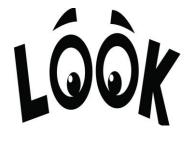
Manor Minutes Volume 12 Issue 35 September 3, 2021

I want to thank everyone who attended the town hall meeting and participated in the discussion. Whether you were in the sanctuary, or on Zoom, you showed genuine care for how Fairhill Manor has reacted and planned to safely worship amidst a pandemic that seems to be dragging on. I also wanted to thank everyone who shared concerns, questions and opinions during our time together. We had a good discussion, but I am concerned not everyone who wanted to speak did so. The Town Hall was set up so we could all voice our concerns in a way that was safe and productive. If you did not share your concerns, and wish to do so anonymously, you can contact Rev. Chris, Pastor Gena, Gary Ford or myself and we can share what you would like discreetly without using your name. During these times it can feel difficult to express your concerns, but please know that every concern matters. Your voice matters. We are one flock and one family in Jesus. Fairhill Manor is all of us. Our church is not just a select few in charge, and most certainly we do not have to agree in opinion to be called family. If you still wish to share your concerns, we are still actively listening.

Thank you,

JC

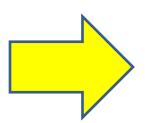


Labor Day –September 6, Church Office closed Stewardship/Finance Ministry – September 7, 6pm via Zoom Elders – September 8, 6pm Shepherds Room Board Meeting – September 8, 7pm Library Personnel Committee – September 9, 4pm Library Deacon orientation – September 9, 6pm Sanctuary Stay up to date, check <u>www.fairhillmanorchurch.org/calendar</u>

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 Picnic

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



Deacon Orientation

A deacon orientation meeting will be held Thursday, September 9 at 6pm. All members of the diaconate are invited to attend this short meeting as we go over our return to pre-Covid communion procedures.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Beginning on September 12, we will be journeying through the Bible using *The Story*, a book of selections from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, arranged chronologically, that reads like a novel. *The Story* will help us get the overall storyline of the Bible, understanding God's story and how our story fits into it. All of **our Sunday school classes and our worship services** will be based on one chapter from *The Story* each Sunday. This means that children, youth and adults all will be "on the same page," learning the same stories, each week for 31 weeks from September through May!

You may remember the journey we took through *The Story* back in 2015-2016. We have seen a renewed need in our congregation for a deeper understanding of the overarching story of Scripture, so we are going back to *The Story* to help us. If you participated in *The Story* before, you may still have your books. Now is the time to dig them out! If you need books, we can help you get them. The adult books will be on sale in the Narthex for \$5. Please come prepared with exactly \$5 cash. You may sign up to purchase the other books in the Narthex; they will be ordered as needed. Feel free to purchase/order books for yourself and/or your family regardless of whether or not you will participate in Sunday school or another study opportunity; your worship experience will be enhanced by reading the chapters ahead of each Sunday's worship.

Sunday school is a great way to get to know others in the Fairhill congregation while learning about the Bible and growing in your faith. Sunday school will begin at 9 am on September 12. Here are this year's classes, teachers, rooms and books:

Kindergarten – Grade 3

Teacher: Cara Hritz Room: Children's Classroom (downstairs near pop machine) Book: *The Story for Little Ones* (up to age 5) or *The Story for Children* (ages 5-8)

Grades 4-5

Teacher: Pastor Gena Room: Shepherd's Classroom (end of upstairs hallway across from Choir Room) Book: *The Story for Kids* (ages 8-12)

Grades 6-8

Teacher: Rev. Chris Room: Youth Room (downstairs across from the Chapel, near the Small Fellowship Hall) Book: *The Story: Teen Edition*

Substitute Teachers for Children's Classes: Kevin & Rita Puskarich

Adult - Bykota Class

Teacher: Connie Sheller Room: Small Fellowship Hall Book: *The Story* and *The Story Study Guide* (Study Guide will be provided in class on the first Sunday)

Grades 9-12, Young Adult

Facilitator: JC Leasure (This age group will meet with the Bykota Class but will have opportunities for discussion and fellowship amongst themselves as led by JC within the class) Room: Small Fellowship Hall Book: *The Story*

Adult – Bethany Class (to be determined)



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

Rev. Chris Stillwell, Senior Pastor Rev. Gena Sheller, Associate Pastor September 5, 2021

Audra Allen, organist

Pastor Gena

Von Lacock

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song. Let all God's children rejoice. Clap your hands and praise God with dancing. Shout for joy and praise God with music. For God brings justice to the peoples. God brings judgment upon the powerful. Sing to the Lord a new song. Let all God's children rejoice.

Opening Hymn

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

Audra Allen, organist A mighty fortress is our God, Did we in our own strength confide, a bulwark never failing, our striving would be losing, our present help amid the flood but there is one who takes our side, of mortal ills prevailing. the one of God's own choosing. For still our ancient foe doth seek You ask who that may be? to work us woe, with craft and power Christ Jesus, it is he with mighty great, and armed with cruel hate, pow'r to save, victorious o'er the grave, on earth without an equal. Christ will prevail triumphant!

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Pastor Gena

Lord of mercy and abundant love, we have gathered here this day to hear your healing words of compassion and to be transformed by your love. Help us to become more faithful servants in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

Compassionate God, we like to think that all we have to do is be "religious," to speak the words, but that we really don't have to change how we behave. We can get so caught up in ritual and rules, that we forget the essence of your word for us. We forget that we are called to truly be people of peace, not just to speak the words, but to practice lives of compassion and hope. So many times in this world, we are challenged to "take sides," one against the other; but you call us instead to stand for mercy, justice, love, forgiveness, hope, and peace. Help us to be people who care deeply about others and about this world. Help us to be ready to truly and joyfully serve you, O God. Free us from selfishness and selfcenteredness. Lift us to lives of peace.

And now, God of light, hear our prayers as we pray silently and aloud.

For the church of our Lord Jesus, hear our prayer....

Bless the church, O God. Deliver us from self-righteousness and make us holy in every way, that all people may see you in the witness of your faithful servants.

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship

For the world and for its leaders, God of light, hear our prayer...

Bless the nations of the world, O God. Guide the leaders of governments for the sake of peace. Give them sound judgment and merciful hearts and help them be accountable for the common good. Save them from the cynicism of war. Free them from the influence of greed. Deliver them from the temptations of social power.

For the community in which we live, God of light, hear our prayer...

Bless our communities, O God. Help us live as friends with our neighbors and do good to one another, that homes may be free of fear and families live in peace.

For children, God of light, hear our prayer...

Bless children and those who care for them, O God. Project them from harm; give them what they need to grow in body and mind and provide caring adults to model for them a life of purpose and compassion.

For the sick and those in distress, God of light, hear our prayer...

Bless all who are ailing in body, mind, or spirit. Heal them of their disease as it is your will, and restore them to fullness of life in you.

For those who are judged by others, God of light, hear our prayer...

Bless those who face the reproach of society, O God: those in prison, whether innocent or guilty of crimes; those who are ostracized due to mental disease, whether or not they pose a threat to others; those who are homeless, and those who are lost to addiction. Surround them with compassion and save them from hopelessness.

These prayers we offer to you, God of light by the power of your Holy Spirit, as we pray the prayer Jesus taught us with one voice...

Adapted from <u>https://www.ministrymatters.com/worship/entry/3027/worship-connection-august-29-2021</u> and Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2 © 2015 Westminster John Knox Press, pp. 147-149.

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.		

Special Music	"Lord I Want to be a Christian," arrangement by J. Aul	Audra Allen
Special Music	Lord I Want to be a Christian, "artangement by 5. Har	ruuru ruuru

Psalm 15

Linda Reese

Rev. Stillwell

Children's Message

First Scripture Reading

September is here and that means a lot of things. It means going back to school. It means football returns. It means the church picnic. There is another thing that it used to mean, but you might not know what I am talking about. When I was growing up, we didn't have many channels on our television like you do. Most people only had a dozen or so, and I had even less. Do you know how many channels I had growing up? 4! Can you believe that?

So, what this meant is that all summer I watched a lot of reruns which were shows that I had seen before that were being showed again until new episodes began in September. I still remember how exciting it was for the new television season to begin. Like most people I easily get tired of repeats. I wonder if God does too.

I don't mean TV shows, though. I mean that sometimes as Christians we are new and fresh, but often times our prayers and praise are tired and repetitive. We repeat the words of faith without having a heart for faith, and I imagine that God tires of this. Likewise, we often repeat the same mistakes or commit the same sins in our lives over and over again. It is natural, as we are human beings, but how many times have we asked God's forgiveness for something only to ask it again a week later?

There are some repeats that I think God never tires of. The first is our repeated presence here. Each week we gather at church to renew ourselves and our faith, to reconnect to God and to one another, to ask for forgiveness where we have fallen short and to leave with the commitment that this week we will do better. So much of the practice of faith is practice, and we have come here again so that we will do a better job of practicing our faith as we try to repeat the life, words, and example of Jesus Christ.

I am also certain that God never tires of us repeatedly forgiving those who hurt us, repeatedly loving others, repeatedly helping others even those who are not always nice to us, and I hope you won't get tired of repeating these things too. If so, you will be a repeat that God loves to watch.

Second Scripture Reading	Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23	Rev. Stillwell
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Sermon

"Pure Hearts, Clean Hands"

Rev. Stillwell

Today we have a passage with Jesus and the Pharisees and as usual the Pharisees are set up as the adversaries. They had come from Jerusalem either to ask him a question or to try to trap him. Either way their question is one of challenge when they say, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" Figuring that much of his audience will not know what they mean by defiled hands Mark, himself, explains what this means in the previous verse. In a parenthetical aside he says, "For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; 7:4 and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles."

Now this strikes me strange because we are conditioned to see the Pharisees as the villains in the gospel, but washing your hands, and your food, and your dishes seems a strange thing to villainize someone about. Who doesn't do this? Who wants to admit if they do not? At first glance this passage seems to be an argument about hygiene that would not be out of place today.

In fact I could not help but sense a strange timeliness when reading this passage; the first time I have done so since the pandemic brought with it an increased scrutiny about hand washing. One of the first things I remember happening before masks and vaccines was being told that we do not wash our hands long or hard enough. So we learned to sing happy birthday twice while washing and to wash up to the elbows, and to wash hard, and we have been reminded constantly. There are two examples of the push for handwashing that stand out to me. The first is a single person public restroom at my favorite coffee shop that, rather than having a picture of a stick figure man and woman to indicate that anyone may use them, the sign there says, "whatever, just wash your hands." Another reminder that gets my attention is that the electronic signs on the interstate that the department of transportation operate to inform you of traffic conditions will also tell you to wash your hands. As if you could do so while driving your car.

So like today, people of Jesus' time were being told and reminded to wash their hands, but for very different reasons. The book of Leviticus only required the priests to wash their hands before making sacrifices but the Pharisees added to the requirements that everyone should do so as part of their oral interpretation of the law. Their interpretations and commentaries then get added to the scriptures to make up the tradition of the elders of which they speak.

Now, on the surface it seems so sensible to us. People should wash before they eat to avoid being contaminated by germs, but that is not the type of contamination or defilement, to use their words, of which they were speaking. Remember that no one understood germs then. In fact it wasn't until 1847 when Hungarian physician, Ignaz Semmelweiss, recommended that doctors wash their hands between working with cadavers and delivering babies. This recommendation was scoffed at by doctors until two decades later when Louis Pasteur proved germ theory.

So the ritual cleanliness laws were not about hygiene, but health concerns, might have played a part in which animals were deemed clean or unclean to eat. For instance, pigs are dirty animals that are prone to hookworm since they spend so much time in the mud. They are checked and treated for these conditions today and do not represent such a threat to us, but many speculate that this is a reason why so many cultures consider eating pork taboo.

As a result this passage seems to be very relevant today, and it is, but not for why we might think. There is a big difference between hygienic cleanliness which was not the Pharisees' concern and ritual cleanliness which was their primary concern. One of the best definitions to explain what ritual cleanliness meant is that it is prepare and made possible for someone to be in the presence of God. God said in Exodus, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Through the law God, in effect said, "Wash your hands you are about to perform a holy act."

Another definition is to compare uncleanliness to being taboo and taboos are simply superstition, by which certain living things come to be associated with good or bad fortune, with cleanness or uncleanness. In this negative light these rituals are seen as lucky charms designed to manipulate God. This results in a ritual of hand washing that would exceed anything we have done during the pandemic. One commentary describes the ritual like this:

The water was first poured on both hands, held with the fingers pointed upwards, and must run up the arm as far as the wrist. It must drop off from the wrist, for the water is now itself unclean, and if it ran down the fingers they would be unclean again. The process is repealed with the hands held in the opposite direction with the fingers pointing down and each one was cleaned by being rubbed by the fist of the other. This would be done before each meal and before each course. William Barclay, Daily Bible Study Series: the Gospel of Matthew Vol. 2 Revised pg. 114

Eating like this would be as if they were doctors about to perform surgery before very meal. Perhaps you could understand that Jesus and his disciples did not do these thingss because it was so much work, but Jesus gives us the real reason when he says, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." To him these washings were being done for show. In effect they followed the letter of the law but not the spirit. In quoting Isaiah Jesus goes back to the most common criticism God has with God's people, which is not that they do not worship but that they worship as "a human commandment learned by rote". (IS 29:13)

In addition to this when they focus on the cleanliness of their hands they focus on the wrong thing. To the Pharisees all this business of ritual washing was regarded as just as important and just as binding as the Ten Commandments themselves. As a result their religion had become identified with a host of external activities and rules. Therefore it was just as important to wash the hands in a certain way as it was to obey the commandment; "Thou shall not covet."

It makes me think that it is almost as if Jesus and his disciples have been eschewing this ritual in the hope that the Pharisees would attack him for it, for when they do, he doesn't even give them a chance to respond to him. Rather, Jesus takes this opportunity to shame the Pharisees in front of a crowd that he calls over to him and says "there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile." In the time of pandemic we can think of something outside a person that by going in can corrupt or kill, but, again, he is not talking about sickness. Instead Jesus speaks of rightness with God

Jesus makes a major statement in which he seems to declare all foods clean. This his disciples do not appear to understand since Peter, in the book of Acts describes a dream in which unclean animals are presented to him, and he refuses to eat them because they are unclean.

But if they don't get that point hopefully they get the larger point, which is that Jesus offers us this proverb for the same reason that he gave it to the crowd and the Pharisees. He handed it to them like a small glowing candle to illuminate their darkness. He invited them, and now us, to look out over the expanse of our culture, our church, our lives to see if there are any situations that stand in need of this short but powerful message.

In this passage Jesus insists that harmful words express evil intent that lead to destructive deeds. What we eat is processed through our bodies and eliminated into the sewer where it is forgotten but what comes out of our mouths so often hangs in the air and lingers infecting all nearby, and I am not talking about Covid. What we say usually comes straight from the heart and for Jesus listeners the heart was the center of emotions and intellect, will and spiritual belief. Our words, therefore, come from our heart and will find their place in other's hearts. If they come from a poisoned well then they will likely do much to poison someone else's hearts.

Our hearts' hurtful words and deeds can take away life, can destroy relationships, can steal hope, can torture truth into lie, and can kill life. That is why a pure heart is much preferable to clean hands. Cleanliness may be next to godliness to some, but it is not a sufficient substitute. The pure in heart are those who are spiritually pure rather than ritually clean, and no one can achieve purity of heart without the help of God.

So let us clean our hands to fight infection and sickness, but let us clean our hearts to protect from a sickness that kills our souls and is even more infectious than the most virulent virus. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come so worry less about what goes into your mouth and more about what comes out. Most people get heart checkups and start watching what goes into their mouth. Jesus recommends that we check on our hearts and then start watching what comes out of them.

Call to Offering

Von Lacock

It is appropriate for us, on this Labor Day weekend, to honor God with a small portion of the fruit of our labor, for it is the Lord who is the ultimate creator of our time and talents, energy and skills, and it is for god that we labor.

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

In celebration of their deliverance from slavery, the Hebrew people offered you their worship and their praise. May the offering we bring before you this day be a sign of our celebration of your saving love and your never-failing grace.

Scifres, Mary; Beu, B. J. The Abingdon Worship Annual 2020. Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

Invitation to Communion

Rev. Stillwell

Rev. Stillwell

McDonald's used to have a slogan that went, "you deserve a break today," and their commercials invited you to take a break from all your worries as you ate their food. Eating or drinking something you enjoy can be like a mini break in your day, and I know that I long for lunch every day at work. The problem with this is that I look forward to it. I eat it. I enjoy it, then it is gone, and then I have nothing to look forward to until dinner. The other problem is that spending my day looking forward to eating fast food is not a healthy way to live. The food we eat fills our stomachs, but only for a while. Some of the food we eat fills our stomachs.

That's what makes this meal we are about share so special. It is not much to eat, so it won't fill our stomachs. It will not fill our mouth with great taste. But if we understand what it is and what it represents then it will remind us of the grace and love of Christ which fills our souls and lasts eternally. This is the living water and the bread of life Christ of which Christ spoke. This food doesn't come with a little toy, but it sure is a happy meal, for here we also receive a break. Here we are invited to take a break from worry and guilt, a break from fear and uncertainly, a break from sin and shame by offering all of these things to the one who welcomes us at this table, Jesus Christ,

During this meal we take a break from all that has burdened us and lift those burdens to the one who offers to carry them for us. Even more so this meal is free, because the same one who offers to take our burdens also has already paid for the meal and much more. Take this bread and cup and give thanks to God in Christ who recognized two thousand years ago that you, yes you deserve a break today and every day.

Communion Hymn

Here at thy table, Lord, this sacred hour, O let us feel thee near, in loving power; calling our thoughts away from self and sin. As to thy banquet hall we enter in.

Prayer for the Bread & Cup

Lord,

We come to this table every week to be in communion with you. Though we come in remembrance of you, sometimes we forget the importance of what we are observing. This bread is your body broken for us. You were broken for our sins. You took on our punishment so we could be with you at this table. This cup is your blood. A promise kept, and a promise given. Your blood flowed so we could have peace. Your cup overflows with grace, and mercy. The only way to salvation is through you. As you welcome us to this table, let us be reminded of the price of this meal. Let us not forget the genuine love you show us every day. A love not just spoken, but meaningful. As we eat of your body and drink of your blood let us praise you not just with our lips, but also with our heart. We will love you with our mind, body and soul. We will spread your love not just with words but with our works. Amen

"Here at Thy Table, Lord" Audra Allen, organist
d hour,
Sit at the feast, dear Lord, break thou the bread;
fill thou the cup that brings life to the dead;
that we may find in thee, pardon and peace;
and from all bondage win a full release.

JC Leasure

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, "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"They'll Know WWe are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
And we pray that all unity may one day be restoredWe w

"They'll Know We Are Christians" Jody Mullis, pianist Lord, We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand, Lord, We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand, restored and together we'll spread the news that God is in the land:

Refrain: And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love, Yes they'll know we are Christians by our love.

Benediction

Rev. Stillwell

Be forever blessed, Forever loved, Forever cradled in God's arms, Forever called by name.

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:

Phyllis Cimino 317 Wellness Way Strabane Trails #325 Alice Cokeley 149 Meadows View Rd Washington PA 15301 Mrs. Mary McDonough 949 Bruce Street Washington PA 15301

Southmont-Presbyterian Medical Center: Bill Behrens Rm 437

835 S Main Street Washington PA 15301 Don Ainsley Ed Alexy Avery Allen Donna Bakaitis Tom Barnhart **Bill Behrens** Bristol Allan Berry Abby Blanchard Susan Britko Mabel Brooks Wanda Chicone John Collar Emily Cope Robinson Coretta and family Ruth Cox Irma Davis Jessica Duke Libby Eberhard Fred Engle Jay Freudenberg Jett Fuller Derek Gardiner Lois Gayman Joe Greene **Bonnie Gregg**

Judy Grover Sloan Amelia Hagy Kyle Hallam Connie Hanning Aryn Hess Ed Jackman Family of Caleb Jackson Dallas Jacobovitz **Bob** Lanning Ty, Kerri, Allie, Ivy & Ty James Lacock Libby LeDuff Frank Lippert Lee & Betsy Martin Dave McConnell Don Melvin Michaela Nixon **Ruth Mikuta** Georgette Murray Karen Palfreyman **Deborah** Patterson Cathy Rentgen

Betty Jo Riggle Jim and Barb Roupe John Shadeck 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

Thank you...

Dear Fairhill Manor Church family,

From the bottoms of our hearts, we thank you for praying for us, encouraging us, and supporting us financially over the past 6 months. We truly believe the twins would not be home in our arms without the power of prayer. They are miracles. Tuning in to virtual church each week and hearing you pray for us meant so much. With the long commute to Pittsburgh and the cafeteria being closed due to Covid, your financial gifts allowed us to not worry about gas and treated us to many Door Dash meals over the 161 day stay. We are thankful to be a part of the Fairhill Manor family.

> With love and gratitude, Ty, Kerri, Allie, Ivy & Ty Lacock

