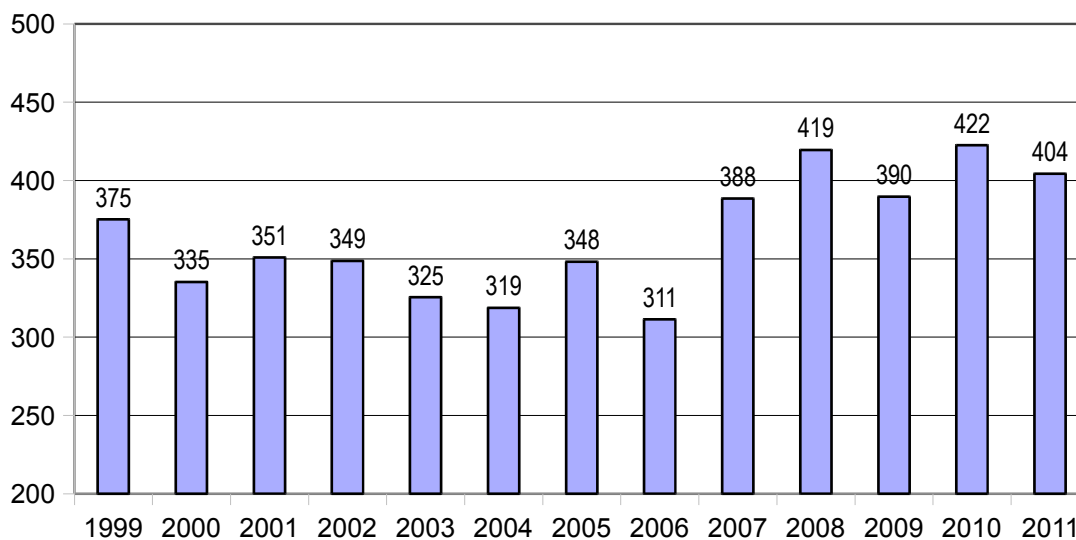


## Council on Ministries Report

*Prepared by Neil McTavish for the Church Council Meeting of December 12, 2011*

I usually start to prepare for my report by analyzing attendance numbers. The numbers this year showed an average attendance decline of roughly 17 in both the 830 and 1100 CLC services and roughly an average increase in WIRED service attendance of roughly 17 leaving us with an overall average decline in attendance of around 17.

### First UMC West Lafayette September/October Average Attendance



Attendance at Welcome Back Sunday was also down by 22 from last year – from 878 to 856. I frankly find this troubling. In many ways we are doing more for Christ than we have since my family joined our congregation at the beginning of 1998. I think of our increased mission activities – the joyous affirmation from Maria Humbane this summer warmed my heart. We feed the children, we are making great strides in TeenMOPS, we have silent auctions that raise thousands for missions and so many other activities. We started the WIRED service to reach the unchurched and seekers and that is a positive. Our music ministry, aside from the CLC praise band, is firing on all cylinders. We have a large offering of Adult Ed classes and Children's and Youth Ministry are strong. There are thriving UMW circles. We're having a good discussion on whether or not we should proceed with a new sanctuary. These are all positives. So what are we missing?

Chuck Newton is head of the adult education program at our church. Adult education had concerns about the future of our GIFT program and decided to seek the advice of Steve Clouse. Steve is the Indiana Conference Associate Director of Church Development. Steve attended a meeting with the adult education group and gave them his opinion on things to we need to really think about. He stated that on the traditional side our two main drivers for growth are Children's Ministry and Music Ministry. The question to ask is whether there is an easy and obvious way for people that don't fit in those two categories to get involved and feel part of our congregation? He also stated that we have to take care of our congregation members from the parking lot to inside and back out to the parking lot. We have to be a warm, welcoming church.

This all sounded really familiar to me. I remembered the welcoming church discussions we had when we first moved into our new building. I remembered thinking that John and the committee did an excellent job presenting the case for being more welcoming. I remember being fired up myself but to me it all kind of waned after 6 months – it didn't become part of our culture. That's not to say we're not friendly – we are. But I don't think welcoming is a natural thing for people – it is different than friendly. So often up in the booth I watch people shake hands at our

time to give peace and I see new people with their hands in their pockets while friends greet each other all around them. I think of Christ's message to us – He challenged us to love everyone including our enemies. My thinking is that Christ knew that naturally we would love and welcome our friends and family (He said “even the gentiles do that”). But He obviously wanted us to take the next step and have love for everyone. Can I take the leap out of my natural tendencies to love and welcome those I don't know – all the time? Can I make this my culture? Can I make it so that when a newcomer comes in they feel I care about them and love them and want them to join us in the Great Commission without them feeling pestered? Am I crossing a line by asking these questions? These are just thoughts I am asking myself after hearing Chuck's report and looking at the attendance numbers.

*I am very pleased with Adult Education's response to Steve's comments. It is their decision to start a short term committee to figure out how we can be a more welcoming church and make it part of who we are – part of our culture. Chuck has volunteered to lead the committee. His proposal is below. However, we all agreed that the committee should be open to all in our congregation that want to participate. It would be great if the people involved in the Welcoming Church initiative would at the minimum give the new committee their views on the previous effort. It would be even better if they were able to assist the new committee!*

On another front, I was considering surveying the congregation on what we are doing right or wrong. But this would be a big undertaking and I'm afraid that we need results quicker than that. The main question that I want to ask the congregation is why our attendance numbers are down. Do you know people that have left the church? Do you know why they left the church or are not attending? Please let me know - in-person, over the phone or by email. Let's account for the decline in attendance! All conversations will be confidential. All results will be anonymous. I would like to compile these reasons and present them in my next report to church council. There may be some obvious action that we can accomplish quickly.

Following is Chuck Newton's proposal:

*Proposal for a  
Paths to Discipleship Task Force  
December 12, 2011*

After brainstorming ideas for enhancing the Wednesday night GIFT program, the Adult Education Council made some recommendations to the Christian Education Committee. We also recommended that we utilize a United Methodist consultant to help evaluate not only GIFT but all Christian Education programs at First Church. Steve Clous recently attended GIFT and then made a recommendation to the Adult Education Council.

I am (Chuck is) inspired by the recommendation. Christian Education and other programs will only succeed in attracting new members if we have an integrated intentional program of attracting visitors into the church programs from the moment they arrive in the parking lot. We do that very well for the children and those who express an interest in music, but we are not yet as effective in attracting others.

Steve refers to this welcoming and integration into the life of the church as “paths to discipleship” consistent with Wesley's approach. He recommends a task force be formed to determine what kind of disciples we want to develop at First Church and then design the pathways to get there in the form of welcoming and involving visitors in the “paths to discipleship”. It is important that the task force have the responsibility, authority and accountability to accomplish this task.

This effort involves every member of the church and areas like church growth, worship, education, and missions under the umbrella of Committee on Ministry. Therefore we made a proposal on December 5 leading to this recommendation to the Church Council tonight.

I (Chuck) am/is volunteering to chair this Task Force and recruit members for it. I anticipate a concentrated effort over six months to accomplish this task. FUMC has something very important to offer this community. An alternative to churches that ask members to check their minds (brains) at the door, we can appeal to those who are on a faith journey and willing to think and explore new ideas along with others on the way to true discipleship. I (he) have/has a vision that we can grow this church in many different ways so that the new building will be an absolute necessity by the time it is finished.

Thanks for your consideration!

## ***Worship***

Joel Rasmus

The Worship Comm discussed the holiday services and decided that Christmas Eve services will be at 6 and 9p with the 6:00 service being somewhat tailored to families with young children. The Church's youth groups will assist with some of the elements for the earlier service. The later service will be the traditional "candle light" service. On Christmas and New Years morning the Church will hold just one service. This 10a service will blend elements from the traditional and the Wired services.

Christmas Decorating of the Church is being done in (2) phases with the first phase completed this past Saturday. The next phase will be completed on Saturday, December 17 from 9-11a. Everyone is welcome to help.

## ***Music***

Ellen Wilson/Gail Polles

Music Ministries at First United Methodist Church continues to be an integral part of worship. The Chancel Choir, MorningStar, Rainbow Ringers, Aldersgate Handbell Choir, Celebration Chimes, Kings Choir and Sonshine Kids, and Youth Choir continue to provide meaningful music to worship on a regular basis. In addition, a new ladies trio, H.I.S. (His In Song) has been formed. This new group came about simply as a group to fill special music during the summer. After rehearsing together, we decided to continue this ensemble and hope to eventually be an outreach ministry of the church by providing music to retirement communities, nursing homes, etc.

In November, Lydia Bittles prepared the Sunday School Singers to sing for the congregation during an 11:00 worship service in the CLC. Lydia and the children did a great job! We love to see all ages participating in music! Lacy Reagan will be back in 2012 to lead the Sunday School Singers after taking some time off to have her new baby.

At the time of the Church Council meeting, the Chancel Choir and Orchestra will have presented the cantata "Journey of Promises." Thank you to the many musicians who have given hours and hours of rehearsal time in preparation! Thanks also to Mark Daugherty who helped set-up the CLC for the cantata. Also, the WIRED band will have had a special program, "A Very WIRED Christmas" on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

December 18<sup>th</sup>, The King's Choir and Sonshine Kids, along with Celebration Chimes will present their Christmas program during the first 20 minutes of the Sunday School Hour. Shari Bittles and Lana Robyne were contacted prior to scheduling the program during the Sunday School hour and were asked for their input. Both were extremely supportive of the proposed date and time. Thanks to Amanda Rowe, Heidi Fornes, all of the children who are involved and their parents, for their work and preparation in helping us celebrate Christmas!

Many of our musicians and ensembles are preparing music for both Christmas Eve services. At 6pm, the Sunshine Kids and King's Choirs will be singing "Happy Birthday, Jesus," Amanda Rowe will sing "O Holy Night," and for the first time, Celebration Chimes and Rainbow Ringers will join forces. They will present the offertory music. MorningStar, Jubilation Bells, and the Chancel Choir will sing/ring during the 9pm Christmas Eve service.

A special thank you to Sallie Crawford for all of the beautiful music she brings to this church every Sunday and on other holy days. We are fortunate to have her at this church!

We are blessed to have many fine musicians in this church who are willing to share the talents that God shares with them. Music Ministries seeks to offer a variety of ensembles and ways to allow people to use these gifts. Please let us know if you are interested in an outlet for your particular musical talent.

Ongoing needs for Music Ministries at First United Methodist Church in West Lafayette are:

1. Adequate and secure storage space for bells, music stands, percussion equipment, digital piano, etc.

2. Adequate seating for the Chancel Choir with chairs designed for musicians
3. Music room rehearsal seating that mimics seating arrangements on the CLC platform
4. A music library where all of the music can be stored in the same room

### ***Education***

See Lana's report. Pray for Nola.

### ***Village Nursery School***

Jean Morehouse

Village Nursery School continues to be a wonderful outreach for First United Methodist Church. Currently, enrollment is good and 121 Children come through our doors each week for classes. The annual Thanksgiving program, which has been presented by the Pre-K classes for more than 30 years, was a success as usual!

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Children and their families had the opportunity, once again, to attend the PMO Christmas show for students. We greatly appreciate being one of the few Pre-schools allowed to attend this event!

VNS is excited to partner with the Trustees in the Playground improvement project that was recently started. We look forward to the results next year!

A few of the Parents expressed concerns over the recent Security changes that had to be implemented at the Church. They felt they were not adequately informed of the events that instigated the changes. We held a special Board meeting to address their concerns and executed a plan to more effectively communicate issues to the VNS families in the future.

### ***Children's Education***

Shari Bittles

See separate report.

### ***Missions and Social Concerns***

Mary Welch

Nothing to report or submitted separately.

### ***United Methodist Women***

Eileen Chamness

THE UMW PURPOSE: "The organized unit of the UMW shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ, to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church". (Article 3, Constitution)

Nothing to report or submitted separately.

*Other ministries have nothing to report or are reported separately.*