In This Issue...
◊ It was a great week at VBS!
◊ Committee Rosters for 2012-13
◊ YSP Report from Rushville, IN
◊ Looking Ahead to Fall Worship
◊ Pictorial Directory Dates
◊ ...and much more!

Grandma's Kitchen
A Brecksville Tradition

Grandma’s Kitchen Heats up for Home Days 2012

June 29—July 1: A special “Home Days” Edition of the Brecksville Bulletin touted the delectable treats available at Home Days this year, urging their readers not to miss “the United Methodist Women’s Pulled Barbeque Beef sandwiches followed by their world famous, truly delectable and highly fattening cherry pie and cherry cobbler. Remember, a Brecksville ordinance requires that they be topped off with a big scoop of ice cream.”

The folks who took that great advice were not disappointed! The United Methodist Women cooked up a storm, and the threat of rain held off. With the help of volunteers from our church family and some hungry customers, Grandma’s was a success, generating a nice sum for the UMW’s missions budget.

Last year the UMW was able to help others locally, nationally, and internationally through their fundraising. Some of the projects they support include Guidestone (formerly Berea Children’s Home), Heifer International, Brookside Center, Church Women United, Flat Rock Home, Henderson Settlement, West Side Community House, West Side Ecumenical Ministries, and Nehemiah Mission.

Do you know someone who would like to get involved in the United Methodist Women? It’s a community of women whose purpose is to know God, to develop a supportive fellowship and to expand concepts of mission through participation in global ministries of the church. Call the church office for more information!
Our Staff
Phone: 440-526-8938
Pastor: Clark Stein
pastor@brecksvilleumc.com
Associate Pastor of Visitation Libby Kuntz
associatepastor@brecksvilleumc.com
Director of Music: Joy E. Fenton
music@brecksvilleumc.com
Director of Christian Education Jenny Gee
education@brecksvilleumc.com
Director of Youth Ministries Kyle Allen
youth@brecksvilleumc.com
Business Manager: Les Buttolph
finance@brecksvilleumc.com
Office Manager: Melanie Smith
office@brecksvilleumc.com
Administrative Assistant: Cec Podolny
cecp@brecksvilleumc.com
Financial Secretary, Pat Gordon
Church School Registrar, Joan Olszko
Facility Managers, Jeff and Scott Hastings
facilities@brecksvilleumc.com
Organist, Chris Toth
tothchristopher@att.net

Published monthly by Brecksville United Methodist Church 65 Public Square, Brecksville, OH 44141
Article deadline: 3rd Friday monthly.

8:30 Outdoor Worship
10:00 Worship, Sanctuary

Old Cell Phones Earn Money for Missions.
Cell phones are manufactured using precious metals and plastics.
Bring your old phones (no cords or accessories, please) to the red bin in the cloak room. Proceeds from recycling go to our missions budget!

A man became disenchanted with the city life he was living. He decided to move to the country and start a chicken farm. He bought a farmhouse with some land around it, moved in, and bought 200 baby chicks. But they all quickly died. He bought 200 more baby chicks but, again, they all died a short time later. Puzzled and distressed, the man wrote to the county agricultural agent and described everything that had happened. He concluded his letter, “I want very much to be a successful chicken farmer. Therefore, can you tell me: Have I been planting the chicks too close together or too deep?” Whereupon the county agent wrote back and said, “I can’t answer your question until you send me a soil sample.”

Summer continues. I enjoy seeing you and hearing of your vacations, your reunions, your fun and play. Summer is a time when we take it easy, yet allow ourselves to be stretched a bit. In our laid back style, we allow some things to be near us, some people to enter our inner circle that might have a hard time getting in there the rest of the year.

We are part of a wonderful church that has built a house on the solid rock of Jesus Christ. No winds will blow it down. My prayer as we plan for the fall is that some of our summertime acceptance will come along into September and beyond. God has great plans for us, although I am quite certain not all of what we will experience is within our present “box.” I have enjoyed a summer so far that is beyond my prior experience. I hope I am not simply asking for soil samples, but looking for new solutions, new experiences, life giving not life taking activity. I pray the rest of the summer brings you the same…

Peace enough for the day.
More Than “Just Music”

Music is powerful. Is there a single person anywhere who could deny having been moved, at one time or another, by its incredible power? We are blessed to have a rich and diverse music program here at Brecksville UMC, and I get excited about so many aspects of our program: wonderful guests artists, concerts, great organ music, new songs from the emerging worship scene, many youth and children in worship, and about a dozen other things I could list!

From time to time, though, it is worth reminding ourselves that worship is at the heart of all the music we create and embrace. Whether it’s a classical performance, a crazy act for Music With a Mission, or a great hymn of the faith, all of our music sings the goodness of God and is an expression of our gratefulness for the way that God has created and gifted each of us. It’s never “just music,” it’s worship!

In that spirit, I invite you into Music Ministry of this church. We need you! When you become involved as a singer, an instrumentalist, or behind the scenes, you are becoming a part of the incredible ministry and mission of this church. It’s a high calling, but one that you will find richly rewarding as you give of your time, your energy, and your God-given talent.

Praise Team: This group of instrumentalists and singers serves as worship leaders for our 8:45 Contemporary Worship on most Sundays. Music is drawn from a wide range of sources - from hymns to cutting-edge songs. Rehearsals are on Sunday mornings from 8:00 to 8:45, and teams are scheduled in advance. We are always looking for vocalists, guitarists, bass players, drummers/percussionists, and brass/woodwind/string players to lead us in our worship of God. Please contact Joy to get involved!

Chancel Choir: This dynamic ensemble serves as worship leaders for our 11:15 Traditional Worship on most Sundays. We learn a wide variety of anthems from diverse styles and genres, but most important, we invite the congregation into the worship of God. You need not be an experienced musician, as lots of guidance is provided along the way! Rehearsals are 7:30 to 9:00pm on Thursday evenings, beginning on September 20.

Handbell Choir: Bell ringing is a unique and engaging way to get involved! This ensemble provides beautiful and worshipful music about once a month at both of our services. The group is both a fun and focused group, and they meet on Thursday evenings from 6:15 to 7:30, beginning on September 13, under the direction of Chris Toth. He is looking for “A Few Good Ringers” to join the group this fall, so contact Chris if you are interested.

Technology Team: There is so much that goes into worship each Sunday morning. Sometimes we forget that worship can’t happen without people working diligently behind the scenes to set up sound equipment, run the PowerPoint, and accomplish many other important tasks. If you have a servant heart and a love of technology, we need you! Even if you feel unsure about all the equipment, just give us a call – we will provide the training!

Whether you are a seasoned veteran or ready to jump in for the first time, I am excited to invite you into Music Ministry. If you feel a calling on your heart that isn’t listed here, let me know. We always have room for new dreams and ideas!

Blessings & see you this fall! - Joy Fenton, Director of Music
Let’s squash malaria in Mali!

What is Malaria?
◊ Malaria is a mosquito-borne deadly disease.
◊ About half of the world’s population is at risk for malaria.
◊ Every 30 seconds, a child dies from malaria.

Where’s Mali?
◊ Mali is a country in western Africa.
◊ It’s about twice the size of Texas.
◊ Mosquito infestations are heaviest in southern Mali (where the Niger River flows) especially during the rainy season.

How Can You Help?
◊ Join our VBS kids to help meet the goal of providing more than 1 million specially treated mosquito bed nets to at-risk kids. Drop your donation in Sunday’s collection plate with a note “Malaria Nets.”
◊ One $6 net can protect two children for up to four years.
◊ For more information, go to www.ok2k.org

Last week our church was abuzz with children, youth and adults all shouting praises to God. SKY VBS took off on July 16 with 85 children (between the ages of 3 and 13) and 34 youth and adult volunteers. Through stories, crafts, games, movie and a mission outreach project the children learned some very basic Biblical truths. We learned that no matter who you are, no matter how you feel, no matter what people do, no matter what happens and no matter where you are you should always trust God.

We learned some wonderful worship songs and sang praises to God to begin and wrap up each day. Each child and adult was given a purple wristband to wear. The wristband says “LOOK FOR GOD TODAY.” On Monday we asked the children to keep their eyes wide open and look for where they see God at work, something we referred to as “God Sightings.” We looked for God in nature, in people and in the everyday blessings of the kids’ lives. By Thursday the children were bubbling with excitement to share where they witnessed God’s loving hand. Would you like a wristband to wear as a reminder to look for God every day? Ask Jenny! We have some extras.

The children also learned about children in Mali, Africa and the threat of malaria there. We named Operation Kid to Kid as our mission outreach project, and raised money for World Vision to purchase bed nets protect the children of Mali from mosquitoes. One child wisely noted that we were a God Sighting for the children of Mali. We set a lofty goal of raising enough money to purchase 75 nets. By Friday, we had raised enough to purchase 91!

Vacation Bible School is one of the largest education events of our whole church year. Many of our regularly attending children joined us, but we also were blessed to be visited by many children who call another church home. The groups worked wonderfully together and had an awesome time thinking about God’s unending love and God’s ever present presence in our lives. It was a wonderful, faith-filled week.

Many thanks go out to all the people who helped make VBS a success this year. We are also so grateful for your abundant and generous donations of food and props that helped defray the cost of the program.
Rally Days are August 26 and September 2. Look for us at the table in the lobby after both the 8:30 and the 10:00 services to update your child’s contact information. We have made it so easy. Even if your information has not changed please stop by the table and let us know.

Have you ever wondered why we ask you to update this information each year? Well, we are aware of a number of children who have had changes in allergies over the past year. We really need to know about that! Occasionally a parent will leave church grounds during the Sunday School hour. If your child became ill or was injured we would need to reach you and we want to know that we have your correct cell information! Many youth have gotten cell phones or email accounts, and may want to receive updates and invitations via email or text. We want to be able to reach them!!

Please take a few minutes on either August 26 or September 2 to stop by the table in the narthex and check over the attendance rosters to be sure they are complete and accurate. You can also find out more about what your child or youth will be learning this year and what adult options are coming up.

Remember Sunday School for all ages begins on September 9!

The Book Group will convene around noon at Joy & Stacy’s home in Strongsville [13432 Tradewinds Drive] and continue until we’re ready to call it an afternoon. Grilled lunch fare and beverages will be provided; bring a side dish or a dessert to share. Families are welcome – we can have a game or movie available for kids. Please contact Joy with questions. **We hope to see some new faces this month!**

**Sunday, August 26: Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality,** by Jack Rogers, Professor of Theology Emeritus, San Francisco Theological Seminary. Book Cost: $11.56, when purchased through the church, or consider the Kindle edition* for $9.49.

In this best seller, evangelical theologian and former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Jack Rogers makes a biblical case for equal rights for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). The book describes Rogers’ own change of mind and heart on the issue, argues for a Christ-centered reading of Scripture, debunks stereotypes about people who are LGBT, and presents ideas for how the church can heal itself and move forward again. A fascinating combination of personal narrative, theology, and church history, this book is essential reading for all concerned with the future of the church and the health of the nation.

*A free Kindle reader application is available for most smart phones, iPhone, iPod touch, tablet, or any computer. If you are someone who hesitates to accumulate more books, this might be an option for you!*

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Try an on-line course!

**August 1-September 1**

**United Methodism 101: (UM101)**

UM101 is an online course designed for new United Methodists and anyone wanting to know more about the denomination. Are you a lifelong or long-term Methodist? You may be surprised at what you can learn about our denomination. The course includes 4 modules that contain many interactive features. Each module takes about 1 hour to complete. You can move through the modules at your own pace. Cost for the course is $9.99. The course begins August 1 – September 12. No participants will be admitted once the course begins. To register: [www.tinyurl.com/metho101]

Would you like to explore what it means to be a United Methodist? Mark your calendars! Our next New Member Class will be held on Sundays, September 16, 23, 30. Sign up by contacting the church office by phone (440-526-8938) or e-mail: [office@brecksvilleumc.com]

Helpers Needed for Picture Days: Sept 4 - 8.

Two and a half hour shifts.

More details later in this newsletter.

Contact the office to sign up! 440-526-8938
As people of faith, we find God’s presence in those who have been blessings to us. At our weekly Staff Meetings, we have recently lifted up the following people in prayer, thanking God for them and the way they touch the lives of others:

Look around BUMC and you may see Claire and Dick Hayes making a sloppy joe dinner to take to Ronald McDonald House; Megan Culley filling the church with her gracious gift of music and enthusiastic spirit; Mike Hart helping decorate Fellowship Hall for VBS and 30 other adult and youth volunteers making VBS happen; Alan Schuefler doing so much for YSP and sharing with the congregation at YSP Sunday.

Dear Church Family,
Greetings from Paris, France. I’d like to thank everyone for coming to my chili dinner to support me on this trip. Paris has been amazing. The Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame have been wonderful. Europe has been great. I hope that everyone is doing well. I can’t wait to see everyone and share pictures, too!

Thanks, Matthew Manocchio

Society of St. Andrew
BUMC has received the “Partner Church Award” from the Society of St. Andrew. Last year, we gave $1,839.33 to the organization, helping them to provide over 84 million servings of fresh fruits and vegetables to people in need by delivering over 28 million pounds of salvaged produce to hunger relief agencies. Over 30,000 people volunteered nationwide during the year to glean and help distribute produce to the poor and hungry. Learn more at: www.endhunger.org

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Can we make our numbers grow? Why not bring a friend to church or Sunday School?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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**BUMC Youth Group Completes Work Project**

In the early morning hours of July 8, a group of dedicated BUMC volunteers gathered in the church parking to begin their journey to Rushville, IN. Nestled halfway between the metropolitan centers of Indianapolis, IN and Cincinnati, OH, Rush County & Rushville is an agricultural community where residents awaken to the quiet of a morning countryside and the close-knit warmth of neighbors. Its distance to larger cities is part of its grace. Yet its location has not shielded its residents from the effects of the economy with automotive parts plants closings and layoffs. In this beautiful setting, our youth had the opportunity to reach out and help both young and old alike, while making some new friends along the way.

In the course of a week, our YSP team provided home repairs at no cost for elderly, disabled, and disadvantaged people in need. Most project crews served the same resident for the entire week, allowing them to develop meaningful relationships. Many projects were designed to be completed during the week, allowing youth to experience the satisfaction of a job well done. Some of the projects included interior and exterior painting, building and repairing porches and wheelchair ramps, building and repairing steps, weatherization and other home repairs.

Want to know more? Ask one of the volunteers listed here about their experience!

**YSP Youth**
Amanda Auble
Nate Bender
Derek Brinkman
Lauren Brinkman
Josh Dietrich
Christine Drescher
Grace Ford
Stephanie Holmes
Brad Holmok
Allie Kenney
Emily Kotnik
Darren Krolikowski
Michael Lee
Allison Loughner
Sarah Lundholm
Bailey Mendlik
Nick Orr
Megan Rohrer
Eli Shively
Russell Slifcak
Alyssa Whitton

**YOY Adults**
Kyle Allen
Matt Auble
Cathy Drescher
Jeff Fesler
Lucy Fesler
Craig Kotnik
Alan Scheufler

**Camp Volunteers**
Ruth Herman
Catherine Vastartis
Mark Vastartis

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**Joy & Stacy’s Wedding**
Sunday, September 2, 2012
2:00pm in the Sanctuary
Reception to follow in Fellowship Hall
Please RSVP to music@brecksvilleumc.com or on Facebook.

We would love to be surrounded by church family and friends as we celebrate our marriage; please join us if you are able. Absolutely no gifts… cards with favorite Scriptures, meaningful quotes, pictures, memories of one or both of us or favorite recipes would be awesome.

If you would like to do something on our behalf, please consider a donation to one of the organizations below in lieu of a gift.

**Brecksville United Methodist Church Music Program/Concert Series**
[www.brecksvilleumc.com](http://www.brecksvilleumc.com)

**National MS Society**
[www.nationalmssociety.org/donate](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/donate)
The National MS Society is a collective of passionate individuals moving together toward a world free of multiple sclerosis.

**Southern Poverty Law Center**
[www.splcenter.org/donations/donate](http://www.splcenter.org/donations/donate)
The Southern Poverty Law Center is a nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to seeking justice for the most vulnerable members of society.
Outreach to our Neighbors

Beads of Hope was one of the organizations represented at our spring Fair Trade Fair. Jenny asked that we share this message from the group’s founder: “Lately I have been reading in Exodus; how God preformed miracles to save the Israelites from the Egyptians. After God divided the Red Sea and saved them, they all began to PRAISE GOD! Every time I come to Uganda, I am AMAZED at all the miracles God has done. Children who were once sex slaves, child soldiers, hungry, and without hope... NOW have a NEW LIFE! What a miracle! I have (WE HAVE) so much to praise God for! His constant provision! Healing the broken hearts of our children! Giving us a staff with a servants heart! Laughter! Joy! Hope! Peace! His goodness is everywhere! His love surrounds each life! Join us in PRAISING GOD for ALL He has done!!!

With a thankful heart....

Cindy Cunningham
Founder & Director
Village of Hope
www.villageofhopeuganda.com

Isaiah 58:9-11
The Message (MSG)

6-9 “This is the kind of fast day I’m after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts. What I’m interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families. Do this and the lights will turn on, and your lives will turn around at once. Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage. Then when you pray, God will answer. You’ll call out for help and I’ll say, ‘Here I am.’

Nestled among the businesses near the intersection of Broadview and Brookpark Roads, is the American Indian Education Center. Despite its relatively small size, it is an important center of activity for the American Indians of Northeast Ohio. On Thursday nights, young people come together to participate in activities that are important in the Indian culture. Most of them are doing crafts such as making moccasins, while others are learning the art of drumming, an essential part of Native American dances, as you can see in the pictures. Because the activities go from 5 – 8 PM, the young people come right from school and are not able to get a nutritious evening meal. The Center’s tight budget can not support providing a meal for the participants. So, volunteers from our church have been providing home cooked meals to these young people. Jim and Linda Rollins provided a delicious venison chili dinner in the pictures above. Previously, Karen and Cliff Thielman, Cathy and Les Buttolph, and Kyle Allen also provided the “awesome” evening meals that were very much appreciated by these industrious young people. If you would like to help us provide these meals, please contact Les Buttolph at the church or by cell (216) 536-0997.

Softball Season Comes to an End

Our Men’s Softball season ended this year with two good games on July 17. We played very well against Our Lady of Guadalupe, who clobbered us twice during the season, losing 16-10. Last year we eliminated Faith Fellowship in the playoffs, this year they beat us 3-2. Our defense was as hot at the temperature. My car thermometer showed it had cooled to 94 by the end of the second game! Thanks to everyone for participating this year, we had a lot of fun and fellowship. Looking forward to next year! - Bob Lundholm
We are thankful to those who commit to the vitality of this congregation as an integral part of the program and administrative life by serving on a committee or in a volunteer position. This month, we announce new volunteers and thank those who have served faithfully over the past year!

**Administrative Board**
Meet quarterly (in January, April, July, and October) to review major policies and programs of the church. Members-at-large help represent the congregation.

*Chairperson*, Sue Hastings. The post of Secretary is vacant. Lay Members to Annual Conference are Elizabeth Jascezak and Jenny Gee. Lay Leader is Tim Miller. President of United Methodist Women, Ruth Herman. President of United Methodist Men, ‘Skip’ Smith. Church Historian, Marianne Nolan. Members-at-large: George Diver, Bob Andree, Penny Burns, Bob Wuerth, Joyce Wuerth, Jack Drescher, Ralph Slifcak. The chairperson of each committee, the church program staff, and the church business manager also serve on the administrative board.

**Board of Trustees**
Responsible for the care and maintenance of the church building and enhancing our space.

*Chairperson*, Mary Kotnik. Other members are: Ann Rittman, Kristi Eberhardt, Jamie Hocutt, Dave Dobos, John Scott, Jack Drescher, Jim Rollins, Paul Calovini. Ex Officio: Business Manager, Les Buttolph

**Staff Parish Relations Committee**
This group supports and encourages the clergy and staff of the church. Where human resources meet God resources.

*Chairperson*, Liz Fredrick. Also serving are Robin Raybuck, Scott Campbell, Claire Hayes, Leslie Miller, Alan Phillips, Mike Kubek, Craig Czarnota, Jennifer Schneider

**Finance Committee**
While the main responsibility is the yearly stewardship campaign, this committee oversees financial resources all year long.

*Chairperson*, Jason Bell. Also serving are Fran McClean, Shelly Meek, Cathy Buttolph, Cliff Thielman, Dick Hayes, Mark Hobzek, Vicki Brinkmann. The Chairperson of the Administrative Board, Sue Hastings; the Lay Leader, Tim Miller; and the Business Manager, Les Buttolph also serve on the Finance Committee.

Want to read more? Go to www.brecksvilleumc.com
Dear Church Family,

We are blessed to have a nominating committee that has prayerfully considered the needs of each of these committees and worked to fill each open position. But theirs is not an easy job! We are a community of busy, active people, and it takes a tremendous number of willing volunteers to carry on the ministry of this church.

In your review of the committees for this year, you have undoubtedly observed vacancies… places where we are still seeking the right person who possess a servant heart and a willingness to share their passion and ideas through evangelism, mission, worship, or a variety of other areas.

Would you prayerfully consider joining the ministry of this church by lending your time, energy and creativity to a committee?

This isn’t just about putting one more thing on your calendar.

This isn’t just one more meeting to attend.

We believe this is part of being in community together and working toward God’s Kingdom as a church family.

We are praying that you answer the call and join us in ministry this year, knowing that God will richly bless you along the way.

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Dear church family,

We want **YOU** to be a part of this year’s pictorial directory!

Schedule your appointment after church on Sundays in August, or schedule right now on line. (Directions below!)

We are excited to announce that we will soon begin the process of producing our new pictorial church directory with Universal Church Directories. This directory is to help us put names and faces together, introduce our church to the community, preserve this time in our church’s history and tell our story to new church families. In order to achieve these goals we need your help to make the new directory a complete representation of our church family.

Photography Dates: Tuesday, September 4—Saturday, September 8.

- Tuesday, 9/4: 2 pm—8:30 pm
- Wednesday, 9/5: 2 pm—8:30 pm
- Thursday, 9/6: 2 pm—8:30 pm
- Friday, 9/7: 2 pm—8:30 pm
- Saturday, 9/8: 10:30 am—5 pm

- All photography will take place at our church for your convenience. Immediately following photography, you will view your images electronically and select a pose for the directory.

- Each family that is photographed and selects a directory pose will receive a **complimentary 8x10 portrait and a directory**. You will have the opportunity to purchase additional professional portraits to share with family and loved ones.

- Universal offers a complete professional portrait studio including a variety of poses, backgrounds, portrait sizes, finishes and frames.

Please join us in celebrating this time in the life of our church.

*Church Directory Committee*

**Online Scheduling Available!**

To schedule your photography appointment online, simply go to the Universal website, [www.ucdir.com](http://www.ucdir.com), and click on schedule your photography session on the right side. Enter **OH1338** in the Church Code field and enter **brecksville** in the Church Password field. Follow the prompts to schedule your family’s appointment time. If you have 6 or more in your family please use 2 consecutive time slots. The online scheduling option is available Monday through Friday. To set appointment by phone call (888)-742-5823. **Appointments fill up quickly, so schedule as soon as possible to secure your preferred date and time.**
### This Month’s Scripture Focus:

Find this month’s scriptures on the home page of the church website: www.brecksvilleumc.com

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<td>9</td>
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<td>8:30 Worship on the Lawn</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Rally Day I</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
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**August 2012**

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**Summer afternoon—summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language. ~Henry James**
Young adults submit devotions
NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Young Adult Network has collected several devotions by young adults for young adults. The essays can be used for discussion groups or personal study. Applications also are being sought for new contributors. Interested? Check out www.globalyoungpeople.org.

Rewriting the Book of Discipline
NASHVILLE, Tenn. — It’s said that the two items no one wants to see being made are laws and sausages. Perhaps the United Methodist Book of Discipline, the denomination’s law book, should be added to that list. It takes almost six months — and a process defined by the rules of the General Conference — before the denomination knows exactly what happened after its big legislative assembly. When the revisions are done, a “redline edition” showing the changes is sent to the Council of Bishops, boards and agencies. After that comes the revision of the revision. Look for the new Book of Discipline in January 2013.

Shoeboxes of Christmas joy
SHEYENNE, N.D. — It won’t be long before treat-filled shoeboxes will begin arriving. By Christmas, these shoeboxes will be filled with gifts for the children living on impoverished reservations in North Dakota and South Dakota. Last Christmas, missionaries Mike and Libby Flowers gave away 5,652 shoeboxes. This year, they’re hoping to give out seven times that many. Learn more by clicking “Shoebox” at www.spiritlakeministrycenter.org.

Ironman pastor shows ‘Anything is Possible’
ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Pastor Scott Sharp was in a rut—physically, emotionally and spiritually. The 44-year-old knew he had to do something and that “anything was possible.” Sharp is now vying to be in the Ironman World Championship in Hawaii. Supporters can go to Facebook to watch his video and vote on his behalf before July 3. Read his story at http://umns.umc.org.

Debby’s waters slowly leaving Florida
APOPKA, Fla.— As Tropical Storm Debby moved into the Atlantic on June 27, United Methodists began assessing the damages and what needs to be done to help affected communities. The slow-moving storm drenched Florida with rain for nearly four days, flooding parts of the state from the west coast to Jacksonville. Until waters recede, however, there’s no way of knowing the extent of damage, said Pam Garrison, manager of the Florida Conference Disaster Recovery office.

West Ohio pulls off 'a current-day miracle'
LAKESIDE, Ohio — In what one pastor called “a current-day miracle,” the West Ohio Annual (regional) Conference raised more than $1 million at its yearly meeting to buy a Cessna airplane for the Wings of the Morning aviation ministry. The airplane will be used to deliver medicine, mosquito nets, doctors, nurses and Bibles to villages in the Democratic Republic of Congo that are inaccessible by car.

Churches respond to U.S. storms
CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Challenged by a swath of severe summer storms and sweltering temperatures the first week of July, United Methodists immediately opened their churches as cooling/relief centers and went to work removing debris. The death toll from the severe weather was in the teens.

Cash donations best for wildfire aid
NEW YORK — The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has issued $10,000 in emergency grants to three annual conferences hardest hit by the “profound disaster” of this summer’s horrific wildfires. “After a fire, people have a very small chance of finding anything that is not destroyed,” says UMCOR consultant Gordon Knuckey. He and other experts say cash donations are best, because they enable responders and survivors to purchase locally as needs change. UMCOR has set up a special Disaster Response relief account (Advance #901670) to aid in recovery efforts.