

The Sweet Spirit

Olive Branch United Methodist Church

July 2017



From the pastor's pen 

It is my hope and prayer that your summer is off to a great start. For Nancy and I it is, as we experienced the excitement that now exists in the Virginia Annual Conference, under the leadership of Bishop Sharma Lewis. The 2017 Annual Conference held in Hampton, VA. was filled not only with excitement, but more so, the presence of the Holy Spirit. The worship sessions, the Bible studies, and oh my, the music was so full of spirit and love for God that it felt like we were floating on air, or walking on water! We almost didn't want it to end, but after two days of reports, voting, singing, worshipping and praising God, as the saying goes, "all good things come to an end."

I hope I can infuse some of that excitement at Olive Branch UMC and by God's help, make worship exciting! Sometimes, we Methodists get bogged down in tradition and "methodical" worship and miss the lifting presence of the Holy Spirit. It's OK to say "AMEN" during my sermon. It's OK to sing out loud, whether you think you have a singing voice or not. It's OK to turn to your neighbor in the pew and share the peace of Christ with them! It's OK!!!!

OK, I know that you may be thinking...."Oh my, what are we in for? Has this preacher gone off the deep end?" But don't worry, I'm not bringing in snakes or burning incense during worship, or rolling on the floor! I'm just saying we can worship with excitement, we can be lively in church and let God know, Olive Branch UMC is alive and well! Let God know through our worship that we are excited to be His children, we are excited to have the privilege to bring Him the honor and glory that He deserves and that we love Him and love each other!

As I start my third year in ministry with you, I could not be happier to be chosen as your shepherd. Nancy and I pledge to you that we will work harder, more diligently, and fulfill the pastoral needs of Olive Branch UMC.

Blessings and Peace,

Pastor Randy

Just a Thought- Rev. Ken Sauer

Don't You Know? Haven't You Heard?"

Isaiah 40:28-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint

Amy Grenoble wrote about her many years of battling with an eating disorder. Her days were filled with mental battles, prayers of desperation, attempts to repair injured relationships and doctor's appointments. She writes, "I confess...I harbored resentment toward [people] who declare they have heard the voice of God. Then one morning I had my own encounter with God. As I sat in my physician's waiting room, my eyes were drawn to a scrap of paper lying at my feet. On it were the words, 'Never give up. Never give in.'" Amy continues, "[Was it] a message from God? That's what it felt like to me. I placed this anonymous encouragement where I can see it every day..."

Isaiah knew how hard it is for us to remember that God is with us, especially when we are facing life's many challenges. Isaiah was writing to the people of Israel after they had been exiled from their homeland. He was talking to people who were dealing with terrible trials and difficulties. They were so beaten down by life that they had forgotten that God was still with them.....And so they had started to wonder whether God had remembered them at all.

Isaiah knew their situation. He knew how lost they felt. He knew their hearts. He knew that what they needed was to remember that God is always with them, and that if they were able to lift their eyes to the heavens...

...if they could remember that the Creator knows the number of stars in the sky and calls them each by name.....and that this same God loves them more than they can imagine.....if they could remember this--they would regain their right perspective on life.....they would "renew their strength..." Not only that.....they would "fly up on wings like eagles; they would run and not be tired; they would walk and not be weary."

Are you feeling discouraged, beaten down, and worn out with life?

Are the problems you are facing so overwhelming that it seems like there will be no end to your struggle?

Do the obstacles in your life keep you from being able to imagine what might be possible tomorrow? Are you on the verge of giving up any hope for true healing to take place in your life? Are the wrong choices of your past more than you can deal with? Are you feeling alone and powerless?

If so, remember that we have all felt like this. Some of us feel like this nearly all the time.

This Scripture --this gift from God--is about us. It's about God and what God does with us when all we seem to be is down.

Isaiah writes to the Babylonian Exiles; Isaiah writes to you; Isaiah writes to me: "Look up at the sky and consider: Who created these? The one who brings out their attendants one by one, summoning each by name. Because of God's great strength and mighty power, not one is missing. Why do you say...'My way is hidden from the Lord my God ignores my predicament'?"

In the busy-ness of our lives it can be easy to forget about the Reality of God, God's attentiveness to every single one of us, God's love and care for every single person.

When we are in financial crisis, are we able to remember Jesus' Words: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet none of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father... ..so don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."?

When it seems like we are all alone in this great big world are we able to remember that Jesus promises: "even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."?

When we feel unloved or unlovable are we able to remember that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life?"

"Don't you know? Haven't you heard?"

Several years ago a church building was destroyed by a deadly tornado. The children's choir had been having practice when the storm hit. The pastor had seen the tornado coming and quickly moved the children into the main hallway of the church. Scared to death, the little kids huddled in that hallway as the winds destroyed their church building. In order to try and calm the children's fears, the pastor started leading them in singing "Jesus Loves the Little Children."

Some of the children were injured that day, but miraculously none were killed.

In an interview with a local news crew, one of the little girls said, "While we were singing, I saw angels holding up the hallway. But the winds were so strong that the angels shouted out 'We need help!' and some more angels came and helped them." That little girl will never forget what she saw. Amy Grenoble will never forget God speaking to her through the words on those pieces of paper in her doctor's office: "Never give up. Never give in."

God speaks to us through a Scripture verse, a sermon, a friend, a song, in prayer.

Hope may be hard to sustain, but if we wait and trust in God.....if we continue to meet together as a church.....if we call out to God in prayer.....if we put all our trust in God we will be given the ability to meet all the challenges of life and even rise above them.

But to those who surrender their lives completely to God, Isaiah has a word of very deep encouragement: "God is the One Who does not faint or grow weary."

This is more true than just about anything else: "human beings will certainly stumble; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength; they will fly up on wings like eagles; they will run and not be tired; they will walk and not be weary." Be blessed.

Message from the Council Chair – Jane DiStefano

The Church Administrative Council meets every other month on the second Monday at 7:00 PM. The next meeting will be August 14th at 7:00 PM. Anyone interested in the business of the church is invited to attend. It is always an open meeting, although voting is limited to committee members.

LISA'S GREAT GIVEAWAY

As we approach the end of the summer, it is time once again to think about Lisa's Great Giveaway! This annual event is sponsored by the Outreach Committee and is an opportunity to truly give back to our community. The Outreach Committee collects clothing and small household items to be given to anyone in need. We are currently receiving these items. They may be left in the fellowship hall in small bags or boxes and will be sorted out and then offered freely to anyone who wants them. Please note that we will not accept furniture or appliances.

The event will be held on Saturday, August 26th. The event requires lots of manpower in order to sort through all the items and then put them out on the day of the event. Anyone willing to help please see Nancy Maguire or Jane DiStefano.

United Methodist Women

The UMW will meet on July 12th at 1:00 PM. This is a great opportunity to meet women of the church or become better acquainted. It is also an opportunity to take part in missions and other activities. We always have a great time.

On Sunday, July 23rd we will have our Annual Candle Burning Ceremony. This is an opportunity to have a candle lit in honor or memory of someone. If you would like to make a donation and have your special someone remembered, please complete the form in the bulletin. All donations will go to missions sponsored by the UMW. This is also the day that the UMW will provide the worship service. The theme of the program will be “Bodacious Women” so be sure to come and find out about these women of the bible! It promises to be a great time.

Outreach

Please don't forget our Church pantry! 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. We currently service 12 families with food donations. Help keep our pantry stocked with your donations. I know you will open your hearts. Also, one of our biggest needs is meat. So if you are able, pick up an extra package of meat to help out one of our families. A big “thank you!”

Monthly Recipe

If you enjoy stir- fry then you will like this. It's quick and easy.

If you have a recipe you would like to share please send it to me or give me a copy.

Chicken & Vegetable Stir-Fry

1 3/4cups Swanson® Chicken Broth or Swanson® Chicken Stock

1tablespoon soy sauce or low-sodium soy sauce

1 1/4pounds skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, cut into strips

5 cups fresh cut up vegetables (broccoli, celery, peppers, carrots)

1/4teaspoon ground ginger

1/4teaspoon garlic powder

1 cup long grain white rice, prepared according to package directions (about 3 cups)

2 Tablespoons cornstarch

How to Make It

Stir the cornstarch, broth and soy sauce in a small bowl until the mixture is smooth. Spray a 12-inch skillet with vegetable cooking spray and heat over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Add the chicken and stir-fry until well browned. Remove the chicken from the skillet. Add the vegetables, ginger and garlic powder to the skillet. Stir-fry until the vegetables are tender-crisp. Stir the cornstarch mixture in the skillet. Cook and stir until the mixture boils and thickens. Return the chicken to the skillet and cook until the chicken is cooked through. Serve the chicken mixture over the rice.

Upcoming Events:

Sun. – July 9 – Second Sunday Luncheon after worship

Wed. - July 12th – UMW Meeting 1:00 PM

Wed. - July 26th Choir Practice resumes at 7:00 PM

Sun. – August 6 – Bring a Friend to Church – Lunch to follow

This is your 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. We need all information by the 24th of each month for the following month. Please, let's keep our church informed on what we are doing. See you at church and all our activities!

God bless to all! Ed DiStefano