

April 1, 2010



IOWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE—SOUTHWEST DISTRICT

Sharing The Mission

“Making Disciples...Developing
Leaders...Transforming The World”

From The District Superintendent

Are we still sharing the Good News with our children?

Since I was an infant, I attended Sunday school. My parents said ‘go,’ and I went. The whole family went. For decades, my grandfather taught an adult class in his rural church in Western Kansas. Sunday school was the place where I learned the stories of Jesus, where I sang the songs of our faith and where I, from time to time, managed to torment the faithful and patient teachers who led our classes. Sunday School taught me what it means to follow Jesus.



Sunday school has its origins among the rowdy poor of England’s Industrial Revolution. Robert Raikes (1736-1811), a crusading newspaper editor, developed Sunday classes as a way to reach out to England’s poor in the 1780’s. Dubbed in Protestant circles “the greatest lay movement since Pentecost,” Sunday school traveled across the big pond in the 1790’s, eventually becoming the Protestant norm here. When I grew up Sunday school was taken for granted. That was the church’s primary means of teaching the faith to children.

But Sunday School appears to be suffering a gradual but steady decline. A study by the Barna Group indicated that in 2004 churches were 6% less likely to provide Sunday school for children ages 2 to 5 as in 1997. For middle-school kids, the decline was to 86% providing Sunday school in 2004 from 93% in 1997. Similarly, there was a six-percentage-point drop in Sunday schools offered for high school kids—to 80% from 86%. **In the churches of the Southwest District** the number reported for average Sunday School attendance (all ages) has gone from 2,996 in 1998 to 1,702 in 2008...**that represents a decline of nearly 57% in 10 years!**

A number of reasons can be given for the decline, including the increasingly secular society and other demands on the time of the average child. And then there is the content issue...what appealed to me and my generation simply will not fly with today’s busier and more sophisticated kids. Other programs are being envisioned by congregations to meet the needs of today’s children, confirmation classes continue to be important, new and innovative Vacation Bible School and After School Programs are also having positive results.

However, in the face of these shocking numbers, the fundamental question for me is, are we finding effective ways to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with our youth and children? Are we providing opportunities for the Scriptures to form the lives of our children? Are the saints of the church continuing to nurture the young in the faith? If not, why not? And if not now, when? *Perhaps God is calling you to this important ministry for this critical time.*

May we continue to seek ways to share the Good News of our Easter Faith...even with our children!

Brian

Change The World

What if...on one weekend all around the world, United Methodists came together to work with the local communities? **What if...**as we serve people locally, we unite globally to eliminate a preventable, treatable disease that kills one child every 30 seconds?



“We all want to see change in the world and by serving our local communities, we get to see that change up close and personal. But we can also touch those we do not see and may never meet. By raising awareness and funds, we can save lives and conquer malaria—a disease that the U.S. has already defeated” said the Rev. Larry Hollon, chief executive of United Methodist Communications.

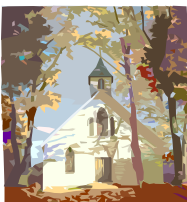
On **April 24-25, 2010**, United Methodists around the world are invited to participate in Change the World, a weekend event that coincides with World Malaria Day on Sunday, April 25. To promote this event, go to the Cokesbury website. They have the products to help your congregation prepare for this event.

Ed Kail (Field Outreach Minister)



Beyond Buildings

One of my Bible professors in seminary used to say, “If something in scripture is repeated, it must be important.” I thought of him the other day after two encounters in which my conversation partner said, “I wish all of our church buildings would just disappear somehow.”



I was struck by the repetition—the same comment from two different people in separate conversations. “If our buildings were removed—totally destroyed—then maybe we

would face the real issues that are afflicting us.” What does it mean that our physical facilities have become a burden, a hindrance, a source of frustration, - - even a sort of prison in which we are captive?

Our buildings: so familiar, so safe, so sacred in memory. The location of thousands of little life events and major transitions. We know our places there—and the places of people long gone from mortal life. We know what to do there, and how to do it—our way. There we have sung, prayed, wept, rejoiced, confessed, and been forgiven. There, at least sometimes, we have been the Church.

And life has moved on around us, and in us. Some old structures, like horse barns and brooder houses, have lost their functionality and have been either remodeled or torn down. Most of our church buildings have been tinkered with, but left largely unchanged, even if they don’t function well any more. And often, the building absorbs more and more attention and resources, even as the persistent decline of our

rural communities and our mainline denomination have continued apace.

What would it take for us to get beyond our buildings? A fresh vision of our mission from God? A captivating experience of the power of Jesus to transform lives? A movement of the Spirit for courage to face harsh realities with faith? A “spiritual tsunami” of love that impels us out of our doors and into our communities with zeal and joy and Good News?



If something is repeated, it must be important. Scripture writers thought so. Parents seem to think so. A repeated refrain in the Book of Revelation is, “Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches!” So: What is the Spirit saying to you and your church--about your building? I’m really curious to know.

Ed Kail

Field Outreach Minister

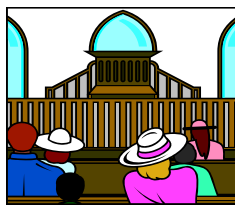
Southwest District Conference & Pre-Conference Training/Review

Celebration of Mission and Ministry And Pre-Conference Training

Sunday, May 2, 2010
First UMC
800 Poplar Street
Atlantic, IA

2:00 pm—5:30 pm
(Childcare Provided)

The Southwest District Conference will begin with a registration and fellowship time beginning at 2:00 pm and include celebration of the SW District mission and ministry. A special offering will be received to support *Haiti Disaster Relief*.



The following persons are members of District Conference according to the Iowa Conference Rules of Order: All clergy, local church lay leaders, president of UMW, UMM, and UMYF from each local church, lay members of Annual Conference,

equalization lay members from each local church, district-at-large members of Annual Conference and all members of the District Connectional Ministries and district committees. **(Please be sure that these persons in your congregation receive this announcement.)** Any material that needs to go into the District Conference Packets must be turned into Shirley at the district office by **Friday, April 23, 2010.**

The pre-conference training session will begin at approximately 4:30 pm for all persons who will be attending annual conference. Please be sure to bring your Pre-Conference Manual.

Could You Serve on an Annual Conference Committee?

The SW District has the following vacancies on Annual Conference committees. We are looking for individuals to serve on the following:

- Board of Camps—need a layperson with either finance experience or Christian Education experience
- Board of Global Ministries—lay man
- Youth representation to agencies—younger than 18 at appointment
 - ◊Equitable Compensation
 - ◊Human Resources
 - ◊Nominations

- ◊Church & Society
- ◊Global Ministries
- ◊Archives & History
- ◊Christian Unity
- ◊Commission On Religion and Race (CORR)
- ◊Commission on Disabilities

YOUNG ADULT REPRESENTATION TO AGENCIES—18-30 years old at election; 4 year terms

- ◊Council on Finance & Administration (CFA)
- ◊Equitable Compensation
- ◊Sessions
- ◊Pastoral Care & Counseling
- ◊Nominations
- ◊Resolutions

- ◊Board of Discipleship
- ◊Disabilities



Also needed is a Chairperson and Quadrant Representatives for the District Nominating Committee.

Anyone interested in service should contact the Southwest District Office at Shirley.Lewis@iaumc.org. Those interested will be sent committee descriptions, preferably by e-mail.

Serving is a way to answer Christ's call to make disciples.

Lay Speaking Classes Are Coming Soon!



Lay speaking classes are being offered again in the Southwest District! One basic course and one advanced course will be offered on **April 9-10, 2010** at Atlantic, First

United Methodist Church, 800 Poplar, Atlantic, IA. If interested in receiving a registration form for the classes, please contact Shirley Lewis (District Administrative Secretary) at Shirley.Lewis@iaumc.org or call 712-243-8573.

In **October, 2010**, there will be two advanced courses offered at Salem United Methodist Church in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Future information regarding those courses will be forthcoming.

Your Mission Work, 2010...

In our lives we are repeatedly challenged to understand what it means to be faithful. We all know we are supposed to be dedicated and committed, but at times it seems we all see wavering of faithfulness in our lives as well as those around us. How can we insure we will remember what it means to share this virtue of faithfulness and love? I Samuel reminds us “And the Lord will repay each man for his righteousness and his faithfulness.” We each display the above by caring for others.



On the conference website you will soon find the new updated Rainbow Covenant Book. The Ingathering books will arrive in the churches, and the district office has available some new Advance books. Here is a lot of material for you to digest as you prepare your “mission year”. This will help you show your dedication and faithfulness to missions in 2010. We have seen so much heartache in the world around us recently. Do not waver; show your love, caring and faithfulness to those in need.

I thank you for the 2009 reports you sent. Wonderful reporting of your faithfulness to the world around us.

“Happy Spring” to all!

Leann Baker
2011 Vail Ave.
Clearfield, IA 50840
641.336.2354
leann@iowatelecom.net

New Outreach—Okoboji Camp Ambassadors!

An Okoboji camping experience has been part of countless people’s faith stories beginning in 1915. Camping events provide children, youth, young adults and families with an opportunity to learn, play, experience God’s love in the outdoors, grow in faith in a safe atmosphere, and to reach their personal best! The activities and opportunities that campers experience at camp will stick with them for the rest of their lives! Camp provides the acceptance and support of a Christian community and positive relationships with caring adult leaders. At Okoboji, Christ is shared in song, word, worship and example. Camp provides an unforgettable summer experience, where campers can discover and explore exciting activities in a carefully supervised, Christian environment. Loves are changed forever!

The purpose of a **Camp Ambassa-**

dor is to help local churches share real-time camping and retreat information with children, youth and families in their local churches and communities, as well as other ways to become involved in this life-changing ministry!

Camp Ambassadors work within their local churches to continue the tradition of sharing the mission and ministry of an Okoboji camping experience! Our goal is to make it easy...even FUN to share this powerful opportunity, rich in tradition and rooted in faith!

An Okoboji **Camp Ambassadors** information packet will be mailed to your church within the next week.

Included in the information packet:

◇ **Camp Ambassadors Guide**

(easy to use, step-by-step guide)

- ◇ DVD with multiple length video clips for worship/youth group, photos and all forms/paperwork needed to share about camp
- ◇ 2010 Catalog & Brochures—please let us know how many more you need!



For additional copies, please contact us at camp.info@okobojiencamp.com or 866.856.9862.

Thank you in advance for making sure this information finds its way to your local church’s Okoboji Camp Ambassador!

Sincerely,

Okoboji United Methodist Camp

Happenings in Hispanic Ministries

Rev. Rubén Mendoza, Hispanic pastor at Broadway UMC, Council Bluffs, has said, “¡Lideres son todos!” (Leaders are everything!) Finding, developing and mobilizing leaders in Hispanic ministry is crucial for any strategy for the future. Here is an update on the “Instituto”, the Leadership Institute sponsored by the Iowa Annual Conference, for which Rubén serves as a leader:

On February 26 and 27, a group from five Iowa Hispanic ministries gathered at Wesley Woods Camp, near Indianola. We had participation of 18 members including 6 children from Broadway UMC.

The purpose for the retreat was for members to learn of church needs, how we might be involved, the importance of being bilingual within our own people, and how that can help us grow. This is the first of six gatherings planned for the coming year. We have faith it will make a positive change in our ministries. Members have shown interest in learning different ways we can reach more people for Jesus Christ, continue growing as a church and start making some needed changes.

It was a great experience for us, and we are sure this is just the beginning of a long process of change for us. Continue to hold us in your thoughts and prayers that we might be faithful in our ministry.

Rubén Mendoza

And here is an article by Judy Smits, Christian Ed Director at Broadway UMC, that portrays the human dimension behind the struggles of our Hispanic neighbors with US immigration policy:

Today I am mourning the loss of two regular, loyal youth members and their sister. They have been a part of Broadway for years. They attended each week, coming in immediately after school on Wednesdays, often just to talk and laugh and join their friends. They would do anything we needed to have done—moving items, setting up dinner, etc. They would also tease each staff member. And, yes, sometimes they were a pain in the neck if we were busy or on the phone or trying to get ready for night activities. They were here also Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays for Spanish-speaking services.

Last Wednesday was their final week with youth group. No, they aren't unhappy with youth sponsors. They aren't going to another church. They aren't involved in a sport that requires them to play Wednesday nights. They are going to join their mother—in Mexico. Mom has been sent there to await her turn on her application to return to the States. She was married to a U.S. citizen (their father) and didn't take steps needed at that time to stay here. All the children were born here, and are U.S. citizens. They father had a heart attack a few years ago and didn't survive. Mom continued to work and support the children—and pay taxes. However, last summer she was required to go back to Mexico, leaving three teens here with an “adopted” family.

Now Mom wants the children with her. And, they dearly miss their mother. They are teens, at an age where they need parental love and guidance. So, they will be traveling to Mexico to join her. To Mexico, where they will not be in school and their opportunities will be limited. To a country where they aren't even fluent in the language or familiar with the customs.

It seems so strange to read in the paper of fragmented families where a child has been neglected or abused, parental rights are being terminated, and sufficient foster families just can't be found. Here was a family that was working well, a model family in their community and they were torn apart. I understand our immigration laws and their purpose. But, I am having a hard time dealing with his issue, because it becomes too real, too personal. I will miss their laughter, the creative reasons they should be allowed to “check Facebook” on my computer or receive money to pick up a snack at Taco John's, watching them mature into young adults.

I don't have any answers. Today all I have is a profound sadness and emptiness as I watch these young people whose futures were so bright, who were excellent students in school, who were involved and active in our church, leave to an uncertain future. All I can offer them is my prayers. Please join the staff, youth sponsors and friends of these boys as we pray for them during this transition and their lives ahead.

Go for a Walk

Spring is finally here and the weather beckons us to be outside. One of the easiest and healthiest changes you can make is to increase your physical activity by taking regular walks. Some of us have gotten in the habit of wearing digital pedometers, the kind that keeps count of all the steps you take during the day. I have found that when I'm confined to my office and computer that I only take 2-3,000 steps per day or less. But when I get outside for a 20-30 minute walk, the number of steps climb to 6-7,000!



What is a healthy number of steps you need to do each day? Research has discovered that people who spend at least 2,000 calories per week in conscious activity (climbing stairs, walking and intentional exercise) have notably better health profiles and live longer than people who are not active (sedentary). When people walk 10,000 steps per day they use 300-450 calories. Multiply this amount over a week and you will have walked over 70,000 steps and have burned the 2,000 calories.

You know that walking is good and healthy for you, but what will motivate you to do it? The little pedometer is a great motivator. It brings to your consciousness how active you aren't, and it's presence urges you to increase those numbers. You can check your local sports equipment suppliers or www.creativewalking.com or www.walking.about.com for information and purchase of pedometers. Those persons who are enrolled with the IAC Wellmark health insurance will be eligible to sign up for the Virgin HealthMiles pedometer at Annual Conference. More information will be coming in the pre-conference packet.

Where should you walk? Around your neighborhood is a good start. Up and down your company or school hallways, or in our many malls. Iowa is also blessed with many trails. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation maintains a website that gives the location and description of trails around the state. Go to inhf.org for more information. Many of the County Conservation areas have nature trails that can be used for walking. Check with each County's Conservation Commission or Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

I hope that this has helped you to do one little change that may have a lasting effect upon your life. As you walk, remember:

"Our steps are made firm by the Lord" Psalm 37:23

Blessings upon you as you become more active.

Kae Tritle, RN
Wellness Coordinator

Support the US Census!



Please encourage the people of your community to take part in the US Census. The information gained can have direct impact on the future opportunities and possibilities of our communities, especially in rural counties. Temporary jobs with the Census Service could also provide opportunities for some of our neighbors to enhance income. Go to www.2010censusjobs.gov for more information.

Native American Ministry Sunday (April 18, 2010)

Without the help from Native American Ministries Sunday, Ray deZafra never would have found his way to the Third Sunday Native American Fellowship. For the first time in his life, the Potawatomi Indian feels that he belongs, not just to a tribe, but also to a community of Christians. The offering on this Special Sunday educates Native American seminarians, plants Native American churches and cultivates Native American outreach to seekers like Ray. Call (888) 346-3862 today to order envelopes and other resources so your congregation can participate in this churchwide offering. They will be sent at no cost to your church! Find more at umcsgiving.org/specialsundays.

Iowa VIM Training Event!

Saturday, April 17, 2010
9:30 a.m.—2:30 p.m.

First United Methodist Church
405 Prairie Street
Guthrie Center, IA

Contact: Rev. Annette Kruse
641-332-2408

Instructors: Dan and Jean Houston

This is for all planning a VIM trip in the
near future!

Upcoming Events!

- **April 1, 2010**—Deepenings Book Study—10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.—District Office
- **April 2, 2010**—GOOD FRIDAY! - District Office Closed
- **April 4, 2010**—HAPPY EASTER!
- **April 13, 2010**—RIM Group Meeting—9:30 a.m.—2:30 p.m.—District Office
- **April 13, 2010**—Grants Ministry Team Meeting—6:30 p.m.—District Office
- **April 14, 2010**—Small Membership Church Seminar—10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.—District Office
- **April 15, 2010**—New Pastor’s Seminar—10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.—District Office
- **April 22, 2010**—Candidacy Mentor Training—9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.—Atlantic, First UMC—800 Poplar
- **April 22, 2010**—District Worship Team Meeting—7:00 p.m.—District Office
- **April 23, 2010**—District Comm. on Ministry Interviews—9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.—District Office
- **April 24, 2010**—UMW Day Apart—9:00 a.m.—Woodbine UMC
- **April 24, 2010**—DCMC plus Conference Leadership—10:00 a.m.—12:30 p.m.—Atlantic, First—800 Poplar
- **May 2, 2010**—Spring District Conference—2:00 p.m.—Atlantic, First—800 Poplar

“Intersections: God and Us”



- You Think You Are Ordinary? Think again. The **Young People’s Ministries** is sponsoring “Youth 2011, “MORE THAN” - Purdue University July 13—17, 2011, in Sacramento, CA July 27-31, 2011.
- The District Office has two copies of the DVD entitled “Journey of the Kit.” This DVD is 5 minutes long and follows the selection and preparation of InGathering kits made in local churches to their final destination in Nigeria. It reaffirms the need for the kits and how they are happily received by recipients in Nigeria!
- Do you have training, skills, or interest in research? Are you interested in the Annual Conference as an organizational system? The Committee on Planning and Research has a couple of openings. The committee meets 4-5 times a year. Members do research for the conference—surveys, project evaluations, demographics, environmental scanning, data for decision-makers, etc. Lay or clergy. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply. For more information, contact Jim Davis (515) 268-3360 or jimdavis95@msn.com.
- The online application process for **Impact Community Grants** and criteria can be found at umcom.org/impactcommunity, or if you need further information regarding these grants, you can e-mail impactcommunity@umcom.org.
- **MESA Regional Gatherings**
 - ◇ Sunday, April 25th—3:00 p.m.—St. Luke’s UMC, Dubuque, IA
 - ◇ Saturday, May 1st—10:00 a.m.—Fellowship UMC, Muscatine, IA
- The Southwest District would like to encourage all churches to hold a “Camp Sunday” where all children would be encouraged to find and attend a camp this summer. Should you have any questions about the camps, you can contact Keith Shew at Camp Okobojo, or Deke Ryder at Wesley Woods. For handouts regarding the two camps, please contact the Conference Center. They would be happy to provide you with all the material needed.
- **REMINDER! Ministry Appraisal Forms** are due in the District Office **May 1st**. The form can be found on the Conference Website under “Forms”.
- All Clergy Spouses are invited to attend the Iowa Annual Conference Clergy Spouse Gather, Saturday, April 10th at the Iowa Events Center at Hy-Vee Hall in downtown Des Moines. Contact the Conf. Center for further details.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:



- **Rev. Kathleen Cramer (Ross, Calvary-Gray)** as she recovers from open heart surgery at Clarkson Hospital in Omaha, NE.
- Family and friends of **Pastor Melodee Carstens’ (Marne-Buck Creek)** father, John Menefee who passed away Thursday, February 25, 2010, and her mother, Ella Menefee, who passed away Saturday, March 13, 2010.
- **Pastors and Congregations** facing pastoral transition this year.
- Congratulations to Lori Wiser (**Rev. Gerald “Bud” Wiser’s Daughter. Rev. Wiser is currently appointed to Noble-Grant**), who was recently presented with the Iowa High School Athletic Association’s Media Award! Please pray for Lori as she waits for a heart transplant.
- Congratulations to **Rev. David Weesner (Council Bluffs—Salem)** and his wife Cheryl! Rev. Weesner has been appointed to the Central District as the new District Superintendent, and will begin his duties there July 1, 2010. Please pray that their move will go smoothly, and that they will be welcomed graciously into their new church home.

The United Methodist Church

*Southwest District Office
1201 E. 7th Street, Suite 300
Atlantic, IA 50022*

Southwest District Newsletter

Feel free to cut out the following contact information and place in a convenient location.



Southwest District Office Contact Information!

**The United Methodist Church
Southwest District Office
1201 E. 7th Street
Suite 300
Atlantic, IA 50022**

(Located on the corner of
7th & Plum, Next to
The Rolling Hills Bank)

Office Hours:
8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.
Monday thru Friday

Telephone Number:
712-243-8573

Fax Number:
712-243-8574

Office E-Mail:
Shirley.Lewis@iaumc.org

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Superintendent, please call or
e-mail Shirley Lewis, DAS.

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