

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - September 21, 2009
The Pastor's Pen

From the book Illustrations Unlimited comes this story. A man owned a cabin, and right next to the cabin was an oak tree. The tree really needed to come down when the house was built, but the man's son had insisted that the tree be left, and so it was. But in his twenties the son died, and so for sentimental reasons the man could not cut the oak tree. The man tried everything he knew to pull the oak tree away from the house, but with each passing year the oak got bigger and bigger. And its trunk as well as its limbs got closer to the house.

Still, though it was a hazard to the house, the man did not want to cut the tree. The fact that his now deceased son had wanted so much to save that tree would not let him cut the tree. All the while that oak tree kept getting bigger and bigger and closer and closer to the house. Despite the man's best efforts he simply couldn't fight nature on this one, and so the oak tree had to come down.

With great remorse the man cut the tree, first the branches at the top, all the while hating every cut he made. Then he began to cut the trunk, and slowly but surely that oak tree came down, but it didn't come down without tears and a lot of heartache. But the tree had to come down. It was a decision the man had to make.

Now that decision was not a decision necessarily between what was good and what was bad. It was not a decision between good and evil. The decision the man had to make was a decision between what is good and what is better. He left the oak tree beside the house as long as he could for a very good reason, the memory of his son who died too early in life. He finally cut the tree down for a very good reason. It was about to damage his house. His decision wasn't one between right and wrong, good and bad, but rather at decision between what is good and what is better.

A lot of the decisions we have to make in life that have to do with holiness are this same type of decision. Being holy in our heart and life does not always involve a decision between right and wrong, good and bad. Sometimes the decision is between what is good and what is even better, what is best.

I have found myself with this kind of dilemma on any number of occasions. There is something I want to do, and that which I want to do is not something bad. Actually what I want to do is quite good. It is just that there is something else I need to do that would be better, and I have to make a choice between the two because they are mutually exclusive. These I think are probably the hardest choices we have to make in life, those that are between what is good and what is better. It takes some wrestling sometimes to make these decisions. Now we won't be condemned if we take the good choice, but we know in our hearts that the other choice is the better of the two. And the key words here are "we know." The decision is ultimately about what "we know" in our hearts to be the better decision. Our hearts tell us what is better, not what others may think.

Sometimes being a member of the church presents us with this very dilemma. There is something else we would rather do than attend Sunday

School and worship on a Sunday morning. This something else is not a bad thing. In fact, it may well be a good thing, but what is more important - my doing that which I'm leaning toward or my being present in the house of the Lord? The choice becomes one of choosing between good and better.

This kind of choice is a part of being holy. Holiness of heart and life will sometimes ask us to make difficult decisions, not choices between good and evil, but between that which is good and that which is even better. And the choice we make will speak in our own lives of the depth of holiness in us. What is your heart saying to you? Holiness won't let us avoid the hard choices. Just something to think about.

Until next time,
Bro. Jim

ADOPT - A - HIGHWAY

We will be picking up trash on our Adopt - A - Highway spot on this Saturday, September 26th. We will meet in the Wesley classroom at 7:30 a.m. This usually only takes a little over an hour and then we go for a Dutch treat breakfast afterwards.

VISITORS FROM AMATITAN, NICARAGUA, COMING OCTOBER 2ND

Well, the tickets are bought, and our brothers and sisters from Amatitan will finally be here October 2nd. Our visitors include Pastor Juan Gonzalez, pastor of the Fountain of Life Church, and his wife Maria Leonor, Valentine Olivas, and Jacoba Sandoval. These four represent our Partnership Committee, and they will be in Lawrenceburg until October 12th. The CEPAD representative accompanying them will be Harold Blandon, translator.

During their stay, we will need invitations for meals, for outings, and for accommodations. If you can invite our visitors along with interpreters, please call Terri at the church office. Several families have already offered our visitors their hospitality, but more will be needed. We have tentatively planned to have breakfast at the Christian Life Center each morning or go out at a local restaurant. If you would like to be part of that, let us know. Each day there are activities planned. Many lunches will be at meetings where the group will speak, or traveling from one place to the next. Dinners will probably be in homes most of the time. If you invite part of the group to stay in your home for a day or two and don't speak Spanish, no problem. There will be someone there to help translate for you.

This is an exciting time for our Nicaraguan guests, but it will be equally exciting for all of us. Those of our church who have been blessed to visit Amatitan can all tell you what a wonderful joy it has been to have met these friends and what a life-changing experience it has been. We just wish that many, many more of our Partnership brothers and sisters could come.

The Outreach Committee will meet next Thursday night at 6:00 p.m. and begin to finalize plans for this great adventure. Come to the meeting and help us plan an experience that we will always remember.

Call Terri. God bless you all for your wonderful spirit of mission.

LAY LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE TO MEET

The Lay Leadership Committee will be meeting on **Sunday, September, 27th**, immediately following the **10:30 worship service**. Members of the Lay Leadership committee are: DeAnna Saliba, Leslie Hunt, Keri McMahan, Linda Newton, Judy Benson, Beth Benson, Ray Price, Chris Thigpen and John Johnstone.

CHARGE CONFERENCE PREPARATION

Our Charge Conference this year is on Sunday, November 8th at 6:00 p.m. The following Committee Chairpersons will need to complete a report form:

Finance Committee - Cliff Philpot
Trustees - Dean Erwin
Staff-Parish Relations - Bobby Belew
Parsonage inspection Form - Gracie Henson & Brenda Benson
Celebration of Missions - Jerry Gibbs
Martin Methodist Representative - Martha Jo Gibbs
Lay Speaker Form (Lay Speakers forms are available at the church office)

NEWS FROM UMW

- Six ladies from our church enjoyed the TN Conference Spiritual Retreat at Beersheba, September 11-13. Those attending were: Mary Ann Clayton, Martha Jo Gibbs, Teresa Glover, Gracie Henson, Anita Johnston and Jean Robertson.
- Our UMW Unit recently made a donation to Bethlehem Center of Nashville.
- At their September meeting the Mary/Martha Circle packed 24 overnight bags for our local Department of Children's Services. These bags contain clothes for a 24 hour period for children who are picked up at school or day care and put into foster care immediately. This is an annual project for this circle.
- Thanks to Judy Crowder, Joann Erwin and Linda Sowell for helping to provide snacks for the training event held at Coleman on September 20.
- Deadline for registration for the UMW TN Conference Meeting on October 10, in Shelbyville, is September 30th. Forms are in the church office. The fee is \$15.00. The church van will leave the CLC at 7:30 a.m. Please bring a love offering for Bethlehem Center and wear orange.

UMW DATES TO REMEMBER

October 10

- TN Conference Annual Meeting "Who's at Your Table?"
Shelbyville FUMC at 9:30 a.m.; Register by September 30. Cost is \$15.00; forms are in the church office. Everyone is asked to wear orange and bring a love offering for *Bethlehem Centers of Nashville. The church van will leave the CLC at 7:30 a.m.

****Please start bringing in your Campbell's soup labels and the box top for education labels; these will be taken to the Fall meeting.**

November 14

- Autumn Harvest - 8:00 a.m. until 12 noon
- Bake Sale
- Breakfast
- Carry-Outs (Stew, Chili, Chicken & Dumplings, Chicken Salad, Pimento Cheese)

****Please start bringing in pint and quart jars for the Autumn Harvest**

COVERED DISH LUNCH

Everyone is invited to a covered dish lunch following the 10:30 worship service on Sunday, October 4th.

PASTOR-PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

The Pastor-Parish committee will meet following the covered dish lunch on Sunday, October 4th. Members of the committee are: Bobby Belew-Chairperson, Virgil Crowder, Gayle Wright, Marc Lerner, Jansen Holt, Judy Brewer, Brenda Benson, Gracie Henson, Tom Benson, Jerry Moore and Judy Benson.

WITH ONE ANOTHER

David Robertson
Freddie Mae Jackson
Oscar and Agnes McCarter
Bill Evans
Scottie McMackin

