What Brightened Your Day?

How many days and counting? We’ve lost track. COVID-19 is with us every day. And every day we look for a good piece of news – something that makes us smile, helps us cope, maybe even brightens our day or gives us strength.

We asked FPCSF members to share their uplifting stories for this special edition. The response was good. There were tales of where God was seen, where new discoveries were made, where people reconnected. Overall, we saw joy and hope, and a resilience that makes God’s creation so unique.

Thank you to all who contributed. Thank you to all in the congregation, who in your own way bring light into the lives of others.
Follow us on:

Sometimes, “need” may dictate how we deal with extra time resulting from something like a lockdown. For M’Lea and me, the pets have taken a little more effort than usual.

The puppy (Arta), just now about a year old, ingested something that would not pass through her system and that required surgery. The surgery was performed in Albuquerque, which required drives down and back.

Arta likes the cats (named Kit, male and Kat, female) but does not know her own strength. Following surgery, Arta had to wear a cone to keep her from bothering her stitches. When Arta walked in wearing her cone, the cats assumed the ideal Halloween stance and hissed. They took awhile to get used to Arta again.

Arta is taking more nutrition than usual to get back on track to a good weight, and more walks, although shorter.

I have ordered some instructional videos on Islam and one on chess (one of my Grands is very interested in that game, and I really need to brush up). Now that we’re locked in, it is a great time to learn some things that are out of our general routine.

Wishing the best for all First Church Friend Group members. Stay safe.
We have enjoyed taking several local car trips to see the beauty within an hour’s drive. We take a picnic lunch and usually never see anyone else, or if we do, it’s nice to see others enjoying a get away with each in their own space.

We have been up to Villanueva St. Park when it was completely closed by a gate and warning signs but were able to sit by the Pecos River just outside the gate. It is now open and there are picnic tables just inside the park. We drove into town then down to little Cerrillos and back to Eldorado by way of Galisteo.

Another day we drove up the Rio Grande to Pilar and had our picnic on a table in the closed Visitor Center. It was lovely to see folks and families enjoying the river accesses with plenty of social distancing available. We drove home by way of Chimayo.

Folks could just drive up to Pilar and back, or just up to the high towns and back for a shorter day. Taking in the various old Presbyterian churches and school is interesting, and nice to see many in use in new ways.

The fruit trees are in blossom, the rivers are running and there is still a little snow on all the high peaks. We think getting out like this does a great deal for us, and others might like to check these spots out. Be sure to bring you mask, sanitizer and wipes anytime you go out.
Just as I am feeling overwhelmed by the many challenges of tutoring second graders online, I step outdoors and remember that God is at hand, as always, and provides the light to guide me.

During this time of social isolation, fear and sadness, I was lucky to find a moment of peace the day after Easter when I got to spend an hour walking in the snow with our dog, Benny. It was late afternoon, the wind had stopped and fat snowflakes gently fell creating a sense of calm and quiet. I’m grateful for that interlude and have reflected on it many times since then.
As we end another week of “stay at home” orders and more deaths I find myself glued to the TV hoping for some ray of good news. There is none, but I believe there is hope. I am blessed to live in this beautiful state, and one of the things that grounds me is the sunset that I get to see out my back door every night.

I remember a conversation the Youth Connection kids and I had with Bill Humphreys the last night of our time at Youth Camp at Ghost Ranch, June of 2018. Bill and I were chaperones for the five that were able to attend camp that year. We had “our” cabin called Lark, which was up on the mesa. Bill had asked that everyone be back home by 9:30 or so at night, and we would share what we did that day and where we saw God in what we did.

I was a listener, not a participant until the last evening. Our youth were sharing their God Signs, something they had chosen the summer before. Drew asked me what my God Sign was. Well, I didn’t have one, so I had to think about it. I adopted that night our New Mexico sunsets as my God Sign. And to this day, when I feel isolated and alone and this reality becomes even more surreal, I walk out my back door and watch another glorious sunset. And I try to remember that I, that we, are held safely in the arms of God.

Psalm 91:2 – “I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.” And I remember the joy those five young people bring to me. And I pray that we can make it to camp again soon. My faith is renewed, as it was that summer evening two years ago.
Pastor Harry Eberts

Joyful Jig

It was a beautiful day on an overlook in Tesuque for the wedding of Carolyn and David Stupin’s daughter, Laura Stupin, and Sebastian Fondra. It was my first pandemic wedding, masks and all (though all masks came off for the photo), under a beautiful sky and breathtaking background. Here the wedding party is doing a little joyful jig. I was honored to be part of the festivities and still smile when I think of how I spent Earth Day this year. Congratulations Laura and Sebastian!

Malissa Haslam

A Time for Renewal

For nearly 47 years in reflecting my deep love for this Enchanted Land, I’ve often commented of Northern New Mexico, “It’s another glorious day in Paradise!” However, this spring with resurrection proof all around that statement has been made less flippantly.

Both Larry and I recently celebrated our 80th birthdays, both of us now in our twilight years. Obviously, there are many more springs behind us than ahead.

Although this pandemic is devastating for many, for me as a gardener the downtime is a real gift. Isolation is a time of renewed childlike wonder, of deep appreciation for the beauty of God’s amazing Creation, and of profound gratitude for life itself.
What has amazed me is the creativity and resiliency of the people around the world as they struggle through each day trying to figure out how to entertain and educate their children, continue their careers, express their sadness, frustration, or joy; and in general live their lives in this “new abnormal.”

There are songs, poetry, cartoons, jokes, art, actions of sharing and love – all of which come from people all over the world FOR people all over the world by way of the Internet. I have never been a big computer fan, but I have come to appreciate how it has helped us stay connected during this time of disconnection.

Has the virus brought me closer to God? Perhaps. One interesting thing is my increased awareness and overwhelming gratitude for things in my life: my grandkids (via Skype), Margaret, the sunrise each morning I go for the paper, a beautiful piece of music. I am often overwhelmed by these everyday interactions, frequently moving me to tears. When this is over, I hope I won’t lose these moving moments.

My Gerbera daisy is full of bright blossoms. This plant spent a rather sad existence for a few months wintering on the garage floor but is now showing off its resilience. Metaphoric?
Elise Packard

**Mutual Care**

I become restless
When the pain of others
Whispers through the windows of my sheltered life.

“You are protected and comfortable
And others are not.
You are doing nothing; and others are doing so much.”

But what can I do at my age, when I am ordered to stay away?
If I could sew, I would make masks
If I could heal, I would be there.
How do I serve in this battle and recovery?

Receiving an invite from a teenager about the Mutual Aid Network that was forming, I found that there are Santa Fe families out of work and unable to get to food distribution. These teenagers are packing and distributing non-perishable food to families in need.

Joy came with making a plain cardboard box into a Big Heart Box, and inviting neighbors, friends and strangers who pass by to open their hearts, share their pantries, and fill the box – fueling a network of mutual care.

Alice Tinkle

**Unhurried Time**

When the quarantine started I was concerned about my son and his family. With both parents working from home and five-year-old Eli out of daycare and home without being able to play with friends, I was wondering how things would go. Recently I asked, and my son said all was well. He said, “Eli’s pretty amusing. It’s been fun having this time with him.”

I decided that this is a very special time for their family, unhurried time together to form special bonds. There will never be another time like this. How odd to feel such joy in the middle of a terrible pandemic. I had felt so useless in not being able to help them out. Now I’m relaxed, knowing that some good had come from the midst of this.
I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

By: William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Jenny Warden

The Right Touch

A very talented floral artist from the Santa Fe Garden Club created this very early in the quarantine. It just tickled my funny bone and still does. Seemed just the right touch to combine ranunculus with a message.

Gale Wright

Coming Together

We thrilled my 89-year-old mother on Mother’s Day with a Zoom gathering of her three children, four grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. She was looking forward to it for days. Once we got everybody on, the gathering went on for two hours. My mother is still bubbling about how wonderful it was to have everybody “together.”
A tree house? Never knew it was there. Discovered it on a hike I took to shake off COVID-19 news. It popped out of the shadows with an alluring sliver of light running up the ladder to the floor opening’s large-mouth smile. I circled around. An old rubber tire, possibly a rope swing’s remnant, lay nearby. The day brightened. I was a young boy again.

I remembered my first tree house. My then best friend, Johnny, and I built it with bent nails, and borrowed wood. It was sturdy. And no girls allowed. We soon changed that for Bonnie, who could run and hit a baseball better than most guys.

Yep, I remember that tree house: My first cigarette and where a week’s allowance could disappear with one poker hand. It represented the bonding that came from building and sharing things.

Another bonding occurred later when dad caught on to me snitching his cigarettes and redirected me from Johnny. I stopped sampling cigarettes. I found a new best friend. Stayed in touch with Bonnie, and later dad and I built a different kind of tree house. Called it a deer stand. We became friends, too.
Dyeing my dad’s beard has been one of many things we’ve done to stay active and not go stir crazy. It was a really fun activity to do at home during this pandemic.

Can you look at this photo and not smile? I have not been alone in this shelter-at-home time. Boots has kept me company for nine years, and even more so now. I know some people have missed touch, but I have been licked, nudged, kissed and loved every day.

I know lonely people and families have emptied animal shelters these days. I hope those folks will appreciate the wonderful companionship of those adopted pets and keep them once this lockdown is over. Stay safe. Stay positive. We are loved.

For my 16th birthday my family drove by in their cars in a little parade with my own jeep, and that was one of the nicest things people have done for me. I was not happy to have my birthday during this time at first but it ended up being one of the best one’s yet.

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Saw this poem by Hafiz in a blog and it surely struck a chord.

How did the rose 
ever open its heart 
And give to the world 
All its beauty 
It felt the encouragement of light 
Against its Being 
Otherwise we all remain 
Too Frightened.

− Hafiz

It has been such a joy to watch the Easter Parade unfold starting with too early blooming apricot trees, then flowering plums, flocks of Painted Lady butterflies, lilacs, iris, tiny leaves of aspen untwirl grow large, wisteria blossoms popping out of nowhere, iris stalks standing straight finally open to untold colors and softness – all in their appointed times.

In the words of one of Ethel Trimmer’s favorite songs, How Can I Keep from Singing, thanks be to the God of all creation for his wondrous works and to His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the World bringing life to all.
In my “shelter in place” (seems like forever) search for ways to alter our current reality, I retreated into the comfort of past things for a quick fix. It would be old-fashioned projects: sewing on buttons, organizing musical CDs, and best of all, baking!

Looking for ways to add a few surprises to the seeming sameness of every day, I turn to all things buttermilk! Everyday it was buttermilk biscuits, buttermilk pancakes, or buttermilk cornbread. I was making Keith so happy. But alas, I was also adding several pounds to our collective weight and filling up the freezer. And I had to admit the “fix” wasn’t working. Something was missing.

People! We are in fact “People Who Need People.” Family on Zoom for movie reviews and for “dinners” with couples we hadn’t seen in forever; girlfriends for happy hour on FaceTime and worship in P.J.’s over Sunday breakfast. All good, but still there was a hole in my heart, something was still missing. The youth group, the Sunday morning gatherings, the Wednesday Girl’s Group, the working and planning for our Ghost Ranch summer retreat.

After several failed attempts to organize FaceTime dates with our teens, I came to realize that they also were overwhelmed and a bit lost. School was often confusing and difficult working from home. They were exhausted by change, disconnected from friends and bummed by cancelled graduations and proms.

Then along came Leah Mitchell’s 16th birthday. Wearing silly hats with homemade cards and a candle that Leah blew out virtually we celebrated together. We heard about Sadie and Milan’s plans for college in the fall, about how Brian loves being home with his family but misses the cafeteria at New Mexico State, about how running in the mountains is perfect training for Drew as he readies for his next Triathlon, and how Lily and her dad amused themselves by building a fort, along with other creative projects.

We all know that together, with family, friends, neighborhoods and church groups we’ve got this! There is an end to this tunnel, and I thank God for the Youth Connection reminding me that we will all be together again. God bless them.
Grateful
Grateful for the sunshine sending
its light across the garden,
catching a glimpse of birds in flight
when I awaken.
Grateful for the man beside me, his
arms across my shoulders
encircling me with love and
steadfast affection.
Grateful for the voice at the other
end of the phone line
saying, “Hey Mom, do you
have time to talk?”
Grateful for the smell of coffee
dripping into a fresh pot
on a cloudy morning with
unexpected raindrops against the window.
Grateful for a computer and its
capabilities to bring into the room
writers pursuing the pleasure of
words when we can no longer meet in the same room.
Grateful for a walk into the
labyrinth, prayers on my tongue
silence as I center, and
the pathway out with renewal.
Grateful for passing a neighbor
Social distancing six feet, saying hello and
“How are you guys doing
In this crazy time of sheltering?”
Grateful to see the
purple mountains against a teal sky,
to smell the new juniper berries and
feel the tiny whiff of air behind the hummingbird.
Grateful for friends who reach out,
for those I can reach out to,
for those whose memories touch me,
for new memories being made.
Grateful for those little – and big – things
I haven’t noticed, don’t remember
at this moment, but all lending to
a truly good life.
Grateful.