

Enlightener

March 2021 Vol. XLI, No. 03



In Search of Silver Linings

In conversation with people from all walks of life, I often find myself referring to what I have come to call the silver linings of the “COVID Cloud.” As challenging as the past 11 months have been ~ and the pandemic is not over yet ~ good has emerged in so many ways and places. This does not in any way diminish the hardships experienced by thousands of people across our nation and around the world who have had to deal with unimaginable loss, unbearable isolation, unrelenting anxiety and unmanageable stress. Yet still, I believe there is value in continuing to look for silver linings amid the pain and suffering so that we might better navigate what lies before us.

When life as we knew it came to a grinding halt last March, we had to totally rethink how to “do” church. Wednesday noon chime concerts emerged as an alternative to Wednesday noon communion, and became so popular that they continued for months, taking only a brief break following Christmas before resuming once again in this season of Lent.

Vacation Bible School became a creative take-out adventure that involved 50 children and their families; Sunday School has been consistently experienced by 40 children as they engage with parents and grandparents in “Carry Out Connection” lessons and activities; meetings and Bible Studies have been held outdoors at St. John’s, in local parks or via Zoom; with great success, Artist Series concerts became virtual events; several babies were baptized in our beautiful meditation garden when weather permitted; and memorable drive-by celebrations and outdoor festivities marked milestones and retirements.

Recorded worship services became the norm and have been continuously improved upon by adding safely distanced singers to bring the hymns to life, messages for children and the young at heart, communion, and for special events, audio and video accessible on YouTube, as well as on our Facebook pages and website. While it is an inexact science at best trying to determine how many are being reached each week by our recorded services, it is safe to say that many more are experiencing St. John’s than ever before ~ some weeks perhaps as many as twice the number of people we would reach on a typical Sunday when worship was in-person and only the sermon was available to listen to on our website.

Granted, silver linings like these are no substitute for being physically together in worship and ministry, but they have provided a valuable lifeline, along with bridges that have taught us lessons about how to be the church more faithfully and effectively once the pandemic is behind us. I, for one, thank God for these silver linings that have sustained us and are propelling us forward. Mostly though, I thank God for you. Your continued faithfulness, support and hope-filled spirit assure me daily that, with God’s help, a bright future awaits us at St. John’s!

Rev. Sue
EB



What's Happening in Church Council?



Financial Report:

Sandy and Bob Taylor, Cotreasurers:

In January, our income of \$43,706.06 fell short of our expenses of \$45,695.70 by about 4%. While being behind is never good, a better measure will be how we stand after a few months, as a one-month snapshot can be misleading.

Our 2021 commitment to "Our Church's Wider Mission" (OCWM) remains at \$46,460, or about \$3,872 a month. January contributions totaled \$5,562. We are off to a great start, thanks to your OCWM giving via the Christmas offering and throughout January. In January, Council decided to complete our 2020 OCWM contributions by making up the 2020 shortfall of \$2,811 using funds from our GEM (Going the Extra Mile) Fund. (See additional details in **Old Business** below.)

Rev. Sue stated last year St. John's had approved the decrease in rent for Montessori School. With receipt of stimulus funds, Montessori School has paid St. John's back rent in the amount of \$3,100 with the PPP Program.

Please feel free to share your questions or concerns with our Cotreasurers, Sandy and Bob Taylor.

Staff Reports:

Rev. Dr. Sue Bertolette, Senior Pastor:

Ash Wednesday is February 17. A worship service has been recorded both in audio and video. The video will be premiered on YouTube at noon. A Watch Party will be held at 7:00 PM. The Wednesday Lenten Study begins on February 24 via Zoom.

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The topic will be *Racism: What it means to be antiracist and the challenges faced as followers of Christ*. The book selected for discussion is "I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness" by Austin Channing Brown. Books are available for purchase and may be picked up in Rev. Sue's office. Sunday, April 4, is Easter. Lansdale Borough has tentatively given St. John's permission to use White's Road Park, pending a detailed presentation by St. John's of what is planned. A vote of the Borough Council will be held March 3.

The Borough will be contacted for details regarding crowd size and timing. Hospitality Teams will be on hand. Anyone planning to attend will need to contact the church to sign up.

Rev. Addie Stong, Associate Pastor:

Ashes from previous year's palms will be used for Ash Wednesday. They have been available in small containers for pickup on Rev. Sue's porch since Friday, February 12. Ashes have been blessed and a card is included with the words of the blessing.

Andrew Paulson, Minister of Music:

Children's choir, United Voices, and Chancel Choir are meeting virtually.

The last Artist Series of the season will be held on Sunday, March 28, at 4 PM. The Chancel Choir will be featured in "St. John Passion: Readings and Responses for Choir, Organ, and Optional Congregation." Audio recordings of weekly worship services continue, with the Ash Wednesday service on YouTube and Facebook.

Abbie Lampe, Minister of Music for Children and Youth:

The Children's Choir has recorded two anthems for Ash Wednesday and is preparing an anthem for Easter. Work continues on a modified version of the musical "Called," to be presented virtually in May. There will be a virtual fun fellowship event, complete with music, in March.

Lisa Delp, Office Administrator:

Since the January Council meeting, St. John's has helped six families in need with \$150 in grocery/gas gift cards and \$1,278 in rental assistance. A letter will be written to Lansdale Borough Parks & Recreation Committee regarding the Easter Service at White's Road Park.

Board Reports:

Elders

o Nothing new to report.

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Educators

- o Nothing new to report.

Deacons

- o Easter Flowers have been ordered to decorate the sanctuary. A small group of volunteers will foil wrap the flowers and decorate the sanctuary.

Trustees

- o The water backflow preventer has been installed and will be tested on Wednesday, February 10.
- o The lease of Montessori School is scheduled for midterm review by June. It is the fifth year of a 10-year lease.

Old Business:

In-Person Worship Update

Currently, there are no plans to open St. John's sanctuary for in-person worship.

OCWM Update

The reported OCWM income in January did not include the \$2,811 approved by Council to fulfill our 2020 commitment. The \$5661.75 was from the 2020 Christmas envelopes and other new giving. The amount exceeded the monthly commitment of \$3,872 by almost \$1,800. That is \$1,200 greater than any month's OCWM income in 2020.

New Business:

Samson Tarpeh (ANAM) Student Sponsorship

Rev. Sue gave background on Samson Tarpeh and the Agape National Academy of Music School (ANAM) in Liberia. Samson continues to send updates to St. John's about the school. Classes will resume for 49 students this month. There is a great need for financial assistance to keep the building open and support students. The primary source of fundraising was Samson's ability to play concerts. Due to Covid, he has been unable to do this. Rent for the building is \$3,000/year. The cost to support one student for the 19-month program is \$95. The current balance of the GEM Fund is \$10,800. Council felt the congregation would support sponsoring children of the school. The financial need could be announced in a recorded worship service. It was suggested Samson post pictures and information about the school on St. John's private Facebook page. This initiative will be revisited each year.

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There was discussion about using GEM Funds for rent assistance only, with the congregation invited to sponsor a child. It was felt members of the congregation will be willing to help support a child. A motion was passed to send \$3,000 from the GEM Fund to ANAM to cover the one-year rent. The congregation will be invited to sponsor the children, in any amount, by designating funds donated to the GEM Fund.

ARTICLES DUE FOR APRIL ISSUE ON MARCH 14

Leaders: Please provide articles for these coming events for the next *Enlightener* issue:

- † Prayer Vigil
- † Maundy Thursday
- † Good Friday
- † Easter Services
- † Earth Day

All submissions must include your name and phone number and be typed or printed. Submissions can be placed in the *Enlightener* bin in the Church Office (bottom bin) or emailed to erickinsey46@gmail.com. If you have questions, please call Eric Kinsey at 215.513.2237.

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Wednesday noon chimes concerts have resumed for the season of Lent. How good it will be for members of our church family to gather once again and share fellowship while listening to the inspiring ringing of the chimes!



Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Brian Miller, brother-in-law of Susan Clemens; Brian Delp, nephew of Lisa Delp; and Miriam Stacy, sister of Marcia Stacy, who passed away recently.

Here is the chancel flower donation list for March 2021. Please review this list and contact the church office if you would like to remove, add, or update any information.



Reminder ~ The requested donation for the chancel flower listing is \$25. Thank you!

March 7

In memory of Sarah Falzone's March 10th birthday from her daughter, Pam, and Ray, Jessica, and Alex Ace

March 14

In memory of Christian E. Wurster's March 15th birthday from Christine Wiley

Remembering with love, Wallace and Kier MacKinstry on St. Patrick's Day and Granny's March 16th birthday, from Jean MacKinstry Rogers and the MacKinstry/Rogers family

In memory of Ruthanne Harrison's March 20th birthday from her daughter and son-in-law, Sue and Wayne Bailey

March 21

In memory of parents, Gerald and Edith Linderman, on their March 26th wedding anniversary, and in memory of his brother, Mark, from Gerry and Grace Linderman

In memory of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Umstead and Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Gehman from Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Umstead

In memory of Lester Long from his wife, Rachel, and family

March 28: PALM SUNDAY

In memory of Lesley Brown's March 31st birthday from her parents, Vivienne and Ian

In memory of The Rev. Hugo and Mrs. Josephine Kellermeier from their daughter, Lorene Ahrens

In loving memory of Louise (Grammie) Snyder's March 30th birthday from her family



One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) Offering: March 14, 2021

When you share your gifts to OGHS your generosity ensures that the transforming power of love will change the lives of the most vulnerable among us. Through Wider Church Ministries, the UCC fulfills its commitment to respond to global and local concerns by providing advocacy, sustainable development resources, long-term disaster-recovery support, and assistance for refugee and asylum seekers, in collaboration with our partners locally and globally. Please find your OGHS offering envelope attached to this Enlightener.

Were You There?



Thirty Years Ago: The Major Renovation and Building Fund was launched.

Twenty-five Years Ago: An excerpt from the March 1996 Enlightener:

From Confucianism: Do not unto others what you would not have them do to you.

From Hinduism: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.

From Islam: No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself

From Judaism: What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowmen. That is the entire law; all the rest is commentary.

From Taoism: Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your loss.

Sound like the Golden Rule? Imagine what the world would be like if everyone in these faiths followed this simple rule.

Twenty Years Ago: The New Pew Cushion Project (aka A Cush for Your Tush) was nearing completion.

Fifteen Years Ago: The Elders requested a photographer to create a photo display of our new members to help introduce them to the rest of the congregation.

Ten Years Ago: The March Artist Series Concert featured, along with St. John's Chancel Choir and Friends, St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Glenside, and the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill.

Five Years Ago: From Rev. Sue's opening page of the Enlightener: Given that **LENT** is a four-letter word (of faith, that is), I attached meaning to each of the letters: **L** reminds us to **L**isten for God within us; **E** reminds us to seek to **E**xperience God and **E**xpect God to show up in the midst of all of life; **N** invites to **N**otice what God is doing, not only in our own lives, but in the world around us; and **T** reminds us to **T**ake **T**ime **T**o **T**hink, to reflect, to pause before charging full-speed ahead.

One Year Ago: St John's Minister of Music, David Furniss, announced his plans to retire in the summer. David was with St John's since September 1987. We wish him all the best in his retirement.



Giving Updates, Sharing Hope

As we continue our Lenten journey toward this second Easter during this pandemic, one of the things that I miss most is the personal interaction that takes place when people get together. I have always loved the time before a meeting, before church, or before Sunday School where people will engage in conversation and share what has happened recently to them. Often, the stories told aren't anything earth shattering or major. Just an update on the family or something interesting that happened recently to the person.

This week I would have given an update around my daughter having a roof leak in her apartment at college or my son getting a scholarship to continue his studies in the medical field. Or I might have talked about the phone call I received from a former colleague who just called to say "hi" and to catch up.

These stories help us to share what is happening and what is important to us. They allow us to connect with each other and share the joys and concerns that are happening in each of our lives.

As we continue our journey together, I pray that we can connect with each other through sharing our stories and taking the time to reach out and give an update. Our connecting time may not be in-person prior to church or a meeting. Our sharing may need to be over the phone, by email, or by sending a card. No matter how we do it, help us to stay connected with each other and to share our stories of hope and love during this Lenten season.

Stephen Butz, Stewardship Committee

The 24-hour Prayer Vigil begins on Maundy Thursday, April 1, at noon and ends on Good Friday at noon. You are invited to claim a half-hour time slot during those 24 hours to pray in whatever way works best for you. You may pray from home, at work, or wherever you are. You may also pray in our Sanctuary, provided you wear a mask. To claim a time slot, please email Rev. Sue (drsueb7@verizon.net) or call the Church Office.



Summary of Last Month and YTD Income and Expense	January 2021	January 2021
Ordinary Income/Expense		
Income		
Current Tithes/Offerings	31,852.00	31,852.00
Flowers	250.00	250.00
Rental Income	2,250.00	2,250.00
Miscellaneous Unrestricted Income	132.00	132.00
Interest Income, Savings Accounts	0.98	0.98
Total Income	34,484.98	34,484.98
Gross Income	34,484.98	34,484.98
Expense		
Salaries and Benefits	34,587.10	34,587.10
Elders Expenses	59.03	59.03
Deacons Expenses	50.00	50.00
Trustees/Building Expenses	738.21	738.21
Building Operation Expenses	5,606.85	5,606.85
Operating Expenses	4,086.45	4,086.45
Miscellaneous Expenses	568.06	568.06
Total Expense	45,695.70	45,695.70
Net Ordinary Income	-11,210.72	-11,210.72
Budgeted Transfers from Investments	9,221.08	9,221.08
Net Ordinary Income Plus Transfers	-1,989.64	-1,989.64
Other Income/Expense		
Other Income		
Artist Series Income—Special	350.00	350.00
Benevolence Offerings	9,865.50	9,865.50
Special Accounts	5,356.75	5,356.75
Total Other Income	15,572.25	15,572.25
Other Expense		
Artist Series Fund Expenditures	300.62	300.62
Benevolence Disbursements	21,390.50	21,390.50
Special Fund Expenditures	4,247.79	4,247.79
Total Other Expense	25,938.91	25,938.91
Net Other Income	-10,366.66	-10,366.66
Net Income	-21,577.38	-21,577.38
Net Income Plus Transfers	-12,356.30	-12,356.30

News From The Pews

Brrr! As this little church mouse writes to you this month, I am still trying to warm up from all the wintry weather we have had in recent weeks.



Although I am safe and warm indoors at St. John's, when I venture out for my daily dose of fresh air I have to put on my hat and scarf, along with boots to help me navigate the huge mounds of snow still piled high in the church parking lot. I had to smile when I noticed the sign near the porch outside Rev. Sue's office: The sign, which has on it the message "Hope isn't cancelled," was buried in so much snow that all that showed was the word "Hope." Ah well, thankfully hope is enough!

Speaking of being outside at St. John's: The Wednesday noon chimes concerts have resumed for the season of Lent, so plan to join me each Wednesday during March. You may need to bundle up when you come. Also, walking the labyrinth or sitting in the meditation garden may not be an option because of the snow, but how good it will be to see you and other members of our church family!

Also, now that we are in the season of Lent, let me remind you that the 24-hour Prayer Vigil beginning on Maundy Thursday, April 1, at noon and ending on Good Friday at noon, will be here before you know it. You are invited to claim a half-hour time slot during those 24 hours, during which you may pray in whatever way works best for you. You may pray from home, at work, or wherever you are. You may also come and pray in the Sanctuary at St. John's, provided you wear a mask. To claim a time slot for the Prayer Vigil, please email Rev. Sue (drsue7@verizon.net) or call the Church Office.

Time now to focus on doing my homework assignment for the Lenten Study. The book we have been reading, *I'm Still Here* by Austin Channing Brown, has really gotten my attention and made me think as I listen to the almost three dozen participants dialoguing about racism, justice, and what it means to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

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I must say, I have gotten rather good at signing on to Zoom meetings (even old church mice can learn new tricks!) and I am so thankful we have found creative ways to stay connected, in spite of the pandemic. The day will come when we can all be back together in the pews, but for now, stay safe, take care of yourselves and one another, and keep the faith.

AMOS

Easter Lily Donations: If you would like to donate a lily this Easter in memory or honor of a loved one, please contact the church office by Palm Sunday, March 28. You may also fill out the donation form and deposit it in the locked box on the wall by the back door at the top of the ramp. Your donation may be in any amount, and the lily may be picked up Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, or the week following Easter, for you to keep. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, volunteers will not be making deliveries to homebound folks this year.



2021 Easter Lily Donation Form Due Date 3/28/2021

In Memory of

In Honor of

From

Amount \$

Envelope #

Thank you for your Blanket Sunday Offering! Your offering to Church World Service and to Blanket Sunday continue to make a difference in the lives of many people here in the United States and around the world. During the past year, members of our congregation contributed more than \$1700 to Church World Service for blankets and tools. Below is the Annual Impact Report for 2020 from Church World Service.

CWS KITS | CWS BLANKETS
IMPACT REPORT 2020

The CWS Kit and Blanket Programs are two of the many ways Church World Service shares in a hope-filled tomorrow. Your support truly makes a difference in the lives of children and families all over the world. Here's how CWS has provided kits & blankets through your support of this program.

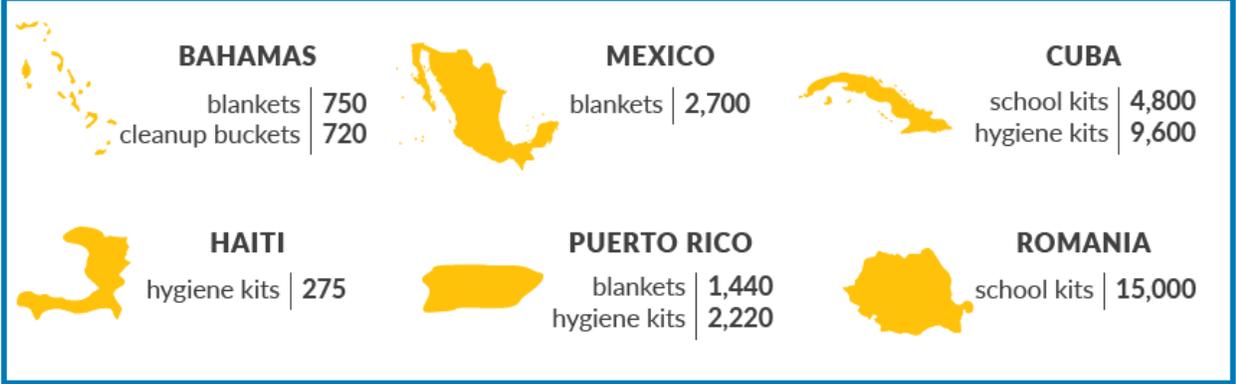
Since January, we've distributed **63,967 CWS Blankets and Kits in the United States.**

"We are very appreciative of those who spend time to fill those hygiene kits. It must take a long time! I wish I could be there to thank them in person! If you knew the value they are to our people, you would know how much they are appreciated. And the time to put them together, they are so valuable and a gift from God."

-DOTTIE VILLESVIK, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, EVERETTE, WA



Since January, we've distributed **37,505 CWS Blankets and Kits internationally.**



TOTAL KITS AND BLANKETS DISTRIBUTED GLOBALLY: 101,472



Child Sponsorship:

A Letter From Alyanna Jean Calumba

The Outreach Team recently received a long-awaited letter from 12-year-old Alyanna Jean Calumba who lives in The Philippines. Alyanna Jean is one of the children who is sponsored by the congregation of St. John's through Global Ministries. Please remember Alyanna Jean and our other sponsored children with your prayers and offerings to *Child Sponsorship*.

Alyanna Jean wrote on November 28, 2020...

“Good day to you all. For me (and) my family we are all fine with God’s blessings. We are now experiencing fine weather after three strong typhoons have passed our country. Fortunately we are fine and grateful to God that He has spared us from those storms. It hit the northern part of our country. Hope they will soon recover from the devastation.

Hope you are well and fine even in the middle of this pandemic condition. Hope God will continue to be with us always specially too for you and your family. It has always been my wish that the virus will be gone. It has limited our movement which really affect our schooling and my parents in making a living.

Our classes started last October, 2020. I am now in Grade 6. I am studying using the modular system. It is my father who goes to school to get and return the modules to and from my class advisor. He is also the one helping me accomplish the tasks of answering and making required projects. Sometimes it is very hard for us to understand because there is no teacher around to guide you what to do and because this coronavirus we cannot go easily to the computer shop to do research. I am studying through modules because it is impossible for me to study and join in on-line classes because we do not have internet connection at home. If we avail of it, it costs so much that’s why I chose to study through modules.

We are praying and hoping that this virus would be gone soon, so that we can have our various activities in Kalauman. Although the lockdown here has eased a little, we still can’t do activities together with many attendance.

May God continue to bless and pour more blessing into your family and to everyone there.

Advance Merry Christmas!

Love, Alyanna Jean”



2020-2021: Our 33rd Season

Join us for the final concert of the season!

**St. John Passion: Readings and Responses for Choir, Organ, and Congregation
Music Arranged by John Ferguson
Featuring the St. John's Chancel Choir**

March 28th, 2021

4pm

Streamed Live on St. John's Public Facebook Page and YouTube

Join us from the comfort of your own home for an afternoon of dramatic and moving music presented by the St. John's Chancel Choir. The stirring sounds of the Passion reading accompanied by emotional choral responses will invite you into the sacred journey of Holy Week. The concert will be streamed live on both St. John's Public Facebook Page and YouTube, and will be accessible at any time afterwards.

While the concert series may be virtual, your support is still needed!

Please consider becoming a patron of the St. John's Artist Series at any of the following levels:

Benefactor (\$200+) Sponsor (\$100-199) Donor (\$50-99) Friend (\$25-49)

Name as you would like it to appear in Artist Series Programs _____

Patrons of the 2020-2021 St. John's Artist Series

Benefactor

A Friend, Lynne Bartholomew, Sandy and Scott Brown, Grace and Mark Bruen, Dennis and Ruth Ellman, Suzanne and Don Franks, David Furniss, Ken and Bonnie Hales, Leroy and Linda Horst, Phil and Wendy Hunt, Sally & Steve Jarinko, Anne and Eric Kinsey, Bill and Judy Leslie, Mark and Karen Methlie, Rick and Wendy O'Connor, Dan and Lillian Panachyda

Sponsor

Lorene Ahrens, Sally and Don Atkiss, Sue and Bob Bertolette, Marie Carota, Amy and Andy Faga, Bob and Jean Fehnel, Debby and Steve Hendricks, Marilyn and Lynn Hurley, Kim and Garen Paulson, Marcia Stacy, Robert and Sandra Taylor, Scott and Liz Vanderburg

Donor

Don and Nicole Groff, Susan and John Hendricks, Ruth Kinsey, Mary Lynne and Ray Snyder

Friend

Ruth Moyer, Pricilla Ponist

Looking to view past Artist Series concerts from this season?

Visit st-johns-ucc.org/artist-series/ for links to the October and December 2020 events.