

*The Network... a Publication of
University Presbyterian Church*

May 2022



Message from our Pastor

As I write this article, workers are at the front of the church installing the new column. It's been a year since a car accident felled one of the front columns on the church building. Since giant columns are not something one can readily pick up at the store, it has taken some time for us to work with the insurance agencies, search for a company to manufacture a new column, and wait for its construction. Our new column was constructed in North Carolina and then shipped up here. It arrived just before Easter and sat on the church's front lawn in a very long narrow wooden box for about a week as we waited for good weather for its installation.

The box containing the column reminded me of a giant sarcophagus. Each time I drove passed it during Holy Week, I felt great eagerness for when the coffin's lid could be removed and the column could finally be raised up to offer its support to our church. A resurrection of sorts!

There are a great many other columns that support our congregation that deserve our attention. While the foundation of our church is the gospel of God's love made known in Jesus Christ, the congregation is supported and strengthened through our members. **You** are the column that supports our congregation. **You** offer vital strength to our faith community. Your presence is essential for UPC to function as the body of Christ to one another and our community.

Wooden columns look beautiful and hold up the building. But you, God's human pillar of support, and care, and compassion, and love are of infinitely greater importance. And we need you!

Shalom,

Tracy

**Mid-Week Bible Study:
“The Way of Gratitude”**

May 11, 18, 25

1 p.m. via Zoom

“If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.” —Meister Eckhart

The upcoming Bible study class will focus on the important place gratitude plays in our life, our faith, and our emotional well being.

Using short writings from a variety of writers, including some biblical passages, Tracy will lead the class in examining how we can practice gratitude even in the midst of hardships and suffering.

The written materials, including the Zoom link, will be emailed each week ahead of the class.

You are welcome to attend any or all of the 3 part series!

Worship Column

Sunday, May 1

3rd Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:1-6 (7-20); and Ps. 30 or Isaiah 61:1-3
and Ps. 90:13-17; Rev. 5:11-14;
John 21:1-19

Sunday, May 8

4th Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:36-43 and Psalm 23 or Isaiah 1-6 and
Ps. 114; Rev. 7::9-17; John 10:22-30

Sunday May 15

5th Sunday of Easter

Acts 11:1-8 and Ps 148 or Lev. 19:9-18 and
Ps. 24:1-6' Rev. 21:1-6; John 13:31-35

Sunday, May 22

6th Sunday of Easter

Acts 16:9-15 and Ps. 67 or Deut. 34:1-12 and
Ps. 109:21-31; Rev. 21:10, 22-22:5; John
14:23-29 or John 5:1-9

Sunday, May 29

7th Sunday of Easter

Acts 16:16-34 and Ps 97 or 2 Kgs. 2:1-15
and Ps. 2; Rev. 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21;
John 17:20-26



Grace is when God gives us good things
that we deserve.

Mercy is when God spares us
from the bad things we deserve.

Blessings are when God is
generous with both.

Truly, we can never run out of reasons to thank God.

God is Good all the time.

Amen

- Women Working

May birthday wishes go out to...



6	Jeffrey Grisante
6	Judy Betz
7	Asia Knight
11	Shahnaz Morris
15	Geoffrey Burker
16	Lisa Patel
22	Sarah Omicioli
24	Robert Hallborg
24	Allan Andrews

*“Go out into the world knowing that God is with you always,
love one another,
and share the kindness”*

New UPC Membership Committee

At the last Session meeting, it was decided that we would begin a committee to attract new members into our doors. Since our former methods haven't made a growth in our numbers, and we are into the endemic phase of Covid, we felt this would be a good time to brainstorm ideas to showcase our church and congregation. If you are interested in developing ideas to highlight our mission to the community and the care and compassion of our congregation, then please join us as we begin our work of spreading our light in the world! Please reach out to Amy Erickson's email address: amyhoechst@yahoo.com or call 716-480-4591. If you don't want to join the group but have ideas on how to reach out to new members please feel free to contact her with suggestions.

What's Happening in May

May 1	Sunday	9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am 7:00 pm	Choir Worship Service Fellowship Hour Opera Foundation Recital
May 2	Monday	7:00 pm	Zoom Deacons' Meeting
May 3	Tuesday	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open
May 5	Thursday	12:00 pm 7:30 pm	Food Pantry Open Choir
May 6	Friday	5:30 pm	Taize
May 7	Saturday	9:00 am	Spring Clean Up
May 8	Sunday	9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am	Choir Worship Service Fellowship Hour
May 10	Tuesday	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open
May 11	Wednesday	1:00 pm	Zoom Bible Study
May 12	Thursday	12:00 pm 7:30 pm	Food Pantry Open Choir
May 15	Sunday	9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am	Choir Worship Service Fellowship Hour
May 17	Tuesday	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open
May 18	Wednesday	1:00 pm 7:00 pm	Zoom Bible Study Session
May 19	Thursday	12:00 pm 7:30 pm	Food Pantry Open Choir
May 21	Saturday	9:30 am	Capen Plant & Seed Exchange
May 22	Sunday	9:30 am 10:30 am 11:30 am	Choir Worship Service Fellowship Hour



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May 23	Monday	1:30 pm	Mobile Food Pantry @ Trinity Methodist Church
May 24	Tuesday	12:00 pm	Food Pantry Open
May 25	Wednesday	1:00 pm	Zoom Bible Study
May 26	Thursday	12:00 pm 7:30 pm	Food Pantry Open Choir
May 29	Sunday	10:30 am 11:30 am	Worship Service Fellowship Hour
May 30	Monday	<i>Memorial Day Holiday Church Office Closed</i>	



Spring Clean Up

All are welcome to UPC's annual Spring Clean-up scheduled for Saturday, May 7th from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm (rain or shine). We will be working mostly outside so bring gloves and your favorite tools! Contact John Swaine 716-367-4218 with questions.



Fellowship Hour Has Resumed!

Please join us Sundays at 11:30 am after worship service downstairs in the Fellowship Room.



Are you facing challenges, struggles or personal issues in your life? Please know that your University Church family cares for you and is available to offer pastoral support. You are encouraged to contact Rev. Tracy Daub, Kathy Hallborg (our Stephen Minister), or a member of the Board of Deacons. Confidentiality will be respected. Rev. Daub can be reached through the church office at (716) 836-7660 and Kathy Hallborg at (716) 491-1115.

Deacons: Marietta Bratton, Robert Hallborg, Scott Horton, Barbara Kraemer, Val Macer, Sharon Melius, Sandy Robertson, Matt Smith, and Tom Somerville. Their contact information can be found in the church directory (copies available in the Narthex).

Notes on Howard's and Lee Ann's Service at the Migrant Resource Center (MRC)

January/February 2022

What is the MRC? It is a two-story structure just west of the Douglas / Agua Prieta port of entry into Mexico that provides food, clothing, first aid, toiletries, toilet access and showers, plus emergency sleeping accommodation. It also has an outdoor shelter for dining and refuge from the wind and the cold and is linked with a border and national network of overnight shelters for migrants (seekers). The hot water was not working when we were there so water for showers had to be heated on a two-burner stove. There were butane heaters in the dining shelter.

Who are the migrant seekers at Agua Prieta? Many seekers come from all over Mexico, but we also saw many from Guatemala and Honduras. Not so many from other destinations, though when Howard was accompanying seekers in the fall of 2019 there were also people from Cuba and Russia, as well as other South American countries. Now, at other locations along the border, some seekers are from Haiti, the Ukraine and other lands. The seekers we met are overwhelmingly male. Women travel in groups for safety in numbers. During the five weeks we were there, the MRC served 6000+ seekers. Recently, 589 were served in a single day!

What do they look like? The seekers are our brown sisters and brothers of various shades, mostly young—20s 30s.

How do they get to the MRC? Where do they go afterward? Seekers are picked up by the Border Patrol at various crossing points along the Arizona border and are held until they have a busload of perhaps 40 persons, or maybe several busloads, and they are then transported to the Douglas / Agua Prieta entry into Mexico. The busloads may arrive at any time of the day but seem less heavy on Mondays. Several busloads often arrive at midnight or in the wee hours of the morning.

Seekers who were dropped off at the Douglas, AZ / Agua Prieta, Sonora entry port to be sent back to Mexico were not always picked up by the Border Patrol in Cochise County, where Douglas is located. Douglas is situated in the southeast corner of the state, but many seekers returned to Mexico at Douglas might have been picked up as many as 250 miles to the west, at Ajo, or perhaps 185 miles west at Sásabe, or maybe in Nogales, about 100 miles west. This lateral transfer of persons is made to separate the seekers from their contacts at the places where they originally crossed the border. Often the seekers would not know where they were (which city) when they arrived at the MRC. We had to tell them they were in Agua Prieta and show them on the map.

The people are cleared through Mexican immigration and walk to the Migrant Resource Center. The MRC is usually staffed from 11 pm through the morning hours until 8 pm the following evening. The center is short of volunteers but calls on members of the Frontera de Cristo mission program, the Just Coffee Cooperative, a Douglas ministry of School Sisters of Notre Dame, a nearby Franciscan Friary, various local churches and organizations, the local migrant shelter staff, and local youth doing community service learning.

Seekers pay smugglers/coyotes at the border a fee to guide them across the border into the US. This is on top of the fees they have already paid to travel to the border. According to a Border Patrol friend of ours, the fee (*piso*) can be \$900-\$1000 US dollars.

This *piso* is good for several crossing attempts, in case the seeker gets picked up by the Border Patrol and returned to Mexico. Therefore, some of the seekers, once they get to the Migrant Resource Center and get some food and coffee and rest a bit, reach out via their mobile phones to contact their smugglers for another attempt. This might go on for several crossing attempts before a new *piso* fee is required, if the seeker continues to want to try to cross—and has the money.

The local OXXO (like a convenience store) or La Fama (supermarket) were standard meeting places to

reconnect with smugglers or traveling group members from whom seekers had gotten separated. They also looked for ATMs. All of these were nearby and we could easily direct them there.

Almost everyone has a cell phone. Some of the seekers have a bit of money. But many have nothing, having spent on the trip all they could put together from family and friends..

How do we respond? Some seekers ask us if we will go to an ATM with them, take out money for them and then their families will repay us. Lee Ann got around this request by saying, We are only volunteers; we are not authorized to handle any money issues. However, if the person wanted to go to the migrant shelter for the night, the staff there could provide them with food and clothing as needed and help them to contact potential resources the next day, perhaps a call to a family member far away or contact with the person's consulate.

Some of the seekers were well equipped with heavy jackets with hoods and full backpacks. They had money and had paid their smugglers for these resources, on top of the piso and the additional fees for getting to the border. They seemed to be the most sure of themselves and what they would do next.

Some of the seekers were only lightly outfitted for the cold and carried their belongings in plastic bags. That was how we usually identified them as they were approaching the MRC. That and the fact that they were not wearing belts and did not have shoelaces. (Belts and shoelaces are taken by the BP and returned at the time of return to Mexico.)

Some of the seekers (mostly those from Honduras and Guatemala, it seemed to us) were woefully underclothed for the weather. The shock in their faces from only a tee-shirt to ward off the cold is not forgettable.

We gave clothing, knit hats, knit gloves, pants, hoodies and the few jackets we had as people needed them.

We made huge numbers of sandwiches in assembly line fashion, "tortas" of rolls, a slice of ham, a slice of cheese and mayo. (We were supposed to always have 100 on hand, in case a large group arrived.) We warmed the tortas in a microwave if we had time before serving. We made pots of Just Coffee to add to an urn from which it was dispensed. Seekers added lots and lots of sugar. Sometimes there was hot chocolate, too, or spaghetti soup, or sweet, thin rice pudding. In the cold weather, the hot food was always welcome.

The MRC plot of land has a wire fence encircling it to create a safe space for the seekers and also to deter the non-seekers (including smugglers) from coming in. Sometimes smugglers came in anyway, and it was a delicate job to get them to leave. How could we tell they were smugglers? They were much better dressed and seemed to carry an attitude of entitlement. We did not want to attempt anything forcible with them. Eventually they did leave, but in a way that indicated they were doing so on their own terms. Those times were uncomfortable.

We swept and mopped and picked up trash inside the MRC, on the grounds and in the dining shelter, a structure with a steel roof held up by iron poles and with tarpaulin sides. It was, until the fierce winds tore it apart, a form of shelter for people to sit during inclement weather and eat tortas and drink coffee and plan what to do next.

Some of the seekers decided to return home, wherever home was. They would ask us the location of the central bus station to take a bus home, and where to catch a taxi to the station, which was about a half-hour walk from the MRC. Or, some would wait all day at the MRC for a family member to drive in from who knows where to pick them up.

Some seekers would come to the MRC, get something to eat and drink, maybe a needed article of clothing and then be immediately on their way.

Toward the end of the day, we would ask people hanging on at the center if they wished to spend the night

at the overnight shelter. One night we sent seven seekers from Honduras. We called Betto, the MRC and shelter organizer, to let him know. He then would drive in from the shelter, only a few blocks away, and transport people in his station wagon. On the night we sent seven people, one of the seekers decided to make his own arrangements and called for a taxi to pick him up. He thought he was in Nogales, Mexico, not Agua Prieta. Once this was clarified, he decided to go to with the others.

One night, two separate groups of Mexicans who live in Agua Prieta brought seekers to us at the MRC toward the end of our shift. A man from Chiapas was the first person brought to us and we provided him with food and coffee and talked to him about the shelter. A second group of Agua Prieta residents brought us a mother and child from Honduras who were fleeing an abusive home environment. To them we also gave food, clothing and coffee, Lee Ann made milk for the toddler and we gave them cream for the baby's rash. We arranged for all of them to go to the shelter. Spontaneously, as she was leaving with Betto, the woman reached out to each one of us, separately, and hugged us and called us "her angels." We can't forget that. The MRC is likely a place where angels gather.

On another night, the Mexican border agency came to tell us that a seeker had fallen into a ditch and could not walk and asked if we could help him. We said, yes, of course, and they brought him to us. He also went to the shelter, where he could be treated medically and heal from the fall. If someone was in serious medical need, we could call on the Red Cross to assist, but sometimes they were closed. The shelter had nursing capability, and two of the other MRC volunteers were Mexican registered nurses. Lee Ann watched while one of them tended to a man who had fallen and cut and scraped himself and later Lee Ann was able to tend to yet another man who arrived after the nurses had finished their shift, remembering to ask if he had had a tetanus shot.

Why did we go in 2022? We had not intended to go to the border this year due to Covid 19. We had gone in 2020 but had not traveled since March of that year. Via ZOOM, we have been teaching English as a Second Language to a staff member of Frontera de Cristo. When he told us of the great influx of seekers coming for help at the MRC, and the huge demands upon the volunteers, we felt called to go and assist. So we went.

We got exhausted. We came home to recuperate, emotionally and physically, and because we had obligations in Buffalo to meet. We left while also feeling that we should stay. We are in Buffalo now but we continue to teach over ZOOM and we continue to attend a weekly remembrance vigil for those who have died in Cochise County seeking freedom, a better life, and escape from poverty and violence.

We make this presentation to you to let you know some of what is going on with the seekers in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico, and what went on with us.

GOING UPSTREAM – "A New Border Vision"

We need to put an end to decades of dangerous border policies that have violated human rights and civil liberties, separated families, criminalized migrants, and have now led to the deployment of border patrol agents throughout the country. A **New Border Vision** is a [framework for governing our borders that expands public safety, protects human rights, and welcomes all people who live, work or travel to t](#) the region.

SBCC's Border Manifesto is a visual representation of what the southern border region is and what it can be. The borderlands don't just belong to border communities, it belongs to all of us!

https://www.southernborder.org/new_border_vision

**THIS IS THE
BORDER.**

It is more than a line in the *sand*.
It is one of the **MOST DIVERSE AND
SAFEST** places in our country.

The **BORDERLANDS** are an economic engine that
|| CREATES JOBS AND WEALTH. ||

🏠 SCHOOLS + HEALTHCARE 🚧 ROADS
are better than agents, weapons and drones.

People should be **FREE FROM CHECKPOINTS** **●**
that violate their civil rights.

WALLS DIVIDE

BRIDGES CONNECT

The extraordinary powers of immigration officers **SHOULD BE REINED IN.**

IT'S THE ONLY WAY

to put an end to years of death and abuse.

== BORDER PATROL MUST BE PATROLLED ==

WE WANT TO BE PART OF THE CONVERSATION
when decisions are made about the border region.

That's why we must

REVITALIZE, NOT MILITARIZE BORDER COMMUNITIES

This is your border. **LOVE IT, TAKE CARE OF IT, PROTECT IT.**

**BORDER COMMUNITIES
BELONG TO ALL OF US.**





Too many of us lead hectic lives.

Our communities are filled with violence and suffering.

Our personal pain and struggles can overwhelm us.

How do we respond? How can we cope?

University Presbyterian Church welcomes Christians from all traditions to unite in a special contemplative worship experience as we seek spiritual strength for the living of our days. Based on the style of worship practiced in the Taizé Christian community in France, these services offered on the First Friday of each month provide an oasis at the end of the week for all who are weary, troubled, or rushed. Special music from guest musicians, meditative songs, prayers, candles, and scripture readings allow each of us to find a quiet place of prayer and spiritual centering.

Please join us on **Friday, May 6th from 5:30 to 6:00 PM.**

A Taizé Service of Prayer, Music, and Meditation

www.upcbuffalo.org

(The Taizé' Service in June is scheduled for Friday, June 3, 2022)