June 2020

Our Vision: Build an ongoing relationship between Jesus and men of all ages, both inside and outside the church, by mentoring men and engaging in small groups, while also recognizing each man’s unique fit into the body of Christ

Thoughts from George:
Who would have thought it? Yes, I am old enough to remember when we had an 8 “party line”. That meant that 8 families shared the same telephone line. We knew the call was for our family when it rang two long and two sort rings. Saturday, May 30, I was privileged to be on a call that had nearly 1,000 people! It was our Annual Great Plains Conference, first one ever held via telephone. It was amazing. With everyone’s patience and cooperation, wonderful support from the ATT staff, and terrific planning by our Conference staff, we got all the work done to keep our Conference operating for another year.

For the past 15+ years of my ministry to, for and through men to all the ministries the church, I have focused on facilitating and promoting transformative small groups. I remember many trips from Wichita to Tribune, Ks. to facilitate a Wesleyan Building Brothers small group out there. Now I facilitate at least three groups a week with men who are spread from here to Virginia using ZOOM. We even converted one local group to a ZOOM group to honor the physical distancing guidelines while maintaining our spiritual connection.

Everyone wants to say we are in crisis. Are we in any crisis greater than other crisis faced by the church since the Apostles? I agree our world is changing. Our challenge is to find God in the changes and use new tools to spread God’s Word – like this electronic newsletter.

Signs are that the Covid 19 pandemic is subsiding in our Conference. If you will allow me to paraphrase Psalm 23, we have made it through the dark valley. God’s rod and staff have protected us. It is time for us to show the world our joy, our hope in the future by trusting in God as our refuge. It is time for us to step boldly into the uncertain future of our world with Jesus at the center.

Your leadership team is working hard to find ways to connect us, if not physically at least spiritually, across our disperse Conference. Keep reading here to find out how. Go to our website. Join the over 400 men actively serving Jesus in men’s ministry through local churches. Tells us what is happening in your area of ministry so we can promote and help. Let us go boldly out into the “new” normal” together with God, guided by the Holy Spirit, with Jesus as our Lord.

Oh, happy Father’s Day. Take time out to visit with your Father. Gave thanks and praise to him for sending his Son, begotten by the Holy Spirit to reconcile the world.

Blessings
George Houle
ummwbb11@att.net
SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

By Gary Spivey, Conference Spiritual Guide

Who’s Your Daddy?
(A few thoughts about Spiritual Fathers)

A wise, wise “old” man once made this comment to me. “The main thing is to keep the main thing The Main Thing!”

The story goes back over fifty years but it’s very vivid in my mind and heart as to what we should be considering the main thing on a day by day, moment by moment basis. I guess this is my “testimony” and I sure “love to tell the story!”

My scholastic efforts have never put me at the top of any class. And so as I started at The Ohio State University back in the 1960’s, achieving greatness was far from my “main thing” but finishing was! My Dad was an OSU grad in Engineering and so that was his hope for me. Sure, no big deal, engineering, why not? Well, the beginning of my third year showed why not. I was “just” passing and not making an assured goal of finishing with a degree in Engineering.

Home for a weekend, Mom, Dad and I were emotionally discussing and struggling with what to do. Change curriculum, get special academic help, what is best, what is most important? So after this lengthy discussion with heads hung down, some tears and no specific directions in mind I asked if all of this turmoil was so important.

What my Dad said is his greatest gift to me ever! I was and am blessed with parents and a family who take church and a religious outlook on life seriously. But my Dad’s next words were a profound and powerful bolt of encouragement that have given my life a “Main Thing!”, direction and purpose. He said, “Gary, you know what the most important thing is!”

I had not seen this next sort of thought in Dad before. But he said “You know that the main thing for you is your relationship with Jesus Christ!” WOW! I hope and pray that my life is worthy of Dad’s wisdom and love. God may it be so.

I confess that I really, really have to work to keep the main thing The Main Thing. But my father put it into perspective years ago and I still praise God for his bold testimony.

Today’s devotion in “Strength for Service to God and Country” just happens to be titled “Put Your Mind On God.” John 14:9 – Isn’t that The Main Thing?

Today’s devotion in Billy Graham’s “Wisdom for Each Day” is in Matthew 16:15 “Who do you say I am?”- ditto.

Today’s devotion in “Jesus Calling” has the same point and purpose – “Remembrance of Me is a daily discipline. Never lose sight of My Presence with you. This will keep you resting in Me all day, every day.”

I need multiple chances for daily devotions to keep me living for The Main Thing. “Need” may be understating reality. But when I walk, talk, sing, pray, and live with my Dad’s reminder of “The Main Thing” - all is well.

Go and seek, pray, ask, struggle, and be sure of your Main Thing! God bless us, every one.
KANSAS

Charles File, your Vice President from Beloit, Kansas, has prodded us into a discussion over the past two weeks on the events surrounding the tragic death of George Floyd. We urge each of you to enter dialog and then act appropriately. We, as your leadership team, are in unity that we should speak out against the violence shown on both sides.

How then should we respond? As you would imagine, we had many opinions. In the end, however, the one opinion that counts is that of Jesus and what is given to us in the Word. This is a matter of heart, character, what makes up the inside of people not what appears on he outside. Many stories in scripture teach us that concept. You have heard them, read them. In John 7:24, Jesus commands us, not ask us, “Stop judging by mere appearances, but judge correctly.” We encourage you as dialog, as you from your opinions, study John 7 and Romans 2. As you dialog and respond, remember the vows we take at baptism or confirmation or at renewals “accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.”

NEBRASKA

Please pause and think for a moment -- how have you experienced or witnessed God's love and compassion these last three months?

I have two answers.

First - my wife and I were unexpectedly exposed to the coronavirus by helping an elderly neighbor who had fallen and couldn't get up. We were third on her Lifeline list. After an ambulance ride to the hospital she was given a routine covid-19 test. She tested positive, even though she had no symptoms. God showed up in the care of paramedics who came for her three more times over the next six days as she fell six times. Each time they were all suited after she was known to be positive. God was in the detailed quarantine instructions and follow up given to us by our local Health District. Further, in the Army and Air National Guard personnel running TestNebraska, where we got a test when they came to town. These are the hands and feet of Christ in times like this. We tested negative, as has our neighbor now as well, and she is now safely in a nursing home.

Second - racial injustice has been laid bare in such clear ways that many institutions and leaders are openly recognizing the significant effects of these biases, even as being sins. I urge us as UMMen, units and individuals, to jump on God's "bandwagon" of change in the way we treat our brothers and sisters. In our little town of Columbus, a brave high school senior girl organized a peaceful and impacting protest focused on Black Lives Matter that ended with a group picture of the protesters and city police who were on hand to protect them. No violence, although the girl had received various threats of disruption on social media ahead of time, but she persevered bravely. After all, Jesus is quite clear in the second great command: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Your conference leaders are developing many opportunities for you to share your experiences through retreats, area gatherings, ZOOM connections, etc. Please take advantage. We'd like to hear what God is doing in your corner of the world. Call or write any time, not waiting for one of these future opportunities to share your life with us.
News:
• Many thanks to those who donated to the UM Men 100 Club through OmahaGives! on May 20 raising $2,700 for young men and women in our conference studying for full-time Christian ministry. Next opportunity is at the 31st Annual United Methodist Men’s 100 Club Scholarship Dinner & Auction that will be held at 5:00 PM on Thursday, October 1 in Grand Island at Trinity UMC in association with the GP Annual Conference.

• Conventional church camps are suspended so their normal revenues will be way down. Please consider if you and/or your men’s group can help out with a donation during these tough times so our camps can be around to minister next year. Go to www.campfontanelle.com or www.norwesca.org.

• Camp Fontanelle is offering virtual camping opportunities, including as a substitute for local VBS ministry, and Family Escapes – an opportunity for your family to safely have fun this summer at camp.

Peace and Hope!
Doug Kallesen  dkallesen@neb.rr.com  402-563-1570  3917 Adamy St, Columbus, NE 68601

HUNGER
David Toler, Hunger Advocate
vdltl@aol.com

The Great Plains Men and the Society of Saint Andrew are coming together to give away up to 1200 boxes of potatoes & onions. Each box contains one 10lb bag of potatoes & 5 lbs. of onions. This will take place on Monday June 22nd at Evangelist Temple Church of God, 2315 Benton Blvd. Kansas City, Mo.

MEDIA NEWS

My name is Craig Nordaker and I am your Great Plains United Methodist Men secretary. I also handle our media inputs.

Part of my heart’s desire is to help the men (and women) of our Kansas & Nebraska geography discover how we can deepen our relationship with each other, and Jesus Christ. One way I do that is by documenting the Holy Spirit inspired discussions of your Great Plains UM Men leadership team. This team is all about encouraging relationships and deeper understanding of God’s Word. In fact, here is our ‘vision’ statement:

Great Plains United Methodist Men Vision
Build an ongoing relationship between Jesus Christ and men of all ages, both inside and outside the church, by mentoring other men and engaging in small groups, while also recognizing each man’s unique fit into the body of Jesus Christ.

We keep this vision in front of us throughout all our discussions, discipleship-growth planning sessions and other ways we might serve God by serving you.

So, please consider getting in touch with any of your Great Plains UM Men fellows to see how we might collaborate in some small (or not-so-small) way, to encourage those in your local area to step out a little for God. We can steer you to numerous helpful resources. Plus, we would very much like to meet with you to offer what we have and to serve. Here is a listing of future events we are planning.
SPONSORED EVENTS

Many of our plans are either in hold or have been suspended because of the Covid 19 response.

McPherson UMM sponsored golf at Hesston Golf Course July 25. See our website for registration details.

We are sad to announce that the annual Family Night at the K has fallen victim to Covid 19.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHERE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potato Drops</td>
<td>TBD for future drops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional Discipleship</td>
<td>Fall 2020?</td>
<td>Chapel Hill UMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wichita?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Groups/Wesleyan</td>
<td>Spring 2021</td>
<td>Omaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Brothers Lead</td>
<td>Fall 2021</td>
<td>Western NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like Jesus</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual GP Retreat</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise Keepers</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Sharpens Iron</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best way to reach one of us:  [www.greatplainsumc.org/ummen](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/ummen) or [www.greatplainsumc.org/gpummenleaders](http://www.greatplainsumc.org/gpummenleaders)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/GPUMMen](http://www.facebook.com/GPUMMen)