

UCCEG Newsletter

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST EAST GOSHEN – APRIL/MAY 2021



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What is the Stone Worth to You?

Cole and I travelled to the feed and concrete store on route 340 close to our home on Holy Friday morning several years ago to buy 30 rocks for our Friday evening service. We had to do some driving acrobatics to locate any person near the store or even in one of the houses on either side of the road. The store always looked downtrodden so I didn't know this time it was really abandoned! Outside the store on the opposite side of the road were huge bins of rocks some small and some large, some river rocks fitting in to the size of my palm and other the size of a basketball or larger.

Finally we headed up the road a little behind the rocks and there was one lone man wearing a plastic hazard like suit, and wearing a plastic safety mask, coming out of the open warehouse-type building, and I said "You know anything about the rocks? I have a holy Friday Service and I wanted to buy 30 or so of the smaller ones." The man said to me "Sometimes I look over the business for the women who lives in the house there." He said, "Drive over to the rocks and I will meet you there."

So Cole and I drove over and began to look through the rocks for some which suited the purpose. Then the man said "Well, I don't know how much to charge let's see... hum well what are the rocks worth to you?"

He said 5 dollars and I said alright, and he walked away, and I piled the rocks into the car not sure where the five dollars would end up. Who had this man been?

Was HE the gardener????....

After he walked away, I had to ponder the theological question he had asked me, which he didn't even know he asked" What are the rocks worth to you?

I felt a sensation like John Wesley said he felt when he was at a prayer meeting he reluctantly attended and he heard someone read from Luther's Preface to the Epistle to Romans. About 8:45 p.m. while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, Wesley said "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

"What are the rocks worth. To you?" It took me by surprise when he said that, but it also left me feeling strangely warm because I knew this was the question of Easter. But also the question as we live out Easter's promises. For us today, The question "What is the rock which has been rolled away worth to us?" What is life eternal worth to us? What is Christ's death worth to us? What changed in us at the tomb on Easter? Once we can answer those questions we have entered into life as ***Easter People!!***

This year I painted and left many small rocks outside around the church building. When you drive by church, stop and pick one up, and keep reflecting on what that stone was worth.

*In Hope from the tomb,
Pastor Angelee*

Mark Your Calendars
(tentative details inside)

April 25 – Blessing of the Animals

1:00 PM – weather-permitting

May 2 – Outdoor Worship

10:00 AM – Sign-up required, weather-permitting, Communion included





Café Script

Our mid-week bible study focuses on the scripture reading for the following Sunday. We meet via Zoom on Wednesdays at 11 AM. The link is in each weekly newsletter and on the website. Please join us!

50th Anniversary Update

Two volunteers are needed for the 50th Anniversary Committee. We had to get creative due to the pandemic, so we will have a year-long celebration with monthly events beginning in September 2021, culminating in a celebration in September of 2022. If you are interested in helping, please contact Bonnie Jackson at cajmom@verizon.net.



Church Directory

An updated version of the UCCEG church directory can now be accessed online via our website. It is password protected, so if you'd like the password please send an email to office@ucceastgoshen.org



Website Updated

Our website was recently updated to be more user-friendly. Be sure to check it out at ucceastgoshen.org and share with friends and family.



Christian Education needs YOU

I am recruiting people to serve on the Christian Education Committee. This committee is responsible for Sunday school as well as adult education. Meeting times haven't been scheduled yet but will be set up according to YOUR schedule if you are the first to join the committee! You don't need to be a parent, the only requirement is an interest in furthering the spiritual journeys of the members of our congregation.

Sunday School Decisions

Returning to in-person Sunday School (when/how) remains the biggest decision facing the CE committee. Whether to order curriculum and the choice of



curriculum is the next biggest decision that needs to be made—soon. And supporting our church's next Confirmation Class is the other main priority for the education of our young people.

Adult Education

Adult education could be offered in a hybrid format—making online connection available to a small group that is meeting in person as appropriate—as soon as a teacher is recruited. That could be YOU! Please think prayerfully whether you feel called to present on a topic one-time or in a multi-session class format.

Contact Carol Swingle at cswingle@aol.com for more information on any of these initiatives.

Our 2021 Outdoor Easter Service



Blessing of the Animals 2021 Sunday, April 25 @ 1 PM



UCCEG's annual Blessing of the Animals is only about three weeks away! Please bring your pet(s) for this fun outdoor service. This year (given Covid and all the adjustments we are making to ensure safety and comfort), our Animal Blessing will be simpler and shorter. We will not be having a photographer present to take pictures of you and your favorite pet(s), but we are happy to take a photo of you and your pet with your own cell phone.

Please wear a face mask so that everyone feels more secure. If you are able, please consider bringing a can of pet food for donation to a local pet charity (most likely the SPCA).

If you have nearby pet lovers in your life, please share news of the Blessing of the Animals with them and encourage them to attend. All pets must be leashed to keep them safe from traffic and other threats.

If the weather is inclement, the event will be cancelled.

Hoping to see you and your special animal friends soon! If you have questions, please send me an email.

Pam Onyx
abtface@aol.com

Not an Ending

Molly Baskette

Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and she told them that he had said these things to her. - John 20:16-18 (NRSV)

One of the enduring mysteries is what actually happened 2,000 years ago on that morning we now call Easter.

We have four unreliable narrators: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They all agree that Jesus really died. But then they diverge. Mark says the women found an empty tomb and ran away terrified, and never told a soul, which is naturally how everybody knows about it now. Matthew and Luke have slightly more optimistic accounts of Jesus coming alive again, walking, talking. John has the most to say about the resurrection, with Jesus showing off his grody wounds to Thomas, cooking kippers on the beach, and going on a whistle-stop tour.

One story, four different endings.

Here's a shocker: Maybe the Gospel writers came up with four different endings because they were doing their best to comfort a people who needed hope, even not-quite-precise hope, even hope with a spin, even false hope.

We know about needing hope. Life is beautiful. Life is also very, very hard. Some years are years of Good Fridays that leave us broke and broken-hearted.

The unreliable Gospel narrators knew there were other versions of the story. They even borrowed from each other, like a cup of sugar between neighbors, a story just as sweet.

The authors didn't care that their Easters were different. They experienced Easter each in their own way. They weren't trying to write endings. They were writing beginnings.

Easter is not a history lesson with a tidy ending, but an invitation to look past death in all its disguises. After every death, new things get born. Your story is not over. You are a resurrection in progress, still becoming. You may sometimes have a year of Good Fridays, but Easter will always arrive.

Prayer: God, I thought I was at the end. But you're just beginning a new story in me. Write the first word.

REOPENING UPDATE

The plan the council has approved as of their March meeting is as follows:

- The first Sunday of each month worship at 10 am will be outside weather-permitting. There will be a sign up, Holy communion will be shared, members and friends are invited to attend, and safe distance precautions will be followed.
- We are grateful to Dr. Eliza Thornton, and Pam Onyx for their generous gift of time and planning for our safe reopening. They are both rotating off of the reopening committee, having faithfully served the church for the past year.
- A new committee has been formed: members are: Steve Bailey, Michael Duca, Andrea Testa and Pastor Angelee. This committee has been tasked in planning the continued steps in our safe inside church re-opening.
- The congregation was sent a survey in March. 35 people responded. Jen, our office administrator, has tallied the results, and the council will receive the results at their April 19th meeting.
- On April 12th, our new committee will meet to decide what resources will be used to plan our safe re-opening, and we will review the surveys.
- Council will receive a monthly report from this committee.
- The council has decided that Todd Speece, our council president, will be the person to receive any suggestions/comment/questions on the inside reopening plans. Please direct your joys and concerns to Todd as the liaison to the committee and council.

Thanks to all who have kept our congregation and staff safe during this pandemic. Although the months have been long, our congregation has not been a part of a super spreader, and our staff and worship leaders have remained covid-free.

In thanks for this ministry we share, Pastor Angelee

ROOT AND ROOFS

We look forward to having you join us at Roots & Roofs on Saturdays at 5:30 PM via Zoom. April 10 begins our series on faith and our senses. Zoom Link is on our website and in the weekly email. All are welcome!

Follow us on [Facebook.com/RootsandRoofs](https://www.facebook.com/RootsandRoofs)

Newsletter Submissions

The UCCEG newsletter is published monthly. Submissions are due by the 3rd Tuesday of the month prior to publication to office@ucceastgoshen.org.

2021 Church Council

- President – Todd Speece
- Vice President – Lucy Barber
- Secretary – Beth Keates
- Treasurer - Beth Saylor
- Financial Secretary – Don Rising
- Building & Grounds – Steve Bailey
- Christian Education – Carol Swingle
- Church Growth - Al Benner-Smith
- Congregational Life – Bonnie Jackson
- Mission & Outreach – Pam Onyx
- Worship & Music - Bunny Watts & Ann Boohar

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www.UCCEastGoshen.org
[UnitedChurchOfChristEastGoshen](https://www.facebook.com/UnitedChurchOfChristEastGoshen)

Rev. Angelee Benner-Smith, Pastor

Michael Hatala, Director of Music Ministry

Maxwell Staley, Worship Leader, Roots & Roofs

Jen Troutman, Office Administrator