



News From Holland

Holland First United Methodist Church

September 2008

Dr Phil Shuler, Pastor

Web Site: www.hollandum.org

FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN

"Once upon a time" is the phrase that often awakens one to the telling of a story. Jesus told stories, but I know of no place where he used the "once upon a time" phrase. He told parables, and the purpose of the parable was to convey meaning – often a spiritual one – to the listeners/readers. He truly must have been a remarkable preacher!

We use stories to convey meaning. I remember some of the stories I heard as a child and have told to my children. "The Giving Tree" was one of the more significant ones to me, even though I don't remember all of it in detail. What I remember is that the tree that thought of itself as ugly and worthless became a bench on which one could rest and reenergize. I guess the point is that no one is ugly and worthless: everyone has something to contribute. I believe the title of a second story was "the little engine that could." This was a children's story of a little train locomotive trying to climb a hill. Every inch of effort found the little engine saying to himself, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can." After much effort the little engine reached the top of the hill, and with perspiration dripping from his engine face, he began the descent on the opposite side saying, "I knew I could, I knew I could, I knew I could." I guess the point of the story is that one should keep trying: i.e., focusing on a goal with self-confidence produces victory through persistent effort. Even adults learn anew through the sharing of such stories with their children.

I really enjoyed sitting around the table at the Fagner's home and eating "Big Mike's" hamburgers Sunday. I wasn't able to go into the pool, but the fellowship was fun – and so were the stories. It was fun hearing about the plans for a Scandinavian cruise and about previous experiences in Belgium and other portions of Europe. I enjoyed telling some of those stories myself. Such stories reminded me of one of the more familiar stories in the Old Testament, one that the traveler didn't want to take. I'm referring to the story of Jonah and the "big fish" (commonly referred to as the "whale"). You know it well, don't you. Jonah was commanded by God to go to Nineveh and preach God's love to the people there. Jonah didn't want to go because he didn't think they deserved it. They rather deserved God's wrathful and vindictive punishment. So, saying "yes" to God, Jonah boarded a boat going in the opposite direction, Tarshish. God, however, is not to be denied. There was a great storm that threatened the boat and sailors on it. Where was Jonah? He was in the bottom of the boat, hiding. He finally admitted that his disobedience was the real cause of the storm, and the sailors ushered him overboard! Not to be denied once more, God had a "big fish" swim by and swallow Jonah who then proceed to pray and sing for three days while in the belly of the fish. He was "thrown up" on land, and then decided to go to Nineveh and preach as God has wanted. Furthermore, they repented. The point is one that is difficult for many adults to realize even now. God loves others – even those of different skin tone and culture – as he loves us!

What fun it is to tell stories. But even as we acknowledge the power of the story, perhaps we need to be careful of the stories we tell. Not every story has a positive learning ending. Not everything we hear builds character and goodness. Once again we come to the realization that the best stories we can depend on for good growth and righteous action are those that are in God's inspired word, the Bible. That's why a little reading of Scripture each day can carry us all through the day! Try it...you'll be surprised...you'll like it.

See you in church Sunday.

Yours in Christ,

Judy's News

New Calling –Granger UMC

Our 5th Sunday Community Service (August 31st) will be held at the Judea Missionary Baptist Church, 401 N Willis Street at 6:00 P.M. in Granger. Everyone is welcome. We pray with assurance that God will bring unity among all the churches and community.

Please be in prayer for our churches new endeavor. We are trying to get a “Feeding the Hungry” Food Bank in Granger. Our goal, with God’s will to be done, will be to have it available in November.

Monthly Luncheons

September’s luncheon will be at Olive Garden at 11:00 A.M. on September 24.th

Everyone is welcome to come. Will need a head count before that day to reserve us a spot.

News!

I attended a spirit filled Waco Prayer Conference led by Daniel Henderson. The purpose was to discover a fresh encounter with God and we did. I am so glad God laid it on my heart to go.

Cowboy Church

Dates have been set for Cowboy Church for the first four months: Sunday, October 19th (5:00 P.M.), Sunday, November 16th (5:00 P.M.), Monday, December 22nd (7:00 P.M.) and Sunday, January 18th (5:00 P.M.).

February, March, April, and May dates will be set up in Dec.

Mark you calendars now. Be in prayer for these services. Format will be changed a little to get back to a “Cowboy” service versus a church service held outdoors. It will be an exciting time!

UMW News

The Holland UMW will resume our meeting on Wednesday Sept 17,2008 at 1:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall of the Church. Everyone is invited. Also the district meeting will be held at Salado in September.