



Our Spire
Volume 40
May 2020
Number 4

**Reaching Up to God,
Reaching Out to People**

Pastor's Page

Dear Congregation,

Just a few weeks ago, the optimist in me said that when this pandemic passes and our social distancing ban lifts, it will be as if a flag over a race track waves and, in going forward again at our regular pace, we'll all return to What Was.



Now I see there won't be a flag. We will come out of this slowly, not all at once.

There won't be a What Was, either. We're going to live with a new norm—at least for a lot longer than any of us initially thought.

This new norm is painful for so many of us. Even us introverts long for those connections we had. We long for worship in the sanctuary, especially when we sing those familiar hymns and the sounds of the voices all around us bring the Holy Spirit right to us and right through us. We miss the chatter before and after church. The waves, the nods, the happenstance greetings for those we have and have not seen in a while feels like such a distant memory. The many, many joys of our fellowship are not just gone, they are grieved.

It's a sad time. It's much more than that though.

Yes, we have the season of sorrow, discomfort, uncertainty and loss, and we surround in prayer those who have lost a loved one to the virus. We, who are no strangers to grief, also know God is talking to us through all of this. **God is directing us through all of this. God is leading us through all of this, just as he did with the lost who wandered the desert for 40 years. We are on a new pilgrimage. A new way of thinking, connecting and bonding is happening, and we're mindful.**

What is God saying? I believe God is powerfully making Himself known at this time. And saving lives to His name matters to all of us.

Evangelism has never been easier than it is today because today we can cut and paste a link to a loved one and voila, our church is seen now from the inside. Our online worship won't go away. As we move further into this year, just as we have done long before the pandemic hit, our worship is far more accessible to all. When we are cooped up, on vacation, hunkered down, feeling quiet, on respite, or need to get away for a time, our worship is there for you and all those you love. Click it. Share it.

The reluctance some of us have to technology is completely understandable. That computer stuff is for the kids, or at least for the younger at heart. Yes, there are challenges with technology. Yes, those challenges are ongoing, but there's help available. We have enough of us in our congregation who feel a call to help you in this specific, connecting ministry. These darling, assessible sweethearts can plug you in, set you on your way AND check in with you when you forget how to sign in, log off, or just get the silly thing to work.

When God said, "Behold! I am making all things new (Revelation 21:5)!" He **r e a l l y** wasn't kidding!

God IS making something new. He is reminding, refreshing and remodeling us not to a life of familiarity and comfort, but to a life where we serve Him and share Him with the world around us as He sees fit.



Most of us choose the quiet, country life. We love our connections, don't get me wrong there, but we are also, at our core, quiet enough—or still enough—to know that God is God. We appreciate the quiet. We value our time in our gardens, with our music, in our baking, on our walks, or resting on our back decks. We farm. We tend to things. The rush of the busy world may amuse some of us, but, deep down, when the sun sets and then again rises, we know where we want to be—and that's with God.

The conversations I have had with so many of you continue to lead me to the observation that yes, while inconvenienced, this virus is a storm you know will pass in time. With a good book, an outdoor project, or just time to putter, you are familiar enough with the inner silence of Harford life and your own self to appreciate all this time you have with God and with family.

So many retirees in our congregation and community have been running even more since the fulltime job ended that this pace, while certainly unfamiliar, is a welcome change. More is getting done that should be done, which includes contemplation, consideration, reflection, and both space and time to “be”.

Fear may rise from time to time. I hear you share this when we talk, but this fear is for your family who live such different lives in different locations from you.

I hear wisdom in your words, too. You know who you belong to and where you are ultimately going, so this social distancing, hand washing and mask wearing, while vital, has done nothing except strengthen your relationship with your Savior, Jesus.

You also miss each other. I definitely hear this. So many of you ask about others when we connect by phone. You share stories of times you've been with your church family, and the lift in your voice and the smile in your soul comes through so very clearly. You're a congregation that loves each other.

Finally, you are strong in your desire to share. “Who needs what?” is a question I hear you ask over and over. You wonder who has been quiet or alone. You ask what is the latest news on those who have had difficulties. This concern is right at the front end of our conversations.

I would like you to know that we are blessed and that you are missed by so many. We will gather again. It may take a while, and it likely won't be an ‘all at once’ event, but do start thinking about the party of fellowship we will host when we celebrate together IN PERSON what we've learned, which is that we, our church, matters, our sanctuary matters, our worship matters, our outreach matters, our gathering matters and yes, oh yes, this is number one behind our God who loves us: the people who make us who we are, as believers in Christ, matter!

ON THE FAMILY FRONT

Speaking of asking, many have inquired about my home front. All five children are with me now. The first, seven-year-old Taven, officially arrived the day after Christmas. The last, soon-to-be six-year old Sereena, officially arrived the day after Easter. Yes, God certainly had this so meaningfully timed!

We are surviving the pandemic. We miss the village it takes to be this village here at home, but we rejoice. Your prayers are at work, and these are what we need, welcome, covet and rest in daily.

The five play and play and play together easily and seamlessly. Oh, I hear a “She hit me!” a half dozen times before noon on a Saturday, but their laughter is love, and love is what they need and share with each other a billion times a day.

**Won't you be my neighbor?
Creating an Interconnected Onsite and Online Christian Community**

All are welcome, aren't they?

Those God calls to build the “church” without blocks, bricks, or boards are no longer lonely, ignored, sidelined dreamers of some far-off tomorrow. Today, these sought-after frontline voices speak plainly and passionately to the number of people who either are (or someday soon could be) present to Spirit-fed and led online worship communities. Never before has the church had both the opportunity and the ability to reach beyond its walls to truly be the church, the ecclesia, whereby the practice of being the assembly no longer rests in a place but as it has always been intended, and that is with the people—specifically, the people on the move who are online more and more with each passing year.

Blocks, bricks and boards have nothing to do with this latest migration. Churches that may have struggled to exist beyond a set location suddenly moved online en masse as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For many in the establishment, the move wasn't welcomed, per se; a great amount of scrambling, prayer, awkwardness, fret and initial failure happened, likely in that exact order. Nevertheless, it happened, and by the presence or the even pressure of God, our Creating Creator, this continues to happen.

Online worship is not new. However, when physical church space emptied by way of government decreed stay at home ordinances, a new way of gathering became a norm. Within days if not hours, pastors and church leaders rallied. Cell phone cameras and Zoom and other internet gathering sessions started to roll. This rolling is changing how and what “church” is. One change is the church, which is no longer set or stationary, is now being experienced by greater numbers. As a fulltime pastor of a rural UCC church in northeastern Pennsylvania, I have immediate data on this change based on how many have watched our online worship services since we've had to go solely online. That number has doubled. I can share that twice the number of people watched our Palm Sunday service than had it only taken place Sunday morning at 11 AM. Over 200 clicked on our Easter service, up from an average of 100 people being physically present in recent years.

Some have concern about what “watch” and “click” mean. For example, did a viewer watch the Palm Sunday service for less than a minute? If this is the case, or as this is the case, what we need to remember is we never know where the Spirit leads, what godly seeds are sown and in what soil, or, to extend the metaphor of seed and soil, how someone's faith formation literally grows. That one minute may trigger more thought, question, and response in the immediate or distant future.

The same argument moves to those in church pews as well. We know the following to be true. Thoughts have strayed during a sermon that, for whatever reason, didn't resonate with the listener. During other parts of a worship service as they have been traditionally known, such as a call to worship or a confession, minds have also wandered. Grocery store lists have been made in the margins of a bulletin. Thoughts about the upcoming game on TV played out during a confession, a hymn, or prayerful moments of silence. What it means to be present is questionable and never fully measurable. Yet measurements—numbers—are important. Unfortunately, the statistics to prove that many congregations are experiencing the same or higher numbers during the pandemic are not available as this work goes to print in April of 2020, which, according to the CDC, is the peak of the COVID-19 crisis where churches are closed due to public safety. However, it is clear that, as a result of the pandemic, the online movement has never been more imperative. Pastors and church leaders now actively close the gap between what has been two distinct yet interrelated communities: those who prefer to worship in physical space (the church itself) and those who find online worship from a physically-based church surprisingly and beautifully inclusive, inspiring, engaging, and even welcoming.

Inclusivity and the church are nothing new, especially when it comes to inspiring, engaging and welcoming others. Yet there are challenges. Technology itself is not foolproof. Problems with livestreaming and equipment happen far too often with worship-minded people who want to praise God, not find another way to plug in to some gizmo that worked yesterday and is now deficient or defunct for any number of known and unknown reasons today. Plus, we Christians still struggle with how a Christian community is defined. The majority of us actually want to meet in person, not through a camera on a desktop computer or a handheld device. This deeply-seated desire happened long before social distancing became a new norm.

Yet something is happening through God's design. It's as if the ALL ARE WELCOME banner marketing ploy from an era now gone is actually being challenged. Are all welcome?

Interestingly, when it comes to the established church, all are welcome—at least in theory. To the United Church of Christ, which is known as the broad-based liberal denomination on the block, this welcome on exterior signs, printed literature, and in an increasing number of churches actively using the internet through such means as interactive websites is in keeping with Jesus' inclusivity of women, children, lepers, and tax collectors. This welcome extends to the physically ill, the handicapped, the demon-possessed, the ritually unclean, and all "sinners," including those who profess and practice what is called an alternative lifestyle—a term that is disdained by some and rejected by others. This same inclusivity does—or it should—also welcome those who choose to "visit church" via the internet, not in person. After all, the bedrock of this liberal denomination which lifts and extends Jesus' liberal love is not just for some but everyone. This love for everyone continues the pronouncement Jesus made when he called the weary and burdened to himself (Matthew 11:28-30) with no specificity other than a willingness to be present to this itinerate preacher and teacher, this self-professed Son of God. Jesus never said where to be present to him; he only said how to be present to him. And Jesus, we should all remember, never stayed still. While people did flock to him during certain times of his ministry [this carpenter's son was known as a healer], this refugee from a nowhere place was never stationary. Instead, he went to the people. It can be argued that the internet goes to the people. The global information highway is the fastest, easiest, and most commonly acceptable means to connect people and the church today.

An important note about a welcome and inclusion needs to be made here. The practice of both welcoming and inclusion exists not only in the United Church of Christ but also in every mainline Protestant church in this nation today for this single reason. Church attendance is down.

On the subject of church attendance, Barna and Kinnaman, the leaders of Barna Group, have statistics to share. The two report there is not a single demographic for which the number of people in American churches today is on the increase. While a few denominations have demonstrated relative stability in church attendance levels over the past two decades, most religious sects in the United States show declines in church attendance. Because young adults have the highest levels of church avoidance, their children are less likely to attend church, increasing the likelihood that they, too, will avoid churches in adulthood.

Inclusive practices such as front yard signs and promotional literature have been a longstanding part of our Christian typography, especially since each generation from the time of Christ here on earth brings its own cultural and adaptive challenges to the landscape of the church. Today, for example, even with the tech hiccups already mentioned, social media technology does make it easier and easier for people to meet and stay connected with speeds and convenience never before actualized in human history, yet, many pastors and church leaders are reluctant to enter into this technology's possibilities, its new and exciting virtual horizons. Even the forerunners who advocate the advantages of social media technology in the church generally agree that more prayer, information, and discernment are necessary when it comes to the gains and the losses this new technology provides a worshipful world without walls.

Specifically, when we look at how interactive church websites can be inclusive in the theology of welcoming all, questions rise. Are online viewers (or participants?) as welcome as those who are literally present at the church site, or are those watching remotely marginalized or considered to be less than welcome? Is a single camera livestreaming a service in the back of the sanctuary supporting the “All are welcome” Christian message, or are overworked, overextended, and likely overtired pastors and worship leaders intentionally and unintentionally sidelining whole groups of people because in the days before the pandemic it was just one more thing to do in an already pressed schedule?

When it comes to welcome and inclusion, even more questions follow. What message of inclusivity and unity is sent to regular worshippers who are away on vacation? How about those who are shut-in temporarily or long-term? What about people who identify as being agoraphobic or have an equally crippling social hardship? What about active duty soldiers overseas who would rely on home church connections if such connections were possible?

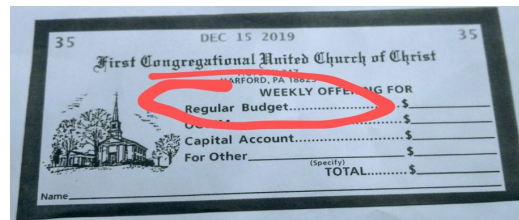
Speaking again of women and children, what about the parent who is home on a Sunday morning with an ill child? Where is inclusion to teenagers who, low on the employment totem pole, have to work late Saturday nights and early Sunday mornings? In regard to the work front, we should also consider a new socio-economic trend: more and more Americans work more and more hours away from the home and even in the home. How is the church welcoming all by acknowledging today’s realities in this digital age where greater and greater amounts of time are spent on our portable electronic devices?

To fill pews during worship, pastors and church leaders are stretched and often stressed. More and more questions circle. In this rapidly changing transformative age, what old measures can be continued, or reintroduced? What new ideas can be presented? When it comes to inclusion, what has worked partially in the past that, with modifications, improvements, tweaks, or greater understanding and implementation, can revitalize Christ’s bride, the church itself?

Let me speak to the last question raised, especially since Christians are called to go and make disciples in the world (Matthew 28:19). To make, encourage, and educate disciples in the world (not just in the pews nearest a worshipper), most American churches today have their own individual website or have considered one. Others know their website, basically untouched since it came about, should be updated so that it can more actively enter the digital age. Many pastors and church leaders recognize the need for inclusive websites that provide community outreach opportunities as well as community centeredness and mindfulness. This awareness came long before the COVID-19 pandemic. The potential to gather online is arguably and recognizably is now a reality. Not-so futuristic websites that can bond near and far members and non-members are a promising reality, not a pipedream. Community-based worship is now more possible when we consider sacred and secular space are now far more intertwined than ever because a single click or swipe can transform something considered unholy to something holy in seconds. We are at the start of a new roaring twenties.

The logo for 'The Roaring Twenties' is displayed in a black rectangular box. The text 'The Roaring' is on the top line and 'Twenties' is on the bottom line, both written in a white, elegant, cursive script font.

WHAT EXACTLY IS ENCOMPASSED IN THE GENERAL ACCOUNT?



This month we will give you a glimpse of what expenses are covered in the General Fund. This is the lifeblood of the church and keeps us operating day to day. This includes monthly expenses of utilities for the church including fuel oil, propane, electric, telephone and internet, water, sewer, garbage service, lawn care, snow removal, maintenance and property insurance. It includes mailing costs, office machine repair and replacement, paper and other office supplies. It also covers the Pastors salary, pension, insurances and housing as well as the salaries of the church including Secretary, Organist, Custodian, Financial Secretary and Treasurer. There is also a yearly amount put in the Capital Expense fund for any major repair or replacement projects that will be needed in the future. Other committees' expenses that fall under general fund include Bells, Choir, Christian Education, Deacons, and Stewardship.

I'm sure I left something off the list, but this just gives you an idea of where your donations and pledges go when you commit them to the Regular budget line on the envelope or just give a donation in general to the church. As you can see, there are many different ways that your gifts help God do his works through your church.

During this uncertain time in all of our lives with this pandemic looming over us, I would like to thank all of you for continuing to support your church. We have continued to be present to our congregation and community online with services, Facebook with everyday updates, the website to stay informed and the email notes. Much of our communication with our committees has been through Zoom, a meeting app on our computers and smartphones where we, as a committee can actually see and talk to each other in a group setting. None of this would be possible without your generous support.

This month's financial report has income at \$8931.00 with expenses at \$10305.70 for a deficit of \$1374.70. But let's give credit where credit is due! That is without physically passing a collection plate! Although we are short, I was grateful that we were not as far behind as I had envisioned. Our year to date income is \$28850.64 and expenses are \$31352.27, leaving a year to date deficit of \$2501.63. Not that we don't have some work to do, but we are truly grateful for our congregations generosity. The other number that is a little more daunting is our income to budget for the year. This leaves a shortage so far this year of \$8943.12 to meet our budget, as we need \$12597.92 per month to meet our budget.

This year will no doubt be a challenging year for us here at Harford First Congregational. But as we know, this is not our first challenge that we as a church have had to rise up to in the past, and that is why this church is still alive after all of these years. We all need to pray about this and ask God for his leadership in meeting our goals that we have asked him to be a part of for His Glory. We also need to pray that He continues to watch over all of our health and wellness so we can continue to serve Him.

Again, on behalf of the Stewardship committee I would like to thank you again for your commitment to your church. Together, with God's blessings and healing, we will weather this storm and come out on the calm seas on the other side. Prayer and hope is what we need to focus on. Stay well and I can't wait until we are able to be together again!

Craig Stout

Stewardship Chairperson

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT

I pray that you are all well. Before you read the text of this message, read the noted Scriptures below and think about how they are connected.

Luke 10:v.19 “Behold I give unto you the power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing by any means shall hurt you.”

Matthew 22:v.21 They said, “Caesar’s.” Then He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesars, and to God the things that are Gods.”

When I see that churches are open and listen to the ministers defying civil authority and telling people that if they come to church the Lord will protect them from the virus. Possibly this is true because I’ve often heard the saying that the Lord protects kids and fools, but I’m not so sure of that. This would not be the first time that the interpretation of the Bible by a select group resulted in many unnecessary deaths. In the Appalachian Mountains (1970’s – 1990’s) a group of churches believed that Jesus would protect them if they handled poisonous snakes during their services. The Snake Cult was originally formed by George Hensley who died when bitten during one of his services. Approximately 100 (or more) other preachers and parishioners died during those state outlawed services. They all thought they had extreme faith and the right to defy civil authority.

I question the modern-day preachers’ motives for holding services and endangering their flocks.

In the second scripture Jesus tells us there are times when we must bow to civil authorities. Some say this violates their constitutional rights. As Congregationalists you should know that ship sailed a long time ago in 1620 and “by virtue hereof to exact, constitute, and frame such equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices from time to time, as shall be thought most meete and convenient for the general good of ye colonie unto which we promise all due submission and obedience”.

This was the first time that it was recognized that laws might have to be made for the common good. This was sworn under God by all 41 male members of the Plymouth Colony. It was the ending of the Mayflower Compact.

These present dangers are real unlike any we have seen in our lifetime. I suggest you all continue to put your faith in God and err on the side of common sense.

David H. Schulte, Jr. April 19, 2020



It’s Peanut Butter collection time!!!.

North Harford Willing Workers are collecting Peanut Butter for the Summer Lunch Program Food Distribution. This distribution is starting earlier than ever due to the pandemic. There will also be an increased need for food!! The collection container is in the Gathering Room and will be placed outside the Double Glass Doors every Wednesday for drive by donations!!

**April 02, 2020
Deacons meeting Minutes**

-Kay thanked the Deacons who helped send out Easter Cards. She has heard from several that the cards were very much appreciated.

-Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Deacons discussed plans of how to continue with Holy week worship.

.Teresa brought to the table a concern of continuing 'Open Church'. It was decided for the safety of all, as well as to abide by the current Stay At Home Order that there will no longer be "Open Church" hours available.

Palm Sunday worship will be prerecorded and posted on Palm Sunday via Facebook, YouTube, website and email. Kay will check with Will to see if he is still printing a sermon to be sent to those who do not have an internet option to view the sermon.

Maundy Thursday and **Good Friday** and **Sunrise service** will be recorded and posted by Will . Will will record a video inviting all to partake in Communion on Maundy Thursday safely from their home with what they have available.

Several have mentioned the idea of a Drive In Sunrise Service. Because of the Stay At Home order it was decided against at this time but Ginny suggested to keep in mind for another time.

Easter Sunday 11 am worship will be pre-recorded and posted on Sunday @11 am.

-Mother's Day –Discussion was tabled until next meeting.

David closed the meeting with prayer.

-Next Zoom Deacon meeting will be April 16th @ 1pm

April 16th Deacon Minutes

Kay opened with Psalm 57:7-11

-Will brought a question to the table for us to continue to think about...*How will we become a society and safely move back into our worship space again when the time allows?*

-Kay reminded us that the Summer Lunch Box Peanut Butter Collection will soon be starting.

-The meeting closed with Kay and Bonnie singing *Put Your Hand in the Hand*.

Next Zoom meeting will be May 3rd @12:30 pm

Christian Education

These are not our usual CE minutes but, we just wanted you, the congregation, to know we, the CE team members, haven't forgotten our commitment to the children.

As many of you know or have seen, we've burned the palms from last year. Bonnie, Payton, and Kandy have posted on our church Facebook page. Kandy did a phenomenal job telling the Easter Story with the eggs. Bonnie did a wonderful job with the Good News of Jesus's resurrection.

So, until we can be present once again keep looking for posts on our Facebook page. Stay well and safe.

Notice: Please send all material for June to be included in the Spire to

Firstchurchspire@gmail.com

by the 15th of May 2020!

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Report from the Treasurer:

To make expense every month in general (example: electric, payroll, office and programs)

We will need \$12,597.92 a month to meet our Budget for 2020.

Here is the Income and Expenses for March 2019 and 2020.

March	2019	March	2020
Income:	\$6,960.27	Income:	\$8,931.00
Expense:	\$15,029.70	Expense:	\$10,305.70
Total:	-\$8,069.43	Total:	-\$1,374.70

General Year to Date for 2020

Income:	\$28,850.64
Expense:	\$29,977.52
Total:	-\$1,126.88

What are we doing with all our time.....

Making masks ...of course!!!!

Thank you to all that are helping us
stay safe!



Weinberg Food Bank is coming to Harford First Congregational Church

The 4th Friday of each month
Next distribution May 22, 2020
3:30-5:30

Any income can apply
Preregistration is required:
See attached application or
complete the form online firstchurchharford.com
or call Teresa @ 570-756-2752



Day of Distribution please bring with you a photo ID and a current household bill with your current Susquehanna County address



Weinberg Food Bank:

March: -110 Families served

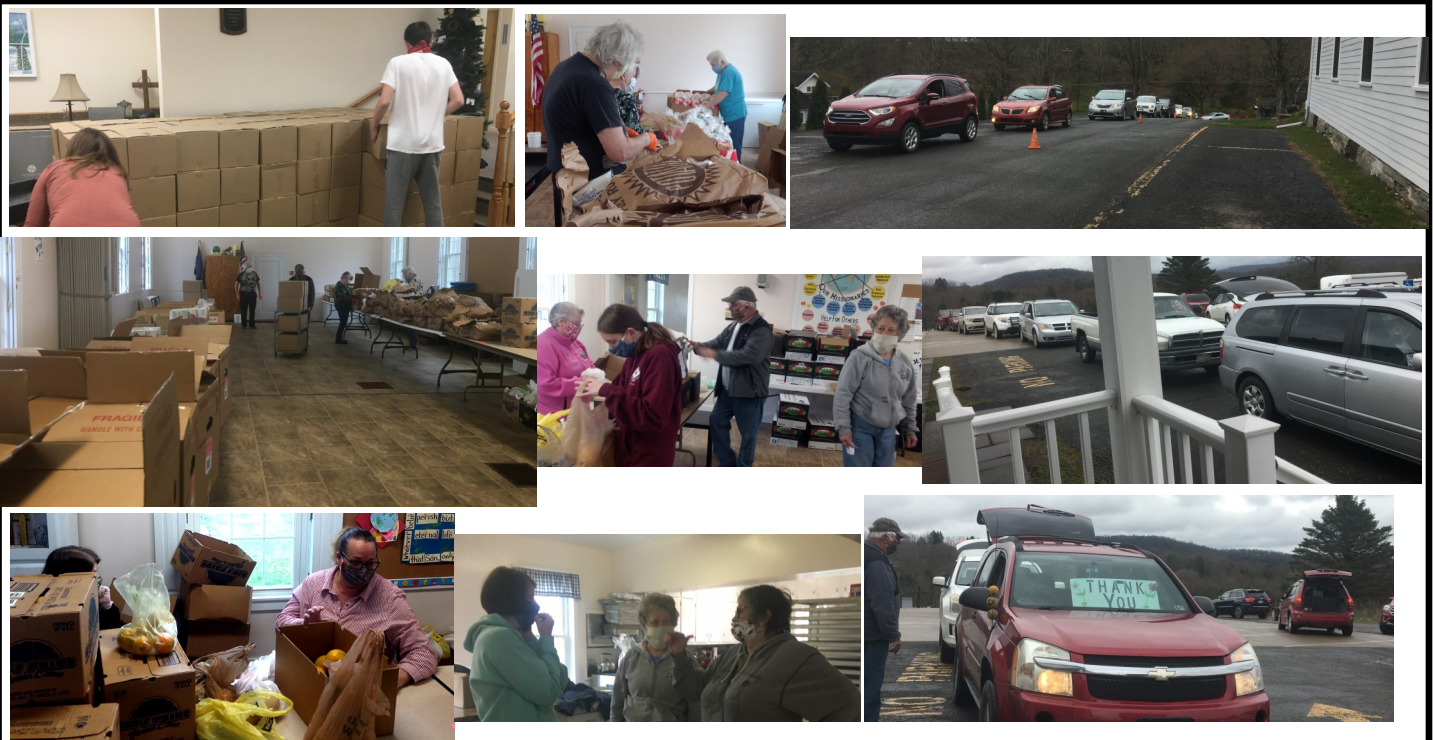
-Hams for everyone donated by Cindy Beeman and Interfaith

-Milk Donated by the Empet family and the 4H Dairy promotion crew along with the Bewley Family

April: 144 Families Served

-Milk Donated by the Empet Family, the Bewley Family and Susquehanna Dairy promotion.

-Food donations by the Harford Fair Youth Board and the Susquehanna County Commissioners



World Wide Missions: Nicaragua

As the COVID-19 Pandemic sweeps our world, we can see God's timing clearly. Our Nicaraguan Missionaries, equipped with sewing machines that we and others have helped them purchased, are able to make safety masks for their communities. We never know how God will use us in His plans.



Spring Shower of Blessings "6"

When: The month of April/May

Where: Harford First Congregational UCC

Benefit: The Women's Resource Center & CareNet

Remember: Many women and children are

currently sheltering in place with abusers.

The need for sanctuary and supplies has increased!

We will be collecting:

New Linen

Cleaning Supplies

Gift Certificates

Personal Hygiene Items

Baby Items

* See next pages for a Complete List

Baby Shower Ideas Care Net Pregnancy Center of NEPA

Car Seats – INFANT – neutral colors

Diapers – (In the SMALL packs of 20 – 30 diapers)
Size N, 1, 4, 5, 6 and pull ups (we have 2 and 3)

Desitin / A&D ointment

Baby Shampoo, Baby Wash , Baby Lotion

Baby hooded towels and wash cloths

Boppy pillow

Nursing covers

Breast Pump

Mobiles

Baby stroller

Wipes – sensitive skin

**Pack and Play and pack-n-play sheets

Changing tables (usually get Graco Freeport to match crib – Espresso or cherry - Walmart)

Clothing up to size 24 months

Onesies through 12 months (colored – not white)

Photo albums

Potty chair

Socks / Baby shoes / boots

**Snuggles (little blankets about 12" square with or w/o animals)

**Teethers & Rattles

Photo albums or baby memory books

Cute things for the mom's are always fun, too. – Body spray, lotions, soaps, gift cards, tea,....

Baby Safe and Gentle Laundry Detergent

High Chair seats that strap onto a regular chair

Anything that you see in a Baby Department we can use at Care Net.

While shopping, try to put yourself in the place of a 15-25 year old mom who loves nice things, but doesn't have money for anything she needs for her baby. If you love it, she will, too. If you used it with your kids, she will use it, too.

We also like to put together a "new mom" gift bag with newborn items and a few "pamper mom" items. So anything towards this end is great – even a good family oriented book (We do give them a "Mother's Comfort" Devotional guide)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!! HAVE FUN SHOPPING. USE YOUR IMAGINATION.

Thank you for making a difference in the lives of babies and their families.

Baby Monitors

Burb pads & bibs

Crib Sheets & Crib mattress pads

CD's with baby music (Twinkle Twinkle little star, baby Einstein,...etc, both singing and instrumental)

Clothing – 0 -12 months / snow suits / jackets

Gerber gentle formula 0- 12 months (NOT NEWBORN)

First Aid kit (baby)

\$20 gift cards to Walmart or Target or Price Chopper

Baby bath tubs with sling liner for infants

Medical kits or baby hygiene kit

Diaper Genies & liner bags

Baby Carriers (soft straps)



With the addition of our Fatherhood program, we now have Dad's shopping, too. So think of toys or clothing a Dad would like for the little ones (camo, sports oriented, etc)

WRC WISH LIST

The Women's Resource Center in Susquehanna County is in need of the following donations that will be used to assist survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence in our community. Please call with any questions:

570-278-1800

Gift Cards

Pump & Pantry, \$10 Gas Cards

Price Chopper, Ray's or Rob's \$10 or \$25 Gift Cards

Wal-Mart \$10 or \$25 Gift Cards

New Donations of:

Linens, including sheets, towels and washcloths

Cleaning supplies, such as mops, brooms and plastic pails

Additional Items:

Toilet paper, paper towels and tissues

Shampoo, conditioner, lotion and body wash

Deodorant, tooth brushes and tooth paste

Razors, feminine supplies, nail care items and sewing kits

Hair brushes, combs and hair ties

Laundry detergent (64 oz. or smaller), fabric softener and dryer sheets

Dish soap, household cleansers, sponges and scrubbing pads

Adult blankets, adult and children socks

Baby/children's items (Diapers, wipes, soaps and toothpaste)

Hard cover journals, pens

Reusable grocery bags

Donation Box is in the Gathering Room and will be placed outside the Double Glass doors every Wednesday for drive by donations

Home Bound

The Carey Family

Barbara Pease

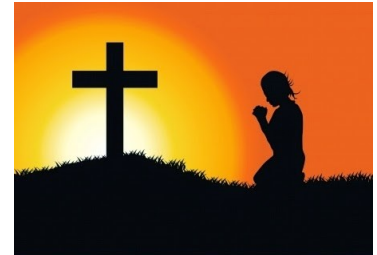
Dorothy Greene



Prayer Concerns

Friend of Ivie Simons
Katherine Doolittle's best friend's father
Aileen Shay and her daughter
Chelsea Ellis
Nicholas (Great Grandson of the Weidemans)
Patrick Simons
Scott Klenk
Heather Warren
Christian Kuhar
Mary Jane Genneken
Sandy Paolucci
Brandi & Dave
Larry Herbert
Shawni Vietri
Joshua (Vietri's foster son)
Karen Jones' Family Members
JoAnn Titus
Gary and Wendy Phillips
Ellie Miller
Sandi Zapanovich
Pastor Will's new Family
Aunt Dolly (Bob DeLuca's sister)

Evan Clarkson
Lynn Franklin and
Family
Greg Symuleski
Rock Estabrook
Joe Batzel and family
our nation under God
our government
Barbara Weideman
John Butler
Corinne Chichester and job search
Sharon Frantz
Weinberg Food Bank
Emily and Donovan
Albert Oullette
Joe Rybnick
Karin and Art Doolittle
Barb Pompey



New Voting Date!!

Register online at
VotesPA.com/MailBallot
to vote by mail or call
1-877-votespa (option 3)

JUNE 2, 2020

IS THE NEW DATE FOR THE PENNSYLVANIA PRIMARY

ALL voters can now vote by mail! Learn more at: [VotesPA.com](https://votespa.com)

To safeguard our vote and our health, the PA primary will now be held on **June 2, 2020**. The new deadlines are:

- **May 18:** Last day to update your voter registration
- **May 26:** Last day to apply for a mail-in ballot
- **June 2, 8pm:** Deadline to return your voted mail-in ballot
- Learn more at: [VotesPA.com](https://votespa.com)

ALL Pennsylvanians can now apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot and vote from the comfort of home. Visit [VotesPA.com/MailBallot](https://votespa.com/MailBallot) - it's fast and easy and also mobile friendly! Enter your email address when you apply and you will receive updates on your ballot status.

If you want to be mailed a paper application, need help, or have questions, call 1-877-VOTESPA (option 3).

Directory update:

Sharon Decker
685 Sherwood Hill Road
New Milford
PA 18834

Kari Zupanovich
862 Thornhill Road
Clifford Twp
PA 18407

David and Brandy Gebo
9296 Mallory Road
New Hartford
NY 13413



May Birthdays

May 02	Hollis Lewis	May 21	Denise Finagan
May 04	Brian and Nancy Tyler	May 22	Dorothy Matthews
	Teresa Lamberson	May 23	Despina Mitchell
May 05	Dena Simons Dew	May 25	George Lotter/Gus Ferrara
	Chelsea Empet	May 26	Elissa Mitchell
May 06	Bob Deemer	May 27	Gary Housel
	Susan Major-Conklin		George Weideman
May 07	Scott Mitchell		Kailey Bridgeman
May 09	Mason Mitchell		Holli Chichester
May 10	Kevin and Diane Reuss		George and Barbara Weideman
	Zeb Feduchak		Dean Herbert
May 12	Richter Masters	May 28	Breanne and Kris Hiller
May 16	Hailey Miller		Gillian Millard
May 18	Ken Bennett	May 29	Missy Clarkson
May 19	Helen Foster	May 30	Jason Miller
	Kris Hiller		



Memorial Plaque Information

Are you interested in having a plaque attached to the memorial stone in the memorial garden? One may have a plaque ordered by doing the following:
Cost---\$25.00



Send check (made out to First Congregational-UCC) along with name of person and the year of birth and the year they passed away to the office.

Spire Sponsors

We **need Sponsors** to help us cover the cost of printing and mailing the Spire. Please let us know if you can help.

The sponsorship can be in Memory or in Honor of someone or just a donation.

Mailing costs approximately \$75/month.

The Website is up and running.

We have worked hard, but we realize that important things may not have been included.

We are still adding and changing things so if you have suggestions, please email Holli Chichester at hollischichester@gmail.com or call 301-643-1775.



Please check it out at

www.firstchurchharford.com

Spire Sponsor

Winemiller Family!!!

Hi Congregation-

We hope everyone is doing well and wish everyone a Happy Easter. Thank you to everyone at the church that are doing so much to provide for the congregation and community.

We are all doing well. Paula's job (NY State Regional Office of Developmental Disabilities) was classified as essential so she is still going to work every day overseeing the needs of people under the State's care. She is working very long hours (12-18 hours a day). Please pray for Paula, the clients, her coworkers and the many agencies/staff that take care of the people with disabilities across the state of NY. Paula pours her heart and soul into her job every day.

I am working from home doing my normal job for MetLife. Working from home is nothing new, but certainly would like to get back to the office soon. Bailey and Ben have continued their school work through virtual learning with their schools. Bailey still gets to see her horse a day or two each week (thank goodness). Ben is helping take care of Gillian and playing online games with his friends.

Lynnette is doing well and keeping things running here in the Millard household. If anyone knows "Netty" you know what that means. She never rests and does so much for all of us. She turned 73 on April 7th! She was scheduled for back surgery at the end of March, but it has been postponed. She is looking forward to that being rescheduled and hopefully the pain going away!

The exciting news is that my sister Heidi and her daughter Gillian have been here for over 3 weeks now. We all decided Harford would be a better place to be during this time. There is always a bright side to every situation and this has brought so much joy to our home!! Heidi is doing so much to help out around the house as well as working with Ben everyday on his school work— This has been a gift from heaven. If anyone has ever done school work with a 10 yr old that isn't really into school, you know what I mean!! Gillian is so much fun! We are doing all sorts of activities inside and out. She also has some school work from her pre-K program. She meets online with her teachers for stories and singing songs.

Thank you, Brad Millard

Correspondence

Hi Church Family! Just a short note to spread some cheer and keep in touch during the quarantine!

I originally took an unpaid leave of absence from my teaching job, but I'm officially back to work from home as of Tuesday, April 14th. My school also has residential children so we are considered essential employees. With Ben being so young and my dad, they were very understanding with my worries of coming to campus. I am currently expected to call my students twice weekly and create work for them weekly to be delivered by staff. I only have 6 students, but they are all on different levels so that's 6 different lessons for each subject for each kid! I have a staff teleconference Monday morning and will be learning about how we will be moving forward with online learning. Working from home with a 5 month old is not easy! When participating in phone conference calls, I have to keep it muted!

Mackenzie has been a big help at home, but she is really bummed about missing out on all of her senior year rights of passage and I can't blame her! I have to admit that I like her being home all the time. It's like the "old days" when she couldn't drive and had to stay home with us! We love to play monopoly and have a lot of different versions, so we've been keeping busy with that!

Benjamin is 5 months old and really growing! He is now eating bananas with oatmeal for breakfast and a vegetable at dinner time. Sometimes he gets a fruit at dinner because he's still hungry! Although I'm happy to be home with him, I miss our routine. I think he misses his friends too!

We celebrated Easter just the four of us. Different as usual, but it was nice too. The bunny brought us all baskets, we watched the church service, cooked dinner, and colored eggs! Benjamin sure seemed to enjoy all of the activities!

Eric has a new position at his job and he is considered essential. Luckily, with his new position he is out on his own and doesn't have much face to face contact with others!

Today, the 17th has been busy already! I've been working and the pool guy came and opened our pool! We scheduled him over a month ago and he stated he likes to open pools before it gets warm and the algae blooms. I think we might have to do the polar plunge!

Stay healthy and safe! Katherine Doolittle and family

From Margaret Maza:

As a 90 year old former member of the church I look forward to the pastor's prayer each morning as part of my daily worship . Thank you.

Just a quick note to let you all know how much I enjoyed the Easter service on YouTube. I was not able to watch it live as it conflicted with the live stream of our service at my church here in Endicott. There is a positive to this pandemic we find ourselves in, and that is, I was able to worship with my PA church family electronically. It was a lovely service, and I especially enjoyed the appropriate music and those who performed it. I especially appreciated George's solos and powerful delivery - very inspiring and moving. Thanks for making my Easter meaningful during these unusual times.

In Christ's love,

Ray Frederick

Dear Congregation,

As we are still practicing social distancing I want you to know, although we could not have Easter Sunrise Service as we've had in years I still went to the church. I sat on one of benches in the Memorial Garden and thanked the Lord for dying for mine and everyone's sins. I sang a couple of songs we would have sung if we'd been there.

The sun came up over the trees bathing the parking lot and surrounding area with light. I said hello to my family members buried in the cemetery, my grandparents, aunts, uncles, parents, and a brother. It was a time of peace, joy, and love.

I then went to the Liberty gas station and talked with Darlene Brink Mack for quite some time. I wished her a Happy Easter. A few other customers came in while we were talking and I wished them Happy Easter as well. As I left to come home a Pa State Trooper pulled in to fill his vehicle with gas, I thanked him for his service and wished him Happy Easter.

I came home and after lunch I began to prepare Easter Dinner for my two sisters, Carolyn, Susan, and myself. We had ham, salt potatoes, corn, and a peach pie which I had made last fall and put in the freezer.

I also gave my two sisters Easter baskets even though we are all adults I still felt we needed to feel like children again as we are all God's children.

Until we are once again able to be together I pray you are all safe and well. May the Lord watch over you and those you love and care for.

Love in Christ, Kay Gow, Deacon Chairperson

Dear Congregation,

God lead me to this thought earlier this morning. Let's all check in. Take a moment or two and send the office an email you'd like to send out to the congregation. It can be a few words. It can be a few paragraphs. You may want to write a short chapter! But let us hear from you! I will not include your email address in your message here, but will share your message.

How are you? What is going on (or what isn't going on)? How is your family? What successes do you have? Are their struggles?

Think of this as a pen pal system, only you're writing to all of us. We need this communication as a godly people to lift, love and laugh. We also need to encourage and inspire each other.

So, please send in your emails. Congratulate the latest Reverend Doctor in the house ☺. Send a direct message to someone who comes to mind whose contact info you do not have. Share a recipe. A coping skill. A joke. Tell a story. Write out a prayer. Inspire others. Teach and reach others. Now is not the time to be silent.

Here in the office I called and spoke with Betty Lou Bennett. She models for us a kind of response to this pen pal business. In her words below, I think we can all see, understand, and appreciate our God at work in us. Betty Lou wrote to Judy here, and, in the call between us, she gave me permission to share some of that email.

I share it now so that you'll see how we all value check ins, updates, and love through the written word.

So, yes, congregation, let us know how you are!

Will

Good morning Judy,

I hope this finds you and your family all well. Ken and I are doing great. We are continuing our stay in Florida until the end of April. We continue our morning walk every day, we are blessed with Sunday morning services via the Internet, and we are enjoying the sunshine .



David and I are doing well. We are both keeping busy as we are both still working. I am full on in my newest roll as a supervisor. I'm excited for this time and am leaning on the everlasting arms of Jesus when I get overwhelmed. Prayers for David's safety as he works for Price Chopper. I am working from home with no in person contact with clients or coworkers.

We are trying to take walks as much as we can, sometimes 2.5 miles, sometimes 4 miles. It's our alone time for now. And for me, the only chance I get to get out of the apartment.

We are moving to our new house next week. God has blessed us that we got in just in time before the virus hit and stalled our while process. We are excited for this new journey together as it is our first home we are buying together since meeting and getting married.

We continue to try to start our family with the intent to keeping our adoption process going as well. Prayers for this please. It's not an easy process emotionally, mentally, financially and/or at times faithfully. Yes, there's times of doubt that I try so hard to keep away.

We miss our PA families, church family included, as soon as it is safe we will be there for a visit! ♡

We send Europe and prayers to you all. Please stay safe and healthy ♡

Brandi and Dave Gebo

Greetings from Jean Bonham,

This is to let you know I'm still around as the letters, phone calls, emails can attest to. The days are filled with odds and ends, cleaning cupboards and drawers, putting together jigsaw puzzles, reading, knitting and embroidery, baking and cooking when I feel like it, and, best of all, playing the record player and listening to old songs, music by the great composers, Country Western, sacred music on Sundays and last but not least try to get outside on the deck and enjoy the great world we live in - listening to birds, watching the wild life, enjoying the sun and breeze. All this in preparation for the evening news which can be so disheartening.

May you all stay safe and well.

The Stout family would like to let everyone that we deeply miss our church family and would like to wish everyone a Happy Easter.

Because I am considered an essential worker, like many others, I have both fortunately and unfortunately continued to work through these uncertain times. I continue to take all precautions while at work, but still am concerned about missing something and bringing it home.

Through all of this I see the different ways people are coping with the current situation. I pray that God continues to watch over each of us as well as our medical professionals so they can soon find a cure that allows us to get back to our normal closeness and fellowship once again.

Please, as Stewardship chairperson, I remind you that your church is here for you to help with any needs you might have. Don't hesitate to call the church and leave a message. Someone will get back to you ASAP.

Until we are together again stay safe and stay well.

In the meantime, I hope that you will all take advantage of the information being shared via the website, Facebook, and email to help us all stay connected.

Craig Stout

Your kindness means so very much.
Thank you for the soup and beautiful Easter lily bouquet given to me at this time!

In His Love,
Glenda Klim



In Memory of:

Thelma and Howard Poxon

Oma and Opa Erhard

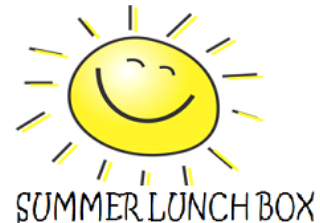
Helen and Steve Brewster

Joan and Peter Terrace

Walter Poxon

SUMMER LUNCH BOX

The Summer Lunch box has donated \$9,000.00 in the form of gift certificates, for groceries, to families in need during this pandemic. Gift certificates from the Hometown Market in Montrose, Mountainside Produce Market in Friendsville, and Black's Store in Hop Bottom are in the processes of being distributed.



The Summer Lunch Box, a grass roots, 100% volunteer, nonprofit organization has provided groceries (perishable and non-perishable), to families of the Mountain View School District for over 9 years and added Choconut area families this past summer. This summer we will be adding all of Montrose School District and the Elk Lake School District to our program. We were able to expand our outreach to these school districts as a direct result of a large donation from the Diaz Companies.

Our funding and support has come from the wonderful men and women of VFW Post 8488, Lenox Twp. and this summer we will have the added support from the VFW in Montrose, American Legion and Sons of the American Legion, Montrose.

In addition to the above supporters, local churches, clubs, businesses and the citizens of Susquehanna County have unselfishly donated to the Summer Lunch Box since its existence.

While we are not able to start our distribution to families yet, we hope our donation of gift certificates will help ease their struggles.

We truly live in the best county in the state, a county who strives to look after their neighbor when times are tough.

SUMMER LUNCH BOX

Spring, 2020

P.O. BOX 74

HOP BOTTOM, PA 18824

Entity: #84-2249142

Greetings from Summer Lunch Box,

As we think about the coronavirus, COVID-19 and the ripple effects on our lives, it is time to think ahead...when hand sanitizer and toilet paper will be readily available once again, for example! It's also time to begin thinking about the coming summer and the ongoing Summer Lunch Box Program.

2019 was a very busy season for the group: We served 73 families with a composite total of 199 children. We have been approved for 501c3 status. If you need it, I have included our number above.

2020 promises to be a busy season with some expansions on the horizon. By location, here are some tentative plans:

Mountain View School District -

- For the 10th consecutive year, distribution will resume at Grace Lutheran Church basement, Hop Bottom.

- **Rescheduling - Chix BBQ, Basket Raffle, Bake Sale-Gun Raffle - Hosted by - Elk Mountain VFW, Kingsley. Tickets will be available as soon as the date is set.**

Montrose School District -

- Choconut Area Children - Distribution at Neumann Center, Choconut

- Montrose Children - Distribution at VFW, Montrose

- **Sept 19th Chix BBQ, Golf Tournament, Basket Raffle, Bake Sale-Gun Raffle - Hosted by the VFW, Montrose.**

- Area charitable organizations have pledged support and assistance.

Elk Lake School District -

- Distribution will be at the Elk Lake High School Cafeteria

- Local groups have promised support and help.

SLB continues to be a small, community-minded group that has taken action to provide nutritious foodstuffs for children who are food insecure. These are those children who would normally receive free/reduced priced meals during the school year. During summer recess, these same kids face food insecurities. Attempting to alleviate this food shortage, the Summer Lunch Box Program was organized in 2011. Centered in Hop Bottom, our efforts have assisted children from primarily the Mountain View School District. That will soon change, as outlined above. Registration begins soon for eligible families.

While the end of this academic year remains in limbo, SLB anticipates 5 or 6 upcoming food distribution dates. Despite our efforts to shop prudently, grocery costs continue to spiral, and each order seems more expensive than the previous one. Present funding will get us started; we are attempting to raise additional monies to cover any shortfall.

On behalf of the Summer Lunchbox Program, I am asking for your help in meeting our needs. Perhaps you yourself experienced hunger as a child or have been in contact with area hungry children. Many of us know families who often must choose between paying bills or buying groceries for their families. In these instances, food purchases often drop to the bottom of the priority list. **We are 100% community and fund-raiser supported and 100% volunteer based.**

Note that the Elk Mountain V.F.W. Post at Lenox once again is assisting our efforts by helping us sponsor a chicken barbecue. Tickets will be available at the V.F.W. or from any SLB committee member. Donations to the accompanying bake sale and basket raffle are welcome. For details on the basket raffle, feel free to contact Holli at 570/851-5109 or cell 301/643-1775. Bake sale questions can be directed to Paula Smith at 570/289-4102.

We would certainly appreciate any support of Summer Lunch Box Program you can provide. Donations can be sent to the above address.

Thanks in advance for your consideration,

Lorraine A. Stanton, for Summer Lunch Box

Non-Profit Organization

US Postage Paid

PERMIT—#20

Montrose, PA 18801

First Congregational Church

United Church of Christ

5016 Creek Road

PO Box 217

Harford, PA 18823

Tel. 570-434-2260

Email: firstch@nep.net

Spire email: firstchurchspire@gmail.com

Web URL: www.firstchurchharford.com

.....the people in darkness have seen a great light

Isaiah 9:2

Join Us Each Sunday!!



Harford First Congregational Church—UCC

Rev. William Hagenbuch –Pastor

Home Phone: 570-434-7729

Email: wrh@nep.net

Office Hours: Mon. 4-5:30 pm

Judy Mitchell –Sec

Hours: Tuesday 1:00-5:00

Friday 1:00-5:00