
The Cornerstone

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.

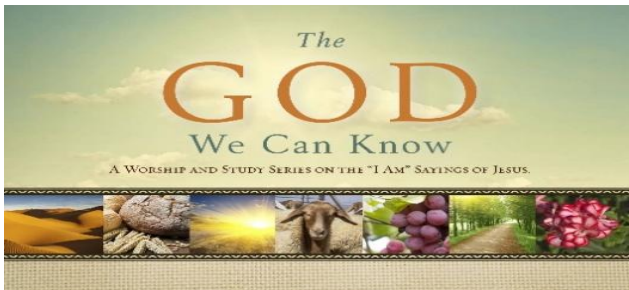
Psalm 118:22-23

VOLUME LXIV NUMBER 13

March 26, 2026



Pastor's Message
for Lent



Sixth Week of Lent: Palm Sunday

"I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"

Knowing God's Way

John 14:1-7

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

This week we begin Holy Week with Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem for Passover and we hear Jesus reassure those closest to him that they will always have a connection to God, no matter the circumstances. Following the Way of Jesus continues to keep us connected today to the Divine no matter the circumstances.

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.

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:

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

Tuesday: March 31 (7 p.m.)

Wednesday: April 1 (12 p.m.)

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.

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 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	6:30 a.m.	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	1:00 p.m.	Blessing of the Animals	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." ...Jill



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 6:30 a.m.

"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.

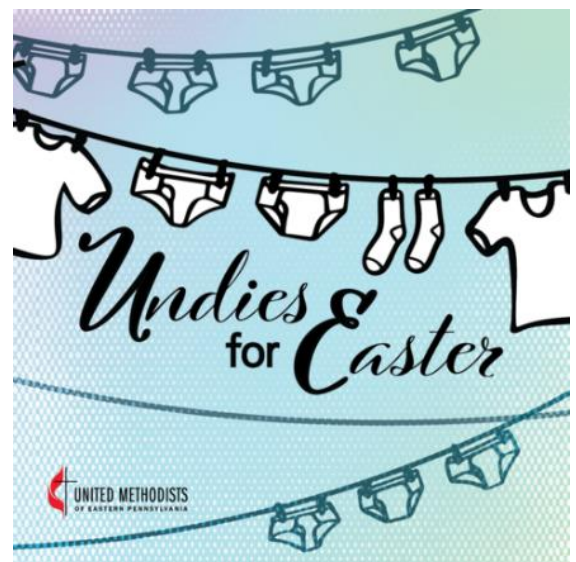


UDPATE! Undies for Easter

Great news! EPA & GNJ met the matching challenge for the Undies for Easter campaign, providing undergarments to those in the Philadelphia prison system. They will now receive those additional 100 shirts pledged by our generous donor!

This leaves them much closer to their goal, at ~65% overall. There are now 1.5 weeks to receive any remaining purchases.

Thanks to all who have already participated, as well as those who will be contributing between now and our **final purchase deadline, Palm Sunday March 29**. Just go to the [Amazon gift list](#), make your purchase, and choose EPAUMC Prison Ministry as the delivery address. Your efforts are much appreciated!



Conference opportunities

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 25th 8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Set up Friday, April 24th 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

New: The Radiance of Grace <https://share.google/hGFYCJ9aNMI6olOKC>

By local author Margaret Cotton -- she and her husband David live in Point Pleasant. David is Pastor of Visitation at the Presbyterian Church of Toms River and also serves at Bay Head Chapel.



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.

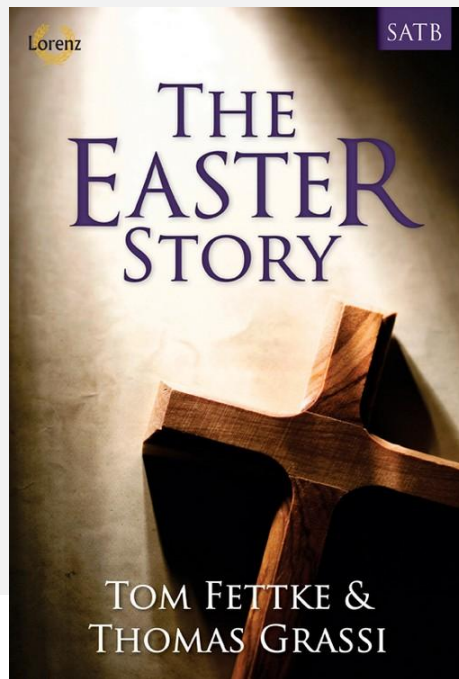


DR. JOHN D. BLAIR SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications for the 2026 Dr. John D. Blair Scholarships are available on the church website or in the church office.

Scholarships are available for up to four years of undergraduate education. Grade transcript must accompany application. The deadline for applications is

April 25.



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

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

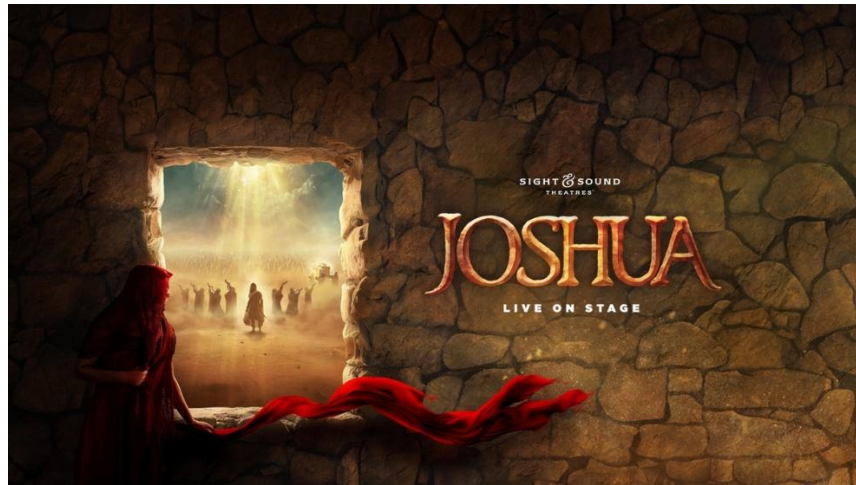
Blessing of the Animals

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





St. Paul's UMC is running a bus trip to Sight & Sound Theater on May 19th 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 28th. Please call Althea Klein, 646-763-0752 to make your reservation or get more information.



Let's all go to the movies!

Below are two movies, one based on scripture and one based on historical events that you may find interesting:

The Faithful: Women of the Bible: March 29th, & April 5th. You can find it on Fox & Hulu at 8 p.m.

A Great Awakening: A historical drama created by Sight & Sound (Lancaster, PA) about the relationship between preacher George Whitfield & Benjamin Franklin. It debuts in theaters on April 3rd. It will be shown at AMC-Monmouth Mall. (Jill notes that she cannot give witness to its accuracy but looks forward to seeing it.)



Palm Sunday
March 29, 2026

Counters: Kitty Amato, Peg Kuchen, Chip Stoll

Greeter: Jack Coleman

Usher: Jim Scisco

Acolyte: Kitty Amato

Lay Reader: Chip Stoll

Fellowship Host: Bonnie McNamara

Altar Flowers

Given in loving memory of Eleanor Serine by Diane & Joy.

Given by Susan McRae in honor of her stepmother, Addie Killian's birthday.

Altar Roses

The yellow rose is given in honor of Kaylin McRae's 4th birthday by Grandma Sue.

The white rose is given in loving memory of Florence Danielson upon her 10th year in heaven.

Palm Strips

Given in loving memory of Rev. Raymond & Ethel Gruezke by Barbara & Len Gruezke.



Easter Day
April 5, 2026

Counters: Patty Aria, John Montgomery, Judy Gorra

Greeter: Alice Coleman

Usher: Robin Whitney

Acolyte: Ian Furda

Lay Reader: Randy Danielson

Fellowship Host: Bonnie McNamara



The UWIF wishes to thank all who participated in the Illiano's Dine to Donate fund raiser. Our purchases netted \$120 and Illiano's generously donated another \$75 to the cause. Please continue to patronize this fine local business throughout the year!

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



Something to think about:

Mad at God? Sure you've got the right person?



March is a 5th 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
April 14th 10 a.m.

Notice Date Change

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. 29-Apr. 4

Matthew 21: 1-11
Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 26:14-27
Matthew 27:11-54



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

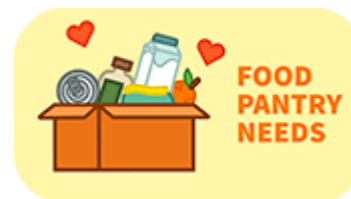


Please think of stocking shelf-stable milk, powdered milk, soup, stew, chili, whole grain cereal, toiletries, hygiene products, baby food, applesauce, canned beans,

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:

Wipes



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.**

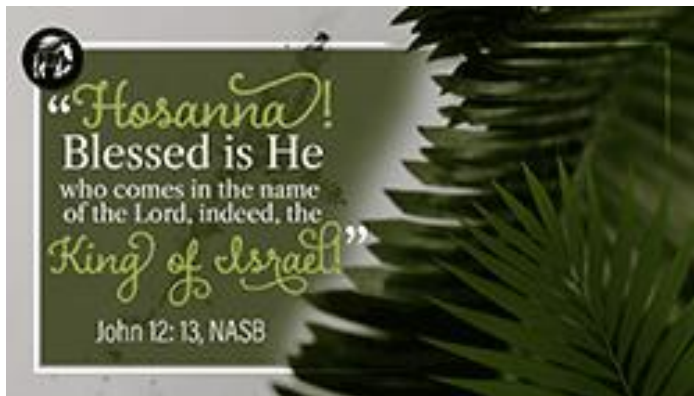


The next free community spaghetti dinner will be on April 19th at 5 p.m. Everyone is invited to Fellowship Hall for a delicious meal and good company.

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**



These cheerful "palm trees" make a bright reminder of the celebration that greeted Jesus as he entered Jerusalem.

What you need:

- Bananas (for the tree trunks)
- Kiwis or green grapes (for the palm leaves)
- Mandarin oranges (for the ground)



What you do:

1. Slice bananas in half lengthwise and place vertically on a plate.
2. Arrange kiwi slices or grapes at the top to form palm fronds.
3. Add oranges at the base.
4. Serve immediately or chill until ready to serve.

Scripture Tie-In:
"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"
—Matthew 21:9 (NIV)