

SEPTEMBER 2023

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.

**Note: We will be
returning to our normal
10:45 AM worship hour,
with Sunday School
before that at 9:30 AM.**



From the Pastors' Desk

I have been a “words” person for most of my life. I write a lot. I read a lot. I am learning to appreciate visual arts as I age. I am curious about details and inspired by the connections others draw or notice, that I miss. I appreciate the ways art can hold

diverse interpretations beautifully; how evocative color can be; and how easily I can sit with a piece and find new things to admire or engage my wonder. I am especially awed by the ways good art can build community, how it can draw us towards each other as we explore it and share in it.

Over the last year, the Witness Team, with significant effort and leadership from Martha Swigart has been on an artful journey to create a visual representation of our Congregational Welcome Statement. The statement was approved in 2012 after a time of discernment and its words carry their own beauty. “Regardless of your current relationship with God,” and “We welcome your active participation,” were two phrases that immediately helped me know I would be fully at home in this community. Those words mean something to me about how I want to faithfully be in the church and the world. There are other words that are an important part of the statement to me - and I suspect each of you can find the words that make you feel most at home. I think the challenge of the witness team in this journey they have set us on, is that the words are not the end.

Visual art moves us beyond the words, invites us into new spaces and understandings and interpretations. Visual art creates its home in us differently. And as we take time to hang this piece of art as a display of our welcome and ongoing growth and desire to keep moving our words into more dynamic action, I hope we can recommit to living out our welcome. I also hope that we take some time to remember the theological underpinnings that have gotten us to this place.

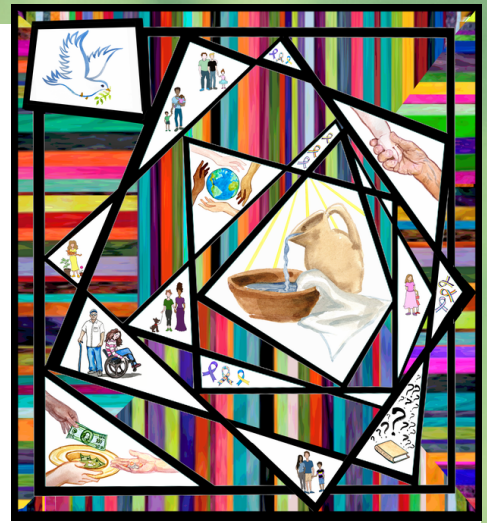
God’s very being is one of community - Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit - God’s own self is diverse and relational. Or one might say that God exists in diverse relationship. Each part of our Welcome Statement is a reminder and a commitment to relationship with others. It reflects a desire to see God more fully in others. It invites an attentiveness to and affirmation of the image of God that is present in each and every one of us.

I love that the art that developed in our collaboration with Elody Gyekis is a quilt. I have loved quilts all my life. The ways that individual pieces of fabric become part of a larger whole; the fact that the quilting process connects each piece with all the others. And this particular quilt reflects an even deeper joining together of diversity. For this quilt, the witness team collaborated with Elody, bouncing ideas around and working together - everyone bringing their own creativity and gifts into conversation. And then we added Linda Taylor, the quilter, into the mix. She brought her own creative flair - and at times a needed dose of reality to our dreaming. Everyone in the process was stretched - and everyone made compromises or changed gears at some point. It took work. And was a labor of love.

(Continued...)

What has been produced - much like our Welcome Statement - is something that none of us could have created on our own - none of us could have even imagined on our own. And it is exceptional. It is truly a piece of art that reflects how the community we create together is better and different and more than any one of us can be - what a gift!

Please plan to join us for a special service of dedication and blessing for our new custom-designed quilt during our regular 10:45AM worship service on September 3, 2023. We will look back at the history and development of our Welcome Statement, the unfolding of the quilt as our art piece, and look ahead to how we can continue to live into the love to which we have been called as a community and individuals.



Upcoming Events

Mount Union Area Ladies' Prayer Breakfast

Held in-person on Saturday, September 2 at 8 am.

This event will be held at First United Methodist Church in Mount Union.

You are invited together with others from our church to be a part of this monthly gathering of women from churches from around our area. The speaker will be Shirley Moore Smeal. Contact Pam Grugan if you have any questions.

Men's Breakfast

Held in-person Saturday, September 9th at 8 am.

This event will be held at Donna's Restaurant.

Our gathering is very informal and is a great opportunity to get to know other Stone Church men. If you have visitors, bring them along too. We share life stories, corny jokes and enjoy a delicious made to order breakfast. If you haven't attended in the past or haven't attended in a while, please consider joining us. We guarantee you will leave with a smile on your face and a full stomach. Usually held on the 3rd Saturday of the month.

Older Adult Luncheon

Held in-person on Wednesday, September 13 at 11 am.

This event will be held in the Fellowship Hall.

The August Older Adult Luncheon was held at Donna's on Tuesday August 8 at noon. Our group was smaller this time, only 11 total. We missed some of the more regular ones, as they missed for a variety of reasons. We will be back at Donna's in October. Our September brunch, generously prepared by Rick Laabs, will be at the church on **Wednesday, September 13th at 11:00**. When we meet at Donna's it is the second Tuesday of the month at noon, but when we meet at church it is the second *Wednesday* of the month at 11. Hope to see you.

Heritage Fair 2023

Held in-person on Saturday, September 16th.

This event will be held at Camp Blue Diamond.

There will be activities for all ages. The children's area is always a hit. In addition there will be music, food, crafts, a dunk tank - and an auction under the tent. New this year there will be a communion bread contest to see which congregation makes the best communion bread. (Let Pastor Ben know if you're interested in baking up a batch to enter on behalf of Stone Church!)

All proceeds go to support Camp Blue Diamond and the Middle PA District. It's a great time every year. Be sure to check it out!

Looking Ahead: Annual Conference 2024

Madalyn Metzger, the Moderator for the Church of the Brethren, shares the theme for Annual Conference 2024. How might we engage and grow around her ideas this year? Here is what she says:

"In today's society, we spend an awful lot of time wondering if we're worthy. We wonder

- If we have the right skills
- If we've worked hard enough
- If our sacrifices are worth it
- If our thoughts and opinions are valid
- If our voice will be heard
- If our presence will be valued
- If we are loveable
- If we're safe
- If we are *enough*

"And, let's be honest... we spend a lot of time assessing and evaluating others based on our own standards...

"Since our founding in the early 1700s, the Brethren have been a faith family that has chosen another way of living... the way of Christ. We are people called to live and experience our faith together – as a community – in service to (and with) God, each other, and our neighbors. And, every person in our faith community shares in the spiritual direction of the church.

"**All** of our spiritual gifts are needed if we are to function together as a healthy Body of Christ.

"**Each** and **every one** of us is called... to extend **AND** receive... Christ's love.

"This is the basis of the theme for the 2024 Annual Conference: Welcome and Worthy, based on Paul's letter to the Church in Rome, in which he introduces Phoebe and tells the Roman Christians to "Welcome her in the Lord in a way that is worthy of God's people."



"We don't know much about Phoebe. In fact, this is the one and only time she is named in the Bible.

"But what we do know is that Paul viewed Phoebe as a valued sibling in Christ... and he commended her as an integral part of the Body, encouraging the Church in Rome to welcome her and to build an authentic relationship with her as a child of God.

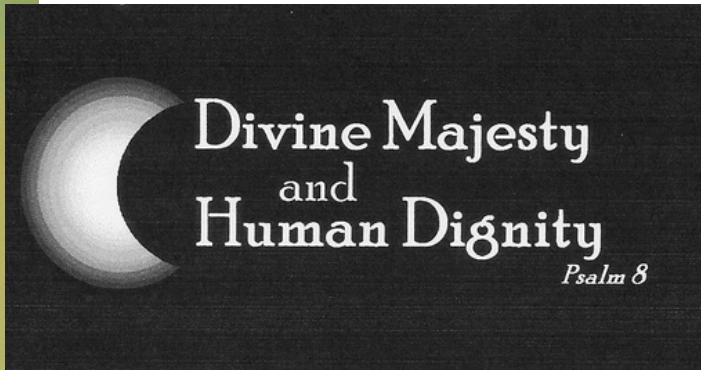
"Like Phoebe, each of us brings our own unique abilities, experiences, and perspectives to this community. And it is through our willingness to share our faith journeys with one another – and to receive one another in the fullness of each person's being – that we can experience and see God's vision for us more fully... and, therefore, be transformed together by God's Spirit.

"And so, in the year to come, I invite you to explore and embrace our call to live together in community... to abide in Christ and one another... to renounce our personal rules and inner assumptions, and replace them with God's eternal truth... and to re-envision how we can extend Christ's love to one another – and to ourselves – in ways that are worthy of God's people."

Greetings from the 2023 District Conference

Moderator, Morgan

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that you have established; what are humans that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Psalm 8: 3-4, 9



Brothers and Sisters, we will gather on Saturday, October 14th at Hollidaysburg Church of the Brethren to celebrate our Creator God's "Divine Majesty" and the dignity granted to all of us by him. On that day we will (hopefully, weather permitting!) have the opportunity to see an annular solar eclipse. We will only have a maximum of 30% coverage in our part of Pennsylvania, but I am excited to see this rare majesty of God's creation. Science can describe what will happen and prepare us for this event, but, I think, no amount of words will prepare us for actually experiencing this with our own senses.

We are going to try something new for District Conference this year. We will conduct business with a hybrid format. Delegates and non-delegates will have the option to participate virtually, in addition to our familiar in-person meeting. Two different formats will be available to those who register for the virtual option. Delegates will be able to participate using Zoom with voting capabilities; non-delegates will receive a link to a YouTube live-stream. I hope you join in whatever way suits you best. **(Please contact the church office to get registered.)**

Annular Solar Eclipse

Registered delegates and non-delegates will receive solar eclipse glasses for viewing the annular solar eclipse following our lunch time.

Note: Many of you know Morgan from Stone Church's own handbell choir. She will be preaching at Stone Church on September 24th

District Conference Outreach Projects



Blair County Head Start

A program of Child Advocates of Blair County

The Program & Arrangements Committee would like to support this local ministry in the Hollidaysburg area. We will be collecting Childrens underwear for their ministry.

Boys & Girls Underwear size 2T to Child size Medium

Blair County Head Start, a Keystone STARS accredited program, provides a high-quality, comprehensive preschool program to children 3 to 5 years old and their families throughout Blair County. Their program uses research-based curriculums to support preschoolers' intellectual, physical, social and emotional growth and to help them prepare to enter school as competent learners. Blair County Head Start provides a variety of options and settings including part-day and full-day center-based classrooms operating within a school year calendar.

Offerings: Ministry in the Making

Ministry in the Making is our District Conference Offering emphasis this year. Middle PA District wants to provide support to our ministers in whatever stage of ministry they find themselves. Education and training, scholarships, continuing education, retreats and special events for ministers and families and promoting calling persons to ministry exploration.

Checks payable: Middle PA District.

Pennies for Witness is an offering emphasis on our outreach ministries: Trucker Traveler, CentrePeace, Prince Gallitzin Park Ministry, Small Church Fund, Outreach Ministry Matching Grants, Global Outreach. We encourage congregations to collect pennies, dimes, nickels, quarters and dollars. That is a lot of spare change!

Guatemala Partnership Update - Summer 2023

WRITTEN BY HENRY THURSTON-GRISWOLD

Students and staff at the Asturias Academy (AA) have been thrilled to resume in-person classes this school year, which began in January, after nearly three years of remote instruction and learning. There are currently 132 students enrolled, about the same number as last year, but due to budget constraints and low enrollments at the high school level, our partners made the difficult decision to suspend the high school program this year. Our hope is that as Guatemala fully emerges from the pandemic, numbers will increase and the high school program can be restored, but the Guatemalan constitution only requires students to complete through the ninth grade, and many students never make it beyond elementary school.

Each month has a foundational theme such as health and wellbeing, the environment, sustainable economic development, and gender equality, and now that classes are in person, our partners have been able to resume culminating activities at the end of each month: a visit to a rural health center, planting seedlings in a nearby valley, a panel discussion on corruption, democracy, and socio-economic differences in preparation for the upcoming presidential election, etc. They also resumed the annual school field trip for the first time since 2019, this year to the indigenous ruins of Iximché and to various cultural venues in the historic colonial capital of Antigua, as well as the annual trek up the Santa María volcano and the celebration of the school's anniversary the first week in August, complete with the election of study government officers, soccer and basketball tournaments, and artistic presentations and food delivery at a residential facility for impoverished senior women.



Culminating activity for the environmental stewardship theme

We are beginning to plan volunteer delegations for the summer of 2024 and there will be four opportunities for you to be involved, three in Guatemala and one here in Huntingdon.

- June 10th -21st : a new elementary delegation for kids who have completed kindergarten through 6th grade and their parents, who will be matched with students at the AA for an experiential language and cultural learning experience. We already have a solid core who have expressed interest in this new venture, including Pastors Ben and Cindy and their three boys.
- June 22nd -30th : a medical delegation that will hold health clinics at the AA and possibly a more rural location. Health professionals (doctors, nurses, dentists, optometrists, therapists, etc.) and interpreters are especially needed for this group that combines medical mission with cultural tourism. Last summer's delegation saw over 500 patients in four days of clinics!
- July 1st -12th : an educational delegation that will prepare and share enrichment learning activities and complete maintenance projects at the school as well as engaging in some cultural tourism, with the opportunity to also study Spanish in small groups or one-on-one.
- July 16th -30th : we are hoping to finally be able to bring a small group of students and staff from the AA here for two weeks for a reverse delegation and as part of their experience, have them staff a Spanish immersion camp at Juniata for high school Spanish students in central PA. We will be looking for families to host our partners for about a week, three days before the camp (July 22-26) and three or four days afterwards, as well as to help organize activities that will make them feel welcome and enable them to experience the natural beauty and culture of central PA.

(Continued...)



View from the summit of the Santa María volcano

Please contact me if you would like additional information on these options, and it is possible and encouraged to participate in more than one program if it works for your schedule. The projected cost for the Guatemala delegations is \$1,800 for adults, \$1,600 for college students, and \$1,400 for children and youth, which includes round-trip airfare and the basic in-country expenses of transportation and room & board. The cost for each additional program is only \$400, and any surplus funds go to support our Guatemalan partner school.

There will be an informational meeting for those interested in participating in any of the three trip options in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday, September 17th at 4:00 pm. No RSVP is necessary, but it would be helpful to know if you plan to attend, and please contact me via email if you are interested in learning more but unable to make the meeting.

Saludos,
Henry for the Guatemala Circle

Faces of our Faith - Thank You

WRITTEN BY DARLENE CHIVERS

Now's your chance! If you've ever wanted to say thank you to someone in our Stone Church family for living God's love, for being one of your faces of faith, there are stacks of Thank You notes piled here and there in the sanctuary waiting to be used by you!

As part of our worship series, Faces of our Faith, we want to help you write a note of gratitude to someone in your life who is a face of faith for you—maybe the person who asks you how your mom is doing, the person who listens to your concerns about your brother, the person who gives you a hug when you are feeling alone, the person who shows up and speaks up.

Saying thank you is a powerful prayer.



Sunday School Class on the Church Community

Are you new to Stone Church? Are you curious about the church? Or maybe you have been part of our community for a long time, but would love a refresher on who we are, what we do, and why? Are you ready to deepen your relationship with this community?

This class is for you! Beginning September 24 we will be teaching a 6 week class to look at these questions. We will talk about beliefs, practices, structure, history, and more. We will also learn more about one another. Many people choose to officially join the church or to be baptized after this class - but that is not a requirement. We simply want to explore together! Join us!

Christian Education Spotlight!

This Fall's Sunday School classes give you an opportunity to dig deeper and grow in your faith understanding, and in your connections to each other. Classes gather in person and over Zoom on Sunday Mornings at **9:30 am** before worship. It all starts on **August 27th** and continuous throughout the Fall. Don't miss out! There are great opportunities available for all ages:

- ***Becoming a People of God:*** Our 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!
- ***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!
- ***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.

Gene's Jottings

WRITTEN BY GENE GOSHORN

September was the the seventh month in the Roman calendar because “sept” is Latin for seven. (In ancient Rome, the calendar used to begin with March - making September the seventh month. When the Romans adopted a January start to the calendar, September and the months following ended up in positions that no longer matched their numbers.)

September really gets going with the Labor Day holiday. Many of us wonder at the first week of September if Labor Day is any more than a summer's end holiday, just as Memorial Day has become more of a cookout weekend than a tribute to those who died in the horrors of war.

The history of the labor union movement of the late 1800s shows us that hundreds of laborers died to make Labor Day happen too. Labor Day was first celebrated in 1882 in New York City. It was part of a movement of workers joining together to ensure fair and just treatment. By working together, these incredibly vulnerable and seemingly powerless workers were able to pressure powerful corporations against incredible odds to make changes that protected workers. As the prophet says, may we too work together, even when the odds seem against us - “to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.” (Micah 6:8)

2023 Deacon Call

WRITTEN BY DAISY DECKER



What is a deacon?

"Deacons are called to be dedicated caregivers who use their spiritual gifts in a shared ministry of concern for the total well-being of God's people."

—from the 1997 Annual Conference statement,
Deacon Ministry in the Church of the Brethren

The Stone Church Deacons have found ways to be effective caregivers. It was decided that we would form sub-groups to use our spiritual gifts and energy to be more specific in our caregiving. We have developed the following small groups within the deacon team: Greeting Cards; Prepare & Assist for Love Feast/Communion; Transportation; Visitation; Assist with Anointing; Prepare & Deliver Meals; Prayer; Assist with Baptisms; and Bible Study Leaders.

It is important to add that deacons are not perfect people, but they are spiritually healthy people. Joan Deeter, in the Brethren publication *Called to Caregiving*, has said: "Those best qualified to serve as deacons will be those who have themselves known brokenness, who have grown strong at the broken places, who have known God's strength most powerfully because of their own weakness, and who are willing to risk sharing their stories. . . Those most ready to serve as deacons are those who have experienced the joy of rebirth."

You are urged to prayerfully consider names of people you think would be good deacons for our congregation.

The Stone Church Deacons are members of the church, called out from the body to be dedicated caregivers using spiritual gifts to support the Stone Church pastors and our community of faith.

During the worship service on Sunday, September 10 you will be asked to write down names of church members you would like to call or "re-call" to this position.

Please feel free to send names to the church office (prior to September 10) or use the chat thread if attending virtually on Zoom September 10.

The Deacon Discernment Team will collect the suggested names and prayerfully discern which members are being called to the deacon role. Those members will be contacted by the Deacon Discernment Team and informed of the call. The names of those who accept the call will be shared with the congregation and affirmed at a date to be determined.



Property Team Update

WRITTEN BY PHIL PATERSON

The property committee has been busy taking care of a number of projects this year. Earlier this year, we dealt with two water claims we had on the same day in different areas of the church. Our insurance carrier handled both claims with top shelf service. The two countertop ranges in the kitchen did not work. We replaced them both with state of the art induction cooktops along with new quartz counters. In June, we had air conditioning installed in the fellowship hall. Recently, we had a small roof leak fixed. The doors off of Seventeenth St coming into the church office, are being replaced in September. The water fountain outside the church office is in the process of being replaced. Our hot water heater has lasted about 10 years past its life expectancy. We are replacing it with a new tankless gas water heater shortly.

We are doing our best to take care of the issues we have with a building the magnitude of ours.

Your building committee
Phil, Monty, Geoff, Bruce, and Bob

Staying in Community

FIND WAYS TO CELEBRATE YOUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS BELOW!

September Birthdays

3rd - Jane Laprade
3rd - Holden McBrayer
5th - Cheryl McClain
7th- Harriet Kaylor
8th - Kristy Launtz
8th- Bill Musser
9th - Jessica Buterbaugh
10th - Barb Purdy
11th - Rachael Beck
13th - Pam Hileman
14th - Brandon Beck
14th - Barbara Detwiler
14th - Cyrus Lattimer
14th- Ezra Lattimer
15th - Randy Yoder
16th - Rowan Dickey
18th - Elsie Weld
19th - Henry Thurston-Griswold
20th - Aiden Borgardt
22nd - Bill Peters
24th - Grace Cook-Huffman
25th - Joan Engle
25th - Greta Hall
25th - Neva Lattimer
25th - Austin Plane
25th - Doug Soliday
30th - Tom Ness

September Anniversaries

1st - Bert & Melissa McBrayer
6th- Ben & Cindy Lattimer
15th - Chuck & Sharon Yohn
20th - Anne & John Shetron Swigart
21st - Jeremy Santos & Mary Garvey
25th - Cindy & Geoff Clarke
25th - Charlie & Robin Paterson
29th - Jeff & Pam Adams



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

Westminster Woods
Sue Martin

Louise Smith
11642 Station Road
Huntingdon, PA 16652