



# *TO THE POINT*

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

[www.fumcpalmetto.org](http://www.fumcpalmetto.org)

August 18, 2008

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## **“LIVING TOGETHER IN UNITY”**

Dear Members and Friends,

Our Psalm in worship this past Sunday was Psalm 133. Verse 1 is “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!” I am picturing a number of images of unity that I have seen this summer in our church and want to share several with you:

- Most recently, yesterday our Youth Group had a Car Wash during Sunday School and after morning worship. It was great to see so many enthusiastic youth and parents working together to make our automobiles shine! It was obvious that they were having a great time together. Everyone got soaked! The donations they received will help with expenses to attend “Rock the Universe”, a Christian music event at Universal Studios in Orlando.
- This year we joined with FUMC Bradenton for Vacation Bible School. It was a Veggie Tales theme. We had children both from our church and our Hispanic Mission attending. The Youth Group assisted with the evening “Spyglass Theater” and a number of adults also helped with crafts, leadership roles, and snacks. Everyone had a great time with the Pirates theme for the week which was “Calling All Heroes.” Thanks to all the HEROES who helped! You were great!
- For the second year we celebrated Father’s Day with “Take Dad to the Ballgame” by going as a church family to a Rays Baseball Game. On Saturday, July 19, we took a group of 40 people to the game between the Rays and the Detroit Tigers. The highlight of the game was seeing Evan Longoria, fresh from his All Star game appearance, hit his first major league grand slam homerun. Everyone had a great time cheering together. It seems like this just might be the year of the Rays!

**A Long Pause** I have been very aware that we have not had a newsletter during all of this year. This Pastoral Letter is an attempt to take the place of that communication. It may not have all the information of the church, but it will be a place for me to write to you, as I believe communication is important. I will write this letter each month. When others

submit articles we will be happy to see that they are communicated to the church. Those who attend worship may have noticed that the liturgy is now being done on a monthly rotation rather than weekly. This frees up time and creative space for writing this letter. Each month we will include a list of Birthdays and Anniversaries. We want to be able to celebrate together and encourage each other. This month I am highlighting several ministry initiatives within our congregation.

**Fellowship Supper Clubs are underway!** These are small informal groups who get together once a month to share a meal at a local restaurant. It is a great way to get to know each other as a church family beyond just smiling and saying “Hi” on Sunday mornings. Richard and Kathy Pecht have been a big help in organizing these and there is always room for more to participate. Let us know if you are interested. The group that Christine and I are a part of met last Monday evening, and we thoroughly enjoyed our time together.

**Putting Names with Faces** is something that is very difficult for me. I think that I am probably not alone. The Lay Leadership Committee has a plan to help with this. In September we will be working on a new Church Pictorial Directory. This will be a little different and hopefully easier than ones done in the past. We will not be using an outside company so photos will be taken before, in-between, and after worship services during September.

**Focused Living Retreat will be September 19 and 20.** For the last year the REFocus Team of our church has been meeting and praying together. During this time they have explored God’s unique shaping of their lives, clarified the values that guide their lives, and sought to understand how God’s shaping of their lives has prepared them for unique influence and impact. This church is blessed to have such a gifted team. They are **Bob and Wendy Marble, Lyn Smith, Coby Gaulien, Sue Revell, and Christine Hoffman. They want to invite YOU to participate in this retreat at our church.** You will have the opportunity to go through the same process that they have experienced. I hope you will agree to allow them to lead you through this prayerful process. It will be held in our Fellowship Hall on Friday evening and then during the day on Saturday. There will also be the opportunity for Follow-up sessions.

We are living through a time of great change. the greatest thing the church can have is leaders who are willing to be led by the Holy Spirit. REFocus is based on two principles:

- Renewal of the local church begins with the renewal of its leaders.
- Personal transformation happens best in the context of relationships.

**Family Promise changes lives.** We are blessed to be a Host congregation in the Family Promise network. Our next week to host families is from Sunday, August 31 through Sunday, September 7. This is a beautiful opportunity for us to express hospitality as a church to families and children who need to experience God’s love. There are opportunities to be an evening host that prepares and serves a meal for two or three families or to be an over-night host who spends the night on one of the extraordinarily comfortable, although a little squeaky cots. If you want to know more, check out the web site at [www.familypromiseofmanateecounty.org](http://www.familypromiseofmanateecounty.org).

**Walk to Emmaus is a transforming experience of Christian Community.** We are blessed that the Emmaus weekends are held so nearby in the beautiful retreat setting of Day Spring Retreat Center between Ellenton and Parrish. The Walk to Emmaus is an experience of Christian spiritual renewal and formation that begins with a 3-day short course in Christianity. Adjoining weekends are held for men and women. The next Men's Walk will be held October 2-5 and the Women's Walk will be the next weekend October 9-12. We would love to speak to you about sponsoring you on this time that for many people is a time to meet Christ and experience God's grace and love in a new way. More information is at [www.UpperRoom.org/Emmaus](http://www.UpperRoom.org/Emmaus).

**New District Superintendent is John Powers.** Our Gulf Central District has been blessed with great leadership for the last several years by Rev. Wayne Curry. This last Annual Conference Wayne was appointed to Trinity UMC in Tallahassee, Florida. He will be missed, but we are also blessed to welcome Rev. John Powers. John has already met with our Cluster Group. You can read more about him on our District's new website at [www.gcdistrictumc.org](http://www.gcdistrictumc.org).

John comes to us from First United Methodist Church of Oviedo. He has a great enthusiasm for ministry with all people and is known as a savvy basketball player. One of his claims to fame is that at his last church, for a fundraising drive, the youth group had a bobble head doll made of him, and rumor has it that at our first District Clergy Meeting we are all going to get one. Stay tuned for more details!

**Christian Marble has done a great job as our Youth Intern this summer!** We all owe Chris a debt of gratitude for how he has pulled our Youth together this summer. Rather than try to recap all he has done I am going to reprint his final email to the Youth Group. He is not only an inspiring leader for our youth he writes well also. We wish him well as he begins his sophomore year at the University of South Florida.

*Dear youth and parents,*

*First of all, a big thank you to everyone who helped out with the car wash today. We raised \$281, a great outcome, and had a lot of fun.*

*I've had a wonderful summer with you all and I hope that my work as the Summer Youth Intern helped you have a great summer as well. PMY is an extraordinary and unique youth group and it has been the whole time that I've been involved as a young person and as a young adult. I'm so glad that we could keep a strong, big group going all through the summer and I look forward to seeing growth come from some of the seeds that we planted over the last few months.*

*Good luck to everyone in the new school year. I will be praying for you all, and I hope that everything goes well for each and every one of you. Remember that even when school seems ridiculous and awful and you'd rather be anywhere else, that God is with you and you have the support of your friends and family at the youth group.*

*They will be there for you, and remember that God will always be with you no matter what.*

*We had a great lesson tonight, over an hour. I was so proud of everyone because you listened and responded to my questions. Just to reiterate some of what we talked about, keep in mind that the future might sometimes be dark, and that Jesus himself told us that it would be; however, you don't need to fear any of it, from hurricanes to war to evil teachers with calculators. Also, remember that God is truly the best friend you could possibly have and He will never fail you, despite the fact that we all fail Him on a fairly regular basis. Remember to keep seeking the truth no matter what, even when you think you have everything figured out. For all find what they truly seek, as Aslan says. Seek God, and you will find Him. Seek salvation and you will find it in Christ. Remember that we are all on individual journeys of faith and it's okay if we feel lost or if we don't feel as certain about our religious beliefs as we say we are. And please, please always remember that God loves you, His creation, no matter what. There is nothing, and no one, that can separate you from the power of God's love.*

*Between going to the movies, partying at the beach, having awesome, epic lock-ins, getting a little too competitive at 9-square, reading Narnia and the Bible, and just hanging out at the Youth House, I think we can all say that we had a great time. I am so thankful that I've gotten to know you all over the last few months and I love every single one of you. I'm very, very proud of you all.*

*I'll see you at Rock the Universe.*

*Thanks and God bless,  
Christian*

**This has been a long letter.** It is often like that when we haven't written in a while. As I write we are anticipating and preparing for a storm named Fay to come by here tomorrow. It is a part of living in Florida to be anxious about these storms. Our prayers are especially with those who are far less prepared than us to deal with such threats and those who have experienced loss and upheaval in their lives. Part of the wisdom of being prepared is that we will be better able to respond to the needs of others. But as people of faith we can also remind each other especially at times such as these that all storms, whatever their nature or whatever their name, have a beginning and an end. They don't last forever, but whatever their name, each one has a beginning and an end. They don't last forever, but God's love does. That alone is eternal, and it is that love that binds us together in unity.

Thank you for all the love we share in this church!

Your Pastor and Friend,

Stephen

***We wish a Happy Birthday in September to . . . . .***

- |                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2 - Owen Jago                      | 20 - Marge Trees                    |
| 3 - Teri Dees                      | 21 - Florence Barrett, Casey Jago   |
| 4 - Ella Crossman, Dickey Stuckert | 23 - Dianelly Macias, Laura Troxell |
| 5 - Jeanette Rinehart, Betty Smith | 24 - Irene King                     |
| 8 - Bill Walwork, Dianna Ward      | 25 - Ed Gibel, Lew Lucal            |
| 9 - Connie Houser                  | 26 - Sister Bush                    |
| 15 - Linda Gibel, LeeAnn Russo     | 27 - Erling Wittrock                |
| 16 - Bill Pascoe                   | 29 - Bettie Wadsworth               |
| 19 - Ann Thomas                    |                                     |

***Celebrating Wedding Anniversaries in September. . . . .***

- |                       |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 8 - M/M Rick Thomas   | 29 - M/M Sidney Thomas |
| 21 - M/M Clem Stiving |                        |



**FOCUSED LIVING RETREAT**

- ◆ Explore God’s unique shaping in your life
- ◆ Clarify your life’s values
- ◆ Understand how God’s shaping of your life has prepared you for unique influence and impact for the kingdom

Friday, September 19, 6:30 until 8:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 20, 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 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. ~ Saturday & Sunday Evening Hispanic Worship 6:30 p.m.*

Senior Pastor  
Rev. Stephen Hoffman

Music Director/Organist  
Mary Shields

Pianist  
Michele Jurgensen

Administrative Assistant  
Noni Hammerstrand

Giovanni Palacios  
Pastor of Hispanic Mission

Church Office Hours:

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Monday - Friday

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**“Grace teaches us in the midst of life’s greatest comforts, to be willing to die, and in the midst of its greatest crosses, to be willing to live.”**

**— Charles Swindoll**