To The Point

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

www.fumcpalmetto.org November, 2009

Dear Friends,

A Bouquet of Gratitude

Early in my ministry I was talking to a seasoned pastor who was always a great encouragement to me. I was serving in the little town of Greensboro in Gadsden County just west of Tallahassee. He was appointed to the larger United Methodist Church in Quincy that is the county seat. We were having lunch. It was just about this time of year.

We were talking about "Gratitude." He told me about a previous church he had served that had very formal worship services. Every Sunday each of the ushers and the Pastor all wore boutonnieres. The ushers had carnations and the Pastor was given a rose each Sunday. One Sunday as he was shaking hands with people after worship; a little boy that he didn't know very well asked him, "What are you going to do with that flower?"

It took him a minute to realize what he was referring to, but he replied, "Do you mean this rose?"

"Yes," the boy replied. "If you aren't going to do anything with it, would you mind if I took it. I would like to give it to my grandmother." The little boy proceeded to tell the Pastor a very complicated story about how neither his mother or father were able to take care of him, but his grandmother had taken him in with open arms, and made him feel very welcome and loved in her home. He wanted to take the flower home to his grandmother.

When my friend and mentor finished listening to the boy's tribute to his grandmother he told the little boy, "I don't think one flower is enough for your grandmother. Do you see those flowers up on the altar? I think we should put those flowers in a vase and you could take them home to your grandmother. How would that be?"

My friend and mentor told me that he had never seen a little boy smile so big! "Wow, what a wonderful day! I asked for a flower and got a bouquet!"

I hadn't thought of that for a long time, but sharing it with you is my way of saying how grateful both Christine and I are for all the expressions of appreciation you have expressed to us, especially in the last month! Each of the cards we received meant a great deal to both of us. Thank you for each of your personal expressions. We feel as if we received a beautiful bouquet of gratitude, and we are very grateful to serve Christ with you as a part of this beautiful community.

A Positive Church Conference

On Sunday October 25 we held our annual Church Conference with a Unity Worship Service followed right after with the Conference in the Fellowship Hall. Presiding was our the District Superintendent of the Gulf Central District Rev John Powers. His wife Sharon was also with us. In conversation they told me that they had driven here early and had taken the chance to drive around Palmetto a little bit and were very impressed with the beauty of this little community. Of course, we already know that! There were over 40 people attending. Thanks to the Glory Group for coordinating the refreshments, and thank you also to the 8:30 people who adjust your schedules to attend worship later than your usual time.

Tim Mercurio gave an outstanding report on how our church is living one of the practices of The Methodist Way. He highlighted all our ministries that are examples of Salty Service.

You may be asking yourself, "What do they mean by Salty Service?" Good question! It refers to where Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth …" (Matthew 5:13) Salty Service is all the ways we express the love of God in deeds so that our talk of God's love does not sound like "a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (I Corinthians 13:1). Salty Service is all the ways we answer the question, "How is Christ calling his disciples today to feed and cloth, visit and house him?" (Matthew 25:31-46), and " How is Christ calling us to bless our communities in His name in order to earn the right to be considered when we speak of His love?" Tim's report is included in this letter.

Sue Revell spoke on behalf of the Staff Parish Relations Committee to recommend the Pastor's benefits for next year, and Rick Barber spoke on behalf of the Finance Committee to give the overview of where the church is in its apportionment payments for this year. As of 30 September the church has paid 31% of its apportionments which comes to $9,134. Rick also presented the 2010 Church Budget which has been approved by the Church Council. We owe a debt of gratitude for the work of both of these committees on behalf of the church as a whole.

The Report of the Lay Leadership Committee was also presented. This is all those who have agreed to serve on various Committees in the next year. In the January "To the Point" we will include a complete listing of leadership positions. A big bouquet of gratitude to each of you who said "Yes" to serving on a Committee!

"Please take care of Space Ship Earth!"

Our study on "Christianity and the Environment" stimulated much discussion in our group as well as a desire to take action. One of our new members wrote the following article, and I include it as Joyce wrote it:

OUR FRAGILE PLANET

by Joyce Alspaugh

As a member of the workshop "Christians and the Environment", this experience has given me a great sense of responsibility that we as Christians must begin to follow God's wishes and protect our precious planet. The group spent 5 weeks seeking God's wisdom and discovering that we as humans have not followed this wisdom and are slowly destroying this fragile place we call Earth. How can we do something about it? A question we kept asking ourselves each week as we delved into the processes that brought us to where we are today and NOW what can we do to fix the problems we made. A Creation Care Covenant will be forthcoming from what we learned and a proposal of what we all must do as a church and individuals to listen to God and to actively care for His Creation.

In the meantime, I discovered a great free special edition local publication called "NATURAL AWAKENINGS", www.nasrq.com; containing green businesses, environmental articles of great interest, calendar of events, ways to live healthy and to maintain a healthy planet. Obviously I cannot review all the articles or local green businesses, but will just list a couple this time and leave it up to you to seek out this publication and begin to prepare how we can do our part to save our earth.

MACY'S TERMITE & PEST CONTROL.....Named 2009 Green Business of the Year, Macy's Termite & Pest Control Co. specialized in organic pest control, using botanically-based products and other naturally-occurring elements which pose less health risks to people and pets. Located at 1080 Enterprise Court, Suite A North Venice, FL. 941-412-9610.

GREEN WORLD HOME CLEANING.....They clean with the belief that caring for the Earth and your health begins at home. The founders of GREEN WORLD HOME CLEANING, began this cleaning company with a mission to offer a "green" non-toxic home cleaning service, keeping client satisfaction in mind at all times. Their personal mission was to create awareness of the health effects of toxins in the home through the company and their newsletter by suggesting simple actions everyone can take to help reduce global warming. Located at www.greenworldhomecleaning.com 941-923-1717.

I am not endorsing any particular business. Check for yourself .....there are a lot of "Green" goods and services out there. It is up to us to find them and change our life styles to get our planet back.

There was also a couple of real eye-opening articles....one "PLASTIC IS NOT SO FANTASTIC by Eve Prang Plews. She points out very bluntly how plastic hurts our world and hurts our bodies. "Plastic can endure for thousands of years in our landfills. It is found to cause genetic changes that set up opportunity for cancer, birth defects, lower sperm count and impaired immunity. Plastic is in canned goods, baby bottles, shampoo, pet toys, sunscreen, fragrances and on and on. We need to stop using styrofoam, plastic juice and water bottles, and buy frozen fruits & vegetables, which have no can linings of plastic."

The very inspirational article "EARTH APPRECIATION THE VIEW FROM OUT THERE"....featured quotes from Michael Collins who served as the Command Module pilot on Apollo 11 who states, "From the moon, Earth looks small, shiny, serene, blue and white, fragile....but appearances can be deceiving. It's certainly not serene, but definitely fragile, and growing more so. The loss of habitat, the trashing of oceans, the accumulation of waste products—this is no way to treat a planet."

"We're living on a tiny little dust mote in left field on a rather insignificant galaxy. Basically, this is it for humans. It strikes me that it's a shame that we're squabbling over oil and borders." – Bill Anders, Apollo 8, Earthrise photographer.

"You come back impressed, once you've been up there, with how thin our little atmosphere is that supports all life here on Earth. So if we foul it up, there's no coming back from something like that." – John Glenn, Jr. First American to orbit the Earth and former U.S. senator.

"From up there, it looks finite and it looks fragile and it really looks like just a tiny little place on which we live in a vast expanse of space. It gave me the feeling of really wanting us all to take care of the Earth. I got more of a sense of Earth as home, a place where we live, and of course you want to take care of your home. You want it clean. You want it safe." – Winston Scott, two-time shuttle astronaut and author of Reflections from Earth Orbit.

"I left Earth three times. I found no place else to go. Please take care of Spaceship Earth." – Wally Schirra, Mercury, Gemini and Apollo missions.

The Creation Care Covenant will be presented at our next Church Council Meeting. This can be a very important step in our life together as a community of faith.

Grace and peace,

Stephen

Salty Service

Presented by Tim Mercurio, Chair of Church Council

Church Conference, 10/25/2009

The 13th verse of the 5th chapter of The Gospel According to Matthew records these words spoken by Jesus: "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men." These words of our Savior can be applied to us, the Body of Christ, in this day and age, by asking the question: "What good is the church if it loses its saltiness and flavor for service in the community in which it exists?"

Here at FUMC Palmetto, we have a rich history and ongoing commitment to service in our community and overseas.

Your work with Family Promise, providing food, shelter, and hope to homeless families in Manatee County, has given the hand up and second chance to many parents who now have permanent housing and employment. Your efforts in this area have filled a present need and built a bridge to the future.

Our Glory Group in conjunction with the Thrift Shop have been providing both Thanksgiving meals and Christmas gifts to families in the Palmetto area for many years. The list of those in need is provided by Palmetto Elementary School. A case of church and state united together for the common good of mankind.

The Food Pantry continues to fill the gap for those who would otherwise go without a meal. This ministry is supported by both your financial donations, and food placed at the foot of the altar. Your efforts here have inspired our fellow Methodist brothers and sisters in the North River Area to help in this ministry.

The Thrift Shop volunteers have provided for and underwritten so many ministries both within our walls and outside of them. It would take another talk to list them all. You have truly been the hands of Christ to countless individuals.

Souper Bowl Sunday, spelled SOUPER, is the work of our youth to collect money on Super Bowl Sunday, the world's most watched sporting event, and then distribute it to programs in the county which help the homeless, the under privileged, and those recently released from prison.

All of these ministries mentioned above fulfill the teachings of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives

or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return and you would be repaid. But when you give a banquet invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Many of you have spent a week or more serving at Hogar de Niño in the Dominican Republic with other mission teams. Being so moved by this experience, you have requested and received your own week of service. Not only does this add a week of service to the children, it opens the door for others to serve on existing teams.

The United Methodist men have sent devotionals to be distributed to our soldiers in war torn Iraq, providing hope and inspiration to men and women serving their country far from home.

Our Sunday school children send financial aid to Heifer International which provides chickens for eggs, goats for milk, and beasts of burden which work the land. All of which enrich the lives of families throughout the third world.

The doubting souls would say, "All of your efforts amount to only a drop in the bucket of the ills of society". The believing soul knows that no bucket can ever be filled until the first drop of water flows in.

We wish a Happy Birthday in November to . . . . .

11/3 - Harry Doyle, Louie Jurgensen
11/6 - Ruth Bandeen, Bonnie Scott, Doris Turner
11/7 - Happy Dilley, Christine Hoffman, David Manning
11/8 - Chris Marble
11/10 - David Bischoff, William Sawdy, Jr. Sydney Thomas
11/14 - Betty Moore
11/16 - Bill Kaklis, George Strawn
11/18 - Matthew Maus
11/21 - Jerry Burzyck, Russ Setkewich
11/24 - Marilyn Benroth, Doug Drayton
11/25 - Janyce McMullen
11/26 - Sheron Bundy, Vickie Kaklis
11/29 - Jenna Atkins, Jayne Ballard Carolyn Parker

We wish a Happy Anniversary in November to . . . . .

11/7 - M/M Doug Drayton
11/8 - M/M Ed Gibel
11/27 - M/M Larry Parker

Glory Group & United Methodist Men
Trash & Treasure Sale & Pancake Breakfast
Saturday, November 14, 2009 ~ Fellowship Hall
Breakfast served from 8:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Trash & Treasure Sale from 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

First United Methodist Church
PALMETTO

330 11th Avenue West
Palmetto, FL 34221

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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.

Senior Pastor
Rev. Stephen Hoffman

Music Director/Organist
Mary Shields

Pianist
Michele Jurgensen

Administrative Assistant
Noni Hammerstrand

Church Office Hours:

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

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

Monday - Thursday

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A Guest at the Table

For, after, all put it as we may to ourselves, we are all of us from birth to death guests at a table which we did not spread. The sun, the earth, love, friends, our very breath are parts of the banquet. Shall we think of the day as a chance to come nearer to our Host, and to find out something of Him who has fed us so long?

— *Rebecca Harding Davis*