



First Press

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April-May 2023

From the Pastor's Desk



WARNING! “Grat-attitude” is infectious

The healing of the ten lepers in Luke 17 is proof of the highly contagious nature of adopting an attitude of thankfulness.

¹⁷ Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”

Ten lepers were healed that day and headed to the priest for confirmation. One turned back to Jesus, a Samaritan, the “foreigner” to fall at his feet in gratitude. All ten were healed on account of their faith in Jesus’ healing powers but only the Samaritan openly bore a “grat-attitude.” As we learn of his attitude of gratitude; “grat-attitude” through reading Luke’s report of the lepers restored to health and community, we realize the depth of our thankfulness for what

Jesus has done for us. Do we act on our faithful response as the lepers did, each in their own way?

As we stop for a minute after the Easter rush, think of all the blessings the Resurrection and mission of Jesus we enjoy. First, I would like to take this opportunity to turn back the clock in my life 45 years to give thanks for all the Beloved Community of churches, presbyteries, synod, and General Assemblies who nurtured my faith. I am so very grateful you have been a 3-year part of this journey and, God willing (and the Creek don’t rise) will continue to be.

I was so immersed in the celebration of my recent significant birthday, I forgot my 45th ordination anniversary in January. Apparently, my friends and presbytery did not, marking the event along with my colleagues also celebrating anniversaries (*cont. on pg 2*)

Pastor's Desk (cont.)

in the last stated meeting. Then I was surprised the next Sunday with your presentation of a James Avery gift card, a dollar a year! I will enjoy pondering an appropriate purchase.

Gratitude does not begin or end with gifts, words of appreciation or cards. It is a daily act of thoughtfulness, remembrance, and praise. Ponder what gifts your attitude is "buying" as you recall the gift of life and eternity God gives. God loves and heals you whichever of the ten lepers you are most likely to identify as your style. This is grace, undeserved, given just because you are so very loved.

One more act of grat-attitude: As we move on to the late spring and early summer months, having celebrated the great days of the church, especially the feast of Easter we are thankful. What a feast Easter was—from the brunch to the postlude, a glorious day of celebration preceded by a meaningful Maundy Thursday service of communion and Tenebrae (the service of darkness when we strip the church). Deep appreciation is due and has been given to all the leaders and worshippers for the excellent and thoughtful worship experiences.

As we look ahead, the blessings continue as do the opportunities for giving back. A total of \$1040 was collected for the Lenten offering, which will be sent to the PCUSA Mission offerings board to purchase selected farming and clean water, animals, tools, and education. Thank you and watch for an accounting of exactly what we have been able to send—perhaps we will see the Chicken in worship again!

The next festival of the church year is Pentecost which will be celebrated with a

gospel music concert and sing-along on Memorial Day weekend. Pentecost falls this year on May 28.

The next Sunday, June 4, please gather after worship for the honoring of our graduate, Nicolette Boyles, with a potluck luncheon. Our other graduate, Alyssa Auten, will already be on the field that weekend to begin her new job with NASA in Houston! Talk about thankful!!! Thanks be to God for these wonderful young people who are both smart and faithful. Congratulations!

Thank you for bearing with me through this long missive which I will end with a new beginning. As reported to the congregation a few weeks ago, the Session has acted on years of conversation about replacing flooring in the social hall.

In the last Session meeting the elders established a "Flooring Fund" to partially pay for the estimated \$6000 in materials. High quality, vinyl plank flooring will replace the blue carpeting. \$3000 is the fund-raising goal.

Memorial funds have been accumulating over the years with no restriction on their usage. \$3000 of that fund will be used to pay the other half of the materials cost. It is anticipated that volunteers are planning to remove the carpet and install the new flooring.

Every time we see the new flooring, we can be reminded of our dear ones who loved this church and be grateful for the saints still visible among us who will contribute to the beautification and improvement of the building.

Thank you! Kathy E. Vineyard, (HR),
Stated Supply pastor

A Stated Meeting of the Session was held on April 18, 2023. Highlights provided by the Clerk of Session include:

- **Worship Team:** Kay Atwood extended an enormous “THANK YOU” to all the people who jumped in to help with Palm Sunday and Holy Week, leading to our Easter Service on April 9th. On Maundy Thursday, the way the large cross was placed and lit was breathtaking! Stripping went smoothly. On Easter, the sanctuary looked amazing, the choirs were magnificent, and the sermon uplifting. The Fellowship Hall was beautifully decorated and it appeared that people enjoyed the fellowship and kolaches prior to the service. Kay notes the sound on Zoom is improving. Attendance was at least 70. Planning is underway for Mother’s Day and for Pentecost.
- The Banner Team met to discuss the next banners to be created. They are ready to purchase new materials and to finalize design ideas. The first banners were well received.
- **Buildings and Grounds:** Larry estimates that the cost to change the flooring in the fellowship hall would be about \$ 5500-7000. And, he already has folks lined up to volunteer to take up the current floor, prepare it, and lay down new flooring, probably LVP. The cost to do the sanctuary would be about the same amount. Session voted to create a special project fund for flooring with half the money coming from donations and the other half from memorial funds. The goal is \$ 6000 total to be raised by early summer. Kay will talk to the families of persons in whose honor the memorial donations were made to ensure this use is acceptable to them. The Session thought that making the church more welcoming and manageable would be a fitting way to use these funds.
- **Congregational Care:** Women’s and Men’s groups – We’re looking for opportunities to pull our two groups together for fellowship and whatever comes along. An informal “tea” was suggested for the ladies, possibly at a nearby coffee house and complete with posh hats, etc. Perhaps the men would be interested in getting together for a dinner, pulled together by Kathy. We will honor Nicolette on June 4th with a potluck dinner, as she is graduating from high school.
- **Missions:** We raised \$1040 during our Lenten giving campaign. Julie will create a list of potential purchases to fund to share with the congregation so that we can wrap up this project and send it off to the PCUSA.
- **Other- Future of the church library** – Julie has been taking care of our church library for a number of years and is asking what we might like to see in that space. Several possibilities were discussed: (1) a meeting room; (2) a craft room; (3) a classroom. This was the beginning conversation and since then the library has been moved to the back classroom and the Sunday School Class is now meeting in the former library.



TEAM MEETING
MAY 25
6:30 PM
AT CHURCH

ALL ARE
WELCOME

FINANCIAL DATA

JANUARY - APRIL 30

Total Income	\$30,800.62
Total Expense	\$23,036.96
Net Income	\$ 7,763.66

PALM SUNDAY



EASTER SUNDAY





ALYSSA
AUTEN

Stephen F. Austin State University

Class of
23

Everything takes a village. I would not be here if it wasn't for all the people who supported me and encouraged me my whole life. Thank you to everyone who supported me during the low points and cheered me on during my highs. As I write this, I just got back from an interview with NASA down in Houston! I hope I will get the position and allow all the work I have done to go to a great cause and help us achieve bigger and better things.

You are all my family, by blood or choice.

Thank you

Alyssa Auten

She got the job!

