



LIVING WATER

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December 2012

From Your District Superintendent

In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. (Jeremiah 33:15)

With these words the Prophet Jeremiah offers a word of hope to the people of God. The need for hope was very real for the people of the city of Jerusalem, the people to whom Jeremiah was speaking. The city was under siege by the Babylonians. There was much to fear. There was little hope for the people. And God spoke.

Jeremiah did a strange thing which is depicted in the chapter preceding the one referenced above. While the city of Jerusalem was in very real danger of falling to the Babylonians, Jeremiah purchased a piece of property in the city. A foolish act at best. What hope is there in buying something that will not be yours in just a little while? What economic gain can one hope to achieve under such circumstances? And God spoke.

According to a recent Gallup poll, there is expected to be about a 3% uptick in Christmas spending this year. Thirty percent of the respondents in the survey said that they would individually spend \$1000 or more on Christmas gifts. Another twenty-one percent said that they would be spending between \$500-\$1000 on gifts. So, economically, there seems to be hopeful signs. At least for some. And God spoke!

Jeremiah bought as a sign to the people that God would bring renewal and that there remained hope. Why do we buy? Just so you know that I am not making a run at being elected a Scrooge, I know that there are good reasons to buy things. I will be buying things this Christmas. I am just challenging myself and you to consider "why?" How do my actions bring honor to the story and the meaning of Christmas? And God spoke.

Even as things get better in our nation there remain too many who suffer in the midst of plenty. My heart grows heavy when I hear messages, even from Christians, that say such suffering is primarily the fault of those who suffer. Yes, there are those who bring it on themselves. But study after study tells us that most, the vast majority of those who are poor work more than most who have so much. It was not the poor who caused the economic meltdown of 2008 from which our nation is still recovering. Those who caused the problems were, and are, quite wealthy. Hear this - this is not an indictment of wealth. This is about character, Christian character. And God spoke.

As we enter the Advent season what hope do we have as a people? We have the hope of the incarnation! God breaking into the reality of our lives and bringing the message of hope. What we do with Christmas needs to reflect that hope. Buy the gifts for those you love. Also remember those who suffer and need our help. There is a phrase going around that says "Buy Less-Give More." Not a bad idea for those who have been given so much...

***For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)***

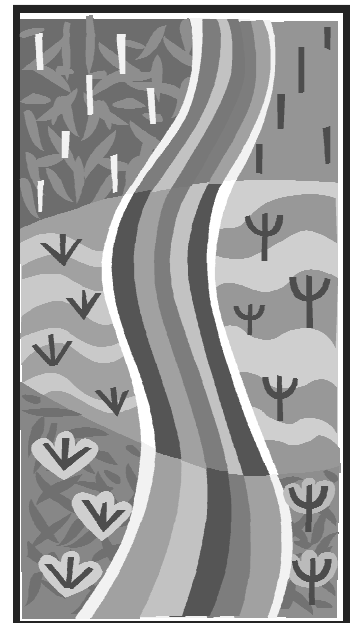
And God spoke!

In Christ,

Great Plains Episcopacy Area
Bishop: Scott Jones

Five Rivers
District Superintendent:
Rev. Dr. Dennis Ackerman

Administrative Assistant
and Newsletter Editor:
Marv e Ralston



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December 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 
2 	3	4	5	6	7	8 <i>Bud Tuxhorn</i>
9 <i>Marcia Eaton</i>	10	11	12	13	14 	15 
16	17	18	19	20	21 <i>Dallas Peterson</i>	22 <i>Lane Bailey</i>
23	24 	25	26	27	28	29
30	31 <i>Gina Gile</i>					

Church Conferences:

- Dec. 2nd Parker/Beagle/Fontana at Parker UMC, 10:00 a.m.
- Dec. 2nd Fort Scott 1st at Fort Scott 1st UMC, 3-5 p.m.
- Dec. 2nd St. John's/Hammond/West Liberty at St. John's UMC, 6-8 p.m.
- Dec. 4th Centenary/Linwood and Central UMC at Centenary UMC, 7-9 p.m.
- Dec. 5th Wellsville/Clearfield and Edgerton UMC at Wellsville UMC, 7-9 p.m.
- Dec. 9th Michigan Valley at Michigan Valley UMC, Noon
- Dec. 9th Richmond and Garnett/Greeley at Richmond UMC, 3-5 p.m.
- Dec. 9th Overbrook and Worden at Overbrook UMC, 6-8 p.m.
- Dec. 11th Eudora at Eudora UMC, 7-9 p.m.
- Dec. 13th LaCygne/New Lancaster at LaCygne UMC, 7-9 p.m.
- Dec. 16th Osawatomie/Lane and Paola at Osawatomie UMC, 3-5 p.m.
- Dec. 16th Louisburg at Louisburg UMC, 6-8 p.m.
- Dec. 18th Lyndon at Lyndon UMC, 7-9 p.m.
- January 6th Lawrence 1st at Lawrence 1st UMC (downtown), Noon-2 p.m.



Jan. 15th-17th
Joint Called Clergy Session
Kearney, NE

- Dec. 1st World Aids Day, **"She Was a Mother"** at Bonner Springs UMC (see pg. 5)
- Dec. 25 Christmas Day

The District office will be closed Dec. 24th-Jan. 1st for Christmas, New Years and vacation

Healthy Families, Healthy Planet Advocacy Training Promotes Awareness

By Marvé Ralston

A recent three-day training event in Fort Worth, Texas, provided an opportunity for 27 women to become better educated about women's maternal health in the world.

The Healthy Families, Healthy Planet project is a program initiative of the General Board of Church and Society and is funded through a grant from the United Nations Foundation. The goal of the training was to educate and mobilize an additional group of advocates for international family planning and maternal health.

The group was predominantly United Methodist and was led by Katey Zeh, director of the Healthy Families, Healthy Planet, and Katie Kraft, Legislative Advocacy and Communications associate. Both women work with the General Board of Church and Society.

The first night the focus was on "Mothers of our Past". The group gathered over dinner and shared life experiences, motherhood, childbearing and the effect these have had on their lives. A devotion was given by Zeh using Rachel's story from the bible (Genesis 35:16-20) regarding the birth of her 2nd son whom she named Ben-Oni (son of my trouble) preceding her death in childbirth.

"Mothers of the Present" was one of the topics of day two. The group was educated on statistics regarding maternal and infant health around the world. All of the statistics were quite alarming.

Every day...

- 800 women die from pregnancy/childbirth
- 16,000 suffer birth-related injury/infection
- 8,300 neonatal infants die
- 2,700 children are left motherless

Ninety-nine percent of these deaths and injuries occur in the developing world.

Throughout the world, 222 million women would like to delay a pregnancy but have no means for birth control. One-third of these maternal deaths could be prevented if this were possible.

Guest speaker Maria Felix Arauz, a native of Nicaragua, gave her personal message about what can be done when women are educated and have access to medical facilities and supplies to care for their reproductive health. Nan McCurdy, a United Methodist missionary to Nicaragua, was the translator for Maria, who spoke to the group in Spanish.



(Maria Felix Arauz and Nan McCurdy UMC Missionary to Nicaragua speaking to the group)



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Maria's story began in an impoverished rural family. She had three children at a very young age and was abused by the father of her children. When her youngest was two she had the opportunity to begin attending Integral Health training workshops with "Women and Community" in her village.

She later separated from her husband and began her life as the single mom of three children. Once divorced the abuse stopped but now she had no help with financial support of her children. Like that of many single women in other parts of the world, the reality was that her husband was not responsible economically for his children. This made it very hard for Maria to provide the basics for her children.

She began working part-time in 1998 with Women and Community doing literacy training with women. In 1999, Maria began working full-time with women who are survivors of violence.

Women and Community helps women, youth and children with health, education, human rights and employment in Nicaragua, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Conditions are improving in Nicaragua partially due to the government working alongside groups like the United Methodist Church and the Catholic Women of Austria, who give funding to help programs like "Women and Community." Maternal mortality has been cut in half and much has been done to improve women's health.

Katie Kraft led with information on "Where are You in History?"



(Katie Kraft, Legislative Advocacy & Communications Association)



(Katie Zeh, Director of Healthy Families, Healthy Planet Project)

The United Methodist Church plays a vital role in maternal health. During the 2012 General Conference the Churches Roll resolution, was accepted.

The Church's Role calls upon all local congregations to:

- Support United Methodist projects around the world working on maternal health and family planning.
- Advocate with policy makers at all levels to improve maternal health through increased access to maternal health and family planning services.
- Support local health initiatives that expand access to information and services for women.

The Kansas East Conference, along with New York, Louisiana and California Pacific conferences all adopted resolutions to support the Healthy Families, Healthy Planet project.

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The film **No Woman, No Cry** was shown to give additional first-hand examples of women in very compromised maternal health situations. In her gripping directorial debut, Christy Turlington Burns shares the powerful stories of at-risk pregnant women in four parts of the world, including a remote Maasai tribe in Tanzania, a slum of Bangladesh, a post-abortion care ward in Guatemala, and a prenatal clinic in the United States.

The newly trained advocates returned home with powerful information and tools for education of others, steps to take to get elected officials onboard to advocate for support and funding, an Advent devotion and mission project to share and a connection with a group of similarly minded women for support.

This is the second training event of this type for this year. The first training event took place in Columbus, Ohio. "In the last year, we have trained more than 75 Ambassadors across more than 20 Annual Conferences in the United States," said Zeh.

A theme throughout the advocacy training was best expressed by Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations General Secretary. "No woman should have to pay with her life for giving life."

You can help women like Maria Felix Arauz in Nicaragua through the **Advance** #13285A "Women and Community" Serving women, youth and children with health, education, human rights and employment.

The Advance, if you are not familiar with it, is an accountable, designated giving arm of The United Methodist Church that ensures 100% of each gift reaches its intended mission or ministry. **You decide** which program or ministry to support through The Advance. The Advance is part of the General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church. You can find other projects at www.umcmmission.org.

Bonner Springs United Methodist Church will host a maternal health awareness event in conjunction with World AIDS Day on December 1 from 10 a.m. to noon. The event entitled, "She was a Mother" is co-sponsored by Healthy Families, Healthy Planet, part of the General Board of Church and Society in Washington, D.C., which advocates for the maternal health of mothers and their babies around the world. "This will be a great opportunity to learn how churches can make a positive impact for women in the developing world, and help improve birthing conditions so that women can have safe deliveries and healthy babies," said Courtney Fowler, a maternal health advocate and member of the planning team for this event.



Courtney Fowler an advocate for maternal health from Manhattan College Avenue UMC

To learn more about the Healthy Families, Healthy Planet project, visit www.umchealthyfamilies.org

Katey Zeh, project director for Healthy Families, Healthy Planet, will be the keynote speaker. "I can't imagine a better way to commemorate World AIDS Day than in community and conversation about global maternal health with members of the Great Plains conference. Advent is an opportunity for us all to reflect on the circumstances surrounding Mary's delivery and birth of the Christ child, and to connect her experience with the realities that women continue to face today," said Zeh.

In addition to the program, attendees will learn about and assemble birthing kits to send to women in need via UMCOR.



District Office
3300 Clinton Parkway Ct. Suite 110
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District Prayer Calendar

Dec. 2 Iola Calvary/Salem
Rev. Gene McIntosh



Rev. Gene McIntosh

Dec. 9 Humboldt/Big Creek
Rev. Marge Cox



Rev. Marjorie Cox

Dec. 16 Lawrence Central
Rev. Jay Henderson



Rev. Jay Henderson

Dec. 23 Pomona/Vassar
Pastor Kathy Symes



Pastor Kathy Symes

Dec. 30 Devon/Mapleton
Rev. Don Flanner



Rev. Don Flanner