



**Upper Path Valley
Presbyterian Church**
Spring Run, Pennsylvania
www.upvpc.org

December 2020 Newsletter

Dear Covenant Partners, Active Supporters, and Friends,

There are many things about celebrating Thanksgiving and Christmas that will be different this year. First and most profoundly, some of our precious family members & friends have gone on into Heaven in 2020. (Please pause right now and pray for the grieving.). Grief is very difficult to navigate in a healthy way without the love, support, & prayers of brothers and sisters in Christ. Something I learned many years ago when my parents had both gone into Heaven was to do something on special days like their birthdays or major holidays that they would be glad I did. This practice has helped to keep them right here with me, it helps me think of positive ways to keep shining Christ's light, and it certainly helps me through the longer days of missing them. Please know that you and your family are in our prayers. If you need help, encouragement, prayer, or something else, please call me at 717-360-4878. Don't try to go it alone. Jesus calls us to care for one another, alongside one another, in the good times and in the more difficult times.

Another difference of course has to do with covid (I refuse to give it any authority by using capital letters!). Some of us aren't able to travel to be with family or vice versa. Some of our special family meals will have to be shared over zoom. But let's be thankful for the technology we have at this time in history that allows us to see one another across the miles!

Another difference in 2020 has to do with our annual Christmas Pageant during worship that includes our children and youth. We have cancelled the pageant, but have not cancelled child participation in worship. Laurie is working on a video that includes our children and youth that we will share as part of online and in-person worship on December 20th. We also are presenting a Live Nativity for our community on Saturday, December 19th from 6-8 p.m. at Hammond's Grove. Many people can participate in this event, from the youngest to the oldest! Maybe this is exactly what God intended us to do together for Christmas 2020 – a multi-generational 'pageant' outside the walls of the church building!

But what about Christmas Eve? While we will not have our traditional candlelight services in the sanctuary at 4:30 and 7:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve, we will offer an online worship video just for this special service, and (weather permitting) we will have a brief outdoor service for the singing of some carols, including singing Silent Night with candles (either ones you bring from your home, or ones we will provide for you). The time of this outdoor Christmas Eve service will be 6 p.m.

On Christmas Day, we will offer our informal Christmas morning worship at 10:00 a.m. in the sanctuary with the singing of carols, a story about Christmas, prayers, and just good, sweet fellowship on this most important day.

Yes, many things are different this year, but God never changes. God's love never grows nor diminishes because God's love is already fully perfect. May our love for God increase in breadth and depth as we recognize, perhaps as no other time, how much we cherish His faithfulness, His patience, His mercy, and His loving kindness. As we look upon the lights in our neighbors' yards and perhaps on the tree in our own homes, may we be reminded of the Light who came to change everything. He truly brings hope, peace, love, & joy – and that will never, ever change.

To God be the Glory, Rev. Meagan

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES!

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing over each person/couple as their special day arrives:

Birthdays

Savannah Harris	December 1
Cheryl Trueax	December 2
Delilah Waite (1 st)	December 2
Marina Fester	December 2
Zac Hall	December 2
Laurie Parsons	December 4
Camden Woodward	December 5
Jonathan Parsons	December 6
Dawn Beaumont	December 11
Natalie Robinson	December 11
Christine Walters	December 12
Jeff Proper	December 16
Darryl Boggs	December 19
Tim Fix	December 20
Robert Parsons	December 21
Laurie Shoop	December 22
Macileigh Martin	December 24
Kenny Wenger	December 25
Brooke Bair	December 27
Jim Herbert	December 28
Axten Daniel	December 29
April Robinson	December 29

Anniversaries

Daryl & Martha Ewan	December 1
Katie & Hunter Waite	December 8
Rick & Sharryl Hockenberry	December 12
Kenny & Brooke Mansfield	December 16
Norman & Mary Jane Coons	December 17
Gary & Kathy McGee	December 17
James & Melissa Bannister	December 18
Bill & Kriste Shoop	December 23
Dick & Neva Neil	December 23
Jeff & Barb Burkholder	December 29
Bob & Betty Myers	December 31

COMMUNITY MEALS ARE BACK BY DELIVERY ONLY - BEGINNING MONDAY, DECEMBER 7th!

This year as we begin the community meal ministry, in our effort to protect our faithful friends and guests, we have made the decision to only deliver meals. Joni Frey has a list of those to whom we will deliver. Please check with Joni

if you have someone in particular you want to add to the list. How can you help?

1. You can volunteer to take a week or more to cook! With Joni's teaching schedule right now, that would be a huge blessing. If you need ideas about what to cook, ask Joni. One dish meals like soups, stews, or casseroles travel well.
2. You can help prep food either on Saturday or Sunday mornings before or after worship. Check with Joni about her schedule each week.
3. You can make cookies and bring them to the church on Sunday mornings or Mondays before 4:00. As of the writing of this newsletter, the number of cookies should be no less than 50.
4. You can be part of the ministry of covering this outreach with prayer.

Words to Ponder

Dr. Bonnie Cornelious

In the November newsletter, I suggested some ways to make the holiday season less lonely for many people who often suffer from heightened symptoms of depression around this time. That said, as we wind our way through the holidays during this epidemic, more people are feeling down because of the unusual "new normal" and can also benefit from the suggestions. (Note to self: I hope and pray the events of 2020 don't become what we think of as normal.)

While thinking about what is happening with restrictions, decisions about masks, dreading not having extended family around, concern that the restrictions might increase, anxiety about jobs and finances, and apprehension that church and other places could shut down again, I was reminded of a quote by Dr. Alice Ginott, widow of Dr. Haim Ginott, teacher, parent educator, and child psychologist. This is the gist of what she said. A woman came to pay her respects when Dr. Haim Ginott died. The woman then said she wanted to share some tragic news with Dr. Alice. She told Dr. Alice that her daughter was pregnant and unmarried. Dr. Alice agreed that it was a very difficult situation but not a tragedy. Dr. Alice declared that her husband's death at the age of 53 was a tragedy because he would no longer be able to help mankind.

Now, whether you agree or disagree with Dr. Alice's conclusion, it does help me to put things in perspective. Yes, there are many who have faced

tragedies through loss of loved ones who died of covid, others who lost loved ones and couldn't be with them during those last days, others who are separated from loved ones because of hospital or nursing home or doctors' office rules. For many of us though, it has been a time of difficult situations and inconveniences. It is an excellent time to think of our Christian responsibility to others and live a life of JOY: Jesus, others, and ourselves.

God the Father was sufficient for Jesus as He bore the agony of the cross. He gives us many verses about His sufficiency for us. Romans 8:38-39, *"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any thing else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Isaiah 41:10, *"So do not fear for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."*

Father, I want to live in the shadow of your wing. When life is hard, and I don't know what to do, help me to remember that You are with me and that I am never alone. Today I choose to walk and live under Your protection. Amen

All Wednesday evening small groups, including Rooted Youth events are paused for in-person gatherings in the month of December. Lord willing, we will pick back up in January!

A Note of Thanksgiving

Reverend Meagan,

It is with profound gratitude, I offer my sincere thanks to the ten folks who sacrificed their time, and came with their own equipment and cut, split, and ranked the firewood that will supply my heat for the winter. As we approach the National Day of "Thanksgiving", this act of kindness takes on a special meaning as the world is experiencing this life threatening pandemic. We must remain vigilant and continue to support each other, and with continued prayers God will see us through this dark hour.

In Jesus' Name, Wayne Treible

Reflections from our Children, Youth, & Family Ministry Coordinator

Christmas will look different this year in some regards for Children, Youth, and Families at UPVPC. We've had to make the very tough decision that there will be no Christmas Pageant and Christmas party for children. Though I will miss seeing all our children on stage portraying the greatest story ever told, this year provides us opportunities to think differently, to think creatively, and to remember that "perhaps Christmas means a little bit more" (stealing from Mr. Grinch and Dr. Suess).

Opportunities to help others enter into this season of Christmas include the Live Nativity at Hammond's Grove on December 19. If you are able, please participate for God-willing this will reach far more people than we ever could for one service in our Sanctuary. We are also going to be putting together a Christmas video featuring our children and youth (I will be reaching out to parents to give instructions and to schedule times to record in the upcoming two weeks.) Christmas will come without pageants and big turkey dinners. It will come without parties and caroling singers. It will come because Jesus came on that first Christmas day. A Savior has been born to us, so the Angels did say. Let us not forget the true meaning of the hope that we have on Christmas and let us be creative in how we share that hope with our families, friends, neighbors, and communities.

"In humility, he was born in a cattle stall to live on earth among men. His mission in life for all the world was to save us from our sin. What a glorious gift God sent from above. More wondrous than we can even know, but it was all for us wherever we are." (Excerpt from *In Humility*, by Lillian Robbins).

Love, Laurie

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OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Thank you to everyone who packed a shoebox, donated shipping costs, and prayed over the boxes before they left Path Valley! Our little valley with big hearts and big dreams packed 4984 boxes! Thank you to Ruth & John Mitchell and to Brenda

Hart for your organizational gifts during the OCC Packing Season, and to the Beaumonts for transporting the boxes!

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Nominations? Budget? Terms of Call?

Perhaps you are one of those 'process' people who has noticed that we didn't go through a nomination process in the Fall, and we aren't scheduling our annual meeting after worship on the first Sunday in December. The reason is simple: Like so many other things, we have paused.

After the first of the year, we will sit with our finances and make a budget that is more in line with where we are at that time. We also hope to go through a nomination process for several vacancies on our Board of Deacons before March, if possible. Our Trustee board has no vacancies for 2021, and our Board of Elders had 1 vacancy which will be filled by an inactive elder for 2021 after a prayerful nomination period by the current board.

These processes are highly irregular but not without reason. The year 2020 threw us all for a loop, and most of the boards met very infrequently throughout the year. All eligible current board members agreed to add one year to their service due to the uncertain circumstances of 2020.

If you have any questions about the 'pause' please don't hesitate to ask!

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

On Sunday, November 22nd we gave special devotional gifts for medical professionals connected to our congregation, firefighters, and law enforcement officers. The devotionals were written specifically for each profession by Sarah Young. Especially in 2020, we are grateful for the faithful work of the following medical professionals: Kathy Baker, Bethany Bair, Lyric Warren, Julie Custer Eckels, Morgan Frazier, Lori Greenland, Angie Hall, Kristie Hall, Sharyll Hockenberry, McKenzie McGee, Tracy Metcalfe,

Tasha Naugle, Miranda Neil, Sharon Peppernick, Barb Ramsey, Patti Rebok, Wanda Ruby, Brittney Rupert, Chris Seibert, Jenna Seilhammer, Kriste Shoop, Brittany Snider, Logan Walters, and Adaria Woodward. Firefighters: David Cauffman, Dale Hall, Zac Hall, & Scott Naugle. Law Enforcement: Scott & Phillip Cornelious.



Christmas Offering

Over the skies of Bethlehem appeared a star
while angels sang to lowly shepherds.
Three wisemen seeking truth, they traveled from afar,
hoping to find the Child from Heaven.

Falling on their knees
they bow before the humble Prince of peace.
We bring an offering of worship to our King,
No one on earth deserves the praises that we sing.
Jesus, may You receive the honor that You're due,
O Lord, I bring an offering to You.

The sun cannot compare to the glory of Your love.
There is no shadow in Your presence.
No mortal man would dare to stand before Your throne,
before the Holy One of Heaven.
It's only by Your blood,
it's only through Your mercy, Lord I come.

I bring an offering of worship to my King.
No one on earth deserves the praises that I sing.
Jesus, may You receive the honor that You're due.
O Lord, I bring an offering to You.

