



THE LITTLE HARBINGER

Bethany Memorial Church

January 2020

The Pastor's Pen

On December 31, a news summary app I receive posted several paragraphs summarizing 2019. Each sentence included phrases referring to a significant event or person, trend or meme from the year. I was a little horrified by how few I understood. The opening one, “*Ok boomer,*” I recognized, as well as the one that followed, “*Did it spark joy?*” But... *Lizzo* and *Lil Nas X*?

Uh oh.

I spent the next hour clicking on links to learn what I had missed of cultural relevance in 2019. As pastor in a college community, I’m going to have to up my game in 2020! The year 2020, will also be a time for me to get better acquainted with the community of Bethany beyond the college.

I’ll have help. A little over a year ago, BMC began a process called New Beginnings, guided by Hope Partnership, one of our Disciples general ministries. Part of the New Beginnings process included a demographic analysis of Bethany, WV, and the surrounding area. I look forward to dusting off that study and reviewing it with many of you as we consider what our ministries should be in 2020.

More than any study, however, I look forward to continuing the process of getting to know the people of this community personally through face-to-face conversations. Whether formally members of Bethany Memorial Church or not, we are all members of this community together. Our lives

impact each other. Many of you have known each other for years – even generations. Some, like me, are newer to the community. My goal is to understand the networks better, so that I can serve more effectively together with you.

The year 2020 will be a benchmark year in our nation. As we begin this new year, my prayers include that Bethany Memorial Church will continue to help shape the culture here (in 2020 and beyond;) and that we will have a role in maintaining our community culture to be one of caring, inclusion and hope – whatever the popular culture may offer.

Wishing you a blessed New Year. I look forward to seeing you around town – and at church!

National Council of Churches Deeply Saddened by Holiday Attacks

The National Council of Churches is deeply saddened by the news of a multiple stabbing at a rabbi's home in Monsey, New York, and of a shooting during a church service in White Settlement, Texas. Both attacks took place this past weekend, in the midst of the holiday season.

Additional antisemitic incidents have occurred recently in Brooklyn, Miami, Jersey City, Boston, Washington, DC, and elsewhere. We call upon churches associated with the National Council of Churches to reach out to synagogues in their communities and express sorrow and solidarity.

Too many attacks against houses of worship have plagued the entire world in recent years. People should not have to fear for their lives as they worship God, nor should they feel it necessary or appropriate to carry weapons into houses of worship in order to protect themselves. All people should feel safe and secure during worship.

"We pledge to continue to counter anti-Semitism, to work for sensible gun violence prevention measures, and to advocate for policies and programs that will assist those suffering from mental illness," said Jim Winkler, President and General Secretary. "We grieve for those who have been wounded and for the families of the victims. We cry out to God in the midst of this pain."

"Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord, I have no good apart from you.' As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight."
Psalm 16:1-3 NRSV

Special Music

*"O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!"*
Psalm 95:1

Bethany Memorial Church continues to be blessed with talented musicians. During the month of December, Vicki NeCastro, BMC pianist, not only put together a choir, but also arranged for special music at each worship service. Among others, Laura Cramblet played the hammered dulcimer and provided vocals. Brenda Hart played the guitar and sang "O Holy Night" at the Christmas Eve candlelight service.



You Know, You Never Know

By Herb Weaver



A friend once relayed to me a story about an elderly woman who proudly stated while riding a city bus, “you know, you never know.” My friend who divulged this information said it was the most profound statement he’d ever heard. Over the years, I’ve thought about both of those pronouncements quite a bit, so there must be something to be considered, especially as we embark on the new year ahead.

You know, I never knew that being a cook at Howard Johnson’s in my teens would involve a process called “triple-mopping” every evening after closing time. Yep!! After wiping down all the counters, cleaning the griddles and stove-tops, then sweeping the floors with a broom... we started to mop! Each round of mopping commenced with a fresh bucket of ammonia-laced water, accompanied by a series of cleaner mop heads. I remember thinking, “how can this mundane exercise EVER help me be a better person?” It seemed so beneath my level of expertise, I mean... I was cook! I wondered why the busboys didn’t mop! Since then, as a ceramic artist who deals with mud and dust, I’ve probably

mopped floors thousands of times, and as I perform this act, I smile.

You know, I never knew that this pattern of clean-up would occur again when I worked for a residential construction outfit while attending college. My boss was emphatic about cleaning up at the end of the workday. His attitude about this strong desire to bring closure to the events of the day, coupled with a belief in “starting the next day with a sense of order” was infectious. Little did I know that this format would transfer over into many circumstances throughout my life.

So, I guess what I’m trying to say is that we should probably look at every task as an opportunity, no matter what, because you never know how it might benefit and enhance your life in the future. As we close out the year and enter into a new one, there is merit in considering a triple-mop of our hearts and minds... wiping the slate clean. In doing so, when we start a new day, the table is set, our foundation is spotless, and the future looks bright. You never know!



The children of the Christian Church of Wilkesburg, Pennsylvania thank the congregation and friends of Bethany Memorial Church for their support of their annual “Santa’s Workshop.” During this annual event, the church’s doors are opened wide to the families of Wilkesburg for an open house during which they offer free food, free games and prizes and a free photograph with Santa Claus. The Wilkesburg church is an “inter-generational, inter-racial, and into Jesus” Disciples of Christ congregation led by the Rev. Janet Hellner-Burns.

December Events

Herb Weaver's pottery at the annual BMC Christmas bazaar; Scott and Jeanne Thayer in Bethany over the holidays; Jan Forsty and the Gill famil including Noah Gill, BC student (Ugly Christmas sweater Sunday); Karen Bracey and Helen Moren light the third Advent candle during worship; Rev. Watkins and BC students at the BMC Christmaas party; The sanctuary; Penny Tittle and Jan Forsty prepared to sell tickets at the Christmas bazaar; Connie McVicar, Karen McFadden, Jan Forsty, Helen Moren and Gerard NeCastro on clean-up duty following the Christmas party; the Chrismon Tree; Judge Joyce Chernenko and the Advent Wreath at the Christmas Eve Candlelight service.



Godspeed Linda Graham

Linda Carol Graham, 79 of Bethany, WV, passed away peacefully in her sleep at 4:35 PM on Saturday, December 28, 2019 at her residence under the care of her family and Amedisys Hospice.

Linda was born July 31, 1940 in Pittsburgh, PA. She was the daughter of the late Bill Jones and Miriam (Schade) Jones.

Linda was a devoted member of Bethany Memorial where she served as church secretary for 11 years, preschool teacher for seven years and Elder. In addition to her church work Linda worked at Bethany College in the bookstore. Many will remember Linda for her pastimes of reading, trips to the Bethany, WV, passed away peacefully in her sleep at 4:35 PM on Saturday, December 28, 2019 at her residence under the care of her family and Amedisys Hospice.

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In addition to her church work Linda worked at Bethany College in the bookstore. Many will remember Linda for her pastimes of reading, trips to the beach and collecting shells and her beloved cat, Frank; but most of all for her work in the church and the determination of living life to the fullest.

In addition to her parents, Linda was preceded in death by her husband, John Graham.

Linda is survived by her two children, Shari Legros and her husband, Jeff of Wintersville, OH, Tim Graham and his wife, Janice of Bethany WV, seven grandchildren, Eric Celler and his wife Erica, Jason Celler and his



fiance, Caylen Farr, Madison Legros, Ryan Benfield, Taylor Elliott and her husband, Kale, Lauren Benfield and Joshua Benfield, 11 great grandchildren, Wyatt, Amelia, Adleigh, Hannah, Riley, Roland, Aiden, Mekhi, Isaac, Mayson and Layla, a sister, Barbara McAuley and her husband, Bill of Mt. Lebanon, PA and nieces and nephews.

A gathering of family and friends was held at Bethany Memorial in Heritage Hall on Saturday, January 4, 2020 from 10:00 AM until time of Memorial Service at 11:00 AM in the Sanctuary of BMC with Reverend Dr. Sharon Watkins and Reverend Thaddaeus Allen, co-presiding.



Emily Griffith Springer

In a recent publication of "The Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago," **Emily Griffith Springer** was recognized as one of eight individuals named Entering House Scholar. As a first year Masters student in the Divinity School, she was also awarded the prestigious Drum and Tennant scholarship. From her biography: "Emily Griffith Springer is a 2019 summa cum laude graduate of Bethany College, where she was co-vaedictorian of her class, and received the Harold and Evelyn Watkins Pre-Ministerial award among other honors. She interned at Bethany Memorial Church..."

As most of you know, Emily married **Michael Springer-Ingram** this past summer in Bethany. According to his Facebook page, Michael is attending law school at the University of Chicago. Michael's faithfulness in attending BMC is not forgotten, nor is his willingness to assist in any way he could.

Blessings on this couple!

The Shell Doll

by Sydma Hatzopoulos

To my five-year-old eyes, they were the most beautiful things I had ever seen. Row upon row of shell dolls, similar yet slightly different in color and size. I think my YiaYia (grandmother) was equally delighted, as she allowed me to choose one to purchase, and did not rush me as I examined each and every one to determine which I wanted. I remember holding that doll in my lap as we rode the city bus from the beach back to her house in Norfolk, Virginia. I cherished it for years.

That doll sparked joy for me.

If you are not familiar with the expression “spark joy,” it was coined by Marie Kondo as an aid in decluttering one’s household. Pick up an object and ask yourself if it “sparks joy” in your heart. If it does, keep it. If it does not, toss or donate it.

At some point in my young life, the doll was forgotten. It ceased to spark joy. Or maybe it just broke. I don’t recall any great sense of loss when it was no longer a part of my life.

Fast forward a number of years, returning from what would turn out to be our last visit together to the Outer Banks, I told my husband I needed to make a quick stop. I left him in the car as I ran into a souvenir shop and returned with a bag containing a shell doll carefully wrapped in paper. As we left the island, I told him of the beloved shell doll I had as a child and how the thought of it evoked memories of beach trips with my YiaYia and brothers. I did not know it at the time, but the new shell doll evokes not only those same early memories, but also later memories of the beach with

my husband and extended family - sparking joy once again.

Last week, I was talking with an individual who had recently begun attending Bethany Memorial Church. She revealed that finding a church to attend was not her idea, and that she had been somewhat of an unwilling participant on her first visit. Happily, she added that all that changed as soon as she walked in the front doors of the church that first Sunday. While she did not use the word “spark,” she did say that the Church had brought her great joy much like a church that had brought her refuge as a child.

At some point in our lives, some of us have felt the Church no longer “sparked joy” in our hearts. Perhaps we left the Church. I myself have done it twice. But I came back. It is reassuring to know that things that are important enough to spark joy in our hearts in the past can spark equal or even greater joy in hearts today.



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY-WHEELING EVENTS

Sunday, Jan. 12

- 6 p.m. “A Celebration of Music, Liberty & Knowledge,” featuring “ezra & the reletivs”, Wheeling University Troy Theater, 316 Washington Avenue, Wheeling; Troy Theater is in Swint Hall, which is the third building on the right

Wednesday, Jan. 15 (Dr. King’s birthday)

- 6:30 p.m. Upper Ohio Valley Ministerial Alliance Prayer Service, Fourth Street United Methodist Church (UMC), 1060 Chapline Street in Wheeling; Preacher: Rev. James M. Agnew, Pastor, Tree of Life Apostolic Church; a Community Choir will also perform.

Sunday, Jan. 19

- 2 p.m. MLK March, beginning at the Windmill, 470 Stone Blvd, Wheeling (at the top of Wheeling Hill.) Park by the Windmill or at Fourth Street UMC, 1060 Chapline St. Buses will take marchers to the top of the hill
- 3 p.m. Interfaith Prayer Service, Fourth Street UMC, 1060 Chapline St.
- 4 p.m. Community Banquet, YWCA Wheeling, 1100 Chapline Street; Keynote speaker is Chief Ivin B. Lee, West Virginia’s first African American female police chief. MLK and Rosa Parks Award winners to be honored. Suggested donation: \$5

Monday, Jan. 20

- 9 a.m. MLK Awards Breakfast, YWCA Wheeling, 1100 Chapline St.
- 9:30 p.m. Local MLK winners award presentations, YWCA Wheeling
- 10:30 a.m. Special children’s programming (5-12-year-olds) in honor of Dr. King

If you have any questions, contact Gerard NeCastro.

Prayer List

Therefore...pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. – James 5:16

- Suzanne Webb (DOC minister and friend of Sharon Watkins)
- Rick Lowery
- Pam and Alan Clifford (Connie McVicar's sister and brother-in-law)
- Sharon Poyneer (sister of Vonnie Larson)
- Katrina Beery (mother of Debra Hull)
- Mary Sutherland (sister of Pat Sutherland)
- Della & Ed Rodgers (Parents of Vicki NeCastro)
- Holly Cramblet Bowman
- Mike Cunningham (Sydma's Dad) and Dottie Hanners
- Caden Knisley
- Joanne Sykes
- Ellen Sanford
- Nancy Sandercox
- Mary Jane Jackson
- Ruth Tye
- Holly, Frank, and Sharley Hillgardner
- Elizabeth DeJong
- Donna Norman (Becky Ayers' sister)
- Nancy Pietrangelo (sister of Penny Tittle)
- Dottie Smith
- Robert Andrews
- Linda Owens Walters
- Paul Gardner
- Kerry Kerr
- Dara Cobb Lewis and family
- Chib Gratz (friend of Kim Lawless)

Christian love and sympathy are extended to:

- The family of Barbara Chambers, who passed away January 7, 2020.
- The family of Linda Graham, who passed away December 28, 2019.
- The family of Betty "Pip" Mae Kearns Francis who passed away December 30, 2019.

January Birthdays

1 – Rev. Dan Harry

2 – Hilary Jeanne Slacum

16 – Vonnie Larson

18 – Austin Chambers

19 – Harry Sanford

26 – Carolyn Forrester

30 – Sue DeVaul

30 – Kerry Shaulis

31 – Anita Weaver

Christmas Homecoming



One of the most joyous parts of Christmas is welcoming friends and family who have been away. BMC was blessed with the presence of (from left to right) Eli Lambie, former church pianist and musician; Ellen Sanford and Harry Sanford (with Deb Hull); and Wes Eddy and wife Candace, who live in Hedgesville, Wv.

Note: Rev. Sharon Watkins has a new email address! She can now be reached at swatkins@bethanywv.edu. Please use this email for all church related information and inquiries.

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