



The Messenger

April 2024

West County United Methodist Parish

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Worship

9:30 a.m. (L) (W)
10:00 a.m. Adult Sunday School (F)
10:30 a.m. Sunday School (W)
11:00 a.m. (G) (F)
11:15 a.m. Children's Church JUMP (F)

Pastor Wade
(724)777-4795

Pastor Ali
(814)241-2269

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Pastor Ali's Note

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isa 41:10

There is an epidemic of loneliness and isolation happening within the United State right now and researchers are seeing growing numbers each month. This is not what God intended for people, God wants us to be in relationship with Him and with others. 36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'[c] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'[d] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matt 22:36-40

Isolation can lead to mental illness or visa versa. But how can we, as 4 churches, help combat this growing epidemic? There are many things we can, and are currently doing, to help support a relational foundation in our lives.

Each church provides unique worship experiences for people to come together and praise God. We also provide unique ministry opportunities within the four churches but these opportunities are not just for the members of those particular churches but things we can all participate within. If you like to socialize and want to come to Pasta Night at Girard and you are a member at Fairview, come on over and come socialize with the people of Girard! If you want to read to the children of Pfeiffer Burleigh and help build their self-confidence, come join us as we read to them!

If you, yourself, are feeling isolated, come join us for Community Café or walk through Pauline's Closet and talk with those there. Enjoy any one of our Parish Events where we are working on building relationships with others within the

churches and sometimes within the community as well.

If you are a family trying to connect with other families, come to family Night Out at Weis Library! If you have kids and you want them to know the meaning of Easter, bring them to the Easter Egg Hunt and More at Fairview.

But the best news is, it doesn't have to stop with us – invite your friends to come along as well. Offer a ride to someone who is homebound and bring them to one or more of these events. We have 28 different things happening in April and 21 so far in May. We are not lacking in providing areas to build relationships, we just need you to come and enjoy the experience with us.

If you have wondered what Messy Church is about but haven't come yet – stop by and check it out! If you wonder what worship is like in another one of the churches, try it for a week! Bring a friend to the next Pasta Night or Spaghetti Dinner! Bring an entire family to the Magic Show or to go bowling!

And we don't have to stop there- I have heard some great ideas of ministries we can start up for people with like minded interests. We could have:

- Walking group
- Scrapbooking weekend
- Crocheting club
- Card Making club
- Canvas painting party
- Fly fishing lure demonstrations
- Coffee and Devotions
- Mom's club
- Dad's Club
- Yoga classes
- Financial help seminars
- Retirement Seminars

What other ways can we be a relationship resource to those within our community who are fighting this loneliness epidemic just as we are?
Until the whole world hears...

Pastor Ali

From Pastor Wade's Desk

Siblings in Christ!

There are times when I sometimes let my mind wander to incredible places! And by incredible, I think I really mean strange! Just ask Ali, she can (and probably will) tell you that I am correct. Oh, I can be very serious when the situation calls for that, but I sometimes wonder about myself!

As I sat down to write this note to you today, I kept thinking about a Dr. Seuss book—yeah, how weird is that! The title of the book is Oh, the Thinks You Can Think! The book is described like this in one place; “The book is about the many amazing ‘thinks’ one can think and the endless possibilities and dreams that imagination can create. The book’s front cover depicts forty-seven unknown bird-like creatures walking around on a cyan circle.”

I wondered why this is the place that my mind was wandering to on this Monday, so then I started thinking about the thinks I might think!

The United Methodist Church will gather for General Conference 2020 in just a few weeks. That isn't a typo, it is still the 2020 General Conference—oh the thinks you can think! General Conference begins on April 23, 2024, and ends on May 3, 2024. The Prayer Calendar for April will ask you to consider praying for this time and the decisions that might be made at this General Conference.

While there will be many decisions made at the General Conference, there is one decision that everyone is poised to hear about—decisions made about human sexuality.

No matter how these decisions turn out, I ask you to consider these thinks –

1. Some people will be happy, and some people will be upset. Between now and the start of General Conference on April 23, 2024, I ask you to look around the congregations each Sunday. These are your brothers and sisters in Christ that you have suggested are a part of your identity as a church. These people will be the same after any decisions made at General Conference. You lived and worshipped together to this point in your history, and I pray we can live together afterwards as well. You have not always agreed with each other, but you managed to work it out—together.
2. God will still be God! God has been God in every decision (right or wrong) that human beings have made since...well...since Creation. God has made it work for God's glory!
3. God is still calling us to fulfill God's mission in this world—making disciples for Jesus Christ.
4. We have begun some great ministries in our Parish! I pray these ministries will not only continue but that they will flourish!

John Wesley reminds us of two things; the world is our parish, and best of all God is with us!

Until the Whole World Hears! _____



Family Matters

Prayer Concerns

Fairview

Marilyn Pease
Theresa Gebhardt
Harriet Grace
Jean Pepicello
Melanie (Becky Morrison)
Kathy Rudd
Wilma Portzer
Marilyn Mehl
Kathy Pytlarz
Peace for Israel

Girard

Martin Duran-health
Iva Sue Tyson-stage 4 cancer
Cliff and Kathy Terib-
ery-health concerns

Ongoing health concerns:

Jacob Hickman
Rick Hossman
Lorraine Weaver
Samuel William (wife Peggy
as well)

Lake City

Pastor Wade and Pastor Ali-
son Berkey
Pastor Jack Tickle and family
Pastor Ronnie Cox and family
Pastor Brock Beveridge
Rev. Dennis Swineford
Lisa Clark
Marilyn Clark – Health
Tyler Copening
Lavina Fehr
Nancy Ward – Cancer
Marilyn Clark

Russians
Ukrainians
People of Gaza
Betty Reninger (Downey)

Weis Library

Parish Shut-ins
Shirley Hall (W)
Dan Honard (G)

Kim Jeffrey
Bob Fetterman
Fred & Annie Blarr
Bernadine Sensenich
Jim F. - serious health issues
Charlotte Widdowson
Shirley George and family
Larry Crum family
Joy Klemm and family
Bev Widdowson
The family of Pauline Young
Eloise Meeker

Birthdays

Fairview

4/1-Leanne Wilson Anderson
4/13-Katia Kanazin
4/15-Geneva McGrath
4/15-Wally Miller
4/16-Jean Worley
4/17-Lexie Gebhardt
4/17-Joseph Nagle
4/19-Emma Searing
4/23-Melissa Swick
4/28-Susan Vorse
4/28-Mary Zimmer
4/30-Aaron Robson

Weis Library

2-Abby Nicolls
2-Kelsey Ore
7-Marilyn Blystone
9-Randy Beers
9-Jill McGee
17-Andrea McGee
21-Pat Fiesler
25-Louise Salhoff

Girard

4-Nancy Dickey
4-Carolyn Titus
4-Kerry Patten
9-Alex Tolbert
9-Bruce Bryan
10-Bev Cisney
12-Nathaniel Kibler
25-Jean Bryan

Lake City

4-Becky Rosenberg Davies
9-Becky Radaker
18-Brian Lehman
21-Darryl Leopold
26-Diane Harbaugh

Underlined indicates 70+

In Service to Our Country

Tia Nejman Jeffrey Pacansky
 Nathaniel Kibler Tony Gollmer
Michael Campbell

To add to or change a prayer concern or birthday listing,
please see the contact info on the front page for each

Fairview UMC Preschool

Wesley Station Preschool

Registration is now open for the 24-25 school year! Call us at (814)840-1559 to schedule a tour! Classes are filling up!

Thank you for your donations! We are still looking for a couple of cork bulletin boards for our classrooms.

Thank you to everyone who helped out at our open house February 18th.

Many families tour our church and preschool.

Education

JUMP/Education

Our JUMP class for children meets during our service, after the children's message. All are welcome!

JUMP meets in our upstairs classroom Sundays after the Children's Moment of the service.

United Women in Faith

The Fairview UWF are collecting ingredients for Flood Buckets. You need not purchase all items for one bucket. A bucket for collected items will be in the Narthex coatroom. Please see page for a list. Though the EM District contest for flood buckets ends on Easter, we will be collecting until Annual Conference in June.

The Fairview UWF are working on their rummage sale for May 10 and 11. Thursday evenings are work nights from 6:00-8:00 on April 11 and 25. Starting April 1 items may be placed in the SW corner of Fellowship Hall.

UWF Mission Study, Saturday April 27, 2024, 10:00-3:00, Registration 9:30, Cambridge Springs UMC, 326 S Main St, (PA Route 86) Cambridge Springs, Speaker: Diane Miller, Bring a bag lunch, Beverage & Dessert Provided

The Girard Women are preparing for their spring rummage sale. Usually works begins after Sunday worship to start moving items. However, this year, due to Community Cafe and spring primaries, we will not be able to start until Wednesday, April 24. We will need a lot of help to be ready by Friday, April 26!

Worship

Girard

4/28

4/7

A-Nick Newell

A-Hailey and Chloe Birkner

U-Karen Platz

U-Pam and Dan Wilson

L-Gail Fees

L-Liz Thompson

4/14

A-Nick Newell

U-Gail Teribery

L-Barb Gunnison

4/21

A-Hailey and Chloe Birkner

U-Bob Bensusan

L-Iva Housler

Readings

April 7: Acts 4:32-35, John 20:19-31 Courtney Nagle (F)

April 14: Acts 3:12-19, Luke 24:36b-48 Todd Searing (F)

April 21: Acts 4:5-12, John 10:11-18 Hilliary Kanazin (F)

April 28: Acts 8:26-40, John 15:1-8 Amanda Lasky (F)

Lake City

Greeters

4/7-Diane and Gerald Harbaugh

4/14-Glenn Campbell

4/21-Rick Killian

4/28-Paul and Cheri Seyler

Liturgist-Doris Schiller

The **Christian Cupboard** food ministry of Girard is asking for:

Girard UMC-Oatmeal
Lake City UMC-Paper products

Each month the Christian Cupboard serves over **200 families** and needs enough items to serve ALL the families in need.

****Distribution is the first and third Thursday of every month, from 1:00-5:00 p.m.****

Looking Ahead....

Active Shooter Training

There is a free one hour active shooter training on April 3rd at 1PM for those that wish to attend. It is at the Girard Boro Building (I believe). Registration for the event is necessary so if you wish to attend, please let Pastor Ali know so you may be registered.

Messy Church

Messy Church was scheduled for April 8, but due to the Eclipse, we will not be having church that day. See page 10 for more information.

Pfeiffer Burleigh Reading Program

We will once again be doing a 6 week reading program with the students at Pfeiffer Burleigh. If anyone is interested in participating please see Pastor Wade or Pastor Ali ASAP to get your paperwork in before we start on April 10th. We meet with the students and read to them, share in reading games, and teach them about dog safety as they get to read to the dogs. Our time with them is on Wednesday afternoons from 2:15 to 3:45PM.

Magic Show

April 12th 6:30PM at Fairview UMC. Children of all ages (1-100) are encouraged to come out for a night of family fun and excitement. This is a parish event for everyone to attend. FREE. Popcorn and drinks provided! Come and enjoy yourselves.

Pasta Dinner

April 16

4:30-6:30 p.m.

Girard UMC; meals are \$10 and include salad bar, pasta with meat sauce or meatballs, bread/butter, dessert, and beverage. Dine in or carry out.

Spaghetti dinner

April 18

4:00-6:30 p.m.

Weis Library UMC: meals are \$10 for adults, \$7 for seniors, dine in or carry out.

Parish Bowling

Lake City Lanes April 20th from 3-6PM. Everyone is welcome. It will be \$4/game including shoe rental. If you like to play, have never played and want to try or just want to support others, come for this great opportunity to get to know others. Hope to see you there. Please sign up at each church so we have enough lanes reserved!

Rummage Sale

Friday, April 26, 9:00-4:00

Saturday, April 27, 9:00-12:00

*Workdays shortened due to Community Cafe and Primary elections, MUCH HELP NEEDED!

Rummage Sale

Fairview UMC Spring Rummage and Bake Sale

May 10 & 11

Friday, May 10, 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Saturday, May 11, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

12:15 to 2:00 pm, \$2.00 a bag or 3 bags for \$5.00

West County UM Parish April Events

- Apr 2nd – Community Council – 11:45AM – Fairview HS
Council – 5:30PM – Lake City UMC
- Apr 3rd – Devotions – 11AM – FB Live
Chamber of Commerce – Noon – Mike N’ Dangelo’s
Active Shooter Training – 1pm – Girard Boro Building
Empowerment Group – 6:30PM – Zoom
- Apr 7th – Communion – all churches (passing out Eclipse glasses to everyone)
Trustees -Noon – Girard UMC
- Apr 8th – Solar Eclipse – 3:15PM
NO Messy Church
- Apr 9th – Pauline’s Closet – 3-5PM – Lake City
Council/Trustees – 6:30PM – Weis Library UMC
- Apr 10th – No Devotions
Pfeiffer Burleigh Reading Program – 2:15-3:45pm- PB
- Apr 10-12th – Hatchathon Event for pastors – Olmsted Manor
- Apr 12th – Magic Show – 6:30pm – Fairview UMC
- Apr 15th – Tax Day – remember to file NEWSLETTER DEADLINE
- Apr 16th – Pasta Night – 4:30-6:30PM – Girard UMC
- Apr 17th – Devotions – 11AM – FB Live
Pfeiffer Burleigh Reading Program – 2:15-3:45 – PB
- Apr 18th – Spaghetti Dinner – 4-6:30PM – Weis Library
- Apr 20th – Parish Bowling – 3-6PM – Lake City Lanes (\$4/game and shoes)
- Apr 22nd – Community Café – 11:30-1PM – Girard UMC
Council – 6:30PM – Fairview
- Apr 23rd - Pauline’s Closet – 6-8PM – Lake City UMC
Council – 6:30PM – Girard UMC
- Apr 24th – Devotions – 11AM – FB Live
Pfeiffer Burleigh Reading Program – 2:15-3:45PM – PB
Newsletter folding day

May’s scheduled events to date

- May 1st – Devotions – 11AM – FB Live
Pfeiffer Burleigh Reading Program – 2:15-3:45PM – PB
- May 2nd – National Day of Prayer – Concert of Prayer- 6:30PM – Girard UMC
- May 5th – Communion all churches
Trustees – noon- Girard UMC
- May 7th – Fairview Community Council – 11:45AM – Fairview Twp building
Council – 5:30PM – Lake City UMC
- May 8th – Devotions – 11AM – FB Live
Pfeiffer Burleigh Reading Program – 2:15-3:45PM – PB
- May 9th – Ascension Day
- May 12th – Mother’s Day
- May 13th – Messy Church – 5PM – Girard UMC
- May 14th – Pauline’s Closet – 3-5PM – Lake City UMC
Council/Trustees -6:30PM – Weis Library UMC

May 15th – No Devotions

PB Reading Program – 2:15-3:45PM – PB
Newsletter deadline

May 16th – Spaghetti Dinner – 4-6:30PM – Weis Library UMC

May 17-May 28th – Pastors' vacation

May 18th – Parish Movie Night – 6PM – Weis Library UMC

May 19th – District Conference – 3PM – Edinboro UMC

May 21st – Pasta Night – 4:30-6:30PM – Girard UMC

May 22nd- Newsletter folding day

May 27th – No Community Café – Memorial Day

May 28th – Pauline's Closet – 6-8PM – Lake City UMC

Council – 6:30PM – Girard UMC

June 1st – District Superintendent Retirement Party – 1-4PM – Bethel UMC (near Titusville)

Eclipse Glasses – The Parish has purchased eclipse glasses for everyone so that on Monday April 8th, we all can be safe in our viewing of the Total Eclipse. Just show up for church April 7th and we will have glasses for you!

Messy Church – April 8th would be Messy Church but since it is also Total Eclipse Day and we are not sure how travel will be, we decided to not come to church this day. However, we will have the great opportunity to see God's Creation do something that only happens once in a lifetime (maybe twice). So I suggest if at all possible, grab a pair of Eclipse Glasses and watch this wonder of God unfold before your very own eyes. Ponder these Bible passages as you watch this wonder unfold:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.” Gen 1:1-5

“Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.” John 17:24



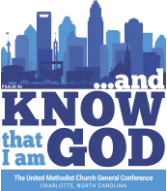






“For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.” Rom 8:19

“neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom 8:39

April 2024

West County United Methodist Parish Monthly Prayer Calendar
 Consider how God is asking you to pray through these concerns!



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	01 Pray for Pastor Ali and Pastor Wade.	02 Pray for everyone, by name, who has an <i>April</i> birthday or an <i>April</i> anniversary.	03 Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Fairview UMC!	04 Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Girard UMC!	05 Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Lake City UMC!	06 Pray for the Church Staff and Volunteers at Weis Library UMC!
07 Read Psalm 133. Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you?	08 	09 Pray through the prayer list from the church bulletin!	10 How can you pray for your neighbor?	11 Pray for a family member who is separated from you!	12 Look for the flowers of Spring as they begin to sprout!	13 Pray for yourself!
14 Read Psalm 4. Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you?	15 Go for a walk today and pray for everyone that you see!	16 Pasta Night – Girard UMC 4:30-6:30. Let's eat!!	17 Pray through the prayer list from the church bulletin!	18 Spaghetti Dinner – Weis Library UMC 4:00-6:30.	19 Pray and give thanks for our District Superintendent, Rev. Dennis Swineford.	20 Pray and give thanks for our Bishop, Rev. Cynthia Moore-Koi Koi.
21 Read Psalm 23. Is there a word or phrase that is speaking to you?	22 Tomorrow is the Primary Election in Pennsylvania. Pray for wisdom in voting!	23 	24 	25 	26 	27 
28 	29 	30 				

April is Stress Awareness Month

Learning to cope with our stress and finding healthy ways to deal with these situations can go a long way in living a healthy and positive life.

What does stress mean to you?

We all experience stress – yet we may experience it in very different ways. Because of this, there is no single definition for stress, but the most common explanation is a physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension.

Stress is a reaction to a situation where a person feels anxious or threatened. Learning healthy ways to cope and getting the proper care and support can help reduce stressful feelings and symptoms.

Common reactions to a stressful event can include:

- Disbelief, shock and numbness
- Feeling sad, frustrated and helpless
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Headaches, back pains and stomach problems
- Smoking or the use of alcohol or drugs

Affecting more than just your mind

Long-term stress can prove to be more than just a mental issue. From headaches to stomach disorders to depression – even very serious issues like stroke and heart disease can come as a result of stress.

When you are placed in a stressful situation, specific stress hormones rush into your bloodstream leading to an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and glucose levels. This is helpful in emergency situations, but having this “rush” for extended periods of time can be dangerous and make you susceptible to the issues mentioned previously.

Learn to overcome issues you cannot change

Sometimes the stress in our lives is not something we have the power to change. Try to:

- Recognize when you don't have control, and let it go.
- Avoid getting anxious about situations that you cannot change.
- Take control of your reactions and focus your mind on something that makes you feel calm and in control.
- Develop a vision for healthy living, wellness, and personal growth, and set realistic goals to help you realize your vision.

Healthy ways for coping with your stress

Here are some basic ideas to help you cope with stress:

- Take care of yourself – eat healthy, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, give yourself a break if you feel stressed.
- Share your problems and how you are feeling and coping with a family member, friend, doctor, pastor or counselor.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. These can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
- Recognize when you need more help – know when to talk to a psychologist, social worker or counselor if things continue.

Potentially the most valuable takeaway here is knowing how to talk to others about your stress. This goes both ways, as you need to know how to discuss your problems with others as well as talk to anyone that comes to you with their issues.

News from the Erie-Meadville District Office

2024 SPRING LAY MINISTRY SCHOOL

Mark your calendars for the 2024 Spring Lay Ministry School (Erie-Meadville District), which begins on Sunday, April 7th and concludes on Sunday, May 5th! Classes will meet each Sunday from 2pm to 4pm at Edinboro UMC (113 High Street, Edinboro, PA 16412). **NEW THIS YEAR!** Bishop Moore-Koikoi will be visiting during the first meeting (April 7th) and you are encouraged to invite your pastor to the last meeting (May 5th). All registrations must be received by Wednesday, March 27th.

2024 DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Mark your calendars for the 2024 Erie-Meadville District Conference on Sunday, May 19th starting at 3pm at Edinboro UMC!

WALK THRU THE BIBLE

Saturday, April 20th, 10am to 1pm, Dempseytown: Oakland UMC (1431 State Route 428, Oil City, PA 16301) Walk Thru the Bible events are unforgettable and life-changing experiences for youth and adults. We know the Old Testament can be overwhelming and confusing. That is why we break it down into the major people, places, and events. That is what you will remember. The event integrates several learning modes simultaneously, involving hearing, seeing, moving, interacting with others, and strategic repetition. You will learn the big picture of the whole Old Testament and have fun doing it. We promise! Cost is \$20 per person. Registration ends on April 8th. To register, please contact the church at 814-676-0959 or office@oaklandumc.com.

SPRING WOMEN'S RETREAT APR. 26-28 PEACE THROUGH SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

AT OLMSTED MANOR RETREAT CENTER

This annual retreat is a time for women to step away from their busy lives to focus on fellowship and spirituality. This year's theme is "Experiencing Peace Through Spiritual Practices." We often exercise our body and our mind, but do we exercise our spirit? Spiritual practices help us experience God through the presence of the Holy Spirit and to relate to God, others, and ourselves. There will be times of quiet, gathering, and learning/experience.

\$225 INCLUDES PRIVATE ROOM, ALL MEALS, & TUITION



REV. CONNIE HOEKE

Rev. Hoeke graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and is an Ordained Elder in WPAUMC. She became a Retired Elder on November 1, 2022. Currently, she is serving a part-time appointment at Franklin First UMC in Franklin, PA. For the past 10 years, she served as an Assistant Pastor, with her husband as lead pastor, at Summit UMC in Erie, PA.

At Summit, Connie was co-leader of Stephen Ministry; Adult Discipleship Coordinator; participated in preaching, consecrating communion, baptisms, weddings and funerals; led spiritual formation and practices classes; and led a Women's Spirituality Retreat. She has completed the Academy of Spiritual Formation and a program for Spiritual Direction, and now sees clients as a Spiritual Director. She also served as chairperson of the WPAUMC Discipleship Committee, and currently leads a speaker series on Spiritual Formation.

WAYS TO REGISTER



Go to www.olmstedmanor.org/events



Call (814) 945-6512



Mail form below to
PO Box 8 Ludlow, PA 16333

EVENT REGISTRATION FORM

Spring Women's Retreat - April 26-28, 2024

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

Accommodation or dietary needs: _____

Rooming preference (select): Private (full event price) Roommate (receives double-room discount)

My roommate's name: _____ OR Assign me a roommate: () male () female

Please include check for \$25 deposit to Olmsted Manor Retreat Center or we will call you to pay over the phone.

www.olmstedmanor.org



17 E Main St. Ludlow, PA

WHERE DID THOSE SHOE BOXES GO?? (Girard UMC) Part 2

Our shoe boxes this year went to four different countries: Haiti, Columbia, Peru, and a Hard-to-reach area. The shoe boxes are sent to different locations so the children don't all receive the same items in their boxes. Here is some information on where our shoe boxes went:



Peru

Peru is located on the western coast of South America. It contains a part of the Amazon rainforest as well as Andes mountains, where the ancient Incan city of Machu Picchu is a popular tourist attraction. Samaritan's Purse began distributing gift-filled shoeboxes there in 1997 and launched The Greatest Journey, our follow-up discipleship program, in this nation in 2010.

Sailors Brave Difficult Seas to Deliver Shoe box Gifts in the Pacific

A team of seven recently set sail on a 57-foot boat named Cloud Nine with cartons of Operation Christmas Child shoe box gifts on board. Their destination? An isolated part of Kwajalein Atoll. Home to some 11,000 people scattered across 100 small islands, Kwajalein Atoll is a part of the Marshall Islands, a nation located in the Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and Indonesia. Situated on a more than 1,000-square-mile coral reef and featuring one of the world's largest lagoons, the atoll is an isolated place at the ends of the earth that even boats find tricky to access. When they reached the island of Mejatto, another smaller boat shuttled them ashore with the cartons of shoe boxes. Here they held an outreach event in which they shared the Gospel and distributed 96 gift-filled shoe boxes that were packed with care by people from around the world. Moved by these tangible expressions of God's love and the stories from Scripture, a total of 87 children accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior at the event! While the team was ashore distributing the shoe boxes, the weather turned in the lagoon. Thankfully, Captain Scott had stayed back on Cloud Nine to guide it through the huge squall that dragged their anchor 148 feet, but he was able to reset the anchor and make the vessel secure for the night.

The next day, the team visited neighboring Ebadon, known as the forgotten island. The boat shuttle owner had warned them that they only had five hours to get in and out during high tide. Otherwise, the water level gets too low for even the shuttle to travel because the reef is so large. Undeterred by the time constraints, the team loaded the shoe box gifts onto the shuttle and set off to serve the island with a population of just 74. When they made it ashore, amid lots of singing and skits, the team presented the Gospel again and 47 children received fun-filled shoe box gifts. We praise God that 41 of these boys and girls also trusted in Christ as their Lord and Savior! The team left the island grateful for all that God had accomplished, wearing gifts of shell leis and Marshallese headdresses from the residents of Ebadon.

Operation Christmas Child outreach events in the Marshall Islands are part of a broader Pacific Islands initiative in which Samaritan's Purse is seeking to reach 500,000 children on 1,000 Pacific islands with a gift-filled shoe box and a presentation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Girard UMC
48 Main Street East
Girard, PA 16417



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