



The Beacon • August 2022

Saint Peter's United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Kimberly Stryjak, Minister

2901 Curtis Road, Reading, PA 19609 • stpucc.com • stpucc@yahoo.com • 610.678.3621

Where Do You Find God?

My family and I just got back from a camping trip. We had a wonderful time in the Poconos hiking, swimming, playing games, biking around the campsite, and having s'mores around the fire. Even though we did not do any fishing (we forgot our rods), the trip reminded me of fishing with my dad.

I have fond memories of fishing with my dad as I grew up. The company he worked for had ponds on the property and every year they would have a Fish-o-thon. It was a long day, when families would come out and everyone of all ages would fish and bring their catch to the judges for measurement and weight. Then at the end of the event trophies and awards would be given to fishers within different age groups. We would go each year and as I got older, I helped at the judges stand.

Another time we would fish is when we went camping. We would find a pond/lake nearby and take our rods out to the banks. As I become a teenager, we would take kayak's out to ponds near own home and sometimes go out on the lake in my uncle's fishing boat. I remember those early mornings, because as a teenager I thought "who gets up at that hour?" but I enjoyed the time spent with my dad.

As these memories came to me, I began to think about fishing and faith. In fishing there are two important things that need to happen. As a fisher, you need to show up prepared - rod,

The Beacon

reel, hook, and bait. And you when you cast your line out, you sit and wait. Why? Because it is the fish that need to bite, that is the second important thing! Fishing is not just dependent on the fisher, as they cannot control if the fish are hungry, in the waters where they are fishing, or if they are going to bite. It does not matter who the fisher is, or what their journey of life has been, the fish are the ones at work in taking the bait.

This is like our faith lives too. When we come to God, is not about worthiness. It is not about what you have done or what you have left undone. When you come before God - prepared with open hearts, receptive to the spirit, it is about what God is doing; God claiming you, cleansing you, and naming you "Beloved." This is the good news, that our faith lives are not solely dependent on us. That does not mean there is nothing for us to do, because just like you cannot fish if you do not go to water where there are fish with your fishing gear, you cannot have a relationship with God if you do not stand before God. If you do not pray, worship, read scripture, or discern God's voice. We are blessed in our faith lives that when we come to God, unlike the fisher, we don't have to wait. God is ready for us, anytime, anywhere, any day.

Whether you like to fish, know someone who fishes, or have nothing to do with fishing, I invite you to join me in being prepared to encounter the living God during these coming days and weeks. Make room for God and yourself in your hearts and pay attention to what God is doing in you. I hope and pray that you open yourself up to the living God and know that deep down you are beloved. Where and when will you find God this summer to grow in faith?

Blessings,

Pastor Kim

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

Saint Peter's has changed in the last years, and so has the world around us. How is God calling us to grow and serve in this changed reality?

An excellent tool for charting our course forward is a local church profile. Creating a new one is a months-long, multi-step process that invites us all to share our hopes and dreams and, yes, even our doubts and fears. Fortunately, we are not alone as we do this work. We are blessed to have Pastor Kim as our designated pastor, and part of her responsibility in this role is to help us in this time of transition. The Pennsylvania Southeast Conference and the United Church of Christ will assist us, too, by providing guidelines that we can follow. There will be plenty of thought-provoking questions for us to consider and different ways of sharing our ideas with each other.

We'll start with a visioning session during our worship service on **Sunday, August 28**. Come prepared to talk and share, to dream dreams and see visions! If you would like to serve on the Local Church Profile Committee or if you have ideas to share but can't be with us on August 28, please contact Janice Rodríguez or the church office.

A Sincere Thank You from Angela!

It has been a month since I began as the administrator here at St. Peter's UCC and I can honestly say I have never experienced a warmer welcome or more positive introduction to a new workplace. This kind of welcome is a wonderful reflection of the community that has been fostered here. All the welcome emails, office visits and offers of help from so many of you have made my transition into this role as seamless as possible. I sincerely thank you!

As a reminder, I will be in the office Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

A Letter from The Financial Team

Can you believe we are already over halfway through the year, that's right just 22 weeks of Christmas shopping left!! This has been an exciting year and we wanted to share with you some of the huge wins we have accomplished together so far.

- Your generosity has contributed \$80,000 of our pledged \$107,000 already. (And that's as of the middle of July).
- Online giving is right on track with just under half of our committed \$12,000!! Way to go online givers!

The Beacon

We have already supported many great UCC Initiatives providing nearly \$3,000 to Our Churches Wider Mission so far and almost \$700 to One Great Hour of Sharing! We have also reduced our Line of Credit for the new roof and HVAC systems with a reduction of over \$7,000 this year. Thanks to the generosity of this amazing group that number has been reduced from \$43,000 three years ago to under \$7,000 to go. Simply amazing!

Please be on the lookout for some exciting campaigns that will continue to help our local community and our church family through the second half of our year! We think you're going to like it.

We hope you all have a great remainder of the summer, and we thank you again for sharing your time, talents, and giving to make all these things possible.

Summer Fun Update

As we mentioned in last month's issue, the social and stewardship teams had been working to organize an outdoor family movie night to be held in our pavilion. We learned that movie licensing for such a showing is something we need to further research and therefore the teams are refocusing on planning an alternative fun event. Ideas so far include a picnic or a game night that is likely to be scheduled closer to the fall season. Keep an eye out for communications on this as plans are finalized.

Worship with Us Outdoors



On August 14 (rain date August 21), we'll meet in the pavilion at 10:00 to enjoy the splendor and beauty of God's creation as we worship. 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.

Outreach: Back-to-School Supply Drive



This summer, the youth of Saint Peter's have partnered with the Reading Recreation Commission to provide school supplies to children in need. The Reading Recreation Commission supplies approximately 150 - 200 students with necessary school items every year.

There will be a collection box in the welcome center until **August 14**. Please consider donating any of the following items:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Backpacks | Folders with two pockets inside |
| Colored pencils | Two-inch three-ring binders |
| Pencils | Pencil cases with three holes to fit in binders |
| Crayons | Five-subject notebooks |
| Rulers | Single-subject notebooks |
| Notebook paper | |

We are asking our children to spread the word to their family and friends. If the children are successful in filling the entire box, they will be rewarded with a special treat! Thank you for your kindness and for helping our youth help others.

