



IOWA CONFERENCE

Edition of

THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER



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Stained Glass Stories and Symbols of Faith Beautify Sanctuary and Lives

Imagine a new worship space, a dedicated sacred space with clear windows to the world. Then imagine that same nearly seven-year-old sanctuary adorned in stained glass with the symbols and stories of our faith.

You've just visualized, in your mind's eye, the Linn Grove United Methodist Church. Nestled in the country, just a quarter mile from one of the main routes into Des Moines, is a holy gallery of the stained glass creations of Robert "Bob" Swanberg. In the nearly three years since his retirement he's transformed a very nice church setting into a living witness to the resurrection faith of Jesus Christ.

Bob Swanberg's most recent creation is a Last Supper scene. It was installed just prior to Ash Wednesday service in February 2008. It took him nearly 100 hours, and 377 pieces of glass to make the sacred Lenten design. "I began working on it on January 1. My son-in-law built the frames. About four weeks later we were done."



The Lord's Supper, stained glass creation by Bob Swanberg

Thirty year interest

"I became interested in stained glass over 30 years ago," Swanberg said, "but because I had a

business that took me away from home for as many as 40 weeks a year I had to set it aside. But then after I retired I took it up again."

The then Pastor of the Linn Grove Church,

Rev. Raymond McKimpson, "asked me if some windows could be done for the church," Bob recalled. "I had been in a restaurant and had seen some stained glass. It just caught my

imagination. I didn't know that I couldn't do that...and so I just did." Stained glass lamp shades were his first projects.

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Lay Ministries Summit a Smashing Success!!

On Sunday, February 27th, 123 people gathered at the Griswold UMC for the first SW District Lay Ministries Summit. Laity and clergy from all over the district came to discern their interests, gifts and passions for ministry in, through, and beyond their church. They were helped to connect with others who had a similar sense of call to mission or ministry, wherever they came from. The energy they generated was awe-inspiring!

Norma Morrison, Annual Conference Lay Leader, was a special resource for the day. Speaking during the opening worship, Norma called lay persons to a new or renewed response to God's call in their lives through their baptisms, by offering practical service to God and their communities. Ed Kail, SW District Field Outreach Minister, guided the discernment process throughout the day, to help people recognize their gifts and call. The process drew upon the book *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, by Bishop Robert

Schnase, for a framework of understanding how the ministry of the laity can revitalize and renew the church through radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity.

SW District superintendent, Brian Milford, helped participants to connect their callings not only to each other, but to the emerging organization of the district. He shared a vision of many teams of people carrying out life-changing and world-transforming ministries, because they are linked together through district organization. Brian urged people to get together, get organized and get going on the Kingdom mission of Jesus Christ.

Thanks go to pastor Leila Blackburn and her team of hosts at the Griswold church, and to the Summit design team: Melodee Carstens, Sheryl Dammann, Ed Kail, Brian Milford, and Lanette Pollock-Plambeck.

Iowa Justice for Our Neighbors

by Doris Knight, Vice Chairperson

Immigration was one of the key political issues of 2007, initially offering some hope for comprehensive reform of the U. S. immigration system. However, the hope became disappointment when Congress failed to come to an agreement and legislation faltered. There were a few victories for pro-immigration groups at the end of the year, preventing some new crackdowns, and rolling back some laws which threaten immigrants and their advocates. However, in the absence of comprehensive reform at a national level, which would make the immigration system work well for everyone, some states have passed very punitive laws, and all immigrants are feeling threatened. Thus the work of Justice For Our Neighbors

continues to be a key resource for immigrants seeking a stable status in precarious conditions.

A total of 38 Iowa Justice For Our Neighbors legal clinics were held in 2007 in four sites: Sioux City, Cedar Rapids, Columbus Junction, and Des Moines, where 324 new clients had the opportunity to consult with our attorneys. An additional 55 new clients from SW Iowa received advice from our JFON attorney at the Omaha JFON Site. Our two JFON attorneys continued

to work with more than 500 Iowa immigration cases in 2007, and currently have 395 of these in their open caseload.

Although the largest percentage of JFON clients come from Latin America, especially

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—by Arthur Lee McClanahan, Director of Communication—

A long time ago I heard a song that grabbed me in a way that few have since. I was sitting in the large ballroom of the hotel where the Congress on Evangelism was meeting. Wes Putnam sang before the morning Bible study. His music was woven throughout the event. But that morning, in the midst of the refreshing wading into and waiting upon the text, I heard Wes sing some words that I'd heard before...but never in that way.

He was hardly done with the song when I jumped up out of my chair, ran to the table where someone was selling cassettes of his music, laid down my money, and clutched the tape as if, in that plastic box, the unlocked revelation for my life had just been released.

Wes' song was entitled, "It is Finished." He drew the inspiration for it, of course, from John 19:30, where the evangelist records that, at the end of it all, Jesus simply declares, "It is finished," bows his head, and gives up his spirit.

I'd been through the Gospel of John countless times. The pages of my Bible are more tattered and soiled in that section of the entire Book of books than almost any other. Alan Culpepper, then a doctoral student of D. Moody Smith, at Duke Divinity School, led the small group discussions of the fourth Gospel. I'd been immersed in the developed theology, the contrasts, and the expressed notion that there was more to be said but that also enough had been said.

Maybe that's the key...more could be said...but enough had been said. Rather than saying, "in conclusion," followed by "let me summarize," and "at the end of the day," and all the other last words that we too often use when we come in for a landing only to bounce off the runway again for a second, third, fourth, or infinite attempts to sit down and be quiet, Jesus simply says, "It is finished."

How simple. How immensely, deeply profound! Yes, the betrayal, the loneliness, the isolation, the condemnation and the torture had come to an end. A field reporter of the day could have chronicled that. Adding the old symbol #30# would have told the copy editor that the story was done.

And, in a way, that's what Jesus did say. "It is finished." It's through.

But Jesus was saying so so much more. And maybe, for me, it had to be Wes' singing that gave life to the plain words.

"It is finished." The struggle for my soul is over. The advocating for me, taking up my cause was over. The tug-of-war between the evil that would undo the good that I would do and the "very good" reflection of the sacred Creation was finished. The "do over," the best two out of three would never happen.

Why not? Because "It is finished!"

The claiming and the naming that made the beginning of the human history so blessed would, once again, be possible. In gentleness, in humility, in gracious relief, the quest to negate the oneness that God desires with humankind was declared impossible. The naming and claiming would again, and forever, be as holy as the first inspired moment.

It was in Wes' song that I realized that John 19.30 was as much a statement for me as it was an historically concluding remark. It was as if I had been called out, been told that "this one's for you"...and for everyone else as much as for me. And though I hardly deserved it, the blessed assurance declared "yes, you do."

That wasn't the end. That will never be the end of the story.

It's the beginning...the beginning of a new understanding...the beginning of a new possibility...the beginning of a fresh start...the beginning of a realization that there is a call, a claim, a pathway.

"It is finished" is the very beginning when all the encumbrances wither and fall away.

Oh yes, there will be hard days...oh yes, there will be disappointments...oh yes, there will be closed doors, powerful inequities.

And yet, with belief that the struggle to separate humankind, to separate me from the God who creates, who created me, is over, is finished, life lived in the love of God, from which we cannot be separated, will overcome, will endure.

On that Friday so long ago, lonely, high on the hill the declaration was quietly broadcast, "It is finished." And with those three simple words, the Lord of life gave, and continues to give the promise of hope and the inspiration that, indeed, "It's just beginning!"



Kevin Evers

New Communications Manager Named

The Communications Advisory Team, in conjunction with the Episcopal Office and the Human Resources Committee, is pleased to announce that Kevin Evers will be the new Communications Manager. He will begin on Tuesday, March 25, 2008.

Kevin has been the Associate Director of Connectional Ministries for Communications for the Kentucky Annual Conference since 2005. He has been an Art Director, Graphic Designer and Graphic Design instructor in the St. Louis area. An active United Methodist, he has been a Bible Study leader, President of United Methodist Men, Youth Group sponsor in local churches and a member of the North County Churches United for Racial Harmony and Justice/Multi-Racial small group leader. His father and uncle are retired United Methodist pastors.

When asked about his vision for the Communications Manager position he said, "I see myself being a team player who can offer fresh and new ideas where needed and also continue the professional work that is already in place."

In addition to graphic design, Kevin has extensive experience in video, print and photography, has supervised the Kentucky Conference website, one that was "built" by the same firm that created the Iowa Conference website, and has conducted training for Kentucky Conference laity and staff.

Kevin, and his wife, Carla, are the proud parents of three sons and one daughter, ranging in age from 10 to 5 years old.

We are genuinely pleased to welcome Kevin Evers to the Communications Ministry Team of the Iowa Annual Conference. He will be a tremendous asset "from day one."

Iowa Justice for Our Neighbors

Continued from front page

Mexico, others have come from 52 countries in Africa, Asia and Europe as well as Canada. Our attorneys work with most types of immigration cases including asylum, family-based, and citizenship applications. Special laws like Temporary Protective Status (TPS), the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA), and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) give some immigrants the opportunity for stable legal status. Our attorneys have advised some persons held in detention, and other clients needing help as they go through the removal process in Immigration Court.

Success stories show the human face of our JFON clients and the capabilities of our attorneys. A young

Honduran man came to the U.S. more than ten years ago as a child. A judge granted him TPS even though his proof of presence here was weak. Rose said that the key was letting him tell his own story during his court appearance. A mother and her five children were granted Legal Permanent Residence within six months after Alison discovered that they were eligible through the husband/father. A Guatemalan man received his Legal Permanent Residence from an immigration judge after having his NACARA application denied wrongfully. Now he can return home to visit his sick brother and the rest of his family whom he has not seen for 20 years. A victim of domestic violence can free herself from her abuser after being granted her own Legal Permanent Residence through the Violence Against Women Act.

From Dreams to Reality

By Pastor Don Bogue

In 1954 the Evangelical United Brethren Church of Dysart constructed the church building that is being presently used by the Dysart United Methodist Church. The cost was \$150,000. After the merger of the EUB Church and the Methodist Church to form the United Methodist Church, these two churches united in Dysart and continued to use the EUB building.

Property was purchased immediately south of the church building over 20 years ago. The house on that property was used for church activities for several years. Then the house was moved to a different location. The congregation started to dream about expanding their church building onto this now vacant lot.

A Space Needs Committee was created eight years ago to look into the needs of the church. After meeting with many people in the congregation, it was decided that the primary needs were a larger fellowship hall, classrooms that were easily accessible for all people, a new large, modern kitchen, and handicap accessible restrooms.

Church building committee

A Church Building Committee was formed in September of 2001. This Committee considered many possible plans for



Groundbreaking ceremony

the construction of a new addition to the present church building.

In 2003 the church decided to work with Dan Jackson of Master Plan Ministries to raise money for the new addition. Through the efforts of the entire congregation on the Dream Big financial campaign, over \$580,000 was raised.

The Building Committee submitted a plan for the new addition to the Charge Conference on August 15, 2007. This plan addressed the needs of the church put forward by the Space Needs Committee. The new addition was to be 91' by 65' at its widest part and would be connected to the present church building by a walkway. The cost would be \$767,500, although that cost could be reduced by the church providing volunteer labor. The plan was approved. A contract was signed with Cardinal Construction of Waterloo to be the General Contractor for this project.

On August 27, 2007, the congregation broke ground for the new addition. Since that date, construction has been moving forward at a rapid rate. A great number of church volunteers have been working with the construction personnel on this project—painting, finishing wood trim, and digging trenches for water runoff.

On November 18, 2007, the church launched a new "From Dreams to Reality" campaign to raise the additional money needed for this project. People were asked to make a 2 year pledge. So far, \$70,000 has been raised in this campaign.

The church also held Church Auctions in November of 2005 and November of 2007 to raise money for furnishing the new addition. Over \$14,000 was raised.

Construction nearly finished

The construction of the addition is now almost complete. Plans are that the inside of the addition will be finished by Easter. The church is really looking forward to celebrating



The building in this winter's snow

Easter in this new addition. Landscaping and other outside work will be done in the spring.

The church will be taking out a short-term loan at a local bank to finish paying for the addition. When all the "From Dreams to Reality" pledges are given, the church should have enough money to complete paying for this project.

The congregation is looking forward to all the meals, special events, programs, and classes that will be held in this new addition. The addition will make possible many new opportunities to minister for Christ in the Dysart community.



Framing the building

Stained Glass Stories and Symbols

Continued from front page



Bob Swanberg and a panel from the Nativity Window

Along the line he's made stained glass crosses, "I've lost count, but I'm sure it's well over a hundred by now." The model for his first crosses, about six inches high, came "from a cross that I picked up in a garage sale for 50 cents. Then I got a book with lots of designs...I work from some of those ideas and make changes along the way."



Rose window cross

Swanberg has made some larger pieces. Many of his angel designs hang in the windows at the rear of the sanctuary that separate it from the fellowship and Sunday School area of the church. "This is our walk of angels," said Jerri Swanberg, Bob's wife. He credits her with much of the beauty of his creations. "She's my color designer. She picks pieces that go together real well."

Much of the glass that he uses comes from local hobby shops. "Some of what I use, though," he revealed, "came from the old church building. Some of it's over 100 years old." Some of the old glass was used in the Jesus figure in the three panel Last Supper that hangs over the altar.

Does Swanberg's master craftsmanship reflecting the Master have an impact on the worshipping community? One church member summed it up in a note she sent to him the morning after the Ash Wednesday evening service. "I can't tell you how moved I was when I first saw the stained glass last night and how I almost cried," she wrote, "it was so beautiful."



Angel hanging in a window at the rear of the sanctuary



From the Bishop. . .

Gregory Vaughn Palmer

Dear Friends and Followers of the Risen Christ:

You are likely receiving this issue of the Iowa edition of *The Reporter* just before Easter or just after Easter. You will be either transitioning from singing the hymns and rehearsing the scriptures of the Passion of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ or still humming “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today”. Whatever you do, don’t stop singing, rehearsing and living the message of Easter. After all Easter is the principle festival of the Christian Faith. Easter informs all that we are as Christians and as the church.

Easter gives us our lives back. But we don’t get them back the way they used to be. We are freed from bondage to sin and death. We are set free to really live as God yearns for us to live. We are set loose to declare in word and deed the power of the Risen Christ at work in us. The gift of new life that we have received is not given to be hoarded but to be given away.

“We are set loose to declare in word and deed the power of the Risen Christ at work in us.”

One of the Gospel lessons for Easter morning is Matthew 28:1-10. It is wonderful text filled with mourning, duty and loyalty, an earthquake and an angel and near death experiences. Fear and joy, terror and delight mingle together. But the thing that stands out most to me is the tone of urgency in the interaction between the two Mary’s and the angel:

“But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come; see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.’ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.”

So what about us? Do we have any good news, any message of such importance that our steps are quickened and our tongues loosed? From this Easter forward may it be so. *The Lord is Risen... The Lord is Risen indeed.*

Got to run and tell somebody.
†Gregory V. Palmer



Gregory V. Palmer
Bishop

Wittstruck Chosen as LDM for Social Justice and Mission

Naomi Sea Young Wittstruck has been selected as the Leadership Development Minister for Social Justice and Mission. She will begin working with the Leadership Development Team on April 1, 2008.

Naomi Sea Young is a graduate of Cornell College in Mount Vernon, Iowa, where she earned a Bachelor of Special Studies in Social Justice and minored in Religion and Philosophy; and Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, where she specialized in Church and Community Ministries and Church and Public Policy.



Naomi Sea Young Wittstruck

Naomi Sea Young is active in her local church and has held a wide

variety of ministry-related positions. Prior to being hired for the leadership development position, she was the Campus Ministry Associate for the Wesley Foundation at Collegiate United Methodist Church, Ames, Iowa.

The Leadership Development Minister for Social Justice and Mission provides leadership to the conference in the areas of addressing social concerns, identifying and training potential leaders, promoting participation in mission activities, and collaborating in the development of conference-wide vision, planning and resourcing.

Living Water and Ellston to be 2008 Builders Calls Recipients

The 2008 recipients of the spring and fall Builder’s Calls have been announced by the Iowa Parish Development Committee. Living Water United Methodist Church in Marion (East Central District) will be the spring call and Ellston United Methodist Church (South Central District) has been designated to receive the fall call.

These churches were recommended by the Parish Development Committee and approved by both the Iowa Annual Conference cabinet and the Iowa Board of Global Ministries at recent meetings.

The Living Water project is to

convert the former Marion Mall into a ministry site for the church and other ministries. Total cost of the project is estimated to be \$357,853. Marty Schumacher is the pastor of this fairly new congregation.

Ellston project

The project at Ellston will make their current sanctuary more accessible and build a more spacious, healthy, and easy to maintain fellowship hall with bathrooms, and add an attractive, welcoming entry way. The estimated cost of this project is \$195,000.

Persons and congregations who

have signed up as United Methodist Builders are called on twice a year to help fund building projects for both new and established congregations. The calls are issued by the office of the Bishop. Builders pledge any amount they choose from \$10 per call to \$50 or more.

More United Methodist Builders are always needed. Persons or congregations who would like to become builders are urged to contact the United Methodist Builders’ coordinator, Norm Knight (515-277-4719, or KnightNL1@cs.com, or 1548 28th St; Des Moines, Iowa 50311).

Evanston Church will Host a “Weekend with Marcus Borg”

April 4–6, 2008

Theologian and biblical scholar Marcus Borg, one of the nation’s foremost interpreters of progressive Christianity, will be in Evanston April 4–6 to deliver four lectures and preach a Sunday sermon at First United Methodist Church.

Since the publication of the best-seller *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* in 1984, Borg has built a coast-to-coast reputation as a professor and author with solid academic credentials who is able to connect with popular audiences of laypeople and spiritual seekers.

One of his peers, the Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor, has said of him: *With great clarity and pastoral genius, Borg offers questioning Christians a way to keep their faith without shutting down the search for truth.*

Borg was one of the original participants in the Jesus Seminar, a cluster of biblical scholars dedicated to determining the historical authenticity of Jesus’ sayings in the Christian gospels.



Marcus Borg

Weekend events

“A Weekend with Marcus Borg” at the Evanston church, located at 516 Church St. near downtown Evanston, will begin at 7 p.m. Friday, April 4 with a free lecture, “Two Visions of Christianity Today.” On Sunday, April 6, he will give the Virginia Bailey Memorial sermon during the 154-year old congregation’s regular 10:30 a.m. worship service.

Under the theme, “Being Christian in the 21st Century,” Borg will deliver three lectures on Saturday, April 5 with time built in for audience response. His presentations are titled:

- 9 to 10:30 a.m.—“Beyond Literalism to Reclaiming Christian Language.”
- 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.—“Beyond Christian Convention to Intention and Practice.”
- 1:15 p.m.—“Beyond Cultural Convention to Alternative Values and Community.”

There is a \$40 registration fee that covers all three Saturday lectures and lunch for those who pre-register. For students, the fee is \$25. Funds are available for scholarships. Hotel information and registration forms are online at <http://firstumc-evanston.org/New/Marcus.html>.