

THE LISTENING POST

FEBRUARY
2024



My friends,

Lent is nearly here. Yes, we just took down our Christmas decorations (well, some of us. Maybe not all of us. And that is totally okay.) Stores at least took them down and immediately put up Valentine's Day decorations, candy, cards. And right next to the big red hearts, there are big pastel eggs. Fluffy ducks and chicks. Chocolate bunnies and crosses (don't even get me started on the weirdness of a chocolate cross.) If it feels fast and really soon this year, it's because it is. Because Easter is considered a "moveable feast," due to its dependence on lunar cycles, the date for Easter, and therefore the start of Lent, is not fixed in our calendar. The earliest possible date for Ash Wednesday is actually February 4 (last happened in 1818, but won't happen again until 2285.) So February 14 is pretty early, but not the earliest.

Okay, but why does this matter for us? Weird calendar details don't necessarily make for great "monthly newsletter fodder." Perhaps

not, but you know what does? Realizing that there are things that we still don't know when it comes to our faith, our beliefs, who we are as people of God. And when there are things we don't know, what do we do?

Some people sit in their lack of knowledge and do nothing. There's something to be said for that in a positive way...because with God, there's no way we will EVER know EVERYTHING. And so we must, therefore, realize that there is mystery to be embraced in following Jesus. Some, when faced with questions, will go to the ends of the earth for answers, poring over library books and old newspaper articles and listening to podcasts. This is what I typically do. When our daughter received her autism diagnosis, I went on Amazon and immediately purchased 6 different books on our ride home. When trying to know more about the things my new friend Geoff really liked, I read 4 Neil Gaiman books and started to read George R.R. Martin's books (I didn't finish because wow...those are way too detailed and long.) Then, we have people who fall on the "in between" of that spectrum. They want to learn more, but realize they can't know it all. And they're okay living in that space. They have conversations with their friends and family about the new things they're learning, hear other points of view, and take some of it to heart.

And all of these people can be found in the church.

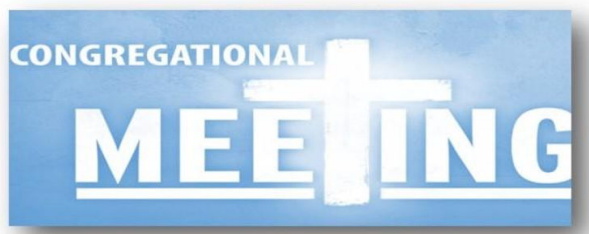
I know a lot of people still give up things for Lent, and that's okay. But I like to try and do something "extra" during the season. Once, I tried doing more silent retreats (dumb idea.) Another year I tried a new vegetable each week (I still hated all of them.) Still another, I worked through an app called d365 that provided a devotional and prayer each day. I loved that. This year, I think I may try to read a new book each week on something or someone I don't know much about. In Proverbs 18, we are told that the "wise...are always learning, always listening for fresh insights." (Proverbs 18:15, The Message) This feels like a good place for me to start.

While preparing our hearts for a season of turning toward God, let us also consider

how to turn our minds and bodies toward God as well. See you on Valentine's Day, I mean, Ash Wednesday!

Blessings, Pastor Niki

- 1 Peggy Marangoni
- 9 Amber Gartley
- 12 Mark Guthrie
- 14 Linda Gould
- 16 Carson Coulter
- 18 Kenneth Travis
- 21 Marisa Chetsko, Rebecca Moyes
- 23 Amanda Hubbard
- 25 Donna Schrecengost
- 28 Karen Travis



THE ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING WILL BE FEBRUARY 11, 2024 IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING WORSHIP for the purpose of receiving the annual report and electing our Congregational Nominating Committee

Annual Reports, Giving Statements & Giving envelopes are now available in the vestibule.

~ Winter Hiatus ~ Chapel Bells & Craft Ladies

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Nursery is available to parents. Young children may attend during worship.

Sunday school classes are held on the 2nd floor of the Christian Ed building shortly after 11 am each Sunday. Classes are determined by age. Our volunteer teachers have all required clearances and are anxious to

introduce or continue to teach your child about Jesus. The children participate in plays 2 times per year and sometimes attend special activities in the sanctuary. If you or someone you know would like to have a child participate, call the church office at 724.478.4807.

YOUTH GROUP

This group is a Bible-based group for all youth ages Middle School, Junior High, and High School up to 18. Activities and field trips will be planned throughout the year. Service projects will be done periodically and the group will be in charge of at least one Worship

Service during the year. As the teens are not funded by the church, sanctioned fund raisers will also be planned.

Group will meet the 1st and 3rd Mondays at 6:30 PM.

Food - No requests

Financial - One family for heating oil \$247

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Immediately following worship

The AUPC Youth Group will be having their first fund raiser of the year!

They will certainly appreciate your support when you purchase some delicious Hot Chocolate and homemade cookies! All proceeds benefit Youth Group outings and projects. Cookies 3 for \$1 ~ Hot Chocolate \$2 per cup (cash only and Thanks!)

FREE Charlie Brown Valentine movie and craft will be available for all participants.

MISSION

Local Mission Happenings...

- ✓ Remember to pass along the message while you DO the mission. Meals-on-Wheels (412-400-0975) – drivers, cooks, prep people
✓ daily on M –

W – F.

St. Vincent de Paul (724-478-1113) M-Sat

Food bank opportunities:

- Feb. 2 (Fri) Westmoreland County Food Bank – 7:45 AM – St. James Catholic Church Activity Center (behind the Church)
- Feb. 19 (Mon), Apollo-Ridge Food Bank (packaging) – 8:00 AM – Glenn Bush Ford, right side, around back
- Feb. 21 (Wed), Apollo-Ridge Food Bank (distribution) volunteers at 7:30 – 8:00 AM - public at 8:00 AM – Glenn Bush Ford (see above)

Community Compassion

Community Compassion: (December)

Food 4 Kids: Due to families moving in and out of the school district, our number of kids keeps changing. We went down to 77 from 86 and currently added six more for a total of 83. Our next packing day will be either Wednesday, February 14 or 21--TBD.

Additionally, Ron and I are looking for someone or a couple who would be interested in taking over the Food 4 Kids program. It's not hard--it's gratifying; it's not stressful--unless you make it that way; in more ways than one--it's a blessing! We have a faithful group of volunteers who make the program work. If God gives you that nudge, let me know.

Blessings, Candy

HELPING TO END HUNGER, ONE CAN AT A TIME!

Any time before or on Super Bowl Sunday, February 11, cans of soup may be placed in the designated containers in the church vestibule. All items will be split between our emergency food pantry and the Apollo Area Food Bank.

MEMBERSHIP & OUTREACH



Join us for the next Fellowship reception after worship on Sunday, February 11. Grab

some delicious foods and settle in for the Annual Meeting while enjoying your goodies.

KIDS KRAFTS



Kids Krafts on **Friday nights @ 6:30 PM**

Always the 2nd Friday of each month.

This month, Friday, February 9.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

If you're looking for unique cards for any occasion, please check out the variety available in the vestibule

made by our own Craft Ladies. Cost is 3 for \$2 or \$.75 each **Now being displayed in our new card**

rack donated by Vivian Shaeffer. Thanks, Vivian!

**PW Quarterly Meeting –
Saturday, March 9 @ 9 AM
Regular Meeting**

SESSION

WHO'S ON SESSION? Here's the current list and in what capacity they serve.

Class of 2024

Shelly Hilty – Christian Ed. (Ministry Team)
Community Programs (Membership & Outreach)

Scott Hollabaugh – Admin Team , Building & Grounds

Amy Shupe – Admin Team (Recorder)
Ministry Team (Worship & Music)

Vivian Shaeffer – Mission Team

Bill Speer – Mission Team: (Chair) Emergency Fund Treasurer

Class of 2025

Lynn Hemke – Admin Team (Chair), Building & Grounds (Chair)

Derek Hilty – Admin Team Stewardship &

Finance, Building & Grounds

Carol Kopnick – Admin Team (Personnel Chair)

Laura Uncapher – Clerk of Session , Admin Team

Amy Zukas – Ministry Team, Chair & Recorder

Many thanks to Emma Knox whose Session term has ended and thanks also to the eligible Session members who have reenlisted to serve.

STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE

WHERE WE STAND at the END of DECEMBER 2023

December Income: \$11,489.19

December Expenses: \$11,744.89

December Income to Expenses: -\$255.70

YTD Income: \$115,863.41

YTD Expenses: \$123,714.43

YTD Income to Expenses: -

\$7,851.02

PER CAPITA

This is the month that we're really encouraging you to pay your per capita for 2024. **It is \$37.40 per member.** At the end of this month, the total per capita collected during January and February will be sent to Kiskiminetas Presbytery and from there, percentages will be sent to Synods and national and our Presbytery will keep their share. And finally, our balance due will be sent in monthly payments, which means, the more we collect to send initially, the less our monthly payments will be. Remember, AUPC is responsible to pay for **every member's per capita** whether or not that member contributes.

Thank you, in advance, for your payments.

Stewardship and Finance

Committee

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

SUNDAYS

11:00 AM

Join us in person or live on Facebook.



Communion Schedule:
Sunday, February 4

Beginning in January

Communion will be celebrated the first Sunday of each month.

One of the awesome things about raising your children in church is that you're not going it alone. You're surrounded by "a great cloud of witnesses" that will help you in teaching your children about the faith we hold dear to our hearts and try to live out daily. Some things can seem "trifficult" to understand, like communion. While Presbyterians don't have a particular "age of reason" for children to partake in communion, it's understandable that most parents want their kids to know more about it before participating. **Join Pastor Niki after worship on Sunday, March 3, to learn more what Presbyterians believe about communion, why we have it when we do, why we use juice instead of wine, and all kinds of other "good to know" tidbits about the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (why do we call it so many different names?) This class will run for about 45 minutes to an hour and is open to anyone with interest in learning more about communion.**

**FEBRUARY 14 at BOILING SPRINGS
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – Service 7 PM
Covered Dish Dinner 6 PM**

AUPC will be hosting the first Lenten Luncheon of 2024 on Wednesday, February 21 at 12:00 PM. A guest preacher will facilitate the service which will be immediately followed by a Community Lenten Luncheon. (included in



this newsletter is the Lenten Service/Luncheon schedule)



**First Sunday in Lent ~ February 18
Palm Sunday ~ March 24
Maundy Thursday Service ~ March 28,
AUPC
Good Friday ~ March 29
Easter Sunday ~ March 31**

LENTEN STUDY

COME to the TABLE

**Held mornings and/or evenings at
Boiling Springs or Apollo United
Presbyterian Churches
Beginning February 15**

(see included schedule & topics)

About videoing our worship services *First, we have been asked to have Pastor Niki followed with the recorder during worship so that when she leaves the pulpit those tuned-in aren't just staring at an empty area. This would make the service more engaging for those watching from home. And, it is thought that while Pastor is among

the congregation, those at home may be able to hear better. *Second, this may or may not raise some privacy issues for those in the congregation. We follow all rules and guidelines which protect our youngsters and this includes signed parental permission slips allowing for photos, filming, etc. This applies to anyone under the age of 18. We do not require this of adults and recommend that if you don't want to be filmed for Facebook Live, please choose your seating in the sanctuary accordingly.

****Third, the videoing responsibilities have seemed to have landed as one person's responsibility which makes it difficult for him to take a day off. We are not asking for someone to sub on a regular basis, only to volunteer to be able to video when Derek can't be here or just needs a day off. More than one person wanting to volunteer would be perfect. Please talk to Derek (he's the one with the video equipment) or call the office if you'd like to be an on-call substitute.***

****Lastly, we've had very good comments about the convenience of watching from home during illness or in climate weather.***

This offering is such a blessing to many and we're hoping to make it not so restrictive for any one person.

Prayer List! How it works: Please list prayer concerns on the back of the attendance card found in your bulletin. We will place these names on our "Immediate" prayer list for three weeks. The *newest names will appear in italics*. On the third week we will **'bold' the name**. The prayers of concern will then move to the "Continuing" list and will remain there three more weeks and then rotate off, unless otherwise requested. If you don't see a name that had previously been there and that person still requires prayer, please list the name again. Also, please list spelling corrections, if needed.

IF WANTING TO ADD NAMES TO THE BELOW LIST DURING THE WEEK, PLEASE CONTACT THE CHURCH OFFICE.

IMMEDIATE Mike Mollick, Jackie, Roberta, Tina, Melissa, Christie, Nancy Hubbard, Jim G. 😊, cataract recoveries 😊, Marlene, Nancy 😊, Donnie, accident victims, Noreen, Jim, Eddie home 😊, William Hileman family, Frank Crawford family, Barb Jones family, Larry Johnson family, Children's play 😊, Christie, family of Bob Rae, all who have lost loved ones, Michael Gerheim family, **Memories of Jacob, family of Richard Young, family of Betty Cooper, PW donations to Emergency Fund & Food 4 Kids, Adam and Cate, Larry, Dave, Robin, Henry.**

CONTINUING, Family of Todd Young Mobley, Nick and Sue Arnoldy, Greg, Jim Talmadge, church decorations and cookies 😊, Billy, Emily, family of Louise, Pastor Niki & family, Zach, Ryan, Terry Williamson 😊, Marie, Arabella, 2 lb. 11 oz baby, Jim Gallagher, Patty's son. Bonnie Machak, Tom Conner, Terry Williamson 😊, Marie, Arabella, 2 lb. 11 oz baby, Jim Gallagher, Patty's son, **Family of Kathleen, family of Jim Stewart, Glenna Hall, Alex Dunmire acceptance to Butler CCC 😊, LaRue, Gary, Christmas Tea joy!, Don Summerhill, Claudia.**

ONGOING Gary Harkcom, Donna Fry, Matt Summerhill, Florence Truffa, Bill & Linda Crabtree, Frank Kovak, Josh Hanus, Shannon Pruss, Mary Harbison, LaRue Mumaw, Chris Hilker, Carol Gallagher, Linda Gould, Snedecor family, Alan Shockey, Bonnie Machak, Lani Knox, Nick Arnoldy, Benjamin Mumaw, Sean George.

MINISTRY All those affected by the Coronavirus and those working in the health care field, first responders, research, and government. Food 4 Kids, AUPC Deacon's Emergency Fund, Support for our church, EPR Mugombwa; Victims of violence and natural disasters; President Joe Biden, our country, other world leaders, our church and its leaders, the war & military personnel, wounded military at home and in hospitals, terrorist victims, Kiskiminetas' Rwanda Partnership

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Parents,
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