



HIRAM CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ)

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Hiram Christian Church is a spiritual and social center for the Hiram community

MARCH 2021 NEWSLETTER

Losing and Finding:

*“God is not found in the soul by adding anything
but by a process of subtraction.”*

~ Meister Eckhart (14th Century German Mystic)

There is such a blessed simplicity within this faithful perspective. That which we long for is not removed from us, beyond our innate reach only available to us through the adherence to doctrinal prescription or even orthopraxy, but woven into our most fundamental being. It is within our essence. And what Christ taught and guided the disciples into then - and what Christ teaches and guides us into now - is that this divine presence and this divine reign are never far from us, but often lay hidden beneath the additions we have accumulated along the way.

Within our scripture last Sunday (Luke 9), we heard as the disciples came to share news of a tragedy with Jesus. Some Galileans had been killed by soldiers during worship, and the disciples were wondering just how much the deceased Galileans had sinned to merit such a fate. Instead of allowing the horror to be heard; instead of grieving the deaths of their siblings; instead of caring for the survivors; instead of experiencing a righteous indignation at this gross injustice, the disciples held a belief that suffering is divine response... This theological construct was something that the disciples had picked up along the way, and it has led the disciples away from their siblings, away from their natural response, and, we may add, away from the heart of God. And so the word from Jesus was to “repent.” Repent of the theologies and ideologies that offer sanctification to the protected and condemnation to the suffering; repent of the theologies and ideologies that turn the eye away from the systemic to narrow the scope and concentrate judgment upon the individual.

It is yet another reminder that we can accumulate ideas, philosophies, and yes even theologies that instead of illuminating the radical simplicity of God, community, and the soul, bestow a murkiness to our vision and distance between ourselves and our neighbors, our God, and our souls. There is no addition to such a mess that can redeem it. It simply must be released and lost beyond our desire to reclaim it, to then find something greater. Christ comes with the holy gift of radical communion - a simplicity of the soul and harmony with God, neighbor, the earth, and the life we live. It’s not far from any one of us at any time (and fortunately this can never be lost!). If ever we struggle to find it, before we try to add something else, let us consider what might best be lost.

Blessings in the losing; blessings in the finding.

Peace,

Rev. Chris McCreight



Worship:

Lent schedule - Holy Week in Partnership with Mantua Center Christian Church:

In addition to our regular worship schedule, we will partner with our siblings at Mantua Center Christian Church to share in worship during Holy Week. To honor Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, we will host a Tenebrae service on Thursday, April 1st @ 7pm on zoom. Easter morning will feature a sunrise service in person at Derthick's Farm in Mantua @ 6:45am (masks will be required and we will practice social distancing).

Altogether, our Holy Week schedule will be as follows:

- Palm Sunday Worship @ 11am via zoom.
- Maundy Thursday Tenebrae @ 7pm via zoom.
- Easter Sunday Sunrise Service at Derthick's Hill @ 6am - in person - masks required.
- Easter Sunday Worship @ 11am via zoom.

Spiritual Formation:

Sunday school continues to meet on zoom each Sunday at 10:15.
Thanks to Margaret Stehno and Pastor Chris for leading us in February.

There will be no Sunday school on Easter, April 4.

Prophetic Witness:

Syrup news:

It's maple syrup season! Working with the Goodell family, Richard Master's farm, Hiram College, and members of Hiram Christian Church, we have embarked on another season of harvesting maple syrup to support the work of Growing Hope Globally. Many hands come together to make this all possible. Ron Etling, and Jim Tolan (from the college field station) are managing the field operation. Richard Masters gifts us with his sugarbush stand of trees for tapping and for the use of his barn for storage and water for cleaning the tanks. Steve Pancost loans his tractor for gathering in the woods. Nathan Goodell provides both a truck with large tank for the sap and does the processing at the family sugar house. And volunteers – both student and faculty from the college as well as from our church do the legwork for tapping trees, collecting sap, and transporting each day's collection. **What a wonderful community effort!**

With the money we raise, (over \$15,000 so far) Growing Hope Globally works with rural families around the world who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Programs provide training and tools to enable small farmers to become self-sufficient and resilient in their farming practices to meet the challenges of weather changes and soil degradation. GHG provides long term, **lasting** solutions to hunger.

If you would like to help with the collecting, bottling, tagging, or sales of our maple syrup, email Jon/Jane Moody jandjmoody@msn.com or Kristen Pool kjpool@gmail.com to be put on our mailing list.



Stewardship:



Stewardship Idea!

Thank you once again to all of you who have generously donated to Hiram Christian Church, helping us with our mission to serve in our community and the world.

2 Corinthians 9:7 reminds us to be cheerful givers. Several of our donors have cheerfully chosen to tithe from their government-issued stimulus checks. What a wonderful idea!

Please consider your own way to tithe to our church.
Ann Patella, Financial Secretary

Stewards report from David Dade:

The installation of a power vent gas water heater occurred on February 17, 2021. Silver Creek Plumbing completed the removal of the old water heater and installation of the new gas water heater.

Ken Roby of The Village Blacksmith inspected the existing church ramp in order to quote a replacement railing.

From our treasurer:

Hiram Christian Church has received a loan of \$15,123.75 from the Small Business Association Payroll Protection Plan (PPP). This money will be used to pay the church's 5 employees and utilities for the next three months. If we meet the obligations of the loan agreement (which is to use the money for those specific purposes), it is highly likely that the loan will then be "forgiven"; it will become a grant that we do not have to pay back.

The Church qualified for the loan because our revenue was down in 2020. While annual revenue was down only 6%, in the third quarter, revenue was down over 25% compared to 2019, which was the threshold for qualifying.

The Church also received a loan in the first round of PPP in May of last year for \$31,700. That loan was shared with Little Village Early Learning Center, to support their employees after the daycare had to close because of the pandemic. The Church used our share to pay our employees for 2 months and also covered some of our utility bills. The application for forgiveness is not available yet, but we are confident that this loan will become a grant.

Since we are operating with a deficit budget in 2021--our expected expenditures exceed our expected income by \$16,595 --this loan will help. This is not to say that we do not need our members and friends to continue supporting the church with their Pledges and donations! The additional money along with the generous support of the community will keep the Church financially stable despite the uncertainties of this year, and also help to cover any unanticipated expenses that may pop up as we hope to reopen the doors later this year.

Kristen Pool

From Cathy Ricks:

"There is a hard truth to be told: before spring becomes beautiful, it is plug ugly, nothing but mud and muck...But in that muddy mess, the conditions for rebirth are being created." ~ Parker Palmer

I start looking for spring early, even in snowy January. As we began the season of Lent, I was searching for signs of rebirth in the natural world and missing the traditional gathering times with our Church Family. Sometimes I feel like that muddy mess. My spirits were raised this week with the gathering in the sugar bush to harvest one of those spring miracles- maple sap. I stopped in the memorial garden and remembered the lights that shone there at Christmas. I discovered the daffodils emerging from the soil that we planted on All Saints Day in November in memory of those we lost. As we emerge from winter and the winter of COVID-19, the conditions for rebirth are being created.



In the Life of the Congregation:

Prayers of comfort:

Prayers for the family of Phyllis Ellenberger, who passed. Her husband Wally was head of the fire Dept in Hiram for many years. Phyllis was a member of the church, deacon, and attended for many years. * Sam Green, minister at Pilgrim Christian Church has lost his mother. Prayers for Sam and his family. * Lindsay (Boyle) and Molly's next door neighbors, Mark and Joan Paglinco, need our prayers. Mark died of a brain aneurysm at 60 years old just so very sad.

* Prayers for the Brewer/ Hankinson families as they grieve the loss of Doug's brother, Jim. * Dan and Jama Peterson of Garrettsville and all their family on the passing of Jama's Mom , Wanda (Meme) McMillan. * Jamie's friend Melissa lost her mom, Lois Wheeler. * Please pray for Sheryl Coffman Dufey's friend Zoey who just lost her mother.

Prayers of healing and strength:

Prayers continue for Paul Molnar who is recovering from a heart attack, but facing more procedures. * Prayers for Al Channell, former Camp Christian maintenance supervisor, had a heart attack and quadruple bypass. * Margaret's sister tested positive for the virus, infection better, will be trying new cancer medication as old one no longer effective. Continued prayers for her. * Prayers for Karla William's. She is a good friend to Karen and Drew and is having an unexpected hip replacement. Karla is the widow of Bobby Williams for whom many of our church prayed during his time of heart and lung transplant. * Joe Dufey (husband of Sheryl Coffman Dufey) has been discharged from the hospital and is recovering from gallbladder surgery and diabetes diagnosis. * Mary Ashby asks for prayers for her friend's father, Alan. * Jennifer Williams asks for prayers for the Texas community in which she works. * Prayers for all the folks in Texas, including Aaron and Emily Boyle. * Prayers for Matteo Ferreras family as Gilda Mateo has flown to the Dominican Republic to be with her mother who has developed an infection after her hip surgery. Prayers also for her brother, Rafael, who is battling cancer and a septic infection. *Continued prayers for Tony Muscari as he continues medical treatment. * Lydia's friend, Wes Ripka, has been diagnosed with Stage 4 terminal cancer. He is only 31.

* Dawn asks for prayers as they are fostering a dog, Shelby. * Pam Shawgo asks for prayers for Pastor Bob Sepkovich who has covid. Prayers for recovery. * Marcia's friend, Cindy, is undergoing treatment for cancer. * Continuing prayers for Ken and Damaris. *Stephanie asks that prayers continue for Darnell Clark who is slowly improving. Hope, prayers for strength and comfort.

Prayers for our students, nation and churches:

Thanks for the goodness of community- collecting sap - grateful for the sharing of efforts from the Goodells, Richard Masters, the College and members of Hiram Church as we raise money for Growing Hope Globally. * We are grateful that our "Week of Compassion" team is working on the ground in Texas offering their help. * May we be in solidarity with those struggling with hopelessness. * Blessings and thanks to Rev. Dr. Miguel A De LaTorre for his inspirational message

Blessings and celebrations:

Blessings for birthdays- Sam, Robin, Maya. * Blessings for all the ways love can be shared. * Maple sap gathering has begun!! A heartfelt thank you to all who participate and also to Richard Masters who generously offers the use of his maple trees and also room in his garage for tractors and equipment, even his water hose for cleanup! Richard's birthday is Friday, March 5 and for anyone interested in sending him a card or note his address is: 6002 Farnsworth, Parma, OH 44129. * The Brewer family gives thanks for the cards they have received. * Grateful for the vaccination progress as several of our members and friends have been able to receive their vaccine. * Prayers from the kids for goodness and joys of milestones such as the loss of a tooth.

Katie Knight, daughter of Janet Knight, sent a lovely obituary letter to share with us. Please [click here](#) if you wish to read it.

HIRAM CHURCH FRIENDS

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Bob and Hope Cisney
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Mantua, OH 44255

Lowell and Mary Evans
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Jaci Swanda
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Don Swift
18060 Fallen Oaks Trail
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The church received a nice card from Beverly and Steve Jones – the transcription follows:

Calle Moral #6
Lomas de Sierra Juarez La
San Andres Huayapam
Mexico 68287

Nov. 21, 2020

Dear members of HCC,

Greetings from Oaxaca, Mexico, a few short days before Thanksgiving. The mail systems seem to have slowed down drastically lately, so we're imagining you will get this sometime between Valentine's Day and May Day! [editor's note: Bev was correct - it was received March 1!]. We hope that you have weathered your winter well and the complexities and tragedies of 2020 in general.

As many of you know, we have had to change how we do ministry here. While many things have gone to an on-line platform here, it is still very difficult for many people here who have limited access to the internet and it can be costly for many.

We are making wonderful progress on the Alberque project to house people near local hospitals, and hope to start fundraising early January. We have been able to provide over 2000 food baskets to help out people here struggling during the pandemic. These baskets are distributed through local Christians who are the hands and feet of the church!

Stay safe and remember you are blessed.

Beverly and Steve Jones

