

Student already answering God's call

By **MICAH WISE
BILGER**
Sentinel reporter

After listening to Patrick Traxler, most people would never guess that he is only a senior in high school.

The young Mifflin County High School student and athlete speaks like the passionate young pastor that he feels called to be.

With few hesitations or nervous "ums," Patrick shares his calling, his ministry, his trials when talking to his peers and his joys in experiencing glimpses of God.

Speaking one-on-one with Patrick, the young man is very personable and polite, sometimes motioning with his hands or pausing briefly to emphasize a statement.

Patrick traces his calling to the ministry back to eighth grade when his pastor, the Rev. Kari Swigart from Trinity United Methodist Church in Lewistown, invited him to the annual Susquehanna Conference of United Methodist Churches.

"That first year I found it kind of boring," Patrick recalls.

Still, the teen decided to give the conference another try. When he returned the second year, he felt something quite the opposite of boredom — God's call.

The young high schooler quickly jumped into youth ministry opportunities by helping at conferences, retreats and confirmation rallies.

At the third Susquehanna Conference, Patrick remembers hearing God call him

again.

He remembers thinking at the time, "God is calling me for something, but I didn't know what."

Patrick sought advice from his pastor, the conference director and his father, Randy Traxler, who had recently become a lay pastor at Lake Park United Methodist Church on Fourth Street in Lewistown.

As Patrick began to explore his calling, opportunities presented themselves.

First, a woman at Lake Park who for many years served as lay minister moved away, then pastors began asking Patrick to fill in and preach for them while they took vacations.

Patrick says he was hesitant at first when his pastor at Trinity UMC asked him to preach a sermon and lead the service.

"It was something I told her I would pray about and get back to her. I wasn't sure if I was ready to do something that big."

On July 4, 2010, Patrick took his first big step toward ministry by preaching his first sermon at Trinity UMC.

Since then, he also has spoken at Granville UMC while the pastor was on vacation, and at Spring Run Church of the Brethren while its members were looking for a full-time pastor.

He says he also participated in the local Methodist pulpit exchange and preached at the Reedsville and Church Hill UMCs as well as his father's church, Lake Park.

Patrick says he typically preaches within the local United Methodist Churches,

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Photo submitted by PATRICK TRAXLER

Teen Patrick Traxler stands behind a church pulpit as he preaches a sermon. Traxler felt called to the ministry in his early teens and occasionally speaks in local churches.

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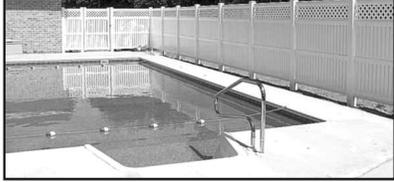
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