



RENEWED IN GRACE NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2023-2024 EDITION

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OUR MISSION

We learn and grow together in faith and God's love as we reach out to all people.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." - John 1:14

Welcome to winter, everyone. There is much that could be pulled from the changing of the seasons theologically. One could talk about the sense of death that winter brings, the strength of those who endure such winters, or that it is just a period of time in which to get through. But I don't want to talk about any of that. Instead, let's talk about Gnosticism; pronounced naa-sti-si-zm. What is this weird word you might ask? Well it is a very old heresy in the Christian church, dated back to the 2nd century. The main tenets of Gnosticism are, that we were created by a lesser God, the God of the old testament, and that our souls are actually trapped in these bodies that the lesser God created, trying to escape to the one true God seen through Jesus Christ. They also believe that this world is evil and unredeemable, and the only way to salvation is through enlightenment and the escape from this flawed world through special knowledge, that, will guide us after we die to the one true supreme being. Jesus did not come to redeem this world, but rather to save us from it, by leaving us with special knowledge to follow.

Pastor's Letter Continued...

Most of Gnosticism has been removed from the majority of Christian thought, but there is still one major tenet that still prevails and has saturated Christian theology today. That is the idea that we must obtain special knowledge here on earth so that when we die, we can escape this evil world for a better world in heaven. My sense is that many of you reading this will feel comfortable with this theological point. I mean we hear it all the time: if you just accept Jesus Christ as your lord and savior (right knowledge) then you will be saved (can escape this evil world). There is an escapism theology that permeates Christian thought today, and to me it is harmful. If Jesus truly did not come to redeem the world, but rather only offered a way out, then it opens up all types of careless and harmful theologies. It opens up the ability to excuse the destruction of the earth. There is no need to preserve or take care of the earth because it is all evil anyway, and this is not our home. There is an idea that evil is just a reality of life and there isn't much that we have to do to stop it, because we are trying to escape an evil world, not fix it. Lastly, it emphasizes a dualism, or a separation of our bodies and our souls, as if they don't interact or affect one another. Essentially, modern Gnosticism allows us to excuse abuse to anything material because the true treasure is trapped inside these fleshy bodies. But the problem with this way of thinking is that God isn't a lesser God, and that God created us and called us good. God loves creation, God wants creation to thrive and grow and be healthy. If Jesus just came to help us escape this world, then why would he have been so radical when it came to loving the poor, the outcast, and the lesser? If Jesus just came to help us escape, why did he spend so much time healing, feeding and enhancing the lives of those around him? Jesus, God, cares about the material world and the spiritual world. It is not an either-or, nor is it that one is better than the other. Both have their place in this thing that we call existence, and both are important, valued and cherished by our God. If we want to live our best spiritual life, we cannot remove the material world. Our souls and our bodies work together, and we are called to see the goodness in this world, as well as the world to come. This is not to say that this material world is perfect, far from it. Sin penetrates every aspect of life, not just for us humans but for all of creation. But that doesn't make this world inherently evil, it just means there is evil in a world designed for good. Even heaven wasn't immune to evil, Lucifer is a fallen angel after all. My point in saying all of this, is that when times get tough, or when life throws you just one too many curve balls, try not to fall into the trap of escapism. Trying to escape this world will not save us from the struggles we have every day. But rather, figuring out how to walk through them, and see God alongside us as we do so, will build a strength within us that we never thought possible. God calls us into the fullness of life, which includes struggle, and in our struggle, if we seek God and walk alongside, we will come out the other end, seeing our own existence and the whole of creation, closer to how God sees God's creation. I guess this turned into a winter message after all. If we can learn to appreciate the winter, learn to walk through the cold. When the warm air touches our skin, we will understand the beauty that can be found, even in this material world. May God be your guide and your co-pilot, now and in the world to come, not your escape pod. Amen.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Chad



Worship and Office Information

Sunday Worship

(All services begin at 10:00 am unless otherwise noted)

December 3: Trinity-First Sunday in Advent

December 10: St. Peter's-Second Sunday in Advent (St. Peter's Congregational Budget Meeting following worship)

December 17: Trinity-Third Sunday in Advent and the Blessing of the Baby Jesus

December 24: Trinity-Christmas Eve service at 10 am
St. Peter's-Christmas Eve service at 7 pm



December 25 Monday: St. Peter's-Lay-Led Christmas Day service at 10 am

December 31: St. Peter's Middletown-Breakfast Church With Lessons and Carols

January 7: Trinity-Epiphany

January 14: St. Peter's-Baptism of Our Lord

January 21: Trinity

January 28: St. Peter's

February 4: Trinity

February 11: St. Peter's-Transfiguration of Our Lord

February 14: Trinity-Ash Wednesday @7 pm

February 18: Trinity-First Sunday in Lent

February 25: St. Peter's-Second Sunday in Lent

*Lenten Wednesday services to be announced

Office Hours

Pastor - Mondays @St. Peter's
8:30 am-12 pm
Wednesdays@Trinity
12 pm-3 pm

Office hours are subject to change due to emergencies or scheduled appointments with members and/or community members. The best way to meet with me in person is to schedule a time to meet either by calling the office or email.

Jen - Tuesdays @St. Peter's 1-5pm
Wednesdays @Trinity 1-5pm

Wednesdays in December Jen will hold office hours 9 am-1 pm



Advent/Epiphany Offerings

*Sunday, December 3, 11 am @Trinity-First viewing of ***The Chosen***. Snacks will be served!

*Wednesday, December 6, 7 pm @St. Peter's Highspire-Celtic Contemplative Service (music by ***Seasons***)

*Sunday, December 10, 11 am @St. Peter's-Second viewing of ***The Chosen***. Snacks will be served!

*Sunday, December 17, 11 am @St. Peter's-Third viewing of ***The Chosen***. Snacks will be served!

*Wednesday, December 20, 7 pm @St. Peter's Middletown-**Blue Christmas Service** (a service where we lament about those not with us this holiday season)

*As in the past, Pastor will offer weekly reflections on various topics via YouTube. They will be posted on Wednesdays of each week leading up to Christmas Eve.

*Saturday, January 6, 5:30 pm @St. Peter's-**Epiphany Dinner Church**

Worship Information Continued...

<i>Worship at St. Peter's</i>	12/10/23	12/24/23 Christmas Eve, 7pm	12/25/23 Christmas Day	1/14/24	1/28/24	2/11/24 Transfiguration of Our Lord	2/25/24
Acolyte/Crucifer	Jill Hawkins	Landon Keyser	Jill Hawkins	Brady Keyser	Jill Hawkins	Brady Keyser/ Landon Keyser	Jill Hawkins/ Brady Keyser
Worship Assistant	Sally Schonewolf	Brian Keyser	Patrick Hawkins	Sally Schonewolf	Brian Keyser	Patrick Hawkins	Sally Schonewolf

Letters from the Presidents

Dear friends,

As we head into another Advent season our lives are full of preparation for Christmas and what lies ahead. We will put up the decorations, buy gifts, bake cookies, and probably be a little too anxious about all the ‘stuff’ we need to get done to make a perfect Christmas. It may be a bit overwhelming at times. So much so that we can’t see all the wonderful signs going on around us. I’d like to share what I have seen at St. Peter’s and the Renewed in Grace cooperative ministry.

I see hope in the food ministries providing free meals and in the free clothes and other non-food items being provided on Monday and Thursday nights. I see joy in the faces of people getting their clothes washed for free from our Laundry Love ministry. I see gratitude on the faces of people on the street corners getting bags of soap, snacks, and other essentials. I see happiness when our shut ins are visited and provided with communion by our lay Eucharistic visitors. These are tangible signs of God’s love and goodness being shared by our members, by you. Thanks be to God for all of you!

I am also looking forward to 2024 and what lies ahead. A new outreach committee has been formed to help us reach out to and involve members of our communities. The consolidation task force is doing their work and in October we will vote on a future for our cooperative ministry. With the approval of a Tree for Hope School at St. Peter’s much work will happen in 2024 to prepare for the opening. These are big items on our agenda, and you could say we are heading into 2024 with a lot of uncertainty. I wouldn’t argue with that. However, we can be certain of one thing. We will not go forward alone. God calls us to the future and just as God has blessed us and sustained us in our current ministries, I’m sure God will be with us in our future ones as well.

May you have a wonderful Advent, Christmas and new year.

Patrick Hawkins
St. Peter’s Council President

Letters from the Presidents Continued...

It has been a very exciting fall at Trinity and we thank the Lord for that! We have had a VERY successful Oktoberfest dance and Election Day bake sale. Our Thursday night meals continue to feed more and more people and the food and clothing pantries are a support for neighborhood people also. Our Humanitarian and Refugee Committees continue to outreach to those in need too. Our mission as a church family is TO SERVE as Christ would want us to serve. Let us continue this mission into 2024 and beyond.

As I come to the end of my 2 years as your Council president, I know I need to thank so many of you for your endless effort toward our many programs here at the church. All of you play an important role in at least one aspect or another at Trinity. Working together, we continue to keep Trinity functioning and of importance to the surrounding neighborhood and beyond. I would love to name all of you and explain your role(s) in and around our church, but that would take many more pages and I would certainly forget someone! Just know that I am grateful for you all and Trinity would not do well without you.

God bless us all and show us His will as we move forward with *Renewed in Grace*.

I TRULY LOVE YOU ALL!

Jan
Trinity Council President

Christmas Eve Services at Trinity and St. Peter's

Because Christmas Eve is on Sunday, December 24 this year, we will have a unique opportunity to offer a Christmas Eve service at both churches that day. Trinity will have a Christmas Eve celebration at 10 AM that morning and St. Peter's will have a Christmas Eve service at 7 PM that evening. Candlelight and communion will be offered at both services. We are hoping that those of you who hesitate coming out for an evening service because of weather or other family functions on Christmas Eve will take advantage of a morning service. We hope to see you at Trinity and/or St. Peter's on the 24th!!!!

Jan
Trinity Council President



Outreach News

Monday Night Meals

This mission continues to be a blessing every Monday night to at least 40 families with an average of 110-130 meals served. It will be 3 years in January and we are so grateful for all the help we have been given. There are so many who help including the Highspire United Methodist church who comes every third Monday. Many thanks to all.

We are blessed to be able to offer non-food items and clothing. So many are appreciative of these offerings. We have many congregational members who continue to contribute to the many needed items. We have been given generous donations from the Fellowship Committee including \$500 from the Oktoberfest and also from many caring individuals. We continue to receive our food from Midwest Food Bank 4 times per month. They also support our own food bank.

We have gained another cook, John Rohrbach, and are extremely grateful for his time and expertise. He contributes many delicious meals. We could always use more cooks and helpers. Please call Sally Schonewolf at 717-265-3342 if interested in learning more. Everyone we help is so grateful.

Thanks again for all your support. Blessings from Sally Schonewolf

Thursday Night Takeout Meals at Trinity continue to take place every Thursday from 5:30-6:30 pm. This outreach program began on May 20, 2021, and we thank the many people who have contributed to this mission by volunteering to serve, cooking, and contributing financially. Since this program was started, we have served 6,627 meals. The Midwest Food Bank continues to generously support this project. A few of our community members who come for meals have also graciously donated to the cause. Those who enter our doors are always appreciative of all that we have to offer. Our dedicated volunteers include: Judy Krovic, Matt Krovic, Jan Holwig, Ed Holwig, Zach Szekeres, Shelley Radic, Barb and Ron Kain, Nancy Paine, Patty Johnson, and Pastor Chad.

The number of meals served each Thursday has steadily increased, and we are now serving between 85 and 105 each week. Through the help of the **Fellowship Committee**, we have a rotation of cooks who are willing to prepare meals. If you enjoy cooking, join us! If you would be willing to bake casseroles or prepare a meal, or even a side dish, let us know. Our food bank source can often provide rice, beans, pastas, spaghetti sauce, vegetables, boxed potatoes, crushed tomatoes, potato chips/snacks, and various other ingredients to supplement the meals prepared. If anyone from either Trinity or St. Peters would be willing to help in serving or preparing food for these meals, please contact Jim or Sandy Canning at 717-652-3493 or sandycanning@verizon.net. You may volunteer when it fits your schedule. Many of the people who take out meals on Thursdays make use of the **Food Pantry** available to them in our social hall. Paper products (toilet paper, paper towels, and tissues) continue to be popular. We will certainly welcome any donations of food (soups, canned goods, packaged foods) or toiletries if you would like to contribute to that mission as well. Thanks again for your support.

Sandy and Jim Canning



*Feed
my
sheep*

Outreach News Continued...

Laundry Love Ministry

Dear Renewed in Grace Members,

We have had a busy Fall with our Laundry Love community. Each month we paid for the washing and drying of laundry for everyone who entered and wanted to accept our help. As is our usual routine, we met at the Boardwalk Laundromat in Highspire the second Thursday of each month from 6:30-8:30 pm. Also during this same time, Sally has been able to open Thankful Threads for anyone interested in shopping for clothing.

The number of people served and loads of laundry paid for are below for the Fall months.

September 2023 – 20 people served, 84 loads

October 2023 – 20 people served, 64 loads

November 2023 – 13 people served, 64 loads



laundrylove

Thank you for your support of Laundry Love. We wouldn't be able to continue helping people with clean clothes if it wasn't for your generosity.

You can support us by donating online at the Renewed in Grace Co-op website, by including it with your offering and specifying "Laundry Love", or by adding your cash to our Laundry Love tub in church.

Grace Hoover, Randy Hoover, Judy Kunzman, Sally Schonewolf, Patrick Hawkins, and Jill Hawkins"

Good Samaritan Bags

This project has been accepted by so many and has become more and more popular. The Penn State Harrisburg Class on Aging, which meets at St. Peter's Middletown and is guided by Dr. Patty Aguilera, loves the idea of these Samaritan bags. They enjoy giving them out to those in need. I have to resupply them each week. I am encouraging them to make their own.

We are still supported by Midwest Food Bank. Don't forget each church has a supply for you to replenish what you have been giving out.

Thanks everyone from Sally

Prayer Shawls

Prayer shawls are stacked up on a table in the foyer of Trinity. If you know of someone (or even yourself) that is in special need of the comfort of a shawl and the prayers that go with it, please feel free to take one from the pile. If you are taking one to a friend, please check the sign-out book to be sure that person hasn't already received one from us. If they haven't, please sign the book and take a sheet that explains the prayer shawl to deliver along with it. These shawls are free of charge, but some people like to give a small donation toward the purchase of materials. There is a box there for that purpose. A contribution is NOT necessary and not expected. Thanks!

Outreach News Continued...

Tree4Hope Corner



Sponsors still needed for our Guatemalan students- Join our friends Jenn and David Hope-Tringali and Tree4Hope in their amazing work in Guatemala. As Renewed in Grace, we are sponsoring 2 students at Hope Academy, a STEAM academy for girls. Members of St. Peter's and Trinity can help provide a month of sponsorship for \$100. Sponsors are still needed to finish out 2023 and upcoming 2024. If you are interested, there are sign-up sheets in the narthex at both churches. Contributions should be clearly marked "Hope Academy Sponsorship" and placed in the offering plate. Look for the 2024 sign-up sheets for sponsorship to help provide life-changing education for girls in Guatemala.

ChicaBean Coffee- We are now partnering with ChicaBean Specialty Coffee, which is an all-female run coffee bean grower and roaster in Guatemala. Unlike other coffee growing and roasting operations, these women are given a livable wage. By supporting ChicaBean, we will also be supporting ourselves and the various ministries that we do here at Renewed in Grace. Not only will we get something in return, but we will be helping ChicaBean stay in business so that they can continue to promote financial and personal independence for women in Guatemala.



Tree4Hope will also receive a small donation when you purchase with our order form. **THREE** ministries will be helped through the simple act of buying coffee!



To support Renewed in Grace and Tree4Hope through purchasing coffee, please try not to use the affiliate link, but rather give your orders to Pat Hawkins and he will place your order. Order forms are now available in the narthex/foyer of each church. If you have any questions about this program, please talk to Pastor or Pat Hawkins.

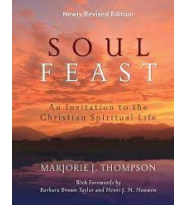


Tree4Hope, one of the Lower Susquehanna Synod global mission partners, is excited to have **opened Hope Academy in Pennsylvania!** This bilingual, STEAM based preschool program, grounded in the Lutheran tradition, is operating out of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Middletown. There are opportunities to financially support this venture. Email Deacon David Hope-Tringali at david@tree4hope.org to learn more and help make a difference in the lives of young children in our community today!

Happenings

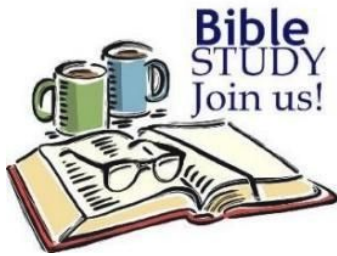
Sunday Morning Bible Study

“SOUL FEAST An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life”
by Marjorie J. Thompson



After a 6-week break, the Bible study with Pastor Chad will reconvene Sunday, January 7, 2024 at 9 am. It takes place every Sunday at 9 am before worship, both in person and on Zoom, and will last approximately 30-40 minutes.

All are Welcome Bible Study



The All are Welcome Bible Study continues to meet on Tuesday nights at 6:30p.m. via Zoom. Due to various holidays, we will not be meeting on Dec 21, Jan 2, and Feb 13.

We are working our way through the Bible. We are currently reading the Gospel of John. This winter, we will also read the book of Ruth, as well as 1 Samuel.

We send out a weekly email with the Zoom link, as well as a brief summary of what we covered the previous week. To get the link for attending the Zoom session, or just to get on the weekly email list, please contact Matt and Mary Hunt at allarewelcomebiblestudy@gmail.com.

Come As You Are Worship

As part of Renewed in Grace's continued attempt to share God's word and reach out to the community of Steelton, we will be holding additional services during the week.

We are hoping through these services we can:

- Affirm for all that they are a beloved child of God.
- Through prayers, the hearing of God's Word, and God's grace and love make everyone's burdens lighter, their hearts encouraged, and their souls refreshed.
- Continue to grow God's church in the world!

The lay-lead services will be held on the third Thursday at 6:30pm at Trinity. The services will be recorded and posted online. The schedule for the services is below.

1. December 21, 2023
2. January 18, 2024
3. February 15, 2024

We are calling these services, Come As You Are Worship, to help communicate that we want to invite and welcome everyone just as they are.

Happenings Continued...

Young Adults Group

We will be meeting monthly at a restaurant at 7pm. There is no real age bracket, just all those who identify as young adults are welcome and are 18 or older. If interested, please email Pastor Chad at renewedgracecoop@gmail.com so that you may be in the loop for restaurant and topic choices.

Our next session is: No December meeting. Will meet again in January!

Bake Sale at Trinity

Our Election Day bake sale on Tuesday, November 7 was very successful. We began at 7 AM and were sold out by 4 PM. Thanks to all of you who baked and who volunteered to help with sales that day. A special thanks to Addison Sanders (Jan & Ed's granddaughter) who kept things lively behind the tables for about 5 hours. She was decorating bags and filling them with people's orders. One of the customers commented,

"I love seeing this! It's good to start them out early in life with a work ethic!"

A tiring day was had by all!

(except Addison! Where do little kids get all their energy?)



Harrisburg Cedarettes Scholarships

The Harrisburg Cedarettes will award \$1000.00 scholarships to high school seniors who plan to attend HACC studying in a medical field (Nursing, Dental, EMT, etc.) for the fall semester of 2024. Starting January 1, 2024, applications can be obtained from the guidance counselor or you may contact Cynthia Hossman at 717 938-8850 or email her at hoss970@epix.net. The deadline for submission of the application will be Friday, March 29, 2024.

Happenings Continued.....



Lutheran Camping Corporation Upcoming Events

Advent Day Apart at The Wittel Farm - Saturday, December 9

Advent/Christmas In The Barn at The Wittel Farm - Sunday, December 17

Winter Youth Retreat at Kirchenwald - Friday-Sunday, January 5 - 7



Register for events at LutheranCamping.org or call 717-677-8211

Lutheran Camping posters for upcoming events from December 2023 - January 2024 can be found on the bulletin boards at St, Peter's and Trinity

Winter Birthdays

ST. PETER'S

December

18th Weston Hawkins
Rose Hoover
24th Nancy Sheaffer
26th Rita Pressler

January

4th Jeff Hoch
6th Savannah Sutch
5th Carole Orendorf
9th Joelle Hoch
10th John Pogasic
30th Sheryl Keyser

February

1st Barbara Johnson
18th Steve Strauss
20th Geraldine Reider
21st Beth Morgan
22nd Carol Dell
26th Matthew Johnson

TRINITY

December

2nd Bob Carrillo
19th George Gabel
21st Doris Reynolds

January

8th Peg Bowling
Leslie Martz
18th Bob Emrich
22nd Cheryl Hippensteel
30th Nancy Paine

February

7th Mary Hunt
12th Bonnie Ward
Zack Szekeres
13th Ed Holwig
21st Joan Hogentogler
23rd Edie Carrillo
27th Richard Martz



Those Who Need Our Cards and Prayers

The following are those who cannot get to church because of physical problems, etc. Please remember them with a card, a visit, and/or your prayers. **Changes are in red.**

St. Peter's

Doris Miller - Middletown Home, 999 W. Hbg. Pike, Middletown, PA 17057

Warren Nelson - Columbia Cottage, Room 48, 103 N. Larkspur Dr., Palmyra, PA 17078

Geraldine Reider - **Brookdale Assisted Living, 3560 N. Progress Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17113**

Trinity

John Brunner - 600 Masonic Dr. Elizabethtown, PA 17022

Evelyn Hippensteel - *Oak Hill Village, Room 135, 1020 N. Union St., Middletown, PA 17057*

Joyce Stickle - 224 Elm St. Steelton, PA 17113

Bob Wertz - Artis Senior Living, 150 N. 12th St., Lemoyne, PA 17043

Ben Whittington - Harmony at Hershey, Apt. 2322, 75 E. Canal St., Hershey, PA 17033

Shut-ins

Joyce Stickle, Jacqueline Acri, Joan Hogentogler, Ann Kline, Leslie & Lisa Listnizer, Geraldine Reider, Andy Jones, Nancy Wilson, Rose Hoover, Lynette Stough, Jeff Myers

We also want to remember to send cards and prayers to:

Jeff Myers

649 Highland St. Apt. C

Steelton, PA 17113



Christmas 2023 Decorations Orders

St. Peter's Christmas Decorations Order Form 2023

Members of the Altar Guild request your help as they prepare to decorate our Sanctuary for the upcoming joyous Christmas Season by donating towards these decorations. If you would like to order, please fill out the order form below and either:

1. Place your order in the offering plate.
2. Call Helene Hoch (717-343-8397).
3. Mail the form to Helene – 49 E. Emaus Street, Middletown PA 17057
4. Mail the form to church – 240 Broad Street, PO Box 97, Highspire PA 17034



Please indicate the number beside each item you wish to donate and include your check payable to: St. Peter's Altar Guild. The deadline for orders is December 11th .

Thank You!

- # _____ Red Poinsettias @ \$11.00 (asking for 30)
- # _____ White Poinsettias @ \$11.00 (asking for 12)
- # _____ Outside wreaths @ \$23.00 (need 9 wreaths)
- # _____ Inside wreaths @ \$28.00 (need 4 wreaths)

Pine Roping @ \$60.00

Tree @ \$110.00

As a memorial to: _____

To Honor: _____

My/Our name as it should appear in the bulletin:

Trinity Poinsettia Orders

If you would like to place an order for poinsettias for December 24's morning service at Trinity, please call Jan (717-608-7220) before December 4. They will be placed in honor of or in memory of whomever you would like. They will be available for pick up after the 10 AM service on the 24th. There will also be order forms in your bulletins at church.

The cost will be \$11 each. (That is the florist's price for us.)



RENEWED IN GRACE COOPERATIVE MINISTRY

ST. PETER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

240 BROAD STREET, P.O. BOX 97
HIGHSPIRE, PA 17034

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

221 SOUTH SECOND STREET
STEELTON, PA 17113

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

WINTER 2023-2024 EDITION
RENEWED IN GRACE CO-OP
NEWSLETTER



RENEWED IN GRACE COOPERATIVE MINISTRY

Pastor Chad Butz

Worship with us on Sunday mornings in person or online.
Worship times/locations are included in newsletter.

Phone: 717-939-3492 (Highspire)

717-939-4998 (Steelton)

Email: stpeters240@verizon.net

trinitysteelton221@yahoo.com

Online: renewedingracecoop.org OR trinitysteelton.org

St. Peter's Highspire and Trinity Steelton are located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Susquehannock peoples and we give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to call this land their home.