



# United Methodist Arkansas

February 6, 2009

## Churches respond to ice storm emergency

A winter storm that put much of northern Arkansas in a deep freeze in late January has been called the worst disaster of its kind in the state's history.

With below-freezing temperatures sustained over several days beginning Jan. 26, the storm brought a shower of ice that coated trees, roadways, power lines, homes and businesses. The storm toppled trees, snapped utility poles and, at one point, left some 500,000 residents without power. Seventeen storm-related deaths have been reported in Arkansas.

Damage caused mainly by falling

tree limbs was inflicted on United Methodist property along a wide swath in the northern third of the state. Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, a South Central Jurisdictional facility at Fayetteville, was among the hardest hit.

"We're pretty much in a pile of rubble, as far as our trees," said co-director Sheri Altland. "We've got around 2,000 trees on our 32-acre campus, and there are just a handful that have not been topped, split or lost significant limbs." The local newspaper said

See ICE, page 12



Ice-encrusted trees bend and break over buildings at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center in Fayetteville.  
photo courtesy Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center

## Vision of new churches in focus

By **BOB CROSSMAN**

Arkansas's Catch the Vision offering is in harmony with a new emphasis coming from the Council of Bishops, Connectional Table and General Conference.

Over the next four years, the vision and yearnings of the church will focus the work of making disciples for Jesus Christ around four areas of ministry: 1) creating new places for new people and revitalizing existing congregations; 2) developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world; 3) combating the diseases of poverty by improving health globally; and 4) engaging in ministry with the poor.

Funds received from the Catch the Vision offering will help the Arkansas Conference to "create new places for new people" and give birth to new United Methodist congregations in response to the changing demographics of Arkansas.

I have the privilege of serving on the Path One team of the General Board of Discipleship. Our purpose is to re-evangelize the USA so that we might reach more people, more young people, more diverse people for Christ by creating new places for new people. In response to Vision Pathway 1 set by the Council of Bishops, the national strategy created by the congregational

See CATCH THE VISION, page 108



### Food for body and soul

Members of Little Rock's Western Hills United Methodist Church serve an evening meal to the homeless twice a month, taking turns with other congregations. Read more about what motivates this church fellowship to reach out to the homeless, page 7.

photo by Jane Dennis

### INSIDE HEADLINES

■ United Methodist churches serve the homeless through the Interfaith Hospitality Network, page 6.

■ United Methodist Women are among the hosts of the Interfaith Day at the Legislature Feb. 18, page 9.

■ Students from Wesley campus ministries across the state unite in mission to Mexico border town, page 10.

■ Parish and Community Development loan applications due by Feb. 18, page 11.



## Letters to the Editor

On the frontlines

In 1986, having recently retired as a college professor, I went to Haiti on a mission sponsored by Jay Lawhon of World Christian Relief Fund Inc. (WCRF). As we left from Cap-Haitien after the three weeks, a member of another incoming team asked me if we did any good. It would be hard not to do good in Haiti. It is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. Ripley says “cookies made from mud” are used to stave off hunger. (*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, 4/19/08).

Doing good *was* the mission. In the village of 10,000 people only two buildings were more than one story. The others were dirt floored, one room, tin or thatch roofed shacks. The main source of water was wells drilled by WCRF. Electricity was available from 6-9 p.m. What a luxury!

Assigned to me was installing a solar powered hot water heater for the doctor. Also, I was to design a second story to the hospital — adequate but affordable. I heard later an engineer reviewed my work. I still wonder if the second story rose like the phoenix.

What I *do* know is the rising of a youth I met there. In 1986, Odin Rock was a 14-year-old lad — very smart, very personable, good judgment, excess energy. I vowed to myself to help him get all the education he could stand. Today he is a medical doctor. Here follows an email from Dr. Rock:

*After I first met you in '86, I felt that something had changed in my life. In 1995 I left Haiti to go to the Dominican Republic for Medical School, where I graduated in 2002. It took me two more years to get my license for leaving Dominican for Haiti. Now I am in Haiti trying to help with the health system of a country where 80 percent of the population has no access to visit a clinic, as there is none available. Doctors usually stay in the cities. I vow to go to the countryside to help those in need. Now I am operating in Logalite in the southern part of the northern department. It's a small community of 10,000 inhabitants without even a help nurse to see them when they are sick. Now I count on the support of good friends so I can keep up these good works.*

In closing, Jay Lawhon is no longer with us. His son, Noal, now heads WCRF. From time to time it is good to remind ourselves there are people out there on the *poor* front line. Dr. Rock is definitely one of those. I still send him money each month. I thought once he became a doctor he could be weaned, but the poverty there is so profound it is truly a giant step to go from “giving a fish to teaching one how to fish.”

If you feel led to help, send a few dollars to WCRF Inc., in care of Noal Lawhon, 114 Illinois Bayou Dr., Sherwood, Ark. 72120.

Stan Reed  
Batesville



By Jane Dennis

## Editor's Corner

### Welcome all

*Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,*

*A place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.*

*Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;*

*Here the love of Christ shall end divisions:*

*All are welcome, all are welcome, All are welcome in this place.*

[“All Are Welcome,” lyrics and music by Marty Haugen]

Building a house, or living a life, like the one described in this contemporary hymn, is a tall order but still certainly worthy of our aims and aspirations. These inspiring words make me wonder if the hymn is referring to the house where I live with my family or a house of worship (the “church” house). I’ve decided it applies to both.

Our house — the brick, two-story traditional with the Japanese maple out front and the three dogs digging up the back — has more love than just about anything. Sure, the down-



Jane Dennis

stairs bath is still awaiting its final fix-up, the fireplace doesn’t put out much heat, and the extra bedroom is more of a catch-all than our designated “playroom.” But there’s love here, and all are welcome. Why, just the other night daughter Lindsey had a few friends over (well, 17 to be exact). All it takes to keep

them happy is plenty of pizza and cheese dip. But I truly love having them “hang out” at our house, where I can get to know my daughter’s friends and witness their character inside and out (even if I’m not supposed to be hovering too closely ... and those of you with teenagers know what I mean.)

Our churches should be houses of love, where all are welcome, where the kids want to hang out, where divisions end and everyone finds that “rock of faith and vault of grace.”

What a place to call home.

[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)]

## Newspaper's digital version now available at no cost

The *Arkansas United Methodist*, the award-winning newspaper produced by the Arkansas Conference, is now available in digital format at no cost, according to Martha Taylor, director of communications.

“The digital edition of the *Arkansas United Methodist* was launched in January 2008 with a discounted subscription fee,” Taylor said. “We can now offer the digital edition at no cost due to a change in the technology we use to produce the newspaper on-line.”

There are numerous benefits to receiving the publication in its digital form. “The full-color digital edition is delivered quickly to the subscriber’s inbox, is searchable and includes hyper-

links to websites of interest and to authors’ email addresses,” Taylor said. In addition, the on-line edition is “carbon-neutral,” meaning that it causes no environmental harm to produce, she said.

“The lack of environmental impact was one of the most important factors in our decision to go digital,” Taylor added.

New subscribers to the digital edition can add their name to the digital mailing list by going to [www.arumc.org/subscribe](http://www.arumc.org/subscribe). Those currently receiving the *Arkansas United Methodist* in print format may change their delivery format to digital by going to [www.arumc.org/subscribe](http://www.arumc.org/subscribe).



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# Viewpoint

Dear Friends:

Karen and I have just returned from a trip to the Holy Land with some of our most recently ordained clergy. It was a special opportunity for me to get to know them and for them to experience being in the land where our faith was born. It was a special trip for all of us. On my fourth trip to the Holy Land I saw and experienced things I had never encountered.

We also saw and experienced some of the tragedy of war and the effects of war that have been going on for a great length of time. If anything about the political situation was confirmed for me it was that nothing is simple, nothing is easily reduced to black and white, right and wrong, good and bad. It is all so complex. When parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict begin



## An Occasional Word from the Bishop

talking about who is/was wronged and who is/was the aggressor, and who is in the right and who is justified and who is not, certainty slips through your fingers like the sands of the desert. And we, whose hands are not so clean — remember slavery, treatment of Native Americans, Japanese internment camps — are not in much of a position to pontificate.

Of one thing I am certain, however. Whatever solution finally brings peace to Jerusalem, it will begin with a profound spirit of forgiveness. There will be no peace, no healing of centuries of animosity

without forgiveness. There will be no progress, no getting on with life, no way forward without forgiveness.

As for peoples, so for persons. We may not be able to affect directly the vagaries of geo-political actions and the shifts of perspective in Washington and Cairo and Jerusalem and Teheran and London and Moscow and Paris and Amman and Baghdad, but we can affect directly our relationships with our neighbors and those with whom we contact daily. We can practice



Charles Crutchfield

forgiveness and dispense with the weight of anger and animosity and frustration that we carry.

We know One who, while hanging on a cross, spoke of forgiveness for those who killed him. Christ showed us the way. I have no clever formula for peace in the Middle East, but I have a tried and true formula for personal relations, for healing personal wounds, for taking the first steps into wholeness and the life that God in Jesus Christ has promised us. It begins with forgiveness. When we are reconciled one with one another, it will make a difference elsewhere in our world.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Pray for peace with your neighbors. Pray for peace in your life. Practice forgiveness.

Faithfully,

Charles Crutchfield



## Letters to the Editor

A record year

The Arkansas Foodbank Network and our partner hunger relief organizations have reached the end of a very challenging year. More than ever, we are seeing many of our neighbors go hungry as plants continue to close, foreclosures stay constant and prices of goods and services remain high. Many of the newer arrivals at our pantries are first-timers, working families whose incomes no longer stretch to include costs of shelter, gas, health care and food. And we anticipate the economic struggles of families and businesses will only become more challenging in the year ahead.

We want to pause, however, and offer heartfelt thanks for the many individuals, companies, media outlets and volunteers who gave extraordinarily of their time, resources and talents in 2008. We have been incredibly gratified by the level of support each of these entities has given their hungry neighbors in 2008 — and we need it. Because of this support, we have been distributing a record 51,000 pounds of food and grocery products each week over the past two months to our food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters, touching the lives of more than 23,000 people each week. We have distributed about 10 million pounds of food and grocery

products to our member organizations this year — a record.

These challenging economic times are affecting us all, but for many, it isn't just a matter of choosing to eat out less often, or trimming movie outings from the budget. It is a matter of finding enough food to get through the week until the next paycheck. As hunger relief organizations respond to the challenge of increased need, we continue to rely upon our communities to help us help others.

Together we can and will continue to work toward a creating a community and state where nobody has to go hungry.

Phyllis Haynes, executive director  
Arkansas Foodbank Network  
Little Rock



On his knees

How sad that anyone could miss the real message of the cover photo of the Dec. 19 *Arkansas United Methodist* — that “Every knee shall bow” at the Christ Child in the manger.

For a nation that has commercialized the holy season with such great emphasis on Santa Claus, it was so fitting that *even* Santa would be on his knees at the cradle of Jesus.

We thank you for your thought-provoking, reverent cover photo expressing the real meaning of Christmas.

Delores & Alan Schakel  
Mount Ida



Forgo politics

In the Methodist paper on Dec. 19, I found the cartoon “For Heaven’s Sake” not proper for a Christian newspaper. I realize that in our church we have differences in politics. However, I found the cartoon offensive to Democrats. I feel that we do not need to put religion and politics together in our paper.

I respect the opinion of Mike Morgan, but I still believe this is offensive to the United Methodist Church. As a Christian church, we need to work together.

Raul Blasini  
Pocahontas



### Opinions welcomed on Viewpoint Page

The Arkansas United Methodist Viewpoint page welcomes letters and other articles expressing personal opinions. All must be signed and include the author's name, address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for brevity and clarity. Mail to: Arkansas United Methodist, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Dr., Little Rock, Ark. 72202; fax (501) 324-8018; or e-mail [jdennis@arumc.org](mailto:jdennis@arumc.org).

### FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE By Mike Morgan



# Viewpoint

## For clergy, greatest impact is in congregational ministry

Is the authority of clergy in America in crisis?

Pastors often complain that they don't have the same level of authority that the clergy had in previous eras. But is it true?

Are ministers today standing at the end of one long story of decline, traceable all the way back to the glory days of ministry, when preachers really were respected and the calling of ministry was seen as head-and-shoulders above any other profession?

These are questions taken up by E. Brooks Holifield, a United Methodist minister and professor at Candler School of Theology, in his book "God's Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America" (William B. Eerdmans, 2007).

Dr. Holifield sets out to trace the history of clergy in America from the earliest colonial days to the present, focusing on the question of clerical authority in American society.

He looks at "authority" in all the ways clergy have held it throughout



Andrew Thompson



### Gen-X Rising

By Andrew Thompson

history. And he points to the way in which clergy in practically every era have viewed their level of authority in the culture as in crisis.

It seems as if ministers have always thought they were a little less respected and a little less influential than the generation before them.

Dr. Holifield's book is particularly important for Generation X and Millennial clergy in the United Methodist Church today. Young adult clergy always hear that the church is in decline and it is up to them to save it.

There isn't a single pastor in the church under the age of 40 who hasn't asked himself questions like these: Can the church be saved? Will what I do in the church really make a difference? Should I even spend my life serving in an aging church with declining numbers, or should I find something more "cutting edge" to do?

The strength of the story Dr. Holifield tells about the history of clergy in America is that it is far from simple. For instance, he argues that the authority of clergy has always been in evolution and is always

dependent on time and place. The history of the clergy is complex, he says, and there was never a "golden age" when the authority of ministers reigned supreme in the land — not even in Puritan New England!

True, there was a time when clergy tended to be the most educated people in society. And before the rise of other professions, clergy were also seen as authorities in areas like law, medicine and education. For the most part, though, such a role for clergy was ending around the time the United States achieved its independence.

The point that Dr. Holifield argues again and again is that the real authority of ministers has never been fundamentally located in subsidiary areas like government and education. Instead, it is located in the leadership of local Christian congregations.

That's right, in the leadership of the church.

Ministers preach and teach. They baptize and preside at Holy Communion. They comfort the grieving and bring the gospel to the incarcerated. In short, they practice the ministry of the gospel as it has been

handed down since the time of the apostles.

Young adult clergy can tend to be frankly scared about the pastoral ministry of congregations because they get the message that it is the "default" job of seminary grads who can't find something more exciting to do.

Everyone who has been to seminary knows someone who believes that the real action in ministry lay somewhere other than the local congregation — in social action, legal advocacy or some specialized ministry that frees the minister from the pulpit and the pastor's study.

But that belief rests on a very cynical assumption. It assumes that Jesus Christ is no longer doing his most important work through the church. It assumes that a clergyperson has to actually escape the church in order to do the cutting-edge ministry work of the gospel.

Young adult ministers who fall into that trap also tend to see professional qualification or educational attainment as at least as important as their vocational call to ordination.

Here is where the subtle theological undercurrent in Dr. Holifield's otherwise historical work weighs in. It is not, it turns out, that the real authori-

See GEN X, page 11

## 'Unexamined faith' in human institutions can spell trouble

By CHARLES COOPER

The Bible is not adverse to regulating business, and it tends to favor the disadvantaged. "Thou shalt not steal" is a law forbidding a particular business model, and such texts as Leviticus 6:1-5; 19:35-37 make it clear that the just Lord is concerned here with more than shoplifting. Lending, it would seem, is a work of charity (Exodus 22:25-27, Deuteronomy 23:19), and the wealthy are commanded to provide for the needy (Leviticus 19:9-10, Deuteronomy 24:24-25).

The prophet Amos detested the greed of his time. He addressed those



Charles Cooper

who made loans to the poor. He refers to the law (the one above from Exodus) which spoke of how it was wrong to keep a person's cloak overnight. It was fine to hold it during the day, but not when it was needed for protection — and how abominable for the lender to then use the same cloak in worship (Amos 2:8).

I think these texts would apply to many who are suffering in this housing crisis, who are losing their shelter. I know a couple who wanted a better home, who went to a banker and to their surprise were given a loan. They went to the banker just as they go to their doctor. They do not understand finances; they do not understand medicine. They trust those who are supposed to understand such things. And now they may lose their home and cannot sue for malpractice.

Before someone complains that some of the housing mess was caused

by speculation, I know this. I saw the get-rich-quick infomercials on television. People were buying houses on the margin, to use a trader's term. They were buying into a bull market, but when it went bear, they got-poor-quick. These hapless investors paid their money, and they made their choices. I have no doubt that in ancient times there were traders in cloaks, maybe speculators, and that some of these folks borrowed against their inventory. The prophet is not concerned with them. He is concerned with the person who has only one cloak and needs it in the desert cold, whether he borrowed money or not. The prophet would be, I believe, concerned with the person who has a family and a job and may lose a home.

I am a philosophical conservative. I do not believe that unfettered humanity will sprout wings and fly

away into its full potentiality. I believe in laws. I must confess I believe in total depravity, at least as Stuart Henry explained the concept in divinity school, total meaning top to bottom, as opposed to totally bad. So, not only are our carnal cravings "prone to wander," as Robert Robinson put it, but our spiritual aspirations do prowl around at times as wolves in sheep's clothing.

I find unexamined faith in human institutions alarming. Free market economics is a human institution. It does not make anyone honest or free from avarice, no more than sitting in a cow pasture and listening to rock and roll made the long ago hippies as free as they imagined — I think sometimes the spirit of Woodstock grew up and went to Wall Street.

I know not all laws are just. The Puritans not only believed in total

See COOPER, page 5

## Social advocacy agency hails action on Guantanamo

WASHINGTON — The United Methodist Board of Church and Society has issued a statement applauding President Barack Obama's executive orders banning torture, and starting the process to close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. The Jan. 27 statement was issued by Jim Winkler, the agency's top executive, and Bill Mefford, director of its work area on civil and human rights. The statement emphasizes that the United Methodist Social Principles unequivocally condemn use of torture for any purpose.

"President Obama has begun to restore the United States to moral leadership in the world," the statement declares, "and to ensure that our government's policies reflect the ideals for which this nation was founded."

The statement also notes that the executive orders bring the United States into compliance with the Geneva Conventions, which set forth international humanitarian standards that prohibit cruel treatment of detainees.

## Firewood ministry warms hearts, homes in mountains

CHEROKEE, N.C. — Bundled up against 39-degree mountain air, 40 volunteers armed with axes, chainsaws and a hydraulic splitter spread out in the field next to Cherokee United Methodist Church. By the end of the week, the enormous stack of fallen logs piled more than five feet high will become winter fuel to warm the homes of families living on Cherokee land. This is the 15th year that volunteers have traveled to Cherokee to chop



For the 15th year, volunteers like Una Harley helped cut, split and stack wood to heat the homes of hundreds of families living near Cherokee (N.C.) United Methodist Church. UMNS photo by Heidi Robinson

wood.

The ministry began when a group from Cherokee traveled to Johns Island, S.C., to cut firewood with a mission team from First Broad Street United Methodist Church in Kingsport. "As we talked, we realized that there was a need for firewood right there in Cherokee," says Danny Howe, director of missions for the First Broad Street congregation. This year volunteers came from six different states and ranged

in age from seventh-graders to senior citizens.

## Social action agency sets legislative priorities

WASHINGTON — The United Methodist Board of Church and Society has set six legislative priorities for the 111th Congress. The priorities support actions taken by the 2008 General Conference, the denomination's highest policy-making body. The six legislative priorities for 2009 are reform of the U.S. health-care system; just, humane immigration reform; strengthening the social safety net; investing in a "green-energy" future; overcoming global poverty; and increasing levels of U.S. spending for international family planning.

## UMCOR responds to Gaza relief needs

NEW YORK — With a tentative cease-fire holding between Israel and Hamas, humanitarian organizations are stepping up their assistance to Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip.

COOPER, continued from page 4

depravity, they practiced it in the witch trials. The pogroms of Europe were legal, as was Jim Crow. Yet, I would argue that no law is no alternative to bad law. Better law (which is all we can hope for) is better. Amazingly, saints and sinners stop for stoplights, and stoplights reduce accidents at dangerous intersections, no matter how much the city paid the mayor's brother-in-law for the light.

We are in the middle of a financial pile up at a crossroads where there should have been a light, and a lot of us were driving too fast and behaving rudely. In short, we are suffering now

because we have sinned. It is a consequential and corporate judgment. It includes all. Personally, I carry no financial debt, and the simplicity of my life is too precious for me to trade it for mere possessions. Yet, I have prospered with the greedy, and we as a nation are collectively up to our eyeballs in a sea of red ink. So I must confess, "You are just, Lord. We have sinned, and we need to repent."

That may not fix the economy, but it does my soul a world of good to say it.

[Charles Cooper is pastor of the Trumann/Tyronza Charge in the North East District.]



# News Digest

Action by Churches Together, representing more than 130 church-based relief agencies, including the United Methodist Committee on Relief and Church World Service, has issued an appeal for \$4 million to provide immediate relief. ACT estimates that 50,000 people are homeless and 400,000 are without running water.

## UMCOR promotes Eco-Palm Project for Palm Sunday

NEW YORK — The United Methodist Committee on Relief is partnering with the University of Minnesota to build support from local churches for the Eco-Palm Project, which helps harvesters in Guatemala and Mexico receive fair wages for their labor, provides opportunities for leadership and incorporates environmentally sound harvesting techniques.

Last year, 582,900 palm stems were purchased from 2,123 congregations

nationwide, including more than 36,800 orders from United Methodists. The deadline for ordering palms this year is March 2. Visit [www.ecopalms.org](http://www.ecopalms.org) or call the University of Minnesota at (612) 624-7418 to order.

## Africa University students struggle to pay fees

MUTARE, Zimbabwe — The economic climate of Zimbabwe is making it difficult for some Africa University students to pay their fees and continue their education without further scholarship and financial aid assistance. Although fees have not increased at the United Methodist-related university, students and their families are still struggling in an economy that has an inflation rate of about 230 million percent.

Without the fees, "we are likely to suffer the same fate as other universities in Zimbabwe — broken-down infrastructure, no lecturers to teach our courses — and be forced to close our doors to students," said Fanuel Tagwira, the school's interim vice chancellor.

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# Extreme Hospitality

*Homeless families are helped by Interfaith Hospitality Network of Little Rock*

By JESSICA SZENHER

*Special to the Arkansas United Methodist*

Every Sunday is moving day for homeless families housed by the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) of Little Rock. They are greeted by members of host congregations in the 18-church network who help them settle in to their new rooms, eat a healthy meal and enjoy evening activities.

Allen Bird of Pulaski Heights UMC, interim co-chair of the board for IHN, said almost every day people call IHN to see if there is space available to them. "There is a huge homeless problem in Central Arkansas," he said. "And many of those affected are families with children."

IHN has temporarily housed and fed 70 homeless adults and 107 children since it began operation in October 2005. The congregations which make up this network serve homeless families as a unit, helping them to become independent. Most of these families remain in Central Arkansas with parents employed and housing secured.

IHN is one way for congregations to utilize the space and resources in their church buildings that often go unused. IHN network churches take turns hosting the families. Four of the participating host congregations are United Methodist: Highland Valley UMC, Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock First UMC and Maumelle First UMC.

Quapaw Quarter is a support church that provides volunteers who work in the program at the Pulaski Heights Christian Church building. St. Paul UMC, Little Rock, also is a support church and in 2008 the congregation sponsored an Angel Tree program for IHN client families.

Sunday evenings the host church provides greeters to get the families settled in one room per family, always keeping the family units together. "They have dinner and activities or entertainment that can be just watching TV, playing games or talking," Bird said. Then church members stay overnight in the building with the guest families.

On Monday mornings, the IHN van arrives and transports the families to the IHN Day Center at First Presbyterian Church at 800 Scott St. in downtown Little Rock. Some adults go to jobs where they are working to save for housing and other expenses. Others spend the day looking for employment or attending training. Children go to school or day care and are reunited with their parents at the Day Center at the end of the day.



Allen Bird prepares to serve a meal to Interfaith Hospitality Network guests in the One Way Café in the youth area of the Pulaski Heights UMC Disciple Center. photo by Scharmél Roussel

## *Why am I spending the night at my church?*

By LUKE CONWAY

Why am I spending that night at church? That was a question someone asked as I was making my plans to be one of the overnight hosts at my church for the Interfaith Hospitality Network.

I had spent the night in churches before, during youth mission trips and other such occasions, but never at my own church where I was the pastor. Staying all night in my office, sleeping on a rollaway bed, was a new experience.

The question came to my mind again: "Why am I spending the night in my office?" As I lay there wide awake, I glanced over at my desk at a photograph of my family. I thought about them being asleep in our home, less than half a mile away. I thought about the preparations for bedtime, taking their baths, reading stories, the last-minute drinks of water or their favorite drink, chocolate milk. The busyness

and stress of the day was over and it was time to sleep and have dreams of another day filled with opportunities and possibilities. I can't even imagine what it would be like to not have a place where my family can be together to do the things that people typically do at the end of each day.

My thoughts were interrupted by a small child crying. I wondered if everything was OK. I thought about what the parents must be going through; the stress of being displaced and having to move around to different churches, looking for work or keeping a job, and caring for children who may be too young to understand the struggle Mom and/or Dad are going through. What could I do? How could I demonstrate that love that Jesus talked about?

I still heard cries from down the hall. I went into the kitchen and found the bottle of chocolate milk I

*See NIGHT, page 7*

"The adults meet with caseworkers when they are accepted into the program," Bird explained. "Weekly goals and 60-day goals are set and monitored along the way. IHN holds their funds in safe keeping in guest accounts

to help the families reach their financial goals."

The families are transported back to the host church each night, where meals and fellowship are provided. On Saturdays and Sunday mornings, the

families spend their day together at the Day Center or participate in field trips before they move to a new church each Sunday afternoon.

Highland Valley UMC Associate Pastor Brock Patterson, also interim co-chair of board of IHN, credits the success of the program to founder Paul Flanagan of Pulaski Heights UMC, who now leads another program in the city.

"Paul is the reason the ministry is here in Central Arkansas," said Patterson. "He felt called to begin this ministry and was looking for churches to participate. Because I knew Paul, I knew the obstacles like liability and logistics would be overcome. And they were."

IHN is funded through grants and fund-raising activities, according to Elizabeth Camper, IHN case manager.

Camper said most host churches utilize Sunday School rooms for client families' bedrooms, but two congregations use gymnasiums with side rooms that serve as separate living spaces for each family. Churches also use kitchens, parlors, youth rooms and fellowship halls for common areas when the IHN families are guests. The program is limited to four families with a maximum of 14 family members, but averages three families with 12 family members.

In October 2005, Highland Valley was the first church to host an IHN family. Patterson sees IHN as a wonderful opportunity for people who have never taken part in mission projects or feel uncomfortable going away to have a hands-on project at their own church.

"It is more than serving a meal or staying overnight with the families," said Patterson. "It is helping parents with parenting issues or helping them with personal financial issues. These are real folks helping real folks." He said two regular IHN volunteers at Highland Valley are 11- and 12-year-old boys who volunteer with their dads to help serve meals, set the table and play with the children.

"IHN is about local people," Patterson said. "We can keep track of the families who leave IHN to get homes and jobs."

Patterson said sometimes church members are hesitant to be involved in a mission that is in unfamiliar territory because they are uncomfortable there. "But IHN brings real people in need to our places of familiarity and comfort," he said. "It allows us to better understand mission work and is getting people involved who have never been involved in mission work before."

# Nowhere to call home

■ LR's Western Hills UMC cares for homeless year-round, in good weather and bad

By JESSICA SZENHER

Special to the Arkansas United Methodist

"It's mighty cold out here."

"Give him some juice."

"I like that juice. God bless you, Buddy."

"Want more to eat? Have some dessert."

"How cold is it tonight? I heard them say 12 degrees. Is that right?"

"Do you need gloves? I have some in the back of the car. Here, these will fit you. Do you need shoes?"

"We have more takers. Back to work."

Steam rising off the serving tables greeted the homeless men and women who came to eat a hot, home cooked meal served by the members of Western Hills United Methodist Church of Little Rock on Jan. 6, one of the coldest nights of the year, as a part of the Building Bridges Ministry. Western Hills members have been greeting, feeding and getting to know the homeless in this same spot on the Little Rock side of the Broadway Bridge for five years.

Bill Barnett got interested in what his church calls "Under the Bridge" when his son and a friend spent the night with the homeless. Barnett wanted to help with serving meals on Tuesday nights, then determined that his church could be a part of the ministry.

Today Western Hills UMC, which has about 260 members, provides meals every first Tuesday and fourth

Thursday of each month. Members and friends of the church cook the food at their homes and meet at the church. They travel to the bridge and spend from 6-7:30 p.m. with the homeless setting up tables and serving food cafeteria style.

"In the past year, we fed 838 people," said Barnett. With many coming back for seconds and with goodie bags of food being distributed for later use, Barnett estimates the congregation served well over 2,000 meals in 2008.

Ernest Robinson of Little Rock takes advantage of the meals regularly. "These people are God sends for us," he said "They are angels who help us in a bad situation. It is very cold tonight. I don't know how we'd survive without them. It is all good, really



On a frigid January night, members of Western Hills UMC, including pastor Sylvia Nasic (far left), set up tables outside to feed the homeless in downtown Little Rock. photo by Jane Dennis

filling."

A homeless woman who chose to identify herself only as Penelope said, "I think it is great that they do it. Lots of places hand out food in the summer, but these people are here all year. It's a blessing."

"When we set up the portable tables, they come out immediately," Marsha Hays said. "We get to know homeless people personally. We try to help them, persuade them to get shelter

So why do I spend the night at my church?

... Because I know I have a place to live.

... Because this ministry demonstrates God's love.

... Because in doing so I receive a blessing.

... Because I can share a bottle of chocolate milk.

[Luke Conway is pastor of First United Methodist Church, Maumelle.]



With temperatures dipping well below freezing, two men stop by the "Under the Bridge" outreach ministry for a hot meal and supplies to keep warm through the night. photo by Jane Dennis

or medical referrals. We develop relationships so they can trust someone."

While not a member at Western Hills UMC, Drew Boyles is a friend of the church. He participates regularly for one reason: "To serve the Lord," he said "You see the Lord at work and you help Him. 'I am the vine and you are the branches', He said."

Peggy Epperson has been serving "Under the Bridge" for all five years. "Some of us have been way too close to homelessness — they've been there themselves," she said. She and her sons had the idea of making up goodie bags so that the homeless would have food for breakfast or lunch the next day.

Members who participate are from all age groups, including one who is over 90 years old. Barnett, recuperating from a recent knee surgery, has been unable to serve for the past month. But he is excited younger members of the congregation like Epperson and David Wilson have become involved.

"You know many of our churches are getting to be ... more mature," Barnett said. "I'm glad to see our younger members coming out and I am struck by the compassion they show here."

Though 50 to 60 homeless people usually come for dinner, the night of Jan. 6 saw less than 10. Elizabeth Dowell, coordinator of Building Bridges, said there are not enough beds for indoor shelter for all of the homeless, but most stay with

family or friends when it gets this cold or find a safe, warm spot somewhere.

"The people who come down here the ones that fall through the cracks of the programs set up to help the homeless," Dowell said. "They don't qualify for assistance. Most have burned bridges with family and friends. We don't question anyone, just give them a meal."

A total of seven local congregations representing various denominations serve the Building Bridges program.

Western Hills pastor Sylvia Nasic said volunteers try to provide other assistance as well as hot meals. At Christmas the congregation supplied 48 bags of clothing. "Jesus told us to feed the hungry and take care of people who need our help," Nasic said. "This is just what the church is supposed to do."

"God blesses us so that we can bless others," Barnett said. "We show them God's love. His Son showed us by words and actions that we are to be servants."



A pillow and blanket to fight off the frigid cold are accepted by a bundled up gentleman living on the streets of Little Rock.

photo by Jane Dennis

NIGHT, continued from page 6

was going to drink for breakfast the next morning. I went down the hall, toward the sound of the crying, and I knocked on the door where a little 4-year-old girl was trying to sleep with her Mom and Dad. I asked the parents if a drink would help her sleep. They said, "Anything to quite her down." I offered her the chocolate milk and she drank it without ever making another sound the rest of the night.



## It Happened

First UMC, El Dorado, recently made a contribution totaling \$2,500 to the McCurdy School in Espanola Valley, N.M., an Advance Special of the United Methodist Church. Dating to 1912, the McCurdy School currently has a student population of 332 students, from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. The school offers a Christian-based education, small classes, highly qualified faculty and a nurturing and safe environment for students.

Quapaw Quarter UMC, Little Rock, had more than 30 participants in the fifth annual Martin Luther King parade held Jan. 21 in Little Rock. The church's youth group joined in, following a lock-in and attendance at the conference's "pRaise the Roof" concert the previous night. Social Justice chairperson Harold Hughes served as coordinator. The church's contingent included two vehicles, several marchers, some riders, two dogs and a skateboard.

"It is always a blessing to encounter smiling faces waving back and even cheering us as we kick off our Social Justice year showing the world our commitment to equality and brotherhood, but it was even more invigorating with the large group of young people joining us this year," Hughes said.

Razorback linebacker Freddy Burton headlined the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service Mission and Servant Fair Jan. 19 at First UMC, Morrilton. About 150 guests attended.

Burton and his sister, Daisha B. Nelson, both graduates of Morrilton High School, spoke of the value of volunteer service in their lives and as an appropriate way to honor the memory of Martin Luther King Jr.

Opportunities of service were offered to the crowd by 17 agencies that had displays in fellowship hall, where Burton also visited with fans who were eager for autographs and pictures. Among the agencies represented were Ozark Mission Project, Heifer International, Methodist Family Health, Bobby Jackson Congo Wesley Foundation, American Red Cross, AFS Intercultural Exchange, Arkansas Hospice and local missions including the free health clinic, food pantry, literacy council, center for battered women and children, fitness center and others.

Music directed by Preston Sweeden included congregational singing, solos by Mario Miller, and a quartet featuring Kathy Bryan, John Gibson, Pat

Sweeden and Miller.

Guests came from many local churches, with a large contingent from the Burtons' church, Mount Carmel Missionary Baptist Church. Voicy Steward of Menifee's Philadelphia Baptist Church spoke of observances of MLK Day in Conway County and the life of Dr. King. Eight students from Morrilton High School presented a reading of the "I Have a Dream" speech.

United Methodist Women served refreshments. The event was coordinated by the UMW Mission Team for Education and Interpretation, Emma Carothers, Pamela Brownlee, Mara Cowein, Beverly Hutchcroft and Anne Queen, with assistance from Social



At Des Arc UMC, pastor Mike Topham is joined by (from left) Faith Gross, Jenna Grace Holland, Turner Holland, Chandler Ford and Logan Shelton, in presenting \$290 in coins to Mary Ann Williams, a representative of a local literacy program.



Bundled up against the cold, members of Quapaw Quarter UMC, Little Rock, join the Jan. 21 Martin Luther King parade through downtown Little Rock.

Action coordinator Becki Griffey and youth minister Cody Vest.

Des Arc UMC United Methodist Kids sponsored a coin drive and collected more than \$290, which they donated to the Margaret Fisher Literacy Challenge Fund. The fund promotes reading by distributing books throughout the county and other means.

This project by the Des Arc kids follows on the heels of a fall coin drive that raised \$300 for Arkansas Children's Hospital.

Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock, hosted a SOUPER Bowl Sunday soup sale Feb. 1 that turned sales of 194 quarts of soup into proceeds of \$1,508. The funds were donated to the church's food pantry, which is celebrating 20 years of Saturday morning deliveries to those in need. Clients are referred by school counselors, the state Department of Human Services, United Way and other agencies. Church volunteers deliver sacks of groceries each



Morrilton First UMC pastor Jerry Collins (left) greets Arkansas Razorback football player Freddy Burton to the church for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service and Servant Fair.

week. The food pantry depends upon second-mile donations of food and money to make the ministry possible.

## 'Dare to Reconcile' events set at LR church

Quapaw Quarter United Methodist Church, Little Rock, will host "Dare to Reconcile," a monthlong series of events on racism and the church, in February at the church, 1601 S. Louisiana St.

The month will include guest preachers, a special Faith in Film series, and a daylong workshop exploring how the church should fight racism and encourage dialog.

Guest preachers will include Barry Hughes of Perkins School of Theology, Dallas; retired United Methodist pastor Joel Cooper of Conway, who led downtown Little Rock's Winfield Methodist Church in the wake of the 1957 desegregation crisis; and Maxine

Allen of Little Rock, minister of mission and ethnic ministries for the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The "Faith in Film" movie series will include "Intruder in the Dust" (1949), a grim reminder of the rural South in the 1940s; "Song of the South" (1946), a Disney movie featuring Br'er Rabbit and happy slaves; "Watermelon Man" (1970), a dark comedy about an extremely bigoted white man who wakes up to find himself black (rated "R" for language); and "Bamboozled" (2000), directed by Spike Lee, in which a black television writer creates a modern minstrel show that becomes a runaway hit (rated "R"

for strong language and violence). Screening time is 7 p.m. each Friday evening.

The daylong "Dare to Reconcile" workshop Feb. 14 will focus on how the church can be on the vanguard of fighting racism by building bridges and nurturing those damaged by prejudice. The goal is to raise awareness, encourage interracial/interfaith dialogue, and to begin generating ideas to make the church a much more inclusive place.

Quapaw Quarter UMC is located at 1601 S. Louisiana St. For more information, go to [www.qqumc.org/dtr](http://www.qqumc.org/dtr) or contact Harold Hughes at (501) 612-0902 or [hhughes@arkansasonline.com](mailto:hhughes@arkansasonline.com).



Holiday Hills UMC will celebrate Fat Tuesday with its annual Chili Supper from 4-7 p.m. Feb. 24. Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for children. Dine in or take out. Tickets are available from members of the congregation or by calling the church office, (501) 825-7301.

Steve "Wildman" Wilson of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission will be appearing at Hamburg UMC at 6 p.m. March 19 for the United Methodist Men's dinner and meeting. The dinner and program are free. For dinner reservations, call (870) 853-5417. For more information contact pastor David A. Moore at d\_amoore@hotmail.com.

The annual Divas and Desserts concert event is coming up Feb. 15 at Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock. "From Broadway With Love" will be the theme of the 3 p.m. concert featuring "divas" Mary Ann Robinson and Julie Jackson and "devo" James Maase. After the concert, the Pulaski Heights United Methodist Foundation will serve homemade desserts and coffee in the Great Hall. A love offering will go to the Louis Sanders Music Endowment. For a reservation, call (501) 664-3600.

Building upon the fall's LeadNow conference on youth adult ministries, St. James UMC, Little Rock, has several events on the calendar designed to engage young adults in mission and ministries.



Headling "Divas and Desserts" at Pulask Heights UMC are (from left) Mary Ann Robinson, James Maase and Julie Jackson.



● "Hoops, Hamburgers and Hotdogs," noon to 4 p.m. March 21 at the St. James Christian Life Center. Contact Luke Miller at WLMiller@garverengineers.com.

● **Returning college students** and young adults will assist with a summer fan collection and distribution project that will give free fans to those who need to beat the heat. Contact Jenni Duncan at (501) 217-6708 or jenni@stjames-umc.org.

● **Days of Service** in June and July. Sites to be determined. Contact Clark Atkins at clark@stjames-umc.org.

Young adult groups and individuals from other churches are invited to participate in these events. For more information, contact Duncan at (501) 217-6708 or jenni@stjames-umc.org.

A new session of the Web-based eChristianEd began last month in the Arkansas Conference. The on-line education course is designed for anyone interested in biblical, theological and practical training in Christian education. The training program is approved for certification by the United Methodist Church.

However, due to the recent ice storm, the first face-to-face meeting of eChristianEd has been

postponed until 9:30 a.m. Feb. 13 at the Kendall Center on the campus of Philander Smith College. Space is available for those interested. For details and registration, go to www.echristianed.com or contact Cecilia Kelly at ckelly@arumc.org or (501) 324-8013 or (877) 646-1816 toll free.

The second annual Caring for Creation Conference at Mount Sequoyah Conference Center in Fayetteville is slated for March 27-29. This is a time for faith communities to come together and challenge each other to embrace "creation care" as a matter of faith. Speakers will include:

■ Ray C. Anderson, founder and chairman of Interface Inc., the world's largest producer of commercial floor coverings. The company has an innovative "Mission Zero" environmental program.



Ray Anderson

■ Peter Illyn, founder and executive director of Restoring Eden, formerly with the Evangelical Environmental Network and Target Earth, and an advocate for Christian environmental stewardship.

■ John Hill, director of economic and environmental justice at the United Methodist General Board of Church

## UMs invited to Feb. 18 'Day at the Legislature'

United Methodists are invited to take part in the interfaith "Day at the Legislature" Feb. 18 in Little Rock.

Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Arkansas Education Association (AEA) Building, 1500 W. Fourth St., across from the state Capitol.

Beginning at 10 a.m., speakers addressing the group will include United Methodist Bishop Charles Crutchfield and Roman Catholic Bishop Anthony Taylor, with a welcome from Gov. Mike Beebe.

The event is sponsored by the Arkansas Interfaith Conference, United Methodist Women and Church Women United.

Advance reservations are required for lunch. Cost is \$15 per person. Reservations and payments must be received no later than Feb. 13. Mail checks to: Arkansas Interfaith Conference, P.O. Box 151, Scott, AR 72142.

For more information, contact Mimi Dortch, executive director, Arkansas Interfaith Conference, at (501) 961-1555.

and Society.

A variety of workshop sessions led by local and national leaders will be offered during the conference. Early registration deadline is March 7. For details, go to [www.mountsequoyah.org](http://www.mountsequoyah.org) and click on "Events," email [programs@mountsequoyah.org](mailto:programs@mountsequoyah.org) or call (800) 760-8126.

## Hendrix College presents The John and Marjem Gill Annual Preaching Workshop

with special guest  
**Rev. Dr. Renita Weems, leader**  
*Biblical Scholar, Author & Public Speaker*

### Register Early!

Cost is \$60 if payment is received before April 15.  
*(After April 15, the cost is \$85)*

Includes workshop, resource materials, two lunches, one dinner, and a continental breakfast.



Rev. Dr. Renita J. Weems

For more information or to register visit:  
[www.hendrix.edu/preachingworkshop](http://www.hendrix.edu/preachingworkshop)

**HENDRIX**  
COLLEGE

# Mexico mission unites Wesley students

For Wesley Foundations in Arkansas, mission extends beyond the campus — even beyond the borders of the United States.

Twenty-eight students from four different Wesley Foundations traveled to Mexico in early January for a mission trip coordinated by Ozark Mission Project. The group helped to build three *casitas* (small houses) for families in Rio Bravo and the surrounding neighborhood.

“Anyone who’s been there knows that God is doing something in Rio Bravo,” said Mark Lasater, trip leader and campus minister at Southern Arkansas University. “I’ve seen what Christian volunteers — including several from our conference — have done to help transform some of these neighborhoods, one home and one family at a time. We’re thrilled to help with that mission.”

Participants worked through the *Manos Juntas* mission, which helps provide standard housing for families

in the area. For a little over \$2,000 in material costs, a team can construct a cinder-block casita in three days. Local builders supervise the work with the help of translators, and entire families often help build their own houses.

Jessie Waddell, a senior from Ouachita Baptist University, believes that connecting with the people of Rio Bravo was just as important as the building itself.

“*Manos juntas* means ‘hands together,’” she said. “It takes a lot of hands to build a home, but the real miracle happens when we get to know the people we’re working with. The things we learn from them matches whatever good we do for them.”

For Wesley Foundations from Henderson State University, Ouachita Baptist University, Southern Arkansas University and the University of Central Arkansas, this marks the third annual mission to Rio Bravo. This year, students from Arkansas State University also joined in the work.



Students from Wesley Foundations around Arkansas celebrate the completion of a home with the new homeowners in Rio Bravo, Mexico.

Jason Molitor, HSU-OBU Wesley Foundation director and co-leader of the trip, praised the connection of the Arkansas Conference for helping make the experience possible.

“Local churches helped us tremendously on this trip,” he said. “If not for their support of campus ministry,

we wouldn’t have young adults to take to Mexico, much less the means to get them there and back.”

Molitor also said that plans are in the works for another trip next year.

“Our students love going,” he said. “They love the work and they love the people. It’s a great expression of what following Christ is all about.”

## ‘Window on Wesley’ event invites future pastors, theologians to visit seminary

Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C., invites all who are considering masters-level theological education to attend a “Window on Wesley” discernment and exploration event either 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. April 21 or 5-9 p.m. March 10. The

events include community worship, information about degree programs and financial assistance, opportunities to talk with professors and current students, and a tour of the campus. Community members guide individual and group discernment times through-

out the day. Participants are invited stay for dinner and an evening class at their discretion.

Participation is free, but reservations are requested to assist with

preparation. To register, go to [www.wesleyseminary.edu/visit](http://www.wesleyseminary.edu/visit) or contact Beth Ludlum, director of recruitment, at (202) 885-8653 or [bludlum@wesleyseminary.edu](mailto:bludlum@wesleyseminary.edu).

### CATCH THE VISION, *continued from page 1*

developers, and the desire of many of our agencies and Racial Ethnic National Plans, Path 1 seeks to create the leaders and processes to regain our healthy denominational habit of starting a church a day.

During the week of Feb. 9-13, 158 pastors are coming to Arkansas to learn how to start new churches. At this New Church Leadership Institute, the participants will be equipped with both the knowledge and the skills to sponsor a new congregation across town, or to be the pastor of that new congregation themselves in a new church appointment.

New churches and multi-site congregations started under this new initiative include: Mount Olive UMC in Van Buren, Journey UMC in Fort Smith, Christ UMC in Cabot, Living Water UMC in Bentonville, Grace UMC in East End, Vietnamese UMC in Fort Smith, Crosspoint UMC in Conway, Woodlands UMC in Fort Smith, Pontiac UMC in Springdale,

Christ’s Way UMC in Jonesboro, Argenta UMC in North Little Rock, and the North Fort Smith Hispanic UMC.

The new churches that are three years old are ranging from 180 to 300 in worship so far this year. The new congregations that are 1 or 2 years old, are averaging from 85 to 185 in worship. Our newest congregations, only 4 months old, are ranging from 40 to 60 in worship already — giving evidence that the harvest for the kingdom will be great.

Your generous gifts will help these new churches to reach more people, more younger people, more diverse people with the saving good news of Jesus Christ.

The generous support of the Catch the Vision offering is helping these new churches to begin, but our task is not over. The Bishop and Cabinet are exploring sites across the conference where the demographics indicate a successful new church could be launched.

## Calendar

### FEBRUARY

- Feb. 7: “Ministry in Color: Team Leadership Using the Birkman Method,” Connected in Christ training seminar, Searcy First UMC; Michael Roberts, (501) 324-8016 or [mroberts@arumc.org](mailto:mroberts@arumc.org).
- Feb. 9-10: “Stay in Love with God,” retreat for clergy of the North Central District, Mount Eagle Christian Center.
- Feb. 13-15: United Methodist Marriage Encounter, Bentonville; Karen & Phil Gier, (479) 876-5371 or [plgier@yahoo.com](mailto:plgier@yahoo.com).
- Feb. 18: Day at the Legislature, co-hosted by United Methodist Women.
- Feb. 20-22: Relationship Weekend, retreat for pre-engaged, engaged or newly married couples, Mount Eagle Christian Center, sponsored by Hendrix College and Mount Eagle; [info@mounteagle.org](mailto:info@mounteagle.org) or (501) 723-4580
- Feb. 21: “Weaving a Web of Connections: Using Internet Technology for Effective Ministry,” Arkansas Conference event, Philander Smith College, Little Rock; Martha Taylor, (501) 324-8005 or [mtaylor@arumc.org](mailto:mtaylor@arumc.org)
- Feb. 21: “Ministry in Color: Team Leadership Using the Birkman Method,” Connected in Christ training seminar, First UMC, Malvern; Michael Roberts, (501) 324-8016 or [mroberts@arumc.org](mailto:mroberts@arumc.org).
- Feb. 21: “Strengthening the Family” workshop, Healing Place Ministries, First UMC, Pine Bluff; Edna Morgan, 870-535-0101.
- Feb. 27-March 1: VERITAS 2009, Arkansas Conference youth event, Hot Springs Convention Center, Hot Springs; Brandon Bates, (501) 753-6186 or

- [bbates@lakewood-umc.org](mailto:bbates@lakewood-umc.org).
- Feb. 28: “Ministry in Color: Team Leadership Using the Birkman Method,” Connected in Christ training seminar, Heritage UMC, Van Buren; Michael Roberts, (501) 324-8016 or [mroberts@arumc.org](mailto:mroberts@arumc.org).
- MARCH
- March 7: “Transformational Ministry Planning,” Connected in Christ training seminar, Searcy First UMC; Michael Roberts, (501) 324-8016 or [mroberts@arumc.org](mailto:mroberts@arumc.org).
- March 7-8: Arkansas Conference Children’s Choir Festival, Lakewood UMC, North Little Rock; Lisa Hester, (501) 860-3093 or [LPHester@juno.com](mailto:LPHester@juno.com).
- March 9-13: Small Church Leadership Institute, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville; Bob Crossman, (501) 324-8012 or [bcrossman@arumc.org](mailto:bcrossman@arumc.org).
- March 13-15: Arkansas Conference Clergy Spouse Retreat, “More Tools for Life: How NOT to be Clueless About Arkansas Conference Benefits and More,” Mount Eagle Christian Center.
- March 14: Confirmation Day with the Bishop, Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock; Rod Hocott, (501) 324-8008 or [rhocott@arumc.org](mailto:rhocott@arumc.org).
- March 14: Crossing Jordan Movement event, Philander Smith College.
- March 14: “Transformational Ministry Planning,” Connected in Christ training seminar, First UMC, Malvern; Michael Roberts, (501) 324-8016 or [mroberts@arumc.org](mailto:mroberts@arumc.org).
- March 20-21: Lay Speakers School, Mount Eagle Christian Center.

## March 18 deadline for loan applications

The Arkansas Conference Parish and Community Development Committee is now receiving requests from local churches wishing to apply for Church Revitalization Fund grants.

The committee will convene March 28 to consider all loan and grant applications. Applicants are encouraged to submit requests by March 18.

Application forms are available

from all district offices and online at the conference website, [www.arumc.org](http://www.arumc.org) (see Forms — Parish and Community Development Grant Application). All requests should be submitted to: Bill Weisner, 124 Hunger Run, Monticello, Ark. 71655.

Bob Burnham is chairperson of the Parish and Community Development Committee.

## Deaths

### Hot Springs

**JOANN RIDGWAY MILES**, 76, of Hot Springs, a faithful United Methodist laywoman, lover of family and friends, and advocate for justice, died Jan. 27, 2009, surrounded by family. She was the spouse of retired United Methodist pastor John Miles.



JoAnn Miles

She was born to Dora and Melvin Ridgway on Dec. 8, 1932, in McCrory, and baptized at McCrory Methodist Church. With her brother, Melvin, and sister, Virginia, she was raised in Forrest City by their mother, a grade school teacher and their father, a shoe store clerk. While a student at Arkansas State Teacher's College in Conway, she met a young preacher, John Miles, at a college event at First Methodist Church. They married at First Methodist in Forrest City, and she joined him in ministry. After honeymooning at the Methodist Annual Conference, they moved to Dallas where he attended Perkins School of Theology.

She was a faithful member of the churches to which they were appointed: Wilmot, Eudora, Star City, Fairview-Camden, Oaklawn-Hot Springs, Arkadelphia First, St. James-Little Rock and Hot Springs First, where she taught Sunday School. She was a member of PEO.

She won awards for her advocacy. A temperance woman at heart, Miles opposed gambling, hard liquor and wastefulness of all sorts. Often heard on her lips was the old saying, "Use it up, wear it out, make do, do without." She was Arkansas president of Homemakers for the Equal Rights Amendment and involved in numerous other advocacy groups.

She was the founder and convener of the Women's Leadership Team of

the United Methodist South Central Jurisdiction and was instrumental in the Inclusivity Coalition. Through this work she was credited with helping to elect the first women bishops, the first Hispanic bishop, and several African-American bishops in this region.

Miles was known for her abundant love for her extended family and friends. She and her husband raised three children and nurtured an extended family. A home economics graduate from Henderson State University, Miles was renowned for her extravagant hospitality.

Preceded in death by her parents and her sister, Virginia Brooks Covert, she is survived by her husband, John Miles; by her brothers and sisters, Melvin and Kay Ridgway, Warren and Joy Miles, and Peggy and James Lann; by her children, Deborah Miles and Marc Rudow, John and Susan Miles and Rebekah Miles and Len Delony; and by seven grandchildren.

A memorial service was held Jan. 31 at First United Methodist Church, Hot Springs. Memorials may be given to a church or charity of your choice or to the "JoAnn Miles Leadership Fund for United Methodist Clergy Women." Gifts for the latter may be made payable to Southern Methodist University for the "JoAnn Miles Leadership Fund" and mailed to Perkins School of Theology, P.O. Box 750325, Dallas, Texas 75275-0325.

## Remember When

### 100 Years Ago

**Feb. 4, 1909:** Governor and Mrs. Donaghey have been received by letter into the First Church, this city. They have been excellent members of the church at Conway, and will find themselves in congenial surroundings here with continued opportunity to do good.

### 50 Years Ago

**Feb. 5, 1959:** Rev. Brooks Holifield, son of Rev. and Mrs. E.J. Holifield, Jonesboro, was guest speaker at the Vesper Service of First Methodist Church, Jonesboro, on Sunday, Jan. 25. He reported on his recent trip to Europe and the Holy Land. The Rev. Mr. Holifield was licensed to preach at the last District Conference. His father, Rev. Elmer

Holifield, is superintendent of the Jonesboro District.

### 20 Years Ago

**Feb. 3, 1989:** Dr. Marshall Turrentine Steel, 83, of Pine Bluff, a former president of Hendrix College and highly regarded Methodist leader in Arkansas and the nation, died Jan. 20. He was president of Hendrix College from 1958 to 1969. ... Steel was credited with spearheading one of the college's most comprehensive periods of growth, which include extensive refurbishment and renovation of numerous campus buildings. He is also credited with leadership that led the college in meeting requirements of the Ford Foundation in endowment funds totaling \$3 million.

## GEN X, continued from page 4

ty of the clergy lies in their influence in a particular field or their effectiveness at bringing about some great and needed social change. When ministers play a role in those areas, it is a wonderful example of the use and application of gifts by individual clergy.

The real authority of clergy is instead located in their calling as shepherds to God's people. As Dr. Holifield puts it, that authority "is ultimately the Christ whose person and message they represent, as ambassadors bound in fidelity to a sovereign."

That's a theological statement, but Dr. Holifield explains it as the driving historical force in the way clergy go about doing their ministry.

"Most clergy, from the 17th century to the present, have understood themselves as the leaders of local congregations that attempt to practice the Christian life," he writes. "This has been the central activity and the animating ambition, and it is difficult to see how the clergy have declined in either their commitment to this task or their faithfulness and effectiveness within it."

This perspective is important,

because it relocates the real task of ministry in the leadership of congregations as they seek to faithfully embody the life of Christian discipleship. Because Jesus called together a church, the most important work of the gospel will always be done there.

Young clergy today hear the call to work for justice in the world. They hear the call to advance compassion and reconciliation among the nations of the world. What they don't always hear is that this work can best be done through and in the church.

The leadership of congregations really is an exciting endeavor. There is no higher calling, no elusive position in ministry that captures something that pastoral leadership does not.

Leading congregations means leading God's people in living and proclaiming the gospel, the very herald of the coming kingdom.

There is real authority in that ministry. And it's something to get excited about.

*[Andrew C. Thompson, an elder in the Arkansas Conference, is a doctoral student at Duke Divinity School. He can be reached at [andrew@mandatum.org](mailto:andrew@mandatum.org).]*

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## Classifieds

**PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED** in the Arkansas United Methodist for 50 cents per word, no limit. Call (501) 324-8005, or mail to: Arkansas United Methodist, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Dr., Little Rock, AR 72202; or e-mail: [mtaylor@arumc.org](mailto:mtaylor@arumc.org).

**COLLEGE DEGREE/Home Study.** Save \$\$\$ Christian Bible College, P.O. Box 8968, Rocky Mt., N.C. 27804; phone (252) 451-1031; [www.christian-biblecollege.org](http://www.christian-biblecollege.org)

**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/resumé to [mountainside-pastor@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mountainside-pastor@sbcglobal.net)

**WANTED:** Full-time Youth Director for a large church. Please send resumé to: First UMC, 215 N. Missouri St., West Memphis, AR 72301; or email [a.johnson\\_11@yahoo.com](mailto:a.johnson_11@yahoo.com), or call Bro. Bob Burnham at (870) 735-1805.

**REQUEST FOR ELECTRICAL BIDS.** McRae United Methodist Church, McRae, AR in need of rewiring sanctuary and classrooms. Must be licensed, insured and bonded. For more information call (501) 882-3843, (501) 605-2255 or (501) 239-0916.

## Correction

The Arkansas Conference 2009 Children's Choir Festival will be held March 7-8 at Lakewood United Methodist Church, North Little Rock. The dates were incorrect in a story appearing in the Jan. 23 *Arkansas United Methodist*.

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Volunteer Gene Cox from Charleston First UMC works to clear away fallen limbs in the early stages of recovery from the ice storm that hit Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center and much of northern Arkansas. photo courtesy Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center

**ICE,** continued from page 1

it was as if an “Arctic tornado” had struck, she said.

Altland reported “significant damage” to eight buildings at the mountaintop retreat, with another 16 suffering roof damage resulting in leaking. Repairs are possible for most of the structures, she said.

Mount Eagle Christian Center, a rural retreat center located near Clinton, had trees down and debris scattered across its 1,000 acres.

“Power being out is the main issue, and this means we have issues of food, water and warmth,” said North East District Superintendent Kurt Boggan. Some churches and parsonages in his district sustained damage, as well as property in the North District, Northwest District and North Central District. The damage was frequently inflicted by ice-covered trees limbs falling and taking down power lines and pulling electrical boxes away from buildings.

“But our churches are making a great effort,” Boggan said. “Some are meeting in the dark and some in parsonages with generators. They are opening their doors to house and feed people and help any way they can.”

“Countless local congregations are providing meals and serving as warming places for members of the community,” said Maxine Allen, Arkansas Conference disaster response coordinator.

Bay UMC, for example, has been providing meals for displaced persons and volunteer workers. Church members also helped staff City Hall, taking care of volunteer firefighters, police and city workers and answering phone calls that came in all night long in the

first 24 hours. And just when the church members were nearing exhaustion, students from the Wesley Foundation at Arkansas State University arrived to help.

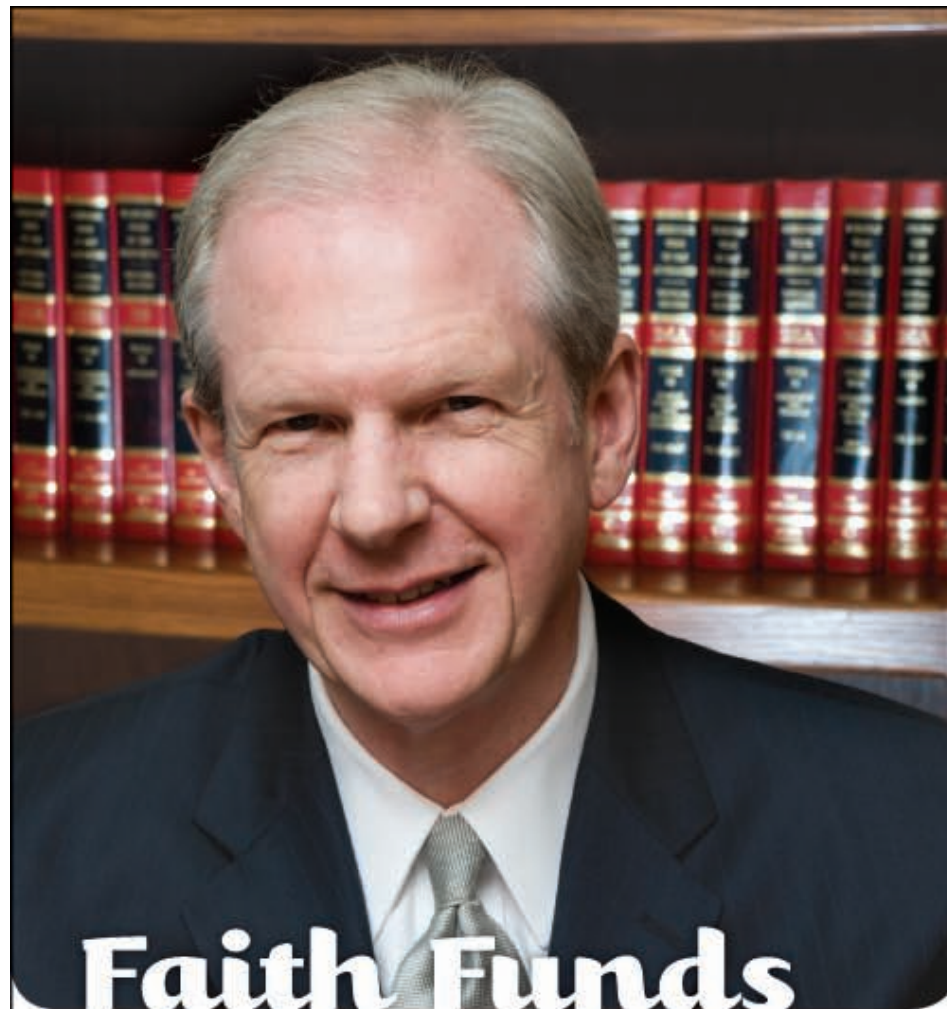
“The response has just been phenomenal,” said Bay UMC pastor Angie Gage. “It’s been the biggest blessing for us to be able to do what we can to help others.”

The storm knocked out power for days on end — with some areas reportedly not expected to have power restored until early March. The outages disrupted schools and businesses. Hundreds experienced the loss of food stored in freezers, and with businesses unable to reopen, some communities were desperate for food and water. The water systems of Cherokee Village, Corning, Harrison, Melbourne, Mountain View, and Salem were among those most severely affected.

Food distribution centers like Arkansas Rice Depot and the Foodbank Network issued emergency appeals for donations to restock inventory and get food to the rising number of those in dire need. The Rice Depot calls for donations of high-protein foods such as canned meat, tuna, soups and stews, shelf-stable meals and dried beans.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief provided emergency assistance funds to speed recovery.

Updates on recovery efforts and ways to help affected areas are posted on the conference web site, [www.arumc.org](http://www.arumc.org). Volunteer in Mission teams that are available to help with clean-up are asked to contact Don Weeks at [dweeks@arumc.org](mailto:dweeks@arumc.org) or (501) 868-9193.



# Faith Funds

## A Plan for Eternity

“When I talk to a client about estate planning, my mission is to determine what the client wants to do, then get it done,” said attorney Carl Crow, Jr. of Hot Springs. “The United Methodist Foundation is perfectly suited for this process when Methodist clients want to leave money to their church or another United Methodist organization. It exists to assure clients that gift assets will be wisely managed and safeguarded. And the Foundation has extremely competitive fees compared to corporate trustees.”

A five-year board member of the Foundation, Crow is also on the Board of Trustees and the Endowment Foundation Board at First United Methodist Church in Hot Springs. He says it’s the greatest feeling in the world when a client comes to him and expresses the wish to make a bequest to an endowment fund for his church or another church in the care of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

“The staff at the Foundation is eager to help and very professional,” he said. “The work product is excellent and they are prompt, thorough and reliable.” He believes the work of UMFA frees the church staff from burdensome administration, provides professional management of the endowment funds and allows the donor or the church to direct the assets according to their preferences.



**The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas**

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