



ALPHA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

211 North Scandia St., PO Box 607
Alpha, IL 61413
309-629-5161 | www.alphaumc.org

July 2022

Volume 2022 Issue 7

God gives us a new song

By Bishop Frank J. Beard

(Below is the transcript of the Episcopal Address delivered by Bishop Frank J. Beard at the 2022 Annual Conference)

The United Methodist Church and the Illinois Great Rivers Conference are trapped between two extreme songs. One is an old blues tune by Albert King, and one from the Broadway musical which was based upon the Harold Gray comic strip, *Little Orphan Annie*.

In one song, the singer has settled in and gotten comfortable with defeat. In the other, the singer has a Pollyanna, sugar-coated optimism that seems to ignore the facts of reality. Albert King sings, "I've been down so long that down don't bother me. I've been down so long that down don't bother me. I'm going to take all my troubles and cast them into the deep blue sea. I've been down so long that down don't bother me." Little Orphan Annie, on the other hand, sings that song that we love, "The sun will come out tomorrow. Bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun. Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrows, till there's none."

Many of our pastors and churches, whether they will admit it or not, have a bad case of the blues. The last three years have been extremely tough. Being in ministry has been extremely hard and difficult, challenging for pastors and for churches. Clergy and laity have had a hard time these last three years.

Unfortunately, some have given up. Some have opted out. Some are hanging on by a thread. Some of our churches and leaders are down in the dumps with the blues. Now I'm not talking about having a bad feeling based on a rough day. I'm talking about a long, steep season of despair and decline that leads down into a pit where we have not been able to get out of. And in some strange, twisted way, we have made peace with and have surrendered and accepted the terms. "I've been down so long," the song says, "That down don't bother me."

The blues are symptomatic of churches and pastors that are more focused on disaffiliation than they have been on making disciples. The blues are a state of mind that would have us embracing bad times rather than clinging to the faith of our baptism. Albert says, "I've been down so long that down don't bother me." On the other hand, some of our churches and pastors are oblivious to the real world. They think like Annie, "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick up my chin and grin and say, 'Oh, the sun will come out tomorrow. So, you got to hang on till tomorrow. Come what may,' the sun will come out tomorrow."

Are you kidding me? I mean, really? Have you seen the Methodist forecast for tomorrow? We know that General Conference has now been postponed for the third time until May 2024. We know that there's chaos and confusion all around. We know that these are liminal times in which we are living.

We are canoeing in the mountains. We're building the road as we're driving on it. We're in uncharted waters and tomorrow looks like we're headed towards Niagara Falls. I know that the sun is coming out tomorrow, but tomorrow by all accounts does not look promising. Well, it sounds like discouragement, despair and defeat are ruling the day. And that's where a whole lot of pastors and churches are at. We continue wrestling with the worldwide pandemic, with all its variants, and that pandemic won't let us go right now. Gun violence is increasing alongside racial hostility and tension. Deep-seated racism continues to be accepted in our churches and in our ministry institutions. Yes, there is racism even in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference. We've had three straight bishops that have been bishops of color, and yet it's still hard to place pastors of color in many of our churches.

(Continued on next page)

Political pressure, violence, drug abuse, sex trafficking, exploitation, genocide, homicide, injustice, poverty, economic instability, gangs, mass shooting, Ukraine, and the threat of World War III, the list goes on, and on, and on. Now I'm not here to tell you to stick out your chin and to grin, and that all will be right with the world. We have difficult days ahead and we have difficult decisions that must be made. On the other hand, it is my job to remind us that we are the people of God. We are the church of Jesus Christ. And Christ has said of us, "You are the light of the world."

Think about that. Jesus said about us, "You are the light of the world." Well, light illuminates. Light gives direction. Light exposure provides your brain with information that sets your body rhythm. Light is called the sunshine vitamin. Light helps us battle the blues and depression. Light overcomes seasonal affective disorder. Light gives us sight and vision. Light gives comfort and promotes healing. Light dispels darkness, and ushers in hope.

Without light, life takes on the blues and leads to decline and death. Jesus says about us and to us, "You are the light of the world." Tough times are not to be ignored. Neither are they to be feared by people of faith. Tough times won't last, but the church strengthened through tough times will endure forever. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses that can and will give testimony to the fact that tough times never last, but people of faith have always grown stronger and tougher while the storm was raging.

Christians grow stronger while in the lion's den. Christians grow stronger while in the fiery furnace. Christians grow stronger while in the wilderness wanderings. Christians grow stronger while in the jail cells at midnight. Christians grow stronger while down in the stoning pits. Christians grow stronger while behind locked doors, huddled together in fear. IGRC family, open your spiritual eyes, because I believe that we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, Christians in every period of history that can tell us, "I've been there, done that, and I've got the t-shirt and the scars."

But God is faithful. God is faithful. God will not leave you down in the dumps with the blues. God will not promise you an unrealistic life free from hurts, hardships and hurdles if you just hang on until tomorrow. No, God never promised to keep us out of the fiery furnace of affliction. But God has pledged to walk with us in the middle of the flames.

The children of Israel were being led away as captives. They were on their way to a foreign land. Their captors ridiculed and mocked them, saying, "Sing us some of the songs of Zion." The people of Israel wondered, "How is that possible? How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" They failed to remember their own history. They failed to remember the name of their God. His name is not in the past. His name is not I just might be. His name is not someday soon. His name is not after a while. His name is not if I find the time. His name is not I just might be able to.

But his name is I am. I am that I am. I will be what you need me to be when you need me to be. If you're in chains, I'm a locksmith. If you're thirsty, I'm water. If you're hungry, I am bread. If you're lost I'm direction. If you are weary, I'm a resting place. If you're lonely, I'm a friend. If you are discouraged, I am hope. If you are wounded, I'm a healing ointment. If you're down in the dumps with the blues, I am the rock that can roll your blues away. I am. And I am with you. I am, and I will always be with you.

The songwriter wrote those beautiful words, "Why then should I be discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home? When Jesus is my portion, my constant friend is he. His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me. I sing because I'm happy. I sing because I'm free. For his eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me."

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches we. He gives us a new song to sing. Not a Pollyanna song, not a blues song. He gives us a new song. And because he lives, I can face tomorrow. Because he lives, all fear is gone. Because I know he holds the future, and life is worth the living just because he lives.

God bless,
Bishop Frank J. Beard

Church Council

Council Chair: Lindi Kernan

Treasurer: Parris Silvis

Financial Secretary: Linda Lanning

Trustees: David Lambin

S/PPRC: Dale Lanning

Outreach: Linda Lambin

Nurture: Kelli Swanson

Worship: Roger Swanson

Christian Education: TBD

Men in Mission: Dean Kernan

Youth Representative: Jack Silvis

Lay Leader: Lindi Kernan

Recording Secretary: Desirae Silvis

Church Office Hours

9AM - 1PM— Monday, Wednesday, Thursday

309-629-5161

alphaumc@gmail.com

Website: www.alphaumc.org

Facebook: @alphaunitedmethodist.com

Pastor Karna's Contact Info:

Cell: 309-337-2700

email: peteysaunt@yahoo.com

Let's Celebrate!

July Birthdays

02: Nadine Nice

04: Dana Schultz

06: Bill Schultz

17: Kynleigh Fox

17: Allison Lambin

18: Desirae Silvis

21: Eric Atchison

22: Phyllis Kearney

July Anniversaries

03: Marvin & Ann Enstrom

26: Dale & Linda Lanning



Join Us !

Sunday Schedule

9:00AM - Coffee

9:30AM - Coffee Hour

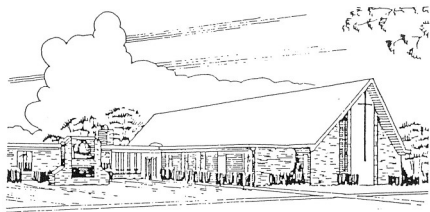
10:00AM - Worship

Bible Study

Tuesdays at 10AM

Prayer Group

Wednesdays at 9AM



July Worship Volunteers

July 3

Liturgist: Roger Swanson

Children's Moment: Pastor Karna

Ushers: Sadie Carlson & Desirae Silvis

July 10

Liturgist: Lindi Kernan

Children's Moment: Pastor Karna

Ushers: Angie Briggs & Joella Holdsworth

July 17

Liturgist: Angie Althaus

Children's Moment: Lindi Kernan

Ushers: Brooks Family

July 24

Liturgist: Dale Lanning

Children's Moment: Pastor Karna

Ushers: Kurt Jordan & Desirae Silvis

July 31

Liturgist: Lindi Kernan

Children's Moment: Pastor Karna

Ushers: Angie Briggs & Sadie Carlson

Thank You Volunteers!

We are always
looking for more
Sunday morning
volunteers.

Please contact the
church office if
you can help out.

Alpha Community VBS Carnival Night!

Games, Prizes, Dunk Tank, Face Painting, Bounce House!

Hot dogs, chips, popcorn, snow cones!

All FREE!



Saturday, July 23

5-8PM

Maranatha Chapel



Join us for this fun community event!



Another Child
FOUNDATION

Final Days for Annual Shoe & Sock Drive

This is the final month for donating to ACF's Project Respond. Donations of shoes, socks, underwear, and sports balls are all being accepted through July 17th.

Monetary donations are also being accepted to help offset the cost of shipping the donations to Romania. If you would like to donate, please write "ACF" on your check or envelope.

Donations due July 17th.


Please contact Angie Althaus if you have any questions.



Alpha UMC will have a float in this year's Sesquicentennial parade, Saturday, September 10. We are looking for ideas for the float, and volunteers to help build it. If you have a idea, please let Pastor Karna know.



July 2022

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4 	5	6 9:00AM Prayer Group	7	8	9
10	11	12 10:00AM Bible Study	13 9:00AM Prayer Group	14	15	16
17	18	19 10:00AM Bible Study	20 9:00AM Prayer Group	21	22	23 5-8PM VBS Carnival @ Maranatha
24 <hr/> 31	25	26 10:00AM Bible Study	27 9:00AM Prayer Group	28	29	30 Private Wedding

ALPHA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Sunday Schedule:

9:00AM Adult Sunday School

9:30AM Coffee Hour

10:00AM Worship

.

Visit us online at alphaumc.org and on



Alpha United Methodist Church
211 N. Scandia St., PO Box 607, Alpha, IL
61413

