

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - July 06, 2009

The Pastor's Pen

This past weekend we couldn't help but be captivated by the news of the death of Steve McNair, the former Tennessee Titans and Baltimore Ravens quarterback. The news reports that I have watched have been filled with testimonials by former teammates, media persons, and front office people currently or formerly with the Titans organization, and others, and all these testimonials seem to revolve around one theme - that Steve McNair was a wonderful person.

Now I would not want to denigrate those sentiments at all. I believe that Steve McNair had a lot of good qualities about him. Although I did not know him, I was always impressed by the way he conducted himself when confronted by the media. He always kept his cool, and as the media has repeatedly said, he did not duck their questions. He would give as honest an answer as he could give. Those are certainly good qualities for a person to have, and I am sure there were more of those good qualities in Steve McNair. Others talked about how he treated everybody well, from the highest official in the Titans organization to the person who worked in the stadium at various "menial" tasks. That too is a good quality. Steve McNair couldn't have been as well-liked nor as popular as he evidently was without being a basically good person.

And yet the reports are now indicating that Steve McNair was unfaithful to his marriage. He was unfaithful to his family, and this infidelity, it would surely seem, played a role in his untimely death. And this was not Steve's only indiscretion. There was an occasion in the past when he had a DUI that he managed to get out of. These are some not-so-good qualities about the man, Steve McNair.

Now my aim in writing this is not to disparage Steve McNair. I don't want to do that. As I mentioned above, he struck me as a good person, and all of us have our good qualities as well as our not-so-good qualities. None of us are perfect. But what I do think we can see through this terribly tragic occurrence this past weekend is a difference between the secular way of understanding and the Christian way of understanding.

My sense of things as I hear the various news outlets reporting about Steve McNair is that they are saying that while his infidelity that seemingly played a part in his death is certainly not good, the good in his life far outweighs this "slight momentary lapse," if we may characterize it that way. And the fact that the good far outweighs the bad is seemingly enough. A secular understanding of things might well say that if the good far outweighs the bad, as seems to be the case with Steve McNair, then heaven awaits. It's a "being saved because one is more good than bad" understanding and I think that is very much a part of our culture's way of thinking in these days. Mike Slaughter, the pastor of Ginghamburg UMC outside Dayton, Ohio, a mega-church, uses the term "soft secular people" to refer to the way a lot of people in our present culture understand things. The kind of understanding I have just alluded to above would be a "soft secular" way of thinking. It is not a Christian way of thinking.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26a). As Christians we believe that trust in Jesus as Savior secures our future. We believe that a personal relationship with Christ as Savior and as Lord of our lives is that which opens the door of heaven. It is not whether the good in us outweighs the bad. Our salvation is dependent on trust in Christ. He is the Savior. Goodness in our lives outweighing the bad is not our Savior.

Now as United Methodist Christians, persons in the Wesleyan stream of understanding, we believe that our trust in Christ will make us better persons here on this earth as well as lead us into God's presence beyond death. We believe that trust in Christ will lead us away from those things like unfaithfulness in our relationships, and thus trust in Christ brings a two-fold blessing. It leads us into more holy living that makes us better persons here on earth than we would otherwise be, and it leads us into life eternal.

And so the Christian way of understanding would be and is quite different from the current "soft secular" way of understanding things. It is very unfortunate that the untimely and terribly tragic death of Steve McNair enables us to see this distinction

between secular and Christian belief, and I sincerely rue that. But this terribly tragic occurrence in the life of one, whom we must remember was a person for whom Christ died and thus a person of worth, does give us pause and does give us occasion to think on these things.

Until next time, *Bro. Jim*

USED BIBLE STORY BOOKS NEEDED FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

During Vacation Bible School, one of the nights our theme will be "Go Tell". We will be cleaning and preparing Bible story books and children Bibles to be given away at our Loaves and Fishes ministry. If you have books to donate for this, please call the Church Office at 762-3696 or bring books to the Church Office before July 19th. In advance, we thank you for your generosity. God bless you all.

TUESDAY LUNCHES

June 30 is the starting date that lunch will be provided to people who participate in the Loaves and Fishes program. **Lunch will be served from 11 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., each Tuesday through the month of July. Anyone who is interested in helping cook, serve, clean up, or would like to make a dessert for a particular Tuesday, please call the church office (762-3696) or Carol Beasley and give the date you are available. We are also accepting donations to help with the cost of the lunch - please label your donation "Tuesday lunches."** Thanks so much for your help with this new ministry and please remember us with your prayers. "The king will say to those at his right hand, '...I was a stranger and you welcomed me...just as you did it to one of the least of those who are members of my family, you did it to me.'" (Matthew 25:34-35, 40)

WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, JULY 12

On Sunday, July 12th, Stephen Hill will be singing for us in the 10:30 a.m. worship service. My reading or your response to my informal inquiry about this seemed to me to be that you think this is a good opportunity for us. The 8:15 a.m. Worship Service will be our usual format. Those who attend early worship are certainly invited to come to the 10:30 Worship to hear Stephen, and those who may have indicated that you prefer the regular worship are certainly welcome to come to the 8:15 service. I must tell you that as I went about listening to your response to this possibility last Sunday every reason I could come up with for this not to be just got brushed away. I have to believe the Lord is in this. I hope you will believe that too. If we can together believe that the Lord is in this, it just may be that the Lord will speak to us in a way and with some message that we need to hear. Let's trust God for good as we go forward.

Thank you. **Bro. Jim**

WEDNESDAY NIGHT MEALS SURVEY

Thank you to those who completed the Wednesday Night Meal Survey. The information gleaned will indeed help the Nurture Ministries Team. We received 32 surveys, and we learned some things from the information gathered. First of all we learned that we as a congregation are very positive about the Wednesday night meals. You unanimously said that you want them to continue. One of the other things we learned is that the fellowship and the convenience of the Wednesday night meals are major factors of importance to us. We also learned that you are overwhelmingly in favor of continuing the Wednesday night study. We had 6 people to respond positively in terms of helping plan the menus. We will be calling on you. There were two things that stood out in the overall information from the surveys about the meals. One is that larger portions are an area of concern, and the other is a more vegetarian friendly menu. These two concerns will be addressed as we move into the planning for the meals for this Fall. The Nurture Ministries team appreciates your taking time to share with us your thoughts about the meals via the survey. We have every intention of taking the information you gave us and using it as we go forward. There are copies of the full compilation of the data and the observations about the data in the office. If any would like to read the full text, you may get a copy of the compilation at the church office.

VBS REGISTRATION

Reminder: You may pick up your Vacation Bible School registration forms

in the church office or you may register online. VBS is July 20-24 and that date is fast approaching. You may pick up as many registrations forms as you need if you wish to invite your friends.

VBS MATERIALS NEEDED - July 20-24

Baby food jars
6 large bowls
3 blindfolds
Tarps, shower curtain liners or other covering
3 large boxes of cooked macaroni
Vegetable Oil
2 ladders of equal size
6' long board
Tape x 5
Small prizes x 5
3 corrugated cardboard wardrobe boxes
6 clean empty paint cans
Paint or colored roll paper
10 empty boxes of varying sizes
10 different prizes, from wacky to wonderful
3 \$ bills
Clothesline
6 hinged clothespins
6 large brightly colored paper plates
Masking tape
4 boxes of plastic wrap (100 ft. box)
4 trash cans
6 clean boxes of the same size
3 (or more) costumes consisting of the same # of pieces (pants, shirts, hats, glasses, etc.)
Balloons, same # as costumes
6 large rubber balls
6 pots, pans or plastic bowls, (large enough for one ball to rest on or in)
3 toilet plungers (New)
3 plunger ends
Drill
3 tennis balls
3 lengths of string (2 ft. ea.)
Hot glue
Duct tape
7 cardboard circles - Approx. 10" diameter
Self adhesive Velcro circles
2 large sheets of poster board
2 floor easels
Large book

WITH ONE ANOTHER

David Robertson
Freddie Mae Jackson
Oscar and Agnes McCarter
Bill Evans

