



~Those Were the Days~

Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?"

For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.

~Ecclesiastes 7:10

Dear Members and Friends,

When my kids were little, I didn't let them watch "Sponge Bob Square Pants," a popular cartoon back in the 2000s. Other parents thought I was being too strict, but I was not a strict father at all. I was playful and silly...but I didn't like Sponge Bob. I found the show sarcastic and noisy with not a single admirable character. Other kids' shows, like "Dora the Explorer" and "The Backyardigans," always had a simple, positive message: cooperate, be kind, be patient, respect nature, see beauty. Sponge Bob was just a parade of spastic deep-sea creatures with crippling personality disorders. Of course, there were shows I was not allowed to watch as a child. I've been thinking about that old sitcom "All in the Family," which aired on CBS for much of the 1970s. "All in the Family" was forbidden at our house, along with "MASH" and "Dallas." And yet, despite their being banned, I remember all three shows quite well. Archie Bunker, on "All in the Family," played the classic role of the wise fool, and he actually had some surprisingly witty and insightful lines. One of my favorites is, "Everybody's scared of death until it hits you... After that, you never give it another thought."

Looking back, I stand by my decision to ban "Sponge Bob Square Pants," and I get my parents' desire to shelter us from "MASH" and "Dallas." But why was "All in the Family" censored? Much like the best children's shows, "All in the Family" advocated for things that matter, like equality, women's rights, inclusion, tolerance, and the need to change. Archie was backward, but he always landed in the right place eventually. This was the genius of the show: It depicted an unimaginative traditionalist amid all the changes of the late 20th century, trying to hold fast to the things he valued, but often learning, grudgingly, to accept new things, too. A small child might not understand this kind of nuance and moral ambiguity, but offensive it was not. Who could forget Archie and Edith singing the theme song at the start of each episode, a song that perfectly captured the sentimental, backward-looking views of the show's main character? The song was "Those Were the Days," and it touted the glories of traditional gender roles and LaSalle cars (extinct since 1940), while railing against the modern "welfare state."

Humankind idealizes the past. We look fearfully at the trials of our current times, then longingly backward at a seemingly perfect yesterday (that memory has largely rewritten). But memory is self-serving. Our brains know that regret does a lot of harm, so they highlight those things that make us happy while downplaying all else. We are called to learn from the past, celebrate it, and then live into the new day that God sends.

A little-known line from the book of Ecclesiastes says, "Do not say, 'Why were the former days better than these?' For it is not from wisdom that you ask this." And so, ill-placed nostalgia for a misremembered past is at least as old as the Hebrew Scriptures. As we welcome the New Year and celebrate our 75th anniversary as a congregation, let's fully embrace the day we're given. It might pale in comparison to a day we think we recall. But memory is not always accurate. And today? Today is a good day, too. Its blessings and struggles were made exactly for you and for me.

Christ's Peace to You in the New Year,

~Brian



Worship Plans

January 4

Epiphany Sunday

Communion

Isaiah 60:1-6

Matthew 2:1-12

January 11

Baptism of the Lord

Communion

Isaiah 42:1-9

Matthew 3:13-17

January 18

Epiphany 2A

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

John 1:29-42

January 25

Epiphany 3A

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Matthew 4:12-23



The Church office will be closed on Monday, January 19, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

De-Deck the Halls - Sunday, January 4

Many hands make light work! Please join us immediately following coffee hour on Sunday, January 4, to help take down and put away the church Christmas decorations.

There will be no second hour classes that day so everyone can help.

2025 Flea Market Results

The Flea Market Committee is excited to share with you the results for the 2025 flea markets.

As a reminder, the Spring Flea Market did not break any records, but the results were very strong at \$9,373. The Fall Flea Market also did not break any records but was also strong at \$9334.

When you put the two totals together, we broke the record for the year at an astounding 18,807!

Here's our fun story from the fall flea market. This year, one of the people who received an email reminder about the upcoming fall flea market contacted me and offered to make stuffed cabbage for the spring flea market that we can sell at the snack bar. It turned out that she works for Highmark (I currently work for AHN and my dad worked for Highmark for 40 or so years until he retired).

Whether you donated items, bought items, made soup or snacks for the snack bar, helped with setup and/or cleanup, helped on the day of the sale, told a friend to come shop, or simply prayed for our success, the Flea Market Committee is grateful to all of you.

PASTORAL PONDERINGS

We begin a new year with fresh opportunities. The long tradition has been to make resolutions. Statistics tell us that by February, less than 10% are actually kept. This being the case, I am asking you not to make a resolution, but rather to make a commitment.

When you share your time, your love, your resources you multiply many things. You transform the lives of so many around you. Giving has a multiplier effect, so that it creates ripples that continue farther than you can imagine.

Often, we fail to understand that little things - a hug, a hand-written note, a phone call - all can mean much more than we think. Please commit in 2026 to increase your sharing so that the love of Jesus can be experienced far and wide.

~ Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure, Parish Associate



Lighting the Steeple

Requests should include: the date(s) you would like to sponsor, the reason you want to sponsor (in honor, in memory, etc.), the name of the person(s) or the event as you want it to appear in the bulletin, and your name. Email your request to: Amy Leasure at amlea97@hotmail.com.
MULTIPLE sponsors can share the SAME DATE.

January 22

In memory of Linda McElroy Thomas on her birthday (1/22/1957 - 11/3/2023) by her surviving spouse Bob and daughter Flor.

Faithful Conversations

While plans for Faithful Conversations in January are not yet finalized, a few details are confirmed. There will be no conversation on January 4 so that everyone may focus on de-decking the halls. On January 11, we will host a conversation with a representative from Light of Life Mission. We have not connected with them since before they expanded their programs and moved into a new building, and we look forward to hearing about their continued work. During the final two Sundays of the month, we may offer participants an opportunity to share about volunteer work they engage in outside of BHCC programs. We may also hold a conversation about The Lord of the Rings, exploring how Tolkien's Catholic faith informed the story and how it has been appropriated by Christian nationalists.

We hope you will join us in engaging in these conversations after coffee hour at 11:00 a.m. in the Friendship Room.

From the Eco-Justice Team:

With the solstice behind us and the days beginning to lengthen, however slowly, the new year will give us all more opportunities to learn to appreciate and care for God's creation. There will be plenty of ways to care for all living things, including our fellow humans, and follow the path God chooses.

The Eco-Justice Team wishes you a healthy and joyous New Year!

Thank You From SHIM!

The holidays are a time to reflect on the many we are grateful for, both personally and professionally. Each of you and your volunteers are at the top of the list for SHIM. Your continued support of SHIM's Community Gardens Program is what made it possible for SHIM to distribute 19,023 pounds of fresh produce to our South Hills neighbors through our food pantries this growing season! I am personally grateful as you have literally helped to grow a cornerstone program for SHIM that I never envisioned when we planted our pilot garden here at SHIM in 2012. It is a remarkable accomplishment that is only possible when community partners work together toward the same goal.

Not only does SHIM's garden program help to provide for the basic needs of our South Hills clients in the form of healthy food options, but we also partner with outside organizations to offer our clients beginning gardening, cooking, and nutrition education classes, providing lifelong skills on the journey to self-sufficiency. Partnerships with The Allegheny Land Trust, Grow Pittsburgh, Tree Pittsburgh and Phipps have provided opportunities for community interest workshops on topics such as identifying trees, planting native plants to attract pollinators, and treating pests and diseases.

The SHIM Community Gardens Program truly embodies building community by growing fresh produce for those in need, offering education benefits for our clients, our after-school program, and our summer camp program, and by offering gardening and environmental education opportunities for our volunteers and members of South Hills Community.

We are grateful for your contributions to the success of the SHIM Community Gardens Program and look forward to building on that success in the growing seasons ahead.

Becky Henninger

Community Gardens Program Manager | South Hills Interfaith Movement

Unity Food Pantry Collection January 11

Unity Food Pantry's greatest need boxed cereal, along with canned fruit, instant mashed potatoes, and diapers of all sizes.

Western PA Diaper Bank

Remember to save coupons for disposable diapers and feminine hygiene products that you collect. You can drop them off at the church office during regular business hours or send them with your weekly offering.

Sponsored by Matthew 25 On the Move of Pittsburgh Presbytery

**Stone Catcher
Retreat****JANUARY 29-31, 2026**

When people were ready to throw stones at the woman caught in adultery, Jesus said the one without sin cast the first stone - they all left. The Stone Catcher Retreat focuses on training people to stand in the gap and be stone catchers for the marginalized in our society. In our churches we may have experience educating ourselves on social issues, praying for the marginalized, and maybe even sending letters to our representatives, but this retreat will teach us how to get into "good trouble" fighting injustice by standing in the gap for the marginalized.

We will begin with lunch at 12:15 p.m. on Thursday, January 29 (registration starts at 11:00 a.m.) and the retreat will end after lunch at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 31.

Following the retreat, the group will develop a "Scandalous Christian Project," putting into action what we have learned. Participants **MUST** be able to attend the entire retreat as well as the evening dinner meeting at First Presbyterian Church of Duquesne on Monday, February 2.

Location: The Spiritan Retreat Center, Bethel Park, PA

Cost: \$100 per person (scholarship money is available if needed)

There are limited spaces available at this retreat in order to foster the group dynamics of the work we will be doing.

Come and learn how to make a difference by being a stone catcher!

For more information, visit <https://www.queervirtue.com/stonecatchers> or contact: Caroline Baker, carolinecath94@gmail.com
Flyer and Registration Information attached.

Deadline for registration is January 11, 2026

**The APCE (Association of Partners in Christian Education) Annual Event
is coming to Pittsburgh this January!**



This event is one of the largest gatherings of Presbyterian leaders in children and youth ministry in the country – and it's happening right in our backyard. Whether you're a new or seasoned volunteer, don't miss this chance to be equipped with new resources and networking opportunity. The theme of "Bridging the Gap" will be explored throughout the event, with each day focusing on a different aspect: how to love God, how to love self, and how to love your neighbor. The event will feature a wide range of workshops (over 75 !), plenary sessions, and worship services.

APCE and the Next Generation Ministry Team have partnered to offer an exceptional opportunity for members of Pittsburgh Presbytery and its congregations to attend the APCE Annual Event right here in Pittsburgh in January. APCE is offering a complimentary membership to APCE (the organization) for one year. Thanks to a generous donor, the Next Gen team is offering a scholarship of \$205 per individual from the Presbytery who registers for APCE. Between receiving the member rate and the scholarship, the cost of registration for the annual event will be reduced from \$585 to \$205 per person. There are also options to attend individual days for a daily rate – don't miss out!

Update from the Director of Education Ministries – Amy Grella



Souper Bowl of Caring Food Drive



Did you know...nearly 80,000 children in the Greater Pittsburgh area go to bed worried about their next meal. In January, Bower Hill Youth will be hosting a Souper Bowl of Caring Food Drive to benefit the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and their work to end child hunger and close the hunger gap for one of our most vulnerable populations. We will be providing collection kits and fliers for families to ask for monetary and food donations from neighbors and friends. Be sure to come to Youth Group in January to learn more and see how you can get plugged in to help.

2026 Summer Mission Trip Opportunities

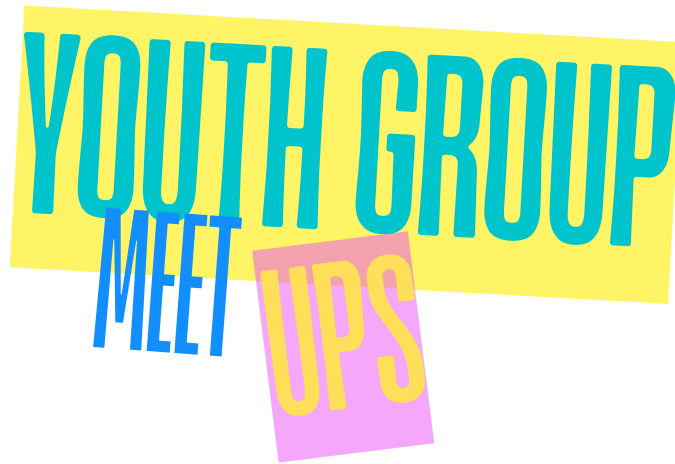
It's that time of year to be thinking about our summer mission trips for youth. This year, we will have two trips, one for middle school and one for high school. Please save the dates. Registration details will be emailed once available.

High School Mission Trip to Wilamore, KY July 5-10, 2026

Save the date! Bower Hill high school youth will join the youth from Hampton PC for a mission trip to Wilamore, KY. This trip will be for completed 8th to 12th graders.

Middle School Crestfield Service Adventure Camp July 19-24, 2026

Don't miss out on the best week of summer. This camp is for completed 6th – 8th graders. [Click here](#) to see the video from last years' Service Adventure Week.



Middle and High Schoolers (for youth in Grades 6-12)

Sunday, January 11 - Youth Group Meeting from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. in room 110 – Bring a friend!

Saturday, January 24 – Ice Skating at South Park outdoor rink. *Note date change* We'll meet at the church at 6:00 p.m. We'll skate from 6:30-8:30pm and return to the church by 9:00 p.m. [Click here to RSVP](#) so you can see who's going and to help arrange carpooling. Please bring \$5 for admission, \$2 for skate rental if needed, and money for snacks at the snack bar.

Sunday, February 15 – The Event Strikes Back (Joint youth event from the Pittsburgh Presbytery) 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Friday, March 20-22 – Crestfield Spring Retreat. Save the date for our annual spring retreat, featuring separate speaker tracks for MS and HS youth.

Tweener Meetups (for youth in Grades 3-6)

Sunday, February 1 -Meet in room 110 for group games from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. The more the merrier, so be sure to invite your friends.

Saturday, February 28 – Sunday, March 1, 2026 – Crestfield Tweener Retreat. Save the date for this special one-night retreat designed to introduce youth in grades 3-6 to the overnight experience at Crestfield. Registration will open soon.

UPCOMING

Fellowship Events

Get Outdoors

Saturday, January 3

During the winter months, it is always difficult to find trails that are safe to walk. If the weather cooperates, we will hike local trails that are not hilly such as Panhandle Trail, Montour trail, etc. I will put article in the Friday E-blast before hike, my best guest on the trail. If it's too cold or all trails may be icy, the hike will be rescheduled.

We will meet at 9:00 a.m. in the main parking lot and carpool to the hike. The trailhead should be about a 30-minute drive. The hike should be about 2 hours. So, we will be home around 12:00 p.m. If it rains or weather is bad, we will reschedule. Please email me at gstchild@yahoo.com or call so we don't leave without you.

Hooks & Needles January 3 & 17

Hooks and Needles continues to meet on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month. We will meet at Phyllis Yohe's house from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

New Members and needle workers of all skills welcome! Hope to see you there!

Koinonia Wednesdays

9:15 a.m. Room 110

All women are welcome to join Koinonia, BHCC's women's Bible study group, and to explore and share in faith and fellowship with other women. This group meets on Wednesdays, fully in-person in the lounge (Room 110). Contact Sarah Neusius (sraahneusius@gmail.com) for more information or just come and join us.

Senior Men's Breakfast January 6 8:00 a.m.

Join us at Denny's restaurant at 2180 Greentree Road, near Swallow Hill Road. No reservation is required, and conversation is spontaneous. The regular meeting date is on the first Tuesday of each month. All men are welcome. Any questions or comments, contact Glenn Child at gstchild@yahoo.com.

Bookworms January 27

1:30 p.m. via Zoom

This is an open invitation to anyone attending Bower Hill Community Church, friends and family members, to join Bookworms, the Church Book Club. Reading and discussing books since 2001, members have enjoyed the variety of perspectives readers bring: from 'loved it', to 'yuk', to everything in between.

The group reads fiction, non-fiction, memoirs, biographies, really anything the group suggests. The conversation is assisted by online reader guides. Different perspectives create great discussions. All opinions are welcome. A list of the books read by the group is available on the church website. (<https://www.bowerhillchurch.org/books-read>). Check out the variety!

The group currently meets by Zoom on the fourth Tuesday, January through November, at 1:30 p.m. We met in the evening at the church until Covid made meeting in-person impossible. Virtual contact is still comfortable for most attendees, although that could change in the future.

Please consider joining the group to discuss any book that interests you. Reading every book and attending all the discussions is not mandatory to be a member. Come try us out. We may 'worm our way' into your reading routine. To join the group for the next meeting, send your requests to Sally Child at sa.child@yahoo.com.

January 27 - *All the Colors of the Dark* by Chris Whitaker



Let Our Light Shine

JOIN US FOR BIRTHDAY SUNDAY - February 1

The second celebration for the 75th Anniversary of Bower Hill Community Church will be held on February 1.

The day will begin with worship at 9:30 a.m. Worship will be followed by a meal and fun activities.

THROWBACK POTLUCK



It's time to dust off those old cookbooks and look up your favorite Tuna Noodle casserole or Jello mold recipe!

For the potluck on February 1, we're challenging you to make a dish from years gone by. Whether it's deviled eggs that were popular back in the 50's, ambrosia salad from the 60's, or strawberry pretzel salad from the 80's, find a vintage recipe to share with your Bower Hill family!

For more ideas of dishes that were popular at potlucks in previous decades visit the [75th Anniversary page](#) on the church website.

Once you've chosen your dish, you can sign up in the Narthex, contact Theresa Child at treetoowon@yahoo.com or use the link below, so that we can make sure that we have a nice mix of main dishes, sides, salads, and desserts.

[Throwback Potluck Signup Sheet](#)

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Grand Finale Weekend May 16-17, 2026

Saturday Evening
Celebratory Banquet

Sunday
Special Worship Service which will include former pastors and members followed by a Strawberry Festival on the church lawn

WONDERING WHAT OUR FUN ACTIVITIES ON FEBRUARY 1 MAY ENTAIL?

We'll be revealing more about the activities planned for February 1 in upcoming bulletins and email blasts, but one thing we can promise is that Susan and I have rejected Dave's idea of putting the boxing ring back up on the stage in Fellowship Hall and having Pastor Brian and Parish Associate Fred Leasure go a few rounds.





Rev. Dr. Brian Snyder, Pastor
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Parish Associate

Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure
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Company of Pastors

Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure

Rev. Dr. Betty Sykes

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Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

www.BowerHillChurch.org



PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR CARE LIST

Bower Hill Church Members

Matt Arner, Nancy Green
 Joan McAnulty, Barb Oram
 Mike Riemer



January 2: Amy Leasure

January 15: Matthew Kocher

January 3: Eric Lansberry
 Emma Marsteller
 Lynn Sirinek
 Alex Stazer

January 21: Beverly Burke
 Ellie Marcovsky
 Clara McElroy

January 7: Drake Robbins

January 22: Leo Ferrero
 Dave Hicks

January 8: Colleen Marsteller

January 24: Lindsay Bruder
 Julian Salvante

January 9: Eloise Grier

January 26: Inese Baumhammers

January 10: Carol Martin
 Landon Stazer

January 28: Sally Child

January 14: Phyllis Madden

January 31: Nathan Rising
 Julia Snead

THE BIRTHDAY BLESSING:

Please take a moment to read through the names, pray for them, and offer them your best wishes!

Have we missed YOUR birthday? If your name is not listed, it is because the church office does not have your information. Please call the office administrator at 412-561-4114 with updated information.

JANUARY 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 9:30am Annual P.U. Party 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship (Coffee) 10:45am Faith Formation Committee Mt. (Rm 101) 11:00am Faithful Conversations - Midwinter Festivals of Lights (FR) 11:00am First Baptist Worship 2:00pm Mission Project with Carnegie Presbyterian (Kitchen & FH)	29 8:00am Montessori School 7:00pm A & P Comm. (Google Meet) 7:00pm Worship Committee (Rm 101)	30 7:15pm OA Meeting (Rm 105) 7:30pm Troop 28 & 9028 (FH)	31 9:15am Koloinia (Rm 110) 7:00pm Mayfair on Moffett (110, 105)	1 Office Closed - New Year's Day 5:00pm Events & Outreach Committee (Zoom) 6:30pm Cub Scout Pack 28 (FH)	2	3 Get Outdoors - See weekly E-Blast 1:00pm Hooks & Needles (Phyllis Yohe's residence)
4 De-Deck the Halls 9:30am Children's Worship 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship (Coffee) 11:00am Faithful Conversations (FR) 11:00am First Baptist Worship	5 8:00am Montessori School 7:00pm A & P Comm. (Google Meet) 7:00pm Worship Committee (Rm 101)	6 8:00am Men's Breakfast Group - Denny's 8:00am Montessori School 10:00am Staff Meeting (Rm 101) 7:15pm OA Meeting (Rm 105) 7:30pm Troop 28 & 9028 (FH)	7 8:00am Montessori School 9:15am Koloinia (Rm 110) 6:00pm Bells Rehearsal (Choir Room) 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Mayfair on Moffett (110, 105)	8 8:00am Montessori School 6:30pm Cub Scout Pack 28 (FH)	9 8:00am Montessori School	10 1:00pm Troop 28 Cooking Event (FH&Kitchen)
11 Unity Food Pantry Collection 9:30am Children's Worship 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship (Coffee) 11:00am Faithful Conversations (FR) - Light of Life 11:00am First Baptist Worship 6:30pm Middle and High School Youth Group (Room 110)	12 8:00am Montessori School 7:00pm B&C Meeting (Rm 101)	13 8:00am Montessori School 10:00am Staff Meeting (Rm 101) 7:15pm OA Meeting (Rm 105) 7:30pm Troop 28 & 9028 (FH)	14 8:00am Montessori School 9:15am Koloinia (Rm 110) 6:00pm Bells Rehearsal (Choir Room) 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Mayfair on Moffett (110, 105)	15 Newsletter and Session Report Deadline 8:00am Montessori School 6:30pm Cub Scout Pack 28 (FH)	16 8:00am Montessori School	17 9:30am Music Recital (Sanctuary) 1:00pm Hooks & Needles (Phyllis Yohe's residence) 5:20pm Rufina Yefimova Music School Recital (Sanctuary) 6:00pm Youth Ice Group Ice Skating
18 9:30am Children's Worship 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship (Coffee) 11:00am Faithful Conversations (FR) 11:00am First Baptist Worship	19 Montessori School - No School 7:00pm Deacons Meeting (Rm 110)	20 8:00am Montessori School 10:00am Staff Meeting (Rm 101) 7:15pm OA Meeting (Rm 105) 7:30pm Finance Meeting (Virtual) 7:30pm Troop 28 & 9028 (FH)	21 8:00am Montessori School 9:15am Koloinia (Rm 110) 6:00pm Bells Rehearsal (Choir Room) 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Mayfair on Moffett (110, 105)	22 8:00am Montessori School	23 8:00am Montessori School	24
25 9:30am Children's Worship 9:30am Worship 10:30am Fellowship (Coffee) 11:00am Faithful Conversations (FR) 11:00am First Baptist Worship 12:30pm Compassionate Friends (Rm 101, 105, 110, FR) 2:00pm Mission Project with Carnegie Presbyterian (Kitchen & FH) 6:30pm Confirmation Class (Rm. FH)	26 8:00am Montessori School 7:00pm Session Meeting (FR)	27 8:00am Montessori School 10:00am Staff Meeting (Rm 101) 1:30pm Bookworms (Zoom) 7:15pm OA Meeting (Rm 105) 7:30pm Troop 28 & 9028 (FH)	28 8:00am Montessori School 9:15am Koloinia (Rm 110) 6:00pm Bells Rehearsal (Choir Room) 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary) 7:00pm Mayfair on Moffett (110, 105)	29 8:00am Montessori School	30 8:00am Montessori School	31