



TINY STEPS CONCERT WITH BRENDA HART AND SPECIAL GUESTS (SEE BACK COVER)

The LITTLE HARBINGER

Bethany Memorial
Church

May 2020

The Pastor's Pen

by Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins

Dear Beloved Bethany
Community,

As I write I am looking out on a rare brilliant sunny day. So many shades of green – birds singing determinedly – temperature trying to get to “warm.” It’s a beautiful reminder that we are in the season of Easter, and we are part of a story of life. I continue to marvel at how this community is staying positive and ready to reach out in many ways to give support and help in the midst of pandemic – through prayer, porch food pantry, lending library and mask project, through offerings supporting homeless locally and many other ministries through our extended Disciples family.

Talk is now about “re-opening.” As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, the advice of our wider

church is not to jump too fast at coming back to church in person. We at BMC have enough space to maintain appropriate distancing, but the question is whether we should. Many of us are in the high-risk group by age and underlying conditions. Encouraging these beloved to gather might not be the most loving thing to do.

Furthermore, until we get treatment for COVID -19, our gatherings are going to be different than before. We will need to maintain distance – an empty pew between each family unit – and 6 feet to either side. Everyone in face coverings. No passing of bulletins, offering plates or communion. No congregational singing. Sanitizing of any space occupied before the next person is in that space. The new sanitizing requirement is

especially challenging given our single main floor bathroom facility.

There is much to think about. I imagine that once we do reopen, we will want to continue our online presence, but that will present its own challenges.

Fortunately, we have shown a remarkable resilience and ability to learn and adapt to new ways of staying “socially distanced but spiritually connected.”

The church board will be giving attention to these matters. I’m grateful for a wise group of servant leaders to pray and discern our way through this.

In the meantime, we have started two new times of gathering: a Thursday night (6:30 pm) prayer
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time on Zoom – which allows us to see each other and talk to each other. For those who do not have internet, it provides a phone-in opportunity to connect.

We are also starting a Bible study. More detail about that soon. Please contact the church office if you are interested in participating.

I am so ready to be able to see you all again. To hold hands and pray. To sing and pass the peace. To share communion in shared space. And yet in so many ways we are communing. I give thanks to God for each one of you, present in the Spirit, if not in the flesh. May God give you strength and health and hope even in these days – especially in these days!

Beautiful? Ugly?

by Sydma Hatzopoulos

While in an area pet supply store a year or so ago, I snapped this picture of goldfish in a tank. I loved the beauty and subtle variation of the colors as well as the sense of movement, and planned to use it as my Facebook cover photo.

But as I focused on the picture, I started thinking. These fish were obviously feeder fish destined to live out their days in an overcrowded tank competing for food and oxygen until a fishnet scooper carried them off to their destiny as prey for other, larger fish. Suddenly I no longer saw the beauty of the picture but became focused on the ugliness.

Had I posted this picture on Facebook, I decided I would title it “Beauty in Ugliness.”

Or did I mean “Ugliness in Beauty”? Did it make a difference on how something was viewed?

I looked back at a picture I had taken of a beautiful and bucolic countryside. With a hydraulic fracking plant smack in the middle. I



saw ugliness in beauty. (I fully respect that others might see it differently).

I called a friend. I gave her these two examples. She agreed with me on my perceptions. I called her back the following day, Good Friday, and asked her what she saw in a picture of the crucifixion of Christ. She responded by saying she saw ugliness in beauty. I agreed, but two days later, during another conversation, we each said we saw beauty in ugliness in the same picture of the crucifixion.

It was only after we had disconnected that I realized why we saw the picture differently from the way we had earlier. On Good Friday, we saw Christ on the cross, dead and crucified. But two days later, knowing what had taken place on that Easter so many years ago, we saw and felt the beauty of Christ as the Risen Savior.

NOTE: The Church building is closed until further notice. BMC staff and volunteers can be reached by calling:

Rev. Sharon Watkins; 317-366-6593 swatkins@bethanwv.edu (Minister)

Sydma Hatzopoulos; 304-639-1600 shatzopoulos@bethanywv.edu (Operations Manager)

Helen Moren; 304-829-4706 moren4391@comcasdt.net (Moderator)

Jan Forsty; 304-639-3428 jforsty@bethanywv.edu (Chair of Elders)

"Thank you so much to those of you who were able to celebrate our mom's 101st birthday with us last month at the BMC coffee hour. In spite of the impending medical crisis, we enjoyed a festive time of fellowship, and were treated by the Women's Club to colorfully decorated, tasty birthday CUPcakes (CUPcakes cleverly planned so as to eliminate "touching"!) Our family appreciates all of the many Bethany friends who have been such a special part of our life for these many years. A heart-felt thank you! Ruth, Jeannie and Jay"



One Busy Lady



Helen Moren has assumed the office as President of the GFWC West Virginia Federation of Women Clubs and has chosen as her symbol the bee and, as her slogan, "Buzzing around GFWC West Virginia". Her chosen theme is "Change Makes a Difference".

While Helen officially became President on March 25th, formal installation ceremonies have been postponed until August due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"As state President I'm hoping to work closely with my board and council, and have fun," says Helen. She has chosen as her theme "Change Makes a Difference". As First Vice President and Strategic Planning chair in the previous administration, several changes were made for the betterment of the Federation.

Helen's state project for the clubs in WV is to focus on the opioid crisis and drug abuse and recovery. As the state of West Virginia is ranked No. 1 in opioid use and deaths, it is Helen's hope that with club members working together, the state's standing can be improved. Opioid abuse leads to many other problems, including domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault. Monetary donations will be important, because state and local agencies need funding to assist the newly recovered make the transition to a productive and drug-free society.

Helen has worked her way up to her current position, having served as President of the Bethany Club too many times to even remember. She has served in Northern District offices multiple times and accepted the responsibilities of the State office of Treasurer in 2010, followed by serving as Secretary, 1st Vice President, and Vice President. She is also the Secretary/Treasurer of the Bethany Community Recreation Board, on Bethany Town Council, Worthy Matron of Bethany Order of the Eastern Star No. 64, and is moderator of the Bethany Memorial Church Congregational Board.

BMC is proud of Helen and wishes her much success in this important office!

Going Green

“The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. Out of our call to “do justice” (Micah 6:8), we strive to demonstrate the fullness of God’s shalom through living out our faith by caring for God’s creation. In keeping with this demonstration, a resolution concerning carbon neutrality was passed at the 2017 General Assembly, in which the Christian Church (DOC) committed to reducing our carbon pollution with the goal to become carbon neutral by the year 2030 and climate positive by 2035. From Hawaii and Washington to Ontario and Florida, and everywhere in between, Disciples congregations are caring for creation in unique and inspiring ways.”

From the Disciples Home Missions web site



The possibility of becoming a “green” congregation at Bethany Memorial Church was discussed at the May meeting of the Congregational Board. Gerard Necastro, in cooperation with Debra Hull and Helen Moren, was asked to coordinate a committee of interested individuals who would be willing to assist in evaluating the present practices of the congregation and changes and then recommend and facilitate change.

The Disciples Home Missions web site (www.greenchalice.org) provides a wealth of information about becoming a “Green Chalice” congregation. The mission? To “connect Christian faith, spiritual practice and creation consciousness in order to demonstrate the fullness of God’s shalom.”

If you have a passion for creation and willing to commit to meet regularly, please contact Gerard at gerard.necastro@gmail.com. You can also contact the church office to express your interest.

“Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet?”

Ezekiel 34:18



The Sanctuary on Easter Sunday



Perspective

By Herb Weaver

“When painting a room, how many coats do you apply,” I asked the master painter, Floyd McFadden. “As many as it takes,” he replied. And honestly, that’s the kind of response that you might expect from him, given the fact that his sarcasm is only exceeded by an unencumbered ability to fire one-liners back at you mercilessly. He went on to tell me that there were just so many variables to consider that it’s difficult to be definitive until you get all the facts. Things like, “what color are you painting over?” ...and “what’s your new color?” ... “is it light over dark, or vice versa?” “is the sheen, eggshell, satin, or gloss over and under?” ... “what’s the quality of your paint?” ... “what roller nap are you using?” ... “is your roller width 9”, 14” or 18”?” ... “are you working off a ladder?” ... and on-and-on!!

By the time Floyd had completed the riddling of my brain with all these questions I realized that I needed a new mindset if I were to pursue the painting of

my house. Often, when approaching a task like this, I think it will be much easier than it really turns out to be. To put it mildly, I underestimate the situation and then, when knee-deep in the paint bucket, tend to get frustrated because it’s not aligning with MY ideas and specifications. There is a certain amount of joy to be found in taking risks, but the satisfaction of a job well-done might be better achieved through a deeper understanding, and that sense of comprehension probably involves endeavors of research, preparation, and experience.

“Then when you think you’re done,” Floyd continued, “come back the next day and shine the light on it from a different viewpoint. You’ll probably need another coat.”

Whew! I guess it never hurts to be well-informed and see things from all sides.

- You can view **Sunday morning worship services on Facebook Live** by going to the BMC Facebook page (Bethany Memorial Church (Disciples of Christ.)) The service begins at 10:45 am. You can download a bulletin for the Sunday service through the Facebook page, or if you would prefer, receive it by email. If you are not presently on the BMC email list, contact the office at BethanyMemorialChurch@bethanywv.edu.
- **Midweek prayer services** are being held Thursday evenings at 6:30 pm. If you would like to attend and are not on the email list, or would like someone added to the prayer list, contact the church by email or phone (304-639-7238)
- Rev. Watkins and Holly Hillgardner are planning a **Bible study** to be held via Zoom sometime in the near future. If you are interested, contact the church office.
- You can keep up with **pledges or contribute monetary gifts** by going to the church web page (www.bmcwv.org) and clicking on the donate button at the top of the page. You can go through PayPal if you have an account or use a credit card. Your continued support of BMC is appreciated. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the church must continue to meet its financial obligations and will not forgo important ministry opportunities.



The Empty Pews

By Sydma Hatzopoulos

Could you be convinced that the above picture was taken, not recently, but nearly 102 years ago?

Most likely not, but rest assured that it is very likely that the interior of the building looked then very much like it does today. Same pews, same pulpit, same stained-glass windows. And empty.

Just shy of three years after the new church building was dedicated in 1915, the Spanish influenza hit the United States. According to a recent series in the *Wheeling Intelligencer*, on the basis of a recommendation from the U.S. Surgeon General followed by a mandate of the West Virginia Health Department, the Brooke County Board of Health issued a “shutdown of schools, poolrooms, lodges, churches, and all public gatherings” on October 15, 1918.

Thinking I still had no proof that Bethany Memorial Church followed the mandate, I read what I had on hand only to find no information on the impact the Spanish influenza had on the town or the Church. And so I called Jeanne Cobb, former archivist at Bethany College, who agreed look in her own personal collection and works and get back to me.

Fortunately, Jeanne had researched and written a narrative on the history of the infirmary and health care at Bethany College from the early years to the present times. There was mention of a quarantine of

those living in Phillips Hall in 1903 (cause unknown), including a description of early social distancing when at certain times of the day, girls would gather in a semi-circle while at a distance of about 40 yards from the quarantined boys and everyone would shout their conversations. There is also mention of a young man who attempted to break the quarantine by going down a rope from a third floor window of Phillips.

Jeanne’s research also indicated that there was an epidemic of typhoid in January of 1910 and that 18 students were attacked. The cause was a contaminated spring at the Northwest corner of College and Main Streets.

But then her research skips to the mid-1920s. Nothing about the Spanish Influenza.

Despite lacking historical evidence, I assume that BMC closed its doors in 1918. I assume that those who had worked so hard to get the new Church building financed and completed almost 102 years ago felt the same way so many of us feel today. The picture shown above could very well depict the sanctuary in both 1918 and 2020.

We are grateful that technology allows us to gather for worship and prayer in a different way, something those early Bethanians were not able to do. But like those early Bethanians, we too will return to the Sanctuary and continue the mission of the Church.

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

Prayer List

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. - Philippians 4:6

Christian Love and Sympathy extended to:

- The family of Chuck Arthurs of Bethany who passed away Tuesday, May 12.
 - Bethany College graduate, Stacey Clauser Shaw, on the loss of her mother to Covid-19.
 - Joe and Carol Kurey on the loss of their grandson, Kyle Kurey.
 - The family and friends of Todd Summers, Bethany College graduate and member of Phi Kappa Tau.
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- Frank Hillgardner, father of Holly Hillgarder who has tested positive for Covid-19
 - Dustin Winters, recovering from Covid-19
 - Bob and Jackie Andrews
 - Casen, three month old great-grandson of Connie Norwood of FCC Weirton.
 - Della and Ed Rodgers, parents of Vicki NeCastro
 - Mike Cunningham, father of Sydma, and Dottie Hanners
 - Gary Larson and Vonnie Larson
 - Barb Stevenson, mother of Kim Stevenson
 - Linda Jacobs, sister of Jan Forsty
 - Nancy Pietrangelo, sister of Penny Tittle
- Jeffrey Yost
 - Allan and Pam Clifford, sister and brother-in-law of Connie McVicar
 - Sharon Poyneer, sister of Vonnie Larson
 - Mary Sutherland, sister of Pat Sutherland
 - Caden Knisley, grandson of Mary Ann Eisenhaur
 - Ruth Tye
 - Joanne Sykes
 - Ellen Sanford
 - Mary Jane Jackson
 - Donna Norman (Sister of Becky Ayers)
 - Linda Owens Walters

Birthdays and Anniversaries

Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness.
-Proverbs 16:31

May 10 – Cathy Chambers (B)
 May 11 – Nancy Harry (B)
 May 16 John and Dr. Tamara Rodenberg (A)
 May 24 – Dr. Tamara Rodenberg (B)
 June 1 – Carol Grimes (B)

June 3 – Herb and Anita Weaver (A)
 June 4 – Rev. Larry and Carol Grimes (A)
 June 10 – Sharon Watkins
 June 13 – Richard and Sarah West (A)
 June 14 – Helen Moren (B)

Front Porch Concerts

Brenda Hart has a passion for praising God through song. Several times during the Covid-19 pandemic, she has shown up at the church to play on the front steps. Sometimes people know about the “tiny porch concert,” and sometimes they do not. Often, folks just show up, on evening walks or driving somewhere. All are reminded to practice social distancing, and all seem to take joy in hearing Brenda sing, whether it be a camp song or a hymn. Brenda is to the right. Below, from left to right are Pastor Sharon Watkins, Jan Forsty, Holly Hillgardner, Vonnie Larson and John and Deb Hull.



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