The Central Connection

MESSAGES & OPPORTUNITIES FROM CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH TO YOU!

May 2011

What Now?

As I looked at May's calendar, it seemed at first like an ordinary month. We've celebrated Easter, with all the excitement and extra preparation. We're not celebrating Pentecost until next month. So what happens in May? On the church calendar, there are no special holidays. A time to coast, breathe and regroup.

But these 50 days between the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost were tremendously exciting days for the followers of Jesus.

Jesus appeared to many of his followers, and he continued to teach them about the life of discipleship they would undertake on his behalf. Easter was the beginning, not the end, of their story. We may be familiar with Jesus' words, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Quite a job description! Jesus' work may have been finished, but the disciples' work was just beginning! Before they set out, they were to wait for the Holy Spirit—they needed God's infilling power in order to be able to fulfill Jesus' great commandment.

Too often we celebrate a glorious day like Easter, with all that it affirms about God's love and provision for us, and then we go back to life as usual, life the way it was before the holiday. Whew! Time to coast. We're not "seeing" Jesus, there are no appearances of the risen Lord, God is not telling us anything new, we don't need to wait for the Holy Spirit. It's May, and there are no special events [except Mother's Day], so we can get caught up, set aside those extra worship services, and get ready for summer.

What if Jesus still has a job description for us? What if, like the first followers, we **will** see Jesus if we pay attention? What if we need a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit in order to be faithful? For we, too, are to go to people where they are, invite them into a relationship with Jesus, include them in the church, and teach them what it means to follow Jesus in a life of obedience. This way of life continues through months like May, and all the months thereafter.

In Christ,

Pastor Stephanie

LECTIONARY READINGS

May 1
Acts 2:14*a*, 22-32
Psalm 16 (UMH 748)
1 Peter 1:3-9
John 20:19-31

May 8
Acts 2:14*a*, 36-41
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 (UMH 837)
1 Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35

May 15
Acts 2:42-47
Psalm 23 (UMH 754)
1 Peter 2:19-25
John 10:1-10

May 22
Acts 7:55-60
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 (UMH 764)
1 Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14

May 29
Acts 17:22-31
Psalm 66:8-20 (UMH 790)
1 Peter 3:13-22
John 14:15-21

LAY ACADEMY

Staunton District Lay Servant Academy

Saturday, May 7, 2011

8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Parrish Court UMC, Covington, VA

Please pick up a brochure for more information and to register. (Registration deadline: April 29)

COURSE OFFERINGS

Basic Course–the first training step to becoming a Lay Speaker, focuses on three primary areas: Caring, Leading, and Communicating

Advance Courses:

Go Preach– simple practical instruction for Laypersons who are called upon to preach on occasion, but who are not formally trained as preachers.

Discover God's Call–to help discern the gifts God has and is giving you to use in ministry.

We are Mission Minded Methodists–the importance of mission locally, nationally, and internationally.

Leading/Teaching Small Groups–find inspiration and practical help as a leader of a small group or Sunday School class.

The Central Connection is the monthly newsletter of Central United Methodist Church, Lewis and Beverley Streets, Staunton, VA.
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IN MINISTRY

The Mission of Central UMC is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Pastor..... Stephanie M. Sault
Minister of Music/Organist..... Sherry von Oeyen
Church Secretary..... Agnes Campbell
Child's Play Director. ..... Jo Ann B. Black
Custodian. ..... Janet Nuckoles
Retired Missionary Professor..... Hunter P. Mabry
Retired Pastor..... David D. Reed

What if you could impact the world locally and globally? Would you?

Through Change the World weekend, United Methodists can witness to the strength of Christ's pulse in their congregation. We can raise awareness and relief by working together so Christ's heartbeat is felt around the world.

COME CHANGE THE WORLD WITH US!

SUNDAY, MAY 15

9:30	Sunday School
11:00	Worship Service
Following Worship:	Pizza Lunch provided by UMM

DONATIONS will be accepted for UMCOR to help with the Japanese disaster.

Please bring non-perishable **GROCERY ITEMS** for our Food Pantry.

HELP ASSEMBLE BIRTHING KITS

–our goal is 100 Birthing Kits to provide a safer delivery for newborns in third-world countries. At this writing, we still need around 90 flannelette receiving blankets (2 Blankets in each kit) All other items have been provided.

Please contact Jim Printy, Chairperson of the Mission/Outreach Ministry Team, for additional information (885-6838).

MUSIC NOTES

Looking back on Easter and remembering singing the "Hallelujah Chorus," I thought it would be interesting to share a bit about Handel and his oratorio Messiah.

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany in 1685. At eleven years of age he was playing the organ and at eighteen had composed his first opera. In 1710, he moved to London where he continued performing and composing. Some time later, his interest grew toward composing oratorios—sacred works for choir and soloists. Messiah is the most well-known of these. It was first performed in Dublin, Ireland, on April 13, 1742 and was well-received. The listeners were very moved. Even though it was originally an Easter offering, it later became very popular during the Christmas season.

The first two parts of Messiah are about the birth and work of Christ. It includes solos and choruses describing the nature of our Messiah using both Old and New Testament scriptures, praising Him as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. The final part re-emphasizes the main point—that by His death we are saved. One receives great joy listening to the vibrant choruses, especially the "Hallelujah Chorus." It is a great work of music, giving wonderful testimony to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Handel gave annual benefit concerts for his favorite charity–London's Foundling Hospital, a home for abandoned and orphaned children–and always included Messiah. It is a blessing to be able to sing and play and hear beautiful music to glorify God.

–Sherry von Oeyen, Minister of Music

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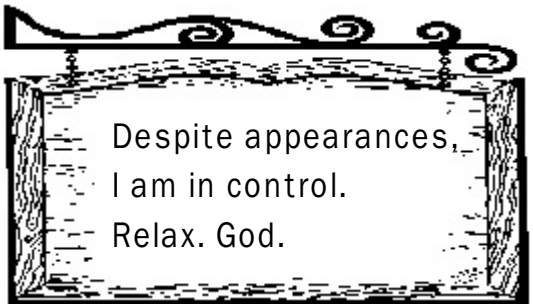
(Sign seen outside of a Church)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UNITED METHODIST MEN

Pizza Luncheon

Sunday, May 15

The next UMMen meal will be on May 15, and will be serving pizza, salad and dessert. This luncheon will be a little unusual. It's not on a fifth Sunday like it usually is, and the men are covering all expenses. We're making these changes so we can support, and participate in the Change the World mission event to be held that day. We hope to see you there.

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COMING SOON–NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY!

On May 8th Central UMC will join other United Methodist churches throughout the United States in celebrating Native American Ministries Sunday – one of the six Sundays authorized by General Conference for a special church-wide offering.

Your generous gifts help develop and strengthen Native American ministries within the Virginia Conference and across the United States – by providing scholarships for Native American seminarians, planting Native American churches, and cultivating Native American outreach.

Other ways you can honor Native American Ministries is by learning more about Native Americans in the United States and in our area.

Here are a few facts about who they are, their economic life, and their health status:

565: The number of federally recognized Indian tribes in the U.S.

4.3 million: The number of people in the U.S. who self-identify as American Indians or Alaska Native, alone or in conjunction with another race. This represents 1.5% of the U.S. population.

56 million: Total acreage of Indian territory in the U.S. This combined area is about the size of the state of Idaho.

49%: The unemployment rate among people who live on Indian reservations.

31%: The percentage of American Indian children who live in poverty. 21% of all U.S. children live in poverty.

28%: The percentage of Native Americans older than 25 who do not have a high school diploma. The national average for all groups is 15%.

71 years: The average age expectancy of Native Americans. This is about five years less than the national average, primarily due to significant rates of several medical conditions (diabetes, mental health disorders, cardiovascular disease, pneumonia, influenza, and injuries).*

Things you can do:

- Learn more by checking out a recent book on Native Americans from one of the area libraries, such as *First People - The Early Indians of Virginia* (2nd ed) by Keith Egloff and Deborah Woodward, 2006 (available at Augusta, Churchville, Mary Baldwin, Staunton, and Waynesboro libraries), and/or *How the Indians Lost Their Land – Law and Power on the Frontier*, by Stuart Banner, 2005 (Available in Augusta and Waynesboro libraries).
- Visit the current exhibit from the John L. Huffer Collection of early Native American artifacts at the Waynesboro Heritage Museum. For over 40 years Huffer has collected and documented arrowheads, knives, axes, stone tools and pottery which confirm early Native American presence all over Waynesboro and Augusta County. The Museum, located at 420 West Main Street, is open Tuesday-Saturday, 9:00 am - 5:30 pm. Free.
- Celebrate the December 10, 2010, enactment of legislation by Congress paying nearly 500,000 Native Americans what they were owed by the federal government for use of land held in trust since 1920 (even though this was only a small fraction of what was originally owed).
- Provide a generous gift on May 8th to help fund Native American ministries that pave the way for those who aspire to serve Christ's church by making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Because of your generosity, seminarians prepare to serve, congregations become stronger, and communities are transformed. – *Hunter Mabry*

*Figures cited are from the Washington Newsletter of the Friends Committee on National Legislation, Nov/Dec 2010. More information is available at: <www.fcnl.org/nativeam>.

THE BRACELET

By Luz M. de Tablan

My husband and I just came home from California where we attended our oldest granddaughter's class ceremony called "wearing of a doctor's white coat." We flew from Baltimore/Washington International Airport and went early to avoid delay and have enough time for our son to go to his work. There were already many passengers at the gate, so we tried to find vacant seats as we waited for our plane. We found a seat in front of a TV monitor and I found mine beside two ladies. I planned to read, but I don't want to lose my opportunity to know those ladies whom I have to fly with. I found out that the three of us have the same purpose on our trip: "to visit our loved ones." Betty was from Frederick, Maryland visiting her only grandson in Colorado. Brenda was from Petersburg, Virginia visiting her mother and her sick father in Kansas City; and I and my husband will visit our granddaughter who attends a medical school in Oakland, California. Betty, Brenda and I became "instant friends," within an hour and half because our trips were made possible by our "love for our families."

On the plane Brenda, my husband and I sat together, and Betty was seated opposite us. During our travel to Chicago, Brenda and I continued our conversation. We laughed and sometimes sighed on the things we shared and talked about. There was trust and comfort between us as if we were long lost friends that we have lots of things to catch up. I told her I am a Methodist very much involved in church and a United Methodist Women member and she told me she is Catholic also active in church functions. We talked about our economy; wars and unrest in the Middle East and the natural calamities here and abroad.

In between our conversation I found opportunities to share my thoughts with Brenda because of her worries. I told her that the world has always experienced some kind of trouble, but God's hands are always there and haven't stopped from giving us reason to trust Him; that these calamities make us all pull together our resources, strength and love to reach out and touch those who have suffered. I shared with her, too, that although there were many who believed that these calamities were God's divine judgment for some kind of un-Christian activity, but what I could see was an opportunity to help, to heal, to reconcile, to be hospitable and enjoy God's grace and love. I also shared that each day so many people continuously receive negative information through television and the internet; and their lives have been overshadowed by feelings of doubt, worry and most of all fear over what the future may hold. But I told her that we must hold on to the promise of God. I reminded her of John 14: 27-28: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." God promised grief will be turned to joy and salvation, not destruction.

When we were about to land in Chicago she asked me if she could give me her bracelet. Though surprised, I said yes and thanked her for her kindness. The smile on her face was an expression of satisfaction, as if a very important "mission was accomplished." The bracelet was made of small beads of three sizes with a small silver cross as its pendant. She said she made the bracelet herself.

At the Chicago airport, Betty, Brenda I and my husband parted ways, but I know the "bracelet" that Brenda gave me will serve as a link of our new friendship.

When we reached California I showed the bracelet to my friend. She said that it's not a bracelet but a "rosary." A "rosary" is a string of beads and those beads are series of prayers used by Catholics which they recite as they touched each bead as if they were counting, and each bead corresponds to a prayer. After my friend explained about the bracelet or "rosary" I thought of Lent. The cross on the bracelet made me realize that at this season of Lent the cross played a very important role in the life and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As a member of our church and a United Methodist Woman the cross gives me hope, peace and joy and reminds me too that I should always be in fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ through prayers for renewed strength from day to day. My dependence and helplessness will open the way and give God the opportunity of revealing His power.

The bracelet will remind me of Brenda; and the message of the CROSS will forever be remembered that God is ever-present in our lives.

Blessings, Luz

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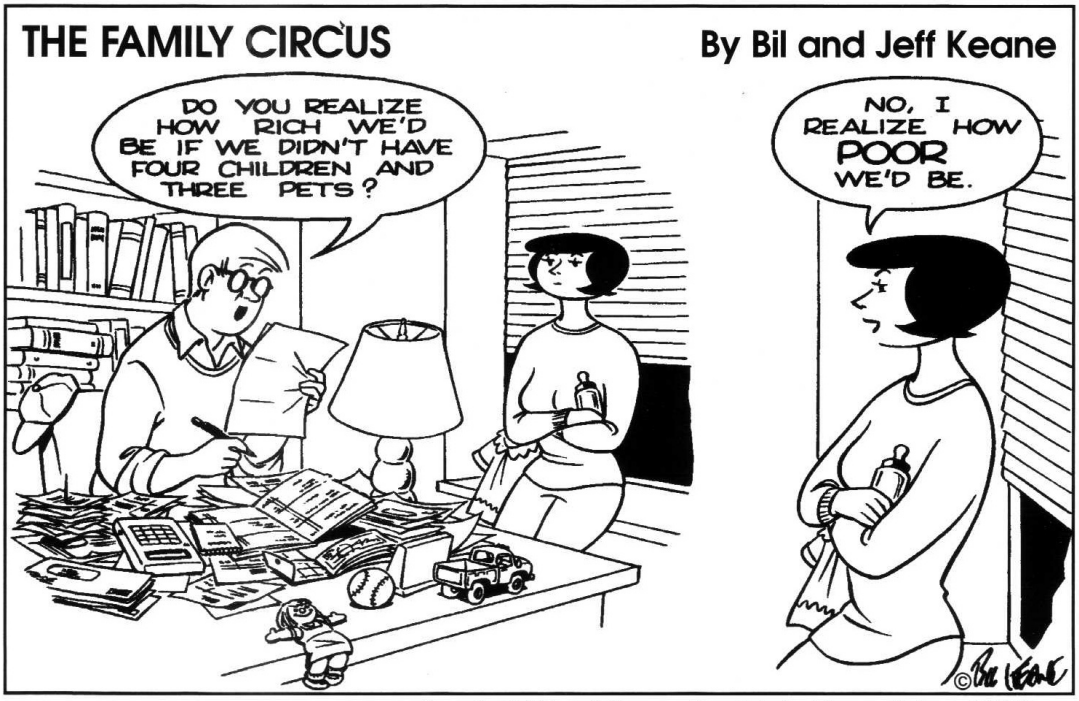

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