



OCTOBER CIRCUIT

VOLUME 2/NUMBER 6

The West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church



By Rev. Alan Williams, Deacon Associate, Johnson Memorial UMC

Middle school is fun but challenging time. For middle school girls, making the transition from childhood to young adulthood often brings doubt and fear. Fairfield Community Ministries, a new UM faith community project in Huntington, has started a new ministry to help develop confidence and teach new skills with 10 middle schools girls.

Rev. Ella Dorsey, director of Fairfield Ministries, has created relationships with Ebenezer Community Outreach and the A.D. Lewis Center in the Fairfield neighborhood through her consistent presence and work as a mentor and a tutor. Rev. Alan Williams, deacon associate at Johnson Memorial UMC, was a coach last fall for Girls On The Run at Southside Elementary School in Huntington last fall. He saw first hand the positive impact the program had on the girls he helped coach.

Heart & Sole is a 10-week, 20-session curriculum from Girls on the Run (www.girlsontherun.org/What-We-Do/6th-8th-Grade-Program) that they have chosen to use. This is structured to create a positive space for middle school girls to learn about themselves, explore new ideas, cultivate empathy, strengthen connections and develop life skills that will help them as they move through adolescence and beyond.

The young women were told at their first session, "Heart & Sole is about being active AND becoming more confident, strong, secure and connected so that you are empowered to do anything you choose to do." The 10 week session will conclude with a celebration 5K on Sunday afternoon, November 12th. Keep watch on at wvumc.org to find out more details. *If you would like more information about how to support Heart & Sole in the Huntington area, or would like information about Girls On The Run in your area, contact Alan Williams at (304) 542-1427, or revalanwilliams@gmail.com.*

Barrackville is

By Rev. Stephanie Bennett

Reaching New People

Barrackville United Methodist Church sent a team to the Reaching New People Event November 2017. The church had been having some outreach events, but the training gave them a foundation. It helped make each event more effective in reaching and connecting with new people.

Some events have gone well. Others have not but the Vitality Team has learned something new every step of the way. More importantly, the church members are meeting and connecting with new people.

Throughout the year, Barrackville hosted a teacher appreciation event for the local school and made efforts to meet the parents of the school age children in the community. The church had an ice cream social, volunteered and connected with a community 5K Run, hosted a birthday party for the community and is planning a 2nd Animal Blessing Event in October.



Barrackville 5K run, Photo by Dusty Merrill

The ongoing phone call coaching times have helped the team stay focused and accountable and the tune-up one day events help keep the 6 month action plan in motion. Because of the focus on Reaching New People, the church has strengthened hospitality teams

and more people volunteer for ministry events. With new families joining, Barrackville now has a nursery ministry team filled with volunteers ready to help with the youngest visitors. They are excited to see all that God has in store for Barrackville as they continue to connect to people outside of the church building.

Stephanie Bennett has been serving churches for over 20. She was appointed to Barrackville-Monumental Charge in July 2015.

She's passionate about helping church communities live their faith beyond the walls of the building. She also moonlights as Wonder Woman.

Check out another exciting Barrackville UMC ministry, "Bisons for Christ," by watching this video: <http://bit.ly/2ynAETg>

Save the Date!
Reaching New People

April 13-14, 2018
Steele Memorial UMC
Barboursville, W.Va.

Details coming soon at wvumc.org

Volunteering to Change Lives

By Rev. Dustin McCune

July 26, 2013 changed the lives of the people of United Methodist Temple in Clarksburg, WV forever. Just a few houses from the church on Locust Avenue, four people lost their lives. Two of those who died were involved in the sale of illegal drugs. The other two, a father and son, were delivering newspapers on their regular paper route.

United Methodist Temple knew that they needed to do something to bring hope to their neighborhood. Lynne Menendez, a lay member, talked to Pastor Dustin McCune

about a Neighborhood Feeding Program for the children in the community. The idea was simple - just a brown paper lunch bag filled with a can of soup, crackers, applesauce, a fruit snack, and a bottle of water offered to neighborhood children. UM Temple wanted to build relationships with families in the community, and knew feeding the children was a good place to start.

The church collected donations and began. A group of volunteers from the church took to the streets, handing out bags of food to any children they saw. The very first night, the church fed 35 children. After a couple of weeks, that number began to grow. Children were leading the volunteers to homes of other children in the community. The church began going door to door,

house to house, and soon 35 bags of food turned into 140 plus bags each week.

The ministry continues and relationships are being built. In fact, it is good to see church members and

community members come together to pray. "We are planting the seed of Christ with each bag. The Holy Spirit is moving among us. We want our community to know that we care and we love them. Not only have the people of UM Temple embraced this program, but our neighbors around the community have become involved. Other churches have even stepped up to help. The children light

up when we come. They are waiting, and we do it all in the name of Christ," said Pastor Dustin McCune.

The volunteers meet every Friday night and walk the three major streets surrounding the church: Locust Avenue, Sycamore Street, and Mulberry Avenue. There is something for everyone to do. One group packs the bags each week, a group drives the car that contains the bags of food, a group walks the neighborhood to distribute the food, and a group prays. You never know how a bag of food and a smile, can change someone's life forever.

Dustin McCune is the pastor of UM Temple, Clarksburg, Marketing Director at Chick-fil-A on Emily Drive & an Asbury Seminary Student



Volunteers from UM Temple, Clarksburg

A focus on *Leadership*

By Jay West

Who among us has envisioned what our leadership requirements will be in 20 years? Who among us has a plan to meet those requirements? What are you doing to train, educate and provide developmental experiences for requirements twenty years in the future?

Creating new places for new people is not an easy task! It requires us to serve the interests of others while aligning our personal values with the organization's values. Do we do that? It requires that we earn AND keep the trust and respect of our communities and our people. What is the reputation of your faith community in the larger community? Is yours "THAT church?"

Plainly stated, the Army begins development of a senior leader twenty years before the Army assigns that leader to the duty position. Think about that...a full TWO DECADES before the Soldier/Leader is required to fill a critical position, the Army is investing in training, education, and experiences.

As early as 1996, I was interested in the idea of ministry as a military chaplain. It was not until the Summer of 2001, however, that I applied for, and was endorsed and accessioned as an Active Duty Army Chaplain. At the time, Chaplain (COL-Retired) Terry Bradfield was working in the Office of the Army Chief of Chaplains Personnel Department. Dr. Bradfield said to me, "I can retire now. I have replaced myself."

I did not understand what Dr. Bradfield meant until I understood the Army's Leader Development Model. Acknowledging the present and envisioning the 20-year future requires us to think in new ways. The definition of congregational development on the Discipleship Ministries webpage invites us to 20-year thinking: congregational development is simply "creating new places for new people."

Creating new places for new people requires us to realize that each individual action, multiplied by many individuals, can collectively change the destiny of our church, our community, and our people. How are we, in the power of God, changing destinies?

"The true mark of a leader is the willingness to stick with a bold course of action even as the rest of the world wonders why you're not marching in step with the status quo." *

Jay West is a WV elder who has been an extension minister for 15+ years and is a believer that the Wesleyan way is a difference maker. He's beginning a new assignment as the Plans and Operations Chaplain for the US Army Command at Fort Bragg, NC.

"How are you training leaders in your congregation? As an Annual Conference, our mission is to discover, develop and deploy passionate spiritual leaders who make disciples for the transformation of the world. We believe that leaders should understand what's expected of them. How are you helping local church leaders understand what's expected?"

(find our Leadership Standards here: wvumc.org/passionate-spiritual-leaders/leadership-standards/)

**Taylor, Bill. "Do You Pass the Leadership Test." Harvard Business Review, 3 Aug. 2010.*

Outdoors with Bethel UMC

By Chris Duckworth

Sometimes 26 acres seems like its just a piece of property to mow. But, you just never know what God might have in mind. When Rev. Chris Duckworth was appointed to Bethel UMC in Mountain Lake Park, MD, he knew that just a few miles down the road from the church, there were 26 empty acres of property beside a school. The church intended to build a new building one day. In the meantime, local schools used the property a couple of times a year and the youth football league had about 100 students use it four nights a week for practice during the season.

But there just seemed like there was potential for more. So Chris began walking the property and praying. Soon after the prayer began, Bethel Outdoors began to blossom. They decided to hold a Sunrise service there, since the existing pavilion seemed like a great place to gather rain or shine. A summer bible study, including lunch, and fifth Sunday services were added. Members also offer snacks to the football players using the property several times during the season.



Members pitched in to mow and construct portions of these additions. Funds from the conference



Outdoor Bible Study at Bethel UMC

pension holiday were used to purchase signs to let the community know about the space.

This summer a second Sunday spiritual discussion group began and a youth day was held. You can always count on a cozy fire in the firepit and smores! Pet blessings are held in the fall. Plans are expanding for next year - to add utilities and restrooms to increase the potential for use of the outdoor space even more. A future plan calls for raised bed gardens to join the Little Free Pantry, a fourth grader's school project.

Sometimes the things that seem to be small are just waiting to burst into life. Take a look at the things that are already all around, add a little prayer and some time and attention. Then watch what happens!

Chris Duckworth is the pastor teacher at Bethel UMC in Mountain Lake Park, MD. He is also #crazyblessed #sundayismymonday and thinking outside the box.

Our Journey to

By Kristi Wilkerson

Reaching New People

“People in the Buckhannon community are seeing First United Methodist Church in different kinds of places – places that have nothing to do with church. We are at music concerts, dog parks, festivals, events, and restaurants. We’re where people live, eat, work and have fun,” says Curtis Wilkerson, chair of the FUMC Witness committee. The church has been participating in the Reaching New People initiative offered to conference churches by the Congregational Development Team for 10 months.

The church is moving away from old tactics of church recruitment, which used to include opening the church doors on Sunday mornings and waiting for people to walk in on their own, without a personal invitation. They are focused on remembering that church work is about relationships and inviting FRANK (friends, relatives, acquaintances, neighbors and kids) to worship, and finding ways to make them comfortable, so that they won’t feel alone in taking the first steps in discipleship.

FUMC and Grow Team members have sponsored a number of events as they engage in church culture change. They encourage member-guest activities where a handful of congregation members have an off-site gatherings and invite a couple of people who are not familiar with FUMC, so that they can get to know some in the FUMC family. For example, a group of ladies hosted a cookie baking night where the goodies they prepared were later distributed as a “thank you” to first responders on Valentine’s Day (see photo p.9).

They held a prayer walk around the Buckhannon River Walk Trail in April and prayed for family and friends, church, and community. (see photo, p.9) Vacation Bible School was expanded and included an invitation

to all students at the local elementary school. VBS attendance increased by more than 25 percent and all children were given a free FUMC t-shirt. During Strawberry Festival, they prepared and distributed 330 pepperoni rolls and glasses of lemonade during an evening parade – all for free (see photo, p.9). They also host a Furry Friends Hospitality Tent at Festival Fridays in the summer where they offer complimentary pet treats and bowls of water.



Participating in Strawberry Festival, Buckhannon

The church is building relationships with individuals in the community. Two committees now regularly meet in local restaurants, often seeing friends there and mentioning the work before them. They also are building relationships with regular customers and restaurant staff. Servers at one coffee shop were given church mugs filled with candy. More mugs were later placed for all to see and use while enjoying a hot beverage, thus lifting up a subtle mention of the church.

Most recently the church decided to reintroduce themselves to the neighborhood. They spent one Sunday evening walking door-to-door delivering postcard invitations to an upcoming church event. The following Sunday evening, they held a “Neighborhood Party” with only one agenda item: create a sense of community and being neighborly. FUMC provided free hot dogs, chips and ice cream, as well as live jazz music, yard games and kids activities. They had planned to host 100 people but welcomed over 150! It was a much-needed and truly relevant activity for their area, where they celebrated their relationships with one another.

Kristi Wilkerson, Director of Christian Education and Programming at First United Methodist Church, Buckhannon, and Associate Lay Leader of the WV Annual Conference of the UMC, wife of Curtis, mother of Rebekah, and graduate of West Virginia Wesleyan College and Miami University (Ohio).

“I feel like the Grow Team has broadened our reach for new members. We have found ways to be out in the community with meetings and outreach. We have done more strategic planning, and I feel have grown in many ways. The team has been able to share experiences, we have kept each other accountable. It has been a beneficial experience.”

-Linda Wellings, chair of FUMC Staff Parish Relations Committee and Grow Team member



Dr. Joel Thierstein, WVWC President, visits at the Neighborhood Party.

Igniting new relationships

By Rev. Matt Johnson

Ignite is our new disciplemaking effort with college students and young adults in Morgantown. In the last three and a half years, they've learned quite a lot about reaching millennials. Rev. Matt Johnson reflects on what he's learned in this new faith community here.

1. **"Sing stuff about Jesus"**

In one of our earliest conversations with some WVU students we began to discuss what a worship experience might look like for Ignite Morgantown. As the conversation progressed one student suddenly looked up and said "Just sing stuff about Jesus. We don't need to be fancy. We just want to worship Him." Often we feel pressure to find flashy and relevant ways to reinvent worship, hoping that somehow turning the latest pop song will connect with millennials. Yet the truth is simple...our music and worship must be focused on God. We don't have to try harder than that.

2. **Start a church and you might get some disciples. Make disciples and you'll get a church.**

Disciplemaking must be the heartbeat of the church. One of the places that Ignite has excelled is in our ability to develop and follow through on a disciple-making system. We've seen people understand what it means to follow God's call to mission. We have seen people grow in their faith in powerful ways. It hasn't happened because of a worship service but because of intentional and focused discipleship. The first step to growing the church is to make disciples and leaders who can freely follow God's direction.

3. **Throw a good party.**

As we read through the Gospels we see that Jesus loved a good party. He ate and drank with people that surprised the religious leaders. We have learned that a good meal and some good conversation might be as close to Heaven as we will experience on this earth. As we eat together and share together about our lives we touch something of Heaven. As we invite others to our table that's always big enough we see something of Heaven breakthrough. I have heard time and time again that our gatherings where we eat and talk and pray for each other is really what people are longing for from church.

4. **There is something powerful about the real presence of Christ.**

That statement might seem pretty obvious but early on we made a commitment to share in the sacrament of Communion every week at all of our worship services. I said that Jesus seemed pretty serious when asked us to do that whenever we got together so we probably should follow through. It was one of the best decisions that we made. People long to experience the real presence of Christ and the Holy Mystery that is Communion nourishes our hungry souls. This regular pattern didn't cheapen the sacrament but instead seemed to give us a deepening hunger to taste and see that the Lord is good.

There is more we learned...I learned not to hang string lights from the ceiling with fishing line and that God always provides a new worship leader even after several keep moving away. We learned that God surprises us with the ways that God invades peoples lives and that storytelling gives us a taste of the Kingdom. I'm thankful for these learnings and the many ways we've seen and continue to see God move.

Learn more about Ignite and the ways that they share faith by listening to The Faith Option podcast (apple.co/2xf7EwT) and hear Savannah Lusk, a WVU student give her testimony here. (bit.ly/2herxQH)

Rev. Matthew Johnson is a WV elder who looks for new ways of being church. He's currently excited to offer radical hospitality to students at WVU with a new coffee ministry.



Choosing the *Faithful Path*

By Rev. Amy Shanholtzer

Sometimes the church knows that it's not where it should be but it has no idea what to do first. Sometimes churches grasp at the best idea from the church down the road or the church their family members go to in another state. Sometimes that works. Most of the time it doesn't.

The Congregational Development Team is excited to bring a resource called "*Choosing the Faithful Path*" for churches that are searching to grow in WV. "This 12-week study is a wonderful opportunity for churches to reflect on their past, assess present day ministry opportunities in their communities and successfully plan for effective future ministries. For those seeking to be vital, healthy congregations, this is a must!" explained Melissa Shortridge, superintendent of the Greenbrier District.

This tool is being used in various churches in that district and is having impact with laity and clergy alike. One lay person reflecting on the experience said, "Discussing our ministries, programs and outreach has been eye opening. We should have been doing this years ago!"

This has been used in churches of varying sizes – from small to large in varying economic situations. In one of our communities that experienced flooding, a lay person had this to say, "The flood forced us to change. We had to both rely upon, and work with, people in the community and other churches. "*Choosing the Faithful Path*" is helping us to change because we want to, with the Lord's direction. We are going to be better than before!"

The study is available by contacting your District Superintendent or Amy Shanholtzer (ashanholtzer@wvumc.org.) Trained facilitators will get your group started and meet with the church several times to keep things on track. This process is paid for by the use of pension holiday and apportionment funding and there is no cost for churches at this time.

"Small on Purpose" *Reviewed*

By Rev. Lisa Lavelle McKee

Having served in our conference for many years, I am on a perennial search for resources that support and encourage the small congregations that make up much of our constituency. There are many excellent resources out there, many of them tend to be of the how-to or program idea genre. Gratefully, I found Lewis Parks newest book, *Small on Purpose: Life in a Significant Church*, published by Abingdon Press this year to be a welcome change. How-to books may provide ideas that generate energy that will create momentum to initiate a turnaround, but this is rare. Dr. Parks does the theological work necessary to sustain service and life in the small church.

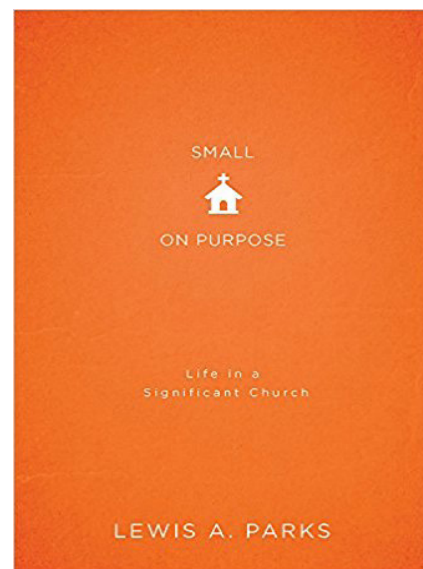
Parks opens the conversation by inviting us into a period of forgetfulness. Forgetfulness of all we balance as pastors of small churches; whether it be the large church on the other side of town or the reality that 30 elderly folks now occupy, and try to sustain, a physical plant designed for 200 plus congregants. If the boiler goes, the church goes. Then what? What is the cabinet thinking? How do we compare and compete? And does it really matter if we try?

As I read this book with the Greenbrier District Lead Team, I found myself remembering not only whose I am but who I am called to be amid all the pressures we sift through and balance. With a pastor's heart, this author encourages us to drop the baggage of doubt and perception, and to hold that hour on Sunday morning as sacred as we attend to the community we are called to serve and join them in their primary purpose. They gather regularly to worship God.

We are reminded that the power of that Spirit is present to every congregation, regardless of size or location. The Spirit makes true worship possible, and provides the gathered congregation with every gift it needs. The Spirit also desires to move the congregation to a place where it can continue to grow in love and grace.

To read the full review, visit:

www.wvumc.org/innovative-congregations/congdev



Rev. Lisa Lavelle McKee, mckee.lisa1@gmail.com, @wheelsrevd

Curious about strategies to help your congregation grow, become more vital and reach others for Christ? Find out more about opportunities, consultation and training available for your congregation by going to wvumc.org/innovative-congregations or by contacting Amy Shanholtzer at ashanholtzer@wvumc.org.

EVENTS CALENDAR

Conference Event Highlights - The role of the Conference Calendar is to share the event and business of conference level agencies and ministries.

October

- 6** Stewardship Seminar (Cedar Lakes)
- 6-7** Bishop's Summit on Diversity & Inclusion (Cedar Lakes)
- 15-17** WV Council of Churches Annual Assembly
- 19-21** Gathering in Grace, WV Conference Clergy Orders Gathering (Christ Church, Charleston)
- 27-28** United Methodist Women Annual Meeting (Christ Church, Wheeling)
- 27-28** Spiritual Formation Retreat (John XXIII)

November

- 10-11** Board of Ordained Ministry Retreat (John XXIII)
- 17-19** Fall Workshop (Cedar Lakes)
wvumc.org/fall-workshop
This is an event for middle school and high school youth!

For full details and event locations,
visit the conference calendar online at
wvumc.org/events

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*Jennifer Kniceley Sprouse, Wesleyan

*Member At-Large

SPECIAL SUNDAYS

OCTOBER

*World Communion Sunday - 1st
Children's Sabbath Sunday - 8th
Undie Sunday - 8th
Laity Sunday - 15th
Ministry Exploration Sunday - 22nd

NOVEMBER

*Day of Remembrance - 5th
*Special Offering

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Want to learn more about developing a plan for developing disciples in your setting?

Membership to Discipleship

By Dr. Phil Maynard

February 10, 2018

Locations and more info coming soon to wvumc.org

