



Our Valley Voice
March
2021



electronic copies are available on our website:
www.valleypresbyterian.net

OUR MISSION

To make Christ known through reconciliation while communicating respect and love to all people.

The principles we will follow to accomplish this are:

- Worship that glorifies God.
- Growing our faith in love, hope and the peace of Christ.
 - Caring for the children of God.
- Reaching out to the community and the world.
 - Seeking an attitude of servant-hood.

Valley Presbyterian Church

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Member of Presbytery de Cristo in The
Synod of the Southwest,
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Pastors

Rev. Dr. Craig Lindsey,
Pastor/Head of Staff

Rev. Diane Christopher,
Pastor of Discipleship

Rev. Joe Hawkins,
Pastor Emeritus

Sunday Worship
Traditional Service of Worship
9:30 a.m.
Online and In person.

Taizé Service
5pm Online
Every week in Lent:
Feb 17– March 31

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Grief Recovery Workshop **Mondays, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00p.m.** **March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29** **Sweet Family Room**

This has been a year of great loss in so many ways. The cruelty of the pandemic is keeping families from grieving the loss of a loved one together. Therefore, we are offering a Grief Recovery Workshop.

The purpose of the workshop is to discover the stages of the grief process, find healthy ways to deal with the pain and loss, and to begin the healing process. To guide you is Lynne Szabo, a marriage and family counselor.



Contact Pastor Diane to reserve your spot
(pastordiane@valleypres.net;
625-5023). Space is limited.

Rev. Dr. Craig Lindsey, Pastor, Head



There is an old joke among pastors, that when we say “Thou shalt not steal” you are preaching. But when a preacher says, “You should not steal your neighbor’s chickens,” you have crossed over to meddling.

I hope that I can claim a difference between what is said from the Pulpit versus what is written as Pastor. In worship, we have come as a captive audience to listen for God’s Word from our Preachers, many of us in very vulnerable times. While, as Pastors, we are to shepherd the flock, interpreting dangers and circumstances of the world. It would be wrong to ever try to use worship as a place to push one’s politics. But as Pastors we must name that politics

has been a major divisive problem for us.

We have just ended what I believe have been the most partisan 20 years of our culture’s history. I am 62, so WWII, the Korean Conflict were before my awareness. I do recall anxiety across America at electing the first Irish Catholic President, and Watergate, and Viet Nam. Contesting may have gone on previously, but our leadership has reached such a low, instead of cooperation there appeared to be only desire to obstruct and disagree without regard for the Nation or humanity.

I pray, we have turned a page, because while there was not a 2/3 majority for conviction following the 2nd Impeachment Trial, both parties did fully agree that what had come to a crescendo on January 6, 2021 had been despicable, horrible, and was not what we want America to be. While the elected leaders disagreed about the means of prosecution, there was expressed commitment that there be Civil and Criminal prosecution to the fullest extent of the law for mob rule, abusing others, hunting to lynch leaders, desecrating the People’s House of Legislation. As horrific as all of this was, I still trust that Justice and Righteousness will be done by our Courts and accountability will provide control within Political parties. Cultures today have been pre-occupied with revenge, which is not the point and cannot be. Peeling back layers of all that has transpired, I pray that instead of arguing over alternative facts, we would try to listen and discern what the Truth is that we all support. I have always been struck by Jesus trial before Pontius Pilate, and Pilate’s question of “What is truth?”

I recall when I first arrived in Green Valley, having a sermon about how difficult change can be, especially because we have to let go of what we

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FROM THE PASTOR con't

have known and trusted. By circumstances out of our control, over the last year nearly everything we had known has been changed. And yet, we are still here for each other, knowing God continues to love us.

Pastor Craig Lindsey

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

During the Administrative Commission, Valley Presbyterian Church had been under an austerity budget, searching for places to cut rather than to expand. From 2020-2021 Property & Liability Insurance costs increased exponentially, due to the number of fires and tropical storms across the Nation. Because of the pandemic, many churches and non-profits as small businesses were forced to close or lay-off employees. However, donors to our church increased our pledged giving by almost \$100 per person. These have been anxious times, and we greatly appreciate your encouragement. We are getting through this together.

REMEMBERING A PANDEMIC

One of the recurrent questions has been “Have you ever faced anything like this before?” While those over 108 years of age may have lived through the Spanish Flu of 1912, no one today has personal memory of those times. However, recently, we learned that in 1947 there was an outbreak of Smallpox in NYC. Thankfully, only 12 persons were infected and the only persons who died were the couple who brought the disease into the United States. Within two weeks, 8 million doses of the vaccine were manufactured and administered, and the infection was confined to the Burroughs of New York! According to the commentator describing this story, “But that is the way America responded in 1947, especially in New York City.”



Diane Christopher: Pastor of Discipleship

The Mystery of God

I rely on the mystery of God.

I have so many questions and not enough answers. Why is there so much suffering in the world? Why doesn't God stop it? Why does evil exist? Are we really predestined? Does that mean I have no choices/ free will?

As I write this, I am currently holding a New Member class. I usually introduce Reformed theology – the ideas about God that we believe in the Presbyterian tradition. One big idea is the sovereignty of God: God is in control, and God's Will will be done (as we pray in The Lord's Prayer). Again those questions come up: if God is in control, why so much suffering? So I rely on the mystery of God.

God says in the scriptures, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are you ways my ways...As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thought than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

I am glad I do not understand all the ways of God. If I did, I would be like God. Therefore, I rely on the mystery.

Instead of trying to find all the answers, I focus on our God who "notices our suffering, who cares enough to act, and who will make all things new" (Tish Harrison Warren). It was C.S. Lewis who said, "I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer." And one day all things will be resolved.

So as we wait for that day, we live with the mystery. We have a story of a God who entered into our world, who became vulnerable, who did not keep bad things from happening to Himself. This is what we remember in Lent...that

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Diane Christopher con't

God participated in all the fullness of being a human being, including a painful death.

I encourage you to enter into all that we offer during Lent, to remember God who entered into all that we are as humans. I encourage you to walk with us as we walk with Jesus to the cross. Faith Formation sent all members a Lenten Devotional with daily readings for the 40 days before Easter. If you did not receive one, call me and I will send you one. You can also pick one up at the Welcome Centers Sunday mornings or in the church office during the week.

We are offering three Lenten classes – some to draw you closer to our Lord, another to apply your faith to the problem of racism. There is still time to join these classes (look for my article in this Valley Voice for more information).

On Wednesdays in March, you can view and worship during our Lenten Taize services. These services will lead you through the Stations of the Cross, and a time of prayer, candlelight, meditation and music. You can view these services on our website (valleypres.net) starting at 5 p.m.

I love the mystery of God. Please take this Lenten Season to draw deeper into the love of this God whose ways we sometimes (often?) question, but whose Will shall be for our ultimate joy.

I love you all,

Pastor Diane

In recognition of Diane's Anniversary at Valley Presbyterian Church. Thank you for generously sharing your gifts with us!



Lenten Taizé Online Wednesdays in Lent February 17 – March 31



Every Wednesday in Lent beginning on February 17, we will have a Taizé service based on the Stations of the Cross. The Stations of the Cross follow the path of Jesus on his way to the crucifixion.

The Stations of the Cross have been celebrated by our Catholic brothers and sisters for centuries. We Protestant Christians can partake in this rich

pilgrimage as they remind us how far Jesus went to save us, and what a miracle it truly is that He rose from the grave.

Each Taizé service will contain two stations of the cross (there are 14 total), and will give you opportunities to think, pray, sing and meditate at each station. It is an intentional way to spend time with Christ, giving thanks and praise.

You can view the Taizé worship service every Wednesday in Lent on the church's website: valleypres.net. The worship will be ready to view by 5 p.m. each Wednesday.



From a Native American Church in MI

FLOWERS ARE NOT VIRTUAL

We have been blessed to have been able to pre-record worship beginning immediately with the National Shut-down in March of 2020. Due to how infectious this pandemic has been, we have not passed communion, passed offering plates, or passed bulletins; instead all of these have been available "virtually" over the internet. HOWEVER, when we began also offering In-Person Worship on Sunday mornings, a choice had to be made whether to have flowers during Worship Recording on Wednesday or Thursday mornings; or to have flowers at the In-Person worship in the Sanctuary on Sunday mornings, because the flowers would not last for both and distribution to folks at home. Since the Sanctuary opened in October 2020, the flowers have adorned our Live Worship and not been video recorded. These bouquets have then been divided into smaller bouquets and delivered. We are very thankful for the flowers in worship. We look forward to the possibility of LIVE-STEAMING Worship, where In-Person Live Worship on Sunday Mornings will be simultaneously broadcast for those worshipping at home, and even more when we can all worship together.

Treasurer's Final 2020 Annual Report

Supplement to the Interim Report



I was unable to get my Final Treasurer's Report into the publishers in time to for it to make it into the Yearly Congregational Report. The items below are what missed that report. Thanks for your understanding.

END-OF-YEAR (EOY) 2020 Church Operations

Financial Status –

Considering COVID-19 we ended the year on a positive with a budget excess of \$50,283.24. How to handle this excess will be addressed at the next Session meeting, scheduled for 28 Jan 2021. The Capital Reserve is currently at \$90,431.44. The Operating Reserve as of 31 December 2020 \$164,161.28. Thanks to all who donated to church support by either dropping off donations at the church or via electronic means during the COVID-19 turbulent times.

George Pike Endowment – This endowment was established in 2013. The idea at that time was to grow the endowment to \$1.5 million over ten years, and then use the income from the principal to pay or supplement the salary of a Pastor for Pastoral Care. The funds in the George Pike Endowment are managed by RBC Wealth Management in Scottsdale Arizona. The investment objective being "Growth w/ Moderate Risk and Duration". The end of year 2020 Asset Allocation was approximately 65% Equities, 32% Income and 3% Cash. Yearly management fees were \$1402.87 (0.85%). The end of the year balance was \$191,928.55. Due mostly to favorable market conditions in 2020, the principal grew \$25,935.85 (15.62%). Yearly donations were \$4,000. Thanks to those who contributed.

Valley Presbyterian Church Foundation – The Foundation was formed on February 17th, 2000. It was initially funded with approximately \$850,000 for the purpose of supporting future capital projects at the church. The charter states that the income from the principal should be used to fund capital projects. These funds are considered "restricted" only to be used for that purpose. However, with an 80% vote of Session for two consecutive session meetings the income can be used for other spending. To this date that has not been necessary. As of the end of 2020 the principal has grown to \$1,361,876.04. Income from the Foundation supported the installation of new Air Conditioners, WiFi Thermostats, a New Tile Roof on the Spiritual Life Center and a Music Computer. Current Asset Allocation is 37.6% Equities, 62.32% Income and .08% Cash.

Solar Production Status – Yearly solar production surpassed the guarantee by 11.65%. The chart below shows the performance on a calendar year basis for the past 33 months. We track these metrics on a Production Year (June Con't

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thru May) and on a Calendar Year basis. Savings for the past 33 months has been \$7,101.14. Once the system is purchased in June of 2023, the church's energy cost **savings** will be about \$14,000 / year. Thanks to the seventy-two donations by church members and the donation matching by one of our church members, \$44,570.50 has been raised. We have 27 months to raise the remaining \$55,526.50. Given the current membership and the number of folks who have already given to this worthy cause, by my calculations, if the remaining members were to donate \$5.96 / month for the next 27 months we would not have to dip into our Capital or Operational Reserve ("rainy day") funds when it comes time to purchase the system.

	Calendar Year Production Status						
	Total Cost Per year	Previous Year Cost	\$ Change From Previous Year	% Change From Previous Year	Guaranteed Production kWh	Actual Production kWh	% Production
Apr - Dec 2018 (9 months)	\$ 12,871.03	\$ 15,137.65	\$ (2,266.62)	-14.97%	78,926	86,257	109.29%
Jan - Dec 2019	\$ 14,193.28	\$ 17,377.28	\$ (3,184.00)	-18.32%	105,081	113,168	107.70%
Jan - Dec 2020	\$ 15,799.82	\$ 17,450.34	\$ (1,650.52)	-9.46%	104,819	117,030	111.65%
33 months Savings			\$ (7,101.14)				



A Musical Note

Please join us at 5:00PM, Friday, April 2nd,
for the next *Music in the Valley* concert.

This will be an organ recital based upon the ancient Tenebrae Office. The word *Tenebrae* is Latin for "darkness" or "shadow". It is a religious office that has its roots in the Medieval church. It is traditionally celebrated at night, in a dark church with only a group of candles providing any illumination. Throughout the evening as a number of scriptures, prayers, and contemplative thoughts are read, candles are extinguished, with the evening finally ending in a completely dark church to symbolize the death of the Light of the World at the crucifixion. Each of these groups of scriptures and contemplations is known as a "Shadow". After the last Shadow, the Shadow of Death, a large book is traditionally slammed shut, an act known as the *Strepitus*, symbolizing the earthquake and the rending of the temple veil at the time of the death of Christ.

Each Shadow will be paired with a musical selection that accompanies its theme. The music and readings will take us on a journey from the Triumphal Entry with Faure's *Les Rameaux (The Palms)* to the Death of Christ with Virgil Fox's arrangement of *Komm Susser Todd (Come, Sweet Death)*.

The evening will end on this somber note, reminding us of the event we commemorate on Good Friday, and as a way to highlight with contrast the joy of Easter morning two days later.

This recital will be an in-person event with social distancing and masks required. Additionally, it will be offered virtually for anyone who would like to view it that way instead. A love offering for the Music Fund at VPC will be accepted but admission is free-of-charge. Please feel free to invite your family or friends to this meaningful event.

Patio Sale News

Are we having a patio sale in April? It is still too soon to say, but the amigos will announce our decision on March 23 when we have an All-Volunteers meeting at 10:00 AM. That is what we are calling our drop-dead date – the date where the final decision will be made. Then we will know whether it is a go or a no-go for having an April 16-18 sale, and it will be the final decision on the matter



In February a woman donated the entire contents of her house to us by means of her real estate agent. The agent is familiar with our church and the Patio Sale and the work we do in emptying out houses. With the exception of some keepsakes she wanted, we were given everything in the house including a car in the garage. The car turned out to be a 2004 Subaru Forester with only 29,000 miles on it, which is a real gem. Both Kelly's Blue Book and Edmonds said that it was worth about \$7,000, so that was the price we put on it when we parked it in our back parking lot.

About that time, our Presbytery Pastor Brad Munroe visited our church and spotted the Subaru in the parking lot. He asked Pastor Craig about the car, found out that it was for sale, and, since he had been looking for a car like that for a while, a deal was made. Now the Presbytery Pastor and his wife now have a very serviceable car from our Patio Sale.

A little change in our personnel: For the time being, Jim Nelson is serving as the head trucker instead of Dave Tompkins and, like Dave, he doesn't just drive the truck, he also arranges the crews necessary to handle the donations of the day and calls all those who have asked for pick-ups to let them know when the truck will be arriving. Thanks, Jim, for stepping up and helping out.





One Great Hour of Sharing

One Great Hour of Sharing is a Presbyterian offering taken up during Lent to improve the lives of people in challenging situations. Three programs are supported by One Great Hour of Sharing:

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)

PDA works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters.

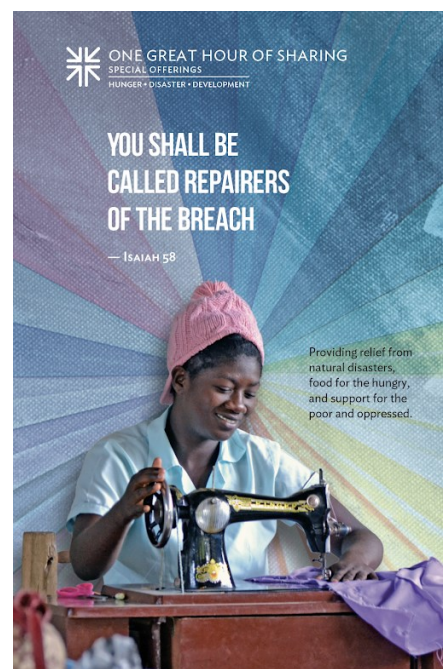
Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP)

PHP takes action to alleviate hunger, care for creation, and the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed.

Self-Development of People (SDOP)

SDOP invests in communities responding to their experiences of oppression, poverty and injustice and educates people about the impact of these issues.

If you would like to give to this amazing work, One Great Hour of Sharing envelopes are on the Welcome Centers at the two main entrances. However, using an envelope is not necessary. **Simply write a check to “Valley Presbyterian Church,” and place on the memo line “One Great Hour of Sharing” or “OGHS.”** You can put it in the offering plate on Sundays, mail it in, or drop off at the office during the week.



Bob and Kristi Rice February 2021

Dear friends,

The church members in the remote town of Aweil felt grateful, honored, and hopeful as they welcomed their visitors from Juba and other parts of South Sudan. The visitors were members of the ordination committee of the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC) and had flown in from Juba to ordain pastors and elders in the congregations in Aweil. Men, women, and children danced and sang in celebration as they received members of their leadership who had been trying for years to reach this remote region in northwestern South Sudan. Their arrival was a significant sign of hope and growth.

The two pastors ordained in Aweil by the ordination committee were Joseph Garang and Goat Mapoath. They had each planted congregations in this region and had worked for some years to grow their congregations, get land to build churches, and help their people find ways to respond to challenges such as food insecurity and lack of education. However, they had not been ordained as pastors because of the challenges of convening the ordination committee and reaching this remote region. In 2019, Elijah Luak, a food security analyst with the World Food Program and SSPEC elder based in Juba, was sent to Aweil to assess the food insecurity in the area. He visited the new congregation in Aweil and was so impressed with the evidence of growth and faith that he personally gave the initial contribution that would help them buy some land that the government offered them at reduced cost. Elijah encouraged the church to start some projects with the resources they had locally, rather than waiting for help that might not come. They have since started literacy classes to help adults learn to read and write in their Dinka language. The ordination of the pastors and elders in Aweil will help the churches to have more credibility with the government and community in continuing these initiatives.



Joseph Garang was ordained in Aweil in November.

South Sudan locked down last year because of COVID-19 like much of the rest of the world. Thus far they have been spared a significant surge of cases, and restrictions have been partially lifted. Congregations are worshiping in person again and schools are expected to resume in April, with increased

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hand-washing and distancing protocols. South Sudan does not have the internet capacity to hold church or school online and most people earn a living from the informal economy, which increased the challenges of being in lockdown. Congregations found ways to stay connected through phone messages and visiting in small groups, and everyone appreciated being able to worship in person again. In the midst of the added economic challenges of the pandemic, members volunteered in promoting health and hygiene messages to keep people safe and assisting with food distributions to people who were hungry. We have been encouraged by the many signs of growth through churches in South Sudan despite the challenging environment of the pandemic. Another encouraging sign of growth is the graduation of the seniors at Nile Theological College (NTC) and the welcoming of new students! Bob celebrated the completion of classes in December for students he has taught for three years, and they are now able to serve full-time in their churches. Some of them are finally reunited with their families after a period of one or two years. Their graduation ceremony has been postponed one year because of the pandemic. NTC welcomes a new class of students every two years, and the newest group of students started this January. This class has nine women – the highest proportion of women in recent years.

After much prayer and consultation with our leadership, we discerned that it was best for us to delay our return to Juba for a few more months. We are eager to return to the work and life that we feel called to in South Sudan, which made this a difficult decision. While in the U.S., we will continue to support and work with SSPEC and NTC remotely. We also hope to have 'virtual visits' with some churches we were not able to visit in 2019 to share more personally how we see God at work in South Sudan. Please contact us if you would like to find a way to connect. We also are using this opportunity for growth through study and classes that will further equip us for supporting the church in South Sudan. By extending our stay now, we hope that when we return to Juba in a few months we can settle in for a longer period and maybe even be vaccinated.

Thank you for your prayers, for your financial support, and for your encouragement of us and our colleagues in South Sudan. This pandemic has been frustrating and devastating for many of us around the world, and we pray that God's Spirit will awaken in us a greater spirit of connection and compassion for our brothers and sisters around the world as we work together for healing. Please contact us if you have any questions or feedback to share – we are always grateful to hear from you.

In Christ,

Kristi and Bob



Happy Birthday, YOTO!

Thirty-five years ago, Ann Young, a Guidance Counselor, convinced her friends and colleagues to help her address a tragic problem: the challenge to graduation and academic success faced by youth experiencing homelessness. Now, what started as a small work of kindness among friends has become a veritable movement for change throughout Southern Arizona. THANK YOU, VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, for your continuing support of this mission!

Also worthy of note this month, Youth On Their Own announced 4 new board members. One is Amanda McCraw. She is a YOTO alumna from Amphitheater High School who grew up in Tucson and currently serves as a City Court Supervisor. She says, "Being a board member for YOTO gives me the opportunity to pay it forward to students who find themselves in similar situations I was in." YOTO's Board of Directors provides governance, financial oversight, and strategic vision for the organization.

INSPIRATIONAL CARD MAKING

Ladies working from home have crafted 153 cards and contributed 15 hours and 20 minutes for Youth on Their Own students in this new year. Our next in person gathering will hopefully be on March 24 in Classroom 5 at 2pm (pending vaccination progress).

Submitted by Mary Horn, Mission Committee Liaison to YOTO

Crossroads Mission, Nogales, Arizona

Submitted by Joan Bolin

On January 21, 2021, my sister, Jan Sullivan, and I delivered 28 beautiful quilts (14 small-size, 10 medium-size, and 4 twin-size) to Ben and Bert Wenke, co-directors at Crossroads Mission. These quilts were all made by the women of Valley Presbyterian's Quilting Group. We also delivered 12 large plastic bags full of gently-used clothing, bedding, personal items, hand-crocheted neck scarves, etc. All the delivered items will be used at the Mission's houses, and given to people that come into the Mission in need of help. Ben and Bert were so excited and thankful to receive such a large delivery of items.

Ben and Bert were saddened to say Jay George, Pastor of Tucson Mt. Baptist Church, passed away. Pastor George was the mentor and mastermind behind opening Crossroads Mission. He will be missed, especially by Ben and Bert.



Bert & Ben with their vehicle loaded with the items Joan & Jan delivered





Thank you letters from some of the children January 2021

The Binational School is an institution that has both a high school and a university.

The CVN children attending The Binational School are shown on campus with their new lap tops from RISE. Read their heartfelt thank you letters and descriptions of what they are able to do with your support.





UNIVERSIDAD
SEBASTIAN RAMIREZ
MECATRONICA

GRACIAS RISE

Bill sproull
Green valley, Arizona

Hola quiero agradecerte por el apoyo tan grande que tú me brindas por poder estudiar una carrera universitaria que me encanta mucho, hay muchas personas que no lo tienen la economía para poder estudiar, gracias a Dios yo fui el afortunado, estoy muy feliz por eso me diste una oportunidad tan grande y la tengo que aprovechar, dar lo mejor de mí, Por bien porque sé que tendré un futuro grande, cuidese mucho, gracias a Dios me dio la oportunidad de convivir contigo y con los demás tatas de Green valley, Dios los bendiga mucho y los guarde de todo mal ,lo quiero mucho, gracias por tu amor y esfuerzo, gracias

SEBASTIAN RAMIREZ

University – Engineering

THANKS RISE!

I want to thank you for your great support that you provide to me as I pursue my university studies which I thoroughly enjoy.



Sebastian 5 years ago

There are a great number of people who are unable to further their education due to lack of finances. I thank God that I am one of the fortunate ones and I will give it my all to take advantage of this opportunity. Because of this opportunity, I will have a great future ahead of me. I thank God for you and all the fine people from Green Valley that support us. May God bless you and keep you safe. Thanks again for your love and support.

Love you and thanks!!


MIGUEL

High School – Preparatoria

THANKS RISE!

I want to thank you for the great opportunity to build a better future that RISE is providing for me. I really appreciate the scholarship and I will work really hard to show my appreciation. Ever since RISE and the fine folks from Green Valley entered my life, I have been blessed and I thank God for your support, love and friendship.

I not only thank you for paying for my schooling, but also for all the necessary equipment and supplies that I need. I thank you for your love, time, money and friendship. You are part of my heart and you are my family. May God bless you.




PREPARATORIA

GRACIAS RISE

Hola RISE le quisiera agradecer primeramente por la tan grande oportunidad de estar en esta escuela que ustedes me brindan y les prometo que gracias a RISE tendré un mejor futuro lo voy a aprovechar yo mantendré mi beca, daré lo mejor de mí y les quiero dar las gracias por todo, desde que ustedes llegaron a mi vida he tenido una vida de bendición abundante por eso yo le doy gracias a Dios por sus vidas y por todo su apoyo, amor, carisma, y bendición le pido a Dios que los bendiga igualmente con su amor, paz, bendición, y vida les quiero decir que los amo y espero que vean la gratitud de mi corazón hacia ustedes les quiero agradecer no solo por pagar mi escuela sino pagar lo que necesito para la escuela y gracias por dar su corazón, tiempo, dinero, amor, amistad y bendición los amo, son parte de mi corazón y ustedes son mi familia.

Dios los bendiga

MYRELI HERRERA SANCHEZ



GRACIAS RISE

MYRELI HERRERA SANCHEZ
preparatoria

Hubo un tiempo en el que me preocupa que podría estudiar, algo que mis padres pudieran pagar y eso limitaba mis decisiones. Pero ahora he visto la bondad, la misericordia y el amor de Dios hacia mí y mis hermanos por medio de ustedes; hombres y mujeres que nos han regalado la oportunidad de soñar y cumplir. Nos han puesto en frente algo que creíamos lejano e incluso imposible, pero gracias familia, por estar presentes a nuestro lado en cada paso.

Ya no tengo límites para usar mis talentos a favor de mi comunidad, a favor de mi país e incluso en el mundo con la gracia de Dios. Estoy muy agradecida con todos a aquellos que conforman y apoyan RISE, aprovecharé esta oportunidad que me dan, sin ninguna duda, sin despreciarla para poder crecer y ser un ejemplo.

Yo quiero estudiar Psicología, de una manera diferente a la que estamos acostumbrados ver hoy en día pues pienso que todos desean ser escuchados y que mejor manera que sea a través del Espíritu Santo para que encuentren la paz y felicidad que tanto están desesperados por hallar. Y no está de más volver a decirles lo feliz y agradecida que estoy con ustedes por tan hermoso regalo, espero que cada uno sean grandemente bendecido y sin más que decir por el momento me despido. Que Dios los bendiga.

High School – Preparatoria

THANKS RISE!

There was a time when I worried that I could study, something that my

Myreli 6 years ago parents could pay for and that limited my decisions. But now I have seen the goodness, mercy and love of God towards me and my brothers through you; men and women who have given us the opportunity to dream and fulfill. They have put something in front of us that we thought distant and even impossible, but thank you family, for being present by our side at every step. I no longer have limits to use my talents in favor of my community, in favor of my



country and even in the world with the grace of God. I am very grateful to all those who make up and support RISE, I will take advantage of this opportunity that they give me, without any doubt, without wasting it to be able to grow and be an example. I want to study Psychology, in a different way than what we are used to seeing today because I think that everyone wants to be heard and what better way is it through the Holy Spirit so that they find the peace and happiness that they are so desperate to find. And it does not hurt to tell you again how happy and grateful I am with you for such a beautiful gift, I hope that each one is greatly blessed and without more to say for the moment I say goodbye.

St. Andrews' Children's Clinic

The St. Andrews' Clinic staff is continuing to work hard to figure out how best to help the children in Mexico who need their help. There has been a big rise in the number of Covid19 cases in Nogales, Sonora. St. Andrews' is sending medications whenever possible. There is no "in person" treatment; all help is given online or via telephone. The flights to Shriners' hospitals in Seattle and Spokane have been canceled. Things could improve when vaccines are widely distributed, hopefully this summer.



St. Andrews' staff is spending time reorganizing the ways the clinic can function when it does open. They realize that the programs will be offered in a very different way than they were in the past. However, services will continue to be provided to the families of suffering children in Mexico.

Pass Through Giving for Missions

Christ has given us the model of self-sacrificing love through the cross. This type of giving is possible in spite the COVID-19 emergency. Please consider additional funding for needy missions. Pass through giving for missions are funds which are given outside of the church's mission budget. In 2021, our mission budget will be significantly less than last year. The needs of our 15 agencies are great and for some critical. Pass through giving for missions is an extra source of income for a specific mission which would be delivered through our church. These pass through funds outside of our mission budget are available for special giving and come from many sources. Extra envelope giving such as Food Bank, PCUSA Special Giving (for example monies for One Great Hour of Sharing etc.)

Addition checks given to VPC for specific Mission Agencies (for example monies for Casa Vida Nueva, Crossroads Nogales Mission, VAS, etc.) as noted in memo area on the check. The advantage of giving to agencies through the church includes easy bookkeeping as these contributions are listed in your Annual Giving Summary. The pass-through monies are given to the agency as a check from VPC which reflects our church's involvement in the community. By request, you can be identified by name.

Projects which generate income such as Mission Breakfasts, Noisy Offering (if identified by check or in Special Offering Envelope) etc.

Undesignated gifts to the Mission Committee are placed in the Emergency Fund and are used in that calendar year for emergencies as identified.

Pass through giving is a way to meet VPC's mission needs.

Zoom with Pam and Dave L.

Dave and Pam L. from **Operation Mobilization(OM)** joined our Mission Committee meeting via ZOOM and told of the trauma that is occurring in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Iran. Pam and Dave are very frustrated to be here when they want to be in the Middle East serving with their partners there. They have been traveling around the United States speaking of their concerns and praying for the countries in which they serve. They are hoping to travel abroad in the spring. Because their mission field is so large, Pam and Dave are used to planning and executing by zoom. This skill is helpful because of the disaster on disaster which have happened in each area. Examples include Northern India where the government shut down all transportation to control the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant all India could only walk putting day workers out of work having to choose between the virus or starvation. OM provided hundreds of thousands of Food packets. Bangladesh experienced the most powerful cyclone in history. OM again shifted to basic human needs showing Jesus in action. The closing of businesses, factories, schools, etc. by the very oppressive Iranian Government has put workers out of jobs and made food production almost impossible and again OM has been helpful. Please continue to pray for OM and for Pam and Dave L as we look forward to seeing them in person next January.

Dave and Pam have served with Operation Mobilization (OM) for over 40 years in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and are now leading OM's ministry in Iran, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Their History: In 1979, Dave served for two years with Operation Mobilization in India, Pakistan and Europe in a ministry of discipleship training for Indian workers and evangelism with Muslims and Hindus. Pam and Dave met at Bethany College of Missions and graduated in 1982 with BA's in Missions and Theology. They were married in October of 1982. After marriage, Dave and Pam went with OM to India and Pakistan in 1983-85 to lead OM's base for training, outreach/church ministry, hospitality and administration in New Delhi, India. They served for two years in Bangladesh (1986-88), where Dave was the Director of an OM training program for Bangladeshi young men from Hindu and Muslim backgrounds. They worked for two years (1988-90) in Pakistan, along the border of Afghanistan learning the Afghan Dari language and culture.

After eight years of ministry, they took a sabbatical, and Dave did an MA in Intercultural Studies and Missions at Wheaton Graduate School (1990-91). While at Wheaton, they agreed with OM leaders to pioneer a new ministry in Tajikistan. In August 1992, they felt God leading them to start a new organization called the Central Asian Development Agency (CADA.) From 1993-2006, Dave and Pam's team helped start four registered churches and many home groups for the new Tajik believers. In 2001, they started a new ministry in Afghanistan with Operation Mercy that has grown to a team of 15-20 staff working in three cities and in rural areas. In January 2004, they started a new ministry in Iran working in disaster relief with earthquake victims and with Afghan refugee women and their families. Today, Dave and Pam serve as regional Leaders for OM's ministries in Central and South Asia, overseeing the ministries in Iran, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (as well as 10 other countries). (From Bethesda Frankel Estate Church)


Birthdays for March 2021

Pam Coggins	03/01
Patricia Sellars	03/01
Linda Kucera	03/01
Nicole Raymond	03/02
Lillian Deyerberg *	03/03
Punky Griggs **	03/04
Stuart Howerter	03/04
Marcia Koshollek	03/04
Donald Groendyk	03/05
James Mills	03/05
William Streng	03/06
Dale Pryor	03/10
Marilyn K. Kidd	03/11
George Boysen	03/11
Susan Wilson	03/12
Sandy Vold	03/13
Cheryl Cooper	03/13
Susan Neuman	03/15
John Wood	03/15
Stephen Kepler	03/17
Sandy Green	03/17
Rev. John Hofman *	03/18
Larry Briggs	03/18
Mary Lee Haas	03/18
Joan Richards *	03/19
Joann Meigs *	03/19
Dorothy Hofman *	03/19

SPECIAL BIRTHDAY MILESTONES!

Happy 100th Birthday!

Punky Griggs



Dianne Steinacker	03/19
Jean Stewart	03/21
Richard Bushong *	03/21
Dick Davison	03/21
Robert M. Williams	03/21
Suzanne Bowers	03/22
Sheila Frahm	03/22
Catherine Sayre	03/22
Caryl Thomas	03/23
Bonnydell Rudy *	03/25
Margaret Hammel *	03/25
Kenneth Frahm	03/26
Anne Moore *	03/27
Kathryn Danhof	03/28
Karen Brooks	03/28
Lance Barker	03/29
Ed Farver	03/29
Carolyn Szabo	03/30
Karen Bahnick	03/30
Jack Claton	03/30
Christine Fleischmann	03/31
Sharon Thompson	03/31

** indicates turning 100

* indicate age in their 90's



Caring for those in our congregation: Congregational Care

Faith & Health/Parish Nurse News March 2021

Submitted by Chris Erickson



Many of our classes are still on hold as the COVID-19 Pandemic continues. We will continue to update you with more information when it is safe to resume these. Blood pressure screening will be by individual appointment. Blood pressure screening clinic may resume in the fall.

Congregational Care is creating ways for our church to continue its care to others and to address the needs we are seeing.

Connections, during this time, are also essential for those to receive socialization and to know others care. Keep communications with friends, neighbors, and family during this time. Please let us know any concerns or needs that we may be able to help with.

Keeping active, during this time of COVID, helps to stay positive and healthy.

As soon as we are safe and vaccines are distributed for COVID, we will be looking at new exercise programs here at VPC.

Medical Minute for March:

Just the smell of citrus (lemon, orange, etc.) helps us to stay positive, and may put us in a better mood.



What's In Your Medicine Cabinet and on your calendar?

Valley Voice Article by Chris Erickson, BA, RN, C-Parish Nurse

Have you heard of the commercial "what's in your wallet"? This particular commercial is for a major credit card. Let's ask a similar question that is related to health - the question should be, so what is in your cabinet and on your calendar?

So, what is important about the calendar? Keeping appointments, vaccinations, lab work, and follow up with healthcare providers is very important during this time of COVID.

- Preventing or staying up on chronic illnesses or concerns still need to be addressed.

Health can change sometimes without a lot of new symptoms, so keeping your healthcare provider appointments is very important.

Vaccinations, such as COVID and Shingles as well as the Flu and Pneumonia vaccination, are important.

Registration for COVID is online through Pima County Health Department. Watch for an upcoming E-blast from VPC about more on this. If you are receiving the Shingles vaccination soon, it should be given at least about 2 - 3 weeks apart from the COVID vaccination. Remember that masks, social distancing, and hand sanitation is still needed after receiving the COVID vaccination.

- Some healthcare providers and counselors may visit with you via video or telephone. It is still important to visit with your healthcare providers in follow up appointments during this time of COVID.

If you have appointments for lab work ordered, it is important that you keep them. Check to see if you can make an appointment, to decrease waiting time in lobbies, or that the waiting area is social distanced. A complete metabolic profile or complete panel assists with diagnosis and assessing chronic diseases.

Con't

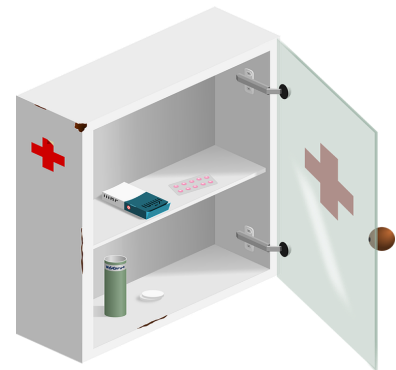
Now what is important about the cabinet?

Today's medicine cabinet contains both prescription and over the counter (OTC) medicines. Modern medicine has made us live longer lives, but you have to be careful when taking medications, especially when you are taking many different medicines. For taking medications, the national average is 3 -5 medications. Where are you in relation to the national average? More?

Are your medicines stored in a cabinet? Are they the current ones you are using? Discard old prescriptions at the Green Valley Sheriff's office where there are proper containers to dispose meds.

At your healthcare provider's appointment, review with them all the medicines you take, including new medication and over the counter medications. Remind your health care provider about your allergies and any problems you have had with medicines, such as rashes, dizziness, headaches, stomach upset or mood changes. Understand how to take any new medicine before you start using it. Bring a note pad and be sure to write down the answers to:

- What is the name of the medicine and why am I taking it?
- How many times a day should I take it? At what times?
- Should I take the medicine with food or without?
- Is there anything I should not eat or drink when taking this medicine?
- What does "as needed" mean?
- When should I stop taking the medicine?
- If I forget to take my medicine, what should I do?
- What side effects can I expect?



What should I do if I have a problem?

The pharmacist is also an important part of your healthcare team. Try to have all your prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy so your records are in one place. If you're not able to use just one pharmacy, show the new pharmacist your list of medicines and over-the-counter drugs when you drop off your prescription.

When you have a prescription filled:

- Tell the pharmacist if you have trouble swallowing pills. There may be liquid medicine available. Do not chew, break, or crush tablets without first finding out if the medication will still work.
- Make sure you can read and understand the name of the medicine and the directions on the container and on the color-coded warning stickers on the bottle.
- If the label is hard to read, please tell your pharmacist. Ask for larger print if needed.
- Check that you can open the container, if not please discuss this with your pharmacist.
- Ask about special instructions on where to store a medicine.

Check the label on your medicine before leaving the pharmacy. It should have your name on it and the directions given by your doctor. If it does not, do not take it and talk with the pharmacist.

Make a list of all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter products and dietary supplements. Show it to all your healthcare providers, including dentists and pharmacists. Keep one copy in your medicine cabinet and one in your wallet or purse. The list should include the name of each medicine, physician who prescribed it, reason it was prescribed, amount you take, and time(s) you take it.

So now, let's ask the question again, what's in your medicine cabinet and on your calendar?

(Some Information from the National Institute on Aging)



Monthly Financial Report

March 2021 Valley Voice
Financial Update
(Based on Financial Data through January 31, 2021)
Submitted by Annie Stitt

The Finance Committee met on Wednesday, February 17, 2021 to review the current financial activity through the first month of 2021. We began the year in a positive position. In the following report we have defined "Giving Support" as contributions for current operations and "Other Support" as Patio Sale Fund or other Fund transfers in support of operations, investment income, fees for services (memorials, events, concerts, etc.):

	<u>Year to Date</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Variance</u>
Giving support	\$ 70,732	\$ 85,791	(\$15,059)
Per Capita support	5,673	5,675	(2)
Reserve Support	-0-	6,500	(6,500)
Other support	<u>882</u>	<u>1,542</u>	<u>(660)</u>
Total support	77,287	99,508	(22,221)
Expenses	<u>70,735</u>	<u>76,315</u>	<u>(6,280)</u>
Net	<u>\$ 7,252</u>	<u>\$ 23,193</u>	<u>(\$15,941)</u>

This report shows that we are behind the 2021 Budget in income. Expenses are less than budget, but that is to be expected because of lack of activities during the pandemic. But we are behind projected net income for the first month of the year. Now that the vaccine is becoming available to Arizona, we may see an uptick in expenses soon. We are grateful for the positive position we had for last year. In order to balance the 2021 budget, we anticipate that we will be using operational reserves possibly in the area of \$68,000; however, we will not move those reserves until it becomes necessary. So, the future reporting may not be as positive as was January.

To date, the 2020 pledges are 99.9% collected and we have 196 pledges for 2021 totaling \$524,870. That pledge amount will cover 66.7% of our projected expenses. The Session passed a balanced budget for 2021 on January 21, 2021 and was presented to the congregation at the annual meeting on January 31, 2021. The Finance Committee will continue to keep you informed of the financial status of VPC. Thank you for your continuing support.



LENT AND EASTER BOOKS

FOR STUDY AND REFLECTION
VALLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LIBRARY

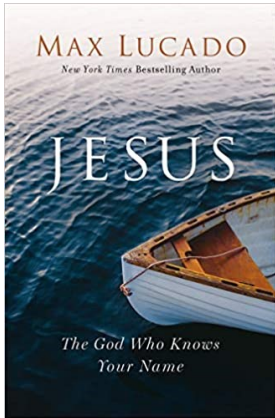
(These books can be found in the bookracks on the round library tables)

- *And the angels were silent.* Max Lucado. (232.96 L96)
- *Calmly plotting the resurrection: Lenten reflections for individuals and groups.* Donna E. Schaper. (242 Sch1)
- *Faces at the cross: a Lent and Easter collection of poetry and prose.* J. Barrie Shepherd. (808.81 S7)
- *First Easter: the true and unfamiliar story.* Paul L. Maier (232 Ma28)
- *The First Easter.* Peter Marshall (252 M35)
- *From Advent's alleluia to Easter's morning light.* Ann Weems. (811 W41)
- *Genesis of grace: a Lenten book of days.* John Indermark. (222 In2)
- *The hope of glory: reflections on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross.* Jon Meacham. (232.9635 MEA)
- *Jesus friend of my soul: reflections for the Lenten journey.* Joyce Rupp. (242 RUP)
- *Jesus, the final days.* Craig A. Evans & N.T. Wright. (232.96 Ev1)
- *Kneeling in Jerusalem.* Ann Weems. (242 W415)
- *The last week: what the Gospels really teach about Jesus's final days in Jerusalem.* Marcus J. Borg & John Dominic Crossan. (232.96 B64)
- *Lent for everyone, Mark, year B.* N.T. Wright. (242 W93)
- *Lent in plain sight: a devotion through ten objects.* Jill Duffield. (242 DUF)
- *Listening at Golgotha.* Peter Storey. (238.96 St7)
- *Living with the seven words: daily devotions for Lent.* John Alexander McElroy. (242 Mc15)
- *On Calvary's hill: 40 readings for the Easter season.* Max Lucado. (242 LUC)
- *Parables and passion: Jesus' stories for the days of Lent.* John Indermark. (242 In2)
- *Reliving the passion: meditations on the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus as recorded in Mark.* Walter Wangerin Jr. (232.96 W18)
- *The rising: living the mysteries of Lent, Easter, & Pentecost.* Wendy M. Wright. (242 W92)
- *Sensing the passion: reflections during Lent.* Kevin Scully. (242 Scu4)
- *Seven lasting words: Jesus speaks from the cross.* Christopher R. Seitz. (231.96 Se4)
- *Six hours one Friday: anchoring to the power of the cross.* Max Lucado. (232.96 L96s)
- *The six miracles of Calvary: unveiling the story of the resurrection.* William R. Nicholson. (232.4 Ni52)
- *Twice seven words: a meditation on the words of Jesus Christ before his death and after his resurrection.* Agnes Sanford. (242 Sa5)
- *A violent grace: meeting Christ at the cross.* Michael Card. (232.96 C17)
- *The way of the cross and resurrection: meditations for the Lenten season.* John M. Drescher, ed. (242 Dr81)
- *A way other than our own.* Walter Brueggemann. (242 BRU)
- *We have seen the Lord: the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.* William Barclay. (223.9 B24)
- *Were you there?: finding ourselves at the foot of the cross.* Erik Kolbell. (242 K79)
- *Were you there?: Lenten reflections on the Spirituals.* Luke A. Powery. (242 POW)

You can still join our Lenten Classes!

Lent is a time to prepare our hearts as we walk with Jesus to the cross. We are offering the following classes to help you do so:

Mondays at 4 p.m.: *Lent in Plain View* by Jill Duffield (Book is \$11) A class on how God works through ordinary objects.

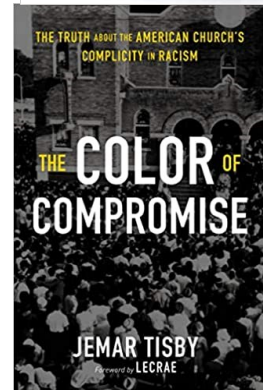
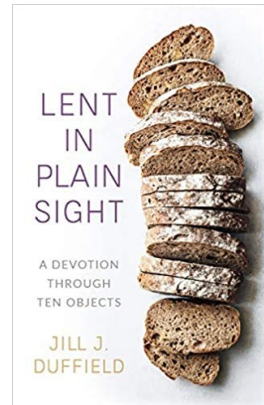


Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.: *Jesus: The God Who Knows Your Name* by Max Lucado (book is \$16) Exploring the life of Jesus by looking at the details

Thursdays at 1:00 p.m.: *The Color of Compromise* by Jemar Tisby (book is \$14)

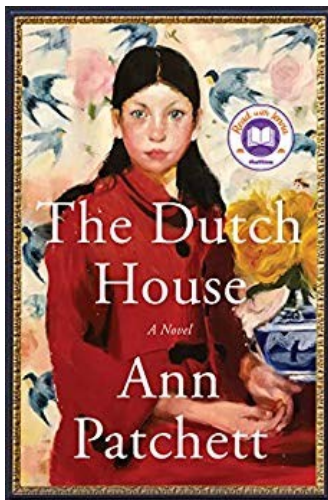
A study of race in the church and ways to build an inclusive church.

All classes are on Zoom. If you have never done Zoom before, Pastor Diane will be happy to give you instructions. Scholarships are available for books, and can be purchased in the church office. Please register with Pastor Diane to obtain your Zoom invite (pastordiane@valleypres.net; 625-5023)



Valley Readers

2:00 PM – Monday, March 22, 2021
BY ZOOM



When the Conroy siblings Danny and Maeve are plunged into poverty after their stepmother inherits all their father's wealth, they find that all they have to fall back on is their bond to one another. Even during their climb to success, they remain haunted by the past and their desire for revenge. *The Dutch House*, by Ann Patchett, is a moving domestic drama that was named to multiple best books of the year lists in 2019. Please join us for this discussion led by Sheila Frahm. Contact Anne Morrison for additional information at 520-399-0762. Contact Liz Haynes at ehaynes62@mac.com for a zoom link.

Burdens vs Loads

Submitted by Helen Phillips



Gal 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ... 5 for each one should carry their own load.

The Greek word translated as burden means "a hardship which is regarded as particularly burdensome and exhausting." This is what people carry when they're in crisis—an exceptional burden that threatens to overwhelm or crush them.

On the other hand, the Greek word translated as load means "a relatively heavy object which is carried." This is what a person normally carries on an everyday basis. It may be heavy but wouldn't ordinarily overwhelm the person.

Sometimes people struggle under the terrible weight of their burdens, mistakenly thinking it would be irresponsible and a sign of weakness to expect or allow others to help bear the weight. It's not always easy to have a clear perspective on the difference between burdens and loads.

Jesus offers to share our burdens when he says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matt 11-28-30) When we put on His yoke, he is right there beside us pulling alongside us. Christ helps bear our burdens through the people of his Church. At Valley Presbyterian, Stephen Ministers are here to help you bear your burdens.

As we begin to come out of this pandemic and more of us get vaccinated, there may be a long-held release of tension and worry. There may even be

grieving for all we have lost over the last year. The grief says, "Only now do I realize how scared I had been."

When long-held tension is met
with a deep exhale of relief,
the contrast can evoke waves of grief.
The grief says, "I realize,
only now,
just how scared I had been."

(Dr. Alexandra H. Solomon)

We've also lost friends and family over the last year and not been able to appropriately mourn their passing and celebrate their lives. Stephen Ministers are ready to walk with you, sharing the yoke of your burdens. We can meet with you by phone or ZOOM if you are not comfortable yet with meeting in person. Call *Peggi Briggs*, 520-965-9203, or *John Agner*, 206-910-6357 to request a Stephen Minister today.

Women's Ministries

The Women's Ministries Coordinating Board continues to meet monthly by zoom during this time to keep up to date with Circle and Presbytery news and we continually assess the situation as to when we might have Gatherings again. At this point it looks like we won't be able to meet again until fall.

If you are using this year's Bible study book, *Into the Light*, please remember that Pastor Diane posts a video lesson each month for that month's lesson. The link can be found on the main page of the website right next to the link for the church video services.

We welcome donations – please consider sending a check to make up for what you are not donating at Circle meetings and/or Gatherings. Checks made out to Women's Ministries can be sent to Gee-Gee Smith, P.O. Box 4709, Tubac, Arizona, 85646-4709 or can be dropped off at the church office

Monday through Thursday. These monies go to support our mission projects as well as those of Presbytery and national programs.



We bid farewell to Leslie Bruce. She and her husband are moving to Pennsylvania to be closer to family. She has served as our Secretary this year and we greatly appreciate her help.



Being Presbyterian – Board of Deacons, Session

By Linda Freeman

I'm noticing a shift in informational materials about the Presbyterian denomination: The Board of Deacons is listed *before* the Session. So, let's look at the Deaconate first.

The Board of Deacons is charged with ministries of care, witness, and service. Fifty years ago, I would have defined the Deaconates as a group of women who prepared the elements for communion (food for the soul) and brought casseroles to homes experiencing a loss (food for the body). How limiting is that? Today I point to the work of the men and women of Valley listed in the Annual Report - the many, many ways the Deacons interact directly with members and friends of our congregation.

The Session is called to strengthen and nurture Christian faith in congregations and to exercise spiritual oversight over the life and work of the church. These responsibilities are so much more than budgets, buildings, and personnel. For example, a wheelchair-bound member requested that we cut down the high wooden sides at the end of each pew so that he could transfer out of his chair and sit among the congregation instead of at the back. However, the sanctuary of this church was often rented out for use in a television series – and that generated about 3% of the total annual income. Changing the “set” could result in losing this income. The final decision: the pew ends were cut, and the pieces saved to be temporarily replaced when filming.

Over the years I have grown so much in my appreciation of these bodies.

Generally, the Board of Deacons is focused on the needs of individuals while the Session is focused on needs of the collective, known as the “church.” Meetings work best when people feel comfortable enough to share ideas and listen to each other with open hearts and minds – and remember to keep the focus on Christ.

I have too often forgotten about my promise to include these people in my prayers.

Next month's article will look at the work of Presbytery – I'd say one of my most enjoyable ways to be a Presbyterian.



Embracing Positive Change

Reflection by Gee-Gee Smith

I frequently hear people say they can't wait for life to go back to "normal". I find this perspective very sad. How can we go through such an upheaval in our world and ever go "back" to the way things were?

In the Bible, time and again, stressors are used by God to bring about change, moving forward, not backward. The Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the desert to move into a life of freedom with God. Job underwent terrible loss and disease only to emerge into a new life of comfort and peace. Jesus endured 40 days of temptation to emerge into a ministry of love and renewal. God promises to always bring good out of difficult times.

From Richard Rohr:

I have read the scriptures since childhood and preached on them continually over the last fifty years in my role as a priest; but over the last year, I've found myself drawn to them in a different way. I have been looking, if not for answers, then for wisdom, solidarity, and always for needed inspiration. Perhaps it's not surprising that this past year I have frequently returned to what we might call the "apocalyptic" readings found in the synoptic gospels (Matthew 24, Luke 21, Mark 13) and also in the entire Book of Revelation. Don't be nervous! I'm not looking for signs of the "end times" or trying to predict anything. I'm simply trying to understand what is being "revealed" in all that is happening. Remember, the word "apocalyptic" simply means to "unveil." It was never meant to be a synonym for bad news!

Apocalyptic literature "pulls back the curtain" to reveal what is real, what is true, and what is lasting. It's never what we think it is! That is the gift of this literature and a time like the one we're living through. It shocks us out of what we take for granted as normal so that we can redefine normal. It uses hyperbolic language and images, such as stars falling from the sky and the metaphor of the moon turning to blood to help us recognize that we're not in my home state of Kansas anymore. It's not that it's the end of *the* world, but it helps us imagine the end of "our world" as we know it. That doesn't mean *life* doesn't go on, but that our lives won't go on the way we thought they would, could, and even should. It allows us to see that what we thought was necessary and inevitable, simply isn't. *

Con't

This year has revealed great pain and upheaval. We have seen that the pandemic is not attacking people equally, but that the poor are being effected in greater percentage due to poor health care systems for the poor. We are seeing the vaccine role out in greater numbers for the wealthy than for the poor and rural areas of our country. We have seen hate and distrust rise in recent years toward people who are different than ourselves.

When things are “unveiled,” we stop taking things for granted. That’s what major events like the COVID-19 pandemic do for us. They reframe reality in a radical way and offer us an invitation to greater depth and breadth. If we trust the universal pattern, the wisdom of all times and all places, including the creation and evolution of the cosmos itself, we know that an ending is also the place for a new beginning. Death is followed by a new kind of life.

*

We have an opportunity to grow and learn, to reshape what has been into something better: into a world that cares for all people, that follows the example of Christ caring for “the least of these”, that widens our hearts of compassion into greater ministry for the poor and downtrodden.

I invite you to continue practicing some form of contemplative prayer this year. Our problems begin when we fight reality, push it away, or insist that the way I “see” reality, from my own limited perspective, is the only valid reality. Any contemplative practice that serves to welcome life as it is will change us. We will dive into this “unveiled”—and even unpleasant—reality positively and preemptively, saying, “Come God, and teach me your good lessons.” We need such a practice to lessen our resistance to change and our tight grasp around things. Let us seek to pray this way for as long as it takes us to arrive at a full “Yes” to Reality. Only then can its lessons come through to us. *

Richard Rohr quotes taken from:

<https://cac.org/when-things-are-unveiled-2021-01-08/> which were adapted from Richard Rohr with Brie Stoner, “United in Spirit,” *The Call to Unite*, reflection (May 2, 2020), YouTube video. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSp7LQHYn8k>

UPCOMING WORSHIP



Wednesday February 24 Taizé On-Line

February 28 Lent 2 Genesis 15: 1-7; John 2: 1-11

Wednesday March 3 Taizé On-Line

March 7 Lent 3 Pastor Diane Preaching I Corinthians 1:18-25
Sermon: The Sign of the Cross Communion on Video

Wednesday March 10 Taizé On-Line

March 14 Lent 4 Numbers 21: 4-9; John 3: 14-21

Wednesday March 17 Taizé On-Line

March 21 Lent 5 Jeremiah 31: 31-34; John 12: 20-33

Wednesday March 24 Taizé On-Line



March 28 Palm Sunday Mark 11: 1-11

April 1 Maundy Thursday Communion
on Video NO IN-PERSON WORSHIP)

April 2 Good Friday 5pm Tenebrae Concert In-Person in Sanctuary

April 4 Easter Sunrise 6am Pastor Diane Preaching (Video only)

April 4 Easter 9:30am in Sanctuary John 20: 1-18