

THE HOME PAGE

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FROM THE PASTOR Stephen Clyborne

For weeks now, our ministers have been thinking, talking, and praying about when and how to reopen our church buildings in the wake of the public health crisis we are facing. We have also been gathering information and input from medical experts, governmental authorities, and church leaders from our own region and other areas as well. As the economy gradually re-opens, and the stay-at-home-orders are lifted, church members are understandably asking questions about when we might reopen our church buildings. These are agonizing decisions that we do not take lightly, and we are praying for wisdom beyond our own as we move into the future

that God has in store for us.

We are so eager to reopen our buildings and to see everyone in person again; but in our eagerness to gather together again as a church family, we want to be sure that we do not reopen prematurely and irresponsibly. Because of our great love for our church, and the tremendous sense of responsibility we feel to do what is best for our congregation both short-term and long-term, we would rather err on the side of caution. We would rather wait too long than not long enough to reopen our buildings.

When we first reopen our buildings, our proposal will be to have only Sunday morning worship services with no Sunday School, no preschool or children's activities, no choirs, and no Wednesday activities. We hope to have the capability of livestreaming our worship services by then so that people who are in high-risk categories or cannot attend for some other reason would be able to experience the same worship service live, at the same time our congregation is gathering for worship in our sanctuary.

Our six ministers, with support from our Medical Ministry Team, our eighteen Deacons, and Dr. Jerry Youkey, a member of our church who recently retired as the Dean of the University of South Carolina School of Medicine in Greenville, propose that we use the following guidelines to inform us in our decision about when we should reopen our buildings:

1. As much as possible, our church should comply with the "Guidelines for Opening Up America Again" issued by the White House and the Center for Disease Control, which identify these criteria that must be satisfied in our state or region before a phased comeback can begin:

- Symptoms - Downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses (ILI) reported within a 14-day period and a downward trajectory of covid-like syndromic cases reported within a 14-day period.
- Cases - Downward trajectory of documented cases within a 14-day period or downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests within a 14-day period (flat or increasing volume of tests).
- Hospitals – Treat all patients without crisis care and robust testing program in place for at-risk healthcare workers, including emerging antibody testing.

2. Since the economy in our state has begun a gradual reopening as of May 1, our church should delay our reopening until we have had a chance to see if there is another spike in new covid cases within fourteen days of May 1.

3. Decisions about when to reopen our buildings should take into account the guidance and direction we receive from churches similar to ours and church leaders in our area.

4. The ministerial staff should request guidance and support from our Medical Ministry Team and Deacons before making a decision about when to reopen our buildings.

5. Our ministers believe it is wise for us to delay reopening our buildings until our re-entry will not feel anti-climactic. We believe that, if we were to reopen our buildings immediately, a lot of awkward restrictions would diminish the joy of our worship experience. For example, we already know that many people will not feel comfortable attending this soon. In fact, we would encourage people in high-risk categories not to attend. Many people who do attend will be wearing masks. We would have to maintain social distancing, rope off sections of our sanctuary, limit seating capacity in the Sanctuary, designate certain doors as entrances only and exits only, close off certain restrooms and classrooms, not have a choir, not allow the congregation to sing, not greet each other with physical contact, allow an hour between worship services to clean the sanctuary and restrooms between services, etc. We believe it would be better to delay our reopening until some of those restrictions could be relaxed or even lifted. When we come back together, we want the joy to far outweigh the frustration.

While we hope and pray it will not be much longer, we believe it is too soon for us to reopen our buildings, or to project a date when we can. Once a little more time has passed and we decide *when* to reopen, then we will be in a better position to make decisions about *how* to reopen.

In the meantime, it is vital for us to remain united and determined to live "the greater way" while we are scattered until the time when we can gather again in a meaningful and joyful celebration. Claiming the promises of Scripture, we believe that God is at work in all things for the good of those who love Him, that God's mercies are new every morning, and that God's grace is sufficient for us during these unsettling times.

Please pray for our staff and deacons as we make these agonizing decisions on the basis of what we believe God is leading us to do during these unprecedented times. We love you and long for the day when we can all be together again - - in person, face to face - - in our spiritual home.

Prayerfully,
Stephen



Love

YOUR NEIGHBOR

**LIVING THE GREATER WAY AT A DISTANCE:
GIFTS TO AND THROUGH OUR CHURCH**

These unsettling times have presented us with new reasons and new opportunities to live, love, and give “the greater way.” Thank you so much for your continued faithfulness and generosity in supporting our church. You may mail your offerings to ESBC, 225 West Earle Street – Greenville, SC 29609 or give online through our website: www.esbcgreenville.org.

If you would like to give over and above your regular tithes and offerings to the church, you may designate an offering in one or more of these ways:

Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions (AAEO) – Many Baptist missionaries in North America are dependent upon this offering for their livelihood and support. With regular offerings being interrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic, there is an urgent need to support our missionaries so they will not have to be furloughed. Our church offering goal is \$10,000. So far, we have received \$7,812 toward that goal. Make your gift to ESBC, and designate it for the AAEO.

Benevolence Fund – This is a fund to provide temporary, short-term financial assistance for church members who need emergency relief because of the impact of the Coronavirus or for another legitimate reason. This fund is administered by the Benevolence Committee in compliance with approved policies based on needs and availability of funds. Make your gift to ESBC and designate it for the Benevolence Fund.

Coronavirus Relief – Some of our local mission partners are facing critical times and are asking for urgent help. Our Mission Cluster Deacons are monitoring the needs and are channeling available funds from our church to help meet those needs. Make your gift to ESBC and designate it for Coronavirus Relief.

Earle Street Academy – Because our weekday preschool program is supported by tuition, and because income from tuition has been greatly reduced, our church wants to take care of our own employees until the income stream is flowing again. Make your gift to ESBC and designate it for the ESA.

Some church members have contacted the church office to let us know that they plan to designate the money they receive from the government stimulus package to one or more of these causes. Prayerfully consider how God has blessed you and how you can bless others through your gifts to and through our church.

**From the Minister of
Youth and Recreation**

Lucy Wilkinson (ext. 212) – lucy@ESBCgreenville.org

YOUTH AND ADULT SUMMER TRIPS UPDATE

Below are the three trips that we have planned. I covet your prayers for wisdom and peace!

Bronx Mission Trip (Virtual Trip)

Look Up Lodge (June 28 - July 3rd)

Thailand Mission Trip (July 14-27th)

Thailand Update: We are re-scheduling our Thailand mission trip for the summer of 2021.

IN MEMORIAM

DOT HIPPS

January 13, 1936 - May 5, 2020

BUDGET REPORT

Sunday, May 3, 2020

Weekly Budget Requirements.....	\$28,228
Budget Gifts.....	\$28,874
Budget Requirements to Date	\$508,104
Budget Gifts to Date	\$552,232

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

Benevolence Ministry	\$4,498
Covid-19 Disaster Relief	\$3,214
Earle Street Academy Teachers Support	\$6,368

PRAYER VINE MINISTRY

PRAYER VINE FOR URGENT PRAYER NEEDS

There are now three ways to access the church prayer vine.

1. Text or call Kathy Kincaid at 864-430-3521.
2. Email Frank Tedards at tedardsf@gmail.com.
3. Call Alver Maheras at 864-233-1047.

From the Minister Of Administration

Denise Plumblee (ext. 211) – denise@ESBCgreenville.org

If you haven't figured it out by now, I'll let you in on a secret. When I write these articles and record my YouTube devotions, I am really just speaking to myself. I'm just letting you all listen in on the conversation. Maybe you're dealing with the same issues or perhaps you need to hear the same suggestions. At any rate, the word "grace" is on my mind this week.

Grace – What does it mean to you?

The word "grace" has several meanings. For some, "saying grace", or "asking the blessing" as we say here in the South, denotes a prayer said before a meal, giving thanks and asking God to bless the food and us as we eat it. Norman Rockwell's 1951 painting entitled "Saying Grace" probably comes to the mind for some of us. For others, it might be the simple verse that we learned - "God is great, God is good, let us thank him for our food." Whatever rhyme or verse we use, expressing our thanks verbally helps us remember to have a thankful heart.

Grace is also a popular name for girls, meaning grace or divine grace. The name "Grace" existed in the Middle Ages but was not in common use until the Puritans adopted it along with other Christian attribute names in the 16th century. In 2018, Grace was the 24th most popular girls name according to several different baby name web sites. Grace is a favorite name in my family as we have four generations that carry that name: my grandmother, my mother, my niece and my granddaughter.

The application of the word "grace" that I have been thinking about this week applies to showing kindness to someone who hasn't earned it. A gift that you give, unmerited, undeserved. In a less formal way of saying it, cutting someone some slack because you know they are in a difficult situation. Since our world began to shut down over six weeks ago, we all have been dealing with situations that we could have never imagined, situations we were totally and completely unprepared for. So maybe, during these times when we all find ourselves in difficult situations, this is the time to show some grace, or maybe more grace, to people than we might normally share.

Over the past few weeks, I've asked God to help me show grace to:

- the person at the fast food restaurant who messed up my order because they're trying their best to handle everyone through the drive-thru lanes
- the teenager stocking the shelves at the grocery store because they are working harder than ever and can't keep things on the shelves or customers satisfied
- the lady who cut me off in traffic because she may be late to work or preoccupied with how she will accomplish everything on her to-do list
- the people on my Facebook feed who feel differently from me about our public health situation and how we should respond because everyone has a different filter to see things through
- the UPS driver whose job has gotten immeasurably harder in the last six weeks while his options for food and a bathroom break decreased
- the homeless man who slept half a day on the bench in the courtyard because the shelters were full and not taking new residents

In addition to asking God to help me show grace in these situations and many more, I also have tried to give myself some grace because I know I'm dealing with situations that I could never have prepared for. And I sincerely hope that God will lead others to show me some grace as well because I know there have been times over the past several weeks when I needed it. I pray we will show grace to others, in our church and community, through our actions and our words, both spoken and written.

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."
Colossians 4:6

From the Associate Pastor

Chuck Emory (ext. 203) – chuck@ESBCgreenville.org

MISSIONS UPDATE

As we have reported recently, in addition to finding ways to stay connected to each other and to God, we have also been finding ways to stay connected to our neighbors through local missions. Here are a few recent updates:

Seneca Tornado Relief: A couple of weeks ago, I shared an article from WYFF about the cleanup and recovery efforts following the tornado in Seneca. In response to that article, which included a list of most-needed supplies, several ESBC members purchased some of those supplies and dropped them off at the church. Last week, I delivered those supplies to the community donation center in Seneca. Also, in the course of communicating with the disaster relief coordinators about the donation, I was told that one of the most urgent needs is financial support for the Seneca Tornado Relief Fund, which helps provide electricity for residents until power lines are restored and also provides assistance for property owners without insurance. When I delivered the supplies, I also delivered a financial contribution to that fund from the ESBC National Missions Team budget.

Greenville Tornado Relief: Less than two weeks after the tornado that hit Seneca, another tornado moved through Greenville, damaging the property and disrupting the lives of our church members and our neighbors. Thankfully, we received no reports of physical injury, but there was extensive property damage near our church campus and in the Wade Hampton/Edwards Road area. The first stages of disaster recovery involve organization and cleanup by trained volunteers. Last week, after communicating with South Carolina Baptist Disaster Relief and Edwards Road Baptist Church to determine the best way for ESBC to help, we purchased and delivered meals from the Taylors Chick-fil-A for the disaster relief teams working in the affected area. We will continue to monitor the recovery efforts and look for more opportunities to assist.

Operation Inasmuch: As you may recall, Operation Inasmuch, our annual community “mission blitz,” was originally scheduled for Saturday, April 25. However, in the interest of safety and in light of restrictions on group activities, we decided not to gather and go out in teams to do mission projects. But that decision did not keep us from sharing the love of Jesus with our neighbors. We redirected some of the funds earmarked for Operation Inasmuch to support our mission partners in their ministry during the pandemic. For example:

- The mission of Generations Group is to prevent sexual abuse by helping neglected and/or at-risk adolescent and pre-adolescent males overcome abusive behaviors. When we decided not to proceed with our Operation Inasmuch project at Generations Group, I asked Director of Development Scott Stephens how we could best help their ministry during these times. He said their greatest need now is continuing to maintain some normalcy and fun for the boys. On Fridays, volunteers typically come and give “Star Parties,” which include playing games, eating pizza, and spending time with the boys. They are still trying to have the Star Parties on Fridays – even without volunteers – so we made a contribution from our Operation Inasmuch account to buy pizza and treats for the boys. If you don’t know about Generations Group, check out their website: <https://generationsgroup.com/>. They are doing important and inspiring work.
- We have reported many times on the work that our ministry partner, the Greenville Church Without Walls (GCWW), is doing to serve several under-resourced neighborhoods in Greenville. In addition to its ongoing work, in the weeks following the coronavirus outbreak, the GCWW has also been providing meals to nursing assistants, custodians, cooks, and other staff members at local nursing homes. It has also been buying essential groceries for senior citizens and making sure school-aged children are being fed and cared for during these difficult days. We were scheduled to partner with the GCWW and its pastor, Rev. Alfred Johnson, for an Operation Inasmuch project. However, in lieu of that project, we made a financial contribution to assist the GCWW in its community feeding ministry.

Thanks to the entire ESBC family for your donations, prayers, and service in support of missions. Even though we must love our neighbors from a distance these days, God is still giving us opportunities to share our resources and share the love of Jesus with those in our community. Stay tuned for more updates!