

# 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.*



March 2024

Volume 43, Issue 3

editor: Lee Ann Kurash

## *from the Pastor..*

### **“Were You There?”**

....

Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?  
Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?  
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.  
Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?

Some songs leave us speechless. This one does every time. Words cannot capture its soul-deep, bone-stirring sentiment. Words cannot adequately express the overwhelming events and experiences it describes. With such agony and grief, stunning shock and surprise, words fail us.

An African American spiritual that probably predates the Civil War, "Were You There?" was first published in 1899. Similar to Bluegrass music's early fusions, this spiritual's earlier roots include a white spiritual known in Tennessee as "Have you heard how they crucified my Lord?"

"Were You There?" invites us to stand with the witnesses of Christ's death and resurrection, to tremble with them as they ponder the horror and pain of Good Friday, the despair and grief of Holy Saturday, and the confusion and terror of that first Easter morning.

One phrase stands out: "Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?" For African-Americans before and after the Civil War, "the cross and the lynching tree" conveyed special meaning. Both symbolized death: yet one represented universal hope; the other racial hatred.

Few people "apart from black poets, novelists, and other reality-seeking artists, have explored the symbolic connections." (James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, xiii). The symbolic connection was certainly not lost on the first African-Americans to sing it.

The lyrics of this beloved spiritual transport us from the grotesque horrors of Good Friday to the stunning mystery of Easter Dawn. We are transported from darkness to light, despair to hope, defeat to victory. We stand suspended between the two, speechless.

Take time to drink in and breathe in this profound expression of sorrow, coming from the heartache and backache of those enslaved and beaten down, singing about Jesus' suffering as they suffered. Just as we remember Jesus' redemptive suffering, we remember theirs as well.

Even more, take time to absorb deeply the heartfelt hope and determination of those who believed that better days were coming; that their children, or grandchildren, even distant generations, would one day stand tall and proud, free and equal among all of God's children.

For now, just sing this song. Then, speak it. Then, be silent..  
From Good Friday's darkness until the predawn light of Easter.

*Prayer:* Silence us, O God, at the foot of the cross. Though words may fail us, amazement and wonder never fail to speak to our souls. May it be so, in Jesus' name. Amen.

+ Blessings, Bruce Greer, Interim Pastor

## FROM THE PULPIT IN MARCH

Rev. Greer will be preaching.

**MARCH 3 – Lent 3**  
**PONDERING THE PRODIGAL - 1**

**The Younger Son**

Luke 15:11-32

**MARCH 10 – Lent 4**  
**PONDERING THE PRODIGAL – 2**

**The Elder Brother**

Luke 15:1-32

**MARCH 17 – Lent 5**  
**PONDERING THE PRODIGAL – 3**

**The Prodigal Father**

Luke 15:11-32

**MARCH 24 – Palm Sunday**

**“So Many Questions”**

Mark 11:1-11

**MARCH 31 – Easter Sunday**

**“The Rest of the Story”**

Mark 16:1-8



## Maundy Thursday Service

Thursday, March 28th at 7:00 pm

Please join us!

## Weather Cancellations

Worship cancellations due to winter weather will be announced via email blasts, Facebook page posts, and on our church office voice mail. Please contact Marie Hibshman (717.343.3247) if you have further questions or concerns.



## Scout Sunday February 4, 2024

It was such a pleasure to help our Scout troop, Troop 420, celebrate Scout Sunday, which is always the first Sunday of February. We enjoyed their participation during worship and after worship, we were able to greet them and offer them some treats during coffee hour. They really seemed to enjoy themselves!

They are very busy out in our community promoting the principals of scouting everyday—



**‘Do a good turn daily;’ ‘A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent.’**



**Pampered Chef Fundraiser**  
for Scout Troop 20 to be held in the social hall.

**Saturday, March 9th, 2024**  
**at 2:00 pm**

Rebecca King is the Pampered Chef consultant for this fundraiser. You may contact her for more information [brebeccapchef@gmail.com](mailto:brebeccapchef@gmail.com) or at 570/425-2038.

## An Irish Blessing

*May God be with you and bless you.*  
*May you see your children's children.*  
*May you be poor in misfortune,*  
*rich in blessings.*  
*May you know nothing but happiness*  
*from this day forward.*

excerpt from: **THE HOPE OF EASTER**

10 Reflections from  
Our Daily Bread

**Cloudy Vision**

...It seems I'd done everything necessary and still didn't get the results I'd hoped for. This same realization hits me each time I face disappointments in life. Does it seem that way to you too—when stuck in a marriage that's breaking down, rejected at yet another job interview, overlooked for that promotion, discouraged by news that the latest round of medication isn't working? After striving and doing all that's needed, there's no certainty that we'll get what we hope for.

Feels frustrating, doesn't it? Maybe even hopeless. We can do everything right, and still, things go wrong.

During a low point in my life, I found myself asking: *How did it go so wrong?* It was a time when, after years of serving as leaders, my husband and I found ourselves without a church community. At the same time I was struggling with a severe flare-up of eczema. There was also unspoken anxiety over our financial situation because of my husband's job situation, and our communication lost the depth of emotional intimacy it once had. Weeks went by without any positive development, and then months. I started to resent living and felt stuck in a season that I didn't foresee and which didn't seem to be passing.

At the time, I could only describe the experience as living under a heavy dark cloud that refused to go away. I see now that it was a sense of hopelessness. With each passing day, it seemed harder to have hope for our marriage, my health, his career, our relationship with the church.

As I struggled to sleep each night, filled with dread for the next day, I'd pray, *Help me Lord*. These three little words were all I had; I didn't know what else to say. It took months before that heavy dark cloud lifted and even longer before the other issues were dealt with.

But during those dark days, God met me where I was. The words of Lamentations 3:21-23 (*ESV*) became something I held on to:

But this I call to mind,  
and therefore I have hope:  
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;  
His mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.

When waking up to a new day felt terrible, when staying alive felt difficult, it was during those times that I came to understand the faithfulness of God. little by little, as He helped me to persevere through the day, He showed me that there *is* hope. It's a hope found not in a set of circumstances, not even the most ideal

ones, but found in a Person—none other than Jesus Himself.

...When we hope in Jesus, there's certainty for our future. Even when we 'may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials' (1 Peter 1:6 NIV), we can rejoice because we have hope—not just any hope, but a hope that's true and certain.

...Hope is always there, but we don't always see it or feel it. Hope isn't the problem, our vision is. Sometimes it's because we're looking in the wrong places, or sometimes it's just *too cloudy*. Wherever you are right now, there is hope. You don't have to wait for the right set of circumstances or see things happen to have it. Because Jesus died for our sins and rose to life again, we have hope in this life.

...my prayer for you are the words from Ephesians 1:18

***I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.***

“ ‘Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.’

*Psalms 50:15 NSRV*



**Daylight Savings time is Sunday,  
March 10!**

**Rise and shine! Turn your clocks  
forward one hour.**

# MARCH OUTREACH

## One Great hour of Sharing

Time to Share the Light - OGHS 2024

“Let me tell you why you are here... You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world... Keep open house; be generous with your lives” (Matthew 5:13-16, The Message). That is the invitation extended in this year’s One Great Hour of Sharing theme, Share the Light.

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is the program through which the United Church of Christ, along with churches of many other denominations, supports relief in times of disaster and provides aid to struggling communities world wide. When man-made or natural disasters strike, agencies supported by funds from OGHS respond, not just for the immediate future, but for the long haul. While we are often inspired to donate after we see images of some unfolding disaster, funds that are sent to OGHS each Lenten season mean supplies are available to respond immediately, all year long.

Over the past year many of us have frequently felt overwhelmed by the problems of MUCC - selling our property, losing the comfort of our sanctuary, facing an uncertain future. Compared to the horrors faced by many people in today’s world, our issues are relatively minor. Let’s celebrate our blessings by generously offering help to others!

In the past the Myerstown UCC family has enthusiastically supported OGHS. We will be gathering contributions to OGHS throughout Lent. Simply add your donation to your offering envelope, write OGHS behind “Special”, and note the amount on the line or use one of the special envelopes provided on the information table in the gathering area. If you give through Givelify, there is now a OGHS “envelope” which will be available until Easter.



# IMPORTANT!

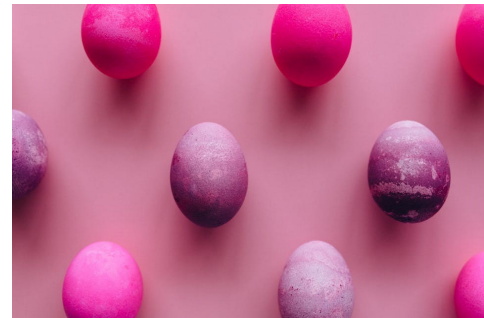
Myerstown Women’s Club meeting on Monday, March 4th at 7:00 pm in the social hall.

Saturday, March 9th @ 2:00 pm in the social hall  
Pampered Chef Fundraiser for Troop 420

Sunday, March 10 - Daylight Savings  
Spring ahead one hour at 2:00 am

Sunday, March 17th—St. Patrick’s Day  
- Congregational meeting following worship  
- deadline to have candy in to Melanie Bennetch for Easter Egg Hunt

\*\*Council Meeting moved one week to Tuesday, March 19th in the Library at 6:30 pm



Join us for our Indoor  
Easter Egg Hunt  
On March 24th, 2024  
(Palm Sunday)

It will be held immediately after worship. Please invite children up to age 12.

Forecast is for lots of fun and 'thousands' of eggs expected!

If you would like to donate candy to help fill the eggs, please bring it in no later than Sunday, March 17 and give to Melanie Bennetch, who is organizing the egg hunt.

Thank you Melanie!!



## March

3—Jennifer Kinsey  
Carolyn Williams

4—Sally Ann Shaak

14—Linden Bennetch  
Karen Leppo

16—Elizabeth Rittle

17—L. Patrick Krum

18—Diana Eisenhauer

20—Evangeline Zimmerman

21—Marcia Bicher



## Important Congragational Meeting!!

There will be a duly called business meeting of the Church on March 17, 2024 immediately following worship in the sanctuary for the purpose of discussing and possible voting on accepting or rejecting bids for the sale of the property.

We will hold an Open House in the Parish House following the meeting.



## ***WE ARE STILL WHERE YOU ARE!***



<sup>24</sup> Kind words are like a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Proverbs 16:24 (NASB)



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

<https://twitter.com/myerstownucc>



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

[@myerstownucc2072](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRDGqMFCollic92-uGCEsUQ)



## Update on Council Actions - February 2024

Some of the news that was shared at the town hall meeting on February 25, 2024:

- 1) We continue to clean out closets and cabinets. Many items not of great value are displayed on tables in various Sunday School rooms. Members may take anything that they can use BUT PLEASE check in the office and identify yourself before coming into the church during the week. If there is anything in the church that you are interested in purchasing, please contact the office or any Council member BEFORE March 15. We will eventually have a public auction, probably on-line.
- 2) Some years ago Kathy Grose donated a large snow-blower to the church. It has been unused and stored in our garage. Kathy recently sold it and donated the proceeds back to the church. Thank you, Kathy!
- 3) Council members are investigating possible locations where we might rent space to continue worshipping together after our building is sold. We are also considering how we might approach a new owner about renting some space in our current building. Most members attending the February 25 meeting indicated they were interested in these possibilities.
- 4) While we can not start searching for our next interim pastor until we know what our situation will be, Doug Bohannon, Carolyn Williams, and Charlee Redick have volunteered to serve on a Search Committee. Bruce Greer's time as our interim pastor ends on June 30, 2024.
- 5) We are investigating preparing a memory book of some kind with exterior and interior pictures of the church.
- 6) Amber Beamesderfer has been hired to prepare a detailed inventory of all items in our possession that have historical significance. This will include photographs of many items.
- 7) We have employed Attorney Ken Sandoe to prepare legal documents that will separate the Mt Hope Cemetery from MUCC. We hope to use proceeds from the sale of the property to then endow a new nonprofit cemetery company. Mike Ebersole continues to search through old cemetery documents. We know that the original Myerstown Cemetery Company was owned by various citizens of Myerstown who purchased shares, bought land north of town, and established a non-sectarian community cemetery. Over the years most of those shares were donated to our church but no formal transfer of ownership was ever filed.
- 8) Nelson Ebersole has reported that he has distributed 7 bid packages and two potential buyers (both churches) have toured our property. Sealed bids must be submitted before March 15 when they will be opened by Church Council members at noon. Any objects permanently attached to the floors or walls (pews, cabinets, etc) are included with the building. All items in the kitchen (cookware, dishes, etc) are included with the building. The organ is NOT included. We have one year to determine what to do with the organ.

While we will continue to update you on what is happening with the sale of the church and everything else going on, please try to come to these important informational/Town Hall and-Congregational meetings.

