

December 1, 2009



IOWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE—SOUTHWEST DISTRICT

Sharing The Mission

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

From The District Superintendent

“If the Lord is really with us, why are we in this mess?”

Jesus repeatedly warned his disciples that if they faithfully follow him they were sure to be crucified with him. In spite of his clarity, for some reason we keep thinking that the Christian faith is just another technique for guaranteed peaceful strolls along a garden path of tranquility (listen to televangelist Joel Osteen and the “Prosperity Gospel”.) I overheard a lay leader of a conflicted congregation say recently, “If this were a *real* church, we wouldn’t be having these problems.” The suggestion was that the congregation’s crisis was due to a failure to be a true Christian church. Sometimes that is the case. But not always. Sometimes we find ourselves in a painful, conflicted and difficult mess not because we are *not* faithful to Jesus but because we *are* following Jesus!



In the 6th Chapter of the Book of Judges, in the midst of all sorts of defeats and struggles related to the conquest of Canaan, an angel appears and tells the Israelites that God is with them. Gideon impatiently asks the angels, in effect, “If the Lord is really with us, why are we in this mess?” The implication is that, if the Lord were really with us, we wouldn’t be struggling.

Have you ever stood with Gideon and asked yourself that question?

When the Lord promised to give the Hebrews land, the Lord did not promise it would be an easy endeavor. When Jesus promised us salvation, he did not promise it would be without pain and struggle. Jesus calls us not only to get along with one another but to love one another, to forgive even our enemies, to love the truth which is Jesus Christ more than we love our own comfort and security, to honor both the past and to be faithful to a living, loving God who is present in the here and now. None of that is easy nor does it guarantee a conflict-free existence!

Most human institutions are content just to get by, to simply survive. Those organizations hope to make it to just one more year. The church must do more, it must make disciples, be light to the world, tell a deceitful, death-denying culture the truth about itself...in other words, Gideon, sometimes we’re in a mess because the Lord *is* really with us! And we find ourselves in peril because we really are traveling with the Lord. Actually doing what the Lord requires usually leads us over difficult terrain.

Our church faces many challenges— financing ministry in challenging economic times; managing a complex far-flung organization; attracting people who have so many options in their lives; building bridges and drawing circles when everyone around us is drawing battle lines and constructing walls. Perhaps we could remind ourselves daily that our greatest challenge is the same as it has always been— loving and serving a living, truthful God and sharing the Good News of our Messiah, Jesus Christ, whose coming we not only await and anticipate during this Holy Season of Advent, but whose birth we prepare and whose way we make straight.

Let’s Focus, Invest and Tell the Good News of Christ!

Brian



Have you heard of The Walk to Emmaus? Some members of the Southwest District are involved with the Walk to Emmaus Community. If you are not, we invite you to learn more!

The Walk to Emmaus is a spiritual renewal program intended to strengthen the local church through the development of Christian disciples and leaders. The experience begins with a 72-hour short course in Christianity, comprised of 15 talks by laity and clergy on the themes of God’s grace, Christian discipleship, and what it means to be the Church. The weekend also includes prayer, meditation, worship, food and fun! It is an experience like no other!

The “Emmaus Community”, made up of those who have attended the Weekend, put on and assist with the event by providing prayer, leadership, and many kinds of support. The weekend begins on Thursday night and concludes Sunday evening. Men and women attend separate events. Following the three days, participants are invited to meet regularly with a small group that supports each member in living faithfully. The goal is to strengthen and renew Christian people as disciples and as active members of the body of Christ in mission to the world.

The next set of Walks in our area will be held on the weekends of February 25-28 (Men’s) and March 4-7 (Women’s at the Corning United Methodist Church. A later set of Walks will be held in August. You need a sponsor to be able to attend. If you are interested in learning more, contact the District Office.

Ed Kail (Field Outreach Minister)



“To Transform, Be Transformed”

Our Mission: to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



Recently, I have been challenged and convicted by Martha Grace Reese, author of *Unbinding the Gospel*. As she shares research on the practice of evangelism in mainline Protestant churches, she points out that one main reason that so little evangelism or faith sharing takes place is because so few long-time church people can describe a difference that their faith has made in their life. They just always have been nice people, doing good and harmless

things, with a feeling of God’s presence in their world. There is not much that is transformative to talk about.

And if there isn’t much to talk about, then the impression is given that God isn’t up to much in the world. Yes, there may be a God, but that God doesn’t appear to make much difference in the “really real” lives of people. As one translation of Isaiah 43: 13-14 says, “...if you are my witnesses, I am God.” God reminds the people of the importance of telling the story of God’s action in the world. If God does miracles, but nobody notices and describes them to others, it is as if, for the people of that community, they never happened.

The convicting part to me is that Reese says that the beginning point for transformative intervention is not developing a program of evangelism, or beginning outreach ministries, or installing new technology. She says, “I am clear that the only way to do ministry successfully, to lead a church or to live a life in today’s United States is to pray deeply. We

must hand ourselves over to God in clear-headed, accountable, non naïve prayer.” (*Unbinding the Gospel*, p. 42)

In the rest of the book, she shares stories, research, teaching and exercises for tapping into the life-transforming power of God, which has the possibility of flowing outward in witness, faith-sharing, and transformative evangelism. Her beginning point is one that is accessible to every United Methodist of every age, and to every congregation of whatever size. If you have a yearning for more of God; if you want Jesus to make a difference in your life, congregation and community—you would do well to encounter Martha Grace Reese.

With the approach of Advent and the New Year, it could be a beginning point for a transformative experience and a transformed life. If you try it, let me know!

Your Field Outreach Minister,

Ed Kail

Speaking of Stewardship:

ARE YOU ROBBING GOD AND ROBBING YOURSELF OF BLESSINGS?

By Rev. Fred Pilecki

Over the last two years First United Methodist Church in Red Oak has conducted Stewardship Programs that stressed the spiritual aspect of giving. We have taken the focus off the needs of the church and focused on the spiritual need of the believer to give.

Two years ago our church lost \$30,000 over an eighteen-month period. Reserves were nearly depleted. Staff layoffs were made. Then things started to change. The first Stewardship drive got things going in the right direction. Before the end of the year, we had rehired staff and actually ended the year in the black.

According to Malachi 3:8-12, we were robbing God and, therefore, robbing ourselves of the blessings of God. We have just completed our second Stewardship drive based on the spiritual aspect of giving. We conducted a "Consecration Sunday" based on Herb Miller's manual by that name. We followed his steps without deviation. We formed a six-member team, each with a various task. Ed Kail, Field Outreach Minister for the SW District, was our guest preacher. For three weeks prior to Consecration Sunday, one of the team members gave a personal testimony focused on the spiritual aspect of giving. I preached from Malachi 3 the week before Consecration Sunday. Reservations were taken for a catered meal following Consecration Sunday.

Here are the results we were blessed with: One-hundred-forty people made reservations for the catered meal (most of our potlucks are for about fifty people). One hundred and eight families completed "estimate of giving" cards (we had 55 pledges for 2008). The "estimate of giving" cards and other expected income for 2010 showed a \$91,528 increase over the previous year. This is a 59% increase in total giving above last year. The good news is, the best is yet to come.

Malachi 3:10-12 says, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not case their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.

In the last year, we have tasted the blessings God has in store for us. We have been able to make about \$35,000 in much needed capital improvements. Our Mission Committee that did not exist in 2008 has contributed over \$16,000 locally and around the world. Our endowment fund has grown from about \$30,000 to over \$200,000. Staff persons who have gone years without pay increases have gotten raises. We have thirty-two new members with another new member class later this month. In 2007 our church paid only 6% in apportionments. In 2010 there should be no reason not to pay 100% of our apportionment.

The best part for me as pastor is watching the hand of God move. God's people are growing as obedient disciples preparing to change Red Oak and the world.

How to Get More Members...

Moving Members to Missionaries

With Jim Griffith



April 17-18, 2010
Des Moines, Iowa

Saturday—10:00 AM—6:30 PM
Sunday—8:00 AM—3:00 PM

Topics will include *Aligning Your Ministry to Reach Your Mission Field, Networking with and Gathering Under-churched People, and Developing a Specific "custom" plan just for your church.*

This two-day workshop is designed for a team of people. Each team must include the pastor and a minimum of three key lay people (non-staff), and all must participate in the whole workshop. Because lay involvement is so vital, this has been scheduled for Saturday and Sunday. Pulpit supply needs to be arranged so pastors can fully participate with the team.

Non-Refundable Registration Fee: \$300 for a team of 4-6 people; \$400 if not paid in full by March 1, 2010.

To register, send the name of church and number of attendees along with the registration fee (or minimum of a \$100 deposit payable to: Conference Treasurer

Iowa Conference of The United Methodist Church
Attn: Leadership Dev. Minister for Evangelism New Ministry
2301 Rittenhouse Street
Des Moines, IA 50321
Phone: 515-974-8926
scott.hibben@iaumc.org

Hispanic Leaders Needed! Submitted by Rev. Ruben Mendoza...(Council Bluffs-Broadway)

Members of the SW District Hispanic Ministries Team are having an impact beyond the bounds of our district. Besides leading the work in Council Bluffs, and working throughout SW Iowa, Rev. Ruben Mendoza works with the Hispanic/Latino Standing Committee of the Iowa Annual Conference, and shares with us some recent developments on that front:

Within the Hispanic/Latino ministry, one of the greatest problems is the lack of leaders for the work of God in the State of Iowa.

This problem in mind, the Hispanic/Latino committee of the Iowa Conference began to prepare a program for Hispanics that will give them tools to become the new leaders of ministries in Spanish.

This program consists of a series of conferences that will be held every two months in 2010, and all of the Hispanic/Latino ministries of the conference will be involved.

The six conferences that will be held next year are the following:

1. A Leader's Understanding of the Workings of the Church and Kingdom of God—**February 26-27, 2010**
2. Discovering the Impact of Wesleyan Leadership—**April 23-24, 2010**
3. Developing Understanding and Interpretation of the Bible (Hermeneutic) - **June 25-26, 2010**
4. Exploring Christian Discipleship—**August 27-28, 2010**
5. Understanding the Power of the Spiritual Life of a Leader—**October 8-9, 2010**
6. Defining Talents and Ministries—**November 19-20, 2010**

This series of conferences was chosen by Hispanics/Latinos, and each was chosen according to the needs of each congregation in the conference.

We hope that God richly blesses all of the churches in the Iowa Annual Conference and in the State of Iowa.

Recovering the Spirit of Christmas

Every year it seems like the stores start stocking merchandise and decorating for the Christmas season earlier and earlier. Within a week after Halloween, the ad campaigns have begun to lure us into buying that {perfect gift} that our family members can't do without. This year especially, the message is that we need to spend in order to save the economy.

In the 1980's Jo Robinson and Jean Staeheli were conversing about how the Christmas season had degenerated into a merchandising contest and how many people were stressed by the "picture-perfect" Christmas as perpetuated by the commercialism of our consumer-based society. These two ladies began gathering people in a seminar format to converse about Christmas celebrations, values, and expectations from various viewpoints; men, women, children and our consumer-based society. What they discovered is that our current commercialized gift-frenzied focus actually began after World War I as a way for manufacturers to keep producing goods for purchase.

They also discovered that what men, women and children really wanted from the holiday season was 1) *relaxed and loving time with family*, 2) *reasonable and realistic gifts*, and 3) *reliable and meaningful family traditions*. This year as you move through the holiday season, I invite you to make mental and even written notes about the activities you do. Are you doing things because you have always done them or are the activities ones that add meaning and joy to your celebration of the season? What is really important and significant? What things do you need to change, let go of or delegate to others? Here is a pledge that Jean and Jo developed to help others recover the Christmas Spirit in their celebrations.

The Christmas Pledge

Believing in the true spirit of Christmas, I commit myself to:

- * *Remember those people who truly need my gifts,*
- * *Express my love in more direct ways than gifts,*
- * *Examine my holiday activities in the light of my deepest values*
- * *Be a peacemaker within my circle of family and friends*
- * *Rededicate myself to my spiritual growth.*

(Unplug the Christmas Machine, J. Robinson & J. Staeheli)

I invite you to consider your current celebrations and evaluate what would help you focus more on family, personal values, and the real reason...the Christ Child. A resource that could be helpful is [Unplug the Christmas Machine](#). It contains worksheets for evaluating who does most of the work, looking at holiday costs, traditions, values, and/or expectations and gives alternative ideas and resources to help you in planning a celebration that reflects what is most important to you.

Remember: *Jesus is the Reason for the Season*

Kae Tritle, RN
Wellness Coordinator



Preliminary Report on the Ingathering

Preliminary, unofficial figures from the Greenfield Site of the 2009 Thanksgiving Ingathering report the following: Cash and checks received: \$86,406.92; Net Cash: \$1,899.49; In-kind donations: \$133,772; for a total of \$222,078.41.

The total received for the five sites in the Annual Conference was \$965,914.51. This does not include checks sent directly to the conference Treasurer for Ingathering. This total tops the 2008 Ingathering Receipts by over \$43,000. Almost a million dollars for life-changing missions!!



District Askings

Don't forget to support Southwest District Ministries through a contribution towards the District Asking Fund. Any gifts are welcome and can be made through your local church treasurer, designated "SW District Asking." These funds help support ministry initiatives throughout the district including Carter Lake UMC, District-wide Hispanic Ministries Outreach and New and Developing outreach ministries in the district. Your support helps transform lives in Christ's name!

Youth Strike for Christ—BRING YOUR YOUTH GROUP!!!

PORTABLE FAITH

FEBRUARY 5-7, 2010

YOUTH STRIKE FOR CHRIST

MARRIOTT HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTER
DOWNTOWN DES MOINES, IOWA

THE WEEKEND INCLUDES:

- Keynote Speaker, Kelly Croy
- Praise band
- Awesome Praise & Worship
- Small Group Sessions
- Room for two nights at the Marriott Hotel
- Meals on Saturday and Sunday
- Entertainment Groups
- Music Concerts
- Free T-shirt—And much, much more...

REGISTRATION INFO:

- * Visit our website for more information and pricing.
www.youthstrike.com



For More Information

Contact: Jim Oberbroeckling
E-mail: joberbroeckling@iowatelecom.net
Phone: 641-842-4136

Council Bluffs Area Ministry Strategy

A conversation has begun regarding the development of a greater Council Bluffs area Ministry Strategy. Please keep this process in your prayers and if you are interested in participating please contact Field Outreach Minister Ed Kail at Ed.Kail@iaumc.org, or by calling in to the SW District Office at 712-243-8573.

Apportionments Do What?



Have you ever wondered what our Conference Apportionments accomplish, in terms of ministry and mission? Have you ever wished for help in

developing a "stewardship moment", or call for the offering? Check out the Iowa Annual Conference website: www.iaumc.org! At the bottom of the home page is a box titled "Featured", and in it is a link to a

page called "Thank You Notes". This page will contain stories of what our "connectional giving" accomplishes throughout the state of Iowa. It's not just institutional maintenance and organization—it's changed lives! Look and see!

As we come to, and through, this holiday season, we realize we have much to be thankful for here at Okoboji camp. We are thankful for all of you—the ones who support this important ministry. We are thankful for the countless hours of volunteer labor we were given this fall to complete major projects. We are thankful for our campers, retreat guests, families and staff, who made a wonderful camping and retreat season possible. Most of all, we are thankful to be part of a ministry that touches lives and hearts for Christ, and that camping and retreat ministries *has, does, and will* continue to affect change in our world. Our cups truly run over!

We'd like to share some of this bounty with you! One of the things that always brings a smile to our faces is reading the evaluations campers fill out at the end of their time at camp. Here are just a few of our favorite quotes from Summer 2009. We hope they bring a smile to your face as well, and help remind us all that in this changing world and time, we all have much to be thankful for! Enjoy!

"Well...the growth in my faith was AMAZING!!! I had a breakthrough :-). I just have never felt SO close to God! When my BREAKTHROUGH happened I sat in my bed crying tears of happiness for at least half an hour :-)"

"I'd like you to know that I was nervous at first cause I had never been to camp for 5 days or sleep away camp. PS But now I know that I definitely want to come back"

"It was way fantastical!"

"now I know why Jesus died for us"

"it's great because I LOVE sandwiches!"

"I met new friends and had so much fun"

"I feel okay not being at church sometimes because of what we did here"

"well you did everything right and.....I LOVED IT"

May you have a blessed Holiday season.

Okoboji Camp Staff

Clergy Financial Advice thru Board of Pensions

UM Clergy can obtain free Financial Advice until the end of 2009 through General Board of Pensions and the trained financial advisors at Ernst and Young. Call now to receive the homework packet! 1/800-360-2539. The Ernst and Young associates are aware of clergy tax issues, pension plan and housing issues. This service is provided at no charge until the end of 2009 for clergy enrolled in the pension program.

Southwest District Epiphany Party!!!



Mark Your Calendars!!!

Southwest District Clergy Epiphany Party!

Friday, January 15, 2010

*The Southwest District Office is eagerly planning this year's Epiphany Party! We are anticipating a great evening, with delicious food and great entertainment! This year we will be holding the event at the Griswold Community Center, located at 601 2nd Street, in Griswold, Iowa. We will begin with a Welcome and Fellowship time at 5:30 p.m. with the buffet dinner (provided by "Our Daily Bread" in Griswold) starting at 6:00 p.m., followed by the evening's entertainment. **Please contact Shirley Lewis at the District Office with your RSVP (712-243-8573). Cost to attend is \$12.00 per person.***

Upcoming Events!

- **December 1, 2009**—DCMC Planning Meeting—6:00 p.m.—District Office
- **December 2, 2009**—Hispanic Ministry Strategy Meeting—1:00 p.m.—District Office
- **December 3, 2009**—Deepenings Book Study—10:00 a.m.—District Office
- **December 9, 2009**—SMC Pastor's Seminar—10:00 a.m.—District Office
- **December 10, 2009**—New Pas-

tor's Seminar—10:00 a.m.—District Office

- **December 24 & 25, 2009**—MERRY CHRISTMAS! - District Office closed.
- **January 1, 2010**—HAPPY NEW YEAR! - District Office closed.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

- **January 15, 2010**—Epiphany Party—Griswold Community Center—5:30 p.m.

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.

- First UMC Harlan celebrated their 150th year in ministry on October 17 & 18. Congratulations!
- Bedford UMC celebrated it's 155th year in ministry on Sunday, Nov. 8th. Congratulations!
- Central Latino celebrated its 8th year anniversary in the greater Council Bluffs community on November 6. Congratulations to this important ministry of offering Christ's love to our new neighbors.
- Carter Lake UMC and Glenwood UMC have begun the process of introducing “Celebrate Recovery” ministries in their communities. Please keep them in your prayers as these two congregations explore this important way of sharing the good news of God's love and acceptance with persons who battle additions.
- The Bishop's F.I.T. Challenge encourages us to Focus, Invest and Tell as we get fit with the mission of the UMC: “To make Disciples for the transformation of the world.”
- Salem UMC in Council Bluffs is seeing God at work in the Lake Manawa area satellite campus. Please keep this new, young ministry in your prayers.

•Save The Date!!! **United Methodist Advocacy Day—Monday, February 1, 2010**—Visit the Advocacy webpage at 222.iaumc.org for more information or contact Kristin Clark Nolan, 515.974.8911 or kristin.clarknolan@iaumc.org. Sponsored by the Social Justice and Mission Ministry, Iowa Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

•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.

•Please let the Southwest District know of anyone you would like to nominate from your church to serve as a **District At-Large Member** for the 2010 Annual Conference. You can either call the office at 712-243-8573, or e-mail Shirley Lewis (District Administrative Secretary at Shirley.Lewis@iaumc.org). Deadline for submitting nominations is January 1, 2010.

•What would it take for your community to say “We're better off because the United Methodists are in the area?” Contact FOM Ed Kail if you are seeking assistance in moving forward with outreach ministries.

•Are you doing a mid-week, after-school program for children? We know of several, but there surely are more than we know. If you have an after-school education ministry, please email ed.kail@iaumc.org. Ed is compiling a list for some future networking and re-sourcing. Tell us your story!!

PLEASE

PRAY

FOR:



- **Rev. Terry McClain (Elliott)** who is recovering from neck surgery on Wednesday, Nov. 11. His recovery continues, though he has been battling some infection.
- **Pastor Nan Allen (Retired), Stuart**, who is continuing to recover from the effects of cancer.
- **Rev. Ken Ferguson's (Carroll) Mother-in-Law, Loretta Hosack**, who has 2 brain tumors and is undergoing treatment.
- **Rev. Dick Kranbeck's (Cumberland-Pine Grove)** daughter who is struggling with significant heart issues in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- **Rev. Gerald “Bud” Wiser (Noble-Grant)**, who has been diagnosed with Shingles.

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

**Brian Milford—Conference
Superintendent:** To reach the
Superintendent, please call or
e-mail Shirley Lewis, DAS.

**Ed Kail—Field Outreach
Minister (FOM):**
Ed.Kail@iaumc.org

**Shirley Lewis –District
Administrative Secretary**
Shirley.Lewis@iaumc.org