

The Onalaska Evangel

A monthly Newsletter of
The First United Methodist Church of Onalaska

January 2009



- NO 2009 Resolutions...

No! I'm not going to write about New Year's Resolutions. Too easy. The birth of Christ gives us hope, and the beginning of a New Year embodies that hope that things will be different. I won't write about resolutions, but I will write about hope. I will write about a New Year. But, --- I will write about VISION. What is the vision for the Church?

Vision. What can we be -- as a Church? What will we be -- as a Church? Questions without answers. And, yet there is insight into these questions.

First, we look at who we are. We are a people who have diverse backgrounds in many things. Some of us are retired from successful careers. Some of us are still working. Some of us have had some very unique life experiences. We are a people who have knowledge and experience we can share with others. We have a lot we can share to make the world a better place. We have talent!

Second, we have resources. Yes, we have money (economic crisis or not). But, that is not as important as something else many of us have --- Time! We have time we can invest. Some of us have a lot of time, some of us a little. But, as a Church we probably have more time we can invest, than a lot of churches. That's a great resource.

We have motivation. We want the world to be a better place for those who come after us. We want to feel good about the rest of our life. We want to contribute.

Get VISION...

We have Good News! We have Good News to share. We have a great God. A God who wants to know everyone and would like us to introduce Him to as many people as possible.

So, we have a lot going for us as a Church. Talent, Time, Resources, Motivation -- a Great God.

Now all we need to do is focus all that energy. We need to get together on a vision.

Vision is an interesting thing. Vision "Percolates." Vision can come from anywhere. Vision can be a remark like, "Gee, I wish we could do ____!" And others begin to think about it and talk about it, and pretty soon, the pot is boiling.

Vision can start as an answer to prayer. What would happen if we all prayed for a vision for our Church? What if we prayed from Jan 1 to our first Church Council Meeting of 2009 on Jan 24th, for God to reveal to us what He has in mind for our Church.

Another thing about Vision --- Vision is CAUGHT. Vision is not something that just a few people talk about. Vision is what *an entire* Church talks about. More importantly, vision is something everyone agrees with and willingly participates in. Vision is not just for a select few. Vision is for the entire Church. Vision is one of those things that when it percolates and people hear the vision, they just say, "Yeah! That would be great!"

So, I call the Church to prayer in the New Year. Forget the Resolutions, and our wishful thinking. Ask God!!!

Ask God, "What do you want for Onalaska First United Methodist Church?" And then ask God, "How can I be a part of what you are doing?"

And, you know what? God will answer. And, it will be an answer you may not expect --- but, God will answer. So, when God answers, I want you to share it. No matter how silly or impossible you think it is. Share it with me, share it with George Scott, share it with Richard Lyne. Share it with as many who will listen. If you don't share it -- we can't percolate.

So, Happy New Year!!!
Let us Pray!!!
Let us Percolate!!!

Joy!!!!
Pastor Paul

Thank You for Cards ---
and Nets!!!

Claudia and I truly enjoyed the Cards wishing us the Joy of this season of Christ, and the well wishes for the New Year. We sat Sunday, after Church, and read every one.

We also appreciate the donations for Nothing But Nets. All of your gift goes toward the purchase of a mosquito net that can save a family of four from the dangers of Malaria. Members of our Annual Conference delivered the first installment of these Nets to the Ivory Coast this Fall in person. Nothing but Nets is a great thing -- it is a God Thing. God thanks you -- and so do the people of the Ivory Coast. And so do we. Looking forward to a wonderful 2009!!
Joy!!!
Paul & Claudia

Thank You Onalaska FUMC!

At Thanksgiving each of us was asked to donate one food product to fill a holiday basket for a deserving family of six in Onalaska. A turkey was also donated. The response was overwhelming. Karen Sides, June Lehenbauer, and Sandy Croll delivered the food basket and the family asked the three of us to thank the church members for their donations.

Then in December donations of toys were also received before the church service. We were able to help "Santa to Arrive" at our Thanksgiving family's home of four children, at a single parent's home with two children, and at the "Toys for Tots" distribution center in Onalaska. Again we were asked to thank the church members by the two families. What a difference we made this holiday season! Giving is what Christmas is all about. When I saw the gratitude and tears in the two mothers' eyes, I knew we had made the holiday extra special for those families. Thank you one and all!

Sandy Croll

Thursday Bible Study

We will resume on January 8th at 6:00 p.m. We will be finishing up the Beth Moore study of Daniel. This second half of the study will focus on prophecy. You can join us for this study, whether or not you participated in the first half.

Workbooks are \$14.95 and there is a sign-up sheet in the Fellowship hall. You do not need to sign up if you already have a book. I'll need to hear from you by Sunday, January 4th, so I'll have time to purchase a book for you. Your payment in advance would be nice, but is not absolutely necessary. Any questions, call me at 646-2881. Thanks,

Billie.

DALE'S JANUARY DIAMOND



SEEING SPOTS



Psalm 103:2 "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

A minister speaking to a group took a large piece of paper and made a black spot in the center of the paper with a marking pen. Then he held up the paper and ask the group what they saw. A quick response "I see a black mark." Right the preacher said what else do you see? Complete silence. Don't you see any thing else he asked and a chorus of "NO" came from the group. I'm surprised the preacher said, for you have overlooked the most important thing --- the sheet of paper.

As we look back over 2008 we may be distracted by small disappointments and forget the innumerable blessings the Lord has given us. Yes like the sheet of paper, the good things in life are overwhelmed by our adversities.

So rather than concentrating of the trials of life in 2009 lets fix our attention on its blessings. And say with the Psalmist "Bless the Lord who loads us with benefits"

If we keep praising Him, we won't be distracted by life's little spots!

*So amid the conflict, whether great or small
Do not be discouraged—God is over all: (Oatman)*

Dale

CHOIR NOTES

By Dottie

As a Chancel Choir, we are looking forward to the New Year. 2009 will bring nothing but great things. Pray with the Choir, the Church, and the Pastor, for a blessed New Year.

December was a very fruitful month and very busy. There was a lot of special music.

Our music selections started December 7th with Mary's Song and continuing each Sunday until December 28th with the Anthem "Christ Has Come" On the night of December 18th we had an all church Gospel Sing that was started out with our Choir and highly received. There were 170+ people attending this event.

Members of our choir shared their talents of singing duets and solo's. Patti Johnson, Faylynn Bullock, Bobbi Batchler sang Duets and solos. Dottie Dean Lyne and Paul Woodworth sang Solos. There were other choirs, groups, quartets and soloist. Special thanks go to Ken Garrison for handling all the music. He is always there for us.

December 18th was a Live Nativity in front of the Court House annex directed by Roy Epperson and Bobby Perkins and sponsored by Onalaska First Methodist Church. Many Choir members came to sing carols dressed in the period costumes. Hot cider and hot chocolate was served all evening. It was a wonderful experience for those attending and stopping by. Roy and Bobby hope to have this every year and it grows bigger each year.

We had many members taking off during the month and many who were ill. The choir members were such troopers with practices and being there on Sunday to lend their voices.

Thank you Chancel Choir.

Preparing for Christ; Preparing for Discipleship

In this first week of Advent – th season of preparation and hope, I've had the privilege of participating in the first graduation worship service of the Lay Ministry College at Methodist Hospital. From one perspective, yesterday's service celebrated the ending – the completion of a goal. From another perspective, like our preparation for the coming of Christ, the service marked the beginning of a new dimension of discipleship for the graduates.

Eleven United Methodist laypersons graduated from a rigorous two-year program under the supervision of the Department of Spiritual Care and Education. These are laypersons who have been called by God to a ministry of pastoral care and who have prepared themselves for excellence and fruitfulness. Most entered the program having already completed the Stephens Ministry process as well as several years of volunteering in their congregation. In the TMH program, the participants met two hours weekly for two years with skilled professionals who supervised their practice of pastoral care.

Yesterday, with the authority of their baptism as disciples of Jesus Christ and certified by the Lay Ministry College of The Methodist Hospital, these graduates rejoiced their vocation as lay professionals or highly-skilled volunteers in pastoral care.

The excitement on their faces, the pride that family members expressed and the sense of accomplishment conveyed by the TMH staff bespoke a joy and gratitude that often accompanies a sense of living one's vocation.

As I listened and watched the service, my thoughts turned to other men and women who claimed God's calling and prepared for the coming of Christ. I thought of the young mother, Mary, who watched and waited as the child Jesus grew within her. I thought of John the Baptist – who announced "prepare the way of the Lord, and make his path straight."

I thought of Joseph and his willingness to claim God's vocation for him to become husband and father even in the face of contradictory information. I thought of Elizabeth who had waited so long to become a mother.

People like me speak frequently about "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." Yesterday, I celebrated that eleven persons were "being disciples" – living out the love of God and neighbor to the fullest extent of their baptism. In those moments as Jesus commanded to John's disciples, "Tell John the blind see; the deaf hear; and the poor have good news preached to them."

I pray that you are glimpsing signs of the jkingdom as you prepare for the coming of Christ.

Advent blessings to each of you,

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie

SCRIPTURES FOR JANUARY

Epiphany of the Lord

January 6, 2009
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

Baptism of the Lord

(First Sunday after Epiphany)

January 11, 2009
Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

January 18, 2009
Leadership Installation Sunday
I Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)
Ps. 139:1-6, 13-18
I Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

January 25, 2009
Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12
I Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

Onalaskamethodist.org Your Church Website

Have you or your committee mission something for the calendar?

New Chairs should review the current information And see if it fits the message your group wants to share with the community

The front page stays interactive with the pending activities and a new "one line sermon" each day, start your day with a quick peek at the calendar and the one liner.

Sermons and newsletters are there for reading, printing or copying.

Current topical prayers are on newsletter page frequently, hope to see you enjoying your website

UMW NEWS

Our first meeting of the year will be Tuesday, January 6th, and promises to be very interesting. Our speaker will be the Polk County District Attorney who will talk to us about Jessica's Law. Jessica's Law is the informal name given to a 2005 Florida law, as well as laws in several other states, designed to punish sex offenders and reduce their ability to re-offend. Join us for coffee and snacks at 9:30. The meeting begins at 10:00 a.m.

We have a number of exciting things planned for this year, including four Sunday lunches immediately following our worship service. These are planned for March 1st, May 3rd, August 2nd and November 1st. Mark these dates on your calendar and plan to have lunch with us on those Sundays.

Ladies, if you aren't a member of the UMW, join us for one of our meetings and check us out. We always have an interesting program, whether focusing on issues dealing with women and children or doing a skit that teaches a Biblical truth.

METHODIST MEN'S BREAKFAST...

Well... as I started this newsletter, I sent out the usual reminders to UMW, Sunday School leaders, Choir, and the many committees in charge of church activity, I suddenly realized that I was the MM new secretary and responsible for putting the column together for Jack...

AND I missed the last meeting...

SO after listening to Jack during the week and on Sundays I am going to make this a question session;

What do YOU want from YOUR Methodist Men's group.

Is Friday good for you, could we recruit more members if we met on Saturday mornings?

Would an 8 o'clock start be better? It would probably help the cooks, how about you? Would the little woman mind you starting the "honey-do's" around 10?

What can we do as a group, able bodied and some not so able, to serve in our community? Should we invite youth—Wildcats for Christ—to join us maybe on a quarterly basis? Monthly? Ever?

Would we want to have non-Methodist men attend our breakfasts—like the promise keepers program?

Since I missed the December meeting I can't list what events took place but I promise to have better minutes for the January meeting, and I will bring enough copies that you can just read 'em during the meal and save time for the rest of the meeting by just making corrections or passing as presented...

Please email me with any information you would like to see in this space in future editions, it is our MMB space and we need to do it together.

Lew
Secretary
Methodist Men's Breakfast

PROMISE KEEPERS A Ministry for Men

Once again the Promise-Keepers men's group was able to bring joy and smiles to the faces of children and adults alike this Christmas season.

Among ourselves, we raised a thousand dollars in cash and lots of bags of children's toys to help five families and thirteen children have a very Merry Christmas morning.

Also, as a result of an invitation to participate with the high school kids at their annual "See You at the Pole" event this past fall, we were able to provide these kids who are members of the "Wildcats for Christ" Christian group at the school with new t-shirts sporting the "Wildcats for Christ" logo in school colors, provide each member with a new copy of "The Message" bible, and wristbands to wear representing the story of the Gospel in colors.

I would like to personally thank those in the group who have big hearts, a love of God, and are dedicated to making disciples for Jesus Christ. May God bless each of them.

Roy Epperson	Onalaska FUMC
Bobby Perkins	Onalaska FUMC
Richard Lyne	Onalaska FUMC
Mayor Lew Vail	Onalaska FUMC
Rev. Paul Whitlach	Onalaska FUMC
Rev. James Mason	
David Larkins	Onalaska FBC
Danny Christian	Onalaska FBC
Chief Ron Gilbert	Wildwood Gospel
Bennie Davis	Central Baptist
John Mulhall	Bethel Baptist
Fames Dunaway	Revival Center
Franklin Simms	
Richard Baker	Church on the Lake

As you can see, our men's group is a non-denominational ministry. Give us a try some Wednesday morning at 7:00 AM in the fellowship hall. All men are welcome.

In His Service,

David Johnson
Onalaska FUMC

John Wesley's Rule for Christian Living

Do All the Good You Can,
By All the Means You Can,
In All the Ways You Can,
In All the Places You Can,
At all the Times You Can,
To All the People You Can,
As Long as Ever YOU Can!