

Manor Minutes

Volume 12 Issue 10

March 12, 2021

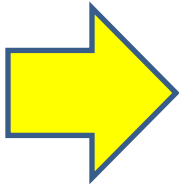
In-person worship will resume March 21

The sanctuary will reopen to limited, scheduled worship beginning Sunday, March 21. We will use the same guidelines as we did in the Fall. Please enter using the back door, wear your mask, sign in, and a guide will lead you to an open seat. There will be no printed bulletin; the bulletin can be found at <https://fairhillmanorchurch.org/bulletin>. You will leave the sanctuary using the side door that leads to the parking lot. Zoom worship will continue for those not able to be in the sanctuary.

Those with last names beginning with A-E & F-O worship in the sanctuary March 21 at 10:15. The Worship Schedule can be found at: <https://fairhillmanorchurch.org/sanctuary-schedule>

ZOOM – LIVE at 10:15 am

Zoom log in information is available on the last page of the Manor Minutes.



This week during the Pastoral Prayer, we will remember and pray for all those affected by the coronavirus pandemic over the past year. We have lost and endured a lot. But we would also like to pause and give thanks for the hidden blessings, the moments of hope, the ways we have adapted and reached out as a congregation as well. For what about the past year at Fairhill Manor would you like to give thanks? **Text or call Pastor Gena (724-263-0033) or email her (genasheller@msn.com) with YOUR thanksgivings as soon as possible.** Let's join our hearts as we remember and give thanks.

Lenten Bible Study with Rev. Chris – March 15, 7pm via Zoom

Board Meeting – March 17, 6pm via Zoom

Weekly Lenten Service – March 17, 7pm by Central Christian Church in Uniontown

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



Children Worship & Wonder

We invite children age 3 – Grade 5 to participate in Children Worship & Wonder. Join CW&W on Zoom around 10:30 am (contact Pastor Gena for the login information). To learn more and register your child(ren), <https://fairhillmanorchurch.org/children-worship-wonder>

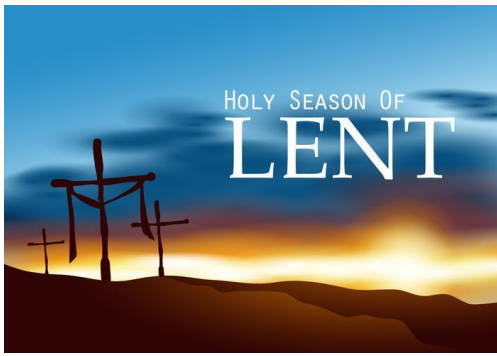
Tween Team

Gather online via Zoom with 4th-7th Graders on Sunday evenings from 5-6 pm. During Lent we are centering our time together around our Lenten devotional for families, "Faithful Families: Lent and Easter Devotions." JC Leasure and Pastor Gena are the co-leaders.



Time Change – Spring Forward
Remember to change your clocks.
Daylight Savings Time begins on
March 14 at 2am.





Fairhill Manor Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

351 Montgomery Ave.
724-225-8610

Rev. Chris Stillwell, Senior Pastor
Rev. Gena Sheller, Associate Pastor
March 14, 2021

Prelude

Audra Allen, organist

Welcome

Pastor Gena

Call to Worship*

Linda Reese

God is good. All the time.
And all the time, God is good.
Let all God's people cry out in joy: God's steadfast love endures forever.
Come! Let us worship the Lord of our salvation.

Opening Hymn

"Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

Audra Allen, organist

Come, thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy 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*

Pastor Gena

Adapted from "Litany of Solidarity and Hope During a Pandemic" by Joseph P. Shadle, found on <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/coronavirus-prayers>

We have been in a different place as a congregation for one year now. One year ago many of us were already choosing to worship from home. One year ago, we made a decision to pause our in-person gatherings, and we embarked on an adventure of figuring out how to be Christ's body in this time and in this place under these circumstances. Today, we pray for those who have been and will continue to be affected by the pandemic. And we give thanks for the hidden blessings, the moments of hope, the ways we have adapted and reached out. Let us pray together.

Loving God, we gather today in a place we couldn't have envisioned one year ago. We give you great thanks for your presence among us in so many ways during this challenging and uncertain time....

Compassionate God, there are times when this pandemic has seemed overwhelming, never-ending, and undefeatable. We continue to name before you those who need your special care.

We pray for those who are sick, for those with chronic illnesses and underlying health concerns. We remember and bear witness to all those who have suffered, those who have been lonely, families who have been separated.

We cry out for those who are unemployed, for those who have suffered financial hardships, for those who still face an uncertain future, for those who have suffered from physical or emotional abuse, for those who

have suffered disproportionately because of the way our world is ordered, for all who have been overwhelmed by anxiety and stress.

We pray for those who are dying and we lift up those who have survived. We remember those who have died while saving the lives of others, all who have lost their lives. Hold close those who have lost their spouses, children who have been orphaned, all those who mourn and those who comfort them.

We give you thanks for firefighters, police, and emergency medical workers; for doctors, nurses, and all health care professionals; for all those who step in to help and serve where needed.

Continue to sustain and guide public officials, business leaders, and educators. Thank you for the time, talent and dedication of innovators and inventors who continue to provide new solutions.

We pray for peace in our cities and in our world; for renewed friendships among neighbors; for solidarity and unity among all peoples; for a greater appreciation and love of all humanity.

Give us patience and perseverance, we pray. Grant us calm in the midst of fear and grace to overcome adversity. Give us generosity of spirit, hope in times of despair, and light in the darkness.

Gracious and Loving God, you are our comforter and our hope. Hear our prayers for all those we love and name to you now.... Continue to strengthen us. Inspire us to acts of solidarity and generosity and give us hope of a brighter future. All of this we pray in Jesus' name, 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.

Anthem

“Be Thou With Me,” by Bach
Performed by Jim Cope

Children's Message*

Pastor Gena

Adapted from https://sermons4kids.com/measuring_gods_love.htm

Our Scripture for today includes a verse that many people learn and even memorize. John 3:16. It says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (NRSV)

This verse makes me think about God's love. I wonder just how great God's love is and how we can measure it. This morning I brought several things that we often use to measure stuff. I think they might help us measure God's love.

Sometimes we measure ingredients. If we were making some cookies or some crepes, which of these would we use to make sure that we put in exactly the right amount of flour and sugar? Yes, we would use a measuring cup. I wonder if we might use a measuring cup to measure God's love? Let's read a little bit from Psalm 23 (vv. 1-3, 5). *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake... You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.* It says “my cup overflows.” I guess if our cup runs over with God's love, we can't use just a measuring cup to measure it.

If we were building something, which of these would we use to measure the length, width and height of different things? That's right; we would use a tape measure. I wonder if we could use a tape measure to measure God's love? Let's read Psalm 108:3-4. *I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples, and I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is higher than the heavens, and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.* This tells us that God's love is higher than the heavens. Well, if God's love is higher than the heavens, I don't think we could use a tape measure to measure it.

Which of these could we use to measure how long something is taking? Yes, we could use this watch. I wonder if we could use a watch to measure how long God's love will last. Let's read Psalm 103:17a. *But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting...* This tells us that God's love is from everlasting to everlasting. I guess we can't measure it with a watch either. A watch won't last from everlasting to everlasting.

So I wonder how we can measure God's love? We can't. We don't really need to either. But we do need to experience God's love. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he writes, "I pray that you may understand how wide, how long, how high, and how deep God's love really is. May you experience it, though it is so great you will never fully understand it" (Ephesians 3:18-19, paraphrased).

Let's pray. Dear God, we thank you for your love – a love so great that we cannot measure it. Help us to know deep in our hearts just how much you love us. Amen.

Scripture Reading*

John 3:14-21

Linda Reese

Sermon*

"Life as God Knows It"

Rev. Stillwell

Within the lectionary passage today is what is probably the most famous of all scriptures. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." You see it at football games all the time. In fact, it is impossible for me to hear this scripture and not picture a person sitting behind a field goal post holding up a sign that reads simply, John 3:16. This is the passage that people recite the most often, the first that children are taught to recite, and if you know only one scripture by heart almost certainly this is the one. It gets recited so much, but I don't know how often it gets preached because I think we all know it, or think we do. When something is familiar it seems less special, but the reason this verse is so well known is because it is so radical. In effect it is the entire gospel in one verse.

This scripture from John describes Life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life." But sometimes we focus so much on this one verse that we miss the bigger picture, when we think that the only thing that matters is what happens after we die. By doing this, we might miss the real miracle, how the fullness of life can be available to all of us right now, before we die!

One of the reasons we miss the miracle is because we zoom in on this one verse so closely. But if we pull back the focus from verse 16, and we get the wide-angle view of this famous verse, a fuller picture emerges. Jesus and a Pharisee named Nicodemus are having a conversation. Nicodemus comes "by night" to learn more about Jesus, "the light of the world". He says "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." After saying this Jesus responds by saying "no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." This prompts many questions from Nicodemus first of which is how a person can be born again, how to be born from above, how to experience a spiritual rebirth, and Jesus tells him in the famous verse

that God has already given you the fullness of God's love. God did not send Jesus to condemn us but to offer you this gift of life that is unlike life as we know it.

The word life or eternal life repeats some 30 times in John's gospel. Sometimes it refers to life after death - an extension of life. But often it refers to the life that we have access to on this side of the grave. In Christ a whole new realm of living is possible not just after we die but here and now. Nicodemus is trying to figure out the one, two, three steps to the spiritual life. But Jesus tells him, God has already issued the invitation.

I remember years ago when I went with a group of college students on a mission trip to Reynosa, Mexico. We were spending our spring break building a mission station with a local church that would house future missionaries who would come and build other things. We helped dig a hole for a septic tank, laid the concrete foundation for the building, painted the walls of the existing structure and installed playground equipment for children to enjoy.

At the end of the week we agreed that if we could get our work done, we would spend the afternoon at the beach on South Padre Island. Having accomplished a week's worth of good work, we were enjoying an afternoon of sun and sand, and I was sitting on the beach with one of the students who said that she intended to live differently once we got back to our home. She wanted to give herself more fully to her faith. She wanted to serve others, and so I mentioned to her that we had something like that in our ministry, and it was during the week. And she said, "Oh! Oh, that sounds good. I really want to participate." And then she said, "Wait, I don't know about during the week. I don't think I can do church two times a week." And we all laughed. Sometimes we say we believe, but do we want to trust our whole lives into God's keeping? Maybe not.

I did see more of her, but still college is a busy time with so many things competing for a person's attention, even things that are valuable and worthwhile. Whenever we think to ourselves that we want to put God more central in our life invariably things get busier and things get messier, and we find ourselves challenged to do so.

The writer, Anne Lamott, writes often of faith and spirituality and the struggle to include these things in our daily lives. In her memoir she writes of having resisted saying yes to God, of accepting God's invitation to a new life even though she believed that life would be better than the one she had been living. She didn't grow up with parents who practiced Christianity or any religion, and she became an addict. Slowly she began to emerge from her addiction. And she began exploring the faith. But when she describes her confession of faith, she says that finally she just said to God one day something like "Oh, what the heck, God, come on in."

Although I grew up in a household that worshiped every Sunday in a local church, I find myself also having to decide on a daily basis if I will let Christ into my life or not. It's not that I have to decide if I believe in him, it's that I have to get up most mornings and decide again whether I will sit down and pray. Some days, the answer is no. Some days I refuse to listen again for God's spirit in the depths of my soul and the world around me. Some days, God and I socially distance.

But still God invites. Still God leaves it up to us as to whether we choose to receive the love that God offers. The gospel of John describes it like this. "The light has come into the world and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil." (v. 19) But I really like the way Eugene Peterson translates it in *The Message*: "God-light streamed into the world but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness."

At first this verse made me squirm. Why would anyone run for the darkness? Can we really reject the light God offers? But then I stopped to remember how often we choose to nurture our resentments at one another rather than to seek reconciliation with a friend or family member. Some days it seems easier for me to buy myself something new rather than invest my resources in empowering the poor. Some of us cling to our addictions rather than to seek professional help from a psychologist or step foot into Alcoholics Anonymous.

I think the problem stems from this idea that our life is our life and we control who gets in, but Jesus isn't just asking to be part of our life, instead he is asking us to give our lives to him, with the promise that we will receive something much better. I am reminded of something Adam Hamilton said in his study of the gospel of John. He says, "For too long, we've called unbelievers to 'invite Jesus into your life.' Jesus doesn't want to be in your life. Your life's a wreck. Jesus calls you into his life. And his life isn't boring or purposeless or static. It's wild and exhilarating and unpredictable." This strikes me as powerful because it is true. We can invite Jesus into our life, messy as it often is, but it would be more effective if we could simply take part in the life Jesus offers us.

John's gospel says we are invited to "come to the light." John invites us to receive the love God offers; to place our trust in God's abundant love, to give ourselves over into God's keeping, completely and fully. Come to the light. It's more of a surrender I guess than a simple choice. It's a movement of trust towards the one who loved the world by giving us Jesus in the flesh. As biblical scholar, Sandra Schneiders says, "Jesus is an invitation to accept the unreserved divine love, to respond in love, and thus to create a shared life with God. God, says Jesus, desires intimate friendship with us."

The choice we have to make is: Will we receive that friendship? Will we trust in that God? Will we give our lives over into that holy relationship?

Have you ever heard the Beatles song, "Got to get you into my Life"? It is hard for me to say it rather than sing it, but believe me, you don't want me to sing it. It goes:

I was alone, I took a ride
I didn't know what I would find there
Another road where maybe
I could see another sign there
Oo, then I suddenly see you
Oo, and did I tell you I need you
Ev'ry single day of my life

I am sure that Paul McCartney was singing about a girl but I often think of God when I hear the song, except now I think it is God singing to us. It is God who has to get us into God's life, because that is the life that is far greater.

After Nicodemus' visit with Jesus, Nicodemus fades from the story. And we don't know quite what happens to him. He reappears briefly a few chapters later, as the authorities question Jesus. Nicodemus rides the fence. He is not quite with Jesus but not quite against him either. And then he surfaces again near the final end of the gospel. He shows up to anoint Jesus' body for burial. I wonder if that means he did choose to accept God's invitation. We cannot keep God from loving us, but we can decide if we will receive and trust in that love each day.

For God gave us Christ not to just improve our life, not to make us happier, not to give us helpful tips on how to have a better attitude. Rather, he gave Christ to us that whoever believes would have eternal life,

but even in this life we would have a life better than any we would have had otherwise. Will we accept this gift? Will we come to the light? Will we place ourselves into the life that is truly life? That is a question only we can answer for ourselves, and it is one we should ask ourselves every day for as long as we have days to live. We can have life as we know it, or life as God knows it. Which will you choose?

Call to Offering*

Linda Reese

God of light and love, as Jesus shined your light into our troubled world, may our offering bring rays of your holy light into the dark corners of our world. May these gifts reach the places where the fear of death holds sway, that others may find Christ's life in the midst of their pain.

Dedication of Offering*

Rev. Stillwell

Through your immeasurable grace, O God, we have been saved by faith. In thankfulness for this mighty gift, we give thanks to you and give back our tithes and our offerings.

Invitation to Communion*

Rev. Stillwell

My bulbs are coming up, but now I fear that if the cold returns they will be stunted. I hate to see so much growth ended because of a relapse of winter. This is always how I feel in the middle of Lent as well. Personal and spiritual growth begins as we try to be better Christians and get closer to God, but then it gets hard and the progress doesn't seem as good as before, but if we hold on and don't give up a breakthrough will come. Easter is not that far off, and soon our hopes and prayers will bloom into something wonderful, but now, let us continue to work through prayer, and study, and self-examination. When we share this meal we remember how stunted and even ruined Jesus' ministry seemed after he was killed, but the good work that God had begun in him was completed on the day of Easter, so that now we remember what Paul told the Philippians, that He who began a good work in you will continue to perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. May this sustain us in times of cold and gloom. The spring is returning because the Son has returned.

Prayer for the Bread & Cup*

Gary Ford

Father,

You sent Your Son to save us and to bring light into a very dark world. There are times in our lives, such as the death of a family member or friend, when we pray for that light and love of Christ for comfort in a time of darkness. Let each of us take this bread and cup, so that we can let the light of Jesus shine through each of us every day. It is in the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Words of Institution*

Rev. Stillwell

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: That the Lord Jesus Christ, on the night that he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is broken for you; eat this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; that is poured out for you. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat of the bread and drink of the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again. (I Corinthians 11:23-26)

Closing Hymn

"My Jesus, I Love Thee"

Jody Mullis, pianist

My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine;
for thee all the follies of sin I resign;
my gracious Redeemer, my Savior art thou;
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore thee in heaven so bright;
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow,
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

Benediction*

Rev. Stillwell

God sends us forth with the immeasurable gift of faith. We will live in the joy of our salvation. God sends us forth to walk in the light of holy love. We will walk in the light of Christ.

* You can listen to these pieces of worship at

<https://fairhillmanorchurch.org/worship-audio-files>

Previous Worship services can also be found on the Church website or on YouTube,

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmlH3qzih_fzHCC2X0Jhc_sfniJ7C1O3X



Prayer Requests

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!

Gary Anderson
Avery Allen
Colt Allison
Donna Bakaitis
Bill Behrens
Bristol Allan Berry
Abby Blanchard
Mark & Susan Britko
Jordon Burk
Wanda Chicone
Emily Cope Robinson
Ruth Cox
Irma Davis
Sue Donaldson
Jessica Duke
Libby Eberhard
Fred Engle
Jay Freudenberg
Lois Gayman
Rose Ann Gorby
Joe Greene
Bonnie Gregg

Sloan Amelia Hagy
Judy Hanning
Aryn Hess
Ed & Harriet Jackman
Dallas Jacobovitz
Bob Lanning
Ty, Kerri, Allie, Ivy &
Ty James Lacock
Cheryl Leach
Lee & Betsy Martin
Don Melvin
Michaela Nixon
Ruth Mikuta
Dick Moninger
Georgette Murray
Deborah Patterson
Joyce and Denny Paul

Betty & Charles Riecks
Betty Jo Riggle
Chip Rogers and his parents
Jim and Barb Roupe
John Shadeck
Theresa Shape
Doug and Tracy Smith
Steve Smith
Cathy Stewart
John Stewart
Beth Teagarden
Gary Weaver
Nikki Wells
Tom Williams
Chuck & Mary Wiseman
Sarah Wittenberg
Preparing for Baptism – Nyka Rash

Southmont-Presbyterian Medical Center

Bill Behrens Rm 437
835 S Main Street
Washington PA 15301

Homebound Members:

Phyllis Cimino
317 Wellness Way
Strabane Trails #325
Washington PA 15301

Mrs. Mary McDonough
949 Bruce Street
Washington PA 15301

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

Congratulations to Jack & Sheena Nelson on the birth of a baby girl, Reese Evelyn, on February 24. Mike and Jackie Nelson are the proud grandparents. Welcome to little Reese Evelyn. Blessings to all.



ZOOM – LIVE

Zoom Worship this Week - Live from the Sanctuary at 10:15am!

"Join a Meeting" on Zoom at 9:45 am 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 Pastor Gena (724) 263-0033. She will share these during worship. At 10:15 am, mute yourself on Zoom (Not sure how to do that? Login at 9:45 am and someone will help). Those on Zoom are visible to each other for the entire worship service. If you would like to see but not be seen, click Stop Video on your Zoom screen.

Lent

To mark this special time of the Christian year, a time of examination and preparation leading to the celebration of Easter, we have two exciting opportunities to grow stronger in our faith and spirituality.

Zoom Bible Study

On Monday, March 15, from 7-8:15pm via Zoom, Rev. Chris will continue the Lenten Bible Study on the Gospel of John. The curriculum is written by Rev. Adam Hamilton based on his book, "John: The Gospel of Light and Life". The only reading required is to read four or five chapters of the Gospel each week. NO registration is necessary just click on the zoom link which will be emailed on Monday.

Weekly worship services

We are teaming up with other Disciples of Christ congregations in the area to provide a weekly mid-week worship service during the season of Lent. Each church will take a turn to lead a worship service each Wednesday at 7 pm to be shared to all churches via Zoom, Facebook, YouTube, whatever their method is. Details on how to watch each service will be emailed each week so stay tuned! The schedule for these services is as follows:

Mar 17 - Brightwood Christian Church Central

Mar 24 - Washington First Christian Church

Mar 31 - Christian Church in Uniontown

Lent Devotionals and other resources are available at www.fairhillmanorchurch.org/lent

Username: fairhillmanor@yahoo.com

Password: lent2021

Please fill out this order form and return to the Church Office with **payment** by March 15. Indicate the number of flowers you would like. The cost per plant is **\$10**. Make checks payable to **“Fairhill Manor”** and indicate **“Easter Flowers”** in the memo.



- # _____ Tulips (6" pot)
- # _____ Mums
- # _____ Hyacinths (3 bloom)

Orders with payment are due by March 15, 2020

Given by _____
In Memory/Honor of _____ (circle one)
In Memory/Honor of _____ (circle one)



Contact Karen at the Church Office (724) 225-8610 after you have been fully vaccinated. She will keep a confidential list. This will help future decisions on increasing in-person Worship attendance.

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 a – 2 pm. The Church phone is forwarded to Karen’s cell phone.

Pastor Gena is off on Friday.

Rev. Chris is off on Friday.

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