

NEWS & VIEWS

December 1, 2024

Volume 23 No. 12

Doylestown Mennonite Church

PASTOR'S PEN

In my travels over the past few weeks, I have been surprised by the number of houses already glowing with outside Christmas decorations. It used to be limited to stores with Christmas displays and radio stations playing Christmas music; now more individuals are jumping the gun with full blown decorations. I guess these individuals never received the memo that such decorations are not allowed before the First Sunday of Advent. I wonder why people are so eager to decorate for a holiday that is still a month away.

Rather than wondering why people decorate so early or even complaining as if there is something wrong, I sensed God asking me how I prepare to celebrate God's great gift of Jesus. I outlined my advent preaching theme and began working on my sermons. I received a few requests from Nancy of what needs to be done to prepare our house. I made plans and placed events on my calendar. These are all things I do to prepare for Christmas.

As I considered how I prepare for God's gift of Jesus, I sensed God inviting me this Advent season to pay attention to two things. First, I am called to look for God's light shining in the midst of chaos and darkness. I am increasingly aware of the brokenness in our world. As individuals we carry hurts and wounds that keep us captive and limited. Many relationships often experience disappointment and betrayal. As a society, fragmentation and division seem

to rule the day. In the midst of this, God calls us to look for the light of His hope and love. This does not mean we ignore the brokenness, but rather where we choose to focus. Will you prepare this Advent by choosing to look for God's light?

Secondly, I sense God calling me to prepare to adjust my plans and expectations. One consistent theme in every account that references Jesus' birth is the need for individuals to adjust their plans. Joseph had decided to divorce Mary quietly but then stayed with her as her husband. Mary declared "let it be to me as the Lord has said". The shepherds left tending their flock to go and see the baby Jesus. After the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph took a detour to Egypt. To receive Jesus means to respond and makes changes.

My prayer for Advent is asking God to help me see my need to lay aside the plans and expectations that often hold me more tightly than I want to believe. Beyond seeing this need, I am asking for courage to change and allow God to direct.

As you see the many signs of the season and you do things to prepare for Christmas, how is God calling you to prepare for the gift of Jesus? May this be your focus for Advent!

- Pastor Randy

THANKSGIVING



Thanksgiving Eve was different last year. We gathered around tables in the fellowship hall for a light meal and shared about our experiences and God's faithfulness. Again this year we will meet together in the same way to share about people who have been an example to us in faithfulness and trust in God.



COMING UP ... SOME SPECIAL DATES

Birthdays

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

KAREN'S PLACE



The last Karen's Place event of the year is the appearance of the Eddy Mann Band on December 7. More events will be scheduled beginning in January.

FROM THE CARE TEAM

Sandy Landes, Randy Heacock, Gary Garges and Freida Myers met as a Care Team via Zoom on October 30. Our scriptural focus was Galatians 6:1-10: Doing Good to All. Carl Yusavitz wrote an article entitled, "Me, Me, Me! Now, Now, Now! When Meeting Everyone's Needs Actually Hurts the Church." How can we wisely carry each other's burdens without becoming overburdened by needs placed on us by others. How do we balance "bearing another's burdens" with helping others "carry their own burdens?" When is my help helping? We need to consult others and take time before rushing in to help.

We heard about pastoral vacations in November. Randy reported on some matching funds in process for a recent Compassion Fund gift. We closed in prayer for a number of DMC families, the upcoming Mosaic Conference Assembly this weekend, Dennis Edwards who is preaching this Sunday, and ongoing wisdom for our work. Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 3.

- Freida Myers for the Care Team

FINANCIAL UPDATE



This update from Kendrick Garrido for your information on the status of our finances through mid-November: our weekly giving has been, on average, less than what we targeted in our budget for this year and when compared with our actual expenses so far, we are about \$9,000 behind. We continue to have reserve funds set aside for times where we fall short of our budgeted giving, so this is a manageable situation and I wanted to make sure everyone is aware. Thank you for your generous and faithful giving throughout the year!

SOME INSPIRING VISITORS



We opened and closed the month of November with two especially interesting speakers. On November 3, Dennis Edwards, a good friend of Pastor Randy's beginning from their times in the Washington, D.C. area, was with us to bring a message. He wrote a recently-published book about humility. He said that in our broken society we need to live as heavenly citizens, and through humility we can have unity and engage in spiritual warfare. Then on November 24, Stephanie Gehman, whom we first knew as



a little girl named Stephanie Ferrier, came back in her new role as the next CEO of Spruce Lake Retreat. She shared about recent developments in the wilderness area of the camp, and something of her journey to the present, with a message about wisdom taken from the book of James.

A SPECIAL MISSION



On Sunday, November 10, Gideon Youssef and his daughter Madison reported on their trip to Egypt. They left on September 30 for a 14 hour flight to Cairo to deliver the aid they had collected. They provided a large amount of food for The Mother of Peace children's home, including, among many other things, beans, rice, meats, frozen vegetables and 60 pounds of flour. Another important part of this aid was support for 18 pastors, who each received \$200 to add to their salaries in this time of severe inflation. It was the first time for Madison to visit the land of her father's birth. She enjoyed meeting the children and their care-givers at the

children's home where they live because they are orphans or their parents cannot care for them. She said that the visit made her want to support them even more and looks forward to another visit.

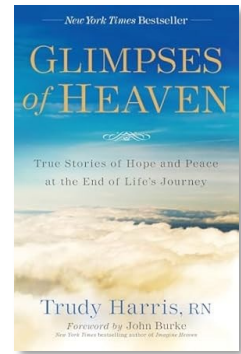
A SPECIAL CELEBRATION

On Sunday, November 25, the family of Ray and Marge Swartley held an open house to celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary. They welcomed many family members and friends, greeting each with thanks. They reflect with joy on their many grandchildren and have now welcomed 20 great-grandchildren. Not many can match their record of 70 years together - it helps when you start young, like 18. We hope they have even more years to celebrate.



FROM THE LIBRARY

Glimpses of Heaven (True Stories of Hope and Peace at the End of Life's Journey) was written by Trudy Harris, RN, former president of Hospice Foundation for Caring. I hope you can check out this book which presents a wonderful view into how she and others helped bring hope and salvation to dying persons.



One was Carl, a spiritual man who had abandoned his faith; he looked for a way back. At one point he was bundled up and taken to a live nativity scene at his request. He sat moved to tears and had peace. Later he called Harris and asked if the priest she had mentioned could come to visit him right then. Carl shared some of his life with the priest after which the family was invited back into the room. The priest helped lift him up in bed and said, "Carl, soon you will be with Jesus in heaven. I know I will see you there someday." He died that night. Harris says, "Carl's prayers all those years were not lost but heard by the God who loved and created him..."

Gene was grieving for a loved one he feared was lost. Harris shared that we can't know a person's heart but could trust that God was a merciful and compassionate God who did not want anyone to perish. God can bring previous conversations to that person's mind and draw them into His care. Harris says, "It is in times like these that hospice nurses depend entirely on the inspiration of the Holy spirit to comfort those God sends to their care and not on their own limited insights and understanding."

Johnny said that he did not believe in God. After several months of visiting, Harris and Johnny had a good relationship. Even in the nursing home he remained an avid smoker. He was getting weaker and asked if Harris would take him to the screened porch where smoking was permitted and she did. He looked up and saw a picture of Jesus knocking on a door and saw that it had no handle. When asked, she explained that it meant Jesus was knocking on the door, not forcing himself in. "He wants to come into your heart and make Himself known to you and take you to heaven with Him." He was not put off but asked, "But suppose I just don't believe in Him at all, what then?" She tucked him into bed and suggested "he just tell God that he had never believed in Him and ask Him to please show him if He really exists. Tell him you're sorry for whatever you did wrong in your life, and ask Him to take you to heaven with Him, if that's where He is." Harris visited the nursing home the next day to pick up his belongings. She did not see the picture on the wall and asked about it. Staff verified that there had never been a picture there but that she and Johnny had been in that place when he saw it. She was speechless and wrote: "Who can explain the awesome power of God?"

- Freida Myers, Librarian

**Deadline for
submitting items for the
January issue of
News & Views:
December 31, 2024**

PARTING THOUGHT

Between darkness and light I will always walk;
wherever I go, I will open a window of light, and will
plant the seeds of love.
I will open a window of light, and will plant the seeds
of love.

- Manal Hreib 2006 (Hebrew and Arabic)

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