

SUMMER PREVIEW

Without leaving Arkansas, United Methodists can learn about the church's impact around the globe at the School of Christian Mission

2A

This special pull-out section showcases Arkansas Conference-supported camps around the state

3A-6A

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance and Society of St. Andrew provide summer mission opportunities to feed the poor

6A

Camp Tanako alumni and friends fondly remember the ministry of Terry Everitt

7A

VBS takes kids out of this world

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

United Methodist churches around Arkansas are preparing to rocket kids into outer space, to set sail for adventure on the high seas or to explore the mysteries of ancient Egypt.

This is the time of year when congregations of all sizes gear up for Vacation Bible School — recruiting volunteers, planning activities and choosing educational materials. Many also are deciding on a mission project to support as part of the summer program.

Not that long ago, VBS involved little more than plaster-of-Paris crafts, Autoharp sing-a-longs and a time for Bible stories. Today, VBS has become a multimedia affair complete with DVDs, puppets, MP3 downloads, science experiments, unusual snacks and inventive crafts all centered on the same Scripturally based theme.

The goal is to appeal to the variety of ways people learn. And for many churches, VBS is their best chance to share the Christian story with the unchurched children in their neighborhoods.

"VBS is an awesome resource the local church can use to further the kingdom of God," said Jeremy Carter, director of children and family ministries at First UMC in Magnolia. "As with each project in children's

[See VBS, page 8A]

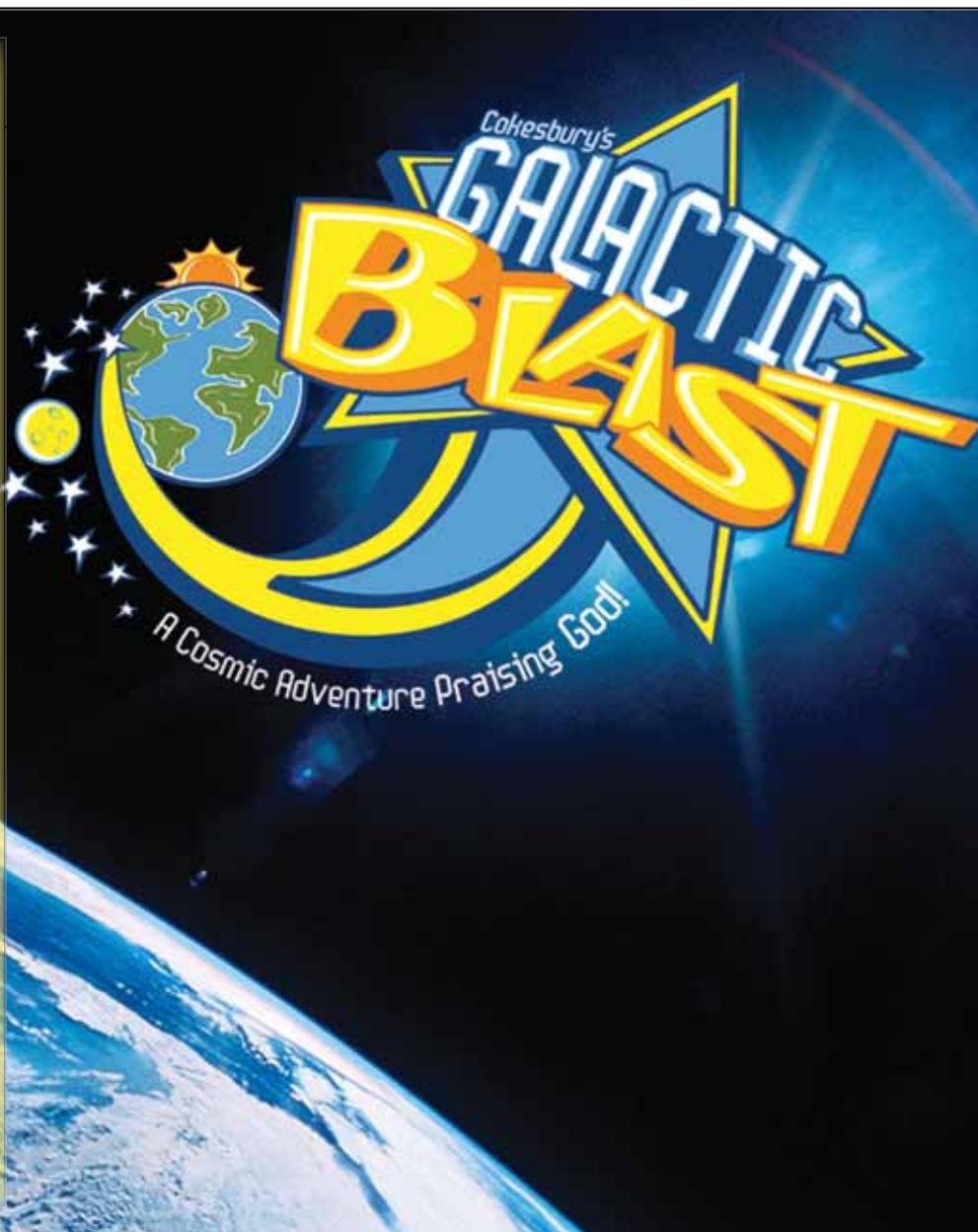


Illustration courtesy of Cokesbury

A WORD ABOUT SUMMER MINISTRY from the Bishop



BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

Dear Friends:

I have a serious personal goal. It is occasioned by my experience last summer while hiking the Colorado Rockies with our daughter, Melissa.

I have always prided myself on being a good hiker. It has been a lifelong hobby of mine to hike and climb in the mountains.

But last summer, Melissa left

me in the dust. I was panting and puffing up the trails while she and her mother were breezing along, then waiting for me to catch up. I was not in shape! I promised Melissa I would be able to keep up with her this summer. So, I am walking, working out in the gym, and watching my diet. I have got to get in shape for summer.

Getting in shape is a goal for all of us in one way or another. It is just as easy to become spiritually flabby as it is to become physically weak.

In that respect, summer offers great opportunities for spiritual fitness.

Think about it. Churches are

offering Vacation Bible School and children and not the only ones who ought to participate. Getting prepared to teach and lead a group of fifth graders with all their curiosity and willingness to ask difficult questions will tone up any adult's spiritual muscles.

There are camps and retreats for youth and children, and the School of Christian Missions for adults, and a thousand other possibilities for enhancing our spiritual depth and broadening the outlook of our faith.

Summer is a unique time for Christian education, nurture, and growth on all levels. It is a time for

experimenting with Sunday School classes for adults. On it goes.

Summer is a time for getting into shape spiritually in a new and challenging way.

Why not plan to walk a labyrinth once a week? Why not begin journaling about your journey of faith? Why not set aside an early morning hour for prayer each day?

Why not ...?

Summer is coming. I have a goal to be in shape.

So, why not...?

Faithfully,

Charles M. Crutchfield



Roy Smith, the Arkansas Conference's director of ministries and assistant to the bishop, leads a class on food and faith at last summer's School of Christian Mission at Hendrix College. Each year, the school offers the chance for United Methodist families to learn more about their faith and its impact on the world.

Photo by James Hendricks



For many UMs, July is the best time for class

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Many United Methodists look forward to summer school.

Since the 1940s, Arkansans have joined together each summer for Schools of Christian Mission where they learn about the church's impact around the globe. What began as a sort of Vacation Bible School for grownups (namely Methodist women) has now become a time when multiple generations participate in Christian learning.

This year's school, sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Board of Global Ministries and the conference's United Methodist Women, will be July 29-Aug. 1 at Hendrix College in Conway. The theme will be "Faith, Hope and Love in Action."

"You learn about missions and other countries and other cultures," LaDonna Busby, the dean of the 2010 school and communications coordinator for the Arkansas Conference United Methodist Women. "And I think whenever you learn something about other people, it takes away a bit of your fear of the unknown."

Every year, some 20,000 children, youth, clergy and laity (including United Methodist and non-United Methodist) participate in similar schools throughout the United States.

The curriculum annually features a spiritual growth topic, a geographic area and an issue that affects society. The weekend also includes activities and studies specifically geared toward youth and children.

The Women's Division of the United Methodist Church begins planning the courses five years in

"The School of Christian Mission is in some ways a slice of Heaven."

— Michael Roberts

advance.

In 2010, the mission studies will be:

- Spiritual Growth: "For the Love of God: John's Letters"
- Geographic: "The Beauty and Courage of Sudan"
- Social Issue: "Mission and Evangelism."

Michael Roberts, an ordained elder who will teach the course on John's epistles, said leading the class is not something he wanted to miss. Roberts, the director of the Arkansas Conference's Connected In Christ initiative, gave up a trip to Nashville, Tenn., so he could be at the school. This will be his third year as one of the school's instructors.

"The School of Christian Mission is in some ways a slice of heaven for me," Roberts said. "The people who are there are seriously interested in missions and the church being as faithful as it can be. They are eager to learn, and they ask good questions."

The event, which receives so much support from United Methodist Women, still attracts a mostly female student body. But Roberts pointed out that the women are of varied ages and backgrounds and bring a diversity of perspectives.

Marleene Calvin, a member of McCabe Chapel United Methodist

Church in North Little Rock and a United Methodist Women officer, said a big draw for her is the fellowship she experiences at the event.

"About the only time you get to meet new people is when you come to School of Mission," she said. "You get to meet people from around the whole state."

She said it also marks a time, when she gets to see her two sisters, Charleene White and Mary Blasingame, who both live in the Fort Smith area.

For Diana Hendricks of Marshall UMC, the school has also become a family affair.

Hendricks, a conference United Methodist Women officer, said her family started going when her youngest son, Blake, was 3. Now, he is 20 and serving on staff as co-director of activities for the children and youth.

"I feel like a lot of his spiritual upbringing occurred at the School of Christian Mission," Diana Hendricks said. "I can tell it's made an impression on him because he won't miss it. He's very dedicated to it."

Her husband, James, also has volunteered for at least the past six years as the event's tech director.

Hendricks said attending the school has helped her grow in her own spiritual life.

"What it has shown me is that I still have a lot to learn," she said.

"Every year, I gain a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures but also of current events."

For her family, she said: "It's an essential in our summer routine."

To learn more about the School of Christian Mission, visit www.arumc.org.



EDITOR'S CORNER

BY HEATHER HAHN

A summer preview

Among my favorite summer memories from childhood:

- The taste of green Kool-Aid
- The scent of paste as I glued together a cross made of matchsticks
- A song whose chorus when belted by a bunch of excited preschoolers sounded suspiciously like, "Who built the ark? No one! No one!"

All of these memories come from my time in Vacation Bible School as a tot.

Vacation Bible School is not only where I first learned the story of Noah and the ark; it's also where I came away with my earliest impression of the church as a fun and friendly community I wanted to be part of.

I had been exposed to worship services almost since birth, and my mom would often read to me at bedtime from a Golden Book collection of Bible stories.

But VBS is where I first began to put all these pieces together into a cohesive picture of God's love.

VBS was, by far, my favorite part of summer as a youngster. When I grew too old to attend VBS as a student, I returned the following year as a youth volunteer working in the nursery.

As I progressed through high school, I eventually worked my way up to being one of the VBS teachers.

Even now, I only have to hear

a snippet from one of the VBS songs — such as "We love because God first loved us" — and a silly grin spreads across my face and warmth fills my heart.

Vacation Bible School is where I first really learned about my faith, and it's where I first felt the urge to share that faith with others.

Today many kids first encounter a church when their parents drop them off for that they perceive as simply free, wholesome childcare. But VBS has the potential to be so much more than that.

But as crucial as VBS was to my spiritual development, I know others could share similar testimonials about the fellowship of church camp or the inspiration they found at the School of Christian Mission.

This is why we decided to offer a summer preview this month. We want showcase the ministries where so many United Methodists of all ages have had their faith invigorated.

The weather is now growing warmer and the days longer. School will be out for summer before we know it.

Now is the time to start thinking about how you and your family would like to spend the coming hot season.

To contact me, e-mail hhahn@arumc.org or call (501) 324-8037.

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2010 Conference Camps



Camp map graphic by Patrick W. Shownes

For many, it just wouldn't be summer without the taste of s'mores around a roaring campfire, a relaxing walk along a nature trail or the view of a glorious sunrise from an outdoor chapel.

Church camps are where many children spend their first night away from home and where quite

a few teens sneak their first kiss. They are where countless clergy first discern their call to pastoral ministry and where some even meet their future spouse.

Most importantly, church camps are where young Christians get to savor the scope of God's creation and develop a stronger understanding of their faith. They serve as a spiritual rite of passage.

In anticipation of the summer months, the following three pages offer an overview of the delights United Methodist camps have in store.

They include camps across the state that minister to youth with a variety of needs.

We hope you can use the following information in planning your summer vacation.

Bear Creek Camp/ Ozark Mission Project

The camp, seven miles south of Marianna, is a year-round camp and retreat facility located in the St. Francis National Forest, on Bear Creek Lake. Bear Creek offers facilities, services and programs for a variety of groups such as church, community, professional, civic and school.

The camp has 10 air-conditioned and heated cabins with bunks for 70 campers. One cabin is wheelchair accessible, but all cabins will be so in the near future. The camp also has new separate boys and girls bathroom facilities.

In addition, Bear Creek Camp offers a basketball court as well as other designated activity areas. The camp has its Outdoor Chapel for worship services and prayer points located throughout the camp.

Its Assembly Hall will accommodate 150 people for meals and is equipped with a commercial-style kitchen that boasts range/ovens, dishwasher, deep fryer and deep freeze. The Assembly Hall is suitable

for inclement weather use as well — for crafts, entertainment and worship.

United Methodist churches often use the camp for retreats, and family reunions use Bear Creek as a the camp has long played host to youth groups that build wheelchair ramps and restore older homes as part of the United Methodist ministry, the Ozark Mission Project.

For directions or to reserve the camp, contact Ike Mohr, pastor of Marianna First UMC and Bear Creek camp director, or Denise Jones, the church's secretary/treasurer, at (870) 295-368. The church office hours are typically 8:30 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday. More information is also available at www.fumcmari.org.

This summer, the camp will host two events that are open to the general public:

■ June 4-6: Southeast District Council on Youth Ministries spring rally. The price will be \$60 if registered by May 14, after that price

increases to \$75 with no guarantee of a T-shirt. To obtain a registration form or learn more, contact Emily Johnson, adult coordinator of the Southeast District Council on Youth Ministries, at (501) 940-6577 or emily4oaks@aol.com. Registrations need to be mailed to Johnson at 12193 Highway 146, Holly Grove, AR 72069. Checks should be payable to SEDCYM Spring Rally.

■ Date to be announced: First United Methodist Church in Marianna is organizing a "First-timers Camp" for rising 1st- and 2nd-graders to get their first overnight camping experience. The experience will include Bible lessons and games. The fee is \$35 and includes a T-shirt. To learn the date of the event, contact Mohr at (870) 295-368.

Ozark Mission Project

For those more interested in hammering than hiking, Ozark Mission Project offers an unusual camping experience for teens across the state and beyond.



Cabins offer a stunning view of St. Francis National Forest at Camp Bear Creek near Marianna.

Photo courtesy of Marianna First UMC

Ozark Mission Project campers clean up, fix up and paint up houses for Arkansans in need. Often those helped are senior citizens or people with physical disabilities.

What began with one camp in 1986 has since expanded to 12 camps each summer, serving all four corners of the state.

This year, youth groups from more than 40 churches, including two Texas congregations, plan to

participate in Ozark Mission Project camps.

Almost all camps are full at this time. But the Ozark Mission Project has an opening for 8 youth and 2 adults at its Middle School Camp for 6th- and 7th-graders on June 17-July 1 at Bear Creek Camp. The camp costs \$185 per person.

To apply and learn the fee schedule, call Nancy Mulhearn at (501) 339-4500 or visit www.ozarkmissionproject.org

Shoal Creek Camp

The camp, 571 Youth Camp Road, New Blaine, will offer a variety of heroic adventures for all ages this summer.

The camp offers a swimming pool, horseshoe pits, a baseball diamond, Frisbee golf goals, children's play equipment, fire pit and hiking trail on a 22-acre campground. School-age campers should select their camp by the grade they will enter in the fall. The registration deadline is two weeks prior to the first day of the camp.

To obtain a registration and health form, visit www.westdistrict.org. You can also e-mail Mardell McClurkin at mardellmclurkin@gmail.com or call the camp at (479) 938-2270. Mail Shoal Creek camp registrations to addresses listed with each camp.

Grades K-2 / Day Camp

Date: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. June 11
Cost: \$15, includes T-shirt
Director: Sharon Balloun, (479) 229-2637
To Register: McClurkins, P.O. Box 33, Alma, AR 72921, (479) 632-5822 or cell at (479) 461-5209

Campers will explore how to be "A Hero" — a true friend through Bible stories. Without spending the night, campers will hike, eat, make crafts, worship, swim and make new friends. Bring swimsuit, sunscreen and towel.

Grades 5-6 / Upper Elementary

Dates: 3 p.m. June 28 to 11 a.m. July 2
Cost: \$100, includes T-shirt
Director: Suzanne Jones, (479) 484-5814
To Register: Suzanne Jones, 4929 Hardscrabble Way, Fort Smith, AR 72903

Campers will be reminded that it takes more courage and faith to be one of God's Hero's than it takes to simply "leap off tall buildings in a single bound." There will be worship, swimming, music, Bible study, a talent show, hiking, group activities, etc.

Grades K-2 / Day Camp

Date: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. July 6
Cost: \$15, includes T-shirt
Director: Mindy James, (479) 996-5683 or cell: (479) 650-1250
To Register: Mindy James, 810 Woodland Way, Greenwood, AR 72936

Without spending the night, campers will explore how they can be "A Hero" by accepting others. Bring swimsuit, towel and sunscreen, and plan to hike, eat, make crafts, sing, hear a Bible story and make new friends.

Grades 7-12 / Jr. & Sr. High

Dates: 2 p.m. July 8 to 5 p.m. July 10
Cost: \$70, includes T-shirt
Director: Ricky Huggins and Greg Pair (479) 785-1415 or Huggins' cell at (918) 413-4705 or Pair's cell at



Youngsters practice ringing chimes at the annual Music Camp at Shoal Creek Camp in New Blaine.

(479) 459-7799
To Register: Journey UMC, 4235 Kelly Highway, Fort Smith, AR 72904, (479) 242-2024, E-mail: journey_ricky@yahoo.com

The theme is "Taking off Masks; Putting on Christ", Romans 13:14.

Campers will swim, hike, have Bible study, meet new friends, and discover from Mark 9:35, "Whoever wants to be first, must be last of all and servant of all." A true "Hero" lives like Jesus.

Grades 3-6 / Music Camp

Dates: 1 p.m. July 12 to 11 a.m. July 16
Cost: \$125, includes T-shirt
Directors: Judy Fraley, (501) 835-3410 and Mark Waynick, (479) 783-5908
To Register: Judy Fraley, Sylvan Hills UMC, 9921 Sylvan Hills Highway,

Photo by John Woodward of CWD Productions
Sherwood, AR 72120

Campers will learn to be "Heroes" by sharing the good news through music. There will be Bible study, crafts, hiking, swimming, playing chimes, learning Festival music and fellowship.

Grades 3-4 / Middle Elementary

Dates: 3 p.m. July 17 to 11 a.m. July 20
Cost: \$85, includes T-shirt
Directors: Herschel and Mardell McClurkin, (479) 632-5822 or at cell: (479) 461-5209, and Sarah Gotschall at (870) 631-2008
To Register: McClurkins, P.O. Box 33, Alma, AR 72921. E-mail: herschelhm@gmail.com

Campers will learn how they can be a "Hero" through the Christian seasons of the year. Advent will be first, then Christmas, Epiphany, Lent,

Easter and Pentecost. There will be songs, crafts, swimming, games and special guests.

Grades K-2 / Day Camp

Date: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Aug. 5
Cost: \$15, includes T-shirt
Director: Norm Moyer at cell: (479) 206-0375
To Register: Booneville UMC, PO Box 507, Booneville AR 72927. The church's number is (479) 675-2811

Bring swimsuit, sunscreen, towel and "Be a Hero Friend," while you swim, hike, make crafts, hear Bible stories, and play — all in one day.

Grades Sr. High (9-12th)

Dates: 5 p.m. Aug. 20 to 3 p.m. Aug. 21
Cost: \$25 (Space limited to 50 campers)
No refunds will be given. Fees may be transferred to another camper if unable to attend.
Director: Judy Hall, (479) 438-1429
To Register: Judy Hall, 593 Townsend Lane, New Blaine, AR 72851

This is an upside down camp. We will be staying up most of the night and then sleeping in. Each participant is asked to bring a group snack. Also, bring one item in a paper bag that represents a "Hero" you would model your life after other than Jesus Christ and be prepared to tell why. Expect to get real, make friends, have fun and experience God in a new way. We will discover who "we are" and the "me I want to be."

Camp Tanako



After an afternoon of swimming, youngsters at the Younger Elementary Extravaganza Camp at Camp Tanako enjoy ice cream sundaes.

Photo courtesy of Camp Tanako

Tanako, 4301 Highway 290, Hot Springs, provides programs that give children, youth and adults experiences that shape and expand Christian commitment. Campers grow in faith through small-group discussion, music, drama, arts and crafts, recreation and worship.

Multiple playing fields provide plenty of room for traditional field sports, relay races and group activities.

Summer session campers can enjoy kayaking, fishing, canoeing and rowing at our waterfront locations on Lake Catherine. Cabins are equipped with central heat and air-conditioning. The campground also has a swimming pool.

To get a registration and health forms, visit www.tanako.org. You can also contact the camp by calling (501) 262-2600 or e-mailing tanako@tanako.org.

Send the registration form and either \$50 registration fee or the full camp fee to: Camp Tanako, 4301 Highway 290, Hot Springs, AR 71913.

Counselor-In-Training Leadership Weekend

When: May 21-23

Grades: 9-12

Cost: \$75

Dean: Tanako

Check-in: 5-5:45 p.m. Friday

Check-out: 10:30 a.m. Sunday

Deadline: May 1

If you are going to be in the 9-12 grades and would like to provide leadership for younger Tanako campers, here is your opportunity. This weekend is required to prepare you to be a

Tanako Counselor-in-Training.

Learn about this summer's curriculum, develop your leadership skills and explore recreation choices.

Fishing Camp

When: June 4-6

Grades: 3-7

Cost: \$140

Dean: Mark Kalkbrenner

Check-in: 10-11 a.m. Friday

Check out: after fish fry

Deadline: May 21

"Adaptation" is the theme as we learn the basics of safety, knot tying, casting and catch-and-release. Campers must bring their own rod and reel with new line. Hooks, floats, tackle and bait are provided.

Camper families may join us for a fish fry June 6 at noon for an additional \$8 per person. Reservations are due at the time of check-in.

Younger Elementary Extravaganza Camp

When: June 21-23

Grades: 1-2

Cost: \$200

Dean: Greg Perry

Check-in: 10-11 a.m. Monday

Check out: 11 a.m. Wednesday

Deadline: June 7

Are you ready for your first solo experience at Camp Tanako? Come get a taste of everything we have to offer, in bite-size pieces just for you.

Senior High

When: June 28-July 2

Grades: 9-12

Cost: \$395

Dean: Shane Staton

Check-in: 10-11 a.m. Monday

Check out: 11 a.m. Friday

Deadline: June 14

Join us for a camp experience that is more than just a "good time." You will be sure to meet new friends and reconnect with old ones, as we enjoy many activities at the pool, lakeside and all around camp. We will also strengthen our relationship with God through small-group sessions and worship services.

Junior High I & II

When: J.H. I: July 5-9; J.H. II: July 19-23

Grades: 7-9

Cost: \$395

Deans: J.H. I: Mike Meeks; J.H. II: Hammett Evans

Check-in: 10-11 a.m. Monday

Check out: 11 a.m. Friday

Deadlines: J.H. I: June 21;

J.H. II: July 6

Not only do we have the "regular" camp activities, but we also have some fun games with new twists. The worship services and small-group discussions are geared toward giving you strength and renewed faith to return home a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Elementary camps

Middle Elementary I

When: June 14-17

Grades: 3-4

Cost: \$220

Dean: Terry Gosnell

Check-in: 10-11 a.m. Monday

Check out: 11 a.m. Thursday

Deadline: May 31

Middle Elementary II

When: July 16-18

Grades: 3-4

Cost: \$200

Dean: Michale Kuntz

Check-in: 4-5 p.m. Friday

Check out: 2 p.m. Sunday

Deadline: July 2

Older Elementary I & II

When: O.E. I: July 12-16;

O.E. II: July 26-30

Grades: 5-6

Cost: \$385

Deans: O.E. I: Bill Fish;

O.E. II: Nathan Kilbourne

Check-in: 10-11 a.m. Monday

Check out: 11 a.m. Friday

Deadlines: O.E. I: June 28;

O.E. II July 12

This year's curriculum for our elementary camps is "Be A Hero." It is published by New Earth Christian Resources for the Outdoors.

Be A Hero focuses on both Old and New Testament heroes and relates their messages to stories of modern-day heroes. Campers will be encouraged to explore and find the hero inside them through small group sessions and worship services.

During the evenings, campers also will participate in all-camp activities, such as pool parties, scavenger hunts, talent shows, water games and carnivals. Canoeing, kayaking and horseback riding are available for campers 5th grade and older.

Music, Arts, and Drama Camp

Audition Day: May 16

When: August 1-6

Grades: 8-12

Cost: \$395

Dean: Fred-Allen Self

Check-in: 3 p.m. Sunday

Check-out: after 4 p.m. show Friday

Deadline: July 12

This year's production will be Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella. Campers who are interested in all parts of putting together a musical production are invited to join us as we will need actors, musicians, artists and all sorts of creative people. While working on the production, there will be plenty of time to enjoy traditional camp activities and connecting with fellow young Christians.

Campers will receive two free tickets with their registration. Tickets will be sold at check-in and at the time of the performance. Adults cost \$5.00 and children under 12 cost \$2. Proceeds will go to Camper Scholarship Fund.

A special audition is scheduled for May 16 in order to cast main characters. To learn more about tryouts, e-mail the camp office at tanako@tanako.org.

Wayland Spring Camp

The camp, three miles south of Imboden on Arkansas 115, over the years has hosted retreats for United Methodists and other groups in the northeastern part of the state.

Wayland Spring has six air-conditioned cabins on 120 acres with basketball, volleyball, swimming pool, ping-pong and a nature trail.

As part of its ministry, the camp also opens its swimming pool to the general public on five dates each year.

The pool dates offer a time for parents or grandparents to bring their children to the camp for some fun in the afternoon sun.

In 2010, the pool will be open from 3 to 7 p.m. June 17, July 1, July 15, July 29 and Aug. 12. The dates are all on Thursday. A lifeguard will be on duty. The camp also has several picnic tables around its Dining Hall for families who want to pack a picnic lunch.

To reserve space at the camp for church gatherings, contact Bob McMillon, the camp director and pastor of Imboden UMC, at (870) 759-1801 or bpmcmillon@suddenlink.net. To see what dates are available and learn more about the camp, visit www.waylandspring.org.

This summer, Jonesboro First UMC is organizing two camps at Wayland Spring that are open to the public.

■ Rising 3rd and 4th Grade Camp on June 10-12 (the time of departure and return to be announced). Volunteers are still needed for this trip.

■ Rising 5th & 6th Grade Camp on June 28-30 (the time of departure and return to be announced)

Each camp costs \$60 per camper (payable to First UMC with memo: camp). To obtain registration, medical release and liability forms for the camps and to see what to bring, visit www.fumc-jonesboro.org and click on "2010 Camps."

If you are with another church or organization and plan to meet at the camp, contact Shannon May at (870) 932-7479.

The camp also will host a Fish Fry from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sept. 18. The event costs \$8 each or \$30 for a family of four or more. To learn more, contact McMillon.



Camp Aldersgate in Little Rock, a ministry long supported by Arkansas' United Methodist Women, provides a place for children and youth of all kinds to enjoy a camping experience, including an afternoon fishing.

Photo by Kelly Quinn

Camp Aldersgate

Camp Aldersgate, 2000 Aldersgate Road, Little Rock, is a ministry long supported by Arkansas' United Methodist Women. Aldersgate provides recreation and an outdoors camp experience for children and youth who have medical or physical conditions or developmental delays and their families, as well as senior adults.

The camp's vision is to set the standard for a camping environment that encourages normalcy, socialization, and inclusiveness to persons with diverse abilities and needs.

The 120-acre camp offers most traditional summer activities such as campfires and singing, canoeing, fishing, arts and crafts, swimming and nature hikes. Aldersgate also has an accessible challenge ropes course, hand- and/or foot-driven catamarans, adapted archery, and for older campers, scuba diving.

This summer, Aldersgate will offer the following camps:

Muscular Dystrophy Camp

For children ages 6 through 17 diagnosed with various neuro-muscular diseases.
Dates: June 13 - 18
Contact: Denise Tackett of the Muscular Dystrophy Association at (479) 646-2199 or jtackett@mdausa.org
Camp Physician: Dr. Richard Nix

Spina Bifida Camp

For children ages 6 through 16 diagnosed with spina bifida and other spinal cord injuries.
Dates: June 20 - 25
Contact: Mary Jo Stanton of the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission at (501) 296-1788 or

(800) 459-1517 or mjstanton@arspinalcord.org
Camp Physician: Dr. Vikki Stefans

Diabetes Youth Camp

For children ages 6 through 13 diagnosed with diabetes.
Dates: July 11 - 16
Contact: Cindy Chambers of the American Diabetes Association at (501) 221-7444, ext. 6056 or cchambers@diabetes.org.
Camp Physician: Dr. Alba Morales

Cardiac Camp

For children ages 6 through 18 diagnosed with various heart conditions.
Dates: July 18 - 23
Contact: Judith Dugan/Angie Smith at (501) 364-1479 or duganjuditha@uams.edu or smithangelaj@uams.edu
Camp Physician: Dr. Paul Seib

Arthritis Camp

For children ages 6 through 16 diagnosed with various arthritic conditions.
Dates: July 18 - 23
Contact: Carla Davis of the Arthritis Foundation at (501) 664-7242 or cdavis@arthritis.org
Camp Physician: Dr. Paula Morris

Kidney Camp

For children ages 6 through 18 diagnosed with kidney disorders.
Dates: July 18 - 23
Contact: Debbie Brady at (501) 364-4170 or BradyDR@archildrens.org
Camp Physician: Dr. Eileen Ellis

Cancer Camp Hope

For children ages 6 through 16 diagnosed with cancer.
Dates: Aug. 1 - 6

Contact: Lyn Hicks of the American Cancer Society a (501) 603-5217 or (800) ACS.2345 or lyn.hicks@cancer.org
Camp Physician: Dr. Kimo Stine

Bleeding Disorders Camp

For children ages 6 through 16 diagnosed with various bleeding disorders.
Dates: August 1 - 6
Contact: Lakeisha Harris of the Arkansas Center for Bleeding Disorders at (501) 364-5961 or lharris2@uams.edu.
Camp Physician: Dr. Kimo Stine

Asthma Camp

For children ages 6 through 16 diagnosed with asthma.
Dates: August 8 - 13
Contact: Camp Aldersgate at (501) 225-1444 or applications@campaldersgate.net.
Camp Physician: Dr. Eddie Shields.

Kota Camps

Inclusive camps for children ages 6 through 18 with various disabilities and their non-disabled siblings and friends.
Both 2010 Kota Sessions are full. Applications received will be placed on a waiting list.
Dates: June 27 - July 2 Session I and July 25 - 30 Session II
Contact: Camp Aldersgate at (501) 225-1444
Camp Physicians: Dr. Jill Fussell at Session I and Dr. Gene France at Session II

To learn who to contact for application forms or learn more about the camp, call the camp at (501) 225-144 or visit www.campaldersgate.net.

Healing Place Ministries Youth Camp

Healing Place Ministries, 200 W. Sixth St., Pine Bluff, offers day camps for children ages 7 through 14.

The ministry will hold four camps from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily on:

- June 14 - 18
- June 21 - 25
- June 28 - July 2
- July 5 - 9

The camps usually can accommodate anywhere from 30 to 70 youth. The ministry's major

partners are: the Pine Bluff Police Department, Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, Jefferson County Cooperative Extension, Pine Bluff First United Methodist Church, Arkansas Fish and Game Commission, Jefferson County Red Cross and Chester Hines Youth Center.

Registration costs \$10 per family. Children can only attend one session. To register, contact David or Edna Morgan of Healing Places Ministries at (870) 535-0101.

Outdoor ministry gives Christians opportunity to glean God's bounty

Special to the AUM

In an agricultural state like Arkansas, one thing churches can always count on is that opportunities to feed the hungry will keep cropping up.

The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance and the Society of St. Andrew have teamed up to provide youth groups and families with chances to get outdoors and share some of Arkansas' harvest.

The relief alliance is a state association of food banks and other hunger relief agencies. The society is an ecumenical ministry founded by United Methodist pastors in 1979. Both share the mission to provide food for neighbors in need.

Gleaning fields is one way to fulfill that mission. Gleaning is the biblical practice of hand-gathering crops left after harvest. Deuteronomy 15 says, "Since there will never cease to be some in need on the Earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor

in your land."

Arkansas' gleaning project salvages fresh, nutritious produce from American farms — produce that otherwise would be left to rot — and delivers it to agencies across the state that serve the poor. Last year, youth and other volunteers gleaned 300,000 pounds of food in the state.

Opportunities to join in the gleaning project arise in late May and early June as well as in the late summer and early fall, if the weather cooperates. Most harvests take place on farms in the eastern part of Arkansas.

Gleaning a field usually requires 25 to 50 people, and usually only requires one day.

Those United Methodist congregations interested in learning more and interested in joining the gleaning efforts this year can contact Michelle L. Shope of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance at (501) 399-9999 or by e-mail at mshope@ARhungeralliance.org.



Youth glean a harvest for Arkansas' hungry as part of a summer ministry offered by the Society of St. Andrew and Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance.

Photo courtesy of Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance

Longtime Camp Tanako director touched lives of thousands

HEATHER HAHN
Editor

Terry Simpson Everitt, who ministered to generations of United Methodist youth as the director of Camp Tanako, died on March 29 of cancer. He was 64.

During more than 30 years as the camp's leader, Everitt oversaw the expansion and updating of its facilities including the construction of new cabins and the Tanako Life Center. Under his leadership, the Hot Springs camp also received accreditation from the American Camp Association in 2003.

"Terry was the most enthusiastic, passionate man about his job that I have ever known," said Myra Fuller, who has served on the camp board for more than a dozen years.

"He never lost his excitement and his drive through all those years to make that camp better for children and adults, everyone who came to the camp."

Becky Campbell, who grew up going to Tanako each summer and has worked at the camp since 2003, said Everitt was always the first person visitors saw when they arrived and he always wore a smile.

"If you had been there before, he always knew your name and was glad to have you there," she said. "He made you feel that you were the one he remembered."

A native of Clarksdale, Miss., and a graduate of Mississippi State University, Everitt first worked in sales for Kodak and M&M Mars. But he soon discerned a call to ministry in the United Methodist Church.

He initially served in youth ministry at St. Luke United Methodist Church in Little Rock and then in 1977, took the post as director of Camp Tanako.

When he first arrived, the campgrounds were in extreme disrepair, said longtime friend Bill Staton. The camp's swimming pool



Terry Everitt, at right, helps young campers at Camp Tanako with their fishing polls in 2005. For more than 30 years, Everitt — who passed away on March 29 — devoted his life to the outdoor ministry. His work touched the lives of thousands of United Methodists.

Photo courtesy of Camp Tanako

had a nonfunctioning 1940s-era pump and bad filters, Staton said, and ducks were swimming in the bathtub of the director's residence.

It was the pool problems that led to Everitt and Staton's first meeting. At the time, Staton owned a hardware store in Hot Springs and had 10 years' experience working with the pool at the local YMCA. Everitt came looking for advice.

Staton helped Everitt get the pool in shape by the time campers arrived that spring, and the two became fast friends. Staton has now served on the camp's board for some 20 years.

Everitt, he said, was determined to improve the camp but he also was always looking for ways to save money.

"He could get 10 cents out of a nickel," Staton said. "We used to tease him about how cheap he was. But he had to be. There wasn't any money."

Everitt's thrifty efforts succeeded. Today, almost all of the facilities at the camp have been replaced or renovated. He even

helped design his family's residence himself.

"One of the things he was proudest of was getting the camp from the pitiful condition it was in to start with to an [American Camp Association]-approved camp," Staton said, "and not just an ACA-approved camp but one of the top ACA-approved camps."

But as much as he transformed the campgrounds, his ministry also helped transform the lives of campers and counselors.

Diane Wright, a member of St. Paul UMC in Little Rock, said she first gave her life to Christ at Camp Tanako.

Wright has visited the camp almost every summer from the time she was 6. She even met her husband, Chris, there when they were counselors. Now Wright has taken a job as the camp's new program coordinator.

She said the camp was where she found solace whenever she felt "out of sync" with God.

"I might come in broken; I

might come in confused and wondering what the heck I was going to do with my life," she said. "But by the end of camp, I knew I might not have all the answers but at least I'd have renewed strength and a renewed spirit. It gave me spiritual clarity."

Much of what Everitt did was behind the scenes. But the sense of peace so many found at Camp Tanako is a big part of Everitt's legacy, Wright said.

"He probably accomplished more before we got to breakfast than we did most days," Wright said.

Campbell, who is succeeding Everitt as the camp's director, said she and many others count Everitt as a mentor and second parent.

His influence extended beyond Camp Tanako. Everitt, certified as a camp director by the American Camp Association, served as the association's section president for nine years. He also served on the United Methodist National Camps and Retreat Centers Board for 12 years.

His wife of 43 years, Becky, and his three children shared his dedication to outdoor ministry.

"They gave up spring breaks to

get the camp ready for summer camp," said longtime friend Russell Hull, the pastor of Nashville First and Bingen United Methodist churches. "They never went on summer vacations because they were always at camp. They love the camp as much as Terry does."

Hull, who delivered the eulogy at Everitt's memorial service on April 3 at Tanako, estimated that Everitt ministered to some 800 youth each year.

"He's touched the lives of some 27,000 campers," Hull said. "That's more people than most pastors will ever see."

Everitt is survived by his wife, Becky, and children Tara Everitt (fiancé, Luis Perez); Kim Carter (husband, Terry) and Mark Everitt (wife, Nancy). His survivors also include brother, Bill Everitt (wife Martha Mosley Everitt) of Heber Springs, and grandchildren Jackson, Grace, Anna Catherine and Cameron Carter.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Camp Tanako or Arkansas Hospice, Inc. at St. Joseph's Hospital, 300 Werner St., Hot Springs AR 71903.

Camp for grieving youngsters scheduled for May

Special to the AUM

Kaleidoscope Grief Center, a service of Methodist Family Health, will hold Camp Healing Hearts will be May 14-15.

The camp program for those dealing with grief will be from 5 p.m. at Camp Aldersgate, 2000 Aldersgate Road, Little Rock.

Campers will arrive at 5 p.m. May 14 and depart at 5 p.m. the next day.

Camp Healing Hearts is for youngsters ages 5 to 18 and their

families who have lost a loved one. The camp is aimed at providing a safe environment to develop coping skills.

Throughout the weekend, campers will reflect, reconnect and rediscover on an individual, family and community level by participating in therapeutic and recreational activities.

In "Heart to Heart" time, children, teens and parents will participate in age-tailored peer support sessions designed to provide

a safe environment for the expression of grief.

Camp Healing Hearts will also provide participants the opportunity to take part in traditional camp activities such as a campfire with s'mores, fishing, swimming, arts and crafts and a ropes course.

The camp is free. To learn more, e-mail Katherine Robinson at katrobinson@methodistfamily.org. To register, visit www.kaleidoscopekids.org.



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VBS Continued from Page 1A

ministry, my prayer is always that hearts will be touched and lives will be changed for Christ."

Cokesbury, the United Methodist publisher, this year wants to give VBS participants a whole new perspective of their faith with "Galactic Blast: A Cosmic Adventure Praising God."

Lisa Bullock, director of children's ministries at Maumelle First United Methodist Church, wants to help churches throughout the Arkansas Conference make the most of the curriculum with a special training session from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 24 at her church.

"I'm hoping small churches can get an idea of how to do things in a big way with small resources," she said. "As I have been involved in this, I've tried not to make things cost a lot of money."

She particularly wants to help congregations holding their first VBS — or their first one in years — learn what they need to get started.

Some United Methodist churches use Group Publishing, which this year has offers a choice of two programs: "High Seas Expedition" and "Egypt: Joseph's Journey from Prison to Palace."

But Bullock said she has always favored Cokesbury materials because they are imbued with Wesleyan theology.

"When you're dealing with seeking children, we want to make sure that what we're representing as curriculum is Methodist," she said.

Faith of a green planet

What Bullock particularly likes about the 2010 Cokesbury curriculum is its emphasis on good environmental stewardship here on Earth.

Each VBS session opens with an assembly where young "cadets" can hear from the puppet Galileo, a green gorilla, who shares tips on preserving God's creation. These tips include electricity conservation, reusing, water conservation, proper waste disposal and recycling.

After their time with Galileo, the cadets will blast off on a galactic mission each day to discover a different Bible lesson. They'll hear how God created the heavens and the earth in the first chapter of Genesis and how God comforted Elijah with a "still, small voice." They'll also learn about Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, His healing of a blind beggar in Jericho and His appearance after resurrection to two disciples walking to Emmaus.

The program includes "cosmic crafts" such as a moonbeam



Children paint scenes of the Garden of Gethsemane at a special Holy Week-themed VBS that St. Paul UMC in Little Rock hosted over spring break this year. The painted "garden mural" boxes later became part of a prayer labyrinth.

Photo courtesy of Kerry Bradford

tambourine, constellation magnets a solar-bead cross, which changes color when exposed to sunlight.

Even the snacks have a space theme. Among other treats, there are comet coolers and supernova sundaes.

The curriculum is flexible enough to not be limited to just five days, said Pam Snider, the director of children's ministry at Asbury UMC in Little Rock.

She said her church plans to use the VBS lessons as its Sunday School curriculum during the warm months.

"Sometimes in the summertime, Sunday School becomes a little bit on the back-burner," she said. "I don't want it to be that way. I think it should be the best we can do, so we do it every Sunday morning for 10 weeks."

An evangelism tool

Liz Wright, director of children and families at St. Paul UMC in Little Rock, said she decided to use Group's program based on the Joseph story because it tied in well with the Little Rock Art Center exhibit "World of the Pharaohs: Treasurer of Egypt Revealed." The exhibit closes July 5, not long before the church holds its VBS.

For St. Paul UMC, the July program will be its second VBS of the year. For the first time, the church

decided to have a Holy Week-themed VBS over Spring Break. The church called its program, "Take This Trip," and each day focused on a different part of Christ's journey from Palm Sunday to the Cross.

"Over 50 percent of the children who came were not children of our members, so we really did reach out into the community," Wright said.

Regardless of which publisher or program a church chooses, VBS remains a key evangelism tool. Many of the kids who initially show up to VBS end up returning Sunday morning with their parents in tow.

That's been the experience of Karen Swales, minister to families with children at Springdale First UMC.

"We find that it reaches so many kids in our neighborhood who are unchurched," she said. "We find that people of all ages are involved in Vacation Bible School from the seniors cutting out things and working in the nursery to the young mothers so excited about seeing their kids grow closer to God."

Vacation Bible School "Galactic Blast" Training will be from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 24 at Maumelle First UMC, 1201 Edgewood Drive. The fee is \$10 per person or \$30 per church. The registration brochure is at www.arumc.org/vbs2010.

COMING UP

Cavanaugh UMC, 7205 U.S. 271 South, Fort Smith, will celebrate its 50th anniversary at 10:45 a.m. April 18 with morning worship, a noon meal and special music in the afternoon. The church received its charter on Easter 1960.

To learn more, contact Troy Conrad, the church pastor, at (479) 739-7047.

The United Methodist Women of **Mayflower UMC**, Miller and Grove streets, will hold a Spring Bazaar at 7 a.m. April 24. A raffle will be held at 11 a.m. for a handmade quilt. Tickets cost \$1 each. Lunches of chicken

spaghetti, salad, garlic bread and a drink will also be available for \$5. Proceeds will benefit local mission projects. To learn more, call the church at (501) 470-0983.

Geyer Springs UMC, 5500 Geyer Springs Road, will host a Variety Dinner Show at 5 p.m. May 1. Baked potatoes with all the trimmings will be served.

Tickets cost \$7 for adults and \$3 for children, ages 4 to 10. Proceeds benefit the church's food pantry, which serves more than 600 people each month.

To learn more, call the church at (501) 565-3175 or visit www.geyerspringsumc.org.



May 10, 1945 – March 29, 2010

Thank You, Terry

The Legend of Tanako states that Native Americans living around what is now Hot Springs were ruled by a wise chieftain known as Tanako. They felt the Great Spirit provided the area's hot waters. Chief Tanako sent word out to all tribes that anyone could come to the valley of hot waters if they came in peace. The area became a place where all could live peacefully as brothers and sisters.

For more than 30 years Terry Everitt, Director of Camp Tanako, and the only certified American Camp Association (A.C.A.) director in Arkansas, kept the spirit of this legend alive as he led Camp Tanako to earn certification by the American Camp Association (A.C.A.).

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas lifts up Terry's memory, thanking God for his commitment to excellence, his lifetime of service to our youth, and his abiding faith.



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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THE UNITED METHODIST

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Like a well-toned athlete

Spiritual disciplines take practice, routine | 6B



Coming of age

When will UMC regain its passion? | 7B

Section B

April 16, 2010



COURTESY PHOTO

Mission volunteers from Suncreek United Methodist Church in Allen, Texas, travel to Tierra Nueva, Mexico to build homes for the poor. Some churches have stopped sending teams due to increased violence south of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Juárez tension puts outreach on hiatus

BY MALLORY MCCALL
Staff Writer

As United Methodist mission volunteers finish the home they've built in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, owner Rosa Torres Baeza praises the simple cinderblock structure that replaced the dirt-floor, cardboard shack her family previously called home.

"This home means so much more to me," she says, "because you came despite what the media says and despite the dangers of my city."

Ciudad Juárez, once a popular spot for mission trips, has emerged in the national spotlight with its escalating border violence, drug cartel tensions and increasing death toll of innocent residents. And while United Methodist churches as far away as New York would send teams across the international border to help build houses and

churches, pray and worship, and deliver groceries and clothes, the increased danger has kept many United Methodists away from ministry in Mexico.

According to the U.S. Department of State, more than 2,600 people were killed in Ciudad Juárez last year. Innocent bystanders—including teens and children—are getting caught in the crossfire of drug wars and gang raids. In March, an American consulate worker and her husband were chased and shot to death.

In light of this violence, some churches are rethinking their south-of-the-border mission projects, and some have eliminated trips to the Juárez area altogether.

Flower Mound United Methodist Church in Texas, for instance, has not taken its annual family mission trip to Juárez in two years. "It breaks my

heart not to go back, but we just don't think it's safe," said Mike Farmer, a member who has been to Juárez 10 times and helped build 25 houses.

First UMC in Garland, Texas, has also stopped its trips to that border city. "We arrived at a decision that until the Mexican federal authorities get a better grip on the situation in Juárez, we were not going to risk sending people down there," said the Rev. Clay Womack, First UMC's pastor.

But while some churches have put their Mexico missions programs on hiatus, others are returning, despite the increased danger.

Still going

On her most recent trip in March, Janet Hunt, director of community ministries at Suncreek UMC in Allen, Texas, was volunteering just outside of Juárez when her pastor back home

called to ask if she'd heard about the shooting of two Americans affiliated with the U.S. consulate in Juárez. She'd heard nothing about it; she had been isolated from the media and was focused on her mission work.

But even in a time of danger and uncertainty, Ms. Hunt said she could not turn her back on the people she was helping in Mexico. "We were not the ones being targeted," she said. "I felt safe."

For over eight years, Suncreek UMC has taken four trips a year to Tierra Nueva, Mexico, to work with Proyecto Abrigo ("Project Shelter"). Founded in 1996 by the Rev. Jose Luis Portillo, Proyecto Abrigo is a faith-based organization that recruits volunteers from the U.S. to build cinderblock houses for families in the poorer communities outside of Juárez.

■ See 'Tension,' page 3B

Q&A: What 'new' Christianity looks like

Brian McLaren says the church has some rethinking to do. In his latest book, *A New Kind of Christianity: Ten Questions that are Transforming the Faith* (HarperOne), he suggests that the old institution of the church may be preparing to give birth to a new sense of what it means to follow Christ.

He spoke recently with staff writer Amy Forbus.

How did you come up with this list of questions you say the church must answer?

I've been doing a lot of public speaking for the last 10 years or so—from Argentina to Sweden to Korea to South Africa—and it's been amazing to me how the same kinds of questions are raised in such different settings. So really I'm just reporting the kinds of questions I've been observing all over the place.

Authors like Phyllis Tickle and Len Sweet agree that something's not working with the way we're doing Christianity. At the same time, I've seen mixed reviews of your book. Did you expect that?

Yes. I have a group of very loyal and very passionate critics, some of whom agree that there are problems and that these questions are important, but they really don't like the kind of answers I'm proposing. Others don't really like the ques-

■ See 'McLaren,' page 2B



Brian McLaren

FAITH WATCH

U.S. bishops defend pope in abuse scandal

A statement released March 30 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops defended Pope Benedict XVI against accusations he mishandled at least two clergy sexual abuse cases before his election in 2005. "We know from our experience how Pope Benedict . . . has strengthened the church's response to victims and supported our efforts to deal with perpetrators," the bishops said.

Hutaree militia group called a Christian cult

Nine members of the Hutaree—a Michigan-based militia group that claims it is preparing to battle the Antichrist—were arrested March 28-30 on charges they plotted to kill a police officer and attack his funeral procession. "Everything I've read about them and on their Web site establish, to me, that they are a cult," Jack Kay, a militia expert at Eastern Michigan University, told Religion News Service.

Critic of creationism wins Templeton Prize

Francisco Ayala, a molecular biologist and former Dominican priest, won on March 25 the 2010 Templeton Prize—an honor awarded to scholars who have affirmed "life's spiritual dimension." Dr. Ayala has criticized creationism as an attempt to blend faith and science. The two realms shouldn't be in conflict "because science and religion concern different matters," he said in accepting the award.

Bush recalls impact of prayer from others

Former President George W. Bush was most surprised during his eight years in office by the "calming effect of prayer by total strangers," he said during a March 12 forum at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla. "Imagine being a president of the United States and innumerable people would . . . say, 'I'm here to tell you, Mr. President, that I pray for you.' You gain strength as a leader by recognizing you need help," said Mr. Bush.

—Compiled by Bill Fentum

McLAREN Continued from page 1B

tions, and they think we'd be better off to not even raise them.

On the positive side, of all of my books I've never had such heartfelt, and in some cases, heartbreaking responses from people that tend to come in privately via e-mail. These are often people who have left the ministry, and they say, "The lack of answers to those questions tells my own story."

Who's your intended audience?

I think there is a potential convergence of what I would call progressive Catholics, progressive evangelicals—some people call them post-evangelicals—and what I would call post-institutional mainliners, meaning folks from the mainline tradition who are not preoccupied with institutional maintenance. With that group coming together with social justice-oriented people from the black and Latino churches, I just think there's potential for a tremendous coalition and convergence.

But the truth is I always write for a lot of the people who feel somewhat disenfranchised and alienated, to try to give them a little bit of hope and help them know that they're not the only people with these kinds of questions.

One of these questions that I've asked myself is, "What do we do about the church?"

Let me tell you the two general things I always try to tell people. The first one is that I think our leaders have to go through a kind of theological and spiritual transformation, because a lot of our leaders are weary, some are a little bit jaded, some are just exhausted. It's not an easy job. There are a lot of challenges. This is one of the reasons why I think we in leadership have to rediscover how good the Good News is. If we can rediscover that, it will re-energize us with another spurt of hope.

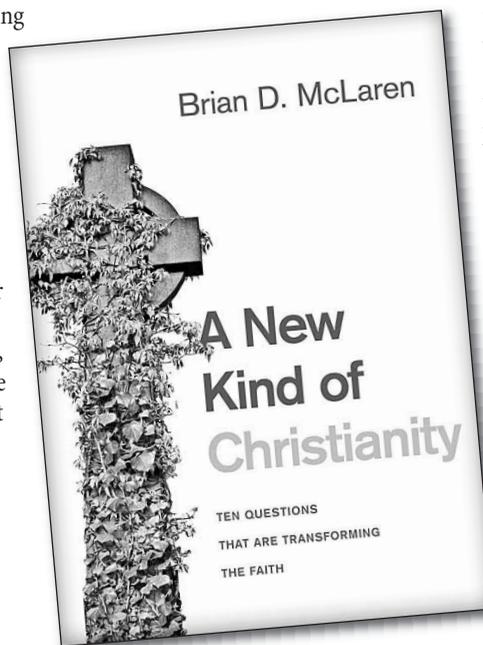
The second thing is we have to understand the value of movements and institutions. We have a lot of people who believe in institutions and not

movements, and a lot who believe in movements but not institutions. I think we have to see that they both have a very vital role, and that they actually need each other.

You're sounding a lot like a United Methodist now.

Well, good! [Laughs.] I try to get Methodists to think about this, because I think [John] Wesley is just a fantastic example. Wesley did not try to reform the institution; he created a movement alongside of it in the hopes that the movement would then bring some benefits to the institution.

The way this would translate



into our churches today is to say, "We need a movement that involves the starting of thousands and thousands of new faith communities." I mean a gathering of people who get to talk about God, and where there is some safe space to ask questions, and safe space to be open about doubts and safe space to explore.

Your book introduced me to a new term: "fundasexuals."

Obviously it's sort of a playful term to deal with a very tense subject. Arguments about sexuality, especially homosexuality, have become polariz-

ing and paralyzing in a lot of our faith communities. What I try to do is to help us move beyond immediately jumping to a for-or-against, pro-or-con discussion, and instead to think more deeply and biblically about the issue, and to ask the question, "What are we going to do when we disagree?" Because we're not all going to agree any time soon.

Even if we all agreed on the issue of homosexuality, there are about 25 more issues related to sexuality lining up on the horizon. And if we're going to divide every time one of these questions comes along, there won't be much left of us at the end. So we've got to find a way to be honest about these very tough issues.

You've written about ways we can look at the biblical narrative.

Well, I love the Bible. I was a pastor for 23 years. I was preaching from the Bible, and that meant that I was actually reading the Bible a lot. And I became convinced that our biggest problems have to do with the assumptions that we bring to the text. In other words, it's not what is in the text that's causing us problems.

One of those assumptions that we share is that the Bible is meant to have the same kind of authority as a constitution. I'm trying to question that assumption—not to minimize biblical authority, but to rediscover biblical authority in a more appropriate way. I propose that we learn to see the Bible as an inspired library. And to realize that a library is intended to do different things than a constitution is intended to do. For example, a constitution is intended to eliminate disagreements, but a library is intended to preserve disagreements—to keep disagreements from being eliminated, because we assume that there's value to having multiple perspectives.

Instead of reading the Bible as if it were a homogenized text, I think we can rediscover the Bible as an exciting, dramatic conversation with many voices who are passionately interested in the one subject that really matters: "How can we live a life that pleases God, a life that really counts for something?"

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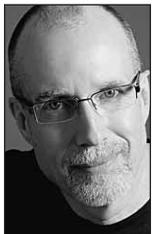
United Methodists get ready to help 'Change the World'

WIRE REPORTS

United Methodists everywhere are encouraged to participate in Change the World on April 24–25, a weekend that coincides with World Malaria Day on Sunday, April 25.

Congregations are invited to schedule a community-based workday, and use World Malaria Day sermon starters on Sunday. A special offering is encouraged to support the fight against malaria.

During that weekend, United Methodist churches are urged to create and participate in a service or fundraising event that helps effect positive change, whether it's revitalizing a food-pantry program, creating a ministry to help the homeless, or increasing awareness of global health issues.



Mike Slaughter

On April 25, World Malaria Day, the United Methodist Church will launch a \$75 million campaign called Imagine No Malaria to eradicate deaths caused by malaria. Churches are being asked to host events such as camp-outs to experience sleeping under bed nets like families in Africa who rely on mosquito netting for protection against malaria. These events will help raise awareness and funds that support Imagine No Malaria.

The Change the World concept originated with the Rev. Mike Slaughter, lead pastor at Ginghamburg Church in Tipp City, Ohio, named one of the top 50 churches in the U.S. by Church Report. Last October, Mr. Slaughter hosted the Change the World conference and authored a book by the same name.

"The way we love is by serving people, especially the poor and marginalized," said Mr. Slaughter. "The church in the world needs the reputation of being a community that helps people . . . a community of people that gives hope and that functions as salt and light in its neighborhood.

"As the United Methodist Church, we have worried too much about getting numbers into our churches instead of getting the people in our churches out into the world in relative ways. Even our smallest churches can have incredible impact when they leave their four walls to serve the needs of their neighbors, alongside of their neighbors."

For resources, visit Cokesbury.com. To list your church's event, go to rethinkchurch.org/changetheworld.

UM CONNECTIONS

Grants awarded to ethnic ministries

Directors of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) awarded \$205,295 in Ethnic Local Church grants at the board's spring meeting. The grants aim to strengthen congregations through education, advocacy or leadership development.

Recipients were:

- * Emmaus Refugee & Immigrant Family Support Services Intervention with Newcomer Youths, at Emmaus UMC in Albany, N.Y. (\$5,000);
- * the Open Table School of Transformation & Change in Providence, R.I., (\$16,000), a program of Open Table of Christ UMC's New Seeds extension ministry;
- * the Leadership Institute of Anderson UMC (\$15,000) to engage local youth to prevent violence in schools in Jackson, Miss.;
- * the Alabama-West Florida Conference (\$5,000) for the National Plan for Hispanic and Latino Ministries;
- * First Grace Community Alliance Hagar's House (\$7,000) for a joint project of an African-American and an Anglo congregation to help women and children left unhoused in New Orleans after Katrina;
- * the Human Rights Monitor, the peace with justice program of the Liberia Conference in West Africa (\$38,500);
- * Durham Hispanic Ministries and Sanctuary UMC in the North Carolina Conference (\$10,600) for La Casa de la Mujer (Latina Women Leadership House);
- * "Hope for Mississippi Delta," a program of Hope Ministries, which is a mission church of the Mississippi Conference (\$10,000);
- * the National Federation of Asian-American United Methodists (\$10,000) for leadership development;
- * the 2010 Ethnic Young Adult Summer Internship Program (\$80,000) in Washington, D.C.; and
- * the Church's Mission & Immigration Cooperative Ministry Team of the Rio Grande Conference, San Antonio, Texas (\$26,095), for the "Church's Mission & Immigration" initiative.

For more information, visit www.umc-gbcs.org/grants.

—Compiled by Mary Jacobs

■ **TENSION** Continued from page 1B

Mr. Portillo estimates that nearly 60 percent of the Proyecto Abrigo volunteer teams come from the Dallas area—or did until the outbreak of violence.

For the last three years the number of participants in Suncreek UMC's adult mission trips in March and October has dropped from around 25 people to as low as four. The reasons vary, but many families have backed out because they feel it's unsafe.

It is no secret that the number of U.S. volunteers is down. While visiting the local church in Tierra Nueva, Ms. Hunt said congregants would ask why more people were not coming to help. When she cited media reports of increased violence, they would plead, "We know it's happening, but it's not happening in our area, and we aren't the people doing it."

For Ms. Hunt, it's the joy and gratitude of the people that make the risks worth it. "They live around this fear and violence that they hear about every day on their news, but yet they're just worshipping the Lord," she said. "It humbles you and makes you realize what's important in life."

She's concerned that peoples' needs will go unmet as volunteers back out. In 2009 Proyecto Abrigo set a goal to build 200 cinderblock homes; instead they built just 21.

"Even though the condition of Juárez is bad with the violence and everything seen in the news, we continue working here, and we feel safe," said Mr. Portillo.

And despite the slow progress last year, the pace is picking up. Since January, Proyecto Abrigo has already built 10 houses.

Redirecting efforts

United Methodist churches and outreach programs are not the only ones cutting back due to the rising tension on the Texas-Mexico border. The Lydia Patterson Institute, a United



Suncreek UMC's Deniece Mason lays mortar for a new cinderblock home in a suburb outside of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico.

Methodist educational institution that serves a predominately Hispanic population in El Paso, Texas, has also experienced a slight drop in enrollment—and a significant surge in fear.

According to Socorro De Anda, president of the institute, about 70 percent of the student body crosses the international border daily to attend classes. One of her students from the suburbs of Juárez has to walk down a hill, take a bus downtown and then walk over the bridge to get to school. The student told Dr. De Anda that she prays the whole way, and that it's not until she passes through the immigration checkpoint that she can start breathing again.

The past three years have been the worst, added Dr. De Anda. Parents complain about their students having to travel through Juárez and across the border, yet they know their children are safe as soon as they arrive at the institute.

Unfortunately, the relief is only temporary. When the last bell rings, the majority of the students return to a world of fear and violence.

"We used to go across the border and recruit, do presentations and interviews," Dr. De Anda said. "I used to do two to three interviews a year on a Mexican TV station, but I have not done it for the last three years because we do not feel safe going across."

"The violence has affected our mission."

Four students at the institute have lost parents because of the drug cartel outbreaks; some parents have lost their jobs because of the violent threats; and many students have witnessed murders and brutality in the streets, restaurants and shopping malls.

"Everything has changed," Dr. De Anda said. "People don't have a life anymore. Once it gets dark, they stay inside."

But there may be an indirect blessing in all of this. Some of the churches that originally planned to go to Juárez have redirected their efforts to volunteer at the Lydia Patterson Institute.

Hesitation

Stonebridge UMC in McKinney, Texas, has a long history of working with Proyecto Abrigo in and around Ciudad Juárez. They have taken groups as large as 75 volunteers—including doctors, pharmacists and dentists—to help serve in a local clinic. Their next trip is scheduled for mid-May, but some on the team are not sure it will happen.

"With the recent violence, we're considering if we should continue to go or not," said Trevor Castilla, chair of Stonebridge UMC's mission team. "There haven't been very many people signing up for this trip right now. We may not have enough people to go



For years mission teams from Stonebridge United Methodist Church in McKinney, Texas have traveled to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico through Proyecto Abrigo (Project Shelter) to build cinderblock homes for families that live in extremely impoverished conditions.

down there in May."

Mr. Castilla, who has taken 10 trips to Juárez, says Stonebridge UMC members are still passionate about serving in Mexico, but the violence is making them think twice. "Our trips to Proyecto Abrigo have really been the catalyst to start our mission program, and we want to continue supporting it any way that we can, while still providing a safe environment," he said.

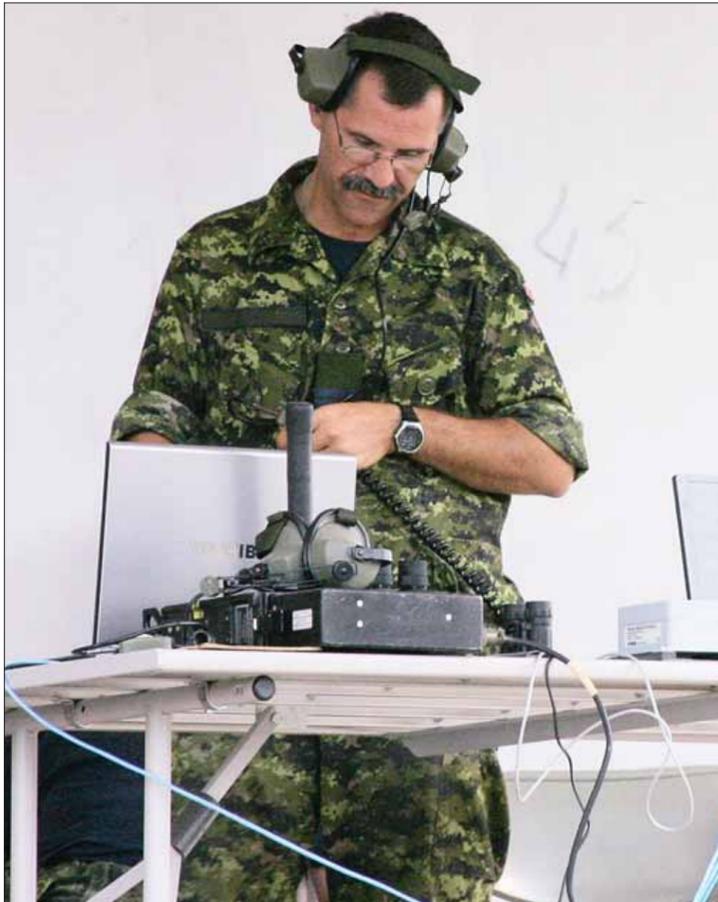
United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) also coordinates short-term missions along the border. "We are not telling anyone not to go to the border projects," said Debbie Vest, director of VIM Ministries, South Central Jurisdiction. "People have to make a personal decision whether they are going or not. Caution is always the word of the day."

mmccall@umr.org



Julia Shelton from Suncreek UMC gives new homeowners in Tierra Nueva, Mexico warm hats and blankets for the winter. In the last seven years, Suncreek UMC has built over 60 new homes in Mexico.

COURTESY PHOTOS



TOP: A Canadian military officer at the airport in Jacmel, Haiti, checks to see if any planes are in the area. RIGHT: Mac and Taylor Tichenor (center) flew medical technicians Scott Svendsen (left) and Andrew Guest (right) to Haiti, along with 200 pounds of supplies for victims of the January earthquake. BELOW: Mr. Guest and Mr. Svendsen load supplies before the flight.



Bird's-eye View

Pilot takes medical team, relief supplies to Haiti

On Feb. 12, a month to the day after the earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, my dad, Mac Tichenor, and I flew a humanitarian team and their supplies from Dallas to Jacmel, Haiti.

story and photos by
TAYLOR TICHENOR

My dad is a volunteer pilot for Grace Flight of America, a nonprofit organization that helps people who need air transport for medical or humanitarian purposes. Their goal is to remove the burden of transportation from patients so they can get to specialized medical treatment not available to them locally.

My dad and I have flown several Grace Flights, helping to transport patients to their treatment city. On this trip, we took emergency medical technicians Scott Svendsen and Andrew Guest and about 200 pounds of medical supplies.

We had to save as much weight as possible to get the best gas mileage possible and also to have room for their supplies. My dad removed one of the plane's passenger seats, and he and I shared a suitcase.

We started our day at 4:30 a.m. and drove to Love Field airport to prep my dad's plane. We then flew to Houston, where we picked up our passengers and their cargo at the Grace Flight hangar at Hobby Airport. The next leg of our trip would be to fly to Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

After introductions were made, we started loading the supplies that the team was bringing along. In one bag I remember seeing some baby diapers. Another was labeled "Ophthalmological Medicines." Each bag had many different supplies for just about any situation. We loaded several foam mattress pads.

After we loaded the plane we got on board and flew to Fort Lauderdale, where we rested, ate lunch, refueled the plane and picked up an emergency life raft for our flight over water to Haiti. We rented the raft for \$35, but had to leave a \$2,800 deposit

(which was later returned to us). Then we headed off to our final destination: Jacmel, Haiti.

It took us several hours to get to Haiti because strong headwinds slowed us considerably. After we entered into Haitian air space, we had a difficult time understanding the controller because of his accent. It took several attempts from my dad's radio hails, but we finally understood our instructions.

We then flew over Haiti at several thousand feet lower than our cruising altitude. We flew right over Port-au-Prince, but I could not see how extensive the damage was. But we did see the port, with many ships anchored there, waiting to unload relief supplies.

The airport we landed in at Jacmel was on the south side of the island; our map showed that it was somewhat remote. But it was busy with planes landing and taking off, completing humanitarian missions like the one we were on.

The Canadian Armed Forces had set up temporary operations there to help manage the chaos, and they did a great job.

After we landed and taxied, we filled out paperwork. Then we unloaded our passengers and cargo.

While we were at the airport in Jacmel, we saw some relief workers sitting around waiting for a plane to take them back to the U.S. One of the main relief organizers approached us and said he had noticed the United Methodist cross and flame on my dad's T-shirt (his "Labors for Neighbors" shirt). He said he's noticed that it's often the Methodists who jump in when there's a need. It made me happy that the church was active in Haiti and other places where there are disaster situations.

We asked a few people if they needed a flight to our final destination of the day, Turks and Caicos in the British West Indies. No one seemed to need a flight, so we left. We spent about an hour in the air and landed at the airport in Turks and Caicos.

Again we went through customs, and then got our car and went to our hotel. It is quite different to go through customs at an international fixed base operator—where people can get a variety of different services for their plane—than an international airport. There was only one customs agent and we had to wait for her to finish with the people who had arrived before us.

We spent the night in Turks and Caicos and flew back to Fort Lauderdale the next morning. After we landed in Fort Lauderdale we had to return our raft and go through U.S. customs. When our customs inspection was finished we taxied to the fixed base operator in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., refueled and had lunch. Then we started for home.

We refueled in Alexandria, La., before returning to Dallas about 10 p.m. We had spent 14 hours in the air and traveled about 4,200 miles from Dallas to Haiti and back. It was a quick turnaround, with just an hour or so on the ground at each stop.

I was very glad I went on this mission trip to Haiti. What was most interesting to me was seeing all the international groups that had come to help the Haitian people. I was glad to be a part it and see a small part of the relief effort, which brought hope to the people of Haiti.

Mr. Tichenor is a production assistant for UMR Communications and a member of Highland Park UMC in Dallas.



TOP: Haitian workers enjoy down time while there aren't any planes or cargo to unload. BELOW: At left, the crew rented an emergency life raft before flying over the North Atlantic ocean to Haiti. At right, medical technician Andrew Guest (right) talks to relief workers at the airport in Jacmel, Haiti.



TOP: Canadian military officers rest at the airport in Jacmel, Haiti, while relief workers wait for a plane to take them back to the U.S. BELOW: A pallet of relief supplies is ready to be moved.



GEN-X RISING

Recommit to Communion as means of healing grace

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON
UMR Columnist

As I've been exploring the means of grace through this column space, a consistent undercurrent in my writing has been the conviction that we need to pay attention to the need for reform in the Church's practices.

We should recognize where we've grown lax in how we approach the means of grace. And for the sake of our faithfulness to God and God's calling on us, we ought to be willing to repent and recommit where necessary.

Our practice of Holy Communion offers perhaps the best example of a needed area of reform.

Holy Communion is among the most important acts of worship in the Church—a point made in spades during the recent Holy Week.

Maundy Thursday recognizes that when Jesus knew his time was limited with his disciples, he took the opportunity to eat the Passover meal with them. But more than that, he also instituted a practice for them of eating bread and drinking wine in his name. Thus Jesus' followers could have communion with him and—as the Apostle Paul tells us—“proclaim the Lord's death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Strong teaching

It's no accident, then, that John Wesley names the Lord's Supper as among the chief means of grace (along with prayer and searching the Scriptures). He believed its constant observance to be a Christian duty, from the command of Christ to “do this in remembrance of me.”

But Wesley sees Holy Communion as more than a duty. It is also a *means of grace*, which mediates the presence and power of Christ.

In “The Duty of Constant Communion,” Wesley writes, “As our bodies are strengthened by bread and wine, so are our souls by these tokens of the body and blood of Christ. This is the food of our souls: This gives strength to perform our duty, and leads us on to perfection.”

For Wesley, receiving the Eucharist was tantamount to receiving “strength to believe, to love and obey God.”



Andrew Thompson

That such a strong teaching on the significance of Holy Communion exists in the Wesleyan tradition is a real benefit for us today. It can also serve as a corrective to our often lazy approach to it in the present.

At too many of our churches, the Lord's Supper is either neglected or treated as an onerous add-on to regular worship. Instead of seeing it as a source of healing grace, our congregations see it as an inconvenient extra 15 minutes that keeps them from the meal they really want to celebrate: the Sunday buffet at a local restaurant.

Too casual

There is also a distressingly casual approach to the sacrament that is widespread in Methodism as well. The “open table” ethic in the UMC has come to mean that anyone present is invited to come forward and receive—regardless of whether they've been baptized or even understand Holy Communion's significance.

Such abuses call for a form of repentance. First, we should recognize how important this gift really is. As a chief means of grace, it is of the utmost importance that we approach it with reverence and an appropriate understanding. Pastors can help in this regard, by regular preaching and teaching on the sacrament as well as insisting on *at least* monthly observance in their churches.

Reforming the so-called “open table” will require more effort. The weakness of reasons given for its continued practice don't seem to dampen the desire for some Methodists to define themselves by what they *don't* stand for. But make no mistake: Wesley's use of the phrase “converting ordinance” to describe the Eucharist did not refer to its use as an evangelization tool for the unbaptized. It was rather meant to refer to the sacrament's ability to quicken the faith of Christians who were caught in the malaise of sin.

Christ does want all to meet him at his Supper. But that Supper takes place in the church, and the manner of inclusion into it goes by a specific name: Baptism. Recognizing the profound meaning of coming to commune with Christ through the baptismal call would help us understand both sacraments more fully.

The Rev. Thompson maintains a blog at www.genxrising.com.
e-mail: andrew@mandatum.org.

Train inwardly for the journey

BY BISHOP ROBERT SCHNASE
Special Contributor

I've never considered myself much of an athlete, but I try to keep fit. I've been a long-time runner, walker and marathoner, and still log more than 1,000 miles each year.

Two years ago I turned 50, and during a thorough physical examination the doctor suggested that while I have “Army legs” and do well with walking/running, I really need to focus more attention on upper-body work.

“As you reach this age,” he said, “you need to think about muscle mass and how it naturally keeps slipping and deteriorating from year to year.” *As you reach this age . . . slipping . . . deteriorating.* Thanks!

More than two years later, I finally concluded that perhaps I ought to do something. So I decided to add a little upper body workout to the schedule. I pulled the old steel weight set (dumbbells, we used to call them) out of the basement. I hadn't used them since I was a teenager, yet we've carried them around with us for more than 30 years!

The new daily workout has felt awkward. I don't know what I'm doing. It's been hard to find a pattern that feels natural. The workouts leave me a little sore. My arms feel wobbly and I quickly grow tired. I lack the confidence and sense of competence that I enjoy when I run or walk for exercise. Honestly, I feel a little foolish.

That's the way of new things. Worship, Bible study, serving on a mission team for the first time, tithing. We feel awkward, uncomfortable, self-conscious and a little foolish. While we may consider ourselves accomplished experts and professionals in others' realms of life and work, we become amateurs and beginners when we try something new.

I'm always amazed when I watch world-class athletes during the Olympics. The skaters spin and leap and glide across the ice in ways that defy gravity. They make it look so easy, so natural, so effortless. They make everything appear so graceful. How do they do that?

They make it look so easy precisely because they've worked so hard. They make it look natural because of the unnatural focus they've given to their craft. They make it look effortless because of all the effort and repetition and practice over so many years.



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Like world-class athletes who make their competition seem effortless, it takes repetition and practice for us to master spiritual disciplines, says Bishop Robert Schnase.

Practice has moved them from the temporary incompetence and awkwardness through the times of repetition and routine to the point of confidence and gracefulness, until muscle memory itself helps them make it look so natural. They've moved from people trying to skate to becoming skaters, and all their years of practice have formed in them an identity and deep confidence.

This brings me to the notion of Christian practice, the personal spiritual disciplines of opening ourselves to God through worship and prayer, learning in community and serving others, generosity and invitation.

Those great-hearted people who have been our models of faith, those folks whom we admire for their graciousness and depth of spirit, those mentors who have encouraged us and invited us and influenced us more than they know—how do they make the Christian life seem so natural? How do they make extraordinary service and incredible generosity appear so effortless? How do they make the spiritual life seem so much a part of their identity?

Perhaps because they have been practicing for a long time. Through their personal practice they have cooperated with the Holy Spirit in their own maturing in faith. They have opened themselves to God's grace. They have said “yes” instead of “no” to God, and opened the door to the spiritual life instead of slamming it closed. And they've done it time and time again, day in and day out, for years.

They have practiced following Christ by putting themselves regu-

larly in the most advantageous place to receive God's forming grace through worship, prayer, service, scripture, community, the sacraments and generosity. God has used their practice to re-form them and make them anew.

Every person who desires to follow Christ begins by experiencing awkwardness and a sense of incompetence. By grace, they find the strength and persistence to stick with it until following Christ begins to feel more natural and sustaining.

Start anywhere. Stick with it. Take the next step. Say “yes” when it's easier to say “no.” Do it daily.

The Christian journey involves sustained obedience in a consistent direction, a daily honoring and serving God. Daily practice helps us stay in love with God. Daily practice is our way of participating with the Holy Spirit in our own perfecting in God's love.

Author and pastor Eugene Peterson interprets Jesus as saying, “When you practice some appetite-denying discipline to better concentrate on God, don't make a production out of it. It might turn you into a small-time celebrity but it won't make you a saint. If you ‘go into training’ inwardly, act normal outwardly. . . . God doesn't require attention-getting devices. He won't overlook what you are doing; he'll reward you well” (*The Message*, Matthew 6:16-18).

May we go into training inwardly, and may God use our practices to draw us further toward Christ.

Missouri Bishop Schnase blogs at fivepractices.org.

WESLEYAN WISDOM

Coming of age: When will UMC regain its passion?

BY DONALD W. HAYNES
UMR Columnist

John Wesley feared that Methodism would become a dead sect. That has not happened.

However, he also said that our major mission was to save souls. That requires a relational evangelism that reaches God's children whose lives have become morally, ethically, emotionally or economically dysfunctional. It was the major market of early Methodism, but long ago we made an intentional shift from "conversion" to "gradualism" among churching families. We have lost confidence in the potential of amazing grace to change lives.

A pivotal point in my education and ministry came in 1989 when I attended a meeting of the United Methodist Association of Communicators in Omaha, Neb. The keynoter was Russell Chandler, a "religion specialist" for the *Los Angeles Times*. It was 11 years before "Y2K," and he had just written *Racing Toward 2001: The Forces Shaping America's Religious Future*.

The Cold War was ending and the press and politicians saw the new peace as a panacea. Wiser minds did not concur. "Seventeen prominent futurists agree that a global economic collapse is possible and some debts will have to be written off in order to keep some nations from going broke," Mr. Chandler said then. "We will see a debt blow-out that could trigger a worldwide depression. But the larger question is not whether America has the ability to be a leader, but whether she has the will to lead, if she is again stirred by what Henry Luce called 'the blood of purpose and enterprise and high resolve.'"

The same question can be asked today of United Methodism.

How can a conference or a district justify renting commercial offices or owning strategically located property when we have tax-exempt local church space left vacant? How can we sustain the network of old-paradigm real estate holdings—camps, campuses, assemblies and local churches—past the time when local United Methodists are willing to support them? How can we justify our whining about lower salaries and benefits

when we have been rationalizing or ignoring lower membership and attendance for decades? How can we ignore the bankruptcies, home losses, unemployment and closure of manufacturing plants, shopping malls and mom-and-pop businesses?

Mr. Chandler presented some damning statistics two decades ago and concluded: "If the mainline does not shift with the times, it will be moved to the sidelines and maybe of-fline." He predicted that we would see splinter and breakaway groups, and mission agencies outside denominations. Have we not seen all of this come to pass? How many wake-up calls do we need?

Rx for recovery

Mr. Chandler also predicted faith would be "re-mythologized" by Eastern religions, Pentecostalism and religious entrepreneurs. He foresaw that media would ignore mainline church leaders, and instead caricature Christians or give massive coverage to clergy who had been historically sidelined. We ignored the warning, assuming it would never happen to us. But when did we last see a United Methodist bishop on a prime-time talk show?

Still, if you have read this column through the years, you know that I insist God is not finished with United Methodism! We may be humbled but not humiliated, chastened but not crippled. Since hearing Mr. Chandler 21 years ago, I have used his prescription for recovery as a program leader, district superintendent and a pastor:

Listen to the remarkable experiences of people, and give them the support they need to understand, mature and channel their energies.

Teach people how to develop their faith, integrating it into their daily lives. Replace biblical literalism and criticism with biblical literacy.

Encourage small-group fellowships. We herald the age of the megachurch, but its Achilles' heel is the revolving door where so many people come and go without learning each other's names or the circumstances that brought them to worship that morning.

Inspire people; don't bore them and don't just entertain them. No one should leave a place where the Gospel has been proclaimed without some sense of a "God moment," a challenge to come home to the Lover of all souls.

Target special groups and persons for support, recovery, and/or a renewed faith pilgrimage.

Søren Kierkegaard was a brilliant

philosopher in Denmark, but he also was a popular preacher and was often invited to leave the university campus and go to a village church. One of his sermons began in this fashion:

Once upon a time there was a village called Ducktown. The entire population was made up of barnyard ducks. They built little duck houses and slept in feather beds of duck down, and gobbled up duck food and quacked in duck talk. On Sundays the females put on little hats and sashes, the males put on little neckties and the duck families waddled down to Duck Church, quacking all the way.

One week they called a new duck preacher, and were very excited to hear his first sermon. He told them that God had endowed all ducks with three great gifts—webbed feet for swimming, beaks for gobbling food and wings for flying.

Relearn to fly

However, they had lost the talent to use their wings. If they looked into the sky, the preacher said, they could see flocks of wild ducks flying in perfect "V" formations. But they were content to eat, quack and waddle around Ducktown, and couldn't even swim much.

"I am here to tell you that you can fly," he said. "Your wings can still lift your bodies into the air and you can soar like the wild ducks. Wouldn't it be wonderful to leave the church this morning and take a short flight over the village?"

He was so persuasive that suddenly there was a loud "Quaaack" from the back of the church, and one of the

young adult ducks was in the air, circling over the congregation. Some of the other ducks were so excited that they joined in the fun, and soon you could hardly see for all the flying feathers. Their lives would be changed forever. They would no longer be confined to the ground; now they could claim their God-given endowment as masters of the skies.

'Still, if you have read this column through the years, you know that I insist God is not finished with United Methodism! We may be humbled but not humiliated, chastened but not crippled.'

Then it happened. One loud duck waddled down to the front and quacked out a protest: "Stop this nonsense! We are domesticated, not wild. We are civilized ducks. We have houses with beds, yards with gates, a village with streets and a church with walls. Flying is what our ancestors did, but we don't fly."

One by one the ducks flew back down to their perches, feeling a bit foolish for what they had done and holding up their heads with quiet dignity. The chastised new preacher pronounced the benediction and they all waddled home, never to fly again.

There is a lot of truth in that fiction. We are constantly tempted to ignore the nudging of the Holy Spirit to "press on the upward way." We are tempted to live beneath our potential,

to sell out to the present age or what Paul called his "lower self." We live out our days muddling and waddling. But we can fly. Yes, we can!

Have young generations of church leaders assumed that whatever we do in each parish, the ladder of career advancement will always be there? Have general boards, conference staff and lay leaders been like the decision

makers on the Titanic, ignoring all the icebergs? Have we really thought United Methodism was immune from the decline suffered by the Presbyterians, Episcopalians and the United Church of Christ? Did we not see some corollary in our own loss of membership and influence in the public square? Have we been satisfied to waddle?

We must have the nerve to drastically rethink, to dramatically cut overhead at every level—from the general church to local congregations.

How long do we have?

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.



Donald Haynes

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D.C. churches torn on gay marriage rules

BY DANIEL BURKE
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON—In this city, the Rev. Mary Kay Totty can now marry same-sex couples. But in the United Methodist Church, the denomination that ordained Ms. Totty two decades ago, that act could get her defrocked.

Ms. Totty, 46, said she's willing to take the risk.

"The institutional church has for so many years oppressed and excluded and harmed our [lesbian and gay] sisters and brothers," Ms. Totty said. "We have to say, 'Enough already. These are people's lives and loves that we continue to exclude from the fullness of life in the church.'"

Nineteen other current and former United Methodist clergy in this city have signed a statement supporting Ms. Totty and Dumbarton UMC, the small, liberal congregation that she has pastored since July. Many others campaigned to legalize gay marriage here. But only Ms. Totty, so far, is willing to put her job on the line.

"It's very hard," said the Rev. Dean Snyder, who supports Ms. Totty and leads Foundry United Methodist Church, one of this city's largest Methodist congregations, where one in four members is gay or lesbian. "We have no desire to defy the larger denomination; at the same time we want to minister to all members of our congregation."

Civil, church rules

As gay rights spread through civil society, an increasing number of clergy are, like Dr. Snyder, caught by conflicting loyalties, forced to choose between church law and civil law in pastoring to their gay and lesbian congregants.

Same-sex marriage is now legal in the District of Columbia and five states—Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. This city's large gay population—it has more same-sex couples per capita than any state—and its spotlight as the nation's capital only intensify the pastors' dilemma.

"My heart breaks for them," said the Rev. Amy Butler of Calvary Baptist Church, "because they do not know what to do." Dr. Butler said Calvary, which will marry gay and lesbian couples, is reassessing its own ties with several Baptist denominations, including the conservative Southern Baptist Convention.

Most of the country's large Christian denominations still consider homosexuality unbiblical and prohibit clergy from officiating at same-sex weddings—though those policies have been fiercely debated for decades.



RNS PHOTO BY DAVID JOLKOVSKI

Members of Foundry UMC in Washington, D.C., support same-sex marriage but worry their pastor, the Rev. Dean Snyder, could be defrocked for violating church rules by marrying same-sex couples.

In the Presbyterian Church (USA), for example, the Rev. Jane Spahr was brought up on charges this month for marrying a lesbian couple in California in 2008, when it was briefly legal in the state. Church courts in the 2.3-million member PCUSA have ruled against pastors who presumed to marry same-sex couples, though "blessing" such unions is allowed.

If Dr. Spahr is found guilty, it would be the first time a pastor in the country's largest Presbyterian denomination would be disciplined for following civil over church law.

"It certainly gives us pause," said the Rev. Jeffrey Krehbiel, pastor at this city's Church of the Pilgrims, a PCUSA church that has offered "services of Holy Union" to gay couples for several years. "You are taking a risk if you publicly perform gay marriages be-

cause you don't know the consequences."

ELCA conflict

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the nation's largest Lutheran denomination, the conflict is not between church and civil laws, but within the church itself.

One policy, reaffirmed in 2005, says there is "no basis" in Scripture or tradition for establishing rites for blessing gay couples. Last summer, though, the ELCA voted to commit to "finding ways to allow congregations" to recognize same-gender partnerships.

So, which policy should D.C. Lutherans follow? "That's exactly what we're trying to figure out," said Bishop Richard Graham of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Synod. "This is a live issue for us."

Bishop Graham said his position mirrors that of the ELCA at large: The usual context for marriage is one man and one woman, but congregations and pastors may celebrate same-gender marriages.

Several pastors have already asked him for permission to marry gay couples, which he has granted, provided they gain approval from their congregation. The Washington synod will also hold a series of meetings to draft guidelines for same-gender marriages.

The rules are more clear in the United Methodist Church, whose *Book of Discipline* forbids churches and clergy from celebrating same-gender unions. Bishop John Schol of the UMC's Baltimore-Washington Conference pledged to uphold the ban in a statement issued in March.

'Bound by church'

The Rev. Louis Shockley of Washington's Asbury United Methodist Church said he will obey church rules, even though his congregation hosted a rally in favor of gay marriage last fall.

"I am ordained by the church. I am bound by the church. I desire to serve the church, and I am governed by church law," Dr. Shockley said. "But it's a struggle for me not to embrace all people."

So far, no couples have come forward asking for Ms. Totty to marry them. But Doug Barker and Sam Kilpatrick would like Dr. Snyder to marry them at Foundry, their longtime church home. The couple, who will celebrate 20 years together next year, believe anything less than a church wedding relegates them to second-class status, said Mr. Barker, 51.

At the same time, they do not want to put Dr. Snyder's career in jeopardy.

"Sam and I would love to get married in Foundry by our pastor," said Mr. Barker. "But that doesn't mean we are willing to do it at the cost of our church and our minister."

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