



The Beacon • March 2023

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



John 14:8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

We are once again in another season of our church calendar. On February 22nd we started the season of Lent which will last throughout the month of March and into April when we celebrate Easter. Lent is about our journey to the cross, it is about reorienting our lives and reconciling back to God. There are many different Lenten practices in which we can partake: fasting, almsgiving, prayer, serving others, reading scripture, etc.

As we make our way through Lent, trying to draw closer to God, I think sometimes we long to encounter God face-to-face, or in concrete ways. We pray and plead for God to pop out, show up, or appear with us in some way in which we will without-a-doubt know we experience God. Yet, most of the time, that is not how God works. Many times, God shows up, in the form of another, or speaks to us through whispers on our heart or through words of a friend. And if we spend too much time or energy focused on seeing God - we miss God's presence right there with us.

This reminds me of the parable of "The Drowning Man." It goes like this:

A fellow was stuck on his rooftop in a flood. He was praying to God for help.

Soon a man in a rowboat came by and the fellow shouted to the man on the roof, "Jump in, I can save you."

The Beacon

The stranded fellow shouted back, “No, it’s OK, I’m praying to God and he is going to save me.”

So the rowboat went on.

Then a motorboat came by. “The fellow in the motorboat shouted, “Jump in, I can save you.”

To this the stranded man said, “No thanks, I’m praying to God and he is going to save me. I have faith.”

So the motorboat went on.

Then a helicopter came by and the pilot shouted down, “Grab this rope and I will lift you to safety.”

To this the stranded man again replied, “No thanks, I’m praying to God and he is going to save me. I have faith.”

So the helicopter reluctantly flew away.

Soon the water rose above the rooftop and the man drowned. He went to Heaven. He finally got his chance to discuss this whole situation with God, at which point he exclaimed, “I had faith in you but you didn’t save me, you let me drown. I don’t understand why!”

To this God replied, “I sent you a rowboat and a motorboat and a helicopter, what more did you expect?”

When we are so focused on the ways in which we think God will show up or help us, we miss the ways in which God is already showing up for us. We miss the angels that come into our lives in many different forms to offer a meal, helping hand, supportive text or a question that changes the direction of our lives.

We are not always granted moments in which we encounter God face-to-face, but we are guaranteed God’s promise to love and care for us. In this Lenten season let our prayer be to see God even in ways we don’t expect or ask for because those God sightings are more than enough to sustain us on the journey.

Blessings this Lenten Season,

-pastor Kim

Parish News & Prayers

While Pastor Kim is away, Caroline Bashore will be leading worship service on Sunday March 5th and Communion will be on Sunday March 12th.

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 also 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.

In addition, if you know someone who would like a copy of The Beacon mailed to them, please contact the office to let us know.

Charting Our Course: A Special Congregational Meeting

We have wonderful news! Saint Peter's has been in a time of reflection and transition over the last year, and we're ready to vote to call Pastor Kim to be our settled pastor. Here's what you need to know.

When is the vote? At a special congregational meeting after worship on March 26.

What is on the ballot? Two things: First, there will be a vote on whether Saint Peter's will offer a search and call agreement (that's church-speak for "contract") for a $\frac{3}{4}$ time settled pastor based on the budget approved in our 2023 annual congregational meeting. If the majority vote "yes" on that, there will be a second vote to offer that search and call agreement to Pastor Kim.

What does " $\frac{3}{4}$ time settled pastor" mean? A settled pastor is one who stays with a church long term. Pastors who work $\frac{3}{4}$ time perform most of the duties of a full-time pastor but with exceptions. For example, a church might decide to relieve a $\frac{3}{4}$ time pastor from financial planning or staff supervision. Pastors in $\frac{3}{4}$ time agreements may choose to devote their remaining time to other employment, eldercare, childcare, or education. Saint Peter's should be prepared, as a congregation, to understand the limitations of a $\frac{3}{4}$ time pastoral call, and our members and leaders should be ready for some additional responsibilities.

Who can vote? According to the by-laws of Saint Peter's, members in good standing may vote. "Good standing" can mean attending services in person or online, participating in outreach/mission efforts, donating time or offerings to the church, or, for home-bound members, receiving pastoral visits.

Can youth vote? Yes! Confirmed youth are eligible to vote.

What about people who aren't officially members? Saint Peter's is blessed to have people who attend faithfully and give generously of their time and talents but have not officially joined the church through letter of transfer, confirmation, or affirmation of faith. Unfortunately, the by-laws prevent those people from voting, but the March 26 ballots will have a space to record their choice, because their voice is important. (And if you're not technically a member but would like to be one, contact the church office for details.)

What about people who can't come to church? The church will send a letter, absentee ballot, and SASE to home-bound members who receive pastoral visits and are on the mailing list for paper copies of our newsletter. The meeting will be broadcast online, and online participants will be able to vote. Members who usually attend in person but have a work or other important commitment that prevents their in-person or online participation on March 26 should contact the church office before March 15 to arrange for an absentee ballot. Absentee ballots must be received before March 26.

How will we vote? For those voting in person and by absentee ballot, with an anonymous paper ballot. For those voting online, by anonymous poll.

When will we learn the results of the vote? The day of our congregational meeting, March 26. Members of consistory will count the ballots and report the results right away.

If we vote yes, what happens next? We tell Pastor Kim the results, and she chooses whether to accept our call. If she does, her start date as our settled pastor is April 1, and we begin to plan for her installation service. If she does not, we organize a search and call committee and, working with the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the UCC, advertise our ¾ time settled pastor position.

What about the local church profile? You've been working hard on it in visioning sessions over the last months, and it's nearly ready to be shared on our website. If Pastor Kim becomes our settled pastor, the local church profile becomes a guide for Saint Peter's to move forward as we grow in faith and in ministry. If she does not, the local church profile becomes part of the position posting on the UCC Ministry Opportunities webpage (that's church-speak for "job posting webpage").

What if I have questions? Ask anyone on consistory (Derek Rutter, Allan Owen, Bryan Sterner, Kim Barndt, Lydia Batz, Juli Winkler, Larry Ross) or the Local Church Profile Committee (Kim Barndt, Janice Rodríguez, Charlie Sterner, Elaine Wiley).

The local church profile and financial teams and the consistory thank you, our congregation, for your faithful support, your thoughtful questions, your endless patience, and your hard work as we chart our course into the future that God is calling us to. God truly is still speaking at Saint Peter's!

Janice Rodríguez
Chair, Local Church Profile Committee

Our Church's Wider Mission: OGHS Offering



Throughout March Saint Peter's encourages you to prayerfully consider this offering. Through OGHS or "One Great Hour of Sharing", lives are changed daily. Your support helps provide clean water, food, medicines, shelter, healthcare, education, and more. Information will be shared at Worship service and you may also learn more about this offering at:

<https://www.ucc.org/giving/ways-to-give/our-churchs-wider-mission/one-great-hour-of-sharing/>

Outreach Opportunities

Wilson Area Food Pantry

The number of food-insecure members of our community is growing with the ending of Covid food aid programs. The Wilson Area Food Pantry distributes food in our neighborhood on the 3rd Friday of every month. The pantry has an ongoing need for nonperishables, especially tuna, fruit, vegetables, pasta, and pasta sauce. Come to church with a can, a box, or a jar, and you'll put some food on a neighbor's plate. A basket where you may leave donated nonperishables is located inside the Sanctuary. Visit wilsonareafoodpantry.org to learn about this outreach or its eligibility requirements.

Opportunity House

The Opportunity House shelter is a 24-hour multi-service facility that works to improve the quality of life for men, women and children who are in need. You may learn about this community organization from their website (<https://opphouse.org/about-us/mission-and-core-values/>) where they state their core mission: We empower individuals to improve their lives. We provide security, stability, safety, and community to our clients. A small group of Saint Peter's UCC and former First UCC members prepares and serves supper to the clients of Opportunity House once every month. Please consider joining us in this worthwhile endeavor. Please see Phyllis Gertney, Louise Miller, or Jane Brubaker for additional information.

Dates to Remember



| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| March 5 th | Worship led by Caroline Bashore |
| March 12 th | Set clocks forward at 2am |
| March 12 th | Communion |
| March 9 th | Opportunity House |
| March 17 th | Wilson Area Food Pantry |
| March 19 th | Consistory meeting |
| March 19 th | OGHS Offering |
| March 26 th | Special Congregational meeting & vote |