



# Almena UMC Newsletter

August/September 2007

269-668-2811

[www.almenaumc.com](http://www.almenaumc.com)

Adult Bible Study: 9 am

Sunday Church Services: 10 am

Hello friends and visitors,

A friendly neighborhood peacock has taken a liking to our church, and frequently hangs out on our lawn and roof. More recently, he seems to be attracted to the cross on top of our steeple. I say, "Yeah God!"

If a beautiful bird is attracted to the cross for purely functional reasons (?) how much more might hurting people be attracted to the forgiveness, love and power symbolized by the cross? Those of us who call Almena UMC our church home have a privilege and a responsibility to BE that which helps attract our friends, relatives and neighbors to Christ. Our words, actions, attitudes and habits all reflect on the quality of that primary relationship.

This fall, in an effort to help you nurture your relationship to Christ, as well as to provide a user-friendly event to which to invite guests, we are offering a 10 week series called the Alpha program. It is a practical introduction to the Christian faith, and will run Thursday evenings from 6-9 pm, starting Sept. 13th.

Alpha takes a low pressure approach, and guests need not commit to attending all 10 sessions. However, registration will be closed after the first 2 classes are completed. More details on the program can be found later in this newsletter. What I want to share with you here is how to decide if Alpha is for you or someone you know.

My first suggestion is to pray about it and seek God's direction. I would love to have every member of our church take Alpha eventually (we plan to offer it twice a year for a few years).

There are two reasons:

- 1) Every person, whether they are a long-time committed Christian, an occasional attendee, or a non-churched person, can learn something new and make new friends at Alpha. and
- 2) Once you have first-hand experience of Alpha, you will be more confident in inviting others to come in the future.

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Regarding who to invite, let me say this...God is the one who draws people to himself and changes hearts. We have the opportunity to partner with him in his work. Pray that God would open your eyes to whom he is drawing. Some indications of readiness are when a person begins asking questions about Jesus, Christianity, faith, your church, etc. That opens a door for you to share what God is doing in your life and, if appropriate, invite them to Alpha.

Another approach is to pray and ask God to reveal the names of individuals he desires to take the course. Then pray for those people and look for opportunities to speak to them about Alpha.

One approach to avoid is to say to yourself "So-and-so really needs this course, so I'll drag them along". That won't work because force is not God's style. You may even drive a person further away. Instead pray for guidance and patiently join God in what He is already doing.

We are trusting that God's Holy Spirit will guide the whole registration and start-up process. Thank you for your prayers and the positive response that you have already expressed. Please feel free to talk to me or another of our Alpha leaders to learn more. (Sam Gordy, Lois Richardson, Walter Gerstung).

Next Sunday, Aug 12, we will have a guest speaker, Trudy Harvey, from the Wakeshma Church, share about how the Alpha Course helped facilitate growth in her life.

To close, let me share with you the first verse of a song we sang at Wesley Woods Confirmation Camp in June...

First though, picture the sun sinking in ribbons of pink and orange over a peaceful lake, picture a campfire crackling on the beach, a large wooden cross as your focal point, and a guitar softly strumming. Then hear these words...

Cl-ing to the Cross. Cl-ing to the Cross.  
I will not be afraid and I will not be ashamed.  
I will cl--ing to the Cross.

May we not be afraid or ashamed of the gospel, but Cling to the Cross, Trust in his Love, and Live in his Word. If you see the peacock on our cross, be reminded of this song.

In Christ's service together,  
Pastor Donna

## Summer Snapshots....

We had a neighborhood ice cream social in May. In June, we walked, ran, napped, sang, quilted and organized to raise money and awareness for Relay for Life and those touched by cancer. We had a church cook-out in July. Nine campers attended church camp at Wesley Woods and Crystal Springs UM Camps. A fresh new garden was planted between our two entranceways. Repairs have been made on the chimney and roof gables.

We've had two new babies born, both on the same day! Welcome Arin Jolyn and Lucas Andrew!

A new photo-directory was assembled, see Marie Wilke-Dobler if you haven't rec'd a copy yet. Celebration Kids! Choir rehearsed thru the summer and shared God's truth in song with precious enthusiasm. Our evening study on the book of John concluded, and our Womens' group continues to meet weekly.

Our Sermon Series "But Don't All Religions Lead to God?" continues to inform and challenge us. Vacation Bible School, "Stories Jesus Told" kicks off August 13<sup>th</sup>. All along we have met for worship, sacraments and fellowship. To God be the Glory!

We look forward to a fruitful fall. Sunday School for adults, youth and children will begin September 16<sup>th</sup>. Stay tuned for more details.

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### **Choir News**

by Sandi Boucher

Believe it or not, the summer is zooming by and in just a few weeks it will be time to get the adult choir up and running for a new year. New members are always welcome.

We are especially in need of a few more men. If you enjoy singing, come join the amateurs that manage to put together a pretty good choir. We don't ask a lot of our members.

Practices are immediately after church every Sunday except for second Sunday due to potluck. They rarely last an hour, most of the time only 30 minutes or so. We practice with CD's on our own time (most of us listen in the car while driving to and from work) and only work on the rough spots during practice.

I have found some truly awesome music to share with the congregation this year and I am anxious to share it with the choir family and get working on it.

Practice will start officially August 19<sup>th</sup> and we should plan on singing on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in September for the first time.

## **Financial Committee & Treasurer**

I do not have a lot to report for this newsletter. We are on schedule with payment for our ministry shares and all outstanding expenses.

Our ministry shares are increasing \$237 a month or \$2844.00 yearly and our annual fire inspection did increase \$144.00 this year and also in 2008.

I do want to give you a definition for ministry share, in case we have someone new and they have not heard this term previously. Ministry share is a means for our congregation to support our shared mission and ministry in the world to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We are all connected together in a structure to do more, than as an individual in response to God's love. Thank you for being a giving congregation.

I am planning a budget meeting for August 6, 2007 @ 7:00p.m. Please join us and help plan for our coming year. God Bless Everyone,

Respectfully, Susan Tinkler

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## **News from Bea Ellis**

Thanks for the Spartan UPC'S. Now have 375 and counting.

Ellis farm had a good week. A Monarch butterfly hatched. Daughter Pat in Calif. is progressing rapidly on their house/garage. Expect electricity, water, and interior walls very soon.

Granddaughter Angie has been hired at Clarksville, Tenn. for her first year of teaching, hoping for 2nd grade, may get 5th grade. Son Tim & family from San Diego, CA will arrive Aug. 11-19.

Thanks to Karen Dixon sharing the alter flower duty on a 2 week basis. Anyone wanting to celebrate an occasion, please don't be intimidated. Two bouquet offerings to our Lord is much better than none.

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## **Almena Quilters:**

Hope everyone is having fun this summer. The quilters took July and August off. We will be starting again this fall. Our first meeting will be September 4th (Tuesday) at 7pm. Pat Conolly has some great ideas for appliqué blocks, and will be teaching us how to do that. Also Pastor Donna would like us to design and make a banner to go on the wall by the organ. So we should be busy with some fun things to make.

HAPPY QUILTING!

Diane Ross

## **Missions** by Lois Richardson

The Lane 3 project for August is Henderson Settlement in Kentucky, a familiar one to many as some of our members have visited the site. The mission provides child care, educational programs, agricultural and economic development, housing assistance and recreation. Eighty percent of the families with school children are either poverty level or low income.

Henderson Settlement works to solve the problems of inadequate education, job training, substandard housing, and poor physical and emotional health of mothers, children, youth and the elderly through the various programs and services offered.

The mission project for September will be support once again for the Bible League. It is the Bible League's goal to place the Bible, or sections of it, with as many people as possible in the language of the people within the United States and worldwide. The Bible League's ministry continues to grow since its beginning in 1936. Today more than 80 countries have received Bibles, New Testaments, Scripture portions, and basic Bible study materials and works with other publishers to buy and place millions of others. Bible League offices have been established in more than 40 countries.

"You help lead people to Christ and to grow in faith through Bible study. They experience transformed lives when they learn to live by the Bible and become members of local churches! This all happens when you send God's Word into action.

Along the Nile River, Bible League equips local Christians to lead Bible studies. This past year thousands of people in Egypt began a journey from darkness to light. This is one of their stories...

**After the Bible League trained Jahi, he began his ministry in a remote Egyptian village, Soon after arriving; Jahi was approached by a man who asked if he was helping people to get Bibles of their own. 'I was in the process of becoming a Muslim. But someone gave me a Bible and it changed me. When I compared the Bible to the Koran and examined the differences, I concluded that I had to follow the Bible. Now my life's work is to help people receive their own Bible.'**

Men, women, children; those persecuted for their faith; the discouraged and downtrodden; those previously unreached by the Gospel, forgotten by most of the world. The Bible is connecting them to Jesus Christ-because you cared enough to share it. Thank you!"

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### **Reminder: Church Conference**

Our yearly Church Conference will be held Sunday Oct. 7 at 5:00 PM in our sanctuary. We will have a joint conference, with LifeSpring UMC, a new church start in Texas Corners. Our Staff Parish Relations Committee will meet with District Supt. Abiade at 4:00.

All church members are encouraged to attend. We will have a mini-worship service, then take care of church business, including votes on Pastor's Compensation, Lay Leaders, Lay Speakers, Membership Report, and receive other reports. Please mark your calendars for Oct. 7 at 5:00.



## ALPHA AT ALMENA - Fall 2007

### Introductory Dinner Thurs. Sept. 6, 6 – 8:30 pm

This optional evening includes dinner and a 35 min. talk titled “Christianity: Untrue, Boring and Irrelevant?” It offers a sample of what Alpha evenings will be like, and provides a question and answer session to help people decide if the course is right for them to take. Please sign up for yourself and any guests you will bring so we can prepare enough food.

Sign up sheet is on the bulletin board, or contact Lois Richardson at 668-5386.

### Alpha Course begins Thurs. Sept. 13, 6-9 pm and runs every Thurs. till Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>

Registration forms available in church hallway. Return to Lois Richardson at church, or the “Alpha Mailbox” located on the lower tier of church mailboxes, just inside the front door.

#### What is ALPHA?

**Alpha is a 10 week practical introduction to the Christian faith. ALPHA stands for...**

**A-** anyone can come. All are welcome

**L-** Learning & Laughter. Join others in an informal atmosphere.

**P-** Pasta (or other food). Each weekly session begins with dinner.

**H-** Helping one another. Large-group video and small group discussion.

**A-** Ask anything. Here’s your chance to ask questions.

Alpha is for everyone, including individuals interested in investigating Christianity, newcomers to the church, new Christians, and those who want to brush up on the basics of Christianity.

No matter who you are the Alpha course offers an exciting avenue to explore life’s most perplexing questions. The 10 week course is filled with great meals, thought-provoking talks, and great small group discussions.

#### What happens at Alpha?

##### Dinner

Evening courses begin with an informal dinner and time for fellowship.

##### Talk

The main presentation addresses a key issue relating to Christianity. The Alpha course presents a DVD series with speaker Nicky Gumbel.

##### Dessert and Small Groups

Guests often find the small group session to be the most valuable and rewarding time of the whole course. The sessions are an opportunity to ask questions, express opinions, and to discuss the topic of the evening. Small groups also provide an opportunity to get to know others and share ideas in a relaxed and non-threatening environment.