

THE PARISH POST

Volume 43 - Issue 7

10:00 a.m. Worship Service
Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

July 2015



“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are

the feet of those who bring good news!’”
Romans 10:14-15

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.”
Hebrews 13:2

A Tale of Two Corners **... and of Two Doors**

Summer is upon us. For many of us that means time for recreation and vacation. For our village, this means ... visitors. Yes, many of our local businesses — restaurants, shops, galleries, and theaters — look forward to this time of year when the population of Three Oaks expands. Without the influx of visitors to our community during this period of time, many of these establishments could not survive.

As I drive into Three Oaks each Sunday morning, I notice all the people milling about downtown. In particular, I am struck by the contrast on two particular corners of Elm Street. At the corner of Elm and Maple sits Viola Restaurant. Many of us enjoy eating breakfast or lunch there throughout the year. The food is very good and fairly-priced; the hospitality is excellent — each meal dished up with a smile. On a Sunday in the summer, Viola is packed! On my way to church, I sometimes see people lined up outside the restaurant waiting to get in.

Travel one block farther and you find a different story. On the corner of Elm and Sycamore sits a building well-known to most of us which is also open every single Sunday — our church! Yet, the contrast is rather striking. There’s never a line running out the door for people waiting to get in. (Maybe at Christmas and Easter, but certainly not in the summer). There is always plenty of immediate seating available; at this time of the year, enough for more than 100 additional people!

Why is this so? Surely some of these folks filling our town on summer weekends may have interest in attending a church. Or they may have interest if someone would invite them.

During our Annual Conference held a few weeks ago, guest speaker Adam Hamilton told how a pastor went about making contacts in downtown Kansas City when he was appointed to start a new satellite congregation there. He started each day with 30 pennies in his right pocket. Every time he initiated a conversation with someone he didn’t already know, he moved one penny over into his left pocket. He committed that he would not go home each day until all 30 pennies had been moved over.

I think that’s pretty ambitious! I don’t know if I could ever be that outgoing and make that many contacts on a daily basis. But what about trying five pennies, or even two or three, or just one? If each of us in the congregation of Three Oaks UMC did that, think how quickly those interactions would be multiplied! Could you strike up a conversation this week with someone you don’t yet know? Maybe you could invite them to church? It might be new neighbors who moved in across the street. Or it might be those people waiting in line beside you when you go to Viola. :)

The first step in increasing our attendance is to make sure people know about our church: where it is located, when it is open, and who it serves — them. Indeed, we have to communicate that visitors are truly welcome.

Then the second step may be to give some attention to our “product” — what we offer. We would do well to evaluate our “menu” and service to see if we can make some improvements. How is our “food”? Well, the “bread” offered by Christ through his word and sacraments is a staple we believe all people need. It is always nourishing to a soul ready to receive. Even so, the delivery of that “meal” can always be improved.

Those who work in the restaurant industry know how important presentation is. Our appetites are stimulated and our senses are satisfied when we receive food that is plated artfully. I think the analogy holds when used to evaluate worship. Our order of

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worship, our style of worship, the preaching, the singing, and all the various components of a Sunday service — are these things done in such a way that people are eager to partake? Do people observe excellence and beauty in what we do and how we do it? I will be exploring some of these questions with our Worship Committee in the coming weeks. If you have suggestions for ways to make our worship more inviting, please let me know.

One final thought on this theme. When people visit Viola restaurant, they all line up in the same place. No customers enter through the kitchen door. :) When people visit our church they have a choice about where to enter. They can use one of two doors. Now, the majority of our active church members enter through the side door on Sycamore Street. They know this is closest to the parking lot, the elevator, the coat room, the rest rooms, the nursery, the Sunday School rooms, and the refreshments. Visitors do not automatically know this. They did not get the memo!

I have noticed that many of our first-time visitors enter through the front door on Elm Street. From an “outsider’s” perspective this makes perfect sense. It “looks” like the main door. Plus, if they have just come from the restaurant, it is the closest door. :) However, it is the door where we have the weakest hospitality. Currently, there are not regular greeters stationed there. Also, most of the congregation is gathered in the narthex visiting with one another before our service begins.

So, can I ask for your help? Please be extra attentive to visitors who attend our church this summer, particularly those who slip in through the front door. Too often such persons arrive at the last minute and leave right after the service ends, and so I never get a chance to meet them. That’s okay, IF I can be confident that members of the congregation are interacting with these people and providing a warm welcome.

I am happy that Viola restaurant is doing a booming business. The owners are such nice, hard-working people. Even so, I would like to see our church experience a fraction of that traffic coming through our doors this summer. And, if new folks make it down the block toward our corner ... no matter which door of the church they enter, I hope these visitors will receive the best hospitality which we can possibly offer.

I look forward to seeing visitors — and you — in church this summer!

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 & Deliegtha Swanson, Charissa, Lois, and Titus in Mexico;
Kate & Peter Walugembe in Jinja, Uganda;
Del & Sandy Groves in Zambia;
Dr. Elma Jocson in the Philippines.

Those who are in the military, including:

Christopher Blackwell, Danny King, Ricky Zeiger.

Those who are in care facilities:

Hamilton Grove – Sabra Lambert, Betty Smith,
Dorothy Schwark
Woodland Terrace – Shirley Hoadley

Those who are homebound:

Dorothy Brayboy, Helen Heward, Elsie Portinga

Those with health problems:

Lynneah Ackerman, Betty Lou Ahrens, Bob Barnes,
Albert Brayboy, Bud Bean, Ty Caldwell,
John Chappel, Nancy Comfort, Peggy Dedo,
Carol Denton, Laura Donner, Norma Eldridge,
Dennis Ferry, Sharon Peterson Flick, Leona Gibbs,
Lianna Hadden, Andrew Hamilton, Peggy Harper,
Dawn Hayes, Hannah Heit, Paula Hess,
Shauni Hinman, Becky Jacobs, Kevin Klute,
Ogden Krossovitch, Danella Lear, Barb Scalf,
Rick Schroeter, Ken Seifert, Jr., Barb Smith,
Hugh Stout, Madison Vollman, Wayne Weller.

Those who grieve:

Family and friends of Leonard Schlieter.

Other:

Dick & Margie Dunn (Penny Vollman’s aunt and uncle) celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary.
Safe travels for Yuriko and Ayame Cooper on their trip to Japan.
Kristen Kozel on her trip to Japan.
The people of Charleston, SC, following the tragic shooting at Emmanuel AME church.
Victims of the stabbing in Three Oaks.
Victims of the flooding in Oklahoma and Texas.
Pastor Saeed Abendine imprisoned in Iran.
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 sympathy to *Dawn Hayes* at the death of her father, Leonard Schlieter, on June 20. He was 91. A family graveside service was held in Lawrence on July 26.

Please pray for comfort for this family in their grief, including Leonard's wife of 67 years – Gertrude Schlieter.



Church Directory

We have prepared an updated Church Directory. Please pick up your copy in the narthex.

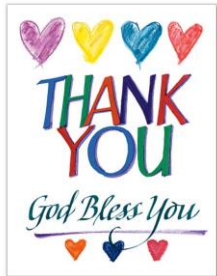


Wesley Foundation

Once again this summer we are collecting funds for the "Widening the Welcome" capital campaign at the Wesley Foundation of Kalamazoo. A new student ministry center is currently under construction at the edge of Western Michigan University's campus and our District churches are all being asked to support this important project.

Please pick up a plastic cup in the narthex for your donations. Take it home and stuff it full during the summer. Then we will collect the cups in September.

It's amazing how much money we are able to raise when everyone contributes their loose change – as well as larger bills. Thanks in advance for your support of our Wesley Foundation! For more information about the ministry of Wesley, visit: <http://wmu.miwesley.org>.



*To each and all –
Your kindness means so very much. Thank you for all your prayers, calls, etc. during my recent surgery and radiation treatments.
Eleanor Desmond*



Please note this change of address:

Betty Smith
P O Box 313
New Carlisle, IN 46552



Church Picnic

We hope everyone will join us for the church-wide picnic on Sunday, July 19, at Camp Soni Springs on Martin Road. Meat and beverage will be furnished. Please sign up in the narthex to bring a dish to pass.

Come out any time after worship ends at 11:00 a.m. We will plan to eat at noon.

We had such fun last year, with great food, fun games and wonderful fellowship. Hope to see you there.

The Fellowship Committee



Rummage Sale

Thanks for all of the donations from and purchases by the congregation at last month's Rummage Sale. Due to your generosity, we realized a profit of \$2,000!



Annual Conference Wrap-Up

The West Michigan Annual Conference was held at Calvin College June 4-7 with Bishop Deborah Lieder Kiesey presiding.

There was anticipation in the air due to a variety of factors including benchmark legislation on the creation of a new conference.

Flash forward ... when the votes were tallied on June 10 at the Area Ministry Center. It was announced that the members of both the West Michigan and Detroit Annual Conference had voted overwhelmingly to become one conference. Bishop Deb now asks for continued prayers for next steps as she begins to gather together an area-wide Design Team which will draw up a specific plan for the union.

Conference opened on Thursday afternoon. The lives of 32 saints, gone home to God, were remembered. The Rev. Dr. William Dobbs encouraged Conference members to fish in deeper waters: "We can't continue to stay in shallow water expecting Jesus to make fish jump into the boat."



Bishop Deb's Episcopal Address Thursday evening spoke to the stress of change. She asked pastors and lay members to return home and ask, "What is God calling us into becoming?"

The Rev. Nohemi Ramirez, pastor of La Nueva Esperanza, got the Conference off to a spirited start on Saturday with the help of a jazz band and hip hop dancers. She challenged her listeners: "I am in love with the United Methodist open hearts, open minds, open doors. However, I have felt embarrassed that a lot of times we don't put these words into practice." She emphasized the need for more inclusive ministries.

The Rev. Adam Hamilton, founding pastor of the Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, KN, and guest speaker for the 2015 Annual Conference shared four-and-a-half hours of teaching focused on "Leading Beyond the Walls." Lessons covered topics of leadership, worship/preaching and missional outreach. "In what ways does your community not yet look like the Kingdom of God?" he asked. "Bridge that gap." Noting that "evangelism and social justice are two sides of the same coin," he encouraged conference members to "start by inviting people to be part of your mission in the world serving other people. Then you invite them to come to church sometime where they hear what it means to be a follower of Jesus."



In this year before the next General Conference session to be held in Portland, OR in May 2016, members made decisions that reached beyond the

Annual Conference. Three petitions were dealt with by the house:

1. A new formula for the equalization of Annual Conference membership, clergy and laity, was defeated.
2. Approval was given to ask General Boards and Agencies to divest from companies involved with illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land.
3. After lengthy discussion, the conference endorsed the Connectional Table's "Third Way." Brought to the floor by the Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai—Lansing D.S. and member of the Connectional Table—the petition would seek to change The Discipline in the following way...acknowledge that the denomination has historically not condoned homosexuality but allowing pastors, in accordance with state law and their personal conscience, latitude to perform same-sex marriages (while not requiring them to do so). Further, Annual Conferences could choose to or refuse to ordain openly LGBTQ clergy.

Five churches were discontinued during the Corporate Session.

Six persons were received as Provisional Elders; one Provisional Deacon was welcomed. One Deacon and four Elders were ordained on Sunday afternoon. The retirement of eleven Elders was observed on Saturday evening.

Transitions on the Cabinet were noted by Bishop Deb. Thanks were given to the Rev. David Hills, leaving the Heartland District superintendency. Gratitude was expressed for the Rev. Dr. William Dobbs, who enters into retirement after 43 years of ministry, including wise assistance to two bishops. The Rev. Melanie Lee Carey was introduced as the new Clergy Assistant to the Bishop.

And finally, some significant numbers shared during the 2015 Conference session:

- 1,100 ... number of persons on the Nominations Report committed to do the Lord's work on Conference boards and agencies
- \$5,967,263 ...the 2016 Annual Conference Budget
- 13% ... the ministry shares rate for 2016 (down from 13.25% in 2015)
- 82% ... percentage of West Michigan churches giving to the General Advance
- 57,533 ... membership in the conference at the end of 2014 (down 1,694 or 2% from 2013)
- 32,911... average worship attendance in 2014 (down 1,990 or 5% from 2013)
- 7,589 ... average Sunday School attendance in 2014 (down 843 or 10% from 2013)

Conference Communications Director, Mark Doyal, reminded members not to come to Calvin College next year. From June 8-13, 2016 more than 2,000 clergy and lay members of the West Michigan and Detroit conferences will gather instead in East Lansing for a joint conference.





Missions Committee News

Thanks to everyone in the congregation who contributed supplies for UMCOR Health Kits. Through your donations, our Missions Committee was able to assemble 32 full kits. These kits, filled with many everyday personal grooming items, are valued at \$12 each. So, in total, our collection amounted to \$384 of supplies.

The kits were taken to Annual Conference by our lay member, Priscilla Hellenga. Next they will be delivered to the Midwest Mission Distribution Center in Chatham, Illinois (outside Springfield). From there, they will be dispersed by UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) to places of need around our country following natural disasters such as tornadoes or floods. The MMDC sent out 8,098 such health kits during 2014. Thank you again for your help with this important missions project.

*Sisters in Faith,
You have the best church sale. Fair prices, friendly helpers and neat – displayed excellent.
I look forward to your sales.
Keep up the good work.
Sincerely,
Wendy Lozeau*



Sunday School Update

Thanks to everyone who returned your Sunday School mission cans full of donations for Imagine No Malaria. We received another \$250.29 this spring. Added to the \$1,797.75 our congregation already raised for this cause in 2014, that makes \$2,048.04 contributed in total over the past year and a half. This translates to 204 lives saved from malaria. Awesome! Thanks for your help.



Way to Go!

Congratulations to our River Valley High School Varsity Softball team for being Conference and District champs and receiving All-State Academic honors.

Members include: *Paige Barbour, Nicole Gibson, Kaitlin Goodenough, Katharine Kersey, and Lexie Olson.*



Haiti Trip

Plans are underway for a Volunteer in Mission (VIM) Haiti School Project Trip affiliated with the General Board of Global Ministries and the Michigan Area Haiti Task Force. Proposed dates are October 9-16, 2015. The cost of the trip is approximately \$1,400 (includes air fare). Youth and young adults are especially encouraged to join the team. Keith Thomas and Rod Green are co-leaders. An orientation meeting will be held in September at the Ypsilanti United Methodist Church.

Applications, medical information, budget, and airfares will be available soon for those who are interested.

Donations of playable musical instruments and laptop computers are being collected for use by the schools. The first school band of College Modele has many students with musical talents but a limited number of instruments.

Have questions? Those interested in joining the team should contact: Tom Anderson at 989-422-5622 or anderson810@gmail.com, Curtis Bartz at 313-278-4849 or jbartz1006@comcast.net, or Keith Thomas at 517-336-7815 or kthomas2741@yahoo.com.



Sisters in Faith

This month our annual picnic will be held at the home of Rhonda Petro (16928 Three Oaks Rd.) on Wednesday, July 15, at 6:30 p.m. All the women of our church are invited. Bring a dish to pass and sign up in the narthex so we know how many plan on coming.



Job Opportunity

A Lakeside family is looking for four people to assist with set-up, serving and clean-up at a house wedding on Saturday, August 8, and Sunday, August 9. Workers will be paid \$25 an hour. If interested, please contact Doris Krossovitch at 756-9024.



Contemporary Worship

There will be a Contemporary Worship Service at our church on Sunday, July 19. This time the contemporary service will be held at our regular worship time: 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Music will be led by Danielle Gibson, Maggie Martin, and Cara Bettig. Come and enjoy singing praise songs, as well as hearing a message from Pastor Sherri in this special service.

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



Children's Church

For our summer programming this year, we are showing Christian movies such as Veggie Tales each week. If you have DVDs you would be willing to share for this purpose, please tell Pastor Sherri.

We are looking for volunteers to take turns watching the children each week. If you love children and can turn on a TV, you are qualified! Please sign up in the narthex.



Community Vacation Bible School

As *The Parish Post* goes to press, our community Vacation Bible School is just getting underway. We are meeting June 29 – July 3, from 9:00 to 12:00 each morning, at the Free Methodist Church. VBS is sponsored ecumenically by several area churches.

Our theme this year is: "Everest – Conquering Challenges with God's Mighty Power." We will embark on an icy expedition where kids overcome obstacles with God's awesome power.

Please pray for all the children who are participating this year as well as the youth and adults who are leading them. We will give a report on attendance and activities in next month's newsletter.

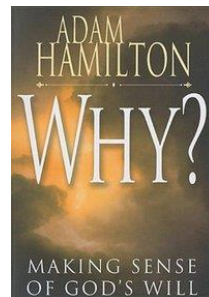


Grief Support Group

A grief support group is meeting at our church every other Wednesday from 11:00 – 12:00. The dates for this coming month are: July 8 and 22.

Grief is a journey and we each count on others to support us along the way. Come join with Christian friends as we share our stories and draw strength from one another. If you have any questions, contact Pastor Sherri.

Summer Study



A summer study will be offered on Thursday evenings, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m., for four weeks: July 9, 16, 23, and 30.

Our topic this year is "Why? Where is God when tragedy and suffering strike?" When the ground shakes, and a poor nation's economy is destroyed; when the waters rise, washing away a community's hopes and dreams; when a child suffers neglect and abuse; when violence tears apart nations; where is God? If God is all powerful, and if each one of us is a beloved child of God, then how can God allow tragedy and suffering to infest his creation?

In "Why?" best-selling author Adam Hamilton brings fresh insight to the age-old question of how to understand the will of God. Rejecting simplistic answers and unexamined assumptions, he lays out core ideas for comprehending God's plan for the world, including: God will not take away our free will, even when we use it to grieve him. God will never abandon us, especially in the midst of our suffering. While God is not the author of suffering, God will bring blessing out of tragedy.

The book has about 25 small pages of reading each week and we will watch a DVD for our discussions. Books cost \$10. Sign up in the narthex.

Special Music Sign-Up

Our choir is taking a well-deserved break over the summer months. We are looking for special music. Please sign up in the narthex to share your talents with the congregation.



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
Web www.toumc.org

Address Service Requested

July 2015



Please Note

Please turn in all submissions for next month's Parish Post newsletter by July 19.

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!



July 5 Communion
"Wouldn't You Prefer Real Freedom?"
John 8:31-41

Sermon Series: "Encouragement from Ephesians"

July 12 "The Big Picture"
Ephesians 1:3-14

July 19 Contemporary Service
"The Heart Has Eyes"
Ephesians 1:15-23

July 26 "Tear Down This Wall!"
Ephesians 2:11-18

Three Oaks United Methodist Church Staff:

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

Church Office Hours:

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

To Reach the Pastor:

Please call the church office first: 756-2053.
If you do not reach her there,
leave a voice message on her cell phone
at 269-405-0002.