

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Joseph Donders, a Roman Catholic priest and teacher in Africa some years ago, had a collection of his free verse poems published in a book, Jesus, the Stranger. In the closing words of one of those poems, which was entitled, "*We Are His Money*," he wrote:

*"We are carrying God's image, we are carrying God's name.  
(God) coined us in (God's) image, (God) named us,  
    we are having (God's) imprint, (God's) stamp, (God's) seal.  
We are legal tenders because of (God).  
We are (God's) money, and we should be spent, that is the lesson of today.  
Money should circulate, we should circulate;  
    money should go from hand to hand, we should go from hand to hand;  
        money should be thumbed, we should be thumbed;  
        money has to be used, we have to be used;  
    money should get smudged in that process, we should get smudged in that process;  
        money is going to be worn, we should be going to be worn.*

*We should not keep ourselves and all we've got safe in a bank or in an old cocoa-tin  
    or in an old sock or under the sole of our shoes  
        or in the ivory tower of our competence  
            or under the cover of our dignity  
                or in the clutched fist of our power  
    or somewhere pinned under the bottom of a table:  
        we should be spent, we are the coins, God is trying to use us....*

*Let us risk being used, and we will be increased, and the end will be glory,  
    because we made things better for all the others we lived and died with."*

In the final days of this first month of the new year, as we prepare to embark on the Lenten journey, these are important words to ponder...to put into action...  
    as we faithfully strive to be who God is calling us to be...  
        in our daily life, and in our ministry as pastors and churches.

Grace and peace,

*Keith*

## FEBRUARY

1-3 Cabinet  
4-5 Covenant Keepers  
9-17 VRD VIM trip to Waveland, MS  
10 Basic Lay Speaking School at Coal City UMC  
10 7-8:30 pm New Streams at Coal City UMC  
14 DCOM at Pontiac First  
17 Basic Lay Speaking School at Coal City UMC  
24 Basic Lay Speaking School at Coal City UMC  
26-28 Cabinet



Ruby Russell	02-06	Janice Logsdon	02-19
Ivy Silas	02-07	Richard Chrisman	02-20
David Reynolds	02-08	Art Runyon	02-23
Lori Bultemeier	02-15	Marsha Leppin	02-29
Keith Zimmerman	02-19		

### **NEW CHARGE AND APPOINTMENT**

Beginning January 1 a new charge was started consisting of Streator First, Grand Ridge and Long Point. The two pastors are Bryce Hays and Lon Alderman. Lon Alderman said farewell to Five Points Parish.

### **- FOR YOUR INFORMATION -**

### **THE LIVING LIGHT AT DWIGHT UMC**



The Herd

The Dwight UMC, under the direction of Corilyn Hensel-McCullough, offered *The Living Light* by R. E. Schram on Sunday, December 16. The combined Cantata and Christmas program, accompanied on piano by Eleanor Bossert, featured more than sixty children, youth and adults from the congregation.

Rehearsal for the Cantata Choir begins about three months in advance. “This year, we decided to highlight the Advent season by making the musical an all-church-family contribution using actors, props and costumes along with the choir,” articulated Hensel-McCullough. “*The Living Light* is a great endeavor of love among us all; both as we rehearsed together and as we offered it today. It was a great joy,” added Hensel-McCullough smiling after Sunday’s contribution.

The full-speaking cast along with an assortment of children-costumed shepherds, bulls, cows, donkeys, sheep, a pig, a mule and a dove-of-peace processed the main aisle as the *Overture* played and the choir looked on from the chancel ready to sing. Once the cast arrived at the manger, the Cantata Choir began the first of a featured seven contemporary musical works sprinkled intermittently with character monologues. Traditional carols made their appearance, too, throughout the musical.

Carols like *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, *Hark the Heralds Angels Sing*, *Angels We Have Heard on High*, *O Come All Ye Faithful* and *What Child Is This* rang through the sanctuary as worshippers, choir

and cast joined in song. Following the benediction, *Away in a Manger* sung by the young children and then joined in by all closed the joyful Cantata and Christmas program. Laura Vigna and John Geschwind both soloed during the cantata with full choral support.

The speaking-cast of Biblical characters found in *The Living Light* included the Innkeeper, played by Jake Thomas; The Innkeeper's Wife played by Marissa Olsen; The Innkeeper's Daughter played by Amanda Richardson; Mary played by Gabbi Davis; an Adult Shepherd played by Kate Muller; a Child Shepherd played by Caitlyn Miller; a Roman Soldier, played by Dan McCullough; Joseph played by Bret Heinrich; a Citizen of Bethlehem played by Brittany Broadwater; and a King played by Mark Olsen adorned with two royals, Eleanor Heinrich and Amber Richardson. Advent readers for Cantata Sunday were Lane and Nolan Hoffman.

*Sammi Patterson and Corilyn Hensel-McCullough*

### **PRAISE REPORT FOR FIRST COMMUNION OFFERING**

Because our sister congregation in Liberia is in the Grand Gedeh District, the Kankakee Trinity UMC wants to send our offerings for Pastors' Salary Support with this particular District. We are having a freewill, love offering at our monthly observances of Holy Communion for this particular missionary cause. The first offering was received the Sunday before Thanksgiving and totaled \$122.91. We praise the Lord for multiplying our giving and pray this will be multiplied many times over as our sister churches in the IGRC and Vermilion River District join us in this ministry to show our love and support of our sisters and brothers in Christ ministering for our Lord in the Grand Gedeh District.

*Rev. R. David Reynolds*

### **ODELL/SAUNEMIN FOOD RESOURCE BANKS**

"Make us worthy, Lord, to serve our fellow men throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them, through our hands, this day their daily bread." This is the prayer that was given during the recent Food Resource Bank Harvest Day in rural Odell on November 3.

The Odell project involves St. Paul's Catholic Church in Odell, United Church of Odell, United Methodist Church of Saunemin, and English Congregational Church in Aurora.

The farmers from the rural churches donate time, land and equipment. Suburban churches donate the money for the fertilizer, weed control, gasoline, and other miscellaneous expenses. Crops are raised and sold. The money goes to the Food Resource Bank in Kalamazoo, Michigan where it is matched by the federal government one for one. Later, it goes to a project in a developing country. Once the donated money makes its way overseas, the project focuses on teaching hungry people to become self-sufficient.

*Rev. Pinckney Love, Jr.*

### **COFFEE AND A SMILE**



Construction material onsite at Jamani Java

Ever since its premier at the 2007 Annual Conference, the people of IGRC have been waiting anxiously for news about the opening of their new favorite coffee shop, Jamani Java. Well, I have good news. The project, nearly two years in the making, is finally coming alive!

In mid-December construction began on Jamani's first 2500 square foot retail space located at 3703 Ireland Grove Road in Bloomington. Conveniently situated just across the street from The Links of Ireland Grove, Bloomington's newest 9-hole golf course, Jamani's building will have indoor seating for 50 and outdoor seating for 40. The space also boasts a large conference room that will be available for company meetings, bible study groups, parties, etc.

Decorated in hues, patterns and textures that reflect the major coffee producing nations of the world, Jamani will have an organic, earthy and old world neighborhood feel. Yet, at the same time, Jamani Java will also offer high tech conveniences such as wireless internet, video and audio capabilities in the conference room, and a text message ordering system for guests on the go. Our latest estimates put our opening guest count at approximately 250 per day or just over 1500 per week. Imagine getting to meet over 1000 people a week, every week of the year! Even more, we estimate that we will get to have extended conversations about life, faith and all things pertinent, every week with at least 100 of our guests. Who says we can't reach new people for Jesus? I say it's as easy as sharing a cup of coffee.

*Rev. Chuck Anthony*

[www.jamanijava.com](http://www.jamanijava.com) to order "great" coffee

### **BRADLEY WESLEY UMW HOLDS FIRST (MAYBE ANNUAL) COOKIE BAKE**



The women of Bradley Wesley recently spent their meeting time in the kitchen, preparing and baking over 45 dozen cookies. Each woman brought cookie dough and cookie sheets and worked in an assembly line to get them all baked and cooled. After packaging the cookies, they were delivered to the Salvation Army for their meal program, and to Harbor House, a local shelter for women and their children who have been in abusive situations. It was a fun afternoon and there was talk of repeating this event next year.

*Kay Fisher*

### **NORMAL FIRST CELEBRATES THE CREATIVE SPIRIT OF GOD**



Fellowship Hall is the heart of Normal First. It is a gathering place for both sacred and secular events involving children, youth and adults. It is also a receiving area for those meeting with the pastoral staff for counseling or business matters and for students participating in ISU Wesley. Many visitors to Normal First may never see the sanctuary but they do see Fellowship Hall and it shapes their impression of the congregation and how it honors God.

The importance of Fellowship Hall within the life of the congregation combined with a growing need for more flexible space led Normal First to launch a revitalization project last June. In just thirty days, congregation members pledged and donated more than \$56,000 to cover the cost of the renovation. Volunteers worked hard throughout the summer and early autumn to paint and prepare the space for new wiring, theatrical lighting and a large, portable stage. Work also began on a large mural. This project was carefully designed so that most of the materials used can be recycled should the church undertake a capital building/remodeling project in the future.

On Sunday, November 25, the newly remodeled Fellowship Hall was officially dedicated during a Soulscape worship service that combined elements of celebration and thanksgiving. Rev. Cheryl Peterson-Karlan led the congregation in honoring the financial support from the entire church; the countless volunteers, pre-schoolers to senior citizens, who so generously shared their talents and skills to transform the appearance, versatility, and functionality of Fellowship Hall; and the creative spirit of God that inspired and guided the entire project. Highlights of the service included a four-part reading on God-inspired creativity; the uplifting music of *Ignite*, the Soulscape band; and a worship center that was both beautifully seasonal and cleverly conceived to incorporate some of the tools used in the renovation. Pastor Cheryl's sermon spoke to the creative gift of the divine that lives within each individual. A video scrap book detailing the remarkable transformation of the space was shown during worship. The photos documented what can be achieved when Christians work together to achieve a goal.

In a memorable presentation, Normal First artist, Shana Parker, shared some of the steps that went into the design and creation of the mural on the north wall of Fellowship Hall. She also explained some of the images depicted in the mural, biblical and contemporary, and how they celebrate God's creative spirit. A similar mural for the south wall will be completed this spring.

The Normal First congregation now regards Fellowship Hall as a space that honors God during worship and provides a wonderful environment in which to enjoy fellowship.

*Susan Scott*

### **QUILTS, QUILTS AND MORE QUILTS**

Monday evenings from 5 to 8 ladies take over the Waynesville UMC Fellowship Hall and turn it into a quilting center. Since June of 2006 prayer quilts have been given to members and friends going through a difficult time. Before they are delivered they are tied with prayer by the congregation as each member who desires to do so comes forward and ties a portion of the quilt during a Sunday morning service. They have proven to be a great blessing to those who have received them.

On Jan. 6 the ladies of the McLean UMC sponsored a talk on Quilts and the Underground Railroad. The presentation was made by Stephen Maxwell, a student at Illinois College, who worked as an intern this past summer at Woodlawn Farm an Underground Railroad site six miles east of Jacksonville. Quilts were used as a way to communicate various messages to slaves as they were escaping to freedom along the Underground Railroad prior to the Civil War.

*Lois Maxwell*

### **HELPING HANDS CLOTHING DRIVE**

Free clothing drive, open to all families, no restrictions! Mazon UMC, 507 7<sup>th</sup> St. Mazon Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> and March 2<sup>nd</sup> from 11:00 am-1:00 pm. For more information call Tina Brookman at 815-448-2715. This is sponsored by Mazon UMC Sunday School Classes.

*Pastor Mark Amenda*

### **LIVE NATIVITY AT HUDSON**



Nativity Scene

The Live Nativity returned this year to Hudson UMC. Thanks to the icy weather, it was held in conjunction with the Children’s Christmas program. The Nativity is an outdoor event which attracts non-members to walk or drive slowly past the display. This has been a good opportunity for people in the community to recognize their friends and have conversations about the church. Working in shifts helped fight the cold, especially for the 4 year-olds who “just had to be an angel”. Human actors were rewarded with hobo stew when their shift was complete, but the animals were content to wait until the Live Nativity ended for their reward.

*Kathy Tymonko*

### **UNITED METHODIST PASTOR GETS CUT – FOR CHARITY**



Photo by Bev Hacker of Pastor Mark Amenda

Pastor Mark Amenda of the Verona-Mazon UMCs recently underwent a big personal transformation with the help of a parishioner. After three “long” years, he sat down with Tawny Roe (member of the Mazon UMC) and allowed her to cut over 13 inches off of his hair. A pastor with hair that long may be shocking to some people and annoying to others, but once people find out that the

growth has a purpose, they are usually more willing to accept it. Pastor Mark goes to “great lengths” to grow his hair as a love offering to people who have lost their hair through the tragedy of cancer. The 13 inches that Tawny cut off of his hair was then packaged up and sent to Locks of Love, a charitable organization that uses hair to make wigs for chemotherapy patients.

*Donna Lee*

### **NO SMALL THINKING IN THIS SMALL CHURCH**

Ellsworth UMC does everything a small church does except act like a small church. It has a small parking lot, a small sanctuary and a small foyer. It is located in a small town (pop. 281 including stray cats and dogs). It has small restrooms and a smaller budget.

What sets Ellsworth UMC apart however is that this small church refuses to believe it is small. When the doors open at 6:00 a.m. every other Sunday morning, about 15-20 United Methodist Men gather for breakfast and a devotion. Later at Sunday School, it's not unusual for the newly formed Seeker's Class to have 25 eager learners perusing their Bibles in search of life's answers. At worship, it's normal for 75-80 people to clap their hands in praise to the music of the newly formed praise band. Church potlucks are standing room only and if the church isn't prepared for 200 or more diners at its Sweetheart Banquet, somebody is going hungry. And now, its newly formed membership class has 20 participants.

So what is it that drives this small church? Its people refuse to think small. Some churches have adopted the “No Whining” policy. This church has adopted the “No Small Thinking Policy.” Why? Because the people believe that there is really no such thing as a small church: just small thinkers. After all, with a band of only 12 rough-cut guys Jesus started a worldwide movement that literally changed the universe. “How much more can we do with two dozen guys and gals?” they ask.

*Rev. Charles Anthony*

### **ITINERARY SCHEDULE FOR THE REVEREND FANNAH TARTIEH**

On Sunday, February 24 Rev. Fannah Tartieh, Superintendent of the Grand Gedeh District, Liberia Annual Conference will make a presentation and have a conversation with Kankakee Asbury UMC Sunday School at 9:30 am and will also preach at worship at Asbury at 8:00 am and 10:30 am.

Reverend Tartieh will make a presentation and have conversation on Sunday, Feb. 24 from 3:00-4:00 pm with the VRD Lay Speaking School students at Coal City UMC. From 6:00-7:30 pm he will preach at a Lenten Service for the Western North Fork Ministry Area at Coal City UMC.

There are more dates scheduled but incomplete at this time. Check with your pastor and watch your email.

*District Office*