



# The Messenger

First United Methodist Church Newsletter  
446 Camden Avenue, Moorestown, NJ 08057  
856-235-0450

Rev. Richard Nichols, Pastor  
Kathy Clawges, Director of Youth  
Donna Banes, Interim Music Team Coordinator  
Devika Gill, Director of First Light Learning Center

Rev. HeyYoung Horton, Associate Pastor  
Karen Murray, Director of Christian Education  
Doug Hamilton, Maintenance Coordinator

Join us for Worship - Saturday 5:30 pm, Sunday 8:30 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am  
Visit us on the Web at: [www.meetwithGod.com](http://www.meetwithGod.com) -or- Email us at: [church@meetwithGod.com](mailto:church@meetwithGod.com)

MAY 2018

## RETIREMENT CELEBRATION FOR PASTOR RICHARD & JOANNA

Dear Church Family & Friends,

To honor Pastor Richard and Joanna for their years of service in the United Methodist Church and to celebrate the beginning of their retirement, our church family is hosting an afternoon tea.

The Tea Party will be at the First United Methodist Church, 446 Camden Avenue Moorestown, NJ on Sunday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 3:00pm in Fellowship Hall.

If you would like to attend please RSVP by May 14<sup>th</sup> to Karen Murray ([education@meetwithgod.com](mailto:education@meetwithgod.com)) or Kathy Appleton ([jkappleton@comcast.net](mailto:jkappleton@comcast.net)). *Our space is limited and we will only be able to accommodate those who RSVP by May 14th.*

If you are unable to attend and would like to write a personal note or make a "love" offering please feel free to use the enclosed envelope and return it to the church office. If you receive your Messenger electronically, you may use your own envelope to mail or drop off your note. All cards and gifts received will be given directly to Pastor Richard on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Thank you so much!  
God Bless  
Kathy Appleton & Karen Murray



## GROUNDS FOR GOOD Friday, May 4th



Join us as we close out the 2017-2018 season of Grounds for Good Coffee House on Friday, May 4. Stillwater Gospel Band will perform and there will be a display by a local artist, free coffee and tea, and snacks and baked goods for purchase. Admission is always free, but proceeds and donations will benefit Love Orphanage in Haiti. The doors to Fellowship Hall will open at 7:30, with music kicking off at 8. Hope to see you there!

\*\*\*\*\*

**CHILDREN'S MUSICAL**  
**Sunday, May 13th**  
**9:30 & 11:00 a.m.**

**SOUL ON FIRE**  
By David & Celeste Clydesdale  
Performed by the Junior &  
Wesley Choirs

*See pg. 6 for more information*

\*\*\*\*\*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 2nd	Sing-Along at Avista - 10:00am
May 4th	Grounds for Good - 8:00pm
May 4-5	Jr./Wesley Overnight - 7:00pm-10:00am
May 8th	The Serving Plate - 5:00pm
May 12th	Adult Fellowship at Broadway Theater
May 13th	Mother's Day Musical - 9:30 & 11:00am
May 13th	Light Harbor at Avista - 2:30pm
May 18th	Confirmation dinner & rehearsal-6:00pm
May 19th	Eyes of Our Hearts breakfast - 7:00am
May 20th	Men's Breakfast - 7:45am
May 20th	Confirmation service - 11:00am
May 28th	Memorial Day - church office closed
May 29th	Crafts for Good - 7:00 - 8:30pm



**A NOTE FROM  
PASTOR TOM KORKUCH**

People always seem to be on the move in scripture. Abraham moves from his ancestral home to a land promised to him and his descendants by God. Moses leads an entire people out from bondage to a land flowing with milk and honey. Jesus is constantly on the move, even telling his disciples that “foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” It would seem that the concept of “movement” is a sacred one in the Bible.

As United Methodists, we're quite familiar with this concept. This is true when it comes to the need to move, and develop, and grow spiritually - but it also applies, in a very literal sense, to the movement of those who are called “to equip the saints for the work of ministry,” as Paul says. Simply put, pastors move - *especially United Methodist pastors.*

As you know, I'll be moving sometime in the middle of June to join with you in ministry as your new pastor at First United Methodist Church. With me will be my wife, Lisa, and our two sons, Patrick, who is 22, and Michael, who will be 20. Also joining us will be our 10-year-old beagle/Labrador mix, Eisenhower (“Ike,” for short). We're all looking forward to the move to Moorestown, especially the new experience of living in the Philadelphia market - although as a life-long Mets, Giants, Rangers, Knicks fan, there will be a bit of a learning curve.

The March edition of *The Messenger* gave you a brief outline of my background, including the churches I've served as well as my love of history and biblical studies. For this article, which Pastor Richard graciously invited me to write, I thought I would augment that brief summary with some more details. I grew up in the Roman Catholic Church and spent my entire childhood in a small town called Chatham in Morris County. I have some business background and worked for twelve years at Bloomingdale's in Short Hills while in high school, college, and graduate school. It was while I was at Rutgers University that I began exploring other expressions of Christianity, until I finally arrived at United Methodism through my later association with Drew University in Madison in the Biblical Studies program.

There are many facets of the United Methodist Church that attracted me. First, the importance of grace and the love of God at work in our lives in the Wesleyan tradition spoke to my own faith journey. Second, the value that the church places on lay leadership and the role of the congregation in the work of ministry was also very appealing. Finally, the traditional Methodist emphasis on social holiness in the form of mission and outreach made perfect sense to me.

All of these facets have shaped my ministry over the past twenty-five plus years - and while there is so much more that I look forward to sharing with you, allow me to just add in closing that First UMC looks to be an exciting place where vital ministry is happening in so many different ways. When I first learned of Bishop Schol's intention to appoint me to Moorestown, I did a little research and discovered that we have much in common, including a strong mission and outreach emphasis, a high value on employing the gifts of the laity, a commitment to children and young people, a deep love and appreciation of music ministry, and a desire to be a church not just for the congregation, but also for the community.

Please know that I will be in prayer for First UMC in this time of transition - especially for Pastor Richard, Pastor Hey Young, and the staff. I know that God is going to work in and through all of us to make us even more what we were created to be in Christ Jesus!

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Tom

\*\*\*\*\*

**OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

*First United Methodist Church is a community of faith committed to sharing the love of Jesus Christ with a hurting world through words and actions.*



## FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY LIFE

*"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth; And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord" The Apostle's Creed (first two lines)*

Just as our congregation was studying the book "Creed" by Adam Hamilton our Confirmation Class was also becoming familiar with the message of The Apostle's Creed. Each time the class meets they recite The Apostle's Creed in order to become familiar with what they are agreeing to when they join the church.

Having a creed to live by was a bit unfamiliar to our students. In this fast-paced world the students commented that they don't have time to be committed to anything except school and having a 'code' or 'creed' to live by didn't make any sense and was something new to them. (I'm sure they all have expectations for "family living" however they never thought about it in these terms.)

As we've studied the Confirmation Curriculum, which talks about and teaches the students about being in a relationship with God through Jesus, they are beginning to understand what it means to have a "foundation" or a "point of reference" by which to live. We've talked about God's grace and how God wants us to be on the receiving end of His unconditional love and what it means to live by "The Spirit".

We've shared in how being confirmed is just a stepping stone into a life-long commitment to living for The Lord and how joining this community is an opportunity to belong to a church that loves The Lord and serves God. We've explored the ways in which the Holy Spirit guides us daily and that it is our responsibility to remain connected to God through faith. We have had wonderful conversations about what it means to be part of God's family and how to live out the Apostle's Creed.

We talked about how when they stand in front of the church they will be making a vow and may hear words like these "Confirmation is an opportunity to respond to the grace of God available to us, as acknowledged in baptism, and to promise to live as a person of faith. What God offers us must be accepted in repentance and faith," according to the Methodist Liturgy found in the United Methodist Hymnal, "Confirmation and reaffirmation are our responses of commitment, profession of faith, and rededication."

Have you considered your confirmation vows or the vow you made upon joining this faith community? I pray you take time this month to consider the importance of living in a "Community of Faith" and allowing the words of The Apostle's Creed to be your daily guide.

Grace and Peace,  
Karen Murray, DCE

---

**Sunday, May 20th - CONFIRMATION SUNDAY!** Our church will welcome 9 youth who have made a commitment to join this faith community as they continue to grow spiritually.

### **June 3rd - Celebration Sunday**

**9:30** - Children in grades 3yrs.-6<sup>th</sup> grade will meet in the Chapel for a morning of worship & games. Children age 2 will meet in their regular rooms for special activities. (No Jr. or Sr. High Sunday School)

**July 8th** - **Summer Sunday School** begins. (Look for more information next month.)

**August 20th - 24th - Vacation Bible School** Theme: "Buck-A-Roo Round-up" The program will be from 9:00-12:00 noon. "Family Appreciation Night" will be on Thursday, August 23rd at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary, followed by the PEACH FESTIVAL on Friday the 24<sup>th</sup> beginning at 4pm.

 LAY LEADER LINES 

I think we will all be so glad to see the month of May arrive this year - what a challenging March we experienced with so much snow! Springtime is such a developing time for everyone, it seems.

Looking at some of the days to celebrate in May, I am reminded yet again of how we are growing as a church family, supporting each other, working together, praying and laughing together. For example, May 23<sup>rd</sup> is “lucky penny” day!

There are many days to help get us ready to celebrate springtime, additional ways to grow: (3<sup>rd</sup> - Garden Meditation Day; 4<sup>th</sup> - Bird Day; 8<sup>th</sup> - Iris Day; 16<sup>th</sup> - Love a Tree Day; 20<sup>th</sup> - Pick Strawberries Day; and Water a Flower Day on the 30<sup>th</sup>).

Then there are so many ways to grow in our faith, and the encouragement is written throughout Scripture. Here are a few of my favorite verses about faith:

*Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

God tells us that, when we ask Him to set our hearts on His promises, the Holy Spirit will change our hearts so we can abound in joy, peace, faith and hope.

We find in the book of John 6:35, that Jesus said: *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”*

We know that Jesus is the only bread of life, and when we turn to Him to satisfy us, we are showing a good example of our faith. We learn in Hebrews 11:1 *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*

Max Lucado has a good reminder to share: *“God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile.”*

Hudson Taylor, a Christian missionary to China in the 1800s, encourages us too: *God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supplies.”*

As we think about beginning our summer season, knowing that we will have changes in our FUMC Community, I know that we are all grateful to Pastor

Richard and Joanna, for all that they have taught us, and for the friendships that we have formed with them. Our prayers for them will continue throughout their retirement, as we prepare to welcome, and work with Pastor Tom and his wife Lisa.

Children have such sincere beliefs about God, and faith in God. As you know, I learn much from children in every conversation that I have with them.

A Kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom while the children were drawing. Walking around to see the children's work, she approached one little girl who was diligently working. The teacher asked the girl about the drawing, and the five-year old said; “I'm drawing God.” The teacher said, “But no one knows what God looks like.” Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing the young lady replied: “They will in a minute.”

Children are so literal too, and maybe we can learn more from their innocence, and at times, unquestioning obedience. I love this story too:

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Christian school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. One of the teachers had written a note, which she posted on the apple tray: “Take only ONE. God is watching.” Moving further along the lunch line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. A child had clearly written this note, which was posted on the cookie pile: *“Take all you want. God is watching the apples.”*

As we move forward, we know that there are challenges to face each day, along with countless blessings. Another pastor, Tony Evans, has some advice I would like to share with you:

*“God will meet you where you are in order to take you where He wants you to go.”*

As we continue on our faith journey together, my prayer for all of us is to work together, encouraging each other to follow the paths that God has for us to take.

God bless you all,  
Kathy Appleton  
Lay Leader



## MUSIC NOTES

May is a month where spring is in full swing, it's also a time to remember and honor our mothers. I was very fortunate to have a great relationship with my mom! I know that is not always the case, but I was lucky enough to call my mom my best friend! It is hard to believe that I have not been able to talk with her, give her a hug or tell her I love her in 11 years. Yet, my mom left me with some wonderful life lessons and a love of music. When I was diagnosed with Breast Cancer 5 years ago, I knew just how I was going to fight it, after all I had watched my mom battle ovarian cancer twice. Not one time did her faith ever waver, not once did she ever give up on herself or our Lord. I know whom she had put her trust and I was going to do the same thing!! Her favorite hymn was When Morning Gilds the Skies. So, it was this hymn I decided to learn more about this month.

The hymn was written by a German author whose name has been lost in time. It first appeared in a Roman Catholic hymnal, *Catholisches Gesangbuch* in 1828. That hymnal originated in Wurzburg, on the Main River near Frankfurt. According to the website *Sermon Writer*, "that is lovely country, with hills and streams. It's no wonder that a poet, seeing that beauty, would be inspired to write a hymn praising God for natural wonders."

Yet, the hymn celebrates more than natural wonders. It calls us to praise God whether we are at work or at prayer-- whether at night or during the day-- even when we are faced with the powers of darkness, they lose their power when subjected to praise to God. The hymn calls us to praise God "thro' all the ages long."

*When morning gilds the skies my heart awaking cries:*

*May Jesus Christ be praised!*

*Alike at work and prayer, to Jesus I repair:*

*May Jesus Christ be praised!*

*The night becomes the day when from the heart we say,*

*May Jesus Christ be praised!*

*The powers of darkness fear when this sweet chant they hear:*

*May Jesus Christ be praised!*

*Let all the earth around ring joyous with the sound:*

*May Jesus Christ be praised!*

*In heaven's eternal bliss the loveliest strain is this:*

*May Jesus Christ be praised!*

*Be this, while life is mine, my canticle divine:*

*May Jesus Christ be praised!*

*Be this th'eternal song through all the ages long:*

*May Jesus Christ be praised!*

My mom lived every word of this hymn. She praised Jesus Christ every morning when she arose and throughout her life. The lesson she passed onto me "... through all the ages long, May Jesus Christ be praised!!!"

Donna Banes  
Interim Music Ministries Coordinator



**CHILDREN'S MUSICAL**

**Sunday, May 13th  
9:30 & 11:00 a.m.**

“It started with a little spark,  
And now it's burning in my heart  
Jesus, I'll never be the same  
You fanned the spark into a flame!”

These are just some of the words of praise and joy that our Jr/Wesley kids have been learning for several weeks now, as we busily prepare for one of the high points of our year: the Mothers' Day Musical! (The kids have enjoyed this so much in years past that, in *September* when they return after summer break, I have heard “Hi, Mrs. Victoria! Have you picked out what the musical is going to be this year yet?!”)

Well, this years' program is called Soul On Fire, written by David and Celeste Clydesdale. The story takes place in a local community firehouse, where a group of children come to spend the day learning - but they quickly learn that this is not a typical field trip! It is a new piece, published only last year; and has many up-tempo, contemporary songs for the kids to share with you, in addition to some more gentle, reflective moments as we talk and share about what Gods' love means to us.

Soul On Fire will be performed on Sunday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018, at both the 9:30 and 11:00 services. We are so excited to share our story with YOU! 😊

Victoria McGrath



Newly Baptized

**Baptisms:**

Reyna Dawn Barrera  
on April 15, 2018; daughter of  
Jilder Barrera & Stephanie Doron

Evelyn Kathryn Clawges  
on April 15, 2018; daughter of  
Michael & Gabrielle Clawges

Liam Edmund Diaz  
on April 15, 2018; son of  
Juan & Erin Diaz

**Weddings:**

Dorothy Sperock &  
Thomas Lebonitte on  
March 17, 2018



**Deaths:**

Deane Johnson  
on March 26, 2018

Kathryn Machamer  
on April 7, 2018

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE**

**ADULT LEADERS  
NEEDED FOR TPP**

We are still searching for adult leaders willing to join us this summer to lead for The Philadelphia Project. This summer we will be serving from July 8-14. As always, we will be working in the Roxborough/Mt. Airy part of Philadelphia doing home repair, ministering to the homeless, as well as working alongside TPP's staff at Kids Camp. We have 45 youth who need you to partner with them for a week of transformation and to learn just how they can grow closer to Jesus. Please contact Melissa O'Donnell, 856-912-2570 or melissaleighodonnell@comcast.net with any questions and for details. This is your time to make an impact!

\*\*\*

**VOLUNTEER OPENINGS  
FOR CHANCEL TEAM**

The Worship Committee is looking for volunteers to help care for the Chancel. This includes maintaining the altar candles and the altar/pulpit cloths in the sanctuary and chapel, as well as care/cleanup of pew materials. The duties are usually done during the week. You will be joining a team of several people, so assistance is always available and scheduling can be flexible (weekly or monthly). Any questions or to volunteer, please contact Susan Nichols, 856-786-8547 or nicholsfam@comcast.net.

\*\*\*\*\*



FROM THE  
MISSIONS COMMISSION

In Romans 1:16 the Apostle Paul states he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. Paul wrote this because he understood there can sometimes be a tendency for Christians to be ashamed of proclaiming the good news because from the world's perspective the gospel is foolishness. Many people who lived during Jesus' time on earth did not understand what the messiah ought to be and the need for a savior even though this was well prophesized in the Old Testament. Instead of a savior the Greeks looked for wisdom, the Jews looked for miraculous signs, but the bible says we preach Christ crucified! Sadly, the world's understanding and belief about God's plan of salvation has not changed much over the past 2,000 years. This is because we live in a world where people's emphasis continue to be focused on worldly things such as having more materialistic things, more prestige, more honor while being consumed with the love of money. These are just some of the things that many people want because they think this will lead to happiness and joy. Needing a savior is probably the farthest thing from the natural person's mind. Therefore, it shouldn't surprise us that the world still considers God's plan of salvation to not only be foolish, but many have animosity toward the gospel because it strikes a nerve with them when we talk about it in a loving manner.

I was impressed with Paul because while in prison he asks God for boldness to deliver the good news to anyone who could hear him. Paul was thrown in jail because of his boldness for preaching the gospel and yet he asks God for boldness! Paul understood very well that talking about our Lord Jesus can unavoidably stir up hard feelings and because of this we may sometimes hesitate to talk about the message to an unbeliever. Like Paul we too need to ask God for boldness, so we can share the message while not sugar coating or using clever words to hide its real meaning.

For the past 33 years I have been praying that my Jewish parents and siblings will one day become disciples in Christ and taste the goodness and unconditional love that God offers to everyone. Perhaps you have a family member that has never accepted the good news or has fallen away from the faith. Perhaps you have prayed and discussed this matter with that person, but you did not receive a positive response. Such has always been the

case when I discussed the gospel with my parents. No matter how loving and gentle I presented the good news, my parents would quickly become upset and were sure to let me know it. For me it is easier to share God's plan of salvation with a friend, a worker or even a stranger than when it comes to sharing it with my own parents and siblings. Maybe it is because of the animosity that flows through the room whenever I bring up God's plan of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps my parents feel betrayed that I gave my life to Christ, something they feel no Jew is supposed to do. Whatever the reason I know I have never stopped praying for them and praying that God will grant me the boldness to press onward and to continue to share the message with them in love and in faith.

This past March my wife Stephanie and I traveled to Florida to visit my 92-year-old mom and 97-year-old dad who live alone in a retirement community. It's been 15 months since I last saw them and whenever I am about to see them I sometimes think of ways to start a conversation that will gently lead us onto the topic of salvation. I never want to become pushy but during our next to last visit (in 2016) I remember telling my dad how much joy and peace I have with Christ in my life and after explaining the good news my dad became a tad uncomfortable by blurting out that he would never become a Christian since he is Jewish. This past visit I decided to take a different approach though admittedly I was nervous to bring up the topic that was burning inside of me which was unmistakably the Holy Spirit's way of nudging me to take another chance on them. However, up until the last day of our stay I had procrastinated in talking to my parents about this matter and remember going to bed each night and feeling disappointed with myself because I had a burning desire to talk to them about salvation. I believe this was the Holy Spirit convicting me to be bold and reminding me that He would give me the right words to say if I brought it up.

While having breakfast the last day with my parents I decided to talk about the upcoming Passover holiday. I told them that back in the Old Testament days every Jewish family went to synagogue every year and brought their best lamb as a ransom for their sins. I said

*Continued on next page*

**Missions, *continued***

that over the course of history the Jews (like everyone else) continued to sin against God and each family had to have their best / unblemished lamb killed at the altar while they repented for God to forgive their sins. But God's plan was for God himself to be the messiah and to come down to earth and be that sacrificial lamb for everyone. I brought up that in the Old Testament it not only says when and where the messiah would arrive on earth, but that He would be rejected by his people and be crucified in order to take on the sins of the world. But then on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day the messiah would be resurrected from the dead. By now my parents were very much aware that I was referring to Jesus but for the very first time they genuinely wanted to know more about this. I told my parents that if they really want to know the evidence of the miraculous resurrection of the messiah, it is that no one has ever found Jesus' body after his crucifixion because He is alive and lives now and forever! I was later floored when both of my parents said they started listening to a TV evangelical minister. Praise God this was the first time my parents had no animosity towards me when I brought up about Jesus! As we were concluding our discussion my dad was very sad we had to leave later that day as tears ran down his face. It was a very emotional day for all of us which never would have happened if it wasn't for God giving me boldness while feeling His presence every step of the way. I don't believe my parents are yet ready to make that commitment of faith in Christ, but on that morning, we connected, and I am thankful for God's amazing grace.

Allan Estrin  
Missions Commission Member

\* \* \* \* \*

**ELECTRONIC GIVING OPTION**

**If you would like to use your mobile device to make an electronic donation to FUMC Moorestown, just scan this QR code and you'll be connected to our mobile giving page!**



**AN UPDATE FROM  
THE PROPERTY COMMITTEE**

Quietly this past year, your Property Committee has been dealing with some major issues related to Fire Safety here at the church. The Moorestown Fire Department cited us for three significant Fire Safety violations, and we are required to bring our building up to code as soon as possible. We are required to add smoke and fire detectors to the old Fellowship Hall basements. We are required to add a sprinkler system to all of our basement areas, both the Fellowship Hall basement, and the new Education building basement. And we are required to enclose the two stairways leading to the Fellowship Hall basement. Just to be clear, there are no options. We comply or we close our doors.

Now for the good news. We have been working closely with the Fire Department to develop and execute a plan to address these issues. We have engaged an architect who has drawn plans for these changes. By the time you read this we will be well underway upgrading and extending our smoke detectors into the old basement areas. And we are under contract and beginning the process of installing the required sprinkler system. With these underway, we have been granted a year's extension on the remaining stairwell task. While these are expensive and involved tasks, they are necessary and are the right thing to do to protect our building, and more importantly our youth who use these areas.

On a more fun note, Property and the Trustees are very close to signing an agreement for FUMC to "Go Solar". Once again, by the time you read this, we may already be under contract to place solar panels on our rooftops, which will generate most of the electricity we will need. In this agreement, the installation costs us nothing. In what is called a Power Purchase Agreement, the Solar company provides the system, maintains the system, and we agree to purchase the power it generates. Clean, green, renewable power, and at a fixed rate for the next 20 years that is less than we currently pay PSE&G. More details will be coming. Catch me at church if you want to know more about any of these topics.

John Halligan  
Property Chairman



**FAITH NOTES**  
**How God Is at Work in Our Lives**

**This month - Pat Mengel**

This reading is from *Jesus Always*, a devotional that really spoke to my life:

“You love Me because I first loved you. I had My eye on you before you were interested in Me. I noticed everything about you and followed you everywhere. I orchestrated circumstances and events in your life to help you see your need of Me. I provided people and teaching that told you the truth about Me in ways you could understand. My Spirit worked within you to make you spiritually alive - enabling you to receive Me and believe in My name. All of this flowed out of My deep, powerful affection for you. I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

My father died in Burma in 1945. It was just my mother and me. We never went to church. We lived in New York City, and were passing by Calvary Episcopal Church one day and looked in. Out of the blue, mother said, “we'll go to this church.”

I was baptized and confirmed there. I went to church by myself. God sent a woman in the church into my life. She was a widow who had no children. We adopted each other as aunt and niece. She was my spiritual mother and my mentor.

When I was 20 years old, I kept having dreams about needing to be saved. When Aunt Anne and I attended a Good Friday service, it was different from the previous ones. We sang “Ah, Holy Jesus, how hast thou offended,” and my eyes were opened to what Jesus did for me. Later Aunt Anne and I knelt together and prayed, and I asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior. I started reading the Bible.

She encouraged me to go to a Faith at Work conference in May. I went. My roommate was a member of the Young Adult Group at Marble Collegiate Church. I joined it in September. I blossomed and grew in my faith. I met my first fiance' there, and when it broke up, I was devastated, but God had another plan. Later I met Jerry. We married and had our daughter, Karen.

We eventually moved to South Jersey and joined a church. While there I went through a desert experience,

and I felt lost and alone. I knew in my heart that I could not turn my back on Jesus. I had to trust Him to lead me out. He did.

In 1981 we joined First United. A door opened to new opportunities: adult Sunday School coordinator, teaching, being a Stephen Minister, and discovering my spiritual gifts.

On July 1, 2013, I was told I had cancer. I said, “Ok Lord, we're in this together.” He filled me with His peace, calm and comfort. My surgery was successful.

Then came the chemotherapy with its pain, weakness, and being bald. One morning, I burst into tears. Jerry asked me why I was crying. I was crying because I was so overwhelmingly blessed with the cards, the prayers, and the meals delivered by Martha's Hands.

Another side effect of chemo is neuropathy, which caused problems with balance and walking, and numbness in my fingers. My pills were tripled, but they didn't work. I was happy to be cancer free, but I could do without the neuropathy.

In August of last year, I received a mailer from a wellness center, saying they treat and cure neuropathy. I went for it, as I was impressed by their presentation. It was costly (not paid by insurance), but I was determined. It didn't work and I was disappointed. I should have prayed before I paid.

Then Jesus reminded me about Paul when he prayed to be healed of his thorn in the flesh. He said to me as He said to Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you.”

For all the good things that happened, I give Him thanks and praise. For all the negative things, I give Him my trust.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

(Proverbs 3: 4-5)