



First United Methodist Church of Dunnellon
February 2019
NEWSLETTER

PASTORS COMMENTS

Praise the Lord for the wonderful attendance this last month for our special service having Reverend Bob Laidlaw speak to us on January 20th. Bob will be leading our Annual Men's Retreat on March 1st – 3rd in Leesburg. We have right at 40 men signed up but there is still room for a few more. Just call the church office if you are interested.

As your pastor I will continue to offer, "Communion with Pastor," every Tuesday night and we will lift up information about our global United Methodist Church and global Christianity as well. These moments are wonderful in our prayers and study together. I will miss a couple Tuesday nights in February because I am flying to Chile where my oldest son Joey is getting married :-)

I encourage you all to continue praying for our General Conference in St. Louis, Missouri the end of this month. No matter what happens, change is taking place within the UMC. This is an amazing time for revival to take place in our local church and in our communities of faith. Let's never forget that God is still on the throne.

Finally, my family and I are overwhelmed with not only the parsonage you are providing for us but also providing the furniture for this amazing house. We are so moved and cannot express our thanks enough. A house warming is scheduled for Sunday, February 3rd between 11 AM and 2 PM. It may have already taken place by the time you read this letter but please know that you are always welcome or I would gladly visit with you at the church, or even better you can always take your pastor to KFC :-) Love you all in the precious Lord, Blessings!

HERNANDO HOMELESS MINISTRY – by Mike & Susie Phillips

We 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 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.

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.

LAITY PERSPECTIVE – by: Wilma Rundell

On Wednesday, March 6th we will begin the season of Lent. I would like to share with you information I found on how Lent began. Easter Sunday this year is April 21st. In the February/March 1998 edition of the "Interpreter", there was an article on "How Lent Began" by Hoyt Hickman. This article explains the beginning of Lent and how it was observed. at

first as intensive preparation for baptism at Easter.

How Lent Began

Lent began in the early church as the time for intensive final preparation and examination of candidates for baptism at Easter. Candidates spent as much as three years in preparation that was more like apprenticeship than classroom instruction. This included with a time of “scrutinizes” that became what we know as Lent. It was a time of self-examination and scrutiny by other Christians to determine if a candidate was ready for baptism.

Later, when large numbers of adult candidates were no longer being baptized, Lent became a time when all Christians were challenged to seek spiritual renewal. The first recorded reference to Lent as 40 days was at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. This time came to be seen as comparable to Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness, when he fasted and prepared himself for the ministry. Lent actually lasts six Sundays in Lent do not count as part of the 40 because Sunday is a festive celebration of Jesus’ resurrection. Even in Lent, every Sunday is a “little Easter.”

MISSION COMMITTEE – by: Rick DuCharme

As I pack and re-pack my suitcases for Cuba, I am reminded of several other ongoing Missions projects. But first, I want to thank everyone who donated funds or over-the-counter medications for our Cuba sister church. And a special thank you to Marilyn Edenfield for the donation of 65 beautiful pillowcase dresses for the little girls at our sister church. I’ll be flying to Havana, Cuba early the morning of February 6th and returning Sunday evening, the 10th. Our Cuba sister church brothers and sisters in Christ have been praying for this upcoming visit, as I bring funds to continue the construction of our new sister church. Another Mission project of importance is our support for our Missionary Scholarship Fund, which currently is Emily Wood who has begun her Spring semester at Asbury College. Her current tuition bill is \$3,114.35. If you are able to bless Emily with tuition assistance, she would be most grateful. Checks can be made out to our church with the Memo line: “Missionary Scholarship Fund.” Our mission highlight for the month of February is PECDA-Kenya. James and Grace Githuka are having health issues, but they continue to faithfully administer this grace-filled program that has changed the culture and brought hundreds to Christ in the two slum villages of Kihoto and Manera. Our church sends approximately \$1,300 per month to support James and Grace’s health care, as well as a food distribution program for the poorest of the PECDA families. Please consider providing monthly support for the PECDA-Kenya program. May God bless you for your support of our church’s mission programs.

NEW MEMBERS – by: Crystal Goins

Pastor Eddie, Adele Strasburger, and I had a new members class on January 30th with 12 people attending. The previous Sunday, January 27th, Pastor Eddie also led a tour of the church building and went over its history. The interested new members will be joining on Wednesday evening, February 6th, and on Sunday, February 10th. Blessings to everyone.

PRAYER QUILT MINISTRY - by: Charlotte Eberhard

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. At the close of 2018 we had distributed a total of 1587 quilts, 119 in 2018. We started 2018 with \$1015 and received an additional \$409 in contributions. We had a total expenditure of \$895.71, \$ 371.40 of that amount going to the purchase of the blue bags with the Prayer Quilt insignia on it. We ended the year with \$572.85 in our account. We will need to order more of the blue bags for 2019. Thus, contributions to meet the needs of the coming year are greatly needed and appreciated. 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 this thank you note from Mary Jones: "I feel so blessed to receive the beautiful prayer quilt with all the love and well wishes expressed. This being my second time having cancer, I truly believe God hears our prayers and answers them. I will treasure this prayer quilt for the inspiration it will give me from this time on. Thank you. In Christ, Mary Jones."

SEWING FOR SOULS

Our newest sewing group, Sewing for Souls continues to grow and take on more projects! 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 "walker bags".

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.

COUNCIL ON MINISTRIES

The COM has been leading the effort to keep our congregation informed of things leading up to the Called General Conference in FEB 2019. The conference is rapidly approaching, we recently sent a letter to all 17 of the Florida Delegates signed by over 200 of our congregation. Thank you all for supporting a continued bible based traditional church model. For those of you still wanting your position heard there's still time. You can send an Email to the following address, it will be forwarded to the delegates. **fidelegation@fumc.org** A copy of the letter we sent follows:

January 29, 2019

Dear Florida Delegate to the 2019 Called General Conference,

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. We 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,

First United Methodist Church Dunnellon, Florida

YOUTH PROGRAM - by Debbie Wright - The youth have started off the year with a big bang. We now know summer youth camp cost will be \$420 per camper. The youth will be earning one point for every dollar that they need to go to camp. we are doing projects around the church and helping different groups with projects for donations to be made to the youth group fund. We will be working in the prayer garden at the designated youth area that was picked years ago. We will be working on the parking stops in the parking lot. The youth have been working on the youth building cleaning and straightening up. Our goal has a group is to be more unified as a group and with our church family. The youth are looking at dates for a youth Sunday in the future. Please let us know if we can help you with projects around your home or areas in the church.

We appreciate all the support that has been shown to the youth program in the past. We are trusting the Lord for it to grow stronger in 2019.