

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

**We are now gathering together, in person, for worship at the Church  
Every Sunday at our usual 10:00 a.m. time!**

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



While we are open, 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...**

**[September 13<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:firstucc2@verizon.net)

website: [www.firstucceaston.org](http://www.firstucceaston.org) ~ Facebook (First UCC Easton)

**~ Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 ~**

**~ The Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost ~**



**Opening Hymn: #395 ~ "In Christ There Is No East or West"**

**Call to Worship:** (Please read responsively – L = Leader, P = People)

L: Let us examine ourselves to see if we rest in faith.

P: **May Christ's power rest upon us.**

("Call To Worship" continues...)

L: We do not boast of our week's conquests, but we boast rather of the things that reveal our weakness.

**P: May Christ's power rest upon us.**

L: Do you not know the stirrings of divine power laid beneath the hardships of everyday life?

**P: May Christ's power rest upon us.**

L: Cultivated by humility to be released as a fragrance of new life ...

**All: Is the power of the living Christ.**

**Call to Confession:** (Please read responsively)

L: Blessed be the Holy Trinity, the one who fashions us, the one who heals us, the one who reforms us again and again.

**P: Amen.**

L: Let us confess our sin, calling for God's transforming power. (*Silence for reflection and self-examination.*)

**Confession of Sin:** (Spoken together, in Unison)

**We confess that we have not allowed your grace to set us free. We fear that we are not good enough. We hear your word of love freely given to us, yet we expect others to earn it. We turn the church inward, rather than moving it outward. Forgive us. Stir us. Reform us to be a church powered by love, willing to speak for what is right, act for what is just, and seek the healing of your whole creation. Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon:**

L: God hears our cry and sends the Spirit to change us and empower our lives in the world. Our sins are forgiven, God's love is unconditional, and we are raised up as God's people, who will always be made new in the name of Jesus Christ.

**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:**

L: Holy Spirit, prepare us to hear from the Scriptures. Sometimes it can be easy to dismiss a passage that seems familiar. We've heard it before and so we disengage. Yet we know that your word is powerful and that it is calling us to live like Jesus. Do not let us turn off our ears so quickly. Help us to listen well and respond with obedience. Let us see what it is you are doing through the Scriptures we hear today. You are working and we want to join you. Amen.

## **HOLY SCRIPTURES**

**Our Old Testament Lesson for Sunday, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> is: Exodus 14:19-31 (NIV)**

<sup>19</sup>Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, <sup>20</sup>coming

between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

<sup>21</sup> Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, <sup>22</sup> and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

<sup>23</sup> The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. <sup>24</sup> During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. <sup>25</sup> He jammed<sup>[a]</sup> the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."

<sup>26</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." <sup>27</sup> Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward<sup>[b]</sup> it, and the Lord swept them into the sea. <sup>28</sup> The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

<sup>29</sup> But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. <sup>30</sup> That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. <sup>31</sup> And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

## **Our Epistle Lesson for Sunday, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> is: Romans 14:1-12 (NIV)**

**14** Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. <sup>2</sup> One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup> The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. <sup>4</sup> Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

<sup>5</sup> One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. <sup>6</sup> Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. <sup>7</sup> For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. <sup>8</sup> If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. <sup>9</sup> For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

<sup>10</sup> You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister<sup>[a]</sup>? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. <sup>11</sup> It is written:

"As surely as I live," says the Lord,  
'every knee will bow before me;  
every tongue will acknowledge God.'"<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>12</sup> So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.

## Our Gospel Lesson for Sunday, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> is: Matthew 18:21-36 (NIV)

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup> “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>24</sup> When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>25</sup> And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup> So the servant<sup>[c]</sup> fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ <sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup> But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,<sup>[d]</sup> and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ <sup>29</sup> So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ <sup>30</sup> He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup> Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ <sup>34</sup> And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,<sup>[e]</sup> until he should pay all his debt. <sup>35</sup> So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

## Meditation ~ “How We Forgive” ~

An elderly man wandering on a lonely beach found a magic lamp. Naturally he rubbed the lamp and a genie appeared. The genie told the old man he would grant him any wish. The man thought for a while and said, “My brother and I had a fight 20 years ago and we haven’t spoken since. My wish is that he would finally forgive me.”

The genie clapped his hands, a bright light shot across the sky, and then he said, “Your wish has been granted.” Then the genie said, “You know, most men would have asked for wealth and fame. But you only asked for the love of your brother. Is it because you are old and dying?”

The man said, “No, I’m not dying, but my brother is, and he’s worth \$60 million.” No wonder that man wanted his brother’s forgiveness.

There’s a story about a little boy who was saying his prayers one night. As he went down the list of his family, asking God to bless each one of them, he omitted his brother’s name. His mother asked, “Why didn’t you pray for Danny?”

He said, “I’m not going to ask God to bless Danny because he hit me.”

And his mother said, “Don’t you remember Jesus said to forgive your enemies?”

The little boy said, “That’s just the trouble. He’s not my enemy; he’s my brother!”

Sometimes it’s hard to forgive a brother or sister, someone close to you.

In today's lesson Simon Peter wanted to know exactly what the Master expected out of him when it came to forgiveness. The prominent Rabbis of the day were teaching that one should forgive his brother three times. Was that enough? Simon Peter wondered. So, one day he asked Christ this important question: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him—as many as seven times?"

Peter was exceeding the demands of the rabbis, but he still was unsure that he was doing what Christ expected of him.

Some of us probably would like an answer to the same question. Forgiveness is a big problem in our lives. There have been persons who have wronged us and it is so, so difficult to let go of our feelings of anger, resentment and even hatred.

**For many of us, forgiveness of people who have hurt them is the biggest obstacle to their mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.**

In one of his books, business guru Brian Tracy tells about a man who called him one day from the Netherlands. The man had a testimony to give. He said he was raised in a dysfunctional family; he didn't get along with his siblings. He had a bad marriage, was cheated by a business partner, lost all his money, and now he was quite sick.

To this his doctor said quite bluntly, "You're going to die. Your system is so shot it's just like a worn-out car, everything's gone. You've got about six months to live, so you should make peace with whomever or whatever in your life you are unhappy with, because there's nothing that modern medicine can do for you."

The doctor went on to confront the man about his issue with anger. The man was angry with many people. The doctor told him he needed to "let it all go."

This got the man's attention and he started to make a list of all the people he was furious with. He deduced that, if he were to take the doctor's advice seriously, there were thirty-nine people he needed to make his peace with. He went through the list and determined that he was going to forgive them all.

Some of the people were difficult to forgive. With some of them he said, "I'm going to have to call that person." Or "I'm going to have to go and see him in person."

He put all his affairs in order, he wrote his last will and testament, he sold all his worldly goods. Then he phoned or personally visited all the people on his list, and he asked for their forgiveness . . . and he forgave them. For six months he traveled around Europe and even came to the U.S. in order to forgive people and ask for their forgiveness.

As he did this, his health improved, and he got better, much better. By the end of the six months, he had forgiven every single person that ever hurt him. He went back to the doctor. The doctor couldn't believe it: "You are completely symptom-free," the doctor exclaimed. His health was not only much, much better, but he had begun excelling in his work. He was feeling great toward himself and others.

At the end of only six months, the caller was a transformed person. He had called Brian Tracy to tell his story because he had heard Tracy talk about the power of forgiveness in one of his seminars, and he wanted Tracy to know what forgiveness had done for him.

Do you understand why we must forgive? Our refusal to forgive one who has hurt us can have devastating effects not only on them, but also on ourselves. It can shorten our lives, poison our memories, weaken our relationship with God and even afflict our feelings of self-

worth. This is in addition to the damage to the relationship with the person we cannot forgive. That is a high price to pay in order to hold on to resentment, anger and even hatred. But how, you may ask, how do we forgive those who have wronged us? How do we let go of the pain, the resentment, the sense of betrayal?

**We let go, first, by recognizing that we ourselves have been forgiven.** We have been forgiven, and thus we are able to forgive others.

Jesus followed his answer to Simon Peter with an interesting parable of a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

Then, when having been forgiven his debts, the servant would not forgive the debt owed. We know what happened then.

The king called the servant in. "You wicked servant," he said, "I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" In anger the king handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. Then Jesus added these ominous words, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart." (Matthew 18:23-35).

That is a serious indictment for the sin of having an unforgiving heart.

Some of us, every time we pray, we ask God to forgive us of our sins. That's a countless number of requests for forgiveness over a lifetime. And yet we may carry in our hearts grievances toward others that we should have let go of long ago. We let go of these grievances, the pain and resentment of betrayal, first, by recognizing that we ourselves have been forgiven through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Dwight L. Moody once put that grace in a beautiful way. He wrote: "I can imagine Jesus saying, 'Go search out the man who put the crown of thorns on my brow; tell him I will have a crown for him in my kingdom if he will accept salvation; and there shall not be a thorn in it. Find the man who smote the reed on my head, driving the thorns deeper into my brow. Tell him I want to give him a scepter. Go seek out that poor soldier who drove the spear into my side; tell him that there is a nearer way to my heart than that!'" That is the forgiveness of which Christ is capable. That is the forgiveness Christ wants us to show towards others.

**In the second place, we need to recognize that forgiveness is the most powerful witness we have to the activity of grace in our own lives.** Want the world to know that you are a follower of Jesus? Forgive someone who has done you a terrible wrong.

Many of us remember the horror we felt on June 17, 2015, when we learned that a 21-year-old white supremacist named Dylann Roof had mercilessly slaughtered nine African American adults during a Bible study at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. It was a terrible event.

But for some of us the horror of that terrible event was replaced with awe at the response of some the family members of the victims when they confronted Dylann Roof in court. They said things to him like, "I forgive you. You took something very precious from me. But I forgive you."

Another person said, "I forgive you; my family forgives you. But we would like you to take this opportunity to repent. Repent. Confess. Give your life to the one who matters the most . . . Christ."

Still another said, “May God have mercy on you.”

As one pastor described it, “These people had just gone through the most terrible storm you can imagine. But there was no hatred in their voice. Sorrow, yes, but no hatred. Only love and forgiveness.”

Can you imagine a more powerful witness to the grace of Jesus Christ than being able to forgive a murderer of someone you loved dearly? Forgiveness is tough business.

The great church father Augustine once said that sometimes people in his church omitted the phrase from the Lord’s Prayer that says, “and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” They “just passed right over that phrase silently,” he said, “because they knew it would be lying for them to say that aloud.”

I suspect that would be true of many Christians if we took seriously this segment of the Lord’s Prayer. We would not want to utter those words, “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Forgiveness is hard. It may be the most difficult requirement of our faith. But it will be easier if we acknowledge that we ourselves have been forgiven and, if we acknowledge that forgiveness is the most powerful witness we have to the activity of grace in our own lives. And that brings us to the final thing that needs to be said.

**Forgiveness is a positive activity necessary to the healing and wholeness of our own hearts.** When we do not forgive, two people suffer—the one we can’t forgive and we ourselves. In other words, forgiveness is not only something we do for the person who hurt us; it is something we do for ourselves. Let me give you an example:

A man named Byron Johnson has interviewed hundreds of inmates in penal institutions. He tells about many of these interviews in a book titled, *More God, Less Crime*. He interviewed one prisoner on multiple occasions. The prisoner was Ron Flowers, a convicted murderer from Houston, TX. Flowers was convicted of shooting a teenage girl named Dee Dee Washington. She was in the car of another person who, unbeknownst to her, was attempting to purchase drugs. In other words, she was simply an innocent bystander—collateral damage. But she was killed, nonetheless.

Ron Flowers became a Christian in prison, but still he refused to admit that he was guilty of this murder. However, while in prison, Flowers began to participate in a faith-based prison program and there he met a pastor of a church in Houston who did volunteer work at the prison. One day the minister mentioned to one of his members that he was working with prisoners at a nearby prison. Intrigued, Arna Washington, a schoolteacher, asked the pastor if he had met or had heard of Ron Flowers. Then she added, “That’s the name of the man who killed my daughter fourteen years ago”

The pastor replied, “He’s in my group—would you like to meet him?”

Mrs. Washington, did, in fact, want to meet Ron Flowers—a person she had come to hate. Not long after her daughter’s murder, Mrs. Washington’s husband and son also died. Though a devout Christian, Mrs. Washington was clearly bitter and had written letters to the Texas parole board in an effort to ensure that Flowers would stay in prison as long as possible. Now she would actually have the opportunity to meet him and ask him the question she had been struggling with for fourteen years.

When the meeting took place, several unexpected things happened. The moment they met face-to-face, Flowers, even to his own surprise, for the first time, confessed to the murder. Mrs. Washington then asked the question she had been waiting to ask: “Why did you shoot and kill my daughter?”

Flowers explained he had been a crazed teenager who was strung out on drugs, and he just started shooting and she happened to get shot. He went on to say, “I don’t know if you can forgive me, but I’m sorry for what I have done.”

To Mrs. Washington’s surprise, she heard herself saying, “I forgive you.”

Later in an interview with Byron Johnson, Mrs. Washington confessed, “That was the moment I got my life back. A huge load was lifted the instant I forgave him.” Did you hear what she said? “That was the moment I got my life back . . .” Forgiveness of another is the best thing we can do for ourselves.

The story doesn’t end there. Mrs. Washington went on to develop a strong and lasting relationship with Ron Flowers. In a sense, she adopted him as her son.

“Ron got out of prison in 1998 and visited Mrs. Washington weekly. He sat with her in church on Sundays, and she played a crucial role in his successful transition back to society. Now happily married,” writes Byron Johnson, “Ron has been out of prison for more than a decade, has been employed at the same company for nine years, has a four-year-old son, and has a bright future.” Mrs. Washington died in 2007—filled with the peace that only forgiveness can bring.

Is there someone you need to forgive—an unfaithful spouse—an overbearing parent—a friend who has stabbed you in the back—an employer who has taken advantage of you? I know there is pain, but the most powerful witness we have to the action of the grace of God at work in our own lives is the ability to forgive others. As we forgive, we heal not only the wounds of a broken relationship, we find healing for wounds inflicted in our own hearts by anger, hurt and resentment. God has forgiven each of us for every soiled thought, act, and deed of which we are capable. Can we not forgive one another? Three times? Seven times? Yes, even seventy times seven?



**Affirmation of Faith:** (Please read together in UNISON)

**All: We believe in one God, Lord of heaven and Earth. We believe that the gift of our salvation is eternal life with Jesus Christ our Lord. We believe that God created heaven, that he lives and reigns there, and that we will live with him when he one day calls us home. We live by faith, believing that what is unseen will one day be revealed, to the glory of our one God, Lord of heaven and Earth.**

**Pastoral Prayer:**

L: Holy God, we are awed and humbled by your gracious presence among us. Who are we in light of your sovereign majesty? You who formed us, you who know the numbers of hairs on our heads, you open to us the riches of your kingdom. Your love and mercy, forgiveness and peace, comfort and protection are not withheld from us but are poured out in abundance. We pray for continued healing for Collette Andreadis, Jeanette Orso, Sal Giamoni, Danny K, Bonnie David, Janet Kobler’s cousin Karen B, Keith Berger, Shirley Galante. We remember Linda Arnold and ask that you be present with her in her grief. We remember Marjorie Harron, Helena Rapp, Phyllis Rush, Evelyn Ritter and Helen Litzenberger. Thank you for loving us with an everlasting love. Renew us and heal us by that love that we might live as your daughters and sons. For the sake of Christ, we pray. Amen.

**Lord's Prayer:** (Please read together in Unison)

**All: 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.**

**Prayer of Dedication:** (Please read together in Unison)

**All: Thanks be to thee, O God, for all good gifts, and especially for thy inexpressible gift of the Lord Jesus. Help us, O Lord, to see wherein we have been blessed, and to be a blessing to others. Amen.**

\* **DOXOLOGY** (SPOKEN 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.**

**Benediction:**

Pardoned by God's abounding grace, empowered by God's constant love and protected by God's peace, let us go forth to serve God and others, always humbly aware of our own shortcomings, but always encouraged by the faithful and loving presence of God in Christ Jesus, to whom be glory and power, now and forever. Amen.

**Closing Hymn:** #311 - "Renew Your Church"



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](mailto: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, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>, 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!** 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](http://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 7:00 p.m.!** **(NOT 7:30) 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](mailto: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...*



**Wishing a HAPPY GRANDPARENTS DAY to all of you who are blessed with grandchildren (or kids in your lives who need you)!**



*“Church Family News” continues...*

**KEEP IN PRAYER...** Please keep Shirley Galante, Collette Andreadis, Bob Arnold Wendy Wandersee, Jeanette Orso, Sal Giamoni, Danny K, Bonnie David, Janet Kobler's cousin Karen B, Moe & Keith Berger. We remember Marjorie Harron, Helena Rapp, Phyllis Rush, Evelyn Ritter and Helen Litzenberger, in our prayers. We offer prayers of sympathy to Linda Arnold & family and to Megan McGinley's family.

**Lord, we pray for the people of California & the western United States who are engulfed in wild fires & smoke.** Give them peace & strength. We pray for You to watch over all the smoke jumpers, firefighters, rescue workers, shelter workers, volunteers & neighbors as they all try to help each other.

**Lord, we pray for the people of Beirut,** for the families of those who were lost, for those who are injured, for the thousands of people who are now homeless in that already hurting land. Help the rest of us to see a way to help them.

Also, please pray for the safety of the **painting technicians & other contractors** who are working on our Steeple restoration project. At times they are working 130 ft. up!



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"**.



**Associate Member Rebecca Price-Janney also had a new book published, "Easton at the Pass".** She is holding a 'virtual/mail-in' book signing with 10% of sales going to support our Steeple Fund. Please see the info & order form at the end of this bulletin.



## 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](mailto:raphifer@rcn.com) to get further information about this payment option.



## 'Steeple Restoration ~ FINAL PHASE!

We are nearing the end of our 'Save the 1<sup>st</sup> Steeple' Restoration project, one that we should all be very proud. We are also nearing our \$125,000 goal. We appreciate everyone's interest and support to accomplishment this significant and historic effort. We continue to welcome your donations and your commitments. We would appreciate them by the end of September. If you have any questions on your donations, please contact Doreen Arnold (610) 252-2703 or Rich Phifer.



celebration!

**SAT., SEPT. 19<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. ~ Join us for our STEEPLE LIGHTING**

**CEREMONY & CELEBRATION** for our church family and community will be held on Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. We will start the festivities at 7:00 PM with the official lighting occurring at 7:30 PM. Please plan to join us for this historic

~ Doreen Arnold, Steeple Project Chair

**Check out all of our Steeple Project Videos on our website or our [NEW YouTube Channel!!!](#)**

We have set up a YouTube channel for the church to post videos of our Restoration progress.

You can find our YouTube channel by searching .....First United Church of Christ Easton PA, then click on the steeple logo!



## **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.*

**Lord, we pray for the people of California & the western United States who are engulfed in wild fires & smoke.** Give them peace & strength. We pray for You to watch over all the smoke jumpers, firefighters, rescue workers, shelter workers, volunteers & neighbors as they all try to help each other.

**Lord, we pray for the people of Beirut,** for the families of those who were lost, for those who are injured, for the thousands of people who are now homeless in that already hurting land. Help the rest of us to see a way to help them.

**Please keep these folks in your prayers...** Baby Jackson Keith Arnold & family, Joseph & Melissa Dennis who were married here recently, Beverly F., Bob A., Bob G., Bob L., Chris, Colette A., 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 Kelty, 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., Shirley 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 Linda Arnold & family, the family of Megan McGinley & 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.**
- **IF YOU TRAVELED out of the area or into an area where covid cases are rising, please be extra cautious about your contacts when you return. You may need to quarantine for the recommended 14 days. Please consult current (& ever changing) PA directives.**

**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](mailto:firstucc2@verizon.net) if you have prayer requests to share or if you are in need of assistance.**

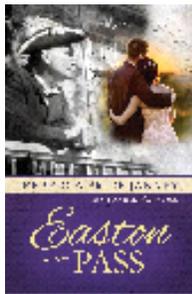
Say your prayers, wash your hands, wear your mask & may God's blessings cover you & those you love!



## "Easton at the Pass" Rebecca Price Janney's Latest Novel

**Who are you when things that define you suddenly change?**

In this strange year, we can all relate to that! Rebecca Price Janney's newest installment in her award-winning *Easton Series*, *Easton at the Pass*, is a book for such a time as this.



Battle-weary Revolutionary War hero Peter Kichline and his remaining troops have returned to Easton, a town in upheaval, as they mend from combat and captivity. Meanwhile back to the future, Erin Miles is settling into her new life in Easton, but the ground has shifted, and the world they once knew and cherished has changed. What they counted on to define themselves and their purpose in life is gone, and they set out to discover, "Who am I now?"

Rebecca is making her book available to First Church via a sign up sheet. If you'd like her to sign a copy for you, just fill out the form below and send it, along with a **check for \$15 made out to "Rebecca Price Janney," to the office**, or give it to Pastor Mike on Sundays through **September 20th**. Rebecca will bring your signed book to the church for you to pick it up.

**Ten percent of sales will go to the Steeple Fund.**

----- Please cut here -----

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

No of Copies: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Inscribe the Book to: \_\_\_\_\_

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Address if you want the book mailed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Add \$2.50 for postage)

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If you are **mailing** your order in, please mail to: Rebecca Price Janney  
75 Pine Manor Drive,  
Hellertown, PA 18055.