

CYNTHIA BLOISE - PASTOR

"I want to encourage new pastors to be courageous in doing something difficult, in learning the skills needed to make God's mission possible," explains the Rev. Cynthia (Cyndi) Bloise '06. Pastor of Center Avenue United Methodist Church in Pitcairn, Pa., Cyndi also serves as executive director of Circles Initiative, a national program assisting those living in poverty.

Before attending Pittsburgh Seminary, Cyndi worked with victims of head injury and stroke. After graduating, she learned how the working memory of people under the extreme stress of poverty behaves similarly to that of stroke sufferers. Soon she boarded a plane bound for Bridges Out of Poverty Training to learn more about Circles Initiative. "I felt God grabbing hold of me and telling me that I had been preparing for this work for years," Cyndi recalls.

Pitcairn is a desperately poor community. Now, through UMC, Circles helps the poor change their circumstances. Instead of giving money to participants, the program helps them develop personal goals and find resources for support while they are making the changes that will enable them to achieve a good measure of stability. Last year Cyndi raised more than \$88,000 for Circles.

"When the church abandons the people in its community, it sends a message to many that Jesus has abandoned them too. The long-term relational approach to the problem of poverty has allowed our congregation to participate in the incarnational ministry of Christ with the poor in the community right where we are."



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