

THE GOOD NEWS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF WEST PARK UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Spring 2022



WEST PARK UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST

An Open and Affirming Congregation

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Following Christ, Caring for All, Growing Together

A FRESH NEW LOOK

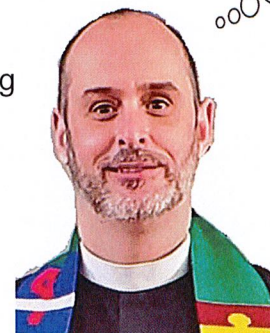
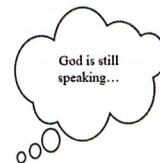
Are you're wondering why you did not get a newsletter last month? It is our shared goal to always keep improving. Our newly designed edition will be published quarterly instead of bi-monthly. As you can already see, we have expanded the content, stripping away some of the old and adding in some newness. As we continue our march into the digital age with instant online access to many of our needs, our printed news will decrease.

NEW YEAR. NEW LOOK.

Please note: we will no longer send out paper calendars. You can access the church calendar via the *EVENTS* page of our website. We will continue to send out weekly announcements via email each week and our printed bulletins for those without internet access to keep you up to date on all the latest church news! If you need a paper calendar, you can contact the church office and one will be mailed to you each month.

IN MY HEAD

thoughts from Pastor Jason



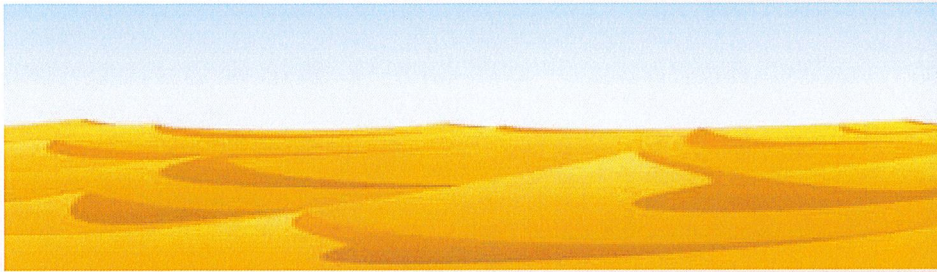
Our friends in 12-step recovery programs have a saying that I really like. When talking about their journey to healthier choices, they often say, "Stay out of your head. It's a bad neighborhood." There is truth in this little nugget of wisdom. We can sometimes sabotage ourselves with our own thoughts. At times, we doubt our own gifts and doubt our value as children of our God. I think our own self-doubt can lead us astray when we fail to seek God's guidance.

I shared a very personal confession a few weeks ago. During the midst of the pressures in my own life created in the wake of the pandemic, my relationship with God was strained. I began doubting God's dream for our world and I began to doubt my own calling to pastoral ministry.

During much of her life, Mother Teresa shared that she, too, felt a spiritual distance from God, what she described as a spiritual desert. Throughout it all, she shared that she longed to love Jesus "*as he has not been loved, and yet there is that separation, that terrible emptiness, that feeling of absence of God.*" But like many strong women of faith, she endured. Though she felt a distance, she continued to do God's work in our world because she knew she had been called.

(continued on facing page...)

In conversations I've had over the years, I have learned that this is not an uncommon condition for people of deep spiritual faith. While it is a deeply vulnerable part of my life for me to share, I do so in hopes that we might all have the space to walk with each other during times of spiritual isolation. As a community of faith, we pledge a covenant to each other that is much like the marriage covenant. We promise to stand with each other "in sickness and in health" and walk the Way together "in the lean and plentiful years."



During my own desert wilderness, my prayers became irregular, my thoughts became my enemy. My head became a bad neighborhood. I did not seek out God for comfort. I did not call on Jesus for strength. I did not invite the Holy Spirit into my life. But I endured and God persisted. Again, I am comforted by the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life and in our shared work together. For this, more than anything, I am most thankful.

I feel refreshed and renewed in my union with God. I am sure that in the years to come, I will continue to reflect on these dark days in my life. But even now, I am grateful for this experience. I learned that no matter what, I can cling to God. I can call on God even when I think God may not be listening. Because the truth of the matter is that God is still speaking *AND* God is still listening.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Jason

CHURCH SABBATICAL

The word sabbatical has its roots in the Hebrew word שַׁבָּת (shabbat) which we translate as sabbath. A sabbath is a time for renewal and refreshment and time dedicated to spend with God. Often times, when thinking of a church sabbatical, we think it is a time for the pastor to be away. And that is partly true. A sabbatical is a time for both pastor and congregation to engage in activities of renewal, to spend time seeking refreshment from the usual rhythms of church life, and to spend time with God.

Our church will have a sabbatical time during 2023. Pastor Jason will be away for several months. During that time, we will host a variety of events focusing on our spiritual formation as a congregation.

Last year, Church Council authorized a sabbatical planning team to begin planning. The team has been working for months to vision a plan for our church. If you have ideas you would like to share about activities we might undertake during sabbatical, please contact the office or Pastor Jason.

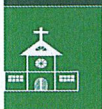
Sabbatical

— refresh | rest | refocus —



DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL MINISTRIES

Since the summer of 2021, our church has been working to dream the future of digital programming in our community. At our Fall Congregational Meeting in November, the congregation chose to move forward by hiring a new staff person: Director of Digital Ministries. On February 21, we welcomed Jennifer White into this new role.



Digital Church



Jennifer comes to us with 20+ years of experience in communications, marketing and digital media. Her role at our church is a one-year contract with part time hours. In her full-time work, she serves on the Faith INFO team at the National Setting as Project Coordinator for Digital Events. Jennifer is the proud mom of two-year-old River Rae. Make sure to offer her a hearty West Park welcome as she joins our ministry team.

MODERATOR'S CORNER

Margaret Owens



This is our first Moderator's Corner and one of the new additions to our newsletter. Since I have just started my time as Moderator, I will make this one short and sweet. The past two years have been both trying and tiring. We have learned a great deal about our individual faith and fortitude. Even though this has been hard, we have endured and grown as a faith community.

I am trying to learn more about the workings of our church community. I am looking forward to serving with everyone and working with Pastor Jason. I think this year will be an exciting learning experience. Thank you everyone for placing your faith in me.

Book Drive

Organized by West Park Kamms' Neighborhood Development and West Park United Church of Christ

We are asking for Multi-Cultural books in English

Books will be donated to Newton D. Baker School of Arts

Donations will be accepted until
Saturday, March 19

Drop-Off Sites

West Park United Church of Christ
3909 Rocky River Dr, Cleveland, OH 44111

5 Points Café
3600 W Park Rd, Cleveland, OH 44111



UPCOMING EVENTS



Ash Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Joint Worship @ Christ United Methodist Church @ 7PM

Imposition of ashes, community worship

Lenten Supper and Study

Each Wednesday in Bartter Hall from 5:30-7PM

March 9, 16, 23, 30

April 6, 13

Potluck dinner with Bible Study

Choral Cantata, April 3, 2022 @ 10AM

Annual Lenten Music from our Chancel Choir

Holy Communion

Sunday mornings @ 10AM

We celebrate the Sacrament each week during Lent.



Palm/Passion Sunday, April 10, 2022

Palm parade and community worship @ 10AM

Maundy Thursday, April 14, 2022

Simple soup meal & worship @ 6PM

Good Friday, April 15, 2022

Tenebrae worship @ 7:30PM

Holy Saturday, April 16, 2022

Vigil @ Christ United Methodist Church @ 7PM

Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022

Community worship @ 10AM

Other Activities

Egg Hunt & visit from Easter Bunny

Saturday, April 16, 2022 @ 1PM

All-Church Retreat

Templed Hills campground, Bellville, Ohio

Friday, May 27—Sunday, May 29, 2022



NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

MARGARET BORRELLI

Margaret grew up at WPUCC and then served as the Church Educator for 28 years until answering a call to serve as Minister of Faith Formation at Church of the Redeemer UCC in Westlake. She and her husband Wayne live in North Olmsted, where they raised three daughters. Since her retirement, Margaret is keeping a practice of prayer, reading, crafting, going for walks and spending time with her grandchildren.

WAYNE BORRELLI

Wayne has been a member of WPUCC since 1978 and is happy to be returning to active participation in the community. He presently works at Zin Technologies as a Safety Engineer doing contract work for NASA. In his spare time, Wayne enjoys playing his guitar, listening to all kinds of music, riding his vintage Triumph motorcycle, and spending time with his children and grandchildren.

NANCY MONAGHAN

Originally from Quebec, Canada, Nancy moved to Cleveland in 1979. She is a retired elementary educator and taught first and second grades for 32 years and was a reading specialist for two years. During retirement, Nancy is caretaker to her mom. She also loves to read, watch movies, crochet, eat out and travel. Nancy has a love for sacred music, singing in church choirs since the age of nine.



A lot of things happen around our church that few ever notice. The Church Mouse sees all! Here are some recent excerpts from her diary.

February 1, 2022

Two large humans named Mark and Bob spent lots of time in the church sanctuary fixing a window. I could barely sleep with all the racket!

February 6, 2022

All the humans were in church this morning. The small one they call Annie went into the front yard and put mittens on the line. Why aren't there any mouse sized items? My tiny hands get cold too!

February 19, 2022

While I was looking for some cheese, I noticed lots of cars lined up for the food pantry. The one they call Sara sure was busy. She is friendly for a human. She didn't give me any cheese.

February 27, 2022

They put out the purple cloths for this thing called Lent. They are preparing for something. God created me too! I think they know that.

WOMEN HELPING WOMEN

March is Women's History Month in our country, a time we honor our women and girls and their contributions to our society. Throughout the month, Community Cupboard Food Pantry will partner with St. Joseph's Academy All-Girls High School in collecting feminine hygiene products. The items will be offered to visitors to our food pantry. If you would like to participate by donating, please place the items in one the bins in the narthex. We will make sure they get to the pantry!



WOMEN HELPING WOMEN

**A partnership between St. Joseph Academy
and Community Cupboard Food Pantry**

WANT TO SHARE YOUR CREATIVE SKILLS?

We are looking for a few folks to assist in creating and editing our newsletter each quarter. If you would like to offer your talent and time to our printed communication ministry, please contact the church office.

CHURCH NEWS

EMAIL DISTRIBUTION LIST

Are you signed up on our email list for all the latest WPUCC news? If not, please visit WestParkUCC.org to add your name to our roster.

EGG HUNT W/ VISIT FROM THE EASTER BUNNY

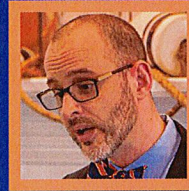
On Saturday before Easter, we welcome a very special guest: The Easter Bunny! This activity was such a big hit with our children last year that the Bunny herself decided to visit us again. We will gather at the church rain or shine (or snow?) at 1PM.

ALL-CHURCH RETREAT

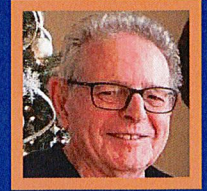
Due to pandemic restrictions last year, we moved our retreat to October. As we learn how to better navigate a world with Covid-19, we are returning to our traditional weekend for 2022. This year's getaway will take place on Memorial Day weekend. Campers can plan to arrive Friday evening, May 27 and settle in to camp. We will spend time together with a focus on this year's theme: *FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT*. If you are a long time retreator or a first timer, all are welcome. This is a wonderful opportunity to spend time with family and friends from church. More details coming soon!

SAVE THE DATES

- June 4, 2022 — Pride in the CLE parade and festival
- June 11, 2022 — Strawberry Social
- June 14-20, 2022 — Peace and Justice Pilgrimage to Alabama
- June 19, 2022 — Juneteenth



Jason Thompson
Senior Pastor



Jim Furry
Associate Pastor



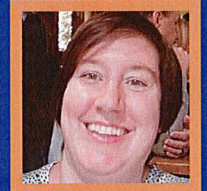
Sue Keserich
Minister of Music



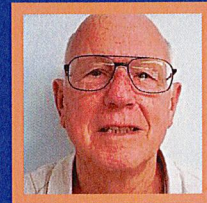
Linda Ferro
Church Administrator



Jennifer White
Director of Digital
Ministries

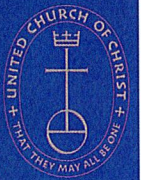


Sara Jovanovic
Food Pantry
Coordinator



Bob Arcuri
Director of Maintenance

God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**





COMMUNITY CUPBOARD

@ West Park United Church of Christ

Help Bring Easter To Families in Need

Donations Due
Sunday April 10th

All donations big and small are much appreciated!

Throughout the year, our church food pantry feeds thousands of people with hundreds of volunteer hours. This important ministry of our church also offers special foods during Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. For our Easter offering this year, we are invited to assist the pantry in bringing a special meal to our neighborhood friends who often only have the resources to buy absolutely essential items.

If you would like to help spread some joy this Easter, Food Pantry Coordinator Sara Jovanovic is seeking:

Maraschino Cherries	Mac & Cheese	Sugar
Flour Muffin Mix	Canned Carrots	Canned Peas
Instant Potatoes	Canned Pineapple Rings	Coffee

