

The Observer

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



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DON'T GO OVER TO THE DARK SIDE

AN E-PISTLE BY BISHOP MIKE COYNER



September 11, 2012

Sometimes I am a slow learner, and sometimes I miss the obvious signs. But when the same thing happens to me three times, I begin to catch on and to notice a trend.

Three times in the past two weeks I have heard pastors whom I deeply respect say something like this: "For the first time in my ministry, I am discouraged about our United Methodist Church." For one it was about the dysfunction of General Conference this past spring. For another it was all about hearing too much cynicism from fellow clergy. And for another the "tipping point" as he called it was the declaration of the Western Jurisdiction that they will no longer obey or enforce the stance of our *Book of Discipline* related to homosexuality.

All three are persons of high integrity, fruitful and faithful ministry, and persons whose opinions I respect. All three told me, as one of them put it, "I have always been a company man, a supporter of our denomination, but I feel like I am going over to the dark side and joining those who have lost hope in our United Methodist structures."

How do I respond to those three and to the many others they probably represent? My first response, almost a gut response, was to say, "I know what you mean, because I get discouraged by our structures and divisions, too." My second response was to affirm that we have problems, and to ask for their suggestions about how to move forward (interestingly, none of them had any ideas about how to solve our issues – which probably reflected their own discouragement). My final response has been to pray: to pray for our United Methodist Church as a whole, for our United Methodist clergy in particular, and for God's guidance to

"All three told me...I feel like...I am joining those who have lost hope in our United Methodist structure."

come upon all of us.

These are tough times, in many ways:

- Our U.S. culture is no longer “church friendly” and supportive of our Christian values. Our communities, even here in Indiana, do not automatically reserve a “church night” or make other spaces for our churches to operate. Trust of every institution is low. Trust of clergy has been damaged (and rightfully so) by the misconduct of some clergy who have besmirched the reputation of all clergy.
- Our United Methodist Church is in the midst of an identity crisis. We have always talked gladly about becoming a “global church” but now that the African branches of the UMC are out-pacing the U.S. branches, we are not sure how to handle that global shift. We celebrate their growth, but we are reluctant to let go of our own power to control decisions for the denomination.
- Our churches (all denominations) are aging, and we no longer have that sense of being “young and vibrant” like we once did. Even though having lots of senior adults means that we have lots of money and resources for today, we also know that every funeral of a long-time member means a financial loss that will not easily be made up by younger, less affluent members. Across the U.S., polls show that most Americans believe that the next generation or two will not be better off than the previous one, and that is a new phenomenon which also applies to the church.
- Our United Methodist Church seems hopelessly deadlocked over social issues, especially whenever we get into a legislative mode. On a local congregational level, those social issues are not a big deal. Most every congregation welcomes persons of all types and stripes, but once we move into legislative mode and start voting on issues, we get caught into the same kind of political strife which plagues Washington, D.C.

Given those difficult realities, it is easy to get discouraged, but I urge you: don’t go over to the dark side, don’t give up on our UMC, don’t give up on each other. This is a time for us to be honest with one another about our problems and issues. This is a time for us to work to find new solutions. Above all, this is a time to pray for God’s guidance and light. Don’t let the darkness overcome.

September 24, 2012 (The following e-pistle is the response to the previous one.)

LIVING IN THE LIGHT

After my last E-pistle, in which I warned “Don’t go to the dark side,” I received many, many comments and replies. Several wrote to say that they agree with the three leaders I quoted in that message who are discouraged about our United Methodist Church. A few others wrote to say that being critical of our UMC does not mean they are “going over to the dark side” – and I certainly agree with that sentiment. The “dark side” of which I wrote is about giving in to cynicism and discouragement. Most wrote to offer me words of encouragement, stories about joys and good news from their churches, and affirmations that God is at work in the Indiana Conference. I appreciate all of those responses.

Let me clarify my own thinking: I believe that we who follow Christ are called to “live in

***“We believe that misery is a choice
and we choose not to be miserable.”***

(Continued on page 3)

the light of Christ” and not give in to the darkness of despair. All of us have times of discouragement, and all of us have seen the darkness of evil, injustice, sin, and death. To follow Christ means to encounter such darkness, even as Christ did, but then to choose to live in the light of Christ.

An example: I visited with a church leader who recently went through some tough times and disappointments. When I inquired about how he and his wife were handling all of that, he replied: “We believe that misery is a choice, and we do not choose to be miserable.” We make those choices all of the time, don’t we? Every little disappointment, unfairness, and heartache comes with the choice: will I give in to the “darkness” or will I choose to live in the Light? We often do not have a choice about which and when tough times come our way, but we do have a choice about our response to those tough times. We can give in to the darkness, or we can choose to live in the light.

Back to our United Methodist Church: I believe now is the time for all of us who both love our UMC and who have concerns about our UMC to live in the light of Christ. We do that by praying for our church, by being faithful ourselves, and by calling our UMC to the higher standards of Christ. Now is not the time to choose misery or cynicism or despair. Now is the time to choose love, healing, hope, and faith. Now is the time to live in the Light.

Esther Circle Resumes Meetings



Lou Ann Andis was hostess at her home in Hillsdale on Tuesday, September 18. She welcomed everyone and gave the devotion, using Psalm 23 from the book, *Psalms Now*, and she also shared an article by Marjorie Holmes entitled, “The Priceless

Company.”

Vice President Andis presided in the absence of President Karen Hartman, who is ill. Those attending were Ruth Hollingsworth, Margie Lapworth, Martha Rutan, Mary Ten Have, Kathy Haraburda, Karen Carlson, Phyllis Marsolf and Audrey Lientz.

The minutes were read and approved, and the treasurer’s report was given. It was announced that the money raised selling root beer floats during the Library Block Party will be given to the Backpack fund. At present, 140 children are being served through this program at Central Elementary School. If

funding can be secured, members would like to expand to include Van Duyn and Ernie Pyle elementary schools. The cost is about \$3.50 per child, per week, to fund this program. It was reported that the support received from the community has been tremendous.

It was reported members will serve a mostaccioli dinner in October to Andis’ camping friends. The next meeting will be Tuesday, October 16.

Karen Carlson gave an interesting and inspiring program, “Letter in the Wallet,” written in 1924 and found later. She also shared scripture of hope and patience, which was proven in the letter.

The meeting closed with a prayer circle and refreshments were served by the hostess.

Next meeting:

Tues. Oct. 16

7:00 pm

Alzheimer's Walk Huge Success!



The 2012 Walk to End Alzheimer's on September 16 was a huge success. The Clinton First United Methodist Church team had 16 walkers and collected over \$1100 with donations still coming in to support ending Alzheimer's Disease. Four hundred people walked and so far, \$35,000 has been raised for Alzheimer's research. This incurable disease has afflicted 4.5 million people in the U.S.

Team members were: Karen Carlson, Terry Chilton, Brycen Dalbey, Joyce Delph, Abby } Edmonson, Carole Edmonson, Gina Edmonson, Cheryl Hargrave, Aubree Heaton, Braeden Heaton, Tiffany Heaton, Brian Hutchinson, Susie Pierce, Freida Rutan, Brenda Starkey, and Peggy Strobel (all are in the photo except for Terry Chilton). We all thank everyone for their donations, support, and prayers as we walked over three miles on a perfect sunny September day. Chuck was honored at the opening ceremony with the emcee telling of



Chuck's "walk" and the most recent gift Chuck gave me when he whispered "I love you" as I was leaving him one evening a couple weeks ago. A few of us enjoyed a lunch at Rick's Smokehouse following the Walk. I thank you all for your love and support as Chuck and I continue on our personal "walk," and I know that Chuck thanks and loves you too.

Love, Peggy

Double Dose of Good News!



Food Pantry

Audrey Lientz has some good news to report: Two significant donations were received recently for the Food Pantry. One was from the local IGA grocery store,

which donated \$350. And, a second donation from Daily Chapel was received for \$2,000.

Audrey greatly appreciated both to help feed hungry people.

Jail Cookie Ministry

Also, Audrey shared that two young men were talking to her during the recent chicken

and noodle dinner at Hillcrest. They were working at the dinner and one thanked her for the cookies she brought to the jail for the Cookie Ministry. He said, "They meant a lot." He added, "He never wants to go back there."

The other young man working with him was also in jail at that time and is now studying to be a minister. Audrey was praising God for them and felt blessed and grateful for those testimonies..



Backpack Program Update



We have started the Backpack Program again for this school year. At this time there are 137 children at Central Elementary who are receiving food for the weekend. The cost per bag is about \$3 a bag. We put at least eight items in a

bag. You know how prices have risen; last year we were spending about \$2 a bag. We

have a dedicated group of people who get the food; others count the items for each week, packers who come on Thursday afternoon and the people who deliver it to the teachers as soon as school is over. It takes a lot of people working together to fulfill this worthwhile mission. This program is all funded by donations from our church, grants and area businesses, individuals and organizations. We appreciate all the people who make this possible.

Phyllis Marsolf

**WELCOME
BACK**

**West District Day
with Bishop Coyner
Wednesday, October 3 at 7:00 pm
Mt. Pleasant UMC - North Campus
1075 North Fruitridge Ave.
Terre Haute**

Bishop Coyner was recently assigned to his third term as Bishop of the Indiana Area. Join us for a reception to celebrate! Everyone, clergy and laity, will be joining together to welcome Bishop Mike back to Indiana. We are going to be blessed to hear the Bishop's vision for the next four years. This is something you won't want to miss. Come and find where our Bishop has set his vision and how he plans to carry it out.

UPDATES!

We will have a very brief West District Conference at 6:40 prior to the Bishop's presentation. Please be present at this conference to vote on the 2013 budget and leadership for our district!

Financial Peace University Coming to Clinton First!

Have you ever heard of Dave Ramsey? Well, he is a Christian financial advisor whose mission is to help people become debt free. He has written several books and has a talk radio show M-F from 8:00-10:00 am on 98.5 FM radio. He's been doing this for 20+ years and has developed Financial Peace University, a course in learning how to manage money and become debt free. Sometime in January, our church will host this program. Stay tuned for details!

Children's Ministries Crank Up!

>Fall Festival, Sat. Oct. 27--Volunteers Needed Still!



Some volunteers have come forth, but more are still needed. Just a two-hour commitment! 10am--noon on one Saturday morning, Oct. 27 Select a game or activity from the suggestions provided at church or create your own.

Add your name and activity to the list of volunteers.

Gather the materials for your activity and be set up, ready to go, by 10 am on 10/27.

Game prizes will be provided by Intentional

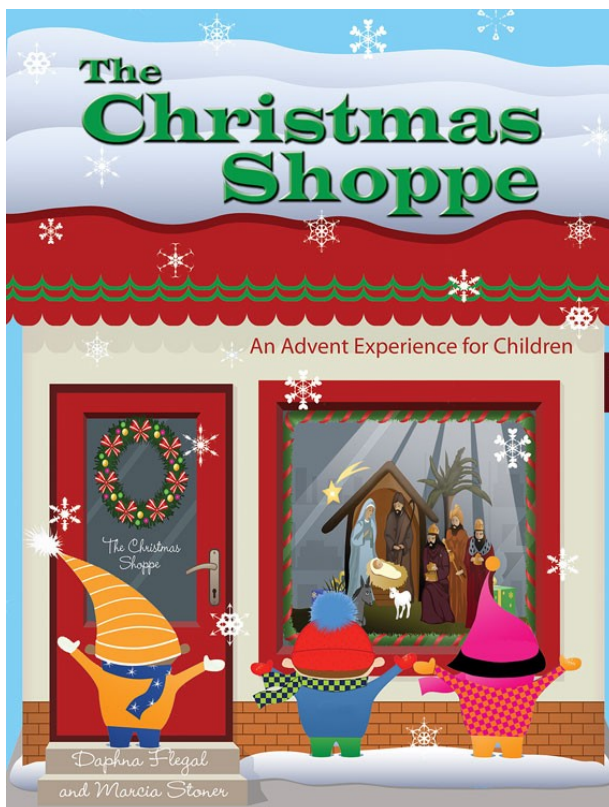
Faith Development.

Sample activities: traditional lawn games (corn hole, ladder ball, ring toss, washers), face painting, duck pond, clothespin drop, cup stacking, obstacle course, paper airplane game (church has kits), ping pong ball bucket toss, candy bar walk (instead of cake walk), lollipop tree, guess how many ____, pin the nose on the clown/scarecrow, storytelling, tour a fire truck, magic trick demonstration/lesson, word puzzles, crafts (leaf rubbings, other quick and easy-dry crafts)

Contact person: Shelby Marsolf

See Next page!

>Check Out Upcoming Fun Activities for Kids!



Looking Way Ahead—

Saturday, December 8

The Christmas Shoppe

10am-4pm

LUNCH WILL BE SERVED! It's all free!

For preschool through 5th grade. Help spread the word! This event will be at our church and open to the community with activities all day for the kids.

For the children, it will be more like an Advent-themed VBS that lasts all day, rather than several evenings.

For the parents, it will given them a chance to do some serious Christmas shopping! More details will follow.

12/30--Pre-New Year's Eve Party

for Grades K-8th

(time and place TBA)

(cluster sponsored)



Fall Festival in the Barn

Fun for the Whole Family!

Games

Prizes

Snacks

Face Painting

**SATURDAY
OCTOBER 27, 2012
10 AM TO 12 NOON**

Drinks

**Clinton First United Methodist Church
310 South Fourth Street
Clinton, IN
Phone: 765-832-3159**

This event is FREE to all--Come join the fun!



Five new prayer shawls dedicated and blessed

*You created every part of me,
knitting me in my mother's womb.
For such handiwork, I praise you.
Awesome this great wonder!*

Psalm 139: 13-14

Prayer Shawls Ready to Comfort

The five prayer shawls have been stitched and assembled by members of the Wrapped in His Love group: Mary Ten Have, Kathy Haraburda, Freida Rutan, Virginia Schragel, Sandee Frey, Connie Sprinkle and Janna Hogan. Each one is prayed over as it's made. If you could benefit from one, or know of someone who could, please contact one of the members.

Cluster News



Fish Fry Big Success!

A Country Rhodes Fish Fry sponsored by the cluster of Methodist churches was held on Saturday, September 22 at Vermillion County Fairgrounds. Money raised was used to fund programs for children and youth in Vermillion County.

Pam Kennedy, treasurer of the Cluster, reported on Sept. 23rd that although some expenses have not yet been received, profits so far were \$1,700! She said, "Good job everybody who helped and participated in this event for the Cluster!!!! Wabash Valley 83 Cluster Working together works!"



Coming up in October Hog Wallow Trip, Sat. 10/13

Time: TBA A trip to Hog Wallow is planned for K-6, which includes a wiener roast and a hay ride. More details to come.

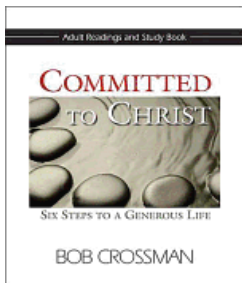
What: Soup, Sandwich and Prayer Walk Gathering

When: Monday, October 1st 6:30 pm

Who: Led by Ann Handschu.

Why: Ann will be here to guide us through a time of seeking God's will for our Church-- Visioning for the future ministry of this church in the community. Please come and share in this vital step for our church. Be a part of the future planning-- moving on from the past into what God wants us to do in 2013 and beyond!!

"Committed to Christ" Begins Oct. 7th And 10th



>Beginning October 7, Pastor Susan will be offering a 6-week Sunday school class-- "Committed to Christ". It will be in conjunction with her sermon series that begins that day also. This study will also be offered at 10am on Wednesday mornings beginning October 10. Please see Pastor Susan if you are interested in signing up to attend a "Committed to Christ" Study.
>Session Titles are: 1) Bible Reading; 2) Prayer; 3) Worship; 4) Service; 5) Financial Giving; 6) Witness.

Love Children? Nursery Volunteers Needed

The nursery is provided for Children newborn-4 years old. Each week we will need a team of two people to volunteer for the nursery—with at least one of the team members being over 18 and with a Child Protection Guidelines Background Check on file in the office. Forms are available from Pastor Susan. Sign up sheet is in the lounge.

Parents your children are welcome to stay in worship if you desire!



CALENDAR



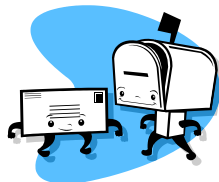
OCTOBER UPCOMING EVENTS

Day(s)	Date	Time	Event
Monday	Oct 1	7:00 pm	Trustees meeting
Mon.	Oct. 1	6:30 pm	Soup, Sandwich and Prayer Walk gathering with Ann Handschu (P8)
Weds.	Oct. 3	7:00 pm	West District Day with Bishop Coyner (p5)
Sunday	10/ 7	10:40 am	New 6-week SS class "Committed to Christ" (p8)
Weds.	10/10	10:00 am	New Bible Study (same as above) (p.8)
Friday	10/12	TBA	Esther Circle serving dinner to campers
Saturday	10/13	TBA	Trip to Hog Wallow (K-8) (Cluster sponsored) (P.8)
Tuesday	10/16	7:00 pm	Esther Circle meeting
Thursday	10/18	7:00 pm	Cluster meeting at Dana
Saturday	10/27	10:00am-Noon	Fall Festival in barn (Pps.6-7)
Sunday	10/28	TBA	Charge Conference at Clinton First
NOVEMBER UPCOMING EVENTS			
Thursday	11/15	7:00 pm	Community Thanksgiving Service at Presbyterian Church
Saturday	11/18	TBA	Cluster Thanksgiving Dinner
Thursday	11/22	-----	Thanksgiving Day



Prayer Concerns

*Telecare Prayer Chain: Contact Pastor Susan at (765) 592-3445 if you have a prayer request or concern. Or, email church at clintonfirst@gmail.com



Terry Has Moved!

Terry Coleman has been in a hospital or facility for more than a year! He really enjoys hearing from people back home. He would appreciate phone calls (although they need to be short).

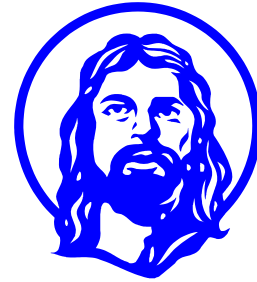
His number is 812-241-2741.

New address: Manor Care
8549 Madison Ave., Room 172
Indianapolis, IN 46237

Contact Information

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>Regular Events Calendar<

Sun 9:30 am Worship service
Communion 1st Sunday
Food Pantry & Hillcrest
donations 1st Sunday
11:00 am Sunday school for all ages
6:30 pm Youth Group
Tues. 7:00 pm Worship at Chateau
6:00 pm First Place Weight Loss /Bible Study
Weds. 7:00 pm Choir Practice
Th. 2:00 pm Pack for Backpack Project