



January -
February 2024

Restoration PRESSBYTERIAN

a bi-monthly publication of Restoration Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Our VISION

To be a church,
a community and a world
continually restored
by the grace of Christ.



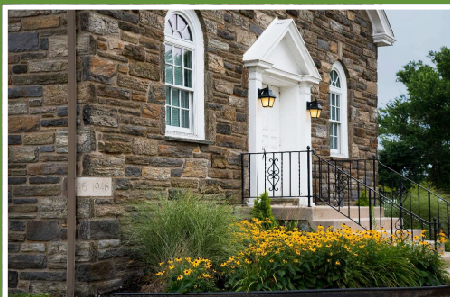
Our IDENTITY

We are strugglers, sufferers,
and sinners who share
in God's restoration
of all things -
our life with God, our
relationships, our community
and our world -
through the Gospel.



Our MISSION

To proclaim the Gospel
and serve in love
with the hope that God
will bring continual
restoration to our lives,
relationships, community
and world for His glory.



You Are What You Eat

by Pastor Jon Bonomo

Have you ever thought about how much of our Identity is tied up with *eating*? When people think of “Philadelphia” – whether they are from Philly or elsewhere – one of the first things that comes to mind is cheesesteaks! And most good Philadelphians will look down with scorn upon people from other areas trying to replicate the *real thing*! Similarly, I’m from an Italian-American family, and whenever we get together, we are focused on what among our old favorite foods we will eat. We’ve all just come through the holidays, and many of us have enjoyed traditional meals prepared according to old family recipes. This is part of our identity. We are what we eat.

“You are what you eat” has become a well-known saying, and for reasons beyond merely our cultural customs. It is true quite literally. Did you

know that the average human adult loses something like *three hundred billion cells*, every single day? How do those cells get replaced? Through what we eat! The food that you put into your body actually becomes a part of you. Which is why, if you eat garbage then you will feel like garbage. If you want to be healthy and feel healthy, then you need to eat a healthy diet. You are what you eat.



This is the way it is for us physically. But it’s also the way it is for us spiritually. The things we spend our time consuming – what we watch, read, listen to, etc., — these things are like spiritual food and drink that get taken into our souls and become engrained in how we think and the decisions we make day-to-day. For these reasons and no doubt many more, food is central to the message of the Bible at pretty much every major stage.

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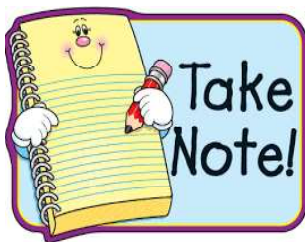
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STUCK IN THE HOUSE

and unable to join us for our Sunday Worship service? It is live-streamed! Please check us out on FaceBook: www.fb.com/restorationpca We would love to have you drop in! **You do NOT have to join FaceBook to stream the service.**



If you are planning ANY activities that involve the church calendar or the use of the church facilities, please let Sherrie Strain know so that the date/s can be cleared and the information can be added to a comprehensive calendar. Thanks!

You Are What You Eat *Continued from page 2*

For starters, Food bookends the overarching storyline of Scripture. The Creation and Fall of mankind center on eating – the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the Fall, we became what we ate. The tree that God said would bring us death if we ate from it, brought death to humanity. At the very end, the consummation of all things will be celebrated in a meal – the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Not insignificantly, the Tree of Life is in the New Creation, yielding its fruit each month for the healing of the nations. (Rev. 22:3)

Similarly, at the two most significant redemptive stages in between the beginning and the end, we find the same theme – God provides a meal for his people. When the people of Israel were delivered from Egypt, the final stage of their deliverance began with the preparation and eating of a meal – the sacrifice and eating of the Passover Lamb, with its blood placed on the doorposts of their houses. And the ongoing celebration of this meal was to shape Israel's identity as a freed people from that time forward. This is why when the Lord gave the Passover to the people of Israel, the first thing he said was, *"This month shall be for you the beginning of months..."* (Exodus 12:2) In other words, this event and the meal which commemorates it generation after generation was to be the story that provided the context in which all of their days in this world are shaped and lived – You are what you eat.

So, when Jesus was about to complete his redemptive work to free us from the shackles of sin and death, it is no mere coincidence that his final hours with his disciples were spent over a meal, at which he said, *"Take and eat.*

This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me... This cup is the New Covenant in my blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Drink it, all of you." (Matthew 26:26-27, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

This is because we are what we eat. Much like the Passover meal was for the people of Israel, the Lord's Supper is for the New Covenant people of God, the Church. It is the meal which retells the story that provides the context in which all of our days in this world are shaped and lived – we are what we eat.



This is why communing with the Lord regularly is so important for us. To be sure, we commune with the Lord in all sorts of different ways – The Word, Prayer, Worship, Fellowship, etc. But, there is a reason we refer to the Lord's Supper specifically *as Communion* – Because while there is physical food and drink involved, its true significance is in our spiritual communion with the Living Christ, which is represented through the physical acts of eating and drinking. As such, this meal is a gift given for the continual renewal of our souls. This at least explains something of what Jesus was getting at when he said to the crowds in John 6, *"Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food. And my blood is true drink."* (verses 54 & 55

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Championing Singleness: Why are you Single?

by Sydney Flores

“I’m saying this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure an undistracted devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:35 NASB).

Defining the Term Singleness: What Christians mean by “singleness” is often very different than what our secular friends mean by “singleness.” Basically, in our culture today, if you’re not a Christian and you’re single, it’s seen as a great thing because you are free, unattached, and uncommitted. You don’t have the entanglements and restraints of a marriage or a long-term relationship. In our culture, you’re free to sexually experiment, have multiple partners, do what you want. Whereas for the Christian, the Bible teaches us that you shouldn’t be having sex outside of marriage. For us, being unmarried doesn’t just mean we’re uncommitted, but that we are called to be celibate. It’s a very different prospect if you’re single as a Christian than if you’re not a Christian.



Why are you here? and Why are you single?

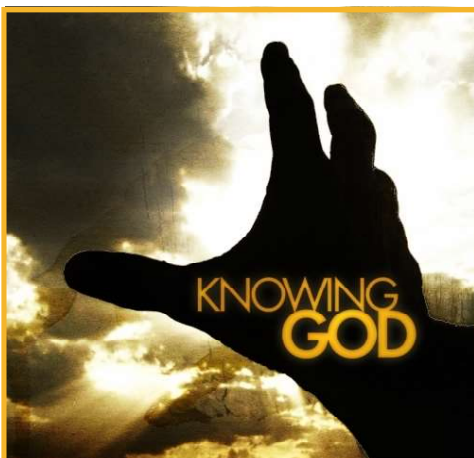
Why has God ordained that every human being experiences a season of singleness?

The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7, as he is championing singleness to this community, *“I’m saying this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but...to secure an undistracted devotion to the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:35).* Did you catch it? Paul just told you the reason singleness exists. It’s not just a waiting period before marriage. If the married life were the only goal, then Jesus never fulfilled that. Paul says, **“Singleness is to pursue an undistracted devotion to the Lord.”** Not to fill our life with distractions of our devices. Not to pursue career ambition, but to secure an undistracted devotion to the Lord.

Marriage is great, Jesus even blessed one by attending and performing his first miracle, but it can be distracting. There’re certainly all kinds of responsibilities, different things to manage. Singleness affords a freedom, and it’s freedom for the purpose of focus.

It’s interesting in the world today when I hear people use the word “focus”, I usually hear one of two words come after it. First is the word “career”. “I’m just focused on my career right now. I’m just trying to get ahead, trying to climb the ladder, trying to make my first million, rise and grind.” That sort of thing, or I hear them say, “I’m focused on me. I’m just trying to do me right now.” But neither of those things are going to satisfy your human heart, because that’s not what you’re made for.

Paul said it to the Colossians, *“... all things have been made by Jesus and for Him” (Colossians 1:16 NASB).* You’re not just made *by* God; you’re made *for* God. Augustine was right, your heart will be restless until it rests in Him. God, in His mercy, ordains that every human being has a season of singleness so we can focus on that foundational relationship. And it’s a kindness.



You see it in Jesus’ relationship with the woman at the well. You remember as He came to her, He’s telling her about living water that will not only satisfy you, but it will well up into eternal life. She says she wants it and then He starts talking to her about the five husbands she’s had and the sixth guy she’s now living with. Why does He bring that up? What He’s letting her know is “you’re thirsty”, but you’ve been trying to satisfy that thirst in men, and they can’t do it. You need to come to Me first. Don’t look to a guy or a girl to do what only God can do. We have to get a relationship with God right before we’ll ever get a relationship with a guy or a girl right.

So, God, in His kindness, gives us this season with its freedom so we can focus on this foundational relationship of knowing Him.

Editor's Note:

This poem was read at our Christmas Eve service and touched the hearts of many. Yvonne graciously gave us her permission to reprint her poem so that, even though we are past the Christmas season, other might have a copy of it.

Boxes

by Yvonne Bonomo

We're spending this Christmas in boxes
Which initially strikes me as sad
It's not quite the typical décor
Of a merry Christmas being had

I've always been one for tradition
I've never been one for much change
Three moves in three years will combat this
And cause a stiff heart to rearrange

It feels like we just had unpacked them
And gave every picture a spot
But now they'll be back under cardboard
And we'll see all the places they're not

We're very excited to go East
And look forward to all that will be
It's just, seeing our lives in these boxes
Brings out the most sentimental me

We welcomed our son to the world here
We pushed our daughter on the swing
I said goodbye here to my appendix
We had kitchen devotions, and would sing

It's not exactly starting over
It's not that everything will be new
But we'll have to take time to learn street names
And get used to a much different view

I think of the baby named Jesus
Who humbled Himself, and was born
We celebrate this each December
We call His coming Christmas morn

Because evil tried to take over
Because His beloved would fall
He traveled from glory to darkness
And made the greatest move of all

He came to this world empty-handed
He came without satchel or bag
He didn't bring stuff taped in boxes
He came to make robes out of rags

For the joy set before Him, He suffered
For the joy He would bring, He endured
For the hope we would need, He became sin
Our Emmanuel, Christ the Lord



His surroundings were less than tradition
And was He found forsaking such change?
He came here with nothing but love for us sinners
Then died, despising the shame

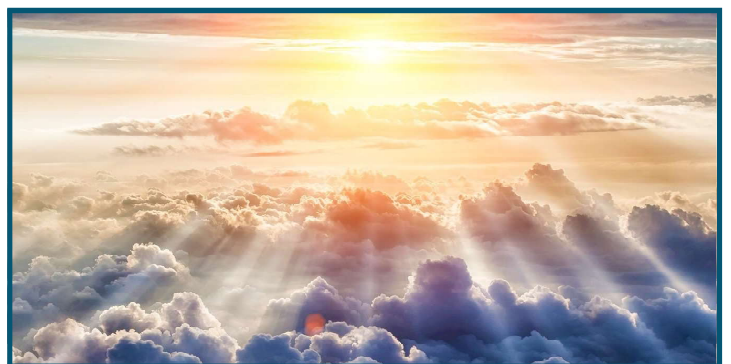
I think when you fill empty boxes
A part of yourself goes in, too
Like you're guarding the things you've collected
While preserving the you that you knew

But the me that I know is still growing
That'll continue wherever the place
And "home" isn't tied to an address
It's bound tight to His mercy and grace

So we'll gather and pack up our family
And lay some new roots in new ground
We'll continue to pray as we have been
That through Jesus, God's love would abound

And we're spending this Christmas in boxes
Which I now find to be pretty fitting
Our true Treasure lies not in bubble wrap
Or a room where we've been used to sitting

Our Savior in Heaven is waiting
He's promised us room near the throne
And it's then, when we find ourselves there at His feet
That we'll finally say, "Now we're home."



You Are What You Eat *Continued from page 2*

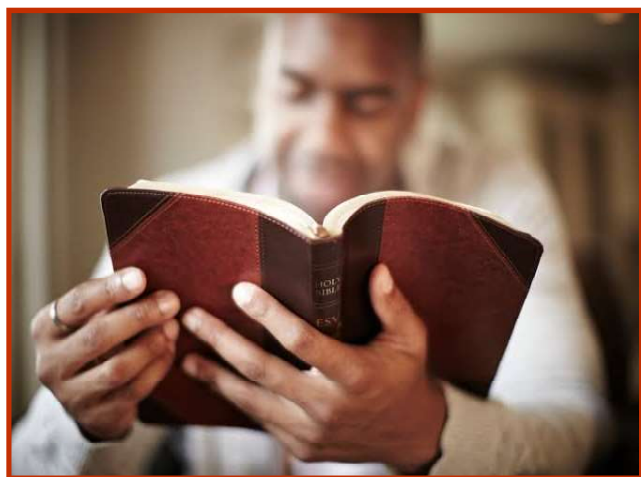
ESV) Every other food we take into ourselves is perishing food that sustains perishable life. Jesus and Jesus alone is eternal food for eternal life. We are what we eat.

This has important implications for how we see what it looks like to make progress in the Christian Life. Oftentimes we can get discouraged because we think God's grace should be like a shot of espresso – drink it quick and get a quick burst. But it is not so! God's grace is more like the natural development of a child as it is nourished by the rhythm of eating, playing, and resting. By continually partaking of the Grace of the Lord Jesus, we are slowly but progressively conformed to His image over the long haul, in ways that we may not even be aware of in the moment.

Just as a growing child is not conscious of his or her own bodily growth day to day, but over the course of months and years it is clearly seen until the child reaches maturity, so it is with our growth in Christ. You don't necessarily feel it or see it happening day to day. But it is seen over the whole course of your life, as you are made more and more like Jesus the more you feed on his grace, week by week, month by month, year by year. In other words: I am not where I want to be. But I'm also not what I once was. And I am not what I *will be*, either, thanks be to God. I am becoming what I eat. As we enter into this New Year together, may He shape us into a community that is becoming more and more like him as we walk, live, and feast together in His Grace!

This is worth reflecting on whenever we come to the Lord's Table, and certainly at the beginning of a New Year. Jesus gives us New Food for the New Life within us. How much do you desire to feed on His heavenly food in 2024?

Make it a year of feasting on His grace, and growing in His likeness! For just as at His Supper, the bread and juice are taken into our bodies and become one with us for the sustaining of our physical lives, so our souls are nourished and our spiritual life sustained and strengthened by the body and blood of Christ, as by the power of the Holy Spirit He becomes one with us and we with him! May that be what is in store for you and me in 2024! May we feast well, and so become what we eat.



Set aside some time during January and February to memorize (hiding God's Word in your heart) these verses about God's peace! All verses are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Psalm 4:8: In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 119:165: Great peace have those who love Your law; nothing can make them stumble.

Isaiah 54:10: "For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and My covenant of peace shall not be removed," says the Lord, Who has compassion on you.

John 16:33: I have said these things to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.



This technique is borrowed from Pastor John Piper.



Laurie Ware

by Beth McCarrick and Laurie Ware

Sometimes it's good to have a good friend to help you out when you are in a crunch for time. I was in one of those crunch times when I asked Laurie Ware if she could help me out with a "Getting to Know You" article for the church newsletter. I contacted her and told her I needed it yesterday and this is what she came up with in response. Laurie, thank you so much!

From Laurie: married to Mark for 31 years, three children, Mark, Tim and Cassie, two daughters-in-law, two grandchildren with one on the way. "Though Mark isn't married yet, fiancé Heather is family to us already."

I was a good kid, one of those who always had to do things just right, and if I disappointed someone or fell short in my own eyes, I would agonize over that. My parents taught me to pray, took me to church, and we had some religious family traditions, but I didn't know much about Jesus and remember asking at home and at church if He was real, if those things in the Bible truly happened, but I wasn't satisfied with the answers. In high school, a friend invited me to Young Life, and it was there that I heard that I was a sinner. Now, I may have heard that before, and I knew of sin and confession, but on this one night in particular, as I listened to a man named Joe explain sin, it hit me hard. I was a sinner - Me, the good girl, the one who never got in trouble and did everything right - or at least tried to. That cut through me, and I'm so glad Joe went on to explain the cross and Jesus dying and shedding His blood, His gift of forgiveness and salvation! It was easy to ask for it, what was harder was living with the assurance that Jesus would keep on loving me. Sometimes that can still be a battle for me.

Fast forward to about twenty years ago. [EEK, I'm old enough to say that?!] Our family had suffered a loss, the death of my nephew Ryan after he fought cancer for five years. I was angry, but I didn't realize that at first. There was busyness that comes with a funeral, and then I was helping my children to grieve (ages 2 - 12 at the time), and I'd been keeping a website about this whole journey because people around the world were praying for Ryan. Life was busy, and I was hurting, but I moved on - away from church, away from the Bible, away from God. My prayer life was this: "Why God? How could you?" Me, daring to question God like this, hard to believe now that I did that. That lasted TEN years! One day, out of the blue, it hit me: I was sinning. Oh, I hadn't done any "bad things," but I had stopped trusting God. I was angry with Him, and I was holding onto that anger, and it was eating me up. I confessed this to a friend and to God, we prayed and cried together, and the relief was immediate.

It was that year that I began to attend Restoration regularly, and shortly after that I became a member. I wanted this community and needed it. I'd like to say that I learned the answer to "why," but I didn't. What I did learn was that God was waiting for me to trust Him, to just trust and love Him, because that's Who He is. Wow!

Cancer. I hate that word because it is one word that conjures up so very many feelings and memories. My family was hit hard, and I got the "c word" diagnosis just as I joined the church. My cousin got it a month before me, my dad the month after. During this time, my mom and my daughter got sick. The circumstances were hard, but my faith carried me through it. We lost Mom and Dad months apart, and I'd like to say I dealt with that ok, but I didn't. This is when my church family and friends held me up, and I learned to lean on others. Over time the pain lessened. I still miss them. It still hurts. The good memories are stronger than the pain though, and thankfully, I have lots of those.

That's what I want to create with my grandchildren - Memories. Little moments, big moments, ordinary, special, it doesn't matter what, just that we have that time together. We pray, sing, make art, read books, play ball, blow bubbles, go on adventures in the yard or around town. Part of being able to do things with my precious grands meant getting my health - mental and physical in order. My heart was not healthy, I couldn't lose weight, I'd been injured badly and recovery was slow, and I just felt overall yucky. A life-long health issue was diagnosed, and that

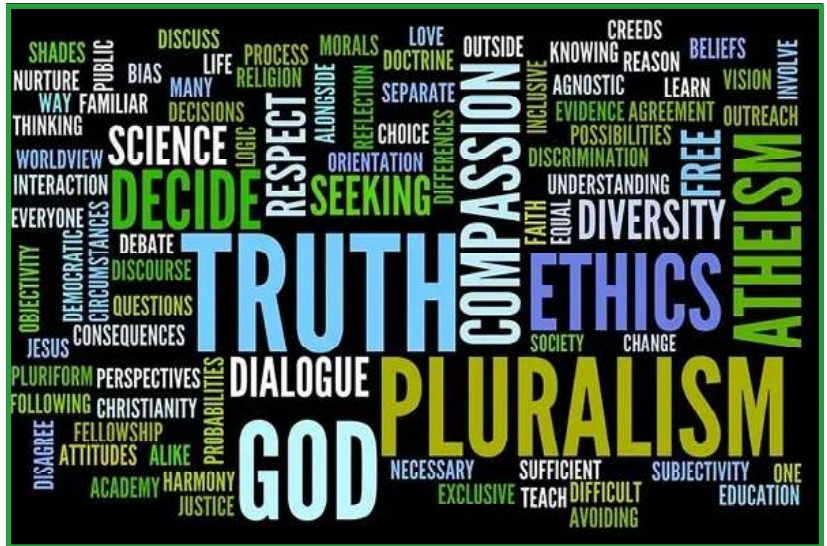


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Two Christian Perspectives on Education: How can Christians view the current issues in Education?

by Justin and Angel White

Take a look at the news headlines the past few years, and you'll most likely notice a topic that was typically not often discussed in the past: education. However, over the past couple of years, parents and community members have been creating waves battling with school boards and their members over such topics as critical race theory, book bans, what names/pronouns to call their students, and the teaching of black history. Up until a few years ago, these topics probably would not have been paid any attention. Now, it seems that everyone has an opinion on what and how things will be taught, despite not spending their time in a school setting on a daily basis. Schools are a unique arena to Christians, (with maybe a few others) where things are separated into "Christian" or "Secular." People don't go to the "Christian" Wawa, or decide between going to the "Christian" or Public Emergency room. It is just a part of the world we live in. It is interesting to hear all of the arguments being made, and we feel we have a unique perspective as we directly work in the classroom.



Angel currently works at Fredrick Douglass Christian School, a private Christian School in Chester. Angel grew up attending Christian elementary, middle, and high school, as well as a Christian University. Justin worked at Douglass for three years, and currently works at Delcroft, a public elementary school. Besides teaching at Douglass, Justin has been in public schools for his entire education.

We were asked what it is like to be a Christian and work in education, particularly in the public-school setting. To us, there is hardly any difference at all. The obvious exception would be that in a private, Christian school, you are expected to discuss your faith, its impact on the course material, and there are courses on religion and the gospel. While Justin does not have the opportunity to directly profess his faith, he does proclaim the message of Jesus through indirect opportunities with his students, such as sharing that he went to church over the weekend and greeting each student with a "good morning" and smile each day.

Besides that, it would be difficult to notice any major differences at all between working at a Christian school or a public school. Parents often assume the students going to a Christian school are saved. However, many of them are not. Parents have good intentions with wanting to provide a great education for their child and to have them enhance their relationship with Christ, but it is up to each individual to accept Jesus as their Savior, and going to a Christian school could be (but is not automatically) a way to help someone along their walk with the Lord. A great number of people have sent their children to Christian schools, and those same students no longer are church goers, and are the subjects of requests from disappointed parents for prayers of salvation.



Both public and private schools have to deal with students who have struggles with drugs/alcohol, pre-marital sex, and so on. To a lesser degree, teachers

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What is Brandywine Summit Camp Meeting?

by Beth McCarrick

Nestled in the woods off Rt. 202 and across from Naaman's Creek Rd. on Beaver Valley Rd is a long driveway that leads to a living sanctuary from years past. Now a site on the national historic registry, Brandywine Summit Camp Meeting (BSCM) is a village of over 50 remaining cottages in the woods. Established in 1866, Christian families gathered on land donated by a local farmer after the Civil War to thank God and to have their souls refreshed and the gospel proclaimed. It was started by area Methodist churches with two rules: all the buildings would be only one story so that no one could look down on another and that none of the trees could be cut down (of course, we've had to remove dead ones threatening cottages). The mission of the camp is to be an explicitly Christian community.

In 2019, I convinced Alan that we should look into the camp meeting. BSCM had a number of available cottages in need of TLC. We were able to be approved by the camp's board after an interview with the sales and rental committee concerning our testimonies and Christian walk. We chose a cottage that appeared structurally sound (meaning no roof leaks and sound walls). The floor though was covered with carpet that had seen better days, and the floor beneath was a thin pressboard that was not in great shape.

At that time, the Lord had seen fit to take our first grandchild to himself and the cottage provided a project for Leah and Jan and us to pour ourselves into. Since Leah had worked with Habitat for Humanity while at Eastern and Jan had worked extensively with his family in construction, they had the knowhow and willingness to lead the project with us. We were able to add a solid floor over the existing one.

My brother and his wife were living with us and I thought "wouldn't it be nice if they were able to get their own place – even if it is temporary". In July, my brother and his wife were able to move in after they completed their approval process.

The camp meeting that first year had several events that we participated in – the first was their Spring Tea which is a time getting everyone excited about the coming season of program and getting folk back into the habit of coming to the camp after its winter nap. We participated in work-days, covered dish dinners on Saturday evenings, listened to various preachers and musical groups that came in weekly. My brother and sister-in-law developed close friendships with a number of folk who also lived full time on the grounds during the season.

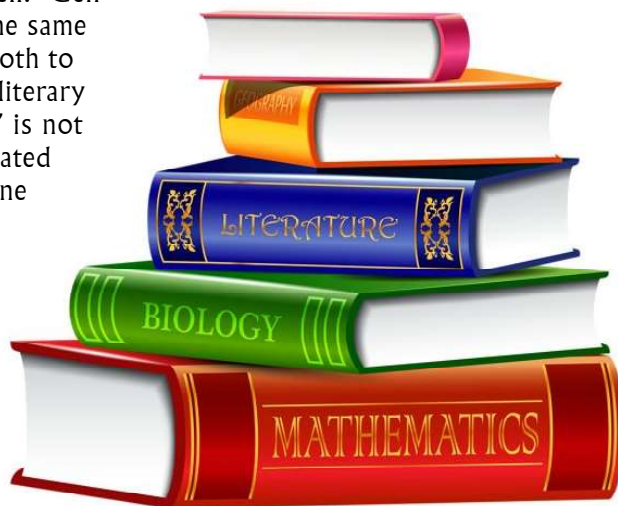
Then 2020 hit with Covid. The nice thing was that our Tabernacle is open air so that as long as we distanced ourselves, we could still meet. We have slowly come out of pandemic mode and this coming season we hope to be totally back on track. To do this both Alan and I have joined the program committee planning the events for the whole season. This means we are looking for speakers and musical talent to fill the weekends at the camp. If you know of someone who would fit that bill, please pass that to us. The camp is open to the public and we would love to have many from church come and enjoy what Alan and I have been blessed with.

Two Perspectives on Christian Education

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are dealing with focus issues, disrespect, manners, and more. In fact, in Justin's experience, many of the students who excel with the classroom expectations (and academics) come from families who practice Islam or are immigrants. God's common grace extends to everyone, even those who have not yet accepted Jesus into their lives, and many different cultures place an emphasis on kindness and respect, and showing love to others, despite not being Christians.

Debates over what is being taught in public schools rage on as well. Generally, with exceptions, private and public schools use much of the same curriculums for reading and math. Classic literature is used in both to develop well-read readers who can infer and discuss a variety of literary topics. In what may be a surprise to many, "critical race theory" is not being taught in public schools, and students are not being inculcated with "secular" values. While some parents may not agree with one hundred percent of the subject matter in a book, the schools are there to teach students to develop and use their critical thinking skills. From an academic point of view, many students in underfunded school districts have deficiencies in reading. Now, books are going to be removed because they may talk about Black History or have an LGBTQ+ character. That seems very counterintuitive to be removing books, while a large number of students are deficient in reading.¹ In minority groups, the number of deficient readers is even larger.² While we certainly need to be careful about what it is we read and watch, there is a reading crisis happening right now with our students, and banning books that they may enjoy reading may not help the cause. While it is important for parents to monitor what their children read and watch, one could read "Harry Potter" for enjoyment, without practicing wizardry. Parents who are thinking of banning books should also consider the content their children are viewing through their electronic devices, and children can access almost any reading material on there. Also, it is also beneficial to learn to see things from different people's perspectives. Jesus also teaches His followers to love all (1 John 4:7-10, Matt. 5:44, Luke 6:27,35) and to shine our light. How can we do that if we stay in a self-contained bubble without anyone who thinks and acts differently than us?



If you are someone who is reading this and does want to get involved in the local schools, we recommend not starting with boycotting or fighting school board elections, harassing officials, or banning books. Prayer should always be one of the first things we turn to. Having conversations with individuals to hear their perspectives and to understand their points of view would also be extremely helpful. Additionally, the Bible calls us to help the oppressed, the foreigner and the impoverished (Psalm 82:3, Psalm 140:12, Proverbs 14:31, Proverbs 31:8-9, Luke 14:13, Matt. 25:34-40 and many more talk about the oppressed and the poor). In February 2023, the funding for schools in Pennsylvania was deemed to be unconstitutional. In the district that Justin works for, the adequacy shortfall per student is roughly \$6,640. Angel teaches at Frederick Douglass, which is located in Chester. The funding shortfall for a student attending the public schools in Chester is roughly \$11,539. No matter where you fall on the political spectrum, funding public schools properly would be beneficial to both sides. One side argues against funding public schools and is in favor of school choice through charter, magnet, and others, claiming one's zip code should not determine the quality of education. If public schools were properly funded, school choice would not be nearly as important, as there would be adequate education for everyone, regardless of where they live. Funding public schools properly would ensure that every student receives an equal and fair education. (For more information on how you can help with this terrible inequity, visit "FundOurSchoolsPa.org"). Parents should still determine the best future for their children, and that may include the local public school, or the nearest Christian school.



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Two Perspectives on Christian Education

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There are benefits to every school setting. Private schools tend to have smaller class sizes, leading to better classroom management and an ability to spend more time teaching. They also can decline to have some prospective students attend to ensure classes do not get too large, or to tell a family that, unfortunately, certain behaviors will not be tolerated and they can no longer attend (which that in itself is a discussion worth having on the merits of disqualifying students from a Christian school). Christian schools get the benefit of teaching Bible courses and having open discussions of the Gospel. Public schools often have much larger class sizes, as they are truly open to the public and cannot turn anyone away. They often do offer more extra-curricular activities, such as sports, languages, and more advanced courses that a smaller school may not be able to support. There is also the benefit of having more resources available for learning support, speech, and occupational therapy (to name a few). One downfall of charter schools is that when a student in a district elects to go to a charter school, the funding follows the student, and there is a lot less oversight on how public money is being spent, where there is transparency in public schools. Charter schools can also be run by an Education Management Organization (EMO), which can essentially turn schooling into a private, for-profit business.³ An example would be that a public school has limits to how many learning support students can be in a classroom, while a charter school does not. Ultimately, it is up to the families to decide which school setting is best for their family.



No matter the educational setting, teaching is generally the same, whether it is in a Christian or public school. Students will go through many challenges in their school years, and Christians who happen to teach can help them navigate their struggles no matter what the setting.

Notes

1. Information was provided through Vanderbilt University that states nearly 40% of students cannot read at a basic level, that almost half of students living in urban areas cannot read at a basic level, and nearly 70% of low-income students cannot read at a basic level! <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/rti01/cresource/q1/p01/>
2. This source provides a breakdown of 4th and 8th grade reading scores using a metric. In their analysis, 30% of all students in 8th grade reading did not meet the basic benchmarks. That number was only 22% for white students, while it is much higher for black (47%), Hispanic, (39%) and American Indian/Alaskan Native (45%). While the numbers differ from the first study, they are astonishing to see nonetheless. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/two-decades-of-progress-nearly-gone-national-math-reading-scores-hit-historic-lows/2022/10>
3. While looking up information on Charter Schools, one great website explained them very well. They also had this quote on how they can make money, “While charter schools must be established as nonprofit entities, contracting with an EMO allows a for-profit entity to operate in the background and outside of public view. Because an EMO is not subject to public transparency and accountability laws, taxpayers are unable to know how public money is being spent.” <https://www.pacharterchange.org/understanding-pennsylvania-charter-schools/>



Needed: Donations for Winter

Please consider making donations for our community Blessing Box! Remember, for winter, we need food items with little to no water content and other dry food products. We would also like to include the following: new or gently used sweaters, coats, socks, toys and toiletries. Please place your donations on the shelves behind the screens in room 101 in the Office/Sunday School wing.

Church Calendar!

(LS: live-streamed)

Every Sunday: . Sunday School, 9:15am
Worship Service, 10:15am, LS

JANUARY

- 1 ... **NEW YEAR'S DAY**
- 3 ... Coffee Break, 10:00am, church
- 3 ... Prayer Meeting, 7:00pm, zoom
- 7 ... Communion, during Morning Worship
- 7 ... Missions Committee meeting, Noon, church
- 8 ... GRASP, 7:00pm, church
- 9 ... Women's Book Study, 6:30pm, zoom, Gloria Snyder
- 10 ... Coffee Break, 10:00am, church
- 10 ... Prayer Meeting, 7:00pm, church
- 11 ... Session meeting, 7:00pm
- 13 ... Men's Bible Study and Prayer, 9:00am, church
- 15 ... **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY**
- 17 ... Coffee Break, 10:00am, church
- 17 ... Prayer Meeting, 7:00pm, zoom
- 21 ... Communion, during Morning Worship
- 21 ... Naanam's Creek Country Manor, 2:00pm
- 23 ... Women's Book Study, 6:30pm, zoom, Gloria Snyder
- 24 ... Coffee Break, 10:00am, church
- 24 ... Prayer Meeting, 7:00pm, church
- 28 ... **ANNUAL MEETING & LUNCH**, after Worship
- 31 ... Coffee Break, 10:00am, church
- 31 ... Prayer Meeting, 7:00pm, zoom

FEBRUARY

- 4 ... Communion, during Morning Worship
- 4 ... Mission Committee meeting, Noon, church
- 5 ... GRASP, 7:00pm, church
- 7 ... Coffee Break, 10:00am, church
- 7 ... Prayer Meeting, 7:00pm, church
- 10 ... Men's Bible Study and Prayer, 9:00am, church
- 13 ... Women's Book Study, 6:30pm, zoom, Gloria Snyder
- 14 ... **VALENTINE'S DAY**
- 14 ... Coffee Break Valentine Brunch, 10:00am, church
- 14 ... Prayer Meeting, 7:00pm, zoom
- 18 ... Communion, during Morning Worship
- 18 ... Naaman's Creek Country Manor, 2:00pm
- 19 ... **PRESIDENTS' DAY**
- 21 ... Coffee Break, 10:00am, church
- 21 ... Prayer Meeting, 7:00pm, church
- 27 ... Women's Book Study, 6:30pm, zoom, Gloria Snyder
- 28 ... Coffee Break, 10:00am, church
- 28 ... Prayer Meeting, 7:00pm, zoom

A red banner with a white border and a slight shadow, containing the text "SAVE THE DATE" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The banner is positioned at the top of the right-hand column of the page.

SAVE THE DATE

January 28th:

Our Annual Congregational Meeting and Fellowship Hall/Kitchen Celebration Lunch *(provided that the Fellowship Hall has been completed!)* You do NOT have to be a member to attend the meeting or lunch!

April 13th-14th:

Our Annual Missions Conference is planned for these dates. Plan to join us! Watch and listen for more details.

Community Calendar!

Please see Beth McCarrick for more information about the below activities...

Wilmington Women's Connection

**Luncheon: February 12, Noon to 2:00pm
\$25.00 inclusive**

Ladies! You are invited to a "Have a Heart" luncheon at Fava Ristorante Italiano (1102 Baltimore Pike, Suite 101, Glen Mills, PA 19342). There will be a heart exchange - bring something heart-shaped and go home with a heart-shaped gift of your choosing. The speaker will be Gail Alicea of Wilmington, Delaware. She is a wife, grandmother and musician who has struggled with illness and depression. Her story is entitled, "Surviving the Grand Canyons of Life."

The Koinonia Bowling League is looking for women bowlers. 10am on Fridays, at Conchester Bowlero, \$15 per week.

Getting to Know You

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was good news because finally I had answers which led to a healthier me. I've learned to eat healthier, how to move properly (I had to relearn how to walk). Now I have to do strength, cardio, and balance exercises every day of my life from now on. That's not easy! Mentally, adjusting to the empty nest from stay-at-home mom then caregiver wasn't easy, and I didn't know how to do it, so I got some help with it. That led to some new hobbies. I was stepping out of my comfort zone, going to unfamiliar places and trying things that I didn't know anything about. I signed up for one free acrylic painting workshop, no commitment, done from home, and sure I would hate it. Art has become a part of my life now: acrylic and watercolor painting, drawing, and mixed media. It's fun, challenging, and social. I'm hoping to find ways to use it to honor God too and encourage others. I have some ideas on that, but it means stepping out of my newly defined comfortable zone.

Becoming a believer in the '80s and loving music, I had friends who made it their mission to introduce me to Christian music. One of the songs that has stuck with me is *My Father's Eyes* by Amy Grant. If I could choose how people view me (and nope, I can't), I'd hope they'd see '*eyes full of compassion, seeing every pain, knowing what you're going through and feeling it the same, just like my Father's eyes.*'

I don't have a favorite Bible verse. Someone recently said to me, 'You sure are "geeking" out on the Old Testament these days'. The OT is better than any mystery novel I've read, and I'm learning so much. Over and over again, I read of things that I've read in the New Testament, and to see the Gospel woven through the OT is powerful and reassuring to me. It also shows me just how small I am. That said, there is a verse that comes to mind that I used to write in books or cards to new parents, but I see Psalm 139 differently now, about how special we are. My heart is burdened for our young people, particularly younger women, and if I could tell them their worth, it would be found here, as God tells us how He Himself knit us together in our mother's womb, knowing all of our days before we were even born. Every time I read through this Psalm, I'm awed by it.



RESTORATION

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PCA

2655 Chichester Avenue
Upper Chichester, PA 19061
www.restorationpca.org
610-485-2644

