



United Methodist

Arkansas

March 6, 2009

Church leaders speak out on economic suffering

■ *UMC's focus areas of ministry respond to need*

United Methodist News Service

The world's financial crisis is bringing hardship and suffering to people across the globe, and the United Methodist Church's focus areas of ministry are among the most effective responses, according to three United Methodist leaders.

United Methodists must engage in ministries with the poor; tackle the diseases of poverty that limit life, health and wholeness; and develop principled Christian leaders for the church and the world, the three leaders said in a statement. The message, addressed to the people of The United Methodist Church, was signed by the president of the Council of Bishops, chairperson of the Connectional Table and chairperson of the table of general agency executives.

The letter, signed by Bishop Gregory Palmer, Bishop John Hopkins and Neil Alexander, notes a loss of 50 million jobs in the world by Dec. 31,

See ECONOMY, page 6



Gregory Palmer



Tom Hazelwood visits the United Methodist Committee on Relief's Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La., where a container is being loaded with disaster relief supplies.

UMNS photo courtesy of UMCOR

Human stories guide UMCOR's Hazelwood in relief ministry

■ *Arkansas native marks 10 years as UMC's domestic disaster response leader*

United Methodist News Service

When a hurricane is predicted, Tom Hazelwood consults weather forecasts and scientific projects to chart its likely path.

If a river threatens to overflow, he checks to see if enough flood buckets are stockpiled at the Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La., or various regional warehouses.

After a tornado strikes, he connects with the local disaster response coordi-

nator to assess what type of assistance may be needed.

For more than a decade, Hazelwood, 50, a clergy member of the Arkansas Conference, has led the domestic disaster relief response for the United Methodist Committee on Relief. The work of Hazelwood and other UMCOR staff is supported each year by the "One Great Hour of Sharing" offering. This year's offering, which underwrites the agency's "costs of doing business," will be collected in local churches on March 22.

"He is a true brother in Christ,"

See HAZELWOOD, page 7

Peace with Justice grants make a big difference

■ *Local church, community ministries receive funds*

Each year, the Arkansas Annual Conference retains half of the Peace with Justice Special Sunday offering funds to disperse as small grants to United Methodist or its affiliated ministries that seek to preserve human dignity and combat injustice. Eight programs and ministries received a portion of the \$4,500 available in 2008 for small grants.

One such ministry is the Saturday free lunch program at Wiggins Memorial United Methodist Church in Fayetteville.

Cherrie Frazee, program coordinator, applied for a small grant through Peace with Justice for funds to purchase needed roadside signage as well as backup food staples for the occasional Saturday when volunteers were unable to provide enough food for the hungry crowd. According to Frazee, when Wiggins hosts the Saturday free lunch, between 50-75 people line up for a hot meal.

"We serve the hungry," Frazee said. "This can be the homeless, the disabled, and college students on student loans who just need an extra meal. Ever since we bought the larger sign, we have had more families from the neighborhood that just can't make

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INSIDE HEADLINES

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■ *Environmentalists connect green movement to Christian faithfulness, page 10.*

■ *Community hopes to salvage and restore historic Selma church building, page 12.*



Editor's Corner

By Jane Dennis

To God be the glory

What a tremendous honor and privilege it has been to spend the past 21 years as the caretaker of this historic publication. My life has truly been intertwined with my career as a church communicator and editor of the *Arkansas United Methodist*. The United Methodist family has been extremely good to me, and I thank each and every one of you for the boundless love and support I have received all these years. I will carry these blessings with me as I retire next month and began a new chapter in my life.



Jane Dennis

Back in late 1987, when I was preparing to leave the *Arkansas Democrat* for this job, cartoonist Joe Thibodeau created a going-away gift of a wacky sketch of me standing behind a tall pulpit with a typewriter perched before me. When I received that gift I laughed at the idea of me behind a pulpit. I'm not going to be preaching, I recall thinking. But now, more than two decades down the road, I think perhaps Joe got it right. The truth is, the pages of this publication have been a privileged pulpit used to tell the inspiring stories of the church, of its people, of the untiring efforts to spread the gospel, to help the downtrodden, to fight for peace and justice, and to reach out and offer the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

I've always been proud to point out that the stories found in the *Arkansas United Methodist* are one-of-a-kinds. These are stories about United Methodist people, ministries, places and events, about the church at work right here at home, in Arkansas. *This* is the place — and often the only place — where those stories are told.

And for the opportunity to be one who gets to share these stories, I'm thankful. For that I'm blessed.

I've been thinking back over the milestones of these 21 years. I was single when I started this job. Two years later I got engaged and then had a wonderful wedding, a celebration witnessed by many friends and acquaintances made through this newspaper and my work.

Over the next five years, we welcomed the arrival of two baby girls into our family — and yours. In 1992, while five months pregnant, I worked for 10 long days covering General Conference. An intense Jurisdictional Conference followed two months later. After that, giving birth was a snap.

My girls, now 16 and 13, have grown up on this page, as I've written about their escapades, my fears and worries and the triumph of turning it all over to God. It has been very special to share these important events and discoveries here and to receive heartfelt words of understanding, commiseration and confirmation from so many.

Over the course of my church career, I attended and reported on six General Conferences, six Jurisdictional Conferences and 31 Annual Conference sessions (two a year for the first 10 years). Whew. I'm tired just recalling that.

Thank you, dear readers, for hanging in there with me, for celebrating the high moments and helping me through the low moments, for finding inspiration in my jumble of thoughts, and for allowing me to step up to this grand pulpit week after week.

I pray sincerely that in all things and in all ways God has been glorified.

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



Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield accepts a check designated for Darfur aid from members of the Panther Programming Union (PPU) at Philander Smith College — (from left) Jamal Williams, PPU vice president; Edward D. Wiley, PPU president; Sharon Sanders, Student Government Association vice president; and Chassidy Taylor, PPU secretary.

Philander Smith students tackle international crisis in Darfur

Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield recently served as an emissary for the United Methodist Committee on Relief, accepting a contribution from members of the Panther Programming Union (PPU) at Philander Smith College. The funds were designated for UMCOR's efforts to alleviate suffering in the Darfur region of western Sudan.

The student activities organization and the college's Harry R. Kendall Science and Health Mission Center

recently hosted a series of programs about the crisis situation in Darfur. The PPU also sponsored "Let's Build," which gave students and others an opportunity to "purchase" a hammer for \$1. Each hammer symbolized the power of support for efforts to help with the reconstruction and rehabilitation of lives in Darfur. In addition, the PPU hosted The Black and White Pnosh, a formal fund-raising event Feb. 9, with proceeds benefiting Darfur aid.



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Photographs may be submitted in print or digital format. We cannot use instant developing (Poloroid) photos or digital photographs printed on plain or photographic paper. Digital photos must have a minimum resolution of 200 and must be submitted electronically. We cannot guarantee that all photos submitted will be used.

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Viewpoint

Dear Friends:

I've been reading "No Ordinary Time," a book by presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin about the Roosevelt White House during the Second World War. It is really a rather intimate portrait of Franklin and Eleanor set against the backdrop of the home front during the war. For me it is a timely read because it is colored by not only the terrible demands of the war but also the lingering effects of the Great Depression. At risk in this context were the demands for continuing social progress, specifically around human and civil rights, in the face of depression era economics and the demands of the war, and the cultural biases and prejudices that existed at the time.



An Occasional Word from the Bishop

Do you risk insulting and alienating a particular interest group — a block of senators, or large corporations, or an ethnic caucus, or the military in order to advance a social agenda, or enhance war production, or care for war-worker's families, or preserve some cultural "sacred cow?"

Those were difficult days. At times the nation seemed perilously close to losing its soul as it placed citizens who had Japanese ancestry in detention centers, or refused to recognize that African-Americans

could be as productive and fight as well and work as hard as white Americans. In the midst of crisis it is easy to forget the values that make you great, that support and sustain and inspire.

As we face a similar time of trial economically, it is important for us as United Methodist people to continue to claim our shared values. There will be strangers at our doors, many needing our help, all needing our love and respect. More than ever



Charles Crutchfield

we need to reject the spirit of fear that causes doors to be slammed shut, that closes our eyes to the possibilities outside our four cozy walls, that clinches our hands.

Some of the visionaries of our past like Eleanor Roosevelt saw the crisis of war and depression as an opportunity to open doors of human dignity and social equality in our nation. What opportunities for ministry in the name and Spirit of Jesus Christ will we seize? Just how creative can we be? Sixty years on, what will our children look back and say of us? More importantly, what will God say of us?

Faithfully,

Charles Crutchfield



Letters to the Editor

Caring and compassionate

I was deeply distressed to read in your publication the recent letter by Jim Dunlap regarding Rev. Thompson Murray. Rev. Murray is a fine, decent, hard-working and caring youth director, loved and revered by all the students who come to the UALR Wesley Foundation. He is not the satanic corruptor of youth that Mr. Dunlap describes.

I remember when Rev. Murray came to the UALR Wesley Foundation, when it was completely moribund. In an amazingly short time, Rev. Murray built up the Wesley Foundation from scratch, adding new structures, preparing Sunday lunches, and making it a warm and inviting place for students of all creeds, ethnic backgrounds and, yes, sexual orientations. That he accepts homosexuals, not just as members of religious bodies but also as leaders in them, suggests to me that he is a caring and compassionate follower of Jesus who does and says what Jesus would say and do. The comparisons of Rev. Murray to disgraced Catholic priests is especially shocking to me. That such a scurrilous piece of character assassination would appear in a Methodist publication is a disgrace to the United Methodist Church.

Susan Walker
Little Rock

Stand for life

I read where the United Methodist Board of Church and Society has as one of its legislative priorities to increase levels of U.S. spending for international family planning. President Obama has just overturned an order by former President Bush to not send funds to countries that practice abortions. Family planning includes abortions as well as many other things. Does this mean the Board of Church and Society, when promoting more spending for international family planning, is actually promoting more abortions?

I am opposed to making this a priority within the United Methodist Church if it promotes abortions. Most Methodists are against abortion. We stand for life.

Ancel M. Offutt
Mount Ida



Opinions welcomed

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.

Inspired to be the church

By RICH CARVELL

We danced, sang, worshipped, prayed, communed, shared, listened and praised God. We were challenged to live the United Methodist Way, and thereby turn worlds upside down.

For four days in Jacksonville, Fla., United Methodists from all over the United States heard about congregational development, eliminating poverty, improving health globally and developing leaders in the church and beyond.

We were reminded at the onset of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "Salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted." And we knew immediately that this was going to be a different experience.



Rich Carvell

Sixteen conference staff, clergy and laity represented the Arkansas Conference at the Quadrennial Training Events in Jacksonville Jan. 29-Feb. 1.

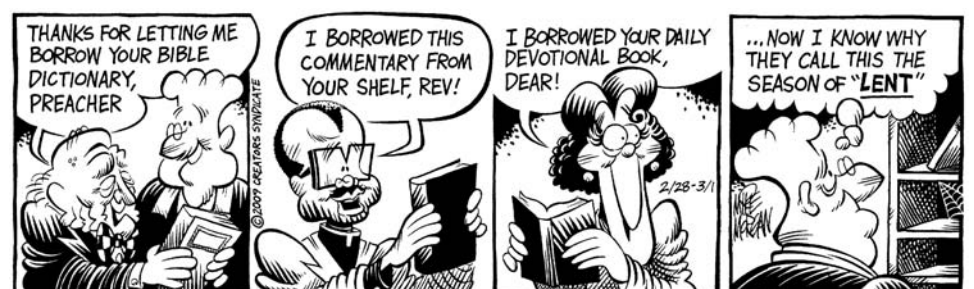
Union Theological Seminary divinity student Jay Williams jolted us by questioning the way things have always been done. He called upon us to renew our commitment to our communities. And he urged us to put less emphasis on the business of the church and more emphasis on doing the church's business ... that of winning disciples for Jesus Christ.

We were reminded of the tremendous diversity of our denomination. We heard prayers in many languages. We sang songs with words not familiar to us. We heard and met people who did not speak as we did. We saw people who did not look like us. But we were all tied together by the fact that we are all United Methodists.

The second plenary session emphasized church development, not only in

See CARVELL, page 4

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE By Mike Morgan



Viewpoint

Seeing is believing: leading by example will work

When Adam Hamilton speaks, the United Methodist Church listens.

The Rev. Hamilton is the senior pastor of the Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., which has 7,500 people in weekly worship and increasingly serves as a resource congregation for the entire denomination.



Andrew Thompson

Besides the books and small group studies Mr. Hamilton himself has authored, the Church of the Resurrection hosts numerous conferences throughout the year designed to build pastoral leadership, enliven the faith of laity and renew the mainline church. The church Web site (www.cor.org) contains a veritable smorgasbord of resources for ministry.

Mr. Hamilton is also the closest thing to a genuine celebrity that a United Methodist pastor is likely to get, drawing crowds to his speaking events who are all eager to hear the secret of his success.

I heard Mr. Hamilton speak recently at Duke Divinity School's annual Convocation and Pastor's School. The conference theme was



Gen-X Rising

By Andrew Thompson

“For Such a Time as This: Christian Leadership in a Changing World,” and Mr. Hamilton was there to share his thoughts on pastoral leadership in today's church.

Mr. Hamilton is an impressive guy. Anyone would know that just from hearing the stats about his church or reading about his influence on the UMC in recent years. But to see him in person is like a combination of seeing a preacher, CEO, motivational speaker and practical theologian all at the same time.

At Duke, he addressed an auditorium full of pastors on subjects as diverse as the current credit crisis, reaching the unchurched, mission work in Africa and strategic goal-setting in ministry.

One point that stuck out was when Mr. Hamilton said pastors can't expect their people to go where they are not willing to lead. He mentioned that in the context of telling the story of a trip he took to Africa to do mission work with children suffering from HIV/AIDS.

His point: If you want your church members to go out on a limb for Jesus, show them that you are willing

to go out on that same limb yourself. It's not just about informing your congregation of what God is calling them to do; it's about inspiring them through personal example.

If we want to nurture a desire for mission and service to the poor in our congregations, Mr. Hamilton suggests, we pastors have to share our stories of the work God is doing in the midst of the poor. That involves at least two steps: actually going to be with the poor in ministry, and presenting those experiences through story and sermon to those we serve.

We could say the same thing about other forms of ministry, such as Scriptural study, personal accountability and environmental stewardship. Want mature Christians in your church? Pursue mature discipleship yourself.

For a pastor so famous throughout the church, you might expect that Adam Hamilton would present a message a bit more edgy or innovative. But as he would probably be the first to tell you, there's nothing really innovative about full commitment to Jesus (except that so few people today are willing to do it).

What must be innovative is how we navigate the challenges of a society that seems to be evolving so rapidly in both technology and basic patterns of living.

The gospel is always compelling, but it must be demonstrated by those who actually live in contemporary culture.

The mission of the Church of the Resurrection is “to lead nonreligious and nominally religious people to become deeply committed Christians.” Mr. Hamilton himself notes that on any given Sunday, there might be 100 unchurched people who visit his church for worship.

If those people are to be brought into a relationship with the living God, they need to be able to see a pattern they can follow. And that means they need to see Christians really living out what they are being asked to try themselves.

That's real leadership. It's as easy (and as difficult) as following Jesus has always been.

[Andrew C. Thompson, an elder in the Arkansas Conference, is a doctoral student at Duke Divinity School. He maintains a blog at www.genxrising.com and can be reached at andrew@mandatum.org.]

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CARVELL, *continued from page 3*

creating new places for new people but also in renewing existing ones. Several Arkansas delegates attended church development break-out sessions.

Since my interest as the chair of the Arkansas Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries was in the area of campus ministries, most of the break-out sessions I attended addressed campus ministry issues, problems and solutions. My feelings were reinforced. We all share some of the same problems, but things are not as bad here as they are somewhere else. I found that organization of campus ministries varies considerably over the various United Methodist Conferences throughout the U.S. and picked up several suggestions for what seemed to be a common problem for all campus ministries — sufficient funding to support the ministries and especially a dearth of money for capital improvement and maintenance.

On Day Three, the Rev. Ed Paup,

General Secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries of the UMC, presented ideas in the morning plenary for eliminating poverty by engaging in additional ministries with the poor. He reminded us that Methodist roots are in poverty and of John Wesley's work with the poor in England. He said our responses to poverty should be three: Hear the poor, accept the poor, serve the poor. In anticipation of the afternoon theme, Paup urged attendees to understand the links between poverty and health. Break-out sessions continued the poverty theme, including a session on the importance of education, especially higher education, in fighting poverty globally.

The afternoon plenary introduced us to global health, with presentations by Rev. Dr. Gary Gunderson, senior vice president for Health and Welfare Ministries for Methodist Healthcare in Memphis; Dr. Cherian Thomas, D.D., executive secretary for Hospital

Revitalization Program of the General Board of Global Ministries; the Rev. Gary Henderson, executive director of the Global Health Initiative of the UMC; and Melba Whitaker, a retired special education teacher and the spouse of UMC Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker.

Gunderson said that Wesley blended health and faith before he even said it out loud. Wesley's vision, Gunderson said, was public health, rather than medical services. He said the church should support programs that “create an epidemic of good health.”

Whitaker's background in Volunteers in Mission (VIM) in South America spoke strongly to her assertion that “when women get together, they can accomplish things.” Whitaker said we should dispel the notion that it is God's will that people live in poverty. “It is not,” she said.

Henderson was one of several

speakers at the training session who emphasized that improving health globally is not something that can be accomplished in four years. We as United Methodists have to “think and plan generationally, rather than quadrennially,” he said. He noted that we began that journey with the Nothing But Nets program. “Rather than a toxic stew,” he said, “we have a healing ointment to offer the world.”

Sunday morning, delegates participated in best practices, listening, networking and agency workshops before gathering for the conference-ending worship and sending forth.

The United Methodist Church is preparing to be the leaven of society. By living the United Methodist Way, we can truly turn world upside down.

[Rich Carvell is chair of the Arkansas Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries and a member of Cornerstone UMC, Jonesboro.]



News Digest

Mission agency to cut \$3.9 million from budget

NEW YORK — The United Methodist Board of Global Ministries is reducing its 2009 operating budget by \$3.9 million, or 7 percent, because of a combination of economic factors. The reduction affects an approved core budget of \$57.6 million, a figure that does not include the Women's Division, the corporate unit of United Methodist Women, or the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

A Feb. 13 letter to Global Ministries' directors indicated that the operating budget could change if the financial picture improves in the coming months. "This is stressful but essential to keep within our means in this time of global economic downturn," said Edward W. Paup, the mission agency's top executive.

UMCOR shipment of medicine arrives in Zimbabwe

NEW YORK — Containers of life-saving medicine and other supplies from United Methodists have arrived in Zimbabwe. The shipment is part of the United Methodist Committee on Relief's ongoing work to provide assistance to the African country in response to ever-widening cholera and financial crises. Muslim Aid, an UMCOR partner and United Kingdom-based relief agency, is providing further medical support.

In addition to the medical supplies, UMCOR is delivering 400 metric tons of milled maize throughout 12 United Methodist districts in Zimbabwe. The situation in Zimbabwe remains dire despite reports of improvement in recent days. More than 3,800 people have died in the cholera epidemic that has swept the country for months. Hyperinflation has led to economic collapse. UMCOR and the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe are working together to provide health care and food and water in the most difficult situations.

Lenten initiative focuses on water resources

NEW YORK — Instead of "doing without" during Lent, Christians are being encouraged to think about what others in need can "do with" access to water resources. The Ecumenical Water Network has developed the "Seven Weeks for Water" initiative as a concrete way for congregations and denominational organizations to focus on water justice over the Lenten Period.

The World Council of Churches, Church World Service and the All Africa Conference of Churches are members of the network's steering group. The first set of resources is posted at <http://www.oikoumene.org>.

Church seeks 'Union with the Congo'

CONWAY, S.C. — Union United Methodist Church took on a new challenge this past Advent season. Faced with critical building needs, including fixing an uneven foundation, the church sought a way to make the needed repairs. Instead of looking to finance only what they needed to fix their building, they believed God was challenging them to do something different.

This was the seed for what would become "Union with the Congo," the church's initiative to not only raise capital funds, but also raise an equal amount to construct wells and latrines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in partnership with the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

Funds raised through the Union with the Congo project are split between Union's building needs and the project in the North Katanga Province of Congo. "This commitment communicates that we are equally concerned with addressing other people's needs as we are our own," he said.

The Union with the Congo project was a focus in worship throughout the Advent season. As the offering funds came in, they added to a well they were constructing on the front porch of the church to represent how far they had come in reaching their goal.

In all, this small-town church of approximately 150 members raised \$14,200 for Union with the Congo — sufficient funds to cover needed building repairs at home and dig one well and latrine in the Kamina area of Congo.

Florida apportionments rolled back to 2008 levels

LAKELAND, Fla. — Local churches in the Florida Conference, already hit hard by the downturn in the economy, massive foreclosures and job losses, are receiving some good news courtesy of the conference's Council on Finance and Administration.

Effective immediately and retroactively, apportionment levels for 2009 will be "rolled back" to 2008 levels. This will result in an approximate 10 percent reduction in the amount of money churches will contribute to their connectional giving, known as apportionments.

The rollback, approved at the council's Feb. 13 meeting in Lakeland, will



Children at Union UMC in Conway, S.C., place water bottles in a symbolic well to represent how much money has been collected for their Union with the Congo project.

send a signal to local churches that the conference is taking the financial crisis seriously, said Tim Smiley, chair of CFA and pastor at Plantation United Methodist Church. Smiley said that conference reserves will make up the

difference between what was apportioned in 2009 and what will now be, in effect, 2008 apportionment levels.

Women's Division met 2008 goal for mission giving

NEW YORK — Despite the declining economy across the globe, the Women's Division of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries met the projected goal for conference pledges to mission for 2008. The funds support Women's Division mission institutions and programs around the world that empower the lives of women, children and youth.

Through last minute giving, using the United Methodist Women online giving web page, actual donations surpassed pledges to mission by roughly \$3,000, bringing mission giving to a total of \$16.5 million. The division's total 2008 income amounted to approximately \$19.3 million, including \$2.8 million received in supplemental giving for specific donation opportunities and mission giving.

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Gov. Mike Beebe greets United Methodist Joann Hays of Russellville, as Interfaith Conference director Mimi Dortch looks on.



Speaking with state Rep. Rick Saunders are (from left), Pam Estes, Shari Coston and Carol Dickinson, all of Grand Avenue UMC, Hot Springs.



State Rep. Barbara Nix (center) speaks with UMW members Kathy Crone and Sylvia Griffin.

United Methodists are heard while at Capitol

■ Legislative day connects citizens with lawmakers

United Methodists led the way to the marble halls of the state Capitol in Little Rock Feb. 18 in order to bend the ears of lawmakers on what they feel are critical issues before the state Legislature.

The 2009 Day at the Legislature was sponsored by the Arkansas Interfaith Conference, United Methodist Women and Church Women United. The morning program and lunch were held at the Arkansas Education Association Building near the Capitol.

With about 60 in attendance, the event began with presentations by Catholic Bishop Anthony Taylor and United Methodist Bishop Charles Crutchfield, both of whom addressed pending legislation related to immigration. They were united in their opposition to a bill being considered that would in essence “deny basic human rights” and impose harsh penalties on undocumented immigrants, and “try to create as much misery as possible,” Taylor said.

Crutchfield spoke of “the need for an intentional, radical hospitality, in our state, in our nation, in our communities and in our churches and synagogues and places of worship.” He described such hospitality as “going to the point of sacrificial stance that calls upon us to love one another as Christ has loved us. With all the fear that engulfs us these days, it’s critically important that we become sensitive to the opportunities for welcoming all who would enter our lives,” he said.

“I join with Bishop Taylor in the prayer that our state will reject laws that build walls and attitudes that separate us,” Crutchfield said. Rather, “we ought to open wide our doors to all of those who are our brothers and sisters in the human family.”

Stephen Copley, director of Justice for Our Neighbors, a statewide United Methodist program that assist immigrants with legal issues, was on hand to answer questions about the impact of the proposed legislation on the state’s undocumented immigrants.

Gov. Mike Beebe stopped in briefly and praised the participants for their role in state government, saying, “I want you to know you are important.” Good laws and effective legislation do not happen “without dedicated people who care enough to talk to their elected representatives and let them know how they feel,” the governor said. “I appreciate you.”

Following lunch, the crowd of mostly women moved to the Capitol, where they sought audiences with their local state senators and representatives in order to express opinions on a variety of legislative issues.



Bishop Charles Crutchfield shares thoughts on proposed immigration legislation.



Hazel Wright, a member of Haven UMC, Hot Springs, says hello to Gov. Beebe.

ECONOMY, continued from page 1

adding to the poverty rolls and leading to an increase in global unrest and violence and the death of up to 400,000 children by 2015 if the situation continues. It acknowledges the economic constraints placed on churches, annual conferences and churchwide agencies, forcing them to reevaluate their ministries while keeping their focus.

“It is a prophetic reminder that our destiny as a worldwide community and a global church is interwoven with complex bonds of prosperity, security, dignity and justice,” the three leaders said. “We reclaim anew Jesus’ teaching, ‘as you (cared for) the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’ as an urgent appeal for how we can live today.”

The financial crisis was discussed recently at a meeting of the Table of

The Four Areas of Focus for the United Methodist Church are:

- developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world;
- creating new places for new people by starting congregations and renewing existing ones;
- engaging in ministry with the poor; and
- stamping out killer diseases by improving health globally.

General Secretaries, presidents of the agencies, the Council of Bishops’ ecumenical officer, Bishop Hopkins and Mary Brooke Casad from the Connectional Table, and Bishop Palmer.

They wanted to use the opportunity to let United Methodists know that church leaders are focused on the mis-

sion and “upon ways in which we can respond to the church and world that is experiencing disease because of the downturn in the global economy,” said Palmer, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops.

Acknowledging the challenges and hardships faced by people in every part of the world, Palmer said “the church is needed now more than ever” and that he and church leaders are “absolutely convinced that our four foci will help us stay on task around the mission of reaching the world for Jesus Christ and making it a transforming world.”

A conversation is occurring across the church about ways to reenergize outreach to the world and to offer hospitality to those seeking deeper spiritual fulfillment. Rethink Church, the

leaders say, is an avenue United Methodist constituencies are using in self-examination to move their outreach beyond the church doors. Rethink Church is an awareness campaign designed to redefine church as a 365-days-a-year experience, in which people seeking a church community can become involved at many different levels.

During the 40 days of Lent, people engage in the practice of self-denial and sacrifice as they look for hope, resurrection and new life. However, the three officials declare, faith “does not rise and fall with the financial markets but resides in the enduring love of God, who is present with us as we struggle and strive to love God and our neighbors.” They advise United Methodists to recommit to three basic rules: do no harm, do good and stand in love with God.

HAZELWOOD, continued from page 1

declares Darryl Tate, who works in disaster relief at the conference level, about Hazelwood. "None of us are ever afraid to pick up the phone and call him."

Tate has experienced both sides of a disaster. As pastor of St. Luke's United Methodist Church in New Orleans, he was displaced when the church was flooded during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. But he has gone on to coordinate the response to Katrina, Rita and subsequent storms as the executive director of the United Methodist Louisiana Annual Conference's Storm Recovery Center.

"I've learned that Tom is very committed to what he does," he says. "He has compassion for the victims."

'Stories of people's lives'

Assisting those suffering from a disaster is what makes his job compelling, according to Hazelwood. While the scenes of disasters are often similar enough to be interchangeable, he says, "the things that never fail to touch me are the human stories, the stories of people's lives and how they are touched by the disaster. Each story is different, and each one is powerful in its own way."

It is a path that Hazelwood never intended to take. With roots in rural Arkansas, he grew up in the small town of Carlisle and worked part-time in

the rice and soybean fields as a youngster. "By the time I was a teenager, I was driving tractors," he recalls.

He enrolled at Henderson State University with a track scholarship and a desire to work with youth. "I intended to be a coach and teach school," he says.

After receiving his bachelor's degree, Hazelwood stayed on as a graduate assistant and planned to earn a master's degree in education. One day, Wesley Foundation director Bob Trieschmann called him in and said a pastor in South Arkansas was looking for a youth minister. Trieschmann told him the position would pay more than a coaching job and told Hazelwood that if he didn't like it, he could return to the school in a year.

"I kept telling him no," Hazelwood says, but he finally changed his mind. "I took the job and I actually loved it." He ended up staying four years in El Dorado, Ark., and participation in the church's youth program grew from 25 to 120.

Eventually, Hazelwood decided to

seek ordination, but with a wife and a baby needed some means of support. The solution was to serve a two-point charge in eastern Arkansas while attending Memphis Theological Seminary.

His introduction to disaster response work in 1996 was almost by happenstance. While serving as a pastor in Fort Smith, he was told his name had been submitted as the district disaster response coordinator. But he found himself deeply frustrated at the lack of information available when he attended his first conference-level disaster response meeting.

Trial by fire

The result was a trial by fire a month later when a tornado struck Fort Smith and Van Buren, causing the death of two children in Fort Smith, numerous injuries and substantial damage to 1,800 homes in the two towns. Other church leaders were away, attending the denomination's General Conference in Denver. "I figured out what it was we had to do and ended up putting together the long-term recovery," he says.

In 1997, after 15 tornados killed 25 people in one of the worst tornado outbreaks in Arkansas history, Bishop Janice Riggle Huie called Hazelwood, then disaster coordinator for the North Arkansas Conference. "I asked

Tom to help us coordinate the disaster response efforts for the whole state of Arkansas," she remembers. "I learned from Tom Hazelwood how to work disaster recovery."

In the midst of that recovery, another call came — from UMCOR. Virginia Miller was retiring as head of domestic disaster response and asked him to apply for the job. He started in February 1998.

Lloyd Rollins worked with Hazelwood at UMCOR for those first two years before leaving the agency in 1999. "In many respects, Tom is still a pastor," he explains. "He has the heart of a pastor. He always had a great compassion for the people who have been impacted by a disaster."

He believes Hazelwood's pastoral experience gave him an important insight into caring for those impacted by disasters. "I grew to depend on that and trust it," Rollins says.

The scope of disasters and how the church responds to them have changed during the past decade, according to Hazelwood, who maintains an office at



Arkansas native Tom Hazelwood has led the United Methodist Committee on Relief's domestic disaster relief response for more than a decade. UMNS photo by Mary Beth Coudal



Hurricane Katrina is the most difficult disaster Hazelwood has encountered since joining United Methodist Committee on Relief. UMNS file photo by Mike DuBose

the United Methodist Building in Washington and lives in Virginia with his wife, Stephanie. They have two sons, Robert, 24, and John, 22.

"From the church level, we have a much higher level of preparedness now than we did 10 years ago," he says.

More training, volunteers

Changes in the denomination's law book, the Book of Discipline, have made conference disaster coordinators a requirement rather than optional, leading to more training, even down to the local church level. In addition, he noted, "we have many more volunteers involved now than we did."

Hazelwood approaches his job with a "ministry heart," according to Huie. "One of Tom's best gifts is working with volunteers," she says. "He understands volunteers, he relates to volunteers and he knows how to use volunteers very well."

Other factors — such as the influx of people living along U.S. coastlines and the immediate media coverage of disasters — have had an impact on disaster response.

Category 5 hurricanes like Hugo, which left a path of destruction from the Caribbean to the Carolinas in 1989, and the even deadlier Andrew, which devastated South Florida in 1992, forced the federal government to reconfigure the Federal Emergency Management Administration, according to Hazelwood.

"James Lee Witt really brought FEMA into its prime," he explains. "He, too, was one who preached preparedness."

Difficulties of Katrina

Not surprisingly, Katrina is the most difficult disaster Hazelwood has encountered during his decade at UMCOR because of its size and "because expectations were so high." Although UMCOR has had smooth relations with the annual conferences during the Katrina recovery, he notes that others had disappointments. "Many volunteers had not volunteered in a disaster of that scope," he explains. "They were trying to make demands on the conferences and UMCOR that we couldn't meet."

Hazelwood still meets in person with the Gulf Coast conference disaster coordinators about once a quarter, according to Tate, where they share information about problems and decisions. "He helps us discern what we need to do," he says.

In Tate's view, Hazelwood helps the church make decisions for all the right reasons: to help the least, the last and the lost. "He is the kind of person who will listen to you and consult with you," he said.

Despite his years of experience, Hazelwood doesn't presume to know what is best for a conference or community. "All disasters are local," he says. "It's got to begin there and end there."

Hazelwood also believes in cooperating with other organizations to respond to disasters. Last May, he completed a two-year term as president of National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, which includes religious, nonprofit and governmental groups. "Everything we do is about relationships," he points out. "If you don't have good relationships, nothing works well."

Special offering supports UMCOR

One Great Hour of Sharing offerings will be collected in many local churches March 22. Contributions can be made through local United Methodist churches or by mailing checks to UMCOR, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087. Credit-card donors can visit UMCOR's Web site at www.umcor.org to give online or call (800) 554-8583.



Coming Up

The annual Arkansas Conference Vacation Bible School Training is on tap for 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 21 at Jacksonville's First UMC, 220 W. Main St. Training will be offered in all aspects of "Camp EDGE (Experience and Discover God Everywhere)," the United Methodist Publishing House VBS curriculum for 2009. Cost is \$15 per person. Registration is available online at www.arumc.org.

An Interfaith Hunger Gathering in Little Rock is planned for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. March 17 at Second Baptist Church, 222 E. Eighth St. Jim McDonald, vice president of policy and programs with Bread for the World, will be the featured speaker. Also attending will be Meredith Williams, the local regional coordinator for Bread for the World.

"The economic times are difficult, people are faced with going to bed without a proper meal each evening," said Stephen Copley, a United Methodist who is a member of the Arkansas Hunger Coalition. "This meeting will search for ways that the faith community in Arkansas can work together to eradicate hunger, both at home and abroad."

For more information, contact Copley at (501) 626-9220 or SCopley438@aol.com.

Henderson UMC, Little Rock, will hold a clothing give-away and free pancake breakfast from 8 a.m. to 12 noon March 14 at the church, 13000 W. Baseline Road. For transportation within a 5-mile radius, call (501) 455-2209.

Bear Creek Camp near Marianna will host Kidz Kamp USA May 31-June 5 for children in the lower Delta who are entering the fourth, fifth and sixth grades and who have never before been to camp. Campers will be invited to attend at no cost. Counselors 19 years old and older are currently being recruited. Jobs include program coordinator, camp dean, camp cook, worship director, recreation director and cabin captains. To learn more, contact David Moore at Hamburg First UMC, (870) 853-5417 or d_moore@hotmail.com.

Geyer Springs UMC, Little Rock, will hold a rummage sale from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. March 14 at the church, 5500 Geyer Springs Road. Proceeds will support the youth group's 2009

missions and activities.

The John and Marjem Gill Annual Preaching Workshop at Hendrix College is slated for April 22-23. Renita J. Weems, a Bible scholar and an ordained elder in the African Methodist Church, author and frequent guest on National Public Radio, will be special guest. Weems, formerly a member of the faculty of Vanderbilt University and former Visiting Professor at Spelman College, has been celebrated by *Ebony* magazine as one of America's top 15 preachers.



Renita J. Weems

Two scholarships to this event are available from each district. For details, see your district superintendent.

Cost is \$60 before April 15; \$85 after that date. For more information or to register, go online to www.hendrix.edu/preachingworkshop, or contact J. Wayne Clark at (501) 450-1263 or clark@hendrix.edu.

Camp Aldersgate Work Week is slated for April 20-24 at the camp facility in west Little Rock. Individuals and groups are invited to help with light carpentry and painting, building repairs and grounds work. Church groups can choose any day to serve. To volunteer or for more information, contact LaVon Post at (870) 307-8067 or revpost@juno.com.

Children of the World, a choir comprised of 39 orphaned and disadvantaged children from Uganda, Nepal and Guatemala, will perform a free concert at 6:30 p.m. March 18 at Lakewood UMC, North Little Rock.

The choir's high-energy and inspiring program features songs in both English and native dialects as well as powerful personal testimonies. Their goal is to generate compassion and involvement by putting voices and faces to the desperate needs of the millions of children worldwide whose lives have been devastated by famine, civil war and disease.

During the 10-month tour, the choir raises funds to build or refurbish children's homes that provide care and shelter to children who would otherwise live on the streets. They also pub-

licize World Help's Child Sponsorship program, which provides orphaned and disadvantaged children worldwide with the basic necessities of food, clothing, medical care and educational opportunities.

"I was very excited to be able to bring this choir to Little Rock," said Kyle Blackburn, Lakewood's music director. "When times are bad here in the U.S., it helps us to help places like Uganda, where there are well over a million orphans in a country with roughly the population of Texas. This is going to be an inspiring show by a bunch of very talented kids."

The children in the Children of the World choir are between the ages of 7 and 12 years old. While on tour, they are tutored to remain up-to-date in their studies. Each child in the choir is also provided with a college scholarship.

The concert is free but a love offering will be collected. For more information about World Help's Child Sponsorship Program (which costs about \$30 a month to help a child), go to <http://www.worldhelp.net>. For more information about the concert, contact Joseph Roitz, director of communication ministries at Lakewood, at jroitz@gmail.com

A South Central Jurisdiction Volunteer Work Week at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center in Fayetteville is planned for March 30-April 3. Volunteers are needed to help with repair, maintenance and upkeep of buildings and grounds, guided by the Mount Sequoyah staff and volunteer leaders. Lodging is provided at no cost; meals for the week are \$93.50 per person. There will also be devotionals, worship, games and fellowship.

For more information, contact Mount Sequoyah at (479) 443-4531 or (800) 760-8126 toll free or mail@mountsequoyah.org.

Asbury UMC, Little Rock, will celebrate "Christ in the Passover" at 6 p.m. March 29 at the church, 1700 Napa Valley Dr.

Rachel Drank with Jews for Jesus will explain the significance of the Passover meal with an emphasis on the aspect of redemption which Christ accomplished at Calvary. Using a visual display of traditional accouterments, the "Christ in the Passover" presentation enhances the Christian's understanding and appreciation of the

Historical Society to gather at Hendrix College

The United Methodist Historical Society will hold its annual meeting at noon March 28 in Hulen Ballroom on the campus of Hendrix College in Conway. Chris Spatz, retired professor of psychology at Hendrix, will present a program on the history of the college.

Walking tours of the college will be offered at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Persons interested in taking a tour are asked to contact Wayne Clark at (501) 450-1263 or clark@hendrix.edu by March 13.

Cost of the lunch is \$8.40. Advance reservations are requested by contacting Mauzel Beal at 1811 Jefferson, Conway, Ark. 72032, or beehill@tcworks.net.

Annual membership in the Historical Society costs \$5 and includes the newsletter *Occasional Papers* and an invitation to the annual spring luncheon meeting and program.

Jewish background on the common communion.

For more information, call the church office, (501) 225-9231.

The Mount Sequoyah Conference on Ecumenical Mission Conference is on the calendar for June 7-10 at the retreat center in Fayetteville. The gathering coincides with Church Women United South Central Regional event.

"2009: A New Beginning, A New Direction, A New Vision of Mission" is the theme. Topics will include "The Middle East Today," human rights and a Bible study on "The Ethics of Jesus for the 21st Century." Conference leaders will include Charles Kimball, Presidential Professor and director of religious studies at the University of Oklahoma, and Tom Boyd, the David Ross Boyd Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Oklahoma.

Canvascommunity, a community committed to reaching out to folks that "traditional" church doesn't reach, invites everyone to join them for "In the Name of Love," a sermon series based on the lyrics of U2. The group meets at 7 p.m. Mondays through March 16 at Trinity UMC, 1101 N. Mississippi St.

For details, visit www.canvascommunityonline.org or contact Sheri Bentley at (501) 666-2813.

It Happened

First UMC, Paris, has begun a churchwide study using Bishop Robert Schnase's "Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations." The study is led by Nick Jewel and will conclude on Palm Sunday with a potluck dinner. A large number of children, youth and adults are participating.

Gillett UMC celebrated UMW Recognition Sunday during the morning worship service Feb. 22. "Living Green and Living Simply" was the theme. An all-women's choir sang "I'm Gonna Live so God Can Use Me" as the morning anthem. A reading from the United Methodist Social Principles'

"The Natural World" was used as an act of worship. The children of the church sang a song called "Reduce, Recycle, Reuse," and then shared with the congregation ways in which each of them had recycled items from their homes. An original skit on "Living Simply, Living Green" was presented as the message. After the worship the UMW served a soup and cobbler supper to raise money for local mission projects. Linda Cover is president of the Gillett UMW.

Hampton UMC welcomed Karon Mann of Little Rock, immediate past president of the Arkansas Conference United Methodist Women (UMW), as a special guest speaker Feb. 22. She spoke of the worldwide work of the UMW and future plans for the organization. In addition, special recognition awards were presented to members and families of deceased members. Janette Goolsby is presi-

dent of the Hampton UMW.

Following the worship service, a dinner was held in Fellowship Hall, with donations accepted for the purpose of mission work.

United Methodist Women's Sunday was celebrated Feb. 15 at Mount Olivet UMC of the Rowell Charge. UMW members conducted the morning service. UMW President Sylvia Boyd, a United Methodist lay speaker, presented the message. Other UMW members participated and carried out the Order of Worship duties. Vice president Candy Qualls gave a brief report on the unit's obligations and missions, both past and present.

Kathy Halley was recognized for

her many years of service to the church, as well as to the Rowell Charge. She was presented a UMW pin and received a standing ovation.



Greenwood UMC welcomed David Bush, chairman of the Arkansas Conference Evangelism Committee and pastor of First UMC, Heber Springs, as guest speaker for a community spiritual event hosted by the church Feb. 8-10.



United Methodist Women leaders from Hampton UMC welcome Karon Mann (back row, third from left) of Little Rock as a recent guest speaker.



Twenty-six couples renewed their wedding vows during a mass Service of Marriage Covenant Reaffirmation Feb. 15 at St. Paul UMC, Searcy. The sanctuary was beautifully decorated for a wedding. The service was centered around the theme "The Seven Virtues: Love" and featured traditional wedding music. A reception featuring a wedding cupcake tier for 150 followed. Pastor Rocky Starnes officiated.



A new digital moving sign has been installed atop the existing church sign at Salem UMC, Benton. The addition was made possible thanks to a matching grant from the Igniting Ministry program of United Methodist Communications.

GRANTS, continued from page 1

their checks stretch to all their needs."

The program serves a hot meal and provides information about health, financial and supportive resources in the area. "But most of all, we have different items that are free for them to take — clothes, toiletries, food, shoes ...," Frazee said. "We provide a positive spiritual environment where they can be prayed with, have someone to just listen, and/or a familiar face in a safe zone."

Though the line between acts of charity and justice can be cloudy, most Peace with Justice recipients are busy at work on behalf of Christ filling the gaps in people's lives that they may be

strengthened in other ways. Other 2008 Peace with Justice Small Grant recipients included the Elm Springs UMC Celebrate Recovery Program, the Arkansas Death Penalty Moratorium and Study Commission, Heritage UMC Food Pantry in Van Buren, the Shepherd's Center Adventures in Learning in Beebe, the Age to Age mentoring program at the Arkansas Tech Wesley Foundation in Russellville, the Montgomery County Food Pantry and the McCabe Chapel PASS PLUS program in North Little Rock.

The Special Sunday offering for Peace with Justice is slated for June 7.

This year, even more so than last, will be a significant year for these ministries and others like them. These ministries struggle to fill the shelves with food and supplies and have seen their donations decrease in these economic times. The amount available for Peace with Justice small grants each year depends on the abundance of the Peace with Justice Sunday offering.

Peace with Justice small grant forms are now available to download from www.arumc.org or may be sent via email or postal service. To request a grant form, contact Susan Ledbetter at susanledbetter@hotmail.com or (479) 273-2712. The deadline for grant



Volunteers with the free lunch program at Wiggins UMC, Fayetteville, include Susan Socia, Michael Frazee, Elizabeth Frazee and Cherrie Frazee.

applications is May 15. Grant awards will be announced at Annual Conference in Rogers in June.

Environmentalism Jerome Ringo: Green movement has 'the power to connect people'

By **SCHARMEL ROUSSEL**

Special to the Arkansas United Methodist

"I feel like I am looking into a rainbow," said Jerome Ringo, president of Apollo Alliance, speaking to more than 180 people who attended a Feb. 8 meeting at Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church in Little Rock.

"What I see tonight is something I have dreamed of," Ringo said, referring to the racially diverse crowd from Hoover, Pulaski Heights UMC, Trinity UMC, Quapaw Quarter UMC, Little Rock First, Conway First, North Little Rock Lakewood, Second Presbyterian Church and other guests.

"Ten years ago we would not have seen this," Ringo continued. "Now this hot topic is creating a movement that looks like America. Green is everybody's issue. Green has the power to connect people."

According to Ringo, God made the earth "perfect," and today's population is dumping environmental problems on its children and grandchildren. Today's world also is leaving future generations with the problem of correcting environmental degradation. Destructive habits are causing global warming. Something has to be done now, and Ringo called upon the church to do it.

"We have to do it from the pulpit," Ringo said.

"This is not a cycle," Ringo said, referring to claims that the earth is experiencing a natural warming period. "We are putting trash into the atmosphere and trapping gases in the



Tufara Waller and Leo Hauser visit with Jerome Ringo, environmentalist and evangelist, at a reception following a Feb. 8 program at Hoover UMC, Little Rock.

environment," he said.

"Because of thermal expansion, ocean levels are rising," Ringo continued. "A significant percentage of African-Americans live close to a coastline. Today New Orleans is more vulnerable than ever, and Tampa, Houston and New York City are next. 2005 was the hottest year in history. Greenland, the earth's air-conditioner that balances temperature, is melting at a rate every day with enough water to cover Texas 13 feet deep. The Louisiana coastline loses one acre every 42 minutes and has lost land the size of Delaware. In Kenya, the ice cap at Mount Kilimanjaro is melting."

Watch for the April 17 issue of the Arkansas United Methodist and more stories about how local churches are "going green" and addressing environmental issues.

Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania has had a snow and ice-capped peak for 11,000 years, he said. In the last 100 years, the ice cap volume has dropped more than 80 percent. In 1901,

approximately 12.1 square kilometers of ice topped the mountain. Aerial photographs in 2000 reveal only 2.2 sq.

km. remaining. Most of the loss has occurred since 1920. For 11,000 years, the ice cap was a source of water for the Nile River. Villages, people, animals and plants depended on the ice melt. The consensus among scientists is

that carbon dioxide emissions contributing to climate change are the cause.

"Poor people will suffer the most from global warming," Ringo told the crowd. "People of color and poor people spend 50 percent of their income on utilities, and the costs are rising. Poor people live near landfills, toxic waste dumps, chemical plants and railroad tracks. Poor people are concerned about rent, groceries, survival — not the ozone layer. Poor people can't afford hybrids."

The church and its people have an obligation, according to Ringo, who speaks with a sense of urgency on the social injustice issues related to environmental problems.

Ringo is president of Apollo Alliance, a consortium of more than 18 million members representing diverse industry, labor and environmental interests. He has been a recent advisor to President Obama on how to best pursue green economic initiatives and create green collar jobs. He taught at Yale University for two years and is now on the faculty at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

Ringo's visit to Hoover UMC was sponsored by the Arkansas Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council, Methodist Federation for Social Action, Black Community Developers and Black Methodists for Church Renewal.

[Scharmél Roussel is communications director for Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock.]

Calendar

MARCH

- March 7: "Transformational Ministry Planning," Connected in Christ training seminar, Searcy First UMC; Michael Roberts, (501) 324-8016 or 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.
- March 9-13: Small Church Leadership Institute, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville; Bob Crossman, (501) 324-8012 or 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.
- March 14: Crossing Jordan Movement event, Philander Smith College, Little Rock, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
- March 14: "Transformational Ministry Planning," Connected in Christ training seminar, First UMC, Malvern; Michael Roberts, (501) 324-8016 or mroberts@arumc.org.
- March 20-21: Lay Speakers School, Mount Eagle Christian Center.

- March 21: "Transformational Ministry Planning," Connected in Christ training seminar, Heritage UMC, Van Buren; Michael Roberts, (501) 324-8016 or mroberts@arumc.org.
- March 21: "Strengthening the Family" workshop, Healing Place Ministries, First UMC, Pine Bluff; Edna Morgan, 870-535-0101.
- March 21: Vacation Bible School Training, First UMC, Jacksonville.
- March 27-29: Caring for Creation Workshop, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville; (800) 760-8126.
- March 30-April 3: Volunteer Work Week, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville.

APRIL

- April 3-4: Family Campout, Mount Eagle Christian Center.
- April 18: "Strengthening the Family" workshop, Healing Place Ministries, First UMC, Pine Bluff; Edna Morgan, 870-535-0101.
- April 18: Vital Signs, St. James UMC, Little Rock.
- April 22-23: John and Marjem Gill Annual Preaching Workshop, led by Renita Weems, Hendrix College, Conway.

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.

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

March 21-28: Shiprock, N.M., working with Navajo Indians, sponsored by Calico Rock UMC. Paul Seay, (479) 970-0696.

May 22-29: Appalachian Trail Ministry, Bastian, Va., sponsored by South East District. Volunteers, cooks and drivers needed. John or Judith Shafer, (870) 628-1282 or j2jshafer@yahoo.com

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. Nurses to work in surgery including pre, post op and operating room are urgently needed. Gwen Efird, gwenefird@att.net.



Oct. 17-31: Ghana, Africa. mission trip, sponsored by Jacksonville First UMC. John Clark, jclark@brownjanitorsupply.com.

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.

Deaths

Fort Smith

VIRGIL CHIPMAN BELL, 87, of Fort Smith, a retired clergy member of the Arkansas Conference who served under appointment for 62 years, died Feb. 24, 2009, in Fort Smith.

He was born Oct. 24, 1921. He joined the former Little Rock Conference in 1946 as a student local pastor and was ordained an elder in full connection in 1951. He served churches in both the Little Rock and North Arkansas Conferences. His pastorates included Carlisle Circuit, Mena circuit, Texarkana Circuit, Few Memorial, El Dorado First (associate), Stephens, DeQueen, Parkview/Rose City-North Little Rock, Pairs/Coles Chapel, Ozark/Cecil, Hamburg Parish, McGehee/Arkansas City, Pocahontas,



Virgil C. Bell

West Helena/Lexa and St. Andrew-Little Rock. After retiring in 1985, he continued serving churches, including Hatfield and Mena First through 2005.

He attended St. Paul UMC, Fort Smith, where he was a member of the Pathfinder Sunday School Class. As a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, Bell helped construct 13 Habitat homes and had a special love for the organization.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Katherine; two daughters, Sharon Smith of Nashville, Tenn., and Susan Hampton and husband Steve of Boerne, Texas; one son, Rev. Bobby C. Bell and his wife, Londie, of Fort Smith; nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Services were held Feb. 27, at St. Paul UMC, with burial at Witherspoon Cemetery in Vandervoort, Ark. Memorials may be made to the St. Paul UMC, 4100 Grand Ave., Fort Smith, Ark. 72904, or the West District Habitat Home, P.O. Box 3634, Fort Smith, Ark. 72913.

Local churches urged to prepare for returning military personnel

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Military personnel, many of whom have served in war zones and areas of conflict around the world, are returning to local churches in increasing numbers. Is your church ready to welcome them home?

“Trauma Healing: Preparing Churches to Receive Returning Military Personnel” is the theme of an April 1-2 event co-sponsored by three United Methodist organizations — JUSTPEACE, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the General Board of Discipleship. The “Gathering,” an annual event, will be held in Upper Room Denman Building of the United Methodist Center, 1908 Grand Ave., Nashville. The event is open to all.

Shelly Rambo and Laura Bender will lead the event. Rambo is assistant professor of theology at Boston University School of Theology and author of “Trauma and Redemption: Witnessing Spirit between Death and Life,” a forthcoming book by Westminster John Knox Press. Bender is a chaplain with the U.S. Navy and a United Methodist minister. She is currently serving as command chaplain on the USS New York.

Topics of the Gathering will include the phenomenon of trauma and its effects on persons and communities

and ways in which churches can more effectively respond to the needs of returning troops. Participants will receive a draft of materials to be provided to local church leaders to assist them in a healing ministry with returning veterans, with an eye to both their needs and church members’ ability to address these needs.

Cost is \$100 per person. For more information, contact the Justpeace office at (202) 488-5647 or justpeace@JUSTPEACEumc.org. Registration is available online at www.JUSTPEACEumc.org.

This year’s Gathering is the ninth annual event for the JUSTPEACE movement, comprised of committed practitioners on the journey of the ministry of reconciliation. The JUSTPEACE Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation is a mission of the United Methodist Church to engage conflict constructively in ways that strive for justice, reconciliation, resource preservation and restoration of community.

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Remember When

100 Years Ago

July 9, 1908: For many years, Hamburg has been reckoned as a good substantial town. The coming of the new Rock Island railroad has given new life and hope, so there are some new buildings going up. ... We have an excellent church and comfortable parsonage. Dr. J.H. Riggan, one of the strongest preachers and one of the best informed men of the conference, is the pastor. He and Sister Riggan are educating their boys in Hendrix College. Sister Riggan takes deep interest in the work of the church and Sunday school. H.A. Dowling and E.C. Knapp hold a Sunday school institute at Hamburg during the week. Crossett and Snyder

sent up delegates.

50 Years Ago

March 5, 1959: Rev. Earl Carter, pastor of the Nettleton Church, was the guest evangelist in a series of revival services at the Centerview Methodist church Feb. 15-22. The singing was led by Jenkins Swan and Polly Bingham was at the piano.

20 Years Ago

March 3, 1989: The congregation of Parkers Chapel UMC recently paid tribute to one of its saints, Bea Cammack, who joined the church at age 12 and has been active ever since. She was presented a plaque recognizing her faithfulness to God and the church.



People of Faith

William A. “Bill” Waddell, a partner with the law firm of Friday, Eldredge & Clark, LLP, in Little Rock, and Chancellor of the Arkansas Annual Conference, has been tapped to serve in the newly created role of legal adviser to the Council of Bishops.

In that role, Waddell will advise the Council of Bishops, the Jurisdictional Colleges of Bishops, and U.S. bishops in the interpretation and application of the United Methodist Book of Discipline. He will also work in conjunction with the attorneys on work the United Methodist Council on Finance and Administration has with the United Methodist Chancellors in the 63 U.S. annual conferences.

The Central Conference bishops will continue to work directly with the attorneys in the GCFA Legal Services Department.

Yvonne Nipper and Martha Sue Weege have been recertified as United Methodist Church Business Administrators by the General Council on Finance and Administration, working in connection with the United Methodist Association of Church Business Administrators (UMACBA).

Nipper is administrative assistant for the Southwest District office, located in Texarkana. Weege serves Heritage UMC, Van Buren.

The General Council on Finance and Administration coordinates and administers finances and safeguards the legal interests and rights of the United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Association of Church Business Administrators (UMACBA) exists to support, train and encourage service through the ministry of administration.

Classifieds

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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.

MINISTER TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: First United Methodist Church of Hot Springs, Arkansas, 2,200 members, in quality of life location seeking leadership to continue and grow an excellent children’s ministry. Full-time position, beginning June 1, 2009. Christ-centered theology, relational skills, appropriate education, demonstrated record of excellence, strength in empowering volunteers for ministry required. Salary commensurate with experience. Job description available on website. Resumes or inquiries addressed to: First United Methodist Church, 1100 Central Ave., Hot Springs, AR 71901. Web: www.fumchs.com. Phone: (501) 623-6668. Fax: 501-623-2293. Email: brobud@fumchs.com.

It's play time!

■ *New playground for Children's Home nearing completion*

A new playground is nearing completion at the Methodist Children's Home located on South Fillmore street in Little Rock.

A celebration lunch was held Jan. 29 for friends and supporters and featured a "thank you" from some of the youngsters who will be enjoying the new outdoor play space. The children, enrolled in the Children's Home preschool program, carried large letters that spelled out "T-H-A-N-K Y-O-U."

The new playground has been dreamed of for many years, said Maggie Beeler, director of development for Methodist Family Health, which has the Children's Home as one of its ministries. More than 50 children are currently enrolled in the education pro-

grams offered on the Little Rock campus. Until now, their recreation had been confined to a small gymnasium.

The new playground became a reality thanks to the \$53,000 raised by participants and corporate sponsors of the 2008 Walk for Children and Families, a benefit event held in September that involved youth and persons of all ages walking on behalf of sponsors across the Big Dam Bridge over the Arkansas River.

In-kind donations were also made by many of the companies that helped construct the playground.

"This will be a safe and fun place for the children to play," said Becky Kossover, chair of the Walk corporate committee.



Children enrolled in a preschool program at Methodist Children's Home spell out "Thank You" with large letters, in appreciation for the new soon-to-be-completed playground.

Community rallies around Selma church restoration plans

Members of the Selma community are rallying to stabilize and restore the historic Selma United Methodist church building.

The building had been deemed in peril of collapse due to serious structural deficiencies caused by a strong windstorm last year. An architect inspected the building in July and found it to be unsafe and recommended that the building not be used for any purpose until it could be properly repaired.

Since that time, the building has been braced and "is no longer in danger of collapse," said Dorris Watson of Tillar, who is heading up the Selma

UMC Restoration Project. "But we can no longer have services, funerals or weddings," she added.

A handful of residents used to gather at the Selma church every fifth Sunday to hold community worship services, but that has ceased, said Glenn Pettus, pastor of the Dumas and Tillar United Methodist churches, who led some of the services.

The Selma church building is currently closed and not open to the public. Only a complete restoration, at a cost of more than \$60,000, will save the building.

"It is a noble, historic structure and is in desperate need of repair," Watson

said.

Built in 1874, the white frame building is made of hand-hewn planks and features divided pew sections, one for men and another for women, and a belfry containing the original church bell. Its pulpit and altar are hand carved. Brackets that once held kerosene lamps are still attached to interior walls.

In 1974, it became the first building in Drew County to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Even though the structure is no longer home to an active congregation, many area residents maintain ties to

the church building, and it has been a popular and picturesque place to hold wedding ceremonies.

"Any contribution to assist with restoration will be greatly appreciated," Watson said. "It is our sincere hope that this church will remain standing for the glory of God, and for the many who travel so far to see the church, as well as get married here."

Contributions may be directed to the Selma UMC Restoration Fund, c/o Dorris Watson, 378 Old Military Road, Tillar, Ark. 72670. For more information, contact Watson at (870) 392-2683 or 866-7189.

NLR church passes hat to help ice storm victims, collects \$7,000

Members of Lakewood United Methodist Church in North Little Rock recently used an old-fashioned technique to raise money to feed the Arkansans left hungry because of the recent ice storms. They passed the hat — literally.

For thousands of people across the northern third of Arkansas, from the northwest to the northeast, the late January ice storm brought hunger as well as darkness and cold. Low-income families could ill afford to lose everything in their refrigerators and freezers. Many lost a week of earnings when businesses were closed.

The Arkansas Rice Depot, which operates a statewide network that supplies food through more than 800 local hunger-relief organizations in almost every county, issued an appeal for help with what was called "perhaps the most serious food emergency in our 27-year history." Food pantries asked

for emergency assistance and immediate food deliveries for the school-based Food for Kids program.

Dennis Schick and Michael O'Conner, members at Lakewood, immediately responded with a simple plan of action. They showed up at each of the church's three Sunday Services and asked worshippers a few questions. Did the people sitting there have electricity that morning? Did they have food in the freezer? Did they have money in their checking accounts?

Then they passed a hat down the aisles.

In two Sundays, \$6,900 was collected and immediately sent to the Arkansas Rice Depot. Since it costs about \$1 for the organization to feed a child, each person in the 500-person congregation supplied an average of more than a dozen meals to those affected by the ice storm.

"We had an opportunity — at this

time and in this place — to expand the light and act as God's people," Schick said. "We had to respond."

For more information about the

Arkansas Rice Depot, go to www.ricedepot.org. For more information about Lakewood UMC, go to www.expandingthelight.org.

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