VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 NEWSLETTER DATE FEBURARY 2012

FIRELANDS FLAME

JUDY WISMAR CLAYCOMB, DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

Along the Way

"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isa.43:19)

Have you noticed? There's a lot of scuttlebutt around our UMChurch's current initiative for vital congregations. At a compass group leader meeting recently someone suggested,

"Say more about the purpose."

"OK. The purpose is to help our churches to be more effective making and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ-- for the transformation of the world!"

"Oh…that."

If "that" is simply a head thing, not a heart thing, a concept, not a motivation, or worse yet, a dictum from some hierarchy perceived as "not of the Body," rather than a personal desire so compelling that we ourselves are willing to be transformed in order to help it to happen, this mission --and the Vital Congregations initiative to help resource local churches for the mission -- will have no transforming Life, Hope, Energy, Power. Hearing your pleas for help in finding ways for your congregations to be energized, equipped and compelling in order to reach new people, younger people, more diverse people, I believe Christ's heart and hope *ARE* within you, motivating this mission.

Why the attention to numbers? See inside the meditation by Rev. Don Kuntz, pastor of Lodi UMC, offered at the Nov 13 compass church conferences, which sheds light on the value of measurement as part of the Vital Congregations effort. Also included in this edition are links to additional articles contributing to the discussion of our Church's current initiative.

I thank God for abundantly blessing so many Firelands ministries, more vibrant and compelling because you have been willing to give up some old things in order for God to do a new thing. I'd start naming names, but I don't want to leave someone out.

Let's do this instead: As God is doing a new thing in your midst, bringing vitality, transformation, hope, energy and power in the lives of Christ disciples, please share the good news through this newsletter and our Firelands District website, www.firelandsdistrict.org. We're going to call this column of brief anecdotes, ***"You Can't Make This Stuff Up,"*** a phrase immortalized on Cabinet by Rev. Dan Bryant, Mahoning Valley District Superintendent. Three Rivers D.S., Rev. Jim Humphrey preached that theme this month, lifting up examples of the wacky circumstances we face in the life of Christian discipleship, and the ways God works transformation in what may seem to be unlikely circumstances. True, WE can't make this stuff up: that which God has done, is doing and will do, bringing life from death, along the Way,

Judy

Vital Signs

Meditation by Rev. Don Kuntz, Lodi UMC for Church Conferences, Nov. 13, 2011

Matthew 20:20-28 reminds us that our purpose is to be servants, not to have titles, or positions. I've come from Cuyahoga county where titles and positions are important. I was often reminded that my title and position were less important than other peoples'. We are to be servants of each other. How are we, as individuals, servants of each other, and how are we, as United Methodist Churches, servants of other UM churches?

I'm the new guy in Medina County, still learning the ropes and the roads. But years ago, I was an Emergency Medical Technician in Wayne County. I owe a debt of gratitude to Roger Uhler, the Murray Family, and JR Campbell who taught me a great deal about what happens on emergency squad runs.

First, this year I've heard plenty of clergy complaining about numbers and reports. But in the back of the ambulance, numbers tell you what's happening in the body you are treating, the person you are tending to. Each number represents something. It's important to know real numbers, not pretend numbers. I'd like my BP to be 120/80, in reality some days, it's higher. I'd like my weight to be 190, in reality many years it's higher. My cholesterol isn't where the doctor says it should be. The real numbers reveal more of the current situation.

The ER staff would sometimes give us heck for only getting one set of vital signs, as the ambulance screamed its way to the hospital. We'd get feedback up one side and down the other. It was important to get a series of numbers, of vital signs, to see how things were trending – was the patient getting better or worse?

Now I know none of your Year End numbers or Charge Conference reports look like an accident report, or well, never mind.

Secondly, many of the numbers on our report forms represent people, people's lives. Are more of our people becoming involved in Jesus' work in the world? Are more of our people being nurtured in the faith?

This year, LODI UMC is removing almost 80 from our rolls (since we haven't subtracted in the last few years, only added). One seventh of the congregation: We no longer celebrate milestones with them; we don't hear their prayer concerns; we don't sing their favorite hymns.

Some of our members, we don't even have their addresses. What does that say? It says our relationship is not strong. We are not keeping in touch. But we could pretend to have 340 and feel good about ourselves, even though we're only keeping in touch with 200. What would Jesus say about our honesty?

Thirdly, there is power in numbers. When I heard last Spring I was coming to this part of Medina County, I started interviewing pastors. Some talked about how the winters are easier than where I was last. The snow won't be as deep here. I was told by a retired pastor that several UM churches in our neighborhood were competing for the same United Methodists members in this corner of the county. Well, we are not only here for United Methodists, we are open for all kinds of people, with all kinds of needs from all kinds of backgrounds. And what if I can't help someone but Lafayette can? What if I can't attract someone but LeRoy can? Then it's still a victory.

In the back of the ambulance, we had short hand for when a person wasn't doing so well, "another one circling the drain." Here at Lodi UMC, we rejoice if Chatham saves one from going down the drain. We rejoice if Nova saves one from going down the drain.

And what happens when we cooperate rather than compete?

In addition, we add 4 and 4 to get 8. When we multiply 4 by 4, we get 16. This synergy comes when we combine forces, share good ideas, support one another's ministries. When I was in Creston, we borrowed VBS supplies from Lafayette. It didn't hurt them any and it blessed us plenty. When I was in N. Olmsted, we held clergy meetings in Spencer.

The truth is that our churches have different personalities, and that's a good thing. Our churches have different styles, and different sounds, and we don't really compete with each other. We compete with the spiritual forces of wickedness (read your baptismal vows in the hymnal). We compete with worldliness and consumerism. We compete with a new fatal disease called affluenza. We compete with anger and hate.

What if we understood more of the power of being the Body of Christ? What if we as churches supported each other more? Attending each other's functions, sharing United Methodist Women speakers, sharing youth activities. What if more UM churches had tables at the Chatham Apple Butter Festival? What if we started working more like the brothers and sisters we are in Christ? Then our numbers would work for us instead of against us, then we'd be in Multiplication territory, instead of the neighborhood of addition and subtraction.

Paul wrote something about body parts. What if we as United Methodist Churches could live that into its reality?

Paul wrote about working together, about rejoicing together. What if we could figure out ways to live some of that into reality? What could happen?

Recommended articles on the discipleship purposes of our Church's Vital Congregations focus:

"We can either have a hard decade or a bad century"

http://www.churchleadership.com/Updates/120112Update.asp

"The proposed changes would streamline the denomination and make it more responsive to local congregations, some of which view the national agencies as out of touch, according to Hopkins." http://www.religionnews.com/search/YTo1OntzOjg6ImtleXdvcmRzIjtzOjU2OiIiTWFpbmxpbmUgUHJvdGVzdGFudHMgU2VlayBJbnRlcm5hbCBSZWZvcm1zLCBTdGlyIEFuZ2VyIiI7czoxMToic2VhcmNoX21vZGUiO3M6MzoiYWxsIjtzOjExOiJyZXN1bHRfcGFnZSI7czo2OiJzZWFyY2giO3M6NToibGltaXQiO3M6MjoiMTAiO3M6Nzoib3JkZXJieSI7czoxNjoibG93X3NlYXJjaF9zY29yZSI7fQ

"Better Ways to Measure Churches"

http://www.umportal.org/article.asp?id=8245

The Town & Country Team of the East Ohio Conference

has three things you might be able to help them with:

1) We are looking for some new members. We would welcome pastors and/or laity who are devoted to small churches, rural or small town. We meet 4 times a year, often with one of those by phone. We work to support small churches by giving grants to help with training of laity and with programs that are designed to reach new people.

2) We are seeking nominations for Small Church of the Year to be recognized at Annual Conference. (Small Church for us is defined as a church with less than 200 members and fewer than 100 in worship.) We especially want to recognize and applaud vital small churches that exemplify what a small church can do in service to their community, and are making and maturing disciples for Christ.

3) We are offering small churches and/or compass groups comprised of small churches the opportunity to submit applications for grants to support efforts to strengthen lay leadership, and laity outreach.

Please contact **Walt Jones** with your ideas by cell: 740-607-6915, r is 740-962-6128, Trinity UMC is 740-962-2285.

Historian of the Year Nominations and Church Anniversary Dates Requested

The East Ohio Conference Commission on Archives and History is seeking nominations for the Local Church Historian of the Year Award. Nominations with supporting evidence of historical work and activity done by him or her, should be submitted by March 1, 2012.

Local churches celebrating significant anniversaries of their founding (100th, 125th, 150th, 175th, 200th years) are asked to send a letter on your church stationery stating your anniversary information by March 1, 2012.

Please send Historian nominations and Church anniversary information to: Rev. Don Trigg, Chr. EOC Commission on History, 130 E. Walnut St., Galion, OH 44833. For further information call 330.715.5504, or email: DLT419@aol.com

Announcements

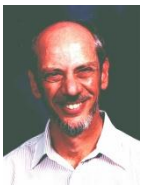
Bishop Hopkins & Cabinet have appointed:

Scott Blevins to New Washington UMC effective Jan 1, 2012

David Rittgers to Leroy UMC effective Feb 1, 2012. David previous served at Orchard Path UMC on the North Coast District.

Patricia Silva, part-time local pastor, will serve at Chatham Community Federated effective Jan 15, 2012.

Congratulations:



Rev. Jim Ellison, *earned his Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree from the Graduate Theological Foundation in Indiana.*

Nominations Sought for 2012 Van Bogard Dunn Ecumenical Award

The Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns announces the opening of nominations for the 2012 Van Bogard Dunn Ecumenical Awards. Two awards are given annually, one to a layperson and one to a clergy member.

Nominees should be persons who have demonstrated concern for the unity of the Body of Christ (the Church) by involvement in local, district, conference, or ecumenical activities that promote unity and understanding between persons of different faiths or denominations.

For more info, contact **Rev. J. Roger Skelley-Watts, COCUIC Chr.** Telephone: (419) 433-3984 or Email: revroger@frontier.com
Deadline March 31, 2012

District Youth Lock In"

ERNSTHAUSEN COMMUNITY CENTER

100 REPUBLIC STREET
(BEHIND K-MART OFF ST RTE 250 N)
NORWALK OH 44857 Ph 419.663.6775

Grades 6th—12th Only

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MARCH 16-17, 2012

STARTS FRIDAY AT 9:00 PM (NO EARLY BIRDS PLEASE)
(Registration 9:00—12:00 Midnight only) PICK UP ON SATURDAY 7:00 AM
COST $10.00 per person (PAY AT THE DOOR)

CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
FIRELANDS DISTRICT UMC
Food / Beverages / Games
Basketball/ Volleyball/Swimming / Sports / Team Building/Praise and Worship

Bring a Friend!

BRING:
- **SLEEPING BAG**
- **SWIM SUIT**
- **GYM CLOTHES**
- **GYM SHOES**
- **YOUR OWN SNACKS**

ADULT YOUTH LEADERS

We must have 1 adult for every 10 youths spending the night or your group will be turned away

Youth Leaders are responsible for Emergency Medical Forms for their youth attending.

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT John Murphey 440.988.0307

Developing Effective Leadership for Small Membership Churches

Town and Rural Resource Program of East & West Ohio Conferences invites you to ***The Small Membership Church: What Stops Us From Moving Forward,*** Sat. Feb 25, 2012, 9:00 am—4:30 pm at Marion Salem UMC, 1640 Salem Rd., Caledonia OH 43314. Registration deadline is Feb. 18.

The Town & Rural Resource Program (TARRP) is excited to be working with Dr. John S. Savage again. This workshop is designed to help churches find a way to move forward. So often past conflicts, hurts, and in-decision prevent churches from moving forward. Whether it is a new missional outreach, change in service times, style, or a building project, members and pastors are often uncertain what is holding them back. Change opens up wounds of the past that may need healing. Often the newer members, or the pastor, get the back-lash. Jesus calls us to healing and wholeness so we can be a healing presence in the world.

Goals of this event:

- Understand why the smaller church has difficulty moving forward
- Learn why historic pain hold holds churches back from moving forward
- Learn how to deal with conflict in small churches
- Learn ways to work through the pain and move toward healing and wholeness
- How to reach out to new persons

(see attached brochure to this newsletter or call the district office 419.668.6115)

Training Event

2012 District Lay Speakers

Basic/Youth Course and Advanced Course:

Norwalk First United Methodist Church
60 West Main St., Norwalk OH 44857 PH419.668.1938

April 20-21, 2012
Friday — 6:30—9:00 pm
Saturday- 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
Lunch provided on Saturday

Basic Course & Youth (age 14-18):

Book:
"Lay Speaking Ministries Basic Course Participant's Guide" by Sandy Jackson
Presenter: Rev. Bruce Kent

Advance Course:

Book:

"Transforming Evangelism: The Wesleyan Way of Sharing Faith" by Henry Knight III & F. Douglas Powe Jr.
Presenter: Pastor Richard Kretchmar

Cost $20.00 for each course, includes materials & lunch, due at the time of registration.
Checks payable to *Firelands District Lay Speakers*
Bring: Bible, UMC Hymnal, notebook & pencil

Firelands District Lay Speaker Training Registration

Name:_____ **Church:**_____

Mailing Address:_____ **City:**_____ **Zip**_____

PH:_____ **Email:**_____

Course: Basic ($20)___ **Advanced ($20)**___

Enclose check payable to *Firelands District Lay Speakers for $20 for each course.*

After deadline: $25

Mail registration to:

Firelands District UMC, 3 Stower Lane, Unit 5, Norwalk OH 44857

Any Questions, contact Eddie Herman, PH (440) 323-9759
Email: EddieJHerman@yahoo.com

Deadline to register, Monday, April 9, 2012 Any registrations received after the deadline will pay $25

Did You Know?

February Birthdays:

Pamela Sayre	Feb 1
Jerry Phelps	Feb 3
Scott Blevins	Feb 21
Scott McCutcheon	Feb 21
Carl Fannin	Feb 24
Donald Kuntz	Feb 26
Michael Padula	Feb 28

February Anniversaries:

Jack & Rainy Gessic	Feb 1
Ted & Cathy Austin	Feb 4
Gary & Kathy Hicks	Feb 11
Brian & Kim Amstutz	Feb 27

Deaths:

Dorothy Meiser, surviving spouse of Wilbur Meiser, died Dec 15.

Rev. David Sperry, Assoc Member, died Dec 18. Memorials may be directed to Mercy Hospice, 7568 Whipple Ave., NW, North Canton OH 44720 or American Cancer Society. Condolences may be sent to Cindy Sperry, 406 Adelaide St, Minerva OH 44657-1314

Patricia Edwards Hinerman, surviving spouse of Rev. John Hinerman, died Dec 19. Condolences may be sent to John Hinerman, Jr. PO Box 20100, Dulles International Airport, Washington DC 20041-2100.

Rev. Dorothy Penny-Larter, Provisional Elder, passed away on Dec. 15.

Edna Biglow, surviving spouse of Rev. Terence Biglow. Condolences may be sent to son, Terry Biglow, 1171 12th St. NW, New Philadelphia OH 44663.

Rev. Netty Burkey, retired elder, passed away on Jan 4. Condolences by be sent to his daughter, Dixon Wade, 1157 Sunset Blvd. Mansfield OH 44917

Rev. Robert L. Smith, retired elder, died on Jan 10. Condolences may be sent to his wife, H. Jean Smith, 800 S. 15th St., #1606, Sebring OH 44672-2043

Tiffin Faith has Free Worship Items Available. Contact the church for a full list.. PH 419.447.6748

February 2012

Primary Business Address
3 Stower Lane, Unit 5
Norwalk OH 44857

Phone: 419-668-6115
Fax: 419-668-7227
E-mail: FirelandsDist@rrbiznet.com

firelands
District
East Ohio Conference
United Methodist Church

WE'RE ON THE WEB

FIRELANDSDISTRICTUMC.ORG

DISTRICT CALENDAR

DS PRESENTING AT TUSCARAWAS DISRICT LEADERSHIP TRAINING—FEB 4

DS AT CPAC—FEB 6

DEADLINE FOR MINISTRIES AND MISSIONS GRANT APPLICATIONS AND EVAULATIONS– FEB 10 DUE IN THE DISTRICT OFFICE

DS AT CLERGY WOMEN'S RETREAT FEB 13-14

CABINET –FEB 15-17

BOOK CLUB– FEB 16
SANDUSKY TRINITY, 1:00—2:30PM
BOOK: ***CHRIST OF THE CELTS: THE HEALING OF CREATION*** *BY J. PHILIP NEWELL*
PRESENTER: REV. BOB MACHOVEC

OFFICE CLOSED FOR PRESIDENTS DAY—FEB 20

DISTRICT MISSON/OUTREACH TEAM FEB 22 10:00 AM DISTRICT OFFICE

DISTRICT NOMINATING COMMITTEE -FEB 23 10:00 AM DISTRICT OFFICE

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP FOR SMALL MEMBERSHIP CHURCHES-FEB 25 (SEE PG 4)

DS AT BOM MEETING FEB 26-28

CABINET—FEB 28-29

SUPERINTENDENCY COMMITTEE—MARCH 8 11:30AM DISTRICT OFFICE

DISTRICT FINANCE COMMITTEE—MARCH 8 1:00 PM DISTRICT OFFICE

COMPASS GROUP LEADERS—MARCH 8 2:00 PM DISTRICT OFFICE

DISTRICT UM WOMEN LEADERS MARCH 12 DISTRICT OFFICE 9:30 AM

DISTRICT YOUTH LOCK-IN MARCH 16-17 (SEE PG 4)

DISTRICT UM WOMEN SPRING MEETING-, MARCH 17-, SANDUSKY TRINITY

DISTRICT SPRING CONFERENCE MARCH 25 2-4:00PM NORWALK FIRST

DISRICT LAY SPEAKERS TRAINING APRIL 20-21 (SEE PG 5)