

St. Matthew's 25 Challenge

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Jesus said, "When you did it to one of these my brethren, you did it unto me." Matt. 25:40

Volume II

FEBRUARY 2002

Issue 2

"On **Ash Wednesday**, the church marks an important transition, beginning the great cycle of Easter that extends from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost. The season of Lent is not primarily a meditation on the suffering and cross of Christ; this is saved for Holy Week. Rather, it is a season of penitence and prayer, reflection and renewal, all designed to prepare the worshiping community for the remembrance of Christ's death and celebration of his resurrection during Holy Week. More specifically, Lent is preparation for baptism. For new Christians who are baptized on Easter, Lent is a time to prepare for their new identity in Christ. For those who have been baptized, it is a time of self-examination so that they might reclaim their identity as those who have been buried with Christ in baptism and raised with him to new life.

Nearly everyone knows the cliches concerning Lent: we are to "give up" something as a kind of obscure penance. Such practices are not without merit, especially for those of us in economic conditions of abundance. Ash Wednesday and the season of Lent, however, call for something else.

Rather than a season for giving up something, let us consider Lent a season of taking on something. At the very heart of the Christian faith is our common participation in the life, suffering, death, resurrection, and Spirit-giving of Jesus Christ. Such participation is sometimes referred to as sharing in the paschal mystery of Christ. St. Paul exclaims, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast" (1 Cor. 5:7-8). The church is thus called to remember and live out in communal form this graced power of new life. In speaking of the paschal mystery we refer to an inexhaustibly rich set of meanings. Lent points us toward the narrative of passion-death-resurrection, celebrated in the three days which climax Holy Week and, hence, the whole season. At the same time the paschal mystery is encountered each Lord's day in Word and the Supper. Furthermore, the

paschal mystery also refers to our continuing experience of living in the presence of the Lord in daily use of the means of grace: prayer, the reading and meditating on Scripture, fasting as well as works of mercy. To such the journey of Lent invites us afresh every year.

Many persons in our society find it immensely helpful for personal discipline to have a season intentionally dedicated to "simplify" the way they live. So Lent can indeed be a significant period in learning to eat in less costly and indulgent ways. But merely giving up food in the name of self-improvement is hardly the essential motivation here. Rather, the point is to learn the connections between learning to live more simply for the sake of solidarity with the poor as well as for the sake of uncluttering our senses. We might then take on the discipline of relating prayer and restraint to our need to wait upon God.

The way of prayer is also a way of discipline. Fasting, almsgiving, and solidarity with all who hunger and thirst are the essence of Lent. These are means of confronting both the mystery of God and Christ and the human struggle within us against spiritual self-deception. This is precisely what the ancient church emphasized. The journey of Lent is to deepen our participation in Christ by following him in disciplines of the soul and body."(Don E. Saliers) **We will re-enact this ancient drama on Ash Wednesday, February 13th at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary.** Come and be a part of this moving experience to begin the season of Lent. Wednesday Night Bible Studies will resume on February 20th at 6:30 p.m..

**Shalom,
Mike**



FEBRUARY

BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 2 - Linda Webb | 14 - Connie Knight |
| - Sue Rutledge | 17 - Toni Terry |
| 4 - Mark Webb | 18 - Tyler Manship |
| 5 - Cathy Edwards | 20 - Bob Probst |
| 6 - Denise Gallimore | 21 - Phillip Powell |
| 10 - Leigh Thomson | 25 - Julie Anderson |
| 11 - Jean Biggs | 26 - Bill Parker |
| 12 - Catherine Morgan | - Al Hildreth |
| 13 - J.A. Sessoms | 27 - Raymond Gray |

HELP'N HANDS

The Senior Group met on January 24th at 11:00 a.m. in the fellowship hall. We all enjoyed a delicious covered-dish lunch.

Plans to take care of the elderly in our church was discussed. Everyone was enthusiastic about keeping in touch with them and informing the pastor of any changes.

Charles Lucas took the position as Co-Leader of our Help-n Hands Senior Group, and I welcome his help. We discussed other things available that we can become involved in, but more on that later. All seniors old or young are invited to come and help us **reach out**.

Eva Smith



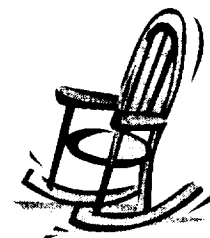
SPECIAL OFFERINGS

- ◆ **EMERGENCY FUND**
- ⇒ from the Thrift Shop
- ⇒ from the Sunday Morning Bible Study Class
- ⇒ from the Ruth-Ethel Smith Circle
- ⇒ from Paul & Jewel Sharpe
- ⇒ in honor of Connie Knight's birthday (Feb. 14) from her Secret Pal
- ⇒ in memory of Eva Smith's brother from the Sunday Morning Bible Study Class
- ◆ **POWER BILL** from the Thrift Shop

THE EMPTY CHAIR

A man's daughter had asked the local minister to come and pray with her father. When the minister arrived, he found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows. An empty chair sat beside his bed. The minister assumed that the old fellow had been informed of his visit. "I guess you were expecting me" he said. "No, who are you?" said the father. The minister told him his name and then remarked, "I see the empty chair; I figured you knew I was going to show up." "Oh yeah, the chair," said the bedridden man. "Would you mind closing the door?" Puzzled, the minister shut the door. "I have never told anyone this, not even my daughter," said the man. "But all of my life I have never known how to pray. At church I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it went right over my head". "I abandoned any attempt at prayer," the old man continued, "until one day about four years ago my best friend said to me, Johnny, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here is what I suggest". "Sit down in a chair; place an empty chair in front of you, and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It's not spooky because he promised; "I'll be with you always." Then I just speak to him in the same way you're doing with me right now." "So, I tried it and I've liked it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I'm careful though, if my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she'd either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny farm." The minister was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old man to continue on the journey. Then he prayed with him, anointed him with oil, and returned to the church. Two nights later the daughter called to tell the minister that her daddy had died that afternoon. "Did he die in peace?" he asked. "Yes, and when I left the house about two o'clock, he called me over to his bedside and told me he loved me and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead. But there was something strange about his death. Apparently, just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on the chair beside the bed. What do you make of that?" The minister wiped a tear from his eye and said, "I wish we could all go like that". Just remember that the chair is never really "empty". No matter where we are, what we do, how we act, what we say, or whom we are with **HE IS ALWAYS WITH US!**

Submitted by:
Eva Smith





Thanks to all workers, shoppers, and givers, the year 2001 was a great year. Our gifts toward missions have included:

- * *Better Health of Cumberland County*
- * *Medical Benevolence Fund*
- * *Andean Rural Health Care*
- * *Hinton Rural Life Center*
- * *Salvation Army*
- * *WFNC Fan Club*
- * *UMCOR*
- * *Care Clinic*
- * *Samaritan's Purse*
- * *Methodist Home for Children*
- * *Argentina Mission (Rev. Mark Lykins)*
- * *Emergency Fund & Church Power Bill (monthly)*

In addition we purchased *Bibles* for the *Youth Bible Study Class*, helped with *Bible School* expenses, purchased *Blinds* for the Church Offices and Hallways, *Renovated Bathrooms (including handicapped)*, purchased *Office Equipment* and helped with *Parking Lot Expansion*.

None of this would have been possible without your support. *Thanks* for everything and a very special *thanks* to Lynwood Griffin, Troy Willoughby, Raymond Gray, Charlie Lucas and any others that helped replace the front door. It is great! **THANKS!!!**

Lee Anna Sproul, Chairperson
Mary Schneider, Co-Chairperson

ONE-BY-ONE

Praise the Lord...again and again and again!!! We are half-way through Session Three. We lose teachers, God replaces them. We lose students, God replaces them. We have needs, God takes care of them. Best of all, He knows where the program is going. We simply listen and do His bidding.

Other avenues for **ONE-BY-ONE** continue to open. We don't know exactly what he expects of us, but St. Matthew's seems to be right there, ready and willing to help.

We want to let everyone in our congregation know how very much we appreciate all that you do for this teaching mission. It is an humbling experience to see how much you care. There is someone who represents every area of our church who is actively involved. There are many more someone's who give materials, money and pats-on-the-back. We are thankful. We have achieved a great deal and have positively impacted many lives during our first three years.

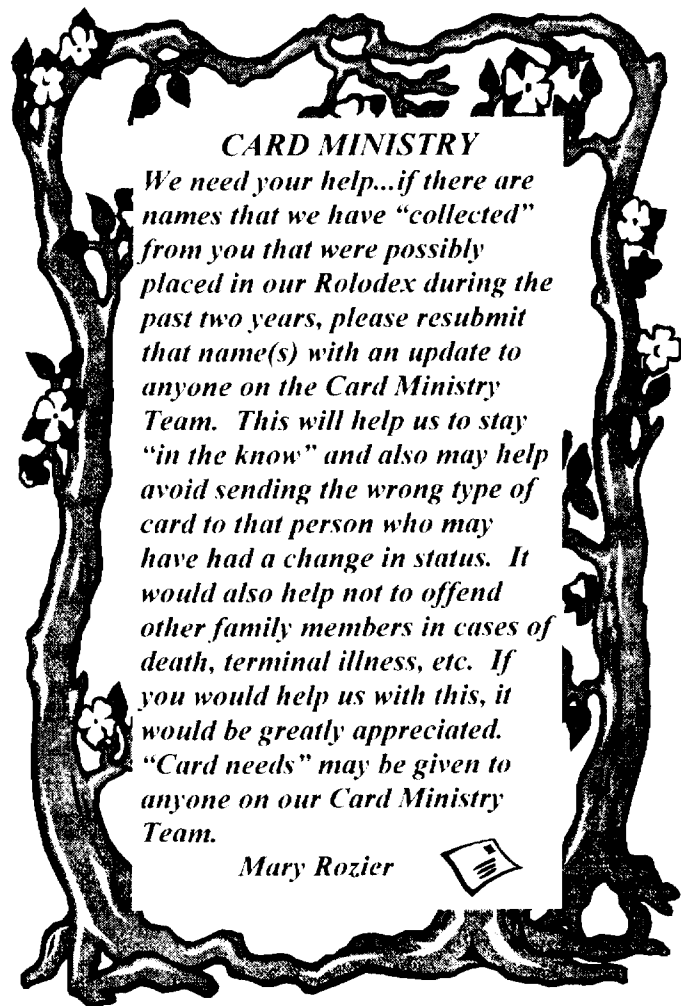
May God bless you all,
Amy



TO GOD'S TEENS:

Until now, usually either an individual or the whole group has written an article for the newsletter. Today, I need to take my turn. By the time you read this, we will have celebrated our **One-Year Birthday**. A journal, worthy of its own place in the History of St. Matthew's, has been kept of all our weekly meetings. The story that it tells so clearly shows how young people think. It includes how **Faith** and **Hope** lead to **Love**. It tells about how Love leads to Stewardship and to participation within our church and community. Mostly, out of God's Word comes active involvement. You are seeing this daily. God's Teens are at the beginning of your **Crest of Christianity**. You are at the peak of knowing you have been called by God to "do something." And you are making excellent progress. You all don't know where your quest will take you, but you are making your approach "full steam ahead." So much learning is taking place. So much love is being shared. And, as Heaven helps me, so many questions...God's Teens are the most special group with whom I have ever been blessed. So many times have I shed tears of happiness and gratitude. There have been so many more "**Thank you's**" to God. To be a part of this group feels like God's Greatest Reward. **G.T., thank you.**

With all my love,
Mrs. Amy



CARD MINISTRY

We need your help...if there are names that we have "collected" from you that were possibly placed in our Rolodex during the past two years, please resubmit that name(s) with an update to anyone on the Card Ministry Team. This will help us to stay "in the know" and also may help avoid sending the wrong type of card to that person who may have had a change in status. It would also help not to offend other family members in cases of death, terminal illness, etc. If you would help us with this, it would be greatly appreciated. "Card needs" may be given to anyone on our Card Ministry Team.

Mary Rozier





UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Thanks to the *United Methodist Men* for furnishing our "*Black-Eyed New Year's Dinner*" and a great big **thank you** goes out to *Pam Thompson, Lola Smith, Rebecca Ramirez* and *Ruth Caldwell* who did the serving. Working together makes both the *UMM* and *UMW* stronger organizations in serving our Church and our God.

We had our first dinner meeting of 2002 on January 7th and made a few adjustments in our budget. We voted to increase our contribution to *Samaritan's Purse* from \$50.00 to \$250.00 which would cover the *Shoe Box Ministry* if necessary. We increased our *Guest Speaker/Entertainment* expenditure by \$50.00 to make it \$100.00. We also made a \$200.00 increase for the *Emergency Fund*.

The United Methodist Women are sponsoring a **Love Offering** for the "**Methodist Home For Children**" on **Sunday, February 24th** instead of the "*Shopping at Food Lion*" percentage that is usually done in the Spring. Please be generous and support our children.

Other points discussed were needing some fresh ideas for our **Easter Card/Pamphlet Sale** or possibly eliminating that project for this year. If you have any suggestions, please share them with us. We do plan to continue the **Mother's Day Booklets**. The **Mother-Daughter Banquet** was set for **Saturday, May 4th**. More details to follow for our banquet.

Continue to pray for our work as UMW.

Mary Rozier, President UMW

RUTH-ETHEL SMITH CIRCLE

I'm sure you have noticed my 2002 is slow in getting started since there wasn't an article written for January.

Our Circle met January 9th in the fellowship hall and for our **February project**, we voted to buy **turbans** for the cancer patients at **Cape Fear Valley Hospital**. This year, we're looking forward to finding new ways of making a difference in someone's world.

Our next meeting is **February 13th** at 10:30 a.m. in the fellowship hall. **EVERYONE IS WELCOME!** God's Blessings to All!!


Catherine Morgan

NIGHT OWLS CIRCLE

The Night Owls met January 10th with 10 members present. After the opening prayer, Ruth Caldwell read the minutes and Karen Ogden gave the Treasurer's Report. We then took up money for our January Project which was to help the **Emergency Fund**. Mary Rozier gave a report on the General UMW. We then voted to take **J.W. Coon Elementary School** as our February Project. Betty Probst agreed to check with the teachers to find out what they needed. We got volunteers for Kitchen Clean-Up duty and our list of callers. Rebecca Ramirez gave the program and Linda Webb furnished refreshments.

Barbara Thompson, President

RECIPE OF THE MONTH "BANANA BREAD"

3/4 cup sugar		2 eggs
1/3 cup milk		1 tsp vanilla
1/2 tsp salt		2 cups all purpose flour
1/2 cup chopped nuts (if desired)		1 tsp baking soda
1/2 cup margarine or butter, softened		
1 cup (2 med.) mashed well-ripened bananas		

Heat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease bottom only of 9x5 or 8x4 inch loaf pan. In large bowl, beat sugar and margarine until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs. Add bananas, milk and vanilla, blend well. In small bowl, combine flour, nuts, baking soda and salt; mix well. Add to banana mixture; stir just until dry ingredients are moistened. Pour into greased pan. Bake at 350 degrees F. for 50-60 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool 5 minutes; remove from pan. Cool completely. Wrap tightly and store in refrigerator. Yield: 1 (16 slice) loaf.

UNITED METHODIST MEN

The United Methodist Men met on January 20th at 8:00 a.m. for its regular monthly Breakfast Meeting. There were **19** men present. We all enjoyed a good breakfast prepared by Dan Eberhardt and Jeff Anderson.

Some of the items of interest discussed were **New Bibles** in the Sanctuary, **Sweetheart Banquet**, and a **May Picnic**.

Dr. Hale lead our group in a discussion on outreach and getting Disciples For Christ. There are many who need our help. As Christian leaders, we individually and collectively need to reach out to others. Our responsibility doesn't lie with what we do; it lies with what we didn't do. How do we measure up?

The UMM have placed **96** new **Bibles** in the Sanctuary and Choir loft. These are easier to read, and we hope they are used. If you need one to be used elsewhere, please return it to its proper place. **Many thanks** to Calvin Rome who handled this project.

Dan Eberhardt is heading our "**Sweetheart Banquet**". If you are asked to help Dan, please do, as we need help setting up and serving the meal. The meal will consist of Steak, Baked Potato, Toss Salad, Bread, Dessert and Beverage. Reservation slips will be in the Bulletin, so please submit your reservation.

There is a plan for a "**Church-Wide Picnic**" in May after Doug Stone returns from his tour overseas. There will be more on this later. Yes, we will ask for some picnic items.

Head Usher for February is Raymond Gray. If you are asked to help, please do. If you are not asked and would like to help, let us know.

Respectively submitted,
Troy Willoughby, President UMM

AN INTERESTING THOUGHT!

It was advertised that the devil was going to put his tools up for sale. On the date of the sale, the tools were placed for public inspection, each being marked with its sale price. They were a treacherous lot of implements...**Hatred, Envy, Jealousy, Deceit, Lying, Pride**, and so on. Laid apart from the rest was a harmless looking tool, well worn and priced very high.

"What is the name of this tool?" asked one of the purchasers, pointing to it." "That is **Discouragement**," replied the devil. "Why have you priced it so high?" "Because it is more useful to me than the others. I can pry open and get inside a man's heart with that, when I cannot get near him with other tools. Once I get inside, I can make him do what I choose. It is badly worn because I use it on almost everyone since few people know it belongs to me."

-Author Unknown-

UNITED METHODIST GIVE \$10.4 MILLION FOR SEPTEMBER 11:

United Methodists have given more than **\$10 million** to the church's special offering in response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. More than **\$6.4 million** was raised in November alone for the special fund. By the end of November, gifts to the "**Love in the Midst of Tragedy**" fund totaled **\$10.4 million**. The church's response to the attacks is being channeled through (**UMCOR**), the denomination's relief and development agency. Contributions to the "**Love in the Midst of Tragedy**," as part of the denomination's general Advance special gifts program, are not subject to administrative or fund-raising costs. Such expenses are covered by the church structure, so **100 percent of Advance special donations go to the designated cause**. By the end of November, **UMCOR** had received a total of **\$22.3 million** through general Advance specials, including "**Love in the Midst of Tragedy**." **ST. MATTHEW'S CONTRIBUTED \$2,072.00 TO THIS CAUSE.**

AFGHANISTAN:

During the days of advent thousands of United Methodists from all **12 districts of the North Carolina Conference**, in partnership with **Stop Hunger Now**, collected **41,422 blankets** and over **\$84,000** for suffering refugees. It was an act of ministry that will make a difference. It was an act of ministry brought about by God's grace through the efforts of the community of faith, the face of God revealed through the action of love. **ST. MATTHEW'S CONTRIBUTED \$1,041.00 TO THIS CAUSE.**

UPCOMING EVENTS:

ALL MINISTRY TEAMS will meet **Sunday, February 24th** from **2:00 - 4:30 p.m.** for a **Ministry Training Orientation and Planning Session**. We will start with a general session in the fellowship hall, split into **Ministry Circles** and then into **Ministry Teams** to plan our major events for 2002. We will regroup in the fellowship hall to coordinate a church calendar. Copies of the new **Church Officers Team Leaders and Members** along with **Team Responsibilities** are on the table outside the Sanctuary.

FAITH SHARING WORKSHOP

with

Dr. Eddie Fox & Dr. George Morris

will be held

March 1-2, 2002

at

Methodist College

Dr. Eddie Fox is a published author, as well as the **World Director of Evangelism** for the **World Methodist Council** and the **Executive Director of the World Methodist Evangelism Institute**. **Dr. George Morris** is the **Dan and Lil Hankey Senior Professor of the World Evangelism Institute**. Any person who wants to know more about sharing their faith with others needs to attend. We should have **15-20 Youth and Adults** and members of our **Door Step Evangelism Team** attend.

SCHEDULE

Friday

4:45 pm - Registration begins

5:15-6:30 pm - Dinner

**7:00 pm - Evening Session: "Faith Sharing
Is God's Idea"**

9:00 pm - Session ends

Saturday

**9:00 am - Morning Session: "Using the
Faith Sharing New Testament"**

12:00 pm - Lunch

**1:00 pm - Afternoon Session: "How to Share
Your Faith Without Fear"**

4:00 pm - Session Ends

(Cost: \$10.00 per person. Each attendee will receive 2 days training, dinner on Friday, Lunch on Saturday, a Faith-Sharing Resource Kit and a Faith-Sharing New Testament. You can't beat the price!)

FEBRUARY

ST. MATTHEW'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

2002

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 Children's Choir – 9:30am YOUTH SUNDAY Haymount Youth Choir (Special Music) UMYF – 4:00pm	4 One-By-One – 7:00pm	5 Prayer Group – 7:00pm	6 Card Ministry-5pm WNA & B. Study-6:30pm Choir Practice-7:30pm	7	8	9
10 Children's Choir – 9:30am Lay Speaker Training 8:30am-6:30pm at Hope Mills UMC UMYF – 4:00pm	11 One-By-One – 7:00pm	12 Prayer Group – 7:00pm Trustees Ministry Team Mtg. – 7:30pm	13 Ruth-Ethel Smith Circle - 10:30 am Card Ministry-5pm Ash Wednesday Service – 6:30pm Choir Practice-7:30pm	14	15	16
17 Children's Choir – 9:30am UMYF – 4:00pm UMM Sweetheart Banquet – 6:00pm	18 President's Day OFFICE CLOSED NO One-By-One	19 Prayer Group – 7:00pm	20 Home Extensions-9:30am Card Ministry-5pm WNA & B.Study-6:30pm Choir Practice-7:30pm	21 Night Owls Circle-7pm	22	23
24 Children's Choir – 9:30am All Ministry Teams Mtg.-2:00-4:30pm UMYF – 4:00pm	25 One-By-One – 7:00pm	26 Prayer Group – 7:00pm	27 Card Ministry-5pm WNA & B.Study-6:30pm Choir Practice-7:30pm	28 Help'n Hands Senior Group – 11:00am		