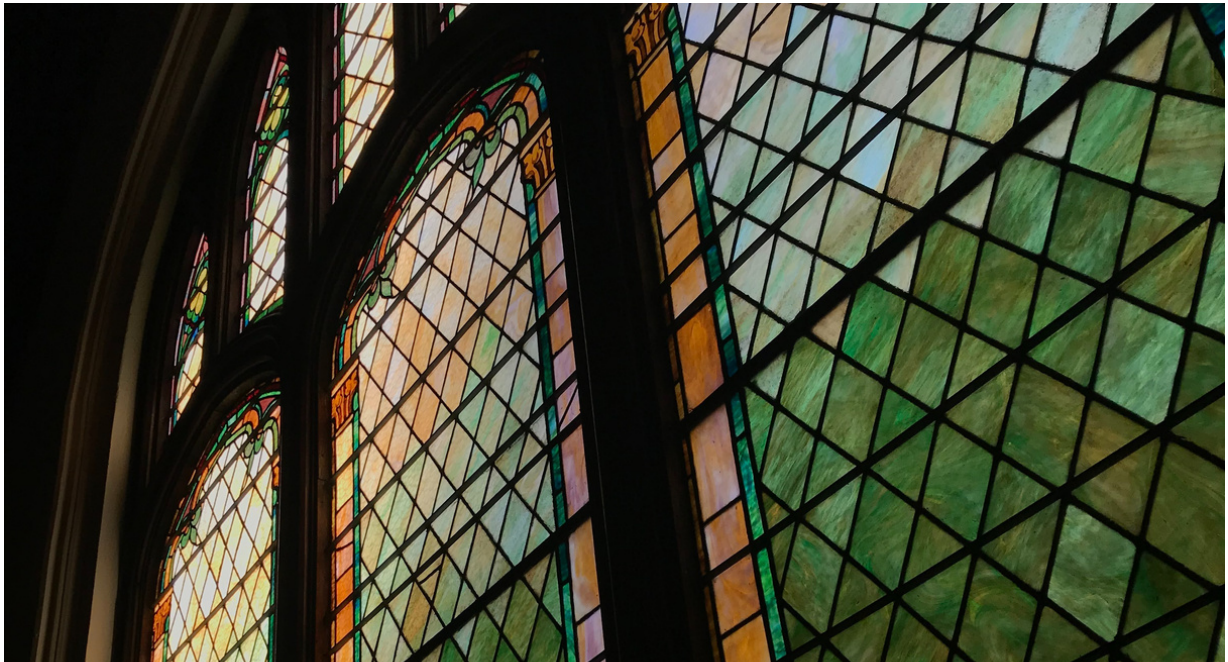


JANUARY 2024

The Stone Church Newsletter

The monthly publication of the Stone Church of the Brethren



Our Welcome Statement

ADOPTED BY OUR CONGREGATION JANUARY 2012

Stone Church of the Brethren is a Christ-centered community, which celebrates every individual as a unique and beloved child of God.

We welcome all regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnicity, physical or mental ability, economic circumstance, or current relationship with God.

We invite your active participation in the life of this congregation, as together we continue to grow in grace and seek justice for God's creation.

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From the Pastors' Desk

Morning runs. Writing thank you cards. Setting up my coffee the night before. Drinking more water. Planning for the weekend before Friday. More regular calls with my friends from seminary.



These are all New Year's resolutions that I have tried and FAILED. I like goals - I like resolutions. I like trying new things. I like feeling like I have a routine - a regular pattern for doing life that increases meaning. But sometimes I get caught in my own rigidity - and the rules become too much for me to actually keep up. Sound familiar?

There is real value in a structure that creates space for good things to happen - and the New Year is often when many seek to put that pattern into place. As you look - both back and ahead- on your spiritual life and the life of this community we share - I wonder if you are the type who needs to create a new pattern - or are you the type who needs to be reminded that spiritual discipline isn't about the task being hard, but about it being regular? Do you need to be encouraged to act with intention - or to let yourself off the hook a little? Be honest - the answer may not be as clear as it seems.

In their book, *Good Enough*, Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie encourage, "Don't worry so much today about whether you want to love God or whether you have all the spiritual feelings you think a better person would have. It's enough to say hello to the idea of trying."

And then they offer this blessing - that I offer to you at the start of this New Year:

A Blessing for Beginning a New Spiritual Practice

Blessed are we who are trying a new thing, though we can't quite see the whole of it. That's the beauty of the life of faith. We start in the middle, at the heart center of an unspoken desire to live into the glimpse we've had of You and of Your goodness.

Blessed are we who ask You to be the guide as we begin to build from here and create a stronger, more flexible rule of life. Trusting that you are trying to foster life in us.

Blessed are we who remember that we will fall short. We will fail, but that doesn't mean we are ruined. We simply pick up and begin again.

Blessed are we, willing to be beginners all over again.

Blessed are we, Stone Church! Happy New Year!

From Your Leadership Team Chair, Sharon Yohn

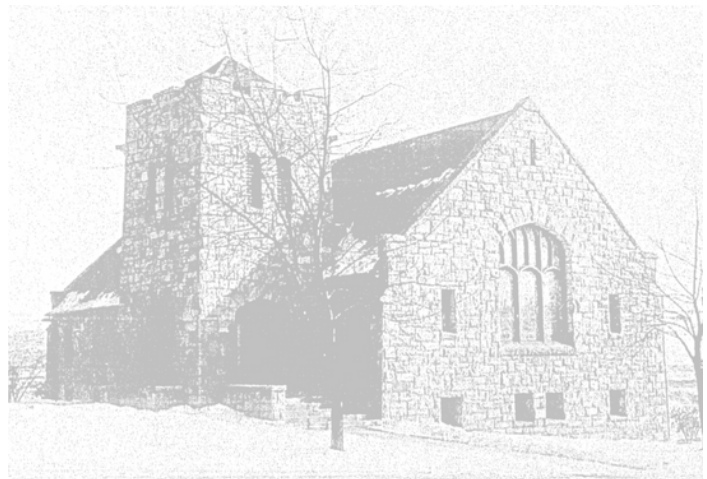
Last month at the Congregational Forum, we shared that we're in a financially challenging situation. While we can absolutely pay our bills this year, we were looking at a significant deficit for this year, and were well behind on pledges for next year. In good news, you heard us and responded - things are looking much better! And yet - we still have about a \$15,000 deficit for this year, and are about \$35,000 behind in pledges for next year. If you do the math, that's a \$50,000 budget gap for next year...

This is significant enough that the pastors, in their thoughtful and grace-filled way, have brought to the Leadership Team financial models of reducing their time to $\frac{2}{3}$ each, or moving to just one full time pastor - and that's not because they want to do this - it's because they are prioritizing what is best for the church. I, and the rest of the Leadership Team (and I suspect many of you as well), don't like this plan, or the idea of slashing our witness budget. And so the Leadership Team is taking the budget gap seriously and wants you to as well.

So what can we do to be able to focus on the energy and vitality of this church instead of thinking about cuts and what we can't do? First - if you haven't pledged - please do so - it's a huge help for planning, and there is no penalty for not meeting your pledge if life circumstances change. If you have pledged, consider the value of Stone Church in your life, and if you can increase your pledge to reflect that value. You can just resubmit a pledge card on paper or online.

Secondly, please participate in the congregational meeting on **January 7**. Depending on pledging and how this year ends, we may need to think hard about priorities and budget cuts, or we may not. We will definitely talk about approaches to avoid being in this situation in the future.

No one wants to hear bad financial news around the Holidays, and yet this is our church family, and we need to be honest and open with each other. And despite financial concerns, I am filled with joy as I think about all that Stone Church is right now, and with hope as I think about the future.



Announcements

January Food Pantry Collection

Our monthly collection for the Food Pantry will take place on Sunday, **January 21st**. We will be collecting **PEANUT BUTTER** this month. Additionally, starting in November and continuing until April 2024, any monetary donations will benefit the food pantry.

Upcoming Events

Congregational Meeting

Held hybrid on Sunday, January 7, 2023 at 9 AM.

This event will take place in the Fellowship Hall and online.

Stone Church is an amazing place - a thriving, healthy church, filled with vitality and energy - and a long history of financial stability. However, we are not currently certain of our trajectory to maintain that financial stability. Thanks to good stewardship of our resources in the past, we are OK for now, but we need to plan for the ongoing sustainability of the church by having open conversations about our priorities and strategies for the future. Please plan on participating in these important discussions on January 7.

Further information will be sent out before the meeting. Coffee, snacks, and childcare will be provided.

Older Adult Luncheon

Held in-person on Tuesday, January 9th at 12 pm.

This event will be held at Donna's Restaurant.

The Older Adults met on December 13 for a brunch in Fellowship Hall at 11 am . There were twenty of us there to enjoy the delicious food . Our next meeting will be at Donna's on **Tuesday, January 9, at noon**. Looking ahead, we will meet on February 14th, in the Fellowship Hall for a Valentines brunch prepared by Rick Laabs. And then back to Donna's for our March meeting.

Congregational Forum

Held hybrid on Sunday, January 18th at 9 am.

This event will be held in the Fellowship Hall and over zoom.

Join us as we hear reports from our ministry teams and vote on our 2024 budget. Everyone is welcome - we all have a voice in our decisions as a community even as only members have a vote.

From the Witness Team Desk

WRITTEN BY PAM GRUGAN

Dear Friends of Stone Church,

On behalf of Co-Chair Randy Yoder and Witness Team members Cory Buterbaugh, Anne Rice, Martha Swigart, and our Pastors Cindy and Ben, I thank you for the trust you placed in our team to steward a significant portion of our 2023 Stone Church budget. We, the Witness Team members, take our charge seriously; we plan and deliberate carefully over what might be good ways for Stone Church to reach out and support what is, in the words of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., our “inescapable network of mutuality,” our community near and far.

We are grateful for the privilege of having enough time, energy, and resources to be able to share what we have beyond what we need. We are grateful for strong leadership among our ministry teams, our pastors and staff, and for the strong support from our congregation as a whole. We are grateful for our children and their rich contributions to the life of our church. And we are grateful for the many hands that work to care for our building and its many purposes.

As we look to the new year, may each of us reflect the Light of God in all we say and do, and when we don't reflect God's perfect Light perfectly, may we forgive one another, and ourselves, if need be.

Sincerely,

Pam Grugan, Cory Buterbaugh,
Pastors Cindy and Ben, Anne Rice,
Martha Swigart, and Randy Yoder

Christian Education Spotlight!

Note: On January 7th, the Children's Class will begin at 9am, and the adult classes will not meet so that everyone can attend the important congregational meeting in the Fellowship Hall!

- **Following Jesus:** Our Christian Ed Intern Sydney Garner returns this month! This Sunday School class for kids of all ages meets in the Llamacats Room, down the hall from the office. It's a chance to learn Bible Stories and build friendships through crafts and games! Throughout Advent the children's lessons will connect with the broader themes from worship.
- **Biblical Leftovers Bible Study:** Rick Laabs leads this Bible Study for teens and adults - taking us on a deeper dive into the Bible Stories we read each Sunday morning in worship. It's a chance to really explore and digest the scriptures together. This gathering is open to anyone. You don't need to be a Biblical Scholar in order to notice and explore connections you hadn't seen before. Join in person or over Zoom!
- **Sojourners Book Study:** Be a part of this group of thoughtful people reflecting together on the intersections between faith and society. This Fall we're reading *From Inclusion to Justice*, by Erin Raffety which explores the ways we can be part of a more authentic community for persons with a variety of disabilities. Join in person or over Zoom. ***On January 21, we'll be meeting with the author herself!***

Gene's Jottings - Hope?

WRITTEN BY GENE GOSHORN

Have you ever hoped that tomorrow will be better than yesterday? Well, that is the way it is for me. I'm hoping 2024 will be better for me and for America than how the last few years have been for me.

First, I lost my gall bladder in June. Then my good friend, Joe Barrett, had heart surgery, and I had a heart scare that turned out to be a kidney stone. I have had continuing trouble with my left leg since a surgery in July of 2018. I lost my sweet wife, Alberta Haught, November 8, 2020, to the same degenerative brain illness that claimed the lives of her parents. We had been married only eleven years.

I have been a reluctant resident since October 18 at Woodland park in Orbisonia since I have come to need 24-hour care. I have three children. My son, David, is sixty-three and lives in North Carolina. My daughter, Sharon, is sixty-two and also lives in North Carolina. Kelly Ann, the youngest, is 58 and lives in Arizona and works as a respiratory therapist. They worry about me from afar. The loss of mobility and independence is devastating. Sometimes it feels like a return to the dependency of childhood. However, I want to be Eugene Raymond Goshorn, adult.

In the last few years I have seen seven different neurosurgeons with the hope of finding solutions to my mobility problems. My Physical Therapist continues to work with me diligently to help me get around more independently and safely. My Social Worker has found resources that help me with care and therapy. I sometimes find it hard to see the bright side, but the circles of care around me...family, friends, and care-givers...help me move forward and cling to the possibility of a better future. I sure hope 2024 is better, and dearly hope it is for you as well.

Notes From the Property Team

The property committee is still working on the lighting in the sanctuary. We will be meeting in January to look at the year ahead. 2023 was a full year - replacing the worn out exterior doors and updating the kitchen's cooking implements, while maintaining the building that provides a gathering space for our church family and a number of other organizations throughout the community!

News From **CAMP**

WRITTEN BY DAVID MEADOWS

Summer Camp 2024

Online registration is open at Camp Blue Diamond! Summer Camp brochures will be mailed to past campers and Brethren churches. If you would like one, contact Camp or David Meadows. Take advantage of the Early-Bird Discount before March 1, and don't forget the Sibling Discount!

District Youth Retreat – January 26-28

Youth in Grades 9-12 are invited to join the Middle PA District and Camp Blue Diamond as we gather together for a wonderful weekend of fellowship and conversation with Brittney (Lowey) Saltsman! Join us as we explore the Bible's big main ideas – creation, fall, redemption, and restoration – in order to meet God and see how we fit into His plan. Our story is His story - the Greatest Story Ever Told! Come out to enjoy time in nature, fun and games, engaging conversation and reconnect with friends old and new!

Cost for the weekend is \$85, but only \$75 if you register by January 12th! Registration is at 7pm on Friday, January 26 and the retreat will end around 1pm on Sunday. Bring warm clothes (we will sled if there's snow), a Bible, flashlight, and sleeping bag and pillow.

Junior High Retreat – February 23-25

Youth in Grades 6-8 are invited to join us for a weekend of fun and fellowship! The Jr. High retreat will be full of classic camp activities, outdoor exploration, hopefully some snow, and more! There will be singing, games, a campfire, outside fun, arts and crafts, and your favorite camp counselors!

Cost for the weekend is \$75, but only \$70 if you register by February 9th! Registration is at 7pm on Friday, Feb. 23 and the retreat will end around 1:30pm on Sunday. Bring warm clothes (we will sled if there's snow), a Bible, flashlight, and sleeping bag and pillow.

Summer Camp Staff, Counselors In Training (CITs), and Volunteer Nurses Needed!

If you (or someone you know!) love Camp Blue Diamond and enjoy working with children and youth, nothing is better than working at Camp and getting paid too. Counselors, lifeguard, climbing tower director, naturalist, arts and crafts director, kitchen, and maintenance staff are hired each summer.

Program Staff must be at least 18 years old. Kitchen and maintenance workers must be at least 16 years old. CITs must have finished 9th, 10th, or 11th grade. Nurses (PAs and doctors too!) must be certified at the RN level or higher. All must be committed Christians, enjoy children and youth, and must be able to live in harmony with others. Staff applications are available on the Camp Blue Diamond Website. To volunteer, contact Camp.

Upcoming Events

- Youth Retreat (Grades 9-12) - Jan 26 - 28
- Jr. High Retreat (Grades 6-8) - Feb 23 - 25
- Junior Retreat (Grades 3-5)- Mar 1 - 3
- Annual Dinners - Mar 15 & 16
- Quilt & Craft Camp - Apr 19-21

Questions? Contact your
Camp Representative,
David Meadows.

Staying in Community

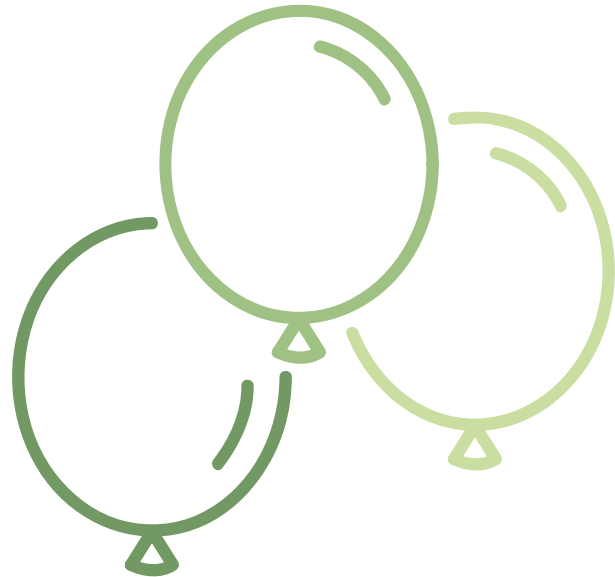
FIND WAYS TO CELEBRATE YOUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS BELOW!

January Birthdays

3rd - Emma Santos
4th - Jeff Decker
6th - Sandy Loughlin
9th - Chick Swigart
12th - Katherine Swigart
14th - Dave Quarry
18th - Robin Paterson
20th - Barry Peters
20th - Guen Porcelli
21st - Cindy Clarke
22nd - Ryan Wetzel
23rd - Celia Cook-Huffman
25th - Will Thurston-Griswold
27th - Spencer Grugan
31st - Tinka Berger

January Anniversaries

11th - Belle & James Tuten



Homebound Members

USE THE ADDRESSES BELOW TO REACH OUT TO THOSE IN OUR
COMMUNITY THAT ARE UNABLE TO JOIN US IN-PERSON

DeLois Fluke
11325 Raystown Rd.
Huntingdon, PA 16652

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

Louise Smith
11642 Station Road
Huntingdon, PA 16652

Westminster Woods
Sue Martin