

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - April 13, 2009

The Pastor's Pen

“Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”). He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” This is a paragraph that comes from the New Testament Book of Acts (4:32-37).

In this paragraph we hear about a man whose name was changed because of who he was. His name was Joseph, but because he was such an encourager in the early church the apostles intentionally changed his name. They gave him a name to fit his character, his role in the Christian faith, and his role in the church. They named him Barnabas.

Now we meet Barnabas several times in the Book of Acts. He accompanied Paul on the first of his missionary journeys, but we meet Barnabas before that. We meet him in that role of “encourager.”

After Paul became a Christian (his Damascus Road experience), Paul went to Jerusalem. There he tried to join the apostles. That would be natural since Paul believed he had been called by the risen Christ to be an apostle, but the other apostles were afraid of him. That too, was quite natural, since Paul (Saul) had been a persecutor of the church. He (Saul/Paul) had wanted to arrest Christians and maybe even have them killed. No wonder the other apostles were afraid of him.

But along comes Barnabas, the son of encouragement, and Barnabas takes Paul with him to meet the apostles. And Barnabas describes to the other apostles the experience Paul has just recently had on the Damascus Road. Barnabas intervenes on behalf of Paul to help legitimize Paul's credentials as an apostle among the other apostles. Oh what a help Barnabas was to Paul and to the church by introducing Paul to the other apostles in a way that would allow him to be accepted.

Then we meet Barnabas again in the church at Antioch. The church had spread because of the persecution that arose around the time of Stephen's martyrdom, and Christians had gone as far as the city of Antioch. There the church came alive. The apostles in Jerusalem heard about how the Holy Spirit was bringing life to the church there, and the apostles sent Barnabas, the son of encouragement, to Antioch to give leadership in the midst of all that was happening. When Barnabas saw what was going on there, he realized he needed help, and so he went and found Paul and brought him there to help. Without Barnabas Paul may have never been the strong apostle he became.

And it is from Antioch that Barnabas and Paul are set apart to go out as missionaries to Asia Minor and Europe, and we read about that missionary journey in the pages of Acts that follow the description of their being set apart.

But then we meet Barnabas again in his role as encourager and helper to those in the faith. Paul and Barnabas split before a second missionary journey could begin. Barnabas wanted to take his kinsman John Mark (whom I wrote about last week) with them, but Paul would have none of it. Mark had deserted them shortly after they began the first missionary journey, and Paul wasn't about to risk another desertion. But Barnabas seeing something of value in Mark, separates from Paul and takes Mark with him. As we saw last week, in time Mark would become a useful servant of the gospel, even to Paul, and I think Barnabas is due a lot of credit for that. Barnabas would not give up on Mark. Barnabas was indeed as named, the son of encouragement.

We have just celebrated the resurrection of Jesus, Easter. We who belong to Christ have the greatest reason of any human beings in the world to always be positive. We are equipped by the good news of the gospel to be encouragers. Whether it is speaking a kind word when a hurtful word would be easier, whether it is being positive when it would be easier to be negative, or whether it is looking for the best in a situation

instead of looking for the worst, we can all be encouragers. We are people of faith and hope. Why should we be anything other than those who encourage? Every one of us as Christians ought to be an encourager. We ought to be lifting up our fellow Christians instead of tearing them down. In fact, we ought to be lifting up all people instead of tearing them down. We ought to be supporting the church in every way we can instead of finding its faults. We ought to be sharing good news every day instead of passing on the bad. There are a lot of ways we can be sons or daughters of encouragement. And our world needs that sort of positive attitude rather the negative that is so prevalent around us.

In the way we approach the people around us and the world around us, let us follow the model of Barnabas, the original "son of encouragement." Let us be sons and daughters of encouragement, always positive rather than negative. It sure would be a lift to the church, the Christian faith, and our world. Just something to think about.

Until next time, **Bro. Jim**

CHURCH PHONE TREE

First UMC is in the process of implementing a phone tree to be used for prayer concerns, announcements, reminders and other messages. The service will contact the church family through their phone numbers (home phone or cell phone) but can also text message and email messages. **If you would not like for your phone number to be given out and would prefer not to participate**, please contact the church office and let Terri know. If we do not hear from you, we will be providing phone numbers to the service as a means of communication for our church family.

HAPPY ELDERS TRIP

The Happy Elders have 14 tickets to the Renaissance Center in Dickson, TN to see the play "Tuesdays with Morrie", May 7, 2009. The best-selling memoir of all time comes alive in a stage adaptation of Mitch Albom's touching visits with a former college professor who is dying from Lou Gehrig's disease. This is a Senior lunch matinee. The cost is \$30.00, which covers the play, lunch, gas for the van and ticket for the driver. Sign up and pay should be made at the church office or call Jean Robertson at ***** **by May 1, 2009**. We will leave the church west parking lot at 9:45 a.m. and we usually return by 5:00 p.m.

LOAVES AND FISHES

During the month of March, the Loaves and Fishes ministry served 200 families and 457 individuals with boxes of food. Monetary donations given totaled \$2,313.00, and non-perishable food items and toiletries were donated as well. Please continue to support this ministry with your prayers and your giving, which serves so many in our community as unemployment continues to rise.

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE TO MEET APRIL 19

The Scholarship Committee will meet Sunday afternoon, **April 19th at 4:00 p.m.** Those serving on this committee are: Layde Ezell, Carol Beasley, Ann Cornelius, Brenda Benson, Gracie Henson and Nancy Nelson.

CHRISTIANS CONNECT - SCHEDULING CHANGE

This month's Christians Connect has been changed and will be held on the third Sunday (April 19th), instead of the second Sunday. This month's gathering will be hosted by the Aldersgate class.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SUPPER MENU - APRIL 22

Chicken & Rice Casserole, Broccoli

Rolls & Pecan Cobbler

Workers: Friends & Fellowship Class

WITH ONE ANOTHER

David Robertson
Freddie Mae Jackson

interested may contact the church office or Alecia.

SEE YOU
AT
CHRISTIANS - CONNECT
SUNDAY, APRIL 19TH
FOLLOWING 8:15 A.M. SERVICE

