



Beverly Heights
Presbyterian
Church

scattered seeds.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021

**God is
faithful.**



REPORTS FROM OUR
MISSION PARTNERS

**He
provides.**

The Lord said, Go to Uganda.



Jill Whitecap with Tom and Louise O'Boyle, in March 2020, just before they boarded a ferry crossing the Nile River in Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda.



**CHRISTIAN
EAST-AFRICAN
& EQUATORIAL
DEVELOPMENT
TRUST (CEED)**

by Jill Whitecap

Fifteen years ago, I started a new chapter in life. It was not by choice.

After working through the incredible pain of betrayal and divorce, I was a single, jobless empty-nester, living in down-sized circumstances. I was definitely not living the life I had expected to live.

Though I was sad, I also felt free. So, I asked God where He wanted me to go.

Having been a Christian for decades, I knew when you ask the Lord a question like that, it's pretty much a guarantee you are opening the door for Him to move.

He answered my query, "Go to Uganda." Not what I expected, but in June 2006, I went.

As a consequence of that mission trip, I interviewed for a position selling Ugandan Gold Coffee. I was vaguely aware of the Christian endeavor to plant and manage a coffee farm in Uganda but didn't know much about it.

I didn't drink much coffee either. I had started an MBA program with a promised graduate assistantship, but the position had not come through.

It seemed like this was the only avenue open, so I took it and began to work for the Christian East-African & Equatorial Development Trust (CEED).

I learned much and sold a lot of coffee, but I received even more in friendships and partnerships.

The farm made its way to being a self-sustaining endeavor surviving even in this pandemic economy. The funding for new wells and well rehabs has increased by more than 200% over the last two years despite the pandemic necessitating only virtual fundraising in 2020.

My involvement with CEED has changed my perspectives. Like a photo app that produces 3-dimensional effects on ordinary pictures, this mission has given me a deeper appreciation of life, faith and my

purpose as a child of God.

CEED started drilling water wells with the first coffee profits in 2006. Generous friends donated our first hydraulic rig, which is still operational though on its second motor. (You may have heard the story that it blew up the day after I operated it, but that was purely coincidental.)

We have now completed 580+ clean water projects, serving more than 780,000 people. If you're a Pittsburgh sports fan, you can translate that number into filling PPG Arena for the whole Penguins' home season schedule. I imagine all those people who, once thirsty and now having ample clean water, screaming: "Thank you!"

My husband Brian went with me in 2012 as we visited the coffee farm, some well-drilling sites, developed an irrigation system, and worshiped with our Ugandan brothers and sisters.

Though I was sad, I also felt free.

Our visit then to the village of Runyanya (which means "tomato" in their language, the main crop) was memorable.

Nineteen children had been killed by a lightning strike on their schoolhouse a few months before our visit. We were able to get them a working well and donate a much-needed roof for their church.

The dedication ceremony included an uninvited green viper snake. Many panicked and ran. In case you're wondering, I ran, Brian did not. Thankfully there were no casualties – except the viper.

I've been back twice since then, most recently this past March, as the whole

world was becoming enslaved to the Covid pandemic. I didn't give it much thought as I blithely boarded the plane with two dear friends, Tom and Louise O'Boyle. It was a remarkable, faith-testing trip.

The Lord was so good and ever-present. He sustained us throughout the journey, guided us through the demanding schedule and brought us safely home.

The CEED mission to provide clean water is extraordinary. That something so simple as a pipe in the ground has the potential to save lives and bring the Gospel to a rural village still moves me.

I have met the most incredible people along the way. They demonstrate a richness of life, unencumbered by possessions. They exhibit a purity of faith in the Father which resounds with joy. It is an example I am trying to follow.

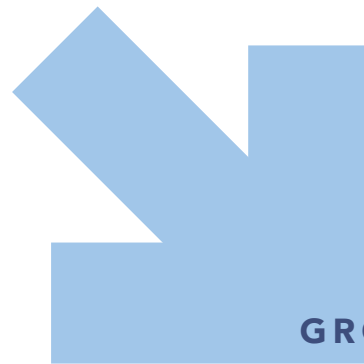
I am thankful to so many people who have been with me on this journey:

- The CEED board of directors and its president, Graham Hodgetts, for taking a chance on me;
- Herbert Asiimwe, CEED's Ugandan director, for his patient guidance on life and business in Africa;
- Master plumber Jim West, for his humble example of caring for his neighbor at significant personal cost;
- For the many women of Uganda who persevere in Christ-like love amid dire circumstances;
- And most of all, to Brian, my husband, for supporting my call. He spent many hours brewing and serving coffee, setting up displays at mission fairs, and working on fund-raisers, all the while explaining the cause to any who would listen.

It's been almost 15 years. Lately, I have felt the nudge of the Holy Spirit to move over and let others have the privilege of this ministry. So now it's time to retire and start a new chapter. I do not know what the Lord has in store, but I know it will be good.

Jill Whitecap retires as CEED's U.S. business manager on Feb. 5. In January, the board of directors conferred on her the second ever CEED Champion Award.

Moving forward with hope & conviction.



**GROW
LIVING
STONES**

The way we were. Hot meals were once served to people without fear. All that changed for GROW Living Stones in 2020.

by Lynn Bell &
Julie Livingston

For many, 2020 was a year to hunker down, stay the course, wait it out. Not so for GROW Living Stones! God had other plans for His ministry, and we would need plenty of flexibility and creativity to stay in sync with His leading.

There was never any doubt that God wanted us to continue feeding those in need. We promised to do that when He called us to serve. He has kept that call on our hearts and He has never let us miss a meal. Not even during this pandemic.

That's not to say Covid hasn't forced us to alter the way we offer those meals – sometimes at the drop of a hat – depending on changes to state, local and individual church guidelines.

Some Sundays, with volunteers and neighbors following strict regulations, we were able to prepare and serve hot to-go meals inside. Other times, we found ourselves preparing cold grab 'n go meals and distributing them in church parking lots, sometimes from the backs of our vehicles.

In December at St. Catherine's in Beechview, we even had volunteers taking orders for hot meals in the parking lot, then running to get the food and take it back to neighbors waiting in the cold.

One thing we've learned during this pandemic is how important hot food and fellowship are to our neighbors, and we long for the day we can return to offering them delicious hot meals and loving conversation around Living Stones tables.

Until then, we will continue to provide them with encouragement, hope and food prepared and served in the best way possible.

While Living Stones is at its core a meal

ministry, when God called us to GROW in 2019, we expanded our vision and mission. Prayerfully following His lead, we determined we would build relationships with neighbors who attend our meals and through those relationships, work together to identify and help meet challenges in their lives.

We would then connect them with existing and accessible means of support, and if none exist, develop Christ-centered programs and services targeting the most common needs.

Excited to embark on our new mission, we headed into 2020 with "minglers" happily getting to know neighbors. We had questionnaires to distribute and talk about during mealtimes.

We were pursuing program development ideas based on mingler and neighbor input. And as we continued to serve in Baldwin and Beechview, we were looking into partnering with one of two interested churches in Dormont, where we could both serve meals and offer programs and services.

Then Covid hit!

Confident that God was calling us to keep His ministry vibrant and continue feeding our neighbors despite the turmoil and uncertainty, we resolved to move forward with hope and conviction rather than sit back and wait for things to get better.

We devised creative ways to prepare and serve food.

We learned more about the lives and challenges of our neighbors while masked and socially distanced.

We researched successful Christ-centered programs and services, and discovered the partnership God had been quietly orchestrating with North Way Christian Community's Dormont campus.

It is difficult to express the joy and excitement we feel as we move forward to

grow our new partnership with the people at North Way. They are excited about participating in our meal ministry. They are also coming alongside us to help neighbors meet challenges in their lives while finding hope in Jesus Christ.

He is preparing us for a joyful end to this troubling time.

We are already working together to restore their kitchen and prepare purposeful programs.

While it is not yet clear when this pandemic will end, enabling us to once again gather around Living Stones tables and begin offering new programs and services, it is clear that God is at work in the life of His ministry.

He is preparing us for a joyful end to this troubling time.

Julie Livingston is executive director of GROW Living Stones. Lynn Bell is a board member. GLS is a non-profit organization independent of Beverly Heights Church and accepts donations, which may be made at the GROW Living Stones website: <https://growlivingstones.com>

**What's your
calling?
I found mine.**



*Jionni is the boy with Phil; and
Jayla is the girl with Linda Nichols.*



**FAMILY
GUIDANCE**

by Phil Nichols

On a Sunday morning in a class at Beverly Heights some time ago, the teacher asked everyone: Who knew their calling?

The clear minority in the class raised their hand.

For most of my life, I would have been in that minority. Recently, I've been one of the lucky few, so I was able to raise my hand that day.

The Lord has called me to mentor a child from a different background, a different neighborhood and a different race.

Much to our surprise, the Lord ended up calling Linda to join me.

After multiple false starts over the last several years, Scott Moore invited us to a Family Guidance dinner.

One thing led to another and we signed up to be mentors, did training, got assigned to Kathleen Grehl, the most wonderful mentor supervisor, and got introduced to Jionni and Jayla.

They are brother and sister, ages 9 and 8, live in East Allegheny, and ... well ... we love them!

They are well adjusted, easy to get along with and just fun. All of these attributes are clear evidence that Erika, their mother, is really doing a great job raising them.

From day one, it was like we had all been friends for years. There was an ease and laughter between the four of us that should have taken years to attain, but God gave us a gift.

We've been spending about six hours together on the weekends and the time just flies.

We've done some activities out, but mostly we've just spent time at our house talking, playing games and doing crafts.

What we do together isn't as important as just being together. Unhurried time together is one of the most precious gifts you can give to someone, so that is what we give to each other.

There was one special day we were headed to Benihana's to celebrate Jionni's birthday and we drove by Beverly Heights' Nativity scene.

Jayla started talking about Christmas and being part of God's family in Heaven. I asked her if she knew how to make sure she went to Heaven, and she said by being good.

I explained Heaven was perfect, so actually nobody can be good enough to get to Heaven.

There was an ease and laughter between us that should have taken years to attain.

"The good news is God's Son Jesus came to earth to save us by dying on the cross as a sacrifice for us," I explained.

As we talked, I mentioned this was a gift. All we had to do to accept this gift was tell God we believe this story and ask Jesus to come into our life to save us.

Jayla said she had done this at church some time ago, to which I said: "Great, do you want to do it again to make sure you're part of God's family?"

Jayla said, "Yes."

When I pulled the car over to pray with her, Jionni had some questions about what we were doing.

After I answered his questions, he wanted to pray with us, too.

So, the three of us prayed together to make sure we were all in God's family.

After we prayed, I explained again that it is easy to make sure we go to Heaven.

Jesus did the hard part and all we have to do is accept the gift!

So that day we celebrated Jionni's second birthday, Dec. 6, 2020.

We don't know what the future holds for us, but we know we will be in Heaven together, which just puts a super big smile on my face!

Each weekend, we have so much fun, our time together goes by so fast.

We signed up as mentors to serve, but ended up just being blessed and having fun.

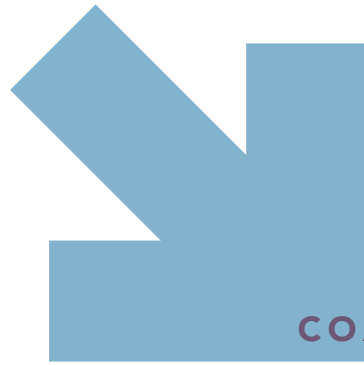
There's an old saying along the lines of: "Find something you love, and you'll never work another day in your life!"

Well, I'd amend it to say, "Find your calling, and you'll never serve another day in your life!"

**Following
true north
to Jesus.**



Peter Chace as everyone's new favorite Christmas star, Larry, and with a small group on the campus of Duquesne University.



**COALITION
FOR CHRISTIAN
OUTREACH**

by Peter Chace

"Star Wars. Everyone likes Star Wars!" Ben said.

"No, it's got to be something more universal," said Nathan, "like Spongebob."

As the teens continued to debate what kind of parody would be best, Elissa Winkler leaned over and whispered, "I think something special is happening."

I nodded in agreement with a grin on my face, and the chatter continued to rise as excited tones filled the room.

The conversation eventually landed on a hodgepodge of different movie references that mostly centered on, you guessed it, Star Wars. We divided up the roles of writing, pre-production, acting/filming, and post production between the group and it was clear the teens were ready to get started.

We were just a week or two away from beginning to film when we were foiled by the novel coronavirus and lockdowns in March of last year.

Although the project was shelved, we did regroup in the fall to complete the Advent 2020 video, incorporating similar ideas and introducing everyone's new favorite Christmas star, Larry. His scenes were short and sweet, with such memorable lines as:

"Who's gonna lead the way to baby Jesus? Not Rudolf!"

I didn't think much about this improv line at the time, but – stick with me now – I think

Larry is on to something. You see, Rudolf doesn't lead us to the manger.

It has become something of a mantra around Beverly Heights to say "just being open is the win," and despite the many unexpected turns and pivots this year, Jesus has remained our focus and continues to define our goal.

But there sure are a lot of Rudolfs out there.

When I survey the cultural landscape of youth and young adults today, there are troubling themes that emerge.

Youth are confused about who they are, what is true, when they will know, where they are safe, and why they exist. The

Jesus is our reference edge, plumb line and true north.

enemy attempts to dismantle the assurance of eternal absolutes through movements within contemporary culture, and they find themselves in a vacuum without wisdom that fills them with fear, insecurity, and dread.

Many have fallen into the trap of following a reindeer with a shiny nose. It makes for a fun children's song, but poor theology and a deeply troubled life.

Training up the next generation is something the Church cares about because it's something God cares about.

From the earliest days of Israel, the Lord commands His people to teach the next generation to love and obey His Word.

And this is to be done throughout life – when we sit and when we walk, when we lie down and when we rise.

It becomes the lens through which we view the world, and the defining entrance and boundary in our call and interaction in it.

This culminates in what we understand to be the threefold partnership between God, the Church, and the family (Deut. 6. 1-25).

This tripartite partnership is what we pursue in Next Generation Ministries at Beverly Heights.

In every area of life, from the Sunday school classroom to the lecture halls at Duquesne University, from Sunday night Fusion to Wednesday Night Heights, from retreats to ice cream cones to mission trips: Jesus is our reference edge, plumb line and true north.

We invite youth and young adults to follow us as we follow Jesus.

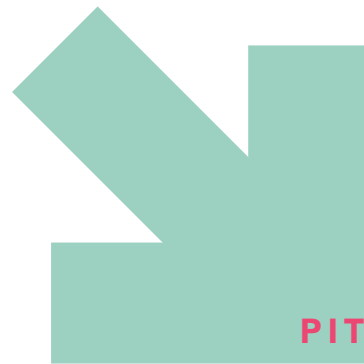
"Who's gonna lead the way to baby Jesus? Not Rudolf!"

Thanks for the reminder, Larry! Here's to 2021.

Under His
wings you
will find
refuge.



Remember when people got together? It wasn't that long ago. Scott Boyd, the director of PRISM (center, in turquoise t-shirt), among friends at the annual Garage Giveaway in August 2019, which attracted more than 400 international students to Bellefield Presbyterian Church in Oakland near Pitt's campus. Last year's Garage Giveaway was virtual.



**PITTSBURGH
REGION
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT
MINISTRIES
(PRISM)**

by Scott Boyd

2020 was a year of change.

When we started the year, it felt much like other years. Then March came!

At the beginning of March, we held our Vision 2020 Conference and Banquet. The conference was attended by 160 people and the banquet had 260 people present.

It was a powerful celebration of how God is using the people of PRISM to share the Good News of Jesus Christ among the nations.

It made it very natural to share with them that God is in control even in a pandemic.

Shortly after this big event, everything changed.

Lockdowns began and our entire ministry environment and landscape was altered. We could not gather for group events in the same way we were used to meeting.

Many international students were unsure about whether they should stay or return home. Flights were getting canceled. Some managed to go home, but many stayed. Some new students managed to come in the summer months, but by fall the flow of international students and scholars had all but stopped.

Yet thousands were still here living in isolation, unable to return to their families. We saw the situation open doors of opportunity.

Students seemed happy to know someone was thinking of them. It made it very natural to share with them that God is in control even in a pandemic.

Words from Psalm 91 came alive: "Under his wings you will find refuge," and "You will not fear the terror of the night."

God used his Word and the many volunteers of PRISM to bring the comfort of Christ to many.

Part of finding refuge was in organizing outdoor events where everyone felt safe, but could also get some fresh air. Having some fun together stirred up great opportunities for Gospel conversations.

In 2020, our annual Garage Giveaway had to be done differently. We could not gather 400+ students as we usually do.

Students signed up online indicating items they needed most. We delivered furniture and household items to about 150 students. We are known for being generous people with furniture! All this happened because of PRISM Volunteers.

The Hospitality House Ministry went well this year with eight to 12 residents in the two homes. The weekly fellowship regularly sees up to 20 students from six to eight different countries.

Other creative activities gave us the opportunity to go deeper into relationships with students.

Firebox Art Studio in Carnegie hosted a "Color Pour" event for us. Outdoor picnics also provided a great way to meet people.

We also continued to develop our online "Connections Program."

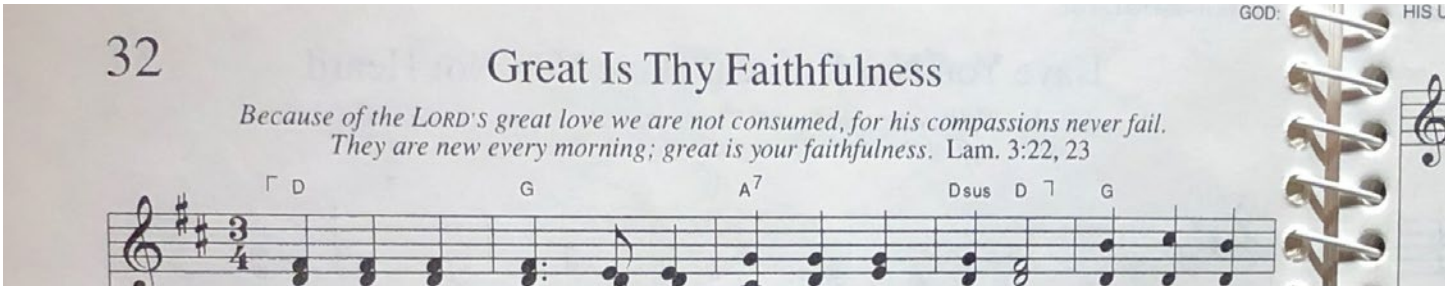
In this program there are about 60 Friendship Partner pairings, eight Discovery Bible Studies and nine Mentoring Relationships.

We were also able to do organizational development and added three new staff members.

We fully expect the flow of international students to open up again in 2021 and by God's grace we will be ready!

God has brought a mission field to us and with your help we are leading many to find ultimate refuge in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

God's great faithfulness.



It's no surprise that Thomas Chisolm's "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" is a beloved hymn of American Protestantism.

It gives voice to the joy of one who has seen God's Word played out in the real and personal terms of daily life.

The hymn, of course, draws on the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness."

One of the great enjoyments of my retirement is serving on the boards of three Christian ministries.

From this privileged position I have a unique vantage point from which to observe the work of kingdom building during these challenging days of Covid.

Though no boards of directors have broken into song during their regularly scheduled meetings, I know that Chisolm's lyric was never far from the minds and hearts of those of us who have struggled with how to do ministry in such challenging times.

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see: all I have needed thy hand hath provided – great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

The faithfulness of God refers to the constancy and immutability of God with reference to His character, His word and His promises. God never changes Who He is, He never varies from what He has spoken and His

promises never fail.

Therefore, God's faithfulness makes Him trustworthy and wholly dependable.

Great is God's faithfulness to us because great is God's faithfulness to Himself.

As a keen observer of the ministries for which I've been charged to assist in leading, I cannot help but give witness to God's great faithfulness.

God has been faithful to His divine character and nature and the result is that ministry continues and, often, thrives.

God is sovereign and His plans and purposes get accomplished even in the worst of times. He is loving and kind, taking pity both on those who offer ministry and those who receive its benefits. God's power is perfected in our weakness and through the sickness, fatigue, discouragement and worry of His servants, God is faithful – God is still God.

God has been faithful to His word of assurance that He knows our needs before we even pray about them.

There has been much outpouring of prayer over financing ministry during a time of reduced visibility and activity. Every ministry with which I am associated conducts an annual fundraising dinner/gala which serves as its primary source of funding. Covid has cancelled these large gatherings.

But God is faithful. He knows our needs before we even pray about them and in

every case with which I am familiar, He has acted according to His word and His promise, and has met the financial needs of ministries, in some cases, in superabundance.

God is faithful – God is still God.

God has promised to build His church, in spite of the "gates of hell" attempting to prevail against it.

Covid has launched a strong, persistent and worrisome attack on the advance of Christ's kingdom, but in spite of it all, the kingdom of God is advancing and the church of Jesus Christ is being built.

Those who serve the One Who has overcome the world are overcoming through their faith in Him.

Of the hymn lyrics which I have had the joy of penning, my favorite speaks of the faithfulness of God. As I contemplate the work of the Christian ministries with which I am familiar and, most particularly, that of my own dear church, one verse of that hymn comes to mind:

*"The gates of hell shall not prevail"
His church shall ever be secure.*

No pow'r without nor threat within shall cause us doubt that we'll endure.

*God lives, God deigns, God speaks,
God reigns, declaring strength and favor.
His faithfulness can never fail, not then,
not now, not ever!*

Rick Wolling is pastor emeritus of Beverly Heights.