

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 2023

Volume 42, Issue 10

editor: Lee Ann Kurash

FROM THE PASTOR – RANDOM THOUGHTS OCTOBER, 2023

As I write, I am completing my 16th month as your Interim Pastor. These months have come and gone quickly! As of October 1st, I have eight months more with you, unless we extend a little longer after June of 2024 on an as-needed basis. Time will tell what your needs will be at that time.

My pledge to you was that we would use our two years together to seek clarity about our future. We have made steady progress so far. From interviews and research, to our Town Hall meetings (9/25/22 and 6/4/23), plus the work of the Vision Team in between, the fog about the future seems to be clearing a bit, along with viable options we might pursue.

The “Vision Team” (six folks plus me) reviewed our 9/25/22 Town Hall feedback, read a lot of materials, interviewed folks with expertise, and set emotions aside to be as clear-eyed as possible about our options. We agreed to be candid with each other and do our best to reach consensus on viable options as opposed to pushing things forward on majority votes.

At the 6/4/23 Town Hall meeting, the congregation was clearly ambivalent about the three options presented by the Vision Team: (1) stay here and share a full-time pastor with another UCC congregation (i.e., “yoking”); (2) stay here and hire a 3/4-time pastor with income augmented by increased rentals; or, (3) sell our property and move to (or merge with) the Lutheran church.

No clear option emerged in our 6/4/23 straw poll. In subsequent conversations since, yoking opportunities dissipated when two nearby UCC congregations turned down our inquiries and our own folks have been lukewarm (at best!) about selling and moving in with Friedens (as a renter, or as a merger). A new Myerstown church interested in renting major space from us fell through.

It seems that our own folks are somewhere on Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross’s five stages/phases of grief: (1) denial; (2) bargaining; (3) anger; (4) depression; and (5) acceptance. After three cottage meetings so far (21 attending), we have folks clearly in phases 4 and 5: depression and acceptance. They are sad, but realize that closing the church may be necessary.

On the other hand, we have a minority of folks clustering around phases 1 and 2, denial and bargaining. Let’s find a pastor and go for it before we quit, said one person. Let’s dig deep into our endowment to fund an entrepreneurial pastor, full-time, to do a “restart” of our church, said another. Let’s augment our rental income and keep going, says another. Others say it’s time to close.

This is why your attendance at the Annual Meeting on November 19th after worship is critically important. If you have plans, please alter or change them unless you absolutely cannot. This will not be a “business as usual” year, i.e., receive reports, vote on the budget, elect folks, go home. **NO! It will be much more than that.** We may need you to vote on important next steps.

(see next page)

Because our business may not be routine, we might need a Town Hall open forum on November 12th to present options and answer questions. “What options?” you ask. They could include selling our property; or seeking a major renter; and/or getting your blessing to retain a realtor. Meanwhile, we will receive a major research report on our cemetery ownership, which is legally unclear.

There is a lot going on behind the scenes, and a lot coming your way soon! So, dear friends, stay tuned!!!! Meanwhile, pray for God’s guidance and grace. + Blessings, Bruce Greer, Interim Pastor

P.S. from Bruce – The Vison Team is no longer meeting. They completed their service with the 6/4/23 Town Hall and debriefing meeting with Council afterward. Members of the Team are serving as hosts, conveners, and/or scribes at the cottage meetings. They have been trained on how to use “focus group interview research” techniques in our cottage meetings to avoid skewing the group’s answers. (BG)

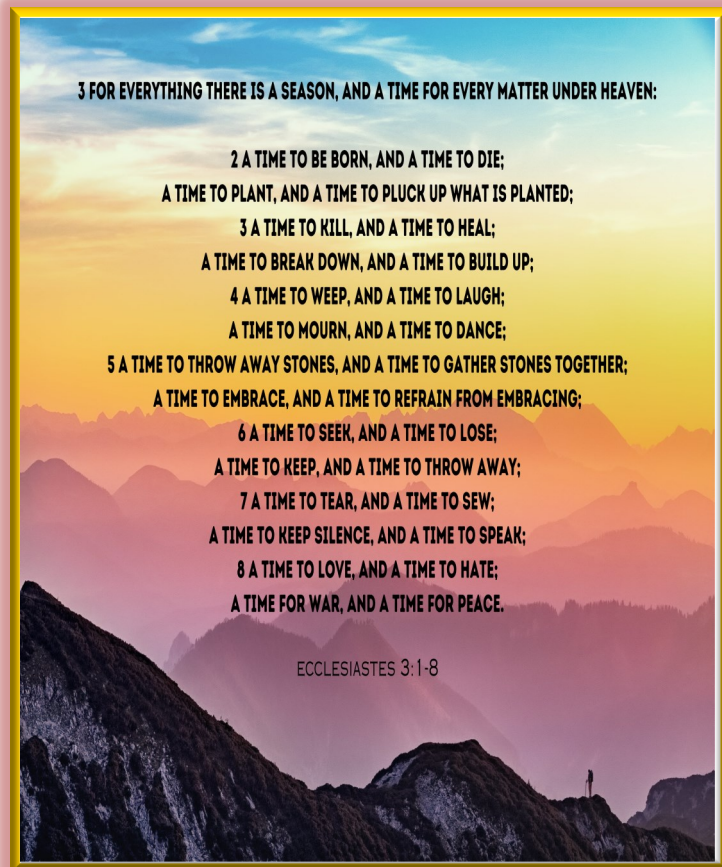
If you have not signed up for a Cottage Meeting, please do so ASAP.

Meetings will be offered on Sundays after worship, and weekdays (day and evening). Our goal is a minimum of 40 participants (50 would be great!).

Another P.S. from Bruce – Disaster relief. I wanted to write about that this month but decided the above topic was more important for our immediate needs. For now, I recommend that you will build disaster relief into your 2024 household budget. There are so many natural disasters right now, so it’s best to be prepared to give on a regular basis. More later. (BG)



Get outside and enjoy this fall season and cooler weather. Go to Seyfert’s or Duncan’s corn maze, pick some apples at Sycamore Spring Orchard and make applesauce, go on a hike, take a hayride to a pumpkin patch, visit Longwood Gardens and their Chrysanthemum festival. Autumn weekends are always so busy but make time to do something special this season. And thank God for the beauty of this season...the brilliant colors all around us, the wonderful cool-weather sunsets. You don’t have to look far, His beauty is evident everywhere !



Lebanon County Christian Ministries

October Wish List

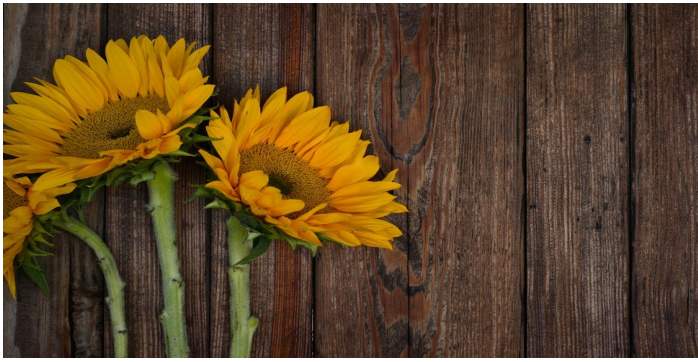
We are in dire need of the following personal care items

~ toilet paper

Please give as you can! There is a large box in the Gathering Area for your donations, or you may drop them off at the office. Any questions, please see Carolyn Williams.

Thank you all who donated toilet paper to LCCM. It was immediately placed on the shelf and quickly disappeared even though our shoppers are limited to the number of rolls so more can be served. We will continue to put this need in the Vineyard since it is a “biggie” for the Pantry. Since we don’t have many mission projects now this is a way we can meet a local need and it is an item we can all relate to. Again, thank you, thank you!

Carolyn



Happy Birthday! OCTOBER

- 1—Brittany Hartman
- 3—Lee Smith
- 4—Lois Werner
- 8—Marianne Boltz
- 9—Louise 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



FROM THE PULPIT IN OCTOBER 2023

PENTECOST 18 – October 1

“It’s Not About Us!”

Exodus 17:1-7; Philippians 2:1-13;
Matthew 21:23-32

PENTECOST 19 – October 8

“And of You, I Will Make a Great Nation”

Exodus 20:1-18; 32:1-14
Rev. Greer preaching

PENTECOST 20 – October 15

“Think About These Things”

Philippians 4:1-9
Rev. Greer preaching

PENTECOST 21 – October 22

“Temple Talk”

Matthew 21:1—24:2 for context;
the focus is on 22:15-22
Rev. Greer preaching

PENTECOST 22 – October 29

“Summing Up”

Matthew 22:34-46
Rev. Greer preaching

Bruce’s Contact information:

Email: revbgreer@gmail.com
Cell: 617.599.6305
(calls, texts, 24/7)



Thank you...

9/23/2023

I wrote a letter of complaint when Mt. Hope Cemetery was looking so bad and neglected. I thought a note was due now to express my appreciation to the church for correcting the cemetery problems.

Whoever is now doing the maintenance is doing a good job. The grass is being mowed regularly and the headstones are being trimmed around.

The paving of the long lane winding down the hill is fantastic...so needed and appreciated!

Thank you for the upgrades and care of the cemetery.

Nancy Deiter



A Prayer for Autumn

O God of Creation, you have blessed us with the changing of the seasons.

As we welcome the autumn months, may the earlier setting of the sun remind us to take time to rest.

May the brilliant colors of the leaves remind us of the wonder of your creation.

May the steam of our breath in the cool air remind us that it is you who give us the breath of life.

May the harvest from the fields remind us of the abundance we have been given and bounty we are to share with others.

May the dying of summer's spirit remind us of your great promise that death is temporary and life is eternal. We praise you for your goodness forever and ever.

- Author Unknown (from Xavier.edu website)



If you've never been, this is a wonderful way to celebrate the fall season.

**The National Apple Harvest Festival
October 7-8 & 14-15, 2023
at South Mountain Fairgrounds in
Biglerville, PA**

Located in the heart of Pennsylvania Apple country, The National Apple Harvest Festival celebrates the fall season with beautiful handmade crafts, delicious food, and jam-packed entertainment.

The Festival has something for everyone with special attractions ranging from steam engine displays, live music, antique cars, orchard tours, pony rides, tastings, craftsman demonstrations ... and so much more!



***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>



Important Dates!

Sunday, October 1—World Communion Day

Monday, October 2—Myerstown Women's Club Meeting in the social hall at 7:00 pm

Sunday, October 8—Fall Festival with the Uptown Band at Bethany Children's Home 1:00 pm \$5 per car.

Sunday, October 8—Gospel Concert to benefit the Sharing Cupboard at Myerstown CoB 3:00 pm free admission

Monday, October 9—Columbus Day
Indigenous Peoples' Day

Tuesday, October 17—Council meeting 6:30 pm in the library. (pushed back a week due to vacations)

Tuesday, October 31st—**Halloween**