



JANUARY
2015

Sunday Services
10:00 a.m.

Adult Sunday School
9:00am

Sunday School
PK-12
10:30am

Choir Practice
Sundays 12pm
Thursdays 7pm

Weekly Activities

Ladies Bible Study
Tuesdays noon-2pm

Small Group
@ the Rivera's
Tuesday 7pm

Men's Breakfast
Wednesday 7am

Women's Study
Wednesday 7pm

Prayer Service
Thursday 7pm

Second Union Church
Ave. Apolo esq. Mileto
Guaynabo, PR 00969
787-720-4423
secondunion.org

Rev. Robert Zoba

Gustavo Gonzalez
Youth Leader

Enough is Enough

Even before the recent attack on the French journalists in Paris, a Christian by the name of Brother Rachid addressed President Obama on YouTube. It had over 500,000 viewers. He said:

"Dear Mr. President,

I must tell you that you are wrong about ISIL. You said ISIL speaks for no religion. I am a former Muslim. My dad is an imam. I have spent more than 20 years studying Islam . . . I can tell you with confidence that ISIL speaks for Islam. . . . ISIL's 10,000 members are all Muslim. They come from different countries and have one common denominator: Islam. They are following Islam's Prophet Muhammad in every detail. They have called for a caliphate, which is a central doctrine in Sunni Islam.

He continued: "I ask you, Mr. President, to stop being politically correct and call things by their names. ISIL, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al Shabab in Somalia, the Taliban, and their sister brand names, are all made in Islam. Unless the Muslim world deals with Islam and separates religion from state, we will never end this cycle."

I find this to be a fascinating statement as it opposes the politically correct notion that recent terrorist acts do not truly represent the religion of Islam (even when said terrorists kill 12 people and shout out that they are doing it in the name of Allah).

That said, let me note that it is true that many Muslims are peace-loving people. It is equally true that many who have come to the US came here for many of the same reasons my grandparents came here. They come to live a better life, provide for their children, help them get an education, and build a better future.

Likewise, when wacko "Christians" muster protests of hate at people's funerals, or blow up abortion clinics in the name of the sanctity of human life, or prance around in white hoods spewing racist rants, the rest of us Christians want to lambast these hypocrites for the imposters that they are. However, the situation with Islam is vastly different in that more often than not, we are not simply talking about a radical fringe who spout hate and commit terrorist acts in the name of Allah. Instead, we are talking about what would be considered mainstream Islam in whole swaths of countries in the Middle East. This is certainly true in much of Iran, parts of Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan, and now parts of Nigeria. So too, Saudi Arabia, a supposedly moderate state and friend of the US, maintains its elitist rule of super-rich princes by promoting, funding, and perpetrating the radically fundamentalist, madrassa schools which teach kids to hate Jews, Christians and other "infidels" from the earliest age.



Pastor Bob Zoba

So too, as Brother Rachid observes, Islam has no concept of separation of Church and State. That is why they want to form a new caliphate, which is just an ancient word for an Islamic state. Indeed, the Muslims of France do not need to use bombs or AK-47s to take over France. They have another strategy. It's called the population bomb. Once they amass a majority, they will simply vote in Sharia Law and establish a new caliphate.

Likewise, do not presume that if we allow Muslims to build mosques here in the West (which they have every right to do under the Constitution) that they, in turn, will allow us to build churches in their home countries. In fact, Christians are presently being butchered, harassed, and run out of the Middle East by the thousands.

Consequently, we as Christians need to stop being so naive about the world as it is. Likewise, it is time that we in the West say to the Muslim world that if you want to enjoy the benefits of a global economy and be treated as an equal in the global community, then you need to start guaranteeing the basic religious rights of all believers, including Muslims. And if those countries do not guarantee these basic human rights, then we should deny them the benefits of global trade or membership in international bodies. Admittedly, there was a time when this would be unthinkable since the Arab World had us literally over a barrel, that is a barrel of oil. But the geopolitical dynamic is changing before our very eyes. With the price of oil dropping to under \$50 per barrel, some of the most reprehensible governments in the world are now imploding since oil is about the only thing they produce, besides hate. Therefore, what better time to leverage this new geo-political reality and demand that people everywhere have the freedom of religion, the freedom of speech, and the freedom of assembly. If people were guaranteed the right to speak God's word, assemble in His name for worship, and share His message of forgiveness rather than the vengeance of Islam, then we might see a real change in that part of the world that seems fixated in the dark ages.

In the words of John Lennon, "you may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one".

Let's pray together for that day!

Blessings!

Pastor Bob

2014-2015 Second Union Church Council & Staff

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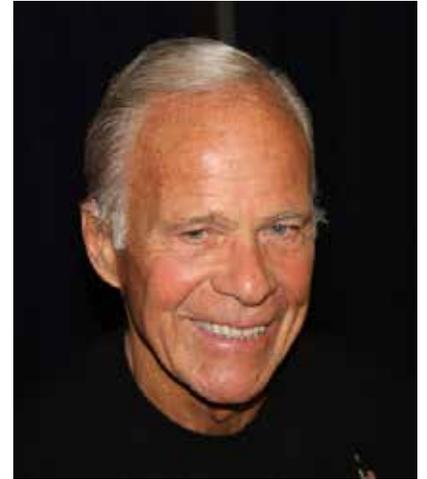
Minister of Music
Luis Manuel Tirado

Youth Leader
Gustavo Gonzalez

Newsletter & Website Editor
Christie Zoba

Bill Stowell passed away on January 1, 2015 and we all lost a dear brother in Christ. At the funeral service each of his four children, Christina Michelle, Billy, Nicole and Giselle spoke poignantly about their father as did their mother, Lourdes and Pastor Bob. There were so many in our church family who would have loved to say a few words about Bill, but time did not allow to have an open microphone, so here are some testimonies to the impact Bill had on our lives:

As I reflect on Bill's life among us, the first thought that comes to mind is from Bible study. Being the great joker that he was, Bill would walk in late on Sunday mornings and ask me to start over again because he had just walked in! After spending a little more time with us, he became more serious and more interested in the study of the Word. We all knew that he was an encourager. More personally, I will always remember how Bill used to tell my husband, after we had ended a Bible study: "Kelley, you married up"! That always meant that I had done a good job. Also: Bill spoke during Kelley's memorial service. And he used words to describe my husband that only a sensitive heart could have seen. It showed me that he was a caring person. I am so grateful that he loved the Lord and that he was part of our lives. Until we meet again, Bill. Thank you, **Lizzette Kelley**



Bill Stowell... wow... hard act to follow! When I think of Bill I do first remember that he always came in with a smile and, and with a joyful spirit that shined out on all! He truly touched all of our lives, as evidenced by all the beautiful testimonies being put forth by all. It was very wise to have limited it to the wife of 24 years and to the children, at the memorial service, because otherwise we REALLY would have all been there a very loooooong time if it was opened up to the floor! It was truly a blessing to hear them, sharing the Bill that they knew and loved and with whom they had spent much more time than any of us, as Husband & Father. Beautiful... nothing less... And I could only sit there and nod in agreement, thinking: Yes, that would be the Bill that we all came to know also... He ran His race, and he won the prize, for sure, as he crossed over into the very presence of God.. And, in so doing, he left behind a powerful scent of the fruit of the Spirit that was within him, touching us all, as listed in Galatians 5:22-23: "... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. ..." All of which shined through, in the life of Bill Stowell! Thank You Bill, for showing us the way! And Praise the Lord, since, by the Grace of God, one day we will be reunited again, in that place prepared for us, by Jesus himself!!! **Stan Pinkerton**

It's hard to summarize Bill in just a few words. At Men's Ministry breakfast we exchange prayer requests. Each time, by chance, we drew each other's requests. My prayer has been for my kids to go to church and he never failed to check in on me to see if there has been progress. I'm going to miss his stories at Wednesday breakfast as well. Always well-told and filled with interesting characters. I'll miss too the talks we had on those times he rode with me to Heart-to-Heart. A great guy who will be greatly missed. **John Alberts**

I just knew Bill for a short time (about 7 months) but he was so authentic that I felt that I knew him longer. One thing I remember is how humble he was, it didn't matter all the life experience he had, if he had a question about one of my children message he would ask. He really wanted to know and understand God and his word, it didn't matter the simplicity in which it was presented. I'm sure glad he knew Jesus Christ; because that is one dude I want to meet again. **Gustavo Gonzalez, Youth Leader**



Above & beyond the men's fellowship breakfast, I suggested I transport him to & fro, what was a pleasureable as well as a learning experiance for me. Bill would often ask me, "where or how do you come up with all those Bible verses?" My daughter Katherin & Eric her husband knew about Wm Stowell alias Bill because Eric was also a proud MARINE. I'll never forget my Bro Wm Stowell alias Bill & his beautiful children. **John Doncel**

Whenever you approached Bill Stowell, as he struggled with his walker, he would stop, and reward you with his beautiful smile, and make a comment that would make you wish YOU had a walker so that you could continue to bask in the beauty of his words, and his joy. **Sylvia O'Connor**

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Bill used to sit at the right side of the sanctuary. Each time I had the honor to sing at church he would smile at me during the performance and after the service he would invariably encourage me with kind words. It was hard to sing at his memorial: He was not there to smile at me. I'll miss his elegant poise, his optimism. His passing took me by surprise. I'm sad that I didn't get to say my last goodbye, give Bill a last hug. Bill was truly a man of faith. I'm convinced he will keep praying for us, his Church family, while his smile will brighten my heart forever. **Madelyn Vega**

Encourager – that is the word that I will always associate with Bill Stowell. Over the years that I've know Bill, I can honestly say, aside from my husband and my family, there is no one who has been a greater source of encouragement to me than he. He seemed to take note of everything I did and found a way to let me know how much he appreciated it. But in all the ways he sought to encourage me and others, none was more significant than prayer. He attended each and every Thursday evening prayer meeting and would pray for me and my family and for so many others by name. I wish those of you who do not attend the prayer service could have heard him pray for you. He attended each and every activity that we held at church – Sunday services, Sunday Bible study, Tuesday evening Bible Study, Men's Breakfast, Thursday Prayer Group and whenever we had a concert, a movie, or any other type of event, Bill was there. He also frequently prayed for the salvation of others – and of course he prayed for his daughters, Lourdes and Elena - how he loved them. He had a wonderful sense of humor – so many stories and he was always sending emails and giving us gifts. Bob and I even received a plaque from the President of the United States (aka Bill Stowell!!) It was Bill's way of letting us know that we mattered, and that he loved us. We certainly love him and will miss him until we meet again. **Christie Zoba**



I knew Bill from the 1980's when he was still married to Lourdes. A few months ago I bought some fresh blueberries and the next day, I decided to take a chance and make some blueberry pankakes for myself as a culinary experiment. I took some photos of my creation and showed it to Pastor Bob and Bill. Bill commented to me that he would like to try those pankakes, so I told him that the next time I was in charge of preparing the food for Men's Breakfast I would try to make these pankakes. When my turn came, I bought a box of blueberries and made about 40 pankakes for all the men. After the breakfast, Bill told me that the pankakes were so good, he had second servings. He told me that this was the only time he had served himself twice at Men's Breakfast....I was very proud of my accomplishment and happy that Bill had liked it so much.....I will always remember that morning and from now on whenever I prepare them, I will call them 'Bill's Pankakes' in honor of him.....
Dennis Gonzalez

Wow, Bill surely was a man who wore many hats and thus impacted each one of us within our own particularities. I would have many things to say about Bill, but I will focus on his time with our Tuesdays Bible studies. Bill never missed any of them and if for any reason we did not meet, Bill always let me know he disagreed. For Bill this study and fellowship time was really important. As he did in every opportunity of prayer elsewhere, Bill prayed for our group by name and by particular needs. His memory was great. We all had wonderful study conversations and it was great to have Bill speak up, for he brought his life experiences into the verse and made it relative to actual events. I loved Bill's sense of being "guapo". He always dressed well, his hair well set and looked up to the day he would be walking tall again. Don't know if he felt he was going home to the Lord soon, but as I supported him up the steps of our home from his car every Tuesday night, Bill always sang a verse from an old gospel song "I'm stepping on a stairway to heaven...". And yes, there he is, in heaven with the Lord. Bill has won the race. Our bible study will never be the same but I know that we will always be encouraged from having Bill amongst us. Thank you Lord for Bill's time with us, Amen. **Luis Alberto Rivera**

We will surely miss his presence at church and bible studies. He always put a smile on everyone. He will truly be missed but we know he is blessed beyond measure to be in the presence of our mighty and loving God..
Dalia Gonzalez

A mighty prayer warrior and faithful friend. Heaven welcomes another son home from the battle. Thank you Bill for standing shoulder to shoulder with us. **Anita Rodriguez**

Even though we only knew Bill for the last year, there wasn't a Sunday when he didn't say hello and we'd chat or a Heart-to-Heart when he didn't make me laugh. We feel blessed to have met such a wonderful man. **Kris & Tim Adams**

Bill for me will always be the image of Encouragement and of God's Grace. During my time in assisting with the leading of the worship music, after the service was over, Bill would come to me and say, "You are so lucky, being able to sing with those good looking girls, your daughter and Isabel". "What did it cost you to get that gig?" Then he would say, you missed a couple of notes, but overall you did a good job. I am recommending they keep bringing you back. What a character! Even in the few times that I was asked to preach in Pastor Bob's absence, he made sure to come up to me with a word of encouragement. He said, "Your sermon won't get us into heaven, but it moved me closer to God". What a Character! **Joe Ramos**



I'm so thankful that I met Bill. I will miss his jokes, laugh and our talkings about Layka. I wonder how is she doing now! He always prayed for my mother and for me also. I will remember him seating next to me at the Bible study at Luis Alberto and Lorraine's home. Nobody else was allowed to sit next to him. jajaja What a privilege!! I will always miss him so much in OSJ feeding the homeless. Love him so much!!! **Janette Quiles**

Talk about "six degrees of separation", that's what I found existed between Bill and me. We all know what a proud father Bill was and how he beamed when his daughters accompanied him to church. Not until the Memorial Service that Bill had for his mother did I know who his beloved wife Lourdes was and who his wonderful mother-in-law Elena was. Lourdes was the daughter of my former boss and Doña Elena his wife. Later in life Lourdes became a colleague of mine when she became part of the faculty at Antilles High School where I taught for 25 years. Lourdes told me at Bill's Memorial that I had been part of their family for many years, a mere 45 years! I only wished I had gotten to know Bill sooner. I missed out on a lot of his humor, but the times we shared at church and church related activities were always memorable and always a blast! Thanks for the prayers Bill, and rest in peace. **Brenda J. Ferrer**

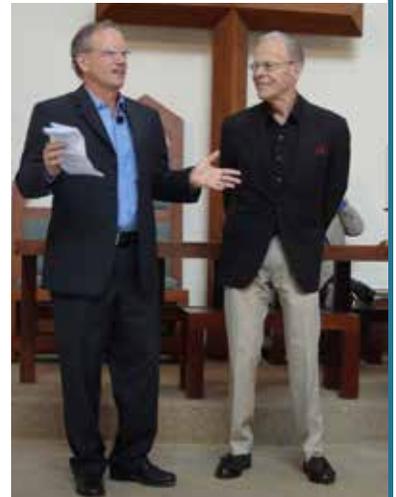
Bill was an amazing guy. Always making people laugh. There was never a dull moment if Bill was around. We will truly miss him but know he is now with our Lord rejoicing in his presence. **Jan Gonzalez**

Our brother, Bill, is absent from the body and present with the Lord. I will certainly miss his loving smile, wonderful sense of humor and his cell phone going off during Sunday service. Prayers for peace and comfort go out to his family. **Elsy Perez**

May God's awesome Peace be with his family especially his children!! I will always remember his sweet smile and humor!! Rest in Peace! **Edith Perez**

What sad news! Praying for his family and all of you. We will miss him so much... **Becky & Christopher O'Meara**

Bill was a class act. He was a one-in-a-million, old school, larger-than-life kind of guy who became one of my dearest friends. He knew more people in more places than just about anybody I ever met. He knew Lawrence Rockefeller, Mrs. Livingston of Dorado, Nick Bollettieri, and Eva Gardner, to name a few. So too, Bill was in Puerto Rico in the go-go years of the 60s when it was like the Wild West and the Gold Rush all at once. I always say that the Rum Diaries movie missed a great opportunity. If they had simply taken the lives of people like Bill Stowell, John Franciscus, and Chuck Hitt and put them into that movie it would have won an Oscar. At Second Union Church we like to say that we are like that TV network who's tag line is: Character's Welcomed! That is Second Union and that is Bill Stowell: the biggest character of all. But, here's the kicker: he was a redeemed character. All of those stories, all of that experience and wisdom and fun were redeemed and transformed through Bill's very real relationship with Jesus which made him into one the most beloved members of Second Union ever. I will miss Bill with tears of sadness & joy ever time I go to Thursday night prayer, attend Men's Breakfast, or look out at the bench by the window. Bill lives on in heaven with the Lord, and Bill will always live on in our hearts here on earth. **Pastor Bob**

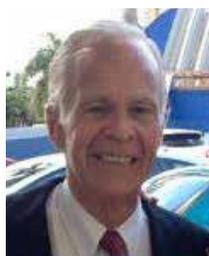


Elsy Perez wrties: We went to Miami for 10 days to spend New Year's there! We also visited Naples and Ft. Meyers.

David and Laurie Yost will soon be relocating back to their home in Arizona where David will be working with an Indian tribe on a remote Indian Reservation ;-(However, David will still be making trips to PR for short-term assignments so we hope to see both of them in the year ahead.

Gil & Marlene had the pleasure of spending Christmas with their son and daughter here in PR.

2UC made a sad farewell to our good brother **Bill Stowell**. It was amazing how many lives Bill touched as he was so faithful in prayer, in study of the Word, and in service to others. We will miss him greatly.



Brian Tester gave a dramatic soliloquy at our recent Christmas Eve Service and Isabel Fernandez sang a beautiful solo. Madelyn Vega and Edwin Perez led the congregation in some lively parranda songs.

The **Strong brothers** have been an invaluable help to Christie Zoba in securing and transporting the heavy donations of food from the Food Bank. (Thanks to all who generously donated as well!)

Fabio Silva de Jesus was back this holiday and introduced us to his fiancée Congrats Fabio!

Edwin Perez and Puerto Rico Supplies made a generous donation of over 50 Christmas bags for the Mariner's Ministry. Christopher got to be the Father Christmas of the docks.



Dell & Lynn McCarley had a wonderful family Christmas back in the great state of Arkansas.

Carlos & Debbie Garcia are settling into Houston as Debbie just got a great, new job.

George and Joan McMurray had a wonderful visit from daughter Patty and her family.

Gabriel Roman, the son of **David & Eva** (and grandson of **Sylvia**) recently earned his PhD in Chemistry at the University of Michigan by defending his thesis. Congrats to all. We know have a doctor in the house of David!!!



Cadiz Rodriguez finished her first semester in college with all A's and recently passed her driving test here in PR. (That girl is on a roll!)

Our **Christmas Cantata** had a record-breaking choir of 54 voices. God is good!

Kim Parker paid a visit to 2UC as she is on home leave from Harbin, China where the average temperature these days is below zero.

Pastor Bob & Christie are planning a missions trip to China in May to teach in a Chinese university with Young Life International?

Don & Joanne Marx report that their mission to Afghanistan is now over and they will be focusing on other areas of work. We thank God for keeping them safe in a very dangerous land and for accomplishing so much for the people of that country.

Noah Martinez was the designated "baby Jesus" in this year's mini-Christmas pageant and he did any amazing job of spreading the joy of the season with his sweet smile. (**James and Coralie** were proud parents to be sure.)



Ed and Irma Candia have welcomed their first grandbaby into the world! Daughter Sarah (& Gabo) Larin had their beautiful baby boy, Daniel, in June. Congrats!

Mike & Irma LaLlave have been visiting thier daughter in Florida while John & Evelyn Albert have been visiting kids and grandkids in Connecticut and Illinois.

Jeff & Rachel Blacker spent some time back in Indiana with kids and family.

Gustavo Gonzalez, our youth leader, has filled in for Pastor Bob in the pulpit with great success. We are blessed to have Gustavo and his wonderful family as a part of our church family.



Manny Fernandez spent the holiday visiting his mom in Jacksonville, FL.

Harry Delacruz is happy to announce that he has secured a new job with a publishing company that produces medical textbooks.

Joanne and Milton Matos write: **Rosabella** successfully completed her first semester at Parkville School which concluded with a fun Holiday Spectacular. Rosabella was a snowflake. Milton, Joanne & Rosabella celebrated New Year's Eve + 3 days with Joanne's Parents and the entire Matos Family (19 in total) at Las Casitas in the El Conquistador Resort.



Milton will begin teaching as a professor at the UPR Orthodontics Program this month following his father's (Dr. Milton Luis Matos Maldonado) footsteps who has been a professor at the UPR Orthodontics Program for over ten years.

Rose de Jesus is back from her travels up north. Welcome home Rose.

Jane Burgess's mother recently passed her first driver's test at the age of 100. Wow!

Felix & Lisa Del Toro had their little princess, **Elena Isabel**, baptized the first Sunday of the New Year.



Football coach, **Ramón Chinae**, has started a new season! He is a blessing to so many kids in Puerto Rico!



In Memorium

Norman White, **Christie Zoba's** step-father, passed away on December 10th. He was 93. Pastor Bob, Christie and her mom, Jane, traveled to Detroit for a very meaningful funeral service. Norm was the father to four children, nine granddaughters and six great grandchildren. He was a successful business owner in the Detroit area and he served as a Marine in the South Pacific in WWII. A great man - we will dearly miss him.



Eduardo "Eddy" McCormack passed away on December 22. Eduardo was the eldest of his three sons and he writes: "All who knew my dad know he was a class act; one of a kind...." Our condolences to Eduardo, Betsy, Natalia, Daniel, Naomi and Andres.



Hector Pages Sr. passed away on January 1st. Hector, Susan, Hecti and Danielle were in PR for the funeral. Originally from Cuba, Hector was a successful real estate developer in PR. Our condolences to his wife, Jo, his daughter Ani, and of course to Hector, Susan, Hecti & Danielle.



The Man in the Mirror

True story: A man went to visit a couple of friends with a very clear intention in his mind. He had learned that they were having big marriage problems. To the point that they were living as bad roommates, they didn't talk to each other, slept in different rooms etc. He decided to talk to the wife and everything was pretty intense, but things got worse when the friend decided to use an argument that went something like this: "You know, you might think you are happy, but with the situation with your husband, you are not truly happy." That was it; the wife lost it and answered quite angrily. "Don't you tell me what I need to be happy, I've never been happier! I'm happy with my children and grandchildren. I go wherever I want and come back whenever I want!" On and on she went, and the friend was in a really awkward position. His good intentions backfired badly.

Although this seemed like the "Christian" thing to do, his intentions missed the point completely. Because, even though, God can restore everything, couples, and people in general, pay a high price when the Body of Christ overlooks a very important teaching that has to do with "happiness", and does nothing to counter it with biblical truth. I'm referring to the concept that we have to pursue happiness in life. By now you might be thinking, "This dude is crazy, there is nothing wrong with pursuing happiness". And if you're thinking that, you just proved my argument.

Let me challenge that notion, at least for Christians. Happiness as it is understood by the majority is self-centered, not other-centered and certainly not Christ-centered. It thinks about what "I" want, what makes "me" happy, and it avoids unhappiness at all cost. That is why we have a bunch of marriages in trouble like the one in today's story. Each person is looking for their own happiness and when that doesn't happen anymore, trouble arises.

You see a man is called to love his wife as Christ loves the Church and gave himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25). Was Jesus looking for his own happiness when he did this? No, he was looking to fulfill the Father's command (Matthew 26:38-39). And wives are called to submit to this kind of love as a representation of the Church (Ephesians 5:22-24) but also to serve as an example of Christ's love if the husband doesn't fulfill his role (1 Peter 3:1-2). Nowhere in the Bible says that marriage is all about you and how your spouse makes you feel, and that if you are not happy, you can divorce (or live like you are divorced).

No! Marriage is about showing the world an image of the relationship of Jesus with his People (Ephesians 5:32). That is what Paul picks up when he states some interesting words in 1 Corinthians 7:29; *"But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none"*

How about that to start a premarital counseling session!? For the sake of Jesus and his mission your focus in your marriage and everywhere else should be the advancement of God's kingdom! A God-glorifying, Christ-centered, Spirit-lead, biblically-healthy marriage becomes a 'competition' between two children of God on who serves the other better and how both can serve God better. And a beautiful, not so perfectly coordinated dance develops in that home. If we understand this, it probably clears up the teaching on not marrying outside of your faith (but that is a whole article on its own).

But the 'pursue-your-happiness-thing' goes beyond marriage. It has infected every area of life! Scores of people "come" to Jesus looking for just that – happiness! They haven't read or no one has taught them that we MUST go through many tribulations to enter the kingdom of God; words that are meant to strengthen our souls (Acts 14:21-22). Or 1 Peter 4:12-13; *"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."*

So what is going on? Why is this so 'under the table'? Why is it, that no matter how good the preaching is on the subject, Christians everywhere don't seem to grasp it? To the point of turning God's unfailing Word into motivational expressions to the likes of Paulo Coelho or Deepak Chopra on social media! I think it is because, like in the case of marriage, we have failed to teach the truth clear enough so people can learn to identify the lies and reject them.

And what is the truth to be taught? Well, a lot of things can be said, but the verse of 1st Peter that was quoted before holds the core and most important thing: we need to learn how to change our pursuit of happiness for a pursuit of joy. See, joy in the Bible is completely tied to doing the will of God --- like Christ did, like the husband and wife should do, like everyone who wants to run a faithful race to be able to rejoice in suffering in this life and be glad with exceeding joy in the next life should do. I don't pretend to give all the answers here, because I don't have them, but I just want to give you something to think about. I hope it gets heavy in your heart and mind, and you like me start asking God how the worlds of Paul in Philippians 3:10 can make sense in your life.

I encourage you to take a look to the following verses; Matthew 10:34-35; Mark 8:34-36; Luke 6:24-26; John 15:18-20; Acts 5:40-41; Romans 8:16-18; 2 Corinthians 1:5-7; Ephesians 6:11-12; Philippians 1:29; Colossians 1:24; 2 Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 13:12-13. There are more that point to the same thing.

I don't have the words to "make it make sense" outside of what the Bible teaches. If you have joy in Christ you'll endure all of the suffering and count it as blessing, because you'll be sharing it with Jesus. You are not alone in it. But if you continue the silly race, chasing "happiness" you might find yourself in a comfortable position, but miss heaven when you're done here.

Gustavo
Youth Leader

Yesterday When I Was Young

This past New Years Eve brought back memories of a New Years Eve gone past. Dec. 31st, 1986 was a day that I will never forget. This was the day of the Dupont Plaza Hotel fire.

Today the hotel has reopened as the San Juan Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino. In 1986, the hotel was the site of the second deadliest hotel fire in U.S. history, started by disgruntled employees in the middle of a labor/salary dispute. The fire claimed 97 lives and caused 140 injuries.

The ruined hotel sat vacant until it was renovated and reopened in 1995. But back on that fateful day the hotel was packed with 1000 guests' who were eager to celebrate the New Year. The fire was set in the late afternoon under the casino. There it was fed by oxygen which was pumped into the packed casino. The perfect storm advanced when a system to suck cigarette smoke started to suck fire and smoke from the flaming casino, soon the entire building was full of smoke.

The only escape for many people was to walk to the roof where helicopters were dispatched to fly survivors onto the ground. This process took hours and private, Commonwealth, and military helicopters coordinated a spectacular rescue, which was witnessed by thousands of Puerto Ricans.

The following days were marked by funerals and families claiming their lost ones. The entire island was in a state of shock. The arsonists were tried and prosecuted and insurance companies paid 210 million dollars. Oh yes my brothers and sisters, the P.R. I remember is full of happy times, but it also has had its moments of sadness.

Brother Joe



Our Church has always answered the call!

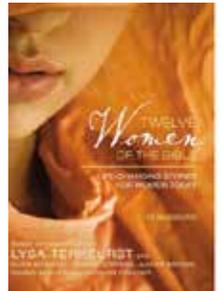
The folks and families of Los Encuentros , in the Valley of Comayagua in Honduras , are in need of children's and adult vitamins. For this purpose I have elected to start a drive in order to correct this need. I am calling on each of you to please give a bottle of vitamins (no matter what size it is). A box will be set up in the narthex for this purpose. An alternative method of helping is to leave cash to be spent on the urgent need.

"When the Lord comes calling, you have to move." B. Dylan

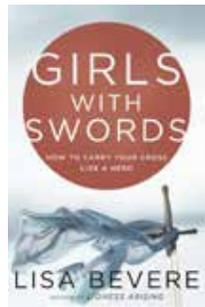
For more information contact Joe Calcolli.

Wednesday Evening Ladies' Bible Study

Look at the spiritual lessons learned from twelve Biblical women and what they mean for your life today. You'll learn about the triumphs and failures of Mary Magdalene, Rebekah, Hannah, and nine other women, studying their lives and learning how to apply biblical lessons to our modern-day struggles- Live through their failures as well as successes- Draw near to God in a world filled with trials. We meet at 7pm at Anita's home. For more information contact Anita at anita00926@aol.com.



Tuesday Ladies' Bible Study & Lunch



Worldwide, women are the targets of prejudice, sex trafficking, abuse, and gendercide. A spiritual enemy is seeking to disarm women on every level. Lisa Bevere explains how the Word of God is a sword that should be both studied and wielded. If there ever was a time for women to be armed, it's now.

Join us on Tuesdays at noon for lunch, fellowship, prayer and study. For more information contact Christie 787-717-4001. Books are \$13. Lunch can be ordered from Anita for \$8.

Seek God - in His Word

Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:12

Are you seeking God? Do you long to know Him and have Him speak to you? The Bible offers us all the insight we need to learn about our Creator and our Savior, so why not commit to reading it?

If you are interested in reading through the Bible in chronological order in one year - or reading through the New Testament in three months - it's not too late! We have two separate groups who began reading on January 1st. If you choose to join the group, you will receive the complete reading schedules as well as weekly emails with the readings for that specific week. If you decide to read the New Testament, you will also receive journal prompts if you would like to add journaling into your time with the Lord.

If you are interested in joining us, here is what we have read thus far:

Old Testament	Genesis 1-7 & Job 1-28	
New Testament	Matthew 1-3/4-7 & 12:1-21	Luke 1-6
	Mark 1-3	John 1-5

To be added to the group emails, let Christie Zoba know: zoba129@gmail.com

The Backpack Program continues to provide lots of opportunities to serve for members of Second Union Church. This program runs 52 weeks a year. Since we began this program in April of 2013, we have delivered over 2,500 backpacks to students at the Juanillo Fuentes School in the Canto Gallo sector of Guaynabo!

This is a great program that helps 32 students and their families, and it has been successful thanks to God and the way He has used so many wonderful people at our church. Ramón China and Mike and Chris Strong have been willing on so many occasions to help out with the pick up of food from the Food Bank - it's a lot of heavy lifting! We are also so grateful to the church for allowing us to use the classroom for storage and the facilities in general. Marlene Williams and her team at Xerox has really blessed us with a shelving system and a lot of food!! We're also blessed to have fresh fruit and vegetables donated almost weekly by Yoav Cohen and we thank Omar at Costco for the frequent donations of baked goods.



We've expanded the program by offering after school tutoring to the participating students on Tuesdays. We've got lots of dedicated tutors!

I would like to thank all of the volunteers and people who have donated money and food by name, but there's no space!! You know who you are, and more importantly, God knows!

We give all the glory to God, but there is one person without whose help the program probably wouldn't have even started and that's Laurie Yost. When we learned



about this program through the Food Bank of PR (El Banco de Alimentos de PR), we were enthusiastic. The first step, after prayer, was to become an official member of the Food Bank. This was a much more arduous process than what we had envisioned, and our enthusiasm quickly diminished to the point of almost abandoning the project. Then we received a check from Laurie's home church in Arizona for our Backpack Program - \$700.00 - Wow! That made all the difference in the world. So with this catalyst, we pushed forward and obtained the certification and we were 'in business' with grateful hearts to God for using Laurie and her church to open a big door for us!



Since day one, Laurie has been so dedicated to the program always available to help pack, distribute, donate food and birthday gifts, prepare birthday cards and so much more. On top of everything she is always so positive and cheerful - a joy to have around. She and her husband, David, are leaving the island on February 1st (unless God answers my prayers!!) and she is leaving a big void in my life and also in the Backpack Program. I'm trusting God to fill that void - it will be a very big one, that's for sure.



Second Union Church



The 2UC Youth were active in December: Ice skating, bowling, reaching out to Joe and sharing a meal!

Support our youth who will be traveling to D.C. for an evangelism conference by purchasing a meal after church on Sunday!!



Delivering gifts to "Abrazando La Niñez"



Instituto Santa Ana, a home for girls who have been mistreated, presented a plaque to Don Julio for the assistance he has given to the organization through the Outreach budget as well as items donated by our church family to help the home.

Don Julio and the Outreach committee also provided turkey dinners at Thanksgiving and collected boxes of gifts and personal items for Operation Christmas Child.

"Unfrozen" Christmas Program



Second Union Church





Second Union Church



A TV Station brings Christmas joy to 2UC for the Backpack Program students



Heart to Heart Serves the Homeless accompanied by the 2UC Parranda band!



Condado Bible Study Walk to OSJ & breakfast at ChocoBar



Baptism of Elena Isabel



James, Coralie & Noah



Mateo, Clara & Waldemar



Noah and Joshua



Audrey and Jane