



The Connection

The Official Publication of the
Capitol Area South District United Methodist Churches

From Your Superintendent

The Gift of Love



Dear Friends and Ministry Colleagues,

Recently, Sue and I attended a dance performance at Otterbein College called **Matchgirl**. It was a compelling ballet presentation by the Columbus Dance Theatre, based on the story *The Little Matchgirl* by Hans Christian Andersen.

This story gives a poignant account of a child without privilege and resources trying to survive in a cold, harsh unloving world. She roams the streets pleading for money to buy food, but receives none. Instead she is given a book. The story in this book is so powerful that it draws her into itself. She becomes the main character, "The Little Matchgirl," who tries to earn food money by selling matches to the townspeople as they rush by, paying no attention to her desperate efforts. Her coat is stolen. She is made fun of by her

peers. Hunger and cold threaten her very survival. When she returns home with just a single coin, her angry father forces her back onto the streets in the cold of winter. Death stalks her. She, the Matchgirl, lights a match to try to keep warm. So severe is her condition that she sees a vision. It is a vision of fire and roasting chestnuts, which warms her until the match burns out. Once again, Death appears but is held at bay by the lighting of a second match by the Matchgirl. This time she has a vision of a magnificent party to which she is invited. There she finds food and enjoyment. But soon the vision fades and she is back on the streets again. To the surprise of her father this time Death finally prevails. The Matchgirl discards her earthly garment and enters paradise, where the Heavenly Host and her joyful mother and grandmother welcome her. The ballet concludes with a final musical celebration that reunites the whole family in the theme of love and Mary's song of praise: the Magnificat by John Rutter.

Each year I search for new ways to make this holy season enrich my faith and inform my everyday life.

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Advent is here. Christmas is just around the corner. Each year I search for new ways to make this holy season enrich my faith and inform my

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everyday life. This year, Andersen's story of The Little Matchgirl is doing just that. I am struck by the parallels in the narrative world of the Matchgirl and the contemporary world in which we live today. Children – indeed people of every stage of human development - suffer from hunger, violence, poverty, abuse, hopelessness, and struggle to survive each and every day in our communities and worldwide. They are ignored, exploited and sometimes teased for their circumstances. Death stalks their every move. Like the Matchgirl they make desperate efforts and plead for assistance, but none or very little is given. They struggle to survive. Finally the flame goes out, and they perish from a lack of resources or hope that comes from compassion and love.

But let us not forget that the poor wandering child was given a storybook that transformed her life. The story was so compelling, so moving that she became one with the character. She embraced its substance in such a way that she became "The Little Matchgirl." And in the end, she was lifted to heaven and joyfully reunited with her loved ones and the Heavenly Host.

As I have prayerfully reflected on the Matchgirl ballet, the message that comes through to me is that the right book with the right story can be a powerful gift of love that can transform ones life. This lowly struggling child was given such a gift.

Christmas is the season of gift giving. Too often we spend too much energy and money on the wrong gifts. Why not make this Christmas different? Why not give the gift of love that transforms lives? Give the gospel story of Jesus Christ. God has given to you and me God's most precious gift, and that is love through Christ Jesus. In 1885 Christina Rossetti acknowledged this spiritual gift when she wrote the words: "Love came down at Christmas ... Love was born at Christmas; star and angels gave the sign."

May this holy season enrich your life with Christian love and the motivation to give the right gift. Give the gift of love. Nothing more nothing less is expected. You will bless the recipient with eternal hope and joy.

Have a loving Christmas and holiday season!

Yours in Christ,
Hank Stringer

RSI Capital Stewardship Campaign Assistance Still Available



RSI continues to lead congregations in the West Ohio Conference through the capital stewardship campaign process. RSI is our Conference's stewardship counsel for the "Strength for Today, Bright Hope for Tomorrow." If your congregation is considering a capital campaign to retire debt, build, or renovate existing facilities, contact RSI's Ministry Development Officer, Tim Owings, for information on how you can raise significant financial resources while having a strong, spiritually oriented capital stewardship campaign. Tim's e-mail is: towings@viscern.com . You can also reach Tim at 1-800-725-0200, ext. 7526.

District Office Holiday Schedule

The Capitol South District Office will be closed from Friday, December 22 through Tuesday, December 26 for the Christmas holiday. The office will reopen on Wednesday, December 27.

For the New Year's Holiday, the office will be closed on Friday, December 29 through Monday, January 1. The office will reopen on Tuesday, January 2.



What Can I Offer You?



Jim's Toolbox

By Jim Waugh, Assistant to the Superintendent

As we move into the Advent Season and toward the celebration of Christ's birth, I realize that I will soon have six months under my belt in this new position as Assistant to the Superintendent. In some ways this has been (and will continue to be) a learning experience for me as I discover more about the new district and the clergy and lay leadership of the congregations of the district.

I am now making an effort to be in touch with some of the pastors around the district to see what things are like "on the ground" in different parts of the district. I want to better understand the issues and challenges that you are facing. In that way I can work with Hank Stringer and the district committees that are assigned to me in our efforts to resource the congregations of the district in your mission and ministry.

Toward that end, I thought I would use some of the Toolbox space in this issue to talk about ways that I can be helpful to your congregation as you seek to move forward in your mission and ministry. So here are some ways that I can resource your congregation:

1. When you call the district office about a question or matter either a "how to" or we have this "issue", you may end up talking with me. If the matter deals with an appointive issue then those matters go to Hank. Otherwise, I have been handling a variety of inquiries that come into the office. Some matters I can answer directly. On other issues I may need to consult with Hank or with someone in the conference office, but I will do my best to get you an answer.

2. I am available to consult with local congregations in areas of my expertise and skill. I don't have all the answers in these areas, but I feel that I have something to offer in the following areas:

a. **How do we bring about change?** Many times we struggle with how to bring about change in some area of the congregation's life. I am

willing to work with the leaders of a congregation on what that means for your church.

b. **Does your congregation have financial support to carry out your mission and ministry?** I am willing to work with a congregation on strategies that will improve giving and offer approaches to stewardship campaigns.

c. **How can our congregation work more effectively to be in mission in our neighborhood or community?** I have worked for many

years in the areas of cooperative ministry and in developing cooperative/collaborative style ministries. What is that we can do better together than we can on our own in fulfilling our mission?

d. **How do we organize and plan for ministry and then carry out those plans?** Organizational and planning skills are essential if you are going to follow through what God is calling to do and to be in these days as the people of God.

e. **What do we need to think about if we want to add another worship service or start a satellite ministry?** There are many factors to consider when considering another service, especially if the style of the new service will be different than the existing service.

So if I can be of assistance to you in any of these areas, please let me know. If you need help in other areas, feel free to contact me, and we can work together in finding you the kind of resources you need so that your congregation can be effective in its mission and ministry. You can contact me by calling the district office (614-222-0666; toll free: 1-877-222-0526). Or via e-mail: jwaugh@wocumc.org .

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Strength Campaign Garners \$14,000 From Special Offering

The Strength campaign committee encouraged the special offering collection as just one way of developing additional revenue resources for local churches.

Approximately \$14,000 was collected this fall from a special Strength for Today, Bright Hope for Tomorrow offering. About 60 churches chose to raise money for district development funds by participating in this offering-event organized by the Strength for Today, Bright Hope for Tomorrow committee.

“We understand that strengthening leadership in the whole conference will strengthen leadership in each local church,” said the Rev. Dale Lykins, of Jackson Christ UMC in southern Ohio. “This campaign can result in better trained laity and better equipped pastors, which will help the church in this new century.”

Initiated almost two years ago, the Strength for Today Bright Hope for Tomorrow campaign seeks to create a variety of new revenue sources for use in church expansion, development, and leadership.

“We just wanted to help and support our Conference and to be part of other connectional churches,” said Dayton Korean UMC Pastor Young Eun Choi, when asked why his congregation decided to participate in the offering.

The Bryan Wesley UMC northwestern Ohio also collected a special offering. Associate Pastor Jon Exman said the Bryan congregation participated, because the future is the hope of the United Methodist Church.

“In John 8:12 Jesus said, I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but have the light of life. Our church feels strongly that the hope for the church is not just in the present, but also in the future,” said Exman.

The Strength campaign committee encouraged the special offering collection as just one way of developing additional revenue resources for local churches. “We have no history with this type of offering, so it is hard to compare to anything else,” said Greg Traucht, Development Director for the West Ohio Conference. “The money is still coming in, and we hope this money will help with the development and revitalization funds in each of our eight districts.”

Congregations in the Capitol Area South District participating in this fall’s special “Strength” offering were Christ, Baltimore; Crossroads, Columbus; Fairfield Beach, Summit Station, Thornville; Frazeyburg; Gates-Fourth, Columbus; Gratiot; Grove City; Hilliard; Mills Memorial, Lancaster; and the Pickaway County Cluster in Circleville.

In addition a special offering received at the closing celebration of the Columbus South District also was designated to the Strength for Today, Bright Hope for Tomorrow.

Issue Three Goes Down in Defeat!

Thank You for Your Support!

(From the Editor: Below is a letter from The Rev. John Edgar of the VANTAGE Ohio Team)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I want to thank all of you for working together to defeat Issue 3 that would have brought casino gambling into our state with 31,000 slot machines. This is a tremendous victory, truly worthy of celebration!

Our grassroots campaign was a major factor in defeating this gambling proposal. Leaders of the West Ohio and East Ohio Conferences came together early in the summer and formed "Vantage Ohio" to coordinate our statewide opposition.

These well organized efforts mobilized thousands of United Methodists to offer a compelling prophetic witness that gambling harms the quality of life for all of us. Your acts of witness featured a variety of effective dimensions including:

- Personal prayers
- Talking to family, friends, and neighbors
- Forwarding e-mail messages
- Announcements in church bulletins and newsletters
- Discussions and study materials in church school classes and other small groups
- Statements by pastors and key local church leaders
- 10,000 yard signs in church yards and other locations
- News conferences and issue forums
- Networking with other organizations, especially the Ohio Council of Churches.
- Going to the polls and voting **NO** on November 7th.

These efforts formed a powerful moral foundation that inspired Ohio voters to ***just say no to casino gambling.***

It has been a true privilege for me to serve in the role as the chairperson of the steering committee for our United Methodist response. I want to encourage you to express your appreciation to the leaders that guided this campaign.

Rev. Deanna Stickley Miner, West Ohio Conference staff

Rev. Paul White, East Ohio Conference staff

Rev. Dan Bryant East Ohio Conference

Mr. Tom Smith, Ohio Council of Churches staff

Ms. Kelley Lilly, paid coordinator for Vantage Ohio

It is my prayer that this success will inspire all of us to work together to shape public policies that reflect our Social Principles. May God continue to bless each of you in all of your endeavors.

Yours in Christ,

John Edgar

Mission Opportunities

Medical Mission Trip to India and Nepal: February 7 – 18, 2007 Cost - \$2800

A small medical mission team will visit villages around Calcutta, India and Nepal doing minimal medical treatments while an Indian evangelism team will share the Saving Grace of Christ.

Needed: Doctors and nurses willing to conduct a daily medical treatment camp in various villages. An assessment of needs and requirements will also be collected for future trips.

Contact: Roger Weaver, Crouse Chapel UMC, Chillicothe, Ohio. 740-772-0864, rweaver@glatfelter.com

VIM teams needed for rebuilding after tornado

VIM teams are needed in 2007 in Caruthersville to rebuild homes that were damaged or destroyed in the tornados of 2006.

Each team will be one of many UMVIM teams from Missouri and other states doing community disaster response. Our work is first with those in a community who are the most vulnerable persons: the poor, the disabled and those who will have the hardest time recovering (including relocation assistance). Uninsured and under-insured homeowners will receive financial assistance to repair and rebuild of their homes but can't afford the labor to repair or rebuild.

Living conditions: Arrangements will be made for team members to lodge at the Eastwood Memorial UMC or Portageville UMC. Team members should bring air mattresses/ sleeping bags or cots to sleep on. UMVIM teams' members will shower at the Community Center and will have the use of the church kitchen to cook. Teams may either bring their food or purchase food in Caruthersville.

Budget: Each team should bring \$50 per person for building materials. Accidental and sickness insurance is required, through the GBGM at \$.75 per person per day, or through OCM at \$1.21 per person per day. A donation of \$50-\$100 per team is needed to defray utility costs, depending on the number of VIM team members. Make the donation check payable to the church where your VIM team lodges.

What to expect: Priority of projects is given to those with the greatest needs. Teams are asked to be flexible and willing to do what needs to be done, even if it is different from what they expected. You may encounter lack of supplies, delay of inspections and inclement weather as you work in response to the disaster.

Who: Each team needs some person skilled in the building trades and a designated "go-fer" who can go for supplies and/or tools that the team needs.

What to take: Bible, writing materials, personal items, sleeping bag/air mattress, towel and clothing for work and leisure. Take a positive cooperative spirit, and a willingness to serve Christ as a member of your church and the Missouri United Methodist Conference.

Construction skill trades: Willing helper, do-it-yourselfers, extensive handy person, no trade experience, worked trade previously, working trade currently as helper, apprentice or journeyman.

Forms needed by the team leader: Liability release form-send to the Office of Creative Ministries. Team leaders can find necessary forms online: medical information and consent, policy agreement, emergency information, parent/guardian, team leader finance, team leader evaluation and team member forms. To find forms, go to www.umocm.com. Click on Volunteer in Mission, Forms, and find all the forms. For other information, please contact Joe Bartelsmeyer, Missouri UMVIM Coordinator, 573-474-7155, or bartelsmeyer@umocm.com



In the celebration of the birth of the Christ child, may the love that he came to bring be born anew in your heart and life in this season. Let us be those who also share the good news of with the last, the least, and the lost in our world today!

Merry Christmas from the Capitol Area South District Staff!

Hank Stringer

District
Superintendent

Jim Waugh

Assistant to the
Superintendent

Carol Wilson

Administrative
Assistant



**Capitol Area South District
West Ohio Conference
The United Methodist Church**

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Capitol Area South District Calendar

DECEMBER 2006

4	7 pm	Mission Outreach Evangelism @ District Office
6	9-3:30	One to Ones @ District Office
7-8		Cabinet
11	1:30 pm	Unity Task Force
12	7 pm	Reynoldsburg Church Conference
13	9-3:30	One to Ones @ District Office
14	9-3:30	One to Ones @ District Office
15	9-2	One to Ones @ District Office
19	1:30-3	One to Ones @ District Office
21	1 pm	Staff Christmas Lunch – District Office Closed after 1 pm
22-26		Christmas Holidays – District Office Closed
29-Jan 1		New Year Holidays – District Office Closed

JANUARY 2007

9	4:30 pm	Superintendency Committee @ District Office
11	9 am	Ordained Ministry @ District Office
25	7 pm	Leadership & Visioning Team

FEBRUARY 2007

1	10 am	Board of Directors @ District Office
6		Stewardship Workshop for Clergy @ Grove City UMC