

the CONNECTION

March 4, 2011

Two Sections, Section A

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in this
issue

4A
mission 5000
barbeque

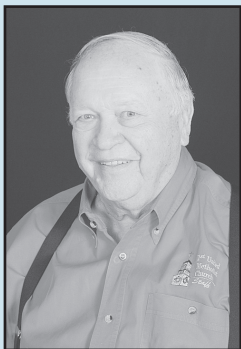
5A
from the
senior pastor

5A
arizona
mission trip

the front page

BY DONNA HENDRICKS
discipleship minister

Charles Watt to Retire



Rev. Charles Watt, our associate pastor, will move into full retirement this July. He is completing two years of service as our associate in recent years, but has served our congregation for a total of six years as one of our pastors. He is a God-send to us all, and we are delighted that he and his wife Martha will continue as members of our congregation.

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) will begin discussion of how to recognize his retirement and ministry at their March meeting, and they welcome your input! They will also begin to address

how to fill this position at that meeting as they consult with the bishop. Scott Price is chair of that committee and can be reached through the church office.

Ash Wednesday Worship

Join us Wednesday, March 9, for our third annual Ash Wednesday service of healing at 6:30 pm in the sanctuary. We will have a brief time of worship together, then offer several stations for prayers, anointing, imposition of ashes, clay, and water. Worshipers will have the opportunity to visit any or all of the stations to help them prepare spiritually for Lent and draw closer to God. LIFE Groups will not meet during the Ash Wednesday worship.

Cottage Meetings Are Back

When the McDonalds arrived as our pastors in 2008, they spent several weeks organizing small group focus groups called *cottage meetings* and met with more than 300 persons over a two-month period. From those groups, Pastor Mark began his ministry with a deeper understanding of the congregation's strengths and challenges. It has guided the work of the pastors, staff, and leadership for the last two years, and it is time to do it again!



This Lent, Pastor Mark McDonald is inviting you to join him for another round of Cottage Meetings to talk about our worship, building plans, staff plans, and anything else you want to talk about. Each group will be limited to about 15 people and will last for one hour. The group will have four basic questions to start the discussion, and it will include time for each person to share their joys and concerns with our pastor. Beginning on Sunday, March 6, we will have sign up sheets available in the Narthex (aka, lobby). We will have weekday and weekend times available, as well as day and evening times.

What is Lent...



Years ago about this time of year, I first heard people in the church talking about Lent. I thought people were talking about the pesky stuff that gathers on our clothing, causing it to look a mess or the stuff that gets trapped in the lint filter of the dryer that must be cleaned after every use. I had no idea Lent was a Christian liturgical season.

Lent comes immediately after Ordinary Time and Epiphany. It is a time of spiritual preparation which includes fasting, prayer, repentance and almsgiving (justice towards neighbor).

During Lent we hold side by side the awareness of our sin and the promise of forgiveness, the call to repentance and the freedom of the resurrection.

(from "Ask Julian", The Upper Room Ministries Online, February 10, 2011.)

Lent is forty days in duration and the liturgical color for lent is purple or violet. The calculation of the forty days of Lent varies in the Christian church. Traditionally, in the Western Protestant churches Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Easter. Sundays are not included in the forty day count because Sundays are considered "resurrection" days or like Easter. Ash Wednesday is March 9th, and Easter is April 24th this year.

The number forty holds great significance in the Bible; the Hebrew people wandered in the wilderness for forty years, the rain in the story of the great flood lasted forty days and forty nights and Jesus' temptation lasted forty days. The forty days of Lent traditionally represent the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness where he fasted and endured Satan's temptations.

Lent is a time of preparation for Easter. Christians typically fast during Lent. When we fast, we deny ourselves; we empty ourselves or cleanse our physical bodies. One spiritual purpose for fasting is to empty ourselves in order to focus on our relationship with God through prayer and repentance. We hope to draw closer to God.

Another way to prepare for Easter is to do something sacrificially (almsgiving.) This could be giving of self by volunteering. Both fasting and sacrificial giving are quite worthy endeavors, and I encourage safe participation in either or both. Consult your doctor before beginning a food fast.

We are all broken, and we all sin. Lent is one season that gives us an opportunity to focus on preparation and repentance in hope of developing a deeper relationship with Jesus. We can prepare ourselves for the darkness of Good Friday in great anticipation of the joy and glory of Easter morning.

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the calendar

These are some of the special events that will be happening around the church during the month of March and the first week of April. Please look for the full interactive church calendar on the church website www.jacksonvilleumc.com or call the church office at 501.982.8176 to have a full calendar mailed to you.

Fri March 4 – Sun March 6

Women's Retreat

Tuesday March 8

2:00 pm Worship at Towers

Wednesday March 9

6:00 pm Ash Wednesday Service

Thursday March 10

9:00 am Sew N Sew

Friday March 11

9:00 am Sew N Sew

Saturday March 12

3:00 pm Woodland Hills Worship

Monday March 14

6:00 pm Finance Committee

Tuesday March 15

2:00 pm Worship at Greenbriar

7:00 pm UMW Covenant Circle

Thurs March 17 – Sun March 20

Women's Walk to Emmaus

Friday March 18

3:00 pm Woodland Hills Party

Sunday March 20

7:00 am UMM Breakfast

Monday March 21

1:00 pm UMW Mary Martha Circle

1:00 pm UMW Wesleyan Circle

6:30 pm UMW Faith Circle

Thursday March 24

12:00 pm Young at Heart

Sunday March 27

3:00 pm Worship at Transitions

Monday March 28

6:00 pm SPRC

6:30 pm Trustees

Sunday April 3

12:30 pm Children's Council

Thurs April 7 – Sun April 10

Men's Walk to Emmaus

Thurs April 7 – Fri April 8

9:00 am Sew N Sew

Saturday April 9

3:00 pm Woodland Hills Worship

Vital Signs

You are invited to *Vital Signs*, a one-day, state-wide gathering of United Methodists in North Little Rock on April 16. This is an annual gathering that provides workshops to help develop leadership and the mission of our churches, and it will include a variety of workshops addressing everything from financial management to community outreach.

The 2011 *Vital Signs* will also have a special focus on Imagine Ministry. The Imagine Ministry team has worked for more than a year to discern how United Methodists in Arkansas can do ministry in a new way. A presentation, keynote address and five workshops will involve *Vital Signs* participants in the Imagine Ministry process, while giving a preview of related proposals to be made at Annual Conference in June. This proposal will address the decline of many of our congregations, and will seek to focus all our churches more on the mission of making disciples.

It only costs \$15 to attend, and you may register at www.arumc.org/vitalsigns. If you would like to carpool or caravan with a group from our congregation, please contact the church office so we can coordinate our plans. We also have brochures available in the church office.

Methodists in Action...Gearing Up!



Our third annual "Methodists in Action," better known as M.I.A., will return to the streets of Jacksonville on Sunday, May 1, 2011! On the Sunday after Easter, our congregation cancels all worship services and LIFE groups to go serve in the community.

Mark your calendars now and watch for many more details in *The Connection* next month! The planning team is beginning work in March, so please let the church office know if you have ideas, suggestions, or would like to help in some way.

IBLA



The IBLA Foundation in New York City organizes an annual music competition for pianists, singers, instrumentalists and composers which takes place in Ragusa Ibla, Italy. During the year following that competition, winners are presented in concerts in venues such as the Lincoln Center Alice Tully Hall and Carnegie Hall in New York, the Tokyo Opera City Hall, the Tchaikovsky Bolshoi Hall in Moscow...and Jacksonville First United Methodist Church!

This year, our IBLA concert will take place on Sunday, April 10, 2011 at 7:00 pm. Please make plans and invite everyone you know in Central Arkansas (or beyond) for this incredible evening of classical music. You can learn more about the IBLA Foundation at www.ibla.org.

Do you Receive the Weekly Update?

The *Weekly Update* is the JFUMC weekly email that is delivered on Thursdays. It highlights any church programs, events or news that pertain to the upcoming week. Many times it includes links so you can find more information. If you have not signed up for the *Weekly Update* or are not in the habit of opening those emails, you are missing an important link in our church's communications. It now includes links to the resources on our church website so that you might find them easier to access each week. When you register, you will be given a choice of different lists which will determine which type church emails you will receive. You may find the sign-up link on our church's homepage www.jacksonvilleumc.com

First Annual Mission 5000 Barbeque



Mission 5000 is going to host a smokin' hot barbeque fundraiser.

O.D. and his team will smoke some of the best barbeque around and serve it late in the afternoon on Saturday, April 23. (Easter eve) Make plans to stop by the church after your Easter shopping and preparations for a delicious meal.

He is looking for volunteers and donations and can be reached through the church office!

Thank You

Dear Church Family,

I want everyone to know how much I appreciate all the prayers, cards and calls I received during the last few months. It was very comforting to know you were praying for me. Thank you all for showing so much love to me and my family.

Sincerely,
Shelley Petefish

The Chili Cook Off was a success! The youth raised over \$3000 for missions because of YOU! Last year the money raised helped with missions in Mississippi and Arkansas. This year the youth will be helping missions in Arkansas, Arizona, and Texas. Your help makes it possible for many to go and do in the name of Jesus Christ! Thank you again!

Philip Smith
Youth and Outreach Minister

New Member

Please join us in welcoming our newest member, Paula Piersing from Livingston, TX .

Building Volunteers Needed

The Board of Trustees is developing a master list of projects around the JFUMC campus, and is looking for volunteers that would like to do some odd jobs! Maybe you would like to paint a bathroom or a hallway, or replace some leaky faucets, help landscape around the church, or help deep-clean and organize a classroom, or any other project -- large or small -- that you see as needed around the church! If so, contact Joyce White through the church office.

Lead us not into... temptation

Since Lent is the time that we recall how Jesus faced temptations, our preaching series for Lent will focus on some of the hardest temptations we face in life today from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:

March 13

Anger: Controlling Your Anger
Matthew 5:21-26

March 20

Lust: Sex Gone Bad
Matthew 5:27-32

March 27

Lying: The Great Cover-Up
Matthew 5:33-37

April 3

Greed: Letting Go
Matthew 5:38-42

April 10

Hatred: Learning to Hate the Right Way
Matthew 5:43-48

Walk to Emmaus

The Walk to Emmaus is a 72-hour spiritual retreat that is filled with fun, laughter, prayer, worship, discussion, rest, and reflection. Each weekend retreat begins with a gathering on Thursday evening and includes lodging, meals, supplies, and everything you need to find a level of renewal you might have never experienced before. You spend time learning about God's grace, our call to live as followers of Jesus, and experience the church at one of its finest hours.

The Walk to Emmaus is sponsored by the United Methodist Church, and we have walks in Central Arkansas several times each year. Each Walk costs \$180, and our congregation has scholarships, so please don't let cost stand in your way. We also provide transportation to and from the retreat center near Hot Springs at no cost to you! Men and women attend on different weeks, and we want to invite you to be part of a walk! Walks during 2011 include:

March 17-20 (Women)
April 7-10 (Men)
August 11-14 (Women)
September 15-18 (Men)
October 13-16 (Women)
November 10-13 (Women)



If you would like more information or if you want to attend one of the walks, please contact the church office to get you started. Someone who has attended a walk before will walk you through every step of the process and answer any questions you may have.

Summer Mission Trip: Navajo Reservation

Explore the tradition and heritage of the Navajo people on Arizona's Navajo Reservation. The natural beauty of this area is unparalleled, with its deserts, forests, majestic mesas, mountains and canyons. Although the Navajo people are strong and proud, their economy has struggled, leaving many tribal members without jobs and living in poverty. Our mission team will serve many of these needy community members through working on homes and ministering to children and elderly residents on the reservation.

This mission trip is open to current 6th graders and older, and we also need adults to serve as chaperones. The trip is through YouthWorks (www.youthworks.com) and they have a staff on site that takes care of all the details of the work and fun. Chaperones will help shepherd the youth, but will also work side-by-side with them each day.

We will be in the Navajo Reservation that extends into Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, and is larger than ten of the 50 states in the U.S. Our group will serve the communities of Window Rok and Fort Defiance in the northeast part of Arizona. They will work with "Kids Club," a hands-on program led by our youth that offers high-energy games, crafts, skits, songs, and interactive lessons to help kids learn about Jesus. Team members will also spend time each day working with home repair projects for low-income families, visiting with residents, and experiencing some different cultural events.

The group will be at the reservation from **June 12-17, 2011**, and we have spaces for 36 people. If you would like to learn more about this trip, please contact Philip Smith through the church office or email him at philip@jacksonvilleumc.com.

Upcoming Events for Youth

March 12: Youth Serve @ Mission 5000
Youth need to be at the church at 9:30 am.
March 21-25: San Antonio Youth Trip
Youth will be heading to San Antonio for a fun/mission trip!

the pastor's study

BY MARK MCDONALD
senior pastor

Have you noticed it?



As we have begun a new year, God has begun a new work in and through JFUMC. Many people are talking about how they are seeing God's movement in new and exciting ways:

- New people are attending the Walk to Emmaus, A Day with God, and other spiritual retreats to grow deeper in love with God.
- We have new LIFE groups starting virtually every month, focusing on growth (including two that have grown past 30 members!)
- Pioneer Clubs, our new after-school ministry, is still growing in members and in volunteers.
- Our finances have rebounded, and our new budget is proving to be well within our means.
- More and more volunteers are helping around the church from receptionists to maintenance, from LIFE groups to mission teams.

Still other signs are occurring in the ministries that have been here for some time:

- Worship continues to bring praise to God and change to our lives.
- Existing LIFE groups continue to care for one another, invite members back into fellowship, and invite new persons to find a family at JFUMC.
- Mission 5000 continues to provide a strong outreach and is building new relationships with our neighbors.
- Our leadership continues to work at improving communications, enhancing our facilities, developing our staff, and growing new leadership.

Please take some time to look through this issue of *The Connection* for the many signs and wonders of our Lord.

Pray for our church, our leadership, our fellowship, and our impact as we come into this Lent with an eye on the mission of our church:

**to make disciples of Jesus Christ
for the transformation of the world!**

Join us as we *Love God, Love Others, and Serve the World* in new and exciting ways!

In Christ's love,
Mark McDonald

Wednesday Night OASIS Meals

March 9
Soup and Salad
March 16
Potato Bar

March 23
Fried Chicken
March 30
Spaghetti and Meatballs

the services

We have three worship times for you to choose from each week.

8:35 am
Traditional Worship

10:55 am
Blue Jeans Worship

6:00 pm
Youth Worship

FREE LUNCH
HERE.

EVERY Saturday
11:00-1:00