

SHARING

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF HOHENWALD

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200 South Court Street * Hohenwald, TN 38462 * www.hohenwaldumc.org

931-796-2681 * firstunitedme680@bellsouth.net



FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

"We know that all things work for good for those who love God." (Romans 8: 28)

I have a friend who is actually regretful when he has no story of misery to tell. He loves to recount, in colorful detail, all that has gone wrong in his life. Fortunately for the rest of us, he is a clever storyteller, and his accounts are usually humorous. Another friend has just as many difficulties, but she looks for the good in each one. When she finds it, she lets go of the trouble and focuses on the good. Which person do you suppose is happier? Which experiences the power of Easter?

Many of us tend to cling to past miseries and pains. This tendency is really a form of self-centeredness. Think about it. When I wallow in my misery, my whole focus is on myself – my pain, my problem, my grief, my self-pity! Oh reality, such an attitude prevents us from trusting God's love for us. To believe in Easter means to believe that Good Friday is not the end of the story. To believe in Easter means to believe that the power of good can withstand any trouble.

To practice seeking Easter in everything requires trust. Paul has it right: "We know

that all things work together for good for those who love God." Paul had learned to trust in the midst of trouble.

What can we do this Easter season to practice this trust? One thing we can do is to examine each thing, each experience, to find the good – the best – that it can bring. If we approach life with this principle in mind, we will find ourselves growing closer to the Lord of Easter.

Meister Eckhart, the 13th-century German mystic, said that even while on the cross, Jesus, deep inside himself, knew joy because he was united with the Father in his heart. This is the gift of resurrection in our everyday lives: to live so close to God in our hearts that even our Good Fridays are filled with Easter joy!

-Drew

Lenten Bible Study Begins March 8

Throughout the rest of the season of Lent, as we prepare for Easter, we begin a new Sunday evening Bible study -- "24 Hours That Changed the World." Using Adam Hamilton's book by the same name, this study will deliver "solid scholarship describing how the day of Christ's

crucifixion unfolded. It also suggests that our response to Christ's work – when it appears evil has the upper hand – can be one of courageous hope and great courage," according to Mark Beeson, lead pastor of Granger Community Church, Grander, Indiana. Bible study begins at 5 p.m. each Sunday evening. Books are \$14 each and can be purchased at the first class. Scholarships are also available for those who need financial assistance to purchase the book.

Celebrating Lent and Easter



"Lent," writes Henri Nouwen, "is the most important time of the year to nurture our inner life. It is the time during which we not only prepare ourselves to celebrate the mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, but also the death and resurrection that constantly takes place within us... True repentance is an interior attitude in which we are willing to let go of everything that prevents us from growing into spiritual maturity, and there is hardly a moment in our lives in which we are not invited to detach ourselves from certain ways of thinking, ways of speaking, ways of acting

Lent is a gentle but also a demanding time. It is a time of listening to the voice within, but also a time of paying attention to other people's needs. It is a time to continuously make the passage to new inner life as well as to life with those around us."

Jesus began his ministry by spending 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness. There

he fasted. When he was his weakest, the devil tempted him. We gain clarity about who we are by resisting the temptation to become something else. Jesus solidified his commitment to obey God's voice by saying NO to the voice of God's adversary.

Lent is the Christian's 40 days and 40 nights of journey inward. We all have evil spirits residing within us. We are tempted to give in to their determining who we will be. Lent invites us to recognize that, though they make big promises, what they always deliver is some sort of dying. The cross of Jesus shows us what happens when the evil spirits are allowed to have their way.

Lent asks us to look inside and be honest about what's there. We cannot be healed of past hurts, if we're pretending they don't exist. We cannot become whole, if we're denying that parts of ourselves are so separate from us they seem to have a will of their own and are out of control. We cannot be free to love, if we're held captive by anger and resentment.

Our Church is offering several spiritual disciplines to assist you in your Journey Inward. Some you'll want to do alone. Some will be most beneficial if you do them along with some journey companions. Be assured that all will be done with Christ, who will lead the way. Because he's traveled this road before.

WORSHIP ACTIVITIES

All Sunday Worship Services during Lent

Palm/Passion Sunday on March 29

5th Sunday Fellowship Luncheon on March 29

Holy Thursday Worship/Communion on April 2 at 6 pm

Good Friday Worship on April 3^d at 3 p.m.

Also note: Pastor Brewer will lead a **confirmation/baptism class** for young people who would like to be confirmed or baptized on Easter Sunday. If you are interested in attending this class, please notify the church office as soon as possible.

DEVOTION & PRAYER

Set aside 15 minutes each day to be still in order to listen to what God is saying

FASTING

Give up a meal. Use the time to be attentive to God. Give the money you would have spent on the meal to One Great Hour of Sharing or a charity of your choice.

Recommendation: fast on Wednesdays at noon.

Give up whatever is getting in the way of your being God's person

STUDY

Attend the Small Group Study, "24 Hours That Changed the World" on Sundays at 5 p.m.

Attend our regular Wednesday lectionary study at 6 p.m.

PENANCE

*Christians often have practiced PENANCE during Lent. PENANCE is not punishment for our sins -- rather it is a sign of the sincerity of our desire to change. We seek to develop "holy habits" by practicing holy behavior. **Consider these:***

Mar. 7-13- Week of Remembrance: *Take or send some remembrance to someone who will be surprised by your gift or visit.*

Mar. 14-20- Week of Family Appreciation: *Do something for every member of your family that will express your love for them.*

Mar. 21-28- Week of Prayer: *Begin by making a list of those you know have a need you care about. Let that be your prayer list each day this week.*

Mar. 29-April 4- Week of Confession: *Find someone you trust and confess what is burdening your heart.*

You might also want to include Journaling in your Journey Inward. In examining yourself through Journaling, you should ask and answer questions that stir your spirit, such as: *For what or whom am I grateful? What is bothering me? What can I get off my mind? What am I angry about? What is making me anxious or afraid? What is causing me to feel guilt? Do I have any regrets? Who needs me to reach out to them? Is God calling me to do something I'm not doing? Am I currently hopeful or discouraged?*

One Great Hour of Sharing

On Sunday, March 15, we will participate in the United Methodist Committee on Relief's (UMCOR) One Great Hour of Sharing. This collection aids those in crisis and human suffering throughout the world. All gifts through this special collection will provide immediate assistance in the wake of conflicts like the serious and ongoing conflict in Syria to support ministries of food, shelter, health and peace.

Sunday School Update

We have just begun our Spring Sunday School Bible studies. The main focus for Adult classes will be the Holy Spirit.

The Senior Youth class continues to read through the entire Bible. Our Children's classes will be exploring the Church seasons from Epiphany through Pentecost

and how we are to go into the world and do God's work.

If you are not currently attending one of our Sunday morning Bible study classes, we urge you to try us out. We meet each Sunday from 9:30 – 10:15 am.

Prayer Shawl Ministry Threads Comfort with Compassion



The Prayer Shawl Ministry, part of the Nurture Committee, meets from January through October on the third Monday of each month at 6 p.m. at the Hohenwald Housing Authority. No prior knitting experience is necessary to become a part of this ministry; call Joyce McCutcheon or Retha Tibbs for more information.

The work of the committee is important and appreciated, as evidenced by the many grateful recipients of the thoughtful and beautiful Prayer Shawls. Following is a Note of Thanks received recently: "God Bless All of You – You're All God's Angels. Your shawl made me feel so comfortable and secure. I'll always wear it. You all are wonderful! Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness, and your prayers." JoAnn Peevyhouse.

From The Upper Room

Threads of Love

I love to knit. So when my dear friend was battling cancer, I made her a shawl. At first,

I just concentrated on the pattern, making sure to get the number of stitches right and keeping the rows even. Then, as I settled into the rhythm of knitting, I began to pray. I prayed for my friend's comfort. I prayed that Christ would hold her in his arms. I felt my prayer become tangible as the shawl grew longer.

One of the last times I saw my friend, she was resting on her sofa, covered by the shawl I had made for her. And while I knew that there was no earthly cure for her illness, I also felt some measure of peace. Something as commonplace as yarn had been threaded through with compassion. Christ was there for both of us. I think that is what peace is: filling the darkness of pain and grief with love.

Prayer: Dear Lord, we ask that you use our hands and our hearts to bring your peace to those who need comfort as we pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."
" (Luke 11:2-4). Amen.

Thanks to Rita Grow for providing support to the Prayer Shawl Ministry. Rita has made the shawls look so beautiful in bags she prepared for presentation to those recipients in need.

Gwynn McVickers has volunteered to take on this aspect of the Prayer Shawl Ministry. Thank you both as well as all the women who so lovingly create and pray over these shawls.

United Methodist Women

At our February United Methodist Women meeting, we welcomed a newcomer to our group, Karen Langer.

We are planning a St. Patrick's Day menu for the March 19th Senior Citizen luncheon. Our corned beef and cabbage meal was a huge hit last year, so we'll try it again.

On Wednesday, March 25th, we'll be sponsoring our annual "birthday party" at the Lewis County Manor.

We welcome all women into the UMW. Our meetings are the second Monday of the month at 6 p.m. in the church library. That same week, we hold Wednesday work days (9 a.m. – noon) in preparation for our Fall bazaar.

FEATURED MEMBER

Editor's Note: *As members, we each have special talents, skills, abilities and ways in which we serve the Lord. Collectively, we strive to serve as the hands, arms, legs, voice and heart of Christ in reaching others and in sharing His love. Our featured member this issue is Kenneth Kistler.*



Listening to Kenneth Kistler talk about his life is a lot like watching an epic film unfold – scenes evoking family, love, conflict, faith, destiny, faraway lands and local history emerge as he recalls the events and people in his life who have impacted him and made him the man – the Man of God – he is today.

He traces his roots back to the 1800s in Switzerland, recalling a family history that includes a grandfather, a devout Catholic,

who crossed the mountains and married a Protestant girl, bringing her back to his valley. Kenneth's father, born in Switzerland, and Kenneth's mother came to America around the turn of the century. The couple married in 1917 in what was then Hohenwald's combined colony of Swiss and German settlers.

Born in 1926, Kenneth was the second youngest of eight children. Some of his earliest memories are of church. He began his religious training in the German Reformed Church, attending there until the mid-1930s when the traveling minister could no longer serve the little church. Kenneth remembers that as a child, the women sat on the right, the men on the left – and he was impressed with the church's pump organ. His religious education continued at the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, where he attended through high school and where he still recalls the kindness and attention paid to him and other children by Mr. Voorhies, who brought needed items for the children during those years of the Great Depression.

He laughingly recalls that during his late teens and early adult years, people came into his life inviting him to the Methodist Church, including his sister Josephine and a number of teachers he worked with. "It seemed like I was running into Methodists everywhere I went," he said. He has been a member of First United Church of Hohenwald since 1956 and credits the church for much of the joy and satisfaction in his life.

Kenneth's life has had its share of disappointments and heartache. "I originally wanted to be a pharmacist," he said, but a series of events in which his pharmacy school application papers were misplaced and a kind Dean allowed him to enroll in APSU despite the deadline being past, led him away from pharmacy and onto a

different path. And, a romance that ended badly over religious and political differences left him full of questions.

Kenneth has reflected deeply on his life and now sees these disappointments as “two of the most gracious things that have happened to me. I look back now and I see that God knew best. He knew that my work in education, the people I’ve met, the children I’ve been privileged to meet and help, would not have happened if I had gotten my way. I was pulling so hard in one direction, but I know now that God wanted me here. I am so thankful to this church and to the many mentors I have had over my life.”

He looks back and remembers being put into situations where a mentor would influence and intervene on his behalf, leading to new opportunities, and instances where he was in the position to help others. He sees God’s hand in where his life has taken him and how events unfolded to God’s glory and to a satisfying life.

A longtime member of the church choir, he recalls the piano lessons he received from Hattie Voorhies who encouraged him to sing in the choir. His entry to education – a career that included not only teaching but serving as State Director for District Vocational Coordinators for the South-Central District – would not have happened without a botched application process to pharmacy school, and then later, through encouragement and support of mentors who got put into his path. “I am convinced that God has directed my path and that everything that has happened has worked to the good, even the negative people that I knew,” he said.

Kenneth Kistler has a prayer that he repeats each night, one that his mother would sing, in German, to each of her children every night in their beds:

“I am little. My heart is pure. No one can live in it, But Jesus alone.”

It has a special meaning to him, he says. “When I retired, I was no longer Mr. Kistler, the Principal. So much had changed. Then it occurred to me: one thing has not changed and will never change – God loves me, just as he did when I was a child, just as much as the day I was born.”

“Sharing” is the newsletter of First United Methodist Church of Hohenwald, TN, published six times a year as a service of the Christian Witness Committee. To submit news for “Sharing,” please contact Deborah Baker at 931-285-0058; email deb.baker@wildblue.net, or contact other members of the Christian Witness Committee. The newsletter is also available on the church website.