

# CORNERSTONE

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“THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU AT ST. PAUL’S”

November 2020

St. Paul’s Lutheran Church

Volume 26, Issue 10

## October Newsletter Article

### God’s promise to his people during times of uncertainty

Then Joshua said to the people,  
*“Sanctify yourselves;*



*for tomorrow the LORD  
will do wonders among you.”*  
Joshua 3:5

It has been seven months since that alarming declaration in March that we need to quarantine due to COVID-19, a virus that would come to change our daily way of interacting with each other. Our worship has changed due to physical distancing, use of masks and no singing. Times have certainly changed. Often, we hear lamented “we have not been through this before.” The circumstances of the Israelites described in Joshua 3 were different than our present situation. However, they, like us, found themselves at a crossroad of change. They were at the Jordan river and they needed to cross. They had been wandering in the dessert for 40 years, Moses their beloved leader was dead and now they were entering into new territory. What were they to do?

Over the last six months we have been asking the same question. The Corona Virus pandemic, the upheaval in our society as we are confronted with the divisiveness of racism, protests, looting, rioting and capturing of police officers and others mistreating black and brown bodies on the news and social

media have certainly influenced how we have been experiencing this time. Our journey through this wilderness of chaos, though only six months, feels more like the 40 years that the Israelites wandered in search of the promise land. But the Israelites had hope. God had seen them through their journey and God was preparing them for this moment. Joshua told the Israelites on the eve before that crossing **“Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”** (Joshua 3:5)

Amid our changes, we too have experienced hope. Our hope has been in the tenacity of you, these beautiful congregations that compromise this partnership of servants committed to being God’s hands for the work that God has invited us into. We continue to do our ministries of providing diapers; feeding those in need via supporting foodbanks, handing out prepacked meals and offering pizza parties to those we cannot fellowship with in person. We extended or began new ministries such as our Zoom 3pm services, on-line bible studies, 3pm fellowship hour, and on-line Taizé service. We have cared for each other through phone calls, weekly meetings with our awesome administrative staff who continue to be our frontline face to the community, as well as monthly meetings with the president of councils and the PLUM board. Joshua’s message from God to the Israelites those many years ago also remains God’s message to us today. Embedded in that message is a command and a promise. The command is to sanctify ourselves. In other words, we should prepare ourselves, engage in acts of worship, prayer and sacrifice for others. Those acts of sacrifice may come through a desire to do more as we learn of the social injustices and inequities that our brothers and sisters are facing.

These past seven months have felt like our time of sanctifying ourselves. I for one do not know what God is up to. I, like you, have been sitting in this space of wondering, discerning and listening. To be clear, there is no specific step by step process of what the right way is to sanctify ourselves, but the Israelites understood that meant entering into a posture of openness, readiness and thankfulness for what God was doing and about to do. That takes us to the second part of the message, the promise: *for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.*

Oh, to experience that wonder. This past month I had the opportunity to go on a hike in the Allegheny Forest. The trail was called Minister Valley (the significance of that is another story 😊). I came across this spectacular sight – trees growing on top of boulders. I paused in awe, breathless, what a majestic sight. Both unexpected and unusual to me. After all shouldn't trees be rooted in the ground? But before me God was doing a new thing. A wondrous thing. As I looked closer, I noticed that the symbiotic relationship between trees and rock shifted. They

started out with the rock supporting the trees. But as the trees grew and their roots branched out and became anchored in the soil beneath the rocks, then the branches of the roots began to secure the rocks in place so they would not move due to erosion. They had established a new way of co-existing. All throughout our hike we found this amazing demonstration of God. No, I do not know what God is up to during this season we find ourselves in. But I know whatever it is, the same God who created a new pattern of co-existing between trees and rocks also is engaged in a transformative experience for us. So, let us continue to sanctify ourselves, with eyes, ears and hearts open to the wonder God is doing and will do among us.



Pastor Brenda  
On behalf of the PLUM Pastoral Team

## November 2020 Newsletter Article

Dear Partners in Ministry,

Are you feeling a little overwhelmed? Are you getting excited about the upcoming holiday season with all the decorations, bells, and whistles of Thanksgiving, Kwanza, Hanukkah, Christmas or the numerous family gatherings that are typical during this time of year, or does it just add to the headache of the uncertain future we are all facing? Are we immobilized from the weariness of it all?

As we walk through the ever-changing seasons on our way through mid-fall, we find ourselves approaching the church celebration we call All Saints Sunday. It is a Sunday during which we intentionally remember our friends, family, and loved ones who most often changed our lives forever and have joined the church triumphant. As we are compiling the list of those we have served and cared for in their final season in this life, I am ever mindful of their celebration of life. When I ask the family if there is a preferred scripture they would like include in this celebration, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is the leading choice.

**Psalm 23** (slightly modified for the current times)  
***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 paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, (coronavirus pandemic, physical distancing, face masks, white supremacy, Black Lives Matter, school closures, political upheaval, unemployment, judicial upheaval, health insurance, environmental concerns, pro-choice vs. pro-life, etc.) I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.***

Most people find in these words that were first recorded some 3,000 years ago by a “called” shepherd, turned king named David, who in human

terms is the forefather of our Lord Jesus, to be words of comfort and strength.

I believe this is just what we need today as we face our current time in our present-day valley. In times like these, we tend to forget that we have a God who is in charge. First allow me to rule out the obvious, for the most part we are all living in a bit of a fog. Check out the following tease and the One Minute version, but for a remarkably interesting description, read the full article at the website link noted below.

Covid and culture shock feel the same to your brain — and here's why

by EDITOR on AUGUST 25, 2020

by Peter Olson

We suspect you've been feeling it too. A frustrating sense of 'molasses' clogging your thoughts. A fatigue you just can't seem to shake. Feeling 'tired' or 'worn-out' as you search to journey through normal days that simply don't feel as normal as they should.

As we have both watched and experienced the events of 2020, something has seemed oddly familiar. Every part of life seems to have changed, nearly overnight. Stores are different. Work is different. Interactions with friends and with strangers – it's all different. Yet in a way this scene seems to be a re-run. Because, in a way, it is. This scene is familiar because it mirrors culture shock.

### **The One-Minute Version:**

When someone moves to a completely new culture, many of the 'autopilots' your brain uses for thousands of small decisions every day become ineffective. In a similar way, your current environment has likely changed sufficiently enough that many of your own 'autopilots' are no longer working. When this happens, the next remaining option for your brain is to use a second decision-making process that requires far more effort and energy (glucose) to operate. Your body can only supply glucose to your brain at a certain rate – a rate far below what would be required to use this kind of thinking continually. Thus, additional thinking about routine matters has likely left you with a chronically depleted level of glucose in your brain. All to say: You are experiencing "culture shock".

For the full article please check out this website:

<https://www.alifeoverseas.com/covid-and-culture-shock-feel-the-same-to-your-brain-and-heres-why/>

This article might begin to explain the fog, but to help us with the decision making process during this cloudy and chaotic time, (yes, decisions still need to be made daily, hourly, and at a moment's notice), Christians are assured that God is clearly in charge even if we are not privy to the end result. And as Christians, we are not called to sit idly by without putting our words into action. Remember, it is God's work; "our" hands. Our example is Christ who was motivated by compassion and justice, always taking the side of the oppressed and those who were disenfranchised. Let us be willing to move in that direction as well, despite the fog that immerses us in our current valley, as there is a difference between being a true follower of Christ and just being religious. To be a true follower of Christ requires risk and assurance that God is with us.

In Christ's service,

Pastor John Gropp

**HYGIENE KITS** The Hospitality Committee of Paul's has elected to do an Advent Project. This project is in conjunction with the Rise For Hunger. The Committee will be making hygiene kits. All of the items needed for the kits were purchased with Thrivent Choice Dollars. The monies will provide 25 kits. Each kit must be accompanied by \$10 so the Hospitality Committee is requesting a \$10 donation. This money will be our Advent Folder collection which will begin on Sunday, November 29<sup>th</sup> and end on Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup>. Envelopes will be available for this donation. Help is needed to assemble the kits on November 14, 2020, 10:30 A.M. in Eberle Hall. **Anyone interested in participating must RSVP by November 8, 2020 by email** ([amorrocco1@verizon.net](mailto:amorrocco1@verizon.net)) or telephone call (724-746-5897) to Ann Morrocco. We cannot have more than 20 people present due to the present climate so no will be allowed to participate without the RSVP. Masks are mandatory and the same rules apply that are used for Sunday Services. Everything will be set up by the time everyone arrives. We look forward to having our first event and sharing some fellowship.

# Thanksgiving



Please join the congregations of Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM) for a special on Wednesday, November 25, 2020 at 7 PM via Zoom.



You are invited to a **FREE** Thanksgiving Dinner on November 26, 2020 (Thanksgiving Day). The dinner will be held at the Canonsburg United Presbyterian Church 112 West Pike Street from NOON until 2:00 p.m. It is sponsored by The Greater Canonsburg/Houston Ministerial Association and the Community. **MEALS AVAILABLE FOR TAKE OUT ONLY OR CURBSIDE PICKUP.**

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## What's Happening at Camp Agapé

### Women's Prayer Day Retreat

Saturday November 21, 2020 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Lead by Program Director, Karen Reardon, this event will provide a day of reflection and relaxation. Opportunities will include: Bible Study, hiking and connecting with other women of faith. For this event you are able to customize your experience to your comfort level and needs.

Ages: 18 and up Cost: \$30 per person (Includes: lunch, drinks, snacks, and session materials)

**Registration Deadline: November 16<sup>th</sup>.**

### Kid's Holiday Craft Day Retreat

Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup> 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.  
Program Director, Karen Reardon will be working with the children to create a holiday surprise to bring home to share with the family.

Ages: 5 and up Cost: \$15 per child Parent free (Includes: snacks and supplies)

**Registration Deadline: November 28<sup>th</sup>**

**For more information, or to register email:** [campinfo@campagape.org](mailto:campinfo@campagape.org) or call 724-356-2308



## CANONSBURG HOUSTON TOY CHEST

Registration for the Canonsburg Houston Toy Chest will be taken on Monday and Tuesday, November 23 and 24 from 11:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. at the Canonsburg U.P. Church at 112 West Pike Street. No registration will be accepted after this and no toys will be given to anyone with a registration form. Applicants must reside in the Canonsburg-Houston metropolitan area. Washington resident's (with a zip code of 15301) requesting toys, must contact Christian Outreach for toy information and cannot register at the Toy Chest.

The following information is required when registering for toys: 1. A welfare/health assistance card or underemployed income verification is required (guidelines from Welfare department will be used in determining qualifying incomes). 2. Proof of children between ages of infant through 16 years of age must be shown along with social security number of all family members.

**EVERYONE REGISTRERING FOR THE TOY CHEST MUST WEAR A MASK AT ALL TIMES! NO MASK-NO ADMITTANCE FOR REGISTRATION!**

Registered families will pick up their toys on Saturday, December 12 from 10:00 a.m. - Noon. Instructions for COVID safety pick up will be given at registration. Toys will be prepacked for families based on their pre-registration forms. **A MASK MUST BE WORN!**

For further information please call the church office at 724-745-0800 weekdays between 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**Our mission emphasis** for November is Mission Support. There are envelopes on the tables in the back of the church next to offering plate and also on the Jefferson Avenue entrance on the table. Make sure to put your name and number on the envelope.

## FALL STUDY CLASSES ON ZOOM FOR PLUM

PLUM has begun a 10-week fall series of study, ending with the start of Advent. There are two different sessions each week: **Tuesday (1:00) and Thursday (7:00)**. All are invited to one or both sessions. **It's not too late to join us!**

The Tuesday class focuses on **Scripture Study**. This is not an academic class. It is expected that the discussion will lead us to applying Scripture to current issues of our day.

The Thursday Evening class focuses on a book entitled **"The Color of Compromise,"** by Jemar Tisby. This is a serious look at Racism and, in particular, the Church's participation in the development of Racism and its potential role to overcome it. (Note: You do **not** need the book in order to participate.)

Come, enjoy the company of PLUM, learn, and pray together. The call in line for PLUM Sunday 3 PM worships services and Bible Studies:  
Zoom online: <https://zoom.us/j/401596541>  
Zoom by phone: (646) 876 9923 Meeting ID: 401 596 541



Randy Bell  
Donna Filby  
Zack Nimal

November 20  
November 25  
November 25



Keep in your prayers: Anna Mae, Mark, Albert, Kristin, Jason, Pam, Virginia, Misty, Matthew, Jennifer, Betty Jane, Rich, Rachel, Pat, Donna, Randy, Anna Mae, Eddie, Steve, Barbara, Tom, Charlotte, John, Mark, Kelly, Mike, Carol Jean, the Miller, Paulick, Galano, Burchesky, Mele, Richmond, Porter, McGrail families, all those suffering from the coronavirus, our Bishops, our Synod, our PLUM pastors and members and our church. If anyone needs to be added or deleted, please contact Jill at 724-747-4418 or email [stpaulscbg@verizon.net](mailto:stpaulscbg@verizon.net)



Congratulations to Zachary and Ashley Layton on the birth of their son, Colin Robert Layton. He was born on October 23rd. Congratulations also to Carol Cramer (grandmother) and Bridget Layton (sister). Carol's address is 89 Welsh Road Washington, PA 15301.

# MAKE AN ADVENT WREATH FOR YOUR HOME THIS YEAR!



Let's begin a new tradition in our homes! The PLUM pastoral team welcomes you to a special ZOOM event on November 21, 2020 at 10 am. Vicar Mandy will lead a do-it-yourself class on creating your own Advent wreath. There will be a demonstration of a wreath using fresh greens as well as an artificial wreath. You can be as creative as you wish! Ideas for your wreath:

**Candles-** It is up to you! They can be 3 purple or blue and one pink. You could also place a white Christ candle in the middle. They can be real flame candles or LED candles/tea lights. Don't forget candle holders!

**Wreath Form-** A wire frame form of any size can be purchased at any craft store. There are also advent wreath forms with candle holders already mounted inside. An artificial wreath that is already around your house is a great idea, just take the old decorations off to create a new look.

**Greens-** Any artificial pine bough, or ready-made wreath will work. If you have access to fresh pine branches, cut some of them into six to eight-inch pieces or some size that you can easily work with for your wreath form size. If you are working with loose pieces, don't forget to pick up some craft wire that bends easily to attach the greens onto the wreath form.

**Decorations-** Although the Advent wreaths that we see in church are usually plain, there is no reason why you cannot add small pinecones, a red bow,

holly with berries, or even a dusting of glitter so that your Advent wreath shimmers!

\*Think about where you will place your Advent wreath. Fresh greens will require a place that is a bit cooler in your house to remain as fresh as possible, also you may wish to use a plastic table cloth under the wreath. If you are using real flame candles, be aware of curtains, pets, children and flammable greens, etc. Your Advent wreath should be in a space where it is a reminder of the season, as well as a place where prayer is offered. A small wreath in the middle of the kitchen table is a beautiful way for the whole family to celebrate the Advent Season! Get all the items together to create your Advent Wreath and sign onto ZOOM on November 21 at 10 am. Let's spend some time together as we prepare for the beautiful season of Advent!

Zoom online: <https://zoom.us/j/401596541>

Zoom by phone: (646) 876 9923 Meeting ID: 401 596 541



Please join friends from PLUM for an **ADVENT FAMILY BIBLE STUDY**. The study will begin on December 1, 2020 on ZOOM. The study will be held on Tuesday at 1:00 and Thursday evenings at 7:00. We will explore the meaning behind the four candles of the Advent Wreath: HOPE, FAITH, and JOY AND LOVE.

