

The Onalaska Evangel

A Monthly Newsletter of

The First United Methodist Church of Onalaska

March 2009



- SPIRITUALITY...

I found the following on a brochure titled "Rethinking Church" on one of our United Methodist websites.

"What if church wasn't just about Sunday, but also about the other days of the week? What if church wasn't just a place we go, but something we do. A menu of adventure. An active verb. Instead of a noun. What if church wasn't just a building, but thousands of doors. Each of them opening up to a different concept or experience of church. So that whoever knocks might find a journey to call their own.

What if church was the way hurch was in the beginning? Outbound. Unbound. Active. An early social network. Human beings from completely different places, united by common purpose, experience and belief. Creating real solutions for their daily lives. What if church looked at itself with seekers' eyes? Recognizing that even the smallest step through one of our doors is an act of courage, a moment of vulnerability. That solving a secular need can lead to spiritual interaction. That social relationships can offer opportunities for discussions of faith, and provide inspiration for discovery. And that for a skeptical world, actions often do speak louder than words. What if church was an OUT OF-church experience. An opportunity to prove what we say we believe, with our lives. Then, perhaps, Sunday could be a day of rest and reflection on all that we had accomplished Monday through Saturday... "

167 hours?

We are more than just a building. The building only exists for us to meet, to plan, to be built up, to learn. Our building is a Launching Pad. A place where we are equipped to "live out there." The Church is a place to be equipped to change the world for Jesus Christ.

The Church must meet NEEDS. People are hungry for spirituality. Hungry to find a deeper meaning of life than the superficial world they live in. But people can't catch the meaning of life when their life is in turmoil. How can you hear the "still small voice" of God when your stomach growls so loud it is all you hear? How can you feel the love of God when no one around you loves you? How can you love others when spend all your time loving yourself?

The Church needs to be about RELATIONSHIPS. Relationships with God, one another, and seeking relationships with those we don't know. How will we know what needs to meet if we don't first establish relationships with those in need? All of this is food for thought, prayer, and action.

The next time you enter Church ask yourself, "What do I think about Church?" Is Church just a noun, a place I go. Or do I think of Church as a verb. A place of action. A place where

I am in relationship with God and others as I journey through the life God has given me. What will I DO on this journey?

Maybe coming to Church may lead you OUT of Church to help transform the world

Let's meet at Church Sunday, so we can pray about how we might leave to make a difference for ourselves and others during the other six days of the week.

There are 168 hours in a week. We only spend 1 hour IN Church. What are we doing the other 167 hours?

Let's RETHINK CHURCH!!!

Joy!!!
Pastor Paul

Spiritual Christianity

Here I am: I and my bible

I will not, I dare not, vary from this book,

Either in great things or small.

I have no power to dispense with one jot or tittle

Of what is contained therein.

I am determined to be a bible Christian,

Not almost, but altogether.

Who will meet me on this ground?

Join me on this, or not at all.

John Wesley

Thursday Bible Study Class

We finished our Bible study, "Daniel: Lives of Integrity, Words of Prophecy" on February 12th. This was a wonderful study, and taught us to look around at the Babylon mentality of the world we live in, and check the choices we make day to day. The second half of this study was on prophecy, and we've discovered that even if we don't fully understand, we are coming to know God more deeply, by simply staying in His Word.

Our next study will begin on April 2nd and is called "Walking by Faith: Lessons learned in the Dark." The author of this study, Jennifer Rothschild, lost her eyesight as a teen. With wit and wisdom she relates some of the challenges in her life—from learning to apply make-up to changing a diaper. Yet she speaks not as one who has overcome great hurdles, but as one who—like all of us—faces them every day. The author offers valuable spiritual lessons on taking risks, giving God control, trusting in His Will and persevering through hardship.

This is a 7-week, DVD and workbook class like the Beth Moore studies we have done. Member book cost is \$10.95. There will be a sign up sheet in the fellowship hall later this month.

Classes are Thursday evenings at 6:00 p.m. Morning classes will be offered if there is sufficient interest. This class is open to men and women. Come join us!

If you have any questions, please call me at 646-2881. Thanks, Billie.

Thank You

The family of Bob Johnson wish to thank you all for the many cards, phone calls, and memorials in Bob's memory. The family felt the love from you all during his service. God Bless.

Georgene Johnson

DALE'S FEBRUARY DIAMOND WHAT CANCER CAN'T DO

1Corinthians 15:57 Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ.



One of the most dreaded things a person can hear is, "**YOU HAVE CANCER**"

An enthusiastic believer in Christ, our friend Bob Johnson, lost his battle with cancer just a few weeks ago.

But his life demonstrated that even though the physical body may be destroyed by this awful disease, the spirit can remain triumphant.

Recently I read the following verses of how cancer is so limited, as demonstrated by Bob Johnson: It cannot cripple Love; It cannot shatter hope; It cannot corrode faith;

It cannot eat away peace; It cannot destroy confidence; It cannot kill friendship; It cannot shut out memories; It cannot silence courage; It cannot reduce eternal life; It cannot quench the Spirit; It cannot lessen the power of the resurrection.

If an incurable disease has invaded your life, refuse to let it touch your spirit. No matter how great the struggle, keep trusting God's love, and your spirit like Bob Johnson's will remain strong.

SO MY FRIENDS THINK LESS OF THE POWER OF THINGS OVER YOU

AND MORE OF THE POWER OF CHRIST IN YOU.

Dale

The Good News Bible Study Class

The Good News Bible Study Class would like to invite you to join us in studying the Bible on Sunday morning at 8:30. We average ten or twelve in class each Sunday. Dean Blau is our teacher. He spends hours in study and preparation and leads us in lively and interesting discussions. We welcome Betty and Ravell back from South Texas. We missed you. George and Dolores are going to visit in South Texas. Hurry back! Charles and Kadie Whitard are going on a three-week trip to Saudi Arabia. They will be staying with their daughter and son-in-law in Dhahran. Please join us in our Bible Study. Our next quarter's lessons will be taken from Ezekiel, Luke, Acts, and Ephesians.

UMW NEWS

Our February program title was "For the Love of Children" and our goal was to explore UMW's involvement in public school education. We are called to make a significant difference in our public schools. Marion McWhorter talked about her involvement for a number of years with the Reading Program of the Onalaska Elementary School and of their constant need for volunteers for this program. Five of our ladies volunteered, and have set up a schedule with the school. Those volunteering were Kay Thames, Laurine Mansur, Sharon Rivers, Pat Heldenbrand and Billie Garrison. We had 25 members and 3 visitors, Thelma Carney, Wanda Lack and Nita Uptegraph present. Nita joined our unit. Welcome Nita!

We also want to thank you ladies for a great job done at the Kids Free Clothing Exchange in January! The following ladies logged 77 collective hours for the month: Donna Langston, Sandy Croll, Jewel Green, Betty Williams, Delores Scott, Dottie Dean Lyne, June Lehenbaur, Linda Kendall and Martha Young. Please pray for these children.

Our next meeting will be March the 3rd with fellowship at 9:30 and our business meeting at 10:00. The program for this meeting will be titled "A Call to Prayer and self denial" presented by Melva Whitehead. We have plenty of room for more women. Please come and join us.

God Bless

Paulette Stinson



United Methodist Men's

Breakfast

Well, it appears that moving our meeting to Saturday morning, and starting a little later for the ladies, the Men's Breakfast had a positive impact on our attendance.

After we enjoyed a breakfast that included fresh fruit, omelets, sausage, biscuits and gravy, coffee and orange juice, we heard from Pastor Paul on the topic of "Love" from a biblical reference.

Then out came the bingo cards and a wheel with numbers and we all played a game that saw many of the women winning prizes from dinners at Jerry's Restaurant and El Mante, to gifts from Lasting Impressions, a fun time was had by all.

Our special speaker was the director of the Agape Mission in Onalaska, Bonnie Ellis, who explained her programs for women that help them get a new start after an abusive encounter. It is a faith based program helping both the physical training, faith and self-esteem issues and also provides pregnancy counseling for young mothers to-be.

Avery interesting and enlightening spiritual presentation.

SCRIPTURES

March 1, 2009
First Sunday in Lent
**Genesis 9:8-17
Psalm 25:1-10 (UMH 756)
1 Peter 3:18-22
Mark 1:9-15

March 8, 2009
Second Sunday in Lent
**Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16;
Psalm 22:23-31 (UMH 752)
Romans 4:13-25;
Mark 8:31-38

March 15, 2009
Third Sunday in Lent
**Exodus 20:1-17;
Psalm 19 (UMH 750)
1 Corinthians 1:18-25;
John 2:13-22

March 22, 2009
Fourth Sunday in Lent
**Numbers 21:4-9;
Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 (UMH 830)
Ephesians 2:1-10;
John 3:14-21

March 29, 2009
Fifth Sunday in Lent
**Jeremiah 31:31-34;
Psalm 51:1-12 (UMH 785)
Hebrews 5:5-10;
John 12:20-33

** Indicates Sermon Text



Q&A: Finding the sacred beneath our feet

Mary Jacobs, Jan 29, 2009

Barbara Brown Taylor

Barbara Brown Taylor's spiritual journey has taken her out of the church and into the world. Her last book, *Leaving Church*, described her transition from parish priest to a new career as a professor. In her latest book, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* (Feb. 10, 2009, HarperOne), she writes about finding meaning in everyday life.

She spoke recently with staff writer Mary Jacobs.

In the book's introduction, you talk about how people say, "I'm spiritual but not religious." When people talk about "being spiritual," sometimes it seems so nebulous that it amounts to a kind of sentimental self-importance. Your thoughts?

You have got to find out what people mean by those two words. I hear "spiritual but not religious" said by people who are using those words and you don't know how till you ask them. And I hear religious people who quote that phrase with scorn. It would be interesting to ask them what they mean. There's a story behind every way people use that phrase. It's more interesting to find what the story is than to take the phrase at face value.

When I work with people under 30, I find they equate "religion" with service to institutional goals. That's fair. The church keeps itself in business, keeps its hospitals open, makes sure the story stays alive. I find people are disenchanted with serving institutional goals, who see religion as just being about that. It usually gets reduced to, "Every time I go to church, all they want to talk about is money." Spirituality is often about "feeling." It's relational, between someone and other people and very often creation. It's something that warms them, excites them, turns them around, wakes them, gets their attention. But often "justice" does not come up on the list of things under spirituality.

The call to take difficult stands for those with no voices—whether those are birds or trees or owls and frogs or immigrants or poor people in the community. It almost takes religion to take those concerns and keep them in front of human beings' faces, because most of us would so much rather turn away.

What led you to write this book? Is there some spiritual shift from your last book behind it?

The last book was called *Leaving Church*, and it was about leaving parish ministry after 15 years of being at it full-time. The title alone was highly upsetting to some people. That led me intentionally in this book to a title, and I hope an entire book, that I hope deals positively both with church teachings and with what happens as those teachings are carried out the door and into the world. I do see this as a partner to the first book. If the first book confessed some brokenness in me, in my relationship with the institution of church, then this book confesses an ongoing love affair with God and the people of God and the creation of God, and offers at least a dozen ways to celebrate that.

Is there is a basic "how to" for ways of encountering the sacred in our daily lives?

I avoid a "how-to" approach like crazy. I don't think there is a "how-to" to God. I don't think there's a "how-to" for approaching the sacred in life. I do think there are time-tested practices that people of many different faiths have found reliable over the centuries of history. And I do attend to those.

If I made clear my aversion to "how-to" instructions, then I would turn right around and say, "You can hardly go wrong if you pay exquisite attention to creation. You can hardly go wrong if you pay exquisite attention to your neighbor near and far. You can hardly go wrong if you will trust that what is happening to you every day carries within it the seeds of wisdom that you are in desperate need of. You can hardly go wrong if

you travel ready to be surprised by God, whether it's across the world or just to your backyard."

This is a practice-based book. I'm laying out some flagstones that I have found reliable to walk on in my deepening in God. Everything in it, you can do in your body; nothing in it is something you can do only in your mind. I worry a great deal about the intellectualization of Christian faith, the way in which a way of life gets reduced to nothing more than the acceptance of a set of beliefs or affirmations of certain principles. I worry that a physical, active, embodied way of life can get lost.

Why do we "miss" the sacred in our daily lives? Why are we often blind to it?

I think a number of us have been taught to look up into the sky for the divine instead of down at the ground under our feet. I also think a lot of us have been taught to devalue our daily experience as being secular, mundane, unholy, and yet the teaching I have received in my life points me to the earth and even encourages me not to draw such hard lines between heaven/earth, sacred/secular, everyday/mystical. I was trying to blur the lines between some dualities in spirituality that I don't find helpful.

What convinced you that those dualities were unhelpful?

I was not raised in churches, but sought them out as teenager. In many of those churches, I was taught that only what was in the Bible was sacred. Anything that happened outside biblical reference, anything that happened outside of church or outside the self-defined community of God, was by definition not holy, not worthy. I think it took me a couple of decades to decide that wasn't so. As I grew in faith and grew in knowledge of the Holy Spirit, I found other parts of Scripture—what scholars call wisdom literature—like Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Job. And for that matter the parables of Jesus

Continued on page 5 col 1)

Many teachings of Jesus are wisdom literature in that they point to ordinary lived experience: to fisherman emptying their nets, to women kneading bread, to laborers lining up for their pay. Proverbs can look at an ant and find a lesson in life.

There I found an alternate understanding of God's presence that was very much rooted in the everyday, that wasn't set aside in a sanctuary or shrouded only in sacred language, but was as available to me as bread or water or air.

Anything else you'd like to say to an audience of United Methodist readers?

I'd just want to say how grateful I am to Methodism for the historical emphasis on sanctification, on the idea that how we live and how we practice our faith really matters, really matters. That we can't do it without God, but that God refuses to do it without us. I've always looked to Methodism as one of the mainline traditions that takes that seriously and lifts it up.

Rev. Paul G. Whitlatch
Pastor
First United Methodist Church
Onalaska, Texas 77360
Off: 936-646-5859
Cell: 936-239-1290
pastorpgw@yahoo.com



2008 Bereavement

Committee

The Bereavement Committee consists of the following: Chairman Martha Martin, and Co-Chairman Gloria Alford. The Committee members are: Barbara Denyer, JoAnn Foster, Alice Harrison, Pat Heldenbrand, Nell Herndon, Mary Ingram, Lela Moncrief, Din Pruitt, Kay Thames and Gertrude York.

In the event of the death of a loved one, you will be visited or called by someone from this committee as to your wishes relating to food and meals to be served before or after the service. When the service is in our church the meal will be served in the fellowship hall. When the service is at a funeral home, the meal will be served at the family's home.

Your church family will be contacted by the committee members to assist with the meals, etc. In choosing help, we will use the church directory. Each committee member has sections to call.

Sympathy cards are sent by the committee, also courtesy calls and visits will be made to the Bereaved. When called to prepare food, we ask that the casseroles dishes be prepared in **9x13 foil containers with lids**. All others such as salads

relish trays and desserts should be prepared in **disposable containers**.

Our menu is planned by the committee and is calculated according to the number of people to be served....please do not substitute as we may not have enough food to serve the families.

Our Church family is loving and caring and have always been ready and willing to assist us in all we attempt to do for our beloved families and we appreciate all their efforts.

God's Blessing to all.

Martha Martin, Chairman

The Secret

Poem by Ralph S.Cushman

I met God in the morning
When my day was at its
best,
And his presence came like
sunrise
Like a glory in my breast.

All day long the Presence lingered,
All day long he stayed with
me,
And we sailed in perfect calmness

O'er a very troubled sea.
Other ships were blown and
battered,
Other ships were sore distressed,
But the winds that seemed to
drive them
Brought to us a peace and
rest.

Then I thought of other mornings,
With a keen remorse of
mind,
When I too had loosed the
moorings,
With the Presence left behind.

So I think I know the secret,
Learned from many a troubled way:
You must seek him in the
morning
If you want him through the
day!



"KFCE"

UMW LOCAL MISSION PROJECT

Most of you know that "KFCE" stands for KIDS FREE CLOTHING EXCHANGE, which is a community service that provides free clothing for infants through 18 years of age, and is located at Hwy 190 and 3186 here in Onalaska. Clothing and shoes (slightly used and sometimes new) are donated to "KFCE" by generous people in our community.

To start receiving free clothing on a monthly basis, the guardian brings child to "KFCE" with child's ID and fills out a "KFCE" simple information sheet (on each child). When sheet completed, the guardian can find clothing to take home that day. After five years of hard work and dedication to her idea, and with the help of many volunteers, Lynn Badgerow has records of over 5000 who have received free clothing and shoes, plus new socks and underwear from "KFCE". Every week more children are signed up to receive free clothing and some do actually bring clothing back to exchange.

Last Friday, Lynn stopped what she was doing to help a local church deacon gather clothes and shoes for three children who had lost everything when their home burned down. She has a vision for a larger building so she could help more people and she asks that we help her pray about this idea.

Last Fall Pastor Paul suggested that the UMW pray and think of volunteering at "KFCE". Soon a list of UMW who wanted to volunteer was made. Lynn Badgerow invited us to come for a little tour of "KFCE" while she explained all of their needs. We did have several work days in 2008, but, our UMW "KFCE" volunteers seriously started volunteering their time on a weekly basis after January 1st. The ladies that volunteered in January logged 77 collective hours. Great job, ladies!!

Some of our volunteers have been sick and/or gone out of town. So, I think we will probably do even better as everyone is feeling better and/or back in town.

We are making a big impact at "KFCE" and many are noticing. I have been told many times how much our help is so very appreciated. Here are some ways we are helping as volunteers:

1. Sorting donations: clean or dirty; appropriate or not, etc.
2. Placing size labels on clothing
3. Putting clothing on hangers
4. Hanging in designated areas
5. Changing or replacing clothing in the front windows

6. Refolding jeans & placing back in order
7. Receiving donations, taking to workroom
8. Re-hanging clothing that has been knocked to floor
9. Assist new people signing up to start receiving
10. Record items received by each child
11. Bag clothing after it has been recorded for each child
12. UMW often take donations to KFCE
13. Some have taken clothes home to wash & mend, then bring back
14. When needed, we clean & vacuum
15. We have taken food and snacks to share
16. We have taken prayer requests from shoppers there
17. We have invited people to visit our church
18. We are continuing to pray for "KFCE", all the children that receive clothing, guardians of these children, and all the volunteers that help make "KFCE" a success.

One of the purposes of the UMW is to be more involved in mission work through prayer, study and action. UMW volunteering at "KFCE" are certainly fulfilling this purpose. Thank all of you who have generously given your time by volunteering and we can always use new volunteers.

If you are interested, please contact Linda Kendall at 936-646-5350

Serving in His name,

Linda

Why is it the Bible verse says—Suffer unto me the little children.

It should say—the pain and suffering of the children should be mine—in this way—innocence will not be lost. It is only in innocence that true peace and acceptance can exist. Children only learn to hate when they are hurt—and then the hatred grows. If we all grew up without suffering—the world would be what it should be.