I’ve been asked two big questions this week. The first is “Aren’t you on vacation?” I guess people didn’t expect to see me Sunday, because I asked a guest to fill the pulpit. I enjoy preaching, but I also know the value of hearing from a variety of voices, so I will have guests from time to time. One reason for doing this is that your regular preachers are both men. I have always been intentional about making sure the children and youth growing up in churches I serve see both women and men in the pulpit. I’m grateful that two pastors I hold in high esteem, Dr. John Sims and Rev. Insook Hwang are both part of First United Methodist Church, and were able to share excellent messages during the last two weeks. In 2020, look for Pastor Yiwen to preach about once a month starting January 12th when he launches our New Year’s sermon series called “New Year, Same Promises.”

My family did take a short vacation after Christmas. I know you will understand that because our worship services are broadcast on the radio and our newsletters are published on the internet, I try to be careful about announcing when the Personage might be empty or that my family might be home without me. I do make the Staff Parish Relations Committee aware of my vacation plans, and the office staff is able to get messages to me. Also, Pastor Yiwen and I coordinate so that one of us is usually in town. Generally, if you can reach Yiwen, Necia or me, we know how to get ahold of the others. First UMC is also blessed to have a corps of retired clergy and some trained Stephen Ministers to provide care as needed.

The other question I’ve gotten is: “What’s happening to the United Methodist Church?” Many of us were surprised this past week by reports from major news outlets announcing the “split” of the United Methodist Church. This came from a new proposal that emerged this week, called “The Protocol of Grace Through Reconciliation and Separation.” So what is this new “Protocol”? It is an agreement by several bishops and representatives of a diverse set of “caucus groups” to a set of principles which would allow for the creation of one or more new Methodist denominations. While most pastors and churches would simply stay in the United Methodist church, some (including some self-defined “traditionalists”) would join a new denomination freeing those who remain United Methodists to remove restrictions on the ordination and marriage of LGBTQ persons, at least for churches in part or all of the United States. For descriptions and comparisons of the 6 major plans for addressing LGBTQ inclusion in the United Methodist Church go to www.resourceumc.com and look for “GC2020: Proposed Plans.”

Our District Superintendent helpfully reminded us through Facebook that this “is merely a proposal put together by various constituencies and some Bishops within our denomination... It would need to be voted upon and approved by the 862 world-wide delegates (of the General Conference that meets in Minneapolis in May). Unlike what has been inaccurately reported by several national media outlets, separation is not yet a ‘done deal’ at this time”

As I said on Sunday, what I find most encouraging about “the Protocol” is that many former antagonists are talking and working together. Another positive about this plan is that this process was initiated by a Bishop from Africa. Support from African churches will be necessary for any path forward, though they haven’t always been included in the process. There are certainly a lot of obstacles. A few groups have already raised objections and others still hope for a solution that doesn’t involve a split. So while we can say some kind of separation is a possible outcome at General Conference in May, it is far from certain.

I have always been blessed to pastor wonderfully welcoming and diverse churches. First UMC is such a place. We are a model of how people with different lifestyles and who have different viewpoints on theological and social issues can create space for everyone who seeks to grow in faith, show respect for each other, worship together, and work together to Share the Heart of Christ from the Heart of Carbondale.

God Bless, Pastor Howard
In Church This Week

Jan. 9 to Jan. 23

**In Sympathy:** Sympathy to family & friends of Lois Payne who passed away on December 28, 2019.

**Calendar Dates for 2020:** PLEASE come in to the Church Office and write in or call in your church-related events held in January 2020 on the Office Calendar as soon as possible.

**Saturday Night Live and PrimeTimers**—Will not meet in January 2020.

**Volunteer Opportunity:** A volunteer is needed for Nametags for the months of April, August and October. Please contact the Church Office if you are interested.

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**FUMCNext-Carbondale, Heritage Room**

**January 13, 2020—6:30 p.m.**

**New Year, Same Promises**

Our new sermon series starts on January 12th!

"New Year, new you!" This is the message we get from pop culture, year after year. We vow to make changes to our diet, exercise habits or lifestyle, but instead of those resolutions, most things stay the same. This may be cause for disappointment, but there is some consistency we can celebrate. God’s promises to us do not change with the calendar or the latest fitness trend. Rather than focusing our energy and attention on making (and in all likelihood breaking) promises to ourselves, come to Crossroads for our “New Year, Same Promises” series, and let's spend the first part of the new year...
Disciples for Sunday, January 12, 2019

Altar Flowers are given by John and Sharon Sims in memory of Adam Sims.

Rosebud on the Altar is to announce the birth of Regan James Wear who was born on January 6, 2020, to Dylan & Jestine Wear. Grandparents are Natalie & Regan Wear and great-grandparents are Betty Bishop and the late Kent Bishop.

Altar Flowers are given by Tom and Carolyn Gallegly and Family in memory of Bob and Wilma Gallegly.

Disciples Corner

Making Sense of the Bible invites us into an honest conversation about the Bible. The study begins with foundational questions such as, How and when was the Bible written? It moves on to address real questions people frequently ask that continue to divide Christians, including:

- Were Adam and Eve real people?
- Why is God so violent in the Old Testament?
- Why would Paul command women to “keep silent in the church?”
- Is Jesus the only way to salvation?
- Why is God so violent in the Old Testament?
- Were Adam and Eve real people?
- Is the Book of Revelation a guide to the End Times?
- Why is God so violent in the Old Testament?
- Were Adam and Eve real people?
- Is the Book of Revelation a guide to the End Times?

Join us as we learn about the basics of budgeting, dumping debt, planning for the future, and much more. This 9 week course includes workbook, lessons, access to website and online community, budgeting tools and much more.

Thank you Robert Weiss!

This year, 2020, marks a significant time in the history of this church and the history of the music program. Bob Weiss will mark his 40th year as Director of Music at First United Methodist Church.

To try to count the number of anthems, service music pieces, and rehearsals he has done these 40 years is a bit of a challenge, but here are some estimates:

- Anthems/8:15 solos: over 4,600
- Instrumental music (Brass Sundays, Handbells, Orchestra) approximately 1,800 pieces
- Number of Rehearsals (not hours!): choir, brass, handbells, orchestra: approximately 3,320 rehearsals.

Bob has done more than direct music. He has brought in numerous guest artists to work with the choir and join us in worship. He has organized and arranged various recordings that were then used to benefit different organizations in our community.

We hear music composed hundreds of years ago and music composed today! Every Sunday is different! The prelude Bob played on January 5, 2020, “In the Bleak Midwinter”, was one of two pieces commissioned and dedicated to Bob for his 40 years of service as Director of Music. Mark Hayes did these arrangements. Later this year you’ll probably hear the second piece, “Let the Spirit Sing!” It's a combination of “I’m Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing” and “Every Time I Feel the Spirit”.

You are encouraged to say a word of THANKS to Bob anytime throughout this year. If you feel so moved, consider making a donation to the music department, so he can continue to bring in the great musicians you hear, especially at Lessons & Carols.

THANK YOU BOB FOR ALL YOU DO!
Trip Opportunity

PER PERSON COST PAYING WITH CREDIT CARD:
$1380 Double - $1205 Triple - $1906 Single
PER PERSON COST PAYING W/CHECK: $1340 Double - $1170 Triple - $1850 Single
FOR INFORMATION PLEASE CALL:
DON BOEHNE - 618-549-1319

All reservations and Full Payment must be received by March 2, 2020
All payments become non-refundable on March 2, 2020

Please Call 618.536.7751 for your reservations and your payment information.

TOUR COST INCLUDES: Roundtrip Deluxe Motorcoach, 5 Nights Hotel Accommodations to Include One Night at the Clarion Inn in Pigeon Forge, TN, Two Nights at the Embassy Suites in Savannah, GA (all rooms are suites), One Night at the Hampton Inn, Charleston, SC, One Night at the newly opened Drury Inn, Knoxville, TN, Dinner at the Applewood Farmhouse Grill, Admission to the Smoky Mountain Opry, Dinner at the Pirates House Restaurant, Hot Breakfast Each morning at your hotels
including your made-to-order breakfast at the Embassy Suites,
Guided Sightseeing tour of the City of Savannah and the Low Country tour,
Lunch at the Crab Shack in an indoor/door setting on the Lagoon on Tybee Island,
Evening adult beverages and snacks at the Embassy Suites and Drury Inn,
Tour of the Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, Boxed Lunch at the Gardens,
Palmetto Horse-Drawn Carriage Ride & Guided Tour in Charleston, SC,
Spirit of Carolina Dinner Cruise, Tour of Hatcher Garden with Box Lunch provided by Jason’s Deli,
Barbeque, Booze and Bluegrass at the Old Glory Distillery with BBQ Lunch & Entertainment.
Gratuity to your guides in Savannah and Charleston, Gratuity to your Guide at the Hatcher Gardens, Gratuity to your Driver and WIFI Equipped Motorcoach.

Children’s Opportunities, Sundays

Sundays at 9:30 a.m. Children’s Sunday School (K-5th grade) uses the Deep Blue from Cokesbury.
Main Topic: “Jesus Leads the Community” – Jan. 12 Sunday School—“Jesus Brings Good News “
Jan. 19 Sunday School—“Jesus Calls Levi”

Sundays at 10:45 a.m. Children’s Church (K-5th grade). All children are invited to Children’s Church following the Children’s Time at the 10:45 a.m. worship service.

Youth Opportunities, Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

9:30 a.m. Junior/Senior High Class meets in the Youth Room and uses a variety of materials connecting the lessons of the Bible with issues relevant to today’s youth.

Adult Opportunities, Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

Renew Class - Renew is a multi-generational Women’s Study Group that focuses both on the Bible and devotional books enhancing scriptural study. All women are welcome!! We meet in the Chapel, Room 404. On January 12th, we will begin a six-session study using Adam Hamilton’s book: The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life. This is a 6-week study focusing on “five essential spiritual practices that are rooted in Jesus’ own walk with God and taught throughout the New Testament. Each of these practices is a part of our daily walk with Christ and an essential part of growing together in the church.”

The Electives Class - Scripture studies following the lectionary led by Rev. John Sims. They meet in the Heritage Room. All are welcome!

Small Group Opportunities

FUMCNext-Carbondale meets in the Heritage Room. Help us explore ways we can share the love of Christ with all people? Come share your ideas. Looking forward to seeing you!

Gentle Toning, Stretch, and Yoga Techniques meets on Thursdays at 5:45 p.m., Rm 404, the Chapel.

Golden Yoga meets on Tuesdays at 10:15 a.m. and on Fridays at 9:30 a.m., Rm 404, the Chapel. A fee is charged for this class.

Grateful Hearts is a group of women who meet to strengthen their faith through Bible study, fellowship, and prayer. The group is studying How Happiness Happens by Max Lucado on Wednesdays, at 6 p.m. in room 308. All women are welcome.

Men’s Group All men of the church are invited to coffee and refreshments on Tuesday mornings at 8:30 a.m. in the Heritage Room. We discuss anything and everything from the perspective of our relationship with God.

The Daniel Plan Essentials meets in Room 403 at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesdays. They are studying the series The Science of Natural Healing. Everyone welcome.

Saturday Night Live is a group of “mature” or “maturing” adults who meet monthly for dinner and fellowship. The group usually meets the first Saturday of the month at 5:30 p.m. Watch the Asburian calendar for dates and location information. Everyone is welcome.

Youth Group meets on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. in the Youth Room. Time and location to be determined each week.