



CTC Connections September, 2021



Session reinstates the use of masks for all indoor gatherings

Sighting the recent increase of infections from the Delta variant of Covid-19 in Saginaw County, the session has reinstated the requirement that masks be worn by all who gather indoors here at the church starting Sunday, August 8th. Coffee hours will continue outside when the weather cooperates and when members are able to provide for it.

From Pastor Brant Piper

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:3-6

These words of Paul are words of thanks and praise for the joy experienced within him from his work with this community of faith.

They are also my words as I conclude my ministry here with you. I will treasure my experiences with you as we engaged together in this precious work we call the gospel. I will treasure our sharing with one another of our experiences with this gospel, how we discovered how God was at work in our lives, lifting us up, providing us with encouragement and insight. Some of this sharing happened as we gathered in smaller study groups to explore how scripture was enabling to see ourselves and our world in another light. Some of this happened as we gathered in our work teams considering what actions to undertake to strengthen our connections to one another and to God. Some of this happened as we gathered after worship, where the informality of the setting encouraged the sharing of personal hopes and dreams. Some happened in visits in hospital rooms, assisted living apartments, home visits, and some in graveyards after a burial. This sharing creates community and the encouragement needed to thrive.

Over the last few months people have once again felt safe enough to venture into the church for a visit. They have shared their frustrations with dealing with the pandemic and what feels like its never-ending presence. They have also been able to express their sadness, their hurt, even their sense of betrayal about my leaving. I feel honored when people are honest with me, when they share what I believe are the most important parts of themselves, their thoughts and our feelings. It is when members of this congregation are willing to be vulnerable with me and with one another that we open ourselves up to the gifts of abundant life offered to us through Jesus Christ. It is in those times that we discover that the grace of God is real, even if we aren't always able to show it.

Together we have taken on difficult challenges, the most obvious being to offer our worship to God during times when we could not be together. When our activities began to shut down last March, we have worked to be together as best we could, using the technology we have before us and finding new ways to share the good news of Jesus Christ. There have been the challenges of finding new leadership as people responded to their own health needs and pulled back from long-held and long-cherished positions. There have been the challenges of staying in touch with each other when face to face wouldn't work. Though we might be able to see one another face to face on our phones or iPads or laptops, it is just not the same.

Doing ministry together is always something that is challenging, because it is supposed to be. Ministry is not only the difficult challenge of reaching out and caring for those outside of the community of faith. It is also the difficult challenge of looking inward to discover the broken parts of ourselves that need the healing that comes to us through the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

I want to express my appreciation to the people with whom I have had the privilege of working.

Dan Groom has been very supportive as we have had to deal with the changes to worship. From the start he has provided wisdom and creativity to the selection of music, finding hymns and other music that have enriched the themes presented in the sermons and liturgy of worship. He has not only used his talents to create the banners that have enhanced our worship, but his attention to detail in also setting up our worship space has added to the sacredness of our worship experiences. He has been instrumental in helping with the redesign of the worship service, indispensable as we have had to tackle the new technology of worship and have had to focus on how worship is presented through the camera lens. On top of all that has been a great person to work with as we have faced the challenges of doing worship in whole ways.

Kathy Loviska serves this church well as its Administrative Assistant. She is very professional in her communications with people inside and outside the church, whether through the phone or printed materials, or through our Facebook pages. She makes the office hum as a well-oiled machine. There has not been a technology challenge that she has not taken on without enthusiasm and creativity. Over the last 18 months we have had to make innumerable changes to how we present information to the church and to the community, and she has developed new skills and sought out new resources to make this happen. On top of all this, she has worked to decipher my handwriting, all with a positive spirit.

Andy Glynn came in with a quiet, helpful spirit. Andy is clearly gifted as a musician, and I have been blessed by his selections and skills. He has demonstrated flexibility in ever changing circumstances and has provided us with his wisdom and knowledge concerning technology. To watch Andy and Dan work together is a source of joy.

I will covet your prayers as I search for new ways to serve God and enjoy God forever. I will be listening for the still small voice that calls me towards new opportunities for service.

Congregational Meeting, Sunday, September 19th, following worship

The Session has called a Congregational Meeting for Sunday, September 19th, following worship, for the purpose of requesting Lake Huron Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship between Rev. Piper and Countryside Trinity Church.

Bedrock Beliefs

Over this past month we have been exploring our Bedrock Beliefs, working to come to a consensus about the ones that are foundational for us.

Bedrock Beliefs are the principles of faith which matter most in our daily lives. They are the words of scripture, or the symbols, or the images we turn to in times of crisis. They are also foundational for us as we set up our priorities for ministry with one another and to our community. Together they answer the question: *Why my belief should matter to a complete stranger!*

What is evident is our Bedrock Beliefs are deeply connected with our personal experiences of God. God is *loving, healing, trustworthy, forgiving, reliable, generous, an ever-present source of growth and wisdom.*

We express our faith with phrases of passion and commitment:

- *Give it all to Jesus*
- *Believe with all my heart*
- *New purpose for life: serving others*
- *Sadness into Joy*
- *Obstacles into Opportunities.*



In the congregational gathering on August 22nd, we sought to further explore our Bedrock Beliefs by answering the following question: *In the midst of stress, what word or phrase gives you strength?* Answers included:

Trust God loves me The Lord is my Shepherd I belong to God
God strengthens me to accept & live with consequences Jesus loves me
My faith keeps me safe I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me
The Spirit surrounds me and never leaves me I am not alone God is with me

Our Motivating Vision

Our next step invites us to continue to pursue God's energy and the creativity, trusting that God's Spirit will reveal to us a "Motivating Vision." A motivating vision is not a statement of faith, but a passionate expression of the heart and mind that *drives us towards mission.* This vision will empower us to incorporate into all we do the new life offered to us in Jesus Christ. This vision will lift us up to see beyond the obstacles before us, fills our hearts with immense purpose and confidence, and give individuals within our community a burning desire to do something immediately, whether or not others want to join in.

This vision will reorient us and individuals and as a community towards those outside of our walls, will carry us in unexpected directions, and will invite us to take real risks.

We seek your input as we work together to discern our motivating vision, because we believe that God often, as with the prophets of old, spoke truth to the people of God from the voices found on the outward edges of the community. For this reason, below is an activity in which you are invited to create your own vision statement. You are invited to play with the words and symbols and images of scripture as they relate to your experiences with God and where God might be calling you to go.

Below is the motivation vision from our last mission study that incorporated our name.

Which words are captivating and motivating to you?

Which words might you change that would make it more captivating for you?

Committing to Christ...Telling our Story...Caring beyond Ourselves.

How would you express your vision of our church?

After asking God to provide you with insight and hope, brainstorm about how you might express your experiences with God and the calling that has come from them.

1. List some verbs that speak to you of how God has and is interacting with you.
2. List some words that describe how you are impacted by those actions.
3. List some words that describe how you might respond to people within our community of faith because of your interactions with God.
4. List some words that describe how you might respond to people outside of our community of faith because of your interactions with God.
5. Now put those thoughts together. Here are a few examples:

Engaging the Gospel...That Heals Hearts...and Creates Communities.

Seeking the Spirit... to Reveal God...and Compel Service.

6. Submit your motivating vision to the church office or place in the survey box.

What's Next?

What happens next is that the Mission Study team, Mary Ann Parker, Roger Scovill, Debbie Davis, and Dan Groom will use the information and energy from our congregational gatherings, focus groups, prayer triads, and surveys, along with your submissions to the above activities, to write a mission study that accurately conveys three questions:

- **Who are we?**
- **Who is our neighbor?**
- **Who is God calling us to become?**

Once this mission study is completed, it will be submitted to the presbytery for approval, upon which the church can elect its Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). The PNC will then have the responsibility to use the Mission Study, as well as its own discernment, to write a Mission Information Form (MIF), the main instrument for the search of a pastor.

Mary Longstreth and Carol VanArsdale continue in their work to bring forth recommendations to the session for the position of a "bridge pastor." This pastor will provide pastoral leadership for worship, administration, and pastoral care for the immediate future as the PNC seeks a permanent pastor. Your prayers for their work are requested.

Online Worship on Sunday Mornings at 10:30 on YouTube CTC Saginaw

We will continue to place on our FB public and group pages our order of worship for the day, and we are hopeful that it will enhance your worship experience by offering the music and words to the hymns and other parts of the service so that you may participate more fully.

We ask that you continue to be in prayer for the volunteers who provide assistance for our services, as well as for new volunteers to step up for these positions. If you have an interest in serving in the ministry of the gospel as a camera person, a computer assistant, or a worship planner working with media, please contact the pastor so that you can review the job description and the responsibilities of these positions.

Financial Report

Your faithful giving empowers us to continue our witness to the work of Christ in the world as it allows you to strengthen your relationship with God. Our goal for September is \$8,500. Please remember you can make an online donation through our app, and if you need help with this, or if you want to run your donation by the church, please call the church office. Our online service includes its usual time of thanksgiving and dedication for our gifts, so you may want to have your money and envelopes or perhaps even your phone ready so that you can more fully participate in this time.

Christian Outreach



Please remember our local ministries during this time, as they work to provide additional resources to our community in this time of pandemic and need your support.

CROP Walk will hold an informational meeting at the East Side Soup Kitchen on Saturday, September 11 at 9 am. Anyone interested call Marcia Lacker 799-0895 for a ride. You can walk on line or in your neighbor or on Sunday, October 10 with the group. After the Saturday meeting, Marcia will have more information. Plan ahead to get some pledgers.

September Mission of the Month is the City Rescue Mission. This mission addresses the most basic needs among the homeless people in Saginaw and provides practical tools to improve their lives immediately. The current needs are towels, twin sheets, men's shoes size 9 and up, corn muffin mix, coffee, cream of chicken soup, canned corn, canned carrots, brooms, dust pans, kitchen and bathroom wastebaskets and trash bags. Check their website for longer term needs. The first Sunday of October, we will receive the Peace/Neighbors in Need offerings.



A great big **thank you** to Pastor Brant Piper and to all who have called and sent prayers and such beautiful cards. It has been a blessing and I hope to be back in church soon.
Nancy Easlick.

Boy Scouts: On September 10th, the Scouts will also be conducting an American Flag Retirement Ceremony with the American Legion on Weiss. If you have flags that need to be retired, you can drop them off at the church and place them in the box at the east entrance.

Be Respectful

Please be respectful during worship service and refrain from talking. Remember that once the Prelude begins and until the Postlude ends the Worship Service **is in progress** and is being livestreamed. During this time we are to remain in our seats and listen to the beautiful music that is being played and the message our Pastor brings to us. We ask that you do not get up until the Postlude has concluded so as not to interfere with the livestreaming. Thank you.

Thanksgiving Food Baskets

We are hoping that this year, we will be able to return to our normal food basket gift for some of the area families in need. We will begin accepting non-parishable food donations beginning in August for those able to help out. The following items will be collecting now - as we get closer to Thanksgiving, we will post those items which are still needed. As always, we will need people to help out on "Packing & Shopping" Day so stay tuned for more information.

Non-parishable canned goods or jars, i.e. vegetables, gravy, fruit, tuna fish, spaghetti sauce, pork & beans, soup, peanut butter & jelly, etc. Thank you so much for your generosity.



Angel Tree: We are hopeful that we can resume our Christmas Angel Tree this year. More information to come.

Two Coins A Meal

We will continue to collect Two Coins a Meal on the first Sunday of each month during Worship Service. There will be a pail at the back of the Sanctuary marked as such. Please bring your coins in a plastic baggie or envelope if you are able to do so and place in the pail either on your way in or out of Church. Thank you.



Kroger Community Rewards Program: We have received our donation from the Kroger Community Rewards program for the months of May-July, 2021. It was for \$47.08 which is not a huge amount, but everything helps. If you shop at Krogers and use their "Plus Shopper's Card" and you have not yet named Countryside Trinity Church as your charity of choice to receive donations, please get together with Kathy Loviska who can assist you in doing so. It costs you nothing, but for everyone names us we get a small percentage of the amount of your purchases which includes among other things, food, medications and gas.

YOUR SESSION/COUNCIL AT WORK

August 17, 2021

Mary Ann Parker, Clerk of Session

Reflection & Thanksgiving Time: Reflected on 2 Corinthians 4:6-12.

Minutes of 6-15-2021 and called session meeting of 8-3-2021: Approved.

Treasurer's Report: Financial information for July reviewed and accepted as printed.

Clerk's Report: Membership remains at 120.

Communion served to 32 congregants on 7-11-2021 and to 32 congregants on 8-1-2021. Ten homebound members and their family members received communion in August.

Pastor's Report: Serves on Presbytery COM Transitional Team and Committee of Ministry and Ministry Preparation.

Served home Communion to 6 members & 4 of their family members.

Has had visitation with members both at the church and in their residences.

Conducted funeral service for Dr. Robert Nelson, ex-member.

Held focus groups and congregational gatherings exploring members core values and bedrock beliefs.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Christian Outreach: August mission is Weiss School. September mission will be City Rescue Mission. CROP walk will be 10-10-2021.

Finance & Stewardship: Monthly income goals reviewed. Monthly goal for August is \$13,500.

Spiritual Life: It was decided to obtain bridge pastor following Pastor Brant's retirement.

M. Longstreth and C. VanArsdale will serve on that team.

Return to Worship: Session will require worship participants to continue wearing masks at this time, singing and verbal responses will be in seated positions, continued good hand hygiene is encouraged.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Motion sustained to allow Pastor Alissa Davis to conduct the marriage service at CTC for Katlyn Scovill and her fiancé on June 11, 2022.

2. Motion sustained to adopt a policy for conducting electronic session meetings when situations arise limiting face to face meetings.

3. Session will host a "farewell reception with regrets" for Pastor Brant on September 26, 2021 with light refreshments. A card box will be available for members/friends to send him off on his retirement with best wishes' cards.

**All members/friends are invited to a farewell reception for
PASTOR BRANT PIPER
September 26, 2021 following worship service.
Light refreshments will be served.**

CTC TREASURER'S REPORT	July, 2021				
	Beginning Balance	Receipts	Disbursements	Transfers	Ending Balance
General	(3,074.80)	7,805.11	9,619.56	1,095.00	(3,794.25)
Memorial	9,470.00				9,470.00
Memorial - Lyons Troop 304	-				-
Manse	-				-
Special gift	17,800.02				17,800.02
Special projects	2,195.36				2,195.36
Mission					
Per capita	360.60				360.60
Two-coins-a-meal	72.00	53.00	18.00		107.00
Food baskets	237.52				237.52
Heifer proj (Church School)	-				-
UCC/PCU/Blankets	220.00		220.00		-
Good Samaritan	2,347.28	50.00			2,397.28
Muriel Lakey Scholarship	7,206.52	309.54			7,516.06
Womens Association	-				-
Local	1,137.00	120.00	1,137.00		120.00
Bricks	1,335.85				1,335.85
	39,307.35	8,337.65	10,994.56	1,095.00	37,745.44
Minister Compensation	94,182.95			(535.00)	93,647.95
Endowment	256,998.27	51.72		(560.00)	256,489.99
	390,488.57	8,389.37	10,994.56	-	387,883.38



Betty Burr Samaritas Senior Living	Joan Comstock @ Home	Dawn Curtis @ Home
Betty Hauk Wellspring Ind. Living	Floyd & Lois Krzak @ Home	Doug and Marilyn Leffler New Hope Valley
Bob & Marie Lemmer Wellspring Assisted Living	Fern Evon Little Swan Haven Manor	Judy Lorenz St. Francis Home
Virginia Lyon @ Home	Ruth Marsh @ Home	Norma Meacham New Hope Valley
Elaine Miner @ Home	Fran Prueter @ Home	Helen Reynolds Wellspring Independent Living
Shirley Roof Wellspring Assisted Living		



BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Becky Pequignot
- 3 Rob Halase
- 3 Dora Fitzgerald
- 5 Charles Davis
- 6 Jerry Brachear
- 8 Lindsey Groom
- 13 Louis Diechman
- 14 Michael Patrick Groom
- 17 Lois Krzak
- 20 Liz Saperstein
- 22 Amanda Dean Groom
- 25 Thomas Kennedy
- 28 Brant Piper
- 29 Tom Ladner
- 30 Vincent Martinez

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Zachary Plater
- 2 Drew Pequignot
- 2 Dan Groom
- 3 Joseph Ruth
- 5 Mary Longstreth
- 6 Amanda J. (Groom) Fulton
- 11 Dick Easlick
- 11 Jerry Paquette
- 13 Ethan Parker
- 13 Ruth Marsh
- 13 Charlotte Armstrong
- 14 Mike Yusaf
- 14 Tania Yusaf
- 16 Randy Groom
- 17 Elizabeth Jacob
- 19 Christopher Davis
- 22 Jean Anne Miller
- 22 Pat Denno
- 25 Ezra Yusaf
- 25 Aaron Plater
- 26 Ashley Huizar (Scovill)
- 27 Marie Lemmer
- 29 Scott Jacob
- 29 Lori Halase

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Paige Pequignot
- 3 Sam Nolan
- 7 Judi Westendorf
- 7 Christine (Dowling) Greenwood
- 8 Duncan Redfield
- 9 Stephanie Plater
- 10 Anjel Vernon
- 11 Dave Fitzgerald
- 12 Jacob Plater
- 15 Dick Woodke
- 16 Pervez Yusaf
- 19 Martin Bethune
- 19 Bethany Scovill
- 20 Judith Lorenz
- 21 Ronald Miller
- 22 Jacob Groom
- 22 Lucas Gonzales
- 23 Bethany Scovill
- 23 Virginia Jarvi
- 28 Jennifer Nolan-Heyn
- 28 Avis Leach

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 9 Roy and Nancy Erndt
- 9 Shirlee & Roger Scovill
- 16 Peter & Isabella Dominguez

OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 Aaron & Paula Plater
- 8 Robert & Marie Lemmer
- 10 Eric & Sue Smith

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

- 17 Jerry & Virginia Brachear
- 22 Dave & Dora Fitzgerald

2021 Gathering of Presbyterian Women in the Synod of the Covenant

September 18, 2021, 9:30-11:30 am, via Zoom (seats limited!)



*Theme: What My Grandmothers
Taught Me*

Bible Study overview by Rev. Cheri
Harper, PW staff (Mission Associate)

Keynote by Rev. Kathy Reeves,
Moderator-elect for Churchwide PW
2021-2024

Overview of two Thank Offering grant recipients:

Koinonia Project in Belize (building a daycare center and Sunday school)

The Castle in Centerville, OH (Mental Health drop-in center)

Business Meeting will include Financial Report, Election of Leaders and News from the Synod of the Covenant (by Rev. Dr. Chip Hardwick, Interim Synod Executive)

How to Register: Email the following information to Susan Ochs, s2123@aol.com, by September 13, 2021:

Your Name, Phone Number, Email address & Your Presbytery's Name. You will receive a registration confirmation.

Then on September 16, you will receive a zoom invitation giving you the link and login information needed for Zoom and gathering documents including agenda for the gathering.

Cost to attend: \$0. A suggested offering will be received that will be split among the two Thank Offering Grant recipients that you will hear about during the gathering. More info will be sent with Zoom invitation. In the meanwhile, find a picture of your grandmother (or a woman of faith standing in for your grandmother) or a candle to light to have with you at the gathering.

**Countryside Trinity Church
4690 Weiss Street
Saginaw, Michigan 48603**

Our Prayer for Our Pastor, Brant Piper

Lord God,

Thank you for the extraordinary love, commitment and creativity this wonderful Pastor has given this church. Thank you for the way he has served us and given so much to all of us.

We pray that he would go on to find new treasures each day, and that the blessing of Christ would be upon all that he does, forevermore.

Amen.



**Celebrate Pastor Piper and join us
for a special farewell reception on
Sunday, September 26th following
his final worship service.**