

## ~ All Seasons Are Good ~

*"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,

I'd be lying if I said these days were easy. A part of me believed that they would be—these days of quarantine, pandemic, leading a congregation through a period of physical absence. What could be hard about doing church over the internet and telephone? It sounded almost like a mini-break amid the busy (and relatively routine) years of witness and worship and mission. But now that we're in our third month of it, the novelty has worn off, a sense of fatigue has set in, and so has a new kind of worry. My worry is probably a little different from yours, but let's compare: I worry that people will go so long without church that it will begin to slip out of their lives. In time, the comforts, and the sacrifices, and the wisdom of our faith will be lost to a generation. I worry that if I don't navigate these waters carefully, then faithful souls will drift gradually away from the flock, tuning into our weekly broadcasts less and less regularly, getting more and more used to this new way of being. I worry that a sense of apathy and fatigue might settle over even the most dedicated of souls—too many Zoom meetings, too many emails, too little music and real human interaction. What are you worrying about?

Our church committees are still meeting online. Spiritual formation opportunities are being offered online. Session meets regularly, via the internet, and conducts all the same business as we did before the pandemic. Endless email threads, an inbox bursting with daily urgencies, phone calls, recording sessions, online meetings. Somehow being a pastor is not easier than before. The physical absences make it somehow harder, like carrying a loose bundle of precious objects uphill in the sand. Did I drop something? Are we ever going to reach the top? Why does it take twice the effort to get half as far?

I've long known that the beauty and the joy of being a pastor is seeing your faces, hearing your voices, being invited into your stories, walking alongside you as together we bear witness to One who is bigger and wiser than we are and who, in the end, makes all things new. But I know this now more keenly than I did when all was normal. I guess this is my preachy way of saying that I miss you. I miss hearing the church ring with the music of your voices. I miss shaking hands and trading smiles and being less than six feet apart. Church is not a performance for an unseen audience, but a big assortment of personalities and priorities that we bring together in service to a God whom we have all known in different ways, but who has a firm and mysterious hold on us all, a hold that no strange circumstances can ever shake.

But these days too are good. I write these words on my iPhone next to a placid brook in the Allegheny National Forest. This is my sacred place, a forest that healed my soul once long ago, and where I can always expect to find more of the same curative grace. Memorial Day weekend is drawing to a close. My newsletter article is due tomorrow, and the family has hurried home, leaving me to break camp and bid a slow farewell to my happy place. Like all vacations, this one has felt both long and unbelievably short. Rolling in and setting up camp, three days ago, feels like a distant memory. And yet it all sped by so fast. As I loaded heavy cast iron skillets into the back of the car, I caught myself musing, "I don't want to go. What if I just stayed another day...or three?" It was a tantalizing thought for just a few seconds...until I remembered that it's the idyllic days like these that make the ones I'm returning to possible. And it's the days that I'm returning to that make these days so sweet. All seasons are good, if we have eyes to see it. Now I sit beside the stream, slow-typing into a phone with no cell service, and looking forward to getting home and back to work—which means that I had better get busy sweeping out the tent, and the awning, and rolling up the beds...

When we look back on these days, in future years, I wonder what we will recognize as their gift to us. Perhaps we'll find that they helped us to more fully cherish our routines, to value human touch, and faces, and voices. We might come away from these pandemic days with a new awareness of the limits of our technologies. Maybe this season will straighten out our priorities and teach us to love what matters and let go of what does not. I do not know. But I know that these are the days God has assigned to us, and they too are good. Like all things in God's wise and mysterious economy, they tend toward goodness and beauty. I'm glad to be making this journey with all of you.

In Christ's Peace,

~Brian

## Bower Hill Church Reopening

The Bower Hill Church Session met on May 18, to review the recommendations from a task force comprised of individuals representing a variety of backgrounds. The task force was created to answer two basic questions:

- 1) Determine when the church building will open
- 2) What conditions will need to be present

### The following guidelines were adopted by Session:

- The church will not open until sometime after Allegheny County receives Green status.
- Before opening, advice of counsel will be obtained regarding potential liability issues.
- The first activity to be opened will be Sunday morning worship, subject to restrictions.
- Streaming of worship services will continue indefinitely after the church is opened.
- Access for ALL outside groups will require evaluation of social distancing, which will be performed at a later time.

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

## MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Since the beginning of social distancing, I have done daily walks with my girls. To be sure, this was not something we did in the past. We were active, with both girls in several activities occupying our time. Our former level of busyness did not allow time to simply walk and appreciate God's beauty around us. And as avid campers and hikers (at least in our pre-children lives), I was biased against the idea of experiencing meaningful beauty in our own suburban backyard. With warmer weather now upon us, one of the silver linings is that we spend more time enjoying the outdoors. We hear the different sounds birds make, see the progress of buds turn to blooms and then into leaves, watch young squirrels playfully gather food and take it home. Yes, we now even know where the squirrels live, having seen them disappear inside a gnarled branch in our tree. We've stopped to take in the colors of the sky at sunset, now that strict bedtimes and the pull of alarm clocks are things of the past.

This epidemic period of social distancing has brought moments of isolation, but it has also increased our connection with God through nature. And I believe the connection works both ways. I believe God is with us in our quiet moments of wonder as we enjoy His creation. If you have not taken the opportunity to just sit or slowly wander around outside, I invite you to do so. It may provide a meaningful connection you have been missing.

## CALLING ALL STORY-TELLERS

Traditionally, the children's worship format changes during the summer. We move from an organized Bible story and response time activities to fellowship and free play on the playground. Therefore, we want to change the format for our children for the summer.

As a result, the CE committee needs your help! We are recruiting adults, older youth and families who would be willing to share a story with the children. I am especially excited about this, as it will give families and kids a chance to see other members of the congregation that they are missing. You can choose the story or one can be provided for you.

If you are interested in helping out, please sign your name and provide your contact info on the [document link here](#). Amy will contact you to coordinate the details. The best thing about being digital - is that these recordings can be done at any time and released as needed. So while the link has dates listed to help us coordinate the content releases, it doesn't necessarily need to be recorded that week.

You can now find all previous Children's Worship videos and files on the church website. Save this link so you can get to it easily. Files are added each week, so check back often for the newest content. <https://www.bowerhillchurch.org/worship/worship-childrens-education/>

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

Hi Friends,

I miss you! I hope you have been able to see our choir videos - we are enjoying making them. As we begin to imagine worship in our 'new normal,' it's wise to consider disease transmissibility via group singing. Essentially, the current data strongly suggests that we cannot safely sing together until there is widespread community immunity. I pray that this guidance changes or that a vaccine or treatment is found earlier than anticipated. Please look over the **COVID-19 Church Singing Advisory attachment** to this newsletter, and let me know if I can answer any questions. We will get through this together!

-Anne



**PASTORAL PONDERINGS:**

What is "Normal"? The news has used the phrase over and over: "a new normal." The dictionary defines it as a typical state or condition. Well, what we have experienced over the last few months defies all that we would have previously described as typical.

For most of us, the understanding of typical or normal is a great source of comfort. It largely relies on a pattern of behavior that is familiar to us and allows us to have a fairly clear idea of what to expect in our day-to-day life. The lack of knowing what the future holds can be quite distressing.

When we explore the material of the Gospel, we discover that the focus of Jesus' ministry was most definitely to establish a "new normal" as it related to the law and the current practices of the established temple hierarchy. It was in large part the uncomfortableness with this lack of the comfortable that led the leaders to seek to crucify him.

For centuries the work of the church has been to forge ahead issues in social justice to unseat the typical and otherwise normal manner of behaving toward one another. As members of the Body of Christ, perhaps we need to take the initiative to seek out positives that our current conditions present to us. How can we shape a society that is more respectful of others and cares for the those in need as we never have before?

~Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure, Parish Associate

**MISSION COMMITTEE NEWS**

- We have received \$6,705 in COVID-19 Relief and have given \$1,700 to individuals in need. The Mission Committee decided not to give any of the money to the church's missions until we find out if these individuals need more money or if there are more individuals in need. You can still give to this fund and those gifts are appreciated.
- Family Promise is currently taking a hiatus and Bower Hill Church will not be hosting for July. Family Promise is currently making changes, and we don't know what those will be.
- The Mission Committee approved sending \$1,000 to Casa San Jose from Mission Facilitation, and the Committee approved sending \$1,000 to Hekima Place, with the money going to food baskets for the girls' homes, since they are living at home due to COVID-19.
- There are approximately 20 people participating in the Immigration Study via Zoom. It is not too late for you to join us, just send me an email at [lindajames1624@comcast.net](mailto:lindajames1624@comcast.net)
- SHIM worked with the Food Bank to help with the distribution at South Hills Village last week.

**WORSHIP  
PLANS**



**June 7: Trinity Sunday**

Communion

Matthew 28:16-20; Genesis 1:1-2:4a

**June 14: 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7; Matthew 9:35-10:8

**June 21: 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Genesis 21:8-21; Matthew 10:24-39

**June 28: 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Genesis 22:1-14; Matthew 10:40-42



### FROM THE ECO-JUSTICE TEAM

clean air the situation has afforded our lungs! The return to normal will be a slow one, and maybe we will make some conscious changes for the better in our own lives.

Alan Hohlfelder has been compiling data for our congregation electricity challenge, which reflects something of our relatively warm winter. It only included, however, two weeks of the “shelter in place” lifestyle, so we’ll see what the next quarter brings. Even so, the lovely weather, clean air, lower level of traffic noise, and time at peace may all help us think of earlier days, when summers were both lazy and memorable. Consider air conditioner use before turning it on automatically. After all, many, if not most of us grew up in this area at a time when no one had air conditioning, without even much use for it. Granted, we are noticing changing weather patterns more and more clearly, and the most obvious and extreme change seems to be at night. Alan will be sharing more of his energy-saving tips as the season progresses.

And after all, nothing says summer like curtains floating in the breeze and the sound of a wooden screen door!

TED talks are very popular and informative these days, and Bill Cadwell has shared a number with the usual participants of Adult Ed. Here are two suggestions from both the Climate Reality Project and the TED Blog itself:

<https://www.climaterealityproject.org/blog/7-best-ted-talks-about-climate-change>

<https://blog.ted.com/12-talks-to-watch-this-earth-day/>



Things that you  
THINK  
are  
environmentally  
friendly--but aren't.



(See attachment for information.)

### ADULT EDUCATION -- Sam Kidder, Chair

The IRU (Immigration, Refugee, Undocumented Persons) Discovery Group continues its study, *Strangers in the Land: A Six-Week Devotional Guide on Immigration, the Church, and the Bible*. The study began on May 10.

### A NOTE FROM JIM GUFFY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SHIM

On May 16, SHIM partnered with the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank to hold a mass food distribution at South Hills Village. More than 70 volunteers worked together to distribute three pre-packed food boxes to each of the more than 950 vehicles. It was humbling to see us come together in tough times.



The day demonstrated what we've seen for the past few months: the COVID-19 pandemic has brought hunger to families who have never before faced it. Our three food pantries — SHIM Center in Bethel Park, Prospect Park in Whitehall, and Baldwin UP Church — provided more than half a million pounds of food in 2019. Since March of this year, when we began offering drive-through and walk-up pantries in lieu of our shop-through option, we have seen a dramatic increase in people seeking help with basic needs like food and financial assistance. In April alone, nearly half of all visitors came to us for the very first time.

As always, we are here to help. If you or someone you know could use help, please call us at 412-854-9120. Learn more about our services, including food pantries, at [shimcares.org/covid-19-resources](http://shimcares.org/covid-19-resources).

If you are lucky to be in the position to make a gift to support our work, please visit [shimcares.org/give](http://shimcares.org/give). Thank you!



**UNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FOOD PANTRY**

An abbreviated Thank You note to a BHCC donor:

*In the past three months, with what is happening with the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have arrived at a time in which communities are being impacted in so many devastating ways. We at Unity are so grateful to be able to help folks in our community who are in need of assistance in providing food for themselves and their families. If we can help lessen some of the burden of worry over food support, then we are fulfilling our mission. We realize that only through the generous spirit of organizations and individuals can a ministry such as ours continue to support those whose needs are so great.*

*Each week that we serve, our clients express their appreciation to us in ways that are tearful, joyful, with humility, or without words...all said with full hearts and with affirmation to all of us as volunteers that we are blessed to be able to help.*

*In Christ's Service,  
The Volunteers in Ministry of the UPC Food Pantry*

Note: If you would like to make a monetary donation to the Unity Food Pantry, the address is Unity Presbyterian Church, 1146 Greentree Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15220.

**INFORMATION AND COLLECTION SCHEDULE**

Even though we are unsure when the next flea market will be held or what special provisions will be in place to keep everyone involved as safely as possible, the collection of items continues.

Donations can be dropped off from Monday through Friday IN THE PORTICO (the area right outside the office). Please call ahead to be sure that someone is in the office since staff continues to work from home intermittently. In addition, there are special collections on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Dates will be communicated via the weekly email blast.

**If you are unable to arrange a time to drop off items during pricing or when staff is on-site, contact Theresa Child and arrangements can be made to meet at the church or to pick up items from your home (even leaving items on your porch.)**

Please do not include clothes or old TVs. All items must be clean and in working condition. Please contact Theresa Child at treetoowon@yahoo.com or at 412-429-9519 if you have any questions.



*Denny and I would like to thank our church family for all the cards, love and support, prayers, and delicious dinners you have sent us. All were greatly appreciated. We are both now in tough cancer battles and are taking our lives a day at a time. It is so comforting to be part of such a loving church family.*

*May God Bless you all..*

*Denny & Nancy Geis*

**WESTERN PA DIAPER BANK**

No collection scheduled at this time.

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 send to or drop off at the church office.

**WILLIAM E. ANDREWS (BILL)**

Passed away on Friday, May 15. A Memorial Service will be scheduled at a later date. A full obituary can be found on the

website of Hershberger-Stover Inc. Funeral Home, Crafton, PA. If desired, memorials may be made to the Bower Hill Community Church, 70 Moffett St., Pittsburgh, PA 15243.

**BHCC Care List**

**Rick Baumhammers, Jeff Carper  
Dennis Geis, Sr., Nancy Geis  
Jim McAnulty, Dan Zabo**

**Rick Miller, former member  
LuAnne Pattison, former member**





### **LIGHTING THE STEEPLE**

The opportunity to light the steeple of Bower Hill Community Church continues to be successful. Many have sponsored a night in honor of a person or a special occasion. It has also been lit as a way to memorialize a special person who has passed away. Notice of the lighting and the person, event, or date that it commemorates, will appear in the weekly bulletin. The cost of this is \$10 a day and can be sent directly to the church. Requests should include: 1) the date(s) you would like to sponsor; 2) the reason you want to sponsor (in honor, in memory, etc.); 3) the name of the person (s) or the event as you want it to appear in the bulletin; 4) your name. Email your request to: Amy Leasure at [amlea97@hotmail.com](mailto:amlea97@hotmail.com).

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE CAN BE MULTIPLE SPONSORS FOR THE SAME DATE.**

**Dedications for June are as follows:**

#### **June 23**

In honor of Mary Good on her birthday,  
from Catherine Ventura

#### **June 24**

In honor of Denny & Nancy Geis who  
will be celebrating their 53rd  
Wedding Anniversary and as they  
both courageously fight their own  
battles with cancer.

Given by DJ, Sheri, Leo, Jacob,  
Owen, Jim, Jenny, Miriam, and  
Michaela



June 1—Carolyn Boisvert  
Kirsten Rising

June 2—Andy Druckenbrod  
Richard Junker  
Charlie Webler

June 3—Steve Grier  
Judith Linaburg

June 4—Amie Donahue  
Robert Foster

June 5—Nina Helbling

June 6—Laura Philson

June 7—Char Balentine  
Mac Harman

June 11—Lily Philson

June 12—Bill Gardner, III  
Nancy Salvante

June 14—Jeffrey Criswell  
Leah Smith

June 17—Emmitt McElroy

June 18—Dylan Lease

June 19—Katelyn Cole  
Lucy Ivey  
June Schriber

June 20—Riley Jones  
Tim Lease

June 22—Rick Jacobs, Jr.  
Gloria Julian

June 23—Mary Good  
June Stewart

June 25—Coleman Child  
Alfie Watterson

June 26—Linda James

June 27—Nicholas Kane

June 28—Melanie Cole

June 30—Kirk Ketchum

Please take a moment to read through the names, pray for them, and offer them your best wishes! If your name is not listed, it is because the church office does not have your information. Please let us know at 412-561-4114 or at [office@bhccml.com](mailto:office@bhccml.com).

*"Often when you think you're at  
the end of something, you're at the  
beginning of something else."  
~Fred Rogers*