

The Vineyard

A publication of

Myerstown United Church of Christ

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Paul's Epistle

This month looks to be an opportunity for us to do a couple things that are important to the ongoing life and health of our Congregation.

In every conversation I have had recently, with Pastoral groups around the nation, the question of what will happen “after the pandemic” comes up. Will people return, will our Worship and Community life be the same?

These would be difficult questions if this happened any time, but the concerns are exacerbated by the realities of the past decades. Amanda Marcotte (senior politics writer for Salon) writes: “Americans are losing their religion. Over the past 22 years the number of Americans who say they belong to a church, synagogue or mosque has fallen to 47 percent—down from 70 percent in 1999.” Considering that even in 1999, Religious Institutions had experienced

significant declines from previous decades, the increase in the pace of decline and influence is startling. When we add the reality that we are a congregation that has experienced serious decline in just the last decade, it can create quite justified concern for us.

Although it would be understandable if we were to throw up our hands and give up on the prospects of a return to vitality against such overwhelming odds, that is not the way of God. The Israelites suffering under slavery in Egypt had no reasonable chance to escape, yet with God, it happened. Paul, an enemy of the early Christians, devoted to their destruction, could never become the greatest evangelist the Church has seen, and yet, with God, it happened. Little David could never defeat the giant Goliath, wrest the crown from Saul nor overcome his personal demons to become a leader guided by honor, and yet, with God, he did.

This month we will be focused on the words Jesus spoke as recorded in

Pastoral Emergencies

In the event of an **emergency requiring pastoral support**, please contact Pastor Paul directly by phone [610.217.9717] or email [muccpastor@comcast.net].

John's Gospel, reminding us what it means to be the "Body of Christ" in the world, along with advice from John about surviving and thriving as the Church in difficult times. We will also be looking how God inspires and revives the people of God at Pentecost and in the Valley of Dry Bones. Finally, we will consider what that might cost us by hearing what it cost Isaiah and Nicodemus.

Many UCC Churches open or close with a call that speaks our Truth: "God is good, all the time, all the time, God is good!" As we gather for Worship, may we be reminded of that eternal truth, and share it in the sacredness of our daily lives.

In Joy and in Peace,

Pastor Paul



Support for Julius Muthengi's Ministry

In last month's Vineyard we printed a letter from Julius Muthengi which described the need for help with providing

electricity to run a water pump. Recognizing that help was needed immediately, Council voted to send \$500 from our Hope Fund. Part of the reply we got - "Thank you so much for your partnership with us in God's ministry here in Kenya. As you are aware, sometime back, we wrote to you regarding the need to have solar power installed so that we could continue providing fresh water to our

community. Indeed, in the last couple of months we have faced insurmountable challenges due to inability to pump the much-needed water! Yes, we got some funds towards this project but not enough to meet the amount needed for the project. We praise God that he led you to come to our rescue. . . Thank you so much for your donation of \$500."

We have since received word that the needed money was obtained and the project is under way! But costs of maintaining the pump and solar panels continue, so throughout May we will be accepting contributions to support the Muthengi's ministry. If you use offering envelopes, note your donation on the "Special" line. If you give through Givelify, choose "Julius Muthengi Ministry."

Many already know the story of our connection to the Muthengis, but if you are interested in some background ——read on!

Rev. Julius Muthengi and his wife Agnes first came to Myerstown in 1978 to attend and graduate from the EC Theological Seminary. Julius is now a professor at International Leadership University in Nairobi, Kenya, educating Christian leaders for ministries in Africa, and he and Agnes maintain an active ministry to a village about 35 miles outside the city.

Julius has come back to the US a number of times to speak at churches and gain financial support. In fact, he was scheduled to speak here last summer but his trip was canceled due to Covid. He has used this support to provide solar lamps, food for the villagers, school fees and uniforms for needy children, and to arrange for medical care from volunteer doctors who provide

free checkups for people. Several years ago we contributed money for solar lamps, which cost about \$40 each and provide light for up to 8 hours a day. Most families have no electricity, and kerosene costs \$3-\$4 a week. The average salary is about \$1 per day.

In 2015, we, along with other churches, donated money to help dig a well in Julius's village of Kalima Kathei, which has a population of over 2,000, with approximately 250-300 households. Most residents there depend on subsistence farming for their livelihood. They experience frequent crop failure due to the hot, dry climate. Before the well was dug, the community lacked adequate water sources. They had to use an unsanitary watering hole on private land that was used by both humans and animals. During the dry season, the hole would dry up and people had to pay for water.

Agnes travels to the village a few days each week, where she leads a Christian Women's Fellowship Group, providing the ladies with a full meal at each meeting and sending snacks home to the children. With donations from churches, she has also provided Bibles in the local language, packages of food several times a year, over-the-counter medicines as needed, small loans, and small grants for health care needs. Julius returns to the village at least once or twice a month for his Men's Ministry. Providing Julius and Agnes with financial support is a great way to spread the Good News of Christ's love.



"Balloons"
photo by
CottonBro on
Pexels.com.

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|----|------------------|
| 2 | Carl Gettle | 20 | Matthew Berger |
| 3 | Stephen Wagner | 20 | Dawn Hassler |
| 5 | Stella Behm | 20 | Larry Hibshman |
| 6 | Chad Hackman | 23 | Bohdan Adams |
| 9 | Gifford Krause | 23 | Catherine Ryland |
| 11 | Brenda Baum | 24 | David Wuori |
| 11 | Andrew Fields | 24 | Brian Zeller |
| 11 | Suzanne 'Suzie' Schott | 27 | Delaney Houtz |
| 13 | Jeremiah Zimmerman | 27 | Sheree Nordall |
| 14 | Mark Wartluft | 27 | David Risser |
| 15 | Priscilla Kahl | 28 | Emma N Behm |
| 15 | Beckett Zimmerman | 28 | Warren Bennetch |

"Flower Petals"
photo by
Karolina
Grabows on
Pexels.com

NOTE: If your name is missing, please contact the church office and provide the month, day and year.

Shhh! We won't tell anyone the year. Honest!



HERSHEYPARK



VOLUNTEERING AT HERSHEY PARK

Are you interested in being a Hersheypark volunteer for our church?

For each shift you work (usually 3-5 hours long), you get a 1-day pass to the park, including free parking. Occasionally, 2 or 3 passes are offered for a shift. This is great to use for yourself or to give to family members. In addition, our church gets \$6 for every hour you work.

The areas where we volunteer are 1) Food and Beverages in Hersheypark and in the Giant Center, 2) Games, 3) Attractions (Rides), and 4) Ushering at Giant Center and Hersheypark Stadium.

If you are interested in being put on the volunteer list, please E-mail Candy Hibshman at: ehibshman1@comcast.net with your name, phone number, and E-mail address. She will E-mail you whenever she gets a request from Hershey for volunteers. If you are interested in working a shift, CALL her at (717) 468-3563. She will contact Hershey. You may not contact them yourself. Candy will get back to you to let you know if you are scheduled.

Questions: You know who to call!

RaiseRight can be an instruction in court for a witness. In this instance, it is an informational logo for the company who provides our gift cards—Shop With Scrip.

They have an app that can be downloaded to your phone or tablet. With the app, you can order gifts cards without having to bring the order form to the church.

The RaiseRight app is a new way to order gift cards. Gift card orders can be made in the same way as before. If you would like more information about the app, please contact the church office.

RaiseRight

by ShopWithScrip



Order
Father's Day
gift cards
in May.

Worship in May

May 2: Communion Sunday

In Person Worship & Live stream 9:00 am

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Sermon: Vine & Branches

**Scripture: 1 John 4:7-21
John 15:1-8**

May 9:

**Mother's Day
Sunday**

*In Person Worship
& Live stream*
9:00 am

**Sermon:
Like a Mother
Hen**

**Scripture:
1 John 5:1-6
John 15:9-17**

May 16: Mental Health Sunday
In Person Worship & Live stream

Sermon: Community Health
**Scripture: 1 John 5:9-13
John 17:6-19**

9:00 am

Background photo, "Easter bright" by Dawn Hudson on Public Domain Pictures



May 23: Pentecost Sunday

In Person Worship & Live stream 9:00 am

Sermon: Dry Bones Live!

**Scripture: Exekiel 37:1-14
Acts 2:1-21**

"Pentecost dove" photo by Gerd Altmann on Pixabay.

May 30: Memorial Day Sunday
In Person Worship & Live stream
9:00 am

Sermon: Cost of the Call
**Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-8
John 3:1-17**



Lebanon County map courtesy of Ed McClelland on usgwarchives.net

Address Updates

Stella Heim: Juniper Village, 101 Hearthstone Ln Rm
305, Lebanon PA 17042-9123

Joanne Ondrusek: UCC Homes, 550 E Main St, Annville
PA 17003-1511. Phone: 717.867.7070

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|---------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| 1 Acts 15: 1-21 | Joshua 23-24 | Job 32 |
| 2 Acts 15:22-41 | Judges 1 | Job 33 |
| 3 Acts 16:1-15 | Judges 2-3 | Job 34 |
| 4 Acts 16:16-40 | Judges 4-5 | Job 35 |
| 5 Acts 17:1-15 | Judges 6 | Job 36 |
| 6 Acts 17:16-34 | Judges 7-8 | Job 37 |
| 7 Acts 18 | Judges 9 | Job 38 |
| 8 Acts 19:1-20 | Judges 10:1-11:33 | Job 39 |
| 9 Acts 19:21-41 | Judges 11:34-12:15 | Job 40 |
| 10 Acts 20:1-16 | Judges 13 | Job 41 |
| 11 Acts 20:17-34 | Judges 14-15 | Job 42 |
| 12 Acts 21:1-36 | Judges 16 | Psalms 42 |
| 13 Acts 21:37-22:29 | Judges 17-18 | Psalms 43 |
| 14 Acts 22:30-23:22 | Judges 19 | Psalms 44 |
| 15 Acts 23:23-24:9 | Judges 20 | Psalms 45 |
| 16 Acts 24:10-27 | Judges 21 | Psalms 46 |
| 17 Acts 25 | Ruth 1-2 | Psalms 47 |
| 18 Acts 26:1-18 | Ruth 3-4 | Psalms 48 |
| 19 Acts 26:19-32 | 1 Samuel 1:1-2:10 | Psalms 49 |
| 20 Acts 27:1-12 | 1 Samuel 2:11-36 | Psalms 50 |
| 21 Acts 27:13-44 | 1 Samuel 3 | Psalms 51 |
| 22 Acts 28:1-16 | 1 Samuel 4-5 | Psalms 52 |
| 23 Acts 28:17-31 | 1 Samuel 6-7 | Psalms 53 |
| 24 Romans 1:1-15 | 1 Samuel 8 | Psalms 54 |
| 25 Romans 1:16-32 | 1 Samuel 9:1-10:16 | Psalms 55 |
| 26 Romans 2:1-3:8 | 1 Samuel 10:17-11:15 | Psalms 56 |
| 27 Romans 3:9-31 | 1 Samuel 12 | Psalms 57 |
| 28 Romans 4 | 1 Samuel 13 | Psalms 58 |
| 29 Romans 5 | 1 Samuel 14 | Psalms 59 |
| 30 Romans 6 | 1 Samuel 15 | Psalms 60 |
| 31 Romans 7 | 1 Samuel 16 | Psalms 61 |



Attendance & Giving



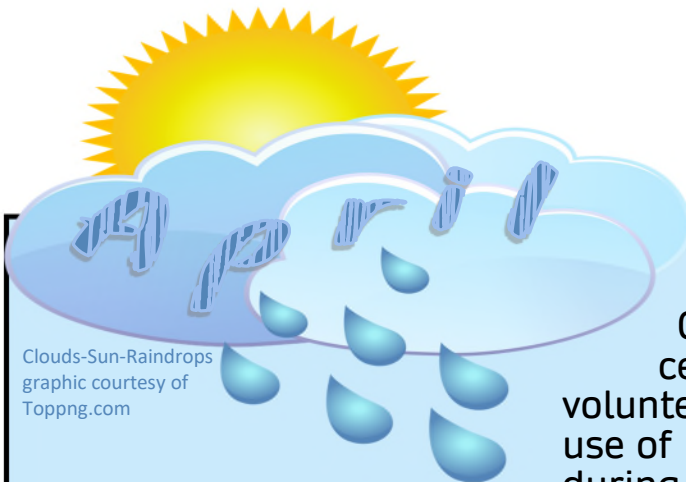
Attendance

| | LiveStream | InPerson |
|--------|------------|----------|
| 7 Mar | 33 | 24 |
| 14 Mar | 26 | 20 |
| 21 Mar | 23 | 31 |
| 28 Mar | 21 | 26 |

LiveStream is the number of households not an actual number of people

Giving

| | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| General Fund | \$18,294.00 |
| Church Improvement | \$540.00 |
| OCWM | \$1,135.00 |
| HOPE Fund | \$ 20.00 |
| Initial | \$ 35.00 |
| Julius M Ministry | \$ 50.00 |
| Memorial | \$ 675.00 |
| OGHS | \$ 860.00 |
| Technology | \$ 50.00 |



Clouds-Sun-Raindrops
graphic courtesy of
Toppng.com

Council Meeting Summary

Some of the business addressed at the meeting included a review and update of Covid-19 procedures, continuing to track a cemetery endowment, securing sound board volunteers, Hersheypark volunteering, Boy Scout use of building, and how to track “who is missing” during these unusual times. Reports were given

by the Pastor, Parish Administrator, and committees.

Some items discussed were a new bid for updating technology in the sanctuary, in-person visits, annual review of membership role, and website ownership and rebranding. Personnel issues included confirming vacation time and reviewing the change to per diem worship accompaniment. Property issues included the roof, mowing bids, and the search for a new chairperson. Worship committee and benevolence committees are beginning to form/reorganize. If you have any questions, please contact a member of church council: President Kory Leppo, VP Jeremy Zimmerman, Treasurer Lindy Bennetch, Greg Beamesderfer or Marie Hibshman.

New Horizons Gathering

The Lebanon Association Parish Life Committee *New Horizons* group will gather at 2 p on May 22nd for mini-golf & dinner at Kauffman’s BBQ, Bethel.



Wooden cutout graphic courtesy of Shutterstock.com



Sound Techs Needed

Volunteers needed **every Sunday** to assist with the In-Person worship. This opportunity involves moving one volume slider two times and maybe putting together a handheld microphone. A great experience for youth.

The **bonus**: You get to sit on a high stool!