



# Jacob's Ladder



A NEWSLETTER OF OXFORD FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Rev. Sapada Thomas, Pastor

Volume 18, Number 8, August 2018



## The Pastor's Point

by  
**Rev. Sapada Thomas**

(I generally preach a 3-point message during my sermons on Sunday morning. However, I would like to present a 1-point devotional in our monthly newsletter entitled "The Pastor's Point" for spiritual encouragement and food for thought.)

### "Religion vs. Relationship"

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

—MATTHEW 15: 8

Religion refers to ways in which humans relate to the divine (a presence or force behind, beyond, or pervading sensible reality). Simply put, religion is how we relate to God. Our society's ideology of "Religion" in the 21st Century is that of external movements. In other words, we become a religious person by participating in the outward rituals of Christianity. That is, attending church, singing songs, lifting our hands in worship, giving money, etc. However, there is a reason why we call it "Christ'anity". It's more than just participating in external movements, but there is most importantly an internal method, that is, a Relationship. Religion without a relationship with Christ manifest itself into empty rituals. Jesus spoke about white wash tombs. These were tombs that were white washed on the outside to create beautiful looking tombs for the eye, but regardless of how clean the tomb looked on the outside,

there were still dead, dry bones on the inside. When we have religion without a relationship we are no more than beautiful tombs on the outside, that are dead on the inside.

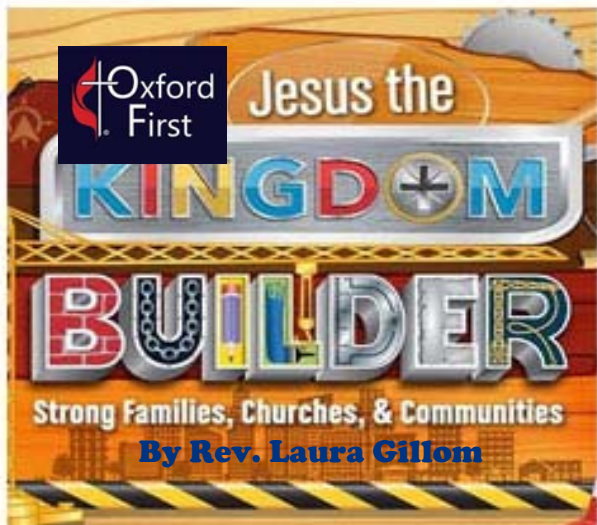
The Pharisees were more concerned about religion acts, outward acts to God, than they were a relationship WITH God. We too, are overcome with this Pharisee ideology. We come to church, lift our hands in worship, honor God with our lips, but our hearts are far from God because we have no relationship with God. In the words of my late grandmother, "It's like we 'court' Jesus on Sundays, break up with him on Mondays, and then take him back on Sundays again." God desires a Committed Relationship with him rather than a Courting Religionship. Because of our relationship with God, we should long to daily fellowship with him, we should desire to constantly talk to him, we

should continuously press to be in his presence. This keeps our hearts internally in right relationship with God.

**The Pastor's Point:** "It's good to be a religious person, but it's better to be a religious person who has a personal relationship with God."

**Prayer:** *God, forgive us for not keeping a constant personal relationship with you. It is our desire to love you, live for you, and serve you with our whole being. As we honor you with our lips, please help us keep our hearts close to you in a society that puts you last. In Christ's name we pray.*

**Amen**



Bayou, MS, Black Wall Street in Tulsa, OK, Hayti, NC, and Arlington, VA, which were built after the emancipation. A revisit to these towns gave all of us a black history lesson. We learned that our people were successful entrepreneurs. We also learned that having an education is an advantage. Property and wealth can be taken away, but no one can take away your education.

This is the second year we were able to sponsor our own VBS at Oxford First. The youth were very helpful in preparing for the event. They were excited to use their gifts and talents to draw, paint and make props. We were blessed to have four classes: Primary (ages 3-7), 'Tweens (ages 8-12), Teens (ages 13-19), and Adults (20 and up). Our average attendance was 50.

Special thanks to Pastor Thomas for his support, our teachers (Min. Gracie Spearman, Sis. Terry Vaughn, Bro. Courtland Barnes, Sis. Evelyn Smith, Sis. Amber Mister, Sis. Marilyn Barnes, Sis. Minnie Milliner), arts & crafts leaders (Sis. Debra McGlawn and Sis. Angela Smith), the kitchen and clean-up crews, and transportation (Min. Tressie Johnson).

Throughout the week, we learned how to Build on Jesus, Build Strong Families, Skills to Build, and Building Tomorrow Today. We learned that when we have Jesus as the center of the family and church, we can go out into the community and be a witness to those who don't know Jesus. We also revisited historically black towns including Mound



# UPCOMING EVENTS



**August 1** - Bible Study at 6:00PM on the Book of EPHESIANS

**August 3** - First day of School - Lafayette County School System

**August 5** - Sunday School at 9:30 AM; Worship at 11:00AM (with a Celebration of Holy Communion). All men meeting immediately following worship

**August 6** - Administration Council Meeting at 6:30 PM

**August 8 - Soup for Seniors at 11:00AM**

**August 8** - Bible Study at 6:00PM on the Book of EPHESIANS

**August 8** - First day of School - City of Oxford School System

**August 12** - Sunday School at 9:30AM; Worship at 11:00AM

**August 15** - No Bible Study

**August 15-17** - Pastor Thomas in revival at Union Grove U.M.C. Nettleton, MS at 7:00PM nightly. Oxford First Mass Choir sings Friday Night. The church is asked to support on Friday night also.

**August 19** - Sunday School at 9:30AM; Worship at 11:00AM

**August 22** - Bible Study at 6:00PM on the Book of EPHESIANS

**August 26** - Sunday School at 9:30AM; Worship at 11:00AM

**August 29** - Bible Study at 6:00PM on the Book of EPHESIANS

\*\*If anyone has any events going on that they would like to have added to our monthly church calendar please send the information to Terry Vaughn at tv48@yahoo.com

## A Joyful Noise unto The Lord



On Sunday, July 29, 2018, Oxford First UMC's Mass Choir had the congregation

rocking as they belted out beautiful, inspiring songs of Praise to the Lord.

Oxford  
First

600 Molly Barr Rd.  
Oxford, MS 38655

# Summer Revival

**August 27 - August 29**  
**7:00 PM each night**

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**Jacob's Ladder**  
P.O. Box 277  
Oxford, MS 38655

## Speakers for the week:

Monday Night



Rev. Terry Wortham  
Pastor  
South Hopewell MBC

Tuesday Night



Rev. Gregg Wax  
Pastor  
Beverly & Salem UMC

Wednesday Night



Rev. Bobby E. Dailey,  
Elder/Senior Pastor  
Providence & Buford UMC

### Revival Theme:

## "Experiencing the POWER of the Gospel"

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes."

—ROMANS 1:16

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