

GAITHERSBURG PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND. A CONGREGATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)



## RECENT SCENES OF GPC



### LIVESTREAM WORSHIP

11:00 AM  
EVERY SUNDAY



### WORSHIP IN PERSON

9:30 & 11:00 AM  
EVERY SUNDAY  
*beginning May 23;  
registration required*



*From the Heart of Pastor Mary Austin*



This phrase is now officially banned at GPC: "We're a friendly church."

Churches are supposed to be friendly. It's like a grocery store saying, "we have food" or a car dealership saying, "we have cars." It should go without saying. It's like the motel I once passed that was advertising "clean rooms." I would have assumed so . . . until they went out of their way to mention it.

It has been noted that when we return to church in person, everyone will be a newcomer. No one will know exactly what to do. Everyone will have the exact same experience that our church guests have, feeling unsettled and out of step. We'll all be looking around for guidance. No one will be a natural at first. It will help us all remember what guests experience when they worship with us the first time.

What we want when we're new isn't friendliness – it's genuine hospitality. Hospitality follows the example of Jesus, who went out of his way to make people feel welcome. He extended himself to include people who weren't usually included. Friendliness comes from us. Hospitality comes from a deeper source. It takes more work. It lasts longer.

Hospitality is stopping a conversation with a longtime friend to greet a newcomer and invite them to sit with you. It's walking someone down the hall to coffee hour (when we have it again) and talking to them so they're not alone. It's taking their information and getting it to one of the pastors, so we can follow up. Hospitality is making room for someone new on a project, or in a group, even when we like it fine the way it is.

We never need to say that we're a friendly church. If we are, other people will say it for us. If you catch someone saying it, you can tell them they have to put a dollar in the mission jar.

Together in hospitality,  
**Rev. Mary Austin**  
Pastor



[www.gpchurch.org](http://www.gpchurch.org)



Find Us on Facebook:  
Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church



(301) 948-9418



(301) 869-3043



# MANY BLESSINGS *From the Heart of Pastor Mary Beth*

**Wow, wow, WOW!** GPC's 2021 Lenten Mission Project – Feeding the 5,000, COVID Style! – was a smashing success!

Our goal was to raise **\$5,000** to support **three** local charities.

But **you gave \$42,520!** And now we will support the following **nine** organizations: the Upcounty Consolidation Hub, Gaithersburg HELP, Manna Food Bank, Gaithersburg Cares Hub, Upper Montgomery Assistance Network, Epworth UMC Food Distribution Program, Frederick Food Bank, KindWorks, and the PC(USA)'s One Great Hour of Sharing Offering.



Your gifts will be shared with our neighbors here and around the world to give them real and tangible hope by meeting their emergency needs. Our prayer is that, through gifts of food and financial assistance, people will know that God is real and cares for them. Thank you for shining the light of the risen Christ.



Many Blessings,  
*Rev. Mary Beth Lawrence*  
Associate Pastor

## WATCH YOUR FRIDAY EMAILS DURING MAY FOR PICNIC/OUTDOOR DINING RECIPES!

As our spring-into-summer days grow longer and warmer, May is the perfect time to start enjoying more outdoor dining experiences. Maybe it's a relaxed pod group picnic in the park, or a renewed chance to dine again on your back deck with neighbors and friends. You can really never have too many recipes for outdoor main dishes, sides, desserts, and cool drinks. Make sure to take advantage of our area's many Farmers Markets. Easily obtainable fresh produce during this season elevates even a simple recipe. Although vaccines are more available, eating outside is still the safer way to socialize with all age groups. The combination of good, easy food with in-person fellowship is certainly one of our greatest blessings during our warm-weather months!



# YOUTH MINISTRY



## A Note from Carrie

Summer is almost here – I can feel it in the change of weather and see it in the leaves and flowers. Typically, our youth would be gathering their registrations and seeing the excitement build for summer camps and a mission trip. Although this past year has not been typical, our summer will be filled with excitement. **Plans are in the works for hikes, kayak outings, ice cream adventures, bike rides, lunch meetups, and simple park shenanigans for both youth and our college students.** For a detailed calendar of events, please contact Carrie or check out the Youth & College emails.

## What We're Teaching

**It's all about friendships!** This summer we, as a group, will celebrate and discuss true friendships. Having good friends who love and support us is essential to our well-being. We aren't meant to do life on our own. God created us to be in community with others who encourage and strengthen us in our relationship with God. Our teaching series titles follow.



**May** – “Friends for the Journey” | **June** – “It Takes Two . . . or More” | **July** – “Be A Bringer”



## Calling All 2021 Graduates!

Are you a High School or College graduate this year? During the month of June, WE WANT TO CELEBRATE YOU and this BIG accomplishment!! Please email [clarsen@gpchurch.org](mailto:clarsen@gpchurch.org) with the following information: If you're graduating from High School, please share the name of your school. If you're graduating from College, please share the name of the school and your degree.

Watch our weekly emails and social media in June for more information about our graduates.

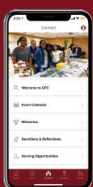


## Fall Confirmation Class

We will be offering a Confirmation Class in the fall. If you're in 8th Grade or above and are interested in being confirmed at GPC, please contact Carrie for registration and class details.

—Carrie Larsen

Director of Youth and Young Adults



## DOWNLOAD OUR NEW APP

Text “gpchurch app” to 77977 or visit the homepage of the website and click the “Download Our App” button. Have questions? Contact GPC's Communications Manager at [jobermiller@gpchurch.org](mailto:jobermiller@gpchurch.org).

# CHURCH IN PERSON . . . AND ONLINE



## CHURCH IN PERSON, CHURCH ONLINE

In the spring of 2020, we sanitized everything in the GPC building, put away the pew Bibles and hymnals, and shut down for two weeks . . . or so we thought. Now, it seems like a lifetime ago. The 2020 flower chart is still hanging in the church office. The hymnals are still in storage.

Way back then, we recorded the church service on Thursdays and the edited service appeared on Sunday mornings. At that time, groups popped up online for pastors to talk about Zoom vs. Facebook live, Zoom bombers, and the oddness of recording worship from sheds, basements, and empty

churches. All along, GPC's gifted technical volunteers have saved us from mediocre worship and potential disasters. Thanks to their recommendations, we bought some different equipment and started to livestream church on Sunday mornings.

Now it's time for the next step in our evolving worship journey.

The session has voted to start having church in person, in addition to church online, on May 23, which is Pentecost. At that time, we will shift to two services, at 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. The second service will be livestreamed. We will have fifty people per service in the building, plus the people who are working (ushers, sound and video, etc.).

Building on what we've learned during the pandemic, we will be one congregation, united in worship, even though worship happens at different times and in different places. COVID has reminded us that God isn't limited to the GPC Sanctuary on Sunday mornings, and we'll continue to grow in that knowledge.

Right now, our worship capacity is limited, as we follow all the state and county guidelines about building capacity. As the limits are increased, we'll prayerfully increase our capacity, too. We know that, as hard as we work, no experience of gathering with other people can ever be 100% safe. We cannot make worship completely risk-free for you. If you have any hesitation about coming, please continue to worship via livestream, and know that your choices are respected.

### **You may have some of these questions:**

#### **How can I register to come to church?**

You can sign up to come to church either by Signup Genius, or by calling the church office. Sign-ups will open ten days before each Sunday service, with a link in the Friday emails. We hope that we can accommodate everyone who wants to come, perhaps by trading off Sundays. Of course, if you're sick, please stay home and let us pray for you from afar.

#### **What will it be like when I get there?**

When you come into the building, you will have your mask on. The ushers will greet you and check your name off the list, and then show you to a seat. Some of the pews will be roped off to allow for proper distancing, so you may not land in your exact seat, the one you claimed years ago and sit in every week. Novelty is good for the brain. We hope you won't be too unsettled by sitting somewhere different.

Singing is still not safe, so we'll have some live music on the organ or piano, and a variety of music via video.

After the service, the ushers will help us leave the Sanctuary, so that we don't get all bunched up by the doors. Chatting and warm greetings will happen outside in the parking lot.



### **What if I'm consistently unable to sign up in time and have to wait several weeks to attend in person?**

Sign-ups will open up a week at a time, so everyone gets a turn. Depending on how many people want to come, however, you may not be able to come every week. (Maybe everyone loves worshipping from the couch . . . and there will be a wealth of openings.) If you can't find a slot and have been waiting, let the church office know and we'll work with you.

### **What if I love worshipping from home?**

Keep doing that! We plan to livestream forever. It's not going away. We imagine that many people will find that some combination of church in person and church online works for them.

### **What about communion?**

We'll continue to have communion as part of worship on the first Sunday of the month for people who are worshipping at home. Then we'll serve the elements to everyone outside after church. Those worshipping by livestream will be invited to come to GPC or to Ballenger Creek Park in Frederick for communion, too.

### **What should I do with my offering?**

If you bring it with you, you'll find a box outside the Sanctuary for it. The ushers will make sure that it gets locked up after church. Or, continue to mail your offering, or give via the app. We're grateful for your gifts in any form.

### **What about the bathrooms? Will someone be monitoring them?**

The bathrooms will be limited to one person at a time, with a sign on the door. You all are smart people. If you find someone in there, step out and wait until they're finished.

### **Will there be coffee hour?**

No, not at first. Online coffee hour will continue each week, except for communion Sundays. Join your fellow GPC members and friends there.

### **What about Sunday School classes, VIPS, small groups, and activities for kids and youth?**

The session is holding off on having those activities in the church building, perhaps until September. We'll see how the summer goes and what the COVID numbers look like.

### **Can we require that only vaccinated people come to church?**

Nope. People's vaccination status is their business, like any other health matter. Please stop asking people if they're vaccinated. If they want to tell you, they will.

### **Am I allowed to pop by the church to say hello?**

We miss you, and no. We're still trying to keep everyone safe, with limited exposure to people, and the staff continues to work both from home and in the building. On any given day, only part of the staff is in the church building.

### **What if I hate everything about this?**

Talk to us! You're not wrong. Church won't be the way we remember it for quite a while . . . maybe never. The great strength of the followers of Jesus is that we keep adapting and have done so for more than 2,000 years. At the core, we still gather around the God of grace, giving thanks and praise with our time, money, and energy. The outward forms of church are a container where we meet up with God, and we trust that God will continue to be present, even as things change.

If you have questions, please ask!

# GPP&K MINI SESSION IS IN FULL SWING!



We are excited to kick off our 8-week Spring Mini Session! Two classes of 4- to 6-year-olds are enjoying being back at school and among friends as we jump into fun themes focused on outdoor activities! It's so nice to have children back with us and hear their giggles, even if from behind masks.

We are practicing all required health and safety precautions, and the staff and students are doing a great job!

We are currently registering for Fall 2021 classes for 3's, 4's, and our state-approved half-day kindergarten. If you or someone you know is looking for a nurturing, fun, and educational program for their child, please visit [gppk.com](http://gppk.com) for more information or call our office to schedule a tour.



In Service to His Children,  
**Amy Smith**  
GPP&K Director



## ARE YOU SOCIAL? LET'S BE FRIENDS!

 [facebook.com/GaithersburgPresbyterianChurch](https://facebook.com/GaithersburgPresbyterianChurch)  [instagram.com/gpchurch\\_moco](https://instagram.com/gpchurch_moco)

 [youtube.com/GPChurch\\_Moco](https://youtube.com/GPChurch_Moco)

A social media strategy is in the works, so if you're not already following us, be sure to "like" our Facebook page, "follow" our Instagram account, and "subscribe" to our YouTube channel!

We'd love to hear your comments and ideas on our posts.

# QUIPS FROM EQUIPPING DISCIPLES

ALL CLASSES AND SMALL GROUPS ARE STILL BEING HELD VIA ZOOM.

## SUNDAY MORNINGS – FOR ADULTS

- The Present Word, Spring 2021 book, continues at 9:30
- The Bible as a Whole, Ephesians, continues at 9:30
- Contemporary Christian Classics, continues at 9:30

*(All classes are open to new members.)*

## SUNDAY MORNINGS – FOR CHILDREN

- Godly Play continues – at 9:30 (Zoom) and also recorded
- Sunday School continues – at 11:30 (Zoom) and also recorded
- Scripture & Reflection continues – at 12:00 (Zoom) and also recorded

## SMALL GROUPS

- *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* by Francis Collins – Sundays, 9:00 a.m.
- The Wisdom Books (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes) – Mondays, 7:00 p.m.
- The Ten Commandments – Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m.
- A study on Doubts (through May), followed by a study on Jonah – Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m. (Frederick Group)

*For further information or to join a class or a Small Group, contact the church office.*

**Carolyn Hayes**

Director of Children and Young Families

# MUSIC NOTES

I joined the staff of GPC in June 2020, and we are quickly coming up on one year together. What a year! Our Music Ministry's priority has been to encourage as much congregational singing as possible—from home, of course. My hope is that the pre-recorded singing and videos have enriched your experience of worship and made singing to the glory of God possible during this era of hybrid worship.

As more people are vaccinated and gathering becomes safer, I am excited about resuming rehearsals for the Canterbury Ringers and other instrumental groups. Unfortunately, it may be some time before vocal choirs and ensembles can rehearse and sing in worship again; however, we have made some huge strides with our Virtual Choir. Even after normal worship services and singing resume, I believe that by maintaining and building our social media presence and a Virtual Choir we may have a whole new way of engaging the community and sharing our ministry beyond the church's walls. If you are interested in singing with the Virtual Choir, please contact me! All you need are two devices—one to listen to the click track and one to record yourself—and either headphones or earbuds.

The overall plan of the Music Ministry can be described in three stages. *First*, using pre-recorded music with displayed lyrics as we have been doing (this stage is coming to an end). *Second*, continuing with pre-recorded music as we did in the first stage, but beginning to incorporate live music from the organ and piano, and possibly some live singing into a microphone at a distance from others. *Third*, coming back in full swing once group singing is safe again, and continuing to nourish and build the new, digital side of our ministry as well.

I'm hopeful that as we begin to filter back into the church building and continue to explore the new skill sets that we've all acquired, we will bloom in a new phase of ministry and church. Thanks to the new equipment, technology, and skills, I can already see how we will be able to expand beyond what we were able to do previously. It is a very exciting time to be at GPC and to make music! Let's join together to explore what might be possible!

**Wade Meyers**

Director of Music and Worship Arts

# SPRINGTIME HOPE

Hope springs eternal most abundantly in springtime. The hope of eternal life is expressed in Easter, and the hopes for new life on earth are seen as the cherry blossoms begin to bloom and the Asbury garden plots turn yellow from daffodils almost overnight.

In farm country, the abundance of hope in the spring is especially apparent. As the snows melt, there is hope that the ground will dry soon, allowing an early start to the planting. In the summer, the hope is that enough rain comes at the right times for growth but not so much as to flood fields. In the fall, the hope is that the crops mature soon enough for harvest before the snow flies. And, of course, the underlying hopes are that crop yields and the prices received for them will be high enough for a prosperous year.



Many rural families reinforce these hopes with prayer and worship. My childhood church had only about 100 members, so everyone knew everyone. In the summer nearly everybody would linger outside after services to talk about how our hopes were working out. With dawn to dusk work the rest of the week, we were isolated from friends almost as completely as during present COVID times, so the chance to catch up was welcome. Often someone would say, "Why don't you all come out?" We would then scatter to our homes to pick up our dinners and reconvene in a spontaneous church potluck.

When Nancy and I joined GPC, we were pleased to find that our new church also had church picnics. The congregation was small enough then that there was room to hold picnics in members' backyards. In another outdoor activity, for several years GPC joined with two other small churches to hold Easter Sunrise Services at the East Overlook on Sugarloaf Mountain. Afterwards we would stop by Dickerson Church for an abundant country breakfast before going to GPC's Easter Service.

As GPC grew, the church picnics outgrew backyards and were moved to a park. Last summer and fall, however, VIPS revived backyard gatherings to ease the isolation that many were feeling. Members graciously offered their backyards for meetings limited to eight people, for social distancing and regulation reasons. Attendance was coordinated on a rotating basis by Nancy Sanders. We saw some amazing backyards and enjoyed the rare opportunity for person-to-person contact.



Now it is springtime again. On the farm in the spring, regardless of what had happened the previous year, hopes for that year would spring eternal again. The same is true for GPC, as indicated by the planned reopening of the building. I hope that outdoor gatherings will continue to play a role in our church life as well.

—Roger Burkhart



# THE COMFORT OF SCRIPTURES

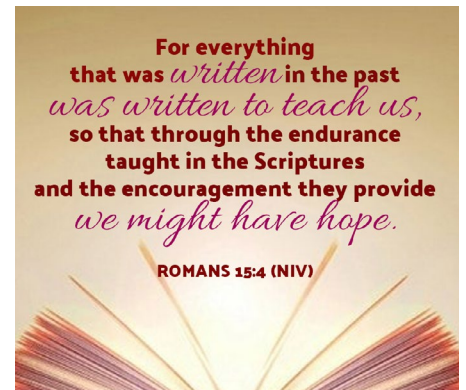
December 2019 marked the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which evolved to a level of global severity. Concurrently, the nation became embroiled in political unrest; a proliferation of mass murders; and daily, disturbing, negative news.

The pandemic, coupled with this negativity, has presented a challenge. At this time, scripture reading and varied GPC classes and programs have provided hope, love, and support, which were desperately needed. For both of us, the Present Word classes, Sunday worship, 2nd Friday Book Club discussions, and weekly devotions are a blessing. Although interaction with family and friends has been limited and sometimes impossible, virtual programming and Zoom have made contact with our GPC friends possible.

Hope is comforting, and it has been a comfort to us at this time to know that in God there is hope. The NIV Bible translation lists the word *hope* 167 times in 159 verses. Our hope is built on faith in Jesus Christ. We have selected Romans 15:4 (verse illustrated at right) for reflection.

As we live for the New Generation, gradually approaching God's ultimate grace, the challenge is to wrap ourselves in the comfort of scriptures and to nurture and live with hope.

—Frantz & Lois Wilson



# HOPE HOPE HOPE HOPE HOPE

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13, The Student Bible)*

As the different fonts of the word HOPE above suggest, each of us feels hope in our own unique ways! Among our hopes may be reuniting with our families; returning to our seats in the Sanctuary; working towards peace and justice; and, possibly, even creating new beginnings. As the number of restrictions of the pandemic declines and more people are being vaccinated, how does VIPS—a group including more than 100 individuals—plan activities that encourage each of our personal feelings of hope to thrive and grow?

With so much isolation being experienced by many seniors during this COVID challenge, VIPS have attempted to reach out to one another through personal phone conversations. As the isolation continued, another layer of communication has been added—monthly treat bags being delivered by the Porch Angel Ministry. Although not in-person interactions, they have permitted new friendships to form and existing relationships to deepen. It is hoped that these friendships will thrive and flourish as we broaden our potential interactions. When asked to share their hopes for VIPS in the future, each respondent expressed a desire for us to be able to get back together, with variable timeframes suggested. One VIPS friend stated, "I look forward to learning about others' journeys and to seeing others' faces."

With the number of warmer days increasing, the Backyard Gatherings for 6–8 people resumed in mid-April, with weekly opportunities for those who are comfortable sharing conversations in person while enjoying the warmth and comfort of a friend's backyard. Also, a larger outdoor gathering at South Germantown Recreational Park took place on Thursday, May 6—our usual meeting day.

The goal of VIPS is to keep exploring opportunities for individuals to joyfully join in fellowship as each of us is comfortably able to do so. We hope that as we transition into the next chapter of VIPS, we are better as individuals and better as a group than ever before!

—Nancy Sanders

# HOPE DURING A PANDEMIC

For the past year, we have lived our lives in a way previously unknown to most of us, and life continues in a modified form. It has been unlike any other year in my life or the lives of most of us.

Although I've lost both family members and close friends for reasons unrelated to COVID-19, because of the pandemic I was not able to attend funerals, memorial services, or any family gathering. A friend said to me, "It's as though our loved ones are dying in the dark." Unfortunately, isolated grieving has become a common experience worldwide.

There are numerous other consequences of this year-long lockdown. For many, there is a loss of meaningful work, lack of food for children and families, and loss of homes providing a safe place to live. Many people have lost the ability to meet their basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. Children have suffered from not being able to attend school in a building with a teacher present. Isolation has prevented them from socializing and having play time with their peers.

There can be a significant loss of identity for the financial provider for a family. When a man or woman suddenly loses his/her job because the company they work for has no business, they wonder, "What is my role now?" The inability to lovingly provide for one's family can lead to frustration, depression, and questions about self-worth. Mental health treatment is needed but their health insurance is gone and they have no money to pay for it.

Our country is experiencing increasing levels of anger and rage, and, often, outright displays of hatred. This is another byproduct of the pandemic. Police brutality and attacks on black people have increased exponentially. As a black woman, my own ability to feel safe when I am out in the community has dropped to a very low level. I worry about needing to call the police for help. Will I be helped or harmed? Again, my world has changed. If I need to go out after dark, I'm only comfortable when my husband is with me.

## What helps when someone is experiencing this kind of darkness?

My hope and my peace come from only one source—my belief in God. He is my anchor. God sent his one and only son to die on the cross so that my sins are paid for and I can look forward to eternal life with him. As stated in 1 Timothy 4:10, "That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people and especially those who believe."

As we know, God works through many people and in multiple ways. I have experienced that throughout this challenging year. I feel blessed to be part of a church that offers so many opportunities for growth, support, and belonging. On Monday evenings, I was part of an adult class that studied the Book of James. My Covenant Group is studying "*God and the Pandemic: A Christian Reflection on the Coronavirus and Its Aftermath.*" The 2nd Friday Book Club finished reading "*White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*" and has been watching and studying film clips about the life of James Baldwin, focusing on racism. I also joined the Racial Justice Coalition and worked helping people vote in the last election. My Adult Ed Class has continued to meet every Sunday morning, reading "*The Present Word.*" During Lent, we read the Presbyterians Today's 2021 Lenten Devotional – "*The Way to Shalom.*" The exchange of ideas often gives me a new understanding about my beliefs and deepens my faith. In addition, the groups have given me an opportunity to meet new people and/or continue relationships with friends of many years. Although each group may discuss a specific book, our connection with one another was most significant for me. Having people pray *with* me and *for* me has given me the strength to continue having hope that we will get through this period of time.



Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." I believe that God has been leading me daily to continuing relationships and also to opportunities to serve others. When I looked around at the numerous needs in our community, I found ways to offer some assistance. There are so many who continue to struggle daily to survive. Scripture reminds me that we are God's hands and feet on earth and I need to do more.

I'm learning to rely more on God's word, which has provided hope throughout this traumatic time. I find Philippians 4:6–7 (NLT) to be a source of encouragement. It says, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

—Carole Johnson Tukes



# GREAT IS THY HOPEFULNESS

The last fifteen months have felt very long; frankly, each month felt long. Did it feel that way to you? We had routine to our lives. It may have been hectic, boring, or less than perfect, but it was our routine. We went to work; we sent our kids to school; we went to church; we ate in restaurants; we even went shopping. When COVID-19 arrived, news of a fast-spreading virus became more than a story about someone else far away. It came to our shores, and the “normal” of daily life was gone.

More than just the loss of a regular schedule, our foundation was shaken in many ways. Suddenly in lockdown, a mindless trip became a frantic search to find bread or toilet paper, and the one thing we needed, to be with our dearest, was off limits. The disruptions of the pandemic caused chaos, isolation, anxiety, and despair, and highlighted cracks in our social order, but they also revealed huge reservoirs of creativity and resilience. I hope for a future that uses these positives to build a healthier, stronger, kinder world that is not driven by political affiliations, racial backgrounds, or economic differences.

The promise of vaccinations and gradual reopening of the world is encouraging, but returning to a “normal” life is fraught with anticipation and promise. We are in a moment that feels hopeful, aren’t we? I don’t know what our post-COVID world will look like, but I pray that it will be one in which we can all be together again. I’m sure that no matter what the world is like when the COVID-19 flood waters recede, hope, anchored in God’s love, will endure. Hope is right here; it is not optional or negotiable. We must embrace it to nourish our spirit, families, and community in every possible way. Hope will get us through whatever, wherever, whenever. It always has. God continues to care for us. He is our hope.



During the pandemic, I frequently have been humming a favorite hymn, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” I listen to it every night before I sleep. This beautiful hymn reminds us that God’s promises are true, He never changes, He never fails, and His faithfulness to us in Christ is abundant. It is based on Lamentations 3:22–23, in which Jeremiah recounts the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

*Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed,  
Because His compassions fail not.  
They are new every morning;  
Great is Your faithfulness.*

You wouldn’t expect to find hope in the Lamentations story, but Jeremiah (and the hymn writer) say that at the worst times God is faithful, and His love, mercy, and compassion are refreshed every day. The third verse of the hymn encourages post-pandemic hope and God’s faithfulness revealed in our lives. God cheers us on every day and gives us strength, no matter the circumstances.

*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!*

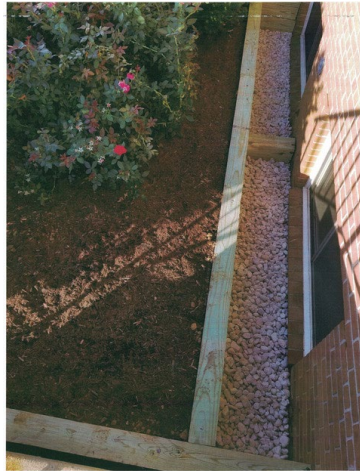
—Sue Farrand

## THE BUILDING WAS CLOSED, BUT THE IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUED!

Our hope to reopen GPC for worship will soon be fulfilled. As a member of the Building and Grounds (B&G) team, this past year has been an opportunity to fill the oil and trim the wick for the reopening. B&G provides for the management and maintenance of the property of the church, buildings, systems, equipment, vehicles, and grounds, and whether the building is open or closed, something always needs to be done, from repairs and painting to planting. It is like maintaining a very large house.



Old window wells



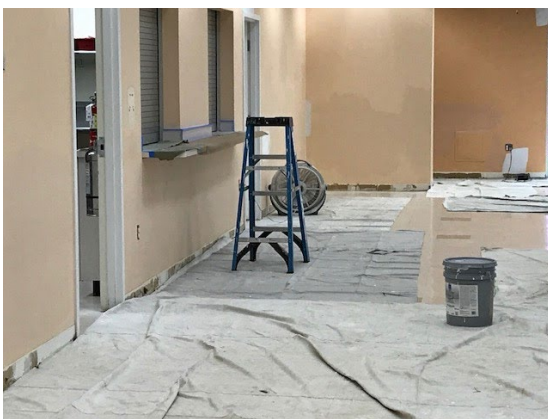
New, improved window wells

Over the past year, our team has made various visible improvements. Outside the building, we have replaced the window wells at the south end of the church as well as the decayed wood in the trellis over the Columbarium. Inside the building, asbestos floor tiles have been removed throughout except for in Fellowship Hall, where the existing floor will be encapsulated. The stairs going from the back corner of Fellowship Hall down to the basement have been improved, and downstairs, we have cleaned up and repainted rooms in Building #1, repainted two GPP&K rooms, and replaced ceiling tiles in the hallway of Building #3.

Much of what has been done is out of sight or otherwise unnoticeable, however, including improving the fire alarm and sprinkler systems and upgrading the phone system.

Work in progress or soon to be done inside the church includes having the walls repainted and new floor tiles installed in Lindsay Hall and the upstairs hallway of Building #3. COVID-19 limitations have prevented us from enlisting your help for such major projects as removing floor tiles and wallpaper but, thanks to your generosity, we've been able to hire professional contractors for those jobs.

The sun is coming out, the days are getting warmer, and there are cheerful sounds of young children back in GPP&K. Church members and friends of any skill level will soon be welcome to participate in team projects, such as our annual grounds beautification. If you're interested in helping with this or various B&G activities, contact Andy Gosnell, our Facilities Manager, through the church office.



Lindsay Hall repainting



Hallway wallpaper removal

—Art Eisenhour

# “THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS . . .”

A lot of people know that I’m always talking about the weather, but not everybody knows that I have a degree in meteorology. Although the weather does not pay attention to calendars, we meteorologists have to draw the line somewhere, and we declare that winter is over when February is. This always seemed a little off to me, because the first part of March is not exactly pleasant and springlike. While astronomers, pets, and alarm clocks tell us that these are not the darkest weeks of the year – and of course they’re not – February has always felt like the darkest time of year to me. It certainly is the coldest month. Sunday morning, February 21, was actually the coldest day of the year in Gaithersburg. A good time of year to sing “In the Bleak Midwinter,” like a good Presbyterian.



Syracuse University  
(Instagram post, March 2013)

I grew up in the bleak midwinter of Syracuse, New York. February is particularly cruel in Syracuse, in its black-and-white existence. Winter is so relentless that it even drains all color from your life: the ground is white, the trees are black, the sky is grey. Two inches of snow every day for a month grinds you down. Winter is relentless and unyielding, like caring for a very small infant, and you wonder how you are going to get through each day without a break. Not unlike what you do, day after day, keeping your family and your community safe during a global pandemic. Days are easier than weeks that are easier than months. Years are the hardest of all, and of course in mid-March 2021 I was very conscious that we had spent one full year living with this pandemic.

Sometimes scripture gives us metaphors and sometimes it is literal. Sometimes it is both at the same time.

*“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*  
(John 1:5 [NIV])

Although the darkness of disease and winter can feel overwhelming and relentless, I am grateful for this reminder that the light is still there and the light will win. Rejoice! This is the day that the Lord has made. The days are getting longer. The weeks are getting warmer. We are getting more vaccines every day. It is time to plant seeds and awaken. Things are only going to get better.

With winter now over and spring beginning, we are grateful for God’s eternal movement toward new life and filled with hope.

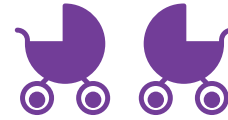
—Andy Imboden



# HAPPY 48TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY!

**Ernie and Lucille Baur**

April 28, 1973



# WELCOME TO THE WORLD!

*Congratulations to:*

Kay Penn,  
the proud great-grandmother,  
and

Kevin and Nicole (Colee) Hope,  
the proud parents  
of

**ADELINE KATHERINE HOPE**

born on March 15, 2021



# CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY



**We mourn the loss of members and friends who have died.**

**Fred Edwards**  
in Rockville, MD  
March 20, 2021

**Juliet Lake**  
in Gaithersburg, MD  
March 26, 2021

**Bob Wasik**  
in Gaithersburg, MD  
March 31, 2021

**Hawa Wright**  
in Gaithersburg, MD  
March 31, 2021

**We extend our sympathy to the members of our congregation who have lost loved ones.**

**Elisa McClelland**  
*(her brother, Ricardo Ramirez, Sr., in Oxnard, CA)*  
February 6, 2021

**Jere & Corinne Denlinger**  
*(Corinne's brother, Vincent Kuypers, in West Hurley, NY)*  
February 8, 2021

and  
*(Jere's father, Leon Denlinger, in York, PA)*  
April 8, 2021

**Asenath Asang Foy**  
*(her father, Rev. Simon Muam Asang, in Cameroon, Africa)*  
March 10, 2021

**Lois Wilson**  
*(her sister, Betsy Gunn, in Richmond, VA)*  
March 26, 2021

**John Frick**  
*(his father, John P. Frick, in Corning, NY)*  
April 8, 2021

**Estuardo Sosa**  
*(GPC custodian)*  
*(his father, Fidencio Sosa, in Los Amates, Izabal, Guatemala)*  
April 9, 2021

**Mary Kempf**  
*(her aunt, Margie Head, in Dallas, TX)*  
April 25, 2021





## MAY WEDDINGS

**Omega Namwali & Edge Kaunda**  
on May 8 in Malawi

**Carol Anderson & David Mecklenburg**  
on May 15 in Potomac, MD



## NOTE OF THANKS

Thank you, GPC, for all of the flowers, cards, and meals that I received during my illness and following the death of my son Russ.

Blessings to all,  
—*Kay Penn*

## DIRECTORY CHANGES

*Addresses and phone numbers  
are available through the church office.*

**Gary & Kathleen Aller**  
**Ann & Jim Davidson**  
**Jerry Hott**  
**Patrick Keziah & Barbara Thorne**

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY REPORT

March 2021

	2021 YTD	% OF BUDGET
<b>INCOME</b>		
Envelope Pledged.....	\$275,846	36%
Envelope Unpledged.....	\$67,819	45%
Loose Offering.....	\$620	2%
GPP&K Rent.....	\$0	0%
Other Income.....	\$2,257	90%
Room Rent.....	\$0	0%
Interest & Dividends.....	\$22	11%
FourthNight.....	\$0	0%
Manse Rental.....	\$0	0%
Carryover.....	\$0	0%

**Total ..... \$346,564 .....35%**

### EXPENSE

NCP Membership.....	\$7,019	25%
Human Resources.....	\$135,218	24%
Buildings & Grounds.....	\$49,980	25%
Office Operations.....	\$10,344	30%
Communications.....	\$7,873	23%
Stewardship.....	\$1,323	23%
Comm Engagement.....	\$17,292	17%
Eq Disciples.....	\$2,172	12%
Vital Worship.....	\$1,310	11%
Congregational Life.....	\$0	0%
Session.....	\$0	0%

**Total ..... \$232,531 .....23%**

**NET.....\$114,033**

To request a complete financial summary,  
email [accountingmanager@gpchurch.org](mailto:accountingmanager@gpchurch.org).

## GPC MEDIA POLICY

Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church (GPC) uses print and digital media of church life in communications materials to share the ministry of GPC with our congregation and community at large. GPC reserves the right to use any media taken at any activity sponsored by GPC, without the express written consent of those individuals included within the media. GPC may use any such media in publications, social media, and any website.

# THE MAINSTREAM

Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church  
610 South Frederick Avenue  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877-1297

*RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED*

NON-PROFIT U.S.  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Suburban Maryland  
**PERMIT NO. 10005**



**GPC PLANS TO REOPEN FOR WORSHIP  
MAY 23 (PENTECOST SUNDAY)! (see pp. 4–5)**



## OUR VISION AND MISSION

GPC is called by God to be: A global, caring community of faith, centered in Jesus Christ, training people to share His life everywhere we go.

Our top three priorities are:

- To worship the Lord with heart, soul, mind and strength
- To engage our neighbors in central Montgomery County
- To equip each generation for Christian discipleship