

THE BROTHER'S KEEPER – FEBRUARY - MARCH 2023
FIRST CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN – 405 Rt. 271, LIGONIER, PA.

Phone: 724-238-6292 * Email: LCOB1888@gmail.com

Sunday School – 9:30am * Worship 10:30am

A NOTE FROM PASTOR JOHN ...



A little more than a month ago we celebrated Christmas with all its glory! We sang the carols, enjoyed soloists and a Christmas pageant by the youth and shared the old, but never old, message of the events of that first Christmas. Our theme was “**God’s Greatest and Most Gracious Gift.**” The birth of Jesus was 2000 years ago, and that Gift remains the greatest and most gracious!

In a little over two months, we will celebrate “the rest of the story.” The Gift of Jesus at Christmas, became a Gift for all eternity as a result of His life, death and resurrection! A **life** that demonstrated to us how to live and His **death** that wipes away our sins, so that we can enjoy eternal life with Him ... starting right now!

That last phrase “starting right now!” may not have occurred to you, but that is the truth of the matter. Yes, we all die and pass from this earth, but as Scripture tells us, life continues in a new and most glorious way when we accept Him as Lord and Savior of our lives. (See 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:23-24; Romans 6:4, among many others).



What is my point? When we celebrate Christmas, we need to involve the Easter Story and when we celebrate Easter we need to include Christmas! It is literally **ONE BEAUTIFUL PACKAGE!**

And by looking at the example of Jesus’ life, we can start experiencing that new life today and every day. Christmas and Easter blessings are **EVERYTHING!**

GOD BLESS YOU.

PASTOR JOHN

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

LENT / EASTER THEME FOR 2023 ... Can you believe it! Lent starts on February 22 2023 with Ash Wednesday, concluding with our Easter celebration on April 9, 2023. Join us each and every Sunday as we study our theme: **“How do you view Easter?”** Knowing what we know of the events of almost 2,000 years ago, how has it impacted our personal faith journey today? What, in effect, have we done with Easter?

- **On the first Sunday of Lent, February 26th**, we will discuss the need to approach our salvation with immediacy, intimacy, and urgency - (II Corinthians 5:20b – 6:2)
- **On the second Sunday of Lent, March 5th**, the whole idea of believing with your heart and confessing with your lips that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, will be pursued – (Romans 10:8b - 13)
- **On the third Sunday, March 12**, we will discuss our priorities as concerns our approach to the Easter Blessing. Are your eyes on your bellies or your beliefs? (Philippians 3:17-4:1)
- **On the fourth Sunday of Lent, March 19th**, we will look at the fruit of our giftedness in light of the Cross. (Luke 13:1-9)
- **On March 26th, the fifth Sunday of Lent**, we will be reminded that “we are all invited”. (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32)
- **On Palm Sunday, April 2nd**, we will ponder the meaning of “A Victory Parade” led by Jesus into Jerusalem. (Luke 22:14-23, 61)
- **On Maundy Thursday, April 6**, we will celebrate the service of **Feetwashing, Love Feast and Communion**.
- **At the Easter Sunday Sunrise Service, April 9th**, we will explore the cross as a gift of life. (Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9)
- **At the Easter Worship Service at 10:30am, Sunday, April 9**, we will celebrate **“The Triumphant Jesus”**. (Revelation 1:4-8)



Why not make it a point to join us for all of our Lenten Worship Services and see how your view of Easter stacks up with Scripture! Hope to see you each and every Sunday in Worship, and for the Maundy Thursday Service on April 6 at 6:00pm.

“God accepts me; that’s **GRACE**. Then I accept God’s acceptance of me; that’s **FAITH**. Then I accept myself; that’s **PEACE**. Then I accept you; that’s **LOVE**. Then you are free to accept me; that’s **FELLOWSHIP**.”



Daylight Savings Time Begins March 12.

Remember: Spring Forward

REFLECTING ON CHRISTMAS PAST ...



CASS SHADRON SHARED A CHRISTMAS CARD AND

NOTE she received from Mary Eichorn's daughter Wanda in California ... *"My Mom is doing fine. She enjoys all the Christmas cards and hearing from all of her old friends.*

She's 98 now and my sisters and I feel so blessed to still have her with us. We thank you all for your warm wishes and know how lucky she is to have such good friends." *"Merry Christmas!"* (And Mary signed the card.) Thank you, Cass for sharing the card and note with our Church Family.

PASTOR JOHN AND SUSAN

received a Christmas Card from Bill and Kay McMillan, who live in Texas ... *"We enjoy the Monday morning two-minute message and appreciate the Prayer Chain messages that keep us up-to-date with our former Church family."* *"A Child will be born to us. God will give a Son to us. His name will be ... Prince of Peace."* Isaiah 9:6 *"Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year"*

From: Bill and Kay McMillan

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH

who shared a Christmas Play with our congregation on Sunday, December 18. Children from the pre-school class and up performed the beautiful Christmas Story skit with lovely costumes.

Thank you Darlene and all who helped to make this event special for all of us. We all were blessed.

"FRIENDSHIP CASSEROLE"

INGREDIENTS... Sorrow * Laughter * Love * Forgiveness * Smiles * Kindness

"Fold two hands together and express a dash of sorrow. Marinate it overnight and work on it tomorrow. Chop one grudge into tiny pieces. Add several cups of love. Dredge with a large smile. Mix the above ingredients together. Dissolve the hate within you by doing a good deed. Cut in and help a friend in need. Stir in laughter and kindness from the heart. Toss with forgiveness and give a neighbor some. The number of people served will depend on you. It can serve the whole wide world if you want it to!"

Bible Study



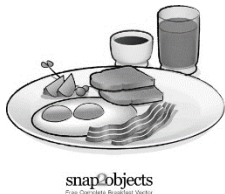
BIBLE STUDY and more! Why not join us Wednesday evenings in the Fellowship Room at 6:30pm for an informal time of fellowship, study

and – you guessed it – refreshments. By the time you read this article we will be just about finished with our study of the Book of Proverbs. Then

we're going to switch gears and move on to the New Testament and study the short letters of John and Peter. We'll first tackle the three letters of John (not the Gospel or the book of Revelation, also written by the Apostle John), and then move on to the two letters of Peter. Won't you consider joining us? Make it your New Year's Resolution!

COME VISIT THE LADY STITCHERS – THURSDAY AT 9:00AM –

We work on our projects, talk some, snack a little and enjoy the fellowship! And, stop in to visit Pastor John in the Church office.



COME ONE – COME ALL (Men and Boys, that is!) ... to the monthly Men's Breakfast. The format is simple: Lift up prayer concerns * eat a delicious breakfast * generally have a Guest Speaker sharing various topics * Have a time of fellowship * Go home! That's it!! Come Saturday, February 11th to hear Andrew Gornic share his ministry entitled "Heroes Never Alone." On March 11th, we will hear from Ken Barackman. Ken was past President of the Pittsburgh Christian Business Men's Association. We meet the second Saturday of the month at 9:00am. (A special thanks to Bob and Sharon Lanz for arranging these two speakers!)

SEE YOU FEBRUARY 11TH AND MARCH 11 AT 9:00 A.M.
IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL!

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12 ... Did you notice this announcement in the Church Bulletin? "All are invited to attend a luncheon and gathering after Church to discuss ways to increase Church attendance." There is information in the narthex for your review before this event entitled, "**50 Ways to Increase Church Attendance.**" (Please pick-up a copy / Your input is encouraged.) Plan to remain after Church for this most important meeting.

HAVE YOU NOTICED THE CHURCH SIGN LATELY??? Thanks to Bob and Sharon Lanz, our Church sign is changed regularly (weekly) to reflect a passage or thought relating to the Sunday Morning Message. They are much like the Post Office - rain, shine, snow, sleet or hail, the sign must be changed!! In fact, based upon our experiences on the other side of the mountain, they are better than the Post Office! Don't forget to glance at the sign each time you pass by or stop in! (But pay attention to the road!) Here are some recent messages:

JANUARY 2023

"If you trust Christ, you are called to share the Gospel."

"Put your trust in Christ, Partake of His promises."

FALL 2022

"What's age when you have eternity with Jesus?"

"Hallelujah! Jesus is coming."

REVELATION 22:20

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“GRIEF SHARE” Janet Riordan, President of the Association of Churches, sent this note to all area churches ... Covenant Presbyterian Church is hosting a Grief Share for anyone in the community grieving the loss of a loved one. Grief Share is a faith-based video seminar support group. It is non-denominational and features Biblical concepts for healing from your grief. The group will be meeting at Covenant Church at 10:00am beginning Friday, February 13 for 13 weeks. Please contact Covenant Church at 724-238-3657 for more information or at **www.griefshare.org.**

“For God so loVed the world,
That He gAve
His onLy
BegottEn
SoN
That whosoever
BelievethIn Him
Should Not perish
But have Everlasting life.”
John 3:16



HAPPY VALENTINE’S DAY!

“The beauty of a Valentine
Is not its words in rhyme.
The loveliest most important part
Is not the fancy, flowery art.
But the reaching out from heart to heart.”

**DID YOU KNOW WE HAVE
SOME GREAT ATHLETES
IN OUR CONGREGATION?**



Brock and Roman are playing basketball this year and the boys are doing a great job! Let’s see: They play baseball, basketball, football – what else?? Brock recently played at Bishop McCort in Johnstown and Roman played at the court at Richland High School in Johnstown. They and the teams did great. Quinn is doing archery with Pastor Frank (he says she’s doing real well!), and she recently competed in the Geography Bowl at school and is involved in a form of karate. Ask Dave, Dayna or Grandma Debbie, Andy or Kara ... they’ll let you know when and where they’re playing! They might even brag a little! Attend one of their games.

**MARCH 11 – “SPRING FORWARD”
CHANGE YOUR CLOCK AHEAD ONE HOUR ON THE EVENING OF
MARCH 11. DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS MARCH 12.**

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BE ON THE LOOK-OUT! _The Board is looking for past copies of The Brother’s Keeper, The Memorial Book and History Books of the Church. If you know where they might be, would you please see Scott Boyd or any member of the Board.

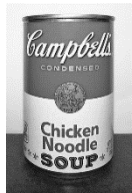
Sorry! There is no reward for finding these items – the reward is just happy Board Members!



THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF RITA'S CLOSET is spreading far and wide through the use of the Church's Facebook page, and word of mouth. We have recently blessed visitors from as far away as Somerset, Jennerstown, Jeannette and Scottdale, as well as many local Ligonier families in both tangible and intangible ways. In addition to providing for material needs, we have had an opportunity to share God's love with many who are walking through difficult times including unplanned pregnancies, sudden loss of a child or other loved ones, job loss, evictions, coming out of rehab and much more. We have even been able to help a young man distribute Bibles to his spiritually hungry friends.

God provides richly, as donations keep pouring in from our generous community. With the help of all our gracious volunteers and donors from within our congregation, as well as from the community, we are prepared to minister to many more, so please spread the word and invite others in need. Or better yet, consider who you might be able to bless by stopping by and getting something that someone else might need and take it to them. Do you know someone who is sick or shut in? A family without transportation? Someone struggling to make ends meet? A family who needs a warm blanket or warm clothing? Stop in any Monday between 10:00am – 5pm and see what you or someone else you know might need. Our space is overflowing with great new and gently used clothing, shoes, household items, toys, games, stuffed animals and so much more! Please help us get these items into the hands of those who need them. God doesn't promise that life will be easy this side of Heaven, but He does instruct us to walk alongside the less fortunate – *"... whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me."* (Matthew 25:40 NIV).

- Submitted by Sharon Lanz



ANOTHER OUTREACH PROJECT that our congregation participates in is "Souper Bowl Sunday". "I (Elaine) have no idea how long ago soup became the Food Pantry item for January, but possibly more than 20 years. It was a word play with the Super Bowl that was initially in January. Churches began having January become Souper Bowl month. Soup is the most desired canned good. Our Church joined in this endeavor most likely the year initiated and every year since. Also, almost since the beginning of the Ligonier Food Pantry, the Association of Churches determined a list of favorite items and has individual churches sign up to guarantee they will provide at least 40 units of this item their assigned month. Our Church determined to commit to 2 months each year. During the rest of the time, Church members are asked to bring any items they desire for the Food pantry. If they take advantage of sales and wish to share, that generosity is encouraged. When a reasonable amount is accumulated, these items are taken to the Food Pantry. We also set the Food Pantry as a recipient for one month of outreach giving and one-fourth of money given in the CROP Walk comes back to Ligonier, equally given to the Salvation Army and the Food Pantry. Youth have on occasion also helped distribute food at the Food Pantry and church members have provided pies through our support of Valley Youth Network. The Fidelity Class supported the Food Pantry monthly for years with a cash donation. Remember: Bring your canned soup to Church and place it in the narthex in support of this outreach program.

– By: Elaine Boyd

“OUR REAL TEACHER” ... There follows an excerpt of the evening devotional by Charles Spurgeon from January 19, 2023. I think you will find it “educational” to say the least:

“THEN OPENED HE THEIR UNDERSTANDING, THAT THEY MIGHT UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES” Luke 24:45

OUR REAL TEACHER ... There follows an excerpt of the evening devotional by Charles Spurgeon for January 19th. I think you will find it “educational” to say the least. “He whom we view as opening Scripture, we here perceive opening the understanding. In the first work, he has many fellow-laborers, but in the second he stands alone; many can bring the Scriptures to the mind, but the Lord alone can prepare the mind to receive the Scriptures. Our Lord Jesus differs from all other teachers; they reach the ear, but He instructs the heart; they deal with the outward letter, but He imparts an inward taste for the truth by which we perceive its savor and spirit. The most unlearned of men become ripe scholars in the school of Grace when the Lord Jesus, by His Holy Spirit, unfolds the mysteries of the Kingdom to them, and grants the divine anointing by which they are enabled to behold the invisible. Happy are we if we have had our understandings cleared and strengthened by the Master! Had it not been for the love of Jesus, we should have remained to this moment in utter ignorance, for without His gracious opening of our understanding, we could no more have attained to spiritual knowledge than an infant can climb the Pyramids, or an ostrich fly up to the stars. Jesus’ College is the only one in which God’s truth can be really learned; other schools may teach us what is to be believed, but Christ’s alone can show us how to believe it. Let us sit at the feet of Jesus, and by earnest prayer call in His blessed aid that our dull wits may grow brighter, and our feeble understandings may receive heavenly things.

SPIRITUAL OPENNESS IS ‘ON THE RISE’ IN AMERICA; (BARNA, CHRISTIAN HEADLINES) – “IT’S AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY” By: Michael Fusty – Christian Headlines ... According to a new Barna Survey, a poll of 2,000 adults found that 74% of Americans say they “would like to grow spiritually”, while 44 percent say they are “more open to God today” than they were pre-pandemic. Additionally, 77% say they believe in God “or a higher power.” David Kinnaman, CEO of Barna, said the research reveals a “tremendous opportunity for faith leaders.” Though religious affiliation and Church attendance continue to decline, spiritual openness and curiosity are on the rise,” Kinnaman wrote in an analysis. “Across every generation, in fact, we see an unprecedented desire to grow spiritually/supernatural dimension and a belief in God or a higher power. Many Americans, he added have “signaled that they’re willing to consider exploring spirituality.” “They are open to more that truly satisfies,” Kinnaman wrote. “The challenge facing the Church and para-church ministries is whether they are ready and able to meet the spiritually open – where they are, as they are. Our data shows the Church has real work to do to bridge the trust gap for people who are spiritual but not religious.” Only 9% of Americans say they do not believe “there is a spiritual or supernatural dimension to the

world.” Half of Americans (50%) say they are “certain” such a dimension exists, while 30% say they “think it exists” but are not certain. Over 80% of Americans say they think there is a spiritual or supernatural dimension to the world,” Kinnaman wrote. He noted that this openness also exists among teens, with 76% of them agreeing with the statement that “Jesus speaks to me in a way that is relevant to my life.” “We have an unprecedented opportunity to share Jesus with a world in need,” Kinnaman wrote. “But how will we do anything unless we are desperate for Jesus ourselves? As we embark on this journey to meet, know and love people who may be on the cusp of integrating spirituality into their life and discovering the transforming power of Jesus, may we be found ready and able to guide them.”

COME ONE – COME ALL - (Men and Boys that is!) – to the monthly Men’s Breakfast. The format is very simple. Lift up any prayer concerns. Eat a delicious homemade breakfast. Generally we have a Guest Speaker of varying topics. Have a time of fellowship. Go home. Come on Saturday, February 11th to hear Andrew Gornic share his ministry entitled, “Heroes Never Alone.” On March 11th, we will hear from Ken Barackman. Ken was past President of the Pittsburgh Christian Business Men’s Association. NOTE: We meet the second Saturday of the month at 9:00am. (A special thanks to Bob and Sharon Lanz for arranging these two guest speakers!). **See you February 11th and March 11th at 9:00am in the Fellowship Room.**

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GENERAL BOARD MEETING – The meeting was held on Sunday, January 8th after Church. Dick Jones, the Chairperson led the meeting. Listed here are a few of the highlights from that meeting: **Michelle Black is the Chair of the Nurture Commission**. There is a lot this Commission does, including ordering Sunday School materials, plant orders for Easter and Christmas, and so much more. Elaine Boyd announced that she is stepping down from preparing the Church bulletin for Sunday Worship. A special thank you to her for her faithfulness over the years. Pam graciously said she would take this on but not every week. We thank Pam for stepping up. **Stacey Knupp is Chair of the Deacon Board**. Christmas were sent to all on our Prayer list, and the Deacons planned the Christmas Eve Service. There were 53 in attendance. She shared that a new Deacon was chosen to serve. All welcomed Debbie McInchok. **Witness Commission Chair is Debbie McInchok**. She reported that 25 Thanksgiving food bags were filled by the congregation and distributed to the Food Bank. Several were taken by members of our Church to give to families that they knew who could use some help. Thank you to all who filled food bags. The **Stewardship Commission** Chair is Paul Knupp. He reported that the 2023 Budget was completed. New stoves for the kitchen are being considered. Becky asked if the leftover funds from the building of the pavilion - \$1,300 - \$1,400 – could be used for the purchase of the new stoves. Our new Janitors are Lori and Billy Crawford. We thank them for stepping up. Paul shared plans being looked into for the Church building: Installation of new floors in the Fellowship Room are on the list, along with LED lights (some have already been installed). A new home for the old piano in the Fellowship Room was found! The Fellowship Room will be getting a new coat of paint as well as epoxy flooring. Speakers will be replaced in the Fellowship Room. Work is set to begin March 27th and the Fellowship Room will be closed for approximately three days.

“Living a life without prayer is like building a house without nails.”
“Prayer is releasing the energies of God. For prayer is asking God to do what we cannot do ourselves.”

“PRAYER IS THE SOUL’S SINCERE DESIRE”

Following a discussion about prayer with some of the ladies after Bible Study, this Hymn came to mind. Sometimes we wonder if God hears our prayers – are we wording our prayers in a way that gets God’s attention. This lovely hymn came to mind –

“PRAYER IS THE SOUL’S SINCERE DESIRE”

- Vs. 1 - “Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire that tremblers in the breast.
Vs. 2 - Prayer is the burden of a sigh, the falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye when none but God is near.
Vs. 3 - Prayer is the simplest form of speech that infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach the Majesty on high.
Vs. 4 - Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath, the Christian’s native air,
His watchword at the gates of death, he enters heaven with prayer.
Vs. 5 - O Thou, by whom we come to God, the Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod, Lord, teach us how to pray.

James Montgomery is the author of this text. He wrote more than four hundred hymns, many of which are still in popular use: “Angels from the Realms of Glory”, “According to Thy Gracious Word” just to name a few. Though trained for the ministry, Montgomery spent his lifetime as a journalist and newspaper editor. He became widely known for his writings and poetry, yet, when once asked, “Which of your poems will live?” he replied, “None, sir, except a few of my hymns.” Many have acclaimed this hymn as one of the finest definitions and descriptions of prayer to be found in short form. Such colorful metaphors as “hidden fire,” “a sign,” “a falling tear,” “an upward glance” and others describe in poetic language the mystic meaning of prayer – understood by experience, yet often difficult to express in words. This hymn is in the 1951 red **“Brethren Hymnal”** (Special thanks to Becky for finding a **“Brethren Hymnal”** for us so we could read the words to this Hymn.)

SOME “RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS” – Hold the door for someone * Let someone who has fewer items go in front of you in line at the store * Call a friend just to say hello * Here’s a neat one – we all eat out occasionally “Write a nice note for your server on your meal receipt below the tip” * If you have extra veggies from your garden, share with a neighbors or Church members (this act of kindness is often practiced within our Church family) * Ask your neighbor if he or she needs something the next time you go to the store. We’re sure some of the dear folks at our Church have done one or more of these Acts of Kindness – that’s just how our Church family is. We all are blessed.

**FIRST CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
405 ROUTE 271
LIGONIER, PA. 15658-9245**

**LIGONIER FIRST CHURCH OF
THE BRETHREN** is a community
of believers who seek to walk
passionately with Christ - reaching
out in His name – preaching and
sharing His Gospel and teaching all
to love Him.



PLEASE JOIN US FOR ...
SUNDAY SCHOOL – 9:30AM
CLASSES FOR ALL AGES –
PRE-SCHOOL THROUGH
ADULT STUDY
WORSHIP - 10:30AM
BIBLE STUDY – WED. 6:30PM

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!