



Christmas in Puerto Rico

Having grown up in Ohio, you would think that I would long for a white Christmas. I must admit that there are few things more magical in this life than waking up on Christmas morning and seeing a fresh layer of virgin snow glistening in the morning sun. It is all so purifying, tranquilizing, and inviting.

However, the reality is that very rarely did snow actually fall on Christmas Eve. Either we did not get snow at all (but plenty of cold) or the snow outside had fallen days before and had already turned to grayish slush. (So too, as pretty as snow is, you don't have to shovel sunshine.)

So, yes, living in Puerto Rico means missing snow, but the compensatory blessing is that in Puerto Rico you get 12 days of Christmas bonuses since the Christmas season extends all the way to Epiphany Sunday or, as it is called here, Tree Kings Day. These are the proverbial 12 days of Christmas that we always used to sing about in Ohio, but never actually celebrated. But here we do!

I recently read that if you added up all the turtle doves, geese a laying, and pipers piping that the cost in today's dollars would come to about \$35,000 dollars. Obviously, we don't spend that much on celebrating the season in PR, but we do rack up about 35,000 calories in mouth-watering lechón, coquito, and arroz con gandules. Likewise, we do so unabashedly. And this is significant as recently in the States, the PC thought police have deemed the expression "Merry Christmas" to be politically incorrect and have tried to intimidate Christians into keeping their mouths shut during the holidays. But here in PR we don't suffer the curse of PC fascism. Instead, here in Puerto Rico a giant crèche is erected directly across the street from the Capital Building, Old San Juan is elaborately festooned with Christmas decorations, and El Dia del Los Reyes is the most important day of the season and is, in fact, an official holiday! Wow, what a culture!

So, as you celebrate Christmas this year, be reminded a) how blessed you are to be loved by God, b) that He has sent us his only begotten Son, and c) that you live on a tropical island that celebrates the longest Christmas season in the world. Now that's something worth celebrating!!!

Merry Christmas!

PB



Pastor Bob Zoba

DECEMBER 2016

Sunday Services
10:00 a.m.

Adult Sunday School
9:00am

Sunday School
PK-12
10:30am

Choir Practice
Thursday 7pm

Weekly Activities

Ladies Bible Study
Tuesdays 12-2

Small Group
@ the Rivera's
Tuesday 7pm

Men's Breakfast
Wednesday 7am

Women's Study
@ Anita's
Wednesday 7pm

Women's Bible Study
Thursday 8am

Prayer Service
Thursday 7pm

Second Union Church

2109 Calle Mileto
Guaynabo, PR 00969

787-720-4423
secondunion.org

Rev. Robert Zoba
Pastor

Gustavo Gonzalez
Youth Pastor

For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Romans 15:4

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Joshua 1:8



As the body of Christ at Second Union Church, we seek to know God, to draw near to Him. The discipline of spending time daily in His Word is imperative if you truly desire to strengthen your relationship with our Lord and Savior. It is not easy, but it is probably one of the most rewarding things you can do. You need dedication and perseverance. The enemy will do whatever he can to thwart your efforts. There will be days where you don't have time, other days where you get frustrated, and other days where you simply don't have the desire. But if you put on the armor of God and if you rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, you can do it.

We begin on January 1, 2017. Contact Christie Zoba at zoba129@gmail.com or 787-717-4001. You will receive an annual reading guide and weekly emails with the readings for the coming week. In addition there is a Facebook Group where you will find questions posted daily to guide your readings.

Second Union Church Council & Staff

Pastor
Rev. Robert Zoba

President
Brenda Ferer

Vice President
Maylie Colón

Treasurer
Stan Pinkerton

Secretary
Humbelina Treviño

Worship
Michael Strong

Outreach
Julio Rivera

Property
Chris Strong

Christian Education
Nicole Delíz

Staff-Congregation Relations
James Martínez

Membership
Nilda Román

Fellowship
Rosa Trinidad

Nominating
Harry de la Cruz

Forward Planning
Anthony Cordero

Women's Ministry
Anita Rodriguez

Men's Ministry
Joe Calcolli

Pianist
Luis Manuel Tirado

Choir & Worship Leader
Jeff Penn

Youth Pastor
Gustavo Gonzalez

Office Manager
Mabel Varela

Newsletter Editor
Website Administrator
Christie Curie Zoba



**Join us for this year's Christmas Cantata to be performed during the Sunday Worship Service.
December 11, 2016 • 10:00 am**

**Director & Organist: Jeff Penn
Pianist: Luis Manuel Tirado**

**A reception will follow the performance
in the Fellowship Hall**

David Yost is visiting the island this week as he will be working with the CDC for a week or two.

Mabel's son Josh has been offered an opportunity to travel to California and play football this January.

Our own Luis Manuel Tirado and former choir director, Carlos Rivera, recently joined their respective university choirs for an amazing concert. Jeff Penn said it was spectacular.

Humbelina Trevino writes: Javier and I celebrated our 3rd wedding anniversary on the 24th of November. He celebrated his 4th year transplanted on November 8th and his kidney function is amazing. Praise God! Javier and I traveled to the west coast as our gift to one another. We hiked through Washington National Parks, Yosemite and Sequoia National Park. We covered a lot of terrain both by foot and by vehicle. Who wouldn't when you have been given a second chance at life? God is good!



Joseph Calcolli spent a great Thanksgiving with his two children at home. Daughter Marion cooked a delicious turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Then she painted the living room and even cut the two dogs nails. "I feel blessed this holiday season."

Wendy Heath's sister Jennifer Stevenson was visiting with them for 15 days. They all had a wonderful time touring the island. Jennifer was a radio presenter on Channel Radio in the U.K. and made sure the Church Bazaar got a "shout out" on Saturday.



Young Life Is holding their 'world-famous' Mr. Christmas Tree Pageant and Event on Monday, December 12 at 7pm at the Robinson School Auditorium. All 9th-12th graders are welcome to attend! Four male 'contestants' dress up as Christmas trees - with lights and all. If you are a teenager, you don't want to miss this!

Steven & Loida Spivak report that construction as finally started on their home in Maryland. We hope to see them in PR soon! They have also sent another big box of Spanish-language children books for the Juanillo Fuentes school! Thank you!

Jose & Osiris have finally found a condo closer to San Juan and will be moving soon.

The Zobas did some dog sitting for Tyler & Anne Snow while they were visiting family up in the States. The loved "Dale" so much they are filing for joint custody;-)



Pedro Seda is a master BBQ chef.

Esteban Ramos was such a stellar running back in high school that he received a full scholarship at Fordham University in NYC. (Of course, some of the credit has to go to one of his equally stellar lineman, Ramon China, who opened up the running lanes.)

Dennis and Amarilis Gonzalez served as excellent tour guides and drove Pastor Bob, Christie and Jane, Christie's mom, to the Festival de los Pasteles in Orocovis! What a wonderful slice of Puerto Rican culture - bomba, plena and every kind of pasteles you could imagine! Thanks!!



Nilda (Nina) Román has graciously agreed to become chairperson of our Membership Committee. Welcome aboard Nilda!

Carlos Rodriguez, who we said goodbye to last month, got transferred back to PR. PTL!!!

Julio Rivera is the Santa Claus of Puerto Rico as he has collected tons of toys for poor kids in the DR and here on the island.



Edwin & Conchi Perez (& PR Supply) have once again blessed our Mariner's Ministry with almost 100 bags of wonderful products. Christopher Strong will be

distributing them to the mariners in the next week. For some of them, this will be the only Christmas gift they will get. Thanks Edwin & Conchi!

Jeff & Tamara Penn took advantage of the Thanksgiving break to visit Machu Pichu, Peru!

Kris Adams is finally back from NC. Welcome home Kris!

The Condado Bible Study is going strong. If you live in the Condado / Ocean Park / Isla Verde area and would like to join, contact Lynn McCarley or Laurie Foster.

John & Evelyn Alberts are on a grandchildren tour this month. We sure do miss them.

Young Life Puerto Rico is taking a camp trip to Crooked Creek Ranch in Frasier, Colorado from June 25th - July 1st! All students who will have completed 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade are welcome! Please contact Anne Snow at 787-361-7480 or younglifesanjuan@gmail.com with questions!

Daryle & Kim Parker will be back from China for a visit in early February.

Sylvia O'Connor has graciously agreed to play the piano for us on Christmas morning.

Newlyweds, Isioma Mordi and her handsome husband (who happened to be a PK, i.e. a preacher's kid), were in PR for a celebratory visit over Thanksgiving.

The McMurrays had a wonderful visit from son Mackie recently and look forward to a visit from Patty and family over the Christmas holiday.

Jodie Manganotis won a gift basket of expensive chocolates at the annual Christmas Bazaar. Mike LaLlave won a Gustazo's certificate and Irma won the biggest prize of all: a two-night stay at the swanky El Conquistador!

Attie Goosen is rejoicing in the Lord for great news he receive regarding a cancer scare. We rejoice with him and pray for him and Alta while Attie is in South Africa attending to some visa issues.

Ben & Christina Zoba, PB's son and daughter-in-law are in the process of adopting twins. So, Pastor Bob may soon be a grandfather twice over.

Marisela Alvear makes some mean chili. Radio personality, Sherman Wildman, came for his yearly fix at our Christmas Bazaar.



Matt Golley and his wife Piper were in town for Enid and Robert's wedding in November. Matt introduced Young Life to Puerto Rico and lived her for five years. He and his bride now live in Florence, Alabama.



And . . . Cadiz Rodriguez was also in town for the wedding! It was a quick trip, but it sure was great to have her on the island!



Joshua Estremera and his football team went to St Thomas for a game on December 3rd, and they won! Congrats!



Joshua is a member of the Newton Science Club and recently served as Master of Ceremonies at their initiation event.

So many members and friends of Second Union participated in the Operation Christmas Child. Thanks to all for your generosity.



Luis Alberto Rivera and the Atelier del Mosaico are dedicating their newest mosaic mural. You are invited to come and enjoy this event with the students of the Atelier on Friday, December 9th from 6pm-9pm.



*encourage one another
and build each other up,*



The Gift of Love Christmas Bazaar

This year's Christmas Bazaar was a great success. Over \$6,000 was raised! The funds will be used to help the different organizations that are supported by Women's Ministry. These include: Young Life, Jovenes En Riesgo, Young Lives, Vida Joven, United World Mission and more.

Thanks to all who made this event a success. Dely Seda, our Bazaar Coordinator did a fabulous job. We could not have pulled it off without her. We are also grateful to MarAzul and Pastor Jonathon Ocasio. They did a great job promoting the Bazaar and many members of MarAzul contributed by serving and performing. It was great to have our two churches unite for a common goal.

We especially were grateful to those who served in our Prayer Room on the day of the Bazaar. Throughout the entire day, prayer warriors were praying for the Bazaar and for all who walked through the door. Praise be to God!

As always, the members and friends of Second Union Church stepped up to the plate and lent their hands and feet and their resources to this Bazaar. There are just too many people to mention individually, and it is thanks to your efforts that this Bazaar is such a wonderful annual event.

We would like to recognize the following people who dedicated an inordinate amount of time and energy to ensuring the success of this event:
Anita Rodriguez, Colleen Comer and Irma Torres. We really appreciate you!

To the rest of you - we know who you are - and more importantly, God knows who you are!! We thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

All glory and honor be to God!



Thanks to all who made this a success! Glory be to God!

The winter of 1818 was a bitter one in the town of Oberndorff, Austria. For centuries the residents of the tiny town had prospered and lived peaceful, quiet lives under the rule of the Austrian Empire. The hamlet straddled the Salzach River at a particularly dangerous set of rapids. Salt (salz in German), mined upriver, was offloaded north of the town, and carried overland through the western half of the town past the rapids. The costly mineral was then reloaded and sent eleven miles downriver to Salzburg, from whence it was dispatched throughout the empire or to trading partners. For many years Oberndorff's residents prospered as part of the supply chain of this valuable commodity, in spite of being passed back and forth between Austria, the Holy Roman Empire, and Bavaria. The politics changed, but life in Oberndorff continued mostly uninterrupted.

But the Napoleonic Wars changed all of that. From 1803-1815 the citizens of Oberndorff continued their lives as best they could whilst all around them as many as six million died in a continental contest for supremacy. In addition to the human casualties of war, the political and socio-economic systems that had defined Europe for nearly 200 years completely collapsed. New boundaries were created, including one drawn right down the middle of the Salzach River that redefined Austria and Bavaria. With the stroke of a pen, Oberndorff had been ripped in half. The old town center, and the overland transit route, now lay within German lands, and was to be called Laufen. The Austrians, left with the rump, kept the name Oberndorff.

Trudging through the snow-covered fields towards church that Christmas Eve, the citizens of Oberndorff had little to rejoice over. The very foundations of their town, the salt trade, was firmly across the river in German control. Unemployment was high; food was scarce. Every man, woman, and child had been plunged over a fiscal, political, and social cliff into the yawning unknown. Was there a future for them? And given the horrific wars of their recent past, did they even want to contemplate what such a future might bring?

The cold darkness of St. Nicholas Church was pierced by the warm glow of candles as the familiar voice of their young priest, 26-year-old Josef Mohr, welcomed the townspeople to Christmas Eve mass. Beside him on the platform stood their organist, Franz Gruber, holding his guitar. Several parishioners glanced at the dark organ loft as Father Mohr explained his unfortunate discovery that afternoon of holes in the organ's bellows; as if there weren't enough chaos in their lives, the church organ, mainstay of their musical tradition, had been rendered useless for their holiest and most important service of the year. Barely audible grumbles could be heard above the shuffling of papers being distributed as Father Mohr explained he would be teaching them a new song this night - one he had composed a few years earlier, and that Herr Gruber had set to music that very afternoon: Stille Nacht, it was called - Silent Night.

As Gruber plucked and strummed the gentle melody, Father Mohr began singing powerful words into the cold darkness:

Silent night! Holy night!
All are sleeping; alone and awake
Only the intimate holy pair.
Lovely boy with curly hair:
Sleep in heavenly peace! Sleep in heavenly peace!

Gruber's simple melody began to catch on, and during the second verse a few of the worshippers began to hum along:

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, O how he laughs
Love from your divine mouth,
Then it hits us - the hour of salvation.
Jesus at your birth! Jesus at your birth!

The hour of our salvation - in this, our hour of need, our hour of bleak despair, love, laughter hits us. We are saved, not from our circumstances, but from our sins. Jesus, God's son, is born.

Silent night! Holy night!
Which brought salvation to the world,
From Heaven's golden heights,
Mercy's abundance was made visible to us:
Jesus in human form, Jesus in human form.

While the parishioners longed for salvation from December of 1818, they were reminded that Jesus, the Word made flesh, was saving them from something far bleaker: sin. Heaven's mercy, rich and free, had arrived in human form and dwelt among them. The voices grew stronger, more confident, as they sang their proclamation:

Silent night! Holy night!
Where on this day all power
of fatherly love poured forth
And like a brother lovingly embraced
Jesus the peoples of the world, Jesus the peoples of the world.

Into that dark, cursed night, into their confused, chaotic world, the people of Oberndorff sang out a proclamation that did not change their circumstances, but did change their hearts. Jesus, the promised Son of God, came to give salvation to the world. Not peace as the world understands it, but the peace that passes all understanding. A peace that brings comfort when lives are torn apart by war or political upheaval. A peace that brings assurance when we are at the end of our resources. A peace that brings hope when our world has fallen apart and we have lost all reason to hope.

That night, the men and women gathered in that sanctuary were brought to Bethlehem where they looked into the face of the Christ child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. For it is only at the manger, in the presence of Jesus, where we find stillness in the chaos, holiness amongst the violence; only at the manger can we see through the troubles of this world, find rest for our souls, and sleep, as he did that first Christmas night, in heavenly peace.

Nearly 200 years have passed since the first singing of Silent Night. Since then the carol has been translated into more than 140 languages. It is by far the most popular carol of them all. But little has changed. We live in a world immersed in violence. Catastrophes natural and man-made sow their chaos and humanity reaps the fear, pain, and violence. While our twenty-first century sophistication may lull us into a sense of order and predictability, it takes only a few extremists in Paris, or an earthquake in Nepal, to remind us of how false that sense is. It only takes seconds for our lives to descend into confusion and hopelessness. With all of our technology and enlightenment humanity still longs for what only Christ can give: the peace that comes from the forgiveness of sins. The singing of Silent Night should not provide us with a sentimental moment to bask in the warm glow of seasonal emotion. What it does provide is the chance to declare a message of strength, that in spite of evil, we will accept the peace Christ brings and, as his reborn children, bring that message to a desperate world.

As we gather this Christmas with friends and family, and as the familiar carols are sung, let us resolve to make the peace of Silent Night our gift to the world. Let us stand with the citizens of Oberndorff, in the cold darkness of a winter's night, in a world that has fallen apart, and declare that all is calm and bright because of the Child in the manger, Jesus.

Contributed by Jeff Penn

CREE Christmas Party @ 2UC



CREE Women's Care Center recently held a dinner to celebrate their first year in Puerto Rico. CREE operates a screening and counseling center for pregnant women. Their first center opened several months ago and they are located next to an abortion clinic in Bayamón near the San Pablo hospital. This is the first pro-life center on the island.



Their mission is to reach out to women who may be considering an abortion and counsel them on the other options that are available to them. CREE offers free pregnancy testing, and they will soon be able to offer ultrasound screening at their facilities.

This ministry which just began this year and was founded by Daisy and Joseph Pardo. They were living in the Tampa area of Florida and were involved in pro-life ministries there. They sensed God's calling on their lives to come to Puerto Rico and open up their facility.

At the dinner, Daisy and Joseph spoke about the successes they have had and the resources they will need to continue expanding this ministry. In addition to financial resources, they need people to man the center and provide counseling and support to the women who call or come to the center. For more information, see Sasha Seda or see their Facebook page.



Young Life Camp 2017

Young Life Puerto Rico is taking a camp trip to Crooked Creek Ranch in Frasier, Colorado from June 25th - July 1st!

All students who will have completed 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade are welcome! Please contact Anne Snow at 787-361-7480 or younglifesanjuan@gmail.com with questions!

The spaces are limited and this is an unbelievable opportunity. You can also speak with Pastor Bob or Christie for more information. This will be the best week of your life!

What is Young Life?

Young Life is a ministry which reaches out to high school students. Staff and volunteers give of their time to hang out with teenagers and mentor them. Young Life sponsors a Monday-night "Club" gathering where students from all over the metro area meet to have fun, sing songs, watch crazy skits and just be themselves. (Don't miss the December 11th Club featuring the "Mr. Christmas Tree Pageant" at 7pm at Robinson School)



The volunteer leaders and staff create an environment where kids feel comfortable and accepted. Young Life also offers 'Campaigners' a weekly meeting for students looking to learn more about Jesus. In addition they host a "Polar Bear" camping weekend and then of course, the summer trip to Young Life Camp in the States.

Young Life is not a ministry of Second Union Church, but it is one that the church supports. Pastor Bob and Christie as well as Lynn McCarley are on the Committee, and they would be delighted to talk to you about getting involved with this ministry.

Financial contributions are used toward supporting the staff as well as paying for students to go to camp.

Finally, a great way to support Young Life is through the Golf Classic which will take place in April. Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez will be there! We need sponsors and golfers!

WHEN

Saturday,
April 1st 2017

WHERE

TPC Dorado Beach
<https://tpc.com/doradobeach>

COST

\$350/golfer

Includes two meals, on course non-alcoholic beverages, logoed premium golf balls, brand name logoed golf shirt & prizes to winners of contests and tournament and more!

PROGRAM

7:30 - registration and driving range opens, breakfast

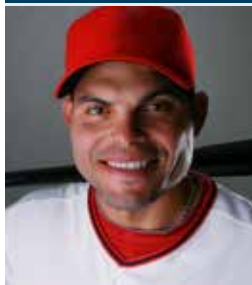
8:30 - in carts for welcome & rules

8:45 - shotgun start

1:30 - lunch and awards

Celebrity Host

Ivan Rodriguez



REGISTER AT: www.ylgolfclassic.org



Thanks to the Second Union Church Men's Ministry, the Juanillo Fuentes elementary school now has screens on the library windows and doors! What a tremendous blessing that is. This school is the home of our Backpack Program (in Spanish, Mochila Alegre!), and one of the outreaches of this program was an afternoon tutoring program for participating students. Unfortunately the library was a breeding ground for mosquitoes as there are many dark corners and spaces.

The school is very grateful, as are those of us who tutor the students! In addition to the screens, the Men's Ministry also installed new fans and fixed broken levers and a broken door latch.



Joe Calcolli spearheaded the fundraising efforts, so we thank him as well as all who contributed financially. Mike LaLlave did the leg work and contracted the screens and supervised their installation.



Thanks to all who served as the hands and feet of Christ!!

“Think globally. Act locally.”

Abby Hoffman

Don't just read these words but please think about them as well. Because it is so much more than just a sound bit.

Let me put it another way. Are you here for the show or are you part of the show!

That may be a bit presumptuous on my part and I do apologize, but.

Our church needs your participation. We need your talents. We need your opinion. We need your help.

Be a member of a committee. The council would love to have you. Start a ministry, start the ball rolling. You have to take the first step.

While I am on the subject of participation let me mention that the Thursday night prayer meeting, 6 o'clock in the conference room needs you.

As Christians we should be forming a line to be an active part of the body of Christ.

Go ahead ignore these words. Maybe I am just a crazy old man. But in your heart you know that I am right.

Brother joe

Adult Sunday School

The Bible: Verse by Verse
9am Conference Room

Tuesday Ladies' Bible Study

Study: The One Another Life
noon-2pm Fellowship Hall

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study
at the Rivera's**

The Second Coming: A New Beginning
7pm at the Rivera's home in San Francisco

Wednesday Men's Breakfast

The 33 Series (rightnowmedia)
7am Fellowship Hall

**Wednesday Evening Women's Study
Forgotten God by Francis Chan**

7pm at Anita Rodriguez' home in Rio Piedras Heights

Thursday Ladies' Coffee Shop Study

8am at the Café Con Alma on Paraná

Thursday Night Prayer Meeting

6pm Conference Room.

Condado / Isla Verde Bible Study

For more information, contact Lynn McCarley or Laurie Foster.

You are welcome to join any of these studies/
small groups! For more info, contact Pastor
Bob or Christie Zoba!

New Members



During the month of November, Second Union Church welcomed new members (from left to right): The Guevara family: María Isabel Guevara, María Isabel Rivera and Jose Guevara; Serena and Eli Lozano, Alta and Attie Goosen, Jonathan Lavoy and Wanda Billoch. What a blessing! We are grateful that you have chosen to be our brothers and sisters in Christ!

Backpack Program Prayer Pals

Just a reminder to pray daily for your Backpack prayer pal! We continue to deliver backpacks through the holidays. If you would like to send a Christmas gift or card to your prayer pal, please leave it in the church office by December 22nd. There is absolutely no obligation to do so!!

Here are the December and January birthdays:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Jezer Resto | December 5, 2008 |
| Aneishka Santos | December 9, 2008 |
| Luis Estrada | December 26, 2005 |
| Kevin Guadalupe | January 1, 2005 |