

Mahoning Valley Messenger

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VOLUME 6, ISSUE 10

DECEMBER 2011
JANUARY 2012

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Bright Spots of Hope

At our last Cabinet meeting, Rev. Karen Oehl, Mid-Ohio District Superintendent, shared a devotion using the children's book, "Can't You Sleep Little Bear" by Martin Waddell. We heard the story of Little Bear and how darkness frightened him and all attempts to ease his fear faltered. It wasn't until he went outside and looked up to see the light shining down from above that little Bear fell asleep.

As a young boy I was mesmerized by those searchlights that scanned the skies near the airports and the bright beam of light shattered the darkness. At times, I'd see beams of light intersecting one another across the horizons and wondered where the source of light was coming from. As we begin our journey through Advent, the birth of the Christ child, and into the Epiphany season – the image of light abounds all around us. I can imagine beams of

light shining across the district, the conference and the world showing other that "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

As I journeyed across the district these past few months, I've witnessed **Bright Spots of Light** shining forth from the local church into the community and serving as a beacon for others to see. Light attracts and illuminates and guides those who are walking in the shadows of darkness into a path that is of the LIGHT! From the emerging new worship services being planned in the upcoming months, to the multiple Christmas Eve services going to places outside the walls of the church, to the building of Habitat for Humanity homes, volunteer ministries at the UM Community Center, to the Mill Creek Work Camp bringing youth from across the nation to mission work in Youngstown, to Project 6:14 – a new faith community focusing on 18-34 year olds, to the one-to-one conversations at Centenary, to the countless food pantries/ministries feeding thousands across the district, to the new truck stop ministry in the Living Waters Cluster, and to those new followers of Christ who professed their faith in many of the congregations this past year – the Light of Christ shines forth all around us.

I encourage you as you walk through Advent to keep your eyes focused on the LIGHT and to give thanks for the Bright Spots of Light that surround us each and every day. You are the shining glimmer of light, the "searchlight" that helps others see the joy of Christ in their lives.

Let your Light Shine so those living in darkness can see a glimmer of hope!

Dan

Rev. Dan Bryant



Kay's Corner

Ordinarily, we would be having Leadership Training in January. This year, however, we will be doing Leadership Training and the District Conference at the same time on April 22, from 2-6 p.m. at the Trinity United Methodist Church, 30 W Front St., Youngstown. You will be hearing from us with full particulars early in 2012.

Mark your calendars now and make plans to attend. Just think, we have combined two district events into one. Please plan to spend the afternoon with us.

Holiday Office Hours

The District Office will be closed from December 23 thru January 2. We will reopen at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 3. Messages and phone calls will be monitored during this period.

If you have an emergency while the office is closed, please call Rev. Kay Dunlap at 330-759-8792.

We will also be CLOSED
January 16
in observance of
Martin Luther King Jr. Day

We Ask Your Prayers for the Following in the Days Ahead:

Pastor Renae Meggitt (North Lima Calvary) recovering from surgery and undergoing treatment.

Retirees Bill Wright, Mike McHale, Lester Hickman, John Klimenko, and Pete Kerlin, all of whom are battling various ailments and illnesses.

Pastor Mary Ann Rufener (Hartford, Western Reserve District) whose husband, Bill, passed away Nov. 15.

Revs. Don Christensen and Russ Libb and their congregations, **Canfield and Berlin Center**, as Don & Russ transition to retirement effective Jun 30.

Pastor Darlene Smiley Masetta, who has been assigned as Supply Pastor at Lowellville.

Rev. Ron Spore, who has been assigned as Interim Pastor at Youngstown Trinity, effective January 15.

Pastor Carolyn Carman (formerly of Greater Wellsville Parish) who has been appointed to Green Valley in Three Rivers District.



With Dan in December

- 1 Cabinet Video Conference / Healthy Church Consultation Training
- 3 Church Hill Consult
- 4 Ellsworth Church Confernece / Project 6:14 @ Church Hill
- 6 Clergy Gathering / Mission Funding Committee
- 7 Equitable Compensation Meeting
- 8-9 Cabinet
- 10 General Conference Delegation Meeting
- 12 Covenant Group Meeting
- 13 CORE Meeting
- 14 Office Staff Lunch
- 15 Cabinet / Ordained Ministry
- 18-31 Vacation

With Dan in January

- 4-6 Cabinet Retreat
- 7 Parsonage Family Epiphany Party
- 8 Preach @ Western Reserve
- 9 Consultations
- 11 Compass Group Leaders
- 12 Cabinet video Conference / Leadership Training Committee
- 13-14 District Y-Night
- 17-19 Cabinet
- 21 Leadership Academy Follow-Up
- 22 Compass Group Leadership Training
- 24 CORE

December Clergy Birthdays

- 6 Matt Darrin Howland
- 15 Mark Vincent Warren Tod
- 26 David Andrews Mt. Carmel

January Clergy Birthdays

- 21 Steve Sparling Ygst. Trinity
- 27 Don Christensen Canfield
- 30 Bill Church Winona

If we have your birthday listed incorrectly (or not at all) please let us know so we can correct our records

The deadline for submissions to the February 2012 Newsletter is Monday, January 23

Submissions should be made in writing/ via e-mail when possible

Reminder: If you would like to receive your newsletter via e-mail, please contact Kathy at mvdistumc@aol.com. Please include your address so we can be sure to remove you from the "snail mail" list.

Clergywomen's Lunch

All District Clergywomen are invited to the home of Peg Welch on Wednesday, Dec. 14 at 12:30 for a luncheon. Please call 330-758-6287 to RSVP and for directions.

Retirees Breakfast

The district retirees will meet for breakfast at 9 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 16, at Lucianno's Café & Banquet Center, Wedgewood Plaza in Austintown. Please note the earlier than usual date due to the Christmas Holiday.

Vital Congregations Website Update

New resources are now available on the UMVitalCongregations.org website and through the Vital Congregations Project. Vital Congregations is now on FaceBook and Twitter. There is also a regular blog post that shares information, ideas, thoughts and theological articles. We would love for anyone interested in contributing, to please send us an email with a contribution or with a link to a video story or more email VitalCongregations@umc.org.

Last Call for Interpreter Magazine

Each church is eligible to receive FIVE free print *and* FIVE free digital copies of Interpreter magazine — but only if you act *now* and subscribe online at <http://www.umcom.org/subscriptions>. The original deadline is long past so you must subscribe online no later than **Wednesday, Dec. 7th** to take advantage of this offer.

Don't miss the opportunity to take advantage of this already-paid-for resource - this is just one of many examples of your apportionment dollars at work!

Teacher Training

Save the Date! **Saturday, January 7** Teacher Training—Discipline 101 Salem First United Methodist Church Music Room. Breakfast at 9:00, Program at 9:30

Please plan to attend this informative program. June Leasure is a school psychologist with a BS in Elementary Education, an MS in Ed Administration, a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in School Psychology, and a PhD in Special Education. She has served as a Christian school Administrator and has over 30 years of Sunday teaching of all ages. For more information or to RSVP: 330-337-9531. Deadline to register is Tuesday, Jan. 3.

Salem First UMC is located at 244 S. Broadway.

Weather make up date January 14.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

All Charge Conference paperwork is due in the district office **NOW!**

This includes any and all forms that were not submitted, completed, or signed at the time of your conference, including 2012 budgets, leadership directories and CFC Forms/Covenants.

Clergy Gathering:

All District Clergy *are expected to attend* the December 6th gathering from 10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. at West Austintown UMC. Unexcused absences will be noted. **Retirees are welcome to attend.** Please call the district office by December 2 with your lunch reservation.

Leadership Academy:

Deposits for the next session of the District Leadership Academy are due by December 15th.

Parsonage Families

Don't forget to mark your calendars for the second Annual Epiphany Party, to be held January 7, 2012. More information will follow by mail.

Blue Christmas

For many, December is not the most wonderful time of the year. It is a difficult time for those who are struggling with a loss. The Western Reserve UMC and Lane Funeral Home are co-hosting an event to help these individuals. On December 18 they will hold their first annual Blue Christmas service. It will be a time to remember the loved ones we have lost. You may share a photo and hang a memorial ornament and/or have a loved one's name read aloud during the service. The 6:00 service will take place at Lane's new Boardman Chapel, 8387 Tod Avenue. Russ Adams, pastor at Western Reserve, will be officiating. If you have any questions please call Western Reserve at 330-792-5805.

Call to Action – Help Needed – A Mighty Army for God!

The Vision: To birth a new faith community in Masury of young adults and families, youth, kids, unchurched and previously churched. To provide a weekly meal for those who are having a tough time in this economy. To bring the power of the living Christ into the lives of folks who are grasping at straws for tomorrow.

The Possibility: “Fresh Expressions,” a coffee house type setting where a weekly meal is provided, there is a coffee/drinks bar, live music and kids are welcomed, cared for, and encouraged. A place where the live 'background' music transforms into worship song, where the preacher in blue jeans gets up from the table and preach/teaches a poignant relevant message that meets folks where they are and where they need. A place where people care about you and will go the extra mile, or two, or three, or whatever!

Where We Are Now: We will launch on Dec. 10th using the fellowship hall of the Masury Church which has an outside, street-front entrance etc. The meals and coffees are in place. The music is in place. The preacher is pumped up and prayed up. Printed materials: posters, flyers, banners, door-hangers, signs and handouts have been designed and are 'at the printer'. A 'story' and picture is ready to be released to the area papers when the timing is right for the launch.

The Need: Jesus said “The fields are ripe with harvest, but the laborers are few”. The biggest need is for you! We need a few folks from every church under the age of 40 to answer the call to join us for a couple hours on Saturday Dec. 3rd, or on Tuesday evening Dec. 6th to 'blanket' the community and share the good news of “Fresh Expressions”.

The Plan: We will gather for 15 - 20 minutes of prayer, encouragement and directions. Then 2 x 2 we will fan out across the community with door-hangers and handouts to the homes in our assigned areas and invite folks to the launch of “Fresh Expressions”. No visiting, or evangelizing necessary! We just need you to help us get the word out and extend an invitation.

To Make a Difference for Christ: Please hold us before God in prayer, and please contact: LivingWatersPreacher@yahoo.com, Pastor Ray @ 330 531-4221, the Masury Church @ 330 448-1643.

Pray for General Conference

Looking for a way to emphasize prayer in your local church as well as connect with the broader UMC?

If so, why not invite congregations to 1) begin praying for general and jurisdictional conference delegates now as they are preparing; 2) pray for God's will to be clearly discerned by everyone involved in the decisions that will be made at general conference; and 3) use the Prayer Guide for the 40 days before and ten days during general conference which will be available free on the General Board of Discipleship web site in early 2012.



We Wish You a Blessed Christmas

The birth of Jesus brought hope to the world. May you find Peace, Joy, and Love during this Holiday Season.

Dan Bryant, District Superintendent,
Kay Dunlap, District Associate
Kathy Kramer, Administrative Assistant
Jeff Williamson, Treasurer

IT'S DINNER TIME, ETC.

Chicken Dinners to Go - Thurs. Dec. 1 and Jan. 5, 4 p.m. until sold out at Poland UMC, 1940 Boardman-Poland Rd.

Drive Thru Stuffed Chicken Dinners - Thurs. Dec. 1 and Jan. 5, 4-6 (or until sold-out) at Western Reserve UMC, 4580 Canfield Rd. (Rt. 62).

Chicken on the Run - Thurs. Dec. 1 and Jan. 5, 4 - 6 (or until sold out) at Salem First UMC, 244 S. Broadway, Salem. Drive-thru service only.

Best Fish Fry Ever - Friday, Dec. 2, and Jan. 6, 3:30-6:30 at Tod Avenue UMC, 155 Tod Ave. NW, Warren.

Famous Swiss Streak Dinner - Sat., Dec. 3 and Jan. 7, 4-6:00 at Vienna UMC, 4265 Warren-Sharon Rd.

Drive Thru Chicken Dinner - Thursday, Dec. 8 and Jan. 12, 4 p.m. until sold out at Calvary UMC, 12062 South Ave., North Lima.

Pancakes & More - Sat., Dec. 10 and Jan. 14, 8-11 a.m. at New Waterford UMC, 46925 S State St., New Waterford.

Spaghetti Dinner - Sat., Jan. 28, 4-7 at Brookfield UMC, 6951 Grove St.

Stuffed Pork Chop Dinner - Sat., Jan. 28, 4-6 :30 at Braceville UMC, 577 Park Rd. SW, Newton Falls.

Holiday Extravaganza - Sunday, Dec. 4th, 2-5 p.m. at Girard UMC, 22 N Market St. Live auction/silent auction/gift baskets and more. Call the church office (330-545-4361) for tickets and information.

Stuffed Cabbage Rolls - Tuesday, Dec. 6, 13, & 20, 11-2 at Mahoning UMC, 2214 Mahoning Ave., Ygts. Call 330-799-5318 to pre-order.

Homemade Chili - Sat. Dec. 10 and Jan. 14, 11 a.m. until sold out at Smith Corners UMC, 300 S Canfield-Niles Rd. Call 330-652-6614 for information.

The Congress on Evangelism 2012

“Catching and Keeping: Discipling in the Local Church” is the theme for the 2012 Congress on Evangelism to be held **January 3-6** at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. Register at www.CongressOnEvangelism.org or call (828) 454-6805.

Reminder

Any time you need to have a document notarized, call me at the district office and I will be glad to provide this service. Please be sure to call first to make sure I'm in that day.

Kathy Kramer



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