

STONE CHURCH NEWS

May 2021

From the Pastor's Desk

Mysteries, Yes

by Mary Oliver

*Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous
to be understood.*

*How grass can be nourishing in the
mouths of the lambs.*

*How rivers and stones are forever
in allegiance with gravity
while we ourselves dream of rising.*

*How two hands touch and the bonds will
never be broken.*

*How people come, from delight or the
scars of damage,
to the comfort of a poem.*

*Let me keep my distance, always, from those
who think they have the answers.*

*Let me keep company always with those who say
"Look!" and laugh in astonishment,
and bow their heads.*

I remain grateful to my friend, Laura, for introducing me to Mary Oliver. Her poetry often centers me, speaks to me, calls me into richer living. In this season of Spring, of new life, of resurrection, I appreciate her reminder to delight, to wonder, to embrace mystery. And to do so with joy and gratitude - in prayer that looks like laughter and a bowed head.

Like many of you, my to-do list stays full. We are at that point in the semester and the year. I want to work on healing racism and figuring out hybrid worship and finish planning for Annual Conference Worship and coach t-ball for our kids. The list is full, but good.

But I need you - I need you to keep pointing out mysterious, beautiful, astonishing things. Things that keep me alive. Keep me grateful. Keep me praying. I want to keep company with you - and I hope you'll keep company with me too.

Stone Church Leadership Team Meeting "Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together."

So now what? We have a vision of (hopefully) being back in the church later this summer. How do we prepare for that? What will a church service in COVID times look like? Before addressing those questions, I'd like to share with you the rationale I shared with Leadership Team of how we came to this decision.



As your COVID-19 Response Team, our highest priority is the health of every member of our church family. Which also leads us to a second priority of being as inclusive as possible. As a result, we base our policies on the most vulnerable. Our understanding of who is the most vulnerable is changing as some people are vaccinated (and therefore safer), but others (our children) will not have this opportunity until much later. We also look at CDC recommendations, and the number of cases in the county and the state.

So where do things stand right now? We know that vaccination can reduce your risk a lot. Based on recent information from the CDC, vaccination reduces your risk of severe symptoms and death by 94%, and of contracting COVID-19 at all by about 80% (Note that this is based on more recent data than the original studies completed before approval). Unfortunately, some (very few) people who are vaccinated have still contracted COVID, gotten severely ill, and a few have even died even though they were vaccinated. This is not in any way unusual for a vaccine - in fact, this is one of the most effective vaccines we have (far more so than the flu vaccine). The more people that are vaccinated, and the fewer cases there are in the county, the lower the risk for everyone. Over 30% of the people in our county have been vaccinated so far, but cases are still much higher than we would like. Based on a risk assessment model, if 100 of us gathered in the sanctuary for worship, there would be a 52% chance that at least one person would have COVID.

Our hope is that by mid to late July, the number of cases will have decreased, and the number of vaccinations will have increased. We also want to wait until every adult in our church family who wants to be vaccinated has had the opportunity (remember our goal of inclusiveness). As that time gets close, we'll be watching the data and recommendations closely. However, we realized that it would take a while to figure out what worshiping in the sanctuary is going to look like, and that a projected opening date would be helpful. Later in the summer seems like a reasonable prediction.

So what will worship look like? Your pastors, music minister, and the Worship Team are hard at work figuring out how to have meaningful worship both for those in our church family who are present in person and those present remotely. This takes both creative work, as well as the installation of new cameras and technology. The COVID team will be recommending policies to make sure all of us, including our unvaccinated kids, stay safe. This means we will still be socially distancing and still be wearing masks. You won't hear the choir right away, and we won't be singing as a congregation. But we will, I hope, be together, back in our sanctuary, and I believe we can do this safely. And we'll keep watching the recommendations from the CDC to see when we can move closer together.

At the same time, our Witness Team is also looking forward. With the church receiving the Healing Racism mini-grant, they are focusing on how our church family can help understand and combat systematic racism and other biases. The Christian Education Team is working to envision learning together in the Fall, and the Hospitality Team is looking at ways to gather outside for fun and community.

It's an exciting time to look forward. Worship won't be the same, but that makes it even more exciting to imagine the possibilities. I look forward to exploring those possibilities with all of you.



Executive Director Search

As Dean and Jerri Wenger prepare to retire in the fall of 2021, the Camp Blue Diamond Board of Directors is seeking a gifted and visionary individual with a passion for outdoor ministry to serve as the next Executive Director. The Wengers and those who came before them have left a brilliant and

meaningful legacy that continues to impact the lives of children, youth, and adults of all ages. As we look ahead to this next chapter, please keep Camp and the search committee, led by David Meadows, in your prayers. We are infinitely grateful for Stone Church's support.

Hiring Summer Staff--Apply Now!

Might you or someone you know be interested in joining the summer staff? Camp is hiring counselors, maintenance workers, and other positions. 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>.

Summer Camp 2021

With the pandemic slowing down and people getting their shots, CBD is excited to announce there will be summer camp in 2021! There will be a few changes: extra handwashing stations, taking temperatures when you arrive, more activities in your cabin group, moving many inside activities outside, and wearing masks when we can't social distance. But don't fret, campers will still do all the fun CBD stuff like nature activities, crafts, music, campfires, cook-outs, swimming, canoeing, Bible Discovery, coffee house, the giant swing, the climbing tower and more! Some camp sessions have already closed due to attendance limitations. For an updated list and online registration, visit www.campbluediamond.org.

RV Campground & Cabins

Need a place for vacation this summer? CBD's family campground and the Lakeside and Rising Sun cabins are open. The campground has 44 RV sites, 2 tent sites, and a primitive cabin. Both Lakeside and Rising Sun have 3 bedrooms, a living/dining room, kitchen, 2 bathrooms, a loft, central AC and heat, and a TV/DVD. They are handicapped accessible. For more information, visit www.campbluediamond.org or call 814-667-2355.

Upcoming Events

Father/Son Retreat for grades K-8 (<i>Full</i>)	May 7-8
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

"He Knows Our Names"

Since my sweetheart, Alberta, passed away, I have been going through her books and papers. I came upon a piece she wrote before we were married about the church her father served, Fairview Church of the Brethren, and its associated cemetery. It is located in Fayette County.

My (Alberta's) dad knew the name of everyone in the cemetery at Fairview...at least I though he did. I was impressed! He was a minister and he had preached at a lot of funerals, but the reason he knew so many names in this cemetery was that he worked there. Starting before Decoration Day, and until the grass stopped growing each year, he mowed carefully around the stones and between the plots. It was a big cemetery, too, for it spread out around three sides of the church.

A couple monuments stood tall, looking proud—and expensive—but most of the stones were smaller, less pretentious, and more suitable for those who subscribed to the Brethren philosophy of "Simple Life." The little lambs on the tops of the children's stones had surfaces so worn that they felt smooth to the touch, and here and there an angel guarded a grave site. Age had weathered many stones so completely that you couldn't read the names any more. Mother told me not to walk over the tops of the graves, but to walk the paths between the plots instead. Daddy would reminisce about the people whose bodies lay below. They included old neighbors and church members whom he remembered from his childhood. My grandparents and great-grandparents were buried there. Family tradition held that my great-great-grandmother and her parents lay nearby as well, but their graves had no markers...

Even as a child, I think I understood that God knew all the people who were buried there. He had a personal relationship with each one and didn't need to consult a map of the plot owners nor search out a stone with a legible inscription. God knew each person in Fairview Cemetery then, just as he knows each of us today.

"O Lord," David wrote centuries ago, "You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways." (Psalm 139: 1-3, NIV)

Alberta Y. Haught, July 22, 2007

May Birthdays

1—Brooke Meadows	10—Anne Siems	14—Pam Grugan
3—Jill Keeney	12—Don Mitchell	16—Jason Boyer
3—Landon Meadows *18	13—Henrik Berger	17—Melodee Wingate
5—Cathy Cloz	13—Jack Wagner	20—Joyce Keiper
10—Jeannie Lashlee	14—DeLois Fluke *95	25—Rosemary Plane *14

May Anniversaries

21—Todd Hammer & Peg Krolak *5 27—David & Brooke Meadows

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

May 22nd — 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.

It's a Small World Book Project

As followers of Christ, we are called to work toward healing and wholeness for all people. Stone Church of the Brethren has recently received a grant to help us work on healing racism - in ourselves, our church, and our community. Please read below to discover how the grant money will be used, as well as how you can be involved in this project - wrestling alongside your siblings in the faith - and having a chance to purchase books that may bring healing in our community.

❖ What will this project involve/how will the grant money be used?

- Funding intentional learning opportunities
- Funding guest speakers
- The purchasing of part of a single curated book collection to be sent to Huntingdon County Library; the books are meant to diversify the stories, knowledge, and media that is available to young people within our community. The books focus on the history, lived experiences, and stories of people of color.
- Purchasing the materials needed to display and store the books well at the Library
- ***But the grant money is just the start - we want to do more! We CAN do more!***

❖ What can I do to help/be involved?

This project will unfold over the course of a year (or more!). Below are some of the ways you can participate right now:

- **Take the African American History Challenge**
 - We invite you to see what you know - or what you think you know - by taking the *African American History Challenge*. Please contact the church office or see a previous Friday Flash for the quiz. Once you've filled it out, please submit your answers to Joan Rogers at:.
- **Attend an Upcoming Presentation**
 - Sunday May 9th at 9:30AM – Joan Rogers will be presenting over Zoom
 - Sunday June 13th – Amy Nathan, award-winning author of *A Ride to Remember* and *Together* will be speaking to us over Zoom.
 - More presentations are to come- watch the Friday Flash and upcoming newsletters for more information!
- **Purchase Books**
 - Part of the grant money will fund the purchase of one whole collection of books, but our current goal is to work together to buy three more collections!
 - The total of four collections are for the following locations: Huntingdon County Library, Mt. Union Library, Stone Church Library, and a traveling set to be used in local schools and churches!
 - The book collections were curated based on the needs of local librarians and educators.
 - One full collection is 52 books and costs about \$800 in total.
 - All books will be purchased from our online wishlist with The Tiny Bookstore, a Black-owned business in Pittsburgh. Not all of the books we want are in-stock right now, so the wishlist will change! Feel free to check back often and make more than one purchase if you want!
 - You are welcomed and encouraged to purchase books in honor or memory of someone you love. We are in the process of developing bookplates to nicely display that information in the front of the books. As you are purchasing, simply type what you would like on the bookplate into the “*gift message*” or “*order comments*” option.
 - Please see the next page for details on how to purchase books – don't worry, if you are not comfortable with ordering books online, we have an option for you!
- **Make a Donation**
 - If you would like to make a donation that will be used generally in addition to the grant money (perhaps for book purchases, to bring in guest speakers, etc.), please feel free to send a check to Stone Church. In the memo line write “ISW Book Project General Donation.”

It's a Small World Book Project con't.

HOW DO I PURCHASE BOOKS?

You have two options when it comes to purchasing books. They are explained below, but if you have any questions just call the church office during office hours (814-643-3390).

1. Purchase books from our online wish list.
 - a. Go to the following link: <https://www.tinybooksonline.com/wishlist/123>
 - b. Add as many or as few books as you would like to your cart
 - c. At checkout enter your personal payment information, but allow the shipping information to auto-fill with Cindy's name and the church's address
2. Send a check to the church and Bekah will purchase books for you!
 - a. In the memo line of the check write "ISW Book Project **Book** Donation." *It is important that you designate you would like the money to be used to actively purchase books, not as a general donation to the ISW Project.*
 - b. If you would like to hand-select which books are purchased, please call or email Bekah to work out those details
 - c. With this option, it is likely that there will be small dollar amounts of your donation leftover after purchase of books (most purchases don't round out to an even dollar amount). So please also consider if you would like any remainder to go toward other aspects of the ISW project (such as payment for authors or speakers), or if you would like it put toward your pledge.



Spotlight on Service

Worship Team: A Conversation with Chris Gibboney, Team Chair

Q. What do you find most fulfilling about serving through this team?

A. Our team finds satisfaction in helping to plan and vision worship services (including the aesthetics of the space and worship aids... like the Advent and Lent gift bags). Then, attending the service and seeing the realization of the vision is fulfilling. It's great to participate in church work with people we love and enjoy. The collaborative effort for making beautiful, meaningful, and artful worship is life-giving.

Q. What are you most excited about in the life of this team and for this team's future?

A. Our team is most excited about how we will make the big shift to resume in-person Worship while continuing online Worship once the COVID-19 Response Team gives us the green light to return to the sanctuary. Maintaining a virtual/electronic presence will be an exciting challenge, as we will be doing two kinds of worship at once. We also look forward to making beautiful music with friends and getting the choir back in the loft when it is safe.

Q. Where could you use some additional help?

A. We are looking for two people to join our team. We would like someone to think about the virtual aspects of Worship who will hold us accountable to creating worship that is still inclusive of those not physically present. We are also looking for a new chair of the Worship Team to begin in January of 2022. This role is mostly organizational in calling monthly meetings for the team and then representing the Worship Team to Stone Church's Leadership Team.

Q. If folks are interested in helping, whom should they contact and how?

A. Interested persons should contact Chris Gibboney at. Marty is always happy to have folks contact him if they are interested in participating with music or other aspects of worship services. Please email him at if you want to take part.



Farmers' Market Bucks Are Back

What are Huntingdon County Farmers' Market Bucks? They're "fake money" that can be used like cash at the Huntingdon Farmers' Market. They come in \$1 and \$10 denominations.

Why purchase Market Bucks? To commit...

- to eating more fresh, nutritious, locally-grown food
- to supporting and strengthening the market, its environmentally-responsible farmers and our local economy
- to increasing access to the market for folks who otherwise couldn't afford it
- to enhancing our sense of our community



How will Market Bucks help folks otherwise unable to afford shopping at the market? For every \$20 of Market Bucks sold, \$1 in Market Bucks will be given to Huntingdon County PRIDE, for use by their older clients. Donations may also be made towards "Bonus Bucks" for use by persons who get government food assistance – SNAP/EBT (a.k.a. Food Stamps), pandemic food relief (P-EBT), and WIC & Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program vouchers. When folks use their EBT / P-EBT cards at the market, they'll receive \$1 of "Bonus Bucks" (donated Market Bucks) for each \$2 they spend. FMNP voucher users receive \$3 Bonus Bucks for each \$6 voucher.

How can one buy Market Bucks and/or make donations to support the "Bonus Bucks" program? Market Bucks purchases and donations may be made using cash or check at the farmers' markets (all season – May through October). Please make checks payable to HFM.

Other questions? Interested in helping out with the project? We're seeking volunteers! Please contact Laura White by email or phone.

Originating at Stone Church, the Market Bucks/ Bonus Bucks program is a cooperative project, of the nonprofit Huntingdon County Local Food Association, involving the Huntingdon Farmers' Market, the Huntingdon Forum of Churches, and area social-services agencies.



Huntingdon Farmers' Market opens Thursday, May 6th

11 am – 3 pm, Portstown Park pavilion (across from Laney's; 842 Penn St)



May is National Bike Month

- Consider riding your bike, as you're able.
- Get some exercise, reduce stress, have fun.
- Reconnect with your community and the natural world – the changing seasons and the weather.
- Slow your pace – open up time for reflection and listening for God's call in your life and for being mindful of your surroundings.
- Feel the empowerment that comes from travelling under your own steam.
- Inspire others to give their cars a rest – and perhaps make it a new habit for yourself whenever possible.
- Use less gasoline, give off less CO₂ and other pollutants, and live out your commitment to being a good steward of Creation. Every gallon of gasoline not used keeps 20 lbs. of CO₂ out of the atmosphere.
- Bike (or walk) in solidarity with all – human and nonhuman – who are paying the exorbitant price for our society's fossil-fuel addiction – victims of climate-change-enhanced flooding, drought, or wildfires... victims of catastrophic oil spills... victims of mountain-top removal coal mining... victims of war, political repression, and theft of indigenous lands in petroleum-producing regions....
- Bike to show we believe in another way of living.



"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
160 Aspen Lane
Apt. 204
Huntingdon, PA 16652

Westminster Woods

John Bowser
Sue Martin
Denny Rock
John Keiper



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

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Additionally, attend a presentation by Joan Rogers on May 9th at 9:30AM on Zoom.