

Second thoughts

SECOND UNION NEWSLETTER • AUGUST 2020

When the World Gives You Lemons...

One of the memes I recently shared with the Men's Breakfast read, "The dumbest thing I ever purchased was a 2020 planner". Ain't that the truth? Who would have ever imagined that the year 2020 would turn into this ongoing disaster, as the Covid pandemic has changed our world in ways that have created a new normal that may never, ever, be like the old normal again. We have all learned to wash our hands often, avoid close contact with strangers, and keep our face mask at the ready. So too, hopes of travel have been stifled, family reunions are verboten, and many of our favorite restaurants are either temporarily closed or permanently out of business. And going to see a movie at the Caribbean Cinema? What's that?



Likewise, as residents of Puerto Rico, meeting with others at a church service or a wedding (or even at a funeral) without the freedom to hug one another makes those occasion seem so awkward and even a little weird. It just doesn't seem right. But it is...for now...as that's the new normal, even as we miss the old.

However, as they say: "when the world gives you lemons, make lemonade". Or, in biblical terms: "all things work together for the good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). And we have found that to be true, once again, even in the midst of this pandemic.

For example, even though we were not able to meet for a couple of months as a congregation, we have been able to use Facebook Livestream to reach our resident members as well as dozens of 2UC alumni who have been off-island for years, and, in some cases, even decades. The same has been true with our Men's Breakfast, Woman's Bible Study, and Spanish-language classes via Zoom. In fact, the Men's Breakfast will soon go to two meetings on Wednesday: the first at 7am for PR residents and at 10 am for Zoomers. That's a notion that would have never come into my brain if it had not been for the pandemic, but soon it will become a reality. Thus, we are now able to reach people who live in Ft. Myers, FL, Albuquerque, NM and Lancaster, PA. Imagine!!!

Likewise, we have discovered that our monthly Council meetings can be held via Zoom which means that people like the amazing Stan Pinkerton don't have to fight 55 minutes of rush hour traffic to get here, or, in the case of Lizzette Howard, a dangerous, 45-minute trip home in the dark. Likewise, we have found that in some ways the Zoom format is a more efficient way to conduct business. In fact, last month we had our first-ever Zoom Congregational meeting.

Now don't get me wrong: I look forward to the day when this horrible pandemic is behind us we can return to some form of normalcy. And we are all praying for this to happen. But, until it does, we are all trying to make the best of a bad situation and turn those sour lemons into the sweet taste of lemonade.

I hope you will be encouraged to join us on this journey as God has even greater things to show us in the days ahead as we follow him as his special people at 2UC and beyond.

Blessings,

Pastor Bob



Second Union Church

*Worshiping the Lord in
Spirit and in Truth*

Sunday Services

10:00 a.m.

Live & FB Livestream

Weekly Meetings

Ladies Bible Study

Tuesdays via zoom 12-2

**Tuesday Fellowship
& Study**

Tuesday 7pm via zoom

Men's Breakfast

Wednesday 7am at church
& 10am via zoom

Embrace Grace

Tuesdays & Wednesdays
7pm via zoom

Prayer Service

Thursday 7pm

Rev. Robert Zoba
Pastor

Gustavo Gonzalez
Youth Pastor

Mabel Varela
Office Manager

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A message from your derelict newsletter editor:

derelict: a person who has abandoned his/her responsibilities.

Guilty as charged. This pandemic has taken a toll on just about everything, and our newsletter is no exception. I hoped to get an edition out in March, but with only one submission (from our pastor), I decided to put it off a month . . . which turned into five. How did that happen?

How about you? Have you had projects that you have 'put off' even though you had every intention of using your time wisely? In the early days of the 'stay-at-home' order and curfew, I was determined to complete a myriad of projects around the house, but I have to admit that after the first two or three weeks of fervent pursuit, my zeal wore off. In its place, a sort of tedious resignation set in. Instead of filling my time with productive pursuits, I looked at countless memes, watched way too much news - 99% of which was depressing, and watched a myriad of Netflix series - most of which were equally depressing. So a lot of those projects I was excited to undertake are still waiting there for me!

But I did keep up with my daily time in the Word - which has been an incredible blessing. I also mastered (when my connection was decent) the use of ZOOM for our Bible studies, English tutoring and Spanish classes, family 'happy hours' and birthday celebrations, I even took up hip-hop dance exercising which I began because my daughter and my grandson were doing it and I wanted to be able to share it with them!!

But life goes on - and so too does our newsletter!

One Another

Our focus in this issue will be 'one another'. During these past months a lot has happened in our church family that has gone unnoticed by most since we have not been meeting. People have left the island, new families have moved to the island, babies have been born, people have passed away, there have been marriages, graduations, job promotions, college acceptances . . . a lot of things we would normally celebrate with 'one another'.

The Bible is filled with 'one anothers':

Love one another (John 13:34 - This command occurs at least 16 times)

Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)

Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10)

Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)

Build up one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)

So even though the pandemia is making 'one-anothering' more challenging, we will use this vehicle to get to know one another beginning with our newly elected council! In future editions, we will be doing our best to get you to know your family at Second Union Church. We invite you to share your lives with us, so be prepared, I will call you!

May God bless you and keep you "one anothering",
Christie Zoba

love
one another.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. **John 13:34-35**

Did You Know?



Don and Joanne Marx planted a large victory garden at their farm (www.terrapiin-springs.com) in Southern Virginia to provide free produce to the Aarons Creek Community

during the COVID-19 crisis. They expect to produce thousands of fresh tomatoes during the summer lockdown. They are looking forward to returning to Puerto Rico for the winter if conditions permit. (see article on page

Laurie Yost has been joining the Spanish conversational group each week from Arizona via zoom. Her husband, **David**, is supposedly retired, but has been working like crazy since COVID has hit the Navajo and Apache tribes really hard in their area.



JB Wilcox is once again a part of our Men's Breakfast via Zoom. He recently went to Mt. Rainer to spread the ashes of his deceased father. Our condolences, brother. We thank God for your father's life.

Tom Von Hillebrandt is working extra hard to keep his business prospering in the face of some many lockdowns. He has also enjoyed the visits of his dear daughters during these days of remote work from anywhere that has an internet portal.



Our **Zoom VBS** went amazingly well. We weren't sure how that would work via the Internet, but it was really fun. Kids are so used to Zoom now. It makes it easy to connect with them.

Kevin & Kara Trivet have settled back in Indiana with their ever growing tribe. The twins just turned one, so that's sweet news.



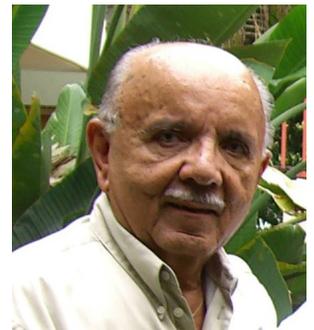
Irma Torres has been working wonders with her mom who suffered a severe stroke several months ago. She and daughter Michele have become a dynamic duo in helping Irma's mom make substantial progress. God is good!



Brian & Ari Tester had to make a sad farewell to their dear granddaughter as Andres and his wife have moved up to the States;-(

It's great to have **Tammy Tatum and Carlos Carbini** back in our fellowship after being away for so many years.

We were sad to observe the passing of **Carlos Sepulveda** last month. Carlos was very instrumental in establishing the Emmaus Walks here in PR. He was also a founding member of our Heart to Heart ministry in Old San Juan and was also very active in our choir. Thus, he was something of an institution here at 2UC and he will be greatly missed.



We were glad that our first **Zoom Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting** went well as we have a brand-new slate of great Council Members. We are so grateful for those who have served so faithfully the last year or two, and pray that the new Council will be blessed through the leadership of our new Council president, Humbelina Trevino.

Carlos Rodriguez reports that he is working overtime for the USPS as their normal daily distribution is about 2500-300 items but is now more like 7,500 plus every day! Wow! Pray for him!!!

Our condolences go out to **Luis Alberto and Loraine Rivera** as Luis lost his mom last month after a long illness and several medical setbacks. We pray that God's peace be upon this very special family.

Did You Know?

Gaby Cortes and Natalie Lorch are back from their honeymoon in America's great West. Pastor Bob officiated at their wedding in June at a beautiful beach near Arecibo. We are glad they are back as we have missed Natalie's oboe playing during worship as well as Gabi's technical expertise for our Sunday Livestreaming.



We give the Lord the glory as Gaby offered his help just when we needed, i.e. at the beginning of the lockdown. Because of our livestreaming, we are now reaching folks who have been away from 2UC for many, many years.

Richard and Diane Rhatigan report that they survived Hurricane Isaias. They are in the DR in dry dock for needed repairs to their boat. They hope to be back to PR when hurricane season is over.

Edwin & Conchi Perez celebrate the arrival of their newest grandson, Sergio. Maria Cristina is doing well as God has blessed this happy family with the gift of wonderful children.

We have been blessed by the services of **Nicolas Rodriquez** as our new keyboardist. Nicolas brings great spiritual vitality to our worship services and we are glad for his presence among us.

We are glad to have **Juan Navarro** back helping us with our sound system!



Justin Mohler and da' boyz will be back in town soon as they have been working on the family farm this summer up in Indiana. Chelsea will be very glad to have them back home here in PR...as will we!!!

We are so glad to see the smiling face of **Dennis Glenn** via Zoom at our Men's Breakfast. He and Linda were such a wonderful blessing to our congregation during their brief tenure here in PR, but they remain a blessing now that they are back on the west coast of Florida.



Elsa Melendez, one of our longest standing members, has moved off the island and will be living near Boca Raton, FL. It is with great sadness that we bid her farewell as she is a woman of great class and grace and has blessed 2UC for many years. After Pablo's passing, she and her family decided it would be best if she lived near her daughter in FL. We agree with that decision, but we are so sad to see her go.



George & Joan McMurray are still enjoying life in California, just on the perimeter of the Apple campus. They live in a wonderful assisted living facility where they are well cared for, but have the freedom to come and go as they please.

We are so glad to have **Angel Martinez** back in our midst. Angel was one of the major forces behind our wonderful mosaic in the sanctuary. So, it's great to have back among us, as well as a participant in our Men's Breakfast on Wednesdays.

Alfred Delbrey has returned to PR after several weeks up in Ft. Lauderdale, FL receiving specialized chemotherapy. He has been living with a relative up there, but has now returned to the friendly confines of PR.

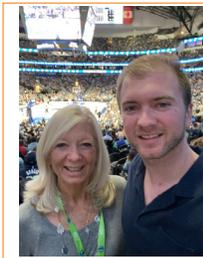
John & Evelyn Alberts are on the cusp of acquiring a new abode along the beaches of Isla Verde. The story of getting the property is a minor miracle in itself. Praise God for the way he works in every aspect of our lives.



William, Jane, Laurie and Matt Foster have moved from Indianapolis to Ireland as Eli Lilly has provided them with another amazing cultural experience.

Did You Know?

Christie Zoba was in Dallas at the beginning of March when the 'lock-down' first took place, so while the second part of her trip with Pastor Bob to visit family in California was canceled, she was able to spend time with her son **J.J. Valdés!**



Nkechi Ebube Mabray, her husband Ty and their beautiful baby Isabella Rose also live outside of Dallas, so it was a blessing to visit with them! For those of you who don't know Nkechi, she is so full of joy! God is good!



Pastor Bob celebrated his birthday in late May with a great zoom meeting with family. One of his gifts, a Vincent Van Gogh biography and puzzle, kept us all busy while visiting Christie's mom up in Northern Michigan! We had some time for a little socially-distanced float-boating and some beautiful sunsets!



Julian Montalvo



mike O'Drobinak

Congratulations are in order for our recent graduates. Both **Julian Montalvo** and **Mike O'Drobinak** graduated from St. John's School! It had to be a very challenging final semester for them, but they did it! Our best wishes and prayers for a promising future ahead.



Congratulations as well to **Sophie Termaat** who graduated from Baldwin School and has been inducted into the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

We will miss the **Termaat** family as **Stephan and Suzanne** moved to Colorado in June. We were blessed to get to know them very well, through early morning tennis games with Stephan, and Spanish conversation group which Suzanne regularly attended. While the Termaats lived in PR, they fostered countless dogs - often a dozen at a time with Love-A-Sato. We wish them all the best!



Gynnne Ann de Jesus recently flew up to New York to celebrate her daughter's wedding. Congratulations to the newlyweds!



We are grateful to **Mike LaLlave** for his timely visit to Carlos Sepulveda prior to his passing. Mike discovered Carlos on his bathroom floor where he had fallen and was not able to either stand up or contact outside help. Mike and Carlos have been the best of friends for many years and Mike's friendly, middle-of-the-night visit prevented Carlos from dying alone. That would have been a terrible tragedy for someone who had done so much for 2UC and the kingdom of God. We thank God for sending Mike as His angel of mercy during Carlos's time of need.

Take me out to a ballgame! (Pre-pandemic, obviously!)



Introducing our newly elected Council members

In an effort for us to get to know 'one another' I have asked each of the council members to submit a bio or answer some questions about themselves. This was not an easy task; most of them said they did not like writing about themselves!

Council President, Humbelina Treviño

I want to start by giving you all just a little bit on background. And I thought I'd begin with taking you through the journey that brought me here today. I was born, raised, and educated in Houston, Texas, home of the Astros, NASA, petroleum exploration center and next-door neighbor to the Blue Bell creamery. Yes, I said Astros. I am a loyal fan regardless of the scandal. How? I'll tell you. I was born in October of 19something at St. Joseph Hospital. The nuns running the Catholic facility made a teeny, tiny mistake shortly after I was born. They handed another little girl to my parents. My father noticed that the little girl my mother was breastfeeding had bushier eyebrows and more hair on her head. Dad claimed his child was nearly bald and that her eyebrows were less pronounced. (I wish he could see me now in the pandemic – all out natural. Thick hair and bushy eyebrows.) The nuns claim to have corrected the error, but I have had my doubts since I learned the truth. Imagine growing up with siblings who teased you unforgivingly. Suggesting the other child was their real sister. Imagine looking in the mirror and admitting you looked like none of your relatives. I know.... childhood can be cruel.



I would like to think that the switch-a-roo was a one-time (innocent) incident because the ward was busy that night. I mean, it had to be that, right? It was not differential treatment? Was it? Did my parents receive poor quality care because they immigrated to this country and the staff perceived us as less than? No. I have to believe they were busy, and this was an innocent mistake. Perhaps the staff and the nuns were busy watching a baseball game? We will never know.

My devoted Mexican-catholic mother is a huge Astros fan. She hated the L.A. Dodgers because my father's nephew loved them. They would argue over which team was better. We had Nolan Ryan on our team. How could you compare? It became a ritual for us. Mami would light a candle at the start of a game between the Astros and the L.A. Dodgers.

So why do I continue to support the 'Stros after the scandal? Because I'd like to think they had enough talent (that year) to win the World Series without cheating. And, because my very first introduction to prayer was borne during those long nights and the rituals.

Fast forward a little and I bring into this world two beautiful girls. Samantha and Alexandria Sanchez. To my delight they look exactly like me. I don't have to question where they came from. (Did I tell you I didn't look like anyone in the family?) Sam is petite. That is the simplest form of describing her physical build. Yet her mental and physical strength is anything but ordinary. She is a certified fire-fighter currently training with the Houston Fire Department. Alex on the other hand is little bit bigger in frame but gentler in spirit. She loves all four-legged critters and technology. She is sensitive to her friend's feelings and often serves as a counselor to them. Gaming is her current passion.

So long story short of why I moved to Puerto Rico: I married a tall, dark, and handsome Boricua. I met Javier Rodriguez in 2012 during a business trip, I learned shortly after my brief trip here that he was terminally ill. Javi was barely 40 years old. How could he be terminally ill so young? What would happen to his kids? It turns out that our blood types were a strong match and very compatible. We had surgery shortly after we met, and the rest is history.

I've grown a little since those nights of watching the Astros with my family. I can admit that Astros did not have divine intervention in 2017 AND that baseball is a funny game. I'm also grown enough to admit that society is set up to be prejudiced against people like me. That society expects us to do and say nothing when "mistakes" such as being switched at birth, bad policing, bad educators, etc. happens to my people John Lewis said it well, "When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something." He was right, it is my place to do something, but I can't go at it alone. Everything I do in life must be done through prayer and petition and with God's guidance. I cannot let fear or anger be my guide in life. Second Union Church taught me that.

Thank you for entrusting me with a leadership position. I endeavor to do good and pray that the power of Holy Spirit will guide me during my term as Council President.



Stanley Pinkerton, Treasurer

I was born in what was referred to as the Old Army Hospital at Fort Hood, Texas. I and my 3 brothers and 3 sisters were all raised in the mostly military town of Killeen, Texas (large family; hard core Army dad!). My working career includes a lot of auto mechanic work (years ago!), part time jobs with UPS and also a survey team while working my way through college, four years active and two years reserve in the U.S. Air Force [accounting specialist], and finally, a total of about 35 years as a Chief Financial Officer in two different major entertainment facilities, one in northwest Louisiana and the other here in Puerto Rico. After one marriage of 8 years and another of 18 years, I have raised a total of 5 children in a blended family including one adopted son [Daniel] plus two girls [Peggy and Erin] and two boys [Steven and Stanley Jay Jr.; aka JJ]. I started college in Central Texas Junior College, located just across from outside the Main Gate of Fort Hood, Texas, in its' extensive 4-year Computer Sciences program, and then transferred to Louisiana State University, Shreveport, after about 2-years, changing my curriculum to Business Administration and Accounting. I received my 4-year degree from LSU in 1982.



My work is what brought me to Puerto Rico, by invitation, in September 2000, so I have lived here now for almost 20 full years [and still not speaking Spanish, unfortunately]. Aside and apart from church, the Bible, and church service, I spend the little spare time I get just relaxing and reading mostly. It is very hard to pinpoint any given Bible verse as my personal favorite: there are so many that I truly love! But one that I find myself consistently "popping out", whenever I am asked that question or in any situation that calls for a quick quotation is the first part of Psalm 46:10- "Be still and know that I am God..." There is just so much peace, comfort, and closeness to God that comes from just "stopping for even just a moment" to spend time mediating on those words in that passage.

Justin Mohler, Council Secretary

Justin and his family are from Indianapolis and have lived in Puerto Rico for two and a half years, Justin and his wife Chelsea have three very bright, active and adorable young boys, Alister (8), Arlen (6) and Adlai (4). They came to Second Union on the recommendation of Matt & Laurie Foster. Justin says they were drawn to the strong bible teaching the surrounding community.

Justin's favorite Bible verse is Colossians 3:23 "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men"

His favorite "fun" book is "Ender's Game" by Orson Scott Card. In his spare time, Justin writes, "I enjoy a quiet moment by myself and cooking with the family. He also adds, "Chelsea and I are involved in the family farm back in Indiana. We raise corn, soybean and kids!" And they are doing a fabulous job.



Brenda J. Ferrer, Outreach Chair

Brenda has lived in Puerto Rico since 1966. She came to Second Union Church because she "was looking for the word of God in Spirit and in Truth without upsetting circumstances!" She has also served as our Council President.

She has an extended family that is very near and dear to her and vice-versa! Three of her four children are alive, her oldest son passed away in 1984. Every summer (except for this one!) Brenda goes on a circuit to visit kids, grandkids relatives and friends in the United States and Germany for anywhere from three months to six months! Included in the circuit is a Jenkins family reunion with over 200 in attendance.

Her favorite Bible verses are John 3:16 and Jeremiah 29:11. Her favorite movie is The War Room which she has watched many times and her favorite songs are "The Power of Your Love" and "Waymaker", both which we sang last Sunday!

In her free time, Brenda likes to do crossword puzzles. But the truth is, she has very little 'free' time, because she loves to help others and she truly has a servant's heart. She is a very active member of the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary and has been for years. Brenda is always picking people up, taking people places, volunteering to show up to help whenever needed. It is what she loves to do! She openly shares her faith and has probably invited more people to our church than anyone!

By the way, the "J." stands for June, her maiden name!!



Wanda Montalvo, Worship Chair

I lived in PR up to my 19 years of age then moved to California. I lived in Germany for three years; then to Sweet Home Alabama for 9 years, after, Arizona for 4 years and, ultimately, back to PR at age 43 until now. My favorite book is Don Quijote de la Mancha by Cervantes.

Wanda is married to her wonderful husband, Peter. She has a beautiful voice and has served as Choir Director in her previous church. She is very giving of her time and resources, and she has been a big help over the past few months at church!



Dely Seda, Membership Chair

I was born in Bayamon PR. We moved to Florida when I was 11 yrs old and lived there for one year. After that we moved to Newark, New Jersey and lived there for four years. We came back to Puerto Rico and after high school I went to Universidad del Sagrado Corazón in Santurce where I graduated with a B.A. in Hospitality and Tourism Management.

I was born and raised in the Catholic faith but my mom is a Christ Disciple, she would take me to the Catholic church one Sunday and to the Christ Disciple church the other weekend, it was very interesting. When Ethan was born I wanted him to have a relationship with God, I didn't want him to become a pew potato or someone that just went to church as a duty, I wanted him to fall in love with Jesus and I started a search for a church, after some time my brother in law Gustavo Gonzalez became the youth pastor of 2UC. My sister Sasha fell in love with the church and I decided to visit, I love the sense of community and fellowship of the Second Union and the love that there is amongst the congregation. I realized that I was home.

I am the oldest of 5 siblings: 2 girls and 3 boys. My parents have been married for 46 years and will be celebrating their 47th wedding anniversary on September 21st. My favorite bible verse is Psalm 46:10 "Be Still and know that I am God." I don't have much spare time but I enjoy scrapbooking and reading. I love to lead the Embrace Grace ministry at our church and spend time with my son Ethan doing silly things, talking, cooking, just mom and son things.

Dely also serves as the Women's Ministry Council representative and the leader and founder of our Embrace Grace ministry!



Christopher Strong, Property Chair

Christopher Strong has a long connection with Puerto Rico. At the age of seven, his family moved to Puerto Rico when his father accepted the position of the President of the Evangelical Seminary in Rio Piedras, and after some years his mother, Lillian Strong founded the Strong Education Center providing educational support to students with dyslexia and learning disabilities. Chris and his brothers Mike and Ross grew up here in the Alto Apolo neighborhood right behind the church. They attended Union Church. At the age of 17 Chris moved back to the States, but returned frequently. About eight years ago, Christopher and his brother Michael moved back to the island to help care for their mother.

Christopher began attending Second Union Church because of its proximity as they could walk to church, but also because of the close ties they had always had with Union Church in Punta Las Marias. The relationships he developed with Pastor Bob and the church family were the reasons he has continued to worship here.

For the last six and half years, Christopher has served as the chaplain for the Mariners which he finds very rewarding. This is a ministry that serves the workers who come to Puerto Rico on cargo ships. These men are very limited while the boat is in port and Chris provides transportation to get supplies, visit doctors and he coordinates worship services dockside for them. He's been especially busy during the pandemic as they are unable to get off the boat, and he has been assisting them wire money to their families.

Chris is a very willing helper at Second Union in many areas. He's been a tremendous support to the Backpack Program, a regular attendee of Men's breakfast and a previous chair of Property. One of his favorite movies is Forest Gump and in his spare time he likes to do crossword puzzles, relax and play games. Chris begins each day with the Upper Room devotional - he says he reads that before he does anything else - it's number one on his list. These days, he provides a lot of support and serves as an advocate for his brother, Mike, who is at the Parkville Home following a stroke in late December.



Chris (on the right, with his brother Mike)

Ramon China, Fellowship Chair

Ramon has lived in Puerto Rico mostly his entire life! When asked what brought him to Puerto Rico, he answered, "Our son Joshua was invited to participate on VBS 12 years ago, he loved the church he wanted to keep coming and Pastor Bob's way of preaching captivated my attention, it was a wake up call to the soul, since that moment I became an active member of Second Union Church."

Our family is composed of my lovely wife Mabel, our son Joshua and our dog Nala (the Boss). If you know us, you know we have a couple of "life daughters and sons" that we love: Matthew Rose (he is back in Ohio), Ricardo Nazario (he joined the Army), Jean Zambrana, Raquel, Emilio, Sofia, Glorimar (Kamila's mom), Alejandra del Mar (Aguiles' Mom), Kevin, Paola, Kyara, Ana Almodovar, Sebastian (our Godson) & Jean Michael; and of course Gina, Sofia and our beloved twins Ian & Sebastian aka Tico & Taco. You can add to our family all of our football players that call us Mom and Dad. Our house is an open door house for all those in need. We love to share the love of Christ with everyone who comes to our Home, serving others is our calling. Ah, also Dely & Ethan are part of our family circle.

My favorite Bible verse is Psalm 23:4. When I was a little boy my favorite audiobook was Pecos Bill. As an adult I love all football related movies but if have to choose one definitely is the Michael Or story "The Blindside"

My hobbies are playing darts, bowling, and watching wrestling TV shows. I love all sports but definitely American Tackle Football is my favorite.



We will highlight the rest of our Council Members and staff in our next issue of Second Thoughts.

The Greatest Impact on Our Lives

There is no doubt that the coronavirus has had a drastic impact on just about every aspect of our lives. Even though we would prefer to focus on other things, COVID-19 is affecting all of us. We can't read a newspaper or turn on the television without hearing about it. It has literally changed our everyday vocabulary: quarantine, isolation, social distancing, spikes in cases, contagion, curfew, lockdown, reagents, and the list goes on. We can't leave our house without our 'armor': a mask, hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, and upon entering most businesses we are instructed to wait in line, wait for the cart to be wiped down and wait for our temperature to be taken. We all feel that 'contact' is possible with whatever we come into contact with: the pump at the gas station, the shopping cart, the pen you use to sign the credit card slip, the door handle at the pharmacy. And are we not all just a little wary of others? We get a little nervous when someone gets too close. And if someone has a cough, or is sweating . . . well, we definitely steer clear of them and douse ourselves with an extra spray of alcohol when they are out of sight. It occupies our thoughts with surprising frequency.

Try to think of a conversation you have had with someone during the last week during which THE virus was not mentioned. It is highly unlikely.

What an impact it has had.

Can you imagine if Jesus had such an impact on every aspect of our lives? Think about it.

Our conversations would be filled with references to Him, the provider of all things. Our actions would reflect our conviction that His love conquers all. We would search for every opportunity to bless others and please Him. Rather than wearing the armor of a mask (or in addition to!), we would put on the full armor of God: the belt of truth, the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of peace, the sword, which is the Word of God. We would be empowered by the Holy Spirit and love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control would be our hallmark.

There has never been a time such as now when people desperately need to hear the good news. Jesus may well be returning soon to rapture His church. We are all called 'for a time such as this' to change our world.

Don and Joanne Marx: Using The Time Wisely

What else could we expect from one of the most energetic, creative and enterprising couples we know? Don and Joanne Marx certainly make lemonade out of lemons when the pandemic hit. They were back at their farm; or perhaps a more accurate description would be a homestead in Southern Virginia. They did not let the pandemic slow down their plans, if anything they became even more enterprising and started all kinds of projects when faced with the stay-at-homestead orders!

They have been busy planting and harvesting, canning, building, bee-keeping, collecting honey, opening a farm stand to bless the community they live in, and no doubt much more.

We have really enjoyed seeing the pictures of their endeavors, and we hope they will inspire you as well!



Joanne with her first fruits



Don, Keeper of the Bees



Don with the day's harvest of plums



after & before



Joanne's birthday present . . a deck behind the barn that is the wood shop, sawmill, Bee House and Craft Shop!



Farmer Don enjoying breakfast!



The beautiful color God gives . . . plum jam!



The Backpack Program: Going Strong

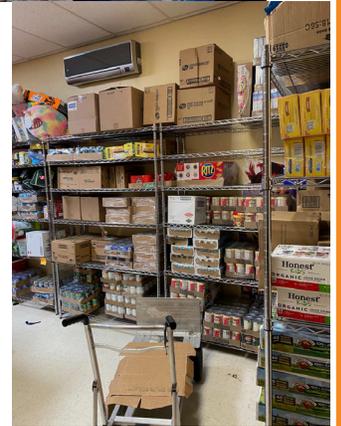


Nothing stops us from getting food to our students - not Hurricane Maria, not earthquakes, not the Sahara dust, not even a worldwide pandemic! We deliver food for students and their families in need rain or shine!

We have had to make some changes and we've instituted protocol to keep our backpack families safe. Rather than delivering the food each week to the school, the families come by the church once every two weeks for a double portion. Rather than refill the actual backpacks we provide them with plastic grocery bags. We wear masks and gloves and we require them to use masks as well. We do our best to make sure there is minimal risk. We continue to provide them with baked goods, thanks to Victor who picks up from Costco every week. And we have recently been giving them fresh fruit and vegetables from our favorite grower, Yoav!

We are grateful for all of the help and donations we have received. You know who you are, and we thank you!

A new school year means new students, so if you are interested in helping with the organizing, packing, distributing or administrative duties, please contact Christie or Loraine!



SECOND UNION CHURCH



Embrace Grace has provided blessings upon blessings to the moms in this beautiful ministry which seeks to provide support and share the love of Christ with moms who have decided to keep their babies. This decision can be a very difficult one and often brings consequences that result in their losing support they once had. Embrace Grace seeks to assist and love them! The focus of the ministry is reaching them for Christ through weekly classes and Bible study.



The message is simple: they are daughters of the one, true God and they are created in His image. He loves them so much, He sent His son to die for them. He wants nothing more than for them to enter into a relationship with Him for their benefit and for the benefit of their babies.



The culmination of the classes and study is a baby shower, which during the pandemic has been done as socially distanced as possible, with drive-by gift drop-offs followed by zoom meetings where the girls open their gifts and share in their joy.



We have so many moms in our program. We are grateful for all the wonderful donations. We are always in need of new (or almost new) items for babies including playyards, car seats, baby strollers, bouncers, etc.



If you'd like to be a part of this ministry, or if you would like to donate items or provide financial support, please contact Dely Seda!!

