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Retreat Center, local communities recover

HEATHER HAHN
For the Arkansas United Methodist

Gary Tobar believes God must have been watching over him April 30 as he sped toward Local Pastor Licensing School at Mount Eagle Retreat Center near Clinton.

A few minutes' delay, the United Methodist minister said, and his car would have been directly in a tornado's path.

"I really believe in miracles," said Tobar, who is training to be a local pastor and leads River of Life United Methodist Church, a new church start in West Memphis.

"I'm grateful because [a difference of] five minutes and I wouldn't be having this conversation."

On the nights of April 30 and May 1, storms spawned at least a dozen tornadoes in central and northern Arkansas. The strongest twister left a woman dead and leveled several homes in Scotland, a small town in Van Buren County.

As of May 3, the state's United Methodist disaster coordinators were still assessing the damage and what help is needed.

But Tobar and others at the Arkansas Conference's licensing school that weekend were relieved that they were spared when a tornado tore through part of the grounds of the 1,000-acre retreat center, also in Van Buren County.

Twenty-four students and four leaders were inside the center's Kaetzell Lodge when the power went out. Ten minutes later, Lu Harding—the center's director—heard the telltale whistle of a train as the tornado came barreling onto the property.

She herded the students and teachers into the lodge's bathrooms, where they huddled together and prayed.

The storm passed leaving the lodge unscathed. The tornado had obliterated a mobile home and big red barn near the property's entrance, and fallen trees blocked the road. The center sustained damage around its campgrounds and shower house. The center also was still without electricity.

Candlelight and the center's 10 kilowatt-generator provided the minimum of power needed for the rest of the weekend.

But the greatest blessing, Harding said, was the outpouring of help from neighbors over the following two days.

Power crews helped to remove debris so people could get out. Volunteer firefighters and a sheriff's deputy checked on the center's guests multiple times. A member of nearby Lexington Baptist Church cooked dinner for the center that Saturday night.

"She even made some apple and chocolate fried pies for us," Harding



Photo by Tommy Jones

Jeff Jones, pastor of Sardis UMC in Bauxite observes the clean up of a resident's home, the result of a series of spring tornadoes that tore across Arkansas.

said, "and she and her husband stayed for dinner."

Just as Baptists reached out to Mount Eagle's guests, United Methodists around the state were also eager to help their neighbors.

Clinton First UMC members provided health kits to those in need

in surrounding Van Buren County.

On Saturday, church member Ida Holt called the Van Buren County sheriff's office to offer vouchers to the church's volunteer-run thrift store for anyone who lost homes in the weekend's storms. The vouchers

[See STORMS page 2A]

Council of Bishops Announces Voting Results

Columbus, Ohio: The United Methodist Council of Bishops announced today that only five of 32 amendments to the church's constitution passed by the 2008 General Conference have been ratified by the annual conferences. The ratified amendments will become effective immediately.

The process for amending the Constitution of The United Methodist Church requires a two-thirds majority vote of General Conference delegates. Annual conferences must then ratify the amendments by a two-thirds affirmative vote. The results of the voting are reported to the Council on Bishops, where they are verified and counted. The results are then

reviewed and certified by the Council of Bishops.

The vote counts for each of the amendments were as follows:

Passed

Amendment VIII, adds "gender" to the list of categories ensuring the rights of membership regardless of race or status: **passed** 41,434 yes; 7,712 no

Amendment IX, which ensures every jurisdictional conference have at least 100 delegates: **passed** 39,333 yes; 9,122 no

Amendment XVII, which allows laity on the committee on investigation to vote on matters of ordination, character and conference relations of clergy: **passed** 33,810

yes; 14,712 no

Amendment XIX, which allows all clergy members of annual conference to vote to elect clergy delegates to general, jurisdictional or central conferences: **passed** 38,604 yes 10,432 no

Amendment XXII, which recognizes Bermuda congregations as part of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference: **passed** 43,049 yes; 5,539 no

Failed

Amendment I, which clarifies all people are eligible to attend worship services and receive the sacraments: 23,614 yes; 25,764 no

Amendment II, which requires all United Methodist organizations

to adopt ethics and conflict of interest policies for members and employees: 32,413 yes; 16,596 no

Amendment III, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 21,126 yes; 28,218 no

Amendment IV, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 19,219 yes; 30,178 no

Amendment V, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,768 yes; 28,486 no

Amendment VI, allows newly established conferences be represented on a non-proportional basis for two quadrennia: 25,969 yes; 22,990 no

[See BISHOPS page 2A]

Amy Forbus Named Editor of Arkansas United Methodist

Little Rock, ARK (May 24, 2010)—Amy Forbus of Carrollton, Texas, has been named editor of the *Arkansas United Methodist*, the official newspaper of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas. Currently the digital community builder for the United Methodist Reporter in Dallas, Forbus has 14 years of writing, marketing communications and United Methodist ministry experience. She will join the conference ministry team in August.

“We are excited to have Amy Forbus as the editor for the *Arkansas United Methodist*,” said Martha Taylor, Director of Communications for the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. “Amy is coming home to the Arkansas Conference. A Hendrix graduate and lifelong United Methodist, she brings excellent writing skills and expertise in new media that will strengthen Conference communications today and in the future.”

Forbus, a Hot Springs native, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English at Hendrix in 1996. She began her career as a writer and account executive at advertising and technology agencies in Dallas. She worked for Leadership Network in Dallas, a church innovation and



Amy Forbus

growth organization, and served as coordinator of program ministries at Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Carrollton before joining the *United Methodist Reporter* staff.

“Amy rose to the top from a pool of several very qualified candidates,” said Roy Smith, Director of Connectional Ministries. “Her writing skills, wonderful curiosity as a reporter and knowledge of the church at the local, conference and general levels are unmatched.”

Forbus’ expertise in both print and digital media will be extremely valuable as the conference engages a wide variety of audiences, Taylor added.

Forbus will succeed Heather Hahn, who has taken a position with United Methodist Communications in Nashville, Tenn.

The Arkansas Conference communications team is led by Taylor and includes Forbus and communications coordinator Patrick Shownes.

Arkansas United Methodist story ideas, news and information or questions may be directed to Martha Taylor, mtaylor@arumc.org, 501.324.8005 until Forbus joins the staff in August.

The Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church represents 132,000 members in 697 United Methodist congregations throughout the state. The mission of United Methodists in Arkansas is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Four areas of focus for United Methodists are starting new congregations, developing leadership, engaging in ministry with the poor and improving global health by eradicating malaria, HIV and tuberculosis. For more information, visit www.arumc.org.

Bishops’ Voting Results

Continued from front page

Amendment VII, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,840 yes; 28,588 no

Amendment X, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 19,386 yes; 29,920 no

Amendment XI, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,711 yes; 28,539 no

Amendment XII, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,825 yes; 28,568 no

Amendment XIII, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 19,566 yes; 29,819 no

Amendment XIV, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,851 yes; 28,505 no

Amendment XV, which allows definition of the lay and clergy membership of the annual conference by the General Conference without going through the constitutional amendment process: 31,233 yes; 17,218 no

Amendment XVI, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,823 yes; 28,586 no

Amendment XVIII, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,856 yes; 28,546 no

Amendment XX, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,639 yes; 28,653 no

Amendment XXI, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,921 yes; 28,425 no

Amendment XXIII, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the

worldwide church: 19,184 yes; 30,185 no

Amendment XXIV, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,575 yes; 28,853 no

Amendment XXV, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,581 yes; 28,688 no

Amendment XXVI, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 19,277 yes; 30,061 no

Amendment XXVII, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,711 yes; 28,657 no

Amendment XXVIII, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,588 yes; 28,656 no

Amendment XXIX, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,652 yes; 28,703 no

Amendment XXX, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,584 yes; 28,703 no

Amendment XXXI, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,658 yes; 28,685 no

Amendment XXXII, which allows the General Conference to create similar structures for the worldwide church: 20,698 yes; 28,591 no

Anyone with a question about the amendments may contact InfoServ, the denomination’s official information service, at infoserv@umcom.org. Visit UMC.org to see the [amendments in full](#). (Reprinted with permission, *United Methodist Communications*)

Local communities recover

Continued from front page for \$100 per person are good for a year.

Store items include clothing, household goods, linen and some small furniture items.

Holt, the store manager, expects the store will be able to help 25 to 50 people in the coming year.

“We kind of know everybody in the community,” said Holt, the store manager. “We try to help as many people as we can the moment we can get out there.”

United Methodists also rushed to help their neighbors in East End, a town in Saline County also torn by a tornado on April 30.

About 20 members of Grace UMC, a satellite campus of Sardis UMC in Bauxite, spent that Saturday and Sunday clearing away tree limbs and other debris left by the storms.

“Our caravan of people going to help was bigger than the governor’s caravan,” said Tommy Jones, the campus’ pastor.

The following Monday, Jones visited more damaged houses,



The remains of the shower house at the Mount Eagle camping area lie beneath trees felled by an April 30 tornado that cut a swath through the 1,000 acre retreat center near Shirley, Ark.



Photo by Lu Hardin

leaving a note behind where no one was home to say the church would help them at no cost.

He had just met a man whose workshop had been crushed under a massive, fallen tree. When Jones said a crew from the church would be back to help remove the tree, the man broke down in tears. The

owner had recently had surgery and wondered how he could manage to afford home repairs as well.

“He said, ‘God bless you,’ and I prayed with him,” Jones said. “Everybody asks where is God when something like this. Well, that’s where God is. Even when it’s dark and doesn’t look like it, God is there.”

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BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

Dear Friends:

We have entered the season of Pentecost. In the early church, Pentecost was the second most important celebration after Easter. Long before Christmas became so important; our Christian ancestors were celebrating the power and transformation that Pentecost promised. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter and the other disciples were touched by the Holy Spirit and the church was born.

The message of Pentecost serves to remind us that we often depend on the wrong things when proclaiming our faith. Peter

preached and, according to the Acts of the Apostles, 3,000 people were converted.

It is almost embarrassing. Just think. Peter had no church building in which to preach. The sermon was in the street. He had no rock band or gospel quartet, or cathedral choral choir to back him up. He used no clever illustrations and did not post a catchy sermon title on the internet to attract attention and interest. He did not even have a power point program to drive home the point of the sermon. He simply depended on the power of the Holy Spirit, a genuine faith, and a strong

conviction that God in Jesus Christ was calling him to call others to God.

We now have the advantages of wonderful facilities, mass communication systems, and back-up resources. But we know evangelism, the simple telling of the Jesus story and how that story has made a difference in our lives, is the heart of the matter.

Too often the church has declared that evangelism is the province of the pastor or priest. Let the preacher tell the story on Sunday and that takes care of the business for us all. In our better

moments we know the falsity of that reasoning. A witness to faith in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the business of each Christian.

How we live, what we do and what we say privately and publicly is our personal Pentecost sermon!

The message of Pentecost is also that *we do not have to do this alone!* God has given us a companion, an advisor, a councilor, or as the Scriptures suggest a “comforter.” The challenge for us is that God’s definition of “comfort” is often different from ours. When we begin to listen to the Holy Spirit, we get led into the hard places of

ministry. We find ourselves in *terra incognita* where life is different and unfamiliar. We find ourselves in a world where different languages are spoken. The promise of God is, if we continue to listen to the Holy Spirit, we will understand. We are not alone. We have a story we *will* tell.

The only question to resolve: Where are we going to seat 3,000 more people on Sunday?

Faithfully,

Imagine a Journey into the Wilderness



DR. WILLIAM O. (BUD) REEVES
Special Contributor

Over the last six years, much of this column has concerned the connected church. I love the church; but even more, I love the Lord who loves the church. Lately, a good bit of my thought and energy has been involved in the Imagine Ministry team, as we seek to engage Arkansas United Methodism in a conversation that will lead to discernment of God’s will for our future.



Bud Reeves

At one of our Imagine Ministry team meetings, as we ended the day, I felt a deep sadness in my soul.

There was a heartfelt pain that I could not identify. As I reflected on the drive home, I realized I was in the wilderness. We have been inviting Arkansas Methodism into a “wilderness conversation,” using the metaphor of the Exodus.

In the wilderness, I was grieving the United Methodist Church I know and love. I grew up in the Methodist Church, became *United Methodist* the year I was confirmed, was called to ministry out of experiences in United Methodist youth groups, and I have given thirty years of my adult life to ordained ministry. The church I knew was stable and secure. If we worked hard, our churches would grow. I have taken comfort in the security of my appointment, pension and insurance. It has been a very good ride.

I’m gonna miss that church!

Whatever comes in the future is not going to be what was. Maybe it will be better—I have not lost hope. But it will not be the same. One of the things we must do if we are to move ahead is to acknowledge the loss of the past and grieve for the church we once knew and loved. Then get on with it.

If we are going to witness deep change in the system, it won’t happen in the system. The paradigm shift will come when people—you and me—become

broken before God. As our consultant Gil Rendle explained, institutions and organizations do not engage in deep change. People do. Imagining new ministry has to be a movement of the Holy Spirit, a prevenient act of the grace of God. It will be different for each individual church and disciple.

Changed individuals, then, can change the organization, thus transforming the world. That is the Gospel—our only hope. How will we encourage that movement?

What we are asking the churches and the denomination to do is to “lose their life that they may find it.” It will be a death and resurrection experience. I believe in resurrection, but death always comes first. That, too, is the Gospel.

I’m not saying that I think the United Methodist Church will die, but the paradigm shift that will lead us to vitality is that radical. I know that such radical talk usually doesn’t set well with the institution. It got one Guy I know crucified.

But once we start on the wilderness journey, how can we stop? We can’t go back to Egypt; that is as wrong as it is impossible. Robert Quinn, author of the book *Deep Change*, said, “We are obliged to care enough to die for an organization that would kill us for caring.”

Many Arkansas United Methodists are now joining us on the journey. We appreciate literally thousands who have engaged in the Imagine Ministry conversation. The comments and different perspectives have been refreshing and enlightening. That’s why we’re having the conversation!

I’m looking forward to continuing the conversation at Annual Conference. It’s a different kind of conversation than any I have done in the institutional church. It will not result in a program, a prescription, or any easy answers. But it might result in new life.

We worship a God of the new thing. He makes a way in the wilderness. If the United Methodist Church is to remain a vital player in the global work of the Kingdom, it will be because at this point in our history, we allowed God to make it so.

Two Rule Minimum

DEENA MARIE HAMILTON
Special contributor



Deena Marie Hamilton

I was reading my Bible one day. I was on a mission to read the Bible from cover to cover again. I studied my Bible more before I became a pastor. One of my lifestyle changes was to read it for myself every day. Feeding my soul became most important to me because that was something that I had been lacking for years.

At that point in time, I was reading the book of Leviticus. Yeah, snooze patrol right. As I was reading over all the laws and ordinances, I thought to myself... *How could anyone keep up with all these rules? This is just way too much.*

But one day a lawyer stood up and asked Jesus, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you shall live.” (Luke 10:25–28).

I am just so grateful that Christ thought enough of us to sum all those laws down to a two rule minimum. Well, if you think about it... if we lived by those two rules, we are essentially obeying all the laws that are written in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. We wouldn’t take the Lord’s name in vain, steal, kill, covet, or lie if we just love God and love others.

We would wake up each morning with our minds stayed on Jesus. We would have our hearts and minds

prepared to live each day pleasing to God and in turn we would be more willing to treat other people in a fashion indicative of the golden rule.

I know... even with Jesus summing over 300 laws and ordinances down to two, it’s still hard to keep the two rule minimum. It’s easier to keep up with a two drink minimum at a bar.

That last commandment love your neighbor as yourself. OMG! That one is the kicker! That one is even hard for me to do at times because I have not loved my neighbor the way that I should have over the years, but I’m getting better. But it’s a hard to walk the walk because there are times when we have all experienced people treating others as if they are nothing.

I wouldn’t treat myself that way, but I’ve treated people that way by looking my nose down on them because of how they looked or acted. I’ve turned my nose up at a woman carrying a replica of a Coach purse. Now that’s just shallow. That’s me not loving my neighbor as myself. That’s me loving myself more than I love my neighbor.

When I was going through a situation with a person that I felt did me wrong, I had come to the realization that God loves me as much the next person.

But if I live by love God and others, then living a life pleasing to God shouldn’t be such an insurmountable task. We should be grateful to Christ that he was attentive to aggregate all those commandments of God to a two rule minimum because our eternal lives depend on it.



Photo by Wes Clement

A First United Methodist Church group celebrated breaking of ground at a Habitat for Humanity site in memory of their friend Kathy Campbell. Campbell was a strong supporter of Habitat in Jefferson County.

Habitat House fitting tribute to long-time supporter

WES CLEMENT
of *The Pine Bluff Commercial Star*

PINE BLUFF—First United Methodist Church of Pine Bluff began a Habitat for Humanity project in April that honors the memory of Kathy Campbell, a member of the church who was devoted to building Habitat's 10th Pine Bluff house by the end of this year.

Campbell died unexpectedly in January, and First United Methodist intensified ongoing efforts to raise money for the home by selling cookbooks.

"Ms. Kathy Campbell was very dedicated to building this 10th house," said Fred Arnold, president of Jefferson County Habitat for Humanity. "Her motto was 'House 10 in 2010.'"

The church has in the past sold cookbooks to fund projects, church member and Habitat volunteer Jean Hudson said. About a year ago it was decided that the current cookbook selling campaign would be exclusively for raising money for the 10th Habitat house.

So far the church has raised \$29,000 from cookbook sales and \$8,000 was given in Campbell's memory for the project. The house is expected to cost about \$45,000 and First Methodist continues to sell

cookbooks to raise the remainder.

Hudson said Campbell was a very hard working woman who consistently cared for others. Campbell worked with her husband Dr. Clyde Campbell at his medical practice.

"They had a man one time who had to go to Little Rock for a PET scan and there was just nobody to take him," Hudson said. "Kathy put him in the car, took him to Little Rock and bought his lunch. She would drive patients home if it was too late or pick them up if needed and sometimes it was Star City, Dumas...she was wonderful."

A groundbreaking was conducted April 23, Kathy's birthday at Eighth Avenue and Gum Street.

"After the groundbreaking we'll be ready to start pouring concrete, putting up trusses, getting the whole thing underway," Arnold said.

He said house nine, completed on Holly Street a few months ago took about three and a half months, about the time he expects house 10 will take to complete.

The house could be a three-bedroom, two bath house, Arnold said, but it is not yet known since a family has not been chosen. He said a family will be chosen within the next month.

Story and photo reprinted with permission.

Community garden grows faith, friendship

HEATHER HAHN
For the *Arkansas United Methodist*

BRYANT—To help her congregation grow in faith, Lynn Cross Kilbourne decided it would be a good idea to grow tomatoes, lettuce and other vegetables.

The associate pastor at Bryant First United Methodist Church led the way in organizing the congregation's first community garden.

"I saw it as a ministry that connected different ages, different life experiences and teaches care for creation at the very basic level," she said.

Church members began planning the garden in February and planting in mid-April.

Now, on 18 10-by-10 foot plots, individual church members and families are growing a variety of vegetables ranging from beans to zucchini. On some plots, tiny green shoots are just starting to peak through the soil.

The men are engaged in friendly competition to see who can grow the most tomatoes. Experienced gardeners are giving advice to those new to horticulture. And many youngsters, for the first time, are getting to help seeds sprout into tall green plants.

"At church, a lot of older people go to the traditional service, and a lot of the younger people go to the contemporary service," said church member David Bratton. "We often don't see each other. But this brings us all together. It's bridged the generational gap."

His daughters Sydney, 11, and Shelby, 5, are among the children who are enjoying getting their hands dirty in the garden.

Kilbourne named the project "Arcadia Garden" after a region in Greece famous for its idyllic beauty.

"It's really surprising, we're here in Bryant," she said. "And here it is—a quiet place. There's something



Photo by Nan Evans

Shelby Bratton, whose parents are members of Bryant United Methodist Church, does her part to prepare the garden for spring planting.

powerful about having your hands in the dirt and sharing that with other people."

Church members look forward to sharing the fruits of their labors at potlucks this summer. But Kilbourne also is encouraging the gardeners to give at least 10 percent of their harvest to those in need, since food pantries often are desperate for fresh produce.

Kilbourne first started thinking about a community garden during her last semester at Duke Divinity School when she took a course titled "Food, Eating and the Life of Faith."

In the class, she learned a great deal about U.S. food consumption and how very little of it is based on a model of Christian stewardship.

Most produce, she said, travels thousands of miles to reach local grocery store shelves, which requires tremendous resources. She added that to make a living, many farmers in the developing world devote their entire land to feeding U.S. demand for a particular crop. That leaves no land to grow food for their own communities.

She decided a garden was one way to get her parishioners to think about the theological issues surrounding the food they eat. When

she mentioned her idea on her Facebook page, she found an eager partner in church member Eddy Bowman.

Bowman had been looking for a way First UMC could put some of its land to use, and he thought a garden would be ideal.

Seeing masses of green rise where once there were only mounds of dirt has strengthened Bowman's faith.

"How can anybody disbelieve in God after this?" he said.

Church member Nan Evans tries to visit the land every day. She's grown flowers before, but this is her first vegetable garden. She said she relishes her quiet moments in the garden.

"You sit there in silence and you can sense God's beauty," she said.

Kilbourne hopes the ministry will remind her congregants of God's sovereignty.

"A cool thing about gardening is that we can do everything right," she said. "We can plant, water and have good soil and the right amount of sunlight. But ultimately whether a seed produces a plant is completely out of our hands. It reminds us that God is ultimately the Creator."

'Now I lay me down to sleep', youth weave sleeping mats for L.R. homeless

HEATHER HAHN*
A *UMNS Feature*

Like many Americans, Ellen Brown used to accumulate more plastic shopping bags than she knew what to do with.

"I would throw bags away, and I would feel guilty about it," Brown said. "I'd try to keep them for a while. But once I had a Wal-Mart bag full, I'd have to get rid of the rest. I live in an apartment where we don't have recycling."

Then Brown discovered a way

that she and the youth group she leads at Asbury United Methodist Church in Little Rock, Ark., could save thousands of plastic bags from a landfill burial and give them new life.

Now with one crochet hook at a time, the Asbury youth are transforming plastic bags into bed mats for the city's homeless.

Each mat requires 500 to 700 bags. Within two weeks, the youth group collected more than 3,000 bags from church members and local stores. More are coming in.

The youth group of about 20 seventh- through 12th-graders began the project on April 25 and plan to complete six or seven mats by the end of July. The youth work on the project each Sunday night during the half-hour of free time they have at their weekly gathering.

Having fun

To make the mats, one team of youth straightens out each bag. Another team cuts off the handles, the bottom seam and next cuts the

[See MAT page 7A]



A UMNS photo by Ellen Brown

Youth from Asbury UMC crochet bed mats out of plastic bags.

New UMFA Seminary Scholars Prepare for Ministry to Arkansas Congregations

LITTLE ROCK, ARK. (May 20, 2010)—New recipients of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas seminary scholarships include Jacob Lynn, the associate pastor at Piney Grove United Methodist Church outside Hot Springs, and two recent Hendrix College graduates, Charles “Chase” Green of Searcy and Rachel Kincannon of Maumelle.

Kincannon will attend Perkins School of Theology in Dallas and Green will attend Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., both starting in the fall. Lynn will attend St. Paul Theological Seminary in Kansas City this summer and take satellite classes at Oklahoma City University starting in the fall, which will allow him to continue serving Piney Grove UMC.

The UMFA Seminary Scholarship Fund, established in 2000, makes grants for full scholarships to Arkansas students attending three-year United Methodist seminaries. As scholarship recipients, the students make a covenant to return to Arkansas to pastor United Methodist churches.

“With a huge percentage of Arkansas pastors retiring in the

next 10 years, this initiative offers the potential of strengthening every United Methodist local church in Arkansas,” said Jim Argue, Jr., UMFA President. “Ensuring strong pastoral leadership for the future strengthens the church and its ministry to our state.”

Lynn and his wife Mindy have a two-year-old and Mindy teaches English in the Lake Hamilton School District. When Lynn was looking for a way to attend a United Methodist seminary and continue his employment at Piney Grove UMC, he found an ad for the new program at St. Paul Theological Seminary which offers classes all on Tuesdays at a satellite campus at Oklahoma City University in Oklahoma City. The two-year-old program was a perfect fit. With summer session and January session classes at St. Paul in Kansas City, he’ll be able to complete seminary in about three and a half years.

Green was a leader in youth group and participated in several mission trips at his home church, First United Methodist-Searcy. He attended Hendrix-Lilly Vocations Initiative programs during summers



Lynn

in high school and continued to discern his call to ministry while at Hendrix College. At Hendrix he became a certified candidate for the ministry as a sophomore and that process has helped him formulate the gifts he will bring to local church ministry when he returns from Washington.

Like her friend Chase Green, Kincannon participated in what is now called the Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics and Calling



Kincannon

at Hendrix College. Originally a pre-med major, Kincannon became more confident of accepting God’s call for her life during her four years of college. Through the Exploring Ministry Together group at Hendrix she found friends and resources to help strengthen her response to that call. She believes the UMFA scholarship’s covenant to return to the Arkansas Conference will help her to stay tied to her home state, and she sees the Conference moving




Green

in a lot of exciting directions.

United Methodists in Arkansas can contribute to the scholarships by contacting UMFA Vice President of Development Janet Marshall at 501-664-8632 or toll-free at 877-712-1107.

UMFA is among the largest United Methodist Foundations in the country. Founded in 1963, UMFA is responsible for over 550 trust accounts that have combined assets in excess of \$93 million.



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TRANSFORMING THE WORLD



Photo courtesy of Lakewood UMC

The Lakewood UMC UMW has been very active in fulfilling the church's mission to Expand the Light. They recently raised \$10,000 by compiling and selling a cookbook, with the proceeds going to purchase programmable thermostats for the church. The savings in electricity bills will allow more funding for outside ministries as well as improve the church's environmental footprint. The group, which has won the UMW Diamond Unit Award for the past two years, also was able to donate \$915 to the Gardner UMC Food Pantry from the cookbook proceeds. From left Liza Godwin, Green Team chair; Richard Lancaster, Senior Pastor; Carol Williams, UMW chair; and Betty Reynolds, Cookbook chairperson. One of the programmable thermostats is visible on the wall to the left.



Photo courtesy of Methodist Family Health

Youth and adults from First United Methodist Church in Magnolia and Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in Emerson spent a day planting shrubs and painting a gazebo and swing set at Magale Therapeutic School in Magnolia. The facility is part of the care network of Methodist Family Health, which serves at-risk families and youth in 22 locations across Arkansas. Pictured left to right are Jerry Franks, Mason Pelford and another youth.



Photo courtesy of FUMC El Dorado.

On United Methodist Women Sunday March 21, First United Methodist Church, El Dorado awarded Dr. Scott and Kay Hardin with the Special Mission Recognition Award. The Hardins are active in the local HomeRepairTeam, Habitat for Humanity and the IHS Gleaning Garden and have led construction and medical mission teams to Rio Bravo, Mexico.

COMING UP

The Old Salem Campground Revival is scheduled for June 20 at 7:00 p.m. and will continue for eight consecutive nights through June 27. Guest preachers include John Miles II, from Jonesboro FUMC and Chester Jones, South Central District Superintendent. Music will be led by Lynn Hoggard and Kathleen Dockery. Salem UMC is located at 1647 Salem Road, north of Benton. For more information call Ezra Wingfield, (501) 316-0997.

The third annual St. James Golf Classic will be held Saturday, June 26, at StoneLinks Golf Course in North Little Rock. Hosted by St. James UMC, Little Rock, the four-person scramble starts at 8 a.m. and is open to all. The \$75 per player fee includes golf cart, green fees, prizes and lunch by Famous Dave's BBQ. All proceeds will benefit the Congo Initiative and provide water wells in villages of the North Katanga Conference. For more information contact Nicki Hilliard at (501) 666-2311 or Jane Dennis at janedennis@comcast.net. Online registration is available at www.golfdigestplanner.com/14499-StJames.

Former Arkansas Bishop Richard Wilke, his wife, Julia, and their daughter Sarah, World editor and publisher for The Upper Room Ministries in Nashville, Tenn, will be in Arkansas on June 27 for the dedication of the John Wesley Upper Room Prayer Room at First United Methodist Church of Little Rock, 8th and Center Streets. Bishop Wilke will be the guest preacher during the 8:30 a.m. First Light service in the chapel and the 11:00 a.m. First Tradition service in the sanctuary. Julia and Sarah Wilke will host an afternoon tea at 3 pm Sunday and share information

about new ventures for The Upper Room Ministries.

Elder Abuse Awareness & Prevention Training, 9:00 a.m., June 11, Philander Smith College, Kendall Hall, 900 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock. The training, led by Ms Angela DeLeon of Bridgeport, Conn., will cover all basic characteristics of elder abuse, available resources for referral and teach effective communicative methods while maintaining victim sensitivity. Space is limited to 50 participants. Educators, emergency service providers, faith-based service providers, health care providers, law enforcement personnel, victim advocates, volunteers, and the general public are invited to attend. Six prevention hours have been approved in either domain 2 or 5. Sponsoring organizations: Healing Place Ministries, the Center for Healing Hearts and Spirits, Partners for Inclusive Communities, Safe Places and the Office of Victims of Crime. For registration, contact Yvonne Glien, (501) 454-2995, healingplacelr@sbcglobal.net.

Addiction Conference 2010, June 27-29, Mount Sequoyah Retreat Center. Presentations and activities will focus on the effects on family relationships and addictions regarding intervention, treatment, transitional living, and recovery. Addiction Conference 2010 is a South Central Jurisdiction Conference for healing families with individuals who are facing addiction and substance abuse. CEU credit and limited scholarships are available through SPSARV for the event. Contact SPSARV, Cindy Sloan (704) 882-0282 for details. For more information on registration and lodging, contact Mount Sequoyah (800) 760-8126 or (479) 443-4531 and www.mountsequoyah.org.

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www.christianbiblecollege.org

Part-time Youth Connected in Christ Leader. Levy UMC, N. Little Rock. Minister to youth and their families. Job description available online at www.arumc.org/jobs. Send resume to Levy UMC, 47th & Allen Streets, N. Little Rock, AR 72118, Attn: Steve Doerr, SPR Chair.

Full-time Youth Director Position 900 member church. Salary and benefits based on experience. Send inquiries and/or resume to luke@fumcmaumelle.org. First United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 13984, Maumelle, AR 72113, (501) 851-2377.

Director of Adult Discipleship for large membership church. Responsible for small group development, leadership recruitment and training and Sunday school coordination and support. Bachelor's Degree in education or related field required. Experience in education or working with adults helpful. Salary commensurate with experience. Send letter and resume to Janell Husted, jhusted@fumcwired.com, First United Methodist Church, 206 W. Johnson Avenue, Springdale, AR 72764 or fax to (479) 751-4612.

APPOINTMENTS

The following are the most recent pastoral retirements, appointments and other changes that have been officially announced as of press time on April 30. Most of these pastoral changes won't take place until after Annual Conference in June.

To see a complete list of appointments as they become official, visit www.arumc.org/appointments.

Retirements

- David Moose (Rosewood senior pastor)

- Lon Hudson (Elkins/Tuck's Chapel senior pastor)

Confirmed Appointment Changes

- Jonesboro: Shiloh/Paragould: Shiloh—David Swift
- Camden: Timothy/McNeil—Mike Jennings
- Lockesburg—Terry Chapman
- El Dorado: St Mark—Mike Proctor
- Mt. Ida/Joplin—David Steele
- Cherokee Village—Ted Deweese
- Batesville: First—Bob & Kay Burton

OBITUARIES

GLENWOOD

Alice Hemund, 80, of Glenwood, died Thursday, April 29, 2010. She was born on January 17, 1930, at Elkhart, Indiana, the daughter of Ralph Leroy Zinn and Myrtle Haggard Zinn. On June 13, 1948, she was married to Ralph Hemund.



Alice Hemund

She was a member of Amity United Methodist Church where she served as church organist and Sunday School teacher for several years and as church secretary for twenty-two years. She was the recipient of the Carnation Community Service Award in 1976 and was a former Cub Scout leader in Amity. She loved flowers and spending time with her family.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her son, John Hemund;

and her brother, William Zinn. Survivors include her husband, Bro. Ralph Hemund of Glenwood; six sons and their spouses, James and Mary Hemund of Glenwood, Joe and Jean Hemund of Glenwood, Jay and Barbara Hemund of Amity, Jerry Hemund of Texarkana, Arkansas, Jack Hemund of Glenwood and Jeff and Carla Hemund of Glenwood; four daughters and their spouses, Jane and Jay Daniel of Camden, Julie and Rickey Owens of Amity, Janet and Kenneth Raines of Amity and Jill and Alan Cargile of Kirby; twenty-seven grandchildren; thirty-seven great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; one brother, Carl Zinn of Amity; and one sister, Judy Minnich of Goshen, Indiana.

The service was held May 2 at Davis-Smith Funeral Home Chapel in Glenwood with Rev. Chris Hemund officiating. Interment followed at Jones Cemetery. Pallbearers were her sons with honorary pallbearers were Dr.

Matthew Hulsey and staff, Dr. Gary Gerhki and staff and the nurses and staff of Arkansas Hospice of Central Arkansas.

Memorials may be made to the Amity United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 142, Amity, Arkansas, 71921.

LITTLE ROCK

A.C. Madison, 95, of Little Rock, passed away May 5, 2010. Born in Uriah, Alabama to James Eugene and Gussie Dewise Madison, he was a member of the Little Rock First Church of the Nazarene. Ordained as a Church of the Nazarene minister on September 12,



A.C. Madison

1947, he worked for 28 years in the Church of the Nazarene, and retired following 18 years as a United

Methodist minister.

Preceded in death by his wife of 71 years, Martha Vera Madison and his son, Phillip Madison, he is survived by his son, Richard Madison and wife, Rita; and grandsons, Chris Madison and wife, Natalie, and Phillip Madison.

Services were May 10 at Little Rock Funeral Home officiated by Dr. Jim Daniel, Dr. Dan Casey and Dr. Phil Stein. Interment with military honors followed at Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery, North Little Rock.

LITTLE ROCK

Cecilia Malone Kelly, 62, of Little Rock, passed away May 7. Born in Russellville on February 3, 1948 to Cecil L. and Betty Jo Rackley Malone. She worked with the United Methodist Conference Office as Minister with Children and Family ministries for ten years. She was also the Associate Pastor of Concord United Methodist Church in Furlow, Arkansas.

Survivors are her husband, Arthur Kelly; sons, George A Toney, III (MeMe) of Alpeton, WI, Thomas Kelly of Little Rock; daughters, Tabatha Toney Burgess (Jerry) of Mabelvale, Katherine Kelly McSweeney (Matt) of Little Rock; grandson, Ethan McSweeney of Little Rock; parents, Cecil L and Betty Jo Rackley Malone of Little Rock; sisters, Linda Pledger (Buddy) of N. Little Rock, Teresa Bechtel (Mike), Brenda Breckling (Kenny Besser), of Benton.



Cecilia Malone Kelly

Funeral services were May 11 at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church with Reverend Beth Turner officiating. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made Arkansas Children's Hospital or to one's favorite charity.

Sleeping Mats

Continued from page 4A
remaining square into four horizontal strips. A third team of youth then loops the strips together to form the plastic yarn—or “plarn,” as the youth group calls it.

Finally, six of the youth then chain the “plarn” using 10-milimeter metal crochet hooks to create the cushions of the mat. The completed mats will each be 2½ feet wide and 6 feet long.

The plastic sleeping mats, which come with a strap, are portable, easily dry off when wet and keep bugs away.

“I never thought you could do something like this with a grocery bag,” said 15-year-old Caitlyn Hendrickson, one of the youth on crochet duty. “It’s a lot of fun too. You don’t have to sit there in silence while you’re working.”

Mat ministry

Brown discovered the bed-mat project when she saw a local TV news feature on the “The Sleeping Mat-ters” ministry at New Life Church, a nondenominational, multi-campus church based in nearby Conway, Ark.

Dawn Warmbold, a member of New Life, launched the ministry with a group of women at her church after hearing about a group doing something similar in Ohio.

Warmbold wanted to share the project with more congregations, so she put together a YouTube video to demonstrate how to make the bed mats.

Her video proved an immediate hit with the youth of Asbury when Brown showed it.

Susan York, a member of Asbury, likes the project because it helps youth learn an art she feared was dying out. York’s mother crochets, and in fact, crocheted a welcome mat out of plastic bags about a dozen years ago. But York never took up the hobby. Now, her son Austin, 12, is one of the youth learning to link material into a creation that brings comfort.

“I like doing this,” Austin York said. “It’s good to give something to the homeless.”

When the Asbury mats are completed, Brown plans to take the youth to join other members of the Sleeping Mat-ters ministry in distributing mats to the homeless. She hopes it will be an eye-opening experience for the youngsters.

“You can’t always build someone a house,” Brown said, “but this is something we can do to improve someone’s quality of life.”

**Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for United Methodist News Service.*

Worship Fair 2010

August 13-14

“Making the Ordinary Extraordinary”

St. Paul
United Methodist Church
2223 Durwood Road
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CLINICIANS

John Thornburg—Preacher, song leader, and worship consultant; head of “A Ministry of Congregational Singing;” from Dallas, Texas
Anna Laura Page—Composer, musician, clinician, handbell music editor; from Sherman, Texas
Gail Wells—Stained glass artist from St. Paul United Methodist Church, Little Rock, Arkansas
Liz Wright—Children’s leader from St. Paul United Methodist Church, Little Rock Arkansas

SCHEDULE:

Friday, August 13

6:00 p.m.—Registration

7:00 p.m.—“Singing the Church’s Song Across the Centuries, Across the Styles, Across the Globe” with John Thornburg (free and open to the public; a freewill offering will be taken)

RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

Saturday, August 14

8:30 a.m.—Registration

9:00 a.m.—Opening Worship (John Thornburg preaching)

9:45 a.m.—Break

10:00-11:30 a.m.—Class Session I

Thornburg—“Beyond Filling in the Blanks: Restoring Joy to

Worship Planning” (Part One)

Page—Reading Session (including Children’s Choir Festival

Anthems

Wells—Introduction to Stained Glass

Wright—Children’s Activities for 3rd-6th grades (Handchimes, storytelling, games)

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—Business meeting, lunch and browsing

12:30-2:00 p.m.—Class Session II

Thornburg—“Beyond Filling in the Blanks: Restoring Joy to

Worship Planning” (Part Two)

Page—Keyboard Reading Session

Wells—Introduction to Stained Glass

(repeat of morning class)

Wright—Children’s Activities for 3rd-6th Grades (arts and crafts, worship preparation)

2:00-2:45 p.m.—Closing worship with Communion

2:45 p.m.—Browsing

(exhibits close at 3:30 p.m.)

Exhibits include Cokesbury Bookstore and Saied Music

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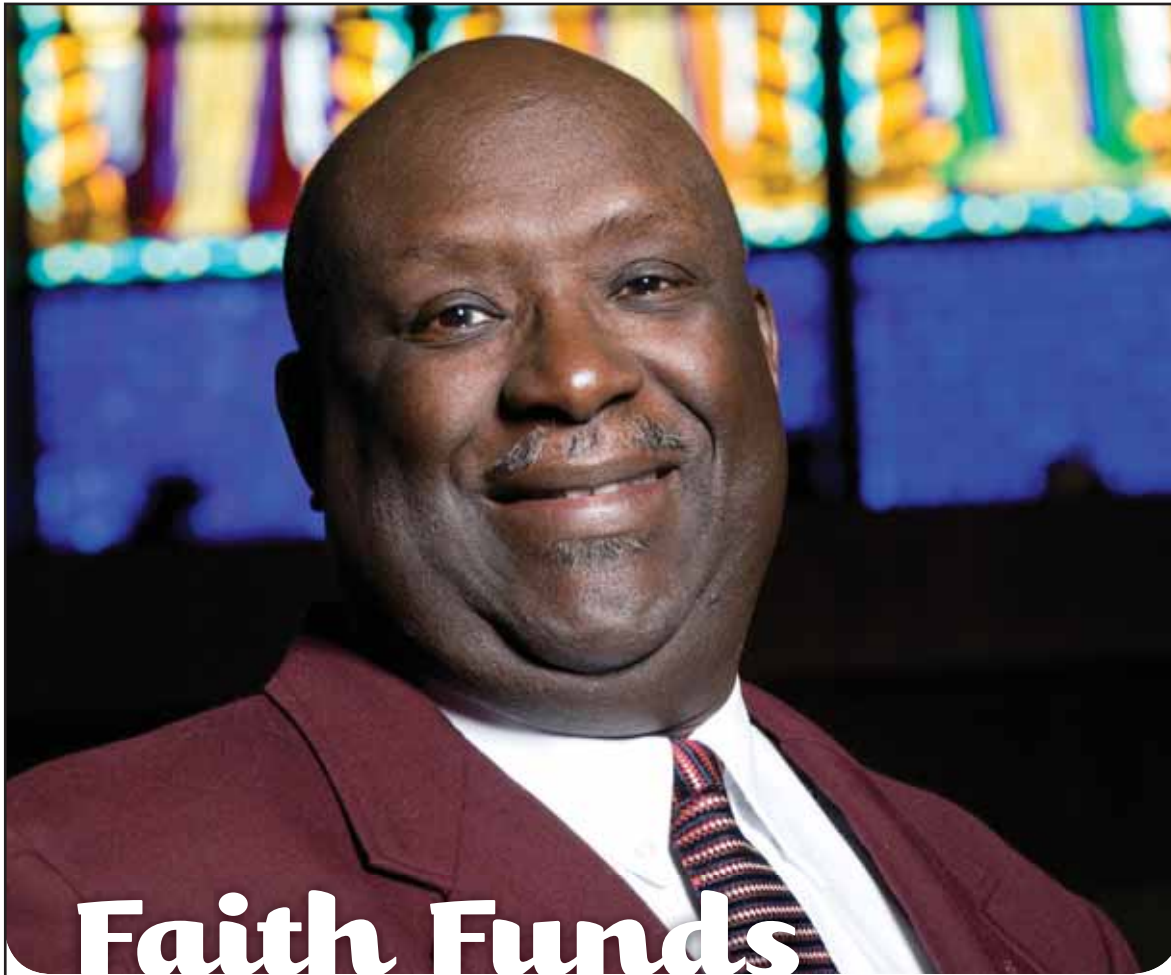
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For event updates, go to www.arkansasfumwa.org



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Local church endowment funds can be a powerful way to expand the church's ministry," said C. E. McAdoo, senior pastor of Village United Methodist Church in Hot Springs Village. "Churches with successful endowment programs have educated their members about creative giving alternatives, and they've been wise managers of the funds entrusted to them."

Rev. McAdoo, who has served on the Foundation's board for almost 10 years, says UMFA helps local churches with both of these key ingredients for success. The Foundation is a great source for expertise in charitable giving, and the Foundation has a great track record in providing investment management services to local churches and institutions.

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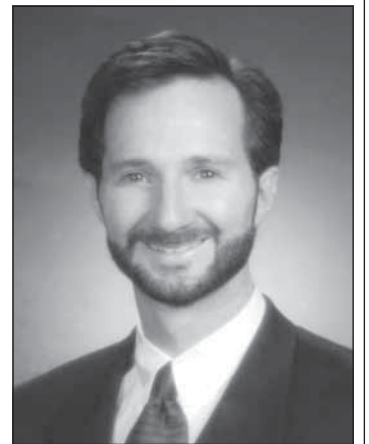
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The Confessing Movement of Arkansas

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Union Baptist Church, 219 Gulpha St.
(behind convention center & rear parking lot)

Reverend Rob Renfroe Guest Speaker

Reverend Rob Renfroe is the president and publisher of *Good News* and serves as the Associate Pastor of Discipleship of The Woodlands United Methodist Church in Spring, Texas.



Rob has been committed to the reform and renewal of The United Methodist Church for the past 15 years, working in his own Texas Annual Conference, serving on the board and as the president of The Confessing Movement, and now leading Good News.

Rob graduated from Rice University and received his M. Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Tickets are \$12 each. Call Carolyn Elias 501.525.2944 by Friday, June 4 for tickets. A very limited number of tickets will be available at Annual Conference.

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Clergy glut?

Are there too many for pulpit slots? | 3B



Building a 'culture of nets'

Seeing that others use them prompts acceptance | 4B



Key to evangelization

Bishop makes case for church planting | 6B

Section B

June 4, 2010



PHOTO COURTESY OF SMU

Many recent college graduates often struggle to find a community of peers when they return home to their local United Methodist church. It's an in-between niche that is often ignored, say young adult ministry experts.

Post-graduates have hard time finding a congregational niche

BY MALLORY MCCALL
Staff Writer

As college graduates pack up to leave their dorms and apartments, some find that the spiritual momentum gained through a campus ministry can come to a screeching halt when they walk back into a local United Methodist church.

Now too old for youth group and college campus ministries, they are still too young to relate to most family-centric congregations. The result? Many post-graduate young adults are

getting lost in transition.

Some end up volunteering with their church's children or youth ministries, others try out other denominations that may have more age-related activities and some just stop attending altogether.

At the very least, recent college graduates and young professionals often struggle to find a community of peers in the United Methodist Church. And denominational expectations have yet to catch up with a changing demographic of young adults today.

It used to be that young people

would graduate college, get married and come back to the church to raise their family just as their parents did, said the Rev. Mike Ratliff, associate general secretary of young people's ministries for the United Methodist Church's General Board of Discipleship.

Now it's becoming more common for young adults to marry later, thus delaying their involvement in a congregation. But that doesn't mean they don't seek a connection.

"It's no longer automatic for young people to go off to college and then

come back and settle into the church," he said. "Community is important to young people, and if they don't find it in church, they'll look someplace else for it, like at work."

A 2007 study from LifeWay Research says two-thirds of young adults who attended a Protestant church for at least a year in high school stop attending church regularly for at least a year between the ages of 18 and 22.

Of these church dropouts, 97 percent say they left the church because of "life-change issues," 25 percent

■ See 'Graduate' page 8B

No Protestants on high court: Does it matter?

WIRE REPORTS

WASHINGTON—As Solicitor General Elena Kagan prepares for confirmation hearings to make her the newest member of the U.S. Supreme Court, her nomination changes the religious makeup of the nation's highest court.

But does it matter that the bench would include six Catholics, and with her confirmation, three Jews and no Protestants?

Observers say it's a historic turning point for a court once comprised of Protestant elites to have no Protestants following the retirement of Justice John Paul Stevens. Of the 111 justices who have served on the U.S. Supreme Court, 91 have been Protestant.

But the shift may say more about how the country—rather than the court—has changed.

"I think that this means that this is an extraordinarily tolerant country religiously and I think we should stop for a moment and appreciate that," said Boston University professor Stephen Prothero.

As times changed, presidents used the nomination process to determine who should fill a "Catholic seat" or a "Jewish seat" or even a "woman's seat" on the court. Now, even those limitations are archaic, Dr. Prothero said.

"The glass ceilings are gradually getting shattered."

For some observers, the news is bittersweet, however, because a tradition of influential Protestant voices

■ See 'Supreme,' page 2B



FAITH WATCH

Red Bird school closes after drop in donations

United Methodist-affiliated Red Bird Mission School in eastern Kentucky was forced to close due to lack of funds after the school year ended May 30. Donations had faltered and the mission had kept the school open by taking \$2 million a year from an endowment, board member Clifford Berry told WYMT-TV in Hazard, Ky. School officials will continue to search for funding.

Last of 10 detainees released from Haiti

Laura Silsby, the last of 10 Baptist missionaries detained in Haiti on charges they tried to kidnap children out of the country, was freed May 17 when a judge convicted her but sentenced her to time already served. Ms. Silsby had organized efforts after the Jan. 12 earthquake to take 33 children to an orphanage in the Dominican Republic. An Associated Press investigation later revealed all the children had at least one living parent in Haiti.

Evangelical ad urges immigration reform

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) urged comprehensive immigration reform in a full-page ad published in the May 13 issue of the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call*. The NAE statement supports legislation to keep families intact, secure national borders and establish a path to legal citizenship. According to the ad, opponents in the immigration debate "have misrepresented each others' positions."

Liberty Univ. probes claims against dean

Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., is investigating claims that the dean of its Baptist seminary told lies about his Muslim background to make his conversion to Christianity more dramatic. Critics say Ergun Caner has contradicted himself in statements and books about whether he was raised in a devoutly Muslim home and whether he trained as a youth for Islamic jihad. A committee will issue its findings at the end of June.

—Compiled by Bill Fentum

■ SUPREME Continued from page 1B

that has included United Methodist Justice Harry Blackmun will be missing from the court.

"Certainly, prejudice against Roman Catholics and Jews has been greatly reduced in recent decades, and we can and should be thankful for that fact. I seriously doubt the vast majority of Americans are concerned about the religious background of Supreme Court justices," said Jim Winkler, the top executive of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society.

"Nevertheless, I hope President Obama will give serious consideration when making future appointments to the court to naming a Protestant. Balance on the court is important," he said.

Newest wrinkle

If Ms. Kagan is confirmed as expected, she will join fellow Jews Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer on the court. Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Sonia Sotomayor are all Catholics.

Blackmun, who served from 1970 to 1994, was the most recent United Methodist to serve on the high court. Four other members of the United Methodist Church's predecessor churches served on the court. They included John McLean, who served 1830-61; Lucius Q.C. Lamar, 1888-93; Frederick Vinson, 1946-53; and Charles Whittaker, 1957-62.

Religious affiliation has become, in recent weeks, the newest wrinkle in the long-running Washington parlor game of sketching the profile of top-level nominees that often starts with race, ethnicity, gender and ideology.

The Constitution specifically forbids a "religious test" for government office, and that's the way it should stay, said the Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

"Religious affiliation," he said, "is immaterial."

First Amendment Center scholar

Charles Haynes said Ms. Kagan's nomination—and the rather ho-hum consideration of the court's religious makeup—is an indication of the country's maturity.

"I think we have grown up," he said. "And I think we now realize that first, we are a very diverse country and, secondly, that there are core principles that we need to look to when selecting a justice and religious affiliation has really little relevance."

'Protestant empathy'

Even so, the dearth of Protestants on the court has not gone unnoticed. Author and scholar Diana Butler Bass, who has written about the importance of mainline Protestantism in the country's history and culture, said the shift on the court is one more indicator of America's statistical slide from a majority Protestant country. According to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, the percentage of self-identified Protestants in the U.S. is a bare majority of 51 percent.

Dr. Butler Bass said there is a "Protestant empathy" for individual conscience, the power of symbols and the separation of church and state.

"It doesn't mean that Jews and Catholics can't interpret these things," she said. "It just means that they're going to interpret them rather differently than a Protestant."

Dr. Butler Bass said the change should be marked—but with sadness, not anger. She also noted, with a bit of irony, that Protestants who were so devoted to church-state separation may now have separated themselves from the nation's highest court.

"We're so successful that we're putting ourselves out of business," she said.

Still others said it was perhaps too much to expect a Protestant judge—of evangelical, mainline or African-



PHOTO BY DOC SEARLS/WIKIMEDIA

Elena Kagan is President Obama's nominee for the Supreme Court. If Ms. Kagan is confirmed as expected, for the first time in history, the high court will have no Protestants.

American persuasion—to fully represent the diverse range of American Protestant churches.

"Protestant is such a multivalent term. It includes Quakers, Baptists, Pentecostals and Episcopalians. It's hard to say what brand of Protestant we have in mind," said William B. Lawrence, dean of Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas.

"One can make the case that Southern Baptists have more in common theologically and ideologically with Roman Catholics than they do with United Methodists," said Dr. Lawrence, who was Blackmun's pastor at Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., after the late justice retired from the Supreme Court.

'Excellent choice'

H. Jefferson Powell, a professor of law and religion at Duke University, said that while religion often informs how justices might go about making legal arguments, it rarely has an impact on their individual decisions.

He pointed out that the Catholic Justice Sotomayor is widely expected to vote more often with the court's liberal bloc that includes Justices Ginsburg and Breyer than her co-religionists Justices Scalia and Alito.

Dr. Powell, who formerly served as principal deputy solicitor general in the Clinton administration and knew Ms. Kagan, then a White House ad-

viser, thinks she is an "excellent" choice.

"It sounds obvious, but I think the court is a court of law and the justices' job is to answer questions of law," he said. "I think this change should not excite any comment or cause any pause."

Retired United Methodist Bishop Melvin Talbert agreed.

"I would not want us as Protestants to begin a rallying cry for more Protestants on the court," said Bishop Talbert, who formerly served as president of the National Council of Churches.

He was delighted, he said, when he learned that Ms. Kagan had clerked for Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first African American on the Supreme Court. "What I'm looking for is someone who is going to do justice."

Adelle M. Banks of Religion News Service and Heather Hahn of United Methodist News Service contributed to this report.



Diana Butler Bass



William Lawrence

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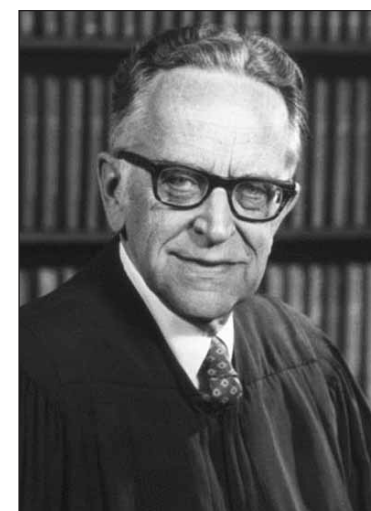
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Justice Harry Blackmun

UM CONNECTIONS

Eleven women receive seminary scholarships

Recipients of the 2010-2011 Georgia Harkness Scholarships, awarded to women over 35 preparing for ordination as elders in the United Methodist Church as a second career, are: LaRonda Barnes, North Georgia Annual Conference; Tracey Beadle, Southwest Texas; Valerie Black, Kansas West; Bessie Hamilton, Kentucky; Lenny Hartzell, Northern Illinois; Wendy Inman, Southwest Texas; Mimi Mills, New England; Heather Scherer, Oklahoma; Charla Sherbakoff, Holston; Jody Topping, Desert Southwest; and Norma Villagrana, Missouri. The 11 scholars will visit the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference in December as part of a continuing program of global women's leadership development.

Website kicks off Youth 2011 event

A new website, www.youth2011.org, has kicked off Youth 2011, next year's national youth gathering for the United Methodist Church. The site offers information and links about the quadrennial event sponsored by Young People's Ministries, a division of the General Board of Discipleship. For the first time, the four-day conference will be held twice on opposite sides of the country: at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., July 13-17, 2011, and at the Sacramento Convention Center in Sacramento, Calif., on July 27-31, 2011. Youth 2011 is designed for students in junior high/middle school and high school.

GCFA elects new deputy general secretary

The General Council on Finance and Administration has elected the Rev. Patricia (Pat) Henning Youngquist as deputy general secretary for operations. Ms. Youngquist, who brings experience in accounting and financial management to the position, is an ordained elder in the Iowa Conference. Most recently, she served as pastor of Epworth UMC in Ft. Dodge, Iowa.

—Compiled by Mary Jacobs

From clergy shortage to clergy glut?

BY GREG WARNER
Religion News Service

After a decade-long clergy shortage in America's pulpits, Christian denominations are now experiencing a clergy glut—with some reporting two ministers for every vacant pulpit.

"We have a serious surplus of ministers and candidates seeking calls," said Marcia Myers, director of the vocation office for the Presbyterian Church (USA), which has four ministers for every opening.

The cause of the sudden turnaround: Blame the bad economy.

According to PC(USA) data, there are 532 vacancies for 2,271 ministers seeking positions. In the United Methodist Church, ordained pastors are guaranteed appointments by their bishops to churches and other ministries—but there are still signs of oversupply. And the issue of guaranteed appointment is always under debate as to whether it's still viable. Also reporting significant surpluses are the Assemblies of God, Church of the Nazarene and other Protestant denominations.

Cash-strapped parishioners—who were already aging and shrinking in number—have given less to their churches, resulting in staff cuts. Meanwhile, older clergy who saw their retirement funds evaporate are delaying retirement, leaving fewer positions available to younger ministers.

Dramatic shift

"With the employment prospects both in and out of the church being slim, those who are employed are not likely to leave"—at least not voluntarily, Ms. Myers said.

All that adds up to a clergy glut—a dramatic shift for denominations and seminaries that had once recruited young ministers to combat the "clergy shortage." Now seminary graduates struggle to find ministerial employment.

"There is just no place to go," said Patricia M.Y. Chang, an associate professor of sociology at Stanford University who has studied clergy supply and demand for more than a decade.

In the United Methodist church, where every elder in good standing must receive an appointment, "there is technically not a glut of surplus ordained pastors still looking for appointments," said Scott Brewer, senior researcher for the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA). "However, quite a few conferences struggled to find appointments for all their pastors in 2009." In a number of regions, no pastors retired last year.

As a result, some conferences were not able to bring in newly minted pastors graduating from seminary. "It may not technically look like a glut,"

Mr. Brewer said, "but for some of our aspiring clergy who struggled to find a conference that could admit them, it probably felt like one."

GCFA statistics also don't reflect the numbers for licensed local pastors—United Methodist clergy who serve local churches but are not ordained—because the denomination doesn't keep track of that population. So if a glut is hurting their employment chances, it won't show up in GCFA data.

In the 1950s there were roughly the same number of Protestant ministers as there were U.S. churches. Now there are almost two ministers for every church, according to the latest Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches—607,944 ministers and 338,713 congregations.

Few offers

Not all those ministers are looking for employment; some are not working or are employed in other professions. Those who are looking—especially recent seminary graduates—say realistic offers are few.

Larger churches are eliminating vacant positions or terminating associate pastors, Ms. Myers said. Smaller congregations are shifting some ministers from full-time to part-time.

Job-hunting is toughest in churches that are autonomous and not connected to a denominational hierarchy. While United Methodists guarantee placement to every fully credentialed minister, Baptist pastors, for instance, are mostly on their own.

It's virtually impossible to track supply and demand among non-hierarchical churches, such as Baptists, Pentecostals and many evangelical groups. But researchers agree the clergy glut is even worse in loose-knit denominations that offer little job security.

Small congregations—those with 100 members or fewer—make up the majority of U.S. Protestant churches,



PHOTO BY ARMANDO RODRIGUEZ

Lay and clergy members and guests celebrated the ordination, licensing, commissioning and recognition of orders of 39 people at the 2009 Florida Annual Conference event. Some denominations are experiencing an overload of new clergy.

and in those pulpits, there's still a shortage of ministers. A 2008 study in the PC(USA) found 71 percent of churches with fewer than 100 members had no permanent pastors.

The two-pronged reality facing American congregations is actually a glut and a shortage at the same time, researchers said. "You have a shortage in small churches, but you have a glut in larger churches," said Dr. Chang.

Economy's effect

Even if the clergy glut is real, most observers expect it to dissipate once the economy picks up. An official of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America estimates that when economic pressures recede, the "pent-up demand" could triple the number of retirements in the denomination—from about 300 to 1,000 a year.

It could also be forced by another factor: Baby boomer pastors will start retiring in large numbers. The first wave of boomers, born in 1946, turn 65 in 2011.

"In five to seven years, I think we

are going to see a major turnover and experience a shortage again," said Dock Hollingsworth, assistant dean of Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta.

Randy Cross, assistant general secretary for clergy supervision and accountability for the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry agrees the "glut" will not last. "There's an ebb and flow to all this," he said. "This is not the time to give up on recruitment of quality folks."

And while economic data must be considered, that shouldn't drive the whole discussion, says the Rev. Amy Gearhart, pastor of Central UMC in Kansas City, Kan., and a member of the Commission to Study Ministry.

"We can't manage the economy or the Holy Spirit," said Ms. Gearhart. "We need to remember our biblical heritage and how God has always been very faithful about raising up leaders for 'such a time as this.'"

Staff writer Mary Jacobs contributed to this report.

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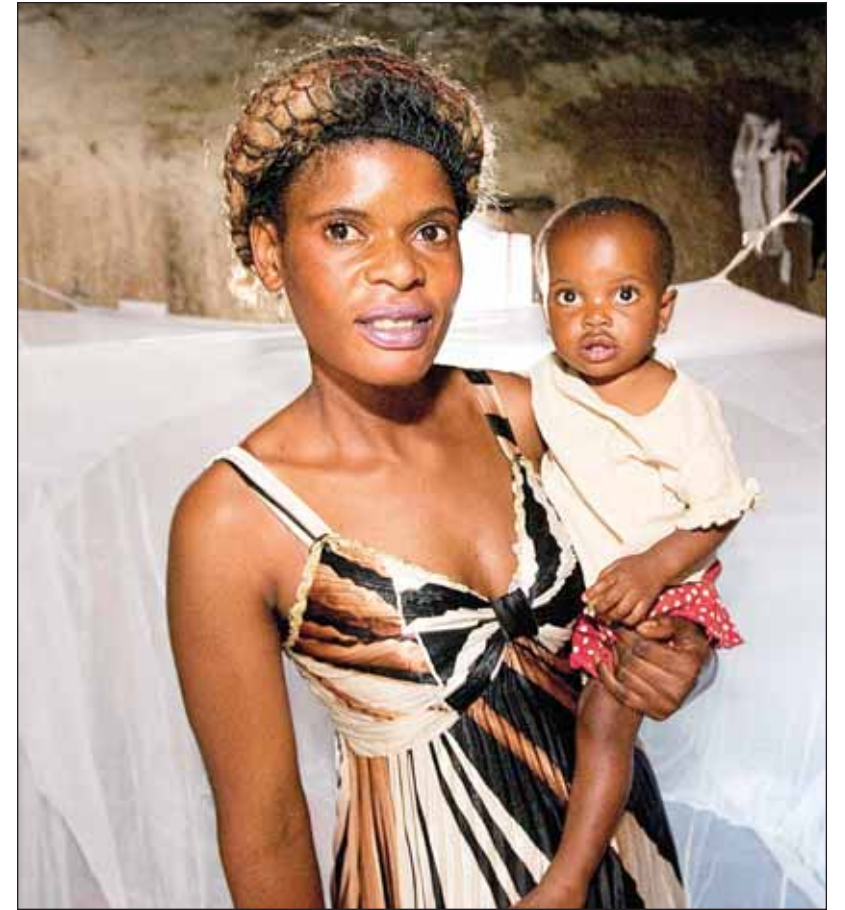
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Mwanze Feza looks after her daughter Monga Vasiy, who is sick with malaria, at the United Methodist Church's Shungu Health Center in Kamina.



LEFT: Patients wait to be seen at the medical center. BELOW: Nathalie Naman holds her daughter, Dunongo, in front of the mosquito net she received at her home in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



ABOVE: A gravedigger walks among dozens of fresh graves in the children's section of the Penga Penga Cemetery in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo. RIGHT: Community health volunteer Madelene Mwainga hangs a mosquito net in the home of Serge Tshibal during a training event in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo.



Church building 'culture of nets' to save lives

BY KATHY L. GILBERT
United Methodist News Service

LUBUMBASHI, Democratic Republic of Congo—Penga Penga is a cemetery for the poor. Over a hill, far as the eye can see, are tiny graves for babies and toddlers. Mothers and fathers have written the names of their babies on the wooden crosses that stand as tombstones on each mound. Many of the children buried here died from malaria. All of them were victims of poverty.

One of the few reliable jobs for young men in Lubumbashi is digging graves. For their heart-breaking work, they earn \$35 a month.

One stone-faced young man, arms crossed, said there are three to four funerals every day just for children under 5.

"We don't just need nets. We need medicine for treating people already affected," he said.

Losing children

A baby girl lies on her back taking shallow, rapid breaths. Her young mother sits on the edge of her bed touching her, comforting her, holding her when she cries.

Dr. Mtwana Ngoie Guy Kasanka, a United Methodist doctor and missionary serving in Kamina, takes a team of United Methodists from the United States through the Shungu Clinic. He stops at the bedside of little Monga Vasiy, and shakes his head. "She is not doing well."

Two other beds in the same small, dark room also hold sick babies and grieving mothers.

Kalombo Makonga, 18 and pregnant with her first child, holds up her arm and points to the scars on her skin made from years of mosquito bites.

She received an insecticide-treated bed net from the United Methodist Church last year because she is in the most vulnerable category along with children under 5.

She did not know mosquitoes carried the disease until she received education at a United Methodist clinic near her village. Asked if she noticed any difference in her life since using the net, she smiles shyly and says there are no new bites on her arms.

More than nets

Shannon Trilli, executive, Global Health Initiative, United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), said Ms. Makonga is an example of someone who has a new "culture of nets."

"There needs to be a culture of nets—when neighbors are using a net, when your cousin has a net, you are more likely to use one," she said. "They see it is not weird to use a net."

The nets also need to be distributed by local people in the community. "A stranger can't give away a net and convince you to do something new and strange," she said.

The United Methodist Church has been involved in distributing insecticide-treated bed nets to different countries in Africa with the Nothing but Nets campaign since 2006. On April 25, World Malaria Day, the denomination launched a new campaign, Imagine No Malaria, to raise between \$75 million and \$100 million to overcome malaria in Africa by 2015.

"We have learned a lot from other programs," Ms. Trilli said. For one thing, the church has learned one bed net per household is not enough.

In Kamina, a rural town about 200 miles from Lubumbashi, Nkulu Taijena is thankful for the mosquito net he received from the church. But he

has 13 children, and one net does not protect 15 people.

Future campaigns will distribute three bed nets per household, Ms. Trilli said. The nets will be given to the community by local volunteers trained to teach the proper way to use and care for them.

Follow-up is critical, she added. "We need to collect information to see if pregnant women and young children are using the nets."

The United Methodist Church is partnering with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The international financing has committed \$19.3 billion in 144 countries to support prevention, treatment and care for the three diseases.

Tell the story

Malaria is a killer that can be prevented and treated. In most parts of the world, it has been eradicated.

"It is very easy for us to say 'imagine no malaria' and then go eat a normal meal or 'imagine no malaria' and go to sleep at night and not think about it," said Bishop Thomas Bickerton, chair of the Imagine No Malaria campaign. "But here in Africa there is no time; the time is now. These children are dying; we have seen them."

The weapons they need to fight the deadly disease are not expensive or hard to obtain. Ten dollars will buy a bed net that will protect sleepers from malaria-carrying mosquitoes that attack during the night. Medicine to treat a child with malaria is cheap. Sometimes all it takes to make a neighborhood safe is a shovel and dirt to fill in ditches of stagnant water.

"The Imagine No Malaria campaign is our way to engage in a broader context. It is not just

about a net; it is about education, about communication... about removing standing water," Bishop Bickerton said.

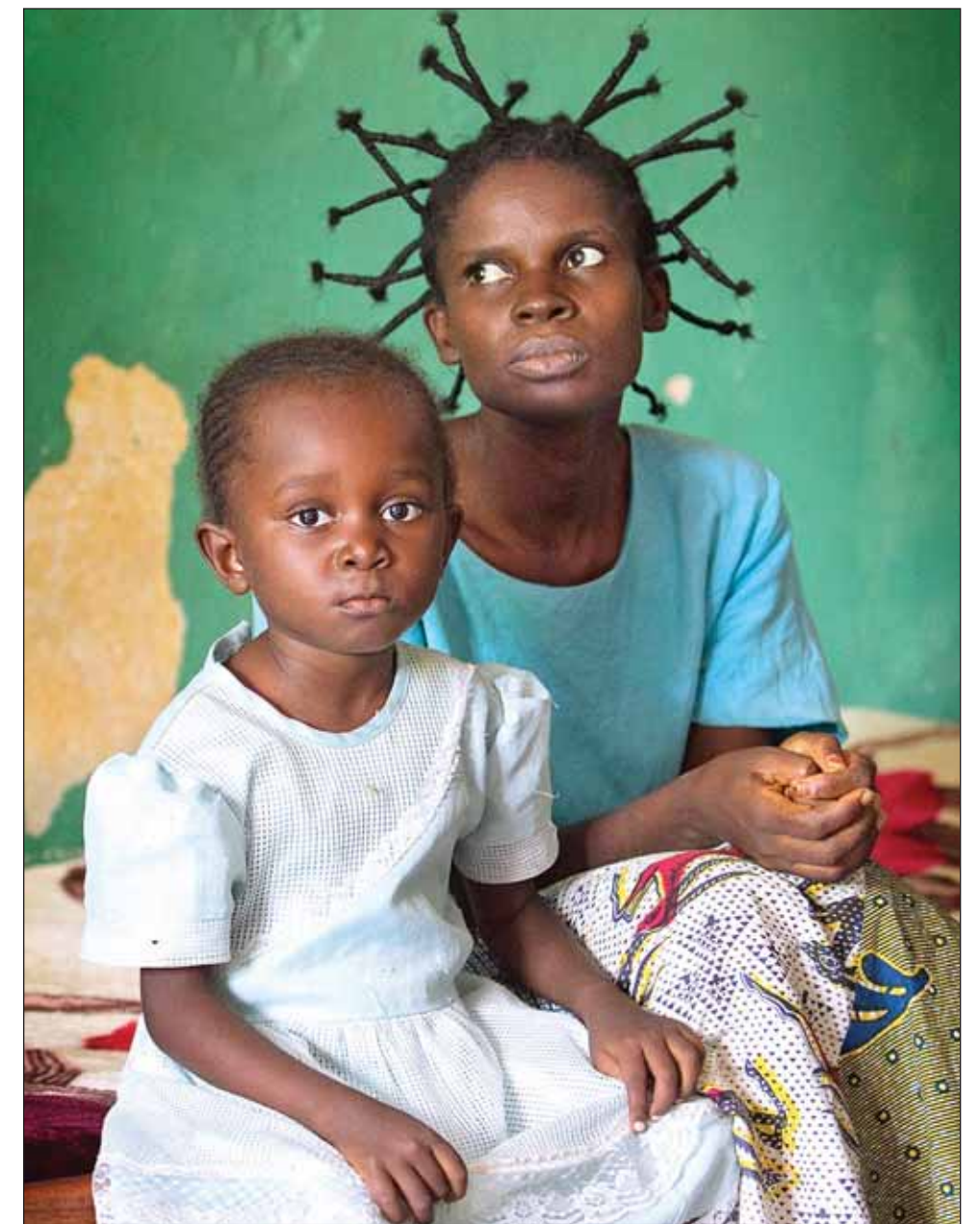
The United Methodist Church has a history of starting hospitals and clinics in hard-to-reach places like Kamina and Lubumbashi, Ms. Trilli said.

Malaria is a place for the church to start, she said. From there the issues of malnutrition, clean water, education and food production can be addressed.

"We are visitors here, even though we have a history in Africa," Ms. Trilli said. "That makes it very important to spend time to build relationships and trust."



Bishop Thomas Bickerton (left) shares a laugh with the Rev. Kimba Kyakutala of the United Methodist Church in Democratic Republic of Congo when anti-malaria nets were distributed there in April.



Mbayo Ndala and her mother wait at the United Methodist Church's Shungu Health Center in Kamina, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Paying for donuts at church conveys wrong message

BY CINDY GREGORSON
Special Contributor

I am calling for a ban on the following practice that I observe in many of our churches: the freewill offering basket placed at the refreshment table during coffee time.

At a stewardship seminar I recently attended, Nelson Searcy of the Journey Church in New York City said that a theology of abundance underlies everything his church does in terms of stewardship. If we expect people to be generous in their giving to the church, he said, then the church needs to model that generosity and sense of abundance.

He further chastised churches that serve day-old, halved doughnuts during the coffee time. Churches need to treat people with the really good stuff!

His church welcomes first-time guests by sending them a public-transportation pass card and gives second-time guests a gift card to a coffee shop—and offers all a Bible. To those who think all the church does is ask people for money, he wants to communicate that the church is a place of generosity and wants to bless people.

So many of the things we do as a church can communicate scarcity and quid pro quo: You pay for what you get. Now, you need to understand that this church makes no bones about asking people to give to the church—and in fact, they urge people toward tithing. They take seriously and have a system for moving people from being first-time givers to tithers.

But they also know that to help people grow into that kind of generosity, they need to see and experience God's abundance. All the small things we do can send unintended messages.

Here is a good practice from the Rev. Amy Jo Bur, pastor of Good Samaritan United Methodist Church, our new-church start in St. Peter. Between worship services on Sunday, her church offers a catered breakfast of egg bake and giant cinnamon rolls

from a local restaurant.

One of her colleagues asked her if they put out an offering basket to help defray the cost of what is not a cheap breakfast. Her reply was instantaneous: "No." In the first place, the donations would not cover the cost. Second, that would send the wrong message.



One of their core values is hospitality, and this is one of the ways they live that out. Everyone is welcome at the table.

When I ask United Methodists what they value about being United Methodist, they usually mention the open communion table where everyone is welcome, no matter their age, church membership or background. Have we considered the irony of welcoming everyone freely to God's communion table and then asking them to pay for their doughnut and coffee at the refreshment table afterward?

How much money do you get in that offering basket at the coffee hour anyway? Not enough to offset the implicit message that we can't afford to be generous. And how much is that costing us in the development of generous Christians?

It is time to get rid of the coffee-hour donation basket—and bring on some really good food. We have been blessed by the extravagant love of God. It is time we showed it in the little things as well as the big!

Ms. Gregorson is director of congregational development for the Minnesota Conference. © 2010 The Minnesota Conference of the United Methodist Church. Used by permission.



Cindy Gregorson

Planting new congregations is key to U.S. evangelization

BY BISHOP G. LINDSEY DAVIS
Special Contributor

Editor's note: This is the first in an occasional series of excerpts from the new book *The Future of the United Methodist Church: 7 Vision Pathways* (Abingdon).

On a recent Sunday morning, my wife and I attended worship at one of the newly planted churches in the North Georgia Conference. The church met at a school in the suburbs of Atlanta.

I was overdressed in my coat and tie. When we entered the school cafeteria, converted temporarily into worship space, a young couple enthusiastically greeted us and asked if we wanted earplugs. They said the music was high energy and high volume. We declined (which we later regretted), and soon the service began.

There were more than 200 worshippers in a congregation not yet one year old. I was deeply encouraged that morning:

- Most of the people in worship were under 40—the opposite of what I usually see in our United Methodist churches. Children and teenagers were everywhere. Young adults were leading and serving.

- Many of the people did not look like me. The crowd was culturally and racially diverse and mingled naturally with one another.

- The preaching was engaging, biblical, thoughtful and Wesleyan. The sermon touched my heart and my head. My heart was warmed and my mind was stretched.

- The mission outreach of the church was highlighted. Without a building of its own, the church had already organized itself to affect and transform its community.

- The church was a hospitable place where people could be accepted the way they were, yet challenged to change and grow spiritually.

This experience is being repeated over and over again in new United Methodist churches across America. It is exactly what the Council of Bishops intended when we began to focus on new church development.

"Creating new places for new people" became one of the Four Areas of Focus affirmed by the 2008 General

Conference. Reaching out to the more than 195 million unchurched people in the U.S. must be a priority again for us. Many of us believe it is the No. 1 priority.

Path 1 team

Path 1 is a collaboration of church planters, directors of congregational development, bishops and general agency staff that seeks to provide leadership and to develop creative partnerships across the church, focusing on re-evangelizing the United States by developing a national plan for training and supporting new church planters.

Its goal: to recruit, train and provide resources for 1,000 new church planters to start 650 churches in partnership with U.S. annual conferences, targeting 50 percent of those churches to be racially and ethnically diverse congregations.

To achieve these goals, we must establish a culture of starting new churches to replace our current culture of maintenance and decline.

In the 1980s, Bishop Ernest Fitzgerald of North Georgia established an office of church development and launched a comprehensive new church-planting program. Since 1990, the North Georgia Conference has started more than 100 new churches, resulting in a net growth of more than 60,000 people.

The newly formed churches accounted for 18,000 of those new members and influenced surrounding congregations to also nurture the unchurched into the body of Christ. In North Georgia, half of the new churches were designed to reach ethnic minority and new immigrant groups, mainly Hispanic and Korean.

The North Carolina, Alabama-West Florida and Arkansas areas of the United Methodist Church have been noteworthy in creating a church-planting culture. The Path 1 team seeks to build on the best practices of these areas to develop a national strategy.

One of our fundamental mistakes is that we have stopped following the people. Since World War II, the population of the U.S. has shifted to places where our churches have not been established. In the next 25 years, most of the growth will occur in the South-

east, South Central and Western jurisdictions.

Some states will grow more than 50 percent above the national rate—Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Alaska, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. Others will be above the national rate—California, Colorado, Tennessee, South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland.

These are the places where we must concentrate our church-planting efforts. We must reclaim the evangelistic commitment of our Wesleyan heritage.

Lovett H. Weems Jr. says it well in his 1999 book *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Abingdon): "The Wesleyan movement became a powerful spiritual force in America by going where the people were. The

movement did not exist to serve churches. . . . It was a passion and urgency for all to know God's love revealed in Jesus Christ that propelled this movement of God, against all odds, to every corner of a vast nation."

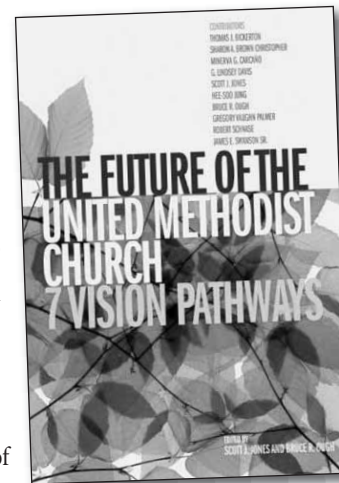
Leadership is key

We must invest in leadership. The most important factor in successful church planting is a leader who can mobilize people into a vital, new faith community; a person with a deep, abiding faith in Jesus Christ and a passion for evangelism, who is not afraid to take risks; who has a sense of urgency about the mission of the church and is able to develop a plan for the future of the new congregation; and who is able to build strong, trusting relationships, especially with those under the age of 35.

If we depend on ordained elders alone, we will not be able to plant the number of new churches envisioned. Lay pastors and other lay leaders can also grow new churches.

Give us persons—lay or clergy—with the passion and skill to plant new churches and the renewal of the United Methodist Church will be under way. Will our church become nimble enough to make the transition? That is the question.

Bishop Davis leads the Louisville Area and chairs the Path 1 Vision Pathway Team of the Council of Bishops.



Bishop Lindsey Davis

What's with Methodists and controversial issues?

BY BUZZ STEVENS
Special Contributor

Most of you may be more knowledgeable than I about the legacy of Methodism but it won't hurt to be reminded of it again.

Some of you might be interested in knowing something about the founder of the Methodist movement. I've learned bits and pieces of John Wesley's gutsy efforts to deal with social justice matters in his day but I'd never quite put them all together.

He dealt with oppressed children who were forced to work 12-hour days and miners who labored under horrific, dehumanizing union-less conditions in the 18th century. He is credited in history books for having helped to avert a nationwide rebellion through those courageous endeavors.

The noted maverick took on the issue of rampant drunkenness in London and he may have been hated and reviled over that cause more than others. Ale went for a penny a pint, a good price for the destitute but a horrendous cost to their lives and families.

Wesley addressed the appalling conditions of the prison system that were acceptable in the eyes of the general public.

The passionate leader put 200,000 miles on his horses throughout the British Isles and later expanded his ministries to America. Not many founders of religious movements made their presence and ideas known like Wesley on such a cosmic scale. He's still featured in the Guinness Book of World Records for the horseback mileage he covered in his day.

A quote from a biography of Wesley by C.E. Vulliamy describes what it might have called out of Methodists who dared to follow his lead. "It is a proof of the irresistible vitality of the Methodist movement, that neither danger, violence, nor intimidation had the slightest effect upon its advance.

The number of people who were frightened away from Methodism was exceedingly small; the number of those who were gained by the Methodist example of courage... and above all by the superb coolness of Wesley himself, was exceedingly great."

Wesley was also an ardent opponent of slavery. The Methodist church was one of the largest faith communi-



John Wesley

ties in the country in the 1840s when the controversy over slavery exploded. One in four citizens in America called themselves Methodists back then. It would be hard to hide one's denominational affiliation in that historic period. Our faith institution had a national, high profile image in that

'There is a great mistrust of our congressional leaders, state and federal, who have refused to take stands.'

time that was not limited to region, class or race. It meant the members had to deal with the flak from the entire populace, a situation that is heating up today for Methodists over immigration and intensely so in Arizona.

When Wesleyan followers make nationwide headlines regarding hot issues in our day, members in our churches can become embarrassed and angered over the media coverage if they are not aware of our history of taking on national or worldwide controversial issues. Part of that frustration is due to feeling stupid by not being informed before it breaks into the news or when neighbors bring it up.

We now have countless members in the Methodist fold who grew up in different faith communities whose ministries were locally or regionally based and not given to taking on national or global injustice issues. The congregations to which they belonged in the past were likely involved in outreach ministries that were pretty

much limited to dealing with the needs of the disenfranchised in their immediate communities.

And few religious institutions go looking for highly controversial matters to tackle. We even have an agency based in Washington, D.C., that is given to searching for evidence of injustice worldwide. When those of other faiths join Methodist congregations they are likely to not have a historical grasp of how we do ministry in the context of an entire culture or an entire planet. It will not make sense to them.

There is a great mistrust of our congressional leaders, state and federal, who have refused to take stands, so perhaps frustrated citizens and faith community members feel their sentiments are being flat-out ignored like never before. It may be that when that happens, anger sets in and people lash out at their congregational leaders who fail to make known where they are on controversial matters.

Frankly, I was very reticent to take the lead on political conflicts as a pastor. I did some demonstrating and preaching on a few heated topics, but never enough.

Bill Moyers, a Baptist no less, ended a commencement address three years ago at Southern Methodist University on the subject of Methodism by proclaiming the following: "No institution has done more to shape America's moral imagination. If America is going to be fixed, I believe someone with this [Methodist] DNA will be needed to do it. It's possible."

We shouldn't have to have a Baptist remind us of that. We Methodists don't get known for that kind of ministry when we remain localized or even regionalized faith communities. Dr. Moyers might have been admitting that Baptists can't fix a country like Methodists can.

We might have to risk being tarred and feathered, but we made it this far because our church ancestors sacrificed in cultural and global arenas to get us here.

What do we owe them?

The Rev. Stevens is a retired United Methodist pastor who is currently living in Phoenix, Ariz. Excerpted from his blog, buzzstevens.net.

REFLECTIONS

A word to starry-eyed couples: vows pledge fidelity to the end

BY BISHOP WOODIE W. WHITE
UMR Columnist

For better, for worse. In sickness and in health. These familiar phrases are part of a traditional marriage ceremony used by many religious groups around the world.

As this popular season for weddings unfolds, couples will join hands and hearts, pledge their love to one another and vow to remain faithful until death.

Despite the changes in how and when two people commit themselves to a lifelong relationship, marriage is still an important institution in community life. It is the way life relationships are sealed and future generations are produced.

In most of our congregations across the connection, pastors are preparing to lead young and not-so-young couples in the familiar vows of covenant and commitment. In some instances, couples will write their own vows, but even contemporary language will promise fidelity and permanency.

Of course, these vows are made in the context of romantic love. Attraction—physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual—are at the center of the promised devotion.

Typically, feelings and emotions are predominant and are essentially self-centered; that is, they are based on how one person makes the other person "feel." One popular song of yesterday puts it this way: "I love you not for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you!"

But as every married couple learns, the nature and content of love changes over the years. Love becomes more expansive. As it matures, it is not nearly so self-centered. It is less about what makes me happy and more about what makes you happy.

It is about a sustained relationship in the midst of difficulty, tragedy, disappointment and failure—the "worse" of the marriage vows. And while the relationship may begin with evidence of energy, exuberance and good health, in time these too will change.

Genuine love expands and deepens in the face of new realities. I don't think I have ever seen a more tender moment than watching a couple facing the new reality of aging, debilitat-

ing illness or other physical and emotional challenges, while still expressing their love and devotion.

You see it when an aged wife lifts a spoon to the mouth of her elderly husband, who is no longer able to perform this simple act alone. Or when one spouse holds the hand of the other who was once so independent but now walks slowly, taking small steps, as even these are an effort. Or when a husband strokes the hair of his declining wife, putting it in place for her, because he knows that while she is no longer mindful of it, she used to take particular pride in her appearance.

The once handsome frame stoops, the shining eyes grow dim, the beautiful hair becomes thin, yet the love for that spouse is unmistakable in the eyes and caring of the other. They teach us something about the transcendence of love!

'Genuine love expands and deepens in the face of new realities.'

So much about the content and endurance of love is learned from such couples: patience, understanding, caring, tenderness, faithfulness. Now the object of love has changed from what makes me feel good to how can I make you feel better, ease your pain, make you more comfortable. How can I unmistakably convey my love for you, even in the most challenging times?

As those who are about to make a life commitment of love, devotion and fidelity prepare to repeat ancient or contemporary vows—even through starry eyes of love—may they find the essence and meaning in those words. The vows are certainly not a demand to remain in abusive and destructive relationships. But they are a reminder that in a marriage, be prepared for challenge, struggle and even sickness.

May they gain a glimpse early in their relationship of those who live and love through the worst, including sickness and ill health. And yes, even unto death!

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



Bishop Woodie White



Buzz Stevens

■ GRADUATE *Continued from page 1B*

moved to college and stopped attending church and 23 percent said work responsibilities prevented them from attending.

Some young adult ministry experts say young people feel unrecognized in the church, so they see little need to be present.

Community on campus

“The church talks about wanting to be in ministry with young people, but doesn’t know how to do it,” said the Rev. Jan Rivero, campus minister and executive director of the Wesley Campus Ministry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

“What happens in campus ministry is that students find themselves in a safe environment where they can explore their faith,” she said. “Their campus ministry experience sets a bar for Christian community that most churches cannot meet.”

Nick Lawton, a 2010 graduate of Oklahoma University, needed an encouraging Christian community on campus and joined the Wesley Foundation, the United Methodist Church’s college ministry, during his freshman year.

“When you go off to college, your worship and faith become completely your own,” he said. “The Wesley Foundation made God more accessible to me. I started to see him more as a God who is right beside me, rather than a puppet master in the sky.”

For four years, Mr. Lawton fellowshipped with the OU Wesley Founda-

tion and attended a local United Methodist church before switching to an independent community church, where he was drawn by the contemporary worship and a larger group of young adults.

“I know it is going to be difficult to find a faith community that’s as tight and as intimate as Wesley was,” he said, “but after four years with the Wesley Foundation, I feel I am ready to move on to the next spiritual stage of life.”

Mr. Lawton is still trying to figure out what his faith community will look like beyond the structure of the Wesley Foundation, but he is determined to find like-minded young adults and organize a faith-based study that caters to their spiritual needs.

To help prepare students as they leave campus, Dr. Rivero leads a “transition group” for seniors through the Wesley Foundation at UNC at Chapel Hill. Most importantly, she wants college seniors to know they have the tools to create the kind of spiritual community provided by the Wesley Foundation wherever they may go.

Community in church

Some United Methodist churches have organized young adult programs for persons ages 18 to 35.

Bridge Builders is a ministry for young adults at Manassas St. Thomas United Methodist Church and St. Thomas Haymarket UMC in northern Virginia. Part of its mission is to “bridge the gap” between the younger generations of Christians and the rest of the church community.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SMU

As college graduates leave campus, many find it hard to plug back into a local church—because they’re too old for youth group and too young for career-aged single groups.

But while the group provides a sense of community for young adults, it’s hard to get a 34-year-old parent to relate to someone who is fresh out of high school, said the Rev. Matt Meisenhelter, who oversees the ministry.

“We are fortunate to have this ministry, but we’re always hoping for bigger and better,” said Ryan Held, an

active Bridge Builder. “There just doesn’t seem to be very many resources for successful young adult ministries.”

Mr. Ratliff said the denomination needs to have a greater focus on ministry to young adults.

“We’re not so effective with what we do in adult ministry,” said Mr. Ratliff. “Just look at the difference be-

tween youth ministries and young adult programs. There’s more for the youth.”

Robyn Magar, a 23-year-old graduate student at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, agrees. “Being a young adult is a difficult place to be,” she said.

As for getting involved in the church, Ms. Magar has tried it all—the university group, the young singles class and the young adult class, which she found catered more to young married couples. So far, she finds it most fulfilling to work with the youth department at First United Methodist Church in Nacogdoches.

“When I’m working with the youth, I feel like I’m a part of the church,” Ms. Magar said, “and that feels different than just going to church.”

But it’s not enough, and she’s not alone, she added. Ms. Magar said other post-graduates she knows also want to be involved and make a difference in their congregations, but they just haven’t been able to find their niche.

“I wish more people knew how awkward it is to be caught in the middle,” Ms. Magar said. “We’re either labeled as college kids or adults, but there is an in-between chapter in life that I don’t want to skip.”

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