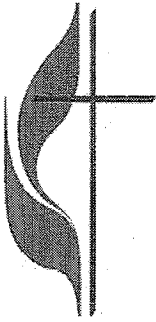


Rick & Lisa Snider
Post Office Box 97
West Point IN 47992



West Point United Methodist Church

O C T O B E R 2 0 0 9

“Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.”
Proverbs 22:6

How do you see yourself? What kind of person are you? That’s a question that is even more important than “how do others see me?” That’s as true for institutions as well as for people. To that end, you might recall that in the September newsletter we introduced you to the core values of our church. In other words, how we see ourselves as a people of God. Those core values, defined by a dedicated and highly spiritual leadership team in early August, were summed up as follows:

- We see ourselves as a Christ centered, God centered, Spirit centered church who sees the bible as foundational to teach, educate and inspire God’s people in such a way as to have us live and carry out His will.
- We see ourselves as a church that, with God’s help, loves, encourages, and accepts all people as children of God.
- We are a church that believes that equipping future generations to become disciples and disciple-makers is a paramount task of our church.
- We are a church that understands that leadership is a shared responsibility with strong, proactive, and risk taking laity leaders who remain future focused.
- We see ourselves as a church that has a passion to serve the community so that others may know the love of God.

My friends, this is who we are! This is how we see ourselves and if we live out these core values, others will see us this way too and we will be builders of the Kingdom of God. The Pastor Parish Committee and I see these core values, and the communication of them as so important that we are going to spend some time trying to communicate them more fully. To that end, over the next several months, we will talk about each of them one by one in this newsletter. In addition, beginning with the October 18th worship services, there will be a five part sermon series dedicated to grounding these core values in both scripture and where we see God’s purpose for us. Today, I would like to start out with the core value of **equipping future generations to become disciples and disciple makers**. Why is this task so important for our church? In 2008, church statistics show that forty-one percent of our churches reported that they did not take in even one new member by profession of faith. Let me say that another way: “Last year almost half of our UM churches didn’t take in a single new member.” Couple this sobering statistic with the fact that our congregations are trending upwards in average age rather than down, you can see that we as a church will soon no longer exist unless we take seriously raising up our youth as disciples with intentions of transforming them into

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makers. Here at West Point, we have invested heavily into youth ministries. We have a core group of seriously committed young people that are not just learning, but doing. We should all be very proud of that. Last summer, eleven of those youth represent our church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ on a mission trip doing inner-city ministry in downtown Cincinnati. Next summer, we hope to take even more on another. Youth attending 708 meetings are learning a lot about biblical characters, concepts and principles and how to apply them to a well lived life. I am confident that we will continue to expand this ministry making disciples and disciple makers in the process. I am also confident that these young adults will be, and already are, leaders in our church and the churches they may serve in their future lives. It is clear to me that we are living out this core value of **equipping future generations to become disciples and disciple makers**. But this raises a question: Is **equipping future generations to become disciples and disciple makers** limited to just our congregation?

For decades, the Wesley Foundation at Purdue University, a sister church in our cluster group, has been supporting and nurturing Purdue students, most of them from United Methodist backgrounds, giving them a church home away from home. The good that Wesley Foundation has done over the years is too extensive to recount here but one excellent example is this: Each year Wesley offers an alcohol free alternative to the year end blow out known as Grand Prix weekend. For generations, Wesley has done a lion's share of the work of raising up leaders, disciples and disciple makers for the people called Methodists. With God's leading, we here at West Point UMC have an opportunity to help them continue to do just that.

At last summer's annual conference, Wesley Foundation's funding was cut significantly due to pressing budget concerns. Personally, I have little doubt that their dedicated pastors, Glenn and Lana Robyn, with their passion for this vital ministry, will make up the difference in the \$40,000 cut from their budget. But every minute Glenn and Lana spend raising funds, is time away from the ministry that God has called them to do — helping to raise up the next generation of leaders for our church. The administrative counsel of our church has agreed to fund the Wesley Foundation to the tune of \$5,000 dollars for the year 2010. Ronda and I have committed to give the first \$500 in this effort because we very much believe two things: If we are to turn around that sobering story told by the statistics of our last general conference, 41 percent of our churches didn't take in a single new member, then our churches are going to need good leaders in the future. Secondly, Ronda and I believe that leaders lead. Our investment in the Wesley Foundation is an investment in the future of the United Methodist Church. Sounds like a pretty sound investment to me. God has blessed us that we might be a blessing to others. Since the Wesley Foundation is comprised of college students and the parents of college students paying for college, they aren't exactly in the position to tithe. *We are* and they need our help. So as you personally consider what ministries you and your family would like to support next year, remember Wesley Foundation and if you feel God leading you to do so, add a little extra to your offerings and make a note that the funds you designate are to go there. You won't be sorry you did.

Blessings,

Pastor Jeff