

Community
CONNECTION

Community United Methodist Church
3487 Route 130, Irwin, PA 15642

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COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Vol. 14, No. 4

April 2010

Change Service Requested

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Community Church

A United Methodist Congregation

Pastor: Rev. John E. Ciampa - jciampa@communityumc.info

Director of Pastoral Care: Rev. James Decker - ajdecker@comcast.net

Director of Youth Ministries: Frank Audia - faudia@communityumc.info

Director of Music & Creative Arts: John Smialowski - jasmialowski@comcast.net

Director of Christian Education: Patsy Ciampa - deaconpatsy@yahoo.com

Director of Connectional Ministries: Elizabeth Somes - esomes@communityumc.info

Discipleship: John Toellner

Evangelism: Rodger Holsing

Fellowship: Pam French

Ministry: Jamie Greenier

Worship: Liz Wade

Communications: Katie Morgan

Church Secretaries: Carole Helsel and Wendy Johnson

Phone: (724) 744-3413 FAX: (724) 744-4758

E-mail Address: info@communityumc.info

Church Web Page Address: www.ShareChristWithOthers.org

Worship Services

- **Saturday Evenings – 6:00 p.m.- Contemporary Worship Service**
- **Sunday Mornings – 8:30 and 11:00 a.m.**
- **Sunday School – 9:45 a.m.**

Community Connection is published monthly for members and friends of Community United Methodist Church. Deadline for submission of articles is the 10th of every month unless otherwise noted. Articles can be delivered to Pastor John or to the church office.



STAYING FOCUSED...

What if...

You had One Month to Live?

Would you change anything in your life? Would you simply go about your routine? Do you have a “bucket list”? What would you do differently if you knew that you had just one month to live?

This is a rather invasive question, I know. And why would I raise it here in the glory of springtime when all around us we see evidence of new life? Why now, when we followers of Jesus are celebrating the victory of our Lord over sin and death in the glory of Easter, the resurrection of Jesus?

Is there any better time to think about the ultimate purpose of your life and the promise of God’s redeeming presence in the here and now of our daily living? Yet it is that daily living that can threaten our relationship with God and with the most precious people in our lives.

Routine can be a good thing, but it can also trap us, prevent us from making changes that need to be made. So, again I ask...what would you do differently if you knew you had one month to live?

This question is posed in the hope that you will be willing to join a 30 day, a one month, congregational wide study of a New York Times bestselling book by Kerry & Chris Shook: “One Month to Live” Thirty days to a No-regrets life.

Beginning the Saturday and Sunday after Easter, April 10th and 11th, we will launch a churchwide study of this compelling book. I have been reading through it for the last several weeks and I am convinced that everyone who reads it and everyone who joins in a small group to discuss it will have their lives refocused and refreshed in very meaningful ways.

In the next several weeks when we gather for worship we will share more information about how to sign up to join a group, or to offer to lead or host a group. More information is found elsewhere in this Newsletter and on our website. (www.sharechristwithothers.org)

Continued on page 2

Staying Focused continued from page 1

It is my hope that you will join a group and do the daily reading for the 30 day period, enter into the small group discussions and see if your life is not transformed in meaningful ways. Several years ago many of you participated in the churchwide “Purpose Driven Life” study or “Purpose Driven Community” here at CUMC. Many of you still remark to me how meaningful those studies were to you, and I believe that were transformational for our church.

I know we are all very busy people but I ask you to make whatever sacrifice you must to engage in this effort. There will never be a time that is convenient, when such an endeavor can be undertaken without disruption to our routine. May I borrow the fabled words of the Nike commercials and suggest; “Just Do It!”

Several weeks ago in a sermon I shared the following story I got from the great Scottish Bible scholar, William Barclay...

He told a fable in which three of the devil’s apprentices were coming to this earth to finish up their apprenticeships. They were talking to Satan, the chief of devils, about their plans to tempt and ruin people.

The first devil said, “I know what I’ll do. I’ll tell them there is no God.”

Satan said, “That won’t delude anybody. They *know* there is a God.”

The second one said, “I’ll tell them there is no Hell.”

“You will deceive no one that way,” Satan replied, “because people know deep down in their hearts that there is a place called Hell and a punishment for sin.”

The third said, “I know what I’ll do. I’ll tell them there is no hurry.”

And Satan said, “With that lie you will ruin millions.”

Perhaps one of the greatest threats to our spiritual well-being is the routine in which we find ourselves, and the delusion that we have plenty of time to make important changes in our lives. But what if we had “One Month to Live”? Would that knowledge prompt change? Why not come invest yourself in this study and learn how to live a no-regrets life?

Happy Easter!!! He Is Risen!!!

Pastor John

Communion Dates Changed in April

Our usual time to share in the Lord's Supper a Community Church will be changed this month due to the date of Easter. It has been our practice in recent years to share in Holy Communion the first weekend of the month, when both Saturday and Sunday are in the same month. This month these dates coincide with our celebration of Easter on Saturday, April 3rd at 6pm and Sunday, April 4th at 8am, 9:30am and two services at 11am. Because of the nature of the celebration of Easter it seemed prudent to delay Communion for a week.

We will move our celebration of the Lord's Supper to Saturday, April 10th at the 6pm Contemporary Service and Sunday, April 11th at both Traditional Services at 8:30am and 11am. Thank you for your understanding in this change in schedule.

Easter Parking Request -8:00am Service

Remember our early Easter Service is scheduled for ½ hour earlier than usual. Our first service on Easter Sunday will be a traditional service in the sanctuary at 8am. If you plan to attend this service we have a special request regarding parking. If you are able and willing, would you please consider parking in the extended part of the parking lot, furthest from the building?

The reason for this request is that the people arriving for the next service at 9:30am will make it difficult for people leaving the parking lot from the first service. If you park in the extended lot it should make your egress from the lot much smoother.

Of course if you are a more mature member of our church family or families with young children, or if you have any mobility issues, please feel free to park as close to the church as needed. We expect to have some people in the lot to assist you in parking at all the services on Easter Sunday. Thank you in advance for your help in this matter.



MAUNDY THURSDAY – April 1

7:00pm Worship and Communion Service – Sanctuary

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICES – April 2

12:00pm Worship Service – Sanctuary
7:30pm Community Worship Service – Denmark Manor Church

EASTER SERVICES – April 3 & 4

Saturday 6:00 p.m. - Contemporary Worship - Multi-Ministry Room
Sunday 8:00 a.m. (½ hour earlier) Traditional Worship - Sanctuary
9:30 a.m. Traditional Worship - Multi-Ministry Room
11:00 a.m. Traditional – Sanctuary & Contemporary Worship-MMR

APRIL

| | | |
|----------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| Sundays | 9:30 a.m. | Disciple 3 |
| | 9:30 a.m. | KC ³ rehearsal |
| | 10:00 a.m. | Women's Emmaus Group (Son Catchers) |
| | 7:00 p.m. | Community Ringers rehearsal |
| | 8:30 p.m. | AA's Open meeting |
| Mondays | 1:00 p.m. | Women's Bible Study |
| Tuesdays | 6:30 p.m. | ALPHA |
| | 7:00 p.m. | Women's Bible Study |
| Wednesdays | 6:30 p.m. | Disciple 2 |
| | 7:00 p.m. | Disciple 1 |
| Thursdays | 9:00 a.m. | Busy Hands Sewing Group |
| | 11:00 a.m. | Stroke Support Group |
| | 7:00 p.m. | "A Life That Matters" Bible Study |
| | 7:00 p.m. | Chancel choir rehearsal |
| | 7:00 p.m. | Youth Worship (grades 7-12) |
| 1st & 3rd Sundays | 6:00 p.m. | UMKids & Faithweavers |
| 1st & 3rd Mondays | 7:00 p.m. | Soaring Eagles |
| 2nd & 4th Mondays | 9:30 a.m. | Mom's Circle |
| 1st & 3rd Wednesdays | 7:00 p.m. | Stephen Ministers Supervision |

| | | | |
|-----------|----------|------------|--|
| Thursday | April 1 | 7:00 p.m. | Maundy Thursday worship |
| Friday | April 2 | 12:00 p.m. | Good Friday Service |
| | | 7:30 p.m. | Good Friday Service - Denmark Manor Church |
| Saturday | April 3 | 6:00 p.m. | Contemporary Worship |
| Sunday | April 4 | 8:00 a.m. | Easter Service - Sanctuary |
| | | 9:30 a.m. | Easter Service - Multi-Ministry room |
| | | 11:00 a.m. | Easter Service - Traditional in Sanctuary |
| | | 11:00 a.m. | Easter Service - Contemporary in MMR |
| Tuesday | April 6 | 12:00 p.m. | Super Seniors lunch and meeting |
| Wednesday | April 7 | 7:00 p.m. | Trustees |
| Wednesday | April 14 | 7:30 p.m. | Taizé Prayer Service |
| Sunday | April 18 | 7:15 p.m. | Youth Council |
| Monday | April 19 | 6:30 p.m. | Ark Council |
| Wednesday | April 28 | 7:00 p.m. | Church Council |



STEPHEN MINISTRY MOMENT

APRIL SCHEDULE

SUNDAY ACOLYTE SCHEDULE - Contact Michelle Yakubisin 724-744-3312

| | | | | |
|---------|------|--|-------|--------------------------------|
| Apr. 4 | 8:30 | Jessica Beal & Darrian Sepe | 11:00 | Jared Wright & Trent Somes |
| Apr. 11 | 8:30 | Luke Fabac & Nathaniel Mischen | 11:00 | Kacy Williams & Lauren Myers |
| Apr. 18 | 8:30 | Justin Moser & Meara Rundle | 11:00 | Aria Markijohn & Sydney Smith |
| Apr. 25 | 8:30 | Shanna Ciongoli & Stephanie Hilderhoff | 11:00 | Alyssa Higgins & Zachary Tusay |

LITURGISTS - Contact Judy Newport - 724-744-4995

| | | | | |
|---------|------|-----------------|-------|--------------|
| Apr. 4 | 8:30 | Dwight Willaman | 11:00 | Jay Newport |
| Apr. 11 | 8:30 | John Simpson | 11:00 | Jack Cycak |
| Apr. 18 | 8:30 | Sunny Nickle | 11:00 | Carol Decker |
| Apr. 25 | 8:30 | Donna Auckerman | 11:00 | Drew Patrick |

SUNDAY GREETERS - Contact Sandy Wessel 724-744-3754

| | | | | |
|---------|-------|---|--|--|
| Apr. 1 | 7:00 | Norma & Bob Ludwig and Donna Auckerman | | |
| Apr. 2 | 11:30 | Amy & Jarrett Reiche and Sheila Lowery | | |
| Apr. 4 | 8:00 | Charlotte Lipanovich & Ruth Lowry and Vera Shale & Lois Colley | | |
| | 9:30 | Laurel & Russell Shirley and Sheila Lowry | | |
| | 11:00 | Amy & Jacob Poczynek and Lorraine Fennel & Amy Keddie (Sanctuary) | | |
| Apr. 11 | 11:00 | Brooke & Stephen Jackowski and Lisa Rager (MMR) | | |
| | 8:30 | Karin & Brian Coiner and Nora McElwee | | |
| Apr. 18 | 11:00 | Jean & Frank Antoline & Barbara Sheffield | | |
| | 8:30 | LuAnn & Dennis Kral and Jill & Matt Eisenhuth | | |
| Apr. 25 | 11:00 | Amy & James Frey and Nancy & Andrew Husak | | |
| | 8:30 | Sybil & Jim Kunkelmann and Nancy & Kerry Moser | | |
| | 11:00 | Kristine & David Laukus and Millie & Tom Thomas | | |

SUNDAY KIDS KINGDOM - Contact Bettina DiMatteo 724-861-9387

| | | | | |
|---------|------|------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| Apr. 4 | 8:30 | Michelle Watson & Christy Keenan | 11:00 | Melinda Gilmore |
| Apr. 11 | 8:30 | Jackie/Harry Hoover & Kara Forsyth | 11:00 | Rich Hollerman |
| Apr. 18 | 8:30 | Donna Blasi and Brian Coiner | 11:00 | Lisa Rager & Amy Pleins |
| Apr. 25 | 8:30 | Janine Glunt & Marnie Kaminski | 11:00 | Tiffanie Rupp & Jennifer Burmeister |

SATURDAY GREETERS - Contact Sandy Wessel 724-744-3754

| | | | | |
|---------|--|--|--|--|
| Apr. 3 | Pam Hilty and David Tessler | | | |
| Apr. 10 | Holly & Jeffrey Wimer and Susan & Roy Anderson | | | |
| Apr. 17 | Rose Coffman and Paul Coffman | | | |
| Apr. 24 | Diane & Rich Mishler and Sally & Douglas Lang | | | |

Receptivity to Care

Most people are much more open to giving care than to receiving it. When a person is giving care, he or she is in a position of strength, stability, and authority. When a person is receiving care, he or she is acknowledging weakness, insecurity and vulnerability.

As a result, there are countless people today who, though they really could benefit from a Christian friend who would listen and care for them, instead tough it out on their own. They remain the strong silent type, or wear a smile across a face that is holding back a flood of tears. Society encourages this (particularly for men). To ask for help is to admit weakness. To show weakness is to admit inferiority.

But God did not create us to be independent. We were created to be interdependent. God’s Word is clear on this all the way back to Genesis: “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. (Genesis 2:18) The New Testament underscores this theme with more than 50 verses that contain the words “one another.” These verses include admonitions such as “love one another,” “encourage one another,” “build up one another,” and “pray for one another.”

What these verses don’t say is that we alone are to love, encourage, build up, and pray for other people. The “one another” wording gives them a reciprocal meaning. It also tells us that we are to allow other people to love, encourage, build up, and pray for us!

It is most difficult for people to ask for help. Whether it is because of guilt, shame, inadequacy, or fear of rejection, many would much prefer to suffer alone than ask for help.

But suffering alone is not God’s intent for us. Jesus promises, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). We can receive this promised rest when we turn to one another for comfort and help.

Our Stephen Ministers know all about receiving care. Many of them have been on the receiving end of care at an earlier point in their lives - something that has motivated them to give care now. They know how difficult it is to ask for help, but they also know the great personal and spiritual growth and healing that follow. They know how to respond in a loving, caring, and nonjudgmental manner. They are equipped, ready and waiting to provide the comfort and care God very much desires you to have.

If you find yourself now or in the future facing difficulties in life, don’t succumb to society’s norm of remaining strong and suffering alone. Take the courageous step of seeking help. Open your heart to receiving God’s love and grace through another person . Our Stephen Ministry offers the opportunity for a very confidential relationship with someone who will listen to you and provide you with the care and encouragement you need, while Christ, works inside to bring rest to your weary burdened heart.

For more information on Stephen Ministry, please contact Elizabeth Somes, Pastor John Ciampa, Jamie Caruso or any Stephen Minister.

(Reprinted from Stephen Ministry Training Resources)



Wedding

Congratulations and best wishes for a long and happy married life to Michael Palaschak and Liane Pavelka - wed March 6, 2010

Deaths

We extend our Christian love and sympathy to the following families who have recently lost loved ones:

- ◆ Joseph and Leigh Casale and family on the death of Joseph's father, Aldo Casale
- ◆ Virginia Rubright and family on the death of Virginia's husband George
- ◆ Clifford Stark and Sherry & Kevin Kissel and family on the death of Clifford's wife and Sherry's mother, Darlene Stark
- ◆ Family and friends of Isabelle (Belle) Twigger
- ◆ John and Darlene Simpson on the death of John's mother Theresa Simpson
- ◆ Mike and Gayle Kochasic, Steve and Becky Kochasic, Don and Laura Kochasic, Phil and Krista Kochasic and Nancy and Steve Beck and families on the death of their mother Nancy Kochasic



Change of Address

Sue Forringer
127 Common Court
Apt. 115
Harrison City, PA 15636

Remove

Michael & Kim Perone - withdrew
Dean Logan - withdrew
Darlene Stark - death
George Rubright - death
Isabelle Twigger - death
Nancy Kochasic - death

NEWS FROM THE ARK

PLAYGROUP

Make-up days for our February snow days will be April 1st and April 6th. April 1st will be our Easter party. We are looking forward to spring and hoping to make some visits to the playground. One of our projects this month will be growing "grass people". The kids enjoy this project as they watch the grass seed sprout in to hair. Other April activities will be umbrellas and windsocks.

PRESCHOOL

A make-up day for one of our February snow days will be April 5th. We will be talking about spring weather before learning about our solar system. We will end our unit by having a "Moon Walk" preschool style. Other topics this month will be frogs, snakes and turtles.

NOAH'S KIDS

Happy Easter everyone! Spring has sprung in Noah's Kids. We have planted some flowers and celebrated birthdays and are looking forward to playing on the playground very soon! Our service project was collecting food for the food bank. Happy Spring everyone!



SPECIAL CHURCH COUNCIL HELD

On Monday, March 15th, a Special Church Council meeting was called to consider one item of business. The whole church was invited to attend but only Church Council members could vote. The agenda item was to address how to house the associate pastor who will be coming to begin his appointment to Community Church, July 1, 2010. After a presentation led by Council Chairperson, Jay Newport and other Administrative Team leaders, discussion of various possibilities ensued. The action taken, with a unanimous Council vote, was to charge the Trustees with the responsibility to locate and make arrangements to purchase a house to be used as a parsonage. That process is underway at this time, updates will be shared as progress is made. Any final decision on this plan will be brought before a Church Conference for approval.



Calling all Kids (adults and families too) Camping Season Just Ahead!!!

Did you know that Community Church sent 42 campers last summer? We are hoping to send more this summer.

Camp Allegheny, Jumonville, Wesley Woods, will be the locations for great fun, adventure and Christian learning this summer. Every year these three Christian Camps, located in our Western Pennsylvania Conference, provide the ultimate in Christian Camping experiences. Through a wide variety of themes every camper will experience engaging lessons, fun in the great outdoors, adventures, friendships, hiking, swimming, eating, Bible lessons and they will grow closer to God.

The 2010 Camping Brochure is available in the church office or from Patsy Ciampa. Be sure to get one and take a look at all the great camping opportunities. Here are a few examples: Wrangler Camps, Pony Camps, Horse Camps, Swim Camps, Adventure Camps, Photo Camps, Work Camps, Sports Camps, Performing Arts Camps, Family Camps, Mini-Camps, Fishing Camps, Mommy Daddy & Me Camps, Canoe Camps, Trail Ride Camps, Astronomy & Rocketry Camps, Computer Camps...and many, many more. There is truly something for everyone, from minicamps for pre-schoolers and a parent, to elementary age, Jr. & Sr. High, and Adult Camps.

Time is of the essence, as April 20th is the deadline for scholarship assistance. For week-long camps Community Church pays \$175 scholarship per camper. For shorter camps the church will cover up to half the camp cost. If needed, special scholarships are available. No child should miss camp for financial reasons, please talk to Patsy Ciampa for more information.

The Camping Brochure has all the information needed including the Community Church Scholarship Forms. Pick one up today at the church office and get your camper signed up for a life-enriching experience this summer!

“GALACTIC BLAST”...

A Cosmic Adventure in Praising God

“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!” Psalm 150:6

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

June 14th -18th at Community UMC

Wanted: Space explorers to join a cosmic adventure praising God!



Would you like to spend a whole week (or even part of the week) on the starship Galactic Praise traveling through the wonders of space and exploring God's incredible creation? This cosmic mission comes complete with out-of-this-world adventures, exciting challenges, great music and hours of fun!

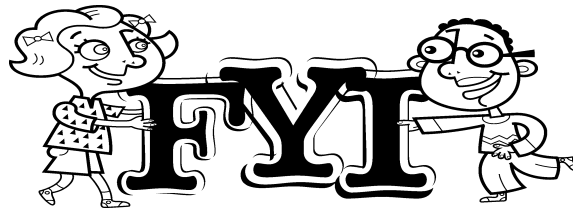
We need Crew Leaders to lead our preschool through elementary Cadets to Stations such as Astro Bistro, Cosmic Crafts, Orbital Observatory and Rocket Rec. (Now how fun does that sound?!?!) We also are in need of Station Leaders for many of these stations as well as a leader for Childcare.

WE CAN'T GO ON OUR MISSION WITHOUT YOU!

Make plans now to register your children, preschool through third, and students in fourth and fifth grades. Our registration is limited to 250 students and registration deadline is May 31st. We are looking forward to a meaningful, exciting week of learning lessons from the Bible.

Please prayerfully consider joining us for the week of June 14th-18th for Galactic Blast: A Cosmic Adventure Praising God! Contact Dawn Albright @ 724-864-4820 or Tammy Fleming @ 724-861-8336 to volunteer or with any questions. Thank you!





Giant Eagle Gift Cards are doing great! We couldn't do it without you all . . . Thank You! Our profit to date is \$2,535.00! We will continue to sell the cards, so look for us after both Sunday services, the church office during the week, or call Shirleen Johnston at 724-244-4525. Remember . . .you can use the cards for groceries, gas or to purchase any of the many gift cards Giant Eagle offers . . . and you receive the fuel and grocery perks . . . all the while helping support the Uganda Mission Project! **Thank You** to Vanessa Reynolds for her mission project "Cupcakes for Christianity?". Vanessa raised over \$260.00 with the proceeds going to the Uganda Mission. Your hard work and dedication is greatly appreciated . . and the cupcakes were delicious!

Local Family in Need - Mark your calendars for a Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser on May 1st to benefit a local family who are struggling with medical bills and unemployment. Look for more details this month.

Stitches in Time Quilt Show - Denmark Manor United Church of Christ is celebrating its bicentennial year in 2011. On May 15, 2010 they will be having their quilt show to honor the women of their church who quilted for many years. They would also like to share their quilts and also have anyone interested display their quilts also. Entry forms are available in the church office.

The Level Green Lions Club have afghan throws depicting the Christian Churches (including CUMC) of Penn Township, Trafford and Penn available for purchase. The cost of each 48x60 afghan is \$50.00 and our church will receive a percentage of the profit. If you are interested, we have a sample of them available in the church office. This keepsake would make an excellent gift for a loved one.

Thanks!

A special thank you to all who helped the food pantry for the Easter outreach. The response was overwhelming. I thank all who donated food, packed and moved it to the church.

*God Bless
Food Pantry*

Women's Group



UMW NEWS

Ladies: Are you looking for a new way of fellowship and a way to join a group or women who challenge the world they live in to support, create and expand the concepts of mission through participating in global ministries of the church? Are you looking for a way to connect with other women in the community or to connect with old friends you haven't seen for a while? If so please plan on attending a meeting of the UNITED METHODIST WOMEN (UMW). Each month from January to May and from September to December meetings are held at the church to do just this. **Among the many projects and missions the ladies of UMW support or are involved with are:** Lenten Lunches and Dinners, World Day of Prayer, This-N-That Sales, Holiday Helping Hands, World Thank Offering, and the Free Clothing Giveaway to name a few. Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month (except for June, July, August) in Fellowship Hall starting at 7 p.m. All women are welcome to come and share this very special type of ministry. The next meeting of the UMW will be Monday, April 12th. Our guest speaker will be Kelly Spiegel who will talk to us about "Tracing Your Family Tree." Hope to see you there.

THIS-N-THAT SALE

It's time to start cleaning up after the long, cold winter. If you have unwanted but still usable items around your house, you may want to consider bringing the items to the **spring This-N-That Sale**. The sale will be held on Saturday April 17th in the Multi-Ministry room from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Please bring any items for donation to the sale to the church during the week prior to April 17th. We will use room 209 upstairs for collection of your items so hallways downstairs are not cluttered. Large items such as furniture will be accepted on Thursday evening April 15th and Friday April 16th. **All church members** are invited to come out and help with this event. Help will be appreciated in setting up for the sale and on the sale day. If you like to bake, please consider donating a goody for the bake sale/ light lunch that will be available during the sale. **Please NO tires, mattresses or consol televisions.** We accept almost everything in good usable condition, including children's clothing. **Please save adult clothing for our clothing giveaway later in the year.** We look forward to your support in this event. Please call the church office for further information .

Worship Corner

Forgotten Forgiveness and The God of the Second Chance

When was the last time you were able to enjoy the company of other believers in Christ? When were you not in a rush to get to the next meeting? Not distracted by the schedule? And just had time to be with people of like mind? To study? To fellowship? To learn? To grow? To share?

As a congregation, we have pretty good participation in our short term and Disciple Bible studies but, when we really crunch the numbers only about 10-20% of our church membership is participating in these types of spiritual formation groups. So my guess is that, it's been a long time for many of us since we have assembled with other believers or seekers; to study, to fellowship, to learn and grow.

Being a part of a "One Month To Live" (1M2L) group is the perfect anecdote. First of all, there are groups forming all over our region; North Huntingdon, Irwin, Penn Trafford, and beyond. Groups are also forming based on interest such as singles and couples groups. Second, the 1M2L study is short, if you are pressed for time in your schedule or unsure of being in a group talking about God, it's only six short weeks ... you can do anything for six weeks! Finally, the New York Times bestselling book is interesting, thought provoking, funny at times and highly recommended. It's sure to be a "good read" and make for better "talk."

Please join a group. Or better yet, host a group. Pick your location, day and time that works best for your schedule. By participating in a 1M2L group, you will be blessed by taking the time to enjoy the company of other believers and seekers, studying, growing, learning and sharing.

Books are on sale now for only \$10

Groups meet six weeks; April 11-May 16; groups are offered most days of the week and at varied times. Sign up today by contacting Elizabeth Somes at esomes@communitymc.info

Jesus said, "Father, forgive these people, because they don't know what they are doing" Luke 23:34.

"I'm forgiven because you were forsaken..." asserts a popular worship song. When we first come to Christ, the words seem rich with meaning. WE realize our brokenness and separation from a holy God and our hearts overflow with thanksgiving: "Thank you, LORD, for paying the price my forgiveness requires. Thank you that your forgiveness never ends!"

The funny thing about forgiveness, however, is that we often fail to remember how much we continue to need it. With our eternal destiny secured, we can become a bit less thankful for the mercy of God. In our honest moments, we may even admit that it doesn't move us like it used to. And it shows.

Traces of our ungratefulness poke through as we avoid Christian brothers and sisters who have offended us or spurn the coworker who betrayed our confidence. Our forgiveness has limits. In our hearts, we cry out like Peter did: "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" (Matthew 18:21). It is all too easy for us to keep a record of wrongs.

In contrast, Jesus said, "Father, forgive these people, because they don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34a). A cry of mercy for the people who had mocked, tortured and condemned him to a cruel death. Latin church father Saint Ambrose said, "Who wouldn't learn to forgive their enemies when they see that, on the Cross, Christ prayed for those who persecuted him?" When he was seen at his weakest, Ambrose affirms, he was giving us the strength to bear insults with uncommon patience.

Today, allow your thinking to shift from those who have wronged you to the One who pardons all the wrongs you will ever commit. "The greater the insult [from others]," Ambrose offers, "the greater gratitude is due [to him]." Come to him in gratitude now for your forgiveness – then pass it on to others.

Continued on page 6

Good Grief Corner

Death of a Child continued

Suggestions for comfort and coping:

1. **Talk about your grief.** Many times we need to tell the story - and keep telling it, perhaps for years. We need to call on a special kind of friend, someone who will listen - frequently and without judgment.
2. **Share positive memories.** It may take time to get past the painful memories and get to the happy ones. But writing or talking to friends and family, talking to your pastor, or looking at old photos are ways those good memories can be stimulated.
3. **Expect many emotions.** Don't be surprised if out of nowhere you suddenly experience surges of grief. Even the most unexpected times. Talk about them with a special friend.
4. **Allow for numbness.** Numbness and disbelief help create insulation from the reality of the death until you are more able to tolerate what you don't believe.
5. **Don't hurry major decisions.** Try to make decisions with your spouse or close friend. If you need time alone, let people around you know this.
6. **Embrace your spirituality.** Express your faith, but express your grief as well. To deny your grief is to invite problems that can build up inside you.
7. **Find positive avenues to express yourself.** It may be volunteering, it may be a new lifestyle interest. These avenues and others won't replace the loss, but they may help fill the void.
8. **Ask for help.** Support groups can be helpful because people there aren't shocked by the idea of the death of a child. We can find others there who can understand the depth of the pain.
9. **Move toward the healing.** Be patient and tolerant with yourself. It's not that you won't ever be happy again. It's simply that you won't be exactly the same as you were before your child died.
10. **God is always waiting for us to call out to him and He will be waiting for you and there for you always.** With God all things are possible." God is our very special friend daily.

"-- - You will not be cured, but - one day - an idea that will horrify you now - this intolerable misfortune will become a blessed memory of a being who will never again leave you."

~ Marcel Proust ~

"Letters"

God's Devotional

I MAKE IT A RULE OF CHRISTIAN DUTY NEVER TO GO TO A PLACE WHERE THERE IS NOT ROOM FOR MY MASTER AS WELL AS MYSELF.

Don't be teamed with those who do not love the Lord . . . How can a Christian be a partner with one who doesn't believe? - 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15 TLB -

An attractive single woman had a job that required she travel a great deal. When a new female colleague was added to her department, she told her how happy she was to have another woman on the team. She related how she often felt isolated when she found herself the only woman at breakfast in a hotel restaurant, or one of only a handful of women on a commuter flight.

"Do men ever bother you?" the new woman colleague asked. "Rarely" the young woman replied.

"Wow" said the young colleague. "You are so beautiful, I would think you are approached a great deal by men you don't really care to meet."

"No" the woman explained, "I just say five words and immediately I am left alone."

"Five words" the young colleague asked, hoping to gain a valuable tip. "What are they?"

"When I am approached by a man," the woman said, "I simply ask, 'are you a born again Christian?'"

"Has anyone ever said 'yes?'" the younger asked. "Rarely," said the woman, "and when such men want to talk to me anyway, I always have an enjoyable conversation, because Jesus can be a part of it."

God's Daily Answer

"God sets the lonely in families"

~ Psalm 68:6 NIV

Families are God's idea. When Jesus came to earth, even He was part of a family. Though every family is unique, they all share one thing in common. They are the testing ground for true relationships.

Living up close and personal with anyone gives you a chance to discover what love is all about. Joy, sacrifice, comfort, forgiveness, patience, commitment, support - the list goes on and on. What lessons in love can you learn from your family or close friends who act like family?

No matter what roll you play in your family, it is irreplaceable. No one else can bring to the people in your life the unique qualities you bring. Ask God to help you carry out your role with honor and integrity.

"Loving relationships are a family's best protection against the challenges of the world."

- Bernie Wiebe -

Worship Corner continued from page 5

Once more he asked him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, "Lord, you know everything. You know I love you." Jesus said, "Then feed my sheep" John 21:17.

The story of Peter's failure is well known. Despite Peter's confident statement that he was willing to die for Jesus (John 13:37), he instead denied three times that he even knew the Lord whom he professed to love.

The account of Peter's restoration in John 20:1 – 21:25 is highly significant. Three times Peter had denied Christ and three times he was given the opportunity to reaffirm his love. Jesus was not only Peter's master, but he also was a master teacher. A good teacher usually knows whether his or her students will pass a test. The purpose of the test is so that the students will know whether they have mastered the subject.

In Peter's case, his teacher was not only fully human but also divine. Jesus had predicted how Peter would perform in the crisis that led to the cross. Now he offered Peter the chance to retake the exam. A second chance.

In *A Heart for the Master*, co-authors Gordon and Gail MacDonald tell the story of Aba Mios, who was asked by a soldier whether God would forgive him. "After instructing him at some length, the old man asked him: 'Tell me, my son, if your cloak were torn, would you throw it away?' 'Oh, no!' the soldier replied. 'I would mend it and wear it again.' The old man said to him, 'Well, if you care for your cloak, will not God show mercy to his own creature?'"

The point is well made. If we as flawed human beings take care to mend and repair that which has been torn, would God not want to see his broken ones restored?

We serve the God of the second chance. Each of us, like Peter, is offered the opportunity to pour our brokenness at the feet of the One who was himself broken for our sake. Repentance is one of the truest forms of worship, for it has the power to remove any barrier of sin that separates us from the Savior. Join us on Easter Saturday or Easter Sunday to thank him for that privilege.

We are called to forgive as we have been forgiven. We are called to give second chances, as we are continually given our second chance...again and again and again...

Godspeed,

John

A colorful CROSS

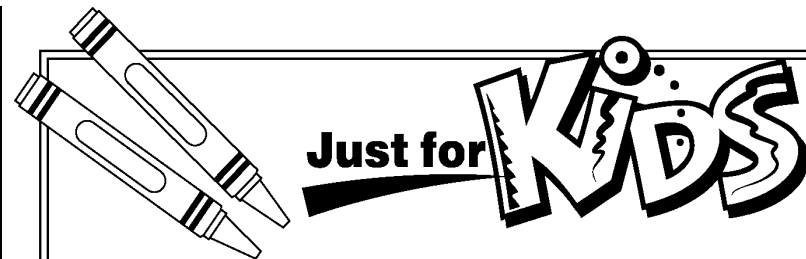
Create a beautiful decoration for your window this Easter. It will remind you that Jesus rose from the dead to save you from your sins.

What you need:

- 8½" x 11" sheet of paper
- Pencil
- Clear transparency sheet (or clear report cover)
- Permanent marker
- Scissors
- Colored tissue paper
- Paintbrush
- Glue
- Scotch tape

What you do:

1. Draw a large cross that takes up most of the paper.
2. Put the transparency over the paper and trace the cross onto it with a permanent marker.
3. Cut the colored tissue paper into 1" x 1" squares.
4. Using a paintbrush, spread glue onto the tissue paper squares and then place them on the cross. (Add a few drops of water to the white glue to make it more spreadable.)
5. After the glue is dry, cut out the cross. Then tape it in a window and enjoy the beautiful colors.



SYMBOL OF SACRIFICE

At this time of the year, we see many crosses draped in purple, black or white cloth. They remind us of the loving sacrifice Jesus made for us – and that he rose again.

Use the code in the big cross to complete 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, NIV.

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Answer: Christ died for our sins ... he was buried ... he was raised on the third day.

