



gCorner of Beaver & Burrowes



A-B NEWSLETTER

• ALBRIGHT-BETHUNE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH •

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Blannie Bowen, Editor; Volume 28, Number 2, February 2021

From Pastor Paul's Desk.....

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, the Healer of the Soul, and our everlasting Redeemer. I am so excited about what the Lord has in store for us at Albright-Bethune. We have an amazing opportunity to be a bridge in the community by mending their souls with the word. Engaging their hearts in stewardship and prayer. All of this is done by a Beloved Community engaging in planting the seeds of Jesus Christ our Hope. Building Bridges of connections throughout the community. (Matthew 25:34-36, Luke 4:18-19)

Family, I pray all is well with each of you during this season. As we have traversed through the holiday season, now we find ourselves in the season of snow, love, and the Lenten season. This time of year is always exciting to me because, first, my birthday is at the end of the month and second, Easter is around the corner. In this new year, I am really elated to be sharing with you during this year's Black History Month. I'm delighted to share with history and music that are a part of me and a part of my people's collective story. I have two dear colleagues who will be participating with us during our worship experiences -- Dr. Tariq Cummings and Pastor Amy Nutt. We will be doing a Lenten season study utilizing the book *Journey to Transformation* by Bishop Sharma Lewis. Every morning during the Lenten season, we are going to read the corresponding devotional for the day that they will place on Facebook every morning starting on the February 17. (See the link listed below)

During this time, we will be having a couple of events that usher us into Lent and into the Easter season. The next forty days I ask that we take some time and look at this Lent calendar and be proactive in our relationship with Christ. We have some great Worship Experiences coming and I hope you are there with us as we take the journey to Easter. - **Pastor Paul Ryan McReynolds**

Journey to Transformation: 2021 Lenten Study Paperback Found on Amazon at:

<https://www.amazon.com/Journey-Transformation-2021->

[LentenStudy/dp/1950899187/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=JOURNEY+TO+TRANSFORMATION%3A+2021+LENTEN+STUDY&qid=1610491637&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Journey-Transformation-2021-LentenStudy/dp/1950899187/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=JOURNEY+TO+TRANSFORMATION%3A+2021+LENTEN+STUDY&qid=1610491637&sr=8-1)

- **LENTEN STUDY** - Albright-Bethune will participate in a Lenten study using UMC Bishop Sharma Lewis' best-selling *Journey to Transformation: 2021 Lenten Study Paperback*. You can purchase the book from Amazon for \$16.95. The book is structured to correspond to each day during Lent with a devotional for individual or group study. Bishop Lewis is from the Virginia UMC Conference and she invites readers to observe Lent by introspection, repentance, forgiveness, renewal, prayer, fasting, and Biblical Study. *A Journey to Transformation* is divided into four sections: Lenten Devotional, Prayer, Reflection, and My Action. See Pastor McReynolds if you have questions or want more details about the Lenten study.
- **BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES** - Congratulations to these individuals who celebrate special days this month: February 7 – **AnneMarie Mingo's** Birthday; February 10 – **Amariah Holliday's** Birthday; February 11 – **Wally Richardson's** Birthday; February 16 – **Courtney Shilling's** Birthday; February 17 - **Aamen Shilling's** Birthday; February 22 – **Matthew McQuilla's** Birthday; February 23 - **D'Andre Wilson's** Birthday; February 24 – **Charles Amara's** Birthday; February 24 – **Terri Schleiden's** Birthday; and February 25 – **Kate Eburn Dyreson's** Birthday. Give Blannie your special dates (call/text 814-777-6550 or email blanniebowen@gmail.com) so we can honor you on your special dates.
- **SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY** - If you watch the Super Bowl on February 7, think about sharing your snacks. In 1993, a single prayer led a senior high school youth group in Columbia, SC, to create a simple, yet powerful idea to fight hunger and poverty in their city. The Souper Bowl of Caring calls youth to action. And individuals, civic organizations, and schools are making a difference through this movement. Various religious groups, including the UMC, promote the concept of souper bowls to share food with the hungry. On this day, give to the Food Bank, share with individuals who are less fortunate, or make a special gift.
- **CONDOLENCES** - All in the congregation extend their condolences to Pastor McReynolds whose grandfather died on January 27. Please keep Pastor McReynolds and his family in your prayers as they cope with their loss.
- **MLK CELEBRATION** – On January 15, the Forum on Black Affairs (FOBA) at Penn State held a virtual celebration to commemorate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. FOBA normally conducts a banquet in his honor. This year the celebration focused on **Project 1972**, a panel discussion by faculty and staff who were Penn State employees in 1972 and students who were freshmen in 1968 when Dr. King was assassinated. Three of our members and worshippers participated in the celebration. **AnneMarie Mingo** facilitated the panel, **Earl Merritt** was on the panel, and **Stephanie Preston** chaired the celebration. If you have questions about the celebration, contact Stephanie who is FOBA's Immediate Past President (sdp163@psu.edu).
- **SABBATICALS FOR PASTORS** - Bishop Jeremiah Park and the Cabinet of our Central Pennsylvania Conference recently thanked all pastors for their dedication, persistence, and bravery during the pandemic. Most of these pastors still face challenges, hardships, and stresses that impact their ability to function on the desired level. Consequently, Bishop Park is recommending that each pastor take a sabbatical and some time away from their obligations. He is recommending that a guest preacher deliver the sermon for them one Sunday each month for the next 4-5 months. This approach will enable the pastors to recharge and recover from the stresses that they have faced during the pandemic. Many of these pastors have had to conduct funerals, memorial services, and virtual comfort sessions for their members and worshippers.

- **I**N-PERSON WORSHIP - Bishop Jeremiah Park has issued advice, guidelines, and recommendations for churches to resume in-person worship and other activities. He is recommending that each church form a team of lay and clergy that will learn about the virus and safety practices in order to develop a plan for the church. Our Albright-Bethune Administrative Council will function as the team for our church. The Conference says that vaccination, mask wearing, and social distancing are critical to churches holding in-person activities. Also, the Conference says that COVID is spread primarily via airborne particles that can stay suspended in the air for 13 hours which makes air exchange essential. This will be a concern for Albright-Bethune because our church does not have a central heating and air conditioning system that can exchange and filter the air. It will be important for us to keep the windows and doors open to circulate the air. Also, given the age of our congregation and because so many members and worshippers have underlying health conditions, getting the vaccine becomes critical for our church to begin holding in-person worship and activities later this year. If you have not already received the vaccine, please do so when you become eligible and it is available. Please see Pastor McReynolds or Jackie Peagler, our Administrative Council Chair, if you have questions about resuming in-person activities.
- **U**MC SCHOLARSHIPS & LOANS - UMC high school seniors and college students who are active in their church and/or in the conference may apply for a Fall 2021 scholarship offered through the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Students must apply online before March 24 at <https://www.qbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships/scholarships>. Student loans are also available at low interest rates. Funds for these scholarships come from offerings on UMC Student Day, World Communion Sunday, and Native American Sunday.
- **S**ERVICES WITH MENNONITE CHURCH – Since 2000, Albright-Bethune and the University Mennonite Church have held a joint worship service and luncheon during Black History Month. This year our 21st annual service will be held in March. Pastor McReynolds said that two virtual services are being planned for March 14 and 21. One service will originate from the Mennonite Church. Rev. McReynolds and Pastor Kate Heinzl of University Mennonite will deliver messages for the two services.
- **M**ETHODISTS IN CONGRESS - United Methodists serve on each side of the aisle in the 117th U.S. Congress, which faces the work of responding to a wounded nation and breached Capitol building. The newly started Congress has 31 United Methodists - 17 Republicans and 14 Democrats. Six of the denomination's members serve in the Senate and 25 in the House. However, the total marks [a decrease of seven from the 116th Congress](#), largely because of retirements (From article by Albert Menendez of UM News).
- **P**ASTOR SENTENCED - Former UMC megachurch pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell of Houston has been sentenced to 6 years in federal prison and another year on supervised release for conspiracy to commit wire fraud. U.S. District Court Judge S. Maurice Hicks Jr. also gave Caldwell a \$125,000 fine during a January 13 [sentencing hearing](#) in Shreveport, LA. Caldwell, 67, began as pastor of Houston's Windsor Village UMC in 1982 with 25 families. Under him it grew to be The UMC's largest congregation with more than 18,000 members. He surrendered his clergy credentials [before pleading guilty last March](#) to collaborating with Gregory Alan Smith of Shreveport in a \$3.5 million investment scheme. The scheme involved antique Chinese bonds and victimized more than 20 Louisiana residents who entrusted funds to Caldwell and Smith. Caldwell's lawyers pleaded for him to be confined to his home citing his ongoing treatment for prostate cancer, as well his hypertension and the threat COVID-19 poses for those incarcerated with underlying conditions (From UM News Article by Sam Hodges).

- **F**INANCE CORNER - Each month the amount our church collects via offerings is posted in this section of the newsletter. Our January collections totaled \$5,918. See Cathy Bowen if you have questions about our church's finances.

Here are two reminders related to giving that can be action items in the next few months.

First, remember that even if you do not itemize your deductions, you can deduct up to \$300 of charitable donations given in 2020. The \$300 limit is **per tax return**. Using the \$300 deduction means you will not pay taxes on these dollars. Finally, this deduction is taken on line 10b of the Form 1040.

Second, if you are age 70.5 or older in 2021 and have an IRA (individual retirement account/arrangement) that you plan to take a withdrawal from or **must** take an RMD – a required minimum distribution because of your age - you can make a donation using a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your IRA. You must be 70.5 at the time of the distribution. Again, the advantage is you will reduce your tax bill because the amount given will not be included in your yearly income for tax purposes. The donation must go directly from your IRA account to the charity and be made payable to the charity. In short, to avoid paying taxes on these donation dollars, you cannot accept a check for the amount payable to you and then write a personal check to the charity. Please consult your IRA administrator for more specifics. Finally, if you want the distribution to satisfy your RMD for year, the QCD should be the first dollars out of the account. More information can also be found on the web. One such article, *How to Reduce Your Taxes and AGI by Giving to Charity*, can be found on Investopedia.

- **Y**OUR ITEMS - Send, email to blanniebowen@gmail.com or give your items to **Blannie** by the **20th** of the month. Send your birthday, awards, church presentations, writings, etc.

Calendar	
February 2	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
February 17	Ash Wednesday
March 2	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
March 5	World Day of Prayer
March 14	Joint Service With University Mennonite Church; Daylight Savings Time Begins;
March 21	UMCOR Sunday (Formerly One Great Hour of Sharing Sunday) Joint Service With University Mennonite Church
April 2	Good Friday
April 4	Easter Sunday
April 6	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
April 18	Native American Ministries Sunday
April 30	Penn State Classes End
May 4	Albright-Bethune Administrative Council Meets, 7 p.m.
May 6	National Day of Prayer
May 7-9	Penn State Commencement Exercises
May 30	Peace With Justice Sunday