

# The Courier



MAY 2024

Church of Christ Uniting Kingston PA



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The content of **The Courier** is only as good as your submissions. Articles and pictures must be received by Sunday May 19<sup>th</sup> at: [thecourier@cocu4u.org](mailto:thecourier@cocu4u.org) for inclusion in the June 2024 issue. Thanks!

Editor: Curt Schwarzwald

## COCU LEGO CHALLENGE!



The first ever COCU Lego Challenge was held on Palm Sunday and boy can our congregation build! Not only did we have a great time working together in teams of all ages, but if the laughter was any indication, everyone had fun! Thank you to all of the participants!



Praying in the Garden



Palm Sunday



The Last Supper



The Crucifixion



The Empty Tomb

Submitted by Elizabeth Jones

Your contributions to the content of **The Courier** will appear in this newsletter ONLY if you submit them to [thecourier@cocu4u.org](mailto:thecourier@cocu4u.org)

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📱 COCU Online: [YouTube channel](#) - [webpage](#) - [Facebook page](#) 📱

Dear Friends:



When I think of the month of May, I am reminded of flowers blooming, lawn mowing and the fresh breeze of spring. It is just a beautiful month filled with sports, walking, new life and the smell of the barbeque grills being fired up for the first time this year. Spring affords us energy and joy as we prepare gardens and make ready for the summer months that are ahead. On May 19<sup>th</sup> this year, we will be celebrating Pentecost. On Pentecost we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. God sent the Holy Spirit to the world so that we would always have a part of God living among us. Jesus couldn't stay forever, so God sent his Spirit to stay with us. The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as being kind of like the wind or the breath of God. We all know what wind feels like. The wind of the Holy Spirit is the same wind that first blew on Adam in the Garden of Eden. When God blew on Adam, life came into him. In John 20, we hear about what happened when Jesus told his disciples about the gift of the Spirit. Jesus was standing in a room with them after he had been resurrected. He told them that just as God had sent him into the world, Jesus was now sending them. Jesus needed the disciples to help spread the message of love to others. He then gave them a gift that would help them do that. He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." They eventually discovered that the Holy Spirit was with them to guide them, strengthen them and help them spread the word. I wonder what it was like for Jesus to breathe on them. I wonder what the disciples felt. I wonder if they felt different. I wonder about a lot of things, but I know that the gift was a wonderful thing. I also know that that gift is still with us today. The Holy Spirit guides and strengthens me every day. The wind of the Spirit enables me to do the work of ministry in faith and love. The wind is blowing today, take in the Spirit and live! Blessings, Pastor Jane

**Sky Lake Turned 77!** On April 10, 1947, the members of the former Wyoming Conference were gathered in Endicott, NY for the Annual Conference. One of the items on the agenda that day was the approval of the purchase of Sky Lake. The vote was unanimous and Sky Lake officially came into existence! 77 years later, we invite you to live out one of our Hemlock Community Values: take a moment to express your gratitude for those who worked hard to ensure that vote took place and was successful. One way to express that gratitude would be to make a special donation to the Sky Lake Annual Fund during the month of May. If you are in a position to do so, we challenge you to make that donation in a multiple of 77. Your contribution to the Annual Fund is put to immediate use in helping to defray the costs associated with operating the life-transforming ministry." Go on the Sky Lake Website and check out all that Sky Lake has to offer. -Pastor Jane



**COMMUNION-** We are serving communion in the pews the first Sunday of May and June. This is that method of serving communion with the cubes of bread and the small juice cups. You will remain in the pews; the communion servers will first pass the bread throughout the sanctuary. Additionally, we will have a communion server with Gluten Free Bread and Juice. That person will walk behind the bread servers and give to those who raise their hand and request gluten free. Those persons wanting gluten free will take both the bread and the juice from the server. When we all have the bread, we will receive the body of Christ together. Secondly, the communion servers will pass the juice cups through the pews. When all have the cup of juice, we will receive the blood of Christ together. We kindly request that all of our worshippers sit on the main floor of the sanctuary on Communion Sundays. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Pastor Jane or Michelle Giza.

**THE UPPER ROOM-** The May/June issue of The Upper Room is available for pick-up in the Narthex of our Church. Get yours today and stay connected to the Vine.



**RECYCLE YOUR OLD INK CARTRIDGES-** Please bring in and deposit in our recycling box all of your used ink or laser cartridges. We get reward \$\$\$ at Staples monthly with your help and our turn in.

**SCRIPTURES FOR THE MONTH OF MAY**



**Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter/Holy Communion-** Acts 10:44-48, Psalm 98, 1 John 5:1-6, John 15:9-17.

**Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>- Ascension of the Lord-** Acts 1:1-11, Psalm 47, Ephesians 1:15-23, Luke 24:44-53.

**Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>- Mother's Day/Festival of the Christian Home, Last Day of Sunday School/Faith Snack-Chat-** Acts 1:15-17 & 21-26, Psalm 1, 1 John 5:9-13, John 17:6-19.

**Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup>- Pentecost Sunday/Graduate Recognition-** Acts 2:1-21, Psalm 104:24-34 & 35b, Romans 8:22-27, John 15:26-27 & 16:4b-15.

**Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup>- Trinity Sunday/Peace and Justice Sunday-** Isaiah 6:1-8, Psalm 29, Romans 8:12-17, John 3:1-17.

**WHAT'S ON THE PRESBYTERIAN CALENDAR?**

**May 1:** Mental Health Month Begins/Foster Care Month Begins.

**May 2:** National Day of Prayer.

**May 3:** May Friendship Day.

**May 5:** Legacy Giving Sunday: Presbyterians are encouraged to include their church and/or a national or international ministry of the PC USA in their will and or other estate planning, Older Adult Week Begins.

**May 6:** Holocaust Remembrance Day.

**May 11:** Fair Trade Day. Allow your faith to impact your purchases.

**May 15:** Palestinian Nakba Remembrance Day. On May 14, 1948, Britain ended its mandate over Palestine and the independent state of Israel was created. The following day began the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homeland--Palestine. This displacement is remembered every May 15.

**May 18:** 1001 New Worshipping Communities!

**May 19:** Pentecost Offering/Intercultural Church Sunday/Mission Worker Sunday/Presbyterian Heritage Sunday.

**May 25:** Africa Day.

**Jewish, Islamic and Orthodox Observances** **May 9:** Ascension **May 19:** Pentecost

**MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH-** Are you aware of some of your options?

+Call **911** if you or someone you know is in **immediate** danger from a mental health crisis 24/7

+Call or Text **988** if you or someone you know needs to be connected to the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** 24/7

+Text **HOME** to **741741** to get help from the **Crisis Text Line** 24/7

+Dial **211** to connect to **United Way** to get the resources you need 24/7

+Call **Helpline 570-829-1341** to find resources

+Call **1-855-284-2494** for the **PA Support & Referral Hotline**

+Dial **988** then Press **1** for **Veteran Crisis Line**

+Call **570-825-5261** for **Volunteers of America** or visit the office at 25 N. River St., WB

**REMEMBER IT IS OK TO ASK FOR HELP!**

**END GUN VIOLENCE: PA ADVOCACY DAY**

Last year, 500 Pennsylvanians descended on Harrisburg, demanding an end to gun violence. Soon after, the first bipartisan policies in years passed the PA House. Join us on **Tuesday, May 7** (9 am- 3:30pm) as we continue our life-saving work. [LEARN MORE](#) (<link)

For more information, contact Rev. Ryan Gephart, Susquehanna Conference Peace with Justice Coordinator at [rgephart@susumc.org](mailto:rgephart@susumc.org) *Your Peace with Justice Commission of the Susquehanna Conference UMC recommends this event*



**73RD ANNUAL NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER Thursday, May 2, 2024-** An annual day of observance designated by the United States Congress and held on the First Thursday of May when people are asked "to turn to God in prayer and meditation." It is a day set aside to encourage all people of the United States to pray for our nation. National Day of Prayer was established as an annual event in 1952 by a joint resolution of the United States Congress and signed into law by President Harry S. Truman. The NDP 2024 Theme is Lift up the Word--Light up the World. "For you are my lamp, O Lord, and my God lightens my darkness. For by You I can run against a troop, and by my God, I can leap over a wall. This God--his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true. He is a shield for all those who take refuge in him." 2 Samuel 22:29-31. We pray today for our nation's leaders. Give them the wisdom to know what is right and what is wrong and the courage to do what God is leading them to do. Pray that God would use us to tell others the reason for the hope that we have!! Our COCU sanctuary will be available for anyone to come in and take time to reflect and pray for our nation. Please use the fellowship hall doors or the Sprague Ave., office door entrances to access the sanctuary. The front doors of the sanctuary will not be open. I leave you now with a prayer that Billy Graham wrote on May 3, 2001 for the National Day of Prayer: "Our Father and our God, we praise you for your goodness to our nation, giving us blessings far beyond what we deserve. Yet we know all is not right with America. We deeply need a moral and spiritual renewal to help us meet the many problems we face. Convict us of sin. Help us to turn to you in repentance and faith. Set our feet on the path of your righteousness and peace. We pray today for our nations' leaders. Give them the wisdom to know what is right, and the courage to do it. You have said, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." May this be a new era for America, as we humble ourselves and acknowledge you alone as our Savior and Lord. This we pray in Your holy name. Amen.

**CHURCH WOMEN UNITED MAY FRIENDSHIP DAY May 3, 2024-** May Friendship Day is traditionally held the first Friday of May. According to the CWU Website, "May Friendship Day dates back to May 1933, when two independent groups planned luncheons to focus on "Child Health" and "Children of Migrant Families." The first event was sponsored by the Women's Council for Home Missions in New York City and the second one, called "Dedication Day," was sponsored by the National Council of Federated Church Women in order to bring the group's dream of unity into full expression in each local community. Under a variety of names, this event continued and expanded until 1939, when they merged under the National Council of Church Women, which called for an annual observance "to strengthen a growing sense of unity, the joy of Christian fellowship, and the power of Christianity in the day of need." In May of 1945, a few years after the founding of Church Women United, the celebration was formalized as May Fellowship Day. In 1999, the movement of Church Women United changed the name of the celebration to May Friendship Day, as we continue to celebrate unity in our journey toward wholeness in all communities." On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, think about how your friendships have shaped your lives. Think about how your friendships have enriched, challenged, and affirmed your wellbeing. What characteristics are found in a true friend? Take a look at the Women and Men of the Bible and how their friendships enhanced their lives and how they ultimately found a friend in Jesus Christ. Here are some examples: Abraham and Lot: Genesis 4, Ruth and Naomi: Ruth 1, David and Jonathan: 1 Samuel 22, Elijah and Elisha: 2 Kings 2, Jesus, Mary, Martha and Lazarus: Luke 10, John 11, Paul, Priscilla and Aquila: Romans 16. Friendships are important in our lives whether we are a man or a woman. Friendships touch our souls in ways that we never thought possible. Make a friend today.

**ASCENSION OF THE LORD, May 9<sup>th</sup>-** The celebration of the Ascension of the Lord takes place 40 days after Easter. This is the day in which the Risen Christ is taken up into Heaven. You can read all about it in Acts 1:1-11. It was 10 days after Jesus' Ascension into Heaven that the Holy Spirit was able to descend upon the disciples. Pentecost signals the end of the Easter season. On the day of Pentecost we recognize the Birth of the Church. The Ascension of Jesus serves as a day of hope for all Christians. Take some time to pray this day and thank God for the gift of salvation and that of eternity for all of us who believe that there is something beyond this life.

| <b>COCU Calendar - May 2024</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Sun</b>  | <b>Mon</b>  | <b>Tue</b>  | <b>Wed</b>  | <b>Thu</b>  | <b>Fri</b>  | <b>Sat</b>   |
| <b>LOCATIONS:</b><br><b>CR= CONFERENCE ROOM</b><br><b>FH= FELLOWSHIP HALL</b><br><b>LL= LUKENS LOUNGE</b><br><b>S= SANCTUARY</b>                          |   |   | <b>1</b><br>8AM PRAYER BREAKFAST -OLLIES<br>12-2PM FOOD PANTRY -FH<br>6:30PM BIBLE STUDY -LL<br>7PM CHOIR REHERSAL  | <b>2</b><br>11AM LUNCH BUNCH -LL                            | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b><br>10AM WYOMING SEMINARY ALUMNI MEMORIAL SERVICE -S                               |
| <b>5</b> Cinco De Mayo<br>10AM WORSHIP -S COMMUNION<br>11AM FELLOWSHIP HOUR -FH<br>11:15AM ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL-LL<br>11:15AM PARISH LIFE TEAM MEETING -CR | <b>6</b>  | <b>7</b><br>9:30AM LECTIONARY ZOOM MEETING<br>2PM EXERCISE CLASS -FH<br>6PM FRONTIER GIRLS MEETING -FH<br>6-8PM GRIEFSHARE -LL                                    | <b>8</b><br>8AM PRAYER BREAKFAST -OLLIES<br>12-2PM FOOD PANTRY -FH<br>6:30PM BIBLE STUDY -LL<br>7PM CHOIR REHERSAL  | <b>9</b><br>11AM LUNCH BUNCH -LL                            | <b>10</b>   | <b>11</b><br>11AM MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR CAROL BENNETTO -S<br>(10AM FAMILY RECEIVES FRIENDS) |
| <b>12</b> Mothers Day<br>10AM WORSHIP -S SUNDAY SCHOOL FAITH SNACKCHAT<br>11AM FELLOWSHIP HOUR -FH  | <b>13</b><br>5:30-8:30PM WOMEN'S CLUB BOARD MEETING -CR | <b>14</b><br>9:30AM LECTIONARY ZOOM MEETING<br>2PM EXERCISE CLASS -FH<br>6-8PM GRIEFSHARE -LL   | <b>15</b><br>8AM PRAYER BREAKFAST -OLLIES<br>12-2PM FOOD PANTRY -FH<br>6:30PM BIBLE STUDY -LL<br>7PM CHOIR REHERSAL | <b>16</b><br>11AM LUNCH BUNCH -LL                           | <b>17</b>   | <b>18</b> Armed Forces Day<br>9AM MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST -SCRATCH KITCHEN                  |
| <b>19</b> Graduation Sunday<br>10AM WORSHIP -S<br>11AM FELLOWSHIP HOUR -FH<br>11:15AM ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL-LL<br>1:30PM DINNER & A MOVIE                   | <b>20</b><br>4:15PM STEPHEN MINISTRY -LL & ZOOM         | <b>21</b><br>9:30AM LECTIONARY ZOOM MEETING<br>2PM EXERCISE CLASS -FH<br>6PM FRONTIER GIRLS MEETING -FH<br>6-8PM GRIEFSHARE -LL<br>7PM ADMINISTRATION MEETING -CR | <b>22</b><br>8AM PRAYER BREAKFAST -OLLIES<br>12-2PM FOOD PANTRY -FH<br>6:30PM BIBLE STUDY -LL<br>7PM CHOIR REHERSAL | <b>23</b><br>11AM LUNCH BUNCH -LL<br>7PM PARISH COUNCIL -FH | <b>24</b><br>5PM WYOMING SEMINARY BACCA-LAUREATE SERVICE -S | <b>25</b>  |
| <b>26</b><br>10AM WORSHIP -S<br>11AM FELLOWSHIP HOUR -FH<br>11:15AM ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL-LL  | <b>27</b> Memorial Day<br>OFFICE CLOSED                 | <b>28</b><br>9:30AM LECTIONARY ZOOM MEETING<br>1PM STAFF MEETING -CR<br>2PM EXERCISE CLASS -FH<br>6-8PM GRIEFSHARE -LL  | <b>29</b><br>8AM PRAYER BREAKFAST -OLLIES<br>12-2PM FOOD PANTRY -FH<br>7PM CHOIR REHERSAL                           | <b>30</b><br>12PM MEALS ON WHEELS BOARD MEETING -CR         | <b>31</b>   |  |

SUNDAY 10AM- WORSHIP IN PERSON IN THE SANCTUARY OR VIEW ONLINE LIVE OR LATER ON DEMAND.

**FESTIVAL OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME-** At COCU we not only celebrate Mother's Day, we also celebrate the Festival of the Christian Home which means that we recognize All People and All Families. We celebrate the inclusiveness of our families on this particular day, recognizing families of all compositions. Some people have close relationships with their family of origin, some do not. Many people have created families of choice, they have formed covenant relationships with spouses and partners and have become loving and caring people to children from all walks of life. I would like to share with you a blessing and prayer written by Rev. Mandy McDow.... **Blessing for Families with Children:** "Creator Spirit: You have worked in us to make us open to loving one another in selfless and life-giving ways. For some of us this means the responsibility and joy of raising children. For these lives, which have touched us and blessed us, we thank you. Today we bring to you our children in order that they may be blessed as Christ blessed the children of his day saying, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." And he took them up in his arms and blessed them. Help us to bless them as they have blessed us." "Let us pray: Loving God: We come today carrying children and youth in our hearts--the children we brought into this world, the children we parent, our grandchildren, mentees, the children we care for in our work, and the children we speak out for in our witness. Lord, help us not to be so preoccupied with our purposes that we fail to hear their voices or see their special vision of truth. Keep us with them, ready to listen and to love even as you have loved us, your grown-up and sometimes wayward children. Amen." So, come celebrate with us and give thanks for the relationships and family units we are blessed to have in our midst.

"Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit, the sun does not shine on itself and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves. Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is, life is good when you are happy, but much better when others are happy because of you." -Pope Francis

#### **PENTECOST SUNDAY OFFERING May 19, 2024**

The theme for our offering this year is "I Am Coming to You." John 14:18b Jesus' words, "I am coming to you." means Jesus will always be at our side. This is the hope and inspiration that carries us forward and is fundamental to our faith. Your gifts help instill in our youth an heartfelt understanding of the ways God comes to them every single day. This offering taken on Pentecost Sunday is about nurturing the faith of our future generations. This special offering will be divided in half between the Presbyterian Church USA and the United Methodist Church. Thanks in advance for your generosity.

#### **A PRAYER FOR ANTIRACISM**

**God of justice**, open the eyes of those who wield power to the destructiveness of racism. Let justice roll like a river and move us to repentance and transformation. Convict the hearts of leaders in government, businesses, charities and the church, towards your kingdom values. May righteousness flow like a mighty stream. God of justice, hear our prayer.

**Christ who lived under occupation**, help us identify and change the systems and power structures in our countries that perpetuate racial inequality. Teach us to transform into societies that uphold the dignity of each person, made in your image. Where we need to be stirred, wake us up to take our part in praying, speaking up, and taking action. Christ who lived under occupation, hear our prayer.

**Spirit of God, our breath in this world**, let this moment in history bring about everlasting change to violence and discrimination based on the color of someone's skin. Breathe newness into our lands, our systems, our structures, our ways of living with one another. Spirit of God, our breath in this world, hear our prayer.

**God of restored relationships, to whom we all belong**, bring healing to all those that are suffering and have endured the pain caused by racial injustice. Restore broken relationships, bring peace; your peace and wholeness to all people in all places. God of restored relationships, to whom we all belong, hear our prayer.

[\*\*A Prayer for Racial Justice\*\*](#), " Tearfund Staff Conference 2020

**REJUVENATE, A LADIES OF THE LAKE RETREAT** May 3-5, 2024. Register for an upcoming retreat that's sure to brighten your year. Bring a woman friend, a group of friends, or travel by yourself to "Rejuvenate" a Ladies of the Lake Retreat at Sky Lake Camp and Retreat Center in Windsor, New York. Come away and rest awhile as you spend time in the lodge and the forest for a weekend free of the distractions of the outside world.

**MILD AND WILD:** If you're new to Sky Lake, or if you are returning, you are wholeheartedly welcome. Our leadership team is planning a weekend filled with "mild and wild" activities. You might hike in the woods, cozy up by the fire, experience massage therapy, experience a laughter class, spend some creative time designing earrings or pendant, make cheese from scratch, or try a watercolor painting class. You'll set your own pace as you take time in solitude in the great outdoors or take time to join with other women for activities. You'll dine on delicious and healthy meals prepared by our foodservice team. You are invited to journey spiritually with vespers and Bible study led by an experienced, respected ordained minister.

**THEME:** "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." -Prov. 17:22. The theme of our 2024 weekend will be "Let's Play, Find Joy in Each Day". We will dabble in delight as we learn to incorporate happiness into life. We invite you to come relax and lighten your heart at this year's lakeside retreat. **HOW TO REGISTER/COST:** Register at Sky Lake's website, <https://skylakecenter.org/event/> Cost Is approximately \$300. Scholarships May Be Available - Contact Sky Lake.



**SUMMER CAMP-** Camp season is almost here and we're excited to share that we have expanded our camp scholarship options this year. As always, Camp Lackawanna, Camp Johnsonburg, Sky Lake and the Susquehanna Conference camps are included, but this year we are also adding two day camp options for our younger kids that may not be ready for overnight camp quite yet (or our older kids who do not want to go to overnight camp). The two additions are Camp Orchard Hill in Dallas and Peace Camp that is sponsored by the Peace and Justice Center and is held at First Presbyterian in Wilkes Barre. Member children will be able to use up to \$300 in COCU Camp Scholarship funds to attend the camp or camps of their choice and non-member children will be able to use up to \$200. If you are interested in learning more about camp scholarship options, contact Betsy Jones at [htebazile724@yahoo.com](mailto:htebazile724@yahoo.com) or by phone at 607-215-5382.



**CAMP LACKAWANNA WORK DAY AND DONATIONS NEEDED!!** On April 13, eight COCU members (Rev. Jane M. Pykus, Dave and Janice Oriel, Karen and Sam Whipple, and Jeff, Sherri and Alex Boerger) traveled to Camp Lackawanna to join other volunteers to spruce up the camp. The COCU group worked in Smyrl Lodge: cleaning an "ancient" oven, sweeping and mopping floors and cleaning light fixtures among other tasks. Our next work day at Camp Lackawanna is Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. till 3 p.m. A couple of members may go up on Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. Please feel free to call Karen Whipple at 570-283-2684 or Dave Oriel at 570-362-1615 with any questions you may have. Also, Camp Lackawanna is in need of donations. If you wish to volunteer your time or make a financial donation to get some needed items, please be in contact with Karen Whipple, 570-283-2684 or Dave Oriel at 570-362-1615. Our next work day at Camp Lackawanna is Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup> from 9 a.m. till 3 p.m. Please feel free to call Karen or Dave with any questions you may have. Smyrl and Merrill Lodge are heavily used throughout the year. On behalf of Camp Lackawanna and managers Jim and Suzanne Bates, thank you for donations of your time and financial resources.



**THE EDUCATION TEAM** has a card writing ministry to our college students to give them a reminder of home and let them know that we're thinking about them and praying for them. In order for this to work, we need to know who our college students are! In the narthex are half sheets of paper to provide names, addresses, and a little bit about the students - like their year in college, what their major is, etc. Thank you for helping us make this project a success!



**WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY/LUNCH BUNCH-** We are studying two books of the Bible: Malachi and James. The author of Malachi is Malachi which means, "Messenger." Although the Jews had been allowed to return from exile and rebuild the temple, several discouraging factors brought about general religious apathy. The glorious future announced by the prophets had not yet been realized. The people began to doubt God's covenant love and no longer trusted his justice. The Jews as a community began to lose hope. Because of their hopelessness, the Jews rarely worshiped and they didn't take the law seriously. In response to this, Malachi encourages covenant faithfulness and obedience to the teachings of the law. Only through repentance and reform will the people of the Lord once again experience the Lord's blessings. Malachi tells the people to be faithful to the law of Moses. The day is coming when all the prophets' words will be fulfilled. Be faithful in giving, be faithful in service, the day of the Lord is coming! The author of James is James. He is most likely the brother of Jesus and the leader of the Jerusalem Council. James is one of several brothers of Jesus and is probably the oldest. At first he wasn't sure about his brother, Jesus. James often challenged and misunderstood Jesus, but later he became a very important leader in the life of the Church. Paul called him a pillar in the church in Galatians 2:9. He was martyred in A.D. 62. The emphasis of this book is on transformational Christianity. The book describes good deeds and a genuine faith that is accompanied by a consistent life-style. The book reminds us to be aware of pride, slander, boasting and a quarrelsome attitude. It also teaches patience in suffering. **Dates for Wednesday Evening Bible Study: 5/1, 5/8, 5/22. Dates for Lunch Bunch: 5/2, 5/9, 5/23.**



**"MARY'S" GROUP May 2024-** We are now meeting for lunch each month. Date: Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>. Place: Adelina's Restaurant, South Mountain Blvd., Mountaintop. Time: 1:00 pm for devotions followed by lunch and discussion of Intro thru Chapter 3 of our new study, "Bad Girls of the Bible."

Book: Copies of the book "Bad Girls of the Bible" by Liz Curtis Higgs are available on Amazon or Christian Books for approximately \$13. If you want me to order a copy, just email or call.

RSVP: Donna Dickinson at 570-696-2539 by Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>.

*"And when she was good, She was very, very good. But when she was bad she was horrid."*

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

**THE WEDNESDAY MORNING PRAYER BREAKFAST GROUP** meets at Ollies Restaurant 84 S. Wyoming Ave. in Edwardsville on Wednesdays at 8 a.m.

**MEN'S BREAKFAST** meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each Month (in May it's the 18<sup>th</sup>) at The Scratch Kitchen, 1335 N. River Street, in Plains at 9 a.m. All Men are welcome to attend. If you would like to have more information, please feel free to contact Todd Swanson at 570-762-2887.



**DINNER AND A MOVIE-** Each month folks gather for a covered dish potluck meal, fellowship and a Christian movie. Usually the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month, this month we've moved the movie to May 19<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm, as the 12<sup>th</sup> is Mother's Day. We meet in Fellowship Hall and Lukens Lounge. Enter the church by the Market Street parking lot and Fellowship Hall door (at the ramp.) Those attending are asked to bring a food item to share. Paper products are provided along with drinks. Anyone can attend. Call the church office 570-288-8434 for more information.

**EXERCISE CLASS-** How many times did you say you should join a gym but don't really want to? Or you are too stiff and just want to start easy and have fun with a small, informal group? Come join us at Church Of Christ Uniting on Tuesdays at 2 pm. for 45 minutes of stretching, balance, and simple exercises. There is nothing on the floor, no jumping, and even some sitting on a chair, led by a professional who will help with issues. There is no fee, but donations are appreciated. Some pay \$2, some \$5, some nothing. If you have questions, feel free to call Phyllis at 570-690-1342.





**HEIFER INTERNATIONAL** is a world-wide nonprofit organization that “gives families, animals, training and opportunity they need to succeed—igniting an energizing spark that motivates and empowers families to take action and better their futures.” The goal of Heifer is to help families have a sustainable income so that they have adequate food, housing and essential resources that leads to growth, happiness and success.

How did Heifer get started? “While passing out meager rations of powdered milk during the Spanish Civil War, Indiana farmer Dan West was distraught when the milk ran out with children still waiting in line. He realized that they needed “not a cup, but a cow.” This simple idea sparked the organization that is now Heifer International.

Beginning on Sunday, April 28 through Sunday, June 23, our Mission and Outreach Ministry Team are collecting dollars, coins and checks to fill an Ark for Heifer. Every dollar we donate will be doubled by Heifer. Our gifts will help to transform individuals, families and communities. Most of us have no idea what human needs there are in the world today. One way to start thinking about the real needs is by focusing on what we have and giving a few cents to help someone else have milk, meat, an income, water and an egg for breakfast. Each day between April 28<sup>th</sup> and June 23<sup>rd</sup> we will give coins and dollars to help others somewhere in the world. You can put your donations in the Giving Jars in the Narthex or Fellowship Hall each week. Thanks in advance for your generosity!



**NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS FOR COCU FOOD PANTRY-** Please help keep our pantry stocked. We are accepting the following donations of food items: peanut butter, jelly, mac and cheese, boxed cereal, shelf milk, juices, pasta and sauce, canned meats, canned soup, tuna, mayo, boxed Hamburger, Chicken or Tuna Helper, boxed potatoes, canned fruits and veggies. Please be sure that all food donations *are not* out of date. Monetary donations are also welcomed and checks are payable to **COCU Food Pantry**. Food will be distributed on Wednesdays between 12:00 and 2:00. If you have any questions, please feel free to give Dave or Jan Oriel a call. If you know someone in need, have them call the church office at 570-288-8434. Thank you. The Food Pantry is a church-supported mission to help members of our community.



**MEALS ON WHEELS** at COCU is in need of volunteer drivers to deliver meals throughout the week. They are in need of volunteers especially when the regular drivers go on vacation or are ill. Please contact Amy at 570-288-1023 for more information about being a volunteer driver for MOW. Thanks in advance for your time.



**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO FEED DINNERS TO KIDS-** The Ollie’s Program, Dinners for Kids, is in need of 2 teams of 2 people to deliver meals to needing children. Two meals to each child of a needing family is delivered on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Volunteers are scheduled for the month. You, as a volunteer, are asked what days you are unavailable to deliver the next month. The schedule is made based on when teams are available. You are usually asked to deliver the meals for only two or three times a month. On your day for delivering, you will be picking up the meals at Ollies Restaurant in Edwardsville about 2:30 p.m. again on your Monday, Wednesday or Friday assigned day. The route sheet has the address, the number of children, (two meals are in each bag and each child gets a plastic bag.) There are directions from one home to the next home of the next recipient. See Charlie Dancheck if you have questions and are interested.



**COCU CLOTHES RACK-** At COCU we are collecting “gently used” clothing of all sizes for women, men and children. There is a cardboard box in the Narthex in which to deposit your contributions. Clothing is sorted, hung on clothes racks, and available during Food Pantry hours on Wednesdays from noon until 2:00 p.m. Thank you for your interest in this project.

## POST-GENERAL CONFERENCE WEBINARS



The Susquehanna Conference delegation is hosting two post-General Conference webinars to share the most important takeaways from The United Methodist Church General Conference which took place April 23-May 3 in Charlotte NC and answer questions that you may have. **You MUST register to receive the webinar link.**

Feel free to register individually or as a congregation! These webinars are scheduled for:

**Thursday May 16** (7–8pm) [REGISTER TODAY](#) | **Tuesday May 21** (12–1 pm) [REGISTER TODAY](#)

*If you have specific questions regarding General Conference, please submit them using the "Questions & Comments" field in the registration form.*

## THE LACKAWANNA AND LEHIGH PRESBYTERIES NOW HAVE A MERGER TEAM-



Providing continuity from the Transition Team are the Reverends Stephen Emick (Lehigh) and Rev. Dr. Martha Jordan, joining them are Elders Jean Biggar (a Commissioned Ruling Elder in Lackawanna) and Deborah Prince (Lehigh and currently serving on the PNC for the new General Presbyter).

The leaders on the Merger Team bring a wealth of experience and understanding of churches of all sizes, polity and governance issues, mergers, and connections to the Synod of the Trinity and to the General Assembly. These four individuals share an excitement at the prospect of merger and how it will positively impact and better serve our churches to do mission and ministry in their communities.

At the March 8th meeting, we affirmed the Merger Team purpose: "Guided by the Holy Spirit and working with the Merger Coordinator and Transitional Presbytery Leader, the Merger Team will discern, develop and implement a proposed plan of merger between the Lackawanna and Lehigh Presbyteries. The plan will address all issues important to the merger: legal, financial, ecclesiastical and relational. The Team will also develop and implement a communications plan regarding the proposed merger.

Reach out to Karen Kinney at [merger.coordinator@lackawannapresbytery.org](mailto:merger.coordinator@lackawannapresbytery.org) or give her a call at 570-348-0643, ext. 3 if you have any questions, concerns or hopes for this proposed merger.



**FELLOWSHIP HOUR-** The Parish Life team meets once each quarter (next meeting May 12<sup>th</sup>) following worship to supervise the fellowship hour hosting, help with worship services, membership updating and other events in the life of the church family. If you (and a friend) are interested in hosting a fellowship hour, please speak to Peg Knapich, Phyllis Johnson or Pastor Jane. As a host you are

responsible for making some coffee (all supplies are ready to use), setting up a food/snack table. The snacks can be as simple or as fancy and complex as you would like. The main idea is to have fellowship time with each other. Water bottles and other cold drinks are also provided as are the paper products. Of course, you are welcome to create/provide a theme for your fellowship hour.

**FRIENDSHIP PADS** are in the pews. The primary reason is not to take attendance, but to afford visitors and others in the pew a connection with the people they are sitting with. It is also important for us to realize who has been away from church so that we can find out if there is some issue that is keeping them from sharing in worship. I would like for us as a congregation to reach out to people who are experiencing difficulties with prayer, a visit, a note. Friendship pads are also a way to keep in touch with visitors. I can't always meet new people at worship. Friendship Pads are about connecting each other with Jesus and changing lives. Each Monday, I read the names of our attendees and pray for those individuals. Our receptionist on Mondays, Kay Smith, writes a note of welcome to visitors who share their address. Please sign in each week so that we can stay connected with each other. –Pastor Jane

**COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY TEAM-** There is a live streaming sign-up sheet for upcoming services next to the live streaming station in the balcony. If you are interested in helping with live streaming, please check the schedule for available dates to sign up. Contact Kristin Haas if you are in need of a refresher course or training for live streaming.

**CONFIRMATION CLASSES ARE COMING!** What is it? The word "Confirmation" literally means "with firmness." It means to solidify what has gone before--what your parents, sponsors, grandparents, families, Sunday school, Faith SnackChat, Church, and God have done to get you to this point in your spiritual walk with God. . Confirmation is about the gift God has given to us in Jesus Christ. It is about how God has loved us. Now it is about what we do to accept God's gift and make it our own. We are ready to profess our own faith, to say what we believe and to live out our faith in the church and community in which we live. **Confirmation will begin in September of 2024 and will end in May of 2025. Confirmation Sunday will most likely be Pentecost Sunday, June 8, 2025.**

There will be an initial meeting for the parents and confirmands to attend. It is imperative that both parents and confirmands attend this meeting. This meeting will most likely be held on a Sunday afternoon in mid to late August. At this initial meeting, we will discuss curriculum, expectations, and set the dates for the first 6 weeks of classes. The classes run about 2 hours each. Classes will be held at Church of Christ Uniting Fellowship Hall, Sanctuary and Lukens Lounge. Parents and Confirmands please be sure to bring your calendars to this meeting so we can set the dates together. Confirmation is for youth 6<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Please let us know of your interest now in Confirmation so we can plan ahead and get your name on the list. More information will be forthcoming in the months ahead. If you are reading this and you know of someone in our church who might be interested in our Confirmation Classes, please pass this information on to them. In Christ Service, Pastor Jane and Betsy Jones, CE Director

**HOYT COMMUNITY CLOSET-** Our neighbors at the Hoyt Library have asked that we share with you the news of their newly formed Community Cabinet. It's mission is to "create a supportive environment in which no young person must grapple with a lack of access to the essential personal care products of adolescence because of financial limitations." Ways to contribute to this project are gifts of money or products. Checks can be made out and sent to the Hoyt Library with the notation that it is meant for the Community Cabinet. Products can be dropped off at the Hoyt Library front desk. Examples of products to be contributed are shampoo, body wash, dental supplies, ChapStick, hand sanitizer, and feminine hygiene supplies. Contributions for this endeavor are welcome and will make a meaningful difference for those in need.



**NEIGHBORS IN NEED PROJECT MAY 2024-** Each month we ask for certain items. Boxes will be in the narthex & reception office. May collection: laundry detergent, fabric softener, dryer sheets.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED-** We have a need for volunteers! Pushing a broom? Running a vacuum? Dusting a few shelves? Between now and the time our new employee begins taking over the custodial duties, we have a need for a few willing people to help with operations at our church. It will involve nothing too strenuous, and will be easier with each pair of hands added to the roster. Interested? Please contact Sherri at our church office (570-288-8434) for more information.

**VOLUNTEERS FOR THE CHILDREN'S MESSAGE-** If you are thinking, "I would like to do the Children's Message," please let Pastor Jane know. It is always good to have different voices in worship to share God's message with our children on a Sunday. Please call either the church office at 570-288-8434 or the cell at 570-396-5883. Thanks in advance for volunteering!!!

**LITURGIST-** Anyone who is interested in being a liturgist, please call or text Diana Grinavich at 570-954-4525 or email [dlg219@hotmail.com](mailto:dlg219@hotmail.com)

**ALTAR FLOWERS-** If you would like to place flowers on the altar or on the side credence tables to remember or honor a loved one or special event, please contact Lois Giza at 570-287-0617 or at [sandlgiza@verizon.net](mailto:sandlgiza@verizon.net). You can check the floral calendar in the narthex for available dates and to sign up. The cost is \$30. You can send your payment to: COCU, 190 S. Sprague Avenue, Kingston PA 18704. Attn: Altar Guild. Thank you to everyone who provides our flower arrangements each week! Any flowers not taken home by the donors are given to our homebound, those in assisted living, or members who are in the hospital.



**GRIEF SHARE-** No matter what the circumstances, grief is a painful process. We are writing to let you know about our GriefShare grief support group for people dealing with the death of a family member or friend.

GriefShare is a safe, welcoming place where people understand the difficult emotions of grief. Over 13 weeks, you'll find relief and comfort as you learn what to expect in the days ahead and how to navigate your personal grief process. Since there are no neat, orderly stages of grief, you'll learn helpful ways of coping with grief, in all its unpredictability—and gain solid support each step of the way. Topics include how to manage grief-related emotions such as loneliness, anxiety, sadness, anger, and regret; how to cope with the changes in your life and relationships; how to recognize what's normal in grief; and what to do if you feel stuck or hopeless. At a weekly GriefShare meeting, Tuesdays from 6 to 8 p.m. in Lucas Lounge, you will view a video which will be followed by support group discussion of the materials presented during the video. Register online at [www.griefshare.org](http://www.griefshare.org). Please feel free to call Peg at 570-239-7189 or the church office (570-288-8434) if you have any questions or would like more information about the GriefShare seminar.

**PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY-** Do you like to knit, crochet, sew or not sew or quilt? Here is a ministry opportunity for you that will bring a smile and warmth to someone's heart. Prayer shawls, blankets, lap robes, pocket prayer shawls or even the cross in your pocket are made with love and prayer. These items have been made for centuries to symbolize an inclusive, unconditionally, loving God. Those who receive these gifts have been uplifted and prayed for by the maker. The gift then has one final blessing at worship before the recipient receives it. What are the gifts used for? Folks undergoing medical procedures, as a comfort after a loss or in times of stress, during bereavement; during an illness or recovery, or when someone just needs to know that they are wrapped in prayer. If this is a ministry you would like to get involved in, please let Pastor Jane know.

**EPILEPSY RESOURCE CENTER IN KINGSTON-** The Michael P. Loughlin Epilepsy Community and Resource Center opened in January at 845 Wyoming Ave. Rena Loughlin, wife of Michael and Mary Loughlin, mother of Michael are heading up the Resource Center. The center provides education and other resources for those living with epilepsy and their families. Phone number: 215-629-5003.

**ALZHEIMER SUPPORT GROUP-** Do you have a family member or friend who has Alzheimer's disease? Do you know someone who may be struggling because their loved one has Alzheimer's? There is a support group that meets the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month at the Dallas Leggio's Restaurant. The meeting starts at 10 a.m. and is facilitated by Lois Reese who for years took care of her husband. Some people stay and have lunch but that is optional. –Donna Dickinson



**STEPHEN MINISTRY CARDS** are in the pews. Please share them with a friend. COCU's Stephen Ministry program provides lay people one-to-one Christian care in our congregation and community who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. Stephen Ministry is confidential. The identity of those receiving care and everything they discuss with a trained Stephen Minister remains private. Could you benefit from this kind of one to one care? Do you know someone, perhaps a co-worker, relative, friend or neighbor who could benefit from this ministry? If so, please take the card and pass it to them. Questions, please contact Donna Dickinson at 570-814-6713 or Pastor Jane at 570-288-8434.

**SUNDAY BULLETIN COVERS-** If you would like to honor the memory of a loved one or celebrate someone's special birthday or anniversary, bulletin covers are available for purchase any Sunday of the year. The cost is \$30. Please call the office at 570-288-8434.





**DEVOTIONAL LINE-** 570-288-2334. Don't forget to start or finish your day by listening to our church members and staff share their thoughts and prayers. Each volunteer records daily devotions for Sunday through Saturday for one week.

**THINKING OF YOU... THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH!-** The Parish Life Ministry Team is sending 25-30 "thinking of you" greeting cards each month to homebound, inactive and hospitalized COCU members. The cards are available in the Narthex before worship for everyone to sign. Please join us in this ministry each month in an effort to keep our COCU family close in our thoughts and prayers. If you would like to donate "blank or hello/thinking of you" cards to the team, please leave cards in the church office.

**CHURCH FRIENDS UNITING-** The Parish Life Ministry Team has an outreach program to identify church members who would benefit from a phone call or visit. Our hope is to maintain and strengthen the connection these members have to COCU. This effort would further support our monthly "thinking of you" card ministry. To learn more about this project, please contact any of the following members of the Parish Life Ministry Team: Phyllis Johnson (570-690-1342), or Judy Vanderburg (570-270-6647)



**THE CARING CONNECTION** is Ready to Serve You! If you need transportation to and from worship, doctors or shopping, wish a home visit, would like communion at your residence, could use a meal due to a family illness, please call the church office at 570-288-8434 (preferably before noon.) Give your name, the request and your contact number. Someone from The Caring Connection will be in touch.

**IF YOU OR A LOVED ONE ARE ADMITTED TO THE HOSPITAL** Please call the Church Office at 570-288-8434. In an emergency, if you cannot reach Pastor Jane, please feel free to call her cell at 570-396-5883 or give a call to our Pastoral Care Visitor, Cheryl Fuller at 570-954-8877.

**PARISH LIFE MINISTRY TEAM** meets quarterly. Our next meeting is May 12<sup>th</sup>. We have set up a sign-up sheet in the Narthex for **Fellowship Hour**. We are requesting people (2-3) to host a time of fellowship after worship. We will also be sending **dinners to St. Terese's Homeless Men** ministry once a quarter (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each quarter – the day after our meeting.) Anyone from the congregation is invited to help with the men's meal. We sponsor a monthly **dinner and movie** usually on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of each month.

**RECIPE - Taco Dip** by Lena Abraham. Delish.com

Ingredients for Dip:

- 2 (8 oz.) blocks cream cheese softened
- 1 1/2 cup Sour Cream
- 1/4 cup Pickled Jalapenos, finely chopped
- Juice of 1 Lime
- 3 tablespoons taco seasoning
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- Kosher salt

For Topping:

- 2 cups shredded lettuce
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar
- 1/2 cup shredded Monterey Jack
- 1/2 cup grape tomatoes quartered
- 1/4 cup white onion, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup sliced black olives
- 1/4 cup pickled jalapenos, sliced

Directions:

Step 1: In a large bowl, stir together cream cheese, sour cream, jalapenos, lime juice, taco seasoning, and garlic powder, and season with kosher salt. Transfer mixture to a large serving dish.

Step 2: Garnish dip with toppings and serve with tortilla chips.

Your contributions to the content of **The Courier** will appear in this newsletter ONLY if you submit them to [thecourier@cocu4u.org](mailto:thecourier@cocu4u.org)

### MISSIONARIES PRESENTATION AT COCU

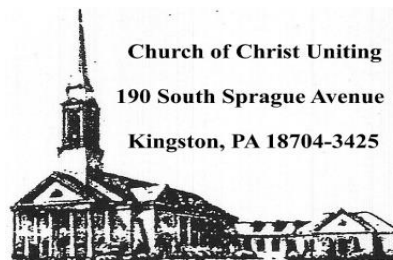


Pastor Jane, Cheryl Fuller, Deborah Monts, Pastor Chuck Monts, Barbara Swanson.



Rev. Monts is showing pictures from their year (2023) in Malawi in East Africa, at the Parish Council meeting in Fellowship Hall on Thursday April 18<sup>th</sup>. COCU was able to contribute to the cost of their missionary trip. Submitted by Cheryl Fuller and Barbara Swanson

**CHURCH OF CHRIST UNITING**  
Come share our Joy!  
Morning Worship 10:00 a.m.  
Sunday School 10:15 a.m.  
Rev. Jane M. Pykus, Senior Pastor  
Dr. Cheryl A. Fuller, Pastoral Care



📱 COCU Online: [YouTube channel](#) - [webpage](#) - [Facebook page](#) 📱  
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