



“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world... And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and the line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.” Luke 2:1-5

Dear Family of God,

Have you ever wondered what Mary and Joseph went through when they were forced to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem? Mary was fully pregnant. Whether she rode on a donkey or in a wagon, the 80-mile journey was no picnic. The couple had to accept some kind of shelter when they got there, because the town was full of other census travelers. A tradition in Bethlehem says Mary gave birth in a shepherd's cave. Wherever it was, soon after they arrived Mary gave birth to a son, who they named Jesus, which means 'God saves,' the name the angel commanded he be given. His first baby bed was a manger – a feed bin for cows and sheep.

Angels told the shepherds nearby to go see the baby, announcing “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:10-12). Later, wise men from the east came to pay homage, having read the signs about the birth of the new king. They gave beautiful gifts. When they left, an angel warned Joseph in a dream to take the family and flee to Egypt, because Herod wanted to kill the child. They became refugees!

Jesus' arrival says a lot about God. Though he was God's son, he humbled himself to become one of us. Though he was the King of kings, he experienced poverty, hardships, refugee status, and ultimately rejection for this purpose: to save us from our sins! He became poor so you and I could become rich, with the riches of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus conquered death to bring us victors in his train. This is “good news for all people!”

The good news is for YOU! Whatever hardships you are going through, the Lord Jesus came to save YOU! He took your place in the judgment of death for sin, proving God loves you. He wants to have a relationship with you. Jesus promised, “Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” (John 7:38)

This Christmas, let us renew our faith in Christ, so those living waters may flow from within all over again! Let's seek him together as his people, share his love with one another, and with all those who are lost and hurting in our community and the world.

Come worship the King with us this Christmas Eve!

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Fisher

Dec. 24 Christmas Services

10:00 AM Family Carol Sing

11:00 AM Cookie Party in Fellowship Hall

7:00 PM Traditional Candlelight Carol Service

Pastor's Pen

Further Reflections On the future of Israel



Dear Congregation,

Last month, we looked at the history leading up to the October attack on Israel. This month, we look at related Bible prophecies about Israel, some already fulfilled, some being fulfilled in our time, and some yet to be fulfilled. These later prophecies herald the return of the Lord.

Jesus prophesied the Second Temple and Jerusalem itself would be destroyed (Matthew 24:1-2). He also foretold the Jewish people would lose their nation and be scattered to the world.

"When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:20-24)

Both Jerusalem and the Temple were indeed destroyed in 70 AD. After the Bar Kochba revolt (132-136 AD), the Romans totally destroyed the Jewish nation. The survivors were exiled all over the world. In their great diaspora, the Jews have suffered persecution and distress (foretold in Deut. 28:58-68). But God also promised through the Prophets they would eventually be regathered from the four corners of the earth back to their promised land. This 2nd Exodus would eclipse the 1st Exodus under Moses (Jer. 16:14f, 30:10; Isa. 11:11-12; 43:1-7; Ez. 36:24-38).

The mass return of Jews to Israel began as a trickle in the late 19th century, in response to the Zionist movement. The trickle became a flood after the end of WWII, as millions of Jews have emigrated to Israel since. The most recent worldwide wave of antisemitism has hundreds of thousands of Jews around the globe seriously considering immigrating to Israel right now, because it is no longer safe for them outside their own homeland. We can probably expect mass immigration to accelerate in the next few years.

The Prophets foretold in these later days, the desert would bloom, and the land would become fertile again, even feeding the world (Isaiah 27:6, Amos

9:14-15). Many see in these prophecies hints of the Gospel, as the desert of mankind, once totally lost in sin, has received the living water of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and become part of Spiritual Israel (the Church). However, many prophecies speak of Jacob and specific tribes being impacted by the 2nd Exodus, and of their inter-tribal jealousy coming to an end as they return to the land (e.g., Isa. 11:13-15). In physical Israel today, there are no inter-tribal jealousies. The desert blooms and produces abundant crops thanks to modern irrigation technology, and Israel exports fruit and vegetables all over the world. Perhaps, like many Old Testament prophecies, the 2nd Exodus prophecies speak of both physical and spiritual realities.

Jesus foretold Jerusalem would be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until 'the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled' (Luke 21:24). We are not sure what that phrase 'Times of the Gentiles' means. Is it the time during which the Gentiles rule over the land of Judea? Is it the time when the Gospel priority is to go to the Gentile nations? Whatever exactly it means, the Israeli government declared Jerusalem its capital in 1950, and the Israeli army recaptured all of Jerusalem in 1967. The United States formally recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in 2017.

Paul explains why natural Israel experienced a hardening toward Jesus. "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in [to spiritual Israel], and in this way all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:25-26). Paul further explains how, since the separation of Israel from Messiah has brought blessings to the Gentiles, how much more will there be blessing when Israel is fully included in Messiah – it will be nothing less than life from the dead! (Rom 11:15). Interestingly, since the reestablishment of the state of Israel in 1948, many Jews have begun turning to Jesus and recognize him as their own Messiah. At first a trickle, this also is becoming a flood. All these things suggest the 'times of the Gentiles' may be ending, though mission agency estimates suggest a vast number of Gentiles still need to hear the Gospel!

Finally, we come to the question of what to expect next. Jesus' warnings in the Gospels about Jerusalem mention some things that have already happened, but also some things that have not yet happened. Among these is the 'abomination that causes desolation' spoken of by the Prophet Daniel (Dan. 9:27, 11:31; Matt 24:15-21). Paul describes what must surely be this in 2 Thess. 2:4: it is when the 'man of lawlessness' (the antichrist) sets his image up in God's temple and proclaims himself to be God. The Lord Jesus will not

return until this sign happens, and ‘the great rebellion’ takes place (v.3). We already see a massive rebellion against God and the Gospel rising around the world, even in places where Jesus once reigned, whether through Marxist revolutions or in the perverse materialist and atheist idolatry of the West. Though the third temple has not yet been rebuilt in Israel, where the ‘abomination that causes desolation’ will presumably be set up, there is serious talk in Israel of building the equivalent of a ‘national cathedral.’ It is not impossible to envision these things reaching their fulfillment in the not-too-distant future.

Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel, and John’s Revelation have further information about these last days, which include terrible tribulation both for Israel and the world. Daniel saw the intrigues of the antichrist, whom he calls ‘the king of the north.’ He will make a duplicitous agreement with Israel but set his sights on destroying the ‘holy people’ (possibly Jews, Christians, or both) (Dan 11). Ezekiel also saw the great battle yet to come (Armageddon), as did John and Zechariah (Ez. 38-39, Zech 14:2,4; Rev. 19:19-21).

Zechariah describes a day when all the nations of the earth are gathered to fight against Jerusalem. This day turns out to be the day of salvation – when the inhabitants of Jerusalem recognize ‘the one they have pierced’ and mourn for him, ‘as for an only son.’ This day is when a fountain of forgiveness is opened for them, when it appears they have finally recognized their Messiah (Zech 12-13). This might be the day when Israel’s salvation is literally life from the dead: the day of resurrection!

There are images here of vast armies attacking Israel, of Jerusalem being under siege, of all the nations being gathered to fight against Israel, and the Lord Jesus returning. Paul describes the end of the antichrist in this way: “whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.” (2 Thes. 2:8). Paul describes our full redemption and coming of the Lord:

According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words. (1 Thes 4:15-18)

Come Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:17) Whatever travails Israel has yet to go through, whatever travails you and I must go through, these are words to encourage us. Though evil abounds, God’s plans for our salvation are relentlessly unfolding. Be strengthened and encouraged with this unshakable truth! Merry Christmas, indeed!!!

Yours in the love of Christ!

Pastor Chris Fisher

Some resources used here:

Lion of Judah Ministry: www.lionofjudahministry.org; © 2016

<https://sareltours.com/israel-bible-prophecy/>

The Book of 100 Prophecies: Ancient Biblical prophecies that foretold the future. © Ray Konig. <http://www.100prophecies.org/page6.htm>;



Worship & Preaching Schedule Jan - Feb 2024

Sunday Worship: 9:00AM Live & Online

10:45 AM Coffeehouse Worship in Fellowship Hall

Saturday Worship: Live at 6:00 PM

Theme:

The Book of Revelation

Coffeehouse Theme: “The Bait of Satan” – John Bevere’s multi-week series on overcoming offense.

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Dec. 24 | Christmas Eve: 4th Sunday in Advent
10 AM – Single Morning Service Carol Sing
11AM – Christmas Cookie Party
7 PM – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service |
| Dec. 31 | New Years Eve/1st in Christmastide
10 AM – Single Morning Service
Guest Preacher: Mr. Brian Reading |
| Jan 7 | Epiphany Sunday
Wesley Covenant Renewal Service
9:00 AM w/ Holy Communion
10:45 AM Coffeehouse Worship resumes w/ Love Feast |
| Jan 14 | 3rd Sunday after Christmas
“Introducing the Book of Revelation” |
| Jan 21 | 4th Sunday After Christmas
Sanctity of Human Life Sunday
Guest Preacher: Mr. Doug Esposito |
| Jan 28 | 5th Sunday After Christmas
Revelation Part 2 |
| Feb 4 | 6th Sunday After Christmas
w/ Holy Communion
Revelation Part 3 |
| Feb 11 | 7th Sunday After Christmas
Revelation Part 4 |
| Feb. 14 | Ash Wednesday
6:00 Supper, 7:00 Service |
| Feb 18 | 1st Sunday in Lent
Revelation Part 5 |

Feb 25

2nd Sunday in Lent
Revelation Part 6



Communion Offerings

Jan. 7 Mission fund for Puerto Rico mission trip
Feb. 4 Pastor's Discretionary Fund



Church Renaming/Rebranding PLEASE HELP US PICK A NEW NAME FOR THE CHURCH!

The latest ballot is included in this newsletter!

Dear Congregation,

The church continues to work on rebranding itself for the future. Another ballot is contained in this newsletter. We've narrowed the choices down to the top five from the last ballot. Please cast your vote for your top choice and sign and submit it by Sunday, January 14. We will have extra ballots at worship that day to give as many members as possible the opportunity to vote. Thank you for your help!



Lent Series 2024



Our 2024 Lent series involves a dual theme: **The Festivals of Israel** and **The Spiritual Disciplines**. We will look at the fulfillment of the festivals in Messiah, and the youth want to hear more about the spiritual

disciplines, so we are covering both themes.

Beginning Ash Wednesday on February 14, We will gather every Wednesday during Lent for fellowship supper at 6 pm, followed by worship at 7 pm. Our preachers will be bringing us lively and informative teaching on our themes each week. Please come out for good food, fellowship, and good teaching!

We are also looking for different small groups/ministry teams to host the meal each week. If your team can provide a meal, please contact the office. We look forward to seeing you then!



Estate Planning and Bequests

We reported in the Fall that our dear brother Mr. Lester Riegel, Sr. left his estate to the Church. A preliminary payout of \$50,000 from his estate is expected from the executor before the end of the year. Lester designated it to the general fund. We thank God for



wills and trusts

Lester's love and generosity. He finished his course in faith and blessed the Church with what he left behind.

Perhaps Lester's example has you wondering how you can honor the Lord with your estate. Here are some thoughts on the matter, from Commonbond.org adapted by the vice-president of our Trustees, Mr. Randy Helwig, and supplemented by the editor.

Planned Gifts – An Overview

It can be hard to think about what happens after we're gone, but setting up a planned gift is a great way to ensure the ministry of the Church continues and your support is included in your arrangements. There are a number of ways you can use planned giving, and to build charitable giving into your life plans, even after death. Some can even help you lower your taxable income now! You can also choose to have your gift remain anonymous. Consider planning ahead now and explore some of these ways for giving after life:

Bequest:

- A specific bequest of money or property naming the Church as a beneficiary.
- Residual bequest of the remainder of the estate after specific bequests
- Contingent bequest in which the gift to the Church occurs if the original beneficiaries die before the donor.

Specific Types of Planned Gifts:

- Charitable Remainder Trust
- Charitable Gift Annuity
- Charitable Lead Trust
- Life Tenancy Agreement
- Life Insurance: The Church can be named as the beneficiary of a new life insurance policy, which is revocable by the donor. Or an existing life insurance policy can be changed to include the Church as a beneficiary or to transfer ownership of the policy to the nonprofit.

Qualified Retirement Plan:

The Church can be named as the beneficiary of a tax-deferred retirement plan, including IRA, 401(k), 403(b), Roth, Keogh, etc.

In-Kind Donations

Donations don't need to be monetary to make an impact. For nonprofits such as the Church, In-kind donations are a gift of goods, services, time, or expertise. When you provide an in-kind donation, you're helping to alleviate some of the stress the

Church undergoes and allows them to use their financial resources in better ways. For example, when you donate your time and expertise, you're allowing the nonprofit to put more money toward their mission instead of additional staff or contractors, help existing staff work more efficiently by taking on some of the load, and bring experience to the organization that might otherwise need to be outsourced. Gifts of goods, like a 15-passenger van, a modern computer, or a large screen TV, free the Church from spending funds on such things when they are needed.

Appreciated Stocks and Bonds

Donating appreciated stocks and bonds to the church can provide a double tax benefit, even while you are living. First, if you give an appreciated stock or bond to the church, you get the full value of the donation to claim as a charitable deduction. Second, you pay no capital gains tax on the appreciated value if you transfer the stock or bond directly to the church. To take advantage of this double benefit, do not sell the asset and give the money later, as the sale will be counted as a capital gain for you, the owner. Instead, give the asset to the church and let the church sell it. Because the church is non-profit, it will owe no tax on the sale. Neither will you, because you didn't sell it. You can claim the full value of the appreciated asset as a charitable deduction. A similar arrangement can be made for assets you would like passed on through your estate.

No matter your situation, there are many types of donations that can be made to the Church to further its ministry and help it prepare for the future.

What if the church changes its name?

If you do decide to use one of these arrangements to give a bequest to the church, please add "or successor of First United Methodist Church of Schuylkill Haven" to the beneficiary section of the document. This will safeguard the bequest in the event of a name change to the church. You may also wish to specify what type of programs or activity you would like the funds to be used for. This can be designated in advance and the church will do its best to honor those wishes.

Prayerfully consider discussing the various options with either your certified financial planner, accountant, or attorney. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) restricts the types of donations that can be made and the types of organizations that can receive them. In order to deduct charitable contributions for tax purposes, the recipient charity must be a qualified organization in the eyes of the IRS. Our Church does

meet the definition of a qualified 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. *Adapted by from Commonbond.org*



Church Prayer Ministry Updates

8 Things to Pray about in Jan – Feb 2024

- 1) Pray for the body of Christ to be built up in the spirit. Pray for our ministry leaders, our discipleship, small group, mission, and outreach teams, and for the missionaries we support.
- 2) Pray for the Mission Team heading to Puerto Rico from January 17-25, 2024.
- 3) Pray for our children, youth, and their families, for strengthening in faith and growth in grace. Pray for revival among the young people of our area, for continued evangelistic fervor in our young people, for a hunger for the things of God.
- 4) Pray for those in authority everywhere, that we may live peaceful and godly lives for the sake of the gospel. Pray for our communities and our sister churches, and for those doing the work of the gospel around the world.
- 5) Pray for the situation in Israel and Ukraine.
- 6) Pray for our seniors, home-bound, and sick.
- 7) Pray for Rev. Portia Kuzanga, her children Nigel and Virginia, and for Stacey Lehman and her daughter Kendall in their care-giving roles.
- 8) Pray for our church, the legal team representing our church, and the leaders of the UMC and GMC.

Weekly prayer team ministry continues.

We continue to recruit prayer teams to pray for one hour a day for one week for the Kingdom of God to come more fully in our church and our community and beyond. You can also pray together in your own homes via video chat or phone call.

Do you have a testimony to share?

Please consider sharing your story as part of our faith-stories series. Contact the office at office@havenfirstumc.org if you want to share.

News from the Finance Committee

Blessings to all of you in this new year.

Thank you all for returning your cards from the Stewardship Campaign last year. \$203,600 representing 46 cards were returned and pledged for next year's budget. This compares to \$283,809 representing 56 giving units returned last year. Several people expressed that they do not feel comfortable pledging, they don't believe in doing that practice, or they can't pledge at this time. But they also said that they will continue to give their tithes and offerings. We appreciated all responses that we received and will use them to guide our planning for future campaigns.

The budget was set at \$452,476 and approved by the Administrative Board. It showed a 3% decrease from last year's budget. We continue to support many missions, programs, and a wonderful staff. If you would like to view the entire budget, there will be a copy in the Finance mailbox in the office by January 1st.

The offering envelopes are in the Comfort Room. Please pick them up or have someone pick them up for you so you may continue your giving. Feel free to use the church's website to give online if you would like to do so.

www.havenfirstumc.org . Click on the **online giving** tab and just follow the prompts. If you need assistance getting started with this, please see me, Adam Kraft, or Don Bergen.

Please continue to fill in your check numbers on your offering envelopes to save our counters valuable time. If giving cash, just write **cash** where the check number would ordinarily go.

In His Service,

Jean Twardzik, Finance Chair

Be a Blessing.

METHODIST WOMEN MINISTRIES UPCOMING EVENTS

Welcome to 2024. We made it and so did you. We hope you will join us in any of our activities, collections, or support us financially. We were able to gift the Puerto Rico Mission Team and another group with \$1,000 thanks to your support of us.

This year:

Jan. 9 – First meeting of the new year. 1 pm in Room 6. We will be planning for 2024 and reviewing past activities. If there is a mission activity that you would like to see done this year, please attend the meeting.

Feb. 13- Meeting 1 pm in Room 6 and then visiting our shut-ins. More in the plans for this day.

March 12 – we are hoping to lead a sing along at one of our nursing homes. We will again be asking you to help collect items for bags for the residents. We will let you know where we will be going and what items we are allowed to give.

We are always looking for ways in which we can serve God's people. If you have any ideas or need help with your project, let us know.





Alpha Update

This fall our Alpha program ministered to approximately 30 people weekly. Some were from First Church, others were people interested in

exploring their faith.

It was a wonderful experience. Alpha consists of 12 sessions, each of which includes a time of fellowship and food, an approximately 25 minute video which looks at a different question about faith, followed by a time of discussion. Twenty-five people were able to attend the “Alpha Day Away” session at the Church of the Good Samaritan in Paoli on November 4th. It was a very special time of prayer and learning about the Holy Spirit.

It was a successful program due to the dedication of the team members who faithfully attended sessions, led discussion and encouraged the guests.

Many thanks to so many of you who provided delicious food for each session – individuals and small groups. The food and the time of fellowship during the dinners was so important for the success of the program.

Lynne O’Connell

Community Lunch

First United Methodist Church 420 Saylor Street Sch. Haven
Lunch is served at noon on the 2nd Saturday of each month

Date	Main Dish	Sides
Jan 13	Meatloaf	mashed potatoes, mixed veggies
Feb 10	Pork & sauerkraut	mashed potatoes, corn, gravy
Mar 9	Ham	potatoes & green beans
Apr 13	Pasta with meat sauce	salad and roll & butter
May 11	Sloppy Joe's	Mac salad, pickled eggs & pickled beets
June 8	Boneless Turkey breast	potato filling, cranberry sauce, corn, gravy
July 13	Hot dogs, hamburgers	baked beans, chips, coleslaw
Aug 10	BBQ chicken breast	baked potato, corn on the cob applesauce
Sept 14	Baked ziti	tossed salad, applesauce
Oct 12	Pork roast	green beans, baked sweet potatoes potato filling, cranberry sauce, corn, gravy,
Nov 9	Turkey	candied yams
Dec 14	Vegetable lasagna	Salad w/hot bacon dressing, roll

Meals are planned ahead of time, but may be subject to change.

Faith Community Nurse's Notes

Healthy Resolutions

Brought to you by Ann Moyer RN, FCN

Each New Year people make resolutions about how they are going to make changes in their life. Many times those resolutions have to do with making healthy living changes.

Seeing a physician, at least yearly, is important for health maintenance. More frequent appointments are necessary if you have any type of chronic illness. Routine blood work, weight checks, cancer screening, as well as a complete physical exam are necessary to detect health problems before they become more extensive.

Physical activity plays a major part in health maintenance. Start with a 10-15 minute walk or other exercise and gradually work up to 20-30 minutes daily. Try to exercise 5 days per week. You can consult your healthcare provider for exercise activities that are appropriate for your age and condition.

Be mindful about what you eat. Half your plate should include colorful vegetables. Be aware of portion sizes. Try to avoid high fat foods and limit salt intake. Keeping a food diary or app helps you understand better how much and exactly what you are eating.

Sleep is imperative to good health. Seven to nine hours is recommended for most adults. You can set an alarm to remind you to go to bed as well as to wake up.

Take time to enjoy yourself. Snuggle with your pet. Hug someone dear to you. Engage in activities that make you happy! Laughter is incredibly therapeutic.

Talk to God! He is a great listener. Enrich your spiritual life by taking time in God's word; take a moment to understand where He is leading you.

How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways.

Psalms 128:5

A NOTE FROM OUR MINISTER OF VISITATION:

MR. BRIAN READING

The following is a list of our homebound or shut-ins members. If I have missed someone, please call me or the church office and add them to the list, or if you know or someone who needs a visit or if someone else knows who that might be, tell them to call.

Marv Berger,
640 Clairmont Ave. ,
Sch. Haven

Gloria Stein, Providence Place, Pottsville

Shirley Yenilaitus, 61 Memorial Dr. Sch. Haven

Carol Wagner, Seton Manor

Helen Knight York Terrace, Pottsville

Elaine Berger, Luther Ridge, Gordon Nagle Trail

Eleanor Gicking, 216 W. Independence St. Apt. 208 Orwigsburg

WEEKLY PRAYER MINISTRY

Dec. 31 - Jan. 6 - Marcy Hudock

Jan 7-13 - Jean Twardzik

Jan 14 – 20 - Ruth Noecker

Jan 21-27 – Darlene Beers &
Ruth Noecker

Jan 28 – Feb. 3 – JoAnn Daum

Feb 4 -10 – Joanne Forbes

Feb 11 – 17 - Marcy Hudock

Feb 18 -24 – Barb Brady & Ruth
Noecker

Feb 25 – Mar 2 - Lisa & Fred
Yuengling



Church Re-Naming Update

Our November Church Name voting has been tabulated. The results of that poll helped to narrow the list of entries to five contenders (in no particular order):

Christ Fellowship Church

Light of Christ Church

Hope Church

The Haven

Haven First (+denominational relationship)

The next step is to vote once again, this time to select the top three (3) nominees.

You will find ballots on the table in the church Narthex (main entry area).

Bear in mind: the way the denominational relationship is named will be decided later.

You are urged to vote for only one of the five names above. The names will all appear on the ballot.

Place your completed ballot in the marked box on the same table as the ballots.

Please be sure to place your name on the ballot to validate it.

We need as much participation from the congregation as possible. An opportunity will be provided during each service on January 13 & 14, 2024.

The deadline for casting this ballot is: **January 14, 2024**



CHURCH RE-NAMING BALLOT				SELECT <u>ONE</u> (1) NAME			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Christ Fellowship Church	<input type="checkbox"/>	Light of Christ Church				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hope Church	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Haven				
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Haven First	+ Denominational Relationship				
Your Name: _____							

NEW YEAR, NEW HEART

Written by: Carey Nieuwhof & April Bergen

So, it's a brand-new year. Here's a question to kick it off. *How's your heart?*

The heart is pretty vital. It's what we live out of really; it's the wellspring of life. Our hearts help us feel the highs and lows, navigate wonder and mystery, keep our imaginations stimulated and our dreams alive.

It is the place where hope and faith live. However, there are times in our lives, where something happens to your heart. *It gets hard. You grow cynical. It stops beating the way it used to.*

The signs of a hardened heart start subtly but eventually become hard to miss: *What used to be meaningful is now mechanical. Everything that used to be fun is now an obligation. Passion is hard to come by. For anything. Including your family. You no longer believe the best about people.* So how do you get your heart beating again? Believe it or not, you can get your heart back in 2024. It will beat again.

Here are a few ways to renew your heart:

- 1. Push past your feelings.** Sure, there are seasons where what's supposed to be meaningful feels mechanical. Do it anyway. Read your Bible. Pray (even if you feel you're talking to the ceiling). Just because you don't feel like it's real doesn't mean it isn't real. Eventually, your emotions will catch up to your obedience.
- 2. Get some rest.** Fatigue and overwork can numb your heart. Get eight hours sleep for a week. Take a day off and do something you love —like going on a hike, exploring a city, or reading a great book. Even God took a Sabbath. If you don't take the Sabbath, the Sabbath will take you.
- 3. Decide to trust, again.** This one is huge. Because most of us are once-bitten, twice-shy, it's so important to consciously re-engage your heart and trust people again. Someone may have hurt you, but not everyone will. Yes, you will be vulnerable, but trust again. God did. And still does. Jesus' arms were wide open when he died, despite the pain of the wounds and the scars.
- 4. Fight isolation.** If 2020 taught us anything, it was that God designed us for community, not isolation. You may want to be alone. Don't. Solitude is used by God. Isolation is used by the enemy. Talk to God. And talk to a friend.

So those are some ideas that can help you care for your own heart. I don't know which method for renewal resonated most with you, but I do know this: your heart *can* become new again. And one day, you'll look back on this season when your kids were young and be so thankful you did what you needed to do to get your heart healthy again. It's not just an investment in them —it's an investment in you.

Create in me
a pure heart,
O God,
and renew
a steadfast
spirit
within me.
Psalm 51:10



Andrey
C. FRANK



Life isn't easy. It's a good thing you don't have to do it alone!

Small group studies return on Wednesday, January 3

6:00 – 7:30 PM for Senior High
7:00 – 8:30 PM for Junior High

Invite someone new! See you there!



Youth are invited to join us for WinterJam 2024 from March 9-March 10, 2024, in State College.

We'll head to University Park on Saturday afternoon to check out the campus and visit the Creamery (YUM!) and then we'll spend our evening at the Winter Jam concert. Artists include Crowder, Katy Nichole, Cain, Lecrae, Seventh Day Slumber, Newsong and a message from Zane Black. Check out: <https://jamtour.com/> for more information. Due to the lateness of the concert, we're spending the night in Lock Haven and plan to return around noon on Sunday.

Cost is \$50 and includes transportation, lodging, food, and the concert. An initial deposit of \$10.00 is due January 3 and the final payment is due February 28.

JOIN US FOR SNOW TUBING!

**Friday,
January 26**

6:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Dress Warm!

Cost is \$15.00



Please help us

TACKLE HUNGER

by supporting FUMC's Youth Group



FOOD DRIVE

Sunday, February 11, 2024
Meet at FUMC at 12:00 PM



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Event	Location	Group	Info
Wednesdays January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 6:00 - 7:30 PM	Senior Talk	FUMC Youth Room	Senior High	
Wednesdays January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 7:00 - 8:30 PM	iGnite Tonight!	FUMC Youth Room	Junior High	"Just Breathe"
Friday, January 26 6 PM - 10 PM	Snow Tubing	Meet at FUMC at 4 PM	Jr./Sr.	Seats are limited. RSVP TODAY! Cost is \$15
Sunday, January 28 10:00- 10:45 AM	Last Sunday Lattes	FUMC Kitchen	Jr./Sr.	Come help us raise funds for camp!
February 4 - March 3	Chocolates for Camp Fundraiser			
Wednesday, February 7 6:00 - 7:30 PM	Senior Talk	FUMC Youth Room	Senior High	
Wednesday, February 7 7:00 - 8:30 PM	iGnite Tonight!	FUMC Youth Room	Junior High	"Just Breathe"
Sunday, February 11 12:00 - 3:00 PM	Tackling Hunger Food Drive	Meet at FUMC	Jr./Sr.	DRESS WARM!
Wednesday, February 14 6:00-8:30 PM	Ash Wednesday	Fellowship Hall Sanctuary		
Sunday, February 18 6:00-8:00 PM	Father Daughter Dance	Walk In Arts Center		
Wednesdays February 21, 28 6:00-8:30 PM	Lenten Study	Fellowship Hall Sanctuary	Jr./Sr.	
Sunday, February 25 10:00- 10:45 AM	Last Sunday Lattes	FUMC Kitchen	Jr./Sr.	Come help us raise funds for camp!

iGnite Youth Ministry Chocolates for Camp Fundraiser

Order Deadline: Sunday, March 3
Contact a member of iGnite to order today!

\$10 for 1/2 pound \$18 for a pound




Milk & Dark Chocolate

- Pretzels**
- Peanut Butter Eggs**
- Coconut Cream Eggs**
- Buttercreams**
- Peanut Rolls**

Delivery Sunday, March 24

**Candy comes boxed
locally from C&C Candies**

Thank you for your support!

Dear Church Family,
Thank you for being the gracious, loving, supportive folks that you are! Your generosity towards our Embrace Grace Mission truly warms my heart. Our young Mamas and their babies have been embraced by Christ's love through all of you! The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed... (Proverbs 11:25 MSG).
In Christ's  Love, Ann Moyer

I want to say thank you so much! I couldn't even find the words as I opened everything. I was so overwhelmed, so emotional. The kindness of you all and your church family...people whom I don't even know. I can't believe the kindness extended to me and my family. That people thought of us so much & have never even met us!
Love, Kayla

Dear FUMC Family,
Thank you for the baby shower and the many gifts. I am amazed by your generosity, and I am refreshed and encouraged by your love for others. You are shining God's light brightly.
Sincerely, Hannah Noecker

Greetings My Precious Church Family,
Once again, I am blown away by the generosity and LOVE that was showered on our beautiful Embrace Grace Moms. I am not surprised, yet I never want to take anything granted. Thank you not just for the practical gifts that were given for their babies, but for the eternal gift of LOVE and SUPPORT! Those are gifts that will never end up in a landfill and forgotten. Those gifts have positively impacted their lives as well as the lives of their babies. That blessing will continue to break the chains of bondage as they spread the LOVE you have shown them to others, which is the great commission! I am blessed and I am a blessing to people. I dispense good to others. GENESIS 12:2 My sincerest gratitude for your blessing. ~Cindy Dros

I feel so grateful and blessed to have worked closely with our Embrace Grace moms over the past 4 months. You, the congregation, have shown the love of Christ to these young moms through your prayers, gifts, and support. Without you, our Baby Shower and the whole program would not have been so successful. Thank you so much for being the hands and feet of Jesus. Many times, the young ladies would say you were "so generous" even though "they don't even know us". You showed them unconditional love, which they truly need. I feel so blessed to be part of such a wonderful church family. Thank you again for all you do to make others feel welcome and loved.
Blessings, Nancy Kraft



On behalf of the Embrace Grace team and our Brave mamas, we send a sincere thank you for your incredible generosity. Words cannot express how you touched our hearts. Our mamas are truly grateful for your prayers, and your expressions of love to them & their babies.
Blessings, April Bergen

Thank you to all the wonderful people who showed up, supported, and helped with the Embrace Grace program. We are truly blessed to have such a great community of people and a wonderful church.
Thank you and Merry Christmas.
~Adalynn and Cheyenne



Youth Corner! Service, Cookies and Caroling – OH MY!!!

So, what's been happening in Youth Group since our last newsletter? Quite a bit!

In November, we continued in our various studies (Middle School with John 10:10 / Senior High with DarkRoom Faith). But as Christmas rolls around the corner (yes, it's here whether you did all your shopping or not), both groups have delved into the behind-the-scenes facts about the Nativity story and the songs that portray them. What was it like to be Mary in those times as you think of 'Mary Did You Know'? Was the nativity scene as silent and calm as the 'Silent Night' song portrays? How was Jesus adored by those around that time, both Jewish and non-Jewish; as we sing 'Oh Come, All Ye Faithful'?

In the mix of these discussions, we integrated a series of videos portraying an 'Eyewitness' account of central protagonists of this amazing period of events. From Isaiah (who prophesied of his coming) to Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, to a Bethlehem tax collector, King Herod, and an angel. The senior high group received scheduled videos through the month of December leading to Christmas, but you can also watch these to by going onto the Rightnow Media site and search for Eyewitness Bible Series – Christmas.



Harvey Cedar Youth Reunion Event – Though illness plagued some of our group, we didn't allow Satan to remove our promise to our youth in the participation through service and fun. Our day started with leaf raking support at Bubeck Park for a few hours. Though a little chilly and windy, we overcame both factors and cleared up a section near the stage area. They worked hard and were thankful for rest once we got back to the church.

Then we kicked back with pizza before departing to Camp Hill for the youth gathering at the Christian Life Assembly Youth Center. After some gametime and team building in the gym, we gathered in the worship center for worship. The goal of the overall Spirit Week event (in which we were in small portion involved) was having 'spiritual discipline in being with and like Christ' in our lives.



Finally in December, we spread good cheer to our shut-ins and searched for the Grinch at our Youth Christmas Party. We went caroling on December 3rd, providing a cheerful voice and tasty cookies to some of our shut-in congregants and those at nursing homes.

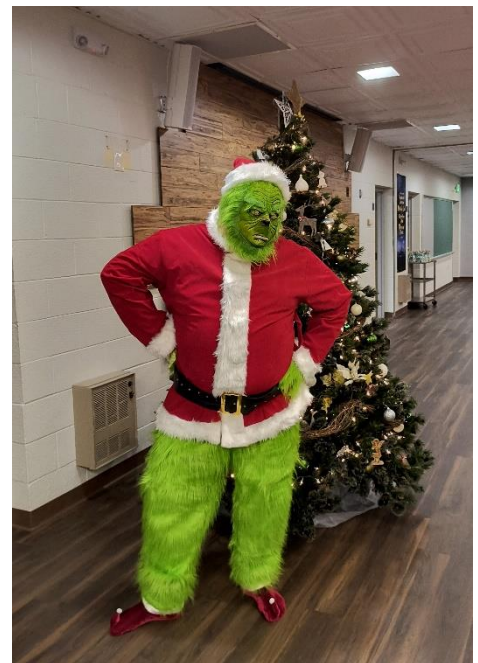


On December 17th we gathered one last time as a group before going on break for the season for a Christmas party with a twist. We needed to find the Grinch as we worked through puzzles in our escape rooms to celebrate Christmas with food and fun.



As we gather back in January, middle school will kick back into gear with “Just Breathe,” a study to help overcome being overwhelmed. Senior high group will talk about purpose and responsibility in line with God’s will. We also plan to go snow tubing (let it snow!) and get ready in March to go to Winter Jam at State College. And we can’t forget about getting ready for the Lenten season in service and study.

In His service,
David Williams / April Bergen



ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE 2024

COMMITTEE	DAY OF WEEK	MONTH	COMMITTEE	DAY OF WEEK	MONTH
Trustees 7:00 p.m.	Second Monday	January 8 April 8 July 8 October 7	Missions 7:00 p.m.	First Tuesday	January 3 (?) April 2 July 2 October 1
Discipleship Council 7:00 p.m.	Fourth Monday	January (?) April 22 July 22 October 28	Youth Council	As needed during regular meeting times	
Worship 6:00 p.m. Lay Leadership 7:00 p.m.	Second Monday	February 12 May 13 August 12 November 11	Fellowship	Not meeting	
SPRC 7:00 p.m.	Fourth Monday	February 26 May 20 (27 is Memorial Day) August 26 November 25	Communications	Meet as needed or via email	
Finance 6:30 p.m.	Second Monday	March 11 June 10 Sept. 9 December 2	Community Relations	Meet as needed	January 8
Administrative Board 7:00 p.m.	Fourth Monday	March 25 June 24 Sept. 23 December 16	Christian Advisory 7:00 p.m.	Third Monday	January 15 April 15 July 15 October 21

Please contact the church office if you have any conflicts with dates, times or need to reschedule a meeting or with the need to schedule any additional meetings. Thank you.



FUNDRAISER

***BENEFITS FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
SCH HAVEN PUERTO RICO MISSION TRIP 2024***

Great Holiday Gift Idea

First United Methodist Church Coaster

FIRST United Methodist Church Coaster

Price - \$10.00 each or buy 3 for \$30.00, and get 1 FREE

PLEASE HELP US WITH THIS FUNDRAISER BUY ONE OR MORE

FOR YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

-----**ORDER FORM**-----

Name _____ **Quantity** _____ **Paid** _____

Phone number _____ **Pick up Date** _____

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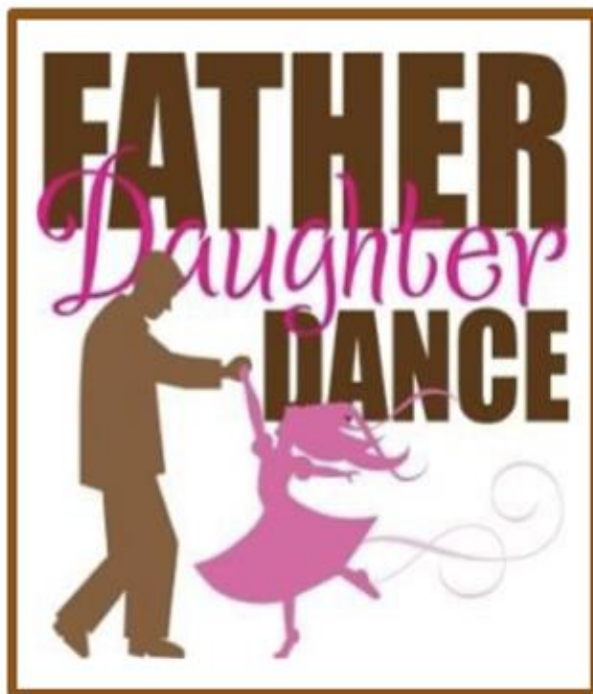
MOMS ON MISSION

MOM

empowering ♥ discipling ♥ encouraging

A new small group just for moms of little ones!
Tuesdays starting January 2 ♥ 6:00 PM - 7:15 PM
FUMC of Schuylkill Haven, 420 Saylor Street, Schuylkill Haven
Childcare will be provided ☺

For more information, please call (570) 385-3941



Sunday, February 18
6:00 - 8:00 PM
Walk-In Art Center

Adults are \$10
Girls are \$8
Call 570-385-3941 to
reserve your tickets

420 Saylor Street
Schuylkill Haven, PA.
17972
Phone: 570-385-3941
Fax: 570-385-6842
office@havenfirstumc.org
www.havenfirstumc.org



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The Circuit Writer
January / February 2024

First United Methodist Church
"Our Mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world"

In Person Sunday Service at 9:00 A.M. & Saturday Night at 6:00 P.M.
10:45 A.M. Coffeehouse Worship Service
You can also join us online at: www.havenfirstumc.org Or
like us on Facebook and join us there.

Our Vision: Welcoming, Empowering, Reaching Out Ministers:

**Everyone of us:
Pastors and Staff:**

Dr. Christopher Fisher
April Bergen
JoAnn Daum
Marcy Hudock
Adam Kraft
Ann Moyer
Cynthia McClelland
Brian Reading
Julie Saunders
Pamela Setlock
David Williams

Senior Pastor
Dir. Of Children's Discipleship and MS Ministry
Office Manager
Sexton
Treasurer
Parish Nurse
Organist/Music Director
Minister of Visitation
Choir Director
Church Secretary
Director of Sr. High Ministries