



Union Village United Methodist Church

The Village Voice

Volume 5 Issue 1

Winter 2009

From the Pastor's Desk...

Third Life for Union Village

2008-2009 may be the years that mark the turning point for Union Village in its ministry and future! I believe this is the year that can be marked as the year of the conception enabling a new birth of Union Village for its "third life". Yes! "Third life!" Here's what I mean. According to David T. Olson who wrote the book The American Church in Crisis¹ based upon a ground breaking research of 200,000 U.S. churches, there is a pattern of life cycle in churches that clearly shows birth, growth, stagnation/decline and death very much like our physical bodies. When a new church is started, a birth of a church, it grows at a rate of 10 percent per year for the first four years and it continues to grow for 40 years although the growth rate declines as the church approaches 40 years of age. At about age 40, the church begins to decline in attendance on average 2 percent per year with the rate of decline accelerating as it grows older. With these figures it is easy to deduce an average life span of the church as 80-90 years.

Looking at the history of Union Village, we can clearly see that we had two lives and it is now time for a third. The church has a long history of 180 years ministering in the community. (Notice 180 is 90 times two) The church's ministry began in December of 1825 as the Union Village Methodist Episcopal Church as an indirect result of a Methodist camp meeting held nearby on Wolf Hill a year prior with 4000 in attendance. Union

Village Methodist Episcopal church flourished until the late 1890's served by a number of circuit riders. At the turn of the 20th century, the church dwindled and in 1904-5, Union Village was not supplied with a pastor. The Newark Annual Conference ordered the church closed and sold the building in 1906. Union Village's first life lasted 81 years.

The buyers Dr. Willis F. Johnson and his brother decided to renovate and re-open the church. The Union Village church was given a second life in ministry around 1924 . The church flourished through the fifties and the sixties, and by the end of 1960s, Union Village United Methodist Church became a thriving congregation of over one thousand members. This is also the time when the current building was erected to accommodate the growing ministry. However, in the early 1970s with the shifting demographics in the area, changing cultures and trends in the society and the church's failure to address these changes began a long journey of decline to present day, nearly at the end of its second life.

With its 80 to 90 years of life span, we can say that churches are born and die everyday just like humans. As a matter of fact, about 3,700 churches die/close every year, slightly more than 1 percent of all churches in the US. Just as humans have continued to live for thousands of years, so has the church been in existence for 2000

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**Mark Your
Calendar!**

January

- 1 *Happy New Year*
- 3 *8am UMMBreakfast*
- 13 *Trustees*
- 14 *10:00 Wednesday Group
Noon—Retired Men*
- 19 *7pm Finance
7:30pm Ad Council*
- 28 *10:00 Wednesday Group
Noon—Retired Men*

February

- 7 *8am UMM Breakfast*
- 10 *Trustees*
- 11 *10:00 Wednesday Group
Noon—Retired Men*
- 16 *7pm Finance
7:30pm Ad Council*
- 25 *10:00 Wednesday Group*

See Inside Calendar for details

Third Life for Union Village

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years. The key factor of 2000 years of ministry so far and another 2000 more into the future is continual rebirth of the church by redefining its purpose and reinventing itself. For example, the Reformation in the 1500s was a major rebirth of the church by redefining itself as the church and reinventing itself accordingly. Union Village's survival depends on the rebirth of its third life by redefining what ministry is and reinventing itself. The third life will be brought on by spiritual rebirth through recovery of the "first love" (Revelation 2:4 NIV), the passionate love for God and for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To make possible a new birth of Union Village's third life, we need to continue taking baby steps toward spiritual rebirth through recovering the first love living out the purpose and mission of Christ's church in the world. We will continue to provide opportunities for members of the UVUMC to build an intimate relationship with Christ and focus our ministry on bringing people to Christ. We will be praying more and harder. We will offer ministries that are

out of the box to connect with people outside the four walls of our church.

The gestation period is a time of hope and uncertainty invoking in us excitement as well as fear. Birthing process will cause great discomfort and pain with a promise of rejoicing. This is a crucial time for commitment and decisive action if we are to rebirth Union Village into the third life. Every single member bears the responsibility of rebirth and it will require the participation of all. Some may laugh and say who ever heard of a baby being born in the geriatric ward? Sarah laughed, too, when she heard angels say she will have a child at her ripe age of 90. But God fulfilled his promise and Isaac was born.

Do we want to be among the 3700 churches that close or do we want to be a rebirth church experiencing growth at least for the next forty years? I am all for rebirth and committed to it. How about you?

Pastor Grace

¹David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2008)

TODAYS WORLD

by Anne R. C. Neale

A wind of worry whisks over the winter scene,
Our economy is slowly disintegrating, it's eating into our "dough
"so green,
The dark shadows of depression are seeping slowly into our souls,
We're worried about our future dreams, and all of our life's goals,

The undulating Wall Street Stock, of waves of up and down trends
Is an endless worry, where will all of this end?
We must never give up our Hope, or Faith, or Trust in God at all,
God knows what is going on, He'll take care of all our souls,

Our prayers are powerful and we all must join in positive prayers,
God will help us all as He is a God who cares,
We must pray sincerely, deeply, and also daily too,
Then our prayers will blend all together to God from all of
us that's true.

Hold fast, don't loose Hope, and keep your Faith still in God,
We'll sail through this life's storm with God as our staff and rod,
The dark days of worry will be lit with the Light of His Radiance
soon,
And after life's storm passes there will still be God, a blue sky, a
golden sun, and a silvery moon.

Administrative Council Report for 2008*

If one looks with open eyes, one can see that the Holy Spirit is helping to continue the transition that started last year. After a year of reading books and articles by Tom Bandy, Bill Hybels, and others, a small number of leaders at UVUMC now understand the importance of growth by focusing on 1) spiritual maturity of its members and 2) the need to introduce others to Christ. They also understand that the small group ministry can be a vital way to accomplish both of these tasks.

The adult and youth small groups continue to meet. To date, they have not yet grown substantially; but this can and will be changed with the spirit's help and prayer. More importantly, the small groups have provided an outlet for their participants' spiritual growth. Most recently, the leaders in the adult small group have been trained to teach Bill Hybel's Just Walk Across the Room series; and they are currently teaching this to members of the congregation. This is the first time that the small group members have played a direct role in Christian education! The participants of these sessions shared their stories with the congregations on Sunday, November 16, 2008.

In late October a small group of leaders met to outline strategies and plans to continue this growth in 2009. The following plans are expected to be adopted in that year:

1) The immediate business portion of Ad Council meetings will be shortened, so that the Ad Council can spend a significant amount of time in prayer or in discussing congregational growth strategies.

This was not so successful in 2008, so a different strategy will be used.

2) UVUMC will introduce a monthly prayer time in order to enhance and encourage spiritual growth.

The authors of Comeback Churches found amazing emphasis on prayer for those congregations who reversed their decline. Again, a focus on spiritual maturity.

3) The leaders of the two small groups (youth and adults) will work out a format for an alternative service.

At first it will be a monthly service, but the goal is for this to morph into a weekly service.

4) UVUMC's Ad Council will plan a vision session; continuing the work that was done during the Future Search Conference.

5) More deliberate communication of the church's strategy to its congregation.

This can include more Ad Council "minutes" during church, the use of posters and bulletin boards, additional newsletter articles, etc.

Here's a first shot at the mission statement that the Ad Council Chairman would write. It is meant to encourage congregational members to start PRAYING AND THINKING about the role that UVUMC plays for God and Christ in its community:

The mission of UVUMC is to make disciples for God's plan and Glory.

We want everybody to experience the GRACE and PEACE that comes with a personal relationship with Christ and God.

To do this, UVUMC member must:

first grow in their spiritual maturity.

be willing to help bring others to Christ.

Spiritual Growth is best achieved by DAILY practicing these seven disciplines: a) prayer; b) Bible Study; c) Worship; d) Mission; e) Giving; f) Evangelism; g) Accountability

Small groups can be an effective tool to encourage spiritual growth and to bring others to Christ.

God has commissioned EACH OF HIS PEOPLE to do this; not just the Pastor.

The leaders and congregation of UVUMC are expected to create an environment that encourages and embraces spiritual growth and evangelism.

Activities, structures, events and attitudes that support these tenets are welcomed. Ones that do not are not condoned.

Using Bill Hyble's scale to bring a convert to Jesus (-10 = complete rejection, +1 = total acceptance), I would say that UVUMC is still in the very early stages of its re-birth: perhaps -9 or -8. However, over the last several years of working with Pastor Grace, the Holy Spirit has convinced me of the "wisdom" in following this congregational growth strategy, and I will do his work among the people of Union Village.

Randy Gaulke

** This article was the report to the 2008 Annual Church Conference.*

Has Jesus Left the Room?

Two questions have guided my [life and] ministry: “What is it about your relationship with Jesus that your neighbor and the world can’t live without knowing?” and “How can one be rabid for Jesus without coming off as a bigot?” If ever the world needed answers to these questions, it’s now. But is the church providing them?

My primary concern isn’t that the Western church is in decline or that we’re running out of world-class leaders. My primary concern is that the lordship of Jesus is slowly being replaced by a juvenile hero worship of a generic whatever-you-need-him-or-her-to-be god. Oprah Winfrey leads the way in this deception. She takes a little from here and a little from there, stirs it up, and—presto! she has the god du jour. But which god is she talking about? It surely isn’t the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus.

A deceptive replacement of Jesus also takes place when the average church member substitutes love of the institutional church and obedience to the Bible for the Lordship of Jesus. We’ve forgotten that long before we were members of an institution or considered to be “people of the Book”, we were called “people of the Way”. Jesus was the Way. The early Christians were defined by their relationship to Jesus. People had authority if they’d been with Jesus or had been disciple by someone who’d been with Jesus, and so on. One’s relationship to Jesus with the litmus test in the first few centuries.

How do you answer?

Going back to my two opening questions, do you know how you’d answer them? Here are my responses:

1) “*What is it about my relationship with Jesus that my neighbor and the world can’t live without knowing?*” The answer to this question lies buried deep within the context of each person’s life story, so the answer will be different for each of us. In my case, I didn’t grow up in church. By the time I was 16, I’d never even heard a Bible story, and my life

was a mess. The day I was introduced to Jesus, everything evil and broken in me was shaken to the core, and my life was turned around in less than 30 minutes (of course I’d known the person who introduced me to Jesus for a few months). I’m not saying I was made perfect, just changed. Six months later I was preaching in missions and on the street corner (you could do that back then). So what does my neighbor need to hear about my relationship with Jesus? That God can make all things new in the blink of any eye if you’re ready—so get ready for the ride of your life.

2) *How can one be rabid about Jesus and not come off as a bigot?* The only way to share the indescribable news that God really can make all things new in the blink of an eye is through vulnerable, humble conversations with friends (this is where our Emergent friends are so on target). The day of the four spiritual laws and big revival meetings is over. Leading with “the Bible says” is deadly. All you have to share about your relationship with Jesus is what God has done in your life.

Within the context of a growing friendship...I’ve found the following questions to be helpful in engaging people in life-changing conversations:

What is your main goal in life? What will make you feel fulfilled in life? What is your number one need at the moment? When you think of God, what images come to mind? What place does faith play in your life? What brings you the most joy in life? If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be? Did your parents go to church or talk with you about God?

How do *you* share your relationship with Jesus with others without coming off as a bigot?

by Bill Easum

Bill Easum is co-founder of Easum, Bandy & Assoc., a full-service church counseling group whose mission is to guide Christian leaders for ancient mission in the contemporary world.

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Nursery School News

The New Year is here! The forecast for January is cold weather ahead but inside our nursery school it's warm and inviting. We will be blasting off to a New Year filled with special events that will brighten the children's winter months here at Union Village Nursery School.

Parents of our three year old students are about to embark on a new career! "ROCK" stars. R.O.C.K. stands for Reading Aloud Creates Knowledge. We hope this program encourages parents to read aloud to their child/children on a daily basis. Parents will be coming to their child's class to read their favorite book. Our UVNS "ROCK" stars will have their pictures taken and will be placed on our "Wall of Fame" bulletin board in our hallway. Please come to the nursery school wing to see our UVNS "ROCK" stars!



Lights...Cameras...Author! We have invited author Corey Rosen Schwartz, author of Hop! Plop! to read her book to our students. She plans on doing a special book signing as well. She graciously has volunteered to donate \$2.00 to our school for every book she sells. When children view reading as something that is enjoyed by their adult role models, reading stories becomes an important and enjoyable pastime for them.

Nursery School Registration is about to begin for the 2009-2010 school year. Our registration will take place on Wednesday, January 21st at 8:30AM in our extended care room. We appreciate letting your family, friends and neighbors with preschool- age children know about our wonderful school.

We're off to a great New Year!

Fran Pearlson, Director

Lenten Soup Suppers "God is Closer Than You Think"

March 4, 11, 18, 25 & April 1



If God is always with us, why is he sometimes so hard to find?

If the Lord says his sheep know his voice, why doesn't he talk to us?

If God is as relational as the Bible says he is, how can we learn to recognize his presence?



Musical Notes



The Christmas Eve service is always a big deal, involving many people and lots of effort. This past Christmas Eve was no exception -- in fact, it was bigger than ever. The groups presenting music that night included 26 people. Eight of these participated in two or more groups.

In the week before Christmas, we held nine rehearsals, not counting the pre-service rehearsals which began at 6 p.m. on Christmas Eve. Many braved snow and ice to be at these rehearsals, during a time period in which most people think they are overwhelmed with shopping and meal preparation. Our musicians had all these things to do as well, in addition to extra rehearsals.

The music director can make elaborate plans, but if the volunteer musicians are not willing to devote themselves to rehearsing the

music, it all comes to nothing. I am extremely grateful to the musicians at Union Village (and our guests) who committed themselves to work so diligently on our music for Christmas Eve. I trust you will agree that their efforts yielded outstanding results.

Special thanks goes to all who were involved with the presentation of *Candles and Carols* by Mark Hayes and Pamela Martin: Laurie Gaulke and her cast of costumed candle-lighters, narrators Pastor Grace Pak and John Flint, and especially the instrumentalists who provided such beautiful accompaniment for the chancel choir.

So, to the Brass Quartet, the Bell Choir, the Chancel Choir, and the instrumental ensemble for *Candles and Carols* – please accept my sincere thanks and appreciation for all you did to make our Christmas Eve service a beautiful and special experience of worship.

Linda Langstaff
Director of Music

Wednesday Group Schedule for Spring 2009

The **Wednesday Group** will plan to meet on Wednesdays through the Spring in 2009 as follows:

January 14 & 21, February 11 & 25,
March 11 & 25, April 8 & 22,
May 13 & 27, and June 10 &
24

The finished delft blue and soft white scarves will be sent to Idaho to the Special Olympics early in January for the February event..

A huge thank you to everyone who knit and crocheted scarves!



**With thanks...
Food Bank Network**



Dear Pastor Grace, UMW, and Fellow Parishioners,

Thank you for donating the toys collected at the Hanging of the Greens Service on December 7th to the children whose families are served at the North Plainfield Food Bank.

This year's Christmas distribution was held on December 20th, and thanks to the generosity of Union Village, Advent Lutheran Church, and others, there were age appropriate toys or games for every child.

The North Plainfield Somerset, Middle and High Schools joined together in their 5th Annual Student Council "Partnership"

Food Drive and donated about a dozen or so car and van loads of food on December 5th. This food was used, along with hams provided by the Food Bank Network, to pack the 52 dinners needed for the 99 children and 98 adults served today.

Thank you, also, for continuing to donate money and soup every month for the North Plainfield Food Bank. Your partnership in our efforts help to make sure that everyone who needs our help receives it. Together, we do make a difference.

Sincerely,

Martha Truxel
Coordinator

Want to See God at Work in the World?

Look here: www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2008/cnn.heroes/index.html

Over Thanksgiving weekend CNN ran a very uplifting two-hour special highlighting the work of ten "ordinary" heroes, and the impact that they have made on people's lives. What was even more amazing and uplifting was the fact that, during their acceptance speeches, a significant number

of the winners cited their belief / faith in God for leading them to do what they do!

I encourage every Christian to spend a few minutes looking at their stories and hearing their acclamations of faith! It will do wonders for your heart.

Randy Gaulke



**Union Village
United Methodist Church
Rev. Grace S. Pak, Pastor**

**The Village Voice
January - February 2009**

**Sunday Worship
10:00 AM**

**Church Office Hours: Monday-Friday
9:00 AM-1:00 PM**

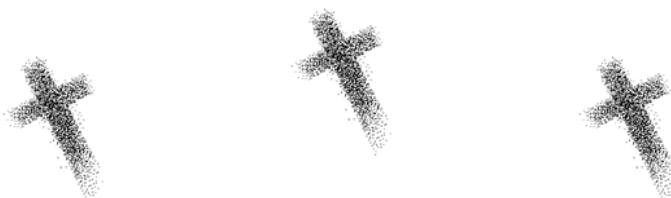
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**Visit us on the web:
www.gbgm-umc.org/unionvillage/**



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Address Correction Requested



Ash Wednesday Cluster Service

Wednesday, February 25th

7:30 pm

Union Village UMC

