

Spring 2008

The Dove Express

The First United Methodist Church of Avalon

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Pastor Vena's Verbalizations, Vision, and Voice

VERBALIZATION: I have been thinking about spiritual formation, spiritual growth, and spiritual direction. This is a process rather than an event. Spiritual formation is not a Bible Study, book study, or prayer group; however, it may well include all of these as a stepping-stone. Spiritual growth is not about what we know, but about the way in which our lives are lead by the Holy Spirit. It has to do with our understanding of our spiritual gifts and our call to use them for the good of the church. Spiritual direction is an individual process in which you work with a mentor to examine "How is God at work in your life?"

Beginning in April, we will have a four-week program that will allow you to experience this process in your own life. Sign up to join the "Covenant Group" and have a "heart warming" experience. This program will be held on Wednesday at 10:00 am and 7:00 pm; choose the time that best suits your needs.

VISION: I am very excited about the vision this county has for *Family Promise*. The number of people living in poverty in Cape May County is significant and the available housing resources are limited. *Family Promise* offers much needed transitional housing for homeless families. There are a number of ways that we can support this project (see article). We are a community blessed with resources, opportunities, and contacts, all of which can be of a support to this program. During June, July and August, we will host a nine-week program entitled, *Just Neighbors*, which will help educate us about the needs and challenges of poverty. Let us prayerfully consider ways in which we can be better neighbors to all of the people of Cape May County.

VOICE: I have numerous hopes, dreams, aspirations, and ideas that I would love to see implemented into the life of this church; however, this church is not about me. This church is the embodiment of a community of believers. Step forward and share your hopes, dreams, aspirations, and ideas about the life of your church. Working together is what turns ideas into reality!

The First United Methodist Church of Avalon

Young Adult Group

The Court House Methodist Church's College & Career Bible Study & Fellowship Group is looking for any interested people to come out to their meetings. This is a group for young adults who are college age and into their 20s. For the winter and early spring they are meeting on Saturday nights at 7 pm. For more information, contact Sarah Webster 368-8341.

Mark Your Calendars!

VBS will be July 14-18 this year. The theme will be Beach Party: Surfing through the Scriptures. VBS is open to any children ages 4 through completed 6th grade. We are also always looking for volunteers. For more information contact Sarah Webster, 368-8341.



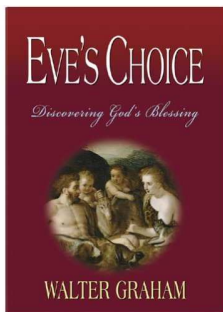
UMW Award for 2007

Be sure to congratulate Dee Phillips on receiving the UMW award for 2007.

Dee joined the church in 1962. She has been a Sunday School teacher and was active in fund raisers. She and Wilda co-chaired the first Christmas Bazaar in 1982. The first bazaar made \$2,719.00 and they both were thrilled. Dee has continued to work on them ever since. Her latest endeavor is being a member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.



The Sunday School class is finishing up the winter curriculum, and will be moving on to Spring where we will study the Easter story.

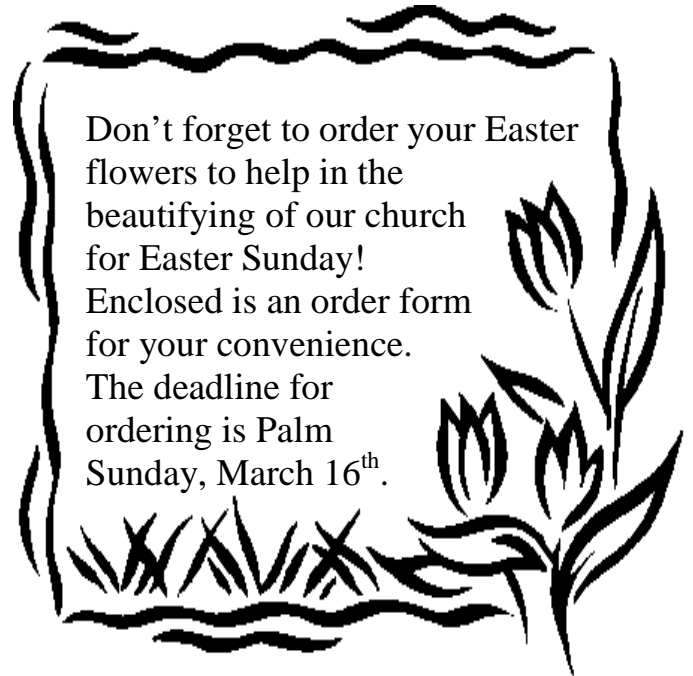


Join the women of the church in reading *Eve's Choice*, a short (82 pages), imaginative exploration of the biblical narrative of the Fall. The author imagines how Eve might tell the story. He

invites the reader to consider new perspectives and to ask questions about events that brought both tragedy and joy to Eve, to her family, and to all humankind.

The first discussion was held Monday, February 25th at noon. Monthly discussions will follow for those interested. If you would like to order a copy of the book, please call Jan, the church secretary. Each copy is \$8.

Don't forget to order your Easter flowers to help in the beautifying of our church for Easter Sunday! Enclosed is an order form for your convenience. The deadline for ordering is Palm Sunday, March 16th.



Theology According to Starbucks!

We are brewing up some great discussions and coffee. Bring your questions, thoughts, ideas, and articles for discussion –



our conversations will percolate rich insights and reflections on our beliefs and practices. This group is open to all; bring your friends and neighbors and participate in a non-judgmental format that allows you to search out new ideas and find meaning in new perspectives.

We will meet the second Friday of each month beginning in April, at 10:00 am in the Parlor. And yes, the coffee will be brewing!

The Men's Coffee and Gospel Group!



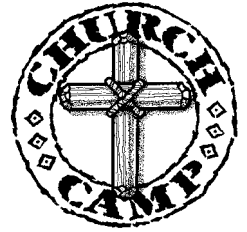
Yes, more coffee (and maybe a little breakfast); after all, we are meeting at 10:00 am, on the fourth Friday of each month

beginning in April. Using a practical guide to spiritual formation, we will examine Wesley's devotional life through his study of prayer, scripture, Communion, and other disciplines. Come have your thirst quenched, your cup filled, and your hunger satisfied.

Do you want a copy of the 2008 budget? Stop by the church office and Jan, the church secretary, will be happy to give you a copy.

Summer Church Camp

Part of the growing up process for young people involves spending time away from home. Summer camp is still an outstanding choice with very special opportunities and experiences, which can help them along their individual paths to adulthood.



The GNJ Conference Commission on Camps, Conferences and Retreats, Inc., offers two different summer resident camping locations in New Jersey. They are the Aldersgate Center and The Pinelands Center at Mt. Misery. These sites are opportunities for young people to learn about themselves, their relationship with each other and most importantly, their growing relationship with God.

To view the summer programs and registration information at Pinelands Center at Mt. Misery please visit <http://www.mtmisery.com/> or call (609) 893-3354 and at Aldersgate Center please call (973) 383-5978.

A MEMORIAL WALK!

The Memorial Committee has plans to install a brick walk in the Memorial Garden. Bricks can be purchased in memory of loved ones as follows:

- 4x8 inch engraved brick (maximum of three lines) \$75
- 8x8 inch engraved brick (maximum of three lines) \$150

Please complete an attached order form and return by July 1, 2008.

Covenant Group is based on Accountable Discipleship

The Cost: Those who accept Christ's call to discipleship must be ready for a struggle with themselves and with the world.

The Task: Since the world is God's sphere of salvation, disciples of the Savior must join him where he is at work.

The Anguish: Be ready to share in the sufferings of Christ if you accept the name of Christian.

The Call: With the call to discipleship comes the promise of grace to sustain us in the journey, which lies ahead.

The Condition: The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you.

The Power: God will sustain us in whatever we are called to do.

The Challenge: The grace of God is so gracious that we are always given the choice of accepting it or rejecting it.

The Hope: We are able to accomplish through the love and power of the Holy Spirit all that Christ calls us to do.

GOD'S GRACE AT WORK IN OUR LIVES

Christian Obedience: Accountability to the Ordinances of God, the Call of Christ, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the General Rules.

Spiritual Growth: The result of obedient discipleship and the development of Christian maturity.

Christian Maturity: Consistent obedience to God, in which the new relationship of justifying faith is no longer interrupted by a wayward will, but firmly grounded in a service of love.



“Souper-Bowl” Sunday in January was a great success, NO - not the football game, our mission project. We collected almost 100 cans of soup from our always generous congregation, and distributed them to two local food banks that we support! Also, \$112

was raised and the UMW donated an additional \$100.

Our second annual “Celebrate Your Heart” dinner in February was a wonderful affair. The food was excellent, the fellowship inspiring, the entertainment divine. Attendees were screened for peripheral vascular disease by the parish nurses. A nice donation was made to the Community Food Bank of South Jersey, and the balance of the profits will be used for our churches mission projects. Heartfelt thanks to ALL!

Speaking of the Community Food Bank, a nice group of us worked there one Saturday putting labels on frozen eggplant cutlets. We were a well oiled machine, labeling 2 pallets worth in 1½ hours.

March Madness is upon us. Check out the basketball net on the way into church. We are joining the effort to stop disease – death by mosquito in Africa. Malaria kills a person in Africa every 30 seconds. The Nothing But Nets campaign will use every \$10 donated to buy, distribute and educate families on the anti-malaria net's use.



Forecast...
The Sun will shine forever!

The First United Methodist Church of Avalon

CHANGE OF ADDRESS



Rebecca High has moved. Please update your copy of the Church Family List with her new address and phone number:

The Fountains at Cedar Parke
114 Hayes Mill Rd, Apt. F-312
Atco, NJ 08004
856-768-3088

We recently heard from Rebecca ---

It is very nice here and I am meeting several friendly people. I feel sure I will be happy here, and eventually feel at home, although no place can compare to Avalon. I wish you all good health and happiness.

Love,

Rebecca

Prayer Shawl Ministry

The Shawl Ministry has given out more prayer shawls to:

Janice Erickson
Dr. Eddy Palmer
Rebecca High

Let's keep those shawls coming ladies, they have greatly received by all recipients! Many thanks to Pam Wright and Phebe Bishop who started this ministry! Also, to all of you knitters and crocheters, your hard work and prayers are touching many people!

Blind Center of the Jersey Cape

All blind and visually-impaired residents of Cape May County are welcome to attend the Blind Center of the Jersey Cape's weekly meetings which are held every Tuesday and Thursday, from 10 am – 2 pm right here in our church. The Blind Center is a non-profit organization founded in October 2000. There are no dues/fees charged to become a participating member. Also, participants can take advantage of the Cape May County Fare Free Transportation System, which will transport you from your home to the Blind Center free of charge.

Members participate in arts and crafts workshops, exercise, music enrichment and drama programs; various field trips to local area restaurants, museums and stage productions. Also, throughout the year, guest speakers and local entertainers are invited to the Center to perform.

The Blind Center mission is to provide a safe, friendly atmosphere where all blind and visually-impaired residents can develop and expand their everyday experiences outside of their home environments.

If you, or any one you know, would like to become an active member of the Blind Center, please contact Millicent Saraduke at (609) 624-0931.

The Blind Center will be holding a fundraiser breakfast at Uncle Bill's on Saturday, April 5th, from 8 am – 12 noon. Mark your calendars and plan on attending, more information will follow.





Every 30 seconds a child dies from malaria, a preventable disease. We believe it is time for us to do more.

One bed net costs just \$10 to buy and deliver to individuals in need. One bed net can safely last a family for about four years, thanks to a long-lasting insecticide woven into the net fabric. Bed nets prevent malaria transmission by creating a protective barrier against mosquitoes at night, when the vast majority of transmissions occur. The African malaria mosquitoes generally bite late at night or early morning, between 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m. A bed net is usually hung above the center of a bed or sleeping space so that it completely covers the sleeping person. A net treated with insecticide offers about twice the protection of an untreated net and can reduce the number of mosquitoes that enter the house and the overall number of mosquitoes in the area.

In our efforts to transform the world as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ serving in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, we want to run the "second mile" collecting \$100,000 to provide 10,000 bed nets to save at least 10,000 children who are at risk to be contagious with Malaria.

As of December 2007, local churches of our Annual Conference have collected the total amount of \$25,000 for this purpose. We are very thankful for this offering. We still need to raise the amount of \$75,000. So, we are inviting each clergy and lay member of our 2008 Annual Conference session to find 10 people in your church or your community who would like to donate one bed net (\$10). If each of us collects at least \$100, we will be able to reach our goal.

Learning Opportunities

We are never too young or old to learn! Our Cape Atlantic District is providing the two following great opportunities:

"A Holistic Approach to Christian Leadership" will be presented by Dr. Lisa Withrow Wednesday, March 12th.

Clergy attend 8:30 am – 2:30 pm

Laity attend 7 -9 pm

at the Salem UMC in Pleasantville

Dr. Lisa Withrow is Associate Professor of Congregational Studies, Director of Field Education and Director of the Gault Center for Christian Leadership at Methodist Theological School in Ohio. She is an ordained U M minister who has served churches in Ohio and in Scotland and has a book forthcoming (August 2008) called *Claiming New Life: A Church for the Future*.

"Making Disciples" will be presented by Rev, Rudy Rasmus Thursday, April 17th.

Clergy attend 8:30 am – 2:30 pm

Laity attend 7 -9 pm

at the Trinity UMC in Marmora

Rev. Rudy Rasmus, along with Juanita Rasmus are pastors at St John's Downtown Church in Houston, TX. The pastors and various ministries of that church have been featured on Oprah and many other TV and media outlets.



May 19th-23rd, Pastor Vena will be away for a week of learning at a Festival of Homiletics. Pastor Vena will also be out of the office for the

Greater NJ Annual Conference in Valley Forge, PA from May 29th thru the 31st.

The First United Methodist Church of Avalon



Family Promise of Cape May County unites over twelve congregational teams and a trained social worker to work with families in finding housing and in meeting other needs that they may have.

Our church is participating in this program. The following are available volunteer positions:

- ❖ Act as week's host-church coordinator
- ❖ Help provide dinner or evening activities
- ❖ Serve as overnight chaperones
- ❖ Set-up and take down host-sites
- ❖ Participate o Family Promise board or committees
- ❖ Provide administrative/clerical support
- ❖ Participate in fundraising (training opportunities are available)

An immediate opportunity to help is by supporting the BUY-a-BED program. Each BUY-a-BED package includes: one twin-size folding bed, one mattress pad, one pillow, one set of sheets, one blanket, and one bedspread. One set per family member is needed while they are in this interfaith emergency housing project. The entire BUY-a-Bed package costs \$250.00, so please contribute what you can. Thanks in advance for your support!

You may talk to Pastor Vena or Ed Rhoad, who are both actively involved in this project or contact Family Promise at the following:

609-350-4875
PO Box 200
Cape May Court House, NJ 08210



We are having a S-E-N-I-O-R moment!

- S – Spirituality
- E – Exercise & Nutrition
- N – News – Wesley Manor
- I – Intergenerational
- O – Organizational
- R – Recreational

The Nurture-Outreach-Witness (NOW) Committee would like to sponsor a monthly Wednesday Evening Program at 7:00 pm. It would be open to the entire community and offer a well-rounded experience for the body, mind, and spirit. If you would like to help organize one of these events, please speak to the Pastor and/or Karen Webster. Keep your eyes and ears open for more news about this exciting opportunity.

Why Easter's Date Changes

Easter is always the 1st Sunday after the 1st full moon after the Spring Equinox (which is March 20). This dating of Easter is based on the lunar calendar that Hebrew people used to identify Passover, which is why it moves around on our Roman calendar. Based on this information, Easter can actually be one day earlier (March 22) that is rare. This year is the earliest Easter any of us will ever see the rest of our lives! Only the most elderly of our population have ever seen it this early (95 years old or above). None of us have ever, or will ever, see it a day earlier! Here's the facts:

1) The next time Easter will be this early (March 23) will be the year 2228 (220 years from now). The last time it was this early was 1913 (so if you're 95 or older, you are the only ones that were around for that!).

2) The next time it will be a day earlier, March 22, will be in the year 2285 (277 years from now). The last time it was on March 22 was 1818. So, no one alive today has or will ever see it any earlier than this year!

The First United Methodist Church of Avalon

**Pencil these
dates
on your
calendar:**



Sunday,
March 9th,
2 am

St. Patrick's Dinner:

Sunday, March 9th, 6 pm

Staff Parish Relations Committee

meeting: 7 pm, Tuesday, March 11th

Cape Atlantic Resource Day:

Wednesday, March 12th

Clergy – 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

Laity – 7 - 9 pm



**Confirmants & New
Members Received**

during 10 am service,
March 16th

Maundy Thursday, March 20th

Dinner 6:00 pm

Service 7 pm

Good Friday Service:

12 noon, Friday, March 21st

Easter Sunrise Service:

6:15 am, Sunday,
March 23rd,

Easter Church Service:

10 am, Sunday, March
23rd



Administrative Council meeting:

7 pm, Tuesday, March 25th

Fellowship Time following service –

Sunday, Mar. 30th, Apr. 27th, & May 25th

Avalon Methodist Women:

Noon, Monday, March 31st

7:30 pm, Tuesday, April 22nd

Covenant Group:

10 am & 7 pm, Wednesdays,

April 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, & 30th

Trustees meeting:

7 pm, Tuesday, April 8th

Theology According to Starbuck's:

10 am, Fridays, Apr. 11th & May 9th

Trustee Sponsored Work Day:

9 am - noon, Saturday, April 12th

Christian Education meeting:

following service, Sunday, Apr. 13th

Cape Atlantic Resource Day:

Wednesday, April 17th

Clergy – 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

Laity – 7 - 9 pm

Men's Coffee & Gospel Group:

10 am, Friday, Apr. 25th & May 16th

Nurture, Outreach, & Witness (NOW)

Committee: 7 pm, Tuesday, May 6th

Mother's Day

Sunday, May 11th

Finance Committee meeting:

7 pm, Tuesday, May 13th

Missions meeting:

7 pm, Tuesday, May 17th



Monday, May 26th

Greater NJ Annual Conference:

7 pm, Thursday - Saturday, May 29th - 31st