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A church resurrected



HEATHER HAHN
Editor

SEDGWICK — Two years ago, Sedgwick United Methodist Church was drawing close to death.

Regular worship attendance had dwindled down to only six people, and the congregation had little hope for growth in this struggling Delta town about 18 miles north of Jonesboro.

What once had been a bustling farming community now

had only about 100 residents.

Many of the family farms lie fallow. Stores have closed, and vacant houses are boarded up.

When residents' children go off to college or the military, most do not return.

By 2008, Sedgwick had no school, no gas station, not even a place to buy a stick of gum. And Sedgwick UMC was at risk of having no pastor.

That spring, Northeast District Superintendent Kurt Boggan had the unhappy duty of

informing the congregation that he didn't have a local pastor or student pastor to appoint to Sedgwick when the church's current pastor departed in June.

He did have a certified lay speaker and pastoral candidate whom he could send, but by Boggan's admission, Marilyn Neal was unlike any preacher the congregation had known. She had a history of substance abuse.

"The congregation was at first resistant to the idea," Boggan said. [See RESURRECTED, page 10A]

Faithful urged to imagine church future

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Throughout the month of March, Bishop Charles Crutchfield and Imagine Ministry team members traveled around the state to share this message: The church must change to remain relevant in American life.

At regional meetings in Little Rock, Fayetteville, Wynne and Camden, the bishop encouraged United Methodists to share their thoughts about what form those changes might take.

"In order to be the church effectively in the 21st century, we are going to have to be a church that has changed the way we do the ministry of Jesus Christ," Crutchfield said in a DVD shown at the beginning of each meeting. "The Gospel is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. But the way in which we hear and appropriate the Gospel into our lives is different from generation to generation."

The DVD, which will be shown in each local church, conveys some sobering information about declining participation in Arkansas Conference.

Among the statistics the DVD showed:

- From 2004 to 2008, the number of Arkansas United Methodist churches declined from 722 to 697.

- More than half of Arkansas congregations in 2008 had a worship attendance of 34 or less.

Crutchfield and Imagine Ministry team members stressed that they did not have the answers for reversing the decline. They were

[See IMAGINE, page 11A]

Cabinet changes:

C.E. McAdoo will be Southwest District superintendent and Dede Roberts will be the Central District superintendent, story on page 4.



Children at Little Rock First United Methodist Church clap the hands and cheer on runners in the 2010 Little Rock Marathon on March 7. For the past six years, the downtown church has spent marathon morning welcoming those who pass by the church on the marathon route. Members stretched an archway of purple and white balloons across the route. The church's praise band played contemporary Christian music. Members also held signs bearing Bible verses that allude to running such as "Run and not grow weary" (Isaiah 40:31). "We've received letters and e-mails from all over the United States thanking us for doing this," said Michael Mattox, the church's senior pastor. "This is showing God's love."

Photo by Patrick Shownes

New days must bring new ways

BUD REEVES
Special contributor

We recently began ordering movies by mail.

You sign up online, tell them the movies you want, and they send them. After you watch a movie, you send it back, and they send you another one. It's very cool and convenient.

Since we now have a bajillion movies to pick from, we decided to watch some that are considered among the best films ever made. One of the top films on most lists is *Citizen Kane*, the 1941 film by Orson Welles. I could tell it was a groundbreaking film for its time, and I read an article detailing the innovations in lighting, cinematography, storytelling, etc., that made it a work of art in its day.

Frankly, however, to my contemporary eyes and ears, it was good but slow. So many of the innovations have become commonplace that it seemed ordinary.

Soon after watching *Citizen Kane*, we went to a theater and watched James Cameron's new film *Avatar* in 3-D. It was a good story, and the special effects (3-D and computer graphics) were amazing. It is also being hailed as a new level in filmmaking, a groundbreaking cinematic experience. It was pretty cool.

As I reflected on those two groundbreaking films, it occurred to me that innovation is contextual. Of course, Orson Welles had no conception of 3-D computer graphics, and if James Cameron had tried the same innovations that were



Bud Reeves

spectacular in *Citizen Kane*, his *Avatar* would never have shown in a theater. Each was groundbreaking in its own time, but each was limited to its historical context.

Many United Methodist pastors and laypeople recently attended the Imagine Ministry meetings held in four locations around the state. The focus of the meetings was the state of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas, and we hope from these meetings to start a conversation about the future of Arkansas Methodism. There are no answers yet, and there was some apparent frustration at that.

So far, all we have is an invitation to "wander in the wilderness" — to talk, think and pray about our church, to seek and discern God's will, to let the Holy Spirit move among us, in us and through us. I hope the conversations continue in our local churches, even beyond Annual Conference.

We are at a crossroads in the United Methodist Church — across the nation, but also in our state and in our local communities. We have the opportunity to make some deep changes that will alter the direction of our church and get us on the path toward vitality again.

We also have the possibility that we can ignore the current situation, resist change and continue to decline until the United Methodist Church is

a footnote in the history of American Religion.

The innovations we seek and the strategies we propose for the vitality of the church in the 21st century cannot be based on 20th century strategies. What worked to make the church grow 50, 20 or even 10 years ago will not be effective in our present or future context. We are plowing new ground.

The opportunity is exciting, but the responsibility is daunting. The stakes are very high. None of us who are steering this process in Arkansas know where it will end up.

But we trust that if we are faithful, God will lead us in a positive direction.

I came away from the Imagine Ministry meetings I attended with two thoughts: One, I am thankful for the strength of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas.

We have taken some hits, but we still have churches full of dedicated and passionate folk. There are great resources we can bring to bear for the revitalization of our church.

Two, I am glad we are not ultimately responsible for the Kingdom. God is. And He guides His people in every generation. The Holy Spirit will lead us if we will allow.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ transcends every historical context, and it will translate effectively into the 21st century. I can't wait to see what form it will take.

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



EDITOR'S CORNER

BY HEATHER HAHN

Good Friday Christianity

I didn't attend a Tenebrae service until I was in junior high. That's when a new pastor introduced the tradition of Good Friday worship to my family's Lutheran church.

That first service was unlike anything I had ever experienced. The altar was completely bare (stripped at the end of the Maundy Thursday service the night before). We didn't sing any hymns or hear any sermon. Instead, a layman up in the choir loft recited each of the seven last sayings Jesus uttered from the Cross.

After each Scripture passage, I heard a bell ring and a cymbal clash, and more lights in the sanctuary were extinguished. When the church member said, "It is finished," a final blast of cymbals reverberated through the church and the sanctuary was shrouded in almost complete darkness. We departed the service in silence with only the small, flickering light of the Christ candle to light our way to the church narthex.

I ate it up with a spoon. Before that stark service, I don't think I had every before really thought about Christ's sacrifice — at least not as someone who felt real, human pain.

Now I consider myself something of a Good Friday Christian. After all, if we as Christians truly believe that Jesus is Lord, then the empty tomb on Easter morning should come as no surprise. Defeating death seems well within God's job description.

But what Christ endured on Good Friday still fills me with wonderment. It's the horror of the Cross as much as the joy of the

Resurrection that continually renews my faith. Because of the Cross, we know God isn't just some distant deity ultimately remote from human affairs. Good Friday reminds us that God knows intimately the worst suffering the world can dole out — not just excruciating physical pain but also the absolute loneliness of feeling forsaken.



It's this idea that Paul captures when he urges the Philippians to share the humility of Christ Jesus, "who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness, And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death — even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

That's a message I sometimes lose sight of.

One of my favorite pop songs in high school was Depeche Mode's "Walking in My Shoes" on the band's ironically titled album *Songs of Faith and Devotion*. In the song, the lead singer Dave Gahan rails against God, saying he shouldn't be judged unless "you'll stumble in my footsteps." As a self-absorbed teenager, I thought the song was very subversive.

But of course, I believe in a God that, because of Christ, knows very well what it's like to walk in human shoes. There is nothing we humans can undergo — not a cancer diagnosis, not an earthquake, not even death — that God doesn't fully understand and truly walk with us.

To me, that is the hope of Easter.

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BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

Dear Friends

I was a 15-year-old kid with a healthy imagination. But this was just too much.

In the hills to the east of Jerusalem near the Mount of Olives, the guide pointed out to us the "footprint" of Jesus in the rock.

There was this weathered indentation in the rock that looked vaguely like a foot.

He then told us this "footprint" was made as Jesus "pushed off into heaven" at the moment of the Ascension. Even at 15, I wondered if

"I can do little more than stand before the empty tomb with an incredulous look on my face and the wondering heart of a child."

the guide would be interested in some oceanfront property in Arizona.

While I still believe the "footprint" was no more than the weathering of exposed rock, I have come to believe that there are

awesome and mysterious moments that transcend the capacity of the mind, of our reason to comprehend or explain.

I have come to understand that life is all about both heart and mind — not one or the other. I have

known mathematicians who saw God in the elegance of a complex equation. I have felt the mysterious warmth of God's love in the darkest night of the soul. I cannot explain either.

I cannot explain the hatred of Good Friday, the despair of Holy Saturday or the triumph of Easter's dawn.

This entire event is for me a great, awesome, inexplicable mystery.

I can do little more than stand before the empty tomb with an incredulous look on my face and the

wondering heart of a child. I simply know that somehow, in the wondrous nature of God's economy, the impossible has happened.

Evil and sin and death — the worst that humanity can do — has been overcome. I believe that love and grace and faith are triumphant.

I will be in worship on Easter Sunday to claim and celebrate again that which I cannot explain. I simply know. And it is enough.

Faithfully,

Charles M. Crutchfield



God makes life a funky joyride

DEENA MARIE HAMILTON
Special contributor

When I was the pastor of the Macedonia Charge in Lockesburg, I gave a sermon titled "Ride It 'Til the Wheels Fall Off."

I made fun of the fact that I was horrified as I rode the Big Bad John roller coaster at Magic Springs for the first time.

Life is much like a roller coaster with the sharp turns, dips and ear-piercing screams as you drop suddenly. There are so many unexpected events in life

that we don't plan for. And what the kicker is that even though we are Christians, that doesn't exempt us

from experiencing the twist and turns that life always offers.

But what I have learned is that if we think that we are in control then we are being delusional. We are not.

The only thing that we can truly control is our own actions in those situations. But even in those instances, it still remains a matter of trust.

When I think about trust, I often think of what Christ tells us during the Sermon on the Mount.

If we live a life of God-worship, then we can't trip about what's on the table at dinner or what clothes in our closets are fashionable.



Deena Marie Hamilton

Life is more than food for our stomachs and the clothes we hang on our bodies. If we just look at the birds that live without a job description, we know God provides for

them. We are worth so much more than that (Matt. 6:25-26).

"I have learned that the best way to get through life is to just strap myself in, hold on to the safety bar and ride"

So why are we worried? I can tell you why we worry. Life is tangible, and God isn't. We can see the twists and turns of life before we can see God in the midst of them.

I have learned that the best way to get through life is to just strap myself in, hold on to the safety bar and ride it 'til the wheels fall off. When I relinquish control of my life to God, I gain more control of my actions.

On my roller coaster, I lost a dear friend and the man of my dreams at the same time.

I had to watch him trot off to be happy with someone else. I invested five years in the

relationship and gave all that I had to give.

But even after the 100-foot drop in my heart, I forgave him because it was the right thing to do. If I truly loved him, I would forgive him whether he asked for my forgiveness or not. And I do because I have.

That was a blow I didn't think I could recover from. I relinquished control to Christ because He was the only one who got me through that.

When I graduated from Philander Smith College with a bachelor's of science in chemistry, the first one I thanked was God even before my parents.

God gave them ability to help me get

to that point in life. God got us through that, and God is gonna get you through it if you're suffering.

Yeah, this is a funky joy ride because even in the gravity defying twists, sharp wicked turns, and heart stopping drops, God's got my back.

So guess what ya'll... I'm gonna ride it 'til the wheels fall off. Life is a fun ride because I have learned how to have joy in the valley.

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

Letters to the Editor

Sam Dixon, the director of the United Methodist Committee on Relief, was in Haiti to further the mission of Christ with other General Board of Global Ministries personnel when the quake struck on Jan. 12. He and Clint Rabb, the leader of the church's mission volunteer program, both died as a result of the disaster.

The event was a very personal one for me. I began work with the General Board of Global Ministries in 1997. I had a close relationship with Sam since 1998. As an adjunct consultant in church transformation for the boar, I worked on several projects with Sam even before he became my immediate supervisor in 2003.

Sam was in Haiti doing what he loved and what he was gifted for, ministry to people in a concrete and personal way. Any accolades I could give on his behalf would give only a partial picture of his ministry for Christ. He believed the United Methodist Church should have a mission presence wherever there was a need in the world.

We can honor his and Clint's

passing by donating to Haiti relief efforts through the United Methodist Committee on Relief. You can direct funds to UMCOR, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087. The Advance number is 418325.

Bob Burnham, ordained elder
Marion

In reference to a column in the March 5 *Arkansas United Methodist*, I am somewhat surprised that a pastor would admit to being a fan of, and condoning an immoral, materialistic TV show like *Sex and the City*.

I suppose I'm behind the times, but I have always thought a pastor was supposed to present an example to the rest of us, as far as rising above the base immorality and materialism of the world. As far as the \$500 designer shoes, the song "Would Jesus wear a Rolex" comes to mind. Perhaps a little retrospection would be in order for us all, concerning what we are willing to condone.

David Warrick
Member of Foreman UMC



This August 2006 picture shows Bob Burnham, left, and the late Sam Dixon when they served as co-deans of the School of Congregational Development and Transformation in San Diego, Calif. Dixon died in the Haiti earthquake.

Photo courtesy of Bob Burnham

The true depths of God's love we have yet to fully discover

MARY FAITH "ZOE" MILES
Special contributor

In a previous article, I equated the picture of church worship to a pink-sea anemone, emphasizing the need for each tentacle to participate in worship in order for the sea anemone to dance.

Personifying the animal, the sea anemone knows that the ocean moving his tentacles is vast, reaching beyond his home among the fish, seaweed and coral. He goes to lectures about foreign fish and underwater volcanoes, considering himself to be a very open minded and cultured specimen.

Despite his understanding, he doesn't have the slightest idea that this ocean wipes off the faces of landmasses, carves out continents and hides monsters in its depths.

This ocean that runs its waters through the anemone's tentacles covers more than 70 percent of the Earth's surfaces and whose depths hide its mysteries from the most equipped scientists.

It's beyond his conceptualization.

Even still, he lives content in his world where the ocean he knows provides him with nutrients and food, and in return, the anemone praises the ocean with dancing.

Now stretching my artistic personification license just a little further, imagine that the huge ocean, magnificent and powerful, is in love with this random sea anemone.

Its power would give heed to the anemone's slightest plea even though the sea anemone simply accepts the gifts the ocean already provides.

Not conceiving what an anemone would want from his lover, my analogy begins to break.

To wit this is our knowledge of our Abba. Our knowledge of God is like a sea anemone's conception of the ocean in which it lives.



Mary Faith "Zoe" Miles

however, we see what He's given us and are often contented.

Unlike the ant or the sea anemone (not claiming that they don't have problems which I'm sure they do), we have reason to claim the extra power that our

Ocean offers to us.

We don't have to be content swaying.

Although worship is key to communion with the creator, to not ask for God to give us a greater realization of His water's depths is to deny Him the

opportunity to reveal Himself.

In discussing the qualities that lure Generation Y to church, I'm currently exploring the third and final trait: power.

My generation reads the Bible as it overflows with supernatural power, knowing that He is still "able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20). We want a church that is claiming that mighty work, praying hard to see it manifest itself in very tangible ways.

He shows himself in unexpected ways. Watch for Him when you visit your child at lunch, pouring love into her classmates. Talk to the young man at the checkout counter. Hit your knees every morning and pray that God does immeasurably more than you could ask or think.

Then, expect miracles.

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

We, as dancing anemones, are happy in our churches to sway in the Spirit's wind. We know that God says that He's much bigger than we realize,

Bishop names two new DS's

Special to the AUM

Bishop Charles Crutchfield has announced his appointment of two new district superintendents, who will join the cabinet starting July 1. The cabinet — comprised of nine district superintendents — is responsible for joining the bishop in making pastoral appointments throughout the Arkansas Conference.

C.E. McAdoo, currently senior pastor of Village United Methodist Church in Hot Springs Village, will become the Southwest District superintendent, and Dede Roberts, associate pastor of First UMC in Conway, will be the Central District superintendent.

Southwest District Superintendent David F. Prothro, now completing his seventh year as a D.S., plans to retire.

Phil Hathcock, now completing his sixth year as Central District superintendent, will take on a new appointment as the Arkansas Conference's Director of Connectional Ministries and Assistant to the Bishop. Hathcock will take the post now held by Roy Smith, who will become senior pastor of First UMC in Russellville.

The full slate of 2010 appointments will be announced at Annual Conference, set for June 6-9 in Hot Springs.



C.E. McAdoo



Dede Roberts

The Southwest District, based in Texarkana, encompasses 108 churches and 12,160 United Methodist members in an 11-county area.

The Central District, with its office at Philander Smith College in Little Rock, includes 43 churches and more than 23,800 members in Pulaski County.

This will be McAdoo's second stint on the appointive cabinet. From 2000 to 2006, he was Pine Bluff District superintendent and later Southeast District superintendent following the merger of the North Arkansas and Little Rock conferences.

McAdoo, 62, first joined the former Little Rock Conference as a local pastor in 1982.

He was ordained an elder in full connection in 1987.

He has previously served the congregations of St. James UMC in Pine Bluff as well as Wesley Chapel

UMC and Hunter UMC, both in Little Rock.

He has served the 745-member Village UMC since 2006.

Roberts, 49, began her service in pastoral ministry as a probationary member in 1985 in the former North Indiana Conference. She joined the former North Arkansas Conference as a probationary member in 1989 and was ordained an elder in full connection in 1991.

She has served the congregations of Russellville First, Dover, Gardner Memorial, St. Paul Fort Smith, North Little Rock First and Sherwood Good Shepherd United Methodist churches. She also has served on the Arkansas Conference staff.

Since 2005, she has been associate pastor at 2,134-member First UMC in Conway where she preaches each Sunday and oversees program staff.

In addition to Hathcock and Prothro, the Arkansas Conference appointive cabinet currently includes Charles T. Settle, North District; Rodney G. Steele, North Central District; Kurt Boggan, Northeast District; Mackey Yokem, Northwest District; Chester Jones, South Central District; Dennis Spence, Southeast District; and Mike Morey, West District.

APPOINTMENTS

The following are pastoral retirements, appointments and other changes that have been officially announced as of press time on March 26. Most of these pastoral changes won't take effect until after Annual Conference in June.

To see other appointments as they become official, visit www.arumc.org/appointments.

Retirements

effective at Annual Conference

- Vic Nixon (Pulaski Heights Senior Pastor)
- David Prothro (Southwest District Superintendent)
- Guy Whitney (North Little Rock First Senior Pastor)
- Jim Brooks (Pine Bluff: Lakeside Senior Pastor)
- Don Eubanks (Paris Senior Pastor)
- Pat Litts (Hughes Senior Pastor)
- Betty Scull (Wesley Chapel and

Philander Smith Wesley Foundation Associate Pastor)

Retirement

(Upon approval at the Clergy Session of Annual Conference)

- Jay Culpepper (Carlisle First Senior Pastor)

Confirmed Appointment Changes

- Benton First, Senior Pastor — David Jones
- Central District Superintendent — Dede Roberts
- Conference Director — Phil Hathcock
- Hot Springs: Grand Avenue — George Rook
- Hot Springs Village, Senior Pastor — George McCoy
- Hot Springs: Piney Grove, Senior Pastor — Scott Gallimore

- Little Rock: Pulaski Heights, Senior Pastor — Britt Skarda
- North Little Rock First, Senior Pastor — Davis Thompson
- Pine Bluff: Lakeside, Senior Pastor — Pam Estes
- Russellville First, Senior Pastor — Roy Smith
- Searcy First, Senior Pastor — Keith Goza
- Springdale First, Senior Pastor — Steve Coburn
- Southwest District Superintendent — C.E. McAdoo

Incapacity leave effective April 1

- Marcia Dodd (North Little Rock: Lakewood Associate Pastor)

Sabbatical

- effective at Annual Conference
- Tom Frase (Russellville First Senior Pastor)

Initiative will show the difference United Methodists make when Sharing Together in Christ's Name

JESSICA COWART
For the Arkansas United Methodist

Cameras are flashing, presses are printing and video is being edited as the Arkansas Conference communications department prepares for Sharing Together in Christ's Name.

This communications and education initiative, funded by a grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, will celebrate the ways United Methodists transform the world for Christ through connectional giving.

The initiative originated with church leaders' requests for a more complete, understandable explanation of how Arkansas United Methodists share resources to change people's lives in the state, nation and around the globe.

Focus groups, formed in fall 2009, explored opinions from Arkansas church members and clergy about how best to communicate the issue of connectional giving.

"Since November, we've been hard at work interviewing United Methodists from throughout our state who work together to make a difference in their communities and beyond," said Martha Taylor, Arkansas Conference director of communications.

"The initiative will communicate shared giving with a presence in newspapers, television, radio, the Internet and directly at local churches throughout the state."

Under Taylor's direction, communications staff have created or localized adult, youth and children's Bible studies for use this fall.

Taylor will introduce curriculum workbooks and DVDs for the studies at the 2010 Annual Conference and they will be delivered to local churches in July.

Bishop Charles Crutchfield tells stories about how we give together for the children's Bible study and provides fun facts about shared giving in the youth Bible study through DVDs.

"I am excited about



Bishop Charles Crutchfield records the Adult, Youth and Children's Bible study DVDs at Jones Productions studio in Little Rock. The Bible studies will help participants better understand how United Methodists share their resources in Christ's name.

Photo by Kelly Quinn



encouraging good stewardship among our youth through the Bible study," Crutchfield said.

"And to think... we're doing this through DVDs with a bishop who is a Luddite. This is a wonderful way of communicating with youth and I enjoyed the assignment thoroughly. I trust all our churches will use the DVD."

In October, print advertisements will run in local daily and weekly newspapers across the state through the Arkansas Press Association and radio advertisements will run statewide through the Arkansas Radio network, Taylor said.

Television advertising will be on KATV Channel 7 in most of Arkansas and Internet advertisements will be seen on popular sites.

Local churches will receive three-minute and one-minute versions of four videos that inform them about the impact of giving together as Arkansas

United Methodists.

They also will receive sermon starters, offering moments, bulletin inserts and posters to help communicate Sharing Together in Christ's Name.

The initiative Web site, sharingtogetherumc.org and a new Facebook page will be launched in the fall to give members of local congregations a chance to discuss the subject of connectional giving and the way that the Sharing Together materials are helping local congregations and individual Arkansas United Methodists.

The site will also be a resource for information on all the ways United Methodists work together to change the world.

"Through Sharing Together, we hope to raise awareness of local congregations, individual Methodists and the public at large about the many remarkable things Arkansas United Methodists accomplish in Christ's name," Taylor said.

"We're excited to show everyone our materials at Annual Conference and have them used by local churches this fall."

To learn more about Sharing Together in Christ's Name, e-mail Martha Taylor at mtaylor@arumc.org.

Vital Signs offers ideas to foster church growth

Special to the AUM

Debi Nixon knows something about making people feel welcome and engaged at church.

That's a big part of her job as the executive director of adult discipleship and catalyst ministries for The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., one of the fastest-growing, most influential mainline churches in the United States. She also is the author of *CATCH: Connecting and Attracting Visitors* as well as *Catch a New Life: Connect with a Church*.

Nixon will share her insights as the keynote speaker at this year's Vital Signs gathering from 9:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. April 17 at First United Methodist Church in North Little Rock. In addition, she will lead a workshop titled "Transforming Your Church into a Place of Welcome."

Nixon will be among the speakers sharing their expertise with Arkansas Conference clergy and laity at more than 15 workshops at the annual gathering.

Candace Lewis, Path 1 new church strategist and another national church leader, will lead a session on "What Ethnic Churches Need to Know About New Church Starts." Path 1 is a national team of leaders drawn from every level of the United Methodist Church with the mission is to provide collaborative leadership to evangelize the United States.

Lewis is an ordained elder from the Florida Conference. Upon graduation from Gammon



Debi Nixon

Theological Seminary, she was appointed to plant a new church. Lewis and a team of committed laity have spent the last 12 years successfully planting the New Life Community UMC, a new

African-American congregation in Jacksonville, Fla.

John Nuessle, assistant general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries, will present a two-part worship "Emphasis on the Theology of Mission Partnerships," and "How to do Mission in your Local Church."

Other workshops include roundtables based on each of the Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations outlined in Bishop Robert Schnase's book of the same name.

To see a complete list of workshops, visit www.arumc.org and click on "Vital Signs."

Vital Signs will be from 9:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. April 17 at North Little Rock First UMC, 6701 John F. Kennedy Blvd. The registration deadline is April 13. The fee is \$20 per person or \$15 per person for churches with five or more attending. Fee includes worship, meals and workshop materials. To sign up, visit www.arumc.org/register. For directions to First UMC, call the church at (501) 835-2201.

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Confirmation Day

More than 400 youth and adults from 39 churches attended Confirmation Day with the Bishop on March 13 at Pulaski Heights UMC in Little Rock. During the event, confirmands attended various sessions on the Wesleyan tradition and participated in a question and answer time with Bishop Charles Crutchfield.



Members of Theresa Hoover UMC in Little Rock attend Confirmation Day. Pictured on the bottom row from left are Rodney Lloyd, Braylon Graves and Ikeia Watson. In the middle row are Deangelo Lloyd, Deneetra Williams, Chara Turner and youth coordinator Ruth Jones. In the back row are Kayla Yann, youth coordinator Nicki Spencer, Nicole Hall and Nathaniel Williams.

Photo by Heather Hahn



Confirmands in the fifth and sixth grade from White Hall UMC were also among those in attendance. Pictured on the top row from left are Matt Adams, Colton Rogers, Kendal Genthier, Chris Medlock and Wilson Golden. In the middle row is Fisher Woolems and at the bottom is Kathryn Renee Taylor.

Photo by Heather Hahn

Conference Mailing Address Change

The mailing address for the Arkansas Conference Office has changed.

**The new mailing address is:
800 Daisy Bates Drive
Little Rock, AR 72202**

This does not affect the post office box numbers used by the Conference Treasurer and Pension & Benefits Offices. Our physical location is still on the 2nd floor of the Kendall Science Center on the Philander Smith College campus.

Arkansas United Methodists injured but safe at home after bus accident

BY HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Thirty-five Arkansas United Methodists suffered only minor injuries when their charter bus overturned on the night of March 23.

The group of mostly young adults from four Little Rock area churches and Philander Smith College was traveling to Jacksonville, Fla., for the annual meeting of Black Methodists for Church Renewal. Their bus carried 38, including two drivers and the son of one driver. Many of the passengers were asleep when shortly before midnight, their bus went off the side of a dirt road near Hollandale, Miss.

"All I heard was 'Oh, God. Oh, God,' and we flipped twice," said Jeremy Carter, who was sitting in the middle of the bus at the time. "When I woke up, we were on a cliff over a river. If we had flipped again, we would have been in the river."

The passengers were able to escape through windows on the top of the bus. The Washington County, Miss., sheriff deputies arrived soon after the accident, and the sheriff's department officers transported everyone in the group to Delta Regional Medical Center in Greenville, Miss.

"My chest caved in and my back hurt, but they checked me out and said I was OK," Carter said. "The Delta Regional people were really helpful to us. They kept us calm."

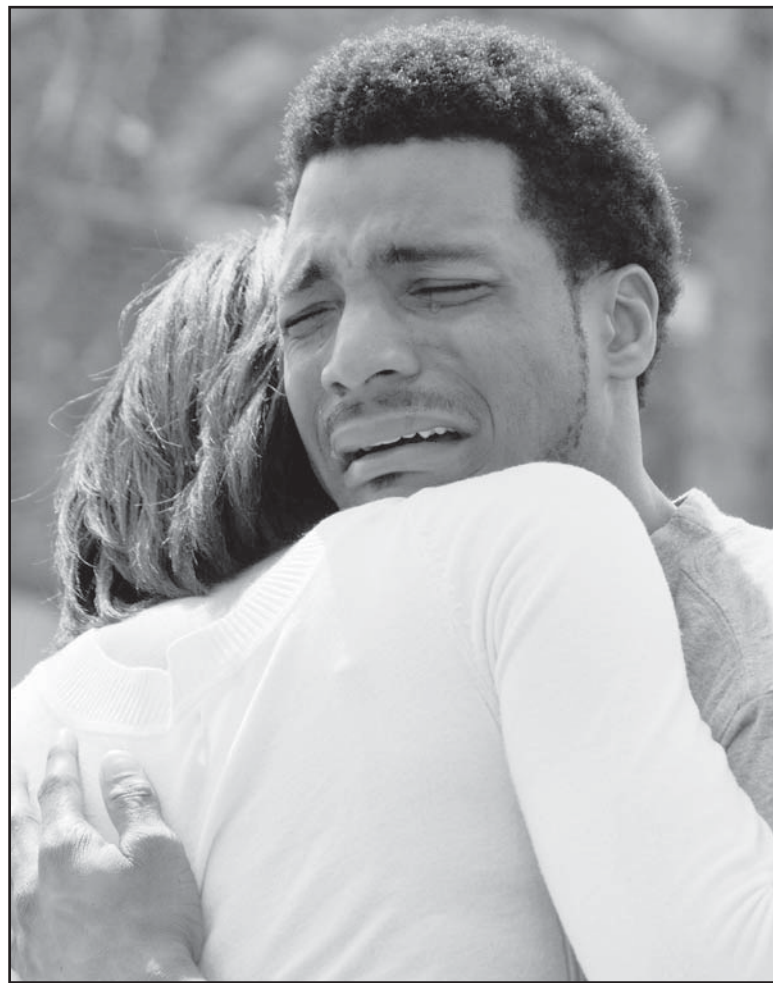
Carter, a Philander Smith College senior and member of Wesley Chapel UMC on campus, said a local United Methodist minister visited the hospital to check in on the group.

Some in the group had sustained arm and leg fractures. One broke her nose. Another dislocated her shoulder and needed surgery.

But by mid-morning the next day, all but a driver had been discharged from the hospital and most had boarded another bus to return back to Little Rock. The driver was in stable condition but remained hospitalized for another day of observation, according to Delta Regional Medical Center.

The bus arrived at Philander Smith College at about 1:45 p.m. to a crowd that included Arkansas Conference Bishop Charles Crutchfield and Walter M. Kimbrough, Philander Smith College's president.

Kimbrough first learned of the accident when students began texting



Jeremy Carter hugs a friend in a tearful homecoming to Philander Smith College after a severe bus accident ended his and other Arkansans' trip to the Black Methodists for Church Renewal national meeting.

Photo by Patrick Shownes

him at 11:30 p.m.

"I knew immediately that they were OK beyond some minor injuries," Kimbrough said. "We just give thanks to God."

In addition to Wesley Chapel, the passengers came from Hunter and Theresa Hoover United Methodist churches in Little Rock as well as First UMC in Sweet Home.

As they disembarked from their bus, many were still visibly shaken by their ordeal the night before. A girl rushed to embrace her boyfriend as he descended the bus stairs. Parents clasped tightly to their children. For most, it was a tearful homecoming.

Jo Webber, a Wesley Chapel UMC member, cried as she recalled how Philander Smith students helped retrieve her and her daughter from the bus.

"They immediately went into rescue mode, and got us all to safety," Webber said. "We are so blessed."

Maxine Allen, the Arkansas Conference's minister of ethnic ministries, was already in Jacksonville, when one of the passengers first called her about the

accident. She stayed up all night keeping church members back home and Black Methodists for Church Renewal leaders in Jacksonville updated on what was happening.

Throughout the night, she said, Black Methodists for Church Renewal members held a prayer vigil for the injured in the hotel room of BMCR president Ronnie Miller-Yow. Miller-Yow is also the Philander Smith College chaplain and senior pastor of Wesley Chapel UMC.

"We're feeling relief that there was no loss of life, and the injuries are manageable," Allen said. "But there is sadness too that they won't be here."

For many passengers, this would have been their first experience at a Black Methodists for Church Renewal national event, Allen said.

Carter said he plans to attend next year's annual meeting. If anything, he said, the accident has strengthened his faith.

"It just reaffirms for me that God is in control of everything," he said. "It doesn't matter what the devil wants to try. God is still in control!"

With needle and thread, women sew comfort for cancer patients

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

TEXARKANA, Ark. — With thread, needles and scraps of colorful cloth, members of Sugar Hill United Methodist Church warm the heads and renew the spirits of cancer patients.

Women in the church get together every other month to sew turbans and headscarves that they call “tiebacks” for those undergoing chemotherapy or nearing the end of their days. The decorative head coverings offer an alternative for those who find wigs uncomfortable or unaffordable.

Keta Gray, who leads the ministry, distributes the completed head coverings to area cancer treatment centers, local hospices and the American Red Cross.

“We’re trying to make people feel more comfortable,” said Gray, who herself is a cancer survivor. “Doing this makes you feel like a part of their lives. We let them know we care and we’re praying for them.”

Every turban and tieback comes with a label attached that reads, “A Gift of Love from Sugar Hill United Methodist Church.”

The ministry started in mid-2001 when then-church member Alice Raggett invited women in her Circle Sunday School Class to sew hope for the ailing. Raggett knew from experience how comforting the soft head-coverings could be. Fifteen years earlier, she had lost a kidney to cancer.

Initially, church members donated scraps to provide the ministry with fabric. But then the owners of local sewing stores and hobby shops learned of the ministry and started sending Sugar Hill UMC the unused remnants from their cloth bolts.

The ministry continued to



Above: Marilyn Irwin, in the foreground, and Joy Morgan do needlework on turbans at Sugar Hill United Methodist Church in Texarkana.

Photo at left: Jean Wren, at left, wears a scarf made for her by fellow members of Sugar Hill UMC. She and Keta Gray, at right, kept the ministry going when its founder moved to Florida. Now, Wren is undergoing cancer treatments herself. She dropped by on Feb. 16 to thank the women in the ministry for the gift.

Photos by Heather Hahn



attract volunteers. For about a year, one of the volunteers also sewed children’s caps for the Arkansas Children’s Hospital.

The ministry was going strong by 2004 when Raggett and her husband moved to Florida to be

closer to family. But then Raggett’s cancer had returned, and she died in 2009. Still, Gray and Jean Wren, the wife of the church’s pastor emeritus Herbert Wren, made sure Raggett’s ministry remained stitched together.

The woman who made the children’s caps has since moved. But the women who remain continue to minister to the sick and dying.

Since Raggett started the ministry nine years ago, Sugar Hill UMC members have distributed more than 1,800 hats, turbans and tiebacks.

Serious fun

After a hiatus over Christmas, 15 women filled a Sunday School classroom on Feb. 16 for the first sewing day of the new year.

While their task was serious, the women’s mood was lighthearted. The staccato of women’s laughter frequently

overpowered the whirring of sewing machines. The women talked about recent snowy weather and their families. Some teased Gray that they only showed up for the doughnuts she brought.

Many of the women agreed that the fellowship as much as the satisfaction of helping others keeps them involved in the ministry. Indeed even women who don’t sew are eager to help out by preparing the noontime meal.

“Not one of us is a native of Texarkana,” said Gerane McWilliams, one of the women preparing lunch. “This strengthens our connection with each other and with our faith.”

By noon, the women had completed 10 turbans and 10 tiebacks.

The vast majority of the women’s creations go to people they haven’t met and likely will never meet.

But their work has won several fans. Among them is a Sarah Cooper, the volunteer coordinator for Hospice of Texarkana.

She visited on Feb 16 to pick up head coverings for clients who were losing their hair not because of cancer treatment but because of age or other conditions.

“We want to encourage them to get out and about,” Cooper said. “These turbans we hope will give them the confidence to do that.”

Help for loved ones

Still, some of the seamstresses knew their handiwork would end up in loved ones’ hands.

Marilyn Irwin, who has volunteered with the ministry since Raggett founded it, was at work on a turban for her daughter-in-law, who had been just diagnosed with the terminal cancer.

Dian LaVoice, who has been involved with the ministry for about a year and a half, said she recently sent a turban she had made to a friend undergoing cancer treatment in Houston, Texas.

“Cancer touches everyone,” LaVoice said.

She said her friend wrote a kind note, saying that the turban was perfect to wear at home when the wig seemed too hot.

“You don’t want to walk to the mailbox or go to the store with nothing on your head,” LaVoice said. “This gives her something cool to wear.”

One of the recent recipients of a Sugar Hill tieback is Jean Wren, who helped keep the ministry going after Raggett left and is now battling cancer herself.

Wren made a surprise visit to the Sugar Hill sewing circle on Feb. 16.

“I want to be the one out of the 10 lepers who comes back to say thank you,” she said, as she walked in wearing a snakeskin-patterned tieback. “I appreciate this.”

Wren faces an uncertain future, but she said she’s very grateful for the support she’s received from friends — not least of all the gift of a fashionable do-rag.

“It’s wonderful to be able to do this for others and now wear this,” she said.



Dian LaVoice uses her new sewing machine to stitch together the cloth that will become part of a head scarf for a local hospice or cancer patient.

Photo by Heather Hahn

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Caleb King of the Christian rock band Daniel's Window helps lead worship at Veritas.

Photo by Patrick Shownes

Jay Gamelin, the lead pastor at Jacob's Porch, a campus mission at Ohio State University, served as the speaker at this year's Veritas. Gamelin marveled at the size of the crowd, telling organizers that most youth events nationwide had seen their attendance cut by half in this economy. That was not the case with the Arkansas Conference's Veritas, which was only slightly down from last year.

Photo by Patrick Shownes



Heather King of the Christian rock group Daniel's Window helps lead an auditorium full of Arkansas United Methodists' biggest youth event each year.

True voice of Christian y

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

HOT SPRINGS — Some 1,100 Arkansas United Methodist teens packed into the Hot Springs Convention Center to "Jump Start" their hearts at this year's Veritas.

They worshiped, prayed, played and talked about giving their heart and trust to God during the gathering on Feb. 26-28. And they returned to their home churches re-energized about their Christian faith.

The giant event for seventh-through 12th-graders rivals the size of June's statewide Annual Conference. And none of it would be possible without the leadership and organizational drive of the youth themselves.

"People think, 'Oh that's a great thing that the adults put together,'" said Rod Hocott, the Arkansas Conference's minister of youth and young adults.

"What I want people to understand is that this is a youth deal. When kids see youth onstage, they see the people who are running

things. It's all youth-run."

That's true for all events planned by the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministry. But it's particularly apparent at Veritas, where teen leaders were always on hand to help things run smoothly and help guide adult chaperones and youth ministers.

"Every adult has questions," said Mary Gillett, a member of the Benton First United Methodist Church youth group and the Veritas 2010 youth chair. "So I've been sitting at the info table trying to make sure everybody knows where they're going, make sure everybody's in the workshops where they're supposed to be, making sure the band is comfortable."

The Veritas task force includes five adults and eight youth, who begin meeting in August every other month to plan the winter gathering. The teens planned the theme "Jump Start Your Heart" and the T-shirt. They also arranged workshop leaders together. The adults — many with years of experience in youth ministry — often had names to suggest for the main speaker and the band. But the

youth on the task force helped make the ultimate decision about who to bring.

The names of this year's workshops kept up with the event's cardiac theme. The young participants could choose among 18 offerings with names such as "Serving from Your Heart: Missions," "Different Chambers, One Heart: Understanding Other Denominations," "Catching the Beat: Going Green" and "Finding the Common Beat: Seeing God in Secular Music & Movies."

The year's speaker was Jay Gamelin, who has spoken at youth gatherings around the nation. He also serves as the lead pastor of Jacob's Porch, a campus mission at Ohio State University. Gamelin was a big hit with a number of those at Veritas, including Gillett.

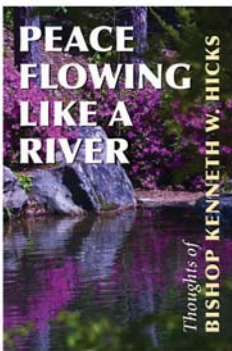
"He is incredible," she said. "He's one of the best speakers I've heard at Veritas. It's so hard to find a good speaker because you're planning for seventh- through 12th-graders. You have to be able to reach a large age group, and he's



Kenneth W. Hicks served sixteen years as a United Methodist bishop in Arkansas and Kansas with distinction and grace, and to this day encourages people to live every day with an attitude of peace and justice. He doesn't just want people to talk about peace and justice issues, he wants them to put those concepts into practice as commanded in the Bible: "Seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14b NRSV).

Throughout his episcopacy, Hicks wrote regular columns in United Methodist publications, and this book is a collection of his memorable thoughts from those well-received messages. In these pages, the reader is invited to discover Hicks's appreciation for God's extraordinary gifts; his wonder as to the glory of Christian holidays; his observations of the full responsibility of being in leadership in the church; and his desperate need for humankind to wake up and see what peace, justice, prayer, hope, and love can do.

The reader is in for a real treat with this book—there is poetry in the thoughts of Bishop Kenneth W. Hicks.



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United Methodist youth in worship at Veritas. The gathering at the Hot Springs Convention Center is the confer-

Photo by Patrick Shownes

Youth rings out at Veritas

definitely good at that.”

This gathering was Gillett’s sixth Veritas. Although her duties as the task force chair prevented her from attending the workshops, she didn’t miss the time of worship.

Gillett said she didn’t know what her faith would be like without the strength and fellowship she has found at Veritas and other Arkansas Conference youth events.

It was a sentiment echoed by a number of youth at the gathering.

“If it wasn’t for events like Veritas, honestly my number of Facebook friends would be cut in half,” said Joshua Holt, a high school senior who was at his third Veritas.

“So many of my friends are here. It’s just so nice to be able to be with a community of fellow believers. We’re all trying to push forward in the same spiritual direction.”

Holt, a member of Salem UMC in Conway, was a manning a table to promote Youth Service Fund, which provides grants that enables youth to be able to join mission trips and attend youth gatherings they might not otherwise be able to afford.

Holt was the recipient of a Youth Service Fund grant to attend Senior High Assembly. Now, like Gillett, he’s a youth leader helping to carry the tradition forward. In Holt’s case, he serves as the youth chair helping to devise ways to support the fund

“If it wasn’t for that [grant], I wouldn’t be here in this position now,” Holt said.

Lindsey Maestri, a sophomore and member of St. Paul UMC in Fort Smith, said Veritas has long been her favorite event and she was excited to help plan it as a member of this year’s task force.

“I’ve made friends from places in Arkansas I’ve never heard of,” she said.

Michelle Moore, director of youth ministries at Conway First UMC and the adult coordinator for the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministry, said Veritas teaches youth the importance of connection within the United Methodist Church.

“It’s incredible to see our young members planning events for others their age,” she said. “I’m so proud of our leaders for taking on the

responsibility to continue educating other youth about the importance of being a faith community.”

The experience isn’t just valuable for youth.

Gretchen Diffie now oversees youth at Star City First UMC, where her husband Bryan R. Diffie was appointed as pastor last June. But she told her former youth group at Camden First UMC that she was determined to come to Veritas even if her new charges in Star City weren’t interested.

“I don’t care if I don’t have any kids with me, I’m going to come,” she said.

Ultimately, two youth from Star City agreed to come, and Diffie could not have been more pleased.

“Even though it’s aimed at youth, it was memorable ‘A-ha!’ moment for me as a Christian. It gets you out of the normal, busy church stuff you do on Sunday. I get to pay attention to the Christian message.”

To learn more about how you can be a part of conference-wide youth events, visit www.accym.org.

Event helps invigorate relationship with God

MARY GILLETT
Special contributor

Veritas 2010 was an absolutely incredible experience!

Jumpstart Your Heart was my sixth Veritas and quite possibly my favorite. There is nothing better than being surrounded by more than a thousand other youth who are just as passionate about their faith as I am.

Even though I may not be able to make a personal connection with each person there, it feels as if I am still a big part of their lives — the best part, their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Whenever I saw all those youth jumping, singing and reaching up in worship, I got the biggest smile on my face.

It warms my heart to know that I was able to take part in planning an event that can change the lives of United Methodist youth within a single weekend.

Whenever I go to Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministry events such as Veritas, I



Mary Gillett

always remember why I love being United Methodist so much.

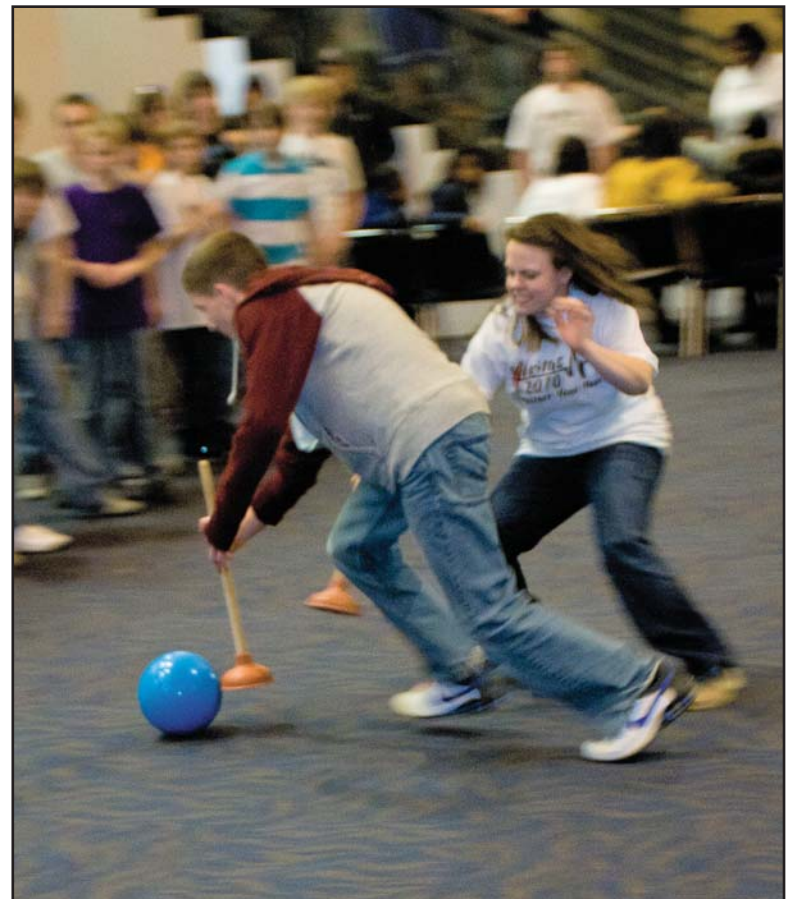
The Arkansas Conference does such an amazing job of bringing

seventh- through 12th -graders together to worship and rejoice in our faith. It was through events like Veritas that I really grew in my faith.

Without these experiences, I have no idea where I would be with my relationship with God.

I feel truly blessed to have been able to be involved with such an amazing organization and all the events produced by that organization; I wouldn’t trade these experiences for anything in the world.

Mary Gillett is the Veritas 2010 youth chair. She can be reached at mary_gillett_978@yahoo.com.



Youth compete in a district competition of plunger ball.

Photo by Patrick Shownes

RESURRECTED *Continued from Page 1A*

One member already had told the district superintendent that the congregation might have to close by Christmas. Now that seemed all but inevitable. Boggan told the church to prepare to shut its doors and left.

"They were in a state of grief," he said. "There was this sense that we've carried on as long as we can this weight and responsibility of a church. Both the physical and financial energy they had for ministry seemed spent."

It was a familiar situation in the Arkansas Conference. Over the last six years, 34 of the state's United Methodist churches have held their last worship service — seven shut their doors in 2009 alone.

But this is not the story of another church's death. As with so much in Christianity, this is the story of a group of believers finding new life.

The day after Boggan's disappointing visit to Sedgwick, he got a call from a church member. The congregation — which had taken great pride in being the first appointment of several Methodist pastors — had decided to welcome Neal after all.

Two years later, Sedgwick UMC has seen its weekly worship attendance more than triple, and children's sermons have become routine. On a recent Sunday in March, about 25 people of a variety of ages filled the pews.

The congregation also has expanded its outreach to the surrounding community, starting a food pantry that has served up to 40 people a month and a ministry to help pay the water bills of people in need. At the 2009 Annual Conference, Sedgwick UMC was named one of the Northeast District's churches of the year.

As the church prepares to



Sedgwick UMC on a typical Sunday in Lent now attracts worshipers of a variety of ages and backgrounds.

Photo by Heather Hahn

celebrate Easter on April 4, the members who've long made their spiritual home at Sedgwick UMC now share their faith with a new generation of youngsters.

"This is a resurrection story," Boggan said. "They are in an isolated community, but they are doing effective ministry in the name of Christ."

Road to redemption

Churchgoers say Neal played a large role in the congregation's reinvigoration.

"She helped us look outward," said Mike Doyle, the church's song leader. "Her feeling was that if we look outward at the needs of the community that that would be a good thing for us."

But just as the Sedgwick congregation was in need of resurrection, Neal was in need of redemption.

The daughter and granddaughter of Methodist pastors, Neal quit

going to church at 16 and like many preachers' kids, she rebelled. She started drinking, using marijuana and having problems at school.

As she grew older, her problems grew worse. She started using harder substances and eventually became addicted to crack.

"Every day and every night was about getting high," she said. "The things that I experienced during that period of time were a living hell. And so when I see people doing what I did, I feel it in my inside. I know the pain that they're in."

At times, she was homeless and had nothing to eat. On one such occasion, she stumbled upon a United Methodist church in Dallas with an open food pantry. A counselor at the church helped her get food, an apartment and a change of clothes so she could look for work. She found a job the next day, and she got sober for a while.

"I didn't stay clean," she said. "But it helped me see what the church could be."

By 2004, her addictions once again had overpowered her. Her life had gotten so bad, she said, that she didn't want to live. She finally hit bottom one night when she was badly beaten up.

A police officer took her to Potter's Clay, a shelter for abused women in Hot Springs. That was Neal's turning point. She hasn't gotten high since.

After a brief stint at Potter's Clay, she enrolled in a substance abuse treatment program that works through Little Rock's Center for Women in Transition. There, she became friends with Sister Lee Ann McNally, a Catholic nun who serves as the program's executive director. McNally continually assured Neal

that there was good in her.

"That was hard to believe because I had done so much that was wrong," Neal said.

Still, McNally's words and letters of encouragement as well as, a strong support from her family kept Neal going as she continued her treatment and eventually moved back in with her father, Jim West, who by then was the pastor of Cherry Valley and Vann Dale United Methodist churches.

For the first time in nearly two decades, she started attending church regularly. She worked as a hairdresser, but she also began to discern a call to full-time ministry. In 2007, she became a certified lay speaker.

"It was a process, and it wasn't one I wanted to accept too easily," she said. "The way things have fallen in place for me since I made that decision has amazed even my dad. ...

It's just mind-boggling to see how much God will do for us and the doors that will be open when we begin to take action to live right and learn more."

Today, Neal — who also pastors nearby Pleasant Hill UMC — is a licensed local pastor and a second-year student at Memphis Theological Seminary.

Ministry growth

Neal knew before taking Sedgwick's pulpit that some in the congregation were leery of her. But on her first Sunday, people who had not worshiped at the church in months were sitting in the pew.

"I think they heard there's a woman preacher and she has a colorful history," she said. "They wanted to see what I would be like."

Mike Doyle, the congregation's song leader, agreed that the appointment of a woman pastor

proved a source of curiosity in the small town.

"We actually had someone visit from the Baptist church just because he wanted to see a woman preacher," he said.

Nobody left because of Neal. In fact, Sedgwick UMC increasingly began to see the return of people who had grown up at the church but for one reason or another had quit going.

Among them were Tim and Angie Nichols.

"We now feel a sense of community that had dwindled over the years," Tim Nichols said.

The couple was instrumental in starting Living Waters, a ministry that helps about three people a month with their water bills and last winter helped a man pay his propane bill.

The ministry honors Tim Nichols' father, the late J.G. Nichols, who worked for the water company for many years and was a devoted member in the church.

Sedgwick UMC had always been mission minded. Even when the church was at its smallest, the congregation always scraped together \$300 each year to send to Methodist Family Health at Christmastime, said J.S. Fielder, who served as the congregation's treasurer for 37 years.

Neal said she wanted to start the pantry because of the help that United Methodist church in Dallas gave her when she had no other place to go. She said Sedgwick members have been equally enthusiastic in taking on new projects.

"This congregation is wonderful," she said. "If an idea comes to mind, and I present it to the board, they go for it. I don't have a person here who's against doing more outreach."

Neal acknowledged that Sedgwick UMC still faces an uncertain future. The town's population is still shrinking. But there are signs of life. A new convenience store recently opened in town, and big events at the church draw as many as 40 people. Those who do come to church also seem eager to share in its Christian work.

Libby James, the daughter of Mike Doyle and church pianist Robyn Doyle, used to only attend the church once a month or so. Now, she and her husband, Zach, can be seen each week in a pew near the front where she helps lead music with her parents.

James said she takes great comfort that the church's steeple still lights up each night and illuminates people's way.

"That's what our mission is," she said, "to be that beacon for people. We reach out into the dark corners."

Alley Moskop, 5, at left, and Sara Shimasaki, 10, listen as Marilyn Neal, Sedgwick UMC's pastor, delivers a children's sermon. Mike Doyle, the church's song leader looks on. Until recently, children's sermons were not a regular part of worship at the church.



Photo by Heather Hahn

IMAGINE Continued from Page 1A

eager to hear from United Methodists around the state about their ideas.

“We want to include as many voices as possible in this conversation,” the bishop said.

To that end, he is urging every congregation in the Arkansas Conference to hold gatherings where churchgoers can weigh in on three questions:

- 1) What hope does your congregation find in looking at the future in a different way?
- 2) What worries your congregation the most about this conversation regarding the future?
- 3) What are some ways your local church can act differently to realize the hopes we have for our future?

Individual United Methodists also will have the opportunity to share their responses to these questions in a Web survey at www.arumc.org/imagineministry. Survey data from each church will be sent to that church for review in early May.

Churches should consolidate these conversations into one response no longer than three pages for submission on June 7 at Annual Conference.

The regional meetings offered the first glimpse of the broader discussion local churches will have. At the end of each meeting, the floor was opened to comments.

More than 600 people attended the first regional meeting on March 7 at Pulaski Heights UMC in Little



Portis Pleasants of Lepanto UMC talks about the future of the United Methodist Church as Eddie Harrie, senior pastor of Campground UMC, listens during a small group session of the Imagine Ministry team's Northeastern regional meeting in Wynne.

Photo by Heather Hahn

Rock.

Jan Owens, a lay speaker at Quapaw Quarter UMC in Little Rock, said she and most other United Methodists struggle with how best to witness to other people get them to come to church.

“Somehow, we have to get it into the members of our congregations how we do this without turning people off and making people think we're just Jesus freaks,” she said. “We have to make people understand why we feel happy going to church.”

Ryan Rush, senior pastor of England First UMC, said one

challenge United Methodists and other Christians face is that a number of people have been hurt by the church.

“We have to build relationships, go where they don't expect us to go,” Rush said. “They used to call Methodist ministers when Arkansas was still a territory, ‘swamp angels’ because they went into the swamps where nobody else wanted to go.”

Reggie Russell, the senior pastor of St. Paul UMC Maumelle, suggested that churches need to adapt to changes in their surrounding neighborhoods. He gave his own

For Annual Conference

During the next two months, each church will generate a response no longer than three-pages to the questions posed by the Imagine Ministry Team for submission the Monday of Annual Conference.

It is imperative that the lay members to Annual Conference be as familiar as possible with their home church's response and the Imagine Ministry team's purpose.

Layty sent to Annual Conference should:

- be in continual dialogue with the pastor and the representative

who was charged with the responsibility for organizing the listening sessions at each church or ministry setting

- be familiar with the three-page written response to the three questions for submission
- determine who will be responsible for turning in the three-page response at Annual Conference, the clergy or the lay member

■ attend the Episcopal Address on June 7 at the Hot Springs Convention Center.

— Susan Ledbetter

church as an example. Increasingly, he said, whites are moving into what was once a predominantly African-American neighborhood.

“We have to reach out to those who are different than we are, those who may speak a different language or the color of their skin is different,” he said. “I feel more comfortable worshiping in an African-American church, but if it means building up the kingdom of God for the purpose of my Lord, then I'm willing to bring white people into my church.”

Several echoed his sentiment with a hearty “Amen.”

Crutchfield formed the Imagine Ministry team last summer to examine how the Arkansas

Conference does church. Any proposals that grow out of these conversations will be taken up at the 2011 Annual Conference.

Susan Ledbetter, an associate pastor at First UMC in Bentonville and Imagine Team member, said in the DVD that she is hopeful about the church's future in Arkansas.

“What seems negative ultimately gives us an opportunity,” she said. “I didn't sign up for a lost cause. I signed up for a cause for the lost.”

To learn more about Imagine Ministry and fill out a Web survey on your hopes for the church, visit www.arumc.org/imagineministry.

OBITUARIES

SEARCY

William Roy Moyers, 91, an ordained United Methodist elder, of McRae passed away Feb. 19, 2010, at White County Medical Center.



William Roy Moyers

He was born Jan. 19, 1919, in Morrilton. He was a graduate of Cabot High School, Hendrix College in

Conway and Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. Moyers pastored United Methodist Churches in North Arkansas and North Texas for 41 years.

He was preceded in death by his parents W.C. and Marina Ward Moyers; two brothers, Bruce Moyers and Robert Moyers as well as one sister, Evelyn Barnett; deceased

wives Dorothy Colburn Moyers and Eunice Gammill Moyers.

He is survived by his wife Ethelyn McDoniel Moyers of McRae; daughters Helen and husband, Wes Kyle, of Cabot and Gayle and husband, Tracy King, of Texarkana, one stepson, Arnold and wife Ernestine Shaw of Higginson, and one stepdaughter, Martha and husband, Jimmy Rogers of McRae.

Survivors also include 12 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren.

Services were held on Feb. 22 at the McRae United Methodist Church in Searcy. Memorials may be made to the McRae United Methodist Church, 201 N. Wilks St., McRae, AR 72102.

COLUMBIA, Mo.

Herbert J. “Joe” Edgington, 79, who served the former North Arkansas Conference as a United Methodist elder, passed away on

March 4, 2010, at Boone County Hospital in Columbia, Mo. He had suffered a long illness of congestive heart failure and diabetes.

Edgington was born on Dec. 21, 1930, in rural Dade County near Everton, Mo., the second son of Charles and Tella Edgington, both who preceded him in death.

After graduating from Southwest Missouri State College, he began a 35-year teaching career at Hartville and Everton High Schools. He then returned to his beloved Southwest Missouri State College, to become an assistant basketball coach and freshman basketball coach. He also taught biology and science.

He later received his M.A. and Ed.D. degrees from the University of Southern California. He taught at the elementary and middle school levels, and served as a principal at both levels, an assistant superintendent and superintendent. Edgington's

extensive experience in education, also included Colorado Department of Education, a university professorship and private school development at the University of Miami, and superintendent of schools for the Arabian American Oil Company in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

A lifelong United Methodist, Edgington accepted a call to preach at age 56.

He earned his master of divinity degree while in the former North Arkansas Conference of the church, where he spent 11 years in full-time ministry.

Ill health precipitated an early retirement to his native Missouri, where he has served the Avilla and Monett Liberty and New Liberty Churches since 1998. At the time of his death, he was pastoring the two Monett churches in a retired capacity.

Edgington is survived by his wife, Della, who he gives credit for

her assistance in both seminary and local pastorates; two daughters by a previous marriage, Teri and her husband, Michael Beattie, of Divide, Colo. and Cindy Smelser of Woodland Park, Colo.

Survivors also include daughter, Autumn, of Springfield, Mo., four granddaughters; two great-grandsons, Tyler and Brayden Woods, of Colorado Springs, Colo.; and great-granddaughter, Alea Raelynn Smelser, of Woodland Park, Colo.

Funeral arrangements are under the direction of the Weng Funeral Home in Jasper, Mo. A funeral service was held March 10 at Liberty United Methodist Church, northeast of Monett. Burial followed in Ray Spring Cemetery, south of Everton.

The family has requested, in lieu of flowers, that contributions be made to aide handicapped children at Camp Barnabas, 901 Private Road 2060, Pierce City, Mo., 65723.

Four churches get into the groove for Congo water wells

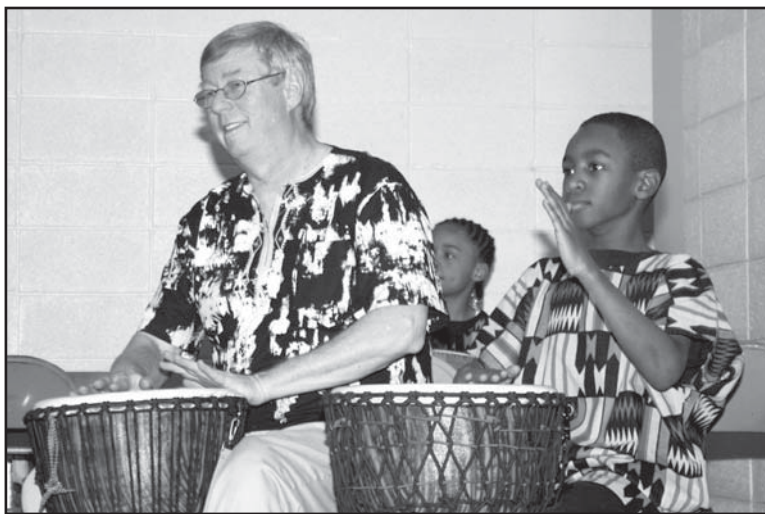
HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Four downtown Little Rock United Methodist churches have joined together this month to drum up support for water wells in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Little Rock First, Quapaw Quarter, Theresa Hoover and Wesley Chapel United Methodist churches will sponsor the 11th annual African Drum and Dance Festival and Silent Auction at 5 p.m. April 10 at Philander Smith College's Kendall Center. The event's goal is to raise \$8,000 to drill a water well in Congo's North Katanga Conference, a partner of the Arkansas Conference.

"I hope people have fun and that this also raises awareness about the issues African nations face," said Nicki Spencer, one of the event's organizers and youth director at Theresa Hoover UMC. "Sometimes you hear about the problems in Africa in the news and they seem so big and so far away. But you can help right here in Little Rock in a small way."

Highlights of the event include a Parade of Nations in which African immigrants living in central Arkansas represent their native cultures and a performance by Mabelvale



Larry Clarke of the Wesley Foundation Drum Circle at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock gets into the beat with the young members of the Mabelvale Elementary African Drum & Groove Ensemble at last year's African Drum and Dance event at First UMC in Little Rock.

Photo courtesy of First UMC in Little Rock

Elementary School's African Drum and Groove Ensemble. The gathering will open with an interfaith blessing delivered by local Christian, Jewish and Muslim clergy.

Attendees are encouraged to wear African attire, bring a drum or other percussion instruments and be prepared to join in the drumming and dancing.

The tradition started in 2000 when former Peace Corps worker

Kathryn Matchett and her husband, Mike — both members of First Little Rock First UMC — hosted the first African drumming event to aid Burkina Faso in western Africa.

Since then the festival has grown to include not only First UMC but also organizers from Hoover and Wesley Chapel.

This year marks the first time Quapaw Quarter UMC has joined the effort. It also marks the first time

organizers have moved the event to Philander Smith College.

Celia Bernheimer, one of the event organizers from Quapaw Quarter, said her congregation is excited to participate.

"It's nice to get the churches working together," she said. Members of the churches recently spent an afternoon painting the flags of all 53 African nations, which Bernheimer had earlier outlined. The flags will be hanging in Kendall Center when people attend the event.

Over the years the festival has raised funds for different ministries in Africa including an orphanage in Burkina Faso, hospice in Zimbabwe and the Congo well project. This is the first year the money will go exclusively toward a water well.

"What we like about this program in particular is: First of all, there is a connection to Methodists in Arkansas," said Liz Parkhurst, a member of Little Rock First UMC, and the event's co-chair. "Secondly, when these wells are built there are mechanisms in place to make sure they are maintained. They become community gathering places and the people that benefit from it really take ownership of it."

Since the Arkansas Conference launched its Congo Well Initiative in 2006, the state's United Methodists have raised more than \$107,000 toward the effort. So far, conference funds have helped build 18 wells.

The clean, fresh water from the wells not only helps prevent the spread of water-borne diseases. Having more accessible wells also means the young girls won't have to spend so much time searching for water instead of going to school.

Becky Falkowski, the event's co-chair with Parkhurst, said the African event was one of the reasons she and her husband, Anthony, began attending First UMC more than four years ago.

"The main appeal the event had for me is the community involvement," she said. "We're helping to educate people about Africa."

The 11th annual African Drum and Dance Festival and Silent Auction will be from 5 to 8 p.m. April 10 at the Philander Smith Campus' Kendall Center, 900 Daisy Bates Drive. Suggested donation is \$5 per person or \$10 per family. To learn more, visit www.fumclr.org and click on "Missions and Outreach."

Preaching Workshop

Featuring Dr. Tony Campolo



April 26-27
Student Life & Technology Center
Hendrix College

Cost is \$60 if received by April 16 and \$75 after that date.

For a detailed schedule, visit www.hendrix.edu/preachingworkshop.

Dr. Campolo has authored more than 35 books, most recently including *Choose Love Not Power* and *Red Letter Christians*.

For registration information, contact Rev. J. Wayne Clark at clark@hendrix.edu or 501-450-1263.



1600 Washington Avenue • Conway, Arkansas

Bishop Hicks shares thoughts on peace and justice in book

Special to the AUM

Bishop Kenneth W. Hicks in March released a new book, *Peace Flowing Like a River* (Phoenix International, \$19.95).

Hicks served 16 years as a United Methodist bishop in Arkansas and Kansas, and throughout his ministry, he has encouraged people to live each day with an attitude of peace and justice.

Hicks doesn't just want people to talk about peace and justice issues, he wants them to put those concepts into practice as commanded by the Bible in Psalm 34:14 — "Seek justice, and pursue it."

Throughout his time in the episcopacy, Hicks wrote regular columns in United Methodist publications. This book with an introduction by T.T. Tyler Thompson is a collection of his memorable thoughts from those messages.

In these pages, Hicks invites the reader to discover his appreciation for God's extraordinary gifts, his wonder at the glory of the Christian holidays and his observations on the



Kenneth Hicks

can do.

Born and raised in southeast Kansas in an Evangelical United Brethren household, Hicks joined the Methodist Church in 1946. He completed his studies at Iliff School of Theology in Denver.

Prior to being elected a United Methodist bishop in 1976, Hicks served pulpits in Colorado and Nebraska.

He and his wife, Elaine, live in Little Rock, and are the parents of two daughters. He and his wife attend Pulaski Heights UMC, and the church's annual Bishop Kenneth Hicks Peace Awards are named in his honor.

responsibility of church leadership. Most significantly, this book conveys Hicks' desperate need for humankind to wake up and see what peace, justice, prayer, hope and love

Two-time hymnal editor to preach and debut anthem at Christ of the Hills UMC

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Not many people can say they've edited the hymnal of a major denomination.

Carlton R. "Sam" Young has the distinction of taking on that role twice — editing the 1966 Methodist and 1989 United Methodist hymnals.

Pat Henry, minister of music at Christ of the Hills United Methodist Church in Hot Springs Village, described Young as the "Paul McCartney of religious music."

"He's the only living editor of two consecutive denominational hymnals," Henry said. "He's the authority on the history of sacred music and yet, he's amazingly modern. He's still in demand to do arrangements and writing now."

And Young plans to mark his 84th birthday by delivering the sermon and debut his anthem "The Final Trumpet" at morning worship on April 25 at Christ of the Hills UMC.

Young said his sermon, titled



Carlton Young

"United Methodists, United in Song," will be basically a sing-a-long using the United Methodist Hymnal.

He hopes those at the service will "briefly and

positively experience the musical and lyrical diversity that characterizes the United Methodist Church." He also hopes to showcase the unity in that diversity.

Henry wrote the lyrics for Young's anthem, which is based on the Book of Revelation.

Henry first became friends with Young while studying for music certification five or six years ago at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology, where Young long served as a professor. Henry and Young soon learned that they shared a love of jazz.

The United Methodist Men will have their ninth annual Jazz Festival April 23 at Christ of the Hills UMC, 700 Balearic Road, Hot Springs Village. Tickets cost \$15 for dinner and concert at 6 p.m., and \$7.50 for the concert only at 7 p.m.

And jazz is what is bringing Young to Arkansas, specifically he would like to see Henry and his quintet perform at Christ of the Hill UMC's ninth annual Jazz Festival, sponsored by United Methodist Men on April 23. The evening's program will include a tribute to Johnny Mercer.

Young grew up the son of a Methodist pastor and district superintendent in Ohio. But his career in sacred music began when he took a part-time job as a children's choir director while studying at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

On his father's advice, he went on to become an ordained elder. He

studied at Boston University School of Theology, with further study at Union Theological Seminary in New York City; and in Vienna and Prague.

As hymnal editor, he worked with a committee. His job he said was to "sort of find parking spaces for everyone."

The 1966 hymnal had a short shelf-life, he said, because of all the changes going on in popular music with the rise of rock 'n' roll.

"Because Methodists are so close to the social developments in America, you can't set something like that aside and say that doesn't count. All that counts is what we've been doing."

In his career, Young — who now

lives in Nashville, Tenn. — has seen the advent of contemporary worship and welcomed the inclusion of sacred music from different ethnic groups and different countries.

He sees music as crucial in the church's effort to reach new people with the Gospel.

During his time at Christ of the Hills, he plans to highlight sacred music as diverse as a camp meeting chorus, a Nigerian hymn and gospel songs. But when asked what hymn is his favorite, he named Charles Wesley's traditional "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling."

"Church music involves memory and memory of the communities where you heard or sang the music," Young said. "So it's a very strong medium."

Carlton R. Young will lead the sermon and debut the anthem "The Final Trumpet" at 8:50 and 10:30 a.m. April 25 worship services at Christ of the Hills UMC. To learn more, visit www.cohumc.com.

BOOK REVIEW

STEVE COPLEY
Special contributor

Little Rock First United Methodist Church will soon play host to John Nuessle of the General Board of Global Ministries who will present a two-hour workshop on April 16 on his recent book, *Faithful Witnesses: United Methodist Theology of Mission*.

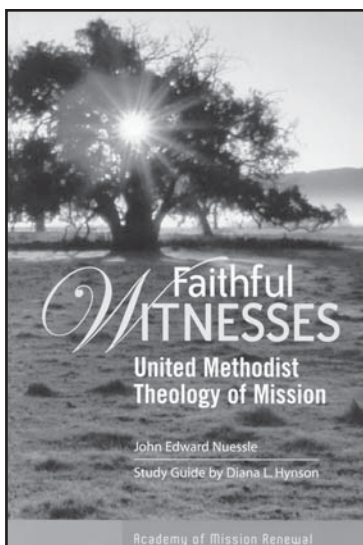
The Missions Committee of First UMC and the Sending Team of the Arkansas Conference are sponsoring the event.

Nuessle's book is the first resource book of the Academy of Mission Renewal. It is hoped that the book and the Academy will be a resource for the development of the church's understanding of mission.

A pastor tells a story that as he begins his prayers each morning, he asks God, "Show me where you are working today, so that I might join you."

For Nuessle, this is the heart of mission. It begins with the *missio Dei* — that is, what is God's mission in the world.

Nuessle begins his understanding of the United Methodist Church's theology of mission in the third chapter of John's Gospel, especially centered on John 3:16-17. We are engaged



in the *missio Dei*, which according to John's Gospel, is the entire world that God loved so much that he sent his Son into it. This is the heart of our mission.

We as the followers of the God who sent Jesus Christ are called to love the world.

The structure of the book is developed around the Theological Task of the United Methodist Church, found in the denomination's *Book of Discipline*. There are chapters on Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. Within each are a series of essays that stand on their own for possible devotion or study time.

Also, at the back of the book is a study guide that offers outlines for studies over a one-day event, a six-session event or in a retreat setting.

There is a wind of change blowing through the United Methodist Church at the moment. It is the wind of the Holy Spirit calling each of us to ask, "God, where are you at work today, and how might we join you?"

This is the wind of the *missio Dei*, which is the very heart of the United Methodist Theology of Mission.

It is worth the time and effort to purchase Nuessle's book and use it in many places in the life of the church.

John Nuessle of the General Board of Global Ministries will speak special mission education event at 6 p.m. April 16 at Little Rock First UMC, 723 Center St. Following a light meal, Nuessle will present a two-hour workshop on his recent publication, Faithful Witnesses, United Methodist Theology of Mission. There is no cost for the meal or workshop, but reservations are required by April 13. To attend, contact Martha Taylor at mtaylor@arumc.org or call her at (501) 324-8005.

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Pastor References Available Upon Request

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

Sarah Haynes Merritt, and father, Bob Haynes, drop anchor at a cruise-themed party at Bentonville First UMC. The event benefited Zoe Ann Haynes Celebration Ministries, a speaker series named in honor of their late mother and wife.

Photo courtesy of Bentonville First UMC



Speaker series' start is a pleasure cruise

LAURA SUITER

For the Arkansas United Methodist

BENTONVILLE — Zoe Ann Haynes Celebration Ministries set sail with a cruise-style benefit at Bentonville First United Methodist Church. The ministry brings Christian speakers to the church each spring to motivate and inspire worshippers.

For the gathering on Feb. 28, all hands were on deck. Guests enjoyed live music, a diverse menu celebrating many ports of call as well as a live and silent auction.

"This annual kickoff and benefit has become something our congregation looks forward to each year," said Tom Goldsborough, chair of the Zoe Ann Haynes Celebration Ministries.

"It's a wonderful way for us to fellowship together while raising funds for an important ministry in the life of our church and community."

Felicia Hopkins will be this year's Zoe Ann Haynes Celebration Ministries speaker on April 25. Hopkins will speak at three worship services — the 8:45 a.m. contemporary service at the Old High Middle School auditorium, a block away from the church, and the 8:45 a.m. traditional service in the church sanctuary and the 11 a.m. traditional worship, also in the sanctuary.

Hopkins is associate preaching

pastor at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in El Paso, Texas. She has corporate experience at Wal-Mart and Kraft Foods and has served as trauma chaplain in the U.S. Army in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Rex Dickey, senior pastor at Bentonville First UMC called Hopkins a powerful speaker who has been "described by her audiences as dynamic, impactful and life-changing."

The late Zoe Ann Haynes was a very active member of Bentonville First UMC who served on numerous church committees.

She and her husband, Bob Haynes, introduced the congregation to Walk to Emmaus. They also introduced the church to the internationally popular ALPHA course, which continues at First UMC today.

After a long battle with ovarian cancer, Zoe Ann Hynes died in May 2006. Her husband created the Zoe Ann Haynes Celebration Ministries in her memory.

"Zoe Ann would be so pleased to see how this ministry is growing and bringing our church family and community together," Goldsborough said as the cruise party docked for the evening. "This has been a great day."

Bentonville First UMC is at 201 N.W. Second St. For a map to the church and Old High Middle School, visit www.fumcbentonville.org.

COMING UP

Easter is April 4. Check with your local church for service times.

Camp Aldersgate Work Week will be April 5-9. Volunteers meet at 9 a.m. at the Aldersgate office, bring a sack lunch and finish by 3 p.m. Camp Aldersgate is at 2000 Aldersgate Road in Little Rock. If an organization or group would like to spend a day helping this ministry, contact LaVon Post at (870) 307-8067 or revpost@juno.com.

The United Methodist Women of St. Paul UMC, 1310 E. Mill St., Malvern, will have a women's conference at 9 a.m. April 10. To learn more, contact Nancy Scott at (501) 337-0065.

Pulaski Heights UMC, 4823 Woodlawn Ave., Little Rock, will have a marriage seminar at 9:15-10:15 a.m. and 5-7:30 p.m. April 11. Greg Smalley, director of marriage ministries at Fellowship Bible Church in Northwest Arkansas, will be the presenter. The cost is \$8.50 per person for dinner. Childcare is available but limited. Reservations requested by April 7 by calling the church at (501) 664-3600.

Churches in the Central and North Central districts will participate in **Get Up and Give**, a day of cleanup, gardening and donating, from 1 to 4 p.m. April 11 at the Methodist Children's Home, 2002 S. Fillmore St., Little Rock. All items must be new and will be distributed to Methodist Family Health's Group/Foster Homes, Therapeutic Day Treatment Schools, Methodist Behavioral Hospital and Outpatient Clinics.

If you are interested in collecting items, here is what is needed.

- Homes: socks, underwear, paper towels, toilet paper, detergent (laundry and dish), soap and board games.
- Schools: board books, computer learning software and school supplies
- Hospital: children's magazines, board books, board games, school supplies, underwear and socks
- Clinics: toys for the waiting rooms, coloring books, crayons and board books.

Registration is needed for those who donate money, items or

attend. Register at www.impactcommunityevent.org/Arkansas.

Cabot UMC Child Development Center, 2003 S. Pine St., will celebrate Arkansas Children's Week April 11-17, 2010 to recognize the needs of young children and thank educators and others who care for young children.

The **2010 Children's Choir Festival**, for children in the third through sixth grades, will be from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. April 10 at Highland Valley UMC, 15524 Chenal Parkway, Little Rock. Worship and concert will follow at 4 p.m. The guest clinician will be Stephen Edds, director of music ministries at Asbury UMC in Little Rock. The cost is \$30 per church along with \$5 per child fee. To learn more, visit www.arumc.org/childrenschoir or contact Lisa Hester, coordinator, at (501) 860-3093 or lphester@juno.com.

Volunteers in Mission team leader training will be from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 17 at Jacksonville First UMC, 220 W. Main St. The trainer is Mayo Powell. Bubba Smith, senior pastor of Christ of the Hills UMC in Hot Springs Village, will speak about work in Haiti. The cost is \$20 and includes lunch and a manual. To register, visit www.arumc.org/register. To learn more, contact Don Weeks at dweeks@arumc.org or (501) 681-2909.

The River City Men's Chorus will perform a "Broadway Showcase" at 3 p.m. April 18, 7 p.m. April 19 and 7 p.m. April 22 at Trinity UMC, 1101 N. Mississippi St., Little Rock. To learn more, call (501) 377-1080.

Healing Place Ministries will observe National Crime Victims' Rights Week on April 18-24. This year's theme is: "Fairness, Dignity, Respect." A memorial service of hope and healing will be at 3 to 4 p.m. April 18 at Greater Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church, 2401 S. Main St., Pine Bluff. Healing Place Ministries also will have a one-day seminar on elder crime/abuse on April 22 at Kendall Center on the campus of Philander Smith College, 900 Daisy Bates

Drive, Little Rock.

Another memorial service will be on a date and at a location to be determined in Little Rock. To learn more, contact David Morgan at (870) 353-0101 or Yvonne Glien at (501) 454-2995.

Vacation Bible School "Galactic Blast" Training is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 24 at Maumelle First UMC, 1201 Edgewood Drive. The training will include eight workshops. Churches that register before April 14 will receive a VBS puppet. Cokesbury will be on hand with a 20 percent discount on VBS materials. The fee is \$10 per person or \$30 per church includes training and lunch. The registration brochure is at www.arumc.org/vbs2010.

The Arkansas Choral Society will present a spring concert of classical church music at 7:30 p.m. April 30 at St. James UMC, 321 Pleasant Valley Drive in Little Rock. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. with a silent auction. The program will include pieces by Mozart and Schubert. Tickets cost \$15 for adults, \$8 for students with ID and free for children under 12. Tickets will be available at the door. For advanced tickets, call Edna Ivey at (501) 568-2719.

Camp Aldersgate has three forthcoming fundraisers.

■ **Aldersgate After Dark: Keeping the Campfires Burning** will be at 7-11 p.m. April 24 at River Market Pavilions in downtown Little Rock. Tickets cost \$75.

■ **The Ken Duke Charity Classic** golf tourney with a pairing party/auction 6 p.m. April 25 at First Tee and golf at 12:30 p.m. April 26 at Maumelle Country Club, 100 Club Manor Drive. Foursomes cost \$1,000 each.

■ **The QualChoice Classic** will be start with lunch and registration at 11 a.m. and golf at 1 p.m. June 7 at Chenal Country Club, 10 Chenal Club Blvd., Little Rock. Foursomes are \$1,000 each.

To purchase tickets, call (501) 225-1444 or visit www.campaldersgate.net.

The deadline for the next edition of the Arkansas United Methodist is 5 p.m. April 14. E-mail submissions to editor Heather Hahn at hhahn@arumc.org.

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TRANSFORMING THE WORLD



The youth of Conway First UMC competed with adult Sunday School classes to raise money to purchase baby formula for the Brighton-Kennedy Foundation. In 40 days, the youth and adult teams raised more than \$4,400, which was enough to purchase 263 cans of formula. This is enough formula to make approximately 6,857 6oz. bottles of formula. At five bottles a day, this formula can feed at least three babies for their entire infancy.

Photo courtesy of Conway First UMC



In February, the children of Bella Vista First UMC sent Valentine's Day cards to a Marine unit in Iraq. This unit has been in Iraq for almost eight months, and this was not the first deployment for most of the Marines. The project included time for the children to talk about service to God and country as well as love and caring about others. Pictured from left at back, are Matthew Pearson and Kolby McCarthy. Pictured from left at front are Kaci Baker, Sarah Griggs, Theo Hamrin, Dalton Dale, Jenna Gilmore, Alec Gilmore and Piper Engle.

Photo courtesy of Bella Vista First UMC



The youth of Gravette UMC held their annual Valentine's candlelight dinner. About 75 people enjoyed a multi-course meal that the youth helped prepare and serve in the church fellowship hall. The event benefits youth trips to Christian retreats. Pictured at left are the cooks, youth director Paul Martin and his helper, Tom Wagner.

Photo by R.D. Evans



Members of St. Paul UMC in Searcy distributed some 2,000 invitations in pink plastic eggs to the church's Easter egg hunt and puppet show at 10 a.m. April 3 and Easter morning services and free Easter breakfast from United Methodist Men. Church members distributed the eggs at nearby apartment complexes as well as fast-food places. Pictured from left are Sandy Homan; Mary Hilliard, senior pastor; Bob Homan; and Mary Kay James, the church's communications coordinator. The Homans, professional photographers, and James designed the new church poster, shown in back.

Photo courtesy of St. Paul UMC



After an extensive training period, 13 members of Christ of the Hills in Hot Springs Village were commissioned as Stephen Ministers on Feb. 14. They join 19 Stephen Ministers already serving in this Christian caregiving ministry. These lay ministers seek to meet the needs of those dealing with a variety of trying circumstances. Pictured on the front row from left are new Stephen Ministers Sally Crawford, Jo Ann Terry, Carol DeGraff and Fred Gore. On the middle row are Nancy Smith, Barbara Meyer, Cindy Ridgway and Kathy Townsend. On the back row are Leilani Beach, Maureen Fitzgerald, Maureen McCarthy and Morris Gotschall.

Photo courtesy of Christ of the Hills UMC



The Arkansas Conference offered parish nurse training on March 10-13 at Mount Eagle Christian Center. Pictured on the bottom row from left are newly trained parish nurses Linda Van Scotter, Joan Dick, Ella McGee, Vicki Msall, Nicole Walton and instructor Janice Sudbrink. In the middle are Lu Harding, Mount Eagle director; Michelle Stone; Michelle Smith; Sue Gaines; Deb Ross; Diane Butler; Shelly Rowan; Diana Christensen; and Lesley Cass. In back are Becky True, Charlene Glasgow and Azy Crabb.

Photo courtesy of Janice Sudbrink

Trust bestows \$100K to help scholarships

Special to the AUM

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas got a boost in its efforts to support seminary students who commit to return home to Arkansas to pastor churches.

The foundation's Seminary Scholarship Fund received a \$100,000 gift from the Winfred D. Polk Charitable Trust.

"I am so happy to see that money from our trust will be helping congregations throughout Arkansas," said Peggy Polk, Winfred D. Polk's widow. "Pastoral leadership is so important, and this fund helps us attract more high-quality young pastors."

Jim Argue Jr., the foundation's president and chief executive officer, said the late Polk decided to set up an endowment for the foundation more than 30 years ago.

"When he died prematurely he left a permanent gift," Argue said. "Even 25 years after his death, his love for his church is being expressed in a very significant way."

The United Methodist Foundation Seminary Scholarship program provides financial support for selected seminary students who attend a United Methodist seminary and make a commitment to return to the Arkansas Conference for their ministry. Foundation donors fund the scholarships, and the Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministries Scholarship Committee chooses the recipients.

"With a large percentage of Arkansas pastors retiring in the next 10 years," Argue said, "this initiative offers the potential of strengthening every United Methodist local church in Arkansas."

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COLLEGE NEWS

CONWAY — Hendrix alumni Matt House (class of 1996) and Amy Dunn Johnson ('96), both of Little Rock, will each be honored with the Outstanding Young Alumni Award at the Hendrix Alumni Association Awards Brunch.

The gathering will be at 10:30 a.m. April 17 in the Worsham Student Performance Hall inside the college's Student Life and Technology Center.

House and Johnson, both United Methodists, are among the co-founders of Harmony Health Clinic, a free health clinic that has served low-income uninsured residents of Pulaski County since it opened in 2008. The clinic is operated primarily by volunteers with a small paid staff.

House is an attorney with James, Fink & House, P.A. in Little Rock, and works with the Center for Arkansas Legal Services to provide free legal representation to low-income Arkansans. He received a bachelor's degree in politics before attending University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law, graduating in 1999. He currently serves as president of the board of Harmony Health Clinic. He and his family are members of Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church, where he serves on the

Mission Board and as president of his Sunday school class. House and his wife, Holly, have two children.

Johnson, an attorney, is executive director for the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission, which works to improve access to the civil justice system for individuals who cannot afford attorneys. A native Arkansan and fourth-generation Hendrix alum, Johnson earned her bachelor's degree in psychology.

Johnson attended UALR William H. Bowen School of Law, where she graduated with highest honors in 2002. She currently serves as vice president of Harmony Clinic's board. Johnson, her husband, David, and their two daughters and are members of Little Rock First UMC.

Dr. Harry Harmon, a pediatrician ('64) and Mary Ann Gwinn, a journalist, ('73) will also be honored with awards at the event.

The Hendrix Alumni Association's Award brunch, which takes place as part of the college's Alumni weekend, is \$15 per person and is open to the public. For the complete Alumni Weekend schedule and to purchase tickets, visit www.hendrix.edu/alumniweekend.

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.

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.

July 16-Aug. 1: Bunda, Tanzania. Volunteers are needed to help: finish a library for Bunda, start construction on two churches, build water filters for purification and possibly start a medical clinic. Contact Gary B. Lunsford at Wiggins Memorial United Methodist Church at (479) 442-8633 or his home number (479) 442-6500.

Aug. 26 – Sept 2: Christ of the Hills UMC has a mission trip planned to Haiti. Those interested should contact Walter "Bubba" Smith at (501) 922-4503 or e-mail spastor@cohumc.com

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.



Faith Funds

A Wesleyan Viewpoint

"I'm a long-term planner, and the future of our children is to get United Methodist trained pastors into our churches to teach and preach the Wesleyan culture," said Dewitt Smith of Bella Vista. "I define that culture as taking it to the streets and living your faith."

His wife Cindy said the church is very important to her family, "I didn't grow up Methodist, but I see how it influenced Dewitt, and I am so happy our daughter and our son had good experiences in the church. "It's now being passed on to our grandchildren."

The Smiths contribute to the Foundation's Seminary Scholarship Fund which funds three-year educations at United Methodist seminaries for young pastors who agree to come back to the Arkansas Conference to serve local churches. Helping students get out of seminary with little or no debt means they are more focused and better able to serve our local churches, Dewitt said.

And the Smiths are personally reaping the benefits of the scholarship program. They attend Oakley Chapel United Methodist Church in Rogers, where one of the UMFA Seminary Scholars is now a pastor. "Brian Timmons is very well prepared because of his graduation from a United Methodist seminary," said Dewitt. "As a student, Brian benefitted from the scholarship. But now we are all reaping the benefits."



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THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER

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Health care

Speaker hails
UM agency | 3B



After the 2008 deluge

Iowa neighbors rebuilding
block by block | 4B



Connectionalism

History lesson shows
its richness | 7B

Section B

April 2, 2010



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE PHOTO COURTESY OF THE REV. DOTTIE ESCOBEDO-FRANK

CrossRoads United Methodist Church serves breakfast on its grounds each Saturday to 150 homeless and poor people in Phoenix, Ariz. The ministry has led to a zoning dispute with neighbors who say the area is no longer safe for their families.

Phoenix church battles in court to feed homeless

BY BILL FENTUM
Associate Editor

Each Saturday morning, a bus pulls up to a church in an upscale neighborhood of Phoenix, Ariz., bringing a few dozen homeless persons to a free breakfast on the lawn. The pancakes, eggs and sausage meal at CrossRoads United Methodist Church could be the only hot food some of them will eat for days.

At least 100 low-income workers from across the city join the homeless for the breakfast. Once the meal is finished and tables are cleared, all are invited to join for a worship service.

The Rev. Dottie Escobedo-Frank, pastor at CrossRoads, describes it as “a community where we build relationships and lives are transformed.”

But some nearby homeowners tell a different story. Not all of the homeless leave when the bus departs after the service, neighbors complain. Reports of trespassing, vandalism and burglary have increased since CrossRoads began hosting the meals in early 2009.

Phoenix officials answered a for-

■ See ‘Conflict,’ page 8B

Q&A: Learning ‘disciplines of goodness’

Few people have witnessed the kinds of horrors that the Rev. Mpho Tutu’s father has, yet the Archbishop Desmond Tutu is known for his famously sunny personality. What’s behind it?

Ms. Tutu helped her father articulate the source of his strength and optimism in a new book, *Made For Goodness* (HarperOne). Ms. Tutu, an Episcopal priest, is executive director of the Tutu Institute for Prayer and Pilgrimage in Washington, D.C., and chair emeritus of the board of the Global AIDS Alliance.

She spoke recently with staff writer **Mary Jacobs**.

In the book, your father says: “We are tuned to the key of goodness.”

‘The exercise of transcribing the conversation was like being on retreat with my dad.’

That is not to deny evil; it is to face evil squarely. We can face evil squarely because we know that evil will not have the last word.” Aren’t some people evil? How can we believe that we are all good when we see the horror that humans inflict upon one another?

He would say that no one is inherently evil. He would say that we are not born as sinners in need of saving; instead we are saints in need of see-

ing. We need to see who we really are and live into the truth of who we are.

Not born sinners? Aren’t you contradicting a key statement of Christian faith?

I would say that we are not so much contradicting it as seeing it differently. [Laughs.] I’m laughing because we had a lot of back and forth

■ See ‘Goodness,’ page 2B

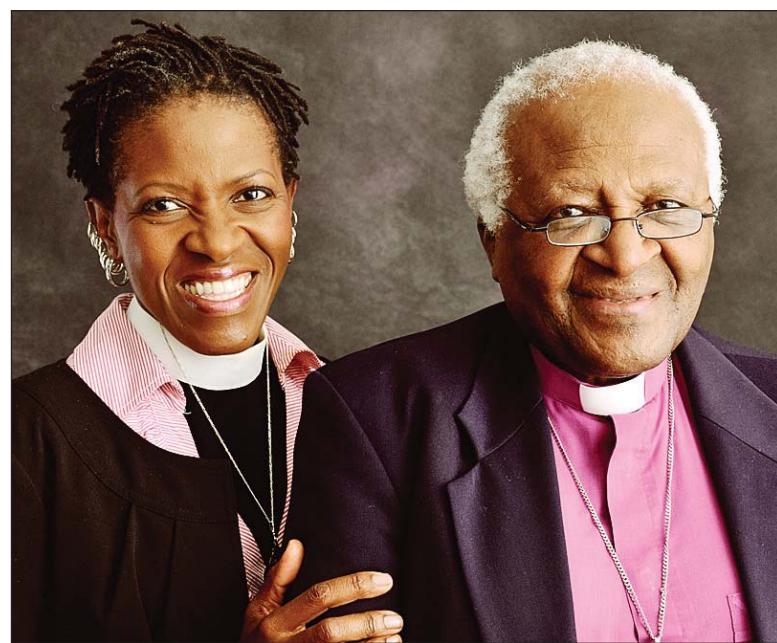


PHOTO BY CAMERON DAVIDSON

Mpho Tutu has co-authored a new book with her father, Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

FAITH WATCH

Former mission leader won't face church trial

United Methodist Bishop Elaine Stanovsky of Denver, Colo., ended on March 9 the complaint process against the Rev. Edward Paup, who had faced an allegation that he "violated the sacred trust of ordination." Mr. Paup, a former bishop and a clergy member of the Rocky Mountain Conference, resigned last year as top executive of the General Board of Global Ministries, citing medical reasons. In a letter to the conference, Bishop Stanovsky said "intervening events have mitigated many of the concerns raised."

Federal court upholds 'under God' in Pledge

A federal appeals court ruled March 11 that inclusion of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance is constitutional, reversing an earlier decision. The 2-1 decision answered a challenge by atheist Michael Newdow, who had said the use of the pledge violated the First Amendment's clause prohibiting the establishment of religion.

Filipino court refuses to free health workers

A court in the Philippines on March 11 refused to release 43 health workers who were arrested in early February on suspicion of supporting Communist rebels. Dr. Alexis Montes, a physician, received grants from the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries from 2007-2009 for his community-based health programs. The decision is being appealed to the Philippines Supreme Court.

Fewer than half link Easter, Resurrection

While seven in 10 Americans describe Easter as a religious holiday, only 42 percent link it to the Resurrection of Jesus, according to a new Barna Group study. Others in a random sample of 1,005 adults described Easter as a Christian holiday, a celebration of Passover, or a special day to go to church. "(T)he specifics of it are really fading in a lot of people's minds," said David Kinnamon, Barna Group president.

■ **GOODNESS** Continued from page 1B

on that conversation.

The book talks about the "disciplines of goodness, the practices that are key to finding meaning and fulfillment in life." People don't think about goodness as a practice. Can you explain? And what are those practices?

It's a way of framing. It's how you choose to look at the world and what you choose to look at in the world. In most modern cultures, the constant invitation is to speed through life on autopilot: Do things the way you always do them and don't pay attention. And yet paying attention is what makes all of the difference. It's the small attentions that are the most loving kinds of attention.

A few years ago my father and I went out for a walk one morning. There was a piece of paper on the ground and he bent down to pick it up, then looked for a trash can. It's a tiny insignificant little thing that doesn't matter. But it's those tiny things that in the grand scheme of things actually do matter: one person caring enough to pick up a piece of paper from the ground.

It's also a matter of holding another person in the present moment in a deep way. I just saw the movie *Avatar*, which wasn't designed as such but was an excellent work of theology. One of the greetings that the blue people have is "I see you." That's a very African greeting. It's the literal translation of how Swazi people will greet each other. "I see you" is a literal recognition of the importance of holding a person in the present moment and honoring that person.

So part of the discipline of goodness is a habit of attention?

Yes, one that doesn't let you flip into the habit of inattentive convenience.

Why did you write the book with your father? What did you see coming out of the collaboration

that you couldn't offer separately?

We decided in writing the book that it was easier to write it in a single voice rather than going back and forth between the two voices.

That allows me to put words in his mouth. [Laughs]. The way we collaborated, we spent a lot of time talking together. We had a couple of long weekends in which we spent several hours talking, with me recording the conversations, then a lot of telephone conversations and e-mails back and forth.

My dad tends to speak very lucidly and in complete sentences and thoughts. A lot of the writing was just editing out the "ums" and "ers" rather than rewriting. Then I'd send him what I had, he'd edit and we'd have another chance to talk and

'We are not born as sinners in need of saving; instead we are saints in need of seeing. We need to see who we really are and live into the truth of who we are.'

argue and decide whether we really wanted to say that. The exercise of transcribing the conversation was like being on retreat with my dad, having a chance to ponder his thoughts. We started out with each chapter with a very personal story. I enjoyed having the opportunities to hear some of the stories from his growing up.

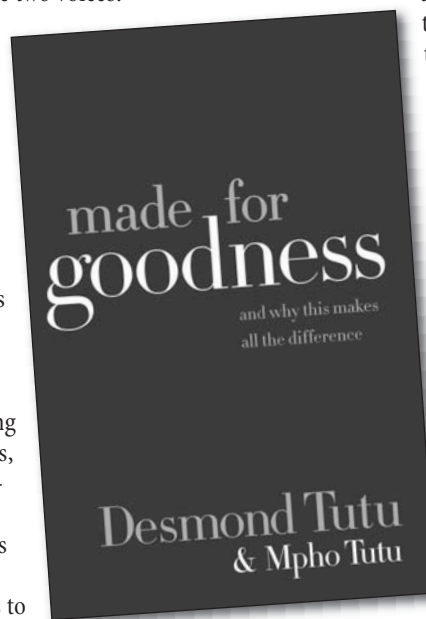
Were you a ghostwriter, or does it have some of both of you in it?

It's in his voice, but it was collaboration. I certainly feel as if some of my thoughts got in there. The nice thing about having the collaboration was that we got to talk back to each other. Sometimes the gift is being able to refine each other's thoughts and being able to push each other.

As it happens, I've been transcribing some of my father's memories, and I was struck by

some new insights into his life. Did you have a similar "revelation"?

One thing was how complicated his relationship with his own father was, and also how formative his mother's personality was. Not so

Interfaith group cites *Reporter* for excellence

STAFF REPORTS

The *United Methodist Reporter* has received five DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial Awards from the Religion Communicators Council for work done in 2009.

The *Reporter* earned four awards of excellence for best national newspaper and for several writing categories, as well as one certificate of merit for its Oct. 16 issue: "Geographic Lesson," about reducing the number of bishops in each jurisdiction. That issue focused on the Dakotas Conference and the North Central Jurisdiction.

Managing Editor Robin Russell earned top honors for a news story on United Methodist response to the Nov. 5 shootings at the Fort Hood military post; an April 10 feature on what scholars and theologians think heaven will be like; and a May feature series on a successful new church start in Kansas that pulled out of the denomination.



Awards will be presented during the RCC's annual convention April 7-10 in Chicago.

The DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial Awards are named for the late Victor DeRose and the late Paul M. Hinkhouse, leading lithographers in New York City. The RCC is the oldest association of religion communicators in the U.S. Established in 1929, the interfaith organization recognizes religion communicators who work in print and electronic communication, marketing and public relations.

Other United Methodist winners in the DeRose-Hinkhouse competition included: Tim Tanton of the United Methodist News Service for his series on Cote d'Ivoire; Roberta Cox of Perkins School of Theology, SMU, for public relations writing and audio-visual narrative; and the Texas Methodist Foundation's staff for Internet communication and audiovisual narrative.

Certificates of merit in writing went to General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) staff Christie House of *New World Outlook* magazine and Barbara Wheeler of *Response* magazine. Certificates of merit for graphic design went to Emily Miller of United Methodist Women and the GBGM's Chris Heckert, Hal Sadler and Ron Underberg.

THE UNITED METHODIST
REPORTER

www.umportal.org

news@umr.org

Bob Mathews, CEO

Robin Russell, Managing Editor

Bill Fentum, Associate Editor

Mary Jacobs, Staff Writer

Mallory McCall, Staff Writer

Cherrie Graham, Advertising Manager

Kristin Del Mul, Senior Designer

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Church agency hailed on health reform

WIRE REPORTS

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has hailed the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) as a key contributor to the March 21 landmark vote on health care reform.

In her closing remarks before legislators approved legislation to provide medical coverage to uninsured Americans, Ms. Pelosi referred to the United Methodist Church as one of many organizations “sending a clear message to members of Congress: Say yes to health care reform.”

The House passed the U.S. Senate version of health insurance reform legislation by a vote of 219 to 212.

‘This vote brings us closer to that reality.’

—Jim Winkler

Jim Winkler, chief executive of the GBCS, said the House action affirms the United Methodist Social Principles that declares health care is “a

basic human right.”

“For decades, the General Board of Church and Society has worked alongside thousands of United Methodists to achieve health care for all in the U.S.,” Mr. Winkler said. “This vote brings us closer to that reality.”

With the bill now signed into law, Mr. Winkler said, important protections for every person will be enacted. These include banning health insurance companies from denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions and more Americans will have access to health insurance.

The denomination’s law-making body, the General Conference, has been a strong advocate for universal health care. The *Book of Discipline* states: “We believe it is a governmental responsibility to provide all citizens with health care.” The United Methodist *Book of Resolutions* charges the GBCS with advocating for health care for all in the U.S.

Bishop Gregory Palmer, president of the Council of Bishops, along with the social action agency, had endorsed a letter to President Obama and members of Congress before the public health care summit held on Feb. 25 urging them “to take heart and move meaningful health care re-



PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi praised the UMC’s efforts.

form forward.”

But United Methodists, like most Americans, have taken different positions on the basic legislation approved by the House. Opponents of the legislation cited its cost, its expansion of federal power and concerns that it would reverse past policy by al-

lowing federal funding of abortions.

“There are parts of this bill that are good, including much-needed health insurance reforms and making health insurance affordable for the uninsured,” said Rep. Mike Ross, a United Methodist from Arizona who opposed the legislation. “On the

other hand, many parts of this bill cause me great concern, like telling people they must buy health insurance or be fined, cutting Medicare by more than a half-trillion dollars, increasing taxes and forcing businesses to provide health insurance to their employees.”

During her remarks prior to the vote, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., thanked the 350 organizations, including the United Methodist Church, that worked to achieve historic health-insurance reform.

The United Methodist Church was not alone among faith communities in working for health-care reform. More than 150 other faith organizations also sought change, working through coalitions such as Faithful Reform in Health Care.

Signers of the letter urging action on health care reform included the Albany Area United Methodist Church, New York, Arkansas Methodist Federation for Social Action, Oregon-Idaho Methodist Federation for Social Action, Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church Advocacy Resource Team and the Western North Carolina Conference Methodist Federation for Social Action.

Conferences struggle to pay their full apportionments

BY KATHY L. GILBERT
United Methodist News Service

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—At the end of 2009, only 14 of the 63 annual conferences in the United States paid 100 percent of the money asked of them by the United Methodist Church to support ministries around the world.

The total collected was \$24 million short of the \$150.3 million budgeted and agreed to at the 2008 General Conference.

The recession, declining membership and a lack of commitment to or

understanding of apportionments are some of the reasons that add up to a collection plate that keeps coming back only partially full.

The Rev. Tom Seay, pastor of Colonial Heights United Methodist Church in Kingsport, Tenn., might speak for many pastors when he says, “We budget to pay full apportionments, but we do so realizing we probably won’t make it. We have to pay the mortgage and the electric bill first.”

Apportionments are the fuel that makes it possible for the church to make a difference in the world. No

one local church is responsible for establishing a university in Africa, supporting the work of the denomination’s boards and agencies, supporting historically black colleges or providing financial support for the education of ordained ministers. But every local church does contribute to all those missions and many others when they pay their apportioned amount.

In the average local church, 12.4 cents of every dollar given support annual conference ministries, 3.3 cents support ministries beyond the conference, and 84.3 cents of the donated dollar support ministries of the local congregation.

None of the U.S. church’s five jurisdictions paid apportionments 100 percent. Jurisdictional percentages were: Northeastern, 92.1; South Central, 91; North Central, 81.5; Southeastern, 78.7; and Western, 74.7.

The California-Nevada Conference in the Western Jurisdiction was at the bottom of the list, paying 49.6 percent of its general church apportionment. Bishop Warner Brown, episcopal leader of the conference, said a number of churches in his area pride themselves on paying 100 percent, but the effect is diluted by many who do not.

The economic downturn has had a “dramatic impact on our churches,” Bishop Brown said. Many people have lost jobs or homes and have had to relocate. However, the conference has a 30-plus year pattern of not paying all their apportionments, he added.

Mr. Seay’s church, Colonial Heights, is in the Holston conference, part of the Southeastern Jurisdiction. Seventy-five percent of the churches in Holston contributed 100 percent.

Bishop James E. Swanson, episcopal leader for the conference, sent a letter to churches that failed to con-

tribute all their apportionments, pointing out the accomplishments of their “sister” churches who gave their “fair share.”

Two other conferences that struggled with their apportionments were South Indiana (50.1 percent) and North Indiana (53.5 percent). The conferences merged in 2009 and this is the last year Indiana will report as two conferences.

Since the merger, there has been “substantial progress” made on connectional giving, said Jennifer Gallagher, conference treasurer.



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY KATHLEEN BARRY

United Methodist churches are struggling to pay their apportioned giving in full.

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Iowa Methodists help rebuild neighborhoods, block by block

BY MADELAINE JEROUSEK-SMITH
Special Contributor

On a frigid winter day, there are new signs of life in the 1300 block of Eighth Street on the northwest side of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Sidewalks are cleared of snow, smoke rises from chimneys and kitchen lights glow behind new curtains. A block away, for-sale signs dot lawns of freshly painted houses, electricians' trailers rest on curbs and power tools buzz in the distance.

Many in this working-class neighborhood thought they'd never return after the Cedar River overflowed its banks and saturated about 10 square miles, or 14 percent, of the city in June 2008. Almost a year later, many people still waited while their homes sat empty.

But the dedication of two brothers, an innovative church-community partnership, and a common faith in neighborly love brought them home

again.

Known as Block by Block, the neighborhood revitalization project has been hailed as one of the most successful efforts in Cedar Rapids. Instead of helping homeowners one at a time, Block by Block works to bring back entire neighborhoods.

Though it melds a unique array of religious and secular groups, the heart of the project is ultimately Christian: building communities of people who take care of one another.

"The early church evolved through a neighbor talking to a neighbor, saying, 'We're building this community. When you get hurt, when you are suffering, this community of believers will help you heal,'" said the Rev. Clint Twedt-Ball, a United Methodist pastor who came up with the idea.

"When disasters happen, we as Christians will come together to help neighbors get whole again."

The Cedar River flows through downtown

Cedar Rapids, a city of about 124,000 people. When the river crested at more than 31 feet in June 2008, floodwaters swept through downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods, soaking more than 7,000 properties, including about 5,000 homes, according to Corridor Recovery, a flood resource clearinghouse.

A river's devastation

Eleven blocks from the river, Katie and Andrew Sandquist had just finished their basement and redone the hardwood floors on the first level of their early-20th-century home in spring 2008.

The neighborhood, where elderly residents gathered on porches and children called out on the way to school each morning, was a mix of single-family homes and rental properties. While most residents took pride in their homes, some of the properties were in disrepair.

Like many of their neighbors, they moved everything from the basement to the first floor

when they learned of the flooding threat, believing that water would seep into their basements but no higher.

In fact, the floodwaters engulfed much of the first story of every surrounding house. Days after the water receded, neighbors returned to find a mud-coated, tangled mess of furniture and appliances.

"I sobbed when I saw it," Katie Sandquist said of pulling up to her home for the first time. "My life was in piles on the curb. It was devastating."

Months after the flood, progress was achingly slow. Many homeowners waited for government assistance to help them rebuild. They languished on waiting lists for overwhelmed plumbers and electricians. Others, who could not return, waited for government buyouts.

"Time went by and so much was still broken," Katie Sandquist said. "People in my neighborhood were feeling hopeless."

Frustration, anger

For many homeowners, frustration with bureaucracy was also fueling anger, said Mr. Twedt-Ball's brother, the Rev. Courtney Ball, whose home was among those flooded.

"People in my neighborhood needed a chance to sit down and talk to each other," said Mr. Ball, who began to organize informal neighborhood get-togethers.

The brothers, who come from a long line of Methodist pastors, know something about community organizing. When they were young, their father left his church and became the first full-time director of Habitat for Humanity in Des Moines. Their mother worked with immigrants, helping them get acclimated to the community. After seminary, the brothers settled into traditional congregations in eastern Iowa. But something was missing in their suburban churches; they felt called to minister to those on the margins.

An urban Cedar Rapids Methodist church gave the brothers space to start their community-building ministry in 2006. Named for Matthew 25:34-40, a passage about helping the less fortunate, Matthew 25 Ministry Hub offered services like free meals and tutoring to those in Cedar Rapids' neediest neighborhoods.

Their approach was based in part on the ideals of asset-based community development, which builds upon a community's strengths. A consultant urged them: Learn to love the neighborhood around you, build relationships, and then give people the tools they need to succeed.

The brothers were still getting to know the neighborhoods when the 2008 flood struck the

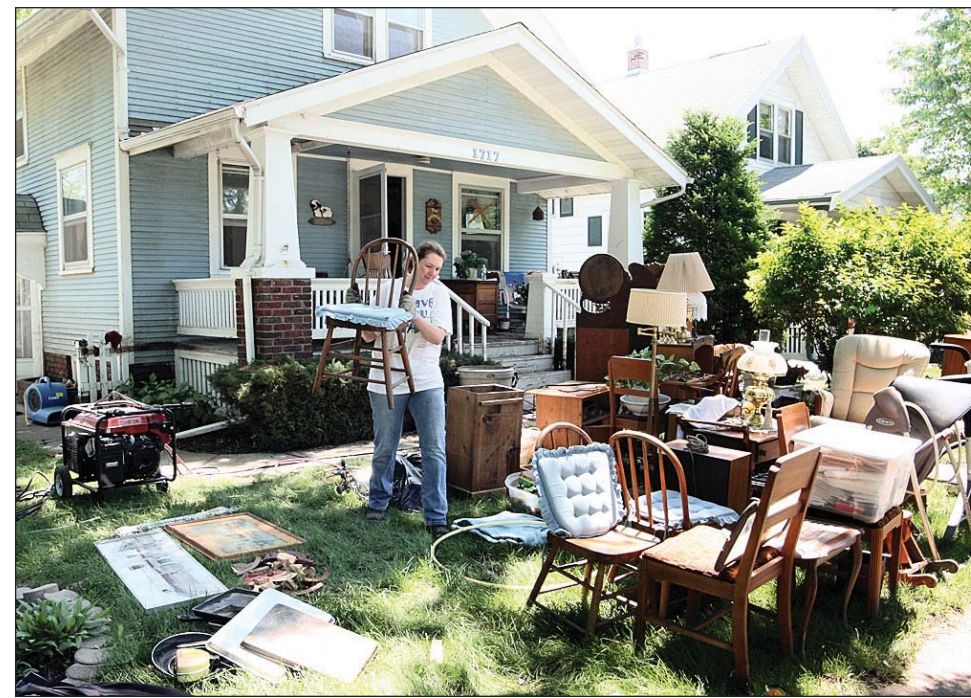


PHOTO COURTESY OF GREG HENSHALL/FEMA
Bonnie Cleveland carries damaged furniture from a friend's home in Cedar Rapids.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PATSY LYNCH/FEMA
Volunteers in Cedar Falls, Iowa, stack sandbags June 10, 2008, as the Cedar River rises to a record-high 102 feet and forces residents to evacuate.

area. In the early months after the flood, Matthew 25 helped homeowners gut and clean their homes. Working closely with neighbors helped them see the problems with flood recovery—and offer solutions.

"The floods ended up presenting an enormous opportunity to bring about change in the community," Mr. Ball said.

Offering a solution

Almost a year after the flood, much of the city was rebuilding. But many west-side neighborhoods were still filled with abandoned homes. Mr. Twedt-Ball approached the Affordable Housing Network Inc. with his vision for a new initiative, Block by Block: give people the resources to improve their homes and neighborhoods; make quick, visible progress; empower people to shape the future of their communities.

Jim Ernst, executive director of the nonprofit low-income-housing group, thought the idea had the potential to revitalize a variety of neighborhoods, not just those affected by the flood. He spoke with John Smith, CEO of CRST International. Smith, a lifelong Cedar Rapids resident, was also frustrated by the lack of post-flood progress on the west side of town and looking to put money toward a solution.

"When I heard about this idea, it was like a light went on," Mr. Smith said. "I thought, 'How simple—and wow, what a difference it could make.'" He and wife, Dyan, pledged \$1 million.

Other backers included the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, which offered \$700,000. This rebuilding program was different, said Dan Baldwin, past president of the foundation, because it offered what government couldn't: a promise to get work done quickly, customized solutions and an approach that would have a long-term impact on neighborhoods.

"What Block by Block presented was a nimble, streamlined attempt to actually bring people within a neighborhood together and have everyone participate in its renewal," Mr. Baldwin said. "This was a chance to create real, critical mass in rebuilding neighborhoods, which are the fabric of every community."

Signs of recovery

Launched in summer 2009, Block by Block works with neighborhoods that request the program's help. Once at least 60 percent of property owners on a block agree to participate, those homeowners meet with Block by Block staff members to discuss the desired outcomes for their homes. About 80 percent of them fix up their homes and stay. The rest choose to sell their property. Block by Block commits to finding solutions for most properties within 120 days.

Those who decide to repair their homes receive volunteer labor and donated supplies. If a homeowner decides to sell, Block by Block may purchase the home at pre-flood assessed value and rehabilitate it for sale at an affordable price.



Homeowners, neighbors and volunteers participate in the Block by Block program to rebuild their flood-damaged neighborhood in the 1300 block of Eighth Street in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



Because the program is supported largely by private funds, renovations or buyouts can happen faster than those programs sponsored solely by government. And thanks in part to a partnership with the United Methodist Church, more than 10,000 volunteers from across the country have traveled to Cedar Rapids to help renovate homes.

Their work was quickly visible. By Christmas 2009, Block by Block had completed most of eight blocks and 103 properties.

"When we walk away from a block, people there know each other," Mr. Ball said. "They're really comfortable calling each other up, having barbecues and potlucks. Not only are we repairing homes, but we're building up neighborly relationships."

Though they sometimes disagree about how to accomplish goals, the partnership works because everyone shares a common purpose to rebuild the community, Mr. Twedt-Ball said.

"While we aren't all faith-based, I do think there is a common faith in humanity and in love of neighbor that we all share even if we don't talk about it in terms of the same God," Mr. Twedt-Ball said. "There's a commitment to something bigger than ourselves and our organization."

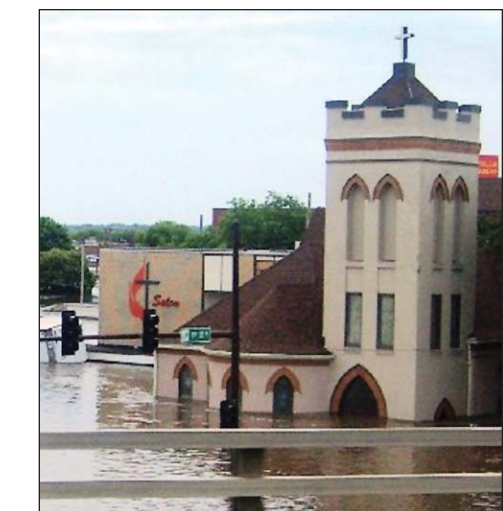
By the end of 2010, Block by Block hopes to work with another 12 to 16 blocks, or about 300 property owners. In all, about 20 percent of properties in the hardest-hit area of Cedar Rapids will have been touched by Block by Block.

"Seeing this actually work, seeing the mo-

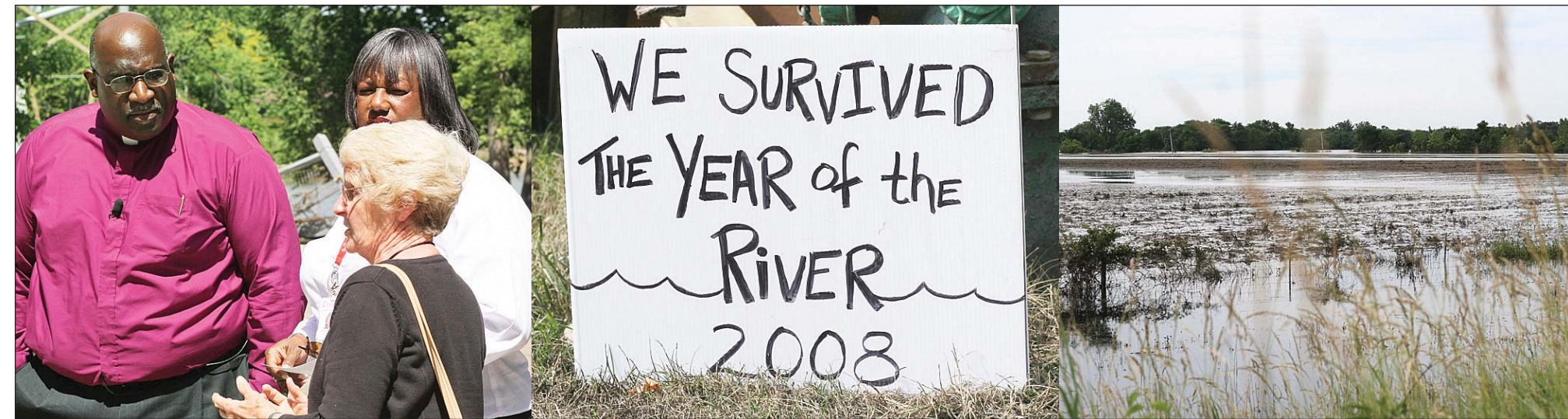
mentum grow, has been uplifting," Katie Sandquist said. "Now we feel like we can effect change in our neighborhoods. I think it's been an incredibly healthy process to make our community stronger."

"This project is healing a community, not just a house," she said. "This is going to be something that makes our neighborhood stronger forever."

Ms. Jerousek-Smith is a freelance writer and editor in Des Moines, Iowa. The full story was first published in *Faith & Leadership* www.faithandleadership.com.



UMMS FILE PHOTO BY BECKY JOHNSON
Floodwaters surround Salem UMC in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.



LEFT: Then-Iowa Bishop Gregory Palmer and UMCOR representative Sandra Kennedy-Owes talk with flood survivor Phyllis Meyer, 81, in Charles City, Iowa. Following massive flooding in June 2008, UMCOR issued an emergency grant to the Iowa Conference and shipped more than 5,000 flood buckets. CENTER: A hand-made sign was posted in a flood-damaged neighborhood in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where some 4,000 homes in mostly blue-collar neighborhoods were submerged after days of heavy rain swelled the Cedar River. RIGHT: Newly sown fields lie underwater in Iowa in this 2008 file photo. Damage was estimated at \$3 billion for the nation's top corn producer.

Living in 'Gotham' helps reduce carbon footprint; others can take steps, too

BY TOM EHRRICH
Religion News Service

NEW YORK—I, for one, believe that global climate change and its threat to humanity are real phenomena.

I also believe that our political systems are paralyzed—for now at least—by any challenge that can't be resolved by blustery words. The days of grand projects like railroads, bridges and dams are on hiatus until partisan rancor subsides. Dealing with climate change, then, comes down to individual choices.



Tom Ehrich

Whether that will be enough remains to be seen. But for now, it's all we have: the willingness of individuals to live differently.

My family's move to New York City gives me hope. When we moved here three years ago, it wasn't to make an environmental statement. We moved here for the energy of the city and for business opportunities.

And yet we did make some decisions that substantially reduced our contributions to environmental distress. One was to declare our freedom from the automobile. Another was to leave behind a four-bedroom house and large lawn, whose maintenance took more time and money than I thought they deserved.

As it turns out, residents of New York City have a "carbon footprint" that is less than one-third of the national average. And it's not just the



PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA

Taking the subway in New York City helps residents reduce their carbon footprint, says Tom Ehrich.

case in the U.S. London's per-person contribution to greenhouse gases is just over one-half the U.K. average. Barcelona's is less than one-half of the average for all of Spain.

Dense, compact housing and public transportation make the difference. We live in an apartment that is one-third the size of our former house. We rarely need to turn on the heat. We never drive cars. We walk one to three miles a day and rely on subways for longer trips.

The environmental benefits are an unintended consequence of something we did for other reasons. I don't

'If anything, walking is a great joy.'

feel particularly noble, as if I had embraced a cause. If anything, walking is a great joy, freedom from lawn maintenance is a relief and occupying one-third as much space is relaxing.

I am finding that urban living makes sense in ways I hadn't anticipated. I can see why life expectancy of New York City residents is 1 percent longer than the national average, and is increasing more rapidly.

I know full well that most people can't easily change where they live, nor do they want to. I also know that Gotham isn't for everyone. Other cities, smaller cities, suburbs, small towns and farms all have their claims on our hearts. Our jobs constrain mobility.

But I am emboldened by this move to believe that individual choices can make a difference. A decision to recycle, for example, matters. A decision to take public transportation wherever possible matters. While dense, compact housing hasn't seemed necessary in cities capable of sprawling, it is a decision worth considering today.

Just as averting environmental catastrophe comes down to individual decisions, our own choices matter when we enter the arena of faith: a single life is worth saving, a single act of goodness is worth taking, a single sin is worth confessing and a single person of faith can make a difference.

It does happen that way. My move to New York City is testimony—unintended to be sure, but encouraging nonetheless.

Fr. Ehrich is a writer and Episcopal priest.

Lord, teach us to pray

BY BISHOP DEB KIESEY
Special Contributor

The other Sunday I sat in church directly in front of a boy of about 8 or 9 years old. He was sitting with what I assumed were his parents and grandparents.

He was a typical little boy, as he wiggled and squirmed and banged the pew in front of him with his feet—full of life, full of energy and full of questions. Lots of questions. He asked why we did this, and why we did that, and what the guy up front was doing now.

Question after question, asked in his little boy whisper that wasn't really a whisper at all—and I was pleased his grandfather tried to answer his questions quietly but honestly. The truth was, I actually enjoyed listening in on this private teaching time.

But what really moved me was during the time for prayer. As the sanctuary stilled, and the pastor began to pray, this little guy quieted down—the questions finally coming to an end.

And when we were invited to pray The Lord's Prayer, a little, clear voice rang out behind me, "OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME ..."

On he went, proudly proclaiming every word of that familiar prayer.

I found myself no longer saying the words, but just listening—moved by a small child's prayer.

"He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray say ...'" (Luke 11:1-2).

'Each time you pray it, listen for God's word to you.'

How many times in our lives have we said that most familiar of all prayers? And yet, as Anne of Green Gables has said, "Saying one's prayers is not the same as praying." She is correct. It is far too easy to just simply say the words without really digesting them—without really thinking of the power of those holy words.

"Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name."



Bishop Deb Kieseey



© 2010 DESIGN PICS PHOTO

Hearing a child pray in church reminded Bishop Deb Kieseey to focus on the meaning of The Lord's Prayer, especially during Lent.

These aren't just words; they are a declaration of faith. They are a statement that proclaims the power, the presence and the magnificence of the God we worship.

And yet they also remind us that our relationship with God is a personal one—a relationship so deep that the only way to describe it is through the image of a parent whose love for a child is beyond words.

That is where prayer begins—with an acknowledgment of who this God is, and our relationship as God's beloved child.

In this holy journey through Lent, I invite you to make this Disciple's Prayer our prayer, and to make it a part of our daily spiritual journey. There are many ways to pray it:

- Pray it slowly, pausing after each phrase.
- Or sing it.
- Or read it, with the words in front of you.
- Or say a phrase slowly, over and over again.
- Or pray a different version of it.

But don't just say it ... pray it. And each time you pray it, listen for God's word to you.

Each week in Lent, we are focusing on a particular phrase of the Lord's Prayer, but I encourage you to pray the entire prayer every day until the words are no longer just words, but until we can proudly proclaim—and claim—this prayer as did that little boy in the pew behind me: with excitement and with awe.

So, pray with me now.

*Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and glory forever. Amen.*

And amen.

Bishop Kieseey leads the Dakotas Conference of the United Methodist Church. Reprinted from her "Dakotas Diary" at dakotasumc.org.

WESLEYAN WISDOM

Connectionalism: What does cherished word mean?

BY DONALD W. HAYNES
UMR Columnist

The 2008 membership decline for the United Methodist Church was the largest single-year drop since 1974. Our worship attendance decline was even larger. What's more, only 84 percent of apportioned funds were paid to the connectional ministries of the church.

That is reality. Ours is a time for faithful courage.

The Connectional Table has appointed the Call to Action steering committee to urge major changes in the church as an agenda for the 2012 General Conference. Across the connection at every level, we seem to be awakening to a significant re-directing of the church's membership and an openness of our leadership to rediscover our brand in both identity and mission.



Donald Haynes

One word that deserves some reconsideration is a favorite among Methodists—"connectionalism." We usually associate the word with apportionments and appointments! It is a much richer word.

Robbed of substance

In 1792 James O'Kelly challenged Bishop Asbury's authoritarian manner of making appointments, led a three-day debate in our first official General Conference, which he lost, and then formed "The Christian Church." As historian Russell Richey aptly points out, O'Kelly's loss pushed "The Methodist Episcopal Church into 'making connectionalism less communal bonds of affection and the dynamism of conferencing and more governance structures. The church would spend the next century and a half determining who had voice and membership in these structures...'"

O'Kelly's defeat pushed Asbury and his successors into robbing us of what Dr. Richey calls connectionalism's incredible theological and spiritual substance, relegating it to legislation and conference actions.

Connectionalism once had a nearly universal meaning of social holiness. The first fracture came with the Southern conferences' insistence that to hold the line on the abolition of slavery would reduce the effectiveness of evangelism. The refusal of the 1840 General Conference to entertain a debate on abolition prompted the cre-

ation of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1843, and the division of the church in 1844 according to north and south.

Following the Civil War, connectionalism regained its voice in the causes of Temperance and Women's Suffrage. Church Extension and the Missionary Movement were marks of connectionalism in the late 19th century. Sadly, connectional leadership against the holiness movement at the General Conference of 1894 pushed out thousands and prompted the formation of the Nazarene Church.

Hymnody was a connectional force—from the 6,000 hymns of Charles Wesley to the days of camp meeting songs to the 8,000 hymns of Methodist Fanny Crosby to the missionary hymns to the hymns with a social justice theme. By 1905 the three branches of Methodism published a common hymnal, stripping it of most of the gospel hymns. (One reaction was the 1923 publication of the *Cokesbury Worship Hymnal* which is still in print!)

The Sunday school Graded Lessons were a strong expression of connectionalism. Almost every child in the denomination had the same "picture card" of a Bible story and almost every adult class studied the same International Bible Lesson. The overwhelming focus on Christian education resulted in similar teacher training, professional educators' certification and youth ministry in the older Epworth League and the post-1939 Methodist Youth Fellowship.

In the 20th century, the two-fold thrust of connectionalism was ecumenism and the mimicking of corporate culture. The Methodist connection provided the major portion of money and muscle in the creation of the Federal Council of Churches and 20th-century ecumenism, almost to the detriment of its own theological identity. By Unification in 1939, a corporation-like bureaucracy was put in place, wresting much power from the bishops.

Connectionalism came to mean uniformity: a Methodist could drop in on worship anywhere and find a similar order of worship! The same was true of local church structure.

Common ethos

Ordination requirements were a major expression of connectional uniformity. The geographic dispersion of theological schools and the similarity of disciplines—such as homiletics, systematic theology, biblical criticism, and an emphasis on pastoral care and counseling—developed a common ethos of pastoral ministry.

A different dimension of connectionalism is more appropriate to instruct us. While it might be melodramatic to compare the early 21st century to the aftermath of the Civil War, which created a clear-cut seismic shift in culture, today's mentality of "everything must change" could threaten the very existence of denominations as we know them. Let us see, therefore, what the connection did in the face of cultural and political changes in 1865.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South of the post-Civil War era can never be justified for its failure to embrace the post-war, "anti-caste radicalism" articulated by the Methodist Episcopal Church (i.e. "north"). However, both regional churches are to be commended for recognizing that their worlds had undergone seismic shifts and would never be the same again. Perhaps their nerve to embrace a new reality will be helpful for our own challenges.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South met in 1866 in New Orleans and

rose from the ashes of military defeat with bold new proposals. One historian's account was that, "Men's minds had become used to great changes, and the session at New Orleans as therefore favorable for measures upon which the usual conservatism might have hesitated long in ordinary times." That is a fitting analysis of the state of the church in 2010!

Subsequent actions by the General Conference included the recognition that attendance at the time-honored class meetings "ought no longer to be enforced with greater penalties than attendance upon other means of grace," that six months' probation for church membership be abolished, that a pastor's service at one congregation be extended from two years to four, that lay representation equal to clergy delegates be introduced in Annual and General Conferences, and "that, at their request, the 78,742 colored members who clave to the Church be, at their request, re-constituted as an independent body they chose, 'The Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, and that all church property used for Methodist Negroes in the past be turned over to them.'" By 1880 the CME Church had over 80,000 members.

Meanwhile in the north, *The Christian Advocate* editor described the 1864 General Conference actions as "significant of the strange times in which we live." Two years later, the Methodists of Ohio and Illinois did not wait for another General Conference before organizing the Freedmen's Aid Society in August 1866. That organization was endorsed by the Board of Bishops and the General Conference of 1868; its accomplishments are miraculous.

In short order, 240 teachers brought the light of literacy to over 6,500 pupils. Twenty-five colleges and

institutes were established throughout the old Confederacy by 1882, and a virtual "army" of teachers and other professionals integrated the 4,500,000 former slaves into aspects of freedom.

Polity is a tool

Emory Stevens Bucke's *History of American Methodism* proudly proclaimed that "no other church in America gave so unstingingly of her sons and her substance to free the Negro from ignorance, poverty, and environmental debasement as did the Methodist Episcopal Church."

My point is not to re-open regional wounds. Rather I submit that our connection, North and South, realized the truth in Lowell's words, "new occasions teach new duties; time makes ancient good uncouth." We must be done with sacred cows. Mr. Wesley searched the Scriptures and found there no divinely inspired form of church polity.

I do not reflect on history to claim that the church lived out God's will in each era or circumstance. We made our connection and we have cherished it. But let us not make of it an idol.

We must use our polity as a tool of missional ministry, not as a weapon to whip local churches in line, or to force married clergy into geographic separation, or to sustain career-advancement ladders with benefits we can no longer afford.

My intent is to write in the spirit of George Santyana: "Columbus found a world, and had no chart, save one that faith deciphered in the skies." We have no chart, but we can discern by faith the will of God for us in our time.

Dr. Haynes is a retired member of the Western North Carolina Conference, an adjunct professor at Hood Theological Seminary and current interim pastor of Kallam Grove Christian Church.

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■ CONFLICT *Continued from page 1B*

mal complaint by ruling the church had violated zoning laws that forbid a “charity dining hall” in a residential district. Since then CrossRoads has continued the breakfasts, but lost its appeals to a district court and local board of adjustment.

Now the case goes to a federal court where the church will argue the breakfast ministry is protected under First Amendment rights as well as the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA)—which bars any government action that “imposes a substantial burden on religious exercise.”

Retired Arizona Supreme Court Justice Robert Corcoran rejected the second defense last fall. A charity group in a commercial zone had offered to let CrossRoads use their building for the breakfast, he noted, and the church already takes food to a United Methodist mission on the city’s east side.

CrossRoads “has numerous alternatives that allow it to fulfill its religious mission,” Mr. Corcoran said in his decision.

But Ms. Escobedo-Frank says the area where most of the breakfast guests live, just north of CrossRoads, has its own needs.

“We have a great location to do ministry because we are at the crossroads of an extremely poverty-driven neighborhood and a neighborhood of great wealth,” she said in a phone interview.

“The practice of faith is not just worshipping in our heads. It’s our hands and feet actually doing the work of Christ. To say to a church, ‘You can do it this way, but not that way,’ is pushing back on our freedom to be religious in the way that we believe we need to be religious.”

Called to action

That’s also the feeling of CrossRoads staffer Mike Ricker, who helped start the breakfast through his nonprofit ministry, Prodigal’s Home.

‘The whole purpose of being a Christian is to serve others.’

—Mary Jo West

Mr. Ricker became a Christian in his 30s but recalls an “angry period . . . when I didn’t see a lot of us living out our potential to help people in the world. When Jesus said, ‘Take care of the widows and the orphans,’ I don’t think he was trying to make a big theological statement. He meant just what he said, and we weren’t doing it.”

So in 2006 Mr. Ricker and his wife, Kim, founded Prodigal’s Home, which distributes meals to the poor and homeless three days a week. He started the breakfast on Sundays at a city park, then moved it to the parking lot

of a Mexican restaurant that sold burritos to him at a discount. When the crowds swelled to more than 200 people and outgrew the lot, CrossRoads offered to host them on Saturdays.

Early on the Rickers met Smoky Brazelton, a homeless man who helped them set up each week. One morning he arrived with his head bleeding severely from a fight, so the couple rushed him to a hospital for treatment and put him up in a motel while he recovered.

At the time, Mr. Brazelton had spent 40 years addicted to drugs, haunted by memories of parental abuse.

Newfound faith

“I was raised a Baptist but had left the church,” Mr. Brazelton said. “Mike let me ask questions, gave me honest answers and quietly helped me see that maybe it was time I came to Christ. Then because of my newfound faith, I was no longer comfortable with the way I was living and decided I needed to straighten my life out.”

After relapses and several stays in rehab, he has kept “clean and sober” for 16 months and now works full-time for Prodigal’s Home.

“I still have issues with the church,” he said, “and because of the way my father was, I’m just now learning to be able to say ‘Our Father’ and not get all weirded out. I still can’t pray with people and have them touch me. But with God’s help I’ll get through all this.”

Mr. Brazelton went to the first public hearings over the breakfasts, but stopped going when the debate took a personal toll.

“It upset me so much,” he said. “A lot of people don’t want us there, and they’re willing to do anything they can to drive us out. I would hate to see that happen, but now I’m trying to leave it all in God’s hands.”

Some point to dangers that could outweigh the good of the mission.

CrossRoads houses a preschool,

managed separately from the church. In the district court decision, Mr. Corcoran said that children at the school had often encountered transients in halls and bathrooms at the school.

Last summer police reported that a homeless man was found camping in an alley behind one home, keeping child pornography in an electrical box. Police were later called when two men attending the breakfast got into a fight, and one stabbed the other in the thigh with an icepick. The injured man was treated and released from a hospital.

Whether the homeless remain



Breakfasts for the homeless at CrossRoads UMC in Phoenix, Ariz., include a worship service and sermon.

after the breakfast or come into the neighborhood on other days, Mr. Corcoran determined they pose a risk to security. He cited a 2008 estimate by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: 26 percent of homeless persons have severe mental illnesses, while 37 percent are chronic substance abusers.

“People have been fearful, confronted with situations you wouldn’t normally see here,” said Scott Crozier, a retired attorney who lives near the church. “It causes them to do things differently and not let their children out as they might have done before.”

Ms. Escobedo-Frank responded to concerns at the school, installing additional locks, cameras and doorbells at all entrances. She moved the church office out of the preschool wing, so homeless people who visit her won’t be near the school. CrossRoads has also begun counting how many people come and go on the bus on Saturdays, though the pastor said no one is forced out of the neighborhood.

“The church has gone way above and beyond to provide safety for the preschool,” she said. “The school staff has basically told us, ‘We’ve never felt safer than now. We’ve done things we should have done 10 years ago.’”

Debbie Prenovost, director of the preschool, declined to comment for this article.

Mary Jo West, a former television anchorwoman whose father died homeless in 1982, lived in a condominium across the street from CrossRoads for several months last year. She supports the breakfasts, and serves as an advisor to the church in dealing with local media coverage.

Ms. West has visited during the breakfasts, donated clothes to the guests and spent time with them. “I’ve felt comfortable with the homeless

and I’ve never felt afraid,” she said.

“The whole purpose of being a Christian is to serve others,” Ms. West added, “and it’s just a smack in the face to those of us who want to serve, to be told we can’t. . . I’m praying that this can be resolved.”

More congregations than ever are prevailing in religious land use cases, according to Lori Windham, senior counsel for The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. The nonprofit law firm based in Washington, D.C., represents clients in all religious traditions,

though is not involved in the Phoenix case.

“Serving meals to people in need is certainly a religious exercise, and you can’t treat religious exercises unfairly,” said Ms. Windham. So if you’ve got a situation where people would be allowed to hold a big picnic and give out food to their neighbors, then a church should be able to hold a meal for the homeless on those same grounds.”

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