



March 2011

BERWYN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
INVITING NURTURING AND ENCOURAGING SERVICE

# The Lighted Cross

## Lent and Holy Week Events at BUMC

Lent is a time of reflection, anticipation and wonder. As Christians we know that Lent leads the way to Holy Week – the Last Supper, Christ’s betrayal, the Crucifixion and, miracle of all miracles, His Resurrection. Even though we know the outcome of the story of Christ’s sacrifice, it remains awe inspiring.

Berwyn United Methodist Church will observe these special events:

March 9 – 7:30 p.m., Ash Wednesday Service and the imposition of ashes.

April 17 – 8:30 and 10:30 a.m., Palm/ Passion Sunday worship services.

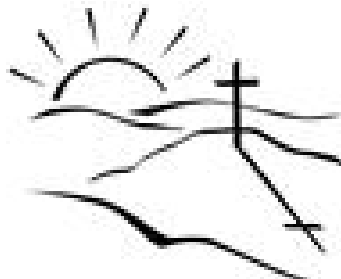
April 21 – Holy Thursday Communion Service and Feet Washing Ceremony.

April 22 – noon to 3 p.m., Good Friday Ecumenical Service at the Church of the Good Samaritan in Paoli. Evening, BUMC Choir’s Good Friday presentation.

April 23 – 9 a.m., Gloria Saturday continental breakfast and Easter egg hunt.

April 24 – 8:30 and 10:30 a.m., the glorious celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday.

At worship services during Lent, there will be special readings. If you would like to participate, contact Kristine or David Adams at 610-889-7520 or [Kristineadamspc@verizon.net](mailto:Kristineadamspc@verizon.net).



## Lenten Lunches

The Lenten Lunch series will be held again, with St. John’s Presbyterian Church joining BUMC and Trinity Presbyterian this year.

Lunch will be served in Schieck Hall at 12:30 p.m. every Wednesday beginning March 16. The theme is from the Lenten Devotional booklet *I Have Heard the Cries of My People – the Exodus for Lent* by Reed Lessing.

The dates and speakers:

March 16 – Rev. Jay Wilkins, pastor of Trinity Presbyterian.

March 23 – Rev. Victor Wilson, pastor of St. John’s Presbyterian.

March 30 – Janet Campbell, lay leader at BUMC.

April 6 – Taylor Kiser, youth director at Trinity Presbyterian.

April 13 – Sum Tang, youth director at St. John’s Presbyterian.

April 20 – Rev. Philip Poncé, pastor of BUMC.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIAN FAITH

# Alpha is coming to Berwyn UMC

**When?** The 10- to 12-week sessions begin in mid-September 2011. The course also includes a weekend away.

**What is Alpha?** Alpha is a biblically based practical introduction to the Christian faith presented in a relaxed atmosphere. Each session begins with an informal meal, followed by a video presentation on a topic about the Christian faith, and ends with an opportunity to discuss the topic with a small group of other individuals in a friendly environment. Participants can make comments, ask questions, or just listen.

**Who should attend Alpha?** Alpha is for anyone. It is designed for the unchurched or new Christians who have little knowledge of the Christian faith or the Bible, but active Christians and church members also find much to learn from it that helps their faith to grow.

**When and where was Alpha started?** Alpha began in the early 1990s at Holy Trinity Brompton Anglican Church in London, England. Since then it has spread to over 31,000 churches worldwide, including 7,900 in the United States, and has reached over eight million people.

**Who else uses Alpha?** Nearby churches that have offered Alpha courses include Church of the Good Samaritan, Great Valley Presbyterian Church, Catholic Church of St. Monica, Church of the Saviour, St. Norbert's Catholic Church, and St. David's Episcopal Church.

**Can I help?** YES! We need song leaders, food preparation workers, audio-visual technicians, group leaders and helpers, and many other workers. For more information, or to volunteer, see any member of the Evangelism and Nurture Committee, or John Paylor, Elaine Parvin, Nancy Atchison, Tom Pierce, Mike Benton or Kristine Adams.

*John Paylor*

## Allocations of the 2010 Fall Festival's earnings

The Administrative Board has approved the Fall Festival Committee's recommended disbursement of the more than \$4,800 raised in the 2010 festival. The allocations are:

- \$1,000 to the Children's Ministry program.
- \$1,000 to the Youth and Young Adults program.
- \$1,000 to the Evangelism and Nurture Committee.
- \$1,000 to the Missions Committee.
- The remainder to buy tables and dividers for use in events in Schieck Hall.

The committee wanted to use the money to benefit our church and community and believes that this distribution will reach many areas of our work. The committee thanks everyone who worked so hard to make the 2010 festival a success.

Remember that this year's festival is SATURDAY, OCT. 8. *We need new chairpersons now.* If you would like to volunteer, contact Janet Campbell, Kate Walker or Brian Walker.

---

**Missions Memo:** Our Peru Fund is replenished thanks to all the bakers and buyers in the congregation who made the Bake Sale on Feb. 13 a success. We earned more than \$450, with \$112 of that amount coming from donations. Our next project is Feed the 5,000, a Lenten food-donation program with United Methodist Neighborhood Services. We will begin collecting groceries March 13. This year we are going to make a few changes to make it easier you to bring in the heavy load. Details will be announced March 6.

## PASTOR'S WORD

# An update on mission efforts in El Salvador

**F**OUR YEARS AWAY from anything can surely make a difference! The last time I visited the Methodist Church of El Salvador was in January 2007. Since then, five more congregations have been added. Three of these new churches, La Providencia, El Shaddai and Coatepeque, are pastored by leaders out of Roca Eterna Church.

Juan de Dios continues to serve as the Volunteers in Mission coordinator and the president of the Conference. The annual conference was scheduled for Feb. 26-27, and at that conference Juan could seek re-election. During the last four years Juan has been instrumental in establishing sister relationships with churches in the Carolinas, Florida and Virginia conferences. He has also been instrumental in establishing cross-cultural awareness training courses for seminarians from Duke Divinity School. Brian, one of the student seminarians from Duke, was so impressed with the work that is being done, that he has committed his life, time and effort to assisting Juan with coordinating VIM, living permanently in Ahuachapan.

The conference has established a thrift shop and an Internet café to help raise funds to support the pastors. Even though some pastoral support is received from the Persons in Mission program of the General Board of Global Ministries, it is still not sufficient to cover the economic needs of the pastors, who each receive \$200 a month. This is also the reason why all of them have other, full-time jobs.

Since 2006, BUMC has had a sister relationship with Roca Eterna. We have supported them by providing scholarships to some of their needy youth and \$1,200 annually to help them in mission and ministry. The mission and ministry areas that we had agreed to help fund were children's ministry, a feeding program, and an adult literacy program. The adult literacy program was attempted for several weeks but due to the lack of interest, it was discontinued. The money we have been sending has therefore been used to expand the children's ministry and the feeding program. I asked if there were any other areas of ministry in which they would like to be engaged, but it was felt by Pastor Jose that these two mission emphases were still the priority – vital and important. The money we send will continue to be used in these areas of ministry.

Roca Eterna, Nuevo Jerusalem and Nueva Vida are the three strongest churches in El Salvador. I am excited about all that has been done at Roca Eterna, and I am confident that God will continue to bless the work of that church.

There has been some success with students we supported through the scholarship money. Several graduated from high school and a few others from university. Three who graduated from university have also gotten jobs, which is a big accomplishment in El Salvador, where unemployment is very high. The three who graduated from university and who have jobs are Jose Miguel, Filadelfo and Emerson.

A fervent request was made that we come again soon to visit with them. As important as the money is to the ongoing ministry and mission of the church, the relational aspect is even more important. It was felt that we needed to reestablish relational contact with the folk at Roca Eterna. To this end, we are invited to come on a mission trip next year. I have taken this request to the BUMC Missions Committee. Stay tuned for more on the possibility of a trip early next year.

Let us continue to keep our brothers and sisters at Roca Eterna and throughout the church in El Salvador in our prayers. Blessings!

*Pastor Phil*

## LAY LEADERS' LETTERS

### Forgiveness and love, words to live by

It all began with a broken candle in the candlestick holder and our grandson Mark, who was about 3 at the time, standing on a chair overlooking “the problem.” “Who broke the candle, Mark?” “Not me!” (The answer every parent and or grandparent knows so well.) “I don’t know who broke it.” Trying to sound wise and informative, I explained to Mark that even though I was sad that the candle was broken, I was really not happy that perhaps he was not telling the truth and maybe he knew who broke the candle. We would love him always and forever, no matter what, but it was very important that he always be honest and not be afraid to come to us. And if he were truly sorry, we would always forgive him.

A few weeks later, there was Mark, once again on a chair, this time overlooking a very not-kid-friendly cookie jar. As he grabbed the fragile lid, I caught it just in time. “Mark, you have to be careful, you might have broken the cookie jar!” “But Grammy, if I broke it and said I was sorry, you would love me always and forever, no matter what!” How do you come back with a response to that? With a hug and a kiss, and by exchanging the cookie jar for a kid-friendly one and refilling the replacement cookie jar with freshly baked cookies. Mark may not remember these stories, but to this day he will tell us, “I know, I know, you will love me always and forever, no matter what.” Wouldn’t it be wonderful if all of our problems were as easy to solve with just a hug, a kiss and freshly baked cookies?

Our faith is based on words so familiar to all of us. “To forgive” and “to love” are words that are a part of my life and an important part of my vocabulary. These are words that are always close to my heart and in my thoughts and in my actions. A kind word, a touch of a hand, reaching out to someone who needs guidance or comfort. They are a part of the person that I hope I am perceived to be.

“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son”; “God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins.”

Forgiveness and love. Love and forgiveness. Are these words a part of your life?

*Janet Campbell*

### The Conference laity retreat, an inspirational event

On Feb. 11-12, I joined 83 other laymen and laywomen at the first-ever Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Laity Retreat. We enjoyed great fellowship and meaningful worship at the beautiful facilities of the National Christian Conference Center on Valley Forge Road, and heard inspiring presentations by our retreat leaders, the Rev. Dr. Sandra Steiner-Ball, director of connectional ministries of the Peninsula-Delaware District, and the Rev. Sunil Balasundaram, a native of India who is now pastor of Trinity UMC in Lickdale, Pa.

Dr. Steiner-Ball pointed out the difference between change and transition. Transition begins with an ending: There cannot be a resurrection without a dying. While we must care for ourselves in a time of transition, we must remember that it’s not about us. We care for ourselves best and care for others too when we are the answer to another’s prayer. We must be God-centered, not self-centered.

She made me realize that we cannot reach our goal to increase our church membership by 10% if we are doing it to fill our pews. We must be aware of the needs of others and meet them. There are many hurting people in our community. We must make our goal be to find them and satisfy their needs – to provide healing for their hurts – if we are to be successful as a church.

Rev. Balasundaram reminded us that we cannot have discipleship without others. It is not enough to be faithful, we must be fruitful as well. He demonstrated graphically that each of us, like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle, becomes part of a picture greater than any of us alone when we come together.

Dr. Mary White, conference lay leader, who was responsible for dreaming up, planning and organizing the entire event, was so pleased that she is now calling this the First Annual Laity Retreat.

*John Paylor*

# Youth Outreach and Motivation Events

## Saturday, April 9

Youth Coordinator Chris Padot and the Berwyn United Methodist Church youth fellowship, Anthem, are planning an exciting day of music and motivational speakers on Saturday, April 9. There are two big events. First there is an information session for BUMC youth, their parents and friends. It is followed by a community outreach event of music and motivational speakers.

### “How Young Leaders Can Get Into Great Colleges”

Dr. Clinton Ohlers

- What can middle/high school students do NOW to increase their chances of getting into a better college?
- What should these students know about trying to pick a career?
- How can I be a leader in high school and college?

**Saturday, April 9, 4:30-6:00 p.m., in Schieck Hall**  
**FREE ADMISSION, FREE PIZZA**



**Dr. Clinton Ohlers** received his Ph.D. and M.A. degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, after earning his M.Div. degree.

# Connekt

*A community youth concert, open to the public, featuring:*

## the Shackeltons



**Nationally Known Rock Band:  
The Shackeltons**



**Philadelphia Area Rock Band:  
Zorro Gato**



**Speaker:  
Chris Padot**



**Emcee:  
Dr. Rebecca  
Blacksmith**

**Saturday, April 9, 7:00-10:00 p.m., in Schieck Hall**  
**Tickets: \$5**

# After 8 years, Memorial Garden to be a reality

After eight years in the works, the Memorial Garden Columbarium will finally become a reality this spring.

The idea of a memorial garden grew after the funeral of a BUMC member whose ashes were being inurned at another church. She had been a long-time active member at BUMC, and we felt that it was sad that her remains went to another church.

An ad hoc committee of the Administrative Board was formed to investigate. We researched columbarium facilities in 20 area churches, contacted six companies who build columbaria, and met with four landscape architects. We also met with representatives from three churches that had recently installed facilities.

We searched our property for just the right location. Our criteria were handicapped accessibility, low maintenance, and convenience of access for funeral services. The site chosen was at the north side of the sanctuary next to the entrance driveway.

After meeting with representatives from five companies that build and design columbaria, we selected Ross Acchione and Karen Berka, who designed and built the wall at St. Luke Lutheran Church in Devon. We gained approvals from the Administrative Board and the Cabinet of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

The project was designed to be self-supporting, so construction could not begin until the money for Phase One was obtained. The initial construction will contain 45 niches (up to two people can be inurned in one niche). The second phase, to be added when needed, will contain 78 niches. Drawings of the project are in the Narthex.

The cost for members or former members is \$2,500 for a single niche and \$500 for the second person. Costs for non-members, with approval of the Memorial Garden Committee, are \$3,000 for a single niche and \$500 for the second person. There is a one-time \$350 cost per person fee at the time of death to cover the cost of engraving the granite face plate and to provide for the continuing maintenance of the facility.

The fee for the scattering garden, which includes the name on a plaque on the wall, is \$750 per person.

Refer to the Memorial Garden brochure (available in the Narthex or from the church office) for details, or contact members of the Memorial Garden Committee: Nancy Atchison, Sally Robie or Judy Fisk.

As soon as the project is complete, inurnment can take place for three deceased members – Stafford Walker, Bill Robie, and Bob Atchison.

---

## Annual conference is May 19-21 at Oaks

The annual conference of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church will be held May 19-21 at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center at Oaks. The Rev. Rudy Rasmus, co-pastor of St. John's UMC in downtown Houston, will lead three 75-minute teaching sessions on the conference theme, "Journeying With the Poor."



# The official church calendar is on our website

We are using an electronic calendar to manage church events. If you or your committee is planning an event – especially if it requires using church facilities – you should immediately send a date request to [officebumc@comcast.net](mailto:officebumc@comcast.net).

Administrative assistant Veronica Mosley updates the calendar twice a week. That means that you should be able to check the calendar within a few days to verify that your event has been scheduled.

The calendar is available online in read-only mode. There are two ways to access the calendar. You could browse to [http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=officebumc%40comcast.net&ctz=America/New\\_York](http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=officebumc%40comcast.net&ctz=America/New_York) Or you could enter the church website, [berwynumc.org](http://berwynumc.org), click on “Resources” and then on “Calendar.” Either way, once you have found the calendar, it is a good idea to bookmark the Internet location.

Diligently using the calendar can help us avoid conflicts in scheduling events. If you see an error on the calendar, please report it in an e-mail to [officebumc@comcast.net](mailto:officebumc@comcast.net). The electronic calendar is our *official* calendar. We want it to be right, and we need your help in making it so.

---

## About the tardy deliveries of the February issue

The goal of those of us who produce The Lighted Cross is to have each issue in your mailbox by the first of the month. Usually this goal is easily achieved. We print and mail the copies about a week in advance, and the postal service takes it from there.

Regrettably, the system didn't work for the February issue. The issue was printed in the church office on Jan. 24, and the volunteer mailing crew processed the copies on Jan. 25. In part because of the snowy and icy weather, the actual mailing did not take place until Jan. 28.

Based on our experience, the postal service still should have had the newsletter in everyone's mailbox by the end of the first week of February. However, in an informal survey taken at the Administrative Board meeting on Feb. 8, 11 days after the mailing, no one had received a copy. At least one person present at the meeting reported receiving a copy the next day. The editor of The Lighted Cross did not get his copy until Feb. 16.

Please remember that you can enter [berwynumc.org](http://berwynumc.org) on your computer and read the newsletter online well in advance of the first. Mike Benton usually posts the issue on the same day it is mailed.

---

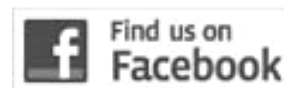
**“Leading Beyond the Walls”:** You are invited to attend a workshop at Paoli UMC, 81 Devon Road, Paoli, on March 11-12. The Friday session is from 6:30 to 9 p.m., and the Saturday session is from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Debi Nixon, managing executive director of regional campuses and catalyst of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kan., will lead a workshop on “Developing Congregations With a Heart for the Unchurched.” The workshop cost is \$25, which includes a Friday evening snack, and breakfast and lunch on Saturday. Contact: Judy Fisk, John Paylor or Pastor Phil.

---

## *The Lighted Cross*

**Next deadline: March 18**

*The Lighted Cross* is published monthly (except in July and August) to spread the good news about the activities of Berwyn United Methodist Church. Chairs and members of committees are invited to submit articles to inform the congregation about events and the work of the church. Individuals are invited to submit cards of thanks and brief items of interest about congregation members. Your submissions may have to be edited for length. The next issue is scheduled to be delivered by postal mail by April 1, and an electronic version will be available earlier on the church website. Submit your items to [gene.foreman@verizon.net](mailto:gene.foreman@verizon.net) or use the mailbox in the church office.



Church Phone:  
**610-644-5555**

Office E-mail:  
**officebumc@comcast.net**

Church Website:  
**berwynumc.org**

Office Hours:  
**Mon-Fri, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.**

# Invite a friend to worship with you April 17

“As a friend, I am inviting you to attend Berwyn Methodist Church on April 17.”

Is that an appealing intro to all that is happening at our church in April? Perhaps an invitation does not convey the experience itself. Indeed, it is only a start, but a start nonetheless.

Although we have designated April 17 as “Invite a Friend Sunday,” the entire month of April offers many activities and services that would appeal to the thousands of people just waiting to be invited to BUMC.

Classically, if you don’t ask, you don’t get. We encourage you to ask a friend and allow the outcome of that request to be in the hands of the Lord.

Can we all make a spiritual commitment to invite at least one friend to experience the incredible community asset that we have available? Go ahead; it won’t hurt.

*Evangelism and Nurture Committee*

---



## Vacation Bible School planning is under way

Planning has begun for a Vacation Bible School this summer.

The dates have not yet been determined for the sessions, which will be conducted on five consecutive afternoons.

The theme of this year’s VBS is “Shake It Up: Where Kids Carry Out God’s Recipe.”

---

## Bring clothing donations to church for Second Mile

Members of the BUMC family are invited to leave donations of clothing under the coat racks in the hallway inside the north entrance. Periodically, the Second Mile Center (“Recycling Things to Redeem People”) comes to the church to collect the donations.

The nonprofit Second Mile Center runs a large thrift store at 210-218 South 45<sup>th</sup> Street in Philadelphia. The center’s job-training program seeks to help “those marginalized by society, struggling to recover from addictions, abuse or crime. For more information: [secondmilecenter.com](http://secondmilecenter.com).

---

## District superintendent to be guest preacher March 20

The Rev. Dr. Gary George, superintendent of the Central District, will be our guest preacher at both services on March 20. Dr. George superintends 75 churches, of which BUMC is one. The district superintendent is an extension of the Bishop’s Office and shares in the Bishop’s Cabinet and in the appointment process.

# Having friends at church = Happiness

“Happiness is having friends at church,” *USA Today* reported in a headline in its Dec. 7 issue. The article by Michelle Healy said a scholarly study had found that attending services regularly and having close friends in the congregation are a key to having a happier, more satisfying life. “Even attending services irregularly – just several times a year – increases a sense of well-being, so long as there is a circle of friendships within the community and a strong, shared religious identity,” the article continued.

The *USA Today* report was based on a study published in the December issue of the *American Sociological Review*. Chaeyoon Lim, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and lead author of the study, said that when people with similar levels of church attendance are compared, the key factors determining happiness are the social aspect of religion and a shared religious connection built around identity and belonging. Lim said that “90% of the correlation between church attendance and life satisfaction can be explained if you have these close interactions.”

According to the study, 33% of people who attend religious services every week and have three to five close friends in their congregation report being “extremely satisfied” with their lives.

The *USA Today* article noted that the importance of congregational connectedness to life satisfaction is in line with research conducted by Nancy Ammerman, professor of sociology of religion at Boston University. Ammerman said: “There’s a high trust level in congregations. The ability to call on people for social support is very high, even if the people are not necessarily the people you’d call your best friends.”

---

## WHAT’S GOING ON AT BERWYN UNITED METHODIST

**Prayer Shawl Ministry:** “A friend from BUMC sent a shawl you had knitted to my 19-year-old daughter. She is having a lot of difficulty with life at this time. She is in a program in Idaho to help her deal with her depression and continue with her school work. ... Thank you for all the effort you put into such a wonderful gift.” This is from a note recently received by the Prayer Shawl Ministry. Prayer shawls are available for celebrations or difficult times. Call Pat White, 610-644-8786, or Ann West, 610-687-0222.

**Shared Bible Study Class:** On March 13, the class will resume the study theme “Hallelujah,” this time focusing on the Lenten part of Handel’s Messiah, as we prepare our hearts for the Easter season.

**Children’s Ministry:** On Sunday, Feb. 20, the children gathered in their pajamas to share a wonderful hour of reading. We enjoyed a light breakfast of doughnuts, juice and hot chocolate, and snuggled on cushions and pillows to read with each other. The “read-in” was inspired by our participation in Heifer International’s “Read to Feed” program. This reading incentive program inspires children to read and raise money for Heifer International all at the same time.

**Good Friday Choir Rehearsals:** The rehearsals are from 7 to 8 p.m. Thursdays. Anyone is welcome to come and sing this beautiful and moving service based on the seven last words of Christ. The music is a compilation of anthems for flute, cello, organ and choir. We welcome back Elizabeth Mendoza playing cello, and we are delighted that Kathy Murphy will join us to play flute.

**Mystery Bus Trip:** On Saturday, April 30, the Adult Council is sponsoring a mystery bus trip. The travelers depart the church at 8 a.m. and return no later than 8 p.m. The trip is open to the whole congregation. The cost will be about \$80 and will include the bus transportation and lunch. The destination is secret, but Rick Stoker says it is within three hours of Berwyn and some walking will be required.

**Nursery School:** The children were delighted that the Groundhog predicted an early spring – they are eager to play outside again. Over the winter, we thank goodness for Schieck Hall. Cathy Mauro, a parent at BUMNS and a local dentist, came to school to teach the children about dental health. The 5-Day children traveled to the Great Valley Nature Center for maple sugaring. Thank you to Janet Campbell for inspiring messages at the 5-Day chapel time.

**Boy Scout Troop 181:** In March, our troop will participate in the First Aid Meet organized by the Chester County Council. Competing against other troops, the Scouts will respond to real-life situations with Cub Scout “victims.”

## REINTRODUCING THE PASTOR

# The Rev. Philip Poncé, 35 years in the ministry

At a recent meeting of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee, it was thought that it would be a great idea to have each staff member reintroduce himself or herself to the congregation, since for many of us quite some time has elapsed since we joined the BUMC staff. I was asked to be first.

I am the first of the five children born to Mary and Lindy Poncé. I was born on a 21-square-mile island called Utila, 12 miles off the northern coast of Honduras.

My primary and secondary education was received on the island. When I became a candidate for the ministry, I was sent to Belize to teach English at one of the Methodist schools there, so as to “perfect” my English. I did my college and seminary work at the University of the West Indies and the United Theological Seminary of the West Indies at Mona in Jamaica. I also did graduate work at the University of London in England and at the Lutheran Seminary of Philadelphia.

I married Zoe Anne Wahrmann 36 years ago in Jamaica. We have three children: Zoe, Phil O and Karis.

I became a probationary member of the Conference of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas in May 1973, and I was ordained at Coke Memorial Church in Kingston, Jamaica, in May 1976. For the first 15 years of my ministry I served churches in Jamaica, Trinidad and St. Vincent, and I superintended the Methodist work in Grenada.

In 1988 I relocated to the Annual Conference of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, serving initially at First UMC in Lansdale and then at Perkasio UMC. In 1999 Bishop Peter Weaver appointed me district superintendent of the Jacob Albright/Central Districts. In 2005, I was appointed to BUMC.

When United Methodist ministers are ordained, they are ordained to Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. Among my primary functions are preaching and teaching the Word of God and administering the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. In ordering the life and work of the church, I am “the administrative officer of the church” and I am to assure that “the organizational concerns are adequately provided for, and I am to administer the temporal affairs of the church, providing leadership in the fulfillment of Christ’s ministry here on earth.” Under Service I am “to embody the teachings of Jesus in servant ministries and servant leadership, giving diligent pastoral leadership to the congregation for discipleship in the world, and to build the body of Christ as a caring and giving community extending ministry to the world.” (The quotations are from the 2008 UMC Book of Discipline.)

I have had passion and excitement for ministry over the many years that I have served God through service in the many local churches I have pastored. Preaching and leading worship fires me up, for God has a mysterious way of using these means to transform, strengthen and bless us. I have taken the spiritual growth of members as a serious undertaking. The ministry of the laity and equipping them for ministry have been a hallmark of the ministry I have tried to offer to Christ and his church. Reaching out to others locally, nationally and internationally has been one of the delights of my heart. I feel that evangelism is the lifeblood of the church, and I see evangelism as E. Stanley Jones saw it: “As one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.”

I also delight in working at a church that is ordered well. I therefore spend much time in church administration. I attend all the meetings and am the person who uses “the gift of memory” – remembering the various decisions that were made. I embrace and am fully committed to the vision for this church articulated in the Ministry Action Plan adopted by the Administrative Board.

Ministry excites me and is a source of great joy and satisfaction. Someone asked me recently what would I do if I had my life to live over. She was somewhat surprised when I said that I would still be a UM pastor. My journey as a pastor has been challenging and at times stretching. More than once I stood amazed as God worked in the lives of others through the ministry I offered and continue to offer. Please pray for me that God would strengthen me on my onward journey.

*Pastor Phil*