
SIDEWALKS

Fall 2023

Gratefulness | Community Table | Fall Children's Festival

Upcoming Events

Come to the Table

On Nov 5 the communion table will extend down the center aisle as the congregation gathers around one table to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Pastor Nathan is looking for people to bake bread for the occasion. Please let Pastor Nathan know if you can provide a loaf of bread.

Community Table

is happening on November 6. CT is for those who use the food pantry and those who believe in its mission. CT is also an opportunity to build community. The meal is served between 6 pm - 8 pm.

Harvest Sunday

Nov. 19 the congregation celebrates God's abundance with gifts of their own.

Christmas Eve

10 am Christmas Eve service
5 pm Christmas Eve
Candlelight service

A Grateful Gardener

Rev. Nathan S. Busker

It didn't take long for the leaves to begin changing colors. From deep greens to vibrant reds, yellows and oranges. Fall has arrived. This is my favorite season with football games, brisk mornings and cool nights. This is also the time I begin cleaning up the garden. The sunflowers are a far cry from the days when they were like miniature suns radiating life to honey bees. The bean plants are finished, as are my tomato and pepper plants.



Before I begin pulling anything out, I'm going to do something we don't do enough - acknowledge God as the Creator and give thanks to God. I only planted the seeds and even then most of my sunflowers were from last year's that dropped seeds on their own. I'm not so much the gardener but the one who enjoyed the fruits. The garden had a great year of beans, cucumbers, peppers and tomatoes. Instead of taking credit for a great job of gardening, I need to redirect the praise to God. God brought forth the bounty.

How often do we look at our lives and give credit where credit is due? We often use language about how much we earned, did and accomplished. It's like using a bowl to make something great and tasty but not recognizing that without the bowl and the ingredients we would have nothing. There's no doubt my life has been blessed in abundance – not because I earned it – but because of God.

This fall I invite you to join me in cultivating a grateful heart. Throughout the newsletter there are great stories, and a few ways we are responding with grateful hearts to the Creator of heaven and earth.

Grateful for Generosity

Over the past few months very important facility projects have been undertaken. The drainage issue that has plagued the lower level for years has been remediated. The downspouts now are tied together and run underground to the catch basins on Oak Street. What was known as the stage was cleaned, painted and new carpet installed. Soon there will be new seating for another space for groups or individuals. A new live streaming system with three cameras will be installed later this fall. The new system will stream directly through the church's website. It will provide greater engagement with viewers during worship and will provide a higher quality worship experience.

These projects amounted to over \$50,000 that was not in the last capital campaign or in the general budget. The monies came from a bequest.

Don Frederick died two years ago on August 30, 2021. Don loved Ponds. The church provided him a community of love and fellowship after his wife died. Shortly after joining the church Don quietly made the decision to bequeath \$94,000 to the church upon his death.

The church finds itself more in a mission field than ever before. Support for the church's work will come from a variety of sources; one of those will be from bequests. In this case Don's gift helped address some immediate needs. In other instances people's gifts have been used to grow the Education Ministries Endowment which provides a portion of support for the Christian Education staff position. Many gifts have gone to grow the Foundation Fund that provides financial support for missionaries and special projects beyond the scope of the annual budget.

Giving a Lift

Early summer Ponds Reformed Church was notified by CWS of an opportunity to love our neighbor. Rayen, a 13 year old Syrian girl, had fled to Turkey with her family after her father died from a bomb blast. While in Turkey a devastating earthquake hit in February of 2023. The family's second-floor apartment was crushed trapping Rayen, her mother and brother.

Although she lost the lower part of her left leg, Rayen was the only one who made it out alive.

Today Rayen lives with her aunt, uncle and cousins in Saddle Brook. Ponds helped the family with supplies prior to Rayen's arrival and secured the chairlift from church member, Georgie Simmers.

Ponds' members installed the lift, and now Rayen can travel up and down the stairs safely.

Her older brothers, who were not in the area at the time of the earthquake, arrive in early November along with other family members. After so much loss, Rayen has embarked on a new chapter in her life and Ponds is there to help her turn the page.



Welcome Gina and Charlie Bennett & children, Charlie and Abby.

A DELICIOUS START FOR COMMUNITY TABLE

Community Table kicked off its first dinner on October 2 with great success. Community Table is an extension of the Ponds Food Pantry (PFP). Each month the PFP hosts a community table for those who use the pantry and those who believe in its mission. Together with Messiah Lutheran Church and Nanak Gurdwara, 48 people came between 6 pm and 8 pm to enjoy a homemade meal consisting of lasagna, rice, curry and desserts. To-go meals were taken to 16 additional people.

Community Table has enlisted Jordina Rinaudo to help organize these monthly meals. She along with Tyffany Mendez, the Ponds Food Pantry Coordinator, are already planning the next Community Table on November 6 from 6 pm - 8 pm.



The success of the first Community Table is attributed to the help from many volunteers, like Cindy Bullis, who made the lasagnas, the gurdwara who made the curry, a student from Indian Hills High School who served and others who helped set up and clean up. The Community Table is working to be the community for the community.

The meal's success is also in part because of a \$15,000 grant from the Synod Foundation of the Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics. The grant will provide initial support for food, materials and staff.

The Community Table is more than feeding people. Relationships are happening. People are meeting their neighbors, building community and it's happening around the table.



CLASS IS IN SESSION

What do you get when you have walls decorated with large, colorful flowers, butterflies, and koi fish? A great room for children to feel playful as they learn stories of the Bible using Children and Worship material.

During the pandemic the classroom became the temporary food pantry while the new food pantry was being constructed. With the food gone, new carpet was installed and the Christian Education Committee with the help of Keith Gross got the room ready for Ponds' young members. The classroom has become a place where we can follow Jesus' instructions, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (Luke 18:16).



Budget Talk, Part 2

By Rev. Nathan Busker

In the last issue I wrote about the largest expense in the church budget...staff. 70 percent of the annual budget is spent providing a gifted staff to lead the church in mission. The remaining 30 percent, which will be broken down in future articles, pays for the ongoing costs of three facilities (the church and two parsonages), music and education ministries, denominational support called an assessment, and a loan taken out in 2017 to replace the church roof and install solar panels. When it all gets added together it calls for donations, gifts and other sources of support totaling \$280,000.

This dynamic mission we know as Ponds is supported by 50 households. Those households account for 65 percent of the necessary funds to cover all expenses (\$180,000). Other income from groups using the building and investment income accounts for another 23 percent (\$64,400) leaving a gap of 12 percent (\$33,600).

While grants have helped the church expand its mission in ways otherwise impossible, grants and other outside sources of support should not be and cannot be the major source of support.

Giving is not about money. Giving is a faith issue. When one gives, it comes from the heart. The heart responds to God's grace and abundant blessings in one's life. One also gives because one believes God has called them into this body of Christ and equipped them to participate in meaningful ways. And one gives because they believe in the mission. There's another reason.

One of the first things Jesus did was to preach from the book of Isaiah. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18).

When we give we declare that this world and its possessions does not hold us captive. Money has no power of us. Our heart is with God. It is in the Lord whom we trust.

Pack It Up!

As community donations have dwindled, the Ponds' deacons stepped it up. With the generous financial donations of the congregation, the deacons went shopping to fill the shelves of the Ponds Food Pantry recently.



Fall Children's Festival!



Younger members of the community enjoyed our Fall Children's Festival. Children participated in "Boo Bowling," picked their pumpkins out of the "patch" and decorated them, made a Fall Wreath decoration, as well as played a bunch of other fun fall-themed

games. Highlights were the temporary tattoos and the face painting! We loved every moment of the time we had with families and friends from the community. The next preschool-aged event will be "Snowball Smash" in January!



In Their Own Words...

First, let me say how wonderful it has been to return to Ponds and be with you! Being able to contribute in this way brings me such joy. For the Food Pantry mural I made a whole bunch of rectangles with different groupings of color. Then on top I used as many different types of vegetables I could think of. Vegetables in the same color rectangle are in the same family. Each vegetable is also labeled with their binomial name. Why include and group by binomial name? The food pantry's motto is strengthening the community through nourishment. That nourishment can be more than physical. It can be nourishing our minds as well as our relationships.

How did the mural take shape? I first preplanned the mural by drawing everything out digitally and then printing out those drawings. I then used graphite transfer paper to sketch everything out on the wall. Next, I used household indoor paint to fill in the colors. Everything was lastly inked with posca markers. The final step will be to protect the mural with a special satin-finish varnish. - Mary Busker



“... I was a stranger and you invited me in.”
—Matthew 25:35

“Diaspora”, 2023, by Peter A. Marcalus

Diaspora was inspired by the desperation of millions of people worldwide making heart wrenching and life-threatening decisions as they try to flee from their home countries because of war, failed governments, authoritarianism, civil unrest and gang violence.

Diaspora, is a modernized narrative of the biblical passage, Exodus 2:3. Here, a mother tries to save her child by putting the baby (later in the passage known as Moses) in a basket and pushing the basket into dangerous waters. But hopefully the baby is moving toward a better possible future. This is the baby's best chance to be saved, rather than facing certain peril if the child stays at home. An ancient story, constantly repeated throughout history and into modern times.

To see a collection of sculptures by Peter Marcalus, visit pamarcalus.wixsite.com/sculpture.