

Manor Minutes

Volume 12 Issue 34

August 27, 2021

There will be a **Congregational Meeting** following worship on **August 29** with open conversation so that we can hear everyone's thoughts concerning our COVID19 protocols. As we have been making decisions through the Pastor's Cabinet, we wanted to make sure all voices were being heard. Therefore, we are calling this meeting to hear from the congregation as we examine what we know about the current status of the virus and how we can protect our children who are not able to be vaccinated while trying to make worship as comfortable as possible. We hope everyone will participate in this conversation



Food Distribution at First Church of the Nazarene – August 28, 10-11am

Congregational Meeting – August 29, following worship

Prayer Shawl – August 30, 11am Parlor

September Board Reports Due – September 2

Stay up to date, check www.fairhillmanorchurch.org/calendar

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

"Join a Meeting" on Zoom at 9:45am using the 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.



We will **Bless Our Backpacks** during the Children's Message on **August 29**. We invite children and youth of all ages to bring their backpacks, lunch boxes, tablets and any other school supplies to worship with them that day. We will bless the items that travel to school and college with us, so that they in turn may remind us of God's presence with us each day as we learn.

Church Picnic

- September 12, 1:07pm
- Kiwanis Pavilion – Washington Park
- Chicken, Hot Dogs & Drinks provided
- Bring a covered dish and/or dessert
- BINGO

Get READY!!! **Sunday School** will begin September 12. Watch the Manor Minutes for more information.





Fairhill Manor Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

351 Montgomery Ave.

724-225-8610

Rev. Chris Stillwell, Senior Pastor

Rev. Gena Sheller, Associate Pastor

August 29, 2021

Prelude

Audra Allen, organist

Welcome

Pastor Gena

Call to Worship

Nyka Rash and Owen Stillwell

Calling all children of the Living God: the gospel is good news for every age and every stage.

Let us worship together, the young and the old.

The good news is proclaimed in God's words, and also with crayons, songs, snacks, and rest.

Let us worship together, every generation.

After months of worshipping and learning in new and different ways,

Let us worship together, as a family of faith.

Things are still uncertain, but we come together seeking God's peace in this beautiful community.

Let us worship together, united in Christ.

Opening Hymn

"Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken"

Audra Allen, organist

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
God, whose word cannot be broken,
formed thee for a blest abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
what can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
thou mayest smile at all thy foes.

See, the streams of living waters,
springing from eternal love,
well supply thy sons and daughters,
and all fear of want remove.
Who can faint, while such a river
ever flows their thirst to assuage?
Grace which like our God, the Giver,
never fails from age to age.

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Pastor Gena

Steady and comforting God, with you, every transition and new start is a reminder of your goodness, for you are always creating fresh, amazing things in us and through us. Though we are sad about summer's ending, we are grateful for this school year. Especially this one. After all we've faced, overcome, and released within the past year of COVID-19, we come to this year changed, with new levels of gratitude, hope, and connection carved in us.

God our teacher, who helps us to understand the world around us, thank you for the privilege of education. We have come to recognize the gift of learning and the gift of teaching in ways we may not have appreciated before.

God who came as a child to show us how to be fully human, to show us how to be your children. You have given us minds that grow and develop in unique ways, at unique speeds, and we are astounded by that miracle.

We celebrate the beginning of this school year and ask for your blessings upon us - the children, the educators, and the families who support them.

We pray as and for students of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. We pray for our hearts and all they hold—excitement and nervousness, disappointment and hope. We give you all our loves and fears. We pray for steady self-esteem and deepening resilience.

We pray for our minds, that they will expand in wonder and celebration, learning not just from the books studied but from the people beside us. Open our minds with a willingness to be changed in unexpected ways, and settle our thoughts in peaceful places.

We pray for our hands, that they will reach out to help, welcome, and care. Bless our hands with patience and dedication as they grip pencils and type on keyboards, swish paint brushes and clap in song, grip monkey bars and lunch box handles, spin wheelchair tires and basketballs.

We pray for our mouths, that they will speak words bringing life and connection. Help us to use our mouths to honor the dignity and belovedness of all. Remind us to open our mouths for deep breaths when we're feeling anxious or afraid.

We pray for our feet, that they will move toward those different from us and help others in safe ways. Plant our feet next to those who feel alone, and bless our steps down hallways and sidewalks. We know you are with us wherever our feet go or stay.

We pray for our eyes, that they may see ourselves and others with compassion. Point our eyes toward those who are forgotten or struggling. Grow us in flexibility to see from all kinds of angles. Bless what and how we see, whether we're looking at a screen, a whiteboard, or the beauty of a person's face. And help us to see with the most important eyes—the eyes of your Spirit within us.

We pray for our ears, that they will genuinely listen to all voices, especially those that haven't been listened to much. When things get noisy, help us listen extra carefully for your voice. Help us hear with the most important ears—the ears of your Spirit within us.

We say a special prayer for parents and guardians, as the start of a new school year is always another leap of faith. Wrap them with your reassuring love as they entrust their children and trust in you. When questions remain unanswered, and the realm of control is finite, bless them with peace and the promise you are right there with their child, whether heading to preschool or driving to college.

We also pray now for teachers, staff, and administrators. Bless these faithful servants with courage and confidence, knowing you are in their classrooms with a steady hand on their shoulders. Give them peace, patience, and balance in the pressures they face, and bravery to build structures and systems which justly serve all your children. Give them delight in the young ones before them, and recognition of the sweet ways children are also teachers.

We pray for children and families and teachers who do not have the resources they need for this school year. We remember those who are beginning school this year lacking supplies, teachers, safe buildings, and accommodations for all needs and abilities.

We ask you to be with those need an extra measure of your comfort and care this day – those we have named aloud this morning and those whose names we speak to you now....

Now coat the year before us with miracles of your mercy and strength, and help us appreciate most of all the bedrock miracle of your presence with us in every single ordinary, sacred moment. May the changes in ourselves and our world through the pandemic bring layers of goodness we'd have never had otherwise. Lead us this school year into life-giving rhythms of grace and light, where our regular routines become the framework for worship and blessing. We pray all of this through Jesus, our Lord and Savior, who teaches us to pray, saying....

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 **Luke 13:6-9** Gene Sheller

Special Music “Touch the Earth Lightly,” by Murray and Gibson Jim Cope

Children’s Message Pastor Gena

What did you bring with you today? How are you feeling about starting a new year at school?

Thank you for being brave and sharing how you feel.

Going back to school always invites big feelings to come along with us, and those feelings can be different for everyone! Whether you’re starting school for the first time, moving to a new school, staying at the same school, or returning to school in person after learning virtually, we can all feel happy, nervous, scared, or curious. Sometimes, we can even feel all those feelings at the same time, and that’s okay!

But did you know God is always with us? No matter where we go and how we feel? God is always with us.

As we start a new year at school, I want to give you this special backpack tag so that whenever you look at it, you can remember God loves you and is always with you, no matter what.

(NAME), this school year, may you be curious and kind, gentle and strong, brave and loving.

Along with the backpack tag, I also want to share a blessing with you. A blessing is something that you receive, so can you open your hands like you are ready to receive a special gift? As I speak, imagine the words are dancing, floating, and fluttering all around, and watch them as they land on your hands and on your backpack. Then take the blessing and put it in your heart.

May these tags remind you that God is always with you. As you sit and as you stand, as you learn and as you play, in every fear and every celebration, may you know that God, your friend, is always there.

Let's pray together. God of fresh starts and new beginnings, we bring ourselves, our big feelings, and our backpacks to you. Last year was different from what we expected. Sometimes we couldn't see our friends or play on playgrounds. Sometimes we learned at home, in masks six feet apart, or both. In all these changes, we may have felt sad and alone. God, our friend who comforts us, hold us close and wipe our tears.

Now, in our backpacks, we carry many things like blank pages, sharpened pencils, and pointy crayons. And in our hearts, we carry many things like big feelings, unanswered questions, and all the things we're hoping school will be like this year. There are endless possibilities of what this new year might bring—of what we might learn, who we might meet, and who we might become. God, our friend who is always with us, be with us through it all. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Second Scripture Reading

John 15:1-17

Rev. Stillwell

Sermon

“Jesus the Gardener”

Rev. Stillwell

There is so much in life we cannot control, and this so often frustrates us. When I was a kid, we got a Pac-Man video game, and I had such a hard time getting him to go the way I wanted him to go and I got so mad that I couldn't use the controller to control the game that I threw it down. When I became a father I would play Pac Man with my son, and I could now move him with ease but, I saw the frustration build up in my son when he could not, which made him want to quit. He may hold the controller, but he could not control what he holds.

I wish I could say that I am able to control. One of the disappointing truths of life is that when we grow up we cannot do everything or control everything we wanted to when we were young. We can control more, but we also become aware of how many more things that we cannot control in this world, and we are aware of how many things do not come with a controller to help us.

As we have been discussing, for many years I have tried my hand at a garden with mixed success at best. Tomatoes and peppers we can grow, but nothing much else. The thing that grew the best in our garden was the pumpkins which we did not plant. Every fall we dispose of our Halloween pumpkins by smashing them and composting them in our garden, and every year a new, unplanted plant springs up. We've gotten one or two pumpkins before, but last year we had a dozen.

The things that grew the best were the things that we did the least to control. Of course we did plant the seed in a manner of speaking, and we watered them, but everything else, we purchased, planted in a specific area which we thought would be optimal, staked the plants, and protected them. The more we tried to control the more we realized how little control we truly have and if that is true for pumpkin seeds, how much more for the seeds of the gospel?

Whether or not you have ever tried your hand at a garden, we as Christians are all called to sow the seeds of faith which is why Jesus told many parables comparing the word of God to seeds sown in the word. It should be clear from these that we are to go about sowing seeds of faith and letting God water them. One person who did this better than most was the apostle, Paul, who spread those seeds throughout the Middle East causing many churches to grow. Even in unexpected places like Rome, the capitol of the empire that crucified Jesus, or prison, which is where Paul sat as he wrote this letter to one of his churches in Philippi. Paul preached the word everywhere he went and now he notices that some of those seeds have taken root in an unlikely way. He says:

“I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, ¹³so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; ¹⁴and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.”

Paul’s fellow prisoners and even his guards were able to hear the gospel and many became followers of it, but Paul could not control what they did with it. He goes on to write that some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill.

“¹⁶These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; ¹⁷the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. ¹⁸What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice.”

This is not what Paul intended. You can imagine that he did not expect to be in prison. He expected to go to the synagogues in every community and preach the gospel and receive the harvest of righteous souls, but God sent him places he would never have otherwise gone, and spoke to people he would never have otherwise known, and because he has kept his spirit strong and shown love to those who have imprisoned him the seeds of faith were sown, and Paul has reaped an unintended harvest of converts. Although they do not sow the seeds of the gospel in the best way, still it is good that they sow at all, because it is God who is ultimately in control of their growing, and sowing the seeds is the only thing anyone can control. This he tells the Philippians, when he says:

“This is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight ¹⁰to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, ¹¹having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.”

He wants their love to overflow because you never know who they will touch or how, and the same is true for us. If it were up to us we would preach in nice places to nice people when we wanted to, but God places us in all manner of places and circumstances, and asks only that we sow the seeds of faith wherever and to whomever, and we do this by speaking of Jesus Christ, sharing his love, and showing how his love has affected us. That is the one thing we can control. So long as we show love and faith, we cannot predict who will be touched or how the seeds of faith will grow, only that God will make them grow. If we imagine Paul’s ministry like a garden it would look like this -- tomatoes doing well but squash not so well, zucchini thought dead but coming back, cabbage planted in one area now in another, all while the beans are springing up somewhere else he never imagined. The same is true for us. You never know what you will harvest when you sow seeds of faith, and if you try to control them too much, they won’t grow, but if we cast them out and trust God then we will reap a harvest. It will not be the one we always intend or expect, but it will always be wondrous.

This is true because Jesus is the true gardener. He never called himself the gardener but by calling himself the true vine and God the vine dresser he is in effect calling God the gardener and those who have seen Jesus have seen the gardener. He also uses the imagery of seeds in his parables over and over. There are many metaphors Christ could have used that no longer would make sense to us today. There are many metaphors Christ could use that would make sense to us today but which would not make sense to his audience 2000 years ago and probably will not make sense to people 2000 years from now, but gardening, planting, eating these images are with us always, they transcend culture and time. I have never seen a fig tree never held a mustard seed, but I know what Jesus has been trying to teach me, because I came to the garden and I found him waiting for me there.

Let us mark the coming of fall by reaping a harvest in our gardens and thank God for such a bounteous growing season, but let us also sow seeds of love and faith that God will make them grow in all seasons. Always remember that you reap what you sow, so sow well and so long form the garden.

Call to Offering

Gary Ford

Offering our gifts to God is a holy act. In this sacred moment, let us offer our gifts and our lives to the holy work of God.

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

Rev. Stillwell

As we give, our offerings blend together in a unity of purpose and vision, for we are one in Christ and one in the Spirit.

Invitation to Communion

Rev. Stillwell

It is hard to believe children are going back to school already. It always seems that the summer goes so fast. The two things I remember about going back to school is seeing my friends and trying to remember the things I learned last year. The first was easy and the second hard. Now we may all be too old for school, but we do have a similar experience when we come to this table. First, we come to church and see our friends, some we may not have seen since last week or before, and I hope the prospect of seeing friends is one of the enticing aspects of coming to church, but we also come back to this table because we need to remember what we have been taught.

We need to be reminded of Christ's love, and mercy, and his instructions for our life so that we will love others as he loves us. It can be so easy to forget that when we are out in the world, in our jobs, or fighting traffic. The lessons we learn at this table are lessons that we must spend a lifetime leaning and practicing until we get them right.

So let us share this meal with our friends in Christ, and let us share in God's grace and never forget that at this table we learned forgiveness and mercy for ourselves and indeed the whole world. Let us forever be schooled in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Communion Hymn

"All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly"

Audra Allen, organist

All who hunger, gather gladly;
holy manna is our bread.
Come from wilderness and wand'ring.
Here, in truth, we will be fed.
You that yearn for days of fullness,
all around us is our food.
Taste and see the grace eternal.
Taste and see that God is good.

All who hunger, never strangers,
seeker, be a welcome guest.
Come from restlessness and roaming.
Here, in joy, we keep the feast.
We that once were lost and scattered
in communion's love have stood.
Taste and see the grace eternal.
Taste and see that God is good.

Prayer for the Bread & Cup

JC Leasure

Lord,

You are the only vine that fruit is produced from. We cannot produce fruit if we abide in ourselves or the gods we make. You are the one true God; the only way to salvation is through your son Jesus. As you have shown mercy and faithfulness all of our lives, let us show we abide in you by coming to your table. This bread and wine is the love you have given us. As we abide in you, let others see receive the fruit we bear so they can taste and see that you are good. Amen

Words of Institution

Rev. Stillwell

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, "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 in Communion

Closing Hymn

"Blessed Be the Tie That Binds"

Jody Mullis, pianist

Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love:
the fellowship of kindred minds
is like to that above.

When we are called to part,
it gives us inward pain;
but we shall still be joined in heart,
and hope to meet again.

Benediction

Rev. Stillwell

Children, families, and all who love them, go out into the beautiful world that God has made!

Go and play! Go and learn! Go and love others!

May you be filled with lovingkindness for yourself and everyone around you.

May the prayers of your faith community keep you safe, healthy, and full of joy. Amen.

The Call to Worship, Pastoral Prayer, Children's Message and Benediction are from **Blessing of the Backpacks and Back-to-School Liturgy** by Illustrated Ministry and are for use only within our congregation. For more information see <http://illstrtdm.in/BackToSchool>

Worship services can also 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:

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Fred Engle
Jay Freudenberg
Jett Fuller
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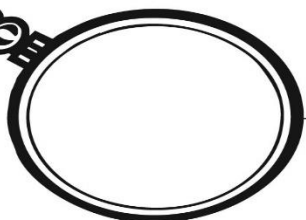
Judy Grover
Sloan Amelia Hagy
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Ed Jackman
Family of Caleb Jackson
Dallas Jacobovitz
Bob Lanning
Ty, Kerri, Allie, Ivy &
Ty James Lacock
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Lee & Betsy Martin
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Georgette Murray
Karen Palfreyman
Deborah Patterson
Cathy Rentgen

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Theresa Shape
Hannah Simpson
Doug and Tracy Smith
Cathy Stewart
John Stewart
Beth Teagarden
Nadine Teagarden
Gary Weaver
Nikki Wells
Tom Williams
Chuck & Mary Wiseman
Sarah Wittenberg
Marcie Yocum
Preparing for Baptism – Nyka Rash

In the Military
Lance Dague
Terrell McClain
Brandon Lipscomb
Daniel Robinson
Shawn Dallatore
Andrew Gregg
Zachary Keene
Sarah Lipscomb
Travis Ringer
Emily Chase
Dylan Demain

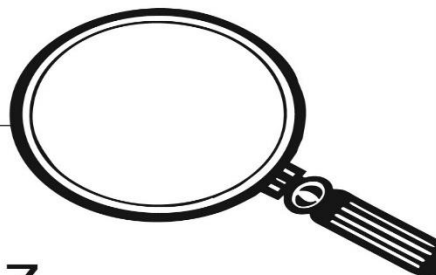
Puzzle!

For this cryptogram, use the clues to decode
Proverbs 3:5, NRSV.



CLUES:

Y = T, D = I



Y K T P Y D X Y J Z

— — — — — — — — — —

V Q K R F D Y J O V V

— — — — — — — — — — — — —

C Q T K J Z O K Y, O X R

— — — — — — — — — —, — — —

R Q X Q Y K Z V C Q X

— — — — — — — — — — — —

C Q T K Q F X D X P D L J Y.

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — .

Answer: Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight. Proverbs 3:5, NRSV