

**Oak Meadow  
United Methodist Church**

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**Pastor Larry Scharmann**

**Laity Notes**

by  
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**VALENTINE'S DAY PARTY**

Some fifty-two people gathered together on Saturday night, February 14<sup>th</sup> to celebrate Valentine's Day in style. Volunteers made the Racquet Club available and borrowed a chapter from the movie "The Sting" to make the club inviting and pleasant. Other volunteers negotiated frugal arrangements with Outback for food. A happy hour was followed by a delicious meal and from that dancing began. The women of our church were decked out and beautiful. Most of the men wore coats and ties, but the award for best dressed definitely went to the women. My oh my, do the ladies of our church know how to dress! The party was delightful and provided an opportunity for us to gather in a different forum and learn more about each other. We discovered some high-steppers in our congregation!

The idea was marvelous; the implementation remarkable. Many thanks to those who put forth so much effort on behalf of others to create a wonderful Valentine's Day party. How good it was for us to meet in a relaxed atmosphere to break bread, to chat and to dance. It works wonders for the soul!

**OFFICERS INSTALLED...INCREASED ACTIVITY**

Officers of the church were formally installed on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Nominations were approved last November, but a few changes were necessary, so formal installation was somewhat delayed.

Committees have now begun to meet with a greater regularity and there is a sense of movement in the air. Each Sunday seems to turn up new guests in our church, and more and more we are finding children coming through our doors. On February 8<sup>th</sup> we had twenty guests to help celebrate Boy Scout Sunday, and on February 22<sup>nd</sup> we had eighteen guests to witness Nolan Franklin's baptism. Church attendance reflects more guests. In December we averaged 47.5 people in our congregation each Sunday. That figure dropped to 43.0 in January, but jumped to 56.6 in February. We had over 30% more people in our congregation each Sunday in February than we had in January. A similar impact was felt in Sunday School, where average attendance for December was 14.0, 14.3 in January and 18.0 in February. By contrast, the increase in Sunday School attendance came not through guests but from regular members.

Be sure to greet our visitors each Sunday and welcome them to our church. And do not hesitate to ask someone to join you at Oak Meadow UMC on Sunday morning. We now have baby sitting services during our worship hour and can accommodate anyone. Remember those moments when you have visited a church for the first time, and how warm it felt to be welcomed and how cold it felt to be ignored. We want to take seriously the commandment to Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself. A kind word can make a very big difference.

**ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD...MDO**

On February 10<sup>th</sup> the Administrative Board received and approved a proposal for an ad hoc committee to serve for the remainder of 2004 as a liaison between our church and the Mother's Day Out (MDO) program. It is anticipated that this new committee will be formally appointed at the Administrative Board's meeting on March 8<sup>th</sup>. The primary purpose of this committee will be to make more transparent the operation of the MDO and the church to each other; "...to take concrete steps to replace questions, doubts and uncertainty with clarity, vision and goals."

The MDO is our church's most important local mission. MDO provides day care services for approximately 23 children and impacts between 70 and 80 people when parents and siblings are included. Its budget amounts to about 75% of that of our church. For many years when many MDO parents sat in our congregation there was a

close working relationship between the MDO and our church. When divorce and moves struck our church in the late 1990s, this relationship weakened and the close connection was lost. During the past few months we have seen signs of improvement. Djream Franklin, an MDO teacher, was engaged by our church to provide baby sitting services during our worship services. Each Sunday Djream brings her two children, Krisjon and Nolan. On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Nolan Franklin was baptized in our church. We are also seeing other MDO teachers in our Sunday worship, and we thank them for their participation. From the church side of this ledger, our pastor is holding worship services for MDO children during the week. Estrangement is gradually being replaced with trust.

We want to capture this moment of good will and to institute more formal lines of communications between the MDO and the Administrative Board, and hence our church. We wish this new committee the best and encourage their efforts. This is another sign of our renewed vitality.

#### ***NEW CHAIRS...SPRUCING UP OUR CHURCH***

The effort to purchase 100 new chairs for our church is nearly complete, and 92 chairs have been subscribed for by church members. At \$50 for each chair, we are only \$400 short of our goal. Most of us have probably seen the sample chair in our church, and from looking at that chair, it would appear that the new chairs will add considerably to the attractiveness of our sanctuary. It is anticipated that the new chairs will be available for our March 21<sup>st</sup> worship service. This effort began as an idea in the mind of one of our congregation members, and through considerable effort it is being brought to fruition. We offer our thanks.

The new chair effort has spawned other ideas about sprucing up our sanctuary. Plans are underway to paint the interior of our sanctuary including a mural on the back two walls to be done by one of our own artists. Thoughts are also being given to the possibility of laying carpet on our sanctuary floor. The combination of new chairs, a paint job and carpet would go a long way toward making our sanctuary more warm and inviting. A new lawn mower has been purchased to create the same effect for our church lawn. Many have volunteered their time and lawn mowers over the years, and we now

have purchased a mower powerful enough to mow our huge back lawn. Many thanks go out to those who are putting forth much effort to make our church more attractive. A church well cared for is a vital church.

#### ***ANNA CRAM POTLUCK DINNER...MARCH 28TH***

Anna Cram found her way to Oak Meadow in the spring of 2001, and within a few Sundays she had become our church pianist, a task she performed with great talent and faithfulness for three years. Recently Anna decided that it was time for her to shift from the piano to the choir, and an effort was made to find a new pianist. On February 22<sup>nd</sup> the Pastor Parish Relations Committee formally engaged Arkadiy Grinman, and since February 15<sup>th</sup> Arkadiy has played the piano and Anna has sung in our choir. We offer our thanks to Anna and our welcome to Arkadiy.

We want to thank Anna Cram properly for her donation of talent, time and generosity to our church over the past three years and as part of that demonstration of gratitude, we will hold a potluck dinner in her honor after worship services on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

#### ***SMALL CHURCH GRACE***

We have some big neighbors. University UMC has a membership of 5,125, Alamo Heights UMC 5,008, Coker UMC 2,772 and Colonial Hills UMC 1,101. We welcome our big brothers in the faith, and we wish them well. At the same time, we believe that for some people smaller is better, and we are striving not to compete with our bigger brothers, but to make our small church one of high quality, a boutique if you will. We make no pretensions of competing with our bigger brothers in terms of programs. We do make pretensions of competing in quality of worship and in the quality of our community. One of the major tasks of a large church is to break itself down into smaller units so that people have the opportunity to get to know each other. We do not share that problem. We have the built-in opportunity to get to know each other better each Sunday morning. Let us appreciate the grace of our small church.

#### ***COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS***

Please email comments or suggestions to [cjhall\\_45@yahoo.com](mailto:cjhall_45@yahoo.com) or leave a telephone message at 404-1894.