

The Hilltop



February 2023

Upper Merion Baptist Church

Dear UMBC Family,

A happy and blessed 2023 everyone! New years are exciting but they're a little foreboding at times as there is a lot of uncertainty contained within those weeks and months ahead of us. We either feel like the proverbial student who is caught unaware with a pop quiz at the start of class or the diligent tradesperson who encounters a problem and automatically begins to reach towards his or her tools at hand to dive in and deal with the issue. Where do we find ourselves at the start of this year?

Of course, none of us are experts in everything, but you would think that after living a certain number of years upon this earth, we would eventually start feeling that we have some grasp of our situation! If only that were true, we would have a lot more content and happy people in this world than we do. In fact, it seems like for many, the anxiety only grows with each coming year, feeling like "a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind." (James 1:6)

Feelings and competency have some relationship with one another: the more we feel able to do something we have experience with, the more comfortable we feel in that situation. Exams train us in an academic situation to be able to perform in our area of study under the pressure and stress of an hour-or-so's deadline. However, put us in a situation we're not familiar with, we respond much differently. If a member of the congregation was asked to prepare a sermon for the coming Sunday with a week's notice, I believe that would cause greater distress in that individual than if I were to be asked to give a brief message on the spot while visiting a church for the first time (which has happened quite a few times over my years).

However, competency and experience are vastly more important than feeling in crisis situations. At the sound of piercing shriek, a lifeguard on duty may feel a sense of fear and dread, but their competency and experience kick in as they go save the life of the drowning person in the deep end of the pool. It's the difference between one who struts around wearing a red swimsuit like the stars of the old Baywatch TV show and another person trained and equipped to rescue people no matter what they're wearing.

In the Bible, there are two Greek words translated as "transform or change." The first, metaschematizo, is a compound verb comprised of meta, implying change, and schema, meaning "figure, appearance." It's used in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 regarding false apostles, Satan, and his followers "masquerading" or changing their outward appearance to fool others. An external transformation but no internal change. There is a positive use of this word used in Philippians 3:21 of Jesus "who will transform" our bodies into conformity with His. This focuses on the change in the body that is outward and will take the form of His glorified body as was seen at the Transfiguration.

Metamorphosis (metamorphoo in the Greek) is also a compound verb made up of meta (change) and morphe, meaning "form," having to do with the special or

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Pastor's Report continued

characteristic form or feature of a person or thing. We see this in the important verse, Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." In 2 Corinthians 3:18, "we all ... are being transformed into the same image ... as from the Lord, the Spirit." This transformation refers to an invisible process in Christians in which they undergo an unceasing and progressive internal spiritual change into the image of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

This inward change directly involves the notion and act of repentance (metanoia in Greek, meta, "change", and noein, "to think") describing a reorientation or change of mind, a fundamental transformation of outlook or perspective of ourselves and of the world. Repentance is a willful rejection and turning away from our sin/desires and a turning towards to our Lord, Jesus Christ. Not a confession simply because we got caught doing something wrong, but a full realization of who we are before a just and holy God. And it's only God who can make us right: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)

An inward change combined with a life of studying God's word, the renewing of our minds, and living in relational experience with our Creator-Father are what prepares us to handle the tumults and toils of our lives. Our life rests in Christ, the anchor that holds us secure. This inner transformation gives us the "depth of existence" that enables us to truly aid others around us and introduce them to the One-who-Saves. This is why it is so important for us to have competency in theology (literally "God thoughts" – I'm not merely referring to the stuff found in text books and seminaries, but knowing the mind of God through a lifetime of Bible study and the working out of our faith in our daily lives) because competency is more important than feeling. Our feelings can then be trained to help us respond in the proper caring, loving, and truthful way, and with that, we have the knowledge and experience to back it up.

Our theme for the first part of our year together, UMBC and EFC Philadelphia's English Ministry, is "Transformation," to have the inner strength to be able to face anything that comes our way in 2023. If anything is constant in this life (aside from God), it's change. I'd rather understand this "big Change" (we'll use a capital "C") within my own life with Jesus, to have that peace that comes only in Christ, and thus be prepared to tackle all the small-c changes ahead (not to say these changes are insignificant, there will be huge changes ahead for many, just that we see them for what they are in light of an Almighty God and eternity). When a problem arises, to what tools in my spiritual toolbox does my hand instinctively reach towards?

With this, we have the confidence and competence to truly wish one another a "Happy New Year." God's abundant blessings to you and to our church. Amen.

—Pastor Dan

Moderator & Stewards Report *by Art Munson*

The UMBC Executive Committee meets the second Tuesday of each month to plan and coordinate the work of UMBC. The meetings are open to any members of the congregation who have concerns to share with the group – or just want to see what we are doing. At our last meeting, topics ranged from how to increase the visibility of UMBC in the community, to deciding whether to purchase a new video projector for the sanctuary. Several helpful ideas surfaced re the visibility question and we decided that, for the present, we do not need to spend \$8,000 for a new projector. We also received reports from the Member Care group, the Pastoral Search Team, the Missions Team, Treasurer Thom, and Pastor Dan. We are looking at ways to increase fellowship within the congregation, and how to provide new educational opportunities for all ages.

Art Munson, Moderator

The UMBC Stewards continue to oversee the buildings and grounds belonging to UMBC.

Several points of note:

Linda Bloemker, Director of our Upper Merion Baptist Nursery School, was appointed as Deputy to Art Munson, the Chair of the Stewards. For the past several years she has carried out this role on an unofficial basis. Linda is in the Educational Building and the Fellowship Hall 5 days a week during the 11 months that the Nursery School is in session. Therefore, she is highly aware of problems that arise routinely, such as plumbing and heating issues. She is now deputized to contact whoever is needed to solve the issues.

Jeff Lawton, a member of the EFC, and Art Munson recently completed replacing over 300 fluorescent tubes with LED tubes. This should eliminate most of the maintenance related to 75% of the tube-type lights in the Educational Building. The old tubes were disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner. They contained mercury and thus could not be thrown in the dumpster.

Our 2 lawn mowers were frequently, and expertly, used last year by the crew of Thom Talamini, Phil Yong, and Franklin Onwubuariri. At present they are in the mower shop being refreshed for this year's mowing.

The Stewards are constantly on the lookout for things that need to be repaired, replaced, or spiffed up. We can't see everything, so, please help us by telling Art if you see something that is not quite right – or is very not right.

Member Care Report by Nereida Montes

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I want to wish every one of you a Happy New Year 2023. Hope you celebrated your Christmas with happy hearts, celebrating Jesus Birthday. I pray that this year will be a year of new purpose in your life.

Last time I shared with you the importance of praying for each other as one of the responsibilities of the body of Christ. He is calling us also to look at our wonderful gifts that He has given us to bless others!

In Peter 4:10-11 it says "Each one of you have been blessed with one of God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others, so use your gifts well. If you have the gift of Speaking, preach God's message; If you have the gift of helping others, do it with the strength that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory and power to Him forever and ever, Amen."

When we serve God according to the gifts God has blessed us, we can accomplish God's mission on earth!! I want to share with you some of our good news at UMBC:

1. Our Pastoral Search Team: Marie Onwubuariri, Ken Maahs, and Linda Bloemker are working faithfully on the search for a permanent Pastor for UMBC. Please pray for wisdom and guidance.
2. We have some people that want to become members of UMBC: Daniel & Joanna Kim want to be baptized and Marie Maharty. Wendy Sanchez became a member on Sunday, January 15. We are thankful for Wendy and her children. Continue praying for the future of our Church.
3. We thank God for the support that Pastor Dan Au has given us and who together with the EFC have helped us as we go through the process of transition.
4. Thanks for all of those faithful members that have given the Church the support needed in the past years: Worship Leaders, Praise Team, Music, Sound Board, Communion, Sunday School Class, Greeters, and Prayer Group. Thank you for your prayer support and financial support that allows us to continue God's work. May God bless you for your faithfulness.

—Nereida Montes

"For we are God's Master handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10"



On September 22, 2022, Fran Hutchinson passed away. Fran and her husband Steve have been attending UMBC for many years. Steve has also been a guest speaker at time. They had just moved into a new retirement community when she was diagnosed with cancer. Sadly the treatments took a terrible toll on her and the cancer was very advanced, so they discontinued treatments and kept her comfortable. She will be greatly missed.

Elma Betz passed away December 22, 2022. Elma along with her husband George, were members of UMBC for many years. George passed away in 2013 and Elma continued to attend until COVID hit. She had not felt comfortable attending after that due to her weakened health. Elma collected clothes for veterans for many years as the Veterans was very close to her heart. She will also be greatly missed.

Missions and Outreach Month *by Jean Munson*

A MONTH OF MISSIONS MARCH IS MISSIONS MONTH AT UMBC

The Missions and Outreach Team is presently planning for mission speakers and events to celebrate UMBC missions outreach in our community and the world. We look forward to inviting you to learn more about the global servants and ministries we will support in the coming year through individual giving of tithes and offerings. Historically, UMBC has been a missions-centered church, and we want to continue the tradition of supporting those who are in special ministries to introduce Christ to others.

Missions and Outreach Team: Trudy Morrison, Pattie Hentz, and Jean Munson

FOUR ANNUAL MISSIONS OFFERINGS

During each quarter of the year, one of these four special annual offerings is promoted in local congregations; however, gifts to any of these offerings may be received throughout the year.

1. Your gifts to the America for Christ Offering impact thousands – through ministries with marginalized children, mission trips that transform lives torn asunder by hurricanes, resources that cultivate Christian leaders, chaplains who bring comfort to hospitals and nursing homes, and much more. This offering is promoted in February and March.
2. One Great Hour of Sharing, promoted in May and June, supports disaster relief, ministries to displaced persons, and development projects of the American Baptist Churches and its partners.
3. During the World Mission Offering, promoted in September and October, our church has the opportunity to join the transformational work God is doing around the world through International Ministries' 120+ global servants and 250+ global partners.
4. The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering is a long-standing tradition established in 1977 which supports ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses who have devoted 15 or more years of their lives to service in ABCUSA. This offering is promoted in November and December.

United in Christ; Together in Mission

In addition to the four annual offerings, American Baptists
Are Encouraged to support United Mission

—Jean Munson

Saturday Get-together with a Purpose

On Saturday January 21, we had a family get-together at the church. It was game day and people could bring various games that they had and liked to play. Everyone also brought Brunch type food to share and boy did we have a fest.

An important part of the event if for people to bring gently used winter clothing the residents of MCES. MCES is a private, not-for-profit, psychiatric hospital in West Norriton, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. MCES and its talented team of more than 200 professionals provide a range of behavioral health services from its 73-bed facility. These people desperately need help with winter clothing of all sorts. We have had a great response and church members have brought in coats, hats, scarves, gloves, sweaters, etc. Sometime next week all the clothing will be taken over there by some of our members. We are excited to be able to provide these necessary items for the residents there.

Ken Maahs led a group of four in a card game that was new to most. It is called Hand and Foot. Those that played had a good time. Another popular game was dominos and Al Brinson had set up an indoor Bocce Ball in the Fellowship Hall. Dan's daughter Megumi and Pattie's granddaughter Aniya really had fun with that and then they did some amazing twisting of their bodies. The food, of course, was a major part with so many varieties. There was enough left over that we were able to share with the congregation after the worship service the next day. Below are some pictures.



Exciting News

Natalie DiNenno started coming to Upper Merion Baptist Church as a little girl. She came with her mother Pattie Hentz. Natalie was always a happy little girl and was blessed with an amazing vocal voice. She sang solos often in the worship services. We wanted to share this exciting press release about Natalie but should also add that we are not surprised at what she has achieved. We wish her well as she begins her new job and settles into life in Oregon.

The following is a press release from the Klamath Outdoor Science School.

FORT KLAMATH, Ore. - The Klamath Outdoor Science School (KOSS) Board of Directors is excited to introduce its new Executive Director as Natalie DiNenno, of Ashland.

DiNenno recently took over the reins at KOSS from longtime Director Bill Hunt, who, at 65, is moving on to other somewhat more relaxing pursuits!

DiNenno recently received her M.S. in Environmental Education from Southern Oregon University. She also holds a B.A. in Environmental Studies and Sociology from Williams College in Massachusetts. Having worked as a naturalist, camp counselor, and administrator, DiNenno brings a wealth of knowledge, experience, and energy to her new role at KOSS.

After growing up and attending college on the East Coast, DiNenno made her way to the Northwest to pursue graduate studies.

"I was immediately captivated by the beauty of Southern Oregon and the supportive network of environmental educators in this region," DiNenno stated enthusiastically. In her free time, she enjoys exploring outside, writing, and singing with her choir.

Because she is so passionate about providing immersive, place-based, experiential education for all students of all ages and backgrounds, the KOSS Board is very happy to have her at the helm at Klamath Outdoor Science School.

DiNenno is already busy scheduling fifth and sixth grade classes for spring and fall outdoor school, all grades for day camps, and planning a wide range of summer programs. After being limited to day camps during the pandemic, KOSS is once again offering residential camps at its Sun Pass State Forest site near Ft. Klamath and Jackson Kimball State Park.

DiNenno is seeking instructors and support staff for those camps. Contact KOSS for more information.



Let's Go Bananas!



When the baseball team in Savannah, Georgia, got new owners in 2016, it also received a new name and identity — the Bananas! Adding pep to what often seemed a long, boring game, Jesse and Emily Cole offered a creative new experience, full of entertainment and spectacle. Players wear all-yellow uniforms (sometimes kilts), and the mascot is a banana named Split. Cheering on the team are the Banana Nanas senior-citizen dancers and the Man-Nanas Dad Bod Cheering Squad. The entire organization sets out to bring hospitality and joy, sending people home thinking, “This was the best experience of my life!”

What if Christians, individually and as a community, fully embraced our new name and identity, sharing radical hospitality and profound joy with everyone? Jesus has bought us from our former owner, sin, and given us a new name: Beloved of God. This identity may seem silly to some, just as the Savannah Bananas raised eyebrows initially. But before long, the delighted fans were going bananas for them!

With the same wild abandon and big-hearted outreach, the church — with its much-greater message — can spread love and goodwill, and have fun doing it!

—*The Newsletter*

The Right Words for Victory in Jesus

My mom tells a story of me as a preschooler, swinging in our backyard and singing loudly (and off key, I’m sure): “Oh victory in Jesus, my Savior forever. He **socked** me and **bopped** me with his redeeming blood.” Though that isn’t an example of how to effectively share Jesus with your neighbors, the mistaken words might contain a nugget of truth.

In 1939, a stroke partially paralyzed hymnwriter Eugene Bartlett. Bedridden and unable to perform anymore, he penned his final, most beloved song, “Victory in Jesus.” The actual lyrics read: “O victory in Jesus, my Savior forever. He *sought* me and *bought* me with his redeeming blood.”

It’s beautiful to realize that Jesus did indeed seek me out and pay the ultimate price for me. But sometimes I forget — and that’s when he “socks me” and “bops me.” Jesus loves me too much to let life’s chaos and struggles distract me from him and what he’s done. Let’s all remember to celebrate our victory in Jesus!

—Janna Firestone



The River of Life



The Red River of the North, in the north-central U.S. and central Canada, takes countless twists and turns. A close-up aerial photo or map shows its frequent sideswipes and U-turns. One could cross the river several times without changing direction while hiking or biking along the border between Minnesota and North Dakota. You might wonder at points if it has completely turned back south — which raises another point: While most rivers flow south, the Red River flows north.

Sometimes life meanders, but that doesn't mean we're off course. Sometimes we seem to be going in the opposite direction of most people, but that doesn't mean we're not headed the right way. Sometimes it feels like it takes us a long time to make progress, but that doesn't mean we're not moving. We might just be taking in more of life's scenery! Follow your own unique trajectory, letting God, the creator of all rivers and all life, serve as the current that moves you ever onward.



Bible Quiz

In the Gospels, Jesus raised several people from death. Which of the following was not one of them?

- A. Tabitha
- B. Jairus's daughter
- C. A widow's son
- D. Lazarus

Answer: A (See Acts 9, Mark 5, Luke 7, John 11.)

Bulletin Board

Fun Facts on Presidents

- George Washington was the only President unanimously elected.
- John Adams died on the same day as Thomas Jefferson, July 4th, 1826.
- Thomas Jefferson was also an accomplished architect.
- James Madison and George Washington are the only presidents who signed the Constitution.



Joyce Yeo 08

Al Brinson 14

If you have a Birthday this month and it isn't listed, it's because we don't have it. Please send you Birth Month and day to us at the office and we will make sure it is listed in the future.



Teachers receive the most Valentine's Day cards, followed by children, mothers and wives.

Breaking news! This year, Americans plan to spend an estimated \$2.14 billion on gifts for their cats and dogs on Valentine's Day, more than double the amount spent last year.



Today we begin a new season
of the church year

February 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
						
5 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service	13	14 	15	16	17	18
19 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service	20 	21	22	23	24	25
26 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Service	27	28	  	February		

New Life in Christ

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TO:

A Prayer for our church

Lord Jesus, we pray that you will somehow give us ears to hear, hearts to love and wills devoted to serve; that in the days to come this congregation may be known not for our glory but for thine alone - a congregation of people who know you; that this place may be an oasis, a place where people come to find out about you, where lives are straightened out and made whole, where people find the peace that passes understanding.

Give us, we pray, a heart to desire these things above all else. We pray through Jesus Christ. Amen.

