

## FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

January 03, 2011

Our theme for this New Year 2011 is *"Building the Church through Passionate Discipleship."* As I mentioned in my Pastor's Report at Charge Conference, I think an important part of passionate discipleship is having knowledge of the Bible. For the foreseeable future my newsletter columns will be a kind of commentary on passages from Paul's Letter to the Romans. So may I invite you as you read this column to also read Romans 1:1-7.

If your Bible has headings above portions of the Scripture, your Bible may well have this heading for Romans 1:1-7, "Salutation." And that is indeed what this passage is. It is a greeting or salutation. It identifies the one who is writing the letter, something about the writer, namely Paul, something about his purpose for writing, an overview of the content about which he is writing, and an identification of the persons (entity) to which he is writing. All of this makes for a salutation, but I think there is more than just an introduction or opening that we can glean from this passage. So let us take a look at it.

First of all we read something of how Paul sees himself. He sees himself as a servant of Christ. He sees himself as an apostle of Jesus, and he sees himself as one set apart for a particular purpose. He's first of all a servant, then he is called to a particular office in service of Christ, and then he is set apart for a particular purpose.

That, I think, speaks to us about discipleship. All of us are first and foremost servants of Christ. We are made servants of Jesus when we are named as his through our baptism and when we accept Jesus' claim of love upon our lives. So we are all, first, servants.

As servants we are subject to being called, called to a particular type of service in the kingdom through the church. Paul will make it clear later in this letter to the Romans and in his letter to the Corinthians that there are differing kinds of service in the church. He will say that some are called to be apostles, some evangelists, some teachers, some with the gift of healing, some with the gift of encouragement, and so forth. As servants of Jesus we all have a role to play in the church, and those roles will not all be the same. And that is because the church and the kingdom needs all those different roles to fully be all that Christ wants the church to be. So that is our calling. We are called to a particular service, a particular role, in the kingdom through the church. We are first servants, and then called.

Then Paul says that he is set apart for a particular purpose, and that purpose is, according to this salutation, to "bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles." Paul's particular purpose as an apostle was to take the gospel to the Gentiles. He saw Peter as an apostle to the circumcised or to the Jewish community, but Paul saw himself as apostle to the Gentiles. Paul believed that in the course of his calling that began on the Damascus Road he was particularly set apart for taking the Gospel to the Gentiles.

And that brings me to a question for each of us. What is our particular purpose to which God in Jesus has called us? I believe that we each have a particular purpose just as we have a particular calling. We are first servants of Jesus, then called to a particular role in the kingdom through the church, and then set apart for a particular purpose within that calling.

I was fortunate to discover my purpose, the reason for which I believe I was called to pastoral ministry, early on. That purpose became clear to me in the course of one of my interviews before the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. I was asked what my goals in ministry were. That was a question about which I had never given much thought if any, and there on the spot in front of that committee of interviewers I had to formulate an answer. I'll always believe the answer was given me by the Holy Spirit in that moment, and my answer was "to proclaim of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to love the people to whom I was appointed to serve." And those two things have been my guiding principles as a pastor from that day forward.

We each need to discover our particular purpose for which God has called us. Our particular purpose won't be the same as that of another person, but just as the differing roles to which we are called are all needed in the kingdom so all those differing

purposes are needed.

So I would say to us that we are all first servants of Jesus. We are named as servants of Jesus in our baptism and in our response to Christ's claim of love upon our lives. That we all have in common. Secondly, we are called, called to a particular role in the church. If you haven't identified the particular role to which you are called, I would encourage you to seek to find what your particular gift of the Spirit is. And then we are each set apart for some particular purpose, and if you haven't discovered that purpose yet, I would encourage you through prayer and reading of the Scripture to seek to discover the particular purpose God has for you in Christ Jesus the Lord.

There really is a lot to this salutation Paul gives to the Romans. There is a lot there for us as present-day disciples. At the outset is service, calling, and purpose. Not just something to think about - a lot to think about.

**Bro. Jim**

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

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

The UMW Executive Committee will meet on Tuesday, January 11, at 4:15 p.m.

The Finance Committee will meet on Tuesday, January 11, at 7:00 p.m. Members of the Finance Committee are: **David Allen-Chairperson, John Beasley, Janice Bailey, Gracie Henson, Jerry Moore, Dave Hancock, Howard Marston, Beverly Duke, Bonnie Thigpen, Cliff Philpot, III, Mike Hardy, Mark Tietgens, and Bill Marsh.**

The Administrative Board will meet on Tuesday, January 11, at 7:30 p.m. Members of the Administrative Board are: **John Beasley-Chairperson, Larry Thigpen-Vice-Chairperson, Jane Jennings-Secretary, Janice Bailey-Treasurer, Jerry Moore, Beverly Duke, Bonnie Thigpen, Judy Benson, Carol Beasley, Dave Hancock, David Allen, Gracie Henson, Jim Gardner-Pastor, Jerry Gibbs, Joyce Holmes, Beth Lerner, Ken Nelson, Wayne Richardson, Beth Benson, Abby Clayton, Mary Ann Clayton, Harlon & Frances Griffin, Tom Benson, Barbara & Bruce Edwards, Bobby Belew, Roy & Linda Ledbetter, Mike Hardy, Roy & Muriel Ross, Elmer Cooke and Martha Jo Gibbs.**

The Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) will meet on Monday, January 17, at 6:30 p.m. Members of the SPRC committee are: **Gracie Henson-Chairperson, Brenda Benson, Tom Benson, Ada Hancock, Jeff Shaffer, Steve Wright, Harlon Griffin, Mary Ann Clayton, Jane Jennings, Jerry Moore, Beverly Duke and Bonnie Thigpen.**

### **NEW YOUNG ADULT CLASS**

If you just haven't found your niche in Sunday school yet, a new class for young adults is currently forming. Perhaps you'd like to be a part of the group. What better time could there be to start a new study than at the beginning of a new year.

This Sunday, immediately following Christians Connect, there will be a "Meet & Greet" gathering. This will be a time to get to know each other just a bit and to talk about what type of study you'd like best. I hope to see you there! **Judy Benson**

#### **Meet & Greet**

Sunday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011

9:30 - 10:15

Upstairs in the Education Building

### **CHILDREN'S OFFERING FOR 2010**

I am very proud of our children in the 10:30 a.m. worship service. For their 2010 offering we collected \$114.38 for the Nicaragua Scholarship Fund. Thank you and keep up the good work. Don't forget to bring those quarters; our jar is empty again and we have to fill it up for 2011! **Alecia**

### **STEVE GREEN IN CONCERT**

Christian artist Steve Green (Steve Green Ministries) will appear in concert at the

Crockett Theater on **Sunday, January 23, at 6:00 p.m.** (doors will open at 5:15 p.m.) Several area churches, including First UMC-Lawrenceburg are supporting this concert. Steve Green sang two years with the group TRUTH and four years with the Gaithers. He has been honored with 4 Grammy nominations, 13 No. 1 songs, and seven Dove Awards. Admission to the concert is free, but a Love Offering for "God's Storehouse" will be taken.

### **MONTHLY CALENDAR**

Beginning in the month of January, **each first newsletter of the month** will have a calendar for you to keep and refer to upcoming events throughout the month. Last week's newsletter had this month's calendar. If you have an event or birthday that needs to be added to the calendar, please contact the church office. The calendar is an effort to keep everyone aware of upcoming church events and activities.

### **NEWS FROM THE ALDERSGATE CLASS**

The Aldersgate Sunday school class may be the youngest in church-in spirit. The class, made up of senior couples and singles, enjoys time together on service projects, Bible study and social outings. They recently made their annual donation to local charities, including the Shelter, A Kid's Place, Spirit of Santa, Santa for Seniors, the Safe and Smart program and East End Kids, for a total of \$600. They have recently completed a study of two books by Dr. James Moore on Christian Living and character, and are now studying the regular Adult Bible Study series. Aldersgate welcomes anyone who does not already attend a class to join us.

### **RECYCLING**

The Youth are partnering with Get Green, a cell phone recycling company. 130 million cell phones are thrown away every year, and they end up in American landfills—that's 1.5 tons of electronic trash.

Please donate your used cell phones in a collection box outside the church office.

Also don't forget we also recycle used printer ink cartridges; that collection box is also in the Education building.

### **FIFTH SUNDAY SINGING**

On Sunday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, beginning at **6:00 p.m. (please change the time on your monthly calendar)**, First UMC will host the first United Methodist Fifth Sunday singing of the year. Choirs and individuals from Methodist churches throughout the county will gather and enjoy music. A time of fellowship will follow in the Christian Life Center.

### **FIFTH SUNDAY DONATIONS TO THE FOOD PANTRY**

The month of January has a 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday, which is a Sunday set aside to donate non-food items to the Loaves and Fishes food pantry. Items needed and accepted are:

Toilet Paper and other paper goods

Toothpaste

Shampoo

Deodorant

Washing detergent

Dish washing liquid

Baby items are also accepted (diapers, jars of baby food, infant formula)

Any or all of these items may be dropped off at the church office at anytime during the month or on the designated fifth Sunday. Your help is much appreciated as the number of people the Loaves and Fishes serves continues to rise.

### **WITH ONE ANOTHER**

David Robertson

Freddie Mae Jackson



**Tues. Jan. 11:** Loulie Brown, Jean Grimsley, Anita Marston & Jerry Gibbs

**Thur. Jan. 13:** Joan Cochran, Martha Jo & Jerry Gibbs