



First News First

Opening Doors with Christ, One Another and Our Neighbors

From the Pastor's Desk.....

“To Everything There Is a Season”: Part 2

In our February newsletter I wrote about seasons. Just as seasons change in the natural world, life moves with ups and downs, joys and sorrows, beginnings and endings. We can't stop seasons from happening, but, with God's help, we can adapt, adjust, and even grow through every season.

In this issue, I want to shift focus to seasons in the life of the church. We are now in the season of Lent, which began with Ash Wednesday and continues for 40 days (not counting Sundays) that lead up to Easter. Lent is a season for deepening our relationship with God. In this newsletter, you will discover numerous opportunities for your spiritual growth during this Lenten Season, like our current sermon series and small group study, “In the Footsteps of Jesus.”

While we mark time in the church according to the church seasons, churches also go through seasons that we have no control over. Seasons of gain and loss, birth and death, planting and harvesting. For every church, a new season began in March 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past three years, we have all experienced loss. Loss of being able to see one another when we couldn't gather in person. Loss of beloved members of our church family that have died. Loss of attendance at in-person worship and at many programs and activities even after we returned to the building. Loss of members, some of whom have left for other churches. Others who are still connected, but much less active. Loss of staff members who retired or relocated. Last year we even lost the use of our sanctuary for six months after a portion of the ceiling fell!

While reflecting on our experiences of loss, I sometimes reminisce about how things were before this COVID season. But, of course, we can't go back. We couldn't have stopped what the season ushered in by the pandemic brought any more than we can stop the coming of spring! But, as you've shown, we could adapt; we could adjust; and we could even grow through this season together. With God's help and a cooperative spirit, you have been open to change and seized new opportunities.

- You have shown amazing love and care for one another, especially for those who have grieved the loss of loved ones. You have undergirded First Church, its people and its mission in prayer.
- You have welcomed new people warmly. You have extended your reach with online worship, social media, and our church website. You have also offered in-person worship experiences and built relationships in classes, small groups, and other activities throughout the week.
- You have employed new staff members, who have joined your team to support the day-to-day operations of the church and to provide creative leadership for church ministries and outreach.
- You have given generously to support our mission and ministry, and to fund special projects like the beautiful renovation of our sanctuary and the Green Space Project.
- You have made us more visible in the community, supporting our growing Little Friends Preschool, holding events in the new Green Space, keeping the Little Free Pantry stocked, and being involved in mission with your time and talent, and your resources.

Over the past three years, we have experienced more loss than any of us could have imagined. But, I am joyful and hopeful because of all you have accomplished in this most difficult season. I'm with the apostle Paul who could say of you what he wrote to the church in Philippi long ago: I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)


Yours in Christ,
Pastor Denny

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Adult Discipleship Opportunities

Whether you are just beginning to explore faith, growing as a disciple or becoming a fully devoted follower, there is 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 while you are at church on Sundays? Check out our weekly worship bulletins for details on new studies happening during Sunday School in February!

- **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 specifically for the purpose of learning and spiritual growth:

- ◇ **Small Groups for Lent** – Join us for a six-week, small group study that goes along with our sermon series for Lent. This study, “In the Footsteps of the Savior” by Max Lucado, takes you on an unforgettable journey as you follow Jesus through his life on earth. The videos will give you a chance to see the Holy Land and God’s heart for humanity in a brand new light. Contact Tina Eaton (717-766-4611, ext. 104 or adultministry@fumchurch.com) if you are interested in participating!

- ◇ **Wednesday Men’s Group** – Meet with other men of First Church on the first and third Wednesdays from 8 to 9 p.m. Currently studying “Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World” by Andy Stanley. Contact Barry Eaton (theeaton5@verizon.net) for more details.

From the Library

March always seems dreary to me. There are no major holidays, unless you’re Irish. Lent also adds a bit of somberness to the month as we remember Jesus’ last days on earth. People with seasonal affective disorder can feel more depressed before spring breaks through. So, I was looking for a feel-good book to buy and write about, and I think I found a great one. You will have to read it, and let me know if I am right.

The book is the debut of author Sharon Mondragon and is titled *The Unlikely Yarn of the Dragon Lady*. Ms. Mondragon writes what she knows about. She is the long-time facilitator of her church’s prayer shawl ministry and is a knitting instructor at a local yarn shop. In this book, she touches on a problem many churches face — a dwindling congregation and how the pastor handles it. The pastor boots the long-standing knitting group out of the church and tells them to knit in the mall as a way to connect with people and spread God’s love in an unlikely place. At first, the women of the Heavenly Hugs Prayer Shawl group are furious at this move and wonder how they can make prayer shawls in such an unholy place. But soon, strangers begin to approach them with their questions or troubles, and a whole new ministry is born. Reviewers say they have laughed, cried and learned so much while reading this book, and they could not put it down. Additionally, there is a pattern for a prayer shawl included and a free Bible study available to be used with the book.



If you like light mysteries without a lot of gore, we have a new series of books donated to us called The Scottish Bakehouse Mysteries. College roommates reunite to open a bakery in Loch Mallaig, Michigan. Their bakery, Bread on Arrival, is in an old Victorian mansion, which gives customers the desire to sit for a spell, sip tea, nibble on shortbread and talk about the latest mysteries of the town. When not baking, these fifty-year-old women solve murders, setting out on new adventures and proving it is never too late to begin again. Though the books are numbered, you don't need to read them in order. Though I am more a coffee drinker than a sipper of tea, learning about Scottish treats calls to me.

If neither of these books interests you, stop in the library and let one of our volunteers help you find just the right book for you!

See you in the library,

Pam, Donna, Marge, Sue, Mary, Debra and Annette

In the Footsteps of Jesus: A Passion Play Experience

For 30 years, First Church has performed a Passion Play where children, youth and adults share the story of Jesus leading up to his death and resurrection. After a three-year hiatus, we are happy to announce that we will be carrying on this beloved tradition in a new way! "In the Footsteps of Jesus" will take the audience along for Jesus' journey from Palm Sunday, to the cross, to the resurrection.

We are looking for children, youth, and adults who are interested in performing as actors (speaking or silent), musicians, and other important volunteers behind the scenes. Rehearsal times will depend on your part (providing flexibility to fit your family's schedule), ranging from Sunday mornings (during Sunday School or KidsWorship), Sunday evenings (for youth during youth group), or another time to be determined. Larger speaking roles or dances will require more rehearsals than non-speaking roles.

There will be one mandatory rehearsal on Sunday, April 2 (Palm Sunday) after the 11 a.m. worship service, with a mealtime before the run-through. The performance will take place on the evening of Thursday, April 6. If you, or your children or youth are interested in participating, please register as soon as possible on our Church Center app or on our website at fumchurch.com/footsteps. Please contact Katie Knorr (kidscount@fumchurch.com) with questions.



REGISTER NOW FOR SUMMER CAMP!

**GROW IN FAITH // MAKE LIFELONG FRIENDS
ENJOY NATURE // HAVE FUN**

SPECIAL OFFERS:

Early Bird Discount - Save \$25 if you register by May 1.

Sibling Discount - Register the one at full price, and additional siblings receive a \$15 discount.

Invite-a-Friend Gift - Invite a friend who has never been to camp and receive a special gift after they register.

Financial Assistance - First Church will pay half of your camp fees!



Visit suscrm.org to register and see a complete list of 2023 camps!

Keep an eye out for details on info sessions in the coming weeks!

TO LEARN ABOUT:

- Financial assistance for campers
- Details on discounts
- What to expect at camp
- Becoming a prayer partner
- Volunteering as a camp dean, nurse or counselor
- Working at camp
- Campsite workdays

**CONTACT OUR FIRST CHURCH
CAMP COORDINATORS!**

**DEB NOSS: SDPPP@MSN.COM
AMY ORTIZ: AMY.OGDEN7@GMAIL.COM**

Praying Follower



March Prayer Focus – In the Footsteps of the Savior

During Lent, many of us are engaged in the study, In the Footsteps of the Savior. Even more of us are engaged in worship and in hearing the sermon series that goes along with this study. In addition, we ask that during this special season of preparation, you use the Bible reading plan in your daily devotion and prayer time. This reading plan has been specially prepared to align with the study and sermon series to help you in your 40-day journey with Jesus. The Bible reading plan can be found on our church website (fumchurch.com) under the resources tab.

Good Friday Community Prayer Walk | Friday, April 7

This Good Friday, we want to cover our Mechanicsburg community in prayer. In the past, we have worked with several area churches to walk and pray over homes, businesses and organizations in our community. Stay tuned for more information. If you have questions or want to help plan the Prayer Walk, please contact Lori Hoffnagle (Lhoffnagle@yahoo.com).

Dedicated Missionary



Greeters and Ushers

We are looking for more greeters and ushers to serve on Sunday mornings. These important members of our welcoming ministry arrive at church about 30 minutes before the service starts and greet those arriving with a smile and a warm hello. If you want more information or can volunteer for one Sunday a month, please contact Judi Buddenbaum (ljbuddenbaum@verizon.net).

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=qzOB7cTVR-g6iAU1L4BY2hA>



Central Pennsylvania Handbell Festival | Saturday, April 1, 4 p.m.

Support our Handbell Choir and several others at this beautiful concert! This free event is and will take place at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Mechanicsburg.

Passionate Worshipper



Isaiah 61 Homeless Ministry | Wednesday, March 15, 6:30 p.m.

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. If you 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? 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 VIM website (susmb.org/vim/).

Peanut Butter Egg Fundraiser

The Christian Fellowship Sunday School class is taking orders for peanut butter eggs! This year, a half dozen peanut butter eggs costs \$10. To place your order, sign up on the forms outside the sanctuary after worship or contact Nancy Routh ([717-258-8954](tel:717-258-8954) or mwrner@aol.com). Place your order by Sunday, March 19, and pick it up on Saturday, March 25 between noon and 3 p.m. or on Sunday, March 26, after worship. Thanks for your support!



2023 Youth Mission Trip

On the night of Dec. 10, 2021, residents in Mayfield, Kentucky, were awoken by one of the worst tornadoes in U.S. history. The tornado ripped through Kentucky and the surrounding states, though Mayfield was hit hardest. Two years later, disaster relief work is still occurring. First Church Youth are currently planning a summer mission trip with Adventures In Mission to serve in Mayfield alongside the local church and other volunteers. Our youth mission trips are designed to help students to experience service and missions in a variety of ways and in a variety of places. Wherever we go and whatever we do, we get to impact the community and people we are serving by extending God's love. We also prioritize working with local churches and local service providers to assure that our help create long-lasting benefits for those with on the ground beyond our stay, throughout the year. We are excited for the opportunity to serve through disaster relief and incredibly grateful to you, our church family, for helping to make these experiences possible for our students. If you are a rising 8th grader-12th grader and interested in participating on the team, please sign up through Church Center by March 16. This trip requires both commitment and participation in the months before our trip, as well as for the week of July 1-7.

Relationship Builder



February Hospitality Tip

As we enter the Lenten season each year, we often think about what we can give up. This year, let's look through the lens of hospitality and think about what we can give back! In Romans 12, the Apostle Paul lists several behaviors that mark a true follower of Jesus, including "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor." We often think of outdoing one another as a competition, and usually, we compete in order to win. But here, we compete to help others win! We are called to respect and value everyone we come in contact with, which we show through how we treat them. So, let's give back this Lenten season as we welcome, respect and value our visitors at First Church!

Men's Breakfast | Saturday, March 4, 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 (theeaton5@verizon.net) to RSVP.



Widow/Widowers Fellowship | Tuesday, March 14, 11:30 a.m.

This month, the group will dine at Red Lobster. If you plan on attending or need transportation, please contact Bonnie Guyer ([717-766-0145](tel:717-766-0145)).

Joy in the Morning | Next Meeting Monday, March 20, 1-2 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. Terry Ketrow and Janice Bowen co-facilitate, drawing upon readings and devotionals. For more information, contact Janice Bowen (717-766-4611, ext. 112 or wecare@fumchurch.com).

Connect with KidsMinistry!

Did you know First Church Kids has a Facebook page? We upload videos, family activities, resources and more for families to use each week. Check out at facebook.com/groups/fumckids or reach out to Miss Ka- (kidscount@fumchurch.com) for more information.



Third Friday Food Trucks Return in 2023!

The food trucks are back for another season starting April 21! Each month, we welcome six to seven gourmet food trucks that serve a variety of delicious and fun foods. This is a great opportunity to meet our neighbors in a fun and casual atmosphere. If you are interested in lending a hand with setting up or taking down the tables and chairs, we'd love to have you! Contact Lori Hoffnagle (l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com) for more details

Broad Street Dinner | Thursday, April 27, 2023

First Church will once again collaborate with local churches and Broad Street Elementary to make and serve a meal to the families at the school. We will contribute homemade hamburger barbecue, as we have done in the past. We will need a total of 60 pounds of barbecue to serve approximately 300 people. Please consider making a batch of BBQ using the simple recipe below. If you have questions or would like to volunteer in any way, please contact Lori Hoffnagle at (l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com). Thanks for your support of our Broad Street community!

Ingredients:

- 5 lbs. ground beef (80% lean or higher)
- 1/2 cup of white vinegar
- 1/2 cup of brown sugar
- 3 and 3/4 cups ketchup
- 1/4 cup yellow mustard

Directions: cook beef and drain fat. Mix in other ingredients and heat thoroughly.



Men's Retreat | Saturday, June 3

Save the date for our 2023 Men's Retreat at Mt. Asbury! Stay tuned for more details.

Greeting Cards to Share!

Want to send well wishes for a happy birthday or speedy recovery to a friend? Stop by our greeting card display in the lobby outside the multipurpose room and help yourself to a card! If you'd like ideas of church members who would appreciate receiving a card, please contact Janice Bowen (wecare@fumchurch.com or 717-766-4611).

Indoor Pickleball | Tuesdays, 6-8 p.m.

Whether you're a single player or double, whether you play pickleball frequently or have never played before, we invite you to join us for some fun and games in the multipurpose room! Contact Janice Bowen (717-766-4611, ext. 112 or wecare@fumchurch.com) with questions.





Financial Report

Through January 31, 2023
8% of year

General Fund		
2023 budget	\$900,886	
Expected income – YTD	\$75,073	(8% of budget)
Actual income – YTD	\$75,401	(8% of budget)
Actual expenses – YTD	\$66,737	(7% of budget)

As we wrap up our report for the first month of 2023, please note the current month’s receipts and expenses are in line with our average monthly budget expectations. We are grateful to all our congregation and guests who continue to support the work of First Church, as we serve the Lord by opening doors for all to know salvation through Jesus. We continue to ask for your prayers, your presence and your support through service and gifts to the mission of our First Church family. We look forward to having you join us as we look forward to the Lenten season, serving the King together.

Ham Loaf Dinner | Saturday, March 11, 4-6:30 p.m.

Support First Church missions projects and enjoy a delicious dinner! Reserve your tickets ahead of time by signing up on one of the papers by the sanctuary doors or by calling Marley Ann Schmick (717-697-2233). In addition to purchasing a meal, you can support this event by volunteering to help in the kitchen, serving food, or providing a dessert. To sign up as a volunteer or for more information, contact Kathie Bittenbender.



Handbell Choir R&K Sub Fundraiser

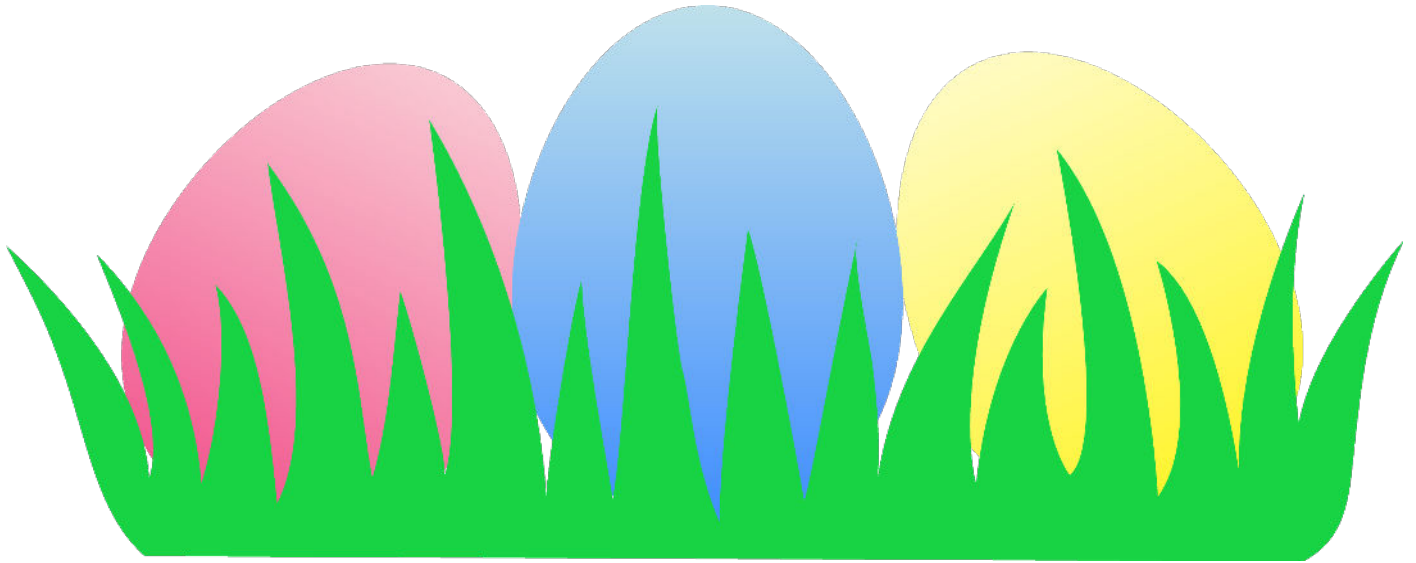
The Handbell Choir will once again sell subs and pretzel sandwiches that will be delivered on Palm Sunday. Be sure to order yours from a choir member!

Change for Water!

Water is the foundation of our very lives. Yet, according to CDC estimates, only 2% of the population in Sierra Leone has access to clean, readily available drinking water! Help us to 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 in the Narthex in front of the gym. Donations from December totaled \$32.05. 100% of your donations will be used to provide training and dig wells for schools and communities in need.

Little Free Pantry and Little Friends

Thanks for your continued support of our Little Free Pantry! This month, we’re especially grateful to our Little Friends Preschool for collecting items for the pantry during the month of February! We’re also thankful for our incredible pantry helpers, Sandy, Pam and Kathy, for always keeping the pantry well-stocked. This small (but mighty!) ministry makes a huge impact in our community. Donations of 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 feel free to contact Lori Hoffnagle (717-732-6430 or l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com).

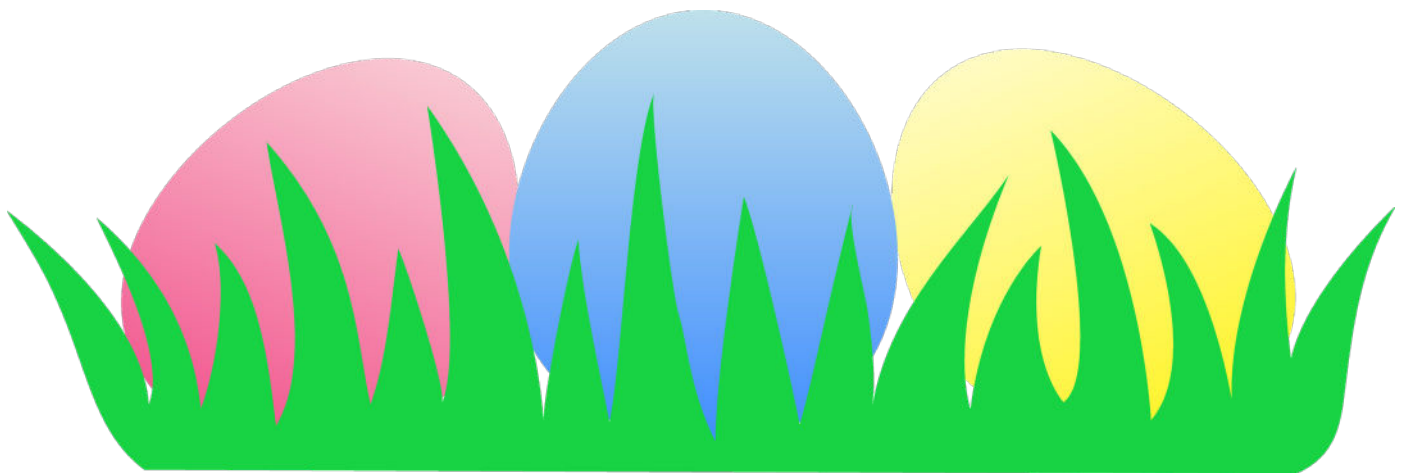


Egging of the Yards – Youth Mission Fundraiser

The First Church Youth want to “egg” your yard! Sign up through our online Google Form and let us know how many eggs you would like. Our youth and volunteers will deliver plastic eggs filled with Easter candy and treats to your address after 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 8. When you wake up on Easter morning, your yard will be full of surprises! Yards must be located in the Mechanicsburg or CV school districts (or in the nearby surrounding areas) and payment must be received by April 10 (see payment details on the sign up form). We will only be able to egg a limited number of houses, so sign up fast! All proceeds benefit First Church Youth’s summer mission trip. Thanks for letting us help make your Easter EGGcellent!

Options: 25 Eggs – \$20 | 40 Eggs – \$30 | 70 Eggs – \$50

Sign up here: <https://forms.gle/PV3Kv3TdnukscGR66>



First Church Mission Moments...



Mission Moment: New Digs Furniture Ministry

Starting over is never easy, but those with limited assets find it most challenging. New Digs freely gives furniture, household items and linens to those looking for a fresh start. These simple things can make such a huge difference to individuals and families in our community.

Most clients come to New Digs through referral agencies, including New Hope Ministries, Children and Youth Services, the Veteran's Administration, local churches and others that recognize the special needs of those starting over. A representative of the requesting agency contacts New Digs initiate the process, assess the client's needs, and determines the best way to help. This collaborative approach streamlines communications and allows New Digs to provide the best and most efficient help.

Everything New Digs gives away to those in need is received as donations from the public. If you're interested in donating new or gently used items, you can drop them off at the New Digs warehouse within Mission Central (5 Pleasant View Dr., Mechanicsburg) from 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays or the first or third Saturdays of the month. If dropoff isn't feasible, call New Digs at [717-620-9735](tel:717-620-9735) to make arrangements for a New Digs volunteer to pick your donation up.

You can learn more about this impactful ministry at newdigsministry.org. Thanks for your support!

Ron Nichols
New Digs Volunteer



Don't miss our Lenten sermon series, *In the Footsteps of the Savior!* We'll follow Max Lucado's study on a journey through the Holy Land and dig deep to learn what following Jesus truly means.

Daily Bible Reading March 2023

Wednesday, March 1	Hebrews 4:14-16
Thursday, March 2	Isaiah 43:1-7
Friday, March 3	John 3:1-17
Saturday, March 4	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, March 5	Worship "In the Footsteps of Jesus"

Week 2: "Sea of Galilee: Following Jesus in Your Storms"

Monday, March 6	John 20:11-18
Tuesday, March 7	John 1:1-14
Wednesday, March 8	Hebrews 12:1-3
Thursday, March 9	John 14:25-27
Friday, March 10	Mark 4:37-38
Saturday, March 11	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, March 12	Worship "In the Footsteps of Jesus"

Week 3: "Mount of Beatitudes: Following Jesus When You Worry"

Monday, March 13	Luke 22:39-44
Tuesday, March 14	John 2:1-11
Wednesday, March 15	Romans 8:31-39
Thursday, March 16	John 13:33-14:3
Friday, March 17	Matthew 6:31-33
Saturday, March 18	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, March 19	Worship "In the Footsteps of Jesus"

Week 4: "Temple Steps: Following Jesus...And Only Jesus"

Monday, March 20	Psalms 118:22-24
Tuesday, March 21	Luke 8:26-39
Wednesday, March 22	Matthew 11:25-30
Thursday, March 23	John 14:5-11
Friday, March 24	Ephesians 2:19-22
Saturday, March 25	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, March 26	Worship "In the Footsteps of Jesus"

Week 5: "Garden Tomb: Following Jesus When You Need Hope"

Monday, March 27	Isaiah 50:4-9
Tuesday, March 28	Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29
Wednesday, March 29	Matthew 21:1-21
Thursday, March 30	Matthew 26:14-75
Friday, March 31	Matthew 27:1-66
Saturday, April 1	Rest and Reflect
Sunday, April 2	Palm Sunday Worship

Church Staff

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News and Notes....

A big, heartfelt thank you to Janice Bowen, Patty Vogl, and their helpers for the beautiful Valentine's luncheon they provided for the widows and widowers fellowship. Our church is truly blessed to have such dedicated members who serve here!

~Widows and Widowers Fellowship

Thank you so much to the FUMC congregation for the continued thoughts and prayers during my recent stay in the hospital and my recovery! I have truly felt the power of GOD and all your prayers during this time! My recovery is going great and soon I will be able to "put my best 'leg' forward!" and get along better than ever. (Sorry, I just had to make the leg joke! LOL!)

All my thanks and love,
Paul Mariano



Pat Gavlack.....March 9
Ben Miller.....March 12
Marge Robinson.....March 15
Gail Siemons.....March 15
Sara Meck.....March 15
Bob Wertz Sr.....March 17
Mabel Strock.....March 28
Buddy Miller.....March 29
Dave Scholl.....March 31

Robert Meck.....April 2
Marilyn Seig.....April 2
Dee Farr.....April 3
Linda Hall.....April 9
Darlene Wilkinson.....April 17
Tom Mullikin.....April 23
Janet Baker.....April 25
Grace Brandt.....April 25
Richard Schmick.....April 26
Chuck Kershner.....April 28



- ♥ **Dick and Marge Scott married April 2, 1963 for 60 years**
- ♥ **Terry and Marcy Ketrow married April 2, 1966 for 57 years.**
- ♥ **Elvin and Charlotte Hess married April 10, 1960 for 63 years.**
- ♥ **Ralph and Autumn Haines married April 17, 1965 for 58 years.**
- ♥ **Dean and Marty Otto married April 21, 1963 for 60 years.**
- ♥ **Donald and Kay Heiges married April 26, 1958 for 65 years.**

FIRST NEWS FIRST
EDITORS: Dawn Fisher
Jennifer Myers

The **deadline** for submitting articles
for the April 2023 issue is **March 15.**
Early submissions always appreciated!