



First United Methodist Church of Dunnellon
December 2018
NEWSLETTER

PASTORS COMMENTS

Wow, Christmas is right around the corner! We just had an amazing “Trunk or Treat” celebration, Thanksgiving came, and now Advent. The year truly has moved on. Let me give you a few thoughts to pray about as we go through December and head into January 2019. **#1** We have continued to meet every Tuesday evening at 5:30 pm for communion and prayer, offering updates on where our global UMC is regarding the vote in February on “Human Sexuality”. **#2** We have received a portable building located by our Youth Building to be used Wednesday evenings for our Children’s Ministry. It has grown by leaps and bounds. **#3** Our four Certified Lay Ministers will meet with our North Central District Board on December 10th for their every other year report to our District. Please be in prayer for them. They continue to do an outstanding job for us. **#4** This year Wilma Rundell and Ray Horne are starting their studies for this program as well. **#5** Our Chancel Choir will be offering their amazing Christmas Cantata on December 16th at the 8:00am & 11:00am services. Our Scouts will be offering a brunch in between, as they did last year. Tickets can be purchased. **#6** Our Christmas Eve Service (Candlelight Service) will be Monday evening, December 24th at 6:00pm. That service is always a tremendous “fun” blessing for all that come. **#7** Please mark January 20th on your calendar for our Worship Committee. They are putting together two services on that Sunday instead of three. One will be contemporary and the other traditional/southern gospel. Our Men’s Retreat speaker scheduled for our next retreat on March 1st – 3rd, 2019 will offering the message on January 20th. **#8** Speaking of the Men’s Retreat, we already have 26 men signed up for the retreat in March! As you can see, many exciting things to pray about – Blessings!

ANGEL TREE

The Angel Tree is up in the Narthex. The angel tree has gift card angels for under privileged children for Christmas. Please take an angel, buy the gift card amount and return it to the church by December 16th. Please tape your angel to your gift card. There will be a box in the Narthex for you to drop it in. Make Christmas more special for someone this year!

FORGET ME NOT ELDER CARE MINISTRY

We continue to meet our Mission goal providing 4 hours of care to the elderly, providing their caregivers respite one day a week. Caregivers of frail or elderly patients have the hardest job of all. Their care is often 24 hours a day, leaving little personal time or relief. Each Tuesday, from 12:30 until 4:30 in Friendship Hall, we provide social activities to anyone who is alone, lonely or just wants some companionship. We will be open throughout the rest of the summer. This program gives the caregiver a few hours of time off and a much-needed emotional break. As always, we are looking for volunteers, if you'd like to give of your time to this worthy effort, please call Grace Burks.

KINGDOM BUILDER INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Did you know... You are now allowed to “freeze” and “unfreeze” your own credit reports FREE of charge at all three of the major credit reporting bureaus, Equifax.com, Experian.com, and TransUnion.com. This is a new law that also allows this FREE protection for our children or grandchildren under the age of 16.

What is a credit freeze? A credit freeze prevents new credit and accounts from being opened in your name. Once you obtain a credit freeze, creditors won't be allowed to access your credit report and therefore cannot offer new credit. This helps greatly to stop identify theft.

To place a credit freeze on your credit report, you must contact each credit reporting bureau separately. Remember, a credit freeze is permanent and stays on your credit report until you unfreeze it. Each credit bureau has its own authentication process for unlocking the freeze so you will have to sign up with a password and/or a PIN#. Happy FREEZING!

MILITARY SERVICE BOARD

This board is in the hallway of Friendship Hall. It is available to display a picture of any service member so the congregation can keep them in their prayer while they serve our country. This includes all active duty service members as well as reservist. Reserves are routinely called up for deployment. They need our prayers as well. FUMC Dunnellon

is a praying Church!!

MISSION COMMITTEE HAPPENINGS

Michelle-O-Gram: Sherry Roberts reported that October was a great month. Each Ocala business sent \$500 when flamingos were placed at their business. Dunnellon High School football team and cheerleaders did fundraisers and donated \$1,000.

Cuba: Pastor Yabay sent a photo of the completed concrete roof on the church being built in Cientiguita. The walls will be worked on next. Rick will visit Cuba from February 6-13 and hopes to have enough funds to take along for the completion of the church. We are still in need of “over-the-counter” medications, vitamins and supplements for our sister church. There is a list of needed items and a basket in the Narthex.

PECDA-Kenya: James Githukah thanked us for the extra \$450 we sent for a yearly payment of a dedicated reservoir purchased by the water board. This will provide an uninterrupted water supply for PECDA families use and for selling to others in the community.



Honduras: Bob is in need of clothing, backpacks and scholarship money for El Pino Bilingual School as well as support for his daughter Emily who is attending Asbury. Bob has also been diagnosed with basal cell carcinoma on his arm and is considering treatment options.

Habitat for Humanity: Elizabeth Chryst said a homeowner has been found for one of the three Dunnellon properties. When the slab is poured, helpers will be needed to start the building process. Habitat has two other lots available. They are looking for qualified families.

Jesus Is: Ken Rowe shared an anonymous donor from our church donated money to Jesus Is for 4 new washing machines.

Happy Feet: Tom Tarkenton said 121 pairs of shoes have been bought this year and 158 kids are fed on the weekends through the backpack ministry.

Heifer Project: December mission emphasis is Heifer International. Carol Stroup will have the Heifer donation boxes in the narthex December 2nd. They are due back December 30th.

Hernando Homeless Ministry: Mike and I want to send a very warm thank you for the generous donations to help feed and shelter the homeless in Hernando. Also, our deep appreciation goes out to the volunteers that dedicate their time to help purchase the food and deliver it on Fridays.

We were at CONNECTIONS last week and the amount of families is growing with the winter season upon us. Children always pull on your heart and there were two in the home Friday - Elizabeth, a toddler and a little fella about eight. The young boy was stepping right up and helping bring in the food along with the adults and I didn't catch his name.

As our “J” Dollars grow we will be able to purchase more tents and sleeping bags. During the really cold nights, CONNECTIONS stays open a little longer in the afternoon to allow time for the transport vehicles to pick up anyone that wants to go to the shelters in Citrus County.

When funds allow, I will again start purchasing over-the-counter medicines from the list the doctor and nurses have provided to us. I only take these items down on Wednesday when the nurses are there. If you would be interested in helping with this need, stop by the Welcome Center and ask for an O-T-C medicine list for the homeless.

Tom Tarkenton, in charge of Happy Feet, recently asked me if I could use any money for shoes. I called Ginger West, CCFRC, right away and got sizes needed. I went to Walmart and purchased shoes and socks to take down to Hernando. Thanks Tom!

Thanks again for your prayers, “J” Dollars and your time in helping the less fortunate.

Blessings, Mike and Susie Phillips

NEW MEMBERS

On Sunday, August 26th Pastor Eddie and I held the most recent New Members Class. Seven adults and no children were in attendance, with all saying yes to wishing to join our church. In late September, we also met with 2 additional people who had been unable to attend the August 26th class. On Wednesday, September 26th, we received 9 new members during the evening service.

Rita and Stanley Spencer had brought to our attention the small “Cross In My Pocket” crosses that are

an individual reminder that Jesus is the Lord of our lives, and that are easy to carry. So for the first time, the “Cross In My Pocket” was included in the packets for each new member joining. At the end of the service, after both the new members and the congregational vows were made, the little crosses were on the Round Table for everyone at the service to pick up.

Another new member, Dave Hickman, made the lovely display of the Ten Commandments, the Birth of Christ, and the empty tomb & resurrection of Christ, which is currently displayed in the Narthex. Also, we will be having another river baptism on September 29th. These are always open to anyone who wishes to renew their baptismal vows, as well as to anyone who has never been baptized.

PRAYER QUILT MINISTRY

Prayers and Squares members meet at Friendship Hall on the 2nd Thursday of each month (unless notified differently) from 9 – 11 AM. New members are always welcome. Fabrics, batting, and patterns are available at the meeting. We will also do the cutting out of a pattern for you, layer a quilt, and assist new quilters. Due to the size of our congregation it is impossible for us to automatically make a quilt for each person whom is ill or hospitalized. Prayer quilts are made on request. A black notebook with information sheets to request a quilt for a friend or loved one is located at the Welcome Center in the Narthex. A prayer quilt may also be requested by calling Charlotte Eberhard at 352-465-7330 or Laura Rutkowski at 352-465-0527. This ministry celebrated 16 years of quilt making and providing prayer quilts for loved ones in November. We have given 1578 quilts in that length of time. Thanks to all the members of the prayer quilt ministry, the many donations of fabric and money, the support off our congregation, and all those praying for recipients, for keeping this ministry going. Prayer shawls and scarves are available for those whom have a new health issue and have already received a prayer quilt. FUMC shepherds may take one to their lambs. These are in a tub marked “Prayer Shawls”, on a shelf in the closet in Friendship Hall. Cards and bags are available to go with them. Please write the name of the person in the notebook provided. We would like to share an excerpt from this thank you note sent to June Reed from her friend Carol Blood.

“To everyone: Thank you so very much for the lovely prayer quilt and signed letter! It means so very much to me as I could feel the love and kindness with every word. God bless you all for spreading God’s love to myself and the many others lives you touch through this ministry! God’s love shines! Even though I will never be able to meet any of you, I feel a closeness to you every time I wrap myself in the prayer quilt and read the kind words and prayer each one of you had written! May God bless you all and your families! Do continue to spread God’s word and love to make a bright light shine on the darkness that affects others, as you did for me. I will always be grateful and thankful!

My dear friend June, I love her dearly and thank her for sharing me with you all to do such a truly wonderful gesture! God bless you all! Carol Blood, Blythe Island, Georgia”

SEWING FOR SOULS

Our newest sewing group has formed, Sewing for Souls. This group is for anyone that has never sewed a stitch before, to the most experienced seamstress. These ladies have already been very busy, sewing pillow-case dresses for our sister church in Cuba, making cancer caps, as well as bible bags for the United Way/Strong Families kids to receive their new bible in. Future projects planned are more bible bags for the next class graduating from our Harmony Preschool, as well as for the next group of kids that come through the Strong Families program.

Do you know of a need or project for this group? Are you interested in becoming involved with this group? Please contact the Church Office.

SHEPHERD MINISTRY

We really do appreciate the dedication of all those who are or who have been Shepherds in this prayer program. Christ has truly shown through your caring and I know that the Lord has been amazed at how all of you has shown His love through your actions. Unfortunately, as with many programs, our Shepherd program, although a great program, is in need of some changes. We seem to continue losing Shepherds due to various reasons, such as declining health, life changes, lack of interest, and so forth. Trying to provide a Shepherd for each and every family has become quite a challenge.

Therefore, the committee, with the Pastor's guidance, has chosen to work on improving this program and, perhaps, bringing some changes to the program. We hope to have the particulars worked out for the beginning of next year and will announce the details at that time. We are asking all Shepherds to continue praying and staying in contact with their Lambs as we work on this improvement. And, we ask all of you for your prayers as we work through this adjustment.



Prayers for a Blessed, Safe and Happy Holiday Season. May You Keep Christ in Your Christmas.
The Shepherd Co-Chairs- Adele and Crystal

UNITED WAY

United Way Strong Families program successfully completed the second session on November 12th. What a tremendous blessing for our church to be part of this amazing program. In addition to the families that benefit from the life lessons this program provides, the opportunity for us to minister to individuals that may otherwise not hear about the word of God is such a blessing! We were able to provide new bibles to over 20 children through this program.

United Way has asked us to host two sessions in 2019! We are so excited to be part of a program that brings so much awareness and assistance to our community.

Multiple ways for YOU to participate in this outreach are available. Volunteering your time, your resources, and most of all your prayers! Please contact the Church Office if you are interested in finding out how you can help.

COUNCIL ON MINISTRIES

Our COM has been leading the effort to keep our congregation informed of things leading up to the Called General Conference in FEB 2019. It's almost time to begin bombarding the 17 Florida Delegates to this conference with our Emails and letters. First, I want to provide you with a summary of the three plans the conference will debate and hopefully arrive at a way forward for our denomination. Read and prayerfully consider the plans described below and stand ready to convey your feelings to the Florida delegation. -Bob White

SUMMARY OF PLANS

Before the Called Conference 2019

One Church Plan- The first of 17 petitions that would enact bishops' recommended plan begins with the words, "We agree that we are not of one mind regarding human sexuality." The One Church Plan acknowledges "persons of good conscience" can interpret what Scripture says about sexuality differently. It affirms both those who believe it does not "condone the practice of homosexuality" as well as those who believe it "calls us to reconsider the teaching of the church with respect to monogamous homosexual relationships." Related petitions would amend the Book of Discipline to remove the language about incompatibility with Christian teaching and marriage being limited to a man and woman. They would allow regional decision-making bodies called annual conferences to determine whether to ordain LGBTQ clergy and allow individual churches to vote whether to perform same-sex marriages in their buildings. They also would clarify that no clergy would be required to perform a same-sex marriage and would allow them to transfer or be reassigned if their beliefs conflict with those of their churches. Bishops could not prevent or require a pastor or church to perform a same-sex marriage under the plan, and they would not be required to ordain LGBTQ clergy, who could be ordained instead by the larger jurisdictional conference's College of Bishops. Does not address graceful exit for more traditional churches.

Traditional Plan- The Traditional Plan would clarify what is meant in the Book of Discipline by a "self-avowed practicing homosexual." That would include those who have publicly stated or told clergy they are "a practicing homosexual," or those in a same-sex marriage, domestic partnership or civil union. It would make a way to recommend a bishop for an involuntary leave of absence or retirement and a Council Relations Committee to hear those requests, creating a "process by which the Council of Bishops may hold one another accountable." And it would strengthen current complaint procedures and penalties in the Book of Discipline. It also would include language that bishops are not allowed to consecrate, ordain or commission "self-avowed homosexuals" even if they have been elected or approved by the appropriate church body, and it would require bishops to sign a statement certifying, "I will uphold United Methodist standards on marriage and sexuality in their entirety." If they do not, they would be subject to review by the Council Relations Committee. As part of the process to determine whether to ordain a candidate, the plan says the Board of Ministry "shall conduct an examination to ascertain whether an individual is a practicing homosexual, including information on social media." A church or annual conference that differs in its beliefs about sexuality would be allowed to leave the denomination to form its own "self-governing Methodist church under a proposed graceful exit. Clergy would be allowed to transfer to those churches.

Connectional Conference Plan- The Connectional Conference Plan would create new connectional conferences from the denomination's existing jurisdictional conferences inside the U.S. and central conferences around the world. Central conferences either could become their own geographically based connectional conferences or vote to join one of three "theologically based" connectional conferences in the U.S., which would align like-minded congregations on matters of sexuality. The plan would include sections regarding sexuality in the parts of the Book of Discipline that those connectional conferences could change or adapt to "more fruitfully accomplish our mission in various contexts." The

so-called Traditional Connectional Conference would define marriage as between one man and one woman, would not allow same-sex weddings or LGBTQ clergy and would express a “covenantal commitment to a more traditional understanding of the doctrinal and moral standards of the church with enhanced accountability.” Like all proposed connectional conferences, it would choose its own name later. The Unity Connectional Conference would acknowledge members “are not of one mind regarding biblical interpretations related to human sexuality.” Clergy would be allowed, but not required, to perform same-sex weddings. Similarly, annual conferences could decide to ordain LGBTQ clergy, and local churches could decide to receive them. In the Progressive Connectional Conference, all clergy would perform same-sex weddings, all annual conferences would ordain qualified LGBTQ clergy and all churches would welcome LGBTQ pastors who “match the needs of the congregation and its ministry.” Does not address graceful exit for more traditional churches.

Remember “We don't change His Word, His Word changes us!”

BOMBARD THE FLORIDA DELEGATES

We have three methods to communicate with the Florida Delegates to the 2019 Called General Conference. First is by Email, address your Email to fldelegation@flumc.org. You will get a confirmation that your message has been received and forwarded to all delegates. You may write an individual letter and mail it to the Delegates. I have a list of the delegates addresses and will have them available for you. Last and certainly the easiest, we have written a letter for you to sign the signature page if you agree with the contents. Once all have had an opportunity to sign, we will mail it to the 17 Delegates. A schedule of times to sign the letter will be announced later. The letter follows:

Dear Delegates,

We the undersigned thank you for representing our Florida conference in the upcoming special Called Session of the General Conference. An awesome responsibility has been placed upon you to represent Methodist believers from all over our great state, in a matter which has great significance for the future of our denomination. Our prayer and hope is for unity in our beloved United Methodist Church. To that end, we hold the delegates to the 2019 Special Called Session in prayer, as you are led by the Holy Spirit.

We believe the overarching issue before the conference seems to be “should we stand upon the written word of God as the source and foundation of our faith”. We only know the great truths about God because He has revealed Himself to us in the person of His Son Jesus. These were recorded in the writings of the prophets and apostles. Jesus says in John 17:17 that God’s Word is truth. The credibility of our Savior is inextricably tied to the written Word. I believe the Bible is God's instructions for us to live by.

While we pray for a unified way forward, the reality of our circumstance convinces us that any decision made at the 2019 special session will likely lead to congregations and Pastors deciding they are no longer able to remain in The United Methodist Church. We believe that the Church has come to a critical juncture in our connectional life together. Our divergent understandings of biblical interpretation and theology underlie our disagreement on human sexuality. We regretfully recognize that our divisions are so significant that our inner squabbling does more harm than good to our witness to the world. We use the same words, pledge fidelity to the same Book of Discipline, cite the same John Wesley sermons, and quote the same Scriptures. With that all in mind, the United Methodist Church is practicing very different expressions of Christian faith. Continuing to operate in this manner will surely impede our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The best choice to solve this difficult situation is the Traditional Plan, maintaining our current Discipline and allowing an amicable separation for those churches and Pastors that are led by their more progressive beliefs. A well-defined exit process which is gracious and equitable will provide consistent guidelines for Bishops and their cabinets, annual conference trustees and local congregations across United Methodism as transitions are determined and negotiated. This is why I urge you to vote for the Traditional Plan and reject any option which would continue a false unity of two positions which are so clearly disunited.

Again, we will continue to keep you in our prayers as you prepare for this difficult decision. We urge your earnest prayer and consideration of our thoughts and concerns. May the grace of God, the love of Christ Jesus and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you. May God's will be done.

Blessings,