



United Methodist Arkansas

August 15, 2008

Russian visitors consider UMC 'one big family'

By **JANE DENNIS**
Arkansas United Methodist Editor

Many thousands of miles separate First United Methodist Church in Searcy, Ark., and Pervourlask United Methodist Church in Russia's Ural/Siberia District. Yet, the miles dissolved into hugs and greetings last

month when two Russian visitors arrived in Arkansas.

Tanzilya Prokopenkova, pastor of the Pervourlask church, and her daughter and translator, Nataliya Butor, a college student in Oslo, Norway, recently spent 10 days as guests of the Searcy church. The con-

See **RUSSIA**, page 6

Are 'myths' preventing the church from growing?

■ *Revitalization ministry launched by Global Ministries*

United Methodist News Service

ORLANDO, Fla. — The notion that the United Methodist Church is dying has been repeated so often that it has become a belief, when in fact it is a myth, according to a church executive and author.

The reality is that the 11.5-million member denomination is poised for hope, said the Craig Miller to church leaders attending a workshop about myths of The United Methodist Church. The class was held during the 2008 United Methodist School of Congregational Development.

Miller, a staff member of the United Methodist Board of Discipleship in Nashville, Tenn., is author of "7 Myths of The United Methodist Church." He said belief in the myths prevents many United Methodist churches from grow-



Craig Miller, a staff member of the United Methodist Board of Discipleship in Nashville, Tenn., addresses seven myths about the United Methodist Church during a training event for church leaders in Orlando, Fla.

UMNS photo by Cassandra Heller, Board of Global Ministries

ing.

The denomination, through the United Methodist Boards of Discipleship and Global Ministries, has embarked on an initiative to strengthen and revitalize existing churches and to

See **MYTHS**, page 6



An almost 2-mile hike for a good cause drew 320 participants to Little Rock and the Methodist Family Health Big Dam Bridge Walk for Children and Families Aug. 1. The pedestrian bridge towering 90 feet above the Arkansas River was a cool place to be on a warm day. Read more about it, page 8.

'Wandering generation' looks for connections

United Methodist News Service

ORLANDO, Fla. — The fact that many Americans have little idea what "church" means or what happens there was a recurrent theme at the 2008 United Methodist School of Congregational Development.

The point was underscored by sociological data and pastoral experience, but more attention was given to ways of responding creatively to the challenge than to decrying the concern.

Lack of knowledge of "church" is

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INSIDE HEADLINES

■ Three hundred UM youth come together for Junior High and Senior High assemblies, page 9.

■ Children at First UMC, Hot Springs experience the first 'Wholly Healthy' camp, page 10.

■ Camp at Shoal Creek helps deaf and hearing children learn from each other, page 11.

■ Three church leaders are slated to be honored with Steel-Hendrix awards in October, page 14.



Editor's Corner

By Jane Dennis

What's on the inside

I didn't intend to buy a new sofa. It just called my name.

I stumbled upon it at a garage sale in a fairly affluent neighborhood in town. Sturdy and traditional in style, it was plenty spacious and looked absolutely brand new. And better yet, it was a queen-size sleeper sofa —

which would come in handy for the numerous giggly girl sleepovers that we have. The seller explained that she was planning a major renovation of her home and just didn't have room for it any more.

And the price — well, it was a steal, I assure you.

So I made arrangements to pick it up the next day. After sharing with my husband the good news of what a bargain I had found, I informed him it was his job was to go get it. He enlisted the help of a good friend who is unlucky enough to have a pickup truck yet always willing to use it when friends call. And off they went.

Fact 1: Queen-size sleeper sofas are not light. Oh no. This thing is extra heavy, and bulky to boot.

Fact 2: Queen-size sleeper sofas are long and wide. They will not always fit easily into just any house.

Fact 3: Houses must sometimes be



Jane Dennis

disassembled in order to accommodate large pieces of furniture, like queen-size sleeper sofas.

It took three hours of contemplating, discussing, maneuvering, planning and sweating to bring my bargain sofa into its new home. Three doors had to be taken off their hinges and one ceiling fan disassembled as the sofa was transported through four rooms to get to its final destination.

When I first looked at the sofa and considered the purchase, I never imagined how difficult it would be to relocate. I never imagined that parts of our house would have to be removed to make way for it.

The sofa saga reminds me of what it's like to be a Christian. The heavy-duty, important stuff is on the inside. It takes perseverance and determination to live out the faith. While often difficult, it's worth it in the end.

My husband says the sofa stays with the house even if we move. That's OK; I can live with that. Some things, like bargain sofas and Christ's love, are meant to be shared with others.

[Jane Dennis has served as editor of the Arkansas United Methodist since 1988. She can be reached at jdennis@arumc.org]

WANDERING, continued from page 1

most acute among those under 35, prompting one pastor and author to focus her presentation on that population.

Carol Howard Merritt is co-pastor of Western Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., and author of the 2007 book "Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation." She is herself a young adult and describes her generation as "wandering" when it comes to connections to God and systems of meaning.

"We have a huge opportunity with the wandering generation," she told 300 people gathered in Orlando at an annual event focused on church development. She was linked by satellite to another 150 at a similar event in Grand Rapids, Mich.

"What young adults are looking for is right there in our congregations," said Merritt, whose church is located across the street from George Washington University in the Foggy Bottom section of Washington.

However, church-as-usual to those over 40 may not be recognized by young adults as a place of caring or a repository of answers to life's questions.

Contemporary young adults, according to Merritt, don't need the church in its present form, but they do need a church interested in relationships and connections rather than programs. At its best, she said, the "church is a place where they can form connections — with God, the world and each other."

Merritt encouraged congregations new or old not to base their entire appeal or plans for growth on nuclear families or the pattern of getting children involved so they will bring their parents to church.

Those are good models, she said, but there is also a large population of unmarried young adults among the unchurched, and the church has a responsibility to that wandering generation.

Walk to Emmaus: an experience of faith

Members of the three Emmaus communities in Arkansas are preparing for another year of spiritual "walks" and encourage all interested persons to learn more about the experience.

The Walk to Emmaus experience begins with prayerful discernment and an invitation from a sponsor, according to Gundel Martin of Caraway, a member of NEAR the Cross Emmaus community. A sponsor is someone who has already attended the Walk to Emmaus, she explained. After one accepts this invitation, an application to attend an upcoming Walk is completed.

The Walk to Emmaus is a 72-hour experience of Christian spiritual renewal and formation. It includes days full of singing, learning, laughing, praying, worshipping and participating in small groups. Discussions are centered on 15 talks given by laity and clergy. There is a daily celebration of Holy Communion.

The purpose of the Walk to Emmaus is to develop leaders for the local church. Emmaus is designed to

"inspire, challenge, and equip participants for Christian action in their homes, churches and places of work," Martin said. "Emmaus lifts up a way for our grace-filled lives to be lived and shared with others."

There are presently three Emmaus communities in Arkansas. The first community, Noah's of Ark, was formed in 1986 and is now located in Hot Springs. A second community, Heart of the Ozarks, was established in Northwest Arkansas and is located in Fayetteville. A third community, NEAR the Cross, is located at Jonesboro in Northeast Arkansas.

For more information on attending a Walk to Emmaus in Northeast Arkansas, contact www.nearthecrossemmaus.org.

To learn more about Noah's of Ark Emmaus Community, visit the website <http://noahsofark.hypermart.net> or email noahsofark@hsnp.com.

For information about the Heart of the Ozarks Emmaus community in northwest Arkansas, email hotoemaus@juno.com.



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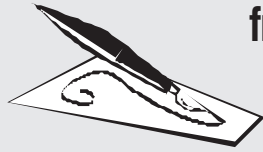
Viewpoint

Dear Friends:

We celebrated my mother's 92nd birthday yesterday. The day began with waffles made on a waffle iron she received as a wedding present 67 years ago! We are thinking about writing the folks at General Electric and suggesting she and the waffle iron be in a commercial about product reliability.

It is nice to know that some things are built to last. The words "transient" and "ephemeral" are hallmarks of our age. The power of our economy last year has vanished in the greed of mortgage lenders this year. International political upheaval and national political uncertainty are daily fare. Flat

An Occasional Word from the Bishop



screen TVs will be yesterday's news. The latest development of computer science becomes passé in a few months. "Virtual" computers (whatever they are) will become the next great rage. In the midst of such rapid and dramatic change, it is nice to find something on which to depend.

Our search for a stable reality

is not in the sphere of economics or politics or science. It is in the realm of faith that we find answers. Regardless of our circumstances, regardless of economic fluctuations and lack of stability in the world, our faith brings us home to that which lasts forever. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday,




Charles Crutchfield

today and forever, is the anchor for our lives, the source of stability, the answer to meaning and purpose in a trying and shifting world.

We, who are people of faith, know this. Our imperative from God is to share the good news about Jesus Christ. Now is our time. This is our place. We can make a difference in a seeking, yearning, changing world. We are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Faith in Jesus is the one thing that lasts — even longer than a 67-year-old waffle maker.

Faithfully,

Charles Crutchfield 

Southern Baptist trends: is there a message for UMs?

By LOVETT H. WEEMS JR.

Recently, The Associated Press reported that Southern Baptist churches suffered a loss of members in 2007.

United Methodists will find this hard to believe in the South, where there is an expression about places where "there are more Baptists than people." It's an expression that reflects the historic



Lovett Weems Jr.

focus of Southern Baptists on evangelism and conversions, but also their tendency to inflate church rolls. Pastoral success is often viewed in terms of "additions" and membership growth.

The practices of keeping a "non-resident" category of members and often leaving inactive members on the rolls have led some senior Baptist leaders to caution against taking membership figures at face value.

So, what are some of the reasons a system designed to avoid reporting losses can begin to decline numerically? And what might United Methodists discover if we are attentive to factors related to that decline?

Membership tends to be a lagging indicator. Membership changes, in either a congregation or a denomination, are the result of many factors that have been present for some time. For Southern Baptists, declining baptism rates over many decades may

have signaled an impending downturn in membership. United Methodists trace membership losses to the mid-1960s, but we know that the growth rate and share of population for Methodists had declined well before then with little, if any, notice.

Defensiveness and denial. When membership declines, the natural tendency is to explain it away. In 1998, when Southern Baptists showed their first membership decline in 70 years, some blamed the loss on a new computer system, while others said it was a temporary downturn as churches "clean" their rolls.

Methodists have used the "cleaning the rolls" mantra to explain slow growth or no growth for over a century in the United States. In the 1900 Episcopal Address of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the bishops reported that since 1800, the nation's population had grown 14 times while Methodist membership had grown by 97 times. But in the last four years of that period, the increase was only 4 percent, a much smaller rate of growth.

"How to account for this smaller gain is not easily seen," said the bishops. They went on to say that such decline should not be the "occasion for despondency and evil forebodings." In the future, as in the past, they projected "small gains may soon be followed by larger."

Even allowing for the imprecise nature of church rolls, membership decline should be seen for what it is: a lagging indicator that some other

important things need attention.

Conflict. Some level of tension is always present in healthy and growing churches. However, severe conflict in congregations and denominations tends to take a toll on participation and membership. The Rev. Frank Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, placed part of the blame for membership loss on a perception that some of the denomination's followers are "mean-spirited, hurtful and angry." He contends that Baptists have been known too much in recent years for "what we're against" rather than "what we're for."

Time takes its toll. As time goes by and churches become successful, it often becomes harder and harder to maintain success. With maturity comes a level of organizational complexity that can be a barrier to growth. And as churches and their members prosper, there is a temptation to become removed from the practices that led to growth in the first place. It could be that Southern

Baptists had some of their greatest growth when they were not the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, but rather when they often were seen on the sidelines of religious life that was dominated by more established traditions. United Methodists should remember that our greatest growth came in such a time.

Change is hard but not impossible. Some demographic indicators suggest that Southern Baptists may be joining that cohort of mainline denominations that has been losing members since the 1960s, a sign perhaps that well-established denominations, regardless of their theology, are increasingly unable to reach new Christians. Unfortunately, Southern Baptists will not learn much from the experience of mainline churches in addressing their decline — except, perhaps, what not to do.

Southern Baptists join these other denominations in the need to break the mold and change enough to turn

See WEEMS, page 4

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE By Mike Morgan



Viewpoint

Homosexuality: the issue that won't go away

After General Conference in 2004, I had hoped that the intensity of the debate over homosexuality would wane. There was another solid affirmation of the Disciplinary language, more delegates from evangelical areas and overseas, and a general feeling of fatigue over the rancor the disagreements had caused.

As we neared General Conference 2008, there was much talk about focusing on mission-al initiatives and holy conferencing. Though all that was done, the emotional flashpoint of the General Conference was still the debate over sexuality. The majority report from the legislative committee recommended that we change the language of the *Discipline* to acknowledge that "Faithful, thoughtful people who have grappled with this issue deeply disagree with one another; yet all seek a faithful witness."¹ It took the adoption of a minority report to retain the language that considers the practice of homosexuality "incompatible with Christian teaching," yet affirms that "all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God," and that United Methodists are to be "welcoming, forgiving and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us."² Sighs of relief and cries



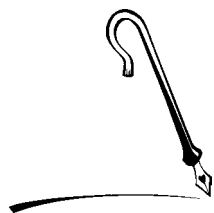
Bud Reeves

of anguish reverberated across the denomination.

Then, when it came time for Jurisdictional Conferences, in which bishops are elected, the first openly gay man, Rev. Frank Wulf, ran for bishop in the Western Jurisdiction. Though he ran for bishop in 2004 without disclosing his sexual orientation, this time it was his platform. In opposition to the *Discipline*, he offered his leadership, which he admitted would create a "maelstrom" in the denomination.³

Rev. Wulf's actions are analogous to someone addressing the stockholders' meeting of Exxon and admitting that he was a socialist and would work for government control of the oil company, yet he would be willing to be elected CEO. In other words, "I am opposed to some fundamental and traditional values of this organization, yet I want to be its leader." The Exxon stockholders would laugh such a candidate off the stage. The delegates of the Western Jurisdiction gave Rev. Wulf a standing ovation.

It's the issue that won't go away. The debate over sexuality is a distraction from our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Inclusion of



The Shepherd's Staff

By William O. "Bud" Reeves

GLBT's (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered) has become the mission for some people. I can't help but notice that the places where this issue dominates the agenda are the places where the denomination is shriveling on the vine, not the places (especially in the global United Methodist movement) where the church is experiencing growth and revival.

The position of the United Methodist Church is clear and compassionate; to change it in either direction would have divisive and destructive consequences for the denomination. On the other hand, we are deeply divided still. Even among those of us who support the church's orthodoxy, it is not simple or easy to do so.

I am haunted by a phone conversation I had with a gay friend a few months ago. Successful, intelligent, and a life-long Methodist, he asked me what I thought about the church's teaching. As I responded, I was very careful with my words, wanting to be as gracious yet truthful as possible. It didn't work. I could hear the hurt and the resentment in his voice as he expressed his dismay that the church he grew up in would not accept him fully. I felt there was a vast gulf of misunderstanding that I was powerless to bridge. He finally told me, "It's

not a lifestyle; it's who I am." I could understand that; such a likable man would never have chosen to be rejected and despised.

I am dedicated to upholding the United Methodist policy on human sexuality. As far as I can tell, it is in harmony with the Scriptures and our tradition. Standing up for historic Biblical teaching may alienate some people, and that's painful. But our first loyalty is to God and his revealed Word. Our understanding of homosexuality makes reasonable sense, and it is coherent with the experience not just of American Christians, who live in a culture where the taboos against homosexuality are nearly gone, but also global Christianity. What is important to do is to continue to treat every person with love, grace, mercy and compassion, all of which we have received without deserving them. Further, we need to stay in conversation with those who believe differently than we do.

So we can't put the issue of homosexuality on the shelf until next General Conference; it's going to become more and more a local issue. We need to continue to think, pray, read, and talk about it. For some reason, it just won't go away. May God in his mercy guide us all.

¹ Robin Russell, "United Methodists uphold homosexuality stance," UMNS, April 30, 2008.

² *Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 161G.

³ "First Openly Gay Bishop Candidate Runs in Western Jurisdiction," *United Methodist Newscope*, August 1, 2008.

[William O. "Bud" Reeves is senior pastor of First UMC, Hot Springs. He can be reached at brobud@fumchs.com.]



Letters to the Editor

Spiritual Nudge

Some time last year I got a call from a fine lady who was a fellow student when we were at Hendrix. She wanted me to be on the Arkansas United Methodist Museum Committee, probably partly since I live in Batesville where the museum is. My health is not the best, but I told her yes. After all, she is a fellow student.

In November when the committee had its first meeting, I missed and — in the finest Methodist tradition — was elected chair. Immediately I found the proverbial catch-22 the museum is sinking on: keeping the artifacts safe in an unsafe building and being unable to determine where money should come from to make repairs.

So, I, like Pilate, sat on my hands for a few months. Then, I got that

Spiritual Nudge. I asked all those I knew to be interested to send me a check made out to the Arkansas United Methodist Museum, and I got several. Then I found out the United Methodist Historical Society and not the Museum Committee would handle monies, raising a new and greater catch-22: who really is supposed to do what concerning the museum?

This double catch-22 may not be important enough to capture the interest of many, but surely there are some good-hearted, good thinking, methodical Methodists who would like to know how things are run. As a layman I have no status in the Arkansas Conference. Even so, is it OK to ask for help for the museum?

Stan Reed
Batesville



WEEMS, continued from page 3

their fortunes around. They are already recognizing the implications of the fact that their constituency has been primarily white and middle class, and this part of the population is not growing. Southern Baptists are turning their attention to people of color (to remedy a historic weakness of theirs) by starting new churches (a historic strength).

The United Methodist Church did very well "growing up" with America through the 19th century and into the early decades of the 20th century. Then, as the last century unfolded, the nation changed and the church did not. Earlier generations had followed Americans from east to west, from urban to frontier, and from lower to middle and upper-

middle classes. But success led to staying with practices even as they became increasingly less effective.

Today, The United Methodist Church in the United States is not only dramatically smaller, but it is older and less diverse than the population. Southern Baptists and United Methodists will have faithful and fruitful futures to the extent that they can find ways to reach more people, younger people and more diverse people.

[Weems is distinguished professor of church leadership and director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington. This commentary is adapted from the center's online newsletter, *Leading Ideas*, available free at www.churchleadership.com.]

'Change is good,' pastor tells church development school

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — UM pastor Mark Beeson presented his topic, "Innovate or Die," to the 2008 United Methodist School of Congregational Development Aug. 5. In front of 150 gathered in Grand Rapids, linked to another 300 in Orlando, Fla., he opened with a video displaying his face pasted on the dancing body of Napoleon Dynamite. People under 30 would appreciate the image of the title character in a cult comedy movie of 2004, he said. Those over 40 might not.



UM pastor Mark Beeson tells participants in the 2008 United Methodist School of Congregational Development that the church must "innovate or die" in its efforts to reach young people. UMNS photo by Chris Heckert

The pastor of Granger (Ind.) Community United Methodist Church said the church should not fear changing ministries to reach young generations. The Gospel and the mission of the church never change, he said, but the church must find strategies that will engage post-modern people to help them take the next steps toward Christian discipleship.

"You have to give them a reason (to come). Give them a why. ... Help people take their next steps towards Christ. ... Is your cause worth the price of change? — because you're asking people to change," he said.

United Methodists minister to neighbors across the border

EL PASO, Texas — Nearly every Saturday members of St. Mark's United Methodist Church in El Paso, Texas, drive into the fringes of Mexico to get to know their neighbors just across the border. Church member Norma Ricci says the outreach has surprised, and inspired, congregants.

"They had no idea that just 40 minutes away people are living in the desert in cardboard boxes." Now a dozen volunteers make border and provide necessities and classes for those in Juarez.

A video story about St. Mark's can be viewed at http://www.umtv.org/newitems/church_crosses_border.htm.

First lady distributes mosquito nets in Myanmar

Laura Bush, a United Methodist and the First Lady of the United States, visited the Mae Tao Clinic on the border of Thailand and Myanmar Aug. 7 to help distribute 10,000 insecticide-treated bed nets to protect refugees. The mosquito nets were provided by Nothing But Nets, the anti-malaria

campaign of The United Methodist Church, the United Nations Foundation and other partners which distribute \$10 insecticide-treated sleeping nets for vulnerable families in Africa.

The campaign is working with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in responding to the needs of refugees and other displaced populations. The Myanmar effort is the first step toward fighting malaria beyond Africa, said Elizabeth McKee Gore, also a United Methodist and executive director of Nothing But Nets, who accompanied Bush on the visit.

"I want the people of Burma to know that the people of the United States want to help in whatever way they can," Bush said.

SOULfeast draws more than 500, offers 'food for the soul'

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. — More than 500 people from several U.S. denominations attended SOULfeast, the signature spiritual formation event of Upper Room Ministries, a ministry of the United Methodist Board of Discipleship. The July 20-24 event was designed to connect people of faith with spiritual practices that encourage them to embrace disciplines that lead to a closer connection with God through Jesus Christ.

The 2009 event is scheduled for July 12-16 in Lake Junaluska under the theme "Show Me Your Ways, O Lord."

Chicago church part of gun turn-in program

CHICAGO — Amid a rash of summer violence in the Chicago area, United of Rogers Park, a United Methodist church in the north part of the city, received the most weapons from among 26 churches participating in a city-authorized program to get guns off the streets. The church took in more than 400 of the nearly 6,000 guns collected on July 26.

Catiana McKay, the church's pastor and a member of Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley's clergy task force on violence, said the event allowed the church to become "a bridge of reconciliation between the community and the police."



News Digest

Uniformed and plainclothes police were present as people turned in guns — no questions asked — in exchange for \$100 gift cards. Daley and the city's police chief issued a plea for guns to be turned in the wake of a wave of 2008 shootings.

Project manager named for bishops' 3-year project

PAT CALLBECK HARPER of Helena, Mont., has been hired as project manager for the United Methodist Council of Bishops' new "In Defense of Creation" document. Effective Aug. 25, Harper, who will be housed at the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, will lead a Council of Bishops' task force in revising and updating the original 1986 document. The new document is expected to address pandemic poverty, environmental degradation and the arms

trade.

Harper will spend time in annual conferences gathering information for the project and will assist in completing hearings across the denomination to provide input for a new pastoral letter and foundation document. The document is expected to take three years to complete.

UMs invited to join worldwide Day of Prayer for Peace

United Methodist churches worldwide are invited to pray for peace on Sept. 21. The International Day of Prayer for Peace offers an opportunity for church communities in all places to pray and act together to nurture lasting peace in the hearts of people, their families, communities and societies. The idea was proposed in 2004 during a meeting between World Council of Churches general secretary Samuel Kobia and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, and coincides with the U.N. International Day of Peace. The Day of Prayer is one of the initiatives of the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence.

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RUSSIA, *continued from page 1*

gregations have been paired as “sister churches” since 2001, as part of the churchwide Russia Initiative and a long-term partnership between the Arkansas Conference and the Ural/Siberia District. In 2007, the North District joined the Searcy church in supporting the partnership.

Hosted by church member Marlene Cothorn, the Russian visitors were treated to a full agenda that included the North District pastors’ picnic at Heber Springs; attending an Arkansas Conference Russia Initiative meeting in Little Rock; speaking engagements at Searcy First, Searcy St. Paul and Batesville First; and rest and relaxation at a vacation home on the Spring River at Hardy.

Prokopenkova’s visit “illuminates that good things that are happening with one of our conference initiatives,” said Searcy First UMC pastor Davis Thompson.

The Arkansas church supports its sister church with financial gifts that

pay the pastor’s salary and covers rent for a flat where services are held. Several members of the Searcy church have also traveled to Pervourlask, which is about 30 miles northwest of Ekaterinburg. Another trip to the region is planned in 2009, Cothorn said.

“Methodist churches in Russia are few, and very isolated,” Prokopenkova said through her translator daughter. “And people are often against them and that’s why its important to have a connection with a sister church here, to feel we are one body in Christ. And also it’s very important to have moral support, spiritual support and financial support.”

While at Searcy, Prokopenkova “got to see how we doing things in the church, how we run the church, how we do our services,” Cothorn said. “It’s a learning experience for them.”

Prokopenkova has been a pastor for about four years and will soon complete her studies at the United

Methodist Seminary in Moscow. She also serves as youth director for the massive Ural/Siberian District.

“The best thing I’ve experienced here is communication with those who serve Christ at First UMC in Searcy and in other places,” she said. “I am very interested in communicating with people dedicated to Christ.”

She added that she will be returning to Russia with many gifts of the heart. “I’m going to tell about everything I saw here and enjoyed. We are loved here and we are one big family,” Prokopenkova said.

As a fairly new, 10-year-old Protestant congregation in a region of the world that is heavily Eastern Orthodox, the Pervourlask church “is doing well,” Cothorn said, “and it is due to Tanzilya’s leadership. She has several active programs going in the church.”

“It’s God’s church and God is doing to work,” said Prokopenkova humbly. “I’m just doing His will.”



Tanzilya Prokopenkova (right), pastor of the Pervourlask United Methodist Church in Russia, and her daughter, Nataliya Butor, recently visited sister church Searcy First UMC.

MYTHS *continued from page 1*

start new ones. The school of congregational development is part of that effort.

The July 31-Aug. 5 school is using educational tracks, plenary gatherings and “teaching churches” to give the 300 people in Orlando and 150 at another site in Grand Rapids, Mich., strategies and ideas for creating and developing disciple-making congregations.

“It is a great joy to see how many of our bishops, district superintendents (and) annual conference leaders have become part of the school of congregational development to learn together, and it gives me great hope because as we learn together it will help us move deeper into this idea of change,” Miller said. Turning a church from slow death to vitality requires discipline, motivation and faith that transformation can happen, he said.

The myth that the church is dying is also contradicted by the denomination’s official statistics, which show membership increasing worldwide.

Being connectional

Both a myth and a reality about United Methodist churches is that “we are connectional,” according to Miller. The church is connected institutionally, but its people are not connected as much in their relationships with others, he said.

The clergy at the school of congregational development were asked if they prayed for the United Methodist church down the street and if they

knew the leader or leaders in that congregation. “It is about relationships with others,” he said.

A third myth is that big churches are bad. The reality is that big churches—those 31 United Methodist churches that have 2,000 or more in worship—offer multiple experiences of grace, Miller said.

Of the 35,000 United Methodist churches in the United States, 47 percent have 50 or fewer people in worship. Thirty percent of the total have between 50 to 119 people in worship, and the rest have more than 120 people in worship. “There is a suspicion about big churches,” Miller said. “People question what it is about those churches that allow them to grow, or they question their theology.”

But the large or megachurches are the ones used to learn the principles of creating new congregations and other discipleship-making strategies, Miller said. In the last 10 years, megachurches, regardless of their denomination, have been growing because they offer opportunities that encourage people to come to them and develop their faith.

“The challenge for us is do we look to them with suspicion or is there something we need to learn from those churches that would allow us to flourish,” he said. Churches that make disciples are those that know their context or area, have a discipleship process for newcomers and offer multiple experiences of grace.

Re-envisioning the church

Local churches that desire new members but cannot get them often verbalize a fourth myth that “there are no people out there.” The reality is that there are plenty of people in the neighborhood, but “they are just different from us,” Miller said. A church must intentionally rebirth itself and re-envision itself to connect with people and help them connect with God, he added.

Historically, a Methodist church was planted every one to three miles and went to where the people were. That strategy still exists today, and while churches do close or merge with others, there is a fifth myth that “we have too many churches,” Miller said.

It is not that there are too many United Methodist churches, he said. The reality is that there are too many churches in the “wrong places” and “in the wrong era.”

In the Western Jurisdiction, there is one United Methodist church for every 37,000 people, while there is one for every 6,337 people in the South Central Jurisdiction, one per 5,400 in the Southeast, one per 8,400 in the Northeast, and one for every 7,600 in the North Central Jurisdiction

Miller said there is tremendous potential for the church to connect with the population growth expected across the United States by 2030. The growth is projected to be greatest in the South Central and Western jurisdictions, at 27 percent, followed by the Southeastern Jurisdiction at 26 percent. The North Central and

Northeastern jurisdictions are projected to grow at 8 percent.

Change must be embraced

The school of development is also an avenue to dispel the sixth myth, that “we don’t know how to start new churches.” At one time in its history, The United Methodist Church or its predecessor denominations started a new church every day. Currently in the United States, the denomination averages one church start every 7.6 days.

The reality is that the denomination knows multiple ways of starting new faith communities, Miller said.

While some new churches do fail, others have been sustained or have grown because they connected their discipleship systems, like Sunday school and Bible study, with worship.

“It is a mistake to start a new church and not think of the systems to bring people in,” Miller said.

The final myth is that people in local churches do not want to change. Often, the church does want to change, but “it is the pastor that does not want to change or pay the price,” he said. Effective congregations are led by leaders who welcome innovation and change, Miller said.

“As long as we live with this myth, nothing will change,” he said. Churches that want change learn from others, learn with others and learn from mistakes, he said. They are passionate for God, for others and for God’s vision.

Connection aids hurricane-damaged churches

■ *'New normal' evolves following Katrina disaster; partnerships foster recovery*

By BETTY BACKSTROM

NEW ORLEANS — Without the help of the United Methodist connection, First Grace United Methodist Church would not be a functioning congregation.

"My salary, our associate pastor's salary and part-time music director are paid through the Katrina Church Recovery Appeal," said Shawn Anglim, the pastor at First Grace. "In addition, teams have come from throughout the connection to help us repair and rebuild this beautiful, historic facility, which is a key spot for population growth in New Orleans."

First Grace Church defines one of the Katrina Church Recovery Appeal goals: "growing a congregation where memberships have declined." The appeal also helps physically rebuild churches, parsonages and other facilities, provide salaries for staff and facilitate training for lay leadership.

United Methodist churches are encouraged to take an offering for the Katrina Church Recovery Appeal around Aug. 29, the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

"We have a steadily expanding urban congregation, certainly one of the most diverse in the conference," Anglim said. "If you look at the faces sitting in worship on Sunday morning, you are looking at the faces of New Orleans."

This racially diverse congregation is the result of a merger between Grace United Methodist Church, historically African American, and the predominantly white First United Methodist Church. The expansive church complex, the former site of First Church, is located on Canal Street, just a short drive from downtown.

In addition to worship and church programs, the church houses a women's shelter. "Reports are saying that one in every 25 people in New Orleans is homeless," Anglim added. "The second floor of the building is currently occupied by 10 women, over half of which work at least one job."

'Cutting-edge ministry'

Across town in the Mid-City area, Mount Zion United Methodist Church has a free clinic called Luke's House. "This is cutting-edge ministry," said Connie Thomas, pastor. "Here is a chance for United Methodists to do hands-on work, helping those in need



Mount Zion United Methodist Church in New Orleans operates Luke's House, a free clinic. Leaders include (from left) Jiselle Bock, volunteer and medical school student; Susan Berry, M.D., medical director; and Connie Thomas, church pastor.

UMNS photo by Betty Backstrom

as they recover from Hurricane Katrina."

Badly damaged by the 2005 hurricane, Mount Zion is in an underserved area of the city. "Many of the residents are uninsured and need free health care," said Carol Winn Crawford, pastor of Rayne Memorial United Methodist Church, a partner church in the project. "A lot of children live in the area surrounding Mount Zion."

Luke's House, currently lodged in the church's Family Life Center, serves as a medical facility during the week and a sanctuary on Sunday.

"Our church needs to be completely restored, so we also worship in the center," said Thomas, whose salary is supported by the Katrina Church Recovery Appeal. "This examination area is like a M.A.S.H. unit which we take down before services and put back up again to serve patients during the week. Once we can get appropriate funding to repair the sanctuary, this area will be devoted fully to the clinic."

Gifts from the appeal — combined with conference, district and some local church funds — are used to provide base pay, travel, utilities, housing, pension and health insurance for church pastors and staff. For 2008-2009, a total of 15 pastors and 10 staff will be supported fully or partially through Katrina Church Recovery Appeal funds.

James Moore, pastor of a two-point charge on the southwest coast of Louisiana, knows firsthand the type of support provided through the appeal. "My compensation package is completely underwritten by the Louisiana Conference, which uses Katrina Church Recovery Appeal funds to make that possible," he said.

The two churches — Grand Chenier United Methodist Church and Wakefield United Methodist Church in Cameron—were both destroyed during Hurricane Rita, which slammed into the coast nearly one month after Katrina in September 2005.

With the help of dozens of teams and through major financial gifts from church partners, the Grand Chenier church is fully rebuilt. The Cameron church is currently under construction, and should be finished in time for Christmas.

Distribution center

During the last three years, United Methodists in the coastal community have participated in major efforts to provide disaster relief and recovery. Sweetlake United Methodist Church, which escaped major storm damage, was the site of a large-scale distribution center that put clothing, food, water and other needed items into the hands of area residents.

One area of focus for local congre-

gations has been to address the need for clergy care and for taking care of mental health issues in a region that has suffered extreme trauma. Grand Chenier worked with Catholic Charities to organize a recently held clergy care conference.

Despite huge hits to the shrimping industry, a significant component of the area's economy, people living in these coastal towns remain optimistic, according to Moore. "So much progress has taken place. We continue to pull together as communities and churches to promote growth and to tend to the spiritual and physical needs of the people. We are living a 'new normal.'"

That "new normal" is developing throughout all areas of Louisiana affected by the 2005 storms. A total of 47 United Methodist churches in the Greater New Orleans area were destroyed or severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Three churches in Cameron Parish were severely impacted by Hurricane Rita.

Of the 47 churches damaged by Katrina, 35 are back in ministry. Six churches have merged with other congregations, and six churches have closed.

Moore said he now understands what it means to be part of a "connectional" church.

"As United Methodists we talk about the connection, but this disaster has shown me its true meaning and impact," he explained. "Major financial gifts from partner churches, donated pulpit furniture, and work teams from all over the world — through these things, our churches have been rebuilt by the connection. United Methodists have put their prayers and their money where their heart is."

Anglim speaks passionately about his appreciation for gifts received through the Katrina Church Recovery Appeal. "First Grace UMC would not have had a chance to rebuild without assistance," he said. "Because of this generous support, we've been given enough time to create this serving congregation, which is making a difference to a people in recovery."

Donations to the Katrina Church Recovery Appeal #818-001 can be made online at www.umc.org/churchrecovery or placed in offering plates in local churches.

[Betty Backstrom is editor of Louisiana Now!, the newspaper of Louisiana Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.]



With the Arkansas River as a backdrop, Dumas First UMC youth (from left) Meredith Vickers, Ashley Vickers and Whitney Lemonds join in the Big Dam Bridge Walk for Children and Families, a benefit for Methodist Family Health.

Walking for a good cause

A little heat on a summer's evening didn't deter 320 enthusiastic supporters of Methodist Family Health. With temperatures in the upper 90s at 7 p.m., the challenge was walking across the lofty pedestrian bridge that spans the Arkansas River and sits atop Murray Lock and Dam — also known as Big Dam Bridge — and going from the North Little Rock side to the Little Rock side, and back again. The roundtrip is almost 2 miles.

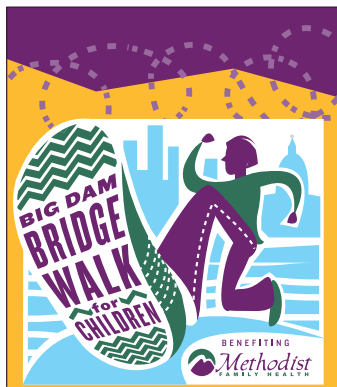
The second annual Methodist Family Health Walk for Children and Families was held Aug. 1. Participants took pledges for their jaunt or made a contribution for the opportunity to join the hike. Combined with corporate sponsors and buoyed by in-kind gifts, the event raised \$55,000 for playground and wellness equipment for children in the care of Methodist Family Health.

To keep cool, Frosty Treats was on hand to distribute free ice cream. Crews & Associates fired up grills to

cook hamburgers and hot dogs provided by Cotham's. The Cabot College Praise Band kept everyone on their toes with live music. Each walker received a T-shirt. Almost 100 volunteers, including many Methodist Family Health employees, insured that registration and activities ran smoothly.

Many of the youth participants completed the route and headed to the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries' Lock-in at Wild River Country water park in North Little Rock to cool off.

Methodist Family Health serves as the management company of Methodist Behavioral Hospital, the Methodist Children's Home and the Methodist Family Health Foundation, all non-profits. Services are offered in 22 cities and towns across Arkansas and offer a wide array of care venues. Every day Methodist Family Health serves approximately 300 clients in residential care and more than 600 through outpatient services.



Taking a breather while crossing the Big Dam Bridge over the Arkansas River are members of Concord UMC, (from left) Derrick Adams, Kendrick Harris, Kevin Kelly and Robby Sinclair.



The August sun keeps hikers warm on the Walk for Children and Families over the pedestrian bridge at Murray Lock and Dam. Mike and Karen Millar (right) of Searcy are among those who hit the pavement on behalf of Methodist Family Health.



Among those hiking across the pedestrian bridge atop Murray Lock and Dam are St. James UMC, Little Rock, members Lynn Staten (center) Don Cole and sons Joshua and Matthew (right).

photos by Jane Dennis



Neill Henry, 3, races ahead of his parents, Mary Martha and Jason Henry, members of Trinity UMC, Little Rock, and grandfather Neill Sloan, a member of Lakeside UMC, Lake Village. The family participated in the Aug. 1 Walk for Children and Families hosted by Methodist Family Health.

eChristianEd study course offered in fall

EChristianEd, a web-based training program designed to equip leaders for ministry, provides affordable and accessible training for volunteers and paid church staff in children, youth, adult and family ministries. eChristianEd is endorsed by the Arkansas Conference and recommended by General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

The next course, Basic 1, will be taught by Arkansas educators LaVerne Keahey and Cecilia Kelly beginning Sept. 16 and continuing through Dec. 16. Some scholarship assistance is available. For an application, contact Keahey at (501) 851-7009 or keaheyh@aol.com, or Kelly (501) 324-8013 or ckelly@arumc.org.

Foundation courses provide training needed in understanding the Bible, theology for ministry, and foundations for Christian education. Advanced courses give specific training in children, youth, adult and family ministries.

Completing five courses satisfies the academic requirements for para-professional certification by the General Board of Higher Education. Details are available at www.eChristianEd.com.

Speakers announced

Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church, Woodlawn and Monroe in Little Rock will welcome several guest speakers to special events in the coming weeks.

■ **Going Green Conference.** Fifty-eight people representing 22 churches and organizations now attend the monthly "Going Green" Conference. All are invited. The next gathering is 5:30 p.m. Sept. 8. State Rep. Kathy Webb will speak about upcoming legislation regarding the environment. Claire LeFrance, executive director of Arkansas Earth Day Foundation, will provide information about Earth Day on April 19. Earth Day is also known as "Festival of God's Creation." Visit www.ArkansasEarthDay.org.

■ **2008 Peace Awards Dinner.** The Bishop Kenneth Hicks Peace Awards will be presented to former Arkansas First Lady Betty Bumpers and Woodruff Elementary School at 6 p.m. Sept. 28. Reservations are \$25 each. A tax-deductible portion of the proceeds will go to the Hicks Peace Endowment for continued peace ministry work and study.

Call (501) 664-3600 for reservations.



Faith, music and inspiration fill youth assemblies

Music, mission, worship, faith and fun drew 300 United Methodist youth from across Arkansas to Junior High and Senior High assemblies last month at Philander Smith College in Little Rock.

Hosted by the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries, the annual summer gatherings — July 19-22 for junior high and July 22-26 for senior high — gave youth opportunities to dive into scripture, service and sharing.

Leyden, a Christian rock band from Hot Springs that features Kyle Thurman, David Rodgers, Bradley Batterton and Duran Crone, was the musical guest at both assemblies. Messages of faith and inspiration were shared by Jay Clark, J.J. Whitney, Justin Ledbetter, Natasha Murry-Norman and Will Choate.

The daily agendas were filled with outdoor games, Bible studies, a talent show and small groups. Senior high participants engaged in workshops focusing on mission efforts such as Heifer International and Nothing But Nets and how to "Wear Your Faith." Participants also enjoyed contemplative walks at the Pulaski Heights UMC labyrinth.

Senior High Youth Assembly participants pray during the closing communion and candlelight service July 25 led by Bishop Charles Crutchfield.

photo by Jane Dennis

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Kids learn valuable lessons at 'Wholly Healthy' camp

■ *Hot Springs church takes conference's health initiative to heart*

HOT SPRINGS — As a part of the initiative on Holy Healthy United Methodist Churches, First UMC in Hot Springs recently held a camp for first- to sixth-graders. Wholly Healthy Kids Camp focused on whole child wellness, techniques of stress and anger management, along with prayer and meditation exercises. This four-day camp lasted from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., and had 29 participants. Each day, the children focused on different aspects of health and wellness.

The first day of camp, the children visited Mid-America Science Museum and saw "The Body" exhibit. The focus on this day was how wonderfully our bodies are made, and "belly" or diaphragmatic breathing. Each day, the children opened camp with large muscle movement followed by breathing and meditation exercises. The focus of the second day was anger management and prayer. The children walked to a local yoga studio and were led in a one-hour session by Karen Smith of Nurture Day Spa.

During closing circle time each day, one camper was selected to take home



Relaxation techniques were part of the Wholly Healthy kids' camp at First UMC, Hot Springs.

a bag of "goodies." The goodies included Rainbow Bear, a Polaroid camera, a relaxation CD and a balloon so the children could teach their families how to breathe deeply to calm and relax. The children also took pictures of how they spent their time with Rainbow Bear and their families practicing relaxation techniques. During circle time the following morning, the

child shared his or her experience with the group.

Nutrition experiences were also a big part of the camp, with the children being very active in their snack making each day. Every day the children had healthy snacks that were creative and fun to eat. The snacks included fruit kabobs, banana dog, sandwich on a stick and trail mix.

Since large muscle movement is important to healthy bodies, and fun is important to children Wednesday included lots of water. The children splashed and played in several pools and enjoyed water games. A guest speaker from Energy also came and led a workshop about diversity and empathy with the children. The children also were led in a discussion and techniques of conflict resolution. On the last day of camp, the children focused on environmental stewardship. After a lesson on reducing, reusing and recycling the children made posters to hang around the church campus. Several bins were placed throughout the church for members to place recyclables such as No. 1 & No. 2 plastics and cans.

The children were told of two missions in town and voted to give the money made from recycling cans to a local food pantry. The field trip this day included a visit to Cedar Glades Park, which was formerly a landfill. The children ended their day by eating at Ryan's Steakhouse to practice making healthy choices.

Because of the tremendous response, this is a program that First Church will continue to offer each summer. For more information on this unique camp and how to start a Wholly Healthy Kids Camp at your local church, contact Rachel Hogue at (501) 623-6668.

Faith leaders call for end to U.S. 'poverty train'

■ *Inequalities start at birth for millions*

United Methodist News Service

Faith leaders say it is time to stop the "poverty train" in the United States and rescue its 37 million citizens living below the poverty line.

The Democratic Faith Working Group (DFWG) and the Out-of-Poverty Caucus (OPC) held a panel discussion June 12 aimed at bringing awareness to the worsening problem of U.S. poverty, as well as exploring solutions. Faith leaders from eight denominations and organizations participated in the discussion held in the Sam Rayburn House of Representatives building.

Poverty is a "lifelong dilemma" that needs to be addressed now, said

Jim Wallis, president and chief executive officer of Sojourners. "The poverty train should stop by 2009," he said.

According to OPC, 37 million U.S. citizens live in poverty and the number increases every year. Since 2000, an additional 5 million people have fallen below the poverty line — defined as anyone with an annual income of \$10,400 or less. OPC says a disproportionate number of those people are minorities and children. United Methodists are emphasizing ministry with people in poverty as one of their Four Areas of Focus.

Poverty, racism and war are preventing the United States from moving forward, said Kip Banks, director of Progressive National Baptist Convention. He said those three evils were first identified by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

"Poverty leads to violence," Banks said.

Poverty involves human dignity, making it not just a moral but a political issue, said Candy Hill, senior vice president for social policy and government affairs for Catholic Charities U.S.A. She pointed out that inequality by race, class and gender, which are at the roots of poverty, starts at birth.

Andrew Genszler, director of advocacy and the Washington office for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, said religious faith must lead everybody to public life with a common purpose to end poverty. Some solutions, he said, include promoting local agriculture, transitioning to a new green economy and increasing road funds.

Along with the problem of poverty is the issue of immigration, said Sam Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. Rodriguez said that mil-



Families sign up for Angel Food Ministries, a grocery relief program in Allegany County, the poorest county in New York.

UMNS file photo by James Melchiorre

lions of undocumented individuals are suffering from indigence. Both immigration and education reform are needed to alleviate poverty, he said.

Rabbi Steve Gutow, executive director of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, emphasized the importance of faith and social involvement in the complete abolition of poverty.

Hands in Motion

■ Camp helps deaf and hearing children learn from each other

Hands in Motion, a summer youth camp, recently brought together youth from across the South Central Jurisdiction with the express purpose of sharing the joy of Christ with hearing and deaf children. The camp was held at Shoal Creek, a United Methodist camp located near New Blaine in the West District of the Arkansas Conference.

The aim of the camp was to allow deaf children the experience of a summer camp as well as to teach hearing children deaf culture and how to effectively communicate through American Sign Language.

"We understand that this is the first camp of its kind in Arkansas," said camp director, Troy Conrad, pastor of the Cavanaugh/Hackett Charge in Fort Smith. "This is the first camp that we know of in which deaf and hearing were partnered side by side."

There are very few resources for the deaf in local churches, according to Conrad. "Deaf children have little or no recourse to seek and find answers about God. The conference does not have a church-sponsored summer

camp for the deaf children and they cannot attend a normal camp because of alienation. A few churches do have translators or try to have Sunday School services for the deaf, but these are normally lead by lay people who do not have formal theological training and in almost all of the churches, the pastoral leadership simply do not have time to devote to learning American Sign Language. Consequently, those deaf who have attended church are leaving organized religions because of a lack of pastoral care and communication."

The Hands in Motion camp was a non-denominational venture between several small United Methodist churches, Southern Baptist and other denominations. The campers made crafts, swam, practiced archery and were



Campers at the Hands in Motion camp at Shoal Creek included both deaf and hearing children.

treated to a racecar show from Tri-State Speedway. Highlights included performances from two sign language choirs and a dance routine that incorporated both deaf and hearing children.

"Camp was an experience none of us will ever forget," said Dee Mathis, director of Hands in Christ Deaf Ministry and a camp counselor. "From decorating the dorms to sharing meals

together, we all found a common bond, [and] learned that each of us were the same no matter if we were hearing or not."

The three-day camp partnered 16 deaf or hard of hearing children with hearing children for all activities. The immersion into the deaf culture was a ministry epiphany for those involved. In all, the camp was enjoyed by 70 children and 20 counselors.

"One of the most moving experiences for me was teaching the deaf children archery through touch alone," Conrad said. "It's amazing how tactile deaf children are and how fast they learn by touch alone and how patient they are with people like me who can barely sign my own name." Hearing children were also taught some basics of American Sign Language.

Conrad said he hopes the Hands in Motion camp will promote awareness among United Methodist congregations of the ministry needs of the deaf in local communities. For more information about the camp or ministry needs of the deaf community, contact Conrad at pastortroy5@mac.com.



UMM leader visits Maumelle

David Adams (right), general secretary of the denomination's General Commission on United Methodist Men, visits with Steve Bullock of Maumelle First UMC United Methodist Men. Adams was guest speaker July 15 at the Maumelle church. He urged the audience to "get on the ball or die." He recommended an outward focus for men's groups, drawing in men from outside the church through common interests such as sports and other activities. He called for "teaching churches" to share best practices proven to help strengthen or start men's ministry. Leadership development is another critical component, and Adams said the Commission is working on a certification program for Men's Ministry Specialists.

Milestones

Cole's Chapel UMC in the West District marked its 100th anniversary June 21-22. A re-enactment of the history of the church and community was presented, with Bill Mainer as master of ceremonies. A fish fry was followed by a concert featuring the Chapel Hill Singers of Cole's Chapel and Diamond State Trio of Ozark.

Sunday's worship service was led by Anita Riddles and Arlene Pickett, pastor. West District Superintendent Bobby Bell was guest preacher, and music was presented by the Chapel Hill singers, the church choir, Oleda Bennett and Todd Patterson. Special guests included former pastors Virgil Bell and J.D. Robinson.

Following a potluck dinner, church members and guests reassembled in the sanctuary and received greetings and congratulations from Franklin County Sheriff Reed Haynes and state Rep. Steve Breedlove of Greenwood, who presented a commemorative plaque to the church.

Mr. and Mrs. Haroldine Hammond

were honored and received flowers in recognition of their 70th wedding anniversary.

Guests browsed through numerous picture albums prepared by Carol Young. One album featured members of the church who had served in the military.

The celebration concluded with the presentation and sharing of a birthday cake baked by Joanie Patterson.

"The congregation is grateful to Lewis and Oleda Bennett, whose dedication and hard work pro-



The rock structure built in 1948 replaced Cole's Chapel original 1908 church building.



Descendants of Jonathan Cole, founder of Cole's Chapel, attending the recent centennial celebration (from left) Jonathan "Sonny" Cole and Dwight Cole, grandsons, and Terry Cole, great-grandson.

vided a memorable event," said Pickett.

Jonathan Cole, founder of Cole's Chapel, grew up in the mountains of Stone County. He enlisted in the Confederate Army. When the Civil War was over he settled in south Franklin County and worked as farmer and dairyman. Some of his descendants continue to live and farm in the area and are active in the church.

Cole's Chapel is located 4 1/2 miles south of Branch on Highway 41.

It Happened

UM Youth from Sugar Hill UMC, Texarkana, recently embarked on a mission trip to Pass Christian, Miss., along with pastors Rob Walker and Terri Morgan and a handful of adult volunteers from the church. The group painted houses, mudded sheetrock, built wheelchair ramps, replaced windows and doors and even found time for some fun. As one of the youth stated, "It was hot, humid, dirty and completely amazing!"

Members of the UMW Afternoon Group of Cornerstone UMC, Jonesboro, recently delivered school supplies valued at \$300 to Fox Meadow Elementary School. The Afternoon Group selected the school as its local community mission project. The group also made a financial contribution to the One Book Foundation to be used by United Methodist missionaries Karen and Charles Wiggins in Tanzania to purchase and distribute insecticide-treated mosquito nets.

More than 150 children attended the Surfin' Through the Scriptures Vacation Bible School at North Little Rock First United Methodist last month. More than 40 adults and youth and countless volunteer hours provided each child with a rich experience each day. With a strong emphasis on mission, the children raised \$794 for the African Children's Choir.

More than 90 children, youth and adult volunteers felt the surf and caught the waves of God's love during Beach Party VBS at First UMC, Little Rock. Everyone learned to surf on the turf and surf through God's Word. They came to know Jesus and developed new Beach Be-Attitudes: Be Obedient, Be Kind, Be Forgiving, Be Bold and Believe! Each day surfers experienced a Bible story at the Scripture Scene, learned tunes at Sound

Waves, made great beach souvenirs at Beachcomber Crafts, ran off energy at Rockin' Rec, got a bit of science in the Surf 'n' Sand Science Lab and ate tasty treats at the Snack Shack.

The mission project was the Arkansas Foodbank Network's Summer Cereal Drive. Children donated 65 boxes of cereal and \$89 to provide breakfast foods to children who desperately need it. Cindy Wallace was VBS coordinator.

Western Hills UMC, Little Rock, welcomed around 30 children to its recent weeklong evening Beach Party VBS. Director Tammy Quick was assisted by youth and adult volunteers who presented skits, taught the "Be-Attitudes," led crafts, songs and other activities.

An 11-member Volunteer in Mission team from Piney Grove UMC, Hot Springs, took part in a construction work trip to the Navajo Reservation at White Cone, Ariz. Participants included team leaders Doris and Cecil Jones and Dorothy and Robert Landrum, Dave and Mary Bower, Donita and Andrea Balfour, Naomi Jones and Ken and Pat McCain.

The Piney Grove team was the third in a series of four teams that helped in the construction of a new sanctuary/fellowship hall for the White Cone United Methodist Church. This church is lead by Pastor Guy Nez Jr. and his wife, Charity. White Cone is located on the Navajo Reservation in the Four Corners area of Arizona.

In addition to painting the building inside and out, the



A Volunteer in Mission youth team from Sugar Hill UMC, Texarkana, heads off on a mission to Pass Christian, Miss.



Older children joining in VBS fun at Western Hills UMC, Little Rock, are led in crafts by Wanda Shipman.

team members visited and worshiped with Pastor Nez and his family.

Caraway UMC youth recently presented Lifehouse's "Everything" skit for the congregation. They later took the performance on the road and performed it at Aldersgate UMC, Blytheville, and Riverside Junior High School, where they received several standing ovations. Casey Emery, a Caraway youth leader, spoke to the teens and shared a moving message. The youth "openly allowed God to use them to touch many lives with delivering this powerful truth, all the while giving God the glory," said Paula Hensley, church communicator.

In addition, eight Caraway youth

attended the Delta Pride. Delta Pride camp, hosted by the Wesley Foundation campus ministry at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

The Calico Rock and Spring Creek United Methodist churches held a "Powerful" Vacation Bible School. The children raised more than \$800 for their three mission projects, the Calico Rock Community Food Room, the Christian Service Center at Pineville, and Nothing But Nets.

Faithful to the Christian call to serve others, a Volunteer in Mission team from Sequoyah UMC, Fayetteville, braved summer days with a heat index of 111 degrees to assist a family in the Clinton area affected by February's tornado.

"We were led by grace to Mount Eagle, Lu Harding, the director, and Wanda Locke, her secretary," said Sequoyah UMC associate pastor Donna Huie. Locke's home, located not far from Mount Eagle, a retreat center that is part of the Arkansas Conference, was demolished by the storm. United Methodist VIM teams are among those helping rebuild it.

The Fayetteville team completed trenches and footings for the home's

See IT HAPPENED, page 13



Children from both Calico Rock UMC and Spring Creek UMC turned out for VBS.



Youth from Caraway UMC perform "Everything," a dramatic presentation about following Christ amid the pressures of modern society.



Volunteers in Mission from Piney Grove, UMC, Hot Springs, who worked recently in Arizona are (from left) Pat McCain, Robert Landrum, Dorothy Landrum, Donita Balfour, Mary Bower, Andrea Balfour, Doris Jones, Ken McCain, Naomi Jones, Cecil Jones and Dave Bower.

IT HAPPENED, *continued from page 12*

foundation, built forms to hold the concrete and cut and placed rebar in the trenches. Many members of the team honed their skills with a pick ax as they prepared the rocky ground.

Locke came out to help on the site one day. "Hearing her tell her story of the storm and its aftermath helped us to understand her, and it helped her to talk about it," Huie said. Evenings were spent at Mount Eagle discussing the day over dinner and with Lu and John Harding.

"We consider our group blessed to be allowed to serve in such a way. It was an incredible gift to us. Having our own worship service at beautiful and inspiring Mount Eagle on Sunday morning just tied that gift with a sacred ribbon," Huie said.

The team included Dennis and Katha Carter, Marilyn Davis, Dick and Donna Huie, Pete Franks, Jeanette Cordell, Sue Kelly, Carl Primeaux and Dennis Stropes. The group is making plans to return to Mount Eagle and continue helping the Locke family in their rebuilding process.

Ten youth and three adult leaders from Greenwood UMC answered the call to Christian service and traveled to the inner city of Birmingham, Ala., last month to be in mission.

Led by youth director Will Strong, the group participated in the Minneapolis-based multi-denominational Youth Works organization. Thousands of students at 70 sites (72 participants at each site) around the United States and Mexico spend 7-8 weeks each summer in Christian service with impoverished acquaintances. They return home, as Greenwood High School senior Cati Griffin explained, "with our hearts so much bigger, ready to do what God wants us to do."

Ranging in age from 13-18, those making the trip in addition to Griffin, were Madi Avlos, Grayson Bell,



Children enrolled in Vacation Bible School at First UMC, Little Rock, prepare for a science experiment in the Surf 'n' Sand Science Lab.

Evan Davis, Emily Gates, Austin Hartness, Jacque Horn, Bryan Loyd, Murphy McCain, Jordan Taylor and adults Kay Oliver and Beth Hawkins.

Greenwood UM Youth spent the week working alongside local church-based groups, BEAT (Bethel Ensley Action Task) and Safe Haven, in addition to Habitat for Humanity.

"Not one person complained," Strong said. "They displayed a phenomenal work ethic."

Oliver seconded that assessment. "I saw the kids evolve spiritually, and show great compassion for others of a different race, class and age."

Griffin returned home grateful and hopeful for things to come. "I felt that we had made a difference in Birmingham, Ala. God has done so much for us."

Searcy First UMC's Chancel Choir, under the direction of Amy Tate, presented "Of Faith and Freedom," a patriotic cantata by Joseph Martin, during the morning worship service July 6.



Youth from Greenwood UMC spent part of their summer in mission in Birmingham, Ala., inner-city ministries.

School supplies donated by members of Cornerstone UMC, Jonesboro, are delivered to Fox Meadow Elementary School. United Methodist Women members Charlotte Griffin and Lucille Milbert (left) and Mary Lou McDaniel (right) present items to teachers Viola Snow and Lynda Medlock.




Coming Up

Gardner Memorial UMC, North Little Rock, will host a fish fry and bake sale from 4-7 p.m. Aug. 23 at the church, 1723 Schaer St. Proceed will benefit Nothing but Nets, a program which fights malaria by providing mosquito nets to protect children from the deadly disease across the continent of Africa. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$6 for children 4-11; children under 3 are admitted free. Tickets will be available at the door or may be obtained in advance by calling (501) 374-9520.

Quapaw Quarter UMC, Little Rock, will host Shannon Wiggins' "Hot Mama Wiggins Variety Hour and Musicfest" as a fundraiser for the church's music program at 7 p.m. Sept. 25. Wiggins, an entertainer who has performed at venues from dirt-floored honky tonks to the Arkansas Repertory Theater, is described as having the "the emotional intensity of a Southern Arkansas freight train, rattling windows then receding to a lone-

some soft cry in the night, carrying saints and sinners away to musical glory and redemption."

Lawrence Hamilton and Stephen Young are also on the bill. Hamilton, the famed singer, dancer and musical director who left Broadway to give back to his home state, has worked with acts like New Kids on the Block and the legendary Lena Horne. He performed for President Reagan at the White House and for Pope John Paul II at the Vatican.

Young has brought the house down at Quapaw many times with his powerful gospel numbers and his personal witness for the Lord. He works with Lawrence often and is one of the star coaches for the church's I Dream A World camp. Newcomers Define Hero will open the show.

Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. Contact the church office at (501) 375-1601 or shannon@qqumc.org.

See COMING UP, page 15



**Hendrix College, Conway, Arkansas
September 11-13, 2008**

**Keynote Speaker: Bishop Minerva Carcaño,
Desert Southwest Conference**

Workshops

- The Bible and Immigration
- Root Causes of Immigration
- Organizing United Methodists for Immigration Reform
- The Local Church as a Place of Outreach and Ministry
- Immigration and Racism

Registration fee: \$50; cont. ed credit offered (1 CEU)

On-line registration: www.umc-gbcs.org/scjimmigration

For more Info: Rev. Steve Copley, Arkansas Justice for Our Neighbors, 501-374-3811 or arjfon@aol.com.



**Sponsors: Arkansas Annual Conference
Arkansas Conference Board of Church and Society
Arkansas Justice for Our Neighbors
United Methodist General Board of Church and Society**

Church leaders honored with Steel-Hendrix Awards

CONWAY — Hendrix College will honor three Arkansans during the 24th annual Steel-Hendrix Awards banquet at 5:30 p.m. Oct. 5 in the Hulen Ballroom.

Nicki Spencer of Little Rock will receive the Youth Director of the Year Award, and Jenni Duncan of Little Rock will receive the Mary and Ira A. Brumley Award for Religious Education. The Ethel K. Millar Award for Religion and Social Awareness will be given to Stephen J. Copley of Little Rock.



Brooks Holifield

Brooks Holifield, the Charles Howard Candler Professor of American Church History at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, and an elder and retired member of the Arkansas Conference, will deliver the keynote Willson Lecture at 7 p.m. in the campus' Greene Chapel. The worship service is free and open to the public.

Tickets for the banquet are \$15 in advance and \$20 after Sept. 29. Those attending the dinner will have a reserved seat for the worship service.

The event is sponsored by the Marshall T. Steel Center for the Study of Religion and Philosophy. Contact J. Wayne Clark, Hendrix chaplain, at (501) 450-1263 for tickets or more information.

Nicki Spencer

Spencer, a native of Little Rock, is a member of Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church in Little Rock. She serves as a certified lay speaker, church administrator, co-coordinator of the youth ministry and a member of United Methodist Women. She also works with youth on district, conference and national levels. Currently she serves as a co-coordinator for the Central District Council on Youth Ministries, and a leader of Just Us Youth, a national youth group that is part of the Community Developer's Program of the General Board of Global Ministries.

Spencer was a participant in the first ever Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly of the United Methodist Church held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in December 2006. Other UMC-related affiliations include Black Methodists for Church Renewal, where she serves as the national secretary, and a member of the Arkansas Conference Young Adult Ministry. Her commitment to

others led her to serve as an Americorp VISTA volunteer where she spent three years serving the economically depressed Midtown Little Rock community.



Nicki Spencer

Jenni Duncan

Duncan, a native of Little Rock and an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church, serves at St. James UMC, Little Rock, where she has been Minister to Families with Children and has worked in adult and lay ministry, spiritual formation and singles. Currently she works with Sunday school, singles ministry, divorce recovery, Bible studies, and women's ministry. She is the author of "Helping Children Cope with Divorce," "Let There Be Peace in the Classroom" and a book of devotions, "Footsteps on the Path of Grace."

Duncan has served on the Board of Diaconal Ministry, Board of Ordained Ministry, and as Little Rock Conference Children's Coordinator. She has designed and presented Caring for Children conferences around the state. She has also been a workshop presenter at numerous state conferences.

Duncan has led mission trips to Sweet Home, Malvern and Marianna in Arkansas; Rio Bravo, Mexico; and Shiprock, N.M. She tells mission volunteers, "People say God inhabits the praises of his people, but when you give God a week, you're going to find he inhabits the mission of his people just as powerfully. Expect to be blessed as you bless others."

Stephen J. Copley

Copley, a native of Gentry and an elder in the United Methodist Church, is the director of the Justice for Our Neighbors program. He has served local churches across the conference and served as chair of the Arkansas Conference Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns and the Hunger Task Force. He also serves on the Conference Board of Global Ministries and is assistant dean of the Arkansas School of Christian Mission. He is past president of the Arkansas Interfaith Conference and serves as the chair of the Arkansas Interfaith Alliance, Arkansas Energy Network, Benefit Bank of Arkansas, the Arkansas Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, the Arkansas Hunger Coalition, and the Arkansas Friendship Coalition.



Jenni Duncan



Stephen J. Copley

He is on the Board of Directors of Camp Aldersgate, the Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the Arkansas Volunteers Organized Against Disaster, the Arkansas Coalition for Economic Security, and the Arkansas Homeless Coalition. He chaired the Give Arkansas a Raise Now Coalition and is currently the chair of the Executive Committee for the Let Justice Roll campaign. He also serves on the Arkansas State Board of Collection Agencies.

Copley is recipient of the Jaycees Outstanding Young Arkansan award, the Entergy Making Things Brighter award and the Arkansas Citizens First Congress Economic Leadership Award.

Brooks Holifield

Holifield was born in Little Rock and has received many awards and fellowships during his distinguished career. He is the president of the American Society of Church History, a member of the Editorial Board, Centennial Publications of the Society of Biblical Literature in America Co Editor, Biblical Scholarship in America, SBL Centennial Publications, National Consultant, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi, a member of the Steering

Committee, Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith, a member of the Pulpit and Pew Project of the Lilly Endowment, and a Fellow for the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion, Emory University.

Holifield has written several books focusing on the history of theology in America. He has also written numerous articles for academic journals and books on the history of religion.

In 1984, Hendrix College inaugurated the annual Steel-Hendrix Award Lectureship to celebrate 100 years of its official relationship with the United Methodist Church. The award was named in honor of Marshall T. Steel, a prominent minister and former president of the college.

At the time the lectureship was established, the college began recognizing people who had made significant contributions in the areas of religious education and social awareness. These awards were named the Mary and Ira A. Brumley Award for Religious Education and the Ethel K. Millar Award for Religion and Social Awareness in honor of three alumni who had distinguished themselves in these fields.

The Willson Lectures were established at Hendrix in 1956 for the purpose of bringing outstanding speakers to discuss spiritual values, sound family relations and vital issues confronting the world today. The Willson Lectures were made possible through the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. Jim Willson. They have established lectureships at 23 United Methodist colleges nationwide.

Volunteers in Mission

This Volunteer in Mission listing includes mission opportunities offered by local churches and districts. Often there are openings on these mission trips and room for additional volunteers from elsewhere to join the team. For more information on any of these projects, contact the individuals listed or Don Weeks, Arkansas Area Volunteers in Mission coordinator, 18 Montagne Court, Little Rock, AR 72223; (501) 868-9193 or 681-2909; dweeks@arumc.org.

Arkansas: VIM Teams needed for tornado and flooding clean up.

Tornado Clean up:

- **Bryant/Benton.** Contact Kay Parda, (501) 944-2390.
- **Little Rock.** Contact Don Weeks (501) 681-2909.

Flooding Clean up:

- **Norfolk.** Contact Fire Chief Frank Baker — (870) 499-5527 office, (870) 499-5610 home, (870)405-0775 cell or Debbie Stanick — (870) 499-5954 home, (312) 972-0095 cell.
- **Oil Trough.** Contact Jackie Gregory, (879) 799-3231, (501) 412-7019 cell.
- **Calico Rock.** Contact Paul Seay, (870) 297-8878.
- **Augusta.** Judy Clark, (870) 347-5066, (870) 347-2216 home.



Sept. 26-Oct. 4: Shiprock, N.M., St. James UMC, Little Rock. Glen Duncan, (501) 551-1951.

Feb. 7-15: Costa Rica, a VIM experience sponsored by First UMC, Bryant. Kay Parda, (501) 847-026 or 944-2390 or kay@fumcbryant.org.

Immediate: Van Buren County, Ark., tornado recovery & rebuilding. Particularly need persons with carpentry and roofing skills. Don Weeks, (501) 681-2909 or dweeks@arumc.org.

Immediate: Urban restoration project in downtown Little Rock. Showers, kitchen & accommodation available at Quapaw Quarter UMC. Betsy Singleton, (501) 375-1600 or revbsb@aol.com



People of Faith

St. Paul UMC, Jonesboro, recently celebrated Scholarship Sunday. Over the last 20 years the congregation has given \$80,000 in scholarships to its college students. Graduating high school seniors received \$1,500 and returning college students received a \$500 book stipend. This year's recipients are Chris Hannah, Meleah May, Dena Muller, Lindsey Ashburn, Jacob Ashburn, Chris Pulliam, Mary Hannah Pulliam and Jodie Green.



Scholarship recipients at St. Paul UMC, Jonesboro, include (front, from left) Chris Hannah, Meleah May, Dena Muller, Lindsey Ashburn; and (back) Jacob Ashburn, Chris Pulliam, Mary Hannah Pulliam and Jodie Green.

A reading in remembrance of William C. Gentry, a clergy member of the former Little Rock Annual Conference, and a reception is planned for 4 p.m. Sept. 7 at First UMC, Arkadelphia. Participants who will be reading include David Thomson, Julia Hall, John Hall, Clinton Atchley, William Durand, Jay Deville and Eileen Durand-Faulkenberry.

Gentry was a long-time member of

the conference and professor of philosophy and religion at Henderson State University. A graduate of Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, he served several appointments, both full- and part-time, including Wesley Foundation campus ministry, local churches and beyond the local church.

In addition, a collection of his essays has been compiled and recently published by University Press of America. "A Philosophical Life," the first volume of his works, also includes remembrances of colleagues, friends and students. It will be available for purchase at the reading.

Bryant Hendon, a member of First UMC, Osceola, was honored with a potluck luncheon July 13 on the occasion of his 100th birthday. In addition to a citation from the state Legislature congratulating him on the milestone, letters were read from President George W. Bush and Arkansas congressman Marion Berry.



Osceola First UMC pastor Bill Fish presents a certificate to church member Bryant Hendon recognizing his 100th birthday.



Remember When

100 Years Ago

Aug. 20, 1908: Rev. J.F. Taylor, chaplain of the Arkansas Penitentiary, helped Bro. McGuyre in a meeting last week on Hickory Plains Circuit. He secured a nice donation of fruit for the prisoners, and the money paid for his services he uses for literature for the prisoners.

50 Years Ago

Aug. 14, 1958: Sunday, August 3, marked a historic date for Little Rock Methodism. At 9:30 a.m. a service began in the Heights Theatre in Little Rock which was to climax preparation that has been being made for several years. The service began as any other worship service, but near the end the words, "In accordance with

the laws and the Discipline of The Methodist Church, I hereby declare that the Trinity Methodist Church is duly constituted" These historic words, spoken by Rev. E.D. Galloway, District Superintendent of the Little Rock District, gave full recognition to the first completely new Methodist church in the western part of Little Rock in 15 years.

20 Years Ago

Aug. 19, 1988: Lillie Parnell, a longtime member of the Cotton Plant United Methodist Church, was honored recently for more than 50 years of service to the congregation. During that time she has served continuously as the church organist and children's Sunday School teacher.

COMING UP, continued from page 13

Two UM churches in Arkansas will host simulcasts of LeadNow, a conference for young adults and those who work with 20- and 30-some-things. St. James UMC, Little Rock, and First UMC, Hot Springs, will be host sites for the Nov. 15 simulcasts, which begin at 8 a.m.

The conference is designed for persons involved in ministry with college students, young singles and young married couples. Both simulcast locations will include workshops, a Mission Village and lunch. Sessions conclude in mid-afternoon. Tickets are \$49.

For more information or to register contact Marcia Dunbar, Little Rock site, (501) 217-6723, or Teresa Holt, Hot Springs site, (501) 623-6668.

In Motion is a communitywide, interdenominational back-to-school bash planned for 5-11 p.m. Aug. 16 at Cabot High School football stadium, 401 N. Lincoln St. Pillar, Kingdown and PLU will be musical guests, along with guest speaker Runks. There'll be free food, prizes and a mini skateboard competition. Cost is \$10. For more information, contact Denise at (501) 339-8693. The event is planned by youth ministers at area churches, including several United Methodists.

Mayflower UMC will host an AARP driving school Aug. 23, beginning at 9 a.m. at the church, Miller (Hwy. 89) and Grove streets. Participants need not be AARP members to attend. Cost is \$10. It is anticipated that those who complete the course will be eligible for a reduction in their auto insurance rates. For more information, contact Linda Varnadore at (501) 650-4640 or (501) 470-0983.

The South Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops, in conjunction with the Intentional Growth Center, will offer an Interim Ministry Training Seminar Sept. 30-Oct. 4 at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center in Fayetteville. The upcoming seminar is the first of a three-phase training program. Phase I and Phase II will be held at Mount Sequoyah. Phase II is a five-month period of work in one's home parish under a mentor's guidance. Jan Hill, coordinator for intentional interim ministry training at the Intentional Growth Center, will be

conducting the training.

For more information and registration materials, contact Hill at (800) 482-1442 ext. 723 or janhill@intentionalgrowthcenter.org. Reservations for meals and lodging are made directly with Mount Sequoyah. Forms are available at www.mountsequoyah.org or by contacting Marilyn at (800) 760-8126 or programs@mountsequoyah.org.

My Soul's Desire Women's Ministry (MSD) will host its first release party, a "denim and bling affair," at 7 p.m. Aug. 26 at Wesley Chapel UMC, 1109 S. State St., Little Rock. The event will be a night of praise and deliverance through song, dance and God's Word. Special guests include Juanita Jackson, pastor of Friendship Church of God in Nashville; Danita Paige, minister of music at Hoover UMC, Little Rock; and Ramona Elliott of Led By The Spirit Ministries, and JDKT.

Sulphur Springs UMC, Pine Bluff will hold a fish fry fundraiser Aug. 23, beginning at 5:30 p.m., at the church, 9238 Sulphur Springs Road. Local talent will provide entertainment. Tickets are \$10. For information, call (870) 879-0109.

Western Hills UMC, Little Rock, will celebrate Homecoming Sept. 7. Fellowship begins at 9:30 a.m., with worship at 10:45. Former pastor Loyd Perry will be guest preacher. A potluck lunch will follow. All former pastors and friends of the church are invited.

Classifieds

PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED in the *Arkansas United Methodist* for 50 cents per word, no limit. Call (501) 324-8031, or mail to: *Arkansas United Methodist*, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Dr., Little Rock, AR 72202; or e-mail: kwilson@arumc.org.

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ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, a 1,000-member church in West Little Rock, is searching for a Children's Intern. This part-time person needs to have a strong faith in Jesus Christ, a passion for teaching children, and an interest in developing church leadership skills. The job requires good social interaction skills, creativity, and a willingness to work in a team environment. Computer skills are required and Early Childhood education is a plus. If interested, please send resume and cover letter by email to Pam Snider at pam@asbury-lr.org or by mail to: Pam Snider, Asbury United Methodist Church, 1700 Napa Valley Drive, Little Rock, AR 72212.

ELM SPRINGS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, a growing church in Northwest Arkansas, is seeking a part-time Director of Youth Ministries. Expected start date is October 1, 2008. Experience preferred. Interested candidates may apply by mail to Elm Springs United Methodist Church, Staff Parish Committee, P.O. Box 8, Elm Springs, AR 72728, or email to umpreach@centurytel.net.

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Study guide offers steps on Darfur involvement

United Methodist News Service

A biblically based study, developed to accompany a best-selling book on the crisis in Darfur, is available to help the Christian community mobilize against atrocities in Sudan.

“Not on Our Watch Christian Companion: Biblical Reflections on the Mission to End Genocide in Darfur and Beyond” is an eight-week study written by Bill Mefford, director of civil and human rights for the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, and Greg Leffel, president of One Horizon Foundation.

The authors, who are receiving no payment for their work, told an Aug. 7 press briefing conducted at The United Methodist Building across from the U.S. Capitol that they intended to create a resource that crossed all theological lines in the Christian community.

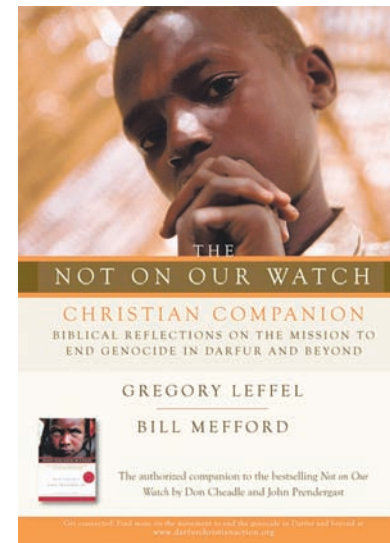
“We wanted to provide biblical reflections that enable people to think through how to respond to genocide,” said Leffel. “We hope to raise awareness about why it’s right to be involved

in this issue in the first place and how to become organized. We tried to link Christian traditions to the wider movement against genocide.”

Mefford said the authors wanted to stay away from abstract, theological detachment. “We tried to make it as personal as possible,” he explained, citing stories of Darfur refugees and aid workers that are in the study guide.

“The most powerful part of the Christian Companion are the steps people will take to get engaged.”

“The Not on Our Watch Christian Companion” is available in paperback and sells for \$7.50. Copies can be ordered through <http://www.darfurchristianaction.org> online. The Web site includes activities to accompany the resource.



Calendar

AUGUST

- Aug. 15-16: UMYF Planning Retreat Camp, Shoal Creek.
- Aug. 15-17: South Central Jurisdictional Singer Songwriter Retreat, Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, Fayetteville.
- Aug. 16: Volunteer in Mission Leader and Disaster Training, First UMC, Fort Smith.

SEPTEMBER

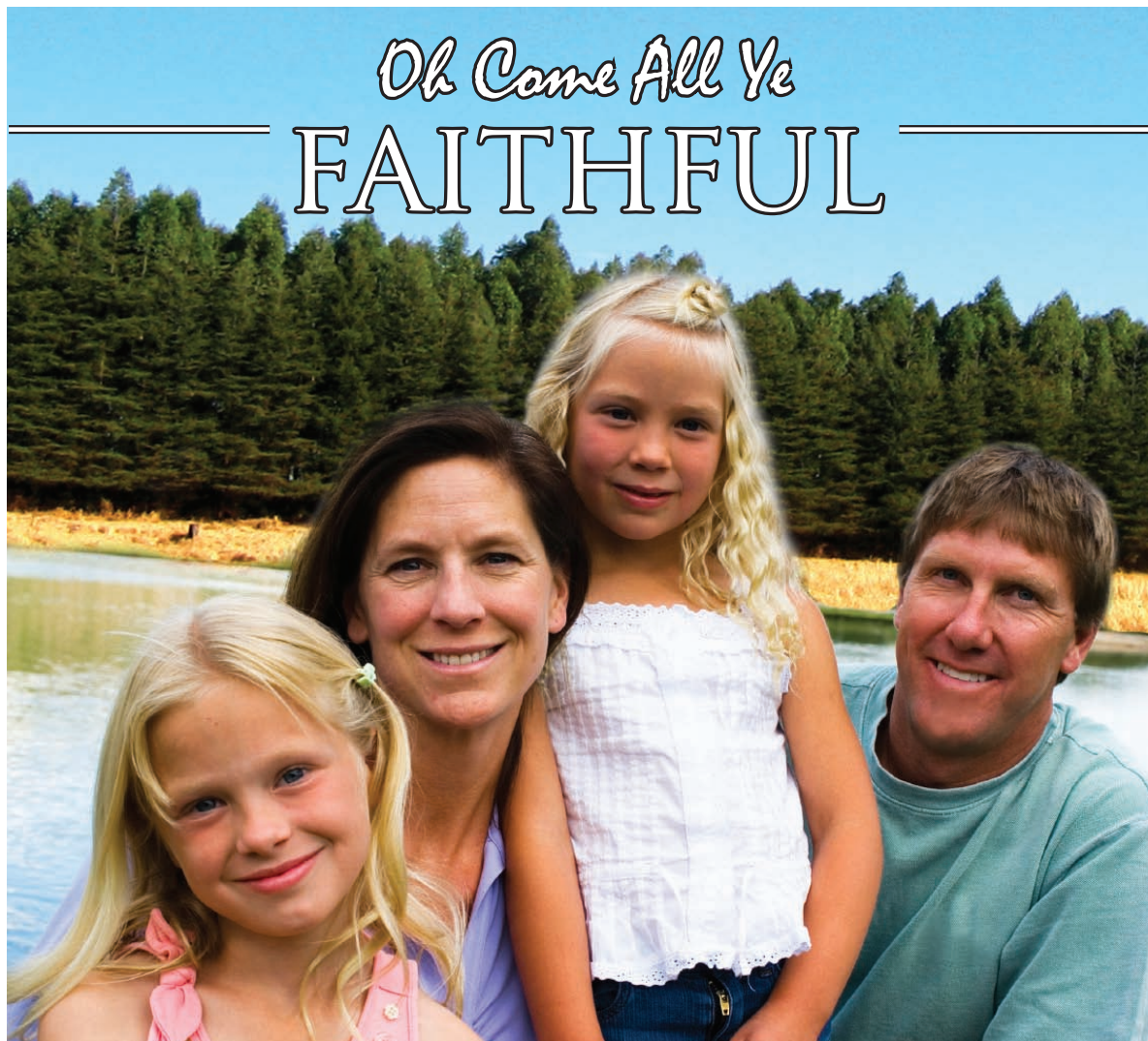
- Sept. 1-3: South Central Jurisdictional Senior/Middle Adult Leadership Training, Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, Fayetteville.
- Sept. 2-9: United Methodist School of Studies, Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, Fayetteville.
- Sept. 13: Children’s Ministry Conference, First UMC, Springdale.
- Sept. 26-27: Hiking/Backpacking Camp, Wayland Spring.
- Sept. 27: Camp Aldersgate 25th Annual Fish Fry, Camp Aldersgate, Little Rock.
- Sept. 30-Oct. 4: Interim Pastor Training Seminar, Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, Fayetteville.

OCTOBER

- Oct. 20-23: Leaves of Gold senior adult event, Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, Fayetteville.
- Oct. 27-30: Autumn Time senior adult event, Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, Fayetteville.
- Oct. 23: “What Are They Saying About the Soul?” lecture by Joel Green of Fuller Theological Seminary, Hendrix College, Conway.

NOVEMBER

- Nov. 8: Arkansas Conference United Methodist Women annual meeting, Benton First UMC.
- Nov. 14-16: South Central Jurisdictional Singles Retreat, Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, Fayetteville.
- Nov. 15: Arkansas Area Ingathering, Arkansas Rice Depot, Little Rock.
- Nov. 15: “Unleashing the Possibilities of Your 20- and 30-somethings Ministry,” LeadNow simulcast presentations at St. James UMC, Little Rock, and First UMC, Hot Springs.



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