

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - SEPTEMBER 27, 2010

The Old Testament Book of Numbers tells a story that I remember from my days in Sunday school. It tells the story of Balaam and his talking donkey. You may remember that story from Sunday school as well.

The Israelites were making steady progress toward the Promised Land to come in from the east side. They were marching toward Moab where they would cross the Jordan into Canaan. Balak, the king of Moab, hears the news of the Israelites coming, and the news is frightening to him. The Israelites are quite numerous, and nothing has stopped them along the way. Balak is afraid the Israelites will take over his land.

So Balak decides to send for a man who can pronounce a curse on these Israelites. The man's name is Balaam. Balaam is a worshiper of God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of the Israelites, and Balaam prophesies according to God's word.

When Balak's emissaries get to Balaam's home and make their request, Balaam tells them they will need to wait until morning for his answer. He, Balaam, will need to talk to God. God tells Balaam not to go with the emissaries. God does not want a curse pronounced on his people, the Israelites. So Balaam refuses to go with them.

When Balak gets the news from his emissaries, he sends other emissaries. This time he sends some men with a little higher standing and authority, and for some reason, even though told by God not to go with them, Balaam decides to go.

So Balaam is riding along on his donkey, and the donkey sees an angel with a drawn sword standing in the road in front of him. Thus seeing the donkey turns off the road into a field. Not having seen the angel with the drawn sword, Balaam thinks his donkey is just being stubborn and whips the donkey back onto the road. A little while later in a very narrow area between two walls the donkey sees the angel again with a drawn sword, and this time moves to one side crushing Balaam's foot against the wall. Again Balaam does not see the angel and whips the donkey. Then a third time at a very narrow pass the donkey again sees the angel, and this time the donkey lays down. Balaam begins to whip the donkey again, and this time the donkey speaks to Balaam. "Why are you whipping me? Haven't I always been obedient to you?" And about that time the Lord opens Balaam's eyes so that Balaam sees the angel. Balaam listens to what the angel tells him and repents of beating his donkey. The end result is that Balaam is allowed to continue on his journey to meet King Balak, but instead of cursing the Israelites, Balaam blesses them.

I think there are some lessons in this story. One lesson might be that we don't always see like we ought to see. Sometimes we can get our attention so focused on some particular task at hand, or something we really want, that we cannot see anything else around us. We may not even see that the path we are taking is wrong. Such can be dangerous in our relationship to God. We need to keep our hearts and our minds open to the leading of our Lord. Being so focused on some particular course of action - for instance, a course of action arising out of anger or jealousy - can lead us into bad things. Balaam beat his faithful donkey needlessly because he simply did not see and could not see. He was totally focused on coming to King Balak's aid, an action that was not yet blessed by God.

A second lesson we can learn from this story is that God has many ways of revealing God's self to us. In the first chapter of Romans where Paul talks about human sinfulness, he says that God has not left God's self without a witness. Paul goes on to say that the creation itself speaks to the presence and the reality of God. So sometimes the creation itself speaks to us a message from God. We need to be open to hearing such messages. Paul also says in his letter to the Romans that "the creation itself waits in eager longing for the revealing of the children of God." Creation itself looks with anticipation for the day when human beings are in fact "in sync" with God as is the creation and as was Balaam's donkey. And so it is that God may well speak to us humans through the creation around us, even the creatures within creation. We may not meet any talking donkeys along the way, but God has a way of speaking to us when we need to hear. The question is, "Can we hear, and are we listening?"

The story of Balaam's talking donkey indeed raises those questions and gives us something to think about.

Until next time, **Bro. Jim**

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

The Hispanic Ministry at FUMC will soon be in full swing again. Classes for adult English Language Learners (parents) are slated to start at the end of September or first of October. FUMC volunteers provide child care so that parents can take full advantage of the English classes offered at the Adult Learning Center on Mahr Avenue. FUMC volunteers care for the children in the CLC from 5:25 until 7:35, one night per week (tentatively Thursday). The schedule for ELL classes follows the school calendar, so when school is out Hispanic Ministry does not meet.

Children are from preschool to preteen age. Various church and UMW members have provided toys and craft supplies for the ministry. The ELL teacher provides snacks for the children each week. The children enjoy all types of activities and are very polite.

In compliance with the Safe Sanctuaries policy adopted by FUMC, there must always be two adults present when working with children and youth. This means there must be two volunteers there each night. Naturally the more volunteers the better. Volunteers can take turns weekly, or split the time nightly, as long as there are two people there.

FUMC has supported this unique ministry for quite a few years now. Several people have responded to God's call to care for His children by volunteering for this ministry. If you feel called to volunteer, it is a very special way to serve God; your service will be greatly appreciated. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Judy Benson. Thank you!

UMW NOVEMBER HARVEST - NOVEMBER 13, 2010

With cooler temperatures arriving, and the beautiful colors of autumn appearing, we are reminded that the time is almost here for the annual UMW November Harvest on Nov. 13th, from 8:00 a.m. - 12 noon. That's more than a month away, so please mark the date on your calendar or date book. This is an important event in the life of our church, as it helps the UMW with its many worthwhile mission projects throughout the year. Here's all you have to do:

Bake a delicious pie or cake; make cookies, candy cupcakes or delicious homemade breads, jellies or jams and bring them to our bake sale. Our church is full of great cooks (both men & women), so please bake your specialty and donate it to be sold. If each family in our church would bring just one baked good, we'd have enough to fill all the tables in the CLC. If you can't find time to bake, then by all means support your church by attending and purchasing items. We'll also have homemade stew, chili, chicken & dumplings and pimento cheese.

Be part of this year's November Harvest and feel good about doing your part to help your church!

Gracie Henson

P.S. Come early and enjoy a breakfast of sausage & biscuit with juice and coffee while you shop.

****Please bring in pint and quart jars and ½ pint jelly jars for the Autumn Harvest.**

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN PULASKI DISTRICT FALL MEETING ST. ANDREW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - OCTOBER 23, 2010

The Fall meeting of the Pulaski District United Methodist Women will be held at St. Andrew UMC on Saturday, October 23rd, beginning at 9:00 a.m. The theme for the day will be "Let's Get Together to Join Hands in Christ's Mission." Our focus will be joining together to support Bethlehem Center of Nashville. Our speaker will be from Bethlehem Center of Nashville. Our speaker will be from Bethlehem Center and our offerings will go to their ministry. We are also asked to bring school supplies, art supplies, used clothing in all sizes, and jewelry for their shop to raise funds. At this meeting, we will install officers for 2011 and celebrate the organization of a new unit. We will recognize faithful UMW members in a program of Lifetime Service Recognition. Please plan to come. We will take the van. Call Mary Ann Clayton today if you plan to go.

UMW SPIRITUAL GROWTH RETREAT

What is the smallest, most powerful and most dangerous weapon in the world? Find

out at the study of the book of James, on Saturday, October 2, from 9 a.m. until noon. The study will be in the Friends & Fellowship class and is sponsored by the UMW. **All women of the church are invited. Bring your bible and a sack lunch.**

STAFF-PARISH COMMITTEE MEETING - OCTOBER 3RD

There will be an SPRC meeting on Sunday evening, **October 3rd, at 5:30 p.m.** Members of the SPRC are: Chairperson-Bobby Belew, Jansen Holt, Judy Brewer, Brenda Benson, Gracie Henson, Tom Benson, Ada Hancock, Jeff Shaffer, Steve Wright, Jerry Moore (Lay leader) and Judy Benson (Lay Member AC).

HAPPY ELDERS OCTOBER 5TH TRIP

The Happy Elders have 14 tickets to see the play "Smoke On the Mountain Homecoming", in Dickson, TN, at the Renaissance Center with lots of old fashioned hymns on **October 5th**. Lunch is at 12:00 noon and the play starts at 1:00 p.m. Cost is \$30.00 which covers lunch, play, ticket for the driver and gas for the van. Tip is not included. We will leave the church west parking lot at 10:00 a.m. Age limit is 55 and up. Sign up and pay at the church office or call Jean Robertson at **** by **September 24**. Checks should be made to the Happy Elders. ***PLEASE NOTE: Mrs. Robertson has 6 more tickets to the play if anyone would like to go; contact her at **** or you may call the church.**

LAWRENCE COUNTY TRAVELERS CHRISTMAS TOUR

The Lawrence County Travelers have a 4-day Christmas Tour to Branson, MO (Nov. 8-11, 2010). Shows are Presley Family Jubilee, Doug Gabriel Show, Shoji Tabuchi Show, Daniel O'Donnell and Mary Duff Show and Andy Williams Show. One Dinner and The Rails and one dinner at Peppercorn's. Three deluxe Continental breakfasts also included. Sign up and pay in the church office or call Jean Robertson ***** by Oct. 8, 2010. Checks should be made to LCSC. The tour will be on a deluxe motor coach with a professional driver.

Price per Person: Single (\$849) Double ((\$699) Triple (\$649) Quad (\$619)

DISTRICT LAY-SPEAKING CLASSES - OCTOBER 16 & 17TH

Coleman Memorial UMC will host the district lay-speaking classes to be held on October 16 & 17. A basic course will be offered as well as an advanced course. The basic course is entitled "Introduction to Laity" and will be taught by Andy Shaver (Certified Lay Speaker). The advanced course offered is entitled "Lay Speakers Are Accountable Disciples" and the instructor will be Ferris Christian. All UMC members will be identified as Local Church Lay Speakers upon completion of the basic course. Completion of basic course plus an advanced course is required to be a Certified Lay Speaker. Pre-Registration is required. Books will be mailed September 22 and October 6. October 4th is the final deadline to register as long as spaces are still available. The church office has registration forms for anyone interested in taking either course. Cost of each course is \$40. For more information, contact the church office.

LAWRENCE COUNTY ORATORIO SOCIETY - CHRISTMAS POPS

For those who might be interested, Christmas Pops will begin rehearsing on Monday, October 4, 2010, at 7:00 p.m. Rehearsals will be held each Monday night (7:00 - 8:30 p.m.) in the Fellowship Hall of the Coleman Methodist Church. **Anyone** who enjoys singing the music of Christmas is invited. The Christmas Pops performance kicks off the Christmas season and will be on **Monday, December 6, 2010**, at the Old Crockett Theatre.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT MEAL FOR WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6TH

Salisbury steak, Mashed potatoes, Broccoli & Cheese, Salad, Rolls, Banana pudding
Workers: **Aldersgate class**

WITH ONE ANOTHER

David Robertson

