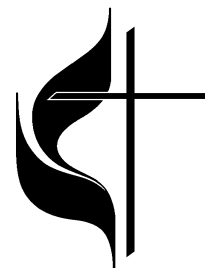


THE

FIRST

WORD



The Weekly Newsletter for Members and Friends of First United Methodist Church, Newton, North Carolina
Phone (828) 464-8422

Fax Number (828) 464-8423

www.fumcnewtonnc.org

PASTOR'S MESSAGE

In one of the stories included in NPR's National Story Project, a man shares a story that his father told him from his childhood. It was the 1920's in Seattle. The family's finances had taken a beating after the collapse of his father's business.

When the Christmas season arrived, the man's family could only afford a Christmas tree. There were no beautifully wrapped presents placed beneath it. On Christmas Eve the children went to bed in pretty low spirits. His mom and dad were pretty dejected as well since there was nothing to give the children.

When they got up on Christmas morning there was a large stack of presents under the tree. The children could hardly get down their breakfast fast enough to get to the tree and open the presents.

Mother opened her present first. In the box was the old shawl she thought she had misplaced. His father then opened his present. Inside was his old ax with the broken handle. The boy's sister got a pair of old slippers. One of his brothers opened his present and got a favorite pair of wrinkled, patched trousers. The boy himself got a hat, the one he thought he'd left in a restaurant weeks before.

Before long everyone in his family was laughing so hard they could hardly pull the strings off of their presents. They all wondered who was responsible. Finally, they discovered that it was Morris, his brother. For several months he had been securing old things he thought his family would not miss. Then on Christmas Eve after everyone had gone to bed, he wrapped them up and placed them under the tree.

Years later, his father said to him, "It was one of the finest Christmases we ever had." That morning around the tree reminded them that Christmas was about one another.

Linda Ellerbee, the noted television journalist, wrote an article for *McCall's* magazine a few years ago that someone passed along to me. The title of her article was: "The Five Best Things I Know." It is a listing of the five most valuable lessons that she has learned during her life. Here is her list:

- 1) Do what you believe is right.
- 2) In this world, a good time to laugh is any time you can.
- 3) Always set a place in life for the unexpected guest.
- 4) If you don't want to get old, don't mellow.
- 5) The best things in life really aren't things.

That's a pretty good list. What are the best things you know? Maybe you would list such things as friendship, work, truth, family, grace, teamwork, church, kindness and forgiveness.

In one of his letters, the apostle Paul offers his list. He explains to the Corinthian Christians: "Now, I know you have tried lots of different things – things like immorality and greed and materialism and cliques and idolatry. I know you have looked for happiness in lots of different places. I know you have experimented with this and that and the other. But now let me show you the higher gifts, the best things in life." And then Paul lists the best things in life: faith, hope, and love.

As you wind down your preparations for this season, I hope you'll remember the best things in life and then do everything you can to share them with the people who matter most to you. As an old sage once said, "Rich is not *what* you have. It's *who* you have beside you."

Merry Christmas, **David**

THE NEWSLETTER WILL NOT BE PRINTED CHRISTMAS WEEK.

FIRST CHURCH CHRISTMAS CALENDAR

Sunday, December 20

- 8:45 AM Sunday Worship
- 9:00 AM Praise Service
- 10:00AM Birthday Party for Jesus
- 11:00 AM Sunday Worship
- 2:00 PM Youth and Adults go Caroling

Thursday, December 24

- 6:00-8:00 PM Come and Go Holy Communion
- 9:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

2010 PLEDGE CAMPAIGN: Thank you to everyone who has submitted your pledge toward the 2010 Church Budget. To date, 72% has been pledged toward next year's budget by 149 individuals/families. This reflects a percentage that is 4-5% below what has been pledged in past few years. If you haven't made your pledge for 2010, please consider doing so in the next few days so that our Finance Committee can plan accordingly for next year.

AT WORSHIP NEXT SUNDAY

December 20, 2009

THE SHARED WORD: Rev Dr. David Greene

"The Gift of Love"

John 3:16-17

AT WORSHIP

December 27, 2009

THE SHARED WORD: Rev. Lara "Willis" Greene

"A Story of Christmas"

Luke 2:8-14

2010 OFFERING ENVELOPES are on tables on the breezeway. Please pick up those that belong to you and your family.



The staff of First Methodist Church would like to wish each of you joy, peace and happiness during this Christmas Season and throughout the New Year.

Also, we would like to thank you, the members, for the Christmas bonuses, gifts, cards and all expressions of joy which you have shared with us during the Christmas season.

*David, Willis, Daniel, Haskew, Kristy,
Peggy, Nikki, Frances, Ann and Ruth*

PRAYERS AND SYMPATHY are extended to Jackie Bandy and family following the death of her husband, Dr. Allen Bandy, Sr. on Tuesday, December 15.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Help is needed on Saturday, January 2, 9:30-10:00 a.m. to take down the Christmas decorations.

BLOOD PRESSURE CHECK

Blood Pressure checks will be available in David and Willis' offices this Sunday, December 20th from 9:30-10:00 a.m.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEXT WEEK

*** December 20-26, 2009 ***

- SUN. 8:45 Worship Service
- 9:00 Praise Service
- 9:30 Blood Pressure Check
- 10:00 Birthday Party for Jesus
- 11:00 Worship Service
- 2:00 Christmas Caroling
- 4:30 Finance Committee
- 5:30 Administrative Council
- MON. 10-12:00 Gomedela Room Reserved
- 7:00 UMW Executive Committee
- 7:00 Youth Praise Band
- THURS. CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED
- 6:00-8:00 Come & Go Communion
- 9:00 Christmas Eve Service
- FRI. CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

OPPORTUNITIES FOR

*** December 27, 2009-January 2, 2010 ***

- SUN. 8:45 Worship Service
- 9:00 Praise Service
- 11:00 Worship Service
- 2:00 Women's Bible Study
- FRI. CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

HOSPITAL REPORT

Vivian Hager is recovering at Conover Nursing and Rehabilitation from a recent fall and surgery.

Frances Bost is at home following treatment at CVMC last week.

THANK YOU

Because of your generosity to the special fund, we will be able to help four families in our community this Christmas.

Thanks for helping and have a Merry Christmas! Peggy

ALTAR FLOWERS FOR 2010

A calendar is being prepared for those wishing to furnish altar flowers in 2010. Please fill out the form below and place it in the offering plate or return it to the church office to reserve the Sunday of your choice.

I will furnish altar flowers in 2010 as follows:

Date: _____

In Memory/Honor of _____

By _____

PRAYER CONCERNS

Pray For:	Requested By:
Bobby Rice	Megan Robertson
Jerry McGee	Merv McGee
Bill Walser	Martha Sowers
Gayle Lowder	Tom Lowder
Frances Bost	Bob Saunders
Dawn Buller	Dotti Goble
Kristin Flora & Family	Dotti Goble

Out-of-Country Military—Scott Beal, Jacob Campbell, Brent Cossich, Gary Hogan, Todd Houtz, Rodney Woody and National Guard 626 Maintenance Co.

In-Country Military—Bobby Benson, Andy Blanton, Stan Josey, Corey Lail, Laird Lambeth, Brad McRee, Tai Orange, Kyle L. Sigmon, Ryan Windham, President Obama & Leaders

MEMORIAL RECEIVED RECENTLY

Renovation Fund:

Cecil Kiser

Jim & Trilby Stockner, Mr. & Mrs. Loy Devine,
Allen & Shirley Johnson, Joyce Wilson,
Nancy Pittman, Jack & Pat Gantt

Helping Hands Fund:

Cecil Kiser

Virginia & Sam Irby

General Fund:

Cecil Kiser

Gaye & Kenneth Keener

HONORARIUMS RECEIVED RECENTLY

Donations have been given to the **Garden Fund** in honor of **Melba and Brooks Nichols** by the following:

Jack and Pat Gantt, Gaye and Kenneth Keener,
Maxine Morrison, Frank Cloninger, Lorene Martin,
Joyce Wilson, Earl & Evelyn Johnson,
Betty & Merv McGee

James and Betty Newsome have given a donation to the **Parker Class Memorial Garden Fund** in honor of **Melba and Brooks Nichols**.

Gaye and Kenneth Keener have given a donation to the **Preschool Fund** in honor of **Frances Hollar and Martha Sowers** for their November birthdays.

Ken and Pat Lawing have given a donation to the **Renovation Fund** in honor of **Tommi and Charlie Anderson**.

The Employees of Newton Family Physicians have given a donation to the **Helping Hands Fund** in honor of **Dr. Shannon Sherfey**.

YEAR-END GIVING

Our church has been informed, that one of the biggest snares it can fall into is failing to keep an unmistakable dividing line between the old year and the new year. According to the IRS, individuals are allowed to deduct charitable contributions from their income during the year in which the donation was delivered. This means that we will need to receive your contribution for 2009 in the church office by 5:00 PM on December 31st. If a donation is mailed, we will use the postmark date on the envelope to determine whether it will be applied or 2009 or 2010.

Also, be aware that any donations to the church on a company check need to be attributed to that company and not an individual. **The contribution receipt will be issued to the name that appears on the check.**

2009 FINANCIAL UPDATE

Year-End Giving: Remember that all charitable gifts to the church must be received in the church office by 5:00 PM on December 31. As of 12-06-09, we have received \$460,049 which is 14% under budget for the year. Please prayerfully consider how you can help us catch up over the last few weeks of 2009.

STEWARDSHIP REPORT, December 13, 2009

Attendance: 8:45 a.m.: 87 11:00 a.m.: 247
Sunday School: 156 9:00 a.m. Praise Service: 66

Offering:	2010 Pledge	\$ 400.00
	Tithes & Offerings	11,075.30
	Altar Flowers	110.00
	Poinsettias	30.00
	Preschool Fund	40.00
	Youth Christmas Gift	652.00
	Prayer Breakfast	112.00
	Garden Fund	210.00
	Helping Hands Fund	150.00
	Renovation Fund	215.00
		<hr/>
		\$12,994.30

Weekly Budget Needs	\$10,969.00
Budget Needs as of 12-13-09	\$548,428.00
Contributions Received as of 12-13-09	482,515.00
Under Budget for Year	-\$ 65,913.00

UNITED SINGLE ADULTS (USA) will have a Christmas party and dance on December 18th at 6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Adam Long will be the DJ for the dance.

YOUTH SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 20, all youth will be going Christmas Caroling at 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 29, all youth will meet at Pin Station in Newton at 12:00 noon for an afternoon of bowling. Please bring money for lunch and bowling.

**BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR JESUS**

We will have a Birthday Party for Jesus on Sunday, December 20, during the Sunday School hour. Due to the renovation downstairs we will have the party in the Fellowship Hall with the help of the Faith and Fellowship Class. Thank you so much Faith and Fellowship for your love for all and your giving heart. All the classes for rotation will meet together. We will have music, storytelling, cake, games and celebrate in a very special way the birth of our Savior.

ROTATION SUNDAY SCHOOL-December 20, 2009
"Christmas Messengers"
All ages will meet together for Storytelling

ROTATION SUNDAY SCHOOL-December 27, 2009
"Christmas Messengers"

4 Years: **Games** Grades K-1: **Cookery**
 Grade 2-3: **Music** Grades 4-5: **Art**

Teachers: December 6, 2009-January 3, 2010

Storytelling: Caroline Sitzer

Games: Lisa Johnson/Gayle Lowder

Cookery: Cindy Boger Art: Susan Reinhardt

Music: Nikki Cavin/Debbie Bandy

RECENT VISITORS

Janice Davis, Danny & Lynn Delancey, Billy & Kathryn Griffis, Brent Roland, Dexter & Karey Warren, Frances Whitener, Betty Sigmon, Ed and Bette Walk, Pastor Stanley Stiver, Ernestine S. Helms, Jane Jackson