

IN THIS ISSUE

Meeting needs in Pakistan and throughout the world

3A

Age 50 or over? Take this ministry survey!

4A

OMP approaches 25-year mark

6A

Two takes on stewardship: financial, environmental

9A

Healthy lifestyle changes help pastor serve God

10A



Historic Gift

Gary Allen Smith of Wichita, Okla., reviews a page of his great-grandfather's journal at the Arkansas Conference Archives room, Hendrix College. Members of the Smith family recently donated 15 journals and a family record book to the archives. Their ancestor recorded details of his life as a Methodist pastor in the White River and North Arkansas Conferences.

Conference archives receives writings of 19th-century pastor

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Accounts of travel by boat, horseback and wagon. A tale of death-bed conversion during a pneumonia epidemic. The generous \$5 honorarium the pastor received for performing a wedding.

These stories and many more are part of a recent gift to the archives of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. The personal journals of the Rev. Matthew Monroe Smith, a Methodist pastor in the White River and North Arkansas Conferences, now reside in the Conference archives room at Hendrix College's Bailey Library.

The 15 journals cover a span of 43 years, from November 1886 to

Smith's death in March of 1929.

Smith actually played a part in determining where his journals now reside. As a member of the Hendrix College board of trustees, he cast the tie-breaking vote that chose Conway over Searcy as the location for the Methodist-related institution.

Descendants from Mississippi, Texas and Oklahoma on July 12 traveled to Conway to present their great-grandfather's journals and a family record book to Conference archivists Mauzel Beal and Marcia Crossman. Several Hendrix staff also attended the event, including the Rev. Wayne Clark, college chaplain.

"The gift of these journals will enrich our Methodist heritage," he told the Smith family. "You can be well-assured that the materials will

be taken care of in perpetuity."

"These journals will be an asset for future generations and scholars of Methodist history," said Amanda Moore, Hendrix librarian.

Smith's journals provide insight into the life of a Methodist preacher at the turn of the 20th century. In addition to entries about unusual events and special occasions, the journals also include information on more basic elements of a pastor's life, such as details of worship services.

James Edwin Smith Jr. first read the journals in 1993. "[It] gave me a new perspective and appreciation of where I came from," he said. The family believes that James Edwin Smith Sr., who died in 2005, received the journals from his father, W.O.

[See HISTORIC, page 8A]

Donated building boosts church's ministry

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Christ Way United Methodist Church has called several locations home since the Rev. Herschel Richardson was appointed in October 2007 to plant a new faith community in Jonesboro.

A Sunday school room at St. Paul UMC came first.

"They were really helpful to us," Richardson said of the St. Paul staff and congregation. Things like sharing a photocopier and providing even one room's square footage can make all the difference in the early phases of a new church start.

As the new, multi-racial congregation prepared to begin holding worship services, they sought space in the local YMCA. Worship launched there in June 2008.

It didn't take long to find yet another home: By October, just a year after its beginning, Christ Way was meeting in Fox Meadow Intermediate School. Though it required setting up the gymnasium every Friday and taking everything down after worship each Sunday, the space worked well for the growing congregation. The school district wasn't even charging them rent.

But as summer break ap-
[See DONATED, page 4A]





EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

Making connections, making disciples, making a difference

In my first month on the job, I've done some traveling to re-learn my home state. Though I won't be able to attend every district conference, they're all on my calendar.

During the Southwest District Conference workshops at First UMC Magnolia, I sat in on Martha Taylor's session to learn more about *Sharing Together In Christ's Name*. If you haven't yet heard about this Bible study resource, visit sharingtogetherUMC.org for an introduction.

Shortly after the workshop began, I got a surprise when someone who looked very familiar leaned in and quietly asked me, "Do I know you from Ozark Mission Project?" It had been a long time, but yes, I had attended the OMP camp at Wayland Springs in the summer of 1988.

The questioner was the Rev. Mark Lasater, director of that camp. He was the guy in charge back then, and all grown up, so he hasn't changed that much. But when Mark last saw me, I was twelve years old. I hadn't even gotten my braces yet! How did he remember me, twenty-two years later?

Mark said that though my photo in last month's paper looked familiar, he didn't remember me until I stood up to talk during the conference business session. Apparently, my speech patterns and gestures haven't changed all that much, and they sparked a memory—one that our United Methodist connection had held in waiting for more than two decades.

On pages 6 and 7 of this issue you'll find articles about Ozark Mission Project. Mandy Stanton shares a brief history of this summer camp that brings people together to transform work sites and, in the process, transforms those who come to serve.

Then, high school student John Szenher offers a personal witness of what this summer's OMP meant to him. Reading his reflection helped me see once again how instrumental my own OMP experience has been in my faith journey.

And if you've ever been a part of OMP, there's a special invitation to add to your October 2011 calendar. Yes, 2011. They're giving us plenty of notice, because they really do want us all to attend.

The Arkansas Conference is full of life-changing ministries; OMP is just one of them. The *Sharing Together In Christ's Name* materials highlight several others. And at the Southeast District Conference I heard about two more:

- An annual Church on the Lake worship service offered by the Mt. Pisgah/Emerson charge reaches more people than their two Easter services combined. This ministry bore fruit its very first year: It opened the path to baptism for one person and to church membership for an entire family. "Listen to your youth," said church member Glenda Gordon as she told the story; guess who came up with the lakeside worship idea?
- A2J—Addicted to Jesus—is a Sunday afternoon ministry for kids in the Emmet area, helping them stay connected as a community following the closing of the Emmet schools. Emmet UMC counts eight children among its member families, yet 14 kids regularly attend A2J. With a plan for ministry and the courage to go door-to-door offering personal invitations, they began making new disciples.

Our mission as United Methodist Christians is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. I'm enjoying learning how, in our own corner of the world and at other points across the globe, Arkansas United Methodists are getting after it. I look forward to learning about more of your ministries.

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

Church renewal depends upon the Holy Spirit

BY WILLIAM O. (BUD) REEVES
Special Contributor

For several months I have been reading some of the sermons of E. Stanley Jones. Jones was a Methodist missionary, primarily to India, and a worldwide evangelist who was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Author of 29 books, his is a voice that has been muted since his death in 1973, but I think it is an important voice to hear again. His thoroughly Wesleyan perspective on evangelism, especially in the context of a non-Christian culture, is prophetic for our situation today.

Two of Jones' best sermons deal with the Holy Spirit. Among the most frequent comments we heard during the recent rounds of discussion in the Imagine Ministry process had to do with the need to be open to the Holy Spirit.

In last month's column, I shared my belief that the renewal of the church will depend on a supernatural movement of God's Spirit. I am not alone.

I recently read an interview with Francis Chan, the pastor who started Cornerstone Church in California in 1994 and grew it to attendance in the thousands. Chan's books, blogs and videos are best-sellers.

Currently Chan is in the process of dismantling his mega-church and establishing hundreds of home-church groups, geographically located and led by indigenous lay leaders, trained by the church to lead community-based ministries.

Why has Chan turned away from emphasizing large church gatherings?

To allow the Holy Spirit to work in a deeper way in the lives of people. To open a gateway for people to "become obsessed with Jesus." To get beyond the walls of the institutional, corporately-structured church.

If a mainline denomination like the United Methodist Church can be renewed, it will take an act of God. That action is through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit cannot be organized, programmed or manipulated. But the Spirit is available to every Christian

individually and to every church corporately.

Jones called it "the birthright of every Christian." In one of his sermons, he shared the steps for receiving the Holy Spirit:

1. Understand that it is God's intention to give you the Holy Spirit.
2. Make it your intention to get your birthright.
3. Offer God a complete self-surrender. (This, of course, is the big sticking point.)
4. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit by faith.

When Jesus offered the disciples the gift of the Spirit in Acts 1, he told them to wait for it. They waited and prayed, and on the Day of Pentecost, they received the Gift, and they immediately got results. As someone has said, "In Acts they prayed ten days, preached ten minutes, and 3,000 got saved. Now we pray ten minutes, preach ten days, and three get saved." What's wrong with this picture?

Jones had an experience as a young evangelist that changed his ministry forever. He was having a tough time connecting with his audiences. They were resistant and unresponsive (imagine that!). He was worn out. He took refuge one

day under an apple tree and poured out his heart to God.

The Lord spoke to him in his fatigue and said, "Do you see how this apple tree brings forth fruit? Does it get into a frenzy of desire and say, 'I will bring forth fruit'? Does it get itself into a stew to bring forth fruit?"

Jones said, "No."

The Lord said, "What does it do?"

Jones replied, "It takes from the earth, air and the sun and keeps the channels open and lets the life drain down into the apple, and it brings forth fruit effortlessly."

The Lord said, "That's all you have to do, my son. Take my resources—it's all yours. Learn to receive and then keep the channels open—no blocks. Then I'll bring forth fruit to you, and you will do it effortlessly."

This epiphany changed Jones' life. It is not a passive life at all. But it is a different kind of activity.

I don't believe renewal of our churches will ultimately depend on studies, structures, or strategies. It will depend on the Spirit of God.

We need to bow our heads and bend our knees and beg God for supernatural empowerment of our ministry. Wait and pray. When we receive the Gift, we will see the results, and the church will have new life.

The Rev. Dr. Reeves serves as pastor of First UMC, Hot Springs. He can be reached at brobud@fumchs.com.



Bud Reeves



Volume 157 • No. 18 September 3, 2010
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The Arkansas United Methodist is the newspaper of record for the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church. It is published once monthly, on the first Fridays of each month, and four special issues throughout during the year for a total of 16 issues per year.

Send Correspondence & Change of Address to:
Arkansas United Methodist, 800 Daisy Bates Drive,
Little Rock, AR 72202; or e-mailed to
Patrick.Shownes@arumc.org

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The United Methodist Reporter, PO Box 660275,
Dallas, TX 75266-0275.

The United Methodist Reporter (USPS 954-500) is published weekly by UMR Communications, 1221 Profit Drive, Dallas, TX 75247. Periodicals Postage Paid at Dallas.



Arkansas Conference Communications
800 Daisy Bates Drive
Little Rock, AR 72202-3770
www.arumc.org (501) 324-8000

Subscriptions
- \$15.00, 1 Year
- \$25.00, 2 Years
- Free, Online
For more information, visit
www.arumc.org/aum or call (501) 324-8006.

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| Issue Date | Submission Deadline |
|------------|---------------------|
| Oct. 1 | Sept. 15 |
| Nov. 5 | Oct. 20 |
| Dec. 3 | Nov. 17 |



BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

UMC generosity meets needs around the world

Dear Friends:

The color picture on the front page of the *Democrat-Gazette* was powerful—a Pakistani man, up to his armpits in water, raising his arms in a prayer for help.

We are there as a church, just as we are in Haiti, in Chile, in Indonesia, on the Louisiana-Mississippi Gulf Coast, in Cote D'Ivoire, in the Congo and dozens more places around the world. Our response to human need through

UMCOR, and through our ongoing shared mission giving through apportionments, provides a powerful response to human need.

Tragically, there are those who try to take advantage of our generosity. After every natural disaster, I receive emails requesting aid from legitimate sounding organizations. But they are not legitimate. I received a number of requests from alleged church groups in Pakistan asking for help from the

floods that are so devastating. Your church (or you individually!) may have received the same kinds of requests.

You and I need to be aware that in areas where we have no organized United Methodist Church, funds are given for disaster response to partner organizations that are transparent and accountable and have a track record of effectiveness.

In Pakistan, for instance, we work through Church World Service, The Church of Pakistan (Diocese of Peshawar), the ACT Alliance (a world-wide ecumenical organization), Muslim Aid, Norwegian Church Aid, and GlobalMedic. These are all trusted partners.

The first responsibility of every United Methodist church is to support in full the shared mission giving (apportionments) that provides the foundation for the rest of our outreach and mission.

Through The Advance and through UMCOR, we respond to specific needs. Conference projects like the Congo water wells or the Russia Initiative (Moscow Theological Seminary) stand in need of our strong support.

Of course, local churches may support missionaries like our own Shanna Harrison in Chile through the General Board of Global Ministries. Arkansas Rice Depot and

Camp Aldersgate are important local mission opportunities.

The key is for the mission project to be clear, transparent, accountable, and clearly in the spirit of Christ. If it is a United Methodist sponsored or endorsed project, it satisfies these requirements. Of course, each local church will have local mission projects as well. That is as it should be, but it is important to remember that together we are able to do far more than any one church can do by itself.

In this vein, I once had the question asked, "What have we gotten out of the apportionments?" Interesting, but it is the wrong question because it is based on a wrong assumption.

Our shared mission giving is not about us and what we get. It is all about what we provide for others and promote in mission and ministry for the Kingdom of God. It is not about what we get back. It is about what we make possible at home and around the world for the sake of Christ.

A wonderful new resource has been made available to your church by the Annual Conference and the Arkansas United Methodist Foundation: *Sharing Together in Christ's Name*. It includes Bible studies for children, youth and adults, and worship resources that

can help every congregation understand our shared United Methodist ministry. I trust each congregation will make good use of this excellent resource.

As opportunities arise, United Methodist people are among the most generous on earth. We have raised over \$30 million for the disaster response work in Haiti. Enormous amounts of money were raised in response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on our Gulf Coast. The responsible use of those funds is carefully noted. There is accountability.

Because we are the church, and have a wonderful "in house" delivery system, our overhead is extremely low. You can feel confident that your gift given through the United Methodist Church is going to the right place.

We respond to the prayer of the Pakistani man in the picture because it is the right thing to do. We do all this in the spirit of Christ who so generously gave himself for us.

Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity.

Faithfully,

Charles Crutchfield



The worst floods in 80 years could spread water-borne diseases threatening up to 3.5 million children in Pakistan. GlobalMedic, a partner of UMCOR, is working to provide clean drinking water to those displaced by the floodwaters.

UMNS PHOTO COURTESY OF GLOBALMEDIC

There's a hunger... and God's people can help

BY DEENA MARIE HAMILTON
Special Contributor

Being involved with the Nehemiah Network, the North Little Rock Ministerial Fellowship and working with the City Fest II planning team has opened my eyes to something shocking: the incredible need for our churches to either support or run food ministries.

When I was given the task of compiling a database of food ministries in central Arkansas, I actually said aloud to myself, "Deena



Deena Marie Hamilton

girl, what were you thinking? This is not like being the Conference Coordinator for Single Adult Ministries."

This task involves leading beyond the familiarity of my beloved Conference. This is a position where my leadership sets the tone for food ministry networking in all churches in central Arkansas! I am afraid of failing God and the people.

But I remembered what I always have said to congregations I've pastored over the years: "God does not expect perfection, but He does expect an excellent effort."

There is no failure when you try your best. I realize that even though the task may seem larger than life, I need to take baby steps, and I don't have to do this alone.

So after my mini-conniption, I took a different approach to dealing

with the issue of hunger. I decided to apply the nursing process: assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. I decided to treat hunger as a disease—not from a physiological point of view, but a spiritual one. I opened my textbook to Matthew 6:32-33, where the Master tells us "Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met" (*The Message*).

We know that we should heed what the Lord says to us, but we also know it is easier said than done. We worry far more than we should. But hunger is an issue that plagues our nation and especially our state.

According to research and statistics from the River Valley Food Bank, the South has the highest rate of hunger in children in the nation, where one of every five children go

hungry every day.

Arkansas ranks the highest in hunger for children under 18. That's a staggering statistic. If children are hungry in the classroom, they won't be able to learn the way they should. Studies have shown that children who eat a good breakfast score better on standardized tests and are less disruptive in the classrooms.

We can help relieve the worry that some have about what they shall eat or drink. If we help alleviate this predicament, it will give people the chance to become less preoccupied with getting, so they can respond to God's giving.

I am grateful for the strides that our Conference has made in fighting the hunger epidemic. Speaking with people connected with the Hunger Task Force was a great place to start as I began building the database of

food ministries.

Many of us are at an advantage. We know how God works, and we steep ourselves in God-provisions, God-initiative, and God-reality so therefore we don't worry about what we shall eat, drink, or wear. We understand our worth to God.

As we continue to be the Conference that is a church alive by the grace of God, transforming lives for Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, we need to take a holistic approach to ensure continuity of ministry by feeding who we can, one by one—body, mind and soul.

The Rev. Hamilton serves as pastor of McCabe Chapel UMC in North Little Rock. She can be reached at rev.deenamarie@gmail.com.

Older adult ministries survey opens Sept. 13

The Council on Older Adult Ministries is conducting two online surveys from Sept. 13-30, 2010. You may find links to both surveys on the Conference website, at arumc.org/olderadults.

Individual Survey—The purpose of this survey is to learn more about the needs of individual older adults in our churches. The council will use information shared in this survey to develop new ministries and programs for older adults.

Though the United Methodist Church's official older adult designation begins at age 65, the council encourages anyone age 50 or over to complete the individual

survey, as it will help them learn more about the population approaching older adulthood.

Congregational Survey—The purpose of this survey is to learn more about what local congregations are currently doing to meet the needs of older adults in their churches and communities. Pastors or Older Adult Ministry coordinators should complete this survey.

Visit arumc.org/olderadults from Sept. 13-30 to complete either survey.

To reach the Council on Older Adult Ministries, contact the Rev. David Smith, 870-365-6678 or flyfisher01@cox.net.



Marilyn Peevy, left, visits with 103-year-old Grace Sahli, her longtime friend and fellow member of Asbury UMC in Little Rock.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Church stays connected with centenarian member

Grace Sahli, who has been a member of Asbury United Methodist Church in Little Rock since 1983, recently celebrated her 103rd birthday with a gathering that included her relatives and her church family, too. Marilyn Peevy, a fellow member of Asbury, organized the event.

Even though Sahli can no longer attend worship or other activities, the congregation has kept a connection by visiting her at the care facility where she lives. "I love having people come to see me," Sahli said. "Marilyn and Nell Wilson are the two that come the most regularly."

"Grace is one of the dear saints of the church," said the Rev. David Moore, an associate pastor of Asbury UMC who also frequently visits

Sahli. He recalled that for years, she served as Asbury's "official unofficial greeter," speaking to everyone and giving out candy.

"One never visits Grace that she doesn't inquire about her friends at the church," Moore said. "Her faith is strong and her trust in the Lord is evident in her conversations—she never complains but is always upbeat. It is a real pleasure to be one of her pastors. But I must admit she ministers more to me than I feel I do to her."

In addition to her role as greeter, Sahli was an active participant in her United Methodist Women circle. "And I was always there when we had food," she joked—a practice she undoubtedly shares with many United Methodists.

Donated building boosts ministry (continued from page 1A)

proached, so did a wrinkle in their arrangement. The school let Richardson know that it planned to use the break to do some maintenance work on the gym floor. Christ Way needed to find another space.

With just a few weeks' notice, Richardson and the Rev. Kurt Boggan, Northeast District superintendent, began canvassing the area for potential meeting sites.

"We were just praying and looking for a spot because the school had told us they needed the building for the summer," Richardson said. "Otherwise, we wouldn't have really been looking. [The school] was a good place to be, and it was in our mission field."

But Richardson discovered another possible option in that same mission field. It was a former church building, not far from the school and in a great location on Stadium Boulevard.

With a little investigation, Richardson and Boggan learned that the building's next door neighbor, the Fletcher Dodge Chrysler car dealership, owned it and was using it for storage. They approached the dealership with a proposal for rental, and soon had a deal. The Northeast District rented the building using funds designated for new church starts, and for the first time, Christ Way occupied a space that had been designed for worship.

Six months into the rental agreement, the space was working out so well that Richardson and Boggan decided to ask the dealership whether it would be willing to let the congregation move from renting the building to buying it.

What they didn't know was that



Children sing and dance during Vacation Bible School 2010 in Christ Way UMC's building, which was donated to the congregation by Frank Fletcher, a fellow United Methodist.

COURTESY PHOTO

this faith community and Frank Fletcher, the owner of the dealership, already had a connection: membership in the United Methodist Church. Fletcher is a member of Lakewood UMC in North Little Rock.

"We got a reply back in a very exciting and gracious way that Frank Fletcher was willing to donate the building to the work," Boggan said. "That was great news, and his philanthropy and generosity was very much appreciated by the congregation, the United Methodist Church, and the [Arkansas Conference] cabinet as well."

That conversation happened in January of this year. By July, all the paperwork was finalized—including an appraisal that put the property's value at \$515,000—and Christ Way UMC owned the building where it worships and serves.

"It's been a great step for the church to move forward in making disciples," Boggan said. "You cannot believe how it has expanded the

possibilities for this congregation. They're debt-free, with appropriate building space for all the growth they'll experience for years ahead."

While it's helpful for a church to have a building, paying for it can become a burden. But thanks to the generosity of a fellow United Methodist, that's a burden Christ Way doesn't have.

"[This donation] allows us to pour funding into ministry, outreach and evangelism," Boggan said.

In addition to the generous donor and the flourishing Christ Way community, Boggan credits the groundwork and training provided by the Rev. Bob Crossman, director of new church starts and congregational advancement for the Conference.

"Bob's work with new church starts has really enabled each of us as DSes to help. He works with us, and with those clergy appointed to new church starts, and enables our work to be most effective."

Martha Taylor contributed to this report.

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'Faith, Hope and Love in Action'

School of Christian Mission provides space for forming, transforming spiritual life

BY DONI AND FRED MARTIN
Special Contributors

Participants in this year's annual Arkansas Conference School of Christian Mission (ACSCM) were challenged to let love be the main focus of mission to others as they gathered on the campus of Hendrix College, July 29-August 1, 2010.

LaDonna Busby, a member of Asbury United Methodist Church in Batesville, served as dean and led the planning team and staff during the four-day event.

"Our theme, 'Faith, Hope and Love in Action,' challenged us to use every opportunity to share a faith that trusts in the promise of Jesus Christ, who brings light and life to all," she said. "Each day we learned more about how we could express our theology of mission through prayers, study and songs."

Registrar Beth Cobb reported 282 people of all ages enrolled for the event, which was sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Board of Global Ministries, Arkansas Conference United Methodist Women (UMW) and the Arkansas United Methodist Foundation.

As participants arrived Thursday morning, many brought supplies from local UMW units around the state for assembling health kits. The kits help the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) provide aid during emergencies in Arkansas and other areas.

Studies included "For the Love of God: The Epistles of John" and "Joy to the World! Mission in the Age of Global Christianity." Leaders offered

"The Beauty and Courage of Sudan" as the repeat study from last year.

Worship and plenary sessions held in Staples Auditorium intertwined the three studies, highlighting the biblical basis for each study and giving examples of ways participants can use the information from the studies in daily life.

Morning praise leaders Brenda Norwood, the Rev. Ronnie Miller-Yow and Brittany Henson directed the early morning worship sessions as large groups gathered for a time of singing, praise, devotion and prayer to begin each day's activities.

Children and youth followed age-appropriate learning tracks that shared the same theme as the larger event. Florine Johnson served as assistant dean for children and youth.

Mission projects for one group of teens included carrying luggage for attendees and using tip monies for expenses and donations to the anti-malaria effort Nothing But Nets. They also created prayer bracelets which they shared with persons from other parts of the state they had never met, and prepared hand-tied blankets for burn victims at Arkansas Children's Hospital.

The offering taken was shared by UMW Mission Giving and Board of Global Ministries, UMCOR.

Saturday Night Social featured performances by participants in the children's and youth programs.

Studies planned for 2011 include "Coming Out on the Side of Grace: Reconciliation" and a special focus on Haiti. "Joy To The World! Mission In The Age of Global Christianity" will be repeated. These



Zenobia Harris and Ida Williams stand behind the worship center to lead a plenary session on Sudan.

PHOTOS BY FRED MARTIN



Morning praise begins each day for attendees of the Arkansas Conference School of Christian Mission. Here, they stand and sing near Veasey Hall, Hendrix College.

studies are determined three years in advance.

Next summer's ACSCM is tentatively scheduled for late July; dates will be announced in early 2011.

Doni and Fred Martin of Corning are longtime participants in ACSCM, and served as registrars for five

years. Doni has served in multiple leadership roles for the school and will serve as dean of the 2011 ACSCM.

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Growing and serving since 1986: Ozark

BY MANDY STANTON
Special Contributor

In 1986, a vision became reality.

Several volunteers had heard a call. They had seen a need and committed themselves to serving neighbors in their communities.

That summer, 35 people traveled to Wayland Springs Camp in the northeast Arkansas town of Imboden to participate in the first Ozark Mission Project (OMP).

For those of us who have been transformed by OMP during our lives, no amount of gratitude seems like enough for the hard work of those volunteers and the difference their enthusiasm has made for so many.

Twenty-five years later, OMP has essentially stayed the same. It still responds to Jesus' command to love our neighbors as ourselves. It still relies on the generosity of businesses, churches and the

communities it serves. It still depends on the help of more than 250 volunteers. The enthusiasm in answering God's call that sparked 35 people to travel to Imboden still lights fires under new generations of campers and volunteers.

The success of OMP rests peacefully with God and the conviction of each participant to serve as Jesus taught.

This summer, 777 youth and adult campers registered for OMP's 12 middle school and high school camps across Arkansas, covering all four corners of the state. Just this summer alone, OMP's energetic campers completed:

- 84 exterior paintings
- 21 interior paintings
- 25 sets of handrails
- 32 sets of steps
- 82 wheelchair ramps
- 34 porches
- 46 repairs to existing structures
- 61 cleared and mowed yards
- 16 screening projects

- 14 house cleanings
- 17 miscellaneous projects

...for a total of 432 projects. At each camp this summer, anywhere between 25 and 50 projects were completed for our neighbors.

More importantly, OMP's youth, neighbors and volunteers were touched by God's presence. He is still making a difference in their lives, as well as illuminating a path for OMP year after year. With more than 1,000 people working to make each summer's camps possible, OMP is by far the largest single United Methodist summer program empowering preteens, teens and college students to serve in mission.

OMP will offer 12 camps next summer, and plans to have the Youth Group Application posted at www.ozarkmissionproject.org by October 15, 2010.

Mandy Stanton serves on the Ozark Mission Project Steering Committee and Board of Directors.

One camper's OMP experience

BY JOHN SZENHER
Special Contributor

What defines a human being? Is it their appearance? How they present themselves? How many times they go to church? Or is it something more?

As I was on my 20-minute drive to Jacksonville for this year's Ozark Mission Project (OMP), I wasn't expecting anything special. The people were pretty nice... I guess. The first night I mostly hung out with my church group and led worship for the camp. I had made some friends through praising God, but I still wanted to know these people.

As the week rolled on by, I became more comfortable, more relaxed with this group of kids. They had really grown on me and were soon the main people I would be with, barely even talking to the youth from my own church. Then Wednesday came. I had no idea I would have a life-changing experience that would have such a huge impact on me.

We drove up slowly to Mr. Myers' house. We were supposed to paint the back of his house, which we did in about 2 hours (thanks to

my paintbrush skills. Yeah, I'm that good). We had the rest of the day to talk to this stubborn old man, this ex-Coast Guard lieutenant who was shouting, "You're getting paint on the house!" as we painted his house.

As he told us his heartbreaking stories of the death of his wife and stepdaughter, it was remarkable what he was able to do with his life. He volunteers at his church, gets there at 5:30 in the morning by walking, and did I mention he's 87? Well he's 87. That's insane. That's incredible.

As we were about to leave, he chased me and gave me his can opener he received in the Coast Guard. I had never felt so honored in my life. I broke down and cried. I had never been affected by something so small and insignificant before, but then again I had never experienced something as gratifying and important before. It's amazing to see God in such small things.

From a bystander's point of view, we painted Mr. Myers' house. By our point of view, we had touched the heart of a seemingly untouchable old man. He never smiled at me until I got in the car and left, and waved goodbye to one of my newfound friends. I saw a change in

Walter Myers that day. I saw a change in myself too.

So what does define a human being? Is it their appearance? How they present themselves? How many times they go to church?

My answer is much less complicated. This is what I think: A person is defined by their actions; by what people do with what God the Almighty gave them; painting a person's house during your busy summer; walking to a church, 2 hours early, when you're 87 years old but have the spirit of a child.

That day, my actions were rewarded. I felt God that week at OMP, and he seemed pretty proud.

John Szenher is a high school student and a member of First UMC Little Rock. This reflection originally appeared in the First UMC newsletter, In the First Place.

Join the 2011 celebration

Following its 25th summer of service to thousands of families in Arkansas, OMP invites you to celebrate with us, to remember our neighbors and to answer God's call.

For information on the Oct. 29, 2011, 25th Anniversary Celebration, or to learn how to join the OMP family, visit www.ozarkmissionproject.org.



ABOVE LEFT: Campers at a Jacksonville work site know how to wield their implements of construction.

CENTER: Bear Creek campers work together on a wheelchair ramp that will provide one of their neighbors with increased mobility.

RIGHT: Campers and their young neighbor celebrate the new wheelchair ramp that gives her access to her front door.



LEFT: Each morning at OMP begins with devotional time to center campers' hearts and minds on their purpose.

RIGHT: An OMP camper shares a hug with a neighbor.

Mission Project's impact changes lives



COURTESY PHOTOS

Thank You.

Methodist Family Health's Walk for Children and Families was a huge success again this year thanks to our dedicated participants, volunteers and generous sponsors. We offer our heartfelt appreciation to everyone for taking steps with us to support our ongoing mission of providing compassionate care to children and families in need.



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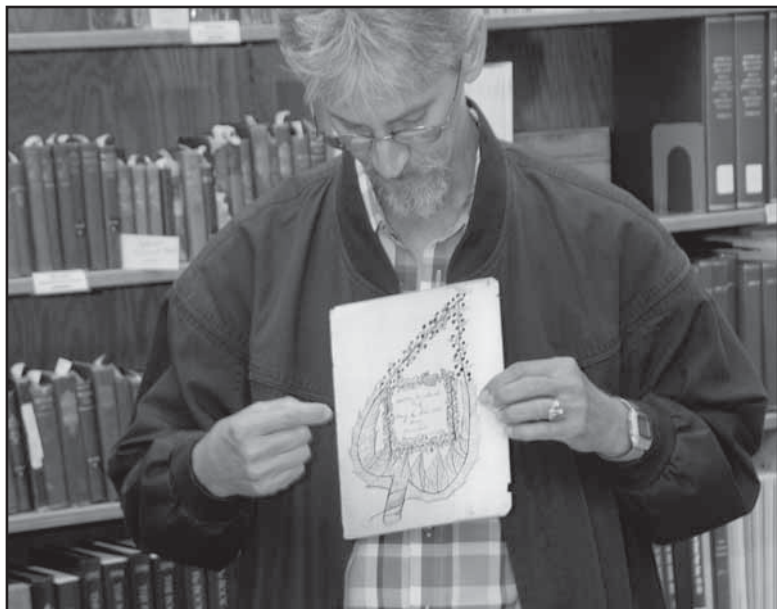
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Gary Allen Smith shows a page from the family record book kept by his great-grandfather, the Rev. Matthew Monroe Smith. This particular page commemorates a wedding.

AUM PHOTO BY PATRICK SHOWNES

Historic gift (continued from page 1A)

Smith, around 1945. In turn, W.O. Smith had received them from his own father, the author of the journals.

Smith Jr. said the family wanted to give the journals to the archives because of "the excellent facility [at a place] where the family knew the materials will be preserved for many, many years to come."

The journals are available for in-person viewing at the Arkansas Conference Archives. Archivists Mauzel Beal and Marcia Crossman staff the archive room each Thursday, and on other days of the week by appointment.

Receiving a gift as extensive as the one from the Smith family is very rare for the Arkansas

Conference. "It is a prize, and the family is just so excited to have those [journals] here," Beal said.

Other personal papers stored at the archives include a history of the Tatom family dating from 1626 to 1995, and a number of church bulletins and personal notes from the Rev. Fern Cook, one of the first clergymen appointed to serve churches in Arkansas.

If you have items of historical significance relating to Methodist clergy or churches in Arkansas, contact Beal or Crossman at ArkMethodist@hendrix.edu or 501-450-1370.

Martha Taylor contributed to this report.

What your archive gifts can do

BY MARCIA CROSSMAN
Special Contributor

Matthew Monroe Smith was one of the first Methodist circuit riders in the old White River Conference, which covered the northeast part of the state. The original material donated by his family gives us new insight into the personal life and ministry of an Arkansas Methodist pioneer.

If your family has original source material of Arkansas Methodism, you can trust your archives to carefully preserve them. No church or person is too big or too small to help the archives gather important material and preserve it for the future—items such as old photographs, pastors' journals, diaries, church histories, church membership books, sermons telling of an individual's call to ministry and programs of special events.

We are also seeking Horace Jewell's History of Arkansas Methodism, the first of four Arkansas Methodist histories published in book form. We only have three copies of this volume in the Archives, and we need a few more.

As part of an archives renovation grant given this year, the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas donated new file cabinets to store the items mentioned above. They aren't just any file cabinets, either: Each one

weighs 600 lbs. empty. They are fire-, water- and crush-proof. The 2010 Conference Journal tells the story of the renovation.

The archives is open every Thursday or by appointment. E-mail is the best way to contact us: arkmethodist@hendrix.edu.

■ ■ ■

Imagine, in a hundred years, a young woman—let's call her Marlie—will attend Hendrix College. Generations of her family had attended Hendrix, but she really did not know why.

Early in her first year there, Marlie learned she could find information about her great-great-grandparents in a very old building on campus. At one time it had been a library, housing things like books and computers.

Marlie walked up the big staircase and down the hallway to a door with a sign that read "United Methodist Archives." Inside the room were a lot of things that looked old, and many books on the shelves—more paper than she had ever seen in one place.

"Welcome to the United Methodist Archives," said the archivist, looking up from her work. "May I help you?" Marlie told the archivist that information about her ancestors might be stored there. She wondered how much it would cost; like most college students, her pockets were

empty. Marlie was elated to hear that any information or assistance she might want is free, because the archives are a ministry of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. After a short wait, the archivist brought Marlie information about her great-great-grandparents and others in her family, too.

Christmas break finally came. Marlie's family shared a wonderful meal before exchanging gifts. When they realized what Marlie had given them, they couldn't take their eyes off the papers. Marlie had duplicated the information from the archives so everyone could have a copy of what she had found. All day, the whole family wanted to pore over the information, trying to decide if they looked like any of the people in the pictures and reading to each other the stories about those who had come before them.

Marlie's gift was one that would only grow more valuable. Finding information on her ancestors was the best gift she could have given to her family. DNA from the past had arrived in the present.

You may have already guessed Marlie's last name. All of the people at this Christmas dinner have the same last name as your own!

Marcia Crossman is an archivist for the Arkansas Conference of the UMC.

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VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION

This Volunteer in Mission listing includes mission opportunities offered by local churches and districts. Often there is room for additional volunteers to join the team. For more information on any of these projects, contact the individuals listed or Don Weeks, Arkansas Area Volunteers in Mission coordinator, (501) 868-9193 or 681-2909; dweeks@arumc.org.

Help needed in Colfax, Iowa, to muck and gut homes affected by recent flooding. Call Wendy at the EMS Office, 515-674-9113, if you are able to help. If you have questions, contact Becky Wood, Director of Recovery and Volunteer Coordinator for the Iowa Annual Conference, 515-238-5346.

Disaster Academy, Sept. 21-24, 2010: The South Central Jurisdiction offers its first Disaster Academy Sept. 21-24 at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center in Fayetteville, Ark. Training is free; participants pay

for meals and lodging.

Each participant chooses a single track of coursework, consisting of 18 hours of class time. Participants must attend the entire academy to receive certification in the chosen track. Offerings include:
Track 1: Disaster Response 101. Note: This training is a prerequisite for Track 2.

Track 2 (Part I): Connecting Neighbors Training. Equips participants to return to their conferences and share information for developing local church disaster response ministries.

Track 2 (Part II): Spiritual and

Emotional Care Team Member Training. United Methodist Disaster Response Care Ministry Teams are faith-based, ongoing teams with standardized UMCOR training and structure that provide care to persons affected by disasters.

Track 3: Incident Command System 300 – ICS-300. For those who may assume a supervisory role in expanding disaster response incidents. Note: Track 3 has several prerequisites.

E-mail Julie Pohl, kseastvim@yahoo.com, or register online at mountsequoyah.org by Sept. 7.

The art of stewardship

BY CHARLES COOPER
Special Contributor

For years, I had heard of Sun Tzu, the warrior-philosopher, and the book *The Art of War*. Friends of mine had read it; my daughter read it for World Civilizations in college, and even Tony Soprano read it and told his shrink that he liked it better than Machiavelli. So, I thought, "I have this to do."



Charles Cooper

Briefly, the book is a collection of wisdom sayings which have as much to do with strategies for avoiding a war as for fighting one.

Sun Tzu believed that with war, no one wins. One side simply loses less than the other—and it is not always the side which thinks it is the victor. Armies can deplete a nation's resources and thus make it vulnerable to its enemies. Sun Tzu wanted to be on the side which lost less.

Reading the book, I thought of Gideon and how well he managed his resources. He started with an army of thirty-two thousand, but sent home twenty-two thousand who were fearful; then he submitted the remaining to a quick intelligence test, which left him three hundred, both brave and alert—the ones who kept their heads up and their eyes open at the river.

Gideon had a risky and complex strategy. He did not need a lot of soldiers; he needed the right ones. Having more would have been a waste of resources.

The Art of War appeals to me. I am turned toward economy, if not frugality. It is an inclination, sometimes a virtue, sometimes a vice. I go to the store for milk and eggs and leave traveling the center aisle as if it were the barrel of a gun. Bang! Out the door with milk and eggs. I resist the impulse triggers, the sweets and doodads, at the cash register. I am inclined to practice the wisdom of Sun Tzu and Gideon on the battlefield of the marketplace.

Sadly, though, I suspect there

have been sweets and doodads I should have bought—if not for myself, for someone else, something trivial and colorful that would have given pleasure.

The poet Dante was right to lump hoarders and wasters on the same circle of hell; both are obsessed with possessions. Likewise, though, generosity and prudence are two sides of the same virtue, so I am thankful that conscience prevailed at times, and my children were not altogether denied their shimmering and gooey delights on our trips to the store.

Stewardship calls us to be generous, and the church should practice and encourage giving, but it is in me to say that we who gather these resources need to prayerfully consider how we may use them wisely and efficiently for the Kingdom.

I believe we need to remember that what we get, we get through shaking a tin cup, begging for alms just like the proverbial fellow in shades propped against a public wall. We need to remember how offended we would feel if we saw him fold his shades and drive away in an expensive car with our money. We would feel as if our resources had been wasted. We might feel as if we had been dragged unwittingly into his sin. Excess robs begging of its dignity, something I believe Jesus and Francis of Assisi understood.

More than two-thirds of Gideon's troops were selfish in their hearts and not willing to make sacrifices for the mission, and nearly all of those who remained were careless.

Perhaps our present distress, this starting and sputtering economy, will give us more courage and wisdom and make us more like the one in a hundred good soldiers. At least I like to think that "all things happen for good for those who love the Lord, who are called unto God's purpose" (Romans 8:28), that no matter the circumstances we are pilgrims, like Gideon or Paul or Dante's hero, who travel from a promise to an unseen victory.

The Rev. Cooper serves as pastor of the Trumann/Tyronza Charge.

How churches can care for creation

BY MALIK SAAFIR AND
ELLEN MCNULTY
Special Contributors

Local congregations are increasingly concerned about the impact that our church buildings have on the only planet we call home. So the passage of the Resolution on Care for the Environment at the Arkansas Annual Conference in June fills us with hope.

"The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). Throughout the Bible, God calls us to care for creation. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church call for us to be concerned about how our lifestyle choices affect air, water, soil, animals and people around the world.

Centuries ago, John Wesley expressed concern about impure water, unplanned cities and smoke-filled air. And as far back as 1968, the General Conference insisted that community rights take precedence over property rights and that "no individual should be permitted to degrade the environment... for the sake... of profit."

We are pleased that our Council of Bishops issued on November 4, 2009, a statement urging people of goodwill around the world to serve God as stewards of creation. Saying that they "cannot remain silent while God's people and God's planet suffer," the 69 active bishops asked 11.3 million members of 42,600 congregations worldwide to join them in effective action to address environmental degradation. Their request was based on many months of listening to the concerns and hopes of more than 5,400 United Methodists worldwide of every age and status.

In 2005, a new program launched activating local United Methodist Women members to work on environmental issues in their communities. Now in its second quadrennium, the Green Team is a diverse group in age, race, geographic background and expertise. Members come from cities, suburbs and rural areas of the five geographic jurisdictional areas



Ellen McNulty

of the United Methodist Church in the U.S. Members' areas of expertise include chemistry, fisheries and wildlife, biology, hydrology, geology, sociology and theology. Their work experience includes government organizations, environmental research and nonprofit organizations related to environmental concerns.

The biggest asset this team brings is the presence of United Methodist Women, with longtime experience in leadership training and organizing within the connectional system. They clearly come with a theologically- and scripturally-based grounding of the purpose of this environmental advocacy team.

Those of us involved in Arkansas Interfaith Power and Light (arkansasipl.com) view environmental issues from a unique, non-partisan theological perspective. For us, energy conservation is a moral issue. It's not about science or politics. It's about Christ's commandment to care for the "least of these" around the world—those in low-income communities who suffer most from the effects of environmental degradation.

Two online resources are available to help churches calculate their footprints and work to reduce energy consumption: Cool Congregations (coolcongregations.com) and Earth Aid (earthaid.net). To work toward sustainability, individuals and churches may track their energy consumption and work with friends to reduce it.

The Cool Congregations and Earth Aid sites have helpful tips, product discounts and rewards. When churches save on energy bills, more money will be available for ministries. As individuals and congregations, we can work toward sustainability through simple measures that add up to make a big difference:

1) Educate yourself and others. Begin by reading and studying the Social Principles (available at <http://www.umcsc.org/PDF/boards/SocialPrinciples.pdf> and at Cokesbury Christian Bookstores). Include the Social Principles in Sunday school, confirmation and new member classes.

The Council of Bishops' Pastoral Letter, "God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action" and study guide (<http://hopeandaction.org> or Cokesbury Christian Bookstores) encourage us to faithfully respond to

the realities threatening our world. The General Board of Church and Society and the United Methodist Women offer many excellent resources, and most are available online.

2) Share the message in positive ways. Local mission work paints a vision of what God desires for creation. Arkansas Interfaith Power and Light members spent a recent Saturday weatherizing 110-year-old Duncan United Methodist Church to make the church more energy efficient. Pulaski Heights UMC Youth assisted with a mission project to exchange incandescent lightbulbs with energy efficient CFL bulbs in low-income homes in New Orleans.

Actions such as these witness the transforming love of God through word and deed. God passionately loves the world, and we are called to be faithful stewards of creation. Encourage and lead your church to minister to those in need.

3) Take action. Studying and discussing social issues among ourselves isn't enough. Become a public witness and advocate for creation. Visit your members of Congress when they are in town. Send a card, letter or e-mail to legislators and write letters to the editor of your local paper.



Malik Saafir

This year, Arkansas Interfaith Power and Light has worked with Arkansas Wildlife Federation and other organizations to bring two celebrated speakers to Arkansas events: Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley from Providence Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta, and Jerome Ringo, former president of Apollo Alliance and former board president of National Wildlife Federation. These two leaders in the African American community preach a message of environmental sustainability that focuses on protecting the environment and pulling people out of poverty through green jobs. Please join us in tending to the garden so that we may continue to live in it.

The Rev. Saafir serves as pastor of Theresa Hoover UMC in Little Rock. McNulty is a member of the UMC Women's Division Green Team and a United Methodist in Pine Bluff.



The Rev. Angie Gage, pictured at left before she began her lifestyle changes, and at right in a more recent photo, enjoys the transformation and greater energy her healthy habits have brought. COURTESY PHOTOS

Pastor finds good health brings greater effectiveness in ministry

BY JESSICA SZENHER
Special Contributor

Physical health impacts every area of life, including the ability to minister to others.

"I can't serve God the way I need to when I'm not healthy," said the Rev. Angie Gage, senior pastor of Bay United Methodist Church.

Gage, along with several other United Methodist pastors in Arkansas, is on a journey to good health that is making a difference for her, her family and her congregation. She has lost more than 100 pounds since January.

Several times at Arkansas Annual Conference this June, Bishop Charles Crutchfield emphasized the importance of health. He encouraged participation in the Holy Healthy Walk/Run on Tuesday morning of the Annual Conference session. And after a light turnout at the run, he queried several delegates about their participation.

"I have heard we are looking healthier this year," Bishop Crutchfield said. "We need to be healthier in body, spirit and mind."

When Gage was going through the process of becoming a pastor, she made a commitment to the Board of Ordained Ministry to improve her health. The Rev. John Fleming told her about a plan he'd been on and she checked it out, but she did not take action then.

This year on January 24, she got serious. She decided that at age 42,

she was not getting any younger, and as a single mother of a 16-year-old, she wanted to make sure her life was a long and healthy one. With the help of a free website, sparkpeople.com, Gage is eating 1,200 calories a day and cooks the same meals for herself and her daughter, who is already at a healthy weight.

"Pastoring is high-stress; single parenting is high-stress. I used to deal with the stress by opening the refrigerator and looking for a solution there," Gage said. "Prayer helps me deal with stress now, and I don't go to the fridge to try to find the answer."

A change that her close friends have noticed is that her personality is more vibrant. She speaks out more and is a happier person. "Even a small thing like walking up steps is a blessing. My feet are not tired and I have all kinds of energy," she reported.

Gage said the most exciting result is that her healthy eating has opened up new pastoral opportunities to help others become healthier. Who can better understand what it is like being overweight than someone who has been through a weight-loss journey of her own?

"The key to this is the commitment I've made to God. I am not on a diet. I've changed my lifestyle so I can serve God in the way I've been called to do," Gage said.

Jessica Szenher is a member of the Arkansas Conference Communications Commission.

'The key to this is the commitment I've made to God. I am not on a diet. I've changed my lifestyle so I can serve God in the way I've been called to do.'

—Angie Gage

Americans with disabilities and the Church

BY JULIE CLAWSON
Special Contributor

July marked the 20th anniversary of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed into law by President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990. It seems a bit strange when you think about it. Only for the past twenty years have people with disabilities been guaranteed fundamental civil rights in our country. Granted, it has only been within the past century that women and other minorities have been assured of those rights as well.

And of course we all know how often those rights are denied or ignored, and that there are groups in America who have yet to be legally given such basic rights at all. But seriously, twenty years ago many disabled people could not physically enter most buildings, ride public transportation, attend mainstream schools, or not be denied a job simply because they used a wheelchair. There were no signs saying "Able People Only," but the entire world was set up to keep the disabled on the outside.

Sad thing, even as a disabled person the only reaction I ever heard about ADA was negative. People complained about the hassle of making space for the disabled. They said it was unfair that the disabled were being given special privileges. And, most of all, they complained about the cost.

Being in the church world, where I heard that complaint most often was from churches. Now, I

understand that churches often don't have a lot of money, and to add another few hundred thousand onto a renovation budget to be ADA compliant is difficult.

A church I attended attempted to renovate their sanctuary to fit in more seating, but in the end we lost seats because of the ramp we had to install to make the stage accessible. It forced the church to rethink where the money was to be spent, which of course led to some choice words about the "nonsense" of the ADA.

But in truth, I had to wonder why the church wasn't the one out there doing whatever they could to include the disabled—even without being forced to by law. Jesus went out of his way to be with the disabled in his society; the church could at least do the same.

Where this gets confusing for me is the intersection of disabled people and worship. Straight-up, there is a lot that churches do in worship (especially in more experimental experiential worship) that is just plain inaccessible to the disabled.

Julie Clawson

There have been a number of times at my current church where I have just sat quietly in my seat because whatever worship activity we were doing would have been impossible to do with one hand. And I always cringe a bit when we do active

things, or create art, or meditate on a film and exclude the wheelchair users or the blind in our congregation.

I similarly don't wish to exclude the say, kinesthetic or visual learners in the church, but it sometimes feels as if there is no awareness of how a disabled person could enter into the worship experience. Have we forgotten how to go to the lengths of cutting open a roof and lowering our disabled friend in through the ceiling just so they could meet Jesus?

So as we celebrate these twenty years, I think it should be as a reminder of how far we still have to go in our culture and in the church. There are still churches that ban the disabled from serving as priests. And there are churches that see disability as a result of sin or of a lack of faith in the Lord to heal. I've been told to just have enough faith and the Lord will grow my arm, or to at least look forward to having two perfect arms in heaven.

Disabled people need to be included in worship, but first, we need to be accepted as who we are. Not as people to be pitied or to be cured, but as children of God created the way God wanted us to be. We want to be included in community not because a law forces us to be put up with, but because the church desperately wants to love us and desires to hear our voice.

Clawson is the author of *Everyday Justice: The Global Impact of Our Daily Choices*. This commentary first appeared on her blog, *One Hand Clapping*, at julieclawson.com.

Your Conference Committee on Disability Concerns

BY ROGER BARKER
Chair, Conference Committee on Disability Concerns

Jesus set the perfect example of making sure the love of God reaches all people, including persons with disabilities. Many years have passed since Jesus walked the earth, but that mission remains the same. We are to go and make disciples of Jesus Christ and, in true Methodist fashion, transform the world.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) reminds us to be in ministry to persons with disabilities. The Arkansas Conference shows its commitment to this effort by supporting the Committee on Disability Concerns, a conference-wide committee

including representatives from each of the five geographic regions of the Conference.

The committee seeks to help local churches be in ministry to and with persons with disabilities. A resource guide, available at arumc.org, can help local churches identify and remove barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from knowing God's love.

Our resource guide includes a brief accessibility survey, a step-by-step guide to building a wheelchair ramp and minimum standards for ADA-compliant bathrooms. We plan to circulate this survey to identify future areas of focus for the Conference and the committee.

Outreach to persons with disabilities is a current focus. We're creating an online listing of current

ministries for persons with disabilities. Churches wishing to improve a current ministry or begin a new one can save valuable time and effort by checking this listing, as it will enable churches to share information on successes and failures.

The committee also focuses on the need to identify and remove barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from being in ministry (such as accessibility of the parsonage, choir loft, pulpit, church van, etc.). We are collaborating with other Conference committees to create a process that considers persons with disabilities when churches renovate or build.

To contact this committee, call 870-698-0131 or e-mail abarker_99@yahoo.com.

OBITUARIES

CONWAY

Phyllis J. Coleman, 50, of Conway died Thursday, August 5, 2010.

She was born October 16, 1959, in Conway, to Allie Dean (Johnston) Yarborough and the late Vaden Yarborough.

Phyllis graduated from the University of Central Arkansas, then obtained her Master's degree from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. She was a music teacher at Conway Human Development Center for several years, then served as an administrator in Pediatric Anesthesiology at Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock.

She was a member of both Springfield and Mallettown United Methodist churches. She was a talented song leader, and enjoyed playing the flute. Phyllis enjoyed the company of several cats, and was the ultimate grandmother.

She is survived by her husband of 10 years, the Rev. Hawk Coleman; sons Chris Coleman of Springfield, Mo., and David Coleman and his

wife, Jodi, of Quitman; mother Allie Yarborough of Conway; brothers Duane Yarborough and his wife, Roseanne, and Gary Yarborough and his wife, Terry, of Conway; grandchildren Courtney, Austin, Jayden and Hunter Coleman, and

McKinley and Colton Shaw; and longtime family friend David Lamberson.

A memorial service was held at 10:00 a.m. Monday, August 16, 2010, at Grace United Methodist Church in



Phyllis Coleman

Conway. Memorials may be made in Phyllis' name to Arkansas Hospice, 1014 Markham St., Suite 1, Conway, AR 72032.

BELLA VISTA

The Rev. **William P. "Bill" Connell**, 81, of Bella Vista died on Wednesday, August 18, 2010, at his home.

He was born March 27, 1929 in Trinity, Texas to the Rev. Richard E. and Bertha Victoria Martin Connell. He graduated from Paragould High School, received his B.A. degree from Hendrix College, Conway, Arkansas, and his Master of Divinity from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

He married Joyce Spencer on June 29, 1952, in Dalhart, Texas.

While in seminary he worked as an associate at St. John's Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas. He received his license to preach in the Methodist Church in 1948. He was ordained elder in the North Arkansas Conference of the Methodist Church in 1954.

His appointments in Arkansas included Bay Circuit; Clinton; Waldron; St. Paul, Ft. Smith; Huntington Avenue, Jonesboro; First UMC, Harrison; Central UMC, Rogers; First UMC, Paragould; Fayetteville District Superintendent; First UMC, West Memphis; and First UMC, Clarksville. He retired in 1991

and moved to Bella Vista, Arkansas, after 40 years of service in the United Methodist Church.

He served on various boards and committees of the UMC, including TRAFCO (Television, Radio and Film Commission), Board of Ministerial Training, Board of Pension, Lydia Patterson Institute, and the Advisory Committee for the Clergy Economic Conference. He participated in the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Arkansas Conference, and attended the 14th World Methodist Conference as an alternate delegate. He was a trustee of Hendrix College from 1991 to 1997.

He was preceded in death by his parents and two brothers, Richard E. Connell Jr. and Herschel



William P. 'Bill' Connell

G. Connell.

He is survived by his wife, Joyce S. Connell of Bella Vista, Arkansas; one son, Tom Connell and his wife, Katherine, of Berthoud, Colo.; two daughters, Ellen Mitchell and her husband, Tim Permenter, of Elkins, Ark., and Susan Malone of Metamora, Ill.; six grandchildren: Jason Connell, Keith Connell, Tyler Toubeau, Michelle Toubeau, Amanda Permenter and Jesse Permenter; and four great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at 2:00 p.m. on September 3, 2010, at First United Methodist Church, 20 Boyce Drive, Bella Vista, Ark.

Bill will always be remembered for his bubbling personality, wonderful sense of humor, and his love for family, friends and his congregation.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the First United Methodist Church in Bella Vista, Hendrix College or Circle of Life Hospice.

COMING UP

September

Mallettown hosts annual homecoming

Mallettown UMC will celebrate its annual homecoming on Sept. 5. Festivities will kick off with worship at 11:00 a.m., followed by a fellowship dinner and an afternoon of singing.

'Go Green' Tea at Wesley Chapel

The United Methodist Women of Wesley Chapel UMC will sponsor a "Go Green" Tea on Sunday, Sept. 12, from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Kendall Center on the campus of Philander Smith College.

LaVerne Paige, Director of Pulaski County Community Services and Housing, is the featured speaker. She is an active member of Holly Grove A.M.E. Church in North Little Rock, a native of the Arkansas Delta and a military veteran with master's degrees in public administration and business administration.

Wesley Chapel UMW have spent the past year studying and discussing how climate change affects local and global communities, particularly the lives of women, children and African Americans. Donations received at this event will be directed to mission.

Asbury Little Rock adds third worship service

Beginning Sunday, Sept. 12, Asbury UMC in Little Rock will offer an additional traditional worship service at 10:45 a.m. in its sanctuary. Asbury currently offers a traditional worship service at 8:30 a.m. in the sanctuary and a contemporary worship service at 10:45 a.m. in the church's Activity Center.

Both traditional services will use the United Methodist liturgy,

including the singing of hymns and service responses, recitation of creeds, special music by the Chancel Choir. The contemporary service is less structured, and includes music led by a praise band and audio-visual features accompanying the sermon. Both types of services provide people an opportunity to worship God and share fellowship with each other.

Camp Aldersgate Fish Fry

The 27th Annual Camp Aldersgate Fish Fry will be held on Saturday, Sept. 18, from 4-7 p.m., at Camp Aldersgate in Little Rock. All proceeds will support the camp, Arkansas' only non-profit uniquely dedicated to serving children with disabilities, youth and senior adults in a camp environment.

The fish fry will feature live entertainment by Jubilation Jazz, Bob Hayes & Elvis; a "country store" filled with homemade goodies and handcrafted gifts; and a children's carnival with games ranging from a traditional Cake Walk to Rock Band.

If you can't attend but can stop by, to-go meals will be available for pick-up at the corner of Kanis and Aldersgate Roads.

Tickets may be purchased online at campaldersgate.net.

Deaf Connection Center grand opening

Mission UMC in Ft. Smith is expanding its ministry to and with the deaf community through the new Mission Deaf Connection Center.

The Center's grand opening celebration will be held on Sunday, Sept. 19, at 3:00 p.m. The Mission Deaf Connection Center is at 7200 Mahogany St. To RSVP, call 479-494-0107 by Sept. 13.

October

Annual Bazaar at First UMC, Bella Vista

The United Methodist Women of First UMC, Bella Vista will sponsor their annual bazaar on Saturday, Oct. 2, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The event features handmade crafts and decorative items, a silent auction, a boutique and a candy and bake shop serving breakfast and lunch. Proceeds will benefit several northwest Arkansas charities.

West Helena UMC turns 100

West Helena UMC will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Sunday, Oct. 3, 2010, beginning at 10 a.m. The congregation began as a mission outreach from the First Methodist Church in Helena, Arkansas, which was the first Methodist church west of the Mississippi River.

Festivities include a southern gospel music concert by the Mercy River Boys Quartet; award-winning actor Roger Nelson performing *The Man from Aldersgate*, a play sharing the story of John Wesley, who rode over 250,000 miles to bring spiritual renewal to England and America; and lunch in the Fellowship Hall at 12:15 p.m.

All past and present members are invited to join in celebrating the rich history of West Helena UMC.

The deadline for the Oct. 1 issue of the Arkansas United Methodist is 5:00 p.m. Sept. 15. E-mail calendar submissions to ArkansasConferenceCommunications@arumc.org

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD



'Dare to Share' eases back-to-school pressures for Saline County families

More than 300 Saline County children received help preparing for the new school year at Dare to Share, an event held Sunday afternoon and Monday evening, Aug. 8-9, at Sardis United Methodist Church.

Dare to Share offered a variety of free goods and services, including

- Haircuts by local barbers and stylists who donated their time
- Child identification kits distributed by the Saline County Sheriff's Department
- Food at the snack bar

- Clothing and shoes
- School supplies.

At least 50 members of Sardis UMC staffed the event, and many more members and friends donated clothing and school supplies. The church is already planning its second annual Dare to Share.

"We learned a lot this year and look forward to doing it even bigger and better next year," said the Rev. Jeff Jones, pastor of the church. "There is obviously a tremendous need for this in our community."

TOP LEFT: A Sardis UMC member helps a child choose school clothes.
TOP RIGHT: A member of the Saline County Sheriff's Department shares a high-five with a student getting ready for the school year.

LEFT: Barbers and stylists from several salons in the Saline County area donated their time and offered free back-to-school haircuts at Sardis UMC's Dare to Share event.

AUM PHOTOS BY AMY FORBUS

Support Camp Aldersgate!



Load your church bus with hungry passengers and head to Camp Aldersgate for our 27th Annual Fish Fry!

When: Saturday, September 18
Time: 4 to 7 pm

Where: Camp Aldersgate
2000 Aldersgate Road

Again This Year!

Drive-Thru Pick Up
Carnival Games
Expanded Bake Sale

Ticket Prices:

Adults: \$15
Children ages 4-11: \$10
Seniors (65+): \$10
Children Under 4: FREE

To purchase tickets or for more info visit www.campaldersgate.net

New churches in service: Children's Home picnic tables

In July, servants from Faithspring UMC, a new church start, donated and assembled six picnic tables for the residents of the Methodist Children's Home, Fillmore St. campus, in Little Rock. On Aug. 4, they joined with two other new churches in the area, CanvasCommunity and Argenta UMC, to paint the tables with cheerful colors and patterns. The Methodist Children's Home, now part of a larger organization known as Methodist Family Health, has been serving Arkansas children since 1899. Methodist Family Health offers the only comprehensive behavioral healthcare service for children and adolescents in the state of Arkansas.

AUM PHOTOS BY PATRICK SHOWNES



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REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

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Ready to go back

UM volunteers help kids stock up for school | 4B



Is being Methodist too easy?

Pundit likens membership to online degree | 6B

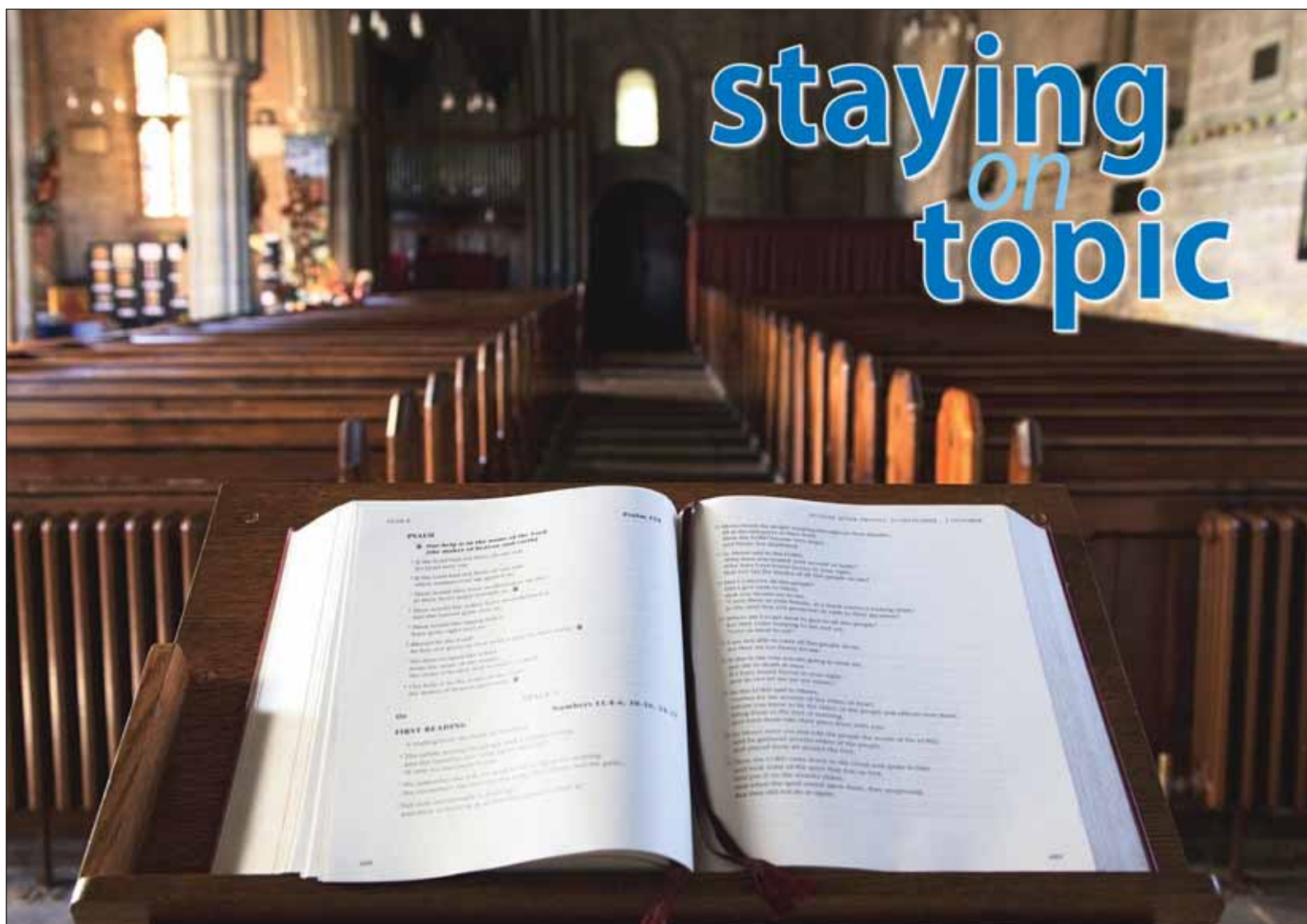


Wesleyan Wisdom

Methodism founder was ahead of his time | 7B

Section B

September 3, 2010



© 2010 DESIGN PICS PHOTO

Should the sermon start here? More than 60 percent of United Methodist pastors say they preach from the lectionary, but one recent study links topical preaching to church vitality.

Topical sermons are popular, but lectionary holds its own

BY MARY JACOBS
Staff Writer

If you want your church to grow, should the pastor preach topical sermons?

One denominational survey suggests the answer is “yes,” identifying “topical preaching in traditional worship” as a common characteristic of vital churches.

But other surveys show that most United Methodist pastors start with the Revised Common Lectionary (a three-year cycle of weekly Scripture

readings) when they prepare their sermons.

So is that a disconnect? Do topical sermons bring in the numbers and motivate attendees to participate more actively in church?

And is the lectionary-based approach still relevant as United Methodist pastors seek to create more vital churches?

Topical preaching does seem to have an evangelistic edge, admits Ronald J. Allen, professor of preaching and New Testament at Christian Theological School. “It allows the minister

to get immediately to an issue, and it’s inviting for people who are not part of the Christian community to recognize connections between their lives and the gospel,” he said.

But denominational leaders aren’t ready to sacrifice the lectionary on the altar of church growth.

“Both approaches are essential, but for different purposes,” writes Taylor Burton-Edwards, director of worship resources for the denomination’s General Board of Discipleship (GBOD).

The Call to Action Steering Team commissioned the independent re-

search project that identified “common factors that work together to influence congregational vitality.” The survey asked United Methodist church leaders about the types of worship offered—such as contemporary, traditional and contemplative—and whether the preaching was lectionary-based, topical or a blend of the two. Those results were correlated with whether the churches were “high-vitality” or “low-vitality.”

The results: High-vitality churches “offered both traditional and contem-

■ See ‘Sermons’ page 3B

Church leaders urge countering fear on mosque

BY HEATHER HAHN
United Methodist News Service

Each year, on the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the Rev. Myrna Bethke has visited the World Trade Center site to remember her brother who perished in the towers that day.

The United Methodist pastor does not blame Islam for those attacks or her family’s loss. She associates the faith with the Muslims she has joined for interfaith Thanksgiving services and the mosque that welcomes visits from her confirmation students.

“This, to me, is Islam,” she said, “not the people who got together and decided to hijack the religion as they hijacked the planes.”

Ms. Bethke, pastor of Red Bank United Methodist Church in New Jersey, also supports the Islamic cultural center planned near ground zero. She is a member of “September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows,” a group of the bereaved that announced its support for the project in May.

But others who lost loved ones that day vehemently oppose the proposal, and the issue has become a source of political debate on cable news and the campaign trail.

The controversy has not been limited to the proposed center in lower Manhattan. In recent months, confrontations have broken out over the construction or expansion of mosques across the United States—

■ See ‘Muslims’ page 2B



UMNS PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

Rifaat Bedawi (left) and Imam Abdulrahman Yusuf help volunteers paint over anti-Muslim graffiti at the Al-Farooq Mosque in Nashville, Tenn.

FAITH WATCH

UM college president resigns over finances

David Pollick, president of Birmingham-Southern College in Alabama, resigned Aug. 11 after controversy over accounting errors and overspending at the United Methodist-affiliated school. Earlier this year, Dr. Pollick said the college had for years failed to subtract Pell grants from students' financial aid, creating revenue shortfalls. Drastic budget cuts have included cutting five academic majors, 29 faculty and 51 staff.

Religious groups urge action on prison rape

A coalition of religious leaders and civil-rights groups sent a letter Aug. 2 to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, urging enforcement of new standards to prevent an estimated 60,000 cases of prison rape each year. Signers included the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society.

Churches fall short as U.S. denies visas

Many foreign delegates were unable to attend global church assemblies in the U.S. this summer because the State Department denied their visas, according to Religion News Service. About 1,000 delegates were missing when the Baptist World Alliance met in Honolulu, Hawaii; many of the rejected visas came from poverty-stricken areas of the world. Applicants must convince officials "beyond a shadow of a doubt that they will return to their home country after their stay in the U.S.," said State Department spokeswoman Rosemary Macray.

Florida UMC plans interfaith open house

Trinity United Methodist Church in Gainesville, Fla., will host an open house Sept. 10 to counteract plans by the local Dove World Outreach Center to burn copies of the Quran on the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Gathering for Peace, Understanding and Hope—co-sponsored by the Gainesville Interfaith Forum—will include prayer, cultural displays and games for children of different faiths to play together.

—Compiled by Bill Fentum

MUSLIMS Continued from page 1B

far from New York's hallowed ground. These include protests in Murfreesboro, Tenn.; Sheboygan, Wis.; and Temecula, Calif.

Being neighbors

The United Methodist *Book of Resolutions* calls for "better relationships between Christians and Muslims on the basis of informed understanding, critical appreciation and balanced perspective of one another's basic beliefs."

Another resolution calls for United Methodists to denounce discrimination against Muslims and "counter stereotypical and bigoted statements made against Muslims and Islam, Arabs and Arabic culture."

When it comes to the issue of allowing Muslims to build mosques, supporting their right to worship is not just in line with the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, said the Rev. Stephen J. Sidorak Jr., the top executive at the United Methodist General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. It's also part of Jesus' command to love our neighbor, which as the parable of the Good Samaritan shows, can include those of different religions.

"If we want to repair the breach that opened up between some Christians and some Muslims on Sept. 11, 2001, if we want to redeem the tragic events of that day, we must—as Isaiah said—come now and reason together," Dr. Sidorak said. "That's clearly the foundation of any interreligious work."

Welcoming local mosques also may help national security. A two-year Duke University study on American Muslims and terrorism concluded that mosques might actually be a deterrent to the spread of militant Islam.

"Our findings are that healthy, robust Muslim communities can be a bulwark against radicalization," said David Schanzer, an associate professor at Duke and one of the study's authors. "We don't know exactly why individuals radicalize. But most



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

Students peer out through windows covered with anti-Muslim graffiti while neighbors of various faiths gather to help clean up the vandalism at the Al-Farooq Mosque in Nashville, Tenn.

terrorism studies show that individuals who go down that path feel alienated. They don't feel that they fit into [the] wider society in which they live."

A strong Muslim community that is part of the mainstream can offer young Muslims the support they need without them turning to radical clerics online, he said.

Competing claims

The proposed Islamic cultural center in Lower Manhattan won the unanimous approval of New York City zoning authorities. Plans call for the building to contain a fitness center, swimming pool, space for art exhibitions and an auditorium for public programs as well as a place for Muslim prayer. Organizers say their goal is to promote tolerance and community cohesion.

However, the ethical case for locating an Islamic center near ground zero is more complex.

Some critics have likened the debate surrounding the Islamic cultural center in Lower Manhattan to the ac-

rimony that followed when Carmelite nuns moved into a convent near the Auschwitz death camp in Poland. After a public outcry, Pope John Paul II ordered the nuns to move in 1993.

Taking a similar stand, some argue that it is insensitive to those who lost loved ones for Islamic center organizers to build near the World Trade Center site.

Addressing the mosque disputes and other issues in United Methodist-Muslim relations is going to take more than a press release of solidarity or conference resolution, interfaith advocates said.

Ms. Bethke and other United Methodist leaders urge fellow Christians to learn more about Islam and get to know their Muslim neighbors.

'As pastors and laity, we need to do the long, difficult work of countering the false fear, incorrect history and bad theology that is out there.'

—The Rev. Omar Al-Rikabi

"When I look over there and see a mosque, it's going to hurt," C. Lee Hanson, whose son, Peter, was killed in the attacks, said at a New York City public hearing, *The New York Times* reported. "Build it someplace else."

Ms. Bethke sympathized with those who oppose the Lower Manhattan center.

"You want to be sensitive to people's feelings," she said, "but at the same time remember that we do have religious freedom in this country."

The Rev. Stephen Bauman, senior minister of Christ United Methodist Church in Manhattan, has worked with Imam Feisel Abdul Rauf, the religious leader who is spearheading the project. The pastor has no doubt the center is exactly what Mr. Rauf and others purport it to be.

"I think the church ought to be about supporting it," Dr. Bauman said. "It ought to be expressing a voice of compassion and hospitality."

When you know someone well, she said, you won't judge that person by the worst acts committed in his religion's name.

The Rev. Omar Al-Rikabi has been watching the angry responses to mosques around the country with increasing concern. Mr. Al-Rikabi, the United Methodist campus minister at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, is the son of a Muslim father from Iraq and a United Methodist mother from Texas.

"As pastors and laity we need to do the long, difficult work of countering the false fear, incorrect history and bad theology that is out there," he said. "It is seeping into too many of our churches, sermons and small group studies. We need to begin by looking at the start of the story: Genesis One: God created humanity in his image. . . . Every human is of sacred worth and loved through the work of Christ on the cross."

THE UNITED METHODIST
REPORTER

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

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

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



Please recycle.
We do!

■ **SERMONS** Continued from page 1B

porary worship, and in those same churches, a very high number were found to use topical rather than lectionary preaching in their traditional services," according to Neil Alexander, co-chair of the steering committee and president of the United Methodist Publishing House.

That seems to confirm conventional wisdom. Many large, growing churches offer sermons on practical topics that address needs of the congregation.

Witness the enormous popularity of United Methodist preachers like Adam Hamilton at Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., who typically preaches sermon series on topics like "Seven Deadly Sins," "Confessions of a Struggling Parent" or "Women of the Bible." (And many of those sermon series, in turn, become popular books.)

'The most important question is not whether the pastor starts with a topic or a lectionary passage, but whether the Bible is cited with integrity.'

Visit the websites for United Methodist megachurches Granger Community Church in Granger, Ind., or Ginghamburg Church in Tipp City, Ohio, and you'll find a link to the "Current Series" of topically based sermons, but no mention of the lectionary.

And as many preachers will admit, some people in the pews don't even know what the lectionary is, much less why it's relevant to worship or their lives.

"I don't think the lectionary means much to most people," said the Rev. Eddie Rester, pastor of Parkway Heights UMC in Hattiesburg, Miss. "More than anything it's a churchy thing."

What's a lectionary?

According to the United Methodist *Book of Worship*, the Revised Common Lectionary is a three-year cycle of readings for every week in the Christian year that is a "tool for voluntary use in planning and leading worship." Over the three-year period, about 80 percent of the Bible is covered.

Each Sunday's readings typically include one passage each from the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Epistles and Gospels, and the readings follow the outline of the Christian year: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Pentecost.

The Revised Common Lectionary was created in 1992 and is used by many Protestant denominations around the world.

That's one of its advantages, says Safiyah Fosua, the GBOD's director of

invitational preaching ministries. When parishioners read the lectionary text, they are reading the same text as many others in Protestant churches throughout the English-speaking world and beyond.

"This is something that we can do together, even if we can't do anything else together," she said.

The denomination's Music and Worship Study, conducted from 2004-2007, showed that about two-thirds of churches use the lectionary at least 75 percent of the time. Similarly, a 2010 survey of readers of *Circuit Rider* magazine showed that a gradually increasing number—more than 60 percent—of United Methodist pastors rely on the lectionary.

"Going back 10-15 years, it was more around 50-50," said Mary Catherine Dean, associate publisher

and editor-in-chief for Abingdon Press. "So there was a move during that period toward the lectionary." Sales have remained steady for worship resources relating to the three-year lectionary cycle.

The survey didn't explore why more are using the lectionary, but Ms. Dean offered a couple of theories. The ecumenical Academy of Homiletics has supported use of the lectionary on a continued basis; for pastors who attended seminary in the 1980s or later, the lectionary-based approach was the "default position."

Similarly, the Course of Study for licensed local pastors in the United Methodist Church recommends the lectionary, and local pastors represent a growing portion of the denomination's clergy. The lectionary-based ap-

proach also seems to fit with the emergent Christianity notion that "everything traditional is new again."

"Topical preaching isn't the only way to be relevant," asserts the Rev. Jim Bankston. He has used the lectionary regularly in his preaching at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Houston, a 3,800-member congregation that's growing steadily.

"Our whole experience here is defined around the lectionary," he said. "For me, it helps address the entire Bible, so that you can't avoid the more difficult passages that might not be toward your inclination."

Recently, for example, the lectionary led him to preach on a passage in which Jesus urges followers to sell all their possessions and give all their money away—not a natural crowd-pleaser of a topic.

Working from the lectionary strikes Dr. Bankston as a more neutral starting point for a sermon.

"It doesn't look as if you've chosen a passage to embarrass somebody or beat someone up," he said. "You start from the Bible, rather than from an idea you have."

Hybrid preachers

The ranks of United Methodist pastors include strong advocates of each approach.

"Topical preaching allows me to address what's going on in the world and in the community," said the Rev. Richard Heyduck, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church in Pittsburg, Texas.

For many pastors, however, the question isn't an "either/or" matter. Many report using a hybrid of lectionary-based sermons as well as topical sermons or sermon series based on a book of the Bible or other passage.

"We use a combination," said Mr. Rester of Parkway Heights. "Sometimes we'll fashion the lectionary into a series, and sometimes we abandon the lectionary altogether to fashion a



COURTESY PHOTO

The Rev. Jim Bankston follows the Revised Common Lectionary in his sermons for St. Paul's United Methodist Church, a growing congregation with traditional worship in Houston.

series that speaks to the needs of the congregation, such as a series on relationships." In both cases, he added, "We've found that people respond well to something thematic that has an overarching goal or purpose."

"I preach both ways, depending on the pulse of the church," says Andy Stoddard, pastor of Asbury United Methodist in Petal, Miss. At his current church, which favors a traditional worship style, he uses the lectionary most Sundays, but opts for a topical approach in the summer. In his previous church, however, he preached topically more often.

"Topical preaching allows me to be more creative," he said. "I can start with something like, 'I have a friend who's been hurt by the church,' or 'I have a friend who can't forgive.' That kind of sermon tends to get a lot of feedback."

Not just marketing

Seminary professors say the most important question is not whether the pastor starts with a topic or a lectionary passage, but whether the Bible is cited with integrity in the sermon.

"One of the caveats for topical sermons is that the preacher can end up choosing texts that support the wisdom that he or she already had," said Charles Campbell, professor of homiletics at Duke Divinity School. "In that case, the Bible is used to support conclusions that have already been reached."

In preparing a topical sermon, he says, a preacher who honestly searches the Bible should expect to have his or her presuppositions challenged or even overturned somewhere along the way. "If there's not a moment where that happens," Dr. Campbell said, "then the preacher has to ask if he or she is truly offering a sermon or just an editorial with a few Scripture passages thrown in to support the position."

Dr. Allen of Christian Theological School has written books about both

lectionary-based and topical preaching, and cautions that both approaches are equally fraught with possibilities for sloppy preaching.

"Topical preachers are often accused of being shallow," he said. "But I don't think those difficulties are inherent to topical preaching." The lectionary, he asserts, isn't the bias-free approach to Scripture that many assume, and preachers can be just as tempted to "read their own theology into any text," even when it's part of the lectionary.

A closer look

So which works better—topical preaching or lectionary-based preaching?

Denominational leaders say that the answer falls, as the United Methodist faith often does, in the "radical middle."

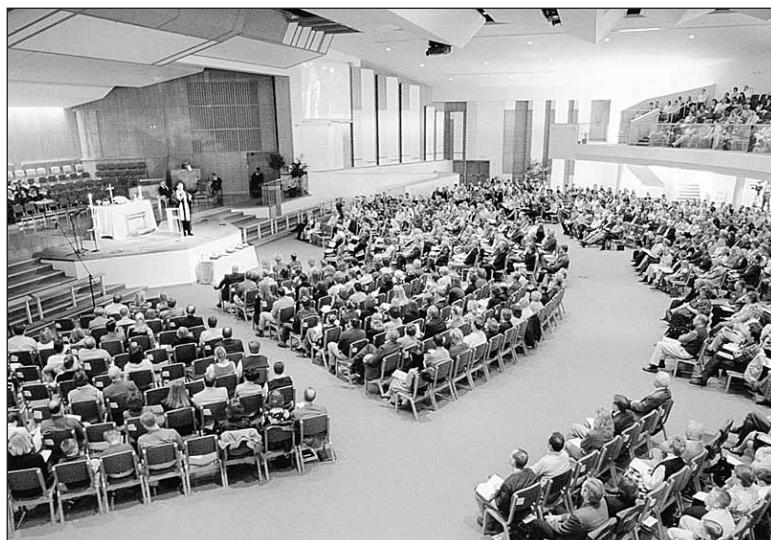
"I think that the lectionary is a reliable guide that keeps us broadening ourselves and the congregation simultaneously," said the GBOD's Dr. Fosua. "But there are times in the life of the congregation where you need to stop the survey tour and dig in right here to address a particular crisis or concern."

Church experts also point out that the denominational survey of preaching styles doesn't prove a cause-and-effect link. Rather, a combination of factors contributes to vitality, not just any one or two. The preaching style is just one piece in the puzzle.

Good sermons can help create a vital, witnessing community, says Dr. Allen, but that's not their ultimate goal. Instead, it's to help bring the world closer to God's purposes of love, justice, hope and liberation.

Ms. Dean agrees. "The challenge for all pastors, whether they preach topically or from the lectionary, is to connect to the lives of the people in the pews," she said. "That's always the goal."

mjacobs@umr.org



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

The Rev. Adam Hamilton preaches topical sermons at United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in suburban Kansas City, Kan.



Checking
OFF THEIR LIST



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: United Methodist volunteers from six churches in the Dallas area helped stuff nearly 500 backpacks with school supplies for students of all ages in the West Dallas community; Wesley-Rankin Community Center serves the diverse West Dallas community with a variety of programs for children, youth, adults and families; Young church volunteers enjoy picking out folders, highlighters and other classroom essentials for their peers; School supplies were collected and donated by United Methodist churches in Dallas, and financial donations were used for program and additional supply costs.



TOP: Community and church volunteers work together to make sure each backpack has all of the supplies on the school-designated supply list. ABOVE: Wesley-Rankin Community Center teaches children at an early age that academic achievement is important and provides preschool for children ages 3-5 and after-school programs for youth. RIGHT: Volunteers of all ages support the Wesley-Rankin community with their prayers, donations, time, services and friendship.



Dallas-area center keeps kids stocked up on school supplies

BY MALLORY MCCALL
Staff Writer

DALLAS—The cost of school supplies can add up these days, especially for families in impoverished West Dallas, where the per capita income in 2005 was barely over \$9,000—less than the per capita income in Mexico. But through the Care4Kids and Families program at the Wesley-Rankin Community Center, a loaded backpack is paid for in service hours, not dollars.

Program participants are required to volunteer at least 100 hours every year in exchange for school supplies and Christmas gifts—complete with wrapping. “This program is designed to work with the community and promote more parent involvement,” says Maria Pintor, the center’s director of community outreach. At least half of the hours must be completed at Wesley-Rankin, while the other 50 may be done at their children’s school, their church or any other agency that is providing service to children, says Ms. Pintor.

At Wesley-Rankin, parents earn hours by working in the kitchen, which provides meals for senior citizens in the morning and kids who come after school, or by working to maintain the grounds, volunteering with the Mi Escuela preschool or attending educational classes the center

offers, such as computer or parenting classes.

The center, related to the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, has been serving Dallas since the early 1900s. Staff established Care4Kids and Families in 1999 to help the community help itself.

Program participants volunteer 20-30,000 hours to the community of West Dallas, and that is an invaluable gift to non-profit organizations like Wesley-Rankin, says Kathy Stutesman, the center’s executive director.

Outside help

“We’re definitely a connecting ministry,” said the Rev. Sarah Squires, director of development. Wesley-Rankin relies on United Methodist churches across the city to provide the school supplies that are given away through Care4Kids.

Churches help by setting up a drop-box outside the sanctuary, cutting a check for backpacks and other program costs, donating pre-filled backpacks or volunteering to sort and pack the supplies.

Donations can look very different, says Ms. Squires. It can be anything from an individual dropping off a bag full of folders and pencils to a church bringing multiple loads of backpacks fully packed and ready to go. “Big or small, it all counts,” she said.

“We are indebted to our volun-

teers, to our churches and the individuals that help support this program with their time and financial contributions,” says Ms. Stutesman.

Not only is the Care4Kids school supplies drive beneficial for the residents of West Dallas, it also offers something memorable to contributing families.

“Getting school supplies for those who can’t [afford them] offers a tangible lesson for kids and is a great place for families to start mission work together,” said Ms. Squires.

About 35 volunteers from six Dallas area churches spent a recent Saturday filling nearly 500 backpacks with gender- and grade-specific supplies. Retired couples, high school boys, moms, dads and even elementary kids strapped on backpacks and paraded through the maze of notebook towers and pencil bundles, carefully collecting each item on the school-issued supply list.

Working with schools

“We try to work very closely with the schools’ administration,” said Ms. Squires. “It’s about giving these kids the foundation and support they need to succeed.”

Supplies were provided for every age student, from pre-kindergarten to college, and no backpack is left incomplete.

The following Monday is distribu-

tion day at the center. Families line up to redeem the school supplies, and as Ms. Pintor checks to see if they have completed at least 50 volunteer hours, she invites the adults to sign up for computer classes.

The Care4Kids program brings a lot of people into the center, she says. “As for Wesley-Rankin, it helps us do a check on what we are actually doing in this community. It shows us if we are meeting the needs of the community and if there are needs we haven’t ad-

dressed.”

The kids are excited to start school as they bop down the stairs and out the door with backpacks in tow, and their parents or guardians are just as excited and thankful.

“We’re Spirit-filled and Spirit-led,” said Ms. Squires as she hugged Wesley-Rankin summer campers goodbye. “Like [John] Wesley said, the world is our parish and this is ours.”

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Are we changing lives or merely affiliations?

BY BISHOP ROBERT SCHNASE
Special Contributor

Recently I heard church leadership consultant Gil Rendle say, “I was not trained to change people’s lives, but to change their membership affiliations.” Gil, who serves with the Texas Methodist Foundation, captures how our understanding of the church and pastoral ministry has evolved over the last few generations.

This insight brought a rush of memories about how I learned to invite and welcome people into the life of the church.

When I served my seminary internship as an associate pastor, our congregation offered a ministry called EmVees, which stood for Monday Visitors. Lynn Day led the program. Lynn was a gracious and spiritually grounded laywoman who loved her volunteer work with the church.

Personal calls

Each Monday evening she would host four to six active laypersons in her home and distribute cards with the names of first-time visitors who had attended church the day before. The names were taken from the registration pads used during worship. She’d tell everything she knew about each person on the cards and lead us in prayer.

Then the Monday Visitors would leave in pairs to visit the visitors at their homes. We’d step into people’s homes, sit down with them for a few minutes, learn something about their faith background, tell them about our church and invite them back.

As a newbie pastor, I served as an EmVees visitor nearly every Monday, teaming up with a different layperson each week. We’d reconvene back at Lynn’s house and report on our visits. Lynn would record the information, make notes on the cards and report the next day to the pastor.

This was an excellent 1980s way of following-up with visitors. We were hoping that people who had moved to our area from another city, or who had become inactive in another church or who had little church experience would change their membership affiliation, or reactivate or initiate their membership by joining our church.

Our focus was helping people decide to join us. When someone stood

before the congregation and repeated the membership vows, we would celebrate, remove their cards from our files and our work was completed. Our work was based on the assumption that joining a church was good for people’s lives and would have a positive effect over time.

I learned much from those visits, and if all United Methodist churches of that era had been as active in their follow-up, our denomination would be immeasurably stronger today.

As my ministry matured through the years, the congregations I served developed greater follow-up systems.

Making disciples

Today, expectations are different. The church’s mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The most vital number for assessing a congregation is attendance rather than membership; being “an active attendee” is more valued than being “an inactive member.”

‘Churches that are growing have learned that ministry is about a way of life.’

The goal of invitation, welcome and assimilation is not merely to change people’s affiliations but to change their lives. The goal is to help people further their relationship to Christ.

Worship, Bible study, Sunday school, mission projects, women’s ministries, youth groups, teaching the personal practices of prayer—these are the means that help us cooperate with the Holy Spirit in our growth in Christ. Churches that are growing have learned that ministry is about a way of life, not merely a membership pledge.

How do we organize our ministries so they support that way of life? Personal transformation precedes the transformation of the world. People who capture a vision of life in Christ become motivated to serve, seek justice, love peace, forgive others and take on the ministry of reconciliation. They become ambassadors for Christ.

How is your congregation reimagining and redesigning ministry to change people’s lives, rather than merely their affiliations?

Missouri Bishop Schnase blogs at fivepractices.org.



Bishop Robert Schnase

EDITOR’S CORNER

Too bland for our own good?

BY ROBIN RUSSELL
Managing Editor

Jon Stewart got a big laugh recently on *The Daily Show* when he said the United Methodist Church “is like the University of Phoenix of religions”—inferring that being a United Methodist is as easy as getting an online diploma.

You don’t have to show up in person. You don’t have to work very hard at it. And as long as you pay your dues, you stay in good standing.

Please, no e-mails telling me that your church is not like that. I know there are many thriving and healthy United Methodist congregations.

But considering how the joke resonated with Mr. Stewart’s television audience, we might have to admit that the United Methodist Church has a bit of an image problem.

Notwithstanding the hip, new “Rethink Church” ad campaign (which doesn’t always translate down to the local congregation experience), the perception of United Methodism seems to be a rather lukewarm version of Christianity.

You know what I mean. The place where you and your spouse from another denomination can find “neutral” ground. The place where no one tells you what to believe. The place where the Christian journey is self-paced, and where questions are better than answers.

Not that there’s anything wrong with those things, as *Seinfeld* would say.

But if you are seriously seeking Christian faith development and an engaged, authentic community, some of our United Methodist churches would undoubtedly fall short (as would any number of churches in any denomination—but this is about us).

Check out the findings from an exit poll of people who attended a seeker study from 2003-2006 at United Methodist churches, and walked away disappointed. Among their comments:

“You don’t know your own story. You don’t know who you are and what you believe.”

“You believe some of the lamest, weirdest stuff and ignore the simple,

kind, and helpful stuff.”

“Methodists are all over the map. . . they don’t have a clue what they really believe.”

“It feels like a time warp—like 1984, but from the other side.”

Respondents felt the church was lacking in prayer, reading the Bible and spiritual conversation, says Dan Dick, director of connectional ministries for the Wisconsin Conference, who posted these comments on his blog, “United Methodeviations.”

“People are disappointed that we don’t seem to know why we do the things we do; why we believe the things we believe; why we say the things we say,” Dr. Dick said.

“Jon Stewart is not the only person who thinks you can believe and do anything and be a Methodist.”

Straying from roots

So what does it mean to be a Methodist? I am amazed at how many readers write in each week to thank our Wesleyan Wisdom columnist Donald Haynes for explaining the basics of United Methodism (and in a shameless plug, see www.umportal.org for information on his book, *On the Threshold of Grace: Methodist Fundamentals*).

This sense of spiritual mushiness is a far cry from John Wesley’s approach when he launched the Methodist revival movement in the mid-18th century. There was no mistaking Wesley’s take on the importance of the spiritual disciplines—fasting, prayer, Bible study, Communion, worship and small-group accountability—and reaching out to those outside the faith.

Can the average United Methodist explain grace theology?

John Wesley, the father of small-group ministry, is a hero of the faith to many outside the Wesleyan traditions. Lifegroups and cell groups for study, fellowship and accountability are a hallmark of most growing non-denominational churches.

But a typical United Methodist church bulletin shows more announcements for Zumba classes and senior citizen outings than for Bible studies or accountability groups.

So what’s a spiritually minded person to do?

Perkins School of Theology professor William Abraham describes the current malaise as “doctrinal amnesia.” The General Board of Discipleship’s Taylor Burton-Edwards takes it a bit further in a comment on Mr. Dick’s blog: “I’m wondering if



Jon Stewart

it has not advanced to doctrinal and practical dementia.”

Membership vows

Persons who take membership vows promise to “uphold this congregation of the United Methodist Church by [their] prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.” All too often, however, there are few expectations beyond serving on a committee, showing up on Sunday and making a financial pledge—and certainly no follow-through or consequences.

Yet churches that ask something of their members tend to have a more engaged and active laity who feel empowered for the work of the ministry. Young people, in particular, are eager to invest their lives in something bigger than themselves.

To be sure, you can’t quite fit Wesley’s theological nuances into a gospel tract or a pithy slogan. But offering a path toward spiritual formation shouldn’t be beyond our capabilities.

And isn’t that what people are looking for in a church—a place where they can become a Christ-follower?

“They want to know how to pray,” writes Dr. Dick. “They want to know how to read and interpret the Bible. They want to be able to talk about Christian beliefs and practices. They want companions on the journey.”

“People are seeking depth . . . and reject those places where people don’t know their own story—the story of the church, the faith and God.”

Can the United Methodist Church rediscover its story? Or will Comedy Central have the last laugh?

russell@umr.org

WESLEYAN WISDOM

Imitate Wesley: Use every medium for witnessing

BY DONALD W. HAYNES
UMR Columnist

John Wesley would have loved the worldwide web! He would have had one of the first websites in England and insisted that all his preachers use e-mail correspondence.

In all likelihood he would have “blogged” and “tweeted.” Wesley was much more diverse in his interests, urbane in his worldview and cutting-edge in his methodology than many of us United

Methodists today.

We often assume that Wesley conducted only what he calls “necessary talk,” or conversation of a religious nature.

The fact is he said, even from the pulpit, “sour godliness is the devil’s religion,” and he could regale for an evening, using anecdotes that brought an uproar of laughter, according to his sister Martha.

While at Oxford, he not only led the Holy Club but also “rowed on the river, and played billiards, tennis, chess, and cards,” his sister wrote.

Wesley delighted to write in Latin verses, wrote a Hebrew grammar text, annotated his Greek New Testament in Greek and was fluent in French. Later he learned German from the Moravians.

For Bible study, he used a “polyglot” which translated the Scriptures into 18 languages so he could see which expressed the Hebrew and Greek most accurately.

According to Franklin Wilder’s biography, Wesley could hold his own in any discussion or “quoting match” from the works of Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton.

Wesley read Voltaire and Hume and Montesquieu, and could debate any of their premises as well as Madison and Jefferson could.

During Wesley’s lifetime, Isaac Newton experimented with the law of gravity and developed “Newtonian” physics; William Harvey discovered the circulatory system of the human body; Antoine Lavoisier became the father of modern chemistry; and James Watt invented the steam engine that would propel the Industrial Revolution.

The power of the pen was felt from the mind and hand of Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope and Oliver Goldsmith. George Eliot’s *Adam*

Bede was a fictionalized portrait of Dinah Evans, one of Wesley’s women “exhorters.”

William Blackstone was writing law books that would train lawyers for a century. The agnostic Edward Gibbon was writing *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*. It was the time of which Dickens wrote: “It was the worst of times; it was the best of times.”

No one’s name was known and company more sought than John Wesley.

Dr. Samuel Johnson was, hands down, the most envied host in all England. To be invited to his table talk was the dream of anyone who wanted to be part of the “upper crust” circles of London society. Wesley was often invited to Johnson’s home, and sometimes offended his rather pompous host by turning down the invitation because he had to preach.

After Wesley began a school at Kingswood, he wrote the textbooks for the pupils. He published 233 works on many subjects, including a four-volume set on the History of England.

He set up spinning and knitting shops to provide employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the poor. He published several hymnbooks because he and Charles were pioneers in congregational singing.

He encouraged Hannah Ball to set up a Sunday school more than a dozen years before Robert Raikes, who is usually credited with founding the Sunday school. He encouraged Thomas Coke to start a Tract Society for which he wrote many tracts.

He wrote on science and philosophy, publishing *A Compendium on Natural Philosophy*.

He was a good friend to English potter Josiah Wedgwood, who made a personal teapot for Wesley. Wedgwood’s grandson was Charles Darwin.

He first saw slavery in South Carolina in 1736, and hated it. (Slavery was not legal in Georgia until 1751—long after Wesley had left). In 1758, he baptized two slaves of Nathaniel Gilbert, calling them the “first African Christians I have known.” Gilbert later returned to his native Antiqua in the West Indies to become the father of Methodism there.

Wesley was a tireless enemy of slavery; in his last dictated letter, he urged William Wilberforce to press on in his crusade to have slavery outlawed in Great Britain.

Wesley was a man of so many interests. Benjamin Franklin began writing about his experiments in electricity to the Royal Society of England

in 1752. Wesley read them, wrote a list of 10 things he learned from Franklin and was a pioneer in electrotherapy. His “electric machine” is still in his study on City Road in London.

In 1760 he published *Electricity Made Plain and Useful*. In his book *Primitive Physick*, he itemized a list of ailments that “electrifying cures.” Doctors called it nonsense; it would not become accepted in medical science until the 20th century.

Wesley insisted on bathing in cold water, and wrote, “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” He urged: “Let

experience of saving grace.

Wesley virtually salvaged the theology of Jacob Arminius from what would have been left to scholars and rare bookrooms. In 1777, when the concept and word “magazine” was new, Wesley launched the *Arminian Magazine*, which he edited and published for 14 years. Widely read, it gave Wesley the kind of exposure one could only get today on the Internet.

Wesley wrote scores of tracts and a number of books from which he received royalties. He had the income to be a wealthy man, but instead he gave

my website.

My deep conviction, which borders on near obsession, is that Methodism has a message that the worldwide web of humankind needs to hear. Millions are longing to hear that God loves every one of us, warts and all; that God’s is a seeking love and not sheer philosophy of religion; and that we can experience three dimensions of God amazing grace: the Holy Spirit’s “preparing grace,” the blessed assurance of saving grace, and the long days’ journey into fuller light through perfecting grace.

Jesus’ at-onement is not limited; he died for every human being. But they cannot get home alone.

Every church and every pastor must prioritize relational evangelism. Every local church should have a website. Every pastor should read and read and read, and let both secular cultural knowledge and spiritual wisdom be reflected in sermons so that we speak to the people in the room as well as speak the eternal truth.

That was the genius of Wesley, and is our calling to fulfill if we are to serve this present age.

We cannot grow slack. We cannot grow weary in well doing. We cannot quit. There is a world out there and we can touch it. Mr. Wesley would insist that we do so through every medium available.

Dr. Haynes is a retired clergy member of the Western North Carolina Conference and author of *On the Threshold of Grace: Methodist Fundamentals* (www.umportal.org). E-mail: dhaynes11@triad.rr.com.



Donald Haynes

‘Millions are longing to hear that God loves every one of us, warts and all; that God’s is a seeking love and not sheer philosophy of religion.’

Methodists take the pattern of the Quakers—avoid nastiness, dirt, slovenliness. Do not stink. Keep your hair clean, free of lice. Cure yourself and your family of the itch. Let none ever see a ragged Methodist; take care of one another.”

In the development of his “grace theology,” Wesley drew from many sources. Almost all Reformation theology was derived from Augustine, but Wesley read deeply in Eastern Christianity. Wesley scholar Randy Maddox documents that Wesley’s salvation language was not so juridical as Augustine’s, but reflected the therapeutic idioms of clinical healing. Wesley even used the term “taking the cure” for the

away over \$200,000, a fortune in the 18th century, and died as he had sworn he would, with assets of less than £10.

Like Wesley, a major life goal and ministry of outreach was to get Methodism’s historic doctrines into the public square. Yes, we can see John Wesley reveling in the web!

As a foot soldier among his progeny, I was thrilled to be able to set up a website where I post the weekly sermons that I preach to about 100 people at Kallam Grove Christian Church, 25 miles from the nearest city. I am also thrilled to post these Wesleyan Wisdom columns and to hear from the *United Methodist Reporter’s* worldwide readership, some of whom hit

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Church sets training event on sexual ethics

BY BARBARA DUNLAP-BERG
United Methodist News Service

It began three decades ago with anxious phone calls and letters.

Women dealing with sexual misconduct started to contact the United Methodist General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in Chicago and say: "I see that you are a women's support organization, and I've had this experience in the church. Nobody in my local church knows how to help me. I don't know what to do. Can you help me?"

Rather than trying to provide a one-size-fits-all answer, the commission went to work studying trends, developing training modules and providing information. And in the years that followed, other United Methodist agencies got on board.

"We have grown into an inter-agency movement," said Garlinda Burton, top staff executive for the commission. "We are branching out and embracing the different aspects of the denomination that also have a stake in this discussion."

To that end, the commission has scheduled a churchwide training opportunity on sexual ethics Jan. 26-29, 2011, in Houston. "Do No Harm" is for anyone in the United Methodist Church who has a leadership role in sexual-ethics training or in intervening when sexual misconduct occurs.

Ms. Burton said the gathering will focus on prevention of sexual misconduct in churches or by church professionals or anyone in a ministerial role, intervention techniques for adjudicating cases and information on how to arrive at just resolutions.

It is geared toward bishops, district superintendents, and response and

safe-sanctuary teams in annual conferences. Planners hope to draw 150 to 200 participants.

The church's Social Principles and *Book of Resolutions* have paragraphs about human sexuality, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. Ms. Burton credited the commission with "getting policies in the *Book of Discipline* that require training, name sexual misconduct as a chargeable offense, and require policies and procedures to be published."

'A pastoral role'

The *Book of Discipline*, the denomination's law book, defines sexual harassment as "any unwanted sexual comment, advance, or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive."

Sexual harassment should be understood as an exploitation of power, according to the *Discipline*. "Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender," the book says.

Women continue to be disproportionately targeted for sexual abuse and sexual harassment in the church, Ms. Burton said. The majority of complaints the commission receives come from laywomen, where the perpetrators or alleged perpetrators are clergymen.

Often, Ms. Burton said, the women have no idea how to file a complaint. "They have no idea whether anyone will listen. They don't know that sexual misconduct is a chargeable offense in the United Methodist Church, and that there are remedies, that there is a place for them to go. They don't know



UMNS PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY RONNY PERRY

Women continue to be "disproportionately targeted" for sexual abuse and sexual harassment, according to the United Methodist General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

whom to contact. Most of our work is helping to point victim survivors to the correct person through which they can file a complaint."

The commission's goal, she said, is not to investigate or to resolve complaints, "but to make sure our church leaders are equipped to deal with complaints in a way that not only has legal integrity, but also has pastoral integrity."

"If the church cannot adequately

address sexual misconduct and make people feel safe," Ms. Burton said, "we are not being a credible witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We see this as a pastoral role."

Ninety percent of the calls to the commission are laity complaining about clergy. However, as more women enter ordained ministry and congregations are unsure how to relate to women as pastors, clergywomen are also reporting harassment.

A handful of clergymen have reported harassment as well, Ms. Burton said. "Men are becoming more comfortable in drawing boundaries with their congregants."

Safe, sacred spaces

Ms. Burton is encouraged that the church is becoming more serious about education and prevention. "I think most of our annual conferences in the United States require some sort of boundary and sexual ethics training for their clergy," she said. Some conferences require something every year, others every quadrennium.

Safe-sanctuary training focuses on congregants, parents, adult workers with youth and adult workers with developmentally delayed adults. "Safe sanctuary" is a term used for churches that are providing an environment free from abuse, harassment or misconduct.

Kansas East was the first conference to require background checks and certification of anyone working with children and youth on any level in the church. The conference has certified 11,000 people, according to Safe and Sacred Space coordinator Nancy Brown. The commission is seeking to replicate that training for the entire denomination, Ms. Burton said.

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