



THE LOWER LIGHTS

FEBRUARY 2009



A Word of Encouragement: A Picture of Hope

“Things, they are a changing” is quote that seems to become more true everyday. The world around us is changing at a rate never seen before in human history. We see it in the way we communicate: how many of us have mobile phones, e-mail or both? Community is now something that many people are finding “online.” We see the changes in our communities every day. Many of us can count the businesses that once lined our main streets and town squares. Some can drive country roads and look at plowed fields remembering the farmsteads that once housed neighbors.



And we feel it in our churches. It is difficult for us not to look over our shoulders to remember the “good ole days” when pews were full and Sunday Schools were always looking for more space. We worry about our future. In response, I would like to remind you that God is not finished with you yet.

About a month ago I made arrangements with Donna Olinger, a Certified Lay Speaker, who is serving the Troy United Methodist Church to come and do a “couple of baptisms” on Sunday, January 18th. By the time the Sunday came the list had grown to 17 and nine persons to be received into membership.

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Happy Valentine's Day!!

“Let the Lower Lights be Burning”

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

February

- 10-12 Bill ~ Cabinet
 15-16 Bill & Paul ~ Orders of Elders,
 Deacons, Fellowship of
 Associate Members and Local
 Pastors ~ Ames
 17 Paul ~ FOM Meeting
 19 Bill & Paul ~ Lunch in Chariton with
 Lay Leader and Lay Speaking
 Chair
 20 Bill ~ District Committee on
 Ordained Ministry (dCOM) ~
 Chariton
 21 Bill & Paul ~ CCMC
 24-25 Bill ~ Cabinet

March

- 1 Bill & Paul ~ Excellence and
 Fruitfulness in Ministry ~
 Albia
 8 Bishop Trimble ~ Albia UMC
 10-12 Bill ~ Cabinet
 15 Bill & Paul ~ Leadership training ~
 Chariton
 25-26 Paul ~ FOM Meeting
 30-31 Bill ~ Cabinet



February

2	Linda & Dennis Reida
3	Jerry Oliver
6	Tom Murr
8	Lyle Ball
16	Kevin Gingerich
21	Kevin & Jill Leveck
24	Bill Ballard
25	Jimmie & Judy Matheney
26	Dola Doser
26	Ann Murr
27	Dan Fernandez
28	Judy Poland

FEBRUARY 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 Bill ~ Cabinet	11	12	13	14
15 Bill & Paul ~ Orders Event ~ Ames	16	17 Paul ~ FOM Meeting	18	19 Bill & Paul ~ lunch in Chariton	20 Bill ~ dCOM ~ Chariton	21 Bill & Paul ~ CCMC
22	23	24 Bill ~ Cabinet	25	26	27	28

RURAL FRIENDS:

Please mark your calendar for the following event.

“Rural Churches: stories of Hope and Struggle”
 A Listening Post with Bishop Julius C. Trimble.

Saturday, March 7, 2009
 1st UMC, Jefferson, Iowa

10:00 am—Noon

9:30 am—Registration & Fellowship

Sponsored by the Iowa Chapter of the United Methodist Rural
 Fellowship. Be watching for additional details.

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The last time Troy had had a baptism was in 2002. The mood in the congregation that Sunday was a joy to behold. People were beaming. I visited with several members who shared with me that they have been praying for years for something like this. Mind you this was over a 10% increase in membership in one Sunday for this congregation. Four of those baptized were youth or adult.

What has changed for this congregation you might ask? Has Troy started a new building development? Has a new business located there? Is there an influx of new people? The answer to all these questions is no. But something is happening there. The people are praying for their church and their community. They are inviting people. They are welcoming them as they come and including them in leadership and service. And they have hope. They believe the Spirit of God is at work. They are served by a woman of hope and vision for the congregation. Donna is excited about ministry and readily engages people with her love and faith. And they just keep praying and inviting people.



As I move about the district I see this in other places like Medora, Millerton, Cincinnati and Jerome. Again these are not growing communities, but have congregations and leadership with growing hearts. They are places of hope and faith and love. In the midst of this changing world of ours some things remain the same; people are still looking for real hope, authentic faith, and genuine love. Where we can carry those gifts from God into the world we will see growth. It must begin in each one of us. We must cultivate hope and faith and love in our own lives. And we must reach out to share it with others.

Keep Shinning,

Bill



Please keep the following in your prayers:

Clara Dvorak, recovering from illness. Clara is the wife of Pastor Bob Dvorak at Agency-Eldon-Batavia.

Dale O'Connell, recovering from rotator cuff surgery. Dale is the Pastor at United Trinity Parish: Humeston.

Sharon Bryce, due to illness. Sharon is the daughter of Pastor Joan Ervin at Cincinnati/Unionville.



Please forward all prayer requests to Sue at the District Office. If you would like the prayer request to go out on the District email list, please indicate that.

Pardon Me Christian, Your Self Is Showing!!

Imagine with me, you are standing in line at the express line at the Grocery store, and someone looks at you in the eye...purposefully cuts in front of you and then turns their back to you. What do you feel like doing? Let's be honest now... Do visions of foot washing come to your mind? Does the laying upon of the hands for the purposes of prayer...come to your mind? Is our first inclination to invite them to worship with us, to kneel together to break the bread. Please notice I said "bread" and not the head...*No, of course not.*

We feel that it is rude it is offensive and not very considerate. Even though it may mean it may take us just 2-3 minutes more, we feel like we have been wronged, we feel like we have been disrespected.

I was doing some reading out of a book entitled "Searching for God knows what" by Donald Miller, the author of "Blue like Jazz". And he relates some thoughts about this very act with some insight.

"God wired us so that He told us who we were, and outside that relationship, the relationship that said we were loved, valuable and beautiful, we didn't have nay worth at all. As horrible as that sounds, it would make sense that things of worth are things God loves, and things that don't have worth are things God doesn't love. I mean I really started to wonder if maybe a human is defined by who loves them. I know that sounds terrible, because we have always grown up believing that a person is valuable even if nobody loves them, and I agree with that STATEMENT BECAUSE God made everybody and the Bible clearly states God loves everybody. But as Paul said, if those relations are disturbed, the relations between God and people, then we feel the desire to be loved and respected by other people instead of God, and if we don't get that love and respect, we feel very sad, or angry because we know that our glory is at stake, that if there isn't some glory being shone through us by somebody who has authority, we'll be dead inside, like a little light will go out and our souls will feel dark, like nothing can grow there."

I have a question to ask..."Whose Glory is shining in your life?"

And how is that going for you and your Church?

If it is not working for you and for your Church, try the One and True Light, Jesus Christ and see how that works for you!!

In Christ's Service,

Paul





OUR NEW LAY LEADERSHIP

By way of introduction, I am Richard Sperring, a member of Avery United Methodist Church, and a Certified Lay Speaker. Bill Poland has met with Sharon Spear, District Lay Leader, and with me, and asked us to integrate efforts toward

Lay Leadership and Lay Speaking for the District.

In pursuing this goal, we will bend our efforts toward improving communication, training and utilization of Lay Speakers. We will have the immediate assistance of Reverends Jim Morris and Mel Ammon to plan at least two training sessions in the first half of 2009, one for Basic Lay Speaking Training and one for Advanced Lay Speaking Training.

It is our hope to assemble a Lay Speaking Committee as soon as possible, and we will be making contacts in this regard in early February. If any certified lay speaker or local church lay speaker (basic lay speaker) would desire to be a member of such a committee, please contact me by email. Through the work of this committee, we will survey all current Certified and Basic Layspeakers by telephone contact, to determine need for training, willingness of Certified Lay Speakers to fill the pulpit as pulpit supply in any church within the district and the distance they are willing to travel to do so, and the willingness of Basic Layspeakers to fill the local pulpit. We also will survey all forms G and F from this year's charge conference for accuracy of personal information and will call all who filled out such forms for email addresses. This information will be compiled and sent to all churches in the District.

A planned schedule of Lay Speaker Training will be drawn up and staffed for instruction and sent along with the other information to all churches in the District, and to other Districts should persons desire to travel to training within our District.

We have a busy plan as you can see. Your help and support is solicited, and any recommendations you may have.

Richard Sperring
South Central District Lay Speaking Coordinator
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LAY SPEAKERS' CORNER

When you read this article all the celebration of Our Dear Savior's birth will be winding down.

Our family had a blessed Christmas, I hope all of yours did also.

As your District Lay Leader, I took the first challenge that Bill Poland and Paul Smith gave us at the Annual Charge Conference at Chariton December 7, 2008. They challenged, all Lay Leaders and Administrative Chairman present to sign up for a prayer and discussion meeting. I have set a meeting up for those who signed up for January 3, 2009 at the Green Plain UMC, at 9:30 p.m. (Let's hope the weather cooperates with us.)

As your new District Lay Leader I ask you for your patience and prayers as I start into this new and exciting ministry.

On December 11, 2008 Bill Poland, District Superintendent, Dick Sperring, District Lay Speaker Development Coordinator, Sue Booth, District Administrative Secretary and I met at the District Office in Osceola. This was a planning meeting for 2009.

Our goal for 2009 is to integrate Lay Speaking and Lay Leaders to become the Lay Ministry that exists in all churches in the District.

With this in mind, our first order of business will be to set up a Lay Speaking Committee. After forming this committee we will hopefully set up two Lay Speaker Training events for the East part of the District and the West part of the District. One Basic and one Advanced in each side of the district. Bill stated that Rev. Mel Ammon and Rev. Jim Morris have agreed to assist in these training events. It was also mentioned maybe we would also have a Youth Lay Speaker Training session sometime during the year.

It is our plan to have a Lay Speakers Retreat sometime during the year also. We will communicate with the Conference Director of Lay Speaking and it is our hope to get this developed as well.

With Dick and I both traveling during the month of January, our next planning meeting will be a lunch meeting in Chariton, February 19.

If you have ideas of things that you wish this committee would do or look into doing please let us know through the District Office. We are here to serve our church members.

Happy 2009!

God Bless you all!

Sharon Spear, South Central District Lay Leader

YOUTH NEWS YOU CAN USE

UP-COMING EVENTS

Feb. 6-8 Youth Strike For Christ –

Conference-wide rally event in D.M.

Feb. 21 Youth Specialties ONE DAY –

Leadership Training in Ankeny



YOUTH STRIKE FOR CHRIST SCHOLARSHIPS

Youth from South Central District churches can each receive a \$20 scholarship to YSFC. Contact me or the District office to learn more. For more info and registration materials for YSFC, go to www.youthstrike.com. There's still time to register!

YOUTH SPECIALTIES ONE DAY TRAINING

Youth Specialties provides some of the best youth ministry training available, both for professionals and volunteers. First UMC, Ankeny is hosting a YS one day training event on Saturday, Feb. 21. Go to <http://ysoneday.com/> to learn more.

RESOURCE IDEA

Trying to ease a little more spirituality into your youth fellowship meetings? Check out [Student-Led Devotions for Youth Ministry](#), volumes 1 and 2, from GROUP. Other similar books are also available. Nothing teaches quite like being responsible to lead.

CAMP JUNIOR STAFF

Check out junior camp staff opportunities for your older youth. The sites provide leadership training and give your kids the chance to learn while serving. The camp books will have more information, or contact Wesley Woods at 515-961-4523. This is a great way to nurture leadership skills that will be brought back to your local youth group and church.

Bob Morris

South Central District Youth Coordinator

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2009 Conference-Wide Leadership Development Focus

“Excellence and Fruitfulness in Ministry: Living the United Methodist Way”

In 2009 events will be held throughout the conference focusing on the topic of Excellence and Fruitfulness in Ministry. These events will be companion events to the 2008 *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. All churches are invited to participate. Whether or not you were involved in the Five Practice workshops in 2008, “Excellence and Fruitfulness in Ministry: Living the United Methodist Way” will have something to offer your congregation.

Events will be held on **Sunday March 1, 2009** from 2:30-5:30 pm in the

<i>Southwest District -</i>	Harlan UMC
<i>South Central District -</i>	Albia UMC
<i>Northeast District -</i>	New Hampton UMC

Events will be held on **Sunday March 8, 2009** from 2:30-5:30 pm in the

<i>North Central District -</i>	Webster City, Asbury UMC
<i>East Central District -</i>	Cedar Rapids, St Paul's UMC
<i>Central District -</i>	Altoona UMC

An event will be held on **Saturday, February 28, 2009** time TBA for the

<i>Northwest District -</i>	Cherokee, St Paul's UMC
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(This event will be in coordination with the Northwest District Leadership event.)

The *Southeast District* will focus on the *Five Practices* in a series of workshops scheduled for:

- February 21—Columbus Junction: Radical Hospitality and Passionate Worship
- May 2—Fairfield: Intentional Faith Development and
- September 19—Mediapolis: Risk-Taking Mission & Service and Extravagant Generosity
(The content of “Excellence and Fruitfulness in Ministry: Living the United Methodist Way” will be blended into these events.)

There will be a **NO COST** for these events.

A Conference-wide Culmination Event is being planned for **September 7, 2009**. Time, location and registration details TBA Watch Stirrings and the conference website for more information.

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The Conference Steering Committee has so far committed \$164,000 to disaster recovery.

We are still in need of volunteer teams—especially for the month of August. If you have teams of adult or senior high youth who are considering sending volunteers and would like myself or a representative to come and do a presentation on the need for volunteers, please contact me.

God's Peace,

Becky Wood

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