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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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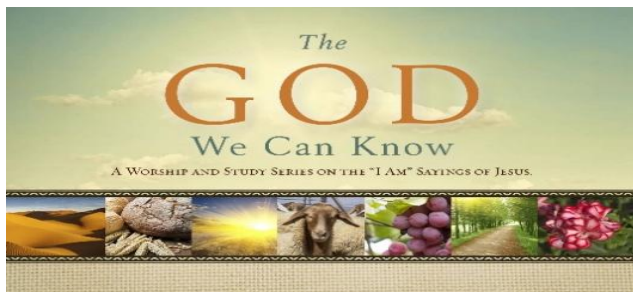
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VOLUME LXIV NUMBER 11

March 12, 2026



**Pastor's Message**  
*for* **Lent**



*Fourth Week of Lent:*  
*"I Am the Good Shepherd"*  
*Knowing God's Care*  
*John 10:1-10*

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

Like sheep, all of us are shifting between familiar routines and seeking adventure. Jesus cares for us in our coming and goings like a good shepherd cares for his sheep. Join me on this Fourth Sunday of Lent as we reflect on the care God provides for our lives.

I look forward to seeing you this Sunday online or in person. Jill

Join us  
during this  
season  
of Lent.



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 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**

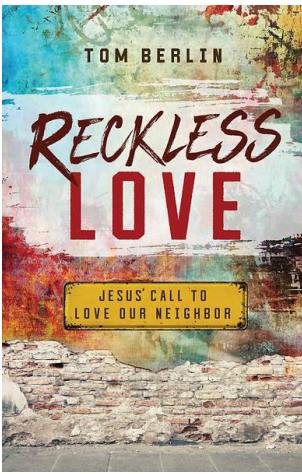
In Wesley Hall, downstairs and to the left from our parking lot entrance.

**Tuesdays:** March 17, March 24, March 31

**Wednesdays:** March 18, March 25

**Daily Devotionals:** *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.



In his latest book *Reckless Love*, author and UMC Bishop 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.**

### **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





## 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.



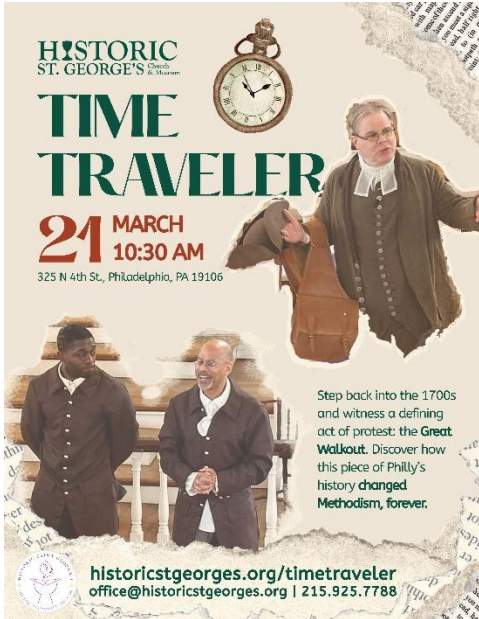
## LENTEN MISSION 2026...

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**.



# 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.



April 25<sup>th</sup> 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Set up Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup> 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

It's time to start gathering your unwanted "treasures" to donate to the UWIF annual garage sale! A few guidelines:

No books

No heavy furniture

No curtain or drapery rods

No linens

No heavy exercise equipment

No clothes or shoes

Please be sure your donations are clean and in working order

Also greatly needed are some hale and hearty volunteers to help clean up at the end of the day on Saturday. To help plan for set-up day on Friday, please sign up on the UWIF bulletin board (next to the upstairs kitchen).



## Calling all bakers

Once again, the UWIF will offer delicious baked goods for sale at the garage sale. Please contribute home-made items. The UWIF is grateful to all who contributed to the bake sale last year. It was almost sold out!

Helpful hints:

Bake now and freeze

Pretty packaging helps things sell

Questions? Contact Diane Maher, 732-513-8413

Thank you!

# MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

## A List of Books Celebrating Women

Timetables of Women's History: A Chronology of the Most Important People and Events in Women's History-Karen Greenspan

America's Hidden History: Untold Tales of the First Pilgrims, Fighting Women, and Forgotten Founders Who Shaped a Nation-Kenneth C. Davis

The Waiting Game: The Untold Story of the Women Who Served the Tudor Queens: A History-Nicola Clark

Lincoln's Lady Spymaster: The Untold Story of the Abolitionist Southern Belle Who Helped Win the Civil War-Gerri Willis

Untold Stories of Women Who Changed History-Alexandra Shaw

Spitfires: The American Women Who Flew in the Face of Danger During World War II-Becky Aikman

10 Women Who Changed the World: Inspiring Female Missionaries Who Fulfilled the Great Commission-Daniel L. Akin

Courageous Women: A Study on the Heroines of Biblical History-Stacy Mitch

Trailblazing Women!-Deborah G. Felder

Women's Firsts: Milestones in Women's History-Susan B. Gall, Timothy L. Gall, & Peggy Saari

Life Lessons from Historical Women-Eleanor Morton



## 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 WOMEN IN FAITH DINE OUT to DONATE



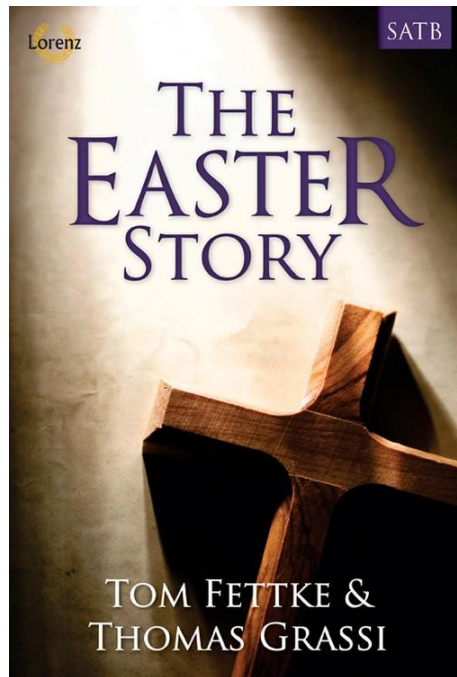
**Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026**  
**Dine In or Pick Up 11AM – 9PM**

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.com](http://illianosrestaurant.com)



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

**Date added:** Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2:30 p.m.  
The Lutheran Church of the Reformation  
Broadway & Locust, West Long Branch

Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m.  
West Grove UMC  
102 Walnut Street, Neptune

# Blessing of the Animals

Join us for the Blessing of the Animals

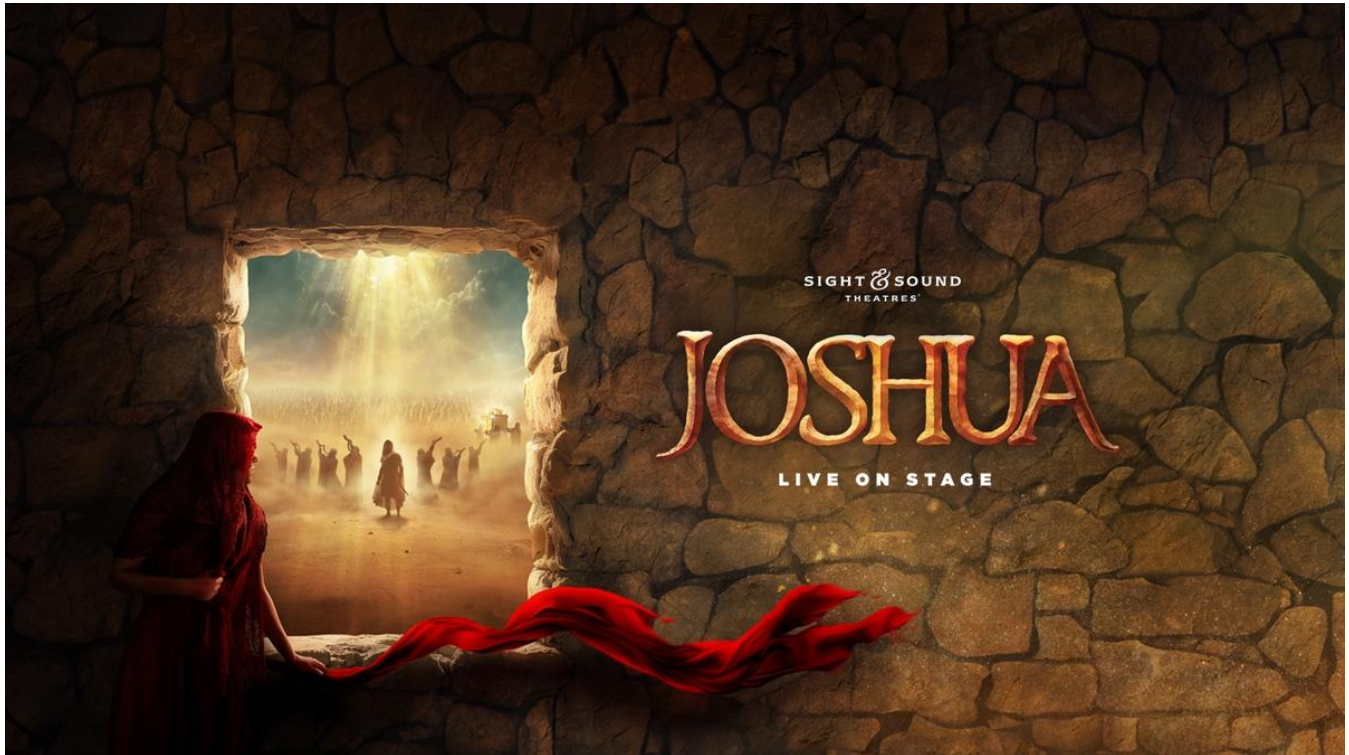
Sunday, April 19th at 1:00 p.m.

First UMC, 103 Monmouth Rd. Oakhurst

732-531-1150

[www.oakhurst.umcchurches.org](http://www.oakhurst.umcchurches.org)





St. Paul's UMC is running a bus trip to Sight & Sound Theater on May 19<sup>th</sup> to see Joshua. Cost is \$189 pp and includes lunch at Shady Maple Smorgasbord, the bus, & tickets to the play. Deadline for reservations is March 28<sup>th</sup>. Please call Althea Klein, 646-763-0752 to make your reservation or get more information.



**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**  
**March 15, 2026**

**Counters: Randy Danielson, Jane Gittines**

**Greeter: Judy Smith**

**Usher: Greg Scott/Robert Scott**

**Acolyte: Garry Smith**

**Lay Reader: Barbara Gruezke**

**Fellowship Hosts: Jeff Danielson & Pam Lynch**

**Altar Flowers**

Given in loving memory of Boe (Charles) Gallagher by his sisters, Gerry Busfield & Gail Cunniffe.

Given in loving memory of James P. Whitney by Robin Whitney & Tommy Vignola.



**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**  
**March 22, 2026**

**Counters: Mary Bailey, Cheryl McLoughlin, John Montgomery**

**Greeter: Kitty Amato**

**Usher: Mike Sheckler**

**Acolyte: Faye Snorton**

**Lay Reader: Ron Puryear**

**Fellowship Hosts: Ron Danielson & Randy Danielson**

**Altar Flowers**

Given in honor of Elaine Gould's 98<sup>th</sup> birthday by Wendy, Bobby, Michael, & 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.



**Beaded Crosses For Sale to Benefit Keswick Ministry.**

Debbie Eckert (Old First UMC) is making & selling these small, beaded crosses to support the Keswick ministry. Keswick provides a program for addiction recovery that costs approximately \$11,000.00 yet they only charge the participant \$600.00.

By providing a donation to this life changing ministry, you will receive a handmade beaded cross from Debbie. They are available from Debbie on Sunday mornings.



**OUR MARCH COMMUNION OFFERING  
BENEFITS UMCOR SUNDAY**

**Tsedalech, our World Vision Child from Ethiopia, is sponsored for the month of March by Diane Maher.**



**Something to think about:**

If you are in need of a spiritual checkup, practice these four habits:

- 1 the habit of prayer
- 2 the habit of study
- 3 the habit of giving
- 4 the habit of fellowship.

Max Lucado



March 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.



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.

**WEEKLY BIBLE READINGS**



**Mar. 15-Mar. 21**

1 Samuel 16:1-13  
Psalm 23  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
John 9:1-41



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

**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

**FELLOWSHIP HOSTS NEEDED**



**Coffee Fellowship**

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

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:  
Unsalted nuts



**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.