



United Methodist

# Arkansas

January 9, 2009

## Pine Bluff church singed by Dec 25 fire

■ Damage contained to one area; stained glass window lost

By JANE DENNIS  
Arkansas United Methodist Editor

PINE BLUFF — A Christmas morning fire damaged the sanctuary of Lakeside United Methodist Church. But thanks to smoke detectors and the quick response of the fire department, the blaze was contained to a relatively small area.

“It’s not nearly as bad as it could have been,” said senior pastor Jim Brooks. “The Pine Bluff Fire Department got here in 10 minutes. They did a wonderful thing for us and put it out very quickly.”

Smoke detectors that are part of an electronic security alarm system went off just before 6 a.m. and alerted the church’s security company, which in turn notified the fire department. No one was at the church at the time of the fire.

A Christmas Eve candlelight service the night before had attracted a large crowd. But all the candles were extinguished and collected at the close of the service and did not play a part in the fire, according to church officials.

Heating units are located under

See FIRE, page 11



Chaplains Scott Shafer (right) and John Lea escort United Methodist Bishop Robert Hoshibata (center) on a tour of the U.S.S. Blue Ridge, a navy ship docked in Tokyo. Shafer, a member of the Arkansas Conference, and Lea are United Methodist ministers and U.S. Navy chaplains stationed in Japan.

UMNS photo by Kathy L. Gilbert

## Armed with faith

■ Chaplains care for many in broad, diverse parish

By KATHY L. GILBERT  
United Methodist News Service

TOKYO — Military commanders stationed in countries along the Pacific Rim say they would not think of going into war without the chaplains who serve as their treasured “battle buddies.”

“I need chaplains to take care of the soldiers so I can take care of their training,” said Col. Jeffery K. Ludwig, deputy commanding officer of the U.S. Army’s 19th Sustainment Command in Deaju, Korea.

Chaplaincy is the Army’s second oldest division behind the infantry.

These unique officers guarantee religious freedom for U.S. troops while providing spiritual care through faiths that range from Christianity, Judaism and Islam to Wicca, goddess worshiping, neo-paganism and druidism.

While most military attention in the United States focuses on conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, thousands of young men and women serve in other dangerous and lonely places. Standing side-by-side with them today are 61 United Methodist clergy serving overseas.

Overall, 339 United Methodist pastors serve as chaplains in every branch

See CHAPLAINS, page 12

## Arkansas UMs make news in '08

■ The year includes host of headlines and highlights

2008 was packed to the brim with decision-making and ministry-shaping gatherings and headline-making happenings that involved and impacted United Methodists from across Arkansas.

Take the 2008 General Conference, for instance, where Arkansans like Rebekah Miles led the way in enacting legislation to streamline the ordination process and the Polly Shafer-designed conference logo was used as the much-embazoned symbol of the worldwide gathering. Or consider the South Central Jurisdictional Conference, which recognized Rodney Steele’s gifts and graces as a leader for the church.

Arkansas saw an abundance of United Methodist headlines in the past year. Here are some of the highlights:

■ United Methodist leaders are vocal in their opposition to a state-run lottery, which is ultimately approved in the November general election.

■ Arkansan clergy, including Wes Hilliard and James Wainscott, are among those in the military Reserves who complete a tour of duty in December serving as chaplains to troops engaged in the war in Iraq.

■ Black UM clergy and laity in Arkansas gather for the first time in more than 35 years to consider the

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## INSIDE HEADLINES

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## Editor's Corner

By Jane Dennis

### Truth and honesty

In the 11 years that I've been writing this Editor's Corner column, my daughters have changed and grown up a lot. When I began in late 1997, my youngest was 2 1/2, and today she is a know-it-all teenager of 13. At the same time, my oldest daughter has made the size-able leap from age 5 to 16.



Jane Dennis

People often tell me they've had fun reading about my girls and their growing up and following my adventures as a mom. Most people correlate my experiences with what they went through (or are going through) as a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle or friend. It's comforting to know others have covered the same ground and survived — and hopefully with a sense of humor intact!

I love my girls with all my heart. But that's not to say we don't have our moments of conflict, anxiety and stress. It goes without saying that neither they nor I are perfect. There are no halos around our house just yet.

Not long ago, my stubborn Sidney was not responding to a mandate I issued; I think it was something simple and practical like "finish your homework" or "get ready for bed." She was basically ignoring me and waiting to see how long it would take for me to get really steamed. It didn't take

long.

Just as I marched into the room where she lounged, bracing for an all out confrontation, she looked at me calmly, smiled and said, "You know why I do that, don't you? Because I know that's what makes you mad."

There. Complete and utter honesty. I have to appreciate

her ability to understand cause and effect, not to mention the bravery it took to cleanse her soul with the truth. When it comes down to it, I much prefer the truth over any kind of lie or made-up excuse.

I'm still dealing with Sidney's compliance issues. But truth and honesty — well, I'll take those anytime.

\* \* \*

Here's another confession wrapped in total truth: It was not my intention to slight the Holy Family or offend anyone with the Dec. 19 cover photo illustration of the Santa kneeling in the hay at the manger of baby Jesus. Two of my Conference office colleagues lambasted my selection of that cover, calling it "banal," "insipid," "kitschy" and "one of the tackiest secular 'Christmas' photos" ever. That's the most feedback I've gotten on a cover in quite a while.

When I ran across that photo, I could not get the phrase "Every knee shall bow" out of my head. "Every knee shall bow" — isn't that what we want for the world, for everyone to know and love Jesus, to bow at his feet and honor him as the savior of the world? Santa is indeed the representation of everything worldly and secular about Christmas — and yet, even Santa was bowing in reverence.

Nevertheless, I apologize to all who may have been offended. I wish to make amends by offering this example of classic nativity artwork. May the blessings of Christmas be yours throughout the coming year.

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



## Letters to the Editor

### Repugnant attack

As repugnant as it is, I believe it is important for the *Arkansas United Methodist* to continue to publish letters like the one from Jim Dunlap (Letters, Dec. 5) of Memphis, because it provides us with a glimpse of where Christianity has gone horribly and violently astray since it began.

Mr. Dunlap made a conscious choice not to argue the belief, but to viciously attack the person who expressed the belief. We should all pay attention because Mr. Dunlap's approach, in my opinion, is the same one that ultimately was at the root of all vicious and violent attacks in the name of Christianity, starting with the burning of heretics by the Catholic church, the persecution compelled by

Protestant reformers, the witch burnings in New England, slavery and oppression in America, the dehumanizing of women, and the Holocaust.

More importantly for each of us, it gives us a glimpse of the ugly and brutal potential we possess, given the right political and economic conditions, for that potential to unite with the potential within others to become yet another of the many, many examples of humankind's succumbing, and letting the perceived threat to one's lifestyle overpower our understanding of Jesus' message and behavior, and instead attempting to destroy those different from ourselves.

Scott Williams  
Little Rock



### CWS: Food, water crises will worsen in 2009

United Methodist News Service

NEW YORK — An increased number of forced migrations, continued global food crises, shrinking water resources and other serious results of climate change represent the principal humanitarian and development challenges of 2009, Church World Service said Dec. 16 in a year-end assessment.

"The world is competing for diminishing resources and, unfortunately, both a worsening global economy and the pressures of global warming are sharpening that competition," said

John L. McCullough, a United Methodist pastor who serves as the CWS executive director. The trends are expected to increase in the year ahead and well into the future, according to the assessment.

"The converging scenarios already are posing major challenges," he said.

CWS is among the humanitarian agencies arguing that the ongoing food crisis affecting millions of people throughout the world now is inseparable from other problems of climate change.



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# Viewpoint

Dear Friends:

Karen and I are in Washington, D.C., visiting our daughter, Melissa. As we made our way to her apartment yesterday we passed the Capitol Building with all of its preparations for the inauguration of President-elect Obama. The platforms are being erected, the port-a-potties put in place, the parking for thousands of tour buses being secured, and the streets being prepared for closure during the parade. It is quite a sight.

As one of our nation's doors is opening to the new Obama administration, another is closing on the Bush administration. What a bless-



## An Occasional Word from the Bishop

ing to be in a country where the transfer of political power is in the hands of the people at a ballot box and not a matter to be settled with guns in the street. There will be new legislative priorities, a new cabinet, a new congress, and new approaches to foreign and domestic policy. In the end, history and God will be the judge of whether or not we as a people use to advantage the opportu-

nities a new beginning provides.

This is true for government, and it is certainly true for the church. The new year gives us an opportunity to learn from the failures of the past, to put behind us concerns that are not worthy of followers of Jesus Christ, and to renew our efforts to be the creative, gracious and commit-




Charles Crutchfield

ted church that Christ calls us to be. It is time for us to put aside the negative, to focus on the possibilities of a future that in God's graciousness has been placed before us. Our task, our purpose, our defining goal is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The marking of a new year gives us a springboard to accomplish our goal.

I look forward to sharing the future with you.

Happy New Year.  
Faithfully,

*Charles Crutchfield* 

# Time to speak out: eliminate 'pay to play' politics

By BISHOP GREGORY V. PALMER

Our United Methodist Social Principles state, "When churches speak to government, they also bear the responsibility to speak to their own memberships." One of the four focus areas within The United Methodist Church is principle-centered leadership. Recently, the people of Illinois have seen a collapse of the public trust.



Gregory V. Palmer

On Dec. 9, Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich was taken into federal custody on charges of political corruption. It was alleged that he had engaged in a brazen attempt to auction off the U.S. Senate seat vacated by President-elect Barack Obama.

As the duly elected governor, Blagojevich has the power to appoint

anyone, including himself, to the vacated seat — a power given to him by the voters of Illinois. As part of that public trust, the people of Illinois put their faith in the governor to exercise due diligence and act in the public's best interest. If the allegations are true, that trust has been violated.

As United Methodists, we affirm, "Churches have the right and the duty to speak and act corporately on those matters of public policy that involve basic moral or ethical issues and questions." It is this right and duty that strike at the core of religious liberty in our country and our state.

As we are well aware in recent years, the reputation of Illinois politics has been soiled by ethical lapses by officeholders, and by those who serve a season and then are charged and convicted once they leave office. In response, lawmakers have taken a piecemeal approach to ethics reform that has been less than effective because of the loopholes built into the law — loopholes that invite its disre-

gard.

This could very well could be a low point in Illinois politics, but it is also an opportunity to demand real and meaningful reform of our elected officials. I have initiated conversation with my ecumenical colleagues to see what steps we can take as the religious community to speak with one voice for real change in the way officials do the people's business. It is time for all of us to be robust participants in civic life and do all we can to restore the public trust.

I would offer the following first steps as a way in which to start that process:

■ I call upon Gov. Blagojevich to respond in ways that promote a restoration of public trust and moral leadership and the healing of this state.

■ I call upon President-elect Obama to keep U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald in place until these proceedings are concluded. As presidential appointees, U.S. attorneys serve at the

pleasure of the president. A disruption in continuity would poorly serve the people of Illinois.

■ I call upon United Methodists to demand from state representatives and senators meaningful reform that eliminates "pay to play" politics with stiff penalties for those who violate the public trust. Several groups have offered comprehensive ideas around the way we fund our political campaigns, which drive much of the perceived need for such schemes.

■ I call upon United Methodists to pray for Gov. Blagojevich, his family and all of our elected leaders as we navigate historically uncharted waters as a state. Take time to stay informed and join in the public debate with the goal of restoring the public trust.

With God's help, even the most difficult times can be times of renewal.

*[Palmer is leader of The United Methodist Church's Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference and president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops.]*

In the words of John Wesley ...

"Once in seven years I burn all my sermons; for it is a shame if I cannot write better sermons now than I did seven years ago."



FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE By Mike Morgan



# Viewpoint

## New stats on young clergy offer hope for denomination

Are more young adults answering the call to ministry? That seems to be the indication of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

In their book published earlier this year, "The Crisis of Younger Clergy," Lovett Weems and Ann Michel gave an analysis of clergy age trends in the



Andrew Thompson

United Methodist Church for the years 1985 to 2005. Those stats showed that young clergy elders in the denomination declined over that 20-year period — both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of all elders.

But the Lewis Center recently updated its report, and the numbers for the past three years are more encouraging.

The number of elders in the church who are under 35 years of age rose from a low of 850 in 2005 to 910 this year. The number of under-35 elders as a percentage of all United Methodist elders also increased from 4.69 percent in 2005 to 5.21 percent



### Gen-X Rising

By Andrew Thompson

today.

The improved numbers are still a far cry from those of 1985, when young clergy elders numbered 3,219 and made up over 15 percent of all UM elders. But the upward trend of the past three years offers a sign of hope that the church is beginning to address its problems with recruiting young adult clergy.

Some conferences in the Southeastern and South Central jurisdictions can boast percentages of young clergy elders well above 8 percent. The highest is in the Arkansas Conference, where under-35 elders make up 9.29 percent of the total.

The Lewis Center report shows other significant statistics. For instance, 2008 is the first year in which women clergy make up more than one-third of all under-35 elders. It appears that women will continue to play a growing role in the ordained ministry.

The Lewis Center's update also offers statistics on deacons and local pastors, which was missing in the ear-

lier report. And it compares those statistics with other denominations, showing how the number of young adult clergy in the United Methodist Church stacks up next to Baptists, Lutherans, Episcopalians and others.

I contacted Dr. Weems, director of the Lewis Center and a professor at Wesley Theological Seminary, to get his take on the recent upward trend. Recognizing that the growing numbers of young clergy are not enormous, Dr. Weems calls it "modest good news." But he also says the growth might be the beginning of a trend that could continue for years.

Dr. Weems also said he felt the church was beginning to take action on promoting the "culture of call" that he and Ms. Michel referred to in their book.

"Behind all this I see very deliberate actions being taken in many conferences related to the culture of the call and to young clergy issues," Dr. Weems said. He also noted that the denomination's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in

Nashville, Tenn., appears to be working with annual conferences to help recruit and retain young clergy.

Dr. Weems sees younger clergy taking initiative to bolster their own ranks. "Younger clergy themselves have engaged this issue with energy because they see it so tied to the future of the United Methodist witness," he said.

The work of Dr. Weems and his staff at the Lewis Center is invaluable on the call and formation of younger clergy. The bare statistics themselves give pastors, laity and annual conferences helpful information with which to act.

But Dr. Weems' promotion of the "culture of call" is as important as the statistics. Only when campus ministries and local churches provide the right environment for youth and young adults to hear the call of the Holy Spirit can the United Methodist Church expect a wholesale renewal of young adult elders and deacons in its midst.

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## Open your heart and allow the Lord to magnify your soul

By MICHAEL TOPHAM

This morning I read again Mary's beautiful song call the "Magnificent." It is a song or prayer sung to the Lord and her pledge of those things that can and should happen because of her son and God's promise.

God's love and mercy are unmatchable. If we allow God to enter into our lives and allow him to use us, there is no end of the miracles that he can perform in and through us. Through his love and mercy he can and does help us in our daily lives, and he can and will answer our prayers, if they are for his glorification. Through his love and mercy he will bring down the oppressor and



Michael Topham

raise up those who have been oppressed in life.

There is a saying that became popular during the 1990s — "What would Jesus do?" This was made into a booming business that the right wing of Christian churches took over as their saying and have used as a hammer to teach children and youth to follow their rules and their tenants of belief. If they knew where it came from and what it really meant they would not have chosen it and would have run from it.

In 1896, the Rev. Charles Sheldon wrote a book called "In His Steps." Sheldon's novel came from a series of sermons he delivered in his Congregationalist church in Topeka, Kans. Sheldon's theology was shaped by a commitment to Christian Socialism.

The ethos of Sheldon's approach to the Christian life was expressed in this phrase "What would Jesus do," with Jesus being a moral example, rather

than a Savior figure. And Sheldon himself identified his own theology with the Social Gospel — something I think John Wesley had hoped the Methodist movement did also.

In this popular novel, the fictitious Rev. Maxwell encounters a homeless man who represents Christ returned for a visit to this world and who challenges Maxwell and his people to take seriously the imitation of Christ. The homeless man has difficulty understanding why so many Christians ignore the poor. He states, "I heard some people singing at a church prayer meeting the other night, 'All for Jesus, all for Jesus, All my being's ransomed powers, All my thoughts, and all my doings, All my days, and all my hours,' and I kept wondering as I sat on the steps outside just what they meant by it. It seems to me there's an awful lot of trouble in the world that somehow wouldn't exist, if all the people who sing such songs

went and lived them out. I suppose I don't understand. But what would Jesus do? Is that what you mean by following His steps? It seems to me sometimes as if the people in the big churches had good clothes and nice houses to live in, and money to spend for luxuries, and could go away on summer vacations and all that, while the people outside the churches, thousands of them, I mean, die in tenements, and walk the streets for jobs, and never have a piano or a picture in the house, and grow up in misery and drunkenness and sin."

The novel's characters start asking, "What would Jesus do?" when faced with decisions of some importance. This has the effect of making the characters embrace Christianity more seriously and to focus on what they see as its core: "the life of Christ."

Who would be the homeless man for us today?

See LIFE, page 5



## Lowery to give benediction at Obama inauguration

WASHINGTON — Joseph Lowery, 87, a retired United Methodist pastor and stalwart of the civil rights movement, will give the benediction Jan. 20 at Barack Obama's inauguration as president of the United States.

A congressional committee announced Lowery's participation on Dec. 17, in addition to the lineup of others who will be part of the ceremonies. Rick Warren, a well-known author and leader of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., will give the inaugural invocation.

In 1957, Lowery and the Revs. Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph David Abernathy and Fred Shuttlesworth founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Lowery served as the organization's president from 1977 to 1998. He retired as pastor of Cascade United Methodist Church in Atlanta in 1992.

## United Methodists call for end to immigration raids

NEW YORK — Some 100 United Methodist Women and United Methodists from across the church's New York Conference held a Dec. 13 vigil at an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facility in lower Manhattan. They called for an immediate end to raids, detentions and deportations of immigrants. Women's Division chief executive Harriett Olson and Bishop Jeremiah Park, New York Area, were among speakers at the Varick Federal Detention Facility.

The event was organized by United Methodist Women/Women's Division, the Methodist Federation for Social Action and numerous groups within the church's New York Annual

**LIFE**, continued from page 4

What would you do if:

- a person with AIDS came into this church for help?
- an unwed mother came to you for assistance?
- a smelly, dirty, homeless person sat down in the pew next to you?
- a gang member showed up with his pants down around his ankles?
- a felon fresh out of prison came up to you on the street?
- an Hispanic family asked you for help since they had just arrived from Mexico illegally?
- a homosexual came to our local church and wanted to join the fellow-

# News Digest



Joseph Lowery

Conference.

The vigil recognized and lamented upon the recent murder of New York resident Marcelo Lucero, an Ecuadorian immigrant and victim of a hate crime. "My heart broke when I saw Lucero's little daughter crying through her father's funeral service. This horrible hate crime never should have happened," said In Koo Chung, pastor of

Patchogue United Methodist Church in Patchogue, Long Island.

## Partnerships provide model for future health care efforts

DADIEKRO, Côte d'Ivoire — Partnerships were at the heart of an unprecedented outreach in West Africa aimed at protecting children's health. More than 1 million insecticide-treated bed nets were distributed in November to young children living in 18 areas of the country most in need. Nationwide, the campaign sought to give every child in that age range the vaccination, vitamin A and de-worming tablet.

The campaign was executed through a coalition that included United Methodists in Texas and Côte d'Ivoire, the Ivorian Ministry of Health, the U.N. Foundation, Population Services International, the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, UMCOR, United Methodist Communications and other organizations.

"The Methodists have done a good work in the mobilization (of volunteers) ... and organizing this campaign. It's a partnership that we have to salute," said Dr. Ekponon D. Angaman, a director with Population

ship?

Are you ready to really understand what it means when you ask the question "What would Jesus do"? And are you ready to receive the answer? Mary knew in her heart that life by life, and in community by community, the change would come — and the changes are still coming.

Let us always be a part of those changes in this world. Let us truly ask the question "What would Jesus do?" And then let us truly do what he would do in each case.

[Michael Topham is pastor of First UMC, Des Arc.]

Services International.

## Yemba named chancellor for Africa University

MUTARE, Zimbabwe — United Methodist Bishop David Kekumba Yemba, a founding member of Africa University's department of theology, is the school's new chancellor and chairman of its board of directors. Yemba was named Dec. 6 to help lead the United Methodist-related school in Zimbabwe, effective immediately. He will remain bishop of the church's Central Congo Area.

Bishop Nkulu Ntanda Ntambo, the outgoing chancellor and board chairman, described Yemba's election as an "important and strategic decision" that comes at a defining moment in the university's history. "In these difficult times for Zimbabwe and for institutions that are operating there, we have

in Bishop Yemba someone who understands and believes in Africa University," said Ntambo, bishop of the North Katanga Area of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

## Retired tour buses shelter Hawaii's homeless

HONOLULU — United Methodist Utu Langi is an advocate for the homeless on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. Langi founded a ministry in 1996 aimed at helping Hawaii's hungry people have hope. Part of that hope now are retired tourist buses that have been converted into temporary shelters for the homeless.

In Hawaii, the brightly painted tourist buses are a frequent sight as they carry guests to see Pearl Harbor, the Dole Plantation or other popular attractions. Langi convinced one of the largest tour companies to donate several retired buses, then spent years working through the permit process with city and state officials. Finally, in September, three buses were put into service as shelters.

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# Storms, nets, worldwide assembly dominate 2008 for United Methodists

■ *Denomination celebrates variety of mission and ministry hopes and plans*

## *United Methodist News Service*

Despite devastating storms, a disappointing economy and declining membership, United Methodists found many reasons for joy and celebration in 2008.

Insecticide-treated bed nets will keep millions of children in Africa safe from malaria due to generous donations from United Methodist congregations, organizations and individuals around the world.

The United Methodist Church joined with other partners in the anti-malaria campaign Nothing But Nets in 2006. Since that time, the campaign has raised more than \$23 million and distributed more than 2 million nets across Africa.

The church's Texas Annual Conference alone raised more than \$1 million for Nothing But Nets and helped distribute some 855,000 nets free of charge during a health campaign in 18 health districts in Côte d'Ivoire. The Nov. 11-15 campaign included nationwide free vaccinations against measles, de-worming tablets and doses of vitamin A to strengthen immune systems.

## 2008 General Conference

During the denomination's top legislative gathering last spring, United Methodists vowed the church and its congregations would nurture the poor, sick and lost across the globe.

The 2008 General Conference met for 10 days in Fort Worth, Texas, and delegates voted to focus on engaging in ministry with the poor; creating new places for new people and renewing existing congregations; stamping out diseases of poverty by improving health globally; and developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world.

In a conference more focused on the world outside the U.S. than in previous years, Liberia President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a United Methodist and the first female president of an African nation, delivered the keynote address.

The Hope for Africa Children's Choir of Uganda, made up mostly of children from displaced persons' camps, brought delegates to their feet with energetic singing and dancing.

The United Methodist Church in Côte d'Ivoire, the largest regional conference of the worldwide denomination with almost 700,000 members, received its full rights and responsibilities.

The worldwide assembly also approved a \$642 million budget for the next four years, created a hymnal revision committee and generally retained the church's stances on homosexuality.

## Prayers for the world

United Methodists hailed the election of the first U.S. African-American president as a "gift" to the world and a bridge-builder among cultures, social orders and national ideologies.

The United Methodist Board of Global Ministries was able, for the first time in many years, to reach out to the people of Cuba when the U.S. granted the agency two licenses for relief work. The licenses will allow the United Methodist Committee on Relief to pro-

Zimbabwe.

United Methodists from five annual conferences attended a summit to discuss sending urgent help to the suffering people of Sudan. Days after the church's Holston Conference raised \$185,934 for southern Sudan, a gathering was held to connect other United Methodists who want to serve in the same region. In November, a United Methodist youth group from Houston participated in "Tents for Hope," an international campaign calling for peace in Darfur.

UMCOR coordinated medicines and medical supplies through U.S. government-sponsored emergency airlifts to the conflict zone in the former Soviet republic of Georgia.

## Rising water, swirling wind

Torrential rains, tornadoes, cyclones, earthquakes and hurricanes left many dead and homeless in 2008, while the church's disaster relief agency stretched its resources to respond.

In February, a rare midwinter storm spawned tornadoes in the southern U.S. that killed dozens of people in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky and Tennessee. Families affected by the Feb. 5 tornadoes suffered an ice storm two weeks later and devastating floods in March.

In May and June, storms and subsequent flooding plagued Midwest states including Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri and Wisconsin.

Two major hurricanes — Gustav and Ike — roared through Haiti and Cuba and flattened parts of Louisiana and Mississippi already devastated from Katrina and Rita three years ago.

Louisiana residents spent Labor Day nervously watching trees and power lines fall as Gustav lashed the state with high winds and rain. Soon after, Ike damaged more than 100 United Methodist churches and parsonages in the denomination's Texas Conference.

The U.S. was not alone in cleaning up after disasters. Rain that began



*The Hope for Africa Children's Choir performs at the 2008 United Methodist General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas.*

UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey



*Marie Akissi Arriko and her daughter receive an insecticide-treated mosquito net from Pam Jackson.*

UMNS photo by Mike DuBose

vide short- and long-term assistance to Cubans affected by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in September.

In Mozambique, a newly launched distance-learning center will help train future United Methodist leaders in Africa. After three years of planning, the Africa Training and Learning Center was dedicated in March as a satellite campus of Africa University, a United Methodist-related school in

Christmas Day in Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe forced thousands from their homes in southern Africa.

The United Nations estimated that 2.4 million people were impacted by the May 3 cyclone in Myanmar, which left 134,000 people dead or missing. Following the cyclone, the government of Myanmar (Burma) blocked most foreign aid workers from assisting the survivors. A prolonged lack of access to relief supplies created a "second wave of disaster," according to Church World Service.

Ten days after a massive earthquake struck China's Sichuan Province on May 12, the death toll stood at 51,151, according to the Chinese government, with 288,431 injured and another 29,328 missing. The estimate of those left homeless by the quake is a staggering 5 million.

## Guns and war

As the Iraq war entered its sixth year, the costs extend far beyond the more than 4,000 U.S. soldiers and 600,000 Iraqis who have died in the violence. Thousands have been left wounded in their bodies, minds and souls — and face a lifetime of struggles related to the experience.

"I am deeply concerned about the returning troops and the mental and physical wounds they have sustained," said Laura Bender, a United Methodist Navy chaplain who served in a field hospital in Iraq. "This all-volunteer force has borne the full weight of this war through multiple, back-to-back



**ARKANSAS,** *continued from page 1*

future of predominately black churches in the state.

■ The church's response to immigration issues is explored in a jurisdictional "Welcoming the Sojourner" gathering at Hendrix College in September.

■ Members of the Arkansas Delegation to General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, are vocal and have significant involvement in the legislation, funding and ministry plans that will guide and impact the denomination over the next four years.

■ UMs are quick to respond to needs of Arkansans impacted by massive flooding and tornadoes in February and more tornadoes in May.

■ A comprehensive communications plan — which includes an emphasis on the denomination's key messages, a revamped web site, new logo and a

tool kit of resources for local churches — is rolled out for the Arkansas Conference.

■ A resolution submitted to General Conference by Arkansas pastor Charles Sigman gives German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer martyr status, a first for the denomination.

■ Healthy living is spotlighted at the 2008 Arkansas Annual Conference, which includes on the agenda the first 5K Fun Run/Walk that draws more than 200 participants. A basketball goal positioned near the conference speakers' platform inside the Hot Springs Convention Center is a reminder of the church-wide Nothing But Nets anti-malaria program. Arkansas native D. Max Whitfield, bishop of the Northwest Texas/New Mexico

Area, is guest preacher.

■ Endorsed episcopal candidate



Arkansas Conference clergy member Rodney Steele withdraws from consideration as bishop at the South Central Jurisdictional Conference in Dallas.

photo by Jane Dennis



Rebekah Miles (center) talks to members of the Arkansas Delegation to Jurisdictional Conference during a time of caucusing regarding the election of bishops.

photo by Jane Dennis



Participants in the first 5K Fun Run/Walk held during the 2008 Arkansas Annual Conference in Hot Springs set off on the route at 7 a.m. photo by Jane Dennis



Army Chaplain and Arkansas United Methodist pastor James Wainscott completed a tour of duty in Iraq, where the summer temperatures soared beyond 130 degrees. photo courtesy James Wainscott

Rodney Steele completes the rigorous interview process in conferences throughout the jurisdiction. At the quadrennial jurisdiction conference in Dallas in July, he falls short of the number of votes needed for election and withdraws his name from consideration.

■ Peace, justice and reconciliation are stressed at Holy Conferences held at 14 sites on a single Sunday afternoon across Arkansas in July.

■ More than 900 UM youth gather in Fort Smith in February for the annual Veritas youth rally.

■ Camp Aldersgate dedicated all new cabins, a pool and health center in April, constructed with a \$7 million grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, the largest grant in the camp's history.

■ Philander Smith College receives a grant of more than \$940,000 from the United Negro College Fund to benefit the college's institutional advancement program.

■ A new online digital version of the Arkansas United Methodist is offered as an option to subscribers of the conference newspaper.

■ Missouri Area Bishop Robert Schnase was keynote speaker for Vital Signs, the conference ministry event in April that drew more than 450 Arkansas clergy and laity.

■ Rock Jones, a clergy member of the Arkansas Conference and former Hendrix College vice president, is inaugurated in October as the 16th president of Ohio Wesleyan University.

■ United Methodist youth in the Arkansas Conference were lauded for raising the most money for Youth Service Fund among the 15 conferences in the South Central Jurisdiction.

**YEAR,** *continued from page 6*

deployments and has done so at great cost."

General Conference approved a petition calling for an immediate end to the war.

The church also continued to help society grapple with the impact of violence, particularly a disturbing increase in shootings in schools and on college campuses in the U.S.

On Feb. 14, a 27-year-old graduate student at Northern Illinois University opened fire in a lecture hall on campus, killing five people and injuring 17 others before killing himself. One of those killed was Ryanne Mace, 19, granddaughter of two retired United Methodist pastors.

Two United Methodist agencies, disappointed with a U.S. Supreme Court decision on handgun ownership, urged church members to advocate for legislation that would tighten federal laws on gun control.

In a joint statement July 1, the United Methodist Board of Church and Society and the Commission on Religion and Race said they were "deeply disappointed by the U.S. Supreme Court decision to strip local municipalities of the right to enact sensible and necessary gun restriction laws." A week earlier, the Supreme Court voted 5-4 that a Washington, D.C. ban on handgun ownership was unconstitutional.

Bush Foundation and more

Following almost two years of debate, the George W. Bush Presidential Center appears poised to be built on the campus of Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

The church's South Central Jurisdictional Conference, which owns the campus, voted 158-118 in July to affirm the private school's lease for the Bush library, museum and policy institute. The jurisdiction's executive committee, called the mission council, initially gave the green light in 2007 to lease the land to the Bush Foundation.

Critics had questioned whether protocol was followed, as well as the appropriateness of the center's place-

ment on the campus of SMU. But in August, Oklahoma Bishop Robert E. Hayes Jr. ruled that a request for a decision of law about SMU's right to lease the property is "improper, moot and hypothetical."

In Indiana, clusters and cooperation were the touchstones for a new streamlined Indiana Conference approved by more than 2,000 UMs in a special session in October. The uniting of the South and North Indiana conferences comes at the conclusion of more than two years of work by task forces and a team made of clergy and lay members from both conferences to streamline the administrative structure and place resources closer to local churches.



# It Happened

More than 20 children participated in the annual children's Christmas program Dec. 14 at Fairview UMC, Camden. "A Christmas Collection" included readings, music and drama. Sammie Briery, coordinator of children's programs for more than 25 years at Fairview, produced and directed the special event. "Santa Claus" visited the children after the program.

In other news from Camden, the Fairview UMC parsonage was awarded the Fall City Beautification Award by the Camden Beautification Committee.

The children of First UMC, Wynne, headed up a mission project in December called "Operation Christmas." They sold homemade "gifts in a jar," which were black bean soup and puppy chow, and raised enough money to purchase items for seven Christmas gift packages to send to U.S. troops overseas. They also donated items to the church's food pantry and the Mitten Tree.



Eric Kelley and Billie Dougherty prepare for the community Christmas dinner hosted by Cabot UMC.

Harrell UMC dedicated its new cross-and-flame insignia on the building exterior at its Dec. 28 worship service. The familiar symbol is made out of metal by members who work in metallurgy; its proportions are exact. The cross and flame is placed over the main entrance on the east side of the building.

Harrell UMC has been busy in recent months. The church has hosted a revival led by LaVon Post, a full slate of Advent and Christmas programs, and a large undertaking for Angel Tree. Buddy Hamner is pastor.



Harrell UMC recently dedicated the addition of the United Methodist cross and flame symbol to the church building.



Members of the Outreach Committee of First UMC, Forrest City, recently spearheaded the churchwide collection of 250 cans of food donated to the St. Francis County Food Pantry, and coats and blankets given to the Care Center. Here, members of the committee are making the delivery, along with pastor Keith Goza (left).



Families that have welcomed babies recently are honored on Baby Recognition Sunday at Cabot UMC.



Children at Wynne First UMC learned about mission last month during Operation Christmas.

At Cabot UMC, nearly 70 members and their families came together Christmas Day to serve dinner to more than 200 Cabot area residents. The dinner is a mission of Cabot UMC and was started last year to minister to those who had nowhere to spend Christmas Day or those who could not afford Christmas dinner. This year the church offered eat-in, carry-out and delivery.

"Our church family really enjoys

coming together on Christmas Day to minister to others and to each other," said Mary Kay Lieblong, the church's director of communications. "While we did not serve many people the first year, it was a true success in that we got to know each other a little better."

Lieblong described it as "a day when we can take our eyes off of ourselves and what we got for Christmas and focus on bringing Christmas to those who are less fortunate and remember the real reason we celebrate Christmas — the birth of the Christ Child."

In other news from Cabot, what better time to celebrate the birth of a child than during the Christmas season and Advent? Cabot UMC held its first Baby Recognition Sunday and "For Unto Us a Child is Born" Luncheon in December. Nearly 40 young families with new babies attended.

Willisville UMC in the Southwest District had a very special day recently, receiving into membership eight persons, including three by professions of faith, including a father and daughter. Seven of the eight comprised three generations of one family. Jerry G. Westmoreland is pastor.



Children at Fairview UMC, Camden, celebrate the holiday season by presenting "A Christmas Collection" Christmas pageant.



A faith-based conference on the environment is slated for May 2 at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church, Little Rock. The event is hosted by the local Green Faith Alliance.

“For the Least of These Our Brethren: Faith, Justice, and the Environment” will feature Rabbi



Rabbi Larry Troster

Larry Troster as keynote speaker. Troster is a nationally recognized religious-environmental leader. He has worked as the Rabbinic Fellow of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, an adjunct lecturer at



J. Matthew Sleeth

the Jewish Theological Seminary, a Steinhardt Fellow at the Center for Life and Learning, a program officer at the Jewish Life Network, and as a rabbi of congregations in Toronto and New Jersey. He is director of the Fellowship Program for GreenFaith, a New Jersey interfaith coalition for the environment.

J. Matthew Sleeth, a Christian environmentalist and author of “Serve God, Save the Planet: A Call to Christian Action,” will make a presentation following lunch. He is executive director of Blessed Earth, a Nashville, Tenn.-based organization that engages faith communities in creation care through church, campus and media outreach.

## Coming Up

In addition, break-out workshop sessions are planned. Among the session leaders will be Arkansas state Rep. Kathy Webb, Pulaski County Judge William “Buddy” Villines, Pulaski County Regional Solid Waste Management director John Roberts, “Green” architect Martha Jane Murray with the Clinton Foundation’s Climate Change Initiative, Little Rock Central High School teacher Annice Steadman, Arkansas Earth founder Shelley Green, Hendrix College environmental chemistry professor Courtney Hatch, Hendrix College biblical studies professor Bobby Williamson and Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church pastor Malik Saafir.

Lunch will be provided by local farmers.

Early registration deadline is Feb. 13. Cost is \$30 per person; \$20 per student. To make reservations, contact Scharmél Roussel at (501) 664-3600 or sroussel@phumc.com.

A United Methodist Marriage Encounter over Valentine’s Day is planned for Feb. 13-15 at the Courtyard by Marriott in Bentonville.

Topics covered include marriage in today’s world, God’s desire for marriage, spousal communication, listening, and expressing and accepting feelings. The weekend will be led by a team from Marriage Encounter-United Methodist, which is recognized by the

General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church.

Registration is available online at [www.encounter.org](http://www.encounter.org) or by contacting Karen and Phil Gier, Arkansas coordinators for Marriage Encounter, at (479) 876-5371 or [plgier@yahoo.com](mailto:plgier@yahoo.com) for more information.

United Methodist Women of Morrilton will sponsor a Mission and Servant Fair, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service from 9 a.m. to noon Jan. 19.

To highlight opportunities for service, 15 non-profit organizations will host displays of their missions in the fellowship hall. Among these are the United Methodist Children’s Home, Ozark Mission Project, Arkansas Hospice, Conway County Christian Clinic, Kids First, Safe Place, Center for Exceptional Children and Literacy Council.

A special program at 10:30 a.m. will feature Arkansas Razorback lineman Freddie Burton and his sister, Daisha Burton Nelson, both graduates of Morrilton High School.

Breakfast snacks will be served. Emma Carothers, UMW coordinator of education and interpretation, is chairman of the event. For more information, contact Anne Queen at [ac.queen@hotmail.com](mailto:ac.queen@hotmail.com).

First UMC, El Dorado, will welcome youth ministry specialist Josh

McDowell for a training event and workshop for volunteer and paid youth leaders from 9 a.m. to noon Jan. 24. The event is free and open to all.

“We want anyone who is involved with their youth to come and hear from one of the best youth authors and speakers ever,” said Matt Carter, director of the church’s youth ministries.

In addition, McDowell will lead evening worship services designed particularly for youth and parents of youth Jan. 23 and Jan. 25, as well as the Sunday morning worship service.

Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock, is offering three new classes that are open to all. They are:

■ “Breaking the Code” (study of symbolic language of Revelation), Mondays, 4:30-6 p.m., Jan. 12 to March 30, led by Ryan Owsley. Participants will study “Breaking the Code” by Bruce Metzger and discuss the symbolic language of Revelation and its teachings.

■ “Living Fully, Dying Well” (end of life issues), Sundays, 3-4:30 p.m., Jan. 18 to Feb. 22, led by Sandy Smith, \$13. Participants will explore how to fully embrace life while making end-of-life decisions.

■ Marcus Borg book study, Sundays, 7-8 p.m. Jan. 18 to May 28, led by Pat and Judy Goss, \$15. Participants will study “Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and the Relevance of a Revolutionary” by Marcus Borg. The group will explore the historical shaping of Jesus in two cultural contexts: the first century and the 21st century.

To register or for more information, call (501) 664-3600.

## People of Faith

Paul B. Coy, associate pastor of Christ of the Hills UMC, Hot Springs Village, was among 17 men and women who completed their course of study in December 2008 for a Master of Divinity degree from Memphis Theological Seminary. Commencement services will be held May 16, recognizing graduates who have completed degree requirements during the 2007-2008 academic year.

Coy joined the Arkansas Conference in 2000 as a student local pastor and previously served Amity UMC.

Jared Guinn of Mabelvale has received a \$1,350 Richard S. Smith scholarship from the United Methodist

Division on Ministries with Young People, Board of Discipleship.

The scholarship is awarded annually to racial/ethnic youth active in their local churches and planning to attend an accredited college or university pursuing a full-time degree.

Guinn is a member of Sardis United Methodist Church and plans to attend Harding University in Searcy. The scholarships are part of the United Methodist Church’s emphasis on leadership as one of the four areas of ministry focus.

Six United Methodist students at Southern Arkansas University have been named Wesley Scholars for the 2008-2009 academic year. They are:

Jessica Tanner of Percy, Robyn Bennett of Magnolia, Alan Thompson of Texarkana, T.J. Hill of Woodlawn, Lindsay Walters of Sheridan and Stephen Brasher of Magnolia.

The recipients are active participants in the SAU Wesley Foundation

at Magnolia and received scholarships through the Wesley Foundation 210 by 2010 program. This program is funded by churches, church groups and indi-



The most recent Wesley Scholars named at Southern Arkansas University are Jessica Tanner, Robyn Bennett, Alan Thompson, T.J. Hill, Lindsay Walters and Stephen Brasher.

viduals making annual gifts of \$210 each. The Wesley Scholars, in turn, provide leadership and ministry through the Wesley Foundation.



## Nothing But Nets scores at LR church

One year ago, Little Rock's Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church declared 2008 the "Year of the Net" and set a goal of raising \$20,000 for the Nothing But Nets program.

By year's end, the congregation had exceeded its goal and raised \$21,500.

Nothing But Nets provides insecticide-treated bed nets to families across Africa. Malaria, a preventable disease, is the leading killer of children in Africa. A \$10 mosquito net can save a life.

The yearlong emphasis was championed by the church Mission Board and led by co-chairs Paula Watson and Meredith Kemper.

"I just thought it was such a worthwhile project," Watson said. "Our church did a year of peace, so I thought, 'why not make 2008 the year of the net?'"

Throughout the year, church members were encouraged to put "nets in their notes" on donation checks. Youth sold "buzz" T-shirts. Children donated cash from collection boxes as part of a five-week Nothing But Nets study in Rotation Sunday School. Members of the Mission Board organized a benefit basketball game, sold miniature stocking at the Christmas Mission Fair and bags of candy at Easter. Hundreds donated to Nothing But Nets in the form of gifts, memorials and honoraria.



Paula Watson and Meredith Kemper, co-chairs of the Nothing But Nets yearlong mission emphasis at Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock, sell Christmas stockings and gift cards to benefit Nothing But Nets at the church's Nov. 23 Mission Fair.

Nothing But Nets was lifted up in prayer, it was talked about at children's time during worship services, and it was emphasized at almost every special event that took place at the church.

"Education was just as important as the fund-raising," Watson said. "We tried to talk to every group in the church about Nothing But Nets. Our intent was to make sure that all ages knew all about it."

The yearlong emphasis in the church of 3,900 members was "exceptionally well received," Watson said. "The congregation got involved and our members knew what Nothing But Nets was about. It was easy for people to get their eyes, hands and hearts around. Even little kids can understand children dying of disease."

The comprehensive program devel-

oped for Pulaski Heights UMC, including an original curriculum created for its children's Rotation Sunday School, is now considered a model for other churches in the denomination.

The people of the United Methodist Church, along with *Sports Illustrated*, NBA Cares, the United Nations Foundation, the Measles Initiative and the Mark J. Gordon Foundation, have raised more than \$23 million to purchase more than 2 million bed nets to end malaria. Bed nets work in two ways: 1) they stop mosquitoes from biting during the night and spreading the disease, and 2) the insecticide on the net kills mosquitoes when they land on it.

More details about Nothing But Nets are available online at [www.nothingbutnets.net](http://www.nothingbutnets.net).

## Deaths

Cabot

WILLIAM "BERT" POWELL, 80, of Cabot passed away on Dec. 15, 2008. He was born June 16, 1928, in Cabot, the son of Luther and Jennie Powell.



Bert Powell

He was a member of the North Little Rock Fire Department for 20 years. He embarked on a second career as a United Methodist minister, studying at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He served as pastor of United Methodist churches at Dover, Quitman and Bethel-Jacksonville. He retired in 1993, accepted an appointment and served the Oakland church at Holland for eight more years, and then retired a second time in 2001. He continued preaching and filling pulpits until his death.

He loved Razorback sports, fishing and gardening. He was a member of Cabot F. & A.M. Masonic Lodge 319.

He is survived by his loving wife of 52 years, Mary Agnes Elmore Powell of Cabot; one daughter, Dianna Hill and husband Raymond of Forrest City; two grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and many other family and dear friends. He was preceded in death by his parents.

Services were held Dec. 18 at Mount Tabor United Methodist Church, with interment at Mount Carmel Cemetery in Cabot.

## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity set for later this month

United Methodists will continue a 100-year-old tradition when they join with those of other Christian traditions to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Jan. 18-25.

The Arkansas Conference Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns supports the Week of Prayer. The observance was first proposed by Paul Wattson in 1908 to cover the days between the feasts of St. Peter and St. Paul. The Franciscan friars and sisters at Graymoor Ecumenical Institute in New York developed the first Church Unity Octave (eight-day period) in 1908. In 1966, the World Council of Churches and the Vatican began collaborating on a common international text. The Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute has developed the texts for use in the United States

since 1968.

The theme for 2009 is "That they may be one in your Hand," from Ezekiel 37:17. The week is rooted in the experience of the churches in Korea. In their context of national division the churches have turned for inspiration to the prophet Ezekiel, who also lived in a tragically divided nation and longed for unity of his people.

The web site of the World Council of Churches and the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship offers resources for pastors and worship leaders.

One way to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is to lay a groundwork for ecumenical ministry. Jon West, pastor of Lincoln Chapel United Methodist Church in Laurelton, Pa., shares the following opportunities that are available to

every church in the United Methodist connection.

❖ **Actively seek opportunities for ecumenical dialogue.** Trust and cooperation are vital.

❖ **Start small.** The greatest movements in Christian unity began with a small group of people sharing over a cup of coffee.

❖ **Connect locally.** Develop ministries with another congregation. Cause people to say, "See those Christians, how they love one another!"

❖ **Involve young people.** They often have fresh perspectives.

❖ **Learn the language.** Study the history, theology and organization of the groups you wish to engage. Be prepared to explain United Methodist beliefs.

❖ **Reach out together.** Work together for a common cause and show that

unity is always stronger than division.

❖ **Share Holy Communion** with a Lutheran (ELCA) or Episcopal congregation. The United Methodist Church has interim sharing agreements with these denominations.

❖ **Surf the Web.** Check out the ecumenical dialogues and documents. Learn about milestones in United Methodist ecumenism.

❖ **Be realistic and honest in your ministry.** We honor and respect each other as Christian brothers and sisters, even if we don't agree.

❖ **Volunteer to serve and become a part** of United Methodist ecumenical work.

For more information, contact Stephen Copley, chair of the Conference Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns at [scopley438@aol.com](mailto:scopley438@aol.com) or (501) 626-9220.



# ASU Wesley receives grant

JONESBORO — The Wesley Foundation at Arkansas State University-Jonesboro, a campus ministry of the United Methodist Church, has received a grant for \$2,385 from the church's General Board of Higher Education Ministries. The grant will be used to purchase a portable sound system for students at Wesley to use when they are leading worship in small local churches, raising funds to support Wesley's campus ministry, and training area youth in contemporary worship techniques, especially during Wesley's Delta PRIDE summer camp.

"I'm thrilled," said student worship team leader Matt Shull, a junior from Searcy. "This is a real boost to our ministry."

"Our students and staff work very hard to minister to students and connect with local churches. Anything that helps us do that better is a plus for Wesley," said Eric Van Meter, director of the ASU Wesley Foundation.

Wesley assistant director Monika Grundy was pleased that the ASU UMC ministry has been spotlighted by the church. "It's great to have GBHEM

recognize us with this grant. Campus ministry can feel isolated sometimes, so it's great to have the larger church affirm our ministry like this," she said.

Each year, Wesley students visit nearly two dozen United Methodist churches, mostly in Northeast Arkansas, to connect with local students considering college and careers, to teach Wesley students how to plan and lead worship, and to raise funds for the Wesley ministry at ASU. The portable sound system purchased with the GBHEM grant will be used by Wesley students in churches without their own sound amplification systems.

The portable sound system also will be used during the Delta PRIDE summer camp. The annual camp gives area youth skills to use in their local churches. Van Meter said one of the most popular activities at the camp is the praise band workshop. He said ASU Wesley students help camp attendees learn about worship instruments, singing, and mixing sound. Between 50 and 75 high school students attend the Delta PRIDE camp on the ASU campus each summer.

## Red Bird Conference to host mission events

The Red Bird Missionary Conference will host two Mission Encounter weeks this year for youth who have completed 11th grade through young adults age 25. The events are planned for July 19-25 and July 26-Aug. 1.

Participants will not only participate in hands-on mission projects and worship experiences but will focus on the calling into mission work.

Mission teams will be hosted at

Camp O'Cumberlands, the Red Bird Conference's camp. Each week is limited to 25 individuals. The cost, which includes food, housing and team supplies, is \$400 per person. Participants are responsible for their own transportation to and from the camp.

Applications are available online at [www.redbirdconference.org](http://www.redbirdconference.org). For more information, contact Angela Cunigan at [campoc@redbirdconference.org](mailto:campoc@redbirdconference.org) or (606) 664-2909.

## FIRE, continued from page 1

each of the stained glass windows along the north side of the sanctuary, Brooks explained. A fan on one of the units shorted out and started the fire, he said.

"The window above this unit fell out and was destroyed," the pastor said. The remaining damage is the result of extinguishing the fire.

"The carpet is messed up and the water that soaked through to the hardwood floor underneath cause the wood to buckle," the pastor said. The fire charred the interior sanctuary wall and peeled back wainscoting, leaving brick exposed. Plywood now covers the hole where the window was.

The fire "upset" church members, Brooks said, "but everyone realizes we got by really well considering what could have happened. Thank goodness

we had a security and smoke alarm system that alerted us."

As of Jan. 5, insurance adjusters had yet to give a full assessment and estimate of repair costs. The stained glass window that was destroyed was installed in 1912 after the completion of the sanctuary, Brooks said. All combined, the church's stained glass windows are insured for \$1.5 million.

On Sunday, Dec. 28, Lakeside's early worship service was held in the chapel and the later service was relocated to the fellowship hall.

"We had a great crowd," Brooks said. "The spirit was good and everyone was relieved. We all know that if the fire had gotten into the floor — which is also the ceiling for fellowship hall underneath — it could really have been bad."



## Remember When

100 Years Ago

**Jan. 14, 1909:** The Prescott District Stewards met in the Methodist church in Prescott on Monday, Jan. 4, 1909, at 2 p.m. Our new and large presiding elder, Bro. W.C. Hilliard, was on hand with a fair number of district stewards. ... Dr. Horace Jewell made a fine talk on "How to manage the erring church member" and "How to stand by the preacher."

50 Years Ago

**Jan. 1, 1959:** Larry Powell, member of the Nettleton Methodist Church, was licensed as a local preacher at the Jonesboro District Conference recently. Larry is a sophomore at Hendrix College, and is preparing himself for the Methodist

ministry. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. R.H. Powell of Nettleton. Rev. Earl B. Carter is pastor of the church.

20 Years Ago

**Jan. 6, 1989:** Among the items listed in "The Year in Review":

- West Memphis continues to mop up from dual disasters in late December: a devastating tornado followed by torrential rains and floods. Rosewood United Methodist Church suffers major structural damage.

- The movie "The Last Temptation of Christ" is released but theater owners in Arkansas decide not to show it following a nationwide uproar over the depiction of Jesus and his life.



## Calendar

### JANUARY

- Jan. 17: "Total Impact: Connected in Christ and the United Methodist Way" training seminar, Searcy First UMC.
- Jan. 17: "How to Raise Children in Troubled Times," Healing Place Ministries, Pine Bluff.
- Jan. 24: "Total Impact: Connected in Christ and the United Methodist Way" training seminar, First UMC, Malvern.
- Jan. 31: "Total Impact: Connected in Christ and the United Methodist Way" training seminar, Heritage UMC, Van Buren.

### FEBRUARY

- Feb. 7: "Ministry in Color: Team Leadership Using the Birkman Method," Connected in Christ training seminar, Searcy First UMC.
- Feb. 13-15: United Methodist Marriage Encounter, Bentonville; Karen & Phil Gier, (479) 876-5371 or [plgier@yahoo.com](mailto:plgier@yahoo.com).
- Feb. 21: "Weaving a Web of Connections: Using Internet Technology for Effective Ministry," Arkansas Conference event, Philander Smith College, Little Rock.
- Feb. 21: "Ministry in Color: Team Leadership Using the Birkman Method," Connected in Christ training seminar, First UMC, Malvern.
- Feb. 21: "How to Raise Children in Troubled Times," Healing Place Ministries, Pine Bluff.
- Feb. 27-March 1: VERITAS 2009, Arkansas Conference youth event, Hot Springs.
- Feb. 28: "Ministry in Color: Team Leadership Using the Birkman Method," Connected in Christ training seminar, Heritage UMC, Van Buren.

### MARCH

- March 6-7: Arkansas Conference Children's Choir Festival, Lakewood UMC, North Little Rock.
- March 7: "Transformational Ministry Planning," Connected in Christ training seminar, Searcy First UMC.
- March 14: "Transformational Ministry Planning," Connected in Christ training seminar, First UMC, Malvern.
- March 9-13: Small Church Leadership Institute, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville.
- March 21: "Transformational Ministry Planning," Connected in Christ training seminar, Heritage UMC, Van Buren.
- March 27-29: Caring for Creation Workshop, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville.

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**MOUNTAINSIDE CHURCH,** a contemporary United Methodist congregation located just inside the East Gate of Hot Springs Village, is interviewing for the part-time position of Praise Team Worship Leader. Weekly job requirements include a Wednesday rehearsal with an established praise team as well as leadership at two contemporary worship services on Sunday mornings. Ability to read and play music and use of Microsoft PowerPoint is necessary. Guitar skills preferred. Excellent competitive salary is based on experience and skill level. Contact Rev. Chris Hemund for more details at (501) 922-2626, or email letter of interest/resum  to [mountainsidepastor@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mountainsidepastor@sbcglobal.net)

**Greenwood UMC** is currently seeking a part-time (3/4) Youth Pastor to continue to grow a large and energetic youth ministry. The Youth Pastor must have the ability and heartfelt desire to love, nurture, minister and grow in faith with the young people and their families in the church and the community. We are seeking a strong Christian who is an energetic, self-starter capable of developing new programs. The Youth Pastor will also provide outside activities for the youth. Housing is provided. Greenwood UMC staff works from a team perspective, and the successful candidate will have ongoing collegiality, support, and opportunities for continuing education. For more information or to send in your resum  contact:

David Hawkins  
P.O. Box 548  
Greenwood, AR 72936  
[drhawkins05@yahoo.com](mailto:drhawkins05@yahoo.com)  
479-996-6397



# UMs give to fund drive addressing hunger in Arkansas

The Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church donated \$2,500 to the Arkansas Community Foundation's (ARCF) recent matching fund drive to address hunger in Arkansas.

During a one-week period just before Christmas, ARCF agreed to donate \$1 for every \$2 donated from other organizations or individuals, up to \$100,000. The United Methodist gift was announced Dec. 15 by Maxine Allen, Arkansas Conference minister

for missions and ethnic ministries.

The ARCF matching funds goal was met, resulting in \$300,000 to help alleviate hunger in Arkansas. The donations were used to replenish food supplies of the Arkansas Rice Depot and the Foodbank Network of Arkansas, both of which supply food to church and community food pantries and hunger relief programs in the state.

"By helping the Arkansas Community Foundation make their

match, we could multiply the funding," said Maxine Allen, Arkansas Conference minister for missions and ethnic ministries. "So we were happy to be able to do this using some of our Ingathering undesignated funds given by our local churches.

"In these tough economic times, most of our food pantries are feeding more people and ending up with empty shelves," Allen said. "This gift will help replenish the food resources available all across the state."

## CHAPLAINS, *continued from page 1*

of the U.S. military worldwide — 139 on active duty and 200 in the Reserves and National Guard. But those numbers are down following a 9/11 surge of volunteers, according to Tom Carter, who works with the United Methodist Endorsing Agency to provide pastoral support to chaplains and pastoral counselors.

"This has been due to more clergy entering in mid-career, and they do not qualify due to age requirements," Carter said, adding that the greatest need for chaplains today is in the Army. "The Army is growing in numbers," he said.

### Hearts and souls

John Lea is a senior officer in the U.S. Navy and a chaplain through The United Methodist Church. Now stationed in Tokyo, he wakes up every day, wraps himself in John Wesley's mantle and places tomorrow in the Lord's care.

Chaplains care for the hearts and souls of the soldiers while other military commanders oversee their physical and mental preparation.

"My job is to load the wagon, not worry about the horse," said Lea, a clergy member from the church's Greater New Jersey Annual Conference.

Before coming on active duty in 1986, Lea was pastor of a small church in Porter Republic, N.J.

"I'm a captain by rank. I'm a chaplain by calling and ordination," he said. "Right now I am the Naval Forces Japan Force chaplain on Rear Adm. James D. Kelly's staff. I'm responsible for chaplains across Japan, Singapore, Korea and Diego Garcia."

Lea said chaplains fulfill three key roles in the life of the military. They serve as symbols of God; they provide listening ears for personal struggles; and they offer hands of comfort on matters of the heart.

"As representatives of God we have a profound ability to remind people of the divine, of the otherness of God, of the Spirit," he said. "I think that we provide an ear for people who often-

times have nowhere else to go and no one they think they can trust with some pretty deep personal struggles.

"We have that tender heart that is different than what they find in the military from the line officers. And the line officers have a huge responsibility for the nation, for the defense of the country. Our job is different in that we're looking to the spirit."

Lea said chaplains remind their flock that "God loves you. I love you. And I'm here to represent that profound truth to you in ways that are different than other officers."

### Ministry challenges

Scott Shafer also serves as a Navy chaplain in Tokyo. A clergy member of the Arkansas Annual Conference, Shafer was serving Good Faith United Methodist Church in Pine Bluff before coming on active duty. He now shares responsibilities with five other Protestant chaplains and one Catholic for the Chapel of Hope at Command Fleet Activities Yokosuka, a U.S. Navy base in Japan.

"I no longer minister to as many blue-haired ladies as I minister to blue-shirted young men and women," he said. "As a United Methodist, I am considered a liturgical Protestant. ... That basically means I baptize babies and have communion a lot.

"I spend much more time on ministry than I was ever able to spend in the parish, but have less time for sermon preparation than ever before," he said. "I won't even go into how much PT (physical training) I have to do every day to stay in shape."

Shafer, who is white, was first assigned to the chapel's gospel praise congregation, which is predominantly African American and Pentecostal and includes whites and Asians.

"If I was in the states in my annual conference, I doubt that a bishop in his right mind would have appointed me to head that congregation. But here I was able to lead that congregation. ... When I started attendance was around 120; when I left it was around 250. So it was a wonderful experience that I

don't think I would have had in the parish."

Both Shafer and Lea agree the United Methodist Church is well-suited to provide pastors as military chaplains. The denomination currently has 139 active-duty chaplains and 200 more in the reserves and the National Guard.

"I see our Social Principles enacted every day in the Navy," Shafer said of the church's statements of belief. "There are no excuses. There are people of different ages, nations, cultures and races all working together toward common goals."

### In appreciation

Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata, who serves the church's Oregon-Idaho Area, traveled to Korea, Japan and Hawaii in August to visit United Methodist clergy serving as chaplains in the Pacific Rim.

"The training and education the

church gives to the clergy makes them especially well prepared to go into a diverse ministry setting," Hoshibata said. "It is important for us to remember that, as United Methodists, we offer to our armed personnel a special gift of not only our effectiveness and our training and our skills, but also our willingness to care for all persons."

Local churches and communities of faith must prepare to offer returning military and their families "a special arm of care and love and compassion," he said.

"I would like to see our churches hear the message of the need to care for those who are coming back from battle ... and welcome them back and give them the appreciation that they are so worthy of for the sacrifice that they are making on behalf of our freedoms."

*[Kathy Gilbert is a United Methodist News Service news writer based in Nashville, Tenn.]*

## 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.**

**Jan. 24-Feb.1:** Costa Rica, construction, sponsored by Rogers Central UMC. Les Oliver, les@cumcrogers.com.

**Feb. 1-7:** Rio Bravo, Mexico, construction, sponsored by Jasper UMC. Larry Acton, (870) 420-3969.

**Feb. 7-15:** Costa Rica, construction, sponsored by Bryant First UMC, Heber Springs First UMC and Jonesboro First UMC. Kay Parda, (501) 366-1828 or kay@fumcbryant.org.

**Feb. 8-15:** Rio Bravo, Mexico, construction, sponsored by Northwest District United Methodist Women. Larry Acton, (870) 420-3969.

**Feb. 21-March 1:** Costa Rica, construction. Larry Acton, (870) 420-3969.

**March 1-9:** Costa Rica, construction. Larry Acton (870) 420-3969.

**March 21-28:** Shiprock, N.M., working with the Navajo Indians, sponsored by Calico Rock UMC.



Paul Seay, (479) 970-0696

**May 23-31:** Salud Y Paz, Guatemala, medical mission, sponsored by Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock. Doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacist, anesthesiologists and other

willing helpers needed. Gwen Efirid, Gwenefird@att.net.

**New and ongoing:** "This Ole Church" VIM mission project. Help restore and repair churches in the Arkansas Conference. Teams will be painting, weather proofing, general repairs, landscaping and other jobs. Teams DO NOT do roofing, plumbing or electrical. The church that asks for teams will provide housing, help prepare meals and provide showers. The teams will supply their food, the materials, tools and labor. Any church can apply for help through their District Superintendent. Teams can sign up by contacting Don Weeks at dweeks@arumc.org.

*Churches that have asked for teams:* First UMC De Queen. David Williams, pastor; St. James UMC, Lonoke, David Scruggs, pastor.