

NEWS & VIEWS

December 7, 2025

Volume 24 No. 12

Doylestown Mennonite Church

PASTOR'S PEN

The Advent theme for us as at DMC this year is "Expecting Jesus." It reminds us of the long tradition of anticipating the second coming of Jesus while also celebrating his first coming to earth as a helpless human. As we live in this in-between time of waiting, we also see many expressions of Jesus at work in our lives day by day. It is good to look back and ahead, but God calls us to be present in the here and now and to experience the joy of his love. As we have listened to and practiced the words of Jesus, our Rock and firm foundation over this past year of 2025, sometimes it has been hard, and we have given into fear or worry. But Jesus has remained the same and his invitation to us is still true, trust in me and my grace. Look around you and see where I am at work and join in my love for all people.

As we live with these words, "expecting Jesus," over the next several weeks, I invite you to ask God to open your eyes and heart to where God is working. Sometimes it is in the least expected places, the most ordinary and commonplace. I have a story of where I saw Jesus.

I have a practice of riding the bus from Hellertown where I live to Bethlehem a few times a month. I do this to avoid using my car, to walk a bit more and to connect with people who live in our community. This week I took the bus and met a woman who was coming home from the grocery

store with a 'granny cart.' We chatted a bit, mostly small talk, but it was warm and friendly. It turned out we both got off at the same stop, and it was a blessing to see another rider help her with her cart as she got off the bus. I was conscious of time and did not stick around to see which direction she was going. I was intent on my agenda, getting **my** errands done so I could catch the next bus "in time." As I walked up the hill I looked back and saw her walking up the hill slowly pushing her cart. I had a thought that I could go back and walk with her, but my priority was my



agenda, not following the nudge of Holy Spirit. This was a learning experience for me and reminded me that as we "expect Jesus" in our daily lives, it may mean we have to change our plans and follow those nudges.

When Jesus was born, he was born in a small town, a place considered the least significant in the communities. And yet, that was where Jesus showed up to begin his earthly life. How will Jesus show up in the least significant, in the small towns, in the ordinary events of our lives? Invite the Spirit to nudge you and ask for courage to follow those nudges. I trust God will be given glory as we celebrate the first coming of Jesus to earth and notice the ways Jesus continues to break into the everydayness and shine his love through us and around us

- Pastor Sandy

COMING UP : SOME SPECIAL DATES

Birthdays

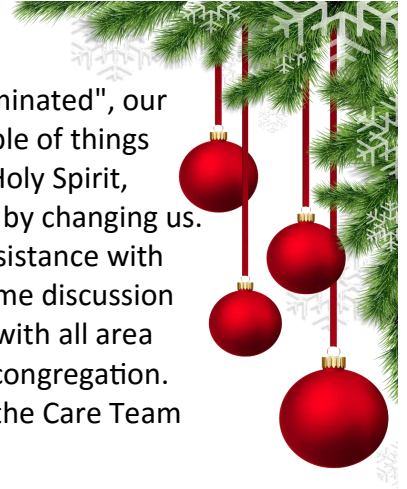
Silas Reiff 12/10
Kathy Heckler 12/13
Blanche Althouse 12/22
David Santopietro 12/29



FROM THE CARE TEAM

The Care Team met November 4 and we finished up the book "Humility Illuminated", our discussion centered around what we learned from reading the book. A couple of things I found helpful is that humility becomes empowering when we yield to the Holy Spirit, and humility empowers not by changing circumstances or other people, but by changing us. We also learned about "The Hub", a new resource for individuals seeking assistance with housing, food or other needs located in the old Doylestown courthouse. Some discussion was held about this and how it could be a source for individuals connecting with all area churches seeking help. We closed in prayer for numerous people from our congregation.

- Gary Garges for the Care Team



The Care Team met again on Tuesday, December 2, and Gary shared some scriptures that were especially meaningful to him during his recent medical care. We reviewed our job description and the use of the Compassion Fund. We plan to visit our DMC participants who cannot attend worship regularly and share Christmas greetings with them. We will meet again on Tuesday, January 6 via Zoom.

- Sandy Landes for the Care Team (Gary Garges, Freida Myers and Sandy Landes)

THANKSGIVING

Our service took place as a table fellowship. We talked about abundance and meditated on the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. We were encouraged to live with an open hand, being ready to be generous with time, resources and connections.



KAREN'S PLACE

"Doylestown's only underground Christian Café"



The last Karen's Place event of the year is the appearance

of **The Eddy Mann Band** on December 6. More events will be scheduled beginning in January.

Check the bulletin board flyers at DMC for future Karen's Place events.

A NEW VENTURE: THE SHARING TABLE

On November 5 at 6 pm, a community meal was served in our fellowship hall to a group of people including members of the homeless community, some seniors, and members of the congregation. It was a time for sharing a meal around the table with our neighbors. The food was appreciated and the social contact enjoyed by those who attended.



Another such evening came on December 3 with more to come on the first Monday of each month in the new year. Members of the congregation participate by sharing around the table and assisting with other tasks, such as providing and serving food.

NOVEMBER WORSHIP



November 2: Richard Brewer from Pinebrook reported hosting various groups and a very successful day camp for children with 112 participants.



November 9: Beverly Benner Miller challenged us to spend time in quiet, to listen to those around us and obey nudges that come to us from the Holy Spirit.



November 16: Noel Santiago spoke about our confidence based on Jesus' sacrifice which opened God's holy place to us, and gives us a place to truly care for one another.



November 23: Diana Moyer and two of her family members led us in worship and she reminded us that "humble, healthy hearts harbor holiness" and we need to pursue holiness and obedience. Pride and ego are the root of subtle sins.



November 30: Our own Mark Reiff took us back to the political, religious, and economic context of Jesus' entry into our world. We can trust the one who says "I Am" and not be afraid.



FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

*Who knew what stories are buried among the stones behind the cemetery wall?
Also, what unusual tasks might end up in a church administrator's lap?
Kristine gives one small answer to those questions.*

THE EMPTY PATCH IN SECTION E

(adapted from a longer essay, by Kristine McClain)

This past summer was somewhat of a reset for me in the DMC office after Randy's departure. I found myself chipping away at tasks that needed administrative attention, one of which was bringing our in-house cemetery records up to date, both for the present and the future. This involved going through the existing written records, checking FindAGrave.com on a regular basis, and walking the rows of the DMC cemetery - particularly the three newest sections - and taking notes and photos in order to get our database as accurate as possible.

One day, while walking up and down the rows, I found myself right off the main path in a small, empty patch of grass in the corner of section E. The map simply gave a name: **Vernon Gross**. It felt odd, but with no other information to go by and hundreds of other burials to sort out, I noted it and moved on. But in the following days, for some reason the questions lingered. Who was Vernon Gross?



As the project continued into the summer, God began writing the next chapter and answers started to unfold. While sifting through the fragile, yellowed papers in one of our upstairs filing cabinets, I came across almost 50 years' worth of burial permits. And that's where it was that I saw the name again: Vernon Robert Gross. But this time more information sprang off the paper. Cause of death - Fulminating Virus Pneumonia. Date of Death - August 21, 1964. Age - 11 months.

My heart sank. I wasn't able to make peace with the idea that this mystery burial was, in fact, a baby.

Several weeks later, I found a historical binder labeled "Burials: 1821-1962", containing long lists of names and dates. Opening it up, it fell to the "C" names ... and there it was, plain as day - a photocopy of a letter, dated January 2, 1968, from Baby Vernon's parents. They shared their regret that due to financial hardship and health struggles, they were unable to place a headstone on their son's grave. And they expressed their appreciation for the kindness of our church during their time of sorrow. (*cont'd* →)



Vernon Robert Gross
September 11, 1963
- August 21, 1964

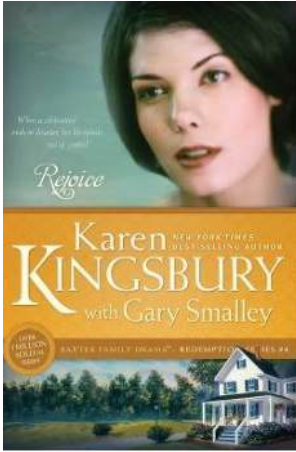
There's no reason I should've ever seen this letter. Vernon had passed away after 1962, his name began with "G" - not "C" - and there were no other letters in this binder! How was it in there, and why? Was it simply so that in 2025, 57 years later, it would be found again?

To be honest, I didn't have a well-formulated plan at the time, but I knew that Vernon should be memorialized in a tangible way. Just as He did in 1964, I believe that God is continuing to call DMC toward showing His kindness, love and grace to the community, no matter how or why our paths intersect. I've also come to learn that sometimes God convicts us in unusual ways and simply asks us to take a step as He leads ... and see what happens.

Thanks to some internet "sleuthing", I made contact - even more-so, CONNECTION - with a loving and gracious family. Spread across the country and made up of five siblings and their father who held the memory of a beautiful, precious baby boy in their hearts, they were thankful and blessed that we would reach out to them. With assistance from Don Derstine and our Cemetery Fund, and with gratitude to Donald Crossin and KSS Cemetery Services, this November we came alongside the Gross family to honor and memorialize baby Vernon Robert Gross. The empty patch in section E is far from empty, and today, more than 61 years later, also bears a new gravestone - a gift from his father and siblings, with love extended from their DMC family.



FROM THE LIBRARY



BOOK REVIEW: *REJOICE* by Karen Kingsbury

Rejoice, by Karen Kingsbury with Gary Smalley, is an amazing story. The author details what happens when a child drowns and is rescued after about 15 minutes. Would you pray for her recovery/survival as a severely brain-damaged child, or for her journey to heaven? What is God's will? Her loving grandfather, a doctor, doubts God would want her to survive. Gary Smalley has written numerous books about relationships, especially for men. Surely this focus on relationships was part of his contribution to the book. The story includes other family members who experienced trauma, guilt and sorrow but highlights rejoicing in the midst of difficulties. A part of the story follows Ashley who works in a facility where she learned a lot from a woman who continued to love even as she experienced dementia. Kingsbury notes that a friend had shared with her the story of a child who had survived drowning with resulting brain damage which explains why she could write so definitively about that incident and the resulting impact on family and friends. Check out some of the other books by Karen Kingsbury if you like this one.

- Freida Myers, Librarian

PARTING THOUGHT

"Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;
from our sins and fears release us, let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart."

- Charles Wesley, 1744



Deadline for submitting
items for the January
issue of News & Views:

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