

The Arbor Vine

A newsletter for the Ann Arbor District of the United Methodist Church



Dear Friends,

Unless you've been hiding in the proverbial cave of late, you know that we are living through some trying times... some are describing them as "unprecedented" over the last eight decades or so. All this is backdrop to one of the Church's central affirmations as we prepare for the birth of Christ... the event we confess that

God became human so we might become more like the One who created us. Christ's birth is nothing if not "Good News" to a battered and bruised world.

Macaulay's Musings

Which got me to "musing" about what the mood was like among the folks of that long-ago era. I can imagine the shepherds "grousing" among themselves in the quiet of the night about the low price for lamb in the marketplace... or the ways that the young ones were "flaunting" the norms of home and temple... or about the dastardly Roman occupation forces. You may come up with your own list.

As we enter Advent for 2008, where is it that you need the Good News in your life... in your family... in your congregation... in the world? Where are the "rough places" that need to be smoothed out? Where are the corners in your life that need the light of justice and mercy? Where in your life... individually or corporately... do we need a word of liberation, of being "set free" from all that ensnares you... me...us? What is the word of hope we would share with each other... and others whom we'll never meet... to a time of despair, of cynicism, of division?

I write these words on the day after I heard of the death of colleague and friend, The Reverend Doctor Ken Christler, Executive Director of the United Methodist Union of Greater Detroit (the Board of Missions for the two Detroit districts in our Conference). Ken had become a member of the Full Cabinet earlier this fall... and too early we lost his voice and passion for Christ's mission in the City... and beyond. As we anticipate the birth of Christ... again... we do well to remember that God is with us in all of life's circumstances. In good times and difficult times... in times of celebration and moments of quiet desperation... when we want to reach out, but are tempted instead to "hold on to what we've got". In times when we seek to raise funds for our next year's budget... ponder when to expand our facilities... or expand our outreach and witness. In Jesus Christ, God is with us. That may be the Good News

- continued -

we need to hear today. This doesn't mean we can be foolish with what God has entrusted to us... but it is also a challenge to the faith community to resist being defined by its "bottom line".

I trust that you'll ask other leaders around you... clergy and laity alike...what is the Good News we need at this time? Where is the Good News of Christ's birth most pressing for us here and now? How shall we bear witness to that truth in these troubling days? I invite you to ponder... to ask... to listen... to discern. May the authentic spirit of Christmas grace you... and all you love... at this time and for the New Year to come. Hold fast to our hope in Christ. May it be so. Contact me if you'd like to discuss this... or have a concern. Thank you for your ministry in Christ's name.

Shalom,



Tom Macaulay
District Superintendent

Michigan Area Resource Center News

The Michigan Area Resource Center newsletter is now available online at: www.marc-web.org. They have new and useful offerings with each newsletter.

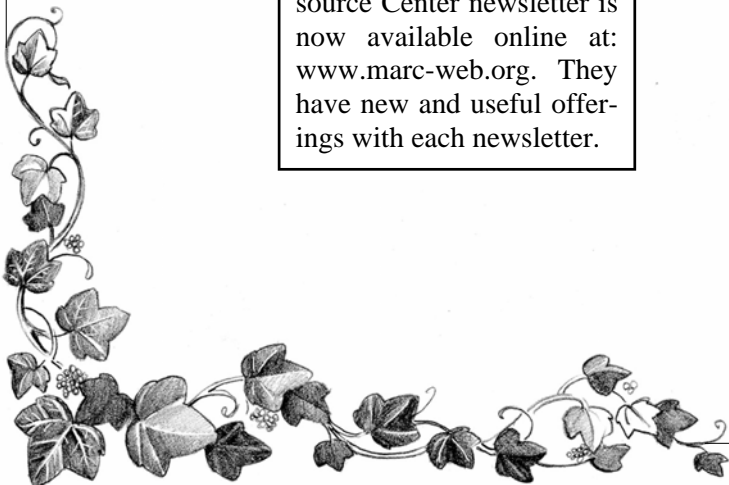
The Arbor Vine

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Jane Pollock, Editor

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Articles are due on the 10th of the month.
Comments and suggestions are welcomed.

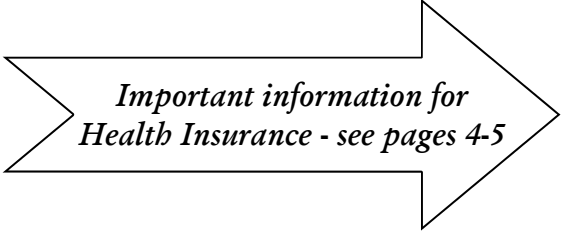


The December Schedule for the District Superintendent

16 Church Conferences in December

Dec 1	9:00 p.m.	Conference Council on Ministries Personnel Com.
Dec 2	10:00 p.m.	Cabinet Meeting
Dec 3	9:00 a.m.	Cabinet Meeting
Dec 4	8:30 a.m.	District Com. on Ordained Ministry
Dec 24-25		Office Closed
Dec 31-Jan 1		Office Closed

Tom's personal day is Friday.



*Important information for
Health Insurance - see pages 4-5*



Health Insurance Open Enrollment December 2008

Clergy - Are you eligible for conference health insurance, or need to add your spouse or family to your existing policy?

Local churches – Do you plan to provide the conference health insurance benefit for a current employee(s)?

Open enrollment in The Detroit Annual Conference Group Health Insurance Plan is available only once a year. All applications for open enrollment must be processed during the month of December for an effective date of January 1, 2009.

Health insurance is available for full time (30 hours) clergy and staff of United Methodist Churches and related agencies. An overview of the conference plan and policy can be found on pages 121-124 of the 2008 Conference Journal. It is essential to understand eligibility requirements, *especially as they relate to clergy disability and retirement.*

Local churches or agencies providing health insurance to their employees through the conference health plan are reminded that local policies cannot supersede established conference policies as indicated on the above pages. (example: A full time employee will be insured on the date of hire and must be enrolled within 30 days of their date of eligibility. Thus, a local church could not institute a three month waiting period before benefits begin, or else the employee must wait until the next open enrollment period.)

2009 HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM RATES

Annual health insurance premiums for 2009 will be:

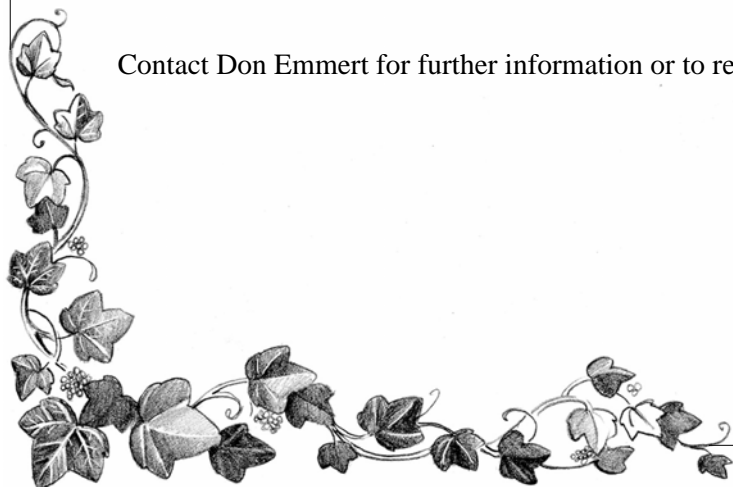
One Person	\$8,880
Two Person	\$17,760
Family	\$20,964

Premium cost sharing for clergy/conference staff participants ranges from 5%-11% of the total premium based on the participant's salary level. The premium cost sharing chart is available on the annual conference website, through the district offices, or the conference benefits officer.

Annual premiums for the optional vision coverage will be:

One Person	\$144
Two Person	\$204
Family	\$360

Contact Don Emmert for further information or to request an enrollment packet.



Important Health Insurance Information for Current Participants, Active & Retired

VISION: Vision coverage is an optional plan and therefore ***all participants must complete an enrollment form every year in order to enroll or to continue in the vision program.*** In other words, participants in the vision plan during 2008 will not be automatically continued in 2009. Rather, their vision coverage will be terminated December 31, 2008 unless they re-enroll for 2009. An enrollment form will be sent to all current health plan participants from AdminPro in November. Please complete and return the form by December 7, 2008 in order to allow sufficient time for processing. In accordance with our plan agreement the insurance company will no longer process late enrollments, so enrollment requests submitted after the beginning of the year will not be accepted. ***Participants who elect to waive vision coverage are also requested to return the vision form*** indicating their election to waive coverage in order to avoid potential confusion and to provide required documentation for the insurance files. Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation.

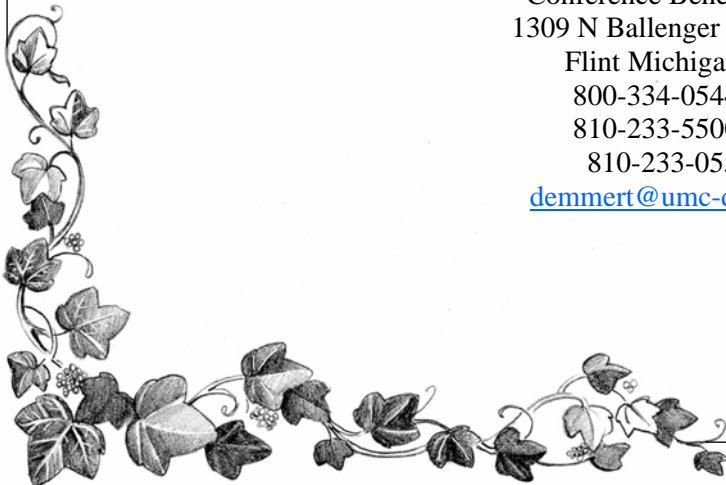
CHANGES IN FAMILY STATUS: Any changes in family status during the year (additions, terminations, births, marriage, adoption) must be communicated to the Conference Benefits Officer within 30 days of the date the change occurs. Any delay in notification could have an impact on eligibility.

FAMILY CONTINUATION: Insurance companies require proof of college enrollment for all dependents age 19-25 who will continue on a subscriber's plan in 2009. Participants must provide verification (i.e. registration form, billing statement, letter from registrar) indicating the dependent's name and enrollment as a full time student (12 hours) ***for winter semester 2009.*** ***Verification of enrollment for the current year 2008 will not work.*** Participants with dependents in this category should be receiving a letter from the Conference Benefits Officer in November requesting this information as soon as it becomes available. If a request is not received by the end of November, please contact the CBO immediately.

MEDICARE PRIMARY AT AGE 65: If you or your spouse are turning age 65 next year, you must supply photocopy(ies) of your Medicare cards to the Conference Benefits Officer in order to accurately process your coordination of benefits. Failure to do so will almost certainly result in a major delay in the proper payment of future claims.

For further information contact:

Rev Donald J Emmert, DAC
Conference Benefits Officer
1309 N Ballenger Hwy Suite 1
Flint Michigan 48504
800-334-0544 x 353
810-233-5500 x 353
810-233-0558 fax
demmert@umc-detconf.org



2008 Annual Church Report

Each church should have received a letter with your username and password for the church's online account at <http://www.eagle.gcfa.org>. Should you not receive this letter by December 1st and/or if you need a paper copy of your 2008 local church report, please contact me immediately. New reports have been added: Membership Growth, Average Sunday School Attendance, and more.

Rev. Brent L. Webster
Conference Statistician
248-851-2330
pastor.wbumc@sbcglobal.net

The Annual Report – HELP!

Free Workshop on Preparing the Annual Report with Brent Webster, Conference Statistician

Tuesday, January 6, 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 a.m.

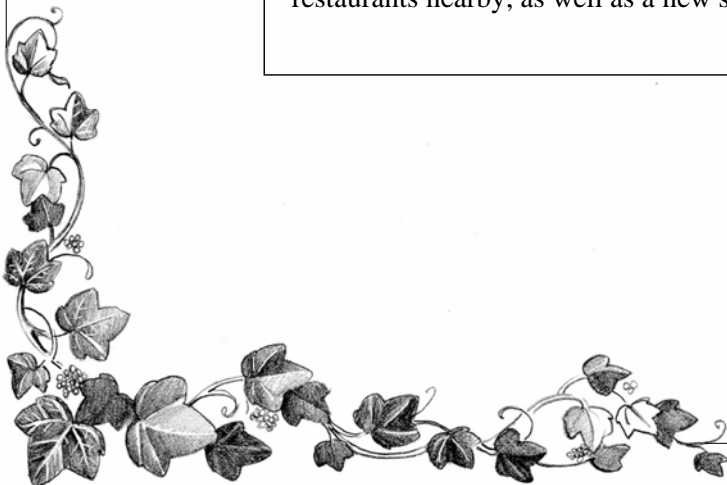
Brighton First UMC

400 E. Grand River, Brighton MI 48116

Brighton First UMC will host Rev. Brent Webster, the Conference Statistician, on Tuesday, January 6 at 10:00 a.m. He will discuss the Local Church Annual Report, demonstrate completing the report on line, and answer your questions. Pastors, administrative assistants, and finance secretaries are invited.

Please contact Terry Keefe at 810-229-8561 or terry@brightonfumc.org, if you plan to attend.

(Editor's note: The church is very close to the highway, and there are several restaurants nearby, as well as a new shopping mall)



A Message from the Conference Statistician

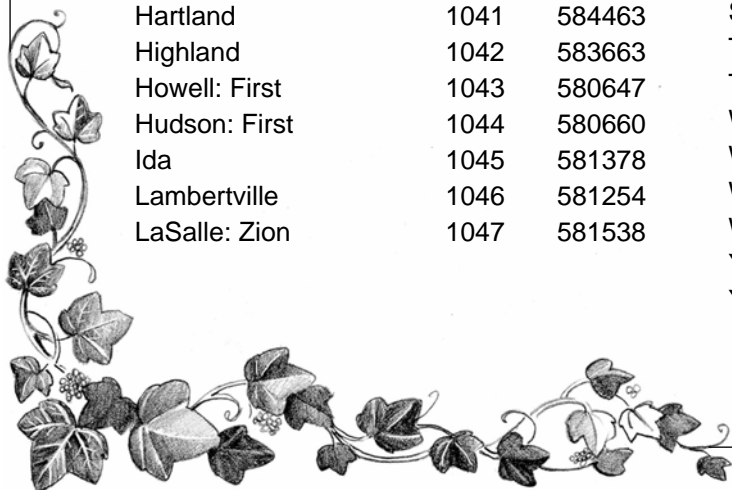
Financial reports are available on the web

By going to the internet site <http://www.umconline.org/detroit> you can view your expanded conference voucher for the most recent month as well as the previous five years.

Your username is your GCFA number (see below).

Your password is your Detroit Conference church number preceded by two zeros.

Church	DAC #	GCFA	Church	DAC #	GCFA
Adrian: First	1010	580204	Lincoln Community	1082	582214
Ann Arbor: First	1013	580225	London	1018	580784
Ann Arbor: Korean	1015	580215	Lulu	1072	581232
Ann Arbor: West Side	1016	580248	Macon	1050	580795
Azalia	1017	580578	Manchester	1051	580807
Belleville: First	1019	580261	Manchester: Sharon	1052	581573
Blissfield: Emmanuel	1020	580317	Milan: Marble Memorial	1053	580820
Blissfield: First	1021	580283	Milford	1054	584645
Brighton: First	1022	580306	Morenci	1059	580886
Britton: Grace	1023	581126	New Hudson	1060	580988
Canton: Cherry Hill	1027	580498	North Lake	1061	581004
Canton: Friendship	1127	580476	Northville: First	1062	581026
Chelsea: First	1026	580363	Novi	1063	581048
Clayton	1028	580385	Oak Grove	1064	584747
Clinton	1030	580408	Petersburg	1033	580512
Commerce	1031	583721	Pinckney: Arise	1139	580853
Deerfield	1032	580465	Plainfield	1048	580816
Denton: Faith	1034	580487	Plymouth: First	1066	581083
Dexter	1035	580523	Rollin Center	1029	581163
Dixboro	1036	580545	Salem Grove	1069	581208
Dundee	1037	580567	Saline: First	1070	581221
Erie	1038	581130	Samaria: Grace	1071	581243
Fowlerville: First	1039	584348	South Lyon: First	1073	581265
Hardy	1040	584474	Springville	1075	581287
Hartland	1041	584463	Stony Creek	1074	581323
Highland	1042	583663	Tecumseh	1076	581345
Howell: First	1043	580647	Trinity	1049	580773
Hudson: First	1044	580660	Walled Lake	1077	585183
Ida	1045	581378	Wellsville	1024	581447
Lambertville	1046	581254	Weston	1079	581482
LaSalle: Zion	1047	581538	Whitmore Lake: Wesley	1080	581527
			Ypsilanti: First	1081	581607
			Ypsilanti: St. Matthew's	1083	580556



More thanks for Connectional Grants

Samaritan Counseling

It has meant so much to be continually supported with prayer and in financial support through the grant. These are challenging times and I am blessed to be able to share God's love through the counseling Center. God is good always; always God is good.

Blessings,

Kathy Martin

Walled Lake UMC

We at Walled Lake United Methodist church thank you for the generous Connectional church grant that helped pay for our new video projector system in our sanctuary. Our place of worship has been enhanced in ways that minister to people on Sundays and throughout the week. We are grateful that we have the ability to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in yet another effective and powerful way.

With much thanksgiving,

Rev. Taek Kim

December Birthdays & Anniversaries

- 3 Marion Damberg
- 4 Gail Burdette
- 5 Bishop Jesse R DeWitt
- 5 Lois Finzer
- 11 Michael Mayo-Moyle
- 12 June & Mark Smith
- 13 Patricia Brown
- 15 Ann Thomas
- 15 Virnelle Cookingham
- 17 Susan & Mike Norton
- 18 Jennifer & Larry Wik
- 23 John Mehl Jr.
- 23 Fred Marr
- 24 Linda & Robert Selberg
- 25 Susan & Mike Clemmer
- 26 David Church
- 27 Christopher P Momany
- 27 Florence & Eric Hammar
- 27 Sandy & Dana Strall
- 28 Leigh & Matthew Hook
- 31 Marcia & Rich Burstall

West Michigan News

Bishop Jonathan D. Keaton has appointed Rev. Benton Heisler to be the West Michigan Director of Connectional Ministries, effective January 1, 2009. Rev. Heisler is the District Superintendent for the Lansing District and was co-chair of the Michigan Area Transition Team.



Outdoor and Retreat Ministries

Visit www.umccamps.org for more information



[Horse Drawn Wagon Rides/Sleigh Rides](#)
[Judson Collins Center](#)
[Fall - Spring](#)

[Locked-In with Aslan: Jr & Sr High Lock-in](#)
[Judson Collins Center](#)
[December 4 – 5, 2008](#)

[Camp at Christmas: Grades 1 - 8](#)
[Judson Collins Center](#)
[Dec. 13 – 14, 2008](#)

[Staff Reunion](#)
[Judson Collins Center](#)
[December 31 – January 1, 2009](#)

[Camp Coordinator Kick-Off](#)
[Judson Collins Center](#)
[February 7, 2009](#)

[Locked In-Snowed Out: Jr. and Sr. High](#)
[Judson Collins Center](#)
[February 27 – 28, 2009](#)

[Camp Coordinator Kick-Off](#)
[Lake Huron Retreat Center](#)
[February 28, 2009](#)

[Camp Coordinator Kick-Off](#)
[Midland First UMC](#)
[March 7, 2009](#)

[Camp Coordinator Kick-Off](#)
[Southfield Hope UMC](#)
[March 10, 2009](#)

[Mission Trip Training](#)
[Judson Collins Center](#)
[March 30-21, 2009](#)



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The Arbor Vine

*Let
Heaven
&
Nature
Sing!*