

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.



October 2022

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editor: Lee Ann Kurash

from the Pastor.. **“THANK YOU”**

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world. (Romans 1:8). “I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus...” (1 Corinthians 1:4). “I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason. I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.” (Ephesians 1:15-16).

“I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.” (Philippians 1:3-5). “In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints...” (Colossians 1:3-4).

“We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3). “We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.” (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

“I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.” (2 Timothy 1:3). “When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus.” (Philemon 1:4-5).

Paul engaged in the risky venture of starting churches and the enviable task of mentoring new church leaders from Asia Minor to Greece to Rome. He also had the unenviable task of coaching these young churches and their leaders, keeping them on course as they ran into challenges, disagreements, and other problems. Whatever the case, the Apostle Paul began his letters giving thanks for the recipients, except for those “foolish Galatians” (3:1). Whatever they did, Paul did not approve of it!

It is risky but exciting to start a church! (Been there, done that.) And, sad to close a church. (Been there, done that.) It is exhilarating to serve a growing church! (Been there, done that.) And, disheartening to serve a declining or dying church. (Been there, done that.) Yet, in every case across 45 years, I have been blessed to work with honest, faithful people, on the growth side of the church life cycle as well as on the downside. Been there, done that, and blessed because of it! I have learned so much along the way.

As we complete our fourth month together, I want to follow Saint Paul’s lead by thanking God you for offering me the privilege of serving you at such a time as this, for welcoming me both into your fellowship and into your struggles, for listening to some challenging sermons through the summer, and for listening to my Power Point slide presentation at the September 25th “Town Hall” meeting. Together we face any number of inconvenient truths about dramatic changes in religion and spirituality.

I thank God for the approximately 50 people who gathered at our Town Hall meeting, who received hard data on dramatic church decline at every level: local, regional, and national. The picture is not a pretty one to be sure! I thank God for your attentiveness, your patience, your questions, and your shared concern. Like the churches Paul mentored so long ago, we and many other churches face daunting challenges, unprecedented opportunities, and difficult decisions. Take courage, God is with us!

All we can do is our best. Nothing more. Nothing less. And I thank God for every soul at Myerstown United Church of Christ willing to give their best, whatever their “best” may be. May God guide us in all things.

+ Blessings, Bruce Greer, Interim Pastor.

Mission Moments

Julius Muthengi

Dear Prayer Partners,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I trust this e-mail finds you doing well. Agnes and I are rejoicing in God's amazing grace, which is always sufficient in spite of challenges. Let me share with you a matter for which we need prayers from God's people. For several months, our daughter Josephine (Joey) has been unwell. Her health condition became worse this week such that she became weak and unable to eat well. Around 1:00 pm this afternoon, Kenyan time, she was hospitalized. They took blood samples, as well as doing other tests. We are waiting to hear from the doctor regarding the cause of illness, perhaps tomorrow, or latest Monday next week. Pray that God will give our daughter quick healing. Pray also for the provision of funds because both she and our son do not have health insurance cover. For that reason, we have to look for money in order to pay for the hospital bills. Thank you for standing with us in God's ministry here in Kenya. May God bless you abundantly.

In Christ,

Julius and Agnes

Julius Muthengi, Ph.D.

Professor of Biblical & Theological Studies/Intercultural Studies
International Leadership University, Kenya

"Africa's greatest need is not economic or material in nature. Rather, it is that of transformed lives. . . men and women who are daily being renewed by the power of the Gospel and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. . . who treasure the Word of God, and are being captivated by its enduring power. This is a fundamental truth of Christianity whose value is as relevant today as it was centuries ago!"

-Prof. Julius Muthengi-

BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS
LOVE, JOY, PEACE,
PATIENCE, KINDNESS,
GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS,
GENTLENESS AND SELF-CONTROL.
AGAINST SUCH THINGS
THERE IS NO LAW.

GALATIANS 5:22-23



REPORT FROM OUR TOWN HALL MEETING

On September 25th, after worship, about 50 M.U.C.C. members and friends gathered in the Social Hall to watch the 45-minute Power Point presentation given by our Interim Pastor, Bruce Greer. He reviewed the history of our church's steady decline since the late 1970s. He also shared alarming statistics about the sharp decline of our denomination, the United Church of Christ (local, regional, and national), as well as of six other "mainline" Protestant denominations in the USA (versus other religious groups). The steep decline in religious affiliation nationwide, from 70% to 47%, was also mentioned.

Bruce ended by saying: "The time to decide has come. What will be the future of Christ's ministry with, through or beyond our church?" Every option is on the table and needs thoughtful consideration, from disbanding and selling our property, to an all-out "go for it" strategy with an entrepreneurial full-time pastor on a five-year contract. The options in between range from carrying on "as is" with a part-time pastor, to sharing a full-time pastor with another church, to becoming a multi-organization facility which includes our church, perhaps another church and non-profit organizations (at fair rental value), plus opening our social hall to 12-Step support groups and other community groups.

The next step: Form a six-person steering committee (a "vision team") to work with Rev. Greer to investigate these several options and report back to the congregation in six months. At least four of these team members should have good computer skills for online investigation, Zoom meetings, etc. All six need to be willing to gather good information and do some reading on each of the options listed above. We hope to have a team nominated and approved by the congregation by early October and no later than the Annual Meeting on November 20th.

If we are unable to form a team for lack of volunteers, and continue to be unable to find adequate volunteers for our governance and ministry, we will be limited to continuing "as is" with a part-time minister or closing the church. **The bottom line is this:** Without ministry, programs, and administration infused with the love and service of volunteers, supporting our church as we have known it will be increasingly difficult. Our goal is to be the best stewards we can be of our lovely facility and the best servants we can be in the name of Christ for our borough and the surrounding area.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Town Hall meeting, feel free to contact Rev. Greer (revbgreer@gmail.com or 617.599.6305) or Marie Hibshman, chair of Council (hheli23@yahoo.com or 717.343.3247).

Please speak up! We need your input! The time to decide has come!

Lebanon County Christian Ministries

October Wish List

We are in need of winter clothing for all.

We are in dire need of the following personal care items

- ~ toothpaste
- ~ deodorant
- ~ body wash
- ~ paper towels
- ~ alcohol-free mouthwash
- ~ face bar soap
- ~ shaving cream
- ~ feminine hygiene products
- ~ laundry detergent
- ~ shampoo
- ~ conditioner
- ~ toilet paper
- ~ tissues
- ~ bar soap
- ~ disposable razors

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.

LCCM Silent Auction Fundraiser

For the past 40 years, LCCM, has assisted thousands of families with shelter, food, clothing, and other emergency services. To support these ongoing services, LCCM hosts four major events each year. The next scheduled event is the **Benefit Dinner and Silent Auction**, scheduled for Thursday, November 17. It will again be held at the Lebanon Area Evangelical Free Church, 600 Shepherd St., Jonestown.

This annual event includes a themed-basket silent auction, special music by Alyssa Mayersky, and a delicious, buffet-style home-cooked meal catered by Country Home Catering. The meal includes roast beef or chicken breast, corn, red skinned potatoes, salad and your choice of shoofly or apple pie.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.lccm.us. The deadline to purchase tickets is November 10. If you have any questions or need more information, please contact Dan Trimble at 717/272-4400 ext.240 or email dant@lccm.us.

Please see the bulletin board in the Gathering Area for more information on this event.



Thank you -

Dear MUCC,

Thank you so much for your generous gift in celebration of my graduation. I appreciate everything the church and congregation has done for me over the years!

Much Love,
Kara Frantz

Dear Myerstown United Church of Christ,

The officers and members of the Keystone Hook and Ladder Co. #1 thank you for your recent contribution of \$500. Your support to our fire company is very much appreciated.

Your donation will help us continue to better serve our great community!

Sincerely,
Michael D. Shaak
Recording Secretary



Dear Friends:

Thank you for your gift in support of the ministry 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 you provide with your prayers and your gifts opens the doors for our students' education opens their minds to learning and opens their hearts to serving.

In Christ,
Matt Hanna
Assistant Director, Data Mgmt/Reporting

Dear Friends,

I am happy to welcome you as an inaugural member of the newly established Lark Society! Your membership in this leadership society is because of your generous philanthropic support of \$1,000 or more to Lancaster Theological Seminary during the past fiscal year.

Your membership benefits include an invitation to the annual Christmas Vespers Reception & Service held at Moravian University, a society newsletter, and special insider updates.

Jenelle M. Holden
Leadership Annual Gift Officer

(Please see the original letter for more info on the bulletin brd)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

October



- 1—Brittany Hartman
- 3—Lee Smith
- 4—Lois Werner
- 8—Marianne Boltz
- 9—Loise Seifert
- 12—Wanda Miller, Holly Rosen
Terry Schott, James Yoder
- 13—Amber Beamesderfer
- 16—Lindy Bennetch, Bryson Runz
- 17—Ronald Baum
- 20—Dallas Noll
- 22—Tina Beamesderfer
- 24—Debra Arnold, Lynn Risser
Ken Salem
- 28—Mason Bennetch



Important!

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Myerstown Women's Club will meet Monday, October 3rd at 7:00 pm in the social hall.

****October's Council meeting** will be held on Tuesday, October 4th at 6:30 pm in the Library.

New Horizons October 2022 is the Annual shore trip. Loads of fun for everyone! Please contact Donna at 717/865-0163 for more information.



FROM THE PULPIT IN OCTOBER

October 2 (Pentecost+17)

"Increase Our Faith"

Rev. Greer preaching

To prepare, please read:

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10

October 9 (Pentecost+18)

"Your Faith Has Made You Well"

Rev. Greer preaching

To prepare, please read:

2 King 5:1-3, 7-15 & Luke 17:11-19

October 16 (Pentecost+19)

Rev. Keith Miller, guest preacher

October 23 (Pentecost+20)

Rev. Keith Tussing, guest preacher

October 30 (Pentecost+21, Reformation Sunday)

"When Lightning Strikes"

Rev. Greer preaching

To prepare, please read:

Acts 9:1-19

**** Please note: Bruce will be on vacation October 14-23 ****