



second thoughts

Second Union Church

VBS: What the Church Should Be Like Every Week

After closing out another VBS program, I was thinking that our experience this last week epitomizes what church life should be like everywhere and all the time. That is, this last VBS was a week of much planning, preparation, and prayer. Likewise, Sasha did an excellent job of recruiting Bible teachers, craft people, snack providers, song leaders, dramatists, worship dancers, registrars, phys-ed instructors, missions expert, fund raisers, teen volunteers, to name a few...and, of course, young impressionable kids, who were open to learning about Jesus.

It was a week of lots of love, high energy, tons of fun, valuable teaching, and at least three folks who came to know the Lord.

So too, we challenged the kids to give generously to two outreach ministries: one was here in PR and the other in Mozambique, Africa. And how did the kids respond? We received over \$479 !!! Imagine! God is good!

Thus, this was an effort that truly brought all facets of our church membership together with a common mission goal to use our respective gifts to serve others, promote the Gospel, and bring glory to Jesus Christ.

It's funny that every year after VBS ends, we get kids who ask us if we can do this same thing again next week, and the next week, and the next week.

Well, imagine, if we could work together with this sense of mission every Sunday, every Monday, and every day of the week, and every week of the year? What would happen? Well, for one thing, we would all be pretty tired. But we would also be pretty blessed. In fact, we would be very blessed. But, even more importantly, we would be an amazing blessing to the world that God loved so much that He sent his only-begotten Son to die for, so that they might live eternally.

Of course, I realize that we cannot do VBS every week, but one thing we can do every week is to come together, work together, worship together, pray together, have fun together, serve together, reach out together, share our gifts with one another, and strive to bring the good news to all who have never heard it before.

May we take up that challenge and find the joy of the Lord in doing that every week of the year!

Blessings!

Pastor Bob



Pastor Bob Zoba

**JULY
AUGUST
2019**

**Sunday Services
10:00 a.m.**

**Adult Sunday School
9:00am**

**Sunday School
PK-12
10:30am**

**Choir Practice
Thursdays 7:17 pm**

Weekly Activities

Ladies Bible Study
Tuesdays 12-2

Small Group
@ the Rivera's
Tuesday 7pm

Men's Breakfast
Wednesday 7am

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

Bible Study & Small Group Opportunities

Day and Study	Location	Contact
Sunday 9am Adult Bible Study Matthew	2UC Conference Room	Lizzette Kelley: Howard01@prtc.net Book of Matthew, Book of Acts
Tuesday Lunchtime Bible Study (12-2) Summer Study: The Parables	2UC Fellowship Hall	Christie Zoba: zoba129@gmail.com 787-717-4001
Tuesday Evening Bible Study (7-9pm) 31 Life Principles: Charles Stanley	Loraine and Luis Alberto Rivera's home in San Francisco	Loraine & Luis 787-370-2448
Wednesday Men's Breakfast (7-8am) Apologetics	2UC Fellowship Hall	Pastor Bob: PastorBobZoba@gmail.com
Weds Embrace Grace / Embrace Life (7-8:30 pm) Ministry for women with un-planned pregnancies and new single moms	2UC Conference Room	Dely Seda: delymarie@gmail.com
Thursday Morning Bible Study Letters From Paul	2UC	Anita Rodriguez: anita009926@aol.com
Thursday Night Prayer Service on Hiatus until August!!	2UC Conference Room	Pastor Bob

Second Union Church Council & Staff

Pastor
Rev. Robert Zoba

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Brian Tester

Vice President & Forward Planning
Humbelina Treviño

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Stan Pinkerton

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Christian Education
Joanne Gonzalez

Staff-Congregation Relations & Nominating
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Membership
Dely Seda

Fellowship
Irma Torres

Women's Ministry
Anita Rodriguez

Men's Ministry
John Alberts

Pianist
Luis Manuel Tirado

Choir & Worship Leader
Jeff Penn

Youth Pastor
Gustavo Gonzalez

Office Manager
Mabel Varela

Newsletter Editor
Website Administrator
Christie Curie Zoba

From our Council President

After 2 years and 5 trips, I have finished my work in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, helping them draft their bankruptcy law and teaching their judges.

The Department of Commerce has now asked that I help Morocco finalize their amended bankruptcy law and help prepare the lawyers, accountants and judges to work the cases.

Although it is not directly missionary work, I pray the Lord uses me somehow in these Muslim countries.

Judge Brian Tester



Women' Ministry invites you to

a Praise and Prayer Afternoon

July 20th at 1pm
at Second Union Church.

This is a time set aside to disconnect from your daily routine and spend time praising God together and praying for each other.

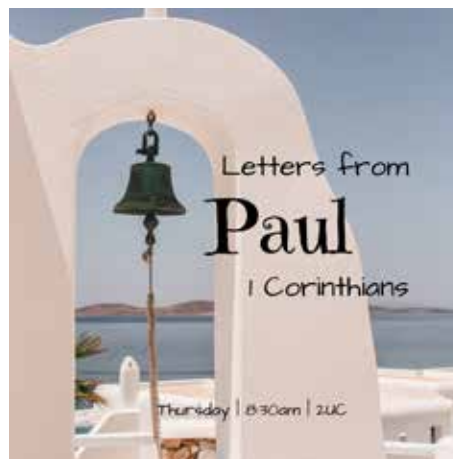
We look forward to seeing you there.

Women's Ministry Thursday Morning Bible Study

We are continuing the Letters from Paul series.

Our next letter is 1st Corinthians. We will meet July 24th 8:30am at Second Union. There are books available at the church (\$10).

If you are interested in attending speak with Anita Rodriguez or Mabel Varela.



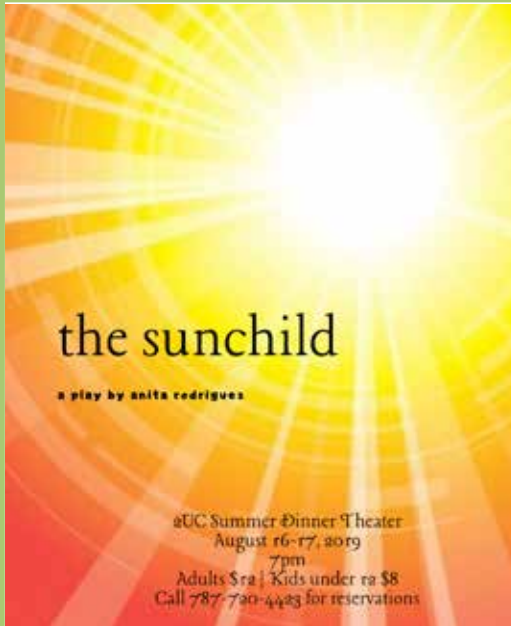
TEEN GIRLS MINISTRY

Discover God's Purpose
in your Life!

FOR GIRLS 13 TO 19 YRS OLD
SUNDAYS @ 6:00PM
THE GONZALEZ'S HOME

BEGINNING IN AUGUST!

Bring something to share
(e.g. cookies, sandwiches,...)
For more information
contact Gustavo Gonzalez
or Sasha Seda at
787-425-7145



Second Union Church Players are pleased to announce the return of the Summer Dinner Theater. They will be performing The Sunchild, an original rhyming fairy tale play written by Anita Rodriguez.

Mark your calendars for August 16 and 17 at 7pm at the church. Tickets will go on sale July 14, Adults \$12 and children 12 and under \$8. All proceeds will go to support the persecuted church of Nepal.

This event is hosted by Women's Ministry, Fellowship and Forward Planning committees. Make your reservations for this family fun evening, Summer Dinner Theater at Second Union.

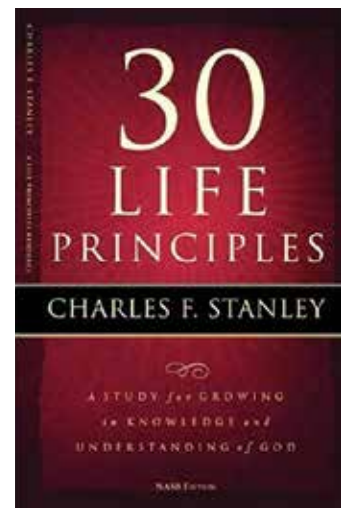
Tuesday Night Bible Study Charles Stanley: 31 Life Principles

Tuesdays 7 - 9 pm
at the home of Luis & Loraine Rivera - Urb. San Francisco
5 minutes from church!

Our small group invites you to join us as we pray for one another, study the Word of God together, and share our lives in a relaxed setting of confidence and trust. Call Loraine for details: 787-370-2448

In this new Bible study, we will discover the memorable truths that have guided Dr. Stanley's life for many years. Below are the first five!

1. Our intimacy with God – His highest priority for our lives – determines the impact of our lives.
2. Obey God and leave all the consequences to Him.
3. God's Word is an immovable anchor in times of storm.
4. The awareness of God's presence energizes us for our work.
5. God does not require us to understand His will, just obey it, even if it seems unreasonable.



Tuesday Ladies' Lunchtime Bible Study • The Parables

Tuesdays 12-2pm • Fellowship Hall

For the next month, we will be reading and discussing Jesus' parables. Each week we will focus on a different parable which we will read and discuss together.

There is no homework, no need to make a reservation . . . just come with an open heart and a desire to grow in understanding and love for God.

Music is an important part of most people's lives. We have songs for working, songs for playing, for celebrating, for mourning, for relaxation, and particularly for entertaining. Music is part of almost every aspect of our lives. So, it's no surprise that we use it in worship.

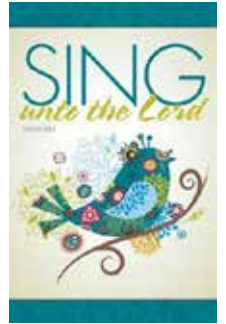
Throughout the history of religion music has played an important role. Almost every organized religion in the world, and throughout history, has had a form of music in their religious rituals. And it is used, mostly, in every service. But why is it important?

Music has the power to transcend our physical being. It moves us from well within our hearts. Different types cause different feelings. We play music when we are happy and when we are sad. We use music to teach, to tell stories, to express love and to express anger. Tender music puts a child to sleep and loud music can raise levels of energy to ecstasy.

In the religious service music has been used to express all of these feelings and more. The purpose of music in religion is not only to praise God but to open our hearts to the Word, to teach us about the message, to bring us together in praise, to express gratitude and to help us commune with each other and with the almighty. It does not matter the style or medium used, music will move your soul. We sing and play music to get closer to God, and to bring God closer to us.

Sing His praises, spread His word!

Alfonso A. Román Ortiz



Giving To Second Union Church via ATH Movil

You may now send your donations to Second Union Church electronically, via ATH Movil, if you already have their APP, or if you install their APP. When making a donation the number to use is the Church cell phone number: 787-501-1749. Any donations made this way will go directly into the 2UC Church Depository bank account. All donations will be posted to your giving statement as a contribution to the Church General Account, for the 2UC annual operating budget, unless designated for some other purpose. We would highly encourage that. However, the ATH Movil App provides space for you to enter a short message, if you like, such as designating it to be for some other specific purpose.

Banking Institutions that currently participate in the ATH Movil APP are as follows:

- Banco Popular de Puerto Rico
- Banco Santander
- FirstBank
- VAPR Federal Credit Union
- Caribe Federal Credit Union
- And Many Cooperativa's



Please be aware that this church phone is assigned to our Pastor Bob, so his name will pop up whenever you enter the number, but rest assured that the donations will all go directly into the church bank account.

Contact 2UC Business Administrator Mabel Varela or 2UC Treasurer Stan Pinkerton if you require any further clarification.

AA Meetings at 2UC • Wednesdays 7pm

Alcoholics Anonymous (commonly referred to as AA) is perhaps the most widely known program related to overcoming addiction or chemical dependency. For decades, AA meetings have helped countless men and women overcome their dependence upon alcohol and begin (or continue) their pursuit of a lifelong recovery.

Second Union Church lends its rooms for this great cause every Wednesday evening at 7pm. Together we share our experience, our strength and hope with each other that we may solve our common problem and help others recover from alcoholism.

Jorge & Debbie Agostini are getting some grandchildren time this summer in the States.

John & Evelyn Alberts have a wedding this summer as daughter, Nadine, will be tying the knot.



David Benson made a surprise visit to 2UC last month and what a joy it was to see him and his son Sam.

Maylie Colon also surprised us with a quick visit. Of course, we put her right to work as she helped sing with our worship team.

Colleen Comer is up in the cooler climes of Syracuse, NY visiting family.

Anthony Cordero popped in last week to help us clean up after VBS.

Alfred Delbrey was back playing guitar during our worship services. Please keep him and his wife in your prayers as they both continue to battle cancer.

Pastor Bob & Christie and Lizzette Kelly had a very pleasant visit with Raul Diaz and Raul is looking great.



Tom & Patricia Enger had to make a trip to Bolivia to be with Tom's family after the passing of his father. Condolences to Tom and the family.

Brenda Ferrer is still on her annual American tour... but we miss her here.

Dr. Mauricio Gomez was back with his family for graduation from Med School. It was great to see Daniela, Lucas and baby Lucía, and to celebrate this great accomplishment!



Alta Goosen & Seugnet created some amazing murals and other art work for our VBS program. Thanx Alta!!!

Jaime Irizarry hopes to be in the movie with Mel Gibson this summer.

Mike & Irma LaLlave are now in New Jersey and will soon be heading up to Maine for their annual lobster feast.



Natalie Lorch is our oboist, who plays for the PR Symphony Orchestra and at 2UC!

Pastor Bob and Rosabella Matos-Gonzalez had a dance off at the recent VBS.

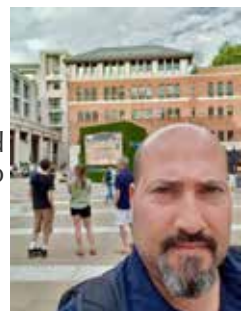


Dell McCarley was on island last month, but didn't have a chance to make it to 2UC.

George & Joan McMurray are doing well in California.



The Mohler's are all back on the family farm in Indiana having a great time.



Jeff Penn is in Cambridge, England this week attending a worship workshop.



Jeff & Tamara spent the first part of their summer up in Alaska!

Luis Alberto Rivera had another impressive exhibition - this one marking at tenth anniversary of the "Atelier del Mosaic" in Santurce.



Fred & Iris Ross had a co-birthday party as their births fall in the same week.

Stephan, Susan & Sophie Termaat have been in the country of Malawi doing relief work: they've assisted in building a school, bringing water to a village and more. Now they are on safari! If you're not a friend of Suzanne's on Facebook, ask her to show you her amazing photos of their experience!



Did You Know?



Nicole Stowell is a happy mom as her little one, **Francisco Javier**, is growing fast.



Pastor Bob was able to spend Father's Day (at least a part of it) with sons Jon, Ben, and daughter-in-law, Christina in New England. It was a short but very sweet visit!



Father's Day was very special at 2UC as the families gathered together to celebrate the dads. All the men of the church joined together to sing to the women of the congregation!

Risa & Catalina Tobin had a fantastic mother-daughter tour of Italy and France. Wow! The Montalvo men miraculously managed to survive on their own!



Kara Trivitt has entered week 31 and we think those little twins will be coming to visit us soon!!!



Victor Moros survived a hip replacement surgery and is recovering quickly.

The Sunday School kids worked diligently on Father's Day cards for the Mariners. Chaplain, Christopher Strong, took the cards along with some gifts down to the docks to honor these fathers who spend so much time away from their families.



David & Laurie Yost are planning to visit us in August. Praise the Lord!!!



We are rejoicing at great news from Richmond, Virginia: **Tyler and Anne Snow** welcomed their beautiful baby,

Elijah, into this world on Monday, June 24th at 1:47 a.m. - 10 lbs 8.4 ozs and 22.5 inches. They are all doing great - and Anne and Tyler celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary on

Friday, July 5th! Congratulations and blessings to this special family!!

John Alberts organized a beachfront surprise birthday party for **Evelyn**.

Happy Birthday Evelyn!!



The last Sunday in May the church celebrated **Pastor Bob's** birthday! A lot of planning went into this activity, thanks to Mabel, Irma Torres, Irma LaLlave and many others! Jaime Irizarry did a great job impersonating Pastor Bob!!



The Power and Importance of Service How focusing on others helps you mature spiritually.



From June 9th to the 15th me and a handful of youth leaders from three other churches took a group of 18 students to spend a week in Camp Caribe in the southern town of Juana Diaz. There were churches from Ponce, Naguabo our friends from Christian Community Church in Guaynabo and of course us from San Juan. We started the week by getting to know each other through some games and fellowship. But right after the kids started experiencing things they've never experienced before. For a lot of them this was the first time they spent time away from home, their parents, their routines and their favorite things.

First they were taught about why and how to have some quiet time with God during morning devotionals. Then we went out each day for our daily projects. We divided the group in two, one half headed to Yauco, where they would spend the rest of their week, to help out cleaning and painting a house right at the foot of the now emblematic "Yaucromatic urban art project" (<http://yaucromatic.com/>), this project celebrates the culture and arts with urban and mural pieces in the "Coffee City". Almost twenty local and international mural artists have contributed to this project. And now the very first piece that visitors will enjoy is a product of our students' effort to serve Jesus by serving others. The author of the piece is our very own Keshawn Drew Simmonds!



Keshawn was inspired by the owner of the house, Don Luis, and the faith he showed even in the face of adversity. Don Luis has only one leg in a two level house and has come from a past of homelessness in the mainland. All throughout the week he was ministering to the students by sharing his experiences and how his faith in Jesus kept him going. The mural shows a tree that gets its nutrients from Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the leaves of the tree are form by the hands



of everyone that helped with the house and to top everything is a verse taken from Psalms 91:2, one of Don Luis' favorites.



The second group spends their first day clearing out some debris from a house in the mountains of Yauco, were the owner suffered a back injury and was unable to finish cleaning up for him and his elderly mother. The second day was up in the mountain as well, but this time the team removed a tile floor that was damaged by the water that got into the house. Lastly on the third day was debris day again this time in Guayanilla. One thing is for sure these students worked hard! On each of these projects they got to know the owners, prayed for them and shared the Gospel with them.



On Wednesday night we visited Youth Challenge, a program ran by the Army were they give young offenders a chance to avoid prison by spending six months on a base experiencing a military training lifestyle and finishing their high school.

When we got there our students occupied the back portion of the room and minutes later about 70 boys and girls started coming in. One of our participants later shared that she was touched by the Holy Spirit with compassion for these youth. She said that you could see the need in their faces for Jesus.

I started off by "breaking the ice" with some games, then three of our students shared their testimonies. I preached about missed opportunities using the passages from Mark 12:13-17 and John 18:35-38. I shared the Gospel as clear as could and gave the students the opportunity to respond, about 30 of them made the decision to make Jesus the Lord of their lives! It was overwhelming and beautiful! When I was done praying one of the kids asked if we could sing some praise songs, so three of the girls stood up and led the worship session. Once we were done, I asked those who just put their faith in Jesus to come forward to connect with us and to be prayed over.

It was one of the most impactful things that I've ever seeing! Our teenagers were praying and ministering to these teenagers. Hearing their heartbreaking stories, crying with them and sharing the hope they have in Jesus. It was truly a life changing moment.

On Thursday morning we visited the shelter "Cristo Pobre" in downtown Ponce where we served the homeless by cleaning their living quarters, cutting the grass of their compound and serving them breakfast. While they were eating our students sat with them and got to know them. Afterwards, Jared Ramos (Christian Community's youth pastor) stood up and preached to them, another life changing moment.



But it wasn't all work and no fun. On the contrary, our students visited Luchetti Lake in Yauco and roasted marshmallows by the fire. The big hit was on Friday, our "fun day". We headed to Surf n Fun water park in San German for the day, and it was amazing!

More amazing was to hear that the students were ready to give up their "fun day" in order to finish our work projects if it was necessary, it wasn't.



Also, it was great to see usually shy students take the lead and initiative to serve and love others. It was great to see how a group of strangers grew so close together by the end of the week, they call it the "Wendys family" (don't ask). It was great to see girls that were "consumed" by their grooming routines gave them up for the sake of the experience. It was great to see leaders anointing and praying for their students and students anointing and praying for their leaders! It was great to see God moving!



Yours truly;
Gustavo A. González

PS. Check out the video recap of the trip at our churches Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/secondunionchurch/>)

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. Colossians 2:6-7

A child with a hearing disability is as intelligent and aware as a hearing child. Hearing disabilities can vary widely and include children who have partial hearing loss in one ear or a loss that can be corrected with a hearing aid. Some children are skilled at reading lips and other can only speak through American Sign Language (ASL). Talk to the child's parents to determine how much the child can hear and comprehend. Consider asking an adult helper to assist regularly with the child.

Methods of Communication

Speech. Interview the parents to determine the child's level of function with speech, too. If the child has some hearing capacity, you may be able to communicate through speaking. But remember to let the child choose the ways to communicate that best suits him or her. Avoid shouting at the child. This draws unwanted attention and distorts the words. Speak naturally and enunciate clearly. Do not talk too rapidly, but at the same time, avoid speaking too slowly or drawing out words. If you normally talk very softly or have a high voice, you may need to speak up a little. Exaggerated facial expressions or speech will not be understood. Look directly at the child and let him or her see your lips moving, especially if the child can read lips. Avoid turning away or covering your mouth when speaking. Keep your hands still, as unnecessary gestures are distracting. Do not use baby talk or talk down to the child. Use complete and grammatically correct sentences. Ask the child to repeat what he or she heard to ensure understanding. The child may have hearing loss in only one ear. When speaking, face the child but stand toward the side from which the child hears best. The child may need to turn his or her ear toward the teacher instead of making eye contact.

Music. Even a deaf child is able to feel music by touching a stereo speaker or feeling the beat through the floor. A child may pantomime the words instead of singing. However, some children need or want the volume of music turned up very high. Music that is too loud will be uncomfortable for the rest of the class and surrounding classrooms. Ask the parents how much the child can hear and at what volume. If the child needs loud music, perhaps he or she can use a portable cassette/CD player with headphones.

Games. Children with hearing disabilities can play along with the rest of the class. If the child cannot hear a whistle, buzzer or bell, use a flash light or hold up a stop sign as a signal. Explain the instructions clearly and demonstrate the game, so the child is not confused when the game starts. Written instructions may be useful, too. Make sure the players do not depend on only verbal cues to play the game. The other children may need to use hand signals to direct the child who cannot hear. Include hearing impaired children's ideas into the activities so that they feel they are contributing members of the group.

Love. Communicate to children who are hearing impaired that God loves them just the way they are. Don't over simplify or trivialize their disabilities. Think of ways to encourage them that don't require listening. Nonverbal communication (a touch, a hug, a smile, etc.) is a great way to demonstrate God's love!

Tools for the Hearing Impaired Imagination. Pretend you are in a foreign country where you don't speak the language. You would likely use your hands, your feet, facial expressions, draw and point as much as possible. Don't be afraid to use whatever communication method gets a positive response!

Sign Language. The child may use American Sign Language (ASL) as the principal form of communication. Learn some basic requests and words in ASL. Training books are available, plus many schools offer ASL night classes for adults. Teach some ASL words to the entire class. Better yet, have the hearing-impaired child teach the other children! Most children love to learn ASL. This will not only help the children to speak to the hearing-impaired child but also will make the hearing-impaired child feel included because the entire class is signing. The class can learn to sign simple prayers or short Bible verses. ASL has a different grammatical structure than standard English for faster speech and fewer hand motions. A child who cannot hear regular speech may not be aware of how standard English is supposed to sound. Do not be surprised if his or her spoken or written sentences are grammatically incorrect. Accept the child's speech as his or her gift to the class. Instead of correcting the child, repeat the statement back with proper grammar.

Hearing Aids. A child with a partial hearing loss may be able to use a hearing aid. Today, such devices are incredibly small and effective. The other children may not be able to see the hearing aid. However, a hearing aid may not be able to fully restore all hearing loss. Even with a hearing aid, the child may not be able to listen to one voice if there is a lot of other noise in the room, such as other children talking or music playing. Continue speaking clearly and directly to a child with a hearing aid. If there is a lot of surrounding noise, stand directly in front of the child to speak. Sometimes the child may need to stop and adjust the hearing aid if he or she is trying to hear someone speaking softly or the surrounding noise is too loud. If the child is working with the hearing aid, stop talking to the child and wait for him or her to finish. At times, a hearing-impaired child may turn off the hearing aid or pretend not to hear. This may be due to sensory over load or problems with the hearing aid. Observe the child to determine if he or she simply doesn't want to be involved with the class. Talk with the parents to determine how they handle similar situations.

Use positive reinforcement to increase the behavior you want to see. As you model appropriate behavior and establish trust, you can expect hearing-impaired children to behave as respectfully as other children.

Last November on the first Sunday of the month we joined with much of the world in remembering the persecuted church. We heard from believers who live in countries where Christians are not free to practice their faith, and we learned more about the state of persecution worldwide. We prayed for our brothers and sisters and were encouraged to continue praying for them and remembering them after we left the church that day. But some people felt we should do more. Some got the idea that we, as a free church, should find a ministry that is working with persecuted believers and support them. The Forward Planning committee took the idea and embraced it, agreeing that yes, as we move forward as a congregation, we need to be mindful of, and supportive of, believers who are not as free as we are. One of our responsibilities as believers is to be mindful of the body of Christ in its suffering. After much discussion, prayer, and research, the committee proposed, and Council approved, forming a supportive partnership with Joel and Sue Garrison who serve in Nepal.

So why Joel and Sue? Why Nepal? Let's take those questions one at a time in reverse order.

First, Nepal is a nation in which it was illegal to be a Christian until 2006. Converting from Hinduism or Buddhism meant an automatic jail sentence. Although on paper Christians are, for the moment, free under the current constitution, it has never been easy to practice Christianity from a cultural perspective. When a Nepali converts to Christianity, there is no hiding it. Nepali Christians abstain from many of the cultural practices of their Hindu countrymen, such as the wearing of tika, the red dot all Hindu women put on their foreheads. While for many modern Hindus this is strictly a cultural practice, or even a fashion choice, Nepalis are much more conservative and devout. In Hinduism tika protects the wearer from evil spirits. Christian women will not wear it, saying that God is their protector, and to wear tika would be a form of worshipping false gods. Another stark contrast is day-to-day greetings. Tourists are taught that the way to say "Hello" in Nepali is "Namaste." But this literally means "the god in me greets the god in you." Not a problem for a Hindu, or even a naive foreigner who doesn't know any better. But for a Nepali Christian, saying "Namaste" is tantamount to blasphemy. "Jai Mesi," which means "victory in the Messiah," is how Christian Nepalis greet. These are but two examples of how Christians stand out from their Hindu countrymen. We could also talk about the hundreds of Hindu festivals in which Christians do not partake, the village shrines Christians do not give money to, or the belief that many Hindus have that Christians bring curses on their villages by not doing what appeases the gods. Since most of the 30 million Nepalis live at least a 2 hour hike from anything resembling a road, law enforcement is spotty to say the least. Believers have been chased out of their ancestral homes for supposedly bringing curses on their village. Bodies have been dug up by Hindus who believe corpses of Christians defile the soil. When most Nepalis depend on community for economic survival, whether it's the use of communal lands for sowing crops and grazing or the patronage of neighbors to support a business, the decision to follow Christ carries real, felt consequences.

Why Joel and Sue? When Tamara and I lived in Nepal we got to know Joel as the PE teacher at the international school where we worked. In time we learned about his "other" job, and got to know Sue and their boys, Isaac and Elliot, through the international church. In places like Nepal there are hundreds, even thousands, of so-called "charitable organizations." Many of them are scams. With loose law enforcement and murky financial markets, it's not always easy to know whether or not an organization is legitimate. We know Joel and Sue. We have seen their work firsthand and know they are the real deal. We know that the work they are doing is their passion. Their knowledge of Nepali language and culture is surpassed only by their love for the Nepali people and their desire to see Nepalis one day worshiping around the throne of God in heaven.



So here is what we're doing. On the fourth Sunday of each month we'll be giving a short presentation in the service reminding people about this ministry and the different ways we can support it. Then after the service you'll have a chance to contribute something to this ministry. We'll have someone with a collection basket in the foyer after the service to take donations. We also encourage you to take home a jar, fill it with spare change, and then bring it back in November when we once again draw our focus to the persecuted church. You can pick up a jar from the same person with the collection basket, or see Humbelina.

We're excited about this opportunity. We're excited to see not only what God will do in Nepal through Joel and Sue, but what God will do at Second Union through this partnership.

-Jeff Penn

I noticed a large box sitting near the front door when we got home on March 29th. I do not have any packages delivered to the house, so I knew whatever was in that box was not for us. I opened the car door and heard little bitty meowing. At this point Javi hasn't gotten out of the car so I open the passenger door and tell him we must leave immediately. He's confused – doesn't understand what I'm saying. He hasn't connected the dots so I explain that there is an animal sound coming from a box and that we should leave so that whatever is in the box can crawl away on its own. He looks at me and says nothing but makes these Puss & Boots eyes at me.



He gets out of the car and we walk towards the very audible box to find two tiny kittens. Personally, I am grossed out by the image. They are so small they look like rats. I hate rats. Javi didn't hesitate. He went inside the house, cut a Styrofoam cup down to a level that the kittens could drink from. He poured milk into the new "bowl" and placed it in the box. The kittens drank some, but they could hardly walk, and I presume they couldn't see very well. They fumbled around in the box and spilt the little milk he had served them. Now what? As Christians it is our duty and responsibility to attend to the helpless even if they are in the form of an animal. In the same token, it is fair to say that it is the human nature to react with some resistance.

Javi was not going to ignore these kittens but I was very resistant. Javi takes the box into the house against my objections. He pulls them out and places them on the floor. These little creatures can't walk – the black kitten crawls on its belly while the white one kept slipping. Javi melts and is fascinated. I am standing in a corner shaking my head at all three of them; still resistant to the idea of adopting to little strangers. I noticed the box they came in had a FedEx label still attached to it. I go to the box to try to find the owners of said box, but this neighbor was clever. He tore just enough information so that I couldn't piece-meal it together. At this point I'm thinking to myself, "Who would do this? "And, God, how exactly is it that I'm supposed to love thy neighbor when they pull stunts like this?" At this point, I felt I lost all control and overwhelmed with the situation.

We decided (really Javi decided), in order for the kittens to survive the night, we were going to the nearest pet store to find something to feed the orphaned kittens until we could make other arrangements for them. Still resistant, I talk to every member of the store and ask for names of shelters. On the way to the store I chimed into every group text chat on my phone and asked for someone to adopt these two "adorable" kittens. I went on social media and put pictures for a potential two-legged mom and dad. Crickets. Not a sound, not a single response. Hopeless! Not the kittens but me. (Several people chimed in to say they were cute but apparently not cute enough for them to adopt.) The staff at Petsmart gave us the names of several shelters but we learned that there was no assurance they wouldn't be euthanized. If the kittens weren't adopted immediately, that would be their fate because shelters lacked personnel and resources. Most shelters were at capacity from Hurricane Maria. Knowing this fact, I started feeling that the fate of the kittens was in my hands. This was not a good feeling at all.

I tried everywhere I could. At Second Union, at work. Heck, I offered to pay "child" support for the new family. I was willing to do anything to get them out of our home, but not to the shelters. Now, I realized that there is a new ingredient to all this mess. It's not exactly that I dislike animals – it's that I was (now am) worried for Javi's health. He has a compromised immune system. As many of you know he was transplanted with one of my kidneys almost seven years ago. He will take anti-rejection medication for the rest of his life so that his body doesn't reject the new kidney. (Imagine that, Javi must take medicine so that he doesn't reject me! The irony of that ☐. How bizarre is this. Javi is very excited about his new "sons" and I am at the point of a nervous breakdown. I guess, at this point, I need to let things flow and just trust. Well, it is not that time yet. We ("I") take all preventative measures and avoid anything that might get him sick. And, naturally pets come with a lot of "little extras" so we have avoided them like the plague.

Javier is much more maternal than me or maybe "relaxed". He purchased a tiny bottle and formula to feed the kittens. He bathed them, he dried them. (I made him wear gloves.) All these images touched my heart – perhaps it's what softened my heart. I still had the same worries, but watching Javi enjoy his time with the kittens, well it calmed me down. It was pacifying and relieved me of some of my fears at least for the moment. Basically, he did everything the mother cat would have done if she hadn't abandoned them. He was great with them and they seemed to adore him. They mostly left me alone until he had to work over a weekend. Javi left for the office one Saturday morning and I was forced to "lace-up". It was up to me to feed them and clean up after them. (I had to help them on to the make-shift litter box). Javi had them on a round-the-clock schedule and I wasn't about to throw away all his efforts. I'd only just finish feeding them and cleaning up after then when it was time to repeat the ordeal. He tricked me into getting close. (I guess part of my fear was also falling in love with these kittens.) I started bottle feeding them around the clock. I bottle fed them for almost two months of their little lives.

We decided that it was in everyone's best interest for them to be seen by a vet. The vet said it wasn't necessary

for me to continue to feed them formula and that they were plenty capable of eating on their own. (btw, I have no poker face.) He saw my sad reaction the second he finished his sentence. The tech working alongside him assured me that the kittens wouldn't die at this point, if I stopped the feedings. The vet knew the bottle feedings were not for the benefit of the cats anymore. He understood it was for me. I had quality time with the kittens, we bonded through feedings. Much to my surprise he came to my rescue and said that I could continue to do it if it brought me joy. And guess what? It did. No matter how bad my day was. No matter how aggressive my coworkers and or people on the street were that day. No matter any of it – these little guys helped erase the stress of the day.



What started out as a complete nightmare turned out to be one of the most joyous experiences in my life. The kittens are a ball of fun and offer unconditional love. Was it a neighbor of ours who decided it was our turn to care for strays? Or was it an act of God? I've decided it was God given – after all He is the creator of all creatures and everything He does is with love.

Javi and I are the proud parents of Moon & Bear. Moon and Bear have brought us so much joy in the past few months that we decided we could handle a puppy, so we welcomed Lucas to our family.

I'm not as fond of the puppy yet but I think he too will grow on me. In the meantime, I thank God for the little zoo at home. It's been a long time (21 years to be exact) since I've had to care for an infant. These little guys – while they are a lot of work – they bring a lot of love and affection. This love can only be felt if you get close enough. Needless to say – the unexpected arrival was a much-needed arrival for me and a lesson of Trust.

Embrace Grace / Embrace Life



“Embrace Grace” and “Embrace Life” are a part of a new ministry at Second Union Church.



This ministry provides emotional, practical, and spiritual support for single, young pregnant women who find themselves in an unexpected pregnancy. The primary goal of Embrace Grace is to empower the church to be a safe and nonjudgmental place for these young women to run to when they find out they are pregnant, instead of the last place they are welcomed because of shame and guilt. It is a 12-week program that teaches them about God's love and grace, and at the end we will give them a baby shower to honor them for choosing life and to help provide for their baby's needs.

A second part of this ministry is “Embrace Life” which provides support to the new moms. The goal of this program is to equip single, new moms to flourish in their relationships with God and not only survive in life but THRIVE! These brave moms will learn spiritual and practical ways to help navigate their way through life while using the Holy Spirit as their compass. Our first “Embrace Life” group began the first week of June. We have three moms participating, one of which just gave birth to her second child!

We need your help! Would you prayerfully consider coming along side us as we launch this ministry and serve weekly in the group meetings, or consider serving at the events that are a part of this program?

The small groups for both Embrace Grace and Embrace Life meet on Wednesdays at 7:00pm in the Conference room. The participants will need to complete an application and questionnaire.

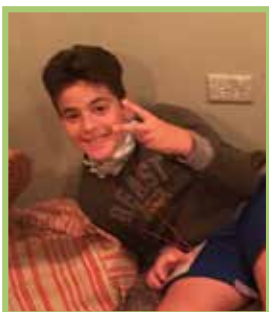
For more information on Embrace Grace ministries, please visit www.embracegrace.com. If you would like to learn more about how you can get involved, please contact Dely Seda at 787-547- 2600, who is heading up this group at our church.

Check out the Embrace Grace commercial here:
<http://embracegrace.com/media/media/i-came-here-for-peace/>

Testimonial Video:
<http://embracegrace.com/media/media/embrace-grace-church-testimonials/>

Second Union Church





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Sasha, our VBS Leader!

