



# Almena UMC

## Newsletter

October and November, 2011  
269-668-2811  
[www.almenaumc.com](http://www.almenaumc.com)

10-7-2011

Dear Friends,

We have been blessed in the past year to receive 14 new professing members at the Almena Church. One of the common mantras I hear from newcomers is: “We like the feel of a smaller church, we feel welcomed here.” I receive those comments with both pride and a bit of trepidation! I am proud of you, church, for the way you extend genuine hospitality. When people join us, they know that they are joining the church, not joining the pastor. But at the same time, I wonder, how long can we keep up the “small church” feel, since we are growing numerically and spiritually? That brings me to the topic for this month’s newsletter: Growing Joys and Growing Pains.

**Growing Joys:** We celebrate that attendance is up at Worship, at Pathfinders Classes, at the Alpha Course and at Monday morning bible study. We rejoice that our youth group is solid and that 6 teens were confirmed last week. It is with gratitude that we have come together to pledge a sizable donation to the Wesley Foundation’s capital campaign. What a joy it is to support meaningful missionary work and to be able to help people in need in this community through our Helping Hand fund. For these things and others we give God the glory for facilitating growth.

Alongside those Growing Joys, we are also feeling Growing Pains: What to do about a parking lot that is too tight? And how about those pews that feel a little snugger than they used to? There is some discomfort we need to press through in becoming more technically connected and environmentally conscious. We wonder, will our financial resources keep pace with growing ministries? And as in the case of any growing and vital group: how will we continue to train up new leaders while at the same time maintaining and honoring the faithful service of those who have paved the way before us?

There are no easy answers for those questions, but I’ve come to the conclusion that we don’t need to fear the future, we simply need to be faithful. As we’ve studied Revelation this fall it is apparent that we should expect to feel the pressures of the culture impacting our ministry. We can anticipate that there will be conflict from within and without as we try to stay on the path of faithful discipleship.

A vital key to weathering growing pains is to stay connected on every level to our Lord and Leader, Jesus Christ, and to each other. Church will you join me, as you meet together in small groups and as you talk around your kitchen tables, and as you gather here on Sunday mornings; in seeking God’s will and God’s way for our church in prayer?

My desire is not that we be a “small church” or a “large church” but that we be a faithful church, participating fully in the work God has prepared for us to do.

Thank you for taking care of me as your pastor, I am grateful to serve at the Almena church and to partner with each of you in ministry.

Pastor Donna

## **Spartan UPC Codes Alert!!!**

Less than 75 more little codes are needed for our 2000 for redemption for \$40 to the Children's and Youth programs. They can be left in the envelope on the bulletin board in the Fellowship room or given to Bea Ellis. Thanks for your help and **KEEP 'EM COMING!!**

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**MONDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY** has had good attendance and is planning a *Mystery Trip* soon. If you are interested in joining the group for this trip, phone 657-4300 or Rita at 657-6233 Our study in September has been intense with thoughts and study about How Great is Our God? Our next series of study will deal with Covenants. We enjoy coffee and chatter at 10 a.m. and bible study is from 10:30-11:30. We promptly dismiss so give us an hour of your time. Everyone is welcome and you don't have to be a bible scholar.

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### **\*\* ELEANOR'S PANTRY UPDATE \*\***

Eleanor's Pantry is located at 221 Drew St. in Paw Paw. The hours are Mon. and Fri., 10 to 1, and Tues., Wed., and Thur., 3-6. They are in need of the items below. (Packaged food must not have passed the expiration date.) If you would like to donate but are unable to deliver the items, please contact a member of the Missions Committee and we will see that they get there

#### **Food items:**

Baking Mixes (brownie, cake, cookie)  
Canned Fruits: pineapple, mixed, oranges  
Canned Salmon  
Canned Vegetables: carrots, mixed, spinach  
Cereal  
Dry Beans  
Frosting  
Hearty soups *with at least 6 grams of protein*  
Juice  
Tuna Helper  
Small Sizes of: coffee, sugar, vegetable oil

#### **Non-food items:**

3" x 3" Post It Notes  
A waterproof box - like a deck box - for after-hours donations  
Quart and gallon size Ziploc bags  
Sample sizes of shampoo, conditioner, lotion, toothpaste



Hello Church Family,

Please review the following procedure for being reimbursed in a timely manner, when you have purchased something for the church:

1. Attach your receipt to an Expense Reimbursement Form (forms in the Treasurer's mailbox).
2. Fill out the top portion of the form completely.
3. Put this form with attachment (receipt) in the Treasurer's mailbox.

(I check this box regularly, and that way your request won't get lost in my purse or choir folder!)

Checks for reimbursement are cut on Tuesday/Wednesday and normally mailed from Paw Paw.

I also thought you may be interested in the missions we have supported to date, through your generous giving:

January -	\$677.37 -	Missionary Salary Support - Paul Webster in northwest Zambia, Africa
	\$390.00 -	United Christian Services - Paw Paw
February -	\$474.20 -	Sylvia's Place in Allegan - Women's Shelter
	\$438.00 -	Believers Business Center - Southwest Michigan
March -	\$521.39 -	Haiti School Water Project
	\$316.00 -	Hunger Relief/UMCOR - One Great Hour of Sharing
	\$424.00 -	Hospice of Southwest Michigan
April -	\$435.00 -	Special collection - Japan Emergency Effort
	\$605.55 -	Red Bird School - Kentucky
May -	\$713.92 -	WMU Wesley Foundation - Capital campaign and current needs
	\$136.00 -	Special collection - Tornado Victims
June -	\$554.40 -	Native American Ministries
July -	\$771.63 -	Pakistan - Safeguarding Women's Health
August -	\$468.90 -	Africa - Mujila Falls Agriculture Research and Training Center – Paul Webster
September -	\$411.59 -	Justice for Our Neighbors - Legal counseling for immigrants

You have also supported CROP/Walk, Relay for Life, the recent clothing donation, and are responding, generously, to the Wesley Foundation Building Fund challenge already! What a blessed congregation!

If you have any questions or issues, please feel free to contact me.

God bless,

Barb Alden  
Treasurer  
657-1885



### **Welcome to the Waldron Family**

Julie and Jon Waldron live in Lawton with their daughters Amelia and Annie. Julie is a grief counselor who works with children and families, and Jon is a high school social studies teacher. Jon enjoys traveling, reading, and Michigan State sports. Julie enjoys traveling, reading, baking, scrapbooking, and being with family and friends. Annie is in the 2nd grade and currently is obsessed with horses. Mia is in the 4th grade and loves dolls and soccer. Jon and Julie transferred membership from First United Methodist in Kalamazoo. ---Greg Rozeveld

### **Welcome to Jim VanWyk** (pronounced Van Why-k)

I am pleased to introduce one of our newest members at Almena UMC, Jim VanWyk.

Jim's family has lived in the Almena community since the 1870's! He was born and raised here, graduating from Paw Paw High School. He furthered his education at ITT, gaining a degree in telecommunications. Over time, he worked at several companies, including General Telephone, I.B.M., Sieman and, finally, Dimension Data from which he retired in June 2010. He married Barb Alden, a member of our congregation, on May 1, 2010.

Jim has three sons, Tim, Derek and Steven and 2 grandsons, Garrett, 14, and Landyn, 9. He enjoys working in his yard, being outside, and spending time with his family and grandkids. He has been a welcome addition to Almena, serving by keeping the grass on the ball field behind the church mowed, as well as working in different capacities at our soup suppers and harvest dinners.

Jim is also very involved in searching out information regarding his brother Clayton, who is listed as MIA/POW from the Korean War. This summer, Jim attended a Department of Defense Briefing in Wisconsin, where family members received information regarding the status of their loved ones who are either MIA or POW. Jim's mission is to have his brother's remains returned during his lifetime.

Please join me in welcoming Jim to our church family. -----Dan Naylor

### **Welcome to Skip Hamilton**

Skip has lived in her home in Mattawan for over 30 years. Prior to that she and her husband Bill lived in Paw Paw. Skip is a widow now, with two grown sons. One son lives in Milwaukee Wisconsin, and the other near Schoolcraft Michigan. She worked as a nurse for the Paw Paw Medical Group prior to her retirement. She remains very active in the community and is involved with the Van Buren County Senior Services and is very knowledgeable of the programs that they make available. Skip is hoping it continues to be active in the Almena area. She enjoys reading, travel, working around her home and in the past was an avid square dancer. Skip says she really enjoys the Almena United Methodist Church and looks forward to being involved helping when she can.

Welcome Skip to Almena United Methodist Church. ----Carole Rickli

### **Welcome to Kim Francisco**

Kim was raised in Paw Paw and lives with her husband Mike and her mother Barb in the home she grew up in. Kim's positive attitude and faith in our Lord keep her going as she is the primary

caregiver for both her mother and her husband who is wheelchair bound. Kim and Mike have a Jack Russell Terrier, Toby, who brings much joy to their lives. Kim also finds satisfaction in crocheting afghans to share at the Alamo Nursing Home where her father lives. Kim has her RN degree but had to give up nursing several years ago. She is a survivor of metastatic breast cancer and continues to receive treatment and to praise God for 5 years of being cancer free. Kim has a heart for prayer and loves being a part of our faith community at Almena. Welcome Kim---Shirley Morgan & Donna Keyte

### **Welcome to Michael Holland**

Michael Holland is a person with a big heart. If anyone is in need he is always ready to share and help where he can. He carries a big smile wherever he goes whether during his good times or hard times.

Mike's parents passed away within the last four years leaving him, as caretaker of the family farm. He has taken over his father's job of mowing grass for neighbors, as well as caring for his own yard that is always immaculate. He helps his handicapped neighbor with chores and other duties when asked, and would give his last dollar to anyone in need. Mike is a good witness and a diligent worker, working full time for a cleaning company at the Black River School where he is always punctual and dependable.

Mike claims that he can never find time for a real hobby but enjoys his little dog Daisy while taking her for walks and giving her loving care. He enjoys reading and is especially fond of Harry Potter books. He declares that television has little to offer and seldom watches it.

Asking Michael about how God works in his life, he stated, "I have had some rough times but God always pulls me through and provides. He has helped me find employment and has brought peace of mind to me during the loss of many friends and family in death." This shows that Mike has a strong faith and he is eager to tell others about his daily dependency on God with the promising words found in the bible. He stated that going to church helps him to fill in the gaps, as he strives to understand certain scriptures.

Mike has a brother and a sister who live close by. He enjoys Almena United Methodist church in many ways and especially appreciates it being close to home where he can enjoy worshiping with neighbors and friends.

---Shirley Huffman

### **Welcome to Betty Coons**

Betty is the mother of Richard Coons, mother-in-law to Jackie Coons. She has 2 granddaughters and 2 great granddaughters and enjoys being in the company of family.

Betty's hobbies include quilting and needlework. She had a booth at Almena Farmer's Market selling her quilting. She is a "Jane" of all trades, and has helped her son and daughter-in-law with many projects. She enjoys camping and boating, and enjoyed taking part in the Alpha course earlier this year.

### **Welcome to Mike Walkington**

I first met Mike at the fall course of Alpha BBQ in 2010. In our conversation that evening, Mike state that he was concerned and somewhat angry at God for some of the decisions that were being made in his life. Decisions, or "actions", to be more precise. Mike decided to give Alpha a try only to mention that I would have my hands full.

During Alpha, Mike continued to learn and grow within God's ever giving love and grace. Mike has four grown boys that are a major part of his life. He likes to travel, explore new beginnings, as well as cook and spend time with friends.

Mike lives in the Almena area and does volunteer with many non-profit organizations. He is always eager and willing to listen, and make suggestions whenever he can.

God works on a daily basis in Mike's life, and he has a more focused approach to his Christian life and lives to share his life's experience. We are very fortunate to have Mike as a part of our Almena Christian family.

----Joe Swabash

## Leadership Opportunities:

At our church Conference last Thursday we elected many new and returning leaders for 2012. A leadership listing will be coming out in the next few weeks. We still have a few major positions open. If perhaps our leadership Development Team has missed considering you and you would like to offer to serve, please contact Pastor Donna. The positions open are: Administrative Board Chairperson, Lay Leader/Lay Member to Annual Conference, Staff Parish Relations Committee member, and Trustee Chair.



### *From the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC)*

\*\*\* **OCTOBER IS PASTOR APPRECIATION  
MONTH!!** \*\*\*

Be sure to tell Pastor Donna this month just how much you appreciate her and all she does for Almena UMC!

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### \*\*\* **MISSIONS** \*\*\*

We have some great mission opportunities this fall! Please consider those below and how you might be able to serve God by serving others.

We will have a **local mission** again for **October**. For November, the congregation is asked to bring appropriate non-perishable food donations for Thanksgiving boxes for families who otherwise would not have a special Thanksgiving dinner. The mission money collected in **October** will be used in November to buy turkeys, perishable food, and any remaining items still needed to fill the boxes. Last year, we prepared and delivered 14 boxes, and they were greatly appreciated by everyone that received one.

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We will have **two** missions for **November**. One is the **Thanksgiving boxes** mentioned in the October mission information above. Non-perishable food items can be brought to the Fellowship Hall beginning Sunday, October 30. We can use stuffing, canned beans, corn, sweet potatoes, cranberries, and gravy, mashed potatoes, and anything else you might want to give a family. We try to provide food beyond Thanksgiving Day as well, so pasta, pasta/tomato sauce, healthy snacks, soup, canned fruits, macaroni and cheese, etc. are also welcome. If you have a source for fresh potatoes or apples, we would be happy to get those as well. Please let Pastor Donna, Marcia Williams, Barb Alden, or me know if you know of any

local persons or families who could use this assistance. We are also in need of strong, sturdy boxes, with lids if possible, if you have any to donate (about the size of copy paper boxes).

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*Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute.  
Speak out, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the poor and needy.  
(Proverbs 31:8-9)*

Our second mission for **November** will be in the area of hunger relief, **Bread for the World**. **Bread for the World** is a collective, non-profit Christian voice that works in a bipartisan way, urging our nation's decision makers to end hunger at home and abroad. By changing policies, programs, and conditions that allow hunger and poverty to persist, **Bread for the World** provides help and opportunity far beyond the communities where we live.

**How they make a difference:** Bread for the World has unprecedented access to U.S. policymakers. Over the past decade, Bread for the World played an essential role in tripling both poverty-focused development assistance and domestic nutrition assistance. These increases in funding, along with program improvements they sought, were achieved under both Republican and Democratic administrations. Between 2000 and 2010, Bread for the World helped boost U.S. funding for poverty-focused assistance to poor countries from \$8 billion to \$28 billion. This had a clear impact in Africa, where more than 15 countries achieved rapid economic growth, reduced poverty, expanded education and health care, and improved governance. Bread for the World also played a key role in expanding funding for nutrition assistance to poor families in the U.S.—from \$33 billion in 2000 to \$80 billion in 2009. The national nutrition programs have been a lifeline for millions of families, moderating the impact of growing poverty in the United States.

**Bread for the World** engages Christian citizens and churches in advocating for and with hungry people at home and abroad. Members write personal letters and emails and meet with their members of Congress. Working through churches, campuses, and other organizations, they engage more people in advocacy. One of their many activities each year invites churches across the country to take up a nationwide "Offering of Letters" to Congress on an issue that is important to hungry and poor people. We will provide information on the 2012 "Offering of Letters" next spring when it becomes available. In the meantime, please join with me in supporting "Bread" and check out their website for even more information. <http://www.bread.org>

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Thank you, Church, for all your prayers, time, and gifts to missions. "...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

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