

THE BIKE RIDE FOR HAITI

Have you heard about the bike ride for Haiti? It's a way for United Methodists in Michigan to raise awareness of the ongoing need of the people in Haiti, as well as a way to raise money which will go directly to support and sustain the people of Haiti. Several of our own United Methodist clergy and laity – representing each of our six West Michigan districts and also the Detroit Conference – are preparing at this moment for a 400 mile bike ride along the Lake Michigan coastline. They will take off on June 7 from the Indiana-Michigan border at New Buffalo, and one week later will arrive at the Mackinac Bridge.

THE VISION HAS BEEN GROWING

Perhaps you remember last summer, when Rev. Rob Nystrom, pastor of Birchwood UMC in Battle Creek, rode his bike the entire way around Lake Michigan to raise funds for Haiti. This year, instead of biking alone, Rev. Nystrom has invited others to join him (the current list is available at www.haitiride.org). He hopes that this multiplication of riders will also result in a multiplication of financial pledges for Haiti.

THE FOUR-HUNDRED-DOLLAR CHALLENGE

“What if every congregation in the West Michigan Conference found a way to pledge \$1 per mile for just one rider?” asks Rev. Nystrom. “That would be an average of \$400 per church. Now multiply that by 400 churches, and in one week we would raise \$160,000 for our Haitian brothers and sisters.” What if indeed!

AN INVITATION FOR YOUR CHURCH TO JOIN THE EFFORT

On behalf of the people of Haiti, and also on behalf of those who are riding, I would like to invite every church in our Albion District to consider and pray about this \$1 per mile challenge. And then – if the Spirit moves you to -- accept this challenge with a joyful heart, and figure out what your church can do. For example...Perhaps your church could make one of those paper “thermometers” that “rises” towards a goal. Or you could make and sell “mission stock certificates” (400 certificates at \$1 each, or 80 at \$5 each, etc.) to family members, co-workers, and friends. Or you could hold a special fund-raising pot-luck after church, and invite a special speaker to come – one of the bike riders, or someone

who has been to Haiti. Or you could simply pass around copies of the bike ride pledge sheet during worship some Sunday morning (they can be downloaded from the website listed above.)

WHAT IF WE DON'T RAISE \$400?

Don't misunderstand – you are not required to be part of this. Participation is optional, and the \$400-per-church goal is just a way to help us realize how much we can do when we do it together. It is my hope, however, that if at all possible, each of our churches will do something. \$400... less than \$400... more than \$400... it will ALL be given to God's work in Haiti, and will bless people in Haiti. Which is what this whole thing is about. Praise God!

If you have any questions about the ride, please contact Rev. Rob Nystrom (269-963-2084), Rev. Dave Morton (269-963-0231), or me (269-962-7760). Or check out the new website created especially for this ride.

Rev. Tamara Williams

Albion District Superintendent