Manor Minutes Volume 13 Issue 16 April 1, 2022

The Story Chapter 24 Jesus and the Kingdom of God – April 3 Prayer Shawl – April 4, 11am Parlor Lenten Devotional Discussion – April 4, 7pm via Zoom Stewardship/Finance Ministry & Trustees – April 6, 5:30pm Library Choir Practice – April 7, 6:30pm Stav up to date. check www.fairhillmanorchurch.org/calendar

Bethany Class

The Bethany Class Zoom will open at 8:30 am. The class will begin at 9:15 am. Meeting ID: 883 3055 7258 Passcode: 344061

Unit 2: Liberating Gospels

April 3	Triumphal Entry of the King]
April 10	Passover with the King]
April 17	Resurrection of the King	-
April 24	Freedom in the King	

Mathew 21:1-11 Matthew 26:17-30 Matthew 28:1-10 John 8:31-38 **Blanket Sunday** will be celebrated on Mother's Day, May 8. \$10 will buy a blanket for someone in need in some part of our world! Please give what you can.



Soup Sunday – April 24 – following Worship Everyone is welcome. Bring your favorite soup or just stay to eat, enjoy and fellowship!



There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex if you would like to bring soup. You can make the same kind of soup as someone else, we just would like to know about how many soups there will be. You don't have to sign up to come.



Prayer Requests

When you would like to request prayer during worship on Sunday mornings, you now have two ways of doing that from your pew in the Sanctuary. (1) Continue to text your prayer requests to Rev. Chris at (412) 956-6590. Or, (2) fill out a **green Prayer Request slip**, which can be found in the pew-back pockets. We will collect these slips at the end of the Announcements time. At any time during the week, you can always ask for prayer through our website or by contacting the Church Office, an Elder, Rev. Chris or Pastor Gena.



Fairhill Manor Christian Church (*Disciples of Christ*) 351 Montgomery Ave. 724-225-8610 Rev. Chris Stillwell, Senior Minister Rev. Gena Sheller, Associate Pastor Elders: Diane Palfreyman, Bread Jackie Nelson, Cup April 3, 2022 - 10:15am

Pastor Gena

Prelude	Audra Allen, organist	
Welcome	Pastor Gena	
Call to Worship	Isaac Mayen Leader: Welcome to the fabulous feast that God has prepared! People: We come hungry, thirsty, and searching for God. Leader: God is near, full of power and glory. People: We are here to be fed by God's word. Leader: Lift up your hands in praise! People: We will sing with joy on our lips. Leader: Bless God, who upholds us with God's strength. All: We will bless God as long as we live!	
Opening Hymn	"Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" Audra Allen, organist Come, thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing they grace; streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above. Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, mount of thy redeeming love.	

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Holy God, we praise your name! You love us beyond measure. You continually show us better ways to live and love. We open our hearts to your good news this morning as we worship you.

We know that our hearts have all different kinds of soil in them; different soils at different stages of our lives, different soils at different times of our days as we navigate stresses and joys, frustrations and routines. We want to be good soil, open and ready to receive and understand the good news of your love. More than that, we long to be good soil that grows and produces good fruit that blesses and feeds others with your love.

But we are not always good soil for the planting of your word. Sometimes we just aren't ready. We don't get what you are saying to us – sometimes we are just oblivious; sometimes we don't have anyone to help us understand. We miss the opportunity to grow in your love. Open our eyes to how you are moving in our lives. Teach us to hear you speaking to us. Give us companions who can point to you and guide us as we learn to walk with you on the path.

Sometimes we aren't good soil because we expect this journey with you to be quick and easy, full of excitement and good times. Give us the endurance to walk with you on the smooth paths and through the rocky terrains of our lives. Thank you for the gift of your presence with us in every moment.

Sometimes we aren't good soil because we're just too busy growing so many other things in our hearts and there just isn't any room left for you. During this time of Lent, give us the courage to reexamine how we spend our time and energy. Sitting in your presence, reading your Scriptures, worshipping in community – these all sound so lovely, but so many things in our lives seem more important, pressing and fulfilling. Give us a taste of the sweetness of putting you at the center of our lives, a taste of the sweetness that spreads and makes everything else in life more meaningful and joyful.

Thank you for those moments when we are good soil, when we are open and receptive to your word, when we are growing and flourishing, when we are alive with your love. Thank you for all of those who have had a hand in teaching us about you and helping us grow. Thank you for this community of faith that welcomes us and encourages us to share the fruits of our faith with each other and the world.

We pray for those among us who are struggling to hear and believe that your love for them is real. We pray those of us who are overwhelmed with struggles and burdens. We pray for those who are sure their soil is spent, with nothing left to give. O God, we pray for our world: bring wars to an end, help us to live in ways that allow each person to have what they need to thrive. Heal our traumas; give us healthy ways to move through our pain. Bless our natural world; open our eyes to its beauty and our dependence on it. Be with those we have named aloud this morning and with these we name now in this silence...

Bless these dear ones with the peace of your presence. And show us how to love them.

Come, Lord Jesus, we open our hearts to your arrival. Give us courage to take up our crosses and follow you, certain that we never walk alone. We pray all of this in your name, praying as you taught us to...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer Response:

"Lord, Listen to your Children Praying" Lord, listen to your children praying, Lord, send your spirit in this place; Lord, listen to your children praying, send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace.

First Scripture Reading

Mark 1:1-15

Kevin Puskarich

Anthem

"Ride on King Jesus," by Thomas Fettke Choir accompanied by Audra Allen and the Waynesburg Brass Quintet (Tyler Williams, Mia Appleby, Eric Burcham, Joshua Gurtner and Dr. Ronda DePriest)

Children's Message

Rev. Stillwell

Have you ever had to make a decision about whether or not you should buy something? In that situation you might have the money necessary to buy the thing that you want, but you have to ask yourself, "Is it worth it?" Will you get enough joy out of it to justify the cost? Have you ever spent a lot of money on something only to later think that it wasn't worth it? Every day, we have to make choices about the value of things. We ask ourselves, "How much am I willing to pay?"

Jesus once told a story about a man who found a treasure which someone had hidden in a field. He was so happy that he immediately went and sold everything he had and bought the field so that the treasure would be his. (Matthew 13:44) Jesus told about another man who went in search of fine pearls. When he found a pearl that he thought was the very best, he sold everything that he had so that he could buy the pearl. (Matthew 13:45-46) These men both found something that they thought was worth giving everything they owned so that they could have it. Do you know what this thing was that Jesus was talking about? He wasn't talking about buried treasure or beautiful pearls; he was talking about the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is the greatest treasure one could ever desire. It is more precious than silver, gold, or jewels. It is priceless, and it is also free.

How can that be? It is priceless because there is no amount of money we could spend to buy our way into Heaven. What is the most money you would be willing to spend on something? The Kingdom of Heaven is worth more than that. At the same time we do not have to spend any money to receive it. Jesus wants to give it to us for no cost to us, and all we have to do is receive it and give thanks for it. Can we do that? Let us pray together, "Jesus we give you thanks that you have given us the incredible gift of life with you. Help us to know what is truly worthwhile and what we should focus our life pursuing and help each of these children to store their treasures in heaven, where nothing breaks or fades, and batteries never die.

Second Scripture Reading

Matthew 13:10-17

Rev. Stillwell

Sermon

"Seek First The Kingdom"

Rev. Stillwell

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." – the Parable of the Pearl

From this parable and many others that Jesus teaches in the gospel of Matthew and others we learn about the Kingdom of God. If we are going to summarize Jesus' life over the course of three weeks, we would be wise to look at the parables which are Jesus' primary form of teaching. With them he taught his followers about God and brought the hard to comprehend awesomeness of God above down to earth so that all could understand and yet his parables are deceptively simple. They are short and to the point but they often leave us with more questions than answers and rarely does Jesus provide the answers.

Like a counselor who helps their patient come to their own realization, our wonderful counselor does the same for us when it comes to explaining God, God's love, and God's Kingdom. Yes the Kingdom is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, but what does that mean? I believe I will spend the summer preaching on Jesus' parables but today we have just one parable to help us understand the main idea upon which Jesus spent his time teaching- the Kingdom of God.

So what do we make of this pearl of wisdom Jesus uses to teach about the Kingdom? Jesus' parables are often active. That is, the Kingdom isn't a man who likes pearls, or a woman who has coins, or a shepherd who has sheep. Rather it is a shepherd who goes after a sheep that has strayed, a woman who finds a coin that has been lost, and a merchant who finds and sells all to keep a pearl of great value. It reminds me of the hymn we sang last week, one that was very common in my church camp days, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness and all these things shall be given unto you."

First, the parable of the pearl reminds us that we must seek if we wish to find, after all the Kingdom is hard to find; seemingly at least. Likewise, pearls are valuable in part because they are beautiful but also because they are rare and hard to find. In fact they are hidden by their very nature as they are contained in the oyster which is itself contained in the shell. Not only that, but they are underwater and you have to go after them if you want to find one. Furthermore, pearls that are found in the sea are found at a rate of less

than one percent. If all of this is not enough, most natural pearls are imperfect and are not what we would want on a necklace. In a harvest of three or four tons of pearls, only a few oysters will yield perfect pearls. The desire for pearls and the difficulty in obtaining them is why pearl farming became an industry. Farm oysters are a different species to true oysters. True oysters include the edible species, but pearl oysters are not eaten by humans. Instead they are raised simply to produce pearls in large quantities. Pearl farming began long after Jesus spoke this parable, in the late 19th century, so pearls today are much less valuable then they were in Jesus' day since they are much more common.

Like a pearl in its shell, The Kingdom of God is beautiful and precious, and it is a hard find for it is hidden in plain sight. All around us is the mundane, but now, because of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom has been brought near. This is the first thing Jesus says after being baptized, "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news." If we believe that we would give everything to keep it near. Still, even with Jesus having brought the Kingdom near, it is hard for us to see because our eyes do not know where or how to look. One must know what one is looking for so that one can identify the Kingdom when one sees it, for, like the pearl of great value, the Kingdom is hidden in plain sight. If the world is mundane hidden in the mundane is the divine. This is what incarnation is, and this is what it means to carry the divine spark within us.

Second, the true value of the pearl is not seen from the outside. To the world around it the pearl is just another barnacle covered in an ugly shell. But God looks on the inside where our hearts are hidden, and even then God looks not at the fibers of muscle and tissue that make up the organ of our heart, but the love, and light that lies within, which makes up our soul.

We celebrate the fact that the Lord sees the pearls within each one of us and does not judge us by our shells, but are we doing the same, to others? Each person has a hard shell that on quick inspection is not much to look at, but they also have a pearl within that is shiny and beautiful. In truth, some hide their pearl more than others, but we should never forget that it is there.

It is interesting to me that to see the true beauty of the pearl the oyster must die. The oyster is ripped open with a knife in the side, before the true treasure of the pearl is revealed. The analogy in the pearl here is like Christ's death and his promise of resurrection, so that all who believe in him will not see death as the end, but in fact the beginning of revealing our true beauty.

Third, the pearl is a fitting representation of the Kingdom because it represents the beauty that can be gained from struggle. Often we feel overwhelmed by stress and worry, doubt and fear, but when things go hard we should turn closer to God so that we will see how faith in God and the grace of God can lift us up out of the pit. And when that happens we will have true cause to rejoice.

The happiest person is not the one who wants for nothing, but the one who lost everything and gains it back and more. The happiest person is not one who has never sinned, but who has sinned in abundance and received grace in equal or greater measure. In truth, the Kingdom is often revealed during times of stress. The calm can only come after the storm, the rainbow after the rain, forgiveness after sin, strength after testing, and this is how pearls are made.

Did you know that a pearl is produced as the oyster's way of getting rid of an irritant? In nature, natural pearls are produced by the oyster covering a minute invading parasite with layers of nacre. Over the years this becomes a pearl. In oyster farming, oysters are 'seeded' by the insertion of, usually, minute pieces of mussel shell. Nacre is layered over shells eventually becoming cultured pearls.

So something that entered the life of the oyster as an irritant, instead of being cast out, is turned into something beautiful and precious within the oyster. We could be seen as an irritant to God though our sin,

but God is gracious and not only accepts us, but covers us in grace until we too are made precious and beautiful as pearls.

This is important, because I find that faith does not come from having an easy life with no obstacles to overcome, but from having used it to get through many times of trial. It can take 8 years or more for an oyster to make a pearl which is why we call wise sayings "pearls of wisdom", because wisdom only comes with age and experience.

Whenever you go through difficulties and trouble wait 8 years, and then look back and see what you have learned from that experience or see if in fact you feel differently about it now that you have come out the other side.

So there is much that is taught about the Kingdom in this parable, but remember that parables are not to be taken literally and sometimes there are things that can be confusing on first reading. Jesus tells parables to describe the Kingdom and to describe how you find the Kingdom, get to the Kingdom, stay in the Kingdom, but he also says, "The reason I speak to them in parables is that "seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand." We can see that this is the case with the parable of the pearl as people have at times taken this parable to mean that one could by their way into Heaven. Addressing this misinterpretation of parables in particular and the gospel in general, Episcopal priest Robert Farrar Capon, wrote in his book, "The Parables of Grace":

If the world could have been saved by successful living, it would have been tidied up long ago. Certainly, the successful livers of this world have always been ready enough to stuff life's losers into the garbage can of history. Their program for turning earth back into Eden has consistently been to shun the sick, to lock the poor in ghettos, to disenfranchise those whose skin was the wrong color, and to exterminate those whose religion was inconvenient. ... But for all of that Eden has never returned.

It is, of course, good to donate to the church or use what money you have to do what good you can, but the road to Heaven is not paved with gold or even pearls. It is paved with devotion. The demand of the Kingdom of Heaven is total. We are called upon to give up everything for King Jesus. Our devotion to the Kingdom is to be so great that we would rather lose an eye or a hand than sin. Our devotion to the Kingdom is to be so great that our love even for our family is to be less than our love for the Kingdom. Our devotion to the Kingdom is to be so great that we seek it first, above all else.

Of course, if you have not seen the treasure of the Kingdom these demands will seem far too great. The price is way too high. But for those who have found the treasure and seen it in all its glory, their joy is so great that they will renounce everything – as much as they have – for the sake of it.

We put value on things for many reasons - because they are pretty, because they are shiny, because they are rare, but the parables tell us that we can like things, we can want things, but the Kingdom should be the thing we want the most, the thing we value the most.

As I said it reminds me of that pearl of wisdom I learned in Sunday school and camp where we sang "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness and all these things shall be given unto you." Throughout our lives we will seek many things, and we will find many treasures, but seek first, seek more, seek above all else the Kingdom, and once you have found it, treasure it as the divine gift that it is and do not let it go.

Call to Offering

Generous God, your faithful love is a constant blessing. As we have been blessed, so may we now be a blessing to others as our offering is received.

Donna Stemski

Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow! Praise God, all creatures here below! Praise God above, ye heavenly hosts! Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Dedication of Offering Prayer

Receive, O God, all that we are: our treasures, our time, our talents, and even our forgiven flaws. May your grace be made known through our giving, that others may be healed by the Spirit of Christ. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

Parables are not perfect metaphors for the Kingdom. They seek to highlight a few ways in which the qualities of the Kingdom mirror the qualities of whatever the parable's subject is, but try to attribute all the qualities of mustard seeds, yeast, or wise and foolish bridesmaids and you will have a distorted idea of God's Heavenly Kingdom. In that vein there is one important way which the pearl does not represent the Kingdom.

When a person finds a pearl of great value it is in their nature to keep it. No one comes to church wearing a string of pearls and hands one out to everyone they meet. If they did that they would be seen as exceedingly generous or just crazy. This is because it is the nature of pearls and other material things that we value that when we share them we have less of them. That is why giving to the church is seen as sacrificial giving.

The Kingdom of God, however, is a precious thing that, when we share it, we find that we do not have less of it. In fact, we should find that we have more. The only other thing to compare to it is love. The more love you share the more love you will receive. That should not surprise us because love is the cornerstone upon which the Kingdom of God is built. It is the love of God that we should be saved from death and the love of God that came in the form of Jesus Christ to show us the way to the Kingdom.

As we share in this meal that was instituted for us to remind us of God's love for us, let us rejoice that when we are in communion with God the Kingdom has come near, and when we share the love of God with others, like we share the bread and the cup, like Christ shared his grace with us, we will find that we will not have less love but more, and the Kingdom will not have been diminished but enlarged.

Communion Hymn

Audra Allen, organist

"We Come as Guests Invited" We come as guests invited when Jesus bids us dine, his friends on earth united to share the bread and wine; the bread of life is broken, the wine is freely poured for us, in solemn token of Christ our dying Lord.

Prayer for the Bread & Cup

Sustaining God, who loves and cares for us, we praise you. We give thanks for this bread and the cup. We remember Jesus and his great love for us. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus into the world and for the salvation he brings to each one of us. Be present with us in spirit, O God, as we seek a renewal of mind and heart, so that our dedication may bear fruit in your name. We ask this in Jesus precious name. Amen.

Words of Institution

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying,

Diane Palfreyman

Rev. Stillwell

Rev. Stillwell

Rev. Stillwell

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Sharing Holy Communion

You will receive the bread and cup together. Please hold them; we will take each together as one body. Disciples of Christ believe in an Open Table. All who profess Christ and follow Him are welcome to share His meal.

Call to Discipleship

If you have come to know Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior and you would like to profess that you intend to begin a life of faith, learning to walk in his way of Love, you are welcome to contact one of the Pastors to take this step. If you would like to join this part of the Body of Christ at Fairhill Manor Christian Church, to covenant to journey together in this life of faith, please reach out to one of the Pastors to learn more. We all take these moments to rededicate our lives to following Jesus.

Closing Hymn

"I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" Jody Mullis, pianist I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus—no turning back, no turning back.

Rev. Stillwell

Rev. Stillwell

Benediction

Go forth knowing that Christ has brought the Kingdom near to us. May we bring it near to all we meet because we have shared Christ with them.

Recorded worship services can be found on the Church website or on YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmlH3qzih_fzHCC2X0Jhc_sfniJ7C1O3X



Do you have a prayer request or need help? Please feel free to contact Rev. Chris (412-956-6590) and Pastor Gena (724) 263-0033 directly and confidentially. Or scroll down on the opening page of our website (www.fairhillmanorchurch.org) to "Requests for Prayer or Help." There you can send an email which will go directly to Rev. Chris and Pastor Gena. We are One Body in Christ!

Homebound Members:

Phyllis Cimino 317 Wellness Way Strabane Trails #325 Washington PA 15301 Mrs. Mary McDonough 949 Bruce Street Washington PA 15301

Bernard and Jane Teagarden 441 Valley Brook Road McMurray, PA 15317 Nadine Teagarden 826 Good Intent Rd Claysville PA 15323 Alice Cokeley 900 N. Cass Lake Road, Apartment 324 Waterford, MI 48328

Ed Alexy Avery Allen Terry Bailey Donna Bakaitis Jim Banish Tom Barnhart Abby Blanchard Susan Britko Mabel Brooks Sandra Carman Denise Charles Wanda Chicone Emily Cope Robinson Ruth Cox Irma Davis Jessica Duke Libby Eberhard Fred Engle Jay Freudenberg Jett Fuller Derek Gardiner David & Lois Gayman Joe Greene **Bonnie Gregg**

Linda Hainer Kyle Hallam Judy Hanning Aryn Hess Ed Jackman Dallas Jacobovitz Kenger Family Family of Pam Kloss Ty, Kerri, Allie, Ivy & Tv James Lacock Von Lacock **Bob** Lanning Libby LeDuff Lee & Betsy Martin Dave McConnell Don Melvin Michaela Nixon Carmen Oliverio Ruth Mikuta Deborah Patterson Bo & Patty Pryor Kayda Richards Cathy Rentgen Betty Jo Riggle Dave Ross Jim and Barb Roupe

John Samida John Shadeck Hannah Simpson Doug and Tracy Smith Cathy Stewart John Stewart Bernard and Jane Teagarden Beth Teagarden Nadine Teagarden Gary Weaver Nikki Wells Tom Williams Chuck & Mary Wiseman Sarah Wittenberg

In the Military

Lance DagueAnTerrell McClainZacBrandon LipscombSarDaniel RobinsonTraShawn DallatoreEmDylan Demain

Andrew Gregg Zachary Keene Sarah Lipscomb Travis Ringer Emily Chase ain

Church Office hours: Office closed April 5 - Phones will be answered

Karen is working from home on Monday, Tuesday and Friday, 9 am -2 pm. She will be in the Church Office on Wednesday & Thursday, 9 am -2 pm. The Church phone is forwarded to Karen's cell phone and can be reached anytime.

Pastor Gena is off on Friday. Pastor Gena is working from home and comes in to the church as needed. Feel free to text, call, email or set up a time to meet with Pastor Gena.

Rev. Chris is off on Tuesday during the school year.

Zoom Worship will continue to be live at 10:15 am each Sunday

"Join a Meeting" on Zoom at 9:45am using the following meeting ID and password.
Meeting ID: 932 4557 4206 Password: 026316
Fellowship with other "Zoomers" from 9:45 – 10:15am.
Text your prayer concerns to be shared during worship to Rev. Chris at (412) 956-6590.



24 Hour Prayer Vigil

Fairhill Manor will be having a **24 hour prayer vigil** beginning at 7am Saturday, April 16 and ending 7am Sunday, April 17.

There will be $\frac{1}{2}$ hour prayer slots. You may sign up for more than one slot.

If you choose a prayer slot from 7am Saturday through 11pm Saturday, you will pray in the Parlor at the Church. If you choose a prayer slot from 11pm Saturday through 7am Sunday, you will pray in your home.

A sign-up sheet will be in the Narthex.



This year we will recreate our Tenebrae service in two parts.

- On **Maundy Thursday** we will read Scriptures about the last supper and light a candle for each disciple.
- On **Good Friday** we will return to the candlelit Sanctuary and read Scriptures concerning Jesus' betrayal and crucifixion and one by one extinguish the candles.

Readers are needed for both services. Contact Rev. Chris for more information.

On Easter we will have a Sunrise Service on the front steps of the church and a joyful worship with the children playing the bells during the normal worship hour.

April 14	Maundy Thursday Service	7pm (In-person & on Zoom)
April 15	Good Friday Service	7pm (In-person & on Zoom)
April 17	Sunrise Service	7am (outside in front of the church)
	5	Following Sunrise Service a continental breakfast in the Large BYKOTA Sunday school class.
	Worship Service Children will play "Christ the Lo	10:15 am (In-person & on Zoom) ord is Risen Today" on bells.