

"To know Him and make Him known"

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**Newsletter
Submissions for the
June issue are due
August 23rd**

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

DRAWING NEAR TO GOD THROUGH HIS MEANS OF GRACE

Lucy Van Pelt is one of the most recognizable characters in Charles Schulz's Peanuts comic strip. Although she was often the bane of Charlie Brown's existence—serving up brutal honesty and always pulling the football away at the last moment just as he was about to kick it—Lucy was, in her own way, surprisingly helpful.

You may remember "the doctor is in" editions when Lucy would open her pop-up psychiatric help booth, and for just five cents she would listen to Charlie Brown's troubles and dispense her latest psychological advice. Charlie Brown visited Lucy's stand 115 times over the 50-year run of the comic strip.

Lucy's booth illustrates a question many Christians quietly ask. How do I experience greater communion with God? I want to hear from God, speak to God, be directed by

God, and grow in His grace. But sometimes I'm not sure how that happens. Even when I read my Bible, pray, and worship with God's people, I can feel underwhelmed and wonder whether "the doctor is in."

By communion with God, we mean living fellowship with the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit. This is a good and biblical desire. Better still, God has not left us wondering how we enjoy such communion. By faith in Christ, with repentance of our sin, and through the diligent use of the ordinary means of grace—His Word, the sacraments, and prayer—Christ communicates to His people Himself and all the benefits of redemption.

But many people come to believe that a genuine encounter with God can only be measured by extraordinary, often subjective experiences. If God has truly met with us, we assume there must be overwhelming emotions, dramatic answers to prayer, remarkable experiences, or fresh revelations. To the point where quiet faithfulness in the use of these ordinary means can seem almost disappointing by comparison.

We often want fireworks, while God is pleased to work more like a farmer than a magician. He plants His Word like seed, and in His time produces fruit.

I don't want to be misunderstood; genuine Christianity is deeply experiential. We believe that the truth of God's Word, applied by the Holy Spirit, changes hearts, renews minds, strengthens faith, and transforms lives. But we also believe that God's promises are more reliable than our emotions. God has promised to meet with His people through His Word, the sacraments, and prayer. He is pleased to accomplish His extraordinary work of sanctification through these remarkably ordinary means.

GOD DELIGHTS TO COMMUNE WITH HIS PEOPLE

There is an old George Strait song that captures the uncertainty of young love. We used to pass notes in school asking, "Do you love me? Check yes or no." Before we risk drawing near, we want to know whether the other person wants to be near us.

Sometimes Christians wonder the same thing about God. Scripture tells us that He checked "Yes" a long time ago.

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In the beginning God created Adam and Eve to enjoy unhindered fellowship with Him. Though sin broke that fellowship and drove mankind from God's presence, it did not stop God, in His grace, from pursuing communion with His people.

In Exodus, God instructed Israel to build the tabernacle "that I may dwell in their midst".

When Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of the Lord filled it—a visible sign that God delighted to dwell among His covenant people and a shadow of a greater dwelling yet to come.

The climax of God dwelling with His people came in the incarnation. John tells us "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The verb literally means "tabernacled." Jesus is the true dwelling place of God among His people.

After His ascension, Jesus took His place at the Father's right hand and poured out the promised Holy Spirit upon His church. Paul reminds us that the church is God's temple in which God's Spirit dwells.

Finally, Revelation ends with the glorious promise that God's dwelling place will be with His people forever.

Christian, never forget that the God of heaven and earth delights to dwell with His people. God has made us for Himself. We are precious in His sight. He has sent his one and only Son to die for our sins so that we could be His now and forever. God himself is our treasure, and his love for us is great. As the psalmist writes: *"In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."* (Psalm 16:11)

Let that glorious truth moves us to pursue Him with joy and confidence, knowing that every step we take toward Him is a response to His gracious initiative toward us.

WHY COMMUNION WITH GOD MATTERS

God not only pursues His people; He is committed to conforming them to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). He chose us in Christ to be holy and blameless before Him (Eph. 1:4). He desires that we bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23), grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), and one day be presented mature in Him (Col. 1:28).

God's plan for his people is not merely their justification, but their sanctification, their growing in Christlikeness. What does that look like?

It looks like thinking like Christ.

Living like Christ in joyful obedience to the Father.

Loving like Christ with compassion and mercy.

Serving like Christ, counting others more significant than ourselves.

Speaking like Christ with grace and truth.

Does your plan for your life align with God's plan for your life? When our ambitions compete with God's purposes, we should not be surprised that our walk with Him feels strained.

As citizens of heaven, we are called to live as Christ's ambassadors while we labor on earth. Whatever we do, we do unto the Lord. Christians often run into problems when we allow our earthly ambitions to overrun God's heavenly ambitions for us.

Whether in our work or our homes, in youth or later years, in joy or suffering, God's chief concern is that Christ be formed in us. Every season of life becomes another opportunity to grow in holiness and serve Him faithfully.

Christians will never feel completely at home in this world, that is not because God has abandoned us. It is because He is preparing us for something far greater. Every act of sanctification is His gracious work of making us fit for our true home, our heavenly home where we will dwell with Him forever.

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HOW COMMUNION WITH GOD ORDINARILY HAPPENS

If God delights to dwell with His people, and if His purpose is to conform us to the image of Christ, how does He accomplish these gracious purposes?

God has not left our sanctification to chance. He has graciously appointed ordinary means through which we enjoy communion with Him and grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. At first glance, His plan may seem surprisingly ordinary.

In worship -

He gathers His people around His **Word**.

He strengthens their faith through the **sacraments**.

He invites them to call upon Him in **prayer**.

These may not seem spectacular, yet the power is not found in the means themselves, but in Christ, who by His Spirit strengthens our faith, conforms us to His image, and nourishes us by His grace. Through these remarkably ordinary means, God is pleased to accomplish extraordinary work.

We do not need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to Christian discipleship or search endlessly for the next spiritual breakthrough. Our confidence rests in the faithfulness of our Savior, who has already given His church everything she needs for growth in godliness. Christ ordinarily meets His people not in isolated spirituality but in the gathered worship of His covenant people, where His Word is preached, His sacraments administered, and His people call upon Him in prayer.

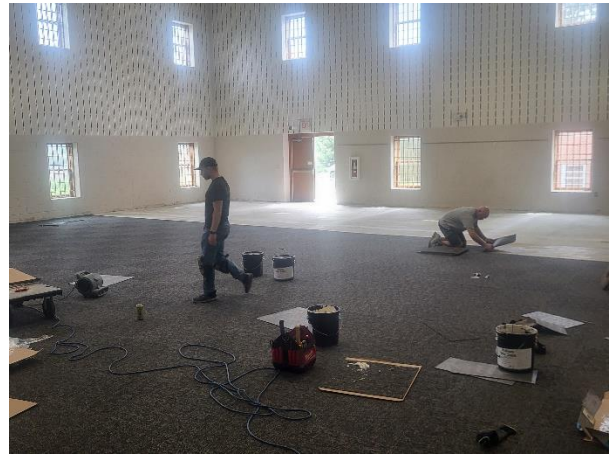
Perhaps the reason we sometimes feel spiritually dry or distant from the Lord is not because Christ has withheld Himself, but because we have neglected the very places where He has promised to meet us.

Over the coming months we'll consider the blessings of God's Word, the sacraments, and prayer—not merely as religious duties to perform, but as gracious gifts through which the risen Christ delights to meet with His people. My prayer is that, as we devote ourselves to His appointed means, we will enjoy deeper communion with our faithful Savior and discover anew that He accomplishes extraordinary work through remarkably ordinary means.

What a wonderful turn-out for this year's Organ Concert - 185 people!



The Memorial Hall Gets a Refresh



**Yard Sale Update –
Sales totaled \$11,055!**

**Thank you for
everyone's hard work
and donations.**

Annual Picnic





AUGUST

2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship COMMUNION	3	4 VBS 9:00 – NOON 7:00 Trustee Mtg	5 VBS 9:00 - NOON	6 VBS 9:00 - NOON	7	8
9 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship	10	11 Middle School VBS 6:00-8:00pm	12 10:00 Prayer Mtg Middle School VBS 6:00-8:00pm	13 Middle School VBS 6:00-8:00pm	14	15
16 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship	17	18	19 10:00 Prayer Mtg 7:00 Session Mtg	20	21	22
23 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	24	25	26 10:00 Prayer Mtg	27	28	29
30 8:30 Prayer Meeting 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Worship	31					

BE Still
AND
KNOW

Psalm 46:10

FOOD BANK

Spaghetti noodles (box), Triscuits/ Wheat Thins crackers, chicken noodle soup (10 oz can size), seafood soup/chowder (cans), diapers (size 5, 6, 7 and 3T, 4T, 5T), baby wipes, mayonnaise, fruit cups, pudding cups, granola bars

Backpack/School Supply list is on the back page. Please have items to the church by Sunday, August 7th.



- 3 Nancy Hastings
- 4 Angela White
Sharon Adams
Sandy Stewart
- 6 Sarah Jane Mullins
- 9 Scott Shoemaker
Linda Brown
- 12 Faye Wade
- 13 Randy Adams
- 14 Ken Graver
- 17 Carol Oswald
Dylon Supplee
Anthony Isaiah Thomas
- 20 Bryan Hastings
- 23 Dina Shoemaker
- 25 William Noonan
- 27 Debbie Hash
- 28 Christine Ambler
- 30 William Ray
Eileen Scotten
Barry Bard

LECTIONARY PASSAGES

August 2nd

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Genesis 32:22-31;
Psalm 17:1-7, 15; Romans 9:1-5;
Matthew 14:13-21

August 9th

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28;
Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b;
Romans 10:5-15;
Matthew 14:22-33

August 16th

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Genesis 45:1-15; Psalm 133:1-3;
Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32;
Matthew 15:(10-20) 21-28

August 23rd

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 1:8-2:10; Psalm 124:1-8;
Romans 12:1-8;
Matthew 16:13-20

August 30th

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 3:1-15;
Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c;
Romans 12:9-21;
Matthew 16:21-28

GREETERS

- 2 (OPEN)
- 9 (OPEN)
- 16 Robin Church
- 23 The Harts
- 30 (OPEN)

Union Presbyterian Church
5637 Street Road,
Kirkwood, PA 17536

UPC VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

JESUS IS THE LIGHT

"I am the light of the world" - John 8:12



DATE: Tuesday - Thursday, August 4-6, 2026

TIME: 9:00 am to Noon

PLACE: Union Presbyterian Church
5637 Street Road, Kirkwood

GRADES: Kindergarden through 5th grade

HOSTED BY: **SCAN TO REGISTER:**



MIDDLE SCHOOL VBS

JESUS IS THE LIGHT

"I am the light of the world" - John 8:12



DATE: Tuesday - Thursday, August 11-13, 2026

TIME: 6-8:00 pm

PLACE: Union Presbyterian Church
5637 Street Road, Kirkwood

GRADES: 6th - 8th

SCAN TO REGISTER: **HOSTED BY:**

Middle Octorara
Presbyterian Church



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