

~ The Shelter of the Most High ~

"You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress'."

~ Psalm 91:1-2

Dear Members and Friends,

Let's talk about the year behind us and the one in which we now find ourselves. In that old TV show, *The Dukes of Hazard*, Bo and Luke Duke were forever being chased by the sheriff of Hazard County. But as soon as they sped across the border into the next county, they were safe, and the sheriff would jump out of his car, and shake his fist, and throw his cowboy hat on the ground. His jurisdiction ended at the county line. I think some of us almost thought that 2021 would be the county line, and the ills of 2020 would come screeching to an angry halt on December 31 of that year, unable to reach us.

Alas, such is not the case! And yet, we survived the trials and troubles of the past year, haven't we? What got us through it? The habit of survival. Hope for a better day. Maybe a dash of faith. The joys that we've built up over the course of a lifetime helped to keep us cheerful and focused, too, knowing that joy is possible and perennial. We took comfort in those things that have always sheltered us and helped us to make sense of hard times. Or, as the psalmist says, "You who abide in the shadow of the Almighty will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress'." The strength that guided us through the days past will lead us into tomorrow, and into this New Year—whatever it brings.

In early January, we bid a fond farewell to Bill Cadwell. Bill has been our very thorough and meticulous clerk of session since 2008. Indeed, we have never had another clerk in my time at Bower Hill. He has spent these past twelve years creating order and leaving us with carefully-worded documents instructing us on how-to-do-what and when. We will miss Bill sorely, but we celebrate the next chapter of his life. He is moving to North Carolina to be close to his daughter. Thank you, Bill, and Godspeed!

2020, for all its misfortunes, did push us rapidly into the 21st century. Our Communication Committee responded with speed and skill in putting our programs and services online, and our musicians and choir excelled (and still excel) at bringing us first-rate worship music—recorded privately in their homes and combined into a virtual choir.

Also in 2020, it became possible to make online financial contributions to our church. As Covid-19 pushed us to increase our online presence, people from faraway places began attending our virtual worship services and looking for ways to make the occasional contribution. Some sent checks, but now they can simply go to our website and click on the "giving" button. Of course, we are always grateful for any gift to our ministry, but if you are a regular contributor, it's still best to give through your bank, or with a check, because online gifts always entail a transaction fee.

And now the short month of February stretches out ahead of us. The holy season of Lent begins with an Ash Wednesday service, online, on February 17. Watch your inbox for details. The Eco-Justice Team will be making suggestions for Lenten practices centered in Earth care. Also, be sure to check your emails for announcements concerning our evening services in Lent. Happy February, friends. And how shall we live the day that has been given us? "In the shelter of the Most High, in the shadow of the Almighty."

In Christ's Peace,
~Brian

Christian Education and Youth Programming

Children's Worship (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.

Fourteen children participated in our first ever virtual Sunday-After-Christmas pajama and movie meetup. While we do miss seeing each other in person, this was a record number for this event! We will continue to host monthly live zoom meetups for preschool through 2nd grade. Our next meetup is planned for Sunday, February 7. Information to join will be shared via email the first week in February.

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

Our combined class for kids in 3rd - 8th grade 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 the Zoom meeting link.

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.

Senior High Summer Mission Trip

We have reserved a senior high mission trip to Benton Harbor, MI from July 4-8 through YouthWorks. There are five youth, and two adult chaperones who will be making the trip, and there are openings available for any youth not registered who would still like join us. We registered early to take advantage of the COVID Refund Protection Plan, which stipulates that any individual may cancel without penalty through May 3. This plan extends over our entire group, so even new registrations to our group will receive this benefit.

A fire pit was purchased with funds from the pie sale, and our next meetup will be outdoors so we can try it out! Please check your GroupMe texts and emails for upcoming dates.

Adult Education Update

Adult Education will continue its Zoom sessions through January and February on the two themes of **Spiritual Self Care in Uncertain Times** and **Racial Justice**. Also, we will soon be switching back to Sunday meetings. Stay tuned for E-blasts with details on topics and times, as well as Zoom links.

--Sarah Neusius, Chairperson

CONGREGATION MEETING NOTICE



By official call of the Session, the first 2021 regular meeting of the congregation of Bower Hill Community Church (Presbyterian U.S.A.) will be held on **Sunday, February 28, via Zoom.**

The agenda for the meeting includes a review of the 2020 Annual Report and year-end financial statement, along with presentation of the 2020 operating budget as adopted by Session. Additional agenda items will be announced via E-blasts, along with instructions on how to vote.

--Bill Cadwell, Clerk of Session

Given the rise in positive rates, the spike in cases from the post-holiday season, and the mutations of the virus that have occurred, it is not prudent to consider reopening the building at this time.



In-person worship service continues to be suspended at least through February. Likewise, the building is closed to all groups.

Though the church office will remain open, we urge you to only visit the office if absolutely necessary. Wearing a mask is required, and if your visit is only to pick up an item, please call ahead so that it can be placed in the hallway.

We feel these measures are absolutely necessary for the well-being of all concerned.

-- BHCC Task Force

January--February WORSHIP PLANS

January 24: 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Mark 1:14-20

January 31: 4th Sunday after Epiphany

Mark 1:21-28; I Corinthians 8:1-13

February 7: 5th Sunday after Epiphany Communion

* Please have bread & grape juice available.
Isaiah 40:21-31; Mark 1:29-39

February 14: Transfiguration

II Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9



February 17: Ash Wednesday

February 21: 1st Sunday in Lent

Genesis 9:8-17; Mark 1:9-15

February 28: 2nd Sunday in Lent

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Mark 8:31-38

BHCC MEMORIAL FUND INFO

Following the death of Elwood "Woody" Hughes in 2015, money was contributed to the BHCC Memorial Fund by friends and family in remembrance of his life. Woody was an active member of this church for more than 45 years, serving as an elder, teacher and usher when called upon.

These contributions have now been placed in the BHCC Memorial Garden account. Money in this account is designated to perpetuate the improvements and care of the Memorial Garden, which continues to be a place for reflection and prayer for the families whose loved one is interred there.

PASTORAL PONDERINGS

The month of January is reasonably void of traditions. It can be a down month as Christmas decorations are packed away, excitement has ebbed, and cold temperatures and more snow sets in. Perhaps you are one of those that begins to look ahead and make lists of what needs to be accomplished.

Amy has worked as a chat coach for Weight Watchers for several years, and the new year is always busy. People are deciding they are going to get back to a sensible diet after all the splurging over the holidays. Others are the products of a resolution to finally pare down to a more healthy weight.

It seems that regardless of our disposition, January launches a new year with a look ahead of things to be accomplished. From a theological understanding, it is the month in which we celebrate the baptism of Jesus on Epiphany Sunday. The sacrament has always been a hallmark of a new beginning. Sin is washed away, promises are made, and a child is initiated into the fellowship of the Christian community. In the Wesleyan tradition, a new covenant is celebrated with the following prayer:

*I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with
whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for thee or laid aside
for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have
nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy
pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on
earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.*

-- Rev. Dr. Fred Leasure, Parish Associate

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

FROM THE ECO-JUSTICE TEAM

Although the newsletter this time is for two months, this is being written in the first days of 2021, as we are all thinking about the hopes and challenges of the year to come. Hopes should outweigh everything for this year, as vaccinations become more available, and a new administration in Washington promises more civility, honesty, and integrity.

Challenges remain, however, even as we see more solutions arising on the horizon. Deb Boisvert has a cousin in Sonoma County, CA, whose Christmas message to family included these words: "The wildfires have been so scary. We are SO close to this year's fire. We know people who lost their homes and acreages on which they depended for livelihood. Each year so far I rationalize - it won't cross the freeway, the river, the redwoods burn slowly (they do) but no doubt it is getting worse. We have every system we can think of in place, backups of everything, generators, communications, hoses, air purifiers. But it doesn't take away the anxiety or deal with the awful air."

Of course, you don't have to live near raging wildfires to endure awful air. I hope many of you will be attending the Adult Education session on Saturday, January 9, which will include a presentation from the maker of a film about the air in Clairton. For a bit of perspective, here is some information from the EPA which was current as of 11/30/2020: <https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/kbtc.html>.

As we move into the new year, the Eco-Justice team is hoping to find partners to aid us in our mission. Within the congregation, we hope to continue to work with the Adult Education committee, to find ways we can plug into BHCC's new foray into racial issues, and how we can be part of the solution. We are also reaching out to other churches and faith organizations to find out what is possible if we work together. Also, keep checking the church website for new information. We are all finding new directions Christ can lead us, even in a time of isolation and danger. God is truly present in the world!

These websites have been mentioned previously, but are each helpful in different ways:

The Green Voice (<https://pittsburghearthday.org/green-voice-newsletter/>) is helpful for local resources on things such as gardening, food, and shopping.

PA Interfaith Power and Light (<https://paipl.us>) offers *Sip of Sustenance*, twice a week inspirational quotations and messages.

THANKS FROM THE MISSION COMMITTEE

The Mission Committee would like to thank everyone for their generous support of our Angel Trees this year.

--Gift cards were provided to Casa San Jose clients totaling over \$1,200.

--Donations to Hekima Place were \$1,250.

--Seven big 40 gallon bags of socks, t-shirts, outerwear, pajamas, children's books, towels, and blankets were provided to the Veteran's Leadership Program, along with five toasters and two coffeemakers.

--At least three gifts were provided to each of the six members of our adopted Family Promise family.

--Special thanks to Madelyn and Julian Salvante for wrapping our Family Promise gifts and for delivering them to our family in Brackenridge.



Happy Birthday!



January and February

January 2—Amy Leasure

January 3—Eric Lansbery
Lynn Sirinek
Sharon Suritsky

January 4—Karen Reynolds

January 5—Erik Johnson

January 7—Drake Robbins

January 9—Eloise Grier
Mary Ann Scott

January 11—Lynn Mezyk

January 13—Sydney Saba

January 14—Phyllis Madden

January 15—Matthew Kocher

January 16—Nina Mackey
Richard Rothrock

January 21—Beverly Burke
Ellie Marcovsky
Claire McElroy

January 22—Lee Ferrero
Dave Hicks

January 24—Lindsay Bruder
Julian Salvante

January 26—Brian Snyder
Inese Baumhammers

January 27—Adam Andrews
Anne Smith

January 28—Sally Child

January 31—Nathan Rising
Julia Snead

February 1—Nancy Geis

February 3—Jaime Lease

February 4—Nathan Gray

February 8—Susan Hicks

February 10—Lauren Kocher
Maggie Weblor
Beth Wilson

February 11—Brianna Brown
Caroline Donahue

February 13—Nathan Ivey
Glenn Williams

February 14—Rachel McElroy

February 15—Dennis Geis Sr.

February 16—Jim Kane

February 18—Karl Casey

February 20—Taylor Linaburg

February 22—LuAnn McNickle
Mary Ryfun

February 24—Scott Olinger
Val Watterson

February 26—Matthew Arner
Chris Robbins

February 27—Jean Barker
Nick Gibbs
Norma Grubb
Chris May
Tracy Riggle-Young

February 29—Emily Chin

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.

The church office will be closed on the following dates:

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY
Monday, January 18

PRESIDENT'S DAY -- Monday, February 15

UPCOMING DEADLINE

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

BOOKWORMS

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

January -- *American Dirt*,
by Jeanne Cummins

February -- *The Vanishing Half*,
by Brit Bennett

March -- *Transcendent Kingdom*,
by Yaa Gyasi



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. — 2:30 p.m.
www.BowerHillChurch.org



LIGHTING THE STEEPLE

Dedications

EVERY DAY in 2021

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

January 18

-- In honor of granddaughter, Jennifer Sykes, on her birthday, from Betty Sykes



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.

JAMES W. CORBETT

November 13, 1932 - November 27, 2020

JUNE C. STEWART

June 23, 1924 - January 12, 2021



BHCC Care List

Jeff Carper, Jean Dunfee
Dennis Geis, Sr., Nancy Geis,
Dave and Nancy Green,
Linda James, Barbara Oram

Rev. Glenn Loper, 1st Baptist Church
LuAnne Pattison, former member

