

UMOS - Change is in the air!

At the November 20 Special Meeting the Council voted to move forward with UMOS and appointed Rick Ashley as the liaison and negotiator between Balsam Lutheran Church and UMOS. (Thank you very much, Rick! What better person to have as our coordinator than a retired principal who understands the needs and workings of schools!) He will be providing us with updates as needed:

If you haven't noticed, there are some changes going on around us here at Balsam. The council has taken the first step by signing a contract with UMOS with the beginning date of December 8, 2014. There has been some rearranging of things already as they have started to move in preparation for their summer Migrant Head Start and summer Migrant School aged programs while closing their facility in Rice Lake by December 31. Most of their furniture will be arriving here at Balsam on December 19th and 20th, and be stored in the nursery and currently unused parts of the Sunday school rooms. We will be able to continue to carry on all of our everyday church activities. The library and conference rooms will continue as they are until the spring when UMOS sets up their classrooms in the spring for summer classes. The contract is a 12 month contract and we will be storing their equipment again in the early fall when they are not in session. The final lease has the space rented for \$925.83 per month.

UMOS will be using the 5 classrooms in the educational wing for their Head Start program, and the Library and Conference room for their school aged program. During the months of operation UMOS will serve both breakfast and lunch to the students and we will see some changes in the kitchen needed to meet code and operate their programs. A vented commercial stove and a commercial refrigerator will replace those we now have in the kitchen. A fire suppressor system will be installed in the kitchen area. A commercial freezer will be added to the storage room that currently houses our freezer. UMOS will need space in the food storage closet for their food and supplies and some cupboard space in the kitchen for their dishes, silverware, and glassware. UMOS is currently looking at adding air conditioning to the classrooms that they will be using to meet guidelines, but this may be a three year project as the cost came in higher than expected. Air conditioning would be done by adding central air units to the three furnaces that now supply heat to those areas. We will also see some changes outside the building as they will add a fenced in playground area

over the next three years. We can look for many of these high end additions to start appearing in the early spring when UMOS' funding cycle begins.

During their months of operation, UMOS will cover any added costs to the building, and repair any damage or breakdown of equipment. They will also provide janitorial services, thoroughly cleaning all used areas at the end of each week and have the carpets and kitchen professionally cleaned at the end of each summer. UMOS will also be using the Fellowship Hall twice per month, for three hours in the evening, on days agreed upon with us.

We have lots of cleaning, storing, and repurposing to do in the building to make space for our new partners and everyone has been chipping in to help make these first changes go smoothly. As we have gone through the building we have found many items that haven't been used but have found comfortable resting spots. We need help from everyone to weed out and find new homes for those things that can be moved, find space for those things that have sentimental or historical value, find locations at Balsam for things that you know will be needed, and dispose of those things that are not. Spring Cleaning before Christmas!

The one thing that all of us have learned as we have worked through this change with the UMOS staff, it is that they are very flexible and their attitude is that if any problem arises, talk about it, and a mutually beneficial solution can be found. Their staff continues to impress all of us that have worked with them. The best recommendation came from one the churches that have shared space with UMOS for many years when they said you would be foolish not to partner with them. This is a partnership that, in the long run, will be beneficial to both groups in many ways.

By Rick Ashley