

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - January 26, 2009

The Pastor's Pen

The story is told of a team of volunteers who went to the Indiana State Penitentiary to lead in a worship service. After the initial service the team was taken by the warden through a maze of cells to the wing where the prisoners were held who were awaiting execution. Only a few days prior to that an execution had taken place, and tension was somewhat high.

However, there were a couple of prisoners on death row who had become Christian during their time in prison. One of those prisoners and one of the volunteers began talking as they stood side by side in the condemned prisoner's cell. It came time for the team to leave, and the team leader said to the volunteer talking to the prisoner that they needed to leave, but the volunteer put him off saying he needed a few more minutes with the prisoner. Well, the team leader said again that they really needed to leave. With that the volunteer turned around and said they needed just a few more minutes. You see, the volunteer was the judge who had sentenced the man to death row, and they were praying together.

The team leader described the scene this way. "I stood in the entrance to that solitary, dimly lit cell, frozen in place. Here were two men - one black, one white; one powerful, one powerless; one who sentenced the other to die. Yet there they stood grasping a Bible together, the condemned prisoner smiling so genuinely, the judge so filled with love for the prisoner at his side."

The team leader goes on to say, "Impossible in human terms! The condemned prisoner should despise that man, I thought. Only in Christ could this happen. The sight of those men standing together as brothers in that dingy cell will remain vivid in my mind forever." (From Illustrations Unlimited).

The first of the fruits of the Spirit that Paul lists is love. In Paul's hymn to love in the 13th chapter of First Corinthians Paul says that "love never fails" (NIV translation). And love does not fail. That's the beauty of love. That's a part of the beauty of Christ. Jesus' life and Christ's death and resurrection prove that love does not fail.

Love is a primary component in the way of living that can best be described as the way of Jesus. Love always reaches across to the other. Love forgives. I had a person to ask me one time, "Brother Gardner, how do you forgive?" Well, forgiveness has to start with love. It has to start with a willingness to love the other persons even though the other person has done harm to you, done an injustice to you, or even done that which is justice but has drastic consequences as in the case of the story above. Love is able to do things that, as the story above says, "seems humanly impossible."

That same love with which Jesus loved - the love that Jesus expressed from the cross when he said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," and when he said to the thief dying on the cross beside him, "Today you will be with me in paradise," - is available to us. It is one of the things that comes with a relationship to Christ, trusting him as Savior and obeying him as the Lord of our lives. The Holy Spirit can, will, and does give birth to the love of Jesus in us when we commit our lives to Christ.

After the shooting in which some Amish children were killed and the Amish community immediately forgave the shooter, a Christian, who should have known better, made the comment that only the Amish can forgive like that. Other Christians can't was the implication, Methodists can't or don't was the further implication. I couldn't help myself. I became incensed by that remark. It sells the power of the Holy Spirit way short. One of the fruits of the Spirit of Christ at work within us is love, the love that reaches across chasms of hurt, anger, enmity, and a whole host of things to the other person. This love is not just available if we want it. It is given by the Holy Spirit to us to be practiced in our daily living.

And so it is that the kind of scene described in the story above about the Indiana State Penitentiary is possible. Christians forgiving people who do horrendous things to them, as seen in what happened to the Amish community referred to above, is possible. Let's not sell the Holy Spirit short. Let's not eviscerate the power of God by our unwillingness to be all that God would have us to be. That same love that can reach out to another and effect forgiveness, and healing, and the destruction of enmity between persons can live in us. The fruits of the Holy Spirit say that it is so. These things are not impossible. They are indeed humanly possible

Just something for us to think about.

Until Next time, *Bro. Jim*

WEDNESDAY NIGHT MENU FOR February 4

Pork loin, Green beans, Sweet potatoes, Rolls, Cherry cobbler.

Join us each Wednesday for a great meal and fellowship

Cost of meal is only \$5 (adults) and \$3 (children).

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.

UMW ladies who are bringing storage containers to put clothes in for their foster children should go ahead and bring those.

HAPPY ELDERS NEWS

The Happy Elders have 14 tickets to The Renaissance Center in Dickson, TN, to see the play "Shirley Valentine", March 6, 2009. Middle-aged housewife Shirley gets tires of talking to the wall and gets her groove back on an adventure to Greece in the Tony Award-winning comedy by Willy Russell. After feeling like her life is stagnant and in a rut, Shirley drops everything and heads abroad with a friend, finding romance and what her existence can be with just a little effort on her part. This is a senior matinee luncheon and play. They have gone up \$5.00 on the ticket to cover gas for the van and ticket for the driver. We need to sign up and pay by the 28th of Feb. We will leave the church west parking lot at 9:45 a.m. and usually get back by 5:00 p.m. You can sign up at the church office or call Jean Robertson at *****. First come, first served.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

The Divine Knitter, the pattern selected, the color chosen, the Knitter rejoices in loving anticipation. Jesus, The Knitter sits silently casting on the yarn, touching with reverence its texture, feeling its softness flowing through His fingers. I, the pattern, I, the yarn held in loving anticipation. I am being knit into being. Into the image and likeness of God. God, who delights in my unfolding God, who finds joy in the shawl. I am becoming Jesus, the Knitter, loves me, cherishes me, and holds me close to his heart. For I am the shawl the work of his hands. If you are interested in being part of a prayer shawl ministry at First United Methodist church, join us at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 11th, in the CLC. Just come and share with us your desire to become the Knitter. For more information, contact the Church office.

LADIES BIBLE STUDY

Ladies, you are invited to participate in a weekly Bible Study that will begin February 4th. This will be a time where we come together to study, pray, and experience God's love. Hope you will join us! Starting date is February 4, and time is from 4:00 - 5:30 p.m. We will meet in the I AM FOR KIDS building (1403 Buffalo Rd., just south of THE WAY church). We will be studying a book titled "The Power of Positive Prophecy", by Laurie Beth Jones. Books can be purchased on Amazon.com for about \$5, including shipping. For more information, call Cinde at ***** or email CindelucasAThotmailDOTcom.

TRIVIA NIGHT & SILENT AUCTION - FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Sunday, February 15, 2009 at 5:00 p.m.

\$10 per person or \$100 per table

All proceeds to benefit Youth Summer Mission Trip

Popcorn and drinks (coffee, lemonade, and water) provided

Call 762-3696 to reserve your table today!

OUTREACH COMMITTEE NEWS

Our Church has recently invited four members of our Sister Church in Nicaragua to visit with us. We have made several trips to their community and thought it would be nice to host them for a visit to our community. Hopefully, late this fall, four members of the Fountain of Life Church in Amatitan, along with a CEPAD translator will come and spend some time with us. None of these church members have ever been to the States before and they are now in the process of obtaining the necessary papers to make this trip. To help them with the cost incurred by this visit, the Outreach Committee will be very active this year, with several different fund raising activities. Our first fund raiser will be a **Sock Hop in the CLC** on Saturday night, February 28, from 6 till 9 p.m. A \$10 ticket will get you a burger, chips, soda and a trip down memory lane as you enjoy the sounds of the oldies but goodies. Priceless. **Go ahead** and start that Spring cleaning just a little early as we will be holding a **Church-wide yard sale** in the CLC on the on the 28th of March. Please be setting aside those treasures you have hidden in the closets, attics, basements and garages. We will start collecting these items the week of March 23rd.

WITH ONE ANOTHER

David Robertson
Freddie Mae Jackson
Oscar and Agnes McCarter
Bill Evans

Edythe Edwards
 Robert White
 Elmer Hackney
 Scottie McMackin
 Rev. Clifton Johnston (Rm. 103-Crockett)
 T. J. Moore
 Meredith Nordin
 Norman Marston
 Willodean Grinnell
 Rosie Coleman
 Jean Cone
 Kris Fann
 Gracie Henson

A NOTE OF THANKS

To The Happy Elders,
 Thank you all for the food you send to me when you come to Mrs. Evelyn Gallaher's. It is very good and I sure do appreciate it so very much. Thanks again,
 Love, **Bonell Short & Evelyn Gallaher**

HISPANIC MINISTRY

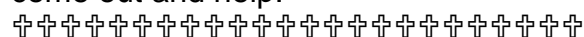
Beginning on Monday, February 2, the Hispanic ministry will be meeting on Monday nights.

AGE LEVEL MINISTRY MEETING

The Age-Level ministry committee will meet on Monday, February 2nd, at 6:00 p.m. Members of the Age-Level ministry committee are: Wayne Richardson-Chairperson, Keri McMahan, Beth Benson, Kim McKnight, Ann Cornelius, Bruce & Barbara Edwards, Harlon & Frances Griffin, and Jean Robertson.

TRADING SPACES

Sunday, February 8, at 4:00 p.m., volunteers will meet to decorate the 4-6th grade Sunday school classroom, upstairs in the Education Building. Everyone is welcome to come out and help.



**I Will Be Loyal
 To The United Methodist Church And
 Support It With: My Presence:**

Sunday, January 25, 2009
 8:15 a.m. Worship Attendance.....50
 Sunday school Attendance.....92
 10:30 a.m. Worship Attendance.....106

My Service: Sunday, Feb. 01, 2009
Acolytes: Lucy Benson & Katie Wayne

Loaves and Fishes: Tues. & Thurs.
Tues. Feb. 3: Linda Newton & Ray Price
Thurs. Feb. 5: Elmer Cooke & Jean Robertson

Attention: The Food Pantry has gotten so busy that three people are needed. If you would like to volunteer to work in the Food Pantry ministry, please contact the church office.

FLOWERS FOR THE ALTAR

The following Sundays are available in the month of February for altar

