

# THE LISTENING POST

APRIL 2024



As I type this, Easter is still a few weeks away. But signs of its coming are everywhere. Flyers for Easter Egg hunts, flowers starting to bloom on trees up and down our road (and hence, my yearly season of two Zyrtec instead of one), fancy dresses and cute little clip-on bowties for sale, even the bulletin for Easter Sunday is open on my computer right now.

We get the benefit of history...we know that Easter is to be expected in our calendar because we've heard the story before. We know that there is a period where all seems lost, bleak, and even hopeless. And yet, we know that when we awaken on that particular morning, celebration is in the air (and probably the smell of ham and chocolate and Peeps too.) There is joy and laughter and hope to be shared! "He is risen!" we will shout to one another in the sanctuary. "Christ is risen, indeed!"

Consider that first Easter, though. Did the disciples have any expectations after the death of their rabbi? By the way they were hiding out together, one probably can assume that they held an expectation that they were next to die. They had all been with Jesus; surely, they were next. Did

they expect the women to come bursting into the room, out of breath, with haphazard declarations that Jesus was not, in fact, in the tomb as expected? That Jesus had spoken to them himself? That he had died but was now alive? What expectations do we bring before the cross? Do we expect a Savior who observes from afar, playing a bit part in the play that is humanity on this earth? Or do we expect a Savior who comes down from on high, to walk alongside us and provide support, encouragement, and hope? Before bunnies and eggs and baby chicks and lilies and chocolate in a variety of shapes, there was simply the joyous acknowledgment, "He is Risen!" Before our reflex response of "Christ is Risen, indeed!", perhaps it is good for us to consider our own expectations for what it means to worship a God who loved us so much, that God did all of this to be in relationship with us. Amen.

Blessings, Pastor Niki



- 1 Franklin Mullooly
- 5 Sara Kerr
- 6 Amy Shupe
- 7 Macie Arnoldy, Shawn Hilty
- 8 Lynn Hemke
- 14 Don Summerhill
- 15 Dolores Hilty, Richard Miller
- 16 Kenneth Hileman, Jerri Mollick
- 17 Preston Ribar
- 19 LaRue Mumaw
- 22 Dannika Austin
- 23 Charisse Varga
- 25 Carol Fulton
- 27 Emberly Finoli
- 28 Peggy Landon
- 30 Jordan Guthri

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



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

Sunday school classes are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays at 6:30 PM.



**Activities happening soon:**

**YOUTH – led Worship.** Join us Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup> at 11 AM for the Youth Group worship service that has been designed, written, and

will be presented just for you by AUPC Youth.

**YOUTH GROUP ANNUAL LOCK-IN**  
Friday, May 17 ~ 7:00 PM to 8:00 AM  
Kids 12 to 18 are invited and encouraged to bring a friend to this event. Snacks, games, conversation and FUN with little sleep will be the theme.

**YOUTH GROUP CLEAN-UP DAY!**  
April 15, 6:00 PM. Again this year, the Youth Group will be outside picking up trash, raking up leaves and in general tidying-up the church grounds. These kids appreciate your support all year long and wish to thank you through service.

Many thanks to the Youth Group who hopped on over to help the Easter Bunny prepare for the Children's Easter Egg Hunt.

### NEW THIS YEAR!

On Pentecost, May 19, we will be honoring all graduates with ties to this church. If you know of someone graduating from High School, College, Grad School, Tech School, you get the idea, please let the office know and we will gladly increase our list of seven whose names will be in next month's newsletter. **This year, instead of this event taking place on the first Sunday of June, it will be Sunday, May 19.**

Also at this time, our many acolytes (Mariana Shurina, Tyler Thoma, Gavin Motosicky, Hayden Brooks, Caelin Kaminski, Gavin Motosicky, Avery Zukas, Claire Brooks, and Carson Coulter) will be recognized. Also to be recognized and thanked will be our teen musicians, Zach Bush and Sam Mullooly.

AUPC is very fortunate to have the opportunity to guide so many young people. Please join us on Pentecost to congratulate all these young folks for their accomplishments and service. Who knows, you may be meeting a future star or world leader.

**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:

- Apr. 5 (Fri) Westmoreland County Food Bank – 7:45 AM – St. James Catholic Church Activity Center (behind the Church)
- Apr. 15 (Mon), Apollo-Ridge Food Bank (packaging) – 8:00 AM – Glenn Bush Ford, right side, around back
- Apr. 17 (Wed), Apollo-Ridge Food Bank (distribution) volunteers at 7:30 – 8:00 AM - public at 8:00 AM – Glenn Bush Ford (see above)



We're not quite penniless, but we're almost centsless and we have a counting and rolling day planned for Sunday, May 5 after worship!

HELP!! We're still trying to collect a mile of pennies for Havin. Please add your 2 cents to this project so we can continue "rolling" this project along. And, to "coin" a phrase, "a penny saved is a penny earned", but a mile of pennies does some saving.

*Thank you, Christian Ed*



**Community Compassion**

(as of 3/20/2024)

Food - No requests

Financial - 1 family (Electric \$159)

We currently have 84 kids enrolled--our number keeps fluctuating. Our next packing day is Wednesday, April 3 at 3:00 p.m.

**Community Compassion**

When food is given out from our emergency pantry, normally we also give out one or two \$15 Naser vouchers. Up to \$15 worth of food items that we cannot provide, lunchmeat, milk, etc., can be purchased at Naser's and Bill Naser is to bill AUPC for that amount. **Since the voucher method has been initiated, Bill has discounted nearly \$2,000 instead of billing us. Bill's generosity has been a blessing for AUPC and our community.**

**MEMBERSHIP & OUTREACH**



Join us for the next Fellowship reception after worship on Sunday, April 14. Grab some delicious light snacks while enjoying the spring-themed gathering.



The new Church Directories will be here soon!! There is no cost to members for a directory, however, if you would like to make a small donation to help defray the church's cost, that would be much appreciated. Simply use the "other" line on your giving envelope and write in "directory".

*Thank You!*





### KIDS KRAFTS

Kids Krafts on Friday nights @ 6:30 PM Always the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month. This month, Friday, April 12



### 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL FAMILY DANCE

Saturday, April 13 ~ 6 - 8 PM If you're a 2 person family or your family can

fill a Van, **ALL families** are welcome to dance the night away. Hope **YOU** can come!

### 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



**PW Quarterly Meeting – Saturday, June 1 @ 9 AM Regular Meeting**



### SESSION

*At the March Meeting:*

- \*Session approved Amy Zukas and party to use the social hall downstairs on April 28.**
- \*Session approved Pastor Niki's 2<sup>nd</sup> week of vacation, July 28-Aug. 3, 3<sup>rd</sup> week of vacation, Aug. 19-25, and study leave October 14-27.**
- \*Session gave its approval for Sam Mullooly and Mariana Shurina to serve communion on April 7 with Elders Derek and Shelly Hilty.**
- \*Session approved ordering 125 Church Directories at \$15 each with \$1,000 from an anonymous donation and \$875 from Abiding Memorial fund being used as payment. Donations received from the congregation will replenish the Abiding Memorial Fund.**

- \*Session approved taking (using the loose offering) on Sunday April 21 for the visiting Gideons.**
- \*Session approved converting the back, left corner of the Sanctuary for the "pray-ground."**

## STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE

### WHERE WE STAND at the END of FEBRUARY 2024

February Income: \$10,499.01  
February Expenses: \$12,653.92  
February Income to Expenses: \$-2,154.91

YTD Income: \$24,054.40  
YTD Expenses: \$25,937.44

YTD Income to Expenses: -\$1,883.04



THURSDAY, APRIL 11 FROM 4 TO 7 PM

Ticket Information call: 724-478-4807

\$12 per person ~ kids under 5 FREE

Take-outs available.

Spaghetti w/Marinara or Alfredo w/meatballs or Sweet Sausage, Salad, Bread & Butter, Assorted Desserts & Beverages  
*Dinner Compliments of La Café*



DONATIONS OF GENTLY USED ITEMS MAY BE TAKEN TO THE CHURCH AT ANY TIME NOW. ITEMS SHOULD BE PLACED ON THE STAGE DOWNSTAIRS

## WORSHIP AND MUSIC



**SUNDAYS 11:00 AM**  
Join us in person or live on Facebook.



Schedule: Sunday, April 7



## Something new is coming to AUPC...

Pretty soon, you will begin to see a transformation occur in a space of our church's sanctuary. With the gracious financial and spiritual support of our Presbyterian Women and the leadership of our Session, we will be putting in a "Pray-Ground!" A what??? Here are some questions you may have...

### What is a "pray-ground"?

-A Pray-Ground is a designated space in the sanctuary where young children and their families can experience worship through age-appropriate worship materials and tools that can help to keep them engaged in what is happening – materials like children's Bibles and books, coloring/drawing materials, soft toys, puzzles, and other items that can relate to the church season or worship theme. Some churches will put a pray-ground in the front of their worship space, as it is easier for children to see when they are up front. However, our sanctuary isn't set up for that ability, so ours will be in the back corner, but facing an aisle so children can still see!

### Why do we need a "pray-ground"?

-A pray-ground is an intentional part of a larger worship space. Some caregivers prefer to remain in worship together rather than separating from their children for a variety of reasons (limited time together during the week, separation anxiety, medical reasons, ritual of worship is soothing, etc.) A pray-ground acts as an "accommodation," such as a wheelchair ramp or a hearing aid, to help children access worship in a way built for them.

It also helps to remind us that the kingdom of God is filled with diversity, people of all ages, abilities, and personalities. And that worshiping God is for all of us, not just some of us. Worship is at the heart of what we do as a church family, and a pray-ground is yet another tool in AUPC's toolbox for a swiftly growing children's ministry (a blessing for us all!)

### Who is the pray-ground intended for?

- Generally-speaking, the Pray-Ground is intended for kids who are in pre-K and younger, or who are not yet old enough to attend Sunday School. Kids who do attend Sunday School sit in worship with their parents until the Moment of Word and Wonder (15-20 minutes into the service), and then go to Sunday School after that. But we also recognize that many ages and neurodivergent types get wiggles and fidgets, so if you forget to bring tools for your kiddo to worship alongside of you, the Pray-Ground can be an option.

### What other options do caregivers have for the kids they bring to worship?

-For kids who are too young to attend Sunday School, there are three options: the Pray-Ground, where they stay for the service with their caregivers sitting with them; the nursery, which is open during every worship service for children 4 and under, and where the service is piped in through speakers (we are working on having this staffed with volunteers who have passed their clearances starting in September); and, of course, parents always have the option to simply sit with their children in the pews. We have activity pages and children's bulletins in the vestibule for kids who need a few extras to help hold their

attention in the pews. Any of our ushers can help you find your way to these options, if you need some help.

### But...won't a Pray-Ground make it noisy and distracting?

- The world around us can be a noisy and distracting place. We all sneeze, cough, move in our seats, sometimes wear squeaky shoes, and even some crack their knuckles! But yes, we get why you're asking this question and it definitely is one we've discussed amongst our ministry team and in other groups. Honestly, it may not be any

noisier than it would be if those same kids were sitting in the pews!

We also took great care in doing our research and connected with other churches who have pray-grounds to see how they handle any extra noise. We have selected play items that would keep the noise to a minimum: the blocks are made of foam, many of the toys and books are plush (we have play food and a play farm, as well as felt books with Bible stories), and even the baskets where we keep the crayons are made of fabric.

The only items that could really be used to make noise would be if a child were to bang a crayon or puzzle piece over and over on the table, but if/when this happens, a caregiver would \*hopefully\* step in quickly. Same for dumping the entire basket of crayons out, which will happen occasionally. But the same thing could happen for a child sitting in a pew!

One of the things shared by another church was that, surprisingly, they found that the noise level has gone down since settling in to having a Pray-Ground. "The first few weeks were a little louder, but now the "regulars" know what is expected of them, and they are rarely disruptive. On occasions when there are a lot of visiting children (Christmas Eve, for example, or Easter morning, or when we have several baptisms with lots of visiting family), things do tend to be a little louder, but if it means that children who aren't generally in church are in church, we give thanks and move on!"

### **Now that I know what a pray-ground is, what is it not?**

-The pray-ground won't be staffed. Children are not to be left unattended, so caregivers are expected to sit at the pray-ground and worship with their children.

-The pray-ground is not intended to be a substitute for church or Sunday school (there's a reason it's called a pray-ground, not a playground.) There will be items in it that are faith-based, as well as items that foster learning. As stated above, it's another tool in our toolbox for helping all ages and abilities learn to worship together!

-The pray-ground is not a place of judgment, just like the rest of our church. If someone is in the pray-ground who looks "older" than a 5-year-old,

we trust that they are there because it's necessary for them.

**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** *Kirk Siverling, Marilyn Repasky, Linda's shoulder surgery, Cindy, Tim Kanish, joy for Kiski Musical, Chester Ferracio family, Niki's dad David, Eric, Butch and Donna Schrecengost, Clarissa Dill Family, Joelene, Family and friends of Jane Perkins, 8-yr-old John, Kim Altmire, Sam Deliek, Candy Graham and family, Bill Schriber family, Cathy Piper-Bikle, Chelsea, Nancy Campitella, Cathy, family of Dorothy Hancock, Eddie, Scott and Nancy Hubbard.*

**CONTINUING** *Matt, Soup donations ☺, patient with kidney disease, Carol Kopnicki ☺, Sidney Jones family, Linda Gould, Ann Cloonan, Dwayne S. traveling mercies & also for Stephanie's brother, Charlie Kukalis family, Florence Truffa family. Mike Mollick, Jackie, Roberta, Tina, Melissa, Sue, Brenna Knox.*

**ONGOING** Donnie Riggle, Jim Crawford, Marge Barnat, Gary Harkcom, Donna Fry, Matt Summerhill, 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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