



Almena UMC
Newsletter

Summer 2010
269-668-2811
www.almenaumc.com

Missions

Our **June mission** offerings will go the Church of All Nations in Kentwood, Michigan (Lane 5, Racial Ethnic Local Churches). This church began as a Korean UMC but is now considered multi-ethnic. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find information on the congregation and its ministries to share with you at this time, but I hope you will join me in supporting them nevertheless throughout the month of June.

The **July mission** offerings will go The Russia Initiative (Lane 2, World Project). The Russia Initiative, which also includes the Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, is a partnership among annual conferences, congregations, and institutions committed to church growth and development in that region. The initiative began in the winter of 1991-92 and its primary purpose was to deliver food to Russia's Moscow Region. It was later expanded to include the re-establishment of Methodism in the former Soviet Union. The Eurasia Annual Conference was established in 1997 and encompasses Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Below are some excerpts from articles at the website (new.gbgm-umc.org/work/initiatives/russia).

The cries of hunger were deafening during the Russian famine of 1921. On the city streets of Petrograd, now St. Petersburg, abandoned children huddled like discarded rags. Past the outskirts of town, peasants swallowed handfuls of clay to fill their bellies. The dead were stacked in shallow graves.

In the midst of a brutal winter, with a heavy wrap gathered around her slight shoulders, Sister Anna Eklund became a familiar figure standing in the middle of a sleigh loaded with provisions donated by Methodists overseas. At her side was Pastor Oskar Pöeld. Though they had little to eat themselves, the two Methodists delivered food and pastoral care throughout the city. Eklund herself would bury 18 among the millions who died of hunger.

This story of devotion to Wesleyan faith is but one chapter of a Methodist history that is being reclaimed during the centennial (2009) of the official birth of Methodism in Russia. Before the

church was slowly suffocated by labor camps, murder, and other forms of persecution in the Soviet era, there was a vital movement that left its mark in Methodist annals. United Methodists live by the simple edict to (in part) "do good in all the places we can." That is what Methodists in Russia have been doing for more than a century, from the early missionaries who braved brutal Russian winters and a repressive communist government to deliver food to famine victims, to pastors and church workers today awakening new generations to a faith that could not be extinguished.

To step into a United Methodist Church in Russia is to experience the epitome of tenacity. Daily, these congregations face adversity from a society that is indifferent to religion, a government that relishes red tape, and persecution by a state-sponsored church. The Russian Orthodox Church is the official denomination of Russia. United Methodists, along with other Protestants, are seen as cults populated by crackpots. There is a lot of suspicion against everything that is not Orthodox and traditionally Russian. "Protestants will brainwash you. They will take away your apartments, take away your children, so be careful." This is all in the back of the minds of Russian people when they hear (the word) Protestant.

Being a new democracy has led the people to focus too much on acquiring status, e.g., a nice car, beautiful clothes, or the latest cell phone. Many people are much more materialistic even than in western countries. The latest generation of United Methodist leaders navigates this materialistic and suspicious environment. Many come from generations of "unbelievers." Some suffer the disdain of family members who can't understand the desire to pursue a "cultish" life that promises little salary and tremendous difficulty. Yet, our brothers and sisters in Russia continually strive to move beyond these obstacles and seek new ways of being understood, accepted, and trusted.

There are many social outreach programs supported by Russian United Methodists. In St. Petersburg, the Rev. Rauza Landorf, pastor of Grace United Methodist Church, welcomes nearly 100 children each weekday to her after-school program. Many of these children live in such volatile circumstances they would rather sleep on the streets than go home to parents who value drugs and alcohol more than their own offspring. Abuse of drugs and alcohol manifests itself in orphanages filled with children suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome and an average life expectancy of less than 60 years for Russian men.

As she provides a loving and empowering environment for the children, Landorf is witnessing the transformation of the children into tomorrow's leaders. "We can't allow this generation to wander around in the desert like the Jews for 40 years," she says.

Some of the children have brought their parents to the church. Others have taken leadership roles in worship. Yet some still cling to fallacies about Protestant practices. One boy said, "You are probably feeding us to get our organs for transplants. It is impossible that you simply love us."

Please help us to show our love in July, and keep our brothers and sisters in your prayers for their small churches struggling to be born and grow in a changing culture and time.

CROP WALK UPDATE

The **28th Eastern Van Buren County CROP Walk** was held Sunday, April 25th. We started walking in the rain, but by about half-way through, we took down our umbrellas and enjoyed the walk. We had 13 walkers and raised \$1,037, with Lois Richardson raising the most, \$290! Twenty-five percent of the total Walk proceeds will remain in our local community. Thank you to all the walkers and to those who supported us with their pledges. We look forward to even more walkers from Almena next year!

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
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PATHFINDERS

MIDDLER'S CLASS ROUNDUP

Teacher, Shirley Huffman

May 16 - Classmates of the Pathfinders 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades concluded their Sunday school year lessons with a trip through the fields to the cemetery to honor past church members who were responsible for establishing our church.

After a short history lesson that told of the beginnings of our church in 1864 and its steeple dedication that took place in 1869, the class placed a flower on Mr. Teed's gravesite in thanks for his dedication in helping to build our yet-standing sanctuary.

The children enjoyed the hand pump and the outdoor privy, pieces of history few remember. After a ride along the perimeter of the Almena Township property, the group stopped at the Township Shelter to have a snack and short bible lesson on Proverbs, Chapter 3 and 4, teaching the importance of Wisdom.

On the last Pathfinder day, the students celebrated the birthdays that took place throughout the year and later joined with the other classes that walked in the nearby fields to send up happy face balloons with our Pathfinder name and phone number. Both days were beautiful and rewarding. Everyone had a great time. 9

Class members: Hope Roseveld, Jakob Rickli, Tim Gill, Ashley May, Mallory DeMott, Kate Gill and two visitors.

Written In the Stars

"Written in the Stars" is a summer Bible study that all are welcome to attend from 8:45 - 9:45 Sunday mornings, beginning June 6th. Child care for all ages will be available during this class. Interested youth are also invited to attend.

Genesis 1:4 God said "Let bright lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. They will be signs to mark off the seasons, days and years."

The stars are a sign to us as the wise men used them in Matthew 2:2 "Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We have seen his star as it arose and we have come to worship him."

Psalms 19:1-4 The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display his marvelous craftsmanship. Day after day, they continue to speak, night after night, they make Him known. They speak without a sound or a word; their voice is silent in the skies, yet their message has gone out to all the Earth, and their words to all the world.

It is through the ancient Mazzaroth (constellations) that the sky speaks to us of the glory of God and His plan of redemption for His people. Join us as we learn together that God placed the stars and named the stars for us to learn about Him.

If you have any questions about this class, please contact Deidre Sweet. Thank you!

Library Corner

Check out our newest addition "Unthinkable" by Scott Rigsby. 9 seconds. That's how long it took for Scott Rigsby's life to come crashing down around him. 16 hours, 42 minutes, 46 seconds. That's how long it took for Scott Rigsby to make history, (from the back cover of the book). This is a true story of the first double amputee to complete the world-famous Hawaiian Ironman Triathlon. Scott's faith was the one constant in his life through realization that God had a greater plan for his life.

We have many titles in our library collection just waiting for someone to check out. Take a look, and you just might find something to interest you.

If you would like us to consider some titles for addition to our collection, see Chris Robbins or Pastor Donna.

To the 2009-2010 Choir Members:

I can't believe our season has finished already. This year seemed to pass so much quicker than the first year - probably because of the fun we've been having. I wanted to formerly thank you for such a splendid season. It was a sincere pleasure serving as your choir director and facing your smiling faces each week. You made great strides as a choir and I couldn't be prouder. I can't wait for next year. Keep singing over the summer!

Lauren Sorensen

Almena Farmers' Market

Every Saturday June 5-September 25, 2010 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Almena Farmers' Market is here to serve this community by providing locally grown, fresh, high quality produce and products, and to provide local farmers, producers and artisans with an economic outlet within the community. Held at the Almena Township Hall Pavilion. For more information contact AlmenaFarmersMarket@yahoo.com or call 269-267-9310. Web address is www.almenatownship.net

90+ Birthday Celebration

White Oaks will be hosting a 90+ birthday luncheon, free of charge, to celebrate our 90+ community residents. The luncheon will be held at White Oaks Assisted Living in Lawton, on White Oaks Road from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesday, June 9. This event will honor residents from our community who are 90 years of age and older. Join us as we remember the inventions, milestones, and memories of the past. Lunch and music from yesteryear will be enjoyed. And of course, birthday cake and gifts. To register, call Jennifer at White Oaks at 269-624-4811. Sign in on the day of the event will begin at 11 a.m. You are welcome to bring a guest under the age of 90.

Soup/Salad Supper for Relay for Life

There will be a Soup/Salad Supper held on Saturday, June 19 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. with all proceeds going to the cause. Your help in signing up for food and help is greatly appreciated.

Movie Night

The Strand Theater will be hosting a Movie Night on Tuesday, June 15 at 7 p.m. with half of the ticket proceeds going to Almena UMC Relay for Life Team. They will be showing the movie "Shrek, the Final Chapter"

Emergency Preparedness

We are developing an emergency preparedness committee. If interested in joining this group, please contact Jennifer Nette at 269-628-4400, or email Sue Tinkler at sktink51@yahoo.com. We need people with knowledge of Red Cross, CPR, EMT, first responders, and those just willing to help. Thank you.

After Service Refreshments

Please remember to sign up for refreshments. If each family commits to doing this twice a year, we should more than cover all our Sundays. Thank you.

Basic Lay Speaking Classes

Basic Lay Speaking Classes will be held on the following dates and times. All are welcome to attend. See bulletin board for registration information, or contact Pastor Donna or Sam Gordy for more information.

- * Saturdays, June 19, 26, and July 10 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Wesley Foundation on the Campus of WMU, 2010 Wilbur Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49006
- * Sunday, July 11 at 3 p.m. – Commitment Service to be held at Northwest UMC, 3140 N. 3rd Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49009
- * The classes will be taught by Pastor Lisa Batten, Director of Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo, assisted by Pastor Sheila F. Baker
- * Registration deadline is June 12
- * Cost is \$11; AUMC will pay your way. See Pastor Donna for details

Men's Group

Will not be meeting during the summer months. Next breakfast meeting will be Sunday, September 26. We are available for any projects or provide assistance that may be needed. We have had many blessings this year and hope to continue to grow in the upcoming year.