

STONE CHURCH NEWS

March 2022

Full to the Brim – Lenten Season 2022 is upon us – see inside for more information and upcoming events!

News from Guatemala– Read inside for a report from Henry Thurston-Griswold on upcoming opportunities to help our partners in Guatemala.

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From the Pastor's Desk



"I have had it up to here!" That's how I feel more days than I care to admit. To be fair, I am writing as I recover from a concussion and after weathering several days of stomach flu for Ezra. And we are still living in a pandemic that is about to enter its third year of stress and strain. The world seems mired in division and despair. And the weight of responsibility on multiple levels makes every decision and action feel imbued with extra pressure. Therefore my initial reaction to a Lenten Series entitled, Full to the Brim was not that it was bringing good news! I am already full to the brim - my bucket is so full that one drop of something extra or unexpected will spill over and flood my life in ways I am afraid will drown me. I have had it up to here!

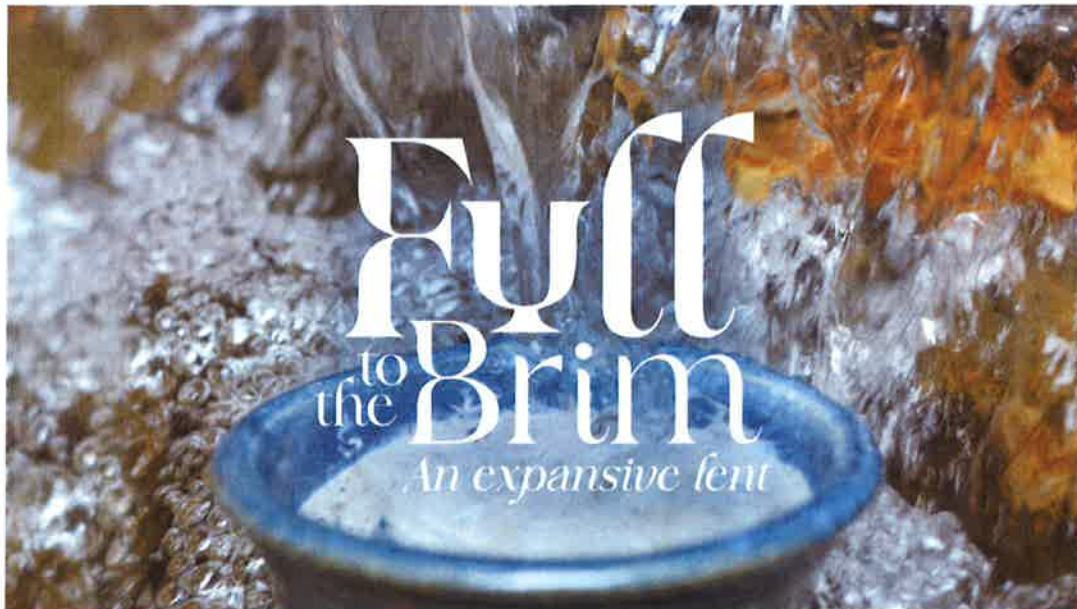
I know that I am not alone - as the Worship Team reflected on this series, we realized that we did not need more - we are too full - we need a way to empty. Many of us are swimming in "too much": too much stress, too much pressure, too much conflict, *too much*. This also means we may feel like we have too little: too little time, too little hope, too little gratitude, too little connection, too little growth, too little mercy, too little grace.

The invitation to this Lenten Season is not meant to add one more thing to your full life. But it is an invitation to see through a different lens. To counter the idea that everything is too much and make space for things that will fill us with more of who we truly are and who we want to be. We hope for more - more than "having it up to here" - we hope for fullness in love and grace and hope and justice. The scriptures describe God's grace and love in images of that kind of abundance - grace that is illogical, boundless, unearned. The creators of the series, from *A Sanctified Art*, describe it this way, "It's an invitation to be authentically who you are, to counter scarcity and injustice at every turn, to pour out even more grace wherever it is needed. It disrupts the scarcity mentality that capitalism, oppression, or hierarchy can plant inside of us. When we allow ourselves to be filled to the brim with God's lavish love, that love spills over. It reaches beyond ourselves; like water, it rushes and flows, touching everything in its path."

We invite you to join us in creating space that can be filled with God's grace in this season - not to do more - but to *be* more - to pause - to have some silence - to stop only seeing the too much, and looking for some of the enough - some of the abundance - some of the grace and love that continually holds us. And to share it, as you can, recognizing that just as the pressure and stress and division can grow when nurtured within us, so can the mercy and hope and love.

*May you be awestruck by the beauty of this world.
May you laugh, and may it be contagious.
May you overflow with love for those around you.
May you be effusive with hope and quick to point out joy.
And in all of your living, and breathing, and being,
may you find yourself full to the brim with God's Holy Spirit,
and may it change your life.
In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself—
LIVE in peace, full to the brim. Amen.¹*

¹Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.



The Lenten Season is here! See upcoming events below...

Upcoming Events

- Ash Wednesday – March 2nd – Hybrid at 6:30PM
 - Hybrid Service held March 2nd at 6:30PM
 - Join us in the sanctuary or over Zoom as we begin the Lenten Season together.
- Visio Divina Art Devotionals
 - Held Wednesdays over Zoom at 7:00PM starting March 9th
 - This popular series returns! Donna Rhodes will again be leading us on a journey to observe, interpret, and learn from art connected to scriptures we study in our Lenten Series.

ISW Book Project Update

An exciting note on our “*It’s a Small World Book Project*”: This month, we were able to purchase the final books to complete all 4 collections! These collections of books, as you recall, grew out of our church’s desire to take a small step toward healing the racism embedded in our community. The curated list of books is designed to allow those visiting the libraries in our schools and community access to works celebrating the broad diversity of our human family. There are books for all ages in the collection. The final purchases this week allow us to complete all four collections - including the collection at the Mount Union and Huntingdon libraries (where the books are already on display!) - as well as a collection here at our church, and a 4th “traveling” collection that is made for use by our local schools and beyond.

Any further donations toward the project at this point will go toward bringing in diverse speakers and further promoting the book collections - because *having* the books is only the beginning. We hope that you and others will continue to borrow and *read* the books - either from the collection here at our church on the back table, or through our local libraries. Many thanks to Pam and Sandy for the countless hours they have put in and to all of you who have been a part of this exciting work.

Lastly, we hope you will get excited as we look toward the future and ramp up for our next ISW initiative: **The Check Out Challenge!** We’ve got the books – now let’s *read* them! Dedicating ourselves to reading and engaging with these books is an important part of the ISW Book Project and we can’t wait to start this work together! Remember that *all* of the books have something to teach us (that means that adults can learn a lot from the kids’ books!). Right now we just want you to get excited about reading and stay tuned as details are soon to come!

Stone Church Leadership Team
“Continuing the Work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.”



Division. It is a word that we have heard often in the past few years. And, unfortunately, it is not referring to a tedious mathematical computation. It seems that every corner we turn, we see more division and growing hate among various types of individuals and populations: those with different skin colors; those with different political affiliations; those with different religious and spiritual beliefs; those with different levels of income; those with different types of employment. The list is endless.

During our Leadership Team meetings, we spend a lot of time reflecting on these ever-present divisions that have grown in recent years. It is because of these divisions that Stone Church revised its welcome statement a few years ago to be more inclusive toward those most affected. For those who are unfamiliar, our mission states, in part:

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

To say that our mission is important to us is an understatement. Our mission is part of Stone Church’s identity; it is who we are and who we strive to be. That being said, it is easy to become complacent and give ourselves kudos for *promoting* this mission, while also losing sight of whether we are truly *living* this mission.

We rely on our members, friends, and visitors to share their observations and experiences with us so that we can continue to learn and grow. However, this is not a realistic approach. If you have ever been the victim of discrimination, hate, judging eyes, and even a low self-esteem, then you understand that it is not easy to speak up and say, “Your actions hurt me.” For many people, it is easier to swallow hard, force a smile, and excuse the actions that hurt the most.

Stone Church does not want to be excused.

Let me say that again: STONE CHURCH DOES NOT WANT TO BE EXCUSED.

We do not want somebody to justify a negative experience they may have encountered while attending a service, including virtual services, or any other type of church event. We want to learn. We want to grow. We want to welcome all. We want to LIVE our mission. But as our society continues to devolve (no, that’s not a typo), the question we struggle to answer is: How can we do this? How can we successfully and honestly live our mission?

While we do not hold all the answers, these are questions we continually ask ourselves and to which we are seeking out solutions together. And these are questions we want *you* to ask *yourself*. Stone Church is comprised of not only its leaders, but of all its congregants. If we want to truly live our mission, we need to work together, learn together, grow together, and live together.

~Jessica Buterbaugh~



Summer Camp 2022 – What’s In A Name?

Don't miss out on summer camp opportunities for children and youth ranging from 5 years-old to high school seniors, and families too! Regular registration is open through June 1, with *early bird savings* available before March 1. Families should check out the *Multiple Sibling* discount. Don't

forget that Stone Church pays half of the registration fee for our children and youth. If finances stand in the way of a child going to camp, look for scholarship information in the brochure or contact the Camp office. Online registration is open at www.campbluediamond.org!

Hiring Summer Staff--Apply Now!

Camp is hiring staff for Summer 2022: counselors, lifeguard, ropes/tower director, naturalist, crafts director, kitchen, and maintenance. Program Staff must be at least 18 yrs. old. Support Staff - kitchen and maintenance workers - must be at least 16. The Camp season will be from June 9 - July 30. Program Staff pay ranges from \$200-\$250 per week, depending on experience. Support Staff ranges from \$180-\$250. Applications are available at www.campbluediamond.org/summer-staff.

Junior Retreat

March 4, 7:00 p.m. – March 5, 7:00 p.m.

3rd, 4th, and 5th graders are invited to join new program director Gabe Imler as we start to welcome the warmer weather and learn about changing seasons. There will be singing, games, a campfire, outside fun, arts and crafts, and your favorite Camp counselors. We will communicate exact COVID plans, but precautions will be in place. Camp will communicate exact COVID plans, but precautions will be in place. Cost is \$40. For more info and online registration, visit www.campbluediamond.org/retreats-%26-events.

Breakfast With the Birds – May 7

Join us at Camp and beyond as we spend the morning sighting and learning about many different local birds. Gabe Imler, Camp's new Program Director and Bird Enthusiast, will be our host for the day.

- Meet at Camp at 7:00 a.m.
- Spend time looking at the birds around Camp
- All ages and skill levels welcome! We will largely stay on the walking trails at Camp both down by the lake and up near the Lodge
- Travel to Shaver's Creek for more birding
- \$10 cost includes breakfast at Camp and transportation

For questions or to RSVP, contact the Camp office at 814-667-2355 or campbluediamond@verizon.net. Transportation will be provided once you arrive at Camp. RSVP by April 29.

Upcoming Events

Junior Retreat	March 4-5
Outdoor School	March 28-May 6
Quilt & Craft	April 29-May 1
Breakfast with the Birds	May 7
Annual Dinners	June 10 & 11
Heritage Fair	September 17

Have questions?

Contact your Camp Representative, David Meadows.



Gene's Jottings

"Lenten Seeds"

Wednesday, March 2, marks Ash Wednesday, the First Day of Lent. Lent is a season of fasting that ends at sundown on Holy Thursday and begins a 40-day season of self-examination, fasting and penance in preparation for Easter. Ash Wednesday is named after the practice of placing ashes on the forehead. The ashes normally used are the burned branches of the previous year's palms from Palm Sunday, prepared, blessed and placed on the forehead, often in the shape of a cross. Ashes were used in biblical times as symbols of repentance and mourning (*Genesis 18:27, Second Samuel 13:19, Job 2:8, Daniel 9:3, Matthew 11:21, Esther 4:1*).

The Bible does not mention Lent or Ash Wednesday. The traditional purpose of Lent is penitential preparation, which is, "feeling regret for one's sins – repentant." Observers of Lent, in some traditions, are to give up a luxury as a form of penance, or sacrifice. Lent is a period of 40 days because the Gospels tell us Jesus spent 40 days of fasting in the desert (*Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 11:12-13; Luke 4:1-13*). The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted. It shows us that temptation doesn't need to end in failure. Moses (*Exodus 34:28*) and Elijah (*First Kings 19*) also fasted for 40-day periods.

Although many Protestants do not observe Lent or Ash Wednesday, it is not just an obligation or duty; it is a way to become closer to Jesus.

Editor's Note: See how you can participate in our Ash Wednesday Service on page 2!

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A Thank You from the Yoder Family

Our family appreciates the food, the cards and the many prayers that were shared during our dear wife and mother's dying and death. I (Randy) appreciated each offering and assure you that I now know more what Paul meant when he wrote about a peace that was beyond one's imagination.

A Remembrance Celebration of Peg (Margaret) Yoder will be held on March 19, 2022 at 10 a.m. Since there is uncertainty about the COVID impact, only family and a few close friends will be in the sanctuary. But, for our church family, I want to make sure you can experience the Celebration with us and so a Zoom link will be sent out the week of the service.

Thanks again for your love and support.

News from Guatemala



A view of the majestic Santa María volcano, seen behind La Muela (The Molar) ridge from La Cruz (The Cross) scenic overlook in Salcajá.

By the time you read this, I will have been in Guatemala for about six weeks volunteering at our partner school and working on sabbatical projects. It has been wonderful to reconnect with the Chojolán family and some of the students at the Asturias Academy, although most of my contact has been virtual as I have assisted with the online classes of English with secondary students and also observed and mentored the new Spanish language and literature professor at the secondary level.

Thanks to the guidance and efforts of the Chojoláns' oldest daughter, Laura, who is an MD, the immediate family has managed to stay COVID free, although most of their extended family has not been so fortunate, and two of Jorge's brothers were hospitalized for extended periods. Since most of the students come from low-income families and

Guatemala's health system and safety net are weak, a number of students at the school have lost family members to the COVID pandemic.

The vaccination rate has increased in recent months as vaccines have become more available, but the rates overall are still low, and as in the U.S., there is a significant amount of vaccine hesitancy. Most of the school's secondary students have been vaccinated and are now getting boosted, but vaccines are not being administered yet to children from the ages of five to eleven, although they will likely start soon as the country moves to resume in-person classes after nearly two years of online or limited instruction via worksheets for those who don't have internet access.

My son Will has designed a new website for the school that we hope to launch by the time you receive this, and with it we would like to reestablish contact with supporters with whom the school has lost touch and also solicit funding for some special needs that have arisen. Google will start to charge the school \$6 per month per account in July so they can continue to use the online platform Google Classroom and tools such as Drive, Meet, and Slides for online instruction, which will cost about \$900/month, since there are currently 138 students enrolled at the school. In addition, the Ministry of Education has established a series of requirements for schools to resume in-person instruction, such as an environmental study, improved ventilation, installation of gel dispensers, and regular disinfection of classrooms, all of which will require additional expense by our partners.

See below for information on this summer's delegations, and thanks for your ongoing support of our congregation's partnership with the Asturias Academy:

We will take educational and medical delegations to volunteer at our partner school the Asturias Academy in July, twenty years after our first delegation from Stone Church! We also plan to host our first delegation from the school immediately prior to the delegations, a group of seven or eight students and staff who will have the opportunity to learn more about the people, places, and cultural perspectives and practices of central PA and the nation's capital. They will also help staff a Spanish Immersion Camp for PA high school students held at Juniata College from July 5th-9th that will serve as a fundraiser for the Asturias Academy.

The dates for this Guatemalan delegation to the U.S. are Monday, June 27th through Monday, July 11th. The educational delegation will be from July 11th-22nd, and the medical delegation will take place from July 23rd-31st. ***We will need to arrange homestays for our Guatemalan visitors for approximately a week (June 29th-July 4th) and welcome suggestions for cultural activities and excursions during their stay to help them experience our central PA cultures and develop relationships with our community.***

If you would like to assist in the hosting of our Guatemalan partners or participate in either or both of the delegations, please contact Henry Thurston-Griswold..

~Henry Thurston-Griswold for the Guatemala Circle~

March Birthdays

2—Chuck Yohn

6—Paul Elder

7—Lydia Price *97

12—Oscar Tuten *18

14—Beau Buterbaugh *2

15—Seppi Grugan

16—Sarah Worley

17—Tim Launtz

23—Dan Cook-Huffman

23—Lori Fagan

24—Shelby Anders *25

25—Brandon Conaway

26—Taylor Boyer *10

26—Knox Boyer *10

26—Carol Oldring

26—Kate Thurston-Griswold

26—Kim Witkovsky

27—Chris Gibboney

27—Charlie Paterson

30—Anita Soliday

March Anniversaries

24—Patricia & Phillip Paterson

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 contact the church office! Cards are available in denominations of \$25, \$50, and \$100.



Men's Breakfast

March 26th — 8:00 AM

Fix your favorite breakfast and brew up some coffee, then settle in for some great fellowship, a few corny jokes 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 an invitation. As things warm up again, we hope to hold this event in person on the patio of *Standing Stone Coffee Company*, but you can also join over Zoom. Watch the Friday Flash for updates! 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. 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.