Dear Church Members and Friends:

The Monday morning Bible Study will focus on the Epistle to the Hebrews. Hebrews contains warnings that advise us: (1) to pay attention; (2) to avoid unbelief; (3) to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest; (4) to avoid dullness in understanding; (5) to persevere; and (6) to not reject God’s Grace.

This message focuses on the third warning: observing the Sabbath. This warning at Hebrews 4: 9-10 states: “So then, a Sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God’s rest also cease from their labors as God did from his.” Exodus 20:8-11, the fourth of the ten commandments also extols us to observe the Sabbath.

Observing the Sabbath should be relatively easy. It does not involve heroic feats. The secularization of our culture, however, has mad the simple act of observing the Sabbath a difficult task. Some Christians regularly put other activities ahead of observing the Sabbath. Activities, especially sports activities, increasingly occur on Sunday. In several of the churches I have served, families with children have routinely opted to attend a Sunday morning sporting event rather than church.

The Rose Bowl Parade is a notable exception to the trend. This year’s Rose Bowl Parade was held on Monday, January 2, 2017. In most years, this parade is held on January 1. However, this parade has a “Never on a Sunday” tradition dating back to 1893 when New Year’s Day fell on a Sunday. Parade organizers feared that the parade would spook the horses located outside of churches along the parade route for Sunday Services. Parade organizers have continued the “Never on a Sunday” exception even though horses have long been replaced by motor vehicles. (Continued)
GIFTS TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND TO THE FOUNDATION

Mr. and Mrs. Doug Foltz in honor of Bill and Jane Waters
TJ Walters given in memory of Libby Walters
John Becker
Florence and George Kingston in memory of:
John and Eunice Griffin

TRANSFERS OUT
Mary Beth Dunlap and daughter Morgan to Warwick Memorial UMC

BUS/VAN FUND
In memory of Elizabeth “Liz” Knorpp
By: Margaret P. Mumford
By: Mr. and Mrs. Merrick R. Vincent
By: Nancie W. Eure
By: Hildegard B. Ruezinsky

(Pastor’s Page)
Few other organizations show respect for Sunday. We have a glaring example of outright disrespect for Sunday as a day of worship. The Newport News One Marathon takes over a Sunday morning by closing down roads. The race organizers and the city officials ask that churches along the parade route not hold worship services. To add insult to injury, they expect the residents be held hostage by the race to come out and cheer on the racers. It is a sad commentary that the City’s Leaders believe tax paying citizens who live and/or worship along the race route should cancel worship services, so runners can shut down large swaths of the city. Alternate this race to Saturday every other year and see how long it lasts. Placing this event on Sunday is discrimination aimed at churches.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Robert

Welcome to Worship
Thank You:
I want to thank everyone for the calls, prayers and phone calls wishing me well. I received a good report from the Doctor, but have extended treatments for a while.

Gene Garriss

A Note of Thanks:
To First United Methodist Church, Newport News, VA.
Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the many cards, visits and caring words and prayers following the ascension of our daughter, Celeste Smetana.

May God bless you for your friendship and thoughtfulness.

Doug and Phyllis Newman

Note of Thanks:
Thank you for the cards, prayers, and visits during my months of illness. Your kindness sure means a lot to me from First U.M.C.

Delores Mitcham

U.M.M. Monthly Meeting: Join the United Methodist Men on Saturday, January 21st, at 8:00 AM for our monthly Saturday breakfast meeting.
The guest speaker for our January meeting will be from the Food Bank of the Virginia Peninsula. The mission of the Virginia Peninsula Food Bank is to distribute food effectively through collaborative efforts that minimize hunger, promote nutrition, and encourage self-reliance through education. The Food Bank serves nine cities and counties in the local area. Enjoy a warm breakfast while learning more about this valuable resource available on the peninsula.

Stocking Caps, Gloves and Scarves
Once again the Mission Team is asking members of the congregation to bring these items to the Fellowship Hall by next Sunday. There will be a rack and basket for these items. These items will again help those in our community in need to stay warm through the winter months.

Thank you for being a part of this outreach to others.
It was a wonderful experience in December to see our church nearly full, both upstairs and downstairs, for Advent Lessons and Carols and for Christmas Eve services. For all of us to come together, at one time and place to celebrate the birth of our Lord seemed more than just an occasion, it felt spiritual and meaningful. The clergy, church staff and leaders of our various committees were thrilled to see so many worshiping together. It did us all a world of good. If you did not make it this year, we hope you will commit now to make that your goal for next year.

With a bright new year ahead, and looking for new ways to enhance worship, we'll be testing some new things early in the year.

To assist worshipers on Sunday morning when we have new hymns or service music, the choir and I will be recording music and putting it on our Facebook Page under a tab called “Prepare for Worship.” Once this page is up and running, you will be invited to visit it and to listen and learn the new material at your leisure. That way, you'll be able to worship without fear the music is not known to you.

We will be launching into a new choir member recruitment program to rebuild our forces following several retirements. Many of our choir members have given 20 – 30 and more years of faithful service and are now enjoying their well-earned retirement. We’ll reach both within and outside of our church community to fill in those seat or voices. Please consider if singing with the choir might be right for you. I’d love to speak with you about it.

Plans are already in place for a uniquely beautiful Tenebrae service on Maundy Thursday this year. Accompanied by the sound of a harp throughout the service, the liturgy will have an emotional, spiritual and aural appeal that is rarely experienced today. Our guest harpist is currently with the Virginia Symphony. This is another time to plan to be at First Church and to bring family and friends. You’ll be glad you did.

Easter will be joyous, bright and everything you would expect Easter to be. With brass, percussion, organ and choirs, we’ll sing the big hymns, read the wonderful Easter scriptures....and celebrate Christ’s resurrection.

Stay tuned!

Mike Hardesty
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<th>Sunday</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 8:30 am Worship</td>
<td>2 10:00 am Bible Study (FH)</td>
<td>3 UMW Exec. Board Mtg. Noon</td>
<td>4 6:45 pm Chancel Ringers 7:30 pm Chancel Choir</td>
<td>5 5:30 pm Cherub Choir</td>
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<td>7 6:00 pm AA MPR</td>
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<td>8:30 am Worship</td>
<td>9 10:00 am Bible Study (FH)</td>
<td>10 10:00 am Circle 2 - MP Rm. 1:00 pm Circle 4 - Parlor</td>
<td>11 10:00 am Circle 6 - Parlor 6:15 pm Bible Study 6:45 pm Chancel Ringers 7:30 pm Chancel Choir</td>
<td>12 5:30 pm Cherub Choir 6:00 pm Circle 6 - FH</td>
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<td>14 6:00 pm AA MPR</td>
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<td>18 6:45 pm Chancel Ringers 7:30 pm Chancel Choir</td>
<td>19 Soup Kitchen 5:30 pm LINK 5:30 pm Cherub Choir</td>
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<td>21 8:00 am UMM 6:00 pm AA (MPR)</td>
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<td>8:30 am Worship</td>
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<td>9 35 am Sunday Sch. 11:45 am Worship</td>
<td>29 10:00 am Bible Study (FH)</td>
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Christmas Eve Service

2016

This is in recognition of our memorable Christmas Eve service.

It was so nice to have all of us joining together in our beautiful sanctuary to celebrate the birth of our Lord. The poignant readings and accompanying music not only made the service meaningful and spiritual, it felt magical! It was thrilling to see so many attending, participating in this joyous occasion.

A recording of the service is located in the Church library if you wish to hear it for the first time or experience it again.

Hopefully if you were unable to attend, you will commit to coming next year.

Yours in Christ,

Barbara Swiatek

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EPIPHANY

The Epiphany (Manifestation) of the Lord (January 6), an even more ancient celebration among Christians than Christmas, originally focused on the nativity, incarnation, and baptism of Christ. Today we celebrate the coming of the three wise men (magi), who brought gifts to the Christ child. For this reason, in Puerto Rico and in most Latin American countries this day is observed as Three Kings Day or Dia Los Reyes. It marks the end of the Christmas Cycle, which began the First Sunday of Advent.

The Latino culture has preserved and developed this ancient celebration in a way that is a gift to the whole Church. Within the church service, this day is celebrated with plays and special songs emphasizing the coming of the kings and their gifts for the Christ child. In the home the children are told to place boxes filled with hay under their beds so that the camels will eat the hay and the kings will leave presents for the children.

The Epiphany Season includes four to nine Sundays, depending on the date of Easter. The First Sunday focuses on the Baptism of Christ and the Last Sunday on the Transfiguration. The Gospel readings in the lectionary center on stories from the early ministry of Christ.