



Almena UMC

Newsletter

April and May, 2010
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www.almenaumc.com

4-1-2010

Greetings Friends!

With Easter upon us, we are grateful to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord! Every Sunday is a celebration of Christ's victory over darkness and death, but today and next Sunday we are especially focused on the hope and joy of the resurrection. Next Sunday, April 11, we will have our second Holy Humor Sunday event. Let me share with you a little background.

In church history, especially in the Orthodox Church, the Sunday after Easter has been a day of great joy and fun times. Practical jokes, funny stories, and feasting all add to the feel of celebration. Too often the church takes itself too seriously, but real humor can help us come to grips with our humanity and our limitations. A little chuckle here and there will surely help us all out.

One of the reasons humans laugh is to release tension over things that we're holding in our mind that don't seem to make sense. They are incongruent. So for instance, in the telling of a joke it seems a story line is going along just fine, and then all of a sudden there is a twist or punch line that makes it ironic or funny, and if we get it, we laugh.

There is much humor in the bible. Early on we heard laughter when God told old Abraham and Sara they would have a baby, that wasn't at all what they would have expected. She was old enough to be a great grandma. Yet in their minds, they were still holding God's promise of offspring. When God revealed how that would work out; boy, Sara busted a gut over that. When indeed their son was born a year later, they named him Isaac, which means laughter.

So at Easter time, the great surprise we can rejoice and laugh about is that Jesus had the last laugh on all the dark forces represented by the crucifixion. Death did not do what it usually does – shut people down permanently. Instead, Jesus rose from the grave, giving us all hope and power for a forgiven and better future.

In spite of economic down-turns, lost jobs, struggling relationships, poor health and all the other bad news of our days, we have reason to be confident for our future. God had the last laugh on the devil when he raised Jesus from the dead. I hope to hear lots of laughter today and next week, and I pray that God hears that as a joyful noise to his glory.

Keep coming to church, be faithful in your practice of holy habits, and bring your friends along. There is good news to be shared here. We are not perfect people, but God is not done with us yet. Join in our journey towards healing and hope in Christ's name.

Following Holy Humor Sunday, we will begin a new sermon series on Healthy Communities.

With Joy,

Pastor Donna

Missions

Our **April mission** offerings will go to **Red Bird Mission** in Beverly, Kentucky (Lane 3, Regional Project). We have supported them in the past, but not recently. The Mission, begun in 1921, helps over 14,000 Appalachians every year to know the love of Christ. It provides medical and dental clinics, community outreach, economic opportunities, housing improvement, a community store, elderly housing apartments, a Senior Citizen's Center, and the Red Bird Mission School. The 'Craft Marketing Program' provides economic opportunity for hundreds of crafts persons within a 60-mile radius of the Mission. The Program purchases the crafts directly from the artisans and markets them locally, online, and at Appalachian Craft Fairs hosted by churches throughout the U.S. The Mission helps the artisans to manage money and inventory.

The 'Work Camp' is a year-round work opportunity for volunteers in mission and service-minded groups. It provides home repair for low-income community residents and maintenance for Mission buildings and grounds. Some examples of work projects are roof replacement, small room additions, painting, building porches or ramps, and grounds keeping. Other projects include cutting Campbell's soup UPC's, office work, craft and community store helpers, and recycling. In addition to their mission opportunities, participants grow spiritually and gain a personal understanding of mission. Evenings are spent in Christian fellowship and learning about all the various ministries of Red Bird Mission.

"Red Bird Mission, guided by Jesus Christ, empowers individuals and advocates justice by providing spiritual, educational, health, and community outreach ministries." (Find out more at rbmission.org.)



The **May mission** offerings will go to Harbor Harvest Urban Ministries (HHUM) in Benton Harbor (Lane 5), a Conference project for community development. HHUM has 60 students enrolled in school year programs. I recently had the pleasure to attend a workshop presented by the Executive Director, the Rev. Sandra Douglas, and discovered that she is a very positive, dynamic leader whose passion is education.

"The mission of the Harbor Harvest Urban Ministries is to involve it's member churches, their congregations, and other volunteers in extending the loving and caring ministry of Jesus Christ to the needy through meeting their immediate physical, emotional, and spiritual needs while prayerfully working to change those conditions and attitudes in individuals, community, and society which create human need." To fulfill their mission, HHUM provides separate mentoring programs for 6th Grade boys and girls and other programs. The 'Peace Partners Mentoring Program' is an after-school program for ages K-3rd grade. Students get one-on-one tutoring twice a week in math and reading, or whatever their school teachers suggest they need help in.

The 'Imani Youth Group' is an after-school program for 4th and 5th grade students. They meet twice weekly to study and discuss health and issues in their community and different ways to change them.

The 'Developing Young Community Leaders' program emphasizes social skills, academics, and community organization. The participants are 7th and 8th graders who choose an issue in Benton Harbor they would like to see improved. The 2010 project is a local city park. The team will learn how the Benton Harbor government operates, attend city commission meetings, write letters, and receive exposure to various government officials. The students will learn that it's possible for them to become involved and have a positive impact on their community.

The 'Summer Exploration Program' (SEP) is an eight-week enrichment program (June 14 – Aug. 6) that will combine educational enhancement, recreation, creativity, and community exploration for 62 youth that will enter grades K-6 in September, 2010. Many volunteers are needed for this summer program. You can serve one day, 8 hours, or an entire week. Please let me know if you are interested in serving as a volunteer.

For more information on HHUM or to see the six outcomes they hope to achieve in the summer program, check them out on Facebook or at www.hhum.comcastbiz.net.

CROP WALK - Sunday April 25 - WEAR RED!

Mark your calendar! The **28th Eastern Van Buren County CROP Walk** will be held Sunday, April 25th at 2:00 p.m., beginning and ending at the Paw Paw United Methodist Church on Red Arrow Highway, across from the Middle School. Registration begins at 1:00 p.m. Almena had seven walkers last year, raising \$1,374.75. We would like to have at least 10 walkers this year. Can we do it?

'**CROP**' stands for 'Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty'. This year, the money raised is more important than ever for hungry and hurting people around the world and in our local community. The **CROP Walk**, a program of Church World Service, raises pledge money to help stop hunger in over 70 countries. Walks are held all over the U.S. throughout the year, with one quarter of the funds raised staying in the local communities to help fund food pantries.

Our local **CROP Walk** is about 3 miles, and winds through downtown Paw Paw, past the wineries, and through a couple of the more scenic areas. It is a fairly easy walk, with no big hills or muddy fields to cross. Families with strollers and wagons are welcome. **We invite new walkers, and everyone who walked last year to turn out again.** It is always a fun time and allows us to chat, catch up, and get to know each other better.

If you prefer not to walk but still want to help, you may pledge a donation to any of our walkers, or volunteer to help the day of the **Walk**. One or two volunteers are desired from each church (contact me to volunteer).

Again this year on the day of the **Walk**, donations of specific items will be collected for local migrant workers. Workers must wait three days to two weeks before they can obtain social service help. The food donated helps them to sustain themselves until they have work and/or aid. Items can be brought to church any time between now and April 25th. If you would like to contribute food, it is important to provide only the items listed below. (Refrigeration is not always available, so provide only the 8 oz. size of tomato sauce.) The items are:

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| White flour – Plain, not cake or self-rising | Salt |
| Bags of white rice – Not instant or brown | Hand soap |
| Bags of pinto beans – Not canned | Laundry soap |
| 8 oz. cans of tomato sauce | Toilet paper |
| Lard/shortening/oil | |

I will be available after church in the Fellowship Hall on April 11th and April 18th for you to sign up and collect your pledge envelope. Note: If you are unable to walk on April 25th, I will be happy to organize a mini-**CROP Walk** in Almena at a day and time convenient for you. We don't want anyone excluded that wants to participate.

Movie Night! Plan a mid-week family outing! On Wednesday evening, April 21, The Strand Theater in Paw Paw will show the animated movie, '**How to Train Your Dragon.**' Half of the proceeds will go to the CROP Walk.

CROP Hunger Walk Demographics

- 68% are over 18, average age is 33.5.
- About two-thirds are women.
- 64% of CROP Hunger Walkers over age 18 have a college or advanced degree. Half are professionally employed in their communities.
- Half are CROP Hunger Walking for their second, third, fourth, or more time.
- 73% of participants say fighting hunger locally and globally is their key reason for taking part.
- 53% say the CROP Hunger Walk is the only fund-raising marathon-type activity in which they participate.
- Walkers get about 95% of their sponsors from their place of worship, family, neighborhood and workplace.

Thank you for your continued prayers and generous gifts for missions. If you have questions regarding any of the missions we support or would like to be on the Missions Committee, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Janet Swigart
Missions Chairperson
jlswigart@aol.com

News from Bea and Tom

We are planning for planting time at Ellis's on CR 652 just north off Almena Rd.~~~ Rozeveld's are planning another squash garden this summer at Ellis's There is plenty of room for companion "patches". If we got "Green" enough we could plant and freeze corn and beans for the Fall Supper. "Fresh from Our Garden to You" would be a good advertisement. A "Farmers Market" is in the planning stages at the Township Hall. Maybe some of you would like to take part in that. And there's your own table to think of. Let Ellis's know if you are interested in a garden patch. Plus there are lots of empty fields in the area/community that could be tilled.

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The Spartan labels have passed the 500 mark already. Keep 'em coming'. That's 1/4 way to our 2000!

## **Paw Paw Community Chorus Spring Concert**

The Paw Paw Community Chorus, sponsored by the Paw Paw High School Choirs, will present its Tenth Annual Spring Concert on Sunday, May 2nd, 4 p.m., at the Paw Paw High School Performing Arts Center located at 30609 Red Arrow Highway, Paw Paw. The chorus, under the direction of Theresa Vaughn and accompanied on piano by Lisa Gardner, will perform a variety of musical selections including "Homeward Bound," "Ain't Misbehavin'," "You'll Never Walk Alone," "Appalachian Celebration," "Steppin' Out On Broadway," and "Gershwin Showcase." We hope you will be able to attend this free concert.

Below is an article about the work of the Wesley Foundation campus ministry that Almena UMC supports. We will be taking a supper to them in early April. If anyone has interest in donating to Wesley's Capital Campaign for building upgrades, please contact our Mission Chair, Janet Swigart 657-7741.

Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo  
The United Methodist Campus Ministry!

Over seventy students are active at the Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo, participating in Worship, Outreach, and Small Groups.

Average worship attendance at The EDGE (Earth Defying God Experience) Thursday nights at 9:00 pm is 35-40, providing an alternative to campus parties.

Spring break mission trips to Washington D. C. and Nicaragua provided a way for 37 team members to be in ministry

Each week a group of students provides hot coffee and cocoa to students passing by the front steps of the building as a way to offer God's love and radical outreach.

Small groups and Bible studies offered at various times throughout the week include;  
Kappa Phi, Women's Service Organization  
MOSAIC Covenant Leadership Group  
Social Justice League  
Prayer Group  
Beginnings Bible Study

These and other groups, like back packing and praise band offer opportunities for everyone to find a place to belong and grow in God.

Sunday night meals have been and continue to be a "family tradition", serving home cooked meals for an open time of fellowship.

In January 2010 The Wesley Foundation launched the "Widening the Welcome" Capitol Campaign to raise funds that will enable the ministry to be in a fully accessible energy efficient building.

Wesley Foundation Vision  
"to be an authentic, transforming Christ-centered community"

Thank you for supporting your United Methodist Campus Ministry!