



Jacob's Ladder



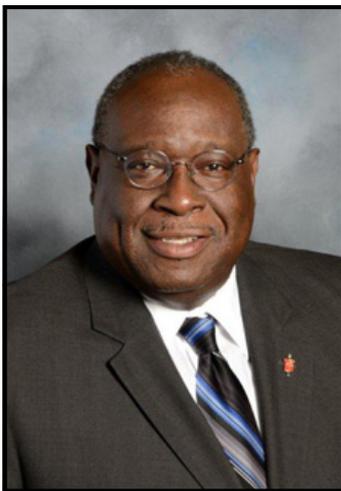
A NEWSLETTER OF BURNS UNITED METHODIST AND HAMMITT HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCHES

Rev. Christopher C. Diggs, Pastor

Volume 14, Number 12, December 2014

Ferguson Reflections

by Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr.



I am extremely prayerful before writing about anything to you. My desire is to be led by the Holy Spirit so that what I write or say reflects God's desire for God's people and not my own. In the wake of the Ferguson, Missouri

tragedy, I decided not to write about it when it first happened. I think most of us write or speak without taking the whole community into our hearts, and that is the work of the Holy Spirit and time. I received from my friend, Charlie Gray, a reflection from Ben Watson (a tight end with the New Orleans Saints) on the Ferguson tragedy that best reflects my journey of seeking to listen to my heart, the heart of godly people who cannot hear each other and the whispers and longings of the Holy Spirit, which we affectionately call **The POWER** in the Mississippi

Conference. Read it below with your heart and mind open to **The POWER**.

While I was preparing to play Monday Night Football, the news broke about the Ferguson Decision. After trying to figure out how I felt, I decided to write it down. Here are my thoughts:

I'M ANGRY because the stories of injustice that have been passed down for generations seem to be continuing before our very eyes.

I'M FRUSTRATED because pop culture, music and movies glorify these types of police citizen altercations and promote an invincible attitude that continues to get young men killed in real life, away from safety of movie sets and music studios.

I'M FEARFUL because in the back of my mind I know that although I'm a law abiding citizen I could still be looked upon as a "threat" to those who don't know me. So, I will continue to have to go the extra mile to earn the benefit of the doubt.

I'M EMBARRASSED because the looting,

violent protests and law breaking only confirm and in the minds of many, validate the stereotypes and thus the inferior treatment.

I'M SAD because another young life was lost from his family. The racial divide has widened, a community is in shambles, accusations, insensitivity hurt and hatred are boiling over and we may never know the truth about what happened that day.

I'M SYMPATHETIC because I wasn't there so I don't know exactly what happened. Maybe Darren Wilson acted within his rights and duty as an officer of the law and killed Michael Brown in self-defense like any of us would in the circumstance. Now, he has to fear the backlash against himself and his loved ones when he was only doing his job. What a horrible thing to endure. OR, maybe he provoked Michael and ignited the series of events that led to him eventually murdering the young man to prove a point.

I'M OFFENDED because of the insulting comments I've seen that are not only insensitive but dismissive to the painful experiences of others.

I'M CONFUSED because I don't know why it's so hard to obey a policeman. You will not win!!! And I don't know why some policemen abuse their power. Power is a responsibility, not a weapon to brandish and lord over the populace.

I'M INTROSPECTIVE because sometimes I want to take "our" side without looking at the facts in situations like these. Sometimes I feel like it's us against them. Sometimes I'm just as prejudiced as people I point fingers at.

And that's not right. How can I look at white skin and make assumptions but not want assumptions made about me? That's not right.

I'M HOPELESS because I've lived long enough to expect things like this to continue to happen. I'm not surprised and at some point my little children are going to inherit the weight of being a minority and all that it entails.

I'M HOPEFUL because I know that while we still have race issues in America, we enjoy a much different normal than those of our parents and grandparents. I see it in my personal relationships with teammates, friends and mentors. And it's a beautiful thing.

I'M ENCOURAGED because ultimately the problem is not a SKIN problem, it is a SIN problem. SIN is the reason we rebel against authority. SIN is the reason we abuse our authority. SIN is the reason we are racist, prejudiced and lie to cover for our own. SIN is the reason we riot, loot and burn. BUT I'M ENCOURAGED because God has provided a solution for sin through his son Jesus and with it, a transformed heart and mind. One that's capable of looking past the outward and seeing what's truly important in every human being. The cure for the Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice and Eric Garner tragedies is not education or exposure. It's the Gospel. So, finally, I'M ENCOURAGED because the Gospel gives mankind hope.

NOTE: Reprinted from an email from Bishop James E. Swanson, Sr., Resident Bishop, The Mississippi Area of The United Methodist Church



Enough Is Enough!

by Clarence H. Franklin

If the Church of today does not recapture the spirit of the early Church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the 20th [and 21st] century.

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Letter from a Birmingham Jail

The recent grand jury decisions not to indict the policemen in the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO and Eric Garner in New York City is disheartening, but sadly, not unexpected. We have certainly seen this movie before, many times. Unarmed men of color killed by police officers. This time, many African-American athletes and leaders have demonstrated and spoken out. The job of the Police is to “protect and serve” our communities, all our communities. Enough is enough. Clearly, it’s time for this to stop. This is not just, and injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. How can this be accomplished you ask? It’s time for the Church, the Black church and particularly the white church to step up and speak out about these injustices. Our white brothers and sisters need to be as outraged as we are. To do nothing and to say nothing is to silently condone and endorse these police actions. The church has a responsibility to expose injustice where ever and whenever it is found, or it really can become irrelevant as Dr. King mentioned in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail. I certainly do not believe that all policemen are of the mindset as these we have been talking about lately. I do not believe that all policemen see the black community as an enemy that they have to protect the rest of the society from. I also do not believe that all black folk see the police

as an occupying force charged with keeping them in their place. I certainly do not believe that. Policemen have a hard relatively unappreciated job. I would not want to do it. There are good policemen as well as bad. It is the same in any occupation or any aspect of society. But these good policemen also have to start speaking out when these atrocities happen. You can no longer continue to join ranks with your brothers whom you know are in the wrong and protect them. Somehow the black community and the police have to come together and work hand in hand.

If we are going to continue to call ourselves “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all,” then we have to find our moral compass, and that begins with the church. Racial reconciliation has to be more than just “lip service.” So who are the church? We are the church! It does not matter whether we are black, white, brown, yellow, or red. WE ARE THE CHURCH! As the church, we are the hands of God in this earth realm. If His work is not being done, that’s means that we are not doing it. As the church, as the body of Christ, we need to bring the communities and the police together, so that they can see that underneath it all, we are all the same, the children of God.

Soup For Seniors



Burns UMC Senior Ministry called "SOUP for SENIORS" is back, held normally on the 1st & 3rd Wednesday in each month. However, for the month of December, it will be held on Wednesday, December 10, 2014. Come for a study of God's word, fellowship and yummy soup. Sponsors are Ann Cancer & Janis Blake.

Jacob's Ladder is a monthly publication of Burns United Methodist Church and Hammitt Hill United Methodist Church. EDITOR/PUBLISHER: Clarence H. Franklin. ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Niler P. Franklin. All rights reserved. Announcements or articles should be submitted to Rev. Christopher C. Diggs or submitted by e-mail directly to Franklin at chfrank@panola.com. Visit Burns website at www.BurnsUMC.org and click on the Monthly Newsletter link to view previous month's issues of *Jacob's Ladder*.

Page 4

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

Free GED Classes

Tuesday and Thursday night at 7 p.m.

Burns UMC provides **Free GED Preparation Classes** and **Tutoring** for those who wish to earn their **High School Equivalency Diploma**. The 2014 GED is computer based and has new test items. Burns has computers to help students be prepared when taking the test. Barbara Wortham facilitates the class each **Tuesday and Thursday night at 7:00 P.M.** If you know someone who would like to participate, please contact Barbara at 607-2636 or at barbaraw10@excite.com.

Thank you Barbara and your team for your faithful and dedicated service!

Jacob's Ladder

PLACE
STAMP
HERE