



THE BEACON

Winter 2009

www.oconeestreetumc.org

Important Dates:

Thursday, Feb. 5

PPR Meeting
7 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 8

Churchwide Planning
Following Service

Monday, Feb. 9

UMW Meeting
Home of Frankie Wylie
6 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 14

Spaghetti Dinner &
Silent Auction
6 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 25

Wednesday Night Supper
6 p.m.

Ash Wednesday Service
7 p.m.

Sunday, March 1

Fellowship Meal &
Diaper Shower for
Meg Hines, Angie Pendley
and Amanda Scott
Following Service

'The World is Our Parish'

Mission, ministry critical to church

Oconee Street UMC is a church with a great heart for mission. We support local mission and ministry within the Athens community, giving generously in the last several years to the work of Our Daily Bread, The Athens Nurses' Clinic, The Athens Homeless Shelter, Interfaith Hospitality Network, The Ark, Project Safe, and the Winter Shelter. We also give generously to mission and ministry in far away places as part of our understanding of John Wesley's belief that the world is our parish. We understand our connection and accept our responsibility to reach out to the world through our support of a missionary in Africa and through giving to worldwide mission efforts of the United Methodist Church. Here is an update on these two giving efforts:

For the past several years Oconee Street has been a sponsoring congregation of a missionary, first Millie Kim in Mongolia and now Priscilla Legay-Jaiah in Ghana. Our contribution provides salary support through the UM General Board of Global Ministries. Recently we received a letter from Priscilla saying that she and her family were moving in February to Liberia.

"I have been assigned as principal to Ganta mission school in the north, where most of the refugees' children

and family have returned. Ganta Mission School is an elementary through senior high level school and vocational training school. It is part of a complex which includes a hospital and nursing school and leprosy and tuberculosis rehabilitation centers in northeast Liberia. It was established in 1926 by two missionaries, Dr. George Harley and his wife Winifred. The school and the hospital serve



a population of around 450,000 in Liberia and neighboring countries. Most buildings were damaged by the civil war in 1990. The General Board of Global Ministries has renovated some of the buildings. In order to get the school in full operation, the

cafeteria and the dorms for both girls and boys still need to be renovated.

"This new assignment is a great challenge financially and emotionally. The need of the country is great as they continue to rebuild roads, electricity, water, the health care system, etc. The government is not able to fully rebuild all of the schools in the country; therefore, the church's schools are the only hope for parents to provide quality education for their children now."

Priscilla lists a number of items that the school needs. Please see page 3 for a list of goods that are needed.

Pastor's Corner

Recently I had the privilege of attending my fifth January Adventure, a meeting of "progressive" Christians held at the South Georgia Conference's retreat center Epworth-by-the-Sea in St. Simons, Ga. The first event attracted 250 people. Each year the numbers have grown and for the last two years, the organizers have had to hold two sessions to accommodate all those interested in attending. This year more than 1,000 people attended the two sessions led by Marcus Borg and Diana Butler Bass.

Marcus Borg took on the unenviable task of explicating Paul, to encourage us to see Paul as "appealing" and not "appalling"! He postulated that there are three Pauls – the "radical" Paul of the early, genuine letters, the "conservative" Paul of the disputed letters (did Paul write them or not?), and the "reactionary" Paul of the pastoral letters, 1, 2 Timothy and Titus (general thought not to have been written by Paul but about 75 years later).

Diana Butler Bass spoke on the general topic "Being Church: The Shape of Vital Congregations." Her thesis is that contrary to popular belief, it is not true that the only churches that are growing are Evangelical and Pentecostal; nor is it true that we now live in the age of the mega-church. In a three-year study of theologically centrist and progressive churches across the country she has found that many churches are flourishing, and are doing so without resorting to mimicking the mega-church, evangelical style.

In her study of the spiritual life of various small to mid-size (35-3,500 members) Episcopal, United Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and Lutheran churches she found certain consistent practices, such as hospitality, contemplation, diversity, justice, discernment, and worship, to be the core expressions of congregations seeking to rediscover authentic Christian faith and witness today. She affirmed that increase in numbers is not as significant an indicator of church vitality as is depth of practice. In fact, she reported that Saddleback Church, the epitome of the church-growth movement boasting of over 20,000 members, recently concluded a 3-year study which has resulted in a complete re-evaluation of their entire philosophy of what it means to be a "successful" church. It seems that Saddleback is a revolving door; retention is a problem. People are attracted by the many programs, but find that their deeper needs and questions are not being met or answered. And so they move out the back door as others come in the front door.

As we move into 2009, I hope we will begin intentionally to discern our vision for Oconee Street UMC, now and for the future.

Continued on Page 4

OCONEE STREET UMC

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OCONEE ST. UMC

THE BEACON

Pastor: The Rev. Lisa Caine

Editor: Joe Dennis

The Beacon is published quarterly as the official newsletter of Oconee Street United Methodist Church. For newsletter submissions, please contact Joe Dennis at 706-548-9359 or joe.dennis@yahoo.com.

Oconee Street United Methodist Church welcomes all people regardless of age, color, race, ethnic background, economic status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, struggles with addiction, physical and mental challenges, or educational level. We come seeking the healing balm of salvation through Jesus Christ. Please talk to the pastor or lay leader if you wish to join this fellowship through Baptism or transfer membership from another church.

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OCONEE STREET
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Bulletin Board

E-mail bulletin board items to joe.dennis@yahoo.com or call 706-548-9359



•Priscilla lists a number of items that the school needs. A shipment of goods was sent in December 2008 and another will be sent in August 2009. The wish list includes: walking shoes, canned meat, rice, educational materials, office supplies (pens, pencils, notebooks, calculators, glue, crayons, ink, files, book bags, rulers, notebooks, dictionaries), Bibles, T-shirts, clothes for girls, boys, men and women, computers, laptops, copying machines, fax, typewriters, Jeeps, pickups that can be used for the school, sporting equipment (football, basketball, playground equipment).

These items can be collected and taken or sent to locally to 3731 Wynship Court, Snellville, Ga. 30039. For more information, call 770-761-6441.

Financial donations are also being requested to support: teachers' salaries (teachers make from \$0-\$150/month), scholarships (sponsorship for a child to go to school for one year is \$150) and shipping costs. Checks for financial gifts should be made out and sent to: General Board of Global Ministries, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 320, New York, NY 10115 Mark: Advance #00382A, Ganta Mission School Liberia



•In addition to support for Priscilla Legay-Jaiah, our congregation supports mission in two other ways: first through our apportionments, that share of the work of the church assigned to each local church; and second, through an additional \$100/month designated in our budget for missions. This year this money will go to the following 12 mission programs, designated by the Board of Global Ministries, as "The Advance," in which "100 percent of each gift reaches its intended mission or ministry and helps to fulfill both physical and spiritual needs through a variety of partnerships worldwide to reach mutual goals that make a life-changing and long-lasting impact."

Below is a list of these 12 programs along with a brief description of what our contribution may be used for:

1. Community Based Rehabilitation in Faryab Province, Afghanistan: \$11 can help train a woman to become a midwife, thereby reducing the high rate of childbirth-related disability and death.
2. Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary, Estonia: \$12 can provide a library book to educate young church leaders from Russia and Eastern Europe.
3. Shade and Fresh Water, Brazil: \$20 can offer tutoring and Christian education to at risk children.
4. Renovation of Betty Carew Women's Training Center, Sierra Leone: \$45 can purchase a bed for a woman living in extreme poverty.
5. Feed My Starving Children: 15 cents can provide a meal to a child in Haiti, Ethiopia, India and around the world. \$55 can give a child a meal every day for a year.
6. Amigos Del Valle, New Mexico, U.S.: \$60 can give an older adult home assistance care for a year.
7. Bethlehem Bible College, The Shepherd Society, Israel and Palestine: \$75 can pay a week's salary for a worker to buy medicine, food, and shelter for his or her family
8. Amity Foundation Blindness Prevention Project, China: \$85 can give sight to a blind person suffering from cataracts.
9. Vietnam Mission Initiative: \$100 can help start a new church in a country recovering from war.
10. Give Ye Them to Eat, Mexico: \$130 can buy a female goat for a village to provide milk, food, and baby goats.
11. New Life, Zambia: \$250 can buy a PET (Personal Energy Transportation) hand bike for a person unable to walk.
12. Accion Medica Christiana, Matagalpa, Nicaragua: \$300 can buy a cow for a village woman, enabling her to earn money and give calves to other women in the community who will repeat the cycle.

Interfaith offers opportunity to serve, help families

Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) of Athens is one of the missions that Oconee Street UMC supports with service and gifts. Thirteen churches take turns hosting homeless families for a week at a time, with the help of seven support churches. Four weeks each year, Oconee Street is a support congregation for Princeton UMC.

As of the fall, IHN had served 70 families, including 12,220 bed nights and serving 36,600 meals. IHN's Day Center staff work with families to reach sustainable solutions for employment and housing. In 2008, 60 percent of families moved from the network into apartments or transitional housing.

On the Sunday afternoon of our host weeks, Princeton's Sunday school rooms are transformed into bedrooms for each family and the overnight hosts. Throughout the week families receive meals, trans-

portation in the van, and sleep at Princeton. On the weekend, the Day Center staff is off and volunteers assist guests around the clock. It takes a lot of people power to provide all these services. For example, during

2009 Dates of Service

March 29-April 5

June 7-14

September 6-13

December 6-13

our host week in October six Oconee Street volunteers provided 69 hours of service, and 30 Princeton volunteers provided 214 hours of service.

IHN is an opportunity to answer God's call in practical ways, such as making a meal or spending the night. Other times we simply serve as a kind presence for a family that is strug-

gling.

For me, it is a great opportunity for my family to serve together. My girls have a good time playing with the kids, but we also get a chance to talk about the bigger world and about helping each other. They are deepening their compassion and the beginning of their own sense of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Last summer my generous 4-year-old described it like this, "God fills up our hearts with so much love so we give some to the families who stay at the church."

Thank you to the dedicated volunteers who make our IHN mission possible! If you would like to join in service as an IHN volunteer, please call or email me at 706-546-4703 or e-mail katieandviolet@hotmail.com.

Our next host week with Princeton will be March 29 – April 5.

-Katie Calkin

Pastor's Corner

What are our traditions— as an individual church, as a part of the United Methodist Church, and as a part of the universal body of Christ? How does remembering our traditions help to shape who we are today? What are our practices? How are the practices of hospitality, contemplation, diversity, justice, discernment, and worship lived out in our congregation? What do we do that strengthens us both corporately and individually? What deepens our personal faith and joins us together as a community? And where do we find the wisdom to face life's challenges? Is it the purpose of church to answer all of our questions or is the purpose to help us ask better questions? Is church something we go to or something we are?

I'm currently reading Bass's book "Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming the Faith." I invite you to read it with me to see if we can find together information there that will help us answer these questions and to be the church God is calling us to be.

Grace and peace,
Lisa C.



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