

FEBRUARY 2024

OAKNOTES



Oakmont Presbyterian Church
415 Pennsylvania Avenue
Oakmont, PA 15139
412.828.5770
www.oakmontpresbyterianchurch.org

Dear Friends,

February is a significant month for the church, as Ash Wednesday arrives on February 14 and begins the Lenten period that leads us to Easter. (Join us for the Imposition of Ashes on February 14, at 12:15 and 7:15 pm) It is a time for the examination and fortification of our faith. To that end, as the season begins, I share with you a story

Arthur Gordon, in his successor book to the best-selling *The Touch of Wonder*, tells of a lesson that arose from the Lenten tradition in his family of "the mite box." (a mite was the smallest Jewish coin in New Testament times). In their journey toward Easter, the children would put money into little offering boxes, to be taken to church on Easter Sunday and given as their Easter offering.

"The trouble in my case is that sometimes in moments of acute financial need, I would pry some of the coins out of my box. My conscience gnawed me a bit, but I always intended to put the money back for God before Easter. But somehow or another I was chronically short and never did. With Easter morning's dawn, Aunt Daisy would come over and always go to church with us on Easter. After breakfast, we were to bring in our mite boxes for inspection by our parents. My sister's box was clean as a whistle, and was always filled with nickels and dimes and clean. It had never been opened. Mine was dogeared and dirty and I would look inside at a few surviving pennies rattling about forlornly.

"My father knew how selfish I had been, and he gave me a lecture every Easter. Why was I so selfish? Why couldn't I think less about myself and more about others? He was intent on making me feel my guilt, and was successful.

"Finally, Aunt Daisy tired of it, fished in her purse, and drew out a 50-cent piece and looked into my dazzled eyes. 'Here,' she said, 'Put this in your mite box.'

"Not fair!' howled my saintly sister.

"It's not right, Daisy,' said my angry father. 'The boy shouldn't be rewarded for poor performance.'

"Well,' Aunt Daisy smiled.

"To my sister, she said, 'You're right, dear, it's not fair. But never you mind. God will remember how faithful you've been.' "To my father, she said, 'Haven't you ever had a gift that you did not deserve? I should think Easter might remind you of that.'

"Then her warm brown eyes rested on me, the chief of sinners. She said this: "Arthur, God loves all sinners, large ones and small ones, like you. But don't push him too far!"

Gordon's story reminds us of many Lenten lessons: the necessity of sacrifice; the reality of sin in our lives, and the endless love of God, whose son died on the cross. This is a season of contemplation and spiritual growth. I encourage you to consider how you might focus your faith during these days of Lent, by contemplation, action, prayer and thanksgiving.

In Christ,

Pastor Tim





Chancel Flowers – Please call **Carla Lowman** at **412-826-5914** to reserve your date; give her the info and wording for the bulletin that week. We appreciate your assistance in enhancing the beauty of our sanctuary!
Available Dates: FEB 4 and 11. In keeping with our Lenten tradition, flowers will not be needed during Lent.



Your OPC Family Cares About You! Because there are times when you are ill, in the hospital or in emotional need and we don't know about it, please remember to contact the church office (412.828.5770) or a staff member (mstecik@oakmontpresby.org) so we may support you in your time of need. You are loved!

Prayer Requests - Members of our church will pray for you and anyone in need. Please send prayer requests to: prayers@oakmontpresby.org

Memorial and Gift Fund – 2023 Annual Report

In 2023 the Memorial and Gift Fund received donations in memory of Bob Coates, John McCollum, Mary Moore, Richard Jones, Beryl Thomas, Laura Crawford, Diane Harrell, Polly Kokales, Dave Sipe, Hydie Houston, Jackie Powell, Dorothea Lazar, Carol Swift and in honor of Dr. Steve Wilson.

Two new leaves were added to the Memorial and Gift Tree, one in memory of Diane Harrell and one in honor of Dr. Steve Wilson. Donations of \$1,000 entitles a person to a leaf.

The Memorial Committee paid \$159.95 for a Keurig coffee maker for the Sunday morning adult education class, \$7,050 for the painting of the church doors, \$6,900 for canopies to protect those doors, and a second payment of \$1,500 for the design of the new web page. These projects were made possible by undesignated gifts to the Memorial and Gift Fund. The committee is very grateful for the generosity of many people over the years.

Memorial and Gifts Finances Report 2023

Balance 1/1/23	\$8,642.16
Donations	8,140.00
Interest	0.99
Expenses	15,609.95

Committee members: Todd Massack, Steve Hoops, Linda Pavlik, Mary McIntyre, Dale Remai, Jr., and Jack Kells, chairperson.



Jillian & Ryan Joyce
and baby Bridger
During 4:30 pm Christmas Eve
Worship Service..

RECOVERY GROUP MEETINGS

AAs

Mondays at Noon
Multi-Purpose Room

Saturdays at 8:30 pm
Dining Room

Women's AAs

Wednesday at 10:00 am
Dining Room

NAs

Thursdays at 8:00 pm
Dining Room

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

The Lions Clubs collects used eyeglasses and delivers them to regional Recycling Centers where they are cleaned, sorted by prescription strength and packaged. Most are distributed to people in need in developing countries where they will have the greatest impact. The Lions Clubs accept prescription and reading glasses, sunglasses and plastic and metal frames. Children's glasses are especially needed. For your convenience, there is a drop box located in the church office.



**DEACONS
ANGEL TREE
GIFT WRAPPING
DECEMBER 2023**



DEACONS CORNER...

The Deacon Team wishes to acknowledge the heartwarming response so many of you had to our angel tree project this Christmas season. Each of you who were willing to take an ornament, spend time shopping, wrapping and adding personal touches to the gifts that went to so many children is truly the meaning of Christmas in action. With your help, the deacons were able to provide a wish filled Christmas morning to 70 children through RCAC, The Verona Methodist Church, and East End Cooperative Ministry. We received cash donations and grocery gift cards that went directly to some of the older children and families locally to help them enjoy a Christmas meal. We could not have accomplished this without each of you choosing to be involved. We received words of thanks from the organizations, and as one hand written card noted, “thank you doesn’t seem to be enough, but some of their faces said at all.”

2024 Per Capita - Each member is asked to **contribute \$36.35 for the Per Capita Fund**. Your contribution enables the local Presbytery, regional Synod and national General Assembly to provide resources to operate the church. Please remember to give using the envelope (included in your box of envelopes). If you do not pay your Per Capita amount, the money will be taken from the Church Operating Expenses.

**OAKMONT PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**



**SPRING
FILM SERIES
2024**

You Are Invited
Admission is free!
Everyone is welcome!
Multi-Purpose Room
(lower level)
Every other Friday Night
at 7:00 pm

FEB 2 *Indian Horse (2017)*

Follows the life of Native Canadian Saul Indian Horse as he survives residential school and life amongst the racism of the 1970s. A talented hockey player, Saul must find his own path as he battles stereotypes and alcoholism.

Ajuawak Kapashesit, Wayne Baker, Sladen Peltier (Not Rated 1h, 41m)

FEB 16 *The Most Reluctant Convert (2021)*

Spanning C.S. Lewis’ bitter childhood, WW1 and his life-changing friendships at Oxford, this movie depicts the events that shaped Lewis’ early life and journey from hard-boiled atheism to prolific Christianity.

Max McLean, Nicholas Ralph, Eddie Ray Martin (Not Rated 1h, 13m)

Soups On met last week and prepared Ham and Bean Soup and Potato Corn Chowder. Stop down at the kitchen freezer and take a container to a friend, neighbor, or relative who needs a cup of cheer and to see your smiling face! Next Soups On will meet **FEB 18** at 10am in the Kitchen.

Clare Oskin Update: Thanks to the congregation for all the cards and calls during her recent stay in the hospital. She is doing well now and is living in an independent facility. She will miss coming to church! Her church means so much to her and always will. Clare's new address is: 1871 Highpointe Lane; APT 1217, Allison Park PA 15101; Phone: 878-248-2009; Email: CLAIRO1019@gmail.com

PW Circle Meeting on FEB 7 at 1:30 pm in the Lona McCrea Room. Continuing their Bible study *Sacred Encounters, The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke and Acts*, Lesson 4 *Mary and Martha encounter Jesus*. Join us for refreshments and fellowship! Contact Margie King at 412-828-5844.

GOSPEL MASS

by ROBERT RAY

For centuries, the world's great composers have set the Ordinary of the Mass (the various parts that are mostly unchanging: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus/Benedictus, Agnus Dei) in a wide variety of styles. Robert Ray (1946-2022) has surrounded these texts with the joyous styles of contemporary African-American music. All six movements, *sung in English*, work well as individual anthems, but collectively they form a truly powerful worship experience for the SATB chorus.

The official premier of *Gospel Mass* was in 1979 at the University of Illinois – Urbana with the composer conducting a chorus of his students. Ray believes the work struck an ecumenical chord that “allowed people of all denominations or faith to embrace the style.” The music for the Mass, like other pieces Ray would compose over the years, was based on his own musical experiences, growing up in the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Our scores of the *Gospel Mass* are purchased for the OPC Chancel Choir by Shannon & Jack Meyers in loving memory of Marti DiGioia-Kistler (d. August 23, 2011), former Director of Music and Organist at First UP/OPC. On many occasions, Marti often shared with Shannon about her lifelong love of Gospel Music.

Plan to join us at 11:00am on February 4th for a Communion Service of inspiration and joy as the Chancel Choir will present *Gospel Mass*. The choir and soloists will sing the various movements of this choral work throughout the service. The work includes African American gospel style music with a touch of jazz and rock. Soloists include: Paul Banahasky, Jamie Fair, Anna Lahti, Laura Amos, Ken Crawford and Nicholas Nury. Providing the accompaniment will be Eric Waggoner at the piano, Paul Banahasky on Electric Bass Guitar and Keith Parton on Drums. Michael P. Frank III will serve as the Director. Come, be inspired and uplifted in this sure to be a toe-tapping worship experience as we celebrate the start of Black History Month and the wonderful musical contributions of our Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

And as a reminder - we offer a more intimate simpler form of the celebration of Communion at the 8:30am Worship Service for those who may prefer that type of worship experience.



Children/Youth News

We had such a joyful time at 4:30 Christmas Eve Family Service. Thank you to all of the children who worked so hard on their parts and singing. Thank you to the parents and families who came to support their kids and did so well with their parts. Thank you to OPC for being involved in this service and watching our vision of loving on our community and families come to life.

In our Christian Education meeting this past month, I read John 14:12-14, *Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.* I am so encouraged by this because we are setting big goals for OPC and Jesus promises that we will do even greater things because we have faith, no thought is ever too big for him. We can be confident He will do more in our church than we could have ever imagined—trust Him and stay the course.

Youth Schedule

- JAN 28th Youth at 1pm, downstairs
- FEB 4th Youth at 1pm, downstairs
- FEB 11th Take home “Superbowl subs” for mission fundraiser.
- FEB 14th Ash Wednesday service, Youth to get Lenten devotionals.
- FEB 18th Starbucks and Bible Study at Harmar Starbucks at 1pm; bring Bibles.
If you need a ride, contact Ronnie.
- FEB 24-25th Tweeners Retreat at Camp Crestfield.

Ronnie

Update on Lalia Shabani and Her Children

February 15 is the second anniversary of the arrival in Oakmont of Lalia Shabani and her three children, Anjelani (age 8), Daniel (age 5) and Sartiel (age 4). We mark the occasion by providing this update to the congregation on the progress the family is making in adapting to life in the United States.

It has been well over two years since the Session of OPC, moved by the tremendous number of refugees around the world, decided that OPC should sponsor the resettlement of a refugee family in Oakmont. The "New Country New Life" team, headed by Sharon Myers, was formed. We partnered with Jewish Family and Community Services of Pittsburgh, which receives families admitted to the U.S. and who have been provided a path to citizenship by the Department of State. We then embarked on this long-term adventure of accepting a family, in this case a Congolese family coming from a refugee camp in Tanzania. Upon arrival, no one in the family spoke English.

The ultimate goal is for this family to become independent. There has been great progress toward that goal, but there remains a ways to go. The family is renting a house near the church. Lalia is working full time at Tomanetti Food Products in Oakmont, and the church is no longer providing her financial support. She is a good worker and has already been promoted at Tomanetti. She is continuing to learn English, taking on-line classes in the evening. Anjelani is in first grade at Tenth Street School, and Daniel is in kindergarten there. Before and after school, they are at Riverview Children's Center in Verona. Sartiel spends the full day at the center.

The Oakmont community has given this family a warm welcome. The mother of another child at Riverview Children's Center helps with transportation of the children. The children have made friends and have been invited to birthday parties. Anjelani has joined the Children's Choir at OPC. You may have noticed her in worship services. Daniel has played soccer the last two summers in the Twin Boro Soccer Program. His team won a tournament at the end of the summer when Daniel scored the winning goal. Sartiel has a beautiful smile and a charming personality. The staff at Riverview Children's Center tell us, "Everyone loves Sartiel."

In the summer of 2022 Lalia's parents, two younger brothers, and a younger sister arrived in Pittsburgh and were settled in Duquesne by Jewish Family and Community Services. This past summer, we helped that family move to Verona. Two of the children are in Riverview High School this year. Lalia's oldest brother and both parents all have full-time jobs in Oakmont/Verona. Lalia's father is an accomplished tailor. He brought sewing machines with him and makes clothing for the family. Because he has limited knowledge of English, he has been forced to accept entry level work that does not use his skills. Lalia's sister Berta (age 15) has been a tremendous help. She provides childcare when Riverview does not have school and goes to Lalia's house after school in order to have dinner ready when Lalia gets home from work.

The New Country New Life team is still providing Lalia's family support in the following ways: (1) weekly transportation for grocery shopping and other needs, (2) help making medical and dental appointments and transportation to them, (3) reading weekly bedtime stories to the children and tutoring them to help them manage school work in a language they are still learning, (4) repairing various household items as the need arises, (5) helping Lalia with the government bureaucracy on which she depends for food support and medical insurance, (6) helping Lalia prepare and file her tax forms.

The Mission Committee of Session budgeted two years of financial support for Lalia and her family. Lalia has not drawn on this support for the past several months except to repay her loan from the U.S. government for transportation to the U.S. That has now been paid off. Although Lalia no longer depends on OPC financially, the church continues to receive monetary and in-kind donations from church members and from friends of OPC members who have learned of the family's journey. They are greatly appreciated, as you can imagine, by a family of four with only one wage earner.

Those of us who have worked with this family have been blessed. We have been on the receiving end of Swahili-language prayers of gratitude by Lalia's mother. We have benefited from Lalia's upbeat attitude and sense of humor. Even though our children are grown, we have experienced the joy of Christmas through the eyes of young children. When asked recently about how all this is going, Lalia said, "I love my life with my children in the U.S."

The New Country New Life Team of OPC



When Christians Become the Minority: Challenges and Opportunities



“Coffee and Conversation” Oakmont Presbyterian Church

Sundays, February 4-25, 2024

9:30 – 10:30 am

Many sociologists of religion believe that the United States is becoming a “post-Christian” society. This series explores how Christians can be a creative, hopeful people even if they someday become the minority. We will look at current trends and future possibilities.

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| February 4 | “What It’s Like to Become the Minority When You Were Once the Majority” |
| February 11 | “What’s Been Lost and What Remains of Christian Culture” |
| February 18 | “Finding a Language for the Gospel in a Post-Christian Land” |
| February 25 | “The Special Hope that Christians Have” |

The Rev. Dr. John Burgess is professor of theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He has written and spoken about the future of the church in Europe and the United States.

Come early for coffee and a donut hole (or two)!!



Men's Breakfast Fellowship - Come join us on Tuesday **FEB 6 at 8:30 am in the Dining Room**. Breakfast is served family style at 8:30 so come a few minutes early. Our goal is to provide a good breakfast, an interesting program after the breakfast and an opportunity to make new friends and see old friends.

FEB 6 - The program will be: "Race & Union - How the House Divides 1846-1861", John Hackworth will describe the causes of the breaking apart of the Union and the Civil War beginning.

FEBRUARY 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>28</p> <p>8:30am WORSHIP (SANC) 9:30am Bell Choir Rehearsal (SANC) 9:30am Coffee & Conversation (MPPR) 10:00am Chancel Choir Rehearsal (SANC) 10:15am Children's Choir Rehearsal (Upper Level) 11:00am WORSHIP (SANC) & Livestream and children's JAM Classes (prek-Grade 2 & Grades 3-6) 1:00pm Youth Group (Grades 6-12) (Youth Rm)</p>	<p>29</p> <p>12:00pm AA's (SGR) 7:00pm Boy Scout Troop #854 & Cub Pack #137 (MPPR & DR)</p>	<p>30</p> <p>8:30am Men's Breakfast & Speaker (DR)</p>	<p>31</p> <p>10:00am Women's AA (DR) 11:00am Bible Study (SGR) 12:15pm Staff (SGR) 4:30pm Jubilation Ringers Rehearsal (CR)</p>	<p>1</p> <p>7:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (SANC) 8:00pm NAs (DR)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>7:00am OPC Film Series (MPPR)</p>	<p>3</p> <p>8:00pm AA's (DR)</p>
<p>4</p> <p>8:30am WORSHIP & COMMUNION (SANC) 9:30am Coffee & Conversation (MPPR) 9:45am Chancel Choir Rehearsal (SANC) 10:15am Children's Choir Rehearsal (Upper Level) 11:00am WORSHIP & COMMUNION (SANC) & Livestream and children's JAM Classes (prek-Grade 2 & Grades 3-6) 1:00pm Youth Group (Grades 6-12) (Youth Rm)</p>	<p>5</p> <p>12:00pm AA's (SGR) 7:00pm Boy Scout Troop #854 & Cub Pack #137 (MPPR & DR)</p>	<p>6</p> <p>8:30am Men's Breakfast & Speaker (DR)</p>	<p>7</p> <p>10:00am Women's AA (DR) 11:00am Bible Study (SGR) 12:15pm Staff (SGR) 1:30pm PW Circle Meeting (LMR) 4:30pm Jubilation Ringers Rehearsal (CR)</p>	<p>8</p> <p>7:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (CR) 8:00pm NAs (DR)</p>	<p>9</p> <p>7:00am OPC Film Series (MPPR)</p>	<p>10</p> <p>8:00pm AA's (DR)</p>
<p>11</p> <p>TRANSGURATION OF THE LORD 8:30am WORSHIP (SANC) 9:30am Coffee & Conversation (MPPR) 10:15am Children's Choir Rehearsal (Upper Level) 11:00am WORSHIP (SANC) & Livestream and children's JAM Classes (prek-Grade 2 & Grades 3-6)</p>	<p>12</p> <p>12:00pm AA's (SGR) 7:00pm Boy Scout Troop #854 & Cub Pack #137 (MPPR & DR)</p>	<p>13</p> <p>7:00pm Our Journey Without Them (MBC) 7:00pm Session (DR)</p>	<p>14</p> <p>ASH WEDNESDAY 10:00am Women's AA (DR) 12:15pm WORSHIP & IMPOSITION OF ASHES (SANC) 4:30pm Jubilation Ringers Rehearsal (CR) 7:15pm WORSHIP & IMPOSITION OF ASHES (SANC)</p>	<p>15</p> <p>10:00am Seeps On (KITCHEN) 7:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (CR) 8:00pm NAs (DR)</p>	<p>16</p> <p>7:00am OPC Film Series (MPPR)</p>	<p>17</p> <p>8:00pm AA's (DR)</p>
<p>18</p> <p>LENT 1 8:30am WORSHIP (SANC) 9:30am Coffee & Conversation (MPPR) 10:15am Children's Choir Rehearsal (Upper Level) 11:00am WORSHIP (SANC) & Livestream and children's JAM Classes (prek-Grade 2 & Grades 3-6) 1:00pm Youth Bible Study (Hartman Starbuck's)</p>	<p>19</p> <p>PRESIDENTS DAY - CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED 12:00pm AA's (SGR) 7:00pm Boy Scout Troop #854 & Cub Pack #137 (MPPR & DR)</p>	<p>20</p> <p>10:00am Garden Club of Oklahoma (MPPR, DR & KITCH) 7:00pm Deacons (DR)</p>	<p>21</p> <p>10:00am Women's AA (DR) 11:00am Bible Study (SGR) 4:30pm Jubilation Ringers Rehearsal (SANC) 6:30pm Lenten Supper (DR) 7:15pm LENTEN WORSHIP (FH)</p>	<p>22</p> <p>7:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (CR) 8:00pm NAs (DR)</p>	<p>23</p> <p>7:00am OPC Film Series (MPPR)</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Twentys Retiree (Camp Crestfield) 8:00pm AA's (DR)</p>
<p>25</p> <p>LENT 2 Twentys Retreat (Camp Crestfield) 8:30am WORSHIP (SANC) 9:30am Coffee & Conversation (MPPR) 10:15am Children's Choir Rehearsal (Upper Level) 11:00am WORSHIP (SANC) & Livestream and children's JAM Classes (prek-Grade 2 & Grades 3-6)</p>	<p>26</p> <p>12:00pm AA's (SGR) 7:00pm Boy Scout Troop #854 & Cub Pack #137 (MPPR & DR)</p>	<p>27</p> <p>7:00pm Our Journey Without Them (MBC)</p>	<p>28</p> <p>10:00am Women's AA (DR) 11:00am Bible Study (SGR) 12:15pm Staff (SGR) 4:30pm Jubilation Ringers Rehearsal (CR) 6:30pm Lenten Supper (DR) 7:15pm LENTEN WORSHIP (FH)</p>	<p>29</p> <p>7:00pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal (CR) 8:00pm NAs (DR)</p>	<p>1</p> <p>7:00am OPC Film Series (MPPR)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>8:00pm AA's (DR)</p>



Lenten Dinners in the Dining Room

You are invited to join us for a simple dinner of salad and soup. The meal gathering is a wonderful opportunity to meet and get to know others in the church. The dinners are scheduled for February 14, 21 & 28 at 6:30 pm.

Wednesday Lenten Worship Focus in Friendship Hall

In our mid-week Lenten worship, our focus will be on Spiritual Disciplines. Almost 50 years ago, Richard Foster, a Quaker theologian wrote a book titled *Celebration of Discipline*. The book has sold more than 2,000,000 copies and has been named one of the top ten books of the twentieth century by *Christianity Today*. The book explores the "classic Disciplines," or central spiritual practices, of the Christian faith. For our Lenten studies this year, we will be discussing some of those disciplines.

February 21—Meditation February 28—Simplicity March 6—Solitude
March 13—Guidance March 20—Confession

We share the journey of Lent with our brothers and sisters in Christ and open ourselves to the movement of the Holy Spirit as we prepare for Easter. Join us in Friendship Hall at 7:15 pm.

Oakmont Presbyterian Church
415 Pennsylvania Avenue
Oakmont, PA 15139

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