

From the District Superintendent by The Rev. Dr. Sung Ho Lee

It was in the morning, I was walking and jogging on the beach. Actually I wanted to test my jogging after I had been on the treadmill for about six months. It was not easy to jog against the wind on the sand. When I was struggling, I found something that gave me a good excuse to stop jogging. There were birds on the beach—two different kinds, big and small. They were having breakfast. What was fascinating to me was that the way they found food was different!



The bigger ones stayed in one place and didn't move as the water came in and out because they were tall enough to be safe from the waves. The little ones could not stay in one spot. If they did, they would be swept away by the waves and drowned. If they stayed too far from the water, they would die too because they wouldn't get any food. So what to do? They constantly had to move back and forth as the water came in and receded.

They reminded me of paradigms of the church of yesterday and today. There were times when the church didn't worry about empty pews because the pews were always filled. In those days, the church was the center of the community. People just came to church. "Evangelism? Why should we do that?" they would say. They had enough people to run the church. What they needed to do was just to offer worship services, Sunday school, some programs and dinners. They didn't have to go out to invite people. Just like the bigger birds they stayed in one place.

Now the paradigm has been shifted. The church is no longer the center of the community. Pews are empty now. The church must learn from the little birds. They don't stay in one place. They constantly move to find food. If they stay in one place, they would be swept away and be drowned or starve to death when they keep themselves away from the water for safety. We must learn from the little birds. Look out. Watch how the world is changing. Go to the places where people are.

There are many churches that keep saying that they need more people, but they are doing nothing just like the bigger birds. Hello, church? Do you still act like the bigger birds? You must be transformed into little birds.

There is one more lesson that the little birds teach us. In the old days, only senior pastors, associate pastors and education directors were expected to bring new members as symbolized by the bigger birds. It doesn't work any more. The little birds are a metaphor of today's church. All church people must go out to meet people in the places where they are, build relationships and bring them to the church. Yes, it is risk-taking. When we need to adjust to a new paradigm, we must take risks. Throughout the history, the church grew when the people of faith took risks as they surfed on the waves of new paradigms. John Wesley did. Why not us?

Handbell festival

A Mini Handbell Festival recently took place at The Reformed Church in Herkimer. This was the 24th year for the festival.

Bell choirs from Herkimer Reformed

Church, Morning Star United Methodist Church (formerly Ilion United Methodist Church, Westminster Presbyterian Church in Utica and Vernon United Methodist Church participated.

Food Pantry SUB-sidized by successful sale

The Earlville Food Pantry received a check for almost \$400 from the Earlville-Poolville United Methodist Churches thanks to a very successful sale.

With the Super Bowl being a time for families and friends to get together and enjoy an evening of great competition, that usually means large amounts

of food as well!

"We have held an annual Sub Sale the last three years to capitalize on this opportunity," said coordinator Joelle Faulks, "and this year far exceeded expectations."

The churches took 83 orders for subs and had dozens of volunteers from the

two congregations to help build the subs on Super Bowl Sunday.

"The Earlville Food Pantry was very surprised by the size of the gift and we were excited to have been able to help in such a memorable way," Faulks said.

Costs were shaved down significantly as members of the churches donated let-

tuce, tomatoes, onions, mustard, Italian dressing and mayo. A restaurateur parishioner from the church also sold the meat and cheese to the sub sale at cost to further reduce the overall cost of the subs.

"We very much look forward to our fourth annual sub sale next year," said Faulks, "maybe we'll hit 100 orders!"

Sunday School studies communion at Sauquoit Valley

This Lenten Season the children of Sauquoit Valley UMC have experienced communion in a variety of ways. This year the church began using the Workshop Rotation Model (WoRM), which focuses on one topic each month or season, instead of a new lesson each week. The first Sunday in Lent the kids experienced the Last Supper from the viewpoint of investigators. Their classroom was decorated to resemble a first-century upper room, complete with the remains of a Passover meal in wooden bowls on the table.

The second week their craft was to decorate bread boards and communion cups with symbols and words that were meaningful to them. The third week Pastor Sharon met with the class to talk about the meaning of the Communion service as it has been handed down to us from the scriptures, and to celebrate Communion as a body. Stacey Voce, Sunday School coordinator, is very excited about this year's approach. "I love that we spend more time on a topic," says Voce. "I think the kids really get a lot more out of it."

