



# THE LOWER LIGHTS

Between Easter and Pentecost

MAY 2009



I have always enjoyed the season of Easter in the Christian year. It commemorates the fifty days when the resurrected Christ appeared to the disciples. As Paul writes: **“Christ died for**



**our sins in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>4</sup>and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup>Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters\* at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.\* <sup>7</sup>Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.”**(1 Corinthians 15:3b-7 NRSV)

The striking thing to me in the midst of all Jesus’ appearances is that no one seems to recognize him. Mary doesn’t, Cephas doesn’t, Cleopas and the other disciple going to Emmaus don’t, the disciples fishing in Galilee don’t, and even in the upper room behind locked doors seeing him face to face, Jesus has to show his scars before the disciples recognize him. He even has to eat fish to prove he is not a ghost. It seems that even an empty tomb and a Jesus who keeps showing up unexpectedly are not enough to convince some people of the power of resurrection.

After all that Jesus has taught them, even after the experience of the risen Jesus; the disciples are waiting for something else. They just seem to keep waiting... and praying. Do you ever wonder what they are waiting for? Did they know? There is no record of them doing much of any ministry during this time. Maybe they were waiting for some kind of revelation on what to do next. Maybe they couldn’t agree on what to do next. Maybe they were just waiting for things to cool down with the Roman and the religious leadership. Maybe they were just afraid.

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*“Let the  
Lower  
Lights be  
Burning”*

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 2 Stewardship Committee Meeting ~  
Albia 10:30
- 5-12 Paul ~ Vacation
- 12-13 Bill ~ Cabinet ~ Conference Center
- 14 Bill ~ Joint Task Force Conference  
Center 4:30
- 16 Lay Speaker Training ~ Chariton  
10:30—3:30
- 23 Lay Speaker Training ~ Chariton  
10:30—3:30
- 25 Memorial Day Observed ~  
Office Closed



### May

- |    |                      |
|----|----------------------|
| 1  | Kevin Smith          |
| 2  | Fred Smith           |
| 4  | Bob & Clara Dvorak   |
| 8  | Todd & Judy Holman   |
| 8  | L. Duane Churchman   |
| 12 | Dorothy Gubser       |
| 12 | June Morrison        |
| 13 | Darlene Churchman    |
| 14 | Dale O'Connell       |
| 15 | Susan Gingerich      |
| 18 | Jodi & Skip Rushing  |
| 19 | Jerry Kramer         |
| 23 | Allen & Debbie Wiese |
| 24 | Sue Kramer           |
| 26 | James & Jane Beranek |
| 26 | Mark & Janice Young  |
| 29 | Neil & Debra Montz   |
| 29 | Cherie Luers         |

# MAY 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 Stewardship Team Mtg
3	4	5	6	7 Paul Vacation	8	9
10	11 Paul Vacation	12 Cabinet	13	14 Joint Task Force Mtg	15	16 Lay Speaker Training
17	18	19	20	21	22	23 Lay Speaker Training
24	25 Memorial Day Observed	26	27	28	29	30
31						

## Mark Your Calendars!

**Matthew 25 applications are available!** Please contact the District office. Matthew 25 is a funding process for churches to do "hands on" ministry with those listed in Matthew 25. Here are just a few: to help with food, clothing, welcoming the stranger, helping the sick and those in prison.

**Book discussion and time of fellowship!** Starting Thursday June 11, 2009 at 10:30 am at either Smokey Row in Oskaloosa or Family Table on HWY 34 in Osceola, either Bill Poland or Paul Smith will lead a discussion on Brian McLaren's book Everything Must Change. Please have the first section (Chapters 1-5) read by the first meeting. We will meet every Thursday until we have completed the book. Here is what the book is about, **"In Everything must change, you will accompany Brian around the world on a search for answers. Along the way you'll experience intrigue, challenge and insight and hope. You'll get a fresh and provocative vision of Jesus and his teaching. And you'll see his core message can infuse us with purpose and passion to address the economic environmental, military, political, and social dysfunctions that have overtaken our world."**

All are welcome! Hope to see you there!

District Stewardship Team will meet May 2, 2009 at 10:30 am at Albia, Trinity UMC in Albia.

Continued from Page 1

I wonder how much like them we are. Are we busy praying inside our churches afraid to take our faith outside? Are we more comfortable talking about issues than we are developing new relationships with people?

I relish the stories of the Risen Savior, but what really convinces me of His presence is what happened to the disciples. On Pentecost day Christ's Body, the Church took its first breath. The Spirit breathed into them and they were no longer comfortable locked up inside. They were driven by a new passion for God's reign for all people and they started outside their own door and got carried to the very ends of the earth. And they took new life with them everywhere they went. Breathe on us God.

Breathe Deep,

*Bill*

**Rev. Bill Poland, Conference Superintendent**

## ARE YOU HEARING, WHAT I AM SAYING?

Anyone who lives in Iowa, knows of the recent decision of the Iowa Supreme Court about the same sex marriage issue. Now before you tune me out, before you turn the page, before you make assumptions, I want to remind you about one thing, "What are the people hearing about what we are saying?"

Before I explore the previous question, I want to tell you of a time when Andy Rooney talked about abortion at the end of the television show 60 minutes. Andy talked about how he did not know for sure what he thought and believed about the issue of abortion, but he liked how the people who were pro-abortion acted and treated others, better than those who were anti-abortion. So he guessed he was more inclined to side with those who were for abortion.

As most of you know, the Discipline states the following:

"We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons." (§161 F 2008 The Book Of Discipline Of The United Methodist Church)"

We as Christians need to realize who is listening to our conversation and watching how we treat those who disagree with us. What are people hearing about what we are saying? Are they hearing, our love? Are they hearing their sacred worth? Are they hearing that we as a church do not condone their behavior but that we still love them? What could happen if we lived and loved as Jesus the Christ lived and loved? What difference would it make if our conversations were places where we could ask the honest and hard questions? What could we do to further the Kingdom of God if we could show grace and unconditional love even when we disagreed with others?!

What will the people hear about what we are trying to say? Please don't let our message get lost in all the noise.

Blessings

Paul

**Rev. Paul Smith, Field Outreach Minister**

# MUMMS UPDATE!!

As the saying goes, summer is just around the corner. We are excited about taking Jesus to **all** God's children across rural Iowa. AND...the Cokesbury curriculum is **AWESOME!** The theme is Camp Edge...Experience + Discover GOD **everywhere!** The music is going to keep us all movin' and grovin'.

MUMMS has one week left to fill for VBS! So, if you haven't had Vacation Bible School for years, are tired and feeling overwhelmed **or** are one of the churches that says, "there aren't any children out there", give me a call. Believe me the kids are there **and** they are "hungry" to hear about Jesus!

This is our 13th summer and God continues to **amaze** myself and the volunteers as we are the hands and voice of our Lord in rural communities. To sum those years up, I would say, "With God, the sky is the limit." Please consider inviting MUMMS to fill our last week with you...believe me, God's blessings will flow!

**Also**, I just returned from Dulac, LA with a youth mission team! We worked with the Houma Native Americans and oh, how God blessed us. Many of you know I have been traveling there since the mid 90's so have a passion for the people/culture. We helped lay tile flooring in the small UMC there on the bayou plus raised up a deck of a 93 yr. old Native woman. She had just been able to return to her home since the last hurricane in Sept. 2009. As an added note, this woman weaves and some of her baskets are in the Smithsonian Institute. She speaks only French but believe me, she and I have communicated for years without speaking the same language! I praise God for taking me back to the bayou and keeping us all safe and healthy as we traveled those 2000 miles.

Remember, we have **one** week left to fill for VBS. This is **your** opportunity to reach out into your communities and share the Gospel. Hope to hear from you and **please** pray for MUMMS as we travel this summer!

Blessings,  
Peg Egbert, Director  
[pjemumm@iowatelecom.net](mailto:pjemumm@iowatelecom.net)  
319-456-6661

Help Wanted: Medical/lab technicians, Paramedics, Nurses, Respiratory therapists, or Doctors Needed to assist with Blood Pressures during Wellness Screening at Annual Conference 5:30 am until 8:00 am on Friday & Saturday Contact: Kae Tritle, RN at [bktritle@msn.com](mailto:bktritle@msn.com) or call 515-226-8760

## Wellness Activities at Conference

Annual Conference is upon us once again. Listed below are the activities and events sponsored by the Wellness Committee of the Conference Board of Pensions

**Fitness Walk with Bishop Trimble:** Sunday 7:30 am. Open to all Annual Conference members and visitors. Stretch your legs and enjoy a leisurely walk and talk with your colleagues and friends within the Iowa State campus. The route will be marked and maps are available at the Wellness booth on the Hilton concourse.

**Wellness Screening:** Open to **all** clergy and spouses (part-time and full-time), ministry candidates/students even if you aren't on the conference insurance. Friday and Saturday mornings 5:30 am-8:00 am. Scheman, room 299.

Included is: a blood-pressure measurement, a self-serve weight measurement, and the following lab tests; glucose, complete blood-cell counts, cholesterol (LDL, HDL, & triglycerides), magnesium, phosphorus, calcium, thyroid, BUN (blood urea nitrogen) and a thyroid level. Men also have blood drawn for a prostate serum antigen. Pre-registration is encouraged. Contact Kae Tritle at [bktritle@msn.com](mailto:bktritle@msn.com)

**Help Wanted:** Medical/lab technicians, Paramedics, Nurses, Respiratory therapists, or Doctors Needed to assist with Blood Pressures during Wellness Screening at Annual Conference 5:30 am until 8:00 am Contact: Kae Tritle, RN at [bktritle@msn.com](mailto:bktritle@msn.com) or call 515-226-8760

**Mammogram screening:** Open to all clergy spouses on Friday, June 5. Must have an appointment. Call McFarland Clinic at 515-239-4456. American Cancer Society guidelines apply; over 40 years old, no lumps or problems, and your last one was over 1 year ago. Will need your insurance information and co-pays may apply.

**Blood Drive:** Save a life and donate blood. Saturday 9:30 am-1:30 pm. Open to all Annual Conference members and visitors. Must be in general good health, weigh at least 120 pounds, and be older than 16. Contact Kae Tritle at [bktritle@msn.com](mailto:bktritle@msn.com)

**Chair Massages:** Open to all Annual Conference members and visitors Available on Friday and Saturday for a donation at the Wellmark booth on the Hilton concourse.

**Wellness Program and Wellmark Informational displays:** Located on the Hilton concourse. Both the Wellness Program and Wellmark will have information regarding healthy lifestyles, self-care strategies, walking, and other benefits included with your health insurance. Open Thursday through Sunday to all Annual Conference members and visitors.

I invite you to participate in the above activities as you are led and are able. Please take care of yourself physically, emotionally, and relationally in the midst of our ministry celebration called Annual Conference.

Kae Tritle, RN

Wellness Coordinator

District news May 09

# LAY SPEAKERS' CORNER

As I sit down today, I am reflecting on the week end just past. What a beautiful Easter we had with a wonderful crowd for our church services at Green Plain UMC and breakfast afterwards, and family to enjoy dinner with.

Spring is one of my favorite times of year. It is for new beginnings, and Easter just starts it out right! I enjoy all the baby animals being born and bouncing up and down the hills in the pasture and flowers beginning to bud and bloom. I have a new Magnolia tree that we planted a couple years ago, that I'm always anxious to see bud out.

I want to invite everyone who is interested in being a Lay Speaker or those who need to Re-certify for Advanced Lay Speakers to think about going to Chariton May 16<sup>th</sup> and May 23<sup>rd</sup> for Basic Lay Speaker Training and Advanced Lay Speaker Training, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Bring sack lunches.

On May 2<sup>nd</sup> there will be a Prayer and Discussion meeting at the Chariton Hy-Vee at the back of their dining room. We would like to see as many of you that would like to come, We always have good discussions.

Annual Conference is fast approaching. Dates for the Conference are June 4-7. There will be a Laity Session on Thursday June 4, from 2:00-4:30p.m. The theme of the session is "Living Right Side up in an Upside Down World". There will be a Prayer Room, it will be in the same place as last year, Also a Board of Laity Booth, with the information and display for Laity Sunday 2009.

In closing I wish to express my congratulations to all the 2009 graduates and ask that we all keep them in our prayers for a very fulfilling and prosperous future.

Sharon Spear

This month, on Saturday, May 16 and on Saturday, May 23, both Basic Lay Speaking and Advanced Lay Speaking (Lay Speakers Tell Stories) will be offered. The courses will meet at Chariton United Methodist Church, 923 Roland Avenue, Chariton, Iowa 50049-1722.

At present, 6 have enrolled in the Basic Course, and 12 have enrolled in the Advanced Course.

We now are turning our immediate attention to determining ways lay speakers can assist in efforts we might term "relational evangelism." District Superintendent Bill Poland and Field Outreach Minister Paul Smith at the District Leadership Training Session held at Chariton United Methodist Church on March 15 raised the concept of broadening how Lay Speakers might extend their efforts and gifts in carrying God's message beyond their own particular churches.

For instance, there is an opportunity always existing within the church community. Further, there is an even greater opportunity beyond the church, within the area surrounding the church, to bring the Word through Lay Speaker ministry in that area. Further, there are small population centers within our South Central District where Lay Speakers may carry an evangelistic message in ways such as speaking in other churches, or bringing hope and grace to those not affiliated with a church.

Paul Smith has developed four immediate questions we might consider:

1. Do you as a Lay Speaker have an interest in doing outreach ministry?
2. What forms and activities of outreach ministry interest you?
3. What opportunities and obstacles do you see pertaining to lay speakers in outreach ministries?
4. What training and other resources would be needed for you to do outreach ministries (relational evangelism) as portrayed above?

Your immediate comments through email or by letter or phone to me and to Paul, will be appreciated. Of course, this column is directed not only to Lay Speakers and Lay Leaders, but to pastors as well. We hope the comments we get will be discussed with your pastor before sending them. And we solicit the comments of pastors as well. In the future, we hope to hold a gathering of Lay Speakers and Lay Leaders to further develop these ideas and the feedback we receive.

Until next time, may God richly bless you.

Richard Sperring

**Sharon Spear, District Lay Leader**

**Richard Sperring, District Lay Speaking Director**

# Helping Us Be Visible!

There are many ways to help your church be more visible and inviting. Below you will find just a few that are offered through the Iowa Annual Conference Website <http://www.iaumc.org> please look around and discover ways to utilize the website to make your church more visible.

## Post Your Own Video

A place to share your ministry-related videos on the site, provided through partner "Our Church Videos" at [www.ourchurchvideos.com/iaumc](http://www.ourchurchvideos.com/iaumc)

## Blog Site for Christian Educators

This is a site where you can post questions and write notes to each other, an ongoing workshop in cyberspace. Myrtle Felkner is a life long Christian educator and is a noted and published author in the field.

[mfelkner.blogspot.com](http://mfelkner.blogspot.com)

## Your Church Information

You can add your own events to the website so that they can be easily found. Contact Sue at the District Office if you need your sign-in and password again.

## South Central District

See what is happening across our district. Access newsletters, look up contacts, keep up on the latest lay speaking news and find out who lay speakers are in your area, look for possible training opportunities.

[www.iaumc.org/scdist](http://www.iaumc.org/scdist)

Please keep the following in your prayers:

**Neil Montz**, who will be serving Albia, Trinity. Neil comes to Albia from Knoxville.

**Lane Riggle**, who will be serving Knoxville. Lane comes to our district from Prairie City-Pleasant Hill in the Central District.

**Robert Dvorak**, who will be moving to the Southwest District. Bob is currently serving Agency/Eldon/Batavia and will be moving to Stuart/Mount Vernon-Menlo-Jefferson Center.

**Todd Holman**, who will be moving to the Northeast District. Todd is currently serving Fremont-Cedar and will be moving to New Hampton.

**Sandra Smith**, who will be retiring.

**Susan Thomas**, who will be moving to the Central District. Sue is currently serving Mount Ayr Larger Parish and will be moving to Prairie City-Pleasant Hill.

**Jodi Rushing**, who is currently serving Milo-Green Plain-Liberty Center and will be moving to Lamoni-Decatur-Davis City.

**Charles Rushing**, who will be serving Mt Ayr Larger Parish. Charles (Skip) comes to our district from Des Moines, Marquisville-Des Moines, Christ in the Central District.



## Prayer Requests

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.

## A Message from Bishop Trimble

On Friday, April 3, 2009, Iowa became the third state to allow same-sex couples to marry. The Iowa Supreme Court's unanimous decision overturned a state law limiting marriage only to a man and a woman. The stage is set for increased pressure on the state legislature, elevated debate about civil rights for gays and religious rancoring among those who chose a path of bitter discourse as opposed to prayerful patience. The debate will continue over legality and morality.

I received a call, while in Chicago, asking me for a brief response for the media. I chose to give no response until I had time to fast, pray and reflect. It was my choice to speak first with United Methodists and I did so on Sunday, April 5 at Wesley United Methodist Church in Muscatine, Iowa. At the conclusion of my Palm Sunday sermon, "Life after the Parade", I shared a brief comment.

"I chose not to speak to the press before speaking to United Methodists directly reminding our membership that our church has continued to engage in dialogue and debate on matters of sexual orientation, equal rights regardless of sexual orientation, separation of church and state, and conduct permissible or not permissible by our ministers.

The 2008 General Conference adopted the contents of our current *Book of Discipline*, paragraph 341.6, "*Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches*".

While all United Methodists do not agree on all matters, the General Conference votes every four years on the contents of our doctrine, order and discipline. **Bishops, as servant leaders, have authority to guard the faith and discipline while promoting unity.**

As we embrace life after the Palm Sunday parade, God has the final word when it comes to Grace, Mercy, Judgment and Justice. As you receive the sacrament of Holy Communion, you come to an open table where God claims you as God's own, because Jesus died for us all." As we welcome a new spring as Easter people, we have questions to ask ourselves and new opportunities for dialogue and decisions. I have decided not to accept an invitation from Catholic Bishops of Iowa and other religious leaders in condemning the Iowa Supreme Court. I strongly believe the Iowa Supreme Court acted with judicial integrity in its determination that "civil marriages must be judged under constitutional standards of equal protection and not under religious doctrines or religious views of individuals".

No doubt a movement to amend the state constitution by the legislature giving the voting public an opportunity to decide is underway. At this moment in history, things have changed in Iowa. As United Methodists, we must ask ourselves what does "radical hospitality" look like, when the practices of the state and the policies of the church differ?

In the words of Jenny Smith, a student at United Theological Seminary in Ohio, "We do our very best to love persons whose words we disagree with."

Bishop Julius C. Trimble

Iowa Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church



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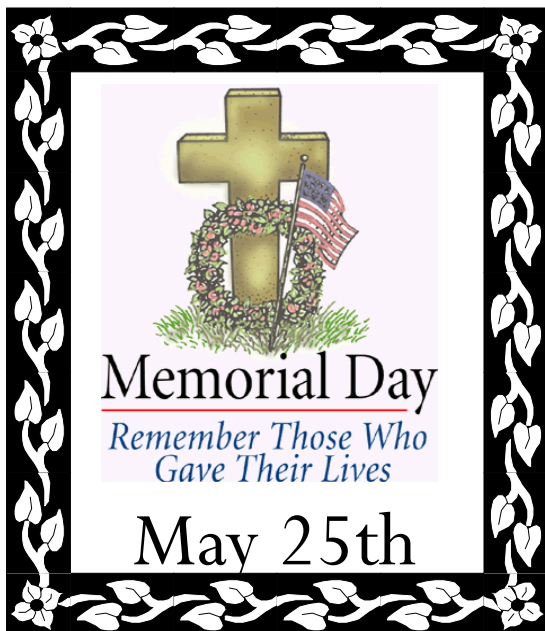
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## 2009 Iowa Annual Conference

June 4-7, 2009

Ames, IA



### \*\*ATTENTION "SNOWBIRDS"\*\*

Many of you escape the bitter Iowa winter weather by flying South. We would appreciate if we could get your contact info before you leave. This way we can get you your Annual Conference registration mailing and you can be sure you are registered for Annual Conference on time. We also need to make sure that you receive your Pre Conference Manual if you have not returned home by the time they are mailed out.

### **If you are unable to attend Annual Conference You need to do the following:**

We need to receive in writing (email works - [sue.booth@iaumc.org](mailto:sue.booth@iaumc.org)) from the pastor or retired pastor if you are not attending annual conference this year and telling the reason why. The District office will then forward the information onto the necessary person(s).