

# *Steeple Chimes (mini edition)*

*July 2020*



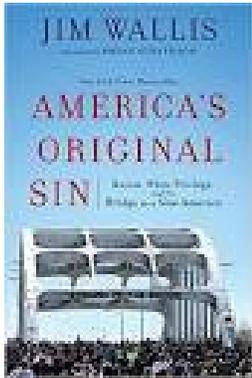
## *From the Pastor's Desk...*

I cannot believe that it is already the month of July. It has been more than **100** days since we were together for worship in the sanctuary and for table fellowship in Bethany Hall. In mid-March, when we began live-streaming our worship services, I thought it would be only a few weeks before we would gather again in our bodies. Others were not so optimistic. It turns out they were right! COVID-19 has thrown us into a reality we had not quite imagined. Yes, there are movies about pandemics. And yes, we have experienced epidemics in which people within a community, population group, or region have been affected by a disease. But this is our first experience with a pandemic in which a disease has touched every single continent in the world with devastating results.

We have grown accustomed to wearing masks in public even though we don't like it, especially now that it is hot again. We have gotten over the habit of shaking hands and hugging one another. We have learned how to greet and meet virtually over the internet. I have never washed my hands so often in my whole life (in first grade I sometimes licked my hands clean in order to pass teacher's inspection following outdoor recesses). We have had to cancel all kinds of plans like going to school, visiting aging parents, in-person celebrations, airplane travel, and summer vacations. We have had to postpone funerals, baptisms, and large wedding ceremonies and receptions. We have surrendered control over our calendars and tried to be wise and patient in waiting for our region to "re-open." **The good news is that we plan to gather again, in person, for worship and fellowship on Sunday, September 13.**

During the months of July and August, and on Labor Day weekend our services will be live-streamed. We will continue to live-stream even after we are able to be together physically. We are preparing for our being physically together by making sure we have plenty of hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, and masks on hand, and clear guidelines for

being physically distanced even when we are gathered. We are also hoping to figure out a way for us to spend time in fellowship following worship, again, while physically distanced. **This is the plan. We will pay attention to how things are with COVID-19 in our region as we move toward September 13. We will not be careless in protecting those who are most vulnerable among us.**



While we have been undergoing this pandemic, we have also been awakened to the 400 years of racism that began with the arrival of African slaves on our shores and has since been woven into the systems, structures, and attitudes of this nation. In our history, we have had multiple awakenings, and progress has been made to overcome the sin of racism. We are being called to go further together NOW. **The Consistory invites you to join in reading and discussing Jim Wallis's book, *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege and the Bridge to a New America* during the month of August.** We had planned this summer read before George Floyd was killed. His death only makes the need more urgent. We will meet using ZOOM. Our first meeting will be on Tuesday, August 4. Books are available from the Church now. If you wish to read the book on your own, or to join the Reading Group for some or all of the meetings, please contact me: [pastorrenee@olddutchchurch.org](mailto:pastorrenee@olddutchchurch.org).

Finally, it is a joy to announce that the workers have taken the scaffolding away! The



**ROOF PROJECT IS FINISHED!** We are planning an outdoor, socially-distanced, hearts-united community celebration for Friday, August 7, 5-7 p.m. with live music, food and drink, some little speeches, special selections from our new carillon, and maybe some dancing.... So, save the date!!

We have doing a lot of waiting together over the past months. And I've been thinking about how much of the Biblical story is about waiting....months, years, decades, centuries. It is the human story. Waiting for birth, for death, for justice, for peace, for equality, for freedom, for renewal. And the good news is that God is always working in our waiting. More patient than we. More lovingly faithful than we. Wiser than we. Says the prophet Isaiah: "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall walk and not grow weary. They shall rise up on wings like eagles."

Hoping to see you all soon...praying you know yourself held and beloved by God.

Pastor Renee