

Manor Minutes
Volume 13 Issue 12
March 4, 2022



The Story Chapter 20 Esther: The Roll of the Dice – March 6

Prayer Shawl – March 7, 11am Parlor

Lenten Devotional Discussion – March 7, 7pm Zoom

Elders Meeting – March 9, 6pm Shepherds Room

Board Meeting – March 9, 7pm Library

Choir Practice – March 10, 6:30pm

Stay 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 1: Liberating Passover

March 6 Freed from Captivity Ezra 1:1-8; 2:64-70

March 13 Free to Worship Ezra 6:1-12

March 20 Free to Celebrate Ezra 6:13-22

March 27 Free Because of the Lord Deuteronomy 8:1-1

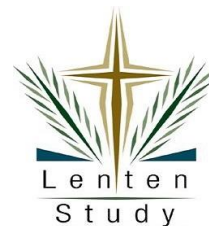
Thank you for contributing your coins to the children's collection for Week of Compassion! They collected \$182.04. May God multiply the blessings that will come to others from your generosity.



Thank you to Kevin Puskarich for trimming the hedges in the front of the church.



Lenten
Devotions



The devotional for Lent this year is titled, “**Gifts of the Spiritual Wilderness**”. There are a few left on the welcome table in the Narthex. There will be a **Zoom discussion** during Lent starting Monday, March 7 at 7pm via Zoom. A Zoom link will be sent out in a separate email on Monday. If a number of people wish to have a second time during the day another discussion session may be set up. If you have any questions, please contact Rev. Chris.



Fairhill Manor Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
351 Montgomery Ave.
724-225-8610

Rev. Chris Stillwell, Senior Minister
Rev. Gena Sheller, Associate Pastor
Elders: Rita Puskarich, Bread
Kevin Puskarich, Cup
March 6, 2022 - 10:15am

Prelude

Audra Allen, organist

Welcome

Pastor Gena

Call to Worship

Diana Crowe

Praise God, who has taught us to sing. Praise God, who has gathered us together.
We come before God to begin again, to renew our hearts and our spirits.
Be assured that God's steadfast love surrounds us and upholds us. Thanks be to God!

Opening Hymn

"O Worship the King"

Audra Allen, organist

O worship the King, all glorious above, and gratefully sing God's wonderful love,
our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days, pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Rev. Stillwell

Guiding God, as we begin a journey of repentance, a journey of renewal, a journey of healing we ask your presence be with us. We confess that often times this journey is hard. We frequently don't know where we are going or how to get there even if we do. Help us remember that we follow in the footsteps of your Son, Jesus, our guide and guardian who has showed us the way. Help us be faithful on this day and all days.

Lord God, creator and sustainer of both heaven and earth,
we come to you as needy people.
Our hearts need the warmth of your love.
Our spirits need the peace of your pardon.
Our minds need the light of your word.
Our bodies need your healing.
Our wills need the direction of your Spirit.

There are times when our hearts reject your love; times when we go against your ways; times when we display an unfaithful attitude. Forgive us our hard heartedness. Replace our hearts of stone and give us hearts for love alone. Remind us of your steadfast love and put a new spirit within us.

Remind us also in this time of Lent that your son told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (*Matthew 16:24)
We take up your cross not so that we may say we are holier than others, but because in doing so we must drop all else that distracts us from your way. We lay down our burdens. We lay down our hatreds. We lay down our deceits and self-justifications. We lay down our sins that we may follow you to where you are leading us. In doing so we receive your love, pardon and healing and we know these are gifts which we must never keep to ourselves.

Lead us now these 40 days through the valley of fear and doubt and death that we may arrive with you in the land of eternal light and love.

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

Esther 3:7-15

Owen Stillwell

Anthem

“Open My Eyes,” by Bob Burroughs

Choir

Children’s Message

Rev. Stillwell

Well it's that time of year again isn't it? It's the time that people wait all year for and get excited when it comes. You know what time of year I am talking about, right? No not spring or Lent or March. Shamrock shakes are back! Some people do get excited about this, but not me, but I mention this because I do like shamrocks. Do you know what they are? Another word for shamrock is a three leaf clover, and they are very common. Soon you will find them all over the ground, but what I like about them and why you will be seeing them as decorations now, is that St. Patrick used them as a teaching tool.

Do you know who St. Patrick was? He was a bishop in Ireland in the early days of the church and he helped establish Christianity in that country through many means but one of his most effective methods of teaching involved using the shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity. Do you know what we mean when we say the Holy Trinity? It means God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but, while you may think of them as three separate things, the church teaches that they are all part of one Holy Trinity. The best way I can explain this is the way St. Patrick explained it. Look at this picture of a shamrock. How many leaves are there? How many shamrocks are there? There are three leaves but only one Shamrock, and that is how we think of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. They are three ways in which God is with us. They are God in three persons, blessed trinity as one of our most famous hymns declares.

Well this month we celebrate St Patrick on March 17 because of all the good he did and often we do it with a shamrock. If you ever have a Shamrock shake I hope you enjoy it, but I also hope you will think of God when you drink it and remember that God loves us so much that God used three ways to send love to us and that is God, and Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Second Scripture Reading

Esther 4:1-17

Rev. Stillwell

Sermon

“The Odds Are Ever In Your Favor”

Rev. Stillwell

A saying in Las Vegas is one's fate is “all wrapped up in the roll of the dice.” In Vegas you can roll lucky sevens, or snake eyes and win a fortune, or you can also lose it all. You can win a massive windfall or experience colossal disaster. It all seems like coincidence, just the roll of the dice. It may be a coincidence when you win but it is not when you lose. There is a catchphrase used in the Hunger Games series of books and movies in which people are pitted against one another in a struggle for their life that goes, “May the odds be ever in your favor.” I think of that when I think of why people go to casinos because one thing you can be sure of there is that the odds are never in your favor. That is how they make so much money so, whether you are in Vegas or at the Meadows, you can be sure that your fate is all wrapped up in the roll of the dice and the odds are against you.

Some people may think of this as a metaphor for life. To them life is a gamble, Nothing is certain and the cards are stacked against them and that there is no way they can win. If ever there were a people who could be justified in thinking this it would be the Jewish people. As we have explored the story of the Bible so far exclusively in the Hebrew Bible they have under gone many troubles and will undergo many more. Jewish history is defined by four tragedies. First, is the exile and destruction of the first temple. Second, is the destruction of the second temple just after the time of Christ. Third, are the pogroms that took place throughout Europe in the 19th century. The fourth is the Holocaust.

Given these events you could understand if the Jewish people were convinced that God was against them, but their faith is strong because they also remember all the times that God helped them and delivered them. We have heard of their being led out of Egypt and delivered to the Promised Land. We have heard of how their exile ended, but today is a very peculiar story set during the time of exile that is another story of God being with the people.

This story is the story of Esther recorded in the book that bears her name and it doesn't mention God at all yet it is retold every year as an example of how God has helped the Jewish people. In the Book of Esther, it seems like the destiny of the Jews is subject to "the roll of the dice," but we discover that God is working behind the scenes to fulfill his grand, saving purpose. The Book of Esther presents one of the most intriguing episodes in the Bible.

We begin with the dangerous character named Haman who quite literally rolls the dice. During the exile many Jews are living in the capitol city of Susa in Persia and in the 127 provinces of Persia. In Susa is a descendant of the Amalekites named Haman who hates the Jews, particularly a Jew named Mordecai. Haman carried a grudge against the Jewish people and held a high position in the Persia Empire under King Ahasuerus

Haman convinces Ahasuerus to decree the extermination of the Jews in all 127 provinces and whoever kills them can keep their possessions. Haman casts lots which in Hebrew are called purim. That is, he rolls the dice to determine the day in which they will be killed. The dice come up Adar 13th which in English is March so the story is a timely one. Then there are the courageous characters named Esther and Mordecai who try to save their people. Esther is a Jewish girl who is selected to be Queen but Ahasuerus does not know her ethnicity. When he makes the awful decree Mordecai, Esther's cousin convinces her to appeal to Ahasuerus to stop the genocide. Asking such a thing could lead to Esther's life. First it was unlawful for her to approach the king without having been called and in order to appeal for the Jewish people to be saved Esther will have to reveal that she is one of them.

Mordecai responds with these stirring words:

Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews.

¹⁴For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.

These words convince Esther to act and she goes to see her husband Ahasuerus after she devised a plan to reveal the evil plot of Haman. Perhaps she was lucky but Ahasuerus does receive her and agrees to attend a feast that she has prepared for him. Along with him he invites Haman as Esther wished

At the feast Ahasuerus asks Esther what it is that she wants and she reveals to her husband:

Let my life be given me—that is my petition—and the lives of my people—that is my request. For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Then

King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, 'Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?' Esther said, 'A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!'

Upon learning that Haman, in his hatred of all Jewish people has condemned the queen, Ahasuerus has Haman killed on Adar 13th and he is executed on the very gallows he had built to kill Mordecai. It is a happy ending, or so it seems, but while a king has power to kill a thousand people with just one edict he apparently does not have the power to reverse or cancel an edict. Ahasuerus cannot revoke his decree, but he does decree that the Jews can defend themselves on Adar 13th. The Jewish people prevail against their enemies and declare Adar 13th as the Feast of Purim, the Festival of the Dice. Mordecai is honored by taking Haman's place as an official in the Empire and courageous Esther continues as Queen. Here is a story of faith and risk and, although God is not mentioned, it is understood that God is working behind the scenes so to speak. What I like about this story is that it shows how life was for Jewish people in exile. Not everyone returned from the exile, and later this will come into play during Jesus' time as the good news did not stay within Israel. The disciples and Paul began to preach the good news in Israel, but their missionary efforts took them all over the middle East. In this way we can see that even things that were terrible God was able to use for good. Because Jewish people lived all over the Mediterranean the disciples sought to go to them and preach about Jesus. Likewise they were aided in their efforts by the fact that all of these places which had previously been individual nations were now part of one giant empire. This allowed for ease of travel because of roads that Rome built to connect their empire, and it also allowed for access. This is not to say that it was necessarily God's plan to brutally subject nations to the will of Rome, but rather that God is so creative and persistent, that even bad things can be used for God's purpose. To paraphrase Joseph, What was intended for evil God turned to good.

That is seen here in Esther as well. Most scholars believe that this book is more story than history, but the story is important because it tells them people that God does not control everything, otherwise there would be no sin, but God does put the odds in our favor. God does not solve our problems. God does not punish our enemies. God does not make the world as we would wish it to be, but when we are ready to try to make the world as God would have it be, we can be certain that God will help us.

Throughout the centuries, Purim has been celebrated as the miraculous salvation of the Jews and the thwarting of Haman's genocidal plot, and it has traditionally symbolized the victory of the Jewish people over anti-Semitic tyranny. As such, Purim is a happy, carnival-like holiday.

I think that we as Christians should also celebrate not because everything is perfect, not that we have it all, but we have God and that is all we need. Life may indeed sometimes look just like the "roll of the dice," but God is behind the scenes working all things out for the good. With God helping us in all that we do, nothing is guaranteed, but I will always take those odds.

Call to Offering

Kevin Puskarich

Knowing how much God has given us, let us come with grateful hearts to offer our tithes and our gifts.

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

Pastor Gena

Gracious God, we rejoice in your tender care for us when we are in the wilderness of life. When we face difficulties, you miraculously make a way forward. May our congregation's ministries and outreach be a refreshing and sustaining companion for those who find themselves wandering in the wilderness. We dedicate these gifts in Jesus' name. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

Pastor Gena

During the summer of 1995, after my junior year in high school, I traveled outside of the United States for the first time. To Russia. I'm not sure how others in my family remember it, but I distinctly remember my grandmother being much more than worried and nervous. She was not happy at all about my going to Russia and didn't talk much to me before I left. You can understand her feelings. Four years of changes in the former Soviet Union weren't quite enough to thaw her fears that had built up over decades.

To be sure, there were moments of nervousness and unease during the trip, but for the most part, I came to realize that most people in Russia were much like me – living life, looking for meaning and purpose. Just people.

A couple years later, some of the folks my sister Samantha and I had met there (on different trips), travelled to the U.S. They came here to Fairhill Manor and worshipped with us. They stayed in the homes of some of our members. We enjoyed their traditional costumes and songs during a concert they gave right here in our Sanctuary.

My heart breaks as I listen to the news of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. I dread the news of more death and destruction, knowing the long-term trauma that war and fear cause. I feel the burden of the many long years of recovery that will come once the fighting is over. The war is today, but the effects will last for lifetimes.

As I listened to news about the invasion this week, I felt anger toward the "Russians." I heard people calling the Russians evil, and I tended to agree. And then I thought, wait, I know people there. I know Alexander and Olga, Vadim and Svetlana. It was almost as if I had forgotten. I've been in their homes. I've worshipped with them. They are not all evil. Nor have they all caused the war in Ukraine. I was surprised how easy it had been for me, even having friends in Russia, even having been to Russia, to write them all off as evil.

That is the danger. For when we can write people off as evil, we can dehumanize them, and then it is much easier to harm and even kill them. And we are on the slippery slope that allows us to justify evil actions against people just because of where they are from or what they look like.

None of us is completely good or completely evil. As the Russian author, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote, "If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his [or her] own heart?"

During these weeks of Lent, let us examine our own tendencies toward good and toward evil. They both live within each of us. Let us consider what in our lives allows enough space for the good within us to flourish. Let us consider what in our lives allows evil and hatred to take root.

Jesus joins us here at this Table. The practice of dining with him weekly creates space in our hearts for more and more good. We experience his grace here at this Table, and we learn to extend that to others. We confess that we are susceptible to evil and ask Jesus to feed us with his mercy and to uproot evil from our hearts. We ask Jesus to help us see each other person sitting at this Table as a child of God. And we ask for the food and drink that will sustain us as we speak truth to evil when we find it within ourselves and in others. May God have mercy on us all.

Communion Hymn*“Lord of Our Highest Love!”*

Audra Allen, organist

Lord of our highest love! Let now your peace be given;
fix all our thoughts on things above, our hearts on you in heaven.

Prayer for the Bread & Cup

Rita Puskarich

Holy God,

As we begin this Lenten journey, help us remember that we are loved. You are with us through all kinds of wilderness - the wilderness of sickness, fear of sickness, loneliness, tiredness or grief. But just as Jesus did, with your help, we will make it through and come out forgiven and blessed on the other side. We thank you for loving us as you did your Son, Jesus Christ. We take this sacred bread and cup, remembering His life and your infinite love for us. Amen.

Words of Institution

Pastor Gena

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 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

Pastor Gena

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*“O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing”*

Jody Mullis, pianist

O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise,
the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of God’s grace!

Benediction

Rev. Stillwell

Go forth to begin again. Go to walk this journey of faith with Jesus Christ, knowing that God’s grace goes with you. Go in peace. Amen.

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

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.

Church Office hours:

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.

If you need anything at any time, please call the Church Office phone
at 724-225-8610.



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
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Jim Banish
Tom Barnhart
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Mabel Brooks
Denise Charles
Wanda Chicone
Emily Cope Robinson
Ruth Cox
Irma Davis
Jessica Duke
Libby Eberhard
Fred Engle
Jay Freudenberg
Jett Fuller
Derek Gardiner
Lois Gayman
Joe Greene
Bonnie Gregg

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

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



Please fill out this order form and return to the Church Office with payment by March 20. Indicate the number of flowers you would like. Make checks payable to “Fairhill Manor” and indicate “Easter Flowers” in the memo.

#_____ Tulips (6” pot) @ \$10/each

#_____ Hyacinths (3 bloom) @ \$10/each

#_____ Mums @ \$11/each

#_____ Lilies @ \$11/each

Orders with payment are due by March 20, 2022.

Given by

In Memory/Honor of

(circle one)

In Memory/Honor of

(circle one)

In Memory/Honor of

(circle one)
