



# Leacock Communicator

Leacock Presbyterian Church

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June & July 2020

## Notes from the Manse—On Worship

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Matthew 18:20

On July 5th, worship will once more be held at Old Leacock and Paradise, at 8:00 and 9:30 respectively. This is an occasion for great joy. Many of you over the last few weeks have told me how much you miss, how you long to be with, each other. I share that feeling. Being physically together for worship is a gift, a blessing. And it's important. The quote above is just one instance of the many times Jesus urged those who would follow him to be in fellowship. It is in communion with each other that we are reminded that we are sisters and brothers, not strangers attending to our own priorities. As I mentioned on Trinity Sunday, just as God is a fellowship, so are we to be. When we worship together, we blend our voices in music and prayer, a sign of how our lives need to be intertwined. We confess and take vows before each other, thereby keeping us honest and offering support. So, yes, it will be good to be in our sanctuaries again. But I need to stress—as a church, we have never been closed. We have continued to worship together through remote worship services, our Caring Connection volunteers who have reached out to the members of the congregation, our Zoom fellowship times, the new use of our Prayer Chain. We are not reopening; we are regathering, and the difference is important. Also know that the worship at Old Leacock and Paradise will be different, very different. My article on the Regathering Guidelines we will be following describes some of the ways worship will be changing. Still, I, like many of you, look forward to July 5th.

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:2

Just before Jesus speaks these words to the woman at the well, she had pointed to a problem—as Samaritan, she worshipped at Mt. Gerizim; Jews, like Jesus, believed worship was centered in Jerusalem. In this passage, Jesus insists that the time is coming and is in fact here when the physical place of worship is not important, a worship is ultimately a matter of spirit and truth. Yes, Jesus urges us to be together. But that can happen even when we are apart. These weeks we have been separated physically from each other I have thought a lot about all the people who cannot worship in a church building, those who are in prison or other forms of isolation, those living in a land that does not allow their faith. And worship is pretty empty if it never leaves a building; properly, it is done every day in how we think, how we live with all others. We are the church, in or out of a building. When we regather on July 5th, some will not be able to join us; others will choose not to for health reasons, and they will be right. In fact, the Session urges anyone who might be at particular risk of the virus that is still very much around to continue to shelter in place. Part of the worship God desires is our care for each other. Endangering anyone unnecessarily would not be worship. We want to be physically together when that is good and wise. But for those who cannot or should not, know that your worship in whatever form it takes, if it is of the spirit and true, is every bit as good, every bit as pleasing in the sight of God. In time, there will be a vaccine. But until then, listen for the Lord. God does not want you to put yourself at risk. God loves you, and all you need to do is love God and neighbor and self. That is worship. And whether in the same physical place or not, we will continue to worship together.

Rev. Robert W. Birch

# JULY LECTIONARY

## July 5

### Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 24:34–38, 42–49, 58–67

Psalm 45:10–17

or Song of Solomon 2:8–13

Romans 7:15–25a

Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30

## July 12

### Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 25:19–34

Psalm 119:105–112

Romans 8:1–11

Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

## July 19

### Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 28:10–19a

Psalm 139:1–12, 23–24

Romans 8:12–25

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

## July 26

### Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 29:15–28

Psalm 105:1–11, 45b or Psalm 128

Romans 8:26–39

Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52

## Thank You From The Deacons

As this virus has made all of us "at-home members" it takes all of us to accomplish the mission of the Deacons. I want to thank the acting Deacons for continuing to minister to their assigned at-home member through means other than in-person visiting.

I also thank those church officers who are participating in the all-member contacting each week. There are also many members of the congregation not officially assigned people to contact who continue to call or send notes of encouragement as the Spirit moves. Continue to listen to that small voice inside you that says "I wonder how so-and-so is doing, I should call them." You may never know how much that call or note is needed or appreciated! This is God at work in all of us. The Deacons thank you for helping to share the love we have for each other.



### July Prayer Families

July 5

Ann Luttrell

July 12

Geraldine Lutz

July 19

Ed Margerum

July 25

Barry & Lee Nettke Martin

### Leacock Book and Movie Group

The Leacock Book and Movie Group will be taking the summer off and will regather in the fall to discuss the book *Just Mercy*. In the meantime, our next book will be *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, so if you want to get a jump start on that one, you've got all summer to do so.

Happy reading/watching, and we'll see you in the fall!

Emily Birch, Book and Movie Group Coordinator

### Trustee Notes

The Trustees will be looking into getting some work completed around Paradise Church. We have to check with the contractors to see if they are back to work. The metal on the Bell Tower needs to be painted and the storm windows in the Narthex, parking lot side, repaired.

We do this to keep your church looking good. Thanks to all of you for your help.

Dave Berkhimer  
Trustee President

The Trustees will meet the 27 of July for their monthly meeting.



### Mission Committee Report

Since our Community Meals are on hold, we have donated \$250 to the Factory Food Bank.

The Factory Food Bank serves 220 families in this area and in these uncertain times, donations are needed more than ever.

### Session Snippets

Your Session has held two Zoom meetings since our last newsletter, navigating the intricacies of signing in, taking turns speaking, and voting. The following actions were taken:

- Cancelling Old Leacock Summer Hymn Sings for 2020.
- Cancelling Community Meals until it is again safe for large groups to gather in confined spaces.
- Scheduling remote Communion.
- Granting Mike Hartmann permission to serve as an editor for the website to upload worship services.
- Approving regathering on a trial basis beginning July 5 at Old Leacock at 8:00 a.m. and Paradise at 9:30 a.m.
- Approving the Regathering Committee's plan.
- Approving Regathering Guidelines which will be sent to the congregation.

## Regathering Guidelines

1. God welcomes your worship even if it is not in the church building.
  - If you are ill, please stay home.
  - If you are in the “high risk” category, according to CDC guidelines, you are encouraged to stay home and continue worshipping remotely. However, please use your own best judgment in making a decision whether to attend worship in person.
2. Only the two doors nearest the sanctuary—the handicapped entrance and the west entrance—may be used for entry and exit.
3. Seating has been set up following the social distance guidelines from the CDC. Please sit only where indicated. An usher will be available for assistance.
4. Wearing a mask is required. If you do not have one, a mask will be provided.
5. Using hand sanitizer, which will be provided, will be required on entering the church.
6. At this time, please do not gather to socialize in the Narthex.
7. Although congregational singing is not allowed at this time, words to the hymns will be printed in the bulletin and the hymns will be played.
8. Bibles and hymnals have been removed from the sanctuary. You may wish to bring your own Bible.
9. Attendance will be limited following CDC guidelines. Overflow areas at Paradise will be provided.
10. Because of CDC guidelines, we will not be running the air conditioner during the service. The air conditioner will be run prior to the service to cool the sanctuary.
11. Restroom use is allowed, although limited to one person at a time. You will be asked to use the provided Clorox wipes to sanitize the areas you have touched. Those waiting to use the restroom must remain six feet apart.
12. A porta potty will be available at Old Leacock.
13. You are encouraged to continue to use on-line giving or mailing your offerings to the church. Offering plates will be available at the back of the sanctuary, but plates will not be passed in the pews.
14. We will continue to record and post worship services on the church website.

## Regathering Guidelines Explored

In my Notes from the Manse, I mentioned that worship in our sanctuaries is going to be quite different when we regather on July 5<sup>th</sup>. And this is going to be true not only in what our state is calling the “yellow” phase, but also in the “green.” The Regathering Guidelines in this newsletter grew out of the work of a committee that was formed by the Session to identify all the issues involved in worshipping in place. This committee met for five weeks and it wasn’t always easy or happy work, as it became clear how many things were going to have to change. We were guided by state and national health authorities, counsel of the Presbytery, and our own research. The committee’s recommendations were sent to the Session, which explored and refined them further. Most if not all of these guidelines may well be in place until there is a vaccine. Some are pretty self-explanatory, but I did want to comment on others. The Session is considering our regathering to be a trial. We will see what works and what doesn’t and adjust accordingly. But for regathering to work at all, we need your help. Please follow these guidelines and support the ushers and others who are implementing them. Our sole interest is the health and safety of you and your neighbors.

*Entering, exiting, and seating:* To maintain social distancing as much as possible, we urge you to enter Old Leacock an individual or group at a time. At Paradise, only the two doors leading directly into the sanctuary will be open. Places to sit will be marked with green tape in both churches. Please sit only where marked and only with family members or those with whom you live. The narthex at Paradise will not be available for visiting. There will be a limited number of people who will be able to be in each sanctuary—in the “yellow” phase that number is 25; in the “green” it will not be many more if we continue to follow safe practices. If there is an overflow, there are rooms that will be set up where one can hear the service while still practicing social distancing.

*Masks:* Masks will be required for any who want to attend worship in the sanctuaries. We realize that masks have become an issue for some and we respect that. But the emerging consensus of health authorities is that masks are one of the few things that definitively slow the spread of the virus. Further, from a theological standpoint, I believe masks are away of loving our neighbor. Masks are thought to protect the individual wearing them. But there is even stronger evidence that they protect others, especially when we might be carrying the virus without knowing it. So, even if wearing a mask seems like a violation of your rights, do so for your neighbor, your sisters and brothers in Christ. For those who cannot or choose not to wear a mask, there will be a room set aside for them where they can listen to the service.

*Hand sanitizer:* There will be hand sanitizer for everyone to use upon entering either church building. This, again, is to protect yourself and especially others from anyone inadvertently carrying the virus. It will be available if you so desire when you leave.

*Music:* One of the hardest things for many is that there will be no singing for the foreseeable future. Please see the worship committee’s article for reasons why.

*Restrooms:* Please note that only one person at a time will be able to use restrooms in Paradise and will be expected to apply provided disinfecting wipes to any surface touched. For some, it therefore may be easier to plan accordingly before church. Attending church at Old Leacock or Paradise: If you are sick or think you may be getting sick, we urge you to stay home. If you are in one of the at-risk categories as described by the CDC, we also urge you not to jeopardize yourself by being among a sizable group. Ultimately, of course, the decision is yours. But as I said in Notes from the Manse, remember that your worship is equally valuable to God whether you are at home or in a church building.

## From the Worship Committee

“Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.”  
Psalm 42:5

Since our last time of in-person worship, March 15, so much has happened. Who could have predicted that by mid June we still would be worshipping remotely? Who could have predicted that as we plan for regathering we have to wrestle with the weighty questions of requiring masks, requiring use of hand sanitizer, and deciding whether we can use air conditioning? Who could have predicted that in-person worship in the near future will look far different than it has looked in the past.

First, though, let’s think about what we still have and even, perhaps, what we have gained. Each week we are able to worship in our homes through the posting on the church website. Our first service featured Rev. Birch sitting at his desk and leading us through worship. Then we got braver, moved to the sanctuary, and incorporated music.

As we worship and listen to God’s word to us for our living, we can focus on visual elements that enhance our experience: the cross, the Pentecost dove, the Easter lilies, the Paradise and Old Leacock photos. Many, many thanks are due **Steven Boas** and **Mike Hartmann** for their recording, editing, and posting capabilities. And many thanks to **Jennifer McElheny** for her beautiful Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time worship enhancements.

We plan continuing to provide remote worship for those not able to be with us in person, but are now actively planning for regathering. Yes, it will be good to see each other again. Yes, it will be good to gather again in one place. Yes, it will be good to corporately worship.

We must, however, be aware that our worship will be different. Many elements will remain the same — prayer, Scripture, the Word. But some elements will change. We must wear masks, we must social distance, we must refrain from hugs and handshakes.

Perhaps the most difficult change will center on singing. We have been advised that congregational singing, even with masks, is not safe. We can still hear the music on the organ and we can still read the inspiring words to hymns as they appear in our bulletin. We can even sing along in our heads.

Dr. Lucinda Halstead, the president of the Performing Arts Medical Association and the Medical Director of the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of South Carolina, has concluded that there is no safe way for singers to sing together until there is a COVID-19 vaccine and a 95% effective treatment in place. She also says masks don’t provide safe methods of singing: “there are no barriers currently safe for singing.”

An N95 mask may provide some measure of safety if fit-tested, but it would be "difficult to breathe," "hot," "decrease the levels of oxygen with rebreathing," "cause headaches with an increase of CO2," and "could injure people with significant health issues, like asthma."

We have thought long and hard about this issue, reading the provided data and consulting choral association guidelines. The decision has been a difficult one, not undertaken lightly but prayerfully.

According to the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), “We are a church in transition changing each and every day, truly reforming to keep up with contextual realities of our day.” At this point in time, the “contextual reality” is that we will keep God’s song in our hearts and keep each other safe.

## **A Response from the Presbyterian Association of Musicians**

We weep with the psalmists.

Like those who made their lamentation by the waters of Babylon, our harps are hanging on the willows. Our tongues have been silenced. How can we sing the Lord's song ... in a time of exile, illness, and isolation? ... when singing has become a dangerous activity? ... when choir rehearsals are "super-spreader events"? ... when the breath of life disperses disease and death? As people who have devoted our lives to leading the people of God as they lift their voices in song, we are heartbroken. At the same time, we respect the wisdom of experts who have warned of the high risks associated with public singing during the Covid-19 pandemic. We believe that current measures to restrict singing—as much as we might lament them—are in the best interest of the church and world at this time.

We weep with the psalmists.

But we also pray with the prophets.

Remembering Jeremiah's counsel, we will build houses and plant gardens, even now. We will continue to learn new music, educate young musicians, train our hands and minds and voices, select hymns and anthems for worship, imagine special programs, conceive of choir tours, and listen for the Spirit leading us into songs as yet unknown.

We will trust that the Lord has good plans in store for us, plans for our well-being, to give us a future with hope. Remembering Isaiah's promise, we will listen with longing for the distant music that will herald the homecoming of God's people, when flowers begin to bloom in the desert and the ransomed will return with joyous song. We will be praying, preparing, practicing for that great day.

We weep with the psalmists.

We pray with the prophets.

And we sing with the whole creation.

We know that the praise of God can never be silenced. The ancient and eternal song of God's saving love will never end. The rivers and oceans sing "hallelujah!" The stones along the road shout "hosanna!" The trees of the fields clap their hands. The mountains and hills skip with joy. We will keep tuning our hearts to that cosmic symphony, joining our voices with a great cloud of witnesses, the people of God in every time and place, forever singing: Holy, holy, holy! Until our final breath, we will proclaim the final words of the final psalm, "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!"

As we seek to sing the Lord's song in these challenging times, the psalm prayer for Psalm 150 expresses our fervent faith, steadfast hope, and abiding joy:

Great and glorious God, unite our praise with the praise of all creation: singing your mighty acts with every breath, playing music to your name with all our instruments, joining the dance of stars and planets with our whole bodies; for you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High—Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

## Statement from Donegal Presbytery Leader Team

The leadership team of our Presbytery recently released a statement on social justice. . We had a long, at times difficult, discussion examining all the unrest that has shaken our country since the death of George Floyd and its implications for our churches and communities. One of our churches had addressed this as part of their Pentecost service. The statement that follows grew out of that service. Leader Team members built on and revised it and then all agreed to sign it. Leacock's Session felt it important for this congregation to see the statement. It is our hope that it will generate thought and discussion guided by the love of Christ. We are currently working on a statement of our own and would appreciate any thoughts you might have—please send them to Rev. Birch. Throughout all the uncertainty and division of our times, let us be guided by the words of Paul in Galatians—"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is not longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

The statement from the leader team follows:

We just celebrated Pentecost on Sunday, May 31. Pentecost commemorates the unleashing of the Holy Spirit on the world and the empowering of the church to reach the world with the gospel. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit did not discriminate based on race, gender, or ethnicity. Instead, "all were filled with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:4)

But we are still sinners and live in a broken and fallen world. We do not take the lead of the Spirit; instead consciously and subconsciously we participate in unjust systems that perpetuate discrimination, prejudice, and racism. It was those very systems and our participation in them that led to the murder of George Floyd. We grieve for him, as well as Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and so many more African Americans created in the image of God.

Let us be very clear—racism is sin. It is utterly contrary to God's Word incarnate in Jesus Christ. It is time for us as the church of Jesus Christ, to denounce racism and repent. It is not enough to feel bad. It is insufficient to leave change to others. We need to stand with our African American sisters and brothers – and all those who are oppressed - in the fight for justice and equality.

So let us pray that the Holy Spirit, who so long ago blew through that beautifully diverse crowd at Pentecost, would blow through us now and enable us to hear the voices "of peoples long since silenced". (Confession of 1967) May the same Spirit convict us and set a fire in our bones, a passion for justice that cannot be quenched,

Until all of God's children are created equal,

Until the knee of injustice is removed from the necks of the marginalized,

Until hatred no longer hunts down the innocent,

Until we are able to sacrifice what is comfortable for what is right,

Until the weapon of fear is traded for the spirit of peace,

Until ears are open to hear the cries of the oppressed,

Until hearts are open to confess the sins of commission and omission,

Until everyone has the opportunity to thrive,

Until the world is transformed and renewed, and all people are gathered in the Spirit of justice and peace.



May we as a church be liberated from our complacency and apathy. May God move us from status quo to transformation. Let us remember that our highest calling is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, and soul, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

In Christ's love and power on behalf of the Presbytery of Donegal Leader Team,

Rev. Sarah Kneier (Co-Moderator) First, Mount Joy

Rev. Matt Randolph (Co-Moderator) Donegal

Rev. Robert Birch Leacock

Rev. Jim Shuler PineGrove/Hopewell HR

Rev. Patty Stoltzfus HR

Ruling Elder Douglas Good Highland

Rev. Scott Szabo Oxford

Ruling Elder Dianne Yuninger Leacock

Ruling Elder Ellie Grove New Harmony

Rev. Allison Beaulieu First, York

Ruling Elder Stephanie Borger First, York

Ruling Elder Rebecca Brown Avondale

Rev. Yung Me Morris Bethany, Mendenhall

Ruling Elder Jesse North First, Lancaster

Mrs. Christine Wells (ex officio) Presbytery Staff

Rev. Dr. Erin Cox-Holmes (ex officio) Presbytery Staff

Rev. Dr. Michael Wilson (ex officio) Presbytery Staff



## Gratitude Corner

### (Those Who Go Above and Beyond to Care for their Minister and His Wife)

Yet again, Bob and I continue to be humbled and touched by those of you who've been thinking of us during these times. During the pandemic, I haven't wanted to single anyone out. This month, though, I *would* like to single out a few. First of all, Eric and Paula Hughes stopped by one day, in the midst of our all staying at home, to drop off gift cards and some lovely homemade gifts. We so appreciated this gesture from them, and it was nice to see them (at a good social distance).

Second, one week during our Leacock Zoom meeting, we discovered that Bob Hershey had made some of his delicious candy. We both talked about how much we love that candy, and the next thing we know, Margy and Bob are at our door step one morning with some for us. We can promise you, that stuff doesn't last long in our house. So, yes, thank you to everyone, but special thank-you to **Paula and Eric Hughes** and to **Bob and Margy Hershey**.

Rev. Robert and Emily Birch

### **A Note from Mary Weaver**

*I would like to thank everyone who has called me or sent me a card or a note. It has meant so much to me during these difficult times. We are a wonderful church! Thanks, Mary Weaver*

# Stewardship

Brothers and Sisters of Leacock Presbyterian Church,

I sit here at my desk, wondering what to write to you for this very important newsletter. I am so late in submitting my article, I am surprised Sandy will even talk to me about it, but she did and I thank her for this. First, let me express gratitude and thanks in how our congregation has continued to support the Church not only financially, but also in keeping in touch with each other and adapting to new ways of communicating and showing that you care. That is incredibly important when the world seems like it is going mad. If dealing with a pandemic isn't enough, racial injustice, civil unrest, inequality have risen to the surface of our society again, hopefully to be addressed in the best possible way so we move to healing and true liberty and justice for all.

We are getting close to finally worshipping again in person at Church and our leadership boards will be able to meet again in person to work. But the danger still exists! Really, nothing has changed with Covid-19 virus since February when things began to come unhinged. There are still no new effective treatments, still no vaccine. The effects of the shut-down and avoiding physical contact will last for months, probably years, as well as the tactics we are trying to use to slow the spread of the virus and still be together like human beings. I'm sorry, this is not much of a Stewardship message. I suppose the point I am trying to make, is that after being apart in person for months, it is very much needed to be together in a physical manner as a Church. We need to keep going on, doing the mission of our Church, and help others where we can and need to. But please remember the risk and danger is still out there, so be careful and be respectful of others as we hope they will be for us, and protect yourselves however you are able. Be tough Leacock, I know you will do what is needed and best for for others and for yourselves.

I look forward to seeing you again.

Steven Boas

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We thank you so much for your continued support of the church through your offerings. As we regather, our expenses will increase. So we will need you to continue to support us either by sending in your offerings or by electronic giving. Your generosity is keeping us going through these uncertain times.

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## **USHERS** Ed Margerum, Head Usher

<b>July</b>	Chuck & Kathy Ankney
<b>August</b>	Harold Yuninger & Carol Shearer
<b>September</b>	David Homsher & Brit Kilborne

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Sandy Schoettle, Editor