

# December 2007



Dearhearts

Sometimes the joy of the Christmas season is challenged by sadness. On Friday, November 30, Sandy and I attended the funeral for David and Jeanie Brazelton's son-in-law, Brian Schinn. This fine young Christian man was married to the Brazelton's daughter, Tana, was the father of three children and was an exemplary officer with the Lakeland Police Department. The service at First United Methodist in Lakeland, where Brian played in the bell choir and worked with the youth, was beautiful and full to overflowing. All these things combined to make it one of those bitter-sweet occasions.

This is not the first time in my life that such sadness has intruded on the season, nor will it likely be the last.. As a consequence, I have thought and prayed about it more than a little and reached the following conclusions:

Christmas was meant for exactly these occasions. Far from Christmas being diminished by such sadness, it speaks to it with wisdom and compassion. God did not send his only Son into the world because it deserved him, but because it needed him. In fact, the story itself acknowledges the depth of this need by including Herod and his henchman in the shadows. Perhaps we need to preach occasionally on Jeremiah, the other prophet quoted in the Christmas story, "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children..." (Matthew 2:18)

Christmas shows us with awesome clarity how God not only addresses our sadness, but overcomes it. The child of Bethlehem grows to manhood and becomes a mighty prophet, teacher and healer. And when Herod's son and his allies try once more to thwart God's plan they are unsuccessful too. The powers and principalities cannot quench God's purposeful love. Jesus faces down the powers of sin and death and emerges victorious on the far side. It has always been this way and always will. Two scriptures that are not normally associated with Christmas find a place among my Advent readings: Psalm 139:7-10 and Romans 8:37-39. They are book-ends for the nativity story.

Finally, none of this is meant to deny the bittersweet experience of losing a loved one, especially a faithful soul friend. Such a thing happening at Christmas makes us swallow hard. But it does assure us that the one who walks beside us and will never abandon us, knows the way and will see us through the dark valley. We simply need a resounding, "Yes!" This is the end of the story that God had in mind from the beginning.

Grace and Peace,

*Rich*



## **Summer Camp Team Leaders Sought**

Now is the time to think about recruiting high school seniors and college students in your church for ministry at summer camp 2008. The Florida Conference's ministry of summer camp at the Warren Willis United Methodist Camp touched the lives of close to 4,000 children, youth and adults in 2007. That success was made possible only with the help of a Leadership Team of nearly 100 young adults, who spend their summer months making each day happen at camp, from life guarding to teaching, from crafts to waterfront activities.

Those who are accepted on the Leadership Team will develop leadership skills, explore vocational possibilities, and begin to better understand the larger picture of the church. It is a 24-hour-a-day job, being with campers five days a week.

Some of the qualities sought in Team Members are:

- A sacrificial spirit;
- A passion for developing relationships with and sharing the story of Christ with children and youth;
- A seeking faith in Christ;
- Openness to other theological interpretations;
- An ability to work as part of a team;
- A flexible spirit that is willing to make and adapt to change;
- Knowledge of appropriate behavior, language, and activities; and
- Specialty skills (i.e., computers, sailing, photography, dance, instruments, etc.).

If selected, each Team Member serves from May 29 through Aug. 10, 2008. Each Team Member receives room and board, and a minimum of \$1,675 for the summer. Team orientation is required, from May 29 through June 8. High school graduates through college students are eligible to apply, before Feb. 1, by visiting the Summer Camp Web site here: [UM Summercamp](#), and clicking on the "Warren Willis Camp Summer Leadership Team Applications Now" button.

For more information, or to suggest a person who you think would be interested in the Leadership Team opportunity, e-mail their name and contact information to Heather Pancoast, Assistant Camp Director, here: email Heather, or call toll-free 866-UMCAMPS, then select option three.

## **Save the Date - Camp Pioneer and Grandparents and Me Camp**

Local churches in the Florida Conference are urged to share information about "Camp Pioneer" and "Grandparents and Me" camps with their members and friends.

Camp Pioneer, to be held July 14-19, 2008, allows adult persons who are mentally challenged to experience first-hand the love of God in Jesus Christ in a caring community. The camp setting at the Life Enrichment Center in Fruitland Park allows campers to discover and enjoy the beauty and wonders of the natural world.

Grandparents and Me camp, June 16-19, and June 23-28, 2008, is a half-week camp for young children, ages 5 to 12, and their grandparents, to come to the LEC and build memories, connections, and faith in Jesus Christ. Grandparents and their grandchildren stay either in motel-style rooms at the LEC, or in their own RV. Camp activities are designed to allow times of games, playground activities, nature exploration, swimming, Bible study, and much more. Information about both camps will be posted online at: [Flumcamps](#) in the near future, and brochures about both camps will arrive in local churches soon.

# Profiles Online

Church and Pastor Profiles for 2008 are available on-line at [www.flumc.org](http://www.flumc.org) Click the Profiles link on the right side of the website.

The church & pastor profiles should be reviewed and updated annually by all churches and all clergy in the Florida Conference. The Staff Parish Relations Committee, both the current committee and incoming new members for 2008, need to meet to review and complete the church profile. Pastors complete their personal pastor profile. Pastors having January consultations with their D.S. should insure that their church profiles and pastor profiles are completed one week prior to their scheduled consultation. All other clergy and Staff Parish Relations Committees should review and update the profiles annually during the time frame allowed, late November 2007 to January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Though you may not anticipate a move, it is important that both the pastor profile and church profile be current and up to date at the appointment-making session of the cabinet. It should be an honest reflection of the pastoral ministry and the profile of the church.

The final date to update the Church and Pastor Profile on-line is January 15th.

**New in 2007** All Pastors and SPRC's will not automatically complete Preference for Appointment or SRRC Advisory Recommendation forms this year. Please refer to a copy of the recently revised Cabinet Appointment Making Guidelines and letters sent to the Clergy and SPRC Chairperson in October 2007.

## 2008 Apportionments are now online

### **Mark your calendars for the Annual District Leadership Training Event**

**January 19, 2008 from 8:45am-12:30pm**

To be held at Orange Park UMC Classes will be offered on Celebrate Jesus, Disaster Response/ Recovery, New Church Development, Lay Leader, Trustees, Finance/Church Treasurer/Financial Secretary, Outreach Ministries, Church Council, The Methodist Way and Campus Ministries Representatives. All classes will be led by Florida Conference staff and District Leadership.

Sign up now in your church office.

## Communications Roadshow

The Communications Staff is going to be trying something new, in an effort to better provide resources to local churches on a more direct basis. We are going to be holding four sessions of workshops, which we are calling the "Communications Road Show." These will be trainings for local church members, held in a local church, with six workshops at each location.

Workshops will focus on improving print materials (like church newsletters, brochures, etc.), crisis communications for clergy, data management 101, starting a Web site, improving your Web site, and starting a podcast.

The locations and dates of the Road Shows are:

- Saturday, Jan. 12, 2008 – First United Methodist Church, Lake City (North West District)
- Saturday, Feb. 9 – Peace United Methodist Church, Orlando (East Central District)
- Saturday, March 8 – First United Methodist Church, Sebring (South West District)
- Saturday, April 12 – First United Methodist Church of South Miami (South East District)

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Registration materials are online at [www.flumc.org/roadshow](http://www.flumc.org/roadshow). The workshops are free; we are charging \$10 for lunch.



## Calendar

### **December**

- 13** New Church Development– 10am  
District Office
- 20** DCOM Meeting– 8am– District Office
- 24** District Office Closed for holidays

### **January**

- 2** District Office Reopens
- 8** District United Methodist Men Meeting– 6pm  
Location TBA
- 19** Leadership Training Event– 8:45am  
Orange Park UMC

### **February**

- 5** \*Clergy Pancake Breakfast– 9am  
Faith UMC
- 9** Celebrate Jesus Information Gathering-10am  
First UMC, Starke
- 11** Celebrate Jesus Information Gathering– 7pm  
Riverside Park UMC, Jacksonville