

Greetings in Christ,

I hope this summer is a blessing in many ways to you and your family. While I am on renewal leave I continue to share with you portions of my journal of reflections while I was in Liberia in February. This one is a bit personal, but it could hardly be anything else in view of what occurred that particular day.

Journal of Reflections
Liberia Trip

Friday, February 16, 2007

The day started early as I awoke by 4 am Liberia time (10 pm Illinois time). It was hot as every day had been...even at that hour. An early shower, which was *not* hot any day, prepared me for yet another adventure at the Liberia Annual Conference.

As the opening music was being sung, I received word that I needed to call home. It was about 8:45 am Liberia time (2:45 am Illinois). I didn't think. I just called. Bobbie slept through the ringing and I left a message for her to call. At 11:30 am or so (Liberia), Joseph (a member of the LAC communications team whose cell phone I had used) called me out of the session. He had called on my behalf and Bobbie had answered. It was then that Bobbie shared the heartbreaking news that my Dad had passed away "yesterday". After a brief conversation about the circumstances and what we should do about the service, I shared the news with colleagues and returned to the guesthouse.

I wept at a loss that was expected on *some* day, but had come *that* day...way too soon...but, don't they all? I wept at being half a world away and not being present to handle the arrangements, which Bobbie was having to

do. I wept thanking God for a father who had been so much a part of my life and our family's; gone only 4½ years after mom's passing.

Dad never liked drawing too much attention to himself—humble and self reliant as he was. At that moment I was overwhelmed at the thought of the attention all this would receive here in Liberia and back in Illinois because I wasn't there, and couldn't get home, but there wasn't much I could do about it. The timing was what it was...God's timing that crowned the earthly end of Dad's life and his passing through the door to eternal life.

(Ironically a small legacy of my Dad remains in Liberia through two wooden candle sticks I took as gifts to my two partner district superintendents, which Dad had crafted by hand. Little did I know at the time the full significance those candle sticks would have. Their mates appear regularly here in clergy gatherings when we have communion and will be included in the worship centers for this year's ministry area charge conferences. What a joy it will be to have Superintendent Morrison Wleh of the Nana Kru District, LAC, as our guest as we gather for these important annual meetings later this fall.)

Keith

INTERPRETER MAGAZINE

Pastors: Your *Interpreter* magazine subscription will be mailed to you this year. Please take time to complete the form and mail it back to UM Communications. This is an excellent magazine.

District Office

SEPTEMBER

3 District Office closed
4-6 Cabinet Retreat

- 10 10:00 am Ministry area clergy group leaders at District Office
- 17 District Office closed
- 18-20 Cabinet
- 23 9:00 am Keith speaking at Momence
10:30 am Keith speaking at Grant Park
- 24 ROMEO
- 25 9 am-3:30 pm District clergy gathering at Pontiac
- 27 9 am-5pm Clergy consultations at Normal First
- 30 9:30 am Keith speaking at Dwight



Karen Gather	9-7	Ron George	9-14
Marvin Orewiler	9-5	Tina Canada	9-15
Bill Leppin	9-10	Mary Rosebraugh	9-17
Diane Yentes	9-10	David Johnston	9-25
Mary Ellen Peabody	9-11	Stan Irvin	9-29
Frank Silas	9-11		
Scott Baird	9-12		

- DISTRICT APPOINTMENTS -

FAREWELL

John Lee retired from the Magnolia/McNabb Churches as of June 30.
Becky Lembke from Heyworth
Debbie Horvath from Roanoke/Secor

WELCOME

Grant Armstrong was appointed to Pontiac First as of 07-15-07.
Stan Haxton is the interim supply pastor at Heyworth.

IN DISTRICT APPOINTMENT

Rob Roy was appointed to Atlanta/Ebenezer beginning August 1.

- SEPTEMBER NEWS -

WORSHIP CONFERENCE

A Worship Conference is scheduled for Saturday, September 22. We have assembled several leaders from around the conference for the purpose of equipping local church worship leaders (both volunteer and paid), worship ministry teams, media teams, praise bands and others involved in weekly worship ministry. For a complete list of presenters, elective seminar titles and registration information please go to

http://www.harvestministryteams.com/worship_conference/index.html. If you have questions, you may also contact Tim Price at 618-667-6241 ext. 414.

Tim Price

WORSHIP WORKSHOP

On Saturday, September 29 from 10 am-4 pm the Coal City UMC will offer a worship workshop on “Finding God in New/Old Ways.”

This interactive and experiential workshop is for all Christians, lay and clergy, and will examine some of the ways our foreparents in the faith have encountered God in the past and how these tools can be adapted to meet the spiritual needs of 21st Century Christians.

Along with the more common and familiar tools of Prayer, Baptism and Holy Communion, we will also be exploring such things as the Walking the Labyrinth, Taize Worship, Prayer Beads, and Spiritual Journaling.

Our keynote speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Carolyn Weber, who completed her Doctorate of Ministry degree in Spirituality in 2004 after developing the Sacred Journey of Healing retreat process to assist adult female survivors of child sexual abuse in grieving their losses and gathering strength and moving ahead. She is a Veriditas Certified Labyrinth Facilitator and has trained with Dr. Lauren Artress at the labyrinth in Chartres, France, as well as attending a retreat with the Taize Community located in Taize, France.

Other workshop leaders will include the Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Logsdon, former mission executive with the General Board of Global Ministries, who will be leading a workshop on Prayer Beads for the 21st Century.

The total cost for this workshop is \$10 per person, to be collected on the day of the event. This small fee will help defray some of the costs related to lunch, supplies, and other expenses of the workshop.

Please make your reservation at least five days before the workshop. For more information or to make your reservation, please call, write, fax or email the Coal City UMC.

Igrc News

Coal City UMC, 6805 E. McArdle Rd, Coal City 60416, 815-634-8670, fax 815-634-2314, email: ccumc@sbcglobal.net, website: www.coalcityumc.org

- FOR YOUR INFORMATION -

SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Children across the United States are leaving church on Sunday mornings with these words ringing in their ears: “God is a great big God.” They are also talking about Bongo, Mr. Z and Ms. Lucy, “The Station” and “Common Ground Café.” Along the way, they are developing lifelong faith and a love for Sunday school. That was the dream behind “Live B.I.G.” when the UM Publishing House last year produced the first year’s Sunday school curriculum for children ages 3-13. One year later, there is evidence that the dream is coming true. In the first seven months of production, sales were up to \$2.4 million, and 4,575 churches had bought the new curriculum. In a survey of first-time users, respondents said the DVD was helpful and that more children were attending Sunday school.

UMNS News in Brief

NOTHING BUT NETS



After returning from Annual Conference, Reverend Estep purchased a mosquito net and hung it on the sanctuary wall along with a "Nothing but Nets" t-shirt. For every net purchased, a picture of a child in Africa will be placed on the net. He challenged the congregation to "cover" the net with pictures. To date, 70 pictures adorn the net.

Rev. Dave Estep - El Paso UMC

BOOKS

A pastor that was moving has left some lectionary preaching resources at the District Office. If you are interested in seeing them stop in at the office.

Sandy

MISSION TRIP TO MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST

The Vermilion District Volunteers in Mission are planning a winter work trip to Waveland MS, February 2-16, 2008. Persons interested can request a registration form by contacting David Prussner by phone at 815-935-8730 after 4:30 pm or by e-mailing David at ddugli@netzero.com. Once you have received and completed the registration form you can mail it to David Prussner, #4 Little Chief, Bourbonnais, IL 60914 by October 31, 2007. The total cost per person is \$350, which includes all travel expenses to and from Waveland, MS along with food and lodging at Camp Gulfside. All registrants are requested to attend the first meeting on Sunday, 11/11/2007 at 2:00 pm at the Asbury UMC, 196 South Harrison, Kankakee, IL 60901.

David Prussner

UMCOR IN NEED OF FINANCIAL DONATIONS

The United Methodist Committee on Relief is asking for financial donations to replenish its U.S. disaster relief fund after record-breaking rains, fires and winds have drained the account during the spring and summer. Since September 2006, the Domestic Disaster Response Advance has been tapped for 28 U.S. emergencies in 24 different annual conferences and delivered more than \$856,000 in aid. "Although we are not reading or hearing about these disasters every day in the news, there are hundreds of people in dire need in Texas, Kansas, California and many other places in the U.S.," said the Rev. Sam Dixon, interim chief executive of UMCOR, which is part of the denomination's Board of Global Ministries. "We are profoundly thankful to United Methodists who have given so generously in the past, but now the need is threatening to outpace the resources."

UMNS News in Brief

EDGE YOUTH GROUP TRAVEL TO MEXICO



LeRoy Youth Group

The EDGE Youth Group from LeRoy UMC spent the last week in June working in an extremely poor area of Matamoros, Mexico. Thirty nine people (28 teens and 11 adults) made the two day trip down to the southern tip of Texas to Los Fresnos where we called home for the week. We traveled into Mexico each day to work with Larry Cox at his ministry Juntos Servimos (“Together We Serve”). Two groups did construction projects, building two houses and another group worked in the mission school with school age kids. All groups were able to travel a little farther into Mexico to deliver food and supplies to some fishing villages. We got a lot of needed work done, however, that was definitely not the most important part of us being there. Our teens and adults formed some great relationships with the families and kids that we were working with. A smile and a hug was enough to break the language barrier. Our group left with tears and a final audios, but the lessons learned and the memories gained will last a lifetime.

Steve Ward, Youth Pastor

ADVANCED SCHOOL

The Advanced Lay Speaking School will be on Saturday, November 10 at Pontiac First.

Deb Honegger

NOMADS WORK AT EVENGLOW LODGE

For the second year a team of NOMADS returned to do a project at Evenglow Lodge in Pontiac, IL. The team members were George & Rubye Russell, leaders, Pontiac, IL; Warren and Carolyn Walberg, Hendersonville, NC; David and Cathie Smith, Kalamazoo, MI; Roger and Janet Woodworth, Logansport, IN. and John & Kitty Hahn, Elgin, IL.

This year they finished a new 4-bay garage for residents of Evenglow. McCoy Construction put up the shell and will have the overhead doors installed. The Nomads finished the interior walls, trimmed the doors, installed and trimmed the outside vinyl siding, painted windows and doors, installed insulation and planned and installed all electrical wiring and fixtures.

NOMADS (Nomads On A Mission Active In Divine Service) is an organization of the UMC consisting mainly of retired persons who own an RV. There are about 1100 members in 41 states and 5 Canadian provinces. They are governed by a Board of Directors of 12 persons and Rev. Russell serves on that board. They do 150-200 projects a year across the U.S., serving UM churches and church-related agencies. Their work and labor is volunteered. The host agency provides a place to park their RVs. In 2005-2006 NOMADS completed 166 projects in 28 states and Mexico, involving 1550 workers (some members do multiple projects) who gave 120,880 hours of work.

For more information you may contact Rev. Russell or go to the website nomadsumc.org.

Rev. George Russell

VBS AT GRACE

Sounds of “yahoo” and “yeehaw” were heard throughout Grace UMC in Bloomington from July 23rd through July 27th as the church was transformed into Avalanche Ranch for VBS. Approximately forty children from preschool through fifth grade attended each night. Puppets, drama, crafts, games and snacks were a hit each night as children learned about our awesome God and His love for us. Certainly a highlight for everyone occurred on Tuesday evening when Lindy Nealey, a teenage member of Grace, brought her horse Gunner to the park across the street. Lindy is a trick-rider and performs with Gunner at rodeos throughout the Midwest. Gunner seemed to enjoy the attention as children got to pet, brush and feed him that evening. Through their nightly offerings, the children and staff raised enough money to purchase over 120 rubber trees to be sent to Liberia. Everyone in attendance enjoyed their time spent at Avalanche Ranch.

Audrey