



News From Holland

Holland First United Methodist Church

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Dr Phil Shuler, Pastor

Web Site: www.hollandum.org

FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN

I have just finished reading an intriguing article titled, "Don't sacrifice small churches on altar of economics," by Dr. Donald W. Haynes. The article appeared in the *United Methodist Reporter*, Central Texas edition.

My reaction is complete agreement with both title and content. Almost everything I read in UMC publications (and elsewhere) tells of the crises facing the United Methodist Church along with the other so-called mainline churches. As the article states, there has been a shift of paradigm from small to mega-church, a shift which presupposes a "nondenominational ethos." Nondenominational churches have swallowed up the smaller, struggling churches with their attendance/membership numbers and their technological/media skills including multi-media and TV programming. Meanwhile, the vast majority of UMC churches are small membership communions.

Complicating factors may be added to the above trends. It is becoming increasingly difficult for smaller churches to support the appointment of full-time ordained clergy. Given the economy of recent years, the UMC is in the process of planning for the rebuilding of funds depleted by our country's financial demise. We are told that the next few years will see considerable increase in replenishing retirement, insurance, and pension funds. I returned from Annual Conference this past June concerned about the future of smaller UMC congregations that may not be able to meet the increased financial obligations, all of which have unquestioned merit.

Solutions? Unfortunately, some have suggested that churches unable to meet such obligations may not be able to survive (such a solution, fortunately, has not been officially proposed!).

I am concerned for at least the following two reasons (among others)! First, I'm concerned because I am a pastor of two of those "smaller" congregations who have been struggling and will continue to struggle to meet financial obligations in Christ. Holland UMC is one of those smaller congregations that is fewer in attendance numbers, yet vibrant in faith and Christian community life. This year, while remaining "small," our congregational life has shown definite signs of life in every aspect. Our Charge Conference will reflect that we have received 4 (5 in our Confirmation Class) new members. Our Wednesday PM Bible study is enthusiastically alive providing a foundation for our Christian life. Our UMW is very active and recently had one of its members elected to a District Office. The Men's breakfast has re-structured and looks optimistically ahead! Cowboy Church at the "Hegar barn" begins its seventh year October 17 (5:00 PM). We're a small church in a small community (not even a County Seat), and God has put us here for the "long haul!"

Second, I am concerned because – as a 25+ year participant in biblical scholarship – I am aware that the New Testament church emerged and became vibrant as a result of its "smallness" that produced true intimacy! I have often said that the small churches I have served while teaching in a university were closer to the New Testament pattern than those big mega-churches where anonymity prevails. Holland UMC has an advantage BECAUSE it is small. We can truly live our faith together, in a real community!

So I say, let's rejoice in our numbers, let's shout about our intimacy, let's take pride in the fact that we know the names of everyone present, and let's serve our Christ with the same enthusiasm for witness as did the disciples long ago.

Join me in shouting: "We're alive!" See you in church Sunday!

Phil Shuler, Pastor

Cowboy Church

October 17th at 5:00 pm is the day we once again celebrate Cowboy Church. Ed Stockton has been asked to come and bring the music. Don't forget to bring those cookies!

UMW

On September 11th six of our members went to the First United Methodist Church in Temple for our Temple District Meeting. Betty Jett was installed as the Communications Secretary and is eagerly looking forward to serving our local unit in this capacity. In October we are planning to take a trip to Georgetown to visit the Methodist Retirement Home. Final arrangement will be announced at a later date. Everyone interested in going will be welcome.

Judy's News

Granger Community Food Pantry

It was a busy month with a recorded breaking 41 families coming through our Pantry for food. We had plenty to give, Praise God, but our shelves are so empty now. I am planning on having a Food Can Drive from October 15 through November 15th to help restock them. If you can help in any way, it would be appreciated.

5th Sunday Service of Song – Church in the Park

On the 31st we will be holding our regular service at 10:45am but with a **big** twist. We are planning to have our regular service in the park. Ed Stockton has greed to bring several of his buddies to be there to sing and play for us. I just know God is going to use this to bring blessings to the Community. Come and join us for a great way to worship!

Tuesday Night Bible Study

Bible Study starts at 6:30 pm. There will be no study on Tuesday the 28th because I will be out of town. However it will resume on Tuesday, October 5th.

5th Sunday Community Service

The 5th Sunday Community Service will be held at the Judea Missionary Baptist Church at 6:00 P.M. on the 31st of this month. All churches in the community are invited to attend – to sing, or sing along, and to enjoy the fellowship of Christ. Everyone is asked to bring a snack to share with others as food and fellowship follow immediately after. Everyone is welcome.

October 23rd – Central Conference 100th Birthday Celebration

Our church will be participating in this as one of the Centennial churches. We are going to have a display table as well. Four of us plan to attend and represent our church.

UMM/UMME

The United Methodist Men will meet on **October 9th at 8:00 am** the fellowship hall and breakfast will be served.