

IN THIS ISSUE

Creative waiting
2A

'Deep Change'
ahead
4A

New Connected in
Christ opportunities
5A

Ingathering keeps
the light shining
8A



Members of First United Methodist Church Russellville serve a Sunday evening meal to guests at More Than Manna, a ministry that grew out of Manna House, the church's food pantry ministry. Acting on the calling to enter into relationship with those who receive services from Manna House, the church has found that joining new friends to share in a meal, worship time and Holy Communion fills a deeper need than just physical hunger.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Russellville church offers meals and spiritual food

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

On a Sunday night in November, eight dinner tables fill the fellowship hall of First United Methodist Church in Russellville. Gathered around each one, people of diverse backgrounds and life situations share a meal and conversation. Soon, worship music will begin, guiding the group toward the spiritual sustenance of Holy Communion.

It's known as More Than Manna, and it draws an average of 70 people each week. The name reflects its connection to Manna House, the church's food ministry, housed just across Commerce Street from the main church campus.

Manna House opens from 10 a.m. to noon

Mondays through Thursdays, and from 6 to 7 p.m. on Wednesdays. Almost entirely volunteer-driven, the ministry uses donations from the church and broader community to provide canned foods and hygiene items to more than 300 families each month.

But they felt called to do more than just feed people.

"A group of individuals met to determine how we might reach out to serve the poor and hungry in our neighborhood and community," said the Rev. Gail Baldwin, associate pastor of First UMC, "to form relationships and not simply hand them food."

The team first met in the spring of 2010, and on June 13 launched a gathering around tree-shaded tables between Manna House and its

law-office neighbor (one of the law firm's partners is a member of First UMC). The team had canvassed the neighborhood around the church, as well as the town's low-income apartment complexes, inviting people to attend the free meal and share in worship.

That first evening, about 25 people not affiliated with the church shared in the meal, worshipped and celebrated Holy Communion.

"The reason we began outside was a strong conviction that many people who have not been involved in a church ever, or in a while, will not come to soup kitchens," Baldwin said. "They are intimidated to come into a building where they do not know anyone and are unsure of your motivation."

[See MORE THAN MANNA, page 6A]

Advent teaches us to practice creative waiting

BY WILLIAM O. (BUD) REEVES
Special Contributor

I think I'm getting worse at waiting.

Maybe I'm trying to do too much and can't afford to waste a second.

Maybe I'm just too used to the instantaneous technology that I work with every day, and I have a hard time waiting to get information, to contact people or to see plans come to fruition.

On the other hand, it's hard to believe that Advent is already here. Where did the year go? In the midst of our busyness, it sort of slipped away.

Advent, ironically, is a great time to slow down and take stock of our lives. Coming at the end of the year, we can reflect back and think about what we really accomplished in the last twelve months. Despite the hectic nature of the season, it can be a time to learn how to wait creatively.

Advent can teach us to wait patiently. This is still a learning curve for me, but I know it is crucial to our relationship with God. Our sense is timing is not God's, and sometimes we have to wait. Before Jesus was born, the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah for centuries. Only when the time was right did God send his Son.

Waiting patiently can be creative. It requires quietness, a spiritual stillness in our soul, to get in touch with God.

We can fill the silence with repentance for the missteps of the past year. We can spend the time in prayer and study. Some intentional patience can get us ready for the next big thing—whatever that is.

Advent also teaches us to wait expectantly. Though our dreams and visions have not yet been fulfilled, we do not despair. We are a people of hope. Like the Hebrews who waited for the Messiah, we know God is going to do a new

thing, and when the time is right, it will happen—if we stay faithful.

The expectation of something good on its way keeps our spirits up, even in the midst of trials, and it gives us courage to walk God's walk, even when the world is taking another path.

Advent, more than any other time of the year, is when I feel the disconnect between God's path and the way of the world, between Christ and culture, between our sad, desperate attempts to find security in things and the eternal security of God's love. Our spirits long for their true home, because that's where our hope lies.

Advent teaches us to wait actively. Patience is not passivity. Hopeful expectation calls us to work for the Kingdom now. While we wait for the coming of Christ, there is ministry to do, compassion to share, injustice to fight. Advent gives us many opportunities to help those in need. Though we should be about that kind of ministry all year long, it does not diminish the value of what we do at the holidays.

Many people of faith are finding new ways to celebrate the holidays that divert our attention and resources away from the materialistic excess of the American Christmas toward a more faithful approach.

(Did you read your Nov. 19 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*? It had some great ideas.) Alternative Christmas celebrations are both active and creative.

I am not a Scrooge about Christmas. I love the parties and the music and the decorations that go with the season. I also enjoy getting presents. But the older I grow, the more important it is to clear away the clutter in my heart to truly receive the Christ Child anew every Christmas. The image gets tarnished during the year. So I try to wait—patiently, expectantly, actively—for a new birth again in me.

'Tis the season of Advent. Something good is coming. It will be a Gift from God. Are we getting ready?

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



Bud Reeves

'...we know God is going to do a new thing, and when the time is right, it will happen—if we stay faithful.'



BY AMY FORBUS

EDITOR'S CORNER

Appreciating the gift of Advent

I'm wondering if the Forbus lawn is the only one in Pulaski County that sports a four-foot-tall Advent wreath.

For years, we tried to find one. We were hoping some company out there manufactured one. We would even accept an inflatable model. We waited, hoping someone else would do all the hard work and we could just buy one.

Eventually, my husband, ever the engineer and tinkerer, procured several lengths of PVC pipe and lumber. He bought blue, pink and white lights to wrap around the candles, and red and green lights to decorate the fake greenery wired to the base. So we now have our very own yard-sized Advent wreath.



(This just in: We're a bit unusual.)

Each Sunday night this Advent, I expect to see my husband peering out the front window to watch his carefully-timed lighting rig kick another candle into action.

In years past, we have missed

our own lighting of the Christ candle, because while we were in Arkansas with family, our wreath was in our front yard in Texas, dutifully following John's electronic script and proclaiming the birth of the Messiah in a few hundred watts of glory.

But this year, we live in Little Rock and will be sleeping in our own bed on Christmas Eve. When we come home from worshipping with my family at First UMC Hot Springs, our fully-lighted Advent wreath will greet us.

And a few days later, we'll have the annual discussion: Do we take it down now and finish up with the season before January, or do we wait until Epiphany? (We're very liturgical around our house.)

After years of watching the retailers' version of Christmas begin when the Halloween candy gets marked down to half-price, we have learned to appreciate waiting.

Our culture isn't accustomed to waiting. Our daily reality includes fast food, fast Internet connections and getting impatient while waiting for the microwave to boil a cup of water in less than a minute.

Advent gives us a great opportunity to go counter-cultural (like Someone else we know who was counter-cultural). We aren't accustomed to waiting for much.

Could it be that waiting is a good thing?

This Advent, consider trying a simple exercise in waiting. Here's an example: If you're already deep into listening to your Christmas CDs or

mp3s, try putting them on hold for a day or two.

That doesn't mean you have to give up every bit of the holiday season; we have Advent carols that we often lump into the same category as Christmas music. "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" and "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" come to mind.

But perhaps the experience of letting "Joy to the World" lay low for a few more days would create some spiritual, prayerful space in this mad rush of a month.

The whole earth waited for a Savior. And when he came, the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him (John 1:10-11).

How did so many people miss the person they'd been waiting for?

Two millennia later, Jesus the Messiah seems so obvious to us, but I can't help wondering if, had I been around back then, I would've missed him myself. And in what way I'm missing him now.

Simeon waited his whole life to meet the Messiah (Luke 2:26-33). When Jesus arrived at the temple, Simeon recognized him as the Christ child.

What made Simeon different? I see one notable difference in verse 27: "Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple..."

Guided by the Spirit. Simeon had kept his eyes, mind and heart open to the possibility of seeing God at work.

May we all be open to the Spirit's direction in this season of waiting.

**Recycle
Reuse
Replenish**



**Be sure to recycle
your *Arkansas United
Methodist* when you're
through reading it
(or give it to a friend).**



Volume 157 • No. 31 December 3, 2010
Martha S. Taylor • Director of Communications
Amy Forbus • Editor
Patrick W. Shownes • Communications Coordinator
www.arumc.org

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 Friday of each month, and four special issues during the year for a total of 16 issues per year.

Send correspondence & subscription updates to:
Arkansas United Methodist, 800 Daisy Bates Drive,
Little Rock, AR 72202; or e-mail to
Patrick Shownes at pshownes@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.

Advertising is welcomed. For a rate sheet or more information, contact Martha Taylor at (501) 324-8005 or mtaylor@arumc.org. While all advertising is reviewed before acceptance, it should not be considered endorsed by this newspaper or the Church.

Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
Jan. 7	Dec. 15
Feb. 4	Jan. 20
March 4	Feb. 17



AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

Dear Friends:

The lyrics from a Stephen Sondheim song capture the breathless spirit of the season for me: “Something’s coming, something good... something’s coming. I don’t know what it is but it is gonna be great!”

Through the haze of too much candy, fruitcake and eggnog, through the noise of children swirling underfoot, through the hassle of chaotic schedules... something’s coming, something great. The moment of holy mystery, inexplicable, sacred, awe-filled comes—a child is born.

We have high expectations for the season. We expect to see family. We even look forward to seeing Uncle Harold, who shakes the house with his snoring. And if we are the last to arrive we don’t complain about the foldout bed in the basement, the one with the support rod just where a person’s hips are

supposed to be.

We expect to see neatly wrapped gifts under a tree decorated with the memories of a lifetime—special ornaments that hold for us the golden glow of the past. We expect to sing “Hark! the Herald Angels Sing” and “Joy to the World” and “Silent Night.”

And we expect to hear THE STORY—to be touched once again by its gentle beauty and the timeless wonder of the miracle of birth, of that moment when nobody turns into somebody.

The Story tells of God, who enters into our human experience in the same manner as all humans start the journey of life.

Our faith is unique in that we make the dazzling assertion that God came to live among us as one of us. We make the bold claim that Jesus felt hunger, pain, disappointment and agony.

We are also bold to claim that Jesus knew the satisfaction and joy

that comes when the light goes on in the heart and head of one of his followers.

In the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, we proclaim that God came to dwell among us, to live among us. In our heart of hearts, at the level of our lives that is most profoundly human, we know we desperately need, we expect, we anticipate, the reassurance of the wonder and awe that brought the shepherds from their flocks and the magi to their knees that we hear once again in The Story.

“Something’s coming, something good...something’s coming. I don’t know what it is, but it is, gonna be great.”

Thing is—we know what is coming. It’s in The Story.

Faithfully,

Charles Crutchfield



A church alive again

BY DEENA MARIE HAMILTON
Special Contributor

I don’t mean to brag, but the worship committee at my church is pretty top-notch. They did something that I do not remember ever happening in our Conference—they put together a fall young adult revival, where all the ministers were under age 40 and the majority of the speakers were members of this Conference. It was absolutely spectacular.

Even though turnout was low, one of the young ministers said, “Whoever is here is meant to be here.” And then it was *on*.

The first speaker told us that we need to fully submit our lives to God and accept the change that lies before us. The second speaker told us that through transformation, we understand that we need to get up, get out and get something—don’t let the days of your life pass you by. And the last speaker brought new life to the congregation and proclaimed that God can give life to these dry bones... and they gon’ walk around!

I know that everyone there was changed for life. We see things through a fresh new perspective that we wouldn’t have seen before. The sense of urgency to be the church that God has called us to be is a priority now.

We understand now that change is inevitable. And it’s time for us to get up, get out, and make something... when I say make something—I mean make disciples for Christ. And to quote my favorite 1960s activist, we must do this “by any means necessary.”

Not through brute force or aggression, but through the love of God that has been so graciously bestowed upon us through Christ.

We effortlessly say in our Communion consecration that Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Because of this mystery of faith, we are ready to be a congregation that will live abundantly and obediently to God. The fire has been ignited within me to the point that the destiny of my life has changed forever.

But everyone gets to that point

at different stages in life. This is my season of change and service.

The harvest is indeed plentiful, but the laborers are few. What’s holding us back? You know, sometimes we are truly our own worst enemies.

One Sunday afternoon, while writing an article, my mother kept bugging me to eat. I told her that I would be there shortly, but she was persistent.

Even at the most difficult time of her illness, she still managed to be my mother and look after me. I gave up and went downstairs and saw a plate of green beans, seasoned and buttered. Her actions were a small gesture with a significant meaning.



Deena Marie Hamilton

‘...we are ready to be a congregation that will live abundantly and obediently to God.’

But if we are faithful with small things, we will be faithful with big things. If we believe in an insignificant God, then we’ll do insignificant things.

We serve a God that is more than able. But to remain in step with Him, we have to remain alive in Christ. Our founder John Wesley teaches us that salvation is a journey home where we go up the steps, are greeted on the porch and walk through the door—but you gotta make the first step.

When we are alive in Christ, we are truly alive! We are free to live life in all its wonder and splendor. We just need to bring some people along on the journey. It’s easy to want to keep all that good love to ourselves, but that’s not what we’ve been commissioned to do. We weren’t told to stay inside. We were commanded to go out.

Once we do that, we begin to live...

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

Will a seeker be able to find your church this Christmas Eve?

Christmas is coming, and hopefully, that means more people coming into our churches. But what if visitors get lost because of faulty directions?

As of November, 37 percent of Arkansas Conference churches have updated their online profiles since June 2009. That’s a 4 percent increase since October, but it still means that 63 percent of our churches may have incorrect information showing up on RethinkChurch.org.

RethinkChurch.org is the primary site featured in Rethink Church advertising. When seekers use the

website to find a church in their area, the site relies upon the data you have provided through Find-A-Church. If your data is wrong or missing, it makes a seeker less likely to attend.

So it’s vital that your congregation’s information is up-to-date in the Find-A-Church database.

To see the information currently available about your church, search for your church name at find-a-church.org. To make changes to that listing, visit umc.org/update.

Questions? E-mail them to fac@umcom.org.

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

BOOK REVIEW: Change a constant for healthy individuals, congregations

*Deep Change:
Discovering the Leader
Within*

By Robert E. Quinn

Jossey-Bass, 1996

BY CHARLES LONG
Special Contributor

How do we bring to the church knowledge and methods proven in the business world? While the differences between church and business are vast, the similarities are important. *Deep Change* could be considered a self-help manual for managers who want to become leaders and leaders who want to become inspired leaders.

Both business and church organizations are subject to the personalities of human beings. Knowledge of human behavior has been tested and documented in business, and to automatically dismiss that knowledge would be an error for the church.

Deep Change assumes that one person can change the larger system or organization in which he or she exists. All of us, at some point in life, get overwhelmed and discouraged and feel like life, or work life, lacks something important. We need to do something, but we don't know what to do or how to do it.

We can all relate to these circumstances, which makes most of us the perfect audience for *Deep Change*. Deep change does not mean a complete overhaul of the system, but a deep analysis of ourselves and the system to determine how each person helps drive the system. To paraphrase a Jeep commercial, "The disciples we make, make us."

The book's primary focus is to attempt change from a very basic position. As Gandhi said, "Be the change that you want to see in the world." As hard as it may be to admit that the system we occupy and help operate—the church—is flawed, we must face that fact.

The author first addresses the system of self: If we don't embrace deep change in ourselves, we are embracing slow death for ourselves and our organization.

How do individuals accomplish deep change? Quinn says the self is not a thing, but an unfolding

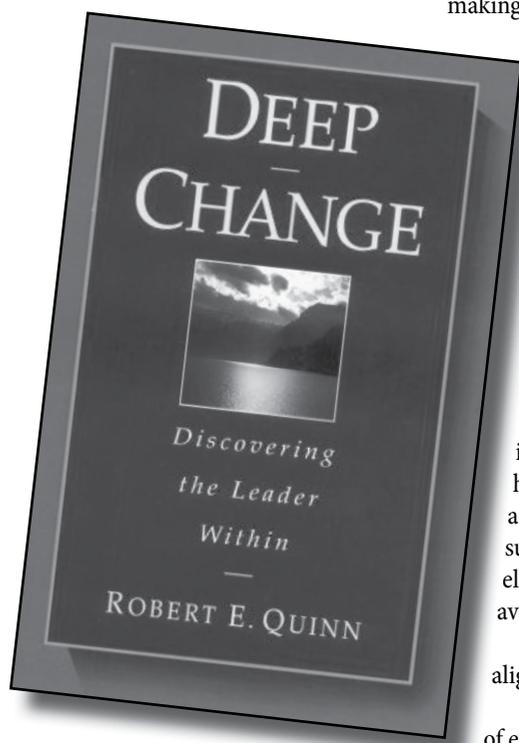
process, and stagnation exacerbates itself. The less we grow and encounter new people, things and places, the less we have a desire to.

The author writes that one is not given empowerment, but must take it. I don't necessarily agree with that idea—I would suggest it's a joint effort of management presenting the opportunity and a person accepting the empowerment and learning to apply the freedom.

Regardless, within this empowerment the author successfully makes the case for four elements that must be in place for the person to fulfill his or her deep change:

- 1) Their work is important to them
- 2) They feel confident about their ability to do the work
- 3) They feel free to choose how to do the work
- 4) They feel that they have influence in their unit.

With these elements present, an individual can be a conduit for



purposeful change in an organization.

Quinn writes, "We are all potential change agents. As we discipline our talents, we deepen our perceptions about what is possible. We develop a reverence for the tools and the relationships that surround us. We then bring a discipline to our visions and grow in integrity. Life becomes more meaningful. We become empowered and empowering to our organization. Having experienced deep change in ourselves, we are able to bring deep

change to the systems around us."

The latter chapters deal with deep change in an organization. Growing organizations change daily so they understand what the present cultural impact will have on them.

Our culture is changing, whether we like it or not. To ignore change is slow death. We may not call it that, but when we choose to live in our present paradigms and ignore the elephant in the room, we have chosen death.

Organizations and change are not complementary concepts. Most organizations are geared to produce no surprises, very few failures and even fewer successes. But for deep change to happen, someone has to take a risk. All risks will not be successful, but in the future no success will be possible without risk.

The author states, "Excellence never lies within the boxes drawn in the past." He does not say that all traditional practices must be replaced. But perhaps the four-sided box may need to become a pentagon, making room for the diversity and lifestyles of coming generations.

Internal and external expectations must also align. Quinn writes, "An invisible form of corruption at the top, such as the exercise of authority without concern or demand without support results in a very visible form of corruption at the bottom." Under stress and pressure, individuals may resort to old habits—back in the box, safe and sound and dying. Quinn suggests four essential elements for organizations to avoid this situation:

- 1) Continuous strategic alignment
- 2) Continuous clarification of expectations
- 3) Continuous conflict resolution
- 4) Continuous participation and involvement of the organization's leadership.

Quinn makes a sound case for keeping up with today's constantly changing environment. His book can benefit anyone interested in being a successful disciple.

Long is a Connected in Christ coach for Arkansas Conference churches and a member of Beebe UMC.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Chair thanks 'Harvest of Hope' churches

This past Labor Day weekend, the inaugural Malvern/Hot Spring County Harvest of Hope raised \$15,000 for Arkansas Rice Depot's Food for Kids program, which will provide food-filled backpacks for underprivileged children in our elementary schools.

This community-wide project was made possible by the participation of many area churches, including seven United Methodist congregations: FUMC, St. Paul, Shorewood Hills, Keith Memorial, Magnet Cove, Leau Fraiz, and Rockport.

Special recognition should go to St. Paul UMC and their pastor, the Rev. Dooley Fowler. Their church has a smokehouse where, over the course of three days and nights, over 1,000 pieces of meat, including pork butts and whole chickens, were prepared by a team of volunteers from the community and smoked to perfection by the church's master smokers. The meat was presold the month before the event and distributed Sept. 3 and 4.

The Rev. LaVon Post of FUMC has helped organize Harvests of Hope in two other communities in which he has served, Batesville and DeWitt. He's very proud of the outpouring of love from the citizenry of his current appointment, and with him, we all look forward to another successful Harvest next year.

Thanks to everyone who participated in some way. Sincerely,
John Allan Funk
Chair, Malvern/Hot Spring County Harvest of Hope

Bullies need love, too

I just read your editorial for the Nov. 5 issue of the Arkansas United Methodist ["Facing the opposite of Christ-like love"]. It was well-written, as always, but you made one statement that really caught my eye: "Those who face bullying are beloved children of God. And so are the ones dishing it out."

As a kid, I faced bullies. As a robust kid, I usually only had to face them once! But, I unconsciously developed my own personal bigotry against bullies.

Thank you for reminding me that bullies need God's love and grace every bit as much as those they torment.

Austin "Hawk" Coleman, Pastor Springfield/Mallettown UMCs

One word missing from excellent column

I feel sure all readers of our Conference newspaper appreciate the amazing contribution that Mary Faith "Zoe" Miles makes to our understanding of young adults as she writes from the Generation Y perspective.

I appreciated her wonderful commentary in the Nov. 5 issue regarding confusion about baptism. She explains the distinct difference between adult and infant baptism, referencing Acts and Matthew 3:17 as the basis for adult/believers' baptism, and Acts 16:15, 33 as the basis for infant baptism. She helpfully writes of the "principle of familial baptism," the parents' role, the place of Confirmation and growing in understanding and surrender.

I must admit, though, that her helpful explanations come up a little short. I kept looking in her well-written column for the term "grace."

For me, without recognizing God's grace in adult and infant baptism, we get off course. Without emphasizing the primacy of divine grace, we risk thinking that baptism is a human act. No—it is all about covenant God initiated, not humans. (Wesley called it "prevenient grace"—i.e., extended before we even ask.)

Therefore, we practice infant baptism, looking to parents, family and the community of faith to raise the child, growing in understanding, acceptance and surrender.
Ed Matthews, retired clergy Little Rock

Letters to the Editor policy:

All letters must be signed (name and city/church) and include the writer's telephone number or e-mail address.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Letters longer than 200 words will not be considered for publication.

The Arkansas United Methodist will not print letters containing personal attacks.

Connected in Christ presents opportunities in early 2011

Seminars in three locations offer more congregations greater accessibility

How can connection make a difference in ministry? When Jesus Christ is the core of that connection, transformation happens.

Connected in Christ (CIC), a ministry of the Arkansas Conference, can help clergy and laity along that pathway to transformation.

CIC clergy retreats, team training seminars and coaching of pastors and lay leadership teams facilitate the connections needed for faithful and fruitful ministry in Arkansas United Methodist congregations.



In the first quarter of 2011, CIC will offer a series of Saturday seminars in three different parts of the state. Cabot UMC, Heritage UMC in Van Buren, and First UMC Magnolia will each serve as hosts.

The seminars are designed to bring laity and clergy together as partners for transformation—to help them become more faithful and fruitful in ministry.

- **Total Impact: CIC and Leading the United Methodist Way:** This seminar will explore what it means to live and lead the United Methodist Way. Participants will examine Wesleyan heritage to gain insights into what God wants from people of faith today and into the future. In addition, the seminar will show how CIC can make an impact on all key areas of ministry.
- **Ministry in Color: Relational Dynamics, Team Building, and Leadership Using the Birkman Method:** This seminar will be led by the Rev. Dr. Michael Roberts, CIC's executive director. Each attendee will take an online inventory and receive a report to help them discover their relational styles, interests, and the gifts they bring to a

ministry team. Participants will learn about leadership and working together as a leadership team.

- **Transformational Ministry Planning:** This seminar will be led by John Crawford, CIC's lay leadership director. The seminar will enable congregations to be more intentional and focused in ministry. Through an interactive process, teams will explore all dimensions of ministry planning, including vision, mission, goal, objectives, strategies and how they all relate.

Each series takes place on Saturdays, and the meetings run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lunch and all materials are provided. To register and provide a list of participants, e-mail mroberts@arumc.org or call 501-324-8016.

Connected in Christ seminar schedule

- Cabot UMC**
- Jan. 15: Total Impact (the United Methodist Way)
 - Feb. 5: Ministry in Color: Team Leadership using the Birkman Method
 - March 5: Transformational Ministry Planning
- Heritage UMC, Van Buren**
- Jan. 22: Total Impact (the United Methodist Way)
 - Feb. 12: Ministry in Color: Team Leadership using the Birkman Method
 - March 12: Transformational Ministry Planning
- First UMC, Magnolia**
- Jan. 29: Total Impact (the United Methodist Way)
 - Feb. 26: Ministry In Color: Team Leadership using the Birkman Method
 - March 19: Transformational Ministry Planning

What is the impact of Connected in Christ?

- CIC pastors and congregations see growth in missional focus and involvement.
- Of the congregations that have participated in CIC, 93 percent have seen an increase in professions of faith.
- More than half the congregations participating in CIC have seen increased worship attendance, and other report growth in the Spirit and increased fruitfulness.

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Back from Kuwait, Hanson prays at special event

The Rev. Tandy Hanson, First UMC Dumas, offered a prayer for 66 recently deployed Air Force troops who were guests of honor at a day-long "Thanks to the Troops" event sponsored by the Hot Springs Village community.

Hanson, who recently returned home from a six-month deployment to Kuwait, was invited to offer the opening prayer at the event. He is a reserve Air Force chaplain currently assigned to the 917th Fighter Wing at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.



Tandy Hanson

Cross recognized for service to elementary school

As a thank-you for his volunteerism and service, the Rev. Jim Cross in October received the honor of serving as grand marshal of the Margaret Daniel Primary School Red Ribbon parade.

Cross and several members of the Ashdown-Richmond UMC Charge volunteer weekly at the school as Good Morning Greeters, helping to grow the program that focuses on volunteers developing positive relationships with children needing extra attention and help with reading skills. Cross also helps with a variety of other volunteer programs connected with the school.



Jim Cross

"When Rev. Cross arrived in Ashdown four years ago, he wanted to know how he could help our school," said Kay York, principal of Margaret Daniel Primary School. "The school suggested that he become a Good Morning Greeter. He not only came, but recruited many from the church to join and each year since, our Good Morning Program has grown. This year the number of volunteers from Ashdown/Richmond charge is the largest ever, with over 10 volunteers greeting a student at least two mornings a week." "His fellowship of sharing with others has made a huge impact on our community," York said.

BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

BOOKKEEPING SERVICES

BOOKKEEPING FOR SMALL CHURCHES



FOOTPRINTS
501.676.5010

www.footprintsolutions.com

CHARTERED BUS



QUACHITA COACHES

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

STAINED GLASS



Serving Arkansas with Quality Stained Glass since 1973

Churches ♦ Residential ♦ Commercial
(800) 791-7667
www.sooisstainedglass.com
P.O. Box 13452, Maumelle, AR 72113

COUNSELING

Daily Bread Counseling

(Member of Clergy Counseling Network)

Rev. Garry D. Teeter, MS, LPC, NCC, CBIST
Offices in Benton, Hot Springs, Little Rock, & Dardanelle
Call for confidential appointment
501.847.2229 | 1.877.847.2229
www.dailybreadcounseling.com



FUNDRAISING

NEW WORLD CANDLE COMPANY



- Raise funds with 60% profit
- No minimums
- No up-front cost
- Free sales forms

Soy blend candles made by hand in Arkansas



Benton, AR 501-551-0097

GIFT IDEA

Christmas is around the corner...
Want to give a meaningful gift to a fellow United Methodist?

Consider a gift subscription to the Arkansas United Methodist as part of your Christmas shopping.

\$15 for one year
OR
\$25 for 2 years.

Visit www.arumc.org/aum to subscribe.

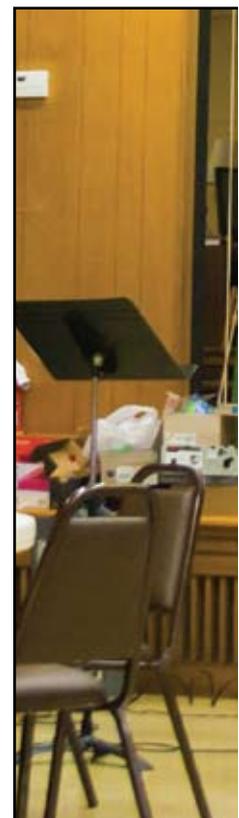




LEFT: Church members and More Than Manna guests take time to greet each other and share conversation during the Sunday night meal.

RIGHT: Kenneth Jones, foreground, listens as lay speaker Mark Hargrave delivers the evening's message.

FAR RIGHT: John Clement of First UMC Russellville and the Rev. Jim Benfer of First UMC Dardanelle serve Holy Communion.



More Than Manna: Russellville church offers meals and spiritual food (continued)

More Than Manna only moved indoors when the summer weather grew too warm to continue meeting outside.

The majority of those who regularly attend More Than Manna first came because of an invitation extended through Manna House, and Baldwin hears from some of the guests that the spiritual side of More Than Manna is what keeps them coming back week after week.

"I believe all human beings are hungry for an encounter with their Creator," she said. "Many of us just choose to fill that God-sized hole with other things or products that can never satisfy. We began with the intention of attempting to offer a space for those outside our walls to fill the space with God's love."

Kenneth Jones has been attending for just a few months, and says he feels the love of God at More Than Manna.

"In my case, when I was young my parents took me to church, and they were preaching a lot about fire and brimstone, and it made going to church in a formal setting really uncomfortable," he said. "Eventually my wife got me to try this informal setting, and this, it just feels like home. Going to church shouldn't be uncomfortable."

Jones' wife, Mary, and 7-year-old daughter, Faith, sit with him at one of the round tables.

"I find it really exciting to come here," says Mary Jones. "You meet a lot of people, you make good friends, you have good meals. We need to spread the word out more and have more people to come, because it's a very loving, sharing place here. I enjoy it."

At the same table, Janice Bishop enjoys the meal and the conversation. She lives less than two blocks from First UMC, but hadn't visited until about three years ago, when her son worked on the construction crew for the new sanctuary.

"He encouraged me to come see it when it was done, so I did," Bishop said. "I fell in love with it... and the more I came, the more I felt welcome and warm and needed here, so I just kept coming."

Several dozen volunteers rotate their involvement in food preparation and service, and also invest their time in helping with worship and building relationships with guests.

The church is seeing more families as guests. More Than Manna includes children's activities, and the menu tends to hold appeal for youngsters.

"Some have told me, 'I have never felt welcomed like this in a church ever before,' or 'I am so grateful that we found this church. It means so much to our family to be here,'" says Baldwin, the associate pastor.

"There are about 50 people with whom we have formed relationships through More than Manna," she said. "Some are coming to worship with us on Sunday mornings and attending our Wired Wednesday night meal now as well."

Nov. 14 worship featured the celebration of Holy Communion in both English and Spanish. The Rev. Jim Benfer of Dardanelle UMC teaches conversational Spanish and English as a second language through the area Literacy Council, and periodically serves as More Than Manna's communion celebrant.

Pastor Rudolfo Piedra of Alpha y Omega, a Hispanic Wesleyan Methodist congregation meeting at First UMC, also has assisted with communion. Though it isn't bilingual every week, More Than Manna does offer the sacrament in more than one language when possible.

Preaching responsibility rotates, too, and is shared by lay and clergy. Lay speaker Mark Hargrave delivered the Nov. 14 message. The upshot: Jesus chose regular people to serve as his disciples during his earthly ministry. He believed in them, and he believes in us, too.

Each Sunday evening ends with the group holding hands, forming a circle around the room. "Bind Us Together" has become their traditional benediction song, and they sing it confidently, knowing that in this particular community, God has made it possible that they be fed, both body and soul.





from page 1A)

'I believe all human beings are hungry for an encounter with their Creator.'

—The Rev. Gail Baldwin



LEFT: Patti Butler, right, spends a moment catching up with a More Than Manna guest.

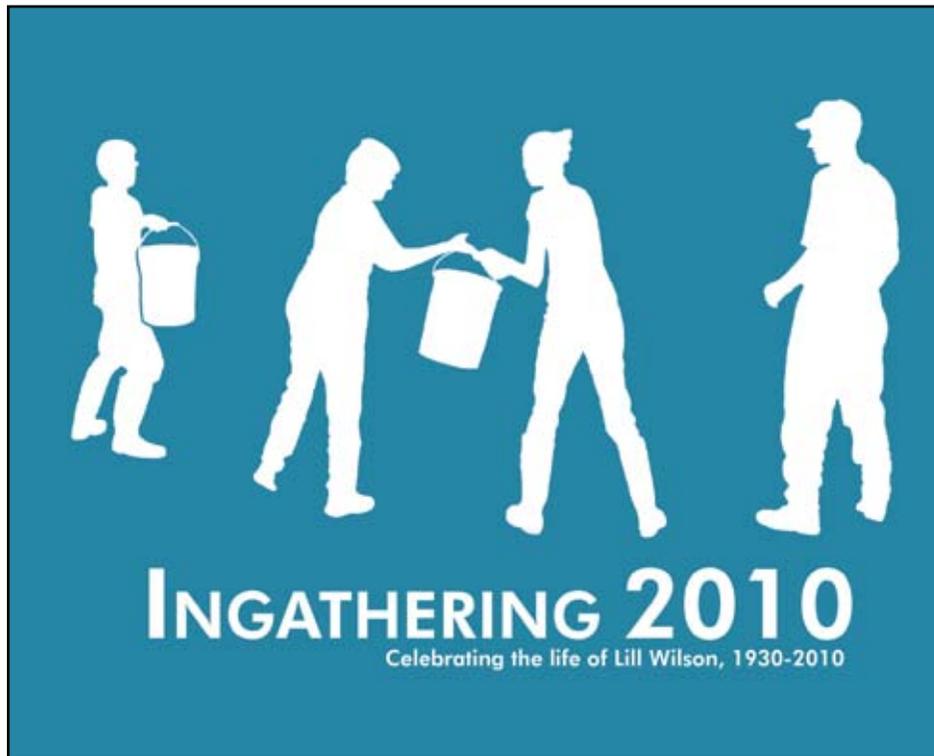
BOTTOM LEFT: Sandy Smith and 7-year-old Faith Jones share a lyric sheet as they sing the opening song for worship.

BOTTOM CENTER: After celebrating Holy Communion, worshippers sing "Bind Us Together," which has become the traditional benediction for More Than Manna.

BELOW: Manna House, located just across the street from First UMC Russellville's main campus, was the starting point for More Than Manna. Many of the current participants first received an invitation to the meal, fellowship and worship time through their interaction at Manna House.

AUM PHOTOS BY AMY FORBUS





LEFT: The disaster relief cleaning bucket that Lill Wilson was filling with supplies before her death sat on the altar during opening worship for Ingathering 2010. RIGHT: Volunteers sort disaster kits at the Arkansas Rice Depot loading dock.

Ingathering yields \$2 million—and counting—for disaster relief efforts

BY MARTHA TAYLOR
Arkansas Conference

A cool fall breeze blew over friends, family and volunteers gathered Nov. 20 for the 33rd Arkansas Ingathering to remember a servant of God and honor her by doing just what she would have wanted—sorting and boxing items for families in need.

This year's Ingathering was dedicated to Lill Wilson, a member of Central UMC near Wynne, who was murdered June 6 while putting cleaning items into buckets for the fall event, held at the Arkansas Rice Depot in Little Rock.

As members of the Wilson family and volunteers looked on, Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield and northeast district superintendent the Rev. Kurt Boggan led a brief worship

service along with Wilson's former pastor, the Rev. Dixon Platt and the current pastor of the church, the Rev. Melvin Mann.

"The tragedy of Lillian Wilson's death does not snuff out the light of her life," said Mann. "Pack one more flood bucket. Load one more bag of rice...don't let the light go out."

More than 100 volunteers, including United Methodist Women and youth groups, spent several hours loading sweet potatoes into boxes and unloading large rental trucks, trailers, and private vehicles that came from all four corners of the state. At press time, more than \$2 million had been donated in hands-on service, financial and in-kind gifts. Churches will continue to turn in their Ingathering totals through Dec. 3.

Wilson's son, Mark, who was

accompanied by his wife, Misty and Wilson's granddaughter, Amy Wilson, and her fiancée, A. J. Kratz, attended the service and stayed afterward to watch and talk with volunteers.

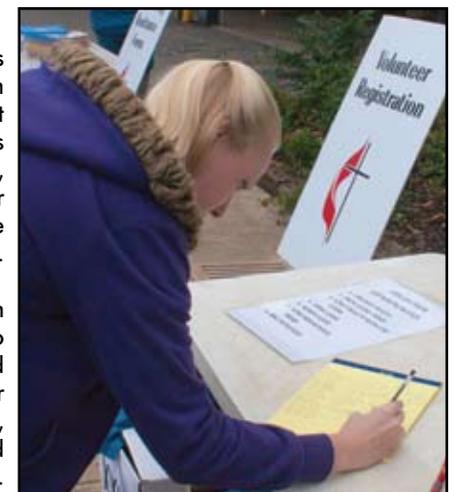
Speaking about the attention drawn to Lill Wilson and her love for caring for others, Mark Wilson indicated that his mother wouldn't have liked all the fuss.

"She would've rather everybody just started picking up the sweet potatoes," he said. But he added his mother wouldn't have objected if it helped to "promote the good that we're doing, and to get people to do 'one more health kit' or whatever."

Taylor is the director of communications for the Arkansas Conference. She can be reached at mtaylor@arumc.org.

RIGHT: Heather Sanders signs the registration roster upon arrival at Ingathering. Volunteers pre-registered online, then confirmed their attendance at the Arkansas Rice Depot.

BELOW: The Rev. Dixon Platt led the call to worship and shared memories of his former parishioner, Lill Wilson, at the service that kicked off Ingathering 2010.



VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION

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

VIM team leader training

A Volunteers In Mission training event will be held from Saturday, Feb. 5, 2011, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Kendall Center of Philander Smith College in Little Rock (the same building that houses the Arkansas Conference offices).

The event will benefit VIM team leaders and those wishing to become team leaders. Bishop Charles

Crutchfield will speak, and the Rev. Larry Norman, VIM coordinator for the Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church, will lead the day's training sessions.

The registration fee for this training session is \$20, which includes lunch and a training manual. To register, contact Don Weeks, 501-681-2909 or dweeks@arumc.org; or Libby Gray, 501-324-8028 or lgray@arumc.org. Registration deadline is Jan. 31.

Members of Lill Wilson's family attended Ingathering to honor her memory. At right, Lill's son Mark Wilson kneels to close up a box of sweet potatoes to be delivered to area food pantries.



AUM PHOTOS BY AMY FORBUS



Ingathering workers gathered for worship before unloading Ingathering donations. The moving truck parked in the background was from the Northeast District, home of Lill Wilson, and was unloaded as part of the worship service.

Conference Native American ministry committee receives training, sets goals

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

The Rev. Anita Phillips, director of the Native American Comprehensive Plan (NACP) for the United Methodist Church, on Nov. 18 led a training session for members of the Arkansas Conference's Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM). Pulaski Heights UMC in Little Rock hosted the meeting.

Phillips noted that a primary goal for the NACP in 2011 is increasing their emphasis on mission with Native American communities and enhancing communication about Native American ministries across the denomination.

The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* (paragraph 654) requires every annual conference to have a committee on Native American ministries. In addition, the *Discipline* specifies that "every local church at charge conference shall designate by nomination and election a minimum of one person... to represent the

need for better awareness of Native American contributions in the local church."

However, Phillips shared that only about 11 percent of churches currently have someone filling that role.

"If we really want to get the word out there, we need to have an advocate," she said.

Phillips suggested that the Arkansas Conference CONAM explore ways to form partnerships with other teams in the Conference. For example, they could use their knowledge of native culture to help mission teams prepare for work in Native American communities.

The committee outlined its priorities for 2011. J. Harris Moore, chair of the Arkansas CONAM, said that the top priority is to educate United Methodists in Arkansas on the purpose and ministry of CONAM.

In particular, the committee will focus on the Trail of Tears, which took five native tribes on a

path through Arkansas, where Methodist churches sometimes served as stopping points.

CONAM requests that local churches with a connection to any of the Trail of Tears tribes contact Moore so the congregation may be recognized by CONAM at Annual Conference.

The Conference nominations committee works to place persons interested in Native American heritage on CONAM. Many of the current members have traced their heritage to a specific tribe or tribes, and others have pieces of information that give hints at their ancestry. Native American ancestry is not required, though—only a heart for mission with Native American people.

To learn more about the Arkansas Conference CONAM and its mission, or to share your congregation's connection to Native American history, contact Moore at jhmoore@nwacc.edu.

COMING UP

December

Highland Valley UMC centennial celebration Dec. 5

A centennial celebration to commemorate the 100th anniversary of what is now Highland Valley United Methodist Church is scheduled for Sunday, Dec. 5 at 10 a.m. in the Galloway Family Life Center.

Highland Methodist Church was organized Feb. 12, 1910, in the Beckler Store Building on the Northwest corner of 12th and Elm Street. In 1976, Highland United Methodist and Pride Valley United Methodist merged. The new congregation, Highland Valley, is at 15524 Chenal Parkway in Little Rock. Previous members of Highland, Pride Valley and Highland Valley UMC are invited to attend.

Sequoyah UMC hosts Mrs. Santa's Kitchen Dec. 11

Mrs. Santa's Kitchen at Sequoyah UMC will feature homemade cookies, candy, bread and gift items. The event runs from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Dec. 11. All proceeds will benefit local missions. Sequoyah UMC is located at 1910 Old Wire Road in Fayetteville.

January

Perkins School of Youth Ministry Jan. 10-13

Register now for Perkins School of Youth Ministry, scheduled for Jan. 10-13, 2011. Internationally-known author Brian McLaren is the keynote speaker. For details, contact Charles Harrison at charles@mcyouth.org or 972-333-9870, or visit the PSYM website: <http://www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms/PSYM.aspx>.

Connected in Christ seminars begin Jan. 15

In the first quarter of 2011, Connected in Christ (CIC) will offer a series of Saturday seminars in three different parts of the state. Cabot UMC, Heritage UMC in Van Buren, and First UMC Magnolia will serve as hosts.

Seminar topics include Total Impact: CIC and Leading the United Methodist Way; Ministry in Color: Relational Dynamics, Team Building, and Leadership Using the Birkman Method; and Transformational Ministry Planning. Each seminar runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with lunch provided.

For more information, including how to register, see the related story on page 5 of this section.

Arkansas Conference on Evangelism Jan. 29

The 2011 Arkansas Conference on Evangelism will meet from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 29, 2011, at First UMC Benton.

Dr. John Ed Mathison will deliver the message at opening worship. After lunch, three breakout groups, led by Mathison, the Rev. Carlton Cross and the Rev. Jeff Jones, will address evangelism in small, midsize and large congregations.

February

Volunteers in Mission team leader training Feb. 5

The Rev. Larry Norman, VIM coordinator for the Louisiana Conference of the UMC, and Arkansas Bishop Charles Crutchfield will be the featured speakers at the Feb. 5 VIM training event in Little Rock. For details, see the Volunteers in Mission announcement on page 8.

Worship Fair Feb. 18-19

The Arkansas chapter of the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts has scheduled Worship Fair for Feb. 18-19, 2011, at St. Paul UMC in Little Rock. The theme is "Making the Ordinary Extraordinary." Participants will learn to plan and perform meaningful worship and preaching during the "Ordinary Time" that stretches between Epiphany and Lent and between Pentecost and Advent.

Clinicians include John Thornburg, Anna Laura Page and Gail Wells. For information, visit arkansasfumwa.org and view the latest newsletter.

E-mail calendar submissions to ArkansasConferenceCommunications@arumc.org

Highlands Church breaks ground for education and multi-purpose expansion

BY LEW TURNER
Special Contributor

Sunday, Nov. 14, 2010, marked a milestone in the history of Highlands Church, a United Methodist congregation in the Highlands area of Bella Vista, Ark. The congregation broke ground on a 7,200 square-foot education wing and a 1,300 square-foot multi-purpose addition.

Now in the final stages of design for the future needs of the church, construction will begin after just a few more details are resolved. The church expects the construction phase will last 10 to 12 months.

The Rev. Rex Darling, pastor of Highlands Church, is excited to see the project get underway. "Our needs for the future have been well defined and the growth projections are right on target," he said. "It is important for us to meet the spiritual needs of our growing congregation, and to do that we must have an expanded facility."

Since Highlands Church's last construction project, a fellowship hall addition completed in 2002, membership has almost doubled. Demographics of the church support the need for more classrooms and additional administrative support space.

A building committee,



The Rev. Rex Darling and members of the youth ministry participate in the ceremonial groundbreaking for the new facility at Highlands Church.

COURTESY PHOTO

established almost two years ago, has been working to develop the facility to support the projected growth. The committee contracted with Brennfoerder Architectural Services of Joplin, Mo., to develop the detailed master plan for the church.

The master plan calls for a second phase of construction, which will include a new Fellowship Hall.

The timing for the second phase will be determined by the growth pattern of the congregation and future funding.

Highlands Church currently offers a Saturday Celebration at 5:30 p.m., as well as a traditional worship service on Sunday morning at 10 a.m.

Turner serves as chair of the building committee for Highlands Church.

Eugene and Dorothy Palmer Memorial Endowment Fund created at UM Foundation

When Dorothy Palmer of First United Methodist Church in Hot Springs died in July, she left her estate to the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) to support United Methodist ministries, including the seminary scholarship initiative, world hunger programs and African-American higher education.

Palmer also provided for a gift to The Caring Place, a ministry related to First UMC Hot Springs that provides respite for caregivers and families of people with dementia through a supervised program for participants in a safe and comfortable environment.

Palmer's \$500,000 gift to the Foundation created the Eugene and Dorothy Palmer Memorial Endowment Fund, through which her generous spirit will be expressed year after year.

"Aunt Dottie loved the church, and she was committed to continuing her support of Methodist ministries past her own lifetime," said her niece, Janet Tarkington of Hot Springs.

"She believed setting up a fund at the United Methodist Foundation was the best way to make sure her gift would continue to make a difference.... We are so pleased that she was able to make this gift."

United Methodists in Arkansas interested in creating an endowment fund to benefit United Methodist ministries may contact Janet Marshall, UMFA Vice President of Development, at 501-664-8632 or toll-free at 877-712-1107.

UMFA is among the largest United Methodist Foundations in the country. Founded in 1963, UMFA manages more than 550 trust accounts that have combined assets in excess of \$100 million.



Dorothy Palmer

Partnership results in Ministry with the Poor certification

BY VICKI BROWN
Higher Education and Ministry

Clergy and laity who want to be more effective in ministry with the poor can develop their skills through a partnership between the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), Methodist Theological School in Ohio (MTSO), and the Church for All People in Columbus, Ohio.

The Rev. John Edgar, executive director of Community Development for All People (4allpeople.org) a faith-based, non-profit community development organization and United Methodist Church dedicated to creating a

community and church that welcomes and cares for all people, said the new program grew partly out of the desire to be better organized about teaching people what had worked in Columbus.

"We've seen an increasing number of people who call us and just want to come and hang out to see the free store, the clinic and the pharmacy," Edgar said. "We wanted to have a more structured program to teach people how we have engaged in ministry with the poor."

Edgar said that he talked with the Rev. Anita Wood, director of Professional Ministry Development at GBHEM, and she contacted MTSO (mtso.edu) to discuss

creating a certification for ministry with the poor.

"This area of certification will help develop leaders who have the skills for ministry with the poor" Wood said. "One of the four areas of focus approved by the 2008 General Conference is Ministry with the Poor, and as the leadership development agency, GBHEM wanted to offer a program to address that. Our certification in specialized areas of ministry is open to all—elders, deacons, local pastors and laity."

GBHEM initially developed a relationship with the Church for All People, a part of Community Development for All People, using it as a site for provisional member deacon retreats.

"This has developed into the formation of a new certification program and the opening of a retreat house for deacons and other clergy

wanting to gain skills in working with the poor," Wood said. "A wonderful opportunity to see first-hand what can be done, and gain the skills to go back to our own communities and engage in ministry with the poor."

The certification program requires taking five courses through MTSO, including two that are taught in conjunction with the Church for All People. "As with all certification in specialized ministry areas, the certification is given in partnership with the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry," Wood said.

Edgar said the first class will be taught through the Columbus ministry in January 2011.

Community Development for All People began with a free store that opened its doors in 1999 and has grown to include a church, a free health clinic, a free pharmacy, a housing redevelopment partnership

and a performing arts program.

GBHEM oversees certification programs and awards certificates for the denomination as a credential that assures denominational standards have been met. To learn more about certification in Ministry with the Poor, visit gbhem.org/certification.

For further information on course offerings, contact Dean Randy Litchfield, rlitchfield@mtso.edu or 740-362-3364 at MTSO. For the opportunity to stay in the retreat house and experience ministry with the poor at the Church for All People, contact the Rev. John Edgar at 614-445-7342.

Brown is associate editor and writer, Office of Interpretation, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.



Find the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church on Facebook at facebook.com/arkansasumc

OBITUARIES

FORT SMITH

J. Kenneth Dodd

The Rev. J. Kenneth Dodd of Fort Smith passed away Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2010, in Fort Smith at St. Edwards Mercy Hospice.

He was born Oct. 18, 1946, in Fort Smith to the late Ivanelle and Nathan Dodd. He was a 1964 graduate of Northside High School in Fort Smith. He was a 1968 graduate of Hendrix College in Conway with a Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science.



Kenneth Dodd

Dodd was a 1972 graduate of Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity where he specialized in communications, producing programs for churches and educational tools for Dr. Frederick Norwood in his Methodist history classes at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

Ordained in 1981 as an Elder in the North Arkansas Conference, he served United Methodist congregations in Hickory Plains, Texarkana, Pine Bluff, Fayetteville and Jonesboro.

A memorial service was held on Saturday, Nov. 6, at Goddard United Methodist Church in Fort Smith.

He is survived by his former wife, the Rev. Marcia R. Carter Dodd of Austin, Texas; a son, K. Carter Dodd, and his partner Jordan VanNess of Austin, Texas; a brother, Leland, and his wife, Sherry, of Texarkana, Texas.

Memorial contributions may be made to Goddard UMC Music Ministry, 1922 Dodson Avenue, Ft. Smith, AR 72901.

FOUNTAIN LAKE

Kate Adeline Embry-Martin-Hoover

Kate Adeline Embry-Martin-Hoover of the Fountain Lake community, Garland County, passed away Monday, Nov. 1,

2010, in Hot Springs.

The oldest of four children, she was born at Board Camp, Ark., on Dec. 9, 1909.

She graduated valedictorian of Mena High School in 1924, and having taken a "Normal" course, began teaching school in the small community of Highland near Cherry Hill. She married John Martin; after 17 years their marriage ended. She married in 1955 the Rev. Wendell Hoover.

She is survived by daughters Gail Burton of Jacksonville, N.C., and Deborah Kolden of Chicago; a son, Howard Hoover of the Fountain Lake community; grandchildren Kelly Kott, Karen Burton, Christopher Kolden and Leia Kolden; great-grandchildren Stephen Kott, Ashleigh Byrne, Samuel Kott, Shayne Byrne, Kayne Byrne, Seth Kott, Tara Kott and Oliver Wade-Kolden; two great-great grandchildren; five nephews; two cousins; and her faithful companion Cody, her lap dog.

A memorial service officiated by the Rev. Fred Hunter was held at Oaklawn United Methodist Church, Hot Springs, on Friday, Nov. 5. A private family interment was held at Mena. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be given to a church or charity of your choice.

LITTLE ROCK

Sara C. "Bennie" Robinson

Sara C. "Bennie" Robinson of Little Rock passed away on Sunday, Oct. 31, 2010. She was born July 3, 1935 to Willie Barnett and Fred Stewart and lived in the South End of Little Rock.

She was a member of St. Paul Baptist Church in Little Rock until joining Duncan United Methodist Church. She was a graduate of Dunbar High School. She married the Rev. Dr. William H. Robinson Jr., in 1950, and they raised eight children and her brother, Larry Hightower.

Robinson was employed at Timex Corp., and later was a dietitian for the Little Rock School District and PawPaw's Day Care Center. She loved to cook and enjoyed making ceramics.

She was preceded in death by her parents, two sisters, a

brother and a son, Willie Ray Robinson, Jr.

She is survived by her husband of 60 years, the Rev. Dr. William H. Robinson Jr.; four daughters, Deborah Bell, Jackay Bruce and husband Charlie, Sandra McIntosh and Karen Robinson; a special daughter Sandra Mitchell; three sons, William Robinson III, Eddie Robinson and wife Sheila, Danny Robinson and wife Bernita, all of Little Rock; one sister, Joy Branch of Oakland, Cal.; five brothers, Billy Hackett and wife Delores of Blytheville, Arlander Hightower and wife Mona of Marina Bay, Calif., Larry Hightower and wife Goon Cho of Las Vegas, Nev., Adell and wife Nancy Barnett of Oakland, Calif., Roosevelt Barnett and wife Betty of Little Rock; two brothers-in-law; two sisters-in-law; 18 grandchildren, 32 great-grandchildren, a host of nieces, nephews and many special friends.

A celebration of Robinson's life was held on Saturday, Nov. 6, 2010, in the sanctuary of Theresa Hoover UMC.

MILTON, Florida

Gracie E. Pollard

Gracie Emma Pollard of Milton, Fla., passed away Monday, Nov. 1, 2010. She was born in St. Francis, Ark., on May 11, 1916.

She was a retired Licensed Practical Nurse and a member of Christ United Methodist Church.

Pollard was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. Marion James "Jim" Pollard, and daughter, Mary Elizabeth "Mary Beth" Doughfman.

She is survived by her son, Marion A. "Jim" Pollard and his wife Harolyn of Milton; seven grandchildren, Emmalee Giles and husband Bennie; Billy Pollard and wife Vicki; Weslee Shane Pollard and wife Tiffany; Jeff Pollard and wife Mary; Michelle Birt and husband Larry; Terri Lynn Billings; Jimmy Doughfman and wife Adrian; and fifteen great-grandchildren.

A memorial service was held Nov. 5, with Dr. Ronnie Bearden officiating. Interment was at Atkins Cemetery, Atkins, Ark.

Memorial gifts may be made to Covenant Hospice or New Life Baptist Church on Highway 87N, Milton, Fla.

South Central District gives scholarship to Lydia Patterson Institute

The Rev. Chester Jones, right, superintendent of the South Central District, presents a check to Bishop Charles Crutchfield and the Rev. Philip Hathcock, director of Conference ministries and assistant to the Bishop. The money will fund a scholarship for a student at Lydia Patterson Institute, a United Methodist-supported secondary school in El Paso, Texas.



AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Several congregations, individuals and one unit of United Methodist Women in the South Central District joined together recently to make a difference in a child's life by providing a scholarship to Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI), a United Methodist-supported school near the Texas-Mexico border.

Inspired by Bishop Charles Crutchfield's Nov. 5 column in the Arkansas United Methodist, the district is giving the scholarship in memory of Carlos, a graduate and former staff member of LPI. Carlos was a victim of violence in Juarez, just across the border from El Paso.

In describing LPI, Bishop Crutchfield wrote in his column, "It is a place where the church proclaims that the ultimate values are those found in the realm of the spirit—values like compassion, humility, forgiveness and charity.

"It is a place where we declare that ultimately, AK-47s and nine-millimeter pistols cannot stand against the love of Christ."

CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED in the *Arkansas United Methodist* for 50 cents per word, no limit. To schedule your ad, call 501-324-8005 or mail to: *Arkansas United Methodist*, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202; or e-mail mtaylor@arumc.org.

-ORGANIST/ACCOMPANIST- First United Methodist Church of Hot Springs is now accepting resumés for church organist/ accompanist. Instrument is a multi-rank pipe organ; duties include choral rehearsals, Sunday worship, and seasonal services. Contact Dr. Ron Hall at 501-623-

6668 or e-mail rhall@fumchs.com.

Home Study:

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

Reza jewelry
678-561-REZA

PENDANTS
14kt Yellow or White
Large 1.5" \$189
Small 1" \$126
Sterling Silver
Large \$59 w/ chain
Small \$49 w/ chain
Pewter
\$9.95 w/ chain

FISH AUTO EMBLEM
\$8.95
2 for \$16

To ORDER:
Mail Check or Money Order to
2020 Howell Mill Rd.
Suite C-206
Atlanta, GA 30318
Or Credit Card
Call 678-561-7392

New Selling Earrings!

www.methodistross.net
Shipping/Handling \$5.00
(anywhere in the U.S.)



A Wesleyan Viewpoint

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

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

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

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



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

5300 Evergreen Drive • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205
501-664-8632 • Toll free 877-712-1107 • Fax 501-664-6792 • www.umfa.org

'Christmas in the Quarter' to benefit QQUMC



LEFT: The Holtzman-Vinsonhaler House on East 9th Street is one of five homes featured in this year's "Christmas in the Quarter" tour. RIGHT: Each year as part of the event, members of Quapaw Quarter UMC dress in period clothing and sing carols for passersby.

COURTESY PHOTOS

Tours of five historic homes, one historic church building and a sampling of visual art, music and food will benefit the ministries of Quapaw Quarter United Methodist Church near downtown Little Rock.

The church's seventh annual "Christmas in the Quarter" fundraiser happens Sunday, Dec. 5, from 2 to 6 p.m. Proceeds from the \$20 tickets benefit the church's general fund, enabling the support of its missions within the community, including:

- The Community Breakfast, serving 150 balanced meals each Sunday
- Stone Soup, which serves dinner every Sunday to approximately the same number of clients
- The Food Pantry, which provides a bag of groceries twice a month to 10,000 people each year and also offers clothing and backpacks
- The new Pet Food Ministry, which provides pet food to 60 clients per month
- HeARTwork arts mission, offering outreach-minded artists studio space at reduced rent in exchange for art-related mission projects.

"We are especially excited this year about Christmas in the Quarter," said Celia Bernheimer, chair of the event. "The five houses are wonderfully varied... [They] have been meticulously and faithfully restored and have interesting histories that tell the story of Little Rock's progress over the century."

Tickets may be purchased in advance through Quapaw Quarter UMC's website, qqumc.org, or by cash or check at the church the day of the event.



 **HENDRIX**

The Hendrix College Choir presents the 46th Annual

Candlelight Carol Service Tour

December 16, 7:30 p.m.

First United Methodist Church
200 North 15th Street • Fort Smith

December 17, 7:30 p.m.

First United Methodist Church
200 West 6th Avenue • Pine Bluff

Reservations are not required.

REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

umportal.org



Ending racism

Bishops speak out against animosity | 3B



Waiting for SuperChurch

There's no one model that will save us | 6B



2012 legislation

Ministry study group tackles clergy issues | 8B

Section B

December 3, 2010



Former President George W. Bush basks in a friendly welcome during the groundbreaking for his presidential library at SMU in Dallas. On the platform with him are Bush Foundation President Mark Langdale and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

UMR PHOTO BY MALLORY MCCALL

Q&A: How teens' faith reflects on the church

Religious faith doesn't concern American teenagers very much, and for most, it's not durable enough to survive after high school. In her new book *Almost Christian* (Oxford), the Rev. Kenda Creasy Dean says the church is to blame.

The book, based on the findings of the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), is a wake-up call to the mainline church, which Dr. Dean believes has passed along a watered-down, mutant form of Christianity to its young people.

A professor of youth, church and culture at Princeton Theological Seminary and a longtime United Methodist youth minister, Dr. Dean spoke recently with staff writer Mallory McCall.



Kenda Creasy Dean

"Almost Christian" is not a new term. John Wesley and George Whitefield preached on the idea. Why revisit an old concept?

I suppose mostly because we haven't figured out how to fix it yet. It was over 200 years ago [John] Wesley gave ["The Almost Christian"] sermon to university professors and students, so his audience was also young people and their elders. We are still facing a version of acculturated Christianity and this happens to be the package it comes in, in the post-Christendom 21st century.

It's easy to blame youth for just about anything, including the downfall of the church. But in this case, you say a lot of the responsibility lies in the hands of the church and the adult congregation.

That was one of the clearest bells

■ See 'Library' page 4B

■ See 'Teens' page 2B

Crowd lauds Bush at SMU groundbreaking

BY ROBIN RUSSELL
Managing Editor

DALLAS—A hometown crowd gave rousing support to former President George W. Bush at the groundbreaking for his future library at SMU, where he hopes the public will better understand key decisions he made while in the White House.

"Through the triumphs and the sorrows, the good days and the bad, the decisions we made together were guided by certain principles," he said during the elaborate ceremony held Nov. 16 under a large white tent.

"I believe that the ultimate responsibility of a leader is to not do what is

easy or popular, but to do what is necessary and right."

Among the more than 3,000 invitation-only guests were political supporters, donors and former White House aides who lauded Mr. Bush's legacy, including former Vice President Dick Cheney and former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Mr. Cheney, who used a cane, said "robust sales" of Mr. Bush's newly released memoir, *Decision Points*, showed that the former president is already being viewed in a more positive light.

"When times have been tough and the critics have been loud, you've always said you had faith in history's

judgment, and history is beginning to come around," Mr. Cheney said.

Mr. Bush's pastor, the Rev. Mark Craig of Highland Park United Methodist Church, offered the invocation.

The Bush Center, set to open in 2013, will have three parts: a library of documents and artifacts of the Bush Administration; an interactive museum with permanent and traveling exhibits; and an independent policy-making institute. The Bush Foundation is privately funding the institute, and the National Archives will operate the library and museum.

Some critics, however, still doubt



UMR PHOTO BY MARY JACOBS

About 80 protesters wore "death masks" to commemorate those who have died in the war in Iraq. See story, p. 4B.

FAITH WATCH

White House opposes U.N. defamation ban

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Nov. 17 said Islamic governments and others are restricting free speech by attempting to ban defamation of religion. Presenting the State Department's annual survey of religious freedom, Ms. Clinton said the White House will oppose a resolution sponsored at the U.N. by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Mormon book softens homosexuality stands

A newly revised handbook for leaders in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints softens language on homosexuality, according to Religion News Service. Presented to thousands of Mormon leaders in a Nov. 13 televised training session, the new handbook eliminates sections from the 2006 version that said gays should repent of "homosexual thoughts or feelings"; it also says celibate gay Mormons should be allowed to have church assignments and participate fully in temple rituals.

Uncivil politics worry Americans in new poll

Four out of five Americans—regardless of party or religious affiliation—believe a lack of civility in the U.S. political system is a serious problem, according to a poll released Nov. 11 by the Public Religion Research Institute and Religion News Service (RNS). The findings echoed sentiments expressed by some religious leaders, including Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary. "We've had heated public debates before, but the level of discourse in [the 2010 midterm elections] and even following the campaign has been atrocious," Dr. Mouw told RNS.

U.S. hunger remains at record high level

Statistics released Nov. 15 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) showed one in seven American households struggled to put enough food on the table in 2009. The number remained at the highest level since the USDA began measuring "food insecurity" in 1995.

■ TEENS Continued from page 1B

that was sounded for me in the [NSYR]. It was very clear that teenagers mirror their parents' religiosity, to an astonishing degree. We've gotten past the point where we can say youth ministry is about teenagers; it's obviously about adults. The truth of the matter is, the youth group model that we developed in the last century—Sunday school, youth groups, basically peer forms of Christian formation—turned out to be good for many things that are important to young people, but they're not so good at developing faith.

Faith is something that takes root in communities of deep and long-standing relationships of belonging—

tions, and we have to enlist young people in the ministry of the congregation and treat them as people who are participants in the community rather than objects of our information.

You use a phrase from Christian Smith and Melinda Denton's *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* to describe the default spiritual outlook of young people—"Moralistic Therapeutic Deism." What is that?

It simply means that religion is to help us be nice—it's moralistic—and to feel good about ourselves—it's therapeutic—and God pretty much

'Being in ministry with young people teaches us to be in ministry with all people because teenagers are the human condition on steroids.'

beginning with families and extending that to significant communities like congregations. And the one-on-one relationship between the adult of faith and the teenager is hard to beat as a crucible for faith formation.

There seems to be a split in a lot of churches. There's the youth group and there's the church.

When you graduate from youth group, you graduate from church. I don't think this study has given a solution to that, but it has basically said, "If you think your young people are going to have faith to carry with them when they leave this congregation, then putting them in the church basement for an hour or two a week to do youth group games with a bunch of their peers is not the way to get there."

I don't want to be heard as saying youth groups are bad. I work with a youth group; there are many benefits. But if we want faith to take hold, we've got to start with parents and congrega-

stays out of the way unless we call upon God for our own needs. So God is the divine butler or cosmic therapist. Those were the images in the [NSYR] about who teenagers thought God was. Basically it means that religion is something we do to justify the things we want to do anyway. We want to be nice, we want to feel good and we don't want God messing around in our business.

In some ways moralistic therapeutic deism is the knee-jerk response to trying not to be evil in the name of religion, and so our response is to do nothing or to water it down to the point where it absolutely has no meat. That's a big misunderstanding of how we need to be fixing this problem, but it's the natural and good impulse to not want to be evil people. We want our children to be nice and feel happy—that's also a natural instinct.

You say it's like the "Emperor's New Clothes": Teenagers are calling out

the church for not being what it says it is.

The big secret of youth ministry is that it is just ministry—it's ministry that is highly contextualized to a particular flock, but all decent ministry is highly contextualized to a particular flock. The difference with youth ministry is that the flock isn't polite if you are not doing a good job of contextualizing them. Young people are not going to put up with some exposition of the faith that doesn't address the human needs that are so acute when you're young.

Being in ministry with young people teaches us to be in ministry with all people because teenagers are the human condition on steroids. We learn how to be the church when we are in ministry with these people who are in our face all the time asking what does [faith] matter and whether it has anything to do with life today. We say adults are afraid of teenagers and we say this is the reason we can't get volunteers, but I don't think that's true. What is true is that teenagers are going to ask the big questions about faith, and what adults are afraid of is faith. They haven't been formed in it significantly enough to feel like they've got anything they can hand down.

It seems that youth have been underestimated. How do we re-establish the value of young people in the church?

The first thing we have to do is remember by virtue of their baptism, they are called to be disciples like everybody else. They're not on hold for ministry until they are old enough to do it. They are called to be witnesses in the community and beyond the community, just like every other Christian.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls the little children to him and says unless you become like one of these, you're going to miss the boat. We use that passage for children's Sundays and rally days to basically say, "Look, Jesus liked children, we like children, bring your children to church." But that passage is not about children, it's about adults

and it's about the witness that children have to the adult church. Jesus lifts up a paradigm in children's approach to him—their unfettered access to him—and he holds it up as a paradigm for adult faith. That passage is not about him liking kids, although I'm quite certain he did. It's about the paradigm young people offer the community of faith in terms of the way we access Christ.

What can adults do to restore an authentic faith for themselves and for the young people in the church?

First of all, we have to stop thinking about handing down the faith and start thinking about it as sharing

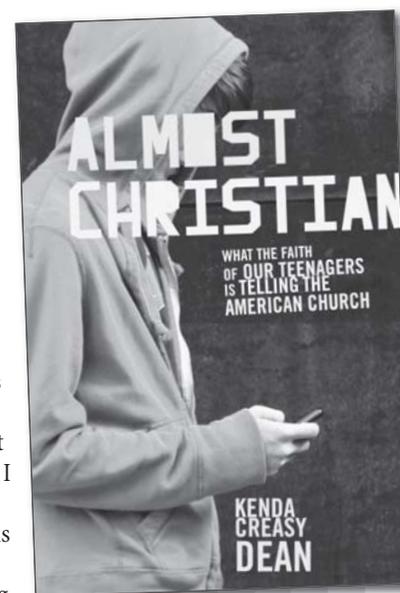
something we love. Parents share something they love naturally, even if they don't know a lot about it. You may not know a lot about baking, but if it's something you love, your kids know it, and they understand it's a source of joy and satisfaction, so they jump on board with that. You don't have to explain how baking powder works; you just

have to bake. We need to shift from the paradigm of expertise to the paradigm of love.

The second thing when it comes to structuring ministry with young people is we need to remember we are not called to convince them, we are called to confess to them. A lot of our energy is spent convincing kids that Jesus matters and the church matters. Most of those efforts are pretty lame and fall on deaf ears—probably because that's not our job, that's God's job. God does the convincing. What the church does is confess. We say, "This is who we think God is, this is who Christ has been for us," and we invite other people to take part in that if they are likewise being convinced by God that this is the way their life should follow.

The most convincing thing we can do for young people is to figure out the faith we can confess. We have to invest in what our faith is or we're not going to have any faith to confess.

mmccall@umr.org



THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER

www.umportal.org
news@umr.org

Robin Russell, Managing Editor

Bill Fentum, Associate Editor

Mary Jacobs, Staff Writer

Mallory McCall, Staff Writer

Cherrie Graham, Advertising Manager

Dale Bryant, Senior Designer

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

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

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

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



GET CONNECTED—Subscribe to the
United Methodist Reporter
www.umportal.org—800.947.0207 x186

UM CONNECTIONS

Perkins offers online application, waives fee

Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, has launched an online application for its master's degree programs. Prospective students can now apply at www.smu.edu/apply2 perkins. In addition, the \$50 application fee will be waived through Feb. 1, 2011. For information, visit www.smu.edu/perkins or contact Herbert Coleman at hcoleman@smu.edu or (214) 768-2139.

Lake Junaluska names new executive director

John "Jack" L. Ewing Jr. has been named the new executive director of Lake Junaluska Assembly, an institute of the United Methodist Church based in Western North Carolina. Each year, more than 150,000 people experience Lake Junaluska through United Methodist ministry programs, church retreats and annual conferences. Dr. Ewing, currently the executive director of the Foundation for Evangelism, will begin his new duties Jan. 1 when the Rev. Jimmy L. Carr retires.



Jack Ewing

Ethnic Young Adult internship deadline set

The deadline to apply for a 2011 Ethnic Young Adult (EYA) Summer Internship in Washington, D.C., is Jan. 10. Sponsored by the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), the program is for persons 18-22 who are Native American, Pacific-Islander, Hispanic/Latino, African American or Asian Americans and are interested in public policy, social justice advocacy and social change. Interns will work in social justice placements in the U.S. capital from May 28 to July 31 and visit different United Methodist churches each Sunday. GBCS will provide round-trip transportation to and from D.C., housing for the summer, commuter stipend for travel to work sites and \$1,500 for each intern. For information, visit www.umc-gbcs.org.

Bishops urge end to racism

BY HEATHER HAHN
United Methodist News Service

PANAMA CITY, Panama—United Methodist bishops have called on Christians to overcome racism and other sources of animosity to recognize the sacredness of every human being.

"As people of faith, we are charged to build the beloved community because Christ has broken down the dividing walls and ended the hostilities between us," says a pastoral letter approved at the Nov. 2-6 Council of Bishops meeting. "Yet, we continue to build walls in the church and in the world which separate us and cause our hearts to grieve."

On the meeting's final day, more than 80 active and retired bishops also agreed to a campaign for humane immigration reform in 2011.

The New Year's Resolution Campaign 2011 calls on Christians to contact U.S. Congress members and pray daily for reform that "reunifies families and provides a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants."

Sponsored by the U.S. Immigration Campaign of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, the campaign has support from the National Council of Churches and the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society.

Wisconsin Bishop Linda Lee, a member of the council's Task Force on Racism, said it was urgent that the Council of Bishops call for greater compassion in human relations because of intensifying rhetoric and violence against racial, ethnic and religious minorities around the globe.

"At this moment in history in the U.S. and elsewhere, our silence is a



UMNS FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

Alice Glenn (right), a reserve delegate from the California-Nevada Conference, embraces delegate Angela Brown during a service of repentance for racism during the 2000 General Conference. Bishops have addressed an escalation of racism issues.

statement," she said. "So if we don't make a statement in writing, it could be seen as complicit with what is happening. . . . We will have lost an opportunity to speak to our churches at a moment when they need to have an idea what we believe."

In adopting the statement, the Council agreed to "model respect and kindness and extinguish the fires of animosity" and to call on United Methodist churches "to engage in genuinely honest dialogue and respectful conversation."

The far-reaching statement dealt with sources of animosity in regions of the world where United Methodists worship.

• In the Philippines, the statement calls for "breaking down the barriers between mainline society and tribal

peoples," with equal rights in land possession and free education for all.

• In Africa, the statement condemns "colonialism, racism, tribalism, hostility and religious persecution."

• In Europe, racism is a growing problem "with political parties openly working against minority, ethnic and religious communities," the document says.

• In the United States, the document cites a "rapid escalation of violence related to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious preference."

"This escalation includes personal attacks, bullying and vicious and criminal acts of violence to the mind, body and spirit of persons," the statement read. "These actions diminish life for the victims and their families, as well as for the perpetrators and the whole community. They are the ultimate insidious and irreverent attacks on the sacredness of God-given life."

The statement also denounced the rise of terrorism and "the religious persecution of various faith communities, including Christians."

"The church is called to decisively and directly counter these acts and engender and empower a 'perfect love that casts out all fear,'" the statement says, citing 1 John 4:18.

"This is a statement that helps us to speak up in our areas," said Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of Germany, "by taking the spirit and our common witness as a council to say that we as people of faith stand up against racism, which unfortunately is all over the world."



Bishop Linda Lee



UMNS FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

Military chaplains as a group were chosen as the Reporter's 2010 United Methodist of the Year. Shown here is United Methodist Chaplain Ernest P. Jay West (left), praying with a troubled soldier.

Nominations sought for UM of year

STAFF REPORTS

The floor is now open for nominations.

The *United Methodist Reporter* is accepting nominations for its fourth annual United Methodist of the Year. The selected person will be announced in the Jan. 7 issue.

Last year, the "United Methodist of the Year" designation went to military chaplains, who were honored for their support to members of the U.S. Armed Forces, particularly in light of the tragic Nov. 5 shooting at the Fort Hood Army Base.

Previous honorees included Minnesota Bishop Sally Dyck and Kansas Bishop Scott Jones for their ongoing dialogue in spite of theological and political differences in the months preceding the 2008 General Conference, and Katherine Commale of Downingtown, Pa., a second-grader in 2008 who helped raise over \$85,000 for Nothing but Nets.

We're looking to honor United Methodists who exemplify the best of United Methodism and who have had a significant national or even global impact on an area of broad interest for the denomination. (While we appreciate hearing about the outstanding pastors, youth leaders and Sunday school teachers out there, we're looking for someone whose impact goes well beyond the local congregation.)

Please send your nomination for the 2010 United Methodist of the Year to news@umr.org or to *United Methodist Reporter*, News Dept., 1221 Profit Drive, Dallas, Texas 75247. Please include your name and contact information, along with reasons why you believe the nominee should be honored.

Deadline for nominations is Dec. 10.

Holy Land, Holy People – A Pilgrimage

The Rev. Neal Christie; The Rev. Clayton Childers
General Board of Church and Society

11 Day Contemporary Studies Program including Israel, the West Bank and Jordan

February 23 – March 5, 2011

Four additional elective days, returning on March 9, 2011

A Holy Land Pilgrimage, designed especially for young clergy, to offer an introduction to both the rich biblical history of the Holy Land and an opportunity to learn first hand about the current opportunities for a just peace in the Middle East.

The trip will be limited to 15-20 persons.

Cost, including airfare from New York, will be **\$2,786** (double-occupancy room.)

A deposit of \$200 is due Nov. 24 with the balance due Dec. 14.

Three Continuing Education Credits will be awarded for full participation.

An itinerary and more details of the trip, as well as a registration form, are available at: www.umc-gbcs.org

For more information, contact **Clayton Childers** at (202) 488-5642 or cchilders@umc-gbcs.org

the complex will offer an unbiased view of Bush administration policies. About 80 area peace activists wearing masks and carrying names of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan marched near the SMU campus during the groundbreaking. Some carried signs that read “Arrest Cheney first” and “Library or lie-bury?”

Handling criticism

Ari Fleischer, White House press secretary from 2001 to 2003, said criticism like that “rolls off [Mr. Bush’s] back.”

“He’s comfortable in his own skin, and confident in the decisions he made,” Mr. Fleischer said in an interview before the groundbreaking.

The president, Mr. Fleischer added, would likely want to be remembered for “keeping America safe” and “for having spread freedom and giving tens of millions of people around the world a chance to make it in life.”

He cited Mr. Bush’s speech to rescue workers at Ground Zero as a high point of the presidency, saying it gave a much-needed boost of confidence to a nation troubled by the 9/11 attacks.

Ongoing debate over Bush administration policies and the presence of the Bush center on campus “underscores” what the university is all about, said SMU President R. Gerald Turner. He added he was glad that both supporters and critics would be able to engage in serious dialogue at the new Presidential Center.

Though Mr. Bush refused to criticize President Obama, he added, “Staying out of current affairs and politics does not mean staying out of policy.”

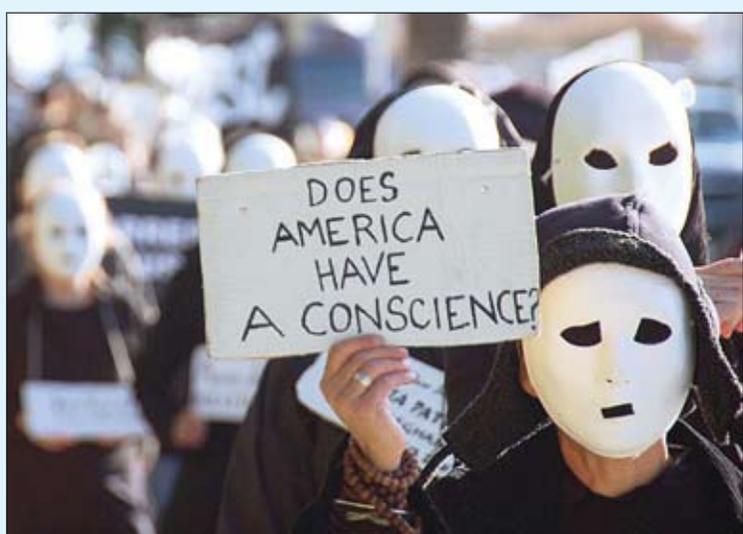
“I strongly believe that the principles that guided our service in public office are the right principles to lead our country into the future. These principles do not belong to any president or any political party.”

James K. Glassman, the Bush Institute’s executive director, said in an interview that while he understood the concerns of protesters, he insisted the policy-oriented institute will be “absolutely nonpartisan.” The institute’s first hire, James Guthrie, a Vanderbilt University professor of education, has “assuaged a lot of the concerns,” he said.

“This is not a partisan operation,” Mr. Glassman said. “We are not out to elect anybody. We are out to find the best policy solutions. My feeling is: Watch us. See what we do. If you think we’re being partisan or slanted or not intellectually serious, we’d like to hear from you.”

“We are not concerned with President Bush’s legacy as far as his presidency was concerned. However, we are interested in doing important work. . . . There’s definitely a lot of continuation of the principles that guided President Bush.”

Condoleezza Rice, chair of the institute’s advisory board, told the audi-



UMR PHOTOS BY MARY JACOBS

During the groundbreaking ceremony for the Bush library, about 80 local peace activists staged a march protesting the war in Iraq and other policies of the Bush administration.

Peace activists protest library

BY MARY JACOBS
Staff Writer

DALLAS—The Nov. 16 groundbreaking for the George W. Bush Presidential Center at SMU prompted several days of protests by area peace activists.

In an Interfaith Service of Lamentation and Hope held on the SMU campus two days before the groundbreaking, peace activists expressed grief about some of the actions of the Bush administration.

A day later, some two dozen anti-war protesters gathered on the SMU campus, calling for President Bush to be arrested for war crimes. The group of local peace activists gathered around 175 pairs of worn Army boots near SMU’s Ford Stadium. *The Dallas Morning News* reported that the boots represented service members killed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And while the groundbreaking was being held, about 80 masked protesters slowly marched past rows of crosses commemorating those who have died in the war, accompanied by a solemn drumbeat. Wearing signs bearing the names of military personnel and civilians killed in Iraq, the protesters chanted “Arrest

Bush” and carried signs with messages such as “Library or lie-bury?” and “Bush failed us.”

A handful of local United Methodists were among the protesters. Meg Hillert of Dallas’ First UMC expressed dismay over the presence of the Bush library at SMU.

“Both of my children graduated from SMU,” she said. “I’m standing for what [Methodism founder John] Wesley would stand for: against unjust war. This was an unjust war.”

“Bush policies and the whole mission to study and perpetuate his policies, including torture, pre-emptive war and endless war, goes contrary to the Wesleyan teachings that I respect and honor,” said Jan Sanders, a member of Northaven UMC in Dallas.

Appearing at the protest, longtime Bush Administration critic Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey who was killed in Iraq in 2004, said she was afraid the new Bush Institute would attempt to rewrite history. “The years under Bush were the worst in this country’s history,” said Ms. Sheehan, who has picketed outside the Bushes’ ranch in Crawford, Texas. “In his book, Bush admits to committing war crimes. He should be like the other international war criminals.”

William K. McElvaney, professor emeritus at Perkins School of Theology and a longtime critic of locating the Bush library at SMU, said he’s waiting to see how the new facility handles the Bush legacy.

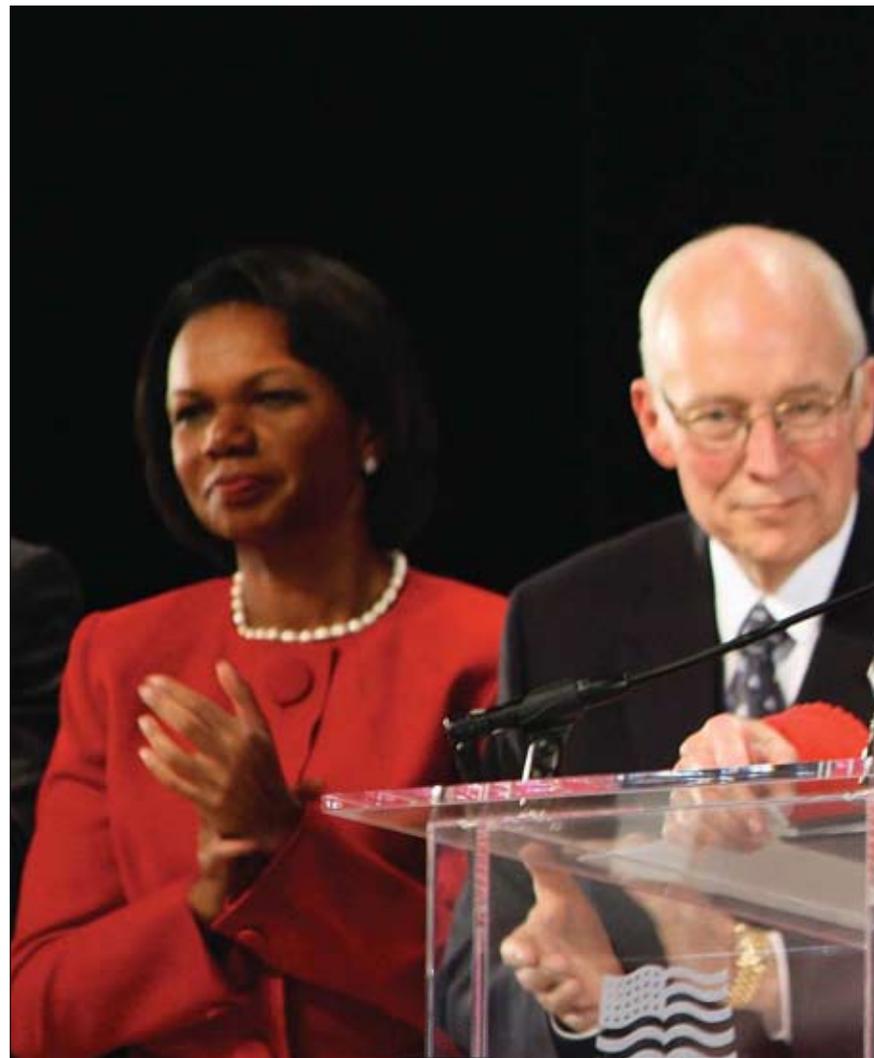
“We have to see how honest the library is—and what they choose to portray,” Dr. McElvaney said. “Will they tell the story the way many of us remember it in a historical sense? Or will it be very, very selective?”

“When you claim to be above the law or act above the law, by starting an illegal war, there ought to be some accountability for that. We’re concerned that that word be spoken.”

mjacobs@umr.org



Meg Hillert, left, a member of First UMC in Dallas, prepares to march with peace activists.



Former first lady Laura Bush addresses the crowd. To her right are Condoleezza Rice and Dick Cheney.

ence that the Bush Institute will focus on human freedom issues and “the transformative power of education.” The advisory board also includes Republican strategist Karl Rove, Dallas oilman Ray Hunt and the president’s brother, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush.

“The president and Mrs. Bush believed that America had a special responsibility to use its power, its generosity and its compassion to advance freedom for those at home and for those abroad,” Dr. Rice said.

In the audience were a group of soldiers from Fort Hood Army Base,

who were given a standing ovation. “I really do not miss much about Washington, but I do miss being your commander-in-chief,” Mr. Bush told them.

Jake Torres, president of the SMU student body, spoke on behalf of the 11,000 students on campus, saying students will benefit from the presence of the Bush complex. “The Bush Center is enhancing our SMU education and experience in ways we will never forget,” he said.

Three-part center

Fundraising goals for the 225,000-



Former Vice President Dick Cheney greets former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who will head the Bush Institute’s advisory board.



Condoleezza Rice and Dick Cheney.

square-foot presidential center have already been met, said Bush Foundation president Mark Langdale. More than 160,000 donors have contributed to the library, and the foundation raised more than \$150 million last year. The total cost of the center is estimated at \$137 million.

Made of Texas limestone and red brick, the center will be constructed on a 23-acre lot on the east side of the SMU campus and is expected to draw

some 250,000 visitors each year.

Its design will incorporate “green” elements Mrs. Bush used at the couple’s Crawford ranch, Mr. Langdale said, and will feature native landscaping, including Texas mesquite trees—which are “tough as nails and can put up with just about anything.”

David Ferriero, archivist of the United States, said the 13th presidential library will be the first with a major digital collection. The Bush library will

contain nearly 80 terabytes of information and 200 million e-mails.

Interactive technology in the museum will help visitors understand “the decision-making process the president followed when the many challenges of his administration were before him,” Mr. Ferriero said.

The policy institute will focus on human freedom, education reform, global health and economic growth, Mr. Bush said. “We have recruited a team of world-class scholars and fellows,” he told the audience.

Though construction will take two years, the Bush Foundation has already hosted conferences at SMU on institute-related topics such as natural gas as an energy source, and announced in September an initiative to recruit and train school principals from corporations, the military and other non-traditional sources.

Former first lady Laura Bush, whose alma mater is SMU, has already headed a panel for the institute on empowering women and girls in Afghanistan.

“Educating women yields rewards for generations to come,” Mrs. Bush said during the groundbreaking. “If we want women to be the bedrock of stable democratic societies, we must educate them to read.”

Rocky road

Dr. Turner acknowledged that the road to the groundbreaking has been “sometimes challenging.” When the



UMR PHOTOS BY MALLORY MCCALL

The Bushes are surrounded by dignitaries, supporters and donors during the symbolic groundbreaking for the George W. Bush Presidential Library.

Bush Foundation narrowed its site search to SMU in late 2006, a vocal group of professors and alumni began protesting through campuswide and online petitions to pressure the board to drop the library bid.

“As United Methodists, we believe that the linking of his presidency with a university bearing the Methodist name is utterly inappropriate,” the petition stated.

Others, like Kansas Bishop Scott Jones, a member of the SMU board and a former faculty member, defended the Bush library as “an important step forward for the university.”

In 2008, SMU officials met obstacles over who had authority to allow campus land to be leased to the Bush

Foundation. The South Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church owns the land, and the jurisdiction’s mission council approved the lease in March 2008.

Delegates to the South Central Jurisdictional Conference backed that decision in July 2008 but asked the university for some accountability regarding the library’s policy institute. A resolution instructed SMU to report back in 2012 on the institute’s relationship to and impact on the United Methodist-affiliated school, and to show compliance in protecting the integrity of both the university and the jurisdiction.

rrussell@umr.org



Former President George Bush and Laura Bush enjoy accolades from a hometown crowd during the groundbreaking ceremony.

**PARTNERING THROUGH
A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP**

Through a Covenant Relationship, you are not only supporting ONE missionary,
you are supporting a global community.
You are a part of the United Methodist connection.
You are a part of God's mission.

The DVD, brought to you by the General Board of Global Ministries and The Advance,
shares stories of missionaries working in different regions
and serving in the Four Areas of Focus of the Church.

Visit www.advancinghope.org for information about entering into a
Covenant Relationship and to order or download this useful DVD,
rich with stories of missionaries serving throughout the world.

The Advance
Advancing hope in Christ's name

LOVE HEAL SERVE EMPOWER

Let's grow up and stop waiting for SuperChurch

BY PHILIP A. AMERSON
Special Contributor

If you have not seen the movie *Waiting for Superman*, you should. This film is a compelling analysis of the state of public education in the United States.

Filmmaker Davis Guggenheim follows the life story of five young people, documenting their lack of access to quality education. The film's title comes from Geoffrey Canada, founder of the Harlem Children's Zone, a charter school in New York City. Mr. Canada speaks of his dismay as a child of poverty in discovering that there really was no Superman who would fly in and set injustices right.

As I left the theater, I was caught up in two streams of thought—the first about our schools, the second about the church.

First, our schools. My commitment to public education runs deep. Growing up, I benefited from exceptional schools and teachers. Our children also attended inner-city public schools. As a nation, we benefited from generations of investment in what Horace Mann proposed as “common schools.” The idea was that our nation held one thing “in common” and that was access to high quality education. All students, no matter their socioeconomic standing, could expect one thing—excellent public education. This was understood as essential for a healthy and prospering democratic society.

In the 1970s and 1980s, my wife, Elaine, served as a board member and ultimately as president of the school board in Evansville, Ind. We learned much during this time about the challenges and possibilities for public education. My appreciation grew. Still, it is impossible to ignore the ways our schools in so many places are failing our children.

As a pastor in a core-city neighborhood, I saw the tragic reality of a system where fewer than 15 percent of the young men in our neighborhood graduated from high school. We worked to make a difference and with a few successes, but the problems seemed so enormous.



Philip Amerson

Worsening pattern

The pattern of schools failing our youth has only gotten worse since then. Some critique the film for focusing too much blame on teachers' unions and tenure. Certainly there are other contributors to the dilemma. There is corruption in a variety of

ways, including unfunded mandates that are not expected of private or charter schools. There are political payoffs, the foolishness of top-down standardized testing ignoring the special gifts and knowledge of teachers and other educators at the neighborhood level. There is an insensitivity to cultural differences and a lack of quality facilities, made worse by capital fund tax structures that allow suburban schools to gain benefits far exceeding those available to others.

Pastor as scapegoat

Second, our churches. My commitment to the church runs deep. It seems we have been waiting for someone or something that will right the wrongs of our situation and restore our vitality. There is considerable hand-wringing. Just as the teachers can become scapegoats for a failing school system, some blame pastors for the perceived failings in the church.

Rather than seeking to free our pastors for innovative ministry, too often we demonize them as the problem behind all problems. And so we have proposals coming to change the appointment system to more easily remove ineffective pastors from the parish.

And we wait for SuperChurch: that formula, that structure, that program, that model that will save us.

Perhaps our worlds of analysis are too narrow. In a recent gathering of church leaders, some spoke of the halcyon days of United Methodism, when we started a new congregation every day!

As the group bemoaned our contemporary loss of membership, a voice of hope and perspective was heard. Dr. William Lawrence, American church historian and dean of Perkins School of Theology, reminded us of the foolishness of believing we could do new church starts without a larger vision for all of society. Bill reminded us that our earlier successes in starting new congregations occurred at the same time we were founding hospitals, colleges and orphanages. In the decades when United Methodists lived out a public theology to the benefit of all and not simply a few, our vision grew along with our congregations.

In the 19th and 20th centuries we founded hundreds of schools, colleges and seminaries. (More than 120 of these schools are still in existence and are related to United Methodism.) We started scores of hospitals. There are still dozens that bear the name “Methodist” in their pedigree.

A lost witness

Why did we stop this wide-ranging witness? In fact, we have contin-

ued to give witness in countless ways through outreach ministries, group homes, etc. What happened to our commitment to quality education for all? It was during this period, when United Methodists shared in a public theology that sought the benefit of all and not simply a few, that our congregations grew and we successfully planted churches.

Have we lost our way? Did we think that by simply saying in our documents that we supported public education, this would be sufficient? Have we in our anxiety focused too narrowly on saving our congregations and consequently watered down the good news to something as tame as “We have a nice church around the corner where you should attend and we won't ask too much of you.”

Futile waiting

What if hundreds of our congregations were committed to improving our schools or our healthcare systems? Are we waiting for SuperChurch and have about as much real hope as those characters in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*?

Now lest I be accused of offering another formula (get involved in public initiatives and you will save the denomination) in response to the anxiety in the system, this is not what I would suggest. Rather the call is to be engaged in public witness and in new church development as a Wesleyan way to live out our faith. If growth of congregations and social health occurs, to God be the glory.

For many years we at Garrett-

Evangelical Theological Seminary have been thinking about ways to encourage congregations to support elementary and high school education, whether public or private. Those who know the story of Wesley's Kingswood School will understand that our Methodist commitment to education is deeply imprinted within our genotype.

Think of the resources we have already in place: facilities that are strategically located, teachers sitting

public and private schools;

- strategize regarding new partnerships in underserved communities;
- strategize regarding internships for students through our colleges, universities and seminaries;
- develop a network of support for congregations who are involved in educational ministries in public and private schools.

Information will be available at www.garrett.edu. If interested,

‘The wait for Superman or SuperChurch can end. We can grow up—and start being the real, live, witnessing people of God right where we live!’

in our pews, internships through our colleges, universities and seminaries. We have enormous untapped capacity to make a real difference in our schools.

Getting involved

On April 7, 2011, Garrett-Evangelical is sponsoring a consultation at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis for congregations already engaged in (or hoping to engage in) significant educational ministries. The event will bring together congregational leaders involved in K-12 education to:

- learn about present ministries in

contact Mary Ann Moman, director of the Course of Study, at maryann.moman@garrett.edu.

The wait for Superman or SuperChurch can end. We can grow up—and start being the real, live, witnessing people of God right where we live! It may or may not cause churches to grow again, but it will be a sign to the nation of a church that believes in all of our children.

Dr. Amerson is president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, a United Methodist-affiliated institution on the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING • CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING • CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

EMPLOYMENT

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC MINISTRIES

Trinity United Methodist Church in Beaumont, Texas seeks a full-time Director of Music Ministries. Skills and experience with both traditional and contemporary worship preferred. Must be able to be a team member on a large staff and work with a variety of groups and ages. A Masters Degree in Sacred Music or work equivalent is preferred. Please send your resume to Nicole Watzlavik: nicole@trinitybmt.org

DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Trinity United Methodist Church in Beaumont, Texas is seeking a full-time Director of Christian Education. This person will oversee all areas of Christian Education, as well as supervise other age-specific CE persons. Qualifications include a Bachelor's degree or graduate theological degree and/or certification. Must be a team member on a large staff. Please send your resume to Nicole Watzlavik: nicole@trinitybmt.org

PRESIDENT AND CEO

The United Methodist Foundation of New England seeks a visionary and energetic President/CEO to realize its vision of being the leading financial and educational stewardship resource center for United Methodists. The new President will inherit a highly respected organization with an impressive legacy of prudent financial investing, commendable investment performance and superior customer service. Working closely with the board and staff, the President will be

expected to bring new creative vision, break new ground, and provide the animating force to take the Foundation to its next level of leadership and impact. Resumes to: unitedmethodist@imsearch.com.

MISCELLANEOUS

DISPLAY & BANNER ADVERTISING

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

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Readership is approximately 225,000 readers each week. **Rates** are per word or group of figures or initials (20 word minimum) **Newspaper Only—\$3.00** per word, two consecutive weeks. **Newspaper/Internet Bundle—\$4.00** per word

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

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

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

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

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

LUMICON DIGITAL PRODUCTIONS

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

What makes communion special?

BY TAYLOR BURTON-EDWARDS
Special Contributor

From Harare to Manila and from Boston to Anchorage, United Methodists spoke a refrain heard across the globe when asked their experiences of Holy Communion: “We want more!”

Over and over, from listening stations in cities to rural areas, of every ethnicity and nation and language we could reach at the time, what we on the Holy Communion Study Committee were hearing was that communion often felt disconnected, uninviting, routine, poorly understood and even more poorly led.

And yet for all that, it was still deeply and powerfully important in their lives.

The General Board of Discipleship’s video, “Living into the Mystery,” documents the experience of laypeople in four diverse congregations where communion is celebrated well. For information, e-mail worship@gbod.org.

We heard that folks wanted more frequent celebration of Holy Communion—with weekly as a norm—but also that there was real concern: that if we celebrated Holy Communion weekly, it would become less “special.”

Answering objections

John Wesley heard that same concern when he insisted that Methodists participate in the celebration of the sacrament as frequently as possible. In Wesley’s time, people said they feared their “reverence” for the sacrament would be “abated” if it were celebrated weekly or more. He answered that “objection” (along with many others) in his sermon “The Duty of Constant Communion.”

Here’s the relevant excerpt:

“Reverence for the sacrament may be of two sorts: Either such as is owing purely to the newness of the thing, such as men naturally have for anything they are not used to; or such as is owing to our faith, or to the love or fear of God. Now, the former of these is not properly a religious reverence, but purely natural. And this sort of reverence for the Lord’s Supper, the constantly receiving of it must lessen. But it will not lessen the true religious reverence, but rather confirm and increase it. . . . [Thus] its abating our reverence is no excuse; since he who gave the command, ‘Do this,’ nowhere adds, ‘unless it abates your reverence.’”



Taylor
Burton-
Edwards



UMMS FILE PHOTO BY PAUL JEFFREY

Christians may wrongly fear they will lose the “specialness” of Holy Communion if they observe it weekly, says Taylor Burton-Edwards.

In other words, Wesley agreed that if you celebrate communion frequently, it will feel less special.

That is true of anything we do frequently. The more we do something, the less we have to consciously think about it. We’re no longer relying on working memory, which is how we deal with new things and complicated problems placed before us. It’s slower than other forms of memory—but it helps us plod through.

And the less we experience anything as new, the less we produce the chemicals in our brain that help us deal with newness as well. Some of these chemicals create a sense of alarm or heightened alertness. Those intensify our focus on the new or not entirely familiar things in front of us. Others produce a sense of well-being or reward when we engage the new thing successfully.

Synaptic pattern

But once we’ve practiced something enough that it gets into our bones, our muscles, our breath and our brains in an almost “hard-wired” synaptic pattern, two things happen. First, with the synaptic pattern being well-established, electrical activity to enable it goes down. And second, our brains reduce the production of those “alarm” and “reward” chemicals to almost zero, meaning the “feeling” we may have had the first time or the first few times we did it abates over time. Both holy fear and joy, the basic ingredients of the feeling we call “reverence,” physically subside.

So in the end there’s almost no getting around the physiological fact that we can’t have it both ways. Holy Communion can either be “special” (because it is relatively infrequent or because we do it a very different way every time), or it can be offered with deep competence and graciousness because it’s gotten into our bones, muscles and breath.

But note I said “almost.”

The power of something practiced and “hard-wired” over time is that you can make small changes, slight variations, that will introduce just enough novelty to re-engage the alarm/reward system without at the same time having to re-engage working memory, and thus make the whole event feel clumsy, forced or awkward.

This is how jazz musicians learn to riff. They learn everything they can about the basic song—rhythm, cadences, melody, harmonics, syncopation and sound level—practicing and practicing until it is in their bones, muscles and breath. The song itself doesn’t change. But what happens with the song, after the combo establishes it a few times—that’s where the joy comes.

Lose the fear

So as you look at what we’ve said we long for as United Methodists, consider the choice before you—a choice built into our brains and bodies.

Do you want a specialness that comes from infrequent celebrations, and so also persist in not being practiced enough to be competent and gracious every time?

Or do you want the specialness that comes from frequent practice, a specialness that is experienced in the small variations that not only your presider but your entire worshipping community can move into and appreciate simply because the Great Thanksgiving—its words, its actions, its gestures, its meaning and its music—are already deep in your bones, muscles and breath, ready at a moment’s notion to riff as the Spirit moves in your midst?

I know my choice. What’s yours?

The Rev. Burton-Edwards is director of worship resources for the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship.

REFLECTIONS

Christmas without journey of Advent just isn’t the same

BY BISHOP WOODIE W. WHITE
UMR Columnist

Some years ago a prominent megachurch pastor preached an electrifying sermon that he concluded with a memorable phrase: “Get Ready! Get Ready! Get Ready!”

Soon the phrase was heard in sermons across the nation. A gospel song was eventually written featuring the phrase and it has become popular in many Christian circles.

“Get Ready! Get Ready! Get Ready!” could very well be the heralding as Christians around the world prepare in this Advent season, to celebrate the birth of the Christ child.

Advent is marked by two markedly different responses, waiting and preparation. The former is passive, the latter active. Yet they need not be mutually exclusive; there are virtues in each.

Some waiting is passive. The Christian is not involved in any activity or any particular preparation, but simply waits. The preparation might be inward, requiring no outward routine, no visible sign of movement. It might be silent, reflective and meditative. It could be a time not of communal but solitary prayer.

Time to ponder

These special moments and times remind me of the way Scripture

records that Mary’s heart pondered what she had heard. Just she and God.

Most Americans don’t like waiting! We don’t like to wait for a traffic light to change or to stand in line waiting to be served. Many expectant parents don’t like to wait nine months to learn the gender of their new infant! Waiting can be a bit of a challenge.

What I so like about Advent is its purposeful waiting. Whether positive or active, it is not stagnant. Something takes place in the period of “not yet.” We wait, but we are not idle. Or at least that is the hope of Advent.

Advent is a time of preparing the heart. It is a time of prayer and song and Word. And yes, it is a time of gift



purchasing and decorating. Of heart pondering and silence.

In a few short weeks Christmas will arrive, but Advent can make all the difference in how it is received.

Missing out

I remember one year when I simply missed Advent. I was out of the country for nearly a month, and was so focused and absorbed in the assignment that took me from home and the normal activities of December that I really lost track of time. In fact, I do not recall preparing at all for the great Christian celebration.

I returned home two days before Christmas. Exhausted from the long trip back to the United States and the changing of time zones, I slept the better part of two days. Like Rip Van Winkle, I finally awoke, but when I did, it was Christmas Day.

I never quite caught the Christmas spirit that year. There was something missing. It was Advent! I vowed never to miss Advent again.

I have learned something about special trips, especially those taken with my family. The journey itself carries a special gift, with unique experiences and memories. In a real sense, the journey prepares us for the destination.

So each year I look forward to the journey of Advent. And when Christmas Day finally arrives, I am ready! I am ready! I am ready!

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

Ministry study group preparing 2012 legislation

BY VICKI BROWN
Special Contributor

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Study of Ministry Commission has mapped out changes that include a shift away from security of employment for United Methodist elders, a move to group candidacy mentoring, and separating ordination from full annual conference membership.

Bishop Al Gwinn, chair of the commission, said the 2008 General Conference asked the commission to streamline the ordination process to help the church become more mission-oriented.

“We can’t expect the 2012 General Conference just to trust us,” he said, “so we want to continue the conversation with the church and its bodies regarding our work as we determine the legislation that needs to be written to accomplish the things we need to do to have a healthy church.”

But action must still be taken, he added. “If we do not choose in 2012 to fix the situation in a way to make the church healthier and to have a more missional stance, finances are going to fix it for us,” Bishop Gwinn said.

“For example, if we have five more clergy than we need, we put them in churches that can’t afford it. Furthermore, those churches then get behind in pension and insurance and the annual conference has to take money from resources to make up the pension and insurance those churches couldn’t pay,” Bishop Gwinn said.

Eventually, he said, the annual conferences cannot afford to make up the difference.

Several members of the Ministry Study Commission led a discussion on the proposals during the General Board of Higher Education’s (GBHEM) fall meeting in Nashville in October.

Culture of call

Although there are too many clergy in some areas, commission members expressed concern about the still low numbers of young people entering ministry and the decline in the percentage of middle-age clergy poised to assume leadership in the church.

While the percentage of young clergy has increased, the numbers are still alarmingly small—just 946 elders and 89 deacons were under age 35 in 2010, said the Rev. Meg Lassiat, GBHEM’s director of candidacy, mentoring and conference relations.

And she said there are fewer middle-age clergy positioned to assume executive or large-church clergy leadership positions.

“Clergy age 35 to 54 now make up only 45 percent of elders,” Ms. Lassiat said. “In 1985, 65 percent of active elders

were in that age group.”

The commission calls on conference Boards of Ordained Ministry to lead annual conferences, districts, congregations, campus ministries, camps and other appropriate ministries in creating a culture of call among youth and young adults.

The commission has three proposals aimed at improving the candidacy process:

- having a vocational discernment coordinator on the Board of Ordained Ministry in each annual conference;
- requiring a ministry prep school for all elder, deacon or local pastor candidates immediately after certification as a candidate;
- moving to group candidacy mentoring.

Seattle Area Bishop Grant Hagiya said that lack of access to trained mentors has been “one of the huge bottlenecks” for young clergy.

In addition, commissioning will be dropped. The practice of commissioning has not been well understood or accepted by the church, causing confusion and diminishing the nature of the gift of ordination, several members said.

“The Boards of Ordained Ministry will oversee candidates earlier, and ordination will replace commissioning in the process,” Bishop Hagiya said.

Ordination and provisional membership could occur as early as the completion of educational requirements, and would be separated from full conference membership.

Employment security

The Rev. David Dodge said that the commission believes security of employment, commonly called guaranteed appointment, has been a barrier to fulfilling the church’s mission.

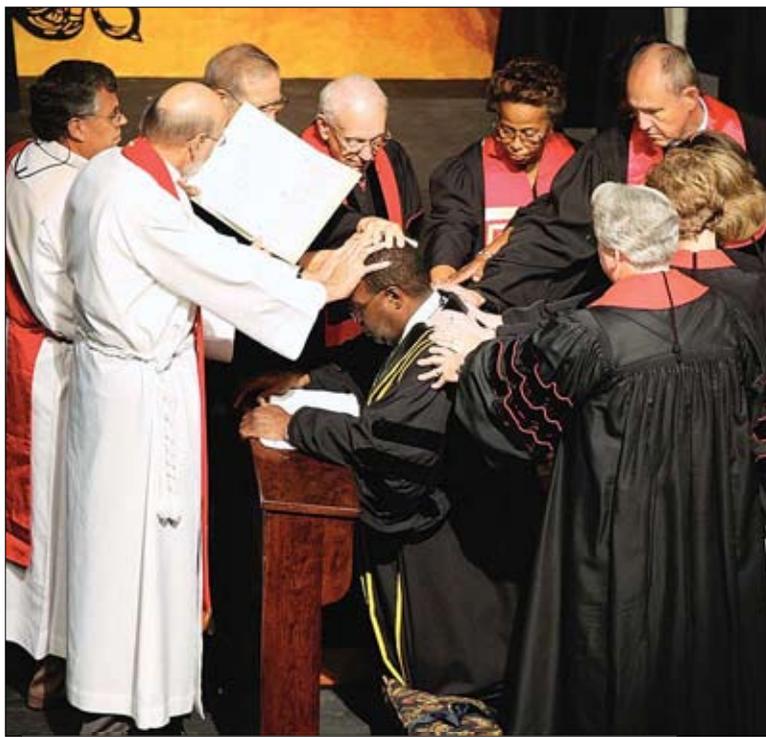
“It results in caring for the needs of clergy rather than the needs of the church,” Mr. Dodge said. “It restricts flexibility and is not sustainable.”

“Our vision is fruitful congregations that are transforming individuals and communities served by effective clergy undergirded by a system that is itinerant, open, flexible and responsive.”

The commission affirmed the practice of itinerancy as effective and responsive to the covenantal obedience to call.

To shift away from security of appointment, Mr. Dodge said the commission calls on the general church to determine limited and standard fitness assessments, and if necessary, revise transitional leave policies.

Annual conferences, Boards of Ordained Ministry, cabinets and bishops will need to determine a clear definition of and method for evaluating clergy, as well as coordinating with the



FILE PHOTO BY REV. ARMANDO RODRIGUEZ JR.

A candidate is ordained as an elder during the service of licensing, commissioning and ordination at the 2009 Florida Annual Conference event.

General Board of Pension and Health Benefits on resources, methods and practices for voluntary separation of employment and employment transitions.

Bishop James Swanson expressed concern that the role of the candidate’s home church and home church pastor

is being reduced.

“In the move to expediency, some are moving away from the [tradition of candidates meeting first with their] own pastor and having the opportunity to preach, do Bible study and practice what it really means to be a pastor,” he said.

The possibility of discrimination against women and racial-ethnic clergy was also a concern.

Bishops Hagiya and Gwinn said the commission had asked for input from the Commission on the Status and Role of Women and the General Commission on Race and Religion about how to protect women and racial-ethnic clergy from discrimination when the church moves away from guaranteed appointment.

A process of appeal for clergy who are not appointed must be in place, they added.

The Rev. Ianther Mills reported on the commission’s recommendations concerning sacramental authority, expressing concern that ministry is becoming isolated rather than collaborative.

“Sacramental authority extends through the bishop to the Order of Elders and sacraments should be available to the whole church, with authority given to deacons for missional purposes and local pastors when an elder is not available,” she said.

The commission report is available for review and comments at www.gbhem.org/ministrystudy. Comments can be e-mailed to ministrystudy@gbhem.org.

Ms. Brown is associate editor and writer at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

