

From Pastor Karen's Desk – January 2010

A Growing List

We made a list recently, Jerry and Susan and Leo and I. Without much difficulty, our list quickly had eight names on it. Eight people who are out of work, some of them for over a year. Eight families where one spouse is carrying twice the burden of supporting the family, and one spouse finds themselves with a double weight of self-doubt and worry. And the frightening thing is, if we could list eight names in a few moments, we know that they are just the tip of the iceberg, and there are many more of you who are unemployed or underemployed in this comatose economy, who have chosen to be private and silent about your search for work.

How can we help?

That's the question we were asking. See, when we mapped out this year, wanting to help FUMC focus on the Four Core Practices of the Church, we had long ago thought that "Caring" was what we would turn to after Christmas. And the people who kept coming to mind in need of care were those struggling with work. It is time to do something. But what? We know we do not have the resources in the church budget to feed these families or pay their mortgages. We have already cut staff positions in the church, and can't afford to hire these people to work for us. We probably can't offer resume-writing or interview-coaching skills as well as many of the community resources out there. So, in the November joint meeting of the Program Committees of our congregation, we began to ask a different question.

What do we have to offer that no one else can?

Prayer and Care topped our list. A God to turn to, and people to lift us up. And so that is where we are beginning. On January 24, our Healing Service will be aimed at lifting up the spirits of those who look for work. We plan to hear from some in our congregation who have gone through a period of joblessness, or are in the midst of it now, stories of how they have gotten through. Already in our Worship Design Team meeting, we were hearing stories of what scriptures individuals have hung onto, and actions people took to stay strong. We want to share those with you. And we will pray. We will not single anyone out or read names aloud (the point is to comfort, not make people squirm), but we will be praying for those searching for new work. If you know someone who could use these stories or prayers, please invite them on January 24.

We also are looking for ways to bring people in the job search together in a supportive group. The details on this are still being worked out, but we will be sharing with you as the month goes on.