



The First United
Presbyterian Church
of Crafton Heights

The Runner

David B. Carver, Pastor
www.chup.org
July 2023

If you're reading this, you either are, or know someone who is, a person who *used to go to church* but has *stopped doing so*. The United States is in the midst of the largest and fastest religious shift in its history: approximately fifteen percent of American adults (roughly forty million people) have simply stopped attending services of worship – and most of this has come in the 21st century. While the pandemic played some part in this, the trends were established long before anyone had ever heard of Covid-19. And please note, this does not refer to people who *changed* churches (“we left that congregation in 2014 and joined this other one because we believe it’s better...”); no, the research suggests that more and more of us are simply disaffiliating from religion (including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and others). In a recent book entitled *The Great Dechurching: Who’s Leaving, Why Are They Going and What Will It Take to Bring Them Back?*, a trio of pastors point out that “No theological tradition, age group, ethnicity, political affiliation, education level, geographic location or income bracket escaped the dechurching in America.” Recently, folks at the *Wall Street Journal* and the University of Chicago polled adults as to their values and faith, and only 39 percent of respondents said religion was very important to them, compared to 62 percent who said that in 1998.



It might be you. It might be your child, or your spouse, or your sibling. But surely you know someone who has decided to stop attending services of worship.

I’m wondering *why* that is?

Some of the research that I’ve seen suggests that for some adults, the fact that many in our culture seem to identify a particular religion with specific political ideologies has been problematic. A number of Americans felt that the white evangelical embrace of Donald Trump’s candidacy in 2016, for instance, prevented them from identifying with a traditional Christian church. Simultaneously, churchgoers were repelled by some of the sex and abuse scandals that were uncovered in a variety of traditions in recent decades. Others find that their ideas of who and what the Almighty ought to be didn’t match up with their experiences (“I prayed and prayed, and she died anyway...”, for instance). These people found that they simply couldn’t believe in a loving God if such profound suffering was happening somewhere on the globe (or in their lives). Still other people reported what we might call a “slow fade” – there was no one precipitating event or overwhelming reason – it’s just that church, or synagogue, or the mosque became unimportant after a while.

But, back to you. How has your experience of and participation in faith grown or shrunk in the past decade? Why do you think that is? What have you, or the people you know, chosen to do with the time and energy that used to be invested in religious observances? Some of you have shared your stories with me, and I’m deeply grateful for that.

My point in bringing this to the front page of the church newsletter this month is simply that I suspect that some of the people who have effectively stopped participating in religious activities have not done so consciously. That is, they didn’t have a falling out with their house of worship, and they didn’t experience some life-changing event... they just kind of fell out of the habit.

What has kept you connected? What has contributed to your disaffiliation? Are you, in fact, de-churched? Or are you someone who is seeking a deeper connection? Let me encourage you to share that conversation with another. If you’d like, I’d be honored to hear about your journey. If someone else is a better fit, I’d urge you to reflect with that person. My sense is that having that conversation will allow you to live with more intentionality and integrity in a world wherein those things are sorely lacking.

Wishing you the blessings of conversation and contemplation as the summer progresses. I’ll look for you in worship!

Pastor Dave

Fellowship Opportunities

Ladies Fellowship: Ladies! BYOL - Bring your own lunch and join us Wednesday July 19th! We'll gather at 11:30 in the pavilion behind Greentree library. All are welcome and we hope you'll join us!

Any questions talk to Dani Anderson.

All-Church Retreat: All-church retreat planning is underway! The retreat this year will be held September 8th-10th, held at Crestfield Camp in Slippy Rock. We look forward to seeing everyone there again, and cannot wait for a weekend of conversation, reflection, and prayer together!

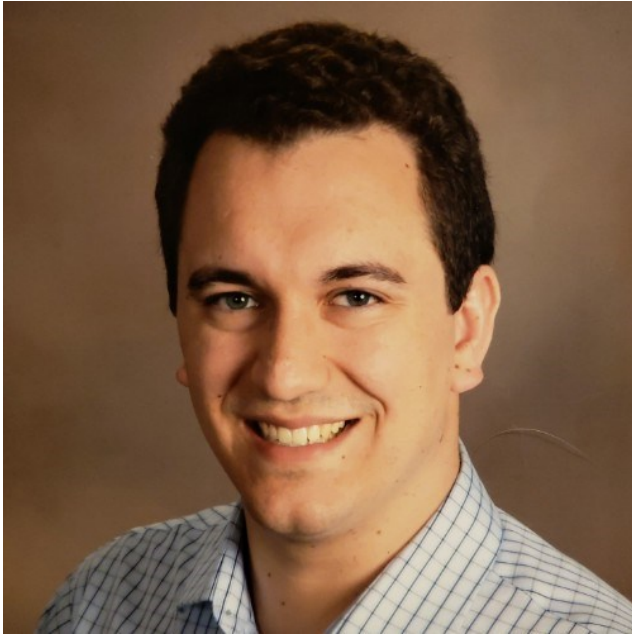
Cross-Trainers: To show your support for Cross Trainers this summer, we are looking for volunteers to provide meals for our staff. Meals should serve 12 people and drop off time is between 11:30 AM - 12:00 PM. If you would like to sign up, visit our link: <https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/2nw79m>

We are excited for this summer and would appreciate your help!

Special Guests: You won't want to miss worship on Sunday, July 23, when we will once more welcome PCUSA Mission Co-workers Shelvis and Nancy Smith-Mather. These friends have been working to serve God's people in South Sudan and neighboring countries for many years, and this year in particular are striving to help meet the needs of those affected by violence in Sudan who have fled to South Sudan for refuge and aid. The Deacons have enabled the congregation to make a significant pledge to the relief and humanitarian work that is going on there, and we will offer you the chance to make your own contribution that morning. Following the 10 a.m. worship, we'll have a small reception where you can meet Shelvis and Nancy and get to know them a bit better.



Open Door



The Open Door Youth Outreach is pleased to welcome Brian E. Mack as its Executive Director! Following his graduation from Westminster College with a degree in Christian Education, Brian served for six years as the Director of Children's Ministry at the Sewickley Presbyterian Church. Since then, he has also been on the staff of the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and most recently the Center for Organ Recovery and Education. Now, Brian is returning to the place where his journey began!

He was baptized as a child at the First U.P. Church of Crafton Heights and confirmed as a member here as well. As he grew up, he participated in the Open Door both as a child and as a staff member for the Cross Trainers Summer Camp. During the interview process, Brian reflected that "so much of who I am and what I do is a result of having grown up in and around The Open Door. It has truly been the impetus for my vocation."

He credits his early experiences in this place with giving him an appreciation for the importance of being with people in a non-judgmental fashion while seeking to live vibrantly as a Christian. Brian and his wife, Tricia, are currently living in Coraopolis, where Tricia operates a Music Studio. They are the proud parents of a two-year-old daughter name Linnie.

Cross Trainers: Cross Trainers camp is off to a great start! We had 55 or so kids come into the church building on Monday the 26th! The building was practically shaking from excitement! Once we got settled, the groups were off to Bible, Recreation, and Art class. We ended the first morning with pizza goodness!

Throughout Cross Trainers, we hope you will consider providing meals for our hardworking staff. We appreciate everyone's generosity and support, you can sign up to provide a meal for our 12 staff members at this link:
<https://www.mealtrain.com/trains/2nw79m> .



Prayer Concerns

Members: Florence Hall, Marge Freeman, Eleanor Arlet, Megan Salinetto Yelley's brother in law, Karren Sites, Tina Nagy

Friends & Relatives: Sue Whitaker, Than and Ruthina Veltman, Pastor Michael Weller, Wayne Arlet, Jr., Lisa Myers, Teresa Stacy (niece of Mary Stacy), Helen Barto (Kitty Kistler's mother).

July Birthdays

3 rd	Emma Pearson Carl Schrenker
4 th	Terry Mulkerrin
7 th	Jeff Jacob
11 th	Madge Seidel
12 th	Susan Barth
14 th	Kelly Dix
15 th	Paul Reed Debbie Dolence
16 th	Stacey Donovan
17 th	Ed Schrenker, Sr.
18 th	Joe Connor Jacob Jones
20 th	Karren Sites
21 st	Jessica Weaver Declan Adler
22 nd	Joann Mikula Carly Vignone Jacob Chacon
23 rd	Thad Ciechanowski Karlana Mehl
24 th	Aliza Ciechanowski
25 th	Alison Kate Fisher
26 th	Jim Fuhs
27 th	Jessalyn Gielarowski
31 st	Cheri Mack

Worship Opportunities

In-Person Worship: Services are Sundays at 10:00 am, starting in June. Please read our updated safety guidelines before attending in person worship: <https://files.constantcontact.com/7a16d75f001/80d3381d-f76d-4188-8553-c263835f868e.pdf>

Online Worship: Each Sunday at 10:00 am, our worship service livestreams on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CraftonHeightsChurch/> And then later on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLU5XsLRAbBddh2dgu38_W9bbRu9wYaOB4

Electronic Giving

Go to <https://chup.org/giving/> to find easy options for sending your donation electronically. Feel free to contact the office chup@chup.org to find out more about how you can designate where you would like your donation to go: the Church, the Preschool, the Open Door, the Food Pantry... the list goes on! Thank you for supporting our many ministries and enabling us to spread God's love in our community and throughout the world.

CHUP Online

Did you know that you can view the Runner in full color on our website? Back issues, too! Our website is mobile friendly and easier to navigate than ever. <https://chup.org/>

Blood Drive

Many thanks to everyone that donated at the CHUP Blood Drive on Feb 26th. We collected **18 units** of blood which is amazing. What is even more amazing is that **54 patients** will benefit from your generosity. That is huge! Please mark your calendar for the next blood drive scheduled for **Sunday, June 4th**. We hope to see you there!

Need Help?

Do you need help of one kind or another? If you are in need of food, or someone to run an errand for you, or a friendly voice with whom to speak, or prayer... please let us know!

Email dave@chup.org and we will marshal the resources to help you face the challenges of your day. You are not alone!





Mark your calendars, because you are invited to the
CHUP All Church Retreat
 September 8-10 at Crestfield Camp and Conference
 Center 195 Taggart Road, Slippery Rock, PA 16057

Leadership will be provided by CHUP Church Members.

There will be no childcare or separate sessions for kids. We plan to enjoy one another's company with games and activities throughout the weekend, with a few times of devotions and singing.

Accommodations

Scott Lodge has hotel-like rooms with private baths. Linens and towels are provided.

All meals are included (breakfast only Sunday)

A deposit of \$50 is required to reserve your room.

Checks are made payable to the First U.P. Church of Crafton Heights.

Because we want to encourage families of all sizes to participate, there is a \$300 maximum per family, and additional financial help is available. For more information, contact Erlina Mae Adler at 412-215-9711 or erlinamae.adler@puccs.org

Please detach the bottom portion and return with payment to Erlina Mae Adler by August 20th. You may keep the top portion as a reminder!

All Church Retreat Reservation Form (return with payment to Erlina Mae Adler by August 20)

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Lodging	# People	Price per person	Totals
Scott Lodge Adult Single Occupancy		\$215	
Scott Lodge Adult Double Occupancy		\$140	
Scott Lodge Adult Triple Occupancy		\$125	
Scott Lodge Child 6-13 years		\$50	
Scott Lodge Child 0-5 years		free	
Additional Cot/ Mattress without bedding		\$10	
Additional Cot/ Mattress with bedding		\$15	
Day Use (come for the day only)		\$50	
Total			
Deposit		\$50	
Balance Due			

First United Presbyterian Church
of Crafton Heights
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