

SHARING

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF HOHENWALD



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FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

"And Moses said, 'I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.'" (Exodus 3:3)



The text from Exodus concerns a man named Moses who had a deeply moving religious experience. Recently, I've become convinced that not only do we need deeply moving religious experiences as individuals, we also need them as churches. There is great need today for churches to have deep religious experiences because most churches I know strain at being places where people experience the living God with power for transformation.

We know where this experience led for Moses. We know how it changed him from a reluctant shepherd to a great leader of God's people. But what we tend to overlook is that it first took a definite resolve on the part of Moses before he could begin to enter this deep religious experience which God

had prepared. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. Moses looked, and the bush burned with fire and the bush was not consumed. "Moses then said, 'I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.'"

There are two impulses in human beings (and in churches). One is to look at something and take it for granted – to accept it without question, just because it's always been there. The other impulse is to question and wonder – to try to see how God might be working in that particular experience. It's from this second impulse that true religious experiences are born.

Moses stops long enough to notice what is in front of him; he cares enough to ask "Why?." And in that stopping, and in that "Why," the awareness of God's presence is born. Could it be that a deeply moving religious experience has something to do with our willingness to be ready for it, to notice it when rushing by with our preconceived notions of how God works in new situations? Are we too busy to see God?

Let's not ignore the bushes in our way – they may be God trying to speak to us!

. Drew

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

It's a new year and a great time to join the United Methodist Women if you haven't done so already.

Our first meeting will be **Monday, January 11 at 6 p.m.** in the church library. For our program we will have a guest speaker. Peggy Owen, our Columbia District Treasurer, will provide information on where our monies go. It will be a great chance to learn more about Hohenwald's UMW and the ministries we support.

Hope to see you!

- Debby Campbell,
President, United Methodist Women

HUMC'S CHRISTMAS GIVING TO THE COMMUNITY



In addition to gifts of **206 pounds of food** and several blankets and warm throws to the Food Bank this past holiday season, members of Hohenwald United Methodist Church gave generously to other needs in the community.

Donations to the Senior Center came to a total of **\$905**, and members gave an additional **\$2200** to the Little Swan Creek Hunting Club for the Children's Christmas program.

CANTATA 2015 = A SUCCESS

The Adult Choir presented the Christmas Cantata, ***Come Messiah King***, to approximately 300 people on Saturday and

Sunday, December 12 and 13. It was decided, after last year's single performance that turned away a large number of people due to a packed house, to present the Cantata twice this year. This was evidently a good decision, since there was an almost full house on Saturday night and a crowd on Sunday night that totally filled the sanctuary.

The Choir began rehearsals on the Cantata in August, and while working on it, continued to present special music each Sunday. Several extra rehearsals were held and changes made in order to accommodate everyone's busy schedules.

The Choir was especially pleased to have several guest vocalists from other churches join in the production. Also appreciated were the many instrumentalists that made up the Instrumental Ensemble accompanying the group. A special thanks to Brenda Duncan, talented pianist, who so willingly gave her time and talent to the lengthy rehearsals. The efforts of Justin Bell for recruiting the high school instrumentalists were also very much appreciated.



Choir Director Kenny Graves expressed appreciation to everyone who had anything to do with the production, including audience participants and those who worked behind the scenes to make the event such a success. He also expressed special thanks to choir members for their dedication and for successfully meeting the musical challenges that were presented to them.

FEATURED MEMBERS



Some might say that the marriage of Joyce and Larry McCutcheon sprang from an impromptu visit the two had when Larry and his son came for a visit to Hohenwald so their kids could get together. Others might jokingly say that it was the slice of “Stupid Pie” Joyce served during that visit. But Larry and Joyce both know that “God was part of the process of our getting to know each other, and with that came hope,” as Larry said.

Larry and Joyce met at Hohenwald First United Methodist Church when Larry first lived in Hohenwald, prior to his moving to Houston. Both parents, they got to know each other through their children’s activities and developed a friendship. When Larry’s son asked Larry to come along on a vacation to Nashville, they decided to take a trip down to Hohenwald to visit friends there. Joyce, in the midst of remodeling her house, agreed that it would be good for their kids to get together. She offered him a slice of “Stupid Pie,” and the two talked.

When Larry returned to Houston, they began talking more frequently, sometimes for hours on the phone, Joyce said. “We were each going through a Divorce Recovery class, and we would discuss the issues and questions that arose through the classes.”

Those honest conversations deepened their friendship, which evolved into love. As it evolved, the two asked their children what

they thought, and all agreed it was a good thing for both of them.

“Putting families together has been our challenge,” Joyce said. “It means accepting things the way they are and respecting each other’s boundaries.”

Raised in Donelson, Joyce began her career in medicine as a nurse at Nashville General. With a bachelor’s and master’s degree from the University of Tennessee, she has taught nursing as well as life sciences, as well as being a regional Health Care Specialist, a Director of Nursing and Director of Ambulatory Care.

Larry, who grew up in West Virginia before relocating to Washington, DC, attended Virginia Military School beginning at age 15, then went into the Army. An accountant who also worked for years in real estate, he has lived in Little Rock, Hohenwald and Houston, as well as being called up during the Berlin Crisis, during which he served as an MP.

Between them, they have five children and six grandchildren. Having lost a son, Ben, in 2013 to pancreatic cancer, they say that they have learned a lot about grieving over the years.

Both are now retired but stay busy with church activities, their hobbies and each other. Although they enjoy traveling, they say they love being at home and being at church on a regular basis. They also share in household tasks. “She cooks, I do the dishes,” Larry said.

“Every morning, Larry brings me coffee in bed, and we start the day with devotionals from the **Upper Room** and talking to each other about them, and our plans for the day,” Joyce said. “Many times, the devotionals lead to talks about issues and other people’s needs. Each of us has a perspective that we draw from each other.”

“And it works for us,” Larry said.

PATHFINDERS CLASS CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION



Members of Hohenwald United Methodist Church's Pathfinders Sunday School Class joined together on December 17 to celebrate Christmas with brunch at the beautiful home of Betty Stilts and Barbara Lewis. This wonderful event began with Brother Drew bringing forth a prayer of Thanksgiving. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed the food provided by all involved, and to say the least, it was a feast to behold. Following the meal, the fun began with "Naughty Santa," in which squeals of laughter could be heard from afar. This occasion brought a deeper feeling of closeness to this amazing group of people and something definitely to add to our favorite book of memories for the season. Thanks again to our hostesses, Betty and Barbara, for their generosity in providing their home for this incredible experience of fellowship.

- Submitted by Cindy Graves

SPIRITUAL DE-CLUTTERING: A FRESH START FOR NEW YEAR

One of the wonderful things about each new year is that it brings with it a sense of a new beginning, 365 days of promise and possibility.

Some use this time to bring **freshness to their lives**. They may decide to declutter the junk drawer, attic, or garage. It may also mean removing many of the sugars, fats, and carbohydrates from **our diets**.

As a United Methodist church member, parting with some things for a season may help declutter your spiritual life. Doing so helps make room for a new movement of the Holy Spirit in the months to come. What might you set aside in the next year?

Your pew - Pastors often know where each member of their congregation sits each Sunday. Some of us **worship** from the very same pew every week. More of us tend to gravitate toward the same general area, like somewhere in the last two rows on the right.

Choosing to worship from a new seat for a season will give you a new perspective—literally. You will see the service from a different point of view, but more than that, it may also change the people around you each Sunday, the usher with whom you interact, the members of the choir or praise team you can see, and more. All of this can help you stay more focused on the worship service as you see things a little differently.

Time-wasters - John Wesley instructed his pastors to "Never trifle away time." Instead, they were to be engaged in the practice of ministry or the development of their spiritual lives. While we may not want to get rid of *all* time-wasters since we need times of rest, there are diversions we could remove and replace with something more beneficial.

Consider finding ways to free up time to volunteer at a local food bank or other mission, to make regular calls to old friends and church members you no longer see, or join a class or small group at your church.

A version of the Bible - If you have been a Christian for some time, you probably know the Bible fairly well. There are verses you know by heart, and stories that are very familiar. Reading from a different **version** of

the Bible can help bring new life to those passages. A translator's decision to use one word over another may give you some new insight you hadn't thought of before.

If you regularly read from a modern version like the Common English Bible, consider a more traditional translation like the New Revised Standard Version. If you gravitate toward the more traditional, try something more modern. Search the web for Bible reading sites and apps (there are many free ones) where you can access a new version of Scripture.

A devotional - Devotionals are helpful aids to lead us in Scripture reading and prayer every day, but we can become stuck in a rut with them as well. If you have been using the same book or website for more than a year, you may benefit from trying something different this year. A new devotional resource, like an unfamiliar Bible translation, can bring new life to your time with God.

There are many devotional helps available online and in physical and digital books. **The Upper Room** from Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church, is a very good source. Try something new.

A favorite author - Many readers have favorite authors. We like the way they turn a phrase, develop a story, or how they put into words what we have thought or felt for some time. Growth, though, often comes from thinking about things from a variety of perspectives. Reading a variety of authors can challenge us to do just that.

When looking for a book to read for spiritual enrichment, consider something new to you, which may be something old. You might want to read from a theologian whose work you have heard is important but you have never read, a person on the best-seller list whose views you think may be different from yours, or a recommendation from your pastor.

A class or group - Give yourself permission to take a break from that class or group you have been attending solely out of habit. It's OK. Try a new class. **Join a group** that discusses things that interest you.

Be careful with this one though. Connections to other people of faith are vital, so don't pull away from all groups. If you take a break from one group, make sure you find other Christians with whom you can share and from whom you can learn.

Negativity - Although we do not like to admit it, there are seasons when many of us can fall into patterns of negativity. Discouraged by the news, the theology of others, policies of our denomination, and practices of our congregation can become sources of stress and fodder for complaining. **Removing negativity** from our lives and choosing instead to find things to celebrate can lift your spirits and renew your passion for that which matters most. Find where you see the love of Jesus in the world and celebrate it.

Obligatory church-stuff - Some of us do things in the church that bring us no joy. We're not really sure how we ever got the job. We don't really want it. Yet, we are pretty sure that if we don't do it, it won't get done. Those types of obligations often lead to church burnout.

After the New Year is underway, schedule a conversation with your pastor. Ask how you can step away from that obligation and into a new way of using your gifts to serve your church or community. That will be a blessing both to you and your congregation.

- A UMC.org Feature by Joe lovino

“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 her at deb.baker@wildblue.net, or leave your news or a note in the Newsletter mail slot in the hall outside the church office.