



# United Methodist Arkansas

June 5, 2009

## Church comes together after secretary stabbed

■ *St. Paul UMC holds service in wake of crime*

By Heather Hahn

United Methodists in northeast Arkansas came together to offer prayer and support after a church secretary was stabbed and robbed in her office.

The pastor and church members rushed to the hospital after Vickie Jo Mueller, 52, was stabbed twice in the chest and twice in the abdomen May 22 by a man who came into the office of St. Paul United Methodist Church in Jonesboro

asking for gas money.

And that night about 180 people — including pastors and members of other area United Methodist churches — gathered at St. Paul to pray some more. Mueller's husband, Bill, and daughter Dena, a sophomore at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, also were there.

On May 31, Mueller was released from the city's St. Bernards Medical Center, and she is expected to make a full recovery.

See Crime, page 14

## Ministry feeds Costa Ricans with rice, beans, Christian love

■ *Group to have booth at Annual Conference*

By Heather Hahn

Some years back, Fred Curry Jr. of Hattiesburg, Miss., and two other friends traveled to El Peje, a community in the remote mountains of southeastern Costa Rica. There, the three met impoverished families who were just as hungry for the Gospel as for food.

The experience led Curry in 2007 to establish Rice and Beans Ministries, a United Methodist Volunteers in Mission partner. The ministry annually draws Christians from across the United States to the Central American nation. The volunteers participate in church construction projects, lead children's day camps and most crucially, share rice, beans and other food

staples with those in need.

"The mission of rice and beans, first and foremost, is to share the Gospel and also help the poor — the children and the widows," Curry said by e-mail from Costa Rica.

"Also we are trying to empower the local congregations to reach out to their local communities."

This year, Curry — who is known as "Papa Fred" — expects to work with 350 U.S. volunteers in Costa Rica.

He hopes to recruit more volunteers for future mission trips at Arkansas' Annual Conference, which will be from June 14 to 17 in Rogers. At his booth, he will have on hand more information about the ministry, as well as a video and T-shirts.

A group of 23 Arkansas

See Rice and Beans, page 20



Grateful soldiers in the 54th Signal Battalion at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait hold up United Methodist Endorsing Agency phone cards they received from a United Methodist chaplain. Those who attend the Arkansas Annual Conference this month in Rogers will be able to donate to the program that enables thousands of deployed service members to call their loved ones.

Photo courtesy of the United Methodist Endorsing Agency

## Helping troops phone home

■ *Card program lets chaplains reach out and touch someone*

By Heather Hahn

Those who attend Arkansas' Annual Conference this month in Rogers will have the opportunity to support the country's servicemen and women deployed overseas.

For \$5 each, people can donate 120-minute phone cards that United Methodist military chaplains will then give to men and women serving in Iraq,

Afghanistan and other places far from home.

People making donations will receive replica cards on which they can write prayers or words of encouragement for military personnel. Toward the end of the Annual Conference, the actual phone cards will be blessed for chaplains' use. Service members can receive cards regardless of their personal faith.

The cards not only help troops keep in touch with their loved ones — they also boost morale, said Bubba Smith, sen-

ior pastor of First United Methodist Church in Magnolia and a chaplain in the U.S. Air Force reserves. Smith is organizing the booth where the cards will be displayed.

"In the midst of stress and tension, a phone card is almost like a balm of calm," Smith said. "The phone card also becomes a visible sign of holy. It connects them to the church."

The cards display the familiar United Methodist Cross and Flame logo.

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## Editor's Corner

### Finding real sanctuary

If there is one place in the world you should be safe from harm, it's the church.

At least that's how many Christians (myself included) usually think.

We recognize that all sorts of cruelty and violence happen in the outside world, but we think of our church buildings as God's house — an inviolable refuge. We even think churches should offer a reprieve from workaday annoyances like other people's cell-phone conversations.

Driving the point home, we Christians traditionally have called the rooms where we worship "sanctuaries."

That's why anytime a church shooting occurs or someone is attacked inside a church, the news always seems especially horrific — not just criminal but blasphemous.

Even days later, I'm still shaken by the murder of Dr. George Tiller while he was at Sunday worship at Reformation Lutheran Church in Wichita, Kansas.

The Associated Press reported that Tiller was serving as an usher in the church narthex that morning, while his wife was singing with the church choir.

It sounded so much like the sort of Sunday-morning routine my Lutheran parents have performed countless times at their church.

But far closer to home here in Arkansas was the attack two weeks ago on Vickie "Jo" Mueller while she was preparing the Sunday bulletins for St. Paul United Methodist Church in Jonesboro. A man came in asking for gas money, and he ended up stabbing her four times.

Mueller is now home from the hospital, and her wounds are healing. But her church family also is still recovering from this brutal violation of their ministry.

Church secretaries deal with strangers asking for help every day. Would they be wiser to bar the church from any outsider?

There are some precautions church staff can take to minimize



Heather Hahn

risk, says Scott Miller of Regions Insurance Corp. in Little Rock. Miller is the program coordinator for the Arkansas Conference and more than 300 United Methodist churches.

He suggests churches lock their doors during the work-week and use an intercom/buzzer system to let people in only at staff members' discretion. Miller also urges that people never work at the church alone, and that they establish an internal distress signal or panic button.

But he acknowledges no church can prevent every violent act.

We live in a fallen world, and that fallen nature has a way of seeping through even the thickest church doors. More importantly, our churches would cease fulfilling their mission to reach out to a fallen world if they became isolated fortresses.

The good news is that the connections we have formed in Christ do make us stronger. And since the attack at St. Paul UMC on May 22, the connective nature of the United Methodist Church has been on full display.

Not only did St. Paul members rush to pray and provide food for the Mueller family, church members across the state and even across the country also have reached out to offer help and support.

Members of Arkansas State University's Wesley Foundation have checked in with Mueller's daughter, Dena.

Members of the Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries have sent cards and e-mails as well as their prayers.

Indeed, I learned of the attack from association member and North District administrative assistant LaDonna Busby, who sent out a prayer request by e-mail to churches across the conference.

Even in a troubled world, the church prevails because we share in the Light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.

### In the words of John Wesley ...



"I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out."



### Letters to the Editor

#### Insurance inadequate

For 20 years, I have been blessed by being part of the United Methodist health coverage for pastors ... so I guess it's ungrateful for me to complain about being cursed by it now.

But as things stand now, I'd be so much better off if I had no insurance because then I'd be eligible to go the local free clinic and my children would qualify for ARKids.

As it is, we can no longer afford to go to the doctor or even to continue our prescriptions as they were before the new deductible levels were initiated at the first of the year.

I have to admit I was shortsighted. I really didn't comprehend that the new deductibles, which are basically a 10 percent cut in my salary, would put my family in dire financial straits.

And I know there are many pastors that it impacted far greater than me. If you haven't had a chat with your

pastor about the insurance repercussions, it might be a good time to do that. As it stands now the cost of family insurance with deductible is approximately \$18,000 a year.

This amount is much more if you receive care outside of approved providers (which outside of Little Rock are harder to find).

I know I'm not in tune with national finances, but that seems incredibly sinful to me and not good stewardship.

I don't know the solution to this problem. One possibility would be for the local churches to purchase an insurance policy for their pastor and family and deduct the cost from the amount they pay into the current insurance pool.

Please pray for the Insurance Committee that they can find a more equitable path.

Gary Harrison, senior pastor  
First United Methodist Church in Mena

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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 June 17.



Volume 128 • No. 11 June 5, 2009

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www.arumc.org

The *Arkansas United Methodist* is the newspaper of record for the United Methodist Church in Arkansas. It is published twice monthly — on the first and third Fridays of each month, for a total of 24 issues per year.

**Offices** are located on the campus of Philander Smith College, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Dr., Little Rock, Ark. 72202.

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**Change of address** notification should be sent to *Arkansas United Methodist*, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Dr., Little Rock, AR 72202; or e-mailed to Patrick Shownes at pshownes@arumc.org

**Subscription price** is \$15 per year (24 issues) or \$25 for 2 years (48 issues) for the print version. The online digital edition is free. Special rates (print version) are offered to retired clergy and surviving



spouses of clergy. Send name, address, church name and payment to: *Arkansas United Methodist*, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Dr., Little Rock, AR 72202, or email pshownes@arumc.org.

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**Signed letters and opinion** articles reflect the views of the author and not necessarily those of the *Arkansas United Methodist* or The United Methodist Church.

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**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: *Arkansas United Methodist*, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Dr., Little Rock, AR 72202.

Periodical Class Postage Paid at Little Rock, Ark. USPS 012-236 ISSN 1080-2819



(501) 324-8000 or  
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# Viewpoint

## Pastors offer tips for welcoming the new guy or girl in the pulpit

*Special the Arkansas United Methodist*

This month, United Methodist congregations across the state will meet their new pastors.

After Annual Conference, nearly 100 clergymen and women will pack up their families and move to new cities or new neighborhoods, and they'll soon be trying to memorize a bunch of new faces.

These ministers will be following a tradition of itinerancy as old as Methodism itself. Francis Asbury reportedly traveled more than 300,000 miles on horse and carriage — not to mention sailing some 2,000 miles across the Atlantic — for his Methodist ministry.

The cabinet — which includes the bishop and eight district superintendents — has set June 24 as the Arkansas Conference's official moving day. Pastors will deliver their first sermons from their new pulpits June 28.

In the mean time, some veterans of "Moving Day" offer their tips for making the transition easier.

"As a preacher's kid, preacher and parent of [preachers' kids], I can say without hesitation that moving is traumatic on the preacher and his/her family," John Miles II, the senior pastor of First United Methodist Church in Jonesboro, says by e-mail. His congregation has nearly 2,700 members.

"I remember my daughter's tears when she went to her huge new high school to enroll. I remember my mom's worry over a parsonage that was too small for our family of five. One of the most helpful things that lay people can do is just to remember that their new pastor and family will be tense, tired, and torn from the move. Simply giving them some time to make the adjustment is the best gift of all."

He suggests church volunteers clean the parsonage before the new pastor arrives and learn any special needs the minister might have.

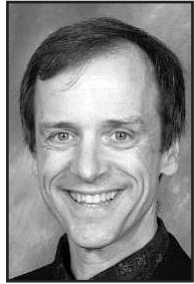
Members of First UMC in Jonesboro fenced in the parsonage's backyard when the congregation learned Miles had two outdoor dogs.

Miles also urges parishioners to wear nametags on the first few Sundays to assist the pastor and the pastor's family.

Reggie Russell, senior pastor of St. Paul UMC in Maumelle, notes that pastors also must make the effort to get to know their new parishioners.

"You always want to do the best you can to establish a relationship with people and build trust in the congregation," he said. "I think that's very key especially in the first six to 12 months."

When he arrived at St. Paul



John Miles II



Reggie Russell

UMC last year, he first met with the church's Pastor and Parish Relations Committee to learn what the committee members expected in a pastor and share what he expected of the congregation, which has about 150 members.

His first four months, Russell met periodically with all the leaders in the church to learn the congregation's history as well as people's hopes for the congregation's future.

"That was very helpful because it gave me an opportunity to learn about some of the dynamics in the church," Russell said. "St. Paul is a family oriented church that mainly consists of five to six strong families. Those dynamics were important to learn."

He said he also paced himself before trying to make changes in the church. But since he's arrived, he has been able to reinvigorate the church's old practice of having children and youth help lead each fourth Sunday's service. He also soon hopes to start having a weekly get-together for the church's youth.

Miles encourages churchgoers to share their aspirations with their new pastor and to pray for the pastor's ministry.

"Finally, get excited with your new pastor about what God can do with your church," Miles says.

"In my second church several leaders came to see me soon after I arrived. They told me so many negative things about the church and community. It was depressing. Then one layman contradicted them all and said, 'This is a great church and God is going to do great things here.' I stuck with that guy the whole time I was there."

His wife, Susan, was similarly touched by a call she received from laywoman before she went to her second church.

"[The laywoman] said, 'I just know that Satan is shaking in his boots!'" Miles recalls. "Those words meant the world to Susan. There is nothing better that to feel like you have come to a place where God is already at work."

## Wooing a new generation to become Christ's brides

As the preacher's kid, the sanctuary was my cave of wonders. The church was my Wild West. It provided a place to parade where I pleased.

I was 4 when Dad took my brother Trey and me to work with him.

Mom was walking to Emmaus, placing us in my father's hands. His thoughts were preoccupied with a wedding.

My father, brother and I rushed through the church's white hallways while I discussed purchasing a Barbie Dream Boathouse.

I kept talking, and Dad kept wanting to talk about it later. Later was a less appealing time than the present.

He sat us down when we got into the sanctuary. The bride came in, and Dad began droning on about "forever" and "commitment" as I grew indignant.

I'm his princess, I thought. No "forever commitment" was more important than his commitment to me!

I hopped out of the pew, marched down the aisle and plowed straight through the bride and groom to let him know that.

As I used my serious voice to affirm the significance of a Barbie Dream Boathouse, he grabbed me by the elbow and directed me to the nursery.

This confidence that prematurely sent little "Mary Faith" marching down the aisle was grown within the church.

It is through the strength of my United Methodist home that I have developed into the woman of God I am today, and it is through that body that our steadfast Lord will mold my tomorrows.

However, the membership of the United Methodist Church is dying.

Like all of life's cyclical functions, death is countered by rebirth. In our denomination, rebirth typically comes in the form of younger people joining the congregation, thereby replenishing previous generations.



Mary Faith Miles

But like annual flowers that must be replanted yearly, if the church's soil is not a nutritious planting ground for new seed, the cycle ceases — resulting in the discontinuation of the denomination.

In March 2008, the United Methodist News Service reported that U.S. membership in the United Methodist church diminished by a total of 63,696 souls between 2005 and 2006.

Marta W. Aldrich of UMNS wrote that despite the decline in membership, "the number of [nonmembers active within the church] in 2006 was more than 1.5 million, a 16 percent increase from a decade ago."

The article cites the Rev. Lovett Weems, the director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., saying many in this group are part of the young adult demographic.

As a young adult, I believe that I hold some insight into this question of why the new generation of Christ's Bride is not being wed to specific denominations

Unlike the poor bride to whom I apologize after 16 years, the Bride of Christ — the church — does not have to be distracted from her Groom due to intergenerational miscommunication.

Allow me to initiate a dialogue over the next several issues concerning the heart of a new generation of Christ's Beloveds.

Mary Faith Miles is a junior at Oklahoma City University in Oklahoma, a United Methodist institution. She is the daughter of John Miles II, senior pastor of Jonesboro First United Methodist Church, and the granddaughter of John Miles, retired United Methodist elder. She can be reached at [mmiles.stu1@okcu.edu](mailto:mmiles.stu1@okcu.edu).

### FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE By Mike Morgan



## Viewpoint

# Will constitutional amendments build global community?

The United Methodist Church needs to be a global church. We need the spirit of evangelism and devotion that we see worldwide.

The global church needs the support, experience, and education that can be found in the American church. The front lines of the movement of Jesus Christ have shifted in the last 100 years. The nations that once received missionaries to share the gospel and the Western way of life should now send missionaries to re-convert the West.

Christianity in northern Europe is like a burned-out field of stubble. Christianity in North America is like the Rust Belt, full of structures, physical and denominational, that remind us of our former glory. Many of us are dedicated to reversing the trend of decay, and the fires of the Spirit are burning hot in some locations. But a general Pentecost has not come yet.

While the growth of the Christian movement has shifted largely south of the equator, the United Methodist Church has remained essentially centered on American issues and agendas. Each General Conference sees more and more delegates from overseas, yet we continue to focus on institutional maintenance, not building the Kingdom.

One of the responses of the last General Conference to the issue of global Methodism was to propose 23 amendments to the Constitution of the Church, which is part of the Book of Discipline.



Bud Reeves

The gist of the global church amendments is the creation of “regional conferences” by geographical boundaries, replacing all our central conferences overseas, but adding to the American jurisdictional conferences. A study committee

has been appointed to bring a report to the General Conference of 2012 to tell us how all that will shake out.

Changing a constitution is a big deal; it should only be done with utmost consideration. It’s very hard to do in our American government, and that’s probably why we have had a stable government for over 200 years.

Wisely, the United Methodist Church requires a vote in every annual conference and a two-thirds majority of all accumulated votes for an amendment to become church law. I do not believe the information we have been given at this time warrants such a massive, far-reaching, and fundamental change in our church structure, for these reasons:

■ These changes were not requested by the foreign delegates. They were proposed by the Council of Bishops and the Connectional Table, the two most powerful entities in our denomination. Good people, but overwhelmingly

American.

■ We will not know the implications of these structural changes for regional, jurisdictional, or general conferences until the report is made in 2012. What responsibilities will the regional conferences have, and what will be left for the General Conference to do? This is the horse that should be in front of the cart.

■ At least in the United States, regional conferences would add another expensive layer of meetings and bureaucracy, which is the last thing we need.

■ It is unclear how regional conferences will make United Methodism more global. They could actually lead to less diversity as regions tend to their own business and the global church is rendered meaningless — or worse yet, fractured. Has anybody noticed what has happened to the world Anglican community in the last five years?

I believe we have enough wisdom in the Council of Bishops and other organs of the church to figure out some ways to increase the global community of the United Methodist Church.

It needs to happen. Regional conferences, at least as they appear in the proposed amendments, are not how. We do not need to change our fundamental structure to support a vision that is as yet unclear.

The other amendment that has engendered much discussion concerns the inclusiveness of the church as the Body of Christ — which is a good

idea. The current statement opposes exclusion on the basis of “race, color, national origin, status or economic condition.”

The proposed Amendment I removes any distinctions and opposes all discrimination whatsoever, which also sounds like a good idea, unless there is a hidden agenda somewhere. In fact, this amendment was proposed by the Rev. Kevin Young, the chairman of a group called Breaking the Silence, which advocates for full inclusion of gays and lesbians in the Texas Conference.

He is quoted in the *United Methodist Reporter* saying that behind the amendment is a “larger motivation to embrace everyone, of all ages, abilities, marital status, gender and sexual orientation.”

Critics say that Amendment I would be a leverage point for the reversal of the long-held United Methodist position on the ordination of homosexuals, and that it negates pastoral authority to determine a person’s readiness for membership in the church.

It’s going to be an interesting Annual Conference. Let’s be in serious prayer for the movement of God’s Spirit as we seek to be the movement of Jesus Christ that makes disciples and transforms the world. I look forward to seeing my friends there.

*William O. “Bud” Reeves is senior pastor of First UMC, Hot Springs. He can be reached at brobud@fumchs.com.*

# Regional conferences would recognize church’s diversity

Somewhere in my childhood, the metaphor for being an American changed from being part of the “melting pot” to being part of a “tossed salad.”

Why the change? As a representative in the melting pot, differences are scarcely noted. How can you discern “what is what” when everything is melted together? In the tossed salad bowl different tastes and textures are celebrated for the richness they give to the whole.

Along the way, we citizens of the U.S. decided that although we are all created *equal*, we are not all created the *same*. We have, as a nation, grieved the past where we have not treated one another as brothers and sisters, and furthermore, we celebrate the diverse traditions that have made us a nation.

Celebrated differences are a deeply spiritual matter for me and play a part in how I help young people discern their vocations. In Paul’s letter to Ephesus, the fourth chapter, he makes a plea that there is “one body and one Spirit...one calling, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of All...”

But (and with Paul there is always a but), “each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ...that some would be apostles,



J.J. Whitney

some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to

maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”

What Paul says to me through Scripture is that we need to celebrate the different gifts we have been given and use them to build the Kingdom of God. We cannot all be apostles or prophets nor can we all be evangelists, pastors and teachers. We need all of the gifts to build up the body of Christ.

As a rookie delegate to General Conference, what it means to be the worldwide church is truly evident in worship. I tell you, when we all sing a Wesleyan hymn on the floor of General Conference, even the hardest of hearts could not resist boisterously singing and smiling as we all lift our voices to God in praise.

What a sound and sight to behold! And, we were certainly blessed by the rich traditions of African worship or the singing of African-American songs as we gathered in the morning. Sometimes we sang praise songs, and sometimes we sang old hymns. We heard stories about hurricane relief work, and we smiled as the youth told the gospel story through dramatic interpretation.

And when we prayed the Lord’s Prayer? I could hear languages and accents uniting for the glory, power and kingdom of our God. All of these elements added to our worship and brought us closer to God so that we would be guided by the Holy Spirit to tackle the legislative elements of our conferencing time together.

When we gathered together in our legislative committees, it was clear that a majority of the petitions dealt largely with American concerns. During the Church & Society Legislative 2 Committee I attended, my brothers and sisters from Africa or Europe or the Philippines often remained silent as we passionately discussed the petitions in front of us.

When asked their opinions by the sub-chair, we heard comments such as, “Well, in my country, this is not an

issue” or “this point does not need to be argued.”

Meanwhile, the American delegates went on *and on* in deliberation.

What did I learn from this experience? The worldwide United Methodist Church desires to tell the Gospel story, but to share it and to live it in a way that their people can hear.

The way that young adults in their 20s and 30s hear the good news in downtown Argenta neighborhood of North Little Rock is very different than hearing the good news shared in my church — First UMC in Conway — just a mere 20 miles apart.

These differences are not threatening to us as a whole, but are to be celebrated because people are hearing about God through Jesus Christ, and they are responding in word and deed.

The worldwide United Methodist Church needs similar freedom in expressing what it means to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ in their particular corners of the world.

Many of the proposed constitutional amendments deal with the issue of allowing each annual conference to belong to a regional conference, which

# Viewpoint

## Change would show church's commitment to inclusiveness

The Uniting Conference of 1968 enshrined in the Constitution of the new United Methodist Church an affirmation of "the inclusiveness of the church."

Article IV of Division One (§ 4) for 40 years has named four specific categories that are not to be used to exclude: "all persons" are eligible for membership "without regard to race, color, national origin, or economic condition." Only once during the succeeding decades has another category been added: status, in 1992. Its meaning is still debated today.

The General Conference of 2008 is recommending, by the narrowest of margins in its required two-thirds vote, that the "without regard to" list be removed. A two-thirds approval by the total number of members present and voting at upcoming annual conference sessions will be required to make this constitutional change.

There is a danger that some voters will be tempted to make their decision based primarily on how they view the ongoing struggle in our denomination over inclusiveness of gays and lesbians.

As a person on the "left," for example, I could decide to vote to eliminate the naming of categories because the term "all persons" means everyone without exception. But I could also vote to keep the list, believing that the best way to show full acceptance of homosexual persons is to work to add "sexual orientation" or other related terms.

There are several other considerations that should be taken into account. They are broader than concerns about particular groups and tend to support the removal of the "with regard to" list:



Bill Martin

1. The original primary function of the list has been achieved. Its naming of "race" and "color" guaranteed the elimination of the discriminatory Central Jurisdiction that The Methodist Church brought to the merger with the

Brethren Church.

The issue of racism, which these terms addressed directly, is still very much with us, but this concern is now addressed in a much fuller way in § 5 ("Racial Justice"), which was added in 2000-01.

2. Removal of the list, better than keeping it, supports the paragraph's goal of advancing the "inclusiveness of the Church." The addition of "national origin" and "economic condition" in 1968 provided examples of inclusiveness closely related to race and color, and it seems clear that the list was not meant to be exclusive.

This conclusion is supported by a sentence in a resolution approved at the General Conference of 1968, immediately following the Uniting Conference: "With respect to race, the aim of the United Methodist Church is nothing less than an inclusive church in an inclusive society" (Book of Resolutions, 1968, 15). Efforts to add a wide variety of categories in recent General Conferences have all been defeated, leaving the unfortunate impression, perhaps sometimes

unintentional, that persons in the rejected categories are also being themselves excluded.

A prime example of how the list has increasingly served to exclude occurred at the 2000 General Conference. The inclusive words "[a]cknowledging that all persons are of sacred worth..." were added.

They came from a petition from the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, which apparently borrowed them directly from the statement in the Social Principles that "[h]omosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth" (*Book of Discipline*, 1996, ¶ 65 G). But the Conference then failed to accept the Commission's recommendation of a greatly expanded "without regard to" list: "race, color, national origin, age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, marital status or economic condition."

3. It is appropriate to have a broad, general statement at the highest level of law (Constitution), leaving specific implementation to the lower levels (remainder of the *Discipline*).

As matters stand now the Constitution has held steady at the level of four or five categories, while at other places in the *Discipline* the lists continue to grow, leaving an increasingly awkward situation in which the Constitution is much less inclusive than other parts of the *Discipline*.

A noteworthy example here is the fact that in 1968 prospective clergy members of annual conferences promised to be in ministry "to all persons without

regard to color or national origin..." whereas today candidates to become deacons and elders are asked about their willingness "to minister with all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disabilities" (*Discipline*, 1968, ¶ 326; *Discipline*, 2008, ¶ 335).

4. A positive practical consequence is that the removal of the "without regard to" list from § 4 almost certainly will mean that there will be one less flash point at General Conference for long and time-consuming debates.

Anyone who observed the 2004 Conference will remember the complex, frustrating and eventually fruitless discussion about adding "mental condition." If we continue with the list, it is certain that every four years there will be attempts to add one or more categories.

For those who see the vote on § 4 as being mainly about how gays and lesbians best relate to the church, little will be gained or lost for either side with the acceptance of the proposed amendment.

Making the paragraph into the broadest kind of affirmation challenges all of us, no matter which side of the debate we are on, to work toward the goal of a church that is as fully inclusiveness as possible, according to our best understandings of what that really means. Plenty of places remain in the rest of the *Discipline* for debate over how best to implement that goal.

A. W. "Bill" Martin Jr. is professor of religion emeritus at Oklahoma City University and a retired elder in the Arkansas Conference.

### Whitney, continued from page 4

would be able to organize sub-units called jurisdictional conferences.

In fact, 23 of the 32 proposed amendments ask for the language of "central conferences" to be changed to "regional conferences."

These amendments required a two-thirds vote before they even got to our Annual Conference. That's a lot of folks at General Conference who thought this change would be a good idea.

If the Annual Conferences vote to approve these constitutional amendments, what does it mean? Or, in the words of one of my clergy friends, where does the rubber hit the road?

In my understanding, regional conferencing would give us freedom to "promote the evangelistic, educational, missionary, social-concern and benevolent interests and institutions of the Church within their own boundaries."

However, this decision does not change our conferencing for this quadrennium and only creates the possibility that it may occur in the 2013 quadrennium. Currently, a task force has been appointed to examine regional conferencing.

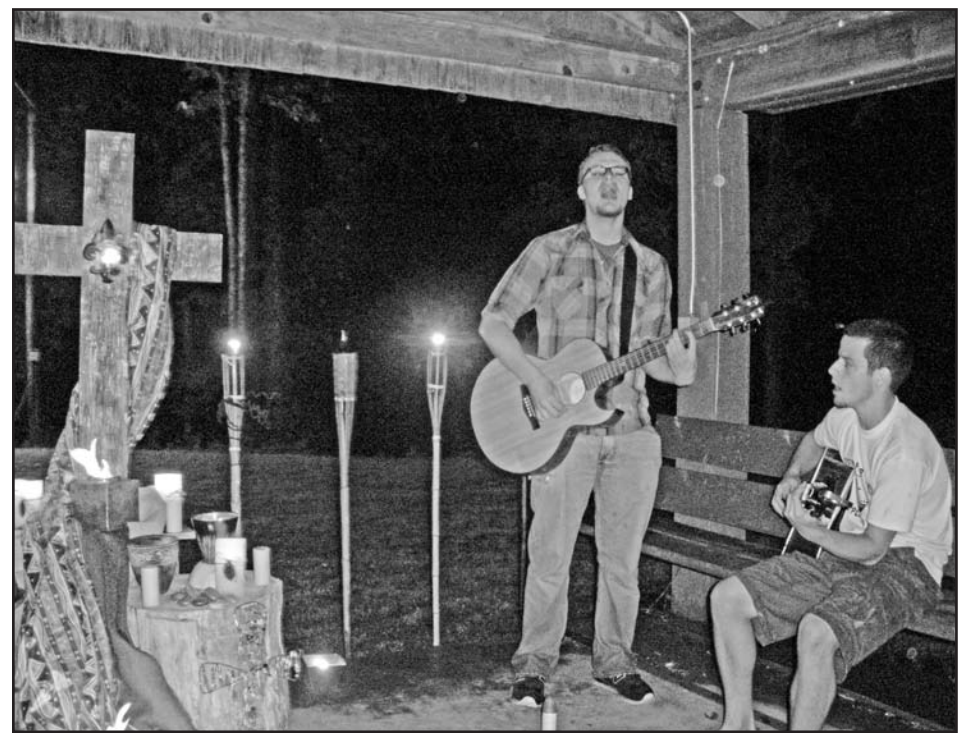
It makes sense to me that in a worldwide church, we would allow

geography to determine some of our practices and policies understanding that the overall mission of the church cannot change and that the General Conference (with equal representation) continues to be the legislative body that acts on the essential elements of the United Methodist Church.

John Wesley was a pragmatic man. If he saw "fruits of the spirit" working among the practices of the church, then he was for it. This is part of the reason why a young ordained woman in the United Methodist Church can write this article for you. Wesley saw that women could preach and that people were brought to Christ through them, so he did not stand in the way of those women who felt called.

Let us be pragmatic about these proposed amendments. We continue to be one church, yet recognizing that we have different gifts and diverse ways of sharing the Gospel message that will "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

J.J. Whitney is the assistant chaplain of Hendrix College and associate director of the Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics & Calling. She can be reached at whitney@hendrix.edu.



The band aCatalyst performs at the spring rally of the Southeast District Council on Youth Ministries at Bear Creek Camp in Marianna. The rally was held May 1-3. The theme was "Survivor," which was appropriate as the youth survived more than five inches of rain over the weekend. As their mission project, the youth prepped and painted the dining hall at the camp.

Photo courtesy of the Southeast District

# June service will recognize 11 retiring pastors



Sam Albright



N. Wayne Clark



Roger E. Glover



Robert L. Hager



Linda Anne Horton



H.E. "Eddy" Howell Jr.



James Lann



Dana A. Thomason



Charles Thompson Jr.



William Paul Woolley

Eleven ministers, pictured at left, with a combined record of more than 274 years of service, will see their achievements recognized at the 2009 Arkansas Annual Conference.

Not pictured is Kit L. Carson Sr...

N. Wayne Clark of Marion has served in licensed ministry the longest. He began active ministry 45 years ago, according to conference records.

The celebration kicks off with a worship service at 11 a.m. June 15 at the Hammons Convention Center in Rogers.

A retiree luncheon will follow at 12:10 p.m. in the Ambassador Ballroom at the Convention Center.

Tickets are free for retired pastors, their spouses and surviving spouses. The cost is \$20 for all others.

Reservations are strongly encouraged. To buy tickets, contact Mona Williams at [mwilliams@arumc.org](mailto:mwilliams@arumc.org) or call her at (501) 324-8003.

# Annual Conference includes spiritual formation sessions

*Special to the Arkansas United Methodist*

In less than two weeks' time, some 1,200 United Methodists will converge on Rogers for the seventh Annual Conference since the formation of the Arkansas Conference.

With the theme "Transforming the World," the gathering from June 14 to 17 will celebrate the Christian faith and the connective nature of the United Methodist Church.

Voting members will decide the Arkansas Conference's 2010 budget and have a say on the proposed amendments to the denomination's Constitution in the *Book of Discipline*. Various church organizations — such as seminaries, United Methodist Women and Black Methodists for Church Renewal — will have special luncheons and dinners.

But amid all the business and banquets, the Annual Conference for the first time also will offer more contemplative sessions to focus on prayer and spiritual formation.

The four sessions will be in the conference's Prayer and Spirituality Center at the Hammons Convention Center.

The descriptions of the spiritual formation opportunities follow:

■ June 15, 8 a.m. "The Path of Life" led Harriett Akins-Banman, associate pastor at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church — Psalm 16:11 says, "You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy."

The path of life can at times seem all uphill; at other times, it seems we're wandering in circles. As Christians, we believe that whatever our point on the path of life, God is with us. Walking the path of the labyrinth as a tool for prayer and meditation can help one focus and clear the mind, to be open to the "still small voice" of God speaking. This session will include a guided labyrinth walk.

A brief introduction to this spiritual discipline also will be given.

■ June 16, 8 a.m., "Speak, Lord, for Thy Servant is Listening" led by Bill Buchanan, senior pastor of Salem UMC in Conway — Sometimes we read the Bible for information about God. Sometimes we study the Bible for sermon or class preparation.

Sometimes we read the Bible devotionally. Other times we turn to the Bible as a place of transforming encounter with God.

The discipline of spiritual reading classically known as *lectio divina*, brings us to the text to listen to God. This session will offer guided *lectio*.

■ June 16, 4:45 p.m., "Conversations for Congregations: Making Sacred Spaces for Nourishing the Spirit," a group discussion — There are congregations throughout the Arkansas Conference who are offering experiences for going deeper into prayer and worship using opportunities like labyrinth walk, prayer experiences with meditation and movement, healing services and art or writing.

This panel discussion will offer an opportunity for those in leadership to share ideas and possibilities with others in the conference.

It also will offer a chance for participants to network across the conference, connecting with one another and allowing the Spirit to work among us and through us in making disciples.

■ June 17, 8 a.m. "Prayer and Creative Expression" led by Helen Stegall, associate pastor of Christ of the Hills UMC in Hot Springs. H. W. Beecher, pastor and father of Harriett Beecher Stowe, said, "The soul without imagination is what an observatory would be without a telescope."

Through prayer, imagination, and utilizing a variety of visual art opportunities, we will let scripture speak to us through creative expression.

The Annual Conference also will include worship each evening at Central United Methodist Church in Rogers.



Another Annual Conference first — those who attend will receive with their registration packets, a reusable bag made out of 100 percent recyclable materials. The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas donated the bags. This is the first year the Annual Conference has used recyclable bags. The handbags are part of the Arkansas Conference's effort to be better stewards of God's creation.

# Lead delegate to General Conference explains amendments

Rodney Steele, district superintendent of the North Central District, served as co-leader of the Arkansas delegation at the United Methodist General Conference last year in Fort Worth, Texas. It was his second time to lead the Arkansas delegation with Asa Whitaker, the Arkansas Conference's lay leader.

At the Annual Conference this month, Steele will introduce the 32 proposed amendments to the denomination's constitution. He also will try to answer any questions about the amendments that come up. He got started by answering some constitutional questions from the Arkansas United Methodist.



Rodney Steele

amendment only through the lens of the issue of homosexuality. All of us want to be in ministry to all, to offer the grace of God through Jesus Christ to the whole world is at the heart of the witness of the United Methodist Church.

The real issue for this amendment is the last sentence. The poor wording of that sentence will lead to all kinds of unintended consequences that go beyond any issues relating to homosexuality. It reads, "In the United Methodist Church no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body."

Everyone needs to look long and hard at this sentence because it applies to all matters relating to the organization of the church. If this amendment is adopted, then any member can show up at Annual Conference and demand to be admitted as a voting member.

All formulas and criteria for Conference membership would be deemed exclusionary by this sentence and, therefore, void; the person(s) would have to be admitted.

The same thing is true of the Board of Ordained Ministry and candidates for ministry.

The Board of Ordained Ministry, the Annual Conference and the local Charge Conference are each "organizational units." Therefore, any criteria of membership would inherently be deemed exclusionary and void.

By the application of this poorly worded sentence, any member who wants to be on a Conference or local church committee must be allowed and anyone who wants to be a minister must be allowed.

I'm afraid that folks have gotten so wrapped up in the issues surrounding homosexuality that they don't realize the chaos that this one, poorly written sentence will cause.

## Twenty-three proposed amendments deal with the formation of regional conferences. What would be the impact of such a change?

When the concept of regional conferences was first proposed, the idea was to be less U.S. centric and more globally minded. It seemed to be a simple matter of semantics until the actual legislation was proposed.

## What are the concerns of those who oppose the change?

Those who oppose the move to regional conferences are fearful that it will lead to a confederation of regional conferences instead of a more global United Methodist Church. They fear that so much autonomy will be given to regional conferences that they will

become strong and independent, caring less for the whole church and more for their region. They also fear that this will create an additional level of bureaucracy, and, as proposed, it will create additional courts and a court system that has yet to be defined.

Some of those who are opposed to regional conferences are afraid that issues of doctrine and polity will be voted upon by the regions and not the whole general church, particularly the church's stance regarding homosexuality, same-sex marriages, bisexuality and transgendered persons. Persons supporting regional conferences have argued that those issues will always be settled by the General Conference.

## What do supporters hope the creation of regional conferences will achieve?

Those who are in favor of the changes believe that the other side's fears are misguided and premature since the details of the regional conferences have yet to be worked out, and won't be until the next General Conference if the amendments pass.

Those who are in favor of this proposal argue that Central Conference members feel like second-class citizens and at General Conference have to sit through a lot of discussion and debate that only affects the UMC in the U.S.A.

Allowing a time when regional conferences can deal with their particular region's ministerial issues is a better stewardship of time and recognizes the cultural differences that exist globally.

Some of them argue that the Constitutional amendments are simply permission-giving and that none of this takes place until the enabling legislation is passed at the next General Conference.

However, some of the amendments' language is mandatory and not just permission-giving but there is no proposal as to what interim steps shall be taken until the next General Conference.

## What is your take on the amendments?

What's missing in this debate is a document like the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights accompanied the debate surrounding the ratification of the U. S. Constitution and, in effect, assured the voters of the parameters of the application or intent of the Constitution.

No such document accompanies the constitutional amendments regarding regional conferences which leaves both sides saying, "I think it will mean this or that." But no one will know until the enabling legislation is passed at the next General Conference.

If the regional conferences amendments fail, they can be considered again at the next General Conference with the enabling legislation in hand which is currently being worked on by a task force.

This would add clarity to how the amendments will be applied. Personally, this approach makes a lot of sense to me.

## Why should the average United Methodist layperson care about the amendment votes?

The average UM layperson in the pews should care about these amendments because of their direct impact upon the local church. For example, I've already listed possibilities with Amendment I's closing sentence. If adopted, members of a local church could invite themselves to serve on various church committees and organizations despite the congregation's nominations report and approval at Charge Conference.

Another example is Amendment II. I have not heard anyone believe that Amendment II is a good idea because it requires *every* "... organization, group, committee, council, board and agency of the UMC..." to adopt ethics and conflict of interest policies.

Of course, everyone is in favor of ethical decisions and moral behavior, but the issue is *every* entity including every committee of the local church processing, composing and implementing policies on ethics and conflict of interests.

Just imagine how much time that will take if every UMW circle has to go through that process as well as every committee, big and small, of a local church; not to mention every entity, etc., on the district, Conference, Jurisdictional and General level.

And, what happens if two committees in the same church adopt different policies of ethics and conflict of interests? Which one prevails?

It's a noble idea but impractical to implement because it will eat up precious time needed to plan and do ministry.

## Is there anything I haven't asked that you'd like me to mention?

All the amendments are important, but one in particular is rather unique and significant. It is Amendment XIX, which will extend voting rights to "... associate members, and those provisional members who have completed all of their educational requirements and local pastors who have completed the Course of Study or an M.Div. degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment immediately preceding the election."

If passed, the ministers listed in the previous sentence will be allowed to vote on clergy delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference.

Even though they will not be allowed to vote on matters of ordination, character and conference relationship, this is still a significant step of inclusion and gives these clergy a voice as to who will represent them at General and Jurisdictional Conference.

## How does the General Conference decide which amendments to propose?

All amendments begin as proposed legislation, and along with all legislation gets to the plenary of the General Conference via a recommendation by a legislative committee.

At that point, and normally following debate, the General Conference votes on whether or not to recommend the proposed changes to the Annual Conferences.

## Who gets to vote at Annual Conference?

Persons who are registered as lay members of the Annual Conference vote on the amendments along with clergy who are full members of the Conference — active and retired elders and deacons.

## What should guide the voting members' decisions?

In my view, traditionally Arkansans have elected delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference whom they believe they know well enough to know how that individual delegate will vote. Delegates work hard to discern the will of the Holy Spirit and seek to follow God's desire in all matters.

## How many votes are needed for an amendment to be ratified?

It requires two-thirds of all persons voting to pass a constitutional amendment. Each Annual Conference submits its totals and all the totals are tallied to find the aggregate number, which must be a two-thirds majority for an amendment to pass.

## Can amendments be altered when they are brought to the floor of the Annual Conference?

An amendment cannot be altered in any way. The vote is straight up or down on the amendment as it is presented.

## What is the implication of the first proposed amendment — which deals with inclusiveness — for the church's debate over homosexuality?

It is a mistake to look at this

# Church building will serve German city haunted by past

*United Methodist News Service*

The United Methodist “Church in the Container” of Oranienburg, Germany, has a new building to serve a community with a dramatic past and acute contemporary needs.

A new facility was dedicated on May 10 in a service attended by civic and church leaders. Like its predecessor portable container, the building is yellow, a standout in the surrounding White City, a complex of apartment buildings constructed for house workers at military factories during World War II.

In her sermon marking the dedication, Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of the United Methodist Germany Central Conference expressed the hope that the congregation would remain as flexible in ministry — now that it has a permanent structure — as when it was in the transitional container. The biblical mandate for ministry, she said, is to be “on the road.”

Mayor Hans-Joachim Laesicke, commenting on the “friendly appearance” of the new center, said that “God certainly will feel at home in this place” as the United Methodists continue to open their doors to everyone and respond to community needs.

Openness and response to the community are hallmarks of the congregation that was started in 1996 by a group of United Methodists who had moved to Oranienburg. The town, about 15 miles north of Berlin, has a storied history.

Block after block of white-painted apartments were built to house workers in airplane factories during the Nazi era. Consequently, it became a target of Allied bombs. Even today, the area has many unexploded bombs that cause hazards for residents.

After World War II, the White City became barracks for Soviet troops and a prison for dissidents. The area was left in ruins when communist rule ended in the early 1990s. Adding to the picture is the museum at Oranienburg that marks the site of Sachsenhausen, the first of Hitler’s concentration camps, where many Jews and others lost their lives.

The housing in White City was gradually restored, but there were few shops and virtually no community infrastructure or organizations for young people. Alcoholism and drug abuse rates are high.

The United Methodists first made their presence known in White City with youth ministry. A playground was built in part by contributions from United Methodist Women at First United Methodist Church in Marietta, Ga.

The original “Church in the Container” opened in 1996 to serve the needs of community youth.

With the Heinrich Meinhardt as pastor, the *Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche im Container* opened in September 1998. Meinhardt, now retired, was succeeded by a clergy couple, Birgit and Andreas Fahnert.



A new Oranienburg United Methodist Church center opened in Germany, replacing the original “church in the container” structure. The yellow church building will serve a community that is still overcoming bombing of World War II and the wages of Communist rule.

Photo by United Methodist News Service

The first public church space was a large portable container with one room for worship and other events and a tiny office.

A part of the Berlin District of the North Germany Annual Conference, the Oranienburg church has received both local and international support through the United Methodist connection. Assistance has come from several general agencies, including the boards of Church and Society, Discipleship and Global Ministries.

The city of Oranienburg, represented by the mayor, was an early and loyal supporter of the initial Youth Pilot Project. The mayor encouraged the United Methodists in the 1990s even when they were branded as a “sect” and their facilities became the target of vandalism.

At the dedication of the new church center, Laesicke praised the cooperation between the church and the community over the last 10 years.

## Phone cards, *continued from page 1*

When service members place a call, they first hear a recording that tells them “The people of the United Methodist Church are praying for you.”

The United Methodist Endorsing Agency introduced the program in November 2003 with the initial support of the Illinois Greater River Conference.

The endorsing agency, part of the denomination’s General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, handles the ecclesiastical approval process for United Methodist chaplains in the military, hospitals and other fields in need of pastoral care. At present, 11 military chaplains are members of the Arkansas Conference.

Laura Flippen, the agency’s endorsement coordinator, said the United Methodist Church works with suppliers to get bulk rates, so the cards are less expensive than the phone cards hanging near cash register at local stores.

Recipients also get domestic rates on their card, so they don’t need to worry about international rates using up their minutes and cutting into their conversation time.

So far, Flippen said, the program has received more than \$500,000 in donations. As of this past February, the program had provided more than 14.5 million minutes of phone service to military personnel.

Flippen said there are some military installations where the United Methodist cards don’t work. In those cases, her agency will supply chaplains with AT&T cards that generally do the trick.

In 2005, Shane Pair, co-pastor of Grace UMC and an Air National Guard

## Church collects supplies for wounded troops

Grace United Methodist Church in Conway is collecting donations and supplies for wounded U.S. military personnel who are passing through Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany.

Ramstein serves as the evacuation point for the wounded from Iraq and Afghanistan. Shane Pair, Grace’s co-pastor and a chaplain at the base, said many of the wounded arrive with only the clothes on their backs.

His wife and fellow co-pastor, Sara Pair, plans to collect items at least through July 8, when Shane Pair’s deployment ends.

The Casualty Areomedical Staging Flight USO provides the wounded with necessities, but these items are in short supply.

Some needed items include:

- Disposable razors and shaving cream
- Individual size toiletries (toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, lotion etc.)
- Lip balm
- Tooth brushes
- Blankets and prayer shawls
- New pajamas, sweat pants and sweatshirts, all adult sizes
- Protein/nutrition bars

Donations by check made out to the CASF USO also may be sent to purchase supplies. The check should note the donation is to purchase these items for soldiers. All items, donations and cards may be mailed to USO Kaiserlautern, ATTN: CASF USO, Unit 23152, APO, AE 09277.

They also can be dropped at Grace UMC, 1075 Hogan Lane in Conway. To learn more, call the church at (501) 329-6056.

chaplain, provided 296 cards to service members heading to Iraq and some of their spouses. He said the cards not only allowed him to act as a witness to Christ but also helped him introduce many of the recipients to his denomination.

“Many had not heard of the United Methodist Church, and for many that had, there was a misconception of who we are and what we believe,” Pair said by e-mail from Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany where he is now deployed.

“The cards provided an opportunity for me as a Methodist member and pastor to be in conversation with those out-

side of our denomination.”

Among those who received cards from Pair were Tommy James and Gary Vickery, both master sergeants in the Air National Guard and members of Alma UMC, where Pair was then pastor.

Back home and now retired from Guard service, both Vickery and James talked about how much the phone-card program meant to them.

While he was in Iraq, Vickery said being able to hear the voice of his wife and sons helped keep him grounded.

“You are reminded that you are still in the world — not in the war,” he said.

On the phone, Vickery said, he could be more candid about the attacks his unit faced than on e-mail, which the enemy might intercept.

Like Vickery, James said the phone cards were critical for helping him and his family stay connected.

“It takes about two weeks for a letter you mail to get between there and here,” James said. “Being able to every now and then get on the telephone and let your loved ones know you were still all right was paramount. The cards are invaluable.”

Just before he left Iraq, James thrilled a younger service member by giving him one of the cards that still had unused minutes.

Smith, the Air Force reserves chaplain, said he always got a positive response from card recipients. For many deployed soldiers and airmen, money back home is tight. The phone cards offer some relief.

“When you hand them a card that doesn’t cost anything, they often ask, ‘Why?’” Smith said.

“My answer is, ‘Why not? You’re here protecting our rights and freedoms.’ This is a way of saying thank you. This is a small token of appreciation for what you’re doing for our country.”

*Donations are welcome from not just those at Annual Conference. To contribute to the phone card program, mail checks to the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA), General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, P.O. Box 340007, Nashville, Tenn. 37203-0007. To learn more, visit [www.gbhem.org](http://www.gbhem.org).*



# Coming Up

**The Arkansas Conference** is seeking nominees for the Jay Lawhon Volunteers in Mission Award, which will be presented during the Annual Conference in Rogers.

The award will be given at a luncheon on June 16 in the Commerce Ballroom in the Hammons Convention Center in Rogers. Tickets cost \$15.

A nomination form is available at [www.arumc.org](http://www.arumc.org). Mail nomination forms to Don Weeks, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Drive, Little Rock, 72202-3770, or e-mail Don Weeks at [dweeks@arumc.org](mailto:dweeks@arumc.org). Nominations are due by June 8.

To learn more, call the Arkansas Conference office at (501) 324-8000.

**United Methodist churches in Camden** will join together for a camp meeting-style revival at 7 p.m. June 7-12.

The churches will celebrate the first three nights at Westside UMC, 2211 Maul Road, Camden. The last three nights will be at Timothy UMC, 1800 California St. David Bush, former pastor at Timothy UMC and now pastor of First UMC in Heber Springs will be the evangelist. Combined choirs will perform under the direction of state Sen. Gene Jeffress, D-Louann. Bill Mann will bring special music June 9-10.

The Camden churches also are combining their efforts for a joint Vacation Bible School at 9-11 a.m. June 8-12 at St. Mark UMC, 1315 W. Washington St.

To learn more call Timothy UMC at (870) 836-8301, Westside at (870) 836-3901 or St. Mark at (870) 836-3901.

**Trinity UMC**, 1101 N. Mississippi St., Little Rock, will host its fourth annual KAOS Youth Event at 5:30-7:30 p.m. June 7. The improv/ comedy group Panic Squad will perform. To learn more, contact Jamey Bentley, minister of spiritual formation, at [jameybentley@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jameybentley@sbcglobal.net).

**Mayflower UMC**, Miller and Grove streets in front of Mayflower Elementary School, Mayflower, will have its annual United Methodist Women Sunday at 11 a.m. June 14.

UMW members will handle all the aspects of the service as well as present awards. Dana Addison of Camp Aldersgate will speak. A hot dog and hamburger feast will follow the service, and two gospel groups will perform under the pavilion. In case of inclement weather, the music will move back into the sanctuary.

To learn more, call Ruth Osborne, UMW president, at (501) 470-1332.

**Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology** will have a free public workshop on "The Politics of Race in the Obama Era: The Implications for the Church."

The event will be at 7 p.m. June 16 in Perkins Chapel. The speakers will be Ruben Rosario Rodriguez of St. Louis and Evelyn Parker of SMU's Perkins School.

To learn more, e-mail David Maldonado, director of the Center for the

Study of Latino/a Christianity and Religions at Perkins School of Theology, at [dmaldona@smu.edu](mailto:dmaldona@smu.edu).

The youth of **First UMC of North Little Rock**, 6701 John F. Kennedy Blvd., will participate in World Vision's 30-Hour Famine June 19-20. The teens will get a taste of hunger to help feed and care for children living in extreme poverty around the world. They will also participate in service projects throughout the area include Brother Paul's Kitchen, Gardner Memorial UMC Food Pantry and a community food drive.

To learn more, call Todd Lovell, the church's youth coordinator, at (501) 835-2201.

**Healing Place Ministries in Pine Bluff** is still taking registrations for its two of its summer camps.

The day camps for children ages 7 through 14 will be from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily June 29-July 3 and July 6-10. Both camps will be at First UMC, 200 W. Sixth St. in Pine Bluff. Meals will be provided.

Registration costs \$10 per family. Children can only attend one session. To register, call David and Edna Morgan at (870) 535-0101.

**Duncan UMC**, 2701 Rock St., Little Rock, will host a reception and book-signing for author and United Methodist Grif Stockley at 11 a.m. July 11. Stockley will discuss his new release *Ruled by Race* at the event sponsored by Renaissance Christian Writers.

**The School of Congregational Development**, a national event designed to strengthen and start disciple-making congregations, is scheduled for July 29-Aug. 2 in Chicago. The event is for Bishops, district superintendents, conference leaders, clergy and lay leadership of existing and new congregations.

The three-day conference includes six plenary speakers, 22 ministry tracks, 11 intensives, and 15 workshops all designed to help strengthen and start disciple-making congregations.

The United Methodist Church's General Board of Discipleship, General Board of Global Ministries and Path One are sponsoring the event. To learn more, visit [www.gbod.org/scd/](http://www.gbod.org/scd/).

National Black Methodists for Church Renewal Youth Harambee will be July 16-29, Philander Smith College, Little Rock. This year's theme is "God's Grace in MySpace."

Registration is now open with space for 250 youths.

To learn more, visit the Youth Harambee Web site at [www.bmcr.org](http://www.bmcr.org).

*The deadline for the next edition of the Arkansas United Methodist is 5 p.m. June 17. 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](mailto:hhahn@arumc.org).*

# Calendar

## 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 7-11: Ozark Mission Project Junior High Camp for sixth and seventh grade at First UMC in Texarkana. Visit [ozarkmissionproject.org](http://ozarkmissionproject.org)

June 7-13: Ozark Mission Project at Lakewood UMC in North Little Rock and First UMC in Star City. Visit [ozarkmissionproject.org](http://ozarkmissionproject.org)

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

June 21-27: Ozark Mission Project at West Memphis UMC and Silver Hills UMC near Camden. Visit [ozarkmissionproject.org](http://ozarkmissionproject.org)

June 21-28: Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries Choir Tour, around the state.

June 22-25 Ozark Mission Project Junior High Camp for sixth and seventh grade in Rudy, near Alma. Visit [ozarkmissionproject.org](http://ozarkmissionproject.org)

June 22-26: Healing Place Ministries day camp for children ages 7-14 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at First UMC in Pine Bluff. (870) 535-0101.

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.

June 29-July 3: Healing Place Ministries day camp for children ages 7-14 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at First

UMC in Pine Bluff. (870) 535-0101.

## JULY

July 6-10: Healing Place Ministries day camp for children ages 7-14 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at First UMC in Pine Bluff. (870) 535-0101.

July 12-18: Ozark Mission Project at West Memphis UMC, First UMC in El Dorado and Cornerstone UMC in Jonesboro. Visit [ozarkmissionproject.org](http://ozarkmissionproject.org)

July 13-17: Healing Place Ministries day camp for children ages 7-14 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at First UMC in Pine Bluff. (870) 535-0101.

July 14-17: Youth Harambee, Philander Smith College, [www.bmcr.org](http://www.bmcr.org).

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](http://www.gbod.org).

July 24-Aug. 1: Local Pastor Licensing School — Part B, Mount Eagle Christian Center.

July 25-28: Junior High Assembly, University of the Ozarks, Clarksville.

July 26-Aug. 1: Ozark Mission Project at Cold Springs, Bear Creek Camp near Conway and First UMC in Hamburg. Visit [ozarkmissionproject.org](http://ozarkmissionproject.org)

July 28-Aug. 1: Senior High Assembly, University of the Ozarks, Clarksville.

July 29-Aug. 2: The School of Congregational Development, Chicago.

## SEPTEMBER

Sept. 21: Luncheon for retired clergy, spouses and surviving spouses at the Governor's Mansion.

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## Young United Methodist clergy launch 40-day prayer campaign

United Methodist News Service

The United Methodist Young Clergy Network is leading a 40-day prayer campaign for renewal, hope and clarity of call for the church.

In the campaign, which began May 18 on the organization's revamped Web site, young United Methodist leaders from more than 20 annual conferences are asking God to guide them through the darkness of their times and to give them a vision for ministry and mission that brings honor to Jesus Christ. The network also is seeking closer union with God so that the witness of United Methodism will be strengthened.

"Together, we will pray for the birth of new faith communities, the calling and development of new leaders within the denomination, the reduction of global disease and our ministry with the poor," said Jennifer Smith, a certified candidate for ministry in the Alaska and Pacific-Northwest Conference.

Participants in the young clergy community are encouraging all people to join them in prayer by visiting [www.umcyoungclergy.com](http://www.umcyoungclergy.com), clicking "Prayer," and subscribing to the RSS feed.

The revamping of the Web site and the prayer campaign grew out of a meeting sponsored by the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry



Image courtesy of United Methodist News Service

that pulled together 10 young leaders from around the country. The network's purpose is to support young clergy and candidates through online and physical community.

"It's powerful to see an image of what you feel called to," Smith said. "That's one reason we have images of young clergy in ministry on the home page. Many young leaders have shared stories of burnout and isolation. We hope that talking in the forums and reading best practices will inspire young candidates and clergy to strengthen their voice at the local and conference level. And none of this happens without prayer."

Meg Lassiat, the board's director of student ministries, vocation and enlistment, said: "Over the next 40 days, we invite anyone to join young adults in praying for the church, its renewal and annual conferences happening around the connection."

# The Confessing Movement of Arkansas

## FACTS REGARDING THE WORLDWIDE NATURE OF PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

**Amendment XIII Provides:** "The Regional Conferences shall have the following powers and duties:

- ... To establish regional conferences boards... and elect administration
- ... To determine boundaries of the annual conferences
- ... To make rules... in their boundaries including changes to the Discipline as conditions may require
- ... To appoint a judicial court to determine legal questions in that region
- ... To appoint committee on appeal for that region."

**Amendment X provides:** "The General Conference shall have authority to change the number and boundaries of regions" (by simple majority vote of General Conference we can have more than one region in the U.S. with all the powers provided by XIII above.)

**Amendment XXVI provides:** "The bishops of each jurisdiction and regional conference shall constitute a College of Bishops" (The U.S. shall have a college of bishops.)

### There Are No Provisions In Any Of These Amendments:

- To limit the establishment of additional bureaucracy in the regions
- To restrict or limit regional conference changes to Social Principles
- To apply all Book of Discipline provisions uniformly to all regions
- To limit 2012 study committee recommendations made to General Conference

### In The Amendments Being Offered:

- The plan of reorganization is not clearly defined.
- The cost to operate the new structure is sure to increase.
- The regional conferences are not defined.
- There is no restriction that the Social Principles will be controlled by General Conference.
- Differences in churches for various areas will actually increase.
- There are no assurances whatever as to what the end results will be on the church.
- The study committee answers to questions will come **after** the constitution is changed.
- There are no assurances about any future changes. Assurances at this point are personal opinions.

**Comment On Social Principles:** Assurances are now being offered that if these amendments are approved the Social Principles would be under the authority of the General Conference. The Social Principles can presently be changed by the regions of the church outside the U.S.A. Even if the study group recommended restricting power for the Social Principles to the General Conference a motion from the floor of General Conference and a simple majority vote could override that recommendation, either in 2012 or at any time thereafter. How would this play out if the amendments are passed now and the U.S. becomes a region or regions?

**Comment On Separate Judiciary For Each Region:** Assurance has also been given that there would not be separate Judicial Councils in each region. This is a play on words. Please see details of Amendment XIII above and **Par 547.3** which **mandates a judicial court** for any region that adapts and edits the **Discipline**. Under the proposed amendments, all regions would be authorized to change parts of the **Discipline**.

**Further considerations:** Twenty three of the thirty two proposed Amendments raise grave concerns. Amendments X, XIII, and XXVI are given special attention in this space. A **NO** is recommended for the following amendments: III, IV, V, VII, XI, XII, XIV, XVI, XVIII, XX, XXI, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, and XXVII until there is a better understanding of what all this means.

*Paid for by a Coalition of Concerned United Methodist Lay and Clergy Members*

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## The Confessing Movement Of Arkansas

Invites you to BREAKFAST during Annual Conference

**Monday, June 15, 2009 at 6:45 A.M.**

Commerce Ballroom, Hammons Convention Center

### Rev. Dr. James V. Heidinger II, Guest Speaker

Dr. Heidinger is the president and publisher of Good News, an evangelical renewal ministry within the United Methodist Church. He has been CEO of the ministry for 27 years.

Dr. Heidinger earned his Doctor of Ministry at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. He is the author of several books including *Guarding the Gospel: Biblical Faith and the Future of United Methodism*.

Dr. Heidinger will be addressing the state of the church and the proposed constitutional amendments.



### Options for registering for the breakfast:

1. Use the registration form in the letter mailed to all lay and clergy delegates.
2. Register online at [www.arumc.org/annualconference](http://www.arumc.org/annualconference).
3. Email Carolyn Elias at [carolyneli@msn.com](mailto:carolyneli@msn.com). **Deadline: June 9**
4. Call Carolyn Elias at 501.525.2944. **Deadline: June 9**
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From left, Samuel and R. Scott Gallimore show the almost 20 pounds of aluminum tabs Jonesboro First UMC donated to the Ronald McDonald House in Little Rock.

Photo courtesy of First United Methodist Church in Jonesboro

## People of Faith



Gail Cole Baldwin, at left, and David Duane Hoffman, at right, were among 57 men and women who graduated on May 16 from Memphis Theological Seminary. Both Baldwin and Hoffman earned masters of divinity degrees. Baldwin serves as senior pastor of Bismark United Methodist Church, and Hoffman is senior pastor of Keo UMC. Memphis Theological Seminary is an ecumenical mission of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and is approved by the University Senate of the United Methodist Church.

Photos courtesy of Memphis Theological Seminary

## Church helps environment keeping tabs for LR charity

By R. Scott Gallimore

First United Methodist Church in Jonesboro didn't clown around when it decided to "go green." Not only does the congregation reduce, reuse and recycle; it's also giving a boost to Little Rock's Ronald McDonald House.

This is an example of one church's efforts to have a positive impact on the environment.

I formed the church's "Green Team" simply by asking like-minded folks to brainstorm.

The first thing we discovered is that we were eating our meal at the inaugural meeting of our "Green First" initiative on Styrofoam plates.

The church has since switched to paper products and rarely uses Styrofoam at all. Yes, the paper coffee cups are a little more expensive. But the church has gotten a good response after encouraging parishioners to bring their own personal coffee mugs from home. Worshippers are especially fond of travel mugs that display the church logo. It's conservation with style.

Kathy Johnson, the church's administrative secretary, had always recycled paper products within the office. When we got the word out to our church that First UMC is focusing on "Green First," Sunday school classes, ushers and children's volunteers started bringing those discarded papers and bulletins to the office rather than filling the trash cans.

Johnson has since recruited rotating volunteers to take the huge amounts of recyclable paper to the local recycling center.

Christy Brannon, the church's communications secretary, has offered us suggestions for reducing the size of our Sunday bulletins and has encouraged many church members to receive their weekly newsletter electronically rather than by bulk mail.

We have a fellowship meal prior to our midweek programs every Wednesday evening with 100 to 150 people. After switching from Styrofoam to paper prod-

ucts, we still recognized the accumulation of a lot of waste.

Ellen Pollock, our Christian activity director, took the initiative to return us to a time honored volunteer responsibility — washing dishes. At this time, we're using washable drink tumblers. The congregation's next step is to move to real plates.

We also noticed plastic bottles and aluminum cans were being thrown away like any other trash item. Now, the church has receptacles dedicated to recycling cans and bottles that people use.

An added incentive was offered by partnering with a ministry already in place for the Ronald McDonald House near Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock.

The Ronald McDonald House provides housing for parents and family of long-term patients at Children's Hospital. The charity collects aluminum can tabs as a means of offsetting their costs for years.

We purchased the little cardboard Tab Houses to distribute to participating individuals and families to collect the tabs for the nonprofit groups. Intentionally collecting those tabs has resulted in more church member aluminum-can recycling than ever before.

First UMC in Jonesboro recently gave almost 20 pounds of can tabs to the Ronald McDonald House.

"Green First" is working. And yes, we still have a long way to go. Our buildings are not as energy efficient as we would like. The errant sleeve of Styrofoam cups still makes it inside our doors from time to time. People still leave lights on, computers running and use far more paper towels than necessary for the job.

But overall we, as a church, have started thinking "Green First". Together, we can make a difference in being the stewards God desires for this place we call Earth.

R. Scott Gallimore is the executive pastor of First UMC in Jonesboro. He can be reached at [sgallimore@fumc-jonesboro.org](mailto:sgallimore@fumc-jonesboro.org).

**Bert Kell** of Rogers has been elected to the board of directors of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, which creates and administers permanent charitable endowment funds to strengthen and expand United Methodist ministry in the Arkansas Conference.

"Bert is a lifelong Methodist with many years of trust and investment experience. He's an ideal addition to our board," said Jim Argue, Jr., the foundation's president and chief executive officer. "I admire Bert's dedication to his community and hometown church, Central United Methodist in Rogers, and I'm thrilled he was willing to also share his talents with the Foundation."

Kell is senior vice president and trust administrator at Arvest Bank, Rogers, where he is responsible for administering trust services. Before he joined Arvest Bank in 1999, Kell practiced law in Little Rock for eight years with an emphasis on estate planning and business transactions.

**Mount Olivet UMC in Rison** had four members who recently graduated from University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock and another member who graduated from Southeast Arkansas College in Pine Bluff.

From UAMS, Mickie Castleberry and Diane Boyd received a master of nursing degrees. Amanda Lem received a bachelor of nursing degree. Brooke Williams received a master of speech pathology degree.

Jamie Coats received three associate degrees — an associate of radiology tech., associate of arts and associate of science from SEARK in Pine Bluff. He plans to attend UAMS in the fall.

**Mount Olivet UMC** in Rison also



Vida Williams, a member of the Arkansas Conference, earned her master of divinity degree on May 15 from St. Paul School of Theology, a United Methodist seminary in Kansas City, Mo. Williams received the Interpretation Magazine Award for academic excellence.

Photos courtesy of St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Mo.

awarded six scholarships to 2009 graduates from Woodlawn High School in Cleveland County.

This year's recipients were: Rachel Davis, Jacob Cole, Ashley Fleetwood, Allison McCoskey, Brooke Herrington and Brittany Richardson.

The church's Hurshell Qualls Memorial Scholarship was established in the year 2000 in memory of Qualls, who was an education teacher for 42 years and a member of Mount Olivet UMC. The scholarships are funded by a barbecue supper in October of each year. To date, the church has awarded 16 scholarships to Woodlawn students. Each scholarship is worth \$1,000.



**Above:** Muriel Aston, an ASU sophomore from Marshall, paints a woman's house in Canton, Ohio. The service project came at the end of the Wesley Foundation's fifth annual Tour de Faith bicycle trip.

**At right:** Christopher Hannah, a senior from Jonesboro; Jacob Hendrix, a junior from Jonesboro; and James Kjørlaug, Junior from Paragould take a pause on their bicycle trip through Ohio Amish country.

Photos by Lauren Wiseman, ASU senior



## Students go on two-wheeled mission trip

By Richard Carvell

It was a long, hard journey by bicycle up and down the hills of Ohio, tracing a part of the route of the 19th century Underground Railroad through that state.

In mid-May, 17 students and adults from the Wesley Foundation at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro made the trip, following the path that allowed slaves to escape to freedom in northern states or in Canada.

The 140-mile trek from Milford (near Cincinnati) to Bowling Green, Ohio, was the fifth Tour de Faith bicycle mission trip for the Wesley students. The Wesley Foundation is a campus ministry of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas.

The annual bicycle trip comes right after spring semester finals at ASU. Ten percent of the trip fee paid by each participant goes to a charity. This year, the Wesley Foundation team gave the funds to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis.

"It's a good way to unwind and to give students a different perspective away from the normal comforts of home," Wesley director Eric Van Meter said.

The new perspective, Van Meter said, comes from the "different kinds of people we encounter" and the "different land- and cityscapes."

The tour route took the travelers through Amish territory in Holmes County, Ohio.

"They are in a place that's different from what they're used to," Van Meter said. "[The students] were a little skittish

at first, but they quickly settled in."

The Wesley team included support personnel who handled the logistics of the trip as well as bicyclists.

While the travelers relished the bucolic scenery of Ohio's Amish country, many said it was the project at the trip's end that proved most satisfying.

The students worked with Hammer and Nails, an ecumenical Christian outreach nonprofit group based in Canton, Ohio, to paint the house of a woman who simply went by "Mrs. Patricia."

Lauren Wiseman, an ASU senior from Searcy and a member of the biker support crew, said Mrs. Patricia was "so grateful and excited" about the students painting her house.

The house was not in a particularly good neighborhood. Students said they were told that a drug house stood across the street from Mrs. Patricia's home.

Mrs. Patricia worked beside Wiseman, as she painted the house's front porch. The 56-year-old woman, who suffers from arthritis, was taking care of her 4-year-old granddaughter on that day. Wiseman said she was singing old hymns the whole time.

"She had a beautiful voice," Wiseman said.

For Corey Shannon, another member of the support crew, it was family reunion time. Shannon, a junior social-work major at ASU, lived in Ohio for a few years, so his family in the Buckeye State met the Wesley group in Cleveland. Shannon hadn't seen these members of

his family in about two years.

What impressed Shannon most about the trip is how everyone from Wesley came together to work as a group. It was his third year to serve on the trip's support crew.

The crew, which consisted of four Wesley students and a mother, managed the equipment for the trip. Behind the church van from St. Paul United Methodist Church in Jonesboro, the crew had a trailer full of spare parts, bicycle pumps, extra tires and rims.

But the most important thing the crew did each day was drive ahead of the bicyclists and prepare the noon meal. The menu included sandwiches, sandwiches and more sandwiches.

The support personnel also had plenty of sports drinks to replenish the liquids that the cyclists lost while riding.

The crew also acted as the biggest cheerleaders for the Tour de Faith.

Each morning after breakfast, the teammates would hoot and holler for the cyclists as they set off each day. The crew would then pack up and begin the drive to the next destination. When they passed their teammates along the road, the crew would again shout out encouragement.

In the evening, the crew stopped at the end point for the day and left "chalk" messages on the roadway. They wrote phrases like, "Keep peddling" or "Lunch is just around the corner" or "Great job!"

Wiseman said the need for a support crew gives everyone something to do. "This is an athletes' trip, but there's

room for everyone," she said. "The bikers need us. So this incorporates many more people."

The prize for the most persistence went to Muriel Aston, a sophomore graphic-design major at ASU.

The Marshall native rode in the Tour de Faith for the first time. After training "a little bit," she usually led the group of cyclists into each destination at the end of each day of the trip.

Amber Horton, a sophomore public relations major from North Little Rock, praised Aston.

"She did an excellent job each day, setting a fast pace and inspiring others," Horton said.

Van Meter added: "Aston is athletic, tall and stubborn."

Aston said she thought she and the other riders were doing well on the last day as they crouched over the handlebars of their bicycles, pushing strongly against the pedals as they strained up a steep hill.

But then up ahead the college-age cyclists spotted a figure of a "little old lady," dressed in a long Amish dress, sitting straight up on her own bicycle and pedaling up the hill with seemingly little or no effort at all.

Aston said: "She wasn't even breaking a sweat."

Richard Carvell is the chairman of the Arkansas Conference's Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministries. He can be reached at [rcarvell@astate.edu](mailto:rcarvell@astate.edu).

# Pastors protest gun violence

United Methodist News Service

David Tatgenhorst and James McIntire have too much in common. They have seen too many lives shattered by handgun violence.

In protest, the two United Methodist pastors joined 10 other religious leaders and blocked the entrance to Colosimo's Gun Center in January. They were arrested for trespassing and disorderly conduct, and put on trial.

Then their cries of justice were heard.

As the defendants took the stand, story after story of lives destroyed by handguns came out, Tatgenhorst said. "The bigger issue of justice took hold. It was miraculous."

All 12 were acquitted May 27.

At one point, it started to feel more like the gun retailer was on trial as the activists, many of them clergy, began to tell their stories, Tatgenhorst said.

McIntire testified about being in a hospital room with parents who had just lost their second son in five months to gun violence. As the dazed family was leaving they met a young Amish couple

coming in. It was the day after a gunman opened fire in an Amish school in Lancaster, Pa., killing five little girls. Three more children were in intensive care.

"One of the women from Kenny's family looked through her own tear-filled eyes and with compassion asked, 'Oh, how are your girls?'"

It was in that moment that McIntire said he felt God calling him to do something to stop the epidemic of violence.

Tatgenhorst believes the simple act of blocking entrances to the store probably saved someone's life that day. "We may have turned some straw purchaser away," he said. Straw purchasers are people paid to buy handguns by persons who cannot legally purchase the guns themselves.

More than 100 people packed Arch Street United Methodist Church at 8 a.m. on the morning of the trial in support of the 12 protesters. Among them were United Methodist Bishop Peggy A. Johnson, episcopal leader of Philadelphia, and 15 other United Methodist pastors.

## 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.

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 U. Washington at (479) 782-0612.

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.

Ongoing: "This Olde 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.

Mount Eagle Christian Center, 935 Beal Road in Clinton, is requesting chainsaw and cleanup crews. E-mail Lu Harding at lu@mounteagle.org or call her at (501) 753-4580.

### Crime, continued from page 1

St. Paul UMC also has collected money to cover the travel expenses of Mueller's family members who came in from out of state. In addition, the church will try to help others who are hospitalized with a blood drive from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 20.

God was present even in this brutal act, said Beth Waldrup, St. Paul's senior pastor, who got a catch in her voice as she recounted what happened to her friend and co-worker.

"Jo shouldn't be here with us," Waldrup said. "The surgeon said there were three wounds that should have killed her. You can see God at work in her being here, and you can see God at work in the way this church has come together."

### Heroic effort

Mueller was alone in the office, printing Sunday bulletins, at around 10:30 a.m. May 22 when a man came in asking for gas money, Waldrup said.

Mueller told the man the church did not provide that service. He then asked to use the church bathroom, and she pointed the way to the men's room. He went into the bathroom for a moment, came out and attacked Mueller from behind. After stabbing Mueller, the man grabbed her purse and bolted out the door, Waldrup said.

Despite her injuries, Mueller was able to drag herself to the phone and call 911.

Just as emergency workers were loading Mueller into an ambulance, an altar guild member drove by the church and started calling church leaders including Waldrup, who is off on Fridays. Waldrup and church members joined Mueller's family at the hospital to wait and pray.

"We're all still kind of in shock," Waldrup said. "But she told me, 'Beth, it's going to be OK. I have faith.'"



St. Paul United Methodist Church in Jonesboro, which has about 300 members, has been shaken by the stabbing of its secretary Jo Mueller.

Photos courtesy of the Northeast District office

According to the *Jonesboro Sun*, police arrested a suspect in the crime the afternoon of May 22. Roy "Ray" Lee Anthony, 47, of Forrest City, Ark., is accused of first-degree battery, aggravated robbery and fraudulent use of a credit card, the newspaper reported. He also is a suspect in several other robberies in Jonesboro.

### The church responds

As the police tracked down the suspect, St. Paul's congregation and other area United Methodists mobilized to show support for the Muellers and provide them with food.

Church member Linda Graham helped organize the prayer service for the Muellers that night at the church. Graham is a school psychologist and member of Craighead County's crisis

response team.

For her, the assault brought back memories of another act of violence. Graham was among the crisis counselors on the scene after two students fatally shot four students and a teacher at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro in 1998.

"Both acts were violations," she said. "A school and a church are both supposed to be safe. The prayer vigil was a really good thing because you have to reclaim your turf."

David Sutton, who also helped organize the vigil, said as he and others prepared for the service at St. Paul, some wanted to lock up the church doors.

"We told them to start unlocking doors," he said. "We decided we don't want to have a sense of fear when we

come to church. We don't want the church to just have a sanctuary but to be a sanctuary."

Graham said she was particularly touched when those gathered sang the hymn "I am Standing on Hallowed Ground."

Also present at the service were some ASU students and staff, who like Dena Mueller are involved in the university's Wesley Foundation. Dena Mueller had just returned from the foundation's annual Tour de Faith, a bicycle mission trip on which she served as a support crew member.

Eric Van Meter, the director of the foundation, said foundation participants giving been checking in with Dena Mueller on Facebook and by phone to make sure she knows she is not alone.

"They know how to take of each other," Van Meter said. "It's not surprising, but it's nice to see."

Sutton, youth minister at Grace UMC in Conway, has long known the Muellers. His father Michael formerly pastored St. Paul's and his wife Bonnie also has served as the church's associate pastor and Dena Mueller's youth minister.

"Jo is a very strong woman and very inspirational in her love for her family and her dedication to the church," Sutton said. "To have the fortitude to know what she needed to do [even after the attack] is just amazing to me."

Waldrup said the church is currently re-examining its safety procedures. She wants St. Paul to continue to be a sanctuary and not become a fortress. She also urges other churches to take precautions.

"You think it can't happen to you, but it can," she said.

St. Paul United Methodist Church, 2201 Culberhouse St., Jonesboro, will have a blood drive from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 20.



Carolee Cook, director of recreational therapy at Methodist Behavioral Hospital, at right, offers one of the hospital's clients some tips on her basketball game. Cook hopes to add to the hospital's recreational equipment with funds raised at the third annual Walk for Children and Families at the Big Dam Bridge.

Photo by Heather Hahn

## August walk will benefit patients at Methodist Behavioral Hospital

By Heather Hahn

Jennifer Lang envisions a time when the Methodist Behavioral Hospital in Maumelle will offer more ways to get its young patients outside and better engaged.

The hospital's administrator sees a rope course for team building, a walking path for contemplation and outdoor benches for journal writing.

"We want an outdoor therapeutic play area for the children here," Lang said. "It will focus on confidence building, working well with others and communication because these are our most intense kids who need one-on-one help."

She hopes the Methodist Family Health's third annual "Walk for Children and Families" on Aug. 7 will help the hospital achieve its goal.

Methodist Family Health is a United Methodist nonprofit that offers a continuum of behavioral services for children and families across the state. Each year, it uses the summer walk along the Big Dam as a fund-raiser for one of its initiatives. This year's walk will help provide recreational equipment for its Maumelle facility.

The 60-bed hospital treats children and adolescents age 3 to 18 with psychiatric or severe emotional problems.

Sometimes patients need treatment for mental-health issues like depression or early-onset schizophrenia. Sometimes they are dealing with a family crisis such as the death of a parent. Many are foster children referred by the state's Department of Human Services who are still struggling with the repercussions of neglect and abuse.

While in the hospital's residential program, the young patients attend school on-site with certified special education teachers.

Carolee Cook, the hospital's director of recreational therapy, handles the leisure activities for the hospital ranging from arts and crafts to pet therapy to physical exercise.

She helps patients connect with various community groups such as the

Boys and Girls Club or the YMCA.

"Especially the older kids who were involved in drugs or hyper-sexuality or something like that, you give them an alternative thing to do in their spare time," she said. "A lot of kids don't know what to do or what's out there, so we introduce them to new things."

The hospital already has a playground with a slide and swings, a basketball court and scenic grove of trees on its campus.

Cook said a rope course requires teens to work together and will help them build trust. She's also looking for ways to get more kids outside and exercising.

Physical activity can help kids open up about their troubles, Lang said. She said the hospital's therapists often now play basketball and go for a walk with a patient instead doing a regular therapy session in an office.

"That's better than trying to get [your story] out of you when it might be your 18<sup>th</sup> therapist that you've seen in five years," she said.

"For kids who have been in the foster-care system for a while and had multiple placements, it's one of our biggest struggles. They've rehashed it all many times. They are really looking for someone who will be caring but they're really skeptical. One of our goals at Methodist is to show we're still going to be there for you."

Cook finds the walk a particularly apt fund-raiser for the hospital.

"In today's society we have such a problem with obesity," she said. "I think it's neat to have a walk to donate to physical activities here."

Methodist Family Health will sponsor its third annual "Walk for Children and Families" on Aug. 7, starting on the North Little Rock side of the Big Dam Bridge. Registration will be at 6 p.m. and the walk at 7 p.m. Registration costs \$20 for individuals and virtual walkers, and \$50 for families. Registration forms are available at [www.methodistfamily.org](http://www.methodistfamily.org).

## Youth choir tour planned

Special to the Arkansas United Methodist United Methodist youth will sing at churches across the state at the end of June.

The choir, sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries, is comprised of 50 youth ranging in age from those entering 10<sup>th</sup> grade to recently graduated high school seniors.

No church has more than seven participants in the choir.

Backing the choir will be a youth led band featuring many different instruments including acoustic and electric guitars, bass, piano/keyboard and a variety of drums.

The performances will include a wide range of music including contemporary praise and worship, folk, pop and rock.

The choir has been practicing since March under vocal director Bill Skaggs, youth minister at Hot Springs First United Methodist Church.

The theme for this year's tour is "Mirrors," taken from Corinthians II 3:17-18: "Now, the Lord is the

Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."

The group's performance schedule is as follows:

■ June 22 — 7 p.m. at Hot Springs First United Methodist Church.

■ June 23 — 7 p.m. at Sequoyah United Methodist Church in Fayetteville

■ June 24 — 7 p.m. Batesville First United Methodist Church

■ June 25 — 7 p.m. West Helena United Methodist Church

■ June 27 — 7 p.m. Lakeside United Methodist Church in Lake Village

■ June 28 — 6 p.m. at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church in Little Rock.

To learn more, e-mail Matt Davis, an adult co-chairman of the tour, at [matthewmorgandavis@yahoo.com](mailto:matthewmorgandavis@yahoo.com).

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## Worship Fair 2009

### August 7-8

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**CLINICIANS**

**Michael Bedford**—Organist/Choirmaster at St. John's Episcopal Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma  
**James Ritchie**—Ritchie Faith Span Ministries, Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference

**SCHEDULE:**

**Friday, August 7**  
6:00 p.m.—Registration  
7:00 p.m.—Organ Concert by Michael Bedford (free and open to the public; a freewill offering will be taken)

**RECEPTION TO FOLLOW**

**Saturday, August 8**  
8:30 a.m.—Registration  
9:00 a.m.—Opening Worship  
9:45 a.m.—Break  
10:00-11:30 a.m.—Class Session I  
Bedford—Reading Session  
Ritchie—"Always in Rehearsal"

Children's Activities for 3rd-6th grades—Drums, storytelling, Handchimes  
11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—Business meeting, lunch and browsing  
12:30-2:45 p.m.—Class Session II  
Bedford—Demo with children  
Ritchie—"A Little Child Shall Lead Them"  
2:00-2:45 p.m.—Closing worship with children  
2:45 p.m.—Browsing (exhibits close at 3:30 p.m.)

Exhibitors include **Cokesbury Bookstore** and **Choristers Guild**.

REGISTRATION — "Children: Their Faith, Our Future" (Worship Fair 2009)

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 \$60 after July 20

Fees for Non-members:  
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 \$5 per child for just the Bedford session

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[www.arkansasfumwa.org](http://www.arkansasfumwa.org)

# Board urges conferences to raise funds for pensions

United Methodist News Service

The news that the United Methodist conferences in the U.S. would not receive their yearly allocation of "Cokesbury" checks has been a wakeup call this summer.

A financial shortfall at the United Methodist Publishing House meant that 62 annual conferences in the United States would not be able to redistribute their allocation from a total of \$1 million for retired clergy and surviving spouses in the church's central conferences, especially in Africa. The amount of the Cokesbury checks is based on the number of clergy in each conference.

The office of central conference pensions at the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits encouraged each annual conference to consider a gift or matching grant from their coffers that is the equivalent of last year's Cokesbury gift for the initiative.

"A number of annual conferences will be taking special offerings," said Dan O'Neill, managing director of central conference pensions, the denomination's long-term effort to help pastors and church lay workers in annual conferences outside the United States retire with dignity, hope and an adequate income. Many pastors have given from 20 to 50 years of service to the church.

Two U.S. annual conferences — Red Bird Missionary and North Central New York — have answered the challenge.

"We already have Red Bird's check," O'Neill said.

Yearly, the 1,472-member conference has received a little more than \$100 as a Cokesbury check and forwarded it to the Central Conference Pension Initiative. Judith Fowler, treasurer of the Red Bird conference, said the regional group sent \$123 to the initiative "because we felt the need to make sure that all of the pastors in the central conferences were taken care of."

Annual conferences along with the entire United Methodist Church face financial shortfalls due to health care costs and the economic distress.

Red Bird is also facing a \$200,000 deficit for next year but "felt that our pastors should be taken care of in their retirement," Fowler said.

The North Central New York con-



Neil Alexander, United Methodist president and publisher.

Photo by United Methodist News Service

ference, which ended May 30, voted to receive an impromptu offering for the Central Conference Pensions Fund. Bishop Marcus Matthews encouraged all to "dig deep," and \$5,302.07 was collected, almost three-fourths of what would have been given in the Cokesbury check.

The participation of annual conferences in returning their United Methodist Publishing House pension contributions has grown significantly in both numbers participating and in enthusiasm over the years, said Neil Alexander, president and publisher.

"The actions by some conferences this year to give sacrificially in order to continue that practice in a time of unprecedented world-wide economic hardship demonstrates that the commitment to central conference pastors and church workers runs deep and is abiding. This outpouring of love and support is a tremendous witness of fellowship and hope for our church's future around the world," he said.

The 2000 General Conference, the top legislative body of the denomination, asked the pension board to find ways to fund pensions for pastors serving in 67 annual conferences in Africa, Eastern Europe and the Philippines. These pastors often retire after more than 40 years of service without resources to meet their daily needs.

The 2004 General Conference reaffirmed a pension support plan for the central conferences and authorized an effort to raise money to support a pension fund initiative for those pastors and surviving spouses.

## News Digest

### Bad economy muzzles proposed new hymnal

NASHVILLE, Tenn. Work has been halted on a proposed new United Methodist Hymnal, making it the latest victim of the economic crisis.

"The resources required to sustain a dedicated staff and pay for the planned activities are simply not available at this time," said Bishop Ernest S. Lyght, chair of the hymnal revision committee.

The United Methodist Publishing House would have to invest at least \$2 million to develop a new hymnal and funding is not available from ongoing operations or from reserves, said Neil Alexander, president and publisher.

The 2008 United Methodist General Conference approved "with joyful excitement" creation of a committee to bring a proposed hymnal to the 2012 session of the denomination's top legislative body.

The publishing house receives no general church-apportioned funds. The difficult global economic climate has affected the publishing house, causing a shortfall of 12 percent in this fiscal year and a reduction in the value of investment reserves of 25 percent.

The United Methodist Hymnal was published in 1989.

### Seminary and university benefactor Prothro dies

DALLAS — Elizabeth Perkins Prothro, a benefactor of Southern Methodist University and the Perkins School of Theology, died May 23.

The late Joe J. and Lois Perkins, her parents, endowed the school of theology named in their honor in the 1940s and were founding contributors to the university in 1913.

In 2007, Prothro provided \$6 million to help launch a building program for Perkins. Prothro was a member of the university's 1939 class and a trustee from 1972-87. Among her many honors are the 1978 SMU Distinguished Alumni Award and an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree in 1996.

### Dismissed official sues ecumenical agency

NEW YORK — A former staff executive with the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns has filed suit against the agency and Stephen Sidorak Jr., its chief executive.

W. Douglas Mills said he was wrongfully terminated from his position as associate general secretary for dialogue and interfaith relations and is seeking compensation and damages. The

lawsuit was filed by his attorney, Obayomi Awoyinfa, on May 26 in the Supreme Court of the State of New York.

The point of the complaint, Mills told United Methodist News Service, is who has authority over the hiring and firing of elected staff.

"The general secretary (Sidorak) does not understand our polity," he said. "The point is the (commission's) board of directors, who are in fact responsible to General Conference, are the persons who elect certain staff and can terminate certain staff."

The lawsuit is asking for \$400,000 in compensation of wages and benefits, another \$500,000 for "torturous interference" by Sidorak with Mills' employment, damages for psychological trauma, and emotional distress and reimbursement of reasonable attorneys' fees and costs.

Attempts to reach Sidorak — who was attending an executive staff meeting in Connecticut — for reaction were unsuccessful.

On March 9, both Mills and Wendy Whiteside, another executive, were dismissed by Sidorak from their positions with the agency. Mills had worked for the agency since June 1, 2005. Sidorak issued a brief statement that they were "no longer with the agency" but expressed appreciation for their work.

Sidorak was first elected to lead the commission on May 14, 2008, and began work on July 1.

During the commission's meeting September 2008, the two executives, along with Sidorak, had been elected by its board of directors for a four-year term, an action indicated by Paragraph 713 of the United Methodist Book of Discipline, the denomination's book of law.

### Church leaders applaud child-marriage legislation

Girls younger than 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their 20s.

Yet every day girls as young as 9 and 10 become child brides in Africa, Asia and parts of the Arab region. Their malnourished, young bodies are not developed enough for childbirth.

That is why The United Methodist Church's social justice agency is applauding legislation recently introduced in both chambers of Congress to prevent child marriage in developing countries.

If approved, foreign assistance will support projects focusing on keeping girls in school, initiatives that foster leadership opportunities and efforts to reduce the spread of AIDS.

"Many girls marry older men who are often infected with AIDS," said Linda Bales, executive with the United Methodist Board of Church and Society. "This act of the House Foreign Affairs Committee is the right one, and we urge the U.S. House of Representatives to approve this authorization bill."

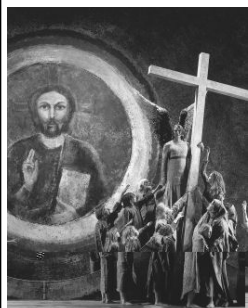
— United Methodist News Service

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# It Happened



The youth group of Highland Valley UMC in late April volunteered during Work Week at Camp Aldersgate, helping the United Methodist site to prepare for its summer camps. Pictured are Jordan Washington, at left, and Hunter Addison.

Photo courtesy of Camp Aldersgate



Fort Smith First UMC's mission team of 32 spent March 29 - April 4 in Rio Bravo, Mexico, helping to build a United Methodist church and to offer two days of medical clinics. The construction team was able to complete the foundation of both the narthex and the Sunday School rooms of the church. The medical team led clinics on site at Manos Juantas and remotely in neighboring towns and rural communities treating 600 or more patients.

Photo courtesy of First United Methodist Church in Fort Smith



Hermitage UMC in Warren dedicated its new activity building on May 3. Joining in the ribbon-cutting ceremony, from left, were Dennis Spence, Southeast District superintendent; his wife Denise Spence, Mona Reep; her husband Marty Reep, Heritage's senior pastor; and Matt Mosler, TV personality and evangelist.

Photo courtesy of Hermitage United Methodist Church



Rock Springs UMC in the Rock Springs community (near Monticello) celebrated its 150th anniversary on May 17. The church began with a Sunday School in 1858 that met in people's homes. The group moved into its first log church building in 1859. The Drew County congregation has worshipped in its current building, pictured at left, since 2002. It is the church's fifth building erected on roughly on the same site as its first structure.

Photo courtesy of Rock Springs United Methodist Church



Timothy UMC in Camden recently hosted the Southwest District United Methodist Women Mission Study. Roy Smith, the conference's director of ministries, led a study titled "I Believe in Jesus."

Photo courtesy of Timothy United Methodist Church

**St. James UMC** in Little Rock received pledges of more than \$3.2 million on May 10 as part of its capital campaign, "Follow the Path."

With more than 300 families responding, the church is well on its way to finishing what was begun just three years ago. St. James UMC raised a record \$7 million in 2006 to expand its facilities and ministries. The church has since built a new Christian life center and worship center that includes a welcome center, Mission Café, offices and classrooms. Ministries have been expanded to include Upward Basketball and new contemporary worship opportunities.

To learn more, visit [www.stjames-umc.org](http://www.stjames-umc.org) or call the church at (501) 217-6700.

**Thirteen members of the clergy** from across the Arkansas Conference gathered May 4-6 at Mount Eagle Christian Center. The group began by playing golf at the Mountain Ranch course in Fairfield Bay. The devotional on Monday night was "Get a Grip," led by David Baker, relating people's grip on the golf club with what God might

say to His followers.

The group decided to make a contribution of about \$130 to Nothing but Nets, the United Methodist Church's anti-malaria initiative. Next year's clergy gathering is tentatively scheduled for May 3-5, 2010.

**Philander Smith College**, United Methodist historically black college in Little Rock, recently received \$225,000 to support student aid.

The college received an \$100,000 award from an anonymous donor to support the Renaissance 100 program, which will help students who have high scholastic potential but require financial assistance to complete their education.

The award comes on the heels of a \$75,000 gift from Harold Gwatney of Memphis, Tenn., a member of the Philander Smith board of trustees, to also benefit the scholarship program.

Additionally, the college announced that alumni Erma and Bennie Williams of Germantown, Tenn., have made a \$50,000 gift to the college to provide student scholarships, financial aid and other student needs.

## Olive Wood Carvings from the Holy Land

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George Khamou | 501.612-7880

# Church agencies are responding to crisis in Pakistan



Desperate for bedding, people struggle over mattresses at a camp for internally displaced people in northern Pakistan.

United Methodist News Service photo courtesy of Church World Service

## United Methodist News Service

Marvin Parvez is afraid that what has become one of the largest displacements of people in Pakistani history could grow into an even larger crisis.

Parvez, a Methodist from Pakistan who is the director of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Program of Church World Service, believes the number of displaced persons from the Swat Valley in the Northwest Frontier Province could double if the fighting between the Taliban and Pakistani military spreads into new districts.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that 1.5 million people have been displaced in northwest Pakistan recently, in addition to 500,000 who had fled the area since 2008.

Visiting Church World Service headquarters in New York, Parvez appealed for support as the agency tries to assist 1,000 of the displaced families. "Our concern continues to be the welfare of people, their security and the whole displacement crisis," he told United Methodist News Service in a May 20 interview.

The United Methodist Committee

on Relief has allocated \$110,000 to Church World Service and Muslim Aid, another partner in the region, for their work with the displaced.

The relief agency also is in contact with the Church of Pakistan about needs for assistance. Muslim Aid is working in a different area than Church World Service, according to UMCOR, and is assisting displaced people by providing tents, mattresses and other necessities.

Parvez, who already had been contacted by several individual United Methodist congregations, is hoping the denomination will respond to the humanitarian crisis in Pakistan, as well as suffering in other parts of South Asia.

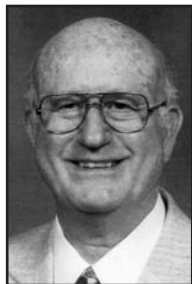
"Even in these very difficult global economic times, I think people are digging deeper into their pockets," he said.

The United Methodist relief agency is seeking donations for the initial efforts in what will be a long-term relief and recovery effort in Pakistan. Checks can be marked for "UMCOR Advance #982450, Pakistan" and placed in church offering plates or sent to UMCOR, P.O. Box 9068, New York, N.Y. 10087-9068.

## Deaths

**Little Rock**  
**Robert Wilson "Bob" Robertson**, 83, of Little Rock, a United Methodist retired clergy elder, passed away on May 27.

He was born May 28, 1926, in Colt, the sixth son and eighth child of Bailey E. and Minnie Robertson. His father was a Methodist minister in Arkansas for 40 years as was his uncle, Robert A. Robertson for whom he was named.



Bob Robertson

Bob Robertson was associate pastor of St. Paul United Methodist Church and senior pastor of Western Hills UMC in Little Rock. He also served churches in Smackover, Batesville, Earle, Hughes and Salem/Viola, and Chapel Hill United Methodist Church in Farmers Branch, Texas.

Before entering the professional ministry, he served in the Pacific Theater of Operations in the 412 Troop Carrier Wing, 6th Carrier Squadron, Army Air Corps during World War II. He was a crew chief and aerial engineer on C46, C47 and C54 airplanes, and part of the occupational forces in Japan.

He later worked for Pillsbury Mills in Fort Smith, Fayetteville and Amarillo, Texas, and for McSwain Brokerage in Little Rock. He was president of R-R Sales, a food and specialty brokerage business in Fort Smith, which received a national award for top sales organization in 1966.

As a lay leader in the First United Methodist Church of Fort Smith, he was evangelism chairman, youth Sunday

School teacher, Chancel Choir member and Boy Scout chairman. Robertson was an original member and coach of the Fort Smith Church Little League Baseball program. He was the baccalaureate speaker at Little Rock's Parkview High School's first graduation ceremony.

He graduated from Hendrix College in Conway and Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He served on the United Methodist Annual Conference Committee as well as the Education, Church and Society, Mission and Cooperative Parish Committees. He also was a Board member of Wesley Foundation and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Robertson is survived by his loving wife of 62 years, Betty Ann Embrey Robertson, also a retired United Methodist elder; their son, Dr. Blake Robertson and his wife, Dr. Charlotte Robertson; their daughter, Diana Myklebust and her husband, Mark; his brother, Ed Robertson of Fort Smith; grandchildren, Matthew Robert Myklebust (Melanie), Mary Kay Steves (Tom Jr.), Jonathan Robertson and Stephen Lane; great-grandchildren, Morgan and Mason Myklebust, Logan Robertson, Tori Steves, Ashtyn and Collyn Lane; and numerous nieces, nephews and friends.

A graveside service with military honors was held on May 29 at the Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery in North Little Rock, conducted by Don Nolley, a retired United Methodist elder. A memorial service followed at St. James United Methodist Church, officiated by Fred Haustein, senior pastor, and John Miles II, senior pastor of First UMC in Jonesboro.

Memorials may be made to St. James United Methodist Church,

Western Hills United Methodist Church or to one's favorite charity.

Arrangements were made by Little Rock Funeral Home. Robertson's online guestbook may be signed at [www.littlerockfuneralhome.com](http://www.littlerockfuneralhome.com).

## Perryville, Mo.

**Mary Ella Fair**, the widow of a United Methodist pastor, died May 9 at the Independence Care Center of Perry County in Missouri. She was 84.



Mary Ella Fair

She was born in Troup, Texas, on March 3, 1925, to Newman and Ella (Burton) White. She was married on Dec. 23, 1947, to Cagle E. Fair, a United Methodist elder who preceded her in death on June 21, 2008.

Her survivors include three sons: Cagle Fair Jr., of Darnestown, Md., Newman and Herman Fair, both of Perryville, and two grandchildren: Andrew and Emily Fair.

Mary Ella Fair was a member of Texarkana Fairview United Methodist Church in Texarkana, Ark. She taught Sunday School and provided piano accompaniment at the church. She also was a retired reading and English teacher.

Memorials are preferred to Texarkana Fairview United Methodist Church.

A funeral service for Fair was held on May 13 at Texarkana Fairview United Methodist Church with Barbara Gilbert, senior pastor, officiating. Burial was at East Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Texarkana, Ark.

Young & Sons Funeral Home, Inc.,

in Perryville, Mo., provided the arrangements.

## Horatio

**Annie Maxine Tollett DeVasier Willis**, 77, died May 17 at her home in Horatio.

She was born to Edgar William and Edna Frieda McWhorter Tollett in Provo, Ark., on Sept. 23, 1931. She was a retired nurse, a retired U.S. Department of Agriculture inspector, as well as a homemaker. She was a member of the First Assembly of God Church of Horatio, and enjoyed working, games on the computer, crocheting and watching soap operas.

Her first husband Earl DeVasier, a United Methodist pastor who died in 1964, and a son, Billy DeVasier, who died in the Vietnam War in 1967, preceded her in death.

She is survived by her husband, Glynn Willis of Horatio; two sons and daughters-in-law, Hollis and Gwen DeVasier of Horatio, Danny and Shona DeVasier of Ashdown; and two daughters and sons-in-law, Jennifer and Jaz Hayden of Frisco, Texas, Patricia and Darrin Higgins of DeQueen.

She is also survived by three brothers and sisters-in-laws — Bobby Tollett of Texarkana, Ark., Jerry and Geri Tollett of Provo, Ark., and Benny and Liz Tollett of Waxahachie, Texas. In addition, her survivors include one sister and brother-in-law, Katie and Chris Elkins of Texarkana, Texas, and a number of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Funeral services for Annie "Maxine" Willis were held May 19 at First Assembly of God Church of Horatio with Ralph Staggs and Charles Ligon officiating. Burial followed in the Clear Creek Cemetery.

# United Methodist case offers preview of nominee's views

United Methodist News Service

President Obama's Supreme Court nominee could find her way to the position paved by a 2006 ruling upholding United Methodist policy in a church-state case.

As politicians and advocates begin to comb every inch of Judge Sonia Sotomayor's judicial record, commentators say her opinion that the United Methodist New York Annual Conference has the right to set mandatory retirement ages for clergy is an indicator of her support for religious freedom.

Obama held up the ruling in a background report to the press. Some observers say the decision could help mute conservative criticism that she would be an activist judge.

Two other judges in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled a 70-year-old United Methodist minister could proceed with his challenge of the denomination's mandatory retirement age. In her dissenting opinion, Sotomayor said the federal Age Discrimination Employment Act does not apply to employment suits brought against religious institutions by their spiritual leaders.

Sotomayor's opinion was based on the freedom of religion clause in the U.S. Constitution, said Larry Pickens, an attorney and pastor of Northbrook United Methodist Church in Illinois. "To rule in any other way would have been an infringement of the free exercise rights of the church," he said.

Pickens believes that, as a Supreme Court justice, Sotomayor would rely on legal precedent when making decisions about religious issues and the separation of church and state.

"I see her as someone who would be very consistent with affirming that bright line between church and state and assuring that the state not have the ability to influence the role of how churches function," he said.

## Retirement challenge

John Paul Hankins, a pastor with more than 40 years of experience, was leading the United Methodist congregation in Stony Brook, N.Y., when forced to retire on July 1, 2003, at the age of 70. At that time, 70 was the mandatory clergy retirement age. The retirement age was raised to 72 in 2008.

He filed suit, but Judge Dennis Hurley, Eastern District of New York, dismissed the age discrimination complaint. Hankins appealed and argued before the Second Circuit Court of Appeals on Jan. 5, 2005. More than a year later, on Feb. 16, 2006, the court vacated the dismissal and sent it back to district court.

In her dissenting opinion, Sotomayor said nothing in the Age Discrimination Employment Act "indicates an intention to extend its provisions to a religious body's selection or dismissal of its ministers." She called the action to remand the case back to district court "a wasteful expenditure of judicial resources and an unnecessary and uninvited burden on the parties."

The District Court ruled a second time it did not have jurisdiction. Hankins appealed, and the case is again before the Second Circuit court.



Sonia Sotomayor



Bishop Ernest Lyght

Larry McGaughey, counsel for the New York Conference, told United Methodist News Service he could not comment on the case until after a decision was announced. Hankins could not be reached for comment.

West Virginia Bishop Ernest Lyght — who led the New York Conference from 1996 to 2004 and was named in the lawsuit — said Hankins was offered the opportunity to continue in ministry in another appointment, but not in his current appointment.

"There was nothing a bishop could do to change the mandatory retirement, and when people retired, I would not reappoint them to the church from which they were retiring," Lyght explained.

In the bishop's opinion, "Sotomayor quite clearly understood the separation of church and state and the right of religious organizations to be able to make their own determination with regard to who they would employ."

## Religious freedom

The White House noted that Sotomayor "has lived the American dream" when it announced her nomination on May 26.

The daughter of Puerto Rican parents, she would become the Supreme Court's first Hispanic justice if affirmed by the U.S. Senate. The 54-year-old grew up in a Bronx public housing project and attended Catholic schools before graduating from Princeton and Yale. She had worked as a prosecutor, corporate litigator and federal district judge before being appointed to the appeals court.

In a *U.S. News & World Report* blog, Dan Gilgoff said the White House is spotlighting Sotomayor's ruling in the United Methodist case in an attempt to reach out to religious conservatives.

"It's the kind of church-state separation opinion — protecting the church from the state, as opposed to the other way around — that will please religious conservatives," Gilgoff wrote.

But Rick Rettberg, legal counsel for the United Methodist Church, said it is hard to calculate the future opinions of a nominee.

"Anybody that has ever gone to law school knows that predicting how a Supreme Court justice is going to rule on a given set of issues between the time they are nominated and the time they actually have to decide a real case is pure speculation," he said.



Sonnye Dixon, a United Methodist pastor, says his faith calls him to pray for his neighbors.

United Methodist News Service

## Pastor helps church's drive to reform immigration in U.S.

United Methodist News Service

NASHVILLE — When President Barack Obama opens the debate on immigration with Democratic and Republican legislators June 8, Sonnye Dixon will be doing what his faith has taught him: praying for his neighbors.

Dixon, pastor of Hobson United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tenn., joined with community, business and faith leaders at a press conference June 1 to launch a national campaign to reform immigration in the U.S. Similar press conferences were held across the country.

"I have been taught by my faith to welcome the stranger and to love my neighbor even if that neighbor is an enemy," Dixon said. "I am praying for that conversation because an epidemic of xenophobia is infecting our nation."

The Reform Immigration for America campaign is an effort of 200 national, regional and local organizations representing labor, faith, education, business and community working for comprehensive immigration reform.

"The June 8 meeting is an exten-

sion of Obama's pledge during the election campaign," said Avi Poster, president of the Coalition for Education on Immigration in Nashville.

United Methodist Bishop Minerva Carcaño applauded Obama's decision to start the conversation on immigration and work toward reform in 2009.

Carcaño, also the chairwoman of the United Methodist task force on immigration, said the church stands "firmly in believing that the inherent value of all immigrants means that all of their civil liberties should be respected and maintained regardless of their legal status. We believe, however, that our present immigration policies violate these basic rights."

The United Methodist Council of Bishops expressed their commitment to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform and to stand in solidarity with "our immigrant neighbors" at the conclusion of its spring meeting May 13.

"I am praying for success," Dixon said. "God puts people in our paths so we can learn to love them."

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Rice & Beans, continued from page 1



Costa Rican Methodists sing God's praises at a worship service at El Peje, the main site of Rice and Beans Ministries, a United Methodist Volunteers in Mission partner.

Photo by Patrick Shownes

United Methodists worked with the ministry in early February during a mission trip, visiting Costa Ricans who live in rows of little more than wooden and tin huts in the mountains.

While the politically stable nation has a bustling eco-tourism industry along its coasts, many rural Costa Rican families still struggle to afford basic nutrition and shelter. The world economic crisis has made their lives only more precarious.

The Arkansas mission team brought some of these families desperately needed rice, beans, sugar and cooking oil. The Arkansans also gave out Spanish Bibles and glass ruby-red beads, which symbolize the blood of Christ.

Volunteers described the visits as eye-opening and deeply humbling.

"We went in to one shack — it wasn't even really a shack, just tar paper spread over a wooden frame," said Don Weeks, the Arkansas Conference's minister of Volunteers in Mission. "There were many children, but the place was very neat."

"We asked if we could pray, and they said, 'Yes.' We asked what they'd like us to pray for, and they surprised us by saying, 'the U.S. economy.'"

The family explained that without the support of a prosperous United States, they and other Costa Ricans

would starve.

Scott Gallimore, associate pastor of First United Methodist Church in Jonesboro, said the kind of poverty encountered in El Peje was far more severe than what he and other mission-trip veterans had seen in Mexico.

"The poor were the poorest of the poor," he said. "It was heart-wrenching to see..."

But Gallimore said he was equally touched that so many of the strangers warmly welcomed the mission team into their homes. No one, he said, declined the group's invitation to pray.

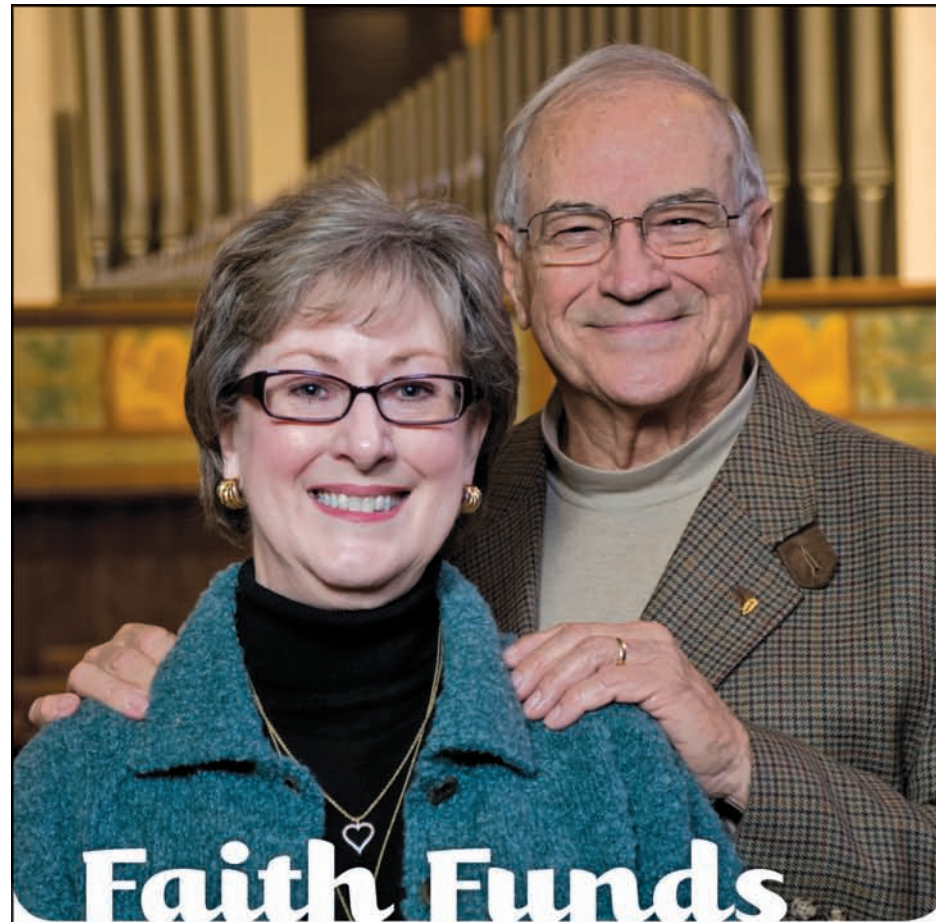
"You could sense that many of them had been praying," he said. "They had been praying for a sign that God had not abandoned them. Some of the mothers would break down and weep. ... We couldn't meet all their needs, but at least we could provide enough food to feed their families for a week."

Weeks called his time with Rice and Beans Ministries "one of the spiritual highlights" of his life.

He said people clutched their new Bibles close, and their eyes brightened when they saw the red beads, a symbol of the much-cherished *sangre de cristo*.

Weeks said: "I really think our visits meant more to them than just food."

To learn more, visit [www.riceandbeans.com](http://www.riceandbeans.com).



### A Local Church Legacy

John and Becki Lusk love their church — First United Methodist Church of El Dorado. He was a hands-on Board of Trustees Chairman and has participated in mission trips to the Mississippi coast and Haiti. Becki has made three mission trips to Mexico, is a leader in UMW and helped with interior design for the refurbished Fellowship Hall.

John, a stockbroker for 31 years, decided after retirement to create a \$1 million endowment to support his local church. The couple chose the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas to manage their Faith Fund because John had researched the Foundation's past financial performance and had heard President and CEO Jim Argue, Jr. speak. "We know the people at the Foundation are the best people to manage our gift," John said.

Most of the couple's blended family of six children, 12 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren no longer live in El Dorado or in Arkansas, but the Lusks chose to leave a legacy for their home church that will touch many families through mission work, music ministry and youth ministry forever.

"My feelings are that to whom much is given, much is asked," said Becki, a retired Bank Trust Officer. "It is a special pleasure for us to be able to make a lasting gift to our church."



**The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas**

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"Papa" Fred Curry, back in gray shirt, shares a prayer with volunteers from the Arkansas Conference and a family in rural Costa Rica as part of Rice and Beans Ministries, a United Methodist mission.

Photo by Patrick Shownes