

TO THE POINT

*A letter from Rev. Stephen Hoffman,
Pastor of First United Methodist Church
of Palmetto*

www.fumcpalmetto.org

May 4, 2011

SUMMER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

June, July, August

Unity Worship at 9:30 AM

(Singing your favorite hymns all summer!)

Dear Members and Friends,

As most if not all of you know by now, my last Sunday serving as your Pastor will be Sunday 26 June. I will be retiring from congregational ministry, and Christine and I will be living in Sarasota.

So this will be the last letter I write to you as your Pastor. I am humbled to have had the privilege to serve Christ by ministering to you, with you, and among you since July 2006. As you know, I first announced my impending retirement the end of January so many of you have been very generous in expressing your best wishes the last several months. We deeply appreciate all of your expressions of gratitude and friendship.

You have been a blessing!

This is our opportunity to tell you how fortunate we feel to have been appointed to serve this church in this beautiful community. There are too many of you to thank individually, but I have continued to be very grateful for all the ways you volunteer to serve in the various ministries of this congregation. Everywhere I go and everywhere I look - at the Thrift Shop, in the office, counting offerings, caring for this beautiful facility, leading Sunday School classes, preparing fellowship meals, volunteering at the Food Pantry, preparing the sanctuary for worship, providing hospitality for the families of Family Promise, all the ministries of the Glory Group, serving on Administrative committees, singing in the Chancel Choir, playing with the handbells (the "ding-a-lings" as I affectionately call them), ushering on Sunday morning, preparing and serving monthly communion, running the sound board, serving on Dominican Mission Team, visiting the sick, the liturgists who lead worship, organizing and participating in the Manatee County CROP Hunger Walk, the United Methodist Men weekly breakfast meeting and monthly pancake breakfasts - what did I miss? (I'm sure

I missed something. . .) I see joy and enthusiasm, great love and steady consistent servants working together in the love of Christ to bring glory to God. You are a blessing to many!

I have a special place in my heart for each of you who I have been able to witness opening your heart to the grace of God in Jesus Christ in new and significant ways. That means more to me than I can express, but in every life that has experienced transformation we each need to be quick to give all the credit to the work of the Holy Spirit.

I also want to acknowledge the reality of those times and circumstances in which as your Pastor I have grieved the Holy Spirit. I know there are times, some of which I am aware and others of which I am not aware, when my shortcomings have been an impediment to the work of the Holy Spirit. I say that with gratitude for your collective and individual generosity. I ask for your forgiveness. In saying that I rely on the sentiment that Paul expressed when he said, "When I am weak, God is strong."

I am humbled to serve as a Pastor in the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. I want to encourage each of you individually and this congregation as a whole to be proud and grateful for our shared identity as United Methodists. In Christ, we are not in competition with any other church or denomination, but our connectional system is a significant way in which our ministry is expressed literally around the world. The most tangible way we express that is to be 100% supportive of our apportionments. I hope the leadership of this church will become fully supportive of this.

How can I miss you when you won't go away?

Christine and I are in the process of moving to Sarasota. We love this part of Florida, and we have grown to love you and to love this church. So it is painful, but still necessary and healthy for us to leave. Last Sunday Sue Revell introduced to you your new Pastor who will be Rev Esther Robinson. Later in this letter, you can read Sue's introduction. I know Rev Robinson both as a colleague and as a friend. I was greatly encouraged to hear of her appointment here. She loves the Lord with all of her heart and has dedicated her life to serving Christ. She brings a caring pastoral presence, demonstrated effectiveness, and a passion for the Methodist emphasis on social holiness. I am excited about the continuity of vision she will bring. Last weekend we hosted her overnight at the parsonage and loved talking with her, telling her about this church, and meeting Chipper and Shelley, her two dogs. We loved taking them for a walk down 4th Street while Rev Robinson shared fellowship with the Staff Parish Relations Committee!

We are already working with the Trustees so the parsonage will be prepared for her move the end of June, and I want to encourage each of you to join with the Staff Parish Relations Committee to go out of your way to welcome her with open arms and open hearts, as you welcomed me and Christine five years ago. You will be blessed by her ministry, and she is very excited to be coming to serve this church! Tell her your name more than once!

One Pastor at a time.

It is important for a church to have one Pastor at a time. I want to encourage you to make a special effort to let Rev Robinson know how she can minister to you. Call her when

you know a church member who is in the hospital or in special need. Special Pastoral needs such as funerals, weddings, and baptisms need to be communicated to her personally or through the church office. In respect of our covenantal relationship, it will not be appropriate for me to respond to those requests.

If you have been blessed by our ministry the last five years, the best way you can express gratitude is by being encouraging and supportive of your new Pastor. If we have let you down in any way, the best way you can express that is also by being enthusiastic in your support of your new Pastor. In doing so, you will be expressing the work of the Holy Spirit. I know you will!

A Beginning Prayer and a Closing Prayer.

When I brought Christine back to Florida early in 2006 a friend in Canterbury gave us a prayer to guide us. I have turned to this prayer numerous times in the last five years. It seems fitting to share it with you one more time as we prepare to leave. Thank you for all you have shared with Christine and me!

Lord God, you have called your servants
To ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
By paths as yet untrodden,
through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with good courage,
Not knowing where we go,
But only that your hand is leading us
And your love supporting us;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We have loved serving as your Pastor,

Stephen

NEW PASTOR ANNOUNCED

Since the time Pastor Stephen announced his retirement, the members of your Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) have been busy. They include Dennis Bundy, Hazel Ford, Clem Stiving, Linda Gibel, Doug Shaw, Jeannette Quesenberry, Bethany Foil, Bob & Wendy Marble and Ann Marshall. I am most grateful for their shared service during this time. Together, we have prepared an updated “Church Profile. . . a “self-portrait” so to speak. We met with our District Superintendent, Dr. John Powers, to convey the qualities and gifts we seek in our new pastor. Our Bishop and members of the Cabinet of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church have also received Ministry & Personal Profiles.

. .another version of the “self-portrait”, on each of the pastors in the Florida Conference. The Bishop and Cabinet have met through a prayerful and careful discernment process to match a pastor’s gifts to the missional needs of a congregation. As many of you know, United Methodists have an “appointment” process for ordained pastors rather than a “call” process. In this process, the church does not review the resumes of potential candidates in advance, but meets the new pastor by way of introduction rather than interview. If both the church, represented by the members of the SPRC, and the candidate pastor agree that it is a good match, the appointment will be made. As chair of this committee, I have put my faith in this system, and know that the Bishop and Cabinet have done their prayerful best to match the right pastor to the right church at the right time. I trust that not only for myself, but also for First Methodist of Palmetto.

Having explained all this, on behalf of the SPRC, I am pleased to announce that the **Rev. Esther Robinson** will be serving as the next pastor of our church. Esther has been an ordained minister in the Florida Conference since 1982. She was a “preacher’s kid”, born in Cuba to missionary parents. She received her baccalaureate degree from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg and is a graduate of Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She has served in churches throughout Florida, including Winter Haven, Key West, Miami and for the past 8 years, she has served as associate pastor at Coronado United Methodist in New Smyrna Beach. Her family includes her two dogs.

For a glimpse of Rev. Robinson prior to the time when we have the pleasure of meeting her in person, I will share portions of her personal & ministry profile, as written in her own words. . . Esther describes her skills in leadership, preaching and teaching in the following ways: “I have had the privilege of ministering in some unique and challenging situations which has helped my growth as a Pastor. I have very good pastoral care and preaching abilities. I am able to work collaboratively with people but enjoy the leadership role. Clear communication and administration are passions of mine. I enjoy teaching and have a great interest in the church’s role in relationship with the community.”

She describes her spiritual gifts as being “Encouragement and mercy. I try to look for the good in situations and am a good listener.”

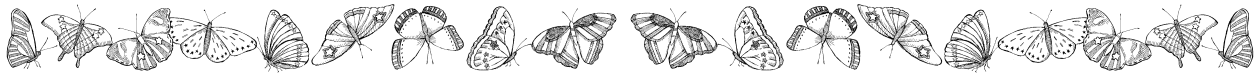
Her theological stance is as follows: “The nature and mission of the church is to spread the good news of God’s love for all creation through the life, ministry and witness of Jesus Christ. Educated, professional clergy lead the church in the ministry of word, sacrament and order, collaborating in ministry and mission with the laity. My own personal faith is most realized and satisfied with the social justice message of the gospel but I recognize and affirm the diversity of theological perspectives within the United Methodist Church.

Esther’s first Sunday with us will be July 3, and I know that we will all extend her a warm welcome as she becomes part of our Palmetto FUMC family. In the meantime, we will continue to learn & benefit from the spiritual leadership of Pastor Stephen as we plan for the future. We will use the coming weeks - now through the end of June - to celebrate and honor the next season of their lives. A church-wide appreciation and farewell dinner for the Hoffmans has been planned for Monday, June 6 in the Fellowship Hall. I hope that you can attend.

Please join me in keeping both Pastor Stephen and Pastor Esther in your prayers, as well as our congregation. May we say good-bye well and welcome well, realizing that the Lord has been present and guided us in all of our leavings and in all of our comings. May He open our hearts and our church to receive Esther with joy, knowing that she has been called to us by the Spirit of God.

In worship & service with you,

~ Sue Revell



We wish a Happy Birthday in May & June to

5/4 - Jean Hensley	6/1 - Jeannette Quesenberry
5/5 - Joyce Lawson	6/2 - Mary Shields, Carleton Sprinkle
5/9 - Barbara Cordwell, Fay Tokanos	6/3 - Gail Moulton
5/10 - Earl Hadley, Dean Shelley	6/4 - Jim Grant, Ruth Van Sickle
5/11 - Fannie Wilke	6/5 - Cecil Klock
5/12 - Marlene Jurgensen	6/6 - Eddie Mercurio
5/13 - Loretta Thompson	6/11 - Patty McRee
5/15 - Jimmy Clements	6/16 - Ron Touchton
5/16 - Mercedes Staples	6/18 - Ty Revell
5/18 - Anna Gianotes	6/19 - Dick Garrison
5/19 - Bob Wahl	6/23 - Josh Edington
5/20 - Bud Van Sickle	6/24 - Judi Windle
5/24 - Donna Cozadd, Beulah Scott	6/26 - Harry Poling
5/26 - Wendy Marble	6/27 - Dennis Bundy, Ginnie Luft
5/31 - Beth Thornton	6/28 - Sara Doyle, Melba L. Hunt
	6/29 - Lura Beth Keogh, Bob Walwork

Celebrating Wedding Anniversaries in May & June

5/5 - M/M Bob Marble	6/13 - M/M David Brown
5/10 - M/M Maurice Durkee	6/15 - M/M Calvert Courtney, Sr.
5/22 - M/M Elvin Mahan	6/18 - M/M Curtis Troxell
5/29 - M/M Doug Shaw	6/23 - M/M Jimmy Clements



First United Methodist Church
PALMETTO

330 11th Avenue West
Palmetto, FL 34221

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Return Service Requested

We are instruments of God called to be neighbors in this community and world through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ based on quality worship, spiritual growth, and effective service.

Sunday Morning Worship: 8:30 & 10:45 a.m. ~ Sunday School at 9:30 a.m. ~ Nursery Care Available

Senior Pastor
Rev. Stephen Hoffman
Music Director/Organist
Mary Shields
Pianist
Michele Jurgensen
Administrative Assistant
Noni Hammerstrand
Receptionist
Betty Sharp
Custodian
Lyn Smith
Nursery Care
Rebecca Staples

Church Office Hours:

8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Monday - Thursday

Phone: (941) 722-1812

Fax: (941) 723-0082

Email:

fumcpalmetto@yahoo.com



be with you.
As the Father has
sent me,
so I send you."

John 20:21, NRSV