



ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE WITH REVS. NICHOLE MAZZA-FREDLEY AND SHARON WATKINS

The Little Harbinger Bethany Memorial Church

March 2021

A BLESSED EASTER TO ALL!

The Pastor's Pen

by Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins

Spring! Maybe I'm a little early, but the days are longer, and my spirit is lighter. The birds are louder, and there are robins. Though a little snow is still on the ground as I write this, the melting has revealed the green shoots of daffodils. Spring is on the way!

For those of us who have continued to isolate during the winter, spring will set us free to connect with more people as we move outdoors. As vaccinations become increasingly widespread (or people live through COVID-19 and gain natural immunity) we will be more comfortable interacting in person with precautions in place. Hopefully, mask-wearing and social distancing will continue enough to stave off

another spike in the virus. Steady wins the race in this case.

In the meantime, we move through the Christian season of Lent. This is a time to open our spirit to the Spirit of God, to prepare for the resurrection of springtime. Lent is meant to be a period of reflection – of naming our own shortcomings before God and seeking to change our ways going forward. The key word for Lent is “repentance.”

Repentance in English is defined as “remorse,” being sorry for what one has done (or left undone.) It is primarily a feeling.

The biblical meaning of repentance, however, is more than a feeling. The Greek word usually translated as repent is “metanoia.” Metanoia connotes

action, specifically the action of turning. In one definition, metanoia means “change in one’s way of life resulting from penitence or spiritual conversion.” Biblically, repentance involves a 180 degree turn in how life is lived. Repentance is active. It is the change that comes when we meet Jesus again, feel regret for unloving ways of life, and begin anew in a more Christ-like direction.

As your eyes and heart are drawn toward spring and the hints of a post-pandemic life on the horizon, let these last days of winter be a time of deep reflection and prayer. Psalm 51: 10 is a helpful prayer for the season: *(next page)*

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”

As we move through these weeks of Lent, what in your life needs to change? If God puts a new and right spirit in you, what would that look like? What repentance would get you going back in the right direction?

With spring comes new energy. Let's prepare our spirits now, through reflection and repentance, to turn our lives in God's direction.

Baggies of ashes await participants in the Disciples student organized "Drive-By/Walk Up" Ash Wednesday service held on the front porch of the church. Noah Gill, BC sophomore, is shown to the right.



Bethany College Disciples and Friends

There's a new student group on campus! With the assistance of Bethany College professor and BMC member, Dr. Debra Hull, Reverend Watkins has been meeting weekly with Disciples (and friends) students. These students came up with the idea of a Drive-By/Walk-Up Ash Wednesday service and are planning an event for Palm Sunday at the labyrinth. Shown below (from left to right) are Marci Mezza-Fredley, Karley Trinidad, Haddae and Kaylie Allen, Noah Gill, and Geoffrey Foster. They are also planning an ultimate Frisbee event at the Park this coming Spring.



Stewardship Report - and Celebration!

by Jan Forsty

Our stewardship campaign theme last fall was “Faithful, Hopeful, Loving.” Wow, did you come through!

Despite pandemic isolation and concerns, the BMC community faithfully, hopefully, and lovingly took stock of God’s generosity with us and was led to be generous in return. Our pledges to program, building and outreach for 2021 are 20% higher than 2020. Praise God! This includes a net increase of one pledging unit for the year.

Additionally, at the end of 2020 we received several offerings from visitors or distant members meant to contribute to this year’s ministries.

As you know, our ministry at BMC is supported in part through the ongoing generosity of

members past who set up their estate in such a way that their stewardship would continue long after their earthly life. We are grateful especially to Forrest Kirkpatrick in this regard. We couldn’t do what we do without his foresight and provision.

It is also true, however, that we could not do what we do without the current membership – giving to the max in time and talent to make our congregation a loving witness in this place. And giving money to support our ministry and mission.

Faithful, hopeful, loving. Bethany Memorial Church. That pretty well sums it up! Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

It’s Time for Easter Lily Orders

We invite you to order an Easter Lily (or Lilies) to honor or memorialize a loved one during this Easter season. The sanctuary will be decorated with lilies on Easter morning, and you are welcome to pick up your lily at that point in time. If you cannot, we will make sure that your lily goes to someone in the community who will appreciate having it in their home.

The cost is \$12.50 per lily. Orders must be in by March 24. You can send a note and check to the church (PO Box 149, Bethany 26032) or order through the church web page (bmcwv.org). If you pay online, please send a note to the church

(bethanymemorialchurch@bethanywv.org)

Indicating who you wish to honor or memorialize.



In the Bulb There is a Flower

by Sydma Hatzopoulos



On the Saturday before Ash Wednesday, members of the Worship Department met to put together “Lenten Bags” for local BMC members and friends. Each bag contained six scriptures and six small items to use for focusing individual or family meditations each week during the season of Lent. Among other items included was a paperwhite bulb, a jar of pebbles and directions for “planting.”

Participants were invited plant the bulb and spend the season reflecting on the miracle of hope and transformation that comes with the promise of Easter. Suggested questions to ask oneself while observing the changes to the bulb were: Where is hope in my life? Where is mystery? What transformation do I hope for during this season of Lent?”

In the three weeks since Lent began, some folks report their bulbs have already bloomed, some (such as that of Kerry Shaulis as shown to the left) are close to blooming, and others are taking their sweet time. Roots spread down through the pebbles, perhaps providing us with another lesson of Lent.

I can’t help but be reminded of one of my favorite hymns, “In the Bulb There is a Flower” written by Natalie Sleeth and published in 1986. She wrote the words during a time she was “pondering the ideas of life, death, spring and winter, Good Friday and Easter, and the whole reawakening of the world that happens every spring.” Her inspiration came from a poem (Four Quartets) by T.S. Eliot which begins with the line “In my beginning is my end” and ends with “In my end is my beginning.”

If you are familiar with the hymn, “In the Bulb There is a Flower,” you might remember the first verse which begins with:

*“In the bulb there is a flower;
In the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise;
Butterflies will soon be free!*

The first line of the last verse is “In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity” virtually identical to Eliot’s ending.

Sleeth originally titled her hymn as “Hymn of Promise.” I almost like that better.



Above, Rev. Sharon Watkins, Karen McFadden (and Maggie), Connie McVicar, and Jan Forsty in Heritage Hall after filling Lenten bags for local members.

Reconciliation Grant 2020-2021

by Rev. Sharon Watkins

Every Fall, Bethany Memorial Church joins other Disciples congregations in collecting an offering for Reconciliation Ministry. Reconciliation Ministry helps Disciples dismantle the mechanisms of racism and white supremacy still at work in our church. These mechanisms are inherited from long ago, and our involvement in them is often implicit. Most white Disciples don't even know we are participating in them. Reconciliation Ministry helps us be more Christ-like and actively against racism in the way our church operates.

One part of Reconciliation's work is to give grants to other Disciples ministries in support of anti-racism projects. Last year, several Bethany-connected ministries applied for a grant and got it!

Bethany College, the Disciples of Christ Historical Society, the WV Region and the Pennsylvania Region designed an Equity Communication Guide project (ECG) to help us identify ways that our various communications discourage progress toward our goals of diversity, equity and inclusion. We wanted to know how the language and images and modes of expression of these ministries represent barriers to the multi-cultural community we aspire to be. Through print and other media, how do we unintentionally communicate a mono-cultural, white-normativity that excludes.

I was invited to serve on a task force guiding implementation of the project. BMC'er John Rodenberg is the main administrative support to our work, and Paul Turner (former Disciples mission co-worker in Congo and Bethany College '90) serves as chair.

The task force quickly engaged the Rev. Yvonne Gilmore (then of Disciples Divinity House, University of Chicago, now Administrative Secretary, National

Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)) as consultant to the project. Rev Gilmore is well familiar with Bethany College, having led anti-racism training here before. For the ECG, she did an assessment of the current communication instruments of the partner ministries, conducted focus groups, and helped draft a guide to improved communication. A final version of the communication guide will be available in the coming months. We look forward to learning and growing as we seek to implement the learnings.

Reconciliation Ministry was originally formed in the 70's when racial unrest was at a peak. It has evolved as the work for racial justice has evolved. For more than two decades, Reconciliation Ministry has resourced our denomination as we have pursued our goal to become "pro-reconciling" and "anti-racist" as part of our very identity in Christ.

I am excited that this work has come to Bethany, West Virginia. As Bethany College becomes more racially and culturally diverse, we have a great opportunity to put our congregational mission into action: to celebrate the diversity of God's creation as a gift to the human family, and open our celebrations, sacraments, ministry and membership to all people."

I hope that the Communication Equity Guide, along with the work of our BMC Racial Justice statement and group (see the January newsletter for more on that) will guide us as we at BMC seek to be a vital part of the movement for wholeness God is calling us to be.

I Call Them Bones

by Sydma Hatzopoulos



The Bones

The box of bones presently in the church office.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."
John 15:12-13 NRSV

Many have probably walked past the church or even into the church without noticing what is hanging from the stately tree to the right of the front door: bones and bells. I call them bones, although during the creation process, they appear to have been called "billets" or "ribs."

Many might have noticed but do not know the story behind them. Recent heavy winds have resulted in branches falling from the tree, leaving broken bits of these "bones" scattered through the front area of the church.

Dr. John Hull provided me with the following information:

In the early 2000's, Professors John Hull and Herb Weaver team-taught a popular class on the Bethany College campus entitled "The Art and Science of Peace."

Students complete a number of art projects in which they learn more about the creativity energy needed for peace. For instance, students in the class decorated large chess pieces in the shape of missiles with images that expressed their feelings about peace issues and displayed them in a main corridor on campus. A peace vessel with messages inside and peace chimes, hung outside the church. In these ways, what the students' art express about peace impacts the entire campus and community.

For a final project last year [probably 2004], one student enlisted the help of classmates in creating a billet for each soldier killed in Iraq (some 600 at that time), including the soldier's name and hometown. The billets were hung from the theater ceiling at eye level. Those who visited the display were urged to walk among the billets and gently clang them together. Many were moved to tears by the impact of this visual and auditory experience, describing billets as looking and sounding like bones rattling together.

I, with assistance from Anita Weaver, picked up all the pieces of bones (or ribs or billets) that had been blown from the tree. Penny Tittle pieced what she could together. Many pieces were missing or broken too much to reassemble, but some names were identifiable. Some still hang from the tree.

The question now is what should be done with these bones. Presently they are in a box in my office. To me, they represent the sons and daughters and brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers who laid down their lives for their friends and families. To dispose of them in a less than an honorable way (if at all) seems like forgetting. And that would be wrong.



2004

Unidentified Bethany College students prepare the ribs for hanging.



2004

The display at Bethany College.

Prayer List

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me, hear my words.

Psalm 17:6 NRSV

- Mike Cunningham (Sydma's Dad)
- Jean McVicar (Mother-in-Law of Connie McVicar)
- Mary Ann Eisenhauer
- Jennifer Knisley
- Hunter Knisley
- Brenda Mayer (First Christian Church of Weirton)
- Theresa Ferraro (sister of Gerard NeCastro)
- Ed Rodgers (Vicki NeCastro's father)
- Gary and Vonnie Larson
- Ashley Pietrangelo, niece of Penny Tittle
- Mark and Donna Sutherland, brother and sister-in-law of Pat Sutherland
- Lynn Cowell, brother of Shirley Kemp
- Nancy Pietrangelo (sister of Penny Tittle)
- Jeanne Cobb
- David Gnatek (brother-in-law of Holly Hillgardner)
- Tammy Ritchea
- Ruth Tye, Jeannie Sarg Tye, and Jay Tye
- Jack Hoffman
- Ned George (father of David) and family
- Perry Jones, Jr.
- Jeffrey Yost
- Caden Knisley
- Ellen Sanford
- Mary Jane Jackson
- Holly, Frank, and Sharley Hillgardner
- Donna Norman (Becky Ayers' sister)
- Dottie Smith
- Linda Owens Walters
- Mike Gostlin, son-in-law of Larry and Carol Grimes (husband to Becca)

Birthdays and Anniversaries

*This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.*
Psalm 18:24 NRSV

Happy 102nd Birthday
Ruth Tye
March 15, 2021

The Sanctuary is Now Open for Worship

For those of you who feel comfortable doing so (and live in the Bethany community), the sanctuary is now open for Sunday morning worship. The service will continue to be streamed on Facebook Live. Masks and social distancing are required for in-house attendance, and participants are asked to refrain from singing.

Holy Week Schedule

March 28 Palm Sunday Service

10:45 am

(Palms will be distributed early so a palm procession video can be made)

April 1 Maundy Thursday – 7 pm

April 2 Holy Friday

Day of Prayer and Reflection

(at the Campbell Mansion labyrinth or by using the finger labyrinth from Lenten bag. If you need a template, contact the office.)

April 4 Easter Sunrise Service – 7 am

You are invited to join Oglebay's sunrise service with Sharon preaching.

April 4 Easter Sunday Service

10:45 am

The
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Church

PO Box 149
Bethany, WV 26032