

~ The Return of the Exiles ~

*“ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion...
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, and they shall obtain joy and
gladness. ”*

~ Isaiah 35:10

Dear Members and Friends,

It's usually only bad news that causes me to scrap my plans and rewrite everything. On a few occasions, I've finished writing a nice little devotional sermon on a Friday, looking forward to a free Saturday. But then Saturday rolls around with some grim catastrophe that must be addressed from the pulpit. You cannot talk glibly about how God uses sorrow to make us wiser when everyone's spirits are still reeling from yesterday's earthquake, or hate crime, or mass shooting. There are times when you just have to give up your Saturday and start over.

But this week? This week it's GOOD NEWS that causes me to scrap the newsletter article I had already written. Yesterday, at our August Zoom meeting, Session voted to reopen our exterior property for use by church groups! First the cautions: Strict adherence to social distancing guidelines MUST be observed. Masks are required for all events. Elbow bumps instead of handshakes or hugs! The church building remains closed, and restrooms will NOT be available for use, so please limit your group's events to shorter time slots.

OUTDOOR WORSHIP & FELLOWSHIP: On Kickoff Sunday, September 13, at 9:30 a.m., we will conduct an in-person worship service at Bower Hill Church for the first time since March 8! Our front lawn, bordering Moffett Street, will be marked up into 50 squares of 10 feet each. One square per household—whether it's a family of five or a family of one. Please bring: lawn chairs or blankets to sit on; umbrellas to use against the sun; bread and grape juice for communion. Masks will be required. If you forget to bring one, there will be a limited number on hand. The outdoor services will have to be abbreviated. There will be no singing, no children's sermon, and no offering. But won't it be wonderful to be together again? After the worship service, you will be invited to stay, if you like, and jump from square to square to visit with your friends. Please check the weather each Sunday. There is no Plan B for outdoor worship services, and they will be canceled in case of inclement weather. (No worries, we will remind you of all these guidelines as the date draws closer.)

If in-person worship might jeopardize your health, we would encourage you to talk with your loved ones and a medical professional before coming back to church. Please self-select! We will not turn you away...unless you refuse to wear a mask.

ONLINE WORSHIP: We will continue to produce a recording each week of a full-scale worship service, just as we have done throughout the pandemic. It will be filmed in the sanctuary and will include hymns, anthems, and the same weekly sermon as the outdoor service. As always, the link via YouTube will be emailed to you each Saturday.

Surely I'm forgetting something. However, there is additional information regarding classes, groups, and upcoming meetings on Page 2 of this newsletter. Please contact me if you need any information that I've left out. Thank you for your faithfulness to Christ's church throughout this strange season. The pandemic is not over yet, but we proceed with cautious optimism. It's called hope; it's one of the Big Three (I Cor. 13:13). It will be such a joy to see each other again.

In Christ's Peace,

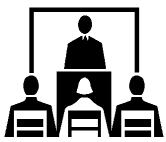
~Brian

GOOD NEWS! -- Opening the Church Information -- (continued from cover sheet)

OTHER CHURCH GROUPS & CLASSES: Please check inside this newsletter to see special announcements from the church groups or classes with which you are involved.

Note: 1st Baptist will also be worshipping outdoors on our property, but unfortunately we cannot yet open the grounds to other outside groups.

SEMI-ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING: Due to the pandemic, outgoing church officers have graciously agreed to extend their terms until their replacements could be elected and installed. Now it's time to give them a break. We will hold a congregational meeting to elect new officers following worship on September 20. If you are attending online, stay tuned for instructions on how to vote.



ADULT EDUCATION: FAITH FORMATION AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Adult Education will meet informally after worship on Sunday, September 13, for the purpose of discussing the method and timing of meetings for the group in the fall. If you do not plan to attend worship in person, but would still like to provide feedback on adult education, please contact Sam Kidder or Amy Grella.



WORSHIP PLANS

September 6: Pentecost 14A

Labor Day Weekend, No Communion

Matthew 18:15-20; Psalm 149:1-5; Romans 13:8-14

“The Debt of Love”

September 13: Pentecost 15A

Kickoff Sunday, Communion

Matthew 18:21-35; Psalm 103:8-13;

Genesis 50:15-21

“Mercy”

September 20: Pentecost 16A

Congregation Meeting

Matthew 20:1-16; Psalm 145:1-8;

Philippians 1:21-30

“The Privilege of Suffering”

September 27: Pentecost 17A

Matthew 21:23-32; Psalm 25: 1-9

Philippians: 2:1-13

“Self-emptying”

PASTORAL PONDERINGS



A book that not only feels good, but is a testimony to hope is “The Notebook,” a 1966 release by Nicholas Sparks. It was later made into a movie in 2004 starring James Garner and a host of others. It is not only a love story but an engrossing episode of a husband dealing with a wife with dementia.

Periodically, in her last year of life, Allie Hamilton (the wife with dementia) has lucid moments which not only enliven her husband, but continue to fuel his determination to remind her frequently of important events in their life together. He never gives up on the potential for her recovery.

Our current moments have been punctuated with peaks of potential normalcy and deep valleys of fear and dread. The longing for meaningful social action has never been abandoned! Media has fueled our concern for authentic leadership and removal of self-centered and reckless behavior. Yet the faith we possess has as its core an abiding hope.

As days drag on, let us read things that are beautiful. The Psalms may be a good place to start. Find movies that are delightful and end happily. If you have trouble locating them, look at some of the kids titles....things you would watch with your grandchildren.

Though we are apart and long to see each other face to face, your church family is still here. We love you and miss you as much as you miss us!

Never, Never, Never forget Hope.

~Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure, Parish Associate

Director of Christian Education and Youth Programs -- Amy Grella

New Children's Worship Programming Kicks Off Sunday, September 13

Our Children's Programs for the new school year, beginning September 13, will be offered in a virtual format for the fall, and are slightly different for each age group. New curriculum has been chosen to ease our transition to the on-line format. See the links in the descriptions below for more information about each class.



Children's Worship (Preschool through Second Grade)

Weekly children's worship stories using the Godly Play format will be pre-recorded and posted on the church website. For this age group, the CE committee felt it was important to focus on providing content that helps parents to engage in Children's Worship with their child. Materials are being prepared for each family that contain everything needed for families to complete the crafts and activities together for each week. These bags will be delivered the first week of September, so that all families have the supplies needed for Children's Worship prior to Kickoff Sunday.

Tweens (Third and Fourth Graders)

We will host weekly 30-minute live Zoom meetings for our tweens at a mutually agreeable time for the group. This year, we will continue to use the Sparkhouse Holy Moly curriculum. Click [here](#) to learn more about Holy Moly. We will also be preparing material packets to send to each tween, so they have everything they need to complete the hands-on activity with the group when we are together.



YOUTH MEETUP OPPORTUNITIES FOR THIS SCHOOL YEAR

Pre-teens (Fifth through Eighth Graders)

New weekly live Zoom meetings will be held for pre-teens entering grades 5 - 8 at a mutually agreeable time for the group. We have procured the Sparkhouse Connect curriculum. Click [here](#) to learn more about Connect. Pre-teens will receive material packets in order to complete the weekly Connect lessons with their peers. Packets will be delivered before Kickoff Sunday, September 13.

Confirmation Class Update

Pastor Brian will resume last year's confirmation class on Sunday, September 13. The class will meet in person on the church grounds in the shade of a tree immediately following worship. Students are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets to sit on. Worship services are only permitted to last 30 minutes under Covid-19 best practice guidelines, so it makes sense that classes, too, should be no more than 30 minutes. We will decide on the best time to meet weekly at that first meeting. We can finish the remaining material and schedule a Confirmation Sunday before the weather gets too cold to meet outside.

Senior High Weekly Meet-up

We have procured new curriculum for a weekly senior high meetup. This weekly meetup will begin once Confirmation is over and will use a biblical narrative journey designed for youth using a collection of learning styles. Click [here](#) to learn more about Echo the Story.

Senior High Youth Group Kickoff in September

Youth grades 9-12 will meet together this year. Led by Miss Amy, this group will plan short, in-person meetings in outdoor locations as the weather permits.

NEWS FROM THE IRU (IMMIGRATION, REFUGEE, AND UNDOCUMENTED PERSONS) DISCOVERY TEAM

In previous articles, the IRU team has been sharing with you what we've been doing to respond to the needs of immigrants, refugees, and undocumented persons. Many of you participated in the Diaper Drive organized by the Mission Committee in July, and we thank you for that!

Since we've begun our work, the topic of advocacy has come up often. We decided to proceed with caution and have chosen not to participate when an organization doesn't give enough details about a particular "ask."

In July, we found information on the Presbyterian Church USA website about an event called Asylum Advocacy Days. This event was sponsored by the Asylum Working Group and the Interfaith Immigration Coalition. Around 400 individuals from 46 states and the District of Columbia participated in around 150 virtual legislative visits; some visits were by conference call and others were over Zoom.

The five of us, Linda James, Betsy Hohlfelder, Darena Lease, Sarah Neusius and Theresa Child, took part in two conference calls, one with a staff member from Senator Casey's office and one with a staff member from Senator Toomey's office.

The event was well organized. There were excellent documents prepared with data and details about our "asks." We learned that asylum laws and policies that have been in place since as early as WWII, written to protect people who have been displaced by political, religious, or other persecution, aren't being followed. The bills we would be asking for the Congresspersons to support are ones that would reinforce those laws or policies.

Both calls lasted about 30 minutes. During that time, we each had 30 seconds to introduce ourselves and explain what concerns us about the current asylum policies. Then a man who was granted asylum told his story and others shared their stories of working with asylees and the dangerous situations they were trying to escape. Our own Sarah Neusius spoke eloquently about how our faith teaches us to welcome the stranger and why that means the laws should be written to show asylum seekers the dignity, respect, and compassion they deserve as human beings. During the call with Senator Casey's office, many thanked him for being cosponsor of some of the bills that were part of our "ask." In her response, Senator Casey's staff member assured us that he would continue to work on getting these bills passed.

Senator Toomey has not co-sponsored any of the bills, so we simply asked him to support them. We were pleasantly surprised when his staff member said that, although it is unlikely he would add his name as a cosponsor, it is possible that he would vote for them if they hit the Senate floor.

We were also asked to follow up with emails to the Senators. Linda James wrote a moving email on behalf of the five of us laying out the bills we support and why. If you are interested in reading the email she wrote, let one of us know and we will happily share it with you.

All in all, we were grateful that the Presbyterian Church USA gave us the opportunity to participate in the event. It was fantastic to work with people from different faiths toward a common goal. But most of all, we felt our participation in Asylum Advocacy Days was a great way to demonstrate how our faith informs our thoughts and actions.



- The office will be closed on Monday, September 7, in observance of Labor Day.
- Session has approved the use of Vanco Payment Solutions to provide online giving options through the church website. Stay tuned for details.



Mission Committee Chairperson -- Linda James

The Mission Committee and the Immigration, Refugees and Undocumented Persons Discovery Team want to give a big thank you for those of you who donated diapers, wipes and cleaning supplies to our immigrant neighbors who live in Brookline and are supported by Cassa San Jose. It is the most we have ever received in a diaper drive. My Subaru Forester was filled with diapers and other items in both the back seat and the back end. We also received \$205.00 in monetary donations, so thank you very much to all who donated.

The following was shared with the Session regarding the Survey Results: We received 41 surveys; this was a 16% return, which looks low but most written surveys do well if they have a 10% return.

The majority of those who returned their surveys indicated they wanted to join PIIN. But the Mission Committee decided to put that decision on hold until we had further discussion with PIIN, because the issues on their website now are not the same issues that we discussed with them earlier.

In regard to the issues, race was first, followed by immigration. We currently have 35 people that were interested in immigration, and from that group we put together the Discovery Team to organize what activities we should explore.

The Mission Committee would like to put together a Discovery Team on race. If you would be interested in serving on the Discovery Team or even interested in exploring the topic of race, please send me an email at bindaleejames.72@gmail.com. Please note the change in my email address.



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|---------------------------------------|--|
| Sept. 1: Dottie Carter | Sept. 17: Carol Knox |
| Sept. 2: Calvin Kocher | Sept. 18: Chloe Snyder |
| Sept. 3: Davis Gray
Emily Lansbery | Sept. 19: Jonathan May |
| Sept. 5: Margaret DeLair | Sept. 23: Henry Druckenbrod
Bryan Webler |
| Sept. 7: Gus Watterson | Sept. 25: Amy Grella |
| Sept. 8: Erin Hohlfelder | Sept. 27: Ashley Brown
Michael Waine
Sam Webler |
| Sept. 9: Aiden Belardi | Sept. 28: Gordon Mitchell |
| Sept. 10: Keith Mason
Phil Neusius | Sept. 29: Barrett Bruce
Ruth Foltz
Ellena Gibbs
Tiffany Marcovsky |
| Sept. 12: Doris Olinger | |
| Sept. 14: Paul Siefken | |

THE BIRTHDAY BLESSING

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 call 412-561-4114 or email office@bhccml.com.

A NOTE FROM PARISH LIFE

The summer is coming to an end, and it's time for Kickoff Sunday, September 13. On that day, we will begin offering an outdoor worship service option in addition to the online service. Groups such as Koinonia and the Youth Group have been given the green light to meet on church grounds as long as they remain outside at all times.

Parish Life will be taking these changes into account and work on providing some fellowship activities for the fall. Most activities will be held via Zoom, but perhaps some will be held on church grounds. Please watch weekly announcement emails and email blasts for information.



If you have any creative ideas about ways to use Zoom for fun fellowship, please contact Theresa Child at treetown@yahoo.com.

ECO-JUSTICE TEAM NEWS

This newsletter has always focused on ways to address the environment at home, and many of us have indeed seen improvements in our carbon footprints from some relatively small changes in lifestyle. This month, however, we're focusing on one quite small business model that has the potential to grow.

Randy Jordan is a fifth-generation dairy farmer in central Massachusetts. A decade ago, he began looking into turning manure from his 300 cows into natural gas, mainly to lower his growing electric bill. Biodigesters, tanks where microorganisms digest manure and turn it into methane gas that can be burned as fuel or converted to electricity, had been around for decades but had turned out to be complicated to manage, especially at a time when electricity was cheaper. Then Mr. Jordan met Bill Jorgenson, an energy consultant, who had a new recipe for success: add food waste to the manure. It would, he believed, increase the energy output as well as boosting income to farmers through tipping fees from businesses looking to unload food waste. With other farmers, they formed AGreen Energy LLC and began operating on five farms. In 2014, they merged with Vanguard Renewables, a start-up tech firm. Vanguard was able to raise \$72 million in venture capital and began partnering with dairy farms all over New England. Food waste comes from firms such as Whole Foods, Gorton's Seafood, Cape Cod Potato Chips, Cabot Creamery and Waschusetz Brewing Co.

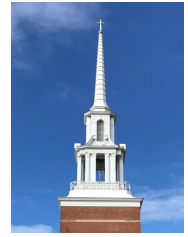
That drew the attention of Dominion Energy, which is now investing more than \$200 million to join with Vanguard to convert the methane to natural gas. Dominion will own the gas. Vanguard will design, develop and operate the digesters. The farmers get paid for the digesters on their property, and get the by-products of the operation -- heat for their property, livestock bedding and fertilizer. Randy Jordan estimates that the heat and hot water save him about \$35,000 annually, the fertilizer \$100,000, and the livestock bedding \$20,000.

Like oil and gas, this project receives government subsidies. There may be no one perfect answer to the problem of sufficient clean energy for the world, but many solutions based on available resources may show a positive effect on both human lives and the planet.

When the winds of change
blow, some people
build walls and
others build windmills.
-Chinese proverb

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.

MULTIPLE SPONSORS can share the SAME DATE.

Dedication for September 1-30

In honor of Jim and Joan McAnulty on their 65th Wedding Anniversary (September 24), given with love from their family.

BHCC Care List

**Jim Burke, Jeff Carper, Dennis Geis, Sr., Nancy Geis
Nancy Green, Mary Gorski, Jim McAnulty**

**Rev. Glenn Loper, 1st Baptist Church
Rick Miller and LuAnne Pattison, former members**

BHCC Information

Rev. Dr. Brian Snyder,
Pastor

Anne Smith
Director of Music Ministries

Parish Associate
Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure

Philip Engel
Financial Secretary

Company of Pastors
Rev. Tami Hooker
Rev. Phil Jamison

Karen Reynolds
Office Administrator

Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure
Rev. Dr. Betty Sykes

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Amy Grella
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