



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 -or- Email us at: church@meetwithGod.com

OCTOBER 2017

ANNUAL CHURCH CONFERENCE; part of a Regional Super Saturday Church Conference Day October 28th

On **Saturday October 28**, **ALL churches** on the Capital District, Northern Shore District and Raritan Valley District will engage in individual church conferences in a shared location, at the Calvary UMC and the Aldersgate UMC, which are side by side in East Brunswick. What is innovative, exciting and Spirit-breathed, will be the gift of worship as a region with dynamic preaching and the prophetic and powerful voice of key note speaker the Rev. Dr. Tony Campolo. Our Super Saturday Church Conference Day Together will allow us to center our hearts as United Methodists and discover what it means to be a missional strategist for our unique context and setting.

All church members are invited to attend. The address is Calvary Korean United Methodist Church, 572 Ryders Lane, East Brunswick, NJ 08816. FUMC's Church Conference will be part of the morning session:

8:45-9:00am Gathering & Refreshments
9:00-9:45am Church Conference
10:00-11:45am Worship & Plenary Session with
Tony Campolo

If you are interested in attending, please RSVP to our church office, 856-235-0450 or church@meetwithGod.com, by Oct. 10th.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

CHURCH PICNIC

hosted by Jr. & Sr. High Youth

Saturday, October 21, 1pm - 5pm
Laurel Acres Park, 1045 S. Church St., Mt. Laurel

See pg.8 for more details!



INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE DAY Sunday, Oct. 15th, 10:00 a.m.

Please join us for our special **combined worship service** on Oct. 15th. Look for sign-up sheets in the Narthex, with various nationalities. We hope you will sign up on the appropriate chart, including your phone number and email address, and work together to create a display in Fellowship Hall on Sunday morning, October 15th. Our worship service will be at **10:00 a.m.** There is also a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall. We also hope you would get together to share some kind of food that is native to your culture, as we will have a coffee hour with food from other countries. If you would be willing to be the organizer for your country, please note that on the chart. This should be a fun event, and we are looking for lots of participation!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Oct. 2nd Blood Drive - 1:30 - 6:30pm
Oct. 4th Dessert & Study begins - 6:45 - 8:00pm
Oct. 6th Grounds for Good - 8:00 - 11:00pm
Oct 7th Annual Golf Outing - 1:00pm
Oct. 8th Light Harbor at Avista - 2:30pm
Oct. 10th The Serving Plate - 5:00pm
Oct. 10th Church Council - 7:00pm
Oct. 13th My Abba's Hands - 7:00 - 9:00pm
Oct. 14th My Abba's Hands - 9:00am - 3:00pm
Oct. 15th Men's Breakfast - 7:45am
Oct. 15th Combined Worship Service - 10:00am
Oct. 15th Blessing of the Animals - 3:00pm
Oct. 18th Internat'l Women's Friendship Grp.-10am
Oct. 21st Eyes of Our Hearts breakfast - 7:00am
Oct. 21st Adult Fellowship - Noon
Oct. 21st Church Picnic at Laurel Acres - 1-5pm
Oct.22-29 Host IHN
Oct. 22nd Youth Bells Homecoming Concert - 4pm
Oct. 24th Crafts for Good - 7:00 - 8:30pm
Oct. 28th Church Conference in East Brunswick
Oct. 29th Trunk or Treat - 3:00 - 6:00pm



**FROM
PASTOR RICHARD**

Last month at a staff meeting I led a devotion from Lamentations 3:16-24. As the prophet lamented over the destruction of Jerusalem, he also refocused his attention to the faithfulness of God and reminded the people of the steadfast love of the Lord. He concludes with conviction: "The Lord is my portion...therefore I will hope in him." That is the wonderful assurance we share as people of faith, believing in the steadfast love of the Lord and depending on God's faithfulness.

As we begin a new fall season, we know that God is with us in all seasons of life. God is with us in times of challenge and hardship, in times of joy and sorrow, in times when we feel encouraged and times when we are discouraged....all seasons of life.

This is the faith we live by as we consider our future ministry at FUMC. Yes, we are going through seasons of change and the future will bring new challenges, but we hold on to the assurance of God's faithfulness and compassion that fails not. What a beautiful truth is expressed in that great hymn Great is Thy Faithfulness:

"Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, Sun, moon and stars in their courses above. Join with all nature in manifold witness, To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed thy hand as provided Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!"

**FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
A Reminder about Electronic Giving**

If you've been thinking about giving to FUMC electronically but haven't checked it out yet, why not do that right now? Just use the QR code below, or visit www.meetwithGod.com, go to the News-Events-Give tab, and click on "Give to the Church" to get started quickly and securely!

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!



**SOMETHING
NEW**

*Trunk
or Treat*

On Sunday, October 29th from 3:00-6:00, bring your children to our First Annual **TRUNK or TREAT!** What's a **Trunk or Treat** you ask? This is an opportunity for your children to dress in their Halloween Costumes and go around to different **decorated** Car Trunks and receive Candy and/or Toys. This will take place in our Church Parking Lot and is open to ALL Children. We will also have **food, music, games** and a **moon bounce!** This event is open to the community so invite a friend and come enjoy some **tricks & treats!**

We are looking for 35 people to decorate their cars and provide candy for this event. All cars must be registered by Oct. 20th. To volunteer your car, contact Karen Murray (education@meetwithGod.com) or Kathy Clawges (kclawges@gmail.com). This event is sponsored by the Education, Youth & Music Ministries of our church.



**GROUNDS FOR GOOD
COFFEE HOUSE IS BACK!**



Join us Friday, Oct. 6th in Fellowship Hall for the exciting kickoff of the 2017-2018 season. The new season will feature some fresh voices in entertainment, including guitarist and vocalist Justin Steurer, whose music is a "classic cocktail" - an eclectic mix of timeless classics with a modern twist. The evening will also feature an art exhibit, free coffee and tea and an assortment of homemade treats for sale. Admission is always free, but proceeds and donations will benefit the Waymakers "Barrels of Blessings" program, providing Christmas blessings for the people of Ghana. To support the cause, please consider bringing new or gently used toys and clothing to fill barrels for shipment. Doors open at 7:30, with music kicking off around 8.



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

"You have been taught the Holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15 (NLT)

Have you ever thought about reading the Bible and then after a few days, weeks or even months it all seems just a bit overwhelming? Well, if you answered yes to this question, you are not alone! Many people, including myself, have tried many times to pick up the Bible to start reading it and by the time we get to the names of all the different people, groups and land it can get very confusing!

Be encouraged though! Yes, it is important to read and study the Bible but it is not mandatory that you memorize every scripture or every name. The joy in reading the Bible is that God uses His words to help us live a life that is in alignment with Him through salvation in Jesus Christ. We are to be taught and instructed, (perhaps through attending a Sunday School Class or a Bible Study group,) the Holy Scriptures so we can gain wisdom and understanding and hope.

The Bible is often compared to a "playbook" that is written by God to be used throughout our lives. It only stands to reason that we must become familiar with the contents of the "playbook" in order to draw from its instruction. It's through that instruction that we learn to believe in the power of God and to trust Jesus as our Savior and friend.

Just this morning I read in my "3-Minute Devotion Book for Women" that there are 3 "Rs" that go with reading the Bible and they are *Read, Remember and Respect* and to that, I add **live it**.

If you have the desire to get closer to God through reading and/or studying His word consider joining a group this Fall to gain *"the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus."*

Grace & Peace,
Karen Murray, DCE

Educational Opportunities:

Along with Sunday School for all ages, at 9:30 & 11:00, our **Fall DESSERT & Study** program will begin on October 4th. There are many opportunities throughout the week for learning, growing and serving, I pray that you find one that excites you. See the list of studies below and consider joining one.

Monday Morning Women's Group:	9:30 - 11:00am, Heritage Room (Childcare provided)
Tuesday Afternoon Bible Study:	2:00 - 3:00pm, Parlor
Thursday Morning Bible Study:	7:30 - 9:00am at Maritsa's Restaurant in Maple Shade
Thursday Morning, FirstPlace4Health	9:00 - 11:00am, Heritage Room (Childcare provided)
Friday Morning Men's Group:	6:30 - 7:30am, Parlor
Saturday Morning Bible Study Group:	7:30 - 9:00am, Parlor

Evening "Care" Groups:

Mondays - **DivorceCare** - 6:30 - 8:30pm, Resource Room (Childcare Available)

Mondays & Wednesdays - **Prayer & Pilates** - 5:30 - 6:30pm, Heritage Room (Childcare available upon request)

Dessert & Study begins October 4th:

6:45 - Dessert & 7:00 - Study - *The Beatitudes for Today* - Led by Pastor Richard (Heritage Room)

6:30 - Youth Worship - Sanctuary & **7:00 - Jr. & Sr. High Bible Study** - Led by Kathy Clawges & Youth Leaders

7:00 - 8:30pm - Young Adult Group (College-Age through 20's) - Led by Pastoral Intern Meg Gaston (Parlor)

**Pastor Richard will lead a 6 week study of the BEATITUDES focusing on: *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, Blessed are those who Mourn, Blessed are the Meek, Blessed are those who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness and Blessed are the Merciful*. He will be using the book *"The Beatitudes for Today"* by James Howell. The Book is available as an e-book or may be ordered through Karen Murray at education@meetwithGod.com.

**For information on any of the groups listed, please contact Karen Murray at 856-222-1120.



Music Notes

As we settle into our Fall routines, I've taken the time to continue a routine I've long embodied. For a long time now I have used the hymnal in my daily devotions. I have used our Methodist Hymnal, and some of the many other hymnals I have collected while substituting for other denominations. I don't necessarily sing the hymns, but read the beautiful words that have been written. Find great joy, peace and comfort in those words.

In a bit of a departure I am using a book that is part of a trilogy called Then Sings My Soul by Robert J. Morgan. The last book in the trilogy is titled, The Story of Our Songs: Drawing Strength from the Great Hymns of Our Faith. Robert Morgan tells us that "a good hymn combines prayer with praise, keen theology with vivid imagery, and the majesty of God with our daily needs. At our fingertips, we have a treasure trove to be used for personal enrichment." Morgan goes on to say "that early Worshippers carried their undersized hymnbooks to church each Sunday, then took them home and sang from them in personal or family devotions the rest of the week." I am blessed to have my grandmom's (Marie Banes) Episcopal Hymnal from 100 years ago. It is one of those under sized hymnbooks. In it she has marked hymns that spoke to her. Talk about a treasure trove!!

In future "Messengers", I hope to share some of the history and backgrounds of our much-loved hymns. It is important not to lose the history of the church which is encoded in her hymns, and the story of Christianity that is enfolded within. At the same time, our appreciation for the hymns should not preclude us from embracing next-generation praise. If you think about it many of our much-loved hymns were the contemporary songs of the day. I hope I never become too old to sing the newest songs of praise to the Lord!

Peace and Blessings!
Donna Banes

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.



Youth Handbell Choir Festival Concert

Sunday, October 22nd
4:00 P.M.
In the Sanctuary

Come and join our Youth Ringers in a concert of music they learned and performed at the Young Ringers Festival at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, NY. It promises to be an afternoon filled with the wonderful sounds of bells!!



First United Methodist ANNUAL GOLF OUTING



Moorestown Field Club

Saturday, October 7th
1 pm shotgun start
Lunch at noon in the clubhouse

Cost - \$45 golf, \$20 cart and \$15 lunch

To sign up, contact Rick Jagodzinski
609-502-4084

CALLING ALL MEN

Want to receive United Methodist Men (UMM) email communications, get involved, or need more info? Speak to, or email: Greg Scott, gregescott@comcast.net or Greg Bryan, gresu23@comcast.net.

Upcoming Men's Retreat:

Northeast Men's Retreat, Lake Champion, NY, Oct. 20-22. More info and registration forms are on the UMM Bulletin Board outside Fellowship Hall and on the UMM page on the church website, www.meetwithGod.com. Questions and info: contact Doug Sell, Jr., 267-259-0621.

LAY LEADER LINES

Peace on Earth

Waking up each morning, checking out the daily news - so many options for becoming informed about current events. There is Twitter, Yahoo News Digest, LinkedIn, to name a few ways of gathering information. It seems like printed newspapers are becoming a thing of the past. Then there is Need2Know, a free weekday morning email digest that sends the most important news of the moment in easy-to-understand, relatable summaries. If you want to have your news and read it from its original sources, too, *The Daily Beast's* Cheat Sheet is for you. Delivered to your inbox on weekday mornings and afternoons, this includes must-reads from the cream of the news crop, providing a summary, photo, and link to each original article.

More and more, the news is filled with the violence that is everywhere. In our country, throughout the world, I can't remember when the word "hate" was used so often.

I had the privilege, along with many other adults, of teaching a class of young children in Vacation Bible School this summer. The week ended with a message from Pastor HeyYoung at the weekend worship services. Her message spoke of the importance of being childlike in our faith. I think this hit home with many of us.

Observing, and listening, to the children singing "Change My Heart, O God", during the music portion of Vacation Bible School was a wonderful example of love for God.

*"Change my heart, O God, Make it ever true,
Change my heart, O God, may I be like you."*

Children can teach us how to love, if we just let them!

Listening to another VBS teacher share a story about the children in her class asking for a turn to pray at the beginning of the class, before the daily snack, and at the end of the class, I was reminded of the importance, yet again, of childlike prayer.

Joanna Nichols and I took our granddaughters on a picnic one afternoon during VBS week. Sitting in the pavilion, before lunch, the girls bowed their heads and prayed aloud. Looking at these innocent children, so grateful for their time together, showing their respect and love for God, was the greatest gift of the day for me.

A poem was written by "Kids for Peace", a group of children between the ages of 5 and 11. Here are some of their contributions:

Everyone feeling music in their hearts
Everyone having someone to love
Everyone knowing they are in a safe place
Everyone knowing they are beautiful inside and out
Getting Dorothy back home
Happiness for all, peace on Earth and pizza for all
people
Every child having a family
Every child having a ball to play with
At least one hug a day
Sending all soldiers home to their families
People shaking hands.

What a lesson for all of us! Perhaps we should personally affirm the Kids for Peace Pledge as well:

*I pledge to use my words to speak in a kind way.
I pledge to help others as I go throughout my day.
I pledge to care for our Earth with my healing heart
and hands.
I pledge to respect people in each and every land.
I pledge to join together as we unite the big and
small.
I pledge to do my part to create peace for one and
all.*

From the Catholic Social Teaching magazine, this quote says so much:

True peace goes hand in hand with justice. It is not merely the absence of war or the fragile exhaustion that exists in the aftermath of conflict, when lives have been torn apart, relationships broken, infrastructures destroyed and homes demolished. Rather, the God-given peace that our creator desires for us, and to which living simply calls us, is built on justice, where everything and everyone in the created order is in right relationship with each other and can reach their God-given potential.

Talking with many children recently, as I tend to do, I found that these children associate peace with love - another lesson to learn, I think. Here are two of my favorite examples:

*"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody
most of your French fries without making them give*

Continued on next page

Lay Leader Lines, continued

you any of theirs” Chrissy, age 6
“Love is what makes you smile when you're tired” -
Terri, age 4.

My favorite seven year old also has a wise perspective on peace: “Peace is when, if someone hurts you by saying something that is not nice, you just forgive them!”

Paul encourages us in the book of Romans 12:18 “If it is possible as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” We are also given this command in the book of Colossians 3:15 “Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

Much to learn, to remember, and to do. I hope we can all take Chrissy's advice, and share our French fries too!

God bless you all.

Kathy Appleton
Lay Leader

**BLESSING OF
THE ANIMALS**
Sunday, Oct. 15th, 3:00 p.m.



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. We will also dedicate our new Pet Memories Corner in the courtyard and place the pet memory stone we have created there. 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.



CAN YOU HEAR JESUS' WORDS OF COMFORT?

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus tells his followers, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

- Do you feel weary?
- Does the yoke of life seem too difficult for you to carry alone?
- Are your burdens too much to bear?

God has called some people within our midst to Stephen Ministry. These people are trained and supported in walking with others through difficult times in their lives.

Could you benefit from the care of a Stephen Minister?

Contact the church office, 856-235-0450, or one of our Stephen Ministers.



**BLOOD DONOR PROFILE:
Sharon Zollers**

Every blood donor is inspired to give for different reasons. Some donors have friends or family members whose lives were saved by transfusions, and some donors have received blood themselves. My inspiration is the example of my mom, Sharon Zollers, who had been a blood donor for 50 years despite facing many health battles of her own. I asked her to answer a few questions about why she gives, in the hopes that her story might inspire you, too.

When and why did you first start giving blood?

I don't remember the first time I donated blood, but it was a long time ago, during the Vietnam War. The need was great and I was able.

What motivates you to give blood?

It is such an easy thing to do and you always hear how much good it does. It's so worth the good feeling you get by helping, even if you don't know who it was you helped. It's also painless, not what I consider pain anyway. A needle stick only lasts a minute. So many people depend on blood donors every day and we can do it for free. You don't have to be special to donate blood, just willing to help someone in need of life-saving blood.

Some people think you have to be in perfect health to give blood, but you are living proof that you can face substantial health challenges and still be an effective donor. Can you share some of the challenges you've had with your health over the many years you've been a blood donor?

Forty years ago I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis and lost all my hearing in one ear. In 1990, I was diagnosed with a rare, fast-growing type of thyroid cancer called Hurthle cell carcinoma. Two years ago I developed a life-threatening blood infection and spent time quarantined in the hospital and another 6 weeks in rehab on IV antibiotics. I have a lung condition and am often short of breath. I have non-diabetic neuropathy in my legs and feet and chronic pain from three surgeries for a knee replacement. None of these things has stopped me from being a blood donor. When I got back on my feet, I donated blood.

What advice would you give to new blood donors, or people who are considering giving blood?

I would say to anyone, give it a try! You don't know how easy it is until you have done it. You will wonder what took you so long and you will be ready to sign up for the next blood drive. It really is just about the easiest thing you can do to help someone out who needs life-saving blood. And once you have done that, you may be ready to be a platelet donor. It is just as easy, and just takes a bit longer. What other contribution can we make that is so valuable and costs us nothing? Just do it!

Feeling inspired? Make an appointment to give blood on Monday, October 2 in Fellowship Hall. You can sign up in the Narthex, online at redcrossblood.org, or by contacting Jen Dunne at jendunne1@gmail.com or 856-979-6329.

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**ANNUAL BLESSING
OF THE BADGES CEREMONY**

**Hosted by Mayor Manny Delgado
& Deputy Mayor Stacey Jordan**

Wednesday, November 1, 7:00 p.m.

No matter the type of badge worn, we pray for all of our first responders, their families, and their abilities as they put their lives on the line for us daily. Please join us on **Wednesday, November 1 at 7 p.m.** for a volunteer organized event, our Annual Blessing of the Badges Ceremony hosted by Mayor Delgado and Deputy Mayor Jordan, to be held at the First United Methodist Church. We will hear from representatives of our local police, fire and EMS departments, and local clergy from a variety of churches/synagogues will offer to anoint their badges and uniforms with oil (for anyone who desires), and will offer prayers of protection, strength, and peace. ***All first responders and their families are invited to participate.*** All community members are asked to attend to show support for our first responders. Everyone is welcome regardless of religious affiliation.

NOTE: First Responders are asked to please attend in uniform.

If you have any questions, please contact Conni Hare Murray, haremurray@gmail.com.



October Youth News

First United Methodist Church
Jr. & Sr. High Newsletter
kclawges@gmail.com
856-866-0285 office



IGNITE YOUTH CONFERENCE

September 29 - October 1, 5pm - 1pm
LOCATION: Wildwood Convention Center

Each year more than 1000 young people gather in Wildwood for a weekend to IGNITE their faith at the Ignite Youth Conference sponsored by the United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey.

WE WANT OUR YOUTH TO GET FIRED UP IN FAITH!!

This year's Ignite weekend is September 29th-October 1st. The total cost, which includes the Conference, lodging and food is \$140.00. We will leave the church parking lot at 5:00pm on Friday night and return approximately 1:00pm on Sunday. This is a wonderful Christ centered weekend of fellowship, great speakers and break out sessions for our youth. What a better way to IGNITE our faith for the coming year's youth programming! For more information, please contact Kathy Clawges at: 856-912-1148 or kclawges@gmail.com



BIBLE STUDY

October 4, 6pm - 8pm
LOCATION: FUMC - Sr. High Room

All Jr. & Sr. High are invited. We will begin at 6pm with a light dinner in Fellowship Hall, followed by worship in the Sanctuary at 6:30pm, followed by Bible Study from 7-8pm in the Sr. High room. We are looking forward to worship part of the evening, which is new this year. It will be very informal & anyone that wants to bring an instrument to play is welcome.

Food donations are always welcome! Please let me know if you can donate any type of light supper (sandwiches, pizza, etc.). For more information, please contact: Kathy Clawges at: 856-912-1148 or kclawges@gmail.com



CHURCH PICNIC hosted by Jr. & Sr. High Youth

October 21, 1pm - 5pm
LOCATION: Laurel Acres Park in Mt. Laurel

Come join our youth for a "good ole fashion church picnic"! The youth will provide hamburgers, hot dogs & drinks. We are asking everyone who comes, please bring a side dish. This is a church wide event for all families & friends! The park has a wonderful playground area for children, bathroom facilities, a pavilion, which we rented, and a grill for cooking. The softball game starts at 2pm & is for anyone that wants to play! For more information or if you would like to bring a side dish, please contact: Kathy Clawges at 856-912-1148 or kclawges@gmail.com.

Celebrate Your Family Identity

Jim Burns - *President of HomeWord and Executive Director of the HomeWord Center for Youth and Family at Azusa Pacific University*

On Monday nights when our girls were growing up, Cathy and I would take them to the Golden Spoon for frozen yogurt after dinner. The weekly yogurt run was part of our family identity --- part of what made us who we were. Even the neighbors knew our routine and sometimes shouted to-go orders as we pulled out of our driveway. Our three daughters are now grown, but when our family gets together, we still make trips to the Golden Spoon. It's one of those simple traditions that have kept our family bonds strong.

Not surprisingly, a strong family identity also helps children develop a strong and healthy self-identity. Knowing what makes their family unique --- traditions, values, and ways of relating to one another --- gives children a clear starting point for discovering their own place in the world. Studies have shown that kids who identify with their family's values tend to be less promiscuous and face less risk of drug and alcohol abuse.

I'm a big fan of parents who make the effort to build a strong family identity. But how is it done? Here are three principles that I believe are critical to the process.

1. Be present. Children regard your presence in their lives as a sign of care and connectedness. Families who eat meals together, play together, and build traditions together thrive. Your presence matters! Does your family eat together at least four times a week? If so, there is a greater chance your kids will perform better in school and be less likely to exhibit negative behavior.
1. Celebrate everything! Don't miss a single chance to celebrate your family. You can celebrate birthdays, graduations, and other rites of passage, but don't miss out on celebrating life's smaller occasions such as Little League victories, learned skills, and school achievements.
1. Talk about faith. For some families, spiritual discussions are easier said than done. But having faith conversations with your kids helps to build your family identity. They also help your kids build strong convictions, as they get older. When you regularly expose your kids to God's truth, it can, as a friend of mine says, "help them develop a sweet tooth for Jesus." And that's something far better than buying your kids frozen yogurt at the Golden Spoon.

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Baptisms:

Harper Laine Dominiak
on September 10, 2017; daughter of
Dustin & Jeanette Dominiak

Deaths:

Elaine Jenkins
on August 1, 2017

