

STONE CHURCH NEWS

January 2021

From the Pastor's Desk

A New Year. A fresh start. A clean slate. A hopeful beginning. Thank goodness.

I imagine that part of you - like me - is ready to say good-bye to 2020 and start fresh in 2021. The year has been full of incredible challenges. When the pandemic hit, schools and businesses closed down. In March, we lost in-person gatherings, worship as we had grown accustomed to it, the choir, *the very building we are named for!* Months later, and we still are not able to gather or hug or share a meal.

And yet, hardship is not the only story to be told about 2020. When I look back at the life of our community over the past year, I see a story of resilience. I see a community that was forced to adapt - to find new ways to be the church together - and did! We learned new technology, and adapted the ways we think about ministry. We have visited over Zoom, donned masks and braved colder weather to sit on porches. We have dropped off meals we could not share in person, and sent so many cards.

We cared for each other in Fellowship Small Groups, shared our images of gratitude in a photo scavenger hunt, and studied the scriptures in mid-week Bible Studies. The Men's Breakfast continued to gather each month to connect and reflect, and the Sojourners continued to encourage one another toward being creators of justice. Prayer shawls were knitted and given to those who welcomed the comforting touch of those embodied prayers. We welcomed in friends and family new and old from around the country, loosed from the traditional bounds of geography.

We celebrated a full Advent season - dreaming together of the light that shines in the darkness. We lit candles, reflected on art, sang carols, and even had a good old fashioned Christmas pageant. You gave generously once again through the Alternative Christmas Gifts Bazaar, caring for the needs of people around the world and in our backyard. And then we gathered - more than 250 of us - on Christmas Eve to welcome once again the Christ child. We even figured out how to have a choir on Christmas Eve!

2020 forced us to remember - to reimagine - who we are, beyond our building. We found strength and resilience we didn't know we had. I look forward to the New Year with its new beginnings. I look forward to gathering with you all again, face to face in the sacred space of our sanctuary. I look forward to the choir sounding forth, and to good meals shared around tables. But I will remember this past year, and the character of this Stone Church family that shined through the challenges. Through it all, you have shown how much you truly care for each other, for this community, and for the ministry to which we are called - proclaiming good news and continuing the work of Jesus - peacefully, simply, and together.



Visiting safely outside



Practicing for the virtual Christmas Pageant



Handing out goods purchased through the ACGB website

Stone Church Leadership Team Meeting

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

The December Leadership Team meeting started with Brooke Meadows sharing a physics-based description of how a wave reflects off an object. She then asked us to consider how we reflect the challenges that come to us. A wave can be inverted as it is reflected – are we able to invert our challenges to opportunities? As our meeting continued, I contemplated how our congregation has reflected the challenges during the Advent season.



Advent and the holiday season can be a challenging time any year. There is the expectation that the season should be filled with joy, which can set an impossible standard – especially this year. So how has our congregation reflected the challenge of the loss of much of what makes this season special?

As I listened to the reports from the various teams, the answer was clear – by continuing to support each other in community. Despite the pandemic, Advent has brought us the Alternative Christmas Gift Bazaar, Christmas caroling, meal sharing among parents, a Christmas pageant, and a deeply meaningful Christmas Eve service. There were many opportunities to connect with others during weekly Bible study, Advent devotionals, men’s breakfast, a virtual scavenger hunt, and more. We continue to support the broader community through actions of individuals and the Witness Team. The meeting also reflected a deep gratitude for all those who make these activities possible, including those making financial contributions, volunteers, and our talented and devoted staff.

The coming year will surely bring its own challenges. But regardless of what’s ahead, we can rest assured that our congregation will reflect those challenges by reaching out to support both one another and the larger community.

Sharon Yohn

Vice-chair of Leadership Team

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*

(*Except for the 2nd week when we’ll meet on Tuesday the 12th!)

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!



Summer Camp 2021

Online registration is open at www.campbluediamond.org! Brochures will be sent to all past campers in the first week of January. Take advantage of the early-bird registration fee before March 1, which will be especially important if Camp needs to limit the number of campers per session.

What will Summer Camp look like in light of our current circumstances? Camp staff have shared this update about Summer Camp 2021: *"We are excited about the Summer Camp 2021 season, but we are mindful that it will look different as we navigate the realities of COVID-19. 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."*

Hiring Summer Staff--Apply Now!

Might you or someone you know be interested in joining the summer staff? Camp is hiring counselors, lifeguard, ropes/tower director, naturalist, crafts director, and maintenance workers. Program Staff must be at least 18 yrs. old, and maintenance workers must be at least 16. Staff members must be committed Christians, enjoy children and youth, and be able to live in harmony with others. Aside from being fun, working at camp is a great learning experience too. Staff members grow in faith as well as leadership and communication skills. For those interested in teaching, ministry, social work or just being a parent, it's terrific on the job training! Pay is based on experience and ranges from \$200-\$250/week, plus room and board. The camp season for 2021 will be from June 7 - July 31. Applications are available at <https://campbluediamond.org/summer-staff>.

A Few Updates from Camp as We Look Back on 2020

- We had a wonderful Family Campground season with 33 seasonal/yearly sites.
- Rising Sun, Lakeside and Hemlock cabins were rented heavily throughout the summer and fall as they provided families an opportunity to shelter-in-place and spend time in the outdoors.
- We were also able to have two physically-distanced, safe Family Camps!
- *Camp Connects*, the online alternative to summer camp this past summer was a huge success.
- We are grateful to many congregations and friends that have supported the ministry of Camp this year. Because of your generosity, we have been able to pay staff and complete many projects. Thank you!

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.



Gene's Jottings

"Speaking of Time"

Less than two months ago, I lost a love of my life, my sweet wife Alberta. None will ever replace her. Or could...

But the other day, a good friend brought up the topic of tears: The tears of crying for lost loved ones. He understood the tears I told him I've been sharing since Alberta died.

He then told me about the tears King David shed in the Bible. In the 13th Psalm:

""O Lord," David asks, "wilt thou forget me forever? ...How long must I bear pain in my soul," he cries, "and have sorrow in my heart all the day?" Consider and answer me, O Lord my God...lest I sleep the sleep of death...I have trusted in Thy steadfast love; Because You hath dealt bountifully with me."

My friend went on to discuss the final words of the 23rd Psalm:

"...goodness and love unfailing, these will follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long."

"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
PO Box 121
Bedford, PA 15522

Westminster Woods
John Bowser
Sue Martin
Denny Rock



January Birthdays

4—Jeff Decker	13—Sabin Fisher *20	22—Ryan Wetzel
6—Sandy Loughlin	14—Lois Harbaugh	25—Robert Lamey
9—Stacia-Fe Gillen	15—Rob Ritchey	27—Tiffany Miller
11—Bob Biber	18—Robin Paterson	31—Tinka Berger
12—Katherine Swigart	20—Guen Porcelli	
12—Rebekah Ford *25	21—Cindy Clarke	

January Anniversaries

11—James & Belle Tuten

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

January 16 — 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.

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2020 In Review — See inside for reflections on 2020. As the year comes to an end, there is certainly lots to reflect on from this unpredictable year

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