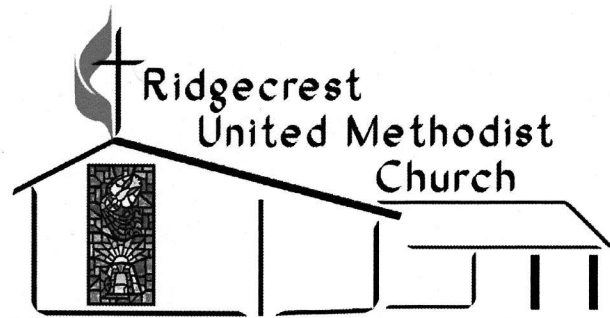


The Messenger



Newsletter of the Ridgecrest United Methodist Church

April, 2011

PASTOR'S POINT

Bishop Robert Schnase serves the Missouri Annual Conference of the UMC. He is a pastor, a marathon runner, a kayaker and an author. His 2007 book Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations has become a new standard for measuring church effectiveness. These are his own words, with the 5 Practices in bold face:

"When I talk about **radical hospitality**, it's got to pervade the whole life of the congregation—every cell has to vibrate with an outward focus. Churches that practice radical hospitality are constantly examining every one of their ministries and saying, 'How do we become more attuned to the call of God to reach out to other people?'"

When I talk about **passionate worship**, I'm talking about worship that is authentic, that is true to the Gospel, that is life changing. Worship that we enter into with an air of anticipation that something significant might actually happen in this time together. I'm talking about worship that really connects people to God.

Intentional faith development has to do with all those things that a congregation offers to help people grow in faith outside of the Sunday morning service. This is central to our self-understanding as United Methodists, of the sanctifying grace of God. And churches that are vibrant, fruitful, and growing are those that provide rich opportunities constantly for people to grow and mature in the faith. But you can't go very far in engagement with Scripture, or learning in community, growing in Christ—this 'inner holiness'—without being struck by a call of God to make a positive difference in the lives of people around you.

And that leads us to **risk-taking mission and service**. These are the things we do out of our commitment and obedience to Christ that we would not have done if we had never known Christ. Risk-taking mission and service stretches us, and churches that practice risk-taking mission and service are looking at the gifts and abilities of the people in their congregation and the needs of their community and the world, and they're asking, "Where do these intersect?"

Now, **extravagant generosity**. I'll just say it up front, what I'm talking about is teaching, preaching, and practicing the tithe, among other things—and just being unapologetic in our proclamation of that. Churches that are growing and vibrant and fruitful talk about generosity—not about the church's need for money, but about the Christian's need to give. They focus on generosity as an aspect of Christian character. The practice of tithing—of putting God first in everything—starts changing how we feel and experience everything else."

Our church is blessed with strength in all 5 Practices, with room to grow. Thanks be to God!



SSP SOAP SALE

Last year's debut of the **SSP Soap Shop** was wildly successful, so it will be set up again for your soap browsing on **Sunday, May 1 & Sunday, May 8**, in the Social Hall between and after the morning worship services.

This year you will have 90 different soaps to choose from, all priced at \$5.50 per bar. We aim to raise \$4,000 to support our youth's participation in Sierra Service Project this summer. Kathy LaShure has made and donated all the soaps. The High School youth will be available to gift wrap your Mother's Day or other gift purchases.

The youth will also be staffing a display about Sierra Service Project and their participation in past summers. They will be happy to speak with you about their life-transforming experiences helping others. What terrific mission ambassadors they are!

The master recipes for all these artisan soaps include many special ingredients such as Fair Trade shea butter from Ghana, unrefined cocoa butter, goatsmilk, etc. The soaps are excellent for combating the harshness of our desert climate with its extremes of dryness, wind, and sun.

The variety of soaps offered is awesome: many favorites from past sales; 4 different unscented kinds; 8 variations on the popular lavender theme; new choices for guys; sophisticated scents such as Black Vetyver Café & Caribbean Kisses; floral delights including Sweet Pea & Vanilla; new Crème soaps made with the goodness of goatsmilk, including Blushing Berry Mint and Sea Mist; more bars of the popular Gardener's Scrubby Goatsmilk Soap; and 30 bars of Navy Blue & White Soap, a clean, crisp scented bar honoring the Navy guys and gals who serve our country. Some types are in short supply so you will want to shop early for the best selection. Please contact Kathy at 760-377-4541 or desert_encelia@verizon.net if you have any questions.

If you haven't yet tried a bar of these terrific soaps, please do this year. In fact, try several, give your skin a treat, and help our dedicated youth and the Sierra Service Project!

