



Sunset Hills

M E S S E N G E R

July/August 2023

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Sunset Hills United Presbyterian Church

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A Message from Pastor Laura

What is it the Lord requires of you but to act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

- Micah 6:8



What does Vacation Bible School look like at a megachurch? I learned firsthand last summer that it looks like a lot of cheerful people, a lot of strobe lights, a lot of loud music, a lot of decorations, a lot of color-coordinated team shirts, a lot of toothy smiles...a lot. I admit that, as an introvert, I felt overwhelmed. My child, who is also somewhat introverted, was also overwhelmed. But, as I looked at the hundreds of children in attendance, I admit I

started to wonder, “what does this megachurch have that draws in so many, many, many people?”

As the documentary on the fall of the megachurch Hillsong drops on hulu, it’s good for us to be reminded that the megachurch isn’t always all that it seems. Former megachurch worship director K.J. Ramsey writes of how the megachurch’s enticement is found in its big budget productions and the celebrity quality of its leader. The goal of the church is to be, “amazing,” and in response to the fall of the pastor she followed, “the church existed under the shiny guise of believing that the end of building God’s kingdom is worth whatever means it takes.” The means, in the case of Ramsey’s church, was a celebrity pastor who was abusing his staff. One needs only google “fallen megachurch” to see other sins that have caused the downfall of these congregations.

And so, yes, there is an appeal to the megachurch. I was awed by the megachurch sanctuary decorations that replicated a Vacation Bible School under the sea last summer. I wondered at the hundreds of kids dancing to, “It’s Raining Tacos.” But, the more I learn, the more I’m convinced: big budgets, large productions, celebrity pastors, and worldly success are not Jesus Christ’s barometer for church faithfulness. Jesus’s barometer looks like Matthew 25.

(Cont. on page 2)

A Message from Pastor Laura

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When Jesus speaks in Matthew 25 of his return, he tells us his criteria for judgment. Did the church give something to eat to the hungry? Did the church give clean water to the thirsty? Did the church advocate for the foreigner among them? Did the church provide good clothes to those in need? Did the church work for health care rights for the impoverished? Did the church care for the people in prisons? Forget the big

screens, strobe lights, and toothy-grinned preachers - they are not what Jesus wants. Jesus wants his church to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God.

If we want to know if Sunset Hills U.P. Church is being faithful, we can ask ourselves how we are fulfilling Christ's above criteria. For that matter, if we want to examine our own personal faithfulness, we can ask ourselves how we are individually.

fulfilling Christ's above criteria. Please join us from July 17-21 as we serve God's children at this year's Vacation Bible School, and as we bless the pets on July 9. Note all of the opportunities we have to serve those in need, and all of the opportunities we have to be merciful and humble with one another.

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Laura

Notes from Christian Education

By Taylor Strang

I used to live for the summer when I was younger. I remember running in my bare feet at my grandparents and swinging on the tire swing out in the backyard. I would count down the days until vacation when I could sit on the raft and have my grandfather push me over the waves. June through August hold my favorite memories.

But while my adventures changed, one stayed the same. All my childhood summers include SHUP's vacation bible school. One week in the summer consisted of the infamous water day, eating ice cream sundaes on the carpet in Findley Hall, singing "Jesus is a Rock," and taking a well needed nap after a fun-filled day.

That is why summer is one of my favorite seasons while working in the church. Being able to plan vacation bible school and then see the memories being made from the other side is such a blessing that I never thought I would have.

Twists and Turns VBS this year is

going to be memorable. We are focusing on how Jesus changes the game with our youth and how we can move forward through his path.

The fun starts on Monday, July 17th through Friday, July 21st! VBS starts at 5 pm every day that week and runs until 8 pm.

We are accepting pre-registration for kids aged 3 years (potty-trained) to kids going into 5th grade until July 17th. You can also register your kiddos on the first day of camp!

The fee for the week is \$25 and admission includes 3 hours of fun, snacks, and a celebration for you and your family on Friday. The admission fee can be paid by cash, check, or through the tithe app.

Please note that we are accepting high school volunteers that are in need of community service hours. Contact me directly for more information on how to sign up for community service hours.

Backpack Blessing

Sun. - August 27th

Bring your backpacks to the service on August 27th for a special blessing from Pastor Laura for the start of your 2023/2024 school year!

Children's Sunday School

Sunday's - 9:00 am

Starting in the Fall, Taylor will begin children's Sunday School. Class will be held before worship at 9:00 am in Findley Hall.

Vacation Bible School 2023**VBS 2023 – Brought to you by:*****Direct Ministries*****July 17th – 21st
5 pm – 8 pm**

Spin the spinner, beat the clock, skip ahead, level up, and play to win! Your kiddos will need to

bring their A-game for this VBS. Come on down to Sunset Hills United Presbyterian Church for *Twist and Turns* 2023. The evening games begin on July 17th and last until the 21st. To register visit us at:

[VBS | Mysite \(shupchurch.org\)](https://www.shupchurch.org/vbs).

**VBS Needs You!****July 17 – 21st****5:00 – 8:00 pm**

We need volunteers to help with snacks, mission, crafts, recreation, bible study, music and more!

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Taylor at sunsethillsce@gmail.com or sign up on the sheet outside of Findley Hall.

Clearances required by July 10th.

VBS Volunteers**Already a volunteer?**

Be on the lookout for volunteer information from Taylor prior to the start of VBS.

Not able to volunteer?

That's okay, you can still help. Join us after worship on Sunday, July 16th to decorate the church for our Twists and Turns event!

Music Notes

By Shelby Gracey

As we celebrate our country's independence on July 4, I thought it might be fitting to share the story behind a familiar patriotic song, which is also a hymn in our Presbyterian Hymnal.

Men must be governed by God or they will be ruled by tyrants. (William Penn)

“Moved deeply by the desire to create a national hymn that would allow the American people to offer praise to God for our wonderful land, a twenty-four-year-old theological student, Samuel Francis Smith, penned these lines on a scrap of paper in less than thirty minutes in 1832. Yet even today, many consider “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” their favorite patriotic hymn and call it our “unofficial national anthem.”

“The easily singable words of the song are matched with a popular international melody used by many nations, including England, where it

accompanies “God Save the King/Queen.” The emotionally powerful ideas that Smith expressed had an immediate response. The hymn soon became a national favorite. The stirring tributes to our fatherland in the first three stanzas lead to a worshipful climax of gratefulness to God and a prayer for His continued guidance.

“Following his graduation from Harvard and the Andover Theological Seminary, Samuel Smith became an outstanding minister in several Baptist churches in the East. He composed one hundred fifty hymns during his eighty-seven years and helped compile the leading Baptist hymnal of his day. He was also editor of a missionary magazine through which he exerted a strong influence in promoting the cause of missions. Samuel Smith was truly a distinctive representative of both his country and his God.”

My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing: land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrims' pride, from every mountain side let freedom ring.!

My native country, thee, land of the noble free, thy name I love: I love thy rocks and rills, thy woods and templed hills, my heart with rapture thrills like that above.

Let music swell the breeze, and ring from all the trees sweet freedom's song: let mortal tongues awake, let all that breathe partake; let rocks their silence break, the sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee, author of liberty, to Thee we sing: long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light; protect us by Thy might, great God, our King!

(“Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions,” Kenneth W. Osbeck, Kregel Publications, 2002, p. 161.)

Calling all Singers!

Men and Ladies of the congregation – Everyone is invited to join us for singing on one of the following Sundays:

- **Men's Chorus will rehearse after worship on July 16 for singing on Sunday, July 23.**
- **Ladies' Chorus will rehearse after worship on July 23 for singing on Sunday, August 6.**

We'll also meet at 9:45 prior to worship on the day you're singing. If you're not able to make the rehearsal the previous Sunday, you can still join us at 9:45 to practice on the morning your group is singing. Thank you!

Session

The Session of Sunset Hills is here to help! If you have questions, concerns, ideas, suggestions, or want to volunteer to help with a specific mission/event, please contact a Session member. Not sure who to contact? A list of our current Session members has been provided below to help guide you in the right direction.

Have a question or concern? Contact a commission chair!

<u>Commission</u>	<u>Chair</u>	<u>Contact Information</u>
Administration & Personnel:	Bev Knasko	bevknasko31@gmail.com
Christian Education:	Luke Obarsky	l.obarsky@gmail.com
Communications:	Ryan Gracey	ryangracey30@gmail.com
Congregational Care:	Mary Abbott	mabbott1457@gmail.com
Facilities:	Keith Yanda	skyanda57@gmail.com
Mission:	Jody Colby	jodycolby@verizon.net
	Chip McCoy	chipc4s@yahoo.de
Neighborhood Outreach:	Kara Yates	kjburian@gmail.com
	Lisa Ursitz	lursitz@hotmail.com
Nominating Committee:	Kara Yates	kjburian@gmail.com
Nursery School Board:	Luke Obarsky	l.obarsky@gmail.com
Stewardship/Finance:	Tim Fako	tim.fako@paramount.com
	Chip McCoy	chipc4s@yahoo.de
Worship & Music:	Bev Knasko	bevknasko31@gmail.com
Clerk of Session:	Carla Robinson	cgrobinson8@gmail.com

2024 Pilgrimage

Japan: An Interfaith Pilgrimage

Monday, April 22 - Thursday, May 2, 2024

Contemplate the Sacred within Nature

Journey on an interfaith pilgrimage with other women as we'll reflect on and nurture together our relationship with the Divine. Our reflections will take place with visits to Mt. Fuji, participation in Japanese arts, and three full days in the natural sanctuary of the Buddhist community at Koyasan.



Dwell in Spiritual Community

There are eight spots for this trip, enabling us to form an intentional community of prayer, support, and encouragement with one another.

Embrace a Simpler Life

We will be staying in Buddhist guest houses, known as shukubo. There will be shared bathing facilities and beds will be futons upon tatami floors, in keeping with Japanese tradition. All meals at the shukubo are vegetarian.

Discover Sacred Spaces

Our trip leaders, Rev.'s DePoe and Strauss will guide us through the sacred temples of Koyasan, providing Christian reflection on how this different tradition helps illuminate and enrich our own. While discussion will be dynamic, the pilgrimage will focus on respite, retreat, and spiritual growth that leads to renewal.

Itinerary, Deadlines, and Cost

Monday:	Depart from U.S. for Tokyo
Tuesday:	Arrive in Tokyo
Wednesday:	Free Day in Tokyo (Optional: Tokyo Disney)
Thursday:	Sacred Tokyo: Kintsugi Pottery
Friday:	Sacred Tokyo: Day Trip to Mount Fuji
Saturday:	Travel to Koyasan
Sunday:	Koyasan
Monday:	Koyasan
Tuesday:	Koyasan
Wednesday:	Travel to Tokyo
Thursday:	Depart and Arrive in the U.S.
<u>Cost:</u>	\$2500

The above includes daily breakfast in Tokyo, accommodations, train tickets to and from Koyasan, daily breakfast and dinner in Koyasan. Cost **does not** include airfare, public transportation, tax, gratuities, or meals not otherwise mentioned. We recommend budgeting \$1500 for roundtrip airfare.

COVID-guidelines set by Japan's government will act as the guidelines for this trip. These will be communicated to attendees as we grow closer to April 2024. Proof of vaccination is required.

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 is due by September 8, 2023 to reserve a spot for this trip. Spaces are first-come, first served. Passports must have six months left until expiration following May 2024. Contact Rebecca DePoe or Laura Strauss with questions.

July/August Information

Adult Sunday School

9:00 am - Library

The Sunday school class will continue to meet before worship in the Library.

Sunday Worship

10:15 am

If you are not able to join us in person, a video of the service will be posted to our YouTube channel on the Monday after the service: [Sunset Hills Church - YouTube](#). You can get a copy of the bulletin by clicking on the link on the homepage of our website www.shupchurch.org.

Fellowship Hour

First Sunday of the Month/After Worship

We will hold fellowship hour in Findley Hall after worship on Sunday, July 2nd and August 6th.

Findley Hall Bible Study

Monday's - 1:00 pm

The Findley Hall Bible Study will take a break for the summer. They will return on September 11 to start an 8-week video study of "The Chosen" season 3.

Wilson Hall Bible Study

Tuesday's - 1:00 pm

The Wilson Hall Bible Study will take a break for the summer. They will return on September 12th.

If you would like to learn more about this class, please contact Carole McCullough at:

seamus1219@hotmail.com.

Peanuts Square Dancing Club

Tuesday's - 7:00 pm

The Peanuts Square Dancing club will meet in Crystal Hall. Everyone is welcome, no partner or previous experience is needed. There is a cost of \$5/class.

The PSDC will hold a special event in Crystal Hall on Sunday, August 13th from 1:00 pm until 6:00 pm.

Office Closed

The office will be closed on Tuesday, July 4th.

Pet Blessing & Food Truck Event

Sunday, July 9th - 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Bring the pet members of your family to SHUP on Sunday, July 9th for a special blessing from Pastor Laura.

Pastor Laura Away

Pastor Laura will be away from August 5th - August 19th. Elder, Dave Petty will be our guest worship leader on August 6th and on Sunday, August 13th, we will be led in worship by Elder, Ryan Gracey.

If you have a pastoral care emergency outside of office hours, please call Bev Knasko at (412)563-7154.

Neighborhood Picnic

Sunday, August 27th - 5:00 - 7:00 pm

The Congregational Care Committee will hold a picnic for SHUP members and our neighbors with games, music and food trucks.

July Birthdays

1	Angela Ellis	16	Taylor Strang
	Dave Petty	18	Lynne Blanning
7	Carole McCullough	23	Lucy Tang
8	Francine Brown	24	Lorryn Ernst
10	Harriet Rickard		Sara Ernst
13	Carl Moeller	29	Ben Kennedy
14	Carol Noonan	31	Dee Borman

August Birthdays

3	Jeannine Stimmel	13	Sarajane Obarsky
	Cal Wilson		Judy Stacey
4	Alice Bonim	15	Robert Tang
6	Paul Bruschi	19	Carla Robinson
	Joanne Enterline	20	Sarah Ernst
8	Lee Cepits		Christa Tang
	Jacey Ellis	21	Pat Ellis
	Jill Fako	25	Chip McCoy
10	Dottie Fleming	28	Kay Walker
	Kailey Hepburn	31	Betty Coffey

Prayer List

Dee Borman



Prayer Circle

We ask that every week you take a moment and add these people to your daily prayers.

Week of:	Praying for:
July 2 nd	Allie Vernacchio Tori Vernacchio
July 9 th	Kay Walker The Weidensall family, Bill, Jessica, Ainsley & Lily
July 16 th	Maralee & Maya Williams Keith & Wendy Yanda
July 23 rd	Michelle Yanda The Yates family, Daniel, Kara & Amelia May
July 30 th	Mary Abbott Clayton Allison
Aug. 6 th	Jeff Allison David Arnold
Aug 13 th	Lynne Blanning Alice Bonim
Aug 20 th	Dee Borman Ray & Ginny Bowman
Aug 27 th	Francine Brown The Brumfield family, Dave, Michelle, Connor & Jessica

SHIM Food Donations

July & August 2023

For the month of July, we will be collecting **Shelf Stable Milk & Juice.**

For the month of August, we will be collecting **Cereal.**

Sunset Hills Book Club

July Book of the Month

River Sing Me Home

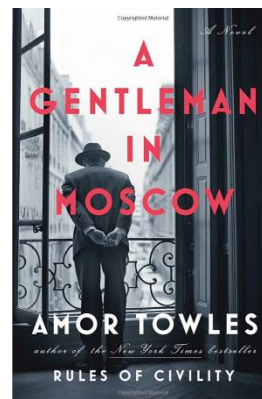
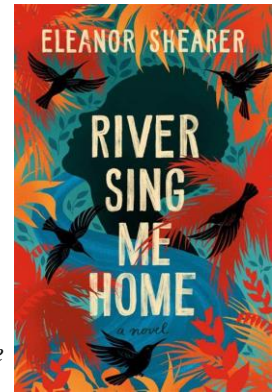
By Eleanor Shearer

July 26th - 7:30 pm

The master of the Providence plantation in Barbados gathers his slaves and announces the king has decreed an end to slavery. As of the following day, the Emancipation

Act of 1834 will come into effect. The cries of joy fall silent when he announces that they are no longer his slaves; they are now his apprentices. No one can leave. They must work for him for another six years. Freedom is just another name for the life they have always lived. So Rachel runs.

Away from Providence, she begins a desperate search to find her children—the five who survived birth and were sold. Are any of them still alive? Rachel has to know. The grueling, dangerous journey takes her from Barbados then, by river, deep into the forest of British Guiana and finally across the sea to Trinidad. She is driven on by the certainty that a mother cannot be truly free without knowing what has become of her children, even if the answer is more than she can bear. These are the stories of Mary Grace, Micah, Thomas Augustus, Cherry Jane and Mercy. But above all this is the story of Rachel and the extraordinary lengths to which a mother will go to find her children...and her freedom. (Amazon Book Description)



August 2023

A Gentleman in Moscow

by Amor Towles

Meeting on August 30th

June 2023

Britt-Marie Was Here

by Fredrik Backman

Meeting on July 5th

Don't forget that the June book club meeting will be held in July.

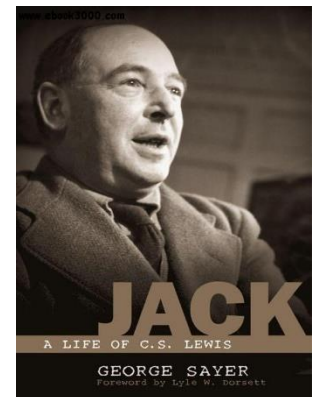


September 2023

Jack: A Life of C.S. Lewis

by Eleanor Shearer

Meeting on July 26th



Thank You

Dear SHUP Family,

Wow! Your generous gift for my doctoral graduation has touched my heart more than you can know.

I was able to use a portion of your gift to celebrate with my parents over graduation weekend, and to perhaps buy a book...or two.



The remainder is a practical blessing which, as we all know, are important blessings that make us breathe a little easier. Thus, I cannot say thank you enough.



That said, the greatest blessing is the blessing of your welcome. The way that you embrace my son and spouse as children of SHUP means the world to me and brings me more happiness than I can convey.

Thank you!

In Christ's Love,

Dr. Laura



Welcome

Welcome to our Temporary Facilities Assistant, Riley Farabaugh! Riley, a rising senior at Mt. Lebanon High School and church member, has signed on to serve as our summer Facilities Assistant. He will be preparing the church for worship on Sunday mornings and managing our trash collection. This is in addition to his service running the lights during our worship service. Thank you and welcome to Riley!



▪Food Trucks!

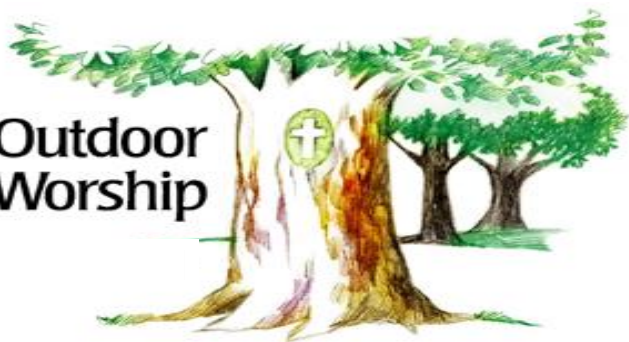
▪Games!

▪And More!

Pet Blessing
Sunday, July 9th
Noon – 2:00 pm

Bring the pet members of your family for a special blessing from Pastor Laura.

**Outdoor
Worship**



Sunday
July 9th

Weather permitting, we will hold our worship service in the parking lot.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!!

If you are able, please come to the church by 8:00 am to help with tent, chair, and audio equipment set-up.

Health & Wellness

TAI CHI QIGONG CLASSES

Taught by Gurney Bolster, Founder, Tai Chi for Health Pittsburgh
Sunset Hills United Presbyterian Church
900 Country Club Dr., Mt. Lebanon, PA 15228

Tai Chi Qigong is a moving meditation integrating mind, body and breath through mindful movement and stillness. Reflecting the patterns of nature, Tai Chi Qigong can help you attune to your own natural rhythms to feel more centered, confident and resilient. Listen to the wisdom of your body. Nourish harmony, purpose and joy.

Regular practice of Tai Chi Qigong can help:

- > Quiet your mind & reduce stress
- > Improve sleep & nurture your health
- > Improve balance & mobility
- > Strengthen immunity & circulation
- > Manage chronic illness & pain
- > Restore vitality & lift your spirits



Introductory Classes, Wednesday 6:30–7:30pm
June 28 - August 23, 2023. No class July 19

Fees: 8 class series, \$110 Single class \$17

Please register online: www.taichiforhealthpittsburgh.com/in-person

Payment can also be made by cash, check or Venmo upon arrival to class.

No experience or equipment needed. Masks are optional.

All classes taught by Gurney Bolster, MA., Dance Movement Therapy;
Certified Tai Chi Instructor, Tai Chi for Health Institute;
Certified Qigong Instructor, Center for Taiji & Qigong Studies and Holden Qigong.