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Jennifer Herron and Jeff Horton, members of Quapaw Quarter UMC in Little Rock, will showcase their family's new energy-efficient home and office that the architect couple designed themselves as part of their church's annual "Christmas in the Quarter" home tour on Dec. 6. The tour also will include Victorian and Craftsman-style houses in the historic Little Rock neighborhood.

Photo by Heather Hahn

Christmas home tour offers art, treats, conservation tips

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Architects Jennifer Herron and Jeff Horton have designed a home that's green even without decking the halls with garlands.

The couple, members of Quapaw Quarter United Methodist Church in Little Rock, will open their new house to the public and showcase its energy-efficient innovations as part of the church's sixth annual Christmas in the Quarter home tour at 2-5 p.m. Dec. 6.

The tour also includes four houses originally built in the 1880s in the historic neighborhood that is home to the Governor's Mansion. In addition, guests can explore the church, a Gothic Revival structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Herron and Horton are definitely the new kids on the block. The family's sleek, ultra-modern office/studio/house on Spring Street was completed in October — just in time to be included in this year's tour. All of the homes will be festooned with the splendor of the season.

"We really wanted to do it," Herron said. "We



Artists Charlie and Lisa James rent studio space at Quapaw Quarter UMC as part of the HeARTwork ministry. The couple will have their work on sale during Christmas in the Quarter.

Photo by Heather Hahn

Agency head urges UMW to be inviting

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

RUSSELLVILLE — In a sermon that brought several listeners to their feet, the chief executive officer of Women's Division encouraged Arkansas United Methodist Women to keep inviting newcomers to share in God's banquet.

"It's not just the mailing to the membership or an invitation to my daughters or my nieces," said Harriett Jane Olson, the deputy general secretary of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries.

"What if each of us in this room invited one person who was not already on the membership list this year? And if she couldn't come, what if we invited her again?"

More than 260 United Methodist Women from churches large and small attended the Arkansas Conference UMW's sixth annual meeting on Nov. 14 at First United Methodist Church in Russellville.

The women recognized faithful members, memorialized those who had passed away and shared a day of fellowship. They also learned of coming UMW events such as Assembly 2010 on April 30-May 2 in St. Louis.

LaDonna Busby, communications coordinator for the Arkansas UMW, said such gatherings remind members that they are part of great work.

"It gives you strength and encouragement to go on in mission," said Busby, who is also the administrative assistant for the North District. "Even if your [UMW] unit is small, you can still do a lot for God in this world."

Olson, Busby said, encapsulated that message perfectly in her keynote address.

The Women's Division leader based her sermon on Luke 14:16-24.

In that passage, Jesus tells the parable of a man who once prepared

[See TOUR, page 10A]

[See UMW, page 12A]

A high school senior and more than 30 college students from Arkansas shared a bus to EXPLORATION 2009 in Dallas. More than 500 young people contemplating calls to ordained ministry attended the Nov. 13-15 event, sponsored by the United Methodist Church's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The gathering comes at a time when the number of ordained elders under the age of 35 is not keeping pace with the number reaching retirement age.

Photo by Patrick Shownes



Advent teaches us the value of waiting



I hate to wait. I always have places to go, people to see, things to do — more than I can accomplish or say grace over.

Something always happens to get in the way of my headlong dash through life. The person in front of me in the express checkout lane has too many items. The doctor had an emergency and is running behind on appointments. The traffic is crawling, and the light is hung on red. I have to stop, and it's frustrating!

But wait. It's Advent, the holy time of waiting. Let me pause. Take a deep breath. Get my bearings. Calm down. Something is going on here.

Advent commemorates the time each year when the people of Israel longed for a Savior. The Messiah was coming, but he was taking his time. They had to wait. So for four weeks, we wait for Jesus to be born. In the midst of the busiest time of year, we try to carve out a little peace, a little space, a place to meet the Messiah.

If we can wait, we learn some things.

Waiting teaches us **the strength of patience**. We live in a culture of instant gratification. If it doesn't happen fast, we lose interest quickly.

Good takes time — making wine, writing a book, playing music. Great takes even longer.

Patience is not my spiritual gift. But if we are to experience the hope of Advent, we must wait.

Paul said, "if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." (Romans 8:25) Living by faith in a yet-unseen reality strengthens our spirit and gives us patience in the everyday frustrations of life: the checkout line, the doctor's office, the traffic jam and even larger issues like injustice and oppression.

Waiting teaches us **the value of humility**. Big shots don't have to wait. They go to the head of the line, pass through the crowd of those waiting for appointments and get police escorts.

Not us. We're regular folks. We have to wait. Waiting means it's not about us; we're not number one; somebody has something better to do than attend to our needs. Even God.

Once we learn the value of humility, we understand the power of grace. When God does get around to sending the Messiah, we are so very grateful because we know we don't deserve it. As we wait, the broken heart heals, the disease is cured, the sin is forgiven, and we see



Bud Reeves

God at work.

When God does meet our needs — and He always does, eventually — it bowls us over with love.

Waiting teaches us **the joy of anticipation**. Something very good is on its way, and we will share in the promise when it happens. Imagine the exultation of Joseph, Mary, the shepherds, the wise men and others who realized that God was fulfilling the prophecy given centuries before — in their midst!

Longing, wishing, hoping and praying for something makes it all the sweeter when it comes. If the reward comes too easy, it is robbed of some of the joy. Anticipation builds the joy.

Advent is counter-cultural. In the mad dash toward the end-of-the-year bottom line, who has time to do Advent? It is subversive, perhaps even radically so, to suggest we take Advent seriously.

Who can wait? The holidays (holy days?) are here! Who wants to slow down in this season of gatherings and glee? Who wants to take time to pray more when our lists are so long? Who wants to consume less — of anything?

In our heart of hearts, we all do. It's just not normally done, is it? But neither was a Messiah lying in the straw.

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

An Advent wish

Phillips Brooks was something of the Rick Warren of his day. His many published sermons earned the 19th century Episcopal priest the sobriquet, "The Prince of Pulpits."

But today if Brooks' name seems familiar at all, it's because in might have caught your eye while thumbing through the United Methodist Hymnal.

In 1868, Brooks was searching for a new carol for the children to sing at his Philadelphia congregation's Sunday School Christmas program.

His thoughts returned to the pilgrimage he had made to the Holy Land some years before. He recalled the Christmas Eve he spent at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and crossing the fields that an enterprising tour guide identified as the place where the "shepherds watched their flocks by night."

Brooks turned his recollections in to text and handed the words over to church organist and Sunday School teacher Lewis Redner to provide the right tune for the lyrics. But Redner struggled to set the verse to music until the night before rehearsal. He awoke to what he later called "an angel-strain whispering in my ear," and jotted down the melody.

The next morning he filled in the harmony of the carol

known today as "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

With all due respect to Charles Wesley (who certainly created equally memorable carols), I have always had a special fondness for the pensive hymn about the still and sleeping little town under the watch of stars and angels.

So much about Christmas is as subtle as the blaring of trumpets or the roar of the shopping mall. Churchgoers have a tendency to bellow their way even through the familiar strands of "Silent Night."

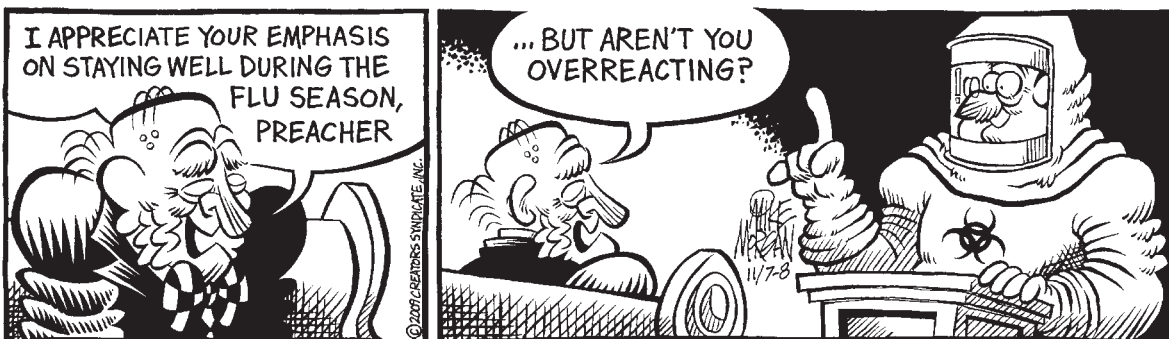
But the minor-keyed hymn to Bethlehem always comes as a quiet surprise, just as I imagine that miraculous birth did to Bethlehem's denizens two millennia ago.

As I write, the Christmas rush hasn't really started yet. Sure, stores are decorated and some radio stations are already blaring carols. But I'm still getting ready for Thanksgiving, and the colorful leaves in the trees remind me that it's still fall.

But I know come this time next week, we all will be in the midst of all the seasonal craziness (perhaps made more frantic by our desperate economy).

My wish for all of you this Advent season is that you'll each be able to find a moment of peace and a moment as quietly and sacredly joyous as Brooks' famous hymn.

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE by Mike Morgan



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Martha S. Taylor • Director of Communications
Heather Hahn • Editor
Patrick W. Shownes • Communications Coordinator
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BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

Dear Friends:

I have not quite finished my shopping, but will soon.

Soon, the presents will be wrapped and under the tree. Soon, that very special gift will light up the eyes of a child like the dawn. Soon, that very special person in your life will see once again an expression of your love.

It is not about the cost of the gift that makes it so special, but that it is from the heart. Soon, your heart will smile with the joy of giving.

Many of you will be making special gifts to your church and to favorite charities this year.

Because of the financial challenges we face, many of you will be digging a bit deeper this year, just to make certain that the mission and ministry of your church succeeds.

Some of you will make additional gifts to dig water wells in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or buy mosquito nets for Nothing But Nets, or make a contribution to Habitat for Humanity or Susan G. Komen for the Cure or the Salvation

Army.

You know the basic truth. It is the “giving,” not the “getting” that is special to the season. The three wise men expected nothing tangible when they knelt at the manger. They simply gave what they had. The shepherds did the same. They had all come to see this thing “which had come to pass.”

What they saw was a gift from God. What they saw was tangible! It was the flesh and blood expression of God’s incredible love for humanity. God took a terrible risk

for us. God’s own son was to live in our midst. What a gift God has given.

Every year at this time it happens. I go around humming the carols I love. One, “In the Bleak Midwinter,” by Christina Rossetti, will not let me go.

The music is almost mournful. It certainly does not rouse the spirit like “Joy to the World.” The melody is haunting, as it should be, for the lyrics ask a haunting question of us: “What can I give him, poor as I am?”

Then comes the answer:

“If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb.

If I were a wise man, I would do my part.

Yet what I can I give him: give... my heart.”

The “from the heart” part is always the best part of giving. What is in your giving that touches the heart’s deep core?

Faithfully,



My Christmas gift to God

“I guess you were right, Linus.” Charlie Brown said. “I shouldn’t have picked this little tree. Everything I do turns into a disaster. I guess I really don’t know what Christmas is all about.”

Charlie Brown shouted in desperation and then said, “Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?”

Linus moved toward the center of the stage and said, “Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about... Lights please.”

As the spotlight shined on Linus, he recited the familiar story from the King James Version of Luke 2: 8-14, “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

“And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’”

There’s something about *A Charlie Brown Christmas* that really gets people in the spirit of Christmas. Every year since its debut in 1965,



Deena Marie Hamilton

this Charles Shultz classic has touched the hearts of many. I remembered watching it on TV as a child, not really appreciating the true meaning of Christmas. Nor could I fathom

the Child whose life that we celebrate yearly in December was in essence... born to die.

“I have to admit that I have taken God for granted But God is still faithful despite my shortcomings.”

Looking back and reflecting on the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ, I can truly say that the gift of salvation is a gift that keeps on giving.

Christ is truly God’s gift to the world. Because God gave all that He had in order for us to have a copious existence, what do we have to give? What can we render?

When we celebrate the birth of our Savior, what gifts should we give him? If God can love us so much to not withhold anything from us, then maybe it’s just time that we be a little more appreciative.

I have to admit that I have taken God for granted far too many times than I care to admit. But God is still

faithful despite my shortcomings.

This Christmas season, I plan to do something a little bit different — Well, I already know that I’ll have to give my baby nephew the latest Spider-Man toy, money for my baby niece because I have absolutely no idea of what to buy a 1-year-old child, and the laptop that my daughter has been eyeing at Best Buy for college...

I got off track a bit... But that’s easy when we lose focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

The gift of Christ is the most precious gift that anyone could ever possess. But once we receive this gift what do we do with it? Well, we could share the love of Christ.

We should be empowered by the Holy Spirit to transform lives. After all, it’s by his grace we are able to exist.

God enables us to do so many things. He blesses us all with unique gifts that we need to utilize to increase the Kingdom. So for Christmas, I’m starting a new tradition.

Because of the many gifts God has blessed me with, I am determined to show my appreciation by using them for God. That’s the only gift that I have to give because I have embraced the Gift that keeps on giving. That’s my gift to God.

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

Letters To The Editor

I found the Rev. Copley’s comments (Oct. 2, *Arkansas United Methodist*) on “health care” reform interesting, particularly the reference to Matthew 25.

I have read several versions and translations and have not found one that suggested or mandated that we turn our responsibility for the widows and orphans, the oppressed, the outcast, etc., over to the care of Rome.

I find the position incredible that the people of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc., would want the care of the least among them, including a 100-year-old woman with a zest for life whose only real health need is the need for a pacemaker, turned over to a bureaucrat to give her a “pain pill.”

Faith? Justice? If these are God’s people...

G.T. Spence
Conway

We were delighted to see that the Rev. Roger Glover had a letter to the editor in the Nov. 6 edition of the *Arkansas United Methodist* newspaper address the issue of gambling and the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church.

In his letter, Glover speaks of his opposition to the lottery in our state and the changes it will require of him as he seeks to trade with business establishments that do not sell lottery tickets. Glover and we have often disagreed on the floor of the Annual

Conference about various social issues, but we are in total agreement in our opposition to the lottery.

We gladly join him in choosing to only trade with those businesses that do not sell lottery tickets, and we hope other United Methodists will join us in this effort.

Victor H. Nixon, pastor
and Freddie Nixon, member
Pulaski Heights UMC in
Little Rock

I am still awake after a very busy day [at Applebee’s in Fort Smith]. Applebee’s served all active and retired military a meal [on Nov. 11 for Veterans Day]. I knew we would be busy, but I didn’t know the other emotions that would come as well.

There were retired vets from all wars. They even brought pictures and scrapbooks showing them in uniform and with their fellow soldiers. There were young soldiers that were either going to be deployed and some who had just come home.

There was a homeless veteran that asked me to visit him because he didn’t have \$2 to pay for his Coke (drinks were not included). Needless to say we took care of him. He had walked — not sure how far — to get to Applebee’s.

I cannot put into words all the stories that I heard.

I am dog tired, but it is a day I will never forget.

Jane Cheyne
Springdale

To get Christians into rhythm, church must correct missteps

"When I think of God, I hear a song," says Rob Bell, pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., in his video *Rhythm*.

"It's a song that moves me . . . And people have heard this song . . . They've heard the song and found it captivating."

When I took dance lessons, I would quiet down the day's noise to hear the song's melody. Then I approached the barre.

The barre is the ballerina's foundation. It's the floor on which she can jump and turn. It teaches her the technique so that when performing, she doesn't have to pay attention to her feet. She only has to hear the song.

As I worked on my foundation in class, my instructor sat at her desk and ate peanuts. When questioned as to why she didn't work with us on technique, she responded that she didn't want the girls to get mad when she corrected them.

I felt betrayed. I trusted her to teach me to swim through air, but by denying me instruction, I didn't really become a ballerina. I was just a copper penny convinced of being a golden coin. Her kindness wasn't kind at all.

The church is our barre. It is where we tune out the noise of everyday to learn the techniques of Jesus. We repeat them until they have been engrained into hurting muscles.

The church trains us to go into the mission field of daily life without watching our feet because the feet know how the song goes. We can allow ourselves to be moved by it.

My generation wants to look like the barefooted Jesus who healed and loved. For that, we need technical training. The United Methodist churches in Arkansas have the wisdom and



Mary Faith "Zoe" Miles

experience to train us.

Give us small groups with mentors that will correct our posture. Deliver sermons that will work out our hearts.

Challenge us. We need to know that we're loved, that we're doing a good job and that we're great dancers, but please don't render the genuine compliments empty by eating peanuts at the desk in the corner instead delivering godly rebuke and criticism.

Don't tell us what will make us happy. Tell us what's going to make us whole. Help work our lustful desires, material dependence and busy lives out of our hearts.

I'm in the process of discussing the three fragrances of an attractive church. In the middle of the second aroma, authenticity, I overwhelmed

myself by trying to pour all the ingredients into one article.

I decided that saying too much takes away from what needs to be said; therefore, I'm going to sit in authenticity until my spirit nudges me to move on.

In conclusion, be authentic about our shortcomings.

I'm not going to promise we won't get mad. I'm not even going to promise we won't put up a fight.

I will promise that if we are captivated by the song and if you challenge us to learn the rhythm, we'll keep coming back to the barre.

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

UMC calls for better stewardship

United Methodist Communications

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. — In a statement that says, "We cannot help the world until we change our way of being in it," the bishops of the United Methodist Church announced a significant call to all United Methodists, ecumenical and inter-religious partners and people of goodwill around the world.

On Nov. 3, the Council of Bishops unanimously adopted **God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action**, the first new pastoral letter with an environmental focus since 1986.

More than 5,400 United Methodists around the world have had input into the final document.

"As bishops, we know that critical issues of the day have left people feeling fearful, cynical, hopeless and overwhelmed," said Bishop Gregory Palmer, president of the Council of Bishops.

"God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action contains our pledges to work in hopeful and robust ways for transforming change as God's stewards of creation. We invite the church and our partners around the world to join us."

The bishops recommend that the pastoral letter be read aloud in worship during the season of Advent in each of 42,600 congregations worldwide.

Stating that they "cannot remain silent while God's people and God's planet suffer," the 69 active bishops in the United Methodist Church addressed the pastoral letter to the 11.3 million global members



Photo illustration courtesy of United Methodist Communications

of the denomination.

They identified three interconnected global threats to God's creation:

- pandemic poverty and disease;
- environmental degradation, and
- the proliferation of weapons and violence.

The bishops pledged to model a response in their own lives from peacefully resolving conflicts to reducing their own travel to limit their carbon footprints.

One example cited in the pastoral letter is a pledge that the 50 active bishops in the United States will be committed to listening and learning with the 19 active bishops in Africa, Europe and Asia.

"And the bishops representing the United States conferences will prayerfully examine the fact that their nation consumes more than its fair share of the world's resources, generates the most waste, and produces the most weapons."

They also pledged to measure the "carbon footprint" of their episcopal and denominational offices and look for ways to reduce it.

Bishop Patrick Streiff, Central and Southern Europe, was part of the task force working on the document.

He said the enthusiastic reception from the Council of Bishops was "deeply moving."

"The document is a message of hope that really takes seriously the suffering caused by the harm we do to God's creation," Streiff said. "It speaks out of our faith rather than a reaction to fear."

To view the pastoral letter and foundation document, visit the Arkansas Conference's home page www.arumc.org and click on "Bishop's Pastoral Letter."

Kathy Gilbert of the United Methodist News Service contributed to this story.

Council of Bishops elects president designate

United Methodist Communications

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. — The United Methodist Council of Bishops has elected Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of the Germany Episcopal Area as its president designate.

The council also elected Bishop Larry Goodpaster of the Charlotte Episcopal Area as president for a two-year term beginning May 6, 2010, and ending during the 2012 General Conference. Goodpaster will succeed Bishop Gregory Palmer of the Illinois Episcopal Area.

Goodpaster, who has served as president-designate for the past year and a half, said that he is looking forward to continuing work on reordering and rethinking church and what it might look like in the



Bishop Rosemarie Wenner

future. "Being in a position to make that vision happen — that keeps me energized," he said. Wenner is a native of Germany and attended the United Methodist Theological Seminary in Reutlingen. She was ordained in 1981, and served as pastor of congregations in Karlsruhe-Durlach, Hockenheim and Darmstadt-Sprendlingen before her appointment as superintendent of the Frankfurt District in 1996.

In February 2005, she was

elected bishop at the Germany Central Conference in Wuppertal — the first woman elected to the United Methodist episcopacy outside the United States.

"We are clear about our priorities; we want to enable our local churches and our annual conferences to fulfill the task of making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," she said. "I look forward to giving my contribution so that we all together might go forward in this direction and really focus on the four area of foci that we have agreed to as our priorities."

The election took place during the Council's semi-annual meeting at Lake Junaluska, N.C., the first week of November.



At left, United Methodist volunteers unload cleaning buckets from the North District at Ingathering 2009. Below, 5-year-old Carter Iazard of St. James UMC in Little Rock, does his part by helping to unload donated pillows.



Michelle Coley of Theresa Hoover UMC in Little Rock was among the volunteers who arrived early for this year's Ingathering. Behind her, are Martha Taylor, at left, the conference's director of communications, and Ruth Jones, also of Theresa Hoover UMC,

We gather together

PHOTOS BY
HEATHER HAHN

More than 120 United Methodist volunteers from across the state turned out at the Arkansas Rice Depot's warehouse on Nov. 7 to help with Ingathering 2009.

Wearing bright red "Rethink Church" T-shirts, they unloaded truckloads of relief supplies and stacked them onto pallets for delivery to Arkansans in need and Sager Brown, the United Methodist Committee on Relief's depot in Baldwin, La.

Throughout the fall, congregations have been collecting contributions to the Arkansas Conference's biggest annual mission project. This year's haul included bedding, towels, birthing kits, sewing kits, hygiene items, school supplies and buckets of cleaning equipment.

At press time, donations for the effort were still coming in.

So far, the Rice Depot collected 696 cases and buckets to be sent to Sager Brown and 369 cases and buckets to remain in Arkansas for disaster recovery.



Stan Denman of First UMC in Bryant hands out boxes of supplies from the West District to waiting volunteers.



Autumn Castleberry, 8, of Cabot UMC, carries a bucket of cleaning supplies across the Arkansas Rice Depot's parking lot. She was among a number of young children who came out on Nov. 7 to help.

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Bringing cheer to Methodist Family Health

For Scott Moore, a ministry of pastoral care involves drumming, praying, traveling and most of all, listening

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

While leading a children's Bible study last December at Methodist Behavioral Hospital, Scott Moore asked the elementary-aged patients what they were most looking forward to that Christmas.

"Spending time with family," one youngster said. "Christmas dinner," another piped up. The kids kept calling out the sort of holiday-card sentiments they thought the chaplain wanted to hear.

Moore interrupted: "Am I the only one here who likes to get presents?"

All the children raised their hands except one little boy.

"You don't like to get presents for Christmas?" Moore asked him.

"I've never had a Christmas present," the boy said quietly.

Moore assured the boy that this Christmas would be different.

On Christmas morn, gifts bearing the boy's name were waiting for him beneath the hospital's tree.

As Methodist Family Health's

director of pastoral care, Moore plays Santa to more than 200 children and young mothers. He works with the state's United Methodist churches to ensure that everyone in Methodist Family Health's care — from the behavioral hospital in Maumelle to the ministry's other programs around Arkansas — gets a reminder of Christ's love on Christmas day.

The ministry, which grew out of the Methodist Children's Home in Little Rock, now provides mental-health services for children and families statewide.

These services include therapeutic foster care, emergency shelter, outpatient counseling, acute psychiatric care and Arkansas CARES (Center for Addictions Research, Education and Services), a residential treatment program where women overcoming drug addiction can stay with their children.

Last year, the ministry served some 2,300 people, many struggling with destructive behaviors.

Spiritual outlet

Moore provides outlets for these

clients and staff to express their faith. He leads weekly Bible studies and spirituality sessions such as labyrinth walks and drum circles. He also arranges for church groups to lead a time of worship or Christian instruction for the children in inpatient care on the third and fourth Sundays of the month.

Moore said his main duty is simply to listen.

"My approach is to listen to what they have to say without judgment," he said. "Sometimes I kind of confront them with behaviors, but it's in a loving way. Just in the nature of their jobs, the therapists have to be hard on them sometimes. They need to confront these issues. The therapists are trained to say this is what you've got to do. I say, 'Have you considered this?'"

To reach his clients, Moore must frequently travel around the state. He visits each of the ministry's seven group homes four to six times a year, sometimes accompanied by his wife, Debbie. Most weeks, he also rotates between the ministry's two inpatient facilities — the behavioral hospital in



Scott Moore, Methodist Family Health's chaplain, strokes a frog wood block, an Asian percussion instrument, while Patricia Craig plays a conga during a Friday morning drum circle with other women in Arkansas CARES, a residential treatment program where women overcoming substance abuse can stay with their children.

Photo by Heather Hahn

Maumelle and the Methodist Children's Home campus. He doesn't have a desk to call his own. Instead, his car is his office.

Craig Gammon, the administrator of Methodist Family Health's children programs, said the ministry was looking for a chaplain who would connect with the kids and in Moore, "we overachieved."

Most of the ministry's young

clients have experienced abuse or neglect, and the Arkansas Department of Human Services has referred them for care.

Many are angry with God. They ask questions like, "Why did this happen to me?"

"Pastor Scott does a very good job of sitting down and being very positive with them," Gammon said. "He shows them their value — their



From left, Lana Greer, Shannon Tipton, Amanda Sharp and Danielle Barber beat and shake the rhythm of "Jingle Bells" at a Friday drum circle, led by Scott Moore, Methodist Family Health's chaplain. The four women are among the clients of Arkansas CARES. Moore said the drumming allows the women to beat out their frustrations and teaches them to work together to play a common rhythm.

Photo by Heather Hahn

worth — to themselves, to their families and to God.”

‘Perfect ministry’

When youngsters first arrive in one of the ministry’s treatment programs, they usually aren’t happy to be there.

“There are many kids who won’t talk to me for the first month except to say ‘hi’ — and they are required to do that,” Moore said. “But after a month or so, they might ask ‘Can I talk to you?’ I’m just waiting because I’ve learned that if I try to push myself on them, they’ll just put that wall up.”

Moore, 52, learned his patience from years of volunteering with teens. An ordained deacon, he has worked with youth ministries in some capacity for 29 years and has a master’s degree in religious education from Southern Methodist University’s Perkins School of Theology in Dallas.

He also is a psychiatric nurse, who served for a few years at the Veterans Administration hospital in North Little Rock.

All that training and experience has culminated in his current post, which began in July 2008.

“I feel this is the perfect ministry for me,” he said.

Voluntary worship

As clients are told when they arrive, all of Methodist Family Health’s spiritual activities are completely voluntary.

“We’ll get kids who say, ‘I don’t believe in God,’” Moore said. “I’ll say, ‘Tell me what you do believe in.’”

Still most of the youngsters are eager to participate in the Bible studies and worship Moore organizes.

On a recent Sunday, dozens of children and adolescents filed into the Methodist Children’s Home gym to watch the drama team from Trinity Baptist Church in Searcy perform Christian-themed skits. Some of the kids brought along their own well-thumbed Bibles (Methodist Family Health has a fund to provide a Bible for any client that requests one).

At the end of the performance, Moore asked if any of the youngsters wanted to offer a closing prayer. Several hands shot up.

After the service, Moore mused that back when he led church youth groups, kids were rarely eager to pray in front of their peers.

He said the youth he now serves are not only more willing to show their faith; they are also hungry for stories of redemption.

“I have kids tell me, ‘I’m not going to ask God for forgiveness because God can’t possibly forgive me for what I’ve done,’” Moore said, his voice catching.



Aimee Mathis, at left, and Katy Cross portray “Fishers of Men” in a skit for the children in Methodist Family Health’s emergency shelter and residential treatment center on the Methodist Children’s Home campus in Little Rock. Mathis and Cross are members of the Upper Room Players, the drama team at Trinity Baptist Church in Searcy. Each month, Scott Moore arranges for church groups to help lead a time of spirituality for Methodist Family Health’s young clients.

Photo by Heather Hahn

“I tell them that the God I worship is forgiving and loving beyond our comprehension. I tell them, ‘I don’t care what you do, God will always forgive you.’”

Therapeutic beat

That message helps kids to adjust their behavior in a positive direction, said Erik Narens, a program consultant for Methodist Family Health.

Narens said he’s seen Moore stay to listen to kid until 8 at night.

“We can tell them until we’re blue in the face why they should do something, but until they’re convinced, they are not going to make that decision,” Narens said. “And I think that he plays a big role in that.”

Rita Galloway, program administrator for Arkansas CARES, said Moore’s ministry also helps the women she counsels in their struggles with substance abuse.

One of his more innovative practices, Galloway said, is the drum circle.

Before the women arrive for a Friday morning spirituality session, Moore arranges chairs in a circle and puts a different percussion instrument on each one.

The women choose among djembes and bongos, maracas and rhythm sticks. Soon at Moore’s direction, they are beating out syncopated rhythms in unison.

“It teaches them to listen to each other and gets them in the rhythm of something bigger than they are,” Galloway said. “Our ladies love it.”

Lana Greer, one of the clients, said she can’t wait until Friday when she knows a drum circle is planned.

“I like the way it lets you express yourself,” she said. “I can’t really explain it. It’s just a good feeling.”

Merry Christmas

Come Christmas day, Moore expects to be with the children at Methodist Behavioral Hospital who either aren’t ready to go home or have no home to return to.

But he hopes to make the celebration of Christ’s Nativity as bright as possible for the youngsters.

The kids at Methodist Family Health all have a variety of experiences. But one thing they all understand, Moore said, is love.

“Everyone has experienced love at some level,” he said. “They understand that there are people here who care about them.”

To sponsor a child or mother at Methodist Family Health for Christmas, contact Scott Moore at (501) 837-8712 or smoore@methodistfamily.org.

VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION

This Volunteer in Mission listing includes mission opportunities offered by local churches and districts. Often there is room for additional volunteers 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.

Feb. 6-12, 2010: Rio Bravo, Mexico. Construction help needed to build a casita, a small house. Contact Larry Acton, lacton@ritternet.com or (870) 520.3969.

Mid-February to Mid-April: Mountain T.O.P. (Tennessee Outreach Project), sponsored by the Tennessee Conference, provides homes repairs in the Cumberland Mountains. Groups choose their own dates (arriving Sunday night and leaving Friday morning). \$200 per person. Samantha Tashman, sam@mountain-top.org or (931) 692-3999

March 6-14, 2010: Costa Rica. Painting, flooring, Bible School. Larry Acton, lacton@ritternet.com or (870) 520.3969.

March 20-27, 2010: “River of Life Ministries,” Belize. Grace Community UMC in Fort Smith needs about 20 people for a construction/ medical/language mission. Contact Ken Duncan, VIM Team Coordinator at Grace Community UMC, (479) 285-9600.

Ongoing: “This Olde Church” Volunteers in Mission project. Help restore and repair churches in the Arkansas Conference. Teams will be painting, weather-proofing, doing general repairs, landscaping and other jobs. Teams DO NOT do roofing, plumbing or electrical. The church that asks for teams will provide housing, help prepare meals and provide showers. The teams will supply their food, the materials, tools and labor. Any church can apply for help through their District Superintendent. Teams can sign up by contacting Don Weeks at dweeks@arumc.org.

Wesley Foundation, UALR: Help needed with general maintenance, cleanup, painting, etc. Contact Maxine Allen at mallen@arumc.org, her office at (501) 663-1153 or her cell phone at (501) 539-0280.

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

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SAINT PAUL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
A Seminary of The United Methodist Church

Des Arc church brings worship to nursing home

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

DES ARC — Before he sets foot in his church on Sunday morning, Michael W. Topham's first stop is Des Arc Nursing & Rehab Center.

Inside a sofa-lined parlor near the nursing-home entrance, the pastor of Des Arc First United Methodist Church leads a weekly 9 a.m. worship service for the residents.

For about 20 minutes, they sing gospel songs from old hymnbooks as church member Mary Sue Roe accompanies them on piano. Then Topham offers a prayer and a short message.

"The sermon is always about God's love," he said, "and how the people still have a useful purpose in life even if they can do no more than just telling their children and grandchildren about God's love."

Most of the residents are wheelchair-bound. Many are dealing with the disorienting effects of Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia.

They no longer can go to church. But they still can worship God, and the familiar hymns of their childhood still can make them smile.

So, for a number of years, the Des Arc congregation has brought church to them. First UMC even lists the nursing-home service as part of



Each Sunday morning, Michael Topham, pastor of Des Arc First UMC, and church members help lead a worship service at Des Arc Nursing and Rehab Center. From left, Betty Morton, Morton's daughter Jean Calhoun, Johnie Siitonen and Debby Topham, the pastor's wife, sing hymns with nursing home residents.

Photo by Heather Hahn

its regular worship schedule on its Web site.

Most weeks, Topham can count on some church members joining him at the nursing home. Johnie Siitonen is one of the regulars. She said she likes coming to see her friends who now live there.

Jean Calhoun comes to worship alongside her mother, Betty Morton.

"I try to come out to see her every day, but especially Sundays,"

Calhoun said. "This is special. I can tell she really enjoys it."

For Dec. 20, the Sunday before Christmas, the church has planned a special service. The church's choir of about 20 will join the residents in a carol sing-along.

Martha Neal, the congregation's music minister, said choir members are already getting excited to harmonize "Hark, the Herald Angel Sing" and "Silent Night" with some of the center's residents.



Mary Sue Roe plays piano during worship at Des Arc Nursing & Rehab Center.

Photo by Heather Hahn

"It's just delightful for us to be with them," Neal said. "Some can't speak, but they'll smile and reach to us. Christmas is a time for giving, and we like to do that."

Topham has seen the service attendance grow since Roe, whose husband is a resident at the center, volunteered to play the piano.

The first time he visited, Topham said, only six people wheeled out to hear him preach. Now the services regularly attract 20 to 30 people.

Gloria Dunbar, a resident and a longtime First UMC member, had a stroke some years back and now rarely speaks. But every Sunday when Roe asks for song requests,

Dunbar says "39" — the number for "Count Your Many Blessings" in the hymnbook.

The demand for such ministries is likely to grow as more baby boomers enter their golden years.

The U.S. Census Bureau projects the number of Americans who are 65 and older will double by 2030, to about 72 million people, nearly one out of five Americans. At present, the age group of those 85 and older is the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population.

While the health of older Americans is improving, many do have disabilities or suffer from chronic conditions that limit their mobility.

According to the 2000 census, Arkansas had the country's ninth highest percentage of the elderly, with 14 percent of its population — roughly 378,000 people — age 65 and over.

Gerontologists say the elderly often have a greater need for the support and outreach that religious communities can provide — particularly as they approach death.

Brenda Mattox, a licensed practical nurse at the Des Arc center, said the residents perk up for Sunday worship.

"They look forward to it," she said. "They seem to be in better spirits after they go."

United Methodists can earn certification at Mount Eagle

For the Arkansas United Methodist

Mount Eagle Retreat Center, a United Methodist facility in Stone County near Clinton, recently received a \$20,000 grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

The grant will allow clergy and lay members to obtain certification in spiritual direction in a partnership with Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas.

Mount Eagle is the first off-campus location for the two-year program led by the Perkins office of spiritual formation. Six core courses and a practicum taken in sequence are required for the certification in spiritual direction.

Perkins faculty will teach the courses for three weekends a year over the two-year period. Class size is limited to 17 clergy and laity.

"With more and more 'seekers'

in our world today — both beyond and even within the church — the need for guidance is imperative," said David Fleming, chairman of the Conference Committee on Outdoor Ministries and senior pastor of First United Methodist Church in Pine Bluff.

The grant will cover expenses for Perkins faculty to travel from Dallas, recruitment of participants, partial scholarships and administrative costs.

Tuition and room and board for the two-year course will cost around \$3,000, significantly lower than costs for Arkansans to attend the same program on the Perkins campus in Dallas.

"Because of the foundation's underwriting, courses in spiritual direction will be offered in the calming quiet of a retreat center with a schedule that is accessible to working clergy and laity," said Lu Harding, director of Mount Eagle.



The Hendrix College Choir presents the 45th Annual

Candlelight Carol Service Tour



Thursday, December 17
7:30 p.m.

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5801 West Plano Parkway
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Friday, December 18
6 p.m.

Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church
4823 Woodlawn Drive
Little Rock, AR

www.hendrix.edu/candlelight

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD



J. Harris Moore, chairman of the Conference Committee on Native American Ministry, presented a \$2,000 gift to John and Sheri Altland, directors of Mount Sequoyah Conference Center. This gift will assist in renovating a training room in the historic Martin Building on the Mount Sequoyah campus and honors Native Americans in the Arkansas Area. The renovation is scheduled to be completed by early April. Pictured from left are John Altland, Moore and Sheri Altland.

Photo courtesy of Mount Sequoyah Conference Center



For six years, the Chapel Sunday School class at Fort Smith First UMC has faithfully served breakfast the last Sunday of each month for the congregation to raise money for backpacks full of food for children who normally go without food on weekends. This fall, the Chapel class and the outreach ministry decided to invite the neighborhood to the monthly gathering. The kickoff breakfast was on Sept. 27 for about 300 people. In October, the numbers grew to serve 370.

Photo courtesy of First UMC in Fort Smith



Leslie UMC celebrated Senior Saints Day on Oct. 25, honoring churchgoers who are over 65. The oldest saints were Gordon Hartrick at age 94 and Herschell Simmons at age 90. The youngest senior saints were Susan Welch and Gail Brown. The church also honored saints who have passed away. Pictured from left are Simmons, Welch, Brown and Hartrick.

Photo courtesy of Leslie UMC



Cabot United Methodist Church celebrated the ground-breaking for a new youth and education building on Oct. 25. The new 20,756-square-foot, \$2 million facility will consist of 20 classrooms, a nursery, youth room, stage and café area. Pictured from left are Raymond Vining, John Shirron, Rick Meadows, Senior Pastor Stephen Coburn and Billie Daugherty.

Photo by Tom Lieblong



University of Arkansas at Little Rock faculty and students as well as area United Methodists officially welcomed Maxine Allen as the new campus minister of UALR's Wesley Foundation at a reception on Nov. 5. Pictured from left are James Wohlleb, chairman of the UALR Wesley Foundation board; Allen; and Patti Luppen, one of the event organizers.

Photo by Heather Hahn



First UMC in Pocahontas celebrated the 102nd birthday of Marie Davis on July 26. Here Davis is pictured with Rockey E. Starnes, the church's pastor.

Photo courtesy of First UMC in Pocahontas



Newport First United Methodist Church hosted its fifth annual "Children's Movie Matinee." More than 100 children were treated to hot dogs, snacks and *A Nightmare Before Christmas*.

Photo courtesy of Newport FUMC

With grant, Arkansas churches will celebrate 'Sharing Together'

For the Arkansas United Methodist

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas recently made a \$125,000 grant to the Arkansas Conference for a communications and education initiative that will celebrate the ways United Methodists transform the world for Christ through connectional giving. The grant for "Sharing Together in Christ's Name" will be paid out over three years.

"In part, Sharing Together in Christ's Name came out of our hearing from pastors and church leaders who asked for ways to better explain how Arkansas United Methodists work together to share resources and what our giving accomplishes — to help people visualize who benefits from our giving," said Martha Taylor, Arkansas Conference director of communications.

"The grant from the foundation will enable us to communicate these ideas and more through words, photos and film."

Work on the Sharing Together

initiative began with focus group research that explored opinions from Arkansas church members and clergy about how best to communicate the issue of connectional giving. Online, print and video materials for Sharing Together in Christ's Name will be completed in the spring of 2010 and introduced at the 2010 Annual Conference.

"United Methodists from every congregation come together through our connectional ministries to do so much good at home and around the world," said Jim Argue, Jr., United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas President. "This effort celebrates all the ministry we accomplish together in the name of Arkansas United Methodism."

The foundation is fifth largest in assets among the 52 United Methodist Foundations in the country. Founded in 1963, the foundation is responsible for over 500 trust accounts that have combined assets in excess of \$90 million.

To see more photos of church activities, visit www.arumc.org/news



Saturday, January 9
9 am—3:30 pm
First United Methodist Church, El Dorado

Big Girl Big God challenges women to deepen their faith and grow up in Christ while reminding them how strong and awesome their God is. The Big Girl Big God conference promises to be a day that will strengthen their daily walk with Christ while reminding them that God is present in daily life.

Featured Guests



BABBIE MASON is synonymous with Christian music. She is the recipient of two Dove Awards and has performed at Women of Faith, Beth Moore and the National Women's Conferences. She is the host of a popular TV show, Babbie's House. www.babbie.com



JAN SILVIUS is a counselor, Bible teacher and speaker. Her bottom line, humorous messages appeal to the young and old alike. Jan has been guest speaker for Women of Faith, Moody's Women's Conferences and numerous church conferences. www.jansilvius.com

Tickets are \$20 and include lunch and child-care. Tickets available by calling 870.826.1341 or online at www.fumceldorado.com.

OBITUARIES

SHERWOOD

J. W. Lofton, 78, of Sherwood passed away October 20.



J.W. Lofton

Jackson Walter Lofton, who was born Oct. 9, 1931, was a pioneering ordained elder in the United Methodist Church.

In 1981, he became the first African American district superintendent in Arkansas since the 1972 merger of the former segregated Southwest Annual Conference with the Little Rock and North Arkansas Conferences. He began his ministry in the Southwest Annual Conference.

From 1986 to '94, he also was first African American to serve as director of ministries in the former Little Rock Conference.

He also served as Area — that is, statewide — director of Ethnic Minority Local Church Ministries

and was instrumental in developing cooperative parish ministries in the state.

He retired in 2001.

He is survived by his wife, Eddyce Lofton; sons Dwight and his wife, Gwinda; Jeffrey and his wife, Shelia; Michael, and daughter, Jacqueline Lofton. His survivors also include his sisters Jewell Bowe and her husband, Alphonso, and Laverne Arnold.

Funeral services were held Oct. 24, 2009, at Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church in Little Rock. Gunn Funeral Home handled arrangements.

GRADY

Clyde Richard Venable Sr., 82, of Grady died Oct. 29 at Jefferson Regional Medical Center in Pine Bluff.

He was born January 21, 1927, in Camden to the late Richard Jefferson and Tempie Roberson Venable.

He was a farmer and worked for Dow Chemical, where he retired. He then worked as a pastor in

Louisiana for Congregational Methodist churches.

Starting in 1996, he began serving in Arkansas as a United Methodist minister and part-time local pastor. He was also a member of the Grady Lions Club.

Also preceding him in death was a brother, Harold Venable; and a granddaughter, Renae Cooper.

Survivors include his wife, Donna Ruth Brooks Venable of Grady; two sons, Clyde Richard Venable Jr. of Whitney, Texas, and Jackie Lee Venable of Grady; daughter, Donna Louise Venable of Grady; two brothers, Robert Venable of Grady and Leonard Venable of Little Rock; five grandchildren, Donna Behnke, Amber Venable, Jake Venable, Trina Meier, Ryan King; and seven great-grandchildren.

Memorial services were held Nov. 2 at Grady United Methodist Church. Lee Zuehlke, the pastor, officiated.

BALD KNOB

Billy Frank Powell, 74, of Bald



Billy Powell

Beebe.

Powell began teaching at ASU-Beebe as an adjunct in 1990 and became a full time instructor in 1995. In 2000, he was promoted to assistant professor of psychology, comparative religions, sensations and perception, and introduction to cultural anthropology.

For the 2000-01 academic year, he received the Positive Teacher Award, which is a student-elected recognition for outstanding teaching. He received the ASU-Beebe Outstanding Faculty Award at the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges Conference in 2002.

Knob died Nov. 11. The son of the late Floyd and Bill Riner Powell, he was a retired United Methodist ordained elder and currently a professor at Arkansas State University in

Powell was also an Army veteran of the Korean Conflict, an avid sports fan, loving husband, father, grandfather, brother and uncle.

Survivors include wife, Mary Whitehead Powell; son, Chad Allen, and his wife, Cassie, of England; daughter, Kathryn Powell Carden of Cabot; sisters, Anita and husband Billy Davis and Sue and husband Ronnie Deller; grandchildren, Hanna Carden, Sydney Carden, Patrick Powell and Parker Powell; and 13 nieces and nephews.

He is also survived by best friends Melvin Cooley and Henry Collison, the Afternoon Coffee Group and ASU-Beebe family and students. He was preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Clara Elizabeth White.

Funeral services were held Nov. 14 at First United Methodist Church in Bald Knob.

In lieu of flowers donations can be made to Bald Knob United Methodist Church building fund or Arkansas Children's Hospital benevolence fund.

TOUR *Continued from Page 1A*

like to support Quapaw Quarter missions and helping our community."

Billed as "A Tour of Homes, A Taste of Christmas, A Touch of Music, A Sampling of Art," the December event serves as one of Quapaw Quarter UMC's biggest outreach activity and fundraiser of the year.

Thompson Murray, the congregation's senior pastor, estimates that proceeds from the tour generate about 10 percent of the church's budget.

Those funds help support not only church operations, but also the congregation's downtown missions to the poor and homeless. The ministries include the Community Breakfast, which provides 150 meals each Sunday morning; Stone Soup,

which serves dinner on Sunday afternoon; a food pantry that distributes groceries twice a month; and the recently started pet food ministry, which has 90 clients so far.

But as serious as the event's purpose is, organizers hope that those that attend will have fun.

Some homes will have live Christmas music, and others will offer finger food and beverages. Two trolleys will carry visitors from house to house while strolling minstrels serenade them.

"One of the joys of this is that it brings everyone in the church together," said Mary Henry, the chair of this year's event. "You don't even have to ask twice for a volunteer. You've got people coming up to you offering to help."

Among those who came



Jennifer Herron and Jeff Horton, partners in H. H. Architects, designed the above structure which serves as both their home and office to be as environmentally sound as possible.

Photo by Patrick Shownes

forward were Herron and Horton, who are the only members with a house on this year's tour.

While other homeowners plan to share their abodes' history, Herron and Horton will talk about how their home will help hold down costs in the future.

The architects designed their 4,000-square-foot, three-bedroom house to take in as much natural light as possible with L.E.D. lighting providing additional illumination. All the kitchen appliances have received the federal government's

Energy Star rating, which means they use substantially less energy than conventional machines and cut down on greenhouse emissions. The house additionally saves on utility bills with geothermal ground source heating and cooling and well-insulated walls. In addition, the house's metal roof is made of recyclable material.

The tour will highlight not just work architecture but works of art as well.

Henry said one of the goals for this year's gathering is to call

attention to the congregation's HeARTwork ministry, which provides studio space inside the church to artists for minimal rents in exchange for community service or public art projects.

Eight HeARTwork artists plan to have their work on display and on sale during the tour. They also have agreed to bake pastries for visitors to snack on.

Among them are professional artists Charlie James and Lisa Claas-James. Charlie is a photographer and a painter of abstract works. His wife creates more naturalistic paintings of brilliantly colored moths and dragonflies.

The couple both talked about how excited they were to participate in the church's Christmas festivities.

"I love this church," she said. "If I don't come over here every day, I miss it."

Quapaw Quarter UMC, 1601 S. Louisiana St., will have its Christmas in the Quarter tour of new and restored homes from 2 to 5 p.m. Dec. 6. Buses will transport guests to each house. Tickets cost \$20 and can be purchased on the day of the tour at 1:30 p.m. To buy tickets, call the church at (501) 375-1600.

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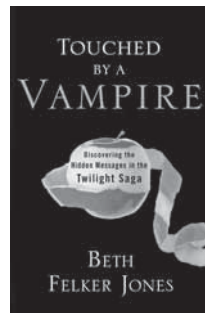
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BOOK REVIEW

It was love at first bite. Beth Felker-Jones' *Touched by a Vampire: Discovering the Hidden Messages in the Twilight Saga* is a stunningly insightful look into the best-selling world of *Twilight*.

Written primarily for teen girls (and their mothers!), *Touched by a Vampire* explores key themes in the *Twilight* series from a Biblical perspective. It is no secret that the *Twilight* series is a pop-culture phenomenon, and Felker-Jones uses that as a source of learning about life, relationships and faith.

Touched by a Vampire begins with a summary of the plot and



major events of the *Twilight* series. Next, Felker-Jones discusses the major themes in the *Twilight* series and their relationship to the Christian faith. In addition to themes such as love, sex, marriage and family, Felker-Jones uses *Twilight* to clear the cobwebs from teachings like resurrection and sin.

Felker-Jones, a United Methodist and assistant professor of theology at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., is critical of *Twilight* — and with good reason. At each turn of her analysis, Felker-Jones references the Bible and plainly explains the Christian perspective in contrast to the worldview presented in *Twilight*. Take for example her discussion of Bella's all-absorbing love for Edward — Felker-Jones challenges that "Christians need to raise questions about a picture of love that assumes another human being can complete us."

The book has great potential

for small group studies with teenagers. In addition to its critical analysis of *Twilight* in light of the Gospel, there are questions at the end of each chapter to spark thoughtful discussion as well as a book-by-book discussion guide.

Felker-Jones' book offers a much-needed tool for parents and pastors to engage teens in meaningful discussions about pop culture and the life of discipleship. It is a great gift to our church.

Danyelle Ditmer, pastor of Atkins First and Bells Chapel United Methodist churches.

eChristianED
now enrolling
new students

For the Arkansas United Methodist

Enrollment is now open for eChristianEd, Web-based training for Christian Educators.

New students can begin Basic I with the first of two face-to-face classes on Jan. 12 at the Arkansas Conference office, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Drive in Little Rock.

Developed by the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Columbia College in Columbia, S.C., and the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, eChristianEd provides training for paid and volunteer Christian educators, youth directors, pastors and Sunday School teachers. The program is recommended by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and is approved for para-professional certification.

Students must have Internet access, Microsoft Word and Microsoft Explorer.

Each course costs \$500, and registration costs \$50. Scholarships and book are available through the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

To enroll, contact LaVerne Keahey at (501) 851-7009 or keahey@aol.com.

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www.christianbiblecollege.org

Choir director and pianist and/or organist (one or two positions). Traditional service. Part-time. Salem UMC, Benton. Call (501) 316-2282 for application, (501) 794-0909 for inquiries.

COMING UP

Camp Aldersgate has formed a partnership with Petit Jean Smoked Meats where the camp receives a portion of profits from smoked ham or gift box sales. Petit Jean offers smoked hams or gift boxes. The items can be shipped directly to the recipients. Gift boxes start at \$22 and hams cost \$45 if picked up and \$77 if mailed. Online order forms can be downloaded at www.campaldersgate.net. The deadline to order is noon Dec. 10. Pick up from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dec. 15-16 at Camp Aldersgate, 2000 Aldersgate Road, Little Rock. To learn more, call the camp at (501) 225-1444.

The youth and parents of **Trinity UMC**, 1101 N. Mississippi St., Little Rock, will smoke holiday hams to raise funds for youth missions, trips and retreats.

Each ham is 8-10 pounds, sells for \$40, and will be ready for pickup after noon Dec. 19. To place an order, call Jay Sweningson, the church's minister of families and youth, at (501) 666-2813.

Lakewood UMC, 1922 Topf Road, North Little Rock, will offer "The Uncluttered Heart: Making Room for God During Advent & Christmas," a guided reflection to help prepare for the coming of the Christ child, at 6 p.m. Thursdays, Dec. 3-17.

■ The church's Chancel Choir and special Chamber Orchestra will present Vivaldi's *Gloria* at 6 p.m. Dec. 6 in the Sanctuary.

■ The church also will present "Ring and Sing Musical

Celebration," a performance by Lakewood UMC's singers and musical groups, at 6 p.m. Dec. 20 in Wesley Hall.

■ For those dealing with grief, financial difficulties or turmoil during this Advent season, the church will hold "Longest Night Service of Hope" at 6 p.m. Dec. 21, the Winter Solstice.

■ The church will have an open sanctuary for meditation and Communion at 2-4 p.m. Dec. 24. The church's Christmas Eve Candlelight and Communion services will be at 6 and 10 p.m. with a service of Baptism, Reaffirmation and Membership at 7:15 p.m.

To learn more call the church at (501) 753-6186.

The **Arkansas Choral Society** and the Concert Choir of the University of Arkansas at Monticello will present most of Handel's *Messiah* at 7 p.m. Dec. 4 at First Pentecostal Church, 1401 Calvary St., North Little Rock. Tickets cost \$15 for adults and \$8 for students with ID. Children under 12 are free. To learn more, call Camille Ostergren at (501) 376-8484.

First UMC, Arkadelphia, 107 N. Ninth St., will present "A Night with Wayne Kerr" at 6-7:30 p.m. Dec. 6. Kerr was the worship leader at Senior High Assembly earlier this year. T-shirts cost \$10 and proceeds benefit the Youth Service Fund. To reserve a seat, e-mail Mike Meeks at dork@thr33youth.org.

The River City Men's Chorus will present its holiday concert at 3 p.m. Dec. 6 and 7 p.m. Dec. 7 and Dec. 10 at Trinity UMC, 1101 N. Mississippi St., Little Rock. To learn more, call (501) 377-1080.

First UMC, Jonesboro, 801 S. Main St., will present *Amahl and the Night Visitors* at 7 p.m. Dec. 10. The Forum Sinfonia of Krakow, Poland, under the direction of Steven Byess, and members of the Northeast Arkansas Master Chorale will perform. Tickets cost \$5.

■ The church also will offer "Surviving the Holidays," a workshop for divorced and separated adults, at 3:30-5:30 p.m. Dec. 13.

■ First UMC Choirs and a brass choir will present "The Glory of Christmas," a concert of classic carols, at 5 p.m. Dec. 20. The performance will include the live broadcast of international opera star Stuart Neill sharing his Christmas favorites at La Scala in Milan, Italy.

To learn more about any of these events, call the church at (870) 932-7479.

First UMC, Little Rock, Eighth and Center streets, will present *I Wish You Jesus*, a children's Christmas musical written by Patricia Martin and arranged by Tommy Greer, during First Tradition worship at 11 a.m. December 13.

■ The church also will present "Christmas on Center Street," a concert by all of its musical groups

and members of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, at 2 p.m. Dec. 20. The concert will feature Camille Saint-Saëns' *Christmas Oratorio* and *The Reluctant Dragon* by John Rutter. Donations will be accepted for tickets in advance and at the door with proceeds benefiting the Ministry of Music and the Arkansas Foodbank Network.

■ The church will have a Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols at 5 p.m. and a Candlelight Communion Service at 10:30 p.m. Dec. 24.

To learn more about any of these events, call the church at (501) 372-2256.

Mount Sequoyah Conference Center, 150 NW Skyline Drive, Fayetteville, will present a Lenten Sermon - Writing Retreat on Jan. 11-15, 2010. Clergy and lay ministers are invited to come undertake their in-depth preparation and sermon writing for this season. The cost is \$395 for those staying on site, \$155 for commuters. To learn more, call Kim Ross, Mount Sequoyah's spiritual director, at (800) 760-8126.

The deadline for the next edition of the Arkansas United Methodist is 5 p.m. Dec. 16. Priority will be given to including events scheduled in the coming month. Mail submissions to editor Heather Hahn, Arkansas United Methodist, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Drive, Little Rock, AR, 72202, or e-mail information to hhahn@arumc.org.

UMW Continued from Page 1A

a great feast and invited many guests. All made excuses why they couldn't come.

One said he wanted to check out his new oxen. Another declined to come because he had just gotten married.

After the rejection of his well-to-do friends, the householder directed his servants to invite the poor, the crippled and blind to the banquet. But there were still empty seats. The parable ends with the householder telling his servants to travel the highways and byways and compel those they meet to come.

United Methodist Women groups sometimes find themselves in the same position as the parable's banquet host, Olson said.

"We've asked. We've prepared. We've made a list. We've baked the cakes. We have wonderful apple juice. And still the room is not full," she said. "Sometimes it's not enough to just put the announcement in the bulletin."

She reminded her listeners that God invites all to the table — even those outside the church walls.

Olson, a Harvard graduate and



**Harriett
Jane Olson**

attorney, has a long history of service to the United Methodist Church as a delegate to General Conferences and as a longtime member of United Methodist Women.

She said her first invitation to the group she now oversees came when a member of her church in Morristown, N.J., asked Olson to accompany her to a mother-daughter banquet.

"It was very hard to say no," Olson said.

Olson said United Methodist Women should strive to make their hospitality equally hard to turn down.

"One of the questions before us," she said, "is how determined are we that the message won't go to waste, that the mission won't go to waste, that the caring that we have for each other won't go to waste. How determined are we to invite others to the table?"

Judy Mattox, the Arkansas UMW president, left Olson's sermon with a renewed sense of purpose.

"I found her very inspirational," said Mattox, who is also the wife of Little Rock First UMC pastor Michael Mattox. "She makes me want to run out and say, 'Hi, come on in!'"

To learn more about United Methodist Women's activities worldwide, visit new.gbmg-umc.org/umw/.

Philander Smith has new address

For the Arkansas United Methodist

Exactly nine years after 14th Street in Little Rock was renamed Daisy L. Gatson Bates Drive, Philander Smith College officials announced that the private, historically black United Methodist school is changing its address to 900 Daisy Bates Drive in honor of the late civil rights activist.

The Philander Smith Board of Trustees voted for the address change, which became effective in October. The main entrance of the school sits on Daisy Gatson Bates Drive. The previous address was One Trudie Kibbe Reed Drive.

The address for the Arkansas Conference office will remain 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Drive.

Philander Smith President Walter Kimbrough said, among other things, changing the address should help minimize confusion about the location of the campus.

"The renaming of our address was a great idea by our Board of Trustees," he said. "Not only does it

make the college easier to locate for the vast number of visitors we see each year, but we are also provided with a unique opportunity to tell the college's story as it relates to Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine."

Daisy L. Gatson Bates is perhaps best known as a mentor and advisor to the nine black students who desegregated Little Rock Central High School in 1957. In her 1962 memoir, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, Bates revealed several connections between the college and the Little Rock Nine.

Most notably, she wrote that members of the Philander Smith faculty tutored the nine students during the days when they were barred from entering the all-white high school by order of the governor.

Bates died Nov. 4, 1999. The next year, on Nov. 10, 2000, 14th Street was renamed Daisy L. Gatson Bates Drive. In 2001, the Arkansas legislature formally recognized the third Monday in February as Daisy Gatson Bates Day.

Sowing Bountifully

As the Apostle Paul taught, those who sow bountifully will also reap bountifully.

The members of the Bishops' Club of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas are sowing bountifully. Their support of the Foundation's ministry has enabled it to develop permanent charitable resources to strengthen the Church's ministry.

Life Members are donors who contribute a one-time gift of \$15,000 to the Cornerstone Fund, an endowment to support the ministry of the Foundation. Annual Members donate \$1,000 each year to the Foundation.

Thanks to the following Bishops' Club members whose bountiful sowing has made such a wonderful difference at the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

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Tightening belts

Bishops set to roll back their paychecks | 2B



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Thinking ahead

Season of betrayal for Christ | 7B

Section B

December 4, 2009

Stepping out in faith



UMR PHOTO BY BILL FENTUM

Young people from 54 United Methodist conferences worship together and explore a call to ordained ministry during Exploration 2009, Nov. 13-15 in Dallas, Texas.

Young people listen, respond to ministry call

BY BILL FENTUM
Staff Writer

DALLAS—More than 500 young people who feel called to ministry sit in a dark auditorium, watching a large screen. Each is waiting to see his or her name flash up. And when it does, each answers enthusiastically: “Here I am, Lord!”

It’s all part of opening worship at Exploration, a biennial event sponsored by the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The 2009 gathering, held Nov. 13-15, drew high school seniors and college-age adults from across the U.S. who are exploring together the possibility of ordained service in the denomination.

“A lot of times I don’t have much contact with others who sense a call,” said Andrew Black, 19, during a break between worship, small-group meetings and workshop sessions. “But here, with hundreds of us, it’s easy to connect.”

‘We need you’

A study released in October by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership showed the number of ordained United Methodist deacons under 35 has more than doubled since 2006, from 4 to 8.4 percent. But the ranks of

■ See ‘Faith,’ page 4B

Revival stirs churches to action

BY MARY JACOBS
Staff Writer

DALLAS—Sojourners founder Jim Wallis often compares Christians to “gangs” because of the way they silo themselves in their own separate communities. But for a few days recently in Dallas, he witnessed a “dropping of the gang colors” as thousands assembled for the So-

joyners Justice Revival at Dallas Market Hall.

Sponsored by the Washington, D.C.-based Sojourners ministry, the Nov. 10-12 event drew about 1,200 people each night—including leaders and laity of United Methodist, Catholic, Baptist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, the Disciples of Christ, Lutheran and non-denominational churches—for preaching, worship and praise music.

On the Saturday after the revival, some 1,000 volunteers fanned across the city to participate in 10 community projects organized as part of the event. Volunteers spruced up landscaping and planted a garden at an elementary school, cleaned up litter and painted houses in low-income neighborhoods.

“It’s exciting what the churches can do when they come together,” said Mr.

■ See ‘Revival,’ page 8B



UMR PHOTO BY MARY JACOBS

The Rev. Zan Holmes preaches at the Sojourners Justice Revival in Dallas.

FAITH WATCH

Interfaith leaders urge Guantanamo closing

More than 40 interfaith leaders sent a letter Nov. 12 to President Obama urging the closing of the federal detention center at Guantanamo Bay. Mr. Obama signed an executive order in January to shut down the prison for suspected terrorists and prisoners of war, but Congress has called for a detailed plan before agreeing to move the prisoners to U.S. soil. The letter was drafted by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, an organization that claims prisoners have been tortured at Guantanamo. Signers include United Methodist Council of Bishops President Gregory Palmer.

UM bishops request Afghanistan pullout

A letter signed by 77 United Methodist bishops was sent Nov. 10 to President Obama urging withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2010. The bishops pledged to keep the president in prayer "as [he seeks] a just and peaceful resolution to the tragic war in Afghanistan." According to the United Methodist News Service, retired Bishop Marshall Meadors, who drafted the letter, said: "I have 10 grandchildren. I want to do everything I can to leave them a world without war."

SMU unveils designs for Bush library center

Designs for the George W. Bush Presidential Center at Southern Methodist University were unveiled Nov. 18 in a ceremony at the Dallas campus. The 225,000-square-foot library center will include a museum and the Bush Foundation's policy institute. The foundation hopes to raise \$300 million from private donors in time for groundbreaking in about a year, according to *The Dallas Morning News*. The Foundation is also seeking rezoning of the property over objections from nearby residents who raised concerns about traffic.

—Compiled by Bill Fentum

Typhoons leave Filipinos 'reeling,' bishop says

BY UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

Filipinos are "reeling" from the impact of multiple typhoons this fall, says United Methodist Bishop Leo Soriano of the Davao area of the Philippines.

Just one week after Tropical Storm Ketsana struck Sept. 26, Typhoon Parma hovered over the country for five days. "You can just imagine [how] it added to the floods," he said while visiting Nashville, Tenn., on Nov. 16.

In all, 25 provinces in the Manila area, Baguio area and part of Davao area were flooded.

Flash floods from the typhoons caused major property damage, according to the bishop. Less substantial homes were washed away and concrete structures were submerged in water for a long period. Part of Manila, the capital city, is still under water.

"Some of the animals, many of them died," the bishop said. "They were drowned—dogs, cats, pigs and even pests like rats. The stench is terrible."

Some people, he added, have become infected with leptospirosis, a disease caused by bacteria from rat urine that has contaminated the floodwaters.

Bishop Soriano happened to be in the United States, attending a meeting in Nashville, when the first typhoon struck. He returned home to find church members organizing for the relief process.

"The district superintendents, the deaconesses, some lay leaders, in cooperation with UMCOR-Philippines, they tried to do some rescue and [provide] relief goods," Bishop Soriano



Bishop Leo Soriano

How to help:

Donations to support ongoing relief work in the Philippines can be made to Philippines Emergency, UMCOR Advance #240235, umcor.org.

said. "Even at this time, they are still doing it."

After the first typhoon struck, the denomination's Manila area, led by Bishop Lito C. Tangonan, organized relief operations and issued a letter appealing for support and donations to church members at home and abroad. United Methodist institutions and local churches distributed relief supplies and assisted with shelter.

Using church members and other local volunteers, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is distributing emergency supplies to more than 11,000 displaced families. Melissa Crutchfield, who coordinates the agency's international disaster response, said UMCOR has just received a \$40,000 grant from Muslim Aid for its relief work in the Philippines.

Long-term recovery will mean rebuilding livelihoods as well as homes, Bishop Soriano said. Many flood victims "simply have only the shirt on their back, so you have to help them rehabilitate and many of them will be relocated because they could not build again where they were before."

Bishop Soriano expects this Christmas to be "a very bleak one" in the Philippines, but hopes other United Methodists will pray for them and contribute financially to the recovery.

"The meaning of Christmas is Immanuel, God with us," the bishop said. "If we could be together in tragedy, in peace and joy, and in pain, then that could be Immanuel and merry Christmas to all of us."

Bishops tighten belts, roll back paychecks

BY KATHY L. GILBERT
United Methodist News Service

In a day and age when just having a job is the new raise, it came naturally to the spiritual leaders of the United Methodist Church to take a pay cut.

"It's as plain as the nose on your face," said Bishop Peggy Johnson, Philadelphia Area. "It makes perfect sense."

Effective Jan. 1, Bishop Johnson and her fellow 49 active U.S. United Methodist bishops will open smaller paychecks and see about \$5,000 less in 2010.

Last May, the bishops voted to forgo a raise for 2010 and roll their salaries back to the 2008 level. Their annual pay will drop from \$125,658 to \$120,942.

"It is a great opportunity to be in solidarity with a lot of our churches," Bishop Johnson said. "I say we should keep it the same for five more years. But that's not very popular."

The lingering recession has caused pain throughout the country, with unemployment rising above 10 percent for the first time since 1983. In the United Methodist Church, apportioned funds were down \$4.7 million and Special Sunday offerings were down \$286,000 in 2008, the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) told the Council of Bishops earlier this month.

United Methodist general agencies receiving apportioned funds have made significant reductions in staff and will not increase salaries in 2010, said Moses Kumar, top executive with GCFA.

Bishop Julius C. Trimble, Iowa Area, said the bishops' decision to lower their salaries isn't so much a sacrifice as an opportunity to

"practice Christian generosity."

Bishops and most Americans are wealthy by the world's standards, he said. "If you can eat two meals a day for five consecutive days and you own more than one pair of shoes—you're wealthy."

Bishop Peter D. Weaver, Boston Area, said he did not go into ministry for a salary. "I went into the ministry to serve Jesus. So whatever is the physical remuneration is very secondary to the spiritual remuneration that we get in following Christ."

He said the decision to take a lower salary was important and was a "small" way to stand in solidarity with many who are experiencing economic challenges.

The cuts mean the bishops will tighten their belts and adjust their family budgets.

What will not be cut is giving.

"All of us know that we have a tendency to live at the level of our income," said Bishop Alfred Gwinn, Raleigh Area. "But this is a wonderful time to rethink why we spend the money that we spend and how we might redirect that to more meaningful causes."

"So I think it's an opportunity to grow spiritually in a personal way and an opportunity to lead in a spiritual way."

The money trimmed from the bishops' salaries will go into the Episcopal Fund because the 2008 General Conference has already approved the budget for 2009, said Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, Los Angeles Area. That was not the intention of the bishops, she said.

At the November council meeting, the bishops voted to ask GCFA to explore ways their salary cuts can be directly deposited in ministries such as the Central Conference Pension Initiative or the Global Health Fund.



UMNS PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE DUBOSE

United Methodist bishops are reducing their salaries, but not their giving.

THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER

www.umportal.org
news@umr.org

Bob Mathews, CEO

Robin Russell, Managing Editor

Bill Fentum, Staff Writer

Mary Jacobs, Staff Writer

Ken Lowery, Copy Editor

Cherrie Graham, Advertising Manager

Kristin Del Mul, Senior Designer

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UM CONNECTIONS

Seeking consensus on change

Portland to host 2016 General Conference

The Commission on the General Conference has selected Portland, Ore., as the site for the 2016 General Conference, tentatively scheduled for May 10-20 that year at the Oregon Convention Center. General Conferences rotate among the five jurisdictions, with 2016 slated for the Western Jurisdiction. Randall Miller, chair of the Commission on the General Conference, said that Portland's ecological "greenness" was a factor in the city's selection, along with the availability of affordable meeting space and hotel rooms. The General Conference is expected to lure some 6,000 visitors, including delegates from the U.S., Africa, Europe and Asia.

Honduras project draws volunteers

The Sierra Service Project (SSP) will send four teams of youth and young adult volunteers to Honduras in June and July of 2010 to be immersed in the culture and to help build simple but safe homes. Volunteers will also learn about local ministries. Since 2003, SSP volunteers have constructed 28 homes in Honduras. The SSP plans to build eight more in 2010. Volunteers must be mature high school juniors or seniors, or college-age young adults. With financial support from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), SSP was able to lower the trip price for 2010. For information, visit www.sierraserviceproject.org.

Puerto Ricans elect Bishop Moreno Rivas

The General Conference of the Methodist Church in Puerto Rico in November elected the Rev. Rafael Moreno Rivas as bishop. Bishop Moreno Rivas' six-year term begins Jan. 1, as Bishop Juan A. Vera completes his term.

—Compiled by Mary Jacobs

BY KATHY L. GILBERT
United Methodist News Service

LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C.—For the past 40 years the one "voice" that has spoken for the United Methodist Church has been a 10-day, 1,000-delegate meeting charged with considering mountains of legislation.

Held every four years.

"At times it seems that General Conference is the absent parent of a dysfunctional family," said Bishop John Hopkins, chair of the Connectional Table.

Between sessions of the General Conference, the policy-making body of the church, there is no mechanism to step in and make quick decisions, stop the "squabbles" and get the church back on track with its mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ, he said.

Finding consensus on a solution, however, has also been difficult. In the past five years, church leaders have formed at least three different bodies, the Connectional Table, the Worldwide Nature of the Church study committee and a Call to Action study committee—to promote collaboration and nimble action between General Conferences.

The Council of Bishops and Connectional Table in November approved a plan calling for outside consultants to also weigh in on the church's future.

'A lot of ferment'

Committees seem to beget committees. Are they listening to each other?

The 2004 General Conference formed the Connectional Table as a roundtable of leaders who could talk about the vision and ministry of the church, Bishop Hopkins said. The group was given responsibility for coordinating the mission, ministries and resources of the United Methodist Church.

The 2008 General Conference created the Worldwide Nature of the Church study committee after the de-



Bishop Gregory Palmer addresses the Council of Bishops during the 2008 General Conference.



UMNS FILE PHOTOS BY MIKE DUBOSE

United Methodist Bishop Scott Jones gives the sermon during opening worship at Youth 2007 in Greensboro, N.C.

nomination made a step toward reorganizing so it does not appear to be a U.S. church, with satellite locations in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Then in 2009, the Council of Bishops formed the Call to Action committee to make a fresh assessment of the church's life, to help make the denomination more effective and accountable, particularly in light of the economic climate.

During a report to the Council of Bishops, the Call to Action committee recommended forming a new committee to continue their work. The proposal prompted Bishop Jane Allen Middleton, Central Pennsylvania, to ask, "How is this not just another layer on top of everything else?"

Bishop Larry Goodpaster, chair, said the Call to Action committee recognized there was some overlap among all the groups. "We kept saying there are groups working on this, we need to encourage them and urge them to do this with some immediacy. We can't put this off."

In an interview, Bishops Hopkins, Scott Jones, Goodpaster and Gregory Palmer, president of the Council of Bishops, talked about the dreams of each group to revive a denomination that is growing older and steadily losing membership in the U.S.

"I think we're in a process of trying to practice collaboration in such a way that it becomes a habit. . . . And I mean a positive habit," Bishop Palmer said. "Collaboration is really, to put it in Wesleyan terms, a form of conferencing."

All four bishops agreed there is a renewed sense of urgency about the mission of the church and how to realign resources to accomplish that mission.

Pieces of the puzzle

The 60-member Connectional Table includes representatives from

the five ethnic caucuses, 13 general agencies, jurisdictions and central (outside of the U.S.) conferences, one youth, one young adult and a member of the Council of Bishops who acts as chair.

"It has the distinct function that's in the [Book of] Discipline to bring legislation to General Conference about the structures of the church to make them more effective and efficient," Bishop Hopkins said.

"Real-time" conversations go on around that table when different parts of the church need to be in collaboration, he said. The four areas of focus adopted by the 2008 General Conference were developed around that table, he pointed out. The four areas—developing leaders, starting new congregations, eliminating poverty and improving global health—show the church can

rally around good ideas, he said.

"The Connectional Table is not a pure administrative group by any means," he said. "It's a table for vetting."

The 20-member Worldwide Nature of the Church Study Group was formed after a study group submitted 23 petitions to the 2008 General Conference to amend the church's constitution to allow for a creation of a regional conference for the United States.

"Our mandate from General Conference is to come back to the 2012 General Conference with legislation possibly altering the *Book of Discipline* so that the United States would be one regional conference out of many within the worldwide United Methodist Church," Bishop Jones said.

Unity of the church is "absolutely important," he said. "The unity rests in our doctrine, discipline and mission."

The Call to Action Steering Committee was formed in 2009 by the Council of Bishops to design a plan for reordering the church.

"I think the initiative behind the call to action was done in the context of the economic crisis, but it quickly became apparent to us that it wasn't the financial crisis that was gonna drive it," Bishop Goodpaster said. "We really focused on the mission of the church and how do we align the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world in our current time with the four areas of focus."

There are at least two more committees appointed by the 2008 General Conference, Bishop Hopkins said. The Ministry Study Committee is charged with clarifying the ordering of ministry. The Committee on Faith and Order is reflecting on matters of faith, doctrinal teaching, order and discipline.

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■ FAITH *Continued from page 1B*

young elders in that time increased only from 4.8 to 5.25 percent—“modest good news,” according to the study.

“People will tell you they need you in the future, but I will tell you we need you now,” the Rev. Motoe Yamada told young people at the conference. She is senior pastor of Sacramento

Japanese United Methodist Church in the California-Nevada Conference.

“God’s people are waiting,” Ms. Yamada shouted. “Let us go!”

It’s tough for anyone to hear, accept and respond to the call, said the Rev. William Lawrence, dean of Perkins School of Theology, during one of the

worship services.

Even Moses, he noted, resisted God’s command from the burning bush. And in the New Testament, only Paul literally heard the voice of the ascended Christ enlisting him for service; others hesitated out of fear or uncertainty that the call was real.

In the 4th century B.C., Esther persuaded her husband, the king of Persia, to prevent the massacre of her Jewish kinfolk. But first, she needed encouragement from her cousin Mordecai: “Who knows? Perhaps you have come . . . for just such a time as this.”

Dr. Lawrence repeated that phrase throughout his sermon. “We can allow for the possibility,” he said, “that the spirit of God might be upon each of us, whispering those words.”

To decide whether they are summoned to ordained ministry, Dr. Lawrence urged Exploration attendees to do three things: Pray regularly, seek advice from friends and mentors and “remain open to the mystery of God’s love which surpasses our understanding.”

Personal journeys

In workshops, clergy told participants about options for ministry and shared stories from their own spiritual journeys.



UMR PHOTOS BY BILL FENTUM

The Rev. Bill Lawrence, dean of Perkins School of Theology, preaches at a morning worship service.



The Rev. Motoe Yamada of Sacramento, Calif., sends out Exploration 2009 participants with a message of encouragement at the closing worship service.

The Rev. Medea Saunders, an elder in the Iowa Conference, was a biology grad student in her early 20s when a mission trip to Juarez, Mexico set her on a different path. “I didn’t feel called right away,” she said during a panel discussion. “But I thought, ‘I’ll just put my life in God’s hands, I’ll be faithful and end up where God wants me.’”

That turned out to be Atlanta, Ga., where she earned an M.Div. degree at Candler School of Theology and interned at a small suburban church. “I fell in love with what I was doing,” Ms.

Saunders said.

She recalled in particular a time when the church staff shared lunch with an older, shut-in parishioner who hadn’t been able to attend services in years.

“We shared Communion with her,” she said. “I watched tears roll down her face, and felt a confirmation from God that I was where I was supposed to be.”

It isn’t always so enriching, warned the Rev. Robert Lopez, who led an inner-city Dallas church when he was fresh from seminary. Vandals busted the church’s stained-glass windows and it took weeks to raise enough money to replace them. “Ministry stinks,” he said, “when you’re forced to hold a charge conference by candlelight.”

Then there’s the stress that comes when a member says he’s considering suicide, or a couple in the church goes through a divorce. Or realizing after two years that you’ve grown a congregation, Mr. Lopez joked, “from 120 people to 40.”

“That’s when you look back at your call and wonder, ‘Lord, did I hear you right?’” he said. “But if you’re one of those people who can still stand up and say, ‘I believe God is indeed calling me,’ it anchors you.”

The Rev. Tyrone Gordon, senior pastor of St. Luke “Community” UMC in Dallas, said in a sermon at the conference that he knew at age 12 that he was headed for ordained ministry. The hard part, he said, was to convince everyone else.

Growing up in Los Angeles, Calif., Mr. Gordon said he struggled to pass high school geometry. When a counselor told him he wasn’t “college material,” he refused to give up. “I told her: ‘I am open to the possibilities. God has a plan for my life, I have an appointment with destiny, and you are not going to make me late.’”

He took geometry again, graduated and four years later earned a



UMNS PHOTO BY KATHY L. GILBERT

(From left) Jessica Branch, Mary D’Amico and Caitlyn Butler, students from North Central College, Naperville, Ill., discuss their faith journey.

bachelor of arts degree from Bishop College in Dallas. "I went back," he said, "put my degree on her desk and said, 'You said I couldn't do it!'"

"God is calling those who can look at what is, and imagine what can be. Folks who answer that call don't take what they see in life or the church at face value, because they know God has something better."

Servant leaders

Clergy are servants—not bosses—according to the Rev. Justin Coleman, pastor of a satellite campus of St. Luke's UMC in Houston, Texas. He led a workshop for high school students who wanted to identify their gifts for ministry.

Christ gave all of his disciples a model of humility and service when he washed the apostles' feet before the Last Supper, Mr. Coleman told the youths. "Not many people wake up in the morning and say, 'I'm ready to wash a bunch of dirty feet, to work with messed-up people,'" he said. "But ministry takes a servant's heart."

Of course, pastors can't be perfect—and don't need to be. Mr. Coleman says any poll of clergy around the country would show most of them struggle with feelings of unworthiness, himself included.

"But by the grace of God, I'm able to do this job," he said. "None of us are good enough because of our own innate righteousness. Sometimes we're all wounded or broken, yet God uses us to heal."

Peter Riggs, a 17-year-old high school senior from Jackson, Tenn., told Mr. Coleman his family has switched from United Methodist to Baptist congregations in his lifetime, and that he now attends a non-de-



UMR PHOTOS BY BILL FENTUM

nominal church. Though he senses a call to some field of ministry—and isn't sure what tradition to follow—he said his love for Wesleyan

Young people from 54 United Methodist conferences worship together and explore a call to ordained ministry during Exploration 2009, Nov. 13-15 in Dallas, Texas.

theology is pushing him toward Methodism.

"The United Methodist Church is a big tent," Mr. Coleman replied. "Wesley said there are doctrines and opinions, that we need unity in core beliefs and with all the other stuff, think and let think. For me, part of the richness of our church is that discussion. It's about finding a community where you can feel at home."

Commitments

Participants were invited on the last night to fill out commitment cards, to say whether they felt certain their vocation would be ordained ministry.

"I'll bet you have other options, maybe even pressure from your families, friends or teachers about what you can do with your life," said United Methodist Bishop Sally Dyck (Minnesota Area), before the cards were turned in.

The apostle Peter, she noted, signed up for more than he expected when he dropped his fishing net to follow Jesus. He later gave in to fear and denied Christ three times, but still received unconditional love and forgiveness.

"There's a cost to ministry," Bishop

Dyck said, "sometimes sacrifices and things you never imagined facing. But I wouldn't give anything not to have been tested."

"Jesus is asking, 'Do you love me more than all the other options you have? Will you serve my people even when it's hard? Will you follow me?'"

'I'll just put my life in God's hands, I'll be faithful and end up where God wants me.'

—The Rev. Medea Saunders

When responses were tallied, 170 attendees had said, "Yes."

Annual conference officials will stay in touch with those young people to help them pursue the call at whatever stage they find themselves—whether they're choosing a major in college, looking for a seminary or needing scholarship information.

Representatives from the 13 United Methodist seminaries came to Exploration to meet with potential students.

Today's leaders

Since 2006, Exploration conferences have also been held for United Methodist youth and young adults in Germany and Russia. GBHEM has begun a long-term study on the impact of the events and hopes to track the careers of Exploration participants over the next 25 years.

In addition, the agency recently published *Beyond the Burning Bush*, a collection of essays by 28 United Methodist clergy on their experiences of discerning the call to ordained ministry.

The Rev. Meg Lassiat, director of student ministries, vocation and enlistment for GBHEM, said in an interview that the goal isn't limited to developing church leaders for tomorrow.

"Young people are today's leaders as well," she said. "We're training them for the future, but we're excited about the gifts they bring today."

bfentum@umr.org



The Rev. Tyrone Gordon, senior pastor of St. Luke "Community" UMC in Dallas, preaches during opening worship.

Tending to the smaller things in life

BY ERIC VAN METER
Special Contributor

You can learn a lot from a chicken. Even about church.

Ask my 5-year-old son what he wants to be when he grows up and he'll usually say "a paleontologist." This might not seem like the most lucrative career goal, but given his last life ambition—to be a velociraptor—his mother and I are quite pleased that now he at least plans to be human.

Not long ago, we decided to help Zachary practice his would-be trade. Denise bought a whole chicken and boiled the meat, then stripped it down to the skeleton. We wrapped the bones in plaster and buried them in the sandbox for Zachary to find. I helped him dig them up and clean them off. Then we set about piecing them back together.

What we ended up with looked nothing like a chicken, of course. Biology was never my strong subject, and Zachary was determined to make whatever bones he found look like something more exotic than dinner. Nevertheless, the intent of the exercise was accomplished: We had some good father-son time and he felt as though he'd made an epic find.

I know better, of course. After all, I planted those "fossils." If I'm going to dream of discovery, I want something a bit more dramatic. I want to unearth a previously unknown species of carnivore, 60 feet tall with razor-sharp teeth. And eyes that shoot laser beams.

Real paleontologists are more like Zachary, however. They get excited about the little things—an ankle bone or feather imprint. They pay attention to the little things, because even the tiniest of details can unlock a world of wonder.

I'm afraid my Church and I get too caught up in a quest for the spectacular. We frantically dig in search of something noteworthy, and in the process, throw dirt on some truly important finds from our children.

But what if we learned to stop trampling the ground in search of success and took time to examine what's buried right beneath our feet? What if we explored what we think is familiar territory with the eyes of our children? We might find discover some incredible possibilities.

Driven by success

We Americans are addicted to success. We don't particularly admire imagination unless it can lead to profitable innovation. Our heroes are not artists, but entrepreneurs. We are



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Paying attention to the little things can unlock a world of wonder—in our children and in the Church—says Eric Van Meter.

hooked on success, which we almost invariably define as growth.

The very worst thing we can imagine for our economy, our power, or our churches is a decline. When the numbers trend the wrong way, we stay up late and wring our hands and look for ways to turn things around.

Those of us who lead churches like to say that we're different. We complain about the year-end forms we have to fill out and how they reduce pastoral work to facts and figures and formulas. We say that numbers don't really matter, not to us.



Eric Van Meter

But we lie, to ourselves most of all.

The truth is that success is almost all that matters, if our practice is any indication. We fret

about membership and worship attendance. We spend countless hours on budgeting and fundraising. We formulate strategies and angle for religious market share.

When that doesn't work, we build. In the last four years, churches in our conference raised nearly \$63 million for capital campaigns, our bishop pointed out at last summer's annual conference. We have invested so much in facilities, staff and programs, but our participation continues to decline. He's concerned, and so am I.

The issue is more than simply return on investment. Participation numbers are important, as are financial figures. But these are measures of

success, not faithfulness. They are only partial indicators of our posture before God. They are fruits, not roots.

Lately, I've had to question my own participation in the Cult of Success.

When I began in my current ministry setting, I pointed to fall 2009 as the semester when my goals would be realized. After a little more than two years of hard work, I expected our attendance to have doubled, our finances to be stable and our facilities to be much improved.

Almost none of that has happened. I can blame the economy, the weather or anything else I want, but the fact is that on paper at least, I'm a failure. For weeks I poured more and more effort into my job. I called in heavy equipment to dig through my ministry, convinced that success must be around here somewhere, if I could only get at it.

Then a minor miracle restored my salvation. A student wanted to be baptized. Then another. As I listened to their stories, I began to realize how close I'd come to overlooking them in my search for larger success.

I turned off the heavy equipment and started listening.

I think I'm starting to learn something through this discipline. I'm beginning to understand how important it is to cherish each pebble I uncover. I'm realizing how much I can learn about God when I stop my frantic work in the name of God—when I just listen.

Tending the ordinary

I want my children to grow up in a church that cherishes them more than

it does success. I want those who guide my children's spiritual journeys to care for them as individuals as much as I do. I want my children to encounter people who will take time to sift through the sand with them, to uncover ordinary things and arrange them in extraordinary ways.

But I can't expect my Church to treat my kids this way unless I make some changes myself.

The way I formulate my goals this year, for instance, will be very different. Instead of setting numerical targets and developing strategies to meet

them, I'm considering how the posture of our community needs to change in the next 12 months. I'm imagining what kind of people we should be and wondering how we can develop those traits. Any numbers we talk about will serve these ends, rather than drive them.

I'm trying to think smaller. I'm trying not to care about my career or my reputation, except when it comes to giving myself fully to Jesus and to fully loving the people around me.

I'm redefining what matters in my own life and encouraging others to do the same.

The structures we spend so much time and money maintaining are little more than pre-fossils. When we are gone, they will be artifacts for someone else to discover, to sift through and piece together the culture of these Methodists. Our architecture and literature and precious little art will signal how we lived, what we valued, what our dreams were.

I wonder what the person who excavates my part of the world will find. I hope what I leave behind reveals more about caring than about wealth, more generosity than accumulation. I hope the religious beliefs and rituals they unearth reveal not just theology but love lived out.

And if they find my son's journal, I hope it tells the story of a Church that cared enough for him to think small and care big.

The Rev. Van Meter is director of the Wesley Foundation at Arkansas State University.

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Preparing for betrayal, repentance

BY ADAM HAMILTON
Special Contributor

Editor's note: This is the first of a four-part series.

The Passover is meant to be a festive and celebratory time, filled with joy as participants remember that those who were slaves were now set free, at last becoming one people, the people of God.

If indeed the Last Supper began with such a tone, it changed during the course of the evening. Even beyond Jesus' foreknowledge of events, there was great apprehension in the room.

Everyone was conscious of the heightened tension between Jesus and the religious leaders. They all wondered what was going to happen to Jesus—and to them. Would there be



Adam Hamilton

repercussions from his actions in the Temple? Might he finally proclaim himself as Messiah?

Jesus cut through the uncertainty with a statement so electric it still echoes across the centuries. "One of you," he said,

looking at them in the sudden stillness of the Seder celebration, "will betray me" (Mark 14:18).

He knew which one it was, but he did not say.

"Surely, not I?" the disciples asked (Mark 14:19). "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me" (Mark 14:20), Jesus said, probably referring to the bowl of *charoset* before them.

The story of the betrayal winds its way through the rest of the Gospel accounts of the final 24 hours of Jesus' life. Before the night was through, Judas would betray Jesus; Peter would deny him; and the disciples would desert him, leaving Jesus utterly alone as he faced trial at the hands of his enemies.

All of us betray him

The echoes of Jesus' prediction and of the acts of betrayal by those closest to him are still discomfiting. In our own age, when church leaders have abused children and embezzled funds, we realize that such betrayals are commonplace. Jesus might well have said, "All of you will betray me"; and with that realization, we must look finally at ourselves.

When have you been Judas? When have you been Peter or the other disciples? When have you betrayed Jesus or denied or deserted him? The reality is



IMAGE COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA

Hans Holbein's 16th century painting of the Last Supper shows Jesus and disciples moments before his betrayal.

that all of us will at some time betray him—every one of us.

Several weeks ago I was greeting worshipers in the narthex of our church building, and I saw a couple who had not been in attendance for quite a while. I went up to greet them and said, "It's so good to see you."

The man said to me, "I haven't been here for some time because I did something that I knew disappointed God, and I just couldn't bring myself to come back."

That man could be any one of us. All of us will disappoint God. All of us will betray him.

When we commemorate the Last Supper in the act of receiving Communion, we would do well to recall this part of the meal: Jesus' acknowledgement of the betrayal, the denial, the desertions that would follow. I suspect this is why the church has traditionally called for confession and repentance before we receive the bread and wine. In the Communion liturgies of many churches, there is a confession that speaks of having sinned against the Lord "by thought, word and deed . . . by what we have done, and what we have left undone."

An entire season of the Christian liturgical year is devoted to the idea of repentance for our acts of betrayal and desertion. Lent, in the early

church, was a time when those who had publicly denied Christ in order to avoid persecution repented and were restored, were brought back into fellowship and allowed to receive Holy Communion again.

Servant leader

It is worth considering, as we look at repentance and restoration, that although Jesus knew Judas would betray him, Peter would deny him, and the others would desert him, he still washed their feet (John 13:3-5), then shared the bread and wine with them—bread that represented his body and wine that represented his blood.

Despite knowing what they would do, he said to them, "I do not call you servants any longer . . . but I have called you friends" (John 15:15). He did that for all of them, including Judas. Jesus looked past their betrayal, their sins and their failures and called them his friends. We take comfort in the knowledge that he will do that for us as well.

The Rev. Hamilton is pastor of Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan. This is an excerpt from his new book, *24 Hours that Changed the World* (Abingdon Press), which also has a video for small-group use and a daily Lenten devotional.

REFLECTIONS

Having a pastor's heart

BY BISHOP WOODIE W. WHITE
UMR Columnist

Military chaplains are pastors in uniform. They are pastors, above all else, whatever rank they hold.

The U.S. military requires those who want to be chaplains to have had pastoral experience in a congregation. Those who become chaplains will experience extraordinary pastoral tasks, needs and circumstances not typical of civilian life. All will require a pastor's heart and pastoral skill.

The unique "congregation" of the chaplain is diverse and demands unusual sensitivity, openness and flexibility. The "congregation" will most often be comprised of persons who do not share the pastor's denomination, theological perspective or even faith. Sometimes there are those who hold no faith at all.

Some chaplains are pastors of a base chapel, which runs much like a congregation in civilian life. Chaplains hold regular weekly meetings, activities and religious education programming, including a youth group and a women's organization.

Other chaplains are assigned to a particular unit of military personnel, and their unit becomes their congregation. When the unit is deployed into battle, the chaplain goes along, though he or she carries no weapon.

One chaplain who was assigned to a unit of paratroopers recently told me he had more "jumps" than many in his unit! When a subma-



Bishop Woodie White

rine or ship is engaged, so is the chaplain. Theirs is a unique congregation indeed!

Over the past 20 years, I have had the privilege of relating to military chaplains here in the U.S.; most often when they were assigned "overseas." I

have learned much from them and about them. I have nothing but the most profound respect for them. So when I learned of the recent tragedy at Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas—which resulted in multiple deaths and injuries—I immediately reacted with disbelief. The tragedy seemed more inexplicable when we learned the alleged perpetrator was a U.S. officer whose assignment was to help those struggling with emotional stress.

For a pastor, death requires a most sensitive and caring response. The pastor must comfort a grieving family whose loved ones may still be in utter shock. That awful day at Fort Hood, so many families, loved ones, colleagues and friends were needing comfort, answers and healing. I can only imagine the tasks of the pastors in uniform there.

In the face of death—especially random, senseless and tragic circumstances—there are typically two categories of the question "Why?" There is the factual "Why?" We seek to know how the death occurred, the circumstances, the cause, the reason. Then there is the spiritual "Why?" We are less able to discover an answer for the latter, yet every pastor has to deal with this at some point.

Chaplain-pastors must also deal with the rage, anger and frustration that follows violent and random death. I suspect that at Fort Hood, all of these responses presented themselves to chaplains and pastors in the greater community.

I began to pray for them all: for God to give them the right word, the right touch and the gift of silence as they listened. Sometimes just our presence is needed. At other times, grieving people desperately need some word of hope to make sense of the senseless.

I have learned a few things about God in the face of death. God can handle our rage and anger, even against God! God understands the depth of our loss, grief and sense of futility. God expects that we will learn faith lessons, even from the horrific.

Oh, the gift of a caring pastor, when your heart is breaking and the tears will not stop, when emotions flood the spirit, especially the feelings that one does not want to share: the anger, rage and desire for revenge.

Oh, for a caring pastor, when facing the next hour is a challenge, not to mention the whole day and the longer night ahead.

Oh, for the caring pastor, when it appears the future is closed and dreams have vanished. Oh, for the caring pastor, when your questions yield only more questions.

Oh, for a caring pastor! Thank God for those pastors in uniform at Fort Hood!

Retired Bishop White is the denomination's Endorsing Agent for Chaplain Ministries and bishop-in-residence at Candler School of Theology.

■ REVIVAL

Continued from page 1B

Wallis. “All kinds of things are possible.”

Though attendance fell below expectations—organizers had set up 6,000 seats for the event—United Methodists were well represented, according to the Rev. Sheron Patterson, pastor of Highland Hills United Methodist Church in Dallas and an organizer of the revival.

The gathering “was a wakeup call to see how much we needed to come together as Christians to focus on the issues in our city,” she said. “Those lines [between denominations] are pretty big and pretty scary, but we did a good job in bridging those gaps.”

Mr. Wallis said he imagined the concept of citywide events while studying historic revivals that spurred social action, such as opposition to slavery. He began to picture gatherings “in the great tradition of revivals of the past, that would combine powerful preaching at night with action during the day.”

The result was Justice Revival, a modern-day spiritual revival aimed at mobilizing churches and individuals to tackle major challenges like ending chronic homelessness and improving public education. The first Sojourners Justice Revival a year ago in Columbus, Ohio, drew some 10,000 attendees.

The Rev. Zan Holmes, pastor emeritus of St. Luke “Community” United Methodist Church in Dallas, delivered the opening sermon on the first night in Dallas. He urged participants to band together regardless of denominational lines, noting that many ecumenical groups, such as the Greater Dallas Community of Churches, are no longer active or in existence.

“In the past, whenever there was a crisis, churches came together and led in addressing the issues,” he said.



UMR PHOTOS BY MARY JACOBS

Dr. Frederick Haynes, senior pastor of Friendship West Baptist Church in Dallas, introduced speakers at the Sojourners Justice Revival.

“That’s not happening anymore. It seems to me that, today, we’re leaving it up to the politicians.”

Dr. Holmes said working together means putting the focus first on Jesus. Just as an orchestra needs one director to play beautiful music, the Christian community needs a common focus in Christ.

“Jesus enables us to get it all together when he becomes Lord of our lives,” he said. “If we can keep our eyes on him, we will get it all together for the sake of God’s kingdom.”

“If there are houses to be built, we can do it together in the name of Jesus. If there are schools to be embraced, we can do it together in the name of Jesus.”

Denise Stovall, a layperson and president of the United Methodist Women at St. Luke, said: “It was like an old-time revival. Everybody felt the spirit.” She praised the way that event leaders called clergy from all denominations to come to the stage to receive prayers.

“It was unusual to see so many ‘brands’ of Christians represented at

the event,” said Lynette Hendricks, who attended along with others from her church, Northaven United Methodist in Dallas. “It was a really big tent. Jim Wallis’ words made me believe that mountains of obstacles not only can be moved, they will be moved.”

Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert told the crowd on opening night how he prayed with his pastor before deciding to run for office. He urged attendees to support Justice Revival’s efforts to improve education.

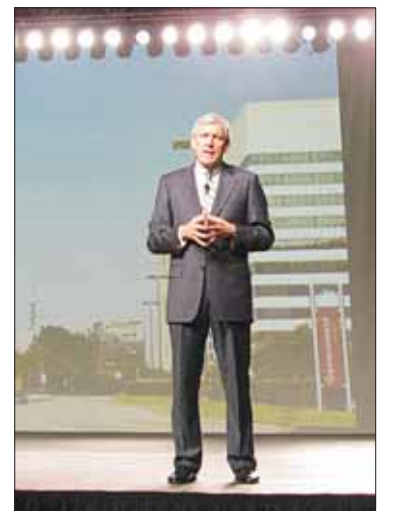
“All of the options I’ve had are because of my education,” he said. “The only way to elevate individuals and communities is through education. We can make a difference, but only if all of us are willing to put our arms around the schools in our city.”

“Not only can we make a difference, but the Lord teaches us in lesson after lesson that we’re expected to do that because we love him.”

As a long-term goal, Justice Revival organizers are coordinating the efforts of hundreds of Dallas area churches in building 700 housing units for homeless people and in creating 25 partnerships between Dallas schools and churches to help mentor students toward success.

“When you focus the passion of the body of Jesus Christ, people think of the city as their parish—not just their own church but their entire community,” Mr. Wallis said, echoing John Wesley’s famous remark, “The world is my parish.”

“The way it was organized helped us focus on ways which churches can



Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert was among those who challenged attendees.

work together,” said Bishop Earl Bledsoe (North Texas Area) in an interview after the event. He added that attendance at the revival had “energized” members of the United Methodist conference’s strategic planning team, which met a few days after the event.

The North Texas Conference team was particularly looking at ways to expand the church’s reach in communities like West Dallas, he said, where residents don’t have the means to provide funding for their own buildings and staff.

“Most of our focus tends to be inward,” Bishop Bledsoe said. “The revival talked about what it means to do justice and mercy in terms of your community, for folks you may not know.”

mjacobs@umr.org



The Christian music group Salvador performed at the opening night gathering.