

# 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.



July 2023

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editor: Lee Ann Kurash

*from the Interim Pastor..*

## *“Now What”*

Thank you for your interest and participation in our “Town Hall Meeting” (open forum) on June 4<sup>th</sup>. About 45 attended and listened attentively to the Vision Team’s presentation, asking thoughtful questions afterward. The straw poll provided more clarity as to what options we might pursue.

The first poll question revealed that we are an ambivalent congregation. 22 voted to sell our property and merge to create a stronger church in the community. On the other hand, 21 voted to stay in our facilities and rent space to augment our income. Both are promising and problematic!

The second poll question ranked preferences from six options: (1) STAY in our facilities/status quo; (2) STAY/pursue a “yoked” pastorate; (3) STAY/increase rentals to fund a pastor; (4) STAY/rent to a growing church; (5) SELL property/move to Friedens Lutheran; (6) SELL/buy or build smaller.

The top first rankings were “SELL/move to Friedens” (n=19) and “STAY/Yoked pastorate with another church” (n=14). The least popular were, by far: “STAY/status quo” and “SELL/build or buy a smaller facility.” By consensus on June 6, the Council struck the least preferred options off the list.

The Vision Team recommended Options 5, 2, and 3 in that order (see 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph). Approaching Friedens Lutheran Church about moving in/merging was a “soft” consensus among Vision Team members (4=yes, 2=maybe). Our Council sees the wisdom of it, but has many questions.

While the Vision Team is sympathetic to staying in our facilities, the feasibility of it is questionable at best. Budget models revealed that funding a full-time pastor would require increasing rental income fourfold; i.e., rentals to non-profit organizations and/or churches renting space at market rates. That includes “yoking” (sharing a pastor), but not merging, with another area church.

While staying in our facilities maintains our identity, it does not solve such challenges as: (1) the ongoing expense of maintaining so much property; (2) the lack of lay leadership to manage it; (3) the rapidly declining giving base (from 148 “giving units” to 59 in just five years). Adding non-profit tenants adds management and maintenance costs, including the need to hire a property manager.

Meanwhile, we will not approach to Friedens Lutheran Church (if at all) until they call a pastor, per agreement with their Interim Pastor, Kurt Strause. Their Synod and a few lay leaders have been advised of the possibility. At best, their new pastor will not start until December/January.

No formal action will take place without an authorizing vote of the church. For now, exploring our options will continue. Meanwhile, we plan to schedule small groups and open forums for further presentations, questions, and discussion. (Stay tuned! More on this coming soon.)

For now, we need open minds and hearts, honesty and patience. Thousands of congregations nationwide, across denominations, now face similar issues. More churches in the USA close than open. Many are merging or pursuing creative alternatives. None of this is easy; but all is not lost!

We also need to be at our creative and courageous best as opposed being risk-averse and change-resistant. Because we are committed to our best stewardship and process, we will take our time. While there is no rush, we dare not put this off for someone else in the future.

Every generation of Christians faced challenges, divisive to difficult, daunting to deadly. Yet, the Christian movement survived. With all his apostolic struggles and personal suffering, Saint Paul was no exception. Appealing for the Lord's help, he once received this Word: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9a).

Paul then adds: "So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9b-10).

Yes, we are weak in number but strong in Christ. Yes, we face hardships as post-World War II religious prosperity disappears but maintain our faith in the living Christ. Yes, we face the insult of unethical churches but maintain our hope because we are committed to integrity in Christ.

So, Keep the Faith! The grace and truth of Christ are sufficient for us. The power of Christ dwells in us. The Spirit guides and encourages us. The Communion of Saints surrounds us. What more do we need! A few big changes? No problem for people of faith! Do I hear an "Amen?"

+ Pentecost Blessings to all, Bruce Greer, Interim Pastor



## FROM THE PULPIT IN JULY 2023

PENTECOST 5 – JULY 2  
*"Small Gestures; Big Rewards"*  
Matthew 10:40-42  
Rev. Greer

PENTECOST 6 – JULY 9  
Guest preacher: Rev. Keith Tussing

PENTECOST 7 – JULY 16  
*"Mind Your Seeds"*  
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23  
Rev. Greer

PENTECOST 8 – July 23  
*"Mind Your Weeds"*  
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43  
Rev. Greer

PENTECOST 9 – July 30  
Guest preacher: Rev. Keith Tussing



## REV. GREER'S SCHEDULE

Rev. Greer will be on vacation  
the week of July 6th thru 13th.

He will work from home prior to  
vacation, the week of July 2nd.

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](mailto:revbgreer@gmail.com)

Cell: 617.599.6305

(calls, texts, 24/7)





## JULY

3—Porter Linn

Carol Woynarowski

4—Camilla Zimmerman

6—Brett Bohannon

20—Scott Bennetch

23—Russell Miller

27—Joyce Bahney

Terence Wolfe

28—Jacob Blystone

Michael Hartman

29- Jacqueline Shaak

Mary Smith



### **Thank you...**

Dear Members of Myerstown UCC,

Penn Central Conference has recently notified us of your gift of \$1,000, which was placed into our Benevolent Fund. Your generosity will touch the lives of real people and enhance our mission to provide compassionate care and services.

Victoria M. Velez

Dir. Of Public Relations

and Fund Development of United Ch. Of Christ Homes

A big **Thank You** to *Kathy Grose and Marie Hibshman* for donating a new refrigerator for the social hall kitchen.

### Thoughts from our Council President —

As I think back over our June 4 meeting, I wish we had talked more about our need for more lay leadership. We have a multitude of unfilled positions. We have no Vice-President. We have only three Council members instead of the six required by our by-laws. Right now Pastor Greer supervises our staff but we could really benefit from having someone chair the Personnel Committee to organize job descriptions and conduct job reviews under his leadership. Our by-laws specify an Endowment Committee to be appointed by Council to over-see our investments. Currently Council members are also Endowment Committee members. As we are faced with more and more serious financial decisions, we really need someone to chair and organize a separate committee. We always need help on the Property Committee. A Worship Committee could help support our worship by recruiting people to set up and serve communion, or perhaps find someone to occasionally read scripture. We must seriously investigate our options on dealing with our cemetery obligations. If we stay in our current building with a part-time pastor, lay members will need to take on even more responsibilities. If you voted to stay, please help make this a realistic option by accepting a leadership position.

**Marie Hibshman**

### *Happy Independence Day*

*July 4th, 2023*

A time to celebrate our country and the freedoms on which it was founded!



# Lebanon County Christian Ministries

## July Wish List

**We are in dire need of the following personal care items**

- ~ size 5, 6 and 7 diapers
- ~ men's & women's deodorant
- ~ bar soap
- ~ liquid dish soap
- ~ paper towels
- ~ alcohol-free mouthwash
- ~ shampoo, conditioner
- ~ disposable razors
- ~ feminine hygiene products
- ~ Junior's toothbrushes
- ~ toilet paper
- ~ tissues
- ~ laundry detergent
- ~ dish detergent
- ~ shaving cream
- ~ body wash

## Current Wish List

- ~ instant brown rice and whole grain blends
- ~ 24 oz jar/cans tomato sauce
- ~ soups—Chunky/Progresso low-sodium soup (ready made—no water added)
- ~ Bisquick (Heart Smart)
- ~ olive oil ~salad dressing
- ~ coffee ~ whole grain pasta
- ~ ketchup, mustard, mayo
- ~ flour & sugar (2 lb. boxes or bags)

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

## More News from LCCM!

Visit Lebanon Valley is teaming up with local businesses to create **The World's Largest Lebanon Bologna Sandwich** at the **Lebanon Area Fair**. Taking place from 5-7pm on Tuesday, July 25, 2023, it's going to be 'the event of the summer'! With great taste and an even greater impact, the sandwich will not only break records but also help fight hunger in the Lebanon Valley through our friends at the **Lebanon County Christian Ministries (LCCM)**. Featuring Lebanon Bologna from **Seltzer's Smokehouse Meats**, the sandwich will be assembled and unveiled during the Fair's Community Night. All fairgoers are encouraged to watch the build and even enjoy a free slice of the completed sandwich along with plenty of toppings from the accompanying fixin's bar.

**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 July 3rd. Lee Ann will be in the office Wednesday and Thursday July 5th and 6th from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Someone will be checking voicemail periodically. If there is an urgent need, please contact Bruce at 617/599-6305.

**Visit the Lebanon Area Fair**

**July 22—29, 2023**

**carnival rides, track events & live entertainment**

for more information visit:

**[lebanonareafair.com](http://lebanonareafair.com)**

## Music to my ears...

### History of 'The Star-Spangled Banner' The War of 1812

Often referred to as the "Second War of Independence," the conflict inspired a fresh wave of patriotism in a generation too young to remember the Revolution. When Key declared that "our flag was still there," he fused the physical symbol of the nation with universal feelings of patriotism, courage, and resilience. By giving the flag a starring role in one of the most celebrated victories of the war, Francis Scott Key's song established a new prominence for the flag as an expression of national identity, unity, and pride. And by giving it a name—that Star-Banner—Key transformed the official emblem into something familiar and evocative, a symbol that Americans could connect with and claim as their own. The flag was no longer just an emblem of the nation; it became a representation of the country's values and the ideals for which it stands.

In the years since 1814, in times of celebration and crisis, pride and protest, people have raised the flag to express their ideas about what it means to be American.

### The Flag

In the summer of 1813, Mary Pickersgill (1776–1857) was contracted to sew two flags for Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland. The one that became the Star-Spangled Banner was a 30 x 42-foot garrison flag; the other was a 17 x 25-foot storm flag for use in inclement weather. Pickersgill, a thirty-seven-year-old widow, was an experienced maker of ships' colors and signal flags. She filled orders for many of the military and merchant ships that sailed into Baltimore's busy port.

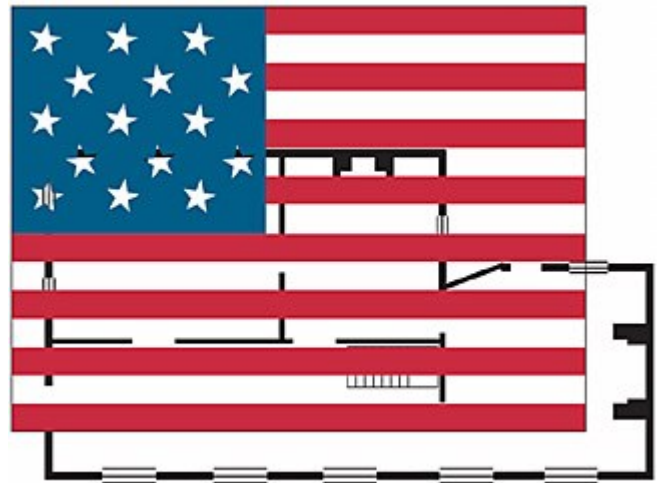
Pickersgill and her assistants spent about seven weeks making the two flags. They assembled the blue canton and the red and white stripes of the flag by piecing together strips of loosely woven English wool bunting that were only 12 or 18 inches wide.

### The Lyrics

Francis Scott Key was a gifted amateur poet. Inspired by the sight of the American flag flying over Fort McHenry the morning after the bombardment, he scribbled the initial verse of his song on the back of a letter. Back in Baltimore, he completed the four verses and copied them onto a sheet of paper, prob-

ably making more than one copy. A local printer issued the new song as a broadside. Shortly afterward, two Baltimore newspapers published it, and by mid-October it had appeared in at least seventeen other papers in cities up and down the East Coast.

*O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last  
gleaming;  
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the  
perilous fight  
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly  
streaming?  
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in  
air,  
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still  
there,  
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free and the home of the  
brave?*



### Floorplan of Mary Pickersgill's house.

The huge 30 by 42-foot flag overwhelmed the cramped rooms of Pickersgill's house. She moved the operation across the street to the more spacious Claggett's brewery. There they assembled the pieces of the flag and placed fifteen cotton stars on the blue canton.

excerpt from Smithsonian website

<https://amhistory.si.edu/>

[starspangledbanner/making-the-flag.aspx](https://amhistory.si.edu/starspangledbanner/making-the-flag.aspx)