

# The Bethany Beacon

## Toth talk

"Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. If they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help." Eccl. 2:9-10

As a young pastor, I was asked, "Why do I have to go to church? I feel closest to God out in the mountains." Most of us could say this at one time or another; just fill in your favorite place to find and feel God—someplace very special, sacred.

But in a very tactile sense, we need more than God. We need one another. We need someone to laugh when we laugh and cry when we cry. We need someone to remind us that God loves us even when we don't feel very lovable. Someone needs to declare in no uncertain terms that I am forgiven and that you are too. Every once in a while, we need a reminder that death is not the end; that Jesus rose from the grave and the first of those who will rise. And when all hell breaks loose, someone

needs to give everyone a hug and say in a firm voice, "God is in ultimate control; you and I don't have to be responsible for everything that happens."

I wish I had given that as the answer.

Peace,

Linda

**Bethany  
Presbyterian Church  
(U.S.A.)**

May 2019

Kathryn Baker, Editor  
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## May scriptures

- ♦ 5/5—Rev. 5:11-14, John 21:1-19
- ♦ 5/12—Rev. 7:9-17, John 10:22-30
- ♦ 5/19—Rev. 21:1-6; John 13:31-35
- ♦ 5/26—John 5:1-9, John 14:23-29

## May pulpit assistants

- ♦ Dave & Barbara Henderson
- ♦ Joya Hill

## Windows dedicated Easter Sunday

Out of extensive damage throughout the church caused by unseasonable snow in 2017, Bethany has now completed repairs and has installed a new stained glass window at the front of the sanctuary as well as reinstalled the Good Shepherd window in the narthex.

Words from the service of dedication: "Bless the work of our hands, O God, that this place may offer your welcome to many and diverse people; that all who seek you here may know your presence in their lives. By your grace and according

to your will, may the gospel of Jesus Christ be truly proclaimed and the sacraments rightly administered that the body of Christ may be nurtured here and strengthened for Christ's service in the world."

"O Light of the world, shine in our hearts, our lives and our sanctuary; now and forever. Amen."



"I used to pray that God would feed the hungry, or do this or that, but now I pray that God will guide me to do whatever I'm supposed to do; what I can do. I used to pray for answers, but now I'm praying for strength. I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things."

- Mother Teresa

## Chenoa and family are now located in Peru

*About 18 months ago, Bethany established a mission friendship with Chenoa Stock, who was serving in Bolivia. Due to her particular focus being phased out in Bolivia, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reassigned her and Jose to work in Peru. Bethany has been waiting to hear about her new home and praying for her safe transfer. The following letter arrived a couple of weeks ago, telling of her change of scene (and what a change it has been).*

"Rebirth." This is how my husband, José, describes our recent move to Lima, Peru. In early February, we packed our possessions, said our goodbyes to Bolivia and took off to begin a new family mission — from a country of 11 million to a city of 11 million; from a landlocked country to a coastal one; from a dry, mountain city at an altitude of 13,000 ft. to an ironically humid, desert city at sea level; from our layers of jackets, jeans and boots to a city where the summer months are no joke and sandals and short sleeves are a must. So yes, a rebirth into new life has indeed begun.

Perhaps this family life transition is timely during this season of Lent. Rebirth, a time of renewal, and resurrection are never easy. There is darkness, there is struggle, there is a longing for what used to be in all its simplicity. But we are called to be Easter people. We are called to walk through that darkness with faith that the Light is greater and that resurrection leads us to brighter days.

Our two months here have found us both in the darkness and in the light. But I imagine that is expected in any life transition, especially as a family. The enormity of this city is one that intrigues and overwhelms at the same time. We have already explored it a decent amount in our searches for an apartment, technological amenities to keep us connected to the outside world, grocery stores, markets, and baby needs. Venturing out to meet friends and colleagues and taking walks have also proven to be times of exploration.

This new mission call is with PERUSA, which is part of the Peruvian Joining Hands Network, the same program

with which I served in Sri Lanka and Bolivia. PERUSA helps facilitate partnerships between PC(USA) churches in the US and communities in Peru to create strong, long-term relationships through working, learning and reflecting together. These partnerships are with communities of the Evangelical Church of Peru and their work in Bible institutes and seminaries, but also accompany Joining Hands Peru network partners, including a school for the deaf, a home for abused girls and ecological gardens. These Peruvian communities are blessed to have partnerships with so many PC(USA) congregations who faithfully support and visit them each year to grow their relationships. If your congregation is interested in exploring a partnership with Peru or in bringing a delegation to visit, please let me know!

Next month we will be traveling to Cusco to meet with the synod members there, as well as to visit their Sajiruyoc Bible Institute and attend their General Assembly. We are looking forward to getting out of the city and visiting a new part of the country. Luckily, our Bolivian-trained lungs should not have a problem with the altitude there. After Easter, we will start focusing on finalizing the logistics and details for the next few months' scheduled delegation trips and their time here with our partners. It is a big learning curve, and there is still so much more to do, see, and learn — but we are taking it one day at a time.

We are deeply grateful to have another mission co-worker couple here, Jed and Jenny Koball, and their son, Thiago, to support us, especially in these first months. Leandro and Thiago have already taught each other so many things, and we look forward to seeing how their friendship blossoms over the years.

So yes, amidst this transition that sometimes feels dark or confusing, we see the Light and feel its presence. We know and faithfully believe that the Easter promise of reconciliation and renewal will be fulfilled and present, not only this Easter, but throughout our time here accompanying our Peruvian partners in God's mission — a mission that only grows stronger because of your accompani-

ment and prayers.

Thank you for walking with our family through this time of change and renewal and for your financial gifts and support that make this service and partnership possible. We would ask for prayers of patience and humility as we continue in our "rebirth," learning about this partnership and country and discovering our role in it all. May the Resurrection of Easter lead us to be people of Light.

**If you want to send a note of support or a card to Chenoa and Jose, their new mailing address is:**

**Chenoa Stock & Jose Luis  
Claire**

**Av Juan de Alaiga 702,  
Departamento 1401**

**Magdalena del Mar**

**Lima 15076 PERU**



## In foreign lands—Part 2 (Antarctica)

By Kathy Penne

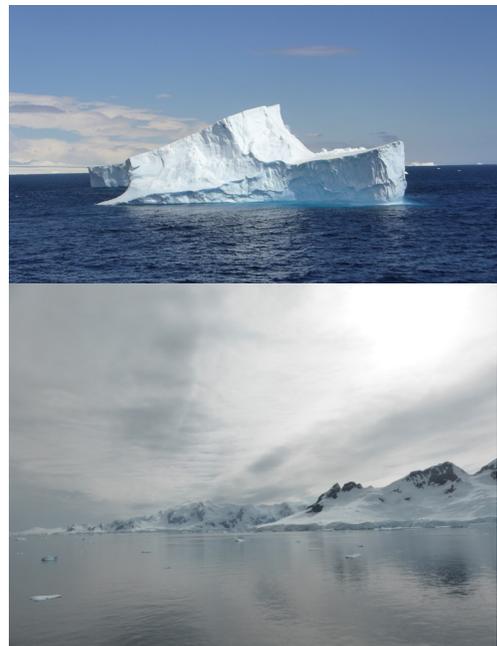
I can't imagine living or even staying where the summertime high is  $-17^{\circ}$ . Yes, Antarctica is breathtakingly beautiful, but surreal. The snow-covered land looked as if someone (God?) sculpted it out of egg white icing, then decorated the surrounding water with startlingly white icebergs and their brilliant blue bases. We passed one iceberg that was 1 1/4 miles long and a 17-story building tall, with only 2/7th of its mass visible.

Two varieties of penguins, the Adelie and the Emperor, live on that vast desert covered with ice year round. We learned they huddle together to conserve body heat when it drops to  $-76^{\circ}$  in the winter. I whine big time at

$-15^{\circ}$  when I leave my heated house or car. I even caught bronchitis going out on the ship's deck to take pictures.

Imagine, Humpback whales swim 5,000 miles south each Antarctic summer to gorge on the plentiful krill swimming in those iceberg-filled waters; then another 5,000 miles north to Baja California, Mexico to mate and calve in the warmer Pacific Ocean. I couldn't swim 5 laps if I tried; which I don't.

I felt privileged to be one of the 30,000 to 40,000 people a year to visit Antarctica, plus South America, but I didn't fit in. Sadly, I never could.



## Presbyterians respond to crisis in Yemen through OGHS\*



In war-torn Yemen, 75 percent of the population lives in poverty, with 60 percent food insecure and 8.4 million

people unsure of where their next meal will come from, according to United Nations statistics. By any measure the crisis is escalating quickly, with a 61 percent decline in gross domestic product per capita over the past three years and 1.25 million civil servants not being paid in the past 18 months. As the situation deteriorated in Yemen, its urgency was obvious to the Presbyterian Hunger Program and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

"We were very worried about the situation on the ground, and we also had a lot of churches calling saying, 'Things look really bad in these places. What are we doing?'" recalls Valéry Nodem, Associate for International Hunger Concerns for the Presbyterian Hunger Program. "So, we reached out to establish some connections."

Yemen is an Islamic nation with a very small Christian population and no Presbyterian presence. So when the Hunger Program and Disaster Assis-

tance decided they wanted to become engaged in helping address the nation's humanitarian crisis, the first order of business was to identify an organization already responding on the ground. The Hunger Program decided to partner with Generations without Qat, a development organization formed in 2007 to work on education around issues related to poverty, health and youth. In 2014, the group began to work on providing rapid response activities and relief support to conflict-affected communities.

The initial Hunger Program funding was \$13,000, to which Disaster Assistance later added \$10,000. The project is in the Al Mukha district in the southwest corner of the country. The project will provide fishing kits and training to almost 500 families of internally displaced people. The partnership does two things strategically: It puts local people in charge of the projects, and it provides a long-term solution to hunger and poverty.

"It's important, even in situations of conflict, to still think about long-lasting solutions," Nodem says. "By providing fishing nets and training to families, they can feed themselves for the duration of the project and

beyond. The project will also help generate revenues for families, as they can sell fish in local markets."

"We have not worked in a place that had so many challenges," Nodem says. "And if I look at the amount of funding we are currently sending to Yemen, it's really a drop in the bucket. As the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, this is for sure the hardest crisis we have worked on."

Bethany has given \$587.20 to OGHS\* (\$94.20 in coins). The Gracie banks also gave up a key (if it is yours, Linda has it), a camera battery and a Euro 10 cent coin.

Thank you Marilyn & Bill for counting all those coins. Marilyn noted, "Some things [we found] just can't be deposited in the bank."

\*One Great Hour of Sharing

# Presbyterian Church (USA) membership decline has slowed

After years of seeing hundreds of churches leave the denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is starting to see the number of departing churches decrease. The Office of the General Assembly has wrapped up its latest review of membership statistics which indicates the decline in membership may be slowing down.

In 2015, the total number of PC(USA) members was listed at more than 1.5 million. Within a year, membership declined by nearly 90,000. Last year, the decline was just over 62,000. The number of churches leaving the denomination between 2015 and 2016 totaled 203. In 2018, it was 34.

"While the difference is not great, we are encouraged by the slowing trend downward," said the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC (USA). "The church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is changing and we still believe God is preparing us for great things in the future."

Nelson is encouraged by statistics showing a significant increase in professions of faith and reaffirmations last year. In 2017, the total number was over 12,900 compared to more than 22,000 last year.

"We rejoice when any one person comes to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but there is great joy in seeing the hearts of 9,000 more followers when compared to the year before," said Nelson. "God is moving through churches, presbyteries and synods, finding new, innovative ways to share the gospel with a lost world and we are thankful for that."

Nelson says the statistics continue to show a need to reach younger generations. The number of youth professions of faith continues to decline.

"The real work internally is creating opportunities for youth and young adults to be taken seriously by our congregations. Many of them bring fresh perspectives to a rapidly chang-

ing world that can assist both sessions and congregations to live into 21<sup>st</sup> century ministries and new evangelism possibilities," said Nelson. "This type of shift should not be viewed as a power issue, but instead a commitment to maximize and broaden opportunities for growth within the congregation. Partnerships with campus ministries are essential as well."

Approximately 82 percent of churches submitted data representing 87 percent of PC(USA) membership. The median presbytery has a membership of 6,266 persons. The average presbytery consists of 113 ministers, 54 churches and four candidates.

"We still have work to do," said Nelson. "But these numbers represent the best we have seen in a long time. Praise be to God."

From Presbyterian News Service



	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Churches	9,642	9,451	9,304	9,161
Active Members	1,572,660	1,482,767	1,415,053	1,352,678
Youth Professions of Faith	11,904	243	10,716	9,578

## Church in the Czech Republic after Soviet rule

By Dave Henderson

Barbara and I were recently in Central Europe and were particularly struck by how local tour guides described how some of the countries we visited have dealt with life after Soviet rule. Initially the Soviets were welcomed as they drove out the Germans towards the end of WWII. But things soon changed as this became an occupation that lasted two generations until 1989.

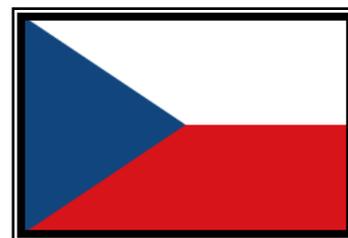
Since then, recovery has been variable but particularly challenging in the Czech Republic. Two different guides told us similar stories about how hard it was to adjust after the Soviets left. Many found it difficult to deal with all of the choices freedom brought. Simply going to the grocery

store and having to choose between all of the new items was problematic for many.

Possibly most striking, was the effects of the occupation on religious freedom. Czechoslovakians in the 1940's were primarily Catholic, but had a strong Protestant presence as well as Jewish and Islamic cultures. Under the Soviets, most of the churches were shut down and the clergy run off.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, religious entities began to re-emerge, but growth has been slow. The guides told us that there is a general apathy towards religion caused by the fact that Czechs, up to about 45-years-old, had been unable to openly practice any religious beliefs at all. Even

though many of the churches aren't being used by congregations, they are being used as the centers for social programs and volunteerism. It's an interesting contrast to the freedoms we have here.



## Session and Deacons

Each church, presbytery and synod is to have a Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Safe Child Policy. Bethany has been updating its policy, and the Session voted to approve it at their April meeting. If you would like to see a copy, ask Linda or Kathryn. The policy will become part of the Manual of Operations and will be reviewed by Session and Deacons annually. Along with the Safe Child policy,

Bethany leaders will undergo background checks. This action is to ensure the safety of children and those who work with them.

The Deacons have re-evaluated the fee schedule for use of the hall. Session is now required to approve their recommendations.

Session is also reworking the Bethany Bylaws. Once the draft is ready, it

will go to the congregation for review and approval.

And if that isn't enough, the Manual of Operations will be updated as well.

The financial report presented to Session at their April meeting shows that giving remains strong. Thank you, everyone, for your generous support of Bethany's ministry.

## Bethany bulletin board

Next Chapter Food Pantry and Garden reminds us that volunteers are always needed. Contact Marilyn Rowe.

Beth Magrini's grandson, Branden Claudio, rolled his pickup on his way between Caldwell and Wilder. He will be okay, but please pray for his good healing.

Jeanette Moore's grand daughter-in-law, Ruth Towley, was in a coma for

several days,. Last report is that she opened her eyes and can squeeze a person's hand when asked.

Daryl Wilson (Redeemer Pres. & Boise Pres. Executive) underwent surgery recently to remove a tumor growing on a nerve on his right arm. Please pray for good recovery for Daryl.

One independent little Gracie fish was found swimming on her back

among a sizable school of fish, which found their way onto the communion table.



## Letterbox

Dear Bethany PW

Thank you for a very well done spring gathering. Indeed everyone does deserve a place at the table!

We would like to help with supplies for the pillowcase project. It seems there is always something, which should not be ignored. Please use this check and buy supplies.

Yours in Christ,

Priscilla Oja

Southminster PW

## May calendar

May 1—Session 7 p.m.

May 2—Presbytery at Covenant 2 p.m.

May 4—Presbyterian Women 9:30 a.m.

May 7—Deacons 7 p.m.

May 7-11—Linda at Synod meeting

May 15—Mariners Noon the Plaza

May 15—Mission Committee 2 p.m.

May 15—Worship Committee 3 p.m.

June 1—Presbyterian Women 9:30

## May birthdays

May 13—Roy Peterson

May 13—Becki Kovach

May 26—Conrad Anderson

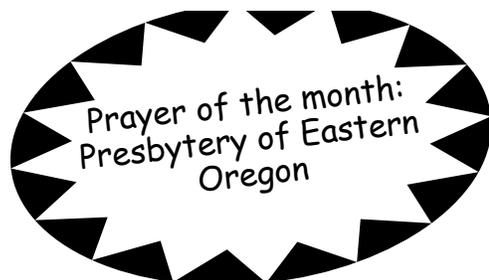
May 30—Linda Peterson

## Bethany Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Love, forgive, grow.



## Just a few words...

A couple of weeks ago, Kathryn and I both experienced a situation we had never thought would happen. Our houses sit well above the Snake River here in Weiser, consequently we both felt very safe and secure. Granted, both houses are downhill from the Galloway Ditch, but it is always carefully maintained and not a worry. Then the April rains began, as well as the spring thaw. We knew there would be much run-off in the Weiser River, which has often flooded the Eastside of town and where it flows into the Snake.

So, one afternoon, Kathryn's neighbor knocked on her door to tell her the Weiser River had breached the diversion dam and was entering the Galloway unrestrained. The ditch company was concerned that the ditch could overflow in various places, one of which was above our houses. Her neighbor, a Weiser police officer, was warning folks in this part of town, and he told her to pack a bag and prepare to evacuate in about three hours. She shared this information with me, and

we each packed a bag thinking... "Oh, this is what it feels like to wonder what to take". Joya offered us beds, Kathryn's family in Boise called offering to come help her move things up or out, Bethany prayer warriors kicked in to pray for our safety and we settled down waiting for the call that did not come.

A few days later we were sharing what we had decided to put in our cars. Kathryn, The Organized, thought to take the external hard-drive from her computer as well as her little lap-top. She thought about some jewelry knowing that a disaster, no matter the magnitude, is an open invitation to the criminally minded. However, I, The Pollyanna, grabbed jammies, undies and a clean shirt for the next day. I also made sure I had shoes on which I seldom wear in the house. Then it hit us...neither one of us had wasted a thought on our possessions. We both have some family treasurers that are antiques, picture albums, some nice paintings on the walls, my grandfather clock, her man-

tle clock we lovingly call Larry (that's another story) but we didn't worry about what to do. There was an acceptance that settled over us, each in our own way knowing we could not lift these things to put them in the car or set up on things on blocks. We were going to just have to see what Mother Nature had in store for us.

Was this our faith in God's care for us that we would survive? We knew we didn't have flood insurance since most of Weiser is not classified "flood plain." We knew how ugly the mud and mess is after water has wreaked havoc, but we didn't fret or fuss about it. We were thankful for Joya's house above the canal if needed, we were thankful for the advanced warning, we were thankful for the city crew who worked and opened head gates along the ditch and relieved the stress. We were just plain thankful. God is good...

In Christ,

**Joey**