



November 2017

# Buffalo United Methodist Church



## The UMC: Hedgehog or Fox?

by Bishop Laurie Haller

“The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.” This quote is attributed to the 7th century b.c. Greek poet and soldier Archilochus. Archilochus did not provide a background for his reflection, but it is generally accepted today that he was referring to how both animals react to danger. When a fox is threatened, it responds by considering carefully the situation and devising a clever plan, which might involve running, digging, climbing, hiding, or engaging. On the other hand, the hedgehog simply rolls up into a protective ball, which is its best defense, and hopes for the best. Whereas the fox has many options, the hedgehog simply does the one thing it knows how to do very well.

The philosopher Isaiah Berlin expanded on this metaphor in his popular 1953 essay, “The Hedgehog and the Fox.” According to Berlin, “There exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single vision...a single, universal organizing principle”--the hedgehogs--and “those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, in some de facto way”--the foxes.

In various venues over the past several months, I have been involved in discussions about the kind of leaders we need for the future of The United Methodist Church. In the fast-changing world in which we live, serve, and share Christ’s love, what qualities do we

need in order to reach out to our communities in ways that are relevant, compelling, and transformative?

There was general agreement that the hedgehog concept no longer works. Hedgehog churches are doing the same things they did a hundred years ago. They sit in their pews and wait for people to visit their church instead of proactively reaching out. Preoccupied by self-preservation, they have little interest in learning about the hopes and dreams of their community and lament the end of the “glory days” of their church. Hedgehog churches are afraid to risk doing a new thing because failure might mean the end of their congregation. Consequently, they roll into a little ball to isolate themselves from an increasingly secularized world. To become a fox is too unthinkable.

The poster church for the hedgehog holds an annual fall festival, now in its 60th year, which the entire community looks forward to. Church members galvanize around baking pies, firing up the grills, using fancy tablecloths, and selling baked goods. They have a respectable turnout, but it always results in great disappointment a few months later when none of those guests return to attend worship. The congregation does not grow because church members are not able to engage others in meaningful spiritual conversation and always revert back to their single organizing principle: food.

Hedgehog churches would be successful if they existed in a fixed environment that never changed.

They would simply need to execute the one strategy they knew to be successful sixty years ago, and it would always work! Unfortunately, we no longer live in that world.

By contrast, fox churches make a conscious decision to learn, grow, and change by giving up what no longer works. They connect with the spiritual yearning of their neighbors, move outside the building to get to know their community, initiate new and relevant ministries, and always remain flexible.

Fox churches understand that the world is complex and that their mission field is continually in flux. They thrive on imagination and innovation, have the courage to fail, and keep in the forefront their mission to share the good news in whatever way works for their context. . . .

What kind of leaders do we need in the 21st century church? Here are some responses that I have heard in recent weeks.

*Adaptive \* Collaborative \* Lifelong learners*  
*Visionary \* Risk-taking \* Courageous and fearless*  
*Creative thinkers \* Relational \* Joyful*  
*Intercultural competence \* Alive in Christ*  
*Sees value in partnering \* Spiritually grounded*  
*Passion and heart for discipleship*  
*Christ-like faithfulness \* World citizens*  
*Nurtures missional imagination*  
*Leadership strength \* Committed to the long haul*  
*Fruitful and effective \* Self-differentiated*  
*Emotionally intelligent \* Servant leaders*  
*Compassionate witness and prophetic boldness*  
*Resilient \* Focused on mission and vision*

. . . . In recent years, a number of major corporations added a new position, Chief Innovation Officer. The rationale was that since the rapid pace of change in our world demands continual innovation and out-of-the-box thinking, someone should have as their only responsibility being the primary company innovator.

What businesses are seeing now, however, is that every employee must be an innovator, no matter what their role is. If there is a Chief Innovation Officer, that person's job is to create a culture shift where all

employees are taught to think like a fox rather than a hedgehog, and processes are created that foster creative thinking and innovation.

What might the future United Methodist Church look like if we trained, blessed, and released our clergy and lay leaders to be curious and clever foxes who relish complexity, challenge, and seeming contradiction? What if we decided that curling up into rigid little hedgehog church balls no longer works in today's world?

What if we identified unconventional entrepreneurs with the gifts of imagination, innovation, and thinking big to pioneer new ways of being God's people? What if our ordering of ministry became more flexible? What if we started with the needs of our world rather than the needs of the institutional church in our passion to make, nurture, and send out disciples of Jesus Christ?

How is God calling us to think and act like the foxes God has created us to become?

[This essay was posted to Bishop Haller's blog, "Leading from the Heart" on October 2, 2017. The complete text can be found at the URL: <http://www.lauriehaller.org/the-umc-hedgehog-or-fox/>]

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## Bazaar and Soup Luncheon

Although the weather was not cooperative, we did quite well at the Bazaar and Lunch on Saturday, October 14. Money raised:

Church projects: \$1,300

UMW: \$113.20

Matthew 25: \$50

A heartfelt BIG THANKS to everyone who helped with this important fall event.



## **Administrative Board**

### **Notes for October Meeting**

We covered a wide range of topics:

- The two bioretention cells will be installed soon.
- The exterior of the church will be painted before cold weather sets in.

The low spot in the driveway that collects water will be filled in

- Discussed plants for Trunk or Treat on Sunday afternoon, October 29. It is fun to see church folk, parents, and youngsters in costume. Should be a good time for everyone.

### **United Methodist Women**

On Thursday, November 16, at 9:30 am we will meet for a brief business meeting and an interesting lesson. Everyone is welcome! Mary Fredericksen and Joyce Hartmann will provide the program and the treats. We look forward to their lesson!

### **Golden Age Potluck**

We will gather together on Thursday, November 9 at 11:30 am at the Buffalo UMC for fellowship and good food. Bring a dish to share and a friend or friends. Place settings and beverages will be provided.

### **Bertram UMC**

#### **Upcoming Event Dates for 2017**

November 5 – All Saints Day

November 7 – Serve Lunch at the Mission of Hope, 11:30-1:00

## **Garfield Projects**

Thanks to everyone who donated treats for the 58 backpack students at Garfield Elementary School. The students will enjoy the extra Halloween treats.

We will continue to pop corn once a month at Garfield School. The students can purchase a bag of popcorn for 50 cents. The proceeds are sent to HACAP for the backpack program. If you would like to help, contact Marlene Himes or Barb Crawford.

### **UMCOR Offering in October**

Thanks to everyone who donated money to UMCOR for disaster relief in many places. We collected \$459 to help with recovery efforts.

### **Special Offering in November**

We will be collecting donations on United Methodist Student Day to help furnish scholarships and loans for students attending United Methodist and other accredited colleges and universities.

### **Serial Number 264,065**

In 1885 the first Schimmel piano was manufactured in Leipzig, Germany. In 1987, 102 years later, the same family-owned company in Braunschweig, Germany produced piano #264,065, the instrument now in Buffalo's Worship Center. Thanks to the generous donation of another Methodist congregation, we have a beautiful piano that miraculously survived the 2008 flood and should bring us many years of beautiful music.

## A Few Personal Observations on A Charge Conference

Buffalo's Charge Conference on Tuesday evening, 24 October, at St. Paul's UMC was my second charge conference in the last 20+ years, and the first time I have attended a multiple-church charge conference. Given my limited understanding of what was happening--including what paperwork required administrative attention--I'll make no attempt to provide a comprehensive or official summation of what occurred. These are simply a few random notes I jotted down during the 2 ½ hour affair.

- Our scripture reading was from the Gospel of John, the passage where Jesus asks Simon Peter, "Do you love me?" In his commentary on the scripture, Rev. Kiboko, our District Superintendent, emphasized that Jesus was asking Simon Peter, "Do you love the people that I love?" And, by implication, the 150 (?) people in the room were challenged to consider whether this Christian love is evident in their congregations' service to their communities.
- We watched a delightful two-minute video on perceptions. A link to this lesson on charity is posted to our church website's Bison Blog: <http://buffalounitedmethodist.weebly.com/>
- We were reminded that each church congregation is expected to create a WIG (Wildly Important Goal) "Discipleship Pathway" by 2020. While listening to the explanation of this project, I found it hard to comprehend that we will soon have completed 20% of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and I'm still a hedgehog, clinging to remnants of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century vision of the world.
- Based on this one, perhaps misleading sample, the Methodist Church in eastern Iowa is overwhelmingly composed of northern

European descendants. I saw two non-Caucasians at the meeting, and they were both ministers. I don't recall seeing any church lay members that I would suspect were of Asian, African, Latin American, Native American, or Middle-Eastern descent.

• Leader: "God is good."

People: "All the time."

Leader: "All the time."

People: "God is good."

In a previous lifetime, I was a professor of rhetoric, and this rhetorical ABBA figure of speech is classified as a chiasmus, one of our language's most powerful techniques for making an important point that listeners/readers will remember. The use of a chiasmus helps explain why President Kennedy's call to action is so memorable: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."

- For me the high point of the evening was listening to representatives from each congregation share current accomplishments or projects they felt worth celebrating. Speakers were excited by the continuing education of their lay leaders, a congregations's 200% increase in the floor space of their church building, a small congregation's assistance with funeral arrangements in a small town, the donation of 200 jars of peanut butter for a local food bank, the enduring benefit from Robert Armstrong (60 years ago) giving free airplane rides to young people who attended three months of Sunday School without an absence.

Although my high school Sunday School teacher never gave us a free airplane ride, he was my Robert Armstrong, producing an enduring impact on my life. It is good to be reminded how powerful can be the well-planted seed. It was an evening well spent.

~Bob Marrs

# Buffalo Church Calendar

November 2017						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><b>Fox churches understand that the world is complex and that their mission field is continually in flux.</b> ~Bishop Haller</p>			1	2	3	4
<p><b>5</b> 8:45: Worship Service <i>Daylight Saving Time Ends</i></p>	6	<p><b>7</b> Election Day Bake Sale  11:30: Mission of Hope</p>	8	<p><b>9</b> 11:30: Golden Age Potluck</p>	<p><b>10</b> 8:00: Popping Corn at Garfield</p>	<p><b>11</b> Veterans Day</p>
<p><b>12</b> 8:45: Worship Service</p>	<p><b>13</b> 9:00: Church Cleaning</p>	14	<p><b>15</b> 4:00: Admin. Board Meeting</p>	<p><b>16</b> 9:30: UMW</p>	17	18
<p><b>19</b> 8:45: Worship Service</p>	<p><b>20</b> Due date for December Newsletter Items</p>	21	22	<p><b>23</b> Thanksgiving Day</p>	24	25
<p><b>26</b> 8:45: Worship Service</p>	27	28	<p><b>29</b> 7:00 pm: Prayer Service (Taizé)</p>	30		

## November Birthdays

3 – Kathy Houlahan  
7 – Tom Ferguson  
11 – Mary Fredericksen

19 – Marilyn Prouty (Becky's Mom)  
20 – Joan Musil  
24 – Mary Bennett

## **Buffalo November Calendar**

November 7: City Elections, with Buffalo Bake Sale

November 9: Golden Age Potluck, 11:30 am

November 10: Popping corn at Garfield School, 8 am

November 13: Church Cleaning, 9:30 am

November 15: Administrative Board Meeting 4 pm

November 19: Pastor Jenny Seylar, send cards, email, or Facebook greetings to remind the Seylar family we are thinking of them. Home or email addresses are available from board members.

November 29: Prayer Service, 7 pm

## **Prayer Service at Buffalo**

**Wednesday evening, November 29**

**7:00 pm**

Buffalo UMC and the Chaplain's Office at Coe College are co-sponsoring a Prayer Service at the Buffalo Church. This hour-long program of prayer and meditation will use music and a worship format developed by the Taizé Brothers community in France. As we enter the Advent Season, this should be an excellent opportunity for our congregation to worship with young people and visitors from the Cedar Rapids community.

## **Buffalo United Methodist Church**

**1000 30<sup>th</sup> St**

**Cedar Rapids, IA 52402**

