



June 2023

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A Message from Pastor Laura

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

- Matthew 22:37-39



The decline of Christianity in the West is an invitation to learn more about our faith. I think of the decline of Christianity experienced in the earliest days of our nation. Unitarian Universalism dominated the American religious landscape because it was no longer assumed that one believed in Jesus Christ. Our early nation was a nation made up of Quakers, Jews, and the list goes on. Some of our founding fathers and mothers were Christian. Others,

such as Abigail Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington, practiced Christian deism - believing Jesus to be human and not God. This era was an opportunity for traditional Protestant Christians, like Samuel Adams, to think critically about what Christianity believes and why.

A pamphlet in Norwich Cathedral in Norwich, England answers the question, “God, Jesus, Church, Christianity: What’s It All About?” They begin by discussing Jesus as a historical figure whose ministry is recorded in the Gospels. Christ is presented as resurrected from the dead, and as saviour of the world. The pamphlet goes on to talk about Christian beliefs, including the belief that every human is created in God’s image, the Bible as a record of God’s relationship with humanity, and Jesus as God’s love revealed on the cross and in his victory over death. The pamphlet concludes with how Christians live: Christians live, not by a set of rules, but by Jesus’s command of love.

Is the above concurrent with what you believe about the Christian faith? What do you think needs to be added? Do you think the author of the pamphlet prioritized correctly? These questions matter because these are the questions of eternity, the questions of what this world all means and why we are here. This is why we affirm our faith every Sunday, because we are keeping our focus on why we are followers of Jesus and why Jesus calls us to this faith.

(Cont. on page 2)

A Message from Pastor Laura (continued from page 1)

In the days to come, if you feel so compelled, it may be worthwhile to pick up the practice of writing your statement of faith once more. You may have done this as a confirmation student. It's worthwhile to do this again. Not everyone knows what it means to be a Christian anymore. So, take the opportunity to write what you believe it means. This exercise is



between you and God, an act of prayer. If you'd like to share with me or talk it out with me, I'd be delighted to listen and to process this with you.

What do you believe about God, Jesus, Church, and Christianity? What do you say it's all about?

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Laura

Music Notes By Shelby Gracey

As summer quickly approaches, the singing season is winding down for the Chancel choir. Sunday, June 4 will be the choir's last Sunday to sing for worship until after Labor Day. When you see a chancel choir member, please be sure to thank them for all their hard work and dedication to the choir throughout the year.

Over the summer we'll have special music from soloists, instrumentalists, GPM, our Ladies' and Men's Choruses, and perhaps some special guests. Men and Ladies of the congregation – watch the Sunday

morning bulletin for announcements about when your groups will rehearse and sing. Everyone is invited to join in singing on these dates! We truly appreciate everyone who offers their musical talents to the congregation over the summer, in order to give the choir members a rest. If we have any hidden talents out there that I'm unaware of and you'd like to sing or play something this summer, please let me know. I'm looking forward to a variety of great music!

Within the next month, some repair work will be taking place on the

organ. Last year there were repairs done to the reservoir on the pedal division. The reservoirs are made of leather, and over time, they deteriorate and need to be replaced. If the leather fails enough to become detached, it affects wind pressure and tuning, and the pipes will fail to operate as they should. Several years ago, the session had the foresight to put money into an organ repair reserve fund, knowing that with the age of the organ, eventual repairs would be needed. These repairs will help to keep our beautiful organ playing for many years to come!



Notes from Christian Education

By Taylor Strang

All lights turned off, can be turned on.

- Noah Kahan

As the sun starts to shine brighter and the weather shifts to become warmer, my favorite pastime becomes sitting outside with my favorite music playing. I let the music drift into my reality as I sit there and think of how the lyrics relate to my life. I start thinking about the music I listen to on my time off, the music sung by our church choir, the music our kids listen to, and I remind myself that no matter the genre, all music has a goal. The goal is to make us feel and to educate us.

No matter what you are feeling, the right music has a magical ability to provide support and inspire our faith.

Graduation Sunday

Please join us for Graduation Sunday during worship on June 4th. We will be presenting the Mehaffey Scholarship and honoring our other 2023 graduates. This year, our Mehaffey Scholarship winner is:

Benson Kennedy

Ben will be attending Ohio University with a major in Business Marketing.

2023 SHUP Graduates:

Catherine Duffner

Catherine will be heading off to George Mason University in the fall where she received a scholarship for Crew.

Jessalynn Ellis

Jessalyn graduated from Edinboro University (Penn West Edinboro) with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology.

After the worship service, everyone is welcome to join us in Findley Hall to celebrate their achievements.

VBS 2023 – Brought to you by *Direct Ministries*



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. More details to come!



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.

Profile of Mehaffey Scholarship Winner

By Ginny Bowman



Benson Kennedy will be awarded the Mehaffey Scholarship during the worship service on June 4, 2023. He is the son of Nathaniel and Jennifer Kennedy. Ben is graduating from Mt. Lebanon High School and plans to study at Ohio University, majoring in Business Marketing. His brother, Drew, will be a senior at Penn State this fall.

During high school Ben was a member of the track team, throwing the javelin. He especially enjoys skiing and snowboarding. You may have seen him at Mineo's Pizza Shop where he works part-time. That will be his job this summer as well. Ben has gone on two mission trips with SHUP youth. Two years ago, the group traveled to Benton Harbor, Michigan, where they worked in a food bank and helped people with weeding and painting. Last summer they worked in a community garden in Philadelphia and helped pack meals for home-bound folks.

We wish Ben all the best and God's blessings as he goes off to college!

Thank You

Dear SHUP Members,

Thank you for the beautiful bouquet of flowers that were delivered following a recent Sunday worship service. It brought a smile to my mom's face the minute she saw them.

We appreciate your kindness and prayers.

Sincerely,

Heather Whitehead & dad (Tom Stacey)



Dear SHUP,

Thank you for awarding me the Mehaffey Scholarship. I will be attending Ohio University in the fall and majoring in Business Marketing. I will use the money towards my education expenses.

Thank you,

Benson Kennedy

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

Mission at the Border

Small Victories

by Pastor Sam Pendergrast

Editor's note: Sam and Cynthia Pendergrast are currently engaged in a one-year mission/service commitment in Agua Prieta, Sonora with Frontera de Cristo and partners. They have a blog for sharing their experiences <https://ayearontheborder.com/posts/>. The following article is one of their posts.



The challenges at the border can seem overwhelming. We provide hospitality for recent deportees—a little coffee and food, basic first aid, new socks and underwear, a place to rest. And it's the same thing every day. An average of more than 100 people a day. More than 41,000 last year came through the Migrant Resource Center in Agua Prieta.

So, I'm thankful for small things. Times we share a smile, listen to a story, know how good it must feel for someone to take a shower after walking through the desert.

March 23rd was one of those times. And it was not a small thing, but it was a small victory. Two men had been in the resource center in the morning. They had left, and they came back in after I started my shift at noon. They had been out looking for their wives, with whom they'd been traveling, but from whom they'd been separated after the Border Patrol detained them during the night. Each couple only had one phone between them. "How can we find our wives?" they asked, trying to keep their panic from showing too much.

Fortunately, part of the process the Border Patrol follows is that they notify the Mexican Consulate of every Mexican citizen they arrest. We gave the number for the consulate in Douglas to one of the men. He was on the phone for a while. Then both men left and went out to the small plaza just outside the pedestrian border crossing. About a half hour later, they returned with their spouses, very relieved. They had a meal, sat for a while, thanked us, and went on their way, ready to make another attempt to cross into the United States.

Earlier this week, an entry in the devotional for Lent I'm following cited these verses from Second Corinthians. God said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." The writer said that to admit our weakness is not negativity. It's to embrace a ministry that belongs not to us but to God. "Unless we embrace weakness and futility, we'll start believing that the world's betterment hinges solely on us, that we are its saviors and heroes." And that leads to the kind of arrogance and intolerance we see so much of these days in public life.

We offer our gifts, our kindness, our advocacy in the hope and trust that God will bring some good out of the seeds we sow. We offer ourselves, grateful for small victories, even when we think we're not enough. Even if we think we can't win, we can believe that *Love can*.

A Goodbye to Stephen Ministry

By Evelyn Lape

We are all familiar with Ecclesiastes 3 which tells us, “for everything there is a time.” I guess it is past time for me to write a closing for our Stephen Ministry. Our Stephen Ministry actually ended during the Pandemic. Close contact and one-on-one visitation in the homes became impossible then.

Circumstances have changed considerably since we began the SHUP Stephen Ministry in 2000. For 21 years we felt a need and had an active ministry supporting one another with love. Those of us who stuck with it for years hated to see it close, but our congregation had gotten much smaller which made it difficult to find new people able to take the Leader’s Training and/or attend the many hours of study. The Pandemic just solidified our feelings that it was time to close the program.

Dr. Gracey originally brought the program to 18 members who began the 52-hours of training required. Betty Rinald and I took that class and then attended the additional Leader’s Training for a week Downtown. We



then led many to classes for 52-week sessions in Stephen Ministry. (At least 8 to 10 people each time, even including 6 people from other churches). John Serpa was able to help teach one Series and help do supervision after he also completed both the Stephen Ministry and the Leader’s Training Courses. During the years, the congregation sent the two of us, John, Mona Odendahl, Jean Swingenstein and Judy Davidson to the week-long Leader’s Training.

The program requires that after the 52-weeks training each Stephen Minister serve for at least 3 years, so we have had over 65 SHUP members who have trained and been Stephen Ministers. (The training included two all-day Retreats. It was a lot of fun, but a lot of study and homework. We

had Speakers for those as well as Speakers occasionally for the Continuing Education Supervision. (Supervision is required monthly after completing initial training)). Each of those 65 people cared for at least two, many had four or five care receivers, and some visited weekly with so many they lost count over the years. When I think of the numbers, I am awe struck that so many are dedicated to seeing that this congregation is cared for, and I am confident SHUP people will always care for one another in the future.

We are fortunate Rev. Dr. Laura is with us who is an extremely caring and vibrant pastor. So we can be sure our members will be cared for by her and each other.

We thank you all for the support of the SHUP Stephen Ministry when it was most needed. And we are thankful for the many hours all those Stephen Ministers spent supporting our pastors, studying, and caring for our SHUP congregation.

God bless.



Outdoor
Worship

Sunday, June 25th

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.

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.

June Information

Adult Sunday School

9:00 am - Library

The Sunday school class will continue to meet before worship in the Library. On June 11, the class will begin studying *Acts: Catching Up with the Spirit*, a video series by Mathew L. Skinner, Professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary. They will “explore the six key themes that illustrate the ways in which reading Acts is capable of igniting the imagination about the character of the Christian message, the work of God’s people, and the challenges of living faithfully.”

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.

Findley Hall Bible Study

Monday’s – 1:00 pm

This study will continue to meet every Monday.

If you would like to learn more about this study, please contact Jody Colby at jody.colby@verizon.net.

Yoga

Tuesday’s – 9:15 am - Crystal Hall

If you would like to sign up for classes offered by BreathIn2It, please visit their website at: [Online Stress Management & Anxiety Relief Programs \(breathein2it.com\)](#).

Wilson Hall Bible Study

Tuesday’s – 1:00 pm

The Wilson Hall Bible Study will take a break for the summer.

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.

Tai Chi

Wednesday’s – 6:30 pm

Gurney Bolster, certified Tai Chi instructor, will hold beginner Tai Chi classes in Crystal Hall. If you are interested in learning more about these classes, please contact Gurney at: gurneybolster@gmail.com.

Yoga

Thursday’s 6:45 pm - Crystal Hall

If you would like to sign up for classes offered by BreathIn2It, please visit their website at: [Online Stress Management & Anxiety Relief Programs \(breathein2it.com\)](#).

Pastor Laura Away

Pastor Laura will be away from June 16th – 30th. Elder, Chip McCoy will be our guest worship leader on June 18th and on Sunday, June 25th, we will be led in worship by Rev. Lidia Barlow.

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

Office Closed

The office will be closed on Monday, June 19th.

Volunteers Needed

Outdoor Worship – Sunday, June 25th

Calling all volunteers...we will be holding our worship outside (weather permitting) on June 25th. If you are able, please come to the church by 8:00 am to help with tent, chair, and audio equipment set-up.

June Birthdays

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------|----|------------------------|
| 2 | Ava Weidensall | 12 | Maya Williams |
| 6 | Karl Hetrick | 14 | Rev. Dr. Laura Strauss |
| 7 | John Ellis III | | Debbie Verncahho |
| | Tiffani Fitzwilliam | 17 | Linda MacDonald |
| 10 | Debbie Edwards | 28 | Ryan Gracey |
| 11 | John Fitzwilliam | 29 | Jacob D'Amico |
| | John Knasko | | |

Prayer List

Dee Borman



Prayer Circle

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

<u>Week of:</u>	<u>Praying for:</u>
June 4 th	The Sembrat family; Matt, Brienne, Colby & Ty Robert Shetler
June 11 th	Tom & Judy Stacey Jeannine Stimmel
June 18 th	The Stimmel family; Jeff, Joanna & Hanna Taylor Strang
June 25 th	The Tang family; Don, Christa, Christopher, Robert & Lucy The Van Houtte family; Diane, Lindsey & Robert

SHIM Food Donations

June 2023

For the month of June, we will be collecting **Pancake & Muffin Mix.**

We appreciate your continued support of this ministry.

Sunset Hills Book Club

June Book of the Month

Britt-Marie Was Here

By Fredrik Backman

July 5th - 7:30 pm

At 63, Britt-Marie has had enough. She finally walks out on her loveless 40-year marriage and finds a job in the only place she can: Borg, a small, derelict town devastated by the financial crisis. For the fastidious Britt-Marie, this new world of noisy children, muddy floors, and a roommate who is a rat (literally) is a hard adjustment. As for the citizens of Borg, with everything that they know crumbling around them, the only thing that they have left to hold on to is something Britt-Marie absolutely loathes: their love of soccer. When the village's youth team becomes desperate for a coach, they set their sights on her. She's the least likely candidate, but their need is obvious, and there is no one else to do it. Thus begins a beautiful and unlikely partnership. In her new role as reluctant mentor to these lost young boys and girls, Britt-Marie soon finds herself becoming increasingly vital to the community. And, even more surprisingly, she is the object of romantic desire for a friendly and handsome local policeman named Sven. In this world of oddballs and misfits, can Britt-Marie finally find a place where she belongs? (Amazon Book Description)



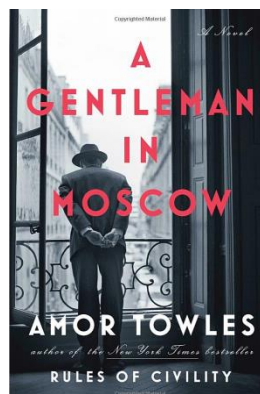
Please make note that the meeting will take place on July 5th.

July 2023

River Sing Me Home

by Eleanor Shearer

Meeting on July 26th



August 2023

A Gentleman in Moscow

by Amor Towles

Meeting on August 30th

Congratulations Mr. & Mrs. Gracey

