

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TRINITY

### Saturday (09/03)

10:00 Emmaus 4<sup>th</sup> Day Reunion Group—Conference Room.  
10:00 Mission Chicken BBQ at Kroger Parking Lot.  
5:00 Meth Anonymous.

### Monday (09/05)

Labor Day -- Church Office Closed.

### Wednesday (09/07)

6:30 Finance Comm. Meeting at Lighthouse Apartments.  
7:30 Church Council Meeting at Lighthouse Apartments.  
7:30 Praise Team.

### Thursday (09/08)

6:30 Cub Scouts.

### Friday (09/09)

6:00 Rehearsal.  
6:00 A.A.—Fellowship Hall.

### Saturday (09/10)

10:00 Emmaus 4<sup>th</sup> Day Reunion Group—Conference Room.  
3:00 Wedding.  
5:00 Meth Anonymous.

## Lift up in Prayer

A Ministry Cluster is a group of 4 to 9 local churches who choose to work together to accomplish the Gospel mission in their area, and it is also be a group of local churches who share common ministry needs and who work together to learn from each other. We have a rotation list of the churches in our cluster to lift up in prayer. In September we will lift up in prayer Sept. 4—Albion Asbury, Sept. 11—Albion Trinity, Sept. 18—Avilla Calvary, Sept. 25—Kendallville Faith.

## Trinity Church Contact Information

Would you like to contact one of your staff persons at Trinity by e-mail? You may go to [www.trinitychurchum.org](http://www.trinitychurchum.org) if you cannot remember the e-mail addresses below. E-mail addresses for Trinity staff are:

Pastor Scott: [gspattison@gmail.com](mailto:gspattison@gmail.com)  
Pastor Steve: [pastorbritt@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pastorbritt@sbcglobal.net)  
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Sonja: [Sonja.richards@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Sonja.richards@sbcglobal.net)  
Jon: [jonzinnel@gmail.com](mailto:jonzinnel@gmail.com)

Find us on the web: [www.trinitychurchum.org](http://www.trinitychurchum.org) or find us on Facebook: Trinity Church-Kendallville, IN. Youth are on Facebook: Trinity Church Ecc12:1 Youth Ministries.

Pastor: G. Scott Pattison -- Pastor of Caring & connections: Steve Brittenham  
Director of Children & Families: Sonja Richards -- Youth Director: Jon Zinnel -- Church Secretary: Hazel Mapes



THE TRINITY SPIRE  
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# The Trinity Spire

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OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT: Trinity Church is a people exalting God, growing in discipleship, reaching our community while caring and serving as Jesus did.

Volume 37, Issue 9

September, 2011

## Sunday at Trinity

8:30 TRADITIONAL WORSHIP

9:30 FELLOWSHIP IN NARTHEX

9:40 SMALL GROUPS

10:39 MODERN WORSHIP

5:00-7:30 YOUTH GROUP

7:00 AL-A-NON

## September?!?!?!?!?

It seems that just yesterday we were complaining about the excessive heat, now I can see my breath and the steam off my morning coffee when I let the dog out. Labor Day weekend has historically marked the end of summer (and wearing white, the end of extended lazy days, etc.). Here we are at another Labor Day, September is starting up, and summer is now a memory. It is as if one can feel the pace of life start gearing up like the old straight-line and flathead 8 engines. They weren't much out of the gate, but boy could they run when they got going. I remember an "old boat" of a '68 Pontiac I had in high school. It took about a mile to get up to speed, but it sure could cruise. (Of course I'd rather had a muscle car that shot out of the gate, and cruised while looking good – maybe in retirement – right?!?!).



Sometimes our schedules slowly build, and other times it seems like they will "shoot out of the gate" while we are pressed back into our seats. This fall, we have many exciting opportunities to help you keep perspective no matter what speed you travel!

- We are taking our small group ministries to "the next level" with trained leaders leading a small group most every day of the week for a 6-week experience, thanks to Dave Beare bringing his experience and training to us as

they have connected to Trinity. Make sure to get plugged into a small group – check out the insert for details. It will only be a 6-week burst from September 11 through October 23 (we factored in apple festival in counting weeks). For those who have experienced small groups, they are ready, for others this is a great way to "try one out".

- The ladies will be traveling to see Beth Moore on Saturday, September 10. Sign-up now. It will be a great experience to share the day with women from Trinity and around Northeast Indiana as they share in the teleconference in Topeka. Check with Kathy Brittenham for details! No cost for tickets this time!
- We will also have our annual Block Party on September 11. Each year we try to grow a little. This year, we will be sharing with our neighbor church to reach out to our neighbors in the neighborhood! St. John's Lutheran will be joining us on Rush Street (change of street) from 5-7pm, along with our neighbors from the neighborhood and those we have invited. This is a great time as we reach out during our fellowship and fellowship during our outreach! As usual, this is a great way for us to invite our neighbors that we have either been asking or thinking about asking to church. What we have realized is that not everyone knows how to "do" church, but they do know how to "do" cook outs! This is an easy step in asking, witnessing, and yes – even "evangelizing!" Simply invite someone to the table – sounds almost Christ like!
- We also are starting confirmation and membership opportunities. If you or your pre-teen or teen are interested, let me know! Sessions are being organized now!
- Sunday nights will be full again with Sunday Night Live with activities with children, youth, and adults. Sonja and Jon have been contacting many of our existing families and participants, but keep checking the worship programs and newsletters for details of new opportunities!
- Other! I always include the "other" category because there is either something I missed, or something God is raising up, but we do not know about it yet. God is working in and through all of us, so be open to what God is speaking to you about!

On an organizational level, we are also entering into an exciting time of assessing where we are, and where we are going. United Methodist Churches across the country are asked to set five goals, work toward them and monitor them via a "dash board". Our leadership will be setting those in the fall. We are also participating in "Step 2" of the Fruitful Congregations. This will be a time of discernment of where we have been, and what we need to do next in focus and priorities. There will be various ways to participate in this process that will help us look to the future with intentional focus. See enclosed insert for details on both of these items.

Growing with you!

*Pastor Scott*

# Looking Ahead

Plan Now: September 11 -- Block Party  
on Rush Street from 5:00-7:00 p.m.  
We're Partnering with St. John Lutheran Church

## Prayer Requests

Jean Alexander, Anna Bailey, Eden Banks, Charlotte Bedson, Diane Bell, Maxine Berhalter, Jean Bonecutter, Terry Bowman, Alli Burton, Floyd Burnworth, Kitty Burnworth, Julie Butgen, Virginia Buttermore, Jim Chaffins, Mary Charlton, Don Corbin, Fred Cornett, Del & Mary Cortner's son, Eleanor Davis, Richard Dorscher, Ben Earley, Sally Eulitt, Marvin Fager, Donni Frain, Jason Gienger, Jean Gray, Sarah Grismore, Mac and Helen Grossman, Beth Hager, Herb F. Hart, Wayne Hartigan, David Haskins, Raven Hensley, Brad Huff, Arla Johnson, Mike Johnson, Linda Keck, Virginia Kirschner, Miles King, Todd Kline, Danielle Knox, Carolyn Laisure, Evan Lash, Kara Lilly, Barbara Luther, Annette Luttmann, Jim Luttmann, Jr., Austin McCormick, Shirley McKinley, Cindy Mercer, Jack and Mary Metzger, LeRoy Nelson, Matt Ogden, Phil Ogden, Ruth Oliver, Gladys Owens, Verlin Reeve, Ashley Rhinehart, Evelyn Rice, Nonalee Roberts, Adam Ross, Justin Scher, J.C. Slone, Jeff Sonne (Auto accident), Karen Steelman, Deena Vale, Willard and Darlene Vale, Betty VanWinkle, Jennifer Will, Howard Woodby, Joyce Woodby, Barbara Woodward, Jerry, with Colon Cancer, Brother who has cancer; Grandson who has brain cancer, Mom, Haley Wright, Lisa Wright, Willie Mae York, Cousin, who is in hospital with heart problems, Son and Daughter, my Mother-in-law with Parkinson's, My Family, Friend going through tough situations, My Mom, Daughter, Karen and her Family, Friend--Janet whose father in ICU, Sister--Dixie, Friend--Alice going through divorce.

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## Friendship Class Selling Sechler Pickles

Members of the Friendship Class are selling Sechler Pickles. They will be available following Worship Services Sunday morning to hand out price lists and take orders.

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## Missions Chicken Barbeque

Saturday, Sept. 3, 10am-2pm

Kroger Parking Lot

Enjoy a tender, tasty, barbecued half-chicken prepared by High's of Auburn. It's only \$5.00 and you won't have to cook!

Proceeds help support the following groups: Life & Family Services, Noble House, and the Wreck.

## Trinity Love Fund

Each month when we celebrate Communion we receive an offering for the Trinity Love Fund. This fund is used to help area individuals and families. **We will celebrate Communion on September 4th.** As you receive Holy Communion this month, remember those in need and support Trinity's Love Fund.

## Your Chance to be a Loser

First Place 4 Health (ladies weight-loss group) will begin a new 12 week session beginning the week of September 12<sup>th</sup> on Mondays at 6:30 p.m.

**A New Beginning**, a First Place 4 Health Bible study, will offer inspiration and motivation to help you deal with any issues of insecurity or failure--especially as you relate to meeting your weight-loss goals. When times get tough and things are off track, it is easy to allow disappointment to lead you to abandon your aspirations for living a life in balance. However, you can learn to cope with setbacks and regret in a way that pushes you toward success instead of dragging you down! **A New Beginning** will help you explore 10 key scriptural principles to help you stand strong in your commitment to live the life God is calling you to live--a life of obedience, balance, and victory!

Based on proven techniques and 25 years of experience, First Place 4 Health is the most complete Christ-centered healthy living program available.

## Beth Moore "Living Proof" Simulcast

Trinity women, friends and neighbors. Saturday, September 10 the Beth Moore "Living Proof" Simulcast will happen at Topeka's New Life Fellowship from 10:30 - 5:00. Several from Trinity previously attended this event - what an inspiration and encouragement the day was!!! Come and join us this year - and invite others to experience Beth's inspiration and excitement about God's love and care for each of us!! There is no cost this year - so reach out and invite!! Let me know soon so that I can order the free tickets. Lunch is provided by the New Life Fellowship women. They are excited to have us partner with them in this outreach event. Kathy will have a sign up sheet at the cookie table this morning, email Kathy at [ksbritt@embarqmail.com](mailto:ksbritt@embarqmail.com), call Hazel at the church office or call 260 351-2149 and leave a message. We will plan to carpool to the event.

## con-fir-ma-tion



[kon-fer-mey-shuh n] noun

1. the act of confirming.
2. the state of being confirmed.
3. something that confirms, as a corroborative statement or piece of evidence: His birth certificate served as confirmation of his citizenship.
4. a rite administered to baptized

persons, in some churches as a sacrament for confirming and strengthening the recipient in the Christian faith, in others as a rite without sacramental character by which the recipient is admitted to full communion with the church.

Confirmation for a United Methodist means two things.

- 1) for an adult, it means confirming one's faith and joining the local church
- 2) for a teen or pre-teen, it means confirming one's faith, the baptism given as an infant or receiving baptism for the first time, and joining the church.

This fall, we will have both opportunities.

If you are an adult, and would like to know more about membership and "joining the team" called Trinity Church, we will be having membership classes to give you an opportunity to inquire and decide if you want to take the step of membership at Trinity Church. If you have worshipped in another church and have joined, these classes simply will help you become acquainted with who Trinity is and how United Methodist Christians "do things." We have you take a "Spiritual Gifts Inventory" to see how God has gifted you so that you may know ways to get "plugged into" ministries based on how you are "wired".

If you are a pre-teen or teen (or you have one in your home) and would like to learn more about faith, and consider becoming a member, we will have classes held on Sunday nights @ 5:30 to 7:00 pm, beginning September 25th and running approximately every other Sunday into the first part of 2011. This is a process of looking into faith, the Bible, and all that means. For the teens that have been baptized they will have the opportunity to "confirm" for themselves their own faith. For those who have not been baptized, the students will choose the method of baptism that best expresses their faith.

All will have the opportunity to join Trinity as an active member.

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## Parkview Noble & LaGrange Home Health & Hospice Bereavement Support Groups

10 weekly sessions focused on "Understanding your Grief" by

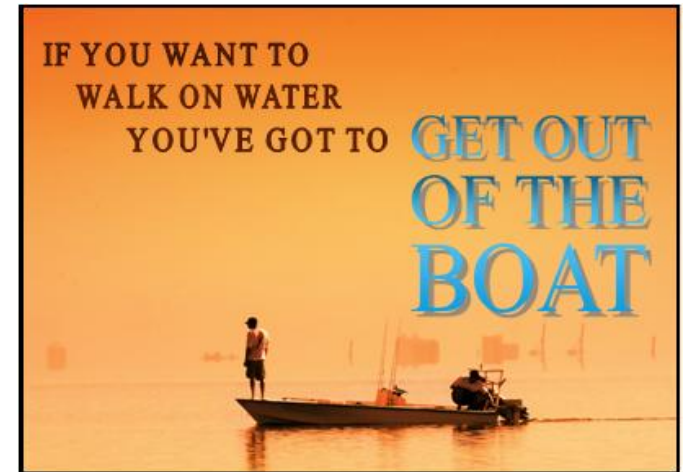
Dr. Alan Wolfelt

Facilitated by Rev. Ken Weaver, LCSW, LMFT & Cathy Petrie, LCSW

Tuesdays Sept. 13-Nov. 22 from 4-5:30 p.m. @ Presbyterian Church, 200 W. Michigan St., LaGrange

Thursdays Sept. 8-Nov. 17 from 4-5:30 p.m. @ Kendallville Public Library, 221 S. Park Ave., Kendallville

To Enroll or to have questions answered call 1-800-292-9894



## DON'T MISS THE BOAT

Starting September 11 and running through October 23, we will have a church wide small group opportunity. Pastor Scott will be preaching on the respective themes, and there will be many small group opportunities almost every day of the week that will allow fellowship and growing spiritually (see insert for specific small group times and days). Special thanks to Dave Beare for coordinating these, and for the small group leaders and hosts that are partnering to help us expand our small group ministry opportunities.

The material is from John Ortberg's book, "If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat." It is based upon Matthew 14, and relates to our lives today. This will help us as individuals and as a church to answer Christ's call to a greater faith, Spirit power-filled deeds, and a new way of Knowing Jesus. The small groups will include video clips and group discussions as we grow in our ability to discern God's call, transcend fear, risk faith, manage failure, and trust God.

## CornerstoneVision Counseling

As therapists from CornerstoneVision Counseling Services, we are very blessed with the opportunity to partner with Trinity Church UM to provide professional Christian counseling to the Noble County community. You may have noticed our signs and wondered about our services. We are located in the lower level of the church where we transformed a couple rooms to set up cozy counseling offices for children, adults and families. We currently have three therapists available to see clients on Tuesdays and Thursdays and will add more staff and days as the need grows. We accept most major health insurances, Medicaid/Medicare and offer fee assistance to those who qualify. We have information rack cards available on the table in the narthex which we hope you will share with others as well.

For more information about our therapists and services, visit our website at [www.corvision.org](http://www.corvision.org) or contact our office at 1-866-676-7285.



You are invited to an open house, Friday, September 16, 2011, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. ET, sponsored by SEND North America, a discipleship training experience for young adults. This open house will be held at Destiny Family of Faith, 856 N. Lima Road (State Road 3), Kendallville, IN. Destiny is located in the Cornerstone Plaza, three doors east of Dude's Dairy Treaty. This event will provide you the opportunity to meet students and leaders of SEND and learn how this movement can be valuable to young adults and to our church. For more information call 1800-626-8515.

[APPLY TODAY - Now Accepting Applications!](#)

**Do you want to draw closer to God?**

**Are you looking for God's plan for your life?**

**Would you like to be equipped as a modern day apostolic missionary?**

SEND is all about spiritual formation.

SEND leads beyond religion to transformation.

SEND equips young leaders who will help churches experience a new reformation.

SEND is for young adults who want to grow in relationship to God and become vessels for spiritual renewal in our culture.

The end result of the SEND experience:

—you will discover what God wants for you.

—you will be equipped to do what God calls you to do.

—you are informed as a valuable member of a church.

—you can be further trained to be a SEND leader in a SEND-ready church.

SEND North America is inspired by the revival movement coming out of Sheffield, England. It has been spreading throughout Europe and is now reaching other continents, including North America. We believe that mission is a cultural life-style—and a Bible culture.

It is not just taught; it is caught. Revival is a spiritual epidemic that moves from one person to another. SEND training is an immersion experience for young adults to discover how God wants to use them.

## Can You Help?

The Church Council has talked about ways to reach beyond ourselves as a leadership team and church, and has decided to hold some of the meetings “off site” to help us be more aware of the community that God has called us to minister to and with. In our latest meeting, we decided to meet at the Lighthouse apartments on Mitchell Street.

Our purpose in doing this is a couple fold (not an exhaustive list):

- 1) we want to intentionally place ourselves outside the walls particularly as the leadership meets,
- 2) this is a simple way to engage in conversation (e.g. “Why are you here?” “The leadership team of Trinity Church is meeting here.”, etc.),
- 3) we want to intentionally go to and bless those areas, and do more than just meet.

This coming Wednesday, September 7, we will gather in the Prayer Room at Lighthouse Apartments on Mitchell Street. This is a very private room. Pam Lash has been given this space as a prayer chapel to “bring God's presence” to the apartment building and the residents. She will meet us at the Main entrance. We'll enter the Main entrance and meet in the Prayer Chapel. Pam will share a little about her work and the people when we ask her to come in and share, but other than that, it will be just us in the private room.

We have also talked about “leaving a blessing.” (or as we talked about this past Sunday “goodness and mercy”). I asked Pam how we can bless the ministry she does, and the people there. She gave me a list. If you feel so led, feel free to bring these to the church on or before September 7, if you are not on Church Council or the Finance Committee, and we will take what we have collected with us when we go.

- “Bed Bug Spray”
- Bottles of Lysol for mop water
- Canned food
- Paper products
  - Toilet paper (Pam will distribute these one roll at a time)
  - Paper plates or bowls (she provides a meal of rice on one day)
- Extra “Wal-Mart” bags

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### Java For Jesus Community Coffeehouse

Presents

## Java on the Lawn

In July, 2002 Faith Church began a community-wide ministry called “Java for Jesus.” They have free drinks, snacks, and entertainment. They are inviting area churches and others in the community to come be a part of this event. This year they are hosting “Java on the Lawn” on Sunday, September 18 at 6:30 p.m. They are looking for anyone willing to get up and share the word of God through song (vocal or instrumental: solos, groups or choirs), readings, poetry, magic, or testimony. If interested in performing please call Faith Church at 347-2616.

Java is open to the public--everyone is welcome!

Free child care is provided.

## You are invited ... to a Block Party on Rush Street, thrown by St John's Lutheran and Trinity Churches!

We are “throwing” a free block party on this Sunday September 11 from 5pm to 7pm. A section of Rush Street between State and Riley Streets (between the churches) will be “closed” and we will set it up for a cook out / block party and you are invited! We will have free cook-out food and games for all ages.



Sunday – September 11 5pm – 7pm

State Street between Rush and Williams Street

We just want to be good to our neighbors,

so we invite you to share with us

Sunday, Sept. 11 for a fun experience and good food!

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Whether you have a regular place of worship, or not, come out and share a fun meal with your neighbors!

St. John's and Trinity Churches are a group of people who cares about our community and our faith. We want to “throw a party” for our neighborhood, so that we can “get to know each other better. We have found food and games are a great way to do that!

If you do not have a place of worship, you are always welcome to worship with us on Sundays

### Trinity Church UM

8:30 am Traditional worship -- 9:30 Fellowship in Narthex -- 9:40 am Small Groups for all ages

10:39 am Modern worship

### St. John's Lutheran

8:00 and 10:30am Traditional worship

9:15 am Sunday School for all ages

8:30 and 10:30am Modern worship

Whether you come to worship, or not, please come to the block party, so we can have a good time as neighbors!

www.sjlc.net ..... www.TrinityChurchUM.org



## “Step 2” Consultation/Intervention Process

### What is it?

The Consultation/Intervention Process is the second of three steps in the Indiana Conference's Fruitful Congregation Journey. It is designed to help a local church conduct a congregational assessment in order to identify what next steps it needs to take in order to more effectively carry out the church's mission.

### What churches are eligible?

Any Indiana Conference United Methodist Church is eligible to participate if its pastor has completed the eight-session Pastor Leadership Development shared learning experience (step 1 of FCJ). Eligible churches can annually apply to participate. A limited number will be selected any given year.

### What's involved?

The Consultation/Intervention Process includes the following...

1. A period of preparation for an assessment weekend (approximately 4 months):
  - a. The church will compile a congregational report for an assessment team, which will lead an assessment weekend.
  - b. The conference will create a demographic report on the church's community for the assessment team.
  - c. A consultant will lead a one-day workshop for the church's leaders on concepts/principles of healthy, effective churches.
  - d. A mystery guest worshipers' report will be compiled from the experiences of several outsiders who will visit the church at various times.
2. Assessment weekend:
  - a. The assessment team arrives on a Friday morning (in most cases) and conducts one-to-one interviews with staff and laity. It takes the pastor and their spouse to dinner, and holds a focus group with laity in the church.
  - b. Saturday, the team meets with the church's Ad. Council in the morning, then conducts a four-hour workshop with church leaders/congregation; it writes an assessment report and shares a draft with pastor that evening.
  - c. Sunday, the team leader preaches at all worship services. A congregational meeting is held following worship where the assessment team's report is read. The report will give the congregation five key next-step objectives, called *prescriptions*, to focus on. The prescriptions are to help the church become healthier and more effective at carrying out its mission.
3. A period of decision:
  - a. The church will have 30 days to consider adopting all five prescriptions. If the church agrees, it will move to the final Fruitful Congregation Journey step. This time of discernment will include opportunities for congregational discussion and prayer.
  - b. The church's District Superintendent will convene a Church Conference at the end of the 30-day period where the church will officially vote whether or not to adopt all five prescriptions. (In order to go to step 3, all five must be agreed to.)

### Cost?

No charge. The cost of Consultation/Intervention Process (step 2) is paid by the Conference Church Development's budget. (*Our Church Tithe at work!!*)



Two exciting things happening this year are:

1. The Conference, along with United Methodists across the nation, are asking each church to set goals in 5 areas (see enclosed Bishop Mike's article). They are asking that each leadership sets a time aside to view the video describing the process and goals – then set the goals. This is to be done this fall PRIOR to Charge Conference (date of Charge Conference to be set by District).

The plan is for this year's Charge Conferences to be more of a worship celebration where we bring our Vital Congregation goals and place them as an offering on the altar. These goals will be gathered and presented in a similar service at General Conference next spring. (Note: it is the 5 goals only, not the strategic ministry plans to reach them, that are to be offered.)

Our District Superintendent (D.S.) said that we will also do the basic requirements of Charge Conference in a liturgical format:

1. Pastor Support (financial and prayerful)
2. Leadership Election (S/PPRC, Trustees, Nominations, Lay Speakers)
3. Ministry Candidates
4. Inactive Members

... in addition to the Vital Congregation goals. Vital Congregation goals are specific measurements to help each congregation determine their progress toward becoming a more Vital Congregation. Each congregation will set its own goals, and those goals will focus upon the five areas which have been identified by the Call to Action study to be helpful measurements of Vitality (see the enclosed article). Those are:

- Disciples worship – We will measure average worship attendance.
- Disciples make new disciples – We will measure professions of faith.
- Disciples grow – We will measure the number of small groups for faith development.
- Disciples engage in missions – We will measure the number of people engaged in mission.
- Disciples give to missions – We will count the amount of money given to mission.

Dates for Charge Conference Worship Gatherings are October 27, 30, and November 1, 2, 3. The locations for each date will be sent soon.

Our church and Ministry Cluster may pick which gathering works best for our schedule and travel distance. All churches are expected to attend one of these events.

Bishop Mike will bring a message via video, and our D.S., The Rev. Dr. Dave Michel, will also bring a message. Live. We'll sing, share, do the Charge Conference liturgy, present our ministry goals, and be challenged to be both faithful and fruitful.

- The Church Council agreed, at the recommendation of the Fruitful Congregation Team, to engage in "Step 2" of the Fruitful Congregation Process (describe in enclosed article). Step 1 was experienced in Fall 2010 – summer 2011.

Step 2 is . . . Discovering how to become a more effective and fruitful church

During step 2, churches – with the help of an outside team and coach—discover their strengths and weaknesses. This step culminates with a weekend assessment that results in five strategic recommendations for the church to pursue in order to move to even greater effectiveness. In preparation for the weekend, the pastor will be a part of a peer mentoring group, the church will do a pre-assessment report and workshop, and have a series of mystery guests visit their worship services.

<p>Outcomes: Helping churches...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get a clearer assessment of its current reality, including growth barriers.</li> <li>• Determine strategic next steps to take in order to move forward.</li> </ul>	<p>Perfect for churches...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wanting to know what specifically it can do to improve its effectiveness.</li> <li>• Wanting to put into action the concepts taught in the Shared Learning Experience.</li> </ul>
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This process will include:

Holding a Fruitful Congregational Journey weekend assessment.

We can choose weekends from October through April.

The weekend will begin on a Friday morning and conclude early Sunday afternoon.

We need to give Ed Fenstermacher several possible dates.

Also -

Two to three months prior to that date the following would happen:

Our church will prepare a report on our church.

A series of mystery guests will visit our worship services.

A two-hour (or so) workshop will be held at our church for our leaders.

I need your feedback for both. Your participation will help determine where Trinity goes from here, so I am asking for your input in regard to the dates!

# Vital Signs of Vital Congregations



This month all pastors serving United Methodist congregations in Indiana are receiving a letter from me about the "Vital Signs" project of our United Methodist Church. The Council of Bishops has approved asking every United Methodist congregation around the world to adopt goals for 2012 as a way of moving toward being Vital Congregations.

Those goals will be collected and taken to General Conference of The United Methodist Church in the spring of 2012 and there offered as a gift to God – and asking God to bless our intentions and efforts to fulfill our mission of "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Vital Signs are specific measurements to help each congregation determine their progress toward becoming a more Vital Congregation. Each congregation will set its own goals (this is not a top-down imposition of goals), and those goals will focus upon the five areas which have been identified by the Call to Action study to be helpful measurements of Vitality. Those areas are not a surprise, but for the first time in our church's history, we have an actual study of data and statistics, which has determined these are the key components of Vital Congregations. Those are:

- Disciples worship – We will measure average worship attendance.
- Disciples make new disciples – We will measure professions of faith.
- Disciples grow – We will measure the number of small groups for faith development.
- Disciples engage in missions – We will measure the number of people engaged in mission.
- Disciples give to missions – We will count the amount of money given to mission.

Are there other things which could be measured? Of course there are. Is it difficult to measure spiritual vitality? Yes, it is. Could some people turn this effort into a "numbers game" and not be honest or faithful? I suppose that might happen, but if so it will only hurt their own local congregation, because it will cheat them out of an opportunity to measure their vitality.

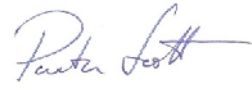
Along with measuring these Vital Signs of Vital Congregations, we also have plans here in Indiana to help any congregation which needs to learn how to set goals, reach goals and become a more Vital Congregation. This is not just another device to measure and to make useless reports. This is a part of a process of helping all of us to be more vital and faithful.

I am excited about the prospect of moving our denomination forward in a way that honors our Wesleyan theology, our mission as a church and our system of leadership. For years many people have been asking for us bishops to lead the church. We are trying to do so, and I hope and pray our leadership will be received with enthusiasm and discipline.

Bishop Michael J. Coyner  
Indiana Area of The United Methodist Church  
"Making a Difference in Indiana and around the world"

The following article is from Kevin Watson's blog post and email list called Deeply Committed - Posted: August 29, 2011. Kevin is a PhD candidate researching the Wesleyan bands, and offering insights how to do 21<sup>st</sup> Century class meetings. I came across his writing in doing my research. I thought this was an especially timely and helpful article as we as a church continue to grow in "how we do and be the church".

Enjoy!



## [On Being a First-Time Visitor](#)

Hello, my name is Kevin Watson. Welcome to deeply committed. I am the author of this blog and I am thrilled that you found your way here. (This seemingly random introduction will make more sense if you keep reading.)

One of the strangest parts of moving from Dallas, TX to Seattle, WA has been the experience of being a first-time visitor in church. For various reasons, I have not been in this position since seminary. And it was different even during seminary, because I was often visiting a church as an assignment or as part of my seminary training. The point of this post is to share a bit of my experience from the past two weeks in order to help church leaders view their churches through the eyes of a first-time visitor.

The first thing I would say about visiting a church for the first time is that it is hard! I like routines and the comfort of feeling like I know what is going on. None of that really applies when you are a first-time visitor at a church.

Here are a few, not necessarily connected, thoughts about the last two weeks:

Neither church was United Methodist. We visited these two churches in order to get a sense of the kinds of churches that my soon to be students at Seattle Pacific University will likely be attending and to get a feel for the types of churches that are generally in the area where we live. It was interesting to visit non-United Methodist Churches. A clear emphasis of both churches was on the importance of small groups, though neither of them appeared to have something I would consider a close analogy to a 21st century class meeting. Nevertheless, it was a humbling reminder that many parts of the Body of Christ are currently doing a better job of practicing Wesleyan communal Christian formation than United Methodism. In fact, the sermon at one of the two churches was on the importance of connecting and small groups were clearly highlighted both before and after the sermon as a vitally important part of the life of the particular community of faith. Without going too far, this church emphasized the importance of connecting through small groups, and providing an accessible and clear way to become involved in small groups as strongly as they could have.

My impression was that both churches that we visited were sincerely trying to be hospitable and welcoming to new visitors. I did not sense that either church was a closed group that would just assume that my family was not there. On the contrary, I think that both churches had successfully cultivated a culture where people wanted new life and would have been genuinely pleased if my family were to join the church. At one of the churches, as soon as someone realized we were new to the church, we were given a small gift bag with a book, pen, water, and breath mints (so much you could over-read into that!) in it.

The same church also had a nice set up of coffee, muffins, bagels, and other breakfast foods. There was no sign anywhere that there was any expectation that you would pay for these things. I think it is a mistake when churches put something next to food and drinks that makes it obvious you are supposed to pay for them. In my view, this severely undercuts the act of hospitality in having food and drink available. (Maybe I was just hungry and glad I could feel comfortable eating even though I didn't have cash on hand...)

Here are a few things I noticed that would have made the experience more positive for my family:

We were a bit early to one church, and when we arrived in the Sunday School area no one was there. To be fair, someone showed up within thirty seconds of our arrival. But, it was a bit disconcerting to show up where we were told to take our daughter and find an empty room.

Andrew Forrest, the pastor at my family's church home in Dallas, started doing two things in church that I appreciate after the past two weeks even more than I did before. The first time Andrew speaks in the worship service, he always introduces himself. He says something very concise and simple like, "Hi, I'm Andrew Forrest. I'm the pastor here at Munger Place. If you're a first time visitor we are really glad you are here..." To people who attend every week, this may seem unnecessary. But what I have discovered the past two weeks is that if someone who is speaking in the worship service does not introduce themselves, and you are new to the church, you have no way of knowing who is talking to you. It isn't the end of the world, but it is a bit confusing and a subtle way that a person can feel outside of what is going on in worship. (See, now the first sentence makes complete sense... right?)

The other thing Andrew started doing a few months before we moved was give an idea of how long the worship service was. To be honest, at first I thought this was a bit silly and unnecessary. However, the past two weeks have changed my mind. Both of the services we attended were different lengths, and they were both different from the typical length of the worship service at Munger Place. Again, it wasn't a major issue, but because we have two little ones who are on schedules as far as when they eat and sleep, etc. Melissa and I did start to get a bit anxious when the service started to go beyond the time that we assumed it would be. It didn't end up being an issue either week, but our minds would have been put at ease if someone had simply said something like "our worship service typically lasts x." (Having said that, I think there needs to be room for the Holy Spirit in worship. The point is not to be legalistic, but just to give new visitors a sense of what is going to happen.)

Related to this, both churches gave us something when we entered the sanctuary. However, it was not an order of worship. I don't really care if a church gives you a detailed scripting of what is going to happen. However, I do think when churches give you no sense of the layout of the worship service, it is all the more important to give verbal clues to the congregation of what is happening, what is next, etc. At one of the churches, the worship leader ended a song and then said, "Ok, we are going to take a break now. Make sure you say hi to someone" and then walked off stage. My wife and I had no idea what was happening, because we have never been to a church before where there is a break in the middle of the service. It would have helped if he had said a bit more, with new folks in mind.

One more positive: Both churches had thoughtful set ups for children. People knew where our kids could go (better still, at one church the greeter took us there and introduced us to the adults who would be with our kids). There was also a good sign-in system that gave us confidence that our kids would not be handed off to someone else at the end of the worship service. These are things I must admit I did not think about before having children. One of the reasons I mention this, then, is in case some of you who read this do not have children. It might be helpful to ask some parents of young children what would be important to them if they were to visit a new church, and if they attend your church they would be great people to ask how your church could be more welcoming to families with young children.

A final thought: I realized that a good website is essential for a church that wants to have new visitors. This is probably obvious to most of you who are reading this. However, even in writing this post I am realizing that we would probably not have even visited either church if the website had not made us comfortable that there would be a place for James that we would be comfortable with, etc. If you are in an urban setting and you don't get many visitors, you may want to think about the quality of your website. If your website looks unprofessional, many people will not even visit the church. Another way of thinking about this is that in 2011 there are no true first-time visitors who come into your church. Rather, your first-time visitor is the person who visits your website and decides whether they want to come "back" by coming to an actual worship service.

There you have it, a few thoughts from a few weeks of being a genuine outsider in two different churches. What would you add to what I've said? What do you think is important for the church to keep in mind when it thinks about new visitors?



