



# Almena UMC Newsletter

August/September 2008  
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[www.almenaumc.com](http://www.almenaumc.com)

In The Message, Eugene Peterson writes the Philippians 4:6-7 scripture like this:

"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life"

Admittedly, Paul's instruction not to fret seems a little unrealistic. Our anxiety has risen as the reality of gas prices, fewer jobs, home foreclosures, and rising food costs have settled in to our weekly routines. Left unchallenged, the tide of anxiety threatens to swamp us totally. When anxiety drives us, we tend to see the world darkly, and spread the gloom to others. We begin to make our decisions based upon the fear of scarcity. Hyper focusing on problems and shortages, we neglect to remember the long history of God's faithfulness and goodness.

But we in Christ's church have been given a hope that can sustain us in the worst of storms of anxiety. We can focus on our covenant-keeping God who is for us, and not against us. We can focus on Jehovah-jireh, "Provider God" who can see us through any point of crisis or anxiety. We can lift our hands and praise God through our circumstance.

As we have studied the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm this summer, we have taken courage in the restorative power available through unwavering trust in our Lord. As we conclude that series August 10<sup>th</sup>, let me leave you with a few more New Testament points to ponder....

Paul challenges us to "Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns." In other words, we can turn our anxiety into prayer, and then, "a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life" Phil. 4:6-7

If you can relate to these words, then I invite you to try turning your anxiety into prayer, perhaps your prayer could go something like this:

Lord God, I confess to you my anxiety over \_\_\_\_\_. I place it squarely in your hands. Please let me know Lord, if there is some action you want me to take in regard to my challenge. I trust your leading, I am thankful for your goodness, and I offer myself to you. In the strong name of Jesus, thank you and Amen.

On top of prayer, reading and meditating on scripture can also inform our attitudes and color the way we see the world. This summer won't you take up the habit of handing your troubles to the Lord and trusting his Holy Spirit will guide you.

John Wesley wrote,

"Whether you like it or not, read and pray daily.

It is for your life; there is no other way, else you will be a trifler all your days.

Do justice to your own soul; give it time and means to grow.

Do not starve yourself any longer."

Pastor Donna

## **Missions** by Lois Richardson

As you may recall, our church has committed to be in a covenant relationship with our missionary, Paul Webster. That means we have agreed to help support him for a three year period at the rate of \$5 per member. I take great pleasure in telling you that in June we collected over \$800 for his support. Praise God! Thank you to all who made this possible. And don't forget that Paul is currently back in the states visiting his supporting churches. He will be at our church for lunch and a power point program at 12:00 on Thursday, September 25. This is a great opportunity to meet and talk with him. So mark your calendar. I'm sure that those who come will really be blessed.

Our mission support for August will go again to the WMU Wesley Foundation, a vital outreach to students on the campus at Western. This financially struggling project is in Lane 6. The organization provides chances for students to worship, connect with each other and have fellowship. The members also give back as the Wesley Foundation provides service opportunities for students to reach into the Kalamazoo Community "through the Gospel Mission and the Rickman House. For the 2008-09 school year, the Wesley Foundation is looking to partner with Stockwell UMC to minister to youth in the Edison neighborhood on Saturday nights. An alternative spring break mission trip has been a tradition as part of the ministry. In 2009, an international trip will be offered as well as a domestic mission." As you can see, this ministry has a positive influence in the lives of the students.

In September our Lane 4 mission project will be a new project for us. It falls under HUNGER/RELIEF/UMCOR and is called Haiti Solar Ovens where the power from the sun is used to cook food and pasteurize water. This project empowers people through self-help. Our donations for the ovens provide free (solar) fuel. Solar radiation easily passes through the transparent window glazing, heat does not, so heat is trapped within the insulated box cooker. "Deforestation is a root cause of hunger/poverty. In Haiti, 50 million trees are cut and only 3 million planted each year. People in developing countries can spend as much on fuel to cook food as on buying food. Solar Ovens pasteurize drinking water to help reduce life-threatening diarrhea/dehydration, thus lowering infant/childhood mortality rates (13% in Haiti) from water-borne diseases. Solar Ovens are smokeless, and can reduce air pollution and frequent cases of lung and eye disease among women and children who tend cooking fires." The Haiti Solar Oven project follows the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission motto of "Christian Love in Action".

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*August 11-14, 2008 (Mon-Thurs)  
6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.*

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Galatians 5:22-23

***Come Join the FUN!***

See our online calendar for these dates and find the link to the registration form!

**Sunday School**



**Catch the EXCITEMENT!**

**Sunday School**

It's not too early to be looking to the start of Sunday School on...

***September 14, 2008  
at 9:45 a.m.***

If you have ideas on adult classes, want to be part of selecting curriculum, or are interested in teaching a class, please see Elizabeth Gordy. Thank you.

For newsletter from Jennifer B:

Please join us for a benefit auction and dinner to raise money for 11-month-old Logan Stout. A dear friend of Jennifer's friend's nephew has recently been diagnosed with Hurler's Syndrome. It's a rare genetic disease in which a person can't break down long chains of sugar molecules.

Without treatment, Logan could experience severe mental retardation, vision loss, heart problems, and eventually heart failure. Life expectancy would be 5-10 years.

Logan is currently at Duke University Medical center undergoing Chemotherapy and a Cord Blood Transfusion. Each transfusion of this type ranges from \$500,000- \$1,000,000! The family has insurance (with deductibles) but still needs support. Although he will always have Hurler's Syndrome, we are optimistic that he will live a long, happy life.

If you cannot attend, but would like to donate, please visit

**[www.loganjackstout.com](http://www.loganjackstout.com)**

**[www.caringbridge.org/visit/loganstout](http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/loganstout)**

for Logan's updates.

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Our miracle baby, Julia, will have a 2nd birthday party after church on the 17th. Please join us for lunch and cake! No gifts necessary. Hope to see you there!

-Thanks, Mike, Jenn, and Julia

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News from the Treasurer:

The audit is complete. Thank you to Rick C. for doing our audit for us.

Treasury notes from the General Conference : The General Conference approved a \$642 million denominational spending plan for the next four years (2009-2012) to support four areas of focus for the immediate future. 1. Developing principled Christian Leaders. 2. Starting new congregations and renewing existing ones. 3. Engaging in ministries with the poor. 4. Improving global health, especially attacking the killer diseases of poverty. For the 2009 budget the CFA recommends ministry shares percentage of 12.6% of our 2007 reported income. This year in 2008 we are paying 12.7% of our 2006 income.

Your gifts make a difference, and again thank you for all you do and for your faithful support of our shared mission and ministry.

Sue

# **GET READY for ALPHA AT ALMENA - Fall 2008**

## **Celebration Dinner Tues. Sept. 9, 6 – 8:30 pm**

This evening serves two purposes: it is a reunion for those who completed the Alpha course last spring, and it is an introductory event for those considering taking Alpha. It includes dinner and a 35 min. talk titled "Christianity: Untrue, Boring and Irrelevant?" It offers a sample of what Alpha evenings will be like, and provides a question and answer session to help people decide if the course is right for them to take. Please sign up for yourself and any guests you will bring so we can prepare enough food. Sign up for this dinner on the bulletin board, or contact Pastor at [pastor@almeanumc.com](mailto:pastor@almeanumc.com) or 329-1560.

## **The Alpha Course begins Tues. Sept. 13, 6-9 pm**

### **and runs every Tues. till Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>**

Course Registration forms available in church hallway. Return to Pastor Donna, or the "Alpha Mailbox" located on the lower tier of church mailboxes, just inside the front door.

### **What is ALPHA?**

**Alpha is a practical introduction to the Christian faith. ALPHA stands for...**

**A-** anyone can come. All are welcome

**L-** Learning & Laughter. Join others in an informal atmosphere.

**P-** Pasta (or other food). Each weekly session begins with dinner.

**H-** Helping one another. Teaching time and small group discussion.

**A-** Ask anything. Here's your chance to ask questions.

Alpha is for anyone in the community or in the church: individuals interested in investigating Christianity, newcomers to the church, those who have doubts about their faith, or those who want to simply brush up on the basics of Christianity. No matter who you are the Alpha course offers an exciting avenue to explore life's most perplexing questions. The 10 week course is filled with tasty meals, thought-provoking talks, and great small group discussions.

### **What to Expect at a typical Alpha session....**

**Dinner** The evening begins with an informal dinner. Don't worry if you are a few minutes late!

**Talk** Each presentation addresses a key issue relating to Christianity. The Alpha course presents a DVD series with speaker Nicky Gumbel. Topics include: Who Is Jesus? Why Did Jesus Die? How Can I Be Sure of My Faith? Why and How Do I Pray? Why and How Should I Read the Bible? How Does God Guide Us? Who Is the Holy Spirit? How Can I Resist Evil? Why and How Should We Tell Others? Does God Heal Today? What About the Church?

### **Dessert and Small Groups**

Guests often find the small group session to be the most valuable and rewarding time of the whole course. The sessions offer an opportunity to ask questions, express opinions, and to discuss the topic of the evening. Small groups also provide an opportunity to get to know others and share ideas in a relaxed and non-threatening environment.