

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

January 05, 2009 - **The Pastor's Pen**

Once there was a Sunday School class of fifth graders who would line up every Sunday morning and recite "The Apostles' Creed." Each child would say a line. One Sunday the class was reciting the creed. The first child, a little girl, recited her line flawlessly. "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." Then the next child, a little boy said, "And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord." Each child recited in turn his or her line in the creed until there came a silence. What had happened? One little girl who was sure she had the answer to their dilemma spoke up and said, "The boy who believes in the Holy Spirit is not here today." (From Illustrations Unlimited).

Sometimes we can be like that fifth grade class. There may be a hole in our beliefs. Sometimes we are not always clear about what we believe or why we believe it. In this contemporary culture of ours when there are so many varied beliefs floating around out there, we sometimes can be confused about what we as Christians are to believe. And in this present culture there are some ways of thinking from the culture that have found their way into some segments of Christian belief, that really should not be there. In short, we need to be clear about what we believe as Christians.

The origin of "The Apostles' Creed" is not precisely known, however it seems to have appeared in Rome sometime in the second century. This creed seems to have arisen to specifically refute some of the teachings of a man named Marcion. Marcion had developed the belief that Jesus was divine, but not human. Marcion had adopted a belief system prevalent in that day that said that matter is evil. Only the spirit is good, and so since the human body is physical and not spiritual, the body must therefore be evil. And if the physical body is evil, then Jesus could not possibly have inhabited a human body. Thus concluded Marcion, Jesus was not human. He was divine but not human.

The Apostles' Creed was written to refute that. And indeed as we look at the second part of this creed we can see how it was written to refute the notion that Jesus was not human. The Creed specifically states "born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried." "On the third day he arose from the dead. He ascended into heaven." Each of these parts of the creed are intended to point to Jesus' humanness. He was indeed human. He was born. He suffered pain. He was put to death on a cross. He died, was buried, and he arose from the dead. Then he ascended into heaven. He was taken up from the earth. Jesus became human, fully human, before returning to God.

And so what "The Apostles' Creed" essentially does is to lay out in brief outline form the body of Christian belief, as do other creeds like "The Nicene Creed." "The Apostles' Creed" forms a summary of basic Christian belief. You might say that "The Apostles' Creed" is the ABCs of what we believe as Christian people.

Starting on Sunday January 18th and continuing through Sunday April 19th Alecia and I will be preaching from "The Apostles' Creed." Each Sunday we will look at one of the lines in the Creed so as to see that particular belief in more depth. We will also try to elicit why that particular part of our belief is important in light of some of the assumptions in the culture around us. The first sermon on January 18th will be on the opening line, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." The second sermon will be on the line, "And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord," and so forth all the way through the creed.

In a world in which we are confronted with a much wider variety of beliefs and belief systems, as Christians we need to give some consideration to why we believe what we believe and what our particular beliefs entail in light of all the other beliefs with which we come in contact. That's the reason for this sermon series. It is my hope that we as your pastoral team will be able to help us all think about what we believe, why what we believe is important in today's world, and where our belief places us in relation to other beliefs and assumptions prevalent in today's world.

I'd like to encourage us to be in attendance regularly for what I think can be an important sermon series for us. And hopefully the little boy who believes in the Holy Spirit won't be absent when it comes his turn.

Until Next time, Bro. Jim

UMW UPDATE

I want to express a heartfelt thanks to all of the women of First United Methodist Church for your dedication and hard work on behalf of our UMW in 2008 and to the church as a whole for your love and support for us and our mission projects.

At the close of 2008 we were able to honor our commitment to Global Missions 100%. Also, at the local level monetary gifts were given to The Shelter, A Kid's Place, Santa for All Seasons, Santa for Seniors and the East End After School Program. Last but not least, contributions were made to Warmth in Winter and the Nicaraguan Scholarship Fund.

We are looking forward to 2009 and with your help continuing to do God's work through the United Methodist Women.

Mary Ann Clayton, UMW President

ANNUAL UNIT UMW MEETING

The annual UMW unit meeting will be on January 18, at 2:00 p.m. in the Rose Chapel. Please mark your calendar to come hear and meet Joy Lewter, president of the conference UMW. The program will include special music plus a review of 2008. All UMW members and all ladies of the church are urged to attend this important meeting.

ATTENTION MARY-MARTHA MEMBERS -FOSTER CHILDREN PROJECT

Now will be a great time to purchase a clear plastic container to hold your stock of clothing. You might also find items on sale to build the contents of a bag. Items needed are jeans, shirt, pajamas, underwear and socks. I've recorded the sex and age of your child, so if you've misplaced this information, just give me a call. Thanks for your continued help with this project.

Gracie Henson - *****

I hope to organize the clothes and containers by our March meeting, so hopefully this will give each one of you ample time to obtain your items and leave them at church in the UMW room

UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

UMW Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday, January 13, at 4:15 p.m.

The Finance Committee will meet on Tuesday, January 13, at 7:00 p.m.

The Administrative Board will meet on Tuesday, January 13, at 7:30 p.m.

ATTENTION - HAPPY ELDERS

We are planning another Take-out/Eat in meal for our shut-ins on Thursday, January 15, 2009. If you can help cook, serve or drive, please contact Harlon and Frances Griffin at *****. We may be contacting you. We will meet at the CLC at 10:30 a.m.

IMPERFECT PARENTS

Parents know that from the time their children are born, their kids look to them as role models. Though it would be nice to always be a good example, no one's perfect. The occasional adult temper tantrum or little white lie inevitably slips through in front of the kids. Use times like these to teach your children valuable lessons on right and wrong and forgiveness.

Losing it-Parental outbursts are common and typically end in a guilty conscience. This is a great time to remind children that everyone is human and makes mistakes and that your behavior wasn't appropriate. Apologize to your kids for any outbursts, especially if directed at them, and ask forgiveness.

White lies-Adults aren't excused from dishonest behavior. If your children catch you in a lie, use it as a lesson to remind kids that dishonesty is wrong and talk about the consequences of a lie.

Bad-mouthing-Standing on the sidelines and talking poorly about the coach to another parent in front of kids is a bad idea. Admit your mistake to kids and remind them that God wants everyone to treat others with kindness-even grown-ups.

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WITH ONE ANOTHER

