

# GENESIS

Serving Members and Friends of The First United Methodist Church of Homosassa

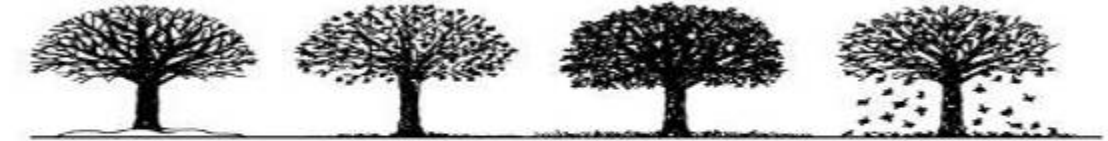
JANUARY 2007

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors

Volume 11 Issue 1

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As We Start the New Year



## What Is The Kingdom Of God?



What do you know about the Kingdom of God, Heaven, the New Jerusalem, Mt. Zion?

Most of us—if we think about these things at all—think they will be experienced when we die.

We think of them as the Christian's reward for a good life, God's promise fulfilled for all those whom God loves.

But is that all they are?

Is it just after we die that we receive these benefits—like pie in the sky, by and by? Are they promised "treats" like a reward to be given little children for good behavior?

And what is the reward? Is it just strumming a harp and singing, "Glory in Excelsus, Glory in Excelsus, Glory in Excelsus"

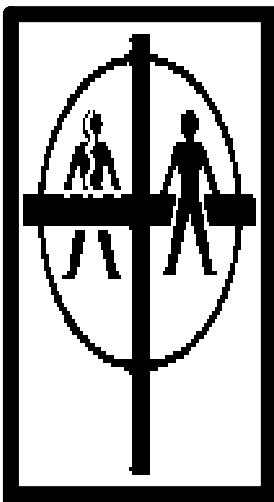
for the rest of eternity?

One of the things Jesus makes clear is that the Kingdom is not a someday-thing but that it exists in the present. As believers in Christ we become part of God's Kingdom in this life, in the here and now of our earthly existence.

The Kingdom of God is not just out there; it is right here, in us. When the Pharisees asked when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21 NIV) As believers, we are responsible for sharing the good news about the Kingdom and for living our lives according to Kingdom ways.

In January and February, I will be preaching a series of sermons about the Kingdom of God and how it intersects our daily lives. We will be looking at the Kingdom as a celebration, a calling, a commitment, and the only way to find true meaning and purpose in our world.

Since the Kingdom is not just about us but exists for all who are God's children, I encourage you to bring a friend to hear the "good news," as we talk about being citizens of the Kingdom of God.

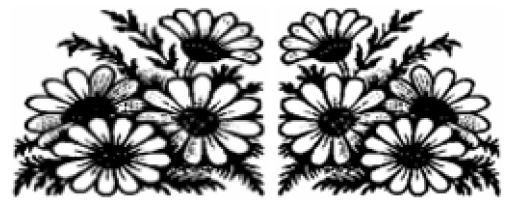
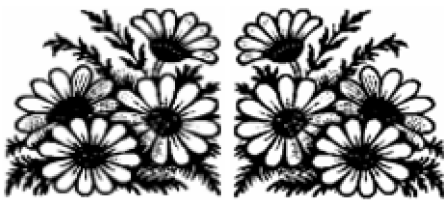


We are a Stephen Ministry Church

# "Everyone Becoming a Disciple of Christ"



The purpose of an organization’s mission statement is to give it direction, focus, and motivation. It clearly states why an organization exists and what it intends to accomplish in the future. This mission statement of the First United Methodist Church of Homosassa was adopted on January 27, 2005.



**Within The Church**

- Worship Services
- Music Ministries
- Men & Ladies Ensemble
- Children’s Choir
- Handbell & Chimes Choir
- Christian Education
- Adult Sunday School
- Children’s Sunday School
- Youth Ministry
- Lenten Soup Supers
- Fine Arts Program
- Disciple Ministry
- Prayer Ministry
- UMW Circles
- Tape Ministry
- Blood Bank
- Visitation Care Group
- Golf Outings
- Wednesday Night Dinners
- Disaster Relief Programs
- Small Groups Ministry
- United Methodist Men
- United Methodist Women
- Biblical Travel Ministry
- Counters
- Attendance Tracking



**As Outreach**

- Thrift Shop
- Food Pantry
- SHARE
- Holiday Baskets
- Nursing Home Ministries
- Cancer Survivors
- Current Affairs
- Healthy Body & Healthy Spirit
- Volunteers In Mission
- Habitat for Humanity
- PAWS (Pets Are Working Saints)
- Crop Walk
- Salvation Army Kettle Ministry
- Discretionary Giving Committee
- Brownies
- Boy / Girl / Cub Scouts
- Clown Ministries
- Missions Ministry
- Prison Ministry
- Children’s Home
- Hospice Bereavement
- After-School Tutoring
- Angel Tree
- Stephen Ministries
- Angels With Wheels
- Prayer Blanket Ministry

**IT'S ANOTHER  
NEW YEAR!**  
*...but for what reason?*

"Happy New Year!" That greeting will be said and heard for at least the first couple of weeks as a new year gets under way. But the day celebrated as New Year's Day in modern America was not always January 1.

**ANCIENT NEW YEARS**

The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. In the years around 2000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring).

The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting new crops, and of blossoming. January 1, on the other hand, has no astronomical nor agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary.

The Babylonian new year celebration lasted for eleven days. Each day had its own particular mode of celebration, but it is safe to say that modern New Year's Eve festivities pale in comparison.

The Romans continued to observe the new year in late March, but their calendar was continually tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun.

In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new year. But tampering continued until Julius Caesar, in 46 BC, established what has come to be known as the Julian Calendar. It again established January 1 as the new year. But in order to synchronize the calendar with the sun, Caesar had to let the previous year drag on for 445 days.

**THE CHURCH'S VIEW OF NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS**

Although in the first centuries AD the Romans continued celebrating the new year, the early Catholic Church condemned the festivities as paganism. But as Christianity became more widespread, the early church began having its own religious observances concurrently with many of the pagan celebrations, and New Year's Day was no different. New Years is still observed as the Feast of Christ's Circumcision by some denominations.

During the Middle Ages, the Church remained opposed to celebrating New Years. January 1 has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for only about the past 400 years.

**NEW YEAR TRADITIONS**

Other traditions of the season include the making of New Year's resolutions. That tradition also dates back to the early Babylonians. Popular modern resolutions might

include the promise to lose weight or quit smoking. The early Babylonian's most popular resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment.

The Tournament of Roses Parade dates back to 1886. In that year, members of the Valley Hunt Club decorated their carriages with flowers. It celebrated the ripening of the orange crop in California.

Although the Rose Bowl football game was first played as a part of the Tournament of Roses in 1902, it was replaced by Roman chariot races the following year. In 1916, the football game returned as the sports centerpiece of the festival.

The tradition of using a baby to signify the new year was begun in Greece around 600 BC. It was their tradition at that time to celebrate their god of wine, Dionysus, by parading a baby in a basket, representing the annual rebirth of that god as the spirit of fertility. Early Egyptians also used a baby as a symbol of rebirth.

Although the early Christians denounced the practice as pagan, the popularity of the baby as a symbol of rebirth forced the Church to reevaluate its position. The Church finally allowed its members to celebrate the new year with a baby, which was to symbolize the birth of the baby Jesus.

The use of an image of a baby with a New Years banner as a symbolic representation of the new year was brought to early America by the Germans. They had used the effigy since the fourteenth century.

**AULD LANG SYNE**

The song, "Auld Lang Syne," is sung at the stroke of midnight in almost every English-speaking country in the world to bring in the new year. At least partially written by Robert Burns in the 1700's, it was first published in 1796 after Burns' death. Early variations of the song were sung prior to 1700 and inspired Burns to produce the modern rendition. An old Scotch tune, "Auld Lang Syne" literally means "old long ago," or simply, "the good old days."

Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
and never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
and days of auld lang syne?  
For auld lang syne, my dear,  
for auld lang syne,  
we'll take a cup of kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
and never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
and days of auld lang syne?  
And here's a hand, my trusty friend  
And gie's a hand o' thine  
We'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet  
For auld lang syne.

~ Happy New Year from your Genesis Staff ~

As primarily a "senior" congregation, due in large part to the demographics of SW Citrus County, we continue to affirm our desire to become truly an intergenerational congregation—a church with "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors"—attracting more young families, youth, and children. And we continue to have discussions, in several "arenas," about how we can effectively accomplish that goal. I want to share some of my thoughts with you on this subject—as we look to the future of FUMCH.

**First, our Youth Ministry** (middle school through high school). My own pastoral experience in several churches tells me that youth programs have "peaks and valleys" over a number of years, as families come and go and as youth are available and interested in the program. Currently, we seem to be in a "valley." Several years ago we experienced some "peak" times. And however one views Matt Pedersen's rather "maverick" style, he did reach quite a few young people and their families in the community. Many of them disappeared after Matt left and before Steve arrived. Some folks have been critical of Matt for "gathering in some 'strays' who were not yet 'solid' in their faith". (But there is good Biblical precedent for that!) I blame us all, however, for not working harder to assimilate those young people and their families into the mainstream of this congregation! (The fact that we let the HS graduation of several of these youth members "slip by" last spring without acknowledgement is evidence enough of our neglect.)

Apparently Steve has been exploring ways to reach out to youth in our area of Citrus County and to expand our youth ministry beyond the small core group of "faithful" that has existed since he arrived. The reality is that few new youth will show up unless something significant and exciting is happening. (And we have continued to lose some young people to other churches where they see something worthwhile going on—and where some of their friends are involved). Right now we do not have

## A Vision for a Faithful and Effective Intergenerational Congregation

by Rev. Richard L. Evans

the necessary "critical mass" to generate the kind of program that will attract other youth.

So, how can we increase our youth ministry? One way is to "grow our own," i.e. by increasing the numbers of families with younger children. How? Read on....

**Young Families with Children** (infants through grade 5). During the late 1990s, before Mark arrived as Pastor and before Matt Pedersen was hired as Youth Minister) FUMCH had a workable vision for attracting younger families. A group of interested members, including Sharon Weaver (Director of Christian Education), began looking at the Rotation Model of Christian Education for children (K-grade 5). At that time it was rather "cutting edge" for more traditional churches like ours—although many non-denominational and mega-church congregations (such as Willow Creek) had been using it with great success. At that time curriculum resources were limited. (Willow Creek and others were writing their own—and were willing to share it). Now some mainline denominations, including the UMC, are providing curriculum resources for the Rotation Model.

In a nutshell, this calls for classrooms equipped as several different activity centers for learning. e.g. one set up as a theater for viewing videos or DVDs (with theater style seats and a popcorn machine), one set up for drama (to act out stories and situations, either live or with puppets), one with computers (we have that), one for art (painting, sculpture, crafts), one with space for playing simulation games, one using the kitchen for cooking, one for music/dance/creative movement, etc. Generally, churches have between 4-6 classrooms with such dedicated space. Children are divided into age groupings that rotate from one room to another during the 4 to 6 weeks of a particular theme. One lead teacher/"shepherd" stays with each group of children for the entire rotation

period, moves with them to the next classroom each week, reinforces the theme/story and assists the activity coordinators ("experts" in their fields) in each classroom. To read more about the Rotation Model, go to [www.rotation.org](http://www.rotation.org)

Since the model focuses on the same theme/story, but in different learning settings, over a 4-6 week period, the learning is reinforced. And if a child misses a week (or even every other week—as in the case of divorced parents sharing custody and weekend visits), he/she still has a significant learning experience on each theme/story.

Administratively, more adults are needed in "teaching teams" but recruitment often is easier since service can be in 4-6 week segments, and people often are more willing to contribute what they are good at and really interested in. Teachers/leaders can prepare for one Rotation cycle, teaching basically the same material/activity 4-6 times, varying it slightly with different age groups, and then take a "sabbatical" while another team takes over for the next Rotation period. The model works, and it works well!

So what happened to our vision—some 8 years ago? Well, several things. Our planning group had presented the vision and the Building Committee included plans to equip several classrooms in the proposed new Education Center to accommodate the Rotation Model. And we continued to plan for the introduction of the new plan for children's education when the new addition was completed—expecting to introduce it to our own members and to the community at a community-wide Open House at the time of the Dedication.

Then we "jumped the gun!" With all due respect to Sharon Weaver, one of our most enthusiastic supporters, she decided to begin the Rotation Model before the new addition was built—in our present Fellowship Hall. It was a disaster—lack of dedicated space, lack of privacy between "classrooms" lack of training for teachers and other leaders. It fell apart even before it really began. Then Sharon moved away. Debbie Pedersen, the new Director of

Christian Education, had no background re. the Rotation Model and had no interest in pursuing it. So we equipped the newly built children's education space as traditional classrooms (with the exception of the computer lab). And that's where we have been, and continue to be.

I think that the Rotation Model is still the most viable one for us--as an effective way of educating our children (K-grade 5) and as an effective means of attracting young parents (who are looking for the best for their children). If we "carve out that niche" for ourselves in SW Citrus County, we will attract families who see that ours is a different and more effective "Sunday School" program than they see elsewhere.

So, if we attract the families with children (K through grade 5) through a creative and fun Christian Education program, they will "graduate" into an equally effective Youth Program, yet to be created in our new Fellowship Center--yet to be built. Their older brothers and sisters will also become involved as their families are being assimilated into the life of the church.

**Now is the time**, I believe, to begin "floating" this idea again. Once the church "owns" it and begins to plan carefully for it, we can make it happen at the time the Fellowship Center is dedicated (2009 or 2010?). We ought not begin it before then because we do not have enough classrooms to dedicate specifically to the children—and we do not yet have enough children to create an adequate number of age groupings for rotation. But we can begin to plan now, and incorporate the equipping of the dedicated classroom space (for children) into the Building for Tomorrow (Phase III) plans.

### So how might Sunday morning look if this were adopted?

**Sunday Worship:** Three Sunday services (8, 9:30, & 11). 8 & 9:30--Traditional with a subtle blending of Contemporary elements, specifically projection of announcements & some worship elements, including words of hymns. The 9:30 service would become more family oriented and truly intergenerational. When we

are ready, the 11 am service might become more Contemporary--probably more attractive to youth and younger adults--meeting at first in the Worship Center. If it really "takes off" it could become a full-blown Contemporary service held in the new Fellowship Hall.

### Sunday Christian Education: 9:30am

**Infants & Pre-school:** We have two rooms that are well equipped and supervised by a paid nursery worker--adequate at least for the near future.

**Children (K-grade 5):** The Rotation Model of education with 4 dedicated classrooms. (1) One of our existing classrooms (or a newly constructed one) equipped theater style to view video or DVD presenting the theme story. Popcorn machine. (2) Room 112 (The blue room), for drama. (3) The computer lab. No change needed except that chairs need to be in raised position for younger children to access the mouse & keyboard. (4) Room 111 (The green room), equipped for arts and crafts. On occasion, when appropriate in the curriculum, some Fellowship Hall space might be substituted for one of the learning centers to play a simulation game. And the Kitchen might be used to bake something related to the theme.

Children would be divided into 4 age groups, each with an adult "shepherd"/teacher who would take care of signing in and out, re-emphasize the theme/story and accompany the group on their "Rotation Journey." Their first stop, on any given Sunday could be the Worship Center--arriving at the conclusion of the announcements and greeting and at the beginning of the Prelude. (On Sundays when some of the children might be dancing or singing, that presentation would be either the Prelude or the Introit). The Children's Moments could follow, when the Pastor speaks to all the children and introduces them to the worship theme for the day—or some other appropriate message. Following the Children's Moments, the children and their teacher teams would exit the Worship Center during the Hymn of Praise and go to their respective classrooms/learning centers. After transition time, each class should have about 45 minutes before dismissal.

In this model there would be 3 Rotation cycles each quarter (12 weeks). On the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday some special program might be scheduled for the entire Children's Division.

### Youth: (2 groups)

#### **Middle School & High School.**

Bible Lessons and Learning activities would be held at 9:30 am in the new Youth Center and, possibly, in a portion of the new Fellowship Hall. Members would be encouraged to attend the Contemporary service at 11 am.

**Young Adults:** A 9:30 am "Koffee Klatch" (study & discussion group) might be offered for single young adults (post high school until age 25). Some may also be interested in helping with the Children's Rotation Model. And they would be encouraged to attend the Contemporary service @ 11 am. Members of the group might go out to eat lunch or brunch together after the service. Special events might also be scheduled when college students are on a break and during the summer.

**Middle and Older Adults:** Classes offered at 9:30 in Room 114, the Samstag Chapel, Room 106, the Conference Room, the Library, and the two or three newly built classrooms. Choir members and others who wish to attend the 9:30 service might wish to join a class that would meet at 11 am in one of the adult classrooms. And, of course, a variety of additional study opportunities would be offered to adults throughout the week--in the Education Center and in private homes.

As we reach out to families with children and youth we will continue most of the effective ministries and programs for and with our middle and older adult constituency, many who are retired (often some distance from their own children and grandchildren) and consider FUMCH to be their "extended family."

Well, this is how I see our future. I'll be interested in your response and comments.

One day a woman raising her six grandchildren for her daughter came to our Thrift Shop desperate for some help.

She had taken on the care of the children but didn't have enough money to supply them with what they needed.

She had applied to the state for food stamps and other aid but those wheels turn slowly.

The ladies in the thrift shop didn't hesitate in making sure that she had all the clothes she needed for herself and all the children.

Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon story.

Staying ahead of the needs of the community and those of our church is challenging.

Fifteen or so years ago when the church started the current building program we called it "Building For Tomorrow."

We saw it as a step out in faith to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

First we built a sanctuary filled with light and sound.

Then we added to the Thrift Shop and built a new education building.

By the time we finished that building three years ago a lot of people were calling the program, "Building For Today."

They called it "Building For Today" because as soon as



**By Rev. Mark Whittaker**

we opened the new Sunday School rooms in the new and renovated buildings they were full - full of happy laughter, full of adults digging deeply into the meaning of the word of God, full of students seeking help from mentors so that they could move forward in school.

These buildings became the foundation of the ministry of our church.

They allowed us to reach out to many different groups and invite them to share in the Good News of Jesus Christ.

And that is well and good. But today's tomorrow presents new challenges, particularly among our youth, who don't have a safe, positive, God-centered environment in which to gather, hang out, and grow in faith.

Building for Tomorrow, Phase III, is designed to fill this need.

In the new Youth Center envisioned by this plan, young people - in and beyond our

church membership - will have a place to gather, complete with programs that help them seek God's guidance through these traditionally turbulent years.

In this building, area youth will find the secure, uplifting environment so many seek.

Across the hall from the Youth Center, an expanded Fellowship Hall will resonate with the sights and sounds of our new contemporary service - an essential tool in our efforts to attract young men, women, and families to our church.

Complete with an enlarged kitchen, the Fellowship Hall will host expanded food-and-fellowship programs and expand opportunities to serve the hungry and homeless who surround us.

And when that grandmother returns to our Thrift Shop to dress her grandchildren for the next school year, she will find a larger space with the same dedication to providing a "hand up," not a "hand out."

Though we're bound to encounter some obstacles as we enter into this effort to once again grow our church, I'm convinced that with commitment and the leading of the Lord, we will be able to expand to meet the growing needs of our community.

Let's not wait until our plan becomes "Building for Yesterday." Let's work to make our plan one that's building for today's tomorrow now.

# Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

(January 18-25, 2007)  
By Jan Wise

This week of prayer for Christian unity is a time when Christians are urged to “de-emphasize their many divisions and to praise God in the Holy Spirit for the unity they already share in Christ.”

Several suggestions are offered - visiting other churches, pulpit exchanges, joined services - as well as a Scripture and Prayer Guide publication for individual use. All of these are good ideas with a Godly intent.

But does an external goodwill type of unity once a year accomplish what Jesus meant when he prayed that we all might be one? We know how an outward show of unity can be a temporary facade for covering a lack of harmony. If you’ve ever been in the minority group of a majority-rules vote and heard the decision presented to others as unity, you know what I mean. Or how it hurts to see a couple that seemed so together last week announcing their separation this week.

A Christian teacher posed this question: If you had one tuning fork and 100 pianos and you tuned each piano to the single fork, what would happen if the pianos played together—would they be in harmony? He makes the point that if *each* Christian keeps his attitude in tune with Jesus Christ, we will be in harmony with one another. The Apostle John explains, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

So how do we pray this week? As our church seeks to develop a passionate spirituality, I’d like to suggest we each pray for an ever-deepening relationship with the Christ who makes the unity possible. By praying, “Lord, I want to know you better,” we are asking to be brought into harmony with the heavenly “tuning fork” who can then bring us into unity with each other. It is a prayer God will delight to answer.

PASSION

Are you passionate about your church, about your faith, about your love for Jesus?

I know you are. It shows in the way you care for each other, in the way you volunteer in the community, in the way you work together, in the way you bring friends & neighbors to church, and in so many other things you do.

We are going to be exploring ways to expand and share our passion and experience, so everyone can have that same zeal. If you’ve experienced something which really increased your passion for the Lord (a Bible study, retreat, prayer experience, etc.), I’d like to hear about it. So stop me and we’ll talk, or email me at [marilynww@netscape.net](mailto:marilynww@netscape.net) or call me at 382-3751.

Marilyn Watson, Spiritual Formation

January 6, 2007



January 15, 2007



*Recipe for a  
Happy New Year*

*Author Unknown*

*To leave the old  
with a burst of song  
To recall the rights  
and forgive the wrong;  
To forgive the thing  
that binds you fast  
To the vain regrets  
of the year that's past;*

*To have the strength  
to let go your hold  
Of the non-worthwhile  
of the days grown old;  
To dare to go forth  
with a purpose true;  
To the unknown task  
of the year that's new,*

*To help your brother  
along the road  
To do his work  
and lift his load;  
To add your gift  
to the world's good cheer,  
Is to have and to give  
a Happy New Year.*

## NEW BOOKS FOR THE NEW YEAR

Start the New Year right by turning over a new leaf -- of one of the following books in the Church Library. New books are displayed on shelves to the right of the door.

1. "Storm" by Bill Bright and Jack Cavanaugh -

The time is 1798 - 1800, the Great Awakening of America, barely two decades old. John Adams is running for President of the United States against Thomas Jefferson. Asa Rush is a freshman at Yale where the importance of God has just been reinstated as part of the curriculum. Eli Cooper, a Jeffersonian, is plotting to spearhead an armed rebellion against the government. Asa is determined to thwart this plot but time is running out. Can he act quickly enough to save his country from a needless war? Also, both men fall in love with the wealthy and mysterious Annabelle Byrd.

2. "Before I Wake" by Dee Henderson.

This is a murder mystery with Rae Gabriella working the case for one of the victim's families. Women tourists visiting town are being murdered. Rae is staying at the same hotel as one of the victims and she could be next. Thinking about the puzzle, Rae prays before she clicks off the light, "If I should die before I wake, please welcome me to heaven, Jesus."

3. Cynthia Davis has written three books about women of the Bible.

"Rahab's Redemption" is full of intrigue and suspense. She was in disgrace but without her, the Promised Land was lost. Marrying an Israelite, she became one of Jesus' physical ancestors. If you've ever wondered how the walls of

Jericho fell or why God's people welcomed a harlot, you'll thoroughly enjoy this exciting biblical novel.

"Miriam's Healing" --

Miriam's mother taught her about the God of Abraham but she is filled with doubt as she watches her people toil as Egyptian slaves and her prayers for deliverance remain unanswered. She's about to discover that God hasn't forgotten those he loves.

"Beloved Leah" is a heartfelt novel that brings the Old Testament story of Jacob, Rachel and Leah to life, showing you how Leah might have felt living in her younger sister's shadow. If you've ever felt second best, you'll be touched by Leah's powerful story.

4. "The Confident Woman" by Joyce Meyer.

A non-fiction book wherein you'll learn how to overcome all obstacles to live a bold, victorious life. She gives women the keys to identifying barriers to confidence. True confidence is faith in Christ.

5. "The Gentle Hills" by Lance Wubbels.

A series of four books. It's a delightful country story of the Macmillan family during the era that redefined America. Newlyweds Jerry & Marjie Livingstone are married just two days before Jerry leaves for the Navy after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Would their love be enough to sustain the dream of one day spending their lives together? Books 2-4 follow them through the war years and challenges they face on the home front as owners of the family farm and their friendship with a missionary who escaped the Japanese takeover of Borneo. As the war finally comes to an end, how will they discover what is most important in their lives?

6. "Asylum" by Nan Corbitt Allen.

This novel tells the story of Ian Lane, 10 years old, who has retreated into his own private world of rhyme after the tragic death of his alcoholic parents for which he secretly feels he may be at fault. He rejects his Aunt Jo's loving attempts to help him and runs away. Alone, hungry, he finds an open door and finds shelter in the organ chamber of a struggling church. Ian doesn't know that he is the focus of a massive search and not everyone has a pure motive for finding him.

7. "A Garden in Paris" by Stephanie Grace Whitson explores the question, "Is it ever too late to be what you might have been?" A father dies and a mother and daughter struggle with their grief. One devotes herself to the family business to honor his memory while the other struggles with untold secrets and regrets.

The story continues in "A Hilltop in Tuscany" when troubling information is found on the deceased father's computer. This is great Christian fiction with heart-touching life lessons.

8. Beverly Lewis continues her Amish series with "The Brethren." This is Book 3 of Annie's People. Book 1 is "The Preacher's Daughter" and Book 2 is "The Englisher." This concluding book has Annie moving from her childhood home to live with Esther, her shunned friend, which only increases her Amish brethren's disapproval.

9. "Family" by Karen Kingsbury is the latest novel in the "Firstborn" series. Her writing makes you feel as if you are part of the Baxter family living their struggles and learning that family is more important than ever.

Your Library Staff  
Helen Lefave & Barbara Jackson



**Merry Christmas and a Happy New You!**  
by Steven Skelley

We've all heard the phrase, "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year," but today I want to say, "Merry Christmas and a Happy New You!" because this is a wonderful opportunity for positive change in our lives.

Every time I hear the song "Greensleeves," I am reminded of positive Christmas change .

William Shakespeare said that "Greensleeves" was one of the favorite pub tunes of his day. It was a sad song sung in bars as people got drunk. This folk song can be traced as far back as the 1500s.

Greensleeves is the story of a man who loved a woman who didn't love him back and then dumped him rudely in spite of all the attention and money he had spent on her. It reminds me a lot of those tear-in-my-beer country songs.

Look at some of the lyrics, "Alas, my love. You've done me wrong. You cast me out discourteously when I have but loved you, oh so long, delighting in your company."

Why does this sad, lost-love song remind me of positive opportunities at Christmas? Because about 200 years after this sad pub tune was popular, a man named William Dix took the music, scrapped the sad lyrics, re-wrote the song and named it "What Child Is This," a beautiful Christmas song revealing that God has come, in the form of a little baby, to help mankind.

"Greensleeves", a sad song about hopelessness and lost love, was miraculously changed into a beautiful story of a love that comes to help those who are lost. What a positive change!

Another of my Christmas favorites is Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Everyone has seen some version of this wonderful story. In it, Ebenezer Scrooge allows Christmas to change him from a mean, lonely, hurtful manipulator into a loving, caring citizen.

Christmas is a wonderful time to be like William Dix and make a positive change in lives that have been darkened by sadness and hopelessness.

It's an excellent season to be like Ebenezer Scrooge and turn from those actions and habits that keep us from finding peace for hearts and love for our neighbor.

Abraham Lincoln said, "I walk slowly, but I never walk backward."

An old Chinese Proverb says, "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step."

The Bible's book of Luke says that the first Christmas was a time of "good news about great joy."

Let your Christmas reflect these thoughts as you take this opportunity to move forward to better things.

**Merry Christmas  
and a  
Happy New You!**



**Our Creative Worship Workshops are now held on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays of each month at the church.**

**Creative Worship Workshops are led by Steve Skelley in conjunction with Rev Whittaker.**

**The goal is to work as a team to support the gospel message creatively so that people of all learning styles can understand God's love for them.**

**Do you have talents in music, drama, art, decoration, or outside-the-box thinking? Join us. Contact Steve for more information**



**New Group To Launch Soon!**

Lisa Specht has joined our list of talented Holistic Small Group Leaders! Lisa has completed her training sessions and will be leading a new group for people who battle chronic pain. This will be a valuable asset to many people in our community. Contact Lisa for more information.

We have a Holistic Small Group for you: Men's Prayer with Clarence Koehler, Marilyn's Siegel's Bible Study, First Place with Diane Gibbs, Chronis Pain Support with Lisa Specht, Caner Survivors with Anna Cooley, Current Events Discussion Group with Bill Ackerman, and Living In Christian Community with Jan Wise.

Join a Holistic Small Group today. Start your own group. Contact Steve Skelley at the church office for information on joining or starting a Holistic Small Group at 1<sup>st</sup> UMC.



**Youth  
Ministry Schedule**

**Sunday School  
9:30 – 10:30 on Sundays.  
In the Youth Room**

**Youth  
Fellowship  
12:00 – 2:00pm  
on Sundays.  
Meet in the Youth Room**



**The new church website  
for youth is at:**

[www.CitrusCountyTeens.org](http://www.CitrusCountyTeens.org)

**Check it out!**

**Recycle Your  
Empty Ink Cartridges**

Bring in your empty printer ink cartridges and place them in the recycle box on the soda machine near the fellowship hall.

Recycling these cartridges saves the environment and earns us money to support ministry to local youth and to pay for food, clothes and schooling for Ralph and Adriana, our mission children in Central America.

**Financial Assists for the College-Bound**

**By Rev. Richard L. Evans**

**New Scholarship Created**

A new scholarship fund is being established this month at FUMCH, created by Robert and Mary Huey in memory of his parents. The Samuel R. and Gladys F. Huey Scholarship awards of \$1,000 each will be given, beginning in 2007, to qualifying students seeking a college degree.

According to the guidelines, preference may be given to residents of Chassahowitzka and Homosassa, to those pursuing teaching careers, and to participants at FUMCH. Recipients will be eligible to re-apply and to continue to receive grants until they have earned a bachelor's degree.

Application forms are available from the Guidance Offices of high schools in Citrus County and from our church office. The FUMCH Scholarship Committee will make the final selection of recipients.

Robert and Mary Huey have attended FUMCH since 2002. Robert's parents came to Chassahowitzka in 1934. For many years they operated a service station, restaurant, and motel at the junction of US 19/98 and Miss Maggie Drive. Samuel Huey died in 1975 and Gladys died in 1995.

The Huey Scholarship Fund will be administered by the Permanent Endowment Committee of FUMCH. Initial grants will be awarded from current funding. The scholarship will continue through the proceeds of a Charitable Gift Annuity, with FUMCH named as beneficiary.

In addition to honoring the memory of Samuel and Gladys Huey, the gift of this Scholarship Fund will help to made a college education possible for many Citrus County young people.

**Katherine Mitchell Scholarship**

United Methodist high school students should be aware of the Katherine Mitchell Scholarship offered annually by FUMCH to UM students who are enrolled in colleges or universities and who are pursuing their education toward becoming United Methodist Ministers, Christian Education Directors, or Church Music Directors.

Awards of \$1,000 are be made annually to qualified applicants. Application forms are available at the FUMCH office and at the Guidance offices at Citrus County high schools. Our Scholarship Committee will make the final selection of recipients.

This scholarship fund was created in 2000 by a bequest from the estate of Katherine Mitchell, a member of FUMCH from 1978-1986. Ashley Riggs, Sandra Garner, and Matt Pedersen were prior recipients of awards from the fund.

**Wonderful Wednesday Suppers**

~ Wonderful Wednesdays for 2007 ~  
 (There will be soup suppers held  
 on Wednesdays during Lent.)

- JAN. 3 - SGT. CHRIS EVAN  
*IDENTITY THEFT*
- JAN. 17 - DICK EVANS  
*GREECE TRIP*
- JAN 31 - BARBERSHOP QUARTET  
*SONGS TO REMEMBER*
- FEB. 14 - JIM & JEANNINE LOVE  
*A NIGHT FILLED WITH LOVE*
- APR. 11 - IRIS WHITTAKER  
*KEY TRAINING CENTER*
- APR. 24 - SHARON SMITH  
*OVERSEAS MINISTRIES*
- MAY 9 - DAVID BENTHUSEN  
*COMMUNITY BASED  
 INSTRUCTION*

Keep an eye on the bulletin inserts for more information. We hope you can come and enjoy the delicious food and desserts prepared by your dedicated group of Wonderful Wednesday Volunteers. Plan to enjoy an evening of Christian fellowship and interesting programs.

My name is Nancy Graham. I'm the daughter of Betty Ainsworth, one of your former members.

Although Mom hasn't moved, she now has her mail delivered to a different address. She looks forward to receiving the bulletins you send so I want to be sure you have the new address.

Please send any mail to her at:  
 Elizabeth J. Ainsworth,  
 P.O. Box 495, Crystal Lake, IL 60039.

Sincerely,  
 Nancy Graham  
 815.455.4557  
[graham\\_n33@yahoo.com](mailto:graham_n33@yahoo.com)

**"The Rest Of Your Life"**  
 By Rev. Richard L. Evans

**Saturday, February 17, 2007**  
**9 am to Noon**  
**in Fellowship Hall**

The Workshop, planned and sponsored by the Permanent Endowment Committee, will explore available resources in Citrus County to provide quality of life to seniors and assurance to family members during "the sunset years."

Panelists will include the director of an Assisted Living Residence, an Attorney, a Geriatric Care Manager, a staff member from Hospice, a Financial Planner, Sharon Smith (our own Parish Nurse), and Rev. Richard Evans, moderator.

After a Continental Breakfast served from 8:45 to 9:15 am, the agenda will address the following topics:

- Where Will You Live during the rest of your life?
- Financial Planning for the rest of your life.
- Legal Issues you may face.
- What Legal Documents will you need?
- Community Resources for those living independently.
- Spiritual Resources for the "journey."

There is no charge for the Workshop, but registration is necessary in order to have sufficient food and the right number of resource packets. Call the church office (628-4083) to reserve your place at the Workshop.

**CANCER SUPPORT GROUP**  
 The Cancer Support Group meets every fourth Tuesday from 1PM to 2PM in Room 203.

The next meeting is January 23rd. We laugh, we cry, we share, we care.

Call Anna Cooley 382-4132 or Merl Hoar 382-4555

**United Methodist Women**  
 ~ 2006 ~

As 2006 comes to a close I would like to give an update on some of the outstanding things our group has done this year.

We had a New Member Reception in January which was well attended, and we look forward to this being an annual event.

Our Spiritual Renewal Brunch was a Social Action Event. The speaker was Penny Phares from Isaiah Place. Penny is a very special person who works with very special children.

Another interesting program featured was Ruth Levins speaking to the unit on "Children of the Bible."

Our Mother/Daughter Banquet was a great success. The attendance was very good with many mothers and daughters there.

At our Pot Luck Luncheon in September Iris Whittaker spoke on The Key Training Center volunteer program.

In October Kay Bast was hostess for a bus trip to Tampa United Methodist Center with lunch at the historic Columbia Restaurant in Ybor City. This was a wonderful experience for us all and especially for those who had never been there before.

Last, but not least, was the Annual Bazaar in November. This year was the best ever. Our proceeds were \$3,400 - the most money we have ever made. It was a lot of work, and the cooperation the day of the bazaar was tremendous. The proceeds figure included the garage sale held in June, conducted by Kay Bast. Kay's Helping Hands Circle was in charge of the Trash and Treasures, and her circle alone netted over \$1,000.

Our final event will be the Installation of Officers in December at the Christmas Pot Luck Salad Luncheon. I will be installed as President again and look forward to my fourth year in this office. My officers have been great, and I applaud them for their help.

In Christian love,  
 Patricia "Pat" Blake



November 14, 2006

To the UMW of Homosassa,

Thank you so much for your gift of \$1,000 to Cornerstone Family Ministries, Inc. Yes, after a year of careful study, Tampa United Methodist Centers has changed its name. We are the same ministry, with the same United Methodist heritage and connection, but we have a new vision for focusing on families. We believe that families are the cornerstone of the community and plan to continue to provide families of all sizes, shapes and needs with the tools for success through our many programs.

The Message Bible translates Ephesians 2: 20-25 as, "God is building a home. He's using us all - irrespective of how we got here- in what he is building. He used the apostles and prophets for the foundation. Now he's using you, fitting you in brick by brick, stone by stone, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone that holds all the parts together. We see it taking shape day after day—a holy temple built by God, for all of us built into it, a temple in which God is quite at home."

Thank you for joining with us through your gifts and prayers. They will help us as we continue to build on the foundation of service that has been growing for 114 years. You make our work with at-risk children and families possible. For more information go to: [www.CornerstoneFamilyMinistries.org](http://www.CornerstoneFamilyMinistries.org).

May God continue to bless you as you continue to bless others.

Stephen S. Langford  
 Executive Director



**Installation of Officers: December 12, 2006 ~ L to R ~ Kay Bast, M.C.; Patricia (Pat) Blake, President; JoAnn Ryan, Secretary; Jackie LaMountain, Treasurer; Maureen Samstag, Secretary of Program Resources; Peggy Benson, Committee on Nominations; Debbie Tomberlin, Spiritual Growth Coordinator; Judith Huffer, Publicity Chairperson. Missing from photo: Kim Bennett, Education & Interpretation Coordinator; and Ann Ice, Social Action Coordinator.**



The 2006 Annual Bazaar is over and I would like to thank all who worked so hard to make the event such a success.

I would especially like to thank my co-chairperson Maureen Samstag because without her I would have been lost.

I look forward to doing this again next year.

Our net this year was the best ever...\$3,400.

We hope we can do as well next year.

There are three men who need a special thank you...Bud Ludwick, Lee Bast, and Sheldon LaMountain. Thanks, guys.

Everyone worked well together, and we got things done.

Again, a special thanks to you all and may God bless you for your efforts to make this bazaar something special.

I love you all and special blessings,  
Pat Blake

The Alternative Gift Fair was a smashing success thanks to everyone who participated this year. The total combined donations received were over \$5,600. They will go to help needy people around the globe.

**THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!**  
~ Jackie LaMountain

***United Methodist Women's Unit Meeting***

January 16, 2007

7:00 pm

~ New Member Reception ~

Leaders: Lorraine Tollefson, Membership Outreach & Nurture  
Patricia Blake, President

Hostesses: Helping Hand Circle

Circle Duties: Thrift Shop ~ Dorcas Circle

January 13, 2007: District Officer Training in Largo, FL  
Contact Pat Blake if you wish to attend. Depending on interest, we might need drivers for this event.

A BIG THANK-YOU goes out to our Music Ministry volunteers and staff who worked so hard to make our Christmas Eve services such a great success.

Now that the Christmas Season is over, we are accepting new members into our Chancel Choir and Sacred Dance Groups.

Chancel Choir rehearses at 7:00 p.m on Wednesday evenings in the choir loft. C'mon by and check us out.

If you have any questions leave a message for Mary Kay at the church office with your name and phone number. I'll get back to you ASAP, or you can just come to rehearsal a few minutes early on Wednesday to pick up music and information sheets.

We'll be rehearsing Easter Music before you know it, so don't put it off.

For Sacred Dance Information contact Holli Benthusen at 422-0233.

**PRAISING**

**GOD**

**~WITH~**

**MUSIC**

**AND**

**DRAMA**

Musically Yours,  
Mary Kay Messenger  
(Director of Music Ministries)



We would like to thank the decorating committee and any other church members that were involved in our annual "Hanging of the Greens."

You out-did yourselves once again!  
Thank you from your  
Committee Co-chairs.



**January Birthdays**

1  
Joyce Stone  
Barbara Hartley  
April Collins  
John Collins  
2  
Marian Sandlas  
John Cooley  
3  
Gloria Marquis  
James Stoneman  
5  
Isabelle Verge  
Dick Bradley  
6  
Barbara Bellcase  
7  
Dot Reed  
James Roberts  
8  
William Oleson  
Sue Kuntz  
Jane Ling  
9  
Marlene Kaiser  
10  
Joan Carnevale  
11  
Mary Kay  
Messenger  
12  
Myrna Evans  
Joyce Leaming  
Ed Messenger  
Steve Skelley  
13  
Iris Whittaker  
Ruth E. Smith  
Paul Glenn  
Hilda Seagren  
Louis Garthaus  
14  
Mary Severance  
Annie Carl  
Evelyn Knight

16  
Marilyn Grime  
David Marquis  
Ruth Smith  
Elwin Mosier  
Stan DeClue  
17  
Harold Swinson  
Barbara Lawrey  
Ann Ice  
Elizabeth Winner  
18  
Joan Cadaret  
19  
Glen Gunderson  
Robert Grafton  
20  
Robert Angus  
Paul Patton, Jr.  
21  
Betty Blockus  
Shirley Cole  
Colleen Megan  
DeClue  
22  
Agnes  
Brickmeier  
Jane Hamilton  
23  
Nancy Buzby  
24  
Elly Case  
25  
L. Archer Walker  
27  
B.J. Smith  
William Waters  
28  
Phyllis Konitshek  
Stephen Csont  
29  
Lois Pohlman  
30  
Kathy Betsko  
31  
Earl Speicher

**January Anniversaries**

4  
Lisa & Rusty  
Stocker ~ 4 yrs  
5  
Betty & Jack  
Eldridge ~ 55 yrs  
9  
Roberta & Todd  
Little ~ 43 yrs  
11  
Gail & Walter  
Rudolph ~ 4 yrs  
13  
Norma & Duane  
Geiger ~ 56 yrs  
15  
Karen & Neil  
Kline ~ 35 yrs  
Lois & Jack  
Schoch ~ 58 yrs  
17  
Joan & Art  
Carnevale ~ 48 yr  
Gloria & Zane  
Megos ~ 38 yrs  
19  
JoAnn & James  
Wilson ~ 50 yrs  
20  
Elma & Jack  
Mallett ~ 61 yrs  
24  
Sue & Russell  
Kamphuis ~ 32 yr

**Nursing Centers**

Barrington  
Ken McGuire  
Brentwood  
Evelyn Bash  
Rene Dube  
Betty Pettit  
Ann Specht  
Crystal River Health & Rehab  
Robert Smith  
Ralph Hudson  
Cypress Cove  
Louise Brechka  
Jack Mallett  
George Mestjian  
Ruth E. Smith  
Willie Smith  
Elta Whilden  
Julia Wilkinson  
Sugarmill Manor  
Del Parker  
Grace Payne  
Ray Short  
Surrey Place  
Marjorie Cook  
Maddie Wallace  
Homebound  
George Cole  
Paul Glenn  
Dea Miller  
Hospice At Home  
Wallace Nave  
~ Visitation  
Committee ~

Please keep these shut-ins in your prayers.  
~ Sharon E. Smith



**SECURITY Reminder**  
When using FUMC for small groups, meetings, etc., we ask for your help in making sure that the building is secure after you leave.

**REMEMBER: STOP!**  
After your meeting is over, STOP and check that all lights and fans are off.

**LOOK!**  
LOOK to make sure that everyone has their belongings and has left the building before you...

**LOCK!**  
LOCK the doors!

Thank you!



Michael Rodgers, Night Security



January 2007						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



26  
Karen & Greg  
Jones ~ 16 yrs  
31  
Gerry & James  
Graham ~ 9 yrs



### Our New Church Columbarium

This beautiful setting is an appropriate final resting place for the earthly remains of some faithful members of Christ's Church.

Niches are available for purchase at \$1,200. The price includes niche space for the cremated remains of one or two persons, brass urns, brass name plates, opening and closing, and perpetual care.

Call the church office for more information.

Rev. Richard L. Evans

### Cell Phone vs Bible

I wonder what would happen if we treated our Bible like we treated our cell phone?

- What if we carried it around in our purse or pocket?
- What if we turned back to get it if we forgot it?
- What if we flipped through it several times a day?
- What if we used it to receive messages?
- What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it?
- What if when we traveled we used it?
- What if we used it in case of emergency?
- What if we upgraded it to get the latest version?

This is something to make you go...hmmm...where is my Bible?

Oh, and one more thing. Unlike our cell phones, we don't ever have to worry about our Bible being disconnected. Jesus already paid the bill.

Submitted by R. Evans: (From 1st United Methodist Church of Scotch Plains, NJ, September News and Views)

## TIME APART

When is the last time you participated in a spiritual retreat? If it wasn't recently, I hope you will think on these things:

- Jesus took time apart to pray and be refreshed.
- God included a Sabbath rest in the 10 commandments (and who knows what our bodies need better than He who created them).

In nearby Leesburg, our conference offers many retreat opportunities where you will find comfortable housing and great food as well as spiritual refreshment.

So why not take this opportunity to enjoy a time apart, to be refreshed and renewed and to have a wonderful learning & worship experience.

You'll find information on some of the upcoming retreats below; for more information check the web site: [www.ummflconf.org](http://www.ummflconf.org) or look at the brochure in the church office.

### SEEK YE FIRST

#### ~ COUPLES SPIRITUAL RETREATS ~

March 9 - 11 ~ Speakers:

John Riley & Dr. Riley Short

March 16 - 18 ~ Speakers:

Rev. Charley Reeb & Rev. Joyce Payne

March 23 - 25 ~ Speakers:

Dale Locke & Max Wilkins

### LIVING ON THE VINE

#### ~ WOMEN'S RETREATS~

Feb. 2 - 4 Keynote Speaker:

Rev. Debbie McLeod

Bible Study Leader:

Rev. Robin Hager

Feb. 16-18 Keynote Speaker:

Rev. Jackie McMillan

Bible Study Leader:

Rev. Sheryl Marks-Williams

### COMING SOON.....

Different types of small group experiences.

They will all be Biblically based and designed to enhance your spiritual growth - not replace your current Bible studies.

Watch your bulletin for more details.

Marilyn Watson, Spiritual Formation

**SHARE of Florida  
by Tom & Nancy Pearo**

Now that we are through the rough part of last year, November and December, we can start 2007 with a new outlook.

Those who continue to take advantage of SHARE know the money they save each month.

We are a program that helps people help themselves, we are not a give-a-way.

Often, when persons or families are going through tough times, their self respect can be at risk.

Getting or needing handouts can be very hard in a way that is difficult to comprehend. SHARE understands. We are a self-help group of people working together to help one another.

You pay for what you get, and you do two hours of community work to help someone else.

This is definitely a win-win situation.

When you come to SHARE to order, bring a neighbor, friend, co-worker or family member with you.

Introduce them to the program and help them get here on D-Day. If you do this, we will consider it your two hours of community service.

**JANUARY BASIC**  
Basic Package guaranteed retail value of \$36 or more....You pay only \$18!

- 1.65 lbs Chicken Drums
- 2.6 lbs. Chicken Thighs
- 1 lb. Polish Kielbasa
- 1 lb. Tilapia Filets
- 1 lb. Swedish Meatballs
- 1 lb. 85/15 Ground Beef

Plus a variety of fruits & vegetables

**JANUARY SPECIALS**

**Super Bowl Pack \$16.00**

Breaded Chicken Wings

Sliced Hard Salami

Cooked Shaved Beef

Chicken Nuggets

Pepperoni Pizza Bread Sticks

Taco Meat Filling

Cooked Bratwurst

**Chicken Cordon Bleu \$12.40**

8 - 6oz.

**Bacon Wrapped Steaks \$16.00**

10 - 5oz.

**Volunteer Service Receipt**

Your participation makes SHARE work. For each month you order food, you are required to contribute a minimum of 2 hours of your time toward community volunteer activities. Coming on Pick-up Day and assisting in the dispersal of food for 2 hours is an acceptable volunteer participation service.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Your Name)

Has completed \_\_\_\_\_ hours of volunteer service for:

(Name of Recipient) \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Service Rendered \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Recipient \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_







# Dear praying friends,

We opened the new church on Nov. 19th.



**"Cool Shade Church"**  
See Dec. 2006 Genesis for how this church's name came to be.



**Joe & Pastor Ogaat**

At our first meeting, there were 13 adults, including two Thai visitors, and 11 children in attendance, all showing great excitement as people rejoiced at what the Lord is doing through all those involved.

At the "official" opening ceremony with members of the Evangelical Fellowship of



Thailand on Nov. 30th, there were 80 people in attendance praising God for the new church, with 20 people forced to sit outside for lack of space.



It was a great joy to be part of shining more of Christ's light on Thailand.

However, along with these joyous celebrations, we were struck by three other events last month that highlight the great need for the freedom of the Gospel here:

The leaders of the Sept. 19 government coup, all members of the military, flew to *Chiang Mai* in a C-130 military plane on a special trip to meet a prominent fortune-teller.

The team, led by the coup chairman and army chief Gen. *Sonthi Boonyaratkalin*, decided to hold a "prolonging life" religious ceremony with *Sonthi's* long-time personal fortune-teller here in *Chiang Mai*.

The five-member team is fearful of bad luck and supernatural political obstacles. While *Sonthi* says he is a Muslim, he strictly follows the fortune-teller's advice and predictions.

At the busy intersection leaving our *mubaan* (development), three people died in vehicle accidents on three successive weekends.

As a result, on the same day we opened the new church, local monks put up a big tent and held a merit-making ceremony at the intersection in order to appease the spirits, obviously angry over something. Hundreds of people went to give offerings, fearful that their lives might be taken next.

*Chiang Mai* is currently host to a world-renowned horticultural show, with 110 gardens from Thailand and 30 other nations.

<http://www.royalfloreaexpo.com/>

It is a huge, beautiful display meant to honor the king in the year of his 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the throne.

One of the most popular stops is a metal bo tree (an Indian fig tree held sacred by Buddhists, who believe that Siddharta Gautama or Buddha received enlightenment under a bo tree).

Visitors can buy a copper leaf for 99 *baht*, write a message to the king on the leaf, and hang the leaf on the bo tree.

On the king's birthday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, all the leaves hung so far will be taken down and cast into a Buddha image to be presented to the king in honor of his 60-year reign.

While it was a privilege to play a small part in expanding God's kingdom on earth as we opened the new church, we were humbled yet again to be a witness to the depth of the need here through these and other events that took place.

For instance, they celebrate

the immensely popular *Loy Krathong* holiday, when millions of Thais float flower vessels or fly paper lanterns meant to rid them of a year's worth of bad luck and bring good merit.



Fear is a real force here: fear of spirits, fear of the future, fear of bad luck, fear of the loss of material possessions, etc.

What is the antidote to fear? John 8:31-32: "Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' "

Freedom through the truth of Jesus Christ is a powerful concept in Asia. If you talk to Asian Christians, the reality of the freedom/peace of Christ is integral to them.

As we celebrate many things – the opening of the new church, Thanksgiving in the States, the celebration of Jesus' coming to earth with the immeasurable gift of salvation – we would ask that you pray simply (and powerfully) for the people of our *mubaan*, called *Kwan Wiang*, and for all the people in the southern *Chiang Mai* area.

While we know about the great coming of Christ to earth, 99% of Thais do not. They don't know the freedom that He brings from spirits and fear and bad luck.

Please pray that our little church would be used in mighty ways by our almighty God!



Elaine's Sunday School Class

We are so thankful for all of you for partnering with us to reveal God's glory here in *Chiang Mai*.

At this time of year, we are humbled even more at the thought of being Christ's servants on your behalf and want to express our gratitude for your prayers and financial support, true gifts for which we are eternally grateful.

May you have a blessed and joyous Christmas 2006 and A Happy New Year to all,

Joe, Elaine, Brittany,  
Justin, Caleb & Jamie

To contact the Henry Family in Thailand, their postal address is:

Joe & Elaine Henry & family  
224/445 Soy 20  
Mubaan Kwan Wiang  
Hangdong 50230  
Thailand

Email: jebjcg@eroam.net

**CHOPSTICKS AND MISSIONS**

(Editor's Note: This article ran in Guidepost.)

Jesus said to the apostles, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." - Acts 1:8 (NRSV)

LIKE most Chinese, I eat with chopsticks without noticing how I use them. However, chopsticks became an important reminder of Christian service for me after a lunchtime talk a couple of years ago. Brother Fong, one of our missionaries to East Asia who was back in Singapore on furlough, gave the talk. As we prepared to tuck into our boxes of fried rice with our chopsticks, Brother Fong challenged us to eat with only one chopstick instead of a pair. Observing our frustrated attempts, Brother Fong laughed and told us to use our chopsticks the usual way. As we ate he asked us to notice how we use our traditional pair of chopsticks: One stick remains stationary while the other stick moves.

He said, "Some of us are called to go out into the mission field. We are like the movable stick. Others remain here at home in Singapore to fast and pray for those who travel, to contribute by raising funds and awareness, to extend hospitality to visiting missionaries. These are like the stationary stick." All of us have a part to play according to our God-given gifts.

Prayer: Eternal God, help us to do our part in serving the Body of Christ, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:  
Whether we stay in one place or travel the world, each of us plays a role in proclaiming God's love.

-- James Kwok (Republic of Singapore)

PRAYER FOCUS: Asian missionaries

*Woostreet Journal*  
 U.S. Address & Phone:  
 315 Bobby Jones Road  
 Sarasota, FL, 34232  
 (941) 377-3014  
 Email: klwooster@yahoo.com

January 2007, can you believe we've begun another year!

How exciting to be a part of God's family and to be given a new year with new beginnings - new opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and to show the love of God in ways too numerous to write.

You may be asking, "Surely you don't mean *I* must share the gospel and/or *show* God's love - that's for missionaries, pastors, people like that."

I love to break the news to you....YES, it's meant for all of us!

BUT....there are so many different aspects of ministry....we don't all have the same "job." [1Cor. 12:4-6]

You see, some of us have the "job" of teaching, some of praying for the saints and the unsaved and some of *sending* out those who are called to "go."

All are a vital part of any ministry....all have been a vital part of the ministry in Russia.

We thought we'd take a quick trip back over this past year and share some of the highlights and blessings God showered over the work in Russia and the Wooster Family.

- A new team was formed and two families have

gone into another region of Siberia to carry the Good News.



Team Time ~ September

- A translation of four teaching books was completed and will be published by the spring of this year.
- The leadership in the churches where we began the work in Siberia is growing in their responsibilities and are beginning new works of their own.
- We continued working with another couple and held a small group for non-believers each week.
- Kevin traveled across Russia five times to meet with teams and encourage them in the work set before them.
- Kevin and Laura attended an international leadership conference for Pioneers in Thailand.
- Joshua and Corey were a blessing to an orphanage outside of Moscow and were able to give out clothing, shoes, and new books.
- With high school comes lot of sports activities....over the four years in Moscow, the boys played approximately 100 games of soccer and basketball and three basketball tournaments in two other countries...WOW!

- God provided a house and vehicle for our return to the US.



Home Sweet Home



- Joshua received the highest award in scouting....Eagle!



Joshua's Eagle Scout Review Board

- Corey began his last year of high school and vocational school for building and construction.

- Joshua graduated high school and began college at Messiah in Pennsylvania.
- Kevin and Laura celebrated their 21<sup>st</sup> Wedding anniversary.

Now, we look ahead to this year and what this all means for the Wooster family.



Family time in Florida

It will change drastically in many ways. What began as four will now be two.

Our boys have become young men and have begun their own life's journey.

Joshua continues his studies at college, with a minor in History and still praying about a major.

Corey is diligently finishing high school and building Mom all sorts of useful things for around the house.

We also see spiritual growth even when they don't.

I (Laura) love the verse in Jeremiah that reminds us of a wonderful promise.

Jeremiah 29:11 says; "For I know the plans that I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

We're so glad that God is in control and has such wonderful plans for or boys.

Kevin and Laura will be sharing at conferences and churches across Florida in the coming year.

We continue to pray for the exact place in Russia where God will have us move and for wisdom to know how we can best get into that area.



Vladimir & Cuzdal

We will also continue training for Biblical Counseling and TESOL classes (Teaching English to Students of Other Languages).

We're excited about some new ideas for ministries in Russia and look forward to sharing them as the details come together.

Thank you for all the prayers and support that made it possible for the Wooster Family to be a part of God's work in Russia.

We look forward to seeing you in January!

Serving Together in Russia, Kevin, Laura, Joshua, and Corey

In next month's issue of "Genesis" (February) I will have Christmas Photos from our church's celebrations. As I get ready to go to print, I am including a few that I have.  
Your Editor, Judith



I don't think that I have ever seen such a beautiful Christmas Tree! One can see and feel the love that went into every ornament... Ladies, you have blessed us all.



What "Angel Tree" Chairperson is up to her knees in presents & bikes?

It's Betty Gunderson, with Jim & Dee Green providing transport.



As of this date, December 12, 2006, there is no exact total to the amount of presents that our generous church has donated for The Angel Tree program. So far 12 bikes have been gifted. Imagine the joy of a child on Christmas morning at the sight of a bike. More information next month.....



**Stephen Ministries**  
**Transforming Lives  
 and  
 Equipping The Saints  
 for Ministry.**



Many people write resolutions as the New Year approaches. Topping the list is often weight loss, increased exercise, or like items.

With a bit of a different twist, for the last few years I have created a New Year's Day brief "wish list" of concrete activities that I hope might come to fruition - if health, finances, and other circumstances allow - during the upcoming 12 months.

For example, my dear cousin in Virginia, a former co-worker in Maryland, and other friends have encouraged me to attend a Women of Faith Conference. So, on 1/1/06, I wrote that on my list, explored the website, and made reservations for an event 11 months later.

I cannot begin to explain what an awesome experience it was for my recently widowed friend (whom I met 12 years ago during a Clinical Pastoral Education college internship at the Eastern Shore of Maryland Hospital - she now resides in The Villages, FL) to participate in the weekend WOF Conference in Orlando several weeks ago.

If your "wish list" for 2007 might include reaching out for loving, Christian-based support during a life challenge, contact:  
 Diane (382-7242)  
 Kay (382-4908)  
 or the Church Office.

Stephen Minister volunteers, trained to provide compassionate and confidential care, can provide a weekly one-hour visit, plus phone support.

Happy New Year  
 from all of your  
 Stephen Ministers and Leaders!



**Pacem in Terris**

"May He banish from the hearts of all men and women whatever might endanger peace.

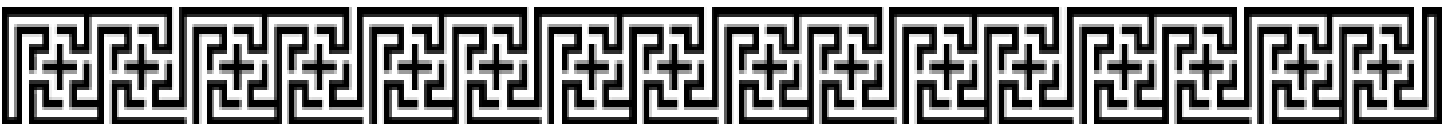
May He transform them into witnesses of truth, justice and love.

May He enkindle the rulers of peoples so that in addition to their solicitude for the proper welfare of their citizens, they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace.

May He enkindle the wills of all so that they may overcome the barriers that divide, cherish the bonds of mutual charity, understand others, and pardon those who have done them wrong.

May all peoples of the earth become as brothers and sisters, and may the most longed-for peace blossom forth and reign always among men and women."

Pope John XXIII, 4/11/63





**Give The Gift of Life!**

**CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF  
BLOOD IN CITRUS COUNTY!  
Donors Desperately Needed!**

We need at least 12 people to donate at each Blood Drive Collection.

The Citrus County Blood Mobile processes donations that are credited to our church and are available for our medical needs. When you go to the hospital, be it for either emergency illness or trauma, or planned surgery, you will be eligible to withdraw units of blood from the FUMC's donations.

It takes a whole community to save a life. Blood donors connect our community because each life saved by a blood transfusion is someone's child, family member, friend or co-worker. From donation to transfusion, many hands take part in the lives saved by blood donors and thereby touch the very heart of our community. One blood donation can save up to four lives.

A gift of appreciation is given.

The Bloodmobile will be in the church parking lot, under the trees facing Bradshaw on:

**January 14, 2007  
at 7:45AM to 1:00PM**

**And**

**March 11, 2007  
at 7:45AM to 1:00PM**

For more information call:  
Barbara Jackson at 382-2705

**"FIRST PLACE"**

also called

**"The Divine Diet"**

A New Class Will Start

**January 10, 2007**

**10:30 AM in Room 106**

**Pressing On To The Prize**

is the title of this 10-week study.

Transform your life with the Bible's way to weight loss. A Christ-centered health and weight-loss program for men and women of all ages.

There are nine commitments to the plan: attendance, prayer, scripture reading, memory verse, Bible study, "live-it" plan, fact sheet, phone call and exercise.

God knows where He needs to work first, and it isn't always in the weight-loss area of the program. There might be emotional or spiritual healing that needs to be addressed before weight-loss occurs.

Giving Christ first place in all things in our lives creates a daily thanksgiving that brings hope and healing that lasts into eternity.

To sign up, or for more information, contact:  
Diane Gibbs, Donna Ludwick, Patience Nave or  
Pastor Steven Skelley.

P L E A S E !  
P L E A S E !  
P L E A S E ..

**DO NOT LEAVE** Thrift Shop donations at the hallway or at the outside doors. Packages and bags in the hallway are a fire-code violation, and packages and bags left outside get damp and mildew.

**The Thrift Shop hours are  
Wednesday & Saturday  
9:00 AM to Noon**

**If you wish to leave donations for the Thrift Shop when it is closed, you may drop them off at either the church office, or the reception desk during the hours of 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM.**

**There is nobody available to handle Thrift Shop donations on Sunday.**

**Thank you for your cooperation,  
Patricia (Pat) Blake  
and  
Marilyn Siegel  
Thrift Shop Co-Chairpersons**

**First United Methodist Church  
of Homosassa**

8831 W. Bradshaw Street  
Homosassa, FL, 34448



**A Stephen Ministry  
Church**



**First United Methodist Church of Homosassa**  
"Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors"

**Rev. Mark Whittaker**  
Pastor

**Sunday Schedule**

**Morning Worship: 8, 9:30 and 11AM**

**Nursery at all services**

**Sunday School for all ages: 9:30AM**

**Methodist Youth Fellowship: 12-2PM**

**Office Hours: Weekdays**

**8:30AM to 4:30PM**

**Office Telephone: 628-4083**

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