

IN THIS ISSUE

Denomination's financial agency recommends General Conference special session

4A

Connected In Christ helps Van Buren church thrive even as pastor serves as military chaplain

5A

A year after ice storm, one northern Arkansas congregation has found more than cold comfort

6A-7A

Ministry aims to pair children in state custody with loving, stable homes

9A

Two Hot Springs Village churches receive recognition for their hospitality

10A

Miracle on Seventh Street

United Methodists and others help save dinner for homeless

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

The Grinchy economy almost stole a Little Rock church's Christmas. Canvascommunity, a newly launched United Methodist church on Seventh Street in downtown Little Rock, had planned to host a neighborhood dinner for those in need on Christmas night.

The church, which seeks to appeal to a more artistic crowd, takes its name from the idea that people are all blank canvases that God continuing to create upon. Canvascommunity only started worshipping weekly on Nov. 16, and the dinner was supposed to be one of its first big outreach events.

But a week before Christmas, the food supplier had to pull out because its financial backing fell through.

"My gut just emptied," said Jamey Bentley, the church's pastor. "I was upset. The team leaders were upset. We didn't know what to do."

He and the event's other organizers were thinking of calling the whole thing off.

"As a new church, we knew we didn't have the financing to do it all by

ourselves," Bentley said. "We wanted to do something really nice. The news came so late and we're still so small that the young families in our congregation didn't have enough time to get all the stuff together for a good potluck."

But that's when Twitter and the United Methodist connection came to the rescue.

Electronic S.O.S.

Robby Matthews, a member of Quapaw Quarter United Methodist Church, had already volunteered to help out with the event after hearing about it through his church's social justice e-mail list.

The Saturday before Christmas Matthews got an e-mail announcing canvascommunity's troubles, and he immediately sent out a message on Twitter to see if any of his contacts could help.

Kerri Case, a member of Pulaski Heights UMC, read Matthews' 140-character S.O.S. that Sunday night and sent an e-mail to her Sunday School class, the Journey, and other friends to see if they would

[See DINNER, page 8A]



Canvascommunity members Carla Haynie, at right in the foreground, and Sheri Bentley, wife of pastor Jamey Bentley, at right in the back, help serve a special Christmas dinner for those in need at the downtown Little Rock United Methodist church. Despite flooding and other setbacks, the United Methodist connection helped keep the dinner on schedule.

Photo by MacKenzie Bentley

Conference introduces new form of appointments

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

It's a truth many United Methodist clergy know well: If you're appointed to lead a church where the last pastor served for several years, don't unpack all your boxes right away.

Whoever immediately follows on the heels of a long-tenured pastor tends to be a short-timer, an unintentional interim appointment. Congregations often need time to grieve and heal before fully accepting a new shepherd.

The Arkansas Conference is embarking on a program in hopes of

better addressing this dynamic by assigning pastors who are specifically trained to be intentional interim appointments.

"An intentional interim appointment takes place for a limited period of time for the purpose of dealing with a transitional period in the life of a church," Bishop Charles Crutchfield said.

"Our custom in the United Methodist Church is that one [pastor] leaves on Thursday morning and the other arrives on Thursday afternoon. But there are times when that's not really wise."

Those transitions can include

the times of stress that follow the departure of a beloved, long-serving pastor or the times when a church is working through long-festered conflict.

The conference's first official interim appointment addresses the former situation. Starting this month, Ed Matthews — a retired elder with 45 years experience in the ministry — is taking the pulpits of First United Methodist Church in Mountain View and nearby St. James UMC. First UMC in Mountain View has a weekly attendance of about 200, and St. James is around 30.

Matthews, whose appointment

will last for six months, is stepping in for Steve Johnson, who pastored the two Stone County congregations for more than 18 years and is now taking an appointment to lead First UMC in Hope.

Johnson is replacing Tandy Curtis Hanson, a captain in the Air Force Reserves who is being deployed for six months to serve as a chaplain in Kuwait.

Johnson's move to Hope is the kind of routine mid-year appointment the conference sees each year. He's following a pastor who

[See INTERIM, page 12A]

Wayne Oudekerk, professor of German, pictured in the center, leads Hendrix College faculty, staff and their families in singing Christmas carols to students on Dec. 10 in the campus cafeteria in Hulen Hall. For nearly 20 years, Hendrix College faculty and staff — regardless of their ability to carry a tune — have serenaded students at Christmastime.

Photo by Mark Scott



Time for church to turn over a new leaf



BUD REEVES
Special contributor

I'm not much for New Year's resolutions. They are usually shallow commitments and too easily broken. If I didn't maintain some sort of discipline throughout the year, I would be too far gone by Dec. 31 for a New Year's resolution to do much good.

Nevertheless, I find the New Year to be a good time to reaffirm some of the deep commitments of my life

— God, marriage, family, church — and to reapply effort to some disciplines that may have deteriorated during the holidays — prayer, diet and exercise mainly. All efforts at self-improvement are good, especially if they involve the spirit.

Our God is a God of new beginnings. Paul rejoices in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that "if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

The voice from the throne at the climax of the Book of Revelation exults, "See, I am making all things new!" Therefore, as Paul wrote in Philippians 3:14, "forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, [we] press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."

People of faith are always on the lookout for the new thing God is

doing among us, and we live with confidence and hope because we know God has great plans for us.

I hope to see the United Methodist Church turn over a new leaf in the near future.

I have been involved with the Imagine Ministry group that Bishop Crutchfield appointed last year, and we have been having some



Bud Reeves

Only one in 10 of our churches held a confirmation class. Most of our churches did not have either a baptism or a profession of faith. The average United Methodist is 57 years old, more than 20 years older than the average American citizen. The trends are nationwide, but our heart is in Arkansas, and we're declining into oblivion.

There are signs of hope, of course. We have one of the best new-church-start programs in the country. Our leadership development process (Connected In Christ) is a model of effectiveness. We have an above-average number of young clergy in the conference. These will help as we move forward.

The Imagine Ministry team will be expanding our conversations to include as many Arkansas United Methodists as possible in some regional meetings this spring and at Annual Conference.

Though the dialogue started among the clergy, it will only be sustained and successful in partnership with the laity.

We're all in this together, and it will take shifts and sacrifices on both sides of the ecclesiastical fence to make the future happen. It's time for a new leaf in Arkansas United Methodism, time to rethink and reform the church, time to turn the institution back into a movement. If we don't, we'll decline until we die.

If we do, we will, as Wesley said, "reform the nation and spread Scriptural holiness across the land."

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

"Our God is a God of new beginnings."

interesting, fruitful and difficult conversations about the future of Arkansas United Methodism.

Imagine Ministry is an outgrowth of renewal conversations that began with the Council of Bishops in 2004. There are several branches on this tree, but they all reflect a growing consensus that deep, systemic change must happen for the United Methodist Church to continue to be vital in ministry — or even to survive.

The statistical studies have been on a negative trend for years, but the downward spiral has accelerated in the last five years. Eighty-one percent of our churches in Arkansas are now below the threshold of being able to support a full-time pastor and a growing program. Youth Sunday School and youth ministry attendance has dropped by a third since 2004.



EDITOR'S CORNER

BY HEATHER HAHN

Goodness in action

"We know that in everything God works for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

I can't count how many times over the years I've found solace in Paul's words of assurance to the young, persecuted church in Rome.

This Bible verse has comforted me through all manner of personal disappointments from bad breakups to career setbacks.

These words even offer hope in a world of tsunamis and suicide bombers — in a world where bad things do indeed happen to good people.

Romans 8:28 is the ultimate silver lining. It reminds us that there is a bigger picture. Even when bad things happen, God is always present — working through us to bring relief, mend the broken and open doors where life's storms have slammed shut windows.

In this issue, you'll find two stories of United Methodists who were able to witness Romans 8:28 in action.

Both faced obstacles that came from forces beyond their control.

For the members of Hardy United Methodist Church, it was last year's terrible ice storm, which destroyed trees and power lines and left much of northern Arkansas in the dark for weeks on end.

For the newly formed downtown Little Rock congregation of canvascommunity, it was a Christmas dinner for the homeless

put in jeopardy when the church's food supplier pulled out at the last minute.

In both cases, church members reached out to their communities and received the blessed assurance that God was at work. I don't think it's a spoiler to say that each story has a happy ending.

Of course, not all problems are as simple to resolve as cleaning up severed tree limbs and putting together a meal for more than 200 people.



I know for many folks, 2009 was a particularly rough year. People lost jobs, rain drowned crops, marriages ended and loved ones died.

Even the Christmas season didn't offer much of a reprieve for many Americans. On Christmas Eve, a Salvation Army major in North Little Rock was fatally shot in front of his children.

I have far less insight than the generations of Christian theologians who have wrestled with the problem of theodicy — that is, the attempt to reconcile a loving, all-powerful God with the existence of evil.

But the message of the Cross, to me, is that God is with us even in our suffering. There is no dark valley we can walk that God doesn't know intimately. And through it all, God is at work for good, leading us toward salvation.

May you all find comfort in God's goodness throughout 2010.

 <p>Volume 156 • No. 35 January 8, 2010 Martha S. Taylor • Director of Communications Heather Hahn • Editor Patrick W. Shownes • Communications Coordinator www.arumc.org</p>	 <p>Arkansas Conference Communications 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Drive Little Rock, AR 72202-3770 www.arumc.org</p>										
<p>The Arkansas United Methodist is the newspaper of record for the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church. It is published once monthly, on the first Fridays of each month, and four special issues throughout during the year for a total of 16 issues per year.</p>	<p>Subscriptions - \$15.00, 1 Year - \$25.00, 2 Years - Free, Online For more information, visit www.arumc.org/aum or call 501.324.8006.</p>										
<p>Send Correspondence & Change of Address to: Arkansas United Methodist, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Dr., Little Rock, AR 72202; or e-mailed to Patrick.Shownes@arumc.org</p>	<p>Advertising is welcomed. For a rate sheet or more information, contact Martha Taylor at 501.324.8005 or mtaylor@arumc.org. While all advertising is reviewed before acceptance, it should not be considered endorsed by this newspaper or the Church.</p>										
<p>POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The United Methodist Reporter, PO Box 660275, Dallas, TX 75266-0275.</p>	<p>Submission Deadlines</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Issue Date</th> <th>Submission Deadline</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>February 5, 2010</td> <td>January 13, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>March 5, 2010</td> <td>February 10, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 2, 2010</td> <td>March 17, 2010</td> </tr> <tr> <td>May 7, 2010</td> <td>April 14, 2010</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Issue Date	Submission Deadline	February 5, 2010	January 13, 2010	March 5, 2010	February 10, 2010	April 2, 2010	March 17, 2010	May 7, 2010	April 14, 2010
Issue Date	Submission Deadline										
February 5, 2010	January 13, 2010										
March 5, 2010	February 10, 2010										
April 2, 2010	March 17, 2010										
May 7, 2010	April 14, 2010										
<p>The United Methodist Reporter (USPS 954-500) is published weekly by UMR Communications, 1221 Profit Drive, Dallas, TX 75247. Periodicals Postage Paid at Dallas.</p>											

Letters to the Editor

I was very pleased to see two pages in the Nov. 6 United Methodist Reporter on Operation Christmas Child.

I began this event at First United Methodist Church in Searcy eight years ago, after reading about it in the news. I felt led to be part of this ministry. I collect some items all year as some others do.

Participants in Vacation Bible School and our after-school "Connection" program, United Methodist Women members and other individuals filled 434 boxes this year.

In 2006, I went to the distribution center in Atlanta with my daughter from Jonesboro. In 2007, my daughter from Dallas joined us in Atlanta, and all three of

us had the joy of working together. This mission outreach goes into 115 countries, including some places the United States cannot go or is unwelcome.

God is touching children's lives, and we are planting the seed of faith as a Bible in the child's language is enclosed in the shoebox.

I also appreciate the article in the Dec. 4 Arkansas United Methodist on UMW. Our unit here works on many events. I have been a UMW member for 50 years. I am committed to missions because of it.

In Christ,
Hettie Van Patten
Member of First UMC
in Searcy

I want to give a shout out to

Holiday Hills UMC for its work with Soles4Souls. We've just completed our first drive here on campus at Mount Union College and collected almost 4,400 pairs of shoes, boots, flip-flops and sandals, almost three times the 1,500 goal set by our Fellowship of Christian Athletes group.

The students sold shoelaces to fund the shipping, and, through a student's parent, they were able to deliver the donations free to a distribution center.

Thus the program had even more funds to complete the project. Kudos to you for giving a simple but important gift for a great cause!

Marty CashBurless
Chaplain,

Mount Union College in Ohio



Pleasant Plains UMC hosted a drive-by flu clinic, sponsored by the city of Pleasant Plains, on Oct. 29. More than 100 volunteers administered 460 vaccinations (nearly twice the population of Pleasant Plains) between 6:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. Pictured is Rhonda Harris of the Arkansas Department of Health giving a shot to a volunteer before the clinic started.

Picture provided by Pleasant Plains United Methodist Church

State tax policy should be changed to better serve the poor

PAT BODENHAMER
AND STEVE COPLEY
Special contributors

"Taxes are good," is not a statement that we hear very often. Most the time we hear just the opposite. If there has ever been one subject so hotly debated and much hated, it would be taxes.

The fact of the matter is: We all benefit from our tax system. Nobody likes to pay taxes, yet few people want to give up the benefits. We enjoy good roads to drive on, we expect the police and fire services to keep us safe, we insist on clean drinking water and we want our children to have great educational opportunities through public schools. These are all possible by our tax dollars.

Many of us get a glazed-over look in our eyes when we hear the tax jargon and the discussion of numbers. But if we care about any issues affecting children and families in Arkansas, then we should be familiar with tax policy.

Unfortunately, unbalanced tax policies make it very difficult for working families to find opportunities to better their situation.

What do tax policies have to do with the Christian faith? Why, as Christians, should we care? Why should we try to understand the complexities of tax policy?

Tax policy affects humans. And, it often affects the low- and middle-income working families of our state the most.

We care because our faith tradition calls us to care. We look to Scripture to find a rationale for our



Pat Bodenhamer



Steve Copley

actions as Christians. Throughout the Old Testament, God has concern for the poor.

This was the background in which Jesus grew up and was nurtured in his faith. It is no surprise that Jesus called his followers throughout the Gospels to "care for the least of these."

He ushered in the reign of God. It was the new era promised

in the Old Testament. It was the new era of justice for all that the Messiah would bring.

It would be a time when there would be no poor. It would be the time when the voiceless would have voice. It would be the time when harsh policies would no longer exist that affected "the least of these" so harshly.

As those following in the paths of Christ, we are called to seek justice for "the least of these." We are called to care for "the least of these" and about what affects the quality of their daily lives. To follow Christ means to care for those who are low-income. This will affect and shape our decisions in daily life.

For the most part, we do not set

out each morning searching for someone to step on to get ahead in the world. However, many Arkansas families are being stepped on by our unbalanced tax system. The Arkansas tax system is regressive.

Our low-income families are paying a higher percentage of their income in taxes because of regressive taxes like the sales tax.

This puts an extra burden on our working families. Arkansas has one of the highest sales tax rates in the country. Sales taxes make up over a third (38 percent) of all our state general tax revenue.

Overall, low- and middle-income families in Arkansas (those with income less than \$40,000) pay 12 cents of every dollar they earn in all state and local taxes, compared to just 6 cents on every dollar paid by the richest 1 percent (those with incomes more than \$326,000).

Some large corporations also receive more favorable treatment under the tax system, which leave small businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

Arkansas is far from a tax system that treats all equally and meets our needs. Arkansas' tax system relies too much on the regressive sales tax and not enough on other sources of revenue.

Our state relies less and less on taxes paid by corporations, and more on low- and middle-income working families. As a state, we are stepping on the backs of working families to pay for services used by everyone.

Why has our tax systems become so unbalanced? For one

reason, Amendment 19 of our state constitution was passed in 1934 to require that any increase in taxes then in existence must be approved by a supermajority vote by the state legislature (at least 75 percent).

However, the sales tax does not fall into the category and only requires a simple majority vote (at least 50 percent).

Arkansas' tax system does not generate adequate revenue to support services that are critical to the well-being of children and families and the state's future prosperity.

According to a 2006 study by the Urban Institute, the Brookings Institution's Tax Policy Center and the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Arkansas is ranked next to last in the country in its fiscal capacity to provide the level of public services that its population needs.

As citizens we must fight for a fair and responsible tax system. Those who earn the most should pay a higher percentage of their incomes on taxes than those who are just barely scraping by.

A state tax system in which everyone, including the wealthy and corporations, pay their fair share will give our state the resources it needs to help children and families thrive and will pave the way to a better future for all Arkansas residents, not just a select few.

We focus too much time and energy on filling the cracks and looking for ways to cover shortfalls for critical programs. We should be spending that effort working to make programs more efficient and effective.

Arkansas needs to modernize its tax and budget system to allow the state economy to grow and allow of working families to thrive.

To do that, Arkansas should: enact a state Earned Income Tax Credit, change tax policy to close corporate income tax loopholes, expand the sales tax base to reflect the economic shift from goods to services, revitalize and strengthen the state personal income tax, ensure that the state is prepared to capture tax revenue from Internet sales and reverse the expiration of the estate tax on wealthy estates.

Arkansas must invest more in its people and infrastructure in order for us all to thrive in 21st century.

Far too many of our neighbors live in poverty and lack the skills to move up in the workforce and are not able to adequately support their families. Instead of stepping on the backs of working families, we need to find ways to work together and provide stepping stones for families to step up out of poverty.

By understanding and becoming involved in the work of tax reform we can help take the first step.

Pat Bodenhamer, a United Methodist elder, is the state budget and tax outreach director for Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families. She can be reached at pbodenhamer@aradvocates.org.

Steve Copley, also an elder, is the director of Justice for Our Neighbors. He can be reached at scopley438@aol.com.

Considering a diet change? Try adding the Bread of Life

DEENA MARIE HAMILTON
Special contributor

With the support of my congregation, I restarted our tutoring program, but this time students from my alma mater Philander Smith College got involved. One of the most costly expenses of the program was feeding the children. I was able to get a nonprofit organization called Potluck Food Rescue to donate food.

One night after tutoring, there was a lot of food left over, and one of the volunteers from the program gave me the bright idea to give the leftover food to the homeless.

When we got to Riverfront area, I was kind of scared. I almost didn't want to do it anymore.

When we walked into the park, we saw people scatter. We continued and saw this cute, plump, squash-faced man sitting on a rock with a stoic expression on his face.

I smiled at him, and my friend asked, "Where's the little homeless people?"

And his reply was, "You're looking at one of them."

We told him that we had food for them. We went back to my car. I looked up at the sky, and I immediately thought about the Israelites in the Wilderness of Sin.

They were in need of food, and wondered why God just didn't let them die in the comforts of Egypt instead of starving to death in the desert. At least they would've been able to have something to eat rather than to starve to death (Exodus 16: 1-5).

I couldn't imagine being in the position of not knowing where my next meal was coming from!

But then I realized that I do have another kind of hunger.

I've been more conscious of the awesome omnipotent power of God. In order for me to stay fine-tuned to that power, I need to feed my soul as well as my belly.

I realize that reading the Living Word of God is something that I need to do every day.



Deena Marie Hamilton

We don't forget to feed ourselves, but we forget to read our Daily Bread.

I recognize that some Christians don't have that problem. But for so

many of us who have overly abundant schedules, daily Scripture reading can be an insurmountable task even when we do have the best of intentions.

How else will we be able to get through the day with poise? How else will we be able to deal with other people's idiosyncrasies?

We take for granted that we live in a country that gives us the opportunity to read our Bibles freely. In some countries, people are physically punished for this.

So this year, I am not going to make another resolution, but another lifestyle change.

Yes, I have to lose weight. I am tired of being just a little bit fat. But in order for me to reach my goals and stay single and fabulous, I need the Bread of Life.

It's hard because I normally just read my Bible to get my message for Sunday, but my soul has been starving for a long time.

I feel a little twang in my heart when I don't read my Bible the way that I should. I will not ignore that feeling any longer.

I will embrace it and use it as an opportunity to feast of the Living Word and experience the True Manna that came from heaven, whose words fill my heart and life with joy.

Take the New Year as an opportunity to experience God to the full. There's no time like the present. So getcha eat on!

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.



Cabot UMC held its third Christmas Feast this year on Christmas Day. About 75 church members and their families helped provide a Christmas meal for 327 Lonoke County residents this year. The volunteers prepared carry-out and delivery boxes for most, but some chose to dine-in at the church. "Our church family looks forward to it every Christmas Day," said Mary Kay Lieblong, communications director at the church.

Photo courtesy of Cabot UMC

Special General Conference is being sought before 2012

ROBIN RUSSELL
United Methodist Reporter

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The financial agency of the United Methodist Church is asking for a special session of General Conference (the church's lawmaking body) to tackle economic hardships affecting the denomination.

The General Council on Finance and Administration voted to encourage the Council of Bishops at their May 2010 meeting to call a churchwide gathering before the 2012 General Conference. The special session would focus on restructuring the church and on funding U.S. clergy pensions, according to a Dec. 8 news release.

The finance agency's board members also approved working with the denomination's General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to get an independent review of funds available for clergy pensions and to recommend ways to ease the burden on conferences to fund that plan.

The board's resolutions were prompted by financial hardships due to a troubled economy — including a decline in connectional giving — experienced by local churches and annual conferences.

A churchwide gathering would also consider input from the denomination's Call to Action Task Force on revamping the format of General Conference and eliminating guaranteed appointment for clergy.

At their fall meeting, United Methodist bishops said the church's structure is no longer able to support its mission and ministry: Membership has declined over the last 40 years in the United States and is growing older than the national average.

But at this point, Bishop Charles Crutchfield of the Arkansas Conference says he does not think a special session is needed.



Delegates to the 2008 United Methodist General Conference consider legislation during their April 23-May 2 assembly in Fort Worth, Texas. These delegates could be called into action again at a special session of the General Conference, which the denomination's finance agency is seeking before 2012.

United Methodist News Service file photo by Mike DuBose

"We don't have enough information available regarding the pension issue to enable the General Conference to make a credible and thoughtful decision," Crutchfield said.

This January and February, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits will be meeting with bishops to offer more information, he said.

"My concern is that even if we call a special session for 2011, we might not have the time between the call and the conference to really prepare," he said. "A worldwide General Conference would be incredibly expensive, and pensions are essentially a United States issue."

A steering committee and an outside consultant are now seeking input from clergy and laity to assess how well church structures are functioning at all levels. A progress report will be given at the bishops' May meeting.

Reordering the denomination's structure might mean reducing the number of general agencies, or perhaps creating a coordinating denominational office to enhance

United Methodist ministries around the world.

"We are still trying to fit new wine in wineskins from 40 years ago," said Bishop Larry Goodpaster at the council's fall meeting.

"The mission is paramount; the mission is everything. Structure follows mission."

According to the Book of Discipline, the bishops may call a special session of the General Conference.

It would be composed of delegates to the 2008 gathering, unless conferences decide to hold a new election.

The last special session of general conference in 1970 focused on the 1968 merger with the Evangelical United Brethren Church, which created the United Methodist Church.

Robin Russell is the managing editor of the United Methodist Reporter. Heather Hahn of the Arkansas United Methodist also contributed to this story.

Mary Faith "Zoe" Miles' column will return in February.

Connected In Christ plan offers church a path to growth

KAYLEA HUTSON

For the Arkansas United Methodist

It's been said that a person with a map and a plan can — and will — reach his or her ultimate destination.

For members of the leadership team at Heritage United Methodist Church in Van Buren, a ministry plan developed and refined using the Connected In Christ process, has provided a “road map” to achieve the church's ultimate vision — to become the church of God's dream.

Heritage UMC became part of Connected In Christ in 2001. Since then it has developed and refined a document known as “Heritage in Mission: Loving and Leading.”

This plan outlines five cornerstones, which are then used to implement Heritage's mission statement, and in effect, chart the future ministries taking place in Van Buren.

Since beginning the process, the church has seen its average weekly attendance grow from 300 to 550. Heritage also started a second campus, Mount Olive UMC in downtown Van Buren, which this month will become its own congregation.

How it began

“I knew that Heritage needed to develop an aggressive strategy to move forward,” Wes Hilliard, the church's senior pastor, said.

Initially, the congregation formed a “transformational leadership team,” which consisted of the top staff and laity. This group, led by Bob Freeman, Heritage UMC lay leader, attended the Connected In Christ training sessions. The group also worked to develop the church's mission, vision and values through several work sessions.

Additionally, the church held listening sessions, allowing the entire congregation to become a part of the process used to develop five cornerstones.

Those cornerstones were:

- Work, which meant all members were expected to participate in ministry;
- Witness, which meant evangelism;
- Walk, which meant discipleship;



The Connected In Christ planning process helped Heritage UMC in Van Buren to continue its capital campaign even as its senior pastor, Wes Hilliard, fulfilled his duties as an Arkansas National Guard chaplain in Iraq and in other states.

Photo by Kaylea Hutson

- Welcome, which referred not only to welcoming newcomers but also congregational care; and
- Worship.

“Those cornerstones became the basis of our ministry plan,” Hilliard said. “In 2006, we formed a leadership team for each cornerstone area. These teams developed objectives and strategies to accomplish those objectives.”

Over the course of several years, the plan began to take shape. By 2007, following a training event on coaching, Hilliard and other church leaders hired Doug Fagerstrom as an executive coach for Heritage.

“Doug helped us tweak all of our systems,” Hilliard said. “He had a huge impact on our transformational ministry team. We had developed a long-range plan to support our objectives.”

Mobilized for ministry

Hilliard said throughout the process, Heritage's lay leadership team and congregation “wholeheartedly” supported becoming a Connected In Christ church.

“The [Connected In Christ] process gave our laity the confidence and ‘authority’ to be in ministry,” Hilliard said.

“The process helped us move from a church where everyone

expected the pastor to minister to everyone, to a church where most of our laity see themselves as ministers and are actively engaged in ministry.”

Additionally, Hilliard said, Connected In Christ provided the ministerial team at Heritage with support, accountability, training and spiritual nurture.

The process — and its results — became evident to the Heritage leadership team when Hilliard, a chaplain in the Arkansas National Guard, was mobilized for active military service in 2002.

“Our ‘Transformational Ministry Plan’ provided the basis and framework for our congregation to step up to the plate and truly lead

the church and its ministries,” Hilliard explained. “The church's theme was, ‘Pastor mobilizes for military; Congregation mobilizes for ministry!’”

Hilliard has actually deployed twice since his congregation began the Connected in Christ process.

“We were wrapping up our initial process when I was deployed for a homeland security mission in October 2002,” Hilliard said. “I was stationed in Pine Bluff Arsenal so I was able to get home occasionally and stay in touch. Bob Freeman continued to lead the team throughout my deployment as they developed a long-range ministry plan.”

Hilliard was doing double duty at Fort Chaffee and Heritage UMC in fall 2007, when the church completed its capital campaign for its new Student Center. The Connected in Christ training also carried the congregation through Hilliard's deployment to Iraq in 2008.

Ministry with a business model

“By including [the laity] in developing the strategies, they took much more of the ministry load,” said Roger Goins, director of ministry at Heritage UMC. “We never want to look at the church as a business. But there are some common factors. What successful business doesn't have a business plan?”

This ministry works as a business plan, Goins said, and it was crucial for successful church growth at Heritage.

“[It] helps us to communicate, it helps us chart our course and it helps us to measure our success or failures,” Goins said. “Where a business develops objectives based on revenue, market share and new product lines, we develop our ministry plan objectives through prayer attempting to discern where the Lord wants our congregation to go.”

“And He is free to change our plans whenever He wants to change them. Our God is a detailed planner. He has entrusted us with His Church. We would be grossly negligent to manage it without a plan.”

Through it all, Hilliard said the process has provided members and staff of Heritage one additional resource — it has reminded the boards, committees and ministry teams of one fundamental thing: the need to pray together over every decision.

“In our most recent church conference, we were discussing whether or not to borrow \$2.6 million to construct a children and youth building,” Hilliard said.

“We spent 20 minutes discussing finances, construction, etc. We spent about 45 minutes in prayer. The prayers weren't led by the pastor; they were led by the congregation.”

To learn more about the Connected In Christ program, contact Michael Roberts, director of Connected In Christ, at mroberts@arumc.org or at (501) 324-8016.

BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

CHARTERED BUS



OUACHITA COACHES

Serving Arkansas safely since 1983
New Luxury Coaches • Air Conditioned
800-782-2877

COUNSELING

Daily Bread Counseling

(Member of Clergy Counseling Network)

Rev. Garry D. Teeter, MS, LPC, NCC, BCPCC, CBIST
Offices in Benton, Hot Springs & Little Rock

Call for confidential appointment

501.847.2229 | 1.877.847.2229

www.dailybreadcounseling.com



STAINED GLASS



Serving Arkansas with Quality Stained Glass since 1973

Churches • Residential • Commercial
(800) 791-7667

www.soosstainedglass.com

P.O. Box 13452, Maumelle, AR 72113

CHURCH FURNITURE

Quality Furniture at an AFFORDABLE price

FORDYCE CHURCH FURNITURE INC.

Solid Oak & Pine Pews | Pulpit Furniture | Cushions & Upholstery

P. O. Box 572, Fordyce, AR 71742

toll free 1 (800) 748-9778 | phone (870) 352-2567 | fax (870) 352-2070

email vickey@fordycechurchfurniture.com

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

Anti-freeze faith

A year after cleaning up ice-storm debris, church has seen hearts thaw and pews fill

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

When last January's brutal ice storm shuttered schools across northern Arkansas, Justin Bryant didn't spend his snow days relaxing indoors.

Instead, the then high school senior led his friends over to the home of Brien Hall, Bryant's pastor at Hardy United Methodist Church. Hall needed the teens' help.

Freezing rains had covered Hardy and surrounding communities in the Ozarks with hard, glassy sheets of ice, downing tree limbs and power lines along the way. Ice and debris completely blocked the pastor's house.

After the boys cleared a path so Hall could get out, the pastor had an idea: Would they be willing to clean up more people's yards?

"We said, 'Sure, we don't have anything else to do,'" Bryant recalled.

Thus was born what locals started calling the "Methodist Chainsaw Mafia."

Over the next week and a half, Hall and his crew of about 20 teens took chainsaws to fallen trees and branches, some of which they had to first hoist off people's roofs. They cleared ice from driveways and bagged up refuse.

Altogether, the teenage "mafia" cleaned up the yards of 37 homes across a tri-county area — many owned by the elderly or disabled.

They restored the houses and warmed the hearts of residents still coping with the chill of weeks-long electrical outages. In the process, the youthful cleanup crew brought communitywide recognition to the small congregation and its mission.

"People were overwhelmed with gratitude," Hall said. "They kept offering to pay, and of

course we refused."

But neighbors paid the boys back in other ways. Whenever they went out to lunch, Hall said, it never failed that someone in the restaurant would have taken care of the check before they ever got the bill.

The wintry weather marked the beginning of a sunnier change in the church.

Now almost a year later, Hardy UMC's Sunday worship services have more than quadrupled in attendance, growing from a weekly average of 25 to 105. In 2009, a record 63 people joined the Sharp County church, the vast majority under 40.

But it wasn't just the storm relief that started drawing more new faces to the 120-year-old church. Throughout 2009, the congregation added new ministries and expanded others. The church's outreach ranged from feeding the hungry to introducing a new worship service.

"I attribute the growth to a renaissance of positive thinking," said Hall, the church's pastor since June 2008. "Everybody desired a greater Spirit. But it took everybody saying the Spirit has been here all along; we have to share that Spirit with others."

Welcoming newcomers

Among the church's first newcomers last year were some members of the "Methodist Chainsaw Mafia."

Blake Martin had never visited Hardy UMC before his friend Bryant asked him to join the cleanup effort last January. The grinding, sweaty work of sawing wood and hauling branches, he said, made him feel "closer to God."

"I felt like that's the church," he said. "That's what it is supposed to be."

Martin, a high school senior, now regularly



Blake Martin cuts up a downed tree in Sharp County after last year's ice storm. Martin volunteered to help out his friend, Justin Bryant, a member of Hardy UMC. After two weeks of helping to clean up severed tree limbs and other debris as part of the church's 'Methodist Chainsaw Mafia,' Martin decided he too wanted to be a member of the church.

Photo by Brien Hall

attends Hardy on Sunday mornings and youth group in the evenings.

Bryant, now a freshman at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, had only recently started attending the church when the storm hit. He had occasionally worshiped at other churches with friends, and visited Hardy in 2008 mainly because his grandparents kept inviting him.

But at Hardy UMC, he said he immediately felt at home.

"I fell in love with the atmosphere that the church brought," Bryant said. "When I walked in I felt really welcome. I didn't know everybody there, but they came up to me like I'd known them forever."

That welcoming spirit has extended beyond worship.

Janice Goldman, the chair of Hardy UMC's staff parish relations committee, said that even before the ice storm, the congregation had embarked on a long-range plan with the explicit goal of reaching more families.

In February, the church opened its Agape Café, offering a free warm breakfast from 9:45 to 10:45 a.m. each Sunday to anyone who came.

"No questions asked, no requirements needed," Hall said. "A lot of people (many with children) simply show up, eat their hot breakfast and stick around a bit and go home, which is wonderful because they at least know that the church is here for them when they need us. And they know that they are loved."

Last year, the Agape Café fed about 2,300 warm meals.

Attendance started growing steadily. A number of folks who came for the free food started sticking around for the food for the soul served at Hardy UMC's 11 o'clock service.

More young families also started coming. Among them were Dr. Matt and Lacy Williams and their two young children.

Matt Williams, the son of retired United Methodist pastor Sam Williams, said his family chose Hardy UMC because it offered a nursery, children's Sunday School and a children's sermon.

"They like going to church," he said. "It's a big advantage when your kid likes it."

But Hall kept hearing from restaurant workers in town that couldn't attend worship because they had to get ready for the Sunday



More than 30 Hardy UMC worshippers came out on Thanksgiving Day to serve a free community-wide Thanksgiving luncheon in partnership with Jeni B's Restaurant in Hardy. The church served more than 300 people.

Photo courtesy of Hardy UMC



Justin Bryant and Landon Strobbe, members of Hardy UMC's "Methodist Chainsaw Mafia" haul off debris during last winter's ice-storm cleanup.

Photo by Brien Hall

lunch crowd. So that spring, the church launched a half-hour service at 9 a.m. each Sunday to cater to their needs.

While the 11 a.m. service remains the biggest draw, the half-hour service now also attracts a loyal group of worshipers. They include the owner of Jeni B's Restaurant who helped the church put on its second free community Thanksgiving dinner this past November.

Evangelism with dirty hands

New members have varying reasons for joining Hardy UMC.

But the ice-storm outreach proved to be a catalyst that led some to rethink their impressions of the church.

Jody Shackelford, the publisher and editor of the local Spring River Survival Guide magazine, coined the phrase "Methodist Chainsaw Mafia" for the cold-defying relief force.

After a long time out of church, Shackelford had just started attending Hardy the previous Christmas in part because Hall had been encouraging of his magazine.

"I realized that's part of what church is — it's getting encouragement and support from other people," he said.

But with the ice storm, Shackelford said he saw another side of Hardy UMC.

"You can get friendly faces and hugs at any church, at least I hope you can," Shackelford said. "During the ice storm, I got to see how much

Hardy UMC reached out and really got their hands dirty to help their community in dire need.

"Before that, it was a good place to go. Now, I realize it's a good place to change lives."

Shackelford officially joined Hardy UMC on Easter Sunday.

Even when the weather isn't extreme, the church continues its commitment to outreach.

Since this past fall, the church has tried to do three missions per month such as visiting nursing homes and collecting food and clothing for the needy.

"We have tried every new avenue that we can think of to reach

out to more of the unchurched in the community," Hall said, "and allow the church to be Christ to the world."

Long after the ice has melted and the electricity restored, the 2009 storm is still leaving a mark on Hardy UMC. But the impact isn't all positive.

After the storm, the sanctuary roof started showing signs of distress from the weight of the frozen precipitation. In November, inspectors announced that the more-than-century-old roof was on the verge of collapse.

"[Hardy] UMC is not an affluent congregation and certainly was not as prepared for this \$100,000-plus renovation financial hit," Hall said. "However, we voted unanimously to go forward in faith that God would provide as we preserve."

Since late November, churchgoers have been worshipping on metal folding chairs in Hardy UMC's cramped and noisy Fellowship Hall.

Still, attendance has not diminished. In fact, the services have been standing room only.

Families have already approached Hall to schedule baptisms when the new sanctuary is complete in mid-February or early March.

"Lots of people have said, 'Oh you need to move away from being in the middle of an old neighborhood and move up on the highway where more people can see you and you can draw from people in other places,'" Hall said.

"I think we are exactly where God wants us to be and with God's help (and the willing hearts of those who love God and keep giving to the church), we will have a church that will be preserved and prepared to meet the future needs of the people for another 120 years and more!"



From left, Justin Bryant, Skylar Johnson and Ben Reed helping an older couple with medical problems move their belongings. It's just one of the community service projects the Hardy UMC youth now participate in throughout the year.

Photo by Brien Hall



From left, Vinnie Roberto, Hardy UMC pastor Brien Hall, and Cody Tipton celebrate after they leaped from a bluff this past summer.

Photo by Jody Shackelford

Taking the plunge into a church family

CODY TIPTON

Special Contributor

"There is nothing below my feet."

That thought blared in my mind as I fell at least 80 feet, the walls of the rock bluff seeming to rise around me.

The big jump sounded like innocent fun from its conception until the first split second of the fall, and the rest, terrifying; wonderful.

Brien Hall, my pastor, and fellow church members Justin Bryant, Vinnie Roberto, Jody Shackelford and I journeyed to an unnamed rock quarry for the sake of following through with a dare to jump into the water within it and leave with a photo evidence of our bravery. Hall had promised to make the leap with us if we came to the church for a full month of Sundays. And that is exactly what we did.

Such an illustration might be suitable to reference the metaphoric "jump" of joining the church. But something of the sort would be all too predictable.

Besides, this event is more of a testament to the friendship and family I've gained in the past year.

It is all so common for individuals to attend church once, maybe twice a week, and in all likelihood these are, at least, pleasant endeavors. But I've never been to any church whose members' lives, outside of services, intertwined so much as they do within the Hardy UMC.

People often haphazardly throw around the sentiment of "being a family." I did not even

take notice of this cliché until I experienced life with my church family.

After all, who do you do wild (and by the opinions of some, stupid) stunts with, other than your family and friends?

Why did I join the Hardy United Methodist Church? The choice seemed so easy to make at the time. I can have faith and worship alone, or with any group, anywhere.

I've attended services at various other churches throughout the years, yet there was absolutely no apprehension involved in my decision to join the Hardy UMC.

I can't just say, "They really care about their youth," or "They have a great focus on community service." It's all there.

Creativity is encouraged, and ideas are respectfully shared. No one is excluded, and all possibilities are considered.

Everyone is enthusiastic and quick to get started with projects.

For example, only a few phone calls created the "Methodist Chainsaw Mafia," hastily formed to help clear yards and driveways after the massive destruction from the ice storm that hit last winter.

And I am proud of what we accomplished and for those we helped. More so, I am glad to be a part of this group at Hardy UMC, which tackles problems like a family.

Cody Tipton, a member of Hardy United Methodist Church for about a year, is a freshman at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

MIRACLE *Continued from Page 1A*

donate money for the meal.

By noon that Monday, Case and her friend Lona Pierce had received pledges for \$1,300, enough to pay for a fully catered dinner. More pledges were still coming in.

"Both of us just really felt compelled to help and that we couldn't just let this fall apart," Case said.

"There are a lot of things in life that you can't fix and this is a fixable thing. I think we both felt like I can't fix so many big things, but I can make sure there is a dinner on a Christmas Day."

That Monday afternoon, three people contacted Case offering to pay whatever the balance was for the dinner. By then, their donations were no longer needed.

Keith Hughes, a Pulaski Heights UMC member, also got Case in touch with his aunt

Paula Brinkley, food service director at Immanuel Baptist

Church.

Brinkley volunteered to prepare enough food to feed more than 200 people, and was able to arrange that her longtime vendor would charge canvascommunity the same rate as the food distributor charges Immanuel Baptist Church.

"This is what I do for a living, so believe it or not, this wasn't a huge deal for me," Brinkley said. "And Immanuel has a wonderful kitchen. So it only took me three or four hours on Christmas day. I wanted to donate my time and do a Christmas good deed, and that was my contribution this year."

Brinkley prepared a traditional Christmas dinner with all the fixings, including turkey, stuffing, sweet potato casserole, green beans, rolls, pecan pie and iced tea.

Case and Pierce picked up the dishes at Immanuel on Christmas afternoon in time for the dinner to begin at 5:30 p.m.



The neighborhood Christmas dinner at canvascommunity drew more than 40 volunteers, including some from other area United Methodist churches.

Photo by MacKenzie Bentley

When it rains, it pours

Even with the food issue settled, canvascommunity members faced more challenges in making sure dinner got served.

When canvascommunity members arrived on Christmas Eve, they found their church flooded after more than a day of relentless rain. The church had to cancel its noon Christmas Eve service.

Instead, volunteers spent that time sucking up water with wet/dry vacuums and pumps, said Alison Chambers, the church member who initially suggested doing the Christmas dinner. The church also was able to get a cleaning service company to come out and dry up the rest.

"It was kind of feeling a little bit like this was not going to happen again," Chambers said. "It was a mess. But we were really grateful we got it all dried off."

With the feast prepared and the

church building dry and decorated with holiday finery, more than 40 volunteers came to serve dinner. They included members of Pulaski Heights and Quapaw Quarter UMC such as Case and Matthews as well as canvascommunity.

Canvascommunity members also had collected blankets, coats, hats and gloves for any dinner guest in need of warmth.

"We had children, teenagers and adults all working side by side to serve people dinner," said Bentley, canvascommunity's pastor. "For once, there was nothing territorial going on. We were gathered together to do good for people, not worried about where it was or who was in charge of it."

They ate at tables donated for the gathering by Union African Methodist Episcopal Church in Little Rock.

Initially, only about 40 homeless people came entered the church. The

volunteers learned that many homeless were leery of going to some place they had never been before even with the offer of food.

But one of the guests volunteered to guide volunteers out onto the Little Rock and North Little Rock streets to deliver food and the warm clothes to wear the homeless were sleeping.

Altogether, the volunteers delivered about 250 meals on Christmas night.

"It was wonderful to be a part of it," said Carla Haynie, one of the events' organizers. "It was wonderful to see that despite when we thought it was all going to fall through, God had a plan to make it happen."

Only the beginning

Bentley expects that the Christmas feast marks the beginning of some fruitful relationships. Not only did canvascommunity members start to build rapport with the local homeless, they also strengthened their relationship with fellow United Methodists.

Bentley said canvascommunity members plan to team up with Case's Pulaski Heights Sunday School class to provide bags of nonperishable items, bus tokens and lotion for those who need who drop by the downtown church. He also expects to form stronger connections with Quapaw Quarter UMC.

Just as in the Dr. Seuss Christmas classic, the Grinchiest moment turned out to be just the precursor to celebrants having more help at the table to share God's blessings.

After the Christmas dinner, Case e-mailed her friends, "My heart grew three sizes today."

Oberammergau Passion Play 2010

A Nine Day European Adventure

July 13-21, 2010



Basic Cost:

\$2798

Includes round trip airfare (from US point of departure), deluxe motorcoaches, alpine accommodations, guided sightseeing, entrance fees, daily breakfasts and dinners.

Your Tour Hosts:

Dr. and Mrs. Walter Smith
Senior Minister



Christ United
of the Hills Methodist
Church

Bring In, Build Up, Reach Out

OBITUARY

SEARCY

Marjorie "Marge" Stark Spence, 86, of Searcy, the wife of retired elder Harold Spence and stepmother to Southeast District Superintendent Dennis Spence, died on Dec. 23, 2009.

She was born June 15, 1923, in Wolco, Okla., to the late Charles Gail and Mary Drake Dawson Munger.

She earned her masters of library science from the University of Illinois. She was a member of PEO (Philanthropic Educational Organization) and of First United Methodist Church in Searcy.

She is preceded in death by



Marjorie Stark Spence

her husband, Wallace Stark; her parents, Gail and May Munger; her in-laws, Coxey and Lola Stark.

She is survived by her husband, Harold Spence; one son, Gail

Stark, and his wife Peggy of O'Fallon, Ill.; and one daughter, Linda Titus, and her husband Mark of Jackson, Minn.

Her survivors also include three grandchildren, Andrew

Titus; Daniel Titus and wife Stephanie; Madeline Stark; two great-grandchildren, Jude Titus and Ascher Titus; five stepchildren, Rita, Janice, Judy, Keith, and Dennis.

A graveside service was held on Dec. 26 at the Little Rock National Cemetery. A memorial service followed at First United Methodist Church of Searcy with Davis Thompson, senior pastor, officiating.

Her family requests memorial contributions be made to the First United Methodist Church Youth Programs at 304 N. Main St., Searcy, AR 72143.

United Methodists join statewide effort to help foster children find loving homes

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Margie and Bill Brackeen knew even before they married that they wanted to adopt children.

The couple first considered foreign adoption or private adoption. Children in foster care never entered their minds, Margie Brackeen said.

"We thought those kids are broken, that they were deviants and had all sorts of problems," she said.

But then the couple accepted a friend's invitation to attend a picnic for foster children in Harrison.

"We realized that these aren't broken kids; these aren't deviant kids," Margie Brackeen said. "These are kids. They just need somebody to tuck them in at night and give them hugs and take them to church."

The Brackeens immediately began training to become adoptive parents through the Arkansas Division of Children and Family Services, and within a month of their certification, the division introduced them to a 22-month-old boy and his 6-year-old sister. The two little ones have been with the Brackeens ever since.

Today, the Brackeens — who attend Trinity United Methodist Church in Little Rock — are the proud adoptive parents of a young son and daughter. They are also volunteers with a Christian nonprofit group that aims to help children in state custody find loving homes.

The C.A.L.L., which stands for Children of Arkansas Loved for a Lifetime, is an multidenominational group that works with churches to encourage and equip Christians to provide care for the state's foster children. The group now works with churches across the state, including 15 United Methodist congregations.

The Brackeens spoke this past fall during Trinity UMC's Sunday School hour about the C.A.L.L. and the adoptive process.

"Even if you don't feel that you can adopt a child and you don't feel that you have the resources or ability to become foster parents, there are a lot of ways that you can get involved," Bill Brackeen said.

One great need, he said, is for people willing and trained to provide respite care for foster parents who already have children placed in their homes.

"You'd basically would take the children off the parents' hands for a weekend, an afternoon or a day so



Georgiana Soderberg, a member of Trinity UMC in Little Rock, looks on at the Heart Gallery, which showcased portraits Pulaski County youngsters available for adoption. Trinity UMC exhibited the gallery, sponsored by the C.A.L.L. (Children of Arkansas Loved for a Lifetime), last October.

Photo by Heather Hahn

Mom and Dad have some time alone," he said.

Mary Carol Pederson, a member of Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, came up with the idea for the C.A.L.L. in 2006 after she became a certified foster parent and she got calls almost about children in need of a place to stay.

According to the Arkansas Department of Human Services, some 3,500 of the state's children are in foster care on any given day.

"It exposed me to a tremendous need for a safe place for these children that I had no clue about before," she said. "I thought why does nobody in my church know about it either?"

She approached the Division of Children and Family Services, part of the Arkansas Department of Human Services, about partnering with churches to recruit foster, adoptive and respite families.

"My feeling is, well, who better than the body of Christ?" Pederson said. "The Bible tells us over and over again that we are to care for the orphan, and many of these children are legal orphans."

Now C.A.L.L. volunteers not only recruit parents but also have received certification to provide training for potential foster moms and dads.

The Children and Family Services Division still handles the background checks.

Merry Alice Hesselbein, a member of Trinity UMC's missions group the Miracle team, organized

the C.A.L.L.'s presentation at Trinity. Hesselbein is an attorney ad litem for the state who represents dozens of children in foster care.

"When I first started hearing about the C.A.L.L., I was concerned that there would be families recruited who didn't have a clear understanding of some of the problems that these children have," she said. "It takes a whole lot more than love."

But beyond providing training, the C.A.L.L. provides support for parents once they have children in their homes.

"That's a real added benefit," Hesselbein said.

"They support each other. They are a real tight group of adoptive and foster parents."

Lisa McGee, a Sunday School teacher Trinity UMC, is an adoptive mother and attorney for the Arkansas Department of Human Services. She said her department has a strong partnership with the faith-based community through the nonprofit.

"They are able to do all this wonderful stuff for us, and we have placements for our kids," McGee said. "It's absolutely the best thing we've been involved with."

The goal, Pederson said, is to have waiting families — and not waiting children.

The learn more about the C.A.L.L. (Children of Arkansas Loved for a Lifetime), visit thecallinarkansas.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.

May 29-June 6: Guatemala Mission Trip 2010. Doctors and surgical nurses are needed for the medical clinic. Contact Gwen Efird, (501) 666-8446, or Pulaski Heights UMC (501) 664-3600.

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. Teams can sign up by contacting Don Weeks at dweeks@arumc.org.



OUR SMILES SAY IT ALL.

At The Baddour Center, men and women with intellectual disabilities are growing stronger every day, in every way. Intellectually, spiritually, physically, socially, emotionally, and vocationally. Learn more about this unique community of productive, happy men and women at www.baddour.org or call 888.422.3368.

THE
BADDOUR
CENTER

COMMUNITY FOR ADULTS WITH
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES.

Two Arkansas churches honored for hospitality

For the Arkansas United Methodist

Christ of the Hills and Mountainside United Methodist churches, both in Hot Springs Village, have become the most recent Arkansas churches to be recognized as official "Welcoming Congregations."

"Welcoming Congregations" are members of a select group of United Methodist congregations nationwide that meet criteria including embracing newcomers and providing opportunities in discipleship.

The churches have each received a plaque and are listed as a "Certified Welcoming Congregation" on the denomination's Find-A-Church database.

All United Methodist churches are encouraged to update information about their ministries at find-a-church.org.

The recognition program is part of a larger effort launched in late 2000 by United Methodist Communications, the denomination's communications agency, to use modern technology and the common language of television to spread the Good News of Christ to a world in need.

For the past eight years, "Open hearts, Open minds, Open doors" has been the theme of the denomination supported with a series of national cable TV advertising, supplemented by regional and local church participation.



Bubba Smith



Chris Hemund

The overall aim of the effort was to invite people, to enter into connection with the Christian community as they seek meaning and purpose in their lives.

The new campaign, Rethink Church, seeks to capitalize on the previous campaign, targeting 18-34-year-olds and inviting churches to think of the motto as a

verb, not just an adjective as in: "Together we can... Open hearts, Open minds and Open doors."

Arkansas has nine other "Welcoming Congregations."

They include Dover, First-Harrison, Goddard in Fort Smith, Levy in North Little Rock, First-North Little Rock, Pulaski Heights in Little Rock, Salem in Benton, White Hall and Primrose UMC in Little Rock.

Mountainside UMC is at 301 Elcano Drive in Hot Springs Village. Its senior pastor is Chris Hemund. Christ of the Hills UMC is at 700 Balearic Road, Hot Springs Village. Its senior pastor is Bubba Smith.

To learn more about becoming a welcoming congregation, contact Martha Taylor, conference director of communications, at (501) 324-8005 or mtaylor@arumc.org.

Kitchen Equip. & Supplies

Buy at our prices and Save
1-800-482-9026 or 228-0808
AIMCO EQUIPMENT CO.

COMING UP

The Arkansas Conference will have **Rethink Church workshops** from 9 a.m. to noon Jan. 9 at First UMC in Marked Tree, 304 Frisco St., and from 9 a.m., to noon March 13 at Perryville UMC, at Arkansas 9 and 10.

Each workshop will focus on the new Rethink Church initiative including welcoming, connecting better with those outside of our churches and Impact Community grants. The seminars are intended to help United Methodists discover, design and do ministries that will take them and their church outside the church walls and into the community. To learn more, contact Martha Taylor, the conference's director of communications, at mtaylor@arumc.org or (501) 324-8005. To register, visit www.arumc.org/register.

Scholarship applications for the 2010-11 academic year through the United Methodist Church's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry are now open. They include scholarships for Native American seminary students.

J. Harris Moore, the chair of the Conference Committee on Native American Ministries, encourages all pastors or members of local church to make this information available to their members who are Native Americans. If a church member does not have a tribe roll number, Moore can suggest ways to assist you in applying for one.

To contact Moore, e-mail him at jhmoore@nwacc.edu. To fill out an application, visit www.gbhem.org/scholarshipapplication.

pRaise the Roof, sponsored by the Central District Council on Youth Ministries, will be 5:30-8:30 p.m. Jan. 17 at Lakewood UMC, 1922 Topf Road, North Little Rock. Doors open at 5 p.m.

To learn more, contact Rod Hocott, the conference's minister of youth and young adults, at (501) 324-8008 or rhocott@arumc.org.

The Arkansas Conference will have **Laity Convocation** for lay leaders and certified lay speakers from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Feb. 13 at St. James UMC, 321 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock. The theme will be "Leading in the United Methodist Way." Registration, which includes meals and workshop materials, costs \$10 per

individual or \$5 per person for churches with five or more attendees. The registration deadline is Feb. 6. To register, visit www.arumc.org/register. Make checks payable to the Arkansas Conference United Methodist Church. To learn more, call the conference office at (877) 646-1816 or (501) 324-8000.

Mount Eagle Retreat Center, 935 Beal Road, Clinton, will host a Basic Prep Certification Course for Parish Nursing from 6:30 p.m. March 10 through 3 p.m. March 13 for registered nurses. The cost is \$50 which includes lodging, meals, course instruction, certification and the Basic Prep manual. This course is being sponsored by the Arkansas Conference and directed by the Holy Healthy Task Force. To register, visit www.mounteagle.org. To learn more about parish nurse training, contact Janice Sudbrink, a registered nurse and deacon, at (479) 782-5068 or at jsudbrink@fsfumc.org.

Veritas, the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministry's gathering for seventh-through 12th-graders, will be 5 p.m. Feb. 26 to noon Feb. 28 at the Hot Springs Convention Center, 134 Convention Boulevard. The cost is \$35 per person. To register, visit www.arumc.org/register.

Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center, 150 NW Skyline Drive, Fayetteville, will hold a clergywoman's gathering on April 7-9. Titled "Living in Balance: Recapturing Our Creativity," the retreat will focus on creativity in ministry as well as offering a time of renewal, learning and fellowship with other women in ministry. The keynote speaker will be Yolanda Villa, district superintendent of the Heartland Central District, Missouri Conference. The cost ranges from \$295 to \$335. Continuing education units will be available. To learn more, contact Kim Ross, Mount Sequoyah's spiritual director, at spiritualdirector@mountsequoyah.org, or at (800) 760-8126.

Pulaski Heights UMC, 4823 Woodlawn Drive, Little Rock, is collecting donations for its Guatemala mission trip from May 29 to June 6.

Desired items include travel-size soap, shampoo, lotion, toothbrush and toothpaste for health kits; new or gently used sunglasses; new or gently used ball caps and visors; small toys such as Beanie Babies, matchbox cars and balls; Ziploc bags, and a used suitcase or duffel bag on wheels. Items can be dropped off at the church's mission closet. To learn more, call the church at (501) 664-3600.

The Arkansas United Methodist Archives staff is completing its collection of program booklets that were produced for the luncheons for ministers' wives and spouses that have been held at each Annual Conference since the 1940s.

Early on this organization was called "Parsonettes," and then "Ministers Wives," and presently "Partners in Ministry." The archivists are missing program booklets from the years 1949-1957, 1960, 1970, 1979 and 1983 for the North Arkansas Conference; the years 1954-56, 1959, 1990, 1992, 1996 and 1997 for the Little Rock Conference; and 2004 for the Arkansas Conferences. The archives also lack minutes from the Little Rock Conference Luncheons for the years 1998-2002.

Booklet copies may be mailed to The Arkansas United Methodist Archives, Hendrix College, Bailey Library, 1600 Washington Avenue, Conway, Arkansas 72032.

To learn more, contact Mauzel Beal or Marcia Crossman at ArkMethodist@hendrix.edu.

The Ozark Mission Project is taking applications for church youth groups that wish to participate in the organization's mission-oriented camps across Arkansas during summer 2010. Applications are available at www.ozarkmissionproject.org under the Downloads tab.

The deadline for the next edition of the Arkansas United Methodist is 5 p.m. Jan. 13. Submissions must include the time, date and the street address and phone number for the church or event. Mail submissions to editor Heather Hahn, Arkansas United Methodist, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Drive, Little Rock, AR, 72202, or e-mail information to hhahn@arumc.org.

Arkansas United Methodist Gift Subscriptions Available
Go to www.arumc.org/aum or call **501.324.8006**

REZA JEWELRY
678-561-REZA



PENDANT
14kt Yellow or White
Large 1.5" \$169
Small 1" \$105
Sterling Silver
Large \$59 w/ chain
Small \$49 w/ chain
Pewter
\$9.95 w/ chain



FISH AUTO EMBLEM
\$8.95
2 for \$15

GREAT GIFT IDEAS!!!
Shipping/Handling \$5.00 (anywhere in the U.S.)

TO ORDER:
Mail Check or Money Order to
2020 Howell Mill Rd.
Suite C-206
Atlanta, GA 30318
Or
Call 678-561-REZA

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD



Mackey Yokem, at left, listens as Tom Hazelwood of the United Methodist Committee on Relief leads a Dec. 14 workshop on disaster response for Bishop Charles Crutchfield and members of the Arkansas Conference Cabinet and extended Cabinet. Hazelwood is UMCOR's assistant general secretary for disaster response and a member of the Arkansas Conference.

Photo by Heather Hahn



First UMC in Jonesboro celebrated RevivAlive '09 on Nov. 15-17. The guest speaker was Maxie Dunnam, retired president and chancellor of Asbury Theological Seminary and the vice chairman of world evangelism for the World Methodist Council. Gene Cordova, pictured at left, brought puppetry and stories to the kids from ages 4 and up.

Photo courtesy of First UMC in Jonesboro



Members and friends of Cornerstone UMC in Jonesboro raised about \$8,000 for seven mission projects during the fourth annual Glorious Giving Market on Nov. 14. Market goers were able to purchase food from the "Mission Café" and enjoy musical entertainment provided by Cornerstone Kids.

Photo courtesy of Cornerstone UMC

Arkansas Interfaith Power and Light, a new nonprofit group, illuminated a solar-powered Christmas tree in Dunbar Community Garden on Dec. 10. Steve Copley, a United Methodist elder, and Mac Mayfield, a member of St. Paul Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, are co-chairs of the group, which seeks to promote environmental conservation from a religious perspective. Leo Hauser, a member of Pulaski Heights UMC, is vice chair.



Photo by Scharmell Roussel



The Trinity UMC Miracle Team, a missions group, held a luncheon and visit with Santa on Dec. 12 in Little Rock for 47 mothers and their children in Arkansas CARES (Center for Addiction Research, Education and Support). Each of the children received a stocking adorned with their name and filled with goodies. The mothers received pictures of their children with Santa. Arkansas CARES is a program of Methodist Family Health. Cindy Crone of Trinity UMC's Miracle Team founded the Arkansas CARES program. Pictured from left are event organizer Toni Wilson, Crone, Lu Elliott, Christy Bolling, Laurie Norman, Jackie Reddick, Mary Alice Hesselbein and Becky Matthews.

Photo by Steve Bonds



Richmond UMC sponsored a pumpkin patch and hayride for more than 130 kindergarten students from Margaret Daniel Primary School. The church set up stations to teach kids about what grows on a farm and what is inside a pumpkin. More than 20 volunteers from Richmond and First UMC also led the children in old-fashioned games, a hayride and decorating cupcakes. Pictured above is a hayride led by Glen Grimes.

Photo courtesy of Richmond UMC



Arkansas NOMADS met at Mount Eagle Christian Center near Clinton on Nov. 8, for a week of work and fellowship. The group, whose name stands for Nomads on a Mission Active in Divine Service, is a mission outreach for people with recreational vehicles. Connie Master of Heber Springs is pictured cleaning up ice damage at the center.

Photo courtesy of Arkansas NOMADS

Churches join for Mt. Eagle cleanup effort

DAN DUNN
For the Arkansas United Methodist

Two days of cleanup at Mount Eagle Christian Center near Clinton drew United Methodists from Arkansas and Mississippi.

Four men from Highlands United Methodist Church in Bella Vista joined a team of seven United Methodists from Biloxi, Miss., for the mission project at the retreat center on Nov. 4 and 5.

Highlands UMC members Ken Bloom, Dan Dunn, John Franklin and Doug Nelson took chainsaws and other tools to help clean up the mess left by last year's ice storm.

The Biloxi group came from a United Methodist congregation that coordinated the disaster relief in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina.

Now the Mississippi United Methodists are returning the favor by doing mission projects in the states that sent help.

Arkansas United Methodists sent more than 500 people to Biloxi, including several teams from Highlands UMC.

CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED in the Arkansas United Methodist for 50 cents per word, no limit. Call 501.324.8005 or mail to: Arkansas United Methodist, 2 Trudie Kibbe Reed Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202; or e-mail: mtaylor@arumc.org

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

www.christianbiblecollege.org

Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church is seeking a part-time Church Secretary responsible for administrative support of the Pastor and various auxiliaries in the Church. Minimum requirements high school diploma/GED or Equivalent, previous experience as secretary/administrative assistant desired and understanding of United Methodist Connectional system desired. Send a resume to: hooverumc@aristotle.net, Attn: Ruth Jones or call (501) 379-1561 for a complete job description.

INTERIM *Continued from Page 1A*

served the Hope congregation for five years and whose parishioners were long familiar what military obligations might entail.

Matthews faces a different sort of challenge.

"[Johnson's new appointment] came as a great shock to the congregation," Matthews said. "When I was with them for our meeting, I thought I was at a funeral wake."

But Matthews comes after years of preparing for his new post. In 2001, at the urging of then Arkansas Area Bishop Janice Huie, Matthews began learn all he could about the intentional interim process.

Other Protestant denominations have long recognized interim ministry as its own distinct calling. For many congregations, hiring an interim pastor has been a matter of necessity. They needed a temporary pastor while their congregational search committees sought out candidates to be more long-term replacements.

But the United Methodist Church, with its itinerant system, didn't embrace the interim concept until relatively recently. The denomination's General Conference approved the intentional interim appointment program and added it to



Ed Matthews, at left listens as lay leaders Joy Rockenbach and Laine Harber of First UMC in Little Rock lead a commissioning ceremony marking Matthews' appointment as the Arkansas Conference's first intentional interim pastor. First UMC in Little Rock hosted the event because Matthews formerly pastored the congregation and has attended the church in recent years.

Photo by Deni Clark

the Book of Discipline in 1996.

Matthews said what sets this sort of appointment apart from other short-term assignments is that it's both intentional and proactive.

Matthews began meeting with Johnson, North District Superintendent Charles Settle and congregation members to draw up a contract of what the church expects and hopes to achieve over the next

six months.

As part of these discussions, Matthews and church members examined who they are as a congregation, what they want to be and what obstacles they must overcome to reach their goals.

An intentional interim isn't supposed to be just a caretaker.

Matthews will be responsible for writing evaluations on the church's

Another pastoral change

Jessica Tanner, a local pastor, became the new pastor of Rushing Memorial United Methodist Church in Chidester in November. The church had been without a pastor since the death of Harold Rogers in August.

progress at least once a month for the district superintendent and the congregational leadership. The lay leaders will also be producing their own evaluations of the church's progress.

"All of that goes into the pot as the bishop and cabinet consider the next pastoral appointment," Matthews said.

One ironclad rule is that an interim pastor is not a candidate for that congregation's next long-term appointment.

"The interim pastor is supposed to be rather assertive and aggressive about having [the church's self-examination] somewhat in line when the new pastor comes," Matthews said. "So that if there is any fallout to be blamed, blame it on the interim."

Johnson had requested to remain in Mountain View while his three children made their way through junior high and high school. Now that they've all graduated from high school, he was expecting a move sometime soon.

Crutchfield said Johnson has been appointed to Hope because the Cabinet believes that the pastor's skill set matched the needs of the Hope congregation and its surrounding mission field.

Johnson has long known Matthews, who is a native of nearby Calico Rock where Johnson also had his first appointment.

"I think Ed was a good choice since he's from this area and knows the area and some of the people," Johnson said.

To be certified in intentional interim ministry, Matthews had to go through three stages of training. He likened it to Pastoral Care 101, just more focused on mediation and the kind of struggles parishioners face when their church is in flux.

Matthews said he was drawn to this new calling because of his desire to foster reconciliation.

"I am rewarded by seeing people address their issues," Matthews said, "not run from them."



nce upon a time, a young mom named Rachel cared more about drugs and alcohol than she did for herself and her little boy, Chase. Life was out of control; drugs clouded every decision. One night, a heated argument between Rachel and her husband led to his attempted kidnapping of young Chase. Thankfully, the police arrived in time. Rachel recognized rock bottom. She was finally ready to start a new page in her life's sad story.

Methodist Family Health provides treatment and support to women, children and families in Arkansas who suffer from emotional, behavioral and addiction issues.



he Arkansas CARES program at Methodist Family Health provided everything I needed to get my life back," says Rachel. "I wasn't the easiest client; I pushed back, but their therapists were amazing through it all. From drug rehabilitation and anger management to parenting courses and an after-care program, Arkansas CARES helps women like me get back on track. I can't take back all my mistakes, but my story has a happy ending."

Methodist
FAMILY HEALTH
Rebuilding the Lives of Children and Families Since 1899

For more information, please call us today at 501.661.0720 or visit us online at www.MethodistFamily.org.

REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

umportal.org



Liberian hope

Seminary reaching its war-torn nation | 3B



Decade of the aughts

Moments from the 2000s seared in memory | 4B

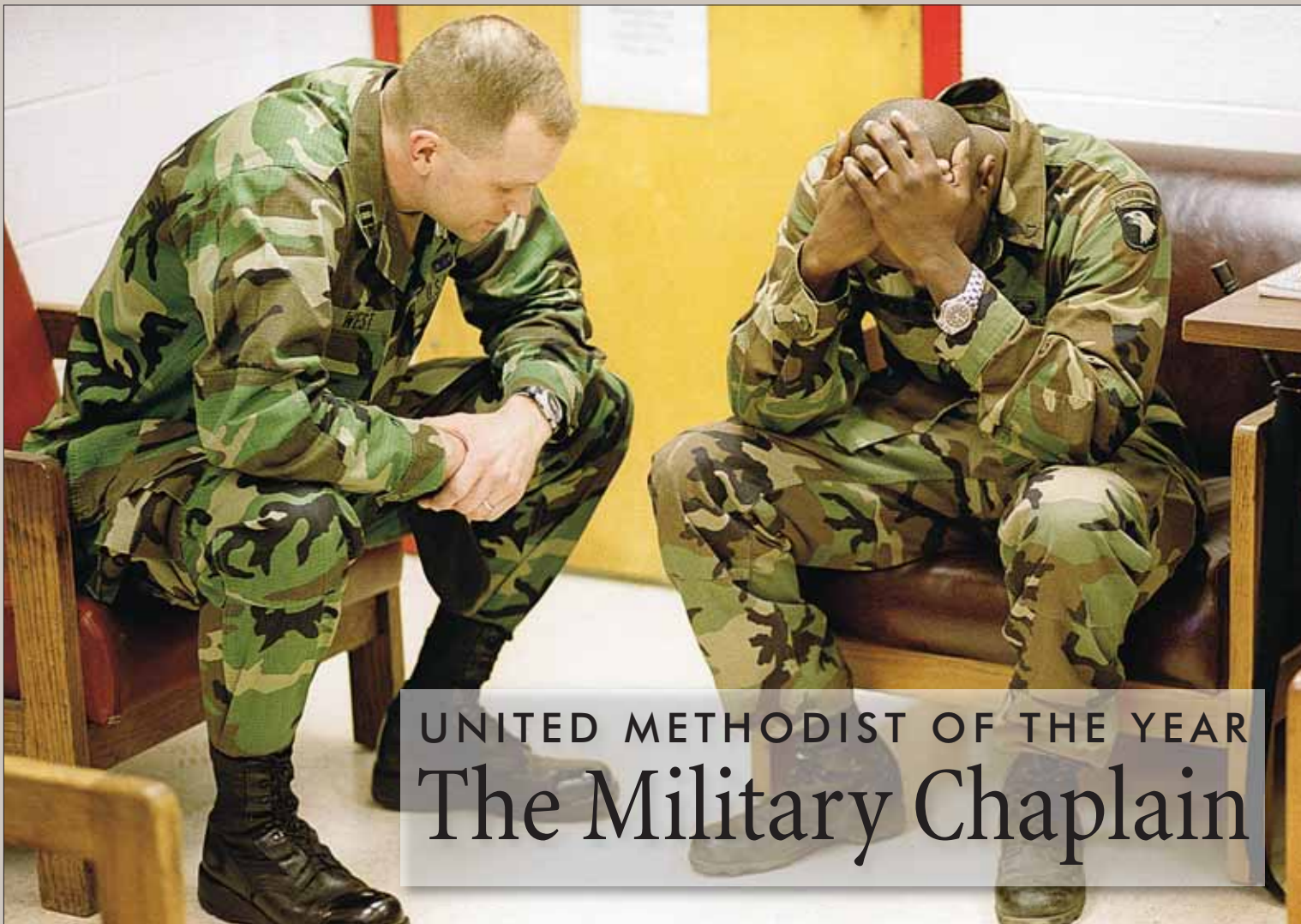


Too cynical?

Do young clergy reflect cultural snark? | 7B

Section B

January 8, 2010



UNITED METHODIST OF THE YEAR The Military Chaplain

UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

In this 2003 file photo, United Methodist Chaplain Ernest P. Jay West (left) prays with a troubled soldier in the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, Ky.

Offering support—even in harm's way

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

—John 15:13

BY ROBIN RUSSELL
Managing Editor

For being the symbol of the courageous and steady support offered to members of the U.S. Armed Forces—in a year that saw a deadly assault at an Army base—the military chaplain is our 2009 United Methodist of the Year.

This composite of the many ordained United Methodist clergy who work tirelessly and even sacrificially to bring spiritual comfort to our military personnel is exemplified most recently by those who counseled wounded soldiers and victims' families near Fort Hood Army Post in Killeen, Texas, following the Nov. 5 mass shootings on the base by an Army psychiatrist.

The Rev. E.F. "Skip" Blancett, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Killeen and a former Navy chaplain during Desert Storm and at Fort Hood, is one of them. He shared about a battalion commander new to First UMC whose unit lost four soldiers and had 11 more wounded

■ See 'Chaplain,' page 8B



UMNS 2003 FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

U.S. Army Chaplain Mitchell Lewis visits a memorial at Fort Stewart, Ga., for soldiers killed in Iraq.

Q&A: Reaching out to returning war veterans

More than half a million U.S. soldiers have served in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001, troops that retired Navy chaplain David Thompson calls the country's "next Greatest Generation." But too often, they struggle to restart their lives back home.



Dave Thompson

Cmdr. Thompson, a Free Methodist minister, offers practical tips for local churches to help returning combat veterans in *Beyond the Yellow Ribbon* (Abingdon Press), co-written with social worker Darlene Wetterstrom. He spoke recently with staff writer Bill Fentum.

We hear a lot these days about returning soldiers who live with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). But the book tells us other issues are more common for them.

That's true. More often a soldier's marriage is strained or they're estranged from their kids simply because they were away at least two years or deployed multiple times. Unemployment runs about 18 percent for returning veterans, particularly National Guard or reserves who find out the companies they worked for disappeared in the recession. Or they struggle with spiritual issues related to combat. That kind of thing isn't discussed at all in mental-health circles.

Are clergy trained for this in seminary?

Not really. Most pastors take one or two classes on those types of stress at local hospitals. But unless they were in the service themselves or grew up in military families, there is so much they don't know. We hope the book will bring church leaders up to speed

■ See 'Q&A,' page 2B

FAITH WATCH

Third of nations limit religion, study finds

A study released Dec. 16 by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life shows people living in one-third of all countries are restricted from practicing their religion freely, either because of laws or public harassment. That amounts to 70 percent of the world population, according to the Associated Press, since some of the most restrictive nations are very populous, including Iran, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan and India. The U.S., Brazil, Japan, Italy, South Africa and the United Kingdom are the least restrictive.

Former missions leader dies at 92

The Rev. Tracey Jones Jr., a former head of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, died Dec. 16. He was 92. Jones helped combine the mission work of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches after the two denominations formed the United Methodist Church in 1968. In the 1940s he served as a missionary in China, witnessing the Communist takeover in 1949. He joined the missions board staff in 1955 and served as head of its World Division from 1968-1980.

Poll shows Christians dabbling in New Age

Nearly one in four Christians in America delve into a range of Eastern or New Age beliefs, according to a new study from the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. In a sample of 4,013 adults, 23 percent of Christians said they believe in astrology, 22 percent in reincarnation and 21 percent in yoga as a spiritual practice. Christians were about as likely as Americans overall to say they have been in touch with the dead (29 percent), had an experience with a ghost (17 percent) or consulted a psychic (14 percent).

—Compiled by Bill Fentum

■ Q&A Continued from page 1B

so they can reach out more effectively. And it does mean reaching out: Most soldiers and their spouses are 20-to-30-somethings who won't normally be found in the front pews of our churches.

Sometimes when you toss that idea at pastors you hear, "Oh, no, not another program!" But often it just means helping veterans through the care or job-loss ministries we already have in place, not reinventing the wheel. Relational stressors and finding one's place in the world after coming home, those are the quiet issues that churches are well-equipped to address.

How can a layperson get involved?

Become a friend to veterans and get to know them as individuals. Don't parachute into someone's life, thinking you have all the answers. If their needs turn out to be more than you can help with—PTSD, for example, or traumatic brain injuries—let your pastor or a Stephen Minister know so they can guide them to professional care. The key is to be a conduit, a bridge that leads people to what they need.

The book also suggests ways to help families during a loved one's deployment. Where should churches start?

Just think creatively about what the congregation can do with its own resources. Before I left for the Persian Gulf, I went to the pastor of our church at the time and asked him to check in on my family, just normal pastoral care. And he never did. Here was a wonderful opportunity for the church's care systems to come into play—and they did nothing.

But later we belonged to a church in San Diego where the wives of servicemen were invited to a weekly Mother's Day Out, a time when they could talk to someone other than their preschoolers. Some of the men at that church regularly took my boys to play soccer or to the beach when they went with their own kids. Three weeks after

I left, my wife's car had flat tires; she called the church's "Handy Hank" hotline, and two hours later someone did the repair. The congregation planned all this, knowing it would be a stressful time for a lot of families.

It's not a one-size-fits-all ministry. It's more like, "What gifts and graces does the church have to be there for these people through a challenging time in their lives?"

What if someone rejects an offer to help?

The worst thing you can leave them with is, "OK, give me a call if you need me." Of course, they'll never do that! My co-author Darlene says to start softly and maybe offer to bring over a meal. Or invite the kids over to your place to give the parent a little rest. Ask yourself, "If I were in their shoes, what sort of thing would I appreciate?" Or simply ask if you can check in with them once in while. Most people respond positively to that, and who knows—a month later, they may need something.

You warn us to keep political views to ourselves when we minister to combat veterans, whether or not we support a war.

That is critical. It's about caring for others without an axe to grind. Besides, the political persuasions of people in the military are no less diverse than any other place in society. If you sat in a barrack or a mess hall after President Obama speaks about sending more troops to Afghanistan, you might be surprised at the diversity of opinions you would hear. So to look at the military as a right-wing monolith is simply wrong.

How should churches honor service men and women, besides calling out their names on Veterans Day?

We could invite returning vets to give testimony about their experience, maybe talk about their readjustment to the civilian world and where they are in that process. Also, you'll never

find anyone more suited to lay leadership in a congregation. Give them a job and they'll get it done—because that's what they did in the military. I mean, these people volunteered to go in harm's way. They know about sacrifice in a way most civilians never experience, and their families understand sacrifice as well. So what better people to recruit than people who understand the cross? It can also be a healing experience: If they're asked to focus on service in the church, it helps them reintegrate with the community.

Whatever we do, it needs to be ongoing. One of my sons, an Army officer in the Korean DMZ, regularly gets care packages from our church, and they keep him posted online with newsletters and instant messages. On a wider level, what if chaplains in Korea could organize retreats for Methodist soldiers stationed there, maybe at the 8th Army Religious Retreat Center in Seoul? Efforts like that would at least keep the connection visible and open to them during their deployment.

One of the toughest jobs you describe in the book is ministry to family members left behind when soldiers are killed in action.

It's complicated mourning. People grieve a future that will never be. Parents of married children face the probability that their son or daughter's spouse will remarry and they'll lose touch with their grandchildren. Sometimes people just explode on casualty officers who walk up the driveway to give them the news, especially when they weren't that keen on their loved one going to war in the first place. Others treasure their loved one's

service, so we shouldn't assume how anyone will respond.

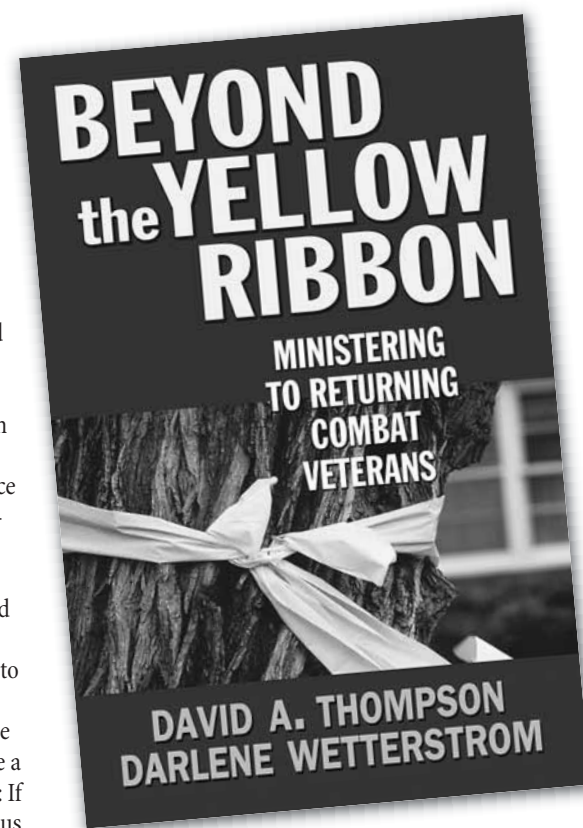
The military is there for them through the funeral, but after the family receives the flag and taps are played, it gets pretty quiet. So churches should pay close attention. Meet them where they're at, check in often, give a little extra care for at least a couple of years. Don't leave them alone, or at least without resources.

You also remind us to never forget the needs of aging veterans.

Yes, especially those who lived through serious combat, people who really saw some tough stuff. That doesn't go away. I served as chaplain for a Minnesota Masonic Home, where a lot of guys had served in World War II and entered into almost a gerontological PTSD, possibly because they had time on their hands and began to reflect. One of the last things people do is search for meaning in their lives, and for war veterans that means revisiting those memories.

Also, it doesn't have to be combat. I once talked to a Navy veteran moments before the invocation where he took command of a ship. He told me: "I gave 110 percent to the Navy. This should be the best day of my life. But it feels like the worst day because I lost my wife and my three boys to my career. They're not here to share in this moment and they won't speak to me." The military doesn't talk about divorce statistics, but the rate is significantly higher than the norm in society. The stress of repeated deployments can beat a marriage to death. Those are the hidden casualties that you'll never see on a wall in Washington, the high price that some people pay when they serve.

bfentum@umr.org



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

THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER (USPS954-500) is published weekly by UMR Communications Inc., 1221 Profit Drive, Dallas, Texas 75247-3919. Periodicals postage paid at Dallas, Texas and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER, PO Box 660275, Dallas Texas 75266-0275.

THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER has provided denominational news coverage since its beginning as the Texas Methodist newspaper in 1847. The Reporter has no official ties to the United Methodist General Conference or to any of the denomination's general boards or agencies. This newspaper aims to provide readers with a broad spectrum of information and viewpoints consistent with the diversity of Christians.

All material published in this newspaper is copyrighted by UMR Communications Inc. unless otherwise noted. Reprint of material from this newspaper must be authorized in advance by the Editor, and fees are assessed in some cases. To request reprints, e-mail news@umr.org, or fax a request to (214) 630-0079. Telephone requests are not accepted.

Send Correspondence and Address Changes (include mailing label) To: P.O. Box 660275, Dallas, TX 75266-0275 Telephone: (214) 630-6495. Subscriptions are \$26 for 52 issues per year. Click on "subscriptions" at www.umportal.org, e-mail circulation@umr.org or send a check to UMR Communications, Attn: Circulation, 1221 Profit Dr., Dallas, TX 75247.



CHOIR ROBES
EXPERT TAILORING **\$35⁹⁵** & UP

Finest fabrics including permanent press and wash & wear. Superior quality. Free color catalog and fabric swatches on request.

GUARANTEED SATISFACTION
Call Toll Free: 1-800-826-8612

REGENCY
CAP & GOWN CO.
www.rcgown.com

P.O. Box 8988-T Jacksonville, FL 32211

UM CONNECTIONS

L. Junaluska Singers names new director

Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center has announced Melodie G. Galloway as the new musical director for the Lake Junaluska Singers. Dr. Galloway, a Lake Junaluska Singer alum, holds a master's degree in vocal performance from Florida State University and a doctor of musical arts degree in conducting from the University of Greensboro. Her experience as a conductor and soprano soloist includes opera, oratorio, musical theater and a professional vocal ensemble, where she has been a soloist in Russia, Estonia, Ireland, England and Spain.

Hamilton to receive Perkins alum award

The Rev. Adam Hamilton has been named recipient of the 2010 Perkins Distinguished Alumnus Award by the Alumni/ae Council of Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University in Dallas. The annual award recognizes a Perkins grad for service to the church and wider community, continuing support of Perkins and SMU, and exemplary character. Mr. Hamilton is an ordained elder in the Kansas East Conference and pastor of the 12,000-member Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan. The award will be presented Feb. 2-4 during Ministers Week at Perkins.

Scholarship deadline nears for Claremont

The application deadline for major M.Div. and M.A. scholarships at Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, Calif., is quickly approaching. Applications for admission must be completed by Jan. 15. Scholarships include the full-tuition University Scholars Award program, the inaugural Paul and Hisako Terasaki Scholarship, and other awards. Visit www.cst.edu or contact the office of admission at (909) 447-2506 or admission@cst.edu.

—Compiled by Mary Jacobs

Seminary reaches out in Liberia

BY VICKI BROWN
Special Contributor

Despite devastation from civil war on the campus of the Gbarnga School of Theology in Liberia, the faculty immediately added counseling to its class offerings after peace was restored.

"This is what sacred theology is all about," said the Rev. Yatta Roslyn Young, dean of the seminary.

The institution is providing clinical pastoral education for church staff so that they can help their traumatized members. Graduates from this discipline are working in churches and schools and communities.

The seminary, with about 100 students, is at the center of the religious community that trains ministers and Christian educators of the United Methodist, Episcopal, Lutheran and Pentecostal churches in Liberia.

"The cross-and-flame logo of the United Methodist Church can be found in every village, hamlet, town, and city in the country," Ms. Young said. The United Methodist connection is particularly strong in Liberia, where President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is a United Methodist.

While seminary graduates try to help the country heal the wounds from a long civil war that left hundreds of thousands of people dead and devastated the country's economy, the theological school itself has many needs.

The Rev. Ken Carter Jr., senior pastor of Providence United Methodist Church in Charlotte, N.C., and chair of the General Board of Higher Education's Division of Ordained Ministry (GBHEM), said he was stunned by the condition of the school when he visited in 2009. The campus in Gbarnga was occupied by rebel forces during the war and the school was moved to Monrovia for the duration of the conflict. The school has now moved back to Gbarnga and is rebuilding the campus.

"They are really rebuilding the school; it was decimated by the war, and there is a need for infrastructure and housing for faculty," Dr. Carter said. "The library looks like the worst church library you've ever seen."

Faculty need laptop computers, and a new lecture hall is the first priority, he said.

His personal project—with the help of his church—is going to be to try and help rebuild the library.

The Rev. Isaac Dowah's studies were interrupted by the war, but he is now completing his final year of study in the basic theology program, though he earned degrees in Ghana and was ordained in 1998.

Study is difficult at Gbarnga, he said, because everything was looted.

How to help: The Revitalization of the Gbarnga Mission and School of Theology/United Methodist University is a designated Advance Special Giving project, Advance #3020679, or you can donate online at <http://new.gbmg-umc.org/advance/projects/search/index.cfm?action=details&id=3020679&code=302067>.

"All our books and computers were taken away," Mr. Dowah said. "Students have to go on a book hunt if they have an assignment to do. Before the war, this was not the case. Students got all their major books on the first day of school."

Lack of electricity also creates problems, he added. Most students cannot afford a personal power generator so they study by candlelight.

Liberians expect the United States to intervene in their civil war because of the U.S. role in founding Liberia, Dr. Carter said. Modern-day Liberia was founded by the American Colonization Society in 1821-22 as a place for slaves freed in the U.S. to emigrate to Africa, where it was believed they would have greater freedom and equality.

"I never met anyone in Liberia who wanted to leave," Dr. Carter said. "They just want to have peace." He believes the United Methodist Church and the seminary can have an important role in the healing process.



The Gbarnga School of Theology in Monrovia, Liberia, needs help rebuilding even as it reaches out to help heal the wounds from a long civil war that left hundreds of thousands of people dead and devastated the country's economy.

UMNS PHOTO BY JOSEPH G. ZEOGAR



PHOTO COURTESY OF RUNNINGAFRICA.COM

United Methodists, such as Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, are working to help the country heal its wounds from a long civil war.

"A lot of young people in Liberia have been child soldiers. They have to be reintegrated into society," he said.

Ms. Young was among 23 theologians, seminary representatives and leaders from across Africa who gathered in August in Kampala, Uganda, with representatives from general church boards and agencies in the U.S. to assess United Methodist theological education in Africa. She said the school needs help.

"We need textbooks for the disci-

plines we have at Gbarnga School of Theology—general theology, religious education, sacred theology and basic agriculture," she said.

"I use a manual typewriter, and I just recently received a gift of a used computer from a friend—praise the Lord for small favors!"

The school needs computers for office use as well as for students to complete their assignments, she said. The library's few obsolete books cannot support research work.

Apart from a few individuals and one or two churches that are helping with textbooks, the school has not established any sister relationship with any church or conference, Ms. Young said.

"The United Methodist Church in Liberia cannot rebuild it on its own," she said.

Ms. Brown is associate editor and writer, Office of Interpretation, GBHEM.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING • CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING • CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

MISCELLANEOUS

DISPLAY & BANNER ADVERTISING

The *United Methodist Reporter* and the *UMPortal* offer advertisers the ability to target unique messages regarding products, services and employment to church leaders and clergy, as well as individuals in the pews. Reach thousands of Christian households, agencies and organizations by advertising in UMR's products. Variety of display ad sizes and rates to fit any budget and objective. Contact: Cherrie Graham at 214-630-6495, x 142 or cgraham@umr.org

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Readership is approximately 225,000 readers each week

Rates are per word or group of figures or initials (20 word minimum) **Newspaper Only — \$3.00** per word, two consecutive weeks **Newspaper/Internet**

Bundle — \$4.00 per word includes two consecutive weeks in print and one month on Internet (www.umportal.org). **Internet Only — \$1.25** per word run for one month on www.umportal.org. E-mail your classified ad to: cgraham@umr.org or enter it online on the Classifieds page at www.umportal.org

HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS? YOU CAN HAVE YOUR OWN VERSION OF THE UNITED METHODIST PORTAL!

Join the growing number of churches across the UMC who are making the *UMPortal* their home page. News from your local church, stories from the award-winning staff of the *United Methodist Reporter*, real-time information from Yahoo! News and Google—all in one home page. Visit www.umportal.org and just two clicks can make it your personal homepage. E-mail a request for an online demonstration to learn how easy it is to

bring a customized version of the *UMPortal* to your church at portal@umr.org

LUMICON DIGITAL PRODUCTIONS

Lumicon offers downloadable worship resources based on the Bible and rooted in current culture, featuring planning guides, graphics and video. The online library provides your church with a range of resources, from Scripture commentary, drama and visual ideas to finished images and videos. Browse the search bank by topic, lectionary or Scripture verse at www.lumicon.org or call toll-free 1-866-LUMICON (586-4266) for more information.

SEE EVEN MORE CLASSIFIED ADS! CHECK OUT WWW.UMPORTAL.ORG

You can find position listings, services, and exciting opportunities — available only on UMPortal.org



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO BY AMY SANCETTA

Decade in review

Not an easy entry into the 21st century

BY ROBIN RUSSELL | *Managing Editor*

The first decade of the 21st century—the “aughts,” 2000 to 2009—was not an easy one, by anyone’s reckoning.

Events that stay stuck in our minds are not usually happy and light; our memories are instead seared by the stunning and tragic, those instances when we recall exactly where we were when we heard news about events that changed our collective psyche—even as a people of faith.

Foremost among them was Sept. 11,

2001, when terrorists attacked on U.S. soil and the nation plunged into a war on terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Natural disasters in 2004 and 2005 overwhelmed relief agencies after a tsunami struck Southeast Asia and hurricanes devastated the Gulf Coast of the U.S.

In the Middle East and parts of Africa, violent civil wars continued to plague already displaced populations, and a humanitarian crisis afflicted Darfur.

Other moments frozen in time: the February 2003 explosion of the space shuttle Columbia; the October 2006 slayings of Amish schoolchildren; the April 2007 shooting spree at Virginia Tech; and the November 2009 assault on a U.S. Army base.

To top it all off, the U.S. and global economy took a nosedive after we entered in September 2008 the worst recession since 1945. Tens of thousands were jobless; many became part of the “New Poor.”

Yet in the midst of the world’s suffering and violence, United Methodists continued to rise to the challenge, providing spiritual comfort and physical assistance through prayer and counseling, disaster-relief efforts and ongoing practical help.

In the end, it’s not so much what happens to us, but how we respond. By committing to live as disciples of Jesus Christ, United Methodists can indeed help transform their world. And that gives us hope for the next decade, come what may.

ABOVE: Pedestrians flee as the World Trade Center’s south tower collapses on Sept. 11, 2001 in New York City. United Methodist churches opened their doors for prayer and counseling following the terrorist attack that killed over 3,000 in a single day. The denomination has also called on its members to initiate interfaith dialogue with Muslims. BELOW: Virginia Tech students held a candlelight vigil on April 16, 2007, after a gunman killed 32 people in the deadliest shooting rampage in modern U.S. history. The school’s Wesley Foundation stayed open for those who sought comfort and counseling.



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO/THE ROANOKE TIMES; SAM DENN



UMNS FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

United Methodist Bishop William Oden (right) greets Palestinian President Yasser Arafat during a December 2000 meeting at Arafat’s headquarters in Gaza City in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip. Bishop Oden was part of a delegation of American church leaders that visited the Middle East to express its solidarity with churches there and to call for a peaceful solution to the crisis in the area.



ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO/VENTURA COUNTY STAR, DANA R. BOWLER

ABOVE: New Orleans evacuee Viola Williams (right) hugs Paula Cade, Christian education director at Kingwood United Methodist Church near Houston after fleeing the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. United Methodists in nearby states organized quickly to meet practical needs for tens of thousands of evacuees. Church work teams from across the country came to the Gulf Coast to provide disaster-relief and recovery assistance through the United Methodist Committee on Relief.



UMNS FILE PHOTO BY JAY MALLIN

Tens of thousands of marchers gather in December 2007 on the Mall in Washington to demonstrate for peace in Iraq. United Methodist leaders and members of local United Methodist churches joined in calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and an end to the war. In 2009, President Obama announced he was sending tens of thousands of additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan after eight years of fighting, as the war against terrorism shifted from Iraq.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GINGHAMSBURG.ORG

ABOVE: At least 400,000 people were killed and more than 2 million were forced to flee their homes during a civil war in Sudan’s Darfur region. The United Methodist Committee on Relief and Ginghamburg Church in Tipp City, Ohio, led by the Rev. Mike Slaughter (right), joined to improve water and sanitation in the refugee camps.



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY KRISTIN CLARK NOLAN

RIGHT: Astronaut Rick D. Husband, mission commander of the space shuttle Columbia, and a crew of six other mission specialists were killed in a crash on Feb. 1, 2003. David Ochoa joins a vigil in Des Moines, Iowa, in support of workers arrested in a May 12 immigration raid at the Agriprocessors meatpacking plant. United Methodists considered how to help meet spiritual and social-service needs for migrant workers.

Tell me about a time . . .

BY EARL CREPS
Special Contributor

As I sat tapping on my computer keyboard in a Starbucks, an unexpected event unfolded nearby. A manager sporting a green apron sat down at a table with a young man, who was there, it turns out, for a job interview—Starbucks style.

The conversation seemed quite practiced on the manager's end. She worked hard to help the interviewee feel comfortable while being questioned. Our tables were close enough to make the entire conversation public domain.

As they talked, I had an impulse to type up the progress of the meeting and eventually produced something of a rough transcript, plus some impressions.

If you apply for a job at Starbucks (maybe while church planting), your interview will revolve around questions like these:

Why do you want to work at Starbucks?

Tell me about a time you have worked in a situation that required a dress code.

Tell me about a time you had to deal with someone who wasn't getting his or her job done.

Describe a time when you failed to meet a customer expectation.

Tell me about a difficult decision you had to make at work when you didn't know the right course of action.

Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult ethical decision.

In your most recent job, describe your relationships with your co-workers.

The manager wrapped up the exchange by informing the applicant that the average employee takes four months to reach proficiency on the store's learning curve.

A huge international conglomerate was asking only seven questions of a potential employee. But six of these items dealt with actual conduct rather than opinions or intentions. After the initial question about motivation, every other one began with something like: "Tell me about a time . . ." In other words, Starbucks believes a person's behavior is best predicted by patterns that can be identified in the past.

While I may believe that I work well under stress, or I may value doing so, my actual conduct is the only real indicator of what type of

person I become when the heat is on.

The Starbucks method immediately reminded me of all the bad job interviews I have conducted. These mostly focused on the person's "values," "gifts" or "attitudes," but paid very little attention to how they actually lived. While I assumed that résumé items reported the individual's conduct, they really only offered me information about previous jobs.

'The Starbucks method brought to mind the words of James: That we are to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only.'

How the applicant lives day to day only comes out when I say words like, "Tell me about a time . . ."

I intend to use this approach in all future interviewing. Of course, the respondent may misrepresent himself or herself, but so do résumés and references.

The Starbucks method brought to mind the words of James: That we are to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only. If I really live the values I profess, then I will be able to answer questions like those that begin with "Tell me about a time when . . ."

My conduct is the only trustworthy indicator of what I truly value. It is the difference between Christianity as talk and as walk.

All of us value evangelism, but when was my last spiritual conversation with a person in need of faith in Christ? All of us value unity, but when was the last time I resisted the urge to say something negative about a peer? All of us value our families, but when was the last time I took a day off just to be with them (and turned off my cell phone)?

My Starbucks experience made me wonder whether in our first moment at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we might hear the words, "Tell me about a time . . ."

Dr. Creps (earlcreps@gmail.com) is author of *Reverse Mentoring: How Young Leaders Can Transform the Church and Why We Should Let Them* in the Jossey-Bass Leadership Network Series. Reprinted with permission from his blog at www.earlcreps.com.

Lessons from chickens coming home to roost

BY BRIAN BAUKNIGHT
Special Contributor

I know very little about chickens. However, I am learning fast.



Brian Bauknight

We purchased one-and-a-half dozen young chickens to start production of free-range eggs on our property. We will acquire more chickens when we see how these first young ones fare.

My son built a mobile chicken coop—where the chickens remain secure from prey at night, and from which they roam all day every day. So we have 16 hens and two roosters in the barnyard.

I asked, "How will we train the chickens to go into the coop at night?" My son replied, "They will learn quickly. And those who do not learn, we will train."

He was more "right" than I could have ever imagined.

As dusk began to settle in on their first night with us, all 18 chickens went directly into the homemade coop for the night. No exceptions. No stragglers. I was amazed.

I also discovered very quickly that they sense feeding time (giving them

the proverbial "chicken feed"!) at 3 p.m. every afternoon. They see one of us coming and they race to the same spot where they had been fed the day before. No exceptions. No stragglers. I was again amazed.

And I thought to myself, "Wouldn't it be marvelous if training Christian discipleship was that easy, that certain and that instinctive?"

'The flock does not always come home to roost. . . . Twenty-first century life in America fosters mostly "free range" most of the time.'

But it is not, of course. Discipleship is not instinctive for the most part. Training and forming disciples in The Way is not automatic—not in us, not in our people.

Clearly, Jesus was about forming disciples in his earthly ministry. He came to model and form in us what God had designed and hoped for from the beginning. He did not force com-

pliance, but offered a gracious invitation to be and to become what God intends for the human family.

We, on the other hand, go our own way. We become enamored by the world's lures. We lust after false gods. We quibble over doctrinal standards and doctrinal "purity."

We prefer military options to the more difficult pursuit of peacemaking. We worry and fret over what constitutes "enough" of this life's goods. We exclude some people whom we deem unworthy.

There is nothing automatic about becoming disciples of Jesus. Except perhaps, in the examples of small children—as Jesus so beautifully pointed out.

The flock does not always come home to roost. They do not always come to the "feeding place" for nourishment, encouragement and care. Twenty-first century life in America fosters mostly "free range" most of the time.

Jesus issues a simple, loving, compassionate, firm invitation: "Follow me." We must hear that voice more clearly, celebrate what it really means and pass it on to the very best of our ability.

The Rev. Bauknight is senior minister emeritus of Christ UMC in Bethel Park, Penn., and is now coordinator of leadership development for the Western Pennsylvania Conference. E-mail: DocBauk@aol.com.



PHOTOS BY KATIE BRADY/WIKIMEDIA

Brian Bauknight says much as he wishes, training in Christian discipleship is never as easy and instinctive as teaching chickens about feeding time.

The crisis of cynical younger clergy

BY KEVIN M. WATSON
Special Contributor

A recent conversation has continued to resurface in my mind: Someone described a younger clergy person as kind of cynical after meeting for the first time. The person who made this comment is someone I find to be charitable and not quick to find fault with others, so the comment stuck with me.

Since this very brief conversation, I have found myself wondering if that criticism is often true of younger clergy. As a younger clergy person, I know it has been true of myself at times.

I am not sure why this is the case, but many of us seminary students and pastors in our 20s and early 30s tend to be quicker to find problems than to look for solutions. And we tend to be contemptuous or scornful of those with whom we disagree.

Sometimes the conversations that leave me feeling the most drained and hopeless for the future of the church take place within groups of younger clergy. This is something that I have found to be true across the theological spectrum (I am referring here primarily to the younger United Methodist clergy with whom I have interacted).

Sometimes it seems that what we have in common is our age and our ability to see the negative in nearly any situation.

In some ways, this should not be all that surprising. We are the generation whose preferred news sources are

The Daily Show and *The Colbert Report*.

Both of these shows are satirical, even dripping with sarcasm, and they often appeal to their audience with the attitude of sharing an “inside joke.” In other words, you “get” these jokes

and understand the hypocrisy because you are smarter than the people Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert are talking about.

However, my experience is also that younger clergy are not all cynical all the time. (Of course, I am painting with broad brushstrokes. There are many clergy who are younger and do not fit the stereotype I am developing here.)

Cynicism seems to come out most clearly when groups of younger clergy come together. Though we can be very cynical in groups, every individual younger clergy person I have talked to is quite passionate about the church and even has ideas for

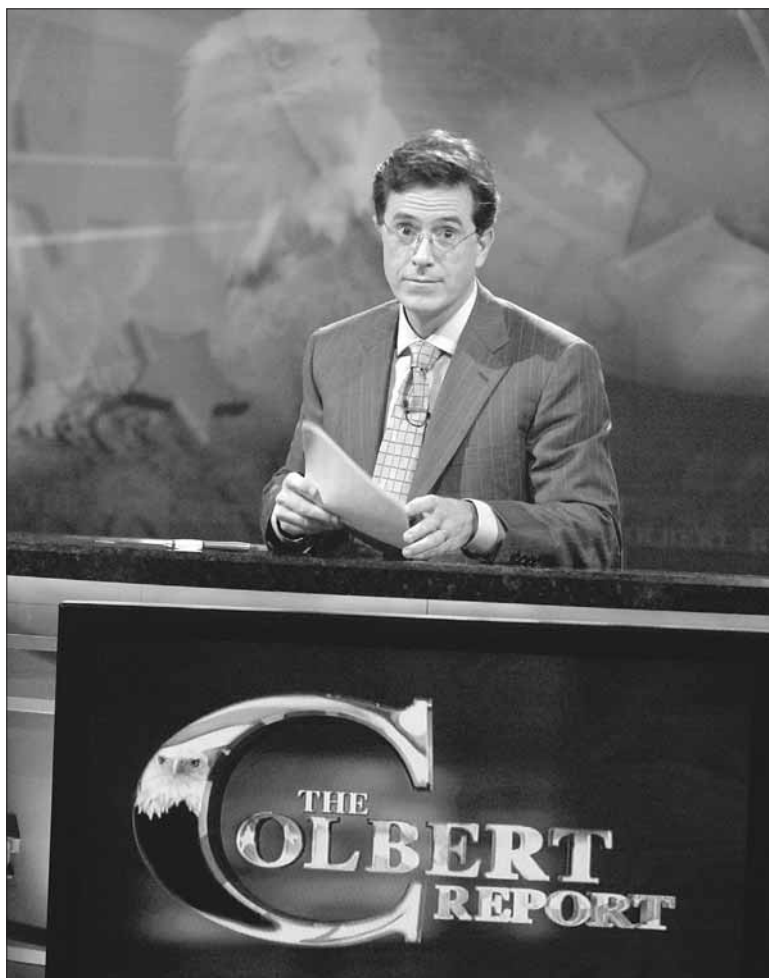


PHOTO BY JOEL JEFFERIES/COMEDY CENTRAL

Young clergy today seem to reflect the kind of cynicism and sarcasm that is seen on TV programs like Comedy Central's *The Colbert Report*, says Kevin Watson.

how to strengthen and improve it.

Ultimately, I don't know why cynicism seems particularly pronounced when younger clergy come together (and I may be wrong about this generalization). I wonder if part of it is a collective expression of frustration: The church seems to be so desperate to have younger clergy but is not always a good steward of the younger clergy it does have.

In other words, there may be some reason for cynicism. It can be difficult to hear people talk about the crisis of younger clergy and at the same time feel like nobody is listening to the younger clergy who *are* in the church.

My point is not to justify cynicism among younger clergy, however. I am writing to challenge myself and other younger clergy to consider whether cynicism—our default mode of thinking—is really a virtue, or whether we might want to try looking at things in more positive and productive ways.

I think one of the reasons my friend's comment has stayed with me is because I suspect that cynicism among younger clergy is more a hindrance than an asset. I believe that the church absolutely needs us to provide leadership. But I also believe the church needs us to be hopeful about

what God wants to do in the places that we are called to serve.

There are certainly reasons to be dissatisfied, and I am not arguing that we should ignore or overlook the problems. Instead, I am arguing that noticing the problems should prompt us above all else to look for solutions.

The gift that God has given this generation of younger clergy is not to be able to point out problems with the church. Rather, I believe that our gift is to boldly look for solutions, with faith that God will provide.

I have seen signs of younger clergy making positive contributions to the life of the church, and I know that we are just getting started. I hope and pray we will not be distracted by the reality that the church we are serving is not perfect.

Instead of diagnosing what is wrong with the last step that the church has taken or is taking, perhaps we can begin to discern what the next step should be.

The Rev. Watson is a doctoral student in the History of Christianity and Methodist Studies at SMU and author of *A Blueprint for Discipleship: Wesley's General Rules As a Guide for Christian Living* (Discipleship Resources, 2009). Reprinted from his blog at deeplycommitted.com.

Is your local church the best place to give?

BY J. CLIF CHRISTOPHER
Special Contributor

The other day a pastor and I were visiting with a key donor of his church. The pastor was asking if she would be willing to serve in a significant capacity in an upcoming campaign for their church.

I fully expected the woman to say yes. She was an elected leader in the church and was the No. 3 donor,



J. Clif Christopher

giving a high five-figure contribution to the operating budget each year. On paper, she seemed to be an ideal candidate for the position.

He began the conversation by bragging on her to me, and then he asked her if she would be willing to consider service in this capacity. I followed up by explaining to her what the position entailed, and after about 10 minutes I stopped, waiting to hear her enthusiastic “Of course!” Instead, I got an answer I totally did not expect.

‘I have long advocated the need for churches to learn how to compete with other nonprofits.’

She looked at her pastor and said: “I am concerned about our church. For the last several years we have not grown, and I see fewer and fewer young people. I think you are a fine man, but I am beginning to wonder if supporting the church is good stewardship.”

Using money wisely

“Lately, I have been looking into giving more support to World Vision and Oxfam. Pastor, do you really believe that our church is a better place for my money than they are? I must see that my money is going to be used wisely, as God calls me to do. Is our church the best place for me to give? That is

what I need answered, because if it isn't, then I could not serve with integrity in this campaign.”

The pastor was stunned. I could see on his face that he was shocked by the request to justify to the woman why she should choose the church for her offerings. He stumbled around a bit and then turned to me to help him out.

But there really was nothing a person in my position could say. It was not my church, and I was not a leader in it. I was just a consultant. She already knew that I would play little or no role in whether this church eventually moved forward or not.

Competing causes

I vainly tried to put a good face on what we were going to try and do, but in the end, she turned us down. What she ultimately decides to do with her gifts will be determined by how well the church can compete for them as a place that changes lives over other very good causes.

I have long advocated the need for churches to learn how to compete with other nonprofits. Persons need to hear our life-changing stories and be helped to understand how their dollars are creating positive change in the lives of people—and in ways that are powerful and distinctive.

Why the church instead of World Vision, Oxfam, Scouts or the local hospital? We must be prepared on a daily basis boldly to answer that question. If we find we cannot easily do it, then we must get busy changing our church.

As the Builder Generation dies off and is replaced by the more questioning Boomers and Gen-Xers, we are going to find ourselves facing those very questions. Are we ready to answer them gladly and compellingly?

I told the pastor afterward that this lady did him a great favor. She voiced the question I felt many in his congregation were wrestling with. His answer to her question will eventually determine whether the campaign succeeds or not.

How would you answer the question: “Is your church the best place for me to give my money?”

Dr. Christopher is president of Horizons Stewardship Company and author of *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate: A New Vision for Financial Stewardship* (Abingdon Press, 2008).

■ CHAPLAIN

Continued from page 1B

when the gunman opened fire.

“If you have not been in the military, you cannot understand what that does to a commander,” said Mr. Blancett. “It is devastating.”

Lt. Col. Marvin Luckie, another United Methodist chaplain who was stationed for three years at Fort Hood, said the greatest ongoing need there will be for emotional and spiritual support for Army soldiers who are feeling shock, disbelief and anger.

“How could this happen in our backyard, and how could it possibly happen from a person who’s an American soldier and a major and an officer?” he asked.

In light of the heroic men and women they serve, being a military chaplain can be a thankless job, and their critical contributions can often go unrecognized, says retired Bishop Woodie White, the denomination’s Endorsing Agent for Chaplain Ministries.

“Even in the church, they are often unheralded, and even criticized by a few,” Bishop White said. “Yet the importance of their ministry has grown as the military itself has changed.”

It’s true that much of the routine life on a military base today resembles that of civilian communities, with spouses, children and school activities.

But when the heat is on, their task can be like pastoral ministry on steroids. Beyond their regular responsibilities is the ever-present reality of war—with the inevitability of casualties and deaths—and the possibility of being deployed with the troops they serve.

“Chaplains themselves must be prepared to accompany troops in harm’s way,” Bishop White said. “For the chaplain, the responsibility is great, burden often heavy and the opportunity for pastoral care constant.”

So in a year when the pressures experienced by increased numbers of troops serving in Afghanistan and Iraq was compounded by the sense of betrayal here on U.S. soil, the military chaplain stands out as an indispensable person who truly made a difference. United Methodists can join in commending the unwavering service of those who support our military personnel on a day-to-day basis.



ABOVE: Kathy Meadows, a member of Christ UMC in Plano, Texas, started Mission Possible Kids in 2003 to provide local and global service projects for children.

Other United Methodists—clergy and laypersons who also fulfill their calling and serve the church in ways that make a lasting impact—were among the 2010 nominees:

Nominee: Kathy Meadows, Christ UMC, Plano, Texas

Lay member Kathy Meadows was nominated for creating Mission Possible Kids, a missions program that empowers kids to change the world through helping others as “special agents doing God’s work.” Participants have helped over 300,000 people worldwide in just the last few years through Mission Possible Kids.

“United Methodism is all about putting your faith in action and serving others in a demonstrative way through missions,” writes Larry J. Guthrie, who nominated Ms. Meadows. “Kathy has done more than anyone I know to develop active mission involvement at United Methodist churches across the country, especially for children and their families.”

Ms. Meadows launched this pro-



The Rev. Pamela Clark of Lake Highlands UMC in Dallas was nominated for her work reaching out to residents of apartment complexes near the church.

gram in 2003 at Christ UMC, where it was “an immediate hit” with nearly 200 elementary-aged children. In 2005, Mission Possible Kids became a non-profit, with chapters launched nationwide that enabled children’s ministers to involve kids in their community.

Ms. Meadows provides guidance for nearly 100 United Methodist churches that lead food drives, send care packages to U.S. troops, collect school supplies for orphans overseas and cook for homeless shelters, among other projects.

“With each “top secret mission” the kids do, they gain confidence in their abilities to make a difference in their communities and around the world,” writes Mr. Guthrie.

—Nominated by Larry J. Guthrie, Mission Possible Kids board member and Christ UMC member.

Nominee: Lisa Tichenor, Highland Park UMC, Dallas, Texas

Lay member Lisa Tichenor was nominated for her work supporting Africa University and other Methodist and charitable causes. For many years, she served as co-chair of the Alfred L. Norris Center at Africa University in Zimbabwe, and traveled with the

North Texas delegation in August for the center’s dedication.

Ms. Tichenor has also served on the board of Methodist Children’s Home in Waco, Texas.

When cancer took her 19-year-old son Willie in 2006, Ms. Tichenor and her family started the “Willie Build” program in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity. The family also created the WWWW (“What Would Willie Want?”) Foundation, Inc., or QuadW, a memorial foundation that supports cancer research, life-transforming mission trips and higher education.

“Lisa truly exemplifies the best of United Methodism,” according to Bobby and Billie Jean Evans.

—Nominated by Bobby and Billie Jean Evans, relatives of Ms. Tichenor and members of First UMC in San Angelo, Texas.

Nominee: The Rev. Pamela Clark, associate pastor and director of off-campus ministries, Lake Highlands UMC, Dallas, Texas

The Rev. Pamela Clark was nominated for her work reaching out to the community surrounding Lake Highlands UMC in Dallas.

“Rev. Pamela had the vision of



COURTESY PHOTO

The Rev. Ross Fulton of Branson (Mo.) UMC, shown here with his family, was nominated as someone whose dynamic preaching style prompts visitors to return year after year.

starting ministries in the many apartment communities that are near our church,” writes Earlene Self, a member of the church. “She had the vision to see that if the children could be reached, the parents would follow.”

Thriving ministry projects are now under way at seven apartment complexes near the church, with a weekly Sunday service of worship conducted at each location.

The Off-Campus Ministries program that Ms. Clark leads aims to “share a love for God, a passion for God’s people and a profound desire to reach beyond the walls of the church to spread God’s message of love to people of all ages and circumstances,” according to the church’s Web site. The effort mobilizes church members to provide support through prayer, worship leadership, nursery care and food for the ministry’s gatherings.

—Nominated by Earlene Self, member of Lake Highlands UMC

Nominee: The Rev. Ross Fulton, pastor, Branson (Mo.) UMC

The Rev. Ross Fulton of Branson United Methodist in Branson, Mo., was nominated by church member Jerry Miller, who says his pastor is the most inspiring Methodist he has ever met.

“When he preaches, it is always to a full house. He reaches out to the congregation in a way that creates smiles and hope,” writes Mr. Miller.

Many visitors who visit the church when they come to Branson, Mo., return year after year, he says, because of Mr. Fulton’s dynamic preaching.

“He exemplifies how to build a church and fill it with the spirit of God,” Mr. Miller writes. “He is tireless, selfless and has lifted our family up. He never stops thinking of what we have and how to be thankful, yet help others anywhere in the world.”

—Nominated by Jerry Miller, Branson, Mo.

Staff writer Mary Jacobs contributed to this report.



COURTESY PHOTO:

Lisa Tichenor and her late son Willie (left), husband, Mac, and son Tyler pose at the family ranch in this file photo.