

IN THIS ISSUE



'Practical Divinity'
series debut
2A



Bishop announces
new technology
center job posting
5A



Youth's experience
at Veritas pays off
for good cause
7A

Churches join partnership to battle child hunger

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

It's a tragedy that should make the news every day, yet so commonplace that it doesn't get the attention it deserves: Kids in our own communities go hungry.

But thanks to Food For Kids, a program of the Arkansas Rice Depot, the number of children without regular access to nutritious food is decreasing. And United Methodist congregations are among the sponsors making it happen.

Food For Kids provides new backpacks, stocked with kid-friendly foods, to participating schools. Each school distributes the backpacks to students who display educational, physical or emotional problems at school due to hunger at home. Food For Kids' formula has proven so successful that organizations in at least 40 states have used it as a model for their own programs.

During the 2010-2011 school year, more than 32,000 Arkansas children in more than 650 schools received Food For Kids backpacks stocked by the Rice Depot.

"We expect those numbers to be higher at the end of this school year," said Laura Rhea, president and CEO of Arkansas Rice Depot.

The cost per school will rise, too. After holding the number at \$2,000 for several years, the Rice Depot has announced a change.

"Due to rising food and fuel cost over the last few years, we have had to increase the amount to adopt a school to \$2,400 starting in 2012," Rhea said.

Seeing both sides

As principal of Ivory Primary School in Camden, where 76 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunches, Melanie Churchill has seen Food For Kids help students for the past decade. So when she learned that churches could sign on as Food For Kids sponsors, she took action.

Churchill, who was then the



Every school day in Arkansas, backpacks like the one this child holds serve as a food distribution channel to kids who would otherwise go hungry.
PHOTO COURTESY ARKANSAS RICE DEPOT

chair of the Fairview UMC Camden church council, felt confident that the church would be interested in providing help.

"That's what we do," she said. "That's what we're all about."

She brought up the idea of sponsorship at the next church council meeting, where it received unanimous approval. A special offering came next, and within a few months, Fairview UMC had gathered \$2,000 in gifts—enough to sponsor a school for an entire academic year.

Churchill knows that while they need the food, kids may feel self-conscious if other children know that their classmates receive this extra help.

"My counselor and her clerk handle it in a very professional and private manner, so that children are not made fun of, they're not teased, nobody's singled out," she says.

She recalled one instance of a child who asked for his weekend backpack on Thursday, explaining he wasn't going to be at school that

Friday.

"It was that important to him, and he seemed so anxious, and extremely concerned about it," she said. "I know that these kids need this food. We are definitely meeting a need in this area."

Though Churchill is no longer its chair, she still serves on Fairview UMC's church council, and she plans to ask the church to continue sponsoring a school in the coming academic year.

Help from near and far

Not every church or group has the resources to sponsor an entire school, but that doesn't mean they can't participate.

"Our church is a small church, but we like to help in any way we can," says Les Brown, treasurer of Hollywood UMC Arkadelphia. The church typically helps address needs in their community and supports the HSU/OBU Wesley Foundation campus ministry. And when the

[See FOOD FOR KIDS, page 8A]

Arkansan involved in 'Plan B' for UMC restructure

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

A member of the Arkansas delegation to the 2012 United Methodist General Conference, held April 24-May 4 in Tampa, Fla., is part of an unofficial team proposing an alternate restructuring plan for the denomination.

Karen Millar of Searcy is among the laity and clergy behind UMC Plan B, which combines contributions from people in 15 annual conferences in four U.S. jurisdictions and two central conferences outside the

United States. The website umcplanb.org provides an overview of the changes the group is suggesting.

Millar, a four-time delegate to General

Conference, will serve for the third time on the General Administration legislative committee, which reviews and revises legislation dealing with plans for church restructuring.

Chief among those plans is the one developed on behalf of the Call to Action Interim Operations Team (IOT) by the Connectional Table. A 47-member body of laity and clergy from around the world, the Connectional Table coordinates the denomination's mission, ministry and resources.

The IOT plan is the result of the multiyear Call to Action process, which found that the status quo of a shrinking and aging U.S. church is "toxic" and unsustainable.

The Call to Action report recommended a sustained 10-year focus on congregational vitality. It also urged the denomination to consolidate general church agencies and reconstitute them with smaller, competency-based boards. The Connectional Table legislation bears out these recommendations.

By merging the nine general agencies, IOT leaders say, their plan [See PLAN B, page 10A]



Karen Millar



PRACTICAL DIVINITY

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON

Prayer: inviting God to come close

Editor's note: This column marks the first installment of *Practical Divinity*, an occasional series from the Rev. Andrew Thompson, the Arkansas Conference's Wesley scholar. The name of the column comes from a phrase used by Methodism's founder, John Wesley, to describe theology that speaks to the situations Christians face in their daily living. Thompson's aim for this series is that it will inform the everyday faith journeys of United Methodists across Arkansas.

We are coming very close to the time when General Conference will convene in Tampa, Fla. How should the church prepare?

General Conference meets only once every four years. With delegates from every part of the United Methodist Church, it is a body truly representative of the church as a whole. There will be clergy and lay delegates from Africa to Europe, and from the U.S. to the Philippines.

The primary reason General Conference meets at all is to celebrate our worldwide Methodist connection. We're doing important work in lots of different places, carrying the gospel of salvation to needy sinners all over the world. That vital ministry needs to be celebrated. Even more, thanks and praise need to be lifted up to God for it.

There are other reasons General Conference meets as well, some of them anxiety-producing. For the past several quadrennia, issues related to human sexuality have been debated in heated tones. Though the doctrinal position of the UMC on these issues remains unchanged, the issues themselves don't seem likely to go away and will emerge in various proposals.

And this year, deliberations around the proposals arising from the Call to Action report promise to be spirited (and not always easy).

General Conference has the power to change large portions of the

Book of Discipline with a simple majority vote. So it is understandable that people all over the church—whether they are delegates or not—take a keen interest in what goes on there.

I've heard lots of questions about General Conference over the past few months—phone calls and emails from people with earnest questions about what we should expect.

It's hard to say what we should expect. But I have been present with the Arkansas delegation to General Conference during its meetings since last June. And I've been consistently impressed with how seriously and intentionally our delegates have taken their preparation. We will be well-represented in Tampa, I am certain.

A better question than the one about how the conference will all turn out is this one: "How should we prepare?"

It seems certain that the best preparation for General Conference is to clothe it in prayer. We should pray for our delegates and for the conference itself. We should ask that God's will be done among us. And we should humbly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that the church would be faithful in all things to Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the New Testament, the letter of James gives us this counsel: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" (James 4:8; NRSV). In the Wesleyan tradition, we express this scriptural truth by our claim that prayer is a true means of grace.

But note the tone of James' teaching. He tells us to *seek out* God, so that we will know what it means to be *close* to God. And he gives us the assurance that our efforts will not be in vain. God will come as close as we are willing to receive him.

Prayer is one of the central means of drawing near to God in this way. It is not fundamentally a

mechanism we use to give God a "to-do" list. And it's not a tool we can use to manipulate God or change God's mind.

Prayer is about submission to Jesus Christ. It is a humbling act, where we put ourselves aside and ask Christ to show us what it means to say truthfully that "Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:11).

There is a wonderful scene in the second book of Chronicles, just after King Solomon has finished building the temple in Jerusalem. God appears to Solomon in a dream, and he tells Solomon to use the temple as a place where true worship happens.

God says, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place" (2 Chronicles 7:14-15; ESV).

The temple, of course, was the central place of worship in ancient Israel. It was the place where the whole people of Israel could gather and sacrifice and pray.

We don't have a temple like that. But we do have a General Conference. It is the place where—once every four years—the whole people called Methodist gathers to glorify God and equip the mission and ministry of the church.

So it seems fitting that we would treat the conference ahead as God told Israel to treat the temple. Its very presence should call us to an attitude of humility, confession and supplication.

If we will but draw near to God, then God will surely draw near to us.

The Rev. Thompson serves as Wesley scholar for the Arkansas Conference, and teaches at Memphis Theological Seminary. He may be reached at athompson@memphisseminary.edu.



EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

Back in my day...

I find myself saying some version of the phrase "back in my day" a lot lately. If you watched *Saturday Night Live* in the early 1990's, feel free to recall your memories of Dana Carvey's character "Grumpy Old Man" and play along with me for a moment:

Back in my day, you had to have a handful of quarters at the ready to do your laundry at Hendrix College! They didn't just let you use the machines for free like they do now.

Back in my day, all of the songs we sang in church came out of the *United Methodist Hymnal*! The camp songs they trotted out for Vacation Bible School were the exception that proved the rule.

And speaking of VBS.... Back in my day, Vacation Bible School didn't have a flashy theme. We just all sang songs and learned Jesus stories and made crafts and had snacks, and we liked it!

Back in my day...

You know what? It's no longer "my day" (though I suspect readers more than a few years my senior would beg to differ). But the laundry

still gets done, songs still get sung and kids still love VBS. The particulars may change, but the core purpose remains.

We use the word "my" a lot in our culture. It's a convenient way to express that we see ourselves as caretakers, even owners. My day. My kids. My garden. My church.

But are any of these things really ours? We treat them as our own without much thought. As people of faith, though, even our very selves belong not to us, but to God. So, theologically speaking, "my day" never was mine, anyway.

If we begin to really think about ownership, we just might see things differently. If our days aren't truly our own, congregations of the United Methodist Church certainly don't belong to us, either. They, and the entire denomination, ultimately belong to God.

If we relinquish a few human-sized ideas, we may find new life in a God-sized reality.

To reach me, send an email to aforbus@arumc.org.

CORRECTION

An *Arkansas United Methodist* story from the March 2 issue, "Working with Resurrection: Two Arkansas churches enter pilot program," contained an error. It stated that the Decatur and Highfill UMCs received "almost \$12,000 in grant money from the Arkansas Conference." The Conference was not the primary source of grant funding: \$11,100 came from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, and \$2,000 from the Arkansas Conference. We regret the error.



Volume 158 • No. 049 April 6, 2012
Martha S. Taylor • Director of Communications
Amy Forbus • Editor
Patrick W. Shownes • Communications Coordinator
www.arumc.org

The *Arkansas United Methodist* is the newspaper of record for the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. It is published once monthly, on the first Friday of each month, and four special issues during the year for a total of 16 issues per year.

Send correspondence & subscription updates to: Arkansas United Methodist, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202; or email to Patrick.Shownes@pshownes@arumc.org

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The United Methodist Reporter, PO Box 660275, Dallas, TX 75266-0275.

The *United Methodist Reporter* (USPS 954-500) is published weekly by UMR Communications, 1221 Profit Drive, Dallas, TX 75247. Periodicals Postage Paid at Dallas.



Arkansas Conference Communications
800 Daisy Bates Drive
Little Rock, AR 72202-3770
www.arumc.org 501-324-8000

Subscriptions
- \$15.00, 1 Year
- \$25.00, 2 Years
- Free, Online
For more information, visit www.arumc.org/aum or call 501-324-8006.

Advertising is welcomed. For a rate sheet or more information, contact Martha Taylor at 501-324-8005 or mtaylor@arumc.org. While all advertising is reviewed before acceptance, it should not be considered endorsed by this newspaper or the Church.

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
May 4	April 20
June 1	May 15
July 6	June 20

**Recycle
Reuse
Replenish**



Be sure to recycle your copy of the *Arkansas United Methodist* when you're finished reading it (or share it with a friend).



AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

Dear Friends:

There is a cave in southeast New Mexico which is called “New Cave” to distinguish it from the “old cave”—Carlsbad Caverns. The cave is full of bat guano, along with the requisite stalagmites and stalactites. Its greatest claim to fame is that it was featured in the original “King Solomon’s Mines” movie with Stewart Granger and Deborah Kerr.

When you tour the cave, now under National Park auspices, you can see the place on the wall where Ms. Kerr mixed her make-up in preparation for a very climactic scene in the movie.

Then they turn all the lights out!

You are suddenly in a darkness so deep there is no escape. You begin to lose orientation. It is hard to stand without stumbling. You cannot see the hand in front of your face. You cannot see the person behind or in front of you.

The separation is complete. And it only takes a moment to feel very

lost and very alone.

The disciples must have felt that way on Friday, as they took his body down from the cross—a loss of orientation, no sense of forward or back, no equilibrium. The total darkness of despair descending. Don’t you know that up until his final breath they held out hope that God was going to do something, anything, to save Jesus? But, the lights went out.

Then God turned on the lights.

Slowly, gently, in a garden where women saw dimly through their tears and disciples ran in confusion. They never could quite get the story all together. It was so personal, so surprising, so right. As the darkness faded into sunlight, there he was.

Still, this was different. God had been busy in the darkness. In the darkness, change was occurring. For the disciples and other followers, God was preparing to open a new way of life filled with risk and change and opportunity. Now, to coin a phrase, the world, not some

obscure corner of the Galilee, had become the primary mission field.

Every year, we re-enact this powerful moment of God’s gracious love as we stand in the darkness of our sin and despair and feel, and see, and experience, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. All the old sins and the recent failures and baggage of a life too hurriedly lived get dumped in the darkness of a cave and we can walk upright in the sunlight again.

We know where we are going and we can see the way. It is the way of the Cross. It is a journey which ends in the arms of God. For he is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! Amen!

Faithfully,

Charles Crutchfield

APPOINTMENTS

The following pastoral changes and retirements have been officially announced as of press time on March 29.

More appointment changes will be announced in the May 4 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*. To see appointments as they become official, visit arumc.org/appointments.

Retirements effective before Annual Conference

- Sheila Vancura, executive assistant to the Bishop, May 15

Appointments effective before Annual Conference

- Rose Kuonen to executive assistant to the Bishop, May 16

Confirmed appointment changes at Annual Conference (effective July 1)

- Asbury UMC Little Rock—Mary Susan Hilliard
- Clinton UMC—George Odell

- Cornerstone UMC Jonesboro—Chris Hemund
- First UMC Bentonville (Associate)—David Ruehr
- First UMC Blytheville—Robin Moore
- First UMC Conway—Michael Roberts
- First UMC Fort Smith—Charles Murry, intentional interim
- First UMC Hot Springs—Michael Mattox
- First UMC Little Rock—Chris Cooper
- First UMC Searcy—David Orr
- Henderson UMC Little Rock—Tom Frase, intentional interim
- Highlands UMC Bella Vista—Bryan Fink
- Marked Tree/Joiner—Ed Wyers
- St. Paul UMC Searcy—Don Hall
- Sylvan Hills UMC Sherwood—Alex Workman

Why is this so important?

BY WILLIAM O. (BUD) REEVES
Special Contributor

When a Jewish family celebrates the Passover *seder*, the youngest person at the table asks a question: “Why is this night different from all other nights?” The question leads to the re-telling of the liberation of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. It’s the most important story in Judaism, and a part of the identity of every Jewish person.

In the Christian tradition, the most important story we tell is the passion of Christ, beginning with the Passover meal he shared with his disciples and ending with his resurrection from the dead on Easter. We cannot know who we are without this narrative.

There’s a story, perhaps apocryphal, from the great Arkansan Johnny Cash. When he was a boy, he came into a room and discovered his father sitting with an open Bible in his lap, tears streaming down his

face. Young Johnny asked, “What’s the matter, Papa?”

The elder Cash replied, “Someday you’ll understand, son.”



Bud Reeves

It’s not that I ever considered the passion of Christ unimportant. But the older I have become, the more important it has become to me. And while the resurrection is

still key, sometimes I think I get more meaning out of the suffering and death of Jesus.

I continue to love and cherish the sheer drama of it all: Last Supper, agony in the Garden, trial before Caiaphas, betrayal of Peter, condemnation of Pilate, *Via Dolorosa*, crucifixion. The story never gets old. It grips me still. How could my Lord have gone through all he did for the world and for me?

Perhaps the Passion means

more to me now than before because the longer I live, the more I hurt. Not just the physical aches and pains, although those are getting more frequent, too. But it seems my heart gets broken more easily than it used to. I notice the pain of others more often. So many people are broken and hurting and near the point of despair. There is injustice and prejudice everywhere you look.

It means something to me that my Jesus suffered. He felt the pain of

‘The longer I live, the more I need hope.’

the whip and the nail. But he also knew the hurts of his people, then and now. That’s important.

The Passion means more to me now because the longer I live, the more I sin. Of course, I’ve had more time to do bad stuff, but it seems like I would quit making the same mistakes over and over: the caustic word, the pride of ego, the selfish

attitude, the lustful thought. Being a good Wesleyan, I am striving for perfection, but it hasn’t happened yet. Not even close.

So it means something that Jesus died on the cross *for my sins*. That sounds like such a religious cliché, until you realize the true state of your soul. Pastor Tim Keller said, “Here’s the gospel: You’re more sinful than you ever dared believe; you’re more loved than you ever dared hope.” His mercy, grace and forgiveness are real. I find that very important.

The longer I live, the more I need hope. With the trials of life and the troubles of the world, we have to

believe that things are going to get better, and that it’s all going to work out in the end. A philosophical commitment to improvement doesn’t get me out of bed in the morning. I need a Kingdom vision—eternal and glorious.

When Jesus gave up his spirit, it was the worst moment in human history. But three days later, the spell

of death was broken. If God could bring Jesus from the lowest valley to the highest mountaintop in just three days, I believe there’s hope for me. Whatever it takes, I want to be part of that victory.

Sometimes it seems the closer I get, the further away I am. My personal walk with God is deeper than it was two years ago or ten or twenty years ago. But the stronger my relationship gets, the more I see it is not about me; it’s all a work of the grace of a loving God. That may be the most important thing of all.

Ruth Graham, the beloved wife of Billy Graham, announced years before her death what she wanted on her tombstone. As she and Billy drove through the North Carolina mountains, they encountered a highway project, and she saw it on a sign: “End of construction. Thanks for your patience.”

We are all underway. The way of the cross leads to the empty tomb. Love, forgiveness, and hope win. Hallelujah!

The Rev. Dr. Reeves serves as senior pastor of First UMC Hot Springs. He can be reached at brobud@fumchs.com.

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Whitfield to become Bishop-in-Residence at Perkins School of Theology, SMU

D. Max Whitfield, Bishop of the New Mexico and Northwest



Bishop Max Whitfield

Texas Conferences of the United Methodist Church, has accepted an invitation to serve as Bishop-in-Residence at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, effective Sept. 1, 2012.

William B. Lawrence, Dean of Perkins School of Theology, lauded Bishop Whitfield's passion for helping develop future leaders and

his legacy of pastoral concern.

"Bishop Whitfield's considerable experience and longstanding interest in leadership will enhance the work of the recently established Center for Religious Leadership here at Perkins," Lawrence said. "We also look forward to Bishop Whitfield's prominent role with students, faculty and staff in the area of pastoral care."

Whitfield expressed enthusiasm about his next role, praising the leadership program at Perkins as making "a significant contribution to the church."

"This will allow me to be a small influence in the shaping of future leaders of the church," he

added.

Whitfield has served as bishop of the New Mexico and Northwest Texas Conferences for 12 years. Before his election to the episcopacy in 2000, he served more than 30 years in the North Arkansas Conference, including as superintendent of the Batesville and Fayetteville Districts. He is an alumnus of Perkins School of Theology, Arkansas State University and Princeton Theological Seminary.

Perkins School of Theology, founded in 1911, is one of five official university-related schools of theology of the United Methodist Church.

Teague named new Conference archivist

The Arkansas Conference Commission on Archives and



Carole Teague

History has named Carole Teague as an archivist at the Arkansas Conference United Methodist Archives, located in Bailey Library at

Hendrix College. She succeeds Mauzel Beal, longtime archivist there, and will work alongside Marcia Crossman.

A native of Fort Worth, Texas, she is married to retired United Methodist minister the Rev. Sam Teague, and they live in Conway. She formerly served as Arkansas Area Director of Mission and Outreach, and as Mission coordinator on the staff of First UMC Conway.

She presently serves on the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, the District Committee on Ministry and the Arkansas delegation to General Conference.

With her deep love for the UMC and a broad knowledge of the history, clergy, laity, churches and geography of the Arkansas Conference, the Commission believes Teague will be a great asset to the work of the United Methodist Archives.

Dementia expert to speak in Magnolia

Free event for caregivers April 20

Renowned dementia expert Teepa Snow will be the featured speaker on Friday, April 20, for a workshop at First UMC Magnolia. The workshop is designed for anyone who provides care for someone with dementia, personally or professionally.

A grant from the United Methodist Committee on Older Adult Ministries, part of the denomination's General Board of Discipleship (GBOD), has provided primary funding for the event. As a result, the workshop is free to the public, with a \$30 fee for those who require continuing education units (CEUs).

First UMC Magnolia is home to The Caring Place, a weekly ministry that offers care for adults with dementia. Snow's visit to Magnolia is one of the ways that ministry is having an impact in the community.

A certified occupational therapist who has received national recognition for her expertise in geriatrics, dementia care and dementia education, Snow shares how the brain controls the human body and behaviors, and explains how a brain disease like dementia affects individuals.

The workshop runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and includes lunch. Topics include:

- Helping children and teens understand and cope with dementia
- Coping with challenging behaviors
- How to communicate with someone who has dementia
- Creative and practical tips for getting through the day
- Changing your strategies

Register by April 13, either online at magnoliafumc.org/outreach or by calling Caring Place director Barbara Lewis at the church office, 870-234-4530. To learn more, visit teepasnow.com or search for "Teepa Snow Workshop" on Facebook.



Teepa Snow

Free camp for kids, families dealing with grief

Kaleidoscope Grief Center, a program of Methodist Family Health, on May 18-19 will hold its annual Camp Healing Hearts, a special overnight camp for children ages 5-18 and their families who have experienced the death of a loved one.

Held at Camp Aldersgate, 2000 Aldersgate Road in Little Rock, Camp Healing Hearts unites families in the grief process by encouraging parents and guardians to attend the event alongside their children. The 24-hour experience begins at 5 p.m. Friday, May 18, and concludes at the same time on Saturday, May 19.



A Camp Healing Hearts camper lights a candle in memory of a loved one.

COURTESY PHOTO

Campers have time to reflect, reconnect and rediscover on an individual, family and community level by participating in therapeutic and recreational activities. In "Heart to Heart" time, children, teens and parents participate in age-tailored peer support sessions designed to provide a safe environment for the expression of grief.

Camp Healing Hearts also provides opportunities to take part in traditional camp activities such as a campfire with s'mores, fishing, swimming, arts and crafts and a ropes course.

Visit methodistfamily.org or call toll-free 877-357-5437 to register, or to learn more about volunteering or giving a donation to keep the camp free to those who attend. Registration forms must be submitted by April 30.

Peace with Justice offering yields grant funds

Application deadline May 31

Peace with Justice Sunday is June 3 this year, though the special offering may be observed at any time. Grants funded by this offering help ministries to promote equality; access to resources like basic health care, food and childcare; and social justice.

One-half of the Peace with Justice offering remains in the Annual Conference, and is administered by the Arkansas Conference Board of Church and Society. Past recipients have included a program providing mentoring and child care so teen moms can finish school; a youth center that offers after-school activities; and a project that teaches English as a second language while building relationships between volunteer instructors and students.

The deadline for applying for an Arkansas Conference Peace with Justice grant is May 31. Applicants must be either a United Methodist or

United Methodist-affiliated organization, or an ecumenical group working with least one United Methodist agency. Visit arumc.org/forms for an application.

To learn more about Peace with Justice Sunday, visit umcgiving.org/peacewithjustice.



Manna House, a food ministry associated with First UMC Russellville, received one of last year's Peace with Justice grants.

AUM FILE PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

JOB POSTING

From Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield:

In the announcement below you will find a job posting for the Center of Technology for the Arkansas Annual Conference. The creation of the center was approved last October along with the Network for Holiness of Heart and Life and the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership. You will notice from the technical expertise required for the position that we are very serious about placing our churches and annual conference on the cutting edge of technology for the 21st century. Please keep this process in your prayer as we seek the best and the brightest for our church and our future.




Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield

Title: Director, Technology Center – Arkansas United Methodist Church

Organization: The mission of the Arkansas United Methodist Church (ARUMC) is to make disciples of Jesus Christ equipped to transform the world with excellence and passion. No matter how or where they serve Jesus Christ, Arkansas United Methodists do God's work in a unique structure—referred to as “the connection,” a concept that has been central to Methodism from its beginning. The ARUMC is seeking experienced leadership to manage the strategic direction and day-to-operations of a technology center that supports the “digital connections” used to fulfill the mission and goals of the Church.

Position Summary: The Director of the ARUMC Technology Center will plan, coordinate, and execute information technology operations, training, and support activities across Arkansas United Methodist Church locations. The Director will demonstrate leadership through staff development, resource allocation, consulting, project management, strategic planning, budgeting and business administration. The Director will work closely with Church leadership to identify long-term needs and establish priorities, define projects scope and timelines, and develop solutions to meet end user requirements.

Essential Functional Duties and Responsibilities include the following. (Other duties may be assigned.)

Strategic Planning & Business Administration. Develops long term strategies for Technology Center implementations. Responsible for developing annual budgets to support end

user requirements. Manages expenses within the Center's overall operating budget.

Project Management. Develops project plans specifying activities, deliverables, time frames, staffing and funding requirements. Manages the development, implementation/integration and operations of information and functional systems for the use of the ARUMC. Establishes and manages a centralized help desk support function.

Consultation. Performs ongoing needs assessments of end user requirements. Provides information regarding design, development, delivery, training and support for technology products and services. Demonstrates excellent customer services skills by soliciting input and providing timely feedback to improve technology products and services delivery.

Communications. Prepares and delivers professional quality presentations and reports as required that summarize Technology Center planning and operations. Documents standards and procedures for Technology Center operations and user support.

Leadership. Provides vision and direction to Technology Center staff consistent with values, strategies, policies and procedures of the Church. Directs and motivates staff to always meet or exceed end user expectations.

Vendor Partner Management. Researches, negotiates, contracts and develops business relationships with preferred vendors and consultants of technology products and services.

Employee Supervision and Development. Responsible for interviewing, hiring, developing, and evaluating the performance of Technology Center staff.

Work Attitude, Performance Under Pressure. Sets and achieves challenging goals and meets deadlines. Demonstrates persistence and overcomes obstacles. Composed and professional demeanor.

Information Technology Industry. Maintains knowledge of information technology industry, including products, services and trends. Analyzes end user IT requirements and researches solutions based upon their specifications.

Minimum Education and Experience Requirements: A Bachelor's degree in Computer Science or related curriculum with at least 7 years of increasing responsibilities in systems/networking/WAN administration, database management, application development, end user support, project management and information technology personnel management.

Compensation Package: Market-competitive salary plus outstanding benefits including comprehensive health care coverage (individual/family health, LTD, dental, vision care, wellness), 403(b) tax sheltered annuity retirement savings program and generous vacation, sick pay, and paid holiday plans.

How To Apply: All applications must be submitted electronically to technology@arumc.org by April 20, 2012.

Location: Little Rock, AR

Choir forming for Annual Conference worship services

Open to all interested singers

All singers in the Arkansas Conference are invited and encouraged to join the Annual Conference Choir. The group will sing at the Sunday night Holy Communion and Memorial Service, June 10, at the Arkansas Best Corporation Performing Arts Center Auditorium in Fort Smith; and at the Tuesday night Ordination and Consecration Service, June 12, at First United Methodist Church Fort Smith.

The Conference Choir is open to any singer who is willing to 1) learn the music before arriving; and 2) attend one rehearsal on Sunday afternoon at the convention center and one rehearsal on Tuesday afternoon at First UMC Fort Smith. We may be able to condense to one rehearsal on Sunday afternoon. Each singer will need a black music folder, a choir robe, a copy of each anthem and a joyful heart!

For information on how to order copies of the sheet music and listen to recordings, email Nancy Vernon at nvernon@sfumc.org. Your voice is needed, and your spirit will be fed!

Kitchen Equip. & Supplies

Buy at our prices and \$ave

1-800-482-9026 or 228-0808

AIMCO EQUIPMENT CO.

NEDCYM raises scholarship money for kids and youth



Members of the 2012 Northeast District Council on Youth Ministries pause for a photo the night of the scholarship fundraiser.

The Northeast District Council on Youth Ministries (NEDCYM) held a scholarship event on Sunday, Jan. 29, 2012, at First United Methodist Church Jonesboro. Skyler Weinmann served as chair of this year's event, which included performances by the First UMC Forrest City-based youth praise band Reign, and the Northeast District Choir under the direction of Rebecca Boggan and Sean Pollock. Nashville, Tenn.-based evangelist Brent Gambrell served as the keynote speaker for the event.

The more than \$2,000 in scholarship funds raised at this year's event will be used for the children and youth of the Northeast District who need financial assistance to be able to participate in activities held by the district each summer.

COURTESY PHOTO

BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

STAINED GLASS



Serving
Arkansas
with Quality
Stained Glass
since 1973

Churches ♦ Residential ♦ Commercial
(800) 791-7667
www.soosstainedglass.com
P.O. Box 13452, Maumelle, AR 72113

COUNSELING

Daily Bread Counseling

(Member of Clergy Counseling Network)

Rev. Garry D. Teeter, MS, LPC, NCC, CBIST
Offices in Benton, Hot Springs, Little Rock, & Dardanelle

Call for confidential appointment
501.847.2229 | 1.877.847.2229
www.dailybreadcounseling.com



Find the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church on Facebook at facebook.com/arkansasumc



Youth at worship during the last night of Veritas.

PHOTOS BY CAITLYN HENDRICKSON

'Veritas: Revolution' brings inspiration for youth

BY MADISON SCHALLHORN
Special Contributor

Last July I became part of a task force with other youth from the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries, and with the help of generous adults, started planning Veritas 2012, one of the biggest events held by ACCYM.

Because of my experience on the same task force the previous year, I assumed that this year would be like any other. But I was proven wrong.

We went through the same process of picking a theme—Revolution; a Bible verse—1 John 3:18; a speaker, a band, workshops, workshop leaders and entertainment, just like every other year. The process was stressful, yet fun, just like I expected it to be.

But when the streams of buses arrived on Feb. 24, unloading hundreds of youth from seventh through twelfth grades, I knew Veritas 2012 was going to go beyond my wildest expectations.

In addition to moving worship experiences provided by the Kyle Cantrell Band and Mark Oestreicher, the youth got to participate in many different workshops, varying from "Weird Stuff In the Bible" to "Modern Dating Etiquette" to "Minute to Win It" Games." They spent about an hour each in three

workshops of their choosing, led by people involved with the United Methodist church. The youth came away from these workshops with enlightening and inspiring messages, and they had fun while learning.

"The workshops left me with a lot of knowledge about myself and how to be a leader. I'll definitely be using that down the road," said sophomore Erica Kriner of Sulphur Springs UMC Pine Bluff.

One large change in Veritas this year was the location—Rogers, Ark. Although it was a longer drive than to Hot Springs for some people, the change definitely seemed worth the extra time in the car for most. This new location proved excellent, and it was able to hold around 1,500 people—Veritas' largest crowd to date.

The Saturday night options never cease to entertain the youth. This year's big entertainer was Drew Worsham, an illusionist from Texas who combines his skills as a magician with teaching God's word. He used fascinating, mind-bending illusions to show everyone that God has given him both a purpose and a life, and that God gave those things to all of us as well.

"It was astounding to watch him pull random kids out of the crowd and play some type of mind trick on the whole crowd," said junior Max de Kunffy of First UMC Conway. "By the end of it I felt revived and revolutionized."

For many, this was not the first trip to Veritas. One of the task force's goals is to make sure that every attendee leaves with a message every single year they attend; that it doesn't get mundane. This year, we seemed to have succeeded.

"Veritas has always been an extremely fun environment for me. The speakers have always been great, and have discussed things that apply directly to my life," said senior Jake Higgins, a three-year attendee from Greenwood UMC in Sebastian County. "I meet new people and make friends every year. The best part of Veritas for me is the time I get to spend with friends and build better relationships."

Jake's words ring true for me, as well. As much as I didn't expect it because of the amount of work I had to do as part of the task force, I walked away from Veritas 2012 with an open heart, new friends, healthier relationships, and a positive attitude for bettering myself. It was a stressful weekend, but during Saturday night's worship, when I saw hundreds of hands raised to the sky to praise our God for all that he's done, I knew it was the right thing for me to do.

I believe the adults and youth who attended Veritas walked away with something, because I know that I absolutely did.

In addition to her role on the Veritas task force, Schallhorn is the current president of ACCYM.



The Veritas task force gets the crowd pumped for Veritas 2012.



Art created as an act of worship by Emily Johnson of Marvell UMC and Alex Dooley of First UMC Forrest City.

Veritas attendee raises cash, awareness for Methodist Family Health

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

My name is Morgan I am a 13yr old United Methodist Youth and I have decided that during Lent I will give up my allowance and GIVE to a wonderful cause that has touched my heart.

So begins the Facebook Event page "Raising Money for the Children of Methodist Family Health." The page was set up Feb. 28 by Morgan Timbs, a member of First United Methodist Church Bentonville. As of press time, Morgan's fundraising total stood at \$1,700, surpassing her \$1,000 goal.

What prompts a teen to give away her allowance—and encourage others to do the same?

Morgan had spent the previous weekend at Veritas, an annual event held by the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries. One of the workshops she attended focused on mission, highlighting several ministries, including Methodist Family Health. It was the first time Morgan had heard of the organization, but its work in helping people her own age captured her attention.

"I can't imagine what it would

be like to not have my parents, or for my parents not to take an active part in my life," she said. "Then you have the part [of the video] where sometimes kids come to Methodist Family Health with just the clothes on their backs."

Veritas ended on Sunday, Feb. 26. That evening, the youth of First UMC Bentonville held their regular gathering. Maggie Beeler, assistant director of development with Methodist Family Health, served as guest speaker. She presented information about the organization's mission and ministry—including the same video Morgan had seen in her workshop. And the second time was a charm.

"That's when I sat there watching it, thinking, 'I want to help, but how can I help?'" Morgan said. "During the same weekend I was still thinking about what I wanted to give up for Lent.... I decided that for Lent I would give up my allowance and donate it to this great cause."

"You never know what can cause a spark in a student," says Brandon Bates, youth minister for First UMC Bentonville. "She'd mentioned to me that night what she was wanting to do, and I told her to go for it, not

having any idea the reach that this would have, and how determined she would be to achieve the goal."

Almost immediately, Morgan began to think bigger than her own allowance. She turned to social media as a tool to multiply her efforts.

"I thought, 'If I could just reach out to a thousand people, and if they can just donate one dollar, then wow! I could raise \$1,000,'" she said.

She started her Facebook Event page, posting it on First UMC Bentonville's Facebook page and inviting her own family and friends. In turn, those people shared the event page with their friends. Morgan soon began receiving donations in the mail from relatives, friends and complete strangers not only from all over Arkansas, but also from Tennessee, Indiana, North and South Carolina, Kentucky and California.

"Honestly, a lot of the donations have come from people I don't know personally," she says. "That's the neat thing about social networking. Once my event page started being shared on Facebook, it seemed like everyone had heard about what I was doing."

Morgan's campaign got the attention of KNWA-TV. When the



Morgan Timbs counts some of the more than \$1,000 she collected through a fundraising campaign for Methodist Family Health.

COURTESY PHOTO

reporter asked if she had been saving her allowance for anything special, she mentioned she had been thinking of buying a tote bag in a style that would be easy to carry to school along with her backpack. After the story aired, a store owner in Fayetteville contacted her.

"He wanted to donate to my cause and give me a gift, which turned out to be the Vera Bradley bag I wanted," she said. "We have also been contacted by a representative from Vera Bradley and they want to send me a little gift, too."

While she appreciates the gift, Morgan makes it clear that her goal was to help others, not to get anything for herself. And because of her efforts, many more people have heard about how Methodist Family Health helps families and children.

"I never expected to receive a gift for what I was doing," she said. "I did this fundraiser because it made me feel good to know that even though I'm only 13 years old, I can make a difference. I hope this helps other youth to stand up and make a difference, too."

KALEIDOSCOPE GRIEF CENTER PRESENTS



MAY 18-19 • Camp Aldersgate



Registration deadline is April 30.

For more information or to register, please call (501) 661-0720 ext. 7115 or toll free (877) 357-5437 or email katrobinson@methodistfamily.org.

Camp Healing Hearts is a FREE overnight family-oriented grief camp for children ages 5-18 and their families. Grief can be a very isolating experience, particularly for children. Camp Healing Hearts provides a safe environment where children and their families can develop coping skills – both individually and within a community of others. Camp begins at 5 p.m. Friday, May 18, and concludes Saturday, May 19. Caregiver participation is required.

REFLECT | RECONNECT | REDISCOVER

Kaleidoscope Grief Center is a program of



Rebuilding the Lives of Children and Families Since 1899

www.methodistfamily.org

Food For Kids (continued from page 1A)

Martie Cousar, director of the Lincoln Schools Wellness Center, accepts a check from the Rev. Andy Newbill on behalf of Central UMC Lincoln. The funds received from the Conference Hunger Task Force and distributed by the Northwest District went toward the Arkansas Rice Depot Food For Kids program in the community of Lincoln.

COURTESY PHOTO



church received a letter explaining Food For Kids sponsorship, they added it to their priority list.

“Everybody was willing and wanted to do it,” he said. “We felt like it was a good cause.” Hollywood UMC contributed \$1,000, and Brown expects the church to continue sponsoring a school next year.

Sometimes help comes from surprising places. A group in North Carolina became aware of the Rice Depot’s Food For Kids program because one of its members receives an email devotional from the Rev. LaVon Post, who currently serves at First UMC Malvern and has a passion for feeding the hungry.

Erik Alksnis of Charlotte, N.C., shared what he learned from Post with a group of coworkers who had already engaged in service together. Calling themselves the Road Warriors, they had traveled to Tuscaloosa, Ala., to help with tornado recovery, and they were looking for more ways to serve.

As Alksnis read the statistics about child hunger in Arkansas, he felt the pull to help sponsor a school through Food For Kids. It soon became the Road Warriors’ next project. They organized a huge yard sale to benefit the cause, and to their amazement, the small amounts of cash from shoppers added up to \$1,000.

“This is all about God’s amazing provision,” Alksnis said. “You mostly just have to ‘show up’ and watch him work.”

In northwest Arkansas, Central UMC Lincoln and Cincinnati UMC are among the area churches that have partnered with Food For Kids through the Lincoln Schools Wellness Center.

“The need is great, and the Rice Depot is doing what they can,” said the Rev. Andy Newbill, pastor of the two churches. “The community has been asked to help fill the gap. I am very proud that both mission fields I serve are helping.”

Newbill is grateful for the support of the Northwest District, as well. In late 2011, a district committee chose Central UMC Lincoln to receive a \$500 grant from Conference Hunger Task Force funds. The money went straight to help Food For Kids efforts in the church’s own community, where the Lincoln Schools Wellness Center assists an average of 70 children per week.

Thinking big

In his last three appointments, Post has left evidence of his passion for feeding hungry children. Harvest of Hope events in Batesville, DeWitt and Malvern/Hot Spring County, which raise funds by selling smoked meats, provide substantial benefit to Food For Kids.

Harvest of Hope for Hot Spring County raised \$14,000 for the cause in 2011, its second year. John Allan Funk, chairperson of the event and a member of First UMC Malvern, says Hot Spring County residents show amazing generosity as a rule. When it came to fighting child hunger, “they just could not stand to think of a child going home from school in the afternoon or on the weekend without food,” he said. In addition to the money, scores of volunteers provided help over the past two years’ Labor Day weekends.

Hot Spring County’s Harvest of Hope involves nine churches, seven of which are United Methodist. All nine churches’ help is needed, too, as Food For Kids benefits ten schools within Hot Spring County’s borders. The broad-based support pays off: Out of the 75 counties in Arkansas, Hot Spring is currently the only one in which Food For Kids costs are completely funded by gifts from within the county.

Workers from Harvest of Hope are available to speak with churches who may be interested in starting a similar effort in their own

communities. To schedule a visit, contact Funk at 501-332-4625 or ja_funk@sbcglobal.net.

Kids helping kids

Vacation Bible School season is approaching, and most churches tie a mission project to VBS events. Food For Kids gives children a chance to help their peers.

“Kids just get this program,” said Gordon Kumpuris, director of development for Arkansas Rice Depot. “Even small children understand hunger and know that it’s a bad thing that just should not occur.”

Food For Kids reaches students in every corner of the state, so the mission project has a built-in local connection for any United Methodist congregation. While food drives are welcome, Kumpuris suggests holding a fundraiser if logistics of getting the food to the Rice Depot’s Little Rock warehouse would be a challenge. “Bucks for Backpacks” drives have proven successful for many kids’ projects.

“The mission project opportunities for Vacation Bible Schools to help the Rice Depot are limited only by imagination,” he said.

Post, of First UMC Malvern, says that when he first learned of Food For Kids, he immediately thought of asking people of the church to step up.

“I just thought, ‘You know, United Methodists would help out,’” he said. “And I was right.”

“It might surprise you how little it takes to turn a child’s life around,” says Rhea, the Rice Depot’s president and CEO. “Can a mission field be in your local school? Absolutely. The need is immediate because a hungry child can’t wait.”

To connect your church with Food For Kids, call 501-565-8855 or visit ricedepot.org.

Bishop’s executive assistant Vancura to retire May 15



Sheila Vancura

Sheila Vancura, executive assistant to Bishop Charles Crutchfield, has announced her retirement, effective May 15, 2012.

Hired in 2001 by Bishop Janice Huie, Vancura came to the bishop’s office after serving a decade as an administrative assistant and office administrator for St. James UMC Little Rock, working for three different senior pastors: the Revs. John Miles, Jack Wilson and Guy Whitney.

After 21 years in full-time service to the church, she says she will miss the ongoing connections

with people who share common goals.

“You can’t quantify the value of relationships and long-term friendships,” she said. “And I’m going to walk out the door and miss it terribly.”

Because of the connectional nature of her job, those relationships extend beyond the Arkansas Conference’s boundaries. At Bishop Huie’s urging, Vancura attended the first official annual gathering of episcopal secretaries, and has remained involved with the network of people who hold jobs similar to hers throughout United Methodism. Through that organization, she has met some “strong, wonderful women whose lives have been dedicated to service,” she says. “We share our struggles and our joys, and learn from each other how best we can serve the episcopal office.”

While every Conference has slightly different structures and faces unique challenges, Vancura has valued the experience of connecting with people who work in other bishops’ offices. They share ideas and processes, taking advantage of the opportunity to learn from each other.

“We all get the same work done,” she says, “but we do it in different ways.”

As Vancura reflects upon the great number of changes that have come about in recent years, she sees great possibilities for the future of the church.

“I think the Imagine Ministry effort is particularly interesting, and has grand potential,” she said. “I’m hopeful for IM, I really am.”

“For her, the job has not been a job at all, but really a calling,” said Bishop Crutchfield. “She has brought grace, skill, empathy, wisdom and deep faith to work every day.

“I am not the only one who will miss her presence here,” he added. “She is very special to many people across our Conference and, indeed, across our connection. It has been a privilege for me to work with her these past eight years.”

In her retirement, Vancura plans to spend more time enjoying her hobbies of gardening, cooking and reading, and spending time with her husband of 41 years, John. And a big priority will be self-care, starting with time at the gym each morning.

Vancura also plans to stay open to ways to serve Christ, particularly through being more active in her own congregation, Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock.

But before she embarks on any new adventures, she will spend the summer months relaxing and unwinding, preparing for what’s next in life.

Bishop Crutchfield sees in Vancura a gift for service that goes beyond the job she will leave behind.

“While she is not going to be in the office now, we are not going to let her fade away,” he said. “I trust she will allow the Annual Conference to take advantage of her many gifts for ministry and her love for the church well into the future.”

COMING UP

April

Easter sunrise service at Pinnacle Mountain, pancake breakfast at Winfield UMC
Pinnacle Mountain State Park, on Highway 300 in Little Rock, will be the site of Winfield UMC’s sunrise service on Easter Sunday, April 8, at 7 a.m. The public is invited to this “come as you are” service, and asked to bring lawn chairs for seating. Immediately following the service, the United Methodist Men of Winfield UMC will be serving a free pancake breakfast at the church fellowship hall, 20100 Cantrell Road. For details, visit wclr.org or call 501-868-4225.

Tech Wesley Foundation hosts Dessert Theatre April 12, 13, 14
The Arkansas Tech University Wesley Foundation group A.C.T.S. (Actors with Christ through Theatre and Song) on April 12, 13 and 14 will present a family-friendly Dessert Theatre featuring two plays: “Black and White,” a spoof on the sitcoms of the 1950s by Forrest Musselman, and “All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play,” a comedic behind-the-scenes look at how a bad play comes into existence, by Werner Trieschmann. Reserve individual seats or a whole table for your Sunday school class, group or club and support campus ministry. The event is at the Wesley Foundation, 1111 North El Paso, across from the Arkansas Tech University football field in Russellville. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the show begins at 7 p.m. Admission is free, but donations toward the campus ministry are appreciated. For information, contact the Rev. Jason Molitor or Trinity Brown at 479-968-4159, or email wesleyfoundationatu@yahoo.com for reservations.

UMVIM team leader training at Mount Sequoyah April 14
On Saturday, April 14, Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference Center in Fayetteville will host a training session for people who may lead Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) teams. Team leader training costs \$20 and includes the team leader manual and lunch. The session begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m.



Debbie Vest

Team leader training is highly recommended for all mission team leaders so United Methodist UMVIM teams can continue to “Do No Harm,” the first of the three General Rules set forth for Methodists by John Wesley. Debbie Vest, United Methodist Volunteers in Mission director for the South Central Jurisdiction, and the Rev. Larry Norman, VIM director for the Louisiana Conference, will be presenters.



Larry Norman

The session will cover the importance of UMVIM’s Best Practices, which ask that all mission team leaders receive team leader training from their annual conference coordinator, jurisdictional coordinator or an approved conference trainer; work with approved projects; purchase accident insurance through their conference or the General Board of Global Ministries; have taken Safe Sanctuaries or Safe and Sacred Spaces training for the protection of children and vulnerable adults on their team and those

they work with; and notify their conference and jurisdictional coordinator of their travel dates, that they have filled out and completed the necessary paperwork found in the team leader handbook.

To reserve your spot, visit www.arumc.org/register.

VBS training at First UMC Magnolia April 14, May 5
First UMC Magnolia is offering opportunities to receive training covering this summer’s two Vacation Bible School curriculum options from Group Publishing. The events will be hosted at First

UMC, 320 West Main Street in Magnolia. The session on Saturday, April 14 will focus on “Sky” VBS curriculum, and the session on Saturday, May 5 will focus on “Babylon” VBS curriculum. Training is hands-on and gives practical pointers on fundraising, decorations, recruiting volunteers and more. Participants will actually get to experience a full day’s worth of VBS through the various station rotations. Both sessions run from 9 a.m. to noon. Register online at www.group.com/vbsfunshop; pre-registration is \$18 per person until one week before training; cost rises to \$25 per person for late and on-site registration. For more information, contact Jeremy Carter at jeremy@magnoliafumc.org or 870-234-4530.

ASU Wesley Foundation golf tourney April 19
The Wesley Foundation campus ministry at Arkansas State University is holding a golf tournament Thursday, April 19, at Sage Meadows Country Club in Jonesboro. Registration is at 12:30 p.m., with a 1:00 shotgun start. The team entry fee is \$300 (or \$75 for individuals). Proceeds will help fund the ministry of outreach to college students. To register online, download a printable registration form or see sponsorship information, visit astatewesley.org/golf.

OMP training dates April 14, 21 and 28
Ozark Mission Project (OMP) is holding regional training sessions for churches sending mission teams to its locations this summer. To prepare mission teams for their experience, OMP requires that each participating church send representatives to a Regional Church Training. All regional sessions take place on Saturday mornings from 10 a.m. to noon.

- April 14: First UMC Conway and SAU Wesley Foundation, Magnolia
- April 21: City Heights UMC Van Buren
- April 28: Highland Valley UMC Little Rock

Teams attending these sessions will return home to lead their local OMP teams through the study material. Every youth and adult attending OMP must attend the required study.

Parker’s Chapel UMC El Dorado hosts homecoming April 22
Parker’s Chapel UMC will hold its 2012 homecoming celebration on Sunday, April 22, at 11 a.m. The guest preacher will be the Rev. Howard Childs of the Louisiana Conference. The day represents a homecoming for him, as well: Parker’s Chapel UMC was the church where, as a 14-year-old in 1946, Childs preached his first sermon. A potluck and singing will follow the morning message. All are invited to attend the festivities.



Howard Childs

Mother of murder victim speaks of faith, forgiveness in Little Rock April 25 and in Fayetteville April 26
A nationally renowned speaker on the subject of restorative justice is bringing her message of faith and healing to Arkansas. Dr. Linda L. White of Houston, Texas, will present “In the Aftermath of Murder: Redemption, Reconciliation and Resolution” on Wednesday, April 25 in Little Rock and Thursday, April 26 in Fayetteville.

In 1986, White’s daughter, Cathy, was abducted, raped and murdered. White shares how she and her family overcame this devastating loss, describing their experiences of pain, hope, and reconciliation. The program includes a screening of an Emmy-nominated documentary which chronicles the White family’s journey from violence to restoration. Co-sponsored by the Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty and Murder



Linda White

Victims’ Families for Reconciliation, the event is financed by a Peace with Justice grant from the Arkansas Conference Board for Church and Society. White received her Ph.D. from Texas A&M in 2001 and went on to serve on the faculty of Sam Houston State University, researching and teaching on the subject of restorative justice. In 2003, Gov. Rick Perry appointed her to represent victims’ issues on the Texas State Council for Adult Offender Supervision. White is a former board member of Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation and in 2009 testified before Congress on the subject of juvenile life sentences without parole. White will appear at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock on April 25 and at Wiggins Memorial UMC Fayetteville April 26. Both presentations begin at 6:30 p.m. For more information, visit www.acadp.org.

Regional meetings to discuss pension/insurance proposals in April and May
The 2012 session of the Arkansas Annual Conference will consider three significant proposals related to pension and insurance issues. To provide information regarding these proposals, the Rev. Dennis Spence, who has chaired the Bishop’s Task Force on Retiree Healthcare Benefits, is conducting a series of informational meetings around the Conference. Meetings already have been held in Mountain View and Jonesboro. The remaining meetings are set for:

- Fayetteville (Central UMC): April 21, 10 a.m. to noon
- Fort Smith (St. Paul UMC): April 21, 3 to 5 p.m.
- North Little Rock (Lakewood UMC): April 22, 3 to 5 p.m.
- Monticello (First UMC): May 19, 10 a.m. to noon
- Stuttgart (First UMC): May 19, 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.
- Arkadelphia (First UMC): May 20, 3 to 5 p.m.

Clergy and laity are encouraged to attend the session most convenient to them.

May

Denman Evangelism Award nominations due by May 10
It is time to nominate clergy, laity and youth for the 2012 Denman Evangelism Awards given at Annual Conference. Begun in 1981 to honor United Methodist clergy and laypersons who exhibit unusual and outstanding efforts for the work on Christian evangelism, the Harry Denman Evangelism Awards help draw attention to evangelism in the local church. Persons who, in their daily lives, are effective in helping others experience the transforming love of God through Jesus Christ are eligible. If you have someone you would like to nominate, visit foundationforevangelism.org to download the forms. Send completed forms to thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org or mail to Dr. David W. Bush, 307 East Fourth Street, Stuttgart, AR 72160. Forms must be received by May 10. For information, contact David Bush at 870-673-1131.

Stewardship/finance workshop in North Little Rock May 12
First UMC North Little Rock, 6701 JFK Blvd., on Saturday, May 12 will host “Church Finances: A Toolkit for Today and Down the Road,” a stewardship workshop for laity and clergy. Presenters at the event, which runs from 9:30 a.m. to noon, include the Rev. Dr. Bob Crossman, Arkansas Conference minister of new church starts and congregational advancement and author of *Committed to Christ: Six Steps to a Generous Life*; Janet Kernodle Marshall, vice-president of development for the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas; Brian Swain, administrator for Central UMC Fayetteville; and the Rev. J. Clif Christopher, president of Horizons Stewardship and author of several books, including *Not Your Parents’ Offering Plate: A New Vision for Financial Stewardship*. Participation is free, and pre-registration is recommended. To register, visit arumc.org/register.

Plan B (continued from page 1A)

will help the denomination improve its alignment and meet the “adaptive challenge” of increasing vital congregations.

As conversation about the Connectional Table legislation has progressed, a number of United Methodists have voiced concerns, and some have put forth alternative plans. For example, the Methodist Federation for Social Action, an unofficial caucus of United Methodists, has proposed an alternate plan available at mfsagc12.org.

UMC Plan B is the most recent development in this denomination-wide conversation. Millar says it originated with members of the Connectional Table who had reservations about the balance of power between bishops and General Conference, and geographical and ethnic representation issues raised by the IOT plan.

“And [the IOT plan] really did too much about the directive of the last General Conference for the Connectional Table to come up with a way to downsize the agencies and the program boards,” she said.

Millar and others supporting UMC Plan B think the IOT plan goes too far in reducing the sizes of governing boards and consolidation of many UMC agencies under one umbrella. Several agencies have proposed voluntary reductions in the sizes of their boards since the IOT released the Call to Action recommendations. Plan B advocates believe these boards should have an opportunity to implement the changes recommended in the Call to Action, rather than have legislation make drastic changes for them.

The Rev. Rodney Steele, Arkansas’ first-elected clergy delegate, notes that pre-General Conference conversation has increased as electronic communication has made it easier to share ideas worldwide.

“Rather than getting into our legislative committees and hearing a counter-proposal for the first time,

and trying to absorb that, folks are starting conversations and dialogs,” he said. “Time will tell if better work comes out of this, but definitely conversation is taking place before [General Conference], and I think that’s a good thing.”

Steele says he found encouraging the original legislation proposed by the IOT and the Connectional Table, but he is examining alternate plans with an eye toward what the next best option would be if the original plan doesn’t have the votes to pass.

“I want to be open to the Holy Spirit,” he said, “and if the Holy Spirit is working through another proposal or another plan, then that’s what I want us to do.”

A statement issued by the Arkansas Conference delegation echoes that desire to follow the Holy Spirit. While some other delegations have endorsed a specific restructuring plan, the Arkansas delegation instead has committed to allowing six principles to guide their decisions:

- Delving more deeply in Scripture and prayer to discern God’s will for the UMC
- Spiritually seeking and exercising more faith to follow God’s will
- Creating more vital congregations and local ministries because that is where the making of disciples of Jesus Christ primarily occurs
- Recruiting and training more young and diverse leadership, lay and clergy
- Simplifying our structure for adaptive change in fulfilling our mission while maintaining appropriate and ethical checks and balances
- Including gender, age, racial and ethnic diversity in decision-making positions.

For more information on the Connectional Table legislation, a detailed story on UMC Plan B and other resources relating to General Conference, visit gc2012.umc.org.

Heather Hahn of UMNS contributed to this report.

CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED in the *Arkansas United Methodist* for 60 cents per word, no limit. Call 501-324-8005 or mail to: *Arkansas United Methodist*, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202; or email mtaylor@arumc.org.

Wesley United Methodist Church in Fort Smith is seeking an administrative assistant for 25 hours per week. Must have good people skills, general computer skills and working knowledge of Microsoft Word and Publisher. Pay starts at \$9.25 an hour with paid vacation and holidays. Send résumé to Wesley UMC, 2200 Phoenix Ave., Fort Smith, AR 72901.

Home Study: Save \$\$\$ Christian Bible College, P.O. Box 8968 Rocky Mt., NC 27804 Phone (252) 451-1031; www.christianbiblecollege.org.

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

Rondo UMC celebrates 150 years by giving big to Heifer International

In 2011, when Rondo United Methodist Church Texarkana reached its 150th year in ministry, the congregation chose “A New Beginning” as its theme for the sesquicentennial celebration. As members sought a fitting way to mark the milestone, they realized that the mission of Heifer International seemed to resonate with the theme. Heifer International is a non-profit organization that seeks to work with communities to end hunger and poverty and care for the earth—providing new beginnings for people around the world.

Direct gifts, memorial gifts, fundraisers, collecting quarters in banks and taking special offerings all played a part in Rondo UMC’s celebration of generosity.

Church members raised more than \$5,000 for Heifer—enough that they could purchase a “Gift Ark,” which provides 15 pairs of animals to change lives where such resources are needed most.

On Jan. 28, a delegation from Rondo UMC visited Heifer’s headquarters in Little Rock to present the gift.

COURTESY PHOTO



First UMC Texarkana luncheon benefits Methodist Family Health

First United Methodist Church Texarkana on Sunday, March 4 hosted a sold-out spaghetti luncheon as a benefit for Methodist Family Health services in south Arkansas.

Organized by the church’s Mission Committee, chaired by Les Stratton, the event raised \$1,800 and included a presentation of the MFH video “Mission in Your Own Back Yard: The Story of Methodist Family Health.” Maggie Beeler, the MFH Foundation’s assistant director of development, was on hand to share a personal thank-you message.

To view “Mission in Your Own Back Yard,” visit methodistfamily.org.

Bible Blitz kids make Children’s Disaster Kits for Rice Depot

First UMC Ozark’s Bible Blitz group, a Wednesday night program for children in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. About 60 kids each week attend to share in food, games and Bible study. Each year the group chooses a service project, and this time they selected something with a personal connection.

The tornado that came through the Ozark area in May 2011 affected many households in the community, and the children of Bible Blitz saw some of the damage first-hand. Because of this experience, they chose to make Children’s Disaster Kits.



COURTESY PHOTO

Provided through the Arkansas Rice Depot, a Children’s Disaster Kit contains items such as a coloring book, a cuddly stuffed toy, and small toy emergency response vehicles. These seemingly small gifts can offer big comfort for children who have experienced a disaster. Bible Blitz kids collected enough of these items to make 63 kits to send to the Rice Depot.

To learn about the various kits your mission group can provide for disaster victims, visit ricedepot.org and click on the Disaster Relief link.

U2-inspired worship service’s offering benefits Methodist Family Health and Imagine No Malaria

Two “U2charist” worship services on March 9 and 11 raised a total of \$1,211 for ministries locally and worldwide.

First UMC Little Rock presented the U2charist, which is a Eucharist, or Communion service, featuring songs and videos by Grammy-winning Irish rock band U2. Many of U2’s songs proclaim a message about God’s call for global reconciliation, justice for the poor and oppressed and the importance of caring for your neighbor. The band allows its music to be used in U2charist services provided that all offerings received go toward furthering one of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

The church split its U2charist offering between two organizations:

Methodist Family Health provides the only comprehensive behavioral healthcare system to children and families of Arkansas, and fits in with the Millennium Development Goals of promoting child and maternal health.

Imagine No Malaria addresses Millennium Development Goal Six: combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Malaria currently kills one person every 60 seconds, a decrease from one death every 30 seconds in 2010, so this United Methodist-backed effort has made progress toward eradicating the disease.



The Rev. Nathan Mattox of University UMC Tulsa, Okla., and his father, the Rev. Michael Mattox of First UMC Little Rock, share in the celebration of Holy Communion at the March 9 U2charist.

PHOTO BY CINDY WALLACE

OBITUARIES

JOINER**Wilton J. Goudeaux**

The Rev. Wilton J. Goudeaux, 77, of Joiner, passed away Monday, Feb. 20.

He was born July 10, 1934. A retired associate member of the Arkansas Conference, he served at churches across the state from 1977 through 2005, including Christ Yarbrow, Holly Grove, Shiloh, Jasper, Valley View, Bellefonte, Elaine, Calico Rock, St. Francis and Bay Village.

His parents, his wife, Doris Jean Ammons Goudeaux, and his daughter, Pamela Goudeaux, preceded him in death. Survivors include two sons, Wilton J. Goudeaux III of Joiner and John Paul Goudeaux of Pleasant View, Tenn.; two grandchildren; a sister, Elizabeth Anne Adams of Joiner; a niece, Sherry Bennett, and two nephews, Mark and Ed Adams.

A memorial service was held at Joiner UMC.



Wilton Goudeaux

JONESBORO**Marie Burrow**

Marie McIlroy Burrow, 92, passed away Friday, Feb. 17, 2012, at Lakeside Nursing Center in Lake City.

She was born Dec. 13, 1919 in Randolph County to Elmo Murray and Della (Graham) McIlroy. She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, the Rev. William Ray Burrow; two brothers, E.M. McIlroy and James McIlroy; and two sons-in-law, Gale Clark and Robert Holt.

She is survived by four daughters: Alea Ruth Clark of Murfreesboro, Tenn.; Laura McMillon and her husband, Morris, of Bentonville; Patricia Harlan and her husband, Bob, of Jonesboro; and Nancy Hall and her husband, Russell, of Lake City; grandchildren Doug McMillon, Lori Haynie, David McMillon, Robert Holt, Amanda Watlington, Melissa Harlan, Terry Hall and Jill Wolf; and 14 great-grandchildren.

A funeral service was held Monday, Feb. 20 in the Chapel of McNabb Funeral Home, with the Revs. Wayne Clark and Heath Williams officiating. Burial followed in Masonic Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Thompson Cemetery or Masonic Cemetery, or to a church or charity of your choice.

LEWISVILLE**Jerry A. Pulliam**

The Rev. Jerry Amos Pulliam, 70, of Lewisville, passed away Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2012, at a local hospital.

He was born July 14, 1941, in Pocahontas, to Amos and Marguerite Pulliam. He was a graduate of Biggers-Reyno High School, Arkansas State University and Emory University of Atlanta, Ga. He was a proud veteran of the United States Air

Force. He served for 42 years as a pastor in the United Methodist Church, with appointments in Van Buren, Kibler, Jacksonville, Greenbrier, Springdale, Fort Smith, Black Rock, Lynn, Powhatan, Alma, Mountain View, Tuckerman, Swifton, Blytheville, Lewisville, Buckner, Taylor and Stamps.

He was a dedicated member of the Lions Club since 1986, and held numerous positions including Zone Chairman, Region Chair, Vice District Governor, District Governor, and Council Chair of the Board of Governors. He was on the Board of Trustees for the Mid-South Sight and Hearing Services in Memphis, Tenn., serving as third vice-president. He was recently awarded the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award.

He was preceded in death by his father, one brother and two sisters. He is survived by his wife, Peggy Pulliam of Lewisville; his mother, Marguerite Pulliam of Jonesboro; a son, Mark Pulliam and his wife, Crystal, of Alma; three daughters,



Jerry Pulliam

Sarah Carroll and her husband, James, of Dallas, Texas; Leslie Beauregard of Hollywood, Md.; and Barbara Gourd-Shaw and her husband, Henry, of Muldrow, Okla.; nine grandchildren, Jarek and Miranda Pulliam, Katherine, Kaitlin and Nicolas Rodriguez, Monica and Sabrina Beauregard and Dustin and Kali Shaw; two-great grandchildren, Morgan and James Shaw; two sisters, Betty Luter of Clinton, S.C., and Peggy Walker of Weiner; and a host of nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 18, at Lewisville United Methodist Church, with the Revs. Ron Eldridge, Mark Lasater and C.E. McAdoo officiating. Members of the Lewisville Lions Club served as pallbearers and honorary pallbearers. In lieu of flowers and gifts, memorial contributions may be made to the Lewisville Lions Club or Lewisville UMC.

NORPHLET**Lola M. Ford**

Lola M. Ford, 84, of Norphlet, passed away Monday, March 19, 2012, at Timberlane Health and Rehabilitation in El Dorado.

Born June 8, 1927, in Cedar Glades, she was the youngest of three children to Clarence Caldwell and Ellie Pitts Caldwell. She was a minister's wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She also taught elementary school in the public school systems at Taylor, El Dorado, Hampton, Camden and Norphlet. In her retirement, she served many years as a volunteer at Medical Center of South Arkansas. Her greatest earthly treasure was her family.



Lola Ford

She was preceded in death by her parents; one sister, Elsie Williams of Pekin, Ill.; and one brother, Elster Caldwell of Ada, Okla. She is survived by the Rev. James Ford, her husband of 67 years; three daughters and sons-in-law, Karen and Ricky Evans of Calion, Linda and Cecil Polk of Norphlet and Diane and Denny Barrett of Searcy, Ark.; six grandchildren: Schelley Covas and her husband, José; Bud Evans and his wife, Terri; and Brandon Polk and his wife, Kerri; Chris Polk and his wife, Melissa; Raegan Jordan and her husband, Brent; and Rane Barrett; 12 great-grandchildren: Caylie Covas, Evans Covas, Tripp Evans, Tucker Evans, Creighton Polk, Haynes Polk, Mathis Polk, J.T. Polk, Mitchell Polk, Ryan Polk, Barrett Jordan and Ryleigh Jordan; several nieces and nephews; many friends; and the loving staff at Timberlane Health and Rehabilitation.

The Rev. Zach Roberts officiated at the celebration of her life held on March 21 at Norphlet United Methodist Church, where she was a longtime member. Interment followed in Rest Haven Memorial Gardens. Grandsons and great-grandsons served as pallbearers. Memorials may be made to Norphlet United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 28, Norphlet, AR 71759 or John R. Williamson Hospice House, 2301 Champagnolle Rd., El Dorado, AR 71730.

NORTH LITTLE ROCK**Shirley Burleson**

Shirley Simpson Burleson, 81, of North Little Rock, passed away Saturday, Feb. 25, 2012, after a lengthy battle with Parkinson's disease.

She was born Oct. 26, 1930, to Melvin and Rose Simpson. She graduated from Little Rock High School and attended Little Rock Junior College and Hendrix College.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her sister, Betty Simpson Pierce; a daughter, Lucy Horton; and a son-in-law, Richard Hall. She is survived by her husband, the Rev. Clint Burleson; a daughter, Katie Hall, of Union City, Tenn.; a son, David Burleson, and his wife, Angela; a son-in-law, Terry Horton; and nine grandchildren: Amanda Addison, Stephanie Hall, Andrew Hall, Matthew Horton, Amber Horton, Lindsey Horton, Alyssa Burleson, Lexie Burleson and Leah Burleson.

She was a member of Lakewood UMC North Little Rock and the George Martin Sunday School Class. A consummate preacher's wife, she was involved in churches across Arkansas throughout her life. As she endured the early stages of Parkinson's, she served as a leader of the disabilities support group at the Oasis Renewal Center. In recent years, she enjoyed making crafts and giving these "serendipities" to friends and acquaintances.

A memorial service was held at Lakewood UMC on Wednesday, Feb. 29.



Shirley Burleson



Shoal Creek Camp benefits from Eagle Scout's project

A young member of City Heights UMC Van Buren on March 17 saw his Eagle Scout project come to fruition at United Methodist-related Shoal Creek Camp.

Clarke Henson (right), who is part of Heritage UMC-sponsored Boy Scout Troop 45, coordinated a total of 23 volunteers to build a set of steps out of railroad ties, complete with a handrail. The steps provide an easier path from the dining hall to the upper field, which is home to the camp's outdoor cross.

Located in New Blaine, Ark., Shoal Creek Camp receives support from the West District of the Arkansas Conference.

COURTESY PHOTOS



Siloam Springs youth sew for residents of Uganda orphanage



Conner Bedor of First UMC Siloam Springs works on a sewing project for a resident of Ekisa orphanage in Uganda.

PHOTOS BY MANVILLE MICHAEL

Youth of First UMC Siloam Springs on March 4 sewed more than 15 dresses and shorts for the Ekisa orphanage in Uganda (ekisa.org), which serves children with special needs.

Erica Hill, a member of First UMC Siloam Springs, will make her second trip to Uganda in May, and will deliver garments personally to all of the children at the orphanage. Each Siloam Springs youth was assigned a specific child that would receive the result of their sewing project. They also agreed to pray for their assigned child.

An area sewing shop, B Sew Inn, provided sewing machines for the sixth- through 12th-graders to use for the evening.

"This was a Sunday evening youth event at the church, and has sparked so much interest from the

kids, it will return as a regular event," says Jennifer Haight, the church's minister to children and youth. "They will sew pillowcases for Honduras and bags for Ingathering at upcoming events."



Phyllis Homeyer, right, gives instructions to Siloam Springs youth taking part in a March 4 sewing project. The clothing produced that evening will be delivered in May to residents of Ekisa orphanage in Uganda.

Will you speak up for me?

Every 60 seconds,
malaria claims a life
in Africa.

Children in Africa
need your voice.

Text **SWAT** to **27722**
Join the movement
to save lives.



IMAGINE NO
Our Faith In Action.
MALARIA

The people of The United Methodist Church

ImagineNoMalaria.org



Faith Funds

Provide and Protect

Amanda and Joey Scott, both 31, were among the youngest to attend a United Methodist Foundation Provide and Protect Seminar at their church, Pulaski Heights United Methodist in Little Rock.

"We wanted to learn more about estate planning to provide for our children, Ella Kate and Anna Claire," said Amanda. "And I wanted to get information for my parents who own a family business and don't have an up-to-date will," added Joey, an instructor at Arkansas State University in Beebe.

After attending the seminar, the Scotts talked about leaving a portion of their estate to the Church, something they had not considered before. "We don't have a big estate now, but in 20 or 30 years we could be in a position to leave a gift through the Foundation," Amanda said.

They also explored the Online Wills Planner at www.umfa.org after the seminar. "How easy!" said Amanda. "I answered all the questions in about 15 minutes, and then forwarded the PDF and login info to Joey so he could make it more complete." After gathering information using the Online Wills Planner, the Scotts plan to send the document to an attorney to draw up their will.

If you'd like to schedule a Provide and Protect Seminar for your local church, contact UMFA Vice President of Development Janet Marshall at jmarshall@umfa.org or call her at the Foundation.



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

5300 Evergreen Drive • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

501-664-8632 • Toll free 877-712-1107 • Fax 501-664-6792 • www.umfa.org

THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER

umportal.org

The independent source for news, features and commentary about the United Methodist Church



Deepening disciples

'Academy' still making difference in lives | 4B



Mourning a daughter

Scholar finds good grief begins with good God | 6B



Reflections

Easter is time to proclaim faith, not argue for it | 7B

Section B

April 6, 2012

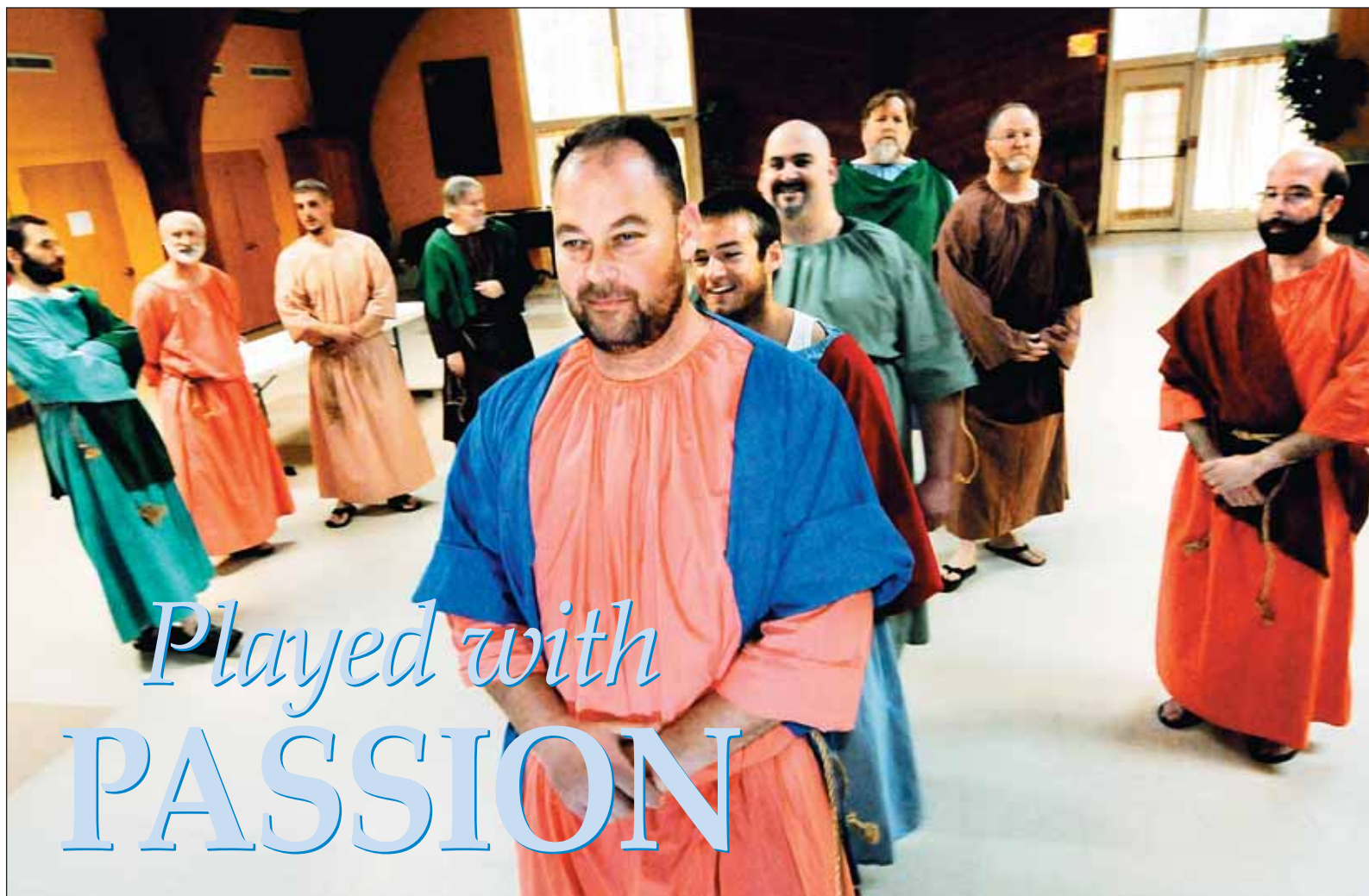


PHOTO COURTESY OF CINDY SCHULTZ/TIMES UNION

Simon Peter, played by Rich Shellenback (center), and others portraying Jesus and the rest of the disciples prepare to re-enact the Last Supper in 2011 at Shenendehowa United Methodist Church in Clifton Park, N.Y.

Living Last Suppers bring Easter message to life

BY MARY JACOBS
Staff Writer

In 2007, Tim Saporito attended a "living Last Supper" at his church, First United Methodist in Irwin, Pa. The dramatic and musical portrayal of Jesus' final Passover meal recreated the scene as Leonardo da Vinci interpreted it in his 1494 painting.

"I was dazzled," he recalled. "I thought, 'This is one of the coolest things I've ever seen.'"

The next year, the church member who played Bartholomew fell ill.

"I work construction, and my hair had grown long and I had a beard, so I thought, 'Maybe I should do this,'" Mr. Saporito said. Checking da Vinci's painting, he discovered that he was a

dead ringer for Bartholomew. So he joined the cast, used his iPod to memorize lines, and was hooked.

This Maundy Thursday, Mr. Saporito portrays Bartholomew for the fifth time. And the next day, as he has for the past five years, he'll head to the barber and get a crew cut.

Moving moments

For many United Methodist churches, the living Last Supper has become a treasured tradition on the Holy Week calendar. For those who act in the presentation, like Mr. Saporito, it's a meaningful spiritual and personal ritual.

Typically, the programs open with a tableau, "freezing" the cast members posed at a long table, to resemble the

da Vinci painting. The disciples deliver a series of brief monologues, interspersed with hymns. At many churches, the program concludes with Holy Communion. Because Jesus announced "One of you will betray me" at the Last Supper, betrayal and forgiveness are central themes of the play.

"Each disciple questions himself: 'Is it I?'" said Bruce Wiancko, who plays Philip at First UMC Irwin.

Many United Methodist churches repeat the living Last Supper year after year, often with the same cast members. Some churches have taken the show "on the road" to retirement homes, prisons and other churches.

"It's a powerful witness," said John Hall, who directs the living Last Sup-

per at St. Luke's UMC in Hickory, N.C., now in its 30th year.

Methodist origins

There are at least two versions of the living Last Supper, and both have United Methodist origins.

The earlier of the two, *The Living Dramatization of Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper*, by the late Rev. Ernest K. Emurian, debuted at Elm Street United Methodist Church in Portsmouth, Va., on Palm Sunday in 1954. Virginia Lee Dodge is historian of Cherrydale United Methodist in Arlington, Va., where Emurian served as pastor for 19 years until his retirement in 1981. She notes that Emurian, a well-known hymnologist, would have

■ See 'Plays' page 8B

Push on for major changes

BY SAM HODGES
Managing Editor

Call it pushback to the pushback. With General Conference looming, backers of the first and most aggressive restructuring plan for general agencies of the UMC have mounted an online petition drive. They want to show that, despite noisy opposition and the emergence of alternative proposals, they have broad support from across the denomination.

In under a week, some 1,400 people—clergy and laity—had signed on as favoring the plan crafted by the Connectional Table and Call to Action Interim Operations Team, which would consolidate nine general church agencies under a single Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry, run by a 15-person board and executive director.

The Rev. Adam Hamilton, an Interim Operations Team (IOT) member, wrote the letter asking for signatures (www.ipetitions.com/petition/openlettertoconference/) and has led an effort to spread the word about it through email blasts and social media.

"There has been so much pushback from some at the general boards that it was beginning to sound like everyone but the bishops was opposed to the Connectional Table proposals," he said. "I didn't think this accurately captured the sense I was getting from many people."

Mr. Hamilton described himself as "thrilled" with the number and diversity of signees.

"You've got people on the left and people on the right and a whole lot of moderates," he said.

Mr. Hamilton, a best-selling author and pastor of the 16,000-member Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., said that pastors from about 90 of the 100 largest UMC

■ See 'Petition' page 2B

FAITH WATCH

Turkey gets 'listed' in unflattering way

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has added Turkey to its list of "countries of particular concern." But four of nine commissioners voted against putting Turkey on the list, and a fifth is second-guessing his vote, Religion News Service reported. Turkish officials sharply criticized the decision, but Greek Orthodox Americans applauded it, citing restrictions against the practice of their faith in Turkey.

Vatican ends probe of Irish church

The Vatican's year-long probe into clergy abuse in Ireland has ended with a call for tougher screening of priests-in-training and mandatory child protection classes in seminary, Religion News Service reported. The Irish government's tough reports on past child abuse in Catholic institutions were followed by Pope Benedict XVI's ordering of an "Apostolic Visitation," involving a team of church investigators.

England bucks church on same-sex marriage

Despite opposition from Catholics and some Anglicans, the British government has set into motion a process expected to end in the legalization of same-sex marriage in England and Wales. A 12-week "consultation" is underway, and support for gay marriage has come from the coalition government led by Prime Minister David Cameron and his deputy, Nick Clegg, as well as from the New Labour Party.

Lingering recession limits church giving

Lingering effects of the recession could be seen in lighter offering plates during 2010, according to an Associated Baptist Press report on the National Council of Churches' 2012 Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches. Statistics collected last year for 2010 showed that roughly 45 million U.S. church members contributed \$29 billion, but that was \$1.2 billion less than the previous year. Membership of mainline denominations continued to decline.

—Compiled by Sam Hodges

■ PETITION Continued from page 1B

churches in the United States had signed the petition.

He believes their endorsement may have weight with delegates to General Conference, which meets in Tampa, Fla., April 24 to May 4.

"Many of these pastors have managed to buck the trend in the United Methodist Church by growing a church when the denomination has declined," he said.

One leading critic of the Connectional Table/Interim Operations Team (CT/IOT) approach sounded unperturbed by the petition drive.

"We welcome everyone looking seriously at all of the alternatives and making determinations as to which plan they feel is best for the church," said Joe Whittemore, a six-time General Conference delegate from North Georgia who helped craft Plan B, an alternative to CT/IOT.

The Rev. Steve Clunn, coalition coordinator for the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA), which has its own alternative restructuring plan (www.mfsagc12.org) said the UMC should be grateful to those on the Connectional Table and Interim Operations Team for pushing for change.

But he took issue with the petition drive, which is drawing signatures from General Conference delegates as well as others in the church.

"While individuals have the right to recognize their belief in a need for change, as some delegates have done, to wholly endorse one proposal as the best way to effect change before the process of 'holy conferencing' has begun is problematic," he said.

Pointed objections

General Conference is the quadrennial gathering in which nearly 1,000 clergy and lay delegates decide matters of denominational law and policy, as well as set a general church budget.



Steve Clunn

The lead-up to this General Conference has been dominated not by debate about homosexuality or other social issues, but by efforts to restructure general church agencies, given decades of numerical decline in the UMC in the United States, as well as a shrinking financial base.

Criticism of the Connectional Table/IOT plan began months ago, with ethnic caucuses raising concerns about whether a 15-person board—to be overseen by a 45-member advisory panel—could reflect the diversity of the UMC. MFSA also weighed in early with that and other objections, and offered a less dramatic proposal for agency consolidation.

More recently, the board of the General Council for Finance and Administration warned that the CT/IOT approach could jeopardize objective financial decision-making and also risks legal problems. Leaders of the General Board of Discipleship said that the agency's work would be undercut by the CT/IOT plan for consolidation, especially if combined with budget cuts.

Meanwhile, Mr. Whittemore and others unhappy with the CT/IOT plan have come out with Plan B, yet another compromise restructuring plan. The Plan B website (umcplanb.org) offers various reasons to oppose CT/IOT, including that it would shift power to the Council of Bishops.

The Council of Bishops offered near-unanimous support for aggressive reform in an open letter titled "For the Sake of a New World, We See a New Church." But even some of the bishops have lately weighed in with concerns about the CT/IOT plan.

'Piece of puzzle'

Mr. Hamilton ascribed some of the resistance to fear of change. He noted that his church went through a staff restructuring a decade ago.

"It was scary for all of us," he said. "But when we were finished, two years later, the morale was higher than it had ever been."

Mr. Hamilton said consolidating



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY HEATHER HAHN

The Rev. Adam Hamilton (left), senior pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., speaks with Neil Alexander, president and publisher of the United Methodist Publishing House, before an update on the Call to Action effort.

agencies under a small board, led by an executive director, will increase the efficiency of the general church.

But he added that he's heard the concerns about diversity and would be open to having 15- to 20-member support teams for each of the five offices that the CT/IOT plan has grouped under the Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry.

He could even see that center with a 60-member board, provided it had a 15-member executive committee.

"That, I think, would be fine," he said.

But he said there has to be an end to the status quo of numerous agencies with large boards.

"What I don't think is helpful is when you have 500 board members flying in twice a year, using apportionment money to listen and give their opinions and fly back home," he said.

Some critics of the CT/IOT plan say they see no clear connection between it and the larger goal of a 10-year emphasis on bolstering the UMC's number of vital congregations.

Mr. Hamilton said that aggressive restructuring will better position the general church to help with that goal, but added that he's more excited about another proposal—investing \$50 million to recruit and train talented young clergy. "Restructuring the

church is not the answer to creating more vital congregations," he said. "It's one piece of the puzzle."

Mr. Hamilton brushed back criticism that the CT/IOT plan shifts power to the bishops, including by creating a full-time president of the Council of Bishops.

"We need the Council of Bishops to function more effectively at collaborating on strategies in annual conferences that produce more vital congregations," he said. "It makes sense to me that we need a real president for the Council of Bishops. The current role of president is a very part-time position that is ineffective. I have zero concern that the president will become a 'pope' of the United Methodist Church."

Mr. Hamilton said he's encouraged that, while opinions on how to reform the UMC differ, there seems to be near unanimity that major change is needed.

Several General Conference delegations have issued statements to that effect, and on March 24, the Arkansas Conference delegation joined them.

"We know that no one can predict with confidence the full impact of any of the proposed changes but we also believe that if we do nothing or only make minor changes our beloved Church will continue to decline," the delegates said.

shodges@umr.org

THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER

www.umportal.org

news@umr.org

Alan Heath, CEO

Sam Hodges, Managing Editor

Bill Fentum, Associate Editor

Mary Jacobs, Staff Writer

Cherrie Graham, Advertising Manager

Dale Bryant, Senior Designer

THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER (USPS954-500) is published weekly by UMR Communications Inc., 1221 Profit Drive, Dallas, Texas 75247-3919. Periodicals postage paid at Dallas, Texas and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER, PO Box 660275, Dallas Texas 75266-0275.

THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER has provided denominational news coverage since its beginning as the Texas Methodist newspaper in 1847. The Reporter has no official ties to the United Methodist General Conference or to any of the denomination's general boards or agencies. This newspaper aims to provide readers with a broad spectrum of information and viewpoints consistent with the diversity of Christians.

All material published in this newspaper is copyrighted by UMR Communications Inc. unless otherwise noted. Reprint of material from this newspaper must be authorized in advance by the Editor, and fees are assessed in some cases. To request reprints, e-mail news@umr.org, or fax a request to (214) 630-0079. Telephone requests are not accepted.

Send Correspondence and Address Changes (include mailing label) To: P.O. Box 660275, Dallas, TX 75266-0275 Telephone: (214) 630-6495. Subscriptions are \$26 for 52 issues per year. Click on "subscriptions" at www.umportal.org, e-mail circulation@umr.org or send a check to UMR Communications, Attn: Circulation, 1221 Profit Dr., Dallas, TX 75247.



CHOIR ROBES
EXPERT TAILORING **\$35⁹⁵** & UP

Finest fabrics including permanent press and wash & wear. Superior quality. Free color catalog and fabric swatches on request.

GUARANTEED SATISFACTION
Call Toll Free: 1-800-826-8612

REGENCY
CAP & GOWN CO.
www.regown.com

P.O. Box 8988-T Jacksonville, FL 32211

Correction

Due to an editing error, the note at the end of the March 30 Reporter column by the Rev. Suzanne Wenonah Duchesne incorrectly said she has a Ph.D. She is studying for that degree at Drew Theological School.

Former bishop, missions leader dies at 66

UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

The Rev. Edward W. Paup, a former United Methodist bishop and top executive of the denomination's mission agency, died March 21 at age 66 after a long battle with a brain tumor.

He served as bishop of the Portland (Ore.) Area from 1996 to 2004 and bishop of the Seattle Area until 2008, when he resigned from the episcopacy to become the top staff executive of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries.

He served only a year as the mission agency's general secretary before resigning from the position in September 2009 because of health concerns.

Paup was ordained a deacon in the Western Pennsylvania Conference in 1968. He transferred to the Rocky Mountain Conference a year later, where he was ordained an elder in 1970, the year in which he also earned a Master of Divinity degree from Iliff School of Theology in Denver.

He served as a pastor in Colorado in 1970-89; was superintendent of the Utah/Western District in 1989-93 and was assistant to the bishop in 1993-96 before his own election as bishop in 1996. He was a general and jurisdictional conference delegate in 1988, 1992 and 1996.

Paup served on the General Council on Ministries in 1996-2004 and was its president in 2000-04. He was a member of the World Methodist Council Executive Committee in 1996-2001 and served on the United Methodist Commission on Communication in 1992-96. Prior to being elected to lead the Board of Global Ministries, Paup became a global director in 2004 and was president of the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

From 1996 to 2004, he was a board member at Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage, Alaska; Willamette University in Salem, Ore., and the Northwest House of Theological Studies in Salem. He also served on the board of trustees of the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Wash.

Paup is survived by his wife, Carol; three daughters and five grandchildren. He will be cremated, and no services are planned at this time, according to the family.



Edward Paup

Bishops' children recall times of change

BY J. RICHARD PECK
Special Contributor

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Fifteen-year-old Mary Brooke Oliphint was sitting in the congregation during a June 1971 ceremony that united the Anglo-American Louisiana Conference with the African American Louisiana Conference.

Eleven-year old Stephen Handy was home, but his mother attended the ceremony that celebrated the merger of what was then called Conference A with Conference B. The ceremony followed the 1968 uniting conference of the United Methodist Church that formally disbanded the racially constituted Central Jurisdiction.

Stephen's father, the Rev. W.T. Handy, was director of personnel services at the United Methodist Publishing House and chairman of the Louisiana Conference Board of Ministry for Conference B. He was the first African American executive for the Nashville-based publishing agency.

The Rev. Benjamin Oliphint was pastor of University United Methodist Church in Baton Rouge for Conference A and a member of the board of directors for the Methodist Board of Education.

The two men represented clergy of the two annual conferences during the worship service at Centenary College in Shreveport, La.

Nine years later Mary Brooke and Stephen were in the congregation

when their fathers were both consecrated bishops during the 1980 session of the South Central Jurisdictional Conference. At that time, W.T. Handy, 56, was serving as a superintendent in the Louisiana Conference and Ben Oliphint, 56, had transferred to the North Texas Conference where he was serving as pastor of First United Methodist Church in Dallas.

Busy bishops

After his consecration, Bishop Oliphint led United Methodists in the denomination's Houston, Kansas and Louisiana areas during the following 12 years.

He was also instrumental in helping start Africa University, the United Methodist-related school in Zimbabwe. After retiring from the episcopacy in 1992, Bishop Oliphint co-chaired a task group that developed the Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development. He died in 2007.

Bishop Handy served the Missouri Area, and returned to the publishing house where he served as chaplain after his retirement from the episcopacy in 1992. On behalf of the Council of Bishops, Bishop Handy helped develop "In Defense of Creation," a churchwide initiative on nuclear disarmament, launched in 1986, and he served on a committee that developed a new *United Methodist Hymnal*, released in 1989. He died in 1998.

Adult children reunited

The adult children of the two bishops were reunited during a March meeting of the Connectional Table in Nashville.

Mary Brooke (Oliphint) Casad is



The Rev. Stephen Handy and Mary Brooke (Oliphint) Casad renew their families' friendship during a March meeting of the Connectional Table in Nashville.

PHOTO COURTESY RICH PECK

the executive secretary of the Connectional Table, and the Rev. Stephen Handy, pastor of 125-year-old McKendree United Methodist Church in downtown Nashville, was invited to preach at a worship service for the 63-member coordinating body.

During the service, Mr. Handy told how church attendance at McKendree had declined from the 1980s to the early 2000s. Ninety-five percent of the 200-member congregation were upper middle class Anglo-Americans.

When Mr. Handy was appointed pastor in 2009, demographics of the faith community began to change. In 2012, 65 percent are Anglo, 30 percent are African American and 5 percent are from other ethnic groups.

"We are a multi-generational and multi-cultural congregation on purpose," said Mr. Handy. "We have part-

nered with the Metropolitan Homelessness Commission and with the Veteran's Administration to help eliminate homelessness in downtown Nashville where there are 4,000 displaced people every night."

Following the service, Ms. Casad and Mr. Handy hugged one another and recalled the shared histories.

"Hearing Stephen preach was incredibly moving for me as I recalled our families' long friendship," said Ms. Casad.

"God continues to offer an invitation for all people to form the beloved community where difference/diversity is embraced and celebrated, grace is extended, love is shared, and ultimately, God is glorified," said Mr. Handy. "My prayer is for the United Methodist Church to live deeper and more intentional into being 'United' as part of the body of Jesus Christ."

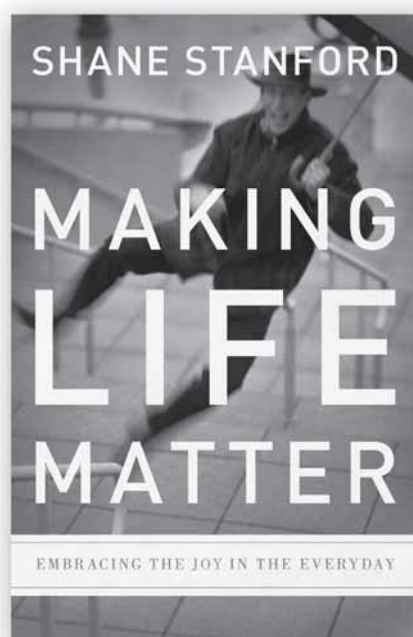
The Rev. Peck is a retired clergy member of the New York Conference and worked with Bishop Handy when both were employees of the United Methodist Publishing House.



Bishop Ben Oliphint



Bishop W.T. Handy



Abingdon Press

DEFINE YOUR JOURNEY

In a world of fast-paced schedules and priorities, conversations about what makes for a life well lived are a rarity and a luxury. But what if the daily pace of life held in itself the way to make choices more significant?

In *Making Life Matter*, Shane Stanford will confront the way in which God, every day, means for us to live deeper, closer, and better in him—in essence, the way God intends for life to matter.

MAKING LIFE MATTER

EMBRACING THE JOY IN THE EVERYDAY

Academy of Spiritual Formation still offers life-changing retreats

BY JOAN G. LA BARR
Special Contributor

In 2013 The Academy for Spiritual Formation will mark 30 years of nurturing laity and clergy in the experiences of disciplined Christian community.

The Academy, a program ministry of The Upper Room, the ecumenical Division of the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, began as a dream of longtime GBOD staff member, the Rev. Danny Morris. In the midst of ever-changing programming trends, Dr. Morris believed there was a place for the daily rhythms of the classical spiritual disciplines.

The Academy launched in 1983 following five years of research and preparation led by Dr. Morris, Bishop Rueben Job, who was then *Upper Room* publisher, and Episcopalian theologian John Mogabgab.

After almost 30 years, The Academy continues to attract a strong ecumenical following. More than 1,400 laity and clergy have completed the program, which meets at a retreat center for eight sessions over the two-year period. Another 8,000 people have participated in short-term adaptations, including the popular regional Five-Day Academies.

Many regard the experience as life-changing. One of these is the present Academy Director, Johnny Sears.

He first encountered The Academy as a part-time youth pastor in a Baptist church. As a young layperson with a background in engineering, Mr. Sears was struggling with God's call and his own future. He enrolled in seminary, but felt something was missing in his search for a deeper and more authentic faith and spirituality.

"I discovered spiritual formation, through providence, I suppose," Mr. Sears said. "It was all new language to me."

One of Mr. Sears' mentors was Baptist historian and ecumenist E. Glenn Hinson, who had been involved with The Academy from the beginning and encouraged him to enroll. The holistic approach proved to be more of what Mr. Sears sought.

He dropped out of seminary and committed himself to the two-year experience as a path to clarity about his vocational calling.

"By the time I completed The Academy, I knew my call was as a layperson," Mr. Sears said.

He continued working at his secular job while becoming more and more involved in the life of The Academy and Upper Room Ministries. When the former director, the Rev. Jerry Haas, was preparing to move to a new position in GBOD, he suggested Mr. Sears apply for the director's position.

Mr. Sears acknowledged that he was surprised at the idea, but after consulting with his wife, he applied.

"It's all been a grace-filled journey of being opened and connected with people who saw something in me, encouraged me, and challenged me. I never planned on being in this position, but I love doing it. I believe in what this ministry represents and what it is doing and will do," he said.



Johnny Sears



PHOTO BY CATHY THACKER

The labyrinth at the Life Enrichment Center in Leesburg, Fla., offers a place for serenity and meditation. The Center is the site of Academy 32, the Spanish-English bilingual experience.

Mr. Haas, who followed Dr. Morris as director, served in that capacity for 12 years and continues to promote Academy work as part of his present responsibilities. He was at a regional gathering of Academy graduates in the Dallas area on Feb. 9. In his remarks, Mr. Haas referenced The Academy logo, based on 2 Kings, chapter 2 in which the mantle of God's spirit passes from Elijah to Elisha.

"Passing the mantle doesn't happen quickly . . . Many things can keep us from being present to the Holy in our lives," he said.

He lifted up what he termed simple spiritual practices learned at The Academy which offer the holy space for God to be at work in individual lives in a very personal way.

Mr. Haas also is an Academy graduate. He described himself as a clergyperson who came out of the Presbyterian tradition, then became United Methodist, who was successful, but felt exhausted and at times, unable to pray.

"Experiencing the joy of being in prayer, in a community of prayer, and falling in love with God was a totally different experience for me," he told the Dallas group.

Positive difference

One of the most lauded aspects of The Academy is the way in which laity and clergy participate on an equal plane and learn to become more open, trusting and appreciative of each other. In

2003 a Lilly Foundation grant allowed an exhaustive study by Doble Research Associates on the impact of The Academy on clergy participants and led to a program called "Companions in Ministry" for clergypersons. A remarkable 91 percent of the pastors responding indicated that the experience had been an extremely valuable part of their lives.

"We received data that support our claims that participation in The Academy makes a positive difference for clergy," Mr. Sears said.

Faculty members are key elements to The Academy's success. Mr. Sears indicated faculty are selected based on knowledge, credibility, use of inclusive language, capacity to serve as spiritual guides to the participants, ability to function as part of the team, and commitment to compassion and justice. Many are well-known names in the field of spiritual formation and have a long history of Academy participation.

Mr. Sears added that participants come from all walks of life and a wide variety of denominations. In a typical two-year experience, one-third to one-half of the group is clergy. Laypersons have included a wide range of professions, from physicians to musicians, from lawyers to film producers, with a number of retired persons and men and women whose work life is in the home.

Participants are immersed in Scripture and serious devotional and theological reading, including Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant

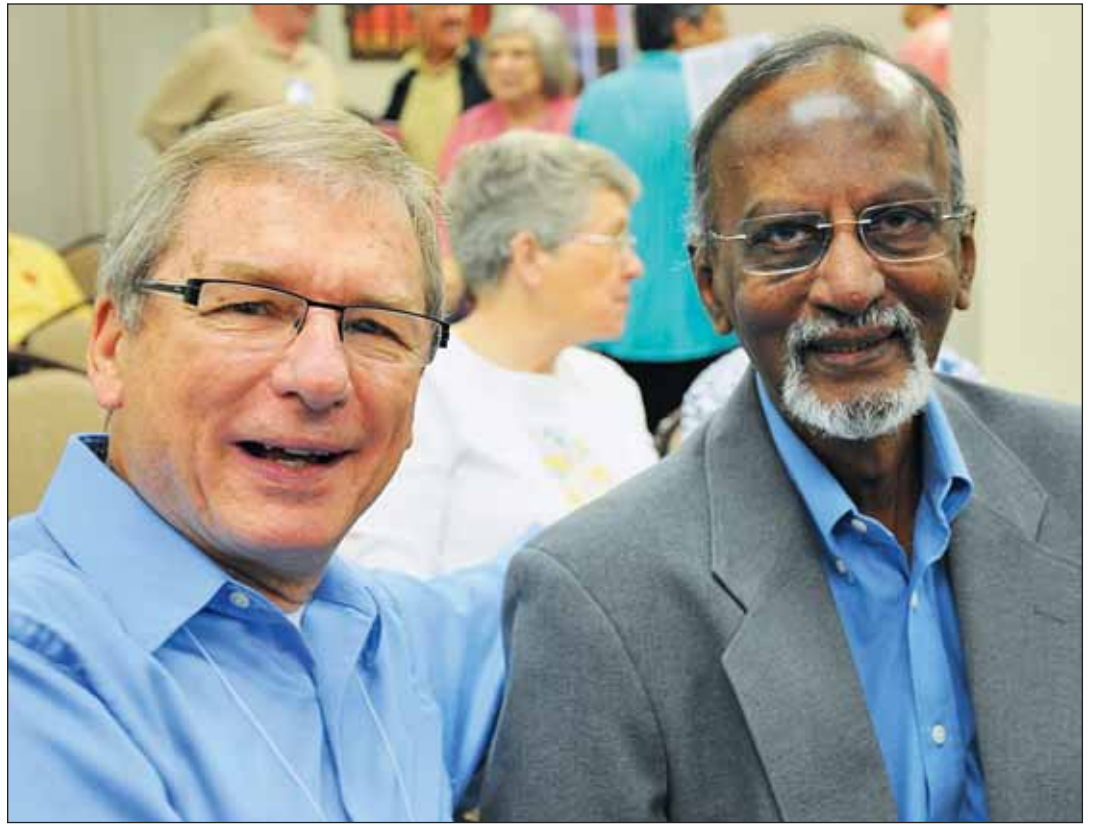
and Spirituality in a Global Context. Each day includes a time for silence and solitude and for worship, prayer and reflection.

Academy sessions are held at the same retreat center throughout the experience. Current and future scheduled two-year programs (numbered 31-35) are in Texas, Florida, Indiana, Alabama, California and back to Texas. Academy #32, begun in July 2011 in Florida, is Spanish/English bilingual. The short-term Academy experiences are also offered in Spanish in Florida and Puerto Rico, and in Korean in the United States and Korea.

Escalating costs, particularly for retreat centers, are a challenge. There is some scholarship aid available. Dealing with costs and other barriers to accessibility are important factors in Academy leaders' vision for the future, which is to enable participants to incarnate the Christian spiritual life effectively in the multi-cultural, interfaith world of the 21st century for the transformation of the church.

Individuals interested in further information or in participating in an Academy experience can obtain a 20-page prospectus, including an application, on the website www.upperroom.org/academy, or email academy@upperroom.com.

The Rev. La Barr is the former director of communications for the North Texas Conference.



PHOTOS BY DAR BERKENPAS

LEFT: The Rev. Victor Perez pours wine for the Eucharist. Dr. Perez, former spiritual director for the Upper Room's Walk to Emmaus program, is retreat leader for Academy Number 32, the first Spanish-English bilingual academy. RIGHT: The Rev. Don Saliers, left, and the Rev. Thomas Thangaraj are both retired professors from Candler School of Theology, Emory University, who serve as Academy faculty.



PHOTO BY LUCY WRAY

ABOVE: The Rev. Tercio Junker (center), Academy 32 Liturgy and Spirituality teacher, along with team member the Rev. Cathy Thacker (left) and participant the Rev. Lydia Munoz, enjoy the rhythm of the drums. RIGHT: The Rev. Jerry Hass, who served 12 years as director of the Academy, addresses a gathering of graduates at Lovers Lane UMC in Dallas.



PHOTO BY JOAN G. LA BARR

Academy responds to deep need

The Academy for Spiritual Formation offers the full Upper Room experience—prayer, worship, deep community, Sabbath. It's the one place in the church that I'm aware of where both clergy and laity can come together as spiritual companions for an extended time. The participants share a common need for engaging in intellectual discussion and spiritual disciplines while living in a covenant community. It is a formative and academic experience that is hard to



Sarah Wilke

find in the Protestant tradition, including in our seminaries.

Regardless of whether we are clergy or lay, everyone needs time apart for spiritual retreat and renewal. A weekend away, now and then, can be helpful but it cannot provide us with the spiritual wellbeing needed to lead and serve well in our vocations. The 30-year success of the Academy is a result of people recognizing and addressing this deep need for prayer, study, structure and community.

Sarah Wilke
General Board of Discipleship
Associate General Secretary/
Publisher, *Upper Room*



PHOTO BY JOAN G. LA BARR

Academy graduate Debi Moses, who helped organize the February gathering of Academy graduates in Dallas, addresses the group at Lovers Lane UMC.

Robert's Rules of Order aren't best guide for GC

BY JAMES HOWELL
Special Contributor

We Methodists are about to head to Tampa for our big quadrennial denominational meeting called General Conference. Like some beached whale, our church struggles to survive, and the underbelly frankly isn't very pretty. I like to be hopeful that the creature can live, but worry that the way we do what we do at such meetings is an unacknowledged hindrance to healthy change.

The ruin of not just General Conference but also the larger church will be the not-so-sacred procedure we unthinkingly use to decide things: Robert's Rules of Order. When the faithful disagree, as fallen, imperfect Christians do inevitably, the advantage goes—always—to the one who is the master of the rules more than to someone who might have some



James Howell

wisdom or humble insight on their side, but isn't swift to the microphone or doesn't grasp a "substitute to the amendment."

Robert's Rules fuel the unholy viewpoint that we have—and should have!—"sides." Worst of all, Robert's Rules seduce us toward a vote, where majority "wins," and it's winner-take-all. On an issue, the vote might be 51 percent-49 percent, but the "official" outcome is just one, unhedged thing. Winner-takes-all . . . and then we have "losers." A political democracy works precisely this way with strategizing, clever plotting and fist-pumping victories.

But we are the Body of Christ, where we don't have winners and losers, but members. According to Paul, the most valued member of the Body isn't the big winner who is crafty in procedure; in fact, Paul would dismiss such bunk as the world invading God's church. The priority goes to the weakest member. What majority vote would Jesus ever have won?

We may choose to speak of "holy conferencing," but I suspect this is a cloak thrown over what our proce-

dures fosters and even requires of us: Just get the votes for my biased version of how I think church should be. Such a church will never be a true Body with differing members that embrace, appreciate and even honor the small.

Quakers know how to "discern" quietly, listening for the movement of the Spirit, refusing to vote in some fractional majority that will create wounded losers. In Tampa, stuck as we might be with Robert and his rules (how would we vote him out—by nimble pluck and majority vote?), can we pray for holier minds and shun any who dare to maneuver? Or call up to the stage a handful of the losers, hug them and share with them leadership in the new, victorious petition?

The Rev. Howell is senior pastor of Myers Park United Methodist Church in Charlotte, N.C. His latest book is *What Does the Lord Require?: Doing Justice, Loving Kindness, Walking Humbly* (Westminster John Knox Press). This essay earlier appeared on Duke Divinity School's Faith & Leadership website (www.faithandleadership.com).

When a Daughter Dies: Our experience of grief begins with a good God

BY BEN WITHERINGTON III
Special Contributor

Having recently gone through the devastating experience of having our beautiful 32-year-old daughter die, completely unexpectedly, of a pulmonary embolism, I was determined from Day One (Jan. 11, when she was found dead in her home in Durham, N.C.) to be open to whatever positive thing there might be to glean from this. I cling by my fingernails to the promise of Romans 8:28 that "God works all things together for good for those who love him. . . ."

The first point that was immediately confirmed in my heart was theological: God did not do this to my baby. God is not the author of evil. God does not terminate sweet children's lives with pulmonary embolisms. Pulmonary embolisms are a result of human fallenness and the bent nature of this world.

One of the primary reasons I am not a Calvinist and do not believe in such predestinings from the hand of God is (1) because I find it impossible to believe that I am more merciful or compassionate than God. Also, (2) the biblical portrait of God is that God is pure light and holy love; in him there is no darkness, nothing other than light and love. (3) The words "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away," from the lips of Job, are not good theology. They're bad theology. According to Job 1, it was not God, but the Devil who took away Job's children, health and wealth. God allowed it to happen, but when Job said these words, as the rest of the story shows, he was not yet enlightened about the true nature of where his calamity came from and what God's will actually was for his life—which was for good, and not for harm.

So, for me, the beginning of good grief starts with the premise of a good

God. Otherwise, all bets are off. If God is almighty and malevolent, then there is no solace to be found in God. If God is the author of sin, evil, suffering, the fall and death, then the Bible makes no sense when it tells us that (1) God tempts no one, that (2) God's will is that none should perish but have everlasting life, and that (3) death is the very enemy of God and humankind that Jesus, who is life, came to abolish and destroy.

"He came that we might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). If there are promises I cling to, as I weep for my sweet Christy, it is this promise, not the sorry solace and cold comfort of "God did this but we do not know why." No. A thousand times, no! God and his will are always and only for what is good, and true, and beautiful, and loving and holy.

As I stared at my baby in the casket—who did not even resemble her-

self at that juncture—I was so thankful that the God of the resurrection had a better plan for her than that cold comfort that "It's all God's will."

I believe in a God whose Yes to life is louder than death's No—not because God likes to hold antinomies like life and death together in some sort of mysterious unity, but because God is

in the trenches with us, fighting the very same evils we fight in this world, like disease, decay, death, suffering, sorrow and sin.

They don't call him the Great Physician for nothing. He, too, took the Hippocratic Oath: "Do no harm."

This essay by Dr. Witherington, professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, appeared as the first in a series on his blog, patheos.com/blogs/bibleandculture.

When a Daughter Dies is a journal of grief by Dr. Witherington, with his wife Ann, just published as an ebook by Christianity Today. CT Senior Managing Editor Mark Galli says: "They write poignantly about their daughter Christy's untimely death. It makes for a very human and theological reflection grounded in hope in Christ." More information can be found at www.CTeBooks.com.



Ben Witherington



LETTERS

UMC should take lead on tolerance

I feel compelled to comment on the article by William McElvaney (March 2 *Reporter*) concerning the church's stance toward homosexuality.

The UM Social Principles are quoted as saying that "the United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." As a child of a Jewish mother in Nazi Germany, I know something about prejudice and exclusiveness. Within weeks of coming to power, the Nazis were operating their first concentration camp at Dachau, rounding up homosexuals, gypsies/Roma, mentally handicapped and clergy. Of these, only the clergy could change their so-called orientation to gain their freedom. All others, due to an accident of birth, could not. Certainly homosexuality was not chosen as "a practice."

To justify attitudes within the church through use of phrases like "incompatibility with Christian teaching" is to follow common social misconceptions and prejudices rather than to follow the teachings of our Lord and to embrace the basic two commandments he left us. To point to

Paul's teachings to justify the church's position is to overlook the theology and to lean on his own social agenda, shaped by his own cultural milieu.

In matters regarding acceptance, I would hope that the Methodist Church can lead, to include and embrace, to heal and to promote Christian love for all.

Dieter Gaupp
Member, FUMC Denton, Texas

This is background for Bill McElvaney's argument on behalf of those he identifies as GLBT. He contends that an unknown number of persons have been and continue to be harmed by language that entered the United Methodist Social Principles in 1972.

The words "we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching" were part of a report presented to the 1972 General Conference.

The 25-member Study Group on Social Principles was chaired by Bishop James S. Thomas, one of the kindest, most compassionate persons ever to occupy the Methodist episcopacy. The

study group held several listening sessions, one at what was then my family's home church, FUMC of Park Ridge, Ill., best known as the home church of ordinand Hillary Rodham.

One member of the study group was a United Methodist Publishing House journalist colleague of mine. He told me that the group spent more time over the words "incompatible with Christian teaching" than on any other portion of the report's approximately 10,000 words. Some members, he said, wanted even tougher language. Some wanted nothing.

But my friend noted that the phrase's imprecision was not so much a compromise as a guarantee to create conflict, uncertainty and confusion. And so it is.

John Lovelace
Member, Highland Park UMC
(Cox Chapel)
Dallas, Texas

Endgraf: The Reporter welcomes brief, civil letters, and reserves the right to edit for space and clarity. Send to news@umr.org or The United Methodist Reporter, 1221 Profit Drive, Dallas, TX, 75247.

REFLECTIONS

On Easter let's proclaim—not argue for—faith

BY BISHOP WOODIE W. WHITE
UMR Columnist

I have long ceased arguing faith. That is, the effort to “prove” the validity and merits of Christian belief.

I am appreciative of the works of scholars and theologians who do so, and I am in the debt of many. I continue to read with benefit the contemporary writings of religious scholars and church leaders as they seek to show the relevance of Christianity to a post-modern world. They serve the Christian community well.



**Bishop
Woodie
White**

There was a time of course, when I believed I could “argue” faith into others. I wanted others to see the logic of belief—especially my own. Or equally important, I wanted to convince them of the validity of the Christian claim. I think, sometimes, my preaching may have revealed such an inclination. Others have tried to frighten people into faith.

Over time, however, I learned to argue less and witness more. To tell the story of faith, witnessing in word and deed to what I have “seen” and what it has done!

I think that's what an Easter Faith requires. In fact, that is what I expect as I sit in a pew on Easter Sunday morning. Less argument and more proclamation. It would be so if I had the opportunity to grace a pulpit on

that Resurrection Day. But now I have the privilege of savoring the testimony of others. My anticipation has been growing these past weeks of Lent.

The final verse of the familiar hymn, “I Love to Tell the Story,” begins with these words: “I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.” Easter Faith is our old, old story.

We know it well. We have heard it again and again. Yet Christians around the world, Believers at all stages of belief will come to hear it once more.

Actually, what is desired most in the telling is not dramatic intensity so much as authenticity. I want to sense that the witness on that morning is not arguing faith but confessing it! For in Easter is a promise of Hope—hope

for the future, hope for eternity. Hope in the midst of chaos and crisis. Hope for the world that is and hope for the Kingdom and Reign of God to come.

Frankly, my spirit is pretty beat up at this time. There seems to be an increase in violence around us and a bent to destroy others.

Hate seems to drench our communities and incivility marks our discourse. Our better angels seem to have flown away! The Faithful seem fewer or more silent. All the wrong things in life seem to have an upper hand.

More frightening is a capitulation to a world of destruction, incivility and animosity.

The late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. often referred to a popular blues singer, who sang a song with the line, “Been down so long, down don't

bother me.” Can a society become so immune to hatefulness, that it is no longer repulsed by it?

Easter is our reminder that evil does not and will not have the final answer. Ultimately love will triumph over hate, and life will win out over death. It is the assurance that light overcomes the darkness. And goodness and righteousness will finally rule.

On Easter morning we are reminded of this reality in special ways. It does not need to be argued, but proclaimed. Or as my daughter would say, “It is what it is!”

Hallelujah!

Retired Bishop White is the denomination's Endorsing Agent for Chaplain Ministries and bishop-in-residence at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta.

Return from exile provides fruitful metaphor for UMC

BY ERIC VAN METER
Special Contributor

The “wilderness” doesn't fit. We need a new metaphor.

The concept of “wilderness wanderings” has taken a prominent role in conversations about United Methodist leadership, thanks in large part to consultant Gil Rendle's *Journey in the Wilderness* (Abingdon Press). The book draws from the story of Israel's four-decade trek through the Sinai desert following the Exodus, when the nation was marking time before their entry into Canaan.

As a description of the UMC's situation, the wilderness metaphor has a lot to offer. It gets at the failures of our past, the discomfort of our present, and the uncertainty of our future. It expresses the frustration we feel as we leave modernism behind and try to find our place in a post-modern world.

But descriptors are only good to a point. If they don't suggest meaningful action, they merely explain where we are. It's like having a map that tells our position, but doesn't show any roads.

The wilderness metaphor suggests action, but in a very limited scope. It depends on leaders at the top—new incarnations of Moses and Joshua—to cast the vision that will lead us into a bright new day.



**Eric Van
Meter**

As General Conference looms, the wilderness seems to be the guiding metaphor behind much of the legislation, particularly that prescribed by the Call to Action. The idea seems to be that if we allow greater executive authority, we will stop bumping into each other and find the Promised Land of greater faithfulness, smoother functioning, and financial stability.

If we truly are in the wilderness, without direction and in dire need of a leader, perhaps this action makes sense. It's worth noting, however, that strong executive leadership only led Israel out of the desert. Once in Canaan, the book of Judges tells us, things fell apart rather dramatically.

And what if we aren't really in the wilderness at all? What if we're working with the wrong metaphor? Our situation might look different.

Our actions certainly would.

My friend David suggests that, rather than continue to talk about the wilderness, we need to look at a lesser known yet fundamentally important biblical event: the return from exile in Ezra-Nehemiah.

In some ways, the story of the exile is much like that of the wilderness wanderings. Complacency and misuse of power lead to sin, which in turn leads to separation from God and the disintegration of Israel. It's a time of suffering, uncertainty and loss.

After the offending generations have died off, God again restores the people through a combination of good leadership, hard work, and favorable circumstances. The people return to Jerusalem with joy, but find it

in ruins.

Two things set the return from exile apart as an applicable metaphor for us: power and shared responsibility.

Although the true nature of Israel's entry into the Promised Land is up for debate, it is often presented as The Conquest. Israel was, according to the book of Joshua, an overwhelming force when they obeyed the Lord. Everyone in their path either joined them or died opposing them.

And although everyone of fighting age was charged with taking up the battle, Joshua clearly takes center stage. One person has the lead. One person gets the credit.

The return from exile happens quite differently. A tiny number (less than 50,000) returns to Jerusalem not as conquerors, but as refugees. They live under the constant threat of annihilation from more than one opponent.

Because of those threats, they have to work together very closely. Although Ezra and Nehemiah play key roles, dozens of other individuals are mentioned by name for the specific work they did. Some repair gates. Others build walls. It seems that everyone who so much as installs a new hinge was lauded for the effort.

The current situation we United Methodists find ourselves in more closely resembles the exiles as they return home. The former glory of American mainline Protestantism is past. Our structures are crumbling and, although a faithful remnant remains, we have no guarantees of success.

All we have is a nearly irrational hope that God is not finished with us, that the ruins of our denomination can be salvaged.

If that hope is to be realized, we have to work together—not just on reports, but on ground level. We have to work side by side, each of us concentrating on the localized task before us, trusting that our efforts will contribute to the larger rebuilding effort.

By “we,” I mean General Conference. And everybody else.

Perhaps the work of this year's General Conference will be an important catalyst for rebuilding. Perhaps the legislative actions they take will make our work in the trenches easier. Or perhaps it will only lead to further instability and mistrust.

There really is no way to know for sure yet.

Either way, we have to realize that our salvation will not come from anything that General Conference does. We everyday United Methodists cannot keep twiddling our thumbs in the wilderness, waiting for direction from on high. We have to get to work on the task of loving the people in front of us, of tenderly caring for even the smallest of ministries, knowing that every act of love builds the church.

We are exiles from the old UMC. But we—all of us—are vital parts of whatever God does with us next.

The Rev. Van Meter is director of the Wesley Foundation at Arkansas State University. Contact him at eric@astatewesley.org.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING • CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

EMPLOYMENT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Scarritt-Bennett Center (SBC), an urban, non-profit education and retreat center is seeking an Executive Director to lead this dynamic organization. Historically related to the United Methodist Church, SBC is committed to addressing social justice issues through regional, national and international programming that promotes cultural understanding, education for and about women and spiritual renewal for all peoples. SBC is an equal opportunity employer. For more information visit: <http://www.thesbsearch.org/>

MISCELLANEOUS

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Seeking mature business professionals for high-income Christian values opportunity. Home-based office. Apprenticeship style training. For complete information call Joel at 888-357-1772.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Readership is approximately 200,000 readers each week. **Rates** are per word or group of figures or initials (20 word minimum) **Newspaper Only—\$3.00** per word, two consecutive weeks. **Newspaper/Internet Bundle—\$4.00** per word includes two consecutive weeks in print and one month on Internet (www.umportal.org). **Internet Only—\$1.25** per word for one month on www.umportal.org. E-mail your classified ad to: cgraham@umr.org or enter it online on the Classifieds page at: www.umportal.org.

DISPLAY & BANNER ADVERTISING

The *United Methodist Reporter* and the *UMPortal* offer advertisers the ability to target unique messages regarding products, services and employment to church leaders and clergy, as well as individuals in the pews. Reach thousands of Christian households, agencies and organizations by advertising in UMR's products. Variety of display ad sizes and rates to fit any budget and objective. Contact: Cherrie Graham at 214-630-6495, x142 or cgraham@umr.org.

■ PLAYS *Continued from page 1B*

celebrated his 100th birthday this year.

“He liked to say that he was as old as the ‘Old Rugged Cross,’ because he was born the same year the hymn was written,” she said.

While at Cherrydale, Emurian led numerous performances of the living Last Supper: at the church, at Lake Junaluska and at national United Methodist Men conferences in Chicago and, in 1969, at Purdue University. The play never failed to move audiences, and quickly became “one of the most popular and widely-used Lenten plays” according to a history of Cherrydale.

“It just really takes your breath away,” Ms. Dodge said.

The copyrights for all of Emurian’s published works have since expired, and the Emurian family has opted not to pursue copyright privileges. Copies of Emurian’s script circulated from church to church, first in mimeograph form, then photocopies, and now via online PDFs.

After the Purdue performance, some attendees recreated the program at their home churches—and at least two of those continue to this day.

Since its first performance in 1970 drew nearly 1,000 people, West Des Moines United Methodist in Iowa has presented the living Last Supper multiple times every year—404 performances in total. Bill Brantley, a church member who saw the 1969 performance at Purdue, directed the program until a few years ago. The ministry has become such a central part of church life that, when the building was remodeled about 15 years ago, a stained glass window was added, picturing the Last Supper along with the words, “Church of the Last Supper.”

Another man in the audience at Purdue, Cy Harader, started a living Last Supper at Simpson United Methodist in Fort Wayne, Ind. Today,

the Last Supper Drama Group of Fort Wayne, Ind., is no longer under Simpson’s umbrella, but still performs every year at United Methodist churches in the area, as well as prisons, retirement homes and community theatres.

“If God’s hand hadn’t been in this, there’s no way it would last as long as it did,” said director Rick Ensley, a member of nearby Good Shepherd UMC. The group is almost booked for 2013, and will start taking 2014 bookings soon.

Mr. Hall estimates that St. Luke’s cast has performed the living Last Supper almost 100 times before at least 15,000 people. But until last week, no one at St. Luke’s had any idea who had written the script they’ve used all these years. When contacted by the *Reporter*, Mr. Hall checked the Fort Wayne group’s online copy of Emurian’s script, and found it virtually identical to the one they’ve used for three decades. Mystery solved.

Newer version

First UMC in Irwin performs another version, *The Living Last Supper: A Dramatic Musical Experience* (Lorenze Publishing, 2007) by composer Ruth Elaine Schram. She was inspired to create the play while attending Christ Church UMC in Birmingham, Ala.

The church’s minister of music decided to stage a living Last Supper, and had a script consisting of disciples’ monologues—she’s not sure who the author was. He asked Ms. Schram if she had any songs that would fit, but she decided to “start from scratch” and researched the lives of the disciples. The result was her own version, which features hymns she composed.

That version is still selling thousands of copies every year, five years after publication.

“Usually sales drop off quickly after the year a book is published,” Ms. Schram said. “That is really unusual to have those substantial sales, year after year. It does seem to have staying power.”

Ms. Schram notes that she tailored her version so that small or medium churches, with few people and limited resources, could produce it. Churches may use a CD as accompaniment, or add live accompaniment with a piano, a few other instruments or a small orchestra. In every case, she made certain the accompaniment wouldn’t overwhelm a small choir.

Ms. Schram says she prays for every church that she knows is producing the show.

“I still get chills when I hear that people are doing this,” she said.

Dianne Runser, director of music ministries at First UMC Irwin, says the annual production of Ms. Schram’s version brings in big crowds—about 300 at each of two performances—including many who aren’t part of the church. About 200 attend the church’s two worship services on a typical Sunday.

In 2009, the priest from the Catholic church next door attended and pronounced the program “biblically sound.”

“When we got the blessing from the Catholic church, we decided we must be doing good,” Ms. Runser joked.

Ms. Runser is particularly proud of the set, painted by a church member who is a theater arts professor at a nearby university. She combed vintage shops and flea markets to find the goblets, candlesticks and other props to match those in da Vinci’s painting, which shows the Last Supper as it might have looked in 15th-century Italy.

“It’s not biblical,” Ms. Runser said, “but neither is da Vinci’s painting.”

Male camaraderie

While churches produce the living Last Supper to convey an important message of faith, many participants discover a side benefit: camaraderie among cast members from a range of ages and backgrounds.

St. Luke’s cast ranges in ages from 23 to 84, and includes several businessmen, a county government official, a school administrator and a recent college graduate who’s looking for work.

In the Fort Wayne group, several of the cast members are second and third generation participants, including Mr. Ensley’s son, Ryan, 14, who plays Jesus. To make a living, Mr. Ensley drives a concrete truck; other cast members include carpenters, warehouse workers and a civil engineer.

Mr. Ensley sees a common thread



PHOTO BY PENNY BRANT

Actors perform Ruth Elaine Schram’s version of *The Living Last Supper* at First United Methodist Church in Irwin, Pa., in 2011.

connecting cast members to the 12 men who followed Jesus 2,000 years ago.

“Jesus called all these guys—a fisherman, a tax collector, a zealot,” he said. “That’s what we do, too. We get all these average guys together.”

One of the longtime cast members at First UMC Irwin is Carl Stewart. He’s not a church member, but as co-owner of Romano’s, the pizza shop next door, he knows a lot of folks in the church. When he heard about the living Last Supper, he wanted to get involved.

“I’ve always wanted to play Andrew,” said Mr. Stewart, a Catholic, who says he admires the disciple’s “excitement for bringing people to Jesus.” This year marks his sixth year in the role.

“When the music starts, we become the disciples,” Mr. Stewart said. “It’s a deep, heart-felt feeling.”

While the program is serious, cast members get to each other and rehearsals often involve a bit of good-natured ribbing. At any church, the man who plays Judas can expect to get grief. In the case of Fort Wayne’s Judas, a used car salesman named Ernie Crowder, he plays right along.

“Most of these guys buy their cars from me,” Mr. Crowder ad-libbed during a sound check before a show. “That’s how much they trust me.”

A key ministry

Mr. Hall says that, because his church is located in “basketball country” and because performances tend to coincide with March Madness, it’s not unusual to see the disciples backstage, dressed in biblical costume and toting smartphones, listening to the latest game.

“That doesn’t mean you don’t take it seriously,” he said, “but this is a great fellowship opportunity.”

Grace United Methodist in Merritt Island, Fla., began presenting

Emurian’s living Last Supper in 1996, and repeated the program every year until 2012. The church is located near the Kennedy Space Center, and lost about a fourth of its cast and production team to layoffs and retirements, so the show won’t go on this year.

But church member Dave McCoy, who directed the program for many years, says the living Last Supper became a key ministry to the church as well as the wider community.

After one performance at a retirement home a few years ago, Mr. McCoy remembers an elderly woman’s reaction: “The Lord hasn’t been with me for many years, but today, he’s back.”

“A lot of times, we don’t know how we affect people, but that was kind of telling,” Mr. McCoy said. “If she was the only one we reached, then it was worth doing.”

Mr. McCoy still maintains a website with copies of the script and production tips for the program. At least a dozen churches have contacted him over the years for help. A plaque in the church honors cast members for each year, including four who participated all 16 years.

Mr. Hall remembers a time his group performed at a maximum security prison unit in Taylorsville, N.C., before 200 inmates, many of whom would remain in prison for the rest of their lives. After the presentation, the inmates shared how the program, and especially its message of Christ’s forgiveness, spoke to them.

And that, Mr. Hall says, is what keeps living Last Suppers going, year after year: The presentation brings to life a story that never gets old.

“If we think about Christ’s death and resurrection, we realize that it pays for all of our sins,” Mr. Hall said. “We all betray Christ, and that gift is truly for all of us.”

mjacobs@umr.org

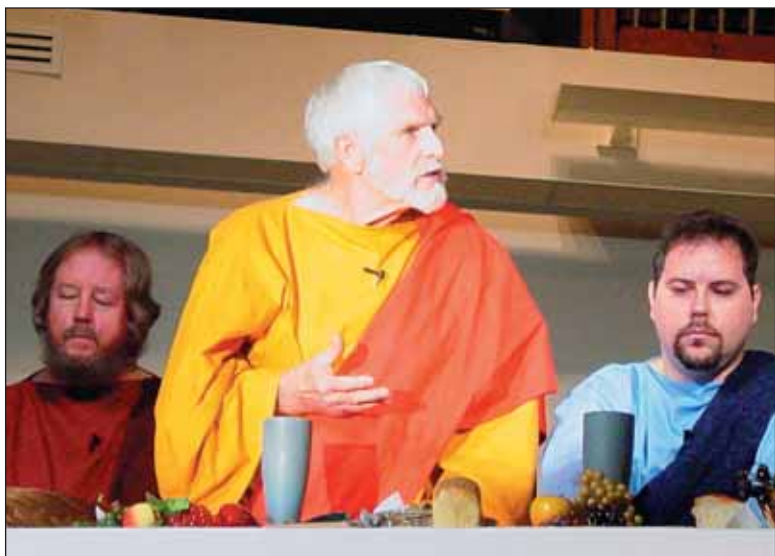


PHOTO BY MARK MCCOY

Dave Sawyer (center) portrays the disciple Andrew in a production of Ernest Emurian’s living Last Supper at Grace United Methodist Church in Merritt Island, Fla.