



# Pullen News

MAY 1, 2020

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

## We Live by Faith: Not a Weak Faith but a Tested Faith

*How do we know what is true in the midst of so much conflicting information? Who hasn't wrestled with this question since early March? This hilarious [meme](#) that I came across on social media nailed what I imagine all of us have felt and thought as we have listened to numerous experts give daily briefings about the Coronavirus. ([link](#))*

The phrase “mixed messages” has taken on a whole new life during this pandemic. “Do not leave your house to go anywhere, unless you need to go somewhere.” “Don't go to the hospital unless you are sick. If you are sick don't go to the hospital.” “Wearing a mask won't keep you for getting the virus. It is mandated that you must wear a mask.” If my good friend Deborah Steely was still alive she would say, “It's crazy-making time,” something she often said when people were inclined to make up stuff because they really didn't know what was true. I will refrain (almost) from giving the latest example of this “crazy-making” but it had something to do with disinfectant and light rays.

I know how frustrating it can be to not have the “right answers” or the “absolute truth” to life's most pressing and profound issues. Is the timing right to leave this job for a new one? Should I send my kid to this school or that one? How do I know if this is the person I want to spend the rest of my life with? Does God exist? Is free will real or just an illusion? Is there meaning to life? If so, what is it?

The more life I experience, the more I am convinced that there are very few “right answers” and “absolute truths” to be found. To the question of should we continue our sheltering-in-place and social distancing in response to the Coronavirus, I would say the right answer is “yes.” I say “yes” not because I know that is the absolute “right” answer. I say “yes” because I believe if there is any chance that sheltering-in-place and social distancing can save lives then that is what we should do. As I listen to the daily news about this virus it seems to me that no one has the “right answers” or the “absolute truth” about it or how to manage it. And that is frustrating and anxiety producing and even exhausting at times.

I find I live a better and more meaningful life when I don't focus on “right answers” and “absolute truths.” In all seasons and times of life, it helps me to focus more on where I am experiencing solidarity with others, meaning in the struggles of life, and joy in the ordinary day-to-day routines. We live most of our lives in the grey areas, moving from not knowing to knowing and back to not knowing; and always facing the truth that in between being born and dying the world is constantly changing. And in this constantly changing world, where there are no “right answers” or “absolute truths” I anchor myself in these affirmations: God is Love and all that is Love is God; and my best life is lived when I love God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength, and my neighbor as myself.

*How do we know what is true in the midst of so much conflicting information? We don't know. As people of the Christian faith, we live by faith—not a weak faith but a tested faith. We live the way of Jesus. We seek to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. In this time and in all times, we live loving God and loving our neighbor.*

*-Nancy E. Petty*

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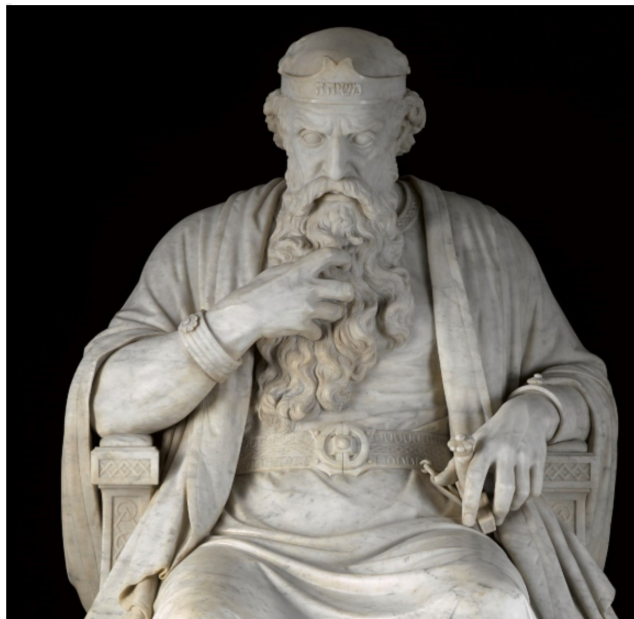


## Seeking Comfort

At the moment, I am constantly thinking about an 8,000 lb marble statue recently acquired by the North Carolina Museum of Art. The statue was carved in Italy by the American William Story between 1863 -1865. Said to be one of Story's greatest works and his only sculpture to feature the full-size male figure, the piece diverts from his commemorative style of great heroes and features one of the Hebrew Bible's most tragic figures: King Saul.

*Saul under the Influence of the Evil Spirit*, Story's title, conjures the notion of a deranged monarch prone to brutal acts. Although this is not entirely inaccurate, a close reading of I Samuel 16 will provide a more nuanced understanding of Israel's first king. Earlier, Samuel, the venerable prophet, rebukes Saul's temple sacrifices taken from the spoils of war and rejects his sovereignty as Israel's king.

Then we read, "The blessings of Yahweh departed from Saul and great distress troubled him." (I Samuel 16:14, Crisp) This moment fraught with distress is the sensation that Story artfully captures. For such a formidable piece, the action is internal. Story's Saul may be clutching his beard and fumbling for his dagger, but the real torment is seen at the furrowed brow and the intentionally blank eyes.



I will confess. My desire to see Story's depiction of Saul goes beyond my love of art. I have always had empathy for the Saul character, but the recent COVID-19 pandemic has me relating more than ever to this ill-fated king. Like Saul's narrative, the world has changed drastically and rapidly, and I find myself with a furrowed brow and blank eyes staring into the unknown. The social distance feels more like separation as it is now impossible to hug my friends who volunteer at Round Table; it is onerous to smile at guests while wearing a mask, and it is now untenable to simply shake hands when meeting. Granted, I understand and support these health and safety measures. I feel that departed spirit most deeply on Sunday mornings. I am very thankful for Livestream and Zoom, but I also leave each virtual gathering longing to be in the balcony joking and making small talk or sharing a hymnal with those beside me. I want to be on the third floor discussing the sacred texts with the earnest members of Exploring the Bible. And, on Monday mornings, I want to be around the library table closely knitted to my colleagues. The confluence of absence and desire can be such a torment that my only option has been to cry.

Crying is essential and healthy. From a physical standpoint, it aids in the release of important chemicals that support well being, and from an emotional view, it helps us self-soothe, release pent-up stress, and it allows us to seek comfort from others. I am unsure, but like to imagine, that in his moments of distress, Saul cried. And it was because of his tears that his courtiers wanted to provide him with the comfort of David playing his harp.

Our catharsis of any moment works best when it is coupled with comfort. I have allowed myself much needed comforts over the past few weeks. Charles and I have spent prolonged moments crafting and eating dinner. I have spent time drawing and using watercolor. Reading is now essential, and long-walks are part of my daily routine of self-care. I devote Sunday afternoons to talking with friends on the West Coast, and I try to find small moments to connect with my Pullen community knowing that desire and absence will need careful balancing during the pandemic.

Almost daily, I spend a few moments looking at Story's masterful sculpture and thinking about the perfectly captured moment where catharsis is on the precipice of comfort. I am longing for the day when I can stand in the American Wing of the museum and stare into its eyes. I am positive that on that day I will have gathered a greater appreciation for this life and for Saul.

*-Brian Crisp*

## We grieve with:

- ☞ Bob Mosher in the death of his father, Robert Frederick Mosher, who died in Raleigh on April 2 at the age of 99.
- ☞ Brent Miller in the death of his mother, Sheila Miller, who died in Ohio on April 6 from heart failure at the age of 81.
- ☞ Janet McCormick in the death of her grandmother, Dorothy Elizabeth Smith, who died in Florida on April 9 at the age of 102.
- ☞ Sarah Huffman in the death of her grandmother, Barbara Swann, who died in Richmond on April 19 at the age of 91.
- ☞ Terrance Ruth in the death of his great uncle, Frank Hosendove, who died in New York on April 14 at the age of 82 from COVID-19.
- ☞ Angel Knight in the death of her grandmother, Georgia Knight, who died in New Jersey on April 25 at the age of 95.

## We celebrate with:

- ☞ Nadine Martin who retired after a 42-year career with American Airlines.

## For All Council and Committee Members, Officers, and Coordinators

Pullen's Constitution and Bylaws (<https://www.pullen.org/records/#bylaws>) describe our church organization and how the leadership roles of council and committee members, officers, and coordinators should function. This is the Constitution and Bylaws which Pullen amended on March 17, 2019. One of the goals of this revision was to reorganize it so that it was more readable and easier to find information. We recommend that you, as leaders, read Article VIII of the Constitution and Article III of the Bylaws. It is important not just to read the section about your specific leadership role, but also to read, depending on your group, the general information sections about officers, councils, committees, and coordinators that precede the specific sections.

Even if you have been around Pullen for a long time, you may find something you did not realize about your leader role!

P. S. All staff members who are assigned to a specific council or committee should also be familiar with the particular sections which apply to you.

*--Emily Cato, Lisa Grabarek, Nancy Jones, George Reed, Brooks Wicker (2017-2019 Members of the Constitution and Bylaws revision group)*

## Pullen Mission Women



There was a hit song in 1970 sung by Dawn (who?) with the title "Knock Three Times". The rest of that lyric line is "knock three times on the ceiling if you love me". Who could imagine that such a line would find meaning 50 years later in the midst of the pandemic of 2020. We see videos & pictures of expressions of love through glass, from balcony to balcony, on tablets & computer screens, and meet through ZOOM.

There are so many ways to express our love and concern for one another and one way you've done so for years is remembering to bring food that we take to Urban Ministries. Each time I shop, even now, I pick up 1 or 2 items and put aside for UM. When we can finally be together I hope that my cache, added to yours, will bless many families served by Urban Ministries. Thank you for all you continue to do.

*-Sharron Underwood*

## Church Financial Update

As you can see from the box below, as of the end of April we are maintaining a positive trend of contributions exceeding expenses. Of course, both our income and expenses have shifted a bit since we are no longer able to meet together to "pass the plate." Our Contributions for April were \$87,953.99.

Our monthly budgeted fixed expenses, rounded, include:

* Personnel Expenses	\$64,000
* Utilities	\$3,000
* Debt Service	\$5,330
* Insurance	\$2,500
* Total Monthly Fixed	\$74,830

I am so grateful to those who are able to continue their financial support of Pullen Church. I'm also aware that some friends are unable to contribute at this time, doubtlessly causing no small degree of anguish. Please know that, as in all things, the Pullen community will pull together to sustain its vital work. I invite your questions at [bwicker@pullen.org](mailto:bwicker@pullen.org).

*-Brooks Wicker, Church Administrator*

### As of April 30, 2020

<b>Gifts to Date:</b>	<b>\$ 404,362.51</b>
<b>Expenses to Date:</b>	<b>\$ 383,925.69</b>
<b>Difference:</b>	<b>\$ 20,436.82</b>



## BYC in Exile

Thanks to many of you who have been in conversation with us around Baptist Youth Camp 2020. Your passion, wisdom and input have been invaluable as we scream, dream and plan in a context that was unimaginable only a little over a month ago.

The overall theme for BYC 2020 is Exile, which could not be more relevant. With the uncertainty of assuring the safety, well-being and livelihood of eleven partnered congregational groups from six states gathering in-person at Laurel Ridge as usual, we are making plans to connect with each other while away from the physical mountaintop that has become so sacred. Since we are not all able to be physically together, we will necessarily and uncharacteristically be turning TO electronics at BYC in order that we might include everyone, individually and as congregations, to the fullest extent possible. In the absence of our grounded space, we will seek to create new spaces. In the absence of our old props, we will be using new ones. In view of the need for diligent and effective planning on the part of BYC leadership, we are - with extreme grief and sadness - making this announcement now.

You will be hearing more in the days and weeks ahead of how BYC in Exile might be structured, and we hope you will share with us more of your own ideas about that. To whatever degree is possible, we envision being gathered in-person at least as congregational groups, and perhaps even as larger clusters of congregational groups. We will sing, pray, play, complain, affirm, interpret and maybe even learn, all in celebration of our lives, and of our life together.

With our traditional foundations absent from us, we will seek to find our identity, our faith and all our voices in a new way. It will be different, and necessarily creative. We will be asking, "How can we sing our song(s) in a strange land?" When we return "home," we will be different. Home itself will be different. With all hope, we will do so with new and imaginative voices that will inspire and guide us into a new reality - a new creation. None of us expected to be on such a difficult road, but we have been grateful to find each other in making our way through this wilderness. Will you walk with us?

BYC 2020 Planning Team: *Amy Mears, Andora Nicholson, Beth Mayfield, Brian Graves, Bryan Lee, Heather Rabalais, Jason Alspaugh, John Kent, Julie Reiswig, Lauren Colwell, Lisa Gagel, Lyndsey Godwin, Missy Harris, Raven Rowe, Santi Matthews*

## Wednesday Night Online

Join us on Wednesday nights at 7:30 for games, your random questions answered, and some conversations about life. We meet via Zoom and you can find the link in the PYM email. Not getting that email? Contact Bryan, [blee@pullen.org](mailto:blee@pullen.org), to get your name on the email list.



## PYM Parent Happy Hours

Join Bryan every other Sunday night at 7pm with a pint of ice cream or your favorite beverage for some time with other parents as we laugh, commensurate, play games, and learn from one another. Upcoming dates are May 3, May 17, and May 31. We'll meet on Zoom and the link can be found in the PYM email.



## The Gnome Bucket

Legend has it, if you give a gnome a bucket, those little humanoids will fill it with some cool stuff and deliver it to your friend's house while no-one is looking. Just kidding, I made that up but let's have fun! This Monday, May 4, someone will find a bucket at their front door filled with about \$10 worth of cool (or maybe just funny) stuff. Your job is to enjoy those things, write your name on the bucket with a marker, and then fill it with some more cool things. You can even "re-gift" something that was in the bucket. You don't need to go buy anything if you don't want to. Find something around your house you're willing to give a friend, cook, bake, make a card, throw in some fruit, anything. Then, deliver that to another youth group friend whose name is not on the bucket already. Need an address? Contact me. Need help making the delivery? Contact me. If you can, snap a picture of the bucket you received and send it to me and let me know where it's going next. NOTE: There will be a container of disinfectant wipes in the bucket. Please leave those in the bucket so everyone can use them to wipe it down when they receive it.

## Preparing for Youth Sunday— May 31

### The Quarantine Art Project

Let's do some collaborative artwork! Use the link in the PYM email coming May 4 to sign up. Sign up by May 6! We'll deliver a canvas and some art supplies to one person's house. Spend some time drawing or doodling or painting something. Let Bryan know you're done and we'll arrange for pickup and delivery to the next house (with proper disinfecting between houses). The next person can add to the artwork. We'll do this until everyone has had a chance to work on it. That piece will be on display for Youth Sunday and be added to the youth space afterwards.

### Youth Sunday

Planning is underway! Join us for Youth Sunday on May 31st as the youth bring their interpretations of the scripture and ideas to our collective worship. It's Pentecost Sunday and our theme for worship is "New Beginnings". We'll also recognize our High School graduates that day. Parents of graduates should contact Bryan if you have not heard from him yet.



### Calling All Graduates

Are you (your child) graduating from High School in 2020? If you haven't heard from Bryan yet, email him! We need a portrait of each of our graduates to be added to the youth space. Email these to [blee@pullen.org](mailto:blee@pullen.org) by May 21. We also need your beautiful face on Sunday, May 31st. Depending on where we are with stay-at-home orders, you may be at the church or taking part virtually.

Please email Bryan Lee for more Pullen Youth Ministry info and links to the meetings: [blee@pullen.org](mailto:blee@pullen.org)

-Bryan Lee

## Pullen Children's Ministry Update



### Story Time with Pullen Friends

Hey families, the Pullen Ministerial Staff would like to read a book to your children! Our staff are now available, via video, reading one of their favorite children's books. Go to the Pullen Children's page (<http://www.pullen.org/children/>) for books.

### Regarding our Summer Program

Please know that our staff and Children's Committee are weighing the options for our future programming for children. We will SOON have an answer on what we will do about Summer Day Camp and other gatherings as we phase into a "get back to somewhat normal" state.

As for now, we encourage our children to join us for Sunday Group Zoom Meetings

and stay informed with info and ideas from our Weekly Family Emails. Please email Pastor Tommy at [tcook@pullen.org](mailto:tcook@pullen.org) if you have questions about our children's programming, or if you need to be added to the Children and Family email list.

-Tommy Cook

## Update from Cuba Pilgrims



This is the week that we should have been in Cuba. It felt so appropriate to participate in this Sunday's worship with the Emmaus road scripture. We often use it as an example of our mission of presence or accompaniment, Jesus walks alongside these two disciples and listens to them and provides interpretation of the scriptures. That's part of what we do, we walk together, talk and listen, interpret scripture and recognize Jesus in those around

us. We also share bread, taken, blessed, broken and given, for all, no exceptions. In his meditation today, the Pastor Emeritus of the First Baptist Church of Matanzas said, "To give oneself, renouncing self-interest, living for others, that's at the heart of our faith: bread that is shared not hoarded, life that is given, love that is offered. Amen."

One of the ways that they are staying connected is through WhatsApp and they asked if we could send some sort of message that showed that we are together during this time. We sent the above picture. The words are, "We are walking together in the light of God." And they returned with the message pictured right, "A night has never defeated the dawn and a problem has never defeated hope." ~Judy Mays



## Still Guided by the Spirit— A note from the Alliance of Baptists

Though the Alliance has recently made some difficult decisions with regard to our annual gathering, we are still guided by the Spirit during this pandemic. The spread of COVID-19 only underscores and affirms our commitment to raise our voices for justice, establish spaces of refuge and renewal, and build partnerships, relationships, and bridges.

We are in "apocalyptic" times in that the pandemic is "uncovering" the inequities that have always existed in our communities and around the world. In particular, this moment will uncover structural racism that plagues our institutions. As a community committed to anti-racism and liberation from our limited field of view, we are taking seriously how we spend our resources and support our partners.

During this moment of social upheaval, we are increasing our commitment to responding with prophetic action. We are asking you to stand with our partners who are ministering in radical ways among vulnerable communities around the world who cannot wait for "normalcy" to return. Many of these have been striving for a truly "new normal" where justice and love are an ethic that shapes our life together. We invite you to read about the vital ministries of our Active Hope partners, along with current updates posted at [allianceofbaptists.org/partners/field-notes](https://allianceofbaptists.org/partners/field-notes) with stories from those grappling with the effects of this virus in their contexts.

In these unprecedented times, we are prioritizing our partners who are ministering among the most vulnerable communities. **Please consider making a contribution to the Alliance designated for our partners as we stand in solidarity with them in this time of crisis.** All donations are tax-deductible and will support those directly in need. Make a donation by visiting the Alliance of Baptists [website here](https://www.allianceofbaptists.org). Our partners urgently need our support.

During apocalyptic times, we will do what we are called to do: to dismantle systems of abusive power, to be in solidarity with the vulnerable, and to join the Spirit as She guides us forward.

Michael-Ray Mathews  
president

Paula Dempsey  
director of partnership relations



# The Hope Center



## Thank you!!!!

Our First Ever Virtual Raising Hope was a HUGE success!! We're thrilled that there are over 630 views of our video and we have raised over \$18,000 so far. We hope you enjoyed hearing from our staff and young adults. Thank you to everyone who donated, spread the word and helped us gain such incredible momentum toward our \$20,000 goal. In case you missed it, you can watch the video [here](#).

## Two Housing Updates:

- ♦ For one young adult, May is going to start with a lease signing on her first apartment. This is the same young woman we told you about at Virtual Raising Hope. She and her daughter will be moving out of a 3 bedroom apartment that 9 people are sharing into an apartment where they will have a safe, stable environment.
- ♦ A second young woman is pursuing home ownership through Habitat for Humanity. We'll keep you posted as she makes steps in this process.

Our Youth Programs staff has delivered 27 Stay at Home Survival Baskets to teens in foster care since schools were shut down. We're preparing more every week for new youth who join LINKS.

Thank you all for your support and encouragement. We are so grateful for you.

-Erin Wutcher

## Pullen Scholarships

The Pullen Scholarship Fund was established in honor of Geraldine Cates and in memory of Ethel Lewis. Both women invested their time and money in assisting students with college educations. Others have contributed to this fund over the years.

Around this time of the year we've normally starting advertising and taking applications for these need-based scholarships. However, this year with some uncertainty about how colleges and schools will be teaching in the fall, (and what their costs will be), we're postponing the application process for a while.

We will let you know via Pullen News the information about the 2020 fall scholarship application process and deadline as it is determined.

- Natalie Hampton and Pat Thomas, GEMS co-chairs

## Music Ministry Update

Keep a song in your heart this spring by visiting the Music Ministry page at [www.pullen.org/music](http://www.pullen.org/music) where you can hear and sing along with "Voices of Pullen Worship" from recently-streamed services. This recorded worship music is a result of collaboration by isolated participants of Pullen's Music Ministry Groups.

Coming soon to worship and these archives will be musical offerings from Youth and Chancel Choir voices and Pullen Orchestra ensembles. On the Music Ministry web page you can also find archived articles from "May a Song Remain Among Us," a weekly column from the Pullen Weekly News that contains links to music and inspiration.

- Larry E. Schultz



## A note about our International Partners

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, I have reached out to our five international partners. I am thankful for the care and concern enveloped in these relationships. John Witcombe has shared that CCN is working on a reduced schedule and trying to host Livestream and Zoom prayers from the cathedral and her partners. AMOS has hosted several Zoom coffee chats and May 6th will host "Restorative Circles in the Time of Crisis." Our Cuba partners have shared their struggle to obtain much-needed medical supplies, and I appreciate the way this relationship has bloomed between Pullen members and our sisters and brothers in Matanzas. Malkhaz and I have shared several emails, exchange poems, and talked about art. Malkhaz is also continuing, as best he can, his interfaith work. He was featured in an interview with Katie Cook of Baptist Peace Fellowship, which you can read at this link: <https://bpfna.wordpress.com/2020/03/12/building-peace-with-hospitality/> I hope you take some time to connect with our partners in thought and prayers.

-Brian Crisp

*As people of faith, what does a pandemic teach us  
about addressing climate and economic systems?*

## **Transforming A World in Triple Crisis: Pandemic, Climate, and the Economy**

**Tuesday, May 5, 6:45–8:00 p.m. on Zoom**

Sponsored by Interfaith Creation Care of the Triangle,  
Orange Chatham Interfaith Creation Care, and Campaign Nonviolence NC

Join us for an open-minded exploration of solutions. Many practical options are on the agenda: stimulus packages, the Green New Deal, carbon pricing. But what might lie beyond short- and medium-term policies? What might need to happen to foster politics and a culture squarely focused on environmental and economic justice, on the wellbeing of people and the planet? To register for the meeting, go to <https://forms.gle/rYHWgrZ7JJ5GoA8p7>

Our conversation will feature Dirk Philipsen, professor of economic history at Duke University (Sanford School of Public Policy and History), senior fellow at the Kenan Institute for Ethics, and a founding member of the international Wellbeing Economy Alliance.



A panel of thinkers will respond from three perspectives: policy, science, and faith.

- **Policy:** Rob Schofield, director of NC Policy Watch
- **Science:** Kathy Kaufman, retired EPA air quality policy analyst; active in local and state climate advisory boards and community organizations
- **Faith:** Dr. Elizabeth Gandolfo, assistant professor of Catholic and Latin American Studies, Wake Forest University School of Divinity

There will be time for Q & A.