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# The Cornerstone

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The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

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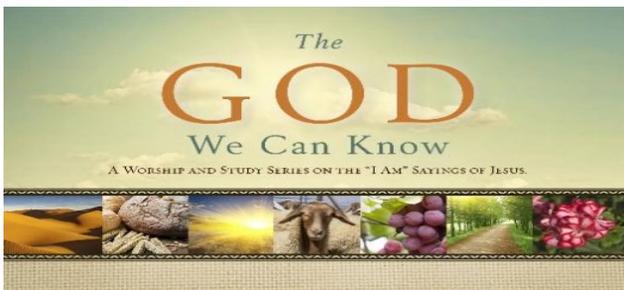
*Psalm 118:22-23*

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VOLUME LXIV NUMBER 9

February 26, 2026



*Second Week of Lent:  
"I Am the Bread of Life"  
Knowing God's Satisfaction  
John 6:27-59*

Our Lenten Worship and Study Series is based on  
*The God We Can Know: Exploring the "I Am" Sayings of Jesus.*  
by Rob Fuquay

The world is driven by a need for fullness. We can only be satisfied if we learn to accept what God puts in front of us each day. So, on this second Sunday of Lent, we will reflect on how the Bread of Life can satisfy our deepest longings and celebrate Holy Communion.

I pray this worship and study series might deepen your journey of discipleship in this Lenten season. See you in church, Jill

**Sunday Worship: Feb. 22 through Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026  
9:30 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.**

**Lent 2: March 1:** *"I Am the Bread of Life." Knowing God's Satisfaction.*  
*John 6:27-59 with Holy Communion.*

**Lent 3: March 8:** *"I Am" the Light of the World: Knowing God's Guidance. John 7:2, 14, & 8:12*

**Lent 4: March 15:** *"I Am" the Good Shepherd: Knowing God's Care. John 10:1-10*

**Lent 5: March 22:** *"I Am" the True Vine: Knowing God's Power. John 15:1-8*

**Palm Sunday (Lent 6) March 29:** *"I Am" the Way, the Truth, and the Life: Knowing God's Way. John 14:1-7*

**Easter Sunday April 5:** *"I Am" the Resurrection and the Life: Knowing God's Possibilities. John 11:17-26*

**Study and Small Group Sharing:**

**Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. & Wednesdays at Noon**

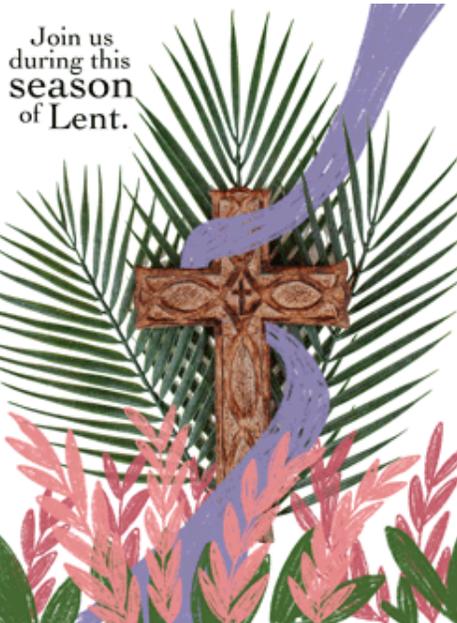
In Wesley Hall, downstairs and to the left of our parking lot entrance.

**Tuesdays:** Feb. 24, March 10, March 17, March 24  
(Note: Not March 3)

**Wednesdays:** March 4, March 11, March 18, March 25  
(Note: Not Feb. 25)

**Daily Devotional:** *Available each Sunday for the coming week.*

If you would like them mailed or emailed to you,  
please contact Joy in the First UMC Office at 732-531-1150.



Lenten Worship & Study Series:  
*The God We Can Know: Exploring the “I Am” Sayings of Jesus*  
by Rob Fuquay.

**Sunday Worship: Feb. 22 through Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026**  
**9:30 a.m.**

- Lent 2: March 1, 2026 – *“I Am the Bread of Life.” Knowing God’s Satisfaction.*  
*John 6:27-59 with Holy Communion*
- Lent 3: March 8, 2026 – *“I Am” the Light of the World: Knowing God’s Guidance.*  
*John 7:2, 14, & 8:12*
- Lent 4: March 15, 2026 – *“I Am” the Good Shepherd: Knowing God’s Care.*  
*John 10:1-10*
- Lent 5: March 22, 2026 – *“I Am” the True Vine: Knowing God’s Power.*  
*John 15:1-8*
- Lent 6: March 29, 2026: Palm Sunday  
*“I Am” the Way, the Truth, and the Life: Knowing God’s Way. John 14:1-7*

**Study and Sharing: Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. & Wednesdays at Noon (please RSVP)**

In Wesley Hall, downstairs and to the left of our parking lot entrance.

Tuesdays: Feb. 24, March 10, March 17, March 24 (Note: Not March 3)

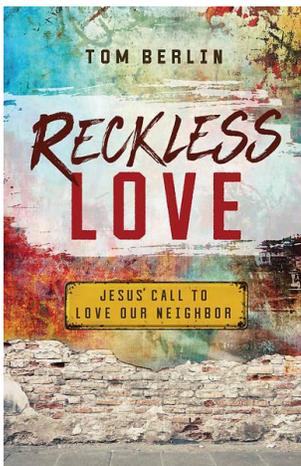
Wednesdays: March 4, March 11, March 18, March 25 (Note: Not Feb. 25)

**Daily Devotional:** Available each Sunday for the coming week.  
If you would like them to be mailed to you, please contact Joy 732-531-1150.



## Eagle Scout Court of Honor

The congregation is invited to the last Eagle Scout Court of Honor that will be held at our church. The date is March 7<sup>th</sup> at 11 a.m. in our sanctuary. This is the last scout from Troop 70 which is disbanding. Please come out and support Troop 70 which has been associated with this congregation for many, many years.



In his latest book *Reckless Love*, author and Pastor Tom Berlin writes that Jesus taught them to love neighbor first as a way to more deeply love God. In his exploration of Jesus' teaching and travels with his disciples, Berlin suggests that Jesus teaches us how to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength by showing us how to love our neighbor. While many hope to learn to be better family, friends, leaders, and neighbors by finding a deeper relationship with God, what if becoming a better neighbor leads you to that deeper love of God?

In *Reckless Love*, you will consider your life, and learn how loving the people around you will completely renew your faith and give you a new experience of loving God

Join the Adult Sunday School as they further explore Pastor Jill's recent sermon series on love. The class will start this study on **March 15<sup>th</sup>** and meets in Wesley Hall at 11 a.m. All are welcome and encouraged to attend. **NOTE:** the study has a companion book by the same name if you'd like to purchase it on your own for deeper study. It is not needed for the study itself.



## Lenten Offerings

Some of you might remember the Lenten banks or coin folders that collected quarters as a Lenten offering. Though the church no longer provides this avenue to give, we do have Lenten offering envelopes by the sanctuary entrances if your Lenten practice is to give toward the ministry of Jesus through FUMCO as a

Lenten practice.

As many of you give something up for Lent as a discipline and/or sacrifice while following Christ to the cross, you might consider putting aside the funds you would have spent on that which you are giving up and offer that as a Lenten offering toward ministry that draws you and others into a deeper relationship with the Lord.

May your Lenten journey offer you a deeper relationship with the Great "I Am."



**Palm Sunday:** March 29, 2026 at 9:30 a.m.

**Maundy Thursday:** April 2, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

*"I Am" Lord and Teacher: John 13:1-17 & 31b-35 with Holy Communion at the Last Supper.*

**Good Friday:** April 3, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

*Who do you say "I Am?" – "I Am" Jesus of Nazareth & "I Am" King of the Jews*

**EASTER SUNDAY:** April 5, 2026

*"I Am" the Resurrection and the Life: Knowing God's Possibilities*

**6:30 a.m. Sunrise Communion in the Prayer Garden**

**9:30 a.m.** Festival celebration with Communion in the sanctuary which will include a special children's message.



## LENTEN MISSION 2026...

Our Greater NJ Annual Conference is inviting all of us into a ministry to support prison inmates' wellbeing and remind them they are beloved children of God by sending underwear, undershirts, and socks.

On Amazon, find the EPAUMC Prison Ministry's gift list to make your purchase and have it delivered to the EPAUMC Prison Ministry P.O. Box 820, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0820 by **March 29**.





Dear Eastern Pennsylvania and Greater New Jersey United Methodists,

We have been alerted to an email scam currently circulating that appears to come from Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi.

The email is being sent from [bishop.cynthiamooreofficialmail@gmail.com](mailto:bishop.cynthiamooreofficialmail@gmail.com) and references the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey and the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

Please be advised that this message is a **scam** and was **not** sent by Bishop Moore-Koikoi. **Do not** reply, provide any personal information, or engage further. If you receive this email, we recommend deleting it immediately.

Bishop Moore-Koikoi will **never** reach out to you to provide personal information urgently.

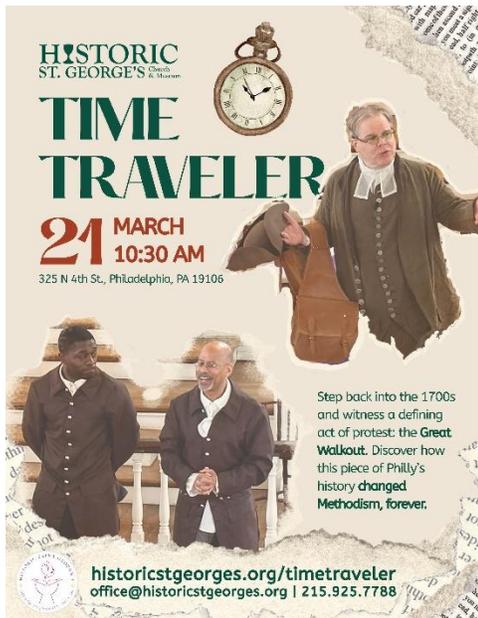
Thank you for your attentiveness to this matter. We are grateful for your care in helping prevent the spread of fraudulent activity.

Grace and peace,

EPA&GNJ Communications Team

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# Conference opportunities



## Historic Walk-Out Re-enactment

On Mar 21, Historic St. George's will host their annual Time Traveler event, re-enacting the Great Walk-Out of the late 1700s—one of the earliest civil rights protests in America—which led to the creation of Mother Bethel AME and St. Thomas African Episcopal Church. Doors open at 10 a.m. The event starts at 10:30 a.m.

This event is recommended for all Methodists. It is an essential and illuminating history lesson, which sparks discussion about how Methodist history can help us be better in the future. For more info email [office@historicstgeorge.org](mailto:office@historicstgeorge.org).

## Saving the Soul of Our Nation, State, and Church-Faith Forum & Historical Tour

Mark your calendars! On **May 12** from **1-6:30 p.m.**, attend a faith forum, **“Striving to End the Sin of Racism in Church & State: Contemporary and Historical Methodist Perspectives”** featuring keynote speakers Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Bishop Ernest S. Lyght, Rupert Hall, Jr., and Kevin Dusenberry. The forum will be held at Pennington UMC (60 South Main Street, Pennington). Then on **May 13**, plan to attend the “Historical Tour: Saving the Soul of Our Nation and State” featuring keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Kevin Newburg and visiting such sights as Washinton’s Crossing State Park, Princeton Battlefield, Historic Tenant Church and more. Buses leave from the Courtyard by Marriot Ewing Princeton at 8:30 a.m. These events are open to all and form part of the **Northeastern Jurisdictional Commission on Archives and History (NEJCAH) Annual Meeting and Program**. For details, registration link or paper registration form contact FUMCO’s church office 732-531-1150. Need accommodation? Register for the conference hotel, Courtyard Marriott Ewing Princeton.

## **CLUSTER UMC CHURCH CALENDAR**

**Old First (Jill Hubbard-Smith) 197 Locust Ave., West Long Branch**  
**Wayside (David Geller) 1229 West Park Ave, Ocean**  
**Oceanport (Donna Nilson) 50 Main St., Oceanport**  
**St. Luke's (Chungmi Kang) 535 Broadway, Long Branch**  
**Embury (Chungmi Kang) 49 Church St., Little Silver**  
**FUMCO (Jill Hubbard-Smith) 103 Monmouth Rd., Oakhurst**

2026

March 15	5:00 p.m.	Free Community Spaghetti Dinner	FUMCO w/Old First
March 18	11-9 p.m.	UWIF Dine Out to Donate	Illiano's Restaurant
March 29	4:00 p.m.	The Easter Story Cantata	West Grove UMC
April 2	7:00 p.m.	Holy Thursday Worship Service	FUMCO
April 3	7:00 p.m.	Good Friday Worship Service	FUMCO
April 5	TBD	Easter Prayer Garden Communion	FUMCO
April 5	9:30 a.m.	Easter Worship Service	FUMCO
April 16	10:00 a.m.	ARMS Annual Meeting	FUMCO
April 19	5:00 p.m.	Free Community Spaghetti Dinner	FUMCO w/Old First
April 25	8:30 a.m.	UWIF Garage Sale	FUMCO
May 17	5:00 p.m.	Free Community Spaghetti Dinner	FUMCO w/Old First
June 21	5:00 p.m.	Free Community Spaghetti Dinner	FUMCO w/Old First
July 19	5:00 p.m.	Free Community Spaghetti Dinner	FUMCO w/Old First
August 16	5:00 p.m.	Free Community Spaghetti Dinner	FUMCO w/Old First
August 19	5:00 p.m.	Peach Festival	Oceanport
September 20	5:00 p.m.	Free Community Spaghetti Dinner	FUMCO w/Old First
October 18	5:00 p.m.	Free Community Spaghetti Dinner	FUMCO w/Old First





## UNITED METHODISTS OF GREATER NEW JERSEY



### 2026 Zoom Prayer Meeting for Laity and Clergy

So much is happening in our world, and many days I am lost as to what God wishes me to do. One day, things seemed so overwhelming I found myself crying. As the tears began to fall, I was reminded that while I am a person of hope, I am only human. I surrendered to my own expectations and allowed myself to give in to my sadness.

In the shortest verse of Scripture we are given a powerful truth: "Jesus wept." Jesus did not rush past sorrow or pretend it was not there. He stood in the midst of loss and let love be seen in his tears.

Jesus came as one of us to show us how to live in times and places when things are not as we might hope. Jesus suffered and yet still chose love. Love is both beautiful and sometimes tattered. Love can be seen in the messiness of birth and the brokenness of death. It was found in Jesus' healing and performing miracles, as well as the agony of the cross.

The sharing of our wounds enables us to heal; it also helps others to heal when they know we have also suffered. It can be the way that we bear one another's burdens and facilitate healing; this is love at work among us.

As Christians, we are not called to unrealistic expectations; we need space to be human, to slow down, to listen, and to allow the love of God to shape how we live and serve. It is our hope that these prayer sessions will offer us just that opportunity.

When we gather to pray, we come not as people who have it all together, but as people who trust that God meets us even in our tears and carries us into love for the world.

#### **Join Us in Prayer**

You are invited to gather with pastors and laity from across GNJ for shared prayer on Zoom. All are welcome.

This half-hour prayer gathering is held on the first Monday of each month.

#### **Zoom Meeting**

<https://epagnj.zoom.us/j/89107773540?pwd=Yibz0kYTKubuqUbbI0QeYbrnXx5p4F.1>

Meeting ID: 891 0777 3540

Password: 375980

#### **Next Meeting: Monday, March 2, at noon**

Grace and Peace,

**Rev. Gina Yeske**

Associate Superintendent

## FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

UM News and Cokesbury.com suggest the following books in relation to Black History Month:

*Expelled: James Lawson, Jr. and Vanderbilt University*-Benjamin Houston

*A High Price for Freedom: Raising Hidden Voices from the African American Past*-Clyde W. Ford

*In Search of Our Roots*-Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

*New Prize for These Eyes: The Rise of America's Second Civil Rights Movement*-Juan Williams

*Nonviolent: A Memoir of Resistance, Agitation, and Love*-Reverend James Lawson, Jr. & Emily Yellin

*Set Me Free: The Good News of God's Relentless Pursuit*-Lecrae

*By the Grace of God: My Life as an African Bishop*-Eben Kanukayi Nhiwatiwa

*Called to the Fire: A Witness for God in Mississippi*-Chet Rush

*Doing Justice Together: Fresh Expressions Pathways for Healing Your Church*-Michael Adam Beck & Stephanie Moore Hand

*Not Just Sunday: Reimagine the Reach and Rhythms of Your Church*-Jevon Caldwell-Gross

*I'm Black, I'm Christian, I'm Methodist*-Rudy Rasmus

*Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*-Esau McCaulley

*African American History & Devotions: Readings and Activities for Individuals, Families, and Communities*-Teresa L. Fry Brown

*Soul Care in African American Practice*-Barbara L. Peacock

*The Black Campus Movement*-Ibram X. Kendi



## Call to Prayer and Self Denial

The United Women in Faith's annual Call to Prayer and Self Denial is a century-old tradition combining spiritual reflection with sacrificial giving to support mission projects, particularly for children, youth, and women.

**2026 Focus ("The Future is Now - Invest in Our Children")** The 2026 offering focuses on supporting national mission institutions that provide early education, after-school programs, and mental health support to children and youth.

Would you like to participate? Just deny yourself some "comforts" such as a purchased cup of coffee, a dinner out, a night at the movies, etc., then give what you'd have spent on such items to the UWIF to be sent to the national organization to advance the focus described above.

All money should be turned in to Mary Bailey or Diane Maher by March 31. **Any checks should be made out to: United Methodist Women of First United Methodist or the bank will reject them!**

Any questions? Please contact Diane Maher at 732-513-8413.

# UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

# UMCOR SUNDAY

## MARCH COMMUNION'S OFFERING-UMCOR SUNDAY 2026

**WEBSITE:** [www.umcmmission.org](http://www.umcmmission.org)

March's communion offering supports the work of UMCOR- the United Methodist Committee on Relief. When natural disasters strike or a humanitarian crisis arises, UMCOR allows United Methodists as a church family to assist the victims.

UMCOR's staff reinforces local recovery & relief efforts with resources provided by the whole church. Last year, UMCOR rendered aid to victims of catastrophic weather events-typhoons, floods, wildfires, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes-around the world.

UMCOR also continues relief efforts for refugees displaced by war or civil unrest that include Palestinians & Ukrainians and civilians caught in the crossfire of the civil unrest in the DRC (Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Besides disaster relief, UMCOR also administers long-term refugee resettlement and hunger relief and poverty projects. Today UMCOR directs long-term programs around the globe that provide brighter and sustainable futures for people struggling to meet basic needs and assimilate into new environments.

Since UMCOR doesn't receive apportionment funds, the UMCOR Sunday offering funds its operating budget which means 100% of every dollar donated to an UMCOR mission relief effort goes to the designated mission.

Your generous support of UMCOR's mission to aid our brothers & sisters in crisis makes a world of difference!

# UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH DINE OUT

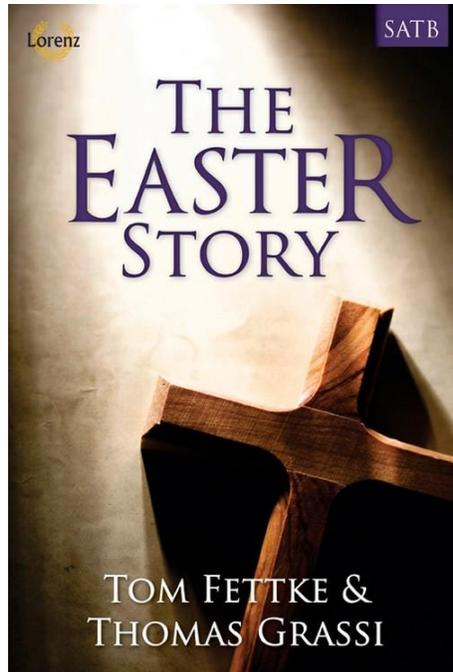


**Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026**  
**Dine In or Pick Up 11AM – 9PM**

Take the day off from cooking! Proceeds will go directly to  
Oakhurst United Methodist Women.

**Please mention this flyer when ordering.**

Pick Up: Call 732-493-2003 or Online:  
[illianosrestaurant.net](http://illianosrestaurant.net)



A Profound Story Engaging Heart, Mind, & Imagination  
Through Word & Music

Presented by The Northern Cluster Choir & The Choraliers  
of Eatontown

Directed by Maynard Burley  
Accompanist-Judy Hyer

West Grove UMC  
102 Walnut Street, Neptune

Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m.

The Atlantic Wind Ensemble  
Directed by Eliot Prowse



Free concert

Sunday, March 8, 4 p.m.

West Grove UMC  
102 Walnut Street, Neptune

This concert is free and open to the community.  
A free-will donation will be gratefully accepted.



**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent  
March 1, 2026**

**Counters: Patty Aria, John Montgomery, Judy Gorra**

**Greeter: Jim Scisco**

**Usher: Scott Danielson**

**Acolyte: Bonnie McNamara**

**Lay Reader: Len Gruezke**

**Fellowship Host: Meg Macan**

**Altar Flowers**

**Given in loving memory of Marty Bailey & Ken Ward by Mary & Marty Bailey.**

**Given in loving memory of George Lynch by Pam & family.**



**3rd Sunday in Lent  
March 8, 2026**

**Counters: Kitty Amato, Peg Kuchen, Chip Stoll**

**Greeter: Joy More**

**Usher: Kitty Amato**

**Acolyte: Robert Scott**

**Lay Reader: Bob Crowther**

**Fellowship Host: Bonnie McNamara**

**Altar Flowers**

**Given by the Henderson family in loving memory of Kaitlin Elizabeth Henderson on her 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday in heaven.**

**Given in loving memory of Hazel Traylor by Pam Lynch & family.**



The next free community spaghetti dinner will be on March 15<sup>th</sup> at 5 p.m. Everyone is invited to Fellowship Hall for a delicious meal and good company.

**OUR FEBRUARY COMMUNION OFFERING  
BENEFITS CHURCH WORLD SERVICE'S  
BLANKET PROGRAM**

**Tsedalech, our World Vision Child from Ethiopia, is sponsored for the month of February in loving memory of brother-in-law, Tom Maher by Joy More.**

**DATE CORRECTION**



**We have openings for altar flowers in March.**

**March 15-one bouquet**

**March 22-two bouquets**

**If you would like to donate for**

**either of these Sundays, please call**

**Diane Maher at 732-513-8413. Donation price \$20**

**Desserts**



On **March 8<sup>th</sup>**, our friend Meg Macan is having a memorial service for her brother, Nelson. The repast will be after the service in Fellowship Hall. If you can

**provide** a dessert, please let Joy know. Joy is also looking for food set up and clean up help on the day.



Mach is a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Month

This is a special offering used to offset grounds and landscaping costs for our church. Please use the marked yellow envelopes for your offering.



THANK YOU to those of you who have been dropping off junk envelopes for the church office to use to save on stationary costs. We are truly well-stocked at this time and do not need any more.



JAVA WITH JILL  
MARCH 24<sup>th</sup> 10 a.m.

Join Pastor Hubbard-Smith and friends at the Blue Swan Diner for an informal gathering to share conversation and perhaps a treat of your choosing.



**Something to think about:**

When sadness fills your heart, when tears flow in your eyes...always remember three things...God was with you, still with you, always with you.

**WEEKLY BIBLE READINGS**

**Mar. 1-Mar. 7**

Genesis 12:1-4a  
Psalm 121  
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17  
John 3:1-17



**FELLOWSHIP HOSTS NEEDED**

Do you have what it takes to be a fellowship host? **YES, YOU DO!**



**Coffee Fellowship**

Please sign up in the upstairs kitchen. The very simple requirements to be a fellowship host are posted on the poster board. Or you may speak with Bonnie McNamara.

**The Little Free Pantry**



Please think of stocking shelf-stable milk, powdered milk, soup, stew, chili, whole grain cereal, toiletries, hygiene products, baby food, applesauce, canned beans,

canned chicken, canned tuna, canned salmon, SPAM, canned ham, canned vegetables, olive oil, canola oil, crackers, dried herbs, spices, canned fruit, dried fruit, granola bars, instant mashed potatoes, meals in a box, nuts, pasta, peanut butter, & rice.

A good idea this week:

Snacks



**UWIF Spring Garage Sale-Save the Date**

Saturday, April 25

Please keep our spring garage sale in mind. Mark your calendars! More info to follow.



**MERCY CENTER**

The Outreach Commission thanks you for your continued support of the Mercy Center food bank. Here are the current needs: canned meats, canned fish, beans, lentils, rice, pasta, oats, whole-grain cereals, low-sodium soup, canned fruits, canned vegetables, peanut butter, powdered milk, & nonperishable oils.



*Please be Praying for...*

**Our homebound:** Bev Itell, Virginia Haydu, Bob Sproat, Bertha Ahrens, Cary Carlisle, Priscilla Smith, Elaine Gould, Jean Gillette

**At home:** Avery Fallon, Peg Kuchen

**Jersey Shore Care Center:** Dave Miller

**Sunnyside Manor, Wall:** Nancy Burt

**Our church family worshipping at a distance:**

Barbara Novick, Laura Eble, Jack & Caroline Chesbro



# Puzzle!

Use the clues to discover the names of some Old Testament prophets. Then unscramble the circled letters to describe what prophets are.

I was called to preach to the people of Nineveh but ran from God instead. (My book is #32 in the Bible.)

— — — — —  
○

I spoke God's message when the temple was being built. (My book is #37.)

— — — — —  
○

Israel's unfaithfulness to God is compared to my unfaithful wife. (My book is #28.)

— — — — —  
○

My book predicts punishment for wickedness and promises comfort. (It is #23.)

— — — — —  
○

I had dreams and visions. (My book is #27.)

— — — — —  
○

Because of my predictions, I was often in danger and angered officials. (My book is #24.)

— — — — —  
○ ○

I was a shepherd from Judah who called people to turn to God and leave their selfish lives. (My book is #30.)

— — — — —  
○

My book contains descriptions of strange visions. (It is #26.)

— — — — —  
○ — — — — — ○

PROPHETS ARE — — — — — .

Answers: Jonah, Haggai, Hosea, Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Amos, Ezekiel, Messengers

