

UMconnect 01/11/12

2011 Mission Shares final report

I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to each congregation for their faithful financial support during 2011. The Nebraska Conference United Methodist churches contributed resources equating to 85.38 percent of the approved funding plan and 281 congregations reached the 100 percent commitment level. I am grateful for your financial contributions which enable us to continue our shared goal of ministering to people in need and wish to thank you for your stewardship. While this is down from our receipts in prior years (86.78 percent in 2010 and 85.56 percent in 2009), we are in partnership together, and together, we will make a difference in the future.

God bless you all!

Robin Kilgore, conference treasurer/director of administrative services

Note of thanks from Bishop Ann B. Sherer-Simpson

Jan. 10, 2012

Today I am signing the last of our 100 percent Mission Share certificates.

I say a prayer of thanksgiving over each one. Your faithfulness to our work together across Nebraska and around the world inspires me. I am glad to be in connection in ministry with you. Together we share and enact the story of God's love and grace. A child is saved from malaria. A Mozambican pastor goes to Africa University and develops the skills she needs to be effective in his or her work. A scholarship is offered to a U.S. student who wants to attend one of the United Methodist traditionally black colleges or Wesleyan University or one of our schools of Theology such as Saint Paul or Iliff.

District superintendents and staff are deployed to help local churches in their disciple-making ministry. The poor are fed and housed and those in prison experience God's love and care through a volunteer.

The list goes on and on. Together we are making a difference in the local and global mission field.

God's blessing.

Ann

Deadline for reporting statistical information is Jan. 13

The deadline for submitting information electronically for the Nebraska year-end statistical reports is Friday, Jan. 13, 2012. Churches should report the information as of Dec. 31, 2011.

Click here to view all correspondence sent previously. Please note this information is also available on the UMDashboard.

Conference Center will be closed Monday, Jan. 16

Please note that the Nebraska UM Conference Center in Lincoln will be closed Monday, Jan. 16, in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. We will resume our normal business hours of 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 17.

Countdown to 2012 Joint Called Clergy Session

We are very excited for the upcoming 2012 Joint Called Clergy Session in Topeka, Kan., Jan. 17-19. This

gathering will provide a time for all three conference clergy to meet together for the first time as we prepare to become one episcopal area in September 2012.

As we are packing and getting ready for the event we pray for good weather and traveling mercies to all. An email will be sent to clergy later this week to provide some last-minute details and reminders. In the meantime you can visit the **Joint Called Clergy Session 2012 Web page** for more information.



A call to all Center for Pastoral Effectiveness alumni attending Joint Called Clergy Session

The Rev. Bill Selby (pictured at right), presenter at the Joint Called Clergy Session in Topeka, invites all **Center for Pastoral Effectiveness of the Rocky Mountains** alumni to wear Center shirts on Wednesday of the session.



“This is just one more way to close that emotional space that comes with bringing the three conference families together,” said Selby.

There are Center alumni in all three conferences — more than 100 in Nebraska, more than 70 in Kansas West and 25 in Kansas East.

“And though you naturally connect as United Methodists, as Center alumni you can connect to one another in a unique way, perhaps in more differentiated, non-anxious way. See you in Topeka,” concluded Selby.

Omaha Water’s Edge charters as United Methodist church

In September 2006, The Water’s Edge started as a second campus of Omaha Faith-Westwood United Methodist Church. As of Jan. 1, 2012, they are an officially chartered United Methodist congregation. They celebrated their “launch Sunday” at their worship services on Jan. 8.



The Rev. Craig Finnestad, Water’s Edge pastor, wrote in **his blog**, “This morning is a new day that I will be writing about five or ten years from now. Our first day as our own church. I’m so grateful for

the people at Faith-Westwood. Their support and vision has made The Water's Edge possible. I'm more excited today about the future than I was five years ago and I was pretty excited back then."

The service was attended by Missouri River District Superintendent Dan Flanagan, Director of Congregational Development Nita Hinds-Park, and Bishop Ann B. Sherer-Simpson. Bishop Sherer-Simpson offered a prayer, saying "This is a day for rejoicing!"

[Click here](#) to view a video clip from the service.

[Click here](#) to see more photos from this event on the Nebraska Conference Facebook page.

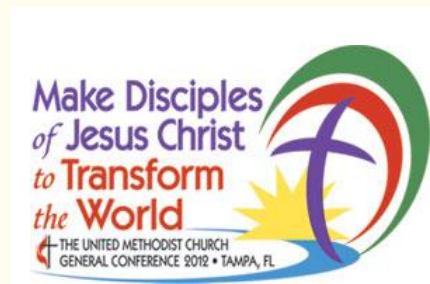
Photo: Attendees of Omaha Water's Edge UMC's "launch Sunday" services were encouraged to come forward and touch their hand to the water flowing from two fountains, as a reminder of their baptism.

Two big disputes ahead at General Conference

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMNS) — Two proposals hover near the top of the controversy list as The United Methodist Church

approaches this spring's General Conference. The first from the **Call to Action process** would restructure the denomination, including consolidating nine of the church's 13 general agencies under a 15-member board. The second would end job guarantees for ordained elders in good standing.

[Click here](#) to read the full story.



New blog entries from Galen Wray, Phil Sloat

Blue River District Superintendent, the Rev. Galen Wray has posted a new entry to his blog on clergy wholeness, titled "Walking the ethical line."

[Click here](#) to read this entry and make a comment.

The Rev. Phil Sloat, Decatur-Tekamah UMCs, has a new blog.

“I was very pleased to learn that Brian McLaren would be the featured speaker at the Joint Clergy Conference Session in Topeka,” Sloat said. “I have found his books inspiring and insightful. They have given me new passion in my preaching and ministry.”

In his first entry, he discusses McLaren’s book, "A New Kind of Christianity." He invites others to join in the conversation about McLaren and his vision.

Click here to read the blog entry and make a comment.

Last chance to register for Hope for Rural Congregations conference with Ed Kail

It's not too late! You can still register for the "Hope for Rural Congregations" conference taking place Feb. 3-4, 2012. It will be held at the Life-Long Learning Center on the campus of the Northeast Community College in Norfolk. See the attached brochure/registration form for details.

Please note the cost for registration is now \$150 for a congregational team consisting of pastor and up to four lay persons. Each additional team member is only \$20. Individuals can also attend at a cost of \$100.

Registrations with payment must be in the Elkhorn Valley District office no later than Monday, Jan. 23.

Please note that for those persons/teams who are already registered, the last day you can cancel and receive a refund of half of your registration fee is Friday, Jan. 20.

Conference leader Ed Kail (pronounced Kyle) was a leader in Iowa’s response to the 1980s farm crisis. In 1991, he began to teach Town and Country Ministries at Saint Paul School of Theology and was director of Course of Study for five years. See the brochure and flier for more information and to register.



- **Brochure/registration form** (PDF)

Kail (pictured above) will offer a free concert the evening of Friday, Feb. 3, at Norfolk First UMC (406 W. Philip Ave.), at 7 p.m. This concert is a benefit for the Church and Community Project of the Elkhorn Valley District and is open to the public. See the attached flier for details, and share it with others!

- **Concert flier** (PDF)

Register now for Horizons of Faith 2012

Omaha First United Methodist Church is pleased to announce Joerg Rieger, Ph.D., will be the featured speaker for Horizons of Faith 2012. The theme is "Empire, Economics and Christ: Does Christianity Still Make A Difference?" It is scheduled for March 23-25, 2012, at First United Methodist Church, 7020 Cass St., Omaha, Neb.



Dr. Joerg Rieger (pictured at right) is Wendland-Cook Professor of Constructive Theology at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. His early seminary education in Europe and subsequent studies in the United States drew him to examine the relationship between existing oppressive expressions of political and economic power and the range of theologies that support them.

His prolific writings over the past two decades have been internationally recognized for their visionary nature as he has worked to develop more helpful and faithful visions of Christianity.

His most recent books include "Traveling" (2011), "Grace Under Pressure" (2011), "Globalization and Theology" (2010), "No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future" (2009).

Rieger has lectured throughout the U.S. and presented in 11 countries, on three continents. He is a founding member of the Progressive Christian Center of the South. For more information on his work, visit www.joergrieger.com.

Horizons of Faith is an annual educational weekend of speakers and discussion, instituted to lend understanding, hope and courage to faith seekers. For more information, and to download a

registration form, go to www.horizonsofffaith.com.

Your Mission Share dollars at work: NWU intern works to educate, advocate on human trafficking

Human Trafficking Awareness Day is today, Jan. 11. Nebraska Wesleyan University intern Nicolette Ware (pictured at right) works to educate and advocate in the attached article about this important and timely topic. She wants churches to be aware that human trafficking isn't

something that happens only in foreign or third-war countries — it happens right here in Nebraska.

Visit the Nebraska Family Council's website to find out what you can do to help stop human trafficking.

Ware's internship is funded by a grant from the Nebraska Conference **Risk-taking Mission and Justice Ministries** Team, which is ultimately provided by your Mission Share dollars.

Her plans for the semester include aggregating the resources listed in her article and making them available to local churches in a usable format. The resource will be made available via UMconnect.



- **Human trafficking article, by Nicolette Ware** (PDF)

Micah Corps applications online for summer 2012 internship



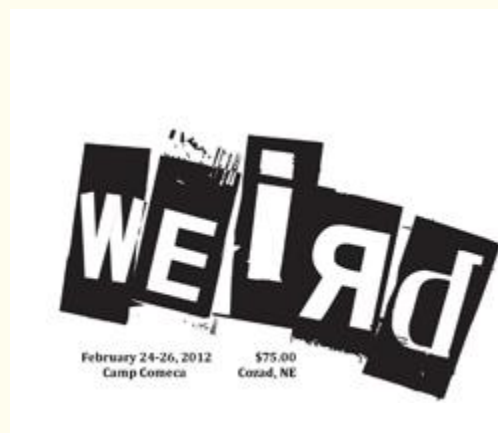
Risk-taking Mission and Justice Ministries is once again sponsoring the Micah Corps, a 10-week young adult summer internship program. This experience helps young adults deepen their walk with God, learn about connecting their faith with social justice, and practice leadership skills throughout the conference.

Click here to apply online. The application deadline is March 2, 2012. To learn about some of the exciting work of the 2011 Micah Corps interns, go to www.umcneb.org/micahcorps.

Photo: 2011 Micah Corps interns take a break and enjoy birthday cake with conference staff.

Attention youth leaders: WEIRD senior high retreat coming up at Camp Comeca in February

All senior high age youth are invited to attend a conference-wide retreat Feb. 24-26, at Camp Comeca, located near Cozad.



Here's a little more info about this event, being billed as WEIRD:

The world tells us one thing, the Bible something completely different. Teachers, coaches, friends, parents, brothers and sisters. It seems like everything we are exposed to in today's world is about trying to get us to be something, to act normal.

But what is normal?

When we look around, we see people who are overworked, overstressed, exhausted and worn down. Normal friendships and relationships are strained at best, with people tiptoeing around trying not to offend. And when it comes to God, most people say they believe, but few ever allow God and teachings of the Bible to impact their lives. Simply put, normal isn't working.

It's time for something different. Something WEIRD!

In Romans 12:2, God invites us be transformed into something that looks different than the rest of the world.

Join together with high school students from around the Nebraska Conference for a weekend of discovering why God calls us to be WEIRD. This retreat will challenge you to consider what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, encourage you to allow God to work in your life, and rethink your definition of WEIRD.

A student registration packet is attached — it includes a flier, a registration form and a health waiver. Attendees will fill out the forms and, along with a check for \$75, turn them in to their church's youth leader by Feb. 1.

Youth leaders will then aggregate all of their church's registrants and submit the attached church registration form, along with a \$25 non-refundable deposit per person (for both adult leaders and students), to the Conference Center (see form for the mailing address), to be postmarked by Feb. 3.

Individual registration forms need to be turned in at the camp the day the retreat begins. The balance of the cost of the retreat is due at that time.

Questions? Contact the Rev. Dr. Jesse Foster at jfoster01@umcneb.org.

- **Student registration packet** (PDF)
- **Church registration form** (PDF)

Summer camp employment opportunities

Our **Nebraska United Methodist camps** are preparing and praying for an abundant harvest this summer, through our summer camp programs with the theme "The Secrets of the Kingdom — The Parables of Jesus." The quality of our hired staff largely lies with your words and actions through your referrals of qualified, generally college-aged applicants and sharing of this opportunity. Please give careful thought about qualified applicants and take the time to talk to them about this opportunity. Camps can be contacted for applications and further questions.

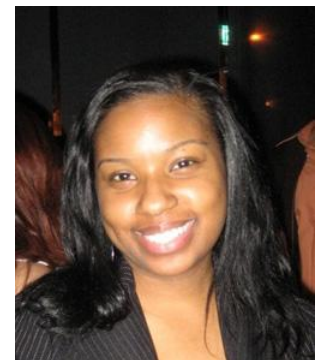
Click here for a flier you can print out and share with others.

- Comeca (near Cozad) — Ron Gans at rgans@umcneb.org or 308-784-2808
- Norwesca (near Chadron) — Valerie Rahrs at vrahrs@umcneb.org or 308-432-3872
- Fontanelle (near Fremont) — Trent Meyer at tmeyer@umcneb.org or 402-459-0686

RTMJ Team offering scholarships for ecumenical advocacy events in Lincoln and D.C.

Scholarships available for ecumenical legislative Briefing Day, Feb. 11 at Lincoln Christ UMC

Legislative Day is an annual event sponsored by **Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska**, and is an opportunity for Nebraska Christians to come together to connect faith with public policy that impacts our communities. Workshop topics include: Advocacy 101, Domestic Violence, Health Care Reform, Aging Population, Rural Issues, Suicide Prevention, Bullying, Immigration, Environment and Young Adults as Advocates. Marcia Huff (pictured at right) of Lincoln will speak at the opening worship service.



For more information, visit www.interchurchministries.org/legislateday.html. Scholarships will be given to the first 20 Nebraska United Methodists who apply by Jan. 20, 2012. To apply online, go to www.umcneb.org/RTMJ.

Scholarships available for Nebraska delegation to attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C.

A delegation of up to 12 people will be selected to represent our conference at the 10th Annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice, March 23-26, 2012.

For details and an application, go to www.umcneb.org/RTMJ. The application deadline is Feb. 13, 2012. Scholarships cover airfare, registration and lodging.

This high-impact event, sponsored by the ecumenical Christian community, is grounded in biblical witness and shared traditions of justice, peace and integrity of creation. The goal is to strengthen the Christian voice and mobilize for advocacy on specific U.S. domestic and international policy issues. Dynamic worship, workshops and lobbying on Capitol Hill are all part of the experience. For more details, visit www.AdvocacyDays.org.

UMCOR Early Response Team Basic Course to be held Feb. 25 at Hastings First UMC

Hastings First UMC is scheduled to host an Early Response Team training on Saturday, Feb. 25, beginning with registration at 8 a.m.

More information about registration will be forthcoming, but mark your calendars now.

The mission of an early response team is to provide a caring presence in the aftermath of a disaster, under very specific guidelines that enable a team to be productive and caring while causing no further harm or being a burden to the affected community. Classes are taught by authorized UMCOR trainers, and team members are given ID badges as evidence of training.

Topics covered in the class include the who, what, when, where and how of doing ministry, as well as hands on experience in the specific tasks that early responders are expected to accomplish. Recertification classes for Early Response Team Members are also available.

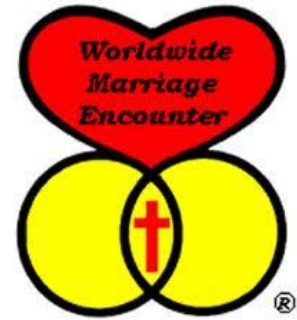
For your information, a district early response team coordinator job description is attached.

- [Team coordinator job description](#) (PDF)

Upcoming Marriage Encounter Weekend dates

What is a Marriage Encounter United Methodist weekend?

The purpose of the Marriage Encounter weekend is to provide the opportunity for a married couple to develop deeper knowledge of Christian marriage, a fuller understanding and acceptance of each other and the ability to communicate with each other in a significantly deeper and more fulfilling way.



The format of the Marriage Encounter weekend is designed specifically to enable a couple time to pause and focus on each other, their commitment and their relationship.

There are 13 presentations given by clergy and lay couples throughout the weekend. Couples are given the chance to explore the difference between ordinary conversation and intimate communication in marriage. Participants take a realistic look at the way they present themselves to others. They can compare the difference between living out the values of our society and living out God's desire for married couples to live intimately and responsibly with one another. They will learn and practice listening skills. The weekend helps couples learn to live their marriages as a covenantal relationship.

This is a work weekend where couples are invited to respond and reflect on each presentation and privately share these responses with their spouse. There are no group discussions and couples are not required to disclose any aspect of their relationship to the group. The weekend is not intended for problem solving.

To register or receive more information and/or brochures, please contact Russell and Lanita Evans, Nebraska state registration couple, at 308-520-1491 or russellevans@internet-usa.net. Visit the official Marriage Encounter website, www.encounter.org.

2012 Weekends:

- February 24-26, in South Sioux City
- April 27-29, at Camp Comeca near Cozad
- August 17-19, at Camp Norwesca near Chadron
- September 21-23, in Lincoln

GBOD offers free webinars for church leaders

The General Board of Discipleship (GBOD) is offering the following free seminars in January and February:

- Jan. 18 at 1:30 PM CST: PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH RENEWAL FOR DS'S — Key factors for setting a path toward renewal of district congregations
- Jan. 31 at 6:30 PM CST: GOAL SETTING FOR VITAL CONGREGATIONS — A guide for setting realistic numerical goals for your congregation on the website umvitalcongregations.org
- Feb. 9 at 6:30 PM CST: 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR CHURCH WEBSITES — A website is the new front door to your church. Patrick Steil, Webmaster for the North Texas Conference and owner of ChurchBuzz.org, will walk you through 10 Commandments that transform your website into the BEST outreach and communications tool that has ever been possible.
- Feb. 23 at 6:30 PM CST: HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERS – KEY FACTORS
SPRC has a key role for health of body, mind and soul for your pastor and leaders. GBPHB's Center for Health shares key factors for a healthy ministry environment.

Register at www.gbod.org/committee_resources.

Training for new church leaders is also available. One-hour recorded modules are available for the Church Council, Trustees, Nominating Committees, Finance leaders, and S/PPRC. Individuals can watch at home or church groups can view the modules when they meet. Encourage the pastors and laity in congregations to learn their jobs with these modules posted at

www.gbod.org/committee_resources.

Five ways you can better equip vital congregations

Every month the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD) provides 5 ways you can better equip Vital Congregations and make disciples of Jesus Christ. This month's issue is below. [Click here](#) to view a printer-friendly version in your browser.

1. **Start the New Year with a new church coach.** Explore the possibility of connecting with a Path1 New Church Starts' coach to provide accountability and support for your church planting ministry. To arrange a conversation about the support a Path1 coach provides, contact Rev. Phil Maynard, director of Congregational Excellence in the Florida Annual Conference, by email at Phil.Maynard@flumc.org.

2. **Get the app and read The Upper Room daily devotional on your smartphone.** Download the new free Upper Room Devotional Lite app for Android or Apple mobile devices and join 2.2 million people from around the globe who use the devotional daily. The app includes features that let you comment and share on Twitter and Facebook. Learn more and download at <http://bit.ly/wbVZnN>.
3. **Gain a deeper understanding of Wesleyan missional leadership.** Immerse yourself in the ministry, theology and spirituality of John and Charles Wesley during a 10-day adventure to England, sponsored by GBOD and GBHEM. Registrations and deposits are accepted now for the 2012 Wesley Pilgrimage Oct. 4-14. For more information, go to www.gbod.org/WesleyPilgrimage.
4. **Schedule a mission work experience for your youth.** Join other United Methodist youth at one of nine week-long mission experiences in Nashville between June 3 and Aug. 3. The mission trips are sponsored jointly by GBOD's Young People's Ministries and YouthWorks!, a multi-denominational youth mission organization. The \$248 per person cost includes meals, lodging, programming, work site supplies and trained on-site staff. To book or for more information, call (877) 746-6418 or visit <http://www.youthworks.com/umc/umc.asp>.
5. **Read reflectively and pray daily on the lectionary scripture.** The Upper Room Disciplines 2012, a daily devotional classic and study aid for more than 50 years, offers 52 weeks of study and reflection with one-page meditations based on the lectionary. It's perfect for personal use or in a weekly group study. Quantity discounts are available. To order, call (800) 972-0433 or visit the Upper Room bookstore at <http://bit.ly/zd3md5>.

Is your church fully copyright compliant?



U.S. Copyright law allows churches to freely perform copyrighted songs in a worship service setting. However, you must secure appropriate permissions and pay royalty fees to perform or play recordings of any copyrighted songs outside of a worship service. This is just one area in which many churches, unknowingly, run the risk of copyright infringement.

Almost every church has the need for licensing to legally cover the copyrighted materials they use. However, while we want to do the right thing, we're often overwhelmed with all we need to do for compliance.

The UM Nebraska Conference has partnered with CopyrightSolver by Christian Copyright Solutions (CCS) to provide you with the answers and resources you need for copyright compliance. Through this partnership, CCS provides you with:

- 15% discount on their WORSHIPcast and PERFORMmusic licenses and PERMISSIONSplus service
- Copyright hotline to answer FAQ and provide solutions
- Free training videos, fact sheets, webinars and other resources

Please visit our special www.copyrightsolver.com/umnebraska Web page to learn more!

Nebraska UM Historical Center announces new hours

Director of the Nebraska United Methodist Historical Center Karrie Dvorak recently announced the Center's new hours:

- Mondays, 9:30a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
- Wednesdays, 9 a.m.- 2 p.m.
- Fridays, 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
- Saturdays (starting Jan. 21), Noon – 5 p.m.

For assistance, including research requests, contact Dvorak at 402-465-2175 or e-mail

kdvorak@umcneb.org.

Click here for information on research requests.

The Nebraska UM Historical Center is located at Cochrane-Woods Library, Nebraska Wesleyan University, in the lower level (handicap accessible).

Faith-based cruise to take passengers on tour of the Apostle Paul's spiritual journey

The Rev. Earl Higgins and his wife Eunice will be hosting a 13-day faith based cruise on Celebrity Equinox, titled "Highlights of Paul's Journeys," beginning Nov. 4, 2012. We invite you to share in this spiritual journey from Rome, to places in Turkey and Greece where the Apostle Paul went in his second and third missionary journeys. Dr. John Holbert, Homiletics, Perkins School of Theology, SMU, Dallas, Texas, will be the guest speaker and leader of our study of Paul.

Educational Opportunities is a travel ministry dedicated to providing a life and faith-enriching travel/study program led by seminary and church professionals. This ministry was begun by Dr. James Ridgway, a United Methodist minister, whose carrier included pastoral ministry and as a professional in the area of international travel. EO is a sharing program in ministry, not a “selling program.” The program includes a lecture based/travel ministry that integrates lectures and travel to enrich and deepen an understanding of both the Old and New Testaments through daily worship experiences, ecumenical fellowship and oneness in Christ.

See the attached brochures for travel information and costs. Clergy and spouses who have not traveled with EO will be eligible for partial scholarships. For more information, contact the Higgins at 402-438-6256.

- **Trip brochure** (PDF)

United Methodist Men’s 100 Club calls for 2012 Annual Conference Session auction donors

The 23rd annual United Methodist Men’s scholarship auction is scheduled for Wednesday, June 6, 2012, at Lincoln First United Methodist Church, located at 50th and St. Paul streets in Lincoln.

The event begins at 5 p.m. and ends with a live auction.

Scholarships go towards Nebraska students in school working towards degrees that will position them in full-time Christian ministry.

The goal of \$10,000 has been set. Mel Andrews and Randy Fleming chair the fund raising committee. Please submit one form per each donated item. Please contact Randy Fleming for more information or for item pick-up, at auctioneer_32@msn.com.



- **2011 Auction Flier** (example)
- **Auction donation form**
- **100 Club annual letter**

Lincoln Aldersgate UMC recertified as welcoming congregation

Lincoln Aldersgate United Methodist Church has been recertified by **United Methodist Communications** as an official “Welcoming Congregation.”



“Welcoming Congregations” are a select group of United Methodist congregations nationwide that meets criteria including embracing newcomers and providing opportunities in discipleship. The recognition program is part of a larger effort launched in late 2000 by UMCCom, the denomination’s communications agency, to use modern technology and marketing to spread the Good News of Christ to a world in need.

Lincoln Aldersgate is pleased to add this most recent certification to their plaque. Contact the Rev. Nancy Flader at nflader@umcneb.org for more information about what it takes to be certified as a welcoming congregation.

Blue Hill UMC members Rethink Church, touch the lives of community members



On Saturday, Dec. 3, 2011, the first snow of the winter was falling in Blue Hill as members of the Blue Hill United Methodist Church set out to continue their mission to Rethink Church. The goal was

to bring Christmas cheer to the 44 residents of a residential facility, LifeQuest, in downtown Blue Hill. Two Christmas trees, many lights, decorations, decorated wreathes and homemade sugar cookies were donated by members of the church for this event. Other supplies were purchased when donations honoring family members were given.

[Click here](#) to read this story on the **Faith in Action** page.

Does your church have a great faith in action story you'd like to share? [Click here](#) to submit your story.

Photo: Blue Hill UMC members Mark Thallman and Shari Olson work with resident of LifeQuest to make their own individual ornaments.

Grand Island Trinity UMC finds success in offering HIV testing site

By Maureen Vetter, co-chair of the Nebraska UM Global AIDS Fund Task Force and member of Grand Island Trinity UMC

A collaboration between Grand Island Trinity United Methodist Church and Central Health Center for HIV/AIDS

Testing is proving to be successful at the parish nurse offices, located in a building across the street from Trinity UMC.

We recently received word that 37 people were tested for HIV this past year; 25 of them were tested at the annual health fair sponsored by Trinity UMC.

We hope more churches will find ways to collaborate with health agencies to offer space for HIV/AIDS support groups in our communities, for HIV AIDS testing and information to eliminate HIV



and thus AIDS by 2020. For more information on the 20/20: Visioning an AIDS-Free World campaign, visit www.2020Aidsfreeworld.org.

It will take many AIDS ambassadors in local churches working together to bring HIV/AIDS out of the closet and into missions and outreach.

An AIDS ambassador helps promote the special offering in their local church, encourages prayers for those who are suffering from HIV or AIDS, and helps to cast out the fear and stigma of HIV and AIDS in our local churches and communities. If you would like to be an ambassador, or receive more information, contact Andrew Brackett at andrewb@nap.org, or Maureen at mvetter@charter.net.

We also want to thank everyone who donated to the **UM Global AIDS Fund** during the special offering taken in United Methodist Churches across Nebraska on Dec. 4. Thank you for your faith offerings and for being a light of hope! Twenty-five percent of the total offerings stay in Nebraska and go towards local AIDS projects. Would you like to donate?

Click here to make a secure, online donation.

Checks should be made out to "Conference Treasurer," with "Global AIDS Fund, Advance 578" indicated on the memo line, and mailed to the Nebraska UM Conference Center, 3333 Landmark Circle, Lincoln, NE 68504.

Photo: Susan Goodman (right), a member at Grand Island Trinity UMC and the education person at Central Health Center, volunteers at the church's HIV testing site.

Rethink Church Lenten series available

How are you reaching people for Christ this Lent?

United Methodist Communications is ready to help you with a free Lenten sermon series, online advertising and a multimedia bundle to help you include the broader community.

The Journey to Hope series begins with Christ's journey to the cross and connects with matters like relationships, money, work and suffering to share the hope that exists beyond life's most difficult

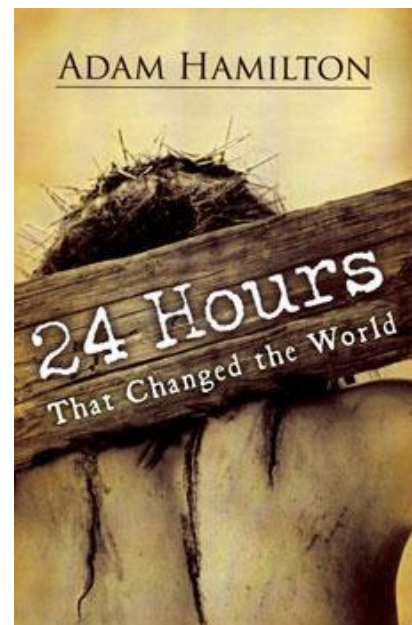
issues. The sermon series was developed in 2010, and has been supplemented this year by small group, children and youth resources. A new multimedia resource bundle will assist in bringing messages to life (in the sanctuary or classroom) as well as extending an invitation through newspaper, door hangers and more.

An online study component to Journey to Hope will be featured on rethinkchurch.org during Lent, offering your congregation another chance to connect with weekly themes and with those who may not have a church home. Digital advertising will connect newcomers to the site and provide an opportunity for them to learn about The United Methodist Church and local congregations. Be sure to review your Find a Church profile to make sure that it provides a welcoming online presence.

Go to www.umcom.org/journeytohope to review and download the series, order the bundle (\$25) and update your Find a Church profile. Questions? Contact rethinkchurch@umcom.org.

Spotlight on Lenten studies at the Resource Center

As we leave the days of the Christmas season behind us and we journey toward the light with the Wise Men during this time of Epiphany, our eyes are invariably drawn towards the season of Lent. Over the next eight weeks I want to introduce you to new, as well as old favorite Lenten studies. Whether your group is interested in learning more about the actual events of Jesus' last days or want an in-depth study of the Christian life of forgiveness, grace and prayer, the Resource Center will have a Lenten study just for you.



Adam Hamilton's Lenten study "24 Hours That Changed the World" is a wonderful study to welcome your whole church to participate in. Not only will you travel to the Holy Land and visit the holy sites where the Holy Week events took place from the Mount of Olives to Calvary, but you will gain new insights and understandings of the events. The seven sessions are: 1) The Last Supper; 2) The Garden of Gethsemane; 3) Condemned by the Righteous; 4) Jesus, Barabbas and Pilate; 5) The Torture and Humiliation of the King; 6) Crucifixion; and 7) Christ the Victor. There is also a bonus

feature titled “What If Judas Had Lived?” A leader’s guide, book and 40-day devotional are all included.

Hamilton’s newest Lenten study, out just this year, is called “Final Words From The Cross.” This study contains seven sessions that provide fresh insight into Jesus’ final words on the cross through the perspective of those who witnessed the crucifixion. Hamilton moves forward in the final session to those disciples who witnessed the Resurrection and walked on the road to Emmaus with him. A book and leader’s guide are included with this DVD study.

For all your Lenten study needs email Diane Dunkerson at ddunkerson@umcneb.org or call her at 1-800-435-6107 for suggestions and ideas for Lenten studies for your church. To view a complete list of our Lenten and Easter studies, go to www.umcneb.org/ResourceCenter.

Letters to the editor

A new letter to the editor has been posted to the news section; [click here](#) to view it.