

Mahoning Valley Messenger

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Spiritual Potholes

My daughter, Kayla, and I decided to go see a movie early Sunday evening. As I entered interstate 11N at the 224 entrance ramp, I went to pass a slow moving car and as I moved into the passing lane, my left front tire hit the deepest pothole I have hit on a highway. Immediately, we heard the whooshing of the tire and suddenly my steering began to pull to the left. Fortunately, I was able to get off at the Mahoning Avenue exit and find a lighted parking lot to inspect and ultimately, change my flat tire. When I pulled the tire off I could see a dent of at least 1 ½ inches deep along the rim. I thanked God for allowing the car to withstand the sudden jolt and for holding air in the tire until I got off the darkened highway. Reflecting on the pothole experience, I remarked to

my daughter, how suddenly our life plans can change. In other words, during our walk of faith we encounter “spiritual potholes” that can damage our perspectives, cause pain in our lives or alter the course we were hoping to travel.

While in Liberia earlier this month, our driver, Quire, as he drove along pothole riddled roads from Grbanga to Ganta, caused by mortar rounds during the civil wars, constantly played a song by Liberian singer titled, “Carry My Load.” The old cassette tape was worn and we heard the song at least 30 times while sitting in the back of van. Quire never ceased to sing the song and to give praise to God while he drove around all (almost all) the potholes in the road. For him, the song conveyed an assurance and dependence that no matter what life struggles he faced, Jesus would help him carry the load. He was not alone and on Jesus, he depended.

As the Lenten journey unfolds before us and we strive to walk the path to Jerusalem along with Jesus we will encounter a myriad of “spiritual potholes” that can shatter the calm, bend our will to a different direction, and possibly deflate or flatten our desire to wholly trust and walk with Jesus. I would encourage you, when the potholes come your way, to look to Jesus as our example. He got it! He understood the road he was walking was going to be crooked and that potholes of distraction, fear, ambivalence, self-centeredness and comfortableness lay ahead. Yet, he kept his eyes focused ahead, towards the cross and toward the kingdom-building living he was modeling for all of us. Even when he hit the potholes of betrayal and the valley of death when all seemed so lost, he did not fear. With a confidence that inspires he surrendered himself in the hands of his loving Father.

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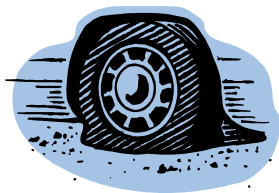
Spiritual Potholes, continued . . .

You know the rest of the story! On the other side of the spiritual pothole of Good Friday, the light, the hope, the joy and the power of new life arose on Easter morning. Mourning turned to Joy and wails to hallelujahs through the empty tomb.

As you walk the Lenten road in the days ahead, may the assurance of Jesus' love for you and gift of the resurrection and new life guide you through the spiritual potholes you may encounter along the way. On the other side of the potholes is new life and hope if we can fully trust in God's grace and allow God's grace to guide us and lead us.

Be Encouraged Always.

Dan Bryant



Prayers and Concerns

Please keep the following persons in your prayers as they face health concerns:

- Rev. Elliot Bush
- Rev. D Larry Kline
- Rev. Mike McHale
- Rev Steve Sparling
- Rev. John Klimenko
- Rev. Enzie Wade
- Rev. George & Trudie Lee and son, Tom Lee, who is at Brooke Army Hospital in San Antonio.

We also pray for all the sons & daughters of the Mahoning Valley District who are serving our country.



Mark Your Calendars Now:

Spring District Conference -
Sunday, April 18, 2:30 p.m. at East Liverpool First.

District Leadership Training -
Sunday, May 2, 2:30 - 6:00. Details to follow.

Kay's Corner

Now is the time to prepare for your 2010 Vacation Bible School.

The curriculum selection is greater than ever before — your church can select from: Galactic Blast; Praise Party - worshipping God with head, heart, hands, feet, and soul; Hero Headquarters; High Seas Expedition; Son Quest Rainforest; Planet Zoom; and Baobab Blast.

Some programs are for toddlers & twos - adult, and some are for infants - youth.

Last summer some of our churches teamed together and shared materials; this is an excellent opportunity to have a VBS without bearing the full expense.

As you make your plans and set your dates, if you are willing to share your materials, call me and I will be glad to share your information with other churches. You may be able to resource another church with your materials.

Please feel free to contact me at the District Office (330) 270-3400 if you have questions or are interested in sharing VBS resources.

Kay Dunlap

March Clergy Birthdays

- 3 Don Booth Deerfield & Palmyra
- 8 George Lee West Austintown
- 20 Terry Brown New Waterford
- 22 Peg Welch Boardman
- 22 Mike Grant Poland
- 24 Rich Thewlis Bunker Hill
- 30 Joyce Lawson Mahoning
- 31 Bill Wright New Franklin

If we have your birthday listed incorrectly - or not at all - please let us know

The deadline for submissions to the April Newsletter is Friday, March 19.

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



Retirees:

Retirees & spouses on the District are invited to gather for breakfast at 9:00 a.m., Friday, March 26 at Lucianne's Café & Banquet Center, Wedgewood Plaza, Austintown.

Clergywomen:

Watch your e-mail for news of your next luncheon gathering. Peg Welch will be in touch regarding the date, time, location, and RSVP information.

The Church Responds

Thanks so much for the outpouring of support for UMCOR's Haiti relief efforts - the generosity is amazing! As we work with the people in Haiti to address the long term recovery and development needs, we are thankful to move forward with the confidence that the people of the United Methodist Church will continue to partner with UMCOR in the years to come. Especially as Haiti prepares for the rainy season, and then hurricane season, please be in prayer with the people of Haiti and know that your support is critical.

As of February 18, 2010, \$12 million has been received for UMCOR Haiti Relief. In addition, hundreds of thousands of kits have been received at UMCOR Sager Brown and are being verified for shipment to Haiti.

How You Can Help

Go to the East Ohio Conference website (www.ecumc.com) for the latest information about Haiti.

All monetary donations should be designated for Advance #418325. Contributions can be sent with your monthly remittance, made online or mailed to: UMCOR, PO Box 9068, New York, NY 10087.



Health kits packed and ready to go at the Midwest Distribution Center

Mission in Motion...

A team of 6 members of Lisbon First UMC traveled more than 560 miles to South Central Illinois – IN JANUARY!! – in response to God's call to help the least and the lost. The Midwest Mission Distribution Center, a project of the North-Central Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, is a marvel of organization and productivity! Materials to construct health kits for Haiti poured in all week long from all over the Midwest, and we (and about 50 other day volunteers) were kept constantly busy unpacking, counting, packing, and preparing items for immediate shipping. In that one short week, approx. 3000 health kits were sent on to Haiti in response to UMCOR's request. In addition, we packed baby layettes, flood clean-up buckets, and school kits. We were impressed with the spirit of joy and commitment of EVERYONE at the Center, and we felt "connected" to the work of the church in a powerful way! We have scheduled two trips to the Distribution Center in 2011. If anyone would like to join us as teams form, please call Lisbon Church. There is something there for EVERYONE to do, regardless of age or skill!! Thank you to *Charolette Davis, Ed Kupka, Rick May, Pat Tressler, & Mary Lee Vandevander* for their gift of time in mission!



Ed Kupka prepares baby layettes

We Have A Website — www.mvdistumc.org

And . . . we would like for as many of you as possible to access the *Mahoning Valley Messenger* via the website or by e-mail.

If you would like to receive the newsletter via e-mail please notify us at mvdistumc@aol.com so we can add you to that list and remove you from the regular mailing list. Also, if you plan to access the newsletter via our website please notify this office so that we can remove your name from the regular mailing list.

If you choose either of the electronic options, please notify us of your choice ASAP. If you wish to remain on the regular mailing list, you may do so.

TARRP Training

The Town & Rural Resource Training Program (a.k.a. TARRP) is sponsoring a training day with Ron Crandall, author of "Turnaround and Beyond" to help equip clergy and laity with proven strategies of change in their local church. The date is Saturday, March 20 at Rolling Hills UMC, Zanesville. Minimal fee will cover the cost of a materials and a meal.

In addition, clergy participants are invited to meet with Mr. Crandall on the previous day, (Friday, March 19). Contact Rev. Tim Reeves (tarrp1@aol.com) for more information on both day's events.

Don't Forget . . .



Sunday, March 14th

A Day of Rethinking Stewardship

Saturday, March 20, 9 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at Church of the Lakes UMC, Canton. Sponsored by the East Ohio United Methodist Foundation, the day features keynote speaker Rev. David Bell who will present two topics: Overcoming the Money Fear Factor in Church: Practical Tips on Talking About Money; and Encouraging the Joy of Generous Giving: A Call to Financial Discipleship. He will also lead a break out session about capital campaigns. Other break outs include Blessed Details; Generational Differences in Charitable Giving; How to Successfully Research and Secure Grants from Foundations; Year Round Stewardship; and Planned Giving: Your Future May Depend On It. Cost is \$7 per person and includes lunch.

Registration deadline is March 12. More information is available at the district office, at eocumc.com, or by calling 800-831-3972, ext. 138. Cost is \$7 per person (including lunch) and must be included with registration.

Attention Treasurers and Financial Officers —
2009 AUDITS
are due in the conference office
no later than
Wednesday, March 31st.

Copies should also be sent to the District Office

Successful Grant Writing

First Matrix Ministries of East Liverpool, Ohio is offering two one-day seminars designed to teach non-profit organizations the skills necessary to find and receive funding. go to: www.FirstMatrixMinistries.com for more information and seminar dates.

Uncle Phil's Diner @ Vienna UMC

The Drama Ministry of Vienna UMC is presenting this dinner theater Musical production on Friday & Saturday, March 26 & 27. Tickets must be purchased in advance — call 330-652-5518 for prices, performance times, etc.

It's Dinner Time

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

Drive Thru Stuffed Chicken Diners
Thursday, March. 4, 4:00 until sold-out, at Western Reserve UMC, 4580 Canfield Rd. (Rt. 62), Canfield.

Swiss Steak Dinner — Saturday, March 6, 4-6:30 at Vienna UMC, 4265 Warren-Sharon Rd.. Take-outs available.

Swiss Steak Dinner — Saturday, March 6, 4:30-6:00 at West Austintown UMC, 6749 Mahoning Ave. Advance sale only - call 330-770-8679 for seating times & reservations.

Creamed Chicken Over Biscuits—
Sunday, March 7, Noon-2:00 at Struthers UMC, 33 Sexton St.

Basket Auction & Dinner - Sun., March 14 at 11:45 at Lisbon First UMC. Call Marilyn at 330-424-1145 for reservations.

Spaghetti Dinner - Sat., March 27, 4-7 p.m. at Brookfield UMC, 6951 Grove St., Brookfield.



Return Service Requested

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