

Grace United Methodist Church
NEWSLETTER
January / February 2021

A Word About Our Future....

January has come, and the sanctuary looks and feels very different. The walls are bare; the altar area stripped of its trees and lights and poinsettias. The banners adorning the walls - proclaiming the coming of our King and Lord - are rolled up and packed away for another year. The sanctuary remains empty and dark - void of the worshippers who once gathered here. The classrooms lie silent - longing for the sounds of children, and the scampering of feet. Even the coffeepot is unplugged - its regular use no longer needed. The offices are empty, the calendar bare. What has become of the place that we have for so long come - desiring to be gathered; to connect with each other; to be challenged; to give back to our communities through service; to grow our faith in? What has happened to the church - to the place where God is, or was, or at least - seemed to be, for so many years? Never (at least in the foreseeable memory of the church), has there been a time such as this.

So, what will become of our beloved church? It is a question that has crossed my heart so many times this past year. Can a fish survive out of water? If so, for how long? And at what cost? Will we survive this season of fallow in our lives, and in the life of our church?

I can only imagine the shock of the people when Moses came down from Mt Sinai and shared with them God's decrees for caring for the land that they were about to take possession of. Recorded in the Book of Leviticus (also known as the Book of the Law), Chapter 25 contains some interesting stipulations for caring for the land, and the people who were stewards of all that God had entrusted them with. And one of those stipulations was to observe a "fallow year" every seven years - in which there was to be no tilling, or planting, or harvesting, or reaping. It was to be a Sabbath to its Creator - a year of rest for the land, and its caretakers - in order that it might continue to produce a bountiful harvest for generations.

"And what about us?" they must have cried. "How will we feed our families, and care for our households?" "How will we survive?"

Moses' answer to them was the same as it is to us today - "God will provide."

And so God has. It has been nearly a year of living under the threat of Covid-19. It has been nearly a year of quarantining and isolation; of social distancing, and living with less than usual. And in that year, we have stepped up to provide out of our abundance the necessary food and clothing and basic necessities for those that lacked them. We have worked to encourage each other in ways that we had forgotten, and to make sure that those around us remained safe. We have taken the time to re-connect with our families, our loved ones, and our spouses - sharing quality time, and eating meals together. We have slowed down

the pace of our living, and have taken time to rest and reflect on what is truly important in life.

A year of fallow. A year of rest. A year of depending more on God that we have been used to. A year of difficulties. A year of loss. A year of facing the unknown. But through it all, God has again proved His faithfulness. This past year was nothing like we could have ever imagined. But I trust that we will come out the other side stronger, and with a renewed faith and dependence on our God.

I was reminded of a quote from Gene Krantz, flight Director of Mission Control for the ill-fated Apollo 13 Mission, who said, "Some believe that this mission will be a blemish on our record. But I believe that it will prove to be our finest hour."

No matter what season we find ourselves in - whether it be a season of seed-time and harvest, a season of feasting, or a season of fallow - I trust that God is working ALL things together for our good - even when we cannot see it, or recognize it.

No matter how long it takes, we WILL return safely to our church building, and we WILL resume worshipping together, and we WILL carry on the mission and ministry that so many have come to love, to appreciate, and to depend on - because we ARE a part of the church of Jesus Christ, and the gates of Hell will never overcome it.

May this prove to our finest hour, indeed!

Your un-wavering pastor,
Pastor Alan

Those who are currently facing challenges, or are in need of our ongoing prayers:

President-elect Joe Biden - for wisdom to deal with the challenges that lay before our country, and courage to face his critics.

Family of Ken Cooper
Family of Pastor Rich Berg
Family of Dharlys Troutman
Family of Mike Oxenrider
Family of Shirley Hooper
Family of Julia Kramer

The women and staff of SCI-Muncy - Mass Covid infection
Jeffrey Kissinger and family- is autistic, has Covid and on a ventilator
Brooke Jury and family - diagnosed with a brain tumor
Beth Spicher - cataract surgery gone awry
Beth Spicher's sister - covid

Kim Petrovich - Young woman hospitalized with Covid
Marsha Troutman - Diagnosed with ALS
Leeane Etzweiler - Young woman with asthma, diagnosed with Covid
Diana Paul - recovering from Covid infection
Angela Seebaugh - breast cancer
Dana Foltz - continued recovery from brain tumor and surgery
Pat Nissel - Ongoing health challenges
Jim Coyle - rotator cuff / shoulder injury
Nancy Coyle - responding well to arthritis injections
Jim Hockenstein - colon cancer
Baby Simon Campbell - heart and health problems
Marsha Michael - cancer and Kidney disease
Larry Paul - awaiting a lung transplant
Brad White - continued recovery from brain injury
Bradley Deitrich - Health and life challenges
Colleen Kerber - young mother battling cancer
Bob Snyder - continuing throat and voice issues, degenerative disc /back pain
Cathy Atchison - kidney disease and other health challenges
Blanche Nice - ongoing health challenges
Janet Zuver – health and life challenges
Janet Rush - spinal tumor
John Haines - Back pain, having tests
Robin Davis' sister Sherry - diagnosed with blood cancer
Robin Davis' sister - undiagnosed illness
Jeff Stroecker - Mystery illness affecting his heart's ability to work properly
Kathy Siegfried - health problems
Kim Sitlinger - health concerns

CONGRATULATIONS !!!!

Congratulations to Allison Schade and Brice Leffler on the birth of their son Morgan Dillon Leffler. He was born on December 18, 2020 at 4:37 am. He weighed 6 lbs. 3 oz. and was 19 in. long.

Congratulations to Mike and Jess Mauser on the birth of their son, Hudson James Mauser, born on December 8th, weighing 7 lbs 11 oz and 19.5 inches long. Proud grandparents are Jim and Pam Mauser.



With UMCOR's move to assisting folks domestically, Mission Central continues to follow our mission (*connecting God's resources with human need*) locally, nationally and internationally. Mission Central's commitment to international assistance is paramount and our, collective, aid creates stronger

families, assists in the fight against global poverty and supports others as they raise their children, educate them and work toward a better and brighter future.

This year's pandemic brought challenges to our global partnerships but we were thrilled to be able to support over 75,000 people with over \$790,000 in resources in this trying year. Many of the areas that were assisted include: Zimbabwe, Congo, Romania, Ghana, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Liberia, Kenya, Romania and Sierra Leone, among others. These countries received a great deal of medical supplies, Bibles and devotionals, materials for school students, toys, bikes as well as Mission Central Care Kits, Mission Central Activity Kits and Mission Central Baby Kits.

You have probably seen pictures and stories on our social media pages throughout the year. This will continue in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Thank you for your support... and thank you for allowing Mission Central to be of assistance locally, nationally and across the globe.

Thank You !!!! Notes

Thank you, Grace Church family. Thank you for your prayers, your cards, and your acts of kindness during Pickle's health trials and since his passing. He fought for four and a half years and in the end, it was his decision to stop all medications and treatments and to come home from the hospital. His journey on earth ended October 11, 2020 and he is now rejoicing in Heaven.

Jane Hepner, Tiffany Caudle and Brian Hepner

Thank you for all your notes of support, and your cards of encouragement throughout this past year, as we have sought to navigate these unprecedented times together.

Pastor Alan and Cathy Atchison

Hearts of Grace Food Ministry - We hope you and your family had a wonderful Christmas. We wish you all a very happy New Year. We pray that this ministry will continue to grow and be blessed in 2021.

Foodbox update: The next distribution will be January 28th from 5:00 - 5:30pm. We will continue to do curbside distribution for at least 34 families. **Jiffy Pack update:** We have been working with the school to determine how to proceed with getting food to our students if the schools are mandated to close down - PRAYER helps! As always, we crave your prayers for both these ministries and truly appreciate your continued support. If you have any questions or know of a family that could use some help, talk to a team member: Deb Goudy, Terry & Carol Uhler, Beth Spicher, Janine Boyer, Diane Nestler, John Ramberger, Shelley Dreibelbis, Debb Bowman, Karen Travitz or Becky Witmer.

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Jan. 2	Rebecca Kolva	Feb. 1	Kristin Ibberson
Jan. 3	John Witmer Jr.; Steven Whary	Feb. 2	Katherine Bolig
Jan. 4	Colt Bellis; Janie Martin	Feb. 3	Ryder Shoop, Ava Shoop
Jan. 5	Natasha Feidt; Karen Fulkroad	Feb. 5	Lisa Osman
Jan. 7	Scott Vallier	Feb. 7	Darla Heyne
Jan. 8	Yonnie Miller; Brian Peiffer; Briana Witmer	Feb. 8	John Ramberger
Jan. 11	Emily Bordner, Joshua Mauser	Feb. 9	Cindy Matter, Lucas Schadel Paul Morris Jr.
Jan. 12	Masen Bellis; Michelle Dreibelbis; Jessica Paul; Zander Underkoffler	Feb. 10	Philip Leer
Jan. 13	Janet Haines	Feb. 11	Abigail Scheib
Jan. 14	Dennis Bowman; Calleigh Hooper	Feb. 12	Bob Tobias
Jan. 15	Matthew Deitrich ; Alyssa Frederick	Feb. 14	Dawn Huntzinger
Jan. 16	Todd Bell; Robin Davis; Beckett Tobias	Feb. 16	Michelle Fulkroad, Kristen Snyder
Jan. 20	Lynne Bolig; Logan Leshko; Joshua Radel	Feb. 17	Aidan Herb, Barbara Shoop
Jan. 22	Zachary Mangle; Brian Miller	Feb. 18	Margaret Bowman
Jan. 23	Wyatt Schaffner	Feb. 19	Dennis Schaffner
Jan. 24	Sandy Snyder	Feb. 20	Lisa Kissinger, Eliska Lower, Ryder Tobias
Jan. 27	Rebekah Brouch	Feb. 21	Sierra Musa, Elizabeth VanOlden
Jan. 28	John Haines	Feb. 22	Kaitlin Fox, Ashlee Wherry
Jan. 29	Malinda Klinger	Feb. 23	Terry Uhler II
Jan. 30	Debb Bowman; Lydia Troutman	Feb. 24	Bradley Deitrich
Jan. 31	Kory Rothermel	Feb. 25	Jan Brosius, Dana Hepner
		Feb. 26	Chuck Fultz
		Feb. 27	Layla Engle, Brianna Rowe
		Feb. 28	Kay Fralick-Matter, Garrett Rowe, Remington Shaffer
		Feb. 29	Kyle Long



...and still going strong !

Jan. 02 - Arlene Wilbert

Jan. 19 - Sylvia Lehman

Jan. 23 - James Wilbert

Happy Anniversary to:

Jan. 20 - Todd & Karen Mace

Feb. 10 - Todd & Trisha Herb

Feb. 16 - Terry & Carol Uhler

Feb. 18 - Ken & Kendra Rudisill

Feb. - Rick & Lisa Osman

If you have praises, prayer requests, announcements or items of interest to share in the MARCH Newsletter please get them to Jane in the church office before Feb 25th.