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Marvell-ous work

Church brings teenage mission teams to Delta

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

MARVELL — On a blistering July afternoon when even the local diner closes early because of the triple-digit heat, dozens of youth brave the relentless sun to engage in some neighborhood revitalization.

Near the town cemetery, ten teens — their faces streaked with sweat — vigorously scrape off the cracked and peeling paint from the exterior of an elderly woman's clapboard house. A few blocks away, another group offers baseball pointers to local boys in the park.

Still another group of youth takes a break from the heat to lead local children in arts and crafts inside the air-conditioned former high school.

These volunteers are all participants in YouthWorks, a multi-denominational Christian ministry that coordinates mission trips throughout North America. They have each paid at least \$198 and traveled from across the country to fix up houses and teach children in this hard-up Phillips County farming town of 1,250 people.

[See YOUTHWORKS, page 10A]

Kortni Isom, 14, a United Methodist from Mediapolis, Iowa, is among the hundreds of YouthWorks volunteers who have come through Marvell this summer.

Photo by Heather Hahn

Bishop: Appointment system takes thought and prayer

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

When Charles Settle was named a district superintendent in late March, that opened a vacancy for a senior pastor at First United Methodist Church in Texarkana.

The bishop and the nine district superintendents who comprise the cabinet filled that opening by assigning Bruce Wayne Bennett to Texarkana from First UMC in Sheridan, and John Fleming to Sheridan from St. Paul UMC in Little

Rock.

That began a chain of pulpit changes that eventually encompassed churches and college ministries in Russellville, Arkadelphia and the Bismarck area. Settle's appointment alone helped lead to moves stretching more than 200 miles.

To an outsider, the bishop's announcement of appointments at the end of each Annual Conference can sound like the random results of a game of clerical musical chairs.

But Bishop Charles Crutchfield can attest that neither he nor his cabinet are playing around when they deliberate over appointments.

"We try to figure out very prayerfully what pastor has the most appropriate gifts and graces to fill the needs of that church," Crutchfield said. "Our job as a cabinet is not to find jobs for preachers. It is to try to match the pastoral resources of the Annual Conference with the needs of the mission fields represented by those

local churches."

Changes in pastoral leadership occur for any number of reasons including retirement, death, a pastor's move to the chaplaincy or a mismatch between a pastor and his or her current assignment. Crutchfield said the cabinet listens very carefully to the requests of each pastor and church, but those are only advisory.

Under the United Methodist

[See APPOINTMENTS, page 12A]

Hospitality: Make mine radical



BUD REEVES
Special Contributor

One of my favorite pieces of religious art was produced by my older son when he was about 8 years old.

I don't know if he drew it in Sunday School or church, and I don't remember if it related specifically to a sermon I preached (probably not!), but it pictured God or an angel in white robe and wings with arms outstretched in an attitude of embrace. There were birds or tiny angels gathered around and rays of light emanating from the central figure. The caption read, "God welcomes you."

I swelled with joy to realize that he understood. He got it. That picture hung on my office wall until the paper rotted.

All our ministries of welcoming are based on the divine character. Our God is a welcoming God. We welcome because God first welcomed us. Paul writes in Romans, "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

Because God has invited us into relationship, we want to welcome and encourage others as they seek relationship with God. We want to create an atmosphere and a process by which people can grow from no faith to deep faith, from self-centeredness to significant service. This is the process of evangelism. As Bishop Scott Jones tagged it, "initiation into Christian discipleship."

However, because of the bad rap "evangelism" has received in our culture (sometimes deservedly so), we prefer to use the word

"hospitality." It sounds friendlier and warmer than evangelism, and it has a sort of southern twang about it that I like. Hospitality means making people feel at home. But Christian

hospitality also has an agenda: "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

We're not inviting people to join our club, but to enter the reign of God. So we develop hospitality ministries. We wear nametags. We train greeters. We follow up with worship guests. We pay attention to how we treat the strangers in our midst. It's all good stuff.

But I am convinced that if we are truly to transform our churches and effectively make disciples of Jesus Christ, we must practice "radical hospitality." This term, coined by Bishop Robert Schnase in his book, *The Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, calls for a deeper kind of welcoming behavior.

Radical hospitality is an attitude of welcoming that is ingrained in the culture of a congregation. It is in the DNA of fruitful congregations to go out of their way to welcome newcomers. Hospitality doesn't just happen at the front door; it happens in every room in the church.

The focus is on the outsiders, not the insiders. Radical hospitality churches are more than friendly; they are invitational. They truly understand that the church is the only organization on the planet that exists for the sake of those who are not yet members. Most churches don't get that.

Radical hospitality is unconditional; any and all sinners are welcome. Radical hospitality welcomes those who don't dress like, look like, smell like or act like the



Bud Reeves

members of the congregation. Fruitful congregations intentionally provide ministries that will bring in a more diverse group of people.

The problem with many welcoming ministries is that they are open to anyone who will agree to become homogeneous with the prevailing community culture. But people aren't buying homogenized Christianity anymore. There are no preconditions to God's grace.

Radical hospitality seeks the lost. It's not just about welcoming those who find their way into our churches; it's about venturing out into the community, into the world, to invite and encourage people who need to know Jesus. Jesus said his mission was "to seek out and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10)

One of his favorite stories involved a wedding banquet at which all the invited guests made excuses not to come, so the master sent out messengers to the streets and alleys to bring in the lost and broken people who had never before been invited to the feast. (Luke 14:15-24) Is our mission any different?

We cannot limit our hospitality to those who come in our doors, because in case you haven't noticed lately, nobody is beating down our doors to come in.

Those who practice radical hospitality will be blessed by new relationships with some wonderful people. The writer of Hebrews says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." (13:2) But even more, by welcoming the strangers, we welcome the Master of the feast, who said, "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35)

That's the kind of company I want to keep.

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



EDITOR'S CORNER

BY HEATHER HAHN

On being a stranger

As a religion reporter in Louisiana and Arkansas, I visited more houses of worship than I could count.

Still, even with that experience, I still get anxious anytime I visit a congregation for the first time.

This is just as true even when the church in question is part of a mainline Protestant denomination I know well.

After all, you'll never read in the bulletin or on the church Web site that this unmarked pew near the front happens to be the one where a prominent church member sits each week, and if you sit there you might be asked to move.

That happened to me at one church. I was the only one sitting in a pew when the service started, so I moved closer to the aisle (the better for the usher to reach me when passing the plate). About mid-way through the first hymn, an elderly woman came up, told me I was sitting in her spot and requested I move.

I did what she asked of course, but I was embarrassed to have caused a fuss. The woman may have had a very good reason to want that particular seat. She may have been hearing impaired and needed to be near the front to understand the pastor. Still, the incident made me feel distinctly unwelcome.

For many first-time worshippers, a visit to a new church can be as nerve-racking as the first day at a new school. You're walking into a building full of people you don't know and want to make a good

impression. You want to feel a sense of belonging as much as a sense of the divine.

Welcoming strangers is a big part of what Jesus has called us to do. But as a practical matter, it's also the only way churches can grow and remain relevant in their communities.

For that reason, some consultants now offer "mystery-worshippers" services to evaluate churches. Last October, the *Wall Street Journal* had a feature on one such professional "secret church shopper" — Thomas Harrison, a former Assemblies of God pastor from Tulsa.

When Harrison visits a church, he looks at such details as general cleanliness but he pays particular attention to its hospitality. Are worshippers friendly? Do they introduce themselves and ask a visitor's name? Do they invite a visitor to come again?


Conference staff (and friends) have made similar undercover visits to United Methodist churches.

Sunday morning is no longer guaranteed to be church hour. At the end of the *Wall Street Journal* article, reporter Alexandra Alter quotes the pastor of CrossPoint Church in Nashville, Tenn., who perhaps best sums up the church's challenge.

"My competition is Cracker Barrel restaurant down the street," the pastor said. "If they go in there and are treated more like family than when they come to CrossPoint Church, then it's lights out for me."

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE by Mike Morgan






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BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

Dear Friends:

“IMAGINE MINISTRY!”

At Annual Conference I announced the creation of a small group which would help create a process whereby we as a conference might rethink the way in which we “do” church in the Arkansas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Seven years after the North Arkansas and the Little Rock Annual Conferences gave birth to the Arkansas Conference it is

time for us to re-examine how best we can live out our life as an annual conference as we seek to embrace the future God has prepared for us.

I have asked the following persons to serve on the Arkansas Conference “Imagine Ministry” Team: the Rev. Susan Ledbetter, Mr. Don Riggin, the Rev. Bud Reeves, Dr. Charles Donaldson, the Rev. Mackey Yokem, Mr. Jim Argue, the Rev. Edna Morgan, and Mrs. Kathy Conley.

They will be working with

To subscribe for Imagine Ministry e-mail updates, visit www.arumc.org/imagine_signup

our consultant, the Rev. Gil Rendle, and with me to help design a process that enables the Arkansas Annual Conference to live into God’s tomorrow with focus, purpose, effectiveness, passion and grace.

Information about each of these individuals will be included in the Sept. 4 issue of this publication as well as online.

We need to marry our faith

and theology to any examination of our mission and ministry. To that end, I ask your help.

A few weeks ago I invited you and appropriate groups within your church to engage in an “Apostolate of Prayer” — a season of prayer and discernment as we move into a process that will open our future to creative and imaginative ministry for our churches and for the conference.

Resources for eight weeks of reading, meditation and prayer that began Aug. 1 are provided through the Arkansas Annual Conference Web site at www.arumc.org/imagineministry.

The Imagine Ministry Team will meet for the first time on Aug. 28. Please be especially mindful of us that day.

Faithfully,



Get that dirt off your shoulder

DEENA MARIE HAMILTON
Special Contributor

Music is a very important component of our lives and worship. The music in worship can make or break the service. Many of us have heard some variation of the famous quote: “Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast.” Well it can. It calms, restores and motivates us.

While the world mourns the passing of a musical icon, we remember the way that Michael Jackson, despite all his eccentricity, has influenced pop culture and music. His music helps soothe my broken heart, teaches me about the man in the mirror and helps me realize that I am not alone.

I was wowed by the Thriller video, mesmerized by how the sidewalk lit up in his Billie Jean video, and I just thought that he walked on air when the King of Pop did the moonwalk. In the world of pop culture and music, Michael Jackson’s contributions may be unsurpassed.

Continuing on with how music has had an influence on culture, I can’t help think about hip-hop and rap. The first name that I can think of on a personal level is Tupac Shakur. The contributions that he has made lyrically to music were phenomenal, but one of my favorite rappers has to be Shawn Corey Carter, who is also known as Jay-Z.

I remember one day when I was working in a production lab at a hazardous waste corporation on the gravel yard shift as a bench chemist. The thing that I like the most about that job was that I could listen to music all night long.

One night I was listening to



Deena Marie Hamilton

some music on a mix CD, and I was really at a crossroads in my life. I was going through the candidacy process in becoming a local licensed pastor. It was a pivotal time for me in my life

because I was thinking... Is all this worth doing? Every time I make a conscious effort to be a better person there’s always a person or situation trying to bring me down...

I was listening to a song by Jay-Z called “Dirt Off Your Shoulder.” At that time in my life there was always somebody trying to discourage me, turn me around and deplete my spirit. I was on fire for serving God.

In this song Jay-Z was declaring to all who listened that he’s one of the greatest. He understood that people were going to be jealous, while others would cheer. Some situations would be monumental while others trivial.

But either way it goes, just take things in stride because of who you are. Because of Who we belong to, we should adopt that same way of thinking. We’re the King’s kids. We need to do our thing and do it well.

Even though I feel that I made a spiritual epiphany, Jesus tells us in Matthew 5 that when you do things for the kingdom, suffering and hardship should not be a surprise, but expected. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed

are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled (Matthew 5: 3-6 NIV). Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:11-12 NIV).

This is something that is very comforting because sometimes we feel like our problems are unique to only ourselves.

Our problems can make us feel isolated from God when we are not because Christ understands how things can be. Times may change, but people don’t.

Christ also tells us that when people are not receptive of what we are lead to do for God, then we need to just shake the dust off our feet and not worry about it because this type of rejection is just a testimony against them (Mark 6:11).

So if you feel called to minister, go and brush your shoulders off. Women are called too... go and brush your shoulders off. When people are too busy to hear what we’re saying or doing, we need to get that dirt off our shoulders.

Deena Marie Hamilton is the senior pastor of McCabe United Methodist Church in North Little Rock. She can be reached at rev.deenamarie@gmail.com.

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First UMC in Corning took home the Judges Award for its float in the city’s Fourth of July parade. About 20 people helped put the float together.

Photo by Fred Martin

CALENDAR

AUGUST

Aug. 25-26: “Pray, Prepare, Prevent & Prevail,” an Inter-Faith Church Security Awareness/ Response course, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville. Marilyn Braswell, (800) 760-8126 or e-mail programs@mountsequoyah.org.

Aug. 29: Singles Ministry Seminar, 9:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m., at St. James United Methodist Church, 321 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock. \$10 per person or \$25 for three or more from one church. Register by Aug. 19. Jenni Duncan, (501) 217-6708.

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 8-15: UM Course of Study offered by the SCJ College of

Bishops, Mount Sequoyah Conference & Retreat Center, Fayetteville. Contact Susan Steuber at (316) 686-0600 or at ssteuber@kswestumc.org.

Sept. 18: Arkansas Conference Volunteers in Mission Team Leader Training Workshop, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at St. James UMC, 321 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock. \$20. Register at www.arumc.org/VIM.

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

Sept. 23: Arkansas Conference Day of Evangelism Seminar, taught by John Ed Mathison, 2-4 p.m., First UMC 307 E. Fourth St., Stuttgart. \$10. E-mail David W. Bush at thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org.

God's glory visible in young faith

MARY FAITH MILES
Special Contributor

In her Bible study *Living Free*, my non-Methodist sister in Christ, Beth Moore, highlights that “the Greek word for glory is doxa, meaning ‘the true apprehension of God or things ... Giving glory to God is ascribing him His full recognition.’”

She surmises through Scripture (e.g. Isaiah 43:7, 2 Corinthians 3:18) and definition that, “God wants to make Himself recognizable to us [and] through us.”

Therefore, “we fulfill what we were meant to be when God is recognizable in us.”

When you see a beautiful flower in all its splendor but fail to praise God by not recognizing that the flower is sculpted for His glory, you deny its purpose.

Likewise, when my generation's passion and drive for the Kingdom is looked on with well-meant patronization, the glory of God is not recognized. Thus, we are stunted in fulfilling what we were meant to do.

I delivered the youth report to the 2007 Annual Conference as the chair of the conference council on youth ministries. I knew that I would receive a standing ovation because my denomination was proud that I



**Mary Faith
"Zoe" Miles**

cherish.

A conflict arises when a young person's presence does not derive from duty but out of a desire to be heard. It is a desire to be looked at straight in the eye and to be taken seriously by our faith community rather than a wish to be pat on the head and sent off to bed with milk and a cookie.

It's the difference between holding a toddler's chubby arms while he attempts to walk and letting him try to walk on his own. It's the difference between letting a child win at tic-tac-toe and giving that child the satisfaction of a game well played.

When our capabilities are doubted, we are hindered in reaching our full potential that is glorifying to God.

In the June 2009 edition of the

was a young person choosing to let this little light of mine to shine. At the podium, I realized that hundreds of hearts were smiling at me, and it is a moment I

Arkansas United Methodist, I reminisce about a child from whom the Lord's Prayer busts forth with exuberance one Sunday morning. Finding her eagerness to worship God with her congregation merely cute, I miss the stirring spiritual experience.

Reflecting on my article, Ben Johnson, 2009 Duke Seminary graduate serving at Paragould First UMC, commented to me that “this little girl [was] praising God because she love[d] Him and mean[t] it. Our response shouldn't be to say ‘Ah, that's cute’ but to applaud her for being an example to strive towards.”

That child recognized God, making Him recognizable to the congregation. Seeing just a cute little girl, we miss God's glory.

My generation needs support. We want to hear your applause. We also need your help. Please recognize our full potential. Allow us to develop our theological tic-tac-toe gaming skills. In these ways, you can assist our growth into the glorifying flowers we were created to be.

Mary Faith "Zoe" Miles is a junior at Oklahoma City University in Oklahoma, a United Methodist institution. She can be reached at mmiles.stu1@okcu.edu.

Church feeds the hungry in El Dorado

Special to the AUM

EL DORADO — St. Paul United Methodist Church recently opened the Helping Hands food pantry, which serves 350 people per month.

That translates to about 3,000 pounds of food every month.

A dozen church members volunteer when the pantry is open 1-3 p.m. on the first and third Thursdays of each month. Four or five others volunteer on non-pantry days to bag.

Under the leadership and guidance of Maurice Peel, the pantry is currently one of the fastest growing ministries at St. Paul.

This is truly a churchwide ministry as adults, youth and children take part in some way to make it successful.

To qualify for the pantry clients need to bring the following items:

- Proof of income: Tax return, check stub, etc.
- Identification: Drivers



Clyde Perdue, James Stanley and John Wells are among the volunteers at the new food pantry at St. Paul UMC in El Dorado.

Photo courtesy of St. Paul United Methodist Church

license, social security card, birth certificate of household members.

Pantry workers make copies of these documents, and the client must go through a short interview process to verify that the person meet the income requirements of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

To learn more, call St. Paul UMC in El Dorado at (870) 862-4242 or e-mail st_paulumc@yahoo.com.

To learn about starting a food pantry in your community, call the Arkansas Rice Depot at (501) 565-8855.



Sarah Steele, a youth delegate to the Arkansas Annual Conference, speaks in opposition to the constitutional amendments that would restructure the worldwide church.

Photo by Heather Hahn

U.S. conferences reject proposed restructuring

United Methodist News Service

United Methodists in the United States have largely voted against 23 proposed amendments that would change the structure of the church, but voting is ongoing in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

The amendments, proposed as changes to the denomination's constitution, would pave the way for making the U.S. church one of several regional bodies around the world.

During U.S. annual conference sessions in May and June, church members also voted against an amendment to make membership in the church open to everyone without regard to sexual orientation.

Forty-four of the 62 U.S. conferences reported the results of their amendment votes to Newscope and United Methodist News Service as part of their annual wrap-ups of conference action. Eighteen conferences did not report their results on the amendments.

The church has 73 conferences in Africa, the Philippines and Europe. Since they hold their annual meetings at different times throughout the year, the final outcome of the voting won't be known until spring 2010.

The 2008 United Methodist General Conference, the denomination's top legislative body, approved 32 amendments to the church's constitution. For a proposed amendment to be ratified, two-thirds of the aggregate number of voting annual conference members must approve.

The worldwide votes will be ratified by the Council of Bishops when it meets May 2-6, 2010, in Columbus, Ohio. Official results will

be announced then.

About 60 percent of U.S. conferences reporting voting results defeated the 23 amendments dealing with the worldwide church proposal. The amendments, proposed by the Task Force on the Worldwide Nature of the Church, would allow the organizing of regional conferences around the globe to create a uniform United Methodist church structure. The legislation would have made it possible to create a U.S. regional conference in the future.

Kansas Bishop Scott Jones, chairman of the task force, said his committee's work will go forward whether the amendments are approved.

The remaining nine amendments cover such issues as church and conference membership, annual and jurisdictional conference composition, and inclusiveness.

Proposed Amendment 1, on the inclusiveness of the church, failed to receive the two-thirds support in 27 of the 44 conferences reporting results. The amendment would make all people, upon declaring a relationship to Jesus Christ, “eligible to become professing members in any local church in the connection.” Forty conferences voted against Amendment 8, which would have added the word “gender” to categories of church membership.

Among other amendments, proposed Amendment 19 — which would extend to provisional members and certain local pastors the right to vote for clergy delegates to the General and jurisdictional conferences — received substantial support from 26 annual conferences.

Black youth come together for Harambee

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

With dexterous thumbs, today's teens can text their friends, Twitter the latest news and keep their Facebook status updated to the minute. But in all their social-networking, Christian youth should know that God tops their friends' list.

That was the message of 2009 National Youth Harambee, a gathering of mostly black United Methodist youngsters sponsored by Black Methodists for Church Renewal. This year's event on July 16-19 took as its theme "God's Grace in MySpace," a play on the name of a popular social-networking Web site.

Derrick-Lewis Noble, the event's main speaker, emphasized that anyone — no matter what they're going through — can connect with God. And the best way to text-message the Lord, Noble preached, is through prayer.

"To pray is to attach yourself or connect yourself to God," said Noble, a veteran youth minister and founding pastor of Impact United Methodist Church in Port Arthur, Texas. "And since God is stronger than you and me, when we have a lifestyle of prayer, we go where God wants us to go."

He also urged his techno-savvy listeners to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in conveying their message. "The Holy Spirit is your spell checker when you pray," Noble said.

Harambee drew 152 youth, ages 12 to 18, from across the country to the campus of Philander Smith College, a historically black United Methodist institution in Little Rock.

The event takes its name from a Swahili word meaning, "Let's come together."

Many came to the gathering with the help of church financial assistance. The Arkansas Conference sponsored 30 teens who likely would not otherwise have been able to attend.

During the gathering, the teens attended workshops on discerning God's purpose for their life and providing witness to their faith. They also discussed the experiences of biblical figures such as Ruth, Jeremiah, Esther and Luke.

The teens also could choose among five creative zones where they could learn about artistically showcasing their faith. These zones included spoken word, step, mime,



Braylon Graves, 14, of Theresa Hoover UMC in Little Rock, and Preston Addo, 13, of Bridgeway Community Church in Columbia, Md., enjoy the upbeat music that preceded morning worship during 2009 National Youth Harambee at Philander Smith College in Little Rock. Black Methodists for Church Renewal sponsored the event.

Photo by Heather Hahn

singing and Christian hip-hop.

Deborah Bell, director for National Youth Harambee and the chair of Arkansas Black Methodists for Church Renewal, said the gathering provides a comfortable, open place for black teens to celebrate their Christian faith.

"When we talk about God's Grace in MySpace, this is our space where we can be free to worship how we want," she said. "We don't have to use the hymnal. We don't have to worry about older people saying, 'you can't dance in church' or 'the music is too loud.' We know any space you're in should be holy ground."

At morning worship, the youth shouted cheers in unison and clapped and swayed in rhythm to hymns of praise. The music reverberated out into the parking lot.

The music was the best part of the event, said Kamisha Curtis, 16, of First UMC in Sweet Home, a community near Little Rock. But she was also particularly moved by Noble's preaching.

"He spoke about real life, real stuff," she said.

On the first night of the event, Noble preached about bullying, a topic that resonated with many of his young listeners.

He asked those gathered to come forward whether they had ever been bullied or if they had ever been

the ones doing the bullying. He then prayed for both groups with equal fervor.

"I usually don't cry in front of people, but I did at that sermon," said Shayla Farrar, 16, a member of Camphor Memorial UMC in St. Paul, Minn. She was among 14 people from her church who attended the event.

"There were people whom I have known since I was little, who went up there and admitted stuff in front of all those people. I thought I

knew them, but I didn't know what they were going through."

For Noble, the sermon derived from his own experiences burying teens who had committed suicide. He wanted to do what he could to bring hope to those struggling with suicidal thoughts.

"Above all," he said, "I hope they all walk away with the knowledge that God loves them and has great plans for them — no matter who they are or where they're

from or what they've done."

Black Methodists for Church Renewal, the denomination's black caucus, holds the national youth gatherings every other year with Jurisdictional Harambee gatherings encouraged on the off years. The Southeast Jurisdiction holds a Harambee event annually.

Cheryl Walker, director of African American ministry for the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, revitalized the youth gatherings in 2006 when she became vice chair of Black Methodists for Church Renewal.

She said the events are crucial for developing new church leaders.

"This shows that they can do ministry and still be youth," she said. "It also exposes them to career opportunities in the United Methodist Church. ... We have gotten away from raising our future leaders. To me, Youth Harambee is the beginning point."

Tony Dixon, another member of First UMC in Sweet Home, said he was eager to come to Harambee even though it meant missing his younger sister's birthday celebration. The event, he said, inspired him to start thinking about what his calling in life might be.

"This is my first time at Harambee," the 16-year-old said. "I'm not planning on it being my last."

To learn more about Black Methodists for Church Renewal, visit www.bmcrumc.org.

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As part of its King's Kids Club ministry, each child at First UMC in Jonesboro receives a royally decorated plastic box to store their treasures.

Photo by Patrick Shownes

Rethinking hospitality

Churches find inventive ways to say 'Y'all come back now!'

Above, James Ruth and Jennifer Gibson, members of the Greeting Ministry at First UMC in Springdale get ready for Sunday worship.

Over the past eight years, the church has been more attentive to hospitality. Since 2001, the church has added 991 members.

At right, Linda Sides begins her Saturday ritual of baking rolls for visitors to Wesley UMC in Fort Smith. The gift reminds visitors that Jesus is the "Bread of life."

Above photo by Joanna Davis
Photo at right by Cynthia Sides



Haley Price, at 89, bakes homemade pies for visitors to First UMC in Corning as part of its PIE (Personal Invitation Evangelism) ministry. The northeastern Arkansas community is about six miles from the Missouri border.

Photo by Fred Martin

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Sunday visitors to First United Methodist Church in Corning can look forward in the coming week to the delivery of a yummy treat—a fresh-baked pecan pie that smells simply heavenly.

More often than not, those pies originate in the kitchen of 89-year-old Haley Price, who bakes each pie with love and prayer from scratch.

"When I first started coming to church here, I lived out in the country and they brought me a pie," Price recalled. "I just enjoyed it, and everyone seems to enjoy it. I thank the good Lord that I've come this far, and I enjoy baking pies for the church."

For nearly 20 years, the Corning congregation has offered its PIE ministry in its northeastern Arkansas farming community. The name stands for Personal Invitation Evangelism.

Longtime member Regina Pillow delivers the toothsome invitations along with a pamphlet about the United Methodist Church. The pastor follows up later in the week.

"I tell them how glad we were they came and hope they will go back," Pillow said. "People are usually just thrilled to death. Some say, 'We plan to come back.' I took one not long ago to a young couple who had three young children — one a baby that's crawling — and they've started coming."

United Methodist churches across the state have embraced a variety of creative ways to make newcomers feel welcome and invite them into a deeper relationship with Christ.

Some congregations, like First UMC in Springdale, "mug" their visitors — giving away coffee cups with the church's name on it. Others offer free DVDs that showcase the church's ministries. And many others do what hostesses have done for centuries: Make sure no guest goes away hungry.

Linda Sides bakes 18 rolls each Saturday for any new worshippers who come the next morning to Wesley UMC in Fort Smith.

The ministry began when the pastor suggested the church give away a bread along with information about the congregation.

"I was praying there would be something I could do," Sides said, "and when he said that I knew that was me."

Sides' rolls never go to waste, and feed more than just guests in the pews.

"If we have no visitors, then I've told the preacher to use them however he can," she said. "Maybe someone is down on their luck and needs something to brighten their day or maybe he is visiting a shut-in."

That's the kind of initiative Ken Sloane likes to hear. Sloane, director of the denomination's communications ministries, said part of United Methodist Communications' recently launched "Rethink Church" campaign is to help churches rethink their hospitality ministries.

"Every church has more doors than the door that leads to Sunday morning worship," he said.

"What we're trying to encourage churches to do is think about what are some of the other doors to your church — what are some of the ways that people

connect with your church."

When she was a local pastor at Quitman UMC, Susan Miles found a new way to open doors to children in her community.

"I wanted these kids to have an identity of who they were in Jesus," she said. "The idea is that if Jesus is the King of Kings and God the Father is the King of Kings, then it's very sound for us to treat our children as royalty."

So she started King's Kids Club for children ages "birth to embarrassment." She provided each child with a regally decorated Christ-centered activity box that they could pick up in the narthex.

Every Sunday they attended, the children received something new in their box, like a notebook or stickers or a small cross. The box also contained a punch card to mark each Sunday a child was there. When a child got up 10 punches in their card, the child was crowned in front of the church. In the three years Miles pastored the Quitman congregation, the children's ministry grew from two to 20.

Miles brought the ministry with her to First UMC in Jonesboro when her husband, John Miles II, was appointed to be the congregation's senior pastor. Now, she said the King's Kids Club has more than 100 young members.

Wendy Jones says because of the program, her 6-year-old daughter, Allie, can't wait to get to church.

"She is the one who gets up on Sunday morning and is ready to go," Jones said. "She has her outfit picked out the night before."

To open a door to your church on the Internet, visit www.find-a-church.org.

New guide helps churches be a welcoming haven for children

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Many families' first entry into a church isn't through the front door that leads to Sunday worship but the side door into the weekday Mother's Day Out or preschool program.

To assist the state's United Methodist churches develop more welcoming — and safer — child-care ministries, the Arkansas Conference Child Care Liaison Project has put together a reference guide.

At nearly 300 pages, the guide — the first of its kind in the denomination — explains state licensing regulations, lists child-care resources and outlines best practices. The conference is mailing the guide this month to the United Methodist churches with existing child-care programs.

Other United Methodist churches considering opening a child-care center can order copies for free at the Conference's Web site www.arumc.org/childcare.

Meredith O'Hara, the conference's child care liaison, said she decided the "Guide to Child Care



Ministries" was needed after all the misinformation she encountered when she first started a program.

"Our care centers are mission posts — they create jobs, they support families, they grow future generations educationally and spiritually," O'Hara said. "It is the congregation's duty to ensure all who come are served — staff, children and families."

About two-thirds of Arkansas children 12 and younger are now enrolled in some form of child care, according to the state's Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. That number includes babies in Mother's Day Out and older children in after-school programs.

Tonya Russell, the division's director, is among the experts who have consulted on the handbook. She sees the document as a great

boon to her field.

"People get caught up in the bureaucracy sometimes — the policy handbooks and the licensing regulations tend to be quite lengthy," said Russell, who is also a member of First United Methodist Church in Conway. "[O'Hara] has done a really good job of boiling it all down. We hope it will let people have a simplified tool that will tell them where they need to go and what they need to do."

Child care has changed a great deal in recent years. Not only has demand for care programs grown as more mothers work outside the home; quality expectations have risen as well.

For many children — particularly those in poverty — it's not just enough to provide a safe, reliable babysitter but to also provide

a stimulating early education that primes them to read and do basic arithmetic in kindergarten.

"People across the country — educators, economic specialists, everybody — have looked at the neuroscience research and realize children don't just start to learn when they get to kindergarten," Russell said.

For that reason, child-care programs should go beyond minimum standards to achieve "quality" accreditation, O'Hara said.

The guide is only the most recent initiative of Child Care Liaison Project, which the conference began a little more than two years ago to ensure churches provide safe, quality child care and activities for young people.

In June, O'Hara distributed free "Caring for Children & Youth" posters at Annual Conference. The posters share basics for child safety such as playground and vehicle safety. More posters also can be ordered online at the conference Web site.

The Arkansas United Methodist Foundation has underwritten much

of the funding for the Child Care Liaison Project, including the guidebook and posters.

"We think Meredith is doing wonderful work," said Jim Argue, the foundation's president and chief executive officer. "She's really a pace-setter."

Kimberly Witte, the guide's author, is working on her doctorate in child-care administration in Florida. She sees child care ministries as important to the church's overall mission.

"It is providing one more welcoming, enriching, God-driven place for the whole family," Witte said. "Whether the parents are with the children when they worship on Sunday or whether the children are alone, when they are dropped off on Monday, it doesn't matter. We're still fulfilling the same mission, and that is we're bringing families closer to Christ."

To learn more about the Child Care Liaison Project, contact Meredith O'Hara at meredithoharaarumc@sbcglobal.net or call her at (501) 231-2299.

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Meet the new district superintendents

Tell me about your family: Charlotte and I have been married for 33 years. She continues to work part time as a dental hygienist. We have



Mike Morey

twin sons: Scott Morey, who is a federal bank examiner for the comptroller of the currency in Longview, Texas; and Steven Morey, who along with his wife Vicky is a pharmacist in Little Rock. My parents are Don and Dorothy Morey of Little Rock. Yes, I am Donna Morey's brother.

Born and raised: I was born and raised in Little Rock and in Oak Forest UMC.

Ordination: I was ordained an elder in 1984, and have served in both the Little Rock and North Arkansas Annual Conferences before the formation of the Arkansas Annual Conference.

What congregations have you served?

It was my privilege to serve: Junction City charge, Westside/Chidester charge, First UMC in Pine Bluff as an associate pastor, Danville charge, Pulaski Heights as an associate, First UMC in Paragould, First UMC in Searcy and Christ of the Hills UMC in Hot Springs Village.

What led you to accept a call to professional ministry?

My calling was a response to many years of being led into that call. I spent untold hours with the Rev. Jim McKay at UCA Wesley Foundation exploring that call.

I went to my first appointment still seeking verification of that call, and in that setting I found the assurance, born of the Holy Spirit, that I was called both into ministry and into United Methodist ministry.

What are you look forward to most in your

new role with the West District?

I am excited about being about to conduct 68 charge conferences annually. Seriously, most guess that it would be the appointive process. I feel like I have been preparing for this for years, in the "Kitchen Cabinet."

I was surprised at the prayer, attentiveness and careful examination that is given by the cabinet to every appointment from the largest to the smallest churches.

I watched the cabinet spend hours on the last three churches in the appointive process as if it were the most important appointments to be made.

Frequently Bishop Crutchfield would ask the vital question, "What is the Kingdom Appointment for this congregation?"

What is something that your district should know about you?

I want to be available to the congregations in the district. I would like to think I can be the pastor to clergy families, and to the clergy to be as honest and supportive as possible.

The last book(s) you read: Two books — *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell and *What has God Wrought* by Daniel Walker Howe.

Your guilty pleasure: I enjoy travel and playing golf poorly.

Favorite Bible verse: 2 Corinthians 5: 17-19 — "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: Everything old has come new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us."

This great passage is on who we are, what God has done in Jesus and what we should be about (reconciliation).

Tell me about your family: My immediate family includes my wife, Mary Anne, whom I met while in seminary at



Charles Settle

Duke University. Mary Anne is a graduate of Duke University. We have been married for 36 years. Mary Anne has taught French, English and Spanish in the public school systems, at both elementary and secondary levels, where we have lived. We both have large

extended families.

Born and raised: I was born and raised in and around Little Rock.

Ordination: I was ordained in 1973 and have served all of my years of ministry in the Little Rock Conference and later, after the merger, the Arkansas Conference.

What congregations have you served?

I began my ministry as associate pastor at First UMC, Texarkana, AR. From there I have served the following pastorates: Grady/Trinity charge, Sardis UMC, First UMC, Murfreesboro, Wesley UMC in Pine Bluff, First UMC of Hope, First UMC in Pine Bluff, and back as senior pastor to First UMC, Texarkana.

What led you to accept a call to professional ministry?

I was in my last year of college at the University of Arkansas at Monticello being trained to become a marine biologist when, during a campus revival, I felt a radical call to enter the ministry.

The rest is a long history of

mountaintop and valley experiences, but through them all I have never questioned my "call" to the ordained ministry.

What are you most looking forward to about about your new role with the North District?

I look forward to learning what I need to know so I can be a listening, caring and supportive pastor to the North District pastors and their families, as well as the North District churches and their families.

What is something that your district should know about you?

I enjoy learning. I enjoy laughing. I enjoy living. I try not to take myself too seriously. I am thankful to our Gracious God in Jesus Christ for these things among the many other gifts I have experienced throughout my life.

The last book(s) you read: Because I read many books at a time, I finish many books at a time.

Some of the books I most recently completed were: *All Over but the Shoutin'* by Rick Bragg, *An Army at Dawn* by Rick Atkinson and *Letters to a Young Doubter* by William Sloane Coffin.

Guilty pleasure: Reading!

Favorite Bible verse: Philippians 2:4 — "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves."

In a "me-centered" world, this is a message of God's radical, powerful and transforming Grace, which is to be seen in every professing Christian. For me, this verse is both a challenge to accomplish and a call to affirm.

COMING UP

Singer/songwriter Celia Whitley will perform Aug. 9 and 10 and First UMC-Paragould, 404 W. Main St. She will lead worship, preach and perform at the 8, 9 and 11 a.m. worship services on Aug. 9. She also will headline a youth event at 6 p.m. that evening (a meal will be available at 5 p.m. with advance reservations). Whitley will lead a closing worship service at 6 p.m. Aug. 10. To make reservations, contact Jeff Weaver at (870) 239-8541 or jweaver72450@yahoo.com.

First UMC-Little Rock, 723 Center St., will offer Financial Peace

University each Tuesday starting at 6:30-8:30 Aug. 18. The class is a 13-week biblically based accountability course that teaches good stewardship. The first hour will be a lesson taught via DVD by Dave Ramsey, followed by small-group discussion.

The cost is \$93 and includes a lesson workbook, budgeting forms, envelopes, an audio CD library and Dave Ramsey's book.

The registration deadline is Aug. 10. To register, call Trent Hubbard at (501) 372-2256. To learn more, visit www.daveramsey.com.

A Single Adult Ministry Seminar

that will be 9:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. Aug. 29 has changed locations to St. James UMC in Little Rock.

This course will explore ways to include single adult ministries in congregations. Lunch will be provided. Registration costs \$10 person and \$25 for three or more from one church.

To sign up, call Jenni Duncan of St. James UMC in Little Rock at (501) 217-6708.

The Voyagers Gospel Quartet will perform at 6:30 p.m. Aug. 30 at Western Hills UMC, 4601 Western Hills Ave., Little Rock. To learn more,

call Carlton Finch at (501) 796-8817 or the church at (501) 565-2384.

Community of Hope ministry classes are now forming at St. James UMC, 321 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock.

The classes will be at 6-8 p.m. Sept. 2 through December 2 in Cottey Parlor. A retreat will follow from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 16 followed by a three month internship and commissioning ceremony April 17.

The Community of Hope program is based on Benedictine spirituality and creates communities committed to pastoral care.

Class size is limited and interviewing is taking place. The cost of the course is \$75, which includes a lay chaplain's badge and certificate of completion. To learn more, call Jenny Smith at (501) 217-6755.

"Mount Sequoyah Unplugged,"

a weekend singer/songwriter retreat, will be Sept. 11-12 at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, 150 N.W. Skyline Drive, Fayetteville. The retreat will feature workshops on songwriting, guitar picking and a Saturday night concert. To learn more, call (800) 760-8126 or e-mail mail@mountsequoyah.org.



Youth members at First UMC in North Little Rock pray before embarking on a "30 Hour Famine" to benefit World Vision and local hunger ministries.

Photo by Heather Hahn

NLR youth group fasts for hunger ministries

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Over two days, growing teens used to grazing in the family fridge whenever they want volunteered to go entirely without food.

The youth group of First United Methodist Church in North Little Rock participated in World Vision's "30 Hour Famine" from noon June 19 to 6 p.m. June 20. The fast and church lock-in helped raise money for the Christian relief agency and also raised awareness of global hunger, which along with preventable disease, claims the lives of 26,000 children a day. The teens also collected items for the Gardner Memorial UMC food pantry.

"I really want them to start understanding world issues," said Todd Lovell, the church's youth coordinator. "In our culture where we worship the Golden Arches, I want them to know what it really means to be hungry."

In fact, some of the participants got a McDonald's fix just before their fast. Among them was Katie Drake, 14. She said she was joining in the fast because she thought it would be fun and draw her closer to God.

The teens didn't just go without food. They put away their iPods, handheld gaming consoles and whatever other overnight bags and bedding they brought for the lock-in. At start of the fast, Lovell invited the group to put anything they brought from home in the center of the church gym.

He explained that he wanted the

kids to be able "to go as deep as they wanted to go" in immersing themselves in being poor. He even had old refrigerator boxes for the kids to sleep in outside. Still he was very clear that the youth could get their belongings at any time.

"Nobody gave in," Lovell explained. "The stuff was still there when their families arrived for the dinner we had the next night."

About half the kids also slept outside in the cardboard boxes, Lovell said, even though the weather was still "miserably hot" late at night.

Jake West, 13, was among them. "To know that people do that everyday — especially kids — was even more heartbreaking than the food thing," he said.

During their fast, the kids weren't spared temptation. That night, the group attended an Arkansas Travelers baseball game where the enticing scent of popcorn, hot dogs and other concessions wafted through the stands. Also just about every page in the program had a food ad.

The group participated in the fast at the instigation of North Little Rock youth member Taylor Rogers, 16, who learned about the program from his father's church in Illinois.

He found the North Little Rock fast very enlightening.

"I just learned the different things that happen when you go without food — the hunger pangs and the way you start thinking differently," he said. "You stop thinking about food and thinking about other people more."

Coming in the Sept. 4 issue,
Vacation Bible School photos

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.

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

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

Oct. 13-29: Tanzanian Medical Mission trip sponsored by One Book Foundation and Charles

Wiggins. The team will be working at the Coptic Hospital in Musoma and teaching courses to improve the health of the Tanzanians and to enrich their faith. A doctor is especially needed. David Poulter at (479) 903-1434 or poulterdsd@yahoo.com or Martha McCandless (479) 442-9975 or mpalbright@cox.net.

Ongoing:

Wesley Foundation, UALR: Help needed with general maintenance, cleaup, painting, etc. Contact Maxine Allen atmallen@arumc.org,

(501)663-1153 office or (501) 539-0280 cell.

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.

Grandriver Station of Louisiana Disaster Response needs volunteer teams to rebuild homes damaged by the last two hurricanes. Contact Michelle L. Hadden, at (225) 659-7450.

CLASSIFIEDS

St. James United Methodist Church is currently accepting applications for the position of Communications Coordinator. This support staff position is responsible for producing newsletters, bulletins and other communications of the church in attractive, professional and creative formats. The position is full time, Monday thru Friday, and entitled to our excellent benefits package. We offer a competitive salary and provide an enjoyable work environment. Persons of high integrity with verifiable references may send resumes to St. James UMC, 321 Pleasant Valley Dr., Little Rock, AR 72212 or fax to 225-0308 or email amy@stjames-umc.org.

Children's Minister: First United Methodist Church of Bryant is currently seeking a part-time Director of Children's Ministry. FUMC Bryant is a 1200+ member church with a past and current tradition of strong ministry to children and their families. A successful candidate will have a passion for helping children become disciples of Jesus Christ, the ability to recruit, train and lead a team of volunteers in this ministry, and a team spirit. Please send resumes and inquiries to: Children's Minister, FUMC, Bryant, 508 N. Reynolds Rd., Bryant, AR 72022 or email: revtaulbee@fumcbryant.org or call (501) 847-0226 for more information.

Home Study. Save \$\$\$ Christian Bible College, P.O. Box 8968 Rocky Mt., NC 27804 Phone (252)451-1031; www.christianbiblecollege.org

Deadline for the application process remains open until August 15, 2009 at First United Methodist Church in downtown Little Rock for the position of Director of Youth Ministries. The director is responsible for all aspects of youth ministry for a constituency of almost 100 youth between the ages of 12 to 18. A college degree in a related field is expected. A passion for Christian discipleship with young people and their families is vital. First Church is a 1200 member congregation in the heart of downtown Little Rock. Cover letter and a complete resume with references may be sent until August 15 to Sr. Pastor Michael L. Mattox, 723 Center Street, Little Rock, AR 72201 or email at mmattox@fumcl.org.

Youth Minister: Cabot United Methodist Church currently has an opening for Minister of Youth. CUMC is 1,300 members strong with a passion for making disciples. A successful candidate will have a heart for youth, a passion for ministry, and team spirit. Resumes can be sent to Youth Ministry, CUMC, P.O. Box 1118, Cabot, and AR, 72023 or email to: office@cabotumc.org.

First United Methodist Church in Benton announces a job opening for Director of Music Ministries. We are a 1500+ member congregation with a wide variety of music ministries. Minimum Requirements: Degree in sacred music, formal music education, or certification in music ministries, and a minimum of 5 years related church music experience. Responsibilities include: Coordinate the total vocal music program of the church including children, youth, and adult choirs. Direct choir in traditional worship services; oversee and assist contemporary service coordinator in music for traditional and contemporary worship services; direct handbell choirs for children and adults. This job offers a generous benefits package. Salary commensurate with experience. A complete job description is available on request. Please send resumes to: Search Committee, First United Methodist Church, 200 North Market Street, Benton, AR 72015, or fax (501) 315-3603.

Choir Director: Fairfield Bay United Methodist Church seeks a qualified individual to direct the Chancel Choir. Primary duties include practicing the choir each Wednesday and directing the choir Sunday mornings. Resumes should be sent to Fairfield Bay United Methodist Church, PO Box 1399, Fairfield Bay, AR 72088.

• **YOUTHWORKS** *Continued from Page 1A*

“It makes me feel really good to help people,” said Kortni Isom, 14, United Methodist from Mediapolis, Iowa. The teen is perched atop a ladder, stripping away old paint and preparing a house’s back wall for the next day’s paint job.

“I like seeing how it affects people, like the way the children’s faces light up when you play with them.”

This is the ninth summer YouthWorks teams have come to work amid the quilted patchwork of cotton, soybean and feed-corn fields that blankets the Arkansas Delta. Over nine weeks between June and August, different mission teams of 40 to 80 youth and adult chaperones arrive each Sunday night and depart each Friday morning.

During their stay, residents say, the young volunteers help restore dilapidated neighborhoods and keep community spirit alive even as the local population dwindles.

But YouthWorks wouldn’t be here without the leadership of Marvell United Methodist Church members.

“They are blessings to us,” said James Davenport, YouthWorks’ site manager in Marvell and one of five staff members who spend the full summer in town.

“One of the greatest impressions I take from being here is the love they have for the community and the love they have for each other.”

A rewarding partnership

The congregation hosts a community spaghetti dinner for YouthWorks staff members and mission team volunteers each Thursday night.



Katie Isom, 15, of Mediapolis, Iowa, weaves a friendship bracelet for a youngster at Kids Club.

Photo by Heather Hahn



Sara Miller, a 24-year-old United Methodist chaperone from Mediapolis, Iowa, helps a child decorate a mosaic of David and Goliath, at YouthWorks Kids Club in Marvell in eastern Arkansas. The ministry is partnered with Marvell UMC.

Photo by Heather Hahn

In addition, the town’s Civic Club — composed mainly of Marvell UMC members — refurbished and maintains the former school buildings where YouthWorks mission teams sleep, shower and lead a children’s program during the day.

The church also aids YouthWorks staff and volunteers with whatever issues arise during their work. For example, when earlier this summer some volunteers found a stray puppy at one of their work sites, church members found a new home for the pooch.

In turn, YouthWorks staff members participate and sometimes help lead worship at Marvell UMC in the summer.

Barbie Washburn, a Marvell UMC member and YouthWorks’ community contact, said people have joined the United Methodist church in part because they like its involvement in the ministry.

“There are a lot of elderly in our church, and sometimes it’s easy to get in a rut doing things the same way,” she said. “These young people who have come in have pushed us in new directions. We have had praise and worship services for them.”

YouthWorks has more than 60 mission sites in the continental United States, Puerto Rico and Canada. The organization has a second Arkansas site in Booneville, in the Ozark Mountains, where mission teams do much the same work as they do in Marvell.

Initially locals were a bit skeptical of the summertime visitors.

“People were asking, ‘Why are these kids paying money to come to Marvell?’” Washburn recalled. “But then you meet them and spend time with them. We fall in love with each group that comes through here.”

Still, it took some wandering in the (Arkansas) wilderness for the Minneapolis, Minn.,-based ministry and the United Methodist congregation to find each other.

A YouthWorks staff member got lost on the way to Mississippi and ended up in Marvell. She stopped by city hall for directions, where she met Washburn, who was then an assistant to the mayor.

“We say it happened by accident,” Washburn said. “But I know the Lord had a hand in it.”

The two women started talking, and Washburn asked to hear more about the program and invited the staff member to lunch. The next day, Washburn said, another YouthWorks’ representative came to Marvell to begin setting up the program.

Faith lessons

During their stay, mission teams split into smaller groups that take turns doing different aspects of the program.

Groups spend two days fixing up houses and the other two days leading Kids Club, a Vacation Bible School-style program of games, songs, crafts and lessons about Jesus. The volunteers also help lead an afternoon sports camp for preteens that typically includes a Bible lesson. They sometimes do other service projects as time allows.

The week of July 5, the 65 volunteers came from a variety of churches in Iowa, Michigan, Illinois and Florida.

Leesa Hansknecht brought a group of teens from St. Gerald Catholic Church in Farmington Hills, Mich., a Detroit suburb.

“The kids are loving Marvell because we aren’t used to a city that is so small where everybody knows

everybody and everybody is grateful to have a conversation with you,” she said.

“We’re used to our big-city life where you have a million people who walk by and don’t speak to you.”

Michael Koziara, a member of her youth group, said his time in Marvell has been a great opportunity to expand his horizons.

The 16-year-old was serving as “foreman” for one house’s paint job, supervising the project and making sure his fellow teens had enough water to stay hydrated.

“It’s strengthened my faith in two different ways,” he said. “It’s made me appreciate that God has given me the chance to help other people, and it’s also deepened my faith because we have chances for worship, chances for prayer and chances to work with other kids who are fellow Christians.”

Dan Petersen, a United Methodist adult chaperone from Mediapolis, Iowa, said the youth from his farming town were eager to help another rural community. The more than 20 kids in the Mediapolis group are part of a multi-denominational youth group jointly operated by Catholic and Protestant churches in town.

“We live along the Mississippi River,” Petersen said. “Last year, the neighboring town got wiped out by the flood, and here comes everybody from across the country to help Iowa. This is our chance to give back. We know what it’s like to need help.”

Eugene Quarles, a Marvell city council member, is among the program’s biggest fans. Each year, he pairs the YouthWorks volunteers with homes that could use a fresh coat of paint.

He said the group’s youthful enthusiasm is contagious. When one house on a block gets a newly painted exterior, neighbors often will step up their own home maintenance.



A Marvell boy works on his skills as a first baseman at a sports camp YouthWorks offers for local adolescents.

Photo by Heather Hahn

“They are very nice young people,” Quarles said. “They have been a positive influence on our children who see these young people try to help others.”

Washburn said the program has provided more than neighborhood beautification. Area convenience stores get increased traffic, and the local John Deere Store typically sells out of its T-shirts each Friday before the mission teams are in town.

YouthWorks even has been a boost to tourism.

One year, two teen volunteers decided after their mission experience to return to town for their Christmas break. The teens worshiped Christmas Eve with the Marvell UMC congregation.

The church also has a new youth and music leader year-round thanks to a sister ministry of YouthWorks called GreaterWorks, which operates after-school programs and completes other service projects during the school year.

Bekki Hagen, originally from the college town of Northfield, Minn., came as a GreaterWorks staff member two years ago.

“I fell in love with the people of the church and the community and decided to come back to serve here,” said Hagen, who also works as an art teacher for the Marvell-Elaine School District.

“Would it be nice to drive to a restaurant or a movie theater in 10 minutes? Yes. But the people make up for that, especially the church. They were so welcoming and loving, it was instantly my second home. I felt like part of the family.”

Washburn said the church looks forward to welcoming mission-minded teens and adults for years to come.

To learn more about YouthWorks, visit www.youthworks.com.

First Hispanic Miss Philander Smith asset to United Methodist ministries

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Francennett Herrera didn't know what to expect when she decided last spring to enter the pageant for Miss Philander Smith College. After all, she was one of the only two Hispanic students enrolled at this historically black, United Methodist institution in Little Rock.

But after a rigorous competition that included such familiar categories as talent, evening gown and oratory, her fellow students selected Herrera as the first Latina in the college's history to win the title of Miss PSC.

"Shock," she said was her first emotion when she heard her name called. "I was on cloud nine, let me tell you," she said. "I started jumping up and down."

If anything, her family was even more excited when she called them with the news. Her mother in Chicago screamed; her grandmother in Mexico cried.

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the junior political science major will serve as the campus queen, joining a long tradition among historically black colleges and universities. She will be the college's goodwill ambassador and a campus representative. Each spring, *Ebony Magazine* typically features the pictures all the HBCU queens.

The 20-year-old isn't just making a positive impression on the student body of Philander Smith, but also on the broader United Methodist Church in Central Arkansas.

This summer, she is the inaugural recipient of the John Woodruff Summer Fellowship for Social Witness at First United Methodist in downtown Little Rock. In that role, she is working for 10 weeks with the church's mission and outreach ministry assisting the city's poor and homeless.

"When I heard what it was, I knew I just had to do this," Herrera said. "I want to help people."

She coordinates with city and religious agencies to find people food to eat and a place to sleep. She also puts her bilingual skills to work, translating for Spanish speakers whenever needed. On her second day on the job, she was already acting as interpreter for patients at an interfaith charitable health clinic.

Michael Mattox, First UMC's



Francennett Herrera is the first Hispanic Miss Philander Smith and a fellowship recipient at First UMC in Little Rock.

Photo courtesy of First United Methodist in Little Rock

senior pastor, said Herrera has brought a passion to her role that is a fitting tribute to the late Woodruff, a First UMC member and journalist committed to social justice and equity.

Herrera learned about the internship from C.J. Duvall, senior pastor of Theresa Hoover UMC in Little Rock. Duvall first got to know Herrera through her leadership in Philander Smith College's "Bless the Mic" lecture series.

He described her as the sort of disciple who will help the United Methodist Church thrive.

"She's open-minded, ready to learn and ready to serve God," he said. "She will help keep the church aflame."

This is her second post with the United Methodist Church. During the spring semester, she interned at McCabe Chapel UMC in North Little Rock.

Deena Marie Hamilton, the church's senior pastor, said Herrera assisted with the church's tutoring program and helped coordinate a care ministry for church members. Hamilton credits Herrera with the idea of mailing postcards to members to fill out with their needs.

"It's a way for me to keep up with what's going on with the people at my church," Hamilton said. "For me, it was an important way to let people know that the church cared about them."

Originally born in a small town in Durango, Mexico, Herrera moved with her family to the United States at 13. She spent some time in Washington state before settling in Chicago, where she graduated from

Olive Harvey Middle College, a predominantly black high school on a city college campus.

Herrera chose Philander Smith after talking to the admission director and the college president, Walter Kimbrough. She also received the college's Mason scholarship.

"How many people get to talk to the college president? That's not something any of the other colleges that accepted me did," Herrera said. "I like the family environment here. The teachers have a one-on-one relationship with you. It's not like you attend class with 500 people, and you have to speak through a microphone."

Herrera grew up going to Catholic Church each Sunday, but when she came to Philander Smith she was eager to get involved in Wesley Chapel UMC on campus. "It was just so warm and welcoming," Herrera said. "I felt I had to belong. I love my church."

She was blown away by the energy of college chaplain and senior pastor Ronnie Miller-Yow, whom she and other students call "Rev."

"She came to the United Methodist Church her first Sunday here, and has been there ever since," Miller-Yow said.

"Whatever cause we were working with, she got involved. She has been a blessing to us."

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TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

Martha Taylor, director of communications for the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, was elected to a three-year term to the Board of Trustees for United Methodist Reporter Communications (UMR Communications), a nonprofit communications firm based in Dallas.

In addition to publishing a national weekly newspaper, *United Methodist Reporter*, the company produces and publishes digital and print products for secular and religious clients.

The United Methodist Communications board is responsible for the development of UMR Communications operational policies, procedures and regulations; to represent the organization to business, industry and public audiences; and to monitor the finances, programs and performance of the organization.

Clarence E. Trice, certified public accountant, has been named vice president and chief financial officer of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. He will be

responsible for accounting, administrative, investment, probate and trust activities.

Trice has served as audit manager for Knapp, Craig & Co., P.A., in Little Rock for more than 20 years. Trice and his wife, Nancy, have two sons, Trent and Matthew. They are members of Trinity United Methodist Church in Little Rock.

Lauren Johnston was the recipient of the \$2,250 Martha Lynn and Felix Thompson Scholarship on June 21 at the annual home concert of the St. James Ringers. Lauren is the daughter of Tanya and Bill Lewis. She will attend the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

First United Methodist Church in Siloam Springs was named Business of the Quarter by the Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors Club on July 10 at the chamber's monthly First Friday Coffee.

The selection was made by Ambassador members who vote each quarter on the business they feel has done the most for the community and for the chamber.

Correction



Hermitage UMC in Hermitage 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 Mary Reep, Hermitage's senior pastor; and Matt Mosler, TV personality and evangelist. A cutline in the June 5 issue wrongly identified the church's town.

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• APPOINTMENTS *Continued from Page 1A*

Church system of governance, the bishop and district superintendents have the final say on where pastors serve.

When elders take the vows of ordination, they agree to “support and maintain” church discipline and polity, and that includes the itinerancy.

“We are not called by local churches,” Crutchfield said. “We are a ‘sent’ ministry.”

He said the appointment process, in a way, is a yearlong affair occurring whenever district superintendents, congregations and the pastors themselves think about their assignments.

But the formal process begins in early December when church staff-parish relations committees receive evaluation forms to fill out on their pastors. Starting in January, district superintendents begin holding consultations with each of their pastors.

“The consultation between the district superintendent and the pastor is extraordinarily important,” Crutchfield said. “It’s a time for what I like to call ‘gracious candor’ when both pastor and district superintendent can share thoughts, ideas and information that need to be shared that affect pastoral effectiveness.”

From late February up through the Annual Conference in June, the bishop and district superintendents will meet to make appointments. They take into consideration the church evaluation forms, winter consultations as well as each church’s statistical data such as membership, attendance and baptisms.

Crutchfield said the Arkansas Conference has records going back at least 10 years on each of its churches that have been around that long. The conference also has statistical information for each pastor.

The data is treated in context, Crutchfield said. The cabinet recognizes that the overall population is growing in Northwest Arkansas but shrinking in the Delta.

The itinerant system has been part of the Methodist movement since John Wesley first began assigning lay preachers to minister to his religious societies across the British Isles.

Under Francis Asbury, the first Methodist bishop in the U.S., the itinerant system grew along with the newly independent United States.

John F. Walker, who teaches Methodist history and doctrine at the local pastor licensing school, said the itinerant system was “vital in the

growing nation.”

“The early preachers were young and had to be very committed,” Walker said. “They went where they were sent and often faced great hardship. The life expectancy was not much beyond 30. The very earliest could not marry. If they did they had to ‘locate,’ which meant they were still ordained, but not itinerate.”

All that hardship paid off. Lore has it, Walker said, that when pioneers went west, they’d be greeted by a Methodist preacher before they started to unload their wagon.

Even now the United Methodist Church is more widely distributed in the United States than other Protestant denominations such as the Southern Baptist Convention and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which are concentrated in specific geographical regions.

Walker, a retired elder in Hot Springs, said itinerancy has changed a great deal not only since the days of the frontier but also from his own early days in the ministry.

“I remember as a young preacher that appointments were made at conference, with little or no consultation with either the lay delegate or the preacher,” he said. “According to my dad, Frank Walker, who was a member of the Little Rock Conference, the preachers [and] the churches didn’t know who would be appointed where until the bishop read the appointments.

“My dad told of a preacher who had moved often and thought there was no place the bishop could send him that was worse than where he was. When the bishop read the appointments he ... stood and said loudly, ‘My God, I forgot about that place!’”

Today, most pastors know about their new posts months or weeks in advance of moving day. Crutchfield said the cabinet also weighs the needs of dual-income households and family obligations.

John Fleming, now the senior pastor of First UMC in Sheridan, said moving can be tough—especially on children. But he fully knew what he was signing up for when he joined the United Methodist ministry.

“I understood with the bishop’s guidance and the cabinet’s advice and God’s leading, that they would put me where they thought I could do the greatest good,” he said. “I have always been willing to go when I am asked to go because I believe there is a great Power at work.”



Faith Funds

Not Retired from God’s Work

Rev. Herschel H. McClurkin, Jr., may be designated as a retired United Methodist Minister, but his current service belies that title. He’s the pastor at Kibler United Methodist Church in Alma, and he and his wife, Mardell, lead the Pacesetters at First UMC-Fort Smith and serve as camp directors for Shoal Creek Camp.

A long-time member of the UMFA Board of Directors, Rev. McClurkin believes United Methodists in Arkansas need to be conscientious in how we use the resources God has entrusted to us. “The Foundation is a direct, easy way for people to see that their funds designated for United Methodist causes are appropriately used to advance the Kingdom of God in keeping with His will,” he said.

He said the Foundation helps local churches with endowments for special needs like building maintenance, an increasing burden for many congregations. “Some elderly individuals with trust funds at UMFA are taken care of by staff members,” Rev. McClurkin said. “There is tremendous dedication to these individuals; The Foundation’s staff has a Christian spirit as well as professional expertise.”



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REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

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Upcoming vote

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Section B

August 7, 2009



Campaign bears fruit

PHOTO BY JOAN LABARR

Africa University Vice Chancellor Fanuel Tagwira (left), Bishop Alfred L. Norris and Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe cut the ribbon of the Alfred L. Norris Health Center.

Texas UMs dedicate new health clinic in Zimbabwe

BY JOAN LABARR
Special Contributor

OLD MUTARE, ZIMBABWE — Texas United Methodists celebrated the July 16 dedication of a new health clinic at Africa University as “a place of healing—a place of wholeness.”

About 30 representatives from churches in the North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church joined some 250 Africa University leaders, faculty and students and government officials for the day of ceremony and celebration.

The North Texas Conference had raised \$500,000 for the clinic and another half-million for health-science scholarships in an initiative begun in 2007 by Bishop Alfred Norris and

■ See ‘Zimbabwe,’ page 4B

UMR accepting CEO applications

STAFF REPORTS

DALLAS, Texas—The board of directors for UMR Communications is seeking a dynamic and visionary leader to take the role of the organization’s new chief executive officer. Applications will be accepted through Sept. 1.

Board members said farewell July 16 to Sarah E. Wilke, UMR’s CEO since May 2004. Ms. Wilke is the new world

publisher and editor for Upper Room Ministries in Nashville, Tenn.

John Greenberger, UMR’s chief financial officer since 2006, is serving as interim CEO.

UMR Communications is the parent company of the award-winning *United Methodist Reporter*. The weekly newspaper has been publishing since 1847, when it began as the *Texas Methodist*.

UMR’s mission is to publish quality religion news and provide print

and digital resources for communication and education.

The national, independent communications ministry provides weekly print and electronic media—the *Reporter* is its flagship product—as well as custom design, variable data printing, marketing and targeted mailing services.

Board members say the organization’s next CEO will provide vision-

■ See ‘New CEO,’ page 2B



UMR PHOTO BY MARY JACOBS

UMR board members met with former CEO Sarah Wilke for the last time in July. From left, seated, are Shari Goodwin, Sarah Wilke and Ruth Palmer. Standing are: Pat Stroman, Hiram Smith Jr., the Rev. Morris Matthis, the Rev. Gail Ford Smith, Dr. Steve Trout, Gavin Richardson, Martha Taylor and Tom Palmer.

FAITH WATCH

Obama receives gift from Mormon head

President Obama met July 20 with Mormon leaders at the White House and received a printed history of his family as a gift from the church. The five leather-bound books detail several generations on both sides of Mr. Obama's family, and continue the Mormon tradition of presenting genealogical records to new U.S. presidents. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), who is Mormon, helped arrange the meeting with Mormon president Thomas Monson and Dallin Oaks, chairman of the church's genealogical committee.

Federal court rules on Bible distribution

A school district in Iron County, Mo., violated the U.S. constitution by permitting the distribution of Gideon Bibles outside classroom time to fifth graders, a federal appeals court ruled July 16. However the court also decided the district can enact a rule allowing "any printed material" approved by the superintendent. Mathew Staver, founder of Orlando, Fla.-based Liberty Counsel, told Religion News Service he was pleased that "a new equal-access policy can finally go into effect."

Orthodox group fights ecumenism

A group of Greek Orthodox clergy led by three archbishops has pledged to resist all ecumenical ties with Roman Catholics and Protestants. The group's manifesto, "A Confession of Faith Against Ecumenism," says the "Orthodox Church is not merely the true church; she is the only church," and adds that the "pan-heresy of ecumenism . . . insults the dogma of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church." Leaders of the Greek Church will debate the issue if it is brought before the synod of all diocesan bishops, a church spokesman told Ecumenical News International.

—Compiled by Bill Fentum

Côte d'Ivoire radio to launch

BY TIM TANTON
United Methodist News Service

ABIDJAN, Côte d'Ivoire—When United Methodists begin broadcasting by radio in December, they will be employing a powerful new channel for informing and educating people in this West African country.

"Radio can help with many things," says Robert Beugré Mambé, a United Methodist and the official in charge of planning the country's national elections. "First of all, it can help people to live in peace, to love God. . . . People who love God will also love their neighbors."

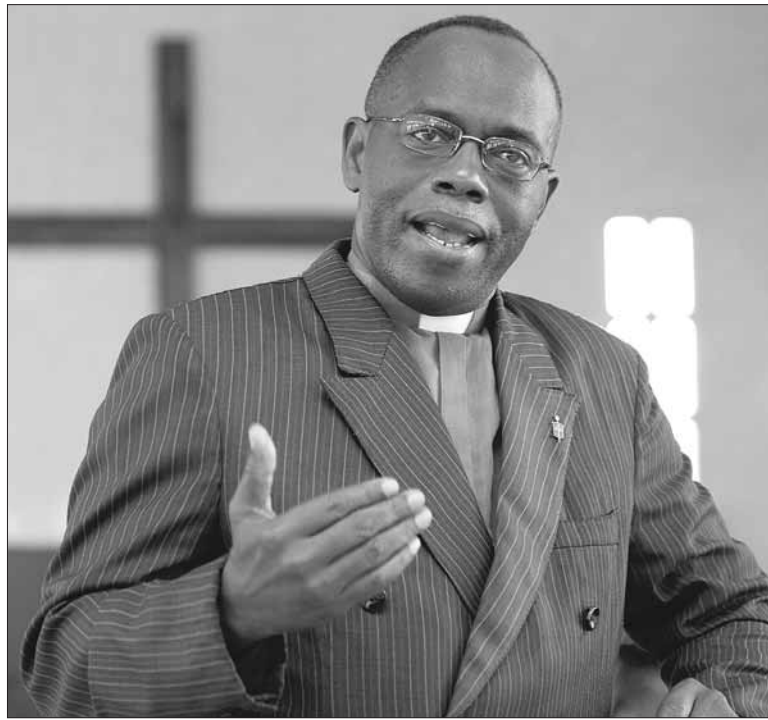
Those words are not said lightly in a country trying to emerge from a period of instability and civil war. Mr. Mambé sees radio's potential in helping the country move forward, teaching people about citizenship and abiding within social norms. It can also inform them during the voting process and encourage a fair, free and peaceful election, he says.

"Radio for the United Methodist Church would be an excellent, desirable, essential and necessary initiative," he says.

The church's Côte d'Ivoire Conference will launch its own community radio station by the end of the year, with help from United Methodist Communications, the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry and the denomination's Texas Conference.

The station, EMU-CI—the letters are an abbreviation for the United Methodist Church—Côte d'Ivoire—received its FM frequency license this month. The station will be at 101.6 on Ivorian radios.

The Ivorian church currently has 30 minutes of airtime every Sunday to preach the gospel on state-run radio and television, says Côte d'Ivoire Bishop Benjamin Boni. "We need to go beyond that. That's why we are grateful that UMRCom and other partners are joining us to see how we can set



UMNS PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

The United Methodist Church has 30 minutes of airtime every Sunday to preach the gospel on state-run radio and television, says Bishop Benjamin Boni.

up a community radio [station] in this country."

The Rev. Larry Hollon, who leads United Methodist Communications, said community radio can be "a lifeline of information" by providing a voice for people who otherwise are not heard and conveying information about health, economics, parenting, citizenship and spiritual concerns.

It is the "most efficient, effective and economical way to reach people with important information," he says. "It's particularly valuable in rural areas and among urban populations who are underserved or ignored because they don't represent viable markets for commercial broadcasters."

Jean Youou of Abidjan, a former Côte d'Ivoire Conference lay leader, sees radio as a powerful tool for evangelization. He notes that a station would enable the church to reach people at any time with news about the church.

Gen. Philippe Mangou, a United Methodist and leader of Côte d'Ivoire's military, is responsible for helping bring stability to the country. He affirms the church's plans for community radio.

"Communication goes beyond the borders," he says. Through radio, the church can reach many people. "With all that Côte d'Ivoire went through, people need to listen to the word of God."

UMCom has committed \$155,000 to getting the station up and running and funded for its first year. The Texas Conference is committing \$50,000 and the Côte d'Ivoire Conference is providing \$20,000. The partnership is seeking additional funding for years two through five.

The station will be behind Jubilee United Methodist Church in Abidjan and will cost about \$200,000 a year to operate. It will serve the Abidjan area, and organizers are still waiting for the license, which will specify the area to be served. The format, including hours of operation, will depend on the final budget.

THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER

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UM CONNECTIONS

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More than 3 billion people, half of the world's population, live on less than \$2.50 a day. To help church leaders and members seek an end to suffering, the fourth Change the World conference will take place Oct. 22-23 at Ginghamburg Church, a United Methodist congregation in Tipp City, Ohio. The conference will feature speakers and workshops on topics that include how to involve youth and children in missions, how to aid those in the midst of crisis and how to obtain funding for missions. For information, visit <http://ginghamsburg.org/changetheworld>.

Worship seminar slated in Illinois

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary's Church and the Black Experience will offer an Aug. 15 workshop focusing on reviving worship through music and sacred movement. The Summer Music and Worship Seminar, designed for pastors, church musicians, choirs and dancers will take place in Evanston, Ill. The conference is coordinated by the Rev. Cynthia Wilson, who co-directed music and worship at the 1996 and 2000 General Conferences. Call 847-866-3964 or e-mail cbe_summer@gmail.com.

Methodist layperson wins fiction award

Joy Jordan-Lake, a member of Christ United Methodist Church in Franklin, Tenn., received the 2009 Christy Award for excellence in Christian fiction July 11 at the International Christian Retailers Show in Denver, Colo. Her book, *Blue Hole Back Home* (David C. Cook, 2008) took home honors in the First Novel category. Ms. Jordan-Lake is also the author of *Working Families* (WaterBrook Press), *Why Jesus Makes Me Nervous* (Paraclete Press) and two other books.

—Compiled by Mary Jacobs

Lutherans, Methodists await full communion

BY THE ECLA NEWS SERVICE

CLYDE, Kan.—The Rev. Anita Strommen is a Lutheran pastor. Her congregation is United Methodist.

The pairing reflects a growing effort by some Christian denominations to share ministry resources as never before, including clergy.

“The congregation worried at first about having a pastor that wasn't Methodist,” said Ms. Strommen, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

“For me it hasn't been an issue,” she said. “I know what Lutherans teach. I know what Methodists teach.”

The ELCA has entered relationships—known as “full communion”—with five church bodies since 1997. A decision on teaming with United Methodists is expected at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly, Aug. 17-23 in Minneapolis, Minn.

United Methodists approved the



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ELCA

The Rev. Anita Strommen, a Lutheran pastor, leads the United Methodist congregation in Clyde, Kan.

plan last year. The agreement notes differences in the denominations' theologies, practices and traditions. It states they aren't “church-dividing.”

“The Holy Spirit is opening a door of possibility,” said Bishop Gregory Palmer, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops. “I hope that we walk together through that door.”

If approved, the vote will make official practices already at play in Clyde and elsewhere.

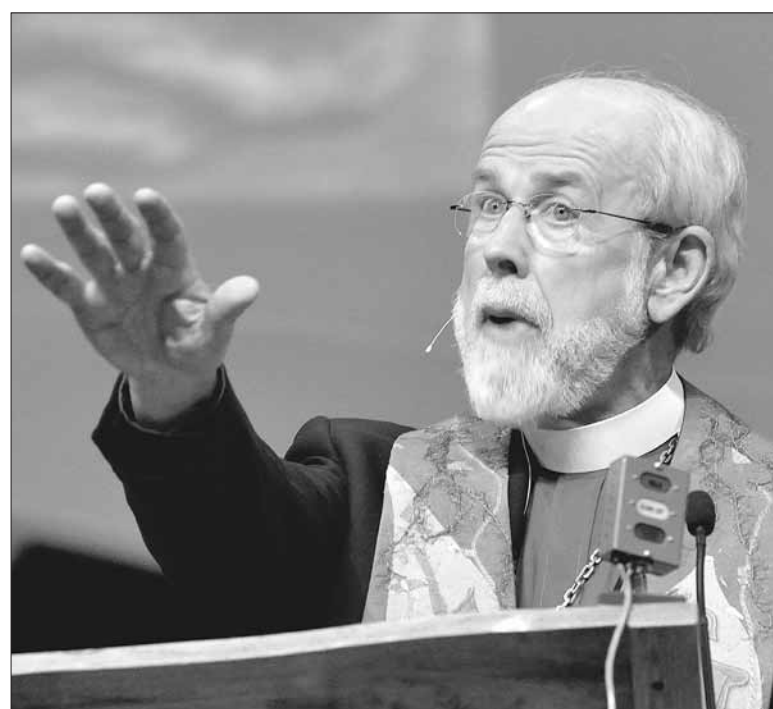
“We're all trying to get to heaven, so I see no problem with Lutherans helping us out,” said Elaine Cyr, co-president, Clyde United Methodist church council. “We still use the Methodist hymnals. We still hear the gospel preached. Pastor Anita is terrific.”

About 650 people live in Clyde, a north central Kansas town rimmed by corn and wheat fields. Ms. Strommen grew up 13 miles away in Concordia, Kan. Her husband, the Rev. David Strommen, is pastor of that town's only ELCA congregation. Because of their three young children, the part-time position in Clyde was ideal for her, Anita Strommen said.

That's not to say the transition has been free of tension or learning curves. Ms. Strommen had to become familiar with United Methodist worship and terminology.

Members said their biggest adjustment is Ms. Strommen's “Lutheran style” of prayer. She often turns her back to worshippers to face a large cross. ELCA pastors aren't required to pray that way, though that's how some were trained, said the Rev. Jennifer Ollikainen of the ELCA's Worship and Liturgical Resources unit.

“It took some getting used to, but it doesn't bother me now,” said Clyde organist Donna Jones. “Some people want her to turn back around. They say that's how Methodist pastors pray,



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO BY PAUL JEFFREY

Bishop Mark Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, preaches during the 2008 General Conference, where delegates approved a full communion agreement with the Lutherans.

and this is a Methodist church.”

The focus of full communion agreements is mission, church leaders said. The interchangeability of clergy is one aspect. Congregations might combine resources for a range of ministries, such as mental health services, missionary outreach or domestic violence prevention.

The Rev. Sue Mackey, a United Methodist pastor, serves ELCA congregations in Whitman and Michigan, N.D. She said she leads a Methodist service because “the Lutheran liturgy was uncomfortable for me.”

Full communion agreements involve ordained clergy. Some United Methodist ministers, however, are licensed but not ordained. One is Catherine Moorehead, who leads a joint Lutheran-Methodist service for

about 10 people in Lavina, Mont.

After the Lutheran church shut down years ago, members said working with Methodists was a way their congregation could survive. That meant, however, adapting to a Methodist worship service. Grape juice is given at Holy Communion rather than wine.

“From a pastoral standpoint it makes more sense to worship together,” Ms. Moorehead said. “To have a Lutheran congregation of six and a Methodist congregation of four in a town of 200 is plumb stupid.”

The ELCA's current full communion partners are the Moravian Church, the United Church of Christ, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Reformed Church in America.

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■ ZIMBABWE *Continued from page 1B*



completed under Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe.

Bishop Norris, who was assigned to the conference in 2006 to fill the term of the late Bishop Rhymes H. Moncure Jr., issued the challenge to raise funds.

“Today reminds us that the One who began a good work in us, will bring it to completion,” said the Rev. Tyrone Gordon, pastor of St. Luke “Community” UMC in Dallas, who was co-chair of the North Texas Conference Bishop’s Initiative for Africa University.

Africa University is the only United Methodist institution of higher learning on the African continent. Its mission is “transforming lives, transforming Africa.”

The university describes itself as a place where “The dream is alive,” and the clinic and scholarships advance the dream of improving health care, both on campus through the clinic and on the continent of Africa through the scholarships.

The newly endowed health science scholarships have the potential to equip young people to fill the need for public health workers and nurses throughout Africa.

During the dedication ceremony, the Africa University Choir performed as young AIDS orphans being helped by the university danced to the lively music.

Dr. James Salley, Africa University’s associate vice chancellor for institutional advancement, told the participants to sing along with the choir if they wanted, or to dance with the dancers. “This isn’t a home-going cer-



Angela Norris Johnson, daughter of Bishop Alfred L. and Dr. Mackie Norris, the new health center.



PHOTOS BY JOAN LABARR

TOP: The Rev. Derek Jacobs, an associate pastor at St. Luke “Community” UMC in Dallas, enjoys the hugs of eager little ones from Fairfield Children’s Home.

ABOVE: Members of the North Texas Conference delegation visit the new Alfred L. Norris Health Centre, which will provide student and faculty health services and offer health-education and counseling services.

emony or a funeral—it’s a glorious celebration,” he said.

Following the formal dedication and tour of the new facility, the North Texas guests joined in the dance in the clinic’s central garden, one of the building’s most striking features.

One of the most dramatic moments came with the announcement that the health clinic would be named for Bishop Norris, a former chair of the Africa University Development Committee, and that the scholarships would bear the name of Bishop Moncure, a longtime supporter of the university.

“I am deeply appreciative—I didn’t expect this,” Bishop Norris said. “It is a testament to the character of the annual conference that they were doing this out of love for the people and respect for their bishop at that time. In that sense, I accept the honor with humility and pride as well.”

Bishop Moncure’s widow, Jewell, and their daughter Roxanne Moncure attended the presentation. At the family’s request, contributions to Bishop Moncure’s memorial fund were included in the scholarship endowment.

Bishop Norris and his wife, Mackie, also were guests of honor for the dedication. Dr. Mackie Norris is a nursing educator who was part of the Africa University task force assigned

to study the health needs of sub-Saharan Africa, and has been a key leader in supporting the university.

The task force came up with the recommendations that shaped the plan for the Faculty (School) of Health Sciences, designed to get well-trained primary public health workers out in the communities as quickly as possible.

Lisa Tichenor, a lay member of Highland Park UMC in Dallas and a co-chair of the initiative, is a longtime supporter of the university. She described the ceremony as “a view into the culture.”

“There is nothing with which to compare it in the United States,” Ms. Tichenor added. “We have a dedication ceremony with dignitaries and constituencies, and it is over. The people of Africa University presented us with their very best.

“The way that they use what has been entrusted to them is evident in the incredible stewardship of their resources. The evidence of that stewardship was all around us in the new health center and the rest of the campus.”

Ms. Tichenor also described the new health clinic as essential to Zimbabwe, calling it “a green shoot in a nation where other public health services have withered.”



embraces a child during the post-dedication celebration in the courtyard of

Fanuel Tagwire, the new Africa University vice-chancellor, said he appreciated that North Texans chose to invest significant resources at a time when many are avoiding involvement with Zimbabwe.

“At a time when few believed it was possible to build in Zimbabwe, you saw possibility where others saw impossibility,” he said. “You took risks, and we thank you very much. This seed you planted, we will water and nurture it to help the people of Africa.”

Bishop Norris shared greetings from the North Texas Conference during the dedication service. “They care about what happens,” he said. “I have never been more proud of an annual conference in my life.”

He then addressed the audience: “You are children of God, important in the scheme of things. God says, I want the best for you, and I am saying, God cannot be disappointed.”

The Rev. Clayton Oliphint, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Richardson, Texas, recalled the role of

his father, the late Bishop Benjamin Oliphint, who had been president of the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry when Africa University was established. Bishop Oliphint had participated in the university’s 1991 ground-breaking.

“Today I wear my father’s tie to remind me of that time,” Dr. Oliphint said.

The Oliphint family was also represented by Mary Brooke Casad, Dr. Oliphint’s sister and executive secretary of the denomination’s Connectional Table, along with her husband, the Rev. Victor Casad, pastor of Christ United Methodist Church in Farmers Branch, Texas.

The new 20-room health clinic has two wings. The clinic has two observation wards—one for males and the other for females—a reception area and records center, pharmacy, consultation rooms, counseling rooms and a “laughter room” for stress management and diversion therapy. A youth-friendly space will accommodate health-related education and activities.

As Africa University celebrated its

‘This seed you planted, we will water and nurture it to help the people of Africa.’

—Fanuel Tagwire



ABOVE: As a former Africa University student, the Rev. Owen Ross of Christ’s Foundry Fellowship in Dallas, forges a special relationship with Fairfield Children’s Home.

RIGHT: North Texas Conference lay leader Richard Hearne, center, holds a painting that Africa University presented as a special gift to the conference. With him are Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe and his wife, Leslie Bledsoe.



newly completed health clinic, the vice chancellor said that the focus will be the Faculty of Science and Technology.

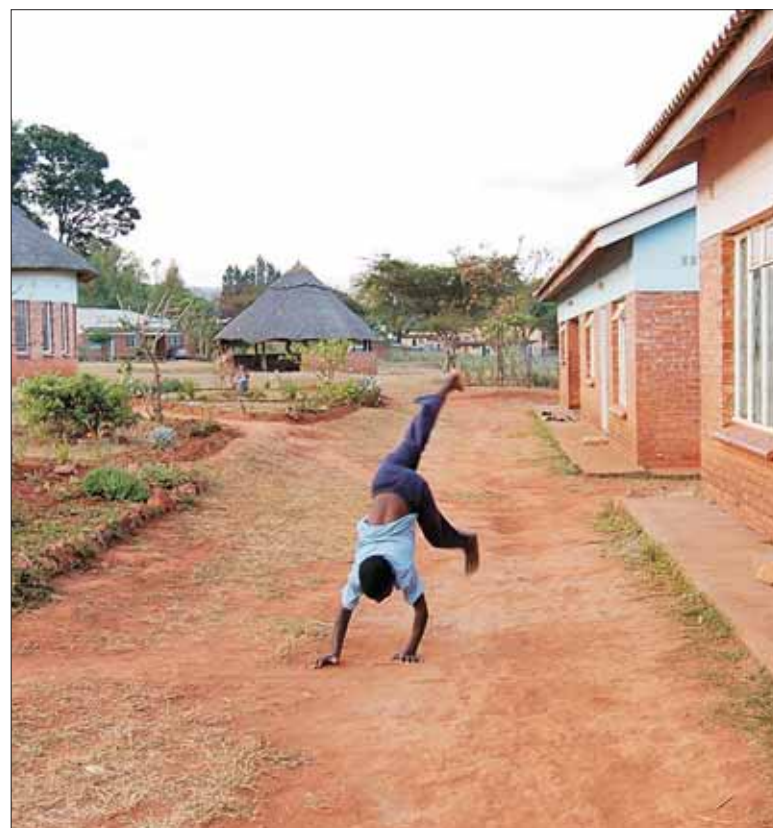
“Africa is behind as far as information technology is concerned,” Mr. Tagwire said, “and we are looking for people with IT skills to help bridge the digital divide.”

University officials also acknowledged the challenge of helping financially strapped students and families keep their young people in school. Enrollment has declined in the past year and several final-year students had to postpone graduation because they could not pay their final fees.

The university and local supporters have launched a campaign to fund scholarships for struggling students, especially those whose graduation was delayed because they were not able to write their final exams in June. The university has set an Aug. 3 opportunity for these students to take their exams and graduate if funds can be raised for their fees.

For information, contact the Africa University Office of Information and Public Affairs at dipa@africau.ac.zw.

Dr. LaBarr is the communications director for the North Texas Conference.



A child from the Fairfield Children’s Home performs a handstand for visitors.

Inward or outward?

BY ALLEN EWING-MERRILL
Special Contributor

If you want to see me get all worked up, talk to me about how we in the church need to take care of ourselves before we can begin to look outward.

This happened recently at a monthly interfaith meeting that I facilitate. We were brainstorming about joint community outreach projects when one of my colleagues spoke up. I'm sure he had no idea he was about to push one of my buttons.

"You know, we have to take care of ourselves before we can begin to look to the needs of others," he said. "We're a very busy church with a lot going on. We've got to take care of our own needs first."

Oh man. I wanted to jump across the table. My first thought: Does this guy read the same Gospels I read? Are we following the same Jesus?

I spoke up with more passion than substance, letting him know that I totally disagreed. I think it surprised him.

But isn't this why so many of our churches are struggling—or on the edge of closing their doors—because we've lost our bearings, because we've become little more than social clubs focused on institu-

tional maintenance?

Does anybody really believe that when we've taken care of all of our own needs, when the institution is finally running like a well-oiled machine, when

we've focused inwardly long enough, that somehow we'll then have the resources to begin caring for needs outside our church? Does anybody really believe this?

Bouncing back

Before we moved to Portland, I served a church that had bounced back dramatically from a place of dismal decline. The church, once strong, had declined over the decades, not unlike other mainline Protestant churches across the U.S. Worship attendance was such that in the winter, they'd move out of the sanctuary into a small adjacent meeting room because they couldn't afford to heat the big, beautiful sanctuary and they were also small enough that they could. Their focus was inward. Morale was low. They

wondered how long they'd survive.

But then over the course of a decade or so, this congregation experienced dramatic change. Worship attendance began to grow from a low of about 40 to close to 300. The church came alive with children, youth and adults of all ages. A growing spiritual vitality produced diverse programs of mission and ministry that enlivened the church and impacted the community. This church had experienced revitalization—new life!

I remember hearing a pastor from another church trying to understand what had led to such dramatic change. One of the church's leaders described it this way: "We used to be a church that looked inward. We were most concerned that the bills were paid, and when money was tight, we worked harder to balance the budget. All of our efforts went into trying to keep this church afloat." (How many churches could describe themselves this way?)

Meeting a need

"But then one day, a newcomer stood up during the sharing of joys and concerns, and through tears, she shared her struggle. She had a parent back in Brazil who was dying, and she was desperate to make it home to see this parent before it was too late. It was hard for her to ask, but she wondered if there was anyone who might be able to help her financially."

Presented with a challenge, the church's members began to understand that they could help a sister in need. The tearful concern of an immigrant in their midst grabbed their hearts and took precedent over a balanced church budget. They began to work together to meet the need of the newcomer and it became their rallying cry. When they were able to raise enough funds to send this person to Brazil, they realized God could use them for powerful things.

"Our focus changed, from inward to outward," said the church leader, "and that made all the difference. Once we began looking outward, we never stopped."

There were many factors that led to this church's revitalization, but the point was clear: When the focus is outward, some of the inward things begin to take care of themselves.

The Rev. Ewing-Merrill and his wife, Sara, co-pastor Chestnut UMC and New Light community in Portland, Maine. This was excerpted from his blog at forwardonthejourney.blogspot.com.

Does anybody care about UMC's campus ministry?

BY CREIGHTON ALEXANDER
Special Contributor

I hear these words from my wife every time someone starts checking their watch or their eyes glaze over when I talk about campus ministry: "Nobody cares about campus ministry!"



Creighton Alexander

Trust me, I know the credibility gap that campus ministry has in our denomination. Most United Methodists probably think of campus ministry as "13th Grade Youth Group."

If we are honest, campus ministries don't work because of poor appointments, lack of funding and no understanding of the strategic potential of the work. What's more, these campus minister positions are mostly low-paying, dead-end posts with little room for advancement. It's one of the first line items finance committees go after to save money.

But like a wise pastor once told me, "It's not a priority because it hasn't worked."

Yet few would argue that our nation's college and university campuses remain one of the most under-served, misunderstood and neglected mission fields in the United States. These communities of learning are our neighbors, but few United Methodist churches acknowledge or know how to effectively serve the students, faculty and staff who walk their halls.

We can no longer remain on the sidelines and ignore the over 17 million students from across the U.S. and around the world who are seeking answers to spiritual questions.

The United Methodist Church stands at a crossroads in reaching college students and young adults. Even with all the excitement surrounding the conversations about "raising up a new generation of Christian leaders" (a phrase Dr. Steve Moore coined in 1980 at the Texas Tech Wesley Foundation), I still don't hear our church talking about intersecting the one institution in American society where young adults explore, experiment and ultimately choose a vocation: it's called college!

We can no longer continue to under-fund, under-appoint and undervalue the strategic mission of campus ministry.

To move forward, we need to gain a clearer picture of where we are. One

source is John Schmalzbauer's "Campus Ministry: A Statistical Portrait," an article based on the Lilly Foundation Campus Ministry Study that reported current trends among campus ministry organizations.

In the article, he cites the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) Web site as listing more than 700 campus ministries. In the study, campus ministers reported an average of more than 88 students as regularly participating in United Methodist campus ministry programs (an estimated 30,000 students). This figure is comparable to that of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's student participation (32,000 students) and other para-church groups. Yet I believe what was reported differs widely from actual numbers.

'Overall we lack a significant presence on most of the nation's top universities.'

Unfortunately, GBHEM does not keep yearly records that tracks the data of students involved with individual ministries, annual conferences or across the nation. The closest snapshot that I can collect is from Wesley Foundations or United Methodist campus ministries' Facebook groups.

There are 15 with more than 100 members, 41 with more than 50 members, 35 with more than 20 members and 11 with more than five members—for a total of 4,305 students who are self-described members of a United Methodist group.

Unlike parachurch groups like Campus Crusade, InterVarsity and Victory Campus Ministry, which gather and publish statistics on their Web sites each year, we are left to guess the true impact of our campus ministries. No doubt the reality of the impact of United Methodist campus ministry lies somewhere between those two figures, but it's the gap that concerns me.

Our most successful United Methodist campus ministries (UGA Wesley, Auburn Wesley, Texas Tech Wesley, University of Oklahoma Wesley and Southwestern College, to name a few) offer examples of hope, yet overall we lack a significant presence on most of the nation's top universities. I believe this absence is one of

the major causes of our growing leadership shortage and continued decline.

The United Methodist Church has played a large role in American higher education in the past, but we must discover a new strategy for ministry with college students and young adults. For that to happen, we need to first ask questions that allow us to shape a new vision that is sustainable, entrepreneurial and shaped by the apostolic ethos of the gospel:

- What are the theological underpinnings of campus ministry?
- What is the history and state of United Methodist campus ministry?
- Where is the United Methodist Church doing effective campus ministry?
- Does it serve our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ? How should it be measured?
- Do we have a model that is strategic? Cost-effective? Sustainable? Reproducible? Faithful to a Wesleyan understanding of the gospel?
- Does it create and nurture a culture of calling where students discover their place in the body of Christ and purpose in life?
- Does campus ministry connect young adults to the mission and ministry of the United Methodist Church?

To find the answer to these questions and discover a new way forward, we are calling the United Methodist Church to 40 Days of Prayer for our campus ministries from Aug. 17 to Sept. 25. As millions of students pour back onto our nation's campuses, we will pour out our hearts to God to move anew among our Wesley Foundations, United Methodist related colleges and local church ministries.

Over 700 people who heard their call to ministry through a United Methodist campus ministry have joined a Facebook group (United Methodist Campus Ministry – Raising Up Christian Leaders) to pray for our mission to this generation of college students, staff and faculty. On behalf of the women and men who serve on our nation's campuses, I invite you to join us in praying for God to do a new thing among our campus ministries this fall.

A prayer guide will be available Aug. 10 for download at www.collegeunion.org/prayer to share with your church, Sunday School class, small group or leadership team.

The Rev. Alexander is the pastor of young adults at New City/Central UMC in Kansas City, Mo., and director of campus ministry in the Missouri Conference. He is the co-editor for www.collegeunion.org.

'Way of Salvation' begins with love, not sin

BY DONALD W. HAYNES
UMR Columnist

Our local faith community is a typical "First UMC" in a small town—an aging congregation that needs children and their parents!

Recently we held a "children's festival" for the whole town, renting huge inflatable games, playing contemporary praise music and cooking hotdogs for the crowd.

I went at lunchtime to support the effort, and was eating my hotdog

when Susan, a member, handed me a card that read: "The Theology of Fundamentalist Soul Winning." A group from a Baptist church had been canvassing everyone at our festival, asking if we were saved!



Donald Haynes

Susan said she had told them: "I told them that I was going to heaven when I died, but right now was making hotdogs for children in the community. Can you believe this?"

I replied that not only was their audacity rude, their theology was wrong. The first statement on the tract—"You are a sinner"—should have been No. 2, I told Susan. She smiled, but did not quite follow my objection.

"Susan," I continued, "we United Methodists do not believe that God's way of salvation begins with the person's sin; we believe it begins with God's character, which is love.

"Almost all these tracts begin with Romans 3:23: 'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' We believe that God's way of salvation begins with Genesis 1:27: 'So God created humankind in His own image.'

"See the difference?" I asked. "If I have not yet responded positively to God's grace, my identity in the sight of God is not 'sinner;' my identity is 'child of God who has lost his way and cannot get home alone.'"

She smiled. "Thanks, Don. You just taught me something I never heard

before. That feels good."

I later realized that many United Methodists might be like Susan in that they suffer from "doctrinal amnesia," as Perkins School of Theology professor William Abraham put it so well.

The evangelism tract asked a familiar "soul-winning" question: "If you died, do you know for sure you would go to Heaven?" It instructed the reader that to be sure of their eternal destiny, four things must be understood and believed:

1. You are a sinner (Romans 3:23);
2. There is a price that must be paid for sin (Romans 6:23);
3. Jesus died and rose again to pay the debt for our sins (Romans 5:8);
4. Therefore God offers us eternal life (Romans 6:23).

The tract then stated, "If you would like to receive this gift and know that you will go to heaven, simply call on Jesus and he will save you: 'The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ'" (Romans 10:13).

Then came the "sinner's prayer." "Dear Jesus," it began, "I realize I am a sinner deserving to go to Hell. I believe you died and rose again to pay for my sins. Today I put my trust in you alone as my Savior. I here and now call upon you to save me from Hell, and receive your gift of eternal life. Thank you for saving me. Amen."

The Baptists from this nearby church had been instructed to tell people who prayed this prayer that, "Now you are saved."

The Wesleyan Way

We United Methodists seldom are out distributing tracts about what

John Wesley called not "God's Plan of Salvation," but "God's Way of Salvation." Perhaps that is why we bring far fewer people to the blessed assurance of being saved! In spite of their rudeness for "invading" the children's festival we

were holding in our own church parking lot, we have to acknowledge the Baptist folks' "radical outreach."

I decided long ago that my faith sharing must be about more than just criticizing fundamentalists. We don't have a right to criticize others' efforts if we are content to sit on the sidelines while millions of God's children have

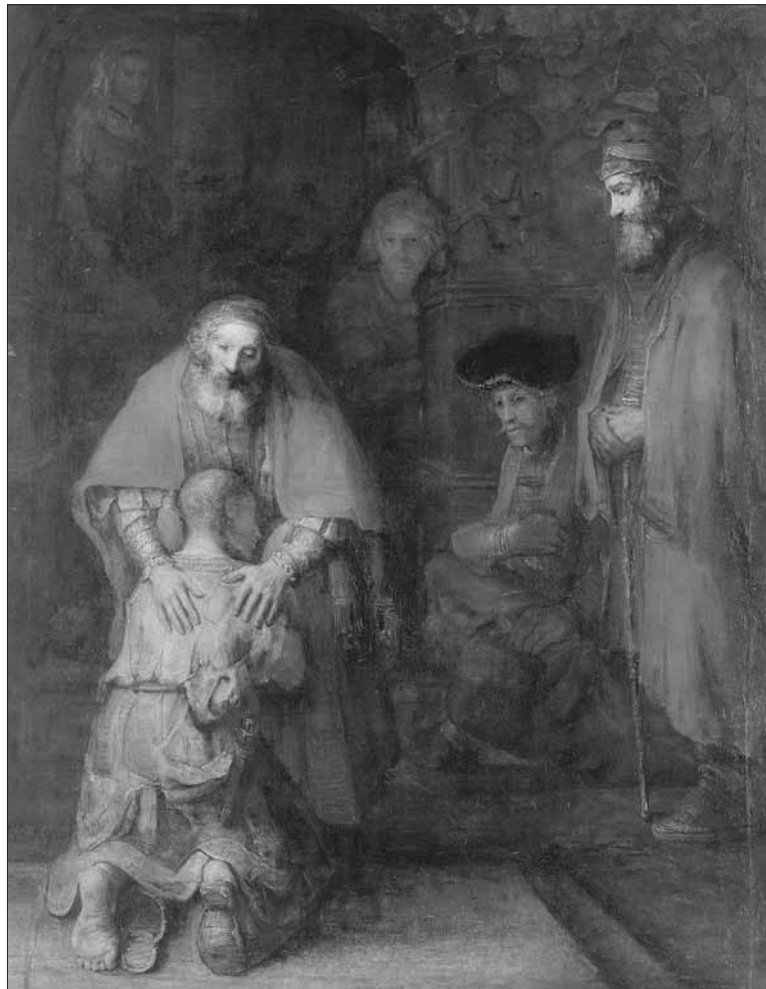


IMAGE COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA

Rembrandt's painting of "The Return of the Prodigal Son" (1668) illustrates that the parable's message is the Father's love, not the prodigality of the son, says Donald Haynes.

lost their way and cannot get home alone. We need to connect the passion the fundamentalists have with the message of grace that we have.

Wesley was clear: The "way of salvation" does indeed begin with God's love, not our sin. The first message every baby needs is to feel and hear and see is love. That is also the first message that God's lost children need to sense. Randy Mattox, a professor at Duke Divinity School, has rightly insisted that for John Wesley, salvation is more therapeutic than juridical.

Let's look at some differences between faith sharing from a United Methodist perspective and "winning souls" as the good folks at the Baptist church understand it.

■ No. 1 on the evangelism tract card should have read, "God created humankind in his own image" (Genesis 1:27). Wesley called this "original righteousness." Indeed the climax of creation is God's observation of all creation: "God saw everything that He had made and it was exceedingly good" (Genesis 1:31).

■ Sin is the corruption, the infirmity of that nature which God created as whole. Wesley called sin the "diseases that drink up our blood and spirits..." He called our sin "chains of iron and fetters of brass." He said our sins are "wounds wherewith the... devil has gashed and mangled us all over." Wesley called sin "loathsome leprosy." Sin is dysfunctional to God's creation; we are sick in sin and need divine healing. Jesus is the "Great Physician."

■ Jesus did not have to pay God to forgive my sins. God loved me as much before I turned my life over to him as he does now. Is it not that way with a parent? Does love only begin when a "price is paid?" Jesus said clearly, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:11); and "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:19). It really is heresy to portray God as the judge about to condemn us to hell, and Jesus as the defense attorney who pleads for mercy and offers to "purchase" our

salvation with his life.

■ God's will is lived out in human history through Jesus' mission: The renewal of our souls in the image of God. Renewal means to restore us to that original oneness with God. Jesus said, "It is my Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

■ We are saved from the addictive consequences of sin when we embrace the love that God has for us. Some of God's children are separated from their real selfhood because their lives are marked by rejection, failure and guilt.

Some people have rejected God and said, "I'll do it my way." Rebellion is the word that describes their estrangement from God. Prevenient grace assures us that God's love will never abandon us and will always reach out to us. The "arms of grace" are always open to our coming home to our real identity as a child of God. We must get into our Methodist message, "Nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:35).

The Father's love

The message of the so-called "Parable of the Prodigal Son" is not the son's prodigality! It is not even the elder brother's judgment of his brother. The message is the Father's love. Theologian Helmut Thielicke is right in calling it the "Parable of the Waiting Father."

The turning point in the story is when the younger brother "came to himself." Aha! Deep inside that wayward boy who had wasted so much of his life was a faint memory that he recalled while in the pigsty. He knew that he was his father's son!

In Rembrandt's painting of the story, one of the son's feet is bare, but on the other he still wears the sandal of his inheritance. Indeed, with all his tattered rags, he still has a sword, obviously given to him by his father for protection. Even in his rebellion, he retained some semblance of his identity as the son of a loving father. Furthermore, as the father's hands are draped over the kneeling boy's shoulders, one is the hand of a man and the other is the hand of a woman!

Salvation is all about love—coming home to a reception of love. This is the message we must get straight and get out!

Dr. Haynes is an instructor in United Methodist studies at Hood Theological Seminary. e-mail: dhaynes11@triad.rr.com.

UMs battle gambling in Ohio

BY KATHY L. GILBERT
United Methodist News Service

Gambling is increasingly becoming an addiction for states trying to balance their budgets in the midst of an economic crisis.

Giving in to the temptation by allowing casinos or expanding state-sponsored gambling would heap the financial burden on those least able to afford it, said several United Methodists on the front lines of the public policy debate.

"In these economic bad times, we are witnessing the throwing over of the common good," said the Rev. Tom Grey, a United Methodist pastor who is field director for the grassroots organization Stop Predatory Gambling.

One of the latest battlegrounds is Ohio, where the governor, Ted Strickland, is a United Methodist minister who was elected in 2006. Mr. Strickland, who earlier expanded the state lottery to Sundays and added Keno games, is proposing bringing in video slot machines at the state's seven race tracks as a way to bridge a \$3.2 billion budget deficit. Keno is a bingo-like gambling game offered by some state lotteries.

This is an about-face for a politician who had been an outspoken opponent of gambling during his



Tom Grey



Ted Strickland

led the effort for 19 years to stop casinos in Ohio."

Tom Smith, public policy director for the Ohio Council of Churches, said gambling opponents face their toughest fight ever this year because of the overall economic situation.

Gambling proposals are coming from three directions, Mr. Smith said. Besides the video slot machines proposed by the governor,

campaign, said the Rev. John Edgar, a United Methodist pastor who has been fighting to keep gambling out of Ohio for the past 19 years. Mr. Edgar is chair of the anti-gambling task force for the East and West Ohio Conferences.

"We are profoundly disappointed. I believe it shows an amazing public cowardice," Mr. Edgar said. "United Methodists and the Ohio Council of Churches have



PHOTO BY JEFF KUBINA, COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA

States like Ohio are eyeing video slot machines as a way to balance their budgets.

there is another proposal from bars and restaurants to put slot machines in their businesses and there is a drive to put casinos on the November ballot.

Slippery slope

In defense of his latest proposal, Mr. Strickland says state law allows slot machines as part of the Ohio lottery. It is the same argument he used to introduce Keno to the state, said East Ohio Bishop John Hopkins.

"Once you start letting gambling in you get hooked and it becomes addictive," he said. "Living on gambling income promotes behavior that is counter to the health of the state."

Bishop Hopkins and West Ohio Bishop Bruce Ough have been working on building a relationship with the governor. Mr. Strickland is on "honorable location," which means he is in good standing as an ordained minister but not active in the church. Bishop Ough said he was ordained a deacon in West Ohio and ordained as an elder in Kentucky.

Both bishops wrote a personal letter to Mr. Strickland expressing their disappointment in his decision to expand gambling.

"We suggested it would have been a better expression of his moral leadership if he had stood his ground and offered other ways to balance the budget," Bishop Ough said.

"The United Methodist Church has

a longstanding commitment to oppose gambling. It is bad economics," Bishop Ough said. "We are obliged not to use forms of generating revenue that causes harm."

The United Methodist Social Principles calls gambling "a menace to society, deadly to the best interests of moral, social, economic, and spiritual life, destructive of good government and good stewardship."

Selling bad public policy on the grounds revenues will benefit education is reprehensible, Mr. Edgar said.

"We are saying we care so little about our children that we will fund their education only if we can do it out of the gambling losses of our neighbors."

Tax on the poor

Gambling is a regressive tax, said the Rev. Cynthia Abrams of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society.

"It is an extra tax on the poor and the most vulnerable such as older adults who are lonely and looking for social interaction," she said, pointing to the practice of many seniors board-

ing buses to go to casinos as a social activity.

One "frightening and weird" fact is that a major financial drain on casinos is the money

'Living on gambling income promotes behavior that is counter to the health of the state.'

—Bishop John Hopkins

spent on replacing the cushions on stools in front of slot machines, she said.

"People won't get up from machines even to go to the bathroom. That shows the seductiveness of slot machines, that is how they are designed."

Ms. Abrams said the economic crisis has compounded the issue, but the trend toward resisting higher taxes helped

the gambling industry gain a foothold before the recession kicked in.

"This environment of people resisting raising taxes has had intended and unintended effects on state budgets," she said. "In essence, we want services all the time, but we have moved away from the idea of paying our fair share."

Mr. Grey said United Methodists will stand strong and continue to fight this dangerous menace in other key states as well as Ohio.

"What a ripe time for the church to speak truth to gambling," he said. "You can't gamble yourself rich."

PA coalition urges ban on video gambling

WIRE REPORTS

HARRISBURG—A growing coalition of faith, community, and other organizations is urging Pennsylvanians opposed to creating up to 14,000 mini casinos in restaurants and taverns to contact Gov. Ed Rendell and their legislators and express their concern.

"More gambling is a bad bet for Pennsylvania," said Stephen Drachler, executive director of A United Methodist Witness in Pennsylvania, one of the organizers of Stop Video Poker In PA.

"This proposal would bring video poker, the crack cocaine of gambling, into restaurants and bars," Mr. Drachler said. "If this becomes law, there could be more gambling machines in restaurants and bars than the Legislature authorized in slots parlors across the state."

The coalition urges Pennsylvanians to contact the governor and their legislators through its new Web site: www.stopvideo pokerpa.com.

In addition to A United Methodist Witness in Pennsylvania, the coalition in-



Stephen Drachler

cludes the Pennsylvania Family Institute, League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, Casino Free Philadelphia,

Casino Free PA, and the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. Mr. Drachler said other groups are urged to join the coalition.

Rep. Dante Santoni, D-Berks, chair of the House Gaming Oversight Committee, has introduced legislation to legalize video gambling, including video poker, in 14,000 restaurants and taverns across Pennsylvania.

Mr. Drachler said leading researchers consider video poker to be extremely addictive, especially when it would be easily accessible.