



Almena UMC

Newsletter

April/May 2007

269-668-2811

www.almenaumc.com

Sunday School/Adult Bible Study: **9 am**

Sunday Church Services: **10 am**

Grace and Peace to you!

Perhaps you were surprised when you walked through the doors of our church this morning...gone are the long-time purple doors, renewed by a fresh coat of paint. I like to think of our new color as lemon chiffon; something light, bright and welcoming. Those in the church world who observe characteristics that make a congregation "welcoming" tell us that curb appeal is as important to churches as it is to selling homes. By occasionally freshening our appearance and by keeping our grounds tidy we convey a sense of hospitality and care to the hundreds who drive by every day. May we continue to be a truly welcoming congregation, both inside and out.

In the past few months we have been praying that God would open our eyes to see His movement in our midst, and that we would join him in his work there. In answer to that prayer, God has nudged a few souls in our congregation to join him in teaching ministries. Starting Wednesday April 25th, Walter Gerstung will begin leading an evening Bible Study from the New Testament. The class will meet in fellowship hall from 7-8:30 PM. Also on the horizon is a Women's prayer and study group. The format is still taking shape, but look for a late spring start to this evening group led by Ann Field. Further down the road, (this summer or next January), Deidre Sweet plans to facilitate a 9 week class titled "Effective Parenting in a Defective World". Stay tuned for more details on all of these emerging ministries.

Our Prayer and Planning group is excited to make a recommendation to the Ad. Board to launch a program called The ALPHA Course. ALPHA is a 10 week practical introduction to the Christian faith. ALPHA is for **A**nyone, it includes **L**earning and **L**aughter, **P**eople meeting together in a setting of friendship, **H**elping one another through dialogue on life and faith issues, and at ALPHA, you can **A**sk anything; no question is seen as too simple or too hostile. If approved, the ALPHA program will require a solid commitment of prayer and volunteers. It is intended to be an ongoing program, offered twice a year. We hope to spend the summer in prayerful preparation and training, and then start our first class in September.

On April 22nd we will celebrate baptism, please let me know soon if you are interested in baptism for yourself or your child. On April 29th our youth will lead worship.

As Easter approaches we are reminded that more than a fresh coat of paint is needed to wash away our sin and to have power to live our lives to the glory of God. I encourage you to attend our Holy Week services and take time for personal prayer and reflection on the meaning of Christ's offering for us. Only when we travel with Christ to the cross can we fully appreciate Easter joy.

In Christ's service together, Pastor Donna

Bethany Christian Services

Last November our congregation supplied nine Thanksgiving baskets to Bethany Christian Services to be distributed to some of their client families, which were most appreciated. This agency is the "largest private Christian adoption and family services agency in the United States".

They are a "worldwide ministry known for compassionate Christian care". Recently they started a new program called Champions for Children. Its purpose is for willing people in the local churches to act as an advocate between Bethany and their church congregation, getting out the word on current activities and special needs of Bethany.

Since I am considering being that contact person for Alma, I would like to give you some information about the services Bethany Christian Services provide. Their primary goal is "to find a loving home for every child in the name of Christ". Adoption of waiting children to families is one of the primary means of meeting this goal. Adoptions can be domestic infants, special needs children (older, sibling group, medical needs) international and foster parents who adopt their foster children. The newest adoption service is embryo adoption. Also, when possible, Bethany works with families for Family Preservation. They also work with couples on infertility issues. They offer counseling services to women faced with an unplanned pregnancy and to adoptive families throughout all stages of the process.

Bethany Christian Services is a not for profit organization and receives funding through the state of Michigan for its operational and foster home expenses. However, they depend on individual and church donations to cover all their costs. There are opportunities to volunteer help at events and fund raising activities. One of the biggest ongoing needs is the demand for Christian foster families. I will keep the congregation informed of some of these opportunities so we can help strengthen the work of those who are helping to make life better for children in need. If I can answer any questions or direct you to Bethany, please contact me.

Lois Richardson

SOUP / SALAD SUPPERS

The Soup/Salad Suppers for the 2007 season are over and what a successful year we had!! The area people that came had great meals and enjoyed sitting and chatting with one another. Our Church family got to know each other better. Some got sticky cutting desserts, others got steam facials serving soup and others laughed and laughed up to their elbows in dishwater. Who can forget all the soups and those big salads, cakes, pies and dinner rolls. (I get hungry just remembering!) It was work done for our God, our church and all for good causes.

Thank you Ann Field for being chairman this year. Thank you also to her co-chairs Barb Alden, Shirley Lyke, and Diane Ross. Thank each of you that worked in ANY way.

The goal of our Soup/Suppers has always been to try to do something for either our church as a whole or those in need in our area and also something for those in a much broader area. This year our Soup/Supper proceeds were donated to the Wesley Foundation at Western Michigan University, United Christian Services of Eastern Van Buren County, and the Heifer Project International. The following is a list of some of the other causes our Soup/Supper proceeds have been given to in previous years: we did several things for our church which included cleaning the choir robes, helping to pay off the parking lot paving, put money in the general fund, bought the refrigerator for the kitchen, the cupboards by the back door, crock pots and roasters. We put money in the camping fund for youth summer camp. We donated to aid the victims of the Sunami, the earthquake in Pakistan and to victims of Hurricane Katrina.

I want to thank everyone for all their help and support for this year and years past, for the cooking, for the working, for coming to eat, for all jobs big and small. God knows that the people of Alma United Methodist are a people with a heart always for Him and always wanting to help others.

Marcia Williams

EDUCATION NOTES

Library Update:

Many of you may have noticed the library in the Fellowship Hall is much neater since the Saturday clean-up day a few weeks ago. You may also have noticed that it's slimmer and trimmer having had the children's books removed and relocated to the new Jr. Library at the bottom of the stairs on the way to the classrooms. (Thank you to all who made the transition happen. It is true that "many hands make light work") The Jr. Library is a work-in-progress and there is still much that needs to be done so if you have an interest in this area please contact Lisa Smith or myself. If you have any gently used children's books or movies that you would like to donate, they would be greatly appreciated.

Calling All Campers:

If you have ever wondered what it would be like to go to camp where there is swimming, canoeing, basketball, soccer, mountain boarding, crafts, dance, camp fires, and many more fun and interesting things than talk to the high schoolers who have gone to camp or Pastor Donna or myself. It is a wonderful experience and one that will easily become a highlight of your summer. There are camps available for all ages. There are pamphlets with additional camp information in the Narthex or you can go online to www.westmichiganconference.org and click on camping.

Nursery News:

After the Saturday church clean-up it became apparent that some of the stuffed animals in the nursery need to be replaced. If you have any gently used ones you would like to donate, we would receive them with open and thankful hearts.

We are looking to expand Nursery Workers. We will be posting a Nursery Sign-up Sheet on the bulletin board. We are looking for 2 workers each week to be in the Nursery. If you have a heart for little ones, feel this is a ministry of the church you would like to serve in, and have been active in the life of the church for 6 months, please prayerfully consider signing up. All those interested would need to fill out an information sheet and complete a safety and child-protection training session.

Vacation Bible School Announcement:

We will be holding Vacation Bible School this year the second week of August. I know that may seem far away at this time but it will be here before you know it. If you are interested in being part of the planning, teaching, and/or preparing for Vacation Bible School this year, please see me, call me or you can e-mail me.

Ann Field

The Almena Quilters will meet on Tuesday, April 3, at 7pm in the community room. The date of the May meeting will have to be changed, due to the election. We will decide on that date at our April meeting. Remember to bring some of the projects you have been working on to show the group. - Diane Ross

~~~~From Bea Ellis's Corner~~~~

1000 UPC from Spartan labels were sent in this week.  
\$20 will soon be received for children/youth programs.  
Thanks for your help ~~Keep them coming.  
Took a whole year to collect them.  
Let's shorten the time this year.

## **Missions** by Lois Richardson

Recently I received a note from Eleanor Martin, the Kalamazoo District Mission Chairperson. I want to share some of her kind words with you. "I just read your domestic report. Let your church family know they are doing great. Thank you for being a six lane church. I wish all the churches in the district would see the vision like Almena." Great words, aren't they?

Our mission project for the month of April is in Lane 6 and is one most of you will be familiar with-the WMU Wesley Foundation. Their Praise Band visited Almena and led the worship service in a joyful way last Sunday. The students in this group meet for worship on Sunday and then gather for Bible studies, mission projects, praise band, fellowship nights, men's and women's groups and the Fireside Cafe throughout the week. It offers them a Christian place to study, eat and talk. I believe that this building has the only steeple on the WMU campus. I quote from one of the students. "I was missing home, and even more so, my church. I don't have a car, so I can't drive anywhere. One day I remembered seeing a little church on campus. The next Sunday I went to worship there, at the Wesley Foundation, and was welcomed by a very loving Christian community. The service was awesome. I am coming back every Sunday. This is where I need to be." So campus ministry changes lives.

However, this ministry is at a crossroads. Their already reduced conference support has been cut in half for 2007. That means the Kalamazoo Wesley Foundation will receive approximately \$33,000 for a budget of \$120,000. They are struggling to raise the necessary funds to remain an open and viable ministry to the university students. Many churches and individuals have given support. The January soup supper proceeds of over \$600 was donated to them. We all now have the opportunity to contribute generously to this ministry that has such a positive influence in the lives of the students.

Our local Crop Walk is another project we'll be working on in April and is in Lane 4. Michigan is the top Crop fund raiser in the nation. Thanks to the walkers in 2006, Eastern Van Buren Co. ranked in the top 100 walks in the United States. The purpose of the Crop Walk is to raise money to feed and teach over 800 million chronically malnourished people who live all around the world. "We walk in the Crop Walk to remind ourselves and others that countless people have to walk many miles just to get water to drink, find food to eat or fuel for cooking. In addition to providing for international needs, six local hunger agencies in our area received more than \$1000 each to help in Eastern Van Buren Co., since 25% of funds we raise are returned to our local community agencies.

The Crop Walk this year is Sunday, April 29, beginning at 2:00 at the Paw Paw Middle School. I encourage everyone to participate, either by walking or sponsoring and donating to a walker. This can be a great family or group activity. It really is a lot of fun. The youth group is currently working on a banner so our group can be easily identified. If we're lucky again this year, maybe Bill Sorenson will bring some more of those delicious Werther's caramels to share.

I'm very excited to tell you about another mission related event that will take place in our church fellowship hall on Sunday, April 22 at 9:00 a.m. In the December/January newsletter I told you about a trip that Pastor Carolyn Sprague from Paw Paw and her parents made to Africa last summer. While there they were Volunteers in Mission (VIM) to Paul Webster, the missionary we help to support. Pastor Carolyn has agreed to come and speak and share her experiences with our entire church family. It's an excellent opportunity to learn more about the work of Paul Webster. She'll be sharing lots of pictures and will even include some of the many African animals she saw while on Safari. The program will take place during the Sunday School hour but is intended for everyone. So please come even if you don't usually attend Sunday School. It promises to be very interesting and the children will love those animal pictures.. So that Pastor Carolyn can get back to Paw Paw in time for her morning worship service, we will start right at 9:00 a.m.

For our mission project in May we will have the opportunity to donate to Paul Webster's agricultural projects in Mujila Falls and Musokatanda in Congo/Zambia, West Africa. This is a World Project under Lane 2. He teaches the people there how to combat hunger through agriculture, and thus be able to take care of themselves. I'm sure that after Pastor Carolyn's presentation to us, we'll have a much better understanding of these projects.

## **Choir News by Sandi Boucher**

Another year is winding down for the choir and what a year we have had! We have added several new members and have been able to try some new things, including participating in a Praise Festival in February at the Paw Paw UMC. As we finish up our year in May and take the summer off, please consider whether participating in our choir would interest you. There is always room for more and we really do need male voices. Practices will start up again in late August so we will be ready to sing in September. Our practices rarely last more than 30 minutes and are right after church on Sundays so you wouldn't have to make an extra trip.



You can donate to or volunteer for Almena United Methodist Church's team at this year's Relay For Life online at [www.acsevents.org/relay/mi/vanbureneast](http://www.acsevents.org/relay/mi/vanbureneast). Click on Team Rank >> [more](#) to find Almena UMC. If you would like to pledge to a participant or make a general team donation offline, see Nancy Mc Elroy or Dave Field, our team captains. So far, we have 4 people signed up to walk and we plan to hand out water with a Bible verse on the label. Come and join us!

Further information:

- Relay for Life Van Buren East
- June 23-24, 2007
- 10:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.
- Lawton High School Track
- Lawton, Michigan

---

## **Newsletter/Ad Board by Jerry**

**With so much going on this time of year, I would like to schedule an extra Ad Board meeting on April 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.**

**I am excited about the new things that are planned. I would also like to thank everyone who has done so much already this year. It is so great to build our relationships in service together for Christ and the church. We are truly blessed!**

**The next newsletter is June 3<sup>rd</sup>, with the deadline on May 30<sup>th</sup>, I welcome contributions from all! ☺. or email: [jerrylentz@almenaumc.com](mailto:jerrylentz@almenaumc.com)**

# **A Worship Musical**

## **"WE ARE CALLED"**

**Presented by the Fellowship Choir**

**Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup> 6:00 p.m.**

**Christian Reformed Church**

**on Red Arrow Highway**

**Sunday, April 15<sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m.**

**Almena United Methodist Church**

**Sunday, April 29<sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m.**

**Paw Paw 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist church**

**A Paw Paw area inter-church fellowship singers  
declaring the grace of God found in Jesus Christ**

*if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,  
and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin 1 John 1:7*

**Community invited**

**[www.twopaws.net/FellowshipChoir.html](http://www.twopaws.net/FellowshipChoir.html)**