

Laity Notes

Chuck Hall

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SUGGESTIONS RECEIVED

A few of the United Methodist Men have been holding play periods for neighborhood children for the past several weeks. Their efforts, for which we highly commend them, have met with varied success. Their greatest days have thus far coincided with our two Wednesday night meals, when parents have brought their children along for a bite to eat. It has been suggested that we announce more clearly our Wednesday night ventures for neighborhood children, and so we bring this to the church's attention via these Laity Notes. If you have a youngster living next door, drop a word in his Mom's ear about joining others to play in a safe and supervised environment.

Two suggestions have been offered about our Wednesday night meals. One was to offer a breakfast for dinner, perhaps pancakes. The second was to go the picnic route and offer hamburgers and hotdogs. Both seem like good ideas, and perhaps they could be carried out by a new host of volunteer cooks and be added to rather than substituted for our regular Wednesday night meals. We might, for example, plan a month with one Wednesday night meal along our regular lines, and then find an additional night of our choosing for the breakfast for dinner idea and the hotdogs and hamburgers idea. Perhaps a Thursday or Friday evening might be enticing to mothers seeking cooking relief. That would mean we offer hospitality two times each month rather than one, and if we enlarge our workforce we could achieve this without overtaxing anyone. In effect, we would be doubling our efforts to encourage people to come to our church. I shudder to admit this, but someone earlier actually suggested that men might be capable of cooking hotdogs and hamburgers.

Please don't be shy. If you have ideas along these lines, step forth and grab a handful of our congregation and make it happen. A good place to begin would be with the women who are behind the Wednesday night meal effort. Ideas accompanied by hands willing to work are the hallmark of a vital small church.

Still another suggestions came from two different sources. That one was to hand out these Laity Notes each Sunday along with the church bulletin, and to leave copies at the entry table for those who might be absent. I have yet to figure out a way to disseminate Laity Notes other than simply handing out copies after church. To mail them would involve time and incur expense. A good portion of our congregation does not have access to email. If anyone has a suggestion about this, I would appreciate hearing from you.

CHURCH TIME

As you know, time for the church is divided into a liturgical year composed of different seasons. . Seasons are designed to celebrate specific parts of the life of Jesus or of the early church. With Easter Sunday we began the first day of the Easter season.

During the Easter season, we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus and appearances he made to his disciples during a period of forty days following the Resurrection (Acts 1:3) On the fortieth day after the Resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven: "When he [Jesus] had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their [the disciples] sight." (Acts 1:9). Easter season ends on the day of Pentecost, which occurred ten days after the ascension (Acts 2), and on the seventh Sunday following Easter. This year, Easter fell on April 20, ascension will occur on May 29th, and Pentecost on June 8th. Counting Easter Sunday, Pentecost occurs on the fiftieth day after Easter, with the ascension occurring on the fortieth day. Pentecost was so named because it was at the time celebrated on the fiftieth (Greek *pentekostos*) day from the first Sunday after Passover. Jesus had gone to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover when he was crucified. While the dating of Easter changes each year, this particular sequence and its timing remain the same.

Today we find ourselves in Easter season, when some two thousand years ago a few people were

trying to understand the magnitude of what had just happened. According to Luke, when the disciples first saw the risen Jesus in Jerusalem they “were startled and terrified.” (24:37) In Matthew, Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” were at the tomb when an angel appeared and told them that Jesus “has been raised from the dead.” When the angel told them that the risen Jesus was going to Galilee and that they should relay this message to the disciples, “they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.” (28:8) On a mountain in Galilee, Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples, who, when they saw him, “worshiped him; but some doubted.” (28:17) In John, when at the tomb Mary Magdalene first saw the risen Jesus she did not recognize him and thought that he was the gardener. (20:14-15).

One of the primary means used to explain and comprehend these monumental events was scripture. Scripture at the time of Jesus would have meant what today we call the Old Testament. Jesus did not have access to the New because it had not yet been written. Events of that first Easter season were the reason why the New Testament was written. On the evening of the first Easter, on the famous Road to Emmaus, two men were talking about “all these things that had happened.” Along the way, the risen Jesus, whom they did not recognize, joined them. In recalling these events to the questioning Jesus, they at one point said, “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” Jesus reprimanded them for their unbelief, and then, “beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.” (Luke 24:27) We would be hard pressed to find a better argument for the importance of studying the Old Testament.

If you are in any manner like me, there are moments when you wish to read something in the Bible, but simply do not know where to begin. If that urge strikes during this seven-week Easter season, we might be rewarded by a venture into Matthew 28, Luke 24, John 20 and 21, and the first two chapters of Acts. A careful reading of these passages might well enhance our appreciation of the Easter season. What happened during that first Easter season is the reason why we attend church today. What happened since that first Easter season is why we attend a Methodist Church today. We have six weeks left in this season, and that is ample time to read these chapters. Happy reading!

NEW FACES

Am I imagining things, or are there really more and more new faces appearing in our church on Sunday mornings? One new face last Sunday morning that put a big smile on my face, was the face of a little boy peeking in the door during the middle of the sermon. As I inwardly laughed, the only thought I had was that I wished he had a buddy at his side. If there is one thing better than one little boy running loose in our church, it is two little boys running loose in our church.

Please remember that our next Wednesday evening meal will be held on May 14th. This is part of our effort to encourage new people to become familiar with our church. If possible, please invite a friend or friends to join you for dinner at Oak Meadow UMC on the 14th of May. Every little effort counts, and who knows but what your invitation might result in that second young boy in church on Sunday morning.

HERITAGE SUNDAY

Today we celebrate Heritage Sunday and return to our roots. As Methodists that takes us back to John Wesley who was born 300 years ago in 1703. When Wesley was born there existed neither Methodism nor the United States. When he died in 1791, both the United States and also the Methodist Church in those new United States had come to exist. The Revolutionary War played a critical part in the creation of both. One separated itself from England, and the other separated itself from the Church of England. Both had their deepest roots in that same England.

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Many of you have come to me with suggestions, and I am doing my best to publish each of them. If I have left some out, please remind me again.

Many of you have also offered kind remarks about this effort and for that I thank you. I am still feeling my way with respect to frequency and content, and welcome comments and suggestions about either. This small venture of mine is part of a larger venture of our church. I am in good company.

Please email me at cjhall_45@yahoo.com or leave a telephone message at 404-1894.