

InterLink

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Two Sections--Section A



Western PA Conference
The United Methodist Church

The Church Has Left the Building--Where is WPAUMC?

Certified Lay Speakers Take Worship on the Road

by Jackie Campbell

Each Sunday, **Heritage UMC**, Ligonier, takes church on the road, using certified lay speakers to provide weekly Sunday morning worship opportunities for special populations who cannot attend services.

With the off-site services in Latrobe and Greensburg, they enable about 50 additional people to worship God each week.

"Maybe this is one form of 21st Century circuit riding!" said the Rev. John Flower, pastor of Heritage.

"Heritage is blessed to have four Certified Lay Speakers who have trained through our District Lay Schools for certification," said Flower. "It is a common lament that Certified Lay Speakers are not used frequently enough, and sometimes not at all. Heritage is channeling the calling that brought these persons to lay school into this outreach ministry with marvelous results!"

Leading the effort is Rich Ziegenfus and his wife Gina, who attend the early worship at Heritage, then travel about 20 miles to Greensburg, where they lead worship for physically and mentally challenged individuals at

Nature Park Commons. Ziegenfus, who is lay leader at Heritage, also is part of a team that offers a weekly service at the Barnes House, a personal care facility in nearby Latrobe.

Some Sundays, the couple leaves Heritage at 8:20 a.m., heads to Barnes House, then on to Nature Parks Commons, making for a long, but rewarding day.

"This came as answered prayer to me," Ziegenfus said. "I had been praying for some direction as to what God wanted me to do. It's such a blessing.

"When we are not there, we literally miss it," he added. "You become familiar

with the people. There's a good relationship between them and Gina and I. We get to know one another on a spiritual and personal level. This is something we have been called to do!"

Ziegenfus was asked about four years ago to do services at the facility whenever he could. He felt it was vital to commit to a regular weekly schedule. "Saying yes meant preparing a message and order of worship each Sunday, but consistency is important," he said.

The couple provides a full ecumenical worship service, except for the offering, every week, using United Methodist Hymnals. They use an altar, lectern and microphone, as well as candles and a cross.

The first Sunday of the month, Flower consecrates the elements and Rich and Gina offer communion. The Rev. Fred Vanderhoff, a retired pastor at Heritage, substitutes when needed.

Ziegenfus, who owns and operates a company offering human resources consulting services, prepares his messages about five to six weeks in advance. "It has been a little bit of a challenge for me, but it still comes. It's not

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First Bethel Walks Out for Fifth Sunday

by Jackie Campbell

A large percentage of the congregation of **First Bethel UMC** in Pittsburgh's South Hills walked out after just a few minutes in the sanctuary one Sunday morning last fall and they plan to do it again this month.

On the fifth Sunday of each month, the congregation gathers for one service at 10 a.m. There's a dedication of the entire congregation, then they split up. "Some stay to sing hymns and pray for the rest of the congregation who take the church on the road" said the Rev. Deb Dennick-Ream, deacon.

"We call it *The Church Has Left the Building*," she said.

In October, 39 people traveled to two South Hills Interfaith Ministries facilities to volunteer. At the Bethel Park site, not far from the church, the Rev. Sandra Marsh-McLain, pastor, and her group sorted coats for winter distribution, put food on the

shelves, and did some other jobs.

Dennick-Ream went with SHIM Director Jim McGuffey to Prospect Park, a community that is home to many low-income families, including refugees from several countries.

"At Prospect Park Jim needed to have a garage cleaned out so they could use it for storage. He had gotten a deal on the rent if he cleaned it out. He rented a dumpster, but had no idea how he would make it happen," she explained. "Our group arrived and in an hour they were done. Jim was as happy as a kid on their birthday to have the garage cleaned out."

With the newly cleaned garage available for storage, SHIM could use its other storage garage, where a Boy Scout had installed shelves and motion detector lights, as their food pantry, Dennick-Ream explained.

"They serve 160 people out of there and

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Community Builders Pursue Vision

About 40 leaders who participated in the Community Builders Labs last Fall gathered at the Conference Center recently to celebrate, share ideas and dream for the future.

"I've been so humbled by the passion and vision many of these leaders have for what ministry can be outside of the church," said the Rev. Jim Walker, director of congregational development and revitalization for the Conference.

Several of those in the labs were already dreaming big and involved in cutting-edge ministries that are making a difference in their communities, he said. Among them: a ministry to skateboarders in Johnstown; the new faith community, Ashes to Life, that's grown out of the ashes after fire destroyed the **Otterbein UMC** building in Beaver Falls; the **Swissvale UMC** ministry housed in a former liquor store; the House @ 10 worship in the parsonage of **First UMC**, Rochester and many others.

The labs offered leaders a place to collaborate, connect and contribute ideas. Lab groups gathered in various places in five areas of the Western PA for worship, communion, and discussion. From the lab, other ideas are springing up, including plans for community ministry in areas like Pittsburgh's Hill District and a small college town.

"Someone shared at our celebration that one of the most powerful things about the lab was it created space for new ideas. It wasn't some expert coming in and telling everyone that they're doing it all wrong. It was a place where leaders could wrestle with the questions and issues. It was a place to dream big." Walker said.

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The Journey Continues

by Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton
Resident Bishop

One of my all-time favorite stories is a real one that took place when I was a junior in high school. A buddy and I were visiting some friends out of town and decided to have supper at a local Pizza Hut. When the waitress approached us, I opened the conversation with a standard line, "How are you doing?"

Her reply was not so standard. "Not very well," she said. "I just don't like my job."

After listening to her for several minutes, I said to her, "You know, if you don't like your job you should just quit. There is nothing that should stand in the way of your happiness. Nothing is worth losing your joy. If I were you, I would just quit!"

She said she couldn't do that. "I need this job," she replied. She took our orders and that was that.

About 30 minutes later we still had not received our drinks or our salad plates. A bit curious, I went to the counter to speak with the manager.

"We're sitting over here in the corner," I started, "and placed our orders about a half hour ago, but haven't been waited on since."

The manager apologized. "We've had some problems here tonight. About a half-hour ago, one of my waitresses just up and quit. She said that there was no way this job was going to stand in the way of her happiness and joy and she left!"

I responded rather sheepishly. "Take your time! We're in no hurry at all."

I didn't know that I would have such influence as a 17-year-old! But that isn't the reason behind this tale. I tell this story to ask a question or two. Do you love what you do? Is there a sense of happiness and joy in your life and work?

I admit to you that I absolutely love what I do. I have never felt more in touch with my sense of calling than I do in my work as a bishop. While some of the drudgery gets a bit frustrating at times, I have never lost my sense of naive joy and inner happiness in my work. In fact, I struggle at times to even see it as work. When you live out a calling, it often feels like a privilege, rather than a burden. I just love what I do!

I wanted to share my joy with you as we begin this New Year together.

I not only love my work, I love doing it in this place. I consider it an amazing privilege to be able to serve with and among you here in Western Pennsylvania.

Oh, I get frustrated with state politics and I come to close to losing my temper with PennDot. I would guess that there aren't many of us out there who don't. I get concerned about the decline of our churches and the stamina of pastors and laity who are giving all they have to be faithful to their calling.

All of that is real. But none of it cancels out the joy I have traveling throughout our Annual Conference. Nothing makes me happier than meeting some new friends or

having a chance to re-connect with old ones. You are an amazing and wonderful group of people and I feel so privileged to serve here.

I also wanted to let you know that as we venture into this New Year that I will be praying for your joy as well. My sincere hope is that you will have the kind of year that will put a smile on your face, a laugh in your heart, and a deep sense of joy as you reflect upon it.

I pray that you will find a peace that will pass even your understanding of why you feel it and a sense of purpose that will cause you to undeniably know that you are being the kind of person God created you to be.

I pray too that this will be a year of exciting possibilities for us both and that through those possibilities we might be able to see the face of Jesus not only in one another but in many with whom we interact.

One of my favorite scripture passages comes from John 15. In the middle of this chapter, Jesus, who is describing the need to love one another, says some wonderful words. May they be words that are heard throughout this year, words that remind us when we are tempted with sadness and words that bless us when we least expect it.

Jesus looked at his disciples and said, "If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." **John 15:10-12**

That is a wonderful passage. It's one that reminds us that we were created for joy. Christ is our source of joy and with God's presence in our lives, our joy may be complete.

That's my prayer for us this New Year. It's a prayer that's based on a conviction I have had for 36 years now: There is nothing that should stand in the way of your happiness. Nothing is worth losing your joy.

May it be so!

The Journey Continues...

Evangelism Award Nominees Sought

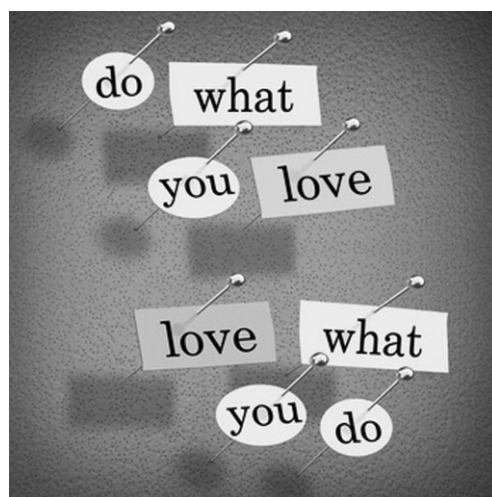
The Conference Evangelism Committee is seeking nominations for 2012 Harry Denman Evangelism Awards.

The Denman Awards recognize people whose life and ministry exemplify the teaching of Christ and the Great Commission. Recipients of this award live their call to "Offer Them Christ" daily, as modeled by John Wesley and Dr. Harry Denman, founder of The Foundation for Evangelism. The Foundation co-sponsors the awards, given each year in three categories--clergy, laity, and youth.

The deadline for nominations is February 29, 2012. The awards will be presented at the 2012 Annual Conference.

To learn more about the award or download nomination forms visit foundationfor-evangelism.org. Click "Recognition">"Harry Denman Evangelism Award". At the bottom of the page, select the appropriate download.

For more information, contact Ken Duffee at klduffee@msn.com or 724-962-2436.



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Submissions—Articles, pictures, story ideas and letters to the editor, are welcome. Stories and pictures, with labeled subjects may be submitted by e-mail, mail, fax or hand-delivery to the Conference Center. Include contact name and

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Western PA Conference UMC Events

Major events are featured here. For a complete listing, go to "calendar" on wpaumc.org. Submit Conference events, observances and meetings through wpaumc.org or call 800.886.3382.

January 2012

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1 | Happy New Year! |
| 2 | New Year Observed--UM Center Closed |
| 6-8 | SPARK! Sheraton Station Square |
| 10 | Keystone Health & Wellness Seminar, UM Center |
| 16 | Martin Luther King, Jr. Day-- UM Center Closed |

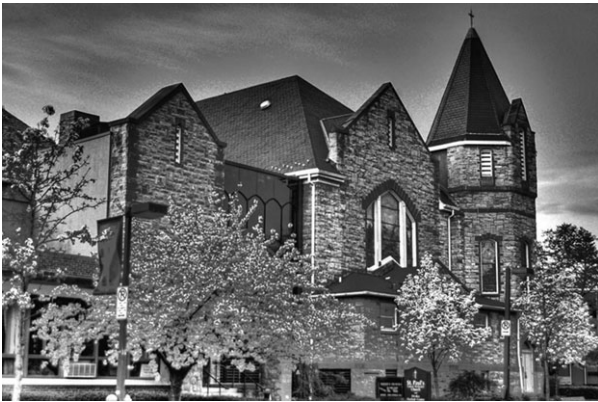
State College Church Responds to Sandusky Scandal

by Jackie Campbell

To the Rev. Ed Zeiders, "It is a gift to be a Christian in a time like this."

Zeiders is the senior pastor of the 1,800-member **St. Paul's UMC** in State College, PA, where the entire community has been rocked by scandal involving charges of child sexual abuse filed against longtime church member and former Penn State assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky.

God's grace is offered to all through the cross of Jesus Christ, who bore the sins of the world, Zeiders told his congregation on Nov. 20, a few weeks after formal charges were filed.



"Now, you understand what it means in your own hearts filled with disappointment and sadness, when the tears are running down your face, when your heart aches with the lack of understanding or disorientation," he said. "When your dreams are dashed, broken and our whole community of learners and seekers living together ... is all affected like this, Christians know what it means to bear one another's burdens and to carry the wounds of Jesus Christ in our very hearts."

Formal charges were filed Nov. 5 against Sandusky, who maintains his innocence. Two university administrators face charges of lying to the grand jury; Penn State Coach Joe Paterno has been fired, and the university president, Graham Spanier, has been replaced. The grand jury investigation is ongoing and charges against Sandusky involving two additional youth were filed Dec. 7.

Amid the turmoil, Zeiders and his staff have to address the kind of questions every United Methodist pastor dreads: How does a Christian faith community respond when a prominent member faces such devastating charges? How can clergy, staff and church members care for all involved in a widening crisis?

"For something so deeply personal and so heartbreaking for everybody, pastoral care has to be pretty clearly focused," Zeiders told United Methodist News Service. "The senior pastor has to take the lead and define the nature of the Christian community so that the congregation understands."

Dealing with Allegations

In the church and in State College, news reports and rumors of the allegations circulated periodically during the two years that the Pennsylvania attorney general called witnesses to testify before a grand jury. The church provided support and care during that time for Sandusky and his wife, who are part of one of the church's 43 active small groups, and others affected.

That care has been ongoing, Zeiders said.

Prayer also has been part of the church's ministry. The first Sunday after the charges were filed, the church ushers passed out papers on which congregation members wrote messages of support for abuse survivors.

"The congregation has been very gracious to people who have found themselves in difficult circumstances," Zeiders said.

"Because the church is so large and made up of so many people connected to the university and the business community, anything that hits any of those groups is going to affect the congregation," he explained. "(Church members) have learned how to care for others in crisis; they have established a pattern of responsible caregiving and have done that very well."

Crisis-management Plan in Place

St. Paul's has had a Safe Sanctuaries policy in place for several years, and, Zeiders says, the congregation strictly adheres to it — especially the "two-person rule" in their preschool and other activities.

The church also already had a crisis-management plan in place when the allegations came to light.

Zeiders, heading into his fifth year as senior pastor after serving eight years as president of United Theological Seminary in Ohio, likened the intervention/crisis-management plan to an archery target. "In the center are people in immediate crisis," he said. "Each circle expands the caregiving."

The situation directly affected several hundred people including church members, university students and many area residents. In situations where charges of sexual abuse are involved in the news, Zeiders said, people who had been abused in the past often relive their experience and need care.

"It's a lot to manage at one time," said Zeiders, who chairs the United Methodist Susquehanna Annual (regional) Conference's Commission on Child Advocacy.

"An intervention team from the annual conference was here almost immediately," Zeiders said. Not only does the team of trained staff provide care for the pastors and leaders, but the team also is available to members of the congregation.

In addition, St. Paul's has a safety net of services as part of its congregational care and health ministries, including links with county agencies and local providers, and those are also a part of the response plan.

Dealing with the Media

Zeiders and his congregation not only have faced a crisis of care but also a crisis of media attention.

Camera crews camped on the church's front lawn, and reporters relentlessly sought out members for comments, but Zeiders refused countless requests for interviews. "I have been trying to be as invisible as I can," he said.

"Congregational life is very sacred," he added. "Some pastors might want the media coverage, but we deliberately kept cameras out. We did not want them intruding in worship."

Reporters, however, came in to worship services. "We had no control over that," he said.

While resisting attempts to probe and pry into members' private lives, Zeiders said it is not a time for the church to remain silent.

He told his congregation that the heartbreaking situation presented an opportunity for them to "give

witness to the authenticity of faith ... to seize the God-given moment even in the face of grave darkness, horrible circumstances that have affected people all around the world.

"What have we to say to those who inquire of the faith, and of our life except that God loves us all? And that steadfast love never ceases. It is a mercy that knows no end," he said in his Nov. 20 sermon.

An Act of Compassion

Zeiders also talked about forgiveness, which he described as an act of compassion toward those who are broken in every condition. It restores the bridge between people and sets up the possibility for new beginnings.

God calls Christians to love and forgive, but forgiveness is not without consequences and never involves forgetting sins, he said.

"God gives us the memory of our sinfulness so that there are corrective measures we can take to assist each other on the path to new life and to recovery," Zeiders told the congregation. "What makes the body of Christ magnificent is that it affirms the forgiving love of Jesus that is meant to heal the heartbreaking wounds in all of our people, including myself, including you."

Forgiveness has a uniquely Methodist aspect when seen in the light of John Wesley's view that we are all called to go on to perfection, Zeiders said.

"There's a lot of misunderstanding about perfection," he said. "Mr. Wesley never meant flawlessness. Mr. Wesley meant we should draw ever closer to the perfect love of God, and the perfect, the holy love and healing of one another."

Methodists, he said, "are called to be accountable for each other... To love one another, to care for each other, to stand with one another. ... What makes us very, very different in western forms of Christianity that are so individualized, is that we are also accountable to each other."

Wesley's small groups were accountable on two fronts, he explained. Not only were members to give an account of the gospel of Christ so those who heard it could be redeemed of sinfulness and restored to a right relationship with God and one another, but they also were to hold people accountable for their behavior.

"Card-carrying United Methodist Christians," Zeiders said, "are mandated to live in the power of Christ... to live as agents of Christ, and ... to hold each other accountable for the way in which we behave."

"When I fail, your job is to restore me, and when you fail, my job is to restore you," he said. "That's a very different proposition than just living in isolation and carrying around our unfinished business."

Although broken and fractured, those in the community of faith are not alone, Zeiders said. "As God's people, we must and we will live together as agents of God's amazing grace (from) now to the end."

Save the Date! Safe Sanctuaries Training!

Even if you have had the basic training, all clergy and church staff should plan to attend a Safe Sanctuary continuing education session with Joy Thornburg Melton on Friday, May 11, 2012 at **Bakerstown UMC**. Melton, an Atlanta attorney, is author of *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church* and several other books on related topics.

Start 2012 with 50 Everyday Faith Practices

We begin each new year with so many resolutions that by the end of the day, we have possibly broken every one of them. Why not begin this new year by strengthening your ability to Listen to the Spirit. Spiritual disciplines enliven the soul and become a gateway to grace upon grace!

Try these 50 Everyday Faith Practices (some borrowed from the Baltimore – Washington Conference and some created by Rev. Rebecca Innerst, Director of Discipleship and Christian Spiritual Formation). Centering in God just for a few moments each day, giving God has our undivided attention, will undoubtedly benefit our ability to not only listen to the Spirit, but live in the Spirit each day throughout 2012.

1. Each morning, as you awake, lift this prayer, "thank you God, for life today!"
2. When you are reading the newspaper, pray over the headlines.
3. When you hear the news on television, lift a prayer.
4. As you listen to the radio on the way to work or leisure, lift needs in prayer.
5. In the busiest time of your day, stop and sit silently for 15 minutes.
6. Write a letter that shares your faith to someone who is in the periphery of your life.
7. Give to a complete stranger.
8. Laugh loudly so as to let your neighbor know.
9. Listen.
10. Offer grace, even in the midst of a busy restaurant.
11. Create an altar area in your house with meaningful symbols of your faith.
12. Be salt and light to someone in need.
13. Consider that as you move about your day, all ground is holy ground.
14. Display your favorite cross where it really can be seen.
15. Say, "I love you" to those who really need to hear these words.
16. Take a prayer walk.
17. Keep your promises to your children and grandchildren.
18. Breathe deeply.
19. Be kind to someone who really annoys you.
20. Say "thank you."
21. Practice diversity.
22. Practice humility.
23. Practice random acts of kindness.
24. Visit someone who may be lonely or alone.
25. Pray.
26. Pray some more.
27. Read a book of the Bible you hardly noticed.
28. Be generous in giving your time.
29. Take the Sabbath seriously.
30. Keep the Sabbath holy each week.
31. Walk your talk and talk your walk.
32. Clean out a drawer and clear out physical and spiritual clutter.
33. Take a winter walk in the snow.
34. Listen closely to the laughter of children.
35. Thank God for the children's laughter and voices.
36. Practice doing good.
37. Practice doing no harm.
38. Practice staying in love with God.
39. Practice journaling your thoughts each day.
40. Dance when you have the urge and do that joyfully.
41. Write down what you need to confess and then pray a prayer of confession.
42. Be still and know.
43. Start a new book of the Bible and stick with it.
44. Pray as though everything depended on God, work to be a reflection of that prayer.
45. Watch for the stranger you can serve.
46. Take time off from work to play.
47. Invite someone to pray with you.
48. Invite someone to worship.
49. Invite someone to a small group gathering.
50. Invite each of the above into your life, and this year you will enliven your soul!



Heritage Takes Worship On the Road

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rocket science, but it's a commitment. I really think it's part of God's will for Gina and I. We are really blessed to do it."

One challenge initially was ministering in a different environment, he added.

"I had to understand the environment we were serving. I had to pay attention to delivering the message and not what's going on—because you have some people falling asleep and others who may not be able to pay attention," he explained.

"What's amazing, though, is when we say the 'Our Father', it doesn't matter what stage they are in, their lips are moving. There is a desire (to connect with God) there!"

Flower said the Barnes House ministry was launched by Dr. Roxanne Pfeiffer.

Ziegenfus, the team also includes Jonathan Hartland, Diane Dennis, and the Rev. Monte Holland, a retired pastor. Other Heritage members assist with worship and liturgy.

In addition to taking worship outside the walls, the congregation welcomes young men from another special needs population into the building.

"A regional ministry for youth offenders has chosen Heritage as a place for regular worship, bringing young men to Heritage weekly for worship, for encounter with God," Flower explained.

Ziegenfus, who has taught four years in the Greensburg District Lay Ministry School, notes that

lay speakers have two years of training before they are certified, yet many rarely get an opportunity to speak in church.

He and his wife have found other ways to use the training. Besides their off-site services, they take the church to the airwaves with a radio program called "A Moment In The Word". The pre-recorded messages, which air 11 or 12 times daily on the odd hour,

include a brief scripture reading and message based on the reading.

"We reach

approximately 2000 people per day on our local Ligonier radio station," he said.

Flower sees empowering laity to take God's word to others is part of our Wesleyan and connectional roots. "Sometimes we get in the way of ministry," he said. "It's best when we can set people free to follow God's lead. "If done throughout the Conference, how many places could be similarly touched -- not only touched, but transformed by regular authentic worship?" Flower asked.



Labs Offer Forum for Ideas

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"I think we all realized how important that is to building authentic, intimate community—allowing space for us to work through the questions in ministry; even figuring out what questions need to be asked. The Lab experience was organic and relational, rather than programmed and institutional," he explained. "In that way, I think this has been a very different approach and people have responded positively."

Moving forward, Walker hopes to continue his work in creating a platform for leaders to participate in the building of new community.

"It's kind of like developing different "apps". (or applications) for ministry", Walker explained. "The Lab is a good app for dreaming big, but there needs to be more. This spring we're hoping to offer an app for leaders to be able to develop their own effective plan for creating a 'new place for new people'. And hopefully within the year we can develop an app that can assist leaders in building a vital core group - which is the seed for a new community of faith. When it's all said and done, I'm hoping we have enough apps available to leaders in this conference that creating a new place for new people is just a 'click' away."

Walker said he plans schedule more Lab sessions, as well as other offerings, in the coming months.

Pastors: Check Your Names and Addresses

The WPAUMC online database will be used to mail the Interlink to church leaders beginning in February. Log in to your church dashboard to be sure names and addresses are up-to-date and accurate.



Promote Your Church

Give your ministry that professional flair with promotional tools from the Conference communication department. Business cards, bookmarks and print ads are available for local church pastors and leaders. Visit [wpaumc.org>ministries>communications>communications toolbox](http://wpaumc.org>ministries>communications>communications%20toolbox) to order yours today!

Hit the Road in 2012!

Do your New Year's resolutions include living a healthier lifestyle? Improving your spiritual and physical health? Finishing a marathon?

The Conference Health as Wholeness Team has a new, more user-friendly online system for logging physical activity that can help—and gain points for your district toward the 2012 Golden Sneaker Award! Learn more at wpaumc.org/sneaker.

If you're serious about the marathon (or half-marathon or relay), the Pittsburgh Marathon/Imagine No Malaria team, headed by Dr. Bob Todd of **Christ Community UMC**, Butler, can help get you ready! Imagine No Malaria is an official charity of the Dick's Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon, so each runner, walker or relay team member commits to raising money to help eliminate deaths from the disease. For details, visit wpaumc.org/marathon.

The Golden Sneaker award was developed in part to encourage clergy and congregations to continue a faith tradition that dates back to Jesus' time. When Jesus called people to follow him, many left their individual pursuits to follow the One who promised them abundant life. Together, as a community of faith, they walked with Jesus.

That's why only miles walked as part of a congregational or group program or event that includes a spiritual component can be counted toward the award. Something like a CROP Walk or a Walk to Jerusalem

would qualify.

Start planning now to implement a program for

your church during Lent, which begins on February 22.

Concerned about the winter weather? Try "Walk to Columbia: The Ski Track", used in the Kane District to help them win the Golden Sneaker in 2010-11. (It was their second consecutive year logging the most miles to win the award.)

The ski track and a Walk to Columbia: Easter track, both developed by the Rev. David Stains, pastor of **Evans Memorial UMC**, are available to



Butler Christ UMC's 2011 Marathon Team

download from the Conference website, along with other programs like Walk to Zimbabwe. Go to wpaumc.org/sneaker.

If you don't like any of the programs you see there, consider creating your own. The only requirement is that it contains both a physical and spiritual components and be open to the congregation. Pray while you walk, or discuss a daily scripture reading. Remember that 20 minutes of physical activity equals 1 mile.

There's a new, easy to use system for logging your steps or their equivalent in other physical activity. Go to wpaumc.org/walkchallenge and sign in to enter miles.

For more information, e-mail healthteam@wpaumc.org.

Sweet, Michael to Lead Saegertown Event

Leonard Sweet, who has been described as one of the church's most important and provocative thinkers, will be the speaker at *Ministry in a TGIF World*, a two-day event scheduled February 12-13 at **Saegertown UMC**.

Songwriter and recording artist Jay Michael will lead worship.

A renowned author, preacher and teacher, Sweet is characterized as a historian of American culture; a visionary and a preacher and writer who "powerfully communicates the gospel to a postmodern age by bridging the worlds of academe and popular culture."

Sweet is the E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism at Drew Theological School. His website is LeonardSweet.com.

The cost for the event, which runs from 6 p.m., Sunday through Monday, is \$90 per person, including breakfast and lunch. Participants can earn one continuing education credit.

For more information or to register e-mail sumc@windstream.net or call 814-763-6685.



NEJ Coordinator Updates Volunteers in Mission Leaders

by Diane Miller, Missions, VIM Coordinator

Seven of 10 conferences in the Northeastern Jurisdiction (NEJ) are still in disaster response mode as the result of last spring's flooding and need volunteers to help with recovery, Greg Forrester, NEJ United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) coordinator, told conference VIM coordinators at a December jurisdictional meeting in Valley Forge.

Susquehanna Conference has 91,000 people who have submitted applications to FEMA for assistance after the September flooding. Some 37,000 residents of New York were impacted by flooding, and Vermont endured three different floods this past year.

For New York and Pennsylvania flood recovery will probably take two years, Forrester said. UMCOR has received little money in donations for these disasters, he added.

Forrester reported on the success of the UMCOR/UMVIM response in Haiti. The funding stream for hiring Haitians to work alongside volunteers has been good; volunteer teams have been excellent; and the Haitian Methodist Churches are praising the process and results.

During the gathering, the coordinators acting as a board, voted to renew Forrester's position for 2012.

Una Jones, executive at the General Board of Global Ministries, cautioned that VIM teams responding to international disasters should be fully trained and networked, and recognize the leadership of the hosting church or organization coordinating volunteers. She used a situation in Japan after the earthquake last year as an example of volunteers causing problems because they didn't follow VIM protocol.

At the meeting, the coordinators shared reports of VIM activities of their own conferences and affirmed how well

Volunteers in Mission fits into the four areas of ministry focus of the United Methodist Church: making disciples, ministry with the poor, global health, and new places/revitalizing congregations.

Ken Mengel, Secretary of Global Ministries in the Susquehanna Conference, reported that his conference has okayed the hiring of a ¾ time VIM Coordinator. That came after phone conferences with Western PA leaders on their job description for VIM coordinator.

The Western PA report included updates on VIM activity organized by district coordinators, ramp ministries, the Eastbrook Mission Barn, and speaking opportunities promoting VIM, as well as four VIM Leader Training events. It also highlighted WPAUMC trips to Haiti, Nicaragua, and the Susquehanna Conference.



Discover Camping in 2012!

"Another fresh new year is here, another year to live! To banish worry, doubt, and fear, to love and laugh and give! This bright New Year is given me to live each day with zest to daily grow and try to be my highest and my best! I have the opportunity once more to right some wrongs, to pray for peace, to plant a tree, and sing more joyful songs!"

I am sharing this poem by William Arthur Ward because a brand new year brings the inspiration to start fresh and renew ourselves. Now is the time to breathe new life into our ambitions and goals, and to reaffirm or redirect our spiritual lives. But, finding the time to do these things can be such a difficult task for most of us. We set goals and say we are going to take time for ourselves to relax and slow down, but inevitably our lives catch up to us and tasks pile up. Those determined goals and best intentions get pushed aside and turn into "I was going to ..." and "I should have ..."

Now is the time to change that trend. This year, let's be intentional in carving out those times to relax and spiritually re-energize. A great way to do this is to get others involved as well. Take the initiative to plan a renewal retreat for you, your family, and church. Each of our three camps--Wesley Woods, Jumonville, and Camp Allegheny--offer beautiful natural settings, perfect for hosting a relaxing weekend of fellowship and prayer. A retreat is a simple way for church families to get to know one another

better and a way to engage spiritually with those whom you care about.

Although planning a retreat may seem like a large task, it can be very easy. Larry Beatty and his team at Jumonville have created a great retreat planning packet for you to utilize called, "Planning Your Retreat ... One step at a time." Visit the retreat



page of the Jumonville website to request a retreat planning packet. Also, visit the websites of all three camps to find out more about their individual retreat rates and accommodations.

**Camp Allegheny – CampAllegheny.org
Jumonville – Jumonville.org
Wesley Woods – WesleyWoods.com**

The folks of the Camping and Retreat Ministries would like to wish you the very best New Year! We will continue to pray for a happy, healthy 2012 for all our United Methodist Churches and all the campers and guests of our camps.

Fund your Faith

United Methodist Foundation
OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA



Scherpereel

UMF Grant Applications Now Available Online

by Larry Scherpereel, Communications Consultant

The application phase of the 2012 United Methodist Foundation of Western Pennsylvania grant awards program opens February 1. This year will mark the first time applications will be accepted by the Foundation only through electronic submittal.

This change will ease input requirements for your application while reducing the volume of paper produced and handled as the Foundation committee members review all applications.

In addition to the details of your grant application, the new electronic application process requires that an Executive Summary be submitted. It should be a synopsis of your grant application written in narrative form that addresses the major points of your proposal, including a concise description of the proposed project, who it serves, why it's important, and why your church or agency should receive the funds required for implementation. A good Executive Summary will encourage our reviewers to carefully consider your full proposal.

As a result of a generous \$1 million bequest made by former Board Chair Robert M. Stewart, the Foundation has been able to award nearly 100 churches and 65 agencies with these grants since 2001. The awards have supported many new activities, such as camper-ships, inventive Sunday school curricula, food banks, and health screenings.

In the Foundation's review of grant applications, we look for the projects that will best be consistent with our mission to complement and reinforce the stewardship ministry of your church or agency, local organizations, or programs of the Western PA Annual Conference. Those that are of an outreach nature to a larger community; work in collaboration with other United Methodist entities; have specific matching sources of revenue; or are an integral part of a long-range plan for ministry in the community are also viewed most favorably.

Electronic applications for 2012 grant awards can be submitted to the Foundation anytime beginning Wednesday, February 1 until the deadline of Friday, March 23. Awards will be announced by the end of May.

You will find all materials necessary for completion of a Grant Application Form on the Foundation's Web site (umfoundation.org). Click on the FOUNDATION GRANTS button on the homepage and you will be directed to the needed forms. Please review both the Grant Application Guidelines and the Directions for Submission of Grant Applications carefully before sending in your completed Grant Application Form.

Fund Your Faith is provided by the United Methodist Foundation of Western Pennsylvania. To learn more about how the Foundation can assist in funding ministry in your congregation, visit umfoundation.org or call 800-743-2128. Be sure to "like" our Facebook page—United Methodist Foundation Western PA!

KUMFCU Wants To Be Your Financial Care Provider

Depending on who you talk to, health can mean different things to different people. To a personal trainer or a coach it's all about your strength, endurance, and performance. To a physician, it's about your overall physical well being. Therapists or psychologists are concerned for your emotional and mental health; whereas clergy help provide guidance for your spiritual life.

Keystone United Methodist Federal Credit Union, much like a coach, physician, or therapist, wants to help build your strength and endurance, perfect your performance, ensure your physical and emotional well being, and provide guidance for your financial life.

The credit union can help you create a personal plan for success through credit and

debt counseling and by providing the products and services you need to save money and plan for your future. All you need to do is ask. They are as close as a phone call or a few keystrokes on your computer.

Plus, with the credit union's new shared branching service, you have access to your account at over 4000 locations nationwide.

If you'd like to switch to a provider that will look out for your financial well being, contact Keystone United Methodist Federal Credit Union at (800) 886-3382 ext. 257 or by email at info@keystoneumfcu.org. The credit union serves all United Methodists in the Western PA conference and their family members, as well as UM churches and church staff, and UM organizations and their staff. Visit them online at keystoneumfcu.org.

Growing Faithful Ministries: A New Program for Capital Campaigns



The UM Foundation of Western PA has a new approach to capital campaign fundraising. Lisa Young, senior fund development consultant for the Foundation, recently answered some questions about it.

What's your new approach?

Growing Faithful Ministries, which is available for use now, is an approach that will appeal to pastors and congregations, keep costs low, and give churches a platform to raise necessary funds.

Will you partner with anyone else to offer Growing Faithful Ministries?

No. It is entirely home-grown. We believe it is a logical, efficient, and spiritual approach that will help congregations understand their church's needs and God's will for their projects. That is something that Growing Faithful Ministries will share with the Find Us Faithful approach we used previously.

What makes you confident that our churches will be successful with Growing Faithful Ministries?

Churches can count on the combined fundraising experience of UM Foundation staff members, which exceeds 80 years. Since 1994, Foundation members have helped 35 congregations in western Pennsylvania raise \$11.6 million for their capital projects. We have been involved in capital campaigns of all sizes. So we used a little bit of all of our experiences to develop a capital stewardship program that would be up-to-date and survivable in the modern world, but would not lose "brass-tacks straightforwardness."

What is the biggest change that churches will

experience with Growing Faithful Ministries?

One major change is the availability of Web-based materials that churches can personalize for their individual campaigns.

How big or small can capital campaigns be to use the Growing Faithful Ministries approach?

We expect that Growing Faithful Ministries campaigns will continue to support the needs of the vast majority of capital campaigns in our area.

What about differences in cost?

The cost to churches will be pretty much the same with some flexibility added. Those churches that have a very small-budget campaign planned can go with Growing Faithful Ministries "as-is" or chose a scaled-down version.

How does a congregation get started with a capital campaign?

With the advice and counsel of the UM Foundation, churches can begin with a planning study. This is an excellent way to gather information and assess the will of the congregation.

Is Growing Faithful Ministries a Bible-based program?

Absolutely. The spiritual component is primary. We will continue to encourage families to pray about their decisions and for God's will for their church. In fact, as we have discovered so many times in past campaigns, any good campaign is not just about the money. Congregations often grow together in so many different dimensions when a campaign is spiritually based. This is a definite advantage for those congregations that have used the Foundation's services previously, and for those that will use Growing Faithful Ministries in the future.



First Bethel team shovels debris from SHIM garage.

Church Aids SHIM

were using a closet," she added. "It was one of the domino things -- get the messy garage for storage (not messy anymore) and get a bigger food pantry.

Dennick-Ream and some other women went to the Nursery School at Prospect Park to wash toys, clean shelves and generally help out.

It's all an effort to Rethink Church, Dennick-Ream said. On January 30, they'll feed the hungry on Pittsburgh's Northside.

Scholarship Awarded

Katherine Wrona of Bethel UMC, Lower Burrell has earned a \$1,000 scholarship from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Her name was not included in the list of scholarship and loan recipients published in the last month's *Interlink*. Katy is a student at Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA.

Cokesbury

19015 Perry Highway
Mars PA 16046
724.776.6150
800.835.9804

Need 2012 Bible Reading Guide?

A limited number of printed copies of a 2012 Daily Bible Reading guide from the Pennsylvania Bible Society are available from the UM Center in Cranberry Twp. If you'd like copies, e-mail jane.fieldler@wpaumc.org or call the Conference Center at 800-886-3382.

The American Bible Society offers a Daily Bible Reading Guide on their website. Go to dbr.americanbible.org.

Appointments

Rev. Keith Dovenspike was appointed to Franklin: Leasure Run UMC, Franklin District, effective July 1.

Rev. Karen Salser was appointed to Indiana: Grace UMC, Indiana District, effective December 1.

Rev. Allen Bailey was appointed to Indiana: Grace UMC, Indiana District, effective December 1.

Rev. Alison Fisher was appointed to Indiana: Robinson Chapel UMC, Indiana District, effective November 1.

To Be Brief!

Mileage Rates Set for 2012 The IRS has announced the 2012 standard mileage rates that are used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable or other purposes. The rates are used for mileage reimbursement in the Conference. Treasurer Pat Morris notes that the business reimbursement rate is 55.5 cents per mile and the charitable/volunteer rate 14 cents per mile.

Note for Treasurers All 2011 Mission Share (apportionment) payments must be received in the Conference office by Tuesday, January 17, 2012. Payments should be mailed to WPAUMC Treasurer, United Methodist Center, P.O. Box 5002, Cranberry Twp., PA 16066. To see your church's share and what it supports, check out the "2011 Apportionment Dollars at Work" calculator.

Help Connellsville Ministries Move! Connellsville Area Community Ministries needs help this month during and after its move to its new location. Needed are demolition workers to rip out floors, walls and doors; carpenters to build walls with doors and windows; electricians to wire new rooms for electricity, phone and internet; drywallers to hang and finish, painters, and plumbers. If you can help, contact Shawn Goodwin at 724-626-1120, 724-317-8913 or connministries@gmail.com.

Official UMC App: Did you know there's an official UMC free mobile app available for Android or iOS devices? The UMC app brings The United Methodist Church community to your mobile device. You can access UMC news, daily devotionals, videos, resources and pictures.

In Memory

Renee Ellis, 57, wife of Rev. Pat Ellis, passed away on November 15. In addition to her husband, she is survived by her children Christopher (Michele), Nicole (Jason) Wier, and Tabitha (Ryan) Smith.

Marjorie Scruton, 88, wife of Rev. Paul Scruton, passed away on November 1. She is also survived by her children the Right Rev. Gordon (Rebecca), Carol (Gary) Griffith, Lois Mock, and Wayne (Melanie).

Virginia Hammett, 80, wife of Rev. Edward Hammett, passed away on December 17. In addition to her husband, she is survived by her children Karen (David) Dempsey, Edward (Dorothy) Hammett, Kimberly (Robert) Farrell, and Elizabeth (Harold) Elkins.

Betty Loney, 83, wife of Rev. Charles Loney, passed away on December 2.

Rev. Robert Callihan, 82, passed away on December 12. He is survived by his wife Eleanor and children Sheryl (Daniel) Mock and Merrilee (Ronald) Saccol.

Rev. Cloyd "Oz" Osborne, passed away on December 8. He is survived by his wife Alberta and his children Yolanda (William) Deemer, Tom (Carol) Osborne, and Rex (Tracey) Osborne.

H. Eileen Jewell, 86, wife of the late Rev. Gale Jewell, Sr., passed away on December 1. She is survived by her children Barbara (John) Baker, Deborah Jewell, Gayla (Bob Zylstra) Jewell, Gale (Gig) Jewell, Jr., and Charles (Suzanne) Jewell.

Classifieds

Child Care Provider PT position at Port Vue UMC at 8:45 am Sundays. Other service occasionally. Send resume to jwhatelyfields@yahoo.com or call Pastor Jo 412.378.6333.

Who is a Young Adult?

by the Rev. Erik Hoeke

Many congregations want to be in ministry with young adults, but who exactly IS a young adult? The answer is a moving target, both literally and figuratively.

The most common way to define "young adult" is by age range. I have heard young adults described as those from ages 18-30, 18-35, 21-35, and even 16-25. It is no wonder we are confused about who young adults are!

Another way to define young adulthood is by stage of life – the stage between adolescence and adulthood. This can also be confusing, especially since today's young people generally complete the transition to adulthood more slowly than previous generations.

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is commonly characterized by five key developmental milestones in life: leaving home, finishing school, becoming financially independent, getting married, and having a child. In 1960, according to sociologist Robert Wuthnow, 77 percent of women and 65 percent of men had completed all these tasks by age 30. Now, just 50 years later, only 46 percent of women and 31 percent of men had completed all five tasks by age 30.

"Think about that," says David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group. "'Settled by thirty' used to be the normal, typical pattern for young adults in the 1960s. Now that path represents a minority of today's young adults."

In addition, the sequence in which these tasks are completed is no longer normative. Sometimes leaving home occurs after finishing school, or financial independence comes before leaving home. And, like it or not, more young people are saving marriage as the last task – after financial independence, finishing school, and parenthood.

What does this mean for young adult ministry? It means it's no longer safe to assume that a person will leave home at 18, be finished with school at 18 or 22, married by 25, and have a child by 28. A normative young adult experience or timeline no longer exists.

Furthermore, young adults are a moving target – literally. In the 10 years since I graduated high school, I have lived in three different towns and seven apartments or homes. In that time, I have been active in four different congregations. I suspect this is also more normal than it once was.

So, who is a young adult? A young adult is someone navigating the seas between adolescence and adulthood. Some cut through the waters as quickly as possible, others consider it a leisurely cruise. Some encounter a choppy abyss, while others find only smooth sailing. Some stay in the same boat (or church) for the journey, but many need several boats to complete the journey.

Young adulthood is different than what it once was, and it continues to evolve. Does our ministry with young people reflect these changes?

Are you interested in joining the conversation? The Western PA Conference is seeking laity and clergy to serve on the Conference Council on Young Adult Ministry, to better equip congregations for ministry with young people. If you'd like to serve or know someone who would, contact Renaye Hoffman (Renaye.Hoffman@wpaumc.org) or Erik Hoeke (erik.hoeke@gmail.com).



Zim Team Seeks Applications for Immersion Program

The Western PA Conference Zimbabwe Partnership is looking for clergy and laity interested in spending about six weeks living in Zimbabwe this summer as part of a Zimbabwe Immersion Program (ZIP).

Those selected for the program will live with a Zimbabwean Christian family and meet together periodically to discuss their experience. The experience will allow Western Pennsylvanians to observe and learn best practices of ministry in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a largely Christian country and most of its people are more "churched" than Americans, according to those who have spent time there. The focus is for Zimbabweans to teach, help and train Western Pennsylvanians.

The dates are July 11-August 19. The deadline for applications is Jan. 31.

Selected participants will be responsible for only \$500 of the cost. The rest of the program cost will be paid by the partnership.

Those selected must participate in training, including learning about Zimbabwean culture, before the ZIP experience. Participation in a debriefing and sharing about the experience in churches and other venues is also required.

Download an application from wpaumc.org. Return the application by e-mail to kgreway@gmail.com or by mail to Rev. Kimberly Greway, 118 Sleepy Hollow Road, Pittsburgh, Pa 15216.

Questions? Contact Zimbabwe Partnership Coordinator Sandra Matoushaya at Sandra.matoushaya@wpaumc.org or 724.776.2300, ext 249

Workshop to Focus on Engaging Youth, Young Adults in Worship

Pastors, youth leaders and worship teams are invited to a workshop entitled Engaging Worship for Teens and Young Adults on Friday, Feb. 3 at **St. Paul's UMC**, Allison Park. Sign-in is at 9 a.m., with workshops beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Leader for the event will be the Rev. Joe Stobaugh, associate pastor and curator of worship at Argyle UMC in Texas. He is the president-elect of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts.

The goal of the event to help leaders learn ways to design worship that involves teens and young adults, to provide practical, ready-to-use ideas for better worship for teens and young adults, and to experience inspiring worship with a nationally known worship leader.

To reserve a spot, e-mail pmarconi@stpaulsumc.com or call 412-486-7006. The cost is \$20, including lunch, and the event earns .4 CEUs.

Delegation Considers Bishop Nominees

The Western Pennsylvania delegation to the General and Jurisdictional Conferences is in the process of discerning possible candidates for bishop.

The five clergy have prayerfully considered this step and agreed to participate in the interview process: Bill Blair, Alyce Weaver Dunn, William B. Meekins, Jr., Eric Park, and Bob Zilhaver.

The Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference will meet in July 2012 in Charleston, WV, to elect three new bishops.

Here's the timeline in Western PA:

January 2012 - The five pastors will be interviewed and the delegation may designate one or more of the five as an "endorsed" candidate.

June 2012 - The delegation will present any endorsed

candidates to the Annual Conference as it considers whether to nominate any episcopal candidate(s) to the Jurisdictional Conference.

July 2012 - *The Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference interviews episcopal candidates nominated by annual conferences and caucus groups before electing new bishops.*

September 1, 2012 - *The newly-elected bishops will take office.*

The delegation encourages United Methodists across Western Pennsylvania to pray for this process, for the delegation and the five individuals who will be interviewed in January, as well as for any "endorsed" candidates.