



July 3, 2016

July 4th Reflections

But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.'

– Luke 10.10-11

Knowing when to stay, knowing when to leave: this is one of the most challenging invitations for discernment and decision that we will ever encounter. And we encounter those invitations often in our places of employment, marriages, the homes we live in, our church affiliations and even the ideas that shape our worldview.

There are times for leaning into the resistance that meets us; times when God calls us to engage the difficulty and struggle that will shape and form us in a way that ease and comfort never can. There is ground that becomes holy only when we remain long enough to see the blessing that can emerge from the struggle.

And then there are times for leaving; times when—as Jesus counsels his disciples—the holy thing to do is to shake the dust from our feet and leave behind a place or perspective that is not meant for us. When the place we are in is no longer the best expression of who God created us to be, doing what God called us to do, it's time to go.

That's what happened with the American colonists. They felt betrayed by their mother country whose old world expectations conflicted with new world ways of thinking and being. When they couldn't take it any more they broke loose from the British and shook the dust from their feet. Their protest became the holy ground of our national freedom and cause of our Fourth of July celebration.

Choosing where we will go, and when, is among the most powerful human freedoms. Jesus knows that such discernment is difficult. In his wisdom, Jesus gives us one another as we search for those places where we can offer our gifts in a way that all the world will know *'the kingdom of God has come near.'*

- Reverend William P. Worley,
Conference Minister

Getting to Know:

St. John's (Gernant's) UCC

13 Gernant's Church Rd., Leesport, PA 19533



Sharing ministry is a relatively new experience for St. John's Gernant's Church, a 222 year-old church in Leesport, Pa., established in 1794.

The Gernant name has been attached to the official name of the church when an acre of ground was bought from John Gernant in 1795. The Gernant's family were German immigrants

who settled here prior to the Revolution.

St. John's Gernant's Lutheran congregation and UCC congregation began shared ministry together 3 ½ years ago, as both congregations experienced a decline in membership. The joining together resulted in one combined worship, drawing on liturgy from both denominations, the organization of a Shared-Board who governs the worship and business aspects of the combined congregation, and other areas such as the music ministry combined choir and special committees.

Ministry outreach has been strengthened with both congregations focusing together on the community outreach and mission projects, in addition to supporting Our Church's Wider Mission and the Lutheran Benevolence Fund.

One of their steadily-supported missions include the support of local veterans through the "Veterans Making A Difference" organization. After discussion with the leaders of this group, new or good used clothing for men is an ongoing collection to be distributed by this veteran's program. An additional project for the veterans provided phone cards for veterans to be able to be in contact with others as needed.

Another community mission supports the local Schuylkill Valley Food Pantry through involvement on the Food Pantry Board and being available on monthly Saturday distribution days. Food items are continually collected and brought to the food pantry to add to the food being distributed.

As the shared ministry continues to develop, the congregations are exploring the possibility of joining together as a Federated Church in the near future.

Gernant's Church is host to the local Girl Scout Troop and also the Christ Evangelical Free Church which meets twice monthly in the hall.



Prayers are requested for St. John's (Gernant's) UCC in Leesport and Rev. Frances Merkel.