Pastor's Pen

What is happening in the United Methodist and Global Methodist Denominations?

Dear Congregation,

Here is a quick report on happenings in the United Methodist and Global Methodist denominations.



The 2024 General Conference of the United Methodist Church will be held from April 23 to May 3 in Charlotte, North Carolina. This is the first UM General Conference since 2019, as the Covid Pandemic caused the postponement and then the cancellation of the May 2020 session.

The Global Methodist Church, the new conservative Methodist denomination officially launched in May 2023, will hold its first convening General Conference from September 20-26, 2024, in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Massive changes have occurred in the UM denomination since 2019, including the departure by disaffiliation of more than 7600 out of ~31,000 U.S. congregations. A much smaller number have left internationally, partly because the Judicial Council – the denomination's top court – ruled against allowing overseas churches to use the 2019 Discipline's Par. 2553 disaffiliation procedures.

Disaffiliations across the US were uneven, as some annual conferences made it easy to leave and others made it almost impossible. Most US disaffiliated congregations and clergy were conservative, with the largest numbers (and usually most easily released) coming from the south and southwest. As a result, the US part of the UMC has become both smaller and more liberal than it was before.

Delegate representation at the UM 2024 General Conference is expected to reflect this new reality. Even though Africa now has more members than the US and is much more theologically and socially conservative, about 56% of delegates will still come from the US, and about 32% from Africa. This imbalance is due to the much larger number of clergy in the United States. Delegates are divided half lay, half clergy, and apportioned by regional membership ratios of the two categories. The remainder of the delegates will mostly represent Europe and the Philippines. Another problem that may make the imbalance even worse: for a variety of reasons, many overseas delegates still have not been able to obtain visas.

The UM General Conference will wrestle with several big issues, including 1) an attempt to regionalize the denomination so each major geographical area can have its own discipline, ordination standards, and membership standards; 2) an attempt to liberalize the denomination's longstanding opposition to LGBTQ practice and inclusion; and 3) an attempt to reinstate and extend a new disaffiliation process that would include international churches, also making exit provisions more fair and uniform.

Petitions previously submitted by members who have already departed by disaffiliation are to be removed from the agenda. Regionalization will occupy significant attention. Even if passed by the GC, a regionalization plan requires constitutional changes, and so could only become official if it receives 2/3rds approval from all annual conference delegates world-wide. Regionalization would result in different geopolitical areas having different ordination, membership, and moral standards. It would likely result in a church which is even more disunited and rapidly declining than it already is. It is an open question whether delegates will ignore the deeper problems of having become a smaller and poorer church without any theological unity at its heart.

Meanwhile, the Global Methodist Church has gone from 0 to over 4000 member churches in less than a vear. Many more disaffiliated UM churches may join after they have time to see what the GMC is all about. The new denomination is preparing for its official and first convening General Conference in September. Delegates from all over the world will meet in Costa Rica to celebrate and adopt its first Book of Discipline, with a commitment to classic Wesleyan Christianity, traditional evangelical traditional biblical moral theology, international and ethnic equality, equal rights for women and men, and a focus on taking the Gospel to the world and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

First United Methodist Church of Schuylkill Haven is part of group of 50+ churches in Eastern Pennsylvania seeking to exit the United Methodist denomination by means of a lawsuit, represented by the NCLL (National Center for Life and Liberty). The suit is still unfolding and is in the discovery phase. Our eyes will be on what happens at both 2024 General Conferences, as will our prayers.

If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact me for additional information.

Yours in the love of Christ! Pastor Chris Fisher

Worship & Preaching Schedule March-April 2024

Sunday Worship: 9:00AM Live & Online 11:00 AM Coffeehouse Worship in Fellowship Hall

Saturday Worship: Live at 6:00 PM
Theme:

The Book of Revelation

Coffeehouse Theme: "Understanding Revelation"

Mar. 3	3 rd Sunday in Lent
	9:00 AM w/ Holy Commun

11:00 AM Coffeehouse w/ Love

Letter to the Church in Pergamum

Mar. 10 4th Sunday in Lent
To the Church in Thyatira

Mar. 17 5th Sunday in Lent
To the Church in Sardis

Mar. 24 Palm Sunday
To the Church in Philadelphia

HOLY WEEK

Mar. 28 7:00 PM Holy Thursday Service Tenebrae Service & Holy Communion

Mar 28-29 Good Friday Prayer Vigil 9:00 PM Thursday to 7: 30 PM

Friday

Feast

Mar. 31 Easter Sunday

w/ Holy Communion

To the Church in Laodicea

11)

Rev. 4: The Throne room of Heaven

April 14 2nd Sunday After Easter Rev. 5: The Scroll and the Lamb

April 21 *3rd Sunday After Easter* Rev. 6: The Four Horsemen

April 28 4th Sunday After Easter Guest Speaker:

Communion Offerings

March 3 Mission TBD April 7 Pastor's Discretionary Fund

Lent Series 2024



Our 2024 Lent series continues with the dual themes: The Festivals of Israel & The Spiritual Disciplines:

Wednesdays: 6:00 pm supper; 7:00 pm worship.

March 6: Feast of Trumpets / Fellowship

Mr. Dwight Dros

March 13: Day of Atonement / Prayer

Mr. Doug Esposito

March 20: Feast of Tabernacles/Booths / Rest

Mr. Brian Reading

Our preachers are bringing us inspiring and informative teaching each week. Please come out for good teaching, food, & fellowship!

Lent concludes with Holy Week, March 24-30.

March 24: Palm Sunday worship

March 28:Holy Thursday Tenebrae Worship Service The Tenebrae commemorates the passion and suffering of Christ with music and gradual darkness as candles are extinguished throughout the service. Includes celebration of Holy Communion/the Last Supper.

March 28-29: *Good Friday Prayer Vigil* (starts after worship on Thursday, runs through Friday at sundown (~7:30 pm).

March 30: Holy Saturday – 6:00 pm worship

March 31: Easter Sunday!

6:49 AM – Sunrise Service

9:00 AM – Traditional Worship

11:00AM - Coffeehouse Worship

Church Prayer Ministry Updates

8 Things to Pray about in March – April 2024

- 1) Pray for unity in the body of Christ. Pray for our ministry leaders, our discipleship ministry, small groups, benevolence ministries, outreach teams, and for the missionaries we support.
- 2) Pray for our children, youth, and their families, for strengthening in faith and growth in grace. Pray for the leaders of our young people's ministries. Pray for revival among the youth of

- our area, and for continued evangelistic fervor in our own young people.
- 3) Pray for those in authority everywhere, that we may live at peace 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.
- 4) Pray for the situation in Israel and Ukraine.
- 5) Pray for our seniors, home-bound, and sick.
- 6) Pray for Rev. Portia Kuzanga, her children Nigel and Virginia, and for Stacey Lehman and her daughter Kendall in their care-giving roles.
- 7) Pray for our church, the legal team representing our church, and the leaders of the UMC and GMC.
- 8) Pray for the 2024 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, which meets in Charlotte, N.C., from April 23-May 3.

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.

METHODIST WOMEN MINISTRIES UPCOMING EVENTS



Mar. 9 – We will be serving the Community Lunch that day. Ham, green beans and applesauce are on the menu. We would love any assistance since we will be short some people. Come out and join us. We'll be there at 10 am. We will meet afterward to discuss our April Sing a-long.

April 9- Tues. 2pm Sing a-long at Providence Place, Pottsville. We'll meet at

church at 1 pm on April 2nd to pack gift bags for residents. We are looking for groups or individuals to help us gather items for the bags – chap sticks, small packages of tissues, small lotions, hard candies, toothbrushes, etc.



Also, if you have any make up bags that you may have received from Clinique



or other makeup companies, we'd like to make use of them instead of paper bags for the women. We will need approx. 30 of each item. Let Jean know if you would like to help or can provide some items. Phone- 570-345-5061.

Results of the January 2024 Church Re-naming Vote

First of all, many thanks to everyone who voted in this seemingly long process that began last year.

Following the first request, there were some 70 names submitted for consideration. The re-naming committee compiled that list of names and researched their legality and/or possible conflict with churches in our surrounding communities. That narrowed the available choices to 30.

The first vote was held on those 30 possible choices. The results did not point to any particular favorite, making it somewhat difficult to narrow the field. The committee decided to try again. Emphasis was placed on selecting three names from those available with the most favored name first, while second and third choices would be names that could be acceptable.

That vote allowed the committee to narrow the field to 14 candidates. That vote was conducted in Fall 2023 with a November deadline. However, the turnout was somewhat disappointing and there were two write-in names.

It was decided to hold another vote in January. Ballots were published in the church newsletter and available in the Narthex. It was also decided to have a voting time during the worship service, hoping to impress upon everyone present the importance of participation.

This last time, we had much better participation, with 86 ballots cast. No name received a majority of votes, but three names had significantly more votes than the others. Therefore, we have chosen those top three (3) names for the next, and hopefully final, ballot. The process will be complete when we have a name that receives a true majority of votes.

Three copies of the latest ballot are included with this newsletter. Ballots will also be available in the Narthex. Please use one ballot per person. Spouses should submit separate ballots. Deadline will be March 31, Easter Sunday. Vote for 1 and only 1 name, and write your name on the ballot.

Please pray about your selection and let God guide your decision for our new church name. Results will be submitted to the Administrative Board for their consideration and action.

John Fatora, Re-naming committee chairperson

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 Pasta with meat	potatoes & green beans
Apr 13	sauce	salad and roll & butter
May 11	Sloppy Joe's Boneless Turkey	Mac salad, pickled eggs & pickled beets
June 8	breast Hot dogs,	potato filling, cranberry sauce, corn, gravy
July 13	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

Brought to you by Ann Moyer RN, FCN

Arthritis

Arthritis is not a single disease. It is a term which refers to joint pain or joint disease. There are more than 150 types of arthritis. Common symptoms of arthritis include swelling, pain, stiffness, and decreased motion in the affected joints. The cause of some forms of arthritis is unknown, but it may be the result of disease, infection, genetic defect, injury,or overuse. It affects over 50 million adults in the United States and is the nation's leading cause of disability.

Osteoarthritis is caused by the wear and tear of the joint over time or because of overuse. Rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and scleroderma are caused by the body's immune system attacking the body's own tissue. Gout is caused by a build up of crystals in the joints. These are some of the more common forms of arthritis.

Women are more likely to develop arthritis. Age is also a factor, the older you are the more likely you are to have arthritis. Hereditary plays a role as certain genes are linked to some types of arthritis. These are all risk factors which you can not control.

Risk factors which may be avoided or changed include being overweight, joint injury, infection, and occupational. Being overweight may lead to damaged knee joints leading to osteoarthritis. A joint which sustains an injury is more likely to develop arthritis. An infection in a joint can lead to reactive arthritis. Jobs that involve repeated squatting and bending can lead to arthritis.

If you are experiencing joint pain see your health care provider who will do a thorough medical history and physical exam. Lab tests and diagnostic imaging may be ordered to distinguish a proper diagnosis.

There is no cure for arthritis but the goal for treating arthritis is relieving pain and inflammation as well as improving joint function.

Treatments may include antiinflammatory medication, creams, and ointments. Joint injections of hyaluronic acid. Physical therapy and exercise may increase range of motion and strengthen muscles surrounding the joints. Sometimes braces and splints are implemented or assistive devices such as crutches, canes, walkers to help keep stress off of the affected joints and improve balance.

Surgeries to aid in treatment of arthritis include, arthroscopy, replacement, or fusion depending on the amount of damage and area affected.

If you are affected by arthritis, self care is important. Appropriate amounts of activity and rest are needed. Different treatment modalities may need to be tried or combined to determine which works best.

Information from Mayo Clinic, Arthritis Foundation and Johns Hopkins Medicine website

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

March 3-9: Liz Wallace

March 10 – 16: Darlene Beers &

Dot Murphy

Marcy 17-23: Marcy Hudock

March 24-30: Ruth Noecker

March 31-April 6: Lisi Fisher

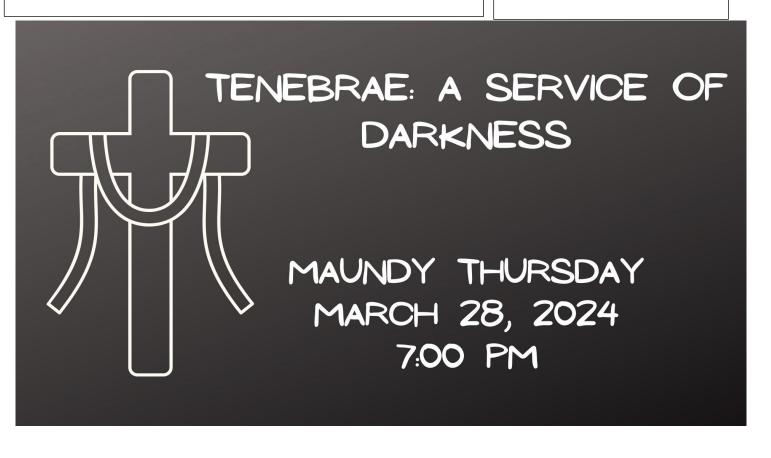
April 7-13: JoAnn Daum

April 14-20: Cindy & Dwight Dros

April 21-27: Liz Wallace

April 28-May 4: Marcy Hudock









Hey families,

You're invited to join us for an Easter Scavenger Hunt to help you engage with Jesus while also spending quality time together this Easter.

Grab your bible, check out www.biblegateway.com, the You Version app, or message us if you want one.

Each week we'll post a "clue" to our Facebook page and at www.havenfx.org.

After you find each "clue," complete the task at hand & submit your photo for a chance to win a basket of Easter goodies!

Winners will be chosen at random from those who share a photo of their completed clue for the week.

Entries must be shared before the next clue arrives (Wednesdays at 6 AM).

Email <u>abergen@havenfirstumc.org</u> with any questions or to submit your photos!



empowering



discipling



encouraging

A small group just for moms of little ones!

Tuesdays from 6:00 PM – 7:15 PM

FUMC of Schuylkill Haven, 420 Saylor Street, Schuylkill Haven

Childcare is provided ©

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



Interested in making a difference in the lives of our littlest blessings and

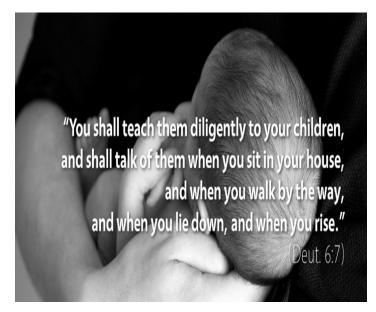
youth? Come talk with April or Lisi today about being a...

- Childcare Volunteer
- Small Group Leader

One of our little friends is collecting pop tops for the Ronald McDonald House. Please save the tops from soda cans and other pop tops. Tops will be accepted through the beginning of July.



How to Set Your Family Values



Every family has a rhythm.

For some families, morning is crazy.

Dinner may happen all together, or you may have one parent who works at night. Or sports or other activities may have you running in different directions.

Bedtime for some families is, well, crazy.

In other words, your family may look different than another family because of schedules or basic wiring.

But if you look closely at what your family does and when, you may find there are consistent things that happen every day or week.

You get up.

You are on the go. You eat.

You sleep.

The rhythm in your home sets your family values.

It establishes what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

It determines what gets talked about and what doesn't get talked about.

When you create a rhythm, you establish priorities.

Whether it's mealtimes, car rides, or during bath time routines, you can leverage that time to have a meaningful connection with your kids.

Morning Time (any kid, any age): Start your child's day with an encouraging word—even if they are grumpy or don't respond well.

Feeding Time (for babies): Use this time to reflect on what's most important.

Cuddle Time (for preschoolers): Pray for your baby, toddler, or preschooler.

Bath Time (for preschoolers): Talk about Bible stories and the character of God.

Drive Time: Use this time to connect with your kid/teen and get to know what's going on in their life and what's important to them.

Meal Time: Talk about faith and character. **Bed Time:** Pray for your elementary-age kid, preteen, middle schooler, or high schooler. **Their Time:** Be accessible when your high schooler wants to connect—whenever that is.

Your family may have other times as well. For example, families with kids with special needs may even have additional times like therapy or doctor visits.

On hard days or in hard seasons, family rhythms help your kids recenter on what is true—like how much you love them, how brave and strong they are. Kids need to know that, even when life is hard, there will be showers and chores and Tacos on Tuesday.

Whatever your family rhythm looks like, see if there's a way you can look at things you are already doing, and do one simple thing to connect with the heart of your child instead of merely getting through it. In the process, you'll build connection, faith, and character.

Youth Corner! Sliding into a new year of festivities!

2024! A new year of fun, service, and discussion!

We started the new year with "Just Breathe" for overwhelmed youth in the Junior High Group. Reading this devotional, adults could also benefit from this at times. The Senior High Group started with finding purpose in life with biblical and modern-day heroes of faith, then readjusted to discussions about current event issues that affect them.



We changed directions in February as we started the Lenten season by having the youth prepare and serve the Ash Wednesday dinner on February 14th (yes – also Valentine's Day). So, we prepared it with Love.

Speaking of service, though January may have been mild with just helping put away the Advent church dressings, February (the shortest month) was more involved. Before

we served the Ash Wednesday dinner, we were out in the community on the 11th (yes – Super Bowl Sunday). We called it Souper Bowl as we reached out to the community for food items (at Redner's) for the food pantry; and helped assist another community organization in reaching out to our neighbors. Thanks to the many donations, we received over 300 items for the Vineyard! The following Sunday was a special day for fathers and daughters (Father/Daughter Dance). The youth boys supported the event by helping with setup and tear down.

Now the months of January/February were not without some fun. Though the nice warm weather felt great in January, it threatened our planned event on the 26th as we went to Blue Mountain Ski Resort for some Sonic Snow Tubing. Though it was a bit foggy, it added to the atmosphere pizzazz as we sledded down the slopes.

In March, we will go to State College for Winter Jam. In April, we invite

other youth groups to join us for our Duty or Design Event on the 14th. This is a choice of Nerf War (Duty) or glamour and crafts (Design).

We are also making plans for summer camp at Harvey Cedar Bible Conference in Harvey Cedars, NJ in July. Parents of campers should plan to join us on May 1st for our important parent meeting.

In His service, David Williams / April Bergen



NEW YOUNG ADULT GROUP

Hey young adults! A young adult small group is starting soon!

The young adult small group, led by the Holy Spirit, seeks to provide spiritual nourishment, inspiration, and guidance to adults ages 18 to 30 something. The co-ed small group, which includes

those that are single, married, widowed, divorced and with or without children, encourages proper spiritual and moral principles to empower Christians to live as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The goal of the group is to establish a community of young adults who want to form healthy friendships in a safe environment and learn how to live life in Christ Jesus in a deeper way.

Our kick-off date starts March 3, 2024 at First United Methodist Church and will continue each week, from 10:15 am to 11:00 am. We will be discussing events and outings that we all can go to for fun and exciting adventures. Bring your valuable ideas! There is also a Coffee house worship service that starts at 11:00 am if you are interested but not required.

There will be a few individuals, like Cindy Dros and Pastor Chris Fisher that will attend to support the group, but the group will be led by Adam Kraft.

God Bless you all and we really hope to see you there on March 3rd!

FATHER / DAUGHTER DANCE

Father Daughters Dance 2024 at the Walk In Art Center was a complete success. We had 91 Fathers, Grandfathers, Uncles, Brothers and Daughters that had a wonderful time dancing "Under the Stars". The men looked so handsome in their attire, and the girls looked beautiful in their fancy dresses and outfits. It is fun to be a helper at this event to capture all the <u>cute</u> memories of the night. Thank you to all that helped organize, decorate, set up, and clean up. Especially would like to thank our senior high youth group boys who did the heavy lifting. It takes many hands to make this night a success!

Blessings, April Bergen, Linda Olsen, Stacey Lehman, and Kristy Kraft

January 8, 2024

Dear Congregation,

A happy and blessed New Year to you.

I write to you on behalf of the Schuylkill Area Council of the Yokefellow Prison Ministry. I know you are busy so I will be as brief as possible.

Our Area Council is seeking volunteers to assist us in prison ministry. The goal of YPM is to reach at-risk youth and to minister to the spiritual needs of those in prison and those soon to be released with he Gospel of Jesus Christ. We currently have a small, dedicated group of people who serve in the above capacities but given time restraints and the demands of daily life, our Council needs more people who have a calling for such ministry.

Our request to you is to ask anyone in your parish who you think might be led to prison ministry and in turn point them to us. We need drivers (for those of our volunteers who cannot drive), folks who can lead a genderappropriate Bible Study, those who wish to correspond with an inmate in either the state system or the county prison, and folks who would covenant to pray for this work.

We can provide training and mentoring by our current staff and would be thrilled to work with anyone who is able to meet the criteria for prison ministry. Would you please assist us in this vital work?

Please feel free to call or email me at any time with questions. Currently, I am filling in for our Area Council Director, Cliff Balson, who is ill. Hopefully, he will be able to return to his post soon.

Yours in Jesus' service,

Rev. John Wallace

First United Methodist Church

Pottsville, PA

570.622.8140

Jcw@reagan.com

David Kriner

YPM Volunteer Coordinator

570.640.1853



EASTER FLOWERS

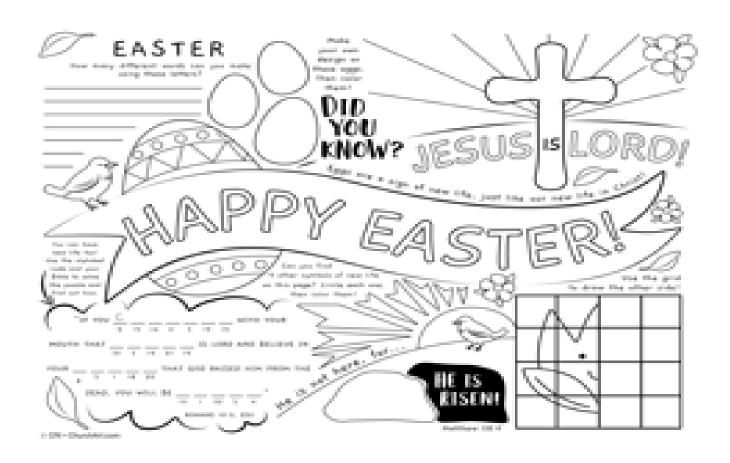
Lilies, Tulips or Daffodils will once again beautify the Sanctuary on Easter Sunday. If you would like to donate a plant as a gift in honor of, or in memory of a loved one, please fill out this form and place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church office. The deadline to order flowers is $March\ 10^{th}$.

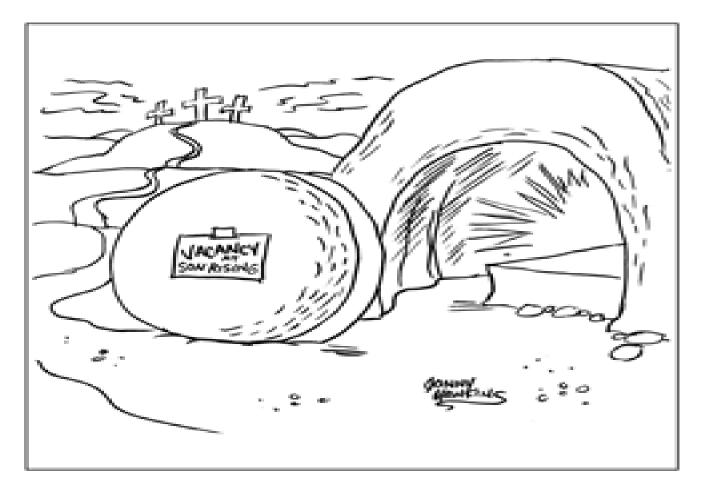
Please see back of form for flower prices and choices. All checks or cash should accompany this order form – checks should be made payable to First UMC, earmarked "Easter Flowers"

YOUR NAME:
n Memory of:
n Honor of:
You may take your plants home after the Easter Service. Please make arrangements to get your plant at this time.
I will take the flowers Please see that a shut-in receives them.

Flower	Price	Quantity	Amount paid
Easter Lily	\$15.00		
Tulip	\$12.00		
Daffodil	\$12.00		
Hyacinth	\$12.00		
Mum Plant	\$18.00		
Pansy Planter	\$14.00		
Azalea Plant	\$28.00		

Please note that highly fragrant flowers may be placed in the Narthex or along the sidewalk leading into the church so that our members who may have sensitivities to the strong fragrance may not be affected. Thank you for your kind understanding.





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

March / April 2024

Fírst 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. 11:00 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 **Senior Pastor** April Bergen Dir. Of Children's Discipleship and MS Ministry JoAnn Daum Office Manager Marcy Hudock Sexton Adam Kraft Treasurer Ann Moyer Parish Nurse Cynthia McClelland Organist/Music Director **Brian Reading** Minister of Visitation Julie Saunders Choir Director Pamela Setlock **Church Secretary David Williams** Director of Sr. High Ministries