



# Almena UMC

## Newsletter

April/May 2008

269-668-2811

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

Sunday School/Adult Bible Study: **9:45 am**

Sunday Church Services: **11 am**

Dear Friends,

Last Newsletter I wrote about our decision to “ReThink” our Sunday morning schedule. We’ve made some changes and so far the result has been very positive, with Sunday School attendance nearly doubling from what it was when we met an hour earlier.

This newsletter, I’d like to inform you about a broader attempt to “ReThink” the way United Methodists in Michigan go about the task of being Christ’s Body in this pleasant peninsula and beyond. First a little background; two years ago both the West Michigan Conference and the Detroit Conference affirmed their intention to develop a plan to merge. Since then, a hardworking team, called the Michigan Area Transition Team (MATT) has listened, prayed, observed, and crafted a comprehensive plan for merging. The purpose for the strategic change is to allow the Michigan area to better fulfill its mission of strengthening the local church for the purpose of ‘making disciples of Jesus Christ’ for the transformation of the world. On Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup> pastors and lay members from the entire state will vote on whether or not to move forward with uniting into the “Great Lakes Conference”. If the proposal passes, it would take effect in January of 2009.

There has been much debate about the plan, which includes centralizing administrative offices in Lansing, sharing talent and resources statewide, equalizing pastor’s pay and retirement expectations, re-districting, forming smaller support pods called clergy clusters, and many other details. Two underlying assumptions that are hard to measure are that there will eventually be cost savings due to economies of scale, and that the change will foster a spiritual renewal in our conference.

Both the latter assumptions are hard to predict, as is the effect a new Great Lakes Conference would have on this local church. While not perfect, we are a basically healthy congregation, growing spiritually and growing in our service to our community. I expect that to continue regardless of the vote in Lansing.

In spite of unknowns and the concerns of some about the proposal, I’m leaning toward supporting the change. The plan may not be perfect, but I am trusting that our leaders have done their prayer-work and homework and will continue to work together to perfect it as we move forward. Ultimately, our organizational plan is a minor detail in the bigger work that God has for us to do.

As we visit in sermon this Sunday with “Doubting Thomas” a.k.a. “Honest Thomas”, we are reminded that some times we need to doubt our doubts, and in doing so we will grow toward greater faith and deeper understanding. In a world that is hungering for meaning and hope, I don’t want to waste any more time, talent or money in haranguing over this decision for another few years. However the vote turns out, we will do our best to be team players in advancing the cause of Christ in Almena, Michigan, and the world.

In Christ, Pastor Donna

# Christian Education & Small Study Groups

## Pre-School-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade ~ Miss Elizabeth

- April Lesson: The House on the Rock
  - Bible Verse: "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." Matthew 7:24
- May Lesson: Saul to Paul
  - Bible Verse: "Live a life of love." Ephesians 5:2

## Middlers ~ Mrs. Hoffman

- **Learn...** about the 12 Disciples
- **Study...** the words of Jesus
- **Explore...** God's Creations

## Jr. /Sr. High School ~ Jackie Coons

- On Sunday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, studies and discussion on: Bible, Fable, Fraud, or Fact Part 1 and Part.



## Adult Studies

### ▪ Studies Continue...

1. **Bible Study (Upstairs in Library) ~ Theron Huffman**
2. **Contemporary Study/Downstairs: "God Was Here & I Was Out to Lunch" by James W. Moore ~ Lois Richardson**



3. **Parenting...."Effective Parenting in a Defective World" – Deidre Sweet**

# Christian Education & Small Study Groups

## Becoming a Woman of Influence: Making a Lasting Impact on Others Written by Carol Kent

“Jesus' twelve disciples changed the world forever. Would you like to have a similar impact? Learn seven simple, life-changing principles Jesus used to influence others - like asking questions, telling stories, and offering unconditional love to others. Through practical examples, see how your struggles and triumphs can inspire others. This book also includes a nine-week Bible study.

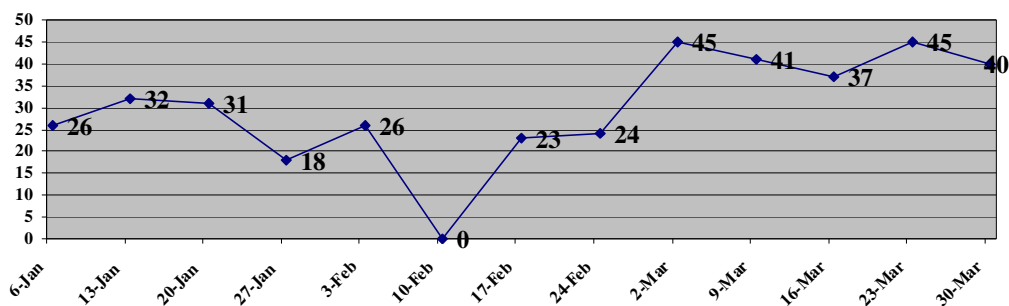


Tuesday's from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. (9-weeks)

- April 22, 29
- May 6, 13, 20 & 27
- June 3, 10 & 17

**Remember to sign up for  
Summer Camp!!!**

Almena United Methodist  
Christian Education  
Sunday Morning Attendance 2008



Effective **March 2<sup>nd</sup>**, our Sunday Morning Christian Education time changed to 9:45 a.m. Since the time change, our attendance is now averaging 42 people, that's an increase of 20 people.

Submitted by: Elizabeth Gordy

## *MEN'S GROUP*

A few men from Almena UMC tossed around the idea of getting together and forming a group. Word had it that there had not been a group of this nature that anyone could recall going back over the last 50+ years. Along came November 2007 and after much deliberating it was finally decided that the only way for this to happen was to stop talking and just do it.

So the Almena UMC Men's Group was formed and we held our first meeting on November 25, 2007. Six men attended the first meeting where we enjoyed a hearty breakfast of pancakes, sausage, and warm fellowship and a good portion of God's Word. The next three meetings all produced attendance in the double digits. By the time this article comes to print we will have just enjoyed the fellowship of the United Methodist Men of Paw Paw United Methodist Church who invited us to join them for breakfast and fellowship at their April 6, 2008 meeting.

We hit the ground running with the mindset that we needed to be a source of Outreach Ministries that served the Church of Jesus Christ inside and outside our four walls with hands on attitude. He commands us to follow his teaching where he instructs us to lead by being servants first. There are an abundance of needs just waiting to be met. If you or someone you know has a need please bring them to us we will do whatever we can to assist the needs of others.

Listed below are two projects currently under construction:

### **CURRENT PROJECTS:**

**1. Crystal Springs United Methodist Church Camp, Dowagiac, MI -Adopt a Cabin**

For a three year period we have adopted a cabin with the promise of doing all the necessary upkeep and maintenance for this period of time. A group of nine people which consisted of Rick & Jackie Coons, Steve Keyte, Todd Harmon, Jennifer Nette, Dave Gay, Dave Field, Dan Naylor, and Sam Gordy just completed our first project on the cabin the weekend of March 29 & 30, 2008.

We painted and patched the four walls on the inside, did some electrical work, and scrapped and painted the floors and did some maintenance on the bunk beds. When you have various people with many different talents it makes the workload much lighter. I am so glad they let me tag along, sharing in the blessings. (If you show me which end of the paintbrush to hold and point me to the ladder I can be reasonably effective).

**2. MPRI-Michigan Prisoner Re-Entry Initiative.**

This is a mentoring program to assist prisoners as they make the transition back into mainstream society. This program is still under review. If you would like additional information or feel the call to assist please see Sam Gordy.

We meet the **Fourth Sunday** each month at **7:30 am** in the **Fellowship Hall at Almena UMC**. Each meeting starts and ends with Prayer. In between we share a nice breakfast along with fellowship, a word of Scripture followed by a short discussion on the scripture and how we can use it to serve Christ's purpose for us. We include time for music to praise God and allow for reflection. Our meetings last approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes. Please join us. There is always room for more.

The next two meeting dates are: **April 27, 2008 and May 25, 2008**

Submitted by: Sam Gordy

## **Financial Committee & Treasurer**

Greetings:

We have just ended a busy month, so I will be sending checks to United Christian Services for the money collected at the Good Friday Service, Society of St. Andrews, monies from the coin boxes, our monthly ministry shares, Umcors, One Great Hour of Sharing, and the money for our March mission projects. After the March Soup Supper I sent money for the Paw Paw Food Pantry.

The sound system is all paid and that was paid out of our equipment-electronics budget. This was money raised from our Harvest dinners and Soup and Salad suppers. We are on track, following closely with the budget set at the beginning of the year.

I have ordered the shirts and for those people who did not pay yet, please send me a check made out to Almema United Methodist Church or put it in the Treasurer's mail box.

Good things happen as a result of your gifts - those in need are helped. We are a connectional ministry reaching out to our community and around the world.

Thank you, Sue Tinkler

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THE MIDDLEL'S CLASS IS FLOURISHING. PRAISE THE LORD! - Shirley Huffman

After the time change we find our Sunday school now has a much higher attendance. Our class has grown to seven and we are having a great time.

During the Easter season we traveled with Jesus. We began with when he served the Disciples at the Last Supper on Thursday evening, to when he arose and later ascended into heaven. Now we march forward to study the good news Jesus brought to us and how we can use his lessons in our every day life. We will start by searching for the words of Jesus underlining them in RED in each of our bibles with the exception of the Parables.

As a teacher I find our children are feeling harried in the days that we are living in. We are learning in class to slow down and stop during each day to "Smell the Roses," the "roses" that God created for us to enjoy. During this time we will learn short prayers called having conversations with Jesus.

When the weather warms up we hope to have one class outside in the Shelter. During this time we will listen to nature and what we can hear and see drawing from it a special practice for making our busy days more rewarding with Jesus being our 24 hour friend.

These next weeks we will also be learning about the twelve disciples and when they traveled with Jesus soon finding themselves launching out on their own, as they began to spread the word.

With Sunday School ending at the end of May, for the summer break, we need to soak in God's Word. It is a joy to spend an hour with the children each week and thank you for seeing to it that they attend class each Sunday. It is very important!

We now have a class motto for 2008. YEARNING TO LEARN THE BIBLE.

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## **MONDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY. SYNOPSIS OF OUR LAST STUDY**

Nehemiah is rebuilding the temple after its destruction by Babylonia led by King Nebuchadnezzar in C:586 546 B.C. Ezra soon comes on the scene from Babylonia to Jerusalem, arriving after Nehemiah's trip to Judah from Babylon. Ezra is led to bring the Jewish people, now who have returned, spiritually back to God and his laws. He brings them again to worship and follow the laws of the Lord their God, as Moses and David had instructed years before.

Before this event and while in Judah, the Jewish people were into idol worship and the various prophets continually proclaimed and warned the people by saying, "STOP! Turn back to the Lord and follow his laws and do away with your idol worship". The Jewish nation doesn't listen so Jerusalem and the temple fall to the Babylonians. Some forty years later they return from exile. Jerusalem now lies in ruin. Nehemiah starts to build the foundation for a new temple.

JOIN US FOR THE REST OF THE STORY

We are learning together. What one can offer can help others to understand God's word better

We welcome you on Mondays...

Coffee time is at 10 a.m. and study is from 10:30 until 11:30 a.m. This spring we hope to have another Mystery trip. We will look forward to seeing you.

The calendar placed on the foyer bulletin board tells the place we are to meet each week. Also it is printed in Sunday's bulletin.

### **- The Neighborhood Ecumenical Bible Study Group.**

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The next Youth group event will be on April 18 - 19 at the Kalamazoo Wesley Foundation. They are hosting an over night Movie Palooza! Any youth in grades 7 - 12 are welcome to join in on the fun. Please contact Deidre Sweet with any questions about upcoming youth group events.

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### **Update:**

My Automotive Academy classes are going very well at K.V.C.C. and I am learning a lot! We started in September and completion of the program is in August. Almost a full year, full time! This has brought some challenges. I want to thank you ALL for your prayers, help and support. I am in the top 3 in a class of 16 students.

The Auto Academy's third phase starts in May and goes until the end of July. During this time, the students will be working/learning in the shop full time. We will be accepting customer cars for diagnostics and repair. If you have issues with a vehicle, you might be interested in this. There would be no labor costs, just the cost of replacement parts if needed and approved. Let me know.

I would also like to talk with anyone that has a non-running, broken or older vehicle you would donate or sell cheap for me to work on. Thanks! - Jerry

## **Missions** by Lois Richardson

Spring is finally here and with it comes an opportunity to learn more about and contribute to a mission project that is new to most of us. It is called Rural/Farm Crisis Ministry and it will be our April mission project. It is in lane 3 under National Projects. It is a response by the church that recognizes the negative farm/rural situations across the USA that are causing much devastation and sometimes even rapid transition in rural communities. The goals of this project are to provide seed money for projects that are responding to individuals and families that are suffering loss of livelihood from family farms, small businesses, or other jobs. Because Almena is somewhat still a rural area, we can empathize with rural families in need and offer assistance where it can make a difference.

The other project for April is CROP WALK (Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty), held this year on Sunday, April 27. It is in lane 4, Hunger/Relief/UMCOR. Last year we set a record in our church with the 12 walkers raising over \$1,300. Because the needs are so great, our goal this year is to set another new record. But that can only happen if we have many walkers and contributors.

Michigan is the top Crop fund raiser in the nation and last year the Eastern Van Buren Co. Crop Walk ranked in the top 100. 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 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, 25% of the funds we raise will be given to five local hunger agencies in Eastern Van Buren Co. This year walkers are also asked to bring food and supplies needed for the Migrant Program.

The Crop Walk will be held on Sunday, April 27 beginning with registration at the United Methodist Church in Paw Paw at 1:00 and the walk starting at 2:00. Thanks to the Youth Group from last year, we have a lovely Crop Walk banner to display. "And for the third consecutive year, the Strand Theater in Paw Paw will sponsor a special movie night, Wednesday, April 9, with half of all proceeds going to the Eastern Van Buren Co. CROP Walk. At 7:00 p.m., the Strand will present a special screening of "College Road Trip", a "G" rated Disney family film."

I encourage everyone to participate, either by walking, volunteering at posts along the route or sponsoring and donating to a walker. This can be a great family or group activity. Walkers and helpers last year really did have a good time. Please consider how you can participate.

The World Project in lane 2 for May is also a new one for most of us. It is called Ishe Anesu Project (God with Us) and is located within the Hilltop UMC premises in Mutare, Zimbabwe in Africa. It makes possible education to the underprivileged children and orphans and the poorest of the poor. The project pays school fees and buys the required school uniforms, books and stationery. It also offers Christian education and values, social and family ethics and recreation. Two meals a day are provided. The Project pays for Doctors appointments and treatment. Occasionally, the children enjoy extracurricular activities such as visits to the museums, animal game preserves, airport, food factories and other sightseeing areas. Currently there is an enrollment of 60 children, most of them orphans of one or both parents. It is the project's dream to eventually send at least one student to Africa University.