

The Simeon Spirit

SIMEON UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH

Gratz, PA

February 2024

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The Quest for a Spirit Filled Life

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:4-9)

A few years after I graduated from college, I read the book *Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude* written by Napoleon Hill and W. Clement Stone. This was my first dabbling with self-help books. As a psychology major, I had an interest in how these approached simple to sometimes serious life issues or clinical mental problems. If you were to go into a bookstore in the late 1980's, you would find a couple packed shelves with this category. Today, Amazon.com returns over 70,000 titles for these books. Literally this is an exploding genre of literature. There are books for men, women, teens, children, and every religious faith tradition you can think of.

What does this tell us about our society today? I believe the answer is that out there are tens of millions of Americans who are in some way so dissatisfied with their lives they are willing to try anything for relief. In a great irony, at a time when our country has abundant material wealth, modern housing, technological wonders, readily available transportation, abundant inexpensive food, and some of the best medical care in the world, we are more unhappy than ever.

Self-help books are being published by psychologists, self-help gurus, and several and many Christian authors. They make bold promises for wealth, popularity, sexual partners, and self-fulfillment. It is big business with traveling lectures, DVDs, and self-help phone lines. One book promises to 'Change Your Life In the Next 15 Minutes'. Fast relief for a fast-food society.

But at the end of the day, their vast numbers and the few which have received even notable acclaim is proof that they have not filled the emptiness so many Americans still feel.

There are as many unhappy Christians as any other group in the population. This is unfortunate. In fact, over the centuries many Christians have accepted the myth that we are not meant to be

too happy. An exemplary Christian is a suffering Christian some would claim. This is completely unfounded.

Perhaps I could recommend some self-help titles which Christians would find beneficial. But come to think of it, there is only one. It's titled "The Holy Bible", and it is not a self-help book, it is a God-help book and that makes all the difference in the world. We may have a difficult time thinking of the Bible as a guide to successful and happy living.

Some complain that these ancient scriptures are too difficult to understand. That they need someone else to tell them what it says. This is just a sad commentary on the ignorance so many Christians have today of the book they claim is the foundation of their faith. There are so many good English translations today, and many great study bibles which help people wade into the mystery and power of scripture. Why does the bible remain so neglected? There is really no good excuse.

So what does this book have to say about living a successful and fulfilling life? First, that our God genuinely cares for our wellbeing and happiness. God loves us unconditionally and desires to bless us. Yet something keeps getting in the way. It is called Sin with a capital 'S'. Lutherans are not always comfortable talking about Sin. We like to think more about grace and keep Sin hidden away in some safe place. But we cannot ignore Sin. Sin describes our relationship with God when it has become damaged. The lower case 'sins' are just the symptoms of a deeper problem.

Yet Sin as a concept still has its difficulties. Perhaps if we describe the ways Sin manifests itself in our thinking, emotions, and behavior, this will help clarify it. Greed, our attachment to material things, pride, slavery to self-interest, envy, fear, and our unwillingness to forgive are all the ways we wreck our own life and the lives of others. This is Sin like a disease at work in our mind and bodies.

Jesus told his opponents "you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." They retorted back, "we have never been slaves to anyone." To that Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin." Here is the truth: if you are dissatisfied and unhappy with your life, it is time to do some honest self-reflection. You will most likely find that at the root of the external problems in your life are the toxins of Sin which work its way into the deepest inner regions of your heart.

And the cure is God. In the 6 verses quoted above, the Apostle Paul offers more powerful advice than could not be found in a hundred self-help books. The power is found in our relationship with God. The key to connecting with that power is prayer.

Prayer is the means by which we invite God back into our hearts and lives and seek his healing. Prayer can be moments of quiet silence as we open ourselves to the radiance of God's presence. Prayer can be a conversation. Jesus taught us to approach God as a loving parent. Through prayer we begin to feel God's feelings, think God's thoughts, and desire what God desires. If we only make prayer something we just wedge between the few gaps of free time we have each day, then our expectations should be modest. There is no 'Change Your Life In the Next 15 Minutes' when it comes true inner transformation of our lives. God's grace is free, but it is not cheap.

Prayer takes work. We must approach prayer as we would in any other important part of our lives. Prayer is not just something we do, but it is a lifestyle. When we truly begin to hunger for the peace we feel in our commune with God, then it begins to spill over to the whole rest of our hours.

When we begin to live a life pleasing to God, we don't have to work up some phony show of emotions to rejoice. Joy begins to well up from our inner spirit and we truly rejoice. We don't have to use a force of will to think true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, and thoughts worthy of praise. They become the natural way we think and see the world. To think any different would be forced.

One caution to note. Those who are experiencing medical depression or an anxiety disorder or think they might be, please see your physician. Depression is treatable and seeking medical help is not a show of weakness. If you needed medication to help your heart function properly, would you refuse it? Who cares how it may look. Both physical and medical health have medical solutions.

There is much more to be said. Even better, there is much more to be read. Make seeking out the wisdom of God a quest. Hear all the words of Jesus. Not just bits and pieces every Sunday. Listen to Paul as he deals with the real struggles of living and his wisdom filled counsel towards finding a peaceful, more meaningful, happier life. Please be patient. Undoing a whole life time of sorrows, guilt, and bitter hurts takes time. Please feel free to share your experiences with me. I have plenty of my own tales of woe.

And as Paul concludes: "Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."

This is most certainly true.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Greg

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS FROM, JANUARY 2024

OLD BUSINESS: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. **Worship and Music**- None

2. **Parish Education**- None

3. **Stewardship and Evangelism** – None

4. **Social Ministry** – Bread giveaway maybe coming back, got stuff from the Lighthouse to give away. Trying to come up with some new things and to get additional stuff for the food bank. Had 15 families for January.

5. **Youth** – No snow tubing yet. Got hotel arrangements for youth gathering.

6. **Church Property** – Need to put a new roof on the outside entry way to the kitchen. Need to get plaster fixed in sanctuary. Since they no longer want John to do snow removal by shovel Lynn has hired two boys to shovel the snow. Discussion was held on how to pay and how much to pay them. Decided to pay them each \$10.00 every time they shovel & Lynn shall keep record of payment to them and submit for reimbursement.

7. **Budget and Finance** – None

8. **Fellowship** – Has a total of 14 member with some new people and has several auxiliary members. Scheduling a meeting to plan the years events. Susan brought up about how to let people know how church is cancelled if they do not have Facebook and a discussion was held, nothing was decided.

9. **Mutual Ministry** – Need a council member to be on committee, Matt Ferster volunteered.

New Business – Tim Ferster along with Jack & Dan Umholtz presented the organ renovation proposal to the council. Discussion held. Motion made to accept the proposal with the additional work by Susan Krause seconded by Sharon Erdman, accepted with one no vote. Going to call a special congregational meeting for congregation to approve on February 4, 2024 after worship service, Motion by Sharon Erdman Seconded by Doris Flynn, Approved. Matt explained how devotions are done and who does them to the new council members. Tim Ferster is doing a Doughnut Fundraiser for the organ fund, taking orders for Homemade Potato Doughnuts. The Bishop would like to worship with us on a Sunday in Fall. Was given 4 dates to choose from, decided on Sunday, November 3, 2024(All Saints Sunday).

The Pastor's Time – Confirmation Covenant tabled. Will be doing a Bible Study on Wednesday nights at 7pm for Lent, beginning on February 21, 2024. Not sure of topic yet.

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING JANUARY 21, 2024 AFTER WORSHIP

Matt called meeting to discuss the congregational meeting scheduled for February 4, 2024 because of not having the finale updated finished proposal from Columbia and to get more information for funding the renovation to the organ. Discussion held and motion made to postpone congregational meeting by Susan Krause, seconded by Deb Trautman, Approved.

John apologized for not having the correct information for the boy's hired to do snow removal. Lynn updated council on the information Discussion held decided to pay them \$40.00 per snow removal. Motion made by Matt Ferster, seconded by John Novinger, Approved.

2023 GIVING

\$155,567.09

2023 EXPENSES

\$155,070.98

Difference between YTD Giving & YTD Expenses \$496.11

{For General Operating Fund}

“VOICE OF SIMEON” RADIO MINISTRY SPONSORS

February 2024

February 4 – Buffington/Reed Funeral Home

February 11 – Willing Workers

February 18 – Bellevue Bees

February 25 – Hoffman's Hatchery

We want to thank our faithful sponsors in continuing to help with this important ministry of our church especially during these trying times. God bless you and be safe.

LENT DEVOTIONALS

Lent Devotionals are available in the narthex, regular and large print. Please pick up a copy for yourself, neighbors, friends, or anyone else.

ITEMS NEEDED FOR THE FOOD BANK

Canned fruit, canned pasta meals, canned meats.

SERVING IN FEBRUARY & MARCH

<u>FEBRUARY 4, 2024</u> 5TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY w/ HOLY COMMUNION	<u>Greeter:</u> Mike Hartman <u>Reader:</u> Sharon Erdman <u>Usher:</u> Matt Ferster <u>Glasses:</u> Brenda Flynn	<u>Altar:</u> Dennis Barge
<u>FEBRUARY 11, 2024</u> TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY	<u>Greeter:</u> Deb Trautman <u>Reader:</u> Doris Flynn	
<u>FEBRUARY 14, 2024</u> ASH WEDNESDAY	<u>Greeter:</u> Matt Ferster <u>Reader:</u> Mike Hartman	
<u>FEBRUARY 18, 2024</u> 1ST SUNDAY IN LENT	<u>Greeter:</u> Doris Flynn <u>Reader:</u> Samantha Boyer	
<u>FEBRUARY 25, 2024</u> 2ND SUNDAY IN LENT	<u>Greeter:</u> Virginia Moore <u>Reader:</u> Becky Hoover	
<u>MARCH 3, 2024</u> 3RD SUNDAY IN LENT w/ HOLY COMMUNION	<u>Greeter:</u> Jenny Sracic <u>Reader:</u> Jenny Sracic <u>Usher:</u> Dave Strohecker <u>Glasses:</u> Jean Perkins	<u>Altar:</u> Doris Flynn
<u>MARCH 10, 2024</u> 4TH SUNDAY IN LENT	<u>Greeter:</u> Susan Krause <u>Reader:</u> Dennis Barge	
<u>MARCH 17, 2024</u> 5TH SUNDAY IN LENT	<u>Greeter:</u> Jenny Sracic <u>Reader:</u> John Novinger	
<u>MARCH 24, 2024</u> PALM SUNDAY	<u>Greeter:</u> Anna Coleman <u>Reader:</u> Barbara & Keith Klinger	
<u>MARCH 28, 2024</u> MAUNDY THURSDAY w/ HOLY COMMUNION	<u>Greeter:</u> Darlene Novinger <u>Reader:</u> Tracy Bixler <u>Usher:</u> Lynn Schadle <u>Glasses:</u> Susan Krause	<u>Altar:</u> Sharon Erdman
<u>MARCH 29, 2024</u> GOOD FRIDAY	<u>Greeter:</u> Dave Strohecker <u>Reader:</u> John Novinger & Pastor Greg	
<u>MARCH 31, 2024</u> EASTER SUNDAY w/ HOLY COMM.	<u>Greeter:</u> Deb Trautman <u>Reader:</u> Virginia Moore <u>Usher:</u> Mike Hartman <u>Glasses:</u> Becky Hoover	<u>Altar:</u> John Novinger & Lynn Schadle

GRATZ UNION CEMETERY ASSOCIATION, INC.
Gratz, PA 17030

December 31, 2022 To December 31, 2023

Balance-December 31, 2022	6,369.96
Income:	
Sale of Lots	1,300.00
Burial Rights	250.00
Cremation Grave Openings	900.00
Grave Up-Keep Fee	1,400.00
Now Account Interest	11.62
Total Income	3,861.62
Expenses:	
Jerry Welker, Lawn Care	1,612.50
Dennis Shaffer, Trimming	840.00
Gas	440.00
Jerry Welker, Appreciation Bonus	300.00
Kris Mattern	444.34
Schreffler Equipment	415.16
Dave Strohecker, Mowing Vacant Lot	50.00
Celin Sitlinger, Cremation Grave Openings	650.00
Simeons Church/Church Mutual Insurance	288.00
Box Rent	15.00
Sandy Kissinger, Secretary Fee	420.00
Postage, Copier, Keys, Oil	93.38
Simeon Church, Insurance Donation	650.00
Simeon Church, Refuse Removal Donation	150.00
Total Expenses	6,368.38
Balance-December 31, 2023	3,863.20

INVESTMENTS

Ameriprise Financial	389,188.26
ELCA Mission Investment Fund	92,469.55
C J Umholtz Memorial	17,386.30

UPCOMING EVENTS:

FEBRUARY

Friday, February 2 - Happy Groundhog Day!!

Sunday, February 4 - Worship Service w/Holy Communion 10:15a.m. /Food Collection

Saturday, February 10 - Food Bank Open 9-11 a.m.

Sunday, February 11 - Transfiguration Sunday Worship Service 10:15a.m

Monday, February 12 – Abraham Lincoln’s Birthday!!

Tuesday, February 13 – Doughnut Pickup 11a.m. – 5 p.m.

Wednesday, February 14 – Ash Wednesday Service 7p.m. /Happy Valentine’s Day!!

Little Hands Valentine’s Day parties Wed. & Thurs Feb. 14 & 15

Thursday, February 15 – Council Meeting 7 p.m.

Friday, February 16 – Deadline For March Newsletter!!!!!!

Sunday, February 18 – 1st Lent Worship Service 10:15a.m

Monday, February 19 – Happy President’s Day!!

Wednesday, February 21 – Bible Study 7pm

Thursday, February 22 – George Washington’s Birthday!!

Sunday, February 25 – 2nd Lent Worship Service 10:15a.m

Wednesday, February 28 – Bible Study 7pm

MARCH

Sunday, March 3 – 3rd Lent Worship Service w/Holy Communion 10:15a.m. /Food Collection

Wednesday, March 6 – Bible Study 7pm

Saturday, March 9 - Food Bank Open 9-11 a.m.

Sunday, March 10 – 4th Lent Worship Service 10:15a.m

Wednesday, March 13 – Bible Study 7pm

Sunday, March 17 – 5th Lent Worship Service 10:15a.m /Happy St. Patrick’s Day!!

Tuesday, March 19 – First Day of Spring!!

Wednesday, March 20 – Bible Study 7pm

Thursday, March 21 – Council Meeting 7 p.m.

Friday, March 22 – Deadline For April Newsletter!!!!!!

Sunday, March 24 – Palm Sunday Worship Service 10:15a.m

Little Hands Easter parties Mon. & Tue. March 25 & 26

Thursday, March 28 – Maundy Thursday Service w/Holy Communion 7 p.m.

Friday, March 29 – Good Friday Service 7 pm / Coloring Easter Eggs in the a.m.???

Saturday, March 30 – Easter Egg Hunt 10 a.m.

Sunday, March 31 – Easter Worship Service w/Holy Communion 10:15 a.m.

2024 OFFICERS AND STAFF

Pastor: Gregory Lindsey

Office Secretary: Timothy Ferster

Recording Secretary: Timothy Ferster

Assistant Recording Secretary: Sandra Matter

Organist/Choir Director: Tim Ferster

Videographers: Bruce Koppenhaver, Bill Reed

Sound Technician’s: Bill Reed, John & Darlene Novinger, Tim Daniel, Andrew Romberger

President: Matthew Ferster

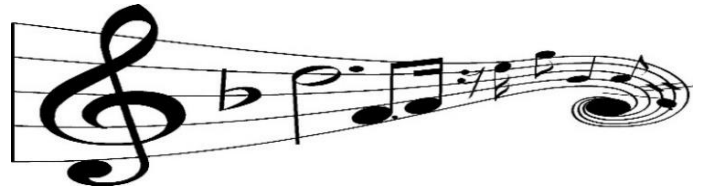
Vice-President: John Novinger

Treasurer: Tracy Bixler

Assistant Treasurer: Dennis Barge

Financial Secretary: Darlene Novinger

Music Notes



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In the Cross of Christ I Glory

In the Cross of Crist I Glory

1825

1. In the cross of Christ I glo - ry, Tow'r - ing o'er the
2. When the woes of life o'er-take me, Hopes de-ceive and
3. When the sun of bliss is beam-ing Light and love up-
4. Bane and bless-ing, pain and plea-sure, By the cross are

wrecks of time, All the light of sa - cred
fears an - noy, Nev - er shall the cross for -
on my way, From the cross the ra - diance
sanc - ti - fied; Peace is there that knows no

sto - ry Gath - ers round its head sub - lime.
sake me: Lo! it glows with peace and joy.
stream - ing Adds new lus - ter to the day.
mea - sure, Joys that thro' all time a - bid.

When the world trade center collapsed following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, workers excavating the site found a cross-shaped beam that, standing upright amid the ruin and debris, became a make-shift center of worship. The picture of that cross was published around the world and served as a symbol of hope.

A similar story is associated with this hymn. On the island of Macao in the region of Hong Kong, a magnificent cathedral was destroyed. Only the front wall remained. Atop it was a great metal cross, blackened with age, silhouetted against the sky. It is said that hymnist John Bowring was so inspired by the story of this cathedral that he wrote the hymn, "In the Cross of Christ I Glory, tow 'ring o'er the wrecks of time."

The validity of that story is questionable, but we do have a verified story about RATHBUN, the tune to which this hymn is set. It was composed by Ithamar Conkey, organist at Central Baptist Church in Norwich, Connecticut.

In 1849, Central's pastor had planned a series of sermons on the seven last words of Christ on the cross. According to the *Norwich Bulletin*: "One Sunday during the series it was a very rainy day. Mr. Conkey was sorely disappointed that the members of the choir did not appear, as only one

soprano came. Mr. Conkey was so discouraged and disheartened that after the prelude he closed the organ and locked it and went to his home on Washington Street. The pastor and the choir gallery were at opposite ends of the church, and he could leave without attracting the attention of the congregation. That afternoon, as he sat down at the piano for practice, his mind was distracted with the thoughts of the sermons Dr. Hiscox had prepared and the words of the hymn, 'In the Cross of Christ I Glory.' He then and there composed the music that is now so universally familiar in churches of every denomination, known as RATHBUN. He admitted afterward the inspiration was a vivid contradiction of his feelings at the morning service."

But why did he name his tune RATHBUN?

The one choir member who showed up on that rainy Sunday in 1849... that one faithful soprano... was named Mrs. Beriah S. Rathbun.

Taken from the book "Then Sings My Soul" By Robert J. Morgan

Chefs Corner



Noodle Kugel

1 (12oz.) pkg. thin egg noodles
1 stick butter, melted
1-2 apples, chopped
1 (15oz) box white or golden raisins

4 eggs
1 cup sugar
pinch of salt
cinnamon to taste

Cook egg noodles as directed on the package, drain, and set aside. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large mixing bowl, mix eggs, butter, sugar, and salt; mix well. Add apples, cinnamon, and raisins to the mixture. Fold in cooked noodles. Butter a 9x13 inch baking dish. Pour mixture into baking dish, sprinkle more cinnamon on top to taste. Bake at 350* for 45 minutes or until top is nicely browned.

Chicken Cacciatore

10 boneless chicken thighs
1 (16oz) can tomato sauce
¼ cup sugar
1 cup chopped peppers
garlic salt
2 cup flour

1 (28oz) can whole tomatoes
2 Tbsp. soy sauce
1 cup chopped onion
1 cup sliced mushrooms
pepper
oil

Wash chicken and leave slightly moist. Generously season chicken with garlic salt and pepper then roll in flour to coat. Pour enough oil in a skillet to cover the bottom and sauté chicken till tender. Drain just the grease from pan. Add the tomatoes, tomato sauce, 1 can of water, soy sauce, sugar, onion, peppers, and mushrooms to skillet and simmer on low heat till slightly thick. Place chicken in a Dutch oven and when sauce is ready pour over chicken and bake at 350* for 30 minutes. Serve with rice or pasta.

Scalloped Asparagus

2 (10.5 oz.) cans asparagus tips
4 Tbsp. flour
salt & pepper to taste
1 cup Ritz cracker crumbs

1 stick butter
4 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
¾ to 1 cup milk
1 Tbsp. butter, melted

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Melt the 1 stick of butter in a large saucepan, stir in flour and salt and pepper. Add milk gradually to desired consistency and cook, stirring sauce continually until mixture is thick and smooth. In a casserole dish, place a layer of asparagus, then eggs, then sauce. Add another layer of each. Take the cracker crumbs and mix with the 1 Tbsp. melted butter then sprinkle on top. Bake at 325* for 10-15 minutes or till crackers are lightly brown.



Thank You Nathan for climbing the ladder!!!



Putting Monkey Boy to good use before heading back to University!!!



PRAYER LIST

Members - Sandra Matter, Cindy Wolfgang, Janet Rumfelt, Barbara Klinger, Clair & Vivian Engle, David Hartman, Jim Neiswender

Northern Dauphin Nursing & Rehab. - Kenneth Mace

Polk Apartments - Martha Koppenhaver, *Charles Schoffstall*

Friends & Family – *Miriam Logan, Clint Timmins, Linda Sitlinger, Kenneth Lahr, Randy Rebeck, Blair Deitrich, Bruce Nace, Kathie Dresel, Dorothy Lettich Martin, Steve Dagen, Rahn Erdman, Marie Lahr, Jeff Latsha, Jim Troutman*

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

The Daily Devotionals for January-March, 2024 are available in the narthex. Pick yours up or have someone get them for you.

SIMEON UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH

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GRATZ, PA 17030

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Church Website: www.simeonlutheran.org

YouTube channel: Simeon Church, Gratz PA

ELCA Website: www.elca.org

Lower Susquehanna Synod: www.lss-elca.org



US Presidents

Find all of the US President names. The names can be up, down, forward, backward, or diagonal.



ADAMS
ARTHUR
BUCHANAN
BUSH
CARTER
CLEVELAND
CLINTON
COOLIDGE
EISENHOWER
FILLMORE

FORD
GARFIELD
GRANT
HARDING
HARRISON
HAYES
HOOVER
JACKSON
JEFFERSON
JOHNSON

KENNEDY
LINCOLN
MADISON
MCKINLEY
MONROE
NIXON
OBAMA
PIERCE
POLK
REAGAN

ROOSEVELT
TAFT
TAYLOR
TRUMAN
TYLER
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