



Gaithersburg
Presbyterian
Church

THE MAINSTREAM

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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
no registration required



From the Heart of Pastor Mary Austin

CLEANING CLOSETS, CLEANING SPIRITS

This summer, dedicated volunteers and staff have been cleaning out closets and storerooms

at the church. A witty soul found this sign (and 49 more just like it) in a closet and left it for me.



The late theologian Phyllis Tickle famously said that the wider church has a giant rummage sale every 500 years, shedding what's no longer needed. Five hundred years ago, the church went through the Protestant Reformation. Five hundred years before that, the church split between East and West, dividing into the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

At GPC, we're not having a *literal* yard sale. Still, it feels as if we've had a *spiritual* yard sale during COVID. Our routines have been tossed out, our schedules upended, our habits tossed askew. We jettisoned coming to church in person. Now, some people are ready to come back, while others aren't yet. We changed the flow of the worship service so that it works in person and online. We changed the service time for livestreaming, and then changed it again when we went to church in person, and went back to two

services. Classes shifted to online, along with meetings. Now we're good at Zoom, and we're pondering in-person gatherings again.

It's not quite clear what's left, after the mental yard sale of the pandemic.

We're waiting to see what we need this fall. The other day, the staff got together to plan for the fall. Half of us wanted to go full speed ahead, with our usual array of programs. Half of us wanted to hand out mashed potatoes and pillows, and let people rest and be soothed. We don't yet know what we need, and what will help us connect with God and each other.

At the end of a really great yard sale, two kinds of things are left—things so outdated and broken that no one would buy them, and we can tell right away that we should throw them out. And things that are so precious we never took them outside. Things that we never considered getting rid of in the first place.

This fall we'll concentrate on those things. God. Faith. Prayer. Community. Support for each other. Fun. Joy. Rest.

I'm praying for you in this time,
Rev. Mary Austin
Pastor



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MANY BLESSINGS *From the Heart of Pastor Mary Beth*

Many of our Jewish friends have a mezuzah on the doorframes of their home. It contains a tiny scroll of a portion of Deuteronomy 6, where Moses instructs the Israelites to worship God alone, to study the scripture, and to write it on the doorposts of their home. Religious Jews will touch the mezuzah when leaving and returning to their homes.

As we enter a new season and a new chapter of the pandemic, we have a lot of anxiety and worry about all the unknowns. Can I return to church? What about my children in school? Dare I get on an airplane? What will it be like to return to the office? Let me encourage you to remember that "the LORD is our keeper," as Psalm 121 declares, and that God guards our "going out and coming in forever." I think I will hang a cross near my back door, the one I use most frequently, to help remind me of God's love through Jesus and what Jesus said. "Go forth into the world and make disciples; and I will be with you" (Matthew 28:19–20).

Many Blessings,
Rev. Mary Beth Lawrence
Associate Pastor

MISSION OPPORTUNITIES!



LACE UP YOUR RUNNING SHOES!

MOCO INTERFAITH 5K WALK AND RUN

Monday, September 6
Germantown Soccerplex

Register and join our team –
Gaithersburg Presbyterian Church Striders
(runsignup.com/Race/MD/Boys/MoCoInterfaith5K)
Registration fees: \$25–\$35/participant
Proceeds will benefit Gaithersburg HELP.

Not a runner? You can walk with Pastor Mary.
You can also support the race financially
or just show up and cheer.

Post-race gathering/brunch at
David & Ginny Allsopp's home.

Questions? Contact Sandy
Menziez (*call the church office*).



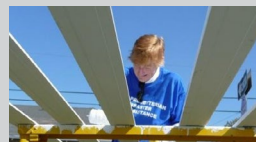
FOOD BOXES

Volunteers are needed to pack food
boxes at Epworth UMC on Sunday
afternoons throughout the fall.

For more information,
contact Mary Beth Lawrence.



OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE



FALL PDA TRIP

NEW BERN, NC
October 17–23, 2021

Information Meeting:
September 19,
after 11:00 service



For information about
RTMC REBUILDING DAY
(September 11–12),
see page 8.



YOUTH & COLLEGE FALL HAPPENINGS

FALL RHYTHM

New Youth Ministry Rhythms

This upcoming school year, our Youth Ministry will have a new rhythm for our Sunday morning gathering. On the first Sunday of each month, youth will remain in the 11:00 a.m. worship service. They will have the option to sit together in the “youth section” of the Sanctuary or may sit with their families. On the remaining Sundays of the month, youth will join their families for the 11:00 a.m. worship time and will leave worship to go to the youth room for age level small group discussion. This new Sunday rhythm will allow new families to be included in our Sunday morning youth gathering, youth and congregation members to have a time of interaction, youth to serve as worship leaders during the service, and youth to participate in communion and worship each month.

What We're Teaching

This year our entire church family will be in one accord with what we're teaching across the board. The church will take on the **Follow Me** curriculum, which is based on practices that Jesus observed and taught us to emulate as his faithful followers. This year we will focus on living out our faith in new and exciting ways. Themes for the fall will be following Jesus, welcoming all, and confession.



Mid-Week Youth Gathering

IN PERSON: Beginning September 15, Wednesday Night Youth Group will gather from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. All middle school and high school youth are welcome. Dinner will not be provided, so please eat before you come to church.

ONLINE: Bible Study for high school youth will be offered on Thursday nights at 7:00 p.m. For details, contact Carrie.

Mid-Week College Gathering

For our college students near and far, we will return to having Bible Study gatherings on Tuesday nights at 8:00 p.m. via Zoom. For more information and the Zoom link, contact Carrie.



Fall Confirmation Class

If you're in 8th Grade or above and are interested in being confirmed at GPC, contact Carrie for registration and class details.

Calendar of Events

Please see youth newsletter emails for a more detailed list of the monthly fall events for youth and college students.

—Carrie Larsen
Director of Youth and Young Adults

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!

HIGH SCHOOL

Rebecca Baxter – Wheaton HS
Paul Beltran, Jr. – Quince Orchard HS
Kaylee Dobbins – Gaithersburg HS
Gedeliah “Junior” Etone – Gaithersburg HS
Sarah Lehrman – Poolesville HS
Ashley Sandhu – St. John’s Catholic Prep HS
Aidan Shields – Rockville HS



COLLEGE

Alicia Gordon – University of Maryland, College Park – B.A. in Spanish and Pre-Dentistry Track in the Honors College Integrated Life Sciences Program
Carvel Graves – Frostburg State University – B.S. in Criminal Justice & B.S. in Political Science
Erin McClelland – Stony Brook University (SUNY Stony Brook) – B.S. in Psychology
Chris Parrish – Virginia Tech – B.S. in Civil Engineering

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Kodjo Kumi – Columbia University School of Law
Ninna Nana – Campbell University – Master of Physician Assistant Practice degree
Alvine Pouemi – Chamberlain University – Master of Science in Nursing, Family Nurse Practitioner specialty

IN SEARCH OF . . . BEST WAYS TO STAY IN TOUCH!



What are your favorite ways to get church information? Are we missing the communication needs of your lifestyle? Please help GPC stay in better touch with you by taking a short Communications Survey.

Here’s a sneak peak of what’s included in the survey: Do our current types of communication (print, website, social media, Mainstream newsletter, postal mail, etc.) effectively meet your needs? Weigh in on what you would like more of and what you think needs to be improved.

We want to hear from all age groups. The survey will also be distributed to Sunday School and Youth Group members, through an eblast, and available in paper form in the Gathering Space. We need and greatly appreciate everyone’s participation. Take the survey online at forms.gle/uvtTPV8Zap6h8AAB9.

INTRODUCING

A NEW CURRICULUM FOR YOUR WHOLE CHURCH



We are starting back this fall with a curriculum for the whole church—from elementary age kids up through the Sunday sermon. As the logo indicates, the theme is “Biblical Practices for Faithful Living.” We will offer adult studies, which can be done individually or as part of a small group, that will mirror the sermon as well as what the children cover each Sunday.

We begin in September with **Follow Jesus**. “When Jesus says, ‘Follow me,’ we are being invited into God’s reality of reconciling love. When we choose to follow Jesus, to become a disciple, we are choosing to be taught and formed into someone who is Christlike. Jesus shows us what we are choosing: restored Fellowship with God and one another.” —*Michelle Bartel*

The next piece is called **Welcome All** and, as you can probably discern, it is about hospitality. “At the very heart of hospitality is a commitment to welcome one another, those who are like us and those who are not. The God we learn about in the Bible and from our faith ancestors desires a loving relationship with us. This responsibility goes both ways . . .” —*Lynne Baab*

The last section of this quarter is **Confess**. “Human beings were created to live in right relationship with God and with one another. The problem of course is that these relationships are deeply broken . . . The appropriate response is to confess our sin, to repent and to repair.” —*Cynthia M. Campbell*

MUSIC NOTES

We will kick off the fall season with the return of ensembles, groups, and masked congregational singing throughout the worship services on September 5. The Canterbury Ringers, Chancel Choir, Praise Band, and other musical groups will be resuming their rehearsals the week of September 12! As of this writing, some details regarding rehearsal times and children’s groups still need to be finalized, but plans are indeed in the works. Listen for announcements in the worship services and keep an eye out for updates in GPC emails—specifics will be coming soon.

We’re looking at an eventful fall and winter at GPC this year! If you haven’t already done so, like the GPC Facebook page and sign up for emails to be sure that you won’t miss a beat!

Wade Meyers
Director of Music and Worship Arts

EQUIPPING DISCIPLES



“The long and winding road” does indeed lead us back . . . and thank you, Sir Paul.

Here we are, back. What does that mean to you? I hope that you are rejoicing; I know that we on staff are. It has been a long, winding road, with many sharper turns than the one pictured above and several abrupt drop-offs.

Whether you race back in, or just stick a toe in and begin to wade slowly, you are not only welcome but welcome to proceed at your own pace, your own level of comfort. We will try to accommodate

as many options and configurations for classes as we can, as quickly as we figure out the technology. It will be a process and I think that we should all probably expect a few epic fails, but as long as we remember to learn from our mistakes and keep moving forward we'll be fine. We are, after all, in the business of forgiving, even when that means ourselves.

The following classes/Small Groups will be offered this fall; specific details will be included in future daily emails.

For Adults

- The Present Word
- The Bible as a Whole
- Christian Classics
- Steve's Sunday Small Group
- Monday Evening Small Group/Bible Study
- Tuesday Evening Small Group/Bible Study
- Wednesday Evening Small Group/Bible Study

NEW BOOK STUDY THIS FALL! *Half Time: Moving from Success to Significance*

by Bob Buford (to be led by Steve Barney and Norm Gordon). Details coming soon.

For Children (Beginning September 12)

9:30 and 11:00 a.m. – Children of all ages will begin in the Sanctuary. On the first Sunday of each month, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, as well as on weekends that include a school holiday, children will stay through the entire service. On the other weekends, they will be dismissed from the service prior to the sermon to attend Sunday School.

For your children's safety, we request that parents come to their classrooms to sign them out.

Older elementary age children who choose to remain in the service will be offered an extensive Children's Bulletin.



Children younger than 4 years old are welcome to enjoy the “Prayground,” a small space with quiet toys in the Sanctuary where their parents can sit with them.

Nursery – For our very youngest children, the Nursery will be open from 9:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.

Carolyn Hayes

Director of Children and Young Families



MINISTRY UPDATES



VERY IMPORTANT PRESBYTERIAN SENIORS {VIPS}

In the past several months, many VIPS have enjoyed fellowship through Backyard Gatherings, Picnics in the Park, and an Independence Day Celebration. On **Thursday, September 2**, they will again meet for a picnic at South Germantown Park. Details to come. Future programs for the rest of the year have been planned as well. Questions? Contact Nancy Sanders (*call the church office*).



PRISON MINISTRY

We're thinking ahead to Christmastime and would like to provide stamped Christmas cards for inmates to send to their loved ones. To donate cards and/or stamps, contact Mary Wasik (*call the church office*).



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

This group is planning to start meeting again in Lindsay Hall, beginning on **Saturday, September 4, at 8:00 a.m.** Questions? Contact Ted Farrand (*call the church office*).



THE GOOD GRIEF GROUP

GPC's bereavement support group will resume its monthly meetings on **Saturday, September 4, at 10:00 a.m.** in Room 202. During this long period, a number of GPC members have lost loved ones. If you have not already been receiving emails from the group, please contact John Slavcoff (*call the church office*).



CRAFT GROUP

The members of this group have been very busy. Many prayer shawls and prayer squares have been provided to Holy Cross Germantown Hospital. They will begin meeting again on **Sunday, September 12, from 12:15 to 2:15 p.m.** in Rooms 30–31. Bring your lunch and a project or pick one from the closet. Help is needed making dignity bibs from donated men's and women's shirts. Questions? Contact Barbara Clark (*call the church office*).



2ND FRIDAY BOOK CLUB

This group has been meeting via Zoom since last year, but will be deciding whether to continue meeting online or start meeting in person this fall. For more information about the group, contact Cindy Cenname (*call the church office*).



KIND WORKS

KindWorks will continue the at-home projects of KindCasseroles (for the Hillside Senior Apartments in Gaithersburg) and KindSoups (for various community agencies) in the fall. Questions? Contact Denise Schleckser (*call the church office*).



CUB SCOUTS

Cub Scout Pack 64 has been very busy, and this past June they met for an awards ceremony. The Pack collected food items for Manna from November 2020 through August 2021 at GPC's monthly drive-in communion opportunities. Food donations can now be put in the bin in the Gathering Place. The Pack's first meeting this fall will be on **Tuesday, September 7, at 7:00 p.m.** Questions? Contact Barbara Clark (*call the church office*).



RTMC REBUILDING DAY – SEPTEMBER 11 & 12, 2021



For the past 30 years, Rebuilding Together Montgomery County (RTMC) has worked to provide free critical home repairs, energy efficiency upgrades, and accessibility modifications for Montgomery County's most vulnerable residents—seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities, and families with children, all living in low-income households. GPC can serve our neighbors in Central Montgomery County by partnering with RTMC in their "neighbors helping neighbors" program to ensure safe and healthful housing for all.

We can help to eliminate health and safety hazards and support our neighbors in need so they may continue to live safely and independently in their homes.

Join the GPC team of volunteers to provide critical home repairs. Due to COVID-19, efforts will be spread over the weekend to enable rotating pods of five people at a time at the jobsite. To participate, contact Yaw Obeng or Jerry Brown (*call the church office*).

FAITH DURING THE PANDEMIC

'If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.'

—Matthew 17:20

It was very stressful to be studying for the bar exam while pregnant and working full time during the pandemic. I was ready to give up at one point. In fact, I did give up. There was only a month until the exam and I was not even halfway through the study materials. Working full time and being sick from the pregnancy, I felt discouraged. I also worked part time for a law firm in Baltimore. One day, I reached out to my supervisor at the law firm and told her that I had decided not to take the bar exam in October. She asked me why and I told her that I was feeling overwhelmed, was constantly sick from the pregnancy, and had not covered half of the study materials. Before reaching out to her, I had already emailed the admissions committee that I was withdrawing my registration. She told me that I could make it and should not give up. I reflected on what she said and also prayed to God, asking for direction. The truth is, I was very confused. However, I told myself that God would direct me by showing me a sign.

On the last day that we were allowed to withdraw from taking the exam, I told my husband that I was going to go ahead and take it. I told him I believed that God would give me the strength to study for the exam. I sent another email to the admissions committee cancelling my withdrawal request. Thankfully, my original request had not been accepted or processed yet. That, I believed, was a sign that God wanted me to sit for the exam. Truth be told, I was anxious because there was so much material to be covered before the exam day. I had less than a month left. I called the bar prep director to ask for guidance on how to catch up. He gave me some suggestions, which I followed. I kept telling myself that I could do this. Suddenly, I had more strength than I'd ever had before. Due to my pregnancy, I'd had some challenges while studying for the bar. I had morning sickness, was often weak, and went in and out of the emergency room a few times.

On the day of the exam, I prayed to God and asked him to help me so that I would not feel sick or need to use the bathroom during the exam. I told Him that if either of these happened, I would not be allowed to continue the exam. He knew my struggles and how far I had come. When you have faith in God, things work out accordingly. I successfully took the 2-day exam without feeling sick or needing to use the bathroom. On the first day, I got sick at the end of the exam. "God answers prayers," I said to myself.

After the exam, I was nervous and, like most people who take the bar exam, was not sure how I did. I was not confident that I would make it. God has a way of blessing us when we least expect it, though. I'm happy to say that I passed the October 2020 bar exam. Although I had faith in God, I put in a lot of work too. We cannot rely on faith alone. We must do the work and trust that God will bless our efforts in His time.

—Claudine Paxton

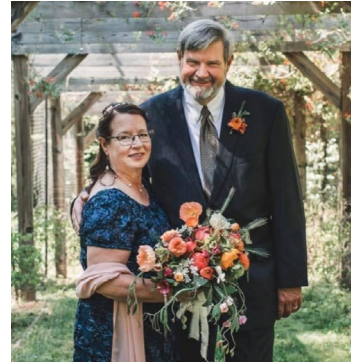


WEDDING PLANNING DURING QUARANTINE

We often hear *faith* referred to as a journey, a challenging series of steps taking us closer to what we hope that our faith will look like eventually. Faith can be something that changes over time, not always moving forward but sometimes going backwards or even sideways. It's a tricky little thing, as one of my own children once said.

We can have faith in many things: God, other people, ourselves, even the laws of nature. Some things in life grow our faith and others test it.

When we became engaged in November 2019, we decided to enjoy the process of planning our wedding and being engaged and not rush, so we picked the wedding date of May 15, 2021, just about a year and a half away. COVID was an unknown word at that time; little did we know the twists and turns it would take to get us to that date! We took a risk and flew to Belfast to visit friends, and arrived back in the US on March 11, just as airports and everything else were shutting down. No wedding plans had yet been made but quarantine seemed like a good time to start!



As we quarantined together and began to make plans, contact vendors, and imagine the wedding day, we began to realize that we were going to have to have faith that things would come together in the end. We certainly never thought that COVID would still be a big issue in May 2021. We had to move forward with faith that in the end everything would work out in the best way possible for us. As the pandemic worsened, it became clear that our guest list was going to have to be flexible, as we had no idea how many people would be allowed to attend by the time of the wedding. We were fortunate to be able to have the wedding outdoors at the home of Dr. Robert Mecklenburg, David's father. Would it be only 10 people—our own kids, us, Mary Beth, and David's dad? Changing our date was never something we thought of doing. That took faith!



We decided to stick with 50 guests, including ourselves and Mary Beth, and hope that family from out of town could be there and that COVID restrictions by then would allow that many people to be together outdoors.

In the end, our faith in God providing the best outcome was rewarded. A vaccine was developed and everyone was able to receive it, family members from around the country were willing and able to fly here, the local restrictions allowed for 50 people, the cicadas took their time and hadn't arrived yet, and the weather that day was as beautiful as a May day can be.

—Carol Anderson and David Mecklenburg

HAVING FAITH IN SPITE OF COVID-19

If you had told me at the start of the pandemic that my relationship with my husband would get stronger, that our finances would get better even as our income went down, and that we would be involved in getting an internet church going, I would have said that you were "crazy," and yet that is what has happened. My relationship with and faith in God has gotten deeper. I have a new job that I love. Through Facetime I have developed a deeper relationship with my sister-in-law, and Zoom gave my family opportunities to reconnect. Because of the extra time that I have gotten to spend with my husband, we both realize that time is precious and we should not take it for granted. Although I would not have asked for the circumstances of the past 17 months, it is amazing to see what God has done in our lives.

—Mary Kempf

FAITH DURING A MILESTONE



Our story is a special one. There are many ways we can describe our story but, all in all, we can say that God is faithful and He was on our side. After four years of dating, Omega and I decided to settle down together. It was the best time, as both of our families were in full support of our decision. We started our wedding planning in 2019 and it was all we ever talked about. Our initial date for the wedding was September 2020.

In January 2020, we started hearing rumors that there was a pandemic in China and it was spreading like wildfire. When the reports started reaching the US, we were still relaxed and hopeful that it would pass, just like all things do. To our surprise, things started getting worse in the US, but we remained hopeful that in September we would wed in our beloved home country of Malawi. One evening Omega called me from work informing me that a case had been identified in Montgomery County. She sounded very anxious and I told her, “We are going to Malawi, my love, no doubt.”

Things escalated when the US imposed the travel restrictions, and we both knew that we would not be going home that September. Whenever our friends and family members in the US called us, they said, “Be hopeful – everything will be OK.” To tell the truth, we had lost all hope, as we knew that all the planning was in vain now. Omega always wanted to know what the COVID-19 numbers were in both the US and Malawi. At one point we hoped just to have our wedding here in the US, but we knew that our extended families would miss out a lot, as we could not invite everybody at the same time.

In August 2020, COVID-19 cases rose at an alarming rate globally, and Malawi was no exception. Restrictions were imposed—facial covering was required at all indoor and outdoor gatherings, and gatherings were limited to no more than 10 people. Due to the restrictions and the worsening COVID cases, our family members back in Malawi advised us to consider rescheduling our wedding to a later date, after COVID cases had subsided. During the Zoom call, Omega faithfully said, “On May 8 of next year we will have the wedding in Malawi.” I was surprised at the way she said the date; this was something we had discussed before but I never took it seriously. After the call I asked her about it and she said, “I have been praying about it and come April next year I will be in Malawi.” I supported her decision, though I remained skeptical about how everything would happen. After weeks of doubting, I started to give in and helped with the wedding planning.

By December 2020, Omega and her sister in Malawi were fasting every Friday and she remained vigilant in prayer, joking with me all the time saying, “I hope you are ready to dance.” It hasn’t been an easy road, because prior to our trip we lost some family members and friends due to COVID. Everybody in Malawi was still positive that we should go, despite the difficult times our families were going through, since a wedding would lift everybody’s spirits.

In April 2021, we departed for Malawi. The wedding restrictions regarding the number of attendees allowed had been eased from 50 people to 300 people and we saw God as He was at work. That was a big miracle for us. On May 8 we had our perfect wedding and it was marvelous. Thank God!

We would also like to thank Pastor Mary Beth Lawrence, Pastor Mary Austin, and our fellow GPC members, who stood with us and always reminded us that we were in their prayers. We would also love to extend a special thank you to our GPC family for this opportunity to share our story. *Zikomo Kwambiri.*

—Edge Kaunda and Omega Namwali



FAITH DURING TRANSITION



During my life I have gone through things that tested my faith and resolve. For starters, I moved from my home country of Cameroon, away from everyone I ever knew and into a new country with its own set of problems. Initially, it was challenging and lonely at times, because I didn't know anyone in this new land.

One thing that kept me going was the story of Joseph. A few months after coming to the US, I became obsessed with watching the movie "Prince of Egypt," which details the story of Joseph. I was inspired by his devotion and loyalty to God, because getting betrayed by your brothers and sold into slavery would make a lot of people give up and lose their faith but not Joseph. He kept his head high and kept praying, and God rewarded him with the ability to interpret dreams, which, in turn, led to his rise in power.

Although I wasn't betrayed or sold into slavery by anyone, I did relate to Joseph in some aspects of his life, such as moving away from his home and being alone for long periods of time. The movie/story helped me bear the initial challenges of moving to this country. Praying and reading religious texts helped me get by on a daily basis, and now I'm set to do it again, although this time I'm more mature and can draw from different life experiences for guidance.

My time in college will be the first time to be truly on my own and it will provide me with a taste of what awaits me in the real world. It's going to be tough and difficult, but I won't let that discourage me, because nothing worth having comes easily. And just as Joseph did, I will devote my life to God for him to guide me through these next four years, and I will hold my head high whenever I'm faced with any challenges.

—Gedeliah "Junior" Etone

SAVE THE DATE



Consecration Sunday

October 24, 2021

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MY FAMILY'S FAITH DURING AN UNCERTAIN TIME

The first leg of my life's journey—from 1975 to 1980, during my formative years—set into motion events that led me to where I am today. But this isn't only *my* story; it is a story of *my family's* beginnings here in the US and about how God provided for us every step of the way.

My family includes my father, Isidro Managbanag (Sid); my mother, Alicia (Alice); and my siblings: Jim Ray, Cherry, Naomi, and Arthur. I am the second child and oldest daughter. We are from Butuan City in the Southern Island of Mindanao in the Philippines.

We were named after missionaries who worked with the Free Methodist Church of the Philippines, the church in which I grew up. My parents had established close relationships with them, as my mother, who was ordained in the church, taught at the Bible college and was highly involved in the work of the church.

My father, whom we jokingly called a “Jack of all trades and master of none,” has a background in mechanical plant engineering and is very talented with his hands. When I was growing up, he owned a car repair shop but was also an electrician, plumber, carpenter, HVAC person, and maintained plants and machinery for businesses in town. I thought that he could fix, repair, or build anything! My father became the go-to person—reliable, trustworthy, and a man of integrity—to everyone in our community.

At one point, under the auspices of the church, a plan was devised to establish a working relationship with a US manufacturing company in order to provide jobs locally. My father was chosen to head this work and was sent to Titusville, Pennsylvania, for training at their facility in 1975. He stayed 9 months. In addition to his training, he traveled all over the country, visiting friends and former missionaries in California, Illinois, New York, and other states. This set the stage for his dream to return to the US.

Unfortunately, due to forces beyond the control of everyone in the project, the plan was later scrapped. This did not diminish my father's wish to emigrate to the US, however, since he did not foresee a good future for his children, due to the economic and political situation in the Philippines.

He was determined to find work elsewhere, so when he was recruited to go to Saudi Arabia, he went to Manila for an interview. The Sunday before the interview, he attended church there, and after the service was invited to lunch by the missionary pastor. During their conversation, my father said that he had plans to go to Saudi Arabia. The pastor asked, “Why do you want to go there? It's hot. You're not going to survive there.” (Or something to that dramatic effect.)

My father shared that he would rather go to the US but didn't know how to make it happen. The pastor told him not to go to the interview but, instead, to write to his brother-in-law, who owned a trucking company in Iowa. He also said that he would call his brother-in-law and give him a good recommendation.

Sure enough, the following week, back in Butuan City, my father received a call from the missionary pastor, who gave him the good news that he was being offered a job as a mechanic at the company and that he would be sponsored!

In addition, my father's soon-to-be employer insisted that the whole family come with him. That was truly amazing and practically unheard of! It was and still is, I think, unusual for a whole family to be sponsored. Typically, an employee goes ahead and then, after years of going through the process of becoming a citizen, petitions for the rest of the family members to come (if they are still under a certain age). With seven of us, you can imagine that there were many ways that we could have been separated, but none of that happened. We landed on US soil together!

Immigration is a process that can take months and years. We heard that ours could take 3–7 years because there were seven of us. While we were waiting, we prayed every night, or nearly every night, during our family devotions about other concerns, but we definitely prayed for “the plan.”

Our parents did not want us to talk about it publicly, so that became our code word/phrase. Almost every night we prayed for “the plan,” with our father giving us an update whenever he heard any news.

Then one day my father told us that we needed to take a trip to Manila for an interview at the embassy



because we would be going to the US. You can imagine the scene—kids and adults jumping up and down in excitement and disbelief, with images of Disneyland and Hollywood in our heads.

It took only 2½ years from the time my father started the process of immigration until the time of our departure. Everyone was amazed at how quickly things moved. It also taught me about the importance of persistence in our prayers. I can't begin to understand why our prayers were answered compared to other people's persistent prayers, but I'm grateful and thankful.

We left the Philippines in December 1980 and flew from Manila to Hawaii to San Francisco to Chicago, where we were met by a company man who drove us to Sioux City, Iowa—our new home.

We left Manila with only our suitcases and winter jackets, which we later realized were just windbreakers. When we arrived in Sioux City, we were taken to a 3-bedroom rental house that had been furnished with beds, linens, pots, and pans—the basics of what we needed—and I remember a huge box of thick and heavy coats of all sizes, scarves, hats, gloves, and mittens. Unbeknownst to us, my father's employer had contacted the local church and told them of our upcoming arrival. The pastor and church members sprang into action, gathered things, and prepared a home for us. The kindness and generosity of those dear people at that church demonstrated to us the vastness of God's love beyond what we could have imagined, and showed us that we were, indeed, welcome in this new land.



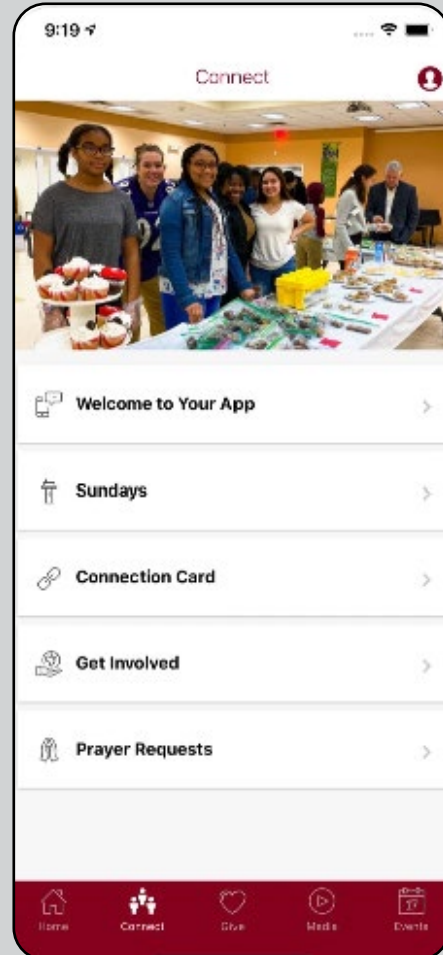
My family 3–4 years after we arrived in the US.

I hope that my story reminds you, as it reminds me, that God is faithful. He has a plan for us even when we can't see it, and he uses individuals and groups of people to do his work so that others can be blessed.

—**Elsie Managbanag Gordon**

This article has been condensed and lightly edited from the version shared during the worship services on July 18, 2021.

DOWNLOAD OUR APP!



GPC's new mobile app features Online Giving, Worship and Sunday School Videos, Weekly Bulletins, Devotions, Serving Opportunities, Ways to Connect, the Mainstream, and an Event Calendar so that you can save reminders right to your phone. Users can choose the notifications they want to receive.

Text "gpchurch app" to 77977 or visit the homepage of the website and click the "Download Our App" button.

For additional step-by-step directions to download the app, visit the YouTube page. Questions? Contact GPC's Communications Manager at jobermiller@gpchurch.org.



CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY

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

Cynthia Cary
of Germantown, MD
May 10, 2021

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

Sandy Newcomb
(her aunt, Nell Mitchell,
in Wilson, NC)
May 11, 2021

Amy Smith
(GPP&K Director)
(her mother, Irene Sturges,
in Staten Island, NY)
May 19, 2021

Keith Rush
(his brother, Wayne Rush,
in Rome, GA)
May 24, 2021

**Comfort and
Margaret Ofori**
(Comfort's husband
and Margaret's father,
Alexander Ofori,
in Ghana)
June 2021

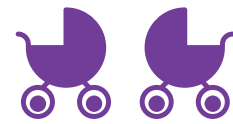
Michael Pratt
(his brother-in-law,
Dr. John Williams,
in San Carlos, CA)
July 5, 2021

Roisin O'Hare
(her uncle,
Jimmy Kelly,
in Dundalk, Ireland)
August 8, 2021



WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

Rachel Simko and James Breheny were married on Sunday, June 20, in Riverhead, New York. Rachel is a child of GPC and, as members may remember from her articles in the Mainstream, she lived in Ecuador for 5 years, working as an artist, teacher, and missionary. She is currently an art teacher and the National Department Head for Visual Arts at Fusion Academy Tysons. James is General Counsel for Route 66 Ventures in Alexandria, Virginia. They live in Arlington.



WELCOME TO THE WORLD!

Congratulations to:

Kay Penn,
the proud great-grandmother;
Mike and Vivian Penn,
the proud grandparents;
and
Nicole (Colee) Penn Pope and Kevin Pope,
the proud parents
of

ADELINE KATHERINE POPE

born on March 15, 2021

Michael and Claudine Paxton,
the proud parents
of

DAWSON MANNA PAXTON

born on April 14, 2021

Emmanuel Mbaiti and Valerie Yang,
the proud parents,
and
Heaven, the big sister
of

HAIDEN VANUEL YANG

born on May 13, 2021

Mark & Laura Wilson,
the proud grandparents,
and
Nick and Katrina Wilson,
the proud parents
of

ARLO THOMAS WILSON

born on July 16, 2021



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

The following people joined GPC in June:

JungJoon Ahn
Crystal Blyler
Bridget Foncham
Rebecca Fuh
Eric & Martha Garcia
Anne Mbugua
Sharon Mbugua

DIRECTORY CHANGES

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

Mary Ambrosia
Kodjovi "Joseph" & Aminata Amewu
Carol Anderson
Emmanuel & Miriam Enokpa
Fiona Holland
Valerie McIlrath
Angela Nthenda
Ami Nyakpor
Alexandra Parrish
Arfan & Ulfat Masih Sandhu
Brad & Rachel Sumrow
Pacome Tchatchoua Tchatchoua
Al & Betty Vargo



NOTE OF THANKS

Dear GPC Friends,
I am so thankful to you for supporting me through my time of hip and back issues. Your cards and calls have lifted me up, and the delicious soup and other food have sustained me. Also, the rides to appointments have helped so very much! And the VIPS porch ministry bags of muffins and goodies were such a treat! Someone even charged my car battery! Thank you, my GPC Family!

Love,
—Patsy Cummings

FINANCIAL SUMMARY REPORT

———— July 2021 ————

	2021 YTD	% OF BUDGET
INCOME		
Envelope Pledged	\$480,527	63%
Envelope Unpledged	\$123,198	82%
Loose Offering	\$11,187	31%
GPP&K Rent	\$0	0%
Other Income	\$2,603	104%
Room Rent	\$0	0%
Interest & Dividends	\$39	20%
FourthNight	\$0	0%
Manse Rental	\$0	0%
Carryover	\$0	0%

Total \$617,55361%

EXPENSE

NCP Membership	\$21,058	75%
Human Resources	\$315,774	57%
Buildings & Grounds	\$111,554	56%
Office Operations	\$20,475	58%
Communications	\$19,978	50%
Stewardship	\$1,323	19%
Comm Engagement	\$56,547	56%
Eq Disciples	\$7,133	31%
Vital Worship	\$6,666	33%
Congregational Life	\$233	3%
Session	\$500	0%

Total \$561,24155%

NET \$56,313

To request a complete financial summary,
email 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

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BACK TO CLASS AND BACK TO GPC!



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