



Almena UMC

Newsletter

December 2011 and January 2012
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www.almenaumc.com

December 2011

Greetings Friends,

We are turning the corner to December and heading into the home stretch for 2011. I want to encourage you to finish the year strong by keeping the season of Advent in your mind and on your calendar. Advent is the liturgical season of preparation for the coming of Christ. We mark Advent by devoting some of our time and energy to nurturing our relationship with the Lord and thinking about how we fit into his plan for salvation. Home Advent wreaths, the use of devotional booklets, times of prayer, fasting or service are some ways of observing this season of preparation. Another idea is to build into your family's Christmas budget an additional sum of money equal to that of one of your main gift recipients. Take that money, and perhaps the time you would have spent preparing such a gift, and instead invest it in ministry to the needy. Remember that Advent is not a carbon copy of Lent, whose focus is more penitential. Rather Advent is a season of joy and hope as we anticipate the coming of the Prince of Peace.

Christmas itself is on a Sunday this year. We will have a candlelight celebration of worship, with Holy Communion on Dec. 24th at 7:00 pm. On Sunday Dec. 25, we will have worship at the usual time of 11:00 a.m., (no Pathfinders classes Dec. 25 or Jan 1.)

Blessings of peace,
Pastor Donna



NEW in 2012 - Council on Ministries

Our Administrative Board has carefully considered and approved a new administrative structure for our church in 2012. Actually, it is not really new, but a return to a model for doing business that we had used many years ago. The reason for changing is to make better use of the time and talent of our leaders and to help us better align our ministries to accomplish common goals. We will try this model for a year and evaluate its effectiveness along the way.

As a church, we are entrusted with being and building disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world. Our core ministries are in the areas of Worship, Discipleship/Education, Outreach, and Mission. In addition we have administrative committees that “add to” the core ministries by providing oversight of our building, finance, and leadership resources.

Under our new “Council on Ministries” model, the leaders of our core ministries will meet monthly to pray and plan for our core ministries. All members of the Council on Ministries will also be a part of our Administrative Board. Ad Bd. will then meet quarterly on the third Wednesdays of January, April, August and November.

Members of the Council on Ministries include:

Pastor Donna Keyte, Worship Chair Lois Richardson, Education Chair Jackie Coons, Outreach Chair Jennifer Nette, Mission Chair Janet Swigart, Elder Member at Large Shirley Huffman, and Youth Group Leader Greg Rozeveld.

The Administrative Board for 2012 consists of all of the above plus secretary Margo McGuire, SPRC Chair David Bates, Finance Chair Tom Richardson, Treasurer Barb Alden and Memorial Committee Rep. Marcia Williams as well as our Trustee Chair and Ad Board Chair.

Administrative Board meetings are open to all, and the next meeting is January 18, 2012 at 7:30 pm in Fellowship Hall. Minutes from Ad Board meetings will now be posted on the “Trustee Bulletin Board” located just outside the kitchen door.



Harvest

D I N N E R

Thank you to all our church family members that helped to make this year's Harvest Dinner a success! The donations of food and work time were much appreciated, and we loved to see all of you there for dinner. The committee decided that this year the proceeds will be split between 2 funds here at the church. 80% of monies raised will be used to purchase some much needed new lawn care equipment for taking care of our property, the other 20% will be put into the helping hands fund - this is a type of emergency fund that is used to help church and community members in times of unexpected crises to help them through. This year the committee members were: Sue Tinkler, Sharyn Bates, Janet Swigart, Margo McGuire, Barb Alden, Marcia Williams, Marie Wilke-Dolber, Diane Ross, & Deidre Sweet. If you are interested in being on this planning committee for next year - be sure to let one us know! We are always happy to have more help in planning and welcome any and all that would like to get involved.

There were many area businesses that also contributed greatly to our success. **Please take a minute and thank them next time you are shopping there** for their support of our church and community by participating in this event with their donations of food items.

D. Coy Ducks
Gordon Food Services (GFS)
Harding's Friendly Markets
Hustead's Farm Market
Mac Kenzies Bakery
North Oakland Commodities
Tea Pot restaurant
Verhage Farms
Village Inn Restaurant (Gobles)
Wagoner's Grocery (Mattawan, Lawton)
Walmart

Again, the committee thanks all of our church family for their support of this heartwarming community event. The next dinner will be held Nov. 3rd, 2012 Mark your calendars :)

Deidre Sweet



“Christmas on a String”

A new Christmas puppet show written and presented by
Julie Richardson

Celebrate the Advent Season with this unique retelling of Jesus birth!!

Hand-made marionettes and puppets will delight
the young and young at heart

Sunday, December 11

9:45 AM

Refreshments provided



Pathfinders Holiday Schedule

December 4:	Pathfinder classes meet as usual
December 11:	<i>“Christmas on a String”</i> presented in the Fellowship Hall
December 18:	Pathfinder classes meet as usual
December 25:	No Pathfinder classes
January 1:	No Pathfinder classes
January 8:	Pathfinder classes meet as usual

Notice to Teachers: *Winter Organizational meeting*
January 4, 2012, 7:00 PM



MISSION UPDATES

Thank you to everyone who donated food, money, and their time to making our **Thanksgiving Boxes** project such a success this year. We were able to provide 11 families (over 60 people) with a turkey, a pie, fresh apples, 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 Christian Services, where 10 boxes were delivered, were so thankful! We were also able to provide a gift card and some food for one family and one individual in Paw Paw.

I especially want to thank Pastor Donna, Barb and Jim Van Wyk, 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 know that they are loved, valued, and not forgotten.

DECEMBER 2011 AND JANUARY 2012 MISSIONS

We have **three missions** for **December** this year. Money collected each week in the globe offering or by donations in your weekly envelope will go to **Eleanor's Pantry** in Paw Paw.

Our Christmas Eve offering will be for **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 third opportunity to give to others this Christmas season is through the **Angel Tree Project**. We had 25 'Angel Tags' representing 25 children from Van Buren County, aged 1 to 16 years of age. Each tag listed what each child wanted for Christmas. *Thank you* to everyone who chose to provide a gift for one or two a children this year. Gifts should range from \$15 - \$20 and be brought to the church by Sunday, Dec. 11. Please do not wrap the gift, but it is important to 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**. He works tirelessly with the local people to help them learn to farm and provide food and a small income for themselves. Pastor Donna, Steve Keyte, and I enjoyed having dinner with and listening to Paul and his co-worker when they visited this area this fall. It was amazing to hear how far this project has come in the 10 years Paul has been there. The United Methodist Church is alive and well and growing, serving God in Africa.

I want to thank **everyone** who helped this year with our missions and special projects, whether by working, contributing, making blankets/quilts/pillowcases, or praying, and a special thanks to our Mission Team. I believe we demonstrate that as a small church, we can make an impact and be an example in our own communities and around the world, but it takes us **all** to be involved. May God continue to bless each of us so that we may in turn help provide for His people, everywhere. I look forward to serving with you as your Mission Chairperson again in 2012.

Janet Swigart

Hard-won, too-late wisdom from the ghost of Jacob Marley, in A Christmas Carol: "...any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness."



Dear Kalamazoo District Family & Friends,

November and December are significant months not only in the life of the church, but also in American society and other parts of the world. We in America have so much to be thankful for, even in the current economic climate we are experiencing. Did you know that we are privileged to attend church without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death and that makes us more blessed than three billion people in the world? That's a lot to be thankful for. If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, and a roof over your head and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of the people in this world. I could go on and on with a laundry list of blessings we enjoy as Americans compared to the rest of this world.

I also know we have many challenges before us as we do our best to carry out the mission of the church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The local church has a great opportunity, now, to show the love of Jesus Christ to those in need in our immediate surrounding communities and beyond. I'm reminded of the manifesto of Jesus Christ when He went home to Nazareth to give a message in the synagogue where He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

I pray for that same Spirit to be upon us because what the world needs now more than ever is love, God's unconditional agape love. I submit to you that the world is watching us more closely than ever before. They are watching us to see what we will do as it relates to the failure of secular organizations that exist to help those in need. They are watching us to see how we will fill the gaps of cutbacks in services of all kinds. Are we up to the challenge? We are blessed to be in a position where God can work through us for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. For that I am thankful.

God loves us so much that he took on flesh, became God incarnate through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. During the time of Jesus' birth the world situation was very similar to what's happening in our world today. The rich were getting richer, more than ever before, there was no middle class, and the poor became poorer. People were held in bondage and there were a lot of captives. God chose to intervene in the affairs of humanity because we needed help. We still need His help!

The month of December reminds me of the need for us to love one another the way we would want to be loved. It reminds me that I am blessed by God to be a blessing to someone else. It reminds me of my covenant with God and my calling to Ordained Ministry. It also reminds me that Jesus was born to be the once and for all sacrifice for the sins of humanity and while He was moving towards that appointed time, He taught and commanded us to do things for the "common good." He also role modeled for us how to be in relationship with God, how to be in relationship with one another, and how to be in relationship with creation. Emmanuel, God with us! He is still with us through His Holy Spirit which dwells in us. That's a cause for celebration.

So, as you celebrate Thanksgiving know that you are blessed, even in tough times like this. When you celebrate Christmas, know that God loves you and you are required to love as well. May the love, peace, and grace of Jesus Christ be yours, Amen.

Blessings,
Rev. Neil Davis
District Superintendent

DRIVERS ARE NEEDED!!

Our local American Cancer Society is in need of drivers who can take cancer patients to and from their treatments. If you are interested in this type of service, please contact:

Jean Thompson
Community Program Manager
Southwest Michigan Area Service Center
Great Lakes Division, Inc.
5110 S. Sprinkle Road
Portage, MI 49002
269-349-8719 (office)
1-800-465-5244 (toll free)
269-720-2339 (cell)
jean.thompson@cancer.org



We have some new books in our collection. Check them out:

When Christians Get it Wrong (Adam Hamilton)

Why? Making Sense of God's Will (Adam Hamilton)

Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves in Life (Richard Rohr)

United Methodist Beliefs: A Brief Introduction (William H. Willimon)

Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results (Lovett H. Weems Jr. & Tom Berlin)

- Chris Robbins

Christmas Eve is a prime time to invite an unchurched family member, friend or co-worker to experience the love of Christ in the fellowship of the Church. Join us:

Christmas Eve, Saturday Dec. 24 at 7:00 PM
A "Silent Night" Celebration of Worship
with Holy Communion and Candlelight

Christmas Day, Sunday Dec. 25 at 11:00 AM
"Naming the Baby" Worship with Choir

