



United Methodist Arkansas

April 3, 2009



United Methodist teens from across Arkansas raise their arms in praise during worship led by Justin Graves and his band at Veritas in Hot Springs.

Photo by Patrick Shownes

Preaching Resurrection amid ruins

■ Pastors look for ways to share the Easter message in these troubled times.

By Heather Hahn

As Christians around the globe celebrate Christ's Resurrection this month, many will be praying for the world economy to experience new life as well.

Ministers preparing their Easter sermons face a challenge: At a time when many worshippers fear empty bank accounts, how do you proclaim the joy of the empty tomb?

"The short answer for me, whether or not I address it directly, the message is one of hope," said Richard Lancaster, senior pastor of Lakewood United Methodist in North Little Rock. His church plans to have its first community sunrise service in years at 6:15 a.m. April 12 in nearby Lakewood Village Pavilion.

"There's an old saying: Never put a period where God puts a comma," he said. "I think that's the message of Easter. The disciples really did think it was hopeless, the end, dead and buried. But God is full of surprises."

Lancaster sees the divine at work even in this moment of plunging home values and mounting layoffs. He expects Americans will use the crisis as a time to evaluate what really matters in their lives.

See Easter, page 12

Youth show true faith at Veritas

■ Arkansas teens get closer to God at Hot Springs event

Special to the Arkansas United Methodist
About 1,125 youth from more than 100 churches learned to "rise up for God in the world" at Veritas, a life-changing weekend of worship and fellowship in Hot Springs.

"Our kids loved the whole thing, from hanging out in the lobby meeting new people, to rushing the stage to watch the band up close, to the small groups that catered to their individuality," said David Sutton, youth pastor at Grace United Methodist Church in Conway.

"The place was huge, with youth everywhere and amazing music. Then to see all those young people worshipping and praising God; I think it floored them."

Sutton said the four youth and two adults from Grace UMC especially enjoyed the worship time when everyone was gathered together.

"The music set the tone for worship," Sutton said. "Music really speaks to our youth."

The Justin Graves Band from San Antonio and keynote speaker Charles Harrison, a youth minister from the North Texas Conference, led the worship services at the event, which took place from Feb. 27 to March 1 at the Hot Springs Convention Center.

The event also included breakout sessions on subjects ranging from mission opportunities to prayer to spiritual gifts. Teens talked about how they could better honor their parents and learned more about the pros and cons of religious tattoos. There was even a "Workshop for

Guys Who Don't Like Workshops."

Will Strong, youth and young adults minister at First UMC-Jacksonville, brought 17 youth and four adults to the gathering.

"Our group really enjoyed the worship services – they were very age-appropriate," he said. "Charles Harrison did a good job of challenging our youth to rise up and do something with the life that God has given them. I could see God working through the speaker."

Terri Morgan, associate pastor for youth and young adults at Sugar Hill UMC in Texarkana, said Harrison did a good job of making his message resonate.

"Charles said they are not too young to do something important," she said. "He said to get out there and make a

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Cabinet changes:

Mike Morey will be West district superintendent, while Charles T. Settle becomes the North district superintendent, story on page 2.

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Editor's Corner

Hello from the new girl

In my brief time in Arkansas, I've seen United Methodist teens brave the July sun to build a porch for an elderly couple. I've seen a United Methodist praise band get more than 100 incarcerated men to jump up and sing God's glory. And I've seen countless United Methodist volunteers feed, shelter and clothe the poor.



Heather Hahn

Whenever a need arises, the state's United Methodists are often among the first to respond with a helping hand and the last to leave. That's true whether that need is here in Arkansas or halfway across the world in Africa.

I had the chance to cover some of these activities during four years as a reporter at the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. But now I am grateful for the tremendous privilege of focusing full-time on church's good work as this newspaper's editor.

I don't take this position lightly. After 21 years at the Arkansas United Methodist's helm, Jane Dennis has left behind some very large shoes to fill. I know there will be times when I fall short.

Still, I hope to continue Jane's practice of sharing news and information our readers can't get anywhere else.

I also plan to heed Jane's advice and give a fair airing of the very real and honest disputes whenever they occur within the wider church. To me, the diversity of views within the United Methodist Church is among this Christian body's greatest strengths.

I come to my new role as a bit of an outsider. I grew up in an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregation in Richardson, Texas (north of Dallas).

Just as many United Methodists grow up learning John Wesley's most famous sayings, I was taught Martin Luther's greatest hits — only in translation from the original German. I still take comfort in the old reformer's advice to "Sin boldly, but trust in Christ even more boldly."

At Austin College, a

Presbyterian Church (USA) school in Sherman, Texas, I got a first-class introduction to Calvinist theology. It was also there that I also learned the Presbyterian version of John 3:16 — "For God so loved the world that He didn't send a committee."

I met my husband, Michael, in the choir of Little Rock's Second Presbyterian Church, where we still attend when I'm not on the job.

While some may regard my outsider status as a hindrance, my hope is that it will enable me to view the church with fresh eyes. What may be routine to one congregation is often news-worthy to other churches around the state.

I look forward to learning all I can about the United Methodist Church. In the coming months, I hope to meet many of you in person as I visit United Methodist churches across the state.

I also hope to highlight the many ways Methodists are training new leaders, reaching new people, serving the poor and working to improve health and eliminate disease around the globe.

Ultimately, my main goal is to show how church members live out the advice Jesus gives in Matthew 25: 34-46 — all of which boils down to seeing the face of God in the least among us.

Please let me know about your church's special events and treasured ministries. Also please don't hesitate to share your thoughts and hopes for the *Arkansas United Methodist* newspaper.

This is your paper, and it should be an accurate representation of the state's United Methodists. Your letters and comments are always welcome.

My mailing address is the Arkansas United Methodist Conference at 2 Trudie Kibbe Road, Little Rock, AR 72202. You also can e-mail me at hhahn@arumc.org or call me at (501) 324-8037 or toll-free at (877) 646-1816.

Cabinet changes made

Special to the *Arkansas United Methodist* Bishop Charles Crutchfield has announced that there is a change in a previously announced district superintendent appointment.

Charles T. Settle will become the district superintendent for the North District, and Mike Morey will become the district superintendent for the West District, according to the bishop. They will join the Arkansas Conference Cabinet, which helps determine pastoral assignments.



Charles T. Settle



Mike Morey

Sara S. Bainbridge, who has served as North District superintendent since 2005, will be appointed to First United Methodist Church in Bella Vista.

These new appointments will take effect July 1.

The North District, with offices in Batesville, encompasses 98 churches and more than

13,700 United Methodist members in a 14-county area. The West District, based in Fort Smith, includes 68 churches and more than 14,000 members in a seven-county area.

Settle, 61, is now senior pastor of First UMC in Texarkana, and Morey, 55, is senior pastor of Christ of the Hills in Hot Springs.

The full slate of 2009 appointments will be announced at the Annual Conference, slated for June 14-17 in Rogers.

As previously reported, Robert C. "Bobby" Bell — who has served as West district superintendent since 2002 — is expected to take a leave from full-time ministry for health reasons.

Bell plans to remain in the Fort Smith area, according to the Office of the Bishop, and will work in the area of new church starts and new church development.

Currently the Arkansas Conference appointive Cabinet, led by Bishop Crutchfield, includes Phil Hathcock, Central District; Sara Bainbridge, North District; Rodney G. Steele, North Central District; Kurt Boggan, Northeast District; Mackey Yokem, Northwest District; Chester Jones, South Central District; Dennis Spence, Southeast District; and David Prothro, Southwest District.

In the words of John Wesley ...



"When I have any money, I get rid of it quickly, lest it find a way into my heart."



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

Send stories, ideas and photos to: Arkansas United Methodist, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Dr., Little Rock, AR 72202, or e-mail to hhahn@arumc.org. For information, call (501) 324-8037. The next deadline is April 8.



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Viewpoint

Dear Friends:
It is night now in Bethany. Tomorrow he would crest the hill of Olivet and enter the city. He knew he would have a decision to make. It was a fear-filled moment.

He had a decision to make. He could give in to the fear and go home to Galilee, or he could choose to trust God and enter Jerusalem. He chose to trust God.

The people gathered about him like a surging ocean. The shouts of the crowd accented the power of the hope in their hearts.

It was a demonstration of power that Rome hated, that the religious establishment feared. It was a scene that could provoke a massive reaction.

He had a decision to make. He chose not give way to the fear of reprisal. He chose to trust God.

An Occasional Word from the Bishop



They gathered in the upper room to share what he knew would be a last meal. Simple food. Bread and wine. A song. Then off to the garden to pray. There as others drowsily nodded off to sleep, he confronted his fears one last time.

He could choose to slip over the garden wall, make his way east to the Jordan and then north to Nazareth or Capernaum. He could retreat from the future. He could live out his life as a respected teacher, quietly and simply.

He had a decision to make. He chose to trust God.

We are people who have decisions

to make daily in most difficult economic circumstances. The world with all its weapons of mass destruction and its hatreds, both ancient and new, and its political uncertainties adds exclamation points to our confusion and our sense of no security. Our fears are underlined.

It is time for us to remember once again that Christians are born for a world like this. Our faith was born in a maelstrom of fear and confusion, and uncertainty. Our Lord lived out his life in a maze of conflicting values and



Charles Crutchfield

goals. The lesson for us is that central to Jesus' life was his trust in God. Everything else paled beside that single, central fact.

Leading up to the events on Calvary, Jesus had to make decisions. On Calvary, God made a decision. Fear would not win over hope. Evil would not win over goodness. Hatred would not win over love. Sin would not win over forgiveness. Life would win over death.

Nothing we face today has changed God's decision.

HE IS RISEN!
HE IS RISEN, INDEED!
HALLELUIAH!
AMEN!
Faithfully,

Following a few basics can help grow youth program

Youth ministers are often put upon by the "powers that be" to produce. In other words, "show us the numbers." This attention to how many are attending the youth group has always been a theological anomaly to me. It continues that age-old business mentality that says to a youth minister, "We hired you, now show us what you can do!"

For years I fought this battle with staff parish relations committees, administrative councils and, of course, senior pastors.

My argument was that if we feed them spiritually, the numbers will soon enough fall in place. I also had to remind them that one needs the patience of Job because this process often takes two to three years depending on where your kids are on their faith journey.

I have been fortunate. My theory has proven true in every church I have had the pleasure to serve as youth minister, and the groups have grown, both spiritually and numerically.

But, it wasn't until the United Methodist Church stated very clearly that our job as Christians is "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" that I began to wonder if there wasn't something to the numbers thing.

My conclusion: Yes, numbers are important after all. The reason: It's hard for youth to become disciples of Jesus Christ if they don't attend the programs set in motion to help them answer the questions of their faith. Those programs being public worship, Bible study, prayer, service to others, and Christian fellowship.

So, I began looking back over my years in youth ministry in order to glean the things that I thought had worked in helping youth become strong in their faith. I was able to come up with four simple things that



Rod Hocott

at each church I served all worked together to increase youth attendance so discipleship could take place. They are simply the basics of youth ministry, whether you have done youth ministry for 30 years or three months, or whether your youth group

has one or 100.

BASIC NO. 1: The senior pastor is the main youth minister of any local church. A study done by Search Institute on Exemplary Youth Ministries discovered this to be a main thread that ran through all the youth groups they spotlighted. This does not mean the senior pastor does the youth ministry, but that they are the support, the cheerleader and the liaison between the youth and the congregation.

BASIC NO. 2: Parent support/involvement. Parents may not want a steady job of being in attendance every Sunday night, but they do care and want to be involved in some way in the lives of their children.

You can ask them to take on such tasks as snack supper servers, van drivers, short-term Bible study leaders, fund-raising coordinators, retreat chaperones, etc. Don't ever negate the power of parents' involvement when it comes to their promoting youth ministry and seeing to it that their kids are in attendance on a regular basis. Kids may say they don't want their parents there, and parents may say they don't want to be there, but the group won't grow without this very important element.

BASIC NO. 3: Have a working youth council. The youth council is made up of youth and the adults who work with them, to plan and carry out

the programming for the youth group. It gives the youth responsibility, allows them an avenue for their leadership skills and promotes youth group ownership. Youth councils can be volunteer, elected or appointed (each of these methods has pros and cons).

Regardless of how a youth council is established, the members must take their duties seriously and understand that their job is to set the stage for ministry to take place in their youth group.

Once youth realize the program belongs to them, they become the promoters and invite not only the inactive, but their friends as well.

BASIC NO. 4: Committed adult volunteers. Putting together a team of adults who want to create relationships with youth to see them on their faith walk is probably the hardest job I had as a youth minister. But, if you recruit correctly, you can find those adults who love the Lord, love the youth and are all about the spiritual growth of each member of the group.

BASIC NO. 5: Communicate! Communicate! Communicate! How, you ask? We live in a fast-paced society with many ways to communicate available to us. E-mail, youth newsletter, phone tree, announcements, individual contacts by phone (every youth now has a cell phone) and the list goes on and

on. Since we all receive and assimilate information in different ways, all of the above forms of communication need to be used in order to reach the majority of the youth in the church.

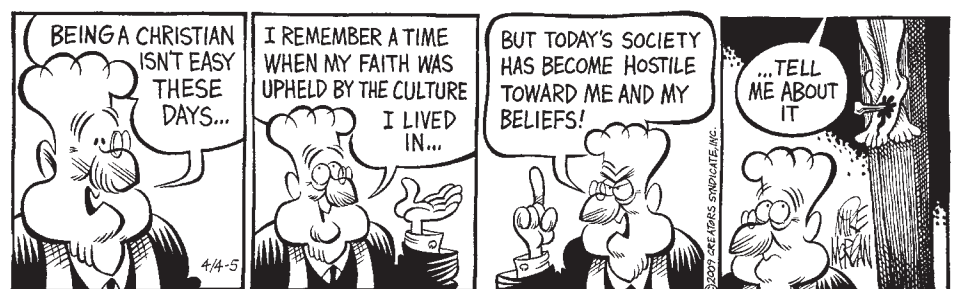
You may have tried all of these basics at one time or another. If they didn't work for your group, either: 1) they weren't all put into practice at the same time; 2) enough time wasn't allowed to prove success; or 3) someone, or something, for whatever reason, was hindering their success.

My job, should it be needed, is to help youth ministers — full-time, part-time or volunteer — in the local churches with the discipling process. I am available to do workshops on all the above basics, plus other areas of your ministry that might need a little boost. Don't feel like you have to go it alone.

We are all in this process together, and your success is a priority. But a greater priority is reaching reach out to youth and helping them become strong United Methodist Christians who are on a journey to perfection.

Rod Hocott is the minister of youth and young adults for the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. He can be reached by e-mail at rhocott@arumc.org or by calling (501) 324-8008.

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE By Mike Morgan



Viewpoint

In fulfilling church's mission, numbers really matter

We all love numbers. Or at least we're obsessed by them.

In these bad economic times, we watch the numbers on the stock market indexes with a kind of jittery anxiety.

During the summer months, baseball fans fervently check the box scores of their favorite teams' games every single day.

And high school students all know their GPA down to the last decimal point because every little bit counts when it comes to getting into the college of their choice.

For those of us raised on "Sesame Street," numbers became important the first time we heard the Count tick off bunches of apples and bouquets of flowers for our benefit.

I've written skeptically in the past about the "numbers obsession" in the church. Since the United Methodist Church was organized in 1968, the number of its professing members has fallen dramatically, so that more than 10 million members are now down to less than 8 million. And that can make Methodists awfully nostalgic about



Andrew Thompson

bygone days.

But my problem isn't with the concern over numbers itself. My problem is with what we tend to think the numbers represent.

Rather than caring about the number of Methodists who are committed disciples with a living faith in Jesus Christ, we tend to worry instead about our falling prestige in American culture. We see Baptists and nondenominational evangelicals exercising the kind of cultural influence we think rightly belongs to us — all because there's more of them.

But today I offer a mea culpa. My perspective has changed. Numbers are important. And whether or not we obsess over the size of other denominations, there are legitimate reasons why we need to focus — and focus hard — on our numbers.

At a recent conference in Washington D.C., I heard Lovett Weems Jr., director of Wesley Theological Seminary's Lewis Center for Church Leadership, present his views on the importance of numbers. Using the center's new survey, the Lewis Pastoral Leadership Inventory (LPLI), Dr. Weems reported on three



Gen-X Rising

By Andrew Thompson

areas that attempt to measure clergy effectiveness: character, competence and contribution.

When administered to pastors and congregations, the survey finds that pastors score well in character and competence.

Generally speaking, Methodist ministers have a high moral character and know how to do the tasks of ministry well, such as preaching, pastoral care and administration.

But they don't score so well in the area of contribution. When it comes to measurable achievements, such as forming new disciples of Jesus Christ, they fall far short of the kind of success that would grow churches.

Dr. Weems is pursuing statistical analysis in the hopes that seminaries can better prepare church leaders who will add numerically to the kingdom of God by forming new disciples who are marked by the love of God and neighbor.

Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). If we are not growing churches by baptizing new Christians and forming them in

the way of discipleship, we are falling short of the mission Jesus has given us.

Numbers really are important. They are an indication of men and women who are being brought into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. We should care about numbers because they point to the growth of God's beloved community, the church, which is the very force that is transforming the world and heralding the coming kingdom.

As Dr. Weems suggests, improving our numbers is a task for leadership—both clergy and laity. It means spreading the gospel more effectively. It means celebrating more baptisms and more professions of faith. It means recognizing the Holy Spirit is already ready to lead us in these vital ministries of evangelism.

We can do this, if we will be faithful to Jesus' call on us. And then what was said about the church in Acts will be said about us: "Day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

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.

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Weems will headline Vital Signs

Lovett H. Weems Jr. has made a name for himself developing innovative ways of thinking about church leadership in the Wesleyan tradition.

He has published more than 250 articles and books — many of which are now required reading at seminaries. Some of his most recent research has focused on young clergy, youth ministry and the future of the church.

Weems will share some of his insights when he is the keynote speaker at this year's Vital Signs gathering.

The event, an annual training session for clergy and laity, will be from 9:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. April 18 at Lakewood United Methodist Church, 1922 Topf Road in North Little Rock.

Weems directs the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., where he is also distinguished professor of church leadership.

Before leading the Lewis Center, he served for 18 years as president of St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Mo., and for three years as vice president of Wesley Theological Seminary.



Lovett H. Weems Jr.

He has served as a pastor and administrative leader in the United Methodist Church for about 20 years, and is a past president of the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools in the United States.

At Vital Signs, he will not only give the main address, but also lead two workshops on "Leading Lasting Change in the Church."

A complete list of workshops is available at www.arumc.org/vitalsigns.

Registration costs \$20 for individuals and \$15 for churches with five or more attendees, and includes meals and workshop materials. Registration closes April 6.

To sign up, visit www.arumc.org/vitalsigns or call the conference office at (501) 324-8011 or toll free at (877) 646-1816. For directions to Lakewood UMC, call the church at (501) 753-6186.

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.

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, pharmacists, 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.

Sept. 20-26: Texas Golden Triangle area, post-hurricane rebuilding, sponsored by St. James UMC, Little Rock. Jenni Duncan, 501-217-6708 or jenni@stjames-umc.org.

Oct. 9-16: Shiprock, N.M., construction and community service, sponsored by St. James UMC, Little Rock. Glen Duncan, duncan7400@sbcglobal.net or (501) 551-1951.

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

New and ongoing: "This Ole Church" Volunteers in Mission project. Help restore and repair churches in the Arkansas Conference.

Teams will be painting, weather-proofing, doing 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.

Coming Up

Pulaski Heights UMC, 4823 Woodlawn Drive, Little Rock, will celebrate Palm Sunday with a live donkey.

The donkey will be in the church's drive court area during the Sunday School hour, 9:15-10:15 a.m. April 5. Characters portraying Jesus and the crowd will be in costumes. Children will wave 200 palm branches. Jesus will enter the drama about 9:45 a.m.

To learn more, call (501) 664-3600.

First UMC, 723 Center St., Little Rock, will host a teaching seder at 5:30 p.m. April 6 in the Fellowship Hall.

The Passover meal will be led by Rabbi Eugene Levy of Temple B'nai Israel and Michael Mattox, senior pastor. The Jewish observance of Passover begins at sundown April 8, the night before Maundy Thursday.

To learn more, call the church at (501) 372-2256.

The United Methodist Women of Mayflower UMC, Miller St. and Arkansas 89, will have a spring bazaar at 7 a.m. April 11.

One of the highlights will be the raffle for a quilt that was made and donated by Cheryl Brannon. The quilt is in shades of lavender and blue on a white background and in a fan pattern. The quilt is on display at H and B Hardware in Mayflower.

There also will be fried fruit and chocolate pies, home preserved jams, jellies and pickles. Also for sale will be cookies, cakes, rolls and various breads.

The women will serve a lunch of garden salad, chicken spaghetti with garlic bread and a drink. Take out will be available. All proceeds go to local missions projects.

To learn more, call the church at (501) 470-0983.

Mayflower United Methodist Church will celebrate an Easter sunrise service at 6:30 a.m. April 12 on the banks of the Arkansas River.

The service will be in the Harrell-Raney Pavilion. To go to the pavilion, go on Arkansas 89 past the high school about three miles, to Easterwood Road, then turn left on Easterwood. Go another three miles or so to the river.

The way will be marked with balloons, starting with the turn onto Easterwood Road.

A time of fellowship will follow with coffee, juice and pastries and then a full breakfast will be at 9 a.m. at the church.

To learn more, call the church at (501) 470-0983.

First UMC, 220 W. Main St., Jacksonville, will fling open its doors at 8 a.m. April 19 for its first "M.I.A." Sunday, which stands for Methodists in Action.

The church will cancel all worship services and classes that Sunday, and will instead invite everyone to a day of community service.

The church has plans for all ages to be

involved from 8 a.m. to noon, and some crews are planning work on Saturday to prepare for the work teams.

Most crews will work at the Jacksonville Middle School boys' campus to help with building and grounds improvement projects.

The church praise team and choir will visit another congregation to offer music for their worship hour, and there are some on-site mission projects for children or others who cannot join the work crews.

The church will hand out 1,000 invitations attached to loaves of bread at 4-6 p.m. April 8. The church also will have a new free community meal the Saturday following M.I.A. Sunday.

The meal will be offered from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Saturday to help the community come together and to help neighbors get to know each other better.

To join a service team on M.I.A. Sunday, visit www.jacksonvilleumc.com or call (501) 982-8176.

The United Methodist Women of St. Paul UMC, 1310 E. Mill St., Malvern, will hold the group's third annual women's conference beginning with registration at 9 a.m. April 18.

This year's study is titled "Forgiveness in a Woman's World." Sue Howe, senior pastor of Faith UMC, Little Rock, will be the guest speaker.

Howe's ministry has taken her to Great Britain, France, Germany, Romania, Israel and Zimbabwe.

Debbie Matlock and Vada Tidwell have planned the music. Soloists will be Britani Gray, Natalie McClellan, Shelly Snowden and Libby Harkins. Retired pastor Treccie Cook of Searcy will lead Communion and the ending prayer.

A snack breakfast will be at 9 a.m. Lunch will be prepared by the men.

To learn more, call the church at (501) 337-7364.

St. Paul UMC, 700 W. Eighth St., El Dorado, will have a Vacation Bible School Training and Networking Party from 9 a.m. to noon April 18.

Churches that are planning to present Group Publishing's Crocodile Dock VBS this summer will receive exclusive training from a Group VBS ambassador, including time to network and share ideas.

Every aspect of VBS will be covered including music, stories and crafts.

To register, call Jeremy Carter at (870) 862-4242.

Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Margaret Edson will speak about "Faith & Health ... and the Arts: Making the Connection," in Memphis.

"An Evening with Margaret Edson" will be at 7 p.m. April 18 in the Wiener Theater of the Hutchison School, 1740 Ridgeway Road, Memphis. She will give a dramatic reading from her play *Wit* and discuss the issues raised in the piece.

The \$10 admission will benefit

Methodist Residential Hospice. For more information, call (901) 516-0500.

Trinity UMC, 1101 N. Mississippi St., Little Rock, will present the 60-voice River City Men's Chorus at 3 p.m. April 19, 7 p.m. April 20 and 7 p.m. April 21.

Dove Award-winning, internationally-acclaimed composer and performer Mark Hayes will join the chorus on stage as director or at the keyboard. The show will feature the world premiere of "I Am That Man" by Hayes and other pieces he's written.

All performances are free, and doors open an hour before the performance. Early arrival is recommended because seats fill up fast.

To learn more, call (501) 377-1080 or visit www.rivercitymenschorus.com.

The "Green Team" of Trinity

UMC, 1101 N. Mississippi St., Little Rock, will sponsor a churchwide Festival of God's Creation during worship at 10:45 a.m. April 26.

Following the service, the team will hold a churchwide soup competition that will be entirely meat free.

The Green Team is responsible for finding new and creative ways to help the church become environmentally friendly.

To learn more, call the church at (501) 666-2813.

The deadline for the next edition of the Arkansas United Methodist is 5 p.m. April 8. Submissions must be typed or printed and include the street address and phone number for the church or event. Mail submissions to editor Heather Hahn, Arkansas United Methodist, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Drive, Little Rock, AR, 72202, or e-mail information to hhahn@arumc.org.

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Robbie Powell, an eighth-grader at First UMC in Conway, talks about a friend's struggle with illness.

Photo by Patrick Shownes

Veritas, continued from page 1

statement for others.”

Her daughter Grace Randle, 16, came away from the event pumped.

“The speakers were awesome, and the band was great,” she said. “I learned that if you put your mind to it, you can do whatever you want to do, not matter how old you are. Veritas is a great experience. You get to meet other people, worship together and get closer to God.”

Randle, a student at Arkansas High School in Texarkana and a member of the Council on Youth Ministry, helped with registration and making sure everyone had the materials they needed and found their way to the breakout sessions.

“One of the speakers was a little eighth-grader whose friend has a disease,” Randle said. “He really opened the younger kids’ minds that they can be disciples of Christ. He told about selling bracelets to raise money to help find a cure for the disease his friend has.”

Her mom Morgan, who is also a leader of the Southwest District Council on Youth Ministry, was one of the small group leaders. Her session dealt with “Weird Things in the Bible.” The participants discussed stories like Lot and the pillar of salt, the talking donkey and Jesus sending spirits into pigs.

“We did skits and activities that brought the stories to life,” Morgan said.

Event coordinator Brandon Bates, youth minister at Lakewood UMC in North Little Rock and member of the Conference Council on Youth Ministry, said the event provided an opportunity for teens to learn tools they will use to serve God and their church.

When Veritas was in Fort Smith last year, just under 1,000 youth participated. Organizers credit the boost in this year’s attendance to the move to a more central location and the event’s growing reputation.

“It is vital that we have our youth meeting together at events like this,”



Justin Graves performs with his band from San Antonio at Veritas.

Photo by Patrick Shownes

Sutton said. “They need to see other youth, with similar beliefs, doing the same thing they are doing – whether it’s acting silly, praising God, or having a meal together.”

In a state where United Methodists often feel like a minority, Morgan said, Veritas gave teens the chance to meet and make lasting friendships with other members of their denomination.

“Veritas is more than just a weekend hanging out with other youth,” Sutton said. “It shows us, as a Conference, what can happen when we give our time to God.”

Save the Date: Junior High Assembly will be July 25-28 and Senior High Assembly will be July 28-Aug. 1 at the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville. To learn more, call Rod Hocott at (501) 324-8008 or toll-free at (877) 646-1816.



From left, Larry Clarke, Ted Williams, Ashish Bhakta, Scott Moore, Leslie Barns, Leewood T... the Wesley Foundation at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Wesley Foundation conn

Special to the Arkansas United Methodist

For many teens, college is the first time when there’s no Mom or Dad to get them out of bed on Sunday morning.

So it’s not surprising that while a recent University of California, Los Angeles study concluded students often become more spiritual in college, their church attendance usually declines.

Wesley Foundations in Arkansas offer students on-campus communities of faith that can help reverse that trend.

“Really the attraction was the free coffee!” Ryder Pierce said.

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock sophomore attends church services at the school’s Wesley Foundation, but he grew up as a member of First Baptist Church in Mountain Home.

“Though at first I was uncomfortable with the thought of attending a Methodist establishment, Thompson Murray finally grew on me, and curiosity got the best of me,” he said.

“Sunday mornings at 11 is the right church time for me since as a student athlete Sunday is the only morning I have to sleep in. And it’s a walk from the dorms. I actually have two teammates who finally wondered what all the fuss was about and got involved.”

Wesley Foundations have a presence at nine of Arkansas’ public four-year universities as well as Ouachita Baptist University. They are part of a tradition as old as Methodism itself. After all, the movement has its origins in the “holy club” John and Charles Wesley led while

students at Oxford University.

Jasmine Whitfield of Vilonia, a senior at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, first came to the Wesley Foundation for comfort.

“A friend I made in the first days of school committed suicide and my high school friend was the one to find her,” Whitfield said. “We both found ourselves at the Wesley to have a quiet place to handle this shock.”

Whitfield says she can always count on her Wesley Foundation friends to lend a helping hand.

“If I need help on a paper or just need to vent about something going on in my life they are here for me, just as I am for them,” she said. “Before coming to the Wesley I hadn’t gone to church in a long while. But since I started hanging out here I wanted to make a difference in what the Wesley was doing for others. Being a part of the Wesley has given me a way to help out the community.”

For some students the Wesley Foundation is their first exposure to the United Methodist Church, but for others it is an essential step in a faith journey they started long ago.

Lauren Wiseman of First UMC-Searcy is a junior at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

“My youth group and home church gave me a very solid faith foundation,” she said. “Once I came to ASU, it was very clear that I was going to have to keep building on that foundation on my own. The Wesley has helped me contin-

Life of Today



Thomas, Mike Mitchell and Mike Cobb pound away at the weekly drumming circle hosted by

Photo courtesy of the UALR Wesley Foundation

Connects colleges to Christ

ue growing and building. I am always supported by not only the friends I met at the Wesley, but also by a staff that is there for the students first."

Son of Gary Harrison, senior pastor at First UMC-Mena, Beau Harrison has a family history of participation in Wesley Foundations. His dad led the University of Arkansas at Monticello Wesley Foundation when he was younger, and both his parents were involved in Henderson University's Wesley Foundation as students.

Even before Beau Harrison arrived on the Henderson campus in Arkadelphia, his father asked campus minister Jason Molitor to keep an eye out for the new freshman.

"During 'Welcome Week' of my freshman year I found out about the Wesley Retreat at the spaghetti supper and decided to go on the retreat to meet people," the younger Harrison said. "I was immediately immersed in Wesley, playing crazy games, meeting great people and growing with peers who were struggling with the same things as me."

Now a sophomore, Beau Harrison said the Wesley Foundation gives him a place and opportunity to hang out with friends and unwind after a long day of class. "Wesley has given me a place to mature in a healthy environment with people I love and make sure I keep my mind in the right place while I am at school."

"God seeks for us to connect not only with Him, but also with others," said

Samantha Meadors, a member of First UMC-Benton and a junior at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. "Becoming involved in the Wesley Foundation completely changed my college experience. Honestly, the people at Wesley are just wonderful. They are accepting and nonjudgmental, willing to journey together. No one can walk into the chapel and go away unnoticed. You belong here just as you are."

Wesley Foundations in Arkansas also are fertile ground for development of new clergy members. "We have an internship called Catalyst, and it's about intentionally living for Christ and truly making Christ central in your life," said Amanda Cofer, a member of St. Paul UMC in Searcy who will graduate from UA-Fayetteville this spring.

"It has been incredible to learn so much, and has really shaped my future as well. I will be attending seminary next year, and if it wasn't for Wesley, I don't know that I would have learned my true calling.

Today Jessie Waddell is also exploring a call into full-time ministry in the United Methodist Church. A member of St. James UMC in Little Rock, she is a senior at Ouachita Baptist University.

"The Wesley Foundation ministry has changed my life, and I am continually amazed by the experiences, growth, relationships and promise it has provided me in my years of college," Waddell said. "God is definitely moving in this place!"

From jazz hands to God's hands: 12 questions for Rod Hocott

For more than 40 years, Rod Hocott has worked to get young Methodists excited about God. He has served the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church for the past nine years as the minister of youth and young adults. He talked to the Arkansas United Methodist about what he does for the church and what gets him to dance.



Rod Hocott

of 1,000 kids, and watching girls — and a guy — cut their hair for YSF and then donate that hair to Locks of Love.

In all this fun, kids are learning about mission and being of service to others.

Tell me about your role.

My job is to train and be a resource for those folks in the local United Methodist churches who work with youth and young adults. Many call me "the youth minister's youth minister" because I am there not only to help them in their ministries with youth but also to be an advocate for them as issues arise within their ministry setting.

What is your background?

I have been a youth minister for 40-plus years serving First United Methodist Church, Fort Smith twice; St. James UMC, Little Rock; FUMC, Springdale, and at a state hospital in Kansas working with adolescents.

What do you like about working with youth?

Youth are so creative and so full of passion about life. As far as they are concerned, there is nothing they can't do. Our job as youth ministers is to help them channel that philosophy into strong spiritual relationships, with God and peers and leadership development so they can understand that they are not only the "now" of the church, they are its future.

Your family includes: Wife, the Rev. Gail Hocott, a deacon in the United Methodist Church; two sons, one daughter, four grandchildren, a dog, a cat, and two fish.

About how many churches do you visit each month?

My visits range from eight to 12 local United Methodist churches per month. Most of these are small membership churches that may not have the finances to send their youth leaders for training. Besides visits, I help between 25 and 30 local churches/youth ministers online each month.

What have been some of the most memorable Youth Service Fund-raisers?

Our Conference Youth Service Fund team is incredible when coming up with new stuff to raise money for other youth who may not have the funds to go on a mission trip or fix up their youth room, or whatever.

Some of my favorites have been auctioning off some huge drawings by The Chalk Guy following a Senior High Assembly, raising enough money to get the conference youth minister to tap dance in front

You take tap dancing lessons. What will get you to perform?

\$5,000 for Youth Service Fund (I did it once for \$3000, but I'm better now.)

What do you do to feel close to God?

I attend worship regularly, I talk to God several times a day, and I read Scripture, although I do not pretend to be a Bible scholar. However, the one thing that brings me closest to God is some of the beautiful music that God has inspired.

What's on your CD changer?

The River City Men's Chorus rehearsal CD. We have a big concert coming up on April 19, 20 and 21.

What is your favorite Bible verse?

Jeremiah 1: 6-8 — Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you you shall go, and whatever I command you you shall speak. Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord."

This verse is not just for youth, but is as relevant to me today as was the first time I read it a very long time ago.

Where can you be found online?

I can be found on Facebook and welcome new friends. I've heard of Twittering, but don't know a lot about it. Sounds "birdy" to me.

What lesson do you hope to share with Arkansas' United Methodist youth?

More than anything I want our United Methodist youth to understand the gifts that are bestowed on us every day by God — particularly God's grace and that God loves us and there is absolutely nothing we can do about it.

I also want them to know as Bishop [Charles] Crutchfield says, "I'm proud to be a United Methodist because I know I don't have to check my brain at the door when I come to church."

We can agree to disagree and still love each other. It is that gift of free will that helps us choose to love God back, for God's first loving us.

Children's Home alumni share fond memories

■ 110th anniversary draws several former residents

By Heather Hahn

When Harold Jones first came to live in the Methodist Children's Home, the 7-year-old felt as small and anxious as a latter-day Oliver Twist. That is, until he walked into the home's dining room.

"I looked around and thought, 'I've never seen this much food,'" he recalled. "I didn't believe there was that much food in the whole world, and I thought I'd died and gone to heaven."

More than 60 years later, Jones — now 71 — credits the Little Rock ministry with not only keeping him well-fed but also providing him with a firm foundation for a successful career and a lifelong faith.

Jones, a member of Lakewood United Methodist Church in North Little Rock, was among more the 30 home "alumni" who exchanged fond memories at the 110th anniversary celebration of the Little Rock-based nonprofit group, now known as Methodist Family Health.

A reception on March 15 in the home's recreational therapy center drew supporters from around Arkansas and even out of state. They came to honor the ministry's past accomplishments and witness how Methodist Family Health is still transforming lives.

Captola Smith-Swain was the oldest former resident at the event. She first arrived at the home as an 8-year-old with her two brothers in 1929.

"It made me be as good and as old as I am," the 87-year-old said with a laugh. "It was a healthy place to be. We ate well. We prayed and went to church."

What began as an orphanage in 1899 has expanded to include a range of behavioral services for children and families across the state. These services include therapeutic foster care, emergency shelter, outpatient counseling, an acute psychiatric care hospital and a residential treatment center where women struggling with drug addiction can stay with their children.

"I think it's phenomenal the fact that we've been able to constantly meet the



Billy Gene Jones, at left, and Harold Jones came to the home in 1946.

Photo courtesy of Methodist Family Health



Captola Smith-Swain

"It made me be as good and as old as I am."

— Captola Smith-Swain

changes in today's mental health environment," said Andy Altom, Methodist Family Health's president and chief executive officer for more than four years.

"In working with at-risk kids, we recognize that sometimes we have to develop programs that will meet the families where they are. One thing that has been constant for 110 years is change."

Altogether, the ministry served nearly 2,500 children and their families last year.

The ministry plans to soon open its newest facility — a school for troubled youth in Magnolia.

Altom said the school will serve kids who aren't able to function in a regular

classroom. Students will attend for a semester or two, working on behavioral issues while still getting an education.

Poverty — not discipline problems — is what brought Jones and his older brother, Billy Gene Jones, to the Methodist Children's Home on Jan. 7, 1946.

The two had lived with their maternal grandparents on a struggling farm just outside Stuttgart. Harold Jones said the elderly couple didn't have the means nor the energy to rear two growing, active boys. The family wasn't starving, he said, but getting food on the table was sometimes "touch and go."

The Children's Home provided the Jones brothers with the stable environment they needed.

"We had clean clothes to wear, a warm place to sleep," the younger Jones said. "And we hadn't had all that."

Back then the Methodist Children's Home was inside an imposing red, three-story structure at 1610 Elm St., in Little Rock. Boys slept on one side, and girls on the other. A giant, green hedge surrounded the building, and towered over the Jones boys.

Harold Jones still vividly remembers how intimidated he was when he first saw the home. But the thoughtfulness of the staff soon put him at ease.

"I was never treated any other way than with kindness and respect," he said.

His brother echoes that sentiment.

"It made my life," said Billy Gene Jones, now 74. "Being put in the Methodist Children's Home, I was given the opportunity to survive. It gave me an outlook on life."

The brothers also participated in the home's move to a group of cottages at 2002 S. Fillmore St., where Methodist Family Health still operates. The elder Jones helped build four of the buildings on the campus.

Both men also credit the home with providing them with spiritual grounding.

"Everything was centered around church life," Harold Jones said. "Usually the house mothers did devotionals each night."

While at the home, the Jones brothers, like the other young residents, attended local public schools. They both went on to college. Billy Gene Jones, a star athlete, won a track scholarship to Louisiana State University. Harold Jones received a scholarship from the home to attend Arkansas Tech University in Russellville. He also worked at a variety of part-time jobs to pay the rest.

After a stint as a cryptographer in the U.S. Air Force, Harold Jones went on to a career in banking. He and his wife, Kitty, now live in North Little Rock.

His elder brother served for 22 years as a U.S. Army aviator before retiring as a lieutenant colonel. He and his wife, Jonelle, now live in Palm Coast, Fla.

Says Harold Jones: "Other than meeting my wife, it's the best thing that ever happened to me."

To learn more about the services provide by Methodist Family Health, visit the Web site www.methodist-family.org.

Parsonage gets new life as hangout

Interpreter Online

When Huntsville United Methodist Church in northwest Arkansas teamed up with the other church in its charge to buy a new parsonage, the plan was to sell the house and move it off site to create room for a basketball court.

But when that idea proved to be too expensive — and because there was a need for a gathering place for youth — the church decided to convert the parsonage into a coffee house.

Church members knew youth would not want to hang out in a run-down old house, so they transformed it into a state-of-the-art facility.

The entire community embraced and supported the idea. An area Starbucks donated bags of coffee, and individuals

donated cappuccino machines and coffee makers.

Women in the church baked cookies and other treats.

Another United Methodist church donated two computers and other equipment was donated to create a fully functional computer lab where youth can do homework or interact on social networking Web sites.

The coffee house is staffed by volunteers from the church, who also are available if the youth need someone to talk to other than parents or friends.

Huntsville United Methodist Church, 500 W. Main Street, Huntsville, can be reached by calling (479) 738-6890 or by visiting the Web site www.huntsvillearumc.blogspot.com.

Calendar

APRIL

April 18: "Strengthening the Family" workshop, Healing Place Ministries, First UMC, Pine Bluff; Edna Morgan, 870-535-0101.

April 18: Vital Signs, Lakewood UMC, North Little Rock, ministry training event for clergy and laity; (501) 324-8011 or (877) 646-1816 toll free.

April 20-24: Camp Aldersgate Clean Up Week; (501) 225-1444.

April 22-23: John & Marjem Gill Annual Preaching Workshop, with Renita Weems, Hendrix College, Conway; (501) 450-1263 or clark@hendrix.edu.

MAY

May 4-6: Clergy Golf Retreat, Mount Eagle Christian Center & Mountain Ranch Golf Course Fairfield Bay; contact David Baker at lynn2david@windstream.net

May 5-7: New Church Boot Camp, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville; Bob Crossman, bcrossman@arumc.org or (501) 324-8012 or (877) 646-1816 toll free.

May 7-9: "From Detours to Destinations: Worship, Music and Preaching" Worship Boot Camp, Mount

Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville; Bob Crossman, bcrossman@arumc.org or (501) 324-8012 or (877) 646-1816 toll free.

May 15-16: Conference UMW Spring Spiritual Growth Retreat, Camp Tanako.

May 16: "Strengthening the Family" workshop, Healing Place Ministries, First UMC, Pine Bluff; Edna Morgan, 870-535-0101.

JUNE

June 5-7: Local Pastor Licensing School, Part A, Mount Eagle Christian Center.

June 7-10: Conference on Ecumenical Mission, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville.

June 14-17: Arkansas Annual Conference, Hammons Convention Center & Central UMC, Rogers.

June 22-28: Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries Youth Choir tour.

JULY

July 13-17: SpiLiRa (Spiritual Life Rally), University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo.

Russian mission field ripe for planting, minister says

■ But Moscow seminary needs church support

By Heather Hahn

The Soviet Union's breakup in 1991 was like ripping a vacuum seal off of Russian spirituality, a longtime United Methodist foreign mission worker said.

After some 70 years of Communist repression, Christians could finally freely express their faith and people's hearts were unbound to the Holy Spirit.

"You know when you have something in a vacuum — like a peanut jar — you open it up and 'Whoosh!' The air rushes into that vacuum," Bruce Hargrave said.

"Well, that's kind of the way it is in Russia. When I got there, I found out that there was an incredible hunger and thirst for the word of God, for a spiritual experience."

Since he first visited Russia five years ago, Hargrave has gone from being mission pastor at First United Methodist Church in Rockwall, Texas, to vice president for development for the United Methodist Theological Seminary in Moscow.

Hargrave, a native of Texarkana, Texas, spoke March 15 at Trinity UMC, Little Rock about the seminary and the work of the United Methodist Church in Russia.

It was his first church presentation in a campaign to help raise money for the small seminary, which began holding classes in 1995. Hargrave came at the invitation of Candace Barrow, associate pastor of Trinity.

Hargrave said his goal is to get 1,000 congregations or Sunday School classes to commit to sending \$100 a month or \$1,200 a year to create a seminary endowment.

"I believe that through this seminary, we are going to teach these young men and women who come from all over Russia," he told dozens of Trinity worshippers during the church's Sunday



Bruce Hargrave, standing, gives a presentation on the work of the United Methodist Theological Seminary in Moscow to Sunday School students at Trinity UMC in Little Rock. Photo by Heather Hahn

School hour.

"We are going to be able to teach them the word of God and train them in effective ministry and pastoral skills."

So far, more than 100 Russians have graduated from the seminary. More than 80 graduates now serve in United Methodist churches across Russia, which spans 11 time zones. The seminary currently has 48 students in a renovated kindergarten building in Moscow and in a distance-learning program.

Methodism in Russia dates back to 1889. The church once had mission work in St. Petersburg and on the far east coast around Vladivostok.

But during the "Great Terror" of the 1930s, Joseph Stalin set about purging Russia of those he considered to be "enemies of the people." That included Christians and their churches. According to the KGB archives, more than 20,700 Christians were slaughtered at the height of the purges in 1937-38.

The Methodist Church, like other

denominations, was disestablished. The Russian Orthodox Church survived mainly as an arm of the state and embodiment of Russian nationalism, Hargrave said. Most Christian worship went underground.

The United Methodist Church reactivated about 20 years ago, and today there are 116 congregations in Russia.

Three of those churches have Arkansas partners — the Northeast District, led by First UMC, Jonesboro; the North District, led by First UMC, Searcy; and Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock. The districts and congregations provide funding to help pay for the pastor's salary and rented space.

This past year, Walk to Emmaus began in Russia, and Upper Room Ministries introduced a Russian devotional called "Meeting Places." One of the publication's translators is Elena Stepanova, pastor of Pulaski Heights UMC's Russian partner Return to Christ United Methodist Church.

Hargrave said the country's United Methodist Church is vibrant and young. Many of the worshippers are in their 20s.

But the denomination still occasionally experiences tension with the Russian Orthodox Church, which accounts for about 15 to 20 percent of Russia's roughly 140 million people.

In some parts of Russia, Hargrave said, UMC institutions have to jump through extra bureaucratic hoops and undergo longer waiting periods to get land permits than Orthodox institutions.

Churches also can be subject to government whim.

Mike Morey, chairman of Arkansas' Russia Initiative Committee, wrote in his annual report that Return to Christ United Methodist Church had worshiped next to a prison. But the government took over the building following a prison riot and change of prison administration.

"We had enjoyed exceptional access to the prison, and had a fruitful ministry with the inmates," wrote Morey, senior pastor of Christ of the Hills UMC, Hot Springs.

"There is promising dialogue with the new prison administration regarding full or limited use of the building."

For now the congregation is meeting in private homes.

Hargrave, for his part, believes the United Methodist Church will eventually transform the country.

"I may not see it in my lifetime, but I truly believe that in some point in time, somewhere some girl will grow up through our Methodist Church and become the president of Russia," he said. "Now, that's an amazing vision."

To learn more about the seminary in Moscow, visit www.gbgm-umc.org/umrussiaseminary. To support Arkansas' Russian Initiative, e-mail Mike Morey at srpastor@cohmc.com.

Russian and Ukrainian youth discuss road to faith at Calif. gathering

United Methodist News Service

The importance of youth and young adult ministry held center stage in San Diego at the 2009 consultation of the United Methodist Russia Initiative.

Fourteen students and young professionals brought a spirit of newness and a sense of continuity to the March 5-7 event, the 14th such consultation since the United Methodist Church was reborn in former Soviet territories.

"We are at a time of changing generations," said Sergei Nikolaev, president of the United Methodist Theological Seminary in Moscow. "Young people born into or joining the church are becoming mature leaders."

The Russia Initiative includes Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, and is part of the United Methodist episcopal area of Eurasia. It is sponsored by

the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries.

Today, the initiative covers 116 United Methodist congregations, all with indigenous pastoral leadership, according to Bishop Hans Växby, leader of the Eurasia Area.

A delegation of 27 from Russia and Ukraine and some 140 U.S. participants attended the consultation, sponsored by the California-Pacific United Methodist Annual Conference.

The conference is deeply involved with the United Methodists in the Vladivostok area.

The gathering coincided with the 120th year since the first Methodist church opened in Czarist Russia, in present-day Lithuania.

All of the young adults took part in a consultation forum, where they spoke and answered questions. Two young pastors, the Rev. Natalya Botova from Samara, Russia, and the Rev. Kira

Volkova from Kirov, said they had been in the church since they were young, having been guided by family. On the other hand, Anton Kuzmin, a college student from St. Petersburg, came to the church only last year.

"Some of my friends make jokes about me going to the Methodist church," Kuzmin said.

"But I keep going because going to church changed my life. My mother, who is Orthodox, did not understand what I was doing. I finally persuaded her to go with me to church once, and now she knows what I do on Sundays. I am trying to influence my friends and my family because they also need to know Jesus Christ."

Prior to the panel, Ekaterina Pugacheva of St. Petersburg told the consultation that she sees great promise for successful youth ministry in Russia because younger people do not have the same hostility to faith that was com-

mon in the communist era.

"People are coming to church through their children," she said, noting that she first went to a United Methodist church when she was 7 years old.

The four Ukrainian students said that they came to the small United Methodist community in Lviv several years ago because they wanted to learn English, and classes were offered by missionaries. They found the Methodist spiritual and social way appealing.

Andrey Tatchin, from Lviv and enrolled part-time in the Moscow seminary, spoke at a special service marking the 100th anniversary of the official registration of Methodism in Czarist Russia.

He said that young people in his culture are looking "to know God with their hearts, their minds, and their hands."

VITAL 2009 SIGNS

Saturday, April 18, 2009

9:30 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

**Lakewood United Methodist Church
1922 Topf Road, North Little Rock**

Keynote Presentation

Congregational Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit

Rev. Dr. Lovett H. Weems, Jr.



Dr. Weems is Distinguished Professor of Church Leadership and Director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership

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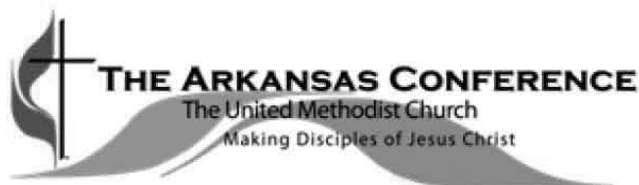
How to Register:

On-line: go to www.arumc.org/vitalsigns

By mail: Vital Signs brochures were mailed to all local churches. Additional brochures can be downloaded at www.arumc.org/vitalsigns.

Registration includes meals, worship events, and workshop materials. Free childcare is available with advance registration.

Hurry, registration closes April 6. After April 6, call tollfree 877.646.1816 or 501.324.8011 or email registrar@arumc.org for session availability.



Deaths

OZARK

ARDATH ANDERSON, 81, retired teacher and the wife and mother of United Methodist ministers, died on March 30, 2009, in Ozark.

She was born Dec. 29, 1927, in Canton, Texas, to Hansford Keahey and Ethel Stewart Keahey. Anderson was a member of Ozark United Methodist Church and United Methodist Women.

She was preceded in death by her husband James P. Anderson, who served as a United Methodist minister in Arkansas for 30 years.

She is survived by her daughters Laura McCollough and husband Lindel in Huntsville, and Kim Balentine and husband Charles in Farmington.

She is also survived by her sons Ben Anderson, pastor of Church at the Oaks UMC in Fort Smith, and wife Laura Beth, and Jim Anderson and wife Julie of Ozark.

She is also survived by sisters Laverne Keith of Seabrook, Texas, and Latrece Smith of Hideaway, Texas and by brother Eldred Keahey of Woodland, Texas.

Her surviving grandchildren are Lea Ford, Taylor Ford, Tyler Anderson, Andrew Anderson, Brianna Balentine, James Balentine, Ashley Culver, Luke Anderson and Kara McCoy. Her great-grandchildren are Kayla Culver, Holly Culver and Allie McCoy.

Services were held April 1 at Ozark United Methodist Church with Ben Anderson and Keith Dodson officiating. Burial was at Highland Cemetery in Ozark.

Memorials may be made to Ozark United Methodist Church's sanctuary

renovation fund, 503 W. Commercial St., Ozark, AR 72949.

HARRISON

BERNICE "BERNIE" SMITH, 70, bookkeeper and pastor's widow, went home to be with her Lord and Savior on March 19 at North Arkansas Medical Center in Harrison.

She was born August 13, 1938 in Sterling City, Texas, to William and Minnie Bumgartner Green.

She had served as a bookkeeper for many years for the Cattlemen's Livestock Auction Company where she served as bookkeeper for many years.

She also was an avid quilter, an accomplished seamstress and an awesome cook. She was a member of Everton United Methodist Church.

She is survived by her sons and daughter-in-law, James and Kathy Bennett of Santa Clara, California, and Tom Smith of Everton; her mother, Minnie Green of Everton; and two grandchildren, Blake Smith and Devon Smith.

She is also survived by her sister and brother-in-law, Billie and Allen Young of Valley Springs; and a host of other family members and dear friends throughout the community.

She was preceded in death by her father, and by her husband, Herman Smith on Aug. 28, 1999. Her late husband was a part-time local pastor in the Arkansas United Methodist Church from 1987 until his death.

Funeral service was March 21, at Christeson Funeral Home, with Dave Smith officiating.

Interment was in Crawford Cemetery.

Methodists can apply for college aid online

Students who need financial help for college costs can now apply online for United Methodist scholarships or loans.

"We believe this new system is much more convenient for applicants," said Angella Current-Felder, executive director of the Office of Loans and Scholarships at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

The online scholarship application went live on Jan. 5. As of March 17, more than 1,600 applications had been submitted for scholarships for the fall term.

"Scholarship deadlines vary for the more than 60 programs administered by GBHEM, but the final deadline has always been May 15," said Allyson Collinsworth, scholarships administrator. "We are encouraging applicants, especially renewal students, to apply and complete the application early this year to ensure they are considered for funding."

For the 2008/2009 academic year, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry gave \$4.57 million in scholarships to 3,371 students, and \$1.95 million in loans to 430 students.

The new system allows the staff to communicate by e-mail about requirements to complete an application.

Applicants must submit an official

transcript, letters of reference, and essay to the office in one packet to complete the file after the online portion is submitted.

"We can now e-mail applicants on a regular basis to inform them of missing items and award notification," she said.

The time saved by no longer needing to do data entry of applications gives staff more time to analyze the applications.

Applicants have provided positive feedback about the online application versus the paper applications.

The applications have church and school wizards that enable the applicant to choose their current school and church from a list. These databases contain all accredited institutions within the United States, and all known United Methodist churches. That helps Loan and Scholarship staff verify church membership, and will allow the office to communicate more effectively to United Methodist churches and institutions regarding recipients from their local congregations or student body.

In addition to online applications, students can now repay their loans online.

To learn more about United Methodist loans and scholarships, visit www.gbhem.org and click on the Loans and Scholarships button.



It Happened



Bismark United Methodist Church hosted the First UMC Praise Band from Benton on March 8. Before the concert, Bismark UMC held a chili cook-off in the fellowship hall. Ten pots were entered. Both the cook-off and concert raised \$700 for the church's "Nothing but Nets" Skeeterfest project.

Photo courtesy of Bismark United Methodist Church



Participants with HO HUM (Holy Older Health United Methodists) of First United Methodist Church in Hot Springs stand ready to lift some weights during one of the group's twice-weekly exercise sessions. HO HUM is for those 65 or older who want to "accept aging, but avoid 'olding.'" In addition to physical exercise, the group attends courses on personal safety, making final arrangements, understanding hospice and other classes with the theme of living fully and dying well.

Photo courtesy of First United Methodist Church in Hot Springs



Confirmation Day proves to be a time of fun and visiting for these participants enjoying a pizza lunch.

Photo by Jane Dennis

More than 400 United Methodist confirmands and their adult leaders turned out for the annual statewide Confirmation Day with the Bishop March 14.

This year's event was held at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church in Little Rock and was headlined by Arkansas Conference Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield, who answered dozens of questions during small group sessions and gave the youth a glimpse into what it's like to be called to the top clergy office in the denomination.

Motivated by the theme "Claim the Name," participants were urged to "dig deep," examine their faith and take intentional steps along their faith journey.

They were treated to a concert by recording artist and special guest Celia Whittler.

Activities also included a knowledge-testing game of "Confirmation Feud," photos with the bishop, a pizza lunch, worship and Communion.

A special mission offering brought in more than \$1,000 for Nothing But Nets, the churchwide campaign that provides insecticide-treated bed nets to families across Africa in an effort to prevent malaria and other killer diseases.

The health ministry of Wesley Chapel UMC in Little Rock has joined with the Philander Smith College Office of Religious Life to offer a way

to spend the 2009 Lenten season rededicating their lives to God by sponsoring a Biggest Loser campaign.

Citing Romans 12:1, Wesley's first lady Shantella Yow said she wanted not only to give something up for Lent but also to concentrate on giving God her mind, body, and soul because "He wants the total package."

The campaign, which kicked off on Ash Wednesday, fulfills the intent of the Holy Healthy UMC initiative of the Arkansas Conference by providing participants with expert advice on proper diet and exercise, health tips and meal plans.

As the name suggests, the Biggest Loser series is a contest. The person who has lost the greatest percentage of their total weight at the end of six weeks will win the \$500 grand prize. Unlike the TV contest, no participants will be eliminated. Instead, unhealthy habits are voted off.

Organizers include Yow, her husband and Wesley senior pastor Ronnie Miller-Yow and Andrew Wilson III.

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The 10th annual African Dinner, Drumming and Dancing event raised a record-breaking total close to \$13,000 for critical needs in Zimbabwe and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Feb. 28 gathering at Little Rock's First United Methodist Church attracted diverse community attendance of 600 to 700. The event was sponsored by the church's missions committee and co-hosted with Theresa Hoover UMC and Wesley Chapel UMC.

Photo courtesy of First United Methodist Church in Little Rock

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.

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

PART-TIME Music Director and/or Accompanist needed for United Methodist Church in the lovely Ozarks lakeside community of Bull Shoals, Arkansas. Duties for Director include coordinating with accompanist, weekly choir rehearsal, directing & practicing Easter and Christmas Cantatas, working with pastor and others who plan special services throughout the year. Salary \$6,000-\$7,000 annually. Duties for Accompanist include weekly choir rehearsal, playing and accompanying choir at Sunday Service, Easter and Christmas Cantatas, being available to play for weddings and funerals, and accompanying any special music during service. Salary \$4,000 to \$5,000 annually. Positions may be combined for a total PART-TIME salary of \$12,000. Please call Ann Manley, (870) 431-8758

PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR for medium-sized church. Please send resume to: Vilonia UMC, 1112 Main Street, Vilonia AR 72173; or email to: viloniaumc@windstream.net; or call Pastor Belinda Price at (501)952-9894 by April 10, 2009.

HEBER SPRINGS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH is looking for a part-time organist. Duties will be practice on Wednesday nights and the 8:25 & 10:55 worship services on Sunday morning. You can send your resume to Jayson Jones, Chair of SPRC. JJdealer@Suddenlinkmail.com or call Mr. Jones at (501) 362-8211.

HAMILTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, located approximately 12 miles south of Carlisle, is seeking a Christ centered, creative self starter to develop and lead a Christian education/activities program for children and youth, ages 2 to 18. The compensation is \$500 per month, a portion of which can be used to cover travel expenses. Resumes should be sent to Martha McCaskill via email, Martha@roddymccaskill.com, or mailed to Martha McCaskill, 16 Pointe Clear, Little Rock, AR 72212.



Remember When

100 Years Ago

April 1, 1909: The Board of Managers of the campaign for the \$300,000 endowment for Hendrix College, under the leadership of the Commissioner of Education, Rev. Jas. Thomas, gave a banquet at the New Capital Hotel in this city on the night of the 30th. The banquet was presided by over Governor Donaghey, was attended by about 50 of the leading business men of the State and a number of prominent ministers. Nearly all of the faculty of Hendrix College were present.

50 Years Ago

April 9, 1959: Rev. Robert B. Moore Jr. Rev. Elmo A. Thomason, and Rev. Kirby A. Vining have been selected by the General Board of Evangelism as three of

the members of the evangelistic team from the Arkansas-Louisiana Area that will visit Costa Rica and Panama in April. ... The Rev. Mr. Moore is pastor of the Dermott Methodist Church. Rev. Mr. Thomason is pastor of the Goddard Memorial Methodist Church, Fort Smith. Rev. Mr. Vining is pastor of the Berwick Methodist Church in Louisiana.

20 Years Ago

April 7, 1989: Tune in to the United Methodist-produced cable TV program "Catch the Spirit" the week of April 30 to see a repeat of the feature on Dorothy Edwards, a member of First United Methodist Church, received a 1988 Arkansas Community Service Award for her volunteer work with the church's Stewpot food program

Easter, continued from page 1

"I think we've lived a long time in our country getting what we wanted," Lancaster said. "I think we're going through a correction: Do we really need as much stuff to be happy?"

Charles Sigman, senior pastor of First UMC in Newport, has been delivering small messages of hope about the economy each Sunday since late September when the stock market collapsed. His overall message: "As long as we take care of each other, it's going to be OK."

Sigman originally hails from Ohio, a state that has been particularly hard hit by the recession. Whole towns have shut down after the closure of steel and auto plants, he said.

He described Newport as "on the bubble." New businesses still periodically open in the area, he said, but more people are seeking help from his church. He knows many in his congregation are anxious. In the services of Holy Week, he sees a way for the faithful to address their fears and, at least symbolically, lay their burdens on Christ.

His church will have a service of healing and reconciliation on Palm Sunday night where people can come forward to be anointed with oil. The church also will have a time of foot washing. The cleansing of the grime from daily life, Sigman said, serves as an apt metaphor for the way God purifies His people.

As the week continues, the church will have traditional Maundy Thursday and Good Friday Tenebrae services. The sanctuary will be completely shrouded in darkness before congregation members unfurl the white banners of Easter.

"I think the mistake churches make is to jump from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday without the Cross in the middle, without that final week of Jesus' life that really sets us up for Easter," Sigman said.

"In a world where we don't know what the stock market is going to do, you can go to church and hear the same words that have been spoken for centuries. There is comfort in that tradition."

Pam Estes, senior pastor of Grand Avenue UMC in Hot Springs, also emphasized the importance of Holy Week rituals in bringing the victory of

Easter into sharp relief.

Her church has worship every night of Holy Week beginning with Palm Sunday night and ending with a "bare bones" service on Holy Saturday.

"It's really a desperate kind of service because — where's Jesus?" she said. "I think it is important for us to name that suffering — to be honest with people about the reality that Jesus suffered, and in that suffering, he identifies with us."

In short, Holy Week reminds Christians that there is nothing they can undergo that God doesn't intimately understand.

"When we get to Sunday, my sermon will be titled 'Proclaiming an empty tomb,'" Estes said.

"What I will be focusing on is how our hope is not in the things that look logical and rational but in the experience of having been with the miraculous reality of the divine who lived as we live and knew suffering."

Easter is a celebration of light out of darkness, and that's always relevant no matter what darkness is enveloping our lives, said Siegfried Johnson, senior pastor of First UMC in Mountain Home.

This Lent, he has been preaching a sermon series titled "Subject to Change."

"There is always something more," he said. "There is always something that we're summoned to do to invest our lives with meaning beyond the present moment. ... We are always subject to change, and we needn't be afraid of that."

Vic Nixon, senior pastor of Pulaski Heights UMC in Little Rock, said he thinks one of the reasons the church crowd at Easter is typically bigger than any other time of year is because people always hunger for the holiday's familiar message of hope and new life.

His church will hosts its 21st annual Easter sunrise service at 6:30 a.m. at Riverfront Park in the capital city. If the weather holds up, he expects hundreds of worshippers to turn out, many who are not regular churchgoers.

"I feel that the Christian Church has a great message to share — especially this year when so many people are feeling uncertain, afraid or angry," he said. "I think people are very eager to hear the Good News in a bad-news world."



Growing in Christ

Eva Lee Paysinger is always growing something good — right now she's using her glassed-in porch and a flower bed just outside her Batesville home to grow vegetables. Early in their ministry she and her husband, the late Rev. Vernon Paysinger, were more often growing churches.

"I was the first member of Rosewood UMC in West Memphis," recalled Eva Lee. "The DS sent us to West Memphis in 1955 with a vacant lot and money for an apartment. It took a while, and we had to get out and knock on a lot of doors. But before we left four years later, they had a fellowship hall that we used for worship and five classrooms. I still get their newsletter."

The Paysingers grew up together as school mates and members of the Evening Shade UMC in Sharp County. After a lifetime of serving churches throughout Arkansas, they retired in Batesville to be near family.

Vernon and Eva Lee dedicated their lives to Christian ministry long ago, and it was only natural for them to plan to leave their estate to the United Methodist Foundation. After her death, the Vernon and Eva Lee Paysinger Endowment will underwrite United Methodist missions in Arkansas. It will express their love for the United Methodist Church forever.

"Vernon and I decided to put our money to good use through the Foundation," said Eva Lee. "It's our way of saying thanks to a church that has done so much for us."



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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