



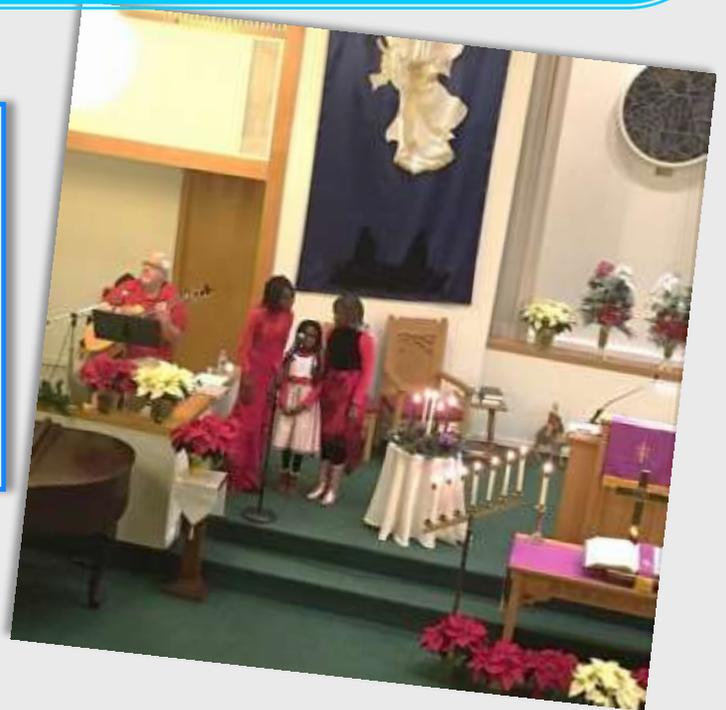
Westgate January 2023 Witness

2235 Harrisburg Pike
Lancaster, PA 17601
717-394-1071



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

January 5	ABW Meeting
January 16	Church Board Meeting
January 17	AB Men's Breakfast



CHRISTMAS 2022



Greetings in the Name of our LORD !

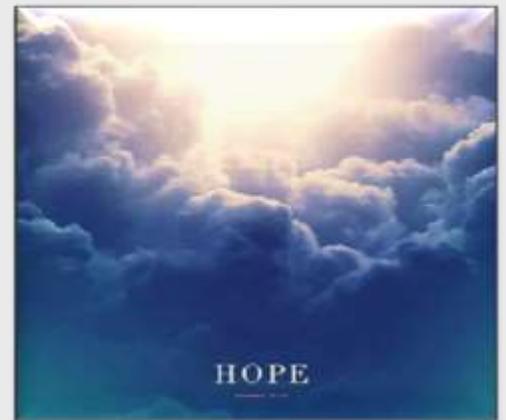
The Power of Hope

Many years ago an S-4 submarine was rammed by another ship and quickly sank. The entire crew was trapped inside. Other ships rushed to the scene of disaster off the coast of Massachusetts. No one knows exactly what took place down in that sunken submarine but we can be sure that those young men clung bravely to life as the oxygen slowly gave out. A diver placed his ear against the side of the vessel and listened. He heard a faint tapping. Inside that trapped prison-- someone was tapping out a message in the dots and dashes of the Morse code. The young diver listened intensely as the message was slowly tapped out and great emotion swelled inside him. What was the message? IT WAS THE QUESTION OF THE AGES—“*Is there any hope?*”

What do you think? Lots of people today are asking that question. Despite the preachers, and peddlers of simplistic positivism—despite the fact that many wait in childlike trust for brighter days—despite the optimism the Pop Psychology crowd would have us embrace—despite the common belief that America is *the greatest Nation on God’s green earth*—despite the “pick yourself up by your own boot straps” mentality—there are countless people who’ve grown suspect of brighter days. They too ask the question of the ages, *IS THERE ANY HOPE?*

The question of hope is on our minds because we live in a world where for many hope seems temporarily dashed. Let’s be honest, we often wonder when is the next shoe going to drop. In our personal lives, our families, and in society at large we deal with so much broken hope. It is not unusual for the things in which we willingly place out hope in to fail us. Yet at my deepest core I believe that because we are made in God’s image, we are hardwired for hope. We historically put our hope in something. If you listen carefully, you will realize that we communicate with the language of hope all the time.

- “I sure hope it doesn’t rain today.”
- “I hope she isn’t mad at me.”
- “I hope I can do what I promised.”
- “I hope they win the world cup.”
- “I hope they can get along for once.”
- “I hope this sickness isn’t something serious.”
- “I hope when I get home, there will be something to eat.”
- “I hope to make something worthwhile out of my life.”
- “I hope what I’ve believed in proves to be true.”
- “I hope my family and friends will be proud of me.”



On our first Sunday of Advent we lit the Candle of Hope—yet for many hope in general is an evasive reality—and if we were completely candid we would allow ourselves to admit that some feel a dimness of hope—and a melancholy in their hearts even more keenly during this season. Even amidst all the bright lights and jingle bells, the Christmas music pumped into our heads since a week before Thanksgiving. Is there more hope or more hopelessness resonating in the hearts among us?

For many the question “*Is there any Hope?*,” is not just a theoretical question—it is **the question!** We desperately need a HOPE THAT GIVES COPE! Alexander Pope once said: “*There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectations of something better tomorrow.*” As believers we often look to the *Good Book* for words of hope and encouragement amidst life’s dilemmas and chaos.

Noah certainly longed for a sign of hope after the world had been destroyed by flood while he was held up floating with his family and the animal kingdom for months. Finally Noah released a dove through a hatch in the ark. Genesis 8:11, “*When the dove returned to Noah in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf!*” To Noah and his family this leaf was so much more than foliage; this was a promise of dry ground—vegetation—a new start. The bird brought more than a piece of a tree; it brought hope. Isn’t that what hope is? Hope is an olive branch—evidence of dry land after a terrible flood.

Don’t we love the olive leaves of life? “*It appears the cancer may be in remission. A friend says.*” “*I can help you with those finances...another says*” “*We will get through this together—a lover says to their partner*” “*Winter, Spring, Summer or Fall—all you have to do is call.*” Words like that are hope infusing. And we love the parenthetical dove (messengers) that bring them. When a father walks his daughter through her first broken heart, he gives her an olive leaf. When a wife of many years consoles the wife of a few months, assuring her that no husband is perfect and storms pass, you know what she is doing? She is giving an olive leaf. When a dear friend put his strong hand on my shoulder and simply said “*You seem very pensive and distracted lately, when you are ready to talk about what’s happening I am here for you.*” His words were the olive leaf—he was the dove (messenger) that delivered it.

During this winter season as days are short and the weather has turned cold let us be present to the reality that despite all the holiday jingles and carols, many feel a lack of hope. One word of kindness, one thoughtful gesture, one random act of generosity may be an “*olive leaf*” bringing hope to a hurting heart. I believe the Christmas story at its core also reminds us that hope will never be found if we look purely on the horizontal, human level. We need a transcendent source of “*vertical hope.*” I believe true hope must have a vertical focus. It is not enough to say that God gives hope, but that hope is attached to the glorious aspects of God’s character. He is Holy, Just, Righteous, Sovereign, Loving, Wise, Forgiving, Immutable, Pure, Truthful, etc.

The more we explore and dwell upon these aspects of His character; the more engulfed in vertical awe we become; the more hopefulness and perspective we will have. **We simply can’t stop hoping, because God created our lives to be propelled by hope.** Our capacity and desire for hope drives us instinctually to Him. And the more intentional and lofty our vertical focus becomes the more hope infused are the possibilities. “*Greater is He that in in you, than He that is in this world.*” And he shall be called “**Immanuel**” which means God with us. Jesus Christ the giver of human hope. The prophecies from of old affirm “*Those walking in darkness have seen a great light; a light has dawned on those living in the land of darkness....and He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...*” Isaiah 9:2,6. He told me to tell you.

He told me to tell you!

(Excerpt from Christmas Service)

Faithfully,
Pastor Robert Zimmerman



ABW Ministries

**Our next ABW meeting is
Thursday, January 5, 1:00 pm
in the Fellowship Hall.
We will be celebrating the birth of Jesus.**

We are participating in the Regional ABW project. The program, "Fresh Start in Costa Rica," is also affiliated with ABC International Ministries and missionary Sue Hegarty. See the posted flyers for more information.

We continue to work on regional and international projects and would welcome your help.

We are looking forward to a very active and satisfying winter and hope that you may join us for one, or all of the projects. If you have questions about ABW, or our projects, please see Pat Rust.

God Bless & Praise the Lord, Pat Rust and the ABW Ladies

Women's Bible Study

Women's Bible Study **will not meet on 1/10.**
We will resume on Tuesday, January 17th.



Come join our Women's Bible Study on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 AM. "Fulfilling the Purpose God Has For You!" Using a wonderful study by Max Lucado called "You Were Made For This Moment," we'll look at the life of Esther. We'll talk about opening our hearts to the purpose God has for each of us individually. During our cozy study we fellowship together, discuss God's Word and pray. We sing songs and have fun activities that enhance the lessons! We start with fellowship and conversation at 9:30 am then go into our study at 9:45am. Come join us!

AB Men's Breakfast

Our next Men's Fellowship Breakfast will be on January 17th at 9:00 a.m. We will meet at the **Family Fare Restaurant**, 5921 Main St., East Petersburg, PA 17520 for a casual Christian Men's fellowship time.



Sunday School Studies

We continue to explore history in the Holy Land in our Adult Sunday School Class. We gather at 9:30 a.m. for coffee. Class begins by 9:45. After Pastor Robert leads in some opening moments of discussion or worship, then we go deeper into our topic for the week as led by Stephen Appleby. Each weeks study is a standalone topic not tied to an ongoing curriculum.

Treasurer's Report

	December
Budget Income	\$6,104.60
Non-budget income	\$3,396.00

Birthdays- January

Birthdays



- Rev. Robert
1/2 Zimmerman
1/6 Joe Faith
1/8 Sarah Tebie
Dottie Jones
1/12 Shiloh Tebie
1/13 Margaret Rogers
1/14 Rev. Richard Cook
Connie Appleby
1/15 Jennifer Ryan
1/17 Dick Papez
1/18 Stephen Appleby
1/20 Susan Miller
1/21 Nickenson Vital
1/24 Jack Stockdale
1/29 Caleb Pate
1/30 Timothy Ferris



On behalf of myself and the part-time staff at Westgate Church I want to express gratitude for the financial gift, as well as all the other individual cards and gifts you so generously gave us for Christmas. Your generous gifts have both a sentimental and practical value to our lives. Each of us enjoy the various aspects of our work at Westgate and your loving expressions only serve to further encourage us to continue doing our best. Thanks on behalf of each of us.

Robert Zimmerman, Pastor



INVITATIONS TO LOCAL EVENTS

Parish Resource Center Classes

The Enneagram is an ancient system that describes nine personality styles with many variations. The Enneagram is first and foremost a journey of self-discovery and can also increase understanding and harmony in our relationships, offering a path for personal and spiritual growth. As a result of participating in this day-long workshop, you will:

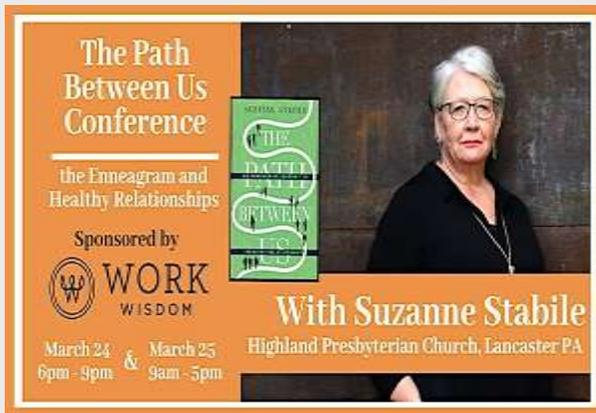
- recognize the complexity of being human;
- possess a greater understanding of yourself, your strengths and vulnerabilities, your fears and defenses;
- gain insight for deepening your spiritual life and discovering implications for prayer;
- find ways to bring humor and self-compassion into daily struggles; and
- receive tools and encouragement for growing toward your best self.



Becoming Your Best Self: Introduction to the Enneagram

Saturday, February 25th - 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

This workshop is available in-person or online. There will be a 1 hour break for lunch. Bring your own lunch (fridge and microwave available) or make a quick trip to a nearby restaurant.



****Please Note**** The Path Between Us Conference is designed for attendees who have already identified their Enneagram number. If you need an introduction to the Enneagram before this conference, please check out:

Lunch is included with your ticket. During registration, please indicate if you have any dietary restrictions. We will make every reasonable effort to accommodate requests.

“The Fieldstone Bridge”

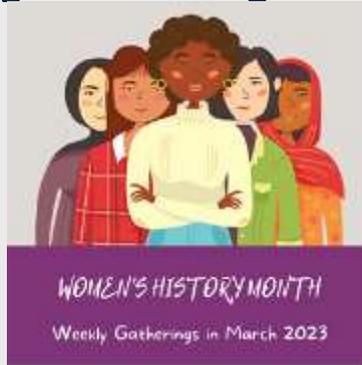
The resonance of ages past lies hidden in the old fieldstone bridge; echoes of lives lived long ago rides upon the ether above the cool creek water, which dances and flows to winding rivers and seas beyond. Moss spreads its young roots where ancestors walked, the foliage masks the ghosts of lovers long past held in sweet embrace. As a child I listened to the songs of angels among the trees and watched the elements collide with childish eyes of wonder. This bridge that joins two worlds, two times, many lives.

Julia Ward



Baptist Potpourri

ABW USA



Save the dates for our upcoming **Women's History Month** Gatherings on Mondays in March:

- **March 6, 2023, at 12:00-12:30 PM Eastern Time**
Speaker: Minister Sadiqa Delaney, Member of ABWM's Young Adult Women's Ministries Advisory Team (YAWMAT) and Associate Minister at Berean Baptist Church
- **March 13, 2023, at 12:00-12:30 PM Eastern Time**
Speaker: Dr. Laura Miraz, Associate Executive Director of Human Resources Management Services at American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS)
 - **March 20, 2023, at 12:00-12:30 PM Eastern Time**
Speaker: Rev. Dr. Patricia Hernandez, Associate General Secretary for American Baptist Women in Ministry and Transition Ministries, American Baptist Churches, USA
- **March 27, 2023, at 12:00-12:30 PM Eastern Time**
Speaker: Yvette Vanterpool, Chief Communications Officer, Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB)

Learn more at www.abwomensministries.org/events.



Discover Your Spiritual Gift! Baptist History & Polity - Rev. Randy Powell
Starting Friday January 6th & 7th 6:00-10:00 pm and Friday January 20 & 21st 2023 8:00 am-4:00pm (Intense Course).

This on-line course explores the origins, development and basic beliefs of Baptists, emphasizing an appreciation for the importance of knowing our rich Baptist heritage. There will be an examination of the association, regional and national structures of ABC-USA and of the typical organization styles and policies of the local church. As opportunity presents itself, concepts of congregational transformation and spiritual formation will be incorporated in the course. Go to the website for more information: actsministryschool.com

ABCOPAD

Well Done!

At year's end, Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Johnson completes his work as a member of the ABCOPAD staff. Pastor Jeff, we offer our best wishes and trust the Lord will bless you in all your future plans with the desires of your heart.



Lancaster County Retired Clergy and Spouses met for their annual Christmas Luncheon at the Shady Maple. While it was a smaller group, due to a number of factors, including a number of significant members now celebrating Christmas home with Lord, it really was a joy being together. It is a delightful group of dear friends and faithful partners in ministry, some having retired from active ministry while most still hard at work serving in pastoral leadership roles.

Special thanks to Pastor Cook for organizing this luncheon.

Our Missionaries

Working our way thru the bureaucracy

Dear Loved Ones,

Greetings and Merry Christmas. This past Tuesday Kihomi and I spent almost the whole day in FBI office in Chandler, Arizona for fingerprinting. The whole session went fine but the person in charge told us that to have the FBI report Apostilled it will take 10 to 11 weeks. We are here expressing our deep gratitude and thanks to the Smiths in DR for mentoring us in the process. So, we need somebody with more patience to share some with us. We are really tired of waiting. Meanwhile we are in touch with the DR consulate in CA for the requirements we need before we got visit them.

Yours, Nzunga

Dear Mission Supporters,

The saga of Nzunga's and Kihomi's future ministry goes on and on. Uprisings in Haiti and bureaucratic changes and delays in the DR. It can be very frustrating. Let's hope waiting on the Lord doesn't take the time it took the Israelites to be freed from Egypt.

Thanks for your support and prayers. Have a Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

Blessings, MPT team

“Wise people still follow the star”

Dr. Marvin A. McMickle



December 19, 2022

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem on that first Christmas Day, two signs were given to the world to announce what God was doing through the birth of his Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. According to the Gospel of Luke, we are told that an angel visited the shepherds in the fields where they were watching their flocks. The angel announced the birth of Jesus with these words: “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11 ESV). It is important for us to remember where God first made that announcement: to shepherds who were among the poorest and most marginalized members of ancient Hebrew society. Shepherds smelled like the work they did. They were always among their animals. They could not maintain the ritual purity that was so important, indeed so essential to the religious life of Israel.

You could say that shepherds were what we have recently come to call “essential workers.” Society needed them to raise sheep that provided meat for food, wool for clothing, skins for bags and pouches and tents for everyday use. Of equal importance, those sheep were used in the Temple in Jerusalem for animal sacrifices on the holiest days in the Jewish calendar. And yet, because of their work with those animals, those shepherds were unable to enter the Temple and offer a sacrifice with the very sheep they had raised. Just like essential workers today whose jobs make them vulnerable and susceptible to COVID-19 infection, those shepherds were subject to touching dead animals or smelling like manure. This made them ritually unclean! Their work was essential, but their presence in society was not!

Now consider that of all the places in the world where God could have announced the birth of the savior of the world, God chose to show up among the shepherds of Bethlehem. Not in Rome where Caesar presided over a global empire. Not in Jerusalem where King Herod sat in his royal palace. Not even inside the walls of Bethlehem itself, since there was no room for Jesus to be born when Mary and Joseph arrived there one night. No, it was shepherds sitting in the open country keeping watch over flocks of sheep that likely belonged to someone else. These men were the poor, the overlooked, the undervalued, and the despised. They were the kind of people that other people in the world would pass by and not give a second thought.

That is where God showed up to announce the birth of Jesus. Understand, that is where God always shows up; on behalf of and in support of the people living on the margins of any society. It begins with God showing up in Egypt in the book of Exodus, not in the palace of the Pharaoh or among the elite families in Egypt. Instead, God showed up in a burning bush in the middle of the desert with the command to Moses to bring the Hebrew slaves out of slavery where they were making bricks to build the royal cities in which they could not live. God showed up on behalf of the poor and the powerless.

Then God did it again with the shepherds in Bethlehem when God showed up among another group of the poor and the powerless. This is where God’s focus is, and this is where God wants the church to place its focus. Not on prosperity theology where the focus is on how we can become rich and successful. Instead, our focus as a church ought to be on the people that society keeps overlooking and underpaying. In this world where so much attention is given to the paths to wealth

and prosperity, God could have affirmed that by showing up in Rome or Jerusalem, but God did not do that. God showed up among slaves in Egypt and shepherds in Bethlehem. The first sign given about the birth of Jesus was to the shepherds in the fields outside of Bethlehem.

There was a second sign however, and that was to persons who lived in eastern countries, somewhere in the vast Persian and Greek empires created by Alexander the Great and before him the Persian King Darius. Known as magi, they were most likely astrologers who observed the night sky for any changes or sudden appearances. Those men are important to the story for several reasons. First, because they were Gentiles, or foreigners, non-Jews who were drawn to the place where Jesus was born by following a star in the heavens. Whatever was happening in Bethlehem that night, it was not limited only to the people of Israel or the descendants of Abraham. Whatever God was up to in Bethlehem, it was on behalf of the whole world. By the way, that is what the angel said to those shepherds: “I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10 KJV).

Christ is not a national savior, whether that nation is ancient Israel or modern America. We may sing the song that says, “God Bless America,” but we must understand that a far better song for understanding God’s intentions is the one that says, “He’s got the whole world in His hands.” Those foreign travelers not only came to Bethlehem to celebrate the birth of Jesus, but they went back home to their country and kindred to announce what God had done in Bethlehem. The coming of the angel to the shepherds was God revealing God’s self to the poor and the powerless. The shining star that captured the attention of the magi was God’s way of announcing to the whole world that a savior had been born.

Notice how the Luke and the Matthew stories overlap. When those magi saw the star, they concluded that such a celestial event must be announcing the birth of a great king. Who else but a child of royal birth would have their birth announcement come by way of a heavenly light? If a king were being born, then where else would you look for that king except in the royal palace? That is why the men went first to the palace of King Herod. They were equating what God was doing with how things usually work in this world. But Herod had no knowledge about this birth, and when he was told about it, he was so jealous for this throne that he was willing to kill anyone who might try to replace him.

Look at this two-part image. First, there is a heavenly baby in a humble stable surrounded by shepherds. Then, as the text points out when the family had moved from the stable to a house, those magi came into the place where Jesus had been brought, probably after he had been circumcised eight days after he had been born. Those magi followed the star to Bethlehem and found what they were looking for.

In the same manner, we need to follow Jesus, because he knows how to get us to where we want to go. Jesus knows how to get us to a more just society. Jesus knows how to get us to the Beloved Community. Jesus knows how to get us out of our current political divisions. Follow Jesus and learn how to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Follow Jesus and learn to beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks and study war no more. This Christmas season, let’s all agree to follow Jesus. Wise people still follow the star!

Article from The Christian Citizen. Dr. Marvin A. McMickle is interim executive minister, Cleveland Baptist Association, American Baptist Churches, USA.