

The Observer

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



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WORDS FROM THE PASTOR

God's Instructions 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 & Hebrews 13: 7, 17, 18a,

Those of us who are leaders, there are many reasons why God would not want you, but don't worry. You're in good company!

Moses stuttered, he had a temper, and he was a murderer. David was too young, his armor didn't fit, and he had an affair. John Mark was rejected by Paul. Hosea's wife was a prostitute. Amos' only training was in the school of fig-tree pruning. Jacob was a liar. Solomon was too rich. Abraham was too old. Timothy had ulcers. Peter was afraid of death. Lazarus was dead. Naomi was a widow. Paul was a murderer. Jonah ran from God. Miriam was a gossip. Gideon and Thomas both doubted. Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal. Elijah was burned out. Martha was a worrywart. Mary was lazy. Samson had long hair. Noah got drunk. But God doesn't require a job interview. He doesn't look at qualifications. He doesn't look at financial gain or loss.

Satan says, "You're not worthy." Jesus says, "So what? I AM." Satan looks back and sees our mistakes. God looks back and sees the Cross and Spirit of Christ. Sure, there are lots of reasons why God shouldn't want us as leaders in the church. But if we are in love with Him, if we hunger for Him more than our next breath, He'll use us in spite of who we are, where we've been, or what we look like.

This is a reminder, congregation that we do not esteem those in church office because of who they are. Those in church office are no better and no worse than anyone else in the church; rather, we are to esteem them because of the office they hold.

We need to ask why Paul thought it necessary to write the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. Why does Paul ask the Church at Thessalonica to show respect for those in church office? The obvious reason is that there were those within the Church of Thessalonica who failed to show respect and regard for those in church office. There were those within this Church who did not support the church officers in their work. There were those within this Church who even opposed the work of those in church office.

To understand what was going on we need to take a look at the problems within the Thessalonian Church. It is clear from both the book of 1 Thessalonians and the book of Acts that the Church of Thessalonica received opposition from the Jewish community of that city. One part of the Jewish campaign was a personal attack on Paul himself. They charged that Paul had no real love for his converts. They further charged that Paul had never been motivated by any genuine concern for his converts and that his main motive was personal gain or profit. We need to realize that there were many so-called preachers at that time who took advantage of the fluid situation in the early church to personally enrich themselves. Within this kind of situation it was easy for the Jews to charge that Paul too was a wandering impostor. The Jews didn't want to discredit just Paul, of course. Above all they wanted to discredit Paul's message about Christ. Some within the Thessalonian Church began to believe these charges. And, they began to question not only the character of Paul but also the message of Christ that he had preached to them.

"Moses stuttered; he had a temper; and he was a murderer."



Ash Wednesday is February 25th.

Another problem was the opposition of the Gentiles. Under their opposition the Thessalonian Church was being persecuted. And, because of this persecution some of the Christians were starting to fall away, to slip away, from the faith.

Members of the Thessalonian Church had some doctrinal errors as well. Chief among them were their views on the second coming of the Lord. It seems that some believed that Jesus was going to return during their lifetime. When some of them died they began to question if Christ was even going to return at all. And, they wondered if their loved ones who had died were going to miss out on the events of the great day of Christ's return. Their mistaken view about the date of Christ's return had two consequences. First, work was viewed as being unnecessary. After all, if Christ is expected to return soon, why bother with work, with laying aside for a rainy day, with planning for the future? The result of this was that some within the church did nothing to support themselves and had to live on the charity of their fellow believers. This created resentment on the part of those who ended up supporting them. Second, those who were not working became idle busybodies; they had nothing else to do. So they interfered in the work of others, gossiped, criticized, and meddled in affairs that did not concern them. This, of course, did great damage in the church.

"I want to say to you who are in church office that it is possible to get by with doing little or nothing."

The leaders of the Thessalonian Church tried their best to deal with these problems. But some within this Church did not appreciate these efforts. Some within this Church failed to show respect and regard for those in church office as they tried to deal with these problems. Some within this Church did not support the church officers in this work. Some within this Church opposed and resented this work of those in church office.

Paul says to the Church at Thessalonica that those in church office are "those who work hard among you." The word that is used indicates the hard labor of those who have toiled till they have become weary in the service of the Lord. Paul frequently used this term for Christian ministry (1 Cor 15:10; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; Col 1:29; 1 Tim 4:10). In other words, church office required hard work on the part of those who were in it.

Christian ministry is not for those who are lazy. Those who are lazy and shiftless have no place among the leadership of the church. Those who are not willing to invest of themselves and their time have no place in Christian ministry. I want to say to you who are in church office that it is possible to get by with doing little or nothing. But, then, you are not doing the duties of your office, you are not visiting the sick, you are not comforting the afflicted, you are not helping the poor, you are not encouraging the widow or the orphan. To do a good job in church office requires time, it requires commitment, and it requires hard work.

This labor, this hard work, is not to be approached with a spirit of resentment either on your part or on the part of your family. Rather, it is meant to be a labor of love. It is to be done out of love for God, love for His church, and love for the individual members. Those in leadership positions are to do their work in the same spirit as Christ, Who taught and healed and prayed and suffered and died out of love.

How did Paul want the members of the church to respond and react to those in church office? Paul called and calls for three things. First, we are "to respect those who work hard among us." The word "respect" has the idea of knowing fully, of appreciating their true worth. Those in church office are like precious stones. It is only when members look at them closely that they come to appreciate their true worth and value for the church and kingdom of God.

Second, Paul says we are to "hold them in the highest regard." What does this mean? To answer this, let me ask, how does a child react to a parent he or she has a high regard for? The child listens to the parent, obeys the parent, and considers the parent's wishes. In the same way, those within the church are to listen to, obey, and consider the wishes of those in church office.

Notice, this regard is to be shown because of their work. It is not the person that is important but the position. In the New Testament church honor is not given to people because of any qualities they may possess but only on the basis of the spiritual task to which they are called.

Third, Paul says we are to do this in love. Respect and honor are to be shown not out of fear, not from an unwilling submission to the power of the office, but from love and gratitude for their service in the sake of the Gospel.

It becomes clear from Hebrews 13 that those who are leaders in the church speak "the word of God" (vs 7). It isn't only pastors who speak "the word of God." In their work, those who are leaders and teachers also speak "the word of God." In other words, it is the Word they use in exercising their care for the congregation, it is the Word to which they turn to for guidance, it is the Word upon which they base their deliberations and decisions, and it is the Word which guides and molds and forms them. The Word should be their guide and their strength as they exercise the heavy responsibilities and many duties of their office.

We turn to Scripture because it is the "word of God" (vs 7). It is inspired by the Lord's Spirit. As such it is inerrant, infallible, and non-deceiving. It is dependable. And, when church leaders look to God's Word for guidance, when they let themselves be led and guided by the principles of Scripture, they will not wander and waver and waffle and weave on the important issues of the day.

Abraham Lincoln once told of a farmer trying to teach his son how to plow a straight furrow. In the time-honored tradi-

tion, he told the boy to keep his eyes on some object at the other end of the field and plow straight for it. The boy started plowing and the farmer went about his chores. When he returned after several hours to check on the boy's progress, he was shocked to find instead of straight rows something that looked like a question mark. The boy had obeyed his father's instructions. He had fixed his eyes on something at the other side of the field, a cow. Unfortunately, the cow had moved! Evidently, that father forgot to tell his son to look for a stable object, one that wouldn't shift or move around. That's one mistake that those in church office don't have to make. We can fix our eyes on the Word that never changes.

Church leaders are also to be examples of faith and in the faith. "Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith," says verse 7. Scripture can say this to us only upon the assumption that the leaders have a faith and a style of life which can be imitated.

In the past few years the church has been rocked because of leaders who did not live up to the calling of their office, leaders who failed to be examples. For instance, we have heard of church leaders exposed as adulterers, lovers of money, wife-abusers, users of pornography, manipulators and liars.

More than once the apostle Paul urges us to imitate the excellencies of Christ. Nor does he hesitate to tell us to imitate the excellencies of Christ to be found in his life. And, in the same way, we should be able to look to our spiritual leaders and find in them the excellencies of Christ to be imitated.

The leaders of the church have the duty, then, to be examples to the flock, especially for the children and youth. Children and youth, you see, learn so much from example. They are so impressionable. So it is very important that they have in the church leaders living examples of faith and in the faith.

Church leaders are to keep watch, they are to guard, they are to protect the souls of the flock; they are to do so against the attacks of the devil. How are church leaders to "keep watch"? What is all involved? In mind here is making sure the congregation is faithful in attendance at worship, Sunday school, and Lord's Supper. It means to conduct home visits so as to measure and to assist in spiritual growth. It means to visit those who are sick or poor so that the needs of the body will not stand in the way of the needs of the soul. It means to visit the lonely and mourning so that their condition does not make them bitter against God and the church. It means to make sure that sermons nourish the people on the full counsel of God's Word.

When church leaders keep watch over souls they must be like the shepherds of old. These shepherds tended their sheep day and night. They kept unceasing watch over them. They were so intent on their task that they gave hardly a thought to their own comfort and safety. This is what God wants from church leaders, complete total devotion to the needs and cares of the flock.

This I would judge to be the most important task of church leaders: keeping watch over souls. If this is ever neglected, the church so quickly goes downhill and pretty soon there are no souls left to watch.

God's desire for church leaders is that they serve joyfully and not sadly in their callings (vs 17). Church leaders are to serve joyfully, not sadly; they are to serve willingly, not by constraint (1 Tim 3:1). Church office is too sacred and too important for anyone to be an unwilling participant. Finally, God declares that church leaders are to remember that in their office they are to "give an account" (vs 17). This means that they have to answer to someone for their work and for how they conduct themselves in their office. Throughout my ministry I have met members who think that the church is a democracy and it is the members who make the final decision. But, contrary to democratic principles and popular opinion, it is not the people, the congregation that church leaders must answer to. Church leaders must answer to God. In fact, all leaders even those outside the church (Romans 13:1-7) must give account to God of their work and their office. Within the church, leaders are responsible not to the congregation, or to the classis, but to God. Therefore, when someone serves in office he serves God first of all, and not the congregation. And, because they must first answer to God, councils sometimes make decisions that are unpopular with the members of the church.

First, the congregation must pray for her leaders. "Pray for us," says the first part of verse 18. It is so important, dear people, to pray for your leaders. All church leaders are only human and none can fulfill the demands of leadership on their own; this can be done only by the grace and power of God. Pray, then, for the grace and power of God to exist in the lives of your leaders. Pray that God will grant wisdom, patience, love, and understanding. Pray that God will empower and equip for office. If the congregation wants better leaders, the best thing to do is to pray for the ones she already has.

I charge you, leaders and congregation, to listen to God's instruction.

"...contrary to democratic principles and popular opinion, it is not the people, nor the congregation that church leaders must answer to."

Pastor Ray

Esther Circle Prepares Love Plates Requests Names for Recipients

It's that time of year again! The Esther Circle will prepare love plates for members and loved ones. Members are compiling a list of recipients. If you know of someone who would benefit from a love plate, please let Karen Carlson, Karen Hartman or any of the Esther



Circle members know. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 17 at 7:00 p.m. at church.

Members are asked to bring fruit, snacks, homemade cookies, small boxes of raisins, and/or

candies.



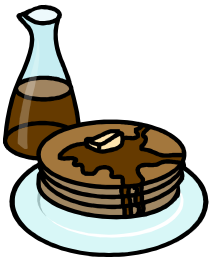
UMYF Activities

Donates \$500--On January 4th, the UMYF, represented by Kelli Weeks and Meghann Reardon, presented Audrey Lientz with a check for \$250 for the Food Pantry. The Youth also donated \$250 to the Scholarship Fund. Thank you, Youth!

Fund Raisers--The Youth also sold Love Grams, which are special valentines, for 50¢ each to help raise money for their summer mission trip.

In addition, they are having a pancake and waffle lunch on February 15 after Sunday school. See below for details.

Youth Pancake & Waffle Dinner




Date: Sunday: February 15

Time: After Sunday school.

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

Cost: \$6:00 (all you can eat)



Bring your Sweetie for a  shaped pancake!

Also, help celebrate the **anniversary** of Pastor Ray and Pat.

Losing Part of Our Church Family

On February 1st, Scott and Kathy Haraburda announced that due to the closing of the Newport Chemical Depot, he has accepted another position. Scott, Kathy, Beverly, Jessica, and Christine have all been active in our church and will be sorely missed!

Scott writes:

Last week, it was announced at Newport Chemical Depot that I will be transferring to

the Crane Army Ammunition Activity in Crane, Indiana, which is about 30 miles southwest of Bloomington. My new position will be the Director for Manufacturing & Engineering. This is a blessing because Kathy will not have to leave her job with Sony DADC. So, we plan to find a house about half-way between Terre Haute and Crane. My last day working

at Newport will be on Friday the 13th of February and I will begin working at Crane on the 17th. I will be returning home to Clinton on the weekends to help get our house ready to sell. We hope to complete our move from Clinton by this summer. Yes, we will definitely miss everyone in our church family and hope to keep in touch after we leave.

David Owen, UMA Trustee of the Year

The Rev. David V.W. Owen, executive assistant to Bishop Michael Coyner and president of the board of trustees at Franklin UM Community in Franklin, has been selected as The United Methodist Association of Health and Welfare Ministries (UMA) Trustee of the Year for 2009.

The award will be presented at the UMA National Convention to be held in Indianapolis the first week of March 2009. The Celebration of Excellence Dinner is scheduled for March 7 at 5 p.m.

UMA is a national association of United Methodist-related faith-based ministries and professionals actively involved in promoting quality care in a faith-based setting.

Congratulations to David Owen, who is the brother of Lou Ann Andis

New Vision & Mission Statements

As a result of the church-wide planning session on January 10th, members hammered out new vision and mission statements.

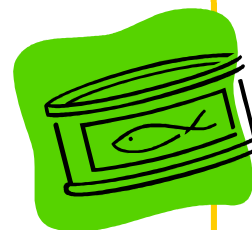
Mission Statement: Our mission is to develop followers of Jesus Christ

Vision Statement: Through Jesus Christ and our strong foundation, we will build a better tomorrow. We are a people open to all who want to grow in faith, love, and service.

Food Pantry

Last month our church donated 60 boxes of cereal. Can we beat that record? Yes, we can! Tuna is the food for February. Let's try to have the church "swimming" in tuna. For March, the food will be cake mix (Yum!), so you can start shopping for specials. Although numbers fluctuate, the Food Pantry recently served 40 families in a 4-hour period, the most ever! Families

can come once a month and must obtain vouchers from the township trustee, Community Action, Work One (formerly Western IN Employment Agency, and C.A.M.A. The Food Pantry is open every other Tuesday from 2-4 pm and every Thursday from 4-6 pm. Contact Audrey Lientz if you would like



Tuna is the food for February.



Food Pantry Report 2008

Salem Methodist Church	130.00
First Christian Church	720.00
First United Methodist Church	931.14
Daily Chapel Church	1,000.00
Vacation Bible School	300.59
Vermillion Co. Farm Bureau	125.00
Lamplighters Class	150.00
CHS Class of 1939	107.00
Y Lunch Bunch	48.00
Wesleyan Class	25.00
KFC	42.00
First Baptist Church	200.00
Dana Community Church	600.00
Total Receipts	\$4,378.73
Beginning Balance	1,846.80
Total	6,225.53
Total Disbursements	4,531.17
Ending Balance 12/31/08	\$1,694.36

Submitted by Audrey Lientz



Summer Camp Info

Yes, already! Note the variety and date of camps. Also, for some wonderful browsing, click on the two web sites below. They're fantastic!

SANTA CLAUS CAMP SITE ANNOUNCES SUMMER 2009 CAMP DATES

Here are the dates for the Evansville District Outdoor Ministries Camp dates for Summer 2009 at Santa Claus UM Church Camp:

- June 15-20: D1A Elementary Camp, for campers entering grades 4-6. Director Jill Johnson
- June 15-17: D1B First Timers Camp *NEW THIS SUMMER! For campers entering grades 3-4. Director Laurie Robinson
- June 22-27: D2 Jr. High Camp, for campers entering grades 7-8. Directors Amy Steele & Jennifer Pusateri
- June 29- July 3: D3 Sr. High Camp, for campers entering grades 10-12. Directors Craig and Linda Duke
- July 6-11: D4 8th, 9th & 10th Grade Camp, for campers entering these grades. Directors Perry Montgomery and Nathan Steele
- July 13-18: D5 Elementary Camp, for campers entering grades 4-6. Directors Linda Duke and Jayson Lenn



Registration for the 2009 Camping Season begins in January. Camp catalogs will be mailed to our campers from last year and to churches beginning January 1. For more information on camps log on to www.SantaClausChurchCamp.org.

NORTH INDIANA CAMPING PROGRAM BROCHURES, INFO ONLINE

The North Indiana camping and retreat ministries summer program is now online for your review at www.impact2818.org.

Cards and Prayers Appreciated



Jason Reed's Address

Moved to Rehab Hospital of Indiana, where expected to stay for several months.

Jason Reed
4141 Shore Drive
Rehab Hospital #411
Indianapolis, IN 46254-2607

Keshia Pearman's Address

Recovering from amputation of both legs

Riley Hospital
702 Barnhill Drive, Room 2961
Indianapolis, IN 46202
Email a card from
www.rileyhospital.org



Lenten Events

Lent is coming up at the end of the month. Can spring be far behind? Take a peek at some of the activities during this blessed time of the year.



> **Ash Wednesday Service**

Weds., Feb. 25 7:00- p.m. in sanctuary

> **Lenten Breakfasts/Services Begin**

What a wonderful way to fellowship and become closer to God!

Saturday mornings from 7:30 -8:30 a.m.

Feb. 28	Salem United Methodist Church	828-0446
March 7	Assembly of God	832-7424
March 14	United Presbyterian Church	832-6626
Mar 21	Wayside United Methodist Church	832-2608
Mar 28	Clinton First United Methodist	832-3159
April 4	First Christian Church	832-9180

> **Palm Sunday** April 5

> **Good Friday** April 10

> **Easter** April 12



Vacation Bible School



Calling all kids!

Put these dates on your calendar

June 8-12 Contact person Jamie Lewis

Weekly Workers-- Serving in February--March 8				
	Greeters	Liturgists	Nursery	Audio Tech
2/15	Earle Harvey	Carol Shew/ Santee Frey	Michelle Itczak	Bo Nield
2/22	Bob & Brenda Alexander	Carol Shew/ Santee Frey	Bill Hartman	Chet Rutan
3/1	Terry & Jamie Lewis	Karen Carlson	Bill Hartman	Bo Nield
3/8	Michael & Theresa Rennick	Randy/Henry Hogan	Cassie Salisbury	Randy Hogan

Joys and Concerns



*Telecare Prayer Chain: Contact Vera Shew at 832-8014 if you have a prayer request or concern. Or, email church at clintonfirst@gmail.com



Help Wanted

There are ways and places to serve. See if one (or more) of these is your calling.

- >**Coffee Time**—Take a turn with this popular ministry. All the food and drinks are provided. Slots are available for March. See Denise Barnes if questions.
- >**Ushers**—Sign up sheets are under the mailboxes. See Pastor Ray.
- >**Friday Night Wheels**—Volunteers needed in various areas and not all volunteers are in the barn. See Pastor Ray.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the March edition is March 1. Please turn in items to Karen Carlson
Email: carlsonsl966@sbcglobal.net



FEBRUARY 2009 CALENDAR REGULAR & UPCOMING EVENTS		
Sunday	9:15 am 9:30 am	Praise Music Worship KFC for Preschoolers-Grade 5 children
	After worship 11:00 am 7:00 pm	Coffee Time Sunday School for all ages Youth Group
Tuesday	5:30 pm 7:00 pm	First Place Worship at Chateau
Feb 17	7:00 pm	Esther Circle meets at church
Feb. 24	7:00 pm	Committee on Outreach
Wednesday	6:00 pm 7:15 pm	Praise Team Practice Choir Practice
Feb. 25	7:00 pm	Ash Wednesday Service
Thursday	6:00 pm	Weight Watchers
Feb. 26	7:00 pm	Worship Committee