

Richardson Park United Methodist Church
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The kingdom of heaven is like what happened one night when ten girls took their oil lamps and went to a wedding to meet the groom. Five of the girls were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps, but no extra oil. The ones who were wise took along extra oil for their lamps. The groom was late arriving, and the girls became drowsy and fell asleep. Then in the middle of the night someone shouted, "Here's the groom! Come to meet him!" When the girls got up and started getting their lamps ready, the foolish ones said to the others, "Let us have some of your oil! Our lamps are going out." The girls who were wise answered, "There's not enough oil for all of us! Go and buy some for yourselves." While the foolish girls were on their way to get some oil, the groom arrived. The girls who were ready went into the wedding, and the doors were closed. Later the other girls returned and shouted, "Sir, sir! Open the door for us!" But the groom replied, "I don't even know you!" So, my disciples, always be ready! You don't know the day or the time when all this will happen.

- Matthew 25:1-13 (Contemporary English Version)

How often does life work out the way that we want it to? I can think of many examples where the plan that I had envisioned for some meeting, event, or decision failed to happen the way that I foresaw. Sometimes I feel like a victim of "Murphy's Law." The observation on life that says, "If anything can go wrong, it will." It's as if the circumstances that we find ourselves in are random and beyond our control, leaving us feeling like we are a cog in some giant, cosmic machine. It's as if we were pawns in some game of random chance where God does indeed roll dice in deference to Einstein's famous assertion to the contrary. We are just a number in the vast universal "bureaucracy of life."

But in Matthew we see Jesus telling us a story about a typical day in the life of a community in the Palestine of his day. In Matthew 25:1-13 we hear the "Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids" which relates the story of ten maids waiting for the bridegroom to arrive. Unfortunately, things don't work out the way the bridesmaids had planned. The groom is delayed and they are forced to wait for him. Five of the bridesmaids have planned ahead and are prepared for the delay with extra oil for their lamps, while the other five are forced to search for oil and miss the party. Jesus is commenting on the need for preparedness, for we neither know the day nor the hour of his return, the Second Coming. This story is meant to illustrate the need for keeping alert and ready at all times in face of the final judgment that will take place. The sixteen verses immediately preceding this parable also urge us to be watchful and to keep alert. Jesus is reminding us that being a Christian is about the need for preparing our hearts and our minds to receive God as a visitor everyday.

In this parable we can see the oil for the bridesmaids' lamps as a symbol. How much better can we understand the story if we substitute the Word of God for the oil the bridesmaids are carrying. As Warren Wiersbe says in his commentary on the New Testament, "The church should be holding on to the word of life in this dark and wicked world. We need to keep the word of his patience and keep witnessing of the return of Jesus Christ." This story is meant to connect the listener to the very simple command of "Watch!" But couldn't this parable also be a comment of the state of our lives today? Is Jesus talking to us about the hectic frenzy that we all find ourselves in? Most theologians treat the young women who are the subjects of the story as if they should have known that the bridegroom was going to be delayed. However, only half of them were prepared for this eventuality. What if we treat this discourse not as a comment on the sovereignty of God, but as a comment on the methodology of God? Then this story takes on a whole new dimension. We know by the arrival of the bridegroom that God's will is going to be done, but now there is some unpredictability in the way that God's will is manifest. The plan is not as clear cut as we Sunday morning preachers would like to make it. There is not uncertainty in the outcome, but there is uncertainty in the timeline. We begin to recognize that our role in creating the kingdom here on earth can be affected by what we do with God's help.

The oil of the story, the Word of God, is now something that we can use to see through the chaos that is continually around us, and even more importantly that we can put to work in our lives to help bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth. Instead of us becoming "closet Christians" who spend all our time sequestered from the world around us, we are challenged to delve into God's Word to take it out to the dark and lonely world in which we live. We are to equip ourselves with all the extra oil that we can carry to make sure that our lamp and our witness are shining bright. We are reassured that God is the ultimate victor and in the end will be in control, but we are also challenged to be prepared with the Word when course corrections and adjustments need to be made in our precise calculations and future predictions.

The only certainty in modern life is uncertainty and change. Jesus is urging us to be ready for it with the oil of life and light, the Word. Change and chaos are inevitable, are you ready? Do you have a spiritual connection that will help you weather the storm? Now is the time to build that relationship. Now is the time to get to know Jesus a little bit better. Now is the time to receive God's grace. Now is the time to let the Holy Spirit work in your life for the greater good. Now is the time.

Blessings and Peace to you all,

Pastor Tom

U.S. CENSUS
March 19 – April 19, 2010

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau will count every person living in our nation. Part of Jesus' call to be our brothers' and sisters' keepers is to help everyone participate in their own governance. Completing your census form helps ensure your community gets its share of representation in the government and funding for essential services, including monies for schools and social agencies. The information you provide is required to be kept safe. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share respondents' answers with anyone, including other federal agencies and law enforcement entities. RPUMC will be helping the effort by hosting a community-based Question Assistance Center (QAC) that will aid families and individuals in filling out their census questionnaire. **It is our goal to help insure everyone in Delaware is counted.**

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



Ashley Aiken	2/3
Edward Podgorski	2/4
Jeff Sheridan	2/8
Carol Cathell	2/10
Mary Sutor	2/11
Brian Crozier	2/12
Terri Antonine	2/13
Byrom Price	2/13
Ellen Willard	2/14
Katherine Oakmont	2/15
Elaine Spedden	2/17
Frank Pugh	2/18
Kathy Gibbons	2/20
Robert Truitt	2/20
Kristin Fleming	2/21
Bethany Pasmore	2/21
Greg Haynes	2/22
Morgan Coverdale	2/23
Ben Brindle	2/24
Bob Thomas	2/24
Angel Adams	2/25
Alice Brosch	2/26

Note: If your name is not listed on our birthday calendar, please call the church office at 654-0961. Thank you.

ZINGO



TAPES

Don't forget to bring your Zingo tapes to worship on Sundays. Just place them in the offering plates or in the wicker basket in the vestibule. Your support is appreciated.

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN



In February, Rebekah Circle will take care of the flowers in the church.

Circle Meetings

Rebekah Circle	Tues., Feb. 2	7:00 p.m.
	Home of Marlene Johnson	
Ruth Circle	Wed., Feb. 3	10:00 a.m.
	Church Lounge	

Circle Leaders

Rebekah Circle	Marlene Johnson
Ruth Circle	Joan Stadelman/ Lee Powell

If you are interested in joining a Circle, please contact Marlene or Joan for more information.



ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Wednesday, February 17

7:00 PM - Sanctuary

WESLEY TOWER BANKS

January 2010 \$90.82

Welcome



It is with great pleasure that the RPUMC family welcomes Ella A. de Courcelle (pronounced de-core-sell) as our new Organist and Director of Music Ministry. Many of you may recall her father's shoe store, de Courcelle Shoes, in Wilmington.

Ella comes to us with a lifetime of experience as a musician. While a student at Conrad High School, she played various instruments in the marching band under the direction of our own Dick George. She studied music at the University of Delaware and received her Master of Music in Organ Performance from the State University of New York.

She has served as the Organist/Choir Director at several area churches and, more recently, as a guest organist throughout New Castle County. She also taught "Preschool Music" at the Wilmington Music School.

Our wonderful pipe organ, her past roots in this area, and the friendliness of our congregation attracted Ella to RPUMC who states "she felt right at home after visiting us for the first time one Sunday." We are thrilled to have Ella bless us with her music ministry!

~Sherlynn Aurelio
SPRC Chair

Thanks for remembering to bring in your filled banks the first Sunday of each month. Empty banks can be picked up as you leave the altar area each Communion Sunday. AGAIN, THANKS FOR SAVING YOUR CHANGE.



MISSION TREE



On Sundays in February, we are hanging **Hearts** on our Mission Tree. Hang a "heart" on the tree in honor or memory of someone special to you. Minimum donation is \$1.00.



A Note to the Choirs

I want to express my sincere thanks to the Chancel and Bell Choirs for their faithfulness during the transition between professional choir directors. God bless you for your patience with me and for doing your best. Especially, thank you for the generous Christmas gift you gave me. God bless us all as we move into a new era of musical ministry at RPUMC.

Brenda Tucker

Free Cleaning Service Available for Women Undergoing Chemo Treatments

If you know any woman currently undergoing Chemo, please pass the word to her that there is a cleaning service that provides FREE housecleaning – once per month for four months – while she is in treatment. All she has to do is sign up and have her doctor fax a note confirming the treatment. **Cleaning for a Reason** will have a participating maid service in her zip code area arrange for the service: <http://www.cleaningforareason.org>.

KIDS' KORNER
Kristi J. Doughty



The pre-school class will be studying Jesus' life. With Valentine's Day coming, we'll be looking at how Jesus showed love.

Grades 1 - 3 will continue to "follow in Jesus' footprints." We started this journey in January with the study of Jesus as a baby and boy. We now follow the footprints in the Gospel of Matthew.

Grades 4 thru 8 will be continuing Grapple - How Do I Know if the Bible is True? (The Bible is Alive and Powerful); How is the Bible Different from Other Books? (The Bible is a message from God); Why should the Bible Matter to Me? (The Bible is a map to guide your life); and they'll begin a new unit on Choices - What's the point? Why Did God Create Me? (Friendship with God).

Grades 9 thru 12 (and high school graduates) will continue with the new materials called Guy Talk Girl Talk focusing on key questions that girls and guys face, including Putting the Fun in Dysfunction (dealing with families); Finding the Balance (handling fear); Hello Ladies/Boys Boys Boys (the opposite sex) and being "caught" in the Internet.

God's Little Angels

Come join us on February 7, 2010 at 2:00 p.m. - we'll meet at the church, and leave for the Masonic Home at 2:30 p.m. to sing and deliver valentines. Come join us or donate snacks for our little angels.



UPDATE FROM RICHARDSON PARK COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM (CAP)

Holiday Programs a Great Success!

Thanks to the enthusiastic support of CAP's supporting churches and the Wilmington Christian School, CAP's needy families numbering 150 were served with special Thanksgiving or Christmas food. Through the generosity of St. Matthew Church and our friend Mr. Joe Smolka of Westview, forty families received Christmas gifts. We truly appreciate the contributions of time, food, and money made by the members of Richardson Park Church. Special thanks to the Koinonia Class, the Methodist Women's Group, the Building Maintenance Group, Joe and Brenda Tucker, Bob Evely, and Mary Alice Bair. Thanks to the Church for your budgeted donation of \$600 received in December. As always, gratitude to our shop volunteers Joan Stadelman, Glenda Donnelly, Lee Powell, and Ruth Gibney.

And to our angels Pat and Frank Pugh, for your major cash donations and astonishing amounts of purchased food, we send our deepest gratitude.

DeITech Internship

CAP's holiday work would not have been possible without the excellent services of Ms. Jaime Daly, who served as our intern from August through December. Like many good things, Jaime's internship came to an end. But our relationship with DeITech happily continues with the placement of our new intern, Mr. Frank Glover. Both Jaime and Frank are students in the Human Services program at the college. We strive to make the internship experience a fruitful one for our interns and the clients they serve. Welcome, Frank! We are glad you are here.

Mr. Ed Locke

CAP will greatly miss Mr. Ed Locke who passed away on January 14. He served the agency as accountant in its early years. Later, and for many years running, Mr. Locke would bring CAP a weekly food donation. He would come in the door carrying bags of canned goods, always being careful to say "Now this is from the Church, not from me personally." But it was from him personally, and we always enjoyed his visits and his hugs.

FOOD FOR CAP

Don't forget to bring food for CAP the first need of:



Sunday of each month. They are in

canned meats and stews, peanut butter and jelly,
hot & cold cereals, tuna, baked beans, and canned fruit.

YE OLDE SHOPPE

Browse and Shop
Every Thursday 9 - 1
January 21 Thru March 4.

THEN

books

dishes

clothes

Friday, March 5, 7:30 - 4

and

shoes

Saturday, March 6, 9 - 3

small appliances

toys

furniture

bedding & curtains

ONE GIGANTIC INDOOR/OUTDOOR YARD SALE

Lunch and Goodies Available

jewelry

RICHARDSON PARK UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
11 North Maryland Avenue
Wilmington, DE 19804-1305
654-0961



We  *Recycling!*

Please bring these items to our green and yellow bin:

Catalogs

Magazines

Newspapers

Junk Mail

TV Guides

Weekly Advertisement Circulars

Folders

Construction Paper

Poster Paper

(Please no phone books or cardboard)

Happy Valentine's Day!



SOUP SALE

Sponsored by the Mission Committee
Richardson Park United Methodist Church
11 North Maryland Avenue, Wilmington, DE 19804-1305
302-654-0961

PICK-UP DATE!!
Saturday, February 27
9 AM – 11 AM
Fellowship Hall

SOUP - \$5.00 PER QUART

Chicken Rice _____ Qts. \$ _____

Ham & Bean _____ Qts. \$ _____

Total \$ _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE NO. _____

ALL ORDERS ARE PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.

Please submit your order by Sunday,
February 21 by contacting:

Bob Evely at 528-0509
Betty Swain at 838-6044
Church Office at 654-0961

RICHARDSON PARK
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
11 NORTH MARYLAND AVENUE
WILMINGTON, DE 19804-1305

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Parsonage Phone: (302) 652-6168 E-Mail: rpumc@rpumchurch.org
Tom Pasmore, Pastor



LAY READERS

February 7
February 14
February 21
February 28

Carol Cathell
Herb Atkinson
Tod Mitten
Youth Sunday

ALTAR FLOWERS

February 7
February 14
At the Cross
February 21
February 28

Charlene & Bruce Workman
Chancel Bells & Choir
Melissa Hughes
Bob Evely
Janet Dickerson

ALTAR FLOWERS

For the month of February, Rebekah Circle is responsible for the flowers.

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PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING FOOD FOR
CAP THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH.

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Please submit your articles for the
March Messenger to the church office by
Wednesday, February 10. Thank You.

*The purpose of Richardson Park United Methodist Church is to help people
experience the amazing love of God and develop a vital relationship with Jesus Christ.*