

# Connections

January 2021

Building a community where all are enriched through Christian Love, Service, and Spiritual Renewal.

## Pastor's Message

### What's in Your Attic

Periodically I walk through the church for reflection and inspiration. The Serenity Room is still such an inviting place to pause and pray. I love how the room was put together by many loving hands. (Steve Short, George Bashian, Joan Kuster). The church school wing has great props for children's messages and Confirmation games. Room 26 houses the fair supplies and CE Pageant costumes. (There are many baskets if you need one for something). I always stop and look at the bulletin boards and the news clippings of our church members. (Thank you Melva for your articles.) We have new chairs and a love seat in the hallway (thanks to Mary and Peter Clarke) and they are very comfortable. The closet in my old office (second floor conference room) still has props from services, Bible studies etc. I often go to the youth room looking for a lesson that I now do online, and I pause and remember how many youth tried to cram onto one couch.

The ATTIC, is the place to go if you want to know a little church history. Over the years, Rob has cleaned it up and put things in special places marked by seasons. All the way in the back (right turn) are the Christmas decorations. Wreaths are hung up, the lighted manger is in the far back, (purchased by Lucinda Melkonian) as it is usually the last item we need. Russ's manger (because he made it) folds up so it is leaning against the walls. The Christmas trees (thanks to post Christmas specials bought by the Shorts) are neatly boxed up. Garland, lights, ornaments, wrapped gift boxes (for a pageant), and the 12 days of Christmas posters (created by Jill Emmer) are all in that area. Another area has on a shelf the Thanksgiving Trees from the Zawacki family (I still remember the story he shared about his first wife's car wreck on Thanksgiving returning from riding her horse). We have wheelchairs, walkers, shower chairs, canes from people who no longer need them. I used to get calls late in the afternoon asking if we are the church with the crutches. I would leave them by the door for whoever needed them. Tents (gifted by the Cohn family) from past adventure trips, are toward the back alongside the box of props from the Women's Auxiliary when they used to have the Live Nativity Program. Sue Bashian and Nancy Faye would create an elaborate program and script showing Madonna paintings from museums all over the world, then church women would be poised in the same scene live on stage. Ruby Gustavson would help with make-up and getting the scene just right. We have a box of stuffed toys from Albert Chu that we would give out at various times, a Marty Lyons framed picture and a few golf shirts. Banners from Confirmation and church school (some have definitely seen better days) and the church's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary banner is still there along with the ones hung on Stewart Avenue leading up to the celebration. Another room houses candelabras that we bring out for Tenebrae Services. Stretched out are the characters Margie used Christmas Eve. They have been *lying* around for years. They came to life at the 4:30 pm Family Christmas Service. Originally created by Jane Huber, Margie added to the collection. Of course, there are old files and records that are not the least bit interesting, but necessary. This is what I do when I am alone in the building missing you. I find you in the hidden places around the church. I remember how each of you have made a contribution over the years to the life of our church. I look forward to rummaging through the church with you soon. In the meantime, What's in Your Attic?

Blessings,

Lynn

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- 'A Tale of Two Schools'  
Documentary Discussion
- Souper Bowl Food Drive
- Lutheran Counseling
- & Much More!

## Worship Schedule

**Sundays**  
10:30 AM  
Livestream & In-person

**Tuesdays**  
Intercessory  
Prayer Service  
9:30 AM  
Conference Call

**Wednesdays**  
8 PM –In-person  
Cancelled until Ash  
Wed. (zoom only)

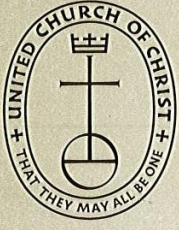
## **GRATITUDE GROWS!**

*There are so many people to thank for your work Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas. Please, if you notice a name left off, please let us know so we can add it to Gratitude Grows next time.*

- Thanksgiving participants: Donna Mongiardo, Chris Dieguez, The Herbst Family, Cindy Campbell, Maria Campese, Matthew McCoy, Trevor Hanson, and the Praise Team.
- The tree sale leaders: Chris Dieguez, Tracey Lawson, Susie Henriquez, Kenny Martens, Rick Herbst, Russ Fincher, Scott and Tina Palmer, Liz McQuaid, Jen Gisolfi, Alli Forelli, Amy McCoy, Guy Milone, Kristian Rhein, Tim Goettelmann, Confirmation leaders, and More. Thanks for buying the trees!!
- Lisa Goettelmann for working with Anna House on the coat drive & the Hat and Mitten tree
- Gloria for coordinating the annual Christmas gifts to Iglesia Evangelica Presbiteriana Nueva Vida.
- Cindy Campbell for coordinating with the Bedford Hills Correctional facility Christmas gifts
- Mico Faella and Cindy Campbell for coordinating with Janet Martens, the Sebrings, Melkonians, Shorts, Jeanne Ellis decorating the church for Christmas
- Margie Price, Cindy Campbell, Meghan McGann, Karin Melkonian, Alice Melkonian and Jeanne Ellis for preparing the Advent Calendar boxes for church members
- Melva Victorino for the wonderful GC News articles she writes
- Frank Crosio for his creativity in putting together the Virtual Vespers Service
- The Youth representing all the youth for the Home Town Hero Award: Rebecca Melkonian, Chase Palmer, Matthew Tusiani-Eng, and Charlotte Clark, and Diana Clark for representing the parents.
- Liturgists: Cindy Campbell, Mary Dewar, Marilyn Yassus, Jim Burdi
- Christmas Eve Participants: The O'Neil family, The Hearon Family, The Yasso Family, The Feyrer Family, The Short Family, Rebecca Melkonian, Paige Sanossian, Bell Choir, special musicians and Arianna Vranka
- The tech team for their many hours of filming all the virtual services: Steve Short, Joe Rivera, Doug Yasso, Rainer DeLalio, Faith Short, Rebecca Melkonian, Mark Sullivan, Tim Martens and our amazing editor Andrew Ellis
- Paula Tusiani-Eng, Dorothy Gist, Marilyn Yassus for their continued work on projects in January/February addressing racism
- The staff: Frank Crosio, Margie Price, Chris Dieguez, Liz Galzerano, Kim Pryor, Gloria Malin, Rob Sipkin and Billy Gagat for all their work on the special mailings, services, programs and events.
- Laurie Burke for the beautiful lanterns she donated to the church
- Diana Clarke, Amy McCoy and Tina Palmer for organizing November & January's bagged snack bags and for everyone that helped with the events.

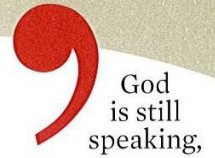
## **Sermons and Services**

We can mail a copy of our Sermons and Service to people that are NOT able to go on live stream to see our Sunday service. Please tell the church office if you know of someone that can't see our Live stream service that would like to receive a copy of the Sermon and Service.



# The Garden City Community Church

United Church of Christ



December 31, 2020

Greetings fellow Church Members!

On behalf of myself and the Council of Trustees I would like to thank Reverend Lynn Sullivan and the Worship team for embarking on this deeply meaningful, and final phase of our Church's reopening plan that completed the year with a beautiful series of Advent and Christmas Services. Reverend Sullivan has been flexible, creative and committed while ensuring we accomplish this safely and responsibly. We are especially grateful for Ms. Margie Price for a beautiful Family Christmas Eve service on the front Lawn of our Church.

Over the course of the past few months, our internal attendance management and contact tracing process has been successful in that when we have been notified of individuals of possible Covid19 exposure situations, we have been able to quickly notify any that may have been in proximate contact. Thus far we have avoided any known situations within our building requiring closure.

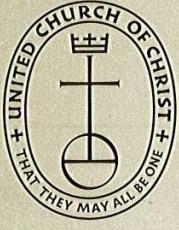
I continue to emphasize that while our Building is re-opened on a Limited (but inviting) basis, please be mindful and respect that the Church Office is making a great effort to maintain a staggered, reduced capacity safe environment for our Members, our School Students, and our Building Renters. In addition to the regular weekly team of Steve Short, Doug Yasso, Mark Sullivan and Joe Rivera, Hugh Lacy and Brad Gustafson have been instrumental in navigating Building Plans and Improvements in a thoughtful fashion, upgrading our Building and enhancing our Congregational experience. Hugh has taken some time to answer some questions about the current and future improvements, listed on page 2. F&A and COT have been reviewing and assessing plans from our contracted Building Engineer and have moved forward with the items we deemed most pressing. In addition to addressing HVAC safety with respect to our current pandemic, we are also taking the opportunity to bring various parts of the building up to current building standard Safety Codes.

As I stated in November, we believe we are reopening in the most responsible fashion within our power, and we continue to work extremely hard on improving the buildings general environment for our Church Members usage. As a reminder, we have initiated:

- a. Upgrading existing technology to accommodate registration and scheduling.*
- b. Installation of barriers in key areas.*
- c. Improved air circulation throughout key areas of the Building.*
- d. Addition of Ultra-Violet (UVC) lights to Sanctuary Air Handlers.*

With Highest Regards,

Drew Hearon  
Chairman, Council of Trustees



## The Garden City Community Church

United Church of Christ

God  
is still  
speaking,

### Building Q&A with Council of Trustee Representative and Congregational Member Hugh Lacy

#### 1) Why was it so cold in here during the Sunday worships in early December?

The furnace has been shutting down repeatedly throughout November. The Boiler issue was solved with a repair that required some time to identify, and the heat has been reliable since.

#### 2) Why is the air conditioning on in the winter?

It isn't, just the air handlers are re-circulating inside air to protect everyone.

#### 3) What are "UVC lights" I've heard about, and what do they do?

These lights are mounted inside the air handlers above the ceiling and they kill germs and viruses.

#### 4) Is there a science to the air quality in here? Have we taken samples?

Yes, and the results are startling. Samples were taken before and after the implementation and it's a stunning improvement. We have before and after photographs for our permanent records and available for those curious in seeing the results.

#### 5) I heard we are cutting a new access hole in the ceiling. Will it be out over the pews?

No, it is planned to be in the balcony, to provide safer access for maintenance.

#### 6) What are the rough plans /or ideas for the future regarding the air quality remediation, in the sanctuary?

We are considering providing enough fresh warmed air to meet the NYS Mechanical Code minimum for places of worship. We are reviewing plans to expand our overall HVAC system improvements throughout key areas in the building as well.

## ON-LINE GIVING UPDATE

Garden City Community Church has recently partnered with Breeze Church Management Systems to support our *On-line Giving Initiative*. If you would like to set up "Recurring Contributions" or make a "Onetime Contribution" to support our many Ministries, please click on the link below. Our new online giving platform allows us to align our congregational giving with our member data base, resulting in greater efficiency and clarity for Church Members.

<https://gccc.breezechms.com/login/create>

Giving can also be accessed through GCCC website via the "GIVE" button

<https://gardencitycommunitychurch.org>

We appreciate your support in our efforts. If you have any questions or concerns, please call Liz or Kim in the office (516)746-1700.

### Annual Corporate Meeting

In accordance with the Religious Corporation law of the Sate of New York, and the by-laws of the Garden City Community Church, notice is hereby given of the Annual Corporate Meeting to be held on Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021 immediately following the 10:30 am Worship Service.

The purpose of the meeting will be:

- To elect successors to the trustees;
- To act on the church budget for 2021;
- To elect a slate of officers for 2021;
- To conduct any other business that may properly be presented at that time.

The Annual Corporate Meeting will be held via zoom. For further information, please call the church office at (516) 746-1700 or email us at [churchoffice@thegccc.org](mailto:churchoffice@thegccc.org)



### SUNDAY 10:30 AM WORSHIP SERVICES HAVE RE-OPENED

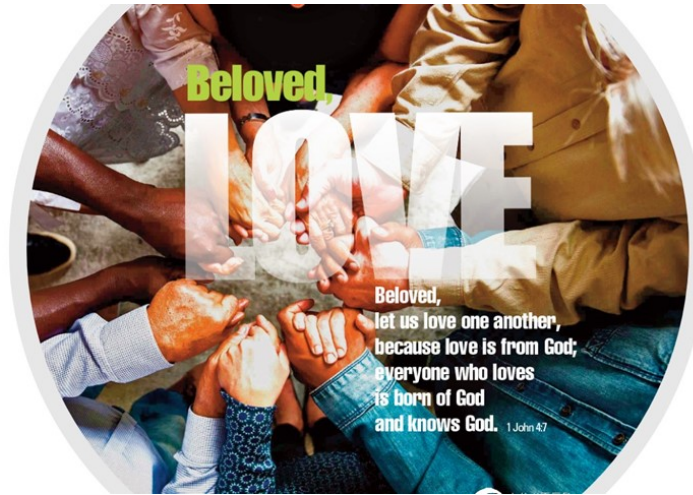
We have on-line registration forms that need to be filled out if you wish to attend the service. COVID related questions will be on the form. The link to the form will be on the Wed. and Fri. e-blasts the week before the service. Contact the church office for more information. If you are unable to register online, contact the church to register.

### TUESDAY PRAYER SERVICE CONTINUES

We continue to hold the Prayer Services via Conference call each Tuesday morning at 9:30 am. Please email the church office, George Bashian or Rev. Lynn Sullivan if you have a prayer request. All requests are kept confidential. If you want to join the call the number is 1+ (712) 770-4598 Access code 877848.

## New Member Sunday:

**If you are ready to join the church, please contact the church office. We will schedule a zoom meeting about membership and celebrate New Members on Sunday, April 18.**



### **GCCC Annual Stewardship Campaign**

**November 8th to November 22nd**

**Pledge online any time**

<https://www.gardencitycommunitychurch.org/give>

## **Garden City Community Church Awarded a \$50,000 Grant**

The Garden City Community Church was awarded a grant through the 2020 Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program. This will fund Rev. Lynn Sullivan's sabbatical, and create programs at the church in her absence. Committee work has begun to plan for Rev. Lynn's sabbatical starting in May.

During her absence, the Church intends to invite clergy from the diverse NY Metro Association to lead worship services. The Church will encourage these ministers to include musical, liturgical dance, and other elements of worship in the services they lead with a goal of discerning how different types of worship connect with people in ways beyond our current experience. The Church will enhance its Vacation Bible School program (or launch a new comparable program), which currently includes church members and folks from neighboring communities, to connect in new ways and increase connections to a broader community. The Church will add and enhance music, drama and other offerings directed at expanding the families that join us. During the sabbatical, the Church will also invite the General Minister and President of United Church of Christ to share with the Church ways churches can strengthen and expand connections in a changing world. The connections between the Congregation and Lynn's sabbatical will be reinforced through a church-wide dinner after she returns at which she will share some of the learnings and new ideas that came out of her sabbatical and the Church will share its experiences, challenges and growth during her absence.

Congratulations to the Church and to Lynn for this prestigious award. If you are interested in being on the committee to bring these programs to fruition, please contact the office.

## Lenten Activities:

### Lenten Theme “Fill the Empty Vessels of our Hearts...The Steadfast Love of the Lord Never Ceases”

We are planning many programs during Lent. Details will be on the website and e-blast..

#### Ash Wednesday

We have three opportunities to receive in a safe manner ashes on Ash Wednesday. The services will look differently, but the mood will still be sacred. All COVID protocols will be followed.

12:00 Noon – Sanctuary

4:30 pm – Family Service – Sanctuary

8:00 pm – Sanctuary

#### Daily Choral Meditations for Lent

Our Minister of Music, Frank Crosio, will be offering an online series of Choral Meditations for the weekdays of Lent. They will consist of a few short paragraphs of reading to help guide the listener and place the music in context, along with a link to a short piece of choral music on YouTube. The music will usually be of about 3 to 5 minutes in duration. Once or twice during the season, we may have a “Big Listen” and include a piece that is a bit longer.

The Choral Meditations will be uploaded to the church website [www.thegccc.org](http://www.thegccc.org) weekly.

As we go through this musical journey together, you can contact Frank with questions or comments at [music@thegccc.org](mailto:music@thegccc.org)

#### Women’s Retreat: “Who is that in the Mirror?”

Save the date for a Women’s Retreat: March 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> . Friday night at 8:00 pm welcome happy hour via zoom featuring Ms. Senior New York and second Runner Up Ms. Senior America Nancy Witter.

Saturday 10:00 am – 12:00 - Noon Information coming soon.

## **WEDNESDAY NIGHT LENTEN SERIES**

### ***CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FAITHFUL CONNECTIONS***

Following the Ash Wednesday service on February 17, the Church will offer a four-week Wednesday Night Lenten Series featuring **Conversations about Faithful Connections**. On February 24 and each of March 3, 10 and 17 at 8:00 p.m., Zoom sessions facilitated by George Bashian and Paul Cohn will meet to explore several of the needs and challenges of staying connected during these times of pandemic, political change, economic uncertainty and personal, family and community stress and anxiety.

The first session will invite conversations about some of the Biblical roots of connectedness and their relevance to us today. The second session will explore how to stay connected within a faith community and the different ways in which to be connected. The third will invite reflections and ideas about what we learned about connectedness during the COVID pandemic, including mistakes made, lessons earned and new strategies for coping in times of broken connections. The last will focus on looking and moving forward to deepen our faith connections.

Although George and Paul will provide Biblical seeds for discussion and related topics and challenges for contemplation, the series endeavors to invite folks from all of the settings of the Church to begin meaningful conversations about where we are spiritually, personally, as families and as a community of faith. The conversations are open to all church members, friends and families, and no books, preparation or written materials will be needed. Open hearts, open minds and a desire to connect with God and each other are the only requirements to join in the conversation. If you have questions or matters on the topic that are dear to you and you would like to be presented to the group, let George or Paul know ahead of time (or raise at a meeting) and we will endeavor to bring before the group. If you would like to join George and Paul in facilitating any session or discussion of any particular area on topic, please let them know and you will be given an opportunity to do so, time permitting.

The Garden City Community Church is very much active and energized. There are many small, and some not so small, groups at the Church who are connecting in a variety of ways and for a variety of ministries. This series offers a good opportunity for them and other people wishing to expand beyond their current comfort zones to share their gifts through conversations with others at our Church to turn our individual or group knowledge into the collective wisdom of a vibrant community of faith.



## **Building Q&A with Council of Trustee Representative and Congregational Member Hugh Lacy**

### **1) Why was it so cold in here during the Sunday worships in early December?**

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Dear Garden City Community Church Members and Friends!

GCCC is in the process of searching for, and calling, an Associate Minister, to assist in the ministry needs of our church.

A Search and Call Committee was voted on at our Church's 2020 Annual meeting.

The Committee Members are Peter Clarke, Michaela (Mico) Faella, Karin Melkonian, Melanie Ross, Melva Victorino and Doug Yasso. Due to our Youth member Brian Matzelle leaving for college in September, the Committee with the support of the Council of Trustees asked alternate Youth member, Erin Lanning to join the committee. She has been an excellent addition to our team. If there are any questions about the addition of Erin to our committee, please contact Karin Melkonian, Chair of GCCC Search and Call Committee.

This Search and Call process is provided in our church's By-Laws and includes several steps, the first of which is to assess and consider the needs of our church, by updating the Church Profile. The Committee has been meeting diligently since last March to complete our Profile. Completed in November, it is a 25 page document with many supporting attachments about our church, community and faith.

Our Profile was submitted to the UCC and other pastoral posting sites at the beginning of January. The next step is to locate potential candidates, and follow our church's criteria to make our recommendation(s) to the congregation.

Once an appropriate candidate has been carefully and prayerfully identified by the Search Committee, the congregation will vote on the recommendation (a 2/3 vote is required).

We are excited to begin this new step of the Search and Call process and look forward to bringing a candidate recommendation to the congregation, in the near future.

Blessings!

Respectfully submitted,

Karin Melkonian

Chair, Garden City Community Church Search and Call Committee for an Associate Pastor

## Community Adventures – A Super-FUN Summer Program

The holidays are behind us and It's frosty and cold outside - Time to start making summer plans!!

Registration will begin for the Nursery School's summer program – Community Adventures on Monday, February 1, 2021.

Community Adventures is a program designed to keep bodies busy and minds moving while providing a safe, loving environment where children feel free to explore, learn and most importantly, PLAY.

Community Adventures meets for 4 sessions in July.

Each session meets Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9:15 - 12:15 - July 6 through July 29.

MINIMUM enrollment - 2 (1 week) sessions.

Children who are entering a 3 or 4 year old program or kindergarten in the fall are eligible to attend.

Registration is open to all. Visit our website to download the registration form and for more information about Community Adventures & the Community Church Nursery School: [www.GCCCNURSERY SCHOOL.com](http://www.GCCCNURSERY SCHOOL.com) or call the school office – 516-746-1756.

### Men's Group Book Club

The men's group book club will be reading Jordan B Peterson's '12 Rules For Life: An Antidote to Chaos.' It is a book by a man the New York Times calls, 'the most influential public intellectual in the Western world right now.'

We will be meeting via zoom Saturday February 6th at 8:00 to discuss rule 1 'Stand up straight with your shoulders back ' and the overture.

Open to all, zoom meeting details available from Dan McCarthy, email [danjohngalt@gmail.com](mailto:danjohngalt@gmail.com)

### Men's Retreat

There will be a Men's Retreat held on Saturday, April 17th, led by Chris Dieguez. Those attending are asked to gather at the church at 9:00 am.

More info to follow.

### Deaths

Evelyn Iagrossi November 11, 2020

Cynthia Marie Wilson November 12, 2020 (Elizabeth Whitcher's sister)

Lily (Elizabeth) Konrad November 13, 2020

Jerry Testani November 25, 2020

John Newman (Betty Birkenstock's brother)

Victoria Valenti (Vanasco) January 5, 2021

### Baptisms

Finnian Reh Tittler January 17, 2021

### MIDDLE SCHOOL & YOUTH GROUP MEETINGS

#### Upcoming Youth Group 2:00 PM Zoom Meetings:

January 17, February 14, March 14, March 28, April 11 and April 25

#### Upcoming Youth Group 8:00 PM Zoom Meetings

January 17, February 14, March 14, March 28, April 11 and April 25

## **CONFIRMATION RETREAT**

Our current 9<sup>th</sup> graders, Confirmation II will hold an all day retreat at the church Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Details will go out to the parents.

### **Confirmation 1 (8th Grade) and Confirmation 2 (9th Grade)**

Confirmation 1 – Mondays at 7:30 PM

Confirmation 2 – Tuesdays at 8:30 PM

## **Youth Group Events**

Greeting youth, young adults, families!

We are gearing up this spring for a slew of youth programs for 6th grade and up. Middle School group is open to all grade 6 through 8, and youth group is open to all who have entered Confirmation 1 through the start of college. Both groups are meeting via Zoom on the same days at 2PM (Middle School) and 8PM (Youth Group). We would also like to extend a welcome to any college aged children you have to join us in our young adults group, which meets Thursday nights at 9PM via Zoom, every other week beginning January 21st. For more information, contact Chris at [chris@thegccc.org](mailto:chris@thegccc.org).

Jan 17 — Winter Game Night

Feb 14— Favorite Disney Moments

Mar 14 — Whose Line is it Anyway?

Mar 28 — Study Break — BYO hot chocolate

Apr 11 — The Way

## **SAVE THE DATES – COMMUNION CLASS**

This year we will once again be celebrating Communion Class with our young people in **grades 4-7** who have not taken the class before. This class is held every other year and will be taught by Rev. Lynn Sullivan and Ms. Margie Price. We will be sharing with our young people the sacredness of Communion and the meaning it holds for us as a Christian Sacrament.

Communion Class will be held in the new year on the following Sundays from 9:15 am—10:00 am.

January 24, 2021—zoom meeting

January 31, 2021—zoom meeting

February 7, 2021—zoom meeting

February 28, 2021- (in-person meeting)

We will share Communion together during worship on **March 7th, 2021**.

More information will follow and registration will open in January.

## INN BIN REQUEST

Please hold off on dropping clothes off at the church until further notice as the INN is not accepting clothing donations in the usual capacity at this time.

**Good friends are like angels...you don't have to see them to know that they are there.**

## **A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS: Race & Education on LI Zoom Discussion on February 4, 2020 7:00 PM**

A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS: Race and Education on Long Island, follows David and Owen, two African American teenagers during their senior year of high school. Even though the students have a lot in common, they go to very different schools. A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS spotlights these differences and the results of educational disparities. The film also focuses on the benefits that diversity provides for all students. Join **ERASE Racism** for a one-hour facilitated discussion about the film and the impact of structural racism on Long Island in education and housing.

To register for the discussion group go to: <https://gcc.breezechms.com/form/b510499366793>

For questions email Dorothy at [tsigdge@gmail.com](mailto:tsigdge@gmail.com) or Paula at [ptusianieng@aol.com](mailto:ptusianieng@aol.com)

## **Souper Bowl of Caring**

We are writing to invite you and your family to participate in our **GCC Church's 2021 Souper Bowl of Caring** "pick up" canned food drive on **Saturday, Feb. 6th**. The Souper Bowl of Caring is a national campaign which involves young people to combat hunger and poverty in the United States. On a day usually focused on national sports pastime, football and food, we want to remember the less fortunate and empower youth to make a difference.

Last year, if you recall, we collected over 586 cans of food which were physically brought into the church during the months of January and February leading up to Souper Bowl Sunday, and it was spearheaded by our ABS program. This year, we are pivoting in light of COVID to go out into the community and pick up the food. We realize that not all can physically get to our church with COVID, and during the winter months it is harder. So we will organize drivers to pick up the food and drop it off at the church.

There are two ways you can participate with your children:

- 1) **Donate Canned Goods on Saturday Feb. 6th** . Leave canned or non-perishable food items outside your front door by 9:00am and volunteers from the church will come pick them up and deliver them to the church as part of the weekly collection to the Long Island Council of Churches in Freeport. Here is the link if you want to participate by donating food: <https://gcc.breezechms.com/form/45951652>
- 2) **Sign-up to be a driver to pick up the canned food at specific local addresses on Saturday, Feb. 6th between 9 and 11am** and drop it back at the church Whitehall Blvd. Porch by 12:00 noon. This is a fun activity you can do with your kids, and it is contactless and COVID-19 safe. Here is the driver sign-up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904084bacad2eaa8-drivers1>

If you have any questions, let us know. Thank you in advance for giving back and taking this opportunity to involve our children in tackling the problem of hunger in our community.

**BI-WEEKLY FOOD COLLECTIONS FOR THE LICC EMERGENCY FOOD CENTER**



We have been collecting non-perishable food items the past few months to support the Long Island Council of Churches Emergency Food Center. Your generosity has been a testament to what we can accomplish, even under the most trying of times. We are also in need of drivers to take the food to the food pantry. Our next few scheduled donation days are: January 13, January 27, February 10, February 24, March 10 and March 24. Donations should be left on the Whitehall porch before noon on the dates mentioned above.

If you want to sign up to be a driver to deliver the food to the pantry on one of our donation days, please go to: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904084BACAD2EAA8-2021>

For the 2020 year we collected **9,275 pounds** of food for the LICC Emergency Food Center.



**HAVE YOU CHANGED ANY OF YOUR CORRESPONDENCE INFORMATION LATELY?**

**Do you have a new address, a new phone number or a new e-mail address? We are looking to update our directory—so please supply us with any updated information or update your Breeze account.**

**Do you want to receive our weekly e-blasts about all the activities going on in the church?**

**Are you getting the mailings from the church?**

**Please let the church office know if any of your information has changed so that we can stay in touch with you!**



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**A Counselor Shares Her Personal Devotion: COVID And 'Getting Bigger'**

By: Elizabeth Geiling, MSED, LMHC, LCC Counselor



As I think back on this past year, the word that keeps coming to my mind is unsettled. We don't know what the future holds for our nation, our health, our career and our family. To date, I have never experienced anything like this where all parts of my life are uncertain. We are in a pattern of waiting. We are in the psychological space of limbo, which is one of the most demanding states, requiring a lot of emotional energy, before we even get to the required work of the day. We are unsettled, uncertain and often afraid of what is coming next.

My son is a hardcore climber. He has climbed all over the world, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, and he summited Mt. Rainer. Recently, he had an accident; not at all related to his dangerous journeys. He was moving a stove and it slipped down the stairs, with him staying almost ahead of it. We received the phone call (in November) that could be any parent's call, but, indeed every parent's worst nightmare.

"Your son has been hurt..." As I listen and try to take the details in, the irony does not escape me. An oven, a random accident has almost taken this kid out of the game permanently. It seems a bit unfair to the worrier and the mom in me, because I had preemptively imagined many horrific types of accidents and none of them included a major appliance

10 days in the hospital and 3 surgeries to wait through gave me a lot of time to ponder life! I would like to share an experience that happened in the hospital, or as my mother-in law would call it, a "God Wink":

I am sitting by the hospital bed of my 23 year old son, who has been seriously injured. Bones broken, limbs crushed and he is scared and confused. I search every part of his face and I can see the baby, the child, the teen. He is bigger now, a grown man, but, I have loved this face and body from before our eyes met.

Time has passed so quickly, but these hours at the bedside feel endless. I feel my body breaking, as I take in the scope of his injuries. My mind moves through the memories of the care I have provided. He is hurt and no amount of 'mommy' can fix this now. Soon, the hospital waiting game begins, as the surgeries are performed and we will the hours to pass.

Directly in front of us in the family waiting area is the hospital gift shop and while we wait, we memorize the contents in the window. Off to the left, there is a circular rack that contains all types of stuffed bears. Laying across the top, staring right at us is a stuffed bear that is almost an exact copy of the one we bought him on the day he was born. It is a little bigger than the original.

As it often happens in tense situations, our family erupts with laughter when the realization hits. Because along the way, Luke lost baby bear and it was a memorable heartbreak. As a child he would wonder where he might be, search the campus we lived on absolutely sure he left it here

or there. At night, he would keep his brother awake suggesting other possible locations. We never found baby bear.

Finally, we are called on the phone. He is through the surgery and we are able to see him. He is in that post surgical sleep, between consciousness and unconsciousness and I sit by his bed. He wakes a little and I hand him the newly purchased baby bear, he cuddles up to it and says, "I have been looking for you for a long time. You are a little bigger now." His recollection, a simple, pure memory of something he loved deeply and never stopped looking for is a profound spiritual message to me (My "God Wink").

I am overwhelmed by presence of the Holy, reminding me that amidst all this brokenness and uncertainty, I am being held in love and God is always looking for me. I am calm for the first time since this ordeal began. I feel we are at another beginning, baby bear in tow and that our family will emerge from this 'bigger'. We will know more, we will understand more, we will have more empathy and we will know God is here holding us in the journey.

I am aware that many of you are experiencing difficult times and the waiting and uncertainty is draining. I am inviting you in these scary, uncertain, sacred moments of your lives to keep your heart open to the "God-Wink" that says – *"I am the God of ages past, present and future. I've got you. I am always looking for you"*

When we cannot predict an outcome, when we are in limbo, while we are waiting, know that God is there too. We pray that we will emerge bigger with a greater capacity for love and service.  
Amen

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*For an appointment with any of our counselors or for more information, call LCC at 1-800-317-1173. For safety, all sessions are currently provided using a secure, HIPAA compliant virtual video and/or audio platform.*