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'Our biggest need right now is people'

Flooding creates disaster in NE Arkansas

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Flood waters in late April and early May inundated homes and crop fields across Arkansas, particularly in the northeastern part of the state, prompting Governor Asa Hutchinson to declare a state of emergency in 36 counties. Arkansas Conference Disaster Response is among the organizations offering help—and is asking for more assistance from UMCs statewide to continue meeting emerging needs.

As of May 23, disaster response workers had determined that of 60 affected addresses in Lawrence County, 14 do not require assistance with clean-up or repairs to homes. ARUMC Disaster Response is currently making referrals to partner responders as needed; trying to contact more affected homeowners to determine other needs; and



Volunteers from Arkansas United Methodist Disaster Response and Headwaters Relief Organization work together on May 13 to remove flood-damaged materials from a home in northeast Arkansas.

PHOTO BY IDA ROSE

making progress on mucking out houses where teams and individual volunteers are available to do so.

ARUMC Disaster Response currently has an adequate supply of

disaster response materials. They request that churches with space to store a small stock of supplies assemble a few UMCOR kits, such as cleaning buckets, to keep at their

own campuses on standby in case more are needed. (Find kit instructions at www.umcor.org.)

"Our biggest need right now is [See FLOODING, page 9]

Praying Our Way Forward

UMs of Arkansas encouraged to pray for mission, future

The United Methodist Church is in the midst of a worldwide, 75-week effort of prayer for its mission and the work of the 32-member Commission on a Way Forward. United Methodists of Arkansas are invited to participate, both now and in a specially designated week of prayer, July 16-22, 2017.

This initiative, known as "Praying Our Way Forward," originated with the Council of Bishops as a part of their larger commitment to "lead the church in every part of the world in times of worship, study, discernment, confession and prayer for God's guidance."

Individuals are invited to join in prayer whenever possible between now and June 2018, but particularly in the week of their Annual Conference's prayer assignment. The effort also encourages all United Methodists to pray daily, as well as participate in weekly fasting, for the sake of the church, its mission and future.

This 75-week effort allows each United Methodist Conference a designated week of prayer.

The initiative challenges the entire United Methodist denomination to engage in a worldwide effort of seeking solidarity, and fulfilling the mission of the church by creating and maintaining "disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world."

"The United Methodist Church is in a time of change, and we believe in the power of God to work through prayer to guide us in the midst of these changes," said the Rev. Jim Polk, assistant to the bishop for the Arkansas Conference. "We are excited to see what this initiative will do in Arkansas."

For the week of July 16-22, the Arkansas Conference will offer an online sign-up page for individuals, congregations and other groups to commit to specific times and dates to pray. Visit www.arumc.org/prayingforward in

[See PRAYING, page 8]

Quit inviting your friends to church

BY ED SEAY
Special Contributor



Ed Seay

I remember as a youngster growing up at First United Methodist Church Dardanelle, we would have “Invite a Friend to Church Sunday” every year. I cannot recall if I ever invited a friend, but I figure I did.

The idea is good for a couple of reasons. First, you already have a relationship with your friends. You know what they like and dislike, and what their interests are. Second, there is a familiarity that gives you freedom to ask them to come to church that would be awkward with a stranger. Finally (and this is the “churchy” reason), if everyone brought one friend we would double our attendance that Sunday.

Now while I cannot remember if I invited a friend on that Sunday or not, I can remember we never doubled our attendance on that Sunday. This has now morphed into “National Back to Church Sunday,” which encourages regular church attendees to invite friends and neighbors to church. Considering the declining attendance in churches across our nation, this is a noble idea, but it is largely ineffective.

A 2015 article, “Which Friendships Last the Longest?” appearing on socialpsychonline.com, cites a study finding that friendships last based on similarities and dissolve due to differences. The familiar phrase “irreconcilable differences” has more application with friendships dissolving than Hollywood marriages, I would presume. If you examine your circle of close friends, not acquaintances

or Facebook friends, I imagine you would find they are a lot like you. They likely make a similar salary, live in a similar size house and have similar family structures. And just like you, they likely attend church with the same dedication you do. They may attend a different denomination, even strikingly different, but they love God, love Jesus and are members of a church. No amount of invitation will convince them to leave their church, just as it would not you. (One exception: If they share with you, because you are friends, that they are dissatisfied with their church, it may be an opportunity to invite them to yours.)

The same goes for your neighbors. I live in an upper middle-class neighborhood, and my

‘If you examine your circle of close friends... I imagine you would find they are a lot like you.’

neighbors, by and large, go to church. Pew Research studies show that only 50 percent of residents in a city go to church, but a large percentage of that number will be concentrated in a couple of areas.

So quit inviting your friends to church.

I can hear you saying, “But who are we supposed to invite? Strangers?” No, because that is awkward and unlikely. How are we supposed to do evangelism if we don’t invite our friends to church?

Author Kay Kotan said at last

year’s Grow By One Summit that we should “go where those who don’t go to church are.” For Shiloh UMC and Pruett’s Chapel UMC, this means we go to the homeless shelter. And we go twice a month (I hope we will expand to four nights a month soon).

The shelter feeds 60 to 80 people every night. These children of God are often times going through hell on earth. They often were not raised in church. They often feel that church has nothing to offer them. And so we go to serve them and to love them.

We share stories with them. We listen to their struggles, and we show compassion. One of our children’s ministry leaders wanted to do something more for the kids who live at the shelter, so we started picking them up for our Wednesday night children and youth programs. To use the words of John Wesley, my heart was “strangely warmed” to see new kids laughing, playing, learning and participating in that ministry.

Instead of inviting your friends to church, celebrate each other’s faith by engaging in meaningful conversation about the challenges our world faces and how Christians can respond to those challenges. Then go outside your neighborhood, outside your circle of friends and outside your comfort zone to meet God’s children where they are, and love and serve them.

I have a motto: “Disciples are made when the pews are empty.” Get out of the church building, seek out those who are suffering, who look for hope in destructive habits and relationships, and show them the Savior who replaced your hope in those same destructive things with hope in him.

The Rev. Seay serves as pastor of Shiloh UMC Paragould and Pruett’s Chapel UMC.



EDITOR’S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

From home to home—again

My first column for this publication was titled, “On leaving home to go home.”

And wouldn’t you know it, nearly seven years later, I’m doing it again.

The role of *Arkansas United Methodist* editor brought my husband and me back to our home state in 2010. Leaving the life we had built in Texas wasn’t easy, but we believed God had provided an opportunity to be closer to our families. And so we reoriented our lives, sold our house, uprooted ourselves and made the transition.

This time, I once again believe God has provided this opportunity for change, though the current uprooting doesn’t involve quite so many drastic adjustments. Instead of relocating every element of my life, I’ll lengthen my commute, making the daily drive from Little Rock to Conway to work as director of communications for my United Methodist-related alma mater. I won’t be able to join the same buddies for lunch or visit with as many clergy friends, as most of them won’t have nearly as much business that would take them through my new office.

So much shapes us as we learn and grow: the people around us, our environment, our socioeconomic status, the faith our families choose and the faith we ultimately choose for ourselves.

Two organizations have played key parts in shaping who I am. For the past 16 years, from local church staff to church-related organization

to the Arkansas Annual Conference, I have had the privilege of orienting my daily work to serve one of them, the United Methodist Church. Now, I have the opportunity to do the same for the other one, Hendrix College.

As the announcement of this change made its way around social media, a Hendrix professor and friend responded with the comment, “Welcome home, Amy!”

It’s true. Hendrix is one of the places I’ve called home. Yet, I’ve learned something from returning “home” over the years: Home doesn’t stay where I left it. In the case of higher education, a college becomes a different place every semester, and many semesters have gone by since my days of hanging around on campus. I’ll have much to learn as I settle into my new digs (on a piece of property that the college didn’t even own when I was a student).

The Arkansas Conference has become home to me, too, just as the Little Rock Conference was when I was a child (there we go again, with “home” changing). I’ll still be part of one of her congregations, and I’ll still be working with a number of her people.

Thank you, readers, for helping me find home at the *Arkansas United Methodist* for a season. May God’s blessings and grace be with each of you, and may you be at home wherever God leads.

Reach the Center for Technology staff at communications@arumc.org.



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Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
July 7	June 16
Aug. 4	July 17
Sept. 1	Aug. 14

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GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

Vital

The trajectory of the Arkansas Annual Conference is to create vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world. It's not just a statement. Rather, it articulates what United Methodists of Arkansas understand about our purpose, vision of the future, what we are going to invest in and what shapes our life together.

Whenever I hear the phrase "vital congregation," I think of a church that is vibrant, passionate, energetic, excited, enthusiastic, hopeful and fruitful. I imagine a congregation that is alive and making a real difference. I picture a church fueled by the Holy Spirit, and dream of a church that really does keep the main thing—Jesus—the main thing in all it does.

I am focused on the critical importance of vital congregations because bishops, annual conferences, district superintendents and conference staff do not make disciples of Jesus Christ who in turn make disciples involved in God's work of transformation. Congregations do. And that's why I long to see more congregations become more vital.

So what are the marks of a vital congregation?

- A vital congregation **seeks spiritual revival**, because no congregation can be vital without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit unleashing it to do what it otherwise cannot do on its own.
- A vital congregation **puts into place those things that bring about vitality** through a discipleship formation process, ways of getting to know and reach out to the community, growth in stewardship and equipping laity. Vitality doesn't just happen. It takes prayer, intentionality and work.
- A vital congregation **experiences increases in numbers** in worship attendance, professions of faith, number of first-time visitors, people involved in discipleship formation groups, baptisms, participation of young adults and those involved in mission in the community. Remember, however, that numbers are always in comparison to the recent past, and not the "glory days" of long ago; they must be read in context of the current reality of the community.
- A vital congregation **discovers stories of transformation involving real people and real life**. These accounts range from how an individual's life has dramatically changed to how a church has reduced childhood hunger in its neighborhood, because what ultimately matters to God is how real lives have been transformed in real ways through the Gospel of

Jesus Christ.

I hope it's obvious how passionate I am about there being more vital congregations that are more vital in Arkansas. Here's why: Jesus loves us enough to save us through the cross. Jesus has given us the mission of making disciples who have had a life-transforming relationship with him. And Jesus longs for all people to experience the abundant and eternal life he offers.

I believe from the bottom of my heart that United Methodists in Arkansas want more congregations to be more vital. I hope you believe it, too. Even more importantly, I look forward to joining hands to do it together!

Come, Holy Spirit!

Grace and peace,

Gary E. Mueller

Laugh at the darkness

BY CASEY WEATHERFORD
Special Contributor

The brewery taproom is crowded tonight. Stools line long community tables. Seats and pint glasses are full. Their contents are as varied as the crowd: pale ale, porter, or Belgian wheat; root beer, Cabernet, or Diet Coke. The place is humming with conversation.

At one end of the room, an older couple laughs with church friends. At the other, a bearded man watches football on the big screen. Young parents entertain a baby with brewery coasters. Bartenders chat with regulars. In the corner, there is a woman who almost didn't come, until she felt a nudge from God in the grocery store parking lot.

Suddenly, the strum of a guitar draws all attention to the front of the taproom, and we sing: *All creatures of our God and King
Lift up your voice and with us sing,
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
Thou silver moon with softer gleam!
O praise Him! O praise Him!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

We finish the last rousing refrain and go right into "O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing," then "Be Thou My Vision." Then it's on to the barnstompers: a medley of "I'll Fly Away," "I Saw the Light," and "When the Saints Go Marching In." The set list is also dotted with cover songs following a monthly theme: Love Songs (February), Flower Power (May) or Back to School (August).

This is Beer and Hymns. This motley mix of locals gathers on a weekend evening once a month, shaking hands and passing song sheets. Some know these hymns by heart; others have never sung them before. Some are regular churchgoers; others have sworn off organized religion. But in this place, something special happens. As voices and glasses are raised, divisions dissolve and hearts are softened. Hands reach across tables, and powerful connections are made. This is a truly communal experience, bringing people together and reminding us that we're not that different after all.

My husband, Ken, and I are the leaders of Bentonville Beer and Hymns, and each time I



Casey Weatherford

stand on the tiny stage and gaze out over my microphone, I am astounded and moved by this phenomenon.

Each time, I hear echoes:
Echoes of the camaraderie at Cana.
Echoes of the 12 friends around the table with their teacher.

Echoes of the Wesley brothers singing and laughing with parishioners.

Echoes of all the times in our travels that we have gathered around tables and shook a hand, shared a story, and toasted to life.

We end every Beer and Hymns gathering with the same song, called "All of the Hard Days are Gone." People throw arms around shoulders, sway, and sing with gusto:

*We'll laugh at the darkness and dance until dawn
All of the hard days are gone.*

It is here that we laugh at the darkness: the darkness that claims our differences are too great; the darkness that keeps us sheltered and comfortable; the darkness that denies a brewery can be holy ground.

Pull up a stool. Let's laugh at the darkness together.

Weatherford, a graphic designer, lives in Bentonville, where she is an active member of First UMC.

APPOINTMENTS

The following **appointment changes**, effective July 1, have been announced since the last publication deadline of the *Arkansas United Methodist*:

- Steve Long—Concord UMC/Cedar Grove UMC Floral
- Tonya Hancock—Desha/Jamestown UMCs
- John Hiegel—Piggott/Wright's Chapel/Mars Hill UMCs
- Bill Mills—Bradford/Pleasant Plains UMCs
- Donna Harvey—McRae/Mount Pisgah/Harmony UMCs
- David Hawkins—Levy UMC
- Phil Costner—Mulberry/Dyer UMCs
- LaVon Post—St. Paul-Maumelle UMC Little Rock
- Carol Moore—Bradley UMC
- Lucian Lee—Rushing Memorial/ Missouri UMCs
- John Braden—Mineral Springs UMC
- Laura Butkovic—Faith UMC Hot Springs
- Laura Jo Prange—Calico Rock/Spring Creek UMCs
- LaToya Shepherd—Heritage UMC Van Buren (associate)
- David Baker—Wesley UMC Conway/Plummerville UMC (charge realignment)
- William "Bill" Mills—Bradford UMC
- Glen Gaboury—Glenwood/Daisy UMCs
- Robert Hunt—Brinkley/Brasfield UMCs
- Heather Sprinkle—Dover UMC
- Doug Walker—Asbury UMC Little Rock (associate)

For the most recent news in appointment changes, visit www.arumc.org/appointments.

Our Trajectory
Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples
equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

PEOPLE OF FAITH

49 Arkansas students receive Dollars for Scholars to attend United Methodist colleges and seminaries

A total of 49 Arkansas students recently were named recipients of the Dollars for Scholars scholarships by the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation.

For each scholarship, the students' local churches give \$1,000, and the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation matches that contribution. Then, the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) gives \$1,000, and the student's selected college contributes \$1,000 for a \$4,000 award.

"UMFA is honored to award \$49,000 in grants to these Arkansas students attending United Methodist colleges and universities during the 2017-2018 school year," said UMFA president and CEO Jim Argue Jr. in a May 15 news release.

Attending Centenary University is **Alexander M. Shannon** of Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock; attending Dillard University is **Kayla M. Vann** of Wesley Chapel UMC Little Rock; attending Drew University is **Erin E. Farrah** of Wesley Chapel UMC Little Rock; and attending Southern Methodist University is **Matthew F. Esterer** of First UMC Bentonville.

Hendrix College students receiving the scholarships include **Ethny M. Ashcraft** of Lakeside UMC Pine Bluff; **Gwen T. Boone** of First UMC Conway; **Aubrey N. Brink** of Sequoyah UMC Fayetteville; **Lexie N. Burleson** of Lakewood UMC North Little Rock; **Samuel E. Byrd** of First UMC Malvern; **Christina G. Choh** of Hope Korean UMC Little Rock; **Joseph R. Coker** and **Samuel M.**

Coker of First UMC Conway; **Andrew D. Fleming** of Grand Avenue UMC Hot Springs; **Ava Z. Graves** of First UMC Bryant; **Liam R. Hankins-Hull** of First UMC Little Rock; **Marlee L. Hoggard** of Geyer Springs UMC Little Rock; **Mary J. "Annie" Meek** of Trinity UMC Little Rock; **Tyler J. Odell** of Clinton UMC; **Harper L. Purifoy** of First UMC Malvern; **Daniel K. Reece** of First UMC West Memphis; **Faith A. Reynolds** of Grace UMC Hensley; **Madison E. Shaddox** of Cabot UMC; **Katherine E. Skartvedt** of First UMC Russellville; **Victoria L. Spradley** of Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock; **Andrea R. Stitt** of Vilonia UMC; **Makala J. Strang** of Fairfield Bay UMC; **Seth R. Wagoner** of First UMC Batesville; **Delaney G. Wells** of First UMC Charleston; and

Margaret A. Young of Lakeside UMC Pine Bluff.

Scholarship recipients studying at Oklahoma City University are **Hannah N. Cozart** of Faith UMC Little Rock; **Anna R. Delony** of First UMC Fort Worth, Texas; **Mary E. Wigley** of First UMC Monticello; and **Emily L. Wollenberg** of First UMC Clarksville.

Philander Smith College scholarship recipients include **Tiaara A. Anderson**, **Edward J. Boyd**, **Ashley D. Buford**, **Jalan J. D. Caffey**, **John D. Davis**, **Robert R. Harris**, **LaKendrick D. Lewis**, **Deviontae T. Martin**, **Michelle M. McDonald**, **Jasmine A. Owens**, **Javante Q. Smith**, **Wendell P. Smith II** and **Russell R. Williams III**, all of Wesley Chapel UMC Little Rock.

Seminary students receiving

Dollars for Scholars awards include **Andrea' L. Cummings** of Wesley Chapel UMC Little Rock, attending Candler School of Theology; **Robin G. Roark** of White Hall UMC, attending Saint Paul School of Theology; and **Meghan L. Hatcher** of Central UMC Fayetteville, attending Wesley Theological Seminary.

The United Methodist Higher Education Foundation is dedicated to helping students achieve their dreams by providing scholarship aid for United Methodist students attending 122 United Methodist-related institutions.

UMFA is one of the largest United Methodist Foundations in the country. Founded in 1963, UMFA is responsible for over 750 funds with combined assets in excess of \$146 million.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reader reactions to May 5 issue

While it is still heavy on my mind, I just wanted to thank you for your column on Ledell Lee ["Last meal," page 2 of the May 5, 2017 *Arkansas United Methodist*]. It gave me much to think over, to ponder, and to question about myself and our judicial system.

Your columns often do.

Thanks for your work and your insight and your willingness to write about such things which often make us feel most uncomfortable.

LeAnne P. Burch
First UMC Monticello

Thank you so much for your wonderful column, "Last meal," and for your news story about the rally at the state Capitol to protest the executions. As longtime opponents of the death penalty, it really helped us to know that our church's official stance against the death penalty and our church's state newspaper were supportive of our efforts. Thanks, too, for printing Jay Clark's letter to the editor [page 6 of the April 7 issue].

Justice has not been served by the four executions—revenge maybe, but not justice. Now we

only have four more dead persons and we are all accomplices. It is a sad time for our state. We WILL continue our efforts for abolition.

With deep appreciation for your sensitivity to the many issues facing our church and the world,

Freddie and Rev. Vic Nixon
Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock

The Arkansas United Methodist (AUM) welcomes the opportunity to hear from its readers. To be eligible for publication, letters to the editor must meet the following guidelines:

All letters must be signed with the writer's name, city and church, and include a phone number or email address. Letters may be sent to editor@arumc.org, or to 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Letters longer than 200 words will not be considered for publication.

The AUM will not print letters containing personal attacks.

The AUM reserves the right to publish Letters to the Editor in print, online or both.

Davis named executive assistant to Bishop Mueller

Vicki Davis has been named the executive assistant to Bishop Gary E. Mueller. She currently serves as the administrative assistant for mission and ministry for the Conference, a role she took on in 2014.

Before joining the Conference office staff, Davis worked for Rock-Pond Solutions in Conway, a provider of medical software with a national market. As the executive administrator and assistant to the president, she planned and implemented the company's marketing plan.

In 2000, Davis served as administrative assistant of the Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics, and Calling at Hendrix College. During her time with the Miller Center, she managed a \$2,000,000 grant budget, supervised five student workers and assisted in the planning and implementation of the Miller Center's mission trips. She was on staff at Hendrix for a total of 13 years, including time in the role of

assistant to the chaplain.

Davis has volunteered with Ozark Mission Project, Amazing Grace Cafe, Camp Aldersgate and Heifer Ranch in Perryville.

"Vicki's skills, background and knowledge make her an ideal fit for this position," Mueller said. "I'm confident she will continue her valuable contributions to the Conference in this new role as we all work together to create vital congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who in turn make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world."

Davis will transition into her new position in July, and succeed current executive assistant Rose Kuonen. Kuonen, who has been with the Conference since 2004, took on the role of executive assistant in 2012. She will retire on June 30.



Vicki Davis

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To keep up with church news on social media, check out the Facebook pages for UMNS, www.facebook.com/umnews, and the Arkansas Conference, www.facebook.com/arkansasumc.

UMFA grant to Methodist Family Health allows youth in group homes to attend Camp Tanako

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) recently awarded a \$15,000 grant to Methodist Family Health (MFH) to allow youth from eight therapeutic group homes throughout Arkansas to attend the Rev. Robert Regnier Memorial Summer Camp at Camp Tanako in Hot Springs.

"This is a great partnership between three Arkansas United Methodist ministries," said UMFA President and CEO Jim Argue Jr. in an April 24 news release. "Methodist Family Health provides its wonderful ministry to children, Camp Tanako provides a great facility and environment and UMFA provides the bridge funding to bring them together. We are delighted to do our part and greatly appreciate the ministries of our sister institutions."

Youth living in group homes attend public schools during the school year, and MFH provides summer activities that mirror the

experiences of their peers, including summer camp.

"We love that our youth have the chance to make priceless memories while having fun and simply being a kid," said Carolyn McCone, executive director of the Methodist Family Health Foundation.

Camp is also a great location for practicing the life skills young people learn in their treatment homes. It allows the youth to continue learning through the Teaching-Family Model, which uses positive reinforcement. They earn awards throughout the week, and medals and trophies are given as tangible evidence of their accomplishments. MFH Teaching Parents say these awards become cherished possessions and are proudly displayed when the youth return home.

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas manages \$145 million in endowment funds

and other charitable assets that benefit local churches and other United Methodist ministries. As one of the largest United Methodist Foundations in the country, UMFA manages more than 750 funds that support United Methodist ministries.

Methodist Family Health provides quality, compassionate psychiatric and behavioral healthcare to children and families throughout Arkansas, serving approximately 2,400 clients daily in inpatient, residential and outpatient venues of care.

Camp Tanako is a ministry of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. Its mission is to welcome children, youth and adults to a place set apart where they can grow in their faith by experiencing God through nature and spending time in community and respond to the call of the Holy Spirit.

arkansas conference
Mission u
July 26-29, 2017 • University of the Ozarks • Clarksville, AR

Mission u registration open through July 10

Arkansas Conference Board of Global Ministries, Arkansas Conference United Methodist Women, the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas and the Ethnic and Language Committee present **Arkansas Conference Mission u**, which will take place July 26-29, 2017, at the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville. Mission u is open to members and non-members of United Methodist Women, and offers classes on topics covering three themes: spiritual growth, social issue and geographic studies, as well as studies for children and youth.

At Mission u: Learning Together for Transformation of the World, participants grow in understanding of the mission of the church in the current world context. The studies give particular attention to the responsibilities of women in the fulfillment of the mission work of the church. Mission u events also include:

- Worship and singing
- Interest groups organized around current events and issues
- Audiovisual presentations
- Fellowship events

To register for Mission u, visit <http://armissionu.weebly.com>.

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We are amazed at your generosity! In response to our Get Up & Give drive, Methodist Family Health received a tremendous amount of much-needed items – including backpacks, socks, basketballs and notebooks – along with more than \$13,000 in cash contributions. All of these gifts will benefit local children and families in our care. Thank you, Arkansas!

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Visit Cokesbury's new Ministry Resource Center at #arumc17

Cokesbury, the retail and customer service arm of the United Methodist Publishing House, is bringing a new consultative experience to Annual Conference this year: the Cokesbury Ministry Resource Center. Focused on equipping leaders to build disciples, the Ministry Resource Center will offer the opportunity for more personalized consultations with church leaders to better match products with their specific ministry needs. Features of the Ministry Resource Center include:

- Showcases highlighting new and classic resources ranging from adult and children's curriculum to church-wide stewardship and Bible studies—all available for review and ordering.
- A robust selection of additional new titles and best sellers available on-site for immediate purchase featuring Bishop Mueller's book recommendations, speakers' books and official UMC resources, new titles and best sellers.
- Consultation areas where church leaders can meet with trained consultants regarding ministry needs, including studies, curriculum, robes, signs, sanctuary furnishings and more.
- An ordering kiosk with access to titles unique to the Arkansas Conference, plus resources not included in the Ministry Resource Center.
- Free shipping on all orders placed at Annual Conference on regularly stocked merchandise.

"We are excited to bring this new approach to each annual conference," said the Rev. Brian K. Milford, president and publisher of the United Methodist Publishing House. "In previous years, up to 80 percent of purchases were from only 20 percent of the titles displayed. The new approach will showcase products that are intentionally selected for each location and focused on equipping your church leaders for ministry."

Cokesbury serves more than 11 million United Methodists worldwide as well as a broad ecumenical audience representing many denominations and independent churches, with books, Bibles, curriculum, worship resources and church supplies—more than 200,000 products—through www.Cokesbury.com.

Conference fitness plan renewed; sign up now or at #arumc17

Virgin Pulse, the fitness rewards plan for clergy and spouses, has been approved for another year by the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits. In addition to the rewards of healthier living, participants can earn up to \$275 per calendar quarter, with increasing dollar amounts given as each of four levels of point accrual is completed.

The Arkansas Conference covers the employee costs and rewards for its members. The first pedometer is free to newly enrolled participants. If a participant already has a preferred fitness tracking

device, the program will sync with many available brands and models, including Fitbit and Apple Watch. Points toward reward levels can be earned through activity, and also by reporting healthy habits on the mobile app or website.

Eligible individuals (all active clergy and spouses, as well as Conference-employed laity and spouses) may enroll in Virgin Pulse

now. Existing participants who may have lost momentum (and possibly their pedometer) can rejoin the plan at any time. To enroll, visit <http://join.virginpulse.com/wespath> and select Arkansas as plan sponsor when prompted. For assistance, contact Mona Williams at 501-324-8028 or mwilliams@arumc.org, or see her at the benefits display table at Annual Conference.



United Methodist Men breakfast at Annual Conference co-sponsored with Project L.O.V.E. (Let Our Violence End)

United Methodist Men breakfast at Annual Conference co-sponsored with Project L.O.V.E. (Let Our Violence End).

Will Faulkner, president of Arkansas Conference United Methodist Men, invites all those interested to a special breakfast gathering **Tuesday, June 20 at 6:30 a.m. in Hall D of the Hot Springs Convention Center.**

Tickets are \$20, and are available at the door.

During this time of breakfast and fellowship, motivational speaker Robert Holt, director of Project L.O.V.E., will share how United Methodist Men can help the organization reach a generation of young people involved in or at-risk for involvement in gangs, drugs and cults.

The journey toward vital discipleship begins at Annual Conference 2017

<h4>Accountable Discipleship</h4> <p>Experience God's grace in community! Learn how to use Wesleyan small groups to grow deeper as vital, accountable disciples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Group Leader Tools • Companion Resources • Promotional Tools & Sermon Starters • Annual Conference Teaching by Kevin Watson 	<h4>Faith Sharing</h4> <p>Sharing your story creates a doorway to invite others into relationship with Jesus Christ. Equip vital disciples to share their faith with others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum & Video Teachings by Kay Kotan & The Center for Vitality • Promotional Tools • Annual Conference Teaching by Kay Kotan 	<h4>200,000 Reasons</h4> <p>Vital discipleship means putting your Christian faith into action. 200,000 children in Arkansas, one of every 4 kids, struggles with food insecurity. Fight childhood hunger through feeding ministries, public witness and education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devotional & Teaching • Feed, Provide, & Garden Toolkits • Advocacy & Witness • Annual Conference Teaching by J.J. Whitney 	<h4>Stewardship</h4> <p>Vital disciples practice a life of generosity. Discover the power of personal stewardship to shape your soul and to invest in building the kingdom of God.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Month by Month Reason to encourage a spirit of Generosity • Local Church Resources • Annual Conference Teaching by Clif Christopher • Child & Youth Resources
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Word from the Bishop

"I invite you to be involved in one of the most meaningful and exciting journeys imaginable.... God is calling you and me to grow vital disciples and create vital congregations that will bring the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people who need it more than they will ever know."

Mount Sequoyah efforts provide ‘Picture Perfect’ prom evening for Fayetteville students

| Outreach, partnerships contribute to fine dining experience

Mount Sequoyah Center on April 29 held its second annual Picture Perfect Prom Dining, a pre-prom dinner for Fayetteville High School students.

Each attendee receives a digital portrait, as well as a dinner and dessert buffet featuring roasted rosemary pork loin, roasted potatoes, vegetables, purple bulldog cabbage, rolls, strawberry cake and an assortment of homemade cheesecakes. This year’s event, attended by more than 50 guests, was held in Mount Sequoyah’s newly remodeled Yancey Lodge. Despite torrential rains in northwest Arkansas that nearly cancelled prom, all who attended the dinner enjoyed a great celebration.

A partnership with Glass Slipper Prom Project and Womenade of Northwest Arkansas provided scholarships for some students to attend the dinner. Nearly half of those in attendance came because of this partnership, and no distinction

was made between paying attendees and those with scholarships. For those who struggle with food insecurity, an elegant meal is an extra blessing on a special night.

“Because of the generous donation that was made by Womenade, our students at the Fayetteville schools were able to enjoy a beautiful dinner at Mount Sequoyah,” said Melissa Rogers, social worker with the Fayetteville School District. “This was an incredible opportunity for our students and very much appreciated.”

As a non-profit, Mount Sequoyah values partnerships as essential for its success. Pretty Old Stuff NWA provided décor, including hobnail milk glass vases and colorful crystal stemware, and the University of Arkansas Wesley Foundation campus ministry leadership team moved furniture before and after the event. Corbett Warren, a host at Mount Sequoyah, served as photographer, and a new Mount

Sequoyah host family, Everett and Amy Coonfield, hosted the dinner.

It is an ongoing quest for Mount Sequoyah to forge greater connection with the Fayetteville community. Knowing that these young adults will

add to the 95-year history of education, celebration and spiritual formation is a great joy for the staff.

Until last year, Mount Sequoyah Center was owned by the South Central Jurisdiction of the United

Methodist Church, and as an independent organization now continues to maintain relationships with United Methodist congregations and ministries.

—submitted by Denni Palmer



COURTESY PHOTOS





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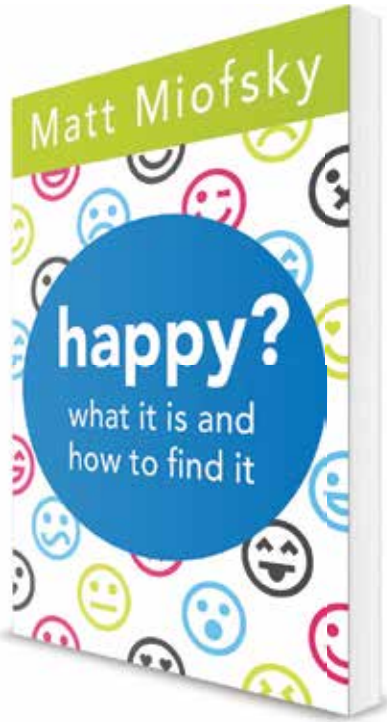
What’s keeping you from being happy? Do you really have to lose weight or find a new job before you can say you’re happy? No matter how hard we try, happiness can seem elusive. Even as we reach our goals, we set new ones, making happiness always out of reach.


In this study, author Matt Miofsky helps you discover that contentment isn’t dependent on the “things” of life. Instead, he’ll help you see that happiness can be found in the value of our relationships, a forgiving lifestyle, living in the present, feeling gratitude, and learning to release control.

This four-week study uses basic theology and the words of Solomon and, in addition to the book, includes a DVD featuring Matt Miofsky and a comprehensive Leader Guide.

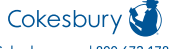


Matt Miofsky is Lead Pastor of The Gathering United Methodist Church in St. Louis Missouri, a church with over 1,000 people worshipping each week across four sites and eight services.





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Praying (from page 1)

early June to choose a time frame.

The Commission on a Way Forward was created at the 2016 General Conference. The “Praying Our Way Forward” initiative began in January 2017, and it will conclude in June of 2018. Learn more about the Commission on a Way Forward at www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward.

New study guide available to help church discuss human sexuality

On May 17, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) and the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools, in support of the Commission on a Way Forward, announced the release of a new study guide, “The Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality: Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness.”

The study guide offers United Methodists an opportunity to facilitate constructive conversations around a cultural and ecclesial flashpoint—human sexuality. The concept for the study guide originates from an Academic Theological Colloquy that shares its name and was held at Candler School of Theology in March 2017.

Convened to help the

Commission on a Way Forward complete careful theological work around this pressing topic, the Colloquy brought together more than 30 participating scholars from United Methodist seminaries and theology schools around the world to present and discuss

theological reflections on human sexuality and Christian doctrine.

During this time in the denomination, constructive conversations around the topic of human sexuality and church unity are vital. The four-week study guide is a tool to help annual conferences and local churches empower these important conversations.

Methodism is no stranger to controversy. John Wesley addressed the contentious issues of his day and endeavored to hold the Methodist societies together across many lines of difference. This guide follows the depths of the Wesleyan heritage to enhance our faithful witness to the

gospel of Jesus Christ.

The study guide is based on the work of Dr. Charles Wood, retired professor of Christian Doctrine from Perkins School of Theology. At the Colloquy, Wood presented his paper “Wonder, Love, and Praise,” focusing on the saving love of God for all people, the transformational love of God, and the ability of God’s love to create community.

“GBHEM is charged with the leadership development of our church. As a part of this responsibility, we continually work to provide the tools and resources needed for our church leadership to help move our church forward. The study guide is one of these resources,” said Dr. Kim Cape, GBHEM general secretary. “As the discussion of church unity

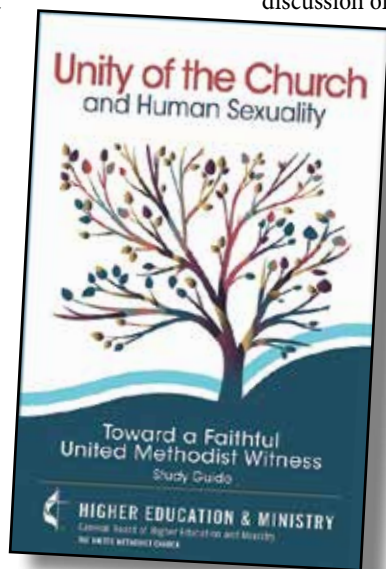
continues, the study guide can help ensure that constructive conversations and reflections take place around the church.

Through these conversations, we will discern our way forward.”

Dr. Kim Cape authored the foreword for the study guide and Bishop Kenneth Carter, Florida

Episcopal Area, created the afterword for the four-part study guide. The four sections of the guide include: The Conversation Matters, Loving God with Our Mind Matters, The United Methodist Church Matters and Finding a Way Forward Matters.

“The Unity of the Church and Human Sexuality: Toward a Faithful United Methodist Witness” study guide is available on Cokebury.com. Translations in French, Korean, Spanish and Portuguese will be available on the GBHEM website at the end of May. For more information on the Colloquy, visit www.gbhem.org/colloquy.



Clergy gather for worship, sharing, discussion



Bishop Gary Mueller, center, and Northeast District superintendent the Rev. J.J. Galloway serve Holy Communion at the May 9 gathering of Arkansas Conference clergy that included the Order of Elders, Order of Deacons, provisional elders and deacons and the Fellowship of Local Pastors and Associate Members.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Arkansas Conference clergy spent May 9 at St. James UMC Little Rock for a day-long gathering convened and led by Bishop Gary Mueller. After worship and Holy Communion, the hundreds of clergy in attendance divided into small groups for sharing and prayer, beginning with the Wesleyan question, “How is it with your soul?”

The afternoon included a plenary session and small group discussion focusing on human sexuality and the United Methodist Church—a timely issue in light of the work currently being carried out by the denomination’s Commission on a Way Forward.

‘Methodist middle’ committed to living together

BY KATHY L. GILBERT
United Methodist News Service

The United Methodist Church has a “vibrant” center that can keep the denomination strong despite the damaging debates around division, said a newly formed group of the “Methodist middle.”

“To Serve the Present Age” was a gathering of 47 United Methodists from the five regional jurisdictions of the church in the U.S. who met in Nashville, Tennessee, May 4-5. The group is planning a larger gathering this fall in Atlanta to build a broader network of support. The crowd in Nashville was ethnically diverse, and included clergy and laity.

“Around those core commitments, we are willing to allow space for equally committed disciples to come to different understandings about many things, including same-sex relationships,” the Rev. Jim Harnish told United Methodist News Service. He is a retired pastor, writer and teacher. “I believe that there is a vibrant, warm-hearted spirit at the heart of many if not most of our congregations that is deeply committed to the core affirmations of our Wesleyan spiritual and theological tradition, our denominational mission and our way of living in connection with one another.”

Members attended the initial gathering at their own expense, Harnish said. The intent was to listen.

During the gathering, several participants said they felt the majority of United Methodists are the “Methodist middle” who share a commitment to making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world even as they hold different convictions about matters such as same-gender marriage and ordination of LGBTQ people.

“Folks in the middle often do not want to contribute to conflict.



Jim Harnish

They are, by nature, more moderate,” Harnish said. “It’s also harder for them to find a voice because folks on the polar ends of the conversation often attract the most attention—they make more interesting news coverage.”

The Rev. DJ del Rosario, pastor of Bothell (Washington) United Methodist Church, said he has been praying about this issue and feels “called to be a part of a group that holds the sacred center.”

“I dream of a church that is known more for who and what we stand for rather than the things we are against in our world,” del Rosario

said. “I envision our work to focus on people who identify as center left and center right and frankly haven’t heard a voice that resembles where they are or the people in their communities.”

The Rev. Tom Berlin, senior pastor at Floris United Methodist Church in Virginia, said it is time for all who love the church to speak up.

“It is imperative that the broad center find its voice and clearly state what they feel God is calling the church to do,” Berlin said in a press release issued by the group. Berlin is a member of the Commission on a Way Forward, which was named after the 2016 General Conference to help the bishops guide the church in addressing issues of human sexuality and church unity. Berlin suggested that United Methodists pray for the commission, offer their own insights for its work and share hope.

The news release listed other initiating members, including the Neil Alexander and the Revs. Carl Frazier, Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, Adam Hamilton, Dan Johnson, Candace Lewis and David McAllister-Wilson. For more information about the group or the fall meeting, email UMC.allofus@gmail.com.

Gilbert is a multimedia report for United Methodist News Service. Contact her at 615-742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

Flooding (from page 1)

people,” said Byron Mann, disaster response co-coordinator and Volunteers in Mission coordinator for the Arkansas Conference. Individuals are coming to the Northeast District to help right now, but teams would be more effective.

They should be ready to start installing new materials into damaged houses any day, so people with drywall experience, or people willing to learn to hang it, are in demand. All skill levels are needed.

“Most of these are old, old houses that at one time had really nice hardwood floors, and they’re ruined,” Byron Mann said.

Walnut Ridge UMC is serving as home base for disaster response efforts in Lawrence County. There’s been an unofficial division of labor by county among denominations

with response teams: Church of Christ workers are taking the lead in Randolph County, Southern Baptists in Clay County and United Methodists in Lawrence County, where there have been at least two weeks spent on mucking out flooded houses.

gathering of volunteers takes place every morning at 8:15 to provide assignments and updates.

Janice Mann, disaster response co-coordinator, has begun talking with communities about long-term recovery. She just returned from a national meeting of Voluntary

Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), where she learned some new ideas for effective response.

“It’s not just this phase,” Janice Mann said of the immediate aftermath. “It goes on.”

To schedule a time to help, contact Byron Mann at 870-826-0268. He says more calls for help are coming in every day.

“The reality is setting in that this is a little bigger than what

they think they can handle,” he said of the homeowners and local recovery efforts. “I’m hearing a little more desperation in the voices that I’m talking to.”

‘I’m hearing a little more desperation in the voices that I’m talking to.’

—Byron Mann, ARUMC disaster response

Teams who come to help can be housed either at Walnut Ridge UMC or Wayland Spring Camp, a United Methodist facility near Imboden. Staging and housing is coordinated out of Walnut Ridge UMC, where a

UMFA grant will send congregations to Church of the Resurrection Leadership Institute

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) recently awarded an \$80,000 grant that will send participants from 20 local congregations to the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection (COR) Leadership Institute this fall in Leawood, Kansas. The Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality will administer these funds.

Churches interested in receiving grant funding to participate in the Leadership Institute may contact their District offices. The Conference Cabinet will determine which churches participate.

“This is one of UMFA’s most popular grants, and it fits perfectly with the foundation’s strategic grant priority to develop leadership for the ministry of the UMC in Arkansas,” said the Rev. Mackey Yokem, UMFA grants administrator.

The Rev. Dede Roberts, director of the Center for Vitality, reports that this ongoing partnership with UMFA has borne fruit. Many churches that have participated in the COR Leadership Institute have demonstrated growth in the areas of profession of faith, worship attendance, new small groups and outreach ministries.

“Participating churches of all sizes, without fail, report that people come back from the Leadership Institute inspired and equipped with new ideas and new resources,” said Roberts. “They appreciate having the clarity of vision, mission, intentionality and excellence of COR modeled, explained and taught at the Leadership Institute.”

The grant requires that teams made up of clergy and lay leaders from each church attend together so that when they return to their church, they have a leadership team ready to implement what they’ve learned.

VIM AND DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATES

For information on any **Volunteers In Mission (VIM)** project, contact the individual listed or Byron Mann, Conference VIM coordinator: vim@arumc.org or 870-826-0268. For **Disaster Response (DR)** projects, contact Byron or Janice Mann, DR co-coordinators: disaster@arumc.org or 870-703-8359 (Janice). On Facebook, join the group **“Volunteers in Mission & Disaster Response - Serving Arkansas & Beyond”** for updates.

Clean up teams needed ASAP in NE Arkansas

Any available teams or individuals welcome. If needed, an on-site orientation/training will be provided and we will pair you with trained teams or individuals. Contact Byron at 870-826-0268 or vim@arumc.org.

Repair teams needed for NE Arkansas

The initial focus will be Lawrence County. We will see projects we worked to clean up through with repairs. As things develop in other affected areas we will move to those areas as needed. Repair work will not begin right away as there are things in the process beyond our control that have to be determined. What we do need is for teams to be ready so we can begin as soon as possible when the way is cleared.

Flood recovery teams still needed in SE Arkansas

Southeast Arkansas continues to schedule teams to help with repairs needed as a result of the March 2016 floods. Projects are identified and funding secured, but volunteer help is little to none. When considering mission opportunities, please consider our neighbors in Southeast Arkansas. Several priority cases are waiting. To volunteer, contact Ron Jones, site volunteer coordinator, at woodrat3@live.com or Janice Mann at disaster@arumc.org.

Local churches: prepare now to respond to disaster

Disaster begins and ends locally. The local community owns the response. When the event or damage overwhelms that community and its resources, it then reaches out for regional and, if needed, statewide assistance. Disaster response organizations in Arkansas are outlining the process for requesting and delivering assistance.

Local churches, prepare to be able to offer assistance for those affected by disaster if you should be approached by your local Red Cross, your local emergency manager or other known disaster response entity. That disaster might be a single-family house fire, a wind storm that

affects just one or a few homes or a similar disaster (typically called a “low-level event”). Assistance from the local church might come in the form of food from a food pantry; clothes or household items from a local thrift store; or a church member walking alongside someone affected by disaster to help them navigate the available local resources.

To better understand local church response to disaster, whether in a low-, medium- or high-level event, contact Janice Mann at disaster@arumc.org. She and Byron Mann, vim@arumc.org, are available to speak to individuals, classes or groups, or the whole church, as well as to lead training for a group from your church or community. Both Janice and Byron Mann are available by email or phone for consult whenever a question arises (see contact information above). There are three trainings every church should consider:

Disaster 101 - How does disaster response work in the Local Church, District and Conference? How do we work with local, state, and national governmental and non-governmental partners in disaster response?

Connecting Neighbors - Local Church Preparedness (now a series of three shorter modules, geared to specific audiences within the church).

Early Response Team - How we provide that caring presence in the aftermath of disaster while helping those affected begin their journey through recovery? It would be a huge benefit, when disaster strikes, to have three to five trained and prepared churches strategically located throughout a district; even better would be one per county. Might your church be that church for your area?

Got kits?

Rather than making our planned mid-May delivery to UMCOR’s Sager Brown Depot, Arkansas Conference Disaster Response kept what was gathered and requested more from Sager Brown in response to the April 26 wind storms and flooding across the state. Thanks to Sheri Mathews for coordinating the gathering efforts, to all churches and drop sites involved and to those who helped with pick-up and staging. Thanks to the team from the Leslie/Marshall Charge for helping to get supplies from Sager back to Arkansas, especially to Bill Dereckson for driving the truck; and to Zach Schrick and Emma Davis for taking the truck to stage supplies further south for those affected there.

COMING UP

150th annual Salem Camp Meeting in Benton June 11-17

Salem Camp Meeting, Benton celebrating 150 years of continued services under the arbor at the old Camp Ground located at 1647 Salem Road, Sunday, June 11 through Saturday, June 17, 2017. The Rev. Tom Letchworth, appointed as a General Evangelist in the Arkansas Conference, will bring a series of sermons for seven evenings entitled “Dramatic Faith Through the Ages.”

Laura Cross, Camp Meeting board chair, expects record attendance this year due to the popularity of the inspiring style Letchworth brings to the messages he shares throughout the state.

Special music groups perform each evening at 7 p.m. A cookout at 6 p.m. Sunday, June 11, will kick off this year’s event. A nursery is open for infants up to 5 years of age; under the direction of Valerie West, the care provided there complies with Safe Sanctuary guidelines. Children ages 6 to 11 will gather first with Denise Willoughby for a short program and then join adults in the arbor to hear Letchworth deliver his lively sermon—an experience they will enjoy. Rachel and Russell Powell will lead youth in grades 7 through 12 in exciting activities they bring each year for the week-long Camp Meeting.

Come enjoy refreshments and fellowship, visit with old friends and meet new ones. If you are new to Camp Meeting, latch onto a seasoned Camp Meeter. Everyone has a story to share. Refreshments are served after services each evening in the church’s Fellowship Hall.

A memorial service will be held Saturday evening, June 17, for loved ones connected to Salem Camp Meeting who have died since last year’s gathering. To have a loved one included, submit the person’s name to Bill Shirron (501-316-2282) by Thursday, June 15.

Training for Walk to Emmaus, Chrysalis leaders in Little Rock July 8

St. James United Methodist Church, 321 Pleasant Valley Drive in Little Rock, will be the site of a leadership development program designed for strengthening Walk to Emmaus/Chrysalis boards and communities. The July 8 gathering will take place from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and includes a light breakfast and lunch. There is no cost to participate, though a love offering will be taken. The training is open to all Walk to Emmaus and Chrysalis board members, as well as any interested members of these communities. Training will be provided by individuals from Upper Room Emmaus/Chrysalis: Greg Engroff, international lay director from Nashville; the Rev. Carl Westbrook; Pat Miller; and Sharon Garrison. To RSVP, contact Garrison: sharongarrison777@gmail.com.

Methodist Family Health’s new ‘Bright Night’ event set for Aug. 4

Bright Night, a new event benefiting Methodist Family Health, will be held Friday, Aug. 4 at Big Rock Fun Park, 11411 Baseline Road in Little Rock. Choose from mini golf, bumper boats, go-karts, laser tag, batting cages, high ropes, an arcade and more. Your support of Bright Night will mean brighter days for children and families served by Methodist Family Health. Tickets include a choice of four activities and food. More information to come in next month’s *Arkansas United Methodist*; or learn more by contacting Denise Luft, dluft@methodistfamily.org or 501-906-4201.

Missions camp at Mount Sequoyah for grades 3 through 12 in July

Camp Sequoyah Missions Camp provides church teams opportunities for service, fellowship, worship, and recreation both on and off the Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference Center

campus. Mount Sequoyah is partnering with Destination: Mission of the Arkansas Conference Council on Children’s Ministries of the United Methodist Church, but this event is open to participants of all denominations.

There will be two sessions of Missions Camp in 2017: July 5-8 and July 12-15. Junior camp is for kids in 3rd-6th grades and senior camp is for kids in 7th through 12th grades. Both age groups will be available each session. Each team needs to have one adult in attendance for every four children. Youth helpers who wish to come must contact denni.palmer@mountsequoyah.org for an application. Visit www.mountsequoyah.org/camp-sequoyah-missions to learn more or to register.

United Methodist Men national gathering set for July 7-8

Join United Methodist Men for worship, workshops, service projects and fellowship at the National Gathering of United Methodist Men on July 7-8, 2017, at St. Luke’s UMC Indianapolis, Indiana. The event will inspire attendees to embrace new possibilities for ministry and discipleship.

“This is not an event to just have a good time and learn things—it will change your life and change the lives of people around you,” said Gil Hanke, general secretary of the General Commission on United Methodist Men (GCUMM). “This gathering challenges men to change their behavior, encouraging them to become more Christ-like in their daily lives.”

Speakers will include Bishop Jonathan Holston, Bishop James Swanson, Shan Foster of Men End Domestic Violence (MEND) and Dr. Kevin Watson, assistant professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies at Candler School of Theology.

Attendees will choose among 19 workshops focusing on leadership, ministry development, personal growth and spiritual development. With subjects ranging from cyber bullying and local church visioning to stress management and small group ministries, there are topics to support men no matter their age or their role in the local church. An extensive ministry fair will offer ideas to enrich and support outreach and service initiatives.

Three community service experiences will support people in need both in Indianapolis and around the world. Attendees will build hand-cranked mobility carts distributed internationally through Mobility Worldwide, sort and pack produce for local distribution through the Society of St. Andrew and build wheelchair ramps for local homes. Visit www.UMMGathering.org for details.

Music and worship national gathering in Little Rock July 24-27

The Fellowship of United Methodists in Music & Worship Arts (FUMMWA) invites you to Little Rock on July 24-27 for its biennial convocation. Four days filled with seminars and workshops that will allow learning and growing in ministry, as well as providing moving worship experiences and fellowship. To learn more, visit <https://awaken2017.wordpress.com>.

Food safety course at Mount Sequoyah Aug. 12

Thanks to a grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, you can train your food pantry workers, kitchen director, child care program staff and soup kitchen volunteers in safe food handling practices at no charge. A ServSafe training session will be held Saturday, Aug. 12, at Mount Sequoyah, 150 North Skyline Drive in Fayetteville, from 8:15 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. The first 20 registrants will receive a free lunch buffet. If more than 20 persons register, the only cost is the \$10 for lunch.

ServSafe Food Manager is one of the top programs in handling food safety. The Rev. Jenni Duncan is a trainer in English and Spanish for the program, and also will proctor the optional certification exams. On Aug. 12, the certification test will be from 3 to 5 p.m.

Interested in the training, but not available Aug. 12? The same UMFA grant will fund a full-length or shorter workshop at your own church. For more information or to register, contact Duncan at 501-551-2141 or jenni.duncan@arumc.org.

SCJ UMC Mission Academy in Aurora, Nebraska, Sept. 10-13

The Mission Academy is a yearly event where mission-minded people across the South Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church come together to learn more about Volunteers in Mission and Disaster Response. The workshops are designed to create conversation around how to do mission in healthy, sustainable, and respectful ways.

Mountainside UMC golf tourney set for Oct. 9

Mountainside UMC Hot Springs Village has set its annual golf tournament for Monday, Oct. 9, at the Diamante Country Club. Funds raised through this event will support outreach and mission endeavors such as the Arkansas Food Bank, Kairos Prison Ministry, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and ministries that support local schools, to name a few.

Email mountainsideumc@sbcglobal.net to receive more information as it becomes available.

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CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD in the *Arkansas United Methodist* for 60 cents per word, no limit. Call 501-324-8037 or email aforbus@arumc.org. Deadlines appear on page 2 of this issue.

Do Children’s Ministry in one of the top five regions in America – Northwest Arkansas! At First United Methodist in Historic Downtown Rogers, Arkansas, a young-spirited congregation of 800 members is seeking to employ a Director of Ministries to Families with Children. With nearly 100 children ages birth through 5th grade, there are endless possibilities for engaging your Christ-given gifts and graces in Children’s Ministries with individuals and families who want to grow in the Christian experience. For a job description and details on the immediate opening contact First United Methodist Church, 307 West Elm Street, Rogers, AR 72756, michael.mattox@arumc.org or 501-631-7997.

Evangelist John Mark Moore is available for Revivals, Camp Meetings, and Retreats. Contact him at 479-787-3360, winwithjohnmoore@hotmail.com, or Facebook. John brings a positive inspirational word, and an up-tempo gospel piano and solo.

Swamp Angel Ministries is “TRAVELING ARKANSAS!” For more info contact Dr. David Bush @ Stuttgart FUMC – (870) 673-1131 or thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org call or text @ (870) 830-7777.

OBITUARIES

LITTLE ROCK

Patricia Lowry Taylor

Patricia Jean Lowry Taylor, 88, passed away May 8, 2017, in Little Rock, Arkansas. She was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on Oct. 26, 1928, to the Rev. Forrest A. and Marie Shelton Lowry.

She graduated at the top of her class from William Jewel College in Liberty, Missouri, and went on to earn her nursing degree from Missouri Baptist Hospital. As a registered nurse, she worked in the Little Rock Public School system and as a psych nurse at the Health Center at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

She married the Rev. Joseph E. Taylor in 1952 and served alongside him at United Methodist congregations in Rose City, Fayetteville, Osceola, North Little Rock, Springdale and Fort Smith. She was a faithful follower of Jesus Christ and lived her life in service to others. Pat always held the title of "best cook in the church" in each and every charge the Taylor family served.

She is preceded in death by her husband of 65 years, "Brother Joe" Taylor, and by her eldest son, Stephen Taylor. Survivors include her daughter, Susan Kincannon (Jim) of Maumelle; sons, David Taylor of Springfield, Missouri, and Jonathan Taylor (Dianne Shaughnessy) of Washington D.C.; a daughter-in-law, Nancy Taylor, of Springdale; ten grandchildren: Spencer Taylor (Tatiana) of Fayetteville; Stuart, Jacob, Ryan and Catrina Taylor of Springdale; Sarah Kincannon of Little Rock; Rachel Gillespie (Tyler) of Dallas, Texas; Lauren, Ethan and Christian Taylor, all of Springfield, and she was anxiously awaiting the arrival of her first two

great-grandchildren, Will Gillespie of Dallas and Baby Taylor of Springdale.

Special gratitude is expressed towards the compassionate staff of Hospice Inpatient Center in Little Rock for their loving care and tender kindness toward our mother.

The funeral service was held at First United Methodist Church Maumelle on Monday, May 15, 2017, with visitation preceding, and with burial following at Oakland Cemetery in Clarksville, Arkansas.

Memorials may be made to First UMC, 1201 Edgewood Drive, Maumelle, AR 72113.

NORPHLET

James Thomas "Jim" Ford

The Rev. James Thomas "Jim" Ford, 97, of Norphlet, passed from this life into eternity Sunday, April 30, 2017, at Timberlane Health and Rehab in El Dorado, Arkansas. He was born Aug. 8, 1919, in Furlow Community, just outside Lonoke, Arkansas, to John Newton Ford and Sarah Frances Shirley Ford.

He was a preacher in the United Methodist Church for 33 years serving the Holly Springs UMC charge, Strong UMC charge, Taylor UMC charge, Norphlet UMC charge, Hampton UMC charge and the Camden Timothy UMC charge. After retirement, he and his wife Lola made their home in Norphlet where they were both members of the Norphlet UMC and he served as interim pastor to the Pleasant Grove UMC charge for a year. He served as a volunteer at South Arkansas Medical



Jim Ford

Center for 26 years. He served in the United States Army. He often said how thankful he was for his family and all the blessings the family has enjoyed.

Preceding him in death were his wife of 67 years, Lola Caldwell Ford; his parents; brothers, John Ford, Joe Ford and Bill Fulbright; and sisters, Elizabeth Kimzey, Ludie Baldwin, Louella Hortzman and Katherine Thresher.

Survivors include his three daughters and sons-in-law, Karen and Ricky Evans of Calion, Linda and Cecil Polk of Norphlet, Diane and Denny Barrett of Searcy; six grandchildren, Schelley Covas (Jose'), Bud Evans (Terri), Brandon Polk (Kerri) all of Norphlet, Chris Polk (Melissa) of Wooster, Raegan Jordan (Brent) of San Antonio, Texas, and Rane Barrett of Hensley; 12 great-grandchildren, Caylie Covas (fiancé Nick Lambert), Evan Covas, Tripp Evans, Tucker Evans, Creighton Polk, Hayes Polk, Mathis Polk, J.T. Polk, Mitchell Polk, Ryan Polk, Barrett Jordan and Ryleigh Jordan; brother, V.L. Ford of Jacksonville, Arkansas; several nieces and nephews; many friends; and the loving staff at Timberlane Health and Rehab.

Funeral services were held Thursday, May 4, 2017, at Norphlet United Methodist Church, with the Rev. Ron Newberry officiating. Burial followed at Rest Haven Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be made to Norphlet United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 28, Norphlet, AR 71759; Arkansas Rice Depot/Arkansas Foodbank, P.O. Box 34427, Little Rock, AR 72203-9991; or LifeTouch Hospice, 2301 Champagnolle Rd., El Dorado, AR 71730.

Celebrate Recovery leaders from North Texas visit Foreman group

Veteran Celebrate Recovery leaders and members of Covenant Church of North Texas on Sunday, April 23, visited Foreman United Methodist Church to encourage and lift up the church members and Celebrate Recovery leaders of Foreman UMC.

Foreman UMC began its Celebrate Recovery (CR) ministry in January 2016. Under the leadership of Frank Timmons and the pastoral care of the Rev. Kathryn Burchfield, Celebrate Recovery continues to grow as it offers effective Christ-based healing to all struggling with hurts, habits and hang-ups.

"The most fulfilling aspect of Celebrate Recovery is getting a front row seat to lives transformed and healed from all manner of addictions, struggles and hurts," Timmons says.

A year ago, the church had 5 to 10 people regularly attending Celebrate Recovery meetings, but now this program regularly ministers to 25 to 30 people each week. CR Foreman meets every Tuesday night at Foreman United Methodist Church, beginning with dinner served at 5:30 p.m. and the

program beginning at 6 p.m.

After a day of encouragement and worship with the Covenant Church group, Pastor Kat provided a "Blessing of the Bikes" ceremony. Each rider was anointed with oil shortly before their departure back to Texas. This visit provided connections with others in recovery ministries, and will help to ensure that each church stays firmly on the road to recovery.

Celebrate Recovery is for everyone. Life can be a struggle, and there's no need to go it alone. For those inside the church, CR can deepen your walk, giving you the advanced tools to forgo, to be forgiven and heal. For those outside the church, Christ can use CR to completely restore a lost and seeking soul. Do you have the tools you need to handle what life throws at you? If you need help dealing with workaholicism, anger, shame, codependency, guilt, food issues, pornography, family dysfunction, addiction or any other issues that hold you back from reaching your full potential that God meant you to have, Celebrate Recovery Foreman invites you to visit their gathering or another one near you.



Foreman UMC pastor the Rev. Kat Burchfield anoints a member of Covenant Church's Celebrate Recovery group before the group's motorcycle ride back to Texas.

COURTESY PHOTO

To learn more about how this ministry could work for your mission field, visit www.celebraterecovery.com. To locate an Arkansas representative for the ministry, visit the CR Groups page of the website. One of the state representatives for Celebrate Recovery is a United Methodist pastor: the Rev. Carl Palmer of Central UMC Fayetteville (cpalmer@centraltolife.com).

Confirmation class includes meeting those of other faiths

Participants in the confirmation class of Oaklawn UMC Hot Springs recently visited the Little Rock Islamic Center as part of their learning experience, receiving an opportunity to get to know some of their Muslim neighbors. The students shared a meal with Muslim youth and talked about God, prayer and the challenges of being teenagers.

The confirmands also have visited House of Israel in Hot Springs and St. Edwards Catholic Church as part of their studies. Another field trip focused on a service opportunity at a sister church, CanvasCommunity UMC Little Rock.

"As the world becomes a more dangerous and divided place, it is central to our faith to provide opportunities for youth to meet and dialog with our neighbors of other faiths as we pray for peace and understanding," said the Rev. Dr. Russ Breshears, pastor of Oaklawn UMC.

In this photo from the visit to the Islamic Center, three United Methodist confirmands appear with two Muslim youth. Can you tell which are United Methodist and which are Muslim?

COURTESY PHOTO



Pastors prepare to 'pass the baton' in transition workshop



Pastors moving to churches in the Northwest District gathered with their district superintendent for a selfie after the passing of the batons at the May 15 Pastors in Transition workshop. Front: the Rev. Stephen Coburn, superintendent. Second row: the Revs. Dee Harper and Roy Beth Kelley. Third row: the Revs. Clark Atkins, LaToya Shepherd and Pete Beevers. Back row: the Revs. Mike Smith and Jim Lenderman.

PHOTO COURTESY STEPHEN COBURN

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

In a relay race, a runner doesn't come to a stop to pass the baton. Instead, both the runner making the handoff and the one receiving it keep moving forward, maintaining the momentum needed to continue the race.

A successful transition in church leadership can have a lot in common with a relay race, which is why the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality (CFV) chose to give a symbolic gift of a relay baton to every clergyperson participating in the May 15 Pastors in Transition workshop. Led by the CFV in conjunction with the bishop and cabinet, this year's workshop focused on how clergy can plan for the changes ahead this summer as they move to new appointments. Participants considered ways to use pastoral transitions to build momentum that will propel congregations out into their mission fields to make disciples.

"Our suggestion is to use the baton in worship, such as children's moments and liturgy, pass it around the congregation during prayer time, take it to homebound members and the youth group for prayer," said the Rev. Blake Bradford, assistant director of the CFV. "Then, have the lay leader hand it off to the church's new pastor."

The 2017 workshop, held at St. James UMC in Little Rock, encouraged clergy to see their upcoming moves in alignment with the Arkansas Conference trajectory, "Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world." The agenda included time to discuss and plan elements of transitions, and was organized by three ways clergy can experience the United Methodist connection: through Loving, Learning and Leading.

During discussion and teaching time, clergy addressed topics such as the customized information included in the appointment letter sent to each pastor and congregation experiencing a transition this summer; how each church can use demographic and statistical data to make connections to its mission field and develop new ministries; and methods for saying goodbye and hello in healthy ways.

The CFV has assembled resources on its website, vitality.arumc.org, including book recommendations, links to information from the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, a timeline and discussion topics for the church's Staff-Parish Relations Committee, suggestions for church lay leadership and more—including the Pastoral Transition Covenant approved in 2014 by the clergy session of the Arkansas Conference. To view these resources, visit <http://vitality.arumc.org/pastors-in-transition-workshop>.



Faith Funds

A Lasting Legacy

Rev. Katie Goss Pearce glows when she talks about the legacy First UMC, Morrilton, receives from the late Lt. Gov. Nathan Gordon's endowment through the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

"In the past, some thought it would have been better to have the \$500,000 gift in a lump sum," said the senior pastor. "But after all these years the principal is still making money for us and we receive around \$21,000 each year to support church ministries. That makes the interest from the endowment one of the top ten annual givers to our church."

At her request, UMFA Vice President of Development Janet Marshall and local attorney Jonathan Kelley presented a UMFA Provide and Protect seminar to about 20 members of the Morrilton congregation. From retirees to couples with young children, participants benefited from the information on creating a will and learned the power of establishing legacy gifts.

"It was really good for us. I'm following up by visiting church members to see what my congregation's legacy dreams are for our church. Where do they see us 20-30 years from now?" said Rev. Pearce. If your congregation is interested in Provide and Protect, contact Janet Marshall at jmarshall@umfa.com.



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