

THE EPISTLE

May 2021 *God's Palette Creates The
Lovely Pastels Of Spring*

- **BRIGHT HOPE "Walk for Life"** Saturday, May 1, 9AM.
- **BETHLEHEM-EASTON MISSION DISTRICT
VIRTUAL ASSEMBLY** - Saturday, May 1, 9AM to 12N.
- **BRIDGE OF HOPE CAR WASH** - Saturday, May 1,
10AM-2PM.
- **YOUTH SUNDAY** - May 2. Holy Communion at 9AM &
10:30AM. Youth will lead 9AM service.
- **TACO WEDNESDAY & COMMUNITY YARD SALE
BRAINSTORMING** - May 5, 6PM.
- **NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER** -
Thursday, May 6, at Bethlehem
City Hall at Noon.
- **MOTHER'S DAY/ROGATE SUNDAY**
- May 9, 9AM.
- **ASCENSION DAY** - Thursday, May 13. Prayer
Service at 5:30PM with Moravian Cake.
- **PRAISE WORSHIP** - Sunday, May 16, 9AM.
- **PENTECOST** - Sunday, May 23.
Holy Communion at 9AM & 10:30AM
- **VBS KICKOFF DINNER** - Wednesday, May 26, 6PM
- **TRINITY SUNDAY/MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE** -
May 30. Holy Communion followed by Praise Time.



2 WORDS FROM PASTOR DAVID

My First

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

(1 John 5:13 - NIV)

You're probably wondering, "My first what?" My first encounter with First John, of course. This Easter season my sermons have focused on the First Letter of John and how we can "*Unleash the Power of God's Love.*" In doing so I shared how my life was changed by my first encounter with First John. I've gotten lots of good feedback from that. So I thought I'd tell the story again for people who missed it or would like to hear it again. (I've added a few details.)

A. My Unfaithfulness & God's Faithfulness

Most of you have probably heard me tell how I was brought up in the church and that I made my first personal commitment to Christ when I was 14. I made some important changes in my life and made it my first priority to pray and read the Bible every day. As I went through High School, however, I gradually drifted from my commitment, as more and more things took priority over my relationship with God. I still went to church, because I had to, but my heart was not in it.

But by the grace of God, about midway through the summer before I went to college, I broke my hand and couldn't work for a number of weeks. My first broken bone gave me time to reflect. I realized my life was getting off course. I was straying from my commitment to Christ, and I resolved to do something about it when I got to college.

Well, that's not exactly what I did. My first 3 nights on campus I spent drinking with guys on my floor, because that's what everyone was doing. Thankfully after the third night a red flag went up in my mind that this was not a good pattern to continue following. I knew that's not why I was at college and I stopped. (Sadly, there were others who didn't.)

My first 3 weeks I didn't bother going to church. This was my first time on my own, without my parents to make me go. So I didn't. I forgot about my resolution over the summer. But God is faithful, even when we are not.

B. Discovering the Joy of Fellowship Around God's Word

I was not looking for fellowship with other believers, but God kept bringing Christians into my life. One night, I was writing my first English paper and wasn't getting anywhere, so I decided to take a walk to clear my head. As I was leaving the dorm, I saw a sign for a Christian Fellowship meeting that was starting in 5 minutes. At that moment, going to that meeting was much more attractive than writing my English paper. So I went and had my first campus ministry experience.

I was surprised to see Chris, a guy from my floor, who was also there for the first time. We instantly became best friends. I wasn't sure I wanted to get heavily involved in the Fellowship, but Chris was gung ho and dragged me along. One of the things he dragged me to was a Small Group Bible Study on the upperclass side of the campus. But he only had to drag me my first couple times. It soon became the thing I looked forward to most each week. We didn't miss a week, even when it meant braving the winter elements as we walked across campus.

I spent my first 3 months wrestling with an important question: Was I going to go all in for Christ? I really enjoyed my involvement in the Christian Fellowship and I admired the dedication of the leaders and many other members. At the same time I was very aware that most of my classmates and professors did not believe in God (or believed in a very different sort of god). I wasn't going to go all in on blind faith. I had to know if the God of the Bible is the one true God or not.

I latched onto a promise from Jeremiah 29:13, *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."* I asked the Lord to show me if He was real and particularly if Jesus really rose from the dead, because that is the truth upon which Christianity stands or falls. I did lots of reading on that topic and God answered my prayer. By the end of November, I was convinced and I recommitted my life to Christ.

C. Discovering the Gift of Teaching

In the fall semester our Small Group studied the book of James and in the spring First John. God's word was coming alive for me and, toward the end of the year, I was asked if I'd like to lead an upcoming study. I jumped at the opportunity. I found preparing for my first Bible Study so enjoyable that I was hooked. I volunteered to be a Small Group Leader next year.

The week after finals there was a camp for Small Group Leaders that I attended, it was like a foretaste of heaven. At that camp our campus staff suggested a boxful of books dealing with several theological issues I was wrestling with. That Summer I ate them up and my first love for theology was born.

D. Avoiding Temptation Out of Love for My Brothers

Fellowship and the word of God helped me navigate the many potential pitfalls of College, so that instead of drifting away from God and from the church, my faith grew tremendously and my church involvement increased.

Temptations were all around me, but I wasn't interested, because Jesus had become my first love. I was consumed by a passion to help others come to know Christ and grow in Him.

For my first 3 years in college, I continued on the path of going into business, majoring in Management. But as I grew as a Christian and as a leader in the Fellowship, I found myself applying what I was learning in my management classes to ministry and the church, rather than business. By my senior year I realized that God was calling me into ministry. Even though it would be quite a few years before I sensed a more specific call to ministry, I knew that was the direction I was headed. God had changed the course of my life and my first encounter with First John had gotten the ball rolling.

E. Learning To Love My Family

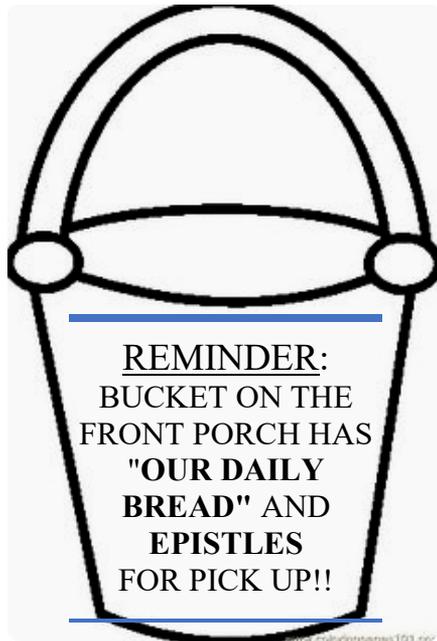
But that was not the biggest way that First John changed my life. I was convicted that I needed to improved my relationships with my family. You may remember me sharing that I didn't have the best relationship with my brothers when we were young. In case you didn't hear, it involved lots of fighting, including throwing rocks at each other and a couple trips to the emergency room. My first few times back home on break, I found it very easy to slip back into my old selfish ways, but I knew from studying First John that I needed to change. I didn't always succeed, but I tried hard to be a more loving brother and son.

F. Assurance of Eternal Life

The most significant thing I took away from First John was that I came to know with certainty that I had eternal life. I didn't have that assurance before and the peace and freedom of knowing that has been an anchor of my life ever since. In his letter John keeps circling back to the promise and assurance of eternal life that we have in Christ.

Is there anything more important than our eternal destiny? I'm sure most of us would not dream of driving without insurance or going without health insurance. I'm guessing most of us have life insurance. But what about life assurance? Have you been taking the biggest risk of all? Have you been going about your life, which is filled with dangers (none of us knows when our last day will be), without being sure of your salvation? Shouldn't that be your first priority? If you're not sure, take the time to read through First John. Maybe it will change your life too!

-- Pastor David



Council Actions:

- Delegates are needed for both the Bethlehem-Easton Mission District Assembly, to be held virtually May 1 (9am-12pm), and for the North-eastern PA Synod Assembly (also virtual) to be held June 4-5. Please speak to Pastor Dave if you feel God nudging you toward one or both of these. We typically send one female and one male delegate, and you must be pre-registered.
- Also on 5/1 will be a youth group car wash. Come out to support Bridge of Hope while remaining safely distanced in your own car!
- Holy Cross will organize a group to walk in conjunction with Bright Hope Pregnancy Center's Walk for Life. This is also occurring on May 1st beginning at 9am. For more info, contact Ruthann Kistler. To register, see briighthousepartners.org.
- The Denomination Task Force continues to meet to discuss our membership in the ELCA. They are also seeking a youth representative to serve on the committee. Their next meeting is Wednesday, 5/12, at 6:30pm
- Preschool days and tuition have been set for the 2021-22 school year. The three-year-old class will meet three days per week (\$180); the four-year-old class will meet five days per week (\$500). We thank God for this delightful ministry!
- We have purchased a new church refrigerator to be delivered by the time you read this!



WALK *for* **LIFE**
Saturday, May 1st

9:00 AM

**Several of us will meet at Holy Cross
and be virtual participants in the
Lehigh Valley Walk for Life.**

Funds raised will go to

BRIGHTHOPE

**Put on your walking shoes and join us.
If you wish, you can leave your car in the
parking lot for our youth to wash it.**

Worship & Music News

We're back! Easter Sunday saw the return of three services at Holy Cross: a 6:30am sunrise service, a 9am and a 10:30am service. It was wonderful to see over 80 worshipers! While not a record, it's a whole lot better than this time last year. Thank you to all who ordered flowers to decorate our sanctuary on this special day.

There will again be two services on May 2nd (9am and 10:30am), both with communion. The 9:00 service will be conducted by the youth. We'll go back to the 9am service on May 9th for Mother's Day. Thursday, May 13th is Ascension Day with a service held at 5:30pm (there will be Moravian Sugar cake available!). On May 23rd we'll celebrate Pentecost with two services (9am & 10:30am). May 30th is Holy Trinity Sunday and we'll also acknowledge Memorial Day.

We're now taking orders for Pentecost geraniums. These will decorate the sanctuary on the holiday and the outside of the church all summer. Thank you in advance for your orders!

If you are fearful about returning to in-person worship, we encourage you to come. We are thankful that God in His mercy has kept us safe at Holy Cross throughout the pandemic. We are still physically distancing in the building, and wearing masks, and more and more people have either recovered from the virus or have gotten a vaccine. We have much for which to be thankful: come, and let us worship our Risen Lord together!

~ Jan Stryker, Worship & Music Chair

Sunday School News 😊

In-Person Sunday School for all ages continues to meet at 10:30AM - hope to see you there!!!!

Adult Sunday School Class

If Jesus stood before you and asked you to touch His scarred side and nail-pierced hands, what would you do? Did the resurrected Christ smell like the oils used to anoint His dead body? These are some intriguing questions recently posed in the adult Sunday School class.

We have been discussing each week's sermon and Scriptures, often with Pastor Dave on hand to answer questions that we have. We found that discussing worship like this really helps us to pay closer attention during the service, and helps us grow in our understanding and love for God.

Right now Pastor Dave is preaching on 1 John, and teaching us about love. Do you want to grow in your love for the Lord? How do we love others when they are acting in an unloving way? How can we resist the evil that Scripture warns is coming for us? How can worship be more meaningful? The answer to each of these is the same: come to Sunday School!



PRESCHOOL NEWS

Registration has begun for the 2021-2022 school year. The class schedule will change for the coming year. There will be a five day class for children four years old (M-F) and a three day class that meets

Tue/Wed/Thur for three year old children.

Classes will be held at the same time (from 9:30 - 12:00 noon). The current preschool year will be extended this year with the final day of instruction Thursday June 24th. Tuesday June 29th there will be a picnic at 11:00 a.m. for the three year olds and their families. Wednesday June 30th will be a graduation ceremony for the four year olds at 7:00 p.m. Please continue to pray for God's will and the future of our program.

BABY BOTTLES - The Bright Hope Pregnancy Center (formerly CareNet) baby bottle campaign starts on Mother's Day (May 9) and ends on Father's Day (June 20). Be on the lookout for the baby bottles in the Gathering Place soon.

Taco Wednesday???
Sure, it is Cinco de Mayo!



**Are you interested in any way in a
Holy Cross
Community Yard Sale
This Autumn?**

**Come for tacos
Wednesday, May 5th
6:00 PM**

**This will be a time of brain-storming and
munching!
Yum-m-m-m!**

Teacher Appreciation WEEK

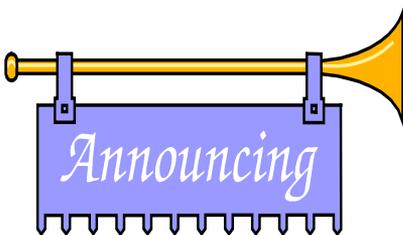


We at Holy Cross would like to again express our appreciation to the faculty and staff of Nitschmann Middle School for all they do for our young people during “Teacher Appreciation Week”. As you probably

know, Nitschmann is our “adopted” school and we pray for the staff and students regularly. On Wednesday, May 5th, several of us will take a card and a snack for each of the teachers and staff. If you have questions or would like to help cover the costs, please let me know with a phone call or by emailing me. If you would like to join me in taking things over to the school early that morning, that would be wonderful!

Most of all, please join us in praying for the students, teachers, support staff and administrators.

Ruthann Kistler, Christian Education
610-217-0397 or ruthannkistler@aol.com

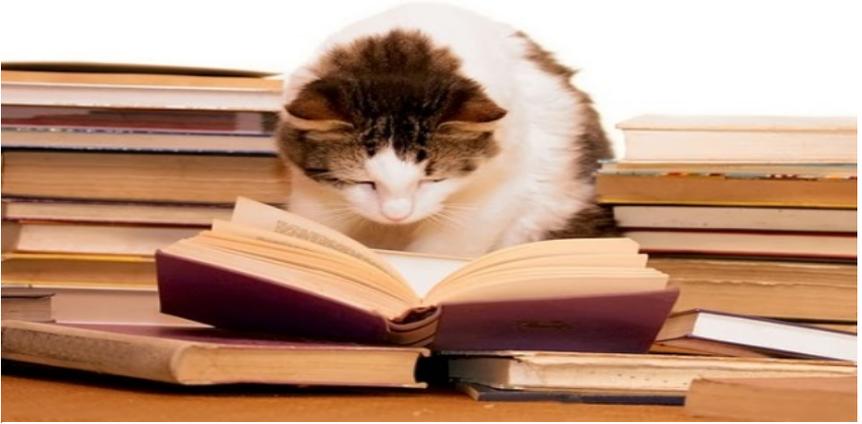


VBS Kickoff Dinner:
Wednesday, May 26, 6PM

VBS IS COMING
July 19th through 23rd
Mark Your Calendars!!!

This year's theme: “Treasured.”

Read for Lent Report



Enthusiasm for the 2021 rebirth of the “Read for Lent” challenge stirred twelve Holy Cross people to participate. Four preschoolers, two youth and six adults made contributions by reporting about their “reads” during the Lenten season.

Adam Barlow read Ruby Bridges by Robert Coles from our new children’s library. This coordinated with what he was learning at school.

Yvonne Frankenfield read Reunion Dance by Carole Jefferson.

Ruthann Kistler read A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 by Phillip Keller.

Nancy Porambo read Nearing Home by Billy Graham.

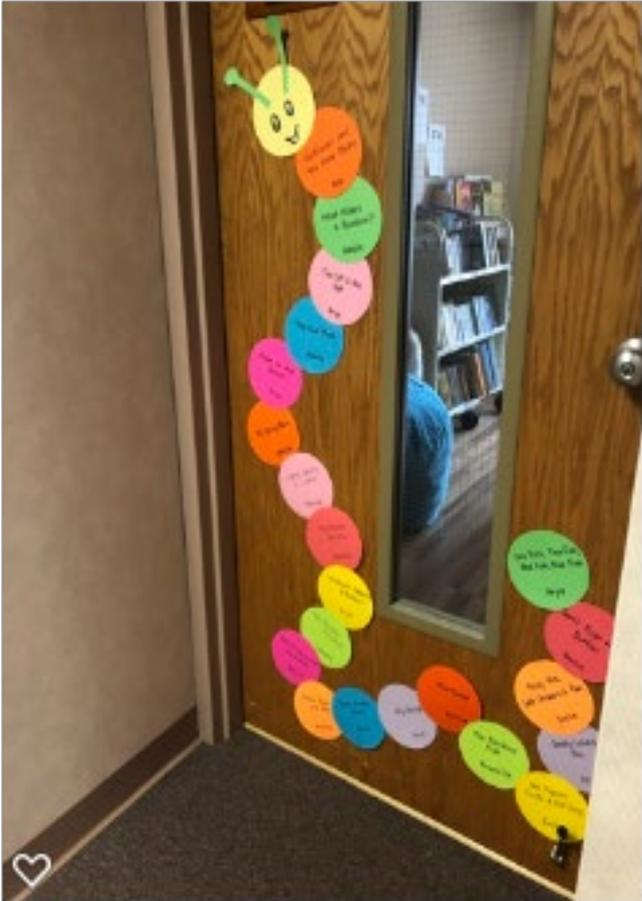
Michele Sciarra read A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23 by Phillip Keller.

Karen Steiner read Starting Now by Debbie Macomber and She Said Yes by Misty Bernal.

Jan Stryker read San Diego by Hake and two new books in our children’s library by Rush Limbaugh: Rush Revere and the Brave Pilgrims and Rush Revere and the First Patriots.

Erineah Quan read The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake by Aimee Bender.

You can see all the titles read by our four preschoolers by checking out the “bookworm” on the door of the children’s library.



As an example of the wonderful material read, Karen Steiner reported about her book, She Said Yes, by Misty Bernal. “Cassie stood up for her faith in the face of death. This is the story of the Columbine High School shootings as told by the parents and friends of the young girl “Cassie”, who admitted that she believed in God when she was about to be shot. Cassie struggled with her faith but was working to make it stronger. Her parents learned after her death by reading her journal that she had decided instead of doing great deeds, she would be selfless in small things. Thank you, Karen, for sharing this.

Perhaps this makes you hungry to read something that is life-changing. There is a multitude of good reading material in our two well-stocked libraries. Stop in next time you are at the church.

Book Report

If you like to read (and even if you don't), this is a book you might want to pick up. It's called What Are The Odds by Mike Lindell (yes - the My Pillow guy). Maybe you've seen the advertisement on TV. He's a great story teller - maybe because his stories are true.

There are many times he should have been dead, broke, or jobless but God was with him at every move he made. It was a 30 year chase but he tells how God finally got through to him. Even his suppliers tried to get him to stop doing crack. What are the odds of that? The book is available for borrowing from our church library. Check it out!

Greeting Guests at Holy Cross

One thing Holy Cross can be proud of is that we are a friendly church and many who visit tell us they were delighted to feel welcome here. In the past year it has become even more important to extend a friendly welcome to those who are looking for an opportunity to worship with others in person.

In the past few years, we have experimented with different approaches to giving those who visit, something by which to remember us. You may remember when Pastor has asked anyone who was visiting to raise their hands and one of the children from the Children's Chat would deliver a gift bag to them. At times, we were aware that a new person preferred not to respond. It is never our intention to make someone feel awkward, so we've decided that this is probably not the best way to welcome our guests.

So, we are hoping that each of us will take it upon ourselves to greet someone we have not met before with a warm welcome. A good way to do this in a less intimidating or threatening way is to offer your name first, making it easier for the new person to give up their identity. For example, "Hi, my name is Ruthann, I don't think we have ever met. What is your name?" They may volunteer that they are visiting. If not, you can ask, "Is this your first time at Holy Cross?" If so, please invite them to sign our guest book.

Pastor David sends a note to first time visitors and the Outreach Committee prays for them at our monthly meetings. Our Snail Mail Ministry person, Nancy Porambo, sends a delightful greeting to repeat visitors.

Also, please feel free to go to the podium in the Gathering Place and pick up a gift bag to give them before they leave. It is appropriate to give one bag per household. There are pleasant little remembrances in there that will help them have good memories about their visit and even let us know if there is any way we can be of service to them in the future. Our own Erineah Quan keeps them replenished, so if you should notice that we are running low, please let Erineah know. If you have the opportunity to introduce someone to Pastor, I know he would really appreciate that as well.

In the future, when things get back to normal, we can engage in such habits as a handshake, a hug, or even inviting them to sit with you. But for now, I think you will find this simple act of kindness, a warm verbal greeting, is very rewarding.



GREETING CARD MINISTRY

Many thanks to those who have given us a "jump start" with your donations. Your help is greatly appreciated. Postage stamps would be appreciated as well.

P.S. We are also interested in "used" greeting cards—we recycle those!!!! Thank you!

Nancy Porambo



CRADLE ROLL

Do you know that there are 936 weeks from birth until a child celebrates their 18th birthday???? We will be sharing more details about this very soon. Watch for further details!!!!



Graduating from High School or College? Please let the church office know. We would like to recognize our graduates.

Member Changes and Updates

This new section will provide address changes and other updates of our church family in an effort to keep you connected and up to date. Feel free to make contributions by contacting the church office by phone (610 867-6237) or email holycrossoffice@rcn.com.

Terry & Judy Iasiello have transferred their church membership to Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mooresville/Nazareth, PA.

The following members or friends of the congregation passed away in recent months:

Joan duBois (died 12-10-2020)

John Wechsler, "Sr." (died 12-26-20)

Charles Branigan, II (died 12-30-20)

Harriett Reilly (died 2-19-21)

Erna Fritz (died 2-25-21)

Pastor Charles Miller (died 3-23-2021)

MAY BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

BIRTHDAYS

- 2 - Alecia Sciarra/Robert Stuber
- 4 - Dawn Wagner
- 10 - Ally Figueroa
- 16 - Nicole LoConte
- 19 - Linda Jo Albertson
- 21 - Heidy Sazo
- 22 - Matthew Reppert
- 24 - Carson Reinhard
- 28 - Sharon Branigan
- 30 - Tom Barlow
- 31 - Leah Quan

ANNIVERSARIES

- Larry & Wendi Wonderly, 5/1/83
- Richard & Alyce Stein, 5/15/71
- Edward & Betty Tkacik, 5/21/60
- Alan & Pat Davis, 5/25
- Steve & Jackie Fenicle, 5/27/78

Calendar Update!

Are you filling in your 2021 calendar? Let us help. Here are some dates we hope you will save for Holy Cross:

Next Month:

Sun, June 20 - "Dads and Grads"

Next Seven Months:

Mon, July 19 thru Fri, July 23, VBS

Tue, August 3 - National Night Out

Fri, August 6 - Game Night

Tue, August 10 - Sight and Sound Bus Trip, "Queen Esther"

Sun, August 22 - Backpack Blessing Sunday

Sun, August 29 - 5th Sunday Praise

Sun, Sept 12 - Rally Day/VBS Reunion/Grandparent Day

Sun, September 19 - Church Picnic

Sun, October 10 - Shoe Box Sunday

Sat, October 30 - Trunk or Treat/Family Fall Fest

Sun, October 31—Reformation/Confirmation/Brunch

Wed, November 24--Community Thanksgiving Eve

Sun, November 28—Advent Workshop

Sat, December 11—Luminaria Night & Caroling

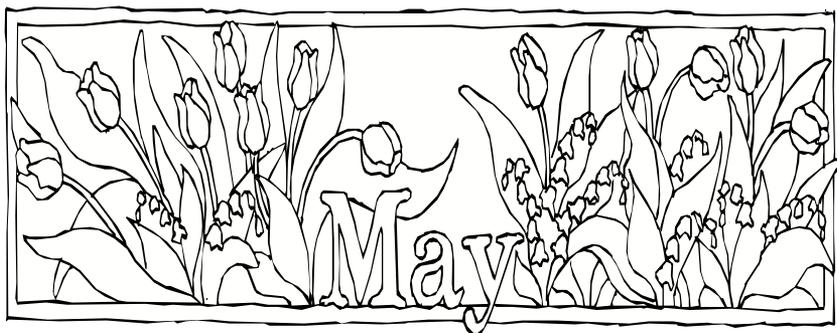
December 19—Birthday Party for Jesus

December 24--Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

More events and details to come.

Let's make 2021 great!!

THE EPISTLE



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