

## FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - April 6, 2009

### The Pastor's Pen

“But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company” (Acts 15:38-39a). This is the account of Paul and Barnabas parting company, and that parting was over a young man named John Mark.

On their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas had taken Mark with them (referred to as John in that passage), but they weren't far into their journey when Mark left them and went back home. Now we don't know why Mark left. Maybe the work wasn't for him. Maybe he was homesick, or maybe Mark was just afraid. He couldn't give up his life in the way being a missionary in Paul's and Barnabas' company called for. For whatever reason Mark left them and went back home, and as we see, that later caused a rift between Paul and Barnabas. Barnabas wanted to give Mark another chance. Paul wanted to have nothing to do with one who wouldn't persevere.

Mark evidently had difficulty with this “running away.” In Mark's gospel we read about a young man who runs away when Jesus is arrested. The scene is described as follows. “A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked” (Mark 14:51-52). Some people believe that this young man mentioned in Mark's Gospel is none other than Mark himself. It would seem that Mark had a habit of running away.

What makes a person flee? What makes a person run away, figuratively speaking? Usually it is fear. There may be a fear of losing self in some way or losing one's life. Certainly that is a cause for anxiety and fear. Fear of losing self is not an unreasonable fear, and that kind of fear certainly happens. That fear was certainly present when Jesus was arrested and not just in Mark, but in all the disciples of Jesus.

Mark continues to deal with this thing of fear as he reports in his gospel the resurrection of Jesus. The women go to the tomb and find it empty, but as they enter the tomb the women meet a young man dressed all in white. This angel tells the women not to be alarmed, that Jesus has been raised, and that they need to go and tell Jesus' disciples to go on to Galilee. The risen Christ will meet them there. And Mark says that the women fled the tomb both amazed and afraid, and they didn't say anything to anyone because they were afraid. They ran away. Mark is not the only one who “runs away.”

Yet Mark doesn't always remain as this one who “runs away.” In Paul's letter to the Christians at Colossae Mark is mentioned at the close of the letter as sending greetings to them. Apparently Mark is in the company of Paul at that time, a later time. In Paul's second letter to Timothy Paul gives instructions for Timothy to bring Mark with him. Mark can be useful to them. And of course we know that Mark would be the one to write the first gospel. Somewhere along the way Mark overcame his fear. Somewhere along the way Mark's life was changed.

By the fact that Mark comes into the good graces of the Apostle Paul later on says that Mark was able to deal with his fear. Somewhere along the way, evidently Mark realized that to find life one had to be willing to lose one's life. One had to be willing to risk for Jesus, and we have to believe that Mark eventually did just that. He risked his life for Jesus. He, figuratively speaking, lost his life to find life. Another way of saying the same thing is to say that Mark's fear was turned to faith, and in that turning Mark was able to write the gospel known by his name.

Now one of the interesting things about Mark's Gospel is that the word “immediately” continues to show up all through Mark's Gospel, so much so, that it seems as though Mark is in some kind of hurry. But the point Mark is trying to make is that you can't really know who Jesus is until you've gone all the way to the cross with him. It's at that point, after you've gone to the cross with Jesus, that Jesus, the risen One, meets you in the everydayness of your life. Could it be that this is what happened to Mark? Could it be that Mark discovered that in going all the way to the cross with Jesus, that is, risking one's life to serve Jesus, one then meets Jesus as the risen One in every day life? Could it be that this is what changed Mark and enabled him to become useful to Paul, to serve the Lord well, and to write his gospel? I'd like to think so.

And that brings me to a point I want to make. Holy Week is important because in Holy Week we have the opportunity through our special services to walk with Jesus to the cross, and in so doing we may just lose our lives and find life in Jesus. It is important that we go all the way to the cross with Jesus. That is the only way we really know who Jesus is and who we are. That is the only way we find life. We find life by losing our lives for Jesus' sake. And that by the way is the theme in Mark's gospel. Just something to think about. Until next time, **Bro. Jim**

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

The miracle of new life is the meaning of an Easter egg. It goes back far beyond any one religion and belongs to all mankind. The ancient Egyptians, Persians, Phoenicians, and Hindus believed the world itself began with an enormous egg. People of the Samoan Islands believed their great god Tangaloa-Langi hatched out of an egg himself. The ancient Persians, Greeks, and Chinese gave one another gifts of eggs during joyous spring festivals in celebration of the new life all around them. And today, when a new baby is born to Chinese parents, they share their happiness by sending a red egg to each relative and friend.

The first book to mention Easter eggs by name was written five hundred years ago. Yet, a North African tribe that had become Christians long before that had a custom of coloring eggs at Easter. During Lent in the Middle Ages, besides giving up meat, people had to do without eggs. It was a religious custom and also a way of stretching meager food supplies a little further. By Easter a fresh hen, duck or goose egg was a precious thing indeed. Kings and nobles usually gave one to each of their castle servants as an Easter gift.

Decorating eggs for Easter became an art, especially in Eastern Europe. Wherever Easter is celebrated, there are egg games and egg contests. On the White House lawn in Washington DC every year children roll eggs down over the grassy slopes.

### **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.

### **THE EASTER CROSS**

Please bring flowers for the Cross on the lawn on Easter Sunday.

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

The UMW Executive committee will meet on Tuesday, April 14, at 4:15 p.m.

The Finance Committee will meet on Tuesday, April 14, at 7:00 p.m.

The Administrative Board will meet on Tuesday, April 14, at 7:30 p.m.

### **CHRISTIANS CONNECT - SCHEDULING CHANGE**

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

### **VBS - JULY 20-24, 2009**

Vacation Bible school is only 4 months away - July 20-24!! Our theme this year is Studio Go! Check out our website for more information, to register or to volunteer.

[www.vacationbibleschool.com/firstumclawrenceburg](http://www.vacationbibleschool.com/firstumclawrenceburg)

### **LAWRENCE COUNTY LAITY CLUB**

The Lawrence County Laity Club will meet on Monday night, April 13<sup>th</sup>, at the Summertown United Methodist Church at 6:30 p.m. A program will follow the meal.

### **WITH ONE ANOTHER**

David Robertson  
Freddie Mae Jackson

Oscar and Agnes McCarter  
Bill Evans  
Scottie McMackin  
Rev. Clifton Johnston  
T. J. Moore  
Norman Marston  
Jean Cone  
Gracie Henson  
Scott Dean  
Georgia Childress  
Brian Beller  
Al Harlan  
Barbara Harlan (Crockett Rehab.)  
Elويد Brock

...We extend our love and sympathy to Bruce Edwards and his family on the passing of his mother (Edythe Edwards) this past week.  
Earthquake victims

### **THANK YOU NOTE**

#### **To Our Church Family,**

Thank you to all those who supported our lunch (fund raiser) following the 10:30 a.m. service yesterday. We appreciate all those who shopped, helped serve and clean up and especially those who ate lunch. Thanks again for your support!

**First UMC Youth**

### **LAWRENCE COUNTY TRAVELERS - BRANSON TRIP**

The Lawrence County Travelers have the following tour to: BRANSON - FAVORITES!!! Dixie Stampede Dinner & Show, Doug Gabriel Show, NOAH @ Sight and Sound Theatre, Branson Landing, Yakow Smirinov, Dinner at The Rails, and the Shoji Tabuchi Show. May 11-14, 2009. The tour will be on a luxury motor coach with a professional driver. PRICE PER PERSON: SINGLE \$669, DOUBLE \$589, TRIPLE \$569 AND QUAD \$549. Meals included: 3 Deluxe Continental Breakfasts, 2 dinners. See Jean Robertson or call \*\*\*\*\* A deposit of \$100.00 will hold a seat and balance 30 days before departure.

#### **I Will Be Loyal**

#### **To The United Methodist Church And Support It With: My Presence:**

#### **Sunday, April 5 2009**

8:15 a.m. Worship Attendance.....40  
Sunday school Attendance.....86  
10:30 a.m. Worship Attendance.....100

#### **My Service: Sunday, April 12, 2009**

**Acolytes:** Maggie McKnight & Lucy Benson

#### **Loaves and Fishes: Tues. & Thurs.**

**Tues. April 14** Linda Newton & Ray Price & Jerry Gibbs

**Thurs. April 16** Elmer Cooke & Jean Robertson & Jerry Gibbs

### **SUMMER CAMP OPPORTUNITIES**

The Church office has information about summer camps as well as applications, or registration forms are available from the website [www.tnumcamps.org](http://www.tnumcamps.org). Those who are interested may contact the church office or Alecia.

### **YARD & GROUNDS CLEAN-UP DAY-SATURDAY, APRIL 11**

Saturday, April 11, we will have a sprucing up of the church grounds. We will begin at 8:00 a.m. and should not take more than an hour or two, depending on the number of volunteers. Bring yard tools if you can or use the extras that will be here. We can find

something for all of us to do. Let's make the grounds look even better for Easter Sunday.

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