



Almena UMC Newsletter

December 2010 and January 2011
269-668-2811
www.almenaumc.com

12-2-2010

Dear Friends in Christ,

With December upon us it is time to reflect on the year just ending. In the following pages you will read reports from many committee chairpersons. As your pastor, I want to share with you a just a few of the things that stand out to me from 2010.

On the challenge side, it's been a year of great stress for many in our church family. Long term unemployment, significant health crises, ongoing relationship struggles, and uncertainty about the future have kept us humble. At the same time, our Lord and our community of faith have been a source of strength and healing through tough times.

One of my personal highlights was tied to a personal lowlight: After church was over on the Sunday in April when we announced my husband Steve had cancer, a spontaneous circle of friends held hands in the sanctuary. The circle grew and grew until it filled the sanctuary. Someone pulled me in from the Narthex just in time to link in as a precious prayer for healing and strength was lifted to the Lord. I count that experience as a great blessing of 2010, and I thank this church family for carrying us in prayer and encouragement. Last Friday we celebrated that Steve's chemo port was removed and we give God the glory for his continued healing.

In 2010 Almena had many visitors in search of a church home. They found a warm welcome here and many have stayed and are growing in faith. The Lord lifted up a handful of new leaders in the second half of the year, and we head into 2011 with a well rounded lay leadership team.

Many other good things are happening at Almena UMC as we seek to fulfill our purpose of reaching out to others, connecting them to Christ, nurturing them in their faith, and sending them into the world to be and to build disciples of Christ. While we always have room for improvement and growth, I am grateful to be part of a church that takes our task seriously and is both receiving seekers and sending disciples.

In this season of Advent, may you be blessed with a sense of God's care as well as a nudge towards obedience to what he is calling you to do in the New Year.

Serving together,
Pastor Donna

Monday Morning Bible Study Fellowship Group

By Shirley Huffman

The year of 2010 has been productive and fun for our Bible Study group. We have people coming from Paw Paw, Gobles, Kendall and Almena. What a wonderful way to meet new friends. Our group has grown this year, having 15 to 22 in attendance. This year we have had more men attend and they have added "food for thought" to our group. What a blessing they have been.

In the beginning of this year a questionnaire was sent to attendees, and the consensus of the group was to study three subjects, which we have covered through the year and as follows:

1. What does the Bible say about eternal life, heaven and afterlife while defining the words Body, Soul and Spirit? At this time we searched for the meaning of the word "kingdom."
2. How does God's Word help us daily to live, as Christ teaches in Scripture?
3. Having an Old Testament story told once a month by various volunteers and then holding a group discussion.

We enjoy coffee and tea while pondering these various subjects.

The group has appointed people to do kitchen duties and oversee the packing of Christmas baskets. Sue Tinkler is our Secretary. Rita Ambs is our Contact Person and Membership Recorder and Sam Gordy is our Devotional Leader.

We started our year by gathering at Jan's Restaurant in Gobles on August 9 for a luncheon and organizational meeting. In October we invited Anita Rumery to come and play piano so we could learn Scripture songs from our new scripture song booklet. We enjoyed not only the singing but also the conversation about past days. At each study we also take time to sing, being accompanied by Carole Rickli on piano. This month we will be doing a short study of Jesus' birth up to when he reaches age 12 and taken from the Harmony of the Gospels. December 13 we will pack Christmas baskets for shut-ins and deliver them. Afterwards we will have lunch and a small Christmas celebration at a local restaurant. In March 2011 we hope to have another Mystery outing. Our group has enjoyed six such trips in the past.

Everyone is invited to join our group and we are non-denominational. We meet at 10:00~11:30 Monday mornings in our Fellowship Hall and we especially invite beginner students, so we can learn together. See you there!



Almena UMC Christian Education Annual Report

The position of Christian Education chairperson was left vacant for the 2009-2010 year. Nonetheless, through the hard work of dedicated teachers and oversight by Pastor Donna, the program remained strong with average attendance at 36. All ages enjoyed a contest early in the year to rename our classes from 'Sunday School' to 'Pathfinders'. We began providing childcare during the Pathfinders hour to make classes more accessible for families with young children and grandchildren.

Children in classes K – 2nd and 3rd – 5th grade studied stories from the Bible and learned to use their Bibles. They presented a post-Christmas skit and sang songs in worship. The youth studied God's truths from stories in the Old and New Testaments using many types of activities such as drama, art, writing and discussion. A segment on Christian Symbols was taught with a field trip to Kalamazoo UMC to view their amazing stained glass windows. A Youth Group was started under the leadership of Greg Rozeveld and Dave Field. Six to eight kids in middle school and high school meet monthly for a time of learning and fun.

Two adult classes studied books of the Old and New Testaments. A summer study for adults, 'Written in the Stars', looked to the heavens in an interesting study of God's redemption story in the constellations of the zodiac.

Shirley Huffman, our long time children's teacher retired this year. Her faithfulness, enthusiasm and knowledge will be greatly missed. Christmas and Easter intergenerational events were held and enjoyed by all. A new member class was offered. The Monday morning bible study and fellowship group continued during the school year.

We look forward to God's leading in the 2010-2011 school year. Jackie Coons has accepted the position of Christian Education chairperson, freeing Pastor Donna's time for other important ministries. We welcome a new teacher, Julie Richardson, who has taken over the 3rd – 5th grade class. The two adult classes have made great choices for the Fall, studying the book of John and the person of Joseph respectively. The youth and K – 2nd grade classes will continue with the same curriculums as last year. A Pathfinder Christmas event is being planned for December 19 and will include carol singing, a quiz bowl and breakfast.

Thank you to those whose faithfulness and hard work provide opportunities for all ages to grow closer to God through Christian education at Almena UMC.

News from the Trustee's:

Since our last newsletter we have:

1. updated all our fire safety equipment
2. purchased a new, larger fire extinguisher for the kitchen
3. replaced batteries in the exit lights
4. removed the outdoor playground equipment because of the safety and huge liability risk.
5. installed safety non-slip treads on our outside steps
6. fixed the tiles in the entryway so that water, ice, and snow cannot do any more damage
7. cleaned up the furnace room under the Sanctuary
8. replaced the old furnace (as it was burning out of the firebox and the chimney was 99.9%blocked, it was deemed "unsafe to run" and was shutdown during the inspection) with a 95%efficient dual-stage Lennox furnace
9. installed new filters and have safety checked all the furnaces
10. had a kitchen inspection on December 2nd and passed with flying colors
11. water tests have been done and sent into Lansing
12. had a required State inspection test done on the elevator. We are not going to renew our contract with Otis Elevator as they have raised their prices to the point that they are not cost-effective anymore and everything done is an extra cost with a labor rate of \$90.00 an hour. We received bids from three companies and have decided to go with McNally Elevator Co. The new contract will cover the quarterly inspection, all parts and labor if something breaks and all required State tests will be included
13. we now have Comcast phone/internet/basic cable hooked up and we are wireless-ready
14. office is set up for use with a computer donated by Jerry, Donna and Steve Keyte
15. our library is settled downstairs and the room is all cleaned
16. the wall in the fellowship hall has been fixed and painted
17. the porch to the Sanctuary door has also been painted along with the railings to the steps of the current entry doors
18. Donna's office carpet has been cleaned and is looking fresh
19. renewed our snowplowing contract with Lantz for the 2010-2011 winter season.

I want to thank all the members of the Trustee committee, Gordon Conolly and Dan Naylor for all their hard work this year. I would not be able to get everything done without my husband, Dan and all the helping hands of these willing people and the support of you the congregation of this church.

Sincerely,
Sue Tinkler



Christmas Worship Schedule

Advent is a great time to bring a friend to church. Why not invite someone you know to share as we tell the story and meaning of Christ's birth this Advent or Christmas season? Childcare provided.

Dec. 12 11am Worship followed by Potluck with Christmas Carol Sing-along

Dec. 19 11am Worship (no communion)

Dec. 24 7pm Christmas Eve Worship with Communion and Candlelight

Dec. 26 11am Worship (no Pathfinders classes)

Almena UMC **Snow Closings** will be posted on Channel 3 WWMT News; also at their website wwmt.com, click on weather and school closings; and (when possible) on our website, almenaumc.com. Phone calls will **not** be made except by request. See Pastor Donna



Pathfinders Year End Schedule



12-19-10 9:45am Everyone is invited to an Intergenerational Pathfinders Party. Our planning team is preparing a fun and educational time. Visitors and newcomers are welcome to join in the celebration.

12-26-10 No Pathfinder Classes

1-2-2011 9:45 Regular Pathfinder classes

Eleanor's Pantry 221 Drew St. in Paw Paw
Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10-1.
Tuesday and Thursday from 3-6.
Closed Christmas Eve and New Years Eve.
Then starting Jan. 5 the hours will be
Monday and Friday 10-1,
Tues, Weds, and Thurs 3-6



Church Conference HappeNings

On November 3rd our Charge Conference was held, with district superintendent Rev. Neil Davis presiding. Twenty two members attended. Lay Leadership for 2011 was elected. A Membership report was received. After 5 additions and 7 subtractions, adult membership stands at 91. (More new members will be received next week.) Average Worship attendance is 80, and average Pathfinders Education attendance is 34. The Conference approved Sam Gordy to become a Certified Candidate for Ministry.

2011 Administrative Board - Almena UMC

Ad Board Chairperson	Sue Tinkler
Recording Secretary	Jan Conner
Pastor	Donna Keyte
Lay Leader	(Open)
Lay Member to Annual Conf.	Janet Swigart
Staff Parish Relations Chairperson	Greg Rozeveld
Finance Chairperson	Tom Richardson
Treasurer	Barb Alden
Finance Secretary	Diane Ross
Trustee Chairperson	Jerry Lentz
Worship Chairperson	Dave Field
Education Chairperson	Jackie Coons
Outreach Ministries	(Open)
Mission Chairperson	Janet Swigart
Elder Member at Large	Shirley Huffman
Memorial Comm. Rep.	Marcia Williams
Membership Secretary	Linda Naylor

Please keep Elizabeth Gordy and her mission team based out of the Breckenridge UMC (Heartland District) in prayer as they travel to Petionville, Haiti. The team leaves Monday Jan. 24, 2011 and returns February 3rd. They are scheduled to work on a building project of a church or school.



~~~2010 ALMENA UMC MISSIONS REPORT~~~

The heart for **MISSIONS** remains strong at Almena UMC! Each month, we support at least one project with our Mission offerings. Almena is proud to be a 'Six-Lane Church' within the UMC denomination. This means we specifically choose to support at least one project in each of the areas listed below, in addition to paying our apportionments.

Six Lanes:

- Lane One: Missionary Salary support
- Lane Two: World Projects
- Lane Three: Regional Projects
- Lane Four: Hunger Relief/UMCOR (United Methodist Committee On Relief)
- Lane Five: Racial Ethnic Local Churches
- Lane Six: Local Conference Ministries

In 2010, we continued to support several projects which were special and vital to us, but reached out to some new ones to whom we felt especially called.

Continuing Projects:

Angel Tree – Christmas gifts for children of Van Buren County families in need (25 children in 2010 through Department of Human Services)

CROP Walk – Eastern Van Buren County. Raises money for projects in over 70 countries; 10% stays locally. We had 13 walkers and raised \$1,037 this year.

Decatur Clothing Center – Donated several boxes and large bags of winter clothing. All clothing is given away free.

OGHS – 'One Great Hour of Sharing' annual offering to help cover the administrative costs of 1000 United Methodist projects in more than 100 countries, so that every dollar we send for every project reaches its intended mission and ministry.

Paul Webster - We have a Covenant Relationship with Paul Webster, a missionary in northwest Zambia. This means we have pledged to support Paul with an agreed-upon financial amount each year for 5 years. Paul's project is called the '**Mujila Falls Agricultural Research and Training Center**', and we also support this separately.

Thanksgiving Boxes – Large boxes of donated/purchased turkeys and other food, and \$25 gift cards, for families in need for Thanksgiving Day and beyond (4 boxes through our church and 10 through Bethany Christian Services)

United Christian Services – Paw Paw area Christian association. UCC developed Eleanor's Pantry in 2009, and provides many kinds of assistance to individuals and families in the greater Paw Paw area.

Wesley Foundation at WMU – United Methodist ministry for WMU, KVCC, and Kalamazoo College students. We also provided a Sunday evening meal for approximately 30 students. The Wesley Praise Band and Pastor Lisa led us in worship once this fall.

New:

Church of all Nations – Kentwood, MI. Begun as a Korean UMC but is now considered multi-ethnic.

Haiti School Water Project – Simple individual filtration devices for desperately needed clean water

Harbor Harvest Urban Ministries – Benton Harbor. A West Michigan Conference community development ministry of after school programs and age-appropriate summer camps for city children.

Heifer Project – Providing farm animals/poultry/rabbits/trees to people around the world to give them ‘a hand up instead of a handout’.

Red Bird Mission – Helps provide medical and dental clinics, a Senior Citizens Center, the Red Bird Mission School, and many other projects to over 14,000 people in the Appalachian Mountains in Kentucky.

Russian Mission Initiative – Also includes the Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. A partnership among annual conferences, congregations, and institutions committed to church growth and development in this region

Sylvia’s Place – Shelter in Allegan for women and children survivors of domestic abuse.

Special Offerings or Projects:

Camp New Day – Almena quilters group made and sent 12 quilts and blankets to this United Methodist Camp for children of incarcerated parents.

Eleanor’s Pantry in Paw Paw – We had 2 to 5 volunteers monthly.

Elizabeth Gordy’s mission trip to Haiti (Jan. 2011) – Provided financial help, and are collecting items to send for the people, or tools for work projects. Almena Quilters made many beautiful, lightweight dresses for girls.

Habitat for Humanity – We sent 5 workers for food booth fundraiser at VBC Fair in July.

Haiti earthquake – Special offering, and 33 ‘Survival Kits’

Pakistan floods – Special offering

Thank you, Church, for your amazing love and support in 2010!

Respectfully submitted,
Janet Swigart
Missions Chairperson
jlswigart@aol.com
657-7741

MISSION UPDATES

Thank you to everyone who donated food, cardboard boxes, money, and their time to making our **Thanksgiving Boxes** project such a success. We were able to provide 14 individuals or families with a turkey, a pie, and all the good food for a complete Thanksgiving Dinner, and more. We also included a \$25 Gift Card, an aluminum roasting pan, and a roasting bag. The people at Bethany were so thankful that they could call upon us this year and that we were able to respond so abundantly. Four of the 14 boxes were delivered locally.

I especially want to thank Bea Ellis for the lovely flower arrangements for each box, and Marcia Williams, Sue and Dan Tinkler, Linda and Dan Naylor, and Todd Harmon for their great help in planning, shopping, and delivering. It is a big project for Almena, but together as a congregation we are able to help so many.

DECEMBER 2010 AND JANUARY 2011 MISSIONS

We have **three missions** for **December** this year. Money collected each week in the globes or by donations in your weekly envelope offering will go to **United Christian Services (UCS)** in Paw Paw. UCS is funded by donations from many local churches, with funds used to help those in emergency need of gas money, rent, utilities, home heating fuel, medicine, etc.

Our Christmas Eve offering is yet to be decided. This is left open purposely until it is almost Christmas, instead of deciding a year in advance. This way we can be open if a special need arises at this special time of year.

Our third opportunity to give to others this Christmas season is through the **Angel Tree Project**. We will have 25 'angel tags' representing 25 children from Van Buren County, aged 1 to 16 years of age. Each tag lists what each child wants for Christmas. *Thank you* in advance to everyone who will choose to provide a gift for a child this year. Gifts should range from \$15 - \$20 and be brought to the church by Dec. 12, if at all possible. Please do not wrap the gift, but it is important attach the original angel tag to it.

Our **January Mission** collection money will again go to support our covenant relationship with missionary Paul Webster in northwest Zambia. We have pledged to give \$5 per member of our congregation. Paul's agricultural project is called **Mujila Falls Agricultural Research and Training Center**, and he has been there for several years, working with the local people to help them learn to farm and provide food and a small income for themselves.

I want to thank everyone who helped this year with our missions and special projects, whether by working, contributing, or praying, and a special thanks to our Mission Team. I believe we demonstrate that as a small church, we can make an impact in our own communities and around the world, but it takes us **all** to be involved. May God continue to bless us so that we may provide for His people everywhere. I look forward to serving with you as your Mission Chairperson again in 2011.

Janet Swigart



Worship Update

Dave Field, Worship Chairperson

Here at Almena UMC, we've had a very spirit-filled season discovering many ways to praise and serve our mighty God. Pastor Donna led us with sermon series "Leading from the Heart" and "Making Love Last a Lifetime". The series "Christianity's Family Tree" touched on different denominations, but found the commonalities to keep us all rooted in Christ. Her sermon series on "When Bad Things Happen" touched on suffering. I couldn't help but think what some of our members have been going through this year. But I've been a witness to their faith, which only makes me stronger in mine. Another highlight has been being able to receive communion every other Sunday.

Our worship music is somewhat diversified depending on which Sundays you attend, and depending who is leading, be it Jo and Carol, Rich and Angela, Dave and Laura, or Lauren and the Choir. And we can't forget the Wesley Foundation Praise Band.

We participated in a Community Good Friday Service in Paw Paw this past spring. Our leadership team went to Cornerstone Church for the "No End in Sight" seminar. We continue to go quarterly to the Lawton nursing homes to sing and lead worship (10 years strong!). Our Alpha program was a great spirit boost for Joe, Sam, and I. More of our Church body is becoming involved within these church walls, filling roles where God has called them to be. We also had our 2nd Community "Free" Dinner, which was well attended. Let us continue to grow and go where Christ leads us.