

The Vineyard

*A publication to encourage and motivate participation in the family of God
and an aid in ministry for the members of Myerstown United Church of Christ.*

hello AUGUST

August 2022

Volume 41, Issue 8

editor: Lee Ann Kurash

from the Pastor . . . LET'S BE HONEST

"We can't go forward meaningfully with our "intentional" interim process without taking an honest look at American religious and cultural trends. For example, the fastest growing religious group in the United States is "nones" and they are steadily growing, not megachurches.

...about three-in-ten U.S. adults (29%) are religious "nones" – people who describe themselves as atheists, agnostics or "nothing in particular" when asked about their religious identity. ...The recent declines within Christianity are concentrated among Protestants. Today, 40% of U.S. adults are Protestants, a group that is broadly defined to include non-denominational Christians and people who describe themselves as "just Christian" along with Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians and members of many other denominational families [like the UCC].¹

New England, the Northeast, and Pacific Northwest have the highest percentage of "nones". While the Midwest and Sun Belt may have lower percentages of "nones" and higher church participation, the trend away from organized religion is growing, especially among people under 40, for a multitude of reasons, from abuse to hypocrisy to intolerance to partisanship to sectarianism, etc.

"Mainline" (historic) Protestant denominations have declined for 60 years. The United Church of Christ (UCC) declined from 8,184 congregations with 2,246,610 members in 1960 to 4,794 congregations with 773,539 members in 2020, a 66% decline in members! UCC Christian education/faith formation numbers are far worse: from 1,272,949 in 1960 to 135,416 in 2020, an 89% decline.²

Risk-averse churches are as vulnerable as churches in changing communities. None are immune, even so-called "distinguished" churches. The church where my wife and I were married in 1973 has closed. My own seminary alma mater closed in 2019 after 210 years. They sold their property, merged into a university divinity school, and carry on with their name, smaller faculty and program.

Scholars and leaders have studied these trends for 50 years. This much is clear: no church can take itself for granted. Denominational identities, like "United Church of Christ", are lost on people. Denominations have reduced national and regional staffing. Clergy are growing older. Fewer young adults go to seminary. Part-time pastorates are now common and available candidates harder to find. The "great resignation" has affected the church world as well as the business world.³

It didn't happen overnight. The decline accelerated as Baby Boomers dropped out and returned in smaller numbers, as their parents (the Builder Generation) aged and died, and as younger generations rarely or never attended. Churches emptied out pre-pandemic. Congregations are anxious and conflicted for a variety of reasons. Hunch-based, reactive decisions only added to poor outcomes.

There are ways out of this decline. Churches can be redeemed and renewed. We are engaged in an exodus from an old paradigm towards a new one. For Moses and the Israelites, it took a generation! The same may be true for us. Faith and hope, vision and courage, persistence and patience are needed. Prayerful, evidence-based, consensus-driven decisions are critical to our future. No short cuts! No tinkering! No going back! Are we ready and willing to be honest with God and each other? That would be a good thing!

Sources: (1) See www.pewresearch.org, "About Three-in-Ten U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated", December 14, 2021. (2) UCC 2022 Yearbook & Directory Statistics. (3) See Peter Chin, "The Resignation Goes to Church", *Sojourners*, July 2022, pp. 22-27.

*From Bruce in the September Vineyard: "Who [or What] is Our 'Competition'?"
+ Blessings, Bruce Greer.*

DO YOU KNOW... ..

Flag Etiquette

The American flag has a long history, and the members of our organization (VFW) have spent nearly as long defending and honoring our nation's most iconic symbol of freedom. Whether you're looking for the historic details of how the U.S. flag came to be, or the rules and regulations that encompass her daily flight, we're here to ensure you can find the information you need.

DISPLAYING THE FLAG

On Same Staff

U.S. flag at peak, above any other flag.

Grouped

U.S. flag goes to its own right. Flags of other nations are flown at same height.

Marching

U.S. flag to marchers right (observer's left).

On Speaker's Platform

When displayed with a speaker's platform, it must be above and behind the speaker. If mounted on a staff it is on the speaker's right.

Special Rules

Do not let the flag touch the ground.

Do not fly flag upside down unless there is an emergency.

Do not carry the flag flat, or carry things in it.

Do not use the flag as clothing.

Do not store the flag where it can get dirty.

Do not use it as a cover.

Do not fasten it or tie it back. Always allow it to fall free.

Do not draw on, or otherwise mark the flag.

Illumination Guidelines

Per Federal Flag Code, Section 2, paragraph (a), it is the universal custom to display the flag only from sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flagstaves in the open. However, when a patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed twenty-four hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.

For more Flag Etiquette, please visit vfw.org

Lebanon County Christian Ministries



August Wish List

~ shorts ~

~ short sleeve tops

~ summer pajamas

Ongoing personal care items

~ toothpaste

~ shampoo

~ deodorant

~ conditioner

~ body wash

~ toilet paper

Lebanon County Christian Ministries continues to operate as a help agency for Lebanon County.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Remember that besides food and clothing, other services are available at LCCM. If you have a need, please call LCCM at 717/272-4400.

FROM THE PULPIT IN AUGUST

Rev. Greer will be preaching

Sermon Topics with Primary Scripture Focus

**Not from Revised Common Lectionary

July 31 (Pentecost+8): Press On!

Philippians 3:4b-14**

August 7 (Pentecost+9): Strong Bodies.

Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15 and Ephesians 4:1-16**

August 14 (Pentecost+10): Enough!

1 Kings 19:1-10**

August 21 (Pentecost+11): Down Payment on Hope.

Jeremiah 1:1-10.

August 28 (Pentecost+12): Put on Your Gospel Shoes.

Ephesians 6:10-20**

September 4 (Pentecost+13): Rev. Keith Tussing

September 11 (Pentecost+14): Rev. Keith Tussing

Bruce will be on vacation September 1-14.



Saturday, August 27th at 1:00 pm

New Horizons will meet at Jonestown Community Park, at 295 S. Mill Street, Jonestown, for a Picnic 'Pot Luck'. Lots of food, games and fellowship. Bring prize(s) for bingo.

Sign up as a volunteer to do Welcome and Announcements or as a Greeter on Sunday mornings. We are also looking for people to provide light refreshment after worship one Sunday a month.

We will be sending in another order for Gift Cards the week of August 15th. If you'd like to order, please fill out the form, which can be found in the Gathering Area and turn it in at the office or put it into the secured box on the information Table.

Volunteering at 

Are you interested in being a volunteer for our church?
For each shift you work (usually 3-5 hours long), you get a 1-day pass to the park, including free parking. Occasionally, 2 or 3 passes are offered for a shift. This is great to use for yourself or to give to family members. In addition, our church gets \$8 for every hour you work.

The areas where we volunteer are 1) Food and Beverages in HersheyPark and in the Giant Center, 2) Games, 3) Attractions (rides), and 4) Ushering at Giant Center and HersheyPark Stadium.

If you are interested in being put on the volunteer list, please email Candy Hibshman at ehibshman1@comcast.net, with your name, phone number and e-mail address. She will e-mail you when ever she gets a request from Hershey for volunteers. If you are interested in working a shift, CALL her at 717/468-3563. She will contact Hershey. You may not contact them yourself. Candy will get back to you to let you know if you are scheduled.

August

- 3 David Behm
Jean Wartluft
- 6 Sally Kulp
- 7 Dena Boltz,
Jane Derr and
Ed Hibshman
- 9 Wyatt Houtz
Loretta Firestine
- 11 Alan Zeller
- 12 Norman Miller
- 15 Darryl Brown
- 18 Melanie Bennetch
Sharon Diem
Suzanne Wartluft
- 19 Abigail Frantz
- 22 Marie Heffelfinger
- 23 John Diem
- 24 Glenn Derr



REV. GREER'S SCHEDULE

In Myerstown Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

He works at home on Mondays (feel free to contact him there).

He is here overnight on Saturdays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays.

The Pastor's "Day of Rest" is Fridays.

The Church Office will be advised of any changes to his schedule.

Drop by to say "Hello!"

August Office Hours

Lee Ann is in the office on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Amended office hours the week of August 1st. Lee Ann will be in the office on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday 9:00 am to 1:00 pm and return to a regular schedule the following week.



Need Pastoral Care?

Rev. David Swift continues to serve our congregation by visiting any member in need of pastoral care.

This includes patients in the hospital, residents of care facilities, persons who are confined to their homes, or anyone experiencing a difficult situation. If you, or anyone you know, would benefit from a visit with Rev. Swift, please call 717/866-5252. In the event of an emergency, call 717/306-6319. This number is to be used only for urgent pastoral needs. You may also leave a message, but this phone is not able to accept text or email messages.



Staff Contact Information

Emily Frantz
muccparishadmin@comcast.net

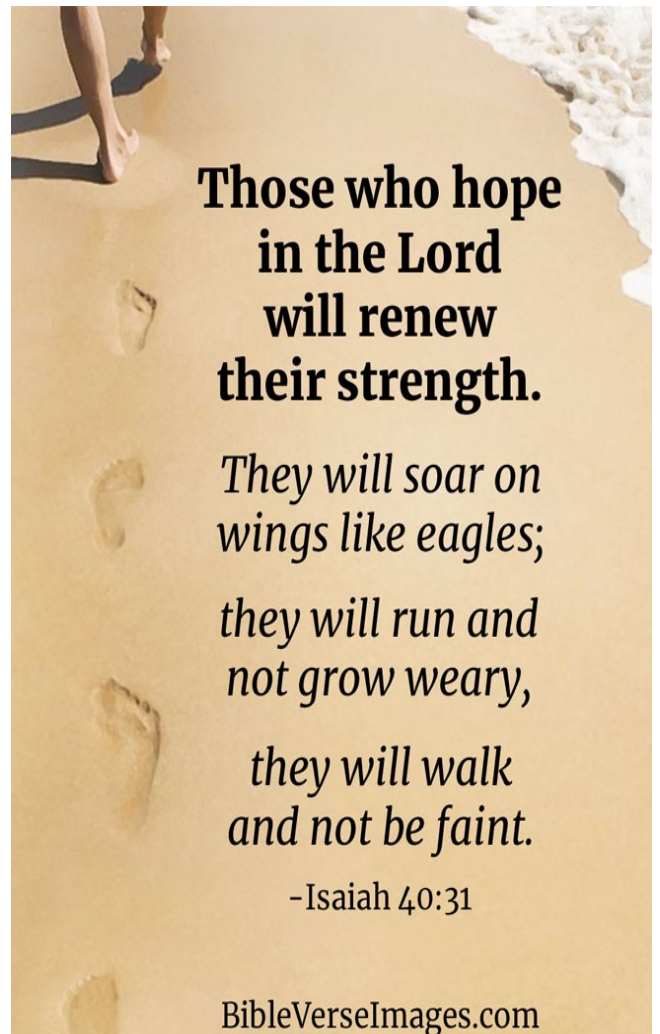
Mark Herr
muccmusic@comcast.net

Lindy Bennetch
muccchurchtreasurer@gmail.com

Deb Spencer
muccfinance@comcast.net

Lisy Frank
llisy711@aol.com

Lee Ann Kurash
myerstownucc@comcast.net



**Those who hope
in the Lord
will renew
their strength.**

*They will soar on
wings like eagles;
they will run and
not grow weary,
they will walk
and not be faint.*

-Isaiah 40:31

BibleVerseImages.com