

~ Pandemic Lent ~

"He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him."

~Mark 1:13



Dear Members and Friends,

Happy Lenten Season to you. Lent is a forty-day period in which we encourage you to take up some new discipline, or practice, or expression of faith in order to draw closer to God. All too often, Lent is seen as a time to dutifully give up caffeine or chocolate for a while. Far be it from me to criticize the spiritual practices of others, but I'm not sure what such brief periods of abstinence accomplish. As the pandemic grows long and our tempers grow short; as great cycles of injustice are being unmasked, and systemic racism and white supremacy are being exposed in many of the things we take for granted; as the threats of sedition and economic disruption loom, we might do better than to give up Netflix for forty days...though that couldn't hurt...come to think of it. We might do better to abstain from apathy and take up some costly act of compassion, or justice, or self-identification with the marginalized.

Yes, there is a kind of funk that has settled over us these days. There have been so many deaths in the congregation in recent weeks. People are tired of sitting at their computer screens, and it's becoming easy for once-faithful churchgoers to sense a sort of estrangement from all things church. In response to this "funk," the session has agreed to open the church sanctuary during office hours to anyone who would like to enter, rest, meditate, pray, or just think. It might be nice to get back into that space that you probably haven't seen in about a year. If you might be interested in this opportunity, there is no need to get a key or tell anyone you're coming. Just park in the handicap lot and use the handicap entrance. It will be unlocked during office hours, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. on weekdays.

Also, we're looking at going back to in-person worship services starting Palm Sunday, which is the last Sunday in March. We will be taking reservations for the service on Easter Sunday, too! Check your emails for details.

Who will we be on the other side of this pandemic? What old things in our lives will remain? What new things will come to be? It's hard to say. The future seems like an unknown country. Let us give ourselves permission to rest in God during this Lenten season. Let us practice God's presence in these times, trusting God with our tomorrows and living faithfully today.

In Christ's Peace,

~Brian

Christian Education and Youth Programming -- Amy Grella, Director**Preschool through Second Grade**

Children's worship stories continue to be pre-recorded and posted on the church website each week, and families may retrieve supply bags with materials to complete the crafts described each week. Please contact Amy if you did not receive yours or need additional materials.

We will continue to host monthly live Zoom meetups for preschool through 2nd grade. Our next meetup is scheduled for Sunday, March 7. Information to join will be shared via email a few days beforehand.

Special Lenten Family Egg Hunt Kits Available

The CE committee has assembled a special egg hunt activity for families to do together during Lent. Each egg contains a unique item that corresponds with an activity focused on prayer. Treasure hunts are so much fun for kids!

Hide each egg and send your kids on a hunt for it. When they find the egg, gather in your prayer area to do the activity and pray together. Kits have been provided for families with children through middle-school ages. If you would like additional kits for friends or families, please contact Amy.

An Update on Junior Day Camp and Day Camp

The Christian Education committee has decided that we will not plan for our traditional week-long day camp and junior day camp this summer. Instead, we plan to host shorter, all-outdoor meetups at various locations throughout the summer. We believe this will be easier to plan and will allow us to adapt to the latest information to maintain safety for all participants and volunteers. If you would like to be involved in planning, please contact Amy or the church office.

Tween and Pre-teen Programming -- (Third through Eighth Grade)

Our combined class for 3rd--8th grade kids will continue live Zoom meetups on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. Lessons will be based off of the Sparkhouse curriculum, *Whirl All Kids*. Check your email for a Zoom meeting link.

**Fellowship Fire Pit**

The youth group will be meeting outdoors next to the church playground on Sunday evenings from 7:00-8:00 p.m. each week during Lent. Our first meeting will be Sunday, February 21. We will have the fire pit going to stay warm. Be sure to wear your masks and bring your own chair if you want to sit around the fire. Please check your GroupMe texts and emails to stay up-to-date on our plans.

Summer Mission Trip Update Meeting

Slots are still available for the senior high mission trip to Benton Harbor, MI from July 4-8. Five youth and two adult chaperones will be making the trip. An informational Zoom meeting is scheduled for Sunday, March 14, at 1:00 p.m., to provide updates from YouthWorks on the steps being taken to ensure safety of this summer's mission trips.



March Worship Plans

March 3

Lenten Vespers—7:30 p.m. via Zoom

March 7

3rd Sunday in Lent — Communion
Exodus 20:1-17; I Corinthians 1:18-25

March 10

Lenten Vespers—7:30 p.m. via Zoom

March 14

4th Sunday in Lent
Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-21

March 17

Lenten Vespers—7:30 p.m. via Zoom

March 21

5th Sunday in Lent
Jeremiah. 31:31-34; John 12:20-33

March 24

Lenten Vespers—7:30 p.m. via Zoom

March 28

Passion Sunday / Palm Sunday
Mark 1:1-11; Mark 14:1-15, 47



April 1

Maundy Thursday

There will be a service via Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

April 2

Good Friday

The church is open for private prayer
from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

April 3

Holy Saturday

Please observe this day in prayer.

April 4

Easter Sunday

A joyous celebration of resurrection will take
place both in person and via livestreaming!
See future announcements to learn how to
reserve your pew!

PASTORAL PONDERINGS



Lent has always been a downtime in the life of the church. Many traditions will not permit weddings, baptisms, or any other rite that would be of a celebratory nature. It is to be a season of introspection and spiritual renewal. In past years, the messages have been that of pausing our busy lives to reflect and deepen our commitment to the faith.

Lent 2021 will be much different, as the pandemic has set a different tone. In 2020, we were forced to reassess daily routines, abandon our busy agendas, and refocus on sometimes stressful new adventures. The *normal* has been redefined! Amid the current reality, what could this season be for us?

As Jesus preached to a time of tension and anxiety, the people were seeking him to change the *normal* of that time. They wanted to rid themselves of the fear of the Roman occupation and the compromised message of their religious hierarchy. The message of Jesus was for them to regain hope by deepening their relationships with each other and redefining the definition of neighbor. There are so many similarities to our concerns today.

Let us reread His messages today and understand with fresh eyes how His love for all impacts us today.

Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure, Parish Associate

FROM THE ECO-JUSTICE TEAM



From the earliest days of the church, Lent has been a time for spiritual repentance and renewal. Shortly before Ash Wednesday, Bower Hill members received an e-blast with two challenges from the Eco-Justice Team. Both concerned lowering the amount of landfill waste that we create, and they were followed by an Adult Education session on the topic. Many of the suggestions are easy: low-hanging fruit, such as avoiding plastic water bottles, disposable straws, and plastic utensils. Other possibilities involve more thought and planning. Fine mesh bags can be used for produce, and some of it doesn't even need to be bagged. For instance, do you really need to bag one pepper, three apples, two lemons, or a bunch of bananas? You might also start paying attention to whether something is wrapped in plastic or paper packaging, as the paper can be recycled. The term "mindfulness" has become a cliché these days, but people who pay attention to their choices find a more meaningful experience in everyday life. It turns out that seeking a less trashy life leads to a more fulfilling one!

We hope to gather some resources for this journey on the [Eco-Justice section of the BHCC website](#).

Following the link above will take you to our newest venture: providing online resources on caring for our environment, community organizations committed to responsible Creation care, and information about upcoming events and activities both locally and around the world. As we grow, we will be adding recommendations for books, articles, websites, and podcasts to keep up with this complex and challenging issue.

ADULT EDUCATION IN MARCH

During the month of March, Adult Education will continue on Sunday mornings at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom. March sessions are still being finalized at this time, but we plan to stick with our themes of "**Racial Justice**" and "**Spiritual Self Care**". Look for sessions on black history sites in Pittsburgh, a class on implicit bias using the Pittsburgh Presbytery's series "**Awareness and Transformation: Conversations About Life, Race, and Faith**", and another discussing a video from the "**Living the Questions**" series centered on spiritual issues related to restoring relationships.

Details and Zoom links will be announced in upcoming E-blasts. We hope you will make a plan to join us!

--Sarah Neusius and Rick Jacobs
Co-Chairs, Adult Education



LIGHTING THE STEEPLE

Dedications

March 21

In loving memory of our mother, Lucille A. Heckman, by Lynn Heckman, Loreen Dreven, and Lee Heckman.

EVERY DAY in 2021

-- In prayer for World Peace, from Susan Hill Brown, former member of BHCC

The opportunity to light the steeple of Bower Hill Community Church continues to be successful. Many have sponsored a night in memory or in honor of a person or a special occasion. 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.



Dear Bower Hill Friends:

Greetings from North Carolina! I do enjoy living so close to my daughter, but I will really miss seeing all of you when the church reopens. I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of cards, gifts and well-wishes I received from Bower Hill members when I moved. Thank you all for your affection and generosity of spirit. I intend to remain a member of the church and will worship with you as the services continue to be broadcast.

Bill Cadwell

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The 2020 Annual Report has been sent electronically to all members with an email address registered at the church office. Households without email access may either pick up a paper copy of the report in the church office or request that one be mailed to them.



GEORGE L FREAS

April 4, 1923 - February 12, 2021

NANCY JEAN GEIS

February 1, 1944 - February 17, 2021

DAVID C. GREEN

May 7, 1933 - February 14, 2021

MARCH



March 1 Phil Johnson
Jay Reisinger

March 2 Dan Zabo

March 5 Daniel Boisvert
Anna Mezyk

March 6 Betty Jonosy

March 7 Deborah Carter
Leo Goode
Brielle Gray

March 12 Megan Henney
Addie Ivey

March 13 Ronald Linaburg

March 14 Beth Ruh
F. Spangenberg

March 16 Lynne Wohleber

March 18 Chris Bruder
Megan Gardner
Cindy Waller

March 21 Chris Kelley

March 25 William Ewing
Gavin Salvante

March 26 Cynthia Gissin

March 27 Matt Belardi
Darenda Lease
Mike Riemer
Bob Winnett

March 28 Gabriel Mezyk
Peter Morgan

March 29 Donna Williams

March 30 Jody Nagel

March 31 Judy Delestienne

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.



BOOKWORMS

The group continues to meet on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 1:00 p.m., via ZOOM.

March 23 - *The Vanishing Half*, by Brit Bennett

April 20 - *Transcendent Kingdom*, by Yaa Gyasi

UPCOMING DEADLINE

Article submissions for the **April newsletter** are due into the church office by March 17.



BHCC Information

Rev. Dr. Brian Snyder, Pastor

Parish Associate, Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure

Company of Pastors

Rev. Tami Hooker

Rev. Phil Jamison

Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure

Rev. Dr. Betty Sykes

Amy Grella, Director

Christian Education and Youth Programs

Anne Smith

Director of Music Ministries

Philip Engel

Financial Secretary

Karen Reynolds

Office Administrator

THE CHURCH OFFICE

(412) 561-4114

office@bhccml.com

Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m.— 3:00 p.m.

www.BowerHillChurch.org

UNITY FOOD PANTRY COLLECTION

We are starting to collect again for the Unity Food Pantry. Items can be brought to the church and placed in the collection bin located in the hallway outside the church office.

Currently, the Pantry's greatest need is for boxed cereal--preferably low sugar varieties--as well as for feminine hygiene products of all types. Donations of any non-perishable food items are always welcomed, as well.

The Unity Food Pantry is grateful to the Bower Hill Church congregation for their constant, faithful support over the years.

WESTERN PA DIAPER BANK

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 and feminine hygiene products that you collect. You can drop them off at the church office during regular business hours OR you can mail them with your weekly offering.



COLLECTION ONGOING

Flea Market items can be dropped off from Monday through Friday inside the Portico door (the area right outside the office). Please call ahead to be sure that someone is in the office during business hours (9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.). Watch for future E-blasts about special collection dates (mostly Saturdays).

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.

BHCC Care List

Jeff Carper, Jean Dunfee

Dennis Geis, Sr., Nancy Green

Barbara Oram, Donna Williams

LuAnne Pattison, former member

