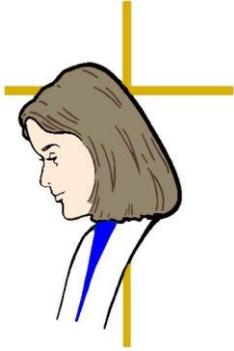


# THE PARISH POST

Volume 42 - Issue #2

11:00 a.m. Worship Service  
*Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.*

February 2014



*"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism ... in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Romans 6:3-4*

## Baptism & New Beginnings

Just a couple of weeks ago, we celebrated Baptism of the Lord Sunday on our liturgical calendar. Since this day always comes early in the New Year, it seems a natural time for the installation of our church leaders. Recalling the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, we have opportunity to dedicate ourselves once again to our ministry which begins when we are baptized in Jesus' name. For indeed, "all Christians are called through their baptism to ministry." (*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, paragraph 126)

I found our service very meaningful as together we remembered our baptism through a congregational Reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant. Even persons who know nothing about the details of their baptism, other than the fact that they were at one point baptized, can remember the significance of that event. And we can also be certain that God remembers it. God is faithful and always keeps promises.

Those who are baptized make promises, as well. Each of us did, or our parents did on our behalf and we chose to profess them at a later time. Now we have to be honest and acknowledge that we haven't always kept our promises. But – when we've failed – God's grace has allowed us to start anew. We can always begin again. Praise the Lord!

Many times throughout my ministry I have been asked to baptize the children of parents who do not participate in the life of the church. So I sit down with them and try to explain the meaning of baptism in our United Methodist Church. I show them the vows they will be asked to make. In particular, I point out this one: *"Will you nurture this child in Christ's holy church, that by your teaching and example he/she may be guided to accept God's*

*grace for himself/herself, to profess his/her faith openly, and to lead a Christian life?"*

After reviewing this question carefully, some individuals decide that they cannot honestly answer in the affirmative. Sometimes, after reflection on these baptismal vows, they decide to dig in deeper and practice their faith more intentionally by getting involved in the church. Other times, they proceed with the baptism, but in a few weeks' time they disappear from the life of the church. I have no way of knowing if people will follow through with their baptismal commitments. Unfortunately, the best of intentions do fall short at times. All I can do is point out the promises they are being asked to make and hope that they make them sincerely.

My point is that baptism is about more than a day in the church; it is about a life in the church. So often it seems that most of the attention is given to things such as: the clothes the child will wear for baptism, what photos will be taken, and what refreshments will be served afterwards. The meaning of what we are doing may be lost in these extraneous matters.

Friends, baptism is not the end. It is the beginning of a lifelong journey of faith. As we stand early in this New Year and look out on all the possibilities yet ahead, I pray that the Holy Spirit will work within each of you, that having been born through water and the Spirit, you will always be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

*Pastor Sherri*





*“When one member suffers, we all suffer; and when one member is honored, we all rejoice.”  
I Corinthians 12:26*

**Those who serve as missionaries, especially:**

Jeff & Deliegha Swanson, Charissa, Lois, and Titus in Mexico;  
Kate & Peter Wulugembe in Jinja, Uganda;  
Dr. Elma Jocson awaiting her next assignment.

**Those who are in the military, including:**

Christopher Blackwell, Lexie Deau,  
David Geminder, Danny King, Scott McDonald,  
Micheal Seminec.

**Those who are in care facilities:**

Hamilton Grove – Betty Smith, Dorothy Schwark,  
Sabra Lambert

Jordan’s – Lucy Lee  
River Ridge – Jerry Thomas  
West Woods of Niles – Barney Fay, Marjorie Weller  
Woodland Terrace – Shirley Hoadley

**Those who are homebound:**

Dorothy Brayboy, Virginia Feather, Helen Heward,  
Elsie Portinga, and Marge Vidal.

**Those with health problems:**

Dave Alexander, Julian Becker, Betty Bolle,  
Jason Busick, Kristin Castelluccio, Barbara Doyle,  
Donna Edinger, Mike Ehlert, Ed Ferry, John Foster,  
Jean Gibbons, Rexalee Gordon, John Grynwich,  
Dawn Hayes, Paula Hess, Jim Ireland,  
Rexalee Ireland, Susan Kamp, George Koebel,  
Lucy Lee, Tammy Mitchell, Dorothy Petro,  
Diane Powers, Alexis Renbarger, Kevin Rost,  
Judy Schinske, Danelle Springer, Rita Thompson,  
Penny Vollman, Jeanie Walls, Marie Webb.

**Those who grieve:**

Family and friends of James Harrington,  
Virgil Geminder, Henry Haynes, Bill Hudson,  
Paul Shultz, Marilyn Peterson,  
and Mary Lou Spsychalski.

**Those newly married:**

Duane Below and Amanda Ireland at their wedding on January 4.

**Other:**

Norm and Marge Ehlert recovering from a car accident.  
Naghmeh Abendine as she speaks at the Human Rights Summit in Geneva, Switzerland.  
Rebuilding in the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan.  
Peace throughout our world.

**Please note:**

*Names will be deleted from the above list after one month unless an updated request is received.*



**Condolences**

We extend our sincere sympathy to *Vivian Koebel*, at the death of her brother, *Virgil Geminder*, on January 3.

We also extend our sympathy to *Mary Weers* and family at the death of her father, *Henry Haynes*, on January 8. *Mary* is the church custodian.

May the Lord give you comfort in your grief.



**Valentine Tea**

Plan now to attend our twelfth annual Valentine Tea. All the ladies of our church and their guests are invited, as well as friends from neighboring churches.

The date has been set for Monday, February 10, at 7:00 p.m. In case of inclement weather our “snow date” will be Wednesday, February 12. Cancellation notice will be aired on WNDU (channel 16) and WSBT (channel 22) television.

An assortment of sweet and savory refreshments will be served, as well as plenty of tea. The program this year will be a humorous skit called “Church Ladies.” Don’t miss the fun!

**We are looking for volunteers to provide refreshments after our worship services. Sign up in the narthex if you will help.**



**Sisters in Faith**

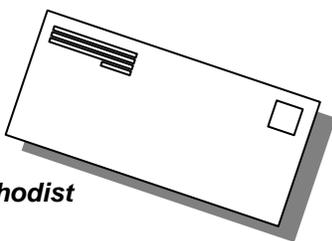
Our next meeting will be Wednesday, February 19, 7:00 p.m. at the church. Devotions will be shared by *Rhonda Hinman*. Refreshments will be provided by *Rhonda Hinman* and *Robin Ireland*.

We will be sending out care packages in February for our college students. They do enjoy getting cookies and goodies that are easily prepared.

The last few months we have been participating in the Blessings in a Backpack program. On the third Thursday of each month we provide five volunteers to fill backpacks with food for River Valley school children who are in need. If you would like to help with this effort, please speak to *Sharon Flick*.

## Mail

Dear Friends at Three  
Oaks United Methodist  
Church,



The West Michigan Conference Board of Church and Society is very thankful for your gift to the Peace with Justice Sunday offering during 2013. As you may know, one half of the offering is sent to our General Board of Church and Society, enabling that board to give grants for projects of advocacy on behalf of the poor and oppressed in the United States and around the world. The other half remains here in our Conference, enabling our Board to support justice and peace at home.

We continue to provide funding for two ongoing programs: JFON (Justice for Our Neighbors) provides help for immigrants seeking status in the United States. JFON provides legal assistance to the immigrants and their families. One such successful example is a man from Kenya who tried for three years to get his wife and children to the US. There are many examples that are similar. The other program is HAPI (Haitian Artists for Peace International). HAPI has been working in a community in Haiti for several years, bringing employment to artisans so that they may afford to support their families and send their children to school. Wonderful things are happening there. Our own Valerie Mossman Celestin is the director of the project. Many of our Conference members have visited Haiti and have returned to tell exciting stories of persons becoming self-sustaining through this ministry.

Each year we have been able to offer other grants as churches and groups contact us with applications for funding. Just this year we provided funds for two summer programs providing help to groups in the Battle Creek area through special ministries at Battle Creek First UMC. We also responded to a request to assist in funding a Peace Advocate attached to the CMU Wesley Foundation, who will serve the Mt. Pleasant church and university community.

We hope you will plan to take the offering again this year. We can't accomplish this without your generous help. Thank you for supporting Peace with Justice.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Ellen A. Brubaker, Chair  
West Michigan Conference Board of Church and Society.

Dear Friends in Mission,

Thank you for your support of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). Through The Advance, the designated giving channel of The United Methodist Church, 100 percent of your contribution will go to Disaster Response, International, Advance #982450. Your gift of \$225 received on 12/18/2013 for the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan is a quick response to meet emergency needs around the world. Giving through The Advance enables United Methodists to partner with one another in mission and ministry around the world. Thank you for joining with us to "Be Hope" to those who desperately need it.

You can find out more about UMCOR's work by visiting our website at [www.umcor.org](http://www.umcor.org). To receive weekly updates about UMCOR's work, sign up on our website for the UMCOR Hotline, a weekly email about the latest happenings at UMCOR.

Grace and Peace,  
Roland Fernandes, General Treasurer  
United Methodist Committee on Relief  
General Board of Global Ministries

Shawn Bakker, Deputy General Secretary  
Communications and Development



## District Leadership Training

Plan now to attend the Kalamazoo District Leadership Conference, "Led by the Spirit, Spirit Led," on Saturday, February 22, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at Milwood UMC in Kalamazoo (3919 Portage Rd, Kalamazoo). God invites us to be co-creators in ministry. The Holy Spirit is our equipper, enabling us and giving us the power to do all things that we are assigned by God to do. You are invited to a day of inspiration and equipping of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Gordie Barry from Stevensville UMC will be the keynote speaker in the morning and District Superintendent Neil Davis will preach at the afternoon worship service. A variety of workshops are being offered for all leaders in the congregation. See the bulletin board for details.

Childcare will be provided. Lunch is included at no cost. Register online at [www.kazoodistumc.org](http://www.kazoodistumc.org) by February 17. Contact the District office with any questions: 269-372-7525 or by email at [office@kazoodistumc.org](mailto:office@kazoodistumc.org). Sign up in the narthex if you would like to carpool.



## R.E.L.C. Offering Celebrates Diversity

Some of them are among the oldest churches in West Michigan. Others are among the youngest. They are what are known as the Racial Ethnic Local Churches (RELC) of the Conference. RELC was born out of a General Conference mandate some 40 years ago, and has been kept alive ever since by faithful persons across the denomination.

The Rev. Neil Davis, Kalamazoo District Superintendent, notes: "The RELC exists to resource local churches and ministries to be relevant and vital as they carry out the manifesto of Jesus Christ, which is to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind and to let the oppressed go free." Why is there an annual RELC offering? As Neil explains, "These churches and ministries are usually financially challenged, located where great need is prevalent. West Michigan is committed to meeting those needs in our own area as well as around the world."

There are twelve RELC churches in our Conference. From north to south, they are:

1. Greensky Hill Indian Mission UMC, Charlevoix
2. Northport Indian Mission UMC
3. Kewadin Indian Mission UMC
4. Chippewa Indian Mission UMC, Mt. Pleasant
5. La Nueva Esperanza UMC, Grand Rapids (Hispanic)
6. Vietnamese UMC, Grand Rapids
7. Mosaic UMC, Kentwood (multicultural)
8. Korean UMC, Lansing
9. Faith UMC/South Lansing Ministries (multicultural)
10. Salem Indian Mission UMC, Hopkins
11. Bradley Indian Mission UMC
12. Washington Heights UMC, Battle Creek (African American)

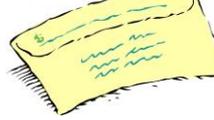
We will be observing RELC Sunday on February 2. There will be an insert in your worship bulletin explaining more about this special offering. You can contribute anytime this month by using a pew envelope for your gift.



## Join Our Tech Team

We are still looking for at least one more volunteer who will take a turn once a month on our tech team running the Sunday morning video projection. Training will be provided. If you are interested in joining the monthly rotation or in serving as an occasional substitute, please speak to *Sabrina Bellaire, Doug Hinman, or Pastor Sherri.*

## Offering Envelopes



Year-end statements have been put in the mailboxes in the narthex. If you were missed, please let me know. If you have any questions, please feel free to see me or call me at 756-7560. If you are not currently using

offering envelopes and write a check for your offering, it would be helpful to the counters if you would use envelopes. Please let me know if you would like a box of offering envelopes.

Thank you,  
Rhonda Hinman  
Financial Secretary

## Finance Update



Listed below are the figures from our Treasurer's report for December 2013.

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Average Monthly Need</u>
December	\$10,271.81	\$10,476.88	\$10,610.00
	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Excess</u>
Year End	\$129,088.84	\$121,615.12	\$7,473.72

General Fund Balance as of December 31, 2013 is \$26,419.60.

## Amount Pledged vs Amount Received:

The amount pledged through December 31, 2013 was \$100,460.00 and the amount received through December 31, 2013 was \$98,127.00.

The amount received in 2013 was 97.68% of the amount pledged.

## Designated Fund Disbursements for December:

UM Student Sunday	\$56.00
Mission Fund	\$43.60
Benton Harbor Safe Shelter	\$503.00
Imagine No Malaria	\$46.00
Helping Hands	\$100.00

Submitted by  
*Jim Thompson, Finance Chairperson*



## Wedding Bells

Congratulations to *Amanda Ireland* and *Duane Below* who were married on January 4 in Kalamazoo. Amanda is the daughter of *Jim & Robin Ireland* and granddaughter of *Jim & Charmaine Thompson* and *John & Rexalee Ireland*. Best wishes to the newlyweds! May God bless your marriage.



## Weather Closings

As winter is upon us, snowy weather can make travel difficult. Usually, we will have Sunday services if Pastor Sherri can manage the drive. However, if we should decide to close, this information will be posted on [www.WSBT.com](http://www.WSBT.com), TV channel 22; and [www.WNDU.com](http://www.WNDU.com), TV channel 16. You can go to these websites and have closing information automatically sent to your cell phone or via email. Any weekday events at the church will be cancelled if River Valley Schools are closed.

Please use caution when venturing out at this time of year. We want everyone to stay safe!



...to *Jim Thompson* for fixing a door lock.

...to *Doug Hinman* for repairing the narthex table.

...to *Jim and Sharon Flick* and *Nancy Caid* who helped Pastor Sherri deliver poinsettias after Christmas. Together this group took plants to twelve of our elderly members who are homebound or living in care facilities. Thanks also to those who donated their flowers.



The Youth on Fire youth group members are currently taking orders for sub sandwiches for Super Bowl Sunday, February 2.

Subs can be ordered in either 6" for \$6.00, or 12" for \$9.00 (best value). You can choose from the following ingredients: turkey, salami, ham, cheese, lettuce, tomato, onion, and pickles. Pre-payment is not necessary. Make checks payable to Water's Edge UMC. All proceeds will be used for the youth mission trip to Danville, Illinois this summer.

The youth are still selling packaged greeting cards in the narthex. The price has been reduced to \$7 for one box or \$12 for two boxes.

Also, thanks to all who supported the "Souper Sunday" soup luncheon on January 19. A profit of \$209 was raised. We appreciate your donations. Another "Souper Sunday" is being planned for Sunday, March 2 – this time in the café at Water's Edge UMC.



## Connect

Are you in Middle School or High School and interested in connecting with friends, the Bible and God? "Connect" is the group for you! We meet on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. Join us in the corner youth room downstairs.



## Three Oaks History Day

The second annual Three Oaks History Day will be held on Saturday, April 5. *Eleanor Desmond* has been attending the planning meetings as our representative and she will be preparing displays for this day. We are looking for a coordinator or co-coordinators of our Open House who will open and close the church and make sure there are adequate volunteers lined up to serve as hosts throughout the day. The displays will all be set up in advance. What we need are members who are willing to give some time to interact with the people who come to see them. If you would like to give a hand or if you have any ideas to share, please contact Eleanor at 756-9160.



## Safe Shelter

At Christmas time, we recall the experience of Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem when they found there was "no room at the inn." As the Savior was born, one of the greatest needs of his parents was for a safe place of shelter.

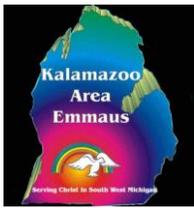
So it is that on Christmas Eve we designated our mission offering for the Safe Shelter in Benton Harbor. This facility serves women and children throughout Berrien County who need a protective, secure, warm place to stay because of domestic violence in their families. Through your generosity we raised \$503 for this worthwhile cause! Thank you for each and every gift.



## Trustee News

The Board of Trustees had their first meeting of 2014 on January 8 to elect officers and set projects for this year. The following persons were elected: Chairperson – *Doug Hinman*; Vice-Chairperson – *Elmer Doyle*; Secretary – *Joe Hinman*. Thank you for your service!

The Trustees will meet again in March and will organize an all-church Work Day for this spring. If you have any suggestions for maintenance needs around the church, please speak to a trustee or Pastor Sherri.



## Emmaus Walks

The dates for the next “Walk to Emmaus” are: Men, February 13-16 at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson; and Women, March 13-18 at Marshall UMC. If you would like to participate in these spiritually refreshing events, please see Pastor Sherri for more information or check out [www.kalamazooemmaus.org](http://www.kalamazooemmaus.org).



## Globe Offering

Each week at our church before worship begins, you are likely to be approached by one of our children or youth holding out half of a globe requesting your donations. Perhaps you are in the habit of throwing in your spare change, but you’ve always wondered what the church does with that money?

Well, all those coins really add up. They go into a designated Mission Fund which supports a variety of projects not in our church budget. Examples of projects that have been supported recently include these:

- \$168 shipping charges to send the 24 shoeboxes our church filled for Operation Christmas Child
- \$18 postage to send a beautiful poster made by our Sunday School children overseas to Japan.
- \$25 contribution to a US-2 missionary from our Kalamazoo District, Darlene Logston, who is serving in Arizona so she can purchase a new bicycle (her only means of getting to and from work) since hers was destroyed in a bad car accident last month.

This is a sampling of the worthwhile causes your contributions support. When you throw a handful of money into the globe offering, you can know that it will be used to support mission projects beyond our church – sometimes in our local community and often all the way across the globe. Thank you!



## Awesome Job!

Congratulations to *Dana Hammons* who was named to the dean’s List at Southwestern Michigan College for the fall semester. Way to go! We are proud of you!



## Lenten Study

A new Bible Study will be offered during the Lenten season, using the book “Final Words from the Cross” by Adam Hamilton. In life and in death, Jesus’ words were powerful and meaningful. Despite the serious effort and increased pain required for Jesus to speak as he hung on the cross, Jesus spoke seven “final words” – statements that have much to teach us about Jesus, his Father, and ourselves:

- *Father, Forgive Them*
- *Behold Your Son...Behold Your Mother*
- *My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?*
- *Today You Will Be with Me in Paradise*
- *I Thirst*
- *It Is Finished*
- *Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit*

In “24 Hours That Changed the World,” Adam Hamilton took us on a Lenten journey through the last day of Jesus’ life. Now in this inspiring follow-up book, Hamilton explores these final words as seen and heard through the eyes and ears of those who stood near the cross.

Each chapter begins with the Biblical account followed by a first-person story as might have been told from the viewpoint of one of the characters at the cross. Then the chapter explores the meaning of Jesus’ dying words for our lives today. Following the last statement, a postscript recounts the words Jesus spoke following his resurrection, including what truly were the final words Jesus spoke while walking this earth.

If there is enough interest, two groups will be formed. One will meet on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m. in the pastor’s study, beginning March 2. The other will meet on Tuesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. in the parlor, beginning March 4. These classes will meet for seven sessions, continuing through the end of April. Join the crowd now and experience the final words from the cross. Sign up in the narthex. Books cost \$11.

## Sunday School News

Sunday School is back in session. We have three classes meeting at 11:15 a.m.: Kindergarten – 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades, and 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades. As well as our Adult Bible Study which meets at 9:30 a.m. Come learn about Jesus and grow in your faith!

During the month of December, our elementary children made a large, colorful poster featuring their handprints and encouraging messages to children who are seriously ill at the Univeristy of Tokyo Hospital. Thank you to *Yuriko Cooper* for initiating this mission project and for mailing the poster, and to *Nancy Caid* for organizing the children’s artwork.

Three Oaks United Methodist Church  
2 East Sycamore Street  
Three Oaks, MI 49128

Phone 269-756-2053  
Fax 269-756-2061  
E-mail [toumc@att.net](mailto:toumc@att.net)  
Web [www.toumc.org](http://www.toumc.org)

*Address Service Requested*

# February 2014



## Please Note

Please turn in all submissions for next month's Parish Post newsletter by February 16.



If we could deliver your next Parish Post by e-mail, please inform the church office. It would be faster, easier, and cheaper.

Thanks for your help!

**Sermon Series: "Too Busy NOT to Pray"**

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| February 2  | Communion<br>"Adoration: Entering Holy Space"<br>Luke 1:46-55 |
| February 9  | Guest Speaker<br>Gene Harris                                  |
| February 16 | "Confession: Naming Our Faults"<br>Luke 18:9-14               |
| February 23 | "Thanksgiving:<br>Expressing Gratitude"<br>Luke 17:11-19      |
| March 2     | "Supplication: Asking for Help"<br>Luke 11:5-13               |

## Three Oaks United Methodist Church Staff:

Pastor: *Rev. Sherri Swanson*  
Secretary: *Cheryl Kersey*  
Organist: *Martha Sychalski*  
Custodian: *Mary Weers*

## Church Office Hours:

Monday: 9:00-3:00  
Tuesday: 9:00-12:00  
Thursday: 9:00-12:00