

The Epistle

The Newsletter of the United
Presbyterian Church of Cedar Grove, NJ

“No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.” (Matt. 5:15)



Celebrating October 31st

BY REV. TODD SHUMPERT

As many of you know, I am seriously looking forward to Halloween! I enjoy the creative outlet the day offers, making sure my whole family and our home are into each year's theme (the theme this year is Disney's Rapunzel story, Tangled). This year, October 31 falls on a Sunday, so I'm trying to figure out whether I'll be leading our virtual worship service in costume.

However, while much of the culture will be focused on candy and things that go bump in the night on October 31, we protestants will have something else to celebrate: Reformation Day, the day commemorating what was perhaps the greatest move of God's Spirit since the days of the Apostles.

On October 31, 1517, few would have suspected that the sound of a hammer striking the castle church door in Wittenberg, Germany, would soon be heard around the world and lead ultimately to the greatest transformation of Western society since the apostles first preached the Gospel throughout the Roman empire. Martin Luther's nailing of his ninety-five theses to the church door that day provoked a debate that culminated finally in what we now call the Protestant Reformation.

A theological heir of Bishop Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther is one of the most significant figures of church history. This law student turned Augustinian monk became the center of a great controversy after his theses were copied and distributed throughout Europe. Initially protesting the pope's attempt to sell salvation, Luther's study of Scripture soon led him to oppose the church of Rome on issues including the primacy of the Bible over church tradition and the means by which we are found righteous in the sight of God.

This last issue is probably Luther's most significant contribution to Christian theology. Though preached clearly in the New Testament and found in the writings of many of the church fathers, the medieval bishops and priests had largely forgotten the truth that our own good works can by no means merit God's favor. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, and good works result from our faith, they are not added to it as the grounds for our right standing in the Lord's eyes (Eph. 2:8-10). Justification – God's declaration that we are not guilty, forgiven of sin, and righteous in His sight – comes because, through our faith alone, the Father imputes the perfect righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

Martin Luther's rediscovery of this truth led to a whole host of other church and societal reforms, and much of what we take for granted in the West would have likely been impossible had he never graced the scene. Luther's translation of the Bible into German put the Word of God in the hands of the people, and today Scripture is available in the vernacular language of many cultures and countries, enabling lay people to study it directly, without the need of a translator. He reformed the Latin mass by putting the liturgy in the common tongue so that non-scholars could hear and understand the preached word of God and worship the Lord with clarity. Luther lifted the unbiblical ban on marriage for the clergy, and by his own teaching and example radically transformed the institution itself. He recaptured the biblical view of the priesthood of all believers, showing all people that their work had purpose and dignity because in it they can serve their Creator.

Today, Luther's legacy lives on in the creeds and confessions of Protestant bodies worldwide, including the Presbyterian Church. Presbyterianism, in a wide sense, is the system of church government by representative assemblies called presbyteries, a style of church government that found a middle way between “top-down” government by bishops (episcopal system), or “bottom-up” government by congregations (congregationalism). The name “presbyterian” basically means, “ruled by elders,” with congregations electing their leaders (Elders) from the congregation, those elders calling pastoral leadership from outside of the congregation.

In a stricter sense, “Presbyterianism” is the name given to the ecclesiastical body that represent the features of Protestantism emphasized by French lawyer John Calvin (1509-1564), whose writings crystallized much of the Reformed thinking that came before him. The most important standards of orthodox Presbyterianism are the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms of 1647. The chief distinctive features set forth in the Westminster declarations of belief are the Presbyterian (elected/called elders) form of church government, Calvinistic theology, and the absence of prescribed forms of worship.

Presbyterians were among the earliest Reformed immigrants to America. They settled up and down the East Coast, and began to push westward into the American wilderness, founding congregations as early as the 1630s. Presbyterian Pastor, Rev. Dr. John Witherspoon of New Jersey, was the only clergyman to attend the Continental Congress and to sign the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

As we enjoy the festivals and traditions of the Fall time of year, let us also celebrate the importance of Reformation Day, and the Reformers that came forth to lead us into deeper, more personal, and more immediate experiences of biblical truth for the living of our days. May we be eager to share the Gospel of God with the world and perhaps spark a new reformation of church and culture. ■



Moving Forward: Reopening

As you know, Session decided that we will push our reopening date until more people are comfortable with worshipping in person. As we discuss our reopening plan after COVID-19, we wish to get the feedback and feelings of the most important people – our congregation! We are incredibly thankful, grateful and blessed that you have joined us during virtual worship services and continue to be amazed how we have been able to keep in contact with those near and far. It is incredible what technology can do! We have a few questions we would like you to help answer so we can get an idea of how everyone feels on reopening either at this time or in the future. We value your feedback!

A few things to keep in mind while taking this survey:

- We continue to maintain high cleaning standards and use a special disinfectant that is certified safe to use in schools but highly effective in killing germs.
- In addition to our sexton's routine, additional cleaning of all surfaces, pews, highly touched areas, bathrooms, kitchen, offices, etc. will be maintained.
- The daycare has their own very strict cleaning practices-they have had very safe and healthy facilities since being opened throughout the pandemic.
- We will be using the restroom in the Pastor's Office, if needed, so as not to enter the daycare wing of the building to keep everyone safe. The restroom will receive increased cleaning.
- Very few people from the daycare come into our area. When they do, areas are always cleaned immediately, such as the kitchen.
- We are planning on continuing a form of virtual worship even when we reopen so that we can stay in contact with those who may not be able to join us! Details will be sent once we decide on a platform for this.

Please click this link (or visit this website) to take the survey for us:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/26PKRH2>

Thank you for your feedback!

UPCCG and the Community

Being a part of a church means not only worshipping together but also giving back to the community. We are here to help others. Over time, we have not been able to do as much as we would like in being an active part in our town... but we can change that. It could mean hosting events like an Easter egg hunt, light exhibit, or fair – an interactive event that reminds our community that we are here for them and still going strong. We would love your support and ideas! Did you have a favorite fundraiser, community event or just UPCCG sponsored activity that you loved and want to see brought back? We want to make it a reality and get more people coming back. We have new housing in town, and it is a great way to show the new neighbors that we are here to stay. So please help us give back and welcome some newcomers to our wonderful family.

Human Needs Food Pantry

For the first time since the pandemic began over 18 months ago, the Human Needs Food Pantry (HNFP) has re-opened their “Upstairs” area where they keep small household items and clothing. If you have fall or winter clothing that is in excellent condition but wish to give away, they are in need of that. The pandemic is not over yet and it hit many in our community hard. We continue to have our HNFP donation box in the Church Narthex available for drop-offs, or you can drop them off directly at the food pantry in Montclair. They are especially in need of adult clothing in size XL (fall and winter only) and new warm socks as the weather turns. Below is also a list of items they are always able to use:

- Canned goods and non-perishable food items (no glass jars please)
- Baby formula, diapers, and wipes
- Fresh produce and baked goods (only if it can be delivered ASAP)
- Feminine products
- Soap, napkins, cleaners, personal hygiene goods
- Toilet paper
- Facial tissues
- Sanitizers
- New undergarments in all sizes for men, women, and children
- Dog and cat food (wet or dry) and litter
- Tall paper grocery bags with handles

They also have a wish list on Amazon that is updated regularly with their most needed items and it can be sent directly to them at any time. [You can find the list by clicking here.](#)

New Roof

After many years of deterioration, we are getting a new roof! On or about October 25th, the construction crew will be starting to remove the old and replace the roof and white fascia around the building. Countless storms, wind damage and water have taken their toll on our poor roof and after multiple patches, the insurance company agreed that the windstorm on March 1st, 2021 had severely damaged the shingles all over the building. The insurance company is covering a large majority of the replacement, so we are very grateful for that. We look forward to a little face lift and especially not worrying about leaks, more windstorms and the ice rink in front of the front doors that the leaking fascia has caused over the last few years. Make sure you check it out when you drive by later this month!

Celebrating 30 Years with Korporate Kids

BY JAMIE-LYNN ADAMS

October 2021 marks thirty years together with Korporate Kids (formerly Executive Kids) at this location). I can hardly believe it has been three decades since they opened. Since then, Joanne and her team have become a wonderful part of our community and our own home here at UPCCG. I was part of the first graduating class all those years ago, and now my son Brian loves being there as well! I

get to not only be a parent and experience what the kids learn and do but also work with Joanne, Jen and the other amazing staff with what they need. We could not do what we do without them and I know they feel the same about our partnership. We have hung a banner over our brick sign temporarily for the month of October as a small token of appreciation. Take a look as you drive by – or wait at the light on Fairview Ave. It says “Celebrating 30 Years of Learning” with both the Korporate Kids and UPCCG logo. We are also sponsoring a lunch for the staff and kids as a thank you for thirty years of togetherness on either Friday, October 8th or the 15th (details being worked out as I write this). I will be sending a special sweet treat as well. Wishing UPCCG and Korporate Kids a Happy 30th Anniversary and cheers to many more!



Fall Craft

You may remember last Thanksgiving when we did a virtual craft after church-Thankful Tom the Turkey! It was meant to be a fun gathering where we could share what we were thankful for especially during such an unusual year. It was a great turnout and I think we had fun! I would like to do another fun fall craft this Thanksgiving season. This year, we will do this in memory of all our past (and honor the present) helpers of our cornucopia setup we do on our alter for Thanksgiving Sunday. Since we can't be together to enjoy the beautiful work that the late Gladys Faison and Ruth Naef as well as our fellow Carolyn Davidson, Lois McNamara, Barbara Senney and countless others who have taken the time to put together over the years, why not honor them and make one ourselves to enjoy all season with our own families? The obvious way would be to get a cornucopia and fill it with fresh vegetables and fruit but unfortunately, not the most efficient to mail to you. So, keep an eye out in the mail for your craft kit – no fruit or veggies will be harmed in the mailing of these kits so it will likely be some sort of paper! If you would like to participate, we will be creating on Sunday, November 21st on Zoom, after our church service. Please let me (Jamie Lynn) know by Sunday, November 7th or as soon as possible so I can start creating the kits and make sure you have them in plenty of time. In case we need the glue stick we used last time and you do not have one or it dried up, please let me know and I can send another if necessary, for this project. Hope you will join us!

Advent Activities

Like our fall craft, we would like to do a Christmas one as well as some other Advent activities. Perhaps we can try a Bible Study or movie/book club surrounding the Christmas theme. Have another idea? Let us know! We will chat at our next Session meeting in a couple of weeks and make our decision and send further details out. Please let us know of your interest and we will make sure you are on the list!

Cedar Grove Library Program

Love reading? Go to the library! The Cedar Grove Library is open. Can't get out? They are looking to start a program for people who are housebound or have trouble getting out and would like to borrow some books. The details are still being ironed out but if you would like more info, please email marrin@palsplus.org who can answer any questions. Please pass this along to other township residents! The summer is a perfect time to read more and enjoy a great escape into a good book!

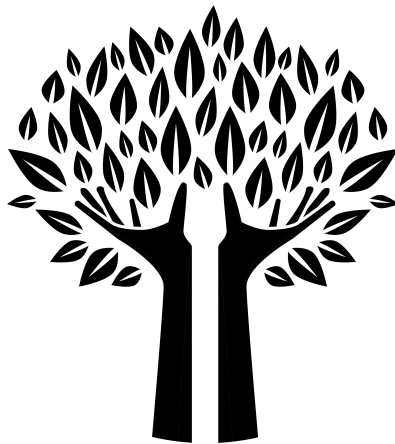
Gathering for Worship Online

Community and Communion on Zoom

Our Zoom gatherings allow folks to participate via desktop computer, laptop, smartphone with audio and video. A dial-in number is also available if you prefer to participate by telephone. [Register today!](#) You're also invited to follow the [United Presbyterian Church of Cedar Grove Facebook page](#).



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