



The Beacon • September 2022

Saint Peter's United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Kimberly Stryjak, Minister

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“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” - Jeremiah 29:11

This is a significant year in our household - our youngest child, Addyson, starts full time pre-kindergarten this fall. I am sure as we prepare for the first day of school there will be many emotions swirling around for all of us. I am sure there will be tears shed on my part. My baby girl is going to school! Tears will be shed because of the wonderful person she is growing into, tears because of how proud I am of her, tears because I am sending her off into the unknown, tears because of my deep love for her.

As I contemplated the emotions of this first day of school for Addy, I thought about what God must feel each time we take the next step on our spiritual journeys. When we are faced with new adventures, decisions in life, both small and big, and the start of a new chapter, how does God react? I imagine as we discern and then choose transformation for ourselves, God sheds tears - tears of love, tears for growing into who God calls us to be, and tears that are bursting with pride. See, if I can feel all these emotions as my children grow and take on each new stage of life, then how much more does God feel these each time we, a beloved child of God, grows and transforms.

Our scripture verse from Jeremiah above reminds us that God is present for us in each new chapter of our lives. God wants us to prosper, to take on challenges and changes with the knowledge that God is guiding us with grace and love. As we enter into this

new season of autumn, with changes in schedules and lives, we also begin the process of growing deeper into who God wants us to be as a congregation. As we have discussions about what is important to us to and as we grow and transform, I am confident that God will be there, encouraging and guiding us along the way.

So, I would like to personally ask for you to keep St. Peter's in your prayers as we walk together in an attempt to follow God's calling and discover anew who we are as St. Peter's, and the ways we want to share the message of hope, love and good news with our wider community.

Blessings,

Pastor Kim

A Letter from Consistory

The Consistory of St. Peter's, on behalf of the congregation, would like to extend a sincere "Thank you" to Janice Rodriguez! Janice graciously filled in as the temporary office administrator upon the retirement of Kathy Lubas. Janice worked diligently from January through June as we searched for a permanent administrator. During this time, she not only handled the daily tasks of the office, but also helped us all stay connected as well as put together processes and resources to help the new administrator. Once we hired Angela, Janice was invaluable during the transitional period and continues to be a guiding presence when needed. We welcome Angela to this position and are very thankful for all that Janice did to help with a smooth transition.



*Thank
You*

Parish News & Prayers

We appreciate hearing news from our members. If you have something you would like to share with us and have us share on your behalf, we invite you to contact the church office to let us know.

Please remember one another in your prayers. We are grateful for the power of prayer to keep us connected to God, renewing our strength and courage. If you have a prayer request or would like to join the list of those praying for others, please contact the church office.

Charting our Course

As we prepare to begin the work of creating our local church profile, I was asked two very important questions: What's a local church profile? Does this mean that Pastor Kim is leaving us?

Let's take the last question first. Pastor Kim is serving us as a designated-term pastor. For another year, she will be with us in our transition, which is a time of change but also of grieving and growing. After that time, if she and we decide that our path lies together, she will stay with us. If she or we feel that God is calling us to separate paths, we will begin to look for a pastor, using what is called a "search and call process."

If we begin a search and call process, the local church profile will tell potential candidates much about Saint Peter's. If we and Pastor Kim continue our journey of worship and mission together, the local church profile will be our map.

A local church profile includes demographic information about our congregation and our neighborhood along with descriptions of our worship life, Christian education program, finances, and history. Much of that information is available to us in our records. But there are other parts of the profile that we need to create together, guided by the Spirit, and we complete them by asking ourselves some thought-provoking questions—What are we holding on to that we should let go of? What should we keep? How well do the words of our mission statement match the amount of time and money we devote to our missions? Have our existing missions evolved to serve our neighborhoods as the neighborhoods evolved? What challenges are emerging in our congregation and community and what ministries are needed to meet them? Beneath those questions we find the heart of this work: Who are our neighbors? How can we be the hands and feet of Jesus in service to those neighbors?

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As we work together over the next months, we'll strive to include everyone, those who regularly worship in church, those who worship online, and those who don't have access to technology. We'll hold monthly visioning exercises as part of Sunday worship and provide ways for those who aren't present to contribute, too. Because the local church profile isn't a secret document, we'll develop ways of sharing the responses to our questions with you, and we invite your feedback at all points in the process, including in the final draft.

We don't know where this process will lead, and our ideas about worship and mission may change as we think and talk about them. Change can be disconcerting, but we can find comfort in slowing down and listening for God's voice and in remembering that God is in charge.

Here are the questions from our August 28 visioning session. The good news is that we started with easy ones. If you couldn't worship in person with us that day and want to contribute your ideas, please send them by mail, phone, or email to the church office.

1. Share a time when this church was here for you when you needed it.
2. What do you want Saint Peter's to be like in two years?
3. In one word, what is meaningful to you about Saint Peter's?

Your local church profile committee—Kim Barndt, Charlie Sterner, Pastor Kim, Elaine Wiley, and I—will meet in early September to plan our October session. If you would like to join the committee or have any questions or comments, please contact us or the church office.

Janice Rodríguez, chair
Local Church Profile Committee

Worship Outdoors



On September 11 (rain date September 18), we'll meet in the pavilion at 10:00 to enjoy the splendor and beauty of God's creation during our final planned outdoor worship for this season. If the weather looks threatening, please check your email or Saint Peter's Facebook page for announcements about moving worship indoors.

Outreach: Celebrate Health!

We are excited to announce that St. Peter's will be attending the 9th annual Guts & Glory Digestive Health & Wellness Expo as a vendor.

This event is a FREE for all ages, pet friendly celebration of health happening on **Saturday, September 24** from 10:00am until 3:00pm at Penn State Berks Campus Perkins Plaza Event Lawn.

We invite you to come and check out all the great vendors and NEW this year the MEGA Colon exhibit which provides an interactive and educational experience of stepping through a scale model of the human colon that highlights common disease conditions. Learn more via the event Facebook page <https://fb.me/e/1TYrzKBpJ>

We also encourage you to represent St. Peter's at the vendor table by volunteering for a few hours. If interested, please contact Derek Rutter or the church office.

Holy Humor

Shortly after tying the knot, a young married couple started arguing over who should make the coffee. Being a good Christian woman, the wife went to the scriptures for her answer. She said that the Bible specifically stated that men should be the ones to make the coffee. Puzzled, the husband asked her where in the Bible it said that. Very confidently, the wife opened up her Bible and said: "It's right here—*HEBREWS*."

