

The Crown

A publication of Church of the Apostles, a United Church of Christ congregation

April 2020



Volume 44 Number 4

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www.apostlesucc.org

For the church, April is our month to focus on Easter and not knowing what we may or may not be able to do will completely determine how we celebrate this Easter. That being said, I need to state that I think Easter has been under-valued in our churches. Christmas Eve seems to be the day everyone wants; however with our story, Easter is far more important. Babies are born every day. Some births are more eventful than others and Jesus was not the first to be born in an unusual place. But dead people do not come out of graves! This is when Jesus showed the full extent of God's power.



From the Pastor...

So I wonder if the resurrection makes us uncomfortable. Many of us have experienced the untimely death of a loved one who we wish would come back to life, sooner than later please. We cry out to God, as Lazarus' sisters Mary and Martha did, saying, "If you had been here, he/she would not have died." But we do not receive the resurrection they did. We may wander in gardens like Mary Magdalene wanting Jesus to show up and give us information or bring us a peace we cannot find anywhere else. I wonder if part of the problem is that we are expecting God to do something specifically for us rather than looking within us to the love God already has there for us to know.

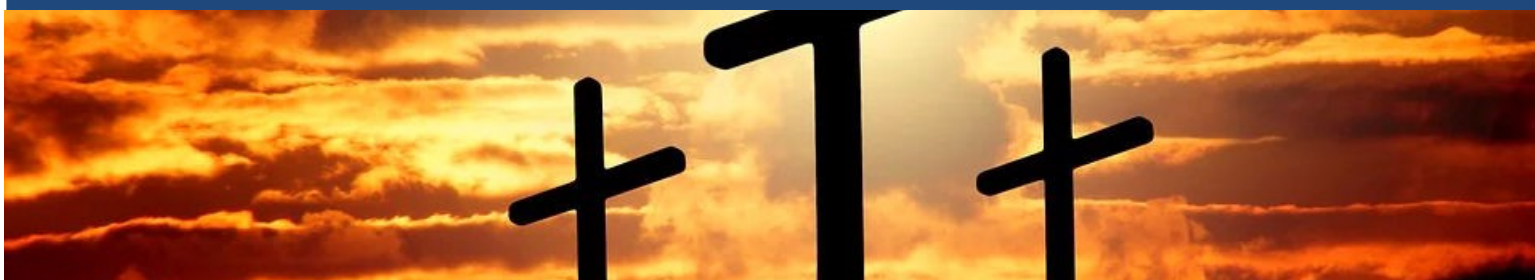
During this time of slowing down, isolation and "social distancing," we are invited to see how God's creation is offering new life all around us. There are lots of beautiful quotes being shared online about how we can come out of this as changed people, more grateful and kind. This is our "world war" as around the world we are learning to re-appreciate the beauty of the sky or a new blossom. Our new "front line" are the hospital workers, EMT's, firefighters, police, grocery store and parts store clerks and those who keep our internet, electric, water and sewer working.

As we approach our holiest of holy days, may we give thanks each day that the sun continues to rise without our help and Christ reigns supreme, guiding those who choose love and as close to us as our next breath. Thanks be to God, who is LORD of the past, present and future! May you find new energy to celebrate Easter this year!

Blessings & peace,

Pastor Kuhn





A Note from the President

Have you ever been driving in your new car and suddenly realize how many just like yours are on the road? All of sudden everywhere you turn you see a car that's the same as the one you just purchased. You probably hadn't noticed that make or model or color before, but now its all you see. Well, over the past week or so, I had heard the phrase "change of heart" multiple times. Then driving past the church, it was on the board out front. It was obviously speaking to me that I needed to sit with it and explore why the phrase would not leave me alone. It was begging to be my next message for you all, even though it was easily one week before the deadline. Which means it was 6 days and 12 hours before I would sit and write my next message. I tend to procrastinate when it comes to the Crown articles, because for me they are the hardest part of being the President of Council. Don't get me wrong, I always love the finished product...but it is a struggle for me to get there.

So, I sat my nerdy self down and I did a little research on the idiom "change of heart" to see where and when it originated from. If I was meant to see something in this phrase, then I needed to know it from the beginning. A "change of heart" is simply to change your opinion on a matter. Typically that shift happens quickly, leading to a "sudden change of heart." The phrase itself dates back to anywhere from 1600-1800's but cannot be confirmed, however is used in Jane Austin's writings in 1813, specifically *Pride and Prejudice*. So it would have been a common enough phrase by then to be relatable to her readers. The word "change" has a much longer history and can be dated back to the 1200's where it originally meant to alter or exchange. In the 1300's however, it had taken on the meaning to undergo alteration or become different. This "newer" meaning is a more plausible use of the word change in the idiom "change of heart."

I do not like this idiom. My view is in order to have a

Council Notes

change of heart, one must have already made up their mind, realized for one reason or another that the stance they took was not in their best interest and decided to switch their view. The place that they land is like a consolation, in that the gut reaction led the person in another direction. It places the emphasis on the decision making process and not feelings of the matter.

What if we were looking at this all wrong? What if the last 200-400 hundred years we had been emphasizing the wrong word? Instead of a "change of heart" what if we had a "heart of change?" How does that alter your perception of the phrase? What if we listened to the Spirit within us and strive to live a more "Christ-like" life? In John 14:17, he says "He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you." Anytime there are alterations to your life it is scary and uncomfortable. But if the focus is to look outward for solace during the tough times, we will never give our intellect the opportunity to be on the same page as the Spirit that lies within us. We need to look inward, and listen, for God will guide us. What could the world look like if we had a "Heart of Change?" When we allow God to guide us, we have no need for fear. At that point any change in life we encounter is simply a "year 1200" use of the word...an exchange...a simple swap. Just like when you buy a new car and trade in the old one. And I bet you'll see it everywhere you go!

Blessings to you all,

Christa DiDomenico Conrad



Worship Schedule

Sundays at 9:15 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.

Dial (717) 392-5718 to listen to the worship information.

The sermon can be watched online at www.apostlesucc.org

Giving Report• February 2020

The cash flow for month ending February 29, 2020 was negative (\$6,675.64) for the year 2020. Same time last year was negative (\$11,511.44). Operating Expenses year to February 2020 were \$94,478.16, Revenue \$87,802.52. Same time 2019 \$88,414.09 for Expenses, \$76,902.65 for Revenue.

PUBLICATION SUBMISSION DEADLINES

The May Crown: 4/17/20.

Requests for the creation of flyers or inserts: 2 weeks prior to the bulletin date requested. . one week in advance if flyer or insert is ready-to-go

Bulletin Announcements (Content only): 1 week in advance



Being a Helper. . .

Looking for the Helpers During Crisis

by Cathy Kenlin

Mr. Rogers said in times of crisis to look for the helpers. And in the past few months, I've seen many helpers at Church of the Apostles. Members writing notes to people in nursing homes who can no longer have physical visitors. Members wondering how best to use our resources like our Food Bank to help others in the community. Members calling others who might be feeling anxious about what's going on with the pandemic and connecting in positive ways via social media.

On a personal note, I have had two serious family issues recently. My mom and her husband took seriously ill on vacation in Florida. Without much notice, I had to fly down there to drive them back home. That meant I was unable to meet some major commitments at the church, but others quickly agreed to cover for me. During their recovery period, I have had numerous people reach out to express concern and to let me know they were in their prayers.

As Sam's pregnancy progressed, she was often approached by members asking how she was and if they could help. The congregation reached out with restaurant gift cards as part of the New Mom's Support Group. When her baby was born, there were complications and he was airlifted to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. He was surrounded in prayer by members of the church. I had a number of people reach out to me expressing their support and concern. He is home now and all appears well. Thank you all.

Church of the Apostles members have clearly shown they are a family of believers and we are definitely the helpers that Mr. Rogers spoke about. We are following Christ's example to support one another and to work to make this world a peaceful and just world.

Ways to be a Helper. . .

As we continue to navigate through uncharted waters during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are exploring ways to stay engaged with our church & community to offer spiritual, temporal and emotional support.

Below are some suggestions from Cathy Kenlin and others to be a Helper in today's world of social distancing:

- Send a card or short note to someone who may not get visitors or who may be living alone
- Donate to a local food bank
- Buy a takeout meal or gift card from your favorite restaurant
- Call & tell someone that you are thinking about them
- Give blood
- Write a letter to your local elected officials about a cause that is important to you
- Say a prayer for someone else
- Pickup groceries, or run another errand, for someone who shouldn't leave their house
- Pick up trash or litter when you take a walk
- Buy a child a book
- Pay for someone behind you in the drive-thru
- Choose a positive attitude – try to find the good in everything and everyone
- Thank someone for something they've done for you or someone else
- Send a thank you note to your local Emergency Dept.
- Pick up your church directory and randomly call 3 people to see how life is going for them right now.
- Pray individually or start a phone prayer chain to pray that an effective vaccine for the coronavirus will be created, for the health and well-being of everyone.
- Stay in touch with the pulse of the worshipping church community by going online and listening to the Sunday worship service or other reflective programming
- COA web site at <https://apostlesucc.org/sermons/>
- Set a time for a "wave party" and invite your neighbors to come to their porch or driveway and wave, sing, dance to music, etc.

If you have any other creative suggestions or if you have had some amazing experiences during this time of social distancing, please let the church office know at maryt@apostlesucc.org



Outreach

Blessing Bag Ministry

by Jane McCartney

Once again, Outreach Commission is partnering with Parish Life and Education to distribute Blessing Bags to people less fortunate than us. This time, the Blessing Bags will be given to Water Street Rescue Mission, specifically for women and children who come to Water Street Rescue Mission for a temporary stay.

Although the church and office is temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this ministry is still active! We ask that you continue to collect donations until May 17th when we will be sorting the donations into boxes for delivery to Water Street. Those who didn't pick up purple tote bags, can put donations in boxes or paper bags, etc. There is a list below of needed items.

We realize it is difficult right now to shop, but when you are shopping in stores or online for needed family supplies, please remember to pick up an item or two for those most in need.

This is also a perfect opportunity to engage in home projects for others. Sunday School children, our youth, and congregation members can make or write cards that say "Thinking of you! From Church of the Apostles United Church of Christ". We are excited about spreading Christ's love with all people! If you have any questions please see or call

Donna Carr or Jane McCartney. ■

List of Needed Items for Water Street Mission. . .

Cough Drops
Chapstick
Hand soap & Sanitizer
Hand Lotion
Women's Body Wash & Lotion
Women's Razors & Shaving Cream
Baby Wipes & Baby Lotion
Diaper Cream & Baby Wash Cloths
Baby Blankets
Socks for Women & Children
Toothpaste & Tooth Brushes
Small packs of Diapers (All Sizes)



Apostles Caring Carts

By Jane McCartney

Our next ministry in the Caring Cart will be our annual collection of children's pajamas for Conner's Comfy PJs. This ministry supports the Holland Foundation which was started by the parents of Conner who lived in Lititz until he lost his battle with cancer at the age of five. Conner told his parents that his wish was for every child going through treatment for cancer to have Comfy pajamas to wear. We will be collecting pajamas for children ages 18 months to 18 years until the end of May. Please consider participating in this wonderful ministry. When the church reopens, kindly place new jammies in the large Caring Cart in the Narthex next to the Outreach bulletin board. Thank you! ■



Parish Life

Please Remember to Donate

Although physical church attendance is not possible at this time, please remember to continue to donate, as you are able. Your generous donations will keep Church of the Apostles going through these challenging times as well as help to provide church staff with the vital income needed to weather this storm. They are faithfully working behind-the-scenes to keep you connected and to maintain operations. . .spiritually, financially, temporally and electronically!

COA Book Club Discussion Dates

Meet in church parlor for book discussions as follows:

April 14	NO MEETING SCHEDULED
May 12	<i>Defending Jacob</i> by William Landay
June 9	<i>Olive Again</i> by Elizabeth Stout

Above dates subject to change.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6



Parish Life

Bus Trip to U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum UPDATE:

The Holocaust Museum is currently closed until at least March 29 due to the Covid-19 virus. With the latest CDC directive, I'm anticipating they may still be closed on the date of our trip, April 25. I've inquired about the process to change the date if they are closed in April. I'm not rescheduling the trip yet, but I'm also not going to deposit your checks until I know the date is confirmed. In the event, we do have to reschedule and the new date doesn't work for you, I will return your check to you.

Cathy Kenlin cmkenlin@comcast.net • 717-940-0364

Meal Support for Sick/Injured Members

Parish Life has entered into an agreement with *Meals on Wheels* that will allow us to refer a sick or recovering homebound member for a specified number of days of meal delivery service. If a member recovering from an illness, injury or hospitalization cannot leave their home and have no other provided meal service at their place of residence, then they can be referred via Pastor Kuhn for this service.

Referral forms are available in the church office and should be given to Pastor Kuhn (or placed in her mailbox in the office). This ministry is supported by funds from the Lockey Endowment. For questions about this supportive service, contact Clara Kosmela, Donna Carr or Pastor Kuhn.



The garage sale, scheduled for April 17 & 18 has been cancelled, for the time being, due to the coronavirus pandemic. It will be rescheduled for a later date. In the meantime, please continue collecting items that can be sold at the sale. Did you get a Christmas present that you don't like or would never use? If so, consider donating it to this year's COA Garage Sale.

Help with preparation (unpacking, sorting, pricing, and displaying) will also be needed. We are looking for cashiers on the 2 days of the sale. We need EVERYONE IN ONE WAY OR ALL WAYS! Please contact Clara Kosmela to volunteer: (717) 569-9960

Worship Online at <https://apostlesucc.org/sermons>

April Preaching Schedule

April 5- Rev. Kuhn

April 12- Rev. Kuhn

April 19- Jonathan Paredes

April 26- Stephanie Dorsey's last day with us



Fun Family Activities—Things to Do At Home

Watch a free viewing of Pilgrims Progress at: <https://www.revelationmedia.com/watchpilgrims/RM17267/>

Fun Christian game ideas: <https://christiancamppro.com/11-fun-christian-games-for-adults>

NASA has a list of fun activities to do at home at: <https://www.nasa.gov>



Sunday School News

Preschool News



Pictured in Photo: Dominic Williams, Dillon Walters, Hannah Royer, Susie McCooley

Sub Sale Postponed

New delivery date for subs will be *April 26* instead of *March 29*. Thank you for your orders. We raised about \$250 for the playground fund for Kingdom International Preschool in Kampong Cham, Cambodia.

Apostles Community Preschool

by Kathryn Zellers

Spring is here! We hopped into our spring unit and discovered all of the new life, this time of year brings.

Apostles Community Preschool traveled to *Fairy Tale Land* where they visited classic fairy tales like *Goldilocks & the Three Bears*, *The Hare & the Tortoise*, and *The Little Red Hen*. . .to name just a few! They learned the valuable lessons that each fairy tale teaches us and had lots of fun seeing the stories come alive!

Girl Scout Cookie Time Postponed

Girl Scout Cookie Sales, slated for **Sunday, March 29th**, from 10:00 am—12:00 noon, with Brownie Troop #70435 is cancelled until further notice. However, cookies can be purchased online at <https://www.girlscouts.org>



Bunny Breakfast is cancelled for this year.

Worship & Prayer



If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.
— 2 Chronicles 7:14 King James Version (KJV)

Come Join Us Online!

Sunday Worship

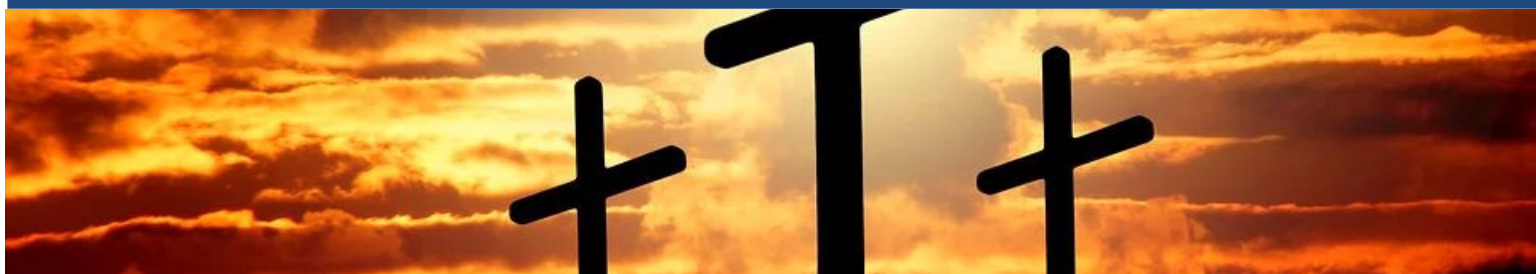
<https://apostlesucc.org/sermons>

Lenten Vespers Online

Wednesday evenings

7 PM during Lent

If you would like to participate, please send us an email and we will forward the meeting I.D. number and password to connect with this evening of prayers. Please join us!



April Celebrations

Thanks for Stephanie Dorsey

Stephanie will be graduating from Lancaster Seminary and leaving COA at the end of April. Please take time to send her a card or note indicating appreciation for her work with COA and to wish her good luck in the future. Her address is:

2606 Northfield Drive, East Petersburg, PA 17520

Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to all who come to him for protection. — Proverbs 30:5



Accentuating the Positive. . .

We can't come closer together literally right now. However, we can use the power of our community to pull together as a whole in the Legend Spirit of Independence, Dignity and Quality of Life.

- **Avoid a steady diet of negative news.** Scout for positive stories of recovery, faith and love. And share them with us. We'll spread them community wide.
- **Look forward to celebrating** the day when the all-clear is sounded and this challenge is overcome. What's the first thing you'll do? Start thinking of your ideas now.

Happy Anniversary! ➡

Date	Name
4/1	Ella Royer
4/2	Barbara Bimson
4/3	Sallie McMinn
4/4	Michael Buckwalter
4/4	Aria Rampaul
4/4	Lois Schousen *
4/5	Beth Buckwalter
4/6	Tim Albert
4/6	Jim Eaton
4/6	Allison Weiser
4/6	Sunshine Whittington
4/7	Jim Dougherty
4/9	Stephanie Hall
4/9	Randy Sweigart
4/11	Cole Bravo
4/11	Jane McCartney
4/13	Kristi Newport
4/14	David Miller
4/14	Ethan Smith
4/15	Dr. Peter Schmiechen
4/15	Elaine Zartman
4/16	Joyce Baker
4/16	Bob Hilliard *
4/18	Susie McCooey
4/20	Ashley Laymon
4/20	Richard Millhouse
4/21	Brent Berger
4/21	Larry Neiderer
4/22	Kamron Fickes
4/23	Lou Gaudio
4/24	Charles Diller *
4/27	Gretchen Conrad
4/28	Carl Zartman
4/28	Dawn Zipko

* 90+ Birthdays

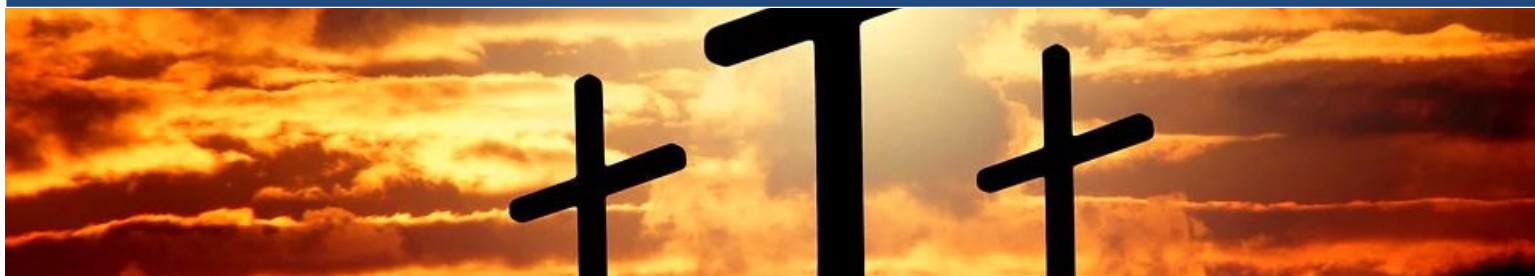
*Birthdays
of the Month*



Happy
Birthday!

** 50+ Anniversaries

Date	Name
4/7/1979	John & Holly Kleimo
4/14/1968	Don & Patricia Hess **
4/20/1990	James & Connie Souders
4/29/1989	David & Joann Irwin
4/30/1988	Michael & Muriel Preston



Church Business

Nominating Committee Bylaws: Proposed Change:

Please mark your calendar for Sunday, May 17 when we will have a brief Congregational Meeting between services to vote on proposed Nominating Committee Bylaws changes. This date may be adjusted depending on the COVID-19 situation. This change centers around lowering the number of members on the Nominating Committee. Watch for a letter that you will receive announcing the meeting by the end of April with the information on this change. Members of the Bylaws Change Committee will be available to answer any questions at information sessions 5/3 and 5/10 between services.

Church Updates Relating to COVID-19

In response to the growing public concern regarding the coronavirus pandemic, Church of the Apostles, UCC made a decision on Tuesday, March 17th, to temporarily suspend Sunday worship services, pre-school, and all church activities until at least April 30th.

Videos of the services, along with corresponding bulletins, will be available on the church web site at <https://apostlesucc.org/sermons>

The church office will remain active behind-the-scenes to address essential issues. However, for the safety and well-being of church staff, we ask that you **do not** come into the office when church staff are present. If you need to conduct urgent church business, kindly either e-mail us or call for an appointment. If you do need to speak or meet with a staff member in person, please be kind and keep to the social distancing parameters of at least 6 feet away and if you cough — cover your mouth.

Food pantry items will also be available by appointment, for those in serious need. For assistance, please call 717-392-5718 or email us.

Church Prayer List

If you have a prayer intention that you would like the church family to pray for, please contact the church office to have your loved ones added to this prayer list at:

Continued Strength and Healing:

Kit Gregory, Marianne Deaner; Carol Horn, Joyce Smedley, Susan Shaak, Russell Weiser; Carrie Adams, Doris Robb, Ed Fuller; Marty Holmes' sister-in-law, Dottie Farmer; Janie Cardellino; Carrie Adams; Joyce Smedley's son, Bill and wife, Collette, Patti Forry, Cathy Kenlin's mother & stepfather; Clay Butzer; Carla Williams' granddaughter-in-law, Angela, Greg Wright, friend of Donna & Skeeter Carr

For the Safety and Protection of. . .

Kit Gregory's grandson, Remi, and all military personnel serving at home and abroad

For all those in the medical profession, police officers and all American workers who are keeping the country in operation. . .tending to the sick and all in need.

And for. . .

A cure or effective vaccine for COVID-19
For all those suffering from the effects of COVIS-19

Prayer Request

I would like to request prayers for:

Name of Person Requesting Prayers:

Phone Number: _____

Please mail to the church office or drop this form off in the drop box right outside the front doors to the church.
Thank you!



Church of the Apostles Lay Leadership

COUNCIL OFFICERS

President: Christa Didomenico Conrad
 Ph: 717-575-8210 • Email: christadi@live.com
 VicePresident: Donna Carr
 Ph: 717-475-5285 • Email: skeetcarr@comcast.net
 Treasurer: Andy Smith
 Ph: 717-615-1649 • Email: andy.smith@bbandt.com
 Secretary: Jeanne Clausen
 Ph: 717-201-9330 • Email: jeannie.joel@gmail.com

COMMISSION CHAIRS

Education Commission

(Meets the 2nd Monday of the month/Rm 306)
 Chair: Judy Waltman
 Ph: 717-285-7395 • Email: jlwaltman@comcast.net

Outreach Commission

(Meets 2nd Monday, every other month/Parlor)
 Chair: Jane McCartney
 Ph: 717-392-4844 • Email: spmccaney@comcast.net

Parish Life Commission

(Meets the 2nd Monday of the month/Rm 304)
 Co-Chair: Clara Kosmela
 Ph: 717-468-3492 • Email: joli6291@yahoo.com
 Co-Chair: Donna Carr (as listed under VP)

Property Commission

(Meets the 2nd Monday of the month/Rm 305)
 Chair: Herb Forry
 Ph: 717-201-7863 • Email: heforry@comcast.net

Stewardship Commission

(Meets the second Thursday of the month/ Rm 304)
 Chair: George Alspach
 Ph: 717-201-2526 • Email: galspach@aol.com

Worship Commission

(Meets the first Tuesday of the month/Rm 111)
 Chair: Bernie Fickes
 Ph: 717-925-9155 • E mail: penquindiva@verizon.net

Church of the Apostles Prayer Chain

Link 1:

Steve & Monica Daniels (717) 299-6007 or monicadaniels54@gmail.com
 Lynn Steedle (717) 390-4152 or ccsteedle@gmail.com

Link 2:

Harriet Latschar (717) 859-1535
 Mary Ellen Bachman (717) 393-8922
 Susan Shaak (717) 872-2987
 Doug Nutt (717) 283-2937

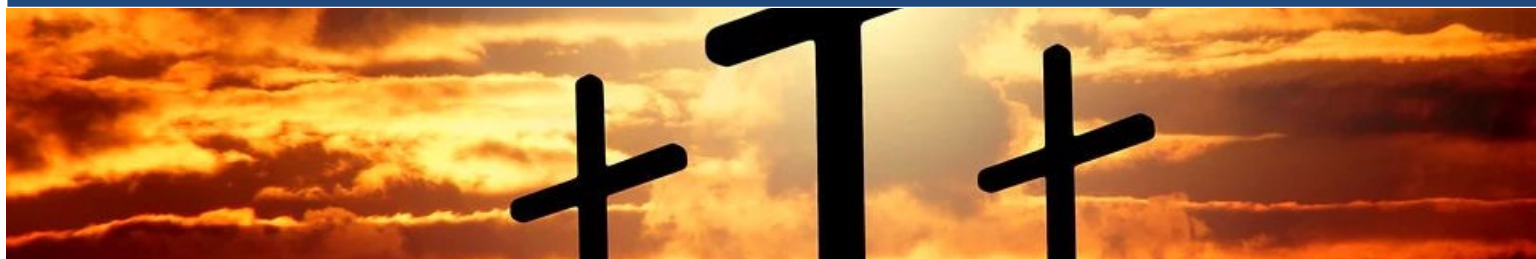
Link 3:

Annette Rohloff (717) 394-0424 or rextthomas@comcast.net
 Bev Keller (717) 898-2146 or bek0914@aol.com
 Cindy Williams (717) 572-3808 or clwjbwilliams@gmail.com
 Nancy Steger (717) 617-2635 or nancyasteger@gmail.com

Link 4:

Kit Gregory (717) 299-6677 or kitpaulgregory@gmail.com
 Jean Heidig (717) 394-8733 or geojean6@gmail.com
 Donna Carr (717) 475-5285





March Flowers for Worship

April 5

In Loving Memory of...

- Mr. & Mrs. J. Alfred Echman, Dr. Jill Hunderford, Mr. & Mrs. Harold L. Groff, M. & Mrs. Edward K. Kneedler by the Butzer and Hungerford families

April 12

In Loving Memory of...

- Florence & Elsworth E. Kistler, Marie & J. Glenn Ebersole, Sr. by daughter & son, Helen & J. Glenn Ebersole

In Honor of...

- All musical participants in our church services throughout the year by Audrey Markle

April 19

In Loving Memory of...

- Candy Cunningham by her family
- Joseph and Joyce Andruisin, Charles & Kathryn A. Waltman by Larry & Judy Waltman

April 26

In Loving Memory of...

- Charles R. Anstine by Darrell and Linda Schock
- Walter Schousen by Lois Schousen
- Wilbur & Anna Eshbach, Ralph & Bertha Ruble by John & Bonnie Eshbach & family
- Susan Nolt, a Stephen Minister, by Lynn Steedle
- Bob Miller by his wife, Shirley & family

ALTAR FLOWERS

If you would like to place flowers on Sunday, please contact:

July—December

Wilma Klingler 717-584-6430

January—June

Jean Heidig 717-394-8733

Cost of altar flowers: \$35.00



Flowers for Worship Form

Our flowers are an integral part of our worship service. Not only providing a physical symbol of beauty during our worship, after the service they are given as a symbol of love and caring to a member of our community who is unable to be with us physically. The cost of our flowers and bulletins averages about \$140.00 a week. Our suggested contribution for sponsoring flowers and bulletins is \$35.00; however, any amount is welcomed and appreciated.

If you would like to sponsor flowers, please fill out the form below and place it in the offering plate or send it into the office. A thank you letter will be sent following your sponsorship with directions for sending in your donation. Thank you for your support in this important ministry.

I would like to sponsor flowers on the following date:

"In honor of" or "In memory of"

Your name

Phone number



A Farewell Letter from Stephanie Dorsey

Fellow Apostles and Siblings in Christ,

Our time together is drawing to a close, and it is a bittersweet time. The future is surely filled with much possibility, and as exciting as that can be, there is also uncertainty and loss involved in any transition. It is natural, when on the precipice of something new, to want to reflect on the exact meaning of what came before, so she can, with open eyes, remember the past with fondness and learn valuable lessons for the sake of the future. Accordingly, I hope you will indulge me in using this letter to reflect a bit, for my own sake and for the sake of Church of the Apostles.

Nothing can be said without first saying that I have loved and cherished my time at Church of the Apostles, both as an intern and as an interim. Apostles will always be the environment that trusted me with enough freedom to truly get to know what a calling for church ministry looks and feels like. Because of my time here, I can confidently say that I have no doubts as to my calling for this work. I have preached, presided, written, prayed, visited, led, taught, counseled, listened, played, sung, and reported. I participated both in baptisms and in funerals. I have laughed with those of you who laughed and wept with those of you who wept. It is not always easy work, but there is always joy in it. I hope, if nothing else, I was able to communicate that in the way I conducted myself among you.

I will miss the people. Along the way I have made connections with many of you. It is such a humbling and extraordinary thing we ministers are entrusted to do: to befriend people, some of whom are quite unlike us. It is a grace given unto me that is hard to describe, but if I had to try, I'd say it's a bit like the way Pastor Kathy talks about the communion table: something happens wherein the divisions between us seem to vanish and we are just children of God praying in a hospital room, studying the Acts of the Apostles, singing a hymn, or sharing a pot of tea. The writer of the epistle to the Ephesians proclaims that Christ has "broken down the dividing wall" between peoples. After nearly two years among you, I can confirm that sentiment.

Of course, the latter half of our journey together was not without challenge. We cannot pretend otherwise. I like to think, however, that we are all the better for it. Despite some hurt feelings along the way, the feeling I am mostly left with is one of gratitude. I am grateful that Church of the Apostles offered a safe place for me to truly begin my ministry, embodied correctly. I am grateful for the many of you who offered words of affirmation and support, for those of you who struggled but did so in love, and for all of you that stayed and remained part of a united body, despite the many differing opinions on the matter. My hope for you is that you not forget this time. I pray it can be formative for you as it was for me, that it inspires the kinds of ministries or messages that develop. I pray that this is not merely the end of something for you, but the beginning. Church of the Apostles has, for as long as I've known it, prided itself on its personable hospitality. I now know firsthand that this famous hospitality is capable of welcoming the stranger and the outcast. I wish you many fruitful years of doing just that, as you, along with the church universal, seek to be the church Christ intends us to be, little by little, step by step. May God bless and keep you.

In humble gratitude,

Stephanie Dorsey



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