

The Parish Visitor



February, 2014

Visit us at myaledoumc.com

LOVE IS IN THE AIR

by Rev. Mark

I met my wife on a hayride. It was October, 1976. I had just been dumped by my girlfriend and my future wife was dating a friend of mine. Our relationship developed slowly over the next several months. Our first date was her 16th birthday. I was playing Mr. Brownlow in the school production of the musical *Oliver*, and I invited her to opening night. After the show, we went to a local restaurant, where we listened to singer/musician Mike Zichovich and ate sautéed mushrooms and stale birthday cake. The rest, as they say, is history!

But the moment that stands out, for both of us, was one day in March, that I've written about before, that happened more than a month before our "first date". We both had 6th Hour classes in "The Main" (one of the buildings on our high school campus) and 7th Hour classes in "The Annex" (yep- another campus building). Knowing that, I made sure I "ran into" her between classes, so we could walk to the next building together. One day, it was pouring rain during passing period, but I did NOT want to miss her. So I stood out in the rain, waiting for a glimpse of this beautiful creature I had fallen for. When she came out, there I stood, like a wet dog...and we both just...knew. I still consider myself the luckiest man on the planet that this wonderful woman puts up with me!

Love is an amazing thing. It breaks all the rules. It has a mind of its own, and it cannot be stopped. Think about it- there are people you love, and you can't even begin to explain why...you just...do. Likewise, there are people who love you, and sometimes you can't imagine for the life of you why they do. Another truth about love is that it is so much more than simply an emotion. Love is a conscious choice that takes dedication, perseverance, and some good, old-fashioned hard work.

We all know that February 14th is Valentine's Day- the day we send cards, flowers, and candy to loved ones. (Hallmark and Hershey's have made several fortunes based on that fact.) This Valentine's Day, I hope you do that again (if it is your habit). But along with the conventions, I have a challenge for you...2 challenges, to be exact.

1. Your first challenge is to make a list of the people you love the most. Write down the 5 things you love the most about them. And then...TELL THEM! Share with them what you love about them. Leave out ANY negatives (we all have them), and focus on the positive aspects of the person. It will make them feel so good. And, surprise, surprise, it will make you feel good, too!
2. Your second challenge is to spend a total of 15 minutes every day this month in prayer, letting God know how much you love Him.

You may be saying, "15 minutes?!" Yes...15 minutes...BUT...I said total. Split it up- 5 minutes at a time. You may be saying, "EVERY day for a MONTH?!" Remember, February is the shortest month of the year! You may be saying, "How much I love God?!" Yes, we are called to love God, above all else. God loves us, so much that He sent His only Son to live among us, teach us, die for our sins, and rise for our eternal lives. When you look at it that way, how could we NOT love God? Make sure you tell those around you they are loved. Also, make sure you tell God how much you love Him.

SPECIAL DATES:

- Feb 1 UMM Work Day
- Feb 2 Communion & Food Pantry Collection Sunday
- Feb 6 Youth Committee Meeting 5:30PM
- Feb 8 Men in Ministries Night 5-8PM
- Feb 10 Trustee Board Meeting 7PM
- Feb 10 UMW Cut tablecloths
- Feb 11 Miriam Circle 6PM
- Feb 13 UMW Cut tablecloths
- Feb 15 Emmaus Gathering 4-8 PM
- Feb 16 Administrative Council 7:15PM
- Feb 17 President's Day Office Closed
- Feb 17 Finance meeting 6PM
- Feb 19 Preschool Screening 9AM-3PM
- Feb 20 Preschool Screening 9AP-1PM
- Feb 21 Late Valentine's Dinner For Young Adults
- Feb 22 Caring Hearts Food Prep
- Feb 23 CIA Luncheon 11:30AM
- Feb 24 Relay for Life Meeting 6PM

WORSHIP TIMES:

- Sundays 8AM & 10:15AM
- Sunday School 9:15AM
- Evening Service 6PM

NEW AND CURRENT PASTOR'S BIBLE STUDIES

Parables: The Greatest Stories Ever Told

WHAT: Rev. Mark and Joanne's new Bible Study

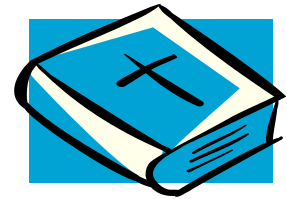
WHEN: Tuesdays @ 9AM and 1:30PM

Wednesdays @ 6PM

WHERE: In the Fellowship Area next to the sanctuary (Tues. 1:30PM in the Sonrise Coffee House)

WHY: Everyone loves a good story. But the parables of Jesus are a special kind of story. They sneak up on us, catching us off guard. The familiar suddenly takes an unexpected twist, and we find our secret thoughts exposed in the healing light of Jesus. In this 8-week study, we will explore eight of the greatest stories ever told.

WHAT ELSE: It is NOT too late to join.



The Sermon on the Mount

WHAT: Rev. Mark's current MEN'S Bible Study

WHEN: Wednesdays @ 6:30AM

WHERE: In the Fellowship Area next to the sanctuary

WHY: United Methodist founder John Wesley's desire was to present "plain truth to plain people." Editor Clare Weakley has attempted to help him do just that by updating his original 18th century commentary for the modern reader. As you read *The Sermon on the Mount*, you will see that the Beatitudes are to be the attitude of believers. This study will show you how.

WHAT ELSE: It is NOT too late to join.

The Letter to the Romans

WHAT: Rev. Mark's current Sunday Morning Bible Study

WHEN: Sundays @ 9:15AM

WHERE: In the Chapel next to the sanctuary

WHY: The Letter to the Romans is the best, most complete example of the Apostle Paul's theology found in the New Testament.

WHAT ELSE: It is NOT too late to join this class.

CURRENT SERMON SERIES

On Sunday, January 12th, we began a new sermon series- The Making of a Leader. We are in the middle of eight weeks of looking deeper into the life of one of the true giants of the Bible- Moses. And through his life, we are considering what it means to be a leader for God...and how we can each become one! The remaining weeks of the series look like this:

Sunday, February 2- Bricks Without Straw (Exodus 5:1-9) God can do the impossible.

Sunday, February 9- Now You Will See My Wonders (Exodus 5:22-6:6) God is more than you can imagine.

Sunday, February 16- The Plagues (Exodus 7-11) God will protect you.

Sunday, February 23- Packing in a Hurry (Exodus 12:31-38) God walks the journey with you.

Sunday, March 2- A Rock and a Wet Place (Exodus 14:10-14, 21-22) God will save you.

Come each week expecting God to reveal His plan for YOU as we consider His plan for Moses!

NEW TABLECLOTHS IN THE DINING ROOM

AUMC is very fortunate to have several new tables to meet the growing needs of our busy dining room. We all appreciate the sturdy, lightweight tables and will treat them carefully as they are transported from one area to another.

Twelve new folding chairs have been recently purchased with the hope of acquiring more as soon as funding is available. Adequate comfortable seating is needed for the many activities served in the dining room.

The new additional tables needed new coverings so United Methodist Women have purchased two new sets of tablecloths for the dining room tables. We now have three sets of nice matching tablecloths for all our tables. The cream colored ones will be utilized for special occasions and the camel and signature red colored tablecloth sets can be alternated for our day to day use. Each tablecloth is marked for the length of table on the underneath side for the ease of fitting the tablecloths to the correct size table. The tablecloths are stored on the racks in the back room of the basement. Please clean the tablecloths with a small amount of soap and water after each use and allow them to dry before storing them on the rack. These flannel backed vinyl tablecloths will last a very long time if everyone treats them with care.

The old white tablecloths have served us well for many years but were beyond cleaning anymore. Some of the old white tablecloths are saved for craft projects. The 23 red and white checked tablecloths have been folded and are still ready for use on "picnic" occasions.

The cutting and organizing of the new tablecloths is a big project. There will be two more work times for anyone who would like to help: Monday, February 10th at 6:00 PM and Thursday, February 13th at 2 PM. Bring your scissors.

Thank you to all who helped so far with the tablecloth project!

We have received many compliments on the "new look" of the dining room.

Ruth Dulaney

FINISH STRONG

For 2013 we were successful in funding all our committed ministries, operating expenses, and conference claims..... what a successful year!! We did this with some help from our endowment, however. We had expenses of approximately \$279,000 and giving of approximately \$274,000. This means we had a \$5,000 deficit in 2013. To continue our operations and ministries without interruption it was necessary to borrow \$5,000 on the approved line of credit from our Endowment. While we always prefer to have a fully funded and balanced budget it is important to understand the increase we have seen in demands for our church's ministries and services. If you recall, we were in a similar situation ending 2012, and borrowed \$9,000 to meet expenses. Our ministry is heading in the right direction and we have stepped out in faith that God will provide as we continue connecting people with Jesus Christ.

As we look to 2014 we have initiated our Commitment campaign and have received 70 commitment cards back in the mail. Our goal is to receive 100. We received 91 back last year. As you read this if you have not received a commitment card for 2014, please contact the church office. If you have one and have simply forgot to return it, please mail or drop it by the church office, or put it in the offering plate on Sunday. The amount of the commitment is secondary to the act of committing to the church and our ministries for 2014. Your action to return the card helps church leadership measure the engagement of the congregation in the ministries we are supporting.

We have more ministering connections to carry out in 2014 than we have in any year prior. We are so thankful for the opportunity God has presented to our church. To do this fully it will take commitment from our entire congregation. On behalf of the Finance Committee we encourage you to pray about your commitment and give it much thought and consideration before returning your card.

Chris Meskan— Finance Chair

AN OUTREACH IDEA

Here's a low-risk, easy way to introduce others to faith- share Rev. Mark's website with them. Described as "a daily look at life as a shaved-headed, ear-ring-wearing, rock-drumming United Methodist minister", www.stickwithjesus.com features a "thought for the day", written by Rev. Mark- a new one is literally added daily! There is also a daily Bible verse AND a Prayer Request page, where you can (anonymously if you want) ask for prayer! Check it out- if you would like to subscribe and receive a daily email link, email Rev. Mark at revmark@myaledoumc.com and let him know.



WEDNESDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP!

Wednesday Night Fellowship is in full swing- all it's missing is...YOU! The dinners have been spectacular, the rest of the evening has been great and the fellowship has been outstanding!

The evening starts with dinner from 5:15-6PM. Then, everything else starts!! At 6PM, your choices include:

Nursery for birth-3 years old

AWANA for kids through 6th Grade

Junior/Senior High Bible Study

Rev. Mark and Joanne's class, Parables: The Greatest Stories Ever Told (Everyone loves a good story. But the parables of Jesus are a special kind of story. They sneak up on us, catching us off guard. The familiar suddenly takes an unexpected twist, and we find our secret thoughts exposed in the healing light of Jesus. In this 8-week study, we will explore eight of the greatest stories ever told.)

Bell Choir

Choir

See you on Wednesday evenings!



THE JOURNEY

This year's "Journey" will be held on Saturday, April 5th. The theme for this year is "Treasures from the Heart". Plans are already being made, so please contact Pam Truman if you would like to help; and we are always looking for additional ideas! Mark your calendars to save the date. You don't want to miss this year's Women's Event!

PASTORAL CARE

If you are ill, having surgery, or are simply in need of some Pastoral Care, let your pastor know! Rev. Mark would be happy to visit you, pray with you, even bring Communion to you. Simply contact the office (582-2169) or contact him directly (revmark@stickwithjesus.com, 217-390-2359- call or text).





Dear Pastor Mark and all the church family,

Thank you for letting us have our wedding in your beautiful church, and for embracing us as family. What a blessing you are!!
Much love!

Karen & Gary Buchanan

To my church family, thank you for the prayers for my mom while she was sick. Thank you again for cards , prayers, hugs, your presence after her passing. My prayer was answered and I know I will see her again. God bless all of you!

Connie Thomas

We want to express our gratitude and sincere thanks to the Caring Hearts group for the lovely Christmas tray. Not only was it beautiful, but the fruit, candy, and baked goods were delicious. God bless everyone that was involved.

Frazier & Donna Hunt

We hope the "Free Ride" musical event was a success for you, and our Center thanks you for the donation from the proceeds. Holiday expenses tend to mount up and monetary gifts come in handy. We truly appreciate it!

Mercer County Family Crisis Center

Thank you for making a difference! Your gift will be used to support children in our Backpack Program. Every \$75 sponsors one child for one semester. Children on the program receive nourishing, easily prepared food to take home in their backpacks every Friday during the school year. Your support is helping us ensure that over 1500 kids in the OC area do not have to face the prospect of a hungry weekend.

On behalf of all the Backpack children and their families, thank you so much for your invaluable support. Together we can end hunger!

Thomas Laughlin

Executive Director

River Bend Foodbank

The Churches of Mercer County Food Pantry would like to THANK the churches and their congregations for all of your support in 2013. The money, food items, and volunteers were all very much appreciated! May God bless You All!

MNM (MEN IN MINISTRY) EVENT COMING

What: A men's evening of Praise, Worship, Ministry Sharing, Food and Fellowship (recommended for ages 15 and older)

When: Saturday February 8th, 5 p.m. till around 7:30PM

Where: The Aledo United Methodist Church, 301 N College Ave., Aledo, IL 61231

What ELSE: Praise Music from the Gospel Soul Revivers, Sharing by No Greater Love Ministries, 180 Zone, Street Ministries, Clown Ministries, Praise Music Ministries, Men's Bible Studies, Accountability/Reunion/ Small Group Ministries, Jail Ministries, Food/Meals Ministries, Cursillo / TEC / Via de Cristo / Emmaus / Chrysalis Ministries and whatever else the Lord provides!

Ministry groups will be available for Q&A during and after the meal. Any questions? Contact Steve 309-221-8383 or steve.oaks@oaklinedevelopers.com or Facebook event MnM (Men n Ministries) Night

John 17:20-23 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

ANNIVERSARIES FEBRUARY

02/03/2007 -Jesse & Connie Midkiff

02/07/1954 –Richard & Beverly Norton

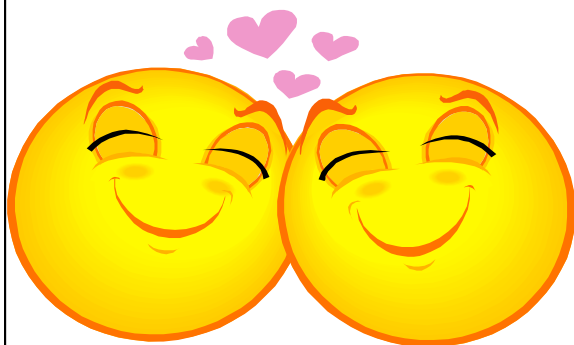
02/13/2011– Ron & Diane Engstrom

02/14/1948– Kenneth & Dorothy Anderson

02/20/1993– Larry & Clara McCreight

02/21/1954– David & Beverly Haney

02/26/1977– William & Kathryn Newswander



UM Women Golden Age Birthdays

Feb 14– Molly Paulsgrove

Feb 21– Dora Mae Howlett



Our Library

Try reading through a different
version of the Bible!

Suggestions:

The Geneva Bible– older than KJV, assembled in 1599. The Bible first divided into books, chapters, and verses.

The Jerusalem Bible– The Catholic version including the Apocrypha.

Any chronological Bible– in the order of events. I have the NIV version. Guideposts has one, too.

THOSE WE REMEMBER IN OUR PRAYERS



Archie
Teresa Baxter
Fred & Joanne Beard
Kathy Bell
Linda Biebaum
Brenda Brandt
Evelyn Brown
John & Bev Carlin
Lucy Ceurvorst
Dawn
Maxi & Tim Dirth
Adam Douglas
Lance Dowsett
Judy Elliott

Chris Engstrom
Judy Finch
Don Harmon
Rev Mark & family
Kate Hermanson
Leanne Helton
Baby Cody Howell
Gerri Howie
Carol Kiddoo
Brad Killip
Rodney Laird
Paige Lehrer
Marsha
Nancy

Betty Oaks
Sammi Prescott's twins
Heidi Reid
Marla Reynolds
Ron Schmidt
Quinci Shride
Greg Stead
Teresa Stevens
Theo & Rick
Lois Vance family
Mark Vinson
Marilyn Wagler
Preston Waters
Shut-ins

Mercer County Schools: Administration, Teachers, Students, Staff
National and Local Governmental Leaders, Military, Security Officers
AWANA, Bus Ministry, College Students, Shut Ins, the lost

Special Observances in February

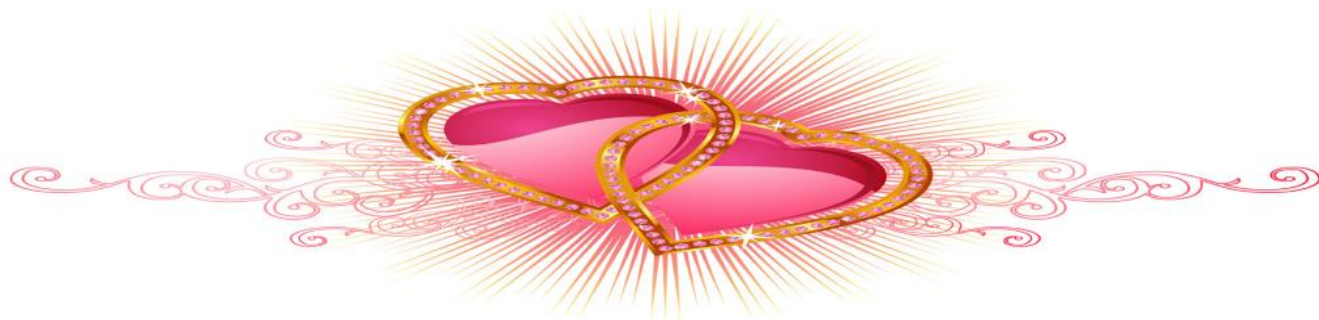
February is American Heart Month, Black History Month, Cherry Month, Embroidery Month, Grapefruit Month and Responsible Pet Owners' Month. Some special days include: 1st- Freedom Day, 2nd- Groundhog's Day, 3rd- The Day the Music Died, 4th- Create a Vacuum Day, 5th- Western Monarch Butterfly Day, 6th- Lame Duck Day, 7th- Olive Oil Day, 8th- Clean Out Your Computer Day, 9th- Toothache Day, 10th- Umbrella Day, 11th- Don't Cry Over Spilled Milk Day, 12th- Plum Pudding Day, 13th- Get a Different Name Day, 14th- Valentine's Day, 15th- Gumdrop Day, 16th- Mashed Potato Day, 17th- Random Acts of Kindness Day, 18th- Battery Day, 19th- Chocolate Mint Day, 20th- Hoodie-Hoo Day, 21st- Love your Pet Day, 22nd- Be Humble Day, 23rd- Dog Biscuit Appreciation Day, 24th- Tennis Day, 25th- Quiet Day, 26th- Carnival Day, 27th- No-Brainer Day, and 28th- Public Sleeping Day. Celebrate the best, the worst, the sweetest and the oddest in February!

GOOD STEWARDS

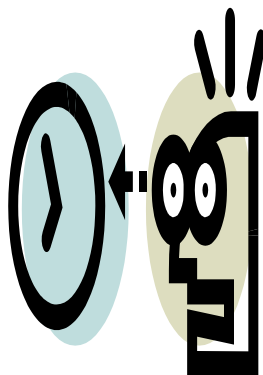
We are called to be good stewards of God's creation. We are to be good stewards of the church building. We are to be good stewards of the funds that He entrusts to us. And we are to be good stewards of...each other! With that in mind, your church would like to purchase an AED- Automated External Defibrillator. An automated external defibrillator is a portable device that checks the heart rhythm. If needed, it can send an electric shock to the heart to try to restore a normal rhythm. AEDs are used to treat sudden cardiac arrest.

The plan is to have an AED unit mounted in or near the sanctuary. In addition, there would be a very specialized kit that accompanies it. This kit will include the more normal first aid items- band aids, gauze, tape, Neosporin, etc. It will also have a blood pressure cuff, stethoscope, blood sugar monitor, etc. The installation would include training for using the unit itself, as well as CPR training.

The entire package will cost about \$2,200. If you think this is a good idea and would like to help make it happen, we would welcome your donations. Simply make your check payable to the church and write "AED" in the memo. Please pray about this new and important ministry.



The deadline for the
next Parish Visitor is
Friday, Feb 21st, at 8am.
Please have all articles
submitted by this date!



FELLOWSHIP CAFE

Have a cup of coffee (regular or our flavor of the week!) or hot chocolate. We also offer hot tea and juice! Grab a snack or breakfast! We offer fresh fruit, gluten free treats, low sugar or low fat snacks, plus the regular indulgent cookies, breads, or cakes. Join us!!

CANDLE...WHAT?

On February 2nd, we recognize a little-noticed day in the church calendar- Candlemas. Described in the Gospel of Luke (2:22–40), it's the day Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem forty days after his birth to both complete Mary's required post-childbirth purification and perform the redemption of the firstborn.

When they arrived at the temple, they met Simeon, who had been promised by God that "he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah of the Lord." He took Jesus in his arms and prayed the prayer that would become known as the Canticle of Simeon, which prophesied the redemption of the world by Jesus. This was baby Jesus' introduction to God's house, as well as the church's 1st "formal" meeting with the Messiah.

God chose to come down in the form of a newborn- that fact never ceases to amaze! Churches often talk about "Christmas and Easter People" (those who only come to church on special holidays), but we ARE Christmas and Easter people. We worship a God who chose to do the miraculous- a birth in a manger and a death on a cross- FOR us, so that we might be redeemed. We should keep the miracle of those seasons in our hearts all year long.

ALEDO UMC BUS MINISTRY

We'd love to come pick you up and bring you to any of our services. Just make arrangements with **Greg Cobert** in advance by **calling (309) 737-5621** and we'll put you on our "Pick Up" list.



SCHEDULING EVENTS

The Aledo United Methodist Church is a BUSY place! (Our custodian tells us that he struggles to find time to CLEAN the church because there is always something GOING ON in the church! His exact words are, "You are the dirtiest church I clean!") And since we are busy connecting people with Jesus Christ, it is a VERY good thing that we are busy! But BECAUSE we are so busy, it makes scheduling a bit more of a challenge. Events that never had to be concerned with the calendar before now...have to!

We continue to find creative, collaborative ways to enable multiple events to happen at the same time- which IS our goal- but we can't do that if we don't know an event is scheduled. With that in mind, please contact the Church Office as soon as possible to make sure your date/time/area of the church is available and to get your event on the church calendar.

Is your church a busy place? Yes! Is it busy connecting people to Jesus Christ? Yes! Therefore, we want to do EVERYTHING we can to make sure as many ministries as possible that help further our mission are able to happen!

DID YOU MISS SUNDAY'S SERMON?

If you miss church on Sunday, you can STILL experience the sermon. Simply go to www.stickwithjesus.com. Scroll down the main page until you find the date you missed- that day's blog will be a transcript of the sermon! If you would like to subscribe and receive a daily email link, email Rev. Mark at revmark@stickwithjesus.com. Please share these links with your friends.



CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

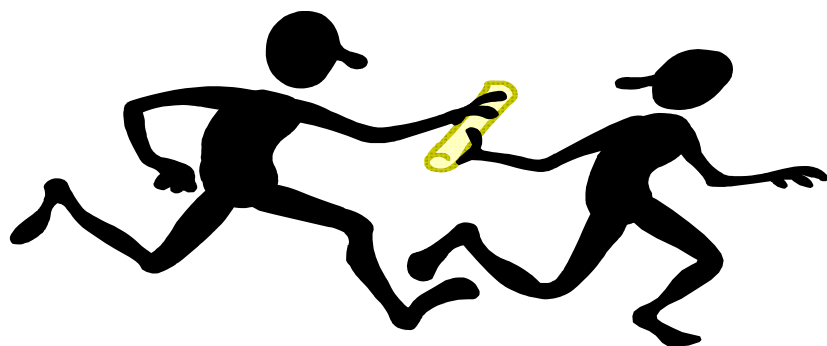
Bishop Gregory Palmer, the former Bishop of our Illinois Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church, in an e-letter dated December 20, 2008, said this about the decline of our denomination, "...the invitation to discipleship is at the core of our identity and mission as The United Methodist Church. We as an annual conference...have struggled to be invitational...with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 2007, 60 percent of our congregations received ZERO persons by professions of faith. We are simply not bringing new people into the life of the church in a way that outpaces our decline. As Bishop of the Illinois Area, I want to encourage you that, as United Methodists, we have a glorious heritage of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and offering invitation to the transforming relationship with the Savior."

6 out of every 10 United Methodist Churches in our conference are losing ground. This makes AUMC all the more exciting of a place in which to do ministry! Have you felt God tugging at you, urging you to take a leap of faith and become a larger part of something bigger than yourself? Have you been considering joining the church, but don't quite know how? Here's what you do! Simply contact Rev. Mark (revmark@myaledoumc.com) and set up a time to visit with him. This 30-minute meeting will allow him to get to know you better and talk to you about your faith journey. At the end of the meeting, you'll decide which Sunday you would like to join the church...and the rest, as they say, is history! Pray about it- are YOU ready to step out in faith?

RELAY FOR LIFE

Our Aledo UMC team is currently forming for the 2014 Mercer County Relay for Life. It will be held Saturday, June 28th, in Central Park. See Pam Truman to join the team or help out. Also, mark your calendars for the Relay Kick-Off to be held at 6PM Friday, March 7th, at Mi Casa Mexican Restaurant . Mi Casa will donate 10% of sales that day to Relay. If you can't come to the Kick-off, please carry out or dine in that day to benefit the Relay event.

Pam Truman



CONFIRMATION CLASS

It's that time! Confirmation, when young people dig into what it means to be a Christian and prepare to become full members of their church, will start in early February. This opportunity is for youth **7th Grade and older**. They will spend 7 **Sunday afternoons, 1PM** starting **February 23rd** and ending **April 6th** with Rev. Mark and Melissa, learning more about what it truly means to be a Christian. There will be lots of conversation and reflection, but there will also be music videos and fun "game shows"! Then, on Palm Sunday, April 13th, they will be baptized (if they have not been), Confirmed and become full members of the church! If you have a youth who is in **7th Grade or beyond**, let Rev. Mark or Melissa know that you are interested in this great opportunity!!

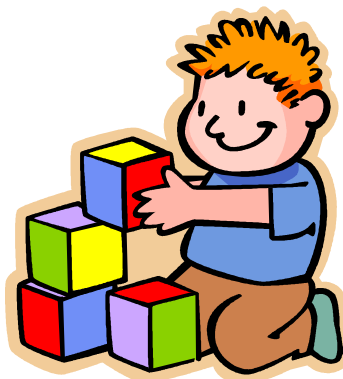
CHURCH WEBSITE



Have you looked at your church's website? If not, go to **www.myaledoumc.com** and see what's going on! Not only can you see the "basics" about the **Aledo United Methodist Church**, you can find the most current church calendar. In addition, the 2-minute "call to worship" videos that start our 8AM service every week are available. Also, the monthly newsletter AND the weekly bulletin (complete with the current version of the Prayer List) can be found on our website. Stop by and check it out!

THE NURSERY

Perhaps one of the best-kept secrets at AUMC is our Nursery Program. Professionally staffed and lovingly tended, our Nursery is a great place to take your children! The main focus of our nursery is simple...care. Our goal is to provide a loving environment where the youngest among us can feel comfortable and safe. At the Aledo United Methodist Church, we truly believe that the children of our congregation are NOT simply the future of the church- they are very much an active, important part of the PRESENT of the church! We strive to take good care of them while offering them a glimpse of....THE KINGDOM!





OH HENRY!

ONLY one week into 2014 I find myself encountering my first New Year's challenge. It begins as I warm up my car to pick Mark up from work. Sitting with my feet dangling out the door, I can tell something is off about the Montego. In the four years, I've had Henry (yes, I named the car...LOL) he's never sounded like that. I proclaim to be no mechanic, but I was unsteady with his struggling purr.

I set out to drive less than two miles for my pick up when Henry (my car) struggles to keep speed. I called my Mom to let her know that I think a belt snapped and asked if I could park him there since they were closer from my destination. In my mind, I could see either

the serpentine or alternator belt flipping like a bad cartoon shade. Then suddenly BAM...Henry dies. I get him going... two feet later, he gives up the ghost again. This song and dance lasted three more times before pushing him out of the intersection and onto Welcome Way. I coast to Mom and Dad's house then he lets out his final sigh.

On Wednesday, the Montego is towed to the shop; I patiently wait for the pending diagnosis and "medical" bill to follow. "A belt shouldn't be that expensive?! I got this," I think to myself. Then comes the call..."Belts are fine." Whew, I breathe a sigh of relief.... "Engine's blown." WHAT?! Between ungodly cold and something malfunctioning in the oil transfer, Henry lacked proper blood flow, causing major damage to his mechanical heart.

So seven days into the New Year, I find myself needing a car; not exactly how I planned on starting 2014. I also found myself acting like the 8th minor prophet Habakkuk, asking God "but why?" I've also been throwing out the rest of the five W's (who, when, what, & where) as well as how when it comes to recent talks with the Father. So it is no surprise that God drew me to this "unworked" book of the Bible.

Habakkuk (whose name means embrace or wrestle) comes to God with some pretty tough questions. Here's a short list: If God is good, then why is there evil in the world? And if there has to be evil, then why do the evil prosper? What is God doing in the world? Wow, right?! And God in His infinite wisdom not only compassionately hears him but also answers. He charges Habakkuk to "live by faith." Habakkuk 2:2-3 states, "Then the Lord answered me and said: 'Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.'" The answer is coming (appointed time); confidently (surely) wait for it (live by faith).

Throughout this journey, we may not understand what God is or is not doing in our lives, so questions begin to arise in us, and our faith dwindles. Then other times we receive the answer but not necessarily the response of our choosing. If your path seems a little jarring right now, know that God is stretching you...He's calling you to LIVE BY FAITH.

Habakkuk's poetic response shows that regardless of the "what if's" and the "even though's," he knew God had a plan of deliverance. God would faithfully see him through, because of His sovereignty and His loving care. What he had to do was live by faith, for "it (the answer/plan/vision) will surely come, it will not tarry."

Where do you find yourself today? Are you questioning? Looking for an answer? I dare you to make your vision plain and write it down, for the God of all things makes the impossible possible! Then choose to wait on Him and live by faith! He has brought us a mightily long way, and He loves us too much to leave us where we are...Your plan of deliverance is coming, just be still and know (Psalm 46:10).

Melissa Farrell

Director of Youth and Children's Ministries



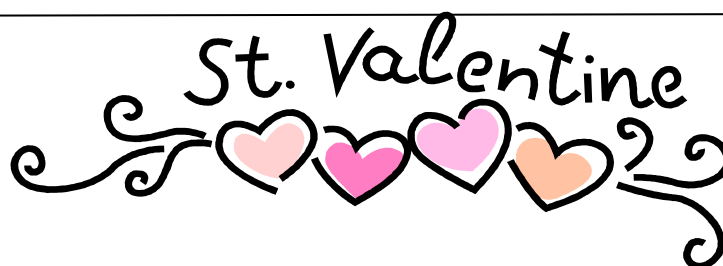
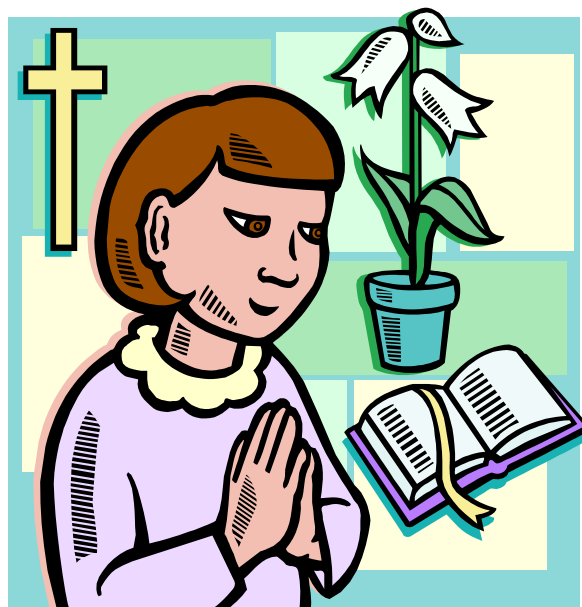
Junior High: 5-7pm
Senior High: 7-9pm

COME CONNECT WITH US IN PRAYER

WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP

Each *Tuesday* at 1:30pm
& 3pm in the Fellowship
Room

PRAYER WALK
through the church every
Sunday morning at 7am



FINANCIAL MATTERS (WEEKLY NEED \$5,440)

Date	01/05	01/12	01/19	01/26
Attendance	137	216	213	215
Receipts	\$3,271.50	\$6,043.00	\$7,863.00	3,266.50



**JOIN US SUNDAY
EVENINGS @ 6PM FOR
MESSAGE, WORSHIP,
COMMUNION,
AND PRAYER.**

1 Corinthians 13:13

*And now these three remain:
faith, hope, and love. But the greatest
of these is love.*