

Winter 2008 - 2009

The Dove Express

The First United Methodist Church of Avalon

3344 Dune Drive, Avalon, NJ 08202 ~ (609) 967-4204

www.Avalonmethodist.com

email: AvalonMethodist@hotmail.com

The Reverend Vena Murphy, Pastor ~ (609) 967-4290

Pastor Vena's Verbalizations, Vision, and Voice

VERBALIZATION: I love synchronicity, that blend of time and event, which I believe is orchestrated by the Holy Spirit. On Sunday, Nov 9th, there was a line in my sermon that stated, "We no longer have people knocking on our door volunteering to rake leaves in return for a meal." As I prepared that sermon, I thought back to the time of the Great Depression and the traveling hobos, who would mark the curb with a cross in front of a home where food was served. The hobos referred to this as an "Angel Food" house. Well, back to the issue of synchronicity. On Tuesday, a man on a bicycle went to the home of a church member, asking to rake her leaves. The man had no rake. The member had no leaves, but he asked if he come could back again. On Wednesday, a man in a car was driving through CMCH dropping off flyers that encouraged people to call if they needed their leaves raked or work done in their yard. With the turn in the economy, we now have people knocking on our door volunteering to rake leaves in return for money that will probably buy a meal. More than ever, we need to be an "Angel" house, where people of compassion, who out of gratitude and bounty, help the needy of our community.

VISION: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Proverbs 29:18

God challenges us to a new vision for the First UMC of Avalon. What are the needs of the people of God, and how do we serve them? What vision for the church, or you as an individual, has God placed on your heart? What vision of ministry fills your heart with the passion of a disciple? Let us work to be a church that shares its faith with others.



VOICE: More and more clergy have expressed a concern with what they call "Club mentality" among their church membership. Fifty years ago, Sunday was the Sabbath, but today church competes with sporting activities, community and civic events, family gatherings which require extensive travel time, work schedules, and the reality of many who need to shop and do errands on their only day off. Being pulled in so many directions, with so many demands upon our time, energy, and resources, is not easy. This is what contributes to "club mentality." The attitude that church is just like any of the many clubs/organizations/teams to which we belong. For many, church no longer is a priority. I believe that there are three reasons that church defeats "club mentality." First, worship is a time of Sabbath: a time to rest in the Spirit of God. We don't get that anywhere else. Second, in church, God and family are the priority. We don't get that anywhere else. Third, we are the children of God: loved, forgiven, and empowered. We don't get that anywhere else! Invite your family and friends to be part of God's club at the First UMC of Avalon.



Advent Study

'The Scriptures Sing of Christmas' is the title of the book that will be used to guide the Advent Study. The study will be held at the parsonage on Mondays and the following are the topics:

- Dec. 1st Mary's Song
- Dec. 8th Concert in a Field
- Dec. 15th An Old Man Sings
- Dec. 22nd Song of Wondrous Mystery

This is a great opportunity to focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

Wedding Coordinator:

If "Here Comes the Bride" brings tears to your eyes, this is the job for you! We are looking for someone to be the contact person between the church and the bride and groom. The coordinator answers questions regarding flowers, decorations, and arrangements, and assists with the rehearsal and the wedding. Generally speaking, there are four to six weddings a year. A stipend is provided. If you are interested, please contact the Pastor.

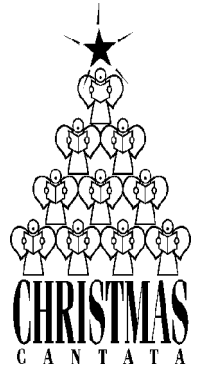


Call the church office, 609-967-4204, by Thursday, December 11th, if you would like to order a Christmas Poinsettia to honor or remember a loved one. These flowers are used to beautify our sanctuary and may be picked up following the 10 am service on Sunday, December 21st, or after the 8:00 pm Christmas Eve service on Wednesday, December 24th.



Christmas Cantata

Sunday, December 21st, the choir will perform a Christmas Cantata titled "Go Tell It". This is a feast for your ears and heart. The Chancel Choir is sure to outdo themselves. Come and enjoy a music-filled service that is sure to make the meaning of Christmas 'ring' in your heart!



Children's Christmas Programs

Don't miss the children's Christmas program on Sunday, December 28th, during the church service. This will be a blessing to all who attend.

Christmas Bazaar

Help needed! We will be preparing for the bazaar all week, Monday – Friday, Dec. 1st – 5th, from 10 am – 3 pm. **ALL are welcome to HELP!** We will be making cookie plates Friday at 7 pm, please bring your plates of homemade cookies by Friday. Donations of games, toys, books, Christmas decorations (new and used), household gift items (glass, linens, etc), and baked items for the food table are all needed. We have empty jars to put your donation of homemade soup in. Don't forget to shop and see our beautiful gift baskets, Saturday, from 9 am – 3 pm.



The First United Methodist Church of Avalon

South Jersey Geriatric Care, P.C.

This geriatric care management practice is funded under a grant through the Cape May County Department of Aging and has been in business since 2001. At no charge So. Jersey Geriatric Care, P.C. can:

- Conduct at-home geriatric evaluations
- Generate a personalized care plan
- Organize home care and/or facility placement
- Relieve caregiver stress through counseling and education service.

Criteria to use the program is:

- Cape May county Resident
- Age 60 or over
- Have a relative, friend, or neighbor who they can designate as caregiver.

A social worker visits the home, interviews the elder and his or her caregiver, and evaluates threats to the elder's safety and independence. A review of the elder's medical diagnoses and prescription medications is conducted. Cognitive testing is administered, as well as an evaluation of the client's ability to tend to his activities of daily living, and an inspection of the home for safety. Once an understanding of the patient's abilities and limits is obtained, a plan is then sent to the elder and his caregiver. With the elder's permission, we will also forward the evaluation report to the client's physicians. For a referral form or brochure see Pastor Vena.



FYI: At the end of December a list of 2009 church officers will be available in the narthex.

Your Change CAN Change Lives



The missions committee is planning a fund raiser 'Change Lives' in January. Everyone will be encouraged to contribute loose change. At the end of the month there will be a soup and bread dinner and Ed Rhoad will make a presentation on his mission trip to Africa.

Learning Opportunity

Plan on attending Sunday, Feb. 8th, from 2-6 pm at St. Peter's UMC in Ocean City. A variety of topics are offered in two sessions, and dinner is included. Watch for details on registration.

2009 Quarterly Meeting Schedule

January – April – July - October

Christian Education	2 nd Sunday, after service
Nominations Committee	2 nd Tuesday, 1 pm (Oct. only)
Trustees	3 rd Tuesday, 7 pm
Endowment	4 th Thursday, 9 am

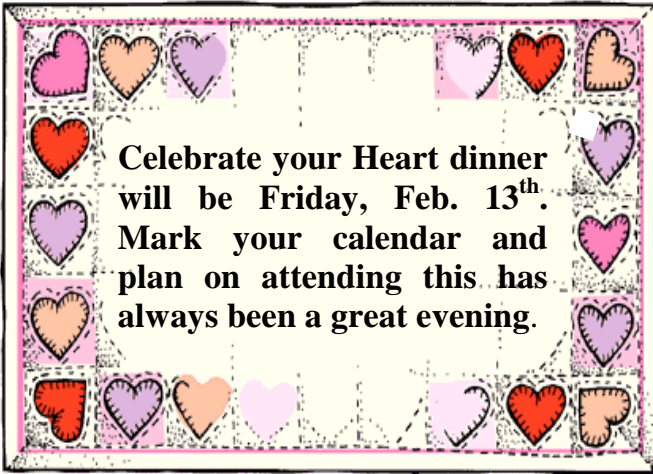
February – May – August – November

N-O-W	1 st Tuesday, 7 pm
Finance	2 nd Tuesday, 7 pm
Missions	3 rd Tuesday, 7 pm

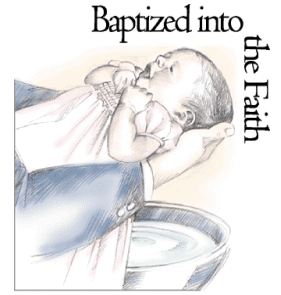
March – June – September – December

Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC)	2 nd Tuesday, 7 pm
Nominating Committee	2 nd Tuesday, 1 pm (Sept. only)
Administrative Council	3 rd Tuesday, 7 pm

The First United Methodist Church of Avalon



Please take time to get to know Blair Madeline Soens our newest preparatory member. Young Blair was baptized on Sunday, Oct. 26th. Congratulate parents, Christy and David, and big brother, Baily, and big sisters, Tegan and Addison.



Congratulations to the growing families of:

- ◆ **Barbara and Bill Graham** the proud great-grandparents of Rylee born on September 25th.



- ◆ **Heather, Chris, and Jeremy Carnuccio** on the birth of their latest family member, Jamison Leigh, on November 10th. MiMi, Terry Hand, and Great-grandparents, Martha and Charles Richardson, have also been blessed by Jamison.

Make sure to spend some time with our snow birds before they head south or contact those that have gone already. The following is a list of those who will be flying south or who have already flown the coup:

**S
Z
O
Z
O
B
B
R
R
S**

- Rita Bedford
- Ruth & Michael Boyle
- Bill & Louise Cadzow
- George & Claire Cushnie
- Jack & Lolly Ferguson
- Barbara & Bill Graham
- Bill & Carol Lehman
- Ted Mozer
- Dee Phillips
- Wilda & Jack Richardson
- Ray & Audrey Smith
- Frank & Elsie Taylor
- John Titherington
- Jean & John Van Horn
- Doris Walters
- Evelyn Warren
- Coy & Sharon Zachary

If we have inadvertently left any one out, please contact the church office and let Jan know.

H.O.P.E.

Helping Other People Evolve, Inc.

For Those Recently Widowed

The goal of H.O.P.E is to assist recently widowed men and women of all ages as they evolve through the natural stages of the grieving process. Ten (10) week sessions begin in January, April, July, and October. Day and evening meetings are available. Call 1-888-920-2201 or email hopesnj@juno.com for further information.

Communion Offerings

As you know the first Sunday of every month we have a communion offering. The following is our winter schedule:

December – UMCOR

January – Human Relations Day

February – Nothing but Nets

Please do what you can to support these missions.



Upcoming Mission Opportunities

- ❖ Christmas Giving Tree will be located in the back of Fellowship Hall. Please take an ornament and help a family less fortunate to have a blessed Christmas.
- ❖ Serve a Christmas dinner at Asbury Church in Atlantic City on Saturday, Dec. 20th at 11 am.
- ❖ Christmas Carol for our shut-ins on Sunday, Dec. 21st after the service.
- ❖ 'Change Lives' see how your loose change can change lives.
- ❖ 'Souper Bowl of Caring' will be held again in February.
- ❖ The third annual "Celebrate Your Heart" dinner will be held Friday, February 13th. Another fabulous gourmet heart healthy meal is in the planning.

✂️ "Clip Campaign"

In these times of unprecedented fiscal uncertainty, the NJ Council of Churches is launching a new campaign to help people in need. Every week thousands of coupons that can be used to help purchase necessary items are thrown in the trash. Please 'clip coupons' and bring them to church each Sunday. Place them in a basket on the table in the back of Fellowship Hall. Please sort them in the following five categories:

1. Cereal
2. Baby products
3. Detergents/cleaning supplies
4. Pet food
5. Miscellaneous – a particularly good coupon in any area

The coupons will be taken to the local food pantry. Thanks for your participation, you are making a difference to those in need.

Cape Atlantic Resource Day

Every year the District holds a Day of Learning. There are a large variety of topics offered at two sessions. The goal for 2009 is to have at least every committee chairperson attend. Please mark your calendar for Sunday, February 8th to attend from 2-6 pm at St. Peter's UMC in Ocean City. There is a minimal registration fee and it includes a dinner hosted by the youth of St. Peter's.



What I have learned about Christianity

by Ed Rhoad

It is perhaps presumptuous of me to assume that you have missed Ruth and I in church. However, I am the Lay Leader and it is obviously important for me to attend church on a regular basis which I have, in fact, done for years. With that said there are reasons for our absence and I feel a responsibility to explain our absence. But more importantly I have learned more about what it is to be a Christian during this absence than any other period of my life. I would like to share my thoughts with you.

It began in mid August when my son, Bob, inspired by James 2:17 "So it is with faith: if it is alone and includes no action then it is dead", felt a calling by God to establish a mission in Malawi, Africa. He asked me if I wanted to go and obviously I said yes. It took my son to teach me that just going to church is not enough.

When we arrived in Malawi it was visibly clear that the country was devastated by HIV/AIDS. You didn't need to be told, you saw it and felt it. It was here then that I learned the truth of James 1:27 "What God the father considers to be pure religion is this: to take care of widows and orphans in their suffering." To witness how these suffering people took care of the 700,000 orphans and uncounted numbers of widows with such love was spiritually uplifting. I had to go half way around the world to a place that I had never heard of before to learn what "true religion" was.

While there with my son Bob and Grandson Ethan we attended a church service in a small windowless church in the village of Sakata on the Zomba plain. As they were reading the 128th Psalm a strong wind blew through the windows carrying dust from the parched fields. The message seemed to be directed specifically at me and it shook me to my core. And there in front of all of these suffering, but happy Africans, I wept. Let me share the 128th Psalm with you.

"Happy are those who obey the Lord, who live by his commands.
Your work will provide for your needs; you will be happy and prosperous.
Your wife will be like a fruitful vine in your home, and your children will be like young olive trees around your table.
A man who obeys the Lord will surely be blessed like this.
May you live to see you Grandchildren."

I did not know why such an unworthy person such as myself has been so blessed, but surely I have been. I have a beautiful wife who I love deeply and who loves me. I have been prosperous beyond my dreams. My children have grown and been fruitful. And I have lived to see all of my grandchildren. What more could anyone ask for? At that moment I felt truly

Continued on Pg. 7

The First United Methodist Church of Avalon

What I have learned about Christianity (cont.)

blessed. It was perhaps the pinnacle of my life. Yes I knew that it was only by the grace of God that I was not in the pews and was going to return to my good life of plenty in America in a few short days where I was soon to celebrate my 50th year of marriage to the love of my life.

When we returned we immediately went into the controlled chaos of having my entire family of eighteen down to the shore to enjoy the Labor Day weekend. And what joy it was to be surrounded by those that I love so dearly. We are truly blessed to have lived to see our Grandchildren. Unfortunately we had little time to attend church, but I don't get this opportunity very often. Our enjoyment was tempered, however, by the sobering experience that I had just had in Malawi. And perhaps more importantly by the knowledge that Ruth was to undergo painful rotator cuff surgery in a few short days, her third in four years.

We knew that the recovery was going to rough, but we were completely unprepared for the devastating change in Ruth's health following the operation. It has been an extremely stressful time for me and my family, not to mention what Ruth has been going through. But our time of stress has been greatly relieved by the support that we received from our church members. Some brought prepared meals, some sent flowers, some visited, some called and some sent cards. It proves to me that the message of Galatians 6:2 "Bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ" has acted upon by the community of faith that is our church. When a meal is given you are giving more than a meal, you are giving love, the greatest gift that there is. Again I learned what it is to be a Christian.

Now please do not take these next comments as self serving, but rather as one who has gained a new perspective on the meaning of following Christ. All of your actions of the past couple of months have greatly relieved our burden. I know that my new role is that of a care giver and that this role will be a long and arduous one. I have much to learn about this role and I have no problem in fulfilling it. Undoubtedly I will need some support from time to time along the way, but I am not seeking it.

Our time of crisis is past, and we are adjusting to our new situation. What I have come to learn is just how important it is for you, as a church, to reach out to care for those who are suffering. There are many, and their burdens are great. As followers of Christ we need to reach out and to share their burdens. It is the very mission of our church.

I thank all of you for your love and support as it has greatly relieved our burden. I ask that you now dedicate yourselves to the teachings of Christ to love and care for those in need just as you have done for us.

The Greatest Joy Giving!

The First United Methodist Church of Avalon

**Pencil these
dates
on your
calendar:**



Advent Study:

10 am, Monday, Dec. 1st, 15th, & 22nd
10:30 am, Monday, Dec. 8th

Memorial Committee:

Wednesday, Dec. 10th

Christmas Bazaar Set-up:

Monday – Friday, Dec. 1st – 5th,
10 am - 3 pm

Christmas Bazaar:

Saturday, Dec. 6th, 9 am – 3 pm

N-O-W:

Wednesday, Dec. 17th, 7 pm

Work @ AC Asbury Church:

Saturday, Dec. 20th,
depart from Avalon,
work, 11 am

Cantata:

Sunday, Dec. 21st, during service

Pastor's Kids: following service

Sunday, Dec. 21st – Christmas Caroling

Christmas Caroling:

Sunday, December 21st, following
service

Church Office Closed:

week of Dec. 22nd – 26th

Christmas Eve Service:

Wednesday, Dec. 24th, 8 pm

Children's Christmas Program:

Sunday, Dec. 28th, during service

Happy New Year!

Epiphany Sunday:

January 4th

Christian Education:

Sunday, Jan. 11th, after
service

Trustees:

Tuesday, Jan. 20th, 7 pm

Cape Atlantic Resource Day:

2-6 pm, Sunday, Feb. 8th
at St. Peter's UMC, Ocean City

Finance Committee meeting:

Tuesday, Feb. 10th, 7 pm

Celebrate Your Heart Dinner:

Friday, Feb. 13th

Missions meeting:

Tuesday, Feb. 17th, 7 pm

Ash Wednesday: Feb. 25th

Soup & bread dinner, 6 pm
Service, 7 pm

