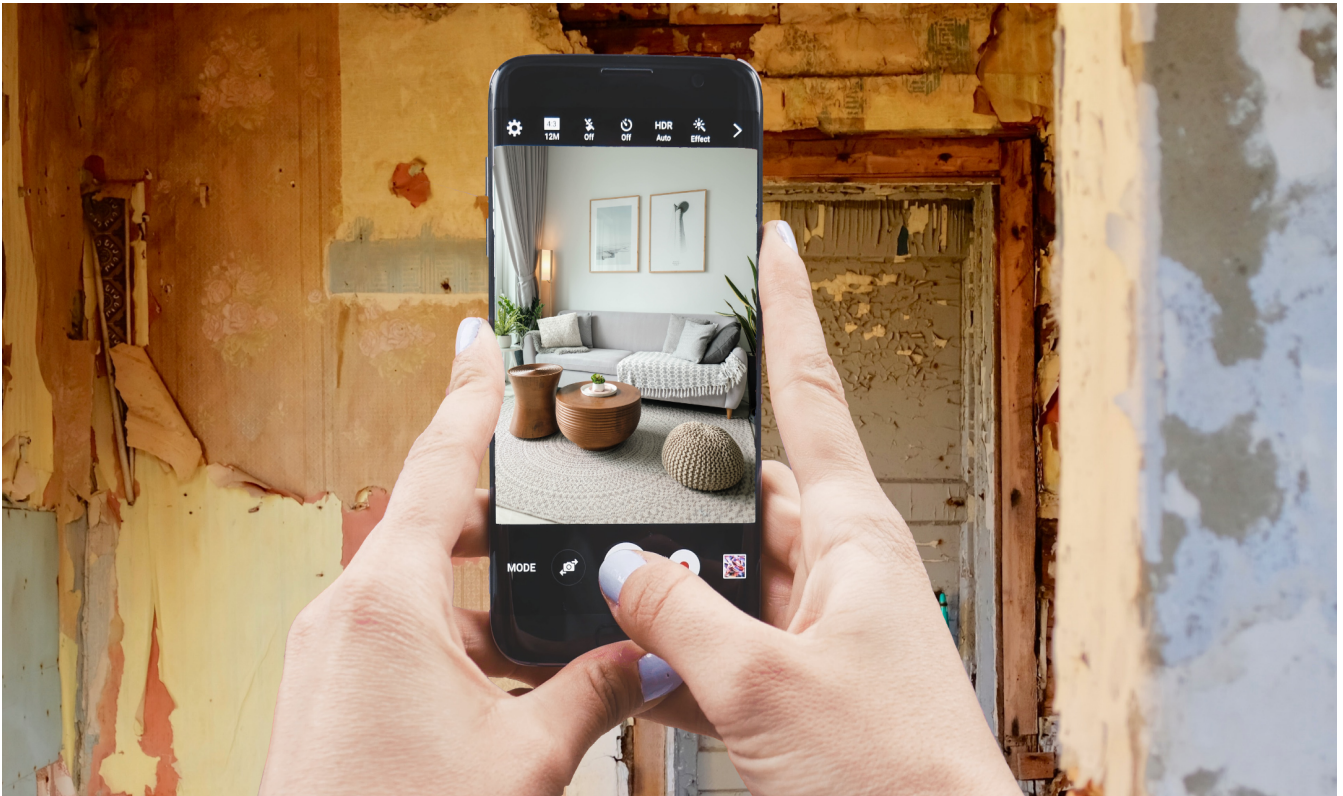


THE OBSERVER

MAY 2021



Keeping Up Appearances

By Rev. Daniel Ervin, Pastor

The kids these days (TM) use an app called Instagram on their phones to share their pictures with friends and followers. I have dabbled with this app for a few years now, and as I scroll through my feed, I see highlights of my life: favorite travel photos, family pets, funny memories. More recently, I've been documenting my bread-baking successes for all the world to see. My life looks pretty good if all you know about me is what you saw on Instagram.

But those photos do not tell the whole story. Looking at a picture of smiling friends, you'd never know that those friendships would soon plunge into conflict, still unresolved to this day. I took one of those backcountry wilderness photos from the comfort of the driver's seat of my Toyota Camry. And I never even bothered to take pictures of my numerous bread-baking failures: flat loaves, dense loaves, moist loaves, burnt loaves. But you wouldn't know any of that just looking at the photos I have posted online. The danger of Instagram—and other services like it—is that it gives us just one more opportunity to compare the imperfections of our own lives with the false images of perfection in the lives of others. My father always says people run into trouble when they start comparing their insides to someone

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS ISSUE:

- Matthew 25 – 2
- Re-Entry Group – 3
- Mission & Outreach – 3
- From Rooms to Zooms – 4
- Poem of the Month – 5
- Answer the Call – 5
- YouthQuest – 6
- New Admin – 7
- May Calendar – 8

else's outsides. He's right about that.

Of course, it is not fair to lay the blame entirely on Instagram or technology. Jan Edmiston, a presbytery executive in Charlotte, writes in [her blog](#) that Instagram is only doing what the church has done for a long time. Instagram, like the church, is one of the places people go to give off the perception of how put-together their lives are. And just like the church, Instagram can be a place where those of us whose lives are not so put-together (that is, nearly all of us) are just confronted by how imperfect we really are. The result is a deficit of authenticity and an abundance of shame, which may portend dollar signs for a social media app, but it is nothing less than poison to a community of disciples. Many of us have learned to spend more time worrying about appearances than fostering an authentic community of Jesus' followers.

Edmiston highlights how this often plays out in churches. I'm sure you can add your own examples and experiences.

- If my child doesn't get married in the sanctuary, our church friends will believe we haven't passed down the faith to them.
- If my Bible study group knows my husband/wife/child is an alcoholic, they will look down on me.
- If anyone knows I'm struggling in my relationship with my husband/wife/friend, people will think I'm a bad husband/wife/friend.
- If people find out my child is gay, our church friends will shame us.
- If I start coming back to church now, people will ask why I haven't been coming to church.

How exhausting! Perhaps it's time for the church to let go of any pretense of perfection and put-togetherness. Instagram does pretense better than the church could ever do anyway. Just like Jesus shows his wounded hands to the disciples, showing our wounds to one another only increases our faith and connection as a community. God already loves every little broken piece of us; the least the church can do is do the same for ourselves and our neighbors!

As we slowly emerge with fits and starts from this pandemic season, we have the opportunity to shift our focus from appearance to a focus on discipleship. But that shift won't happen unless we are intentional about making it. Without intentionality, churches revert to the ways things always were. So I ask, when you show up again - on Zoom, phone, in-person - will you bring your whole self along? Will you let me bring my many baking failures along with my one beautiful loaf of bread? Will you listen to somebody who is struggling without judging them? Will you welcome someone new into the life of our church? Will you show up for the work Christ has given us to do together? I hope you will! - Pastor Daniel



Matthew 25

By Karen Wilson, Elder

What is a Matthew 25 Congregation? You can probably guess that it might have something to do with caring for “the least of these.” And you’re right. Following are the three components of the Matthew 25 initiative:

- Building congregational vitality by challenging people and congregations to deepen their faith and get actively and joyfully engaged with their community and the world.
- Dismantling structural racism by advocating and acting to break down the systems, practices and thinking that underlie discrimination, bias, prejudice and oppression of people of color.
- Eradicating systemic poverty by working to change laws, policies, plans and structures in our society that perpetuate economic exploitation of people who are poor.

To be a Matthew 25 Congregation, a congregation must choose one or more of these components. On February 25, the Session of LoveJoy United enthusiastically chose to implement all three! You might say we’re already addressing these things through our food pantry, Good Samaritan Fund, special offerings, and so on, so what’s new?

These things are a good start. But being a member of this so-called vital congregation means more than just being a member of the “club.” It means each member is actually living into this concept. It means each member is discovering their gifts, finding their passion and making it a part of their lives Sunday thru Saturday. Being a member of LoveJoy United is not just a Sunday morning thing.

Members will be contacted sometime between Easter and Pentecost to learn just how they might incorporate the Matthew 25 concept into their everyday lives. Remember, this doesn’t have to be a church-type thing. It might be driving someone to a medical appointment or be something as simple as a kind word to someone. We can all be Matthew 25 people who make up our Matthew 25 Congregation.

Re-Entry Group

The past 13 months have affected us all in some way. Some of us have experienced increased anxiety, loss of a job or have missed hugs, reassuring pats on the back or the holding of a hand. Now there is a cautious optimism that with the wide spread distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, the next 13 months will provide us with the hope of a return to normalcy. However, this pandemic will still leave its mark and affect the way each of us moves forward. In an effort to support our community, the Adult Christian Education (ACE) team is offering an opportunity to let each of us be heard and share our experiences and intentions in moving forward through small group experiences, meeting twice a month. Groups will convene on Mondays or Tuesdays and time of day will be determined by the participants. **If you are interested, please confidentially email facilitator Sandy Monroe, monroe5216@gmail.com with your preference for meeting day and time. You can call the church office to connect with Sandy. All persons, in and outside of the congregation are welcome to attend.**

It is the intention of the ACE to get this program up and moving within the next couple of weeks. Please look for upcoming information on dates and times the groups will meet.

Mission & Outreach

Food Pantry

You can drop off non-perishable items for the food pantry on Monday mornings between 9 am and 1 pm. The cart is by the front door. Thanks so much to those of you who continue to support our food pantry even though we're not in the building on Sunday mornings.

Good Samaritan Fund

As we all know, these are not normal times. If you need some extra help meeting your bills or a gas voucher to make those necessary trips, please know that you can come on Mondays at 1:30 pm and we can help you. Everything will be confidential. And if you can help support this fund, just mark your check for Good Samaritan Fund. We are here to help one another and those most vulnerable in our community.

Booth House and Saturday Café

If you have a heart for feeding the hungry, as Jesus taught that we should, helping with meals at the Booth House and/or Saturday Café is a great opportunity for you. The Booth House is a homeless shelter operated by the Salvation Army in Alton. They do not have a meal prepared for them on Sundays. Six times a year we have agreed to prepare the Sunday evening meal to feed the approximately 20 people they may have. During these pandemic times, meals are dropped off and they serve themselves. Saturday Café is a ministry of First

Presbyterian in Alton, serving anyone needing a meal. We handle this meal on the first Saturday of March, June, September, and December. Let Brenda Donohoo or Karen Wilson know if you'd be willing to help with this.

May Birthdays

- 1 Candis Jacquin
- 1 Jake Friederich
- 2 Marilyn Holt
- 3 Jaclyn Lindquist
- 4 Raymond Hunt
- 4 Tim Cerny
- 5 Kaleb Klette
- 5 Kaylynn St. Peters
- 6 Linda Frizzell
- 6 Bob Vandalia
- 8 Karissa Joi Chapman
- 8 Scott Thompson
- 9 Beth Forrester
- 10 Katie LaMarsh
- 11 Amber Holt
- 11 Amber Kerkemeyer
- 13 Kelly Slayden
- 14 Deb Goskie
- 17 Waylon Duncan
- 17 Michael Carnes
- 19 Glenda McDonald
- 19 Jake Bienemann
- 21 Julie Gvillo
- 22 Emilia Huff
- 24 Ashley Cox
- 25 Jeanie McCoy
- 29 Viktoria Monroe
- 30 Alice Gallina
- 30 Edna Griesbaum
- 31 Heather Carnes



Two matching masked food pantry volunteers believed to be Marilyn King and Brenda Donohoo

From Rooms to Zooms

Our technological transformation during COVID-19
By Pastor Daniel Ervin

Sunday at 10:15 AM, we gathered for worship in the Sanctuary of LoveJoy United. It was one of the first beautiful spring weekends of the year. The church service was entirely ordinary, save that I asked the congregation to refrain from shaking hands during the passing of the peace. It was March 8, 2020, and it was the last time that we would worship together in the sanctuary until March 28, 2021.

For weeks, we had heard the growing rumble of a new Coronavirus spreading stealthily around the world. But it only felt imminent to me when our presbytery sent an emergency notice recommending that congregations suspend all church activities immediately beginning on March 15. In the Presbyterian Church, only an individual church's session can suspend worship; therefore, I called for an emergency session meeting resulting in the unprecedented decision to move worship to a little-known software called Zoom.

I was first introduced to Zoom a few years earlier by our presbytery, which had adopted it to help overcome the distance barrier between congregations farther from St. Louis. Honestly, I think it was a good selling point to get new pastors on presbytery committees, considering it saved me from an hour and a half round trip commute a couple of times a month. But I never envisioned its usefulness to ministry until I received an invitation in late February or early March of 2020 to participate in a Zoom meeting with Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow on utilizing Zoom as a platform for ministry during COVID-19.

Reyes-Chow is a former moderator of the Presbyterian Church and has been a vocal advocate for online ministry efforts. Many churches, he acknowledged, would begin livestreaming their worship services. Livestreaming is the equivalent of watching a church service on television where there is a direct feed from the church, but there is no live interaction with the speaker or other viewers. While this can look and feel remarkably professional, Reyes-Chow convinced me that online worship could be so much more than passively watching a computer screen. Zoom could help us sustain active participation in community life together. More, Zoom enabled homebound members and those who had moved away to participate in worship for the first time in what may have been years. Even those whose most sophisticated technological device was the corded telephone in their living room could still call in, listen, and offer prayers during worship. We built a small team of 'Tech Deacons' who ventured out to troubleshoot cranky computers and make purchase recommendations to get more people connected to the church from their homes.

My first home Zoom setup (what preachers would begin to call their 'Zoom battle stations') was a chore to untangle, connect, and use each week. Saturday nights, I would pull my dining table out from the wall into the middle of the kitchen and decide which area of the house I wanted the



Pastor Daniel's first Zoom 'battle station' for online worship

congregation to see and, consequently, which part of the house I would clean that night. We had considered early on the possibility of me Zooming from the church sanctuary, but that would have required more technology, volunteers, and energy than we could muster in the early months of the pandemic when our lives were stretched so thin. But I grew to appreciate the intimacy of connecting from our homes – a 21st-century riff on the 1st-century house church.

Never knowing when this pandemic would end, but knowing that it would be a slow and gradual process, we did begin to imagine a worship service where some people could gather in the sanctuary while others would gather online. The gifts we have received from being connected more deeply with homebound members are too great, frankly, to stop the online component of worship.

Even as I led worship from my home, week after week, we were laying the foundation for the future of our worship. A group of five or six men ran internet cabling through the ceiling from my office to the sanctuary. We received a \$2,000 technology grant from the presbytery, which enabled us to purchase a powerful media laptop and a high-quality camera. After learning that music on Zoom has significant limitations, we began inviting individual singers to record videos of hymns ahead of time for worship.

Our technology, though it was feeble and finicky at first, was slowly coming together. We received the benefits of this new technology in 2020 most fully during one service of baptism and several funerals, all of which are important moments for the whole church, but particularly for a family in the church. We did not want to discourage families from celebrating these occasions, but neither could we welcome all the people who would ordinarily attend them. This hybrid technology allowed us to safely accommodate a family unit for an in-person baptism or a funeral while still accommodating many more participants online. These services became a template for the hybrid services we are now holding.

In February of 2021, COVID positivity numbers began to decrease significantly in our community. Our session and

worship committee set Palm Sunday, March 28, 2021, to be the first Sunday of hybrid worship, provided that COVID cases in our community remain low. Our vision remains to include up to 50 masked and socially distanced people in the sanctuary, while also continuing to engage those online as deeply as we had before. Rather than leading from the sanctuary, many of our lectors and liturgists are reading scripture from their homes over Zoom. Furthermore, we utilize the passing of the peace (still no handshakes!) to keep active the connection between our congregation gathered and our congregation scattered over Zoom. I have been moved to tears when we have gathered around the communion table, coffee tables, end tables, and kitchen tables and we break bread together, still faithful as Christ's body.

I am tremendously grateful for God's Spirit, who has guided us all along the way during this process. We have a ways to go yet, so keep praying. I am grateful for people like Robert and Michael Musgrave-Perkins who operate the camera and media system, for Kathi Cooper, who welcomes worshippers on Facebook. I'm tremendously grateful for our session, which refuses to be boxed in by the past. And I am thankful for all of you for the many ways you have creatively continued God's ministry during this unprecedented time.

Goodbye Dear Friend

By Herbert J. Peel
Poet Laureate

*Dedicated to Queen Elizabeth II at the death of
her husband, Prince Philip*

*Goodbye dear friend.
The time has come for the parting of the
ways.
Through the years we have had some
grand adventures.
Going to parades,
hanging out,
having tea together.
But alas the time has come for one of us to
go home.
Is is sad.
The heart is broken.
I am to tears.
But I know we shall meet again.
So until then then,
Goodbye dear friend.*



Answer the Call . . . From Your Deacon

Expect a phone call from your deacon this month asking you and your household a most important question: What makes you come alive?

To live into our commitment to be a Matthew 25 congregation, we first want to discover what fills you with passion, energy, and creativity. The Presbyterian author Frederick Buechner wrote that “vocation is the place where our deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.” Likewise, we believe it is at the intersection of this ‘deep gladness’ and our community’s deep needs that we will discover God’s future for our church and ministry.

“What makes you come alive?” is an intentionally big, broad and open-ended question, and it can be daunting to try to answer (especially over the phone!). To help you prepare, here are some other ways of thinking about the question:

- What sparks joy for you?
- What do you enjoy doing for hours on end?
- What are your hobbies?
- What have you enjoyed doing as a group that made an impact?
- What do other people tell you you’re good at?
- What makes you tick?

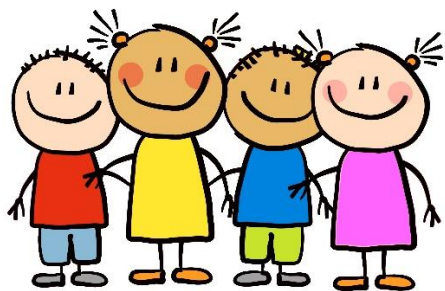
Don’t worry if the answers you come up with don’t seem at all related to the church or faith. One thing Presbyterians believe is that God has given us those passions – whatever they may – for a reason, and we will help one another find way of connecting those gifts.

If you don’t receive a call, or if you don’t want to wait any longer, feel free to go ahead and call your deacon. You can find your deacon’s contact information in the church directory or by calling the church office.

“

*Vocation is the place where
our deep gladness meets the
world’s deep need.”*

– Frederick Buechner



Youth Quest

LESSON MAILINGS The 2nd Semester has ended so regular weekly Youth Quest lessons have been put on hold. However, there will be periodical mailings once or twice a month throughout the summer months. A new semester will begin on **September 12**, the Sunday after Labor Day. Hopefully, progress with COVID will allow us to begin meeting in person again with new programming and curriculum.



CONTINUE PRAYERS FOR OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH !

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL Due to COVID, it has been decided to **NOT** have Vacation Bible School this summer with First Presbyterian and St. Paul Episcopal Churches of Alton. However, we are exploring having an event this summer before school starts.



HONORING LUPC GRADUATES We are proud to honor our six high school and college graduates on **Pentecost Sunday, May 23**. It has been decided to honor them during the morning worship in person and on Zoom. Graduates will be presented gifts from the church – wall crosses for high school, and crystal ornaments for college. This year's six graduates are:

**HIGH SCHOOL – Mackenzie Cerny, Gavin Shelton,
Spencer Slayden**

COLLEGE – Kennedy Carnes, Paige Lemasson, Jordan White

Many Ways to Worship

We continue to gather in several ways at 10:15 AM on Sunday mornings as God's worshipping people. We hope you will join us online, by phone, or in-person. All three are good and faithful ways of worshipping.

Online: Go to lovejoyupc.org/live and click 'connect Via Zoom.'

Phone: Dial +1 (669) 900-6833 and then at the prompt enter: 611 784 858# (long distance rates may apply)

In Person: make a reservation at lovejoyupc.org/reserve or call the church office at 618-254-5880. Participants are asked to remain masked and refrain from singing during the service. We can accommodate up to 50 people in-person

Zoom Adult Sunday School meets at 9 – 9:45 AM. Connect online or by phone according to the instructions above.

Tech Deacons are available to help you get connected online or by phone. Call the church office for information.

Contact Information

LoveJoy United Presbyterian Church
2550 Rock Hill Rd.
Wood River, IL 62095

618-254-5880

www.lovejoyupc.org

daniel@lovejoyupc.org

New Administrative Assistant

In May we will welcome our new Church Administrative Assistant, Tabitha Nail. Tabitha will be on the front lines of communication at the church as she answers phones, keeps records, records financial information, and enables us to better serve God's kingdom. We are grateful for so many who participated in the hiring team: Tom Wyatt, Sarah Carnes, Taylor Donohoo, and Daniel Ervin. We're also deeply grateful to Lisa Hemphill, Brenda Donohoo, Karen Wilson, Karen Cerny, and Jeanie McCoy for their efforts to keep the office running during this transition.

We will publicize a slightly altered schedule for church office hours as well as Tabitha's contact information soon. For urgent requests, please call the church: 618-254-5880 or email pastor Daniel daniel@lovejoyupc.org.

Financial Stewardship

Our congregation thanks you for your continued financial support during these difficult pandemic season. We give thanks to God that we have been able to continue worshiping, serving, growing, and learning, albeit in new and creative ways.

To make contributions to the church, please mail checks to the church office. Online giving is now an option if you wish to contribute using automatic bank transfer or use a debit card. Instructions can be found here: www.lovejoyupc.org/give

In lieu of an offering plate, a basket is placed by the door for offerings during in-person worship.

Prayer Concerns

JoAnn Moss, Scott Shelton's Mother, Carol, & his sister, Tina, Mary Trudell, Pat Fletcher, Kate Trudell, Jim White, Rachel, Terry Allen, Judy Luck, John Lindquist, Herbert Peel, Katie Davis, Bill Meyers (Neighbor of Henson's), Nancy Yarnell (friend of Slayden's), Vickie Aldrige, Patrick Bone, Tollie Family, Glenda McDonald, Kathy Testori (Glenda McDonald's sister), Gayla Boehm, Dorothy Kelley, Laura Martin, Daniel (Friend of the Humbert's), Edwin Ehlers (friend of the King's), Dorothy Freeman (Joe Freeman's mother), Annabel Gibson, Deborah (friend of Paula Blair), Maurice and Susie Musgrave, Marian Twigg, Jennifer and Waymon Taylor (family of Brenda Gremler), Bill and Susan Nesmith (family of Tanya Sisk), Jeff Loyet (friend of Humberts'), Sylvia Porter (neighbor of Sandy Franke), Bob Wilson, David Doersam (Lisa Hemphill's brother), Hayden Lindquist.

Nursing Home Residents

Riverside Care Center, Alton - Ron Franke.

Stearns Nursing & Rehab, Granite City - Christine Cunningham

Retirement Home Residents

Integrity Healthcare, Wood River – Herbert Peel

The Cottages of Carlinville, Carlinville – Shirley Martin

Villa Rose, Bethalto – Beth Forrester

Aspen Creek, Troy – Susanne Randall

Cedarhurst, Bethalto – Cliff & Mary Barnes, Shirley Burris.

May 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:00 AM Online Adult Sunday School 10:15 AM Online Worship 6:00 PM Outdoor Earth Day Film 	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office Hours 9-4 9:00 AM Food Pantry 	27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office Hours 9-3 11:00 AM Staff Meeting 	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office Hours 9-3 10:15 AM Bible Study 7:00 PM Online Evening Prayer 	29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office Hours 9-12 	30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office Hours 9-12 9:30 AM Music Recording 	1
2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:00 AM Zoom Adult Sunday School 10:15 AM Hybrid Worship 	3	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:00 AM Staff Meeting 6:30 PM Mission and Outreach Meeting 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:15 AM Zoom Bible Study 1:00 PM ACE Committee 7:00 PM Online Evening Prayer 	6	7	8
9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:00 AM Zoom Adult Sunday School 10:15 AM Hybrid Worship 	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:00 AM Food Pantry 	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:00 AM Staff Meeting 6:30 PM Children and Youth Christian Education 	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:15 AM Zoom Bible Study 7:00 PM Online Evening Prayer 	13	14	15
16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:00 AM Zoom Adult Sunday School 10:15 AM Hybrid Worship 	17	18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:00 AM Staff Meeting 	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:15 AM NO Zoom Bible Study 7:00 PM NO Online Evening Prayer 	20	21	22
23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pentecost Confirmation...gnize Graduates 9:00 AM Zoom Adult Sunday School 10:15 AM Hybrid Worship 	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:00 AM Food Pantry 	25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:00 AM Staff Meeting 6:00 PM Admin and Finance Meeting 	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:15 AM Zoom Bible Study 7:00 PM Online Evening Prayer 	27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:30 PM Session Meeting 	28	29
30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:00 AM Zoom Adult Sunday School 10:15 AM Hybrid Worship 	31	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11:00 AM Staff Meeting 6:30 PM Mission and Outreach Meeting 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:15 AM Zoom Bible Study 7:00 PM Online Evening Prayer 	3	4	5

8