

Good News!

The newsletter of the Memorial United Methodist Church of Clovis

March 2004

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2004 A WEB-FRIENDLY VENTURE

Paper is (nearly) out and e-mail and the Internet are in. Registration for 156th session of the California Nevada Conference June 16-19 in Fresno will take place by computer. That is just one of the changes participants can expect.

Registration forms and housing information will be available to download beginning March 1 from www.cnumc.org. Preliminary packets with reports and recommendations will go onto the web site as soon as they become available.

The new registration process is seen as a cost saving measure for the conference. Those persons without computer access are urged to contact their local church or district office for assistance. If they must receive a printed copy of materials, they can call the conference at (916) 374-1544 and request a copy. For a complete listing of information, visit the conference web site and click on ACS 2004.

Another exciting change this year is the plan to connect all local churches to the annual conference session, by including them in the final worship. This year's theme, "Rekindling the Gift of God within us," will include special worship materials, liturgies, prayers, hymns and sermon ideas, all available from the website that pastors and local worship committees will be encouraged to use. The materials will be sent out early to allow churches to prepare. Though the official end of the ACS will be June 19 at 5:30 pm, Sunday will be the climax of this year's session.

PLAYGROUND WORK DAY

Join us on March 6th to put up the equipment. We could use all the manpower that we can get to do this. If enough people show up it should only take a few hours to get it in.

NEW ON THE WEB

Memorial's web site now has Pastor Denice's sermons available. Take a look if you miss a Sunday. Print a copy to take to someone else. Also you can find next Sunday's Order of Worship on the site. This is not the abbreviated version that is distributed on Sunday, but the complete, full version. If you wish, you can print a copy on Saturday to bring to Sunday's service. A new help wanted section is also added.

As usual, the news section is updated once or twice a week and there will be some updated photos very soon. Please email webmaster, Ron Zastovnik, ronz@clovismumc.org with any additions, suggestions, or corrections. Bookmark the site as one of your Favorites so you can return to it often and easily. WWW.CLOVISMUMC.ORG.

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DICIPLES CORNER

Disciples Corner is your space. You are invited to share your spiritual struggles, experiences, stories, insights, victories here. Your words will bring inspiration and support to all of us as we seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus. Together we will all hear the Holy Spirit speaking through us and to us! And we will grow in faith and the strength of the Lord. Submit your reflections to our Good News editor at Mumc@clovismumc.org by the 15th of each month. Our first article is submitted by Max Cannon.

December began with a colonoscopy followed by an upper-respiratory infection and culminated on the Friday after Christmas with chest pains. That isn't, however, the purpose of this writing. It was during that time that I basically checked out of church. I had lost my ability to sing and was not inclined to come and observe. Music was, for me, the heart of worship and since I couldn't sing there seemed no point in coming to church. When asked why I wasn't attending, I would simply say that I was a performer not a spectator.

The full impact of that statement didn't arrive until I began preparing for a presentation to the Horizon group of an overview of the Tom Bandy workshop. Actually, it got a little nudge earlier from a conversation with John Talmadge during which he assured me that there was life after singing. I wasn't quite ready, though, to accept that. Something Tom had said, and which I read again in his workshop booklet, caused a bit of an epiphany.

He said, "All worship motivates people into a larger process of discipleship." How this manifests itself will vary individually but, if there has been an experience of true worship, some action should follow. Absent any action, if this statement has credence, we must ask ourselves, "Was our worship experience theological or social? Did we come just to fellowship with those we see only on Sunday or did we come to experience that fellowship along with gaining a deeper understanding of

God's love so that now, better equipped, we can proclaim that love to all we meet?"

Sadly, my epiphany was the awareness that I was attending to experience the joy of singing and socializing and not to become involved in true worship. Even more disturbing is the realization that I'm still in the process of reconciling that dilemma. Although this writing was something of a catharsis for me, it was also written with the hope that it might encourage others to evaluate their own worship experience. The Lenten season offers us a timely opportunity to take a spiritual inventory of not only our worship experience but also our individual ministries.

Worship Ministry

News from the teams that support the Sunday worship services.

*"Make a joyful noise to the LORD...
Serve the Lord with gladness!" (Psalm 100)*



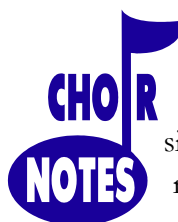
Music Notes

FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

Our Chime Choir, Fellowship of the Ring, has rehearsal every Sunday at 4:30. All are invited to come. For more information, see Janette Erickson or Sue DeFranco.

SING UNTO THE LORD!

The choir is always welcoming new voices. All who would like to sing are invited to join us in rehearsals on Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.



Care Ministries

Giving Special Care to Others

WORDS ON HEALING

Over sixty verses in the Bible use the words healing. Situations of occurrence refer to the "One Who Heals." I believe that to be receptive to healing we have both physical and spiritual needs. The story of creation tells us God provided those needs and that included a garden. A quote I'd like to share says, "When heaven falls to earth it becomes a garden." The feedback and response can restore a sense of control over events of our life that often seem difficult to resolve alone. It is easy to visit and pray with God in a garden. To be in touch with the earth itself has a healing nature. The rhythm of plant growth unites us with God's natural world. Our inner soul can find warmth and peace. We reap benefits which help us with our individual physical and spiritual needs as well as to be able to function in local, national and worldwide needs. In attending to the music of the earth we reach serenity. Relaxing, reminiscing and meditation bring peace of mind. Frustrations are relieved and inspiration may take place. The planning process may lead to self-satisfaction. Diversity, power and a strong partnership is developed. Healing is the internal power of the body to cope with disturbances. Though treatment often comes from outside our body and mind, we grow our healing capacity from within. In all of us there is an inner garden that must be replanted to increase that healing capacity. Real plant gardens must be renewed to sustain nourishment. They have a parallel healing nature to our inner garden. In some

unexplained way we may share with others as our inner spirit regenerates allowing us to express our gratitude for our blessings. Our inner garden needs include five R's, namely recovery, regeneration, restoration, renewal and reconciliation. To witness or experience a process of healing may have a profound effect for each of us as we encounter healing needs that are individual, local, national or worldwide. (Re - The Healing Garden by Robert Rodale & Organic Gardening Magazine, Gardening secrets that nourish body & spirit.)

SPECIAL FRIENDS TEAM REPORT

from February 10, 2004 meeting

Our opening worship centered on Ephesians 2:11-22 including the verse: "He (Christ) is our peace." We sang the hymn "When Love is Found".

Present were Pauline Middleton, Pat Frey, Dorothy Carr, Max Cannon, Minnie Eller, Evelyn Haulman and myself.

Max Cannon brought a draft of a "Care Card" to be offered members of the congregation giving the name of a person we could contact in case of an emergency. It was forwarded to Pastor Denice for comment.

We reported 8 visits in addition to Denice's pastoral calling, 14 telephone calls and 21 cards sent to Special Friends cards/notes. We planned to pray for, visit and send cards to several seriously ill people. We prayed for our Special Friends and others facing crises and for the upcoming Church Council meeting.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday (second), March 9, 2004 at 1:30 pm in the Conference Room. Everyone is invited to come or call me about this ministry. Come visit us!

Laurence Hill, Chair, 322-5853

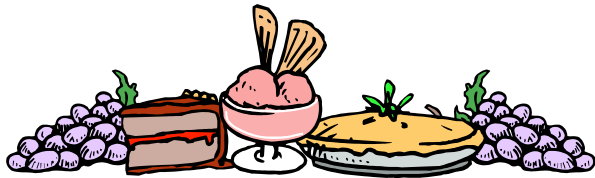
Congregational Life

News of the church life and the groups that meet for fellowship and support.

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Matthew 18:30

THURSDAY POTLUCK, PRAYER AND HOOTENANY A WELL-KEPT SECRET!

But the secret is getting out! If you enjoy great potluck fare (in abundance!), fellowship and prayer, join us every Thursday evening at 6:30 p.m. in the Social Hall. Judy Gross brings her keyboard and plays old gospel tunes for us and we conclude the evening with prayer for our community and our world. Table settings provided so just drop by the deli or store or make up a dish and come for a heartwarming time.



THRIFT SHOP NEWS by Bev Daly

Our sales for February were \$628.18

Please check with the Thrift Shop before donating furniture. We may not have room.

The Thrift Shop Board has decided beginning in April to be open EVERY SATURDAY only. Our work days will change to the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the calendar month. Work days are the most convenient time for us to receive donations. We need a few men we could call on from time to time to move heavy items. We can always use more volunteers. Can you give a few hours a month to help this important mission?

Bev Daly

BOUTIQUE NEWS

WHO? Anyone who likes to craft, sew, quilt, crochet, knit, ANY kind of crafting.

WHAT? Do your own thing or participate in group projects.

HOW? We offer instruction, patterns, ideas, encouragement, materials, and Friendship.

WHEN? 9:00 am to 11:30* Come every Wednesday or as often as you can. *We turn into the "Out to Lunch Bunch" at 11:30.

WHERE? Church Social Hall

WHY? To make articles to sell at the annual November boutique, a major fund-raiser for MUMC. We would LOVE to have you.

Information: Barbara

UNITED METHODIST MEN'S MEETING FOR MARCH 6TH

Meet in the Social Hall at 8:00am and enjoy good fellowship and some delicious pastry and coffee. We're praying for a good turn out so we can do some planning for the 2004 year. Max Cannon has volunteered to guide the group for the rest of the year and will be giving a presentation concerning two workshops he attended recently. Get your thinking caps on because we want to have plenty to chew on besides the donuts in deciding what the group is going to be about and how that will manifest itself in the coming months. Every one is welcome so come and bring a friend.

SCRAPBOOKING NIGHT

Get out your pictures and share some memories. Join the scrapbooking group on the third Friday of the month in the Fellowship Hall. The fun starts at 6:00 and childcare is provided.

UMW NEWS

March 1 - Board Meeting, 9 am, Library

March 16 - UMW meeting - 10 am, Social Hall.
Program by Denice Leslie. Wesley Circle hosts.
Bring own service. Everyone welcome!

March 10 - Red Bird Circle, 9:30 am, Library

March 24 - Wesley Circle, 1 pm, Social Hall

Micah Ministries

Local & World Missions

"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"
(Micah 6:6)

NEW VIM TEAM HEADS TO ANGOLA

Our conference connection with the United Methodist Church in West Angola will receive a boost when some Cal-Nevada visitors arrive there in a few weeks. The team of Volunteers in Mission from California-Nevada conference leaves for West Angola Feb. 26 to begin working on a much needed health clinic in Luanda. The clinic is located on the grounds of the UM church conference offices there.

The team, led by Conference UMVIM coordinator J.P. McGuire is made of members from nine different churches around the conference. Among them, conference chancellor Jay Rosenlieb and conference lay leader Pete Taylor.

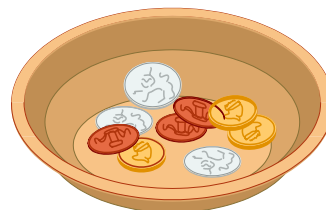
The team, which also includes Warren Dale, a trauma care specialist who will be working with church authorities to establish a long-term trauma care program, returns to the US March 15.

IRAN QUAKE VICTIMS RECEIVE UM AID

The United Methodist Committee on Relief is providing an emergency grant of \$10,000 to faith-based partners in Bam, southeastern Iran following the deadly earthquake that killed, injured or left homeless tens of thousands of people. Funds will supplement installation of tents and provide clean drinking water. The agency will also cooperate in underwriting pastoral care for stricken families.

Replacement shelter has been a specialty of UMCOR in its work throughout Afghanistan, Turkey and the former republic of Yugoslavia, according to Paul Dirdak, UMCOR. Emergency supplies and money are critical needs.

The agency expects to provide health kits and school kits, among other supplies, to Iran in coming weeks. Specifications for assembly may be found online at <http://gbgm-umc.org/umcor/kits.cfm>. Gifts to a newly established UMCOR Advance # 624315, Iran Earthquake, will underwrite additional humanitarian assistance to the stricken area.



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

On Sunday, March 21, 2004 a special offering will be taken for One Great Hour of Sharing. The money received from this special offering is used to undergird UMCOR's entire ministry.

Christian Education

"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable."



Sunday School

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL 8:45 a.m.
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:00 & 11:15 a.m.

Our Sunday School starts at 8:45 with music then we go to our classes and learn different things about the Bible.

OUR ALL STARS ARE GOING STRONG

In January, the Middletons came and talked. In February, Pastor Hill was our speaker and in March, you don't want to miss Wayne Golden. He has something really special to share with the children. Thank you to all Our All Stars for your time and support.

Our Christian Education is really going strong. We have fun each and every Sunday. If you have missed a Sunday you might have missed out on some special things that we do. For example, on Feb 1 at the end of class we had a special treat of mini pancakes with either syrup and whip cream or jelly on them. You never know when this or something like it could happen again.

Youth Group News

BUNKO/PIZZA PARTY

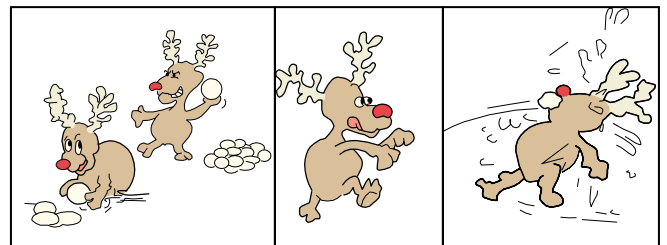
What's "Bunko," you ask? It's a dice game that requires a lot of yelling and moving around and throwing stuffed animals at each other and receiving goofy prizes at the end! Sounds like our kind of game, huh?

Join the rest of your youth group on Sunday March 28, as we host a Bunko Party with our friends from Wesley UMC, from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. in our Fellowship Hall. They'll bring the pizza if we bring the sodas!

FRIENDS ARE WELCOME!

LET'S GO TO THE SNOW!

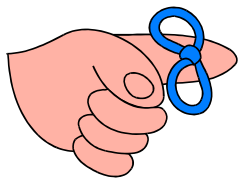
The annual youth snow retreat is planned for March 19-21, at the Hutchinsons' cabin in Yosemite. We will leave on Friday afternoon, play in the snow on Saturday, and come home Sunday afternoon, March 21. Friends are welcome! See the February youth newsletter for more information and permission slips. You can also check out the youth page on the church web site at clovismumc.org, or contact Connie Alfaro





POVERELLO HOUSE WORK DAY

The first Saturday of every month, our youth group volunteers at Poverello House in downtown Fresno. We help serve breakfast, make sandwiches, repackage snacks, and pack the 500+ lunches that Poverello House will distribute that day. The time spent together helping other people really brings us closer together, and it lets us get a clear picture of the needs of many families in the Valley. We would love it if you could join us! We meet at the church on that first-of-the-month Saturday morning at 8 am, leave at 8:15 am promptly, and return by 11 am. If you have any questions, please contact Youth Worker Connie Alfaro.



MARCH YOUTH CALENDAR

Saturday 03/06/04 8:00 - 11:00 am
Poverello House Work Day
Sunday 03/07/04 5:30 - 7:30 pm Meeting
Sunday 03/14/04 5:30 - 7:30 pm Meeting
Friday 03/19/04 to Sunday 03/21/04
Snow Retreat in Yosemite
Sunday 03/28/04 5:30 - 7:30 pm Bunko/
Pizza Party with Wesley UMC at Memorial

Coach's Corner

Mel Gibson's new movie on the crucifixion of Christ made its debut Ash Wednesday. This is a great opportunity for us as Christians to enrich our Lenten journey to the cross and increase our understanding of the sacrifice of Jesus and the work of God on our behalf. Study guides for the film were made available in worship February 22 and at the evening Ash Service. If you would like one please call the church office.

As you know, the film has stirred a great deal of anxiety in the Jewish community. In our enthusiasm for the artistry of this film, God forbid we glibly dismiss these concerns. For those who remember their ancestor's accounts of the pogroms of the "old country," or survived the Holocaust or remember the burning of the Jewish synagogue in Sacramento a few years back or the more recent bombing of a Jewish community center in Los Angeles, concern over anti-Semitism is legitimate.

Because The Passion of Christ is based on the gospel of John which refers to the religious authorities as "the Jews" it is easy to read this gospel and forget that Jesus is a Jew and to mistake the gospel's reference as referring to all Jews. The fact of the matter is all of the first disciples and first Christians were Jews. Even after becoming Christians, Jewish Christians continued to worship in their local synagogue and to break bread together in Jesus name the next day on Sunday, the day of resurrection for several decades.

As we prepare to appreciate this splendid film, we have a responsibility to be fully aware of our Jewish neighbors' concerns and be prepared to witness to a few basic facts to ourselves, our children and, should the need arise, to others: Jesus was born a Jew and preached in the best prophetic Jewish tradition. Of course, our heritage as Christians is Judeo-Christian. Furthermore, Jews are not responsible for the death of Jesus—only the Roman government had the power of capital punishment. And finally, let us closely examine our own unconscious involvement in anti-Semitism by excising from our vocabulary phrases we may have picked up along life's way such as "Jew you down,"

or other stereotypes of Jewish people we have acquired and hear repeated inappropriately in jokes.

Unfortunately, hate and fear know no generation. White supremacists in our communities continue to target Jews, Catholics, immigrants and people of color. Clovis has a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. So did Paradise where I last pastored! AND every community is filled with Christians whom God calls to love neighbor as self and to stand up and be counted when necessary to speak out against hate and speak up for God's love and grace for all.

I look forward to seeing this film and hope you will make time for it this Lent/Easter season. After all, the end of the story of Jesus death is his victory over evil and death—a victory over the forces of hate and division and violence that would conquer life! This is a message the world still needs to hear and God calls each of us to share.

-- L'Chaim! Pastor Denice



LENT/EASTER OFFERING 2004: A YEAR OF RENEWED HOSPITALITY

Our Lent/Easter Offering this year will go for our Fresno District Advance Special Mission Projects which includes our Memorial UMC Hmong Ministry . Each Sunday a different flyer will inform us about each of six District Mission Projects selected for support by our District Council on Ministry The six projects include Hmong Ministry at Memorial and Sierra Vista, Calwa Bread for the Hungry and God's Storehouse, Hispanic Ministries at San Pablo UMC in Selma and at three church sites in Bakersfield, and Campus Ministry at the new UC Merced. The District Council has selected the theme of "A Year of Hospitality" for 2004. The annual Easter Letter will bring you an offering envelop for your use.

PASTOR'S INVITATION TO A LENTEN DISCIPLINE

I am encouraging everyone to view the Mel Gibson film "The Passion of Christ" based on the gospel account of John, in preparation for the film and as a Lenten/Discipline. I also invite you to join with me in reading the Gospel of John for your personal devotional time throughout the month of March. Prior to viewing the film, please pick up a copy of the study guide for the film available in church in the office and in the lobby. Then join with me for a time of reflection on the gospel and the film on Palm /Passion Sunday evening, April 4 at 5:30 p.m. in the Lose Memorial Library. Child care provided

– Pastor Denice Leslie

LAY MINISTRIES PROJECT REPORT

In keeping with our efforts to help each of us as disciples of Jesus answer our call to ministry, the Lay Ministries (Formerly Nominations per change in the 2000 Book of Discipline), we are compiling ministry task descriptions for every ministry in the church. Leaders received Ministry Task Description forms for this purpose. If you have yet to submit your form, please return them as soon as possible to the church office or to Pat Frey, co-chair of the committee as we will soon resume our work. The final results will be available in a binder in the church office and will be entered into the Ministry Data files of our computerized ministry data system. We will annually review the data for changes and you may submit changes to the office. Thanks to the hard work of computer tech Barbara Woodward, all of the spiritual gift inventory results have been entered.

NEWCOMER WELCOME AND CONVERSTATION MARCH 28

If you have been worshipping at Memorial for a while and would like to visit with the pastor and get better acquainted with the ministries of our church, please join Pastor Denice in her office at 11:15 a.m. on Sunday, March 28, 2004.

A PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

By Newell P. Knudson

"The Passion of the Christ"

Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ", has probably received more thoughtful criticism, pro and con, than any other movie since "Gone with the Wind". Personally, I'm glad that the Bible story has made news, because the very meaning of "gospel" is "good news". Will I see the movie? At this moment, I'm not sure. It is a violent story -- crucifixions were brutal and violent happenings in the days of the Roman Empire. As someone who has lived through World War II, with its extermination of six million Jews in death camps and more millions killed on the battlefield -- wars in Korea and Vietnam, with the virtual genocide of a people by the Khmer Rouge -- wars in Iraq, with tales of torture and brutality -- not to mention a large number of TV shows and newspaper articles - I've seen enough violence in my lifetime, to the point where I don't need to see any more. Even reading the Bible story and imagining what was done to Jesus, provides a large helping of shock and horror.

Some religious leaders are concerned that the movie will encourage anti-Semitism, based on the idea that "the Jews killed Jesus". I hope this will not be the case, for there is already too much cancerous anti-Semitism in the world already, and we do not need more. Some of the films critics have made the point that it gives very little information as to why anyone would want to kill a man who preached love to God and neighbor, who healed the sick and blessed little children. Let me point out some of the background.

First of all, Jesus was put to death, not because he preached love and peace, but because he threatened the religious establishment of his day. The religion of the Jews, at that time, had degenerated into a legalistic system, in which it was more important to keep the minute details of the law than to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God." As the leaders saw it, the religious law was what held their people together; without it, the nation would fall apart. Besides that, they held positions of political power. If Jesus kept on gathering followers, and if he was right in his concept of religious, then they were wrong, and they would be out of business. In their eyes, for religious, political, and personal reasons, Jesus had to go -- even if it meant trying him in a way that was completely contrary to their own law.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, played his role. He examined Jesus and found no fault in him. However, Pilate kept his job by keeping the peace. And he kept the peace by giving in to the religious leaders and the people over whom they had influence. Only he could sentence a person to death -- the religious leaders could not; and by doing so, he kept the peace -- and kept his job. It is noteworthy that soon after the incident with Jesus, Pilate lost the support of the Jewish leaders and people and was removed from his position.

Another factor: The Jewish people were looking for a Messiah -- someone divinely appointed by God, who would be their spiritual and temporal king. Their concept of "Messiah" was that of a warrior-conqueror, who would free them from Roman tyranny and set up a heavenly kingdom. Jesus failed to meet their hopes and expectations. When he refused to lead a popular revolution, they demanded that Pilate free Barabbas, a notorious revolutionary.

The Bible story has the people saying of Jesus, "His blood be on our heads and on our children." This statement has been misinterpreted through history as reason to persecute those of the Jewish faith. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Jews who demanded Jesus' death were simply saying that they were convinced they were doing the right thing, and were willing to take responsibility for it -- and pass on to their children what they considered to be a reward of a righteous act.

I am happy that "The Passion of the Christ" has been made and released. It will be followed by "Judas" and a film based on the Gospel of John. "The Passion of the Christ" is, in a sense, "the gospel according to Mel Gibson". He does what Matthew, Mark, Luke and John did in an earlier day, lifting up the elements in the story that each felt were important; setting forth the suffering and death of Jesus as the means by which all humankind may be redeemed from sin and evil. I would hope it would have that kind of impact. And if the movie can help people to think about their own faith and be willing to discuss it among themselves, it will have achieved a good purpose. And some may discover, as did the centurion who supervised the crucifixion and was impressed by the way Jesus faced death, that "truly this man was the Son of God".