

THE TIDINGS

Shelter Island  Presbyterian Church

December 2020 Newsletter

From the Pastor's Study: A Thanksgiving Message

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
I Thessalonians 5:16-18

These words of encouragement and reassurance are written by Paul to a new church he had founded a mere three months ago in the city of Thessalonica, in what is now modern-day Greece. They are under duress, and so, are anxious about the future, as a church and as individuals.

Paul reminds them that no matter their present circumstances they are now in Christ and Christ is now preparing a place for them, and in time He will come again and take them all to be where He is now. He reminds them that their future is assured and because of this assurance they can rejoice always and give thanks in any and all circumstances in which they find themselves and that this thankful, joyous attitude, is God's will for them.

Paul's words may seem entirely counterintuitive to us, particularly now, during this pandemic, coupled with social and political turmoil. The future seems anything but assured. As I write to you Thanksgiving is only a week away and Christmas is hard on its heels and I must confess an attitude of joyfulness and thanksgiving has so far eluded me. Paul's exhortations to those newly minted Christians then becomes both a challenge and a reminder to me, and us here I think, in this place and time. We are also being reminded that our futures are assured and are also enabled because of this assurance to take on an attitude of joyfulness and thanksgiving despite all that now swirls around us.

Is that possible? Are we truly capable of that? Can we thank God no matter what?

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Let me answer that by telling you a story of a Lutheran pastor who lived almost 400 years ago in Germany. His name was Martin Rinkart. He had just become the pastor of a church when the Thirty Years' War broke out which lasted the rest of his life. It was the most brutal and destructive war ever fought in Germany and that includes both World War I and II.

Refugees fleeing the violence overwhelmed the city. At the same time soldiers were billeted in his house, stealing his belongings and most of the food meant for his wife and children. Then, in 1637, plague arrived in the overcrowded city. Eight thousand people would die, his wife amongst them. There were four pastors in the town. One left for safety, the other two he buried. Alone now he was in constant demand, sometimes conducting funerals for forty to fifty persons a day. Before long victims had to be buried in long trenches without services.

Then came the famine. At times up to forty people might be seen fighting in the streets for a dead cat or cow. He gave away everything he could and mortgaged his future income for years to come. Yet, living in a world of death and endings, Martin Rinkart was able to take the Apostle Paul's challenge to heart. He sat down at his desk one evening and wrote a prayer for his children to offer—up to God at their dinner table. This was that prayer.

*Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done, in whom His world rejoices;*

*Who, from our mother's arms, hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.*

*O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;*

*And keep us in His grace and guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills in this world and the next.*

*All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given,
The Son and Him who reigns with them in highest heaven,*

*The one eternal God whom earth and heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now, and shall be ever more.*

We know it today as the hymn, *Now Thank We All Our God*—a testament to one person's insistence on thanking God no matter what happens and for passing that attitude along to his children and his children's children and to us here in this place and time.

Can, and should we, do anything less?
In Christ,
Pastor Bob

DEACON'S COMMITTEE BY BRENDA BERGMAN

The Deacons will be meeting two Sundays in November to share names for card/flower delivery during the Christmas Season. As always, we will be helping those in need with medical or other financial difficulties. We ask the congregation to be generous in their giving. Thank you in advance.

THE BEST WORST CHRISTMAS BY JOANNE SHERMAN

It was turning into the worst Christmas ever for Mary. Not Mary from the Bible, Mary from Virginia, who lived there with her husband Joe and their 5-year old twins, Mikey and Sam. It was Christmas Eve and Mary's family was stranded at home with no tree, no presents, no decorations, an empty fridge, and no electricity. And worst of all, it was her fault.

She was the one who thought it would be fun to spend Christmas with her parents in Ohio. She shopped early and mailed boxes to Grandma's house -- boxes that contained big presents and small stocking stuffers, already tagged "from Santa."

The boys were so excited about the trip, they didn't mind that the house wasn't decorated or that there was no tree. Right after Thanksgiving they wrote Santa about how they were going to be away and Santa wrote back that he would deliver their presents to Grandma's house.

Mary wanted to leave early Christmas Eve morning, but Joe had to go to work for an hour. Then they would hit the road and be at Grandma's in time to enjoy the Christmas Eve feast she was preparing for them.

Big fluffy snowflakes floated past the kitchen window as Mary poured the last of the milk into cereal bowls. After breakfast she wiped down the inside of the fridge. She'd cleaned it out, so except for the tuna sandwiches she'd packed for the trip, it was empty.

Mary settled Mikey and Sam in front of the television to watch "A Charlie Brown Christmas," again, and she watched the snow fall. By the time Joe got home, those fluffy flurries were a near blizzard.

"It's pretty bad out there," he told her. "We'll have to wait, but it's supposed to let up this afternoon."

So, they waited. And Mary silently prayed over and over, "Please, please, please stop." But apparently, she hadn't been specific enough, because right in the middle of her more fervent "please!" the power went out. That meant no television, no lights, and no heat.

Joe built a fire in the fireplace and pushed the sofa close to it, and they all sat there, waiting. At noon they ate the sandwiches and at four it was still snowing and getting dark, so Mary lit candles and held back tears of disappointment that kept threatening to spill over.

Dinner was an assortment of canned foods, heated over some sterno. But Mary found chocolate mix for hot cocoa and some popcorn that Joe popped in the fireplace. She tried to distract the boys with board games. They played checkers and Candyland, then Sam said, "Tell us a Christmas story."

"Okay," Mary said, and began to recite, "'Twas the night before Christmas." But Mikey said, "No, Mommy. Not that one. Tell us the real story, about the baby Jesus."

They had a couple of Baby Jesus children's books, but Joe got out the Bible instead. Together on the sofa, wrapped in blankets and snuggling close to each other to keep warm, they listened as Joe began the familiar story. Mary watched their little faces as he read, "...but the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people...'"

And again, her eyes filled with tears, but not from disappointment or frustration. They were tears of love and joy seeing her boys' eyes reflect awe and wonder as they listened to the Christmas story. She realized, in that moment, how lucky they were. And how blessed.

They arrived at Grandma's early Christmas afternoon. There were lots of hugs and a decorated tree and food and presents from Santa.

Years later, when those little boys were grown and had children of their own, they would remember snuggling on the sofa on that night with no lights, or presents and not much food, as the best Christmas, ever.

BUILDING & GROUNDS REPORT

By Dan Binder

The Building & Grounds Committee has been busy even during the 10 months of COVID.

- We coordinated the rental of the Manse.
- We accomplished routine maintenance regarding in Church building and Manse.
- We oversaw the installation of new A/C units and sanitizing scrubbers in the Sanctuary.
- We continued to work with the Town of Shelter Island on the installation of a water filtration system. We are hopeful that the water filtration system will be installed by the end of 2020.
- We worked with Joy Bausman on replacing the Sanctuary windows. Please note that while the new windows are being installed, the worship service will be held in the Fellowship Hall.

PASTORAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE BY HEATHER REYLEK

Glad tidings in this Advent Season. This has been a strange journey for our Church family. The Pandemic, staying at home, minimized Church services, and cancelled local events have made us reflective, sometimes lonely, and anxious. But, let not our hearts be troubled. I'm writing this just before Thanksgiving and it gives me an opportunity to think of all the things I can give thanks for. I have my home, my family, plenty of food on my table, my health, a wonderful Church family, a beautiful island, and so much more. All I have to do is look out my window and see how amazing the woods look now that the leaves have fallen. It's a beautiful time of year. Red-tailed hawks soar through the trees and the deer venture out. Please pause a while after you read this and make a mental list of the goodness that is in your life.

I am also grateful for my friends and Southold neighbors that are with me, Ellen Gove and Marianne Baird on the Pastoral Nominating Committee. I realize that it seems like it takes forever. But, it's not an undertaking to take lightly. We want to seek and select the best possible candidate for our next pastor. COVID-19 has made this a challenge. We've been interviewing and searching in a virtual environment. I never thought I would like Zoom, but I don't know how we would have gotten this far without it. Our Zoom meetings have begun to bear fruit. Not to get ahead of ourselves, but we have narrowed down our search process and I think we are much closer to offering a call. So, prayers for this to continue to fruition. Prayers of Thanksgiving despite this unusual year. Let us be good to each other, reach out to each other, and prepare for Advent with joy.

MUSIC MINISTRY REPORT BY LINDA BETJEMAN



Dear Church Family,

All of us have been affected by the music restrictions in Worship imposed by COVID. Sadly, we have been unable to sing in Church or enjoy the musical leadership of our beloved Choir. I miss my Singing Family and long for the day (which will come!) when we can return to a full fellowship with all members together in Sunday Worship. I am extremely grateful to all the volunteers who have sung or played an instrument to offer music solos or ensembles during the Choir's absence: Marianne Baird, Linda Bonaccorso, Anne Danforth, Katie Herbst, Christina Herman, Christopher Herman, John Kerr, Penny Kerr, Maryann Koch, Pete Mikochik, Frank Milano, Thomas Milton, Andy Norton, Heather Reylek, Glenn Waddington, Roswitha Wissemann, Jillian Yoo, and the Sweet Island Dulcimers. Bravo to all! If anyone would like to volunteer to offer some special music, just let me know.

On a personal note (no pun intended), I enjoyed a wonderful trip to New Mexico in September-October to visit my son, Thomas, and family with their newborn (March) baby, James Yi-Yong Betjeman, our first grandchild. I like to think he already appreciates music, and I gave him a piano lesson every day. We had such fun. By the way, did you know that New Mexico is a very Presbyterian state? Even small towns have a Presbyterian Church, and artist Georgia O'Keefe's homestead, Ghost Ranch, is a national Presbyterian Retreat Center. My son and daughter-in-law both practice medicine at Presbyterian Hospital in Albuquerque which has satellite clinics throughout the state.

As we look forward to Christmas, sadly there will be no Community Chorus Christmas Concert or Church Choir, but there will be special solos for Christmas Eve and we can still share the joy of the season in many ways. We look forward to the new year when COVID is defeated and we will be able to gather together again. Keep singing at home, listen to music when you can, and Keep the Faith! Love to you all.

STEWARDSHIP PLEA BY SHARON MORGAN

My name is Sharon Morgan and I moved to Shelter Island 48 years ago with my husband and seven-month-old daughter, Kelli. My husband became the 4th grade teacher at Shelter Island School and I was a stay-at-home mom.

What brought us to this Church was really a “who,”—two women who helped my young family in so many ways, Peg Bixler, and our neighbor, Ruth Zabel. They both encouraged us to come to Church and later Ruth brought me to Choir and I joined. Our daughters attended Sunday School and youth group, and we were all part of this family. Lives and time have marched on, but I will always feel part of this Church family.

Each and every Sunday that I am here in person or remotely, I leave with a kinder heart, knowing that the lesson of the day will make me a better person to myself and others. My husband and I have supported this Church all these years and will continue to do so. If you can, please do the same. Thank you!

MISSION TEAM REPORT BY MARILYNN PYSHER

The **Better World Book Club**, devoted to reading and discussing socially meaningful books, met on October 12 in the Fellowship Hall to discuss Everyday Ubuntu, Living Better Together, the African Way by Mungi Ngomane, Archbishop Tutu's granddaughter. Everyone brought their own chair, wore masks, and socially distanced. It is a visually beautiful book, and it contains many important messages for our time. We had 14 people and a very lively and interesting hour-long discussion. As usual, we could have gone on much longer. Our next book is Our Malady, Lessons in Liberty from a Hospital Diary by Timothy Snyder. We are scheduled to meet January 11 at 3:00 pm, same place, same safety instructions. We read very enlightening books and encourage you to join us and tell your friends, Presbyterians and non-Presbyterians, off-Islanders as well as homies.

Another initiative we have is **Kiva** which is the world's first online lending platform connecting online lenders to entrepreneurs across the globe. It supports women, entrepreneurs, students, and refugees around the world with as little as \$25. 100% of your loan goes to support borrowers. We have given out 109 loans in 34 countries. This year we have given \$3,125.

As you do your holiday and other shopping be sure to use **Amazon Smile** and select our Church as your not-for-profit. A percentage of your purchase will then be donated to our Church. It is a small amount but adds up. We are eager to do much more mission work as soon as the world is healthier and need new members (men and women) so think seriously about joining the cause--after all, what better effort for a Church than doing mission work?

SESSION COMMITTEE BY ELLEN GOVE

COVID is still lurking around—in fact as the cold weather approaches, cases are increasing. Here on SI we have a handful of new cases; however, that doesn't mean we get complacent especially as the holidays are fast approaching. I am grateful our Session has worked together with Pastor Bob, Linda, Karin, and the Deacons regarding holding worship in our Sanctuary. We have a successful traffic flow, seating, and sanitizing offerings. I am looking forward to when we can hear our wonderful Choir and sing again.

Session continues to meet monthly via Zoom and we are able to carry out the work of our Church. Listed below are the actions that we have approved:

- Voted and approved moving forward replacing Sanctuary windows with monies received from several donors. Thank you Dan Binder and Joy Bausman.
- Successfully rented the Manse during the summer months.
- Because we are faced with COVID and Pastoral transition, we sought approval from Committee on Ministry to allow the three elders whose terms are ending to serve one more year in order to receive our new minister.
- Approved open issues on cemetery matters that needed to be addressed.
- Approving various requests to use our parking lot and building to serve the Shelter Island community.

CONGREGATIONAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE BY HEATHER REYLEK

Greetings to all. The Congregational Nominating Committee extends an invitation to all active members to consider possible nominations for the following positions:

- **Service as an Elder on Session, Class of 2023.** This is a three-year term that can be repeated once. After serving two terms, the Elder must come off for at least one year. Session is our governing body. Elders share in governing and leading the Church in a faithful direction along with other duties. Session meets monthly and the Elders have roles in committees. A good and effective Elder serves the Church as a decision maker, a leader, and a peacemaker.
- **Service as a Deacon, Class of 2023.** This is a three-year term that can be repeated once. After serving two terms, the Deacon must come off for at least one year. It is their duty to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress both within and beyond the community of faith.
- **Service on the Nominating Committee.** At least two members should be Elders, at least one actively serving on Session. One member should be from the Board of Deacons and others from Members-at-Large for a one-year term of office.

All offices are elected by the congregation. If you would like to propose a nomination, please contact our current Congregational Nominating Committee members: Heather Reylek, Lee Anne Bastible, John Miller, or Rachel Brigham, by leaving a message at the Church office, 631-749-0805.

MAUREEN'S HAVEN BY MARIANNE BAIRD

Maureen's Haven protects the East End homeless population, including Riverhead, the North Fork and the Hamptons, by providing shelter, supportive services, and compassionate care for individuals in need. Recent good news from Maureen's Haven headquarters in Riverhead is that all their clients have remained healthy so far during the pandemic season. With the cold weather months just around the corner, the need for meals and shelter will become greater.

Our Mission Committee will continue our involvement with Maureen's Haven by preparing and delivering dinners and lunches from November through April. If you'd like to join us in this endeavor, please contact: Dana Hallman at 631-377-2930 or Marianne Baird 516-492-5763.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY BY ELLEN GOVE

My term serving on Committee on Ministry will be coming to an end December 31, 2020. When I was asked to be a part of this committee six years ago, I had no idea what my serving on this committee entailed. I have learned about Presbytery Polity and the purpose and goals of CoM. I have also made many dear relationships with Pastors and other Ruling Elders from Nassau County to the Eastern End of Long Island. I have grown spiritually and emotionally and am grateful for the opportunity to serve the Presbytery of L.I. in spite of the investment of my time. I will miss this group of dedicated servants with whom I served. I recommend, if you feel called to serve our Presbytery, do so.



MISSION STATEMENT

We envision the Shelter Island Presbyterian Church as a spiritual heart of our small island community—a congregation that keeps its doors open to all and offers service and support to friends, neighbors, and visitors from beyond our shores.

We will encourage the spiritual growth of our Church's people in Jesus Christ through worship, service to others, stewardship, study, and fellowship with one another. We will work to increase our spiritual engagement with youth, young families, and our growing senior population.

Inspired by God's Word, we look forward to our future with faith and confidence in God's purpose for us.

AS WE BELIEVE, SO WE DO.



THE GIVING TREE

The Giving Tree is now up in the Church entrance way and is accessible during Sunday services. We hope you will take an angel or two, purchase the gift listed on it, and place it in the box under the table no later than December 16. Many people are struggling financially during this time so your generosity is even more needed and appreciated than usual. You may want to pick up a few angels for parishioners who would like to donate but are not attending services. The green angels are for C.A.S.T. clients--most of whom live off-Island. The red angels are for Shelter Island children, teens, and adults. The Mission Team thanks you in advance for being part of this Christmas giving program.

Please remember:

Services can be viewed on the Church's Facebook page and on the website at: www.sipchurch.org.

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PLACE
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