

## FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - January 19, 2009

### The Pastor's Pen

Last week I wrote about patience, and I mentioned that patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit that Paul lists in his letter to the Galatian churches. Another of those fruits of the Spirit in that list is peace. As we read the Bible we find that Jesus promises us peace. Peace is a blessing that comes with following Christ.

In Jesus' farewell discourse to his disciples found in The Gospel of John beginning in chapter 13 and continuing through chapter 16, Jesus promises peace. In chapter 14, a passage we often hear read at funerals, Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27). At the end of the Gospel of John when Jesus appears to the disciples behind locked doors, he says to them, "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). And in Paul's theological treatise that is his letter to the church at Rome Paul says, "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Yet for all these promises of our Lord, peace seems to be an elusive thing. It is elusive in terms of a lack of enmity between people, groups of people, and nations, and it can sometimes be a terribly elusive characteristic as applied to our individual lives, that is, our having peace within.

The following story comes from the book Illustrations Unlimited and is said to be a true story. There was a retired couple that became alarmed by the constant threat of nuclear war, and so they undertook a very serious study of all the inhabited places on the earth where one might escape this seemingly constant threat. Their goal in this study was to determine which spot on earth was least likely to be affected by a nuclear war. They were looking for that place of ultimate security, or you might say, ultimate peace. And so they studied and traveled, and they traveled and studied. And they found just the place. It was the Falkland Islands, and so they packed up and moved there. At Christmas they sent their pastor a postcard from the Falklands. But the very next year the Falkland Islands became a war zone in a contest of ownership between Great Britain and Argentina. They may have found the place least threatened by nuclear war, but they did not escape war itself. They landed right in the middle of it, and the peace they sought eluded them. The security they sought eluded them.

Often we think that if we could just get the right set of circumstances in life, we would have peace. We wouldn't be constantly bothered by those things that upset our sense of being secure. Or we think that if we could just get to the right place to live we would find that secure feeling. I must confess that I sometimes entertain these thoughts, but alas that set of circumstances seems never to be found nor does that place seem to exist.

And that's because the peace that Jesus offers, yea that Jesus promises, is a peace in one's soul that we are not alone. It is that sense that we are not alienated from God by our guilt. It is an assurance we carry with us that our sins have been forgiven by the One who really counts, God our Creator and Jesus our Savior. It is that sense that whatever happens, life is good because we belong to God. We are a child of God. It is that assurance that we have lived that life that was in accordance with God's purposes for us having surrendered our lives to Christ and earnestly sought

to do his will. It doesn't mean that we have done the Lord's will perfectly. It does mean that we gave ourselves fully to being obedient to that will, and in those times when our human frailties didn't allow us to effect God's will as fully as we would have liked to do, we have the assurance that God's abundant mercy covers that.

Real peace is about being right with God. It is about not depending on our own efforts to be good or righteous or perfect, but about depending on God's mercies and God's grace to lead us in his green pastures and his still waters. It is about accepting God's goodness to be our goodness. It is about receiving God's forgiveness to cover our sin and our failures. It is about trusting in God. It is about trusting Jesus completely as our Savior.

And this is a gift of God. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Peace is the product of a real, and right, relationship with God. Just something to think about.

Until Next time, *Bro. Jim*

### **PARENTS, CHILDREN, & YOUTH**

Sunday School is such a blessing for all of us, especially for young people. It helps to build a firm foundation of faith. We want to encourage everyone to make Sunday School a priority, so perfect attendance for children and youth will now be recognized each quarter rather than once at the end of the year. In addition to recognition during the church service, children and youth will be invited to go on a fun outing. Trip options being discussed for Winter Quarter are ice skating, movies museums, or shopping. Suggestions are welcome at all times and children and youth will definitely have input on the choice.

For the purposes of this ministry, attendance for Winter Quarter will start this Sunday and go through February 28<sup>th</sup>. Spring Quarter will start March 1<sup>st</sup> and go through the last Sunday in May. Quarters will continue in three month periods. One absence will be allowed per quarter.

Serving as an acolyte on your scheduled Sunday is also very important to the church. Attendance of acolytes will also be recorded and rewarded just like attendance at Sunday School. If you know a child who would like to become an acolyte, please contact the church office.

Children and youth are very important to God and the church. As a church family we want to encourage their spiritual growth. Please join us in this vital ministry.

#### **Just So You Know...**

Pre-K and K students meet downstairs across from the nursery in the older section of the Education Building.

All other classes meet upstairs in the new section of the Education Building.

7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grades meet upstairs across from the adult class.

4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grades meet upstairs next to the youth.

1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> grades meet upstairs in the large Sunday School room.

### **WEDNESDAY NIGHT MENU FOR JANUARY 28**

Chicken & Rice Casserole, Broccoli w/cheese, Rolls, Brownies w/icing.

### **YOUTH MEETING TO INCLUDE PARENTS ON JANUARY 28<sup>TH</sup>**

On Wednesday, January 28, the youth will meet for a planning session. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend this important meeting. We will begin at 6:30 p.m.

### **UMW NEWS AND NOTES**

**Reminder:** NEED CARDS? A box of 10 note cards with a picture of First United Methodist Church on the front can be purchased in the church office for \$5.00. Also,

church cookbooks are still available for \$8.00. Proceeds benefit UMW mission projects.

**Congratulations** to Loulie Brown and Ken & Nancy Nelson who received the UMW Special Recognition Awards for 2008. All three were honored for their faithful love and service to God through First United Methodist Church. They were recognized with certificates and pins presented to them this past Sunday at the 10:30 service.

**SWAMP JOHN'S IS COMING! Sunday, March 22.** The UMW Executive Board voted to sponsor Swamp John's in March as a benefit for T. J. Moore, son of Nancy and Jerry Moore. T. J. was injured in a motorcycle accident last year and has not been able to work since. All proceeds will go to help with T. J.'s medical and personal expenses. Please be thinking how many tickets you can sell as we will need everyone's help in making this event a huge success.

#### **OUTREACH COMMITTEE MEETING**

There will be an Outreach committee meeting on Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. Members of the Outreach committee are: Jerry Gibbs-Chairperson, Sonny Duke, Beverly Duke, Martha Jo Gibbs, Harlon Griffin, Frances Griffin, Sid James, Carol James, John Benson, Polly Marsh, Pam Shaffer and Jeff Shaffer.

#### **LAY SPEAKING/SERVANT MINISTRY SCHOOL**

The next scheduled Lay Speaking/Servant Ministry School is scheduled for April 4 and 5, (Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and Sunday 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.). The location will be Ardmore UMC. Those who are interested may contact the church office for more information.

#### **THE GUILD RUTH-BIBLE STUDY**

The Guild/Ruth Bible Study of the First United Methodist Church will meet Tuesday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, at the Summitt at 2:00 p.m. Our normal meeting time is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. We are studying William Barclay's book the "Gospel of Mark". We will have "The Day of Prayer" in February, Picnic in July, World Thank Program in October, Pledge Service in November and a Christmas Luncheon in December. We would like to invite any lady in the church who is not already involved in a United Methodist Women's group. Below is a list of scheduled meetings for the 2009 year:

January 27 - Planning	February 17 - Days of Prayer
March 17	April 21
May 19	June 16
July 21 - Picnic	August 18
September 15	October 21 - World Thank Prog.
November 17 - Pledge Service	December 15 - Christmas Lunch

#### **AN UPDATE ON NICARAGUA**

A new school year will be starting in Nicaragua around the first of February. Just like here, some of the children may be dreading it and some are definitely looking forward to it. But unlike here, some are wondering if they can afford school this year. This is where we can help. If you haven't given yet to the Nicaraguan Scholarship Fund or if you would like to give some more, please do this in the next couple of weeks so that we may send them a check by the end of January.

#### **WITH ONE ANOTHER**

David Robertson  
Freddie Mae Jackson  
Oscar and Agnes McCarter  
Bill Evans  
Edythe Edwards



