

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.*



January 2023

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editor: Lee Ann Kurash

from the Pastor..

"Sometimes It's Hard Not to Say 'Humbug!'"

Let's be honest. There is so much in the world and our nation to discourage us. We need not mention such things here because the list is so long. Then again, we may not agree on such a list in the first place, which is part of the problem, isn't it? Sometimes we are tempted like Scrooge to dismiss Christmas as foolishness, to hug our money, and keep to ourselves. Sometimes it's hard not to throw our hands up in a huff, saying, "Bah! Humbug!"

Add to this the personal struggles we brought with us into the holiday season. The loss of loved ones and dear friends certainly tops our lists. Our hearts ache for those we know and love who have lost spouses, parents, and dear friends over the past year; as well as for those whose health deteriorated. For those of us on fixed incomes, inflation is a cause of great concern. Much to grieve and worry about this year, for sure.

Then there are the everyday insults and injuries that come our way, life's unwanted and unexpected events. My own Christmas was worthy of a noxious "Humbug!" or two: my wife's deep cut on one of her fingers requiring nine stitches, my own respiratory illness (not COVID!), our home's power loss from 12/23 to 12/26 (when our interior temperature fell to 39°), plus an auto accident on 12/24 (minor, no injuries, but costly). "Humbug!"

I'm not done yet! My Christmas Eve day was disrupted by having to go out for breakfast, deal with an accident involving an uncooperative party, an unplanned run to the hardware store, and a bat in our bedroom! I left home late for Myerstown, needing a hot shower, shave, and fresh clothes. When I arrived at 4:45 for the 6:00 PM service, the heat was out in the sanctuary and front doors would not work! Murphy's Law followed me all the way up from Baltimore!!

Our Christmas Eve attendees took it all in stride. Our musicians pulled together a wonderful array of music at the last minute, given the absence of our COVID-stricken organist. One of our little ones, Noah, carried the Light of Christ from the Christ Candle to the tapers of the ushers, who shared the Light with the congregation. I then retreated to a warm Parish House for dinner and a warm bed, while my wife stayed with our daughter. Somehow it all worked out.

But we're not done yet! Meanwhile, the heating emergency in the main church building continued well into the night, with our heating contractor staying until 1:00 AM to repair it. The furnaces continued to struggle and some radiator pipes burst, all requiring many hours of volunteer time on the part of several lay leaders, who took it all in stride. Fortunately, we did not suffer serious damage. Repairs are still pending as I write.

Yet, the Light of Christ remained bright through it all. Neighbors reached out with offers of food and lodging. A calm police officer helped us get much needed information from our surly accident counterpart. The Christmas Eve service brought me inner peace (after about 30 minutes!), and hopefully for you as well. Christmas was enjoyed with family. Our power returned. My cold went away. My wife's finger healed and our car will soon be repaired. These little troubles pale in comparison to violence and suffering from Ukraine to Uvalde, and in so many other places. May Christ's much needed Light shine brightly in such places, and through all of us.

+ Grace and Peace, in Christ. Happy New Year! Bruce

FROM THE PULPIT IN JANUARY

Rev. Greer will be preaching (except for the 29th)

1ST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY – JANUARY 8

“Out of Jordan’s Murky Waters”

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7,18-19;
Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

2ND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY – JANUARY 15

“Here Comes Trouble!”

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11;
1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-41

3RD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY – JANUARY 22

“Immediately!”

Isaiah 9:1-4; Psalm 27:1,4-9;
1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23

4TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY – JANUARY 29

Rev. Keith Tussing, guest preacher

REV. GREER’S SCHEDULE

Bruce is usually in Myerstown Sundays (8A-Noon), Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. He works at home in Baltimore on Mondays (feel free to contact him there). The “Pastor’s Day of Rest” is Friday. The Church Office will be advised of any changes to his schedule. Drop by to say “Hello!”

Bruce’s Contact information:

Email: revbgreer@gmail.com

Cell: 617.599.6305

(calls, texts, 24/7)

Cancellations Due to Inclement Weather

If the weather is bad, we may cancel a worship service. Information will be sent in an email blast, posted on FaceBook, and provided on the church voicemail. Please spread information to friends who do not use email. If there is any doubt, please call the church - 717-866-5252.



To the Care Team members:

For your thoughtfulness, I want to thank you for the beautiful cards. They are very special to me. May you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Rita M. Lentz

Dear Friends:

Thank you for your gift in support of theological education at Lancaster Seminary.

Your gift provides support for Lancaster Seminary’s mission ‘to educate and nurture leaders to join God’s redemptive and liberating work so that all creation may flourish.’

The support that you provide with your prayers and your gifts opens the doors for our student’ education, opens their minds to learning and opens their hearts to serving.

In Christ,
Matthew Hanna
Asst. Dir. Data Reporting



‘Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins.’

1 PETER 4:8 NRSVA

**‘A NEW COMMAND I GIVE YOU:
LOVE ONE ANOTHER. AS I HAVE
LOVED YOU, SO YOU MUST LOVE
ONE ANOTHER’**

JOHN 13:34 NRSVA

Lebanon County Christian Ministries

January Wish List

We are in need of winter clothing for all.

We are in dire need of the following personal care items

- ~ size newborn 6 and 7 diapers
- ~ shampoo
- ~ deodorant
- ~ body wash
- ~ tissues
- ~ shaving cream
- ~ feminine hygiene products
- ~ laundry detergent
- ~ paper towels
- ~ conditioner
- ~ toilet paper
- ~ bar soap
- ~ disposable razors

Current Wish List

- ~ oatmeal variety pack
- ~ Chunky/Progresso soups (ready made—no water added)
- ~ chicken broth
- ~ whole grain products
- ~ pancake mix
- ~ cooking oils
- ~ Jello/pudding
- ~ mayonnaise
- ~ mustard
- ~ 24 oz. tomato sauce
- ~ cold cereal
- ~ baked beans
- ~ bagged pasta
- ~ canned potatoes
- ~ gravy
- ~ ketchup
- ~ instant brown rice

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.



Important! If you would like to receive your end-of-year giving statement, either email or a paper copy by mail, please let the office know by Thursday, January 11th, 2023. Our email is myerstownucc@comcast.net or call 717/866-5252 to request a copy.

Hope for a New Year

Jesus was a master question asker. He often responded to questions asked of Him with questions of His own. He asked probing questions. He asked exposing questions. And, on occasion, He asked what appeared to be peculiar questions. Such was the case in John chapter 5.

Jesus arrived at a pool of water near a gate in Jerusalem called the Sheep Gate. Surrounding this pool were five covered porches where, *a great number of disabled people used to lie – the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.* — John 5:3

Legend had it that, periodically, an angel would agitate the water and the first one into the pool would be healed. Consequently, the pool attracted a great number of people who were desperate for hope.

Jesus approached a man who had suffered what appears to be some sort of paralysis for thirty-eight years. We don't know his age but would have to assume he had suffered most of his life. We also don't know how long he had been at the pool; the text simply says, "a long time". And Jesus asked the man, "Do you want to get well?"

Why would you ask a man who has suffered for thirty-eight years if he wants to be well?

It not only seems like a peculiar question, it seems insensitive; maybe even rude.

Have you ever had something in your house cease to work properly? Like a drawer in the kitchen that sticks? And the only way to open the drawer now is to lift up on the handle, pull it to the right and give it a little jerk. And that just becomes the way you open that drawer. You teach your kids to open it that way. If a guest comes over and needs to get into that drawer, you teach them to open it that way. At first, it's frustrating. Then it's merely annoying. And eventually, you don't even think about it at all. It's just the way you open that drawer. But that's not how it's supposed to be. It's not what the builder of that drawer had in mind. It's not how the drawer was designed.

Have you realized we're not talking about a drawer anymore? Maybe Jesus' question wasn't so crazy after all. Do *you* want to get well?

Even more peculiar than the question was the man's response. There seems to be only one right answer to this question: "Yes!" "Yes I want to be well." But that's not what the man said. Instead, he explained to Jesus why getting well wasn't possible for him. He had no one to help him into the pool. When the water was stirred, someone else always got there first. He had tried and failed so many times. "Yes" was just not an option for him. He had lost hope.

Sometimes we lose hope that things can or ever will be different. That our addiction can ever be conquered. That we will ever be able to control our anger. That fear will always dominate our lives. That our wounded heart will never be whole. That we will ever be able to trust again.

We begin to believe that the way things are is the way things will always be.

(cont'd bottom of next page)



JANUARY

- 4—Holly Hartman
- 9—Hannah Rosen
- 13—Carol Batdorff
- 14—Deborah Miller
- 16—Russell Brightbill
Kory Leppo
- 20—Patricia 'Pat' Underkoffler
- 21—Kimberly Rittle
- 22—Donna Reigel
- 28—Jim Miller
- 29—Kristi Fields
- 30—Larry Eisenhauer
- 31—Morgan Berger
Ralph Ryland, Jr.



Hope for a New Year (cont'd)

Think about the irony of our story. Jesus, God with skin on, stood before the man and asked him if he wanted to be well. And all the man could see was how impossible it was for him to get into the pool first.

He needed to re-imagine hope in light of Jesus. Jesus ignored his explanation and told the man to *Get up, pick up your mat and walk.* — John 5:8 He told him to do what the man had been unable to do for most of his life. And, for the first time in thirty-eight years, the man shifted his weight over his legs and stood to his feet.

The word translated “get up” is a word regularly used in the New Testament to describe resurrection. This story is a demonstration of what God is up to in the world. It’s His Kingdom breaking out on earth in the form of new life, new creation.

Maybe you need to re-imagine hope for yourself or for someone you love, in light of Jesus. He is, after all, the God of new beginnings. He is the One who can breathe new life into the dead parts of our souls. No matter how tangled the web of our lives has become, no matter how broken, no matter how lost; He is the One who invites us to bring our pain, our failure, our disappointment... all of it to Him. He invites us to trust Him. We demonstrate that trust through our obedience. Jesus told the man to “Get up”. The man could have continued to make excuses, explaining again why that’s not possible for him. But instead, he obeyed by getting up, picking up his mat and walking. Similarly, obedience is our response to hope; it’s how we participate in new beginnings.

As we look ahead to a new year, may we live hope-filled lives; placing our hope in the One who knows everything about us and loves us anyway. And may that hope flesh itself out in a life of obedience. Here’s to a new year and here’s to new beginnings.

Written for Devotionals Daily by Rob Cowles, co-author with Matt Roberts of *The God of New Beginnings*



WE ARE WHERE YOU ARE!



***PLEASE
LOOK FOR
US!***

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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRDGqMFCollic92-uGCEsUQ>



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