

FROM: McKnight United Methodist Church
600 Fox Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

www.mcknightumc.org

Your Summer, 2009 FOCUS!
June, July & August

TO:

Where there's a *Will*, There's a way!
Have you remembered the church in yours?
-the MUMC Endowment Team

Our Purpose:

To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world!

Our Vision:

*We will be a growing community in Christ spreading the word of God
by reaching out to all people in an accepting, supporting and loving way.*

See inside: Stay in love with God! (page 3)

Relief Kits needed June 7 (page 5)

Pray for our troops! (page 6)

Church nite out with the Buccos (page 7)

Employment opportunity! (page 8)

Roger Dubois bikes across the USA! (page 9)

PA Bishops' letter on Gambling (page 10)

McKnight United Methodist Church

www.mcknightumc.org

Church Office 412-364-7132

Parsonage 412-364-7007

CEO.....God
Pastor....Rev. William R. LaVelle, Jr.
Ministers.....The Congregation
Organist..... Olga Doudina-Dimova
Church Secretary.....Lisa Bowen
Nursery.....Anna Dierksen
Sexton.....Rich Czado

Church Council

Chairperson.....Diana Barnett
Vice Chairperson.....Bernie Watson
Council Secretary.....Carol Neifert
Nurture MinistryDon Riddle
Outreach Ministry.....Gerri Czado
Witness Ministry.... Tom Wiley
Lay Leader.....Joe Brandt
Finance.....
Treasurer.....Bob Moore
Assistant Treasurer...Steve Lindquist
Financial Secretary.....Ellen Kuntz
Trustees.....Bob Brown
Staff Parish Relations.....Bill Conley
Memorial Chair.....Bob Conrad
Membership Chair....Alfred Teasley
Communications.....

Sunday Worship

September – May

Sunday School Classes...9:30 a.m.

Classes for all age groups

Worship11:00 a.m.

June – August

No Sunday School Classes

Worship.....9:30 a.m.

Our Social Creed

We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God's gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends.

We affirm the natural world as God's handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind.

We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons.

We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and responsible consumption; and in the elimination of economic and social distress.

We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.

We believe in the present and final triumph of God's Word in human affairs and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the Gospel in the world. Amen.

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2008; ¶ 166.

MUMC ENDOWMENT FUND

We have established an endowment fund to accept your planned gift to support a favorite ministry into the future and/or provide for future new ministry opportunities. Inquiries and participation are welcome.

McKnight Church website address:

<http://www.mcknightumc.org>

Please visit our web site and email any comments or suggestions for improvement.

The Pastor's Ponderings...

Dear Friends,

Summertime is upon us! Looking forward to outdoor activities, vacations, gardening, going to the baseball game... Lots of wonderful opportunities.

Many of you know that I really like to fish! Fishing has been something that I've looked forward to every spring for thirty years. But this year's different. I haven't even bought my license yet!

This year family priorities have taken precedence over the lure of the boat and the lakes and the thrill of the catch. I had to decide what my priorities were, and live into the really important stuff.

The Spirit has continually led me to return to the small book I mentioned in this column in January, *Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living*, by Bishop Reuben Job. You may recall the Three Rules: Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God. This was John Wesley's practical guide for living.

Bishop Job writes in the Preface, "Here we have the foundation and instruction for the faithful and good life in every age. It is both a simple and profound statement. It is easy to comprehend and challenging to attempt. And it remains a guide to the highest form of faithfulness and continues to hold the promise of a way of life that is both rewarding and fruitful in furthering God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven." (page 9)

In the chapter "Stay in Love with God" Bishop Job says, "Ordinance is a strange word to our ears. But to John Wesley, it was a word that described the practices that kept the relationship between God and humans vital, alive, and growing." (page 53)

The first practice on John Wesley's list is public worship of God. The consistent practice of this spiritual discipline keeps we who seek to follow Christ in touch with the presence and power of Christ so that we can fulfill our desire to live as a faithful disciple.

Yes, summertime is upon us. Lots of opportunities. Please keep your priorities clear. Stay in love with God! See you in worship.

Keep lookin' up!
Pastor Bill

Summer Worship Ministry

June

Liturgists

7 Judy Duncan
14 Bill Conley
21 Joe Brandt
28 Garrick Barnett

Counters

7 Rick Greenfield & Tom Gregory
14 Matt Matthews & Alice Moore
21 Dick Pflugh & Manya Riddle
28 Dan Rhodes & Martha Spisak

Greeters

7 Bob & Donna Conrad
14 Craig & Kay Fowler
21 Judy Freese
28 Sam & Joann Clauter

Ushers

7 Dick Pflugh, Tom Wiley & Bob Moore
14 Bob Thomas, Dick & Jackie Pflugh
21 Kris Bell, Reyman Branting & Philip Bova
28 Rick Greenfield, Joe Brandt & Rich Czado

July

Liturgists

5 Sue Baxter
12 Ellen Kuntz
19 Bill Edsall
26 Diana Barnett

Counters

5 Alfred Teasley & Linda Watson
12 Mike Woolley & Martha Spisak
19 Kris Bell & Garrick Barnett
26 Reyman Branting & Becky Brandt

Greeters

5 Ron & Jeannette Latkovic
12 Rose Rodkey
19 Ellen Kuntz
26 Steve & Ellen Lindquist

Ushers

5 Mike Bova, Matt Matthews & Dick Pflugh
12 Mike Woolley, Tom Wiley & Bob Moore
19 Bob Thomas, Dick & Jackie Pflugh
26 Kris Bell, Reyman Branting & Philip Bova

August

Liturgists

- 2 Jen Matthews
- 9 Joan Bova
- 16 Bob Conrad
- 23 Laura Miller
- 30 Karen Tobias

Counters

- 2 Bill Conley & Bob Conrad
- 9 Ed George & Kay Fowler
- 16 Tom Gregory & Rick Greenfield
- 23 Alice Moore & Matt Matthews
- 30 Manya Riddle & Dick Pflugh

Greeters

- 2 Linda Ludwig
- 9 Alfred & Shirley Teasley
- 16 Dick & Jackie Pflugh
- 23 Phillip Bova
- 30 Matt & Jenny Matthews

Ushers

- 2 Rick Greenfield, Joe Brandt & Rich Czado
- 9 Mike Bova, Matt Matthews & Dick Pflugh
- 16 Mike Woolley, Tom Wiley & Bob Moore
- 23 Bob Thomas, Dick & Jackie Pflugh
- 30 Kris Bell, Reyman Branting & Philip Bova

ATTENTION MUMC VOLUNTEERS!

The church carries insurance for volunteers working in and around the church and/or parsonage. Coverage includes medical and rehabilitation benefits, loss wage provision and death benefits if an injury is incurred while volunteering. Please refer to our policy with Church Mutual for a detail description of coverage. Note, this coverage does not apply to off site volunteering activities such as the North Side Feeding Program, Global Links, etc. To qualify for the above-mentioned benefits while volunteering, you must sign the Workman's Compensation Volunteer book.

YOU ARE NOT COVERED UNLESS YOU SIGN THE BOOK.

One book is located next to the Emergency Medical Supply Kit on the shelf in the Narthex and the other next to the Emergency Medical Supply Kit in the Kitchen. A sign up sheet is also available at the Parsonage and mailbox right outside the church.

SUMMER BIRTHDAYS!

JUNE

- 2 George Jones
- 6 Nancy Weckley
- 16 Alice Moore
- 17 John Wesley
- 19 Jan Conley
- 20 Joe Brandt, Callie Egan
- 21 Sue Baxter, Kaycie Cleric
- 22 Michael Zipf
- 23 Tom Wiley, Rebecca Jay
- 26 Greg Steindle
- 27 Phillip Bova, Sandy Defibaugh
- 30 June Bigalow, Jessica Watral

JULY

- 2 Helen Mitchell
- 6 Karen Pflugh
- 7 Nate Bell
- 9 Robert Conrad
- 10 Robert Jay
- 11 Emily Ricotta, Amy Parks
- 12 Susan Miller
- 13 Kathy Conley, Steve Thomas
- 15 William Miller
- 20 Lauren Thomas Mussitsch
- 21 Pat Rowe
- 24 Caroline Kaiser, Diana Barnett
- 29 Johan Groenewald, Catherine George
- 31 Sam Clauter (the younger)

AUGUST

- 1 Chelsi Egan
- 4 Shyrl LaVelle, Stephen Knott, George Mertz
- 10 John Filip
- 11 Sue Thomas
- 13 Robert Cleric
- 14 Shirley Teasley
- 15 Linda Woolley
- 17 Jan Swedish
- 18 Ethan Barnett
- 24 Mike Georgalas
- 28 Dalton Barnett
- 29 Richard Greenfield
- 31 Martha Spisak, Allison Hill

Pennsylvania Probate & Living Trusts

A free booklet titled "The Truth About Probate and Living Trusts in Pennsylvania" is available from the Allegheny County Bar Association. To receive a copy by mail call (412) 261-6161; then dial "0" for the operator. Tell her that you would like to receive a copy of their recent booklet about probate and living trusts.

UMCOR KITS

Please bring to worship by Sunday, June 7!

This assembly info is applicable for **each** type of kit:

All items in kits must be **NEW** items.

All emergency kits are carefully planned to make them usable in the greatest number of situations. Since strict rules often govern product entry into international countries, it is important that kits contain only the requested items-nothing more.

Do **NOT** include any personal notes, money or additional materials in the kits. These things must be painstakingly removed and will delay the shipment.

School Kit

- 1 pair blunt scissors (rounded tip)
- 3 pads (or loose leaf) of 8 ½ x 11 inch ruled paper
- 1 30 centimeter ruler
- 1 hand held pencil sharpener
- 6 unsharpened pencils with erasers
- 1 eraser, 2 ½ inches
- 1 box of 24 crayons (only 24)

Prepare a 14 inch x 16 inch (finished size) cloth bag with handles and an optional closure (Velcro, snap or button) and place items in the bag.

Birthing Kit

Place items inside a sealed one-gallon plastic bag.

- 1 hotel-size bar of soap (1 oz. and up)
- 1 pair of clean latex gloves
- 1 square yard of clear 4 mil plastic sheeting
- 3 pieces of clean string each 12 inches long
- 1 clean single use razor blade (carefully wrap the blade in paper or plastic to protect it and keep it from causing injury)
- 2 flannelette receiving blankets, each 1 square yard

Health Kit

Place these items inside a sealed one-gallon plastic bag:

- 1 Hand towel
(15 x 25 up to 17 x 27 inches, no kitchen towels)
- 1 washcloth
- 1 comb (large and sturdy, not pocket-sized)
- 1 nail file or fingernail clippers
(no emery boards or toenail clippers)
- 1 bath-size bar of soap (3 oz. and up)
- 1 toothbrush (single brushes only in original wrapper, no child-size brushes)
- 6 adhesive plastic strip sterile bandages
- \$1.00 for the purchasing of toothpaste in bulk by UMCOR to be added to kit

Cleaning Bucket

- 5 gallon bucket with re-sealable lid
- Bleach (two 1 quart or one 82 oz. bottle)
- 5 scouring pads
- 7 sponges
- 1 scrub brush
- 18 cleaning towels (reusable wipes)
- Liquid laundry detergent
(two 25 oz. or one 50 oz. bottle)
- 1 household cleaner, 12-16 oz. bottle
- Disinfectant dish soap, 16-28 oz. bottle
- 50 clothespins
- Clothes line (two 50 ft. or one 100 ft.)
- 5 dust masks
- 2 pair latex gloves
- 1 pair work gloves
- 24-bag roll of heavy-duty trash bags, 33-45 gallon
(remove roll from box before placing in bucket)
- 1 insect repellent spray, 6-14 oz. can
(if aerosol, cans must have protective caps.
See special requirements below.)
- 1 air freshener, 8 or 9 oz. can
(if aerosol cans, must have protective caps.
See special requirements below.)

NOTE: if the requested item size is not available, go down to the next available size. If nothing is available in the requested or smaller size, put masking tape in the outside of the bucket saying, "This bucket contains no _____".

Special Shipping Requirements

Cleaning Agents - all cleaning agents must be liquid and in plastic bottles. No powders. Pack them inside a bucket or strong outer box.

The HeLP Committee is instituting a new program called "Request for Blood Donations." We will list those individuals that require blood for upcoming surgeries or long-term illnesses. If you, a member of your family, or a friend are need of blood, please contact Lisa Bowen with the patient's name, your name and relationship, and the name of the city if the patient lives outside of Pittsburgh. The patient needs to be registered with the Central Blood Bank. This information will be published in the Focus and posted on the HeLP's bulletin board. No medical reason for the request will be indicated unless the patient approves. If you are a donor, please consider donating on behalf of these individuals. Remember that **"There is Power in the Blood!"** Each donation has the possibility of saving three lives. Please donate if you can. Thank you.

Central Blood Bank phone number
1-866-366-6771

Website <http://www.centalbloodbank.org/>

**WE HONOR AND PRAY FOR ALL
THOSE INDIVIDUALS SERVING
OUR COUNTRY**

The Blue Star Banner in the Narthex is in honor of the following military personnel from our church family currently serving on active duty:

- 2nd Lt. Mike Conley, U.S. Marines
- SSGT. Jason Hoffmann, U.S. Army
(Bill & Sue Baxter's Son-in-Law)
- Major John Matthews, U.S. Air Force
(Matt Matthew's brother)
- Capt. Adam Hill, U.S. Army

Please keep these individuals, their families and all those serving our country in your prayers.

If you have an immediate family member or others currently actively serving in the military, please see Bob Brown for a request form, so that we can honor and pray for them.

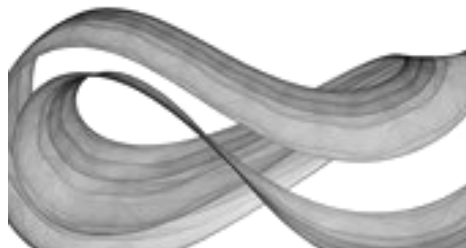
The candle in the window is for Mike Conley, who is currently serving in Afghanistan.

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE SURVEY

Don't forget to complete the salmon colored paper you received in your mailbox on May 3, or that was mailed to your home. The Endowment Committee appreciates your support. Thank you for taking time to complete the survey. Return your completed form to Linda Watson by June 14th.

ANNUAL USED BOOK SALE

Monday, June 8 through Friday, June 12, 2009. Doors open at 9:00 a.m. and close at 9:15 p.m. For additional information please contact Denise Patsko at 412-366-1300. Proceeds benefit children and families served by North Hills Youth Ministry Counseling Center.



**Ocean
Motion
VBS**

July 13-17

6:30 - 8:30 pm

For kids ages: 4 – 12

\$10.00 per child for materials

Child's name and age _____

Child's name and age _____

Child's name and age _____

Child's name and age _____

Child's name and age _____

Parent's name and phone _____

Need more info?

Call Barb Jarmell @ 412-492-7166

MCKNIGHT CHURCH FUNDRAISER WITH THE BUCCO'S

Come join your friends and family of MUMC with
a day at PNC PARK!

Wednesday, August 19, 2009 at 7:05 p.m.
Pittsburgh Pirates VS the Milwaukee Brewers.

Sell as many tickets as possible to raise money for
the church and hear your church choir sing the
National Anthem!

For every ticket sold, proceeds will be donated to
McKnight United Methodist Church!

Outfield Box - \$20.00 (\$5.00 donated back to the
church)

- ◆ The event is open to all MUMC members and
their friends, families, co-workers, and neighbors.
- ◆ Sell tickets to help raise funds for McKnight
Church and give the choir the opportunity to earn
the right to perform the National Anthem prior to
the start of the game. (Need to sell 300 tickets)
- ◆ The church will have a group welcome on the
color LED Board.
- ◆ Orders should be returned to Pastor Bill's
mailbox, through the offering plate, or in the mail.
- ◆ Checks should be made out to "McKnight United
Methodist Church" and in the memo line indicate
"Pgh. Pirates Fundraiser."
- ◆ Checks and order forms that are submitted
together will be seated together. This is the *only*
way seating requests will be filled.
- ◆ All orders are subject to availability.

McKnight United Methodist Church Fundraiser
at PNC Park

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

_____ Outfield Box @ \$20.00 = \$ _____

Check # _____

CHURCH BASEMENT LADIES

A new musical comedy featuring M*A*S*H star
William Christopher. For 11 years he played
Father Mulcahy on what many consider the best
sitcom of all time, M*A*S*H. William is coming
to the Byham Theater in a musical comedy that
mixes the silliness of *Nunsense* and the homespun
humor of *Prairie Home Companion*. This
hilarious musical comedy is a celebration of the
church basement kitchens everywhere and the
wonderful, unsung women who work there. The
script is dead on, the music is toe tapping and the
humor is delicious. September 23 - 27, 2009.
Book early and save! All groups \$25.
For discounted group tickets call 412-471-6930.

REPEAT PERFORMANCE: ANOTHER NIGHT NOT TO COOK HAVE SPAGHETTI AGAIN WITH US!

WHEN: June 4
WHERE: Fellowship Hall of MUMC
TIME: 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
TICKETS: \$8.00 for adults & \$5.00 for kids 10
and under. Take out available.

The Spaghetti Warehouse will be cooking and
serving the dinner. Mark your calendars now for a
great night out for dinner for a wonderful cause!
Benefits American Cancer Society/Relay for Life

CEMETERY GRAVES FOR SALE

In 1986, Virginia Walker donated 15 cemetery
graves located at Allegheny County Memorial Park
(412-366-8296). It was decided at the time to sell
them to the congregation at half the current price
plus the deed transfer rate. We have four remaining
graves located in Section 9009, Block 2-D, Graves
3, 4, 5, and 6. The current price is \$1,860.00.

If you are interested in buying or have any
questions, please contact Bob Brown. If the graves
are not sold by year-end, we will be offering them
to other Methodist Churches in the area.

A Computer for Jahmaih

What a wonderful experience it was, during our worship service on April 24th, to witness the joy of the drummers from Bethany House, under the direction of Keith Murphy, Executive Director. During his introduction of the young people, Keith mentioned the need of Jahmaih Gullory, for a Macintosh Computer to take with him when he begins his studies this fall at the McKeesport Campus of Penn State University, hoping to major in Petroleum Engineering.

On hearing this need I felt a strong urge as if God were telling me, "You can do this." So I walked to the lectern and announced that this young man ought to have this need met and that I would be willing to guarantee the purchase price. Several members of the congregation agreed and began to offer donations, which continued throughout the week and in the worship service on May 3rd.

In addition to Keith's telling us of Jahmaih's 3.95 Grade Point Average in High School, he is also one of the mentors of the other students in the Bethany House program. While tutoring there, Audrey worked with him and remarked at how calm and capable he was with the younger children. He is also the male head of his household of seven siblings. He is certainly worthy of our support as a congregation as we continue to relate the ministry of Bethany House.

Additional contributions to the Computer Fund can be made by sending or bringing them to the church.

Thanks,
Bill Edsall

Employment Opportunity

North Hills Youth Ministry Counseling Center seeks a part-time Assistant Office Manager to work approx. 24 hours a week. Candidates must have MS Office and QuickBooks experience. Raiser's Edge database experience is helpful. This position requires strong communication skills and the ability to work in a fast-paced environment. Send resume to: North Hills Youth Ministry Counseling Center, 802 McKnight Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15237 or FAX to 412-366-1333 or email to nhym@nhymcc.org.

The American Cancer Society's Relay for Life



**Saturday, June 20, 10:00 a.m.
through
Sunday June 21, 10:00 a.m.**

**at
Shaler Middle School
(Titan Stadium) 1810 Mt. Royal Blvd.**

Please join us! The Helping Hands women's group will be sponsoring a team of individuals at this race. This is a non-competitive community event where teams of people take turns walking or running around a track for 24 straight hours. Team members can walk for any length of time that they choose as long as one member of the team is on the track at all times.

When team members are not walking, they can camp out at their campsite at the track and enjoy themselves in a carnival-like atmosphere with entertainment and food.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Barb Jarmell (captain) at 412-492-7166 or Diana Barnett (co-captain) at 412-931-5763.

Please come and support us and the event!!!!

Graduates to be Honored during Worship June 7

If someone in your family is graduating high school or college, please call the church office. We want to know so that we can have a time of special recognition during worship Sunday, June 7. Those we are presently aware of are:

Carly Schueler is graduating Shaler Area High School and heading to the University of Oklahoma with scholastic and athletic (crew) scholarships.

Lauren Schueler (Carly's older sister) is graduating from the University of Central Florida and will be returning for a summer internship with the Allegheny County Medical Examiners office.

Christine George is graduating North Allegheny High School and will be going to Pitt Johnstown in the fall.

Joanie Bova has graduated from Mountain State University on May 26th with a Masters of Science in Strategic Leadership.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JUNE

- 9:30 a.m. Every Sunday Worship
7:00 p.m. Every Sunday PBJ Youth Meeting
5:30 p.m. Every Monday AA Meetings
2nd 10:30 a.m. Northside Feeding Program
2nd 7:30 p.m. SPRC Meeting
3rd 6:00 p.m. Set up Spaghetti Dinner
4th 4:00 p.m. Spaghetti Dinner
7th 9:30 a.m. Graduates Honored at Worship
7th UMCOR kits due
11th – 14th Annual Conference
18th 7:30 p.m. Church Council Meeting
20th 10:00 am. Relay For Life
21st 10:00 am. Relay For Life
21st Father's Day
25th 10:00 a.m. Global Links

JULY

- 9:30 a.m. Every Sunday Worship
7:00 p.m. Every Sunday PBJ Youth Meeting
5:30 p.m. Every Monday AA Meeting
4th July 4th Holiday
7th 10:30 p.m. Northside Feeding Program
7th 7:00 p.m. Trustees Meeting
9th 7:30 p.m. Finance Meeting
13th – 17th VBS
16th 7:30 p.m. Church Council Meeting
23rd 10:00 am. Global Links
31st 6:00 p.m. Wedding Rehearsal

AUGUST

- 1st 2:00 p.m. Wedding
9:30 a.m. Every Sunday Worship
7:00 p.m. Every Sunday PBJ Youth Meeting
5:30 p.m. Every Monday AA Meeting
4th 10:30 p.m. North Side Feeding Program
6th 7:00 p.m. Nurture Committee Meeting
20th 7:30 p.m. Church Council Meeting
25th 7:30 p.m. SPR Meeting
25th FOCUS information deadline
27th 10:00 am. Global Links

Roger Dubois will bike across The United States!

It is called the 2009 Cross Country Challenge and is run by America By Bicycle, www.abbike.com. Twenty-five adults, young and old, male and female, will be riding the whole trip. It starts in San Francisco on June 7th and ends in Portsmouth, New Hampshire on July 28th. The trip covers 3,850 miles over 52 days of which five are rest days, so we will average a little over 80 miles per day, with eight days being over 100 miles. We go through 13 states: California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont and New Hampshire. We stay in motels and our suitcases are moved via a truck.



Long Distance Bicycle Touring

Why am I doing this ride? As you know, I grew up on a farm in a Methodist family. We love the land that God gave to us when he created this world and I always yearn to be out on the land marveling at our beautiful country. I have a passion for long distance sporting events. I have run 20 marathons in my younger days, and over the last 20 years have learned to love bike riding, having ridden with Libby, my son and daughter, DJ and Matt and my brother Dick, in rides in America and in Europe.

So I have had a long-time dream to put these two passions together and ride across America. This trip will fulfill that dream. I am going to miss Libby dearly and Matt and DJ. I pray that God will keep me safe and will give me the mental and physical strength to complete this trip. I have trained long for it and am in the best biking shape of my life, so I will go for it.

Joanie Bova has a map of my trip and will post it somewhere in the church. I will send her e-mails as I travel and she will update the map. Thanks for your prayers and the support of our church.

Roger Dubois

A Pastoral Letter to United Methodists in PA

May 27, 2009

Grace and peace to all Pennsylvania United Methodists:

As followers of Jesus Christ, committed to the principles of peace and justice that he sacrificed his life for, we come to you with this urgent concern and call to action. The General Assembly is considering legislation to dramatically change the character of communities across the Commonwealth. House Bill 1317 would allow video poker and similar forms of gambling in thousands of restaurants and taverns across the state.

We urgently ask all United Methodists and persons of good will to contact their legislators and Gov. Edward Rendell to oppose this legislation, as well as any other effort to expand gambling in Pennsylvania.

The United Methodist stance on gambling is clear: "Gambling is a menace to society, deadly to the best interests of moral, social, economic, and spiritual life, destructive of good government and good stewardship." (Paragraph 163.G 2008 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church)

Scripture tells us gambling is the wrong path to success. In 1 Timothy, Chapter 6, verses 9-10, Paul writes: "Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after." (The Message)

Most gambling addicts begin betting innocently, but there is nothing innocent about gambling. From lotteries to horse racing, to slots casinos, gambling is state-regulated theft. Gambling pits people against each other, with many more losers than winners. Because of the computer-generated lure of fast-paced action, video poker is often called the crack cocaine of gambling. These machines are designed to trap players into getting in over their heads. Gambling addiction breaks down families, forcing bankruptcies, job losses, and crime.

Jesus' greatest commandment is to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. If we live this, then how can we let a neighbor lose everything to gambling? Research shows proximity to gambling increases the potential for gambling addiction. Imagine then, the negative effects of mini casinos in nearly every neighborhood?

Gov. Rendell's video lottery proposal is a cynical approach to funding education. He has proposed using the profits from video poker to provide scholarships to Pennsylvanians attending our state-owned universities and community colleges.

This is a terrible lesson to be teaching our young people. It offers our students and their parents a false choice. They gain from the government-sponsored losses of millions of persons. We expect more from our governmental leaders. Unfortunately, too often they turn to gimmicks, or poor choices like gambling to fund basic state services.

This is the second time the governor has moved to use gambling as a major source of revenue for education. We strongly opposed Act 71 of 2004, which allowed the state to create slot machine casinos around the state, and use the proceeds to reduce property taxes.

Since the passage of Act 71, there seems to be a sense that more gambling is inevitable in Pennsylvania. We disagree. Speaking clearly with a united voice from across Pennsylvania, we believe our elected representatives will listen and act responsibly.

Please contact your legislator and Gov. Rendell. Tell them video poker goes against God's best intentions for God's children. Tell them to find better, more equitable ways to fund education. Tell them more gambling only hurts Pennsylvania.

Thank you for speaking out on behalf of all Pennsylvanians, whom are all God's children.

In Christ's Service,

Thomas J. Bickerton Jane Allen Middleton
Pittsburgh Area Harrisburg Area

Peggy A. Johnson Susan W. Hassinger
Philadelphia Area Albany Area