January 10 is Matthew 25 Sunday in the PCUSA. Matthew 25:31–46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. The leadership of the PC(USA) has prepared a worship service based on the Matthew 25 vision to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor.

We will enjoy the service together during our regular 10am worship time. Tune in and find out more about what it means to be a Matthew 25 congregation.

Nancy will be under the portico outside the Sanctuary at 11:15am until 11:50am. Adult Sunday school participants will be given a star word during the class.

The online Annual Congregational Meeting will be held Sunday, January 31 following the 10am worship service. The purpose of the meeting is to receive the reports of the Session Teams, the financial report, report of the corporation, and approve the 2021 Pastor Terms of Call. Watch for more details.

Join the meeting on Zoom.
Meeting ID: 835 1896 2883
Passcode: GCPC202

The Report deadline for Team and Committee Chairs is January 18 at Noon. Send your report to Patrick at patrick.bell@gcpc.org.

Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church celebrates God’s unbounded grace and all-inclusive love.
Sunday School News!

The year of the pandemic may have stopped us from meeting in person, but it hasn’t stopped us from doing some great new things in Sunday school. Until the virus is better under control, we will continue our online Sunday school program.

2’s and 3’s Preschool Class

Lisa Cox has created a wonderful Facebook Page featuring the weekly Sunday school class. The lesson includes the colorful Bible story page and Lisa’s wonderful voice leading the class. You will find the page at GCPC Preschool Sunday School Stories. www.facebook.com/groups/GCPCstories

4 yrs – 1st Grade

We are blessed to have Awakening to Worship (ATW) at GCPC. ATW is an introduction to worship that offers a creative telling of a Bible story as the children learn about the practice of worship. We are continuing to offer the ATW experience online and this will be the Sunday school class for the 4-year-old – 1st grade children. These lessons will be pre-recorded and available for viewing at your convenience. The weekly links will be uploaded to the website’s Christian Education/Sunday School Page.

2nd – 5th Grades

This class will meet each week from 9 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. on Zoom. As the new year begins, we hear the one story of Jesus growing up; as a young boy, already seeking, or knowing, his place in God’s house. We will hear stories from the Gospel of Mark and his story of good news. We will enjoy learning Bible stories, singing with the Celebration choir, and learning about the mission work of our Mission Team. In order to participate, parents will need to register with Rev. Sue at sue.trigger@gcpc.org. Sue will send you the log in information, including the password, when she receives your email. Please include your child’s name, year in school, and any special needs we need to be aware of for an online class. You can find Sunday school information and the Celebration choir videos on our new Facebook Page. https://www.facebook.com/GCPC25grades Content will be updated weekly with information about the coming lessons.

Joy! and Celebration! Singers

In addition to our Sunday school classes, we are blessed to have music time available online too! Links to our music time will be available on the Sunday school page. Each week Joy!, our 4 yrs – 1st grade and Celebration!, our 2nd – 5th grades will enjoy singing and learning about music and faith.

There will be no Sunday school classes on January 31st. Join us for worship at 10am online with annual meeting activities to follow.

Adult Classes

What is a Matthew 25 church?

Matthew 25:31–46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. Convicted by this passage, both the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) exhorted the PC(USA) to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor.

In 2020 our Session signed on to become a Matthew 25 church along with many Heartland Presbytery congregations. Join our online adult Sunday school class to learn more about what it means to be part of this exciting initiative.

The classes will meet Sundays January 3, 10, 17, and 24 at 11:15am. Join us on Zoom at 11:15am. Meeting ID: 883 1302 4210 Passcode: GCPC2020

$2,800+ Collected for GCPC Missions

Thanks to GCPC’s generosity during the holiday season, we raised over $2,800 for charity through Alternative Gift Certificates sale.

We collected $300 for the Children’s Nutrition Program of Haiti; $525 for Heart to Heart International; $199 for chicks for Heifer International; $340 for Maya Quiche; $420 for Rosehill Elementary; $520 for Project Peanut Butter; $375 for water for South Sudan; and $200 for the Mission Team’s general fund.

Many thanks from your Mission team members and we hope everyone enjoyed the certificates!
Clerk’s Corner

The December 21, 2020, Session meeting was held via Zoom with Reverend Mitch Trigger serving as moderator. In addition to the ruling elders, deacon Liz Chandler and the newly elected deacons Michelle Gaillez-Frye, Jody Mason, Barbara Douglas, Jesse Martin Bures and Knute Rosche were in attendance. Mitch opened the meeting at 7:00pm and Cheryl Johnson shared a devotion about appreciating the gift of life before leading us in prayer.

Consent agenda: The minutes of the November 16 Session meeting and the December 13 Congregational meeting were approved, as well as appointing Harold Frye, Tim Hayden, Mike Mattix and Ric Cummings as commissioners to the next Presbytery meeting.

Team minutes
Generosity team: So far, we have received 101 pledges for a total of $460,000. Letters are going out to the members who haven’t pledged yet. Until all the pledges are received, we cannot create a budget or determine the co-pastors’ terms of call to be voted on at the annual meeting.

Worship team: Because of the pandemic and not being able to have in-person worship services, the “Blue Christmas” service wasn’t held. Instead, Session approved letting people sign up for a time when they could come sit in the sanctuary for 30-minutes on December 30 as long as they were wearing a mask and maintaining a safe distance from others. More details will be forthcoming.

Clerk’s report: We started the month with 404 members. Matt and Gina McBride requested to be removed from membership and Shirley Sampson passed, leaving us with 401 members.

Co-Pastors’ report: There were no questions with the co-pastors’ report.

Deacons’ report: Liz Chandler reported the deacons are finding it difficult to establish communication with many of their group members. They are looking forward to when we can meet in person.

Old business: There were no distributions from the discretionary fund this month. Heartland Presbytery issued a statement about in-person services, which can be read here.

New business: The Annual Meeting will be January 31. It will be held via Zoom, with separate breakout sessions for each covenant group so the deacons can greet their groups.

Corporation business: The trustees of the corporation (ruling elders in church-speak) elected the following corporate officers to serve in 2021: President Diane Schmit, Vice-President Susan Sutherland, Treasurer Aaron Soule and Secretary Cheryl Johnson. These are the same officers as last year.

After sharing joys and concerns, the meeting adjourned at 8:18pm and Rev. Mitch Trigger closed with a prayer.

Thank you GCPC Family!

I wanted to thank my Grace church family for all the cards and prayers during my long hospitalization. I definitely felt your prayers and God’s support as I went through major surgery, recovery, and then unexpected cardiac issues. The timing of each and the experienced assistance I received seemed a God thing. Thank you also Women of Grace for the beautiful prayer shawl.

—Mauri Turner

January SMASH!

January 17, 4-6pm (K-5th grades)

January 17 is a Matthew 25 Sunday in the PCUSA. Our SMASH kids will join the congregation in thinking about diversity and how we can change the world. There will be a story, games, activities, and lots of fun as we think about all God’s children.

Please RSVP to help us safely prepare for supplies and social distance. RSVP to Rev. Sue at sue.trigger@gcpc.org.

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Grace Covenant continues to support mission co-workers Jeff and Christi Boyd. They continue their work in east Africa and offer this update.

A Letter from Christi and Jeff Boyd, serving in Africa

Dear siblings in Christ,

As the world went into a pandemic-induced hibernation earlier this year, one might assume that ministries, too, have slowed down or come to a halt. For the Presbyterian Ministry for Vulnerable Children in East Kasaï, Congo, nothing could be farther from the truth!

Four years ago, I shared through the story of Serge, how in the current Congolese context losing a parent can put a child at risk of abandonment, and highlighted different models of ministry for vulnerable children applied in the Presbyterian Church in Congo (CPC).

At the time, the most prominent of these ministries retrieved unaccompanied minors from the markets and streets by taking care of them in halfway homes while tracing back their biological parents or extended families to mediate reunification. The transitional character of these ministries provided an appropriate alternative to the more permanent nature of traditional orphanages, but the center-based model still proved costly for an economically deprived context like Congo. Sporadic but faithful donations from local and U.S.-based Presbyterians allowed the ministries to run on a shoestring budget that could provide for the children’s basic needs but was too limited to also ensure their timely reintegration into society even if family had been found. A year later, CPC leaders organized a weeklong series of participatory workshops for a cross-section of CPC staff, mid-council and ministry leaders to identify main directions for a collaborative strategy. The Kamuina Nsapu uprising, however, disrupted the process, and a plan was never drafted.

Fast forward to early this year, when Jeff and I were fortunate enough to visit the Kasaïs just before the first COVID-19 cases in Congo were identified and the government isolated Kinshasa as the pandemic’s epicenter from the rest of the country. While in Mbuji Mayi, I spent considerable time with Pastor Benoît Mingedi, who doubles as a social worker and is the coordinator of the Presbyterian Ministry for Vulnerable Children in East Kasaï. For years, Pastor Benoît has on a monthly basis been participating in a platform for mutual learning and collaboration that brings together social workers from the State’s Department for Social Affairs (DIVAS), and from different religious communities and NGO’s that all work in Child Protection programs in East Kasaï. In one of his last reports, Benoît had shared with me about a community-based approach for the accompaniment of vulnerable children that he had learned about from the National Catholic Office for Children (BCNE) and at my request he arranged for him and me to visit the BCNE’s coordinator in Mbuji Mayi. Benoît realized that the Catholics’ approach incorporated the main outcomes from the CPC’s earlier discernment process, and it inspired him to envision a church-wide paradigm for the Presbyterian Ministry for Vulnerable Children in East Kasaï.

Less than a month after our trip to the Kasaïs, as Jeff and I had started sheltering at our home in Kinshasa, Benoît shared with me a comprehensive plan that had transpired from the conversations during our visit, asked for my feedback and invited me to an ongoing accompaniment for the restructuring of the ministry that had the blessing of the Church’ senior leaders. In the weeks that followed, we used all modern means of communication to clarify our understandings, sharpen the plans, calculate budgets and make projections to determine the limits of feasibility and sustainability to be respected by all to ensure the ministry’s success. All along, the CPC leaders were consulted and endorsed the process.

In essence, the plan entails a shift from a center-based model for shelter and care to a community-based ministry where children are taken in by host families that are members of CPC congregations. The main support-base for the care component shifts from Presbyterian churches in the U.S. to those in Congo, implying a change from donor-dependency to self-reliance with full responsibility and ownership for the children’s basic needs by the local congregation. The time and resources freed up in the new approach are redirected to the timely and effective
tracing of the children’s families and their reunification within three months after their initial arrival. Altogether, the restructuring would allow the church to help more children in a given year than in the center-based approach, including boys who originally were referred elsewhere as a precautionary measure to protect the already vulnerable girls. The plans further include the creation of a four-member volunteer committee in each of the CPC’s 192 congregations in East Kasai to not only ensure the churches’ support for the host families but to also raise awareness about Children’s Rights in their communities, and to watch out for and denounce any abuse. Together with the Catholic Church, social workers of DIVAS and local health clinics, these congregational committees would form a province-wide alert system as an important preventative component of the new plan.

Once Benoit’s plans started to consolidate, we realized that with the schools closed due to COVID-19, it was an opportune time to reunite those children whose biological families had already been traced back, but funds had been lacking to complete reunification. Thanks to the prompt response from one of our supporting churches Benoit was able to ensure the reintegration of 45 children from halfway homes in three CPC Synods within a time frame of just eight weeks. This step not only prevented disruptions in the children’s schooling later on in the year, but it also allows a clear shift for the ministry’s new model.

The traced back families, however, are typically poor and hesitate to welcome children back merely for their inability to support their child’s schooling. The educational scholarship program started a few years back at the request of the CPC and supported by Presbyterians in the U.S. will therefore continue in this new approach. The scholarships provide basic school kits for reintegrated children at the beginning of the school year and ensure their education through secondary school.

Next step in the restructuring process was the identification of host families and congregational volunteers in each of the CPC’s four Synods in East Kasai and ensuring their training as the success of the strategic shift hinges on the ability of each to assume their respective roles. The trainings are costly, but a one-time expense for the church to finalize the transition and launch the new structure. We were able to secure funds for a first round of trainings in Mbuji Mayi through a grant from the Africa Healthy Women Healthy Families committee. A few donations have since started to come in to complete the trainings in Kabeya Kamuanga, Muene Ditu, and Kabinda. I regret not to have been able to attend the first training event due to travel restrictions, but Benoît has kept me abreast through WhatsApp chats, pictures and videos. Jeff has called the paradigm shift for this ministry of the CPC “revolutionary.” The plans are bold and courageous and have already invigorated all 192 CPC congregations in East Kasai, who are eager to employ their meager resources to partake in this ministry to give vulnerable children a second chance.

In a season when we are reminded that there was no place in Bethlehem’s inns to receive the Christ Child into this world, I celebrate how our Congolese siblings in East Kasai are preparing to open their doors and welcome in children without a home, feed and clothe them. They do not act individually but together as the Body of Christ for these overlooked and ignored children who are members of Christ’s family (Matthew 25 vs. 40 paraphrased).

As a denomination modelled after our own connectional structures, the Presbyterian Church in Congo shows us that the PC(USA), too, can be most effective in rooting out systemic poverty and responding to the symptomatic needs by acting corporately.

Years of sustained support from Presbyterians across the U.S. have allowed me to walk with our partners, learning about their contextual challenges, discovering their capacity embodied in local congregations, discerning with them appropriate responses, and envisioning outside the proverbial box the rebirth of a ministry as vital for the children as it is for the church itself. I am thankful for all of you who have come alongside us and are willing to join us on this untrodden path, whether through prayer, a word of encouragement, a contribution towards Jeff’s and my sending and support, or a gift towards our partners’ ministry. It is in the PC(USA)’s continuous journey with our global siblings that we embody our kinship in Christ while gaining a window into the world to see the faces of Jesus in those ministered to by them.

As we celebrate the arrival of the Christ Child into our global village, may we continue to recognize and welcome Him in the appearance of our extended family worldwide!

**Christi and Jeff**

Mission co-workers based in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Serving as facilitator for women and children's interests (Christi) and regional liaison for Central Africa (Jeff)

- **Contact:** Christi Boyd ([christi.boyd@pcusa.org](mailto:christi.boyd@pcusa.org))
- **Contact:** Jeff Boyd ([jeff.boyd@pcusa.org](mailto:jeff.boyd@pcusa.org))
- **Learn more about Christi and Jeff Boyd here:** [https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/jeff-and-christi-boyd/](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/jeff-and-christi-boyd/)
Music Notes

Well, we’ve finally turned the page to 2021. Like all of us, I’m not sure what’s ahead, but there’s much in the rear-view mirror for which I’m grateful…all of you, for one.

Although we’ve had to be separate in many, many ways. Our community has stayed connected because of love for each other, the effort of many, incredible creativity, and of course, technology…lots and lots of technology.

My Gratitude Expressed

To all our musicians, directors, accompanists, tech crew, Pastors, Staff, and Music Team: We will plan to continue making music in 2021 as we have in 2020, while always following the COVID guidance. As we move into 2021 we’ll hope to open up to more ensembles and then in-person in larger groups as soon as it is safe to do so.

2020 Thank you’s and Looking toward 2021

Our ensemble directors and accompanists – Fall 2020
Emily Hussey, director of Joy! Singers (4s-1st graders) – virtual music time during Sunday School
Pam Kelly, director of Celebration! Singers (2nd -5th graders) – virtual music time during Sunday School
Kathy Bures, director of Exaltation!/Jubilation! Ringers (8th graders-adults) – Sunday afternoon rehearsals
Donna Heer, accompanist of Exaltation! Singers (8th grade – grad students – Rebecca Prater, director) – Sunday afternoon rehearsals.

Adult Small Ensembles
Praise Team – Leaders in Online Worship
Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings
Donna Goeckler, Contemporary Music Coordinator
Carrie DeVries, Contemporary Music Accompanist and Daniel Cole, Contemporary Drummer and Percussionist

Chancel Ensemble – Leaders in Online Worship
Sunday mornings
Chancel Singers I, II, III – Small Ensembles made up of Chancel Choir members – Tuesday evenings
Linda Dover, Organist/Accompanist (Rebecca Prater, director)

Music Librarians
Connie Richards, Chancel Choir and Lead Librarian
Ellie Nelson, Youth and Children’s Librarian
Mikki Walker, Handbell Librarian

Music Team
Katie Hearn, moderator; Chris Lindsay, clerk; Linda Dover, Michelle Gailliez-Frye, Terri Monrad, Celia Nicholas, and Anne Stroud

Administrative, Graphic, Licensing, and Piano Care
Patrick Bell, Kim Krueger, Mary Sue Thomas, and Kathy Williams

Tech Crew
Joel Kesler, Ray Kowalczewski, Eric Lee, Nelson Townsend, and Miles McDonald, Director of Tech

“Thank You” Notes

The anthem, “Hope in Me” by Terre Johnson, was donated by Bob and Linda Dover and Jim and Pam Kelly in memory of Lauren Bond’s father, Dr. Norman E. Bednarcyk (1938 – 2019). March 2020.

The anthem, “Come By Here” setting by Kyle Pederson, was donated in memory of Keith Elmore (1944 – 2017) and Kathy Elmore Hovis (1948 – 2020) – Rebecca Prater’s brother and sister – by Chancel Choir, August 2020.


Here’s What Else Will Come in 2021

…………………… (Cliffhanger)………..but it will be good.
Connect
Since our last newsletter, we have been part of the Christmas Eve photoshoot and had a lot of fun dressing up as angels and wise men. We also held a Glow Games night where we competed in events such as javelin throwing, mini golf, four square volleyball, and more all lit by glow sticks in the courtyard behind Heartland Hall. We ended the month with a game night for our students to choose either more high energy games or more relaxed games to play.

Progressive Dinner and Gift Exchange
One of our great youth group traditions is our progressive dinner and gift exchange. Since we didn’t feel safe during the pandemic to load students into cars and have a large group in someone’s house, we held our progressive meal outside around separate firepits at church. It was a blast cooking our own hotdogs and desserts over the fire and keeping ourselves warm with real flames. Our parents really were VIPs, providing the food and fire pits to help keep our students warm.

Looking Forward
We are excited to have our college students back home and we hope to have some time to get together and have some socially distanced fun. College-age students are also welcome to attend all of our youth activities while they are in town.

MLK Weekend
We encourage our youth families to join us for an MLK Day activity. This year we will be participating in a 90-minute driving tour of segregation in KC. You can participate any time between now and January 17th. We will be holding a zoom call for the youth to discuss what is learned on the 18th, but we encourage families to do the tour together when you are able to by following this link: https://voicemap.me/tour/kansas-city/dividing-lines-a-history-of-segregation-in-kansas-city
Worship Schedule
10am Online Worship until otherwise announced. Visit gcpc.org/online for links

Upcoming Newsletter Article Deadlines
February 2021 issue - Deadline, January 19
March 2021 issue - Deadline, February 19