

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

April 25, 2011

“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand.” These are the opening words of Romans chapter 5. Paul has just described Abraham’s relationship to God as one in which Abraham was justified as being in right relationship with God through his trust in God. Abraham becomes the prototype of what it is to be justified by faith.

Like Abraham we can be justified by faith, that is put in right relationship with God, through faith. Jesus’ death and resurrection lays the foundation for trust. Jesus died for us. That proves God’s love for us, and what’s more Jesus died for us while we were still sinners. That proves God’s love even more. God has initiated relationship with us. God has moved toward us in Jesus crucified and risen.

And Jesus crucified for our sins and raised from the dead, proves also that God is faithful. God does not abandon those who trust in him. One of the statements we read a number of times in sermons in the Book of Acts after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension is that “God did not abandon his holy one to death.” Rather God raised Jesus from the dead, Jesus who had been faithful to God. That lays the foundation for our faith. God does not abandon those who trust in him. God does not abandon those who have faith in him. Thus we can trust God, and we can trust Jesus. God and Jesus make that possible through Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.

So in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus the foundation is laid for our faith, and in trusting in God through Jesus we are justified. That is, we enter into right relationship with God. Our sins are forgiven. They separate us from God no more, and we find that God loves us. We find that we have worth as persons because God loves us, and we find that we can trust God. Such is right relationship with God. Such is justification.

And that justification brings something with it that is truly wonderful. We have peace with God. We don’t have to worry about whether we are loved by God or not. We are. God has proven that in Jesus. We don’t have to worry about whether we have worth or not as a human being. We do. Jesus dying on the cross for us establishes that we human beings have worth in God’s eyes. And we don’t have to worry about trying to do that which will make us acceptable to God. We are already accepted. In Jesus we are claimed as those who belong to God. So we have peace with God. We are accepted. We are loved. We belong to God through Christ who died for us and rose again.

In the Book of Hebrews we read these words. “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain’s” (Hebrews 11:4). While the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis does not really tell us that Abel’s offering was accepted by God because of Abel’s faith, we can surmise as much, I think. The story in Genesis is actually more about Cain than it is about Abel. Cain seems to be looking for acceptance by God. He offers his sacrifice in the hope that he will be accepted by God, and when God doesn’t accept Cain’s sacrifice, Cain becomes angry with God and envious of his brother Abel. And God says to Cain that if he does that which is right,

he will be accepted.

So the tenor of the story seems to be that Cain offered his sacrifice to God in the hope that he would be accepted by God. Abel seems to have offered his sacrifice to God out of gratitude that he belonged to God, that he was indeed in right relationship with God. Abel offered his sacrifice by faith. Cain offered his sacrifice in the hope of winning God's approval. And the difference between the two seems to be that Abel had confidence that he was loved and accepted by God while Cain was trying to do something, maybe even trying to do enough, to be loved and accepted by God. One represents faith, Abel, and one represents unfaith, Cain. And one has peace with God, Abel, and the other does not, Cain.

The great message of Easter is that God has laid the foundation through Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead for us to be able to trust God and come before God in the full assurance that we are loved, that we are accepted, and that we have worth in God's eyes. To live out of that kind of attitude is to live by faith in God, and to live out of that kind of attitude is to have peace within ourselves. We are not bound to striving for God's acceptance. We already have it in Jesus. We indeed do "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand." We can live in the calm assurance that we belong to God and that our sins are forgiven. Nothing separates us from the love of God in Christ Jesus the Lord (Romans 8:38).

This is good news. This is the gospel. This is something to celebrate, and this we do celebrate. That's what Easter is - the celebration of God's love for us given in concrete terms whereby we may trust God, and trust Christ, completely. God, through our Lord Jesus crucified and risen, invites just that trust, and in that trust we find peace, 'the peace that passes all understanding' (Philippians 4:7). Praise be to God, and definitely something to think about, and rejoice in.

Until next time,
Bro. Jim

UPCOMING MEETINGS

The **Staff-Parish Committee** will meet on **Monday, May 2nd**, at **6:30 p.m.** Members of the Staff-Parish committee are: Gracie Henson-Chairperson, Brenda Benson, Tom Benson, Ada Hancock, Jeff Shaffer, Steve Wright, Harlon Griffin, Mary Ann Clayton, Jane Jennings, Jerry Moore (Lay leader), Beverly Duke (Lay member-AC), Bonnie Thigpen (Lay member-AC).

NEWS AND NOTES

We will be celebrating our upcoming graduates on **Sunday morning, May 1st**. We will have a brunch during the Sunday school time.

MAY 5TH HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS A NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

HOUSE BLESSING

Everyone is invited to a house blessing for Daniel and Leslie Hunt, following the Wednesday night meal on **May 4th**. If you haven't gotten the bulletin or newsletter insert with the Hunt's wish list, please contact the church office.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING

The Education Committee met on March 29, to discuss changes and modifications to

our Sunday School program for the upcoming school year. We have decided to regroup our lower and upper elementary classes, and after Promotion Sunday (May 22) the classes will be divided as follows: Grades 1-4 will be combined and grades 5-8 will be grouped together. We have recently had new directory signs installed in each Sunday School building, and hope these will be helpful to guests and others seeking Sunday School classes. The committee also discussed distributing a survey via newsletter and bulletin to see if the church is meeting the educational needs of the congregation. More information on this will be coming soon.

*****Adult Bells will meet and practice on Sundays at 5:00 p.m. through May 22nd.**

WANTED: ANYONE WHO IS INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING TO HELP WITH VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL - JUNE 26 THROUGH 29TH

HISTORY OF THE OLDER ADULT MINISTRIES

(By Jean Robertson)

The Older Adults Ministries Coordinators were Okelene Brewer and Anita Johnston. The committee was made up of Mary and Tom Benson, Peggy and Elmer Cooke, Judy and John Birdsong, Jean Robertson, Jean Cone, Viola Carpenter, Mary Catherine Belew and Pastor Jeff Foster. The Committee had a luncheon meeting on Saturday March 13, 2004 at the home of Anita Johnston to begin planning ministries for the year. The theme of the Adult Ministries was "God's Gift of Long Life."

The first group meeting of Older Adults was on Saturday, April 17, at noon in the CLC. Finger foods were brought and shared. We had a time of organizing into a very active, stress-free group. There were 27 present. Our hope was to encourage and empower older adults to be receivers and providers of the essential ministries of First United Methodist Church. At this meeting the older adults were given a name suggested by Jean Cone. The name, which Jean suggested was voted on and thus came the name "Happy Elders".

The second group meeting was held at the Brass Lantern on May 22. Mary Benson organized the meeting and gave prizes for persons winning Biblical Bingo. The Happy Elders Committee met June 29th to plan activities through December, 2004. We offered an open invitation to any older adult in our church and community. Jean Robertson was elected to serve as Treasurer for the group, and she plans the day trips that the Happy Elders Make.

On July 10th the group traveled to Mary and Tom Benson's beautiful home on Marcella Falls Road. There were 17 who enjoyed this outing and meal. In September we traveled to Miss Bobo's in Lynchburg. In October we enjoyed a trip to Loretto Lynn's Ranch. We made a trip to Chaffin's Barn Dinner Theater for a Christmas play and joined with the Lydia Circle for a meal at the Scarritt Bennett Center and visited the Upper Room in Nashville. The Happy Elders have made many trips to Dickson for lunch and a play also at Chaffin's Barn Dinner Theater. At our age we had rather wear out than rust out. Watch the newsletter for trips to enjoy.

We have had several good van drivers including Beverly Duke, Howard Marston, Teresa McWhirter, Alecia Fischer and now Jerry Gibbs, who takes good care of us old folks. We appreciate all of our van drivers.

The present leaders are Barbara and Bruce Edwards. Our main project now is to take a meal to each shut-in each quarter. We welcome all who would like to join us.

PRAYER CONCERNS

Scott Healthcare

Mrs. Scottie McMackin

Mrs. Bea Thigpen

2380 Buffalo Road

Lawrenceburg, TN 38464

Mrs. Freddie Mae Jackson

(Rm. 111A)

2380 Buffalo Road

Lawrenceburg, TN 38464

NHC Healthcare

Mrs. Jean Cone (Rm. 212)

P.O. 906

Lawrenceburg, TN 38464

Martha Whitten

(Lettie Richardson's mother)

374 Brink St.

Lawrenceburg, TN 38464

The Summit

Mrs. Vernon Belew

(Bobby Belew's mother)

Prosser Road

Lawrenceburg, TN 38464

Wayne County Assisted Living

Mrs. Ruby Lopp

210 Fairlane Drive #213

Waynesboro, TN 38485

Current Prayer Concerns

Cliff Philpot, Jr.

Elmer Cooke

Carlos Pierce

***We extend our love and sympathy to Brenda Oliver and her family on the loss of her brother (Mr. Wayne Gobbell) this past weekend.

Ongoing Prayer Concerns

Laura Kitchens

David Robertson (Jean Robertson's son)

Selene Crews

Buddy Gibbs (Jerry Gibbs brother)

Kenneth Williams (Cleda Williams's son)

Byron Shelton (Sheriff's Deputy)

Agnes McCarter

Ray McCarter (Agnes McCarter's son)

Joey Howell (Coffman student with cancer)

Margie Mann (LCHS teacher)

Those serving in the Military

Justin Mitchell

Kelsey Egly



**I Will Be Loyal
To The United Methodist Church And
Support It With: My Presence:**

Sunday, April 24, 2011

8:15 a.m. Worship Attendance.....49

Sunday school Attendance.....88

10:30 a.m. Worship Attendance.....195

My Service: Sunday, May 1, 2011

Acolytes: Katie Rochelle & Nick Ricaurte

Communion Helpers: Cory Ricaurte & Katie Wayne

Nursery Volunteer: Anita Story

Children's Church: Jane Jennings

Loaves and Fishes

Tues. May 03: Loulie Brown, Jean Grimsley, Anita Marston & Jerry Gibbs

