



First News First

Opening Doors with Christ, One Another and Our Neighbors

From the Pastor's Desk...

The Windshield > The Rearview Mirror

At our annual church conference this fall Rev. Barry Robison, our district superintendent, shared a quote that I love: “There’s a reason why a windshield is bigger than a rearview mirror. Where you’re going is so much more important than where you’ve been.”

When driving down the road, we should be looking forward most of the time and only glancing back us to change lanes, turn, or look for danger behind us. If we spend too much time staring at the rearview mirror, we’ll miss out on the beauty ahead of us. Worse, we could get lost or even end up in a ditch!

What’s true in driving, is also true in our lives. Many of us spend too much time looking back and not enough time looking ahead. We reminisce about happier days that are now behind us. We live as if the road out ahead of us will never match the beauty and opportunity of the road we’ve already traveled. Or, we revisit past hurts or relive past decisions and mistakes, letting them hold us back from enjoying the road ahead. The rearview mirror is close to the windshield, so it’s easy to get distracted by it. But, the rearview mirror is also much smaller than the windshield. What we see in it is not nearly as clear and expansive as what we see through the windshield in front of us.

Jesus invites us to remember the past and learn from the past, but not to get stuck there. He goes before us, inviting us to treasure the good gifts of the past. He also invites us to let go of the hurts and failures we’ve experienced along the way, and to experience His healing and forgiveness. “Don’t worry,” He says, “I’ve got this.”

Matthew recalls the scene in which Jesus calls his first disciples:


As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him.
Matthew 4:18-20

When they heard the call of Jesus, “Follow me,” Simon Peter and Andrew immediately left their nets on the shoreline behind them so that they could follow Jesus into the future that lay ahead of them. Now, instead of fishing in the sea, they would become fishers of people.

If you’re looking for a New Year’s resolution, there isn’t one better than this: “Follow me!” As you begin 2023, I encourage you to take your next step along the path of discipleship. Keep your eyes focused, looking through the windshield out ahead of you. See Jesus there, showing you the way to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love others as you have been loved by God. Remember, the windshield is so much bigger than the rearview mirror. Why? Because where you’re going is so much more important than where you’ve been!

Together with you as we travel into the new year,
 Pastor Denny


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No Ordinary Life: Living the Faith Day by Day

Followers of Jesus who live their faith day by day are anything but ordinary! Jesus says that we are a light shining forth for the world to see (Matthew 5:14). Our lives are evidence that our faith is true and our God is at work. As we begin this new year with a new sermon series, we'll focus on some of the most famous passages in Matthew's Gospel and catch a vision of the life Jesus calls us to live, not just now and then, but every day.

January 8	"The Water's Fine" Holy Communion	Matthew 3:13-17
January 15	"Ask, Seek, Knock" Rev. John Shellenberger, guest preacher	Matthew 7:7-12
January 22	"Come, Follow Me"	Matthew 4:12-23
January 29	"Blessed Are"	Matthew 5:1-12
February 5	"You Are"	Matthew 5:13-20
February 12	"But I Say"	Matthew 5:21-37
February 19	"Listen to Him"	Matthew 17:1-9

Adult Discipleship Opportunities

Whether you're just beginning to explore faith, growing as a disciple or becoming a fully devoted follower, there's always something new to learn on our journey with Jesus. First Church is here to help by providing a variety of offerings for your next faithful step:

- **Daily Bible Reading Plan**

God speaks to us through His Word, and our daily Bible reading plan is customized to go along with our weekly sermons! You can find the plan in our weekly worship bulletin and on our church website (fumchurch.com).

- **Sunday School | Sundays, 9:45 a.m.**

Looking for learning and relationship-building on Sunday mornings? Look in January's worship bulletins for details on all new studies happening during Sunday School!

- **Growth Groups**

We encourage all adults to build long-term, Christ-centered relationships with one another through small groups. While we have several different kinds of groups at First Church, here are a few that meet for the purpose of learning and spiritual growth:

- ◇ **Men's Bible Study | Mondays on Zoom, 6:45-8:15 p.m.**

Study the book of Matthew to learn about the character and lifestyle of those who are a part of God's kingdom. If interested, contact Ken Guise (guiseken100@gmail.com).

- ◇ **Wednesday Men's Group | First and Third Wednesdays, 8-9:30 p.m.**

We often tell people what we are against, instead of what we're for. Our current study, "Know What You're FOR" by Jeff Henderson, presents a better strategy for life. Join us at the home of Barry Eaton on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Contact Barry (theaton5@verizon.net) for more details.

- ◇ **Women's Book Study Group | Wednesdays, Jan. 11, 18 and 25, 1:30-2:30 p.m.**

All women are invited for tea and discussion of the book God's Guest List, in the church

library. In her first nonfiction book, best-selling author Debbie Macomber opens our eyes to see how God uses “guests” in our lives to support, teach, lead and love us. Contact Tina Eaton (adultministry@fumchurch.com) if interested.

Wonderful Wednesday – Expanded! | Feb. 8-March 15, 5-7 p.m.

After a great kickoff last fall, First Church’s popular Wonderful Wednesday program will return again 2023, and it’s not just for kids! Children, youth and adults are all invited to participate in this family fellowship and learning program. The winter/spring session will run for six weeks (with March 22 and 29 reserved as snow dates). The program begins with prayer and a family-style dinner in Fellowship Hall, followed by small-group learning. This session’s theme, “Growing with Jesus,” focuses on Jesus’ journey and what his death and resurrection means for each of us. Mark your calendars now and look for registration information later in January!



Passion Play Update

First Church is currently planning for the return of a reimagined Passion Play in 2023! Stay tuned for more details later in January about how we will continue to help First Church experience the story of Jesus’s final days and invite our community to learn about His love and sacrifice. If you have questions, please contact Katie Knorr, Lisa Aronson or Tina Eaton.

Women’s Book Study Group | Wednesdays, Jan. 11, 18 and 25, 1:30-2:30 p.m.

Join other women of First Church in the Church Library for tea and discussion of "God’s Guest List: Welcoming Those Who Influence our Lives," by best-selling fiction writer Debbie Macomber. In her first non-fiction book, Debbie opens our eyes to see how God uses “guests” in our lives to support, teach, lead and love us. Purchase the book on your own (available in paperback or ebook) and start reading before the first gathering. Contact Tina Eaton (adultministry@fumchurch.com) to RSVP.

From the Library

Happy New Year! Of course, I am writing this in December, and someone was kind enough to mention that Christmas is just THREE weeks from today. This article might be very short because I am having difficulty staying in this chair instead of running around prepping for the holidays. But, a couple of weeks ago, I ordered more books for the library. I’m thrilled to tell you about some of the new titles we have coming.

Kathy Harris is finishing up her “Deadly Secrets” series. Ironically, her third book, *Deadly Conclusion*, will be on the shelf in January. *Deadly Commitment* and *Deadly Connection* are already available, but you don’t necessarily need to read them in any order. The main character in this third book, Keely Lambert, trains German shepherds as search and rescue dogs. While training Titan, she is called to search for little Connor Wells, lost in Beaman Park in Tennessee. She is aided by Beau Gardner who is also in law enforcement and Connor’s uncle. After finding Connor, Keely discovers something else half-hidden in the dirt: her father’s military dog tags. The same father that disappeared more than twenty years ago. Determined to find out who murdered her father and aided by Beau, Keely begins to dig into the case. As the pair get close to the answer, the killer tries to stop them by kidnapping Keely’s mother, killing Beau’s father, and setting Keely’s kennel on fire. But when Keely herself is kidnapped, nothing will stop Beau from finding her before there is another deadly conclusion. Reward yourself for surviving the Christmas season with this very suspenseful book!!

A newer author, but quickly becoming a favorite, is Julie Klassen. *The Sisters of Sea View*, first in the “On Devonshire Shores” series, finds Sarah Summers and her sisters destitute after their father’s death. Determined to stay together and not lose the family home, they open their home as a guest house. The sisters assumed they would run the house for elderly invalids, but instead find themselves with a house full of fashionable gentlemen. Viola has some scars on her face and usually wears a veil to cover them. She decides to work outside the house and put her earnings toward a maid to cover her duties. One of her jobs is to read to a wounded officer in his thirties, and this new task opens some hidden emotional scars. Can she and the officer heal together? If this series holds



true, the each book will generally feature a different sister, but they will all exemplify the power of friendship, loyalty, love and new beginnings. I know it will be hard to wait for the next installment.

If you were too busy to read our Christmas collection in December, they are still available. The timeless book by Franklin Graham, Operation Christmas Child is a great read for all seasons. If you want to read about the impact the Christmas boxes make in the lives of children, the people who create each box, and the volunteers who distribute them, read this. It is a testimony of God's power in the simplest gift.

See you in the library!

~Donna, Pam, Sue, Mary, Deb, Marge, and Annette



Start Planning for Summer Camp Today!

Now is the time to start planning for Summer 2023! Visit the Camp and Retreat Ministry website (susumcamps.org) to see all the offerings for next year. As registrations open, keep an eye out for information on early bird discounts, sibling discounts and First Church half-payment assistance.

Please pray and ask God how He would like you to use your gifts for Him this year! Will you:

- Attend a camp, retreat or event,
- Volunteer as a Dean, Nurse or Counselor,
- Be a prayer partner for a camper,
- Provide financial aid to support campers,
- Help with a work day at one of the sites,
- Become a summer employee at camp, or
- Spread the joy of camp to a prospective camper, volunteer or employee?

If you have any questions about the Camp and Retreat Ministry, please contact Deb Noss (sdppp@msn.com or 717-697-5982) or Amy Ortiz (amy.ogden7@gmail.com). You may also contact the church office (office@fumchurch.com or 717-766-4611).

Thank you for your ongoing support of this life-changing program!

Praying



January Prayer Focus – Hygge Prayers

Although wintertime means being indoors more, it comes with a peaceful feeling. The Danish call this feeling hygge, which is a “quality of coziness and warmth in relationships that brings about a feeling of contentment or wellbeing.” Embracing time in prayer can help us accomplish this inner sense of winter happiness, whatever the weather! This January, we encourage you to create a warm and cozy space dedicated to prayer and spending time with God, who loves you more than you even know! Find a comfy chair, grab a soft blanket and a warm beverage, light a candle and turn on some soft music.

Make sure to set a time each day for your “hygge prayers.” This will bring you joy as you feel the warmth of His love on the cold winter days. Visit the prayer station under the balcony for winter devotionals and journals you can use to enhance your special time with the Lord.

God of creation, thank you for the beauty of winter - for snow, icy window panes, evergreen trees, warm coats, sledding, and hot cocoa. Let us enjoy Your creation in all of its glory, this winter and always. Amen.

Joy in the Morning | Next Meeting Monday, Jan. 23, 1 p.m.

If you live with chronic pain or ongoing health challenges, we invite you to join in sharing discussion and supportive friendship with this spiritually-focused small group. We meet Monday afternoons once a month from 1 to 2 p.m. Terry Ketrow and Janice Bowen co-facilitate, drawing upon readings and devotionals. Contact Janice Bowen (717-766-4611, ext. 112 or wecare@fumchurch.com) for more details.

United Methodist Conference Women’s Retreat | March 10-11

The Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church invites all women to the Seeking God First Retreat at Best Western in Lewisburg (7701 West Branch Highway). This year’s speaker is Anita Keagy, founder of JoyShop Ministries. Her mission is to inspire people to prioritize spending time with God every day through Bible reading and prayer. For registration information, visit the conference website at susumc.org/sus-uwif/. If you have any questions, please contact Lori Hoffnagle, United Women in Faith First Church president at l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com.

Passionate Worshipper



Spotify Playlist

On the first Wednesday of each month, we release a new monthly playlist on Spotify. Search for First UMC of Mechanicsburg, and click on the playlist titled *Where Words Fail, Music Speaks*. For non-Spotify users, click this link to listen to the playlist: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5rbHEYEfHei97cUI8rjwNJ?si=qzOB7cTVRg6iAU1L4BY2hA>



Dedicated Missionary



Isaiah 61 | Jan. 18

Isaiah 61 Ministries serves the needs of the homeless in Dauphin County through a variety of services including a soup kitchen, clothing bank and life groups. First Church members help serve meals to the homeless in downtown Harrisburg on the third Wednesday of each month. The next volunteer opportunity is Wednesday, Jan. 18, at 6:30 p.m. If have any questions or would like to carpool, please contact Tiffany Holland (tholland1967@gmail.com).

Volunteers In Mission

Thinking of going on a mission trip or wanting to plan a trip? If so, the Volunteers in Mission team will be happy to support you and provide free training! United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) is the short-term mission agency of the United Methodist Church. A UMVIM volunteer is any United Methodist who engages in outreach as a member of a United Methodist Church in service of their neighbors near and far. For more information on upcoming trainings or mission trips in the Susquehanna Conference, visit the website (susmb.org/vim/).



Cru Mission Presentation | Jan. 22, 9:45-10:45 a.m.

Thanks to the generous support of First Church and others, Matt and LeeAnn Herring have served on staff with Cru for the past seven years. LeeAnn works at West Chester University, training and equipping college students in evangelism, discipleship, and studying the Bible, while also working as the Finance Administrator for her team. Matt runs Cru’s internship program for the Northeastern U.S., which sends people around the world to share the Gospel. Join us in the multipurpose room to hear an update on Matt and LeeAnn’s ministry and how God is at work on college campuses around the U.S. and the world!

Relationship Builder



January Hospitality Tip

At the start of a new year, we often make resolutions that focus on how to improve our lives, but wouldn't it be even better to make a resolution to help improve someone else's life? Instead of being inward focused, let's strive to be outward focused by serving others, welcoming others, praying for and with others, and inviting others in 2023! Don't neglect to show hospitality to strangers (Hebrews 13:2). Instead, let's give this new kind of resolution a try!



Joy in the Morning | Monday, Jan. 23, 1 p.m.

If you live with chronic pain or ongoing health challenges, we invite you to join in sharing discussion and supportive friendship with this spiritually-focused small group. We meet Monday afternoons once a month. Terry Ketrow and Janice Bowen co-facilitate, drawing upon readings and devotionals. For more information, contact Janice Bowen (wecare@fumchurch.com) or 717-766-4611, ext. 112.

Men's Breakfast | Saturday, Jan. 7, 7:30 a.m.

Join other First Church men for good food and light-hearted fellowship on the first Saturday of each month at Brothers Restaurant (705 Gettysburg Pike, Mechanicsburg). Please contact Barry Eaton (theaton5@verizon.net) to RSVP.



Soupy Saturday | Jan. 28, 9 a.m.

If you enjoy cooking, join us in Fellowship Hall to make some delicious soup and muffins to share with a friend, neighbor or church member at home! Contact Janice Bowen (717-766-4611, ext. 112 or wecare@fumchurch.com) with any questions.

Covered in Love Knitting Group | Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m.

The Covered in Love Knitting Group has returned to in-person meetings in the Fellowship Hall. Feel free to join if you love to knit, crochet or do some other kind of crafty work. Questions? Contact Judi Buddenbaum (717-697-2524) or (ljbuddenbaum@verizon.net) with questions.

Community Dinner | Feb. 19

The community dinners continue at Buhrig's Gathering Place in Mechanicsburg. This dinner is a collaborative event with other local churches to bless our downtown community with a free meal, music and games. Over 80 people attended the last dinner in October!



Broad Street Dinner | April 27

First Church will once again participate in making and serving a meal to families at Broad Street Elementary. Keep an eye out for more details closer to the event!

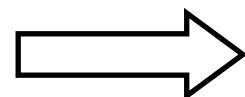
Widow/Widowers Fellowship | Jan. 10, 11:30 a.m.

This group will dine at Snappers Restaurant. If you plan on attending, please notify Bonnie Guyer (717-766-0145). Transportation will be provided upon request.

First Church Women's Retreat | Feb. 3-5

Join us for our 2023 retreat, "Anxious for Nothing" (based on the best-selling book by Max Lucado), at Mount Asbury Retreat Center. We will walk through an in-depth study on Philippians 4:4-9 and reframe the way we see fear and uncertainty. Choose a one-day option or a full-weekend experience! Find more details and register at the display outside the church library or on the Church Center app. If you have questions, please contact Patti Herring (familyzeke@verizon.net).

Or fill out the registration on the next page





2023 Women's Retreat
February 3 to 5, 2023

Mt. Asbury Retreat Center, Newville

Join us for a weekend filled with fellowship, fun, food and faith! Program starts on Friday evening and concludes on Sunday before noon. Hotel-like accommodations and 4 meals included.

New for this year, a One Day Option Available!

See website here: sites.google.com/fumchurch.com/womenretreat2023/home

.....
Please return registration with payment (payable to FUMC)

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Medications: _____ Emergency Contact _____

Allergies or Diet Restrictions _____

Send payment to Patti Herring, 613 Lavina Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 **OR** via the Church Center app (link is available on the Retreat website, listed above). You may also place payment and registration in the Scrip Box (located near the couches).

Early Bird Registration due by **12/31/2022 is \$145**. After that date, fee will be \$150. **All registrations due by 1/21/2023**. Financial assistance available upon request.

___ Full weekend early bird payment enclosed \$145

___ Full weekend payment enclosed (if paying after 12/31) \$150

___ One Day (Saturday) payment enclosed \$35

Is this your first retreat? Yes ___ No ___ Any special concerns? _____

Questions, contact Patti Herring at familyzeke@verizon.net or 717-795-9721

FINANCIAL REPORT

Through Nov 30, 2022 92 % of year

	General Fund	
2022 budget	\$ 925,985	
Expected income-YTD	\$ 854,755	(92% of budget)
Actual income -YTD	\$ 789,450	(85% of budget)
Actual expenses-YTD	\$ 818,805	(80% of budget)

Receipts through the end of November were running short of our year-to-date estimate. As in prior years, we expect the Christmas season means financial support will pick up in December with strong attendance and members catching up on giving to meet their annual commitments.

Expenses year-to-date through November were favorable to the budget, but a bit more than our giving for the year, so far. The staff at First Church and its volunteers continue to be mindful stewards of the gifts of our congregation and are continuing their work to lead our congregation in opening doors to others for the Glory of God.

We have made a significant number of enhancements to our worship spaces during this past year. The most recent improvement is the new carpet, sound desk and fresh paint throughout the sanctuary. We are especially grateful for the significant contributions we have received to ensure the sanctuary and other improvements could occur in 2022.

We also want to thank all of you who participated in our Consecration Sunday and have submitted 2023 pledge cards to help us plan our outreach and service to the Lord in the coming year. We look forward to serving the Lord and continuing the mission of First Church, opening doors to celebrate the Christmas Season and spreading God's Word again in the New Year. Happy New Year and blessings to you and your family.

Change for Water

Water is the foundation of our very lives. Yet the CDC estimates only 2% of the population in Sierra Leone has access to clean, readily available drinking water! Help us support the Well Drilling Fund for Sierra Leone by dropping your loose change (or even paper bills) into the blue Change for Water bucket located at the collection center by the church library stairs. 100% of your donations help provide training and dig wells for schools and communities in need.

Little Free Pantry Collection — Thank You!

Thanks for your support of the Little Free Pantry during Advent! As of mid-December, we collected nearly 400 pounds of food to share with our community! We appreciate your support of this small but mighty ministry. Nonperishable items are always welcome, including small toiletry items. If you have questions about the Little Free Pantry or would like to make a contribution, please contact Lori Hoffnagle ([717-732-6430](tel:717-732-6430) or l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com). Thanks for your generosity!



Altar Flowers

We have a few dates open for altar flowers in 2023. If you would like to place flowers in honor or in memory of a loved one on July 16, Aug. 6, or Oct. 15, please contact Gretchen Nesmith ([717-319-4009](tel:717-319-4009) or gnesmith@comcast.net).

First Church Mission Moments...



Have you ever needed to feel needed or appreciated? Have you ever wondered what it looks like to actually BE the hands and feet of our Lord? These are just some of the things you see and feel when you volunteer to serve those in need with Isaiah 61, a ministry based out of Harrisburg.

April and Angel Ocasio started **Isaiah 61** as a way to give back. At one point in time, they both found themselves in the exact situation of those that they now serve. Isaiah 61 offers hot meals, clothes, toiletries and prayer to all in need and focuses on treating everyone with dignity and compassion, regardless of their circumstances.

Each month, a team from First Church volunteers to serve a meal with Isaiah 61. The people we serve are always very appreciative of our presence and willingness to help, pray or just lend an ear. We're always amazed by God's perfect provision each time we meet to serve meals. Whether we serve donated pizzas from a local shop, leftover food from a funeral luncheon, or the wonderful cooking efforts of volunteers from April's church, we always have enough to go around! In fact, we can usually offer seconds or provide a spare meal to go for our friends who are hungry.

Sometimes when serving, it's easy for us to wonder what circumstances led to their homelessness. However, we know that this is not for us to worry about. God simply called us to show compassion. He has abundant and unending love for each person who comes through the meal line, and for all members of the homeless community.

Helping at Isaiah 61 is such a humbling and rewarding experience, and it's a great honor to love our neighbors and act as God's hands in this way. We'd love for everyone to experience the joy that comes with helping others through Isaiah 61. You're always welcome to join us downtown on the third Wednesday of each month. If you can't help in-person, there is always a need a great need for donated items. During the colder months, shoes, socks, coats, blankets, tents and sleeping bags will be extra special blessings to these individuals.



- Tiffany Holland, First Church Member and Isaiah 61 Volunteer



Daily Bible Readings January 2023

Sunday, January 1	Worship "The Star"
Monday, January 2	Isaiah 60:1-6
Tuesday, January 3	Ephesians 3:1-12
Wednesday, January 4	Matthew 2:1-12
Thursday, January 5	Acts 10:34-43
Friday, January 6	Matthew 3:13-17
Saturday, January 7	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, January 8	Worship "The Water's Fine"
Monday, January 9	Psalm 40:1-11
Tuesday, January 10	Psalm 49:1-7
Wednesday, January 11	John 1:29-42
Thursday, January 12	I Corinthians 1:1-9
Friday, January 13	Matthew 7:7-12
Saturday, January 14	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, January 15	Worship "Ask, Seek, Knock"
Monday, January 16	Isaiah 9:1-4
Tuesday, January 17	Psalm 27:1-9
Wednesday, January 18	I Corinthians 1:10-18
Thursday, January 19	Matthew 4:1-11
Friday, January 20	Matthew 4:12-23
Saturday, January 21	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, January 22	Worship "Come, Follow Me"
Monday, January 23	Micah 6:1-8
Tuesday, January 24	Psalm 15
Wednesday, January 25	I Corinthians 1:18-25
Thursday, January 26	I Corinthians 1:26-31
Friday, January 27	Matthew 5:1-12
Saturday, January 28	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, January 29	Worship "Blessed Are"
Monday, January 30	Isaiah 58:1-9a
Tuesday, January 31	Psalm 112:1-10

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Organist/Accompanist:

Karen Philp

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Timeless Connections:

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pvogl@timelessconnections.org

We would like to thank our First Church family for your prayers, food, visits and cards. We appreciate the kindness that was shown to us. Jonathan is in remission! God is good, prayers are answered!

Love,

Eve & Jonathan Kellenberger



Special Birthdays



- Pat Hutter.....January 3
- Judy Wertz.....January 12
- Leroy Weaver..... January 15
- Leta Rohlmeier.....January 23
- Don Coldren.....January 24



FIRST NEWS FIRST

Editors: Dawn Fisher
Jennifer Myers

The **deadline** for submitting articles for the **February 2023** issue is **January 15**

Early submissions always appreciated!