

## Report from Annual Conference, 2015

Lay Delegates Doug and Trish Broemsen

Trish and I had the privilege of attending Annual conference for the East Ohio Conference (EOC) at Lakeside, June 14-18.

Annual Conference is where pastors and lay people from all the churches in the EOC meet to discuss the status of the church each year. One thing I learned this week was that there are more United Methodist churches in the East Ohio conference than there are post offices in the same area.

Every 4 years all the conferences from around the world meet for what is called general conference. In 2016 the general conference will be held in Portland Oregon. One of the main items we addressed at our conference was electing clergy and laity to serve as delegates to this General Conference. It took us 10 or 11 ballots but we finally selected our delegation. Interestingly, 3 people with ties to this church were selected to represent us. Kay Panovec, who served this church for several years as education and communications director, and Jessica Vargo, who is president of the Copley Fairlawn Board of Education were elected as delegates. 17 year old Ali Wainwright, whose parents attended here before moving to Akron First, was chosen as an alternate.

We also had it confirmed that Elizabeth and Amy have been reappointed here for another year.

The conference addressed head on the decline of the Methodist church in America and East Ohio. One of my favorite quotes from the week was "When our memories of the past are more exciting than our vision for the future, we have already begun to die" (Yoost). We heard a lot of ideas about how to stem that tide. Exciting for us was that many of the items discussed were things that we are already starting to implement here at Montrose Zion. We must have heard 5 or 6 times the importance of getting your people to tell their stories. Seems to me we've heard some of that already around here.

We heard about many of the mission programs locally and around the world that are supported by the church. We also made some contacts that we may be able to follow up with who may be interested in our Haiti Microloan ministry.

We were also able to talk and share with many people associated with Montrose Zion. We got to spend some time with Kay Panovec, Bill Wendall, Matt Darrin, Alan Bevere, Dave Scavuzzo, Bruce and Suzanne Mont, **Becky** Verbridge, and also ran into a fraternity brother of mine.

Trish- The 3 things that caught my attention the most: Connection-Worship- Theme of Annual Conference:

**The purpose of the Annual Conference is to make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by *equipping* its local churches for ministry and by providing a *connection for ministry beyond the local church*.** We saw a great example of this at the ministry team fair on Wed pm. A woman from a small church in our conference excitedly told us they had read and studied the

book The Hole in Our Gospel by Richard Stearns ( a study we have done here also) and were so inspired by it that they connected to the 3Cs ministry of UMC Worldwide(churches, clinics and classrooms) and are making a big difference in Africa now with their help. You may recall the 3C's ministry in our bulletin lately as Pastor Elizabeth participated in the 5K run at Lakeside. MZ sponsored her and contributed over \$450.

The second thing that stood out to me was the worshipful atmosphere. Numerous services with many diverse ways of leading everyone in worship, including everyone coming to the Lord's Table and participating in Holy Communion. Beautiful times of together bringing glory to God!

Thirdly, was the overall theme that was emphasized the whole week long, Jesus is Calling us up. The Pastors and leaders in the UMC are tired of hearing about church decline and instead encourage us all to be "all in" (Cavs theme) the Kingdom of God work. One speaker said "it's like dancing the Hokey Pokey; we aren't finished until we put our whole selves in" and ended with a challenge to us all (including all here today); "Don't lose hope, BE the hope.

**-Doug**

I came away from the conference more excited about the future of the United Methodist church. It was great to see some many people in one place passionate about seeing the church move forward in a positive direction. But more important than that, the emphasis was not just on church growth but more importantly on how the church can make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

If you have any questions about what else happened at conference, please contact Doug or Trish Broemsen or either of the Pastors.