



The Messenger

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

Rev. Richard Nichols, Pastor
Glenn Rodgers, Director of Music
Kathy Clawges, Director of Youth
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 -or- Email us at: church@meetwithGod.com

SEPTEMBER 2017

MEMORIAL FUND UPDATE

When loved ones pass away, we often look for a meaningful way to honor the life they lived. Making a donation to First United Methodist Church in memory of your loved one can be a lasting tribute that touches many lives.

Many times, the family of the deceased loved one feels led by the Spirit to designate a specific purpose for monies donated, and our church family works diligently to honor those requests. However, sometimes the family has a difficult time deciding how the funds should be used.

To help the members of our church understand what happens when you make a Memorial Gift, and how funds are used, the Worship Committee has posted a document that can be found on our website, www.meetwithgod.com under the About Us/Forms and Policies section. Here is the link:

http://meetwithgod.com/wp-content/uploads/about_us/forms_policies/memorial_gifts.pdf

The information posted there includes a Suggested Memorial Gifts Designations list. This list will be reviewed as needed; new items may be added at any time.

We encourage you to take a look at the information on our website. The Worship Committee welcomes any suggestions or comments you have regarding this ministry - just email Jill Lee at j.huntington_lee@icloud.com.

"The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever." Psalm 138:8

Jill Lee and Deb Irwin, Worship Committee

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

FALL RUMMAGE SALE
Wednesday, Sept. 27th
& Thursday, Sept. 28th

Donations accepted beginning
Sunday, Sept. 24th

See pg. 8 for more details

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sept. 4th	Labor Day - church office closed
Sept. 6th	Wed. Prayer & Pilates resumes - 5:30pm
Sept. 7th	Adult Choir resumes - 7:30pm
Sept. 8th	My Abba's Hands - 7:00-9:00pm
Sept. 9th	My Abba's Hands - 9:00am - 3:00pm
Sept. 10th	New Sunday School session begins
Sept. 10th	Light Harbor at Avista - 2:30pm
Sept. 10th	Youth Bells resumes - 6:00pm
Sept. 10th	Jr. & Sr. High UMYF resume - 7-8:30pm
Sept. 11th	Mon. Prayer & Pilates resumes - 5:30pm
Sept. 11th	Adult Bells resumes - 7:00pm
Sept. 12th	Adult Bible Study resumes - 2:00pm
Sept. 12th	The Serving Plate - 5:00pm
Sept. 13th	UMW Luncheon & Craft Display - Noon
Sept. 14th	First Place 4 Health resumes - 9:00am
Sept. 14th	Thursday Youth/Choir resumes - 4:30pm
Sept. 14th	Youth Choir resumes - 6:30pm
Sept. 16th	Eyes of Our Hearts breakfast - 7:00am
Sept. 16th	Adult Fellowship - Noon
Sept. 17th	Men's Breakfast - 7:45am
Sept. 20th	Internat'l Women's Friendship Grp-10am
Sept. 27th	Rummage Sale - 6:00 - 9:00pm
Sept. 28th	Rummage Sale - 9:30am-2pm; 6-8:30pm
Sept29-Oct1	Ignite Youth Conference - Wildwood,NJ



FROM
PASTOR RICHARD

The world we live in can so often be a troubling place. Everyday in the news we hear about words of hate, acts of violence, mounting tensions between people and nations. And these are not isolated incidents, but they seem to have become commonplace. It is a world that runs contrary to who we are called to be as followers of Jesus Christ. Over and above the ways of this world is our call to live a different kind of life, that the evidence of our discipleship would be seen in how we treat one another and the example we live.

Part of that calling is expressed in Paul's words to the Colossians when he describes for us the character of the Christian life: "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience". Not the kind of qualities we often see around us. He goes on to say: "Bear with one another and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other, just as the Lord has forgiven you..." And then finally he captures the essence of that character by saying: "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." This kind of spirit pictures the life of the follower of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine the difference it would make in our communities and in our world if we could all live with these Christlike characteristics?

We know we will continue to live in a world that is fallen, sinful, and broken. But each of us have the opportunity and the responsibility to bring God's light and love in our relationships and with everyone we meet. Let the good news of God's love and grace be seen in us everyday.

NOTICE OF CORRECTION:

Our one-worship service Sunday will be on October 15th, NOT on October 8th. We have received some flyers regarding participation for this day, October 15th, and can't wait to see more! Thank you all so much.

God bless,
Kathy Appleton
Brian O'Donnell
Lay Leaders

LAY LEADERS' REPORT
August, 2017

We have no news to report during the month of August. However, we are working with the pastors and staff on preparing a one-worship-service celebration on October 15th, which will be a celebration of the heritage of our church family. There will be prayers and music, as important parts of the celebration. We are requesting, for the luncheon that will follow the service, that everyone will contribute some type of food item that reminds you of your heritage. Please look for more information in the weekly bulletins. The Scripture reading program is running smoothly, with a big thanks to the coordinators for each worship service. A few names were added this summer. Thank you all for your encouragement in all that our church family is doing!

God bless,
Kathy Appleton
Brian O'Donnell
Lay Leaders

ADULT BIBLE STUDY
RESUMES SEPTEMBER 12

The Adult Bible Study will again meet on Tuesday afternoons at 2:00, beginning September 12. We will now be meeting in the Parlor.

This Bible Study is open to all. Regular attenders and occasional drop ins are equally welcome. For more information please contact Charlie Rudolph, charlie@ccrudolph.com or 856-235-9206. Please join us.

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

“¹³Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” ¹⁵After laying His hands on them, He departed from there.” Matthew 19:13-15

As the next Sunday School year begins I thought it a perfect time to remind everyone, especially parents, reading this that Jesus speaks these words directly to the disciples and the surrounding crowd, “Let the children come.” (Matthew 19:14 NLT)

This passage is repeated in three of the four Gospels as Jesus is ministering to the crowds. As is typical in many societies, children are not always looked at as having much value or influence but Jesus says in Matthew 18:3 *“Then he said, “I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven.”* I think it's fair to say that Jesus placed much value and influence on children and being child-like.

One characteristic of all children is that they watch and learn from the adults in their life. They pick-up on just about everything they say and the actions they do. So what actions are you doing that the children in your life are mimicking? Are you being the Spiritual influence that Jesus calls you to be?

Recently we heard two messages on the power of words and how the words we use can either build someone up or tear them down. Are the children hearing you build others up or are they hearing words that are hurtful and disrespectful?

If we are to become child-like to follow Jesus then we need to be sure we are taking on the characteristics of Jesus. We need to learn from him, model his behavior and continue to grow in his favor.

Participating in Sunday School, Bible Study and Small Groups are ways to continue to grow into the likeness of Christ. There are Sunday School classes for all ages. If you've not participated before and would like to join one, or if you would like to start a new group just let me know.

Growing and changing into the person that God has called us to be is a lifelong challenge so why not challenge yourself this year and dig deeper through learning to become the best version of yourself. Be the Christ-like influence to the people around you, especially the children.

~Peace,
Karen Murray, DCE

Sunday School for All ages begins on September 10th **Nursery Care available in Room E-101 during** **all Worship Services**

9:30 - 2 year olds - Rm. E-102, 3 year olds & 4 year olds - Rm. E-104, K's & 1st grade - Rm. E-202, 2nd grade & 3rd grade - Rm. F-104, 4th, 5th & 6th grade - Community Room, Jr. High (7th & 8th) - Rm. F-05,

Sr. High - Resource Room, Adults Class - Heritage Room

11:00 - Kindergarten - 6th grade - Room F-105 (Staff is still needed - Curriculum provided), Adult Bible Study - Heritage Room, Adult Sermon Discussion Group - Rm. E-203

(A few volunteers are still needed to assist with Sunday School at both hours.)

Thursday Youth Group, Dinner & Choir Combo **Begin September 14th**

Young Followers - K - 1

Begin with Dinner at 4:30 then Choir at 5:15 and returning for Fellowship from 5:45-6:30

CHUM & Trailblazers - 2nd Grade - 6th

Begin with Choir at 4:30 then Dinner & Fellowship from 5:15 to 6:30.

This is a great opportunity for the children to make lasting friendships while experiencing, singing and learning about God. (Volunteers are always needed.)

First Place 4 Health - Begins September 14th at 9:00am in the Heritage Room

Prayer & Pilates will resume on Wednesday, September 6th & Monday September 11th at 5:30.

See The Bulletin Insert for the Start of Bible Studies and other learning opportunities.

If you would like to volunteer in the Christian Education Department, please contact me at 856-222-1120 or via e-mail at education@meetwithGod.com.

LAY LEADER LINES

Back-to-School preparation - how did that happen so quickly? If you have school-age children, you might breathe a sigh of relief, once the school supplies, outfits, and shoes are chosen. Whether or not you have children, your travel time to work might change, with local school buses on the road, traveling on the same roads you are traveling, at the same time you are going to work!

It seems like September can be a wake-up call in many ways. New opportunities are waiting for each of us. Whether we start thinking about a new project at home, a committee at church to become a part of, a new class to take, it can be exciting, as well as a bit daunting, as we move into unfamiliar territory.

Scripture encourages us in so many ways: *Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.* *Proverbs 3:5-6 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him. And He will make your paths straight."*

A group of first grade children were given a list of proverb beginnings, and asked to complete them. Here are a few I thought you might also find interesting:
"You can't teach an old dognew math"
"If at first you don't succeed,get new batteries."
"An idle mind isthe best way to relax."
"Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and.....you have to blow your nose!"

We will be holding a one-worship service Sunday on October 15th, encouraging each of you to celebrate at least one of your nationalities. This will be a wonderful opportunity to share some of your stories with all generations, as we will eat together after the service, sharing native foods. What a teaching and learning experience for each one of us! I like this verse from I Timothy: *"Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."*

Children, just like adults, have apprehensions about new things. With starting school, Nick, age 5, shared his thoughts: *"I'm looking forward to meeting new friends. I'm NOT looking forward to homework!"* Olivia, age 8,

shared her concerns and excitement: *"I am going to third grade and I am looking forward to what I am going to learn and what homework I am going to get. I am not looking forward to getting up really early and sitting in a chair all day!"*

Just as the children have mixed feelings, I am sure we do as well. I hope that we all will keep these words from Joshua 1:9 in our hearts - *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*

I look forward to celebrating our nationalities together, as we worship together on October 15th!

God bless you all this month, as we work to welcome in the autumn season together!

Kathy Appleton
Lay Leader



Newly Baptized

Baptisms:

Brynn Noelle Marshall
on July 30, 2017; daughter of
Bill & Christa Marshall

Emerson Grace Caulk
on July 30, 2017; daughter of
Kevin & Lauren Caulk

Weddings:

Raquel Mocelo &
Ryan Donahue on
August 11, 2017



Deaths:

Robert Kessler
on July 21, 2017

Helen Cardwell
on August 9, 2017



A TIME FOR SINGING HAS COME



I would like to begin by writing how truly grateful I am for the opportunity to serve as an Interim part of the staff in the Music Ministry. There is indeed a long-standing tradition of wonderful music and an outstanding Music Ministry led in the last 35 years by Glenn. It is with great excitement that I look to continue that ministry in some new ways! Stay tuned.....

As I sat to write this I was finding it impossible to believe we are kicking off a new choir season. Yet, here we are, yikes! Over the summer I had run across an article titled 6 Psychological & Physical Benefits of Choral Singing. The list while in some aspects, not surprising, some did catch my eye.

The list was as follows:

1. Choral singing strengthens the feeling of togetherness
2. Choral singing regulates the heart rate; studies show choir members heart rates beat in unison.
3. Choral singing reduces stress levels and depression.
4. Choral singing improves symptoms of Parkinson's and lung disease.
5. Choral singing improves the feeling of social well being
6. Choral singing increases life expectancy.

The benefits for children were increased performance in school. Studies show children who experience choral singing have larger vocabularies, along with advanced reading and math skills. Studies also show that it can lead to higher test scores.

While all this is amazing and interesting to read I had to go back to John Wesley's directions for singing: There are seven, but it's the last one that resonates with me "Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing." That is the absolute best reason to sing with a choir!

I hope that you will look for ways to join our amazing Music Ministry here at FUMC. We have so many varied opportunities from Children, Youth & Adult Choirs; Youth & Adult Handbell Choirs, the Praise Team and Band and the Gospel Choir. Look for the startup schedule then join us, the benefits are there, but more importantly we love to Praise the Lord through song! (*The Music Ministry startup schedule can be found on pg. 6*)

Donna Banes
Interim Music Ministries Team Coordinator

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ADULT FELLOWSHIP

Come and enjoy music and dancing of the Emerald Isle. We will be hosting Irish dancers from the Emerald Isle Academy of Irish Dance. Owner/Instructor Kate O'Brien has been dancing since 2001 and teaches choreography to her dancers who have participated in the Philly St. Patrick's Day parade, workshops with professional Irish dancers, and special public performances like Irish Heritage nights at the Philadelphia Phillies. They have competed and won many awards including having "All Ireland" Champions, in addition to honors at the Irish Dance World Championships in Limerick, Ireland and Dusseldorf, Germany.

Join us for a covered dish luncheon at noon, Sept. 16th in the Fellowship Hall followed by the entertainment, also in the Fellowship Hall. Bring enough food portions for ten people. For reservations please call the DeWitts at 856-779-8071 or the Rudolphs at 856-235-9206. Please RSVP by Sept. 10th. Bring a friend and don't forget your place-settings and your appetite.

12:00 noon - Meeting & Greeting 12:25 - Devotions 12:45 - Our Cover Dish Luncheon



MUSIC MINISTRY - REHEARSAL TIMES & START UP DATES



ADULT CHOIR *Begins September 7th*

Rehearsals are Thursdays from **7:30-9:00 p.m.** The Adult Choir sings a wide variety of music at the 11:00 a.m. worship service, in addition to special concerts.

YOUTH CHOIR *Begins September 14th*

The Youth Choir is for teens in 7th - 12th grades. Rehearsals are Thursdays from **6:30-7:15 p.m.** The Youth sing contemporary as well as traditional style music.

WESLEY CHOIR *Begins September 14th*

The Wesley Choir is for children in 5th & 6th grades. Rehearsals are Thursdays from 4:30-5:15 p.m. Their music can be in 2 parts, traditional, contemporary, and can also include an occasional soloist.

JUNIOR CHOIR *Begins September 14th*

The Junior Choir is for children in 2nd - 4th grades. Rehearsals are also Thursdays from 4:30-5:15 p.m. Their music is also quite diverse. Junior and Wesley Choirs usually rehearse together - and put on a musical play on Mother's Day.

PRIMARY CHOIR *Begins September 14th*

The Primary Choir is for children aged 5 years through 1st grade. Rehearsals are on Thursdays from 5:15-5:45 p.m. The children sing songs, play instruments & games, and joyfully sing songs of faith.

ADULT HANDBELL RINGERS *Begins September 11th*

Rehearsals are **Mondays 7:00-8:00 p.m.** Adult Bells have participated in local handbell festivals and play regularly in church worship services.

YOUTH HANDBELL RINGERS *Begins September 10th*

Youth Handbell Ringers is for teens (7th - 12th grades). Rehearsals are Sundays 6:00-6:50 p.m. These talented musicians not only add to our worship services, but they have also taken performing tours and participated in regional handbell festivals.

JUBILATION CHIMERS *TBD*

Jubilation Chimers is a beginners handchime choir for young children. Rehearsals are Sundays 5:15-5:50 p.m.

PRAISE TEAM *(Ongoing)*

Our Praise Team, a group comprised of singers and a band, leads the 9:30 worship service with contemporary praise choruses and hymns. Rehearsals are Monday nights, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

GOSPEL CHOIR *(Ongoing)*

This musical group is for anyone from youth through senior citizens. Rehearsals are Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.

LITURGICAL DANCE GROUP Rehearses as needed for special services.

**** Please note - days and/or times in bold print indicate a change from previous schedules****

A desire to serve and a willingness to commit to the music group are all that is required to become an active participant in the music ministry. For more information, pick up a music ministry brochure in the narthex, or contact Donna Banes, our Interim Music Ministries Team Coordinator, at music@meetwithGod.com or 222-9369.



CALLING ALL LADIES

Come to a **Covered Dish Luncheon and Craft Display** on Sept. 13, 2017 at 12:00 P.M. in Fellowship Hall. Please let us know if you can bring sandwiches or a salad. Call Ricky Smith, 609-914-4698 or Fay Ferris, 856-235-0941 RSVP by Sept. 8th

*Bring your favorite craft to display. It can be anything handmade.

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A NOTE OF THANKS

Pastor Richard received the following letter, dated July 27th, from First Baptist Church of Moorestown:

Dear Rev. Richard Nichols,

On behalf of our Pastor, Reverend Linda Pepe, and our entire congregation of the First Baptist Church of Moorestown, please accept our sincere appreciation for your ongoing support of our Food Pantry ministry.

For our Pantry workers, the timing of this letter of thanks is most appropriate since summer should be a time of taking a break; enjoying the outdoors. Yet, we know that hunger takes no summer break. For most, the need is the same all year round. We know at First Baptist, therefore, that there is a need for us to recommit ourselves to the provision of a readily accessible Pantry now as much as any other time. So yes, thank you for your ongoing support. It serves to reinforce and revitalize our commitment to provide this service to those in need.

We would especially like to thank Marilyn and Howard Arbittier for their ongoing efforts to collect, organize and deliver donations from your congregation, neighbors and friends to help stock our Pantry shelves. We are indeed grateful to the Methodist Church for your support.

In Appreciation,
Vanel Perry
Chair, Outreach Ministry Team

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS
Sunday, October 15th



On Sunday afternoon, **October 15**, we will hold our third annual Blessing of the Animals in our courtyard at **3 pm**. You are invited to bring your dogs, cats, birds and other companion animals. Please bring with you bags or cans of pet food, which we'll collect and donate to the rescue groups that we support. We will start with a time of fellowship and refreshments for people and pets, followed by a brief service, including a personal blessing for each pet. Even if you have no pets of your own, you are welcome to join in the fun. From a spiritual standpoint, this worship service will provide an opportunity to celebrate our deep connection with creation and each other that our pets help enable. All pets will need to be on a leash or otherwise restrained. Questions: Margie Morgan at 856-764-1247 or margmorgan75@gmail.com.

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FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE

It's that time of year, when the church office will need your schedule for the 2017-2018 year. In order to get your programming and room reservations on the church calendar, please call Joan at 856-235-0450 or email Joan@meetwithGod.com. This includes all committee/ commission meetings, Bible Study groups, fellowship groups, prayer groups or any other group that will meet on a regular basis. It's very helpful to have your schedule to avoid conflicts. Thank you!

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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!





FALL YOUTH NEWS!



YOUTH PROGRAM BEGINS

Sunday, Sept. 10th

7:00 - 8:30 pm

LOCATION: Youth Rooms, downstairs from Fellowship Hall.

All Jr. & Sr. High students are invited to join us. We will continue meeting every Sunday at the same time.



IGNITE YOUTH CONFERENCE

September 29 - October 1

LOCATION: Wildwood Convention Center, Wildwood, NJ

All Jr. & Sr. High students are invited to attend. For information about cost, schedule, etc., contact Kathy Clawges, Youth Director - kclawges@gmail.com, 856-912-1148.



First United Methodist Church
Invites you to Shop at our
SEMI-ANNUAL RUMMAGE SALE
September 27th & 28th

Location:

First United Methodist Church
(Fellowship Hall wing)

Shopping Hours:

Wednesday 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Thursday 9:30 am to 2:00 pm and
6:00 pm to 8:30 pm
(\$3.00 Bag Night)

**Soup & Sandwich lunch for sale from
11:30 am to 2:00 pm on Thursday

Donations Accepted:

Sunday, Sept. 24th, 3:00 - 7:00 pm
Monday Sept. 25th & Tuesday Sept. 26th
9:00 am to 7:00 pm

(Sorry, we may need to close doors early for donations if we are full.)

Please, NO magazines, encyclopedias, large furniture, large exercise equipment, tube TVs, PC Monitors or anything requiring two people to carry.

Sponsored by Adult Fellowship and the Education & Youth Departments

**NOT ON OUR EMAILED
“MESSENGER” LIST YET?**

Did you know that the church Newsletter is available electronically? If you still receive a mailed paper copy of your monthly “Messenger” and would like to help us “go green” and save some money too, let us know that you would like to be added to our email list! You will receive an email from the church each month with a link to the page on the church website where you can get the current issue, as well as back issues and the calendar pages. Just email church@meetwithGod.com, or call the church office at 856-235-0450.

LETTERS FROM THE BISHOP

In response to recent events, our Bishop John Schol has written two letters that were sent to the churches in the Greater New Jersey Conference. We would like to share them with you. They are printed on this page, continuing on page 10.

From Saturday, Aug. 12

***And the word became flesh.
-John 1:14***

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The recent violence in Charlottesville and the threats between the leaders of the United States and North Korea remind us that words take form and shape for healing or destruction.

John in his Gospel describes God's great love, healing and salvation for us in saying the Word of God, the grace of God became real in the person of Jesus: *The Word became flesh.* (John 1:14)

I read stories of white supremacist, neo Nazis and KKK members saying that it is time to take America back. Here in Greater New Jersey this Sunday, the Word of God will be read by United Methodists in nine different languages. *The Word made flesh!* Greater New Jersey United Methodist Churches have more than 100 cross racial appointments and nearly 150 multicultural congregations. *The Word made flesh!* Our five largest worshipping congregations are Korean. *The Word made flesh!* Greater New Jersey United Methodists will give witness to mission trips taken to Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala and others will take offerings to support mission work in Ghana, Nigeria, and the Congo. *The Word made flesh!*

This week I want you to pray for peace and an end to racism and I want you to bear witness in your communities, schools and work places that hate is the work of evil, not Christ, that nuclear arms are the work of a fallen world, not the Creator's desire and that our words should work toward drawing people to Christ. I call for all of us to spend the week living and modeling the same Word of God that we find in Christ Jesus.

I give thanks to God for United Methodists of Greater New Jersey who speak of Christ in nine languages and

pray and work for mission across the globe regardless of race, creed and faith so that people see in us the love of God.

Keep the faith!

John

John Schol, Bishop
The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

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From Thursday, Aug. 17

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I write to you with a heavy heart because I know good people of faith will hear different pieces of news coming out of Charlottesville and come to different conclusions. I believe that conversation is important and hope that we will continue to gain clarity and understanding about these issues.

While in Germany for a Council of Bishop's meeting several years ago, I toured a concentration camp. Martin Niemöller, clergyman and Christian theologian, had been imprisoned there for being outspoken about Nazi atrocities against the Jews. The cell where he was in solitary confinement was preserved. Throughout the concentration camp, there were pictures of guards. There were quotes from guards. As I toured the concentration camp, I recognized that artifacts and history were preserved to communicate that while at the time, the behavior of the Nazis seemed the right thing to do, it was not normal. It was not moral. It was not how God intended for us to treat one another.

Today, we are facing one of the greatest challenges for our soul and the soul of our Nation. We are facing the normalization of hatred and the continued normalization of racism. You do not find today in Germany statues of Nazis on horseback or proudly marching. I commend the

Continued on next page

Aug. 17 letter, *continued*

people of Germany who have preserved the horrors of the Holocaust, not idols that look patriotic or victorious.

What we choose to honor normalizes behavior. What we choose to portray as heroic signifies the behaviors our society normalizes. The argument that statues of heroic confederate soldiers are a part of our history is like saying statues of heroic Nazis are a part of history. It does not tell the story that at its heart, the Civil War was based largely on individual rights to preserve an economic system based on enslaving people. When unjust systems and the people who seek to preserve those systems are honored, it signals that injustices and oppression have a place, not only in our history but our present and future.

To say the Nazis, the KKK and other hate groups and the people who stand up against them are similar only emboldens hate groups. The Nazis of Germany and the dissidents who fought against them are not the same. The Nazis of today's hate groups are not the same as those who resist and protest hate groups. To compare as similar people who seek to preserve oppressive systems and injustices with those who seek to oppose them is a comparison that leads to further harm. One group of people went to Charlottesville with guns, chanting racial hatred against Jews and people of color to promote racism. The other group responded to oppose them and stand up for injustice. To call them the same is not normal. There is no moral equivalency between the groups.

What we witnessed in Charlottesville was not people seeking to preserve history, but people who seek to maintain a culture and system of racism and prejudice clashing with those trying to stop racism and prejudice.

What occurred is something that happens to a lesser degree in communities, churches, businesses, schools, organizations, and families all across our nation every day. It is a battle for what is right, what is of God and what kind of people we want to be. Racism in all forms, individual and systematic, is wrong. We can learn from the German people that we should never glorify a hate-filled and oppressive past, but we should help people see its horror, pain and evil so we can all work to prevent it from occurring again. Here in the United States, in our churches, communities and organizations, we should not glorify those who perpetrated or fought to preserve

slavery, segregation and racism, but help the entire world see how wrong it was, is, and continues to be. When we don't act, we allow other voices to normalize hate speech and divisiveness, and the injustice continues.

I also believe we cannot minimize behavior that is wrong by saying, "Oh, that is just the way he talks," or, "That is just what she does." Or, "That is just the way they are." If we allow this, we normalize behavior that reinforces racism.

In Martin Niemöller's cell there is a quote that says:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out-

Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out-

Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out-

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me- and there was no one left to speak for me.

Let's all work together to resist injustice, to preserve what is right and to stand up to injustice and oppression in the name of Christ.

Greater New Jersey is a diverse church and we have made important progress. Let's keep going. I invite each of you to have conversations during the next several weeks in your homes, Bible studies, small groups and worship and ask, "What can our family/congregation and individual disciples do to increase understanding about racism? What are the stories Jesus told about how to treat people? How will we listen to and honor the stories of those affected by racism? What will we do to work toward ending racism?"

Keep the faith!

John

John Schol, Bishop

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey