

~ Things to Ponder ~

“But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart.”

~ Luke 2:19

Dear Members and Friends,

In one of the sweetest, most perplexing verses of Luke’s Christmas story, we get just a very brief snapshot into the sentimental heart of a mother. After all the strange events that attended that first Christmas—the angelic visitors, the shepherds, the long trek down to Bethlehem, the star in the night sky—we read that Mary, “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” If those marvelous events occurred today, Mary could take a few photos with her cellphone, post them on Instagram, and ask the world what to make of it all. But she had no such luxury, and so she had to process her life’s events the old-fashioned way. She “pondered” them in her heart.

Our hearts do a lot of pondering in the season leading up to Christmas. Despite the busyness of December with its crowds, and its shopping, and its parties, and concerts, and family gatherings, our hearts are especially open at this time of year. We give ourselves over to musings that we would never entertain in the bright light of July. We think of the special people with whom we used to share this season. Some have died, some moved away, and some are still with us—the old spouses, the old selves—but so unlike the ones we know today. It’s a time of year when expectations run high, and the past is never far behind. Any soppy seasonal song on the radio can send our hearts spinning back over the years of our life and perhaps the miles of the big globe. This can be a sweet thing. It can be a painful thing. It’s just December’s regular fare, the raw yuletide tingle that mixes longing and hope, wistfulness for what-no-longer-is as well as joy for what was, and is, and surely is -to-come.

Our four watchwords for Advent are hope, peace, joy, and love. In this season when both happy and unhappy emotions run high, I hope you’ll take time to attend to your spirit. Let’s think of Advent as a “thin place” in time, a place on the calendar when eternity draws near, a place when we commit ourselves to sitting quietly with the things that kindle those four wonders in our souls: hope, peace, joy, and love.

And so, we’d like to offer you some opportunities this Yuletide season to withdraw from the madness and ponder some things in your heart. First, pick up an Advent devotional daily in the narthex on December 3. Choose a time in each day when you have ten minutes to devote to quiet reflection, and read your devotional daily. Second, take part in our Advent evening worship services on Thursdays, December 5, 12, and 19 at 8:10 p.m. on the chancel (just behind the communion table). I’m calling these brief, meditative services “Advent evensong” because they will be more sung than spoken—a perfect way to center your spirit in the peace of Christ during a busy season. It doesn’t matter if you’re not a great singer. Our musicians will be there to lead us.

All blessings and joy to you—even as the days grow shorter, the darkness increases, and the temperatures drop. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” Don’t let this holy time be reduced merely to a period of hustle and spending. Let it also be a time of reflection, a time of sitting with your hopes, a time to ponder things in your heart. Merry Christmas! It is one of my life’s greatest blessings to be journeying alongside all of you.

In Christ’s Peace,
~Brian

DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROGRAMS -- Amy Grella — am@bhccml.com

De-

December Youth Calendar

- Sunday, December 8 -- Second annual White Elephant gift exchange. 6:00-8:00 p.m. in room 110. Bring a silly present (less than \$5 value) and prepare to have fun!
- Sunday, December 22 -- Youth Group at SHUP (900 Country Club Rd., 15228) 6:30-8:00 p.m.
- Sunday, December 29 -- Trip to Games n'aAt. Leave around 11:30 a.m. after church potluck. RSVP to Amy so that transportation can be coordinated.

Children's Christmas Eve Worship Service on 12/24 at 11:00 am.

Bower Hill is pleased to offer a worship service just for children at 11:00 a.m. on Christmas Eve. We will be sharing a Children's Worship story in the sanctuary and singing carols. Childcare will NOT be provided so that younger ones can see and experience the worship service as well.



DIRECTOR OF MUSIC MINISTRIES -- Anne Carper Smith—an@bhccml.com

Happy Advent! Thank you to all who are participating in this season's music.
We know it will be fantastic!

Thank you to all who participated in the SHIM Thanksgiving service. We cherished joining with Cantor Rena Shapiro and the Shalom Singers to form The Sacred Bridge Choir. We look forward to more interfaith activities in the future.

It's almost time to welcome our Cherub Choir (preschool to 2nd grade) back to rehearsal! Cherub Choir will rehearse from 11:00--11:20 a.m. on December 1, 8, and 15. They will share their music in worship on the 22nd. Chorister singers (grades 3-5) who want to help the Cherubs are welcome to attend cherub rehearsals and to perform on December 22.

Thanks! *Anne*

Bower Hill Church LIBRARY News

Many in our congregation may not be aware that Bower Hill Church has had a wonderful library for many years. It was first established in 1956 under the oversight of the Christian Education Committee. During the time Jack Hodges was here, an effort was made to catalog and document the collection, which at that time was housed in what is now the Nursery. The collection primarily includes books covering philosophy and theory; the Bible; Christian history, practice, observance and denominations; the local church; social and ecclesiastical theology; and other religions. In the last year and a half, the entire collection was moved to shelving in Conference Room 101. In 50 plus years it has gone from a modest 125 volumes to over 1,000.

New to the Bower Hill Church Library is a collection of books donated by Lynne Wohleber. These books include inspirational and devotional works, several series that are historical fiction, and many Christian fiction titles. The books are arranged alphabetically by author and can be found in the stand-alone cabinets between the two windows in the library.

In order to have a place for this collection, Glenn Williams built shelving into this cabinet. We are grateful for this project so that anyone interested in finding a book may browse the shelves, borrow a book, and return it when finished.





**THE JOURNEY:
Walking the Road to Bethlehem**

**AN ADVENT BIBLE
AND DEVOTIONAL STUDY**

Led by Rev. Fred Leasure in his home.
Living room discussions on the following
Wednesdays during Advent:

December 4, 11, 18 at 7:30 p.m.



December

WORSHIP PLANS

December 1

First Sunday of Advent; Communion
Matthew 24:36-44; Isaiah 2:1-3

Thursday, December 5

Advent evensong, 8:10 p.m. on the chancel

December 8

Second Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 11:1-10; Matthew 3:1-12

Thursday, December 12

Advent evensong, 8:10 p.m. on the chancel

December 15

Third Sunday of Advent
Matthew 11:2-11; Isaiah 35:1-10

Thursday, December 19

Advent evensong, 8:10 p.m. on the chancel

December 22

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25

Tuesday, December 24

Christmas Eve

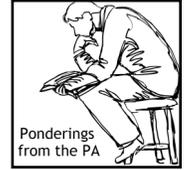
Children's Service at 11:00 a.m.
Evening Candlelight Service at 7:00 p.m.
Holiday music begins at 6:30 p.m.
All are welcome!

December 29

First Sunday of Christmastime
Joint Worship Service with 1st Baptist at 10:00 a.m.,
followed by Potluck Brunch

PASTORAL PONDERINGS

Do you still send Christmas cards? Now that postage is 55 cents per letter and we have the internet, many have abandoned that tradition. Or perhaps you don't take the time to write a personal note and instead send out cards that are preprinted and addressed with a computer-generated label. I will not comment on those who send out letters that tell all the places they visited, the new car they bought, and how many scholarships their children have won.



Christmas cards began in the United Kingdom around 1843. The first cards are attributed to Sir Henry Cole. He was a government worker who was given the task of establishing a postal system. Since the cost to post a letter was about 8 cents, he needed to encourage the average person to begin to use the system. As popularity grew, the cost dropped to a penny. The first cards usually portrayed the nativity and soon caught on all over Europe.

Perhaps this is the year we all should consider reviving some traditions by sending a simple "Merry Christmas, Thinking of You!" note to those we have not heard from in some time. It could be a way of affirming that Christ came into the world to affirm love for everyone and to heal all the hurts.

Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure, Parish Associate



ADULT EDUCATION

—Sam Kidder, Committee Chair

Join us in the Friendship Room from 11:00 a.m. until noon on Sunday mornings following worship and a time for fellowship. The December schedule is as follows:

December 1: NO Adult Education--DECK THE HALLS!

December 8: Rev. Phil Jamison will lead a discussion of various Confessions that can be found in the Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) published in 2016.

Class will begin at 11:15 a.m., since the Christmas Bazaar will be held during Fellowship Time.

December 15: We will continue the DVD Violence Divine led by John Dominic Crossen.

December 22: Sally Child and Karl Casey will lead a session on Spiritual Practices.

December 29: This is a Fifth Sunday when a Joint Worship Service with First Baptist takes place at 10:00 a.m., followed by a Potluck Brunch.

BOWER HILL BAZAAR
Sunday, December 8 -- 10:30-11:30 a.m.



Come to Fellowship Hall during Coffee Hour on December 8 for the Bower Hill Bazaar!

BHCC members will have the opportunity to create Holiday Baskets that bring cheer to family and friends while supporting farm communities that provide Fairly Traded and sustainable products. Members will have a variety of baskets from which to choose. They will be able to customize their own gift baskets with coffees, teas, chocolate, hot chocolate, nuts, and dried fruit from cooperative communities that participate in the Equal Exchange Co-op with who we have partnered for over 15 years. We will have a variety of products beyond the regular choices throughout the year. There will also be order forms to expand your choice of goodies with which to fill your baskets. Orders will be available for pickup on December 15. You can pay with checks or good old-fashioned cash.

So, save the date and start thinking of the family and friends whose holidays you can brighten, while supporting our brothers and sisters beyond this community who work hard to sustain their families.

Questions? See Steve Boisvert or email sdboisvert@gmail.com.



In response to recent shooting incidents, Session has established a security task force to evaluate the church's physical security. Members of the task force are Bill Cadwell, Lynn Foltz, Dave Hicks (chair), Susan Hicks, Rob Mackey and Mike Riemer. If anyone in the church has expertise in some aspect of physical security, they are invited to contact a

member of the task force. We will keep the congregation informed as we proceed with this evaluation.



This holiday season, congregation members will have the opportunity, once again, to honor loved ones through a Christmas Remembrance offering.

For a suggested donation of \$10, your gift in honor or in memory of a loved one will be featured in the Christmas Eve service program. All donations will benefit both SHIM and the BHCC Organ Fund.

A donation form is inserted in this newsletter and will also be inserted in the weekly bulletin beginning December 1. Please return the completed form, along with your check payable to BHCC, in the Sunday offering plate or mail it to the church office. **Deadline to return the form is Sunday, December 15.**

Questions?? Please contact Melissa Harman at 614-406-0061 or MelissaRHarman@gmail.com.



ANGELS AT BHCC IN ADVENT



The Angel Trees at BHCC have returned! As you travel from the sanctuary to Fellowship Hall, you will see three "trees" on your left. This year we are collecting items for the following organizations:

- ◆ **Hekima Place** — The Angel Tree will help support the girls who live there.
- ◆ BHCC is a host site for **Family Promise** families. We are collecting items to support the families.
- ◆ The **Veterans Leadership Program of Western PA** empowers veterans to navigate the transitions of life. Items to assist in its mission are being collected.

Please Note:

The gifts are not to be wrapped, but it is important that they be marked accordingly for their specific Angel Tree. Gifts can be dropped off in the church office, and they will be placed in a secure room.

Items will be collected through Christmas Eve.

Please consider supporting one, two, or all three of these Advent projects. Thank you!

COMMUNITY NOTES

Want to be included on this page? Submissions are due the 15th of every month for the next month's publication. 412-561-4114 or office@bhccml.com



SENIOR MEN'S GROUP

This group will meet on **Tuesday, December 3, at 8:00 a.m.** The meeting

location is the Denny's restaurant at 2180 Greentree Road, near Swallow Hill Road. All senior men are welcome. No reservation is required. Conversation is spontaneous.

UNITY FOOD PANTRY COLLECTION



Our next collection date will be **Sunday, December 8**. The holidays are almost here, and Unity Food Pantry is busy getting ready to provide client families with extra food for their celebrations! The greatest holiday needs

are for dessert mixes and boxed potato mixes. Cold cereal continues to be an ongoing need as well. Thank you for enabling the pantry to share the joy of the holidays with their client families! Donations of any -perishable food items are always welcomed. Collection bins are located in the hallways outside the church office and the narthex.

Other Notes

- Beth and Cal Wilson's new mailing address:
 Cal and Beth Wilson
 32 Champagne Lane
 Lisbon, ME 04250

- Prayers are requested for 19 year-old Melanie Kronwald, who has been diagnosed with Stage 4 Hodgkin Lymphoma. She is part of the extended family of Don Farr, brother to church member Lynne Wohleber.



CHRISTMAS EVE AND DAY
 Tuesday / Wednesday, December 24 and 25

NEW YEAR'S EVE AND DAY
 Tuesday / Wednesday, December 31 and
 January 1

THREE RIVERS RINGERS CONCERT

Friday, December 6, 8:00 p.m., BHCC



Please join us in the sanctuary for the Three Rivers Ringers concert. This annual event is **FREE**, and always attracts a nice crowd. It is a fantastic way to usher in the season. **All are welcome!**

BOOKWORMS

WESTERN PA DIAPER BANK

Collections will be made at each 5th Sunday Joint Worship/Potluck Brunch. The next projected collection date will be **December 29**. Sizes 4, 5, and 6 are most in need for babies. XL diapers are needed for our geriatric population. Donations of feminine hygiene products are also welcomed, primarily sanitary napkins.

The collection container is the **Pack 'N Play**, which will be placed in **Fellowship Hall** on collection dates.

Tax-deductible monetary donations are accepted by making your check payable to **Western Pennsylvania Diaper Bank and mailing it to 201 N. Braddock Ave., Suite 124, Pittsburgh, PA 15208**. Please note our church name in the memo line. Remember to save coupons for disposable diapers that you collect but don't use, and place them in the envelope near the Pack 'N Play by the Nursery.

Our ladies' book discussion group meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in Room 101 for fellowship and discussion of a chosen title. Everyone is welcome to read the book for the month and join the discussion.



NO meeting in December.

- January 28--Back Roads**, by Tawnie O'Dell
- February 25--Finding Dorothy**, by Elizabeth Letts

LIGHTING THE STEEPLE

There are no steeple lighting dedications for the month of December.



Merry Christmas from the Eco-Justice Team!

With Thanksgiving behind us, it's time to try to hold onto the warm feelings for friends and family we get from a turkey dinner once a year - just food and fellowship, without gifts, parties, elaborate decorations, or stress (except for the person cooking a turkey for the first time!). The story of Christmas as a poor baby in a stable destined to become a refugee, but also the One who shows us the way to God, should inspire those same feelings. Last month, this newsletter offered some options to spend Christmas in a way that honors both God and God's Creation, and we continue this month.

For people who have already "downsized" and have no wish or space for more "stuff," give the gift of your time. Consider a meal, or a trip to a museum. Memories can be made at a concert or theater presentation. Any live performance will never be truly duplicated on a screen, no matter how many pixels it has.

Give the gift of your helpfulness. Promise to shovel snow, rake leaves, or do other heavy or difficult tasks.

Gifts of experience are also valuable for children. Pittsburgh has wonderful children's theater options, and musical groups often have special programs for kids. Taking young family members on a trip, or hosting them for a time, can spur both bonding and memories.

The Bible has many stories of God providing food for the hungry and weary, and gifts of food have been a tradition for a very long time. If you are baking cookies, cakes, or bread as gifts, present them on vintage plates from Goodwill or another such store.

More and more clothing companies are identifying themselves by their responsible practices. Patagonia, for instance, has long been known for its stylish and useful garment, made from recycled plastic. American Giant, while pricey, sources all its fabrics locally and follows very fair labor practices.

Gift wrapping can be both expensive and wasteful. Consider using something useful later on - a scarf, for instance, or a napkin. Gift bags can be made with a length of fabric and a simple sewing machine.

Many of us had grandparents or parents who carefully opened each gift, then ironed and saved the paper. It works just as well today!

Magazines used to recommend unusual wrappings such as newspaper comics or maps. These are becoming fewer and farther between! However, ideas abound on the Internet, and people are as creative as ever.

Finally, don't forget the Bower Hill Bazaar on December 8!

Coming soon – an exciting and fun challenge for the new year. Stay tuned.



BOWER HILL GREEN GROCERS NEEDS HELP

This mission outreach may be the least known of the many mission projects that our church members have organized and run for many years. For over 30 years, we have been delivering produce from the South Hills Village Market District (Giant Eagle) every Sunday to local people in need. We are currently delivering to SHIM in Bethel Park. Our best guess is that we have delivered approximately 230 TONS of produce to those in need through this long-running project. At the same time, and with the obvious help of Giant Eagle, we have kept that amount of produce from being wasted and ending up in a landfill.

This is a great volunteer project that takes about 1-2 hours one Sunday each month, and we are looking for new volunteers. Anyone who is interested in volunteering and has access to an SUV or van, please contact Dave Hicks at 412-833-7753, 412-427-6606 or email him at davehicks@yahoo.com.



DECEMBER WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Dec. 8: TBD
Dec. 15: Lease Family

Dec. 22: Hicks Family
Dec. 29: Casey

FLOWER DEACONS

Dec. 1: Phyllis Madden
Dec. 8: Cynthia Gissin
Dec. 15: Mary Good
Dec. 22: Melissa Harman
Dec. 29: Bri Ivey

SEXTONS

Dec. 1: Dave Hicks
Dec. 8: Glenn Child
Dec. 15: Dick Headley
Dec. 22: TBD
Dec. 29: TBD

SOUNDBOARD

Dec. 1: Nathan Ivey
Dec. 8: Peter Morgan
Dec. 15: Bill Andrews
Dec. 22: Peter Morgan
Dec. 24: TBD
Dec. 29: Rob Mackey

DISHWASHERS

Dec. 1: Robbins
Dec. 8: Boisvert
Dec. 15: Ivey
Dec. 22: Hohlfelder
Dec. 29: Delestienne



COMMUNION SERVERS

Dec. 1: Kirsten Bruder, Barb Hughes
Nancy and Rich Salvante

LECTORS

Dec. 1: Rev. Fred Leasure
Dec. 8: Ellie Rising
Dec. 15: Steve Boisvert
Dec. 22: Mandy Belardi
Dec. 24: Cynthia Gissin
Dec. 29: Greg Jones, 1st Baptist

GREETERS

Dec. 1: D.J., Sheri and Leo Geis
Dec. 8: Nick and Bethany Gibbs, Caroline Barone
Dec. 15: Cynthia Gissin, JoAnn Goode, Mary Gorski
Dec. 22: Dave and Nancy Green, Barb Oram
Dec. 24: TBD
Dec. 29: Steve and Amber Grier, Craig Grella

ACOLYTES

Dec. 1: Autumn Grella, Gavin Salvante
Dec. 8: Jackson Donahue, Chris Bruder
Dec. 15: Clair McElroy, Mac Harman
Dec. 22: Henry and Helen Carter
Dec. 24: Leah Smith, Bea Watterson
Dec. 29: Aiden Belardi, Ellena Gibbs

COFFEE HOUR

Dec. 1: Gissin / Olinger



December Birthdays

THE BIRTHDAY BLESSING

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

December 3—Katie Philson

December 6—Joan McAnulty
Steve Boisvert

December 7—Bill Andrews
Richard Salvante

December 8—Sophie Hicks

December 10—Estelle Smith
Christine Henney
Kathy Philson
Laura Swedler

December 11—Jason Robosky

December 14—Betsy Prine
Leo Geis
Tim May

December 15—Morgan Kohler

December 18—Melissa Harman
Rob Mackey

December 19—Richard Headley

December 21—Abigail Boisvert

December 22—Beth Gardner

December 23—Kemp Carter

December 28—Catherine Ventura

December 31—Betsy Hohlfelder
Sarah Neusius

BOWER HILL COMMUNITY CHURCH

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

70 Moffett Street
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THE CHURCH OFFICE

[412] 561-4114

Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m.— 2:30 p.m.

PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR CARE LIST

Dennis Geis, Sr.

Lauren Kocher

Betty Mancini, Canterbury Place, 310 Fisk St., #130, Pgh. 15201

Virginia Mason

LuAnne Pattison (former member)

Virginia Reinstadtler, mother-in-law to Mike Riemer

SUNDAY TRANSPORTATION

Need a ride to worship? The deacons would like to provide a ride to worship for members who need one. Please contact the church office several days before Sunday worship, and someone will help schedule your ride.



ARE YOU WILLING TO GIVE A RIDE?

The deacons are compiling a list of people who might be **willing to give rides** to church. There are several people who do not drive who might come to church if they had a ride. If you would be willing to offer rides, please call the church office at 412-561-4114.