

May 1, 2013

The Oaks



Riverton First United Methodist Church, (217) 629-9721

Life, Death, and Change

We are reminded from time to time of our mortality. It has happened most recently with the passing of Lyle Beckey. We have seen several of our long-standing members die in the last year or so. We also reported a drop in average attendance when we filled out our 2012 annual report. Factors like these have caused some concern among us, even though we did better financially than in previous years. These concerns have come up in some of our committee meetings lately. Specifically, a written note was presented to the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. (It was a signed note, by the way. We don't do anonymous letters, although we do respect confidentiality.) Some of the contents of that note and my written response to it form the substance of this month's greeting from the pastor. The SPRC asked me to share it in the hope of promoting healthy dialogue among us as a congregation.

The note began with the words "I feel like our church is dying a slow death. I don't like this feeling." My first thought in response is to point out that we are all slowly dying. That is the human condition. We all die eventually. So do the institutions we found and in which we participate. Clubs, political parties, even countries come and go. So do churches, spelled with a small c. The eternal Church, spelled with a capital C, the Church as the Body of Jesus Christ, is everlasting, but it exists in specific times and places by a variety of names. United Methodist is one of those names. First United Methodist Church of Riverton is one of them too. So were Dawson UMC, Buffalo UMC, and Mechanicsburg UMC. Those last three went out of existence. A new institution, Fountain of Life UMC has been planted in their place. The Church lives on; churches come and go.

In saying this I am not implying that this church will or should die in the foreseeable future. A larger point to be taken here is that living things, all of them, grow and change. The one unmistakable sign of life is change. If we in this church feel we are in decline or in danger of dying, as has been expressed, then our response must be to do what living things do while we have life; that is, we must change.

Fortunately, the note went on to propose some possible changes, such as updating our website, getting on Facebook, and newspaper advertising. We are already making progress on some of those. The most general proposal was to form a new group, a Long Range Planning Committee, to systematically address needs, set goals and create a Five Year Plan. I haven't taken that up with the nominations committee yet. We humans, especially in churches, sometimes make the mistake of thinking we have solved a problem by assigning it to a committee. I again quote from the note, "I feel it is everyone in the congregation's responsibility" to address the issues such as membership and attendance decline and scarcity of young families. I agree. It is everyone's responsibility. Whether adding yet another committee to our structure will be advantageous is open to question. I would like more feedback on this.

Finally the note proposed that we think about what our church does in the community, and about what would be missing if we were not here. That is an excellent thought experiment. We can all do that. It could make for prayerful meditation.

What I have done so far, besides think and pray, is to gather some resource materials that I can share with interested church members to help us move in a positive direction. Several members of the SPRC took materials with them to review. More resources are still available for anyone who wants to see some. This is a start; something we may be able to build on; but it is just a start. We will need to do more than think and talk. We will also need to act. Please join me in prayerful consideration of how we can grow and change as a local body of the Church of Jesus Christ.

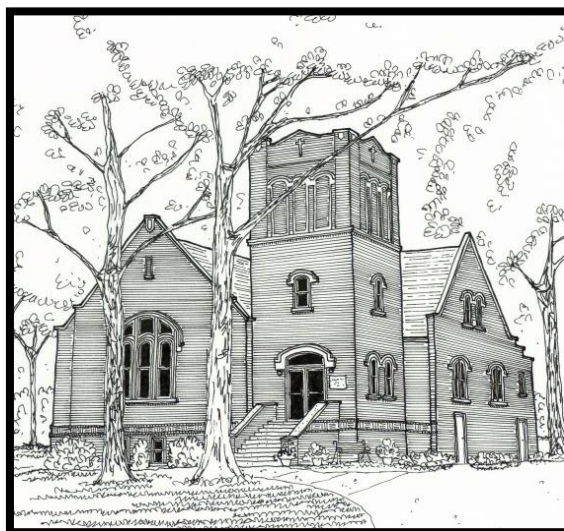
Pastor Jonathan Dixon

United Methodist Women

The United Methodist Women will meet Tuesday, May 14, at 5:30 pm. It will be a Ladies' Night Out at Chesapeake Seafood House. We welcome all the ladies of the church. If you are interested in joining us please call Rose Hughes by Sunday, May 12. Happy Mother's Day.

Trustee Update

As stated in the last several newsletters, the trustees are still working on the parsonage kitchen. However, it is nearing completion. The new cabinets are in place; the new stove/oven is in place and working; the new microwave is positioned and working; the new refrigerator is hooked up and working. By the end of April, the trustee men are hoping to insert the new kitchen sink, garbage disposal and faucets. At that time the old sink and cabinet will be taken out, but the wall behind this will need to be refinished and the floor attended to. New hardwood flooring is being installed in the dining area. There will be some minor adjustments probably, but it is hoped that the main work will be finished. A larger and updated electrical box has been installed in the basement to aid in accommodating all these renovations.



When the kitchen and dining rooms are nearly finished, the trustee men will evaluate the existing hardwood floors in the living room and the hallway. It will be determined whether to expose this flooring or to install new carpet.

Again.....the trustees want to express their gratitude to the Dixons for their patience through this remodeling project.

RFUMC Calendar – May 2013

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 9 AM Quilting; 9-12 CLM at church; 6 PM Mother – Child Banquet	2 National Day of Prayer	3	4
5 9:30 AM Worship; 10:30 AM Adult Bible Class	6 7 PM Trustees	7	8 9 AM Quilting	9	10	11 7:30 AM United Methodist Men
12 Mother’s Day 9:30 AM Worship; 10:30 AM Coffee Fellowship; 10:35 AM Adult Bible Class	13 7 PM Stewardship Team	14 5:30 PM UMW Ladies Night Out at Chesapeake Seafood House	15 9 AM Quilting; 9-12 CLM at Church; 12 PM Membership Team	16	17 7 PM Pre-School Graduation for Teddy Bear Christian Day-care	18
19 Consecration Sunday 9:30 AM Worship; 10:30 AM Fellowship Brunch	20	21	22 9 AM Quilting; 9-12 CLM at church	23	24	25
26 Memorial Sunday 9:30 AM Worship; 10:30 AM Adult Bible Class	27	28	29 9 AM Quilting; 9-12 AM CLM at church; 10 AM Prayer Time	30	31	

Looking Ahead...

June 5-8, Annual Conference in Peoria
 June 16, Father’s Day
 September 8, United Methodist Women Sunday
 October 12, Chili Supper
 October 31, Trunk-er Treat
 November 10, United Methodist Men Sunday

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: MAY 19

May Anniversaries

Eric and Joan Fritzeen	May 2, 1954
Thomas and Marjorie Todd	May 4, 1958
George and Patsy Skaggs	May 7, 1966
Arthur and Janet Gowin	May 24, 1958

May Birthdays

Beth Baumann	May 4
John Pearson	May 6, 2004
Tracy Tester	May 8
Joan Fritzeen	May 9
Joshua Higgins	May 11, 2011
Sahara Higgins	May 11, 2011
Rose Alice Hughes	May 13, 1937
Judy McCullough	May 19, 1945
Leanna Pantier	May 19, 1993
Casey Stoneburner	May 22, 1993
Cody Thomas	May 22, 1996
Ann Sims	May 23, 1997



Consecration Sunday Is Coming

Congregations that approach financial stewardship from a biblical perspective do not view the money Christians give to their church merely as a way to pay its bills. Rather, such congregations see financial contributions as a way to help people grow spiritually in their relationship with God by supporting their church's mission and ministry with a percentage of their incomes.

Our congregation's finance committee has selected the *New Consecration Sunday Stewardship Program* as a way to teach the biblical and spiritual principles of generous giving in our stewardship education emphasis this year.

New Consecration Sunday is based on the biblical philosophy of the need of the giver to give for his or her own spiritual development, rather than on the need of the church to receive. Instead of treating people like members of a social club who should pay dues, we will treat people like followers of Jesus Christ who want to give unselfishly as an act of discipleship. *New Consecration Sunday* encourages people toward proportionate and systematic giving in response to the question, "What percentage of my income is God calling me to give?"

During morning worship on Consecration Sunday, we are asking our attendees and members to make their financial commitments to our church's missionary, benevolent, and educational ministries in this community and around the world.

Every attendee and member who completes an *Estimate of Giving Card* does so voluntarily by attending morning worship on Consecration Sunday. We urge people to attend who feel strongly opposed to completing a card. The procedure is done in such a way that no one feels personal embarrassment if he or she chooses not to fill out a card.

We will do no home solicitation to ask people to complete cards. During morning worship our guest leader will conduct a brief period of instruction and inspiration, climaxed by members making their commitments as a confidential act of worship.

We will encourage participation in Consecration Sunday events through the Consecration Sunday team and governing board members. Since we will make no follow-up visits to ask people to complete their cards, we will make every effort to inform, inspire, and commit everyone to attend Consecration Sunday worship.

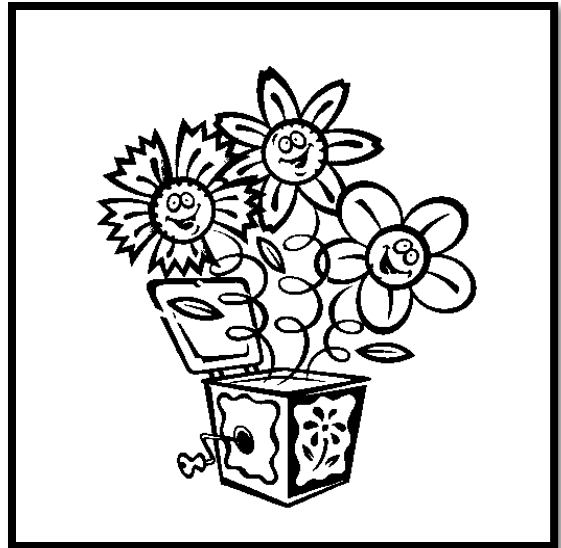
Thanks in advance for your enthusiastic participation in Consecration Sunday events.

Administrative Counsel Chairperson,
Jeri Sucech

SCRIP Update

We are almost there! We are getting close to having another \$1,000.00 to pay on the church's loan principal. Sometime in May we should have enough to make a payment. Congratulations!

Also as a support to our community, we have aided the After Prom Committee for the Riverton High School by ordering gift cards for them to use, charging no shipping and letting them keep the donated percentages. They only had to pay for the cost of the cards minus the donated percentage.



Quilters' news

The folks that quilt every Wednesday have been busy finishing one quilt, working on a second quilt and just putting a third quilt in the frames to be stretched and quilted. If you have a quilt top that needs to be quilted, please call Doris Lamkey to get your name on the list of quilts to be done. Her number is 629-9556. Remember you are always welcomed to join the ladies. If you don't know how to quilt, they will help you learn; or if you want to work on another project of yours, just come for the fellowship.

Church Committees

Recently the Stewardship Committee met and determined that there may be members of the congregation that are not aware of what certain committees and groups do in the church. It was decided to place an article regarding one of these committees or groups in the newsletter each month to inform the congregation and perhaps interest some of you to join a committee or group and enhance our church with your knowledge and talents.

This month our committee is the Prayer Committee. The purpose of this committee is to organize the prayer list and the prayer tree. This committee also meets sometimes just to pray together. This committee meets as needed. If you have any questions or are interested in joining the committee, please contact a member of the committee. Current committee members are: Ellen Dixon, Dot Hendricks and Barb Lucas.

MISSION STATEMENT: *Our mission is to draw people into relationship with Christ and the church and to lovingly challenge them to spiritual growth.*

OUR VISION: *A warm fellowship of Christians in the Riverton area, growing in numbers and spiritual nurture, with facilities and programs to do ministry in the name of Jesus Christ for generations to come.*

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