

Mahoning Valley Messenger

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VOLUME 6, ISSUE 7

SEPTEMBER 2011

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A Race of Discipleship

On Saturday, August 20th, I climbed into a mini stock car at Sharon Speedway for the *Faster Pastor* race along with five other pastors, including Pastor Bill Johnson from Brookfield UMC. My wife, Debbie, sat anxiously in the stands along with others from the district, wondering if I was going to survive the 6 lap race around the dirt track. I drove car #421 which was owned by a young man named James, who lives in Austintown, and who volunteered his car for this inexperienced mini stock car driver. I marveled at James' kindness and instruction as he quickly oriented me to the car, which had been damaged somewhat in the feature race earlier, and said that shifting into second gear was difficult. Standing there in a fireproof racing suit and squeezing on the racing helmet, I realized that I was actually way outside my comfort zone. Of course, I put up a good front but internally my nerves were on edge and I listened intently as James gave me last minute instructions on how to handle the car as I went into the turns and to have fun. At that moment, in all honesty, I wasn't having fun but entirely focused upon the car, the racetrack and being sure that I survived what was going to a "priceless experience."

When we were led onto the track I entered a race I had never imagined and I felt my spirit quicken and I took the three practice laps in stride, gunning the engine and feeling the car bounce and slip somewhat as I took the turns. Before I knew it the race was on and I was losing ground on the lead car but still in the race. All my fears and anxieties disappeared as I focused on the track ahead and the difficult challenges of taking the turns in a manner that wouldn't send the car into the wall. Suddenly, I saw the flashing yellow and knew a "caution" was in place and slowed the car down until we could resume at full speed. Once the green was given, the race continued and before you knew it, the checkered flag and a slow lap around the track. When we exited the cars and had a chance to stand together with the winner, who wasn't me, I felt sense of accomplishment and knew I had stretched beyond what I imagined I could. As James helped me out the car he said to me, "*you did great! You can drive my new car next year, it will number #421. Look me up and I will be there with you again.*"

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A Race of Discipleship, Continued

You know, as we move into this new season of ministry and the many changes that are coming as we seek to find innovative and appropriate ways of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, I believe God is going to stretch us beyond our comfort zones and place us into a **race of discipleship**. We all have different approaches and anxieties and wonderings regarding what the journey will actually look like. Yet, just as I had a young guide, named James, who helped me into the car and stood beside me as I entered the track and watched as I raced and then encouraged me as I finished – we all have an amazing and life-giving guide, named Jesus Christ, who offers us more than we can ever imagine as we prepare for the discipleship race ahead.

My friends, allow the movement of God's amazing Spirit to challenge your comfort zones and to open your eyes to the new possibilities that await you and the church as this coming season unfolds. You have the tools, the gifts, the power and the

wisdom to do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Yes, the “mission/ministry race track” may be bumpy and slippery at times and you may need to squeeze the spiritual steering wheel tightly around the curves, and the mission caution flag may appear to slow you down and clear away debris, but if you can put your trust in the One who gives us LIFE, then we will finish the race. It won't matter if you are first or last as long as you keep focused on the finish line and pay attention to what the Lord has called us all to do.

I pray for each of you as you seek to follow Christ and may the **race of discipleship** excite you and fill you with a passion to share Christ's love to those who hunger for new life.

Be Encouraged Always,

Dan

FYI: The District Office will be **CLOSED** on **Friday, Sept. 16** so Kathy can attend a continuing education event at the Conference Office.

With Dan in September

- 1 Clergy Consults
- 3 SPRC Consults
- 6 Clergy Consults
- 7 Clergy Consults
- 8 COMPASS Group Leaders & Conveners
- 10 General Conference Delegates Meeting / SPRC Consults
- 11 SPRC Consults
- 12 Vital Congregations “Webinar”
- 13-15 Cabinet Fall Retreat
- 17 Ellsworth Kalas @ East Fairfield / SPRC Consults
- 18 Masury UMC 100th Anniversary
- 20 Strategy Team
- 21 COMPASS Group Leaders / District Finance Committee
- 22 UMCC Board Meeting
- 23-24 Lay Speaker Training
- 24 SPRC Consults
- 25 Church Conferences / District Youth Kick-off
- 27 District UMW Fall Meeting / SPRC Consults
- 28 Clergy Gathering @ New Waterford

September Clergy Birthdays

- 18 Mike McHale
Lockwood/McDonald
- 25 Glenn Hamilton
Warren Grace
- 28 David McDonald
Niles First

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 OCTOBER Newsletter is Wednesday, September 21

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

All churches with “standing” dates for dinners (first Thursday, etc) are asked to send Fall schedules so we don't miss anyone.

Reminder: If you would like to receive your newsletter via e-mail, please contact Kathy at mvdstumc@aol.com.

Clergywomen's Lunch

The District Clergywomen will meet at Fellows Gardens in Mill Creek Park on Weds, Sept 14 at 12:30. Bring your walking shoes to tour the gardens

Retirees Breakfast

The district retirees will meet for breakfast at 9 a.m. on Friday, Sept. 23rd at Lucianno's Café & Banquet Center, Wedgewood Plaza in Austin-town.

Kay's Corner

What is a Vital Congregation?
Bishop John Schol from the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference writes in the August 17 edition of *Newscope* that Vital Congregations have five qualities: 1) Inviting and inspiring worship; 2) gifted, equipped and empowered lay leadership; 3) engage disciples in mission and outreach; 4) small groups; and 5) strong children's programs and youth ministry.

We as a district are striving to have vital congregations in all of our churches. It takes time and effort to fulfill all the five areas to strengthen the ministry of our churches to become vital congregations. As a district, opportunities are provided to assist the clergy and laity of our district to develop skills for leadership. During the month of September the first of six Leadership Academies for the pastors of the district - to be held over a two year cycle - will be held at the Carlisle Inn on October 25-27. Lay Speakers Training will be held September 23 & 24 at Poland UMC, and the Youth of the district will begin their gatherings on September 25 at 4:00 p.m. at Niles First UMC.

Additional information on each of these events is available by calling the district office or Kay at 330-759-8792.

Speaker at East Fairfield UMC

Save Saturday, September 17, 9-12 for an opportunity to learn from one of Methodism's premier Bible teachers, **Dr. J. Ellsworth Kalas** (Disciple Bible Studies, the "...From the Back Side" series). Invited to our district by Lisbon UMC, he'll lead a lively session for all interested clergy and laity at East Fairfield UMC on 9/17. Includes a light breakfast."

We ask your prayers for the following in the days ahead:

Rev. Kay Dunlap (District Office) for continued healing of her broken ankle.

Rev. Lester Hickman (Retired) for treatment of continuing health problems.

Pastor Curt Miller (Ellsworth and New Hope) as he recovers from open heart surgery.

Pastor Dennis Devorick (Elkton/Negley/Mt. Zion) as he relocates to a secular job in Myrtle Beach. Watch out for hurricanes, Dennis!

Attention District Clergy

The first
CLERGY GATHERING
of the season will take place on
Weds. September 28 at New
Waterford UMC from 10 a.m.-
1:00 p.m. As in the past, all
clergy are *expected* to attend.
You must call the district office
to make a lunch reservation.
Retirees are welcome too!
Please call 33-270-3400 for
reservations.

Church Capital Campaigns

The East Ohio Foundation is sponsoring a Church Capital Campaign Workshop Saturday, September 24, 2011 at Montrose Zion UMC, 565 N. Cleveland Massillon Rd., Akron, OH. The Why, When & How will be presented by Rev. Dr. Michael Reeves & Rev. Dr. Bradley Call.

Cost is \$25/per/person, register by Sept. 10, 2011. Call the Foundation office at 800.831.3972, ext. 138.

Thank You . . .

Each year at Annual Conference time, we as a district receive requests for persons to do specific tasks at Conference. Many thanks go to: Renae Meggitt, Dick Smith, Jeff Pelin and Mary Kay Heverly for assisting with communion; Joyce Lawson, Russ Adams, Jan Sprague, Mike Grant; Vern Shepherd and Renae Meggitt, clergy tellers; M.J. Bown, Bob McLean, Mary Kay Heverly, Judy Yungbluth, Doug Wack and Bob Bucklin, lay tellers; Barbara Beach, who assumed the work Kay was unable to do; and all those from the district who served as ushers.

We are grateful for your willingness to serve.

Dan Bryant & Kay Dunlap

United Methodist Women — Please Note:

The correct date for the District UMW Fall Meeting is **Tuesday, September 27**. The meeting is at Tod Avenue UMC in Warren.

Lay Speaker Training

Friday, Sept. 23 (5:45 - 9:30 PM)
and
Saturday, Sept. 24 (8:00AM - 5:00PM)

"LAY SPEAKING MINSTRIES" - Basic Course (Leading, Caring, Communication) is being offered at Poland UMC. Deadline for registration is September 9.

Contact Peggy Sutherin for details, questions or problems: 330-426-9608 or email: peggysutherin@yahoo.com

Cost is \$30 for book, snacks, and continental breakfast and lunch on Saturday.

Scholarships are available.

Congratulations to Pastor Bill Johnson (Brookfield UMC) and his fiancé, Janice Brenner, who will be married on Saturday, October 1st at 12 noon at Western Reserve UMC with refreshments to follow. All are invited to attend.

UM Men to Hear Mike Hargrove

There will be a gathering of United Methodist Men on Saturday., Nov. 12 from 9 a.m.– 4 p.m. at Grace UMC in Canton. Breakfast and registration at 8 a.m. Worship, special music, and workshops are planned. For more information, call Kay at 330-270-3400 or 330-759-8792.

In Concert . . .

The Keelings will be in concert on Sunday, Sept. 11 at 6:00 p.m. at Western Reserve UMC, 4580 Canfield Rd. (Rt. 62), Canfield.

Power of Praise will perform at New Hope UMC on Sunday, Sept. 25 @ 2:00 p.m. Bring your lawn chairs - concert will be outside, weather permitting. New Hope is at 21 Fairview Ave., Niles

The Following Note was received from the children of Masury UMC:

“Thank you for the \$50 Camper-ships. We had such a great time. Treehouse Explorers learned about Jonah and the Whale and they slept in the fish mouth. M.A.D.D. camp had fun learning about John 3:16 and then performed at the end of the week. Some made a movie during the week while others took voice lessons. Camp is awesome. Three of the older kids want to be Cadets next year. Thank you for helping us go to camp.”

This is an example of your shared ministry dollars at work.

Angel Food Ministries

New Hope UMC, 21 Fairview Ave., Niles, is now a host site for the Angel Food Ministries program, a nonprofit organization that provides high quality food at a low price by buying in bulk.

If you would like to help or get more information on the program, call the church (330-652-3409) or Carol Miller (330-652-3625).

It's Dinner Time, etc.

Homemade Chicken Dinners to Go Thur., Sept. 1 4-6 (or until sold out) at Poland UMC, 1940 Boardman-Poland Rd.. Drive-up service.

Drive Thru Stuffed Chicken Dinners - Thurs. Sept. 1, 4-6 p.m. (or until sold-out) at Western Reserve UMC, 4580 Canfield Rd. (Rt. 62).

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

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

Chicken Pie Dinner - Sat., Sept. 10, 3:30 - 6:00 at Fowler UMC, Rt. 193 & 305, Fowler. Takeouts available.

Rummage Sale — Damascus UMC will hold its Annual Rummage Sale Fri., Sept. 30 (9-4) and Sat., Oct. 1, (9-2). Bake Sale & Lunch Bar available too.



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