

The Onalaska Evangel

A monthly Newsletter of
The First United Methodist Church of Onalaska

July 2008



- *The Church of the Perfect Storm*

This is the title of a collection of essays, edited by Dr. Leonard Sweet. The theme of the collection is, "The church is headed into a perfect storm of culture forces. Will the church sink beneath the waves or ride the winds of the Spirit?"

There is no doubt that the church is declining. In our own case our attendance trend over the past 14 years is down. But, attendance is a symptom and not a cause. The cause has to do with the question, "Is the church being and doing what God has called it to be?"

So, let me toss out some facts:

Only 5% of our budget is devoted to mission and ministry. The remainder goes for salaries and upkeep of the building. In fact, the budget for building and grounds is larger than the combined total of funds allocated for mission and ministry.

Discussions at church council have been oriented toward polity, structure, voting, sinks, etc. On only one occasion has the leadership met to discuss mission and ministry.

Leonard Sweet, in the above book, uses the following experiences during his participation in a radio talk show. Callers said, "I hate Christians!" "The Church is last place I would go to deal with my spirituality." Sweet goes on to relate the last caller was the most poignant; The caller admitted to being "over sixty" and said, "I used to be a Christian. But, after a lifetime of listening to Christians cutting down this person, and hating that person, I became an atheist! Do you hear me Dr. Sweet? I became an atheist because of Christians."

What did Jesus ask us to be as the Body of Christ? The Great Commission is recorded all over the

Ride the Winds...

New Testament:

Matthew:28: **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Mark: 16: **15** He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

Luke: 24: **45** Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. **46** He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things. **49** I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

AND: 4: **17** The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: **18** "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, Because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

John: 20: **21** Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." **22** And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive any-

one his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." Acts: 1: **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

No wonder we are in a "Perfect Storm." We seem to be in conflict with the purpose and mission of the Church. We seem only concerned with ourselves and not encountering the culture. Only concerned with maintenance and not making disciples. More concern for ourselves, not others. Oh, we do a few things – but they are not making more disciples. They are not encountering the culture. We need to critically answer the question as the Body of Christ, "Where to we spend our money, where do we spend our time.?"

To guide us through the "Storm" we need more of a focus on Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Faith Forming Groups, Risk Taking Mission & Service, and Extravagant Generosity.

If you find where we are in the "Perfect Storm" troubling --- let me hear from you!

I'll see YOU in Church – where we will navigate together.

Joy!!!

Pastor Paul

Short & Sweet

I was shocked, confused, bewildered
As I entered Heaven's door,
Not by the beauty of it all,
Nor the lights or its decor.

But it was the folks in Heaven
Who made me sputter and gasp--
The thieves, the liars, the sinners,
The alcoholics and the trash.

There stood the kid from seventh
grade
Who swiped my lunch money
twice.
Next to him was my old neighbor
Who never said anything nice.

Herb, who I always thought
Was rotting away in hell,
Was sitting pretty on cloud nine,
Looking incredibly well.

I nudged Jesus, 'What's the deal?
I would love to hear Your take.
How'd all these sinners get up
here?
God must've made a mistake.

'And why's everyone so quiet,
So somber - give me a clue.'
'Hush, child,' He said, 'they're all
in shock.
No one thought they'd be seeing
you.'

JUDGE NOT.

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Remember...Just going to church
doesn't make you a Christian
no more than standing in your
garage makes you a car

DALE'S DIAMOND FREEDOM FROM FEAR!!!

"You did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear" Romans 8:15



Freedom from fear, awe yes!! On July 4, 1776 a group of men gathered to sign the Declaration of Independence. That document assured the 13 Colonies that they were

FREE & INDEPENDENT STATES.

Since that time our freedom has been secured by the men and women of our armed forces and so on this July 4, 2008, we honor those who gave their tomorrows for our todays.

We have freedom from fear. Yes we may have worries about the future and preoccupied with what it may have in store. There is only one way you will ever have peace about it and that is to put our future in God's hands, trust Him, then no matter what the future holds in this turbulent world we can experience peace and enjoy our Freedoms!

"I don't worry o'er the future, for I know what Jesus said; and today I'll walk beside Him, For He knows what is ahead."

We may not know what the future holds, But we can trust the one who holds the Future.

DALE

GOODNEWS BIBLE CLASS

Our Sunday School class continues to do well. We will be losing the Vince Jullian family who has been faithful members almost from the beginning. We will miss them, and wish them God Speed in their move to Austin.

We have an interesting study continuing in the book of Hebrews. Some members are vacationing, and look forward to their return. Our class is called "Good News Class, and our good news is that we have a savior Jesus Christ, who loves and cares for us all !!

Good News Class
Dean Blau

JULY SOCIAL

Don't forget the social dinner on Tuesday July 1st at 6:00. We will be having sandwiches and all the trimmings. A sign up sheet is in the fellowship hall. BE SURE AND BRING A WEDDING PICTURE BY JULY 29th! And quit asking WHY!!!

This will be a night you will never forget!

See you then....Patti & Karen

The Sunshine Class

The Sunday morning Bible Study Classes are beginning the Summer Quarter.

We will look at Hebrews and the Gospels for answers to the questions about the identity and actions of Jesus. The lessons from Hebrews name Jesus as God's son, intercessor, leader, redeemer and eternal Christ. We look to the Gospels to learn about Jesus' work as healer, teacher, servant and Messiah.

Then we go to the book of James as he will guide us to become doers of the Word be impartial disciples, wise speakers, people of godly behavior and prayerful persons.

Do you know all that you need to know about God? If yes lead a study group. If not come join us on Sunday morning and let's learn together. See you in church!

The Sunshine Class

BETH MOORE BIBLE STUDY

"Stepping Up: A Journey through the Psalms of Ascent" explores Psalms 120-134. Traveling pilgrims sang these psalms both on the way to the great festivals of the Jews and as key elements of the worship at those festivals. Students will interact with Beth Moore and the Scriptures in new ways. They will gain a new appreciation for the life of faith as a journey to greater fellowship with and worship of God.

Beth says, "I am expecting nothing less than a new level of relationship and intimacy with God through these psalms. I ask you to settle for nothing less as well. The more we unveil our faces to God and bare our souls to Him, expressing what is on our hearts, the safer we'll feel with Him and the closer we'll draw to Him."

Our study will begin on Thursday, July 10th at 6:00 p.m. There will be no morning class for this one. The class is 7 weeks long, and the first night is an introduction. Workbooks are \$12.95, and I strongly encourage each of you to have your own workbook. I know this is short notice, but God doesn't always give us long lead times on what He wants us to do. There is a sign-up sheet in the fellowship hall. Make your checks payable to FUMC, Onalaska.

Even if you don't do the workbook, plan to join us on Thursday evenings at 6:00 for this study. Beth Moore always brings us a word from God.

If you have questions see Billie Garrison or Martha Young. This class is open to both men and women.



BETH MOORE Live 2008 Simulcast

The First United Methodist Church, Livingston is hosting a live simulcast of the fourth nation-wide "Living Proof Live", broadcast live from Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. Participate in the event live via satellite and take in every minute of Beth Moore's powerful message. Music by Travis Cottrell and the Praise Team will be broadcast as well. The first broadcast is Friday night, August 1, from 6:30 to 9:00 pm, and the second is Saturday, August 2, from 8:30 a.m. to 12 noon. Tickets are \$30.00 for both sessions and we are encouraged to purchase in advance. See Billie Garrison for more information or call her at 646-2881.

FOOT PRINTS

In the Sand

"LORD, you said that once I
decided to follow
you, you'd walk with me all the
way.

But I have noticed that during
the most
troublesome times in my life,
there is only one set of foot-
prints.

I don't understand why when
I needed you most you would
leave me."

The LORD replied:

"My son, my precious child,
I love you and I would never
leave you.
During your times of trial and
suffering,
when you see only one set of
footprints,
it was then that I carried you."

RESOLUTION Death Penalty Matter

The attached is a Resolution passed by the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church opposing the Texas Death Penalty specifically. I have attached the text of the Resolution.

Maybe the congregation would like to communicate their feeling regarding this Resolution.

For easy contact here are our elected Reps:

*State Senator Todd Staples -- Dist 3
202 E. Pillar St. Ste 208
Nacogdoches, TX 75961
936-564-4252*

*State Rep John Otto Dist 18
303 N. Jackson
Livingston, TX 77351
936-328-5222*

*Joy!!!
Paul*

Texas Death Penalty

Whereas, The United Methodist Church strongly opposes capital punishment, and

Whereas, in the state of Texas over 400 persons have been put to death since the state resumed executions in 1982;

among the persons executed since 1982 at least six were mentally retarded, at least 20 suffered from mental illness, and 13 were juveniles when their crimes were committed;

among those executed 83 African Americans were put to death for crimes against white victims, and only one white person was executed for crimes against African Americans;

eight persons sentenced to die have later been proven innocent and removed from death row;

capital trials have at times been characterized by unreliable

witnesses, lack of evidence, incorrect experts, official misconduct, and inadequate defense attorneys;

the Innocence Project of Texas has pointed to the likelihood that one or more innocent persons have been executed; and

Whereas, over 250 organizations of all kinds, including religious, civic, political, legal, and humanitarian groups, have officially called either for a moratorium on executions or for the abolition of the death penalty in Texas, and

Whereas, at least 10 major newspapers in Texas have endorsed either a moratorium on executions or the abolition of capital punishment in the state,

Therefore, be it resolved, that the 2008 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, meeting in Fort Worth, Texas,

Express its deepest appreciation to all those organizations and individuals in the state of Texas who have valiantly struggled and continue to struggle for a more humane society in which the death penalty is rare or non-existent.

Call upon the Texas Legislature either to abolish the death penalty completely or to stop executions in the state until such time as all capital cases can be tried in a completely equitable way,

Call upon the Texas Pardon and Parole Board and the Governor to commute the sentences of persons currently on death row to life in prison without parole or to life in prison.

Instruct the Secretary of the General Conference to have copies of this resolution sent immediately to all members of the Texas Legislature, to each member of the Pardon and Parole Board, to the Governor of Texas, to the Texas Conference of Churches, and to the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

The longest day of the year has passed - Summer Solstice. We enjoy less daylight each day until late December; our time on earth is becoming shorter.

Reading the Bible and praying daily seems to match the fading daylight. Bishop Janice Huie asked all of us United Methodists to fervently pray.

What have YOU done spiritually so far this year? Are you fervently praying? Fervent prayer means to pray with passionate, intense feelings. You may recall that Jesus prayed fervently at Gethsemane. Luke 22:44 says, "Jesus prayed more fervently and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood". Fervently talking with God in whispers, shouts and song may be a new spiritual experience for you. Try it.

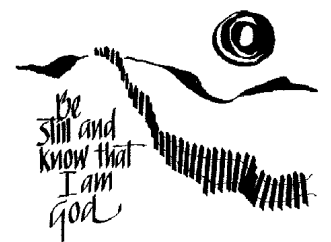
INTERCESSORS WANTED: Wednesday, 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary. Talk to God.

Our church needs YOUR fervent prayers for direction. This month, let's pray together:

"Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings, with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Pray fervently and continuously,

Bonnie Magid,
Prayer Coordinator



THE BEAR MINISTRY

Have you noticed the Bears and Bear Wanna Be's appearing in the Sanctuary to sit with you and going out to your friends and family? Thanks to all who bring those special Bears to share the Word and Healing of God. Please pick up any Bear and give it to someone who needs God's love, and then pray continuously for that person. Take a Bear to a stranger in a nursing facility or to a neighbor you don't know. Tell them God loves them and so do you. See what happens!



Valerie, The Bear Ranger, and Bonnie

I'D RATHER BE BLIND...

A volunteer returning a young camper from a week at a camp designed for physically challenged children (handicapped to some), was making small talk to pass away the long five hour drive to her home.

Suddenly the girl spoke out loud to the driver saying "Mr. Smith, I'm glad I am blind" making reference to her condition.

Poor Mr. Smith could hardly hold the steering wheel straight, shocked that this young girl seemed content with a loss that would be devastating to many an adult.

"Honey, why would you say you are glad you are blind?" he asked trying to be as matter of fact, as she was in making her statement.

The girl sort of shuffled in her seat and turned toward the direction his voice came from—"well you see, my bunk mate this week at camp was a deaf girl. She has never heard the sound of a bird, or a happy song, or heard her mother and father tell her that they love her, all her communication comes from sign language. My mom and dad tell me everything that I cannot see and paint a picture with words, and tell me they love me! So that is why I am glad I am blind—not deaf..."

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

We are committed to:

- Focusing on the mission outreach of the church
- Learning what is happening to people everywhere and helping those less fortunate than ourselves
- Supporting mission personnel with prayer, offerings and other assistance
- Working with ecumenical organization and other organizations in our community for the common good
- Assuring ministries to women and children globally
- Expanding concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

We do this by:

- Participating in Church Women United Services and causes, in our local unit's mission studies and attending Conference and District Cooperative Schools of Mission.
- Praying for members, clergy, mission personnel, church-wide leadership and UMW boards on every level.
- Giving monetary gifts to Polk County Emergency Health Care, Wesley House, Lydia Patterson Institute, The Methodist Children's Home, Onalaska I.S.D. and it's Wildcats for Christ in support of programs to benefit children and young adults
- Donating goods and services to Polk County Mission, F.A.I.T.H. Military Support Group, The McCurdy School, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Godtel Christian Ministries, Mannafest and Kid's Free Clothing Exchange.

If you wish to **make a monetary donation** to the above organizations through the auspices of UMW, give it to Treasurer Pat Winstead.

You may make a donation of time by helping pack boxes for our local soldiers once a month. Contact Bea Ellis' office at 327-4084.

You may donate time at Kid's Free Clothing Exchange Monday through Saturday during open hours at the shop.

You may donate goods for:

F.A.I.T.H. – individual powdered drink mixes, sun block, eye drops, cotton swabs, baby wipes, canned fruit & meats, liquid hand sanitizer, gum/candy/breath mints individually wrapped, or food snacks such as peanuts, sunflower seeds, trail mix, granola or power bars, peanut butter, Ramen noodles, etc. A collection box is in the Fellowship Hall.

KID'S FREE CLOTHING – new children's socks and underwear, good used clothing and shoes, school supplies and hygiene products.

UMCOR – items needed for "Hands On" projects (health kits)

MANNAFEST – medicine bottles with labels removed, small plastic butter, Cool Whip, cottage cheese and sour cream containers with lids, small plastic bottles, plastic and paper shopping bags, Ziploc bags, double frozen food paper bags. These items can be taken on Mondays and Fridays 9 & 12 a.m. or put in collection box in the Fellowship Hall.

McCURDY SCHOOL – Campbell's bean, soup & chili labels; Franco American gravy and Spaghetti O's labels; Pepperidge Farm soup labels and breads, cookies and pastries UPC's; Swanson broth & chicken labels or box UPC's; V8 UPC's; Prego sauce label or lid; Pace salsa product lids, beans, chiles and peppers labels and taco seasoning UPC; all Box Tops for Education found on most cereals and on Pillsbury, Betty Crocker, Ziploc, Old El Paso and Nature Valley products.

GODEL – clothing, bedding and household articles.

Support our mission efforts in some way.

Thanks!

Martha Young

DOES GOD NEED US?

First from the prophet Jeremiah who speaks of being called, being forced to become a prophet of God, despite his strongest protestation:

If I say, "I will not mention him or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in and I cannot.

And then in the Gospel of Matthew the same theme of urgency appears. Jesus is addressing his disciples and says to them:

What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops.

God's Graffiti

by Tim Bertram



God doesn't need us...We need God.
2 Corinthians 3:5

Scripture Readings For July

July 6th

Genesis 24: 34-38,
42-49, 58-67
Psalm 45: 10-17 or
Psalm 72
Romans 7:15-25a
Matthew 11:16-19,
25-30
Sermon:
"The Struggle"

July 13th

Genesis 25: 19-34
Psalm 139: 1-12 23-
24
Romans 8: 12-25
Matthew 1:9-18,

Sermon:
"Life Through the
Holy Spirit"

July 20th

Genesis 28:10-19a
Psalm 139: 1-12, 23-
24
Romans 8:12-25
Matthew 13:24-30

Sermon:
"Patience"

July 27th

Genesis 29: 15-28
Psalms 105: 1-11 45b
Romans 8: 26-39
Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-
52

Sermon:
"Nothing Can Separate
Us from God"

"Where can I go from your Spirit [God]? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. . . . If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you'" (Psalm 139:7-8, 11-12, *NIV*).

GOD's Graffiti

by Tim Bertram

www.christiancartoons.com



Adam and Eve: The original designers of camouflage clothing.

A WALK TO EMMAUS

The Walk to Emmaus is a spiritual renewal program intended to strengthen the local church through the development of Christian disciples and leaders. The program's approach seriously considers the model of Christ's servanthood and encourages Christ's disciples to act in ways appropriate to being "a servant of all."

The Walk to Emmaus experience begins with a 72-hour short course in Christianity, comprised of fifteen talks by lay and clergy on the themes of God's grace, disciplines of Christian discipleship, and what it means to be the church. The course is wrapped in prayer and meditation, special times of worship and daily celebration of Holy Communion. The "Emmaus community," made up of those who have attended an Emmaus weekend, support the 72-hour experience with a prayer vigil, by preparing and serving meals, and other acts of love and self-giving. The Emmaus Walk typically begins Thursday evening and concludes Sunday evening. Men and women attend separate weekends.

During and after the three days, Emmaus leaders encourage participants to meet regularly in small groups. The members of the small groups challenge and support one another in faithful living. Participants seek to Christianize their environments of family, job, and community through the ministry of their congregations. The three-day Emmaus experience and follow-up groups strengthen and renew Christian people as disciples of Jesus Christ and as active members of the body of Christ in mission to the world.

The Upper Room, a ministry unit of the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, sponsors the Walk to Emmaus and offers it through local Emmaus groups around the world. Although connected through The Upper Room to The United Methodist Church, The Walk to Emmaus is ecumenical.

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BIBICAL CONNECTION

The Walk to Emmaus® gets its name from the story in Luke 24:13-35, which provides the central image for the three-day experience and follow-up. Luke tells the story of that first Easter afternoon when the risen Christ appeared to the two disciples who were walking together along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Like Christians and churches who are blinded by preoccupation with their own immediate difficulties, these two disciples' sadness and hopelessness seemed to prevent them from seeing God's redemptive purpose in things that had happened.

And yet, the risen Christ "came near and went with them," opening the disciples' eyes to his presence and lighting the fire of God's love in their hearts. As they walked to Emmaus, Jesus explained to them the meaning of all the scriptures concerning himself. When they arrived in Emmaus, Jesus "took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them," and their eyes were opened. They recognized him as Jesus, the risen Lord, and they remembered how their hearts had burned within them as they talked with him on the road. Within the hour, the two disciples left Emmaus and returned immediately to their friends in Jerusalem. As they told stories about their encounters with the risen Lord, Jesus visited them again with a fresh awareness of his living presence.

However, the story of Jesus' resurrection does not conclude with the disciples' personal spiritual experiences. Jesus ascended to the Father, and the disciples became the body of the risen Christ through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The disciples were sent forth by the Spirit to bear witness to the good news of God in Jesus Christ. They learned to walk in the spirit of Jesus, to proclaim the gospel to a disbelieving world, and to persevere in grace through spiritual companionship with one another.

The Walk to Emmaus offers today's disciples a parallel opportunity to rediscover Christ's presence in their lives, to gain fresh understanding of God's transforming grace, and to form friendships

that foster faith and support spiritual maturity. While Emmaus provides a pathway to the mountaintop of God's love, it also supports pilgrims' return to the world in the power of the Spirit to share the love they have received with a hurtful and hurting world.

The Walk to Emmaus® is grounded theologically and institutionally in The Upper Room ministry unit of the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church.

However, The Walk to Emmaus is ecumenical. The program invites and involves the participation of Christians of many denominations. Emmaus is ecumenical not only because members of many denominations participate, but because Emmaus seeks to foster Christian unity and to reinforce the whole Christian community. This is one of the great strengths and joys of the Emmaus movement.

The fact that Emmaus is ecumenical does not mean it is theologically indifferent. On the contrary, The Walk to Emmaus is designed to communicate with confidence and depth the essentials of the Christian life, while accentuating those features that Christians have traditionally held in common.

The Upper Room Walk to Emmaus is a tightly designed event that is conducted with discipline according to a manual that is universally standard. Emmaus is offered only with the permission and under the guidelines of The Upper Room. This ensures a proven format and a common experience that should be trustworthy from weekend to weekend wherever Emmaus is being offered.

Each community is administered locally through its local Board of Directors. The program is administered globally through the International Emmaus office in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

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