

STONE CHURCH NEWS

December 2020



From the Pastor's Desk

I have never been great at dreams; I don't tend to remember them - and if I do, they are typically nightmares so I wake up either scared or anxious. Ben has dreams that make me jealous - he dreams he is a superhero flying around. He wakes up empowered and excited. I have been known, however, to daydream. To think ahead and imagine. I am often guilty of over-dreaming - or overplanning - especially given what the reality of our

lives can actually hold. I am particularly susceptible to this around the Christmas season. My head fills with images of perfectly decorated Christmas trees with presents that are wrapped in color-coordinated ways - all of which match exquisitely with the table decor. And the table is, of course, filled with enough homemade goodness to feed a good portion of the northern hemisphere. Don't get me started on the Christmas events I dream up - perfect experiences for the children with the just right mixture of family time, faith-formation, and fun. Bless my heart, I could create a Hallmark-movie-type world for our family if I just had enough time and energy.

But I don't. And I shouldn't. God has bigger and better and deeper dreams for us than this. Dreams of peace and wholeness. Of goodwill for all. Of Good News: freedom, salvation, hope, and love. And if I get distracted by the decorations, I may miss out. If I force my timeline of events, I may miss the wonder and surprise of faith - born anew in our hearts. If I shoot for perfection, I may forget that sadness and longing and grief are real parts of the story - important parts of the story! There is already a lot of pressure on this particular Christmas season. Some, in a rushed desire to both find some happiness and draw 2020 to a close, began decorating for it at Halloween. Others are dreading the ways that the pandemic will alter beloved traditions and gatherings. But the call of advent remains the same. Wait. Pay attention. Trust. And like the characters in the story - Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the Magi - allow your life and your dreams to be re-oriented by this birth.

All in All

by Sarah Are

It takes strength to dream.

I imagine it's that same strength that leads people to say,
"I love you" first,

Those three vulnerable words,

Wrapped in heart strings,

Whispered,

Because what could be

Is too good to keep quiet about.

It takes strength to choose joy.

It takes strength to push the covers

Off our weary bodies morning after morning,

To plant weary feet on solid ground,

And look for signs of beauty.

It takes strength to remember that we are not alone,

But the story starts with bone of bone and flesh of flesh.

That feels like so long ago.

Oh yes, it takes strength to dream.

I imagine that's why many choose not to,

For it would be far easier to simply sleep.

But there are always those who dream,

Those who are up at night picturing what could be,

Because this world is too good not to.

So we say, "I love you."

We push the covers off.

We find solid ground.

We look for beauty.

And we dream.

We dare to dream.

Stone Church Leadership Team Meeting

“Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.”

We are quickly approaching one of the busiest times of the church. A time both loved and, well, perhaps a little dreaded by church staff, as the joy and intensity of Advent comes upon us. This year, of course, will look a lot different. My thoughts first turned to how we can keep things the same despite COVID. But we can't, of course. Fortunately, your Leadership Team has a broader view than that. As I listened and contemplated at our November meeting, it was clear that the most important thing in mind was how to care for others, in part by creating new experiences, and in part by reinventing traditions.



Pastor Cindy shared with us the unsurprising increased need for pastoral care during this time, including to college students struggling to balance the challenges of college in a pandemic. They have also particularly reached out to parents with kids still at home. On a brighter note, we will be reinventing all the delightful chaos and fun of a Christmas pageant – only this time with one especially designed to take place over Zoom! I can't wait to see what the pastors' kids do... We'll also have virtual Christmas caroling, where families and individuals record songs in a group Zoom session, later to be delivered with cookies. While I will leave the singing to those with more musical talent, I am definitely going to be there watching (in my comfy clothes with a glass of eggnog – what could be better?). And I can't wait to see what they are putting in the Advent bags that they are giving to all the families in the church! I'm grateful to our pastors, Marty, and the Worship team for finding creative and fun ways to reinvent these traditions.

The Deacons are also helping make Advent happen. They are sending Christmas cards to everyone in their "flock" and making it possible for each of those people to ALSO send a card to someone in the church by including a postcard and stamp. It's a way to help keep building community and bringing joy to one another. They have also been continuing to do their regular ministry of care to our community. The Witness Team continues to reach out to the broader community, helping with Salvation Army bell ringing, helping prepare Thanksgiving food baskets, and hosting the amazing Alternative Gifts Bazaar. Have you checked it out yet? It's dangerously (to the wallet) wonderful. I think all my Christmas gifts may come from there this year...

Hospitality Team has been thinking hard to come up with a fun activity that can be done at different times by different people, but still shared by our church family. They have come up with a photo scavenger hunt that will be themed around gratitude and specific Bible verses. Knowing our community, I expect everything from the beautiful to the profound, with perhaps a bit of inanity thrown in...

I would be remiss to neglect to mention the hard work of our Finance Team and co-treasurers. Caring for people takes resources, and they work hard to track those resources and remind us to financially support our church and its care for others. But Facilities Team, that team that deals with both maintenance and crises with our facilities, had the shortest report, "nothing broke." This is the only team where we are glad when they don't have much to share...

As we head into the joy and chaos of Advent at a time that seems so different, at a time when we have to make difficult decisions about staying safe despite our desire to see others, know that you are being thought of and cared for by Stone Church. Most activities this season can happen from anywhere, so no matter where you are, join us for things that are deeply meaningful or delightfully silly – and maybe even both at the same time.

Sharon Yohn

Vice-chair of Leadership Team

From Your Finance Team...

Thanks to all who have pledged support for next year! We are still behind in the number of pledges and the amount pledged compared to the prior year. Still planning to pledge? Contact the church office, a member of the finance team or find pledge information on the Stone Church website.

Also, thanks so much for the financial support during 2020 (this most unusual year)! Below is information on our budget status. Not sure of the status of your pledge for 2020? Contact the church office.

2021 Pledges (As Of Nov. 24, 2020)

	2019	2020	2021
Number of Pledges	68	68	55
Total Amount	\$229,148	\$244,253	\$225,174

2020 Finances (As Of Oct. 31, 2020, % of year 83.3%)

Income	Actual to 10/31	Budget	% of Budget
Pledged	\$201,680	\$245,000	82%
Not Pledged	\$14,884	\$23,000	64%
Good Faith	\$0	\$11,000	0%
Trust Income	\$5,354	\$6,800	79%
Dividends	\$353	\$1,200	29%
Interest	\$16		
Endowment	\$0	\$1,000	
Total Income	\$222,287	\$288,000	77%

Expense	Actual to 10/31	Budget	% of Budget
Christian Ed.	\$478	\$4,325	11%
Property	\$36,890	\$39,200	94%
Hospitality	\$78	\$975	8%
Deacons	\$432	\$1,550	28%
P&A	\$157,584	\$196,330	80%
Witness	\$32,942	\$40,060	82%
Worship	\$3,450	\$5,560	62%
Total Expenses	\$231,854	\$288,000	81%

Income	Actual	Budget
Total Income	\$222,287	\$288,000
Total Expenses	\$231,854	\$288,000
Net Income	-9,567	\$0

Please seek out a member of the finance team if you have any questions: Bob McMinn, Daisy Decker, Jeff Closz, Jamie White, John Wright



Summer Camp 2021

The staff at Camp Blue Diamond recently shared the following update about Summer Camp 2021: "Online registration is open and can be found at www.campbluediamond.org! Summer Camp brochures and registrations will be sent to all past campers in January. Take advantage of the early-bird

registration fee before March 1, which will be especially important if we need to limit the number of campers per session.

We are excited about the Summer Camp 2021 season, but we are mindful that it will look different as we navigate the realities of COVID19. There are still many unanswered questions, but considerations will be given to limiting the number of campers per session, operating in strict Family Groups (keeping the same small group of staff and campers together for all activities), hiring additional staff, and adding health and sanitation protocols. If affordable rapid testing is available we may be able to operate much as we have in the past, but it's too soon to know if testing will be an option.

Upon This Firm Foundation

Construction has begun on the third project of CBD's capital campaign, a new washhouse for the Family Campground. It is well underway, with the foundation and blockwork nearly completed. Camp hopes to have the building completed before the 2021 RV Campground season in May.

Upcoming Events

Jr. High Retreat for grades 6-8	February 19-21
Junior Retreat for grades 3-5	March 5-6
Youth Retreat for grades 9-12	March 19-21
Quilt & Craft Camp	April 23-25
Annual Dinners	May 1 & 2
Father/Son Retreat for grades K-8	May 7-8
Senior Adult Day	June 4
Hoss's Fundraiser	June 13
Brethren Open Golf Tournament	August 10
Family Camp	August 20-22
Heritage Fair 2021	September 18

Have questions?

Contact your Camp Representative, David Meadows.

From our Witness Team...

Donate to The Village at Morrisons Cove... find a large print crossword puzzle book and send it to the address below. It will be used in Christmas gift bags for the residents!

Mike Lightner, Activities Director
The Village at Morrison's Cove
429 South Market Street
Martinsburg, PA 16662

Be a Salvation Army Bell Ringer... the Salvation Army has an urgent need for volunteers for bell ringers for their red kettles. The money collected from the kettles is an important source of income for their providing of boxed meals at Thanksgiving and Christmas for those who are needy in our community. To volunteer call the Salvation Army at 814-643-1430.

Stone Church of the Brethren Advent and Christmas Story Calendar

November 22 – Advent Gift Bag Pick-up
After church - 12:30 p.m. 17th Street Side of Church

November 29 – First Sunday of Advent
10:45 a.m. Worship on Zoom

Tuesdays in December – Advent Devotionals
7:00 p.m. on Zoom, Tuesday evenings Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22

December 5 – Alternative Christmas Gift Bazaar Pick-up
9:00 a.m. 17th Street Side of Church

December 6 – Second Sunday of Advent
10:45 a.m. Worship on Zoom

December 6 – Virtual Caroling
3 p.m. on Zoom

December 12 – Virtual Christmas Recital
7 p.m. Livestream

December 13 – Third Sunday of Advent
10:45 a.m. Worship on Zoom

December 13 – Caroling CDs and Cookie Delivery
3 p.m. 17th Street Side of Church

December 17 – Longest Night Service
7 p.m. Service on Zoom

December 20 – Fourth Sunday of Advent
10:45 a.m. Worship on Zoom with *Christmas Pageant!*

December 24 – Christmas Eve
7:00 p.m. Service on Zoom
9:00 p.m. “Silent Night” on the church lawn

December 27 – First Sunday after Christmas
10:45 a.m. Worship on Zoom

See the Friday Flash each week for more details!

Sojourners

Adults of all ages are invited to join Sojourners as they study the book *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*, by Jemar Tisby. It’s “an acclaimed, timely narrative of how people of faith have historically--up to the present day--worked against racial justice. And a call for urgent action by all Christians today in response.” **The Sojourners class meets via Zoom at 9:15 a.m. each Sunday!** Contact Virginia Biber, Sojourners Coordinator to join us for this timely study!



Mid-Week Bible Study WEDNESDAY nights @ 7pm*

(*there will be no Mid-Week Bible Study on the weeks of Dec. 9th and 30th!)

Join us as we take a deeper dive into the scripture.

See the **Friday Flash** for details on how to join us on Zoom via computer or phone.

And, if you’re unable to make it, but still want to listen in, contact the office to have an audio recording sent to you!

Miguel Angel Asturias Academy

Read on to the next page for a detailed report from the Academy! But first, read about Abigail’s story.

Abigail, a 2nd grader who lives with her mother and older brother, was thrilled to receive one of the food baskets distributed by our partner school. Her mother works cleaning houses and contracted a serious case of the coronavirus, and Abigail’s brother cared for Abigail while their mother recovered in the hospital.





Miguel Angel Asturias Academy | A Fair Start

November 15, 2020

Celebrating a quarter century of providing a transformative education to Guatemalan children during a pandemic was not what our Guatemalan partners at the Asturias Academy (AA) had in mind, but they have persevered under adverse conditions: a severe national lockdown that resulted in school families already on the edge experiencing hunger and hardship; remote instruction for the last six months of the school year when many students did not have reliable internet access; and most parents being unable to pay their children's reduced tuition due to loss of employment and income. Despite these obstacles, our friends have been resourceful and creative as always and managed to fulfill their educational mission. Click on the following link to see some images and sounds from their small celebration of the school's 25th anniversary posted on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/karlita.ch.3/posts/10217691437212898>.

Jorge Chojolán reports that they began the school year in January with 215 students, 55% female and 45% male. After about two and a half months of normal instruction, the COVID-19 shutdown necessitated an immediate switch to remote instruction for the remainder of the year. Only 45% of students were able to regularly attend online classes via Google Classroom, another 30% attended once or twice per month or per week, and another 25% did not have any access to online instruction. Teachers and staff underwent a crash course in online instruction and prepared instructional packets that they delivered to students' homes. By the end of the year, only five students had to withdraw from school, and 99% of the remaining students passed and will move on to the next grade.

In addition to accomplishing their educational mission, our Guatemalan partners also provided invaluable health services at the school through the medical and dental clinics of Jorge and Verónica's two oldest daughters, Laura and Paty. They offered the HPV vaccination to all the girls between the ages of ten and fifteen, all students were treated for parasites, 45 students received dental treatments, 98 received medical treatment, as did 53 mothers of students. The school also received financial assistance from a non-governmental organization named Girl Rising to purchase and distribute large food baskets to 50 of the neediest families during the worst part of the shutdown.

We had to cancel this past summer's volunteer delegations, but thanks to generous donations of some or all of the trip deposits that participants had made, in addition to a few other contributions, we were able to send \$10,000 to the AA. This, combined with the tapping of some of the school's limited endowment funds, enabled them to pay their teachers and staff, since most families were unable to make their monthly tuition payments. The vast majority of the school's students are on at least a half scholarship, but even with the Guatemalan economy's reopening and many parents resuming tuition payments, Jorge indicates that as of early November, 55% of families are still unable to pay tuition fees, and sadly, three parents have died of COVID-19 during the pandemic.

For the upcoming academic year that begins in early January, it is clear that Guatemalan schools will still be operating under a hybrid educational model. In order to do so at the school, the Asturias Academy's teachers and staff have designed a plan to be able to combine in-class and synchronous remote instruction for their students. The total budget for the plan, \$9,300, will enable the school to purchase and install 12 computers in classrooms and upgrade their network and internet bandwidth to support simultaneous transmission during the school day.

Nearly 90% of our partner school's students come from low-income families, and without scholarship assistance, they would be unable to experience the life-changing education offered at the school. Tuition payments make up less than half of the \$120,000 annual operating budget that covers all the operating expenses of a pre-K through grade 11 education for over 200 students. That is only about \$50 a month to pay all the educational expenses for each student at the school!

In order to continue empowering Guatemalan youth to break the cycle of poverty and to build a more just and inclusive society, in the midst of the ongoing global health crisis, the Asturias Academy needs our support. As you consider year-end charitable contributions, remember that your monetary gift will have an extraordinary impact at the school. How many



Miguel Angel Asturias Academy | A Fair Start

organizations can say that virtually 100% of donations go directly to program expenses? For only \$50 per month, under \$2 a day, you can provide a deserving child a full scholarship that covers tuition, all necessary school supplies, and a school uniform. A half scholarship costs less than \$1 per day, but any amount you can contribute will go a long way toward helping our partners accomplish their worthy mission.

The Guatemala Circle is participating in Stone Church's Alternative Christmas Gifts Bazaar, which has been moved online and will run throughout the month of November. All you need to do is click on the following link to make a donation (<https://www.stoneacgb.com/>). As you will see, there are multiple options for designating your gift, and you can choose the number of items to adjust your contribution to the amount you wish to donate. Included below is the necessary information if you would prefer to mail your contribution. In addition to the remote instruction proposal mentioned above, the school's priorities continue to be student scholarships, funds to build an endowment and improve teachers' salaries, and undesignated funds to be able to respond to general operating expenses and occasional unexpected, urgent needs.

On behalf of our friends at the Asturias Academy, *un millón de gracias* for any support you can offer to make possible the transformative and empowering gift of education for Guatemalan children and youth.

Best wishes for a joyous holiday season,

Henry Thurston-Griswold
Coordinator, Stone Church of the Brethren Guatemala Circle

P.S. Remember that **100%** of your tax-deductible contribution goes directly to the Asturias Academy.

Donor's Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Donation: _____ Full Academy Scholarship (\$600)
_____ Half Academy Scholarship (\$300)
_____ Endowment (\$____/mth)
_____ Teachers' Compensation (\$____/mth)
_____ General Operating Budget (\$____/mth)
_____ New Remote Instruction Project
_____ Other (please indicate the purpose for which you wish to designate your gift:
_____)

Payment: _____ one-time _____ monthly _____ quarterly _____ semi-annually _____ annually

****Please mail completed form to Stone Church of the Brethren, 1623 Moore St. Huntingdon, PA 16652
Checks should be made payable to Stone Church of the Brethren,
with Guatemala Partnership on the memo line.
For additional information, contact Henry Thurston-Griswold.**



Gene's Jottings

"Regrets"

My Alberta is gone. She left me suddenly on Sunday, November 8.

I must tell you of the woman I am so glad I married. I hope you have someone in your life that you love as much as I love my girl.

I could count on Alberta to be there for me, to care for me. I am a better man because of Alberta.

She once told me: "I love you for all the times you have taken my hand, rubbed my sore back and shoulders, and kissed me good night. I love you."

Alberta honored her parents, the Reverend and Clara Haught. She spoke of them often. I found favorite verses in her Bible. The first one read:

"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart."
Psalm 73:26

I wish I had Alberta's faith now as I cry my tears. I miss her so. I regret those things I did and words that I didn't say to her.

What more can we ask than to be remembered by those we love?

- Eugene Goshorn -

"With us in spirit..."

Below are members of our church family who, though they are not often able to join us in worship, remain with us in spirit. Remember them in your prayers, and with cards and visits! Please contact the church office (814-643-3390 or stonechurch@verizon.net) to add others you know.

DeLois Fluke
11325 Raystown Rd.
Huntingdon, PA 16652

Jean Prendergast
930 Mifflin Street
Huntingdon, PA 16652

Thelma Wallace
5754 Wallace Dr.
Huntingdon, PA 16652

Gene Goshorn
14155 Hill Valley Rd.
Mt. Union PA 17066

Lydia Price
c/o Charla and Greg Chiapelli
597 Sechler Rd.
Somerset, Pa 15501

John Keiper
Pennknoll Village
208 Pennknoll Road
Rm. 401A
Everett, PA 15537

Westminster Woods

John Bowser
Sue Martin
Denny Rock



December Birthdays

5—Mario Grugan	15—Terry Murray	20—Meredith Widman
8—Virginia Biber	17—Geoffrey Clarke	21—Aislin Wright
9—Shepherd Miller *11	17—Jeff Closz	22—Terri Krabill
9—Dennis Plane	17—Jerriann Wenger	24—Sally Stewart
9—Zilla Wagner	18—Emily Elder	26—Eleanor Roth
14—Tyler Hall	18—Max Hosler *21	28—Olivia Grugan
14—Rick Laabs	19—Martin Berger	30—Cora Dickey *8

December Anniversaries

3—Max & Barb Moyer *65
31—Tinka & Henrik Berger *25

Grocery Gift Cards— Every card helps our church!

(We get 5% to use in our ministries!)

Buy your groceries at Weis or Giant using a grocery gift card purchased through Stone Church and Stone Church gets a donation of 5% back from the grocery store! To get your grocery gift cards, simply contact Cheryl Ritchey or leave a message at the church office! Cards are available in denominations of \$25, \$50, and \$100.



Men's Breakfast via Zoom

December 12 — 8:00 AM

Prepare your favorite breakfast and join the gathering virtually by Zoom. Enjoy fellowship, jokes, stories and a light reflection. Join the regular attendees, who look forward to seeing the gallery of faces and hearing the latest joke. If you are interested in attending, send your email address to Rick Laabs and he will send you a Zoom invitation. If you have questions, call Rick.

Prayer Shawls

The prayer shawl ministry provides comfort and love from the Stone Church congregation to those who experience challenging times. The shawls are tangible reminders of God's ever-present hope and peace freely given to us. Challenges may cloud our awareness of God's continual presence, but a shawl is a wonderful reminder. Placed around shoulders or across a lap, a prayer shawl provides a comforting touch. We are journeying through a most unusual year filled with social unrest, political stress, COVID and maybe stress that is unique to you. We approach the holiday season which will be different than we traditionally experience as we continue to practice social distancing and families may not gather as is customary. The prayer shawl ministry offers shawls to those who may be feeling additional stress, sadness, or loneliness this season. If you would like a shawl, please reach out to Pastor Cindy, Pastor Ben, or Donna Rhodes. We will arrange for a safe delivery to you.

Stone Church of the Brethren
1623 Moore Street
Huntingdon, PA 16652
www.huntingdonstonechurch.org
814-643-3390 • stonechurch@verizon.net

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STONE CHURCH NEWS

December 2020

Advent Season — Please see inside for the Stone Advent event schedule!

Virtual Worship Continues — see the Friday Flash for the Zoom link or catch us later in the week on our Facebook page.