

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.*



September 2023

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editor: Lee Ann Kurash

FROM THE PASTOR—SEPTEMBER 2023

Six Questions for You

We are 15 months into our interim ministry journey together. Hard to believe! Since July 2022, we have covered a lot of ground, as indicated by the Vineyard's "From the Pastor" articles since then. Aside from seasonal articles for Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter, we have looked at 500 years of change in Christianity and religious trends in North America over the past 50 years.

We asked the question "Who and What is Our Competition?" and discovered that our primary competition is cultural change, not other churches. Last October I offered my thanks to all of you for your interest and participation in the September 25th Town Hall meeting. We shared a lot of data and resolved to form a Vision Team to follow-up on our findings.

Last November, we talked about the importance of taking Jesus into the voting booth. After the holidays, we reflected with Emily Frantz on the question, "Why do you attend Myerstown UCC?" We will never know your answers because only one person volunteered to be interviewed on video for the website. A fine idea on Emily's part; a missed opportunity on our part.

Last May, we found ourselves asking "What's next?" in preparation for our June 4th Town Hall meeting. The Vision Team was completing its research and was prepared to offer several options for going forward. In June's article, "A Season for Everything," I asked: "Is it time to close, merge, and pay-it-forward with our assets in order to support new ministries beyond our own?"

Last month, I reflected on why high-speed rail is thriving around the world, but not here. I asked what the Church needs to do to get it right going forward. Simply this: Be bold. Don't hold back! Countries with successful high-speed rail did not hold back. They replaced aged and archaic rail systems, and did so boldly. Shouldn't we also replace aged and archaic ways of doing Church?

After a nice summer break – time to relax, travel, enjoy loved ones, or just stay cool – we are ready to hit the road again with the discernment and decision-making process. The time has come to pick up where we left off in June; to look once again at our options as a congregation and to seek the best evidence and the Spirit's guidance for going forward.

We will start with six questions for small group discussion over the next two months.

1. How are you feeling about the direction our church seems to be heading?
2. What about our church makes you feel most hopeful right now?
3. What is your greatest concern or fear with regard to our church?
4. What questions remain for you that are still unanswered?
5. If we close and sell our property, where do you see yourself worshipping?
6. What other questions or concerns do you have right now?

(see next page)

You will hear much more about “cottage groups” scheduled for September and October, groups of about six people, convened in homes, led by a trained facilitator, assisted by a “scribe” who will record the main themes of these conversations (no names!). We encourage everyone to participate! Feedback from these groups will be shared with the congregation prior to the Annual Meeting. Meanwhile, pray and be of good cheer!

+ Blessings, Bruce Greer



Julius Muthengi *Mission Moment*

Dear Ministry Partners,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I trust this e-mail finds you well. Agnes and I together with our family are fine in the Lord, in spite of challenges. Let me say that between November, 2022 and July, 2023, we lost five close family members. Most recently, we lost my maternal cousin the late Pauline, who was buried yesterday. However, we praise God for his amazing grace which has prevailed in the midst of difficulties.

We thank you for standing on the gap, and being there for us as we serve God here in Kenya, and beyond. God has continued to bless his ministry both in the village and also at International Leadership University, for which we are grateful. On Friday, 28th July, 2023, Agnes had a great time with over forty women at our village compound. She shared God's word with the ladies, as well as preparing some food for them to eat. A always, she also gave them small packets of corn flour to take home. It was a great moment as our two grand daughters and a grand son were given the privilege of giving the foodstuffs to the women. I am sending you images of the occasion for you to see how joyful the ladies were, as they sang songs to our God.

As I have shared many times with you beloved, in addition to teaching and students mentoring, on of my passions for years is that of research and publishing. Back in 2015, God enabled me to publish a book on the title, " Old Testament Examples On The Providence Of God and Its Implications For Africa." In the last two years, I have been working on the second edition of the book. I have added four other examples, namely, Jeremiah, Josiah, Nebuchadnezzar and Nehemiah. The work is now complete, and the printing will be done in the next week or so. Thank you for your prayers and financial support through which we continue to serve God, by impacting others (students, scholars, families in our village, etc). May God bless you immensely.

Your friends in Christ,

Julius and Agnes

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR *FIRST* OPEN FORUM:

Sunday, September 17th after worship at 10:30 am/location tbd

Rev. Rick Luciotti Open Forum

What challenges are now facing UCC churches and the Conference?

What about clergy shortages?

How are local churches responding?

These and other topics will be discussed. (light refreshments served)



Pictures of Agnes and the ladies from their village



Happy Birthday!

SEPTEMBER

- 1—Shirley Krall
Judith Stohler
- 5—Stella Driscoll
- 8—Kathy Kale
- 9—Karen Line
- 11—Greg Beamesderfer
Ryan Leppo
- 12—Marlene Bowman
- 15—Mark Herr
- 17—Bonita Beamesderfer
Loretta Weaver
- 19- Larry Rabold
- 21—Jessica Behm
- 23—Patrick Yeager
- 26—Ronald Houtz
- 27—Jane Fuhrman,
Jacqueline Kulp
- 28—Derek Behm

ADULT BIBLE STUDY

The Adult Bible Study will begin its fall session on September 10th. This discussion-style class which is led by Jim Diehm, Marie Hibshman, and Charlee Redick meets after worship for about 45 minutes. The Upper Room will be used as the background for each week's lesson and the format is very informal. New participants are enthusiastically welcomed! **Marie Hibshman**

FROM THE PULPIT IN September 2023

PENTECOST 14 – September 3

“Standard of Living”

Romans 12:9-21

Rev. Greer preaching

PENTECOST 15 – September 10

“Conflict’s Constant Companion”

Matthew 18:15-20

Rev. Greer preaching

PENTECOST 16 – September 17

“Let’s Do the Math: 70x7”

Matthew 18:21-35

Rev. Greer preaching

PENTECOST 17 – September 24

“A Whale of A Tale?”

Jonah 3:10– 4:11

Rev. Greer preaching

Bruce’s Contact information:

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Cell: 617.599.6305

(calls, texts, 24/7)

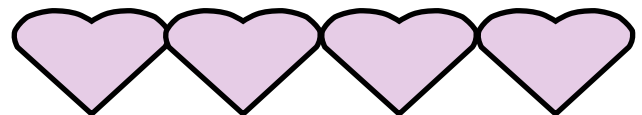


Thank you...

Dear Rev. Bruce, Lee Ann, Marie and everyone else involved in our mom’s celebration of life. We thank you so much for all of your help, sympathy, love and more in making all the preparations and doing the service—it helped so much and the service was lovely! Mom would have been so happy!

Sincerely,

Nancy Perrotti & Joanne’s (Ondrusek) family



Lebanon County Christian Ministries September 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.

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

LCCM Upcoming fundraising event

Five Loaves 5K

Join us for our first annual FIVE LOAVES 5K and 1 Mile Fun Walk. This years FIVE LOAVES 5k and FUN WALK will be held on September 9th, 2023. Enter the park on the Lincoln Avenue side and find us at the pavilion near the bathrooms.



The run/walk will be held on the South Hills trails and will start at 8 a.m. The event will be an amateur-timed event. This is a fun event that is being held to **raise some dough** for LCCM and our programs.



MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2023 IS LABOR DAY

It is a time to honor and recognize the American labor movement and the works and contributions of laborers to the development and achievements of the United States. (Wikipedia)
Enjoy your long weekend! Celebrate with a picnic or get-together with friends and family.



**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!

Tuesday, September 5th 7:00pm in the social hall
- Myerstown Women's Club meeting

Saturday, September 16th 4:00–7:00 pm
- Troop 20 Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser, take-out Only

****Sunday, September 17th after worship 10:30 am**
- Rev. Rick Luciotti Open Forum/location tbd
What challenges are now facing UCC churches and the Conference? What about clergy shortages? How are local churches responding? These and other topics will be discussed. (light refreshments served)

Tuesday, September 19th 6:30 pm in the Library
- Council meeting (moved back a week due to conflicting schedules)

Music to my ears...

The Four Seasons

Antonio Vivaldi is a genius and truly stands out as the most creative among the host of composers who brought Italian Baroque style to its zenith. His works ooze the perfection of the 17th century Italian opera and concerto formats.

Vivaldi's 'The Four Seasons,' or 'Le quattro stagioni' is a set of four concertos. The generalized views suggest concertos as a conversation between—a solo instrument or multiple solo instruments and a wider ensemble. Antonio utilized the violin as the sole instrument in 'The Four Seasons.'

A timeless masterpiece, the concerti were first introduced in 1725. It was Vivaldi's 8th opus among a set of 12. He named it 'The Contest of Harmony and Invention,' Apart from harboring inspiration from the seasons, the concertos were influenced by a set of four sonnets crafted about summer, winter, autumn and spring. The name of the originator of these sonnets remain questionable, although most historians credit Vivaldi for them. 'The Four Seasons' in particular, exemplified the typical concerto form.

A typical concerto consists of three movements—a slow middle movement contrasting the lively first and third. Each sonnet (in this case each season) can be divided into three sections, each corresponding to a movement.

Fast-forwarding half a century, the four concertos can now be safely considered as the single greatest sensation of classical music. The most eminent violinists have recorded it more than a hundred times. They have been featured multiple times in TV commercials and Hollywood movies. From credit cards to cars, to billboards, elevators to hotel lobbies, and even to mobile phone ringtones, their popularity continues to soar.

At a basic level, 'The Four Seasons' is extraordinarily authentic, an association with profound elegance and luxury. It is full of glistening and brilliant sonorities, ingenious innovations with vivid solo lines capturing the essence of nature. The most important factor that renders its popularity is the fact that it incorporates the basic human elements—the passage of time, the cycle of years and nature. The program incorporates seasonal images and sounds spectacular. Each season offers a 'point of departure' for a diverse

range of metaphors. Vivaldi's 'The Four Seasons,' sits at the very pinnacle of classical music alongside Beethoven's 'Fifth Symphony.'



Excerpt and photo from 'Story Behind The Four Seasons by Vivaldi' at Galaxy Music Notes.com





We wish all our teachers a great beginning to this new school year. May you be blessed and have hope and strength as you adjust to your new schedules and students.

Loving God, watch over our children as they begin their new school year. Bless them with joy at seeing friends, excitement at new experiences, and a love of learning.

Guide and protect all who learn, replacing fear with joy, anxiety with peace, and tiredness with energy. Give wisdom, patience, and joy to teachers as they serve their students.

In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.



A BACK-TO-SCHOOL PRAYER

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