



Pullen News

APRIL 3, 2020

What does God require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. —Micah 6:8

Holy Week in a Pandemic

We are at the beginning of the holiest week in the Christian liturgical calendar, April 5-12. In fact, we call the week starting on Palm Sunday to Easter morning, Holy Week. It is “holy” because as Christians we relive the story of our faith from the moment Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey proclaiming to be the Messiah to the morning when it is discovered that the tomb is empty and, in astonishment, we proclaim: “He has risen.” In between those two events, a lot happens. The rabbi and revolutionary resister from Nazareth will be put on trial by his government and executed by that same power structure. His high crimes: compassion for the poor, love of neighbor, a kin-dom of inclusion, and the power of love over the love of power.



In our churches we reenact this weeklong narrative starting on Palm Sunday and moving from solemn reverence on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday to joyful celebration on Easter Sunday. We begin the procession by waving palms on Palm Sunday, we wash each other’s feet and gather around the table to remember Jesus’ last meal with his disciples on Maundy Thursday, we walk the stations of the cross on Good Friday and we ring Easter bells while singing our hallelujah’s on Easter morning. Some of our churches even baptize people into the faith community on Easter morning. These reenactments are crucial to the life of the worshiping community for several reasons. They remind us of our

identity as followers of Jesus. They deepen our devotion to the teachings of this man who gave his life for the higher purpose of a justice-love. And, not least of all, on Easter morning, we are given the hope and promise of life rising from dead places. All of this we do in community symbolizing our shared faith.

So the question before us is: “How do we move through this Holy Week and Easter when we are living in the midst of a pandemic and under an order to “shelter-in-place?” We do what we’ve always done, but different. We live into the events of the week. This Sunday, go outside and cut some branches from a tree and begin your home worship with a procession around the house waving the branches. There is nothing sacred about them being palm branches. Think about what it is like to be that donkey that Jesus rides on into Jerusalem. Ask yourself how you are carrying the love of Jesus into the world. On Maundy Thursday, in the evening, gather around your dinner table and have communion. It doesn’t have to be bread and wine. It can be cookies and juice. But talk about what it means give your all for the sake of truth and love. And after dinner, wash one another’s feet to remind you that we are called to serve one another. If you live alone, phone or facetime or zoom call a friend and share this experience with them. Washing our own feet can remind us of the importance of self-compassion. On Good Friday, take a meditative walk around your neighborhood as a way of praying for the suffering in our world. And on Easter morning, read the Easter story from your favorite gospel and tell someone where you have or where you are experiencing life rising up from a dead place.

As the evening draws near on Easter Sunday, think of this: the Monday after Easter is when the real work of Easter begins. Easter happens every day when we show compassion for the poor, when we love and serve our neighbors far and near, when we welcome the stranger into our lives and when we choose the power of love over the love of power. Just as Holy Week and Easter are not reserved for one week and one Sunday out of the year in a church building, neither are these things. Holy Week is unfolding in our world every week. And the dead places in our lives are being resurrected all the time.

-Nancy E. Petty

April News Inside:



- New Earth: A meditation page 2
- Pullen News, Joys & Concerns, Round Table page 3
- Home Communion, Staying Connected, Gardening page 4
- Youth and Music Ministry News, New Members page 5
- AMOS Ministry Update, Financials page 6
- Hope Center Update, Earth Ministry page 7
- A Coming Alleluia page 8



Continued on page 4:

**Preparing for Palm Sunday Worship
in your Home**

New Earth

The line moves from the bottom left in a jagged movement toward the right before receding off the page. Before its completion, it intercepts several other lines, all darting toward opposite sides of the paper. The spaces between the lines form varying triangles connected by a single point. Their dance may appear random as it avoids all pattern recognition. The paint must be delicately applied because the empty spaces are compact requiring a steady hand. My pallet is a spectrum of umber, sepia, mahogany, sorrel, and caramel noting the delicacy of shading. The silence around the room denotes the seriousness with which I am approaching the work, as if the slightest noise could derail my mind's vision of geometric shapes. Unconscious of time, I step back to look at the progress. I move the frame to better light and rotate the canvas for a different perspective. I contort my eyes into assorted states of squinting toying with the amount of light spotlighting the image. I move my body further away, and then closer and closer still examining every inch of the canvas. This litany continues as I try to negotiate the painting in my mind with the production in front of me.

This process is familiar to most of us who engage in creation. The writer parses a sentence continually finding the best arrangement of words for their prose. The dancer spends hours at the barre perfecting the movement of the body into a graceful poise. The singer may isolate and practice one melismatic passage so that its final presentation is both effortless and profound. There are often sweat-infused and gut-wrenching hours spent in studios and ateliers before an audience catches a few moments and pronounces it as effortless.

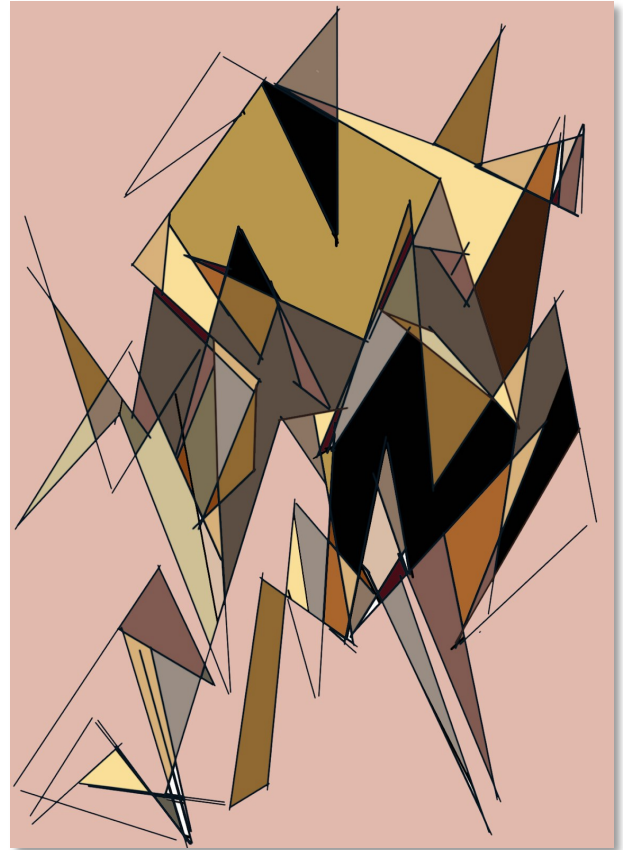
As readers of the biblical witness, we can be more like the viewer than the creator. This phenomenon is palpable when we read the aspirational words of Isaiah 65 and 66. Often titled, "New Creation," the passages are pleasing as Yahweh proclaims, "Pay attention! I am always creating a new heaven and a new earth." The promise is enticing, and we, as readers, become excited about the advent of a new earth. Isaiah shares such excitement as he sees the need for a new society in the post-exilic landscape. Yet, he provides no details about how to create such a world.

When the COVID-19 crisis began, Malkhaz Songulashvili and I began an email exchange pondering if any good could come from the current global devastation. We wondered if humans in this moment could be like artists who so easily engage the imagination to picture something meaningful and new. Would we have the patience to meticulously sketch what the canvas could become? Will we have the tenacity to weather the moments of angst, frustration, and elation as we make adjustments and employ variations. Can we alter our stance so we can see our creations from different vantage points to gain new perspectives? Will we be able to edit our work and discard the pieces that are impediments to our vision?

At this juncture, we realize bible reading is not a passive diversion but an active venture. No wonder Isaiah starts the sentences with, "Pay Attention!" We will be the ones making the new earth, and it will take great imagination and greater perseverance. As Malkhaz and I ended our last email exchange we both hoped that this time would draw us into great contemplation of how the world could be. I asked if we could lean into these circumstances and create something beautiful. Malkhaz replied almost immediately, "We can if we do it together."

I closed the email and returned to my palette. The colors once so precisely separated had now run together. Laboriously I mixed the colors into a new hue that covered the remaining parts of the canvas. Almost completed, I stepped back to look at the progress. The work had become something new. It is often a simple mistake or alteration that makes the piece more beautiful than I ever imagine.

-Brian Crisp



The name of this piece is "New Earth," March 2020

We grieve with:

- ☞ Greg Bruhn in the death of his uncle, Will Radionoff, who died on February 24 in Elberta, Michigan.
- ☞ Shirley Hubert in the death of her brother, Douglas Lent, who died in early March at the age of 88 in Inwood, West Virginia.
- ☞ Randall and Patrick Lathan and Erin Newton in the death of Randall's father, Patrick's grandfather and Erin's father-in-law, Ralph Lathan, who died on March 2 at the age of 81. A memorial service was held in Berea, SC on March 14.
- ☞ The family of Zach Cox who died on March 14 at the age of 72.
- ☞ Elmer Johnson and family in the death of his wife, Phyllis. Phyllis was a member of Pullen for over 50 years when she died on March 16. A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Church Financial Info.

Several members have asked about mailing their contributions to the church given that the office is now closed until further notice. I have placed a "hold" on our mail and about twice a week I go to the post office to retrieve it. Rest assured that your mailed contributions are being received and deposited...with gratitude!

- Brooks Wicker

As of March 31, 2020

Gifts to Date: \$ 313,520.52
Expenses to Date: \$ 302,371.17
Difference: \$ 11,149.35

Round Table Update

For years, Round Table has been a place where people from our community can come for a warm meal and friendly conversation. At the start of COVID-19, we took steps to secure the safety of volunteers and guests while trying to provide food for those experiencing food insecurity. We began handing out snack bags at the doors of Poteat Chapel and the front doors of the sanctuary. We place snack bags on a table outside so guests can pick them up. Each guest receives two bags, and at the moment, we are providing vouchers to the Randolph Food Bank. Although our numbers have decreased, we are still providing food to approximately 100 people during the week. We use two volunteers on 45-minute shifts, and each volunteer is asked to wash their hands and wear gloves.



Nancy Bradley and her expert team of packers has also altered the way they prepare snack bags. They have limited themselves to three volunteers while packing. This allows them to practice social distancing while packing. Again, all volunteers are practicing regular hand washing and other safety measures such as disinfecting tables and surfaces.

In addition to these new ways of operating, I am keeping in close contact with Catholic Charities, Healing Transitions, Oak City Cares, St. John's MCC, Urban Ministries, and Wake County. Services for our guests are changing daily due to access to supplies. Some of our partners have needed nonperishable food items and we have tried to donate from our supply.

Round Table volunteers are meeting via Zoom once a week. This allows us to practice being community with each other. Although our world has changed drastically very quickly, we are still trying to be good neighbors to those who are all around.

-Brian Crisp

Pullen's "Houseguest": How is He doing?

Despite the social distancing orders we all must follow due to the Coronavirus, our guest -in-residence, Abbey Thompson, is doing very well. Having endured months of detention, he is no stranger to living with social isolation, and knows how to take care of himself. To provide better protection from Coronavirus exposure, Abbey is seeing one volunteer each day either in person or on-line for conversation, GED prep instruction, to take a walk, do chores or to attend a virtual appointment. When he is alone, he studies the Bible, meditates, prays, studies, exercises, enjoys playing a game or watching a movie, cooks African stews and soups, talks to family and friends, and follows the news in his home country, Nigeria.



Like many of us, Abbey is getting very good at attending virtual meetings. Recently, he participated in an online worship service at the Raleigh Mennonite Church. He also has plugged into English conversation classes offered through Forest Hills Baptist Church. Once a week, he meets with his "team", also known as the Resettlement and Sanctuary Mission Group. He met with 11 people online on March 31st, and shared that he is "not worried (about being by himself), that he has what he needs, and he understands that (at this time) people must stay home."

-Noelle Schofield

Preparing for Palm Sunday Worship in Your Home

It is our Pullen tradition to begin Palm Sunday with a processional in which our children and their families process into worship waving palm branches as we sing of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. This year, we will also share communion on Palm Sunday, as it is the first Sunday of the month. To prepare for worship, we are asking you to be ready with your branches to wave (or your cloaks to spread along the floor) to prepare the way for the unfolding of the story. We are also encouraging you to "set the table" for our shared meal of remembrance. It doesn't have to be bread and juice. It can be cookies and milk or crackers and water. These are only symbols of the embodiment of God's love and grace in the man we called Jesus. There is nothing sacred about bread and grape juice. There is, however, everything sacred about gathering around this table where God's love was poured out for all. So, get your branches ready to wave and your table set for worship this Palm Sunday. Tune in to the services at <https://www.pullen.org/livestream/>

-Nancy Petty



Staying Connected during COVID-19



There is a new page on the Pullen Website to help you stay connected during the pandemic. Visit it for all of the links to our weekly emails, the livestream videos, and Zoom meeting info. <https://pullen.org/updates/>

The church office closed on March 27, 2020 at 12:30 and will remain closed until the Stay-at-Home Order is lifted. You can leave a voice mail at the church (919-828-0897). You may also email staff. Please reach out if you have questions or suggestions about our communications channels, or if you have news for us to include. Email news@pullen.org.

Flowers in the Pandemic: Why Garden?

It's easy to get overwhelmed. That was true even before the pandemic hit, but the COVID-19 epidemic has only added to the weight of the world we all carry on our shoulders. It's easy to feel helpless.



If, during this time of isolation, you have a yard, access to online shopping, and time, why not consider gardening? In his essay *Why Bother*, Michael Pollan writes, "Planting a garden sounds pretty benign, I know, but in fact it's one of the most powerful things an individual can do." (<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/20/magazine/20wwln-lede-t.html>),

Our lives have changed in the past month more radically than we thought possible. We've suddenly lost so many of the little bricks that pave our normal lives—a standing Taco Tuesday date with friends, casual small-talk with co-workers about weekend plans, saying "how was school?" to children at the end of the day. But in these times of change, we can make new paths for ourselves and even, perhaps, the world.

Pollan noted that gardening is a solution that begets other solutions. Gardening gives us control over the world around us in a direct way; it gives us the power to put nutrients in the soil, to pull CO₂ from the air, to feed the native wildlife around us, and to feed ourselves. It takes us away from the firehose of news and bombardment of electronic notifications to focus us on a task that rewards patience, care, and peace, helping our minds and bodies both. And the more we garden, the more we can change the norm away from a sterile lawn that must be beaten into submission with weedkillers and gas-guzzling lawnmowers. We can each change our small patch of the planet for the better and inspire others by doing so.

Even in this time of pandemic, "the sun still shines down on your yard, and photosynthesis still works," as Pollan said. Some things remain constant, and those constants can anchor us in changing what needs to be changed. With the sun on our skin and dirt beneath our hands, we can make our own radical transformation. And once the pandemic is passed, we can reconnect with our friends, our family, and our neighbors by sharing the food we've grown.

By Claire Korzen, ICCT member



For more information on how to start gardening, visit <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/home-vegetable-gardening-a-quick-reference-guide>

Youth Updates

Cuba Trip Canceled :(

In light of our current COVID-19 pandemic, with the health and safety of everyone involved being most important, we have made the difficult decision to **cancel** our July youth trip to Cuba. Multiple factors went into this decision.

1. With so many unknowns as to when we will be able to gather in groups or travel freely, it is difficult to plan ahead for July. In addition, we run the risk of losing money for visas and airfare.
2. Our ability to fundraise has come to a halt.
3. Our Cuban friends are just now starting this new normal and we do not know how long they will be affected. We would certainly not want to spark a new round of infections if they do have things under control by then.
4. At the end of this time of isolation and fear, when we are able to come together again, we will need time to heal psychologically.
5. We do not know where our families will be financially when we emerge from this pandemic.

Rest assured that we are grieving this disconnection with our Cuban sister congregation and thinking of ways to support them until we can return to Cuba for a warm embrace.

Virtual Youth Group—Wednesday Nights—7:30

For the immediate future, youth and adult leaders can join us virtually for our Wednesday night time together from 7:30-8:30. We'll do a check-in with one another and talk about a topic. We'll also still answer our random questions! We will join one another via video conferencing app, Zoom.

Bible Study

Every week, we'll read a section of scripture and talk about what it might have meant to the people that originally heard it and what it might mean to us today. We'll follow the lectionary passage for the week that will be used for Sunday morning worship. Join us Friday nights at 7:30 PM via Zoom.

In Person Gatherings Suspended

Given the Wake County shelter in place order that bans gatherings of groups of any size, Pullen Youth will not gather for bike rides, disc golf, or Free Food Fridays. Hang in there! As soon as we can, we will start back up.

Parents/Guardians, We Love You Too

Join Bryan and one another for a Happy Hour this Sunday Night at 7:30. We'll use our time to be in community and to discuss some future parent/guardian opportunities. Grab a pint of ice cream or your ideal beverage and join in.

Please email Bryan Lee for more info and links to the Zoom meetings: blee@pullen.org

New Member



Shane Barham

I have been attending Pullen Memorial Baptist Church since 2007.

Pullen has been a place of rest, refuge, and strength for me over the years.

I was raised by my grandmother and grew up in rural Wake County, just outside of the town of Rolesville.

I attended East Carolina University for undergrad and UNC-Chapel Hill for graduate school.

I have spent the last 22 years as an educator in the Wake County Public School System, serving as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal.

I have been a finalist for the WCPSS Principal of the Year and I was the Region 4 Magnet Principal of the Year.

Currently, I am the principal of Rogers Lane Elementary School, which opened in 2017.

I believe in equity for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or social circumstances.

In my spare time, I enjoy reading, cooking, playing with my dog, Tyler, and spending time with my partner, Baxter.

Music Ministry

For connection and encouragement through music during this time of physical distancing, the *Pullen Weekly News* (sent by email each Monday) includes a column, "May a Song Remain Among Us." The first three columns include information and links of music from Pullen's worship livestream, the adult and youth Festivals by the Sea, and from Pullen's 2007 Music Ministry recording of inclusive hymns.



You can find the columns archived by subject on the Music Ministry page of the church website: <https://www.pullen.org/music/>. The *Pullen Weekly News* is archived at: <https://www.pullen.org/weekly-email/> (where you can also sign up to receive this publication).

-Larry E. Schultz, Minister of Music

*May a song remain within you,
ever-singing in your heart.*

*May a song remain among us,
whether near or far apart.*

*And through our song may others hear
the harmony of peace.*

*May a song of love remain in all;
and may it never cease!*

[Words © 2019 Larry E. Schultz. All rights reserved.]

News from AMOS Health & Hope in Nicaragua

Dear friends at Pullen,

In times of fear and uncertainty, all of us at AMOS are reminded of how much we can do when we come together. Thanks to generous partners like you, for more than 50 years, local leaders in Nicaragua have saved the lives of pregnant moms and babies, and helped improve the health of thousands more vulnerable people. **We invite you to read Silvina's, Petronilo's, and Martha's stories of hope in our 2019 Annual Report at amoshealth.org/AR2019.**



You give us hope even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, which knows no boundaries. On March 26th, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health confirmed the first death from COVID-19 in our country. The resources that Nicaragua has to face a pandemic are extremely limited. And we know that it will affect the poorest people the most.

Because of your support, AMOS is committed to responding and educating to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We are keeping our two medical clinics in Managua open to patients who need urgent care. We are educating our community health workers about key prevention guidelines, including good handwashing practices, recognizing symptoms, and social distancing. And we are helping our health promoters install simple hand washing devices in their communities where there is no running water.

Your support is also helping us strengthen AMOS today and for the future through expanding our leadership team. Dr. David will continue as our Executive Director, but will dedicate more time to traveling to share our



model with other organizations and develop the resources needed to continue our mission long into the future. Dr. Laura is now our Chief Strategy Officer, working to help guide the future of AMOS. She now serves part-time on the faculty of the University of New Mexico School of Medicine as Director of the Center for Participatory Research. ***Please pray for Dr. Laura, as right now she is actively working to respond to COVID-19 in New Mexico, directing response efforts to take care of the homeless and other vulnerable populations.***

For our new position of Country Director, the AMOS Board unanimously promoted one of our own staff members, Dr. Gabriella Woo. Dr. Gabriella is well-known at AMOS for her nearly eight years of hard work, team playing, medical and organizational leadership, and her ability to inspire others to do their best. We are confident that she will excel in her new role leading the day-to-day operations of AMOS and working closely with the entire leadership team.

Though Nicaragua continues to face serious economic, political, and public health challenges, we are so grateful for your ongoing support, which allows our staff and front-line health care workers to continue ministering to people in need, improving health, and sharing hope! Please pray for AMOS and for Nicaragua, and know that we are all praying for you and your community, too.

With sincere gratitude and blessings,
Dr. David Parajón *Dr. Laura Parajón*
Executive Director *Chief Strategy Officer*



A note from Pullen Mission Women

So often you hear from Pullen Mission Women asking for your help in support of any number of missions. You have always responded and we thank you! For as long as the "Stay In Place" order is in effect we will simply let whatever is in the food basket for Urban Ministries accumulate and deliver after the order is lifted. In the meantime if you have contributions please hold them until the appropriate time because they will be needed. As you remain in place we recognize and thank you for your generosity and kindness. We wish you safe harbor and good health.

Peace and Blessings,
Pullen Mission Women

The Hope Center



We will update you on a new date for Raising Hope as soon as it is reasonable to do so. We hope you are all staying well and finding ways to connect with the community while we practice social distancing.

Thank you to everyone who has reached out to us to find ways to help during this time.

Here is what we are hearing from our clients, the majority of whom have been laid-off or had hours significantly reduced. Even when they apply for the newly expanded unemployment funds, there is a month long backlog until they

can expect to feel any financial relief. We are committed to ensuring [that our young adults stay housed, fed, and socially connected during this time](#). We need your help to fulfill that commitment. Right now, the most pressing needs are:

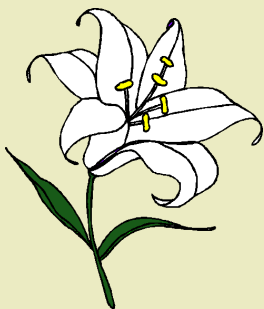
- [Eviction Prevention](#). Evictions are still happening. We anticipate redirecting a significant amount of resources to ensure that our young adults do not experience homelessness while they wait for unemployment or a return to regular working hours
- [Internet service](#). If clients can have internet service, then they can make calls, send messages and stay connected. While Spectrum does have a program that will give free service to a qualified group of individuals, not all of our clients qualify and, for those who do, there is a backlog.
- [Hearty Meals](#). We want our young adults to be able to stay in and cook hearty meals.

You and your friends can donate through our re-purposed Raising Hope site: <https://one.bidpal.net/raisinghope/browse/donation>. Please share this link on social media or consider hosting a Facebook fundraiser benefiting the Hope Center at Pullen. If you need help setting that up contact Meredith 919-694-3133 or Erin 919-283-8524. Every donation helps ensure that our clients stay safe and stable during this difficult time.



-Erin Witcher

Pullen Earth Ministry



"And the people stayed home. And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised, and made art, and played games, and learned new ways of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their shadows. And the people began to think differently.

"And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.

"And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed."

~Kitty O'Meara

A Coming Alleluia

They say there will be no Easter this year.

No hats.

No hunts.

No hymning.

*No lilies to fill a bright room
with a fanfare of pollen.*

*No garden, no angel,
no victory.*

*They say that our journey
born in sackcloth and ashes
will lead us at last
to nowhere.*

*And so we sit worried
that the tomb, this year,
will be found, for once,
still full.*

*That Mary and the others
will leave with their spices
and come back home with nothing.
That this year the women will finally end their work –
anoint and then
leave empty.*

Ssh. Be still.

Do you not hear her?

*Clucking close by like an old mother hen,
brooding and sighing and
stretching her wings?*

*Fear not, she says,
for I did it before –
in the silence
in the dark
in a closed and locked room
in a world that had known
only death.*

*Did I not once prove
once for all
that there is nothing you can do,
no decision you can make
(for good or for ill)
that can stop
me
rising?*



The Rev. Erika Takacs, Rector of the Church of the Atonement in Chicago.

A reflection for those who are worried about Easter this year. (A work in progress)