



The Pastor's Pen "Bah! Humbug!" Really?

Most people know the character of Ebenezer Scrooge from Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. The book was originally subtitled: "Being a Ghost Story of Christmas." Scrooge's "Bah, Humbug!" is proverbial for the cynic and grump this time of year. Scrooge used the phrase to cast scorn on Christmas. 'Humbug' means a 'fraud or imposter.' Scrooge was calling Christmas and everything about it a lie. He hated it. "If I had my way...every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart!"



To people who know the living Lord Jesus, the idea that Christmas is a lie is itself one of the most pernicious lies the devil ever whispered. Dickens is aware of that. In *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge, not Christmas, is the real humbug. He was so hardened by money-grubbing greed, selfishness and pride that he was blind to the glory and goodness of the Nativity. Because of his critical spirit, he could not see its goodness until the ghosts did their terrible work. Then he ceased his "humbugging" and became a giving soul.

We might be tempted to think we are immune from unwarranted 'humbugging.' But it is easy to develop an over-critical spirit. It can enter in a variety of ways. I once had a friend whose wife was suffering from depression and did not want to do anything anymore. He was thinking about divorcing her. I asked how he was treating her. Turned out he was dissatisfied and constantly critical of her. She did not match many of his expectations for a wife, and he let her know it regularly. She was despondent. No wonder their relationship was on the rocks!

There are other reasons we may develop a critical spirit. We may be too tired, working too hard without a break. Our feelings may get hurt, or we may get offended by someone, so that thereafter, everything that person does incites a cynical response. Even someone who reminds us of that person may trigger the same attitude. Or if someone is unremittently critical of you, you may acquire their same spirit towards others from failure to fully forgive that person. We may have entertained ourselves with TV



shows that mock Christianity or other good things, unwittingly opening ourselves to such a spirit. Or we may suffer from Ebenezer's sins, including greed, selfishness and pride, so that the good things we might otherwise receive now look tainted to our eyes. If you have hidden Scrooge's sins in your heart, someone else's good things may feel threatening or puny and unimportant compared to you. Even seeing someone else's generosity may incite critical annoyance.

The Pharisees and teachers of the law saw Jesus through 'humbugging' eyes. When he cast evil spirits out of people, they accused him of doing it by the power of Beelzebub. Talk about unjustified cynicism!!

The gospel explains why the Pharisees and teachers of the law had such a hyper-critical spirit. They had rejected the baptism of John, who called for repentance from greed, selfishness, pride and hypocrisy (along with other sins). The Pharisees thought they were too good for that, so they scoffed at John. When the Son of ... (continued on next page) ... God showed up, their hearts were not ready for him. Instead, like Scrooge, they gave him a 'Bah! Humbug!'

There are couple of lessons here. Just as it prevented

2017-18 Ministry SURVEY

What: Surveying the Church's Ministry

Why: To help improve our ministry & mission

The Leadership of the church is conducting a comprehensive survey of the church's overall ministry. We have included two copies of the survey in every newsletter, so that married couples can each submit a survey. If you have older children who want to fill one out, feel free to make a copy or to pick up an extra in the office. Please fill out the survey at your earliest convenience and mail or drop it off at the office no later than January 15 so we can collate and study the results.

Scrooge from receiving Christmas, or the Pharisees

from receiving Jesus, a critical spirit can prevent you from receiving the good things God wants to give you.

Let's consider how to deal with this. First, acknowledge what's going on. Search your heart for the reason. Confess what's at the root of it. Repent. Address the real problem. If you have been burning the candle at both ends, maybe you do not have the resources to see things positively anymore. "In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves." (Psalm 127:2). Change your schedule to take regular breaks. The sabbath rest was given by God as a gift. Start taking advantage of it! Rest!!

Maybe you are secretly angry with someone, and you need to confront them, or at least confront your feelings about them. Has someone else been hyper-critical of you? Name it, tell God how that made you feel, and then choose to forgive that person. Forgiveness is the key that sets us free from so many bitter poisons, including a critical spirit dumped on us by others.



(The prayer table at Saturday, December 23, Longest Night Worship Service)

If you have been infected by a mocking spirit through reading or media, take responsibility, renounce that attitude and ask God to forgive you for opening yourself to it. Then close the door in the name of Jesus to that rubbish.

If greed is at the root of your cynicism, maybe you, like Scrooge, need to repent and start giving things away. Money was Scrooge's god. So naturally, Christmas looked threatening! Ebenezer destroyed that idol by becoming generous. This is the solution Jesus gave the Pharisees in Luke 11:39-41. "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you." Choosing to be generous to the poor is a great and practical remedy for the sin of greed.

If selfishness or pride are the root sins, don't lie about it or hide the truth. Just name it for what it is, repent and ask God to forgive you. The blood of Jesus is powerful enough to effect cleansing for every sin. Stop putting yourself at the center of your universe. Put Jesus there instead. Humble yourself, and trust God to lift you up in his time. Set yourself to be his servant and do what he says, and you will find rest for your soul and the 'righteous eye' you long for.

Finally, maybe you need someone to pray for you to help release you from a hyper-critical spirit. James says, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16). The Lord gives extra grace through the body of Christ when we humble ourselves to become vulnerable in this way through confession and prayer.

I conclude with the rest of my friend's story. After hearing his situation, I challenged him to stop loving his wife for who he wished she was, and to start loving her for who she actually was. I reminded him of God's love for us, "while we were yet sinners." I challenged him to encourage her and build her up instead of criticizing her and tearing her down, and to let go of his expectations for the 'ideal' woman, especially since he himself was not the 'ideal' man: to love her as Christ loved him.

He took my challenge. That Christmas he sent me a card. It said, "Thanks! You saved my marriage!"

God is in Christ, loving us, tenderly. Forgiving us and calling us to better things. I pray your Christmas has been wonderful, and that you will have a blessed New Year! Watch a rerun of Scrooge's story with the fam! Be generous to the poor. Identify the "Bah! Humbug!" spirit and kick it out! Embrace the high truth of the Nativity – and take joy in the salvation of God! Feliz Navidad! Jesus has come! Immanuel, God is with us!



Yours in Christ, Pastor Chris Fisher



OUR COMMUNION OFFERINGS

Jan 7: Mission Committee Local Needs

Feb 4: Pastor's Discretionary Fund

Worship & Preaching Schedule January – February 2018

Sunday Worship: 8 and 10:45AM

Saturday Worship at 6 pm

Events and Themes

Theme: "The Case for Christ"

1 Corinthians 15:3-7



This preaching series is inspired by the book *The Case for Christ*, by Lee Strobel. It's designed to help those who want to defend their faith with reason and sound research, and to help skeptics, agnostics and atheists put their faith in Jesus.

Dr. Fisher preaching unless otherwise noted

- Jan 7 – *Epiphany Sunday*
w/ *Holy Communion*
"Introducing the Case for Christ"
- Jan 14 – *2nd Sunday after Epiphany*
"The Power of Prayer" by Irene Tomchik
- Jan 21 – *3rd Sunday after Epiphany*
"The Case for Christ: Can Jesus' biographies be trusted?"
- Jan 26-28 – *Winter Youth Retreat*
- Jan 28 – *Christ the King Sunday*
"The Case for Christ: Does the Archaeology confirm the ancient accounts of Jesus?"
6:00 PM Family Movie Night
Showing "THE CASE FOR CHRIST"
- Feb 4 – *5th Sunday After Epiphany*
w/ *Holy Communion*
"The Case for Christ: Is the Jesus of history the same as the Jesus of faith?"
- Feb 11 – *Transfiguration of the Lord*
Lenny J. Yenialitus's Testimony
- Feb. 14 (Wednesday) Ash Wednesday
6:00 pm – Lenten supper
7:00 pm – Ash Wednesday Worship Service
Note: We are planning on joining with local sister UM churches for Lent this year. Location of each Lent Series Wednesday service TBD.

Feb. 18 – *1st Sunday in Lent*
"The Case for Christ: How can we be sure Jesus was the Son of God?"

Feb. 25 – *2nd Sunday in Lent*
"The Case for Christ: Can we be sure Jesus – and only Jesus – is the Messiah?"



Sunday Worship Schedule Change 2nd Service to begin at 10:45 AM

When: Beginning Sunday, January 7, 2018

Why: To make Sunday School and the transition to 2nd Worship service less hectic.

The New Schedule:

8:00 AM Traditional Worship Service

9:20-9:35 All-Sunday School Opening

Exercises in the Sanctuary

9:40-10:30 Sunday School

10:45 AM Contemporary Worship

Service

See the article in this newsletter by our Christian Education Director April Bergen on details of the transition.



CHURCH PRAYER MINISTRY UPDATES

Wednesday Prayer Meeting: Church-wide prayer meeting is held in the sanctuary every Wednesday night from 6:00 – 7:00 pm. Please join us as we seek God together!

Do you have a testimony to share with the congregation? Has the Lord done something special in your life recently? You might have a testimony to share and be a blessing to the congregation. It is exciting to hear what God is doing in our midst! Please let Pastor Fisher know if you want to share.

Seeking to cover all members of the Church in Prayer: Our Prayer Ministry is working on a way to get every member and constituent of the church covered in prayer. We are still working on the design. Please prayerfully consider whether the Lord is calling you to be one of our 'prayer pillars' to uphold the rest of the body of Christ.

Weekly prayer team ministry continues. Please sign up in pairs to pray for one hour a day during your week, for the Kingdom of God to come more fully in our church and our community and beyond. We will continue to promote the prayer team ministry on

Sunday mornings, with the prayer clipboard circulated periodically.

Prayer Team Schedule: Jan–Feb 2018

Jan 7-13 Gary and JoAnn Daum

Jan 14-20 Chris and Lisi Fisher

Jan 21-27

Jan 28-Feb 3

Feb 4-10

Feb 11-17

Feb 18-24

Feb 25-March 3



**YOUNG FAMILY FELLOWSHIP (YFF)
Hershey Bears Ice-Hockey Game**

When: Saturday, February 3, 2018, 7 PM

Where: Giant Center, Hershey

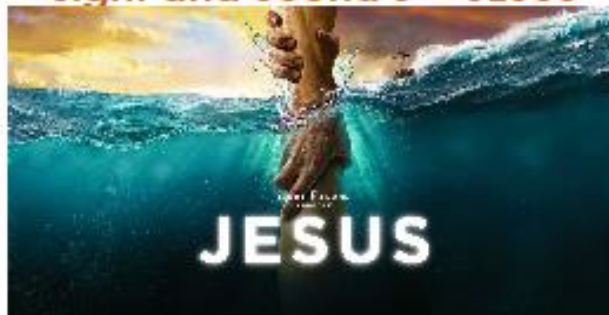
What: Family Friendly Fun & Fellowship



The Young Family Fellowship is organizing a trip to see the Hershey Bears ice-hockey team game (vs. Charlotte) at 7:00 PM on Saturday, February 3 at the Giant Center in Hershey. This is a "Faith and Family" Night, and will be family friendly. Tickets are \$20.50 for 100 level seating. Please call or email the office at office@havenfirstumc.org if you are interested by January 7. The YFF will leave from the church at 5:30 pm. We look forward to seeing you that night!



Sight and Sound's™ JESUS



**Confirmation Class Trip
Open to the whole church**

May 5, 2018, 7:PM Friday Show

Where: Sight and Sound Theatre, Lancaster

Cost: See below. (Confirmands go free)

Reservations Due by: January 15

The Confirmation Class is going to *Sight and Sound Theatre™* this Spring to see the presentation of their new show, *JESUS*. All confirmands go free. If you would like to join us, please submit your ticket request with cash or check for the full amount to the Church office by January 15. Adult ticket: \$65, children 3-12: \$30. Travel details to be announced.



Parish Nurse's Notes

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

Nancy Kraft, FCN, RN, BS



*Healing Body,
Mind, and Spirit*

COMING EVENTS

JOURNEY OF HOPE

11 AM on the following

Tuesdays:

January 2, 2018

January 23, 2018

February 6, 2018

February 27, 2018

BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENINGS BETWEEN SERVICES

January 21, 2018

February 18, 2018



Recently I read an article from the Wall Street Journal that I found very interesting, but it also was quite disturbing. The article was titled, "Why Personal Tech is Depressing". It was written by Dr. Stephen Ilardi, a clinical researcher at the University of Kansas. He was talking about how, over the years, things have changed with the availability of personal technology. Shopping has been made easier by the availability of shopping apps on our phones and personal computers. You can order just about anything very easily, including books, clothing, groceries, and anything else your heart desires....right from your comfortable couch. This may seem very convenient, but it comes at a price. According to Dr. Ilardi: "Our indoor, sedentary, and socially isolated lives leave us vulnerable to depression. The U.S., the most technologically advanced nation on the planet, is also the most depressed: Three in 10 Americans will battle depressive illness at some point in their lives, an estimated tenfold increase since World War II".

The depression rate in America has risen 400% since 1990 and is the leading disability in the world. Automatic robot-like vacuum cleaners are a perk, but their use decreases our opportunity to get some exercise. Physical activity can affect our well-being by stimulating the release of neurotransmitters that will encourage motivation. It also helps eliminate stress. "Remove physical exertion, and our brain's pleasure centers can go dormant".

Our devices can save us time but they also tend to make us inactive. Our brains can be overstimulated by increased screen time. This overstimulation of the nervous system causes our bodies to produce the stress hormone known as cortisol. Ilardi says, "...when chronically activated, it triggers the brain's toxic runaway stress response, which researchers have identified as an ultimate driver of depressive illness".

30 years ago, only 15% of Americans reported feeling lonely. Today 40 % report loneliness. The issue is that we communicate more through technology-texts, emails, and video messaging. This reduces face to face contacts. We all need personal contact with other persons in order to feel valued.

Did you know in present time we spend more than 90% of our time indoors? Direct sunlight stimulates the brain to release serotonin which can protect us from Seasonal Affective Disorder, a type of depression. Also, artificial light and the type of light emitted from personal devices can stall the body's release of melatonin, causing sleep deprivation. This deprivation can trigger increase depressive tendencies.

What can you do? UNPLUG more from your devices. Decrease your screen time. With the time you save being unplugged you can go outside and take a walk. Get out in the natural light and increase your metabolism. Get your body back in sync. As Dr. Ilardi wrote: "...the same technology that's wrecking our emotional well-being can, when smartly employed, reduce and even reverse the symptoms of depressive illness".

(Quotes taken from: "The Future of Everything" Nov/Dec 2017, The Wall Street Journal- "Why Personal Tech is Depressing", p. 51
by Dr. Stephen Ilardi)



It's almost January...the beginning of a new year and a new healthier you! Please join us for a Ladies' Bible Study that focuses on healthy ways to balance it all - raise a healthy family, nourish your own spirit, and find joy in your daily life! Devotions for a Healthier You is an encouraging Scripture based study, paired with helpful lifestyle tips, prayers and recipes! To find out more, please contact April Bergen at 570-739-1606.



SAVE THE DATE

The Annual Father/Daughter Dance is scheduled for Sunday, February 18.

There will be more details to follow in the next few weeks. Keep watch on the weekly bulletins, FUMC website and/or Facebook page.



JAN. – FEB. 2018

NEW TIME TO MEET

For the months of Jan., Feb., and March – we will meet at 1 pm on the second Tues. of the month.

January 9th Program- Missionary Conferences of the UMC in the United States

We have three Missionary Conferences in the United States, Alaska Mission and Conference, Appalachia and the Red Bird Conference, and the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. We will watch a video for an overview of these conferences and their work. We will also discuss involvement of our teens in Girls on the Go, a two day camping outing at Camp Innabah in March to introduce teens to mission work and leadership development.

Feb. 13th – Call to Prayer and Self-Denial

2018 program on Prayer and Self-Denial will support UMW's commitment to leadership development and equipping women and girls for leadership in the church and society. We will look at women who influenced our lives and mentored us.

Closing out 2017

United Methodist Women of Schuylkill Haven's church was able to meet their pledge of \$750 to conference for Mission work both in the United States and abroad through our contributions, special day inserts in the bulletin, and soup sale. \$100 was donated to the Vineyard, \$100 and clothing was donated to Servants for All. \$674 was sent in for our Thank Offering to Conference. The group conducted a sing- along at Weston Retirement Home in Orwigsburg in September, and we also lead Christmas caroling and a cookie share with residents of Providence Place in Pine Grove. We thank you for your support last year and look forward to continuing to support mission work for women, youth and children.

The Purpose of United Methodist Women

The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

SPRC Announcements

As many of you may know, earlier this year Mike and Joanne Forbes announced their intention to step down as Saturday Night Worship Leaders at the end of the year. Saturday, December 16th was their last final service leading worship in this capacity. We are deeply grateful to God for blessing us with their gifts for so many years and to Mike and Joanne for many years of faithful service. I was first introduced to Mike and Joanne when April's mother arranged for "Shout Humbly" to sing at our wedding in 2002. It was through them that we first became acquainted with First Church, and for that I will be eternally grateful. On behalf of the Staff Parish Relations Committee it is my pleasure to wish them all of God's richest blessings in their "retirement". We also look forward to seeing them make occasional guest appearances at both the Saturday night and Sunday morning services.

We are pleased that John Fatora has been selected to provide leadership for the Saturday night worship service for 2018. John will be arranging worship experiences through a combination of both live and pre-recorded music. We thank John for volunteering for this role and we look forward to seeing what God has in store for the Saturday night service.

We also thank Kathy Hackman for her many years of faithful service as our Treasurer. As a long time member (and two-term chair) of the Finance Committee I have worked closely with Kathy over the years and I am personally very grateful for her hard work, dedication, faithfulness, patience and grace in what can be at times a very challenging and demanding role. We wish her all the best and look forward to seeing how God uses her next.

I have to confess that when Kathy announced her intention to step down I committed the sin of worry. I feared that it would be very difficult to find a qualified candidate at a salary we could afford. God showed up and proved once again that he can be trusted to meet all our needs. Within a short time of announcing the opening we had two highly qualified candidates! To make our job even easier God led one of the candidates to recommend the other! I am delighted to announce that Adam Kraft will be our Treasurer beginning January 1st 2018. We thank him for his willingness and pray that God blesses him as he serves.

Thank you all for your support, Merry Christmas, and God bless!

-Don Bergen



Stephen Ministry at First Church

This fall, we celebrated the third anniversary of Stephen Ministry at First Church. To date, we have a total of 15 people trained to provide one on one care to people who are going through a difficult time. Currently we have 12 people receiving care. It is an amazing blessing to both the care receivers and caregivers.

Stephen Ministry requires that a man minister to a man, and a woman to a woman. We have a significant need for men to answer the call to become Stephen Ministers. Currently only one of our Stephen Ministers is a man, Doug O'Connell. I encourage any man who wants to learn more about Stephen Ministry to talk with Doug about his experience. There are men who could really benefit from this program, but no one is available to provide the care.

We will begin another Stephen Ministry class when we have several people interested in becoming Stephen Ministers. If you are interested, please contact either Lynne O'Connell (570-449-2355) or Nancy Kraft (570-385-4431).

The Blessings of Serving as a Stephen Minister

Since 1975, more than 600,000 Christians from all walks of life have trained and served as Stephen Ministers. They became Stephen Ministers as a way to help others who were hurting—but they quickly discovered that God blesses them in amazing ways as well. Below are several testimonies from Stephen Ministers.

"I've been a Stephen Minister for nearly ten years and can truly say it becomes a part of your life. I'm more in tune with people's needs, and I always do my best to listen, care, and model the love of Jesus. It's amazing to see God working through me to change lives."
Kelly, Professor, Shoreview, Minnesota

"Stephen Minister training taught me how to be a caregiver, but even more, it taught me how to live life in a new way—sharing Christ's love with other people. It's an awesome blessing to be used by God to bring hope and healing to someone else."
Mike, Carpenter, Kennesaw, GA

"Stephen Ministry has enhanced every relationship I have. Now I can listen and be there without feeling like I have to rush in and try to fix things—which my 15-year-old really appreciates! I'm much more at peace in difficult situations because I realize that it's not me, but Christ within me, who does the work."
Yvette, Accountant, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

"The assertiveness skills I learned through Stephen Ministry gave me the courage and confidence I needed to be a more effective supervisor in my job—and to be more assertive in my personal relationships. It's made a difference in many areas of my life."
Gary, Restaurant Manager, Portland, Oregon

"Since becoming a Stephen Minister, I've experienced a richness of God's grace beyond anything I could have imagined. To truly listen with the ears of Christ, to see others through his

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

I am writing to notify you of some changes that were approved by the Administrative Board at the December 18, 2017 meeting with regard to Sunday School and Worship schedules. The first is that beginning on January 7, 2018 we will begin our Sunday School hour with a combined opening from 9:20-9:35 AM in the Sanctuary. This time will allow the church body to come together as one. During this time, we will open with prayer, sing a few praise songs and collect the Sunday School offering. Age appropriate small groups/classes will begin after the opening celebration and continue until 10:30 AM. Please note that this provides us with an extra fifteen minutes for teaching and learning. The Education Committee requested this change in response to request for extended learning times to allow for more in-depth teaching. Therefore, as a result, a second motion was made and approved to move the Contemporary Worship Service time to begin at 10:45 AM. Therefore, beginning on January 7, 2018 the Sunday morning Worship and Sunday School schedule will be as follows:

8:00 AM – Traditional Worship Service
9:20 AM – Sunday School Opening in the Sanctuary
9:35-10:30 AM – Age Appropriate Classes/Small Group
10:45 AM – Contemporary Worship Service

I would also like to take a moment and thank everyone for their cooperation with these changes. The Education Committee is excited to open the Sunday School hour together with the church family all together as well as provide increased time for teaching! If you have any questions, please see me.

Please also note that we will begin new adult classes for the winter quarter. Dawn Housel will be teaching a class titled, "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God." For details about this class, please contact Dawn. Jean Twardzik will be holding a new members class. For information about that class, please see Jean or Pastor Fisher for more information.

In closing, on behalf of myself and the Education Committee, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and pray that the God blesses you in 2018!

Blessings,
April Bergen
Director of Christian Education
First United Methodist Church, Schuylkill Haven

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITIONS

This past summer we have decided to recognize all the hard work and time that our members give to serving the church. Over the course of the summer we recognized the following people for their service as Trustees, Committee Chairs, Communion servers, Prayer warriors, Lay Speakers, Choir members, Youth Leaders, Sunday School teachers, mentors and the list goes on. It was quite the task and very rewarding to see how involved the members for FUMC are in the routine care and ministries of the church. Once again we are going to publish the list of names and express our thanks to each one of you for your service.

LAY SPEAKERS

Gary Daum	Dwight Dros
John Fatora	Joanne & Mike Forbes
Bonnie Hawley	Doug O'Connell
Jack O'Rourke	Brian Reading
Ralph Saunders	Rebecca Sausser
Mary & Moffette Tharpe	Irene Tomchik
Rimi Shemajli	

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COMMUNION SERVERS

The list published in last month's newsletter was incomplete, we would like to acknowledge the following for their service.

Kim & Sonja LeVan	Sue Rudiman
Jerry Bowman	Walt & Jenny Meck
Liz Wallace	Walt & Jan Dunkling
Wanda Langley	Tom & Eydie Reed
Bev & Terry Luckenbill	Ruth Noecker
Greg & Dawn Fisher	Ken & Theresa Breisch
Nancy & Warren Kraft	Wes Rhodes
Ann Moyer	Jillian Moyer
Joelle Moyer	Jenna & Javius Galan
Kevin & Trish Bayliff	Mike & Addie Sterner
Darlene Beers	Dot Murphy
Jim Eifert	Bret Challenger
Danny Challenger	Christie Challenger
Bob & Claire Kempes	Bob Kempes (co-ordinator)

YOUNG FAMILY FELLOWSHIP EVENTS

January 13, 2018—2-4 p.m.—

Gathering at Bill and Cassie Murphy's home.

265 Creek Drive

Auburn, PA, 17922

Please bring a snack to share

RSVP to Cassie: 570-294-7890

FAITH & FAMILY NIGHT

with the Hershey Bears

Saturday February 3, 2018

At the Giant Center in Hershey

Tickets are \$20.50/person, please contact the church office if you plan on attending and would like tickets.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE CLASS

Will continue on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. following the 6:00 p.m. Prayer meeting the next sessions will be on January 17 and February 21, 2018.

Dear FUMC family,

I am praying that you and your family are doing well.

As we near our New Year, I wanted to remind all of us (myself included) of the importance of being Spirit-led. The Bible tells us in Romans 8:14 that “those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God,” Jesus is speaking to us more than we can imagine! His voice can be a soft whisper or emotional comfort; he can speak through dreams, visions, divine visitations, etc. The first time that the Lord spoke to my brother Ardian was through a supernatural visitation. To my aunt Besa, the Lord audibly spoke to her and protected her from death.

God especially speaks to His children. In John 10:27, Jesus says: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” Indeed, as children of God, born from the unperishable seed of Christ Jesus, we are supposed to learn and constantly grow in listening to the Spirit of God. In the life and ministry of the first church, described in the book of Acts, the early disciples trained themselves to discern and follow God’s leading (for instance, please see: Acts 5:3-4; 11:9; Acts 8:26; 9:4-6; 10:9-16; 12:5-10; 16:6; 20:23, etc.). Through these Spirit-ledings, a movement that began with just eleven disciples turned the world upside down. In doing so, the early believers demonstrated a lifestyle in which the only way to hear the voice of God is through an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. May we all draw closer and closer to God and hear His voice as clearly as we hear the voice of one beside us.

Certainty, brothers and sisters, we need to be led by this same Spirit who lives inside of us – America and the world needs the King’s sons and daughters to, once again, shake the foundations of the earth and turn this world upside down for Christ. We cannot do this though our own ideas or creative plans; as in days past, we need a deep relationship with God so that we will be able to listen and follow Him. He will lead us down the paths where we can be the most effective ministers of the Gospel.

I pray that these prophecies, spoken by the prophet Joel (2:28-30), be lived and practiced in our generation: “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.”

Also, a brief update: Our Youth Group has drawn up its calendar for winter, spring, and summer. I am excited to let you know that we have prepared a very good and balanced Youth program (thank you, Youth Council members, for your hard work). We have also implemented a point-system; more information will be given about it when we begin the next semester. Our first meeting of the next semester is on Sunday, January 14 (when I will hand out our completed Youth Group calendar). At the same time, be mindful that our Youth retreat (Winter-Blast) is from January 26-28. Hope to see all of our members of the Youth Group and our Young Adult Fellowship in January, and praying that you all have a blessed break!

Finally, to all members of our FUMC Family, on behalf of our Youth Group and Young Adult Fellowship, we wanted to wish you a very happy and blessed Christmas and New Year. Also, we wanted again to thank you for all of your prayers and support – we could not minister without them.

Much love, Rimi



A NIGHT IN NAMIBIA

CHILDREN OF ZION

ANNUAL FUND RAISING DINNER

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you would like to help by sewing curtains for the children's homes, please contact JoAnn Daum in the church office. We will meet again in the church office on January 19th @ 2:30 p.m. to take about the next round of curtains.

CHILD SPONSORSHIP

Did you know that you can sponsor a child for \$30.00 per month? If you would like to sponsor a child, please check out the Children of Zion website for more information:

childrenofzionvillage.org

or you can send a check to:

Children of Zion, Inc

P.O. Box 13

Churchville, MD. 21028



On November 2, 2017, Children of Zion held their annual Fundraising dinner, in Bel Camp Maryland, this year several Africa team members and their spouses were able to attend. The evening was filled with wonderful entertainment, delicious food and beautiful stories of the work that is happening at Children of Zion village. The event raised \$30,000.00 to help continue the outreach to orphaned and vulnerable children in Namibia.

Children of Zion Village is growing rapidly, just before Christmas 18 new children arrived at the village. That brings the total number of children in the village to 75, aging from infants to 18 years of age. They have moved from living in a dormitory style building to smaller family homes with several children living with a house mother. It is for these homes that we have been making curtains for the windows, as well as the new homes that are to be built in the future. The first set of curtains were delivered to Travis & Lorna just before Christmas. They were so very excited to receive them and will be hanging them in a new family home when they return to COZ after their Christmas break.

2017-18 Ministry Assessment Survey

Introduction: Our church is assessing its mission and ministry to be more effective for the kingdom of God. Please complete the following survey questions to help our leadership team in this work.

1. Name: _____ **Phone #/email:** _____

2. Thinking about the general direction of the Church, please answer these Questions:

- A. Do you believe the church's current overall ministry is generally headed in the right direction?
 ___ Yes ___ No Please explain your answer:
- B. What, if anything, would you like to see done differently? Please describe your solution in detail. Indicate whether you are willing to help be part of the solution. Use extra paper if necessary.
- C. Any comments or questions related to the pastors and/or staff and/or leadership?
- D. What topics or areas would you like to hear more preaching and teaching about?
- E. What Music/Hymns/Worship song(s) would you like to see included in Worship?

3. Thinking about our current ministries and missions and how you are involved with or impacted by them, please give us your feedback. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being least, 5 being greatest, please answer the following by placing the number in the appropriate column. Leave blank if not applicable.

Ministry	How important is this to you?	How would you rate this ministry's impact / effectiveness on you/others?
a. Community lunch		
b. Fellowship Activities		
c. Health & Welfare Ministry		
d. Missions Work/ Mission Trips		
e. Music Ministries		
f. Nursery		
g. Outreach Ministries		
h. Prayer Ministry		
i. Preaching Ministry		
j. Small Groups (all types)		
k. Stephen Ministry		
l. Sunday School		
m. VBS – Vacation Bible School		
n. Vineyard		
o. Worship (Sunday & Sat.)		
p. Young Adult		
q. Young Family		
r. Youth Ministry		
s. Other (please specify):		

A. Use this space if you would like to explain your rating of any the ministry(s) above:

4. Please pick your top two (2) priority ministries in the previous list and answer these two questions about each ministry. Use question "Z" below if you need more space.

Ministry (Please write in its name here)	1. How does your involvement in this ministry affect or impact you or others positively (or otherwise)?	Any comments or suggestion to improve this ministry.
A:		
B:		

5. Thinking about your own spiritual gifts and talents, please answer these questions:

- A. Do you know what your spiritual gifts and personal talents are? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Unsure
- B. How are you currently using your gifts and talents in the Body of Christ (the church)?
- C. What, if anything, is hindering your from using your gifts and talents for the Lord?
- D. How would you like to use your gifts and talents in the church in a way you are not doing now?

6. Thinking about the church's future ministry, where would you like us to go in mission & ministry?

7. The Local Mission Visioning Team, appointed by Admin Board, is researching leasing or buying a building on Main St., Schuylkill Haven, to meet some community needs, possibly including a youth center, Christian coffee house, counseling offices and/or live entertainment venue. Your thoughts?

- A. ___ Don't know enough about it.
- B. ___ I need more time to pray about it, more information to understand the 'what' and 'why.'
- C. ___ I'm for it // against it (circle one). Why or why not:
- D. Comments or Questions:

8. Thinking about the United Methodist Church as a Denomination:

- A. Are you aware of the current state of the UM Denomination? ___ Yes ___ No
- B. Do you know what the Wesley Covenant Association (WCA) is? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Unsure
- C. Are you aware that First UMC of Schuylkill Haven is a member of the WCA? ___ Yes ___ No
- D. Comments or Questions:

Z. Other comments or observations on any part of this survey or any other item on your mind?

Please check here if you would like us to follow up with you. _____ About which survey item? _____

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- D. Comments or Questions:

Z. Other comments or observations on any part of this survey or any other item on your mind?

Please check here if you would like us to follow up with you. _____ About which survey item? _____

VISITATION LIST

Orwigsburg

The following people are on our Visitation List due to illness, recovery or homebound for on reason or another. Please let them know you are thinking about them with a card, phone call or even a short visit.

Schuylkill Haven

Evelyn Moyer
McKinley Street

Jean Huntzinger
2 Blossom Lane

Ken & Lucille Romberger
406 May Drive

Shirley & Lenny Yenilaitus
61 Memorial Drive

Daryl Hoffmaster
Rose Wood Manor

Pottsville

Rev. Carl Geary
1425 Sweet Arrow Lake Road

Debra Urffer
Manor Care Rm. 324

Marilyn Koch
Manor Care Rm. 226

Donald McDemus
Manor Care, 3rd fl.

Claire Bowman
Weston Center Rm 25

Dr. Herb Rubright
33 Grist Mill Rd.

Marion Geary
Seton Manor Nursing Home Rm. 607

Carol Shappell
Seton Manor

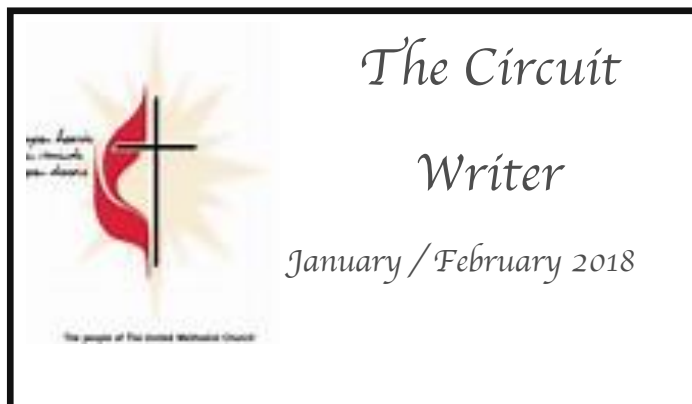
Topton

Jack O'Rourke
32 Price Drive

Our minister of visitation Mr. Brian Reading visits each one every month. We have another congregation member who visit once a month: Vickie Brink. If you would like to join this team of people who visit our members from time to time, please see Brian and he will help you get started. If you know of someone that we have missed, please contact Brian as well. Thank you.

**FIRST UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH**
420 Saylor Street
Schuylkill Haven, PA. 17972

Phone: 570-385-3941
Fax: 570-385-6842
E-Mail: office@havenfirstumc.org
www.havenfirstumc.org



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First United Methodist Church

"Our Mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world"

Sunday Services at 8:00 A.M. & 10:45 A.M.

Sunday School at 9:15 A.M.

Saturday Evenings at 6:00 P.M.

Our Vision: Welcoming, Empowering, Reaching Out
Ministers: Everyone of us:
Pastors and Staff:

Dr. Christopher Fisher	Senior Pastor
JoAnn Daum	Office Manager
Marcy Hudock	Sexton
Adam Kraft	Treasurer
Nancy Kraft	Parish Nurse
Cynthia McClelland	Organist/Music Director
Brian Reading	Minister of Visitation
Julie Saunders	Choir Director
Pamela Setlock	Church Secretary
Adhurim Xhemajli	Associate Pastor of Youth & Young Adult Ministries