



What's Inside?

- Calendar and Birthdays, page 1
- Pastoral Ponderings, December birthdays and calendar, page 2
- Letter from Pastor Billy, page 3
- Advent and Christmas at Govans, page 4
- What's Going on at Govans, page 5
- ChurchWorks, Welcome New Members, page 6
- Youth Servant Leader Meeting, A Stewardship Reminder, page 7
- December Mission Offering - Baltimore Safe Haven, page 8
- Merger Anniversary, page 9
- Believe in Baltimore Podcast, page 10
- Kay Papa Nou/Unity House and Butoke news, page 11

YOUR CHURCH TURNS FIVE YEARS OLD

by Jon Morgan

The merger of Brown Memorial Woodbrook and Govans Presbyterian was completed five years ago this month, an event that brought together two proud religious communities and resulted in a vibrant institution full of new energy and members.

The financial resources of the combination made possible an expansion of staff in key areas, including making Rev. Billy Klutz a full time associate pastor and creating a new Ministry of Racial Justice and Multicultural Engagement under Minister Lea Gilmore.

There have been plenty of physical changes to the church as well. Among the projects that were made possible: the renovation of Sharp Hall with a stage and state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment to house the Woodbrook



Players and new monitors and equipment in the sanctuary that helped the church provide services throughout the pandemic.

And, of course, the *Herald* and *Bellringer* became *The Herald & Bellringer*!

How has it changed your worship experience? The Herald & Bellringer reached out to a few members with that question. Here are their responses:

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CELEBRATE ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WITH GOVANS

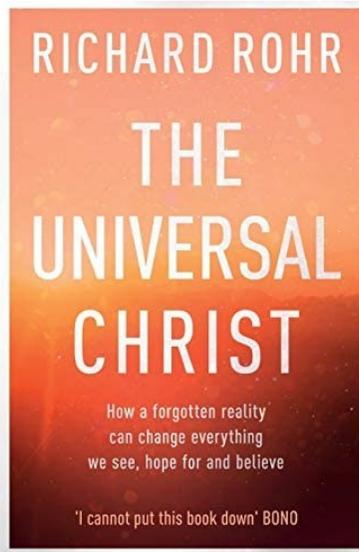
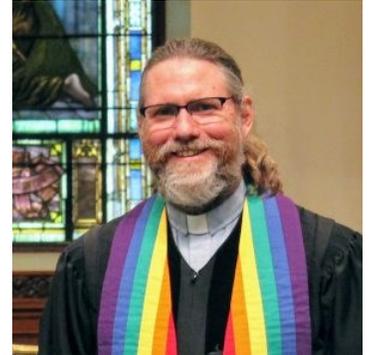
Detailed schedule on page four



PASTORAL PONDERINGS

Dear Friends,

It is said, “When the student is ready the teacher will appear.” Richard Rohr recently appeared to me as a teacher. Multiple people I respect had recommended him over the years. I read his quotes here and there, and even browsed through one of his books in the library one day. But, for some reason his writing didn’t grab me. I think I was not ready for him to be my teacher. Then I heard him being interviewed on Brené Brown’s podcast and something shifted. It may have been his voice and his spirit more than anything. His voice sounded very old and worn. Not the kind of clear speaking voice I would have expected of such a famous author and speaker. During the interview, he was extravagantly kind, affirming, and generous to Brené Brown. It seemed like he was delighting in her as much as she was in him.



So, I decided to give him one more try and ordered his book “*The Universal Christ*”. Just the title gave me some pause because I’ve been thinking and reading about Christ as the universal divine presence for decades. Do I need another rehashing of that concept? Well, it turns out when the student is ready the teacher will appear. This time around, Rohr’s writing has really captured me. Perhaps the most surprising part of his writing is the way he grounds his teachings about mysticism, spirituality, and Christ consciousness in scripture.

...continued on page five

December Birthdays

- 3 - Anne-Allen Dandy
- 5 - Tanya Morrel
- 5 - Jenny Williams
- 6 - Ralph Arnsdorf
- 7 - Edie Cleaves
- 8 - McKenna Traynham
- 10 - Marin Harris
- 16 - Laila Ali
- 20 - Ralph Cook
- 20 - Anne Minkowski
- 20 - Diana Romano
- 22 - Ted Kruse
- 24 - Myra Brosius
- 31 - Jeannette Dircks

December Calendar

- 3 - Racial Justice Film Series, 2:00 p.m.
- 4 - Online and In-Person Worship, 10:00 a.m.
- 4 - Youth Servant Leader Council 11:10 a.m.
- 4 - Soul Kitchen Meal Pick-Up, 3:30 p.m.
- 5 - Music Mondays with Marie Herrington, 7:00 p.m.
- 11 - Online and In-Person Worship (Music Sunday), 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.
- 11 - Soul Kitchen Meal Pick-Up, 3:30 p.m.
- 12 - Music Mondays, 7:00 p.m.
- 16 - Youth and Young Families Christmas Party, 6:30 p.m.
- 18 - Online and In-Person Worship, 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.
- 18 - Soul Kitchen Meal Pick-Up, 3:30 p.m.
- 19 - Music Mondays, 7:00 p.m.
- 22 - Service for Grieving, 7:00 p.m.
- 24 - Christmas Pageant, 4:30 p.m.
- 24 - Christmas Eve Worship, 9:00 p.m.
- 25 - Online and In-Person Worship, 11:00 a.m.
- 25 - Soul Kitchen Meal Pick-Up, 3:30 p.m.
- 26-30 - Church Office Closed

LETTER FROM PASTOR BILLY

Hello, Govans,

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11, KJV



One of my favorite parts of the Advent season is the reminder from the angels to “fear not!” The Bible contains more than three hundred verses that remind us to “be not afraid.” I don’t know about you, but I often need those courageous reminders as we near Christmas and all of its concomitant commitments.

This year, our children and young families will be reminding us to “take heart” in our Christmas pageant, **Do Not Be Afraid**¹. The Govans Christmas pageant will take place on Saturday, December 24 at 4:30 pm. Adults and kids alike are invited to take part! If you would like a speaking or non-speaking role, please email me (billy@govanspres.org).

Until then, I hope that your Advent season is filled with the hope of God’s promised return. In the words of John Bell from the Iona Community:

*Come, O Lord, and set us free
Come, Lord Jesus, come*

Take heart,
Pastor Billy

¹Do Not Be Afraid is an original Christmas pageant written by Illustrated Ministry.

Youth and Young Families Activities:

- Sunday, December 4 - Youth Servant Leader Council - 11:10 am in the Youth Room
- Friday, December 16 - Youth and Young Families Christmas Party - 6:30 - 8:00 pm
- Saturday, December 24 - Young Families Christmas Pageant at 4:30 pm at Govans
- Sunday, January 8 - Youth Servant Leader Council - 11:10 am in the Youth Room (no intergenerational Sunday school)
- Sunday, January 15 - Return of Intergenerational Sunday school between services (from 10:10 am to 10:45 am)

Contact Pastor Billy (billy@govanspres.org) for more information and to sign-up for weekly Youth and Young Families Updates.

Church Staff

Rev. Tom Harris, Senior Pastor
 Rev. Billy Kluttz, Associate Pastor
 Lea Gilmore,
 Minister for Racial Justice & Music Director, 1st Service
 Marie Herrington
 Music Director, 2nd Service
 Pam Wallace and Rufus Ingram, Bookkeepers
 Andy Wilson, Office Manager
 Sylvia Usher, Sexton
 Pam Ferguson,
 Director of Preschool
 Gwen Lloyd, Program Director, Senior Network

Govans Presbyterian Church
 5828 York Rd Baltimore, MD
 21212 410-435-9188
www.govanspres.org

Submissions for the January/February 2023 newsletter are due by December 15. Please send to Andy Wilson at wilson@govanspres.org

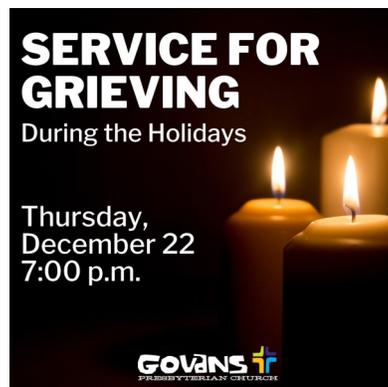
CARES Food Pantry: Please consider donating non-perishable food to CARES, the food pantry operated by GEDCO. You can bring your donations to worship or to the church office during the week. You can also drop off at 5502 York Rd at the back of St. Mary of the Assumption Church between 9:00 a.m. and noon, Mon - Fri and 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Saturday. Email wilson@govanspres.org if you have any questions.



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT GOVANS

December 11 - Music Sunday in both services: Our music teams will proclaim the Word through music.

- **In the 9:00 a.m. service,** join us for a festive, spirit-filled morning of music! Not only will we hear from the band, but members of our congregation, and Govans community members will share with us songs of the season, spoken-word and more.
- **In the 11:00 a.m. service,** the chancel choir will be presenting a truly unique piece of music titled *Carols and Lullabies: Christmas in the Southwest* by composer Conrad Susa, with special musicians Erin Baker on harp, Thomas Potts on guitar, and Johnny Barker on the marimba. Susa wrote this piece when he was commissioned to write an accompanying piece to Britten's Ceremony of Carols, and was suggested by Gary Holt to write a piece of Christmas music that he sang as a young boy. You will hear the choir sing Christmas carols from various regions of the world in these languages and dialects: Biscayan, Puerto Rican, Spanish, Catalanian, and Andalusian.



December 18 - The Sunday before Christmas! In both services we will sing the songs of the season as we move closer to our celebration of God's revelation to us in Christ. The Handbell Choir will help us celebrate in the second service. Between the services there will be an **Alternative Gift Fair** in the Gallery. Come support local nonprofits by purchasing gifts for loved ones. We will also have a carol sing to accompany the shopping!

December 22 at 7:00 p.m. - Service for Grieving During the Holidays: All are welcome for this beautiful service with music provided by our Handbell Choir and Anne Owens leading singing with guitar. During this season of compulsory joy, take a moment to honor the sorrow we feel for those we have lost. Light a candle, remember those who have passed, and support those left behind.

Christmas Eve, December 24 at 4:30 and 9:00

p.m.:

- **Join us at 4:30 p.m. for our annual Christmas Pageant.** The band will lead us in beloved Christmas hymns and contemporary classics. This year's pageant "*Do Not Be Afraid*" will feature our very own child and adult actors in retelling the Christmas story. We will end singing Silent Night to candle light.
- **Join us at 9:00 p.m. for a Service of Peace and Joy.** This year we are re-imagining the service of Lessons and Carols. Our choir will provide beautiful music and lead us in medleys of Christmas hymns. We will begin by singing Silent Night to candlelight before moving into the reading of the gospel Christmas stories interspersed with beloved music. We will end as the choir leads us out to "Go Tell It on the Mountain"!



December 25 - Christmas Day: We will have one service at 11:00 a.m.! Come as you are on Christmas morning. Still in your PJs? No problem! Everyone is invited to share about a gift they received and challenge Pastor Tom and Pastor Billy to make an impromptu connection between the gift and our Christian faith.

January 1 - New Year's Day: Start the new year off right with a Combined Service and Communion at 10:00 a.m. We will be reading about the genealogy of Jesus including some of the surprising women Matthew includes. Everyone is invited to share about an ancestor who was unusual, surprising, or even scandalous.

What's Going On at Govans?



MARIE HERRINGTON

Monday, December 5

7 p.m. Live on Zoom

In addition to being Govans' Second Service Music Director, Marie Herrington is a composer of song who uses her performance background in voice, piano, and organ to showcase everything from human tragedies to sublime human delights. Join us for a special Music Monday. Visit Marie's website to stay tuned to her upcoming music: marieherringtonmusic.com.

Contact Lea Gilmore (lea@govanspres.org) for the Zoom link or more information.



GOVANS BOOK CLUB

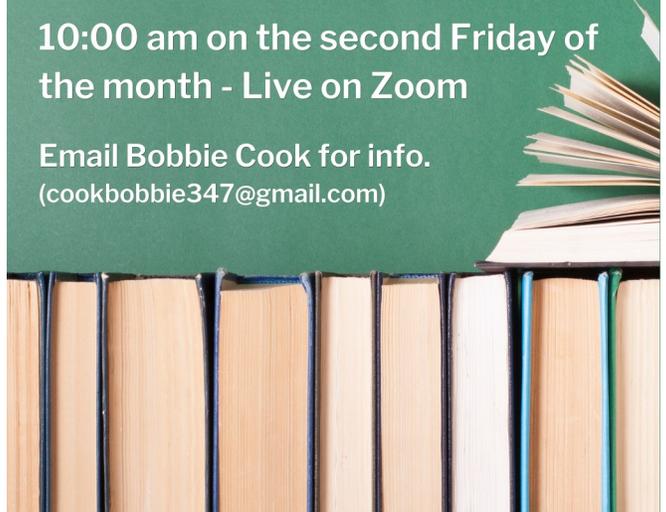
10:00 am on the second Friday of the month - Live on Zoom

Email Bobbie Cook for info. (cookbobbie347@gmail.com)

Youth and Young Families 

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Friday, December 16
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

PASTORAL PONDERINGS...continued from page two

His writing is full of quotes from the Bible put together in such a spiritually grounded way that it seems like common sense. How had I been missing it? When the student is ready the teacher will appear.

When reflecting on the incarnation of God through the birth of Jesus, Rohr suggests that the first Christmas was not the first incarnation. He writes, "When Christians hear the word, "incarnation," most of us think about the birth of Jesus, who personally demonstrated God's radical unity with humanity. But in this book, I want to suggest that the first Incarnation was the moment described in Genesis 1, when God joined in unity with the physical universe and became the light of everything."

A few pages later he writes, "Instead of saying that God came into the world through Jesus, maybe it would be better to say that Jesus came out of an already Christ-soaked world. The second Incarnation flowed out of the first, out of God's loving union with physical creation."

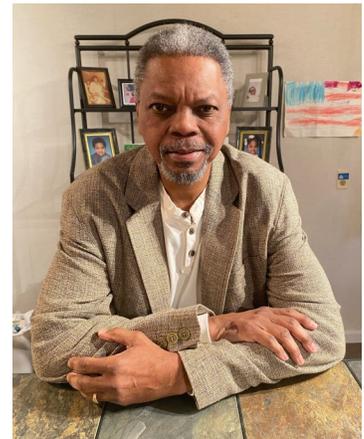
As we look toward our Christmas celebration of the incarnation, my prayer is that the story of Jesus' birth will remind all of us that the world is literally soaked (aka "anointed", which is what Christ means in Greek) with the presence of God. God is constantly, daily being born within us, within each person, within all living things, and within all creation. If we can recognize that birth in the manger, we can begin to recognize it everywhere. When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.

Peace,
Tom



The Govans Session met on November 15, 2022 for our regular monthly meeting. Here are some highlights from that meeting:

- We were excited to approve 8 new members of the church. Sarah Morris-Compton, Akilah Atkinson, Jimmy Bradshaw, Ana Hernandez and Angela Pinaglia, Joanna Wilson, and Frank and Drue Hodgetts will be joining the church during the combined service on December 4.
- In other business we did a first reading of a draft 2023 church budget. We are working to manage rising costs of staffing and a significant accounting audit expense. Pledges are a key component of our planning process so everyone is asked to turn in their 2023 pledges as soon as possible. Reminder letters for those who have not yet pledged were mailed out the week of Thanksgiving.
- The Session also approved revisions to the Govans Child Protection Policy. As we seek to get more church members involved as youth leaders, these revisions will help us set clear expectations for everyone.
- Additional business was the approval of our new part-time bookkeeper to take over for Pam Wallace as she plans to retire at the end of this year. We are happy to introduce Rufus Ingram. Rufus is a CPA with decades of accounting and bookkeeping experience with nonprofits in Baltimore. He has also taught accounting at Morgan State, Baltimore City Community College, and Villa Julie College. Mr. Ingram will be training with Pam Wallace through the end of the year. Please join me in welcoming him to the Govans family.



Welcome to Govans new part-time bookkeeper, Rufus Ingram

If you have any questions and thoughts to share, please speak with any member of the Session.

Welcome
NEW MEMBERS!

Akilah Atkinson
Jimmy Bradshaw
Frank & Drue Hodgetts
Angela Pinaglia & Ana Hernandez
Sarah Morris-Compton
JoAnna Wilson

GOVANS COMMISSIONS NEW YOUTH SERVANT LEADERS AND MENTORS

This fall, Govans commissioned four new Youth Servant Leaders. Alexander Hoffman, Matthew Moore, Thomas Moore, and Trenton Simmons will all undertake a year of servant leadership inside Govans and within the community as part of the Youth Servant Leader program.

The Youth Servant Leader program is our middle and high school leadership development program at Govans. Youth Servant Leaders (or YSLs) gather monthly to discuss what it means to be a Christian leader, complete a service project, regularly lead worship at Govans, and serve on a church committee. After a year of participation in the YSL program, youth are invited to join the church as full members.



This year, we also have four incredible mentors who will be working alongside our Youth Servant Leaders: Stephen Gaede, John Laube, Karl Starks, and JoAnna Wilson. Pictured here, the youth servant leaders and their mentors smile after their first council meeting in November (not pictured: Trenton Simmons and JoAnna Wilson).

Please join us in praying for these young leaders and their mentors. To learn more about the Youth Servant Leader program or how you can be involved in Govans youth and young family ministries, please email billy@govanspres.org

A STEWARDSHIP REMINDER

For those still considering their pledge for 2023, please remember that for congregants over the age of 70½ who are taking Required Minimum Distributions (RMD), contributions can be fulfilled through a Qualified Charitable Contribution (QCD) to our IRS-qualified Endowment Fund (Group Ruling No. 1617). Such a contribution can be used to offset part or all of your RMD, allowing you to contribute over and above what might qualify on your tax return. For more details on how to make a contribution, please contact your financial or tax advisor, or email me at fgaede@comcast.net.

Thanks!
Fred Gaede,
Finance Committee



DECEMBER MISSION OFFERING: BALTIMORE SAFE HAVEN



Baltimore Safe Haven

At the end of 2018 the Mission Committee decided to look for a new Mission Partner that serves the LGBTQ community in Baltimore. The committee decided to support a new organization, Baltimore Safe Haven, that serves the most vulnerable in our community.

Here is more about Baltimore Safe Haven -

Mission:

“We provide opportunities for a higher quality of life for transgender people in Baltimore City living in **survival mode.**”

Leadership:

Iya Dammons, Executive Director - Only Baltimore LGBTQ Service organization headed by an Black Trans Woman
Since 2018, Baltimore Safe Haven has grown from providing outreach services focused on harm reduction, safety, and HIV testing, to an array of services to assist with transition to more stability and long-term solutions. Baltimore Safe Haven’s Drop-in Center provides food, showers, laundry, and case management.

The staff of Baltimore Safe Haven identified a need for a variety of housing and job training. As a result, they developed an array of housing opportunities and job training. Transitional housing is available for everyone from youth (18-24) to older adults.

The support of local organizations like Govans Presbyterian Church has given Baltimore Safe Haven the opportunity to expand services needed to serve one of the most vulnerable groups in Baltimore.

*****All donations during the month of December marked "Mission Offering" will support Baltimore Safe Haven. Thank you for your support. *****



Govans at the first Trans Pride parade in the summer of 2022. Photo credit: Washington Linus Berggren

YOUR CHURCH TURNS FIVE YEARS OLD...continued from cover page



Tom Harris: *The merger has brought many benefits including new resources for staffing and mission. The work we are doing today toward racial justice and community engagement is a direct result of our two congregations combining our resources. Beyond that, I've seen all kinds of new friendships blossom over the years. People from the two predecessor congregations really care about each other and support one another in times of need. As the leader of the Session, I am especially grateful for the way the leaders of each congregation came together and continue to lead in so many ways.*

Jane Houck: *I have appreciated the Govans-Brown Memorial Woodbrook merger. When you ask me why, I have to stop and reflect over the last 5 years. At first it felt strange to be going to someone else's church every Sunday. I had been an usher at BMW and I volunteered to continue, with some encouragement from our BMW pastor. This made all the difference! I got to know the Govans folks and we all got to know one another. Today we are family!! I appreciate the increased number of diverse members at Govans! We have more families. We have a variety of ages. We have more people with different backgrounds. We have more gay members and more racial diversity. A meeting can offer lots of different thoughts and styles.*



Kit Clark: *I served on the committee considering the merger. It was a really good committee with members who were devoted to the idea of making a workable merger. Since the merger I have worked with several former Brown members on projects in the merged Church and it has been very good. Jane Houck and I have tackled ushering and I can't imagine having a better partner. I think the merger has been better than any of us could have imagined.*



Stephen Gaede: *The merger breathed new life into both congregations, a spark that continues to power so many friendships and meaningful experiences. I especially appreciate the creative and artistic expertise of the Woodbrook Players who brought their energy, dedication, and talent to the Govans congregation. We have been forever changed, for the better.*

Maria Wong: *I have been so happy at the relative ease with which the congregations came together. Each congregation has been willing to embrace what the other brought to the merger, which has been a joy. When we, as the newly merged Govans, brought on Lea and Billy, it really began to feel like a rebirth as a unified church to me. I've enjoyed having the option of 2 different worship experiences. I've especially appreciated both the diversity and the community of the merged church. While I will always cherish memories of Brown Memorial, I couldn't be happier that much of what I loved there lives on at Govans.*



Susan Saunders: *In the merger between Brown Memorial Woodbrook and Govans Presbyterian I got something my husband Larry and I had wanted for a long time, a chance to be a part of more diverse and welcoming congregation and to work on becoming even more inclusive while we address some of the issues that stand in the way of that.*

BELIEVE IN BALTIMORE PODCAST UPDATES

Govans' community podcast, *Believe in Baltimore*, has released three additional episodes this fall highlighting some of the great work going on in our church and neighborhood.

Value COVID - Isabella Sarria of Johns Hopkins University joins Pastors Tom and Billy to discuss the VALUE COVID-19 initiative to increase vaccination rates against COVID-19 and decrease public health misinformation in our community. We were also joined by some of the amazing VALUE COVID-19 ambassadors: Tristan, Aiara, and Sophie. You may have met some of these ambassadors at this year's Trunk or Treat event. They joined us to share important vaccination information for kids and families.



Pastor Tom and Pastor Billy discuss the VALUE COVID-19 Initiative

Believe in Baltimore
Hosted by Govans Presbyterian Church



Marie Herrington - Marie Herrington works as Second Service Music Director at Govans. In this podcast episode, she discusses her work at Govans, training at Peabody, and her hopes for music making in our community in the years ahead.

Kyra McDonnell - Kyra McDonnell and Pastor Billy discuss what's new with the York Road Initiative as they continue to focus on youth development, food access, commercial corridor work, and civic capacity building in the Govans neighborhood! Kyra McDonnell serves as Program Coordinator at the York Road Initiative at Loyola University. She recently came to Govans for an Adult Options session on the work of the York Road Initiative.

You can find all of the Believe in Baltimore podcast episodes at: govanspres.org/podcasts. If you have ideas for podcast episode topics or future guests, please email billy@govanspres.org.



Sundays at 9:00 and 11:00 a.m.
*10:00 a.m. on the first Sunday of the month

WORSHIP @GOVANS

In-Person and Online
Details at www.govanspres.org

KAY PAPA NOU/UNITY HOUSE UPDATE:

Since first traveling to Haiti in 2008, life for most Haitians (except for the protected elite) has gotten worse.



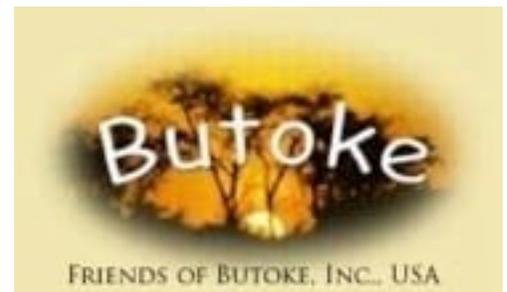
Where there was hope for a better life, today there is hopelessness. Haiti is in the middle of yet another humanitarian disaster as gang warfare worsens since the assassination of President Moïse. Gangs rule the land. Hunger has intensified. Cholera is spreading, as it has before, partly because

armed groups are preventing doctors from providing care. Thousands of refugees can be seen sleeping on cardboard and cement right next to the airport.

The house in Arcahaïe where the family fled for safety is no longer safe. After robberies, money that was meant to feed and care for the children had to be used to add an additional three feet to the wall that surrounds the house. Port-au-Prince is now controlled by gangs, raping women, men and children and making passing in and out of the city difficult. Our friends need prayers. - Joyce and Ted Kruse.

THANK YOU FROM BUTOKE:

Thank to Govans for our recent donation to Butoke in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Our gift to Butoke will be used for the **BUILD CONGO SPRINGS** project to bring clean water to villages that have no clean water sources today. Lack of clean water contributes to childhood intestinal infection that causes malnutrition and anemia. It will also be used to feed the orphans.



Fresh, clean water from a rehabbed spring.

**GOVANS**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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*"Govans Presbyterian Church is a theologically progressive community
empowering people to make the world better."*

CHRISTMAS EVE @ GOVANS

Saturday, December 24

4:30 p.m. Children's Christmas Pageant

9:00 p.m. Service of Peace and Joy

**GOVANS**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH