**Gerrardstown Good News**

**July 2017**

**God’s Will or My Will ? Are we doing God’s will or trying to create God’s will in our own image? By Pastor Karen**

This could have been the plot for a made-for-TV movie, it was so full of drama, suspense and heartbreak. A God-promised baby isn’t forthcoming as soon as the older mother thought so she improvises by substituting her slave girl for herself with her husband. When the slave girl becomes pregnant from this twisted and warped version of pro-creation, her mistress is outraged at how contemptuous the slave girl is being towards her! She, whose idea this was, wants this girl gone, baby and all! What had started out as a way to create God’s will in her own image had produced only heart ache and hurt from an action that today we would call sex trafficking.

You may know the story I just described. It is the famous story of Abram and Sarai and Hagar the slave girl who bears a son to Abram. (Genesis 16). This faithless plot to fix God’s unfulfilled promise of a descendant for Abram and Sarai only served to create hardship and resentment. How often do we, like Sarai and Abram, believe God for so little? Instead of waiting expectantly, we feel we must try to help things along to make the promise happen. As if God needed any of our ‘help’ to work in our lives. Oh how often we too are people of little faith! Jesus often used this description for his own disciples and I’m afraid we are not much different sometimes.

In the brokenness of human fixing, however, God is merciful and gracious to all involved. When Hagar runs away because Sarai treated her harshly, God shared with her the plans God had for Hagar, including the new babies’ name, Ishmael, which means ‘God hears’. Ishmael it seems will be quite a young man with ‘his hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him.’ His turbulent life won’t be easy but God promises later ‘he will be father of twelve princes and a great nation.’(Gen. 17:20).

God who allows us to make our own decisions – even ones that aren’t for the best – still offers us grace in midst of our human-made messes. For God’s wonderful and generous grace is more bounteous than our boundless need for it!

Hagar and Ishmael survive even after Sarah has Abraham send them away for good after Isaac is born. Is it any wonder there are hard feelings between Ishmael’s descendants, the Arab nations and Israelites? As the Psalmist so aptly wrote, it is a wonder that God takes any notice of us for all the havoc we can produce! The wonder of this story may encourage us to give thanks to God in at least three ways.

We can be thankful that God heard and still hears the cries of rejected mothers and children – even though they may have been thrown aside. God has promises and blessings for each of them because God does hear and love the ones on the margins, the ones no else seems to love. We only have to look at Jesus to see how he loved and cared for all those who were considered of little worth, such as the outcasts or unclean.

We can thank God for God’s great mercy and forgiveness, as God gives new names to those who have hurt or despised others – offering the newly named Sarah and Abraham a second chance to be in covenant with God and giving them the promised child, Isaac, who was born out of laughter. We too may need a second chance. We find that this is exactly what Jesus offered, even to those who hurt and killed him on the cross. He interceded for their and our forgiveness with God and offers us a new chance in life as we come to know him as Savior and Friend.

We can be thankful even though we too may laugh like Abraham at outrageous and amazing miracles that are worked by our God. May our laughter be full of awe and wonder in order that we may also receive God’s love and miracles in Jesus, may we come to see the ones on the margins who God loves and yearns to care for through us, and may we realize we also can forgive those who have hurt or despised us, for Jesus has forgivenus. For this is God’s will being done.

**Mission Made Possible by You!**

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Helpers needed with the packing of food for the school children in the area. Packing dates are:

**June 29, July 13, July 27, August 10**

****Volunteers are needed at 9am on the above dates at James Rumsey Technical Center on Hedgesville Road. Enter through the side door from the parking lot. If you can’t pack, are you willing to donate food? They accept ‘kid friendly’ foods such as microwaveable pasta, mac ‘n cheese, canned pasta and soups. Also nonperishable cereal, juice, pudding cups, cookies, pouches of tuna or chicken, pancake mix (just add water type) and syrup. Bring to church to and it will be delivered.

***Rescue Outreach Mission Needs:***

**For July the need is Vegetables. If you have fresh please take them directly to the Mission. Canned can be brought to the church.**

**August 6th 11am Worship and Fellowship at the Hughes!**

Sunday Aug. 6th Worship followed with Fellowship will be held at the home of Bev and Bob Hughes. We will celebrate like the early church, that we are the family of God in Jesus. All are welcome! Dress will be casual and relaxed. Bring food to share for fellowship. In case of inclement weather, we will meet in The Hall. Hughes’ address: 456 Berridge Dr. Shepherdstown ph.304-876-3093

**Handicap Accessible Bathroom Construction has started!**

Construction will begin the first week of July on a handicap accessible bathroom in the Church building in what has been often called the ‘Lecture room.’ This will mean that this area of the church will be not be as usable as it has been. JC Smith has the contract. If you have any questions please contact Tom Greenawalt who is the liaison to the contractor. Tom’s cell phone 321-422-9575

**Thank you for your generosity!**

**Thank you to everyone who shared your shoes.**

**We collected 101 pairs of shoes so far this past month for Good Samaritan Free Clinic in Martinsburg!!**

**See the bulletin board** **in the Narthex** at church with cards of thanks to the congregation from the Campbell family and The Shenandoah Women’s Center of Martinsburg.

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**Next Community Dinner July 25th from**

**4:30pm-6:30pm.**

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**GPC May-June Session Highlights**

**Property:** Lighting fixture in the Hall has been repaired and is back up providing more light than ever before! Bids for the repair of the church roof are being obtained. Bathroom project is on schedule.

**Worship:** Communion servers and ushers lists were updated and sent out with new instructions. If you would like to usher please contact Stephen Zurenda.

**Christian Education/Outreach** – VBS had a record number of 18 children including 4 teen helpers this year and 16 adults who served and numerous gifts given by congregation to make our 2017 VBS fun and enjoyable! Thank you to all who contributed and a special thank you to Tracey Oester for being the director!

**Mission:** Session approved the collection of $111.00 from those who attended VBS to go to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and approved another $89.00 to be added to make our gift to PDA $200.

**Presbytery:** Session approved Stephen Zurenda as the representative to the August 26th Presbytery Meeting at Mt. Horeb PC. **New Business:** Session voted to host the EPMC Music Fest on September 17th in the evening. Session accepted the resignation of Charles Linton with regret and thanks for his service as an elder. He felt it was time for another to take on this task.

**Active Session Elders**: Harriet Kopp, clerk

Glen Sherrard, Stephen Zurenda and Grace Weekley.



**Eastern Panhandle Vespers in the Park** will take place July 30th at 7pm in War Memorial Park in Martinsburg. Pastor Karen will be assisting in leading worship. Anyone interested in helping, please contact Pastor Karen.

Pastor Karen and her family will be on vacation July 5th through July 12th. If you have need of pastoral care please contact an elder who can contact Rev. Rachel Crumley from Tuscarora as there is need.



**Dear Wonderful Church Family and Session,** what a surprise to receive a rose, card and your lovely singing for my 1st Anniversary! I cannot tell you how meaningful that was to me! The lovely Bewitched rose (which I think of as the Be Blessed Rose) has been neatly planted by Tom and has two new friends thanks to the gift card that came with it! Love and blessings to you all! Pastor Karen

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