

LOOKING TOWARDS OPENING.....

General Committee has been meeting regularly to discuss how to proceed to look toward the future. We all, if given a choice, would love to be back in our own beautiful sanctuary. Since this is not feasible at this time according to all our science, medical and state officials, we are trying to make the best decisions based on all the listed information below.

We look seriously at the facts that our congregation falls at least 80% of our group of people they suggest are vulnerable age wise and people that have medical problems that could present a problem with the COVID -19 virus.

Our service if we were to come back, we would have many stipulations on what we could do and how we could worship. There would be no singing in the sanctuary, no group speaking, no coffee hour or sharing of food and drink, everyone would wear masks, social distancing of family groups mandatory, and no live music. The recorded music would be used.

For this reason, our committee has decided to remain closed until at least September. At that point we will revisit this decision to see how we continue according to the recommendations of the groups below.

<https://albanypresbytery.org> Albany Presbytery

forward.ny.gov New York State

<https://www.presbymusic.org/> Presbyterian Association of Musicians

www.cdc.gov CDC activities and initiatives

coronavirus.health.ny.gov New York State Health Department

<https://www.unyumc.org/> Upper New York United Methodist

In the meantime, our committee will continue to discuss how we will open when we decide it is safe to do so.

FROM CHURCH TREASURER

Then, the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord: 2 Chronicles 29:9

Let us all rejoice for our continued giving while we are apart!

Income: With steady giving from our congregation our income is on budget. A big thank you to our everyone who has kept up with their giving.

When you mail in your offering, put your check in your offering envelope, if you have one, and mail your check to:

Stephentown Federated Church

Attn: Treasurer, PO Box 10, Stephentown, NY 12068

----- OR -----

Make a secure, one-time or recurring gift, by clicking the button/link below.

GIVE NOW

For enhanced security and giving simplicity, create an account by clicking on the login/signup link in the top right corner.

Give from any smartphone, tablet or computer without installing an app. Schedule a withdrawal from your bank acct or credit/debit card. Your donation goes directly to the church's bank account. You have the option of covering the fees.

You can designate how you want the money to be used (e.i. Offering, Memorial, Church Painting, etc.). It allows you to setup Recurring Giving: Every Week, Every 2 Weeks, Every Month, 1st. & 15th of Month. You can also pick the day of the week it's paid.

----- OR -----

Have your donation sent directly from your bank to ours. No fees. Contact me for details on how to do this.

Prayers and blessings to you all. May you continue to be healthy and safe!

Barbara Terpening, Treasurer

babst3@verizon.net

[518-527-0182](tel:518-527-0182)

Giving:

March 22nd \$70

April 5th \$670; 12th \$855; 19th \$1400; 26th \$1030

May 3rd \$940; 10th \$950; 24th \$866, 31st \$740

June 7th \$2131; 14th \$270; 21st \$190; 28th \$615

July 5th \$675

HYMN SING

We have added back a segment to our online service. We are doing a hymn sing. The second Sunday of each month when we had our service in the sanctuary the congregation had an opportunity to choose a couple of verses of their favorite hymn. We have found a way to now incorporate that part back in the service. We have added a couple of ideas about that hymn historically that doing it in person would not have allowed. We need your help in sending us your favorite hymns. We need them a couple weeks in advance so we can plan to record on a good day when we can do the distancing for our singers and accompanists. Please send us your favorite hymns to morg104@aol.com.



CHURCH GROUNDS

Spring brought the usual cleanup from the winter snow plowing. Thanks to Bryan McMillan for his plowing all winter and to Keith Westfall for his clean up in the spring and the mowing and trimming each week of the church grounds. Thanks to Heather Eckhardt and Judy Leab for planting those beautiful flowers in front of the church. Also, thanks to Larry and the gang for keeping them watered with their equipment during the dry spells. You know they say it takes a village to raise a child well it also takes a village to keep everything going in our church community. We thank them for their service to our church.



MUSIC

I know the summer normally brings us special music, but this year is anything but normal. Our beloved music and the way we knew it has changed. Even at people singing 16 feet apart in an enclosed space is risky according to our science people. We are however inviting anyone that would like to record at their home a hymn or piece of music and send it to me (morg104@aol.com). We would be happy to include it in our Sunday online service.

Our regular choir as we knew it will not be back until the covid-19 is settled, a vaccine, and some form of medicine to attack this deadly virus. In the meantime, we are looking for ways to add music to our services.

★ HAPPY ★
BIRTHDAY!

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July 24th Joe Leland

August 1st Tammy Madden

7th Don Lewandoski

17th Maureen Saxby

19th Kate Beach

26th Bev Westfall

September 4th Don French

5th Eric Ross

6th Jay Hennig

8th Madison Rontey

8th Georgee Bebee

9th Bonnie Bates

17th Alicia Jacobs

24th Bob Lowenthal

27th Gene Jacobs

27th Gene Sawin

28th Dorothy Zuckerman



In other news, we need to keep our prayers while he undergoes. With the strain of keeping Rick healthy Bonnie has asked to be relieved of her church duties at this time. At the last General Committee meeting Bev Westfall was elected to take over as Chairperson during her absence.

Bonnie Bates and her husband Rick in several serious medical procedures.

Stephentown Food Pantry Pandemic Operations

We are now allowing clients to come every week. The twice monthly policy has been suspended for the pandemic. Every effort is made to socially distance and sanitize surfaces as needed.

Clients stay in their vehicles and are given a clipboard and order form. When they have filled out the form, the sheet is placed in a clean plastic bag, and handed to a volunteer inside for processing. The clipboard and pen are sanitized after each use.

Two volunteers work inside the pantry, fully masked and socially distanced. One works up front, and the other in the back. The front worker handles the paperwork, produce, and front refrigerator. The rear worker handles the pantry closet, toiletries, rear freezers, and pet food.

The order is filled according to the client's request. When completed, it is placed in their vehicle (trunk or back seat).

Any announcements about other food distributions are printed out and handed to clients when they get their order form.

Items we can use.... canned fruit cocktail, coffee, brownie mix, & spaghetti.

-Bonnie Frank

Donations should be left in the vestibule by the kitchen door. There is a desk here that the Upper Room will be left on and next year's calendars for you to pick up without having to go into the building.

IN ADDITION to the Food Pantry using Pierce Hall, we have signed an agreement with the Heavenly Quilters and offered one to the AA Group. These agreements have strict guidelines for use of Pierce Hall during the pandemic.

COFFEE HOUR Via ZOOM!

Contributed by Arlene Longo

Who would have believed it? Here we are in mid-July, and still no end in sight! While we all deal with the pandemic in different ways, one common denominator seems to be the fact that we miss seeing each other. We are a tight, friendly, caring bunch. We look after one another and are concerned with each other's well-being. We are big on hugs and handshakes! We like to gather to talk and laugh, sometimes we complain or commiserate, the point being that we take comfort and gain strength from each other. SO.....While we can't physically be together now, we are very fortunate to be able to do so online – just when we needed it most, along came ZOOM! Zoom is so very easy to do – you just download the app and then when you get the link from the meeting organizer, you click on it and follow the instructions! Since early May, 12 or 15 of us have been getting together this way (each Sunday at 10:30 am) and it really is fun hearing what everyone has been up to and what's going on in each other's world. We'd love to expand our group – everyone is invited! If you would like to join us, please let Arlene Longo know and she'll send you the link. Her email address is alongo6177@fairpoint.net. If you have any questions, please ask. It's easy, it's fun, and it's the connection we all need.



OLD MAN WINTER: BE GONE!!

Submitted by Doug & Laurelyn Mayen



Last year General Committee authorized purchase of two windows and an exterior door to be installed in the Pierce Hall vestibule, hopefully eliminating the drafty situation. In late May the project was begun by Ted Bears, Tom Smith, and Doug Mayen and after a total of 150 hours, it was completed in late June.

Working mornings 3 to 4 days per week, these three amigos removed the old windows, door, and paneling. Next, they increased the existing wall thickness from 4" to 6" in order to fully insulate and bring it up to code standards. The existing paneling was reinstalled and refurbished where needed.

After securing the insulation, the two-energy efficient double hung windows with screens were placed in the modified existing openings. Then the guys reworked the framework for the fiberglass insulated door with push/pull plate and hold open closure. Finally after some challenges, the door was installed. A new bright white hung ceiling with 6" of insulation now replaces the open area above the vestibule.





Since the fellows had their tools handy, they also trimmed the Pierce Hall interior windows.



Painting the siding around the new windows and door completed the project. The old windows were placed outside the church and labeled FREE. They disappeared overnight!

SONSHINERS

Even though we haven't met these past months, the group has made donations with funds from our fundraising in the past. We donated \$250 to our Food Pantry, \$500 thru Global Ministries for Relief in Puerto Rico and \$500 thru Global Ministries for US Disaster Relief. Another \$500 will be going to Qualaqhoe Mountain Connections to help with food.

Lynn Minderman has mailed us a newsletter regarding the Qholaqhoe Mountain Connections.

I've included parts of it for you all to read. There were stories from the residences of the area telling of their hard lives and of the students who have achieved so much. Editor

High in the Drakensburg Mountains, it is snowing now. In Qholaqhoe, the sorghum and maize stored by families for winter is depleted by climate change and drought. Covid-19 has entered the country through the porous borders with South Africa. Schools, markets and businesses are closed. Difficult life has become even harder.

There are no stimulus checks, unemployment funds, no PPE or health care benefits for the people around Qholaqhoe Mountain. No food pantries; indeed, very little food support of any kind (QMC Emergency Food Fund support 62 students who have no food). Families fortunate enough to have found jobs in mines, on farms or as domestic help in South Africa have been forced by Covid-19 to return to Qholaqhoe where there is no work, no jobs, no income. In Qholaqhoe, winter it is about survival. The Basotho grow their own food for winter; when it is gone, they purchase more; when there is no money, they rely on charity, or go hungry.

The villages in Qholaqhoe have been struggling with drought, climate change, crop failures for more than four years. The UN Development Programme notes in its June 20, 2020 report "As incomes are lost, a hunger pandemic could eclipse the coronavirus, The World Food Program has warned. The loss of income for people already living perilously close to the margins of survival will propel people into abject poverty this year, meaning they lack the basic means to survive. "<https://reliefweb.int/report/lesotho/drought-rising-temperatures-and-extreme-weather-poses-risks-lesotho>

Qholaqhoe Connections College Scholarship Program, "now in its fifth year with community involvement and support, has proven to be very successful. Nine scholarship winners have entered university; three have graduated and six continue their studies at the National University of Lesotho. In August, they will be joined by two new scholarship winners bringing the QMC enrollment at NUL to eight. You can learn more about the Community College Scholarship Program and the application process by visiting our website, www.qmconnect.org."

FINAL THOUGHTS Our goal has always been to keep you aware and part of our planning, work, setbacks and successes. The uncertainty of our lives here at home and their lives 8,000 miles away in Africa, has made our work ever more difficult and uncertain. As the challenges seem more and more difficult to overcome, sometimes, for a fleeting moment, our hope wanes and energy lags.

Maybe what hurts the most is a pandemic blocking us from getting to Qholaqhoe to do our work and see the people for whom we do that work. That hurts. And that pain drives us to redouble our efforts for the folks we have come to know well, respect deeply and love.

We will, with your support, persevere to provide student sponsorships and support current university students through graduation while searching for resources to offer more students the opportunity to learn and grow to support their families, strengthen their community and serve their country. Fundraising is now more difficult; board members have pledged to search out additional sponsors, to pursue more grants and to uncover new revenues. But, we need your help

as well. Please consider supporting QMC this year so that we can continue our programs both at the high school and at the National University of Lesotho.

Donations can be made to: Qualaqhoe Mountain Connections, PO Box 405, Honeoye Falls, NY 14472 OR you can donate on-line via our website: www.qmconnect.org