



OPEN HEARTS OPEN MINDS OPEN DOORS

April 23, 2008



From the Pastor's Pen

Following our Table Talk last week, Steve Tippens sent out these thoughtful words to the talkers. I asked him if I could use his words in my article for the newsletter, and graciously he said I could. He reflects on our need for spiritual fitness, especially as it relates to our ability to embrace all that God has created in our world.

Got to thinking today about fitness. We usually think of fitness in physical terms. More and more, I think of what we do on Tuesday mornings as exercise to achieve spiritual fitness. One particular exercise in the fitness routine that becomes more important the older we get is stretching. Stretching our minds and spirits pushes us beyond what we think of as our normal limits and invites new concepts, new understandings, and new experiences. I'm trying to stretch my mind and my spirit more as I get older. Seems that, as with our bodies, it's a healthy thing to do. So, thanks for allowing yourselves the opportunity and the challenge to engage in spiritual and intellectual stretching on Tuesday mornings.

In June, we are projected to have a new pastor, one of a different ethnicity than most members of the Blakemore family and of those of us who gather on Tuesday mornings. In the midst of a presidential campaign in which our choices include for the first time a female candidate and a mixed race candidate, it seems to me that Blakemore is being presented a timely opportunity to "crown our good with brotherhood" as we intentionally seek to put aside old hurts, old thinking, old prejudices that draw lines of separation in the human family, and see anew the unity and connectedness of all God's creation, even in the midst of such a brilliant rainbow of diversity of which we all are a part. Can there be unity in diversity? If not, is not humankind condemned forever to a peace-less existence? I would like to suggest to you that we have some meaningful and open conversation about racial attitudes in coming Table Talk sessions as preparation for the coming of our new pastor and possibly a U.S. President having African ancestry. I do not presume to set the agenda for our conversations, but I think it would fit the character of our group and our purpose to deal openly with the racism issue as a timely concern, as well as one that will be front and center for Blakemore just ahead. Please give me some feedback on this. I will not push the matter unless you are open to it. I would probably not suggest this if I were not ready and willing to share openly and honestly with you my own struggles with racism in my life and how I have chosen to deal with it as one who aspires to follow Christ.

It was apparent to me this morning that we are comfortable with each other, to the extent that we can share with each other our personal struggles in the confidence that support is there for us and that we have more in common than not. That's a good feeling.

Have a good walk this week, and try to avoid the ruts, particularly the spiritual ones. They can be hard on souls.

Steve Tippens

*You are cordially invited to a
Celebration of Ministry
for
Rev. Shirley Majors-Jones*

Sunday, May 4 beginning at 2 pm

*Community Care Fellowship and
Nancy Webb Kelly United Methodist Church
511 South 8th Street
Nashville, TN 37206*

*The program will take place in the sanctuary of Nancy Webb Kelly
followed by a reception in the dining room of Community Care Fellowship.*

*Donations for Rev. Jones may be made to the Community Care Fellowship.
A money tree for Rev. Jones will also be available.*