

February 2009

Volume 2, Issue 2

"Think Globally, Act Locally"



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Planting Seeds of Hope

Your help is needed for our United Methodist mission J.A.M. (Jackson



Area Ministries) serving needy families here in Ohio through

the "Green Thumb and Gardening" project.

You can donate packages of vegetables seeds or money donations to help purchase tomato plants and seed potatoes. Through seed and money donations last year over 2,800 families from seventeen southern counties in Ohio were able to plant, raise some of their own food, and even give extra fresh produce to the food banks in their counties. People helping people! Let us help get the gardens growing.

The Dorcas Circle of the Gay Street United Methodist Church Women have a designated box in the chapel area and a basket in the upstairs lounge to receive your gifts

of seed and money. If you give money by check please mark "Seed Project" on it. If you want to give cash, just mark the envelope "Seed Project" so it will get placed in the appropriate account.

Type of seeds needed

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Beets | Lettuce |
| Broccoli | Melons |
| Cabbage | Peppers |
| Carrots | Pumpkins |
| Cauliflower | Radishes |
| Corn | Spinach |
| Cucumbers | Squash |
| Green Beans | Turnips |

In 2008 J.A.M. distributed 21,456 plants and distributed seed potatoes. Donations came from thirty-four different states.

~Catherine Seward

UMW Executive Committee

- Peg McCracken
President, 397-2252
- Janet Rehling
Vice Pres., 397-5017
- Jan Moreland
Secretary, 397-9571
- Angie Richards
Treasurer, 392-7904
- Norma Siekkinen
Ast. Treas., 397-4386

Norma Siekkinen and Agape Patria

If you are newer to Gay Street UMC, you may know Norma Siekkinen only as the fashionable lady in the second service who always wears a hat. Or perhaps you have attended a luncheon following a church funeral, and noticed Norma, this time in an apron, working side-by-side with her husband Duane in the kitchen. But did you know that Norma has been involved with luncheons following memorial services for eighteen years?

Family and friends, especially those from out of town, need a place to gather following a funeral—a place to eat, relax, and continue to share stories of their loved one, to laugh and cry, and to renew family ties and friendships. A restaurant may feel too public and a private home, even if available, may be too small or lack parking. When the family chooses to use the fellowship hall, the funeral director relays this to Dr. David Baker, pastor, who informs Colleen Hicks, administrative assistant, who then contacts Jason Frazer, building supervisor, and then phones Norma or whomever Norma has designated.

So, rarely with more than two days notice, Norma and Duane clear their schedules and spring into action to offer healing hospitality on behalf of our



Norma Siekkinen
"Priceless Gem"

church to an indefinite number of people. "Back when we started, luncheons were usually small," says Norma, "Maybe 25 or 30 people; nothing four volunteers couldn't handle." Two or three times more recently they have served over 100.

Norma makes a trip to Kroger's to buy a sliced ham, prepares Betty Crocker potatoes (bought by the case at Smithhisler's), phones others to ask for help and additional food, and then, with the help of a crew (Peg McCracken and her daughter Sue Baker are two of them; in fact, every two months Peg takes lead responsibility) prepares side dishes, sets tables, arranges the buffet, makes coffee, clears tables, and cleans up. When pressed, Norma estimated it was probably a minimum of six hours per din-

ner, but it suits Norma. She says, "Cooking is something I can do. I would much rather do a 'one shot' kind of thing like a dinner than do an ongoing job like secretary."

Although Norma, youngest of five children, had never prepared a meal prior to marrying Duane, both are good cooks. "One day," Norma related, "a guy came to the kitchen after the meal and demanded, 'Who made the potatoes?'" Norma said she had. "Well, I'm taking you home with me!" was his response. Norma says Duane is the one who is better at tasting and knowing just what additional seasonings a dish needs.

Like many good projects, Agape Patria began as the result of one person seeing a need and doing something about it. That person was Marjorie Soon, wife of Rev. Kim Yong Soon. The Soons, retired from Illinois, moved to Mount Vernon and were active at Gay Street UMC during the pastorate of Rev. John Capper, 1988-1996. *<continued on page 3>*



Agape Patria

Norma Siekkinen and Agape Patria ~ continued from page 2

Post-funeral lunches in the church were not done as often then, but after one for Winona Wyant, who had been an active UMW member, her grateful family gave the church \$50. One Sunday morning, Marjorie Soon proposed using the \$50 as seed money to form a group that would coordinate funeral lunches at the church. She also suggested the name, Agape Patria, which loosely translated means “Love Feast,” and passed out a sign-up sheet. Those who volunteered to cook, serve, and clean up covered a page and a half of narrow-lined notebook paper.

Norma and Duane Siekkinen were among the earliest volunteers. Duane had just retired, their four children were adults, and they were available. From the beginning, Agape Patria has been a ministry of both men and women, often couples. Ruth and Harlan Hubbell played a key role in the early years, taking over when the Siekkinens were wintering in Texas. Janet and Ernie Rehling have helped, and also Bonnie and Jim Magaw. The couple tradition continues today with Diana and Doug Peterson and Ellen and Woody Stopher, but many others have been involved as well. When a luncheon is expected to exceed 75 or so, Norma calls on volunteers who stand ready and willing all the time.



Norma Siekkinen
In the kitchen—at the ready!

Early on, the United Methodist Women voted to make sure that Agape Patria always had adequate funding and UMW handles the money. There has always been enough money. Voluntary donations from families come in, and the money goes to the UMW treasurer, currently Angie Richards. Angie keeps track of families served, donations received, and gives Norma regular updates on how much money is available. Norma turns in receipts and is reimbursed for food purchases.

Having a set menu helps, but it has changed over the years. In the '90's, before she moved back to Illinois, Marjorie Soon always baked a cake and Norma made a Jell-o

salad. Ruth Hubbell says that in late summer people would bring in fresh green beans, corn, and tomatoes from gardens, whatever they had. Church members have always been generous with cakes, pies, salads, and casseroles. Marna Burwell, according to Ruth Hubbell, has never said “No” and has made countless pans of scalloped potatoes for funeral dinners. Lisa Phillippi, Norma's daughter, another good cook, has been a contributor. Gary Palm used to not only set up the tables, but also make the coffee and help run the dishwasher. There are many, many others, too many to mention, who have cheerfully helped with Agape Patria.

~Janet Jennings



GALATIANS 5:13, NIV



Mission Outreach of the UMW—Red Bird Mission School

"Think Globally, Act Locally"



Red Bird Mission School

Notes of Appreciation

Irene Day....

"I wish to thank you all for your thoughtfulness and Christmas basket, it was very nice."

Alta Smith... .

"Many thanks to the United Methodist Women for the box of goodies at Christmas."

The Gay Street United Methodist Women mission work touches those within our church, in our community, within our state and globally. During the 2008 year a total of \$125 was given to the Red Bird Mission.

Red Bird Mission was founded in 1921 in the southeastern corner of Kentucky to provide education and Christian evangelism ministries to residents of the area. The Mission was started by the Evangelical Church on a small piece of property, at the confluence of Cow Fork and the Red Bird River.

The story of Red Bird is one of deep faith in God. Red Bird Mission was born in answer to prayer. It is a story of gracious outpouring of prayer and means by the church.

As early as 1913 the women of the Evangelical Church became aware of the needs of the people of the Southern Highlands. In 1919 the

Illinois Branch Women's Missionary Society was the first of three branches to request that the church begin work here. After much prayer and study the Women's Board established the Faith Fund, named thus as they said, "in the faith that money would flow into it and that God will show us where to invest it."

Meanwhile, God-fearing people in the mountains of Southeastern Kentucky were praying that someone would "come over and help us."

Miss Zelphia Roberts, a Presbyterian girl from near Hyden, was one of those who prayed. She taught in a little school at Phillip's Fork across the mountain from Beverly. Once a week she walked to Beverly for the mail.

There she saw intelligent boys doing nothing and receiving no training. She also heard that Uncle Millard and Aunt Myrtle Knuckles, a local couple, were wanting a school for the youth. So as she crossed the mountain each week

she regularly stopped at a certain rock to pray that a Christian school would be built at Red Bird. She said that God had assured her that her prayers offered at this wayside altar would be answered.

Aunt Carrie Knuckles also prayed that her children would have a chance to attend a school and Sunday School near their home. Years later, when her children did have this opportunity and later grew up into fine, useful citizens, she said, "I cannot express in words my appreciation for this school. Sometimes we can't see our prayers answered for a long time, but we must never give up for God is before us leading us gently over."

So it was that God answered these prayers and sent the Evangelical Church into the Cumberland Mountains of Kentucky into the area called Red Bird. The first workers arrived on July 1, 1921.

For more information see:
www.rbmission.org/AboutUs/history.html

**The Story of Red Bird Mission by
Roberta Schaeffer, (1980)*

Sarah Circle News

Sarah Circle met the chilly evening of January 21. Six members heard and approved minutes from the November, 2008 meeting. Peg McCracken shared an inspiring poem from Marjorie Holmes. The piece perfectly fit the tone of our country at this time of many challenges, and is a prayerful writing for direction and strength of new leaders as well as all people.

Colleen Hicks introduced a discussion of Christine A.

Mallouhi's book, Miniskirts, Mothers & Muslims, an indepth and intriguing look at the cultural nuances and values of Muslim people, particularly women. We discussed how our world has become smaller over the years, as we grow in this electronic and media-driven age. This brings people of different cultures and customs together, and challenges us to understand, and appreciate, our differences. Peg McCracken shared her learning experiences with

medical professionals from other countries with whom she worked at M.V.D.C.

February 18, Sarah Circle will meet and review chapters three through five of the book. Carolyn Allar will lead the discussion and share refreshments. All women are invited, at 7:00 p.m. in room 102 of the church.

~Colleen Hicks

