

## FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

January 31, 2011

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth.” These are words of the Apostle Paul in the opening chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Just prior to this sentence Paul has said the righteousness of God is also revealed, and that in the gospel (Romans 1:16-17). So according to Paul there is a revealing of God’s righteousness and a revealing of God’s anger, but just how are we to understand this revealing of God’s anger? Probably not in the way it is often understood.

At times I will hear a person say that the occurrence of some recent destructive-type event, not unlike the mass shooting in Tucson, is God’s way of punishing us for sin. Or some natural disaster will be looked upon as God’s anger toward us. Some viewed 9/11 as God’s wrath upon an American society that has gone astray. We’ve all heard these kinds of statements from time to time, and we may in fact lean in that direction in our own thinking from time to time. Such just seems to be a natural correlation.

And it is not uncommon for us individually to think that something bad that has happened in our life is maybe a punishment from God. God is angry with us and therefore punishes us. I have not been immune to that way of thinking in my life. Sometimes things just feel that way.

But if we digest what follows Paul’s statement about the revealing of the wrath of God in this letter to the Christians at Rome, we come away with a very different understanding of the anger of God. What follows this statement is the passage I commented on in last week’s article about sin and what sin is. The gist of what Paul says is that sin itself is a revelation of the wrath of God. Paul doesn’t see God’s wrath as being visited upon us in a direct way through particular destructive-type events, but rather the wrath of God is really what we might call the reverse side of God’s love.

God in God’s love for us allows us human beings the freedom to choose. We can choose to honor God by acknowledging God as Creator and worshiping God as such, or we can refuse to so honor and worship God. The result of honoring God as God and worshiping God in that way is the revelation of God’s righteousness, and the result of a refusal is that we descend into a kind of darkness where we cannot understand as we should and we cannot discern as we should. What results from that is that we human beings make further bad choices, and our lives descend into a whole host of behaviors that are not good for us and bring about all kinds of wrongdoing. Examples of those wrongdoings that result from “a darkened mind” are found in the list included in Romans 1:28-32, a passage cited in last week’s column as symptoms of human sin. And so the result of God’s wrath is that we human beings get what we chose. God allows us to choose, and then God allows us to live in and with the consequences of our choices. That is the revealing of God’s wrath. It comes in a more indirect way than we often hear expressed.

And thus when we look around us and see a society that has all kinds of problems that have resulted from human behavior that is not what it should be, we can know that we are indeed suffering God’s wrath. God’s wrath is God not interfering with our own bad choices. It’s kinda like the

parents who allow a young child bent on running away from home to do so just so that child can see that maybe he/she really doesn't want to do that. God's wrath is not so much a direct punishment through destructive-type events as it is God allowing us to experience the consequences of our choices so that our eyes may be opened to our own wrongdoing and bad choices. The one way of understanding, the former, is a direct anger or punishment visited upon humankind, while the other, the latter, is a wrath or anger that is the "reverse side" of God's love.

I think we do a disservice to the understanding of God as presented in the Bible, particularly as presented in the New Testament which tells of God being revealed in Jesus, when we think of God's wrath as a direct punishment or destructiveness upon human beings and/or the world. God's wrath is much more redemptive than that. God's wrath, while holding us accountable for our choices, still contains within it love, a love that is expressed most supremely in Jesus dying for us on the cross. So the next time you think about God's wrath, you might think about the cross and just ask the question, "Would the God who has come to us in Jesus, who died on a cross for us, really visit the kinds of destructiveness upon us as to punish that some people say God does?" I think not, and I don't think the Bible says that either.

So the next time you read Romans 1:16-32 really think about and digest what the Apostle Paul is saying about sin and about the wrath of God. Just something to think about.

Bro. Jim

#### **NEWS FROM THE JERRY THOMAS CLASS**

The Jerry Thomas Class was named in honor of the son of Mr. and Mrs. N.G. Thomas, who gave his life in World War II in 1945, while serving in the Philippines. The class was organized in 1945 during the service of the Rev. Robert B. Rawls as pastor. Over the years this class has had a positive influence on FUMC and the Lawrenceburg community. While the class began for WWII veterans, today only one charter member of the original class survives, Mr. Roy Bryce, who lives near his son in Houston, Texas.

The greatest single accomplishment of the class occurred during the fall and winter of 1957. Fellowship Hall was given a complete remodeling from floor to ceiling by the Jerry Thomas Class. The old partitions, floor, ceiling wiring were removed, a new concrete floor poured, new ceiling and lighting installed, paneling added and numerous other improvements made.

Today the class is located on the first floor of the Education Building in what was originally designed as a spare kitchen area. Mr. Elmer Cooke is responsible for craftily "providing dry storage space" for the old conference table that once belonged to the Lawrence County Board of Education. The Jerry Thomas Class also is equipped with a piano that opens each class with rousing song and praise to God. The International Bible Lesson Quarterly has provided a colorful variety of educational literature for the class since its origin covering lessons from every book in the Bible.

Today, the class is open to men and women of all ages. Those shopping for a new class or those who would like to drop by only for a cup of coffee and the song service each week are cordially invited to attend.

#### **LIBRARY NEWS**

The new UMW reading books are now on the library shelves. We ask that you please check your shelves at home to see if you have any library books from the church. Several books from the church library have been "checked out" for a long time. We especially need those that are still on the UMW list to be returned.

#### **BIBLE STUDY**

Bible Study will resume on Sunday, February 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. We will finish the study

on Genesis. Please read Chapters 37 through 50.

### **A NOTE FROM THE HAPPY ELDERS**

Bruce and Barbara Edwards will be leading the "Happy Elders" ministry this year. Barbara has notified us that they plan to have the first luncheon for the church shut-ins on **Thursday, February 17<sup>th</sup>**. The group will start putting the meals together for the shut-ins around 10:30 a.m. If anyone knows of any shut-ins that have not been served before, please **call Barbara at \*\*\*\*\***. Also, Barbara would like for those who can volunteer to prepare food to please call her and let her know what they plan to bring.

### **MISSION TRIP TO HENDERSON SETTLEMENT-KENTUCKY**

Anyone interested in going to Henderson Settlement, for a work/mission project in the Spring? We are looking at the weeks of April 3<sup>rd</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup>. Cost is \$245 per person, meals and housing included. Please let Alecia know if you are interested.

### **SAVE THE DATE**

On Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011, there will be a Spring yard sale sponsored by the Outreach Committee. Start rounding up all the extra things you have stored in your houses and bring it to the church. We can store some things upstairs in the Education building, if you want to start bringing things in.

### **CROCKETT THEATER PERFORMANCE SERIES PRESENTS** **"BLUE GRASS TO BEATLES"**

"Blue Grass to Beatles" is a live musical concert coming to the historic Crockett Theater on Thursday, February 10, 2011. The title is an indication that there will be a variety of music.

Many well-known local musicians will perform.

Performances will include Blue Grass, Pop, Country and Rock N' Roll music which is guaranteed to entertain all family members.

Reserved Tickets are \$20 and General Admission Tickets are \$15. To order tickets online, contact TICKETSage at [www.lawrenceburgtn.gov](http://www.lawrenceburgtn.gov) and click on Theater Link or call Beth Campbell at Lawrenceburg Parks and Recreation at 931-762-4231.

### **IMPORTANT SURVEY**

In order to determine the future of Night in Bethlehem, I have put together a short survey for the members of First United Methodist church to fill out. To access the survey go to the church's web page at: <http://lawrenceburgfumc.com> on the left side menu, at the bottom there is a link called survey click on it and fill out the survey. It is important that everyone in the church fill this survey out to help us determine the future of Night in Bethlehem. (If you have already answered the email or facebook questions you don't have to take the survey).

Thanks, **Alecia Fischer**

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

UMW Executive Committee meeting will be on Tuesday, February 08, at 4:15 p.m.

The Finance Committee will meet on Tuesday, February 08, at 7:00 p.m.

The Administrative Board will meet on Tuesday, February 08, at 7:30 p.m.

The Lydia Circle will meet on Monday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 a.m.

### **CHRISTIANS CONNECT - FEBRUARY 13<sup>TH</sup>**

Christians Connect will meet on Sunday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, following the 8:15 a.m. service. Everyone is invited to join us for snacks and fellowship. This month's gathering will be hosted by the Friends and Fellowship class.

### **WITH ONE ANOTHER**

David Robertson

Freddie Mae Jackson



