

## FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

February 23, 2009

### The Pastor's Pen

In Max Lucado's book When God Whispers Your Name there is a chapter entitled "The Choice." In that chapter Max Lucado recites each of the fruits of the Spirit, but he recites them in a particular way. He says, "I choose" and then he names the particular fruit - love, joy, peace, etc. Hear what Max Lucado has to say about faithfulness, one of the fruits of the Spirit.

"I choose faithfulness. Today I will keep my promises. My debtors will not regret their trust. My associates will not question my word. My wife will not question my love. And my children will never fear that their father will not come home."

Faithfulness is something that in current culture is often not put on display as much as unfaithfulness. In the sports world we read every day of a coach breaking a contract with a University or College to seek another higher paying or more prestigious position. We read quite often about Colleges, Universities, or Professional Teams letting a coach go before his contract expires because of usually a losing record. Neither coaches, schools, or organizations in these days are a beacon for keeping their word, that is, faithfulness.

In the business world it has not been a necessarily uncommon practice for business firms to let employees go a few years prior to their retirement so the company would not have to pay that retirement. It's also not uncommon to see employees jumping from one job to another because the new job offered more money or greater benefits. Where once it was common for persons to work their whole careers for a particular company such is rarely the case anymore. Loyalty between employers and employees and vice versa surely doesn't seem to be what it once was. There is something missing in all this that would at least seem to touch on faithfulness, keeping promises, and keeping commitments.

We see a form of unfaithfulness in the church. It is not uncommon today to hear people say, "We left that church because we didn't think we were getting what we needed." Church hopping is not an uncommon practice. And in our own United Methodist Church far too many times clergy and/or local churches seek a pastoral change rather than try to work out difficulties that may exist, many of which may not be the pastor's fault or the congregation's fault. Somewhere in there the practice of faithfulness gets thrown to the wind.

We see it in relationships. Although the divorce rate is now said to be coming down, a lot of marriages have ended in divorce. Vows were made when the couple entered into marriage, but somehow for some reason those vows were broken. There is something there about the lack of faithfulness.

And in one of my favorite songs of all time Gentle On My Mind by Glen Campbell there is a line that pays homage to a lack of unfaithfulness in relationships when the song says, "It's knowing that I'm not shackled by some ink stain that has dried along some line." Somehow we've come to be a society that while paying at least some lip service to faithfulness as a virtue, actual practice in the course of living seems to favor unfaithfulness.

Faithfulness comes into play when we refuse to continually put self first. Faithfulness often requires some sacrifice. Faithfulness is about letting devotion to something, to someone, or to a set of values come before pursuing one's own selfish concerns. Now I realize that it is not always easy to know where we place that line that separates legitimate concerns from selfish desires, but our society, it seems to me, has moved the line closer to selfish desires in recent times more so than to legitimate concerns. As Christians faithfulness is something we should seek to practice. As Max Lucado says in his book, "Faithfulness ought to be something we choose daily to practice."

Just a couple of thoughts about the way we practice faithfulness. The Apostle Paul says it this way in Philippians. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," and goes on to describe how Jesus emptied himself, how he let go his status as one with God to become one with us. Faithfulness is about letting that which really ought to be important in our lives take first place. Faithfulness is about putting the best

interest of the other first or about adhering to that which will serve in the best interest of an important value. Faithfulness is about not letting ourselves be easily offended so as to give ourselves an easy excuse to be unfaithful. Faithfulness is about being true to certain things, true to our families, true to our friends, true to our church, true to our employers, and true to our employees. Faithfulness is about letting Jesus be the Lord of our life, and we do that through obedience to all the ways of Jesus and letting those ways of Jesus have a primary place in our lives.

There are a lot of things that go into being faithful, or being true as faithfulness was once upon a time defined, but the primary ingredient in faithfulness is that self is not always the center of one's ultimate concern. Just something to think about.

Until Next time, **Bro. Jim**

#### Noon Lenten Service Schedule:

**March 04** - Cumberland Presbyterian Church

**March 25** - First Presbyterian Church

**March 11** - Solid Rock Christian Church

**April 01** - Immanuel Baptist Church

**March 18** - Sacred Heart Catholic Church

**April 08** - Calvary Hill Church of God

#### MARY/MARTHA MEETING (DATE CHANGE)

The Mary/Martha Circle will have their meeting on **Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>**, at 6:30 p.m. (Please note the change in date).

#### CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Winter Quarter for the Sunday School program ended this past Sunday with these eight children achieving Perfect Attendance; Maggie McKnight, Kamelia Wayne, Katie Wayne, Breonna Lindsey, Lucy Benson, Kelton Moore, Noah and Sophie Saliba. In celebration of their Sunday school attendance, the children were treated to a movie at Crockett Cinemas. The children had a great time and are looking forward to the next field trip at the end of May!

#### MISSION TRIP UPDATE

Those planning to go on the Mission trip to Henderson Settlement should go ahead and pay their \$185 fee as soon as possible (or no later than March 1).

#### ATTENTION!

Two trays for the dishwasher in the CLC are missing. They are a light brown plastic. One tray is flat inside, and the other has posts for holding plates during the wash cycle. If you know the whereabouts of these trays, please call the church office. The dishwasher in the CLC cannot be used without these trays. Thank you.

#### WEDNESDAY NIGHT MENU FOR MARCH 4th

Beef Stew, Grilled cheese, Peach shortcake

Workers: Jerry Thomas/Stellar classes

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

#### HAPPY ELDERS - DIXON TRIP

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 tired 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. **We will leave the church west parking lot at 9:45 a.m. and usually get back by 5:00 p.m.**

#### THE LAWRENCE COUNTY TRAVELERS

The Lawrence County Travelers have a 3-day REDISCOVER ATLANTA TOUR March 31-April 2, 2009 via a luxury motor coach with a professional driver. Five (5) meals are included, along with a city tour, the Aquarium, dinner at Mary Mac's Tea Room, Margaret Mitchell House, Lunch, New World of Cocoa Cola, Broadway musical "Happy Days", The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army @ High Museum, 2 Deluxe Continental Breakfasts and lunch at Classic on Noble. **Price per Person: Single is \$655, Double is \$555, Triple is \$525, and Quad is \$505.** **Deposit of \$100 will hold seat and balance by March 10.** See Jean Robertson or phone \*\*\*\*\* to sign up and for more information.

#### SWAMP JOHN'S IS COMING TO FIRST UMC

The UMW is hosting a Swamp John's to benefit T. J. Moore. We **NEED** your support. Tickets are now available (see Martha Jo Gibbs, church office or any UMW member). Please help us

make this benefit a huge success for T. J. Stop by and pick-up a sheet of tickets to sell to your family, friends and neighbors or co-workers. **Let's get the WORD OUT!**

### **CHILDREN'S EVENT**

Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009, at 4:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church will be showing the newest Veggie Tales DVD: "Abe and the Amazing Promise". The event will take place in the CLC, in the youth room. All participants will receive a poster, Veggie Tales sticker, a \$2 coupon towards the purchase of the movie and Veggie Tales activity sheets.

### **SOCK HOP IN THE CLC**

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28<sup>TH</sup>, 6:00 - 9:00 P.M.  
\$10.00 PER PERSON INCLUDES BURGERS, HOTDOGS, CHIPS AND SODA  
ALL BENEFITS GO TO HELP BRING A NICARAGUAN DELEGATION  
TO VISIT OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

### **SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE**

Scholarship applications for the Jackson-McClanahan, May Jones Memorial and UMW scholarships will be available in the church office beginning on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. High school seniors who are members of First UMC, First UMC youth group or who attend First UMC are eligible to apply. Completed applications are to be returned to the church office by April. 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **A LOOK AT LENT**

(Alecia Fischer-Associate Pastor)

This season of Lent is a time when we prepare our hearts, minds and souls for the sacred observances of Christ's death on Good Friday and his resurrection on Easter. In Lent, we recognize we are simply dust and ashes without Christ, we confess our sins to God, and we follow Christ to the cross, where we are made whole again. In the early Church, the six weeks of Lent were a time of training and instruction for converts to Christianity who were preparing to be baptized on Easter. The English word "Lent" is derived from the Germanic root for "long," because Lent occurs in spring, when the days lengthen.

**Forty days.** Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Sundays are excluded from the counting of the 40 days because they still remain "Little Easters" even during this solemn season. The number 40 is significant because, at the start of his ministry, Jesus spent 40 days fasting, praying and resisting temptation, as we are called to during Lent.

**Three Disciplines.** Traditionally these times disciplines are associated with Lent: Fasting, skipping a meal once a week or refraining from eating certain foods affords us the opportunity to spend more time feeding on the Word of God and being spiritually nourished through prayer and meditation. Abstinence. Removing a particular bad habit, sinful indulgence or guilty pleasure from our daily routine frees us to engage in activities that are God-pleasing and reflects in a small way the self-sacrifice that Christ endured for us. Almsgiving. Giving something extra during this time, to our church, to the poor and needy among us, to charities or other service organizations, is a way to remember that Christ gave up everything to save us from sin, death, and the devil and to free us to live a new life in him.

**One Focus.** Our focus during Lent is solely on the cross of Christ. For it was on the cross that the sinless Son of God suffered and died for us that we might be fully forgiven and live forever with him in heaven. Reading Scripture about the events leading up to Christ's crucifixion and putting a cross in a prominent place where we can see it often keep our focus strong. Matthew 26:14-27:66, Mark 14:1-15:47, Luke 22:14-23:56 and John 18:1-19:42. Remind us, Lord, that we are dust. And when reminded, lead us to remember that most wondrous miracle that in your hands, dust lives!

[Creative Communications from the Parish]

### **WITH ONE ANOTHER**

David Robertson  
Freddie Mae Jackson  
Oscar and Agnes McCarter



**FLOWERS FOR THE ALTAR**

The following Sundays are available in the month of March for altar flowers: **March 29th**. Please call the church office if you would like to place altar flowers on this date.

**JERRY THOMAS CLASS BREAKFAST**

The Jerry Thomas Sunday school class will have a breakfast on Saturday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 8:00 a.m. at the Square Forty Restaurant on the square. All current members and spouses, former members and spouses and spouses of former members are invited to attend.

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