

Leadership Within—Rev. Karen Oehl, Lead Pastor

-Jan L. Talbott



Rev. Karen has arrived.

-photo courtesy of Renee Davis

We are delighted to welcome Rev. Karen Oehl and her husband, Chris to our Gay Street United Methodist Church family as she takes on the yoke of Christ's service with us starting July 1.

Rev. Karen Oehl is excited to be getting back in the local church setting. To Rev. Oehl this is not a job, it is lifestyle, it is life! As she so passionately stated, "This immersion into the sea of living for God and knowing that it is all service, all to a purpose, all simply giving back what has been given -why, that IS life." Now, that response did not surprise me at all because I know of her roots and she was planted and nourished lovingly throughout her formative years.

A few of you won't be surprised to learn that the folks that influenced her the most in life were her parents, Bill and Judy McCartney. Her mother was her teacher in everything from Bible stories, to music, to even inspiring her to become a teacher herself. Her father's influence helped lead her into ministry. They both infused her with a love of United Methodism and a drive to seek justice in the church and in the world. Both parents allowed her to learn and explore the outdoors, her faith, and her own role as wife and mother.

Karen has two sisters and a brother. She is number two in birth order. Her older sister and brother live in Cincinnati, her younger sister outside Washington, D.C. in Silver Spring Maryland. Her brother went to Kenyon and his name is. . . Paul McCartney!

Now if you would ask Bill or Judy where to look for Karen when she was a kid growing up they would you have told you, look up! Yep, up! A lot of her childhood was spent climbing trees, especially the tall apple tree in their backyard. It was her favorite place to hangout. I would venture to guess that is also one of her favorite places to read books. She loved books. As a kid her favorite book was, *Heidi*. I don't know if that inspired her to try to make anyone walk or not, but it still makes her want to run barefoot on a mountain and eat a lot of bread and cheese! To this day trees hold a special place in her heart, they help her renew and refresh.

She also tested her mother's tolerance level after reading the Margery Sharp book, *The Rescuers*. Karen successfully convinced her mom to allow her to have pet mice! As a teen she started her lifelong passion for Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings". She loves fantasy and science fiction, especially Lois McMaster Bujold. For variety she reads Jane Austen novels, mysteries by Ellis Peters, and two lesser known 20th century authors, Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Elizabeth Goudge.

Forty years ago, Karen met her future husband, Chris during Freshman Orientation week at The College of Wooster, when his hall played her hall in a softball game. Their first "date" was to see the James Bond movie "Goldfinger" showing on campus and at their first lunch in the cafeteria he dropped his tray and ended up with spaghetti all over his shoes.



Moving in time for Rev. Karen

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After college, Karen began her teaching career at Hathaway Brown School a private K-12 school for girls in Shaker Heights. She taught Middle School Social Studies. She also taught ICOPE - Inductive Creative Outdoor Process Education which involved adventures, rope course stuff and various games and team problem solving. Good training for ministry!

Karen and Chris have two daughters. Kirsten just turned 30 on Aldersgate Day, for all Wesleyan history scholars. She is married to Mark, who is British. They currently live in Worcester, NY with their three hounds. Maren is getting married on October 7 to Brock Schludecker. They will be moving back to Ohio from Chicago. As a family they love camping, cooking, Christmas, Vermont, dogs, and audio-books.



The Oehl family

Rev. Oehl's call to ministry took root, unnoticed by her, as it grew out of a life of activity in the church, first with her parents, then on her own. From singing in the choir, teaching Sunday School, being very active in the camping ministry, involved in church, district and conference activities the call was nourished. Finally, at a turning point in her life, Karen and Chris were walking the dog one evening. When he said "What's next?" The answer that came from her heart and lips was, "I think it is time for me to go to seminary."



Welcome Rev. Karen!

During her time spent in the trees as a young child, I would venture to guess that Karen never envisioned all that God had in store for her. It is good to know we won't have to look up to find Rev. Karen now, she'll be right beside us, as we all continue to work together to bear lasting fruit that make the branches bend in plenty in His Name!

Be sure to join us after church on Sunday, July 9 in the red parlor for the welcome reception for Rev. Karen and Chris Oehl.