

The Sweet Spirit

Olive Branch United Methodist Church

January, 2014



Just a thought

Last week, when I was thinking about what I wanted to write for “Just a Thought”, I figured I’d write about the future.”

Of course, Christ is always part of the future for me, and it should also be a part of the future for all of us. As we come to the end of 2013, we can look back and ponder .What have I done that made the world a better place to live in? Have I reached out to those who are in need, those who are lonely, and most of all ...to those who are unsaved, without Christ?”

In Isaiah we find that the task for the Israelites was to be witnesses to the world—telling the world Who God is and what God has done. In verse 10 of Isaiah Chapter 43 we read: “You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord... ‘Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me...”
... and in verse 12 we read again: “You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “that I am God.”

And we, the Church of Jesus Christ, share the responsibility laid upon the Israelites so long ago, of being God’s witnesses today...in today’s world! Are we doing this? Did we do this in ’13? Do we plan to do this in ’14? There are many uncertainties about our future, but there is one certainty. One thing we can count on without a doubt.....Christ will be in our future!!!

And Christ will be in the future for all people—even for those who do not know him or do not believe in Him. “I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.” God has “revealed”, God’s self to us.....God has “saved” us and we are to be witnesses to this fact!

Most folks, if we were to ask them, believe that there is a God. There really are few atheists.

A friend went to Norfolk to have some genetic counseling as he and his wife were going to have a baby. As the geneticist was explaining the very delicate and highly scientific intricacies involved that decide whether a child will be a boy or girl, a person with physical or mental handicaps, a person with Down’s Syndrome and so forth my friend was completely enthralled. “That is absolutely fascinating!”...he kept saying over and over again.

Then he asked the geneticist if all this knowledge enhanced her belief in God or took away from it. “Oh,” she replied, “It definitely enhances it. Everything is set up so precisely—how could one not believe that God is behind all of this?”

On the way home, my friend wished he had paid more attention in his biology classes...because there certainly is a direct link between scientific discovery and the definite existence of God.

So, as saved people to whom God has so graciously revealed Himself—we are to proclaim God—not as some foreign god—but as the God Who has shown us what He is like by coming into our world in the form of a man—that is, Jesus Christ!!!

We are to show people what God is like by our words and by our actions—as they are in conformity with Jesus Christ. Do people know what God is like by what we say and what we do? They cannot see God directly, but they can see Him reflected in us. This is our call.....to give the world an undistorted view of the One and Only living and loving God!

The glory of God allows us to know that we are SOMEBODY.....we are precious in the eyes of God—mistakes, sin and all. As Paul writes in Romans Chapter 5:8: “But God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

That includes you, me, and everyone else in all of creation!!!

Our job is to make the world a better place by witnessing to the fact that the God...the One and Only God...loves His sinful creatures with an unfathomable and unconditional love!

And therefore, we are to love others, just as God loves us! God is love, and everything God does, God does because of love.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:13 that faith, hope, and love are the heart of the Christian life.

It is God’s love that gives us the ability to reach out to others.

But God’s love is useless if it is only looked upon as an abstraction.

When Jesus rose from the dead, He didn’t seek out those who had killed Him and demand their lives... ..instead He commanded His disciples to spread the kingdom of God—the kingdom of love and grace—throughout the world.

So, as we come to the end of 2013, let’s look back and ponder...
What have we done that made the world a better place to live in?
What are you going to do in 2014?

Second Sunday Lunch Change

Second Sunday Lunch will be on the 12th immediately after worship. Everyone is asked to bring a covered dish as we join in fellowship.

Board of Trustees

The Trustees will meet on Tuesday, January 14th at 7:00 PM. If you are a member of this committee, please plan on attending.

December Events

This was a busy month for our church. The month began with the decorating of the Chrismon Tree and the lighting of the greens. During worship, everyone present added a Chrismon to our tree. Then, each Sunday, a new candle was lighted on the Advent Wreath; each candle represented one of the following: Love, Hope, Peace and Joy, and Rev. Jennifer's messages were on these topics. Our Candlelight Christmas Eve service was a special time at Olive Branch. We had almost 50 people in worship that evening. Rev. Jennifer brought us a moving message and the choir gave a wonderful selection of songs with Elizabeth Rheem, the youngest member, giving a wonderful rendering of "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly, while dressed as the Virgin Mary. At the end of the service, everyone joined in singing "Silent Night" as we lighted individual candles.

Nine Poinsettias were donated to help decorate the Church. Each poinsettia was given in honor or memory of a loved one. Many thanks to all who made a donation. The distribution of the Angel Tree presents was a great success. Each and every angel wish was fulfilled. Every family was supplied with a Christmas dinner as well as the usual food distribution. A GREAT BIG "THANK YOU" to all who participated in this program.

And we enjoyed the use of our private "post office" to deliver Christmas Cards to our congregation. It was truly a blessed month.

Message from Bishop Cho

Bishop Cho has invited all of our Churches to join together in a prayer covenant. Every person is asked to commit to at least one hour each day and be in prayer. Let us join together and pray for each other, our church, and our sister church; Rock UMC, The United Methodist Church, and all of our churches and World Leaders. Let's make 2014 a year of prayer and recommitment to our Lord and Savior.

OPEN HOUSE AT THE PARSONAGE

Rev. Jennifer has invited everyone to the parsonage for an Open House. It will be a time of fellowship and food, so clear your calendar for the 19th of January and join in the festivities from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Church Pantry and Food Distribution

Please don't forget our Church pantry. We, serve 10 families on the second Tuesday and Fourth Friday of each month. Our brothers and sisters in the greater community are suffering and need help. We are blessed that Food Lion is willing to provide us with meats, vegetables, fruits, and baked goods but, it is up to us to fill out the dietary needs of the families we serve. Help keep our pantry stocked with your donations. I know you will open your hearts.

Administrative Council Meeting

Our Administrative Council will meet on a new day this year. Our first meeting will be on the 13th of January at 7:00 pm. This will be the first of our new meeting dates. At the last Council Meeting it was decided that the Council would meet the second Monday of alternate months beginning with the January meeting. Jane DiStefano reminds all Committee Chairs and organization Chair persons that they are to be prepared to give a report of their committee activities, and future plans.

If you have an idea of how we can make OBUMC better, bring your ideas to the council and let's talk about them. We can only be as good as our participation in the way we do things! Council meetings are for each member of our church to be heard.

United Methodist Women

The UMW will meet this month on the 15th at 2:00 pm. This will be the annual Quiet Day Apart, which is a time for reflection. All women of the church are invited to take part in the missional activities of the UMW.

United Methodist Men

The United Methodist Men are continuing the mission work they are doing. At this moment we have three portable heaters to loan to those in the community who have little or no heat. If you know of a

family or a person in need of heat this fall and winter please call Ed DiStefano, 252-537-5705 or Ray Dyer, 252-308-0972 for assistance. Our next meeting will be the 18th of January at 8:00AM. Breakfast will be cooked by Mike Fross and Monty Evans, and we invite all men of the church to join us for a time of fellowship, breakfast, devotion and planning for the New Year.

Sunday School

Sunday School is available each Sunday morning. The importance of Sunday School is that, though you may think hearing the word during the worship service will suffice for you, you really need to be in attendance at Sunday School to gather all the information that you can in an open discussion classroom. Jesus' word cannot be totally understood just by listening to a sermon. You have to interact with it and with other Christians to learn what He, as well as the other people of the Bible is saying to us. This is a life long study and you should take part. We are continuing a study on Revelation by Dr. James "Mickey" Efird. Dr. Efird is teaching us through video programming and afterwards we have a full and open discussion on his teachings. It is very interesting and we hope you will join us. Sunday School begins at 10:00 AM

Save Your Empty Ink Cartridges

A continuing mission project headed by Matte Bersch is to gather empty ink cartridges and send them away. The company that they are sent to then sends the church a check. Sooo, please save them and put them in the box in the fellowship hall. All funds go to continuing our outreach. Thank you Mattie!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Celebrating birthdays this month:

India Phillips 10, Greg Roller 13, Jane DiStefano 15, Sara Clary 17, Bill Tatum III 21,

Meredith Stephenson 26

Make a Joyful Noise

And our choir does just that. We practice on Thursday's at 7:00 PM. We are 9 strong at this time and with the help of Shirley Everret we are beginning to learn to read music. Try that at our age!!! If you feel that you would like to make a joyful noise, please come join us. Let us all come together to praise the Lord in song at our worship services.

PARTING SHOT



Happy New Year!

This is our newsletter. It is meant to be a way to communicate what your church is doing and what all the organizations are doing both in the congregation and the community. I am sending this electronically via email and copies will be made available for those who need a printed copy.

There are many organizations within our church and I hope they would like to have their achievements, plans, and meetings made known to the entire church. It is my hope that they will ask one of their members to drop a short note as to what they doing each month. The line of communication in the church needs to be open and full of what we are doing at Olive Branch to make disciples in our area. If you would like to send us something, please bring it to church or send me an email (revedumc@yahoo.com) and we will see that it gets published. Please, let's keep our church informed on what we are doing. See you at church and God bless. Ed DiStefano