

Greetings from First UCC!

We pray that God's blessings continue to fill your home and touch your life!

Big Hallelujah News!

We are planning to gather together, in person, for worship at the Church
Beginning THIS SUN., JULY 19th
at our usual 10:00 a.m. time!

Naturally, we will be following proper distancing & safety protocols but it will be a beautiful blessing to gather as a Church Family again!
More details will follow soon!



While we 'reopen' today, we do plan to CONTINUE to offer a video Worship services for those who are unable or uncomfortable attending 'in person' worship, or for anyone who would like to join us via the internet!

Rev. Mike would like to share this Sunday's Gospel message of hope with you. Even in the midst of this world-wide health emergency, Jesus love is still with us.

You may view the video of Rev. Mike sharing this Sunday's message by clicking this link...

[July 19th Worship Service](#)

Please use this 'mini-bulletin' to follow along with the service, reading responses along with Kathleen in the video. Our 'mini-bulletin' also includes other information & announcements to keep you informed. Please feel free to share the bulletin & the video with others.



Thanks to Kathleen Dowd for serving as the Sound Engineer & as the "People" for our Responsive Readings.

Thanks, as always, to our Music Director, Sheila Cooke for recording our worship music each week.

Thanks to Paul Ricciardi at Golden Pepper Productions, Inc. for setting our video up for us each week.

Thanks to Gabby & Cliff at Cliff Ross Advertising & Design for assisting us with our Facebook postings.



~ First United Church of Christ ~

229 Church St. • Easton • Pennsylvania 18042

Rev. J. Michael Dowd, Pastor ~ Sheila Cooke, Music Director

Telephone: 610-258-3361 ~ Email: firstucc2@verizon.net

website: www.firstucceaston.org ~ Facebook (First UCC Easton)

~ Sunday, July 19th, 2020 ~

~ The Seventh Sunday After Pentecost ~



Opening Hymn: #84 ~ “This Is the Day”

Call to Worship: (Please read responsively)

Leader: This church opens wide its doors and bids you welcome to this time of worship.

Women: We welcome you to this place of prayer.

Men: We welcome you to this house of God.

Women: We welcome you to this sanctuary of transformation.

All: To the God who makes all things possible, let us lift our voices in praise!

Call to Confession:

We know that we have not lived according to God’s desires for us. The brokenness in the world, and the sin and despair in our hearts, threaten to consume us as a mighty flood. Yet God is our hope and our firm foundation. Let us confess our sin before our gracious God.

Confession of Sin:

We have failed as your church, O God. You call us to live faithfully, act justly and bring peace to the earth. Instead, our lives and your church reflect more of our needs and worries and less of the needs and worries of all peoples. Move us beyond ourselves to hear the cry of the world and to respond with acts and deeds of kindness, mercy and justice. May your grace shine through a church that, even with its shortcomings, accepts the call of Christ to serve and care and love and bring peace. May we feel your forgiving spirit now. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon:

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. In our forgiveness, may we blossom fully with purpose and resolve, so that the world will know us by our love.

Gloria Patri: (Spoken together, in Unison)

**Glory be to the Father, and
To the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now,
And ever shall be;
World with out end. Amen**

Prayer for Illumination: (Spoken together, in Unison)

**Gracious God, as we turn to your Word for us, may the Spirit of God rest upon us.
Help us to be steadfast in our hearing, in our speaking, in our believing and in our living. Amen.**

HOLY SCRIPTURES

Our Old Testament Lesson for Sunday, July 19th is: **Genesis 28:10-19** (NIV)

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. ¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it^[a] stood the Lord, and he said: “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will

be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.^[b] ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.”

¹⁸ Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ He called that place Bethel,^[c] though the city used to be called Luz.

Our Epistle Lesson for Sunday, July 19th is: Romans 8:12-25 (NIV)

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.^[a] And by him we cry, “*Abba*,^[b] Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that^[c] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Our Gospel Lesson for Sunday, July 19th is: Matthew 13:24-30 & 36-43 (NIV)

Verses 24-30

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and

sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

Verses 36-43

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Meditation ~ “Time to Pull the Weeds” ~ *Matthew 13:24-30*

In Saint Louis a few years ago a woman noticed a few bees buzzing around the attic of her home. Since there were only a few, she made no effort to deal with them. Over the summer the bees continued to fly in and out the attic vent while the woman remained unconcerned, unaware of the growing city of bees that was taking up residence just above her ceiling.

The whole attic became a hive, and the ceiling of the second-floor bedroom finally caved in under the weight of hundreds of pounds of honey and thousands of angry bees. While the woman escaped serious injury, she was unable to repair the damage of her accumulated neglect.

That's a parable about many people's lives, is it not? We let things go. We put off dealing with them. We ignore that which is disturbing, yet inconvenient--until it is too late. And our ceiling comes crashing in.

Neglect. What a powerful word. It describes many family relationships. Neglect. Spouses neglected. Children neglected. Later, older parents neglected. Responsibilities neglected. Opportunities neglected. It is a specter that haunts all of life. Neglect. Ever seen a neighborhood that's neglected? How about a home? A garden?

Malcolm Gladwell in his book, The Tipping Point, tells about "the Broken Window" theory of crime. Many years ago, criminologists James Q. Wilson and George Kelling formulated this theory about how a neighborhood or community slowly gives in to increasing crime rates. They called it the Broken Window theory. Wilson and Kelling said that crimes are more likely to be committed in areas where it appears that the residents have lowered their standards and no longer care about their community.

If a window is broken and left unrepaired, people start to assume that no one cares about maintaining that building. More windows will get broken. As the building becomes more dilapidated, there is a growing assumption of lawlessness by the residents. People assume that they can lower their standards of behavior, because no one will notice or care.

The mayors of several cities have used the Broken Window theory in the as a guide for improving the quality of life in their cities. The City of Easton launched a similar project several years ago including the Easton Ambassadors, neighborhood police dedicated to their community, special incentives to convert apartment buildings to single occupancy, to encourage home ownership, community pride and support. As the Ambassadors cleaned up downtown streets and alleys, greeted visitors, kept a watch for crime, cleaned up graffiti, and police officers became familiar with and to their neighborhoods, home ownership and neighborhood pride began to increase, and Easton began to change and in many ways in the envy of the Lehigh Valley cities. Attitude and appearance was changed.

Neglect. Broken Windows. Weeds growing in the garden. Jesus told a parable about a man who sowed good seed in his field. But, in the night while he was sleeping, someone with a grudge against him came and sowed weeds among the wheat. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

"An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

"No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" (NIV)

We're told that in Syria and Palestine there is a weed known as the bearded darnel which grows plentifully. Here's the problem with this weed: it bears an uncanny resemblance to wheat--until the head appears on the plant. Only then is the difference easily discerned. The weed appears to be wheat--even an experienced farmer could not tell the difference--until the time comes for it to produce fruit. Only then is its true nature revealed. To have attempted to weed it out sooner would have been impossible and attempting to do so would have destroyed valuable grains.

Weeds and wheat. Kind of a scary parable, if you think about it. It's easy to talk about God's grace--God's loving acceptance of the unworthy. But we are left with these harsher teachings of our Master. Some people are like wheat; some are like weeds. Wheat goes in the barn;

weeds go in the furnace. I don't know about you, but I want to be wheat. I don't want to end up in the furnace with the weeds. You can do with this parable what you will.

I. Fighting the Weeds in Our Own Life.

I do know that I am continually fighting weeds in my own life.

Aren't you? If I neglect my car, sooner or later it catches up with me. The battery cables corrode. And one cold winter night, the car refuses to start. And, you know what I do? I pray, "Lord, why did you let this happen to me?" I need to get to that meeting, but my car won't start." But the Lord had nothing to do with it. It was my own neglect.

If I neglect my lawn, soon there are dandelions everywhere. If I neglect my health, sooner or later I pay a price. If I neglect my responsibilities here at the church, weeds sprout up all over the place. Battling weeds goes with being a responsible human being. Keeping a garden or keeping a life is not easy. Someone has said that when weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.

How true it is. Pulling weeds is not easy, and it's never fun, but it is invariably a mark of character as well as successful living.

Pastor Cecil Williams tells of growing up in Texas. They didn't have electric lights in their house. They had two oil lamps with wicks that had to be lit daily. Once they were lit, a glass shade fit over the flame and they glowed.

Cecil's mother kept telling her children, "Ya'll clean the shade before you put it over the lamp. If you don't, you won't get as much light." Young Cecil didn't like cleaning the lamp shades. It took a long time and lots of elbow grease to scour off the sticky, gray soot. But when the shade was clean, one lamp would be bright enough to light up the whole living room.

Back then, cleaning the lamp shades was Cecil's job. He couldn't ask his brother or his sister to do his job for him. If he took a day off, everybody could tell. The light would be dim. Cecil Williams says he has discovered that what was true back then about lamp cleaning is also true about life cleaning. "Neither you nor I can ask anybody else to clean up our lives. My life belongs to me, and your life belongs to you. I have to clean my life daily or my light won't shine; so do you."

We are mixing our metaphors, perhaps. Cleaning lamp shades and pulling weeds and fixing broken windows and cleaning out a beehive growing in our attic. But you get the idea. There are things in life which must be looked after. If we let them go, we start to notice. And generally, we notice after the damage has been done.

II. Fighting the Weeds in Our Relationships.

Let me say a word to parents and grandparents. Beware. Kids today are exposed to temptations that earlier generations never dreamed of. Most kids are great kids, but some of them will be damaged goods by the time they reach adulthood. Some of that damage could be avoided by vigilant parenting and today grandparenting.

Author Carole Mayhall tells how her mother dealt with a common vice that captures many people when they're teens--smoking. Carole's mother looked dead serious as she announced that she knew she could not always be Carole's keeper as she grew up. So she would not insist that Carole not smoke. After this pronouncement, though, she paused for effect and then delivered the killer line: "But you must promise that you will smoke your first cigarette in front of me."

A few of Carole's friends had begun to experiment with smoking despite their parents' warnings. Carole was shocked by what her mother had said. Carole's parents had never broken a promise to her, and she was expected to honor her promises as well.

Her mother was a wise woman. By extracting that promise from her daughter, she had effectively taken all the fun out of sneaking off to smoke. To this day, Carole has yet to smoke her first cigarette. Who in the world would light up her first smoke in front of the mother she loved and respected, breaking her heart in the process? Smart Mom.

In his 1996 book, Beyond the Classroom, Laurence Steinberg, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at Temple University in Philadelphia, cited his survey of 20,000 teenagers, in which one-third claimed their parents had "no idea" who their friends were, where they went after school and how they spent their money. That has only gotten worse since that time.

There are some weeds growing in those gardens. Weeds that need to be pulled. You and I have no use for people who abuse children. Most of us would bury them under the jail house if we had the opportunity. But we know of well-known organizations that have buried their knowledge of child abuse for the benefit of the organization. We have an obligation to weed it out. If we see it our neighborhood, in our family we must root it out. We also need to understand that neglect is a form of abuse. Take time to pull the weeds. It's so important in the area of relationships.

III. Fighting the Weeds in Our Relationship with God.

Some of us have weeds growing in our most important relationship of all--our relationship with God.

It's true, isn't it? We don't pray as often as we should. We don't rely on God's guidance like we should. We live as practical atheists most of the time with no real thought to God's claim on our lives. And the weeds grow.

I enjoyed reading a description pastor and author Brian Waite once gave of his family. He said that generations of men in his family have gained a reputation for foolish choices. There is a statue in New Hampshire erected to the memory of a General Waite, a leader in the Revolutionary War. General Waite abandoned his troops in the midst of a battle and ran away from the front lines. But he became lost in the dark night; he and his horse froze to death. The statue makes note of his cowardice and foolishness.

Pearl Waite, another man in Brian Waite's family line, invented "crystallized gelatin," or Jell-O. Unfortunately, Pearl Waite sold the patent to his invention for just \$25.00. The man who bought the patent turned Jell-O into a product worth many millions of dollars. Pearl Waite died broke.

But in 1981, Brian Waite made the wisest and best decision any Waite man has ever made: he gave his life to Christ. Now his life had a new purpose and peace. He became determined to break the chain of foolish choices and defeated living that defined the Waite men. Brian married a wonderful woman and entered the ministry. He served as an Army chaplain overseas, but he kept in close touch with his parents, who were atheists. Brian's new attitude convinced his parents that his faith was real, and that they could have a relationship with God, too. In 1996, both of Brian Waite's parents gave their lives to Christ.

There are no weeds growing in Brian Waite's life--in his relationships with his parents, his wife or with God. He has his priorities in order.

How about you? It's a simple idea, but so very vital. Relationships take maintenance, just like our car, just like our house, just like our lawn or our community. Our relationships with our children, our spouse, our parents, and, most important of all, our relationship with God. Are there weeds growing in your garden? It's time to pull them out. Today.



Affirmation of Faith: (Please read responsively)

Leader: There is one hope, one calling, to which we are called.

People: The hope in our lives is Jesus.

Leader: There is one hope, one calling, to which we are called.

People: The call we must answer is God's.

Leader: There is one faith, one hope, one Lord of us all.

People: The Lord of our lives is Jesus.

Leader: There is one baptism, one Father, one Mother of all.

People: The Creator who calls us is God.

Leader: We are one body, one family, one church,

People: woven by the Spirit with bonds of peace.

Leader: With Christ's children throughout all of this earth,

People: we are one body in unity and love.

Pastoral Prayer:

God of infinite love and grace, we come to you ever thankful for this place of worship and this time of prayer. We offer our thanks for our family gathered here and ask that your healing presence be with those in our family who are ill; and with those who are homebound; and with those who mourn with a sorrow too deep for words. We acknowledge that our faith binds us to each other — and to that which is holy. And yet we confess that there are some people to whom we do not feel bound. We confess that there are times when we build walls instead of opening doors. We turn a deaf ear to those in pain or in need of our counsel because we are too busy to open the door of our hearts. And sometimes when we listen, we listen poorly. We talk when we should be silent, and we become mute when we should use our voices to break barriers down. Break down the walls of our apathy and reluctant resistance, O God, to do what you would have us do.

We pray for those who are poor in body or in spirit, for those oppressed and heavy laden, for those sick or in despair, especially Janet Kobler's cousin Karen B, Gregg D, Linda Arnold's Father Harold Mims, Marjorie Harron, Helena Rapp, Evelyn Ritter, Phyllis Rush, Helen Litzenberger, George Beling, Wendy Wandersee and Danny K who is suffering from brain cancer. We pray that the Lowe's will feel the comfort of your hand as they deal with the death of Gordon's mother. We share our prayers for the continued health of those who spend their lives in health care and essential jobs, Mark Cooke, Keith Berger, David Wandersee, Ross Forsythe, David Skillinge, Helen Corona, and Jill West. Care for all those for whom we have prayed.

We thank you for our family gathered with you. Help us to catch a vision of what we are to be because of what they were. Open our hearts to the strengthening presence of all who love us, in this life and beyond. Enter into our hearts that we might be moved to walk with Jesus wherever we are led. It is in his name that we pray as we say the prayer he taught his disciples

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth,
As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

Offering Dedication:

Gracious Spirit, you have showered us with your gifts, and we embrace you with thanksgiving. May our embrace be arms wide open, ready to share, to serve and to love. Use our spiritual gifts that we may live the spiritual life, moving according to the Spirit's heated touch and bending in the direction of God's holy will.

Doxology: (Spoken together, in Unison)

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him all creatures here below.
Praise Him above Ye Heavenly Host
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
Amen

CLOSING HYMN: #495 ~ "Called as Partners in Christ's Service"

Benediction:

Friends, go into this week with God's word to Jacob — and to us — ringing in your ears: "I am the LORD. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised to you." By the power of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, let us live into God's word of presence and power to us this week. Amen.

Pastor's Recessional Music

Postlude



As we navigate our way through this difficult and unpredictable time please share your personal, family and neighbor prayer requests. You can send them by email for our church office: firstucc2@verizon.net or you may call the office & leave a message. Also please share our First UCC Worship program & video with your friends and family.



Announcements for Sunday, July 19th, 2020 ~

No matter who you are, or where you are on your life's journey,
you're welcome here. Join us in celebrating First UCC's
respect for the past and faith in the future.



PLEASE NOTE: Hospitals no longer notify the church or the pastor unless you SPECIFICALLY REQUEST IT. So please, if you or a family member is hospitalized, let us know by calling the office at 610-258-3361!



Please see our prayer list below.

OR by calling or texting Rev. Mike directly on his cell phone at 610-216-5471.



IMPORTANT FIRST CHURCH NOTES...

Rev. Dowd & our First Church leadership will continue to monitor the ongoing Corona virus situation. We will be especially mindful of the most vulnerable members of our First Church Family & make decisions accordingly.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US TODAY AS WE RE-OPEN! We will continue to meet on an ongoing basis to discuss how things are working. We will share information on these decisions as they are made. **HOWEVER, we do plan to CONTINUE to offer a video Worship service for those who are unable or uncomfortable attending ‘in person’ worship or for anyone who would like to join us via the internet!**

Please keep watching your **e-mail**, our **website** at www.firstucceaston.org, or our **Facebook** page at <https://www.facebook.com/FirstUCCEaston> or call our **Church Office at 610-258-3361** for updates & information.



Rev. Mike is hosting a Virtual WED. EVENING BIBLE STUDY via Zoom, live at 7:30 p.m.! You can join in on the computer or on the **PHONE!!!** This virtual, live, group Bible Study runs from 30 to 60 minutes, depending on what topics come into the conversation. You can join in on line or, you can **CALL IN** & be a part of the group on the phone! Please e-mail Rev. Mike or the Church Office (firstucc2@verizon.net) if you are interested, he will send you the link/info to join.



“SUNSHINE FUND” - We are also most grateful for continued donations to our “Sunshine Fund”, which goes to assist any of our First Church Family members who are in need. **THIS FUND IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW, with many people being out of work due to this health emergency.** Though we have published our Easter dedications today, we are still accepting donations to our “Sunshine Fund”. **A REMINDER – If you are experiencing an emergency need, please contact the Church Office or Rev. Mike directly. All requests will be kept confidential.**



FIRST CHURCH FAMILY NEWS! ...



As we continue in this “state of limbo”, we would like to make note of some of the events in the lives of our First Church Family. IF YOU have family news to share, especially if we missed it, please e-mail or call the office to let us know & we will post it in our next “Mini-Bulletin”. *[Please note: Apologies for missing events that would normally have been shared in our monthly “Steeple News”.]*

“Church Family News” continues...



Our own Linda Wright has had her second book published **“55 (More) Journal Pages ~ Grace Upon Grace”**. It is also available as a paperback & e-book on Amazon, as well as her first book **“333 Journal Pages”**.

STEWARDSHIP NOTE ~



- While we have reopened, many are not able to join us yet. Even through this, our church expenses (gas bill, electric bill, etc.) must still be paid each month. With this in mind, we ask that you continue to contribute during this crisis. You can...
 - **MAIL your contributions** to the church at 229 Church Street, Easton, PA 18042.
 - **DROP your envelope through the MAIL SLOT in the Church St. door of the SCHOOLHOUSE** (formerly the Office). Please make sure your name or envelop number is on it.
 - **Online Giving**, which allows you to make your contributions online from either your bank checking or bank savings account. If you are interested in this online option, please contact Rich Phifer at 610-217-9244 or email Rich at raphifer@rcn.com to get further information about this payment option.



‘SAVE THE FIRST STEEPLE’ project update ~ Work Begins July 27th!

It’s happening! **A high lift will be moved into the courtyard on July 27th to begin work!** This lift will reach up to the Weathervane, where Gordon Bennett Painting will begin their work! Sorry, no lift rides available!!

We are proud to report that we have just reached our \$90,000 fundraising mark, on our way to the \$125,000 goal! A few Final sponsorships are still available at \$2500 each, as well as, a new lighting sponsorship!

Let me know as soon as possible if you are interested in one of these sponsorships for your beautiful historic church!
~ Doreen Arnold, Steeple Project Chair



First Church Prayer Requests ~

Prayer is a powerful thing! God invites us to pray with words of praise, thanksgiving & petitions for others & for ourselves. We gladly receive & share prayer concerns so that we may 'Bear one another's burdens' (Galatians 6:2) and 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.' (Romans 12:15). 

IF YOU ARE IN NEED OF EMERGENCY PASTORAL CARE, please call our church office at 610-258-3361 or Rev. Mike at 610-216-5471.

We all ask for Your blessing, Lord, on all of those who are essential employees & remain in high risk positions, unable to isolate, in order to serve & protect us during this national health emergency & their families. Father bless those in Health Care, First Responders, those who care for others, all those who wait on us in stores, restaurants, those who drive us on public transit & take care of us at other places that we frequent, all those who will be cleaning public places & all those around us who must deal with the public in other ways. Including those in our own families & church family who are 'essential' in their work places (**David S., David W., Helen C., Jill W., Keith B., Keith C., Mark C., Ross F.**) We pray for those who reside in group facilities (nursing homes, hospitals, prisons, group homes, etc.) we pray for Your protection over them Father.

We pray for Your healing for all those afflicted with this Corona virus or who may be ~ **Beth** (Linda W. relative) & others ~ we pray that Your healing love will wash over them, strengthen them & bring them to full & complete recovery.

Lord, we pray for our **hospitalized Veterans and the dedicated staff** that care for them and we **pray for the souls of our Veterans and staff who Shave lost their battle with COVID.**

Father, we lift up those who struggle with mental & emotional health & substance abuse issues, seen & unseen. For many, the amplified uncertainty of what is happening, fear, income/job loss, family stress, loss of support contacts, etc., is more than they can bear. Lord, speak Your Peace into the spirits of those who are gripped by these struggles that may be spiraling out of control. Help them to see You at the center of their storm & let them know You will be their strength.

Lord, we pray for Your wisdom for those who are making decisions about how to keep us all safer. **Help us all to remain calm but cautious.**

We pray for those whose incomes will be affected due to closures, cancelations & cautions. This is a MAJOR problem for many. Help us to help each other through this time. Bless those who we are in debt to, (utility companies, credit card companies, loan holders, medical facilities, insurance companies, etc.) with understanding & compassion. We pray that we will be kind, compassionate & considerate with each other. Help us to see need in our neighbors & in our own families & help us to reach out, to share & to shine the light of hope on those around us.

Please keep these folks in your prayers... Beverly F., Bob G., Bob L., Chris, Danny K., Debbie S. & Family, Deacon Anthony Koury, Doris S., Evelyn R., Fawn B., Ferne, Gregg D., Helena, James R., Jeanette O. & Family, Jill R., Joe R., Kim Keltly, Lila, Marilyn Crozier Snuggs, Marjorie H., Mark, Marlene M., Michael R., Nancy M., Nancy & Ken A., Naomi, Nicole A., Ray U., Ruth F., "Sal: G., Stewart W., Wendy W. & all those affected by the recent storms, fires & other natural disasters, and now disease & civil unrest, Lord, protect them, keep them strong & help them to recover their lives.

We pray for Ashley, Barbara, Bonnie, Brittany, Claritza, Davonna, Davon, Dawn, Delila, Katie, Kimberly, Skyler, Susan, Charlene, Amy, Jailien, Jessica, Rose, Twanda, Wendy, Nancy, Natasha & all officers & prisoners at NC Prison.

ALSO, we lift up the Berger Family, The Lowe Family, the Flad/Orso family & All whose broken hearts endlessly grieve. LORD, send Your sweet, tender & restorative love to cover them all.

Jesus, we pray for our Nation, that we can come together for each other, for this whole world Lord.

We pray for You to watch over parents & families & all of our young people. Especially now, while schools are closed. Lord keep Your hand on them & guide their choices & decisions. Help families to meet the extra needs they have during this time.

Lord, again we see more cases of severe racial inequality in our nation & the anger of a community that has had enough. We lift up ALL victims of hatred, violence, abuse & their families & all people of faith as we pray for healing for them all, for our nation & an end to hate. We pray for peaceful but meaningful protests that are heard by the heart of this nation. We pray for a leader to step forward from that community, a person of character, peace & strength, to end the violent protests & to channel the anger into meaningful action & change rather than destruction.

Lord, we pray for healing of these communities around our nation that have been ravaged as protests morphed into riots, looting & violence. Lord, speak to the hearts of those perpetrators & show them that, that is not the way. We pray for those were injured or killed, for whose businesses, homes & possessions were destroyed. We pray that those responsible will step forward to bring restitution & restoration.

We thank you & pray for those who protest in peace, who seek justice & peace. We thank you & pray for the police & other law enforcement agents who act with restraint & compassion and we pray for those who don't.

We lift up all of our military and all of our first responders, LORD, we ask for your protection over them all as they serve us all.

We pray that You will give our leaders the courage & compassion to make changes that will begin to heal our nation.

We pray for our very planet. It seems to be groaning with earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, germs & all sorts of natural responses to our treatment of our host planet, our home here in the Universe. Lord help us to find better ways to live so we do not endanger ALL life that shares this planet with us.

Jesus, thank You for coming to save us! Without You, we would all be lost. AMEN.



**Even though we have moved “Into the Green”, we all need to
continue to be “Corona Warriors”
We need to protect our loved ones, ourselves & those around us!**

- If you are sick **STAY HOME & CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR.**
- We should still **LIMIT CONTACT IN PUBLIC PLACES** and **WEAR MASKS.**
- If you do go out to the store, check with neighbors & friends to see if you can pick up items for them (the fewer folks out there, the better!)
- Use grocery/pharmacy pick up services & delivery services.
- If you go out, make sure to wash your hands, sanitize your carts, car, bag handles, doors knobs, & all high touch areas.
- Katie & Larry Miner have volunteered to run **NECESSARY** errands for folks who are at high risk or cannot get out. You can contact Katie by calling 610-258-4426.

**Please keep watching your e-mail for updates & information!
Say your prayers, wash your hands & stay well!**



**The Church Office will be open on a limited basis during this time.
Please call the office at 610-258-3361 if you need something or before you come,
to make sure someone is there.**

**(But we hope you are all practicing “Social Distancing” &
only go out if it is absolutely necessary.)**

**Please call the office at 610-258-3361 or e-mail us at firstucc2@verizon.net if you have
prayer requests to share or if you are in need of assistance.**

***Say your prayers, wash your hands, wear your mask &
may God’s blessings cover you & those you love!***

