

# The Messenger



## Pastor's Pondering

Every-so-often certain themes seem to emerge within my life. When this happens, I typically interpret it as one of the many ways that God is seeking to communicate with me. And in recent days God has been trying to get my attention.

It is not a new theme. In fact, it is a theme that has been around for many, many years. I have multiple conversations with other clergy in covenant groups about this very topic. John Wesley even wrote about this in his day. Over twenty years ago a man by the name of Juan Carlos Ortiz wrote a book entitled, Disciple: A Handbook For New Believers and in it he hits upon the same theme.

Charles and Heather Ogborn introduced me to a book by David Platt entitled, Radical: Taking Your Faith Back From The American Dream, and then at Annual Conference I picked up a book by Dr. Kenda Creasy Dean entitled, Almost Christian: What The Faith Of Our Teenagers Is Telling The American Church. Add to all of this my recent studying and sermon preparation in the book of Revelation and there is a definite theme developing.

So I have a confession. I want to be liked. I hate it when people are upset with me. I let such things eat at me way too much. So consequently, I am often more diplomatic (and/or nice) than what the Christian life is about and my calling as a pastor requires. You're probably asking 'What's wrong with "nice"?!?'

As I've been pondering this, it is becoming more and more clear that 'nice' in our culture may well be antithetical to the Christian faith. Nice often handcuffs a Christian from witnessing because to make the exclusive Christ claims is deemed 'not nice' within our society. Nice tends to prevent honesty and integrity which are part-n-parcel to Christian faith and practice.

The Fruit of the Spirit contains 'kindness' not 'niceness.' Kindness functions very differently. Kindness has the other's interest at heart . . . but from what I can tell (at least with how it functions within my life) 'nice' is far more about me and how others might view me.

Think about this . . . children are honest to the core. At young ages they say Truth without any filters. How do we adults train them to not do this? We say, "Oh honey, don't say that . . . that's not nice." And if I'm being honest and confessional, the root reason for me doing this with my own children was because I was concerned how I would be viewed as a parent.

Please don't misunderstand . . . I'm not calling for Christians to be rude, hostile, or offensive. Quite the opposite! I'm calling upon us to be genuine and not trade our faith for a poor substitute. And I am raising the question, "Is the Christian faith we live and pass on to our children more social/cultural or biblical?" Are we living and passing on the Christian faith or what Dr. Dean refers to as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism? As Christians, are we trying to live into God's dream for us or the 'American Dream'? Confession and repentance are not easy, but at least in my case they are needed.

*--Pastor Renner*

# Library Update

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The following books have been recently donated or purchased for our library - two books for children and one nonfiction:

God Holds Me Tight by Elspeth Campbell Murphy

God Hears Me When I Pray by Elspeth Campbell Murphy

Made to Crave (Satisfying Your Deepest Desire with God, Not Food) by Lysa TerKeurst.

**Keep on reading and enjoying our church library!**

Lois Shuman



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## ***UNITED METHODIST WOMEN***

There will not be any General Meetings or Circle meetings during the months of July or August. Our first meeting in the fall will be a General Meeting September 7<sup>th</sup>. Below is a list of the activities we had in June and other activities for July and also some fall information.

One of the very first items we want to take care of this summer is to CLEAN THE KITCHEN AND STORAGE ROOM AND TRY TO GET THINGS MORE IN ORDER. The dates we have set are August 9 & 10 from 8 till noon both days. Sign up sheets will be available August 7<sup>th</sup>. We are also looking for A FEW GOOD MEN to give us a helping hand. Please mark these dates on your calendar.

The Christmas in July Craft Sale and Bake Sale from 8 to 5 Thursday & Friday July 14 and 15. The Luncheon will be from 11 to 1:30 on the same days. The Craft Sale will also be available on Saturday July 16 from 9 to Noon. The United Methodist Women will be asking for donations for the Bake Sale Sunday July 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> as well as workers to help with serving and etc.

The SOCM will be held in Springfield - Week-end July 29, 30 & 31. Also Week day School evening of July 31 thru Noon August 3<sup>rd</sup>. If you are interested contact Linda Grose scholarships are available.

United Methodist Women's Sunday has been set for Sunday September 11. We are asking for suggestions for a special person we can recognize with our UMW pin. If you have some one in mind please tell Linda Grose or Hylllis Rhoades.

Our Annual Noodle Dinner has been set for October 23.

We want to thank all those who helped with the Retired Teacher's meeting in June and also the Ice Cream and Cake Luncheon for the RSVP ladies and gentlemen. JOB WELL DONE  
The United Methodist Women.

## **2011 Annual Conference Report**

### **by Susan Connor lay representative to Annual Conference**

This is a summary of my report in case you missed early service on June 26<sup>th</sup>.

InSook Hwang continues as our Iroquois District Superintendent.

Charliam Renner continues as our local minister.

Bishop Palmer continues to serve the Illinois Great Rivers Conference of which we are a member.

The minimum salary for entry level clergy was raised 5%. The local church or multi church charge is required to supply minister with internet as much of the business of the conference and continuing education opportunities are not email or online.

An offering was taken for a roof for the John Kofi Asmah UM School, a Jr Hi School in West Point, a slum area of Monrovia, Liberia.

An offering was taken for the building of a maintenance building badly needed by the African University in Zimbabwe, which we have supported for many years through an Advance giving.

An offering was taken for the Tom Brown Scholarship for Wiley College in Texas.

24 ministers retired this year, 8 elders were ordained and 1 deacon was commissioned.

An offering was taken for the Ordinand's service trip to Liberia.

The conference attendees were asked to bring hand towel for the Midwest Distribution Center this year. 12,454 hand towels were delivered.

Among the speakers this year were Bishop Palmer, Dr Kenda Creasy Dean and Bishop Woody White.

Cynthia Harvey, head of UMCOR, was also there to thank us for our giving through the Advance Special Offerings. Our conference was #3 in missionary support this past year. UMCOR gave one million in disaster relief last year, \$900,000 of that to Haiti. UMCOR continues to work actively in the Haiti recovery effort.

Although 5 churches in our conference closed this year, three new congregations were formed. One is in South Shores, Decatur.

The UMC continues its health initiative with other organizations in a program called Imagine No Malaria which goes beyond the Nothing But Nets program in providing clean water and immunizations as well as insecticide treated bed netting.

Representatives from our conferences to UMC 2012 General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference were elected and no, I was not one of them, but I thank the many who supported and encouraged me. I ask you to pray for those who were elected so that God's work can be done as God wants and not as individuals want.

Bishop Palmer wished to remind all of us that our vision is to Make Disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Much helpful information to do this is provided for all UMC members at [igrc.org](http://igrc.org), including a regular newsletter called The Current.

Next year's Annual Conference will be in Peoria again. Please join me this year in growing as a disciple of Christ by attending worship, prayers, reading scripture, taking the Lord's Supper, and fasting on 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month.



We are grateful for the many acts of kindness shown to us by the congregation, Pastor Renner, the United Methodist Women, Mike & Darla at the time of the loss of our loved one. The prayers, cards, calls, food, flowers, and memorial gifts brought much comfort. Her church family meant so much to her. God bless you all.

The family of Ina Hall Roney

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Thank you very much for the use of the building and for the ladies who helped to make the RSVP Recognition GREAT!  
Norma, RSVP Coordinator

Dear Church family,  
Thank you for the Bible.  
April Shuman

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*“Through the Sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into Christ’s holy Church. We are incorporated into God’s mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit”* (The United Methodist Hymnal)  
*We rejoice with those who have received the Sacrament of Baptism*  
Caleb Shumard

*“We give thanks for all that God has already given you and we welcome you in Christian love”* (The United Methodist Hymnal)

We give thanks to the Lord for those who recently have been received as members of our First United Methodist Church. May their new Church home be a blessing to them as they continue to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Lyn Banning



Welcome  
New  
Members

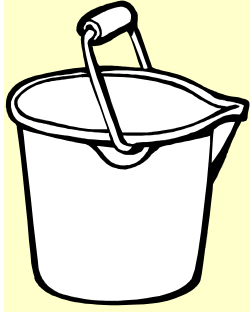
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*Remember these lost loved ones*

*“Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth”* (Psalm 124:8)

*May the Lord’s comfort and blessings be with the family and friends who mourn the death of Ina Hall Roney.*



The Yellow Bucket offering for July will go to The Sullivan Fire Department's Fire Safety Program. The Yellow Bucket offering for June was \$181.98 and went to the Sullivan Ministerial Association.

### **Church Finances**

Needed each month to meet budget: \$23,304

May receipts: \$26,512.17

May Disbursements: \$21,121.26

Campus Balance: \$1,042.77

Mortgage Balance: \$108,813.57

**Administrative Council reports are now available on our website:  
[www.sullivanfirstumc.com](http://www.sullivanfirstumc.com)**

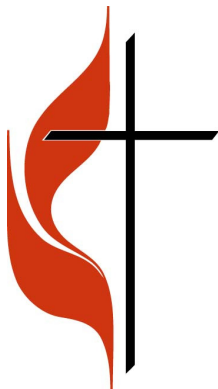


*The deadline for the August Newsletter is Friday, July 15*



CHURCH OFFICE  
CLOSED

***The Church Office will be closed Monday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day!***



#### **First United Methodist Church**

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