



First News First

Opening Doors with Christ, One Another and Our Neighbors

From the Pastor's Desk.....

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At lunch with other clergy one day we were talking about traditions as we approached Holy Week and Easter. We took a side trip talking about Creasters, those that worship at Christmas and Easter only, and as clergy thinking aloud about the perennial challenge of how to engage the nominally religious before Easter morning. Someone then said, if you don't understand and worship through Holy Week, Easter doesn't seem like such a big deal. Imagine with me if you attend worship on Palm Sunday, celebrating Jesus riding a donkey into Jerusalem and the crowds happy and praising his name. Then come back the next Sunday, Easter to singing "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" and hearing the shouts of Hallelujah. That's why we need Holy Week, to understand that between those two celebrations a lot happens!!

During Holy Week Jesus upends tables and is frustrated with religious leaders and people. Jesus is betrayed by close friends and knows the heartache and pain some of us experience today when we have been betrayed by loved ones. Jesus has a meal with his disciples and eats with them in the Upper Room, celebrating communion together. Jesus prays alone in Gethsemane, a reminder of our need too for quiet time and discernment with God. Jesus is arrested, taken before the High Priest, mocked, questioned and judged. Jesus then walks carrying his cross and is crucified, like a criminal, and his body quickly placed in a grave before sun falls that evening. While Jesus' close friends and loved ones return to their homes grieving his death. A lot happens in a week!

I am looking forward to this year's Passion Play, a beloved tradition at First Church, where we get to see these events (and more) to understand why as Christians we will join on Easter to sing, "Up from the grave he arose...". Celebrating Easter changes when you know the week that Jesus walked from Palm Sunday to Easter morning, and the power of Jesus' sacrifice and love for us that we see throughout Holy Week. On Easter morning we come celebrating that death no longer holds thy sting, that Christ has forever taken away the power of death and through his resurrection promises "Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!" for us all. May we continue the journey of Lent, walking beside Christ through Holy Week and truly understand the power of Easter morning.

On the journey with you,
Pastor Mira

Palm Sunday Worships 8:30 and 11 am
Passion Play Thursday, April 17 6:30 pm
Easter Sunrise Worship 6:20 am
Mechanicsburg Cemetery
Easter Worships 8:30 and 11 am



Discipleship

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 your journey with Jesus. First Church is here to help by providing a variety of offerings for your next faithful step:

- **Breaking Bread Sermon Series** - Luke records seven meals Jesus eats with others - Jesus clearly enjoyed eating! It was in breaking bread with others that Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God and revealed important things about himself. Join us in the weeks leading up to Easter as we explore these deeply meaningful stories in our sermon series, Breaking Bread with Jesus.
- **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 that pairs with the sermon series on our church website, fumchurch.com.
- **Wednesday Men's Group** – 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 8:00 p.m.
This group enjoys great fellowship while focusing on discussion-based Bible studies. Contact John Bowen or Bob Wertz, Jr. if interested in more information.
- **Adult Sunday School** - Groups meet Sundays, 9:45 – 10:45 a.m.
With six groups to choose from, there is something for everyone! Visit our website fumchurch.com or Church Center for the most up-to-date listing of classes and the topics they are studying. If you have questions, contact Lisa Aronson.
- **Next Step's New Member Class & Confirmation Class | April 27 – May 25 | 9:45-10:45**
Looking to be baptized? Ready to become a member of First Church? Just want to explore the foundations of our faith? Join us for a five-week Sunday morning study, "A Disciple's Path." Together with Pastor Mira, you'll explore what it means to faithfully participate in the life of the Church through your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

Confirmation Class:

If you are a student wishing to join as well, we will be offering a confirmation class at the same time led by Lisa Aronson. Confirmation is best suited for those in 6th grade and older. (Older high school students can choose to attend the adult class if preferred).

Contact Pastor Mira with any questions.

Lent Opportunities

Lent is the 40 days (not including Sundays) from Ash Wednesday to the Saturday before Easter and is set aside as a time to prepare our hearts for Easter. It is the season in the church calendar where we are diligent in our coming to God, both in repentance and longing, as we recognize and long for the renewal and transformation that comes with Easter. Lent is a time to grow deeper and feel more fully the need and beauty of Jesus' sacrifice.

- **Good Friday Prayer Walk:** The annual Community Good Friday Prayer Walk will be held on Friday, April 18 starting at 11:00 a.m. See page 5 for more details.
- **Easter Sunrise Service and Breakfast | 6:20 AM | Mechanicsburg Cemetery**
Our Easter Sunrise service will be taking place at the Mechanicsburg Cemetery at 6:20AM on Sunday, April 20th. Following our time together, we invite everyone back to the church Fellowship Hall for breakfast (estimated time of 7:15). If you plan on attending and can help us by providing a potluck-style meal, please sign up here to let us know what you can bring. Thank you for helping us in providing this time of fellowship and food on such a joyous morning!
Sign up to provide food here: ttsu.me/sunrisebreakfast

- **Lent Study Options:** Consider participating in a group, with a friend, or individually with any of the following options. Sign up at Church Center or at the Registration Table in the Main Lobby and let us know what study you choose (Information about purchasing study material is on Church Center <https://fumchurch.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2786099> and at the Registration Table).

Taste & See by Margaret Feinberg

Type: Video-based study with optional personal daily study

Description: This study explores Biblical accounts of Jesus gathering at tables with others and considers the common items from those meals (fruit, oil, bread, salt, etc) to understand more about the goodness of God.

Groups offering this study:

- Christian Fellowship Sunday School – Sundays 9:45 – 10:45 | March 9 – April 13
- Growing in Christ Sunday School – Sunday 9:45 – 10:45 AM | March 9 – April 13

Meeting Jesus at the Table by Cynthia Campbell, Fohr, and Burns

Type: Weekly devotional book with reflection questions

Description: This study explores the Biblical accounts of Jesus gathering at tables with others and challenges us to see whom we choose to include or exclude from our tables. The study includes artwork to reflect and meditate on.

Groups offering this study:

- Wednesday Morning Discussion Group – Wednesday 9:30 – 10:30 AM | March 5- April 16

Lent in Plain Sight by Jill Duffield

Type: Daily devotion with prayer and reflection questions

Description: In this devotional book, the author draws readers' attention to ten ordinary objects that Jesus would have encountered on his way to Jerusalem: dust, bread, the cross, coins, shoes, oil, coats, towels, thorns, and stones. In each object, readers will find meaning in the biblical account of Jesus' final days.

Groups offering this study:

- Faith in Everyday Life Small Group - Sundays 9:45 – 10:45 AM | Contact Jenell Paris for meeting dates.

From the Library

Happy Easter! By the time you read this Easter will be three weeks away, and Lent is ongoing. If you are like me, you are busy planning Easter dinner, thinking where to hide the Easter eggs, and most importantly getting your heart ready for the blessings of Easter. The library has had a resurgence of interest in Biblical fiction and Janette Oke's latest book is *The Pharisee's Wife*. Set during the time of Christ, Mary is a young woman of great beauty and from a very poor family. When Enos, a rising Pharisee, spots her in the market, he sets his sights on making her his trophy wife. Offering an extraordinarily large bride price for her seals her fate. That money is the only hope her parents have to escape their poverty. Yet marriage to Enos is all Mary feared. He treats her as his prize and sends her into training to be the proper Pharisee's wife. One misstep could send her to her doom, as he doesn't love her; he just wants to own her. And just as she fears life isn't worth living, she hears of a traveling Prophet. Both she and Enos's lives will be changed forever as Jesus comes into their lives. You won't want to miss this timely story of lives forever changed by our Savior.

Hope's Enduring Echo by Kim Vogel Sawyer is also historical fiction, but a little more recent set in the 1800's. Jennie Ward has taken over her father's job since an accident has left him unable to complete the task of inspecting a seven mile wooden pipeline. It is a lonely job, all by herself most of the time, she prays for a companion. During her trek along the pipeline, she discovers what looks like a very old



and odd shaped bone. Enter Leo Day, a paleontology student that wants to prove to his father that his studies are valid. He asks Jennie to be his guide and show him where she found this bone. He believes it belongs to an Allosaurus. If they can find the rest of the bones of this dinosaur, his father will surely approve of his son's career path. With Jennie's prayer answered for a companion, she struggles to keep up with her father's work and help Leo. She also feels that God has sent Leo for a purpose, and she wants to know what that means for her.

Both books are romances with the richness of their time and settings adding more than just a love story. I think you will enjoy not only the story, but also the underlining message of God's timelessness. Hope to see you in the library. The library will be closed on Easter Day so you might want to pick up and extra book or two on Palm Sunday.

Pam, Marge, Annette, Mary, Deb and Donna

**Susquehanna Conference
Camp & Retreat
ministry**

REGISTER FOR SUMMER CAMP!

**BUILDING AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS TO
CHRIST, COMMUNITY, AND CREATION.**

SPECIAL OFFERS:

Early Bird Discount - Save \$25 if you register on or before **May 1.**

Sibling Discount - Register the one at full price, and additional siblings receive a \$25 discount.

Invite-a-Friend Gift - Invite a friend who has never been to camp and receive \$50 off the cost of camp after they register.

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

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 NOIS: SDPPP@MSN.COM
AMY ORTIZ: MATTANDAMYORTIZ@GMAIL.COM**

Visit suscrm.org to register and see a complete list of 2025 camps!

Camps Great

“Come with me on a walk through C A M P!

Everyone’s life has various stages. I’d like to share how church camp has been a part of the stages of my life.

C = Commitment When I was eight years old, I went to EUB camp in Mt. Gretna. It was there that I made a conscious decision to follow Jesus.

A = Adventure The adventure years (grades 7-12) took me to Central Oaks Heights and Camp Penn. I especially connected with Jesus through the many wonders of nature in these camps: trees, streams, moss, quiet places.

M = Maturation After college as a young married “adult”, I wanted to reconnect with Jesus and nature in a camp setting so I headed to Wesley Forest as a counselor and retreat attendee. When my daughters were born I hoped they would have the opportunity to experience camp too. (They went to Greene Hills, Camp Penn, Wesley Forest and Mt. Asbury)

P = Present Day At the age of 72, I am no longer a camper or a counselor but the camp experience is still dear to my heart. I feel it is a privilege to monetarily sponsor and prayer partner with campers each summer. As some doors have closed, God has provided new ways to support our camp program.

-Jeannette Behel”

Praying Follower



Good Friday Prayer Walk, Friday, April 18

The annual Community Good Friday Prayer Walk will be held on Friday, April 18 starting at 11:00 a.m. Led by local pastors, prayer walkers will start at one of the prayer sites and then cover the surrounding area in prayer. Participants are then invited to join together at noon at Mechanicsburg First Church of God on the square (28 East Main Street) for closing prayer and worship. All are welcome! The starting prayer sites are: Mechanicsburg Area Senior High, First United Methodist Church, St. Mark Lutheran Church, Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Park, and Turning Point Church. Watch for more details and updates on our website and on Church Center. If you have any questions about the Good Friday Prayer Walk, please contact Lori Hoffnagle at l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com. Looking forward to praying for our community with you! 1 Thessalonians 5:17



Passionate Worshipper



Passion Play- April 17th 6:30 pm

For over thirty 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. The Passion Play Experience will take the audience on an interactive journey with Jesus from Palm Sunday to Easter. There's no need to pre-register for this free, all-ages event. Be sure to invite friends and family!



Dedicated Missionary



April 27th Worship

The Sunday after Easter Dwayne and Julia Johnson, founders of One80 Ministries in Mechanicsburg will share during worship. One80 Ministries seeks to create a safe space to share life together by assisting those in need with everyday necessities, providing food, and helping to provide housing to those in need. They will be sharing about how the power of Christ has transformed lives in our local community and the ways One80 and its partners are creating bridges between our local community and churches.

Isaiah 61 Homeless Ministry

First Church is pleased to support Isaiah 61 Ministries, a local organization that serves the needs of the homeless in Dauphin County. They provide a variety of services including a soup kitchen, clothing bank and Life groups. Specifically, First Church members prepare and serve meals to the homeless in downtown Harrisburg on the third Wednesday of each month. The next volunteer opportunity is Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. To find out how to get involved, contact Tiffany Holland at tholland1967@gmail.com.

Summer Youth* Mission Trip [June 29th – July 4th] Western North Carolina

Youth and adults interested in participating in a summer mission trip to assist in the North Carolina hurricane disaster relief can find more information on Church Center. *Our youth summer trips over the past years have continued to be more intergenerational, so we would like to extend the opportunity to other adults in our congregation wishing to participate in a mission trip. Because of youth presence on the trip, all adults must have up-to-date safe sanctuary clearances. Priority will be given to students. We need to finalize our team soon and would love to have you along! Here are some answers to the most frequently asked questions:

Who are we going with?

Praying Pelican is an organization we have partnered with before that comes alongside the local church to offer help and support in the work they are doing in their community.

What will we be doing?

Some of that depends on the makeup of our team and what skills we bring to the table. It also depends on the community's needs and what disaster relief stage they are in when we arrive. We will serve and help in whatever ways we can. Disaster relief tends to be a more physically intense style of work and service.

How will we get there?

We will travel together in whatever vehicle arrangement is needed to transport the team and our

stuff. Usually, we have one or two rented vans and often a personal vehicle or two.

What will we eat?

Praying Pelican, in conjunction with the church, will provide us with meals and we will assist in preparing them if asked or instructed.

Where will we sleep?

Depending on the arrangements made by Praying Pelican we will be sleeping in a space where we can set up air mattresses, cots, and sleeping bags. Sometimes, these are private rooms (like a Sunday school room) with several people in one room or a large space divided up to make private sleeping areas for each gender.

Register on Church Center and reach out to Lisa Aronson at uthrock@fumchurch.com with more questions.

Relationship Builder



Monthly Hospitality Tip

At First Church, we all play a role in creating an environment of love, acceptance, comfort, support and care for visitors, guests, friends and members. This sense of welcoming and belonging enhances everyone's worship experience, encourages fellowship and builds a sense of community. As Christians, we're all called to reflect the Jesus' love by ensuring that every visitor, guest, friend and member feels special and welcome in our church. While it's important (and often more comfortable) for us to show this hospitality to people we already know in the church, let's not forget to show that same hospitality to the people we don't know yet. Take the time to reach out to visitors and guests after the church service. Extend a hand, offer a smile, greet them with an enthusiastic "good morning!" It will brighten your day as much as it will brighten theirs!



Community Dinner, June 1, 2025

Our spring community dinner will be held on Sunday, June 1 at First Church of God on Main Street at 5:00 p.m. This collaborative event with other local churches blesses the downtown community with a meal, music and a gift card drawing, free of charge. The idea comes from the book 'Welcome to Dinner, Church,' which encourages churches to share a meal with their neighbors. We serve over 100 of our neighbors and friends at these meals. Watch for more details on how you can get involved.

Friday Food Trucks at First, Save the Dates!

The Food Trucks are back for another season starting May 16! New this year, we are excited to offer additional activities alongside the food truck events. In May, we will partner with the Simpson Library for a kick off to the Summer Reading Program, along with music on the patio from RJ Wertz. On July 18, we welcome Jazz 4 on the patio and a family-friendly movie. For our last event on September 19, we will partner with Sadler Health for a Fun and Fit Fair in the multipurpose room and music on the patio with Scott Hallman. The food trucks are a great way to meet our neighbors in a fun and casual atmosphere. We look forward to offering these events to our church family and our community. The food trucks serve from 4:30 to 8:00 p.m. We can always use volunteers to help with parking, set up or tear down. Please contact Lori Hoffnagle at l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com to volunteer or learn more. Hope to see you there!

Pickleball Outdoors! - Tuesdays 5-7 pm

Join us at Mechanicsburg's Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Park every Tuesday evening for the joy of Pickleball! No experience is necessary. Paddles/balls will be available to borrow if you'd like to learn how to play! In the event of unfavorable weather, we will shift back to the church gym. Contact Janice Bowen

(717-766-4611, ext. 112 or wecare@fumchurch.com) with questions or to be added to the Pickleball email list for updates and alerts.

FUMC Volleyball – Wednesdays 6:30-8:30 pm

If you enjoy volleyball, please join us Wednesday evenings in the church gym! Please contact Janice Bowen (wecare@fumchurch.com or 717-766-4611 x112) with questions or to be added to the list to receive volleyball communications.

Joy in the Morning - A small group invitation, Monday April 28 @ 1 pm

If you live with chronic pain or ongoing health challenges, we invite you to join in sharing discussion and supportive friendship with this small group. We meet monthly on Monday afternoons at Bethany Village's West Apartments Commons Room. Janice Bowen facilitates, drawing upon readings and devotionals.. For more info., information, contact Janice (717-766-4611 x112 or wecare@fumchurch.com)



Greeting Cards to Share!

Looking for a birthday card or wanting to send 'get well' or Easter wishes to a friend? Stop by the 'Card Ministry' display in the lobby outside the multipurpose room and help yourself to a card! If you'd like a bigger supply of cards or suggestions of who may appreciate receiving a card, please contact Janice Bowen (wecare@fumchurch.com or 717-766-4611, ext. 112)

Visiting with Friends!

If you miss seeing your friends at church due to issues such as aging or driving limitations, Janice Bowen would like to hear from you! Janice is interested in taking people with her for visits so that friends can remain connected by visiting in-person with one another! Whether you find yourself 'stuck at home,' no longer able to get out to church or you are able to get to church, but you are missing your friends who are 'stuck at home.' Either way, Janice would love to hear from you! 717-766-4611 x112 or wecare@fumchurch.com

Easter Egging

The youth are not egging yards this year, but we are happy to supply you with filled eggs for a donation to our mission trip fundraising. Contact Lisa Aronson, uthrock@fumchurch.com, for more information.

Men's Breakfast – April 5th, 7:30 a.m., Brothers Restaurant

An open invitation is extended to all men who want to gather for good food and light-hearted fellowship on the first Saturday of each month (Brothers Restaurant is located at 705 Gettysburg Pike, Mechanicsburg, 17055). Please contact John Bowen or Bob Wertz, Jr. if you are interested in attending.

Women's Morning Meet-Up – April 26th and May 17th at 7:30 a.m., Down To Earth Café

Start your morning with a warm cup of coffee and great company. Order food or a drink, or just grab a seat and connect with other women of faith, share stories, and find support in a welcoming atmosphere. Down to Earth Café is located at 100 Legacy Park Dr. Suite 108, Mechanicsburg, 17055.



Easter Jam: a Family Easter Event- April 5th 9-11 am

Looking for something exciting for the entire family to do this Easter? Join us for an unforgettable Easter Experience complete with fun, games, and music! Invite your friends, family, and neighbors for a morning to get you in the Easter spirit and learn about the true meaning of Easter. This is an event for kids and families to participate all together, this is not a drop-off event. We will start with an opening with games, music, and the story of Easter and then ends with games and crafts. If you have any questions, please email Katie Knorr, Director of Children and Family Ministry at kidscount@fumchurch.com

Coffee Ministry

Coffee is available before Sunday school (9:45) and the 11:00 Gathering Service. Coffee is located in the main lobby (near the mailboxes), and we hope you find it a welcoming addition to Sunday mornings. Contact Lisa Aronson at adultministry@fumchurch if you can help support this expression of hospitality.

Senator's Baseball Game | June 8th

Mark your calendar for our annual summer church outing to see the Harrisburg Senators play baseball on City Island. Sign up on Church Center. Ticket prices include a picnic lunch in the Giant Tent and seats for the game. Ticket information is on Church Center. Please reach out to Jeff Hoffnagle with questions.

Scholarship | Due May 23rd

First Church's Trustees oversee the following Scholarships and are currently accepting submissions for the upcoming school year (2025-2026). The following Scholarships are available:

Comfort Education - Students who are members of First United Methodist Church and are certified candidates for ministry are encouraged to apply for this scholarship.

Betty Brandt - Assistance under this scholarship fund is limited to students from First United Methodist Church with a defined physical or mental disability in need of financial aid as they pursue post-secondary education.

Zimmerman Youth Scholarship - This scholarship fund is open to all students who are members of First United Methodist Church.

Applications may be completed here or dropped off in the First Church office, attention Judi B or filled out online on Church Center. (Printed scholarship applications are available in the main office).

Looking for a sign-up?

In the Main Lobby is the Registration Table where you can register for current studies, fundraisers, events, and more



Generous Giver 

Financial Report

Through February 28, 2025

General Fund

2025 Budget \$869,000

Expected Income	\$144,862 (17% of year complete)
Actual Income	\$115,020 (13% of budget)
Actual Expenses	\$136,605 (16% of budget)

The financial report for February shows income lagging expectations so far in 2025. Expenses remain lower than anticipated for this year, which is fortunate.

The church debt for the parsonage stands at \$38,637, and the belltower loan stands at \$37,327, following a principal and interest payment on the belltower loan this past month.

We thank you for your continued generosity and prayers in support of First Church.

Little Free Pantry

Thanks so much for your support of the Little Free Pantry through your donations and monetary contributions. We are building up our supply to stock the pantry, but we still welcome your donations which can be dropped off at the church office or at the Alley Entrance in the marked basket. We are blessed to be able to offer this 'no barrier access point to food' to our neighbors. Questions about the Little Free Pantry, contact Lori Hoffnagle at l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com.

Penny Bucket

Water is the foundation of our very lives. Yet, according to the United Nations, over 2 billion people lack access to clean, readily available drinking water. Help us to support well-digging efforts in Africa by dropping your loose change (or even paper bills) into the blue Change for Water bucket located in the lobby in front of the multipurpose room. Donations from March totaled \$21.60. Thank you!

Ringling in the News!

The Handbells sincerely thank you for your continued support as you dine out with us each month. We hope you enjoyed Primanti Bros last month. You could almost get 2 meals for one! We hope you've ordered your R&K subs as they will be delivered to church on Palm Sunday. Don't forget to pick them up in the Multi-Purpose Room that morning!

This month we are dining in! We hope you will join us for our annual Spaghetti Dinner to be held here at church on Saturday, April 26th Watch for ticket sign-ups at the Registration table soon!

We are participating in the Susquehanna Valley Handbell Festival this month to be held here at St. Joe's Catholic Church. There is a public concert at 6 pm on Saturday, April 5, in the gym attached to the church. We know several of you came to hear this before – it really is something to hear a bunch of bell choirs all playing together!

And - Our annual concert here at First Church will be on Sunday, May 4 at 7 pm. Please mark your calendars now as we hope you will plan to attend!

Stain Glass Articles by Al Robinson



Over a period of time, I'm going to tell you about the meaning of symbols on the windows and where to find them. As your church historian, I know little about the people who donated them. They were faithful members and pastors of the First Church and some of the relatives who donated them are still members of the church today. As you look at the windows you will see that time has aged them. The trustees have a fund established to restore the windows and the cost estimates are significant. So as you enjoy looking at the windows, consider an extra gift to the church to help conserve them.

There are two "grapes windows" at First Church. The first is in the sanctuary on the right side of the stain glass window depicting Jesus and the little children. The second is on the second floor the sixth window from the Frederick Street entrance.

Grapes in the Bible are a symbol of abundance and prosperity and successful agriculture. The Bible reports in Numbers 13: 17-24 that when the two spies returned from the scouting trip into the promised land that they brought huge grape clusters carried on a pole between them as proof of prosperity there.

The Bible also talks about sour grapes. In Jeremiah 31:27-30 (NRSV), we read these words²⁷ The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed

of humans and the seed of animals.²⁸ And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD.²⁹ In those days they shall no longer say: "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."³⁰ But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge. Jeremiah states that the sins of the ancestors will no longer determine the plight of the people of Israel but what each person's own sins will determine what happens to that person. I think is true for us today.

Wine was important in Bible times because there was and is little water in Israel (about 7^{1/3} inches of rain in a year around Jerusalem today). Wine was a part of daily family life and in celebrations in Bible times. Jesus' first miracle reported in John 2 was the turning of the water into wine and that the wine that Jesus made was the better wine. Because water was so scarce, the connection between grapes and wine and not keeping the covenant were would have been clearly understood by the Israelites in the wilderness. "You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them" (Deuteronomy 28: 39 (NRSV). In other words, if you don't keep the covenant someone or something else is going to eat your grapes and drink the wine that you grew or made!

Genesis 49:11 calls wine the "blood of grapes." This makes the symbolism of wine clearer in Matthew,²⁷Then he [Jesus] took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matthew 26:27 -29) (NRSV).

Let us remember that when we take communion that Jesus poured out his blood for the forgiveness of yours and my sins. Let us thank God for the abundance he has given us and to remember to give to others from it.

First Church Mission Moments...

Backyard Missions, or BYM for short, is a wonderful outreach from our church to the surrounding community where we take requests for chores that need to be done in and around people's homes. The process involves sending an email to the BYM Team with proposed dates/times and talents needed to complete the task and then watching how God moves through each of the responders. Most of the work focuses on spring and fall cleanup in the yards of our Mechanicsburg neighbors while some might involve simple household repairs or painting that the homeowner cannot complete on their own or has the resources to pay professionals. It can be a lot of fun and the results are always rewarding in themselves, a happy homeowner with an improved property. Not to mention the hope that it instills in both the neighbor and the crew as we are blessed to be a blessing. And lest you feel that you cannot do the labor. There are tasks for volunteers of all abilities (scouting properties, sending messages, taking pictures, and chatting with the homeowners as well as praying for all of it).

So, if you would like to get more involved sign up at the table in the tower hallway this month or send an email to bowenhome720@gmail.com.



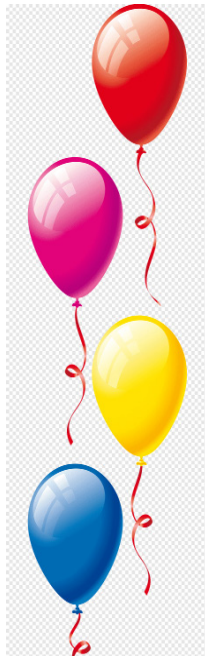
Happy Birthday

Help us celebrate special birthdays for our church members turning 80 or older!



Robert Meck.....April 2
 Marilyn Seig.....April 2
 Dee Farr.....April 3
 Darlene Wilkinson.....April 17
 Gina Johnson.....April 24
 Janet Baker.....April 25
 Grace Brandt.....April 25
 Richard Schmick.....April 26
 Larry Buddenbaum.....April 26

Barb Eckert.....May 4
 Ginnie Miller.....May 4
 Richard Hoffnagle.....May 5
 Annabelle Elder.....May 10
 Nancy Otstot..... May 12
 Denny Kauffman.....May 13
 Marjorie Kohr.....May 15
 Donald Heiges.....May 16
 Roy Miller.....May 16
 Mary Lou Vierthaler...May 19
 Bob Bittenbender.....May 27
 Flossie Ryder.....May 31



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

- ♥ Dick and Marge Scott married April 2, 1963 for 59 years
- ♥ Larry and Sue Bruner married April 12, 1975 for 50 years.
- ♥ Ralph and Autumn Haines married April 17, 1965 for 60 years.
- ♥ Dean and Marty Otto married April 21, 1963 for 62 years.
- ♥ Donald and Kay Heiges married April 26, 1958 for 67 years.

FIRST NEWS FIRST
EDITORS: Kelsey Goll

The **deadline** for submitting articles for the May 2025 issue is **April 15**. Early submissions always appreciated!