Don’t Forget the Woof  
Comments by Rev. Karen Oehl

James Herriot has a story about a sheepdog that did not bark, except for one occasion. The dog was a good working dog, both happy and healthy. The only time that the owners heard the dog bark was when they were watching some sheepdog trials with him. The dog’s litter mate, or brother, was competing. He gave just one “woof”, the only one they ever heard. Although he did not bark at other times, there was apparently an urgency in expressing his joy and relationship that needed a “woof”.

“Woof” is a word that is used in weaving, as well. It is the thread that goes back and forth through the “warp” threads. Both warp and woof are needed to create fabric. Since the warp stays in place and the woof moves back and forth, I think of it as the change agent. It is also the woof which can vary in color, creating the pattern in woven cloth.

I find myself again and again in these columns talking about change. In my five years now as a district superintendent, I am convinced that our ability to change—significantly and immediately—is critical. There is absolutely no way to fulfill our mission from God without changing. Just continuing in the same path is like all warp and no woof. With no woof we have no color or message. We become irrelevant, boring, and the message is lost. Not OUR message, but the good news of Jesus Christ that has been entrusted to us.

Now, I also love the church. I love the traditions, and I am certain that the United Methodist Church doctrine and polity work as a way to fulfill our mission. In this year when I am attending both General and Jurisdictional Conferences I have thought about this a lot. This is the warp of our lives, that holds us together, and I honor it and work within it. All woof with no warp would be a mad dash from new thing to new thing with nothing to hold it together.

This is the way that we ourselves are formed, as God made us. As it says in Psalm 139, “You knit me together” and we are “intricately woven.” We grow and change, held together by God’s weaving.

We need the whole fabric, but it is the woof that needs special attention NOW. There is an urgency to our message — people we love are facing trials. We cannot just watch from a distance. It is time to come out of our silence and stuckness and “woof” with all of our hearts, and minds, and souls, and strength.

Blessings, Karen

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
~ Psalm 139:13-15

A very special THANKS to all those who served during annual conference at Lakeside… Greeters, Ushers, Offering Counters, VBS Volunteers, Pagers, Hospitality, Registration Prayer Warriors, Communion Servers, and the many other various volunteers it takes to host and support the business of the UMC. Blessings, Rhonda Stemmer & Barbara Beach

Additional APPOINTMENT CHANGES effective 7/1/2016

Kyle Gould to Cardington Center/Fairview
Rev. Brad Smith, Elder of the United Church of Christ to Lemert and Plankton UMC’s & Pastor of Visitation for Bucyrus UMC
CARES AND CONCERNS

PRAYER CONCERNS: Millard Mead, Jean Hess, Gloria Loughman, Rita Sprague, Myrl Gephart, Dorothy Daniel (mother of De Wayne Smith & Delaine McGhee), Leslie, wife of Rev. Glenn Hamilton (Lexington Church of the Cross); Olivia, daughter of Rev. Becky Smithey (Bucyrus) and Pastor David Smithey (New Washington)

SYMPATHY TO THE FAMILY & FRIENDS OF:
Barbara June Beighley

Beginning with the next newsletter you must submit prayer requests for each newsletter so we can avoid not being current & be better stewards. Thank You

CLERGY SPOUSES

In order for us to be better stewards of our resources we would like to hear from you. Please take the time to let us know if you are interested in receiving info regarding clergy spouse events such as… breakfast at lakeside or the clergy spouse retreat, etc. You can call the district office at 419-522-3881 or send an email to midohiodistrict@gmail.com Thank You!

Safe Sanctuaries for Today’s World: A Lot Has Changed…
An event to help congregations renew their commitment to providing safe places where all persons may experience the abiding love of God and fellowship within the community of faith.

September 15, 2016 @ Faith UMC (300 Ninth St. NW. Canton 44720)

Keynote Speaker:
Melanie Gordon
Discipleship Ministries
Director, Ministry with Children

Workshops:
How to Get Started with Creating and Reviewing the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Guidelines
Safely Building a Social Media Network/Presence for Your Ministry
Safe Sanctuaries as an Act of Hospitality
Panel Discussion with:
Melanie Gordon
Discipleship Ministries
John Hanna
Owner of Walters & Hanna Insurance Agency - specialized in serving churches and related ministries for over 30 years
Gary Jones
East Ohio Conference
Director of Spiritual Formation

Fee: $10
Registration Deadline: September 9
Event Registration, Schedule & More Info @ http://www.eocumc.com/safe-sanctuaries
YOUTH NEWS

Jason Snyder is the new Mid Ohio District Youth Coordinator! He has met with Rev. Karen Oehl and they are adjusting DYC this year to help enhance what you are already doing with your youth group but not to take away from it. Our focus is to help make disciples who make disciples.

Here’s how we will do that! At every DYC gathering, teens will have the opportunity to grow deeper in their relationship with Christ by practicing their faith in a safe way. Of course games, activities and snacks will be involved, but we will have special speakers, music, and discipleship time where they will walk out what they’ve learned. It’s youth group amped up! Whether you have one teen in your church or one hundred – it shows the teens, their parents, and your church that we are a part of something so much bigger than the little world around us. We are a part of The Church.

Our first event is a Back-to-School Bash on Sunday, August 14th from 2 – 5pm. We will elect DYC officers, have a cookout, water balloon fight, shaving cream fight (bring your own!), basketball, music, a huge slip-n-slide and of course devo’s! It will be held at Chapel Hill UMC located at 3716 Bellville North Road, Mansfield Ohio 44904 (just off State Route 13). Please RSVP an approximate count of how many you are bringing so we make sure to have enough food!

Blessings, Pastor Jason Snyder, 419-688-9057, jasnyder105@gmail.com

EAST OHIO CONFERENCE

Mission 50/50 Partnership Conversations
Saturday, September 10
9a - 4p
@ Mansfield First UMC (12 N. Diamond St.)

Enjoy a day of fellowship and conversation to learn about building effective mission partnerships locally, nationally and internationally. Guest speaker, Patrick Friday, director of In Mission Together (IMT) for Global Ministries (GBGM) who facilitates missional engagements for over 20 years. Cost: $25 includes lunch/materials. Register by Sept. 1 at www.eocumc.commissions/opportunities
Running the Good Race

So you heard that Paul ran the good race and now you would like to run your own. Or at least plan and host your own. Races can be a fun and healthy way for churches to build community and to raise funds for a good cause whether it is your own congregation or for another worthy cause. However, races are not something that you should host half-heartedly. If your congregation has the desire to participate but perhaps is not ready to host their own, remember that there are plenty of options of already planned events for your group to jump in on. Relays for Life and Cropwalks occur around our conference and are great at raising funds and are a team activity for church members.

To host the good race takes some work and time. Planning can take months and there are many factors that you should consider.

1. Look at other local races or events. You need to avoid conflicting events in your general area.
2. Decide what type of race you are going to have. Is it going to be a serious 5K, a triathlon or is it going to be a fun race like the ones with bounce houses or certain activities every so many miles?
3. Plot a course. Knowing where you are going is a wonderful cliché for life but it is necessary for race planning. Unless you are blessed with very large properties you will need to work with others to secure the course.
4. Get ready for the real work! You decided when to have the race, whether or not to have a partner, the type of race, charted the course, and received permission from the necessary agencies, now it’s time for the work.
   a. Advertising- Word of mouth is great but so are the many free community event websites. Take the time to make a nice flyer and get it out there! Also check out free radio options, advertising through church websites and through your clergy brothers and sisters.
   b. Pre-registration- If you can do this, your day of work will be much easier! Online is the way to go. Do not forget though to include a waiver.
   c. Plan hospitality- Remember that this may be some people’s first and potentially only interaction with you. Hospitality counts. Items that almost have to occur are water or nutrition stops along the course and at the finish, some kind of swag (t-shirt, medals, coupons, etc.), registration workers, and the celebration of the winners (for fastest participants and the big winner which is whatever org you raised money for). You also want medical experts on hand- do not just assume no one will be hurt. Other potential options are a finish line festival, night before carb loading meal, or events/items that go with your theme. These are also events that allow your members more time to interact with guests.
   d. Volunteers- Races take a fair number of volunteers in prep and especially day of. In addition to your church folk, remember local high school and other groups may be looking for community service hours. Working with other groups at any stage only strengthens the social impact of your event.

Finally, at every stage of planning and executing you should be praying! Pray for guidance on if you should have an event. If it should be in partnership or solo. Who you should outreach to. For the safety of all those involved. Have people of the church begin and continue to pray for the event even after it ended. On the day of the race you can have prayer walkers in the crowd praying quietly or in an organized fashion for the event. We are a church and we should not leave this most powerful tool in our bag.

If you are interested in planning a race, the District Strategy Team may be able to help resource you as you begin your planning.

The mission of the District Strategy Team is to resource pastors and local churches in Mid-Ohio in ways that help to make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ both inside and outside the church walls.