



Vol. 30, Issue 1
2024

The Messenger



FROM OUR PASTOR:

Greetings and Happy New Year!

Friends and family of Maplewood, as we look back on the many challenges and hardships that we have faced as a community and as individuals this past year...the economic crisis, the social unrest, the natural disasters, and the personal losses, I am well aware that all of these have tested our faith, hope, and love in various and sometimes unprecedented ways.

But we also look back on the many blessings and joys that we have experienced as a community, and as individuals. The acts of kindness, the expressions of friendship, the moments of grace, and the signs of hope have strengthened us in remarkable ways.

We thank God for His presence, His provision, and His promises in our lives. We thank Him for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the source of our faith, hope, and love. We thank Him for the gift of His Spirit, who is the guide, the comforter, and empowers our faith, hope, and love.

As we enter the new year, we do not know what it will bring. We do not know what challenges and opportunities, what sorrows and joys, what trials and triumphs await us. But we do know that God will be with us, that He will never leave us nor forsake us, that He will work all things together for our good, and that He will complete the good work that He began in us.

Therefore, hold fast to your faith, hope, and love...holding fast to our faith in God, who is faithful and true...holding fast to our hope in Christ, who is able and willing...holding fast to our love for God and one another. May the New Year be a year of faith, hope, and love for us all, and may it also be a year of God's favor, peace, and joy for all at Maplewood. A joyous New Year to all!

Grace and Peace!

Steve

NEWS INSIDE:

Session News
Worship Volunteers

A Page for Prayer

EPG

Happenings
Martha Circle
News from Pews
Deacons Corner
L.I.F.T.
Supper Club Redeux

Celebrations

Calendar of Events



STAFF & CONTACTS

PASTOR:

Steve LaSor 724-836-3784

CHURCH OFFICE:

Diane Dale
724-834-4960

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Rich Anthony

Email:

maplewoodpc@comcast.net

Web:

www.maplewoodpc.org

Elders & Committees:

Stewardship/Finance

Sharon Elkettani, Chair

David Hileman

Carol Limegrover

Diane West

Missions/Membership

Bobbie Johns

Joe McNamara

Personnel

Sharon Elkettani

Property

Dana Ferry

Worship/Christian Edu.

Mike Cerilli, Chair

Donna Costelnock

Dave Hileman

Clerk of Session

Sharon Elkettani

Deacons Chair

Bonnie Peebly

Treasurer

Arlene Troster

David Hileman, Assistant

Financial Secretary

Diane West

Webmaster

Bob Bereit

Messenger Staff

Katy Doran-McNamara,

Editor

Marie LaSor

Joe McNamara

Arlene Troster

New Adult Studies for the New Year

Beginning Sunday, January 14th, a new Adult Sunday School class will be offered to those who enjoy coming to Sunday School before worship. The class will be looking at a brief history of how our New Testament came to us, and also questions about the documents that have come to be our scriptures. We will also consider a pressing question that has come up again: Are they reliable? The New Testament is being challenged on several fronts today, using old arguments for a new generation. The class will underscore what the Apostle Peter said, "For we did not follow cleverly devised stories or myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." (2 Peter 1:16)

Our Wednesday and Thursday classes will resume also with a scripture study, highlighting a variety of chapters in the gospels, and the book of Acts, with special focus on what Christ is calling us to be and do as his disciples in challenging times. This class will dovetail with the book study we had last fall on "Flickering Lamps." The Wednesday afternoon class at 2:00 will begin in the Lounge on January 10th. The Thursday class will be held in the Lounge the next day, January 11th at 7pm (weather permitting).

Begin the New Year by joining us in one or both of these studies!

Parking Issues

Dear friends,

We have begun to have a problem with parking in the upper section of our parking lot, near the front door. Some folks, due to lack of parking spaces along the handicap section, are parking on the grass island that separates the street from our upper lot. This is creating a congestion problem. With cars parked both on the grass and in the parking stalls, the corridor between the two rows of cars is very narrow, so much so that it makes it difficult to drive between the two. It would be impossible for an emergency vehicle (ambulance, fire truck) to get through if we should have an emergency.

So we are asking people to please not park on the grass island for this reason. We will also make sure to have more attendants down stairs to help members use the lift. It's slower than an elevator, but it provides a way for those who have trouble with the stairs.

Your consideration is most appreciated!

The Maplewood MISSION STATEMENT:

***TO KNOW CHRIST and TO MAKE HIM KNOWN
By LEADING People to a Saving Faith in Jesus Christ,
NURTURING and EQUIPPING People in the Faith,
Love and Knowledge of Jesus Christ,
DEPLOYING People in Servant Ministries to the Rest of the World.***



NOTES from DECEMBER MEETING

Elder Committee Assignments, 2024:

Worship & Education: Mike Cerilli, Donna Costelnock, Dave Hileman (to assist with background clearances)

Mission & Membership: Bobbie Johns, Joe McNamara

Stewardship/Finance: Sharon Elketani, Carol Limegrover, Diane West, Dave Hileman

Property: Dana Ferry

Personnel: Sharon Elketani

Pastor Steve expressed his appreciation to Denny Leavy and Ray McAteer for their work and participation on Session. He welcomed Dana Ferry who will join Session in the new year.

Committee Reports:

Worship and Education – Elder M. Cerilli reported the committee's initial plans for 2024 which will be discussed more in the new year.

Finance – Elder S. Elketani provided the November 2023 financial overview, highlighting the investment gain for November.

Mission and Membership

Elder D. Leavy reported on the following committee activities:

****Salvation Army Family** – Denny and Kathy Leavy escorted a family identified by the Greensburg Salvation Army on a Christmas shopping spree at Target.

****Joe McNamara and Mary Ellen Miller** volunteered at Torrance State Hospital to help assemble Christmas bags for the residents.

****All Session members** agreed that the Church Christmas Party on December 17, 2023 was a wonderful time of fellowship and thanked the Mission/Membership Committee for all their work.

Property – Elder R. McAteer informed Session of the following:

****The Westmoreland County Election Bureau** paid the church \$150 for use of the church in the November 7 general election.

****The ballast in the exterior sign light** has failed. Replacing the fluorescent with LED lighting planned.

Session continued:

****AARP** is scheduled to use Fellowship Hall to prepare tax returns for seniors and disabled people. Starting January 30, they will use the church on Tuesdays and Thursdays until April 9.

****Parking** in front of the church on Sundays has become an issue. With cars parked on both sides of the driveway, access to the front door is severely restricted, causing a concern for emergency vehicles to respond easily in an emergency. An announcement in the bulletin will explain the need to keep the fire lane in front free and clear and we ask members to park on one side of the lane only, or in the handicapped spots downstairs and to use the lift (with Dana helping members use the lift). Ray also suggested that valet parking could be offered to members.

Next meeting Monday, January 15, 2024

WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS:

Lay Reader: Bob Bereit

Communion Prep: TBD

Communion Servers: Dave Hileman, Donna Costelnock

Upstairs Greeters: Jane Myers, Marie LaSor

Downstairs Greeters: 7th, 14th Bob Harlan, 21st, 28th Sharon Elketanni

Ushers: Diane West, 7th, 21st Mike Cerilli, 14th, 28th Sharon Elketanni

Acolytes: 7th, 21st Mike Cerilli, 14th Marie LaSor, 28th TBD

Prayer Team: 7th Mike Cerilli, 14th, 28th Marie LaSor
All Other Dates TBD



Fern Benson
Mike Cerilli – Jason Patterson
Melody French's sister
Michael French's brother Joseph
Rosemary Fry
Diane Konop
Sue Kramer
Nathan & Matt LaSor – grandfather Bill Meyer
Family of Cliff Leonard, friend of Maplewood
Val McAteer's cousin, Gail
Roy & Jane Myers neighbor, Chris
John & Peggy Potts
Jason Reeher, Katy Doran-McNamara's son-in-law
Family of Jose Rodriquez, friend of Bob Bereit
Ann Ryan's friend Joanne
John Scales
Arlene Troster
Nancy Woodward



Prayers for members of our congregation and others who are struggling with emotionally at this time of the year, from the loss of loved ones, health issues, or other concerns.

Prayers for comfort and peace to members/friends who are shut-ins, in care facilities/nursing homes:
Mary Lou Constable, Nancy Gosser, Evalinda Rose, John Scales

The people of Ukraine & Russia; all who live within the zones of war & conflict.
All the innocents who live within the zones of war & violence in Israel & Palestine; those stranded in Afghanistan & those who choose to remain there to spread the Gospel.
For all our service men & women.
Prayers for Maplewood and all churches, for our community/nation/world in these troubling times.

Newest Additions in **BOLD

Please contact Katy Doran-McNamara to have requests added or removed from the list.

An Irish Blessing for the New Year

*May God grant you always a sunbeam to warm you, a moonbeam to charm you,
A sheltering angel so nothing can harm you;
Laughter to cheer you, faithful friends near you,
And whenever you pray, Heaven to hear you.*

From the Emergency Planning Group (EPG)



2024 Kickoff
By Karen Bouknight

Welcome to the kickoff of the Emergency Planning Group for 2024! I've updated the class calendar at the end of this article – as always it is subject to change. I like to keep things fresh and current if possible, and there have been two things that have happened recently that impact our personal preparedness.

The first thing that happened was the release of a film on Netflix that has caused a lot of buzz in the preparedness community. *Leave the World Behind* depicts a set of events experienced by two families on Long Island. It has some well-known actors, but I wouldn't say it's worthy of an Emmy Award. Some folks have panned it completely, but there was an important lesson beyond the obvious need for food, water, medicine, and power in an emergency. Let me explain.

Often in a movie or story we are presented with information in the plot that we try to connect in a way that makes sense. Even when there is a big twist that shows everything is not what we thought, we are usually presented with additional facts that help make a good believable story. But real life doesn't unfold that way like in a compact two-hour movie. What was great about this movie is that the audience is presented with multiple strange events that cannot be attributed to a single cause. For example, in the film there were dozens (or hundreds?) of Tesla electric vehicles all self-driving to a single location and crashing into one another, along with hundreds of deer gathering in a backyard, both in the same day or within a day or so of each other.

This observation is important because it is very likely that as the world unravels further, we will witness events that will not have a single cause, nor a guaranteed outcome. We could explain the Teslas as a successful hack of the onboard computer systems, but I don't think we can say the deer were hacked even though both events had a similar "gathering" together. The film never explains the cause of the strange events, which has led to a lot of discussion online speculating on plausible possibilities.

The EPG classes usually focus on a specific topic or aspect of being ready for a particular emergency. The critical takeaway is to understand that multiple emergencies are likely going to overlap, and in some instances one event could obscure another. Additionally, multiple emergencies don't always occur at the same speed. The primary emergency might cause subsequent events – or might give cover to bad actors who take advantage of the chaos to further another agenda. In the heat of the moment, it is unlikely that we would know that agenda or its purpose.

The other thing that happened recently is the data breach of Xfinity/Comcast that exposed the data of 35.9 million customers. If you are a Xfinity/Comcast customer, you should immediately change your password (something complex and not used anywhere else) and enable two-factor authentication. If you are unfamiliar with two-factor authentication, this is a process where during the logon-ID and password entry, you are prompted to receive a code electronically via text or email. Then you enter the code where prompted and access is granted. These codes are generally only valid for a few minutes. The type of data stolen is believed to be usernames, hashed passwords, contact details, and secret security question-answers. In other words, our most sensitive information was exposed. And if you use the same information on other websites, you could potentially be hacked with other sites you use.

Both the film and the data breach touch on our next class topic: **Cyberwarfare**. Even if you don't personally use a smart phone or a computer, all the services you depend on use those things. Join us in our next class to learn how cyberwarfare is being used right now across the world by governments, militaries, criminal enterprises, and intelligence agencies. The new year could include more direct and frequent cyber-attacks. Learn how to limit your exposure, protect yourself, and help others protect themselves. See you in class! Maranatha!_

Upcoming EPG Classes:

January 21: *Cyberwarfare: Understanding the Threat* – Class
February 18: *Economics, Politics, and Your Pocketbook* – Class
March 17: *Finding or Building a Safe Shelter* – Class



MARTHA CIRCLE:

December's luncheon was held at Giannillis restaurant at Carbon.

Reminder for the change of location for future meetings. Beginning January, 2024, we will meet in the church lounge. Hostesses will provide supplies for future meetings.

Thank you to Diane Konop for the Christmas socks, Carmella McCormick for the ornaments and Arlene for the name drawing for the 2024 Secret Sisters.

L.I.F.T. GROUP:

Happy New Year from the LIFT ladies! We hope the year is full of blessings and good health for everyone.

Keep an eye on the Sunday announcements for information on our next study to begin later in January. We would love to have you join us!

Blessings,
Marie

NEWS from the PEWS

Thank You!

Michael, Becky, Paul and I want to THANK my Christian family for the VISITS, GREAT FOOD and CARDS that I have received since my fall right after Thanksgiving. I feel so blessed that I have such a wonderful church family.

Arlene Troster

Something Thoughtful from Mary Leamer:

*Every day may not be good
But there's something good in every day!*

DEACONS CORNER:

The Deacons hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and we wish you all a happy and healthy New Year.

You will be contacted by your Deacon in the month of January by a call or card. Some of you will have a new deacon this year. We are all here to help you in any way we can.

Have a blessed New Year!
Bonnie Peebly

Supper Club

2024 REDEUX!

OK, folks! Let's try this again!

Our first Supper Club dinners were very successful & fun events, even including after-dinner game time with one Host family. What a great plan! Now, in 2024, we can build on that social event if we will.

If you are interested in an evening of good food, relaxed camaraderie & fellowship, call **Katy Doran-McNamara** (see your Directory for home or cell number) and PLEASE consider being one of the hosting households! The next gathering in this New Year will be scheduled for **March**, followed by **June, September & December**.

A meeting of at least one person per household will be held in **February** to consider how to proceed with dates, menus, host & guest groupings, and to answer any questions or concerns. Stay tuned for an announcement of a date for that meeting.

Looking forward to making this an annual series of events that more will want to join!

Blessings, *Katy Doran-McNamara*



Celebrate or Commemorate

Do you have a birthday, anniversary, graduation or other special occasion to rejoice about? Are you remembering a loved one who has died? Are you joyful about God's love? If so, share these events with others by placing flowers in our church for Sunday service. It's very easy. Choose a date you wish to have flowers, fill out the form below and put in the church's office. The rest will be taken care of for you. For \$29.00, you can have fresh flowers for a service, a note in the bulletin to commemorate your special occasion and you can take the flowers home with you. If you do not want the flowers, the Deacons can deliver them to shut-ins. Detach and send to church office:

M.U.P.C., 108 Woodland Road, Greensburg, PA 15601

Name _____ Phone _____

Date for flowers (Sunday) _____

Notice for bulletin to read: In honor of _____

OR: In memory of _____

I wish to (check one) _____ take the flowers after the service _____ let the Deacons deliver them to shut-ins

1....Gary Hemminger

6....Autumn Limegrover

9....Doris Bogert

26...Sharon Elketanni

30...Tony Cerilli
Mackenzie Williams



Taking a few moments to recall those we have lost in recent (and a few not so recent) years, fondly remembered and grateful for the promise Christmas gave us in our Savior for grand reunions.

**Donna Anderson
Natalie Anthony
Robert Bogert
Roland Constable
Glen Doran
Vince Falvo
Pauline Fritz
Jim Fry
Ruth Gordon
David Gosser
John Hofelt**

**Nancy Hofelt
Carl Ireland
Patrick Labeka
Richard Leamer
Cliff Leonard – Friend
of Maplewood
Don Livingston
Roger McCormick
Hugh Perotti
Marcia Remaley
Beverly Reynolds**

**Robert Rose
George Roth
Mark Seeno
Sara Seeno
Don Smeltzer
Audrey Smith
Fred Snyder
Dan Stuthers
Mike Troster
Carl Truxel
Lois Weyandt**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<div>31</div> <div>9:30am Sunday School 10:45am Worship Service</div>	<div>1</div> <div></div>	<div>2</div>	<div>3</div> <div>11:30am Men's Luncheon 7:00pm Choir</div>	<div>4</div> <div>6:00pm Al-Anon 7:00pm Prayer Group</div>	<div>5</div>	<div>6</div> <div>9:00am Food Bank 12:00pm Property</div>
<div>7</div> <div>Communion Sunday 9:30am Sunday School 10:45am Worship Service</div>	<div>8</div> <div>7:00pm Finance/Stewardship</div>	<div>9</div>	<div>10</div> <div>11:30am Men's Luncheon 2:00pm Bible Study 7:00pm Choir</div>	<div>11</div> <div>6:00pm Al-Anon 7:00pm Bible Study 8:15pm Prayer Group</div>	<div>12</div>	<div>13</div>
<div>14</div> <div> 9:30am Sunday School 10:45am Worship Service 12:00pm Mission/Membership 7:00pm Finance</div>	<div>15</div> <div>7:00pm Session</div>	<div>16</div>	<div>17</div> <div>9:00am Martha Circle 11:30am Men's Luncheon 2:00pm Bible Study 7:00pm Choir</div>	<div>18</div> <div>6:00pm Al-Anon 7:00pm Bible Study 8:15pm Prayer Group</div>	<div>19</div>	<div>20</div>
<div>21</div> <div> 9:30am Sunday School 10:45am Worship Service 12:00pm Annual Meeting 12:00pm Worship/Education 12:15pm Cyberwarfare: Understanding the Threat</div>	<div>22</div> <div>7:00pm Deacons</div>	<div>23</div>	<div>24</div> <div>11:30am Men's Luncheon 2:00pm Bible Study 7:00pm Choir</div>	<div>25</div> <div>6:00pm Al-Anon 7:00pm Bible Study 8:15pm Prayer Group</div>	<div>26</div>	<div>27</div>
<div>28</div> <div>9:30am Sunday School 10:45am Worship Service</div>	<div>29</div>	<div>30</div>	<div>31</div> <div>11:30am Men's Luncheon 2:00pm Bible Study 7:00pm Choir</div>	<div>1</div> <div>6:00pm Al-Anon 7:00pm Bible Study 8:15pm Prayer Group</div>	<div>2</div>	<div>3</div> <div>9:00am Food Bank</div>