



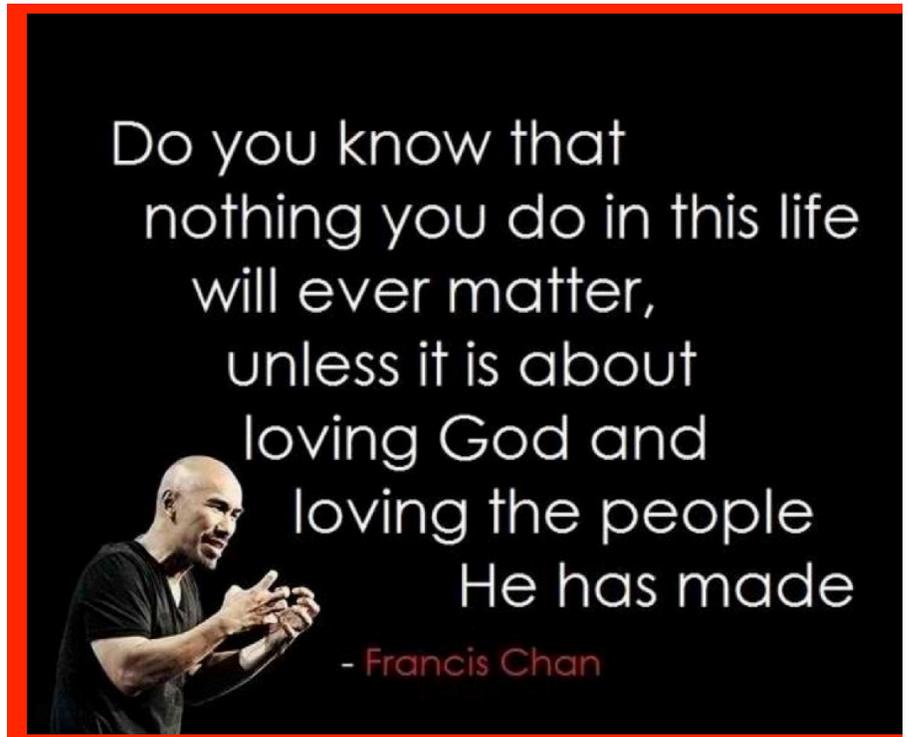
e - Votion

EVOTION FOR WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 3, 2014
And Information About Building Improvements/Painting Approved by Trustees

Dear Friends,

Today I am reading
Romans 13:8-14:

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another, has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet;" and any other commandment are summed up in this word. "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this, you know what time it is; how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.



It has never been easy to be poor. In today's world it may cost even more. It is easy to romanticize the poor--to generalize that people are poor because of the bad choices we make. And it is also easy to strip the poor of human dignity, to reduce us/them to be just objects to pity.

In the world today, people are discovering new and creative and different ways to strip the poor of human dignity. The "have-nots" are often subjected to harsher treatments and more costly fines than those who commit the same crimes who are wealthy. For example, in some states, those on trial are charged \$250 for a 12-juror trial. Can you believe that?

According to NPR, a Georgia man recently received a year in prison because he could not pay the fine for stealing a \$2 can of beer. In Alabama, those who are cited for running red lights and cannot pay the fines are handed over to privately funded probation companies. In Ferguson, Missouri (I know we don't even want to talk about Ferguson) city court routinely begins hearing cases 30 minutes

ahead of the posted schedule and issues warrants/additional fines for those not present when their case is called.

Jail time often isn't because of the severity of the crime but because of inability to pay the fine. :(

And Paul tells us that "the one who loves another has fulfilled the law" and "love does not wrong to a neighbor." If you read the New York times, you may have seen the op-ed that stated, "This new system.... creates a vicious circle: the poorer the defendants are, the longer it will take them to pay off the fines, fees, and charges; the more debt they accumulate, the longer they will remain on probation or in jail; and the more likely they are to be unemployable and to become recidivists."

Maybe all this suggests that justice is not blind, but has its eyes set on the bottom line.

I thought debtors prison was a relic from another age. Samuel Wesley, father of John Wesley spent some time in debtors' prison. Samuel was despised by the people of Epworth England because of his abrupt personality and lack of tact. I'm wondering if our good buddy John inherited some of those personality traits. He was sentenced to debtors' prison, leaving Susanna and the 10 surviving children at home. Eventually, he wrote and received a pardon from the Bishop of York.

In 1983, the Supreme Court of the US ruled that persons cannot be imprisoned for failure to pay fines.... but.... people are being incarcerated because they are too poor to pay fines, fees, or other garnishments. I'm trying to find the love for neighbor. :(

I first ran across this system of punishment in Sevier County. I discovered that some of my friends got in the court system and could not get out. By the time, they paid for arrest warrants, court expenses, probation costs, they could not survive. The result in some cases was a perpetual cycle of crime followed by debt followed by more crime. Many people did not ever get an opportunity to rise beyond poverty. It was heartbreaking. The church continually sought ways to creatively help persons get out of the system and turn their lives around. (TONIGHT at FIRST UMC you will hear one of my Gatlinburg friends tell his story...)

Paul says-- "Owe no one anything except to love one another." The love we experience from God in Jesus Christ propels us to serve our neighbor. The law under which we stand--God's law-- brings the liberating, joyful grace of God that calls us to love each other.

Love of neighbor is the fulfillment of what God expects from us. LOVE is the only debt we are required to repay. Isn't there a commercial out there that says, "What card is in your wallet?" As Christians, it's the LOVE CARD!!!

PLEASE PRAY:

- For Juanita Knight--John Collins' aunt
- For Linda and David Kornblum, friends of Brian Milby
- For Sabrina Hess' grandmother
- For Carrie Denny, and for her parents (David and Lyndell) who mean so much to Carrie in her recovery, but are also struggling with a very sick dog, Lucinda.
- For Jane Eddy
- For the crisis in the Middle East, which seems to be going on and on-- and those being affected by ISIS
- For those affected by the Ebola outbreak in Africa, particularly Liberia
- For our church and community

CALENDAR/ANNOUNCEMENTS ETC:

Just want to give a big THANK YOU to the church for the wonderful spirit in our midst. We have so many changes going on, and we are weathering those changes remarkably well! I'm so proud to be part of a church with the attitude of First! We are creating a positive vision for the future, and it is very exciting to watch!

I also want to provide regular updates (bear with me I will try my best to communicate effectively) on the ongoing work around the church. The Trustees are overseeing the work being done (from a distance since it is being done through volunteer labor, Praise God!) At last month's Trustee meeting, the painting projects were discussed and Serena Crowder was designated as the Trustee who will coordinate the work being done around the church.

So far the following painting has been done: (AT NO COST TO THE CHURCH)

- The third floor bathrooms in the Education Building
- The Fellowship Hall
- The little room off the connector in the old building (where the coffee pot always was) and it is now a waiting room for folks waiting to see the pastor or another staff member
- The hall going to the gym balcony, near the offices.
- Kathy Tidwell's office is in process, should be finished this week with new furniture being installed.
- Pastor's office
- Bathrooms on street level (outside Scripture study classroom and Questors room)
- Bathrooms on sanctuary level
- Narthex.
- Gym balcony

Currently, the floor on the gym balcony is being stripped, sanded, and refinished. The hope is to relocate the former coffee room to this space.

At last night's Trustee meeting the following actions were taken:

- *APPROVED an electrician bid to wire for 3 sconces in the Narthex. A subcommittee was appointed to bring a recommendation of fixtures to go in the Narthex.*
- *APPROVED raking the dirt outside the gym where the handicap hopefully will eventually be and plant grass until the handicap ramp can be completed. To be done by volunteers at a church work day in the near future.*
- *APPROVED repairing the wall in the ceramics room with insulation around the pipe and a door to access the cut off valve. This hopefully to be completed by volunteers.*
- *APPROVED coordinating a workday prior to Heritage Sunday.*
- *APPROVED moving forward on previous approval of IED purchase (the equipment that shocks the heart if someone is having a heart attack... don't know the real name of it)*
- *IF you want to know more, please don't hesitate to call me, or to come for a visit. In case you haven't noticed, I'm all about transparency. :) Also, if you are skilled in this kind of work and want to volunteer, we can accomplish a lot through use of our God-given talents.*

CALENDAR:

- Saturday Sept 6 Tree Street Yard Sale
- Sunday Sept 7 5:30 connections pillar
- Monday Sept 8 7 pm Worship Pillar
7 pm Buffalo Mountain Camp information meeting Cherokee UMC
- Tuesday Sept 9 Church Council

- Sunday Sept 14 Church picnic, Rotary Park
- Thursday Sept 18 Older Adult Gathering, Centenary UMC, Erwin
Communications Pillar
- Tuesday Sept 23 6:30 Leadership Pillar
- Saturday Sept 27, Fundraiser for International Christian Fellowship (David Gbaa's church). Let's come out and support David and his church as they seek to raise funds for a new building.
- Sunday September 28 UMW Sunday

"Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

St Francis of Assisi

Blessings,

Jane Taylor
First United Methodist Church
Johnson City TN