



**CHRIST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH
NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2009**

MISSIONS REPORT

Barbara Reish, Missions Committee chairperson submits the following report:

Our team members are: Jean DeFreese, Carla Schanck, Shirley Baker, Alice Peterson, Joyce Preston, Marilyn Arionus and Jeanne Ridgeway.

We all thank each of our members for your 'second mile' donations, giving us the opportunities to reach out of our church into our local community in an effort to help others. **THANK YOU!** As chairperson, I owe this team the greatest respect, as they donate not only money, but time and their gifts and talents. I never hear the words "I can't"!!! They just DO! Thank you all!

The following is a report from January through March.

Joshua's food donation – 188 1/2 pounds
Joshua's cash donation \$100.00
Share boxes - \$30.00
Total to school - \$26.78
Crisis Center (fruit) - \$223.44
Homeless Clinic - \$123.90
Care Net (baby bottles) - ?
Individuals in Need - \$200.00
Gideons (bibles) - \$100.00
Red Cross - \$100.00
Hospice (memorial) - \$50.00
Rescue Mission (meat donation) \$30.00
Total people served – 145

Our mission team has decided to provide the meat every other month. We invite anyone willing to help with the cooking to join us. You don't have to go and serve as Carla Schanck, Alice Peterson, Joyce Preston and myself have been serving along with Winnie Scott, a member from 1st United Methodist church. Cooking takes a few more hands, and we'll do our best to limit the expense on anyone willing to help out. I am new at serving and I am so happy to see people who appreciate what is being done for them. Many are working at hard physical labor and they need food. It's been good to see this.

We also encourage and invite you to inform us of needs you see in our community. This is a time of hurting for many people, therefore it's a time for the Church to be there and be God's hands.

Upcoming events:

April 19th is a Missions Moments, and we are inviting our nursing home attendees for a special musical treat.

In May, we are planning a Progressive Dinner. It's fun and everyone is invited to participate. More on that to come.

In June, Kathy Palmer will be presenting an international need the country of Africa has, straight from her children who serve there. Kathy is a devoted member of our church, and a very informed and interesting speaker.

Please keep in touch for these future dates!

Sincerely,
Barbara Reish
Missions Committee Chair

I am grateful, God of Hope, for the gift of each new day, each new season, like the one unfolding around me now in flower and birdsong, in seedling and bud. When they arrive as surely as dawn follows night and bloom follows bulb, I am uplifted by the fulfillment of your promise.

FINANCIAL NEWSLETTER

Thank you to all who have made pledges and tithes to the church this year. A much-appreciated donation of \$500 has been received from the Boy Scouts Troop #60 and a thank you note has been sent. Remember, this is your church! We truly depend upon your generosity to survive and to have an impact in our local community. Joyce Preston is the contact person at 237-8632 for donations and pledges. And don't forget, you can also remember your church in the form of a bequest, as well.

Submitted by Joyce Preston

TRUSTEES REPORT

Look forward to changes!

Submitted by Lee Sucher
Trustee Chairman

(yep, that's what I was told to put into the newsletter...that's all folks!)

CHRIST UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

CUMC will be serving breakfast at church on Easter morning – 7:30 to 9:00am. Yummy food and a time to be close to your church family. A love offering will be gladly accepted. CUMC meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 7pm in the Fellowship Hall. All women are cordially invited to attend.

LAY LEADER

We are rapidly approaching the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference, where much work is done every year. We have recently received the new Book of Discipline that was formulated at last years General Conference (every four years). Several of our committee chairs have attended a conference in Douglas, which was very informative.

The annual sub-district conference was held on March 21st at First United Methodist Church here in Casper. The keynote speaker was our new Bishop, Elaine Stanovski. I found our new Bishop to be quite personable and easy to talk to and I look forward to her tenure here. At the sub-district conference, I presented our Quiet Disciples, Ed & Barbara Reish (in absentia) to our district. It was an honor and a priveledge to be able to tell everyone what wonderful people we have in our church and it was an absolute joy to be able to present the award to Ed and Barbara in person on March 22nd. We are so blessed to have them, and so many like them, as members of our church community.

If anyone has anything they would like to discuss about the upcoming conference, please feel free to contact Ruth-Anne Bray at 232-8250.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

It could be said that Charles Wesley sang the gospel into thousands of hearts. The author of more than fifty-five hundred songs and hymns, Charles, less well-known than his brother, John Wesley, came from a family of poets and songwriters. Wesley had a clever way of writing his music on the run. Using a system of shorthand, he would jot down his initial versions of the songs on small cards he kept in his pocketbook specifically for that purpose. Often songs came to him immediately after attending prayer meetings and taking communion.

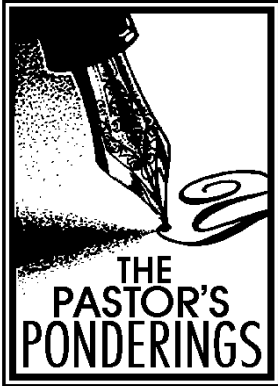
The Wesley family was unusually large, even for that time. Charles's mother, Susanna, gave birth to nineteen children, though only ten survived to adulthood. Charles, youngest of three surviving brothers, was approached by a wealthy man who offered to adopt him and make him his heir. Charles declined and chose instead to pursue his education.

While in his third year at Oxford, Charles entered into what he called a serious and methodical way of life. Along with his brother, John, he persuaded several other young men to join him and together they applied this perspective to every aspect of their lives, especially their studies. This group was the 'Holy Club', and the ideas John and Charles crystallized during that time gave birth to the Methodist denomination. After his time at the University, Charles became a popular itinerant preacher. In 1756 however, ill health forced him to confine his labors to Bristol and London, where the majority of his family resided. Surprisingly, he lived until 1788, his eightieth year.

In 1995, the Gospel Music Association recognized Charles Wesley's musical contributions to gospel music by listing his name in the Gospel Music Hall of Fame.

*Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation
day after day.
Psalm 96:1-2*

*Keep yourselves in the love of God;
Look forward to the mercy of our Lord
Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life
Jude 21*



Lent, Holy Week, Easter, rethinking our lives and our personal journey to the cross. Heavy stuff! Stuff we would just as soon avoid. Let's face it, it is not easy nor is it comfortable to examine our lives in the light of Christ. We're not perfect. We all have faults, and facing these same faults is painful. But especially during this time of year when the grass is greening up, buds are beginning to show on the trees and bushes, and the flowers are beginning to bloom. As nature, God's creation, begins anew, should we not also seriously begin looking at beginning our lives anew also?

To illustrate this I am going to share with you a story, a fairly long story, but a story none the less, that talks about starting life anew by truly letting God find us and changing us.

"Can I find God?"

by Rev. John Powell, Professor, Loyola University, Chicago

Some twelve years ago, I stood watching my university students file into the classroom for our first session in the Theology of Faith.

That was the day I first saw Tommy. My eyes and my mind both blinked. He was combing his long flaxen hair, which hung six inches below his shoulders. It was the first time I had ever seen a boy with hair that long. I guess it was just coming into fashion then. I know in my mind that it isn't what's on your head but what's in it that counts; but on that day I was unprepared and my emotions flipped. I immediately filed Tommy under "S" for strange... very strange.

Tommy turned out to be the "atheist in residence" in my Theology of Faith course. He constantly objected to, smirked at, or whined about the possibility of an unconditionally loving Father/God. We lived with each other in relative

peace for one semester, although I admit he was for me at times a serious pain in the back pew.

When he came up at the end of the course to turn in his final exam, he asked in a cynical tone, "Do you think I'll ever find God?"

I decided instantly on a little shock therapy. "No!" I said very emphatically.

"Why not," he responded, "I thought that was the product you were pushing."

I let him get five steps from the classroom door and then called out, "Tommy! I don't think you'll ever find God, but I am absolutely certain that God will find you!" He shrugged a little and left my class and my life.

I felt slightly disappointed at the thought that he had missed my clever line -- He will find you! At least I thought it was clever.

Later I heard that Tommy had graduated, and I was duly grateful.

Then a sad report came. I heard that Tommy had terminal cancer. Before I could search him out, he came to see me. When he walked into my office, his body was very badly wasted and the long hair had all fallen out as a result of chemotherapy. But his eyes were bright and his voice was firm, for the first time, I believe. "Tommy, I've thought about you so often; I hear you are sick," I blurted out.

"Oh, yes, very sick. I have cancer in both lungs. It's a matter of weeks."

"Can you talk about it, Tom?" I asked.

"Sure, what would you like to know?" he replied.

"What's it like to be only twenty-four and dying?"

"Well, it could be worse."

"Like what?"

"Well, like being fifty and having no values or ideals, like being fifty and thinking that booze, seducing women, and making money are the real biggies in life."

I began to look through my mental file cabinet under "S" where I had filed Tommy as strange. (It seems as though everybody I try to reject by classification, God sends back into my life to educate me.)

"But what I really came to see you about," Tom said, "is something you said to me on the last day of class." (He remembered!) "I asked you if you thought I would ever find God and you said, 'No!' which surprised me. Then you said, 'But God will find you.' I thought about that a lot, even

though my search for God was hardly intense at that time.

"But when the doctors removed a lump from my groin and told me that it was malignant, that's when I got serious about locating God. And when the malignancy spread into my vital organs, I really began banging bloody fists against the bronze doors of heaven. But God did not come out. In fact, nothing happened. Did you ever try anything for a long time with great effort and with no success? You get psychologically glutted, fed up with trying. And then you quit.

"Well, one day I woke up, and instead of throwing a few more futile appeals over that high brick wall to a God who may be or may not be there, I just quit. I decided that I didn't really care about God, about an after life, or anything like that. I decided to spend what time I had left doing something more profitable. I thought about you and your class and I remembered something else you had said: 'The essential sadness is to go through life without loving. But it would be almost equally sad to go through life and leave this world without ever telling those you loved that you had loved them.'"

"So, I began with the hardest one, my Dad. He was reading the newspaper when I approached him. "Dad."

"Yes, what?" he asked without lowering the newspaper.

"Dad, I would like to talk with you."

"Well, talk."

"I mean ... It's really important."

The newspaper came down three slow inches. "What is it?"

"Dad, I love you, I just wanted you to know that." Tom smiled at me and said it with obvious satisfaction, as though he felt a warm and secret joy flowing inside of him. "The newspaper fluttered to the floor. Then my father did two things I could never remember him ever doing before. He cried and he hugged me. We talked all night, even though he had to go to work the next morning. It felt so good to be close to my father, to see his tears, to feel his hug, to hear him say that he loved me."

"It was easier with my mother and little brother. They cried with me, too, and we hugged each other, and started saying real nice things to each other. We shared the things we had been keeping secret for so many years.

"I was only sorry about one thing - that I had waited so long. Here I was, just beginning to open up to all the people I had actually been close to.

"Then, one day I turned around and God was there. He didn't come to me when I pleaded. I guess I was like an animal trainer holding out a hoop, 'C'mon, jump through. C'mon, I'll give you three days - three weeks.'"

"Apparently God does things in His own way and at His own hour. But the important thing is that He was there. He found me! You were right. He found me even after I stopped looking for Him."

"Tommy," I practically gasped, "I think you are saying something very important and much more universal than you realize. To me, at least, you are saying that the surest way to find God is not to make God a private possession, a problem solver, or an instant consolation in time of need, but rather by opening to love. Would you come into my present "Theology of Faith" course and tell them what you have just told me? If I told them the same thing it wouldn't be half as effective as if you were to tell it."

"Oooh... I was ready for you, but I don't know if I'm ready for your class."

"Tom, think about it. If and when you are ready, give me a call."

In a few days Tom called, said he was ready for the class, that he wanted to do that for God and for me. So we scheduled a date.

However, he never made it. He had another appointment, far more important than the one with me and my class.

Before he died, we talked one last time.

"I'm not going to make it to your class," he said.

"I know, Tom."

"Will you tell them for me? Will you ... tell the whole world for me?"

I will, Tom. I'll tell them. I'll do my best."

So, to all of you who have been kind enough to read this simple story about God's love, thank you for listening. And to you, Tommy, somewhere in the sunlit, verdant hills of heaven - I told them, Tommy, as best I could.

You see, I believe that in order for us to become Alive-in-Christ, we have to open ourselves up to the love of God and let that love flow through us - not hoard it for ourselves.

Opportunities for Growth!!

(As I was reviewing some of what I have put in the previous newsletters, I felt that this piece was worth rerunning.)

For the last several months, as a part of the bulletin there has been a list of four “Permissions.” These include such things as saying no, asking questions, making mistakes, and rethinking. I want to discuss this last permission – the permission to rethink everything. Christ United Methodist Church is a family oriented, traditional, and missional church with plenty of potential for growth. Growth though, will only come through this last permission.

Permission to rethink – how we do worship, outreach, mission, stewardship, and the list can go on and on. We have done things this way for how many years? Probably too many for most of us to count. Is it time to rethink things completely? The answer I believe is of course yes! You know, I don’t know who coined the phrase that: “If you continue to do things the way you always have, you will continue to get what you always have.” The question becomes, where is that getting us?

So where do we begin in this rethinking business. I believe that if we begin this process by saying that we are rethinking things to make changes then we have missed the mark. On the other hand, if we begin this rethinking process by looking at it as opportunities for growth, then both change and growth can occur.

Now this does not mean that we will see instant results – of course not. As with anything else, we will begin by spending time looking at how we are presently doing things. We will then consider different ways that we feel may bring a variety of opportunities for growth. When we have identified those opportunities for growth we will begin the process of educating one and all of what and how these opportunities for growth can occur.

Will this mean that all of us will probably have to do some personal rethinking – I believe so. Beyond that, there will be some people who don’t like or want to rethink. And that’s ok, because the opportunity to rethink is not about individuals, but about the church as a whole. And when we rethink, we open up opportunities for sustainable continued growth.

What opportunities of growth do you see for Christ United Methodist Church?

Our Pastor Never Stops

Occasionally someone will say, “Our Pastor never stops to visit in our home.” If the pastor never stops at your home, you probably should thank God. It means that death has not struck, that no serious illness had laid you low, that the surgeon’s knife had not been necessary, or that you have had no serious family problems or that you are not a spiritually delinquent member. As a rule, your pastor does not have time for “social calls.” It is not that he would not enjoy doing so; it is simply a matter of priorities...putting first things first. Your pastor does not have time to do everything he would like to do. However, you may be sure of this; your pastor is willing to come to the hospital or your home, the jail, the street corner, or anywhere at any hour of the day or night, whenever or wherever he is needed. *Call him if you need him.* Otherwise, he will not know of your need until it is too late. For the moment, thank God you have not needed him. One day you will need him and he will be there when you call. Now he is visiting someone else who does need him.

And we urge you, beloved...encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them.
Thessalonians 5:14

Faith is knowing without seeing, believing without fully understanding, trusting without touching the One who is ever faithful.

Christ United Methodist Church
1868 S Poplar St, Casper, WY 82601
(307) 234-6371

<http://ChristUnitedMethodist.org>

Pastor William “Mac” McGrew

Newsletter Editor: Ruth-Anne Bray

