**EXCERPT FROM PDA MAGAZINE**

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) publishes an annual magazine entitled *Mosaic. ,* The latest issued, Mosaic 2021 Year in Review, included a section on Living Into Matthew 25. In 2019 the Presbyterian Mission Agency issued the Matthew 25 Invitation, the invitation guiding ministries of the Mission Agency, along with churches and mid councils across the country, to work to eradicate systemic poverty, dismantle structural racism, and build congregational vitality.

PDA focuses on communities located in places subject to disaster’s worst impacts and least equipped to deal with the outcomes. One of the stories in the magazine hits close to home, i.e. Winchester, VA, and Massaneta Springs Camp and Conference Center outside Harrisonburg. The following is an excerpt from that article.

*When a congregation opens itself to follow Jesus’ teaching to welcome the stranger, it is not always clear how and when that pledge will be made real. In the case of First Presbyterian Church in Winchester, VA….they are now an integral part of the largest U.S. refugee resettlement in almost 40 years.*

*In 2016 Carolyn Thalman, a member of the National Response Team for PDA and a ruling elder at First Presbyterian Church, organized a series of educational programs for her congregation about refugees and immigration and helped organize early talks between Winchester’s Unitarian, Lutheran, Episcopal, Quaker and Presbyterian churches and Church World Service (CWS) to learn how their community might welcome refugee resettlement….Then there were drastic cuts in the number of refugees coming to the U.S. and the idea of a new refugee ministry was dashed. Circumstances changed again when the Biden administration made a public commitment to restart and expand U.S. refugee resettlement, prompting the group to reorganize and resume talks of opening a local office with CWS.*

*….In August 2021 all resettlement efforts kicked into high gear. The CWS office in Harrisonburg soon learned it would receive up to 100 Afghan refugees between October and December and that a new office in Winchester was approved. The local interfaith group was soon assisting CWS in its search for transitional short-term housing as well as coordinating church and community commitment to co-sponsor families…..*

*Meanwhile, Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center outside Harrisonburg offered CWS temporary housing, placing refugee families in the center’s cottages as well as its hotel. When the urgent need for culturally appropriate groceries became clear, they reached out to PDA and worked with CWS and Massanetta Springs to submit a successful grant request to help cover the cost. The Shenandoah Presbytery voted to endorse the PDA grant to this refugee ministry and set up a new Refugee Resettlement subcommittee of the presbytery to support the ongoing work.*

*Pleased to see the blossoming community ties formed throughout town, Thalman was unsure of how her own congregation would respond when she began organizing apartment setups for Winchester’s impending Afghan arrival in November…..She was genuinely amazed when everyone wanted to bring something (everything from four dressers to a tremendous amount of toilet paper!). She said that her pastor reflected that welcoming the stranger builds congregational vitality by encouraging people to be involved in something that’s exciting. She’s gotten to know people beyond just their names as they have shown up to make beds, wash dishes and get things put together for our new arrivals. We all hear the Matthew 25 call to welcome the stranger….She went on to comment that the experience has continued to be like the Gospel story of the loaves and fishes. Every time she worries that they don’t have enough to meet the needs of the new arrivals, another donation appears!*

**AMERICAN PRESIDENTS COMMENT ON MEMORIAL DAY PRAYERS**

Former President George W. Bush reminded citizens why it’s important to remember our military families in prayer on Memorial Day.

*“They defended our nation, they liberated the oppressed, they served the cause of peace. And all Americans who have known the loss and sadness of war, whether recently or long ago, can know this: The person they love and miss is honored and remembered by the United States of America.”* --Memorial Day Address, 2004

As we remember our war dead, it is fitting for Christians around the world to ask God to bring about peace in our nation and in our world. During Ronald Reagan’s presidency, he urged Americans to put prayers for peace on their Memorial Day agenda:

*“Now, Therefore, I, Ronald Reagon, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate Memorial Day, Monday, May 3, 1983, as a day of prayer for permanent peace, and I designate the hour beginning in each locality at 11 o[clock in the morning of that day as a time to unite in prayer.”* --Memorial Day Proclamation, 1983

We can pray that those who fought and died for our country did not die in vain. We can ask that their sacrifice would live on to inspire others to live in freedom and to serve and love their fellow citizens:

*“That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” --Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, 1863*

**A FEW MOTHERS’ DAY QUOTES**

“A mother is your first friend, your best friend, your forever friend.” --Unknown

“Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children.”

--William Makepeace Thackeray

“A mother understands what a child does not say.” --Jewish proverb

“A mother’s hug lasts long after she lets go.” --unknown

“It may be possible to gild pure gold, but who can make his mother more beautiful?”

--Mahatma Gandi

“Youth fades; love droops; the leaves of friendship fall; A mother’s secret hope

outlives them all. –Oliver Wendel Holmes

“There is only one pretty child in the world, and every mother has it.” --Chinese Proverb

**SESSION HIGHLIGHTS**

Session held a Stated Meeting on April 12, 2022.

* Session had requested information on the possibility of our Preschool becoming a 501c3. This very complicated and expensive process was dismissed. Another option is incorporation of the church as a religious non-profit.
* A detailed report of ideas for the continued use of FPC’s Sanctuary as a non-profit Legacy Hall for musical activities was distributed. Included was a list of musical events held in the Sanctuary since 2015.
* A Building/Grounds Assessment has been made. Wood in particular needs attention as there is extensive rot.
* The Session will act as the Nominating Committee at its May meeting to find new and replacement leadership, i.e. elders.
* A cleaning service will be employed to carry out custodial duties.
* *Being Presbyterian in the Bible Belt* Book Study continues on Wednesdays in the Barksdale Room. Lunch is provided. A Maundy Thursday service in the Barksdale Room will include communion and a light lunch.
* FPC met with representatives from Glen Kirk, Hermitage, Smyrna, Second, First and Westminster at a meeting led by Rev. David Witt. The purpose was to inquire about shared endeavors, possibly growing collaboration and partnership in mission.

All Session meetings are opened and closed with prayer. –Betsy Ruehl