



United Methodist Arkansas

May 1, 2009

Congregations keep the faith in tight times

■ Churches find ways to help those hurt by the recession

Special to the Arkansas United Methodist

If you ask Arkansas United Methodists at Sunday worship to raise their hand if the economic downturn has affected them, many hands would go up.

In these tough times, local churches are seeking ways to help their members and others in their community who are dealing with losing their jobs, their savings and homes. Churches throughout the state and nation have stepped up to address this opportunity for service.

Here are some examples of what churches and churchgoers can do to help their neighbors:

■ Listen — People who are hurting need to be heard, and that takes time. Church members can spend time one-on-one with people who need to talk about their fears and the realities of living on smaller incomes. Pastors, Stephen ministers, Sunday School classes and other small groups are an excellent resource for active listening, said Linda Singh, associate pastor Little Rock First United Methodist Church.

■ Pray — Encourage congregation members and others in the community hit hard by the economy to resist fear and face their problems with prayer, which can increase their ability to cope and connect them with God.

■ Teach — For several years Grace Community UMC in Fort Smith, along with many other churches statewide, has offered the Financial Peace University course. In addition, Grace Community UMC recently has begun simulcasts of classes by Dave Ramsey.

See Recession help, page 6



Connie Fleischer, a registered nurse, checks the blood pressure of Maria Onate, at the free health clinic held each Thursday night in at Oak Forest UMC in Little Rock. The clinic is a joint ministry of Oak Forest and Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock. On this Thursday night 22 patients received care.

Photo by Heather Hahn

Heroes of health

■ United Methodists help provide care to the uninsured

By Heather Hahn

Jacquie Morgan could feel her health deteriorating — everyday she was exhausted and on edge. She knew she had high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes, but she couldn't afford to see a doctor.

Then about six months ago, she saw a sign outside Oak Forest United Methodist Church in Little Rock that announced its Shepherd's Hope Free Medical Clinic each Thursday night.

"Oh my goodness, it saves my life," she said. "I can pay \$4 for prescriptions at Wal-Mart or Kroger, but just seeing a doctor is very expensive. ...I would be really, really sick if it wasn't for this place."

Morgan now not only has regular monthly checkups, she also volunteers to help at the clinic. She helps Oak Forest

member Terese Evans fix dinner each week for the patients and their families to enjoy as they wait for their appointments. She recently brought a huge pan of home-cooked sausage and rice.

Morgan works as a data collector, but her compensation does not include health benefits. Between 550,000 and 600,000 people in Arkansas — roughly 20 percent of the state's population — lack health insurance, according to the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement.

The majority of those uninsured are between the ages 19 and 64, said Kevin Ryan, the center's executive associate director and an assistant professor at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. Many, like Morgan, work but their employers either don't offer insurance or they are self-employed and can't manage the high premiums on their own.

See Clinics, page 10



Patients pray at the chapel of Mountain Home Christian Clinic, which a United Methodist physician, Dr. Paul Wilbur, helped start.

Photo courtesy of the clinic

INSIDE HEADLINES

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Editor's Corner

An answer to a burning need

My whole world changed one cold December night with a spark from a malfunctioning space heater.

That spark ignited a fire in my family's upright piano, and flames soon engulfed much of our study.

The acrid smell of smoke got my mom out of bed. She called the fire department and then raced across the hall where my younger sister and I peacefully slept. She shook us each awake, made us grab our slippers and pushed us toward the front door.

We frantically called for our cat, Freya, who was nowhere to be found.

We could see the study, which was separated from the rest of the house by a pair of glass doors. The room flickered with an eerie light that illuminated our way out. I could hear the crackle of burning wood, and I saw the orange blaze curling over our piano bench like a tsunami about to crash on an unsuspecting beach.

Once outside, my sister and I huddled together in our frosty front yard. She quietly wept and hugged her teddy bear. I clutched my stuffed bunny.

The fire truck arrived almost without a sound. That late, the fire department opted not to use sirens. But the commotion still drew our neighbors outside. The woman across the street brought my sister and me into her house.

Within a half hour, the firefighters had extinguished the blaze, which never spread much beyond the study. But the heat and smoke had a devastating effect on the rest of the house. Almost everything we had was destroyed.

My sister and I spent what little remained of the night in our neighbor's house. My mother stayed in another neighbor's guestroom.

We were incredibly lucky, I knew even then. My family was alive and well. But I remember still being very angry with God. At that moment, all my sister and I had were our pajamas, slippers and favorite stuffed animals. We learned that our beloved cat had died of smoke inhalation. I wondered how God could let this happen.

I was in the sixth grade, and my sister in second. We had no idea what we would wear to school the next day or



Heather Hahn

where we would sleep the next night.

My mother faced an even more daunting list of things to worry about — starting with how to get a hold of my dad, who at that moment was en route to London on business.

Her first call was to her parents, who lived nearby. They brought the dresses they had planned to give us for Christmas. They also invited

us to stay with them.

While we were at school, my mom spent the day on a neighbor's phone.

She reached my father and our insurance adjuster. Most importantly, she called our church.

My father wouldn't be able to return to the United States for days, and the insurance claim took weeks to process. But the pastor immediately added our family to the church prayer chain. It was like a call of SOS across the congregation.

Church members jumped into action to address our most pressing needs. They provided us with food and clothes and a listening ear. For weeks, we had a different casserole every night. My parents' Sunday School teacher also invited our family to his home for Sunday dinner.

Another member gave my sister and me a pair of beautiful glass angels — a visible reminder that God was watching and looking after us.

Our fellow Christians gave us the surest proof of divine love. They acted as God's hands in our life, the answer to prayer. And their actions had a lasting impact on my family's faith.

Now thousands of Arkansans are undergoing similar calamities in their lives — losing their sense of material well-being and often their sense of place.

In this disorienting time, United Methodists across the state are taking up the charge to help their neighbor — whether they are fellow congregants or strangers in their midst.

These Christians are stocking food pantries, mentoring those looking for work and operating health clinics for the uninsured — just to name a few outreach ministries.

They are helping people get back on their feet. Just as significantly, they are sharing a lasting testimony to the Gospel without a single sermon.



Don Robinson

There isn't any particular group that holds the corner on passion, not deer hunters nor NASCAR fans nor soccer moms. There are undoubtedly coin collectors that have mortgaged their homes on the off chance of acquiring a Morgan Dollar just to complete a page in a coin book.

Every imaginable interest generates passion, and it isn't about winning or losing or making a profit.

Some of the very wealthy have long since forgotten about security and comfort and endowing the generations that follow. They strive to cultivate their revenue-generating skills with a fervor shared by orchid growers, glider pilots and pastry chefs alike.

Competition has no bearing on passion; it is a delight, a rendering of the heart and soul that transcends the clawing distractions of succeeding.

Passion is an unclothed, undistorted, unamended manifestation of joy. The whispers of accolade become meaningless against this serene sharing in the mind of God.

To worship with passion is to acknowledge that we are because God is, and all that surrounds us perfects us.

It is to visualize the "Sweet Hour of Prayer" through the blind eyes of its author, William Walford.

It is to be present in that mystic moment of revelation when the apostles asked of Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray," and he answered, "Father, hallowed be thy name..."

It is to know that fear and darkness are dispelled at the lighting of an altar candle and that in the receiving of the elements of Holy Communion, we are guests in the Upper Room.

To worship with passion is to revel in the company of the faithful — those who immerse themselves in the presence of the Holy Spirit and the promise of life everlasting, a sojourn that begs for the journey.

Not an escape from reality — that brackish diluteness of peace we call life — but to a spiritual nature that beckons further contemplation, that then becomes in itself reality.

Passionate worship is ever a beginning without end, a mindfulness that soothes and heals insults to the soul and craves more and deeper understanding. It compels; it creates wonder that strengthens resolve; and it invites discourse.

To be in the mind of God, to see through the window of eternity, to finally and ultimately belong: That's the gift of passionate worship.

And in inviting others into the presence, it is not in waiting for something good to happen, it is in knowing something good is happening.


Don Robinson is the senior pastor of Pullman Heights United Methodist Church in Hot Springs and Gum Springs UMC in Mountain Pine. He can be reached at donhrob@hotmail.com.

Submission guidelines

The Arkansas United Methodist welcomes contributions of stories and photographs related to the denomination and submitted in a timely manner by local churches, groups and individuals. Information may be edited for brevity and clarity. Always include information on a contact person who may be reached in case of questions.

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 May 6.



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Viewpoint

Dear Friends:

Over the past two Sundays, I have celebrated a 10th anniversary with Mountainside United Methodist Church in Hot Springs Village, and a 100th anniversary with our church at Keo.

There are some differences between the two churches. They differ in size and worship style. The buildings are certainly different. Obviously the age of the churches is a significant difference.

The congregations are very different, one drawn from a retirement community that is just beginning to discover young families, the other from a much older community that has been related to agriculture and antiques.

Many of the folks at Mountainside have come from somewhere else, a significant number from outside of Arkansas. The Keo

An Occasional Word from the Bishop



families tend to have deep local and Arkansas roots.

But there are some similarities. They were both founded as an expression of the Wesleyan movement's commitment to spread scriptural holiness across the land.

There was and is a commitment to make a home of faith and outreach where disciples are nurtured and prepared to serve God and God's Kingdom. Both churches have known seasons of challenge, moments of discouragement and days of joy.

In both, from the beginning, has been evidenced an understanding that church is not just about "me" or about "us." Worshipers understand that

church is about serving people we will never see in ways we can hardly imagine through the Methodist "connection" of churches worldwide, through World Service, missionaries, the Advance, and United Methodist Committee on Relief.

Schools like Hendrix and Philander Smith colleges and Africa University and our seminaries in Russia and Congo and elsewhere prepare young men and women from 100 countries, speaking dozens of languages to share the good news of Christ have been supported.

Here are people in each of these



Charles Crutchfield

churches who really do believe that the grace of God is for all God's children, who believe the doors are opened to all God's children, who know from experience that the Holy Spirit can and does blow through the life of a church committed to mission and ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

Church is about letting our faith in Jesus Christ flow in an ever widening stream to quench the thirst of spirits that are parched and dry.

I never fail to be amazed at the capacity of United Methodist churches to be the Church.

In this season of the Resurrection, may you feel the power of God's Spirit.

Faithfully,

Arkansas legislative session yields laws that help the poor

"Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

Matthew 25:34-37

This passage reflects the importance Jesus places on caring for the least of these in the world. There are numerous ways to show our love for those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, in prison, sick and are the stranger.

We can offer a meal to those who are strangers to our neighborhood; we can have ministries to those in jail; and, we can visit those who are sick in hospitals. Also, we can move into the area of public policy.



Steve Copley

It is important to consider that legislation passed by the Arkansas legislature can give food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked and welcome to the stranger. The legislative session in Arkansas concluded last month.

In this article, I am reflecting on some important acts that passed that touch "the least of these."

ACT 435 expanded the income eligibility for the ARKids First program to children in families up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level, making 8,000 more uninsured children eligible. It will also reach children who are already eligible for ARKids but are not enrolled, which makes up two-

thirds of the state's uninsured children.

ACT 722 created a 22-member Legislative Task Force on Reducing Poverty and Promoting Economic Opportunity that is to produce a final report by November 1, 2010. Many Arkansans live in poverty.

Jesus was concerned that people lived in poverty and called his followers to share in that concern. Also, this is an important act for the United Methodist Church as our 2008 General Conference called us to concern for the poor in our midst.

ACT 661 created the Housing Trust Fund, a trust fund advisory committee and established the administration of this fund by the Arkansas Development Finance Authority.

Currently, many Arkansans have reasons to worry about their housing. They face foreclosures on their homes; they live in sub-standard housing; or, they face being homeless. This act assists people to be able to live in affordable, quality housing.

ACT 436 reduced the state sales taxes on groceries from 3 percent to 2 percent. Many people in the state are forced to make decisions on how to stretch the money they earn. Do they buy food? Do they pay utilities? Do they buy their prescription medications?

This reduction takes \$1 dollar off every \$100 dollars of groceries purchased. For many families in Arkansas, this allows more money for the utility bill and for the medications.

In our state, many go hungry each and every day. The issue is called food insecurity and means that there are many in our state who miss meals each day and do not get proper nutrition.

There was legislation passed that allowed money for the food banks in Arkansas to purchase more food to distribute to those who are hungry.

For the least of these

Many acts were passed that assisted those in our state who are hungry, thirsty, without adequate housing and shelter, naked, sick and in prison. This is one of the mandates of the church.

It is an important place for the church to be engaged in assisting with the development of public policy that affects the least of these. And Jesus said, "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Matthew 25:40b.

Steve Copley is a United Methodist minister and the director of Justice for Our Neighbors. He can be reached at scopley438@aol.com.



Letters to the Editor

Look to the future

I recently saw on television that it takes 10 adults to have a Jewish worship service.

I don't know if this is from Scripture or from the Talmud, but it sounds like a good rule that United Methodism would do well to adopt.

This would force church leadership to spend more time working on where we need churches in the 21st century and less time trying to avoid closing those "churches" where only a handful of people remain of what was a church in the 19th century.

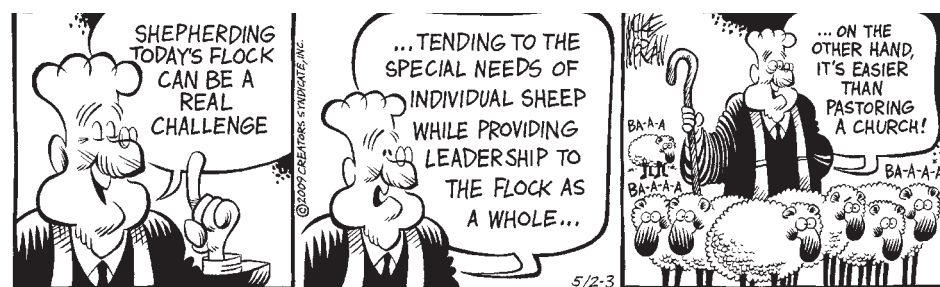
We really need to decide is our mission one of caretaker for what was, or are we going to get out there and work to recruit for the future. Too often, it seems like the former takes precedence.

I just feel that our church needs to spend more time meeting the needs of the present and planning how best to meet the needs of the future and far less time caretaking the needs of the past.

Too often we seem to be running a church that is best suited for the old folks home, and I am one of the old folk.

Joe Whalen
North Little Rock

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE By Mike Morgan



Viewpoint

Economic loss can be our gain in discipleship

The economic downturn is forcing many people to put the breaks on a lifestyle of high-speed consumption.

Like waking up after an all-night bender, many are asking, "What happened?" And it's becoming all too clear that the debt-fueled life of luxury so many have enjoyed since the mid-90s must now come to an end.

And that ain't all bad.

Now is the time for faithful Christians to get their priorities straight. Sure, it would have been nice if we had taken Jesus seriously when he said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19).

And yes, it would have been better if we had heeded Paul's counsel to Timothy that "those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction" (1 Timothy 6:9).

But while Christians in this country don't always listen to the word of



Andrew Thompson



Gen-X Rising

By Andrew Thompson

God, you can bet your bottom dollar — if you still have one — that we'll listen to the latest economic news on CNN. So skyrocketing unemployment and falling home values are pushing us to change our ways, even if Jesus isn't.

Regardless of how we got here, the current situation at least gives us the opportunity to reexamine our values and revise our lifestyles. That is especially important for Gen Xers and Millennials like me who may never have had to make tough choices before.

The chance we have now is a chance to start practicing a lifestyle more faithful to the gospel in the use of our time, our activities and our wealth. John Wesley offers insight to just such an approach in his sermon "Self-denial," on Jesus' command to deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow him (Luke 9:23).

Wesley saw the call to deny oneself as a call to say "no" to those parts of our own human nature that push us toward sin. Because sin corrupts all of us, it often seems natural to indulge all sorts of unhealthy and wrong desires.

The avarice and greed among individuals and corporations on Wall Street that led to the current financial meltdown in the economy is just one conspicuous example.

Most of us had nothing to do with causing our current situation; we only feel the effects.

But when we are honest, we know that all of us can look in the mirror and find an overly materialistic lifestyle staring us in the face.

We like to indulge our greed in personal ways. And frankly, those lifestyles we cling to only inhibit our relationship with God. We should begin practicing self-denial at exactly those points in our lives where we put materialistic idols before God.

For Wesley, the flip side of the coin of self-denial is in taking up our cross to follow Jesus. That means more than self-denial. It means that we should "willingly embrace the will of God," which comes in the form of serious discipleship practices.

These can be personal devotional practices like prayer and Scripture read-

ing. But they also include a life patterned by the love of neighbor. And Wesley is particularly interested in pointing to the need to sacrifice our own luxury in order to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit those who are sick and in prison.

We should put such practices at the center of our discipleship because Jesus asks us to do so.

As we include them in our daily lives, we will also soon find ourselves transformed from within.

And the surprising good news to us will be that the cross that seemed so heavy at first will grow lighter and lighter until it is positively joyful to carry.

There is a word for that process: sanctification. It's a word that names what it means to grow closer and closer to Jesus.

Given the way that the world's hollow promises have collapsed around us in the past year, we ought to give it a try.

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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United Methodist mayor helps lead fight against North Dakota floods

United Methodist News Service

A member of United Methodist Women who also is the mayor of her city is fighting rising floodwaters in North Dakota.

On April 14, Mary Lee Nielson asked residents of Valley City, about 60 miles west of Fargo, to voluntarily evacuate the downtown business district and surrounding area by 6 p.m. the next day. The population of Valley City is approximately 6,500 to 7,000.

Debra Ball-Kilbourne, who is helping coordinate disaster relief for the United Methodist Dakotas Annual Conference, said the order came on the 22nd day of sandbagging efforts on the dikes that ring the city.

"Valley City is one of the areas we're most concerned about right now," she told United Methodist News Service. "It has 11 bridges. All but one are under water right now."

Ball-Kilbourne said that Nielson, a lifelong Valley City resident, had never led in disaster response before but has made "all the right moves" during the flood crisis.

Authorities decided to request the evacuation upon consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Weather Service and U.S. Geological Survey, according to the *Valley City*

Times-Record. Three breaches in the flood dikes there occurred in the 48-hour period before the decision was made.

At issue is a combination of rain and snowmelt into the dam and Sheyenne River, which empties into the Red River, requiring the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to release more water than expected from the reservoir.

Nielson told the *Times-Record* that while the dikes are at 24 feet, "river water elevations have never before exceeded 20 feet," thus sparking the evacuation. The National Guard is assisting with flood-related work and security.

Residents of North and South Dakota and Minnesota have been coping with flood threats since mid-March. In an April 13 YouTube video message, United Methodist Bishop Deborah Kiesey acknowledged that the threat was not over.

"As some communities and homes are now just mucking out from the flooding, others are watching and praying for the dikes to hold," she said, "and still others are waiting for the snow to melt and worrying about the effects of overland flooding."

United Methodist Committee on Relief is coordinating donations.

To help with flood relief effort, visit new.gbgm-umc.org/umcor.



The swollen Sheyenne River floods this house in Valley City, N.D. On April 14, Mary Lee Nielson, the town's mayor and a member of United Methodist Women, called for a voluntary evacuation of the downtown business and surrounding areas. Tom Hazelwood, who oversees domestic disaster relief for the United Methodist Committee on Relief, was in the area April 6-9 surveying damage. He predicted that the full extent of the damage will not be known until June, but said UMCOR would provide some funding for the recovery effort.

Photo by United Methodist News Service

Coming Up

Jay McDaniel, professor of religion and director of the Steel Center for the Study of Religion and Philosophy at Hendrix College, will speak about Islam to the Bowen-Cabe Sunday School class at First UMC in Little Rock.

The class is from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. May 3 in Room 204. The church is at 723 Center St. in downtown Little Rock.

To learn more, call the church office at (501) 372-2256 or visit www.fumclr.org.

First UMC in Little Rock, 723 Center St., will present its youth ensemble, Voices, at 6 p.m. May 3 in the gym. The group will perform its spring musical *Flashback*. The musical deals with God's amidst the various trials of teenage life.

A dessert reception will be provided after the musical. To learn more, call the church office at (501) 372-2256 or visit www.fumclr.org.

Former U.S. Sen. David Pryor will receive the Marie Interfaith Civic Leadership Award at 2:30 p.m. May 3, at Temple B'nai Israel, 3700 North Rodney Parham Road.

Stephen Copley, a United Methodist minister who leads the conference's Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, is the chairman of the Marie Interfaith Civic Leadership Award Steering Committee.

He said the award recognizes leaders who mobilize people of different faiths and different segments of the community to address the challenges facing Arkansas.

Each year the award steering committee chooses an issue to be highlighted, and the 2009 issue is aging.

Pryor is being honored for his four decades of work on the aging issue beginning as a young congressman and continuing through his terms as governor of Arkansas and as chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging.

In addition to the award ceremony, the event will include a panel on aging moderated by Pryor. Participants will be Dr. Jeanne Wei, director of the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging at UAMS; U.S. Rep. Vic Snyder (D-



David Pryor

Little Rock); and Lou Tobian, associate state director of AARP Arkansas.

In 2004, Paul and Irving Spitzberg initiated the Marie Interfaith Civic Leadership Award an award to honor their mother, Marie Spitzberg.

The event is free but reservations are requested. To attend, call Jessica C. Szenher at (501) 413-9212 or e-mail jszenher@swbell.net.

A career fair sponsored by Goodwill Industries of Arkansas will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 4 at the Hilton-Little Rock, 925 S. University Ave.

Employers from a variety of industries will be on hand. Also available will be representatives from several service agencies to discuss what assistance is available. Job seekers are encouraged to dress their best and bring a resume.

To learn more, call Goodwill Industries of Arkansas at (501) 372-5100 or visit www.GoodwillAR.org.

Peace with Justice Small Grants are available to United Methodist churches with a ministry program that promotes equality, accessibility to resources and social justice.

The deadline for applications is May 15. Grants typically range from \$200 to \$1,000.

The grants are funded by the Peace with Justice Special Sunday Offering, which is scheduled for June 7.

Grant organizers ask congregations to give an extra dollar for the Peace with Justice offering, have children and youth collect change throughout the month of June or consider another option such as designating the loose plate offering to go toward Peace with Justice.

To get an application, e-mail a request to Susan Ledbetter at susanledbetter@hotmail.com or visit www.arumc.org and download the 2009 Peace with Justice Grant Application from the "Forms" menu.

Rock Springs UMC, 819 Rock Springs Road, Wilmar, will mark its 150 years of ministry with a special program at 10:30 a.m. May 17. Hardy Peacock, senior pastor, will preside over the service. A potluck lunch will follow at noon. To learn more, e-mail pta95@hotmail.com or call Dr. A. Wayne Groce at (870) 866-5062.

Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology will host a luncheon at 12:10 p.m. June 16 for Perkins graduates, friends and prospective students during the Arkansas Annual Conference.

The luncheon is scheduled in the Razorback Room of the Embassy Suites Convention Center in Rogers. The cost is \$19.88, with pork loin and vegetarian meal options. Guests are asked to buy their meal ticket when registering for Annual Conference. To learn more, e-mail Harriett Akins-Banman at hakinsbanman@phumc.com.

Bishop's Week will be from June 24 to June 27 at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, 150 N.W. Skyline Drive, Fayetteville. The theme will be "Connecting Health and Faith... Our Call to Action."

The event is for United Methodist laity, clergy and conference staff. The bishops of the South Central Jurisdiction are the sponsors.

Keynote speakers will discuss practical ways to establish health-care ministries and get involved in the church's global health initiatives.

Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, who over-

sees the Mississippi Annual Conference, will lead worship.

The District Superintendents seminar will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. June 24. The theme is "Building a Healthy World Begins with Me."

The Laity Seminar will be at 9 a.m. June 24 and 25. The theme is "Health and Wholeness: Congregations in Action."

Costs vary depending on program selections.

To learn more, visit www.mountsequoyah.org or call (800) 760-8126.

The deadline for the next edition of the Arkansas United Methodist is 5 p.m. May 6. 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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We regret the error

A "Coming Up" item in the April 17 issue should have listed the contact phone number for Joyce O'Neil at Highlands UMC in Bella Vista as (479) 876-2755. She is the contact for the church's annual flea market from 7 to 11 a.m. May 16.

For corrections, e-mail Heather Hahn at hhahn@arumc.org.

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Mary Catherine McBee, a volunteer leader for Pulaski Heights UMC's People Helping People, gives encouragement to people on the job hunt. Since March, Pulaski Heights has offered the ministry at 6 p.m. each Monday. Although Pulaski Heights has experienced budget shortfalls in recent months, the church — like many United Methodist congregations — is not cutting back on its outreach to the community.

Photo by Heather Hahn

With less in their offering plates, some churches make hard choices

Special to the Arkansas United Methodist

Rosewood United Methodist Church in West Memphis has switched from paid to volunteer staff for lawn care and office secretary. Springdale First UMC has tightened its belt, cutting the budget by 7 percent.

Across Arkansas, as United Methodist congregations respond to the needs of their congregations and their communities, they often are doing so with reduced resources.

The economic downturn has forced Pulaski Heights UMC in Little Rock — the conference's largest church with nearly 4,000 members — to cut back staff hours.

Where formerly the church was open at least six days a week, the church office is now largely empty during the Friday business day. Pulaski Heights also has laid off three custodians and left two program positions unfilled, said Larry Sweet, the congregation's administrator.

Still, Pulaski Heights is not cutting back on its service in the state's capital city. It recently added a ministry — People Helping People — to support those dealing with layoffs and financial setbacks.

"I think it's very important that the church doesn't cut its ministries," Sweet said. "That's what the church is about. ... It's more important to look at other things like reducing your mailings or overtime and things like that. If you can reduce your operations costs and keep your ministries, you're doing real well."

Not all congregations have been affected.

"We have a small church and meet once a month, but I haven't noticed any reduction in our

resources," said Melissa Maskell, senior pastor at Martin Chapel UMC in Hermitage.

"Recently we have begun to talk about job loss in the poultry and lumber industry. But it hasn't hit us yet."

Whether or not their communities have been hard hit by the economy, pastors strike a similar note of hope about the work of the church.

Gary Maskell, senior pastor at Warren First UMC (and Melissa Maskell's husband), has not noticed a difference in monetary support.

"We're not experiencing a downturn," he said. "Our ministries have continued."

He explained that youth and adult volunteers at Warren First UMC have worked with Beautiful Feet Ministry, a nondenominational nonprofit group founded by KARK 4 anchor Matt Mosler. The church has helped the ministry build a facility, prepare food and deliver meals for Fee Fee's Kitchen, a local nonprofit that provides 800 to 900 meals twice a month to those in need.

Britt Skarda, senior pastor of Springdale First UMC, said even though his church has had to reduce its budget, his congregation continues looking for ways to offer more help to the broader community. The church recently moved its Bread of Life food pantry into a new facility downtown.

"A new study showed 54 percent of the families in Springdale Public Schools fall below the poverty level," Skarda said.

"With our food pantry and other programs, we're working to expand our base to help feed and provide support for those in need."



Recession help, continued from page 1

At Central United Methodist in Fayetteville, a budgeting and finance class was held last fall.

■ **Counsel** — Pulaski Heights UMC in Little Rock offers counseling and assistance for church members and others in the community hit hard by the economy.

More than 50 people attended the first meeting of People Helping People in early March, said Nancy Milbourn, the professional committee chairwoman.

Since then, 12 to 16 people have been meeting on Monday nights as a part of this ministry. Goals are to improve the effectiveness of job search efforts, better manage income changes, reduce the stress on marital relationships and cope with income-related losses.

■ **Give** — Grace Community UMC also has a Grace Bank. "When members of the church are faced with financial hardships, they can apply to the Grace Bank to help them get through the hardship," said Dee Dee Autry, associate pastor.

After the members receive funds from Grace Bank, the church provides

advice and budgeting information for a year to help them become more financially secure.

■ **Support** — At Springdale First UMC, Senior Pastor Britt Skarda said the church keeps up with those who may have lost jobs or experienced home foreclosures.

Support groups help people deal with the emotional issues of loss that come with financial woes.

■ **Mentor** — Getting a job is often about relationships, so pairing job seekers with members who have business contacts in the community is a great way to help.

Roswell UMC in Georgia has more than 140 volunteers on a team of hiring and recruiting professionals who meet with job seekers twice a month through the church's job mentoring program.

■ **Compute** — If your church has a computer lab, make it available to the public on specified dates and times for use in job seeking.

■ **Volunteer** — A continued commitment to local and global ministries energizes those who are experiencing diffi-



Shown above and to the left are images from the opening of the new Bread of Life facility on March 29 in downtown Springdale.

Photos courtesy of First United Methodist Church of Springdale



Nancy Wildborn offers homemade cornbread and a friendly word to a woman at the inaugural community luncheon held by First UMC in Jacksonville on April 25.

Photo by Heather Hahn

Feeding the hungry of Northwest Arkansas

The Bread of Life, a food bank operated by First UMC in Springdale, recently moved to a new facility in the heart of downtown Springdale.

The ministry, along with Daily Bread, served more than 32,000 people last year. The ministry distributes food from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Wednesday and Thursday. Typically, 125 to 175 families per week sue its services. The ministry already has seen a 20 percent rise in its clients this year over the

same time period last year. A total of 120 volunteers give their time and service to the food bank.

Additionally, The Bread of Life is associated with The Benefit Bank of Arkansas which allows clients to access other social services.

The Bread of Life is one of countless outreach programs United Methodist churches have initiated or expanded to serve the growing needs in a bad economy.

culties themselves. Local churches can provide a pathway for those members who are temporarily out of work to volunteer for church and nonprofit work as they search for jobs.

Churches also can arrange for those who have jobs to volunteer to help counsel or encourage others.

At Central UMC in Fayetteville, many members volunteer for the Joseph Project, an effort sponsored by WorkMatters to help those who are between jobs transform their desert experience into a God experience. WorkMatters originally was a ministry of the church and now is a local nonprofit organization.

■ **Feed** — Many local churches have food banks, and Jacksonville First UMC is meeting the need in a direct way with a free healthy meal for anyone in the community each Saturday. The ministry started on April 25.

“This new ministry is a direct outcome of the way we sense God calling our church to help the community, especially during tougher economic times,” Mark McDonald, senior pastor, said.

■ **Preach** — Sermons about responses to unemployment and income loss can encourage those who are struggling and inspire others to help their fellow community members in need.

Skarda said he’s redirected the focus of messages in worship to offer comfort and help for those who have been affected by the economy.

■ **Create** — Build a new ministry to serve as a clearing house for job seekers, partnering with community and social agencies to assist those who are changing careers.

At Peoria First UMC in Illinois, the congregation is bringing together a cross-section of its membership and partnering with community and social agencies to be a clearinghouse for persons needing assistance in cooperation with the Illinois Workforce Network, the state agency that assists with transitional employment training.

■ **Hope** — Challenge the community of disciples in your local church to imagine a world of peace, abundance and justice. Then challenge them to embody that world today.



O.D. Ridgle, a retired cook who once worked for the Excelsior Hotel in downtown Little Rock, stirs the chicken noodle soup he made from scratch for the first community luncheon at First UMC in Jacksonville.

Photo by Heather Hahn

Building a more close-knit community

First UMC in Jacksonville hosted a community meal for more than 250 people on Christmas Day.

But church member Candy Bass, thought breaking bread together was too important to just do just once a year.

So she borrowed an idea from her aunt’s United Methodist church in Norwich, N.Y., which holds a weekly luncheon. Members of First UMC’s Primetime Christians Sunday School

class volunteered to serve First UMC’s first meal on April 25.

The menu, put together by retired cook O.D. Ridgle included homemade soup, cornbread, pizza and cookies.

Different church ministries plan to host a free meal from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Saturday for anyone who wants to come.

“It’s not about us,” Bass says. “It’s about helping people, which is what we are put on Earth to do.”



The Highland Valley UMC Bell Choir performs under the direction of Betty Morgan at the Crime Victims' Memorial Service on April 28 at Philander Smith College in Little Rock. Healing Place Ministries, based in Pine Bluff, organized the service with the Pulaski County Prosecuting Attorneys' Victim Witness Division and other groups. The gathering coincided with National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 26-May 2.

Photo by Heather Hahn

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.
- June 24-27: Bishops' conference "Connecting Health and Faith ... Our Call to Action," Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville.
- June 24: District Superintendents' Seminar, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center.
- June 24 and June 25: Laity Seminar, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville.

JULY

- July 13-17: SpLiRa (Spiritual Life Rally), University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo.
- July 21-24: Focus 2009 — Faithfully Forming Our Children, a conference for children's ministers, in Indianapolis, Ind. Pre-conference on July 20. More information at www.gbod.org.
- July 24-Aug. 1: Local Pastor Licensing School — Part B, Mount Eagle Christian Center.

OCTOBER

- Oct. 12-16: New Church Leadership Institute, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville.

Director gives inside look at conference budget outlook

As the director of conference ministries for the Arkansas Conference, Roy P. Smith is involved in the development of the conference budget from start to finish. He is the staff person assigned to work with the Vision Team and Conference Personnel Committee. He is also ex-officio member of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CFA). His primary role is to help provide information to help the groups make the best decision.

Since January, he has been working on the proposed budget for 2010, while keeping in mind current economic realities. The budget will be voted on when the Annual Conference convenes June 14-17 in Rogers.

What goes into the budgeting process?

Beginning in January each committee, commission, board and agency begins working on a funding request based on ministry plans for the coming year. Also each committee, commission, board and agency prepares a ministry audit, which describes what they have done with the monies granted to them in the previous year.

In the case of program ministries, these requests are received and reviewed by the Vision Team. Part of the review is to examine the financial and ministry audits. After approved, these requests are sent to the Council on Finance and Administration.

The other parts of the total Conference budget arrive with similar processes. The Conference Personnel Committee submits their requests and the CFA approves administrative budget requests.

These requests are combined with jurisdictional and general church apportionments and a final proposed budget is developed by CFA. This budget is then presented to the entire Annual Conference.

What is the impact of the bad economy on this year's process?

The economic downturn has caused a greater interest than usual in the con-



Roy P. Smith

ference budget and the process of developing it. There has been more discussion and close examination of each part of the budget. We have continued the process of searching for efficiencies in operating which can save

money. Also we are looking for totally new ways to deliver ministry support and resources.

This spring, various committees and the CFA have shown deep sensitivity to and recognition of the current economic realities. Likewise, there is a deep gratitude for the support we receive from churches across the conference.

What does the budget include?

The conference budget is divided into two main sections.

The first is for ministerial support, which includes pensions for active and retired clergy, retiree health care as well as salaries and expenses for district superintendents. It also includes the ministerial education fund and equitable compensation for pastors in mission congregations or churches where there is an especially difficult financial situation.

The second section is for ministries beyond the local church. This includes the funding for all of our conference committees and programs such as Camp Tanako, Mount Eagle Christian Center and nine Wesley Foundations.

Also this section includes the Conference Ministry office, the Conference Treasurer's office, as well as funding for Hendrix College, Philander Smith College, Camp Aldersgate and Connected in Christ. The conference also pays general church and jurisdictional apportionments from this section of the budget.

When setting the budget, what are the conference's priorities?

Key emphases are moving from

maintenance to mission; developing lay and clergy leaders; evangelizing children, youth and adults; engaging the world in mission and improving communications and Holy Healthy ministries. Our efforts to create new places for new people and develop leadership are also of high importance.

How does the conference determine the allocations that congregations must give?

Each local church's share is determined by its local expenditures for salaries, program expenses and operating expenses such as insurance and utilities.

The amount each church shares for ministerial support is calculated by dividing the local church's operating expenses by the total operating expenses for all the churches in the conference.

This percentage is then multiplied by the total conference budget for ministerial support to determine a local church's share.

The local church apportionment for ministries beyond the local church is a tithe of 10 percent of the amount spent on their standard operating expenses.

Some United Methodists view allocations as taxes on congregations. How do you see them?

A fundamental part of who we are as United Methodists is that we are part of a connected church. The reality is that we can multiply our efforts and effectiveness in ministry by working together. We can do together what we could not do alone.

Our apportionments, which are connected giving, are a testimony to who we are and what we value as United Methodists.

What are some of the ministries these allocations support?

Gifts shared by local churches reach across our state and world and bring value to these local churches.

Through this collective giving we support the building of new churches, sending missionaries across our country and world as well as United Methodist

camps and higher education institutions.

We also reach out to respond to people affected by disaster such as the recent tornados in southwest Arkansas. We train youth leaders and pay pensions to clergy after a lifetime of faithful ministry. How much space do you have? I am just getting started.

How is the conference adapting to current economic restraints?

Earlier I mentioned the care with which the 2010 budget is developed.

Most years the CFA receives the budget requests from its various boards and committees, and it can bring together a budget they feel is appropriate for the Annual Conference to consider. This year the CFA asked each group to reconsider its requests.

There will be decreases in almost every section of the budget. An example of a cost-cutting measure already in place is that in 2009, the district superintendents did not accept the raise, which had been voted to them in 2008. The CFA has set to 2010 salary for district superintendents at the 2008 level.

How can the church be effective with a smaller budget?

It is difficult to cut your way to the Kingdom of God. Our plans are not about cutting back ministries. We plan to bring creativity to bear on our connected ministry operations. To spend less does not have to equal cutting the quality of ministry.

We will, to name a few, seek to build partnerships and discover new efficiencies of operation.

Things are tough economically for a lot of people in our world. However, we are Easter people. Fear cannot be the hallmark of the church.

Seeing the picture realistically allows us to know what resources we have. The needs of the people are greater than ever.

The church cannot shirk from its ministry in a time like this.

To learn more about conference ministries, visit www.arumc.org.

People of Faith

William A. "Andy" Altom, Methodist Family Health's president and chief executive officer has been appointed by Gov. Mike Beebe to serve on the Child Welfare Agency Review Board.

The Child Welfare Agency Review Board is responsible for overseeing the licensure of residential, emergency, psychiatric and sexual offender programs and placement agencies, as well as take action against facilities found to be in violation of the Child Welfare Agency Licensing Standards Act of 1997. Altom's term lasts until March 1, 2013.

"This is a great opportunity for Andy, and I am very pleased he has been asked to serve," said L. Don Cole, chairman of the Methodist Family Health board of directors. "Andy brings to this group a passion for the well-being of children and families of Arkansas that is second to none."

Altom, a Heber Springs native, has been president and CEO of Methodist Family Health for more than five years and has been an employee for more than 17 years. He is married to the former Myra Matthews, has three grown sons and is a member of Heber Springs United Methodist Church.

Methodist Family Health offers the only comprehensive behavioral healthcare service for children and adolescents available in Arkansas.

At its annual awards banquet, the Blytheville/Gosnell Area Chamber of Commerce recognized outstanding citizens and businesses for their contributions to community.

Of the eight awards given, five highlighted the work of First United Methodist Church in Blytheville. The church has, as part of its mission, focused on community outreach and the important role of Christians in community development.

The prestigious "Lifetime Community Achievement Award" was given to James McLemore "Mac"



Andy Altom

Williams for his long-time service to Blytheville. In addition to leading a long list of civic organizations, Williams is also a stalwart of First UMC-Blytheville. He has served as chairman of the finance, trustees and administrative boards. He also has been part on numerous committees and projects.

Williams was honored with a special photo presentation at the banquet; his award will be listed at the chamber with a plaque on its Wall of Honor.

Chris Cooper, the church's senior pastor, received the "Citizen of the Year" award for his outstanding volunteer leadership.

Cooper, who came to Blytheville in 2006, was instrumental in the development of the Great River Promise, a program that provides college scholarships to every area high school graduate. He is also the founder of the Great River Charitable Clinic, the county's first and only charity health center, which opened in March.

Jerry Sims and Mary Gay Shipley were honored for outstanding generosity as "Friends of the Chamber."

David Lyttle took the award for Small Business of the Year, representing the Ritz Civic Center where he is executive director.

Zac Carter has been recognized as volunteer of the year by Waldron United Methodist Church, a local host site of Angel Food Ministries.

The ministr —, a nonprofit, non-denominational organization — is dedicated to providing grocery relief and financial support for communities across the United States. The ministry allows people to buy roughly \$60 worth of fresh and frozen food for half that price.

Waldron UMC serves as a host site that distributes boxes of food for the charity. Carter was honored on April 18 for volunteering each month to travel to Van Buren in the early morning hours to pick up the Angel Food orders, load and unload boxes, help with distribution and assist people in assembling and carrying their orders to their car.

Carter is the son of John and Deborah Carter of Waldron. He is a member of New Life Center church in Waldron.

Pastor's mission field now includes state's National Guard and church

By Heather Hahn

Whenever the servicemen and women in Arkansas' National Guard need spiritual guidance or support, they can count on a United Methodist pastor in Van Buren.

Lt. Col. J. Wesley "Wes" Hilliard in March was named the Joint Force Headquarters Command Chaplain for the Arkansas National Guard, which includes the Air Force and Army.

He is essentially the state's top military chaplain, a post he will carry out as he also serves as lead pastor at Heritage United Methodist Church in Van Buren.

"I do more than one weekend a month, but [the National Guard] is really good at working with me," he said. "I don't do things on Sundays. I'm back at my local church."

In his new role, he advises the top commanders of the Arkansas National Guard on the free exercise of religion, morale and ethical decision-making. He also is responsible for training, assigning and deploying the state's other National Guard chaplains.

He performs funerals, interviews chaplain candidates and occasionally attends national leadership training in Washington D.C.

Hilliard was serving as a U.S. Army artillery officer in the 1980s when he felt called to the professional ministry. The U.S. military paid for his education, including his studies at Garrett-Evangelical Theological seminary in Chicago. After he graduated, he still owed the military his time.

So after he became a United Methodist pastor, he also joined the chaplaincy of the Army National Guard.

Throughout his service, he said his congregation in Van Buren has been very supportive of the demands of his chaplaincy work.



Lt. Col. Wes Hilliard

In 2002 and 2003, he served an 11-month mobilization in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas and was rarely able to come home.

He spent all of 2008 ministering to troops in Iraq. While there, he led a Protestant liturgical service, which drew Episcopalians, Lutherans and some United Methodists. At the same time, he pastored a predominantly African-American Pentecostal congregation.

"What's unique about being Methodist is our ability to minister to such a broad spectrum of the Christian family and feeling at home and comfortable doing that," he said. "I think that comes both from our Anglican roots and our frontier, camp-meeting roots."

His current position is nondeployable, which means he won't be sent out to serve overseas or in other states.

The main joys of his work as a chaplain, he said, is "getting to serve my country and getting to be in the mission field at least once a month."

He relishes ministering military families, but acknowledges that's among his greatest challenges.

"There are enormous needs among our families, particularly with what's going on in our world and the multiple deployments our soldiers and airmen are going through," he said. "It puts strain on families. I help families cope."

He has counseled family members dealing with divorce, depression and suicide. It's work he also balances with what he calls his primary job as pastor at Heritage.

Sue Stranathan, a member of Heritage UMC for 37 years, said Hilliard manages the balance extremely well.

She called Hilliard "a soldier's soldier," who truly understands the struggles faced by service members and their loved ones. But she also said her congregation is glad to have him home.

"I feel so strongly that this is mission work he is doing, and we need to support him," said Stranathan, the wife of a retired Army officer. "I feel that what he is doing is absolutely vital. ...I can't say enough good things about him."

United Methodist woman's estate helps 10 charities

Special to the Arkansas United Methodist

Ten Arkansas nonprofit groups recently received a total of \$150,000 in residuary bequests from the estate of Gertrude Rimmel Butler.

The gifts, representing a partial distribution until the estate is closed, were distributed by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, estate co-trustee.

Receiving bequests were the Arkansas Association for Hearing Impaired Children, Arkansas Community Foundation, the Arkansas Urban Garden Educational Resource, the Central High Visitor Center and Sculpture Garden, Easter Seals of Arkansas, Heifer International Foundation for a Richard C. Butler Memorial Garden, Little Rock Garden Club Foundation, Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis

Activities Inc. for Camp Joseph Pfiefer and Scott Connections Foundation.

A lifelong philanthropist, Gertie Butler died in September 2007.

She was generous during her lifetime, and used several trusts and her estate to plan her gifts. More than \$188,000 was distributed to charities from the Gertrude Rimmel Butler Unitrust No. 2. These gifts were in addition to the bequests made from her estate.

"Gertie was so generous, and so loving," said Jim Argue, Jr., president and chief executive officer of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. "She worked hard at doing good. It brought her such great joys."

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas is fifth in assets among the 52 United Methodist Foundations in the country.



Paige Bethel, Waldron Angel Food Ministries director, and Terri Churchill, Angel Food volunteer, present Zac Carter with a certificate of appreciation and a proclamation from Waldron's mayor.

Photo courtesy of Waldron United Methodist Church



Members of First United Methodist Church in Jacksonville give Jacksonville Middle School's Boys Campus a fresh coat of paint as part of the congregation's "Methodists in Action" Sunday.

Photo by Kelley McDonald

Congregation goes 'MIA' to assist people in need

■ Jacksonville church takes worship outside its four walls

By Mark McDonald and Heather Hahn

If you visited First United Methodist Church in Jacksonville for worship on a recent Sunday morning, you would have found plenty of empty pews and an empty pulpit. The congregation had gone "M.I.A."—"Methodists in Action," that is.

Over the weekend of April 18-19, the church canceled all its worship services and small groups in exchange for four hours of targeted community service.

"The Sunday after Easter is usually a Sunday of low attendance, and we wanted to find a way to keep Easter alive in our community," said Mark McDonald, the church's senior pastor. "We wanted to show the community some action behind our mission statement: 'Love God. Love Others. Serve the World.' God has blessed this event beyond our imagination, and it has been a wonderful day."

The congregation began planning the event last fall after hearing about similar outreach efforts in other communities. Because Jacksonville is often in the news because of their struggle to have an independent school district, the planning group immediately thought about how they could offer some positive input by helping the schools.

They first visited with the Jacksonville Middle School for Boys and Girls because the Pulaski County Special School District is making plans to merge two campuses into one coed school next fall.

Michael Nellums, principal at the boys' campus, agreed to work with the church to set up multiple jobs to handle up to 100 people.

"I'm just glad that there are friends of our community who are willing to sacrifice their time and their resources ... that they care enough about their community to do this," Nellums said when visiting with volunteers on MIA Sunday.

The first week the congregation offered sign-up for the event, more than 100 people signed up.

A mission team in the church immediately stepped up to offer a new project. So the team decided to set up shop to

make book bags that day to bring to Sager Brown, the United Methodist Committee on Relief facility in Baldwin, La.

This month, the team plans to go to Sager Brown.

Church leaders and staff members next began planning work at other sites. By the time MIA Sunday rolled around, the congregation had more than 300 volunteers ready to work numerous sites, building relationships in the congregation and community.

Volunteers worked at two school campuses, a local thrift shop, a nursing home and the military museum.

Two church music groups went to Hope Korean UMC to help lead a combined worship service for their congregation. The children potted plants for homebound neighbors and other volunteers made book bags and health kits for UMCOR.

A prayer vigil was held all morning in the sanctuary, and four area restaurants—Cody's Café, Subway, Western Sizzlin', and Chicken Country—donated food served in the church gym after the work was completed.

"I think it's an amazing thing that everyone in this church got together on a day they normally worship and all pitch together to do these enormous projects," Keri Dupree, one of the volunteer, said.

She was part of the group that made book bags for Sager Brown. The mission team's original goal was 500. Altogether, volunteers made more than 750 bags.

Lala Antunes, the leader of the planning group, wasn't sure what to expect.

"I'm feeling very pleased and proud of our church," she said.

The congregation estimates more than 1,500 hours of service were provided over the weekend. Church members have produced a video of the event that is available for promoting it next year.

"The response has been incredible, and we want this to be even bigger next year," McDonald said.

"We hope this will help our church become more connected and active in the community, and we are also hoping that we can connect with some other churches to create a 'C.I.A. Sunday'—Christians in Action—for next year."



News Digest

Court rejects resolutions on same-sex marriage

DENVER — United Methodist clergy cannot perform same-sex marriages, even in states where such unions are legal or the ceremonies are endorsed by a regional church group.

The Judicial Council, the denomination's top court, ruled at its spring meeting that it is a chargeable offense for United Methodist clergy to perform ceremonies celebrating same-sex unions.

The ruling overturned resolutions from two annual conferences supporting clergy who perform same-gender marriages. Those conferences were the California-Nevada Annual Conference and the California-Pacific Conference.

Bush library lease legal, Judicial Council rules

DENVER — The United Methodist Church's top court has ruled Southern Methodist University can lease campus property for the George W. Bush presidential library, museum and public policy institute.

The Judicial Council in its spring meeting said the agreement between the United Methodist-related school and the George W. Bush Foundation does not violate church law.

Critics opposed to many policies of the Bush administration, including the war in Iraq, argued placing the institute on SMU property would be inconsistent with church teaching.

Jeannie Trevino-Teddle, director of the Mexican-American program at

SMU's Perkins School of Theology, made the original request for a legal decision, contending the lease would subsidize "a specific political and ideological point of view."

Oklahoma Bishop Robert E. Hayes Jr. made an initial ruling last August that Trevino-Teddle's request did not relate to church law. The Judicial Council disagreed, saying the request "could have and should have been answered" as it relates to church law.

In its own review, the nine-member council said it found nothing in the lease agreement that violated the school's Articles of Incorporation or the church's Book of Discipline.

Penn. United Methodists fight video-poker plan

PHILADELPHIA — Pennsylvania United Methodists are taking a leading role in the fight to defeat a proposal that could create up to 14,000 mini-casinos in restaurants and taverns across the state.

A United Methodist Witness in Pennsylvania is a growing coalition of faith, community and other organizations urging Pennsylvanians opposed to this expansion of gambling to contact Gov. Ed Rendell and their legislators.

"More gambling is a bad bet for Pennsylvania," said Stephen Drachler, director of the coalition. "The United Methodist Church's position is clear: gambling is a poison that hurts families and communities."

He urged United Methodists to contact the governor and legislators through the coalition's new Web site: www.stopvideopokerpa.com.

— United Methodist News Service

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



James UMC, Little Rock. Jenni Duncan, 501-217-6708 or jenni@stjames-umc.org.

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.

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

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

July 12-17: Mission United Methodist Church needs workers to serve at the Healing Hands Ranch, an aftercare ministry of Deaf Prison Ministries Network in Willis, Texas. Volunteers needed for construction, painting, grounds maintenance, electrical, general cleaning. Dee Mathes at (479) 430-6568 or the U. Washington at (479) 782-0612.

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.

Sept. 20-26: Texas Golden Triangle area, post-hurricane rebuilding, sponsored by St.

It Happened



St. Paul United Methodist Church in Malvern dedicated a completed set of bells and hand chimes on March 29. The set was given to the church by Bill and Linda Orr in memory of their parents. Janet Fowler directed a program of music by the Handbell Choir and Youth Chimes Choir. Pictured above from left are Bill Orr, Janet Fowler, Linda Orr and Dooley Fowler, the church's senior pastor.

Photo courtesy of St. Paul United Methodist Church in Malvern



Tom M. Letchworth delivers a dramatic sermon portraying Eliezar, a servant of Abraham, on March 7. The sermon, titled "The 4,000-year-old man," was part of the church's inaugural "Spring Forward Saturday Worship Service," the night before Daylight Savings Time. Martha's Sons provided music.

Photo courtesy of First UMC in Paragould



Fred W. Hunter, senior pastor of First UMC in Pocahontas, portrays Pontius Pilate in a production of Jesus Christ Superstar at the Imperial Theatre. The show continues through May 9.

Photo courtesy of First UMC in Pocahontas

Georgia Daily and Jane Dennis — the two previous editors of the Arkansas United Methodist newspaper — enjoy the reception honoring Dennis for her 21 years at the newspaper's helm on April 22. Daily was the first woman to lead the newspaper.



Photo by Heather Hahn

Goddard United Methodist Church

in Fort Smith replaced lilies with nets this Easter. The church's mission committee suggested that members and friends support Nothing But Nets, the denomination's campaign against malaria, by buying one or more nets in memory or in honor of a loved one instead of the usual lilies. A total of 109 nets were purchased, and the memorials and honoraria were published in the Easter worship bulletin.

The church has a goal of one net per member. Including the nets pur-

chased for Easter, the congregation has collected more than half of its goal. The campaign will continue on Mother's Day and Father's Day.

The Child Development Center at First United Methodist Church in downtown Little Rock has been chosen by *Little Rock Family* magazine as the Best Child Care Center and Best After School Center.

This is the second consecutive year that the program received the honor. Kaye Hoover is the director of the program.



The youth from Valley Springs UMC near Harrison traveled to Shoal Creek Camp on April 3-6 for some cleanup. Pictured from left are Cole Henson, Russell Murray, Kayla Henson, James Wilburn, and Trey Brown during one of the group's break times.

Photo courtesy of Valley Springs United Methodist Church

WANTED: MUSIC DIRECTOR

Crossgates United Methodist Church in Brandon, Mississippi, is seeking a full-time Music Director responsible for overseeing the total music ministry of the church in a traditional setting.

The Position: The Music Director shall direct both the adult and youth choirs, direct both the adult and youth handbell choirs, oversee the children's choirs, coordinate activities with the Associate Pastor/Youth Minister and the Director of Children's Ministries, and collaborate with all staff members

Qualifications and Responsibilities: This individual must be a highly motivated Christian leader who possesses the following skills and characteristics: (1) FLEXIBILITY to work with a wide variety of age groups; (2) DILIGENCE to develop existing programs; (3) CREATIVITY to design and implement new programs; (4)

PLANNING ability to prepare for musical presentations as well as to assist the Senior Pastor, as directed, in planning morning worship services.

Education and Experience: A degree in music and a minimum of 2 years experience in church work are preferred.

Salary: Salary is negotiable based on education and experience.

Our Church Community: Many members of CUMC believe the warm, friendly attitude of the congregation is our strongest asset.

Our membership includes a total of 1011 people within a zip code area that includes 29,568 people who enjoy an excellent school system, a low unemployment rate, and a low crime rate.

Contact: To apply, please contact Rev. John Moore, Senior Pastor, sp@crossgates-umc.org, (601) 825-8677.

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

FAIRFIELD BAY UMC seeks to hire a Choir Director and a pianist. Both positions are open immediately. Compensation depends upon education and experience. Send Resume and salary requirements to: Fairfield Bay UMC, 765 Dave Creek Parkway, Fairfield Bay, AR. 72088.

PINEY GROVE UMC has an opening for a Director of Christian education. This is a full-time position in a church with over 200 children and adults in Sunday School. We are seeking a person with Christian education experience, a degree and who is able to make a long term commitment. Please email davidjones@cablelynx.com with your resume or mail it to David Jones, Piney Grove UMC, 2963 Airport Road, Hot Springs, AR 71913-9071.

GREENWOOD UMC is currently seeking a part-time (3/4) Youth Pastor to continue to grow a large and energetic youth ministry. The Youth Pastor must have the ability and heart-felt desire to love, nurture, minister and grow in faith with the young people and their families in the church and the community. We are seeking a strong Christian who is an energetic, well-organized, self-starter capable of developing new programs. The Youth Pastor will also provide outside activities for the youth. Housing is provided. A summer internship may be considered. Greenwood UMC staff works from a team perspective, and the successful candidate will have ongoing collegiality, support, and opportunities for continuing education. For more information or to send in your resume contact: David Hawkins at P.O. Box 548, Greenwood, AR 72936; at drhawkins05@yahoo.com or (479) 996-6397.

ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH a 900-member church in West Little Rock, is searching for a part-time Worship Leader for our contemporary worship service. If interested, please send resume to the Rev. Bryan Fink at bryan@asbury-lr.org or by mail to 1700 Napa Valley Drive, Little Rock, AR 72212. Closes May 13, 2009.



Jack Coker reviews patient records on a recent Thursday night at Shepherd's Hope Free Medical Clinic, which operates twice a month at Oak Forest UMC in Little Rock. A pharmacist and member of First UMC in Stuttgart, Coker regularly commutes more than 55 miles between Stuttgart and Little Rock to volunteer in the clinic.

Photo by Heather Hahn



Above: Nurse Karen Welch takes a patient's EKG at Eureka Christian Health Outreach Clinic in Eureka Springs.



At left: More than 200 volunteers helped renovate the old Blytheville Housing Authority building to equip it for the new Great River Charitable Clinic that serves Mississippi County.

Photos courtesy of ECHO and Great River Charitable clinics

Clinics, continued from page 1

In this economy, Ryan expects the number of uninsured only to rise as people lose their jobs and businesses are forced to cut back on their benefits.

Charitable medical clinics such as Shepherd's Hope, which Oak Forest UMC operates with Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, play a significant role in making sure thousands of Arkansans receive at least basic care.

On a recent Thursday night at Oak Forest UMC, the health-care need was readily apparent. Shepherd's Hope opens at 5:30 p.m., but people start lining up around 3 p.m. in hopes of getting an appointment, said Russ Breshears, the church's senior pastor. Less than a half hour after the clinic opened, its volunteer doctors were already booked up. Altogether, the clinic saw 22 patients that night.

Oak Forest and Fellowship Bible have plans to expand Shepherd's Hope to include a dental clinic and weekly service on Tuesday night as well. Oak Forest recently bought a house in its neighborhood that has two rooms for dental check-ups and space to expand the lab where the clinic's blood work is done. The church is in the midst of a fund-raising campaign to pay off the mortgage and is already more than halfway toward its goal.

Nearly 30 free medical clinics now operate across the state, according to the Arkansas Association of Charitable Clinics. They all have strict income requirements for people to qualify for care — typically between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Their patients make too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough for private insurance.

Most of the charitable clinics are organized by church alliances or inter-faith partnerships that join the resources and volunteer strength of multiple congregations.

"We try to get clinics to involve every church in town," said Chuck Morrison, the association's president and executive director. "Why do I say churches? Well that's where the people are who have the kind of spirit we're looking for. Those are the people who will invest their money and more importantly their time for the long haul."

He said United Methodist churches have taken the lead in establishing many of the state's free clinics.

One of the state's most recognized charitable clinics is the Eureka Christian Health Outreach clinic founded by Dr. Dan Bell and his wife, Suzie, both members of Eureka Springs UMC.

The clinic was featured on ABC News on Jan. 7, named in an April issue of *People* magazine among a group of "Heroes in Hard Times" and will be included on a forthcoming episode of *Oprah*. At press time, the air date was yet to be announced.

Dan Bell, a family physician in Eureka Springs for the past 25 years, said the idea for the clinic grew out of a workshop at their church on how to be better "Kingdom people."

"We wanted to live our faith more than we were," he said.

The couple decided offering medical care would allow them to both meet a community need and build relationships with those they served. The first clinic treated about 10 patients on Nov. 10, 2005, and the ministry only has contin-

ued to grow.

The clinic sees patients from 5 to about 9 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursday each month inside the Fellowship Hall of Faith Fellowship Church in Eureka Springs. On those nights, the church nursery doubles as a pharmacy.

More than 200 volunteers help out, and just about every church in Eureka Springs is involved. Congregations also take turns providing a meal for the patients and volunteers each clinic night.

"Now they are competing with each other to see who is bringing the best food," Bell said with a laugh. "And when the patients, doctors and nurses all sit down to eat together, it changes the spirit of what you're doing. We're really trying to do what Jesus did. He fed the hungry, healed the sick and ultimately saved their souls."

Each clinic night opens with a devotional.

Still, Bell acknowledged that the free clinic hasn't led to any noticeable increase in area church attendance. But he said the ministry has strengthened the faith of the volunteers.

"That was unexpected to me," he said. "It was more about us than the patients. It's been about living our faith in ways more than studying and going to church. It's also been a whole lot of fun."

Dr. Paul Wilbur, a retired physician and member of First UMC in Mountain Home, helped start one of the state's older medical ministries — the 9-year-old Mountain Home Christian Clinic.

The inspiration for the clinic came after he traveled to rural Brazil for a medical mission trip. He started thinking

about all the people in Mountain Home who also lacked access to health care.

"While we very much enjoyed our mission trip to Brazil," he said, "we came home and decided we had better do something for the people in our own community."

The clinic is open two nights a month and also occasionally sees patients during the workday when the clinic typically takes care of its administrative business. Last year, the clinic served 3,166 patients. First UMC in Mountain Home supplies many of the clinic's volunteers.

Chris Cooper, the senior pastor of First UMC in Blytheville, founded the state's newest free clinic — the Great River Charitable Clinic, which opened in March. It is Mississippi County's first charity health facility.

Cooper earlier helped start a charitable clinic to serve Conway County when he was a pastor in Morrilton.

The Blytheville Area Chamber of Commerce recently named Cooper "Citizen of the Year" in part for organizing the clinic (see story on page 9).

Even in the clinic's first month, he saw the clinic change lives.

The optometrist discovered a patient who had diabetic retinopathy, a condition that if left untreated untreated can lead to blindness.

"The person probably had it for as long 10 years — never been diagnosed, never knew anything about it and there was already some deterioration," Cooper said.

"Because we caught that, we may be able to save that person from a hospital stay, save them from amputation and save their eyes."