

Friends in Christ. Serving Together with Love

Saints Alive!

April 2024 | Volume 22, Issue 4

Worship & Spiritual Life

As this article is being written, Holy Week is about to unfold. Easter Sunday is imminent, and the church is lively with preparation. The time from Easter until Pentecost is called Eastertide. Once Eastertide concludes, the church will enter “ordinary time.” That term is thought-provoking. Ordinary time in the church calendar fills the six-month period following Easter. It is a time for each of us to become more holy and whole persons, and to reflect on how to live as Christians.

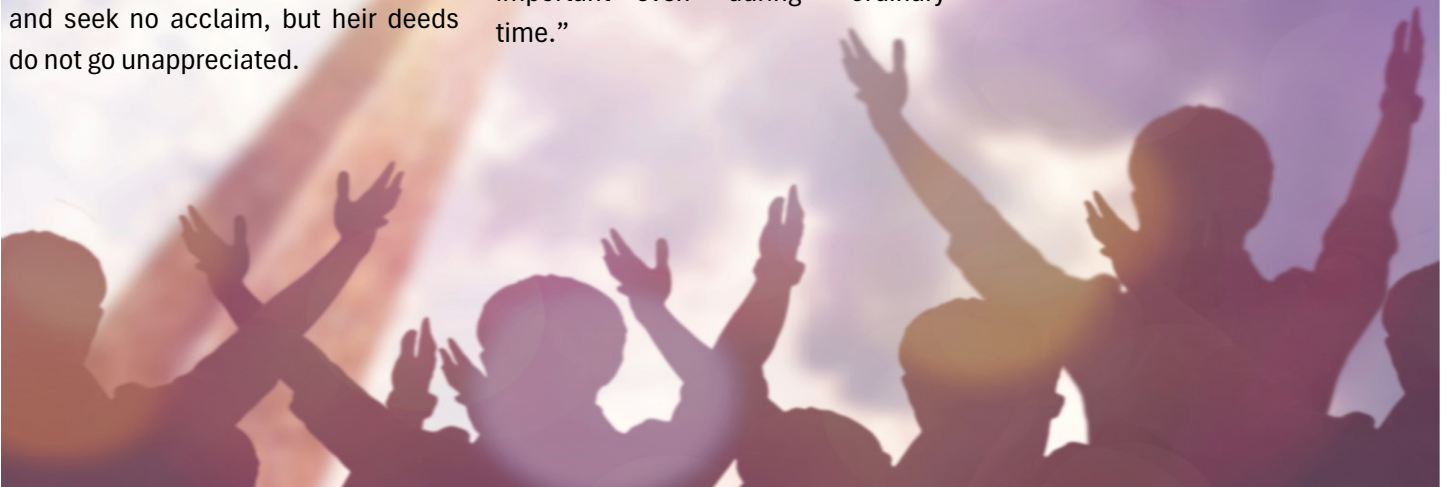
So many of our members live out ordinary time giving in quiet, hand-on ways that draw no particular notice—unless their work were to be left undone. They offer up their sacrifices and seek no acclaim, but their deeds do not go unappreciated.

Do you know who tidies up the sanctuary after worship and ensures that sign-in pads are in place, pencils are sharpened, and brochures are neatly placed in the pews? Who takes home dish clothes and towels to wash and ready them for use again on Sunday mornings? Who makes coffee and cookies for worshippers, and who cleans up after post-worship socializing? Who devotes countless after-work hours to addressing technology developments and needs? Who prepares the Sunday morning slides? Hangs the banners and paraments? Attends to the seasonal enhancements of the sanctuary and the Narthex? None of these are glorious tasks, but they are all important—even during “ordinary time.”

The Worship and Spiritual Life committee offers its deepest gratitude to all who keep our church “on track.” Though the fast-paced demands of preparation for Advent and Lent are behind us, ordinary time still promises its own excitement. Pentecost (remember to wear red!), Music Sunday, and Christian Education’s Vacation Bible School are in busy planning stages. The “hidden helpers” remain hard at work.

Our ordinary time promises to be anything but ordinary.

Submitted by Sherry Spenser





*Perk up with a cup of joe at our Coffee House!
Sundays at 10 a.m., worship services are live-
streamed so you can watch from the comfort of
the couch while enjoying a hot beverage, a donut,
and of course, fellowship.*

*If you prefer worshipping in the sanctuary, coffee
and tea are always available after the service.*

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Mission Statement

In awe, we Receive God's Grace and Gospel.
In gratitude, we Respond with Worship and Servanthood.
In love, we Represent Jesus Christ as we minister to
transform lives in family, community, and the world.

*If you would like to be a worship service volunteer,
please contact the head organizer of the position you're interested in.*

Worship Assistants: Sherry Spenser, sherryspenser@hotmail.com

Greeters: Lee Lohr, LeelaAnn60@gmail.com

Ushers: Marcy Uhl, muhl0710@oh.rr.com; Kathy Hamilton, kmhamilton228@gmail.com

Communion Servers: Lee Lohr, LeelaAnn60@gmail.com

Coffee Servers: Cris Till, b.cristill17@gmail.com

Missions

"It is our choices that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities."
J.K. Rowling

Thank you for your support of **One Great Hour of Sharing** and our **Easter** offering for local missions.

Want to be a part of the lunch packing fun? The next event is Sunday, April 14 after church. It is a talk and work activity. It is amazing what you can learn making sandwiches for 72 people! If you want to help in another way, we like to add homemade or purchased cookies or brownies to each bag.

Bill Till will be making dinner for the people staying at Haven Center on April 28. If you like being a sous chef or

enjoy washing pots and pans, talk with Bill Till or Kathy Hamilton.

Special thanks to the ALPC small groups and circles that have been bringing a variety of donations each month. The "unmentionables," non-perishable food, and warm weather wear have been passed on to LCM Churches including Front Door Ministries and the Great Lakes Church Clothing Pantry, as well as to Avon Lake's Community Resource Services. Donations are especially welcome knowing the Front Door reported a 37% increase in people requesting help.

Who is interested in a drive-up/drop-off of unneeded clothing event at ALPC? We hope to arrange one in the next few months. Organizations tips are welcome!

May 19 is our annual Pentecost PCUSA Offering opportunity. (*try saying that fast three times*) We will share our portion of the offering with Camp Imagine of Avon Lake. Look for more information via email and bulletins.

We value your opinions and suggestions. Please feel free to join our next meeting April 4 at 4:15 p.m. at the Janis'.

Submitted by Beth Janis

Church Officers

Deacons

CLASS OF 2024

Joy Harris (2018)
Jim Hough (2021)
Deb Reichlin (2021)
Doug Day (2022)

CLASS OF 2025

Catherine Graves (2019)
Jeff Spenser (2019)
Sybil Wendling (2019)

CLASS OF 2026

Sandra Seib (2020)
Craig Shoemaker (2020)
Sherry Thompson (2020)
Gary Uhl (2023)

Ruling Elders

CLASS OF 2024

Linda Swartz (2018)
Terry Vine (2021)
Shawn Brunner (2021)

CLASS OF 2025

David Brunner (2022)
Sharon Call (2022)
Cheryl Dean (2019)
Sue Mabe (2022)
Paul Butrey (2023)

CLASS OF 2026

Lee Lohr (2023)
Carol Nussle (2023)
Sherry Spenser (2023)
(vacant)

Trustees

CLASS OF 2024

Sue Scott

CLASS OF 2025

Mike Richardson

CLASS OF 2026

Bill Hamilton

Elected by Session: Clerk of Session, Ruling Elder Elizabeth Shoemaker

Pastor's Passage

The Love of My Life

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs." 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

Last month, I shared with you a story about my best friend, Chris. I talked about how our friendship pre-dated my relationship with Mary. In the story I wrote, "You could say that I brought Chris along with me when Mary and I made our connection in 1977." I also stated, "After college, Chris moved to Colorado and I eventually moved back home, where I re-met Mary (that's another story) and got married."

As Paul Harvey used to say, "And now the rest of the story." I would like to share with you my story about Mary, the love of my life and my best friend.

Mary and I went to high school together. I was two years ahead of her. We knew of each other but that was all. After graduating in 1970, I left for college. I attended two colleges without graduating. College was just one big party for me. My drinking quickly escalated along with my use of pot. It is rather amazing that I never flunked out and after six years I just quit.

I was fortunate that my parents let me move home in October 1976. I believed a change of scenery would "cure" me of my bad habits. Unfortunately, I brought myself along when I moved home and nothing really changed.

On April 9, 1977, the day before Easter, I attended a party with my

sister and that is where I re-met Mary. Another guy at the party was making Mary uncomfortable and she asked my sister for advice. My sister asked her, "Do you remember my brother? He's in the living room sitting on the couch. Go talk with him." Mary sat down next to me and reintroduced herself.

We talked and caught up with each other the rest of the evening. We gave Mary a ride home after the party. My sister drove because I was drunk. When we got to Mary's house, I asked if I could call her the next day. She told me that she and her son, Kenny, would be at her parents for Easter dinner. I asked for the phone number and she told me it was listed in the phonebook (remember those?). Mary didn't think I would remember this conversation, let alone expect me to call. To her surprise, I did call and you could say the rest is history.

Mary's son, Kenny, would turn five in May. Her ex-husband had walked out on them soon after Kenny was born. The three of us bonded pretty quickly. We spent all of our free time together. By the end of May, we talked about getting married in about a year.

That summer, I was playing on a softball team with some high school friends. We had a game on Father's Day June 19, 1977. Before the game, we went to Mary's parents house for a cookout. I asked her dad permission to

marry his daughter. He and Mary's mom gave us their blessing. After the game, we went to my parents house and shared the news with them. They too were excited. On our way to a softball team picnic, Kenny asked if he could tell the team our news. At the picnic, Kenny stood on a picnic table and said, "Hey everyone! I have an announcement to make. My mom and Rick and I are going to get married!"

Later that summer, we decided why wait and got married on October 15, 1977. Within the next couple of years our daughters, Shelby and Stacey, added to our family.

Mary worked at Baldwin-Wallace College (now University) and I finally completed my degree there in 1983. Mary graduated from BW in 1998 after taking one class a quarter for 25 years.

Mary retired from BW on July 1, 2020 after 46 years. I, on the other hand, bounced from job to job throughout our marriage. As I reflect back on this, I realize that I was a functioning alcoholic and "pothead." This meant that after a couple of years my employers got tired of my act and let me go.

Throughout our life together, Mary has been the anchor to our family. Because I was an alcoholic, I was there physically for our family but not emotionally. Mary kept our household

intact and functioning. She, at times, was both a mother and a father to our children. Looking back, I wonder how she did it.

The above scripture from 1 Corinthians is a great definition for the person that Mary has always been. The words from the Apostle Paul describe her to a "T."

The day before Easter in 1998, with Mary's blessing, I quit my job as an assistant manager of a greenhouse. I had worked there since 1990; the longest job tenure I had had during our marriage. I wanted to become a teacher and had already started part-time at BW. I wanted to go full-time and Mary agreed.

That evening at dinner Mary asked if I would like to go to church Easter Sunday. At first, I balked but then said, "ok." We had been absent from church for about 15 years. The Easter morning felt like we were the only people in the sanctuary. The words spoken that morning from the Rev. Oommen Thomas touched our souls. We haven't missed church since that day.

Though our marriage and family seemed ok on the outside we realized that our spiritual connection to God and Jesus Christ was not there. Our souls had been hollowed out in part due to my addictions to alcohol and marijuana. We were good people but I was not the person God created me to be and it took its toll on our family. Without Mary's strength, I hate to think what might have happened.

I did get certified to teach and did so for a year while we remained very active in the church. After one year of

teaching, I was hired as Director of Christian Education at our church. My hiring was announced Easter morning in 2000.

By the fall of 2002, my alcoholism had brought on deep depression. Mary encouraged me to get medical help. For once, I listened to her about my drinking and followed through. My journey of sobriety began November 19, 2002. I was miserable but I attended AA meetings and sought counseling. Mary was my pillar of strength and she walked this path with me. Throughout the first 25 years of marriage, Mary never lost hope that I could become the person God created me to be.

Some people might wonder how Mary survived all of this. Why did she put up with me and the effects my addictions had on our family? That is a story she has to share.

Nine months into sobriety and I was enrolled at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. When I told Mary I believed God was leading me

on this path she responded, "What took you so long to figure it out?"

In recovery, I was able to make amends to Mary, our children, and our families. I believe that Mary's unconditional love and support for me in recovery made my amends easier. Others saw how Mary treated me during this process and this might have influenced others when I offered my apologies for my past behaviors.

God has been a huge part in my life even though I did not recognize His presence for so many years. It started almost 47 years ago when God brought Mary and Kenny into my life. God working through Mary all those years kept us together. Life wasn't always smooth (*continued on page 6*)



Mary, Kenny, and Rick

Session

The Session met on March 25, 2024. Highlights of their meeting follow.

- ▶ The Deacons have had more ride requests recently and are happy to provide them.
- ▶ The Deacons need some extra help with the Easter Breakfast cooking and clean-up.
- ▶ Kenzi in the church office manages the church calendar, so bring calendar request to her first.
- ▶ The February finance report was preliminary, as it needs reconciliation.
- ▶ Expenses exceeded income in February, primarily due to Property expenses such as the stove repair, toward which Presbyterian Women donated \$1,300.
- ▶ Vanguard changed how balances are viewed online, making it more difficult to get specific balances for desired dates.
- ▶ The Easter Egg hunt went very well with 35-40 kids participating.
- ▶ The changes to the Sexual Misconduct portion of the Employee Manual were approved.
- ▶ HR will provide the annual clergy compensation report to the Presbytery.
- ▶ Employee reviews are being conducted.
- ▶ Emilee wants to make family activities available after church some Sundays.
- ▶ Options for resurfacing the parking lot are being investigated, realizing minimal repairs will not last, so more extensive repairs will need to be funded.
- ▶ Loans for such improvements are available from the denomination, and a capital campaign would need to be conducted to pay off any loan.
- ▶ Mission is supporting the Lorain Community Foundation raffle with some donations.
- ▶ Holy Week and Easter services have been planned. Candles will be set out for the Taizé style Maundy Thursday Service.
- ▶ The Nominating Committee is still looking for one elder and one deacon willing to serve.
- ▶ Noting that the revised Child Protection Policy had not been approved last year, a motion was passed to approve it.
- ▶ A preliminary anti-racism statement was discussed as a basis for starting to create an Anti-Racism Policy for ALPC.
- ▶ The Ministry Discernment Form completed by the Pastor Nominating Committee was approved with one change.

Submitted by Elizabeth Shoemaker,
Clerk of Session



Thanks, Babe. Every day I thank God for bringing you into my life. You, with the help of God, have made me the person I am today. I love you very much.

Blessings, Rick Stein

Love of My Life

continued from page 5

or gone the way we would like it but God continued to work in us, even when I was unaware of it.

God continued to work through Mary and work on me. And God continues to do so. It took 25 years of love, patience, kindness, humbleness, and support from Mary. This is who Mary is and always has been. It was never

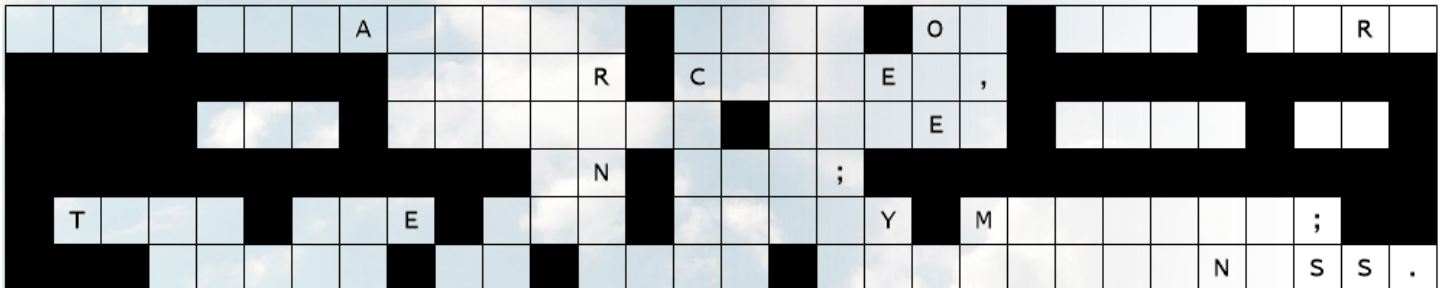
about her. It was always about our family and others.

You were always the rudder on my drifting ship. You were steering me (with God's help) in the direction I needed to go, even when I didn't want to. Thank you for always believing in me.

FUN & GAMES

The letters from each cell are below the puzzle. Try to rebuild the original message by choosing the letters for each cell.

Hint: Lamentations 3:22-23



V E S O E E
H A F R E T U V A R C H M
R E A D E N C W E E V E T T O I G
H G Y T S R M E A S Y O E N D F A S R H R U L E L O
T H E E S I E T N I S A I E L R N S V I F O F N E N E T O D

Letter from the Editor

This edition of *Saint's Alive!* is by far the smallest issue I've done in the two years I've been with ALPC.

Articles are written by committees and then submitted to the church secretary—me—by the Sunday before the last Friday of each month. *Saints Alive!* is then scheduled to go out to the congregation on the last Friday of each month. This allows for only five work days to complete editing and formatting.

I enjoy creating graphics to go along with the articles I receive and have a good time putting together the Fun & Games Section. I must admit, though, that the aforementioned are merely “fillers” for the newsletter. To ensure I have proper formatting, the newsletters need to have a number of

pages that is a multiple of four (four, eight, twelve, etc.).

This issue is set to go out on Good Friday. Holy Week is a very busy week here in the church office, not allowing much time to get creative with newsletter “fillers.”

Over the past year, article submissions have steadily declined. Please talk to your committee persons and plan to have someone write something (anything!) for ALPC's newsletter. If you have suggestions for new content, please let me know. I'm always looking for ways to improve our church communications and am happy to listen to your ideas!

Thank you and bless you,
Kenzi Roberts

2024 SAINTS ALIVE SCHEDULE

<u>Articles Due</u>	<u>Newsletter Out</u>
April 21	April 26
May 26	May 31
August 25	August 30
September 22	September 27
October 27	November 1
November 24	November 29
December 22	December 27



Our worship services begin at 10:00 am every Sunday.

Live streaming of our services is available on Facebook at www.facebook.com/avonlakepc

Our Sunday services will air on ALC-TV beginning the following Wednesday, and continue every day throughout the week at 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

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ALPC Staff

Rick Stein Transitional Pastor

Rick Fortney Director of Music & Arts Ministries

Emilee Oliva Director of Christian Education

Kenzi Roberts Office Administrator

Marcy Uhl Treasurer

Julie Wasserman Director of Cornerstone Preschool

Ed Homer Lock-Up Custodian

