

First United Methodist Church Messenger

drawing near to the heart of Christ

Newsletter - May 2011

THERE ARE ONLY TWO THINGS IN LIFE YOU CAN COUNT ON...

At least that's how the old saying starts. It finishes with... "DEATH AND TAXES."

There's another thing that we can count on in life...CHANGE. Change comes and goes. Change is, paradoxically, a constant. Nothing in life stays the same forever. Change is certain. The question is how do we deal with change as it unfolds in our lives.

Change happens in churches. When we look back over the almost 2000 year history of the Christian movement, it is not the same today as the writer of Acts 2 described it. The world isn't the same. We are not the same. The Church can't and shouldn't be the same. We learn from those who have gone before us. We build on their faith and their foundations. But the Church changes to meet the needs of a new day...to draw people closer to the heart of Christ. We Methodists of all people ought to know that!

The movement led by John Wesley and others in 18th century England changed people's lives...and it changed the way they understood the church and experienced the grace of God.

Our church is changing under the dome of God's watchfulness and care. We are shifting staff priorities. We continue to live into our model of discipleship, believing that God is calling us to be faithful in Worship, Formation, and Service. New people are among us every week. Sometimes those changes will challenge us because they lead us in a direction different "from the way we have always done it." (And, of course, there is nothing that we have *always* done one particular way.) Sometimes changes will happen without us really even noticing.

One change that has come out of conversations and wrestling with who we are and what we really want to accomplish in ministry is a shift in children's ministry over the summer. This summer, led by Ryan George and a team of congregation members, we will try a different approach to making disciples of our children. We will not have Vacation Bible School. Instead we will have intentional encounters and experiences over the summer that will be fun for kids and will grow them closer to the heart of Christ through this congregation. Of course, all of it will be open to the community. In fact we encourage you to invite and bring community children and *you are needed* to make a difference in the lives of our smallest disciples.

What I am talking about is not change for change's sake. It is about being intentional in listening for the Spirit of God at work among us. It is about growing like a mustard seed into a large tree where the birds of the air find a home. It is about living and growing in the Kingdom that God is bringing into a reality among us.

And there is one more thing we can count on besides death, taxes, and change... That is the One who was and is and is to come, who leads us and keeps us through all the changes of our lives.

Embracing an Adult Faith

A 6-session study that will help us explore: "What does it mean to be a Christian?" May 24 through June 28. We meet each Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. in the church library. See Chris Ray's article on page 2.

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Worship - Formation - Service

under the Dome of God's watchfulness & care

Formation and Service - *Chris Ray*

Formation opportunities:

Coming Soon! Every Sunday through the month of June (5-26) Discover 1st UMC. Who are we as United Methodists? What does this mean in context of our conference, district and local church? How do we as a UM church embody our vision of service, worship and formation? Come one and all to Discover 1st UMC. We begin with a lunch at 11:00 on June 5th and will meet at 10:45 for June 12, 19 and 26. All sessions will be in the Fellowship Hall.

Existing Sunday morning Journey groups, how can the Formation Working group assist you to help grow each other deeper into a relationship with God and each other? We are here to help in any way that we can.

Embracing an adult faith: This 6-sessions study will help us explore: "What does it mean to be a Christian?" The study will start on May 24th and run for the 6 consecutive weeks. The sessions involve a video presentation by Marcus Borg, followed by group discussion. A workbook is included (\$15). We will meet Tuesday evenings 6 p.m. in the church library. Contact person: George East.

Book Club: The book club had their first discussion and meeting on Thursday, April 28th. The book read and discussed was *Same kind of different as me*. New book, date and other information coming soon!

Service Opportunities:

Feed My Sheep: Every third Sunday of the month members and Sunday School Journey Groups supply sack lunches for this organization. Anyone and everyone who is need of food is welcome to come to Feed My Sheep. We need help in packing the bags and handing out the bags and water at Feed My Sheep. If interested please see Chris Ray or Susan Lenes.

United Methodist Men: Every second Saturday the UMM meet in the Fellowship Hall at 7:30 a.m. Breakfast is provided for a small fee. After breakfast a meeting will be held and after that there is a workday at the church. Anyone and everyone are welcome to attend this time of fellowship and service.

Our Christian Sympathy...

...to the family and friends of Viola Griffin.

...to Bill and Margie Young and family in the death of Lauren Young and Howard "Sonny" Alford.

...Mary Green and family in the death of her sister-in-law, Pauline Overby.

...Alden and Michael Johnson and family in the death Michael's sister, Erin Fink.

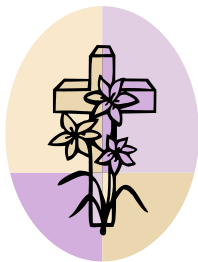
Request:

We have received a request from the VA in Biloxi to assist with purchase a lift chair for a veteran who cannot afford it. The cost is \$1,400. If you would like to make a gift, please designate it "Lift Chair." You may drop it in the offering plate on Sunday or send it to the church office. Thank you for being as generous as you are able.

Divorce Recovery and Grief Recovery Workshops

New ten-week sessions of the Divorce Recovery and Grief Recovery Workshops will begin Thursday, May 19 at 7:00 p.m. in the Education Building. God is at work and people's lives have been changed through these groups! The power of being able to openly share with one another and talk about one's loss cannot be underestimated. The workshops are open to anyone in our community, and no pre-registration is required.

Unfortunately, we are not able to provide child care for our summer sessions. For more information on either program, call Catherine Barnes at 229-6851. Our Broken Rainbow program for children with divorce or death issues does not meet during the summer and will start a new session in September.



Feed My Sheep

If you will help pack food bags or hand out bags on a 3rd Sunday of the month, please let us know.

Contact:

Chris Ray, 863-0047, or Susan Lenes, 831-2588.

Minister to Families with Children and Youth

- Ryan George

Here is it. My inaugural space in the Messenger. What to put in? What to leave out? Jokes or scary statistics? Stories, anecdotes, the meaning of the genealogy in Luke? The questions build and mount...

Let's try a wandering thought. My history isn't on the New York Times best sellers' list for a reason, several reasons really. It includes: a call to ministry, running from said call, a wedding, two little girls, a deep seated love for the church, two teen ministry positions, and more moves than I care to count. Not the most exciting reading I know, but hopefully it paints some kind of a picture.

To further develop that picture, please know that I am not interested in "playing church," think children "playing house." We should do what we do because it fits with who we are. Leaders and teammates should be energized in regards to the vital roles they play. The leaders, and those they minister to, should be excited about the ministry. This means amping some things up, and even letting some other things go to try something else.

Great idea, but what's the strategy? Good question!

I'm going to be in a lot of meetings. I want to meet with those who want amazing things to happen for and with our children and teens. I want to meet with parents who will be the front line of what the church looks like at home and how the home shapes the church. I want to meet with teens who are trying to figure out what it means to live as Christ in this world and help them find areas to use God's blessings to bless others.

I want to meet and hear how the church is looking to be the church, not just "play church."

So, in this my first space in the Messenger, I hope you can read what my passions are. I want to make sure you see that this isn't something I have any illusions about doing on my own. And I want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to come and be a part of what's happening here. As God moves us forward, step by step, into what He wants us to be.



Please Pray For....

...David Bittle, nephew of David and Barbara Powell, who is in Afghanistan.

...Lee Farley, grandson of Sharon Olson, who is in the Marines.

...Susan Barrett, daughter of Peter and Fay Barrett, who is in the U.S. Navy.

...Tyler Schultz, grandson of Gene and Betty Schultz, who is in the U.S. Air Force.

...Brister Bishop, son of Wade and Ruth Bishop, who is in the U.S. Navy.

SaSSy SeniorS

The Sassy Seniors go "On the Road" to the Biloxi Yacht Club (Hwy 90) at 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 18. Lou Hare has invited us back for lunch. The church van holds 15 and will be used to transport those who need a ride. Email Ada at slntonsr@cablone.net or call 864-4721 to reserve a place for lunch or if you need a ride. We have lunched at the Yacht Club in the past and it was a very enjoyable experience. Make plans to join us.

SeniorS 2011

Seniors 2011 is scheduled for Thursday, May 26 at Handsboro Community Center at 2:00 p.m. The speaker will be from the Attorney General Consumer Protection Division and will tell us of the latest scams, frauds and ways of identity theft. Our own Tonya Hays of Wings will perform. This free monthly program is sponsored by Garden Park Medical Center and hosted by Ada Reid.



Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a part of the Choir? Come be our guest in rehearsal - Wednesday nights from 7:00 - 8:30 in the 3rd floor choir room. You will not regret it.

-Jonathan

"More than music, we are family"

The Messenger
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Andy Johnson – Pastor

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Gifts Given

In loving memory of Roy Lewis
Given by: Brenda D. Clark

In loving memory of Thames Lloyd
Given by Mary and George East
and Mary Anne and Jare' Barkley

In loving memory of Lauren Young
and Howard "Sonny" Alford
Given by: Diane and Jim Miller
and Kay B. Braswell

In loving memory of Charlotte Parker
Given by: Mary Anne and Jare' Barkley

In honor of Liz Clower
Given by J.C. Meek

In honor of Connor Austin Lonergan
Given by Barby and Laurel White



Dear Friends,

Bill and I would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to our wonderful church family for your loving support, cards, emails, prayers, food, cards and flowers. To the fantastic choir and our director, Jonathan Kilgore, to Jeanie, Chris and Rev. Andy, we will always be grateful for your many kindnesses that you and all of this church have poured upon us during our loss of our granddaughter, Lauren Young and Bill's brother, "Sonny" Alford. God bless each of you.

Margie and Bill Young



Back Bay Mission of Biloxi is in need of food to help with their pantry ministry. You can bring non-perishable food items to worship with you and place them in the collection bins at the entrances or you may bring them to the church office through out the week. Please give as generously as you are able.

Dear Friends

My husband and I come to Back Bay Mission to volunteer every spring and attend services at your church. Again this year, the members of the First United Methodist Church in Gulfport gave us the opportunity to deliver donations to the food pantry here.

As I sit here surrounded by those donations from First United Methodist Church for the BBM food pantry, I am thinking of all the times during the day I say "Thank you" in social settings. Thank you for holding the door; thank you for letting me spend my money in your store; thank you for passing the ketchup. And these are nice happenings to be acknowledged. But there is another place gratitude comes from. It is the place where God resides and stirs the heart. It is from this place that we say how thankful we are to you for being allowed to be part of the chain that passes food pantry donations from people I don't know to others who neither you nor I know, but who are hungry. The generosity of the members of this church amazes my husband and me, and we say thank you from that very special place in our hearts.

Also appreciation comes to you from that wonderful Miss Jill who supervises the food pantry at Back Bay Mission. She gets to see the people smile and hear them express their thanks when they receive your gift.

*Blessings,
Tim and Jennifer Rowles
Volunteers at Back Bay Mission*