The Celebration of Humanity

"Because it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God.” Romans 14:11 (Common English Bible)

I wasn’t planning to see The Greatest Showman, even though Hugh Jackman is my favorite actor. I am not a fan of the circus, and I had read some pretty unflattering things about P.T. Barnum. I just didn’t think I wanted to see a movie that glorified a man who, in my opinion, took advantage of those who were different. But, like most of America, my daughters loved the movie and convinced me to go. Jeni has seen it three times and plays, or sings, the soundtrack daily. When it came to town, I decided to set aside my judgments of Barnum and see what the big deal was. Well, I was pleasantly surprised. The movie was fantastic. The acting was superb, the filming and cinematography spectacular, and the music—fantastic! I was hooked.

But, the writer of the film did not shy away from Barnum’s failings in dealing with those who were different. There were many good quotes from the movie and it was just a hope-filled, good movie. During most of the movie I could not stop thinking about the Church. There is a line toward the end of the movie from a critic who had written harsh words about Barnum’s show. In a tragic moment for P.T., the critic offers him some hope. He says that what he realized was happening with the show is that it was “celebrating humanity.” At that moment I realized why I could not stop thinking about the Church. It is not a sideshow or a circus that is meant to celebrate humanity, it is the Church. Yes, we gather to give praise to God and to learn how to follow Jesus, but we are also the people, the Body, that shares the Good News so that one day, “every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God.”

A transformation took place in the lives of the outcasts, or “freaks,” that P.T. Barnum put on display. There was a confidence found, a family formed, and a realization that their lives were of value and worth. They found their voices on the stage and with one another. The bearded lady still had a beard at the end of the movie, the black brother and sister were still black, the tattooed and pierced men looked the same, but inwardly they were different, forever changed. This is what happens when the Church celebrates humanity—lives are transformed. When we take the time to meet people where they are, then we value their worth as humans, as being created by God. When we take time to set aside judgment and prejudice, then we allow people to set aside any guilt or shame they have been carrying and get a glimpse of what life can be like without it. You see, only the Holy Spirit can work on a person’s life to bring the change needed inwardly. Only the Holy Spirit can bring someone to a place of repentance and confession of sin. But, we in the Church, buy meeting people where they are, provide the space and opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work in a safe place, in a loving place, in a place of love and grace.

I pray during the season of Lent, you are able to get real with God and ask what you can do, or what you need to cut from your life, so that you can meet people where they are and offer the love and grace of God. I pray that you are able to ask God to work in your life to bring the transformation needed to celebrate humanity and move closer to person God desires you to be. This is the prayer I offer every day for my own life. I want to be a conduit of the Holy Spirit so that people will experience Jesus. I want to be able to bow with every nation and give praise with every tongue!

See you Sunday,
Pastor Amy

Our mission is To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World.
At First UMC Decatur, we do that as we Connect in Community, Grow in Faith, Serve in Love as followers of Jesus Christ.
Lent 2018
REHAB

Sunday Mornings in Lent
March 4
PROGRAM
Exodus 20:1-17

March 11
RECOVERY
John 3:14-18

March 18
PROMISE
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Holy Week—March 25-31
March 25—Palm/Passion Sunday
Mark 11:1-11, 14:1-15:39

The Physicality of Holy Week

March 27—Tuesday
John 12:20-36

March 28—Wednesday
John 13:21-32

March 29—Holy Thursday
A Shared Meal & Washing

March 30—Good Friday
Community Service @
Church of God, 1:00 pm
Thank You Notes...
Thank you for all the prayers, cards, lantern and plant for the passing of my father. They were greatly appreciated. Also thank you for the prayers for my mother.
  Janet Frauhiger

Dear Friends,
Thank you so much for blessing the clients of the Hope Clinic with the wonderful baby shower gifts. We were blessed with so many wonderful items to help stock our shelves! This ministry is truly a community effort, and would not be possible without your prayers and support. Thank you so much for your on-going partnership with us. We consider it an honor that you choose to join God's hand at work through the ministry of the Hope Clinic!
  Sincerely,
  Hope Clinic Clients, Board of Directors, Volunteers, & Staff

Dear Friends,
We so appreciate all your prayers these past two years. At this point, Jim is stable with some complications. Your prayers have made the difference. Thanks for your faithfulness.
  Blessings,
  Jim & Elaine Hurst

To the ladies of the First United Methodist Church,
I want to thank each and every one of you who worked on my blanket. “It is beautiful”. I put it on my bed the first day I received it. It was very warm and very comforting. It was very thoughtful of all you to think of me. I’ve had a lot going on the last few years, but soon I hope things will get better. God Bless all of you from the bottom of my heart.
  Bertha Marie Wyatt

Ladies,
Jo Bollinger brought over to my Mom’s house a beautiful comforter made by the “comforter ladies”. I had knee surgery a while back so it will be warm on my knee. It’s true, we are simply grateful for people like you. Jo is Mom’s neighbor and is always doing something to help her. I want to thank Jo, too for the awesome bag, tissue paper, greeting and delivery! I want to thank all of you.
  A friend,
  Karen L.

What a beautiful gift from the congregation of First United Methodist Church. The prayer shaw keeps me very warm. Thank you for thinking of us at this time of losing our son.
  Love to all,
  Tom & Carolyn (Hakes) Ruble

**Soup Sunday - March 18**
Mark your calendars for Soup Sunday, March 18. Come to the Fellowship Hall following the 10 am worship service for food and fellowship. Chicken noodle and chili soup and sandwiches will be served. Donations will be received for Missions. “Let us not neglect meeting together... but let us encourage one another...” Hebrews 10:25

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**March Birthdays**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>3/01</td>
<td>Nan Cook</td>
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<td>Brenda Huggins-GM</td>
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GM - Golden Meadows

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**March Anniversaries**

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>3/04</td>
<td>Alfred &amp; Elaine Plew</td>
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<td>Grant &amp; Deb Porter</td>
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<td>3/29</td>
<td>Lou &amp; Vicky Koning</td>
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**Decatur First UMC Small Bereavement Group to Begin After Easter**

Have moments of remembering and honoring family members, loved ones and friends? Grief is natural to everyone. But sometimes it becomes burdensome and difficult to understand. Right after Easter (starting in early April) Pastor Joe is going to lead a small group (limited to a maximum of 6 people) in sharing stories, honoring gifts and celebrating the lives of those we love. We will meet during the daytime for 6 weeks. Contact Pastor Joe or the Church office to join in this special time of remembering and celebrating.

  Pastor Joe

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**Men’s Lenten Breakfasts at 8:00 am**

Saturday, March 10 at St. Mark’s UMC
Saturday, March 24 at Monroe UMC
LET'S MARCH INTO WHO WE ARE!

PHOTO DIRECTORY
PICTURES
&
SPIRITUAL GIFTS
INVENTORIES

PLAN TO JOIN US FOR BOTH THINGS
HAPPENING THIS MONTH

STAY TUNED FOR MORE DETAILS

It is our heartfelt desire to have everyone who is part of our church family participate.

We want to know who you are physically and spiritually.

CONNECT - GROW - SERVE
THE HOPE CHEST
THE LITTLE SHOP WITH A BIG HEART

We will be collecting Easter Baskets items beginning March 5th thru March 23rd. The baskets are given to children at the Crisis shelter and Wednesday night meals. They are also taken to children at the hospital.

We are now taking spring and summer items. Think of us when you clean those closets, attics and basements.

Customer Appreciation Day March 16th. Stop in enjoy free coffee and cookies and WELCOME SPRING MARCH 20TH.

Thank you for your continued support.
The Hope Chest Staff
Tana’s Colorful Words
Are They Listening
Do you find yourself raising your voice or even repeating yourself? Almost everyone from time to time, demonstrates selective hearing. Children lose interest with long, rational explanations and to them simple logic isn’t that important. When giving explanations or a request keep it “short and sweet” for good listening results. Let the tone of your voice become conducive to compliance without being forceful or loud. Keep in mind you are modeling good listening skills. Acknowledging their feelings, let’s your child know their opinion does matter and you do understand. Your voice of calm is more likely to be heard as your child really wants to listen. Keeping eye to eye contact, does make it harder to be ignored. If you really want their attention, hold their hand as you talk. You might even suggest they repeat back to you what was said.

When children aren’t listening, here’s a few suggestions to ask yourself:
• Are they hungry or tired?
• Do they need to burn off some extra energy?
• Would a change of scene get them to refocus?
• When they’ve asked me for something did I respond to them the first time?
• Possible ear infection, might need to have the doctor check their hearing?

“Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance. “

Proverbs 1:5

That’s A Fact
Annual Parent Meeting

A Thank YOU Breakfast was provided for all parents and children, Saturday February 3rd.
It was a joyful time to be sharing with the families as they started arriving at 9:00 am in Fellowship Hall their day off, Saturday.
Volunteers served the parents and children a breakfast of eggs, hash brown potatoes, sausage, Danish Rolls, and orange juice, milk and coffee.

Annual Parent Meeting is mandatory, providing a time for staff, children, and parents to come together sharing in communication, asking questions, and provided updates in the KFCCM enrollment registration, and parent handbook.

Bona Vista’s Child Care Solutions mentors were in attendance to explain Voluntary Certification Program (VCP) and Paths to Quality and KFCCM’s continued education. They shared information with discussion about Safe Sleep, Picky Eaters, Simple Crafts, and Literature.

Keeping in mind the importance of weekend family time, the breakfast, meeting, and clean up had everyone on their way by 10:30 am. One could say, ”Great information and time was had by all!”

And all God’s Children said, “Amen!”

Until the come out again!
Easter Flowers * Flower Garden Fund * Mulch

Remember and honor your loved ones with spring flowers for Easter Sunday and support our garden funds. After filling out the form, please return it with payment in the offering plate or to the Church office by March 19. A list of those who purchased an Easter flower or donated to the Flower Garden Fund will be in the bulletin Easter Sunday, April 1st. Flowers may be collected after services on Easter.

***

___ Easter Lily $15.00
___ Tulip $13.00
___ Daffodil $13.00
___ Hyacinth $13.00

___ Flower Garden Fund donation $________

___ Scoop of mulch $18.00 Total due $________

In Memory of ________________________________________________

In Memory of ________________________________________________

In Honor of _________________________________________________

In Honor of _________________________________________________

Given by ___________________________________________________
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| 8:15 & 10 am-Worship  
11:15-Discipleship Groups  
5 pm-Youth | 6:30 pm-Boy Scouts & Cub Scouts | 9 am-MamaTalk  
7 pm-A.A. | 11 am-Lenten Prayer -  
Chapel  
5-6 pm-Fishes & Loaves  
6 pm-Al Better Life - -  
Brianna's Hope | 5 pm-Endowment Committee |     |     |
| 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  | 17  |
| 8:15 & 10 am-Worship  
11:15-Discipleship Groups  
5 pm-Youth  
SPRING FORWARD AN HOUR - - Daylight Saving Time Begins | 6:30 pm-Boy Scouts & Cub Scouts | 7 pm-A.A. | 11 am-Lenten Prayer -  
Chapel  
5-6 pm-Fishes & Loaves  
6 pm-Al Better Life - -  
Brianna's Hope |     |     | 6:00 pm-Brianna's Hope  
Worship |     |
| 18  | 19  | 20  | 21  | 22  | 23  | 24  |
| 8:15 & 10 am-Worship  
11:15-Sunday Soup  
5 pm-Youth | 6:30 pm-Boy Scouts & Cub Scouts  
Newsletter Deadline | 9 am-MamaTalk  
3:30 pm-Bible Study  
6 pm-Stewardship &  
Finance Team  
7 pm-Ad Council  
7 pm-A.A. | 11 am-Lenten Prayer -  
Chapel  
5-6 pm-Fishes & Loaves  
6 pm-Al Better Life - -  
Brianna's Hope |     |     |     |
| 25  | 26  | 27  | 28  | 29  | 30  | 31  |
| Palm Sunday  
8:15 & 10 am-Worship  
11:15-Discipleship Groups  
5 pm-Youth |     | 3:30 pm-Bible Study  
7 pm-A.A. | 11 am-Lenten Prayer -  
Chapel  
5-6 pm-Fishes & Loaves  
6 pm-Al Better Life - -  
Brianna's Hope | 7 pm-Maundy Thursday  
Service | Good Friday  
9 am-12 noon-Church  
office hours  
1 pm-Community Good  
Friday Service at Decatur  
Church of God |     |
Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world

CONNECT—GROW—SERVE

Soup Sunday
March 18

Maundy Thursday Service
March 29
7:00 pm

Holy Week Begins
March 25

Good Friday Service
Church of God
March 30 @ 1:00 pm