

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.*



June 2023

Volume 42, Issue 6

editor: Lee Ann Kurash

from the Interim Pastor..

“A Season for Everything”

“For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2a)

The question is this: what season are we in as a congregation? Our birth, youth, and mature years are gone. Is it time to close our church? To break down? To weep? To mourn? To lose? Is it time to embrace one another, just as we do when loved ones die? Has that season finally come to us?

We have all been through such seasons. I have: the loss of my grandparents, parents, in-laws, aunts, mentors and colleagues, not to mention four very special cats. As much as we saw it coming, my wife and I grieved the loss of her home church, where we married; also, the seminary I attended.

I wish my father lived to be 98 or 99, like his sisters, or my mother lived to be 105 like her mother. My father fell short by 23 years and my mother by 12. How I wish that my seminary was still thriving after 216 years; but it sold its Boston campus in 2018 and moved to Yale University Divinity School.

I grieve the loss of great mainline Protestant churches with beautiful sanctuaries, gifted preachers, soul-stirring organ music and hymns, excellent choirs across the age span, eloquent language and thoughtful orders of worship. Saint Paul would have loved their “decency and order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

Exceptions notwithstanding, those days are long gone. Our day has also passed. Given our depleted state (e.g., 350 members lost and worship down from 151 to 45 in 10 years, unfilled leadership positions, declining funds, no children’s ministry, etc.), it’s hard to see any viable way forward for us.

As a hospital chaplain, I witnessed the incredibly kind but blunt words of an attending physician. At an end-of-life care conference with the family of a medical intensive care patient, he said, “In all of my years of medical practice, I have never seen a patient survive with these conditions.” The choice was then very clear: comfort measures and lots of love. Death came in time, surrounded by love.

I say the same to you: “In my 46 years of pastoral practice, I have never seen a congregation survive with these conditions.” Our “life-support” includes beloved sanctuaries, remaining friends, diminishing funds, plus memories. But when do we comfort and love each other; and then, let go?

At end-of-life, some families value “quality of life” while others value “sanctity of life.” “Quality” adherents believe that extraordinary measures extend suffering and squander resources. “Sanctity” adherents believe that life should be supported as long as possible, regardless of the cost.

Congregations are no different. Some choose the “quality” standard by being proactive as a matter of stewardship. Rather than waiting for the inevitable, they close with assets and a vision for how Christ’s mission might be furthered after their church closes; thus, closing in a positive way.

Some congregations choose the “sanctity” standard at end-of-life, believing their stewardship is to keep their legacy alive at all cost. Sadly, too many congregations wait too long, as their buildings deteriorate for lack of funds and spirits wither for lack of people. How long of a wait is too long?

(Cont’d on next page)

With courage and compassion, be honest: we are at the end-of-life. No quick fixes work. No pastor alone can fix it. Well-intended pastors and members did their best over the years to no avail: the results are the same: more decline. Plus, churches like ours will not “come back” any time soon.

As a former church planter and pastor of two growing established churches, I can tell you how labor intensive growth work is: lay leaders, volunteers, creativity, risk, and growth staffing are all needed. Clarity of mission and purpose, plus everyone stating it simply, are all vital. *I don't see that here.*

Pastoring deeply declined churches, I see the loss of children, youth, and adults under 50; programming and program staff; leaders and volunteers. I see risk aversion, conflict with innovators, downsizing, budgets cut instead of income built, all leading to part-time pastors. *I see all of that here.*

We are where we are partly for reasons beyond us. Our culture has changed. Our local ministry context has changed. But, *have we changed with them?* Downward trends began unnoticed in the 1980s, continued unabated, then accelerated in the last 10 years because of conflict and COVID.

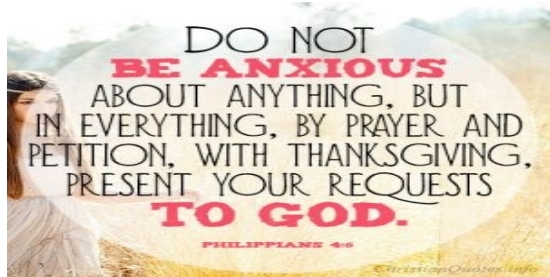
So now we must ask, what's next? Given our current realities, what options for viability do we have? Is it time to close, merge, and pay-it-forward with our assets in order to support new ministries beyond our own? Or, do we soldier on, status quo, as people fall away? What's next?

Saint Paul has good counsel for such a time as this, when the challenges are many and the future is uncertain, as it was with First Church in Corinth, around 53-54 A.D.:

Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. (2 Corinthians 13:11-13).

Love will lead, guide, and support us. Keep the Faith! All is not lost! God is with us, and we will be here for each other, no matter where we gather for worship.

+ Blessings, Bruce Greer, Interim Pastor



FROM THE PULPIT IN JUNE

(Underlined = passage receiving primary emphasis.)

TRINITY SUNDAY – JUNE 4

“Final Instructions”

2 Corinthians 13:11-13 and Matthew 28:16-20

What do Jesus and Paul have to say to us on this pivotal Sunday?

PENTECOST 2 – JUNE 11

“Called to a New Life”

Genesis 12:1-9; Psalm 33;

Romans 4:13-25; Matthew 9:9-13

Are we being called to a new life?

PENTECOST 3 – JUNE 18

“The Last Laugh”

Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7; Psalm 116;

Romans 5:1-8; Matthew 9:35—10:23

Does God have a sense of humor?

PENTECOST 4 – JUNE 25

“Cast Out; Lifted Up”

Genesis 21:8-21 and Jeremiah 20:7-13;

Psalm 86; Matthew 10:24



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)



Congratulations Graduates!!

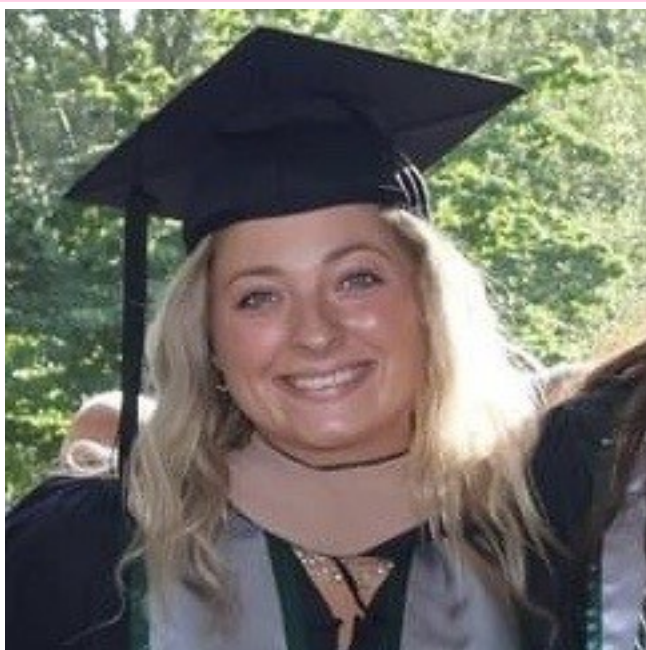


Logan Hibshman, son of Tom and Tracy Hibshman and grandson of Candy and Ed Hibshman, is graduating from Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on June 4. He will be attending University of Florida, majoring in Environmental Science. Congratulations Logan!!

Victoria Saunders graduated from Ohio State with a degree in biology and psychology on May 6, 2023. She is the granddaughter of Terry and Suzie Schott. She plans to further her degree. She hopes to have a job in Pennsylvania or further south after graduation. Congratulations Victoria!!



Lily Saunders graduated from William and Mary University in Williamsburg, VA., with a bachelor's Degree from their Business School. She played four years of NCAA Division 1 Field Hockey in the CAA Conference. She will be heading to Richmond University next year to pursue a Masters of Business and will play her final year of eligibility on their field hockey team in the fall. Lily is Terry and Suzie Schott's granddaughter. Congratulations Lily!!



*We wish you the best
in your future endeavors,
blessings and much love!*



June

1—Sarah Wagner

4—Phyllis Keith

8—Noah Blystone, Rachael Ebersole,
Greg Ebling

9—Stephanie Bohannon

10—Kristi Ryland

11—Braden Bohannon

15—Faye Louser, Patricia Sattazahn

20—Mary Gerhart

21—Ernie Firestine

22—Glenn Runz

26—Trudy Yeager

27—Tricia Garman, Suzi Upton

28—Joseph Shaak

29—Olivia Runz



Music to my ears...

Love it or hate it, Pachelbel's Canon in D is one of the most famous pieces of classical music of all time, but the facts behind the composition aren't as well known.

It's as simple as three violins, one cello, and eight bars of music repeated 28 times – but Johann Pachelbel's Canon in D has risen in popularity to become one of the best-known pieces of classical music ever written. How did Canon in D become 'the wedding song'? It's hard to imagine a time when this piece wasn't a firm favorite at weddings, but in reality, not very much is known about Pachelbel's most famous piece.



Music to my ears... (cont'd)

'We don't even know exactly when it was composed, although it's thought it was around 1680. There are a few unsubstantiated claims that the music was written for the wedding of Bach's brother, Johann Christoph, on 23 October 1694, but this is pretty unlikely.

The Canon's popularity snowballed in the 1970s, after French conductor Jean-François Paillard made the recording 'Frere Jacques'. Since then, the music has been recorded hundreds of times, and the iconic harmony has made its way into pop songs, films, and advertisements.

But even before the public got hold of the piece, classical composers knew Pachelbel was on to a good thing – Handel, Haydn, and Mozart all used the iconic bass line in some of their compositions in the following years.

It's easy to be distracted by the tight harmonies and the three pretty violin tunes, but Pachelbel's approach to writing the music was almost mathematical.

He uses an *ostinato* (the same bass line repeated over and over again) and a canon (the same music repeated by the violin parts, in a round) to construct his piece. Listen for the same music being passed between the violins.

No wonder he had such good compositional technique: Pachelbel wrote more than 500 pieces over his lifetime. He was a prolific organist in his hometown of Nuremburg, and even taught the man who became Bach's teacher.

excerpt from <https://www.classicfm.com/composers/pachelbel/music/pachelbels-canon-d-facts>



September 1, 1653 –
March 9, 1706

(picture: <https://pragueclassicalconcerts.com/en/composers/pachelbel>)

Johann Pachelbel

Lebanon County Christian Ministries

June Wish List

We are in dire need of the following personal care items

- ~ size 5, 6 and 7 diapers
- ~ alcohol-free mouthwash
- ~ men's & women's deodorant
- ~ Junior's toothbrushes
- ~ toilet paper
- ~ face bar soap
- ~ Adult diapers—sizes XL & XXL
- ~ liquid dish soap
- ~ Body bar soap



Current Wish List

- ~ low-sodium rice blends
- ~ Low-sodium canned pasta
- ~ soups—Chunky/Progresso low-sodium soup (ready made—no water added)
- ~ Bisquick (Heart Smart)
- ~ olive oil
- ~ coffee
- ~ ketchup, mustard

If you have a need, please call LCCM at 717/272-4400.

LCCM 2023 EVENT SPONSORSHIP GUIDE

Hurdles to Housing—August –September

This 30-day fundraiser is a peer-to-peer event happening over the course of a 30-day period. Individuals and teams can complete challenges on their own time to raise funds.

To raise awareness of homelessness and funds for FRESH Start Emergency Shelter.

For information on any of these events, please contact Dan Trimble 717/272-4400 x211.

NEW HORIZONS SCHEDULE

June 24, 2023 at 2:00 pm—Chalk talk with Elva Hurst 1519 Brunnersville Rd, Lititz \$12.00. Drive back long lane, park behind barn. Small incline into theater. Dinner following at Lititz Family Cupboard. Buffet or menu available.

WE ARE WHERE YOU ARE!

PLEASE LOOK FOR US!

<https://www.facebook.com/myerstownunit-edchurchofchrist>



<https://twitter.com/myerstownucc>

<https://www.instagram.com/myerstownucc/>



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRDGqMFCollic92-uGCEsUQmyerstownucc2072>



Amended Office Hours the week of June 26 thru the July 4th Holiday. Lee Ann will be on vacation!

Someone will be checking voicemail periodically. If there is an urgent need, please contact Bruce at 617/599-6305.