

# Li'l Ripples

DECEMBER 2024  
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A Publication of Lower Marsh Creek Presbyterian Church



A message from

Pastor Mark



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## Preaching in Advent: May I ask a question?

I wrote a series of sermons for Advent this year pondering the questions that Jesus asks. These questions from Jesus provide wonderful launching pads for our spiritual reflection. Advent is always a special time to draw up close to Jesus and claim his power and grace in our lives anew. Please join us for worship each Sunday, and remember that we will have one worship service each Sunday at 10:00.

### **Advent One: December 1 "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15)**

Jesus asked this of the disciples when they were repeating what other people were saying about Jesus' identity. So much for what other people think. What do *you think*? *That's what counts.*

### **Advent Two: December 8 "What do you want me to do for you?" (Matthew 20:32)**

Two blind men were among a large crowd following Jesus, begging for mercy. Jesus doesn't heal them until they say exactly what they want. Prayer is a chance for us to articulate our needs. What do *we want*?

### **Advent Three: December 15 "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46)**

What we value most will be shown in our lives. We are an open book. It is impossible to say "Lord, Lord" and truly mean it without also acting right.

### **Advent Four: December 22 "When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" (Mark 8:19)**

Jesus has performed an astounding miracle. Have the disciples fully noticed? Have they taken stock? Have you noticed the miracles done in your life? There is abundance and grace all around. Can you see it?

### **First Sunday of Christmas: December 29 "Do you love me?" (John 21:17)**

Jesus asked Peter this question three times, and each time when the answer was yes the response was "Feed my sheep." Talk is cheap. Love is everything. What do you do to show your love?

Blessed Advent in Christ!  
Mark



## CHURCH LIFE - PRESENT, FUTURE, PAST



**IMPORTANT NOTE :** December 1st will start the new schedule of one worship service at 10:00 AM.  
Sunday School will begin at 9:00 AM.

**December 1st at 9:00 AM** - the **Seekers Sunday School Class** will be joining with the **Adult Sunday School Class** to form one class for an Advent study entitled "*Christmas: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*" by Richard B. Wilke. We associate the Wise Men, the Shepherds, and Joseph with the joy and celebration of Christmas. But let's not forget that the evil King Herod is also part of the Christmas story. It is because there is evil in our world that we desperately needed - and need - a Savior. This combined class will be meeting in Fellowship Hall and have coffee and baked goods available. **Please join us.**

(Mike Orleski, Susan Nunamaker, and Doyle Waybright)

**December 1st at 5:00 PM** - Please join us for our **Annual Advent Dinner** provided by our Deacons. We will be serving a full turkey dinner. We need an accurate number - please sign up on the Narthex bulletin board. We are asking each family to please bring a dessert.

Editor's Note:

**December 1st deadline.** - Please see page 7 for details about a **NEW MISSION PROJECT**.

Lower Marsh Creek Presbyterian Church  
**Advent Fellowship Dinners and Bible study 2024**

**Tuesdays, December 3, 10, and 17**

In our fellowship Hall from 5:30 to 7:00

A light soup dinner will be served

Study Book and Advent Devotional:

Erin Wathen. *Calling All Angels: An Advent Study of Fearlessness and Strength*. (WJK Press, 2024)

**Preparation and advance reading:**

Tuesday, December 3:

Introduction in Calling All Angels, pages 1-7

First Week of Advent in Calling All Angels, pages 9 - 22

Bible passage: Luke 1: 5-25 (the story of Zechariah)

Tuesday, December 10:

Third Week of Advent in Calling All Angels, pages 59 - 69

Bible passage: Matthew 1: 18-25 (the story of Joseph)

Tuesday, December 17:

Fourth Week of Advent in Calling All Angels, pages 83 - 92

Bible passage: Luke 2: 1-20 (the story of the Shepherds)

**ACPM Operation Chocolate for Inmates**

The inmates at the Adams County Adult Correctional Complex need to know that during the Christmas season they are not forgotten. Join us in bringing a little joy in a practical way. This year Adams County Prison Ministries is collecting chocolate for the inmates. Please place your donations of Hershey Milk Chocolate bars (1.55 oz. - no nuts please) in the box in the Narthex



**No later than Sunday December 8th.** Thanks.!

**The Couple's Study Group - December 14th** - will be having a "Progressive Dinner" . We will begin at 4:30 PM at the home of Lori and Joe Jackson (40 Fawn Trail, Fairfield) for appetizers. The main course will be at Fellowship Hall at 6:00 PM consisting of lasagna, salad and Italian bread. The main course will be prepared and served thanks to our Couple's budget fund. We will travel to Len and Dale Williams (241 Carr Hill Rd., Gettysburg) who will host with dessert and some Christmas fun. Please sign up in the Narthex to participate by furnishing either appetizer or dessert . (Please be specific in what you will bring.) This has been a fun event in the past and we are looking forward to continuing that tradition for married couples in our congregation. (Bev Benner)

**The Women's Guild** will meet **December 17th, at 11:30 AM** at Perkins for our annual Christmas Party. Please bring a gift to fight over and a bath towel or some washcloths for Hillside Nursing Home. This is what they need the most. This will be our last meeting until March.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

(Roz Santay)

> > > > **Christmas Eve Worship** < < < <  
7:00 PM and 9:00 PM

Please join us for one of the most holy worship services of our Church year. Both services will include the sacred tradition of candle lighting with the hymn Silent Night.



- 5 - Lenorah Williams
- 6 - Nick Johnson
- 9 - Rodger Benner
- 9 - Sally Suder
- 10 - Shirley Breslin
- 13 - Phyllis Rioux
- 26 - Linda Lapp
- 27 - Aimee Metz
- 28 - Fay Hess
- 31 - Lynne Orner



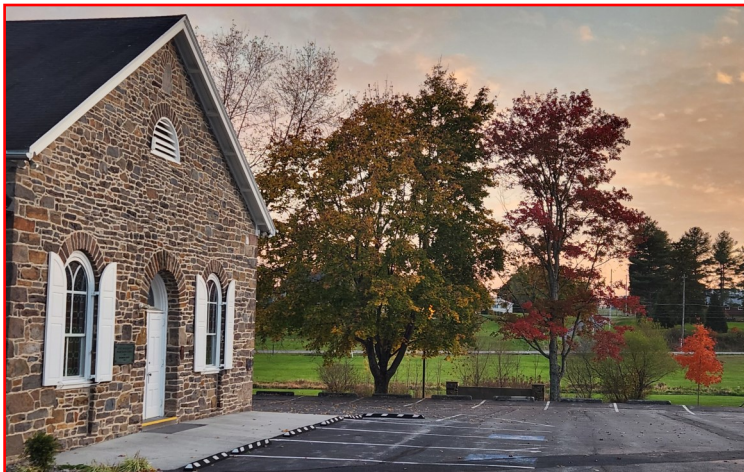
***"My Second Christmas In Heaven" - A Message from a Dearly Departed Loved One***

This poem appeared in a Christmas card sent to a friend of mine in Owatonna, Minn. that he wanted to share with others who have recently lost a loved one - which makes this time of year particularly hard. There was no author mentioned, but I wanted to pass it along to others who know that it's only Christ who can mend our hearts and comfort us as another year soon begins. Kathy Megyeri

*"I see the countless Christmas trees around the world below with tiny lights like Heaven's stairs reflecting on the snow. This sight is so spectacular, so please wipe away the tears for I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ again this year. I hear the many Christmas songs that people hold so dear, but the sounds of music can't compare with the Christmas choir up here. I have no words to tell you the joy their voices bring, for it is beyond description to hear the angels sing. I know how much you miss me; I see the pain in your heart, but I am not so far away. We really aren't apart.*

*So be happy for me, dear one; you know I hold you dear. And be glad I'm spending Christmas with Jesus Christ again this year. I send you each a special gift from my heavenly home above. I send you each a memory of my undying love. After all, love is a gift more precious than pure gold. It was always most important in the stories Jesus told. Please love and keep each other as our Father said to do. For I can't count the many blessings or love He has for each of you.*

*So have a Merry Christmas and wipe away that tear.  
Remember that I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ again this year."*



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Thanks to  
Jim Richardson for these  
pictures of LMPC this  
fall.

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## Marriage Retreat Alert

**SAVE THE DATE: COUPLES 2025 MARRIAGE RETREAT IS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 7-9<sup>TH</sup>  
AT THE WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS RETREAT CENTER.**

The Retreat Center is located in the foothills of the Allegheny mountains near the town of Bedford, Pennsylvania. The actual address is 4500 Milligans Cove Road, Manns Choice, Pa 15550, if you care to look at the map. For more information about the property and activities available at the center, please go to [whitesulphursprings.org](http://whitesulphursprings.org). I can envision some people fishing, canoeing, rocking on the front porch, hiking, and maybe ziplining??? Or, how about a drive around Bedford for many other interesting things to do in/around Bedford, which are also outlined on this site.

Total cost of the retreat, per couple, is \$440. LMCPC will subsidize each couple by \$150, making the cost to each couple \$290. The cost includes the Friday evening meal, all meals on Saturday, and Sunday morning breakfast, as well as overnight accommodations and conference rooms. We are staying in the Heritage House. You can look at the rooms on the website, as well.

Pastor Laura Bulger, of the Orrtanna Good News Church, is preparing our program...more to come on that topic in the next month or so. Our itinerary will be similar to past years, with sessions Friday night and Saturday morning, a block of time on Saturday afternoon to relax or explore, and Sunday morning worship and communion.

Here are a few pictures taken from their website to entice you to come out for this annual event:

View of the property



Heritage House



^  
Upcoming  
in

MARCH

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Due to the Lend-A-Hand Mission trip to North Carolina during the week of November 17th (which will involve a number of active Elders) the date for the November session meeting was changed to November 26th. Therefore, the information from the session meeting was not available in time to be included in this December issue of the Lil Ripples. In order to make that information available to the readers of this publication, the *FROM THE CLERK'S DESK* column will be published and distributed as a *DECEMBER EXTRA* after the session meeting takes place on the 26th .



### A Joyful Celebration

On November 10th, the LMCC family participated in a joyful celebration as **Bradley and Katelyn Stephens** became members of our church. In addition, their infant daughter **Evelyn Mikana Stephens** was baptized by Pastor Mark. Katelyn is the daughter of Clerk of Session Dana McDonald and her husband Mike.

Dana said, *"Evelyn had her 3 great-grandmothers, 2 great-grandfather's, all 4 grandparents plus 2 step grandparents, 2 uncles, 2 aunts, 1 cousin and many friends in attendance a church today!!"*

How great is that?

**A very heartfelt welcome to this young family.**



### My Brother

We had a temporary pastor here at LMCCP many years ago who, after a service, addressed me and others by saying *"Peace my bother or Blessings my brother."* I knew of no one else using that expression at the time. I liked it when he said that and it got me thinking: I thought about where else I had heard this greeting. I had heard this annually from my best childhood friend, who would send me a Christmas card each year addressed to *"My Brother From Another Mother."* I would always get the card in spite of the fact that my name was not on the envelope. To me this expression acknowledged that we were so very close through the years (since 6 years old), that we actually thought of each other as brothers.

My next connection to the term *"My Brother"* was in a college fraternity, where the complete expression used was *"My Brother in Bond."* This meant that we had taken an oath promising to always be there for any brother who needed our help, and we were.

My current use of this expression has usually been when signing a letter or email as *"Your Brother in Christ."* We may not have had the same Mother, but we do have the same Father in Jesus Christ. This use of *"Your Brother"* reminds us that we both have the same relationship with Christ and are bound by the same pledges and promises with our Lord.

Your Brother in Christ, John (McMann)

Ps: Even though I mentioned just a single gender, of course what I have said applies to both.

**A NEW MISSION PROJECT** is being made available for **January 19 - 25, 2025**. This trip will be to the Tri-City area in Tennessee that was flooded by hurricane Helene. This is a very depressed area in Appalachia with over 200 homes that need major repairs. This trip is sponsored by Appalachia Service Project which has been serving Appalachia for 50 years. Pastor Laura Bulgar and her husband Rob from the Good News Church in Orrtanna will be leading this mission. This trip will be physically taxing (not to deter you) but the need is so great! **We must let Pastor Laura know of our intent by December 1<sup>st</sup>. Please contact Bev Benner 717-398-9933 ASAP if you are interested.** Funds for attending will be paid by the Mission Endowment Fund. Thanks for your prayerful consideration.

### Story of My Faith

All too often, we adults forget the impact of early religious education on our young and the important role that youth play in spreading God's word. My own faith in today's youth was restored and my own faith in Christianity was strengthened when some of the high school students I taught spoke of their beliefs in class or wrote of them in compositions. Periodically, a small group of pupils gathered around the school's flag pole at 7:10 a.m. to join hands and pray together. And as much as I, as a retired teacher, try to live a Christian life by recognizing the courageous acts of teens or continue promoting their accomplishments in adulthood, I was humbled by their testimony when they verbally or in writing bore witness to the Lord in front of their classmates. For example, some of my students included these comments in their compositions and even read them aloud to the rest of the class; to me, a true act of courage:

*My advice to incoming ninth graders next year is to always do your homework, stay on your walk with Christianity, and read your Bible as often as you can.*

*My most prized possession is probably my hymnal. I take it to choir rehearsal every Thursday night and to church every Sunday morning. I can't tell you how much I love my church. Singing is my greatest joy and the best place to do it is at my church.*

*I'm a Christian, I believe in God and the church is really important to me. My beliefs make me strong. All the things He made happen in my life and all the miracles He has done for me make my beliefs grow stronger and stronger.*

The irony is that I taught in a public school, not a church school where one would expect to find such testimony. Some years ago, I taught in Ukraine, and I'll always remember the Russian production of Andrew Lloyd Weber's "*Jesus Christ Superstar*" that was performed in Kiev. Teens were packed in the opera house, many of them sitting two on a single chair, crouching in aisles, and hanging off balcony ledges, but they left humming their favorite tunes from the musical. St. Sophia's Cathedral and St. Matthew's Church, also in Kiev, were filled with teens worshiping, lighting candles, and praying silently while sitting in ornately carved wooden pews. Even the city's jewelry stores featured not only gold

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icons, but crucifixes that teens wore to the school where I taught. I saw firsthand that the young in both Ukraine and the U.S. are not afraid to bear witness to the Lord, something that I've personally found so difficult to do, not only because I taught in a public school, but because I was raised in a family that held its beliefs privately and considered them personal. Thus, I stood in awe of my students' outspoken commitment to Christianity and their ability to distinguish celebrity worship from the true heroism of Jesus Christ. So, as we faced this contentious election season and viewed attacks on some candidates' religions, let us pay homage to pastors everywhere and to praise our youth who bravely attest publicly to their faith and commitment to Christ.

When most students wrote of sports heroes, movie stars, and rock groups they wished to emulate, I was amazed at how many students consider Jesus Christ their personal "hero" and cited good reasons for their belief:

*I enjoy going to church. It makes me feel better inside after I have gone. My beliefs made me stronger when my mom died because I know that someday, I will see her again. Lots of things puzzle me. I don't know why my mom had to die, and now my life, which was perfect, is all messed up. I don't know why bad things happen to good people, but I worship God and I call upon Him when life is very hard to handle, and sometimes, I just sit and admire all the work of God. I look up and see the blue clouds and above is God.*

*Jesus was very courageous because He came to earth to die for a people he knew would not listen. He knew he would endure. He was beaten, flogged, and devoted to his Father, God. He did everything for the glory of His Father, and nothing for himself. He was also authoritative. He motivated a few people from all walks of life to follow and listen to Him. He had a great following of disciples and was able to make people do anything He asked at any time. Jesus is still the greatest hero that ever was.*

*Jesus was to be admired for his selflessness. He died without even trying to defend himself. He was silent, like a lamb being led to slaughter. He died for our sins, and He'd never even met any of us. He was a man of exceptional wisdom and extraordinary ability. He had power because he rose from the dead. I also believe that Jesus died for me, which shows inexplicable love, another quality which I admire and consider heroic.*

As one of my students wrote and read aloud in class, "Jesus Christ made sacrifices for a higher purpose; He saved people, benefitted society, improved the lives of children, molded others into greatness, played a positive role, and still possesses the greatest love of all, for people everywhere." Thanks to my students, I am still inspired to "bear witness to my beliefs," and I've personally become a stronger Christian because I listened to them, read their testimonies, and truly believe that they will "inherit the kingdom of heaven."

Kathy Megyeri



*You are cordially invited to our Christmas Cantata  
during the 10:00 service on Sunday, December 15, 2024!*

*"A Thrill of Hope" by Joel Raney  
will be presented by a combination of our  
Glory Singers and Faithful Voices.*

Our singers have worked very hard to present a beautiful musical program for Advent and Christmas.

This inspiring cantata features four sections including :

- ~ A Thrill of Hope*
- ~ A Gift of Love*
- ~ A Prayer for Peace*
- ~ A Song of Joy*

Each section contains a medley of some of your favorite carols of this holy season. You can listen for:

- ~ Sing We Now of Christmas*
- ~ Love Came Down at Christmas*
- ~ Let There Be Peace on Earth*
- ~ Oh Holy Night*
- ~ Mary Had a Baby*
- ~ and many more*

Hope to see everyone there for our special program.

*Linda Clark*

*[www.pausetoreadbooks.webs.com](http://www.pausetoreadbooks.webs.com)*



*Serving God By*

DEACONS' INFORMATION

*Serving Others*

**TRANSPORTATION MINISTRY:** Attendees of LMCC having a transportation need should call one of the following drivers directly to arrange for a date, time, and destination. If none of these volunteers can meet your need, please call Al Miller at 717 - 642 - 1574 or 443 - 977 - 9129

**VOLUNTEER DRIVERS:**

Lee &amp; Jean Bentz 717 - 334 - 6064

Susan Nunamaker 717 - 642 - 9646

Sallie Sites 717 - 253 - 0305

Jim Welsh 717 - 377 - 5370.

Len Williams 717 - 642 - 0123

*Go Into All*

MISSION ADVOCATE'S CORNER

*The World***RECENT CORRESPONDENCE****Adams Christian Prison Ministries***From their November 2024 Newsletter:*

**Alpha Program:** As reported in last month's newsletter, ACPM is introducing the Alpha Program to the Adams County Adult Correctional Complex (ACACC). It will be the first of several faith-based programs to be brought into the prison to assist inmates in discovering answers to questions on how to apply God's word in their everyday life. The program will be launched on the weekend of November 22. Prayers are requested for God to use this program in a mighty way. For more information, visit <https://alphausa.org/prisons/>

**Celebration of Grace:** The next "Celebration of Grace" Sunday event will be held on April 27, 2025, the Sunday after Easter. Churches and organizations in Adams County and surrounding counties are invited to save the date. Participant packets will be made available in March 2025.

**Chaplain's Corner:** I was reminded how fragile life can be. Regrettably, I was reminded by the passing of my older brother on October 29, just last month. Here are a few things I reflected on: The **promise** to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. In John 11:25-26, Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies. And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" The **limitations** of this life on earth, James 4:13-14, "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" – yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes." The importance of **family**. 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

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### **Child Evangelism Fellowship of Adams County**

This year's banquet was a hit. We changed venues but everyone enjoyed themselves and wants to come back next year to the same place. Next year we will be moving our banquet to the spring (May 3, 2025). We would like to involve our Good News Club children and their parents in our banquet.

Praise the Lord that He has granted us permission for ALL elementary and both intermediate schools in Adams County.

### **Compassion International**

*Letter (6/19/24) from Hawine:* First of all, let my greeting reach you my beloved and respected friends. How are you? Thanks to the Lord, my family and I are doing well. What about your family? I hope you and your family are safe. Thanks to the Lord who has helped all of us to live safely today. I am attending my college education nicely. Your support has played a great role in my life. Next to God, your support has helped me reach this level. May God bless you more. I am following some programs in the church properly. I am also serving in the church. Please pray for me. I received the money gift that you sent me. I used the money you sent me with my family properly. My family thank you for your support. Please pray God helps me to reach a good level and make you and my family more happy. I have got a lot of benefit from your support. May God Bless you with a long life. May your family bless you all he time. I hope to have the opportunity to meet you in person someday. I received the money gift you sent for my birthday, which amounted to 2519.08 birr in our currency. I used the money to purchase shoes and clothes. Once again, thank you for your generosity. Until we meet again in the next letter, goodbye."

*Letter from Sergio:* "1. Hello, dear sponsors Friends. Let me greet you with a tight hug. I am very grateful for the support you provide me. I want to tell you that I went with my friends to a party at my school one weekend and we had much fun. It was a gala party. I also went with my family to see the dances that are danced in my country. And my family and I went to eat afterwards. I also traveled to the countryside. I like the landscape, animals, and the mountains very much. I also participated in a championship between schools at my school and my school won the first place. Last week, I went to the Bolivar Park with my friends and we had much fun. Then, I felt a bit unwell and had to go home. 2. I would like to ask you to pray for my family, for all the institute's tutors, and for everyone. Let me say goodbye. With a tight hug, your friend Sergio"

### **SAT-7**

*From Dr. Rex Rogers' October 1, 2024 Letter:* Alone in his bedroom in Morocco, Diran's (name changed for safety) eyes were fixed on his television screen. A movie scene of Christ hanging on the cross illuminated the darkness in his heart. "He must know what my suffering feels like," Diran thought. A silent struggle with suicidal thoughts was crippling Diran. Even in a room full of people, he felt completely alone. Diran was suffering through sleepless night after sleepless night. Lies tormented him. Desperate for an escape from his depression and loneliness, he attempted suicide – multiple times. Diran had no one to tell him about the truth of Jesus Christ. *You can meet a truth-seeker in their midnight hour when they have no one to call.* The programming you make possible is a beacon of truth for millions in the Middle East and North Africa. Without you and our SAT-7 family, we couldn't broadcast messages of hope 24/7 for people like Diran.

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Thanks to the Viewer Support Team, viewers have someone who will listen to them, pray for them, walk through their questions, and point them to Christ – every hour of the day. For Diran, this opportunity to connect one-on-one changed his life for eternity...

Diran couldn't shake the scene of Jesus dying on the cross. Hungry for truth, he tuned in to more SAT-7 programming, listening to story after story in his language from people whose lives were transformed by an encounter with the Holy Spirit. He wanted the freedom, peace, and joy radiating from the faces of these new Christians.

Burning with questions and longing to share his deep struggles with someone, Diran sent our Viewer Support Team a message. An understanding team member spent time sharing the Good News and praying with Diran, inviting him to enjoy a loving relationship with Jesus by receiving Him into his heart. Desperate for hope that doesn't fade at the end of the day, Diran devoted his life to Jesus. "After giving my life to Christ, I slept soundly for the first time in years!" Diran says, "I feel as if some dryness in my heart has been quenched."

All Diran needed to find freedom from lies and healing for the darkness in his soul was someone to personally tell him about the redeeming love of Jesus – an opportunity he otherwise may never have experienced. In most regions of the Middle East and North Africa, Christians make up a meager 1% of the population. It's rare for a truth-seeker to personally connect with a Christian and hear the Gospel one-on-one.

### MISSIONARY UPDATES

#### **Thomas and Cheri Henry (One Another Ministries)**

From their September/October 2024 Newsletter:

##### **Romania:**

We spent five years developing the marriage ministry team in Romania. Ten couples are now trained and facilitating the Relational Skills Intensive for Couples, and several more are in training. It is a joy to watch them lead these intensives among missionaries and national leaders, strengthening marriages to equip people for ministry. ...

Romanian Marriage Facilitators say thank you: We are grateful for you who responded to our plea to consider donating as a special project toward the Relational Skills Intensive in Romania. Your gifts allowed us the extra funds needed to meet in a Christian Retreat Center in the mountains outside the city where most of them live. It makes all the difference for couples to get away from the distractions of home, children, ministry, and work, to focus on their marriages. ...

##### **Nairobi, Kenya:**

At the time the newsletter was written, Thomas and Cheri were headed to Nairobi to attend the Global Member Care Consultation. It was Thomas' first time in Africa (except Cairo). Held every three years in a different region of the world, the conference advocates for skilled, holistic care of international and national workers around the globe. They were primarily representing One Another Ministries. Since the team is being rebuilt, they were raising new awareness of what they have to offer. For them personally they were networking to better collaborate with other organizations in making available the Relational Skills Intensive for couples or singles.

The first week in November, the White House Team hosted the One Another Ministries annual board/staff retreat and met their new international Director. They report being excited about their choice and hopeful for their future

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**Dori Hjalmarson, PCUSA Mission Co-Worker (Honduras)**



From her Winter 2024 Letter:

As I walked through the gloam of the cultural center's garden one evening the last week of October, ... I came upon a fountain surrounded by coffins, and I got a little jolt as I looked inside and saw myself reflected in a mirror.

It was a few days after Reformation Day, ... We had already spent a few days doing our own Protestant reflection on the generations who had come before and, in our own way, invited the past into the present, and dreamed about the future.

The Mexican Communion is young, only 12 years old, and its leaders had joked with us about the denomination entering its tempestuous adolescence. Membership and money are perpetual worries. Young pastors have a passion and vision for ministry but often face reticent and complacent congregations who cling to "the way things used to be." Congregations that were growing in numbers and vitality before the COVID-19 pandemic seem to have fallen into an abyss - "We never came back from Zoom church," more than one leader told us. Yet some communities continue online or in secular spaces and seem to have formed their own ways of being "church" without four walls and a regular Sunday meeting.

Sometimes it feels as though we are staring at ourselves in our own coffins. But there is always the hope of reformation and resurrection. Leslie and I visited a lodging house in Mexico City, a secular program funded by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and run by a Lutheran pastor originally from El Salvador. The Rev. Miguel Solórzano fervently explained the philosophy of the lodging program for people migrating through Mexico in many cases waiting for months or years for appointments to request asylum or refuge in the United States.

"Human mobility is not a phenomenon or a problem," Pastor Miguel told us. Human mobility has been the human condition since the beginning of time, and it is our human institutions - geopolitical states - that limit and punish migration. Pastor Miguel insisted that the lodging program not be called a "shelter" - a word that in both Spanish and English evokes an overcrowded place of anonymity and scarcity. The lodging house seeks to resurrect a sense of family autonomy and communal unity by establishing healthy boundaries and providing a space of dignity and respect. And it is not a church, but many of its staff and volunteers—a new college graduate from the U.S., a Presbyterian pastor, and graduate student in her 30s from Mexico, a Lutheran pastor from El Salvador—are passionately enacting their call to be reformers and resurrectors in the world.

As we reflect on this time of remembrance of generations past, together with our anxious unknown future, we wonder what walls we are imagining to contain our reflections: The walls of a coffin, or the walls of a church?

**Kristi and Bob Rise, PCUSA Mission Co-Workers (South Sudan)**

*From their Winter 2024 Letter:*

Seven years ago, I joined the faculty of Nile Theological College (NTC). I was warmly welcomed into this family of faith and scholarship by Rev. Santino Odong Othol, the principal of the college at that time. I remember my first day coming to see Rev. Santino in his office as he welcomed me, politely and kindly saying “fagdahl.” I asked him what it meant. He said, “Oh, you have not heard that word yet? It means ‘welcome’ in Arabic.” This was the beginning of many wonderful conversations and shared times of learning, laughter, eating together, mutual encouragement, and prayer. I vividly remember the afternoon when Reverend Santino, Reverend Michael Aban and members of the faculty and staff of NTC came to visit me in our home and pray for me. By God’s grace, the following February I began teaching. The two courses I taught were Early Church History and Contextual Theology. My students were eager to learn and the teaching/learning journey from that time forward has been robust, memorable, and transformative. The joy of learning and the joy of discovery are two gifts I have witnessed over the last several years.



... I have learned many things over the last seven years through my service at Nile Theological College. First, I have learned that I love learning, and that I love teaching. I have thoroughly enjoyed course preparation and being in the classroom with students. I have done everything in my power to show dignity to each student and to communicate love to them. I have always been prepared to teach, and I have prayed and trusted the Holy Spirit to lead me and to give me the mental and physical strength needed. At times I have had to be creative, especially when I was feeling physically weak. I would break the class into small groups and allow them to discuss questions amongst themselves with my attentive ear close at hand. I have also learned that I love being part of a learning community and being part of a team (faculty/staff).

Stepping away from Nile Theological College has been one of the hardest things I have done in a very long time. Truly, it is the end of an era. At the end of the seventh semester of our seniors in May, I almost broke down in tears as I told my students that this would be my final semester teaching at the college. Even now, I miss my students and I have missed being part of the faculty. Yet, I know it was the right time to step away and that God is revealing His plan.

On a related note, Kristi and I will be transitioning from our role in South Sudan next year as our current term comes to an end in June 2025. We feel that God is leading us in a new direction, and we hope and pray to continue serving on the great continent of Africa. We welcome your prayers during this season of discernment and transition and as we continue to stay engaged in ministry with our partners in South Sudan.

We want to again thank you for your unswerving commitment to us through prayer and financial gifts. We could not be in South Sudan without you! May God bless you during these uncertain, anxious times, and may the Spirit of God come upon us all, that we may fully lean into the goodness and mercy of our gracious and loving God, expressed most perfectly in the Person of Jesus Christ (John 12: 44 – 45).

**Ryan and Alethia White, PCUSA Mission Co-Workers (Northern and Central Europe)**

From their Winter 2024 letter:



As I write this, the election in the U.S. is yet to happen. By the time you read it, the outcome will be known. For some this will bring hope and for others disappointment. As I rode my bike through the city recently, I thought about the vibrancy of the world, literally vibrating it seems sometimes, and how it seems we all carry varying states of hope or perhaps tip toward hopelessness at times. Some of us are wrapped up in the wars that affect family and friends. Some of us may hope the results of an election might bring change. Some feel that hope is a lost cause.

I, personally, swing between the two like a clock pendulum, wishing to stay on the side of hope, inevitably some mechanism pulls me back. Perhaps it's the desire not to be disappointed. I avoid the term pessimism and prefer a healthy dose of realism instead, refusing to be too wrapped up in outcomes I cannot change even as I invest time and energy in trying to do just that in seemingly small ways.

Christmas is coming. That's supposed to be a season of hope in the church. I find that hard to match sometimes with the world around. I find that especially hard the last couple of years when so many have died in the place where the church, along with others, claim their origins. Too much of the world stays silent on this. Hope could also be that voices carry and land like lightning, sparking some sort of shift in the global atmosphere. One can hope.

In the midst of all of that, our family sends you greetings from Berlin where we are preparing to welcome the holidays and enjoy the focus on Advent here in this culture. It's a dark time of year this far north, a time that many struggle to cope with as we wait impatiently for more daylight, but there is enough spark to remind us that there is still reason to hope.

**Christian and Rayan Weaner (TeachBeyond – Dakar Academy, Dakar, Senegal - West Africa)**

It feels like so much has happened since our last newsletter! This past month has been both very busy and fun, and every day we are reminded of just how grateful we are to be here.

We hope each of you are enjoying the fall season because we are slightly jealous of all of the pictures we have seen of the beautiful fall foliage and cooler weather. Funny enough, the seasons here are almost opposite, so while it is getting cooler back in the states, it is actually getting warmer in Senegal. October is the hottest month, but we have been told that the end of November and December might bring down the temperature to a brisk 75 degrees!

With that said, here are some highlights and photos from this past month!



In Senegal, we don't have pumpkins. So, instead we carve watermelons! This was a fun event that we participated in with our TeachBeyond team here at Dakar Academy that helped us feel a little more at home during this "fall" season in Dakar.

If you would have told us four years ago that the Lord would lead us here today to West Africa, we would have never believed you. The Lord has grown us in ways we could have never imagined!

We also had the opportunity this month to meet a missions team from South Carolina, who came to lead a time of worship and small group sessions for our staff. It was so fun to connect with some fellow southerners and have a taste of America for a few days. The time spent getting to know the team was so encouraging, and it reminded us once again that this is exactly where the Lord has ordained for us to be.

Please continue keeping us in your prayer as we are still adjusting to our new life here and learning how to balance all that is happening around us. Over the past few months, we have watched family members and friends bear some difficult things, and it has been tough to be far away in distance in those moments. We are grateful to know that while we feel far away at times, the Lord is near to us and those we love.

Though days can feel long and tiring with the heat and the battle of learning language, the laughter we share with the students, the memories we are making with new friends, and the way the Lord is working in our hearts make it all so worth it. Whether we are playing in intramural sports tournaments with other students/staff, spending the afternoons working/grading, or learning to be patient with ourselves as we take on so many new things, we see the Lord's hand and grace through it all!

Lastly, as the election in the U.S. gets closer, please know that we are praying for each of you and for our country. When the South Carolina team was here, their pastor, Ryan, preached on Revelations 7, which says:

"There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"

While there may be uncertainty in the days ahead as we elect a new president, we have been encouraged that, as believers, our hope does not and will not rely on our political leaders.

In his sermon, pastor Ryan reminded us that we often forget that our goal in life is not ultimately forgiveness or even Heaven itself, but that it is the reality of Revelation chapter 7 — being reconciled to our Father who is at the center of the throne. No matter what, we can rejoice in knowing that in the midst of the uncertainties of this life, one thing is for certain—that one day, as children of God, we all will be singing together with every nation and every tongue the words: "Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

All our love, Christian and Rayan Weaner

### **Stories of Hope and Healing**

Shared by Bob and Kristi Rice

We sat with five women from Eden church in Juba, engrossed as the women shared their experiences of war. At one point they tried to demonstrate the challenge of fleeing from war with their children, showing how they would tie the smallest child on their back with their 'lawa' or outer garment, then other children would hold onto their mother's skirt or hands. Then running, trying to find safety when people are being killed around them. Emily, a student at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, visited South Sudan in June to learn how people are finding hope and healing after periods of conflict and trauma. She asked these women at Eden church to share a story that showed the impact of the war on their lives or communities.

Continued on the next page . . .



### **"Martha"**

Martha\* was in Juba when civil war broke out in 2013, and she shared the horror of seeing people killed in her neighborhood and of her community being targeted. She and her children joined a group of people who fled Juba on foot, walking for weeks toward the north, until they ended up in a camp near Khartoum. Ten years later, when war broke out in Sudan, she prepared to return to South Sudan. But her children, older now but still traumatized by the war that they fled in 2013 in South Sudan, refused to return with her. They fled instead to Libya and Egypt, and Martha now mourns that they are suffering there, and she may never see them again.

#### **Small Group Interviews**

Lologo neighborhood, Juba

In a small group interview at a church in the Lologo neighborhood of Juba, Ogud shared how his father was killed in the war when he was a child, and others in his family instilled in him the idea that it was his responsibility to avenge the death of his father by killing someone from the group responsible for his death.

Mary described jumping into their 'holes' as a child whenever they heard the Antonov bomber planes overhead, and how scared and alone she felt. Over nine years of these frequent attacks, she thought this way of life was normal since everyone in her community had the same experience.

Each person in the group expressed their hopes for South Sudan before independence came – that there would be security and freedom of movement, jobs, free school for the children and medical care. When none of that materialized, they felt disillusioned and let down.

When each group was asked what gave them hope and whether they had any stories of healing, Ogud shared how the Word of God has helped him, particularly a sermon he heard in church about forgiveness that included a story about someone in Rwanda who lost all his family and forgave them. Ogud thought, "Could I also do that?" He felt like he was chained in a hole. Now he feels light.

"Forgiveness is freedom," he says, and he encourages others to break the cycle of revenge and violence that is fueling local conflicts. Mary described attending a Healing Hearts Transforming Nations workshop in Rwanda and how emotional and healing it was to be able to share some of the pain from her childhood with someone and then give over the pain to Jesus.

The women at the Eden church said that they gather twice a week to sing, encourage each other, and pray. "Singing together and the Word of God makes us strong," they said. The Eden congregation recently started a primary school, and they keep fees low or free for those who cannot afford them. The women expressed how comforting it is for them that their children can learn and get a meal at the school. The ongoing economic crisis in South Sudan and the lack of employment means that getting food is a daily struggle. The women said that just being able to share their stories relieved the pain.

*\*Name changed for confidentiality*



### A SEASON OF GIVING

As members of the Interpretation and Stewardship Team we are very often talking to you about giving. Giving of your money, time and talents is important for the continuation of our church, but let's change our perspective during this Advent Season.

God gave us THE most amazing gift, in his son Jesus Christ that Christmas oh so long ago. In fact, everything we have and are, is a complete gift from God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. So we challenge you during this season of giving to give not only materially but with your heart and mind by showing love to all around you. Be a little bold and share about the hope that Jesus brings to the world. Proverbs 15:1 states: "*A soft answer turns away anger.*" When we get busy and stressed this holiday season try to remember that and watch how Jesus shines in the darkness. Jesus showed a better way to live and we can challenge each other to follow him each and every day. This can be our gift to the community around us.

***"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."***

**John 1:5**

The Interpretation and Stewardship Team wishes each and everyone of you a  
*Blessed and Merry Christmas*  
filled with light, joy and peace found in our Lord Jesus Christ.

# FINANCIAL HEALTH UPDATE – OCTOBER 2024

## Church Operating Fund Income

Account Description	October—2024	Year-to-Date 2024	2024 Budget
Offering Income	\$15,414.00	\$234,627.41	\$262,571.00
Other Income	\$3,820.00	\$45,779.76	\$63,415.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$19,234.00</b>	<b>\$280,407.17</b>	<b>\$325,986.00</b>
<b>Church Operating Fund Expenses</b>			
Spiritual Life	-\$393.91	\$2,484.23	\$14,750.00
Education & Nurture	\$0.00	\$26.40	\$3,400.00
Interpretation & Stewardship	\$187.99	\$5,335.99	\$5,648.00
Home Ministry	\$2,748.47	\$44,571.86	\$87,100.00
Church Administration	\$16,531.33	\$167,875.03	\$215,088.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$19,073.88</b>	<b>\$220,293.51</b>	<b>\$325,986.00</b>
<b>INCOME minus EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$160.12</b>	<b>\$60,113.66</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

**Church Operating Fund Checking Account Balance as of 10/31/2024: \$109,758.18**

## Mission Opportunities/Missionaries Fund Income

Account Description	September— 2024	Year-to-Date 2024	2024 Budget
Offering Income	\$2,863.00	\$76,273.06	\$91,200.00
Other Income	\$87.42	\$1,904.76	\$500.00
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$2,950.42</b>	<b>\$78,177.82</b>	<b>\$91,700.00</b>

## Mission Opportunities/Missionaries Fund Expenses

<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$492.49</b>	\$76,021.37	\$91,700.00
<b>INCOME minus EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$2,457.93</b>	<b>\$2,156.45</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

**Missions Checking Account Balance as of 10/31/2024: \$4,310.70**

**Notable expenses for October: Funds to reimburse funeral reception & other activity expenses for Deacons in the Spiritual Life Team budget have exceeded actual expenses resulting in a credit balance for the month.**

Lower Marsh Creek Presbyterian Church

1865 Knoxlyn Road

Gettysburg, PA 17325

*Li'l Ripples*    December 2024



Pastor

Rev. Dr. Mark Englund - Krieger



Sunday Morning Worship

Sunday School 9:00 - 9:45 AM

Worship Service 10:00 - 11:00 AM

Nursery 9:00 - 11:00 AM

Christmas Eve 7:00 PM and 9:00 PM

Church office Hours

Monday - Friday 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Phone Number 717-642-5332

Email Address - [office@lmcpc.org](mailto:office@lmcpc.org)

Website - [www.lmcpc.org](http://www.lmcpc.org)

Lower Marsh Creek Presbyterian Church Mission Statement

To glorify God, deepen and enrich the spiritual life of the family of believers,  
and reach out to the community with the love of Jesus Christ.

*Li'l Ripples* - Fay Hess, Editor - 77-476-5682 or [lilripples@gmail.com](mailto:lilripples@gmail.com)