

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - March 16, 2009

The Pastor's Pen

"Here's comes that dreamer," one of the sons of Jacob says. That son has looked out across the fields and spotted their younger brother, Joseph, coming toward them. Joseph is still a long way off, so the brothers have some time to continue talking about him. As they do, their intense dislike for this brother of theirs comes to the point of boiling over. Their father makes no attempt to hide his feelings of favoritism for this one son, and Joseph plays on that favoritism for all it is worth. Consequently, his brothers absolutely abhor him.

"Let's kill him," one of the brothers says, and they hate their brother enough to do just that. They're not kidding. They are quite serious, and they are about to do just that when someone else shows up - their oldest brother, Reuben. "You can't do that!" Reuben exclaims. "It'll kill our father." So Reuben suggests that they put Joseph in a nearby pit that is dry. Reuben's intent is to come back later, pull Joseph out of the pit, and return him to their father.

Every time we hear this story told, read, or studied it is usually being considered from the standpoint of Joseph, the wronged brother who turns out to be a very gracious man after having been "a little snot" as a boy. But let's consider Reuben this time. How many times do you suppose Reuben has heard his father, Jacob, say "I love you, son?" I'd be willing to bet you won't even need the fingers of one hand, much less two, to count the times.

Remember who Reuben is. He's the first son born to Jacob, and his mother is Leah. Remember who Leah is. Leah is the wife Jacob got when his father-in-law, Laban, tricked him. Jacob thought he was getting Rachel, and he got Leah. And then Jacob had to work seven more years for Laban to get Rachel whom he had been promised after the first seven years. How do you suppose Jacob feels about Leah? Remember now that Leah is not the pretty one. Leah is the daughter who is probably not going to be married unless Laban can figure out a way to get her married along with Rachel, and that's what he does. Now imagine how Jacob feels about Leah, and imagine how Jacob just may feel toward the first child born of that union. I doubt Reuben ever heard "I love you" from his father many times, if any.

And yet hear Reuben as he walks in on the plot of his brothers to kill their father's favorite son, Joseph. "We can't do that!" says Reuben. "It will destroy our father." Here is a man who loves his father very much even though that love has most likely not been reciprocated.

Can we do that? Can we still give love even though our love is not reciprocated? That's the kind of love we as Christians are asked to give. For you see that's the kind of love God gives, and it is for sure the kind of love Jesus gives. All we have to do to find proof of that is to read the passion narrative again. All we have to do is to look to the cross to know that's the way Jesus loves.

There are some unsung heroes in the Scripture. Sometimes we just need to look for them. They're not always the ones who get the most press. Certainly that is the case with Reuben. Joseph gets most of the press in the stories of Jacob's sons. Judah gets some, all of which is not good, and Levi gets some as the ancestor to the Levites, the tribe of

Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. But Reuben - this story is about all he gets, but it doesn't make this story unimportant.

You see, every once in a while we need a Reuben to get a mature Joseph. Reuben is capable of being a man of grace, just as his younger brother Joseph would be in time. Let's not forget Reuben's love for his father, a love that was quite extraordinary under the circumstances. Reuben is a Biblical hero even though he doesn't get a lot of press coverage, and we need the Reuben's in order to have the matured Josephs. Do you suppose Joseph ever knew that Reuben saved him from certain death? Do you suppose Joseph may have one day as he looked back to the past recognized the grace of his older brother? Do you suppose the grace of the older brother gave the younger something to draw on? Maybe. I'd like to think so.

Can we be a Reuben? That is our calling. Just something to think about.

Until next time, **Bro. Jim**

SWAMP JOHN'S IS COMING - MARCH 22!

It's Here!! This Sunday!! Swamp John's - March 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Fish, Chicken, Shrimp - Tickets are \$10.00

Desserts provided by the youth for a donation

All proceeds will go to T. J. Moore to help with medical expenses

Tickets can be bought at the door

PULASKI DISTRICT UMW SPRING MEETING

The Pulaski District UMW Spring meeting will be this Saturday, March 21, at the New Prospect United Methodist Church. Registration starts at 9:00 a.m. We will be taking the church van and will leave the CLC parking lot at 8:45 a.m. for those who would like to ride. Everyone is asked to please wear a floral or green shirt in keeping with the theme of "Taking Care of God's Green Earth." Those attending are also asked to bring seeds, seedlings, bulbs or cuttings for an exchange.

Summer Camp Opportunities

Listed Below are camp opportunities for this summer. Registration forms are available in the Church office or from the website www.tnumcamps.org Camp Scholarships forms are also available in the office.

2009 Summer Camp for Children

- June 1-3 & June 17-19 "**Just ME**" Mini Camp for graduated 2nd and 3rd Graders. This is a short version of our week-long Elementary Camp for first-time solo campers. A great introduction to camp at Cedar Crest. **Cost: \$70.00**
- June 19-20 **Mustard Seed Camp** for graduated K through 2nd Graders. This two day, one night experience at Cedar Crest is intended for first-time campers and their parents. It will introduce everyone to the learning and playing that campers experience for many years of discipleship development. **Cost: \$35 per child and \$40 per adult.**
- June 22-26, July 6-10, & July 20-24 **Agape Camp** for graduated 3rd and 4th Graders. Agape campers will explore the love that God has for each of us as they experience God's great outdoor world. Lots of fun activities and Christian growth at Cedar Crest. **Cost: \$175**
- July 6-10, July 13-17 & July 20-24 **Icthus Camp** for graduated 5th and 6th Graders. Campers will explore lives of vibrant faith in today's world as they experience all that God offers in the natural world. A wide variety of outdoor fun and excitement at Cedar Crest. **Cost: \$175**

2009 Summer Camp for Youth

- June 8-12 **Ignite the Fire** at Beersheba is an event for all youth designed to kick off the summer with a variety of experiences and opportunities to explore discipleship in the context of today's world. Fun, outdoor activity, and Christian Community will be stressed. **Cost: \$210**

- June 22-26 Camp Challenge will be a week of challenging outdoor adventure for Senior High Youth who wish to grow in faith and ecological awareness. Many outdoor activities are planned for an experience of a lifetime at Cedar Crest. **Cost: \$210**
- June 28-July 2 Camp Survivor will be a full week of outdoor fun and adventure for Junior High Youth who dare to learn about God's outdoors and how to survive the ecological challenges of the future as a person of faith. Held at Cedar Crest. **Cost: \$210**
- July 29-31 Celebration will be a camp experience like no other. Come to Beersheba and share your gifts and learn how each of our unique talents can be utilized for worship. Youth will have the opportunity to explore and develop specific musical, spoken, and visual arts to create worship experiences for the community. As an exciting part of the experience, the campers who wish to combine Celebration with Summer Sizzler will have the opportunity to lead worship during the Summer Sizzler weekend. **Cost: \$80**
- July 31-Aug 2 Summer Sizzler combines community building, small group experiences, outstanding messages from a special guest speaker, and worship to bring an amazing end to the Summer Youth Ministry camping season. Sizzler has been our traditional send-off for Seniors who recently graduated from High School. Held at Beersheba. **Cost: \$70**
- **Combined Celebration and Sizzler Cost: \$135**

The Stories Behind Easter Symbols...Easter Fire **(From Associate Pastor - Alecia Fischer)**

The new Christian Church frowned on the gods of the pagans, as non-Christians were called. Spring fire rites to honor the sun god were forbidden until the year 752 AD. By that time the pagan fires had changed into Easter fires. This is how it happened: When Saint Patrick was a boy somewhere in what is now England or Scotland, he was captured by pirates from Ireland and taken there. For six years he tended sheep; then he escaped to France and became a monk. In 432 AD a vision led him back to Ireland to bring the Christian religion to the people. Like other pagans, the Irish held spring fire rites, and did not want to give them up. So, in place of the old pagan custom, Patrick offered them a new Christian fire rite. On Easter Eve he gathered them together for huge bonfires outside the churches. The custom of stating and blessing a new fire each year spread through Europe, and in time all Christian churches made it a part of the Easter service. Along with it there developed another custom. People would light a stick in the flames and take some of the precious Easter fire home with them. As the years passed, they began preparing their homes for the new Easter fire in special ways. No fire or light burned in a house on Easter Saturday. All candlesticks, lamps, and stoves had to be clean and ready for the sacred fire. During Easter week a boy in the family would place a log with others lying in a huge pile beside the church. Then on Easter Eve the priest struck fire from flint, set the logs ablaze, and blessed the flames. Each boy found his own log and pulled it out by a wire he had left fastened to the end. Swinging it round in the air, he ran home. With the burning log, his family would light all the lamps and candles and touch off the kindling in the fireplace or stove. The moment the kindling began to burn, they would snatch it from the fire, cool it and put it away. Only when thunder and lightning threatened the house would the Easter kindling be burned again, as a magical charm. In many European villages people still carry home sticks lighted at the new Easter fire. In others the Easter flames are often taken home in lanterns. Easter fires, like the sun from which they come, mean that life and light triumph over death and darkness.

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 2nd. 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 1st.

FIFTH SUNDAY ITEMS NEEDED FOR LOAVES AND FISHES

This month has a fifth Sunday, which is a Sunday set aside to receive donations of non-food items for the Loaves and Fishes ministry. Items needed are:

Toothpaste	Diapers	Toilet Paper
Detergent (liquid or powder)	Soap	Dish detergent

Please show your support by donating one or more of these items to the pantry.

FIFTH SUNDAY SINGING - MARCH 29TH

We will have a Fifth Sunday Singing, on Sunday evening March 29th, at 6:00 p.m. Please join us at Coleman Memorial United Methodist Church and enjoy the musical talent of our church choirs as well as individuals. A time of fellowship will follow the program of music.

INVITATIONS

Dr. & Mrs. Michael G. Rutherford
Request the honour your presence
At the marriage of their daughter
Heather Renee to Ryan William Edwards
Son of

Mr. & Mrs. Bruce W. Edwards, Jr.
Saturday, the twenty-first of March
Two thousand and nine
at five o'clock in the afternoon
Riverbend Event Center
Fayetteville, Tennessee
Reception immediately following
Directions: From Hwy. 64 by-pass, turn right on Eldad Road
And in 2.5 miles turn left on Rambo Road

Pamela Faye Roberts
&
Jon Mark Brewer
Together with their parents
Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence E. Roberts
&
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Brewer
Invite you to share in the joy
when they exchange marriage vows
And begin their new life together
on Saturday, the eighteenth of April
Two thousand and nine
at three o'clock in the afternoon
Sacred Heart Catholic Church
305 Church Street
Loretto, Tennessee
Please RSVP by March 26

Noon Lenten Service Schedule:

March 25- First Presbyterian Church

April 01 – Immanuel Baptist Church

April 08- Calvary Hill Church of God

CROSSES & EGGS

It's that time of year, Easter is just around the corner and our annual Easter egg hunt is on Sunday, April 5th. We need YOUR help. The children's ministries would like you to donate plastic eggs and goodies to fill them up with. All candies must be individually wrapped. Please bring your donations to Alecia's office by Sunday, March 22, so we can get them prepared for the Easter Bunny to deliver.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT MENU FOR MARCH 18th

Chicken Picasso, Green Salad, Garlic bread, Cookies

Workers: UMYF

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

WITH ONE ANOTHER

David Robertson
Freddie Mae Jackson (Rm. 117B-Crockett)
Oscar and Agnes McCarter
Bill Evans

