



First News First

Opening Doors with Christ, One Another and Our Neighbors

From the Pastor's Desk.....

In This Issue...


 *Lifelong Learner* 2

 *Praying Follower* 3

 *Passionate Worshipper* 3

 *Dedicated Missionary* 4

 *Relationship Builder* 5

 *Generous Giver* 7

On Easter Sunday we heard how Cleopas and Simon walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus because they didn't understand and believe that Jesus was alive. Even as Jesus walked beside them, they were not able to see and know it was him.

Do you sometimes struggle to see, hear, or know where God is in your life? I know I have (and still do at times). And when we don't hear God's voice then we have trouble knowing what direction to go in our lives.

During May we are going to be using the book *Whisper* by Mark Batterson to explore how to hear God's voice. *Whisper* is defined as "speaking very softly using one's breath without one's vocal cords." There are many reasons whisper, sometimes so we don't spoil a surprise, or we don't want someone to hear, or we want someone to pull in closer and listen attentively.

In 1 Kings, Elijah was a prophet, but struggling to hear God's voice and direction when an angel tells him to go to Mt Horeb.

The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. - 1 Kings 19:11-12 NIV

Elijah had to go to the mountain because life was so busy and loud he could not hear God's voice. Sometimes we can get away to focus on God's voice such as the men's or women's retreat. And yet we also need to learn how, within the busy and loud lives that we live, how can we learn to lean in and hear the whisper of God's voice each and every day?

In worship we are going to look at God's Whisper in Scripture on May 4, Whispers of Desires and Doors on May 11, Whispers of Dreams and People on May 18, and Whispers of Promptings and Pain on May 25. If you want to dig more, you can order a book to read along or join one of our small groups that you can find more information about later in the newsletter.

I pray in this series we would all be able to pray the words of 1 Samuel 3:9 Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. AND that if Jesus were walking beside us like he did for Cleopas and Simon on that road to Emmaus we would know his voice immediately, not 2 hours and 7 miles later. I hope during *Whisper* you will hear, experience and lean into God's voice throughout this sermon series.

Be God's Always,

Pastor Mira



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:

- **Whisper Sermon Series** - Many people have difficulty believing God still speaks. Sure, in ancient times and mysterious ways, God spoke to His people, but is He still speaking now? Tune in to hear God's voice through Scripture, Desires, Doors, Dreams, People, Promptings and Pain. Look at the love languages of how God speaks.
 - **Book Study:** Supplement your learning during this series by reading Mark Batterson's book *Whisper*. Sign up on Church Center or at the Registration Table to order a book (\$9.00) and/or to share who you are reading with. The following group options are available:
 - ◊ Wednesdays | 8:00-9:00 PM | May 7, 14, 21
Pastor Mira will be offering a book discussion on Zoom
 - ◊ Wednesday | 9:30-10:30 AM | May 7, 14, 21, 28
Lisa Aronson will be offering a book discussion in the Hardwood cafe (the round table area under the balcony)
 - ◊ Sunday Mornings | 9:45-10:45 | B003
The Christian Fellowship Sunday School class will be watching the 4-week video lesson by Mark Batterson that pairs with this book/sermon series.
- **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.

From the Library

I am writing this on a very chilly day in April, looking out the window at the beautiful flowers and wondering if they will still be beautiful tomorrow. I hope by the time you read this newsletter in May, Spring will be here to stay. If not, it would be a good time to curl up with a book and ignore the weather. Of course, I have a few suggestions.

Author Janice Cantore is a former police officer which gives her the inside knowledge of how the police department works. This knowledge makes her books so real and her characters so believable. In her latest book, *Every Deadly Suspicion*, the main character Chief of Police Hanna Keyes not only has crime to deal with in Dry Oaks, but also her father. Her father has been in prison for 35 years for murders he committed while he was chief of police. Hanna has never had anything to do with him, but now he is dying, and he is being given compassionate release if Hanna will take him. Her first thought is no, but then the bodies of some of the murder victims have never been found. Maybe she can convince her father to reveal

COME VISIT THE
CHURCH LIBRARY



the locations. No sooner does he arrive at Hanna's home than one crisis after another begins to occur. First a wildfire that brings Hanna's first love Jared back to town, and then a series of murders that her current boyfriend, Nathan is trying to solve. If that is not enough, a true crime podcaster is trying to also get her father's confession about the murders for his podcast. All of this while living with and caring for a man Hanna doesn't even like. You won't want to miss this page turner—I think you will be surprised at the ending.

If mayhem and murder aren't your genre, dive into Irene Hannon's series of *Hope Harbor* novels. Her latest is *Sunrise Reef* and just the picture on the front of the book will calm your soul. Main character Bren Ryan has found her place working as a barista in Hope Harbor. She rents a guest cottage from Fred Ward, an elderly man in the community. Life is good for Bren, but she feels she needs to make some changes and get more involved in the community. She begins to help Emma Blair a downtrodden young woman. Enter Noah Ward, Fred's son. Noah has decided his father needs to move closer to him so Fred can get any help he needs from his son. Noah did not know Fred had rented out his cottage to a woman Noah defines as quirky. But as Noah and Bren get to know each other, a friendship forms and who knows what will blossom next. This is a gentle romance with a subplot of helping others. You won't want to miss it.

If neither of these books is for you, stop in and let our volunteer help you find just the right book for you.

See you in the library,
Pam, Annette, Mary, Marge, Deb, & Donna

Praying Follower



Greeting Cards to Share!

Looking for a birthday card or wanting to send 'get well' or birthday 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)

Passionate Worshipper



Pentecost Sunday | June 8 th | 9:00AM

One Church. One Family. One Service. Join us for a special combined service on June 8 th at 9:00 AM as we welcome and celebrate our new members and confirmands into the First Church family. We are thrilled to have a chance to highlight the uniqueness of the Foundations and Gathering services and to come together to praise the Lord with one voice. Please know that the service will also last longer than the usual hour. Childcare is available for 5th grade and under. Following the service at 10:30 in the lobby, we will have coffee, refreshments, and fellowship. Sign up on church center or at the Registration table to bring a breakfast treat if able.





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, May 21, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. To find out how to get involved, contact Tiffany Holland at tholland1967@gmail.com.



REGISTER FOR SUMMER CAMP!



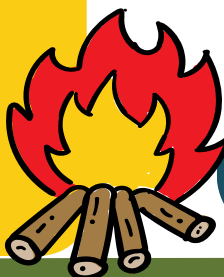
BUILDING AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS TO
CHRIST, COMMUNITY, AND CREATION.

SPECIAL OFFERS:

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 NOSS: SDPPP@MSN.COM
AMY ORTIZ: MATTANDAMYORTIZ@GMAIL.COM



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



Solo Seniors Fellowship

The Solo Senior Fellowship will dine at the Moonlight Diner on Tuesday, May 13 at 11:30 a.m. If you plan on attending, please call Bonnie Guyer at [717-766-0145](tel:717-766-0145). Transportation will be provided upon request.

Mechanicsburg Area Ecumenical Choir Concert

The 36th annual Mechanicsburg Area Ecumenical Choir Concert is Sunday May 18, 2025 at 3:00 at St. Joseph Catholic Church. This year the choir is directed by Denise Fagan and her accompanist is Rebecca Henry both of St Luke Episcopal Church. This year's choir features 74 voices from 29 area churches. The choir will sing anthems by Hal Hopson, Tom Fettke, and Mary McDonald among others. The free will offering benefits New Hope Ministries. This event is sponsored by the Mechanicsburg Council of Churches.

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. If you would like to help set up, serve or provide a food item, please contact Lori Hoffnagle at L_hoffnagle@yahoo.com. Thanks for your support!

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. We will be welcoming the following trucks for May: *Grappling Crab Shack*, *Tomasic Sausage*, *360 Cuisine*, *MoMo BBQ*, *Creekview Foods*, *DonutNV*, yum!

On July 18, we welcome Jazz 4 on the patio and a family-friendly movie and 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!



Yard Sale 2025

The annual Yard, Book and Bake Sale will be held on Saturday, August 16 in our church parking lot. The collection for the yard sale will start on Monday, August 4 and last only until Thursday, August 14. There may be additional collection dates, watch for details. Thanks for your support of the sale in the past, as we are only successful because of your wonderful donations! Any questions about the yard sale, contact Lori Hoffnagle at L_hoffnagle@yahoo.com or Donna Nichols at djnichols43@hotmail.com.

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



Senator's Baseball Game | June 8 th

Invite your family and friends to join us at FNB Field on City Island for a picnic and a Harrisburg Senators baseball game! The buffet-style picnic starts at noon and includes hamburgers, hot dogs, BBQ chicken, baked beans, pasta salad, chips, cookies, soda and water. The Senators game starts at 1 p.m. Discounted tickets are just \$25 for adults (age 19 and older), \$15 for children/youth (age 4-18) and free for children 3 and under! All participants must register and pay by May 18th. Contact Jeff Hoffnagle with questions at jeffrey.hoffnagle@yahoo.com.

Men's Breakfast – May 3rd, 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 – May 17 th 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.



Graduate Recognition | June 1 st

Help us learn about those in our church family who are graduating so that we can celebrate with them. (any recent graduations from any level of education, including December graduates.) Please take a moment to fill out the form on Church Center to share about those graduating. Please send a current photo to be used in our newsletter recognition and slide show during June 1st services. Pictures can be emailed to uthrock@fumchurch.com Graduating HS seniors, remember to bring in a senior photo for our youth lounge. Use the QR code below to link to the form or sign up on Church Center.



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.

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

Looking for a sign-up? In the Main Lobby is the Registration Table where you can register for current studies, fundraisers, events, and more.





Financial Report

Through March 31, 2025

General Fund

2025 Budget	\$869,000
Expected Income	\$217,250 (25% of year complete)
Actual Income	\$220,175 (25% of budget)
Actual Expenses	\$205,585 (24% of budget)

The financial report for March shows income slightly ahead of expectations so far in 2025, thanks to improved giving numbers (and a 5-Sunday month in March) and interest income from bank accounts. Expenses remain lower than anticipated for this year.

The church debt for the parsonage remains at \$38,637, and the belltower loan stands at \$36,713, 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 through this Easter season!

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.

Scholarship – Due May 23rd

First Church 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).

Change for Water

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 eorts 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 April totaled \$15.35.



Ring in the News!

The Handbells sincerely thank you for your continued support as you eat, eat, eat! We hope you had a wonderful time at our Spaghetti dinner enjoying food and fellowship with one another. This month, we're going back to Hoss's! Save the date for Saturday May 17th at Hoss's in Mechanicsburg. Don't forget to bring a flyer with you. Flyers can be found on the registration table, on our website, and on Church Center.

Finally, we are proud to present our annual concert on Sunday May 4th at 7pm in the sanctuary. We hope to see you there!

Be sure to check back on our website or Church Center for more opportunities as the summer months start rolling in!

We thank you for helping to support our ministry!

Stained Glass Class



I have always wondered about the meaning of the stain glass windows at First Church. So, with a little help from the Church library, I thought we would explore the windows and their symbolism. The first window that we are going to look at is the window with the wheat stalk.

There are two wheat windows in the church. One is located on the left side of the stain glass window depicting Jesus and the little children in the Sanctuary and the second one is on the 2nd floor of the 4th window from the Frederick St. entrance to the building

Wheat was an important dietary staple for the people in the Old and New Testaments and even today. How many of us have a slice of toast or a bagel made out of wheat for breakfast in the morning. Wheat was an image of plenty and blessings of God among his people. Exodus 34:22 describes the Festival of Weeks in which the first fruits of wheat harvest were given to God. In Deuteronomy 8:8, Moses describes the promised land as a land of wheat, barley, vines and fig trees. When Solomon was building the temple, he purchased the cedars of Lebanon in part by trading with wheat for them (I Kings 5:11).

In the New Testament, John the Baptist describes the coming of Jesus with these words: 11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." (Matthew 3: 11-12) (NRSV)

In Matthew 13: 24-30, Jesus tells the parable of the wheat and weeds. In the parable, good wheat seed

is planted in a field but weeds are planted by an enemy in that field, too. When the wheat comes up so does the weeds. When the servants ask the master what to do about this, he tells the servants to let both grow together. When harvesting, the weeds will be burnt and wheat gathered in the barns. The wheat is like the good people of the Kingdom of God while the weeds are the evil ones and will be burnt as part of the final judgment.

We can't end this discussion about wheat without talking about bread. Wheat is turned into bread using the water sent by God. Bread is staple of the diet in biblical times and is today too. Bread is one of the things sacrificed to the Lord (Exodus 29:2, Leviticus 2:4-16). In both the tabernacle and the temple, 12 loaves of showbread were in the Holy of Holies. Unleavened bread is part of the Passover ritual in the Old Testament. Exodus also tells us that manna is bread that God has given the people who wandered in the wilderness to eat.

In the New Testament bread is a powerful symbol. Jesus reminds the devil that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from God (Matthew 4: 4). In the Lord's prayer, Jesus says "Give us this day our daily bread." Jesus takes bread and feeds 5,000 more than 5,000 people with it. Jesus said in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry." (NIV). Finally, at the last supper, Jesus takes bread blesses it and breaks it saying: Take, this is my body" (Mark 14: 22).

Let's remember God's love for us when we see wheat grown in the fields and bread on our table.



We recently received a letter of thanks and this certificate to celebrate First Church's paying 100% of our Shares of Ministry in 2024 to the Annual Conference. Shares of Ministry support pastors and lay leader equipping and training, ministries to underserved communities, support of retired clergy, and conference staff. Together the giving at First Church enables us to support this commitment while also making ministry happen in and beyond the walls of First Church. Thank you for your generosity!

Vacation Bible School is officially accepting travelers! Registration is now open for kids, as well as teen and adult volunteers to join us July 14-18th from 9am-noon. Kids will Join Navigator Miss Katie and Scout the dog on an epic adventure filled with games, music, crafts, snacks and amazing Bible stories. Sign up today at fumchurch.com/vbs2025 and receive a free gift if you register before June 1st.

FIRST UMC VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

July 14-18

9 a.m. -

12:00 p.m.

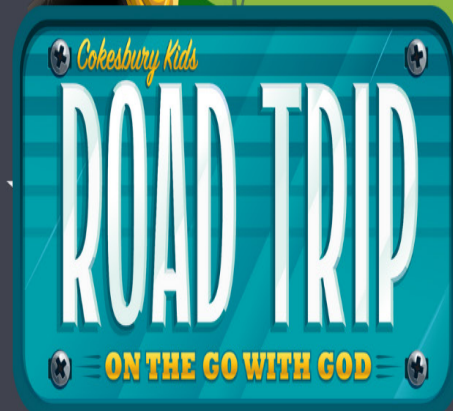
4 years old -

completed 5th grade



Register:

fumchurch.com/vbs2025



Church Staff

Pastor:

Rev. Mira Hewlett
717-766-4611 ext. 103
pastormira@fumchurch.com

Director of Office Management and Communications:

Kelsey Goll
717-766-4611, ext.105
communications@fumchurch.com

Director of Worship Arts:

Sarah Pugh
717-766-4611, ext.119
worship@fumchurch.com

Pastor of Discipleship & Youth:

Pastor Lisa Aronson
717-766-4611, ext.113
uthrock@fumchurch.com

Director of Congregational Care:

Janice Bowen
766-4611, ext.112
wecare@fumchurch.com

Director of Children and Family Ministry:

Katie Knorr
717-766-4611, ext.102
kidscount@fumchurch.com

Director of Finance:

Amy Erno
717-766-4611, ext.120
financedirector@fumchurch.com

Facilities Coordinator:

Paul Zito
717-766-4611, ext.109
facilities@fumchurch.com

Custodian:

Candice Rudy
717-766-4611, ext.109
maintenance@fumchurch.com

Praise Team Director:

Sarah Pugh
worship@fumchurch.com

Sounds of Worship Director:

Flossie Ryder
missflossie42@gmail.com

Youth Worship Director:

Allison Ometz
allisonometz1@msn.com

Director of Bell Choirs:

Kathie Bittenbender
rbittenben@verizon.net

Organist/Accompanist:

Brandon Rhody

Director of Little Friends Preschool:

Jemma Church
717-796-0723
director@littlefriendspreschool.org

Timeless Connections:

Patti Vogl
717-319-7318
pvogl@timelessconnections.org

Dear friends who have helped at One80 ministries,

There are friends, and there ARE FRIENDS! We can not express your generosity and how it has been such an amazing help to us. The hours of labor can't be measured and this card of thanks just is not enough, but we pray that God will bless you each abundantly for the love and support you have given. Thank you for being willing to be God's instruments of blessing to those living in Mechanicsburg. - Blessings, One80 Ministries

A special thanks to our church family for all the cards, visits, thoughts and prayers for our family during the 10 + years of Peggy's life at Chapel Pointe. Even for the beautiful music of pianist Bill Ingraham whose CD played during her recent visitation. - Family Of Peggy Shenberger

A special thank you to Amy Erno who directed this year's Passion Play along with staff Katie Knorr and Sarah Pugh. It was a wonderful evening of seeing the scripture come to life through Holy Week and Easter celebration. Thank you to all the cast and crew who did a fantastic job. Mark your calendars now for Passion Play 2026 on April 2, 2026.



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



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

Dick Scott.....June 2
Barbara Sill.....June 7
Bonnie Guyer.....June 19
Beryl Morgan.....June 30



♥ **Don and Debbie Karns married May 6, 1972 for 51 years.**

FIRST NEWS FIRST
EDITORS: Kelsey Goll

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