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***United Methodist Church of the Dunes***

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**UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF THE DUNES AWARDED CERTIFICATION  
AS OFFICIAL WELCOMING CONGREGATION FOR 2010**

**GRAND HAVEN, Mich., Sept. 9, 2010** – Dan Duncan, senior pastor with United Methodist Church of the Dunes, announced today that the church has been awarded certification as an official “Welcoming Congregation for 2010.” The award was given by the national United Methodist Communications organization, based in Nashville, Tennessee.

United Methodist Church of the Dunes is located at 717 Sheldon Road in Grand Haven. The church has been active in Grand Haven for 137 years and has a membership of 700 individuals and families who participate in a variety of church activities, as well as service projects to the poor and underserved members of the community and the world.

The “Welcoming Congregation for 2010” award was given to the United Methodist Church of the Dunes because, as stated in the award notification, “... the church places a high value on radical hospitality as a vital ministry, as demonstrated by its work continuing to embrace newcomers and provide opportunities for discipleship through its welcoming lifestyle.”

“Our goal as a mission-driven church in west Michigan is not only to *strengthen* but *maintain* a spirit of welcoming to all members of the community,” said senior pastor Duncan, adding, “we are blessed with congregation members who deliberately work to make a difference in the community through their volunteer work leading book and Bible discussion groups, providing nursery care, organizing before- and after-service fellowship activities, supper gatherings, small study groups, and larger ministries such as Family Promise as part of our welcoming ministry.”

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United Methodist Church of the Dunes works in conjunction with the Muskegon-based Interfaith Hospitality Network, a program operated by Family Promise of The Lakeshore. Together, the organizations work to empower families to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty, while providing mission opportunities for individuals and faith-based communities. UMC-Dunes provides congregational members who volunteer for an entire week, four times each year within the church to host needy families and provide a place of welcome, warmth and ministry.

In receiving the “Welcoming Congregation for 2010” award, senior pastor Duncan stated the notification included the following statement: “On behalf of United Methodist Communications, we thank you for ensuring newcomers know the people of The United Methodist Church have open hearts, open minds and open doors.”

United Methodist Communications bestows the “Welcoming Congregation” award annually. The organization powers a website called Find-A-Church.org, which is part of UMC.org, the official online ministry of The United Methodist Church national entity.

Anyone from the Tri-Cities interested in receiving information about the United Methodist Church of the Dunes, a schedule of service times and programs, or membership within the church is encouraged to call the church’s administrative office at: 616/842-7980 or visit the website at [www.umcdunes.org](http://www.umcdunes.org).

The mission of United Methodist Church of the Dunes in Grand Haven is *“to be a church with outstretched arms demonstrating the caring of Christ to each other, the community, and the world by encouraging growth in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, challenging and equipping all to be faithful disciples for the transformation of the world.”* Founded in 1873, UMC-Dunes moved to its present location at 717 Sheldon Road, Grand Haven in February, 1962. The church provides a variety of community outreach ministries to women, children, men and families in the area, supports the annual CROP Walk, offers membership in its United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women groups, plus book and Bible studies, a weekly creative arts and crafts group, participation in Coast Guard Festival, plus Christian service projects to ministries in Haiti. Children’s, youth and adult educational programming is provided throughout the year. For further information about UMC-Dunes, contact the church administrative office at 616/842-7980.

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