

The Dog Days of Summer

*by Tom Wilkinson, Vice President, Development
Florida United Methodist Foundation
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Have you ever wondered why July and August are called the “dog days of summer?” The answer is a bit of astronomy trivia. Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, is in the constellation *Canis Major*, the big dog. It is most prominent in the southern night sky in January for stargazers in our part of the world. During the summer months Sirius rises and sets with the sun, and ancient astronomers thought it added its own heat to that of the sun, thus the hot, sultry “dog days” of mid-summer.

According to today’s *New York Times*, “A common theory holds that hot weather is more tolerable than cold. This fails to account for something meteorologists never refer to: Call it the Grumpy Factor, a phenomenon tied to humidity.” Well, if they’re grumpy in New York, we should be downright grouchy here in Florida.

The other “dog days” definition that Webster provides is “a period of stagnation or inactivity.” Does that describe your church at this time of year? Or perhaps you?

In many of our churches, attendance and giving fall off in the dog days. The attendance side of the equation is understandable as many vacationing Floridians flee the heat northward to the mountains or the lake. (I recall from my childhood the practice of bringing home a bulletin from a church we visited on vacation, a credit toward the coveted perfect attendance certificate. Does anyone still do that?)

But even though we may be absent, the work of the church continues. There are people in our communities who are still hungry and homeless. Hopelessness does not take the summer off. There is still someone searching for meaning and purpose that only the love of God in Jesus Christ can provide. The Holy Spirit does not take the summer off.

And as a year-round enterprise, the church still needs to pay salaries, electric bills and all the other expenses that don’t take a holiday.

“Pay it Forward” was the title of a movie from a few years back. How about that as a practical response to our financial commitment to the church? If we’re going to be away for a Sunday or two, how about paying our tithe, pledge or gift ahead of time?

Commitment never takes a holiday, not even during the dog days.

As the stewardship voice of the Florida Conference, the Foundation is ready to help you, your family and your church with anything related to comprehensive Christian stewardship. For more information please call, click or write us at 1-800-282-8011, extension 106; www.fumf.org; or PO Box 3549, Lakeland, FL 33802.