

IN THIS ISSUE

Transformation in
the Congo
2A

Got plans for Lent?
Ideas here
5A

Reviews: book,
documentary
9A

History finds
a new home
11A



AUM PHOTO BY PATRICK SHOWNES

Imagine Ministry team member Jim Argue asks attendees of the Leadership 100 gathering to consider the information presented and determine how they will help the Arkansas Conference move forward in ministry.

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Team refines proposal as regional meetings approach

HOT SPRINGS—The Imagine Ministry (IM) team on Feb. 18-19 convened to present to a gathering of Arkansas Conference leaders a draft of the changes it plans to propose at the 2011 Arkansas Annual Conference.

The Leadership 100, a group of clergy and laity selected to interpret the vision, core values and priorities the IM team will present at Annual Conference, spent two days in sessions with the IM team and Dr. Gil Rendle, the team's consultant.

Feedback given by the Leadership 100 served to help the IM team further
[See IMAGINE MINISTRY, page 6A]



AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

Dear Friends:

These are only some of the facts.

I am not a fast reader, but in the two minutes it takes me to read aloud these "occasional words," four children will die of malaria.

Each year, between 350 and 500 *million* people are infected with malaria. Ninety percent of them are in sub-Saharan Africa.

Each year, more than a million people die from malaria, and many more are incapacitated for varying periods of time.

The most startling fact is that if we are committed to putting our money where our mouths are, we can make malaria a memory in our lifetimes. If we work at it with passion, it can be essentially eradicated by 2015.

While we have been very fortunate to have essentially eliminated malaria

in the U.S. (there are only a handful of cases each year), still it is a disease that knows no national identity, no racial, ethnic, gender, age or economic boundaries. Did you know that George Clooney, the award winning actor, recently contracted malaria while filming a documentary in Sudan?

The United Methodist Church has joined in a global alliance with a wide variety of foundations and global health partners to work toward the eradication of malaria in the next few years. The General Conference of 2008 stepped out in faith and declared that we as a church would raise \$75 million over the next several years to do our part.

No apportionment dollars have been allocated toward this goal. It will depend on the efforts of local churches if this is to transpire.

Our continuing work through UMCOR and our efforts with our global
[See MALARIA, page 3A]

Congo trip provides glimpse of UMC's worldwide work of transformation

BY RODNEY STEELE
Special Contributor

As a member of the United Methodist Church's Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, I traveled recently to Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

This committee works with the UMC outside the U.S. in the four-year intervals between sessions of General Conference. With members from around the world, we must use translators whenever we meet.

A task force within the committee establishes criteria and process for determining if, when and where to recommend new episcopal areas to the General Conference.

(New episcopal areas require additional bishops, among other administrative changes.) When I was asked to co-chair this task force, my first thought was, "How in the world can we do that?" Who am I to know what the UMC in Africa or the Philippines needs?

My co-chair, who lives in Germany, asked me to moderate the task force meetings. So we began doing some of our work before the gathering in Kinshasa via e-mail, Skype and international conference call.

To continue building trust while handling a highly political topic, I asked the task force if we could proceed without Robert's Rules of Order. I felt a less formal approach would invite conversation, build consensus, encourage transparency and increase participation.

With the Holy Spirit's guidance and help, we selected criteria and created a process that was unanimously adopted by our task force and then by the whole committee. Folks approved our criteria and process even though it meant that they would not receive a new episcopal area. They believed that the Holy Spirit had worked through our task force, and that we had achieved something which was more fair and transparent than what had existed before.

Seven new episcopal areas were requested, but we recommended only one new area for the Congo Central Conference. Nevertheless, the recommendation was unanimously accepted. This unanimity and sense of the Spirit

was seen as real progress by those who had worked with Central Conferences for several years. More than once I heard others say, "We have moved ahead by centuries."

We were blessed to meet fellow Christians outside the meeting, too.

Some things from our visits with local United Methodist congregations stand out in my memory, such as the desire of the people to give and how that giving is seen as part of maturing in faith, and the high number of children, youth and young adults worshipping and leading worship, all eager to learn and grow in their faith.

Even as they continue to recover from years of war, United Methodists in the DRC care for their mission field. The Kinshasa West



Rodney Steele

When asked what the church could do, the prime minister said, 'Be the church! The people need you to be the church!'

district supports new churches in an area 600 kilometers away. They refer to it as a "mission district." They will oversee the area until it grows into a district in its own right. Strong relationships between the pastors and the district superintendents are evident as they talk about their ministry together.

Another realization I had is how easily providing basic services such as clean water can drastically improve life and provide

opportunities that we in the U.S. take for granted. Even in a city of seven million people, obtaining water can be a daily problem.

To get water for their families, many women must leave their homes at 4 a.m. to locate a faucet or some other source. The pre-dawn darkness makes them vulnerable to sexual assault. It happens frequently enough that the church has a ministry to help women recover from the trauma of being attacked in this way.

But water wells made possible through the Arkansas Conference's Congo Well Project are increasing the availability of this life-sustaining resource. With God's help, we are changing lives in the DRC!

At one point in our journey, the bishops on our committee met with the DRC prime minister. He wanted to thank the UMC for the work we have done there. After the visit, the bishops reported that when asked what the church could do, the prime minister said, "Be the church! The people need you to be the church!"

The prime minister said that the government has to spend most of its money securing its own borders and confronting rebel forces and that effort leaves very little for the people. "The people need the help and the hope which the church gives," he added.

The church in the DRC continues to grow and reach out to the mission field in ways that can inspire us. When I asked one pastor why people choose to be United Methodists instead of joining another church, he listed their ministries for the whole person: education,

health, victim recovery, helping families cope with poverty and others.

For people in the DRC, ministry to the whole person underscores the idea that Christ cares about every part of their lives. It is an extension of worship and the teachings of Christ.

The Rev. Steele serves as superintendent of the North Central District.



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



EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

It's that time of year again...

It's almost time for Lent! Hooray! No, really. I'm not kidding.

I like Lent. I like having a time of intentional preparation. I like singing "What Wondrous Love Is This" a cappella from the back of a sanctuary. As a vocalist, I almost dislike practicing Easter music during Lent, though it's a necessity if you're going to know what and how to sing on the big morning that happens to be my favorite holiday.

I just don't want the explosion of joy on that day to be dampened by having already rehearsed it. To temper my exposure to the music—the advance warning of Easter—immersing myself in Lent seems like a useful spiritual practice.

At some point in our dating life or early marriage, I discovered my husband thought Lent was just the stuff you had to remove from that filter in the clothes dryer. I was surprised, because I really thought he knew that I'd given up sugar for 40 days my sophomore year of college.

Of course, my roommate and I were taking it pretty easy on ourselves. Artificial sweeteners didn't count, you see, so we were still allowed to have diet cola and sugar-free hot cocoa. Maybe that's why the "sacrifice" didn't register with my then-boyfriend.

And so, after a few years of marriage and an Ash Wednesday service or two, we began deciding together on a Lenten sacrifice.

The first year, we gave up caffeine for Lent.

The second year, based on our experience with caffeine withdrawals,

we gave up Lent for Lent.

So yes, there have been some stumbles. But we've also managed to go meatless for Lent, and we've kept our language squeaky-clean for Lent, too. Like any kind of fasting, noting the absence of what you've given up serves as a reminder to pray, to turn to God in your weakness.

Our pastor also suggested that instead of giving up something for Lent, we take on a spiritual discipline. We haven't yet decided on a Lenten discipline as a household, but I will be continuing to observe the weekly fast I began in January.

On page 5A you'll find a sampling of what some churches in our Conference are doing for Lent, along with some ideas from beyond local congregations.

But this is the March 4 issue of the paper, you're thinking. Ash Wednesday is March 9. I don't have time to start a congregation-wide observance. True; unless your congregation is on the smaller side, you probably don't have the ability to rally everyone around a common 40-day discipline.

But you do have a few days to ponder how you might add—or subtract—a little something in the days between next week and Easter.

Besides, you can always begin pondering next year's observance—another Lent will be here before we know it.

To contact me, send an e-mail to aforbus@arumc.org, or write me at 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202.



Volume 157 • No. 44 March 4, 2011
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@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
April 1	March 17
May 6	April 14
June 3	May 19

Malaria (continued from page 1A)

partners involve not only providing mosquito nets for families, they also involve public health training, increased efforts to eliminate standing water, associated water projects, treatment facilities and medications.

All of this accompanies our continuing work on a spiritual level as we respond to mind, body and spirit.

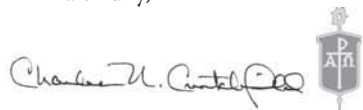
In areas where the governments of malaria-ridden countries are unable to respond, the church is already present. We have a network of laity and pastors ready and able to carry the heavy burden. We simply

need to step up and give them the tools.

Other information on this page can help you tell the story. There will be suggestions about how you can be personally involved. You might even throw a party...

In the name of Jesus Christ, for the sake of all God's children, we can be world-transforming.

Faithfully,



Charles Crutchfield



Eradicate malaria by 2015?

It is possible—with your help

The Nothing But Nets initiative has seen great success in distributing insecticide-treated bed nets, along with education on their proper use, to protect people from the bites of mosquitos that often carry malaria.

In the Arkansas Conference, individuals and churches have given enough money to distribute more than 24,500 bed nets to malaria-affected areas in Africa—and that just takes into account the donations sent through the Conference office. Many people gave online at nothingbutnets.net, as well.

But, as Bishop Crutchfield wrote in his column, there's more work yet to do. That's why the United Methodist Church has launched Imagine No Malaria—to push forward with the effort to eradicate a disease that claims the life of someone's child, parent or sibling every 45 seconds.

Bishop Crutchfield also mentioned throwing a party as one way to get involved. To learn more about the Imagine No Malaria House Party concept, visit imagineenomalaria.org/houseparty.

Even if hosting a party isn't for you, don't count yourself out. You still have opportunities to educate yourself, your friends, your church and your neighbors.

Visit imagineenomalaria.org for:

- Personal stories of those affected by this deadly disease
- Information on the partnerships making the work possible
- An interactive map of where mosquito nets have been distributed
- Resources to help spread the word.

**Nothing But Nets is enough.
the first step.**

Malaria prevention.

United Methodist support of Nothing But Nets has provided millions of bed nets to African families. That work continues through Imagine No Malaria.

While we continue to provide life-saving bed nets, we must also help break the mosquito life-cycle by removing standing water where the insects breed.

Imagine how many lives you can change.

Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.
The people of The United Methodist Church




**IMAGINE
NO
MALARIA**

ImagineNoMalaria.org

'As United Methodists, we are strong—11 million strong. We believe the world is our parish. Every life is important to us, and every one of us is important in making this vision real. In reaching out to people to relieve suffering, we find a revitalization of our own faith and our understanding of what it means to be Christ followers.'

—from imagineenomalaria.org

For words that bring life, trust the Spirit

BY DEENA MARIE HAMILTON
Special Contributor

When I was asked to preach for the North Little Rock Ministerial Alliance Community Thanksgiving service this past November, I was floored. I didn't think that anybody thought that much about me. I was honored by the gesture, but the moment I said "yes," my nerves got the best of me.

I know that God has not ever failed me, but even though I'm not of this world... I still live in it. And the somatic changes in body gave me heartburn and an upset stomach.

As the moment of the service approached, I read over my sermon frantically. The more I read over my sermon, the more nervous I became. Finally, a friend told me to stop reading.

I obeyed her, but I didn't want

to. I felt as though my life depended on my reading over that sermon just one more time.

All sorts of thoughts ran through my mind. Would they laugh at my jokes? Will they get my humor? Would I offend one of the priests in our group by encouraging the assembled congregation in Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church to give vocal feedback throughout my message?

I didn't know what to expect, so I said a quick prayer and trusted that God would deliver.

The core of my message that evening was that every day we experience is a day of thanksgiving.



Deena Marie Hamilton

Morning by morning new mercies we see. Thanksgiving is not a holiday; it's a way of life.

I hate to admit it, but I got full of the Spirit and said something that even surprised me. I said, "This here Methodist pastor is about to turn it out in this here Lutheran church!" I continued to say that because of that very moment, I will forever be grateful to God because God gets all of the glory.

To my surprise, the congregation erupted with an explosive, affirming "Amen." I hope that I don't offend anybody when I say this, but from a cultural standpoint—me, being an African American pastor—I haven't ever seen a congregation of Anglo people get full of the Spirit like that before.

They wanted to hear the message that God put on my heart. I was humbled that they received the

message with gratitude and joy.

That experience made me realize that I must watch what I say and do at all times. I have experienced and witnessed people of different denominations, priests and pastors, receive my sermon as if it came directly from the mouth of God. That's humbling on so many levels that I can't even describe it. All I know is that I've been changed forever by it.

Proverbs 18:21 specifically states that words kill and bring life. They're either poison or fruit. We're the ones that make the decision on which one we produce.

According to John Wesley, death and life are brought upon by men based on the words that they choose to use (Wesley's Notes on the New Testament). That just goes hand in hand with what Christ says in the twelfth chapter of Matthew: that if

we have minds like snake pits, the things that we do to build the Kingdom will not be heartfelt and sincere.

It is what is in our hearts, not what is in the dictionary, that gives meaning to our words. A good person produces good deeds and words season after season.

Jesus continues to teach us a hard lesson in that same chapter by telling us that every one of our careless words will come back and haunt us. Words are powerful; take them seriously because words can be our salvation as well as our damnation.

Are we going to produce life or death with what we say?

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

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Feeser named CGO of the Year

United States Air Force Captain the Rev. Ronald L. Feeser has been selected as the Company Grade Officer of the Year for the 39th Air Base Wing, Wing Staff Agencies (WSA). The WSA consists of all offices that work directly for the Wing Commander, such as Protocol, Command Post, Legal and Finance.

Feeser is currently stationed in Turkey as a chaplain, and is an elder in full connection with the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church.



Ron Feeser

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.

UMCOR/VIM Disaster Response training March 12

Jeff Baker, disaster coordinator for Missouri Conference, will lead the next UMCOR/VIM Disaster Response Training session for the Arkansas Conference. The session will be held Saturday, March 12, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Kendall Center at Philander Smith College.

Cost for training is \$20 per person, which includes the training manual and lunch. To reserve your seat, register online at arumc.org/register.

Hunt to lead workshop on cultural intelligence March 26

Those who are self aware, cognizant of cultural differences, motivated to cross cultural boundaries and sensitive to differences in cultural behavior are the most effective servants of God in mission.



Robert Hunt

Dr. Robert Hunt, director of Global Theological Education at SMU Perkins School of Theology and a former missionary in Malaysia, Singapore and Austria, will present a Volunteers in Mission seminar, "Cultivating Cultural Intelligence," on Saturday, March 26 in the Kendall Center at Philander Smith College.

While no seminar can fully prepare a person for their first encounter with a different culture, this introduction to cultural intelligence will guide participants into richer and fuller partnerships in ministry across cultures. Missioners will become more comfortable in their first encounter with a new culture, more sensitive in their ministry to people in that culture, and more likely to return having received as much as they have given.

Participants will gain awareness of how culture shapes expectations, become more culturally aware, learn basic behavioral patterns for engaging new cultures and receive resources for learning about specific cultures. It's a "don't miss" training for any individual serving in culturally diverse settings. To reserve your spot in this workshop, register online at arumc.org/register.

VIM Team Leader training April 9

Arkansas' next VIM Team Leader training will be led by Debbie Vest, Volunteers in Mission coordinator for the South Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church. The session is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 9, at Pulaski Heights UMC in Little Rock. Cost for training is \$20 per person, which includes the training manual and lunch. To participate, register online at arumc.org/register by April 2.



Debbie Vest

Willing to serve? Arkansas' General, Jurisdictional Conference delegates to be elected June 5-8

Every four years, Annual Conferences across the United Methodist Church elect clergy and lay delegates to serve at the denomination's General and Jurisdictional Conferences.

This year, at the June 5-8 Annual Conference in Hot Springs, voting members of the Arkansas Conference will elect six lay and six clergy delegates to General Conference and six lay and six clergy delegates to the South Central Jurisdictional Conference. Jurisdictional Conference delegates will function as reserve delegates to General Conference.

In addition, the Conference will elect three lay and three clergy to serve as reserve delegates to Jurisdictional Conference.

Clergy and laity who wish to be considered for election are

encouraged to complete the appropriate profile form posted at arumc.org/delegates12.

Submitting the form is not required, but in previous years the majority of delegates elected have submitted a profile. The deadline for completing the form is April 1, 2011.

The 2012 General Conference meets April 24-May 4, in Tampa, Fla. For more information, visit umc.org/gc2012.

The 2012 South Central Jurisdictional Conference, which elects bishops to fill openings in an eight-state region, meets July 18-21 in Oklahoma City, Okla. Information will be available via the Jurisdiction's website, scj.umportal.org.

Those willing to be considered for election agree to dedicate the time, energy and personal resources required to prepare for the two

conferences, including:

- studying issues that will be addressed by each Conference;
- spending between \$500 to \$1,000 to cover out-of-pocket expenses;
- attending all pre-conference meetings;
- attending all interviews of episcopal candidates.

Those who miss the April 1 deadline, may still make 800 copies of the completed form at their own expense and give them to the Conference Secretary, the Rev. Bob Crossman, on the first day of Annual Conference for distribution.

For more information, including who is eligible to cast votes for and serve on the delegations, visit arumc.org/delegates12.

Worldwide UM leadership summit scheduled for April 6

All United Methodists invited to participate online

On Wednesday, April 6, the United Methodist Church will "conference" in a remarkable and unprecedented way.

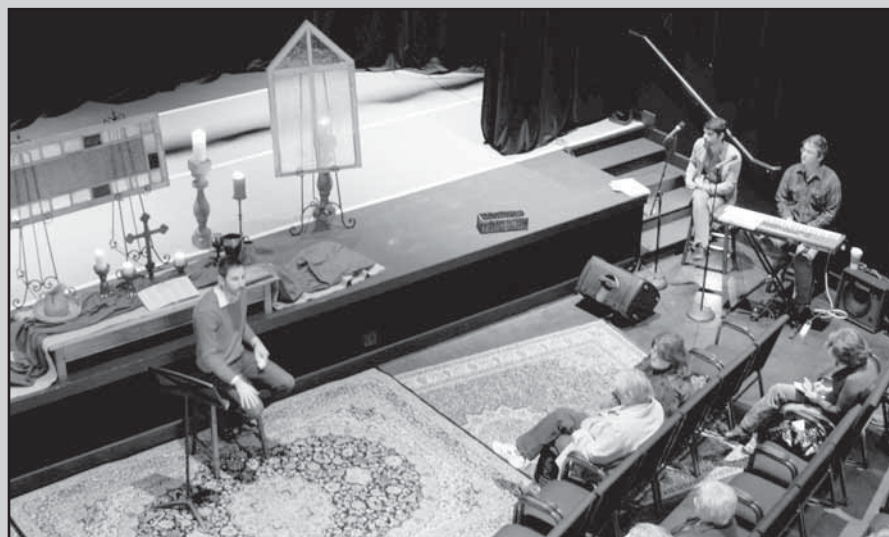
A real-time, three-hour Leadership Summit will be offered to United Methodists across the globe at 11 a.m. Central time. The web-based seminar will focus on the

critical issues facing the denomination.

While some United Methodists will be gathered for group participation, every United Methodist with an Internet connection can join in the conversation. Participants will be able to submit questions and

comments via e-mail, and presenters will respond to as many of them as possible.

The web address for the Leadership Summit will be posted on the Arkansas Conference website, arumc.org, as soon as it becomes available.



Argenta UMC grows into larger space

The Rev. Will Choate, left, preaches at the first worship service in the new location for Argenta United Methodist Church. On Sunday, Feb. 13, the congregation began

meeting at the new Argenta Community Theater on Main Street in downtown North Little Rock. Having outgrown available seating at the Starving Artists Café, Argenta found a new home just two doors down from their original meeting location. The theater, when configured for worship, will seat about 200 people. Argenta UMC, a new church start, is a satellite campus of First UMC North Little Rock.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Makings of a meaningful Lent

“The season is a preparation for celebrating Easter. Historically, Lent began as a period of fasting and preparation for baptism by converts and then became a time of penance by all Christians.”

—*The United Methodist Book of Worship*

Lent kicks off with Ash Wednesday, which this year falls on March 9, and culminates in the joy of Easter Sunday—this year on April 24.

But what about the 40 days (excluding Sundays) between the two? How can we give Lent a place in our daily lives? Below are some ideas from just a few Arkansas congregations, as well as some other United Methodist organizations.

Devotionals

A Google search on “Lenten devotionals 2011” yields more than a quarter-million results—and at press time, the second and third listings just happen to be United Methodist resources. Congregations don’t need to look far, though, for content that will feed the soul.

Like many churches across Arkansas, Mayflower UMC plans to have an Ash Wednesday worship service and hold a Bible study series during Lent, but they’ve also added a very personal touch this year: They’re producing a daily Lenten devotional booklet written by church members and staff.

“I have seen this work in larger churches and remember how much people enjoyed participating and reading devotions written in-house,” says the Rev. Rick Wilkins, Mayflower’s pastor.

“We started encouraging inputs in January on a half-page format similar to *The Upper Room*, with title, Scripture reading, reflection, thought for the day, and prayer.... Every member will receive a copy and we will print extras for friends and family.”

On a slightly larger scale, the Rev. Steven Copley, who works as director of Arkansas’ Justice For Our Neighbors (JFON), has collaborated with colleagues the Rev. Melissa Thomas and Julie Larson to develop online devotionals for Lent.

Entitled *To Welcome the Stranger* and centered on the theme

of Hebrews 13:1-2, the series focuses on the biblical understanding of hospitality. The devotionals will be available as of Ash Wednesday at Arkansas JFON’s website, arjfon.org.

Prayer

The prayer team at Asbury UMC Little Rock is inviting everyone in the Arkansas Conference to join in a time of unceasing prayer during Lent:

What if we experienced our connectionalism through our daily practice? What if we intentionally practiced our faith together each day? What if through Lent we humbled ourselves as an entire church through one Christian practice? Just think how our connectional nature as people in ministry together could take on new depth and meaning.

We at Asbury United Methodist Church in West Little Rock caught a vision of what this might look like and the potential it could have for our entire church. Thus, we want to invite you to participate in 40 Days of Prayer.

This isn’t simply another program to implement in your church along with all the other churches in the Conference. Rather, it is a time to for everyone to be in prayer together, to pass the torch of prayer from one church to another, from one individual to another throughout the Conference.

We have set up a prayer calendar in which you can individually sign up to be in prayer at a certain time each day through the season of Lent. Our hope is that we as a Conference can be in prayer continuously for 40 days. This time of prayer will begin March 13 at noon and conclude Holy Saturday at noon.

We invite you, as individuals or as churches, to sign up for an hour time slot to pray. You can sign up each week at www.24-7prayer.com/signup/f4173f. Also, each week a prayer guide will be posted to our website to assist you in prayer. It will be accessible at www.asbury-lr.org.

Action

Get Up & Give, a mission opportunity from Methodist Family Health (MFH), is asking United Methodists in Arkansas to spend Lent gathering up much-needed necessities for its clients, many of whom arrive at one of MFH’s behavioral health centers with nothing. For more information, see the related article on page 12 of this section.

Another Lenten initiative comes from the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), an organization with roots in the temperance movement of the early 20th century. GBCS is calling United Methodists to observe an alcohol-free Lent.

The Alcohol Free Lent challenge asks congregations and individuals to establish a “Spirit Fund” in conjunction with the Lenten challenge. For example, instead of a cocktail before dinner, drink water and put \$6 into a Spirit Fund jar; instead of a glass or two of wine at night, put \$7 in the fund; instead of a cooler of beer while watching basketball, have soft drinks and invest \$24 in the jar.

Spirit Fund proceeds can benefit a local recovery/addiction prevention project or one of the national projects listed in the Alcohol Free Lent section of GBCS’s website. To learn more or register your church’s participation, visit umc-gbcs.org/alcoholfreelent.

—compiled by Amy Forbus



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

MASTER'S TRANSPORTATION OF ARKANSAS

offers a full line of buses at 4 locations with over 200 New and Pre-owned buses in stock. **WE HAVE IT ALL!**

Sales, Service, Parts, Leasing & Rental

Call Today - 501-262-9380

4201 Malvern Rd., Hot Springs, Ark.
www.masterstransportation.com

If you don't call Master's Transportation of Arkansas, INC. You Will Pay Too Much!

Free web-based seminars for trustees, other leaders

The United Methodist General Board of Discipleship (GBOD) is sponsoring two upcoming webinars for local church leaders. Both webinars are free, and are hosted by Betsey Heavner, GBOD’s Director of Congregational Renewal. They begin at 6:30 p.m. Central time on the following dates:

“Trustees: Stewards of Church Property” on March 24—The role of trustees is practical, legal and biblical. Every trustee can benefit from this review of the responsibilities and reminder of effective ministry through this job.

“Easter Living for Church Leaders: Prayer and Faith” on April 28—Church leaders care deeply about their faith community so that sometimes the “doing” church work overwhelms “being” the church. Several church leaders will tell about their own experiences to inspire Easter renewal in leaders.

“The webinars include basic information about the position from the *Book of Discipline*, plus Biblical framework for the ministry of the role,” Heavner said. “Webinar participants can chat and send questions in real time, and all the webinars have follow-up resources online.”

For information or to register, visit gbod.org/committee_resources. Previous webinars for Pastor Parish Relations Committees and finance leaders are available for viewing at the website.

Spirit moving at Rock Springs UMC

The Rev. Mark Trout of Rock Springs UMC (Clay County) baptizes Cassidy Edwards by immersion at a neighboring church in Rector. Cassidy’s baptism was one of two immersions in a year-long line of baptisms, reaffirmations and professions of faith, resulting



in 17 additions to the Rock Springs congregation in 2010. The church reported an average attendance of 17 for the year 2009, and that average has now doubled.

According to church member Patricia Miller, between 15 and 20 of the congregation’s approximately 50 regular attendees are children and youth. “It is truly amazing how many children we have to be a small country church that some people travel 17 miles to attend,” she says.

COURTESY PHOTO

BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

<p>STAINED GLASS</p> <p>SOOS STAINED GLASS</p> <p>Serving Arkansas with Quality Stained Glass since 1973</p> <p>Churches ♦ Residential ♦ Commercial (800) 791-7667 www.soosstainedglass.com P.O. Box 13452, Maumelle, AR 72113</p>	<p>CHARTERED BUS</p> <p>OUACHITA COACHES</p> <p>Serving Arkansas safely since 1983 New Luxury Coaches ♦ Air Conditioned 800-782-2877</p>
<p>COUNSELING</p> <p>Daily Bread Counseling (Member of Clergy Counseling Network)</p> <p>Rev. Garry D. Teeter, MS, LPC, NCC, CBIST</p> <p>Offices in Benton, Hot Springs, Little Rock, & Dardanelle Call for confidential appointment 501.847.2229 1.877.847.2229 www.dailybreadcounseling.com</p>	



Imagine Ministry
(continued from
page 1A)

refine its vision to lead the Arkansas Conference into “deep change”—a phrase borrowed from the title of a book by Robert E. Quinn. (For more information on *Deep Change*, see the review in the Dec. 3, 2010, issue of this publication.)

Leadership 100 members participated in worship and prayer, engaged in discussion and provided feedback, both in plenary sessions and through small group reflection.

The IM team found its time with these leaders “extremely productive,” said the Rev. Mackey Yokem, the IM team’s convener. “The team learned a whole lot. The questions that were presented were very thought-provoking.”

Preview of proposals

What is the Imagine Ministry team planning to propose at this year’s Annual Conference? Revamped vision and mission statements and core measures for ministry across the Conference kicked off the opening session of the Feb. 18 gathering. (See the “Vision and Mission” box on this page for details.)

To help local churches catch the vision and fulfill their mission, the IM team recommends a process that will give churches the opportunity to assess and identify themselves with a strategic category for ministry and mission. Congregations will then develop their own missional goals and be held accountable for reaching them.

In future years, the team expects further development of ways to hold both clergy and laity accountable for their discipleship, but the local church self-assessment serves as a concrete starting point for those conversations.



With a smartphone-inspired image of potential Conference ministry structure appearing on a screen in the background, Jim Argue answers questions about the Imagine Ministry team’s proposals.

AUM PHOTOS BY PATRICK SHOWNES

On the Conference level, the IM team will propose a reduction in the number of districts within the Arkansas Conference. They are currently recommending moving from nine districts to five, with realignment taking place in 2012. The IM team’s presentation to the Leadership 100 explained the rationale for reducing districts: “Resources freed from a nine-district structure will be redirected toward the mission field and local church to address the making of disciples at the local level.”

“We are not going to silo our work; we’re going to be in constant

conversation,” said Bishop Charles Crutchfield when asked about the effect of a lower number of district superintendents on the cabinet’s knowledge of local churches. Bishop Crutchfield said the focus will be on the local church, not the pastor, except to the extent of asking whether the gifts of a particular pastor fit a particular local church.

Along with the reduction in the number of superintendents would come a shift in how a DS spends his or her time. Some duties would be shared with people filling the new roles of the circuit elder (clergy) and the congregational coach (laity). Circuit elders and congregational coaches would be appointed by the cabinet and receive special training for their work with local churches.

If the Annual Conference approves the district reduction, a special called session of the Annual Conference will be held in October 2011 to address the details of district realignment and the budgets associated with such a transition.

From left, the Revs. Bud Reeves, Michael Roberts and Stephen Coburn serve as song leaders for a time of worship during the Leadership 100 gathering.



Vision and mission for the
Arkansas Conference UMC

Current vision statement:

A church alive in the grace of God offering Christ, transforming lives, and changing our world through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Proposed new vision statement:

Congregations and surrounding communities transformed by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate holy living, justice and love of neighbor.

Current mission statement:

In order to fulfill the vision of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas, the mission of the Arkansas Conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by equipping local churches for mission and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the congregation, all to the glory of God.

Proposed new mission statement:

To make disciples of Jesus Christ equipped to transform the world with excellence and passion.

Proposed core measures

We shall embrace deep change that empowers us to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by:

1. Rooting all we do in our understanding of scripture, personal and social holiness (the foundational principles of United Methodism), so that we revitalize our connection and our ministry instead of being connected by our apportionments, appointments and benefits.
2. Establishing the mission field as the primary place for our attention and resources instead of directing most of our attention and resources to the institutional needs of congregations and clergy.
3. Equipping laity and clergy for shared outcomes for transformation with excellence instead of directing our resources toward congregational preservation and satisfaction of current members.
4. Organizing our ministry around the unique geographic, cultural, demographic, and ethnic contexts in our mission fields instead of treating every church, district and conference structure the same.

Another proposed change at the Conference level is a streamlining of committee structure. Currently, 74 Conference committees exist, only 32 of which are required by the Book of Discipline, United Methodism’s book of church law.

However, ministry can and does happen without a formal committee structure. Reducing committees to only those required by the *Book of Discipline* would relieve the need to fill seats on 42 committees, but would not impede ministry, according to the IM team.

“The important ministry needs of these committees will be addressed organically again, by networks of passionate people who see a need and want to respond,”

said the Rev. Susan Ledbetter, a member of the IM team.

Questions continue

The IM team acknowledged to the Leadership 100 that many questions remain unanswered.

Yokem said the IM team met for two hours immediately following the Leadership 100 gathering to review concerns passed along from the small group discussions and questions asked in the plenary sessions of the two-day meeting.

In addition, the team scheduled a follow-up web-based conference call for Feb. 26. At press time, Yokem expected that meeting to center on further changes to the IM team’s

proposals, based upon Leadership 100 feedback.

"This thing is evolving," he said. "Friday and Saturday were so rich with ideas and conversation and reactions... it really has spurred a lot of creative thought. What's really healthy, too, is that we're still getting comments and responses [days afterward]."

The IM team is using those comments and responses to refine its proposals. An executive summary of the plan must be submitted for inclusion in the pre-conference journal by March 14. On March 26, a series of four regional gatherings begins, allowing opportunities for clergy and laity throughout the state to receive and discuss the proposals before Annual Conference. At that point, a longer document detailing the team's 18-month process will become available.

Some questions asked among the Leadership 100 that cannot yet be fully answered deal with the financial implications of the proposed changes.

"There was talk about whether the proposal we heard will save the Conference and local churches money over what is currently being budgeted, apportioned, and spent," said Stark Ligon, lay leader of the Central District and part of the Leadership 100.

"If spending even the same amount differently will let us do church and deliver services more effectively, then I believe that is the type of 'big change' we need to

embrace for the new century," he said.

Change must occur

Changes of any kind will raise questions—and a wide variety of questions from a group of 100 people. But aside from the questions, the leaders present at the Feb. 18-19 gathering all seemed to agree that change is necessary.

"[The IM team has] done a great job in diagnosing the problem and helping us all to see that continuing on the current path leads to a bleak future for the United Methodist churches in Arkansas," said the Rev. Jeff Jones, pastor of Sardis UMC and Leadership 100 participant.

"Some of the proposals currently lack clarity and we are being asked to embrace a future that remains relatively unknown," he said. "This is scary, but I have great faith and trust in the members of the IM team who are leading us through this time of change."

For Ashley Coldiron, a member of St. James UMC Little Rock and a Leadership 100 participant, the elements of the plan that offer the most promise are a renewed focus

on mission and an emphasis on placing power at the local church level.

"I believe the radical change we need in order to see our denomination grow and thrive is going to come from a grassroots movement within our local churches," she said. "What works in Portland, Arkansas might not work at St. James UMC in Little Rock. We have to make sure each of our churches is connecting with their own community in active mission."

Some members of the Leadership 100 voiced reservations about the lack of specifics in this draft of the plan.

"I'm encouraged that all these possibilities are being considered, but I am anxious about the absence of any part of the plan involving children, youth and young adults," said Michelle Moore, youth minister at First UMC Conway and participant in the Leadership 100.

Bishop Crutchfield reminded those gathered that voting on proposals at Annual Conference does not guarantee the change the church needs.

"Whatever happens at Annual Conference is not an end," he said. "It's just a step along the way."



Bishop Charles Crutchfield shares a devotional and offers words of encouragement to those gathered at the Leadership 100 retreat.

Want to learn more about Imagine Ministry?

Visit arumc.org/imagineministry to view the slide presentations from the Feb. 18-19 gathering, as well as other materials previously posted. You may also choose to attend one of four regional gatherings:

- Saturday, March 26 at 10:00 a.m., First UMC Camden
- Saturday, April 2 at 10:00 a.m., First UMC Wynne
- Sunday, April 3 at 3:00 p.m., First UMC Springdale
- Saturday, April 16 at 8:30 a.m., First UMC North Little Rock*

*The North Little Rock meeting is part of the larger Vital Signs event, and pre-registration is recommended. See related article on this page.

APRIL 16, 2011

VITAL SIGNS

HOW VITAL IS YOUR CHURCH?

imagine ministry

REACHING FORWARD TO WHAT IS AHEAD

- 9 WORKSHOPS
- KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY DR. GIL RENDLE
- WORSHIP
- IMAGINE MINISTRY PRESENTATION

Vital Signs includes workshops on grant writing, older adults, Imagine Ministry and more

Nine workshops, a presentation from the Imagine Ministry team and a keynote address from church leadership consultant Dr. Gil Rendle make this year's Vital Signs event a unique opportunity for Arkansas United Methodist laity and clergy to learn new approaches to ministry.

First UMC North Little Rock, 6701 John F. Kennedy Blvd., serves as the host church for this day of worship, training and discussion centered around the vitality and effectiveness of our congregations.

On-site registration opens at 8:30 a.m., and worship begins at 9:00 a.m. Workshops conclude at 3:45 p.m.

Rendle, author of six books including *Journey in the Wilderness: New Life for Mainline Churches* (Abingdon Press, 2010), has served as a consultant to our Conference's Imagine Ministry team during their discernment process. He will present key concepts that have driven the team's work up to this point.



Gil Rendle

regional gatherings: Saturday, March 26 at 10:00 a.m., First UMC Camden; Saturday, April 2 at 10:00 a.m., First UMC Wynne; and Sunday, April 3 at 3:00 p.m., First UMC Springdale.

Clergy and laity from across the state who are unable to attend the meetings near them are especially encouraged to attend Vital Signs.

Vital Signs participants will have opportunities to become engaged in the Imagine Ministry process through five different workshops, each led by a different Imagine Ministry team member.

Four additional workshops relate to grant writing, demographics research, older adult ministry and sound financial practices in the local church.

For complete descriptions of the workshops, see the second page of the Vital Signs online registration form at arumc.org/register.

Registration details

The registration fee is \$15 per person and includes lunch.

Visit arumc.org/register to reserve your spot for Vital Signs. Online registration remains open until April 12. Walk-up registrations will also be accepted the morning of the event, but your pre-registration guarantees adequate seating and meals.

If your church is not already participating in *A New Way to Do Church*, the Bible study developed by the Imagine Ministry team, consider studying the material with others preparing to attend Vital Signs. Based on the development of the early church in the book of Acts, the reading and video components of the study are available online at learn.arumc.org.

Imagine Ministry

Following Rendle's keynote, the Imagine Ministry team will present the results of its most recent work, including a preview of proposals to be made at Annual Conference in June. The team has spent more than a year discerning how United Methodists in Arkansas can be the church in a new, more fruitful way.

The Imagine Ministry team's presentation will contain the same information provided at three other

Places of the heart: Rural churches at crossroads



Members of Tulip UMC in south central Arkansas have prayed and shared in worship together for more than 160 years.

BY HEATHER HAHN
United Methodist News Service

Sunlight streams through the frosted-glass windows of Tulip United Methodist Church, a white, wooden building on the side of a little-used country road.

Entering a sanctuary that holds the tangy, old-wood scent of an antique shop, congregants catch up on news about far-flung children and grandchildren, and buck each other up through the maladies of aging and the routines of retirement.

The church cannot afford bulletins. But the 15 worshippers do not need them. The order of worship is as familiar and reassuring as a favorite recipe.

They share joys and concerns—one celebrates a local crafts fair she visited, the pastor expresses delight that his granddaughter lost a tooth. They pray, sing beloved hymns, recite the Apostles' Creed taped to the front of their 1966 Cokesbury hymnals, take up an offering and listen to a sermon.

And then they have more fellowship.

"They are like family to me," Ida Mae Nutt, 83, says of her fellow congregants.

This spirit of community is why these 15 people keep not only the Tulip church open, but also three other nearby churches in Dallas County in south-central Arkansas. They rotate each Sunday among the four churches—Hunter's Chapel, Tulip, Waverly and Carthage—honoring the memories each of the buildings holds.

Their commitment to maintain all four churches is a story of sacrifice in an age when many people and institutions—manufacturers, schools and businesses—have fled rural communities.

In 2009, 207 rural churches closed their doors.

United Methodist leaders,

presiding over an aging denomination losing U.S. members and resources, are asking the church to place priority on building "vital" churches, and to hold bishops and pastors accountable for membership growth.

Many in the rural church feel they are being left behind precisely at their moment of greatest need.

Hanging on

Nutt married into Carthage UMC in 1950. She and her late husband, John, a longtime song leader at the church, enjoyed traveling to Saturday night "singings" at area congregations.

Back then, Carthage was a thriving sawmill town with stores, service stations, a doctor's office and an auto dealership.

Today, the town's population has dropped by half to slightly more than 400. The mill, sold years ago to a company based in Idaho, now employs few locals. Children grew up and moved away to look for work. A handful of churches are what remains of the community's once bustling downtown.

Nutt is the sole surviving member of Carthage UMC.

The UMC has far more buildings than it needs, admits the Rev. Roger Grace, president of the United Methodist Rural Fellowship. Many were built when the main mode of transportation was a horse, and people only could travel a few miles to get to church.

"The ties many times are to the building, and it's very difficult for people to let go emotionally," Grace says. "If you think with your heart instead of your mind, this is what happens. There is a real sense of failure if people let go of their church."

Denominational leaders also worry that preserving smaller, "family" congregations limits outreach to newcomers. In Carthage, for example, the population is largely African American, but the four

nearest UMCs are all white.

And yet there is something both Wesleyan and Christlike in the efforts of members of even the smallest churches to keep faith alive in their communities, advocates for such churches say.

Nutt contributes about \$145 a month to help pay for the pastor, the church's liability insurance, maintenance and apportionments. She cleans the inside of the church and weeds and trims bushes outside.

Each day draws her closer to God.

"I have wondered many times how have I ever made it through," she says. "But it always comes back that God has been with me and taken me through all this. He is still watching over me today."

For the foreseeable future, rural churches will remain the backbone of the UMC. More than six in 10 of the church's 34,000 congregations and about a quarter to a third of the church's 8 million members in the U.S. are in rural settings.

Rural life offers many gifts, nearly 1,000 leaders say in a 2010 survey from the United Methodist Rural Fellowship:

- Meaningful worship was identified as the greatest strength of rural congregations.
- While it is an increasing struggle, many rural churches express great pride in paying 100 percent of apportionments.
- Rural churches today symbolize Christian hope. In many rural communities, the church is the last institution standing.

The Rev. James E. Batts, a local pastor licensed to preach in 1956, understands why the four churches are so important. His wife's grandfather helped build Hunter's Chapel's current building in the early 20th century.

Batts, 72, served the four churches from 1997 to 2005, and came out of retirement in 2009 to be their pastor once again. When he looks out from the pulpit of Hunter's Chapel, he pictures the circuit riders who once stood where he now preaches and the generations who have made this their spiritual home.

He may retire again at 75. But for now, Batts says he feels privileged to minister to such a loving congregation.

"I'd like to have a whole church full of young people, but I know that will never happen. You just do what you can do," Batts says. "I'm proud that the Lord allows me to minister here. Wherever two or three are gathered in his name, that's where God is and that's where I want to be."

Difficult decisions

Not every rural church will make it.

Although the Arkansas Conference chips in \$1,000 a year, the churches of the Carthage charge are "on hospice care," says the Rev. Dennis Spence, superintendent of the Southeast District. The budget for the four churches was a total of \$9,565 last year, including their apportionments to the wider church.

If possible, Spence says, the Conference wants to let the churches "determine when they are ready to die with dignity."

Each rural church is different, however. Many respondents to the rural fellowship survey say their congregations are relatively healthy.

Often, rural church leaders say, the denomination has fallen short in giving them the support they need for revival.

"I am frustrated when I hear the conference talk about closing churches and consolidating congregations 'to save money' in areas where there may not be another Methodist church for 50 miles minimum," one rural leader says in the survey. "Small and rural congregations need to feel that they are important to the denomination." Each day Hunter's Chapel survives is a lifeline to Mary Key, 81. She remembers as a child riding in a wagon along a dirt road to get to the one-room church building.

Hunter's Chapel UMC is where she, her three children and one of her grandchildren were baptized. And the cemetery next to the church is where, when the time comes, she plans to be buried alongside multiple generations of her family.

Until she had a stroke six years ago, she was the building's main



Mary Key sits in a pew of Hunter's Chapel UMC. Key grew up there and expects to be buried there.

UMNS PHOTOS BY HEATHER HAHN

caretaker. She still looks forward each weekend to Sunday school and worship, where her faith and the warm smiles of fellow church members are sources of comfort.

"If it wasn't for the Lord, I would be alone a lot of the time," she says. "My husband is hard of hearing, and since my stroke, he does not understand me. Talking to the Lord helps, and I love the people in the church."

Still, from the oldest to the youngest worshippers, members of the Dallas County churches sense the end is near.

Luke and Cheryl Womack, members of Waverly UMC along with Luke's parents, talk about where they will go with their 3-year-old son, Daniel, when the churches close.

Already, Cheryl stays home with Daniel when the weather is cold because the church's tiny butane heaters are not enough to keep the boy warm. And her son is getting to the age where he needs to be in Sunday school, Cheryl Womack says.

"I trust that God will have his own way of working that out somehow," she says.

Closing is not necessarily a bad thing, says Grace of the United Methodist Rural Fellowship.

Churches are living organisms, and they all have a life expectancy, he says. He points out that the book of Revelation was addressed to seven churches that no longer exist.

"When a person dies, you celebrate their life and mourn their passing, and life universal goes on," Grace says. "I think the same goes on with the church. When a church dies, you celebrate the good, you mourn their passing, but the church universal goes on."

But many rural churches look to a brighter future.

In northwestern Ohio, some 850 miles northeast of Tulip UMC, 10-year-old Ashley Kelley stops her bike in front of the empty building that used to be Belmore UMC. She surprises the Rev. Tom Graves, who is standing outside, by asking, "My dad wants to know, are you going to reopen this church?"

The answer is no. But within a month, members of a nearby parish are picking up Ashley and some of her friends for worship.

Belmore does not survive. But five other rural churches in this part of Ohio have formed a partnership that is giving each of them new life.

Hahn is a reporter for UMNS and a former editor of the Arkansas United Methodist.

BOOK REVIEW: Mosler urges readers to let go of security

Way Off Base

By Matt Mosler

High Point Publishers,
2010

BY HEATH BRADLEY
Special Contributor

Matt Mosler's *Way Off Base* is a book with a simple point that poses a difficult challenge.

The author, who Arkansas readers may recognize as co-host of the KARK 4 Today morning show, presses the reader to let go of making security and comfort our number one priority and to follow the lead of God no matter what.

The image which guides the book, and is the basis for the title, is that of children playing a game of tag. Usually, a tree or slide or other convenient object is designated as

"base," which is, of course, the place where you can go for security and escape the dangers of being caught.

Mosler points out that many of us try to live out our lives never leaving "base," out of fear of failing or of simply not wanting to give up the comforts of security.

His metaphor resonates well with me, because as the father of two young daughters, I have played many games of chase. I have observed that after getting caught several times, my girls are much more likely to play it safe and stay on base. This is when the game gets really boring, at least from my perspective.

This pattern repeats itself in our lives in many ways, as individuals and as churches. We try something, it doesn't work, and so we go back to base, afraid to leave and get caught again.

I have to think that when we do this, God gets really bored with us. I have to think that God would much rather see us risk getting tagged than

to stay on base all the time; that the comforts we build up are not as nearly impressive to God as the failures that we risk for advancing God's kingdom of love in the world.

In his chapter on "The Role of the Modern Day Church," Mosler points out that we often see church as a "base," as a place where we go to feel safe again and find comfort from the dangers of the world. This is a fine and good thing so far as it goes, but, as he points out, the way we do church gets distorted when safety becomes our sole end game.

Just as the game of tag is ultimately oriented around children running around, the life of discipleship to Christ is ultimately oriented around living in God's world as witnesses to a love beyond human comprehension.

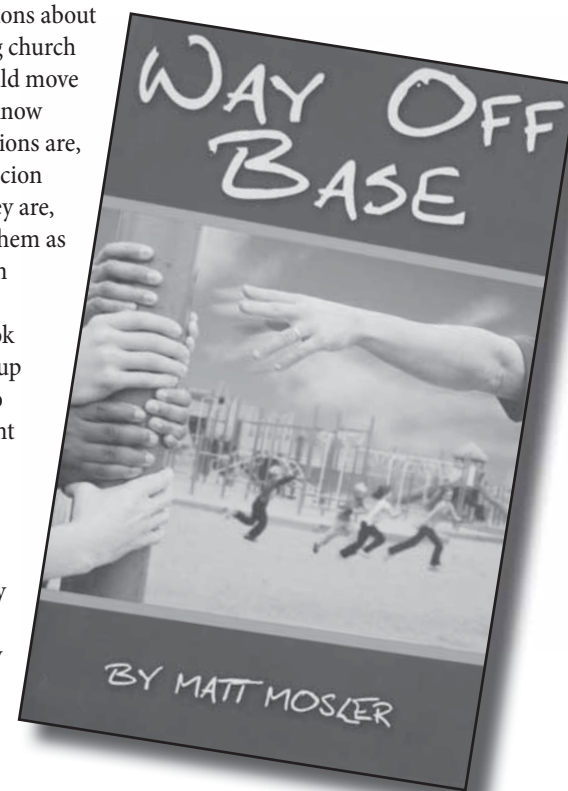
As a young United Methodist pastor reading this book, I couldn't help but think about the current situation of our denomination.

We are going through a phase where the Spirit is stirring us to ask

some deep questions about how we are doing church and how we should move forward. I don't know what all the solutions are, but I have a suspicion that whatever they are, we will not find them as long as we stay on base.

Mosler's book provides a wake-up call to all of us, to confess and repent of our security-seeking and comfort-driven lives, and to be willing to actually trust God and to live in such a way that could only be described as "way off base."

The Rev. Bradley serves as an associate pastor at Pulaski Heights UMC in Little Rock.



FILM REVIEW: 'Race to Nowhere' sheds light on silent epidemic

BY JAY CLARK
Special Contributor

The youth ministry of Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church in Little Rock recently sponsored a screening of the independent documentary, *Race to Nowhere: The Dark Side of America's Achievement Culture*.

Race to Nowhere asks questions about the over-scheduling and over-homeworking of young people, and how we might improve their education by being part of a movement to decrease their stress level.

One of the main arguments the film makes is that our schools are training kids to take tests and not to learn. To adhere to the standards of what each grade must learn, teachers must move quickly through an exorbitant amount of material at a breakneck pace while kids memorize the answers to score high on tests—and yet don't truly learn the information, and therefore don't retain it.

The film suggests that we are creating a generation of young people who are not creative thinkers, and thus need scripted answers.

A concerned mother turned filmmaker, Vicki Abeles aims her camera at the high-stakes, high-

pressure culture that has invaded our schools and our children's lives, creating unhealthy, disengaged, unprepared and stressed-out youth.

Featuring heartbreaking stories of young people in all types of communities who have been pushed to the brink, educators who are burned out and worried that students aren't developing the skills they need, and parents who are trying to do what's best for their kids, *Race to Nowhere* points to the silent epidemic in our schools:

- Cheating has become commonplace.
- Students are disengaged.
- Stress-related illness and depression run rampant.
- Many young people arrive at college and the workplace unprepared and uninspired.

Tens of thousands of people are coming together, using *Race to Nowhere* as the centerpiece for raising awareness, radically changing the national dialogue on

education and galvanizing change.

"As a mother, I experienced the stress firsthand and realized that no one was talking about it," says Vicki Abeles in a news release posted on

racetonowhere.com. "I saw kids who were anxious, depressed, physically ill, checking out, abusing drugs and, worst case, attempting suicide."

"I felt compelled to speak out about this crisis by making a film and giving voice to the students, teachers and parents," she

says. "I wanted to expose a deeper truth about our education system. We are graduating a generation of robo-students, unable to think and work independently, creatively and collaboratively."

Race to Nowhere is a call to action to challenge current assumptions on how to best prepare the youth of America to become healthy, bright, contributing and leading citizens.

'Race to Nowhere' is a call to action to challenge current assumptions on how to best prepare the youth of America to become healthy, bright, contributing and leading citizens.

The more than 300 people gathered at Pulaski Heights UMC for the screening seemed to resonate with some or all of the film's points. Something is wrong with the way our young people are over-scheduled in our schools and lives—and sometimes even our churches. Homework and other activities are killing what is left of family time and unstructured time just to be a young person.

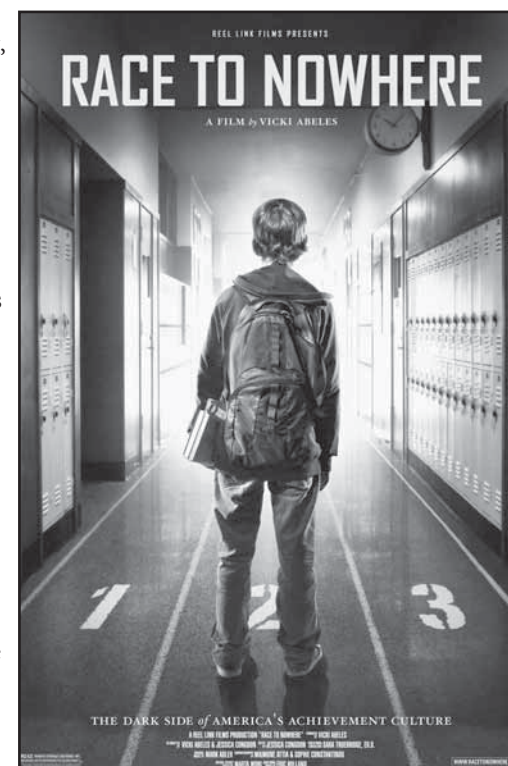
After the screening, one brave young man stood up during our question-and-answer time and began to cry. He told the audience what he had experienced and what he felt was true: There is a huge amount of stress and pressure on our young people to achieve more and more and build that resume and get into a good college.

The U.S. educational system has some potentially crippling issues. But what can we do to make solutions a priority?

To learn how you can help, visit racetonowhere.com,

where you can find suggestions for change on a personal and household level, as well as connect to larger efforts such as letter-writing campaigns, petitions and volunteering. Your church may even want to consider sponsoring a screening.

Jay Clark is a youth minister at Pulaski Heights UMC in Little Rock.



OBITUARY

MURFREESBORO, Tenn.

Doyne E. Graham

The Rev. Doyne E. Graham, 77, of Murfreesboro, Tenn., passed away on February 7, 2011, at Middle Tennessee Medical Center.

A member of the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church, he was raised in Stamps, Ark., and attended Hendrix College in Conway. He received his seminary training at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Ga.

He retired in 1998 after serving as a pastor for 42 years in Arkansas and East Tennessee. In his retirement, he attended First United Methodist Church in Murfreesboro.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Nathan E. Graham and Regina Sutherland Graham. He is survived by his wife of 51 ½ years, Betty Ruth Peek Graham of Murfreesboro; two sons, Ronald Doyne Graham of Murfreesboro and his wife, Virginia, and Terrell Alan Graham of Murfreesboro; one daughter, Rebecca Graham Rock and her husband, Mike, of Hermitage, Tenn.; two sisters, Veta Graham Blewster and her husband, Carroll, of Arkansas and Lou Dean Graham Howard and her husband, Bob, of North Carolina; and four grandchildren, Andrea Rock, Nathan Graham, Ethan Rock and Zachary Graham.

A memorial service was held on Thursday, February 10, 2011 at First United Methodist Church with the Revs. Michael O'Bannon and Thad Austin officiating. Burial followed at Mt. Hope Cemetery in Franklin, Tenn., with family and friends serving as pallbearers. The members of the Challenger Sunday School Class served as honorary pallbearers.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Building Fund of First UMC, 265 West Thomas Lane, Murfreesboro, TN 37129.



**Doyne
Graham**

State's Methodist museum relocates to Little Rock

UM archives, historical society make plans to merge; April 9 luncheon to feature Archives and History exec

The United Methodist Museum of Arkansas will settle into a new home this spring, and the Arkansas United Methodist Historical Society will welcome guests to that new home at First United Methodist Church of Little Rock with a celebration on April 9, 2011.

The museum, founded in 1995, was originally housed at Quapaw Quarter UMC Little Rock. It moved in 2005, when QQUMC expanded its HeARTwork ministry, which offers affordable studio space to local artists.

Asbury UMC Batesville then

hosted the museum, but the location further north had a negative impact on the number of museum visitors. In addition, the Batesville church leases part of its building to a fast-growing Hispanic congregation with an increasing need for space.

These factors led the historical society to seek a new, more central location for the museum. First UMC Little Rock offered space to meet the need.

The museum will occupy part of the oldest section of the 110-year-old facility. "It is all the more appropriate that the museum will be

located in this historic, vital downtown church," said society president the Rev. Don Nolley. "It's as though history begets history."

Accessible from both the 8th Street and Center Street entrances, the 2,200 square-foot space is located across the hall from First UMC's own History Room. Five rooms with moveable partitions will allow for flexibility in exhibits.

Unlike the Conference Commission on Archives and History, which oversees the Arkansas United Methodist archives now housed at Hendrix College's Bailey Library, the historical society lies outside the structure of the Arkansas Annual Conference. That arrangement will change at the 2011 Annual Conference—the two organizations are currently preparing to merge and form one entity within the Conference structure.

While the archives houses primarily print materials, the historical society's museum holds other types of artifacts from across the state.

Its collection includes pulpits, sections of pews, crosses, a mourner's bench, a pump organ, chairs, Bibles, antique preaching coats and robes, Communion ware, altar cloths, baptismal fonts, plaques, grave markers, photographs, quilts and nearly 100 commemorative plates from local churches. Ample space at First UMC will allow for future expansion.

Help make history at April 9 meeting

The United Methodist Historical Society of Arkansas will hold its annual meeting at noon on Saturday, April 9, 2011, at First UMC Little Rock. The Rev. Dr. Robert J. Williams, General Secretary of the denomination's General Commission on Archives and History, will speak at the luncheon.

Williams has served in the Greater New Jersey Conference, at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary and taught United Methodist studies at Princeton Theological Seminary. He also will preach at First UMC Little Rock on Sunday, April 10.

Though artifacts from the United Methodist Museum of Arkansas will not be on exhibit by April 9, the new space will be open that day for tours. The society plans to have the guest book ready for attendees to sign so they may "make history" as the first guests in the museum's new location.

The luncheon meeting and tour of the new space are open to the public. Luncheon tickets are \$10 per person; reserve seats by sending payment to Sue Osment Jones, 2210 Maplewood Drive, Conway, AR 72032. Please make reservations in advance to ensure adequate food for the meal.



Bob Williams

Native American Ministries requests Trail of Tears stories from AR churches

The Conference Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM) is currently compiling a list of churches that provided aid to Native Americans who came through Arkansas on the Trail of Tears. These churches will be recognized at Annual Conference this June.

If your local church was a part of the Trail of Tears, send information to J. Harris Moore, chair of CONAM, at jhmoore@nwacc.edu. The submission deadline is March 14. To learn more about CONAM's work, visit the Native American Ministry booth at Annual Conference.

Nominations sought for Steel-Hendrix, Youth Minister of the Year honors

Hendrix College has opened nominations for the Steel-Hendrix Awards and the Youth Minister of the Year award. The Steel-Hendrix Awards include the Mary and Ira A. Brumley Award, which recognizes outstanding religious education, and the Ethel K. Millar Award, which honors outstanding religion and social awareness.

The Youth Minister of the Year award recognizes an outstanding youth minister, director or counselor. The honoree may be a full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer youth worker who has exemplified outstanding leadership. Nominees should hold membership and serve in a UMC in Arkansas; be involved with the connectional system; participate in district and Conference youth events; and be intentional about making disciples of Jesus Christ through missions, Bible studies, outreach, evangelism and Christian fellowship. Nominees must also have participated in some type of continuing education in the area of youth ministry.

Nominations for any of the three awards should consist of a letter that includes the individual's career highlights and reason for nomination. Nominations may be submitted to the Rev. J. Wayne Clark, Hendrix College, 1600 Washington Avenue, Conway, AR 72032, or e-mailed to clark@hendrix.edu. The nomination deadline is April 4, 2011.

The awards are sponsored by the Marshall T. Steel Center for the Study of Religious and Philosophy. Named in honor of Marshall T. Steel, a prominent minister and former president of Hendrix College, the Steel-Hendrix Awards were inaugurated in 1984 to celebrate the college's 100 years of relationship with the United Methodist Church.

Miller Center Summer Institute seeks students exploring call to ordained ministry

The Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics and Calling at Hendrix College invites high school students wishing to learn more about ordained ministry to apply for its Summer Institute, held June 13-17, 2011, at First UMC Conway.

The Summer Institute is open to United Methodist students who have completed their sophomore or junior year of high school, as well as those who have just graduated with the class of 2011. The five-day experience includes worship, shadowing United Methodist clergy, helping with service projects, small-group sharing and having fun along the way.

Students whose applications are accepted pay nothing to attend the Institute, which is funded in full by the Miller Center.

For more information or to receive an application, contact the Rev. J.J. Whitney, 501-450-4590 or whitney@hendrix.edu. Applications should be submitted by April 29.

Get Up & Give 2011 includes Lenten emphasis

Methodist Family Health is issuing a pre-Easter challenge: "This Lent, don't just give something up. Get Up & Give."

As the state's only comprehensive behavioral healthcare system serving children and families, Methodist Family Health receives clients who may arrive at their facilities without even basic necessities.

"Many of our clients arrive with nothing—just the clothes on their back and maybe a few belongings in a trash bag," says Alyssa Anderson, director of communications for Methodist Family Health.

"This event allows us to collect the basic necessity items needed by the children in our care, as well as duffel bags to hold those belongings."

Local churches and mission groups can help the organization's ministry provide such items by participating in "40 Days of Collecting," Methodist Family Health's 2011 Get Up & Give project.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, March 9, collect new items listed in the box below. Continue collecting throughout the season of Lent, culminating with Easter Sunday.

Then, between April 25 and 29, deliver your group's collected items to one of the six drop-off locations across the state. In addition, the Little Rock drop-off location will receive items on May 1.

The May 1 drop-off also includes a celebration: Visit Methodist Family Health's Little Rock counseling clinic, 1600 Aldersgate Road, from 2 to 4 p.m. for live praise music, refreshments and guided tours of the clinic.

To learn more about the services Methodist Family Health provides, visit methodistfamily.org.



40 DAYS OF COLLECTING

Items most needed by children and families in Methodist Family Health's programs

Socks	Toothpaste
Underwear	Toilet paper
Diapers	Books
Laundry detergent	Coloring books
Dishwashing detergent	Crayons and markers
Paper towels	Board games
Toothbrushes	Backpacks/duffel bags

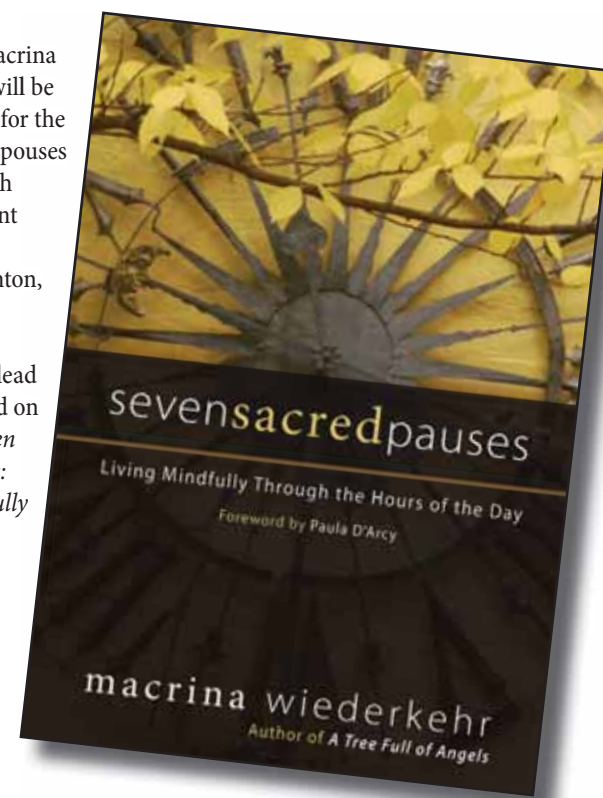
Drop-off locations, April 25-29

Batesville: 1539 Harrison Street 870-569-4890	Heber Springs: 407 South 7th Street 501-365-3022	Little Rock: 1600 Aldersgate Road, Suite 100B 501-661-0720
Fayetteville: 2592 N. Gregg Avenue, Suite 16 479-582-5565	Jonesboro: 2912 King Street 870-910-3757	Magnolia: 617 E North Street 870-234-0739

Clergy spouses retreat to feature Benedictine author

Sister Macrina Wiederkehr will be the presenter for the 2011 Clergy Spouses Retreat, March 25-27 at Mount Eagle Retreat Center in Clinton, Ark.

Sister Macrina will lead sessions based on her book *Seven Sacred Pauses: Living Mindfully through the Hours of the Day*. Reading the book before the retreat is recommended, but not required.



Seven Sacred Pauses draws the reader into the practice of contemplative listening. Sister Macrina advocates traditional seven sacred pauses of monastic life as a valuable practice to assist people in keeping vigil with their own lives.

The retreat also includes several hours of unstructured time.

Attendance is limited to 40 spouses of United Methodist clergy. Cost is \$90; partial scholarships are available. The event is underwritten by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

For information or to register, contact the Rev. Lu Harding at 501-723-4580 or lu@mounteagle.org.

Your congregation has placed its trust in you...

...more than 100,000 congregations place their trust in us.

Let's face it ... insurance is basically a matter of trust: you trusting a company like ours to be there for you when you need us. To pay claims fast and fairly. To understand how unique your religious organization truly is.

Church Mutual insures more than twice as many congregations as any other insurer. And every year, we come to the aid of more congregations. Our experience and dedication to the religious community are simply unparalleled.

For a detailed on-site risk analysis of your facilities and activities (a value-added service we offer at no charge) and premium quotation, or for a closer look at why more than 100,000 religious organizations trust Church Mutual, simply call 800-554-2642 or go to www.churchmutual.com/onsite.

Church Mutual insures more than 10,000 United Methodist churches.



Listening. Learning. Leading®

Listening, Learning, Leading, is a registered trademark of Church Mutual Insurance Company. © 2011 Church Mutual Insurance Company

Because you shared together...

Thank you for Sharing Together in Christ's Name through your local church's apportioned giving. It makes a difference in our ministry and mission throughout Arkansas. Here's how:

- In October, the Parish and Community Development team awarded grants to 10 local churches in five of our nine districts. Because you shared together in Christ's name, those churches gained the resources to complete projects ranging from basic facility repairs that enabled them to return their focus to ministry, to local mission efforts and seed funding for long-term outreach efforts.
- In January, a tornado struck the Cincinnati community in northwest Arkansas. Because you shared together in Christ's name, the Arkansas Conference was able to provide \$10,000 in assistance to the people of Cincinnati UMC, who answered the unexpected needs of disaster relief.
- Also in January and early February, overnight temperatures in the Little Rock area sank well below freezing. Because you shared together in Christ's name, the Arkansas Conference provided emergency financial assistance to help keep open a warming center hosted by canvascommunity UMC, offering assistance and safety to the area's homeless community.

When we share together in Christ's name, we help transform the world.



REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

umportal.org



Rural Churches

Faithful ministry,
dwindling numbers | 4B



Gen-X Rising

The disciplined
preparation of Lent | 6B



Wesleyan Wisdom

The properties of
powerful preaching | 7B

Section B

March 4, 2011



PHOTO COURTESY OF DIVISION ON MINISTRIES WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

United Methodist youth from across the nation are invited to attend Youth 2011, a two-site gathering to be sponsored in July by the General Board of Discipleship's Division on Ministries with Young People.

Event grows to serve, challenge UM youth

BY MALLORY MCCALL
Staff Writer

Grand things happen every four years—U.S. presidential elections, the Olympics, Leap Year, the World Cup and the United Methodist Church's international Youth event sponsored by the General Board of Discipleship's Division on Ministries with Young People (DMYP).

Just as they have every four years since 1988, United Methodist youth ages 12-18 will gather for worship, concerts, small groups, workshops and flat-out fun at Youth 2011.

In 2007, over 6,200 youth from

four continents gathered in Greensboro, N.C., and this year coordinators are preparing for an even larger turnout. The last three Youth events were hosted in the southeast, but this time around the DMYP is branching out, aiming to make the experience more accessible and affordable to youth on both sides of the country.

Youth 2011 will be held twice—once at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., July 13-16, and then again at the Convention Center in Sacramento, Calif., July 27-30. The same program will be presented at both locations—same keynote speakers, musicians and artists.

"We just wanted everybody in the church nationwide to feel like they could attend without as much trouble as they may have had in the past," said Blake Thornell, DMYP's Youth event coordinator.

So, who's making this happen? Youth, of course. A design team of 27 United Methodist youth and youth workers from as far as Hawaii and the Philippines have been hard at work planning logistics, coordinating volunteers, lining up performers, praying and even blogging and hosting group chats on the event's highly interactive website.

"We're all about the youth, for the

youth, by the youth," said Mr. Thornell. "They're really the heart and soul of what's going on."

'More Than'

This year's theme, "More Than: You think you are ordinary? Think again," came as a result of the DMYP's inaugural "Dream Retreat" held in 2008 when a group of United Methodist young people and leaders met to brainstorm and discuss their vision for the event and the next generation of the church.

"We had a lot of discussion about how throughout the Bible, God uses

■ See 'Youth' page 8B

Bishops react to statement on homosexuality

BY HEATHER HAHN
United Methodist News Service

A call by a group of retired bishops to end the United Methodist Church's ban on homosexual clergy has prompted varied reactions from other episcopal leaders in the denomination.

Thirty-three retired bishops on Jan. 31 released a statement urging the church to remove the *Book of Discipline's* ban on practicing homosexuals serving as clergy. "We believe the God we know in Jesus is leading us to issue this counsel and call—a call to transform our church life and our world," the bishops said.

In February, some bishops urged prayer and thoughtful discussion, while others expressed disappointment in the retired leaders. Still others voiced support for the change. In each case, bishops have stressed their commitment to uphold church law.

Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster, president of the Council of Bishops, released a statement on Feb. 3 encouraging "thoughtful, prayerful dialogue about sensitive and challenging issues."

"We call this holy conferencing," Bishop Goodpaster wrote on behalf of the council's executive committee. "We are committed to embody this in our own life as a council and lead the church in doing the same."

Meanwhile, three more retired bishops have signed the Statement of Counsel to the Church, bringing the total to 36 retired bishops asking the church to change its policy.

The three new signers are Bishops Daniel Arichea of the Philippines, Alfred Johnson of New Jersey and Richard B. Wilke of Kansas. About 42 percent of the denomination's 85 retired bishops have signed the statement.

Most signers live and serve in the United States. But in addition to Bishop Arichea, two other retired leaders from the denomination's central conferences signed the statement—Bishops Joseph C. Humper of

■ See 'Bishops' page 2B

FAITH WATCH

U.S. churches still in decline, says report

Membership in mainline Protestant denominations including the United Methodist Church continue to decline while some Pentecostal traditions are on the rise, according to the National Council of Churches' 2011 Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches. The figures compiled in 2009 showed a 1 percent decrease overall in U.S. church membership, to 145.8 million.

PCUSA pastor cleared in same-sex wedding

The top court of the Presbyterian Church (USA) on Feb. 2 found a Boston minister not guilty of violating church law when she married two women in 2008 in Massachusetts, where gay marriage is legal. The denomination's Permanent Judicial Commission cleared the Rev. Jean Southard because the wedding took place before the church had decided that its ban on same-sex marriage is mandatory for clergy.

Study shows churches, charities don't compete

Houses of worship and other charities often aren't in competition for dollars but instead tend to reap donations from similar donors, according to a study by Phoenix-based Grey Matter Research Consulting. Conducted last May among a nationally representative sample of 2,005 U.S. adults, the study found more than 50 percent of people who financially supported congregations had also given to at least one charitable organization in the last year.

App can't forgive sins, Vatican official warns

Just in case Catholics are wondering if a new iPhone app can forgive their sins, the Vatican has issued an answer: No. According to its Indiana-based producer, "Confession: A Roman Catholic App" invites users to prepare for confession by examining their consciences. However, "one may not speak in any sense of confessing via iPhone," the Rev. Federico Lombardi, director of the Holy See Press Office, said in a Feb. 9 statement.

■ **BISHOPS** Continued from page 1B

Sierra Leone and Franz W. Schäfer of Switzerland.

The *Book of Discipline* states that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in the United Methodist Church."

The retired bishops' statement asks that this passage be removed.

Only General Conference can change the *Book of Discipline*. The subject of homosexuality has surfaced every four years at General Conference, and delegates consistently have voted to keep the restriction.

The next such gathering is scheduled for April 24-May 4, 2012, in Tampa, Fla., and Bishop Goodpaster asks church members to pray for the whole church as General Conference approaches.

In the mean time, Bishop Goodpaster assured church members that the Council of Bishops remains "committed to living within the covenant defined by the *Book of Discipline*."

'A serious matter'

Neither active nor retired bishops are allowed to vote at General Conference.

Still, it is "a serious matter" when a group of bishops communicates to the church disagreement with established doctrine, Bishops John Schol and James E. Swanson said in separate statements to their respective conferences.

"The Council of Bishops needs to teach and lead; and when the church is divided on essential doctrine, teaching and leading becomes even more important," Bishop Schol told the Baltimore-Washington Conference in his statement.

In coming months, Bishop Schol said he hopes to invite United Methodist bishops with varying views to share the denomination's teachings on controversial matters. He committed to pray for the church and asked



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

Some delegates and visitors to the 2008 United Methodist General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, stood in response to a vote on homosexuality, while others remained seated.

others in his conference to do the same.

Bishop Swanson shared a similar message with the Holston Conference, which encompasses 900-plus churches in Tennessee, Georgia and Virginia.

"We want to make it clear that we respect the right of people of good conscience to disagree with the positions of the United Methodist Church," he said in a joint statement with Mary Ruth Richards, conference lay leader. "However, we assure you that we are committed to faithfully upholding the *Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church."

Voices of disagreement

Some bishops expressed disappointment with the retired bishops' public opposition to the *Book of Discipline's* current rule.

"I think that it's unfortunate that this group of bishops has stepped out-

side of the covenant relationship and find this the only way in which to voice their opinion about the issue of homosexuality," Oklahoma Bishop Robert E. Hayes Jr., said in an interview.

He said the statement steps outside the accepted process for changing church policy. Any person, regardless of whether that individual is clergy or a layperson, can petition General Conference to ask for a change.

"This circumvents our way of handling difficult issues," Bishop Hayes said. "I am very disappointed the bishops chose this way to make their opinions known."

Bishop Eben K. Nhwitiwa of Zimbabwe said, by and large, people in his conference stand by what the *Book of Discipline* says about homosexuality.

"Africa should not be pushed on this issue," he said. "The position of the United Methodist Church right now is the position that is in sync with the context of the African church right now."

Bishop John Innis of Liberia agreed. He said he respects the retired bishops, but he must stand with the *Book of Discipline*.

"We are all created by God," he said. "A person who practices homosexuality can be my friend, but I cannot condone that behavior."

Voices of support

Bishop Robert T. Hoshibata of the Oregon-Idaho Conference takes a very different view. He is among those who endorse the retired bishops' statement.

He believes "good, biblical people"

are on both sides of this issue.

"But . . . in the context where I am doing ministry, there are many persons that I know—gay and lesbian and transgender—who are good people, good Christians, who the church is neglecting or turning away from," he said.

Retired Bishops Sharon Z. Rader and Donald A. Ott said they circulated the statement to their fellow retirees urging the change in part because of their experience as church leaders.

Since the statement was released, Bishop Rader said the responses she has personally received have been almost universally positive. She said many have told her the initiative "brings hope for the future of our church and the making plain of our desire to invite, receive and empower all who desire to live as faithful disciples of Jesus as part of the United Methodist Church."

She and Bishop Ott have not sought the signatures of active bishops, but Bishop Rader is looking forward to hearing their thoughts.

"We hope the change we propose will help bishops and the whole church to find our place beside Jesus where people live on the margins of church and society," she said.

At this point, the Council of Bishops has not discussed the retired leaders' proposal as a group. Bishop Goodpaster, the council's president, predicted in an interview that when the council meets in May, "there will be some conversation."

Linda Bloom of United Methodist News Service contributed to this story.

THE UNITED METHODIST
REPORTER

www.umportal.org

news@umr.org

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.



UM CONNECTIONS

GBHEM names 13 Dempster Scholars

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Division of Ordained Ministry has awarded 13 Dempster Graduate Fellowships—which carry a value of up to \$10,000 annually, with a maximum of \$30,000 over a five-year period—to students committed to becoming seminary professors. This year's recipients are: Katherine Brown (Baltimore-Washington Conference), an incoming Ph.D. student at Catholic University; Andrew Dunning (Rocky Mountain Conference), a Ph.D. student at Southern Methodist University; Adam Ployd (Virginia Conference), a Ph.D. student at Emory; Gerald Liu (Mississippi Conference) and Carolyn Davis (Texas Conference), Ph.D. students at Vanderbilt; Nancy Hale (Upper New York Conference), a Th.D. student at Boston University School of Theology; David Scott (New England Conference), Jennifer Quigley (West Ohio Conference) and Erika Hirsch (New England Conference), Ph.D. students at Boston University School of Theology; Stephen Cady (Kansas East Conference), a Ph.D. student at Princeton Theological Seminary; Sang-woo Kim (New England Conference), a Th.D. student at Duke Divinity School; Julie Todd (New England Conference), a Ph.D. student at Iliff School of Theology; Mark Chung Hearn (Cal-Pac Conference), a Ph.D. student at Claremont.

Young adult ministry office names director

The Rev. Daniel J. "DJ" del Rosario has been named director of young adult ministry discernment and enlistment for the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry's Division of Ordained Ministry. Mr. Rosario, who currently serves as pastor of Lynden United Methodist Church in Lynden, Wash., will provide leadership in developing networks, programs and resources for clergy vocational discernment, enlistment and leadership formation of young adults in the United Methodist Church.

—Compiled by Mallory McCall

Court clarifies voting for GC clergy delegates

BY LINDA BLOOM
United Methodist News Service

DALLAS—When United Methodists start electing clergy delegates this spring to the denomination's top legislative meeting, several new groups will be eligible to vote for those representatives.

The new categories of electors for the 2012 General Conference were clarified by the denomination's Judicial Council in a special called session Feb. 12. The nine-member council serves as the church's "supreme court."

The new categories—related to elections conducted by annual conferences—are the result of the adoption of Amendment 19 to Paragraph 35 of the Constitution of the United Methodist Church.

As interpreted by the Judicial Council in a ruling released Feb. 14, those now eligible to vote are:

- Full clergy members;
- Associate members;
- "Provisional members who have been judged by the annual conference to have completed the educational requirements and have been elected to provisional membership"; and

• "Local pastors who have met two criteria: They have, by either of two options as determined by the annual conference, completed the constitutionally specified level of education; and they have been appointed by the bishop and served for two consecutive years, during which time no withdrawal of the appointed status has occurred."

The 2008 legislation was part of a long-term effort by the United Methodist Rural Fellowship, the National Fellowship of Associate Members and Local Pastors and other groups to expand the pool of those eligible to elect delegations, said the Rev. Roger Grace, the rural fellowship president.

Mr. Grace noted that many rural churches are served by local pastors. But under the previous *Book of Discipline*, the denominational law book, local pastors were not allowed to vote on representatives to the top legislative meetings.

"We always felt that was unfair to the rural churches," he said. "We felt the pool should be enlarged."

The 2008 General Conference refined the petition and adopted what became Amendment 19. That action later was ratified, as required, by the annual conferences, with a vote of 79 percent in favor of the legislative change.

Clear interpretation

Although the United Methodist Council of Bishops certified the vote

in spring 2010, the council was concerned that the amendment be interpreted consistently across the annual conferences. A declaratory decision was requested from the Judicial Council, which held the special called session in Dallas to consider the matter.

As certified, the amendment of Division Two, Section VI, Article IV of the constitution reads: "The clergy delegates to the General Conference and to the jurisdictional or central conference shall be elected from the clergy members in full connection and shall be elected by the clergy members of the annual conference or provisional annual conference who are deacons and elders in full connection, associate members, and those provisional members who have completed all of their educational requirements and local pastors who have completed course of study or an M.Div. degree and have served a minimum of two consecutive years under appointment immediately preceding the election."

In an oral hearing during the Feb. 12 session, Bishop Larry M. Goodpaster, president of the Council of Bishops, noted the bishops were not questioning the amendment itself but looking for clarity on how it should be interpreted. "The last thing any of us wants is for this amendment to be applied in different ways across the many annual conferences," he told council members.

One question, he said, was how to interpret the phrase "two consecutive years under appointment" and whether those years should be counted as the time between the dates a person is appointed to serve by the bishop or as an actual 24 months.

"Because of the nature of our itinerant system and because local pastors can be appointed at any time during the course of a calendar year, the 'two consecutive years' or the '24 months' becomes a necessary matter of interpretation and application," Bishop Goodpaster said.

In addition, some provisional members of annual conferences gain that status after completing half of their theological degrees. However, since Amendment 19 states that all educational requirements must be completed, a provisional member might have to serve three or more years before being eligible to vote for clergy delegates, Bishop Goodpaster pointed out.

A second question posed by the Council of Bishops related to the date that disciplinary educational requirements would have to be met for either provisional members or local pastors.

Such concerns are what led the bishops to seek an interpretation of

the amendment by the Judicial Council, Bishop Goodpaster said. "We believe this is too important a matter to be tested in several ways, and this calls into question the validity of an election process already completed," he told the council.

In its decision, the Judicial Council first noted that full clergy members of an annual or provisional conference are eligible to be elected as clergy delegates to General Conference, jurisdictional conference (regional gatherings in the United States) or central conference (gatherings in Africa, Europe and the Philippines).

Those eligible to become delegates also are qualified to cast ballots for others, as are associate members of

to define what is meant by 'two consecutive years under appointment.'"

What can be inferred, however, is "... that any local pastor who has met the educational requirement and has been appointed, either full-time or part-time, for two consecutive years 'immediately preceding the election' without being deprived of an appointment during those two consecutive years of appointment is eligible to vote on clergy delegates," the decision said.

Issue of clarity

The Judicial Council noted that it "cannot provide legislative language where the General Conference is silent" or "create uniformity where the Constitution and the Discipline of the

'We always felt that [the voting rules were] unfair to the rural churches. We felt the pool should be enlarged.'

—Rev. Roger Grace

the conference.

As stipulated by the *Book of Discipline*, only the annual conference "has the authority to decide whether and when those requirements have been 'completed' for provisional membership. Only those whom the annual conference has elected as provisional members are eligible to vote in the election of clergy delegates."

For local pastors, both the educational options and service requirements must be satisfied before they are eligible electors, the Judicial Council declared. "The annual conference is the only body with the authority to determine whether those elements have been satisfied," the decision said.

While there is "substantial guidance" regarding the educational elements of the amendment, the council said, "there is no legislative clarity ...

Church create diversity."

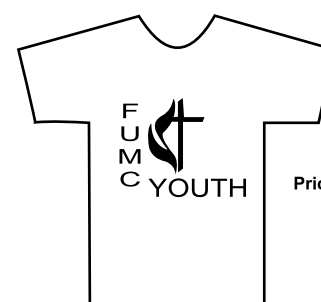
Less confusion would have arisen over the amendment, council members concluded, with "a more deliberate process by which the body (2008 General Conference) could have seen and reviewed the full text of the proposed constitutional amendment prior to its adoption. ..."

Bishop Goodpaster agreed that the record from the *Daily Christian Advocate* of the 2008 General Conference did not clarify some of the questions the bishops had. "I'm grateful that they [the Judicial Council] heard it and gave us some direction," he said after the decision was released.

The rural fellowship, which had filed a brief with Judicial Council, also expressed appreciation for the decision which, Mr. Grace said, "is pretty much what we had in mind."

Spread the Good News

Advertise your Church, Youth Group, Mission Trip, Children's Services, etc... using T-Shirts



\$3⁵⁰ ea.

Price includes printing high quality t-shirts with your custom artwork. Minimum 12 shirts. One color.

www.directstitch.com
469-585-2824

Our ministry is promoting Christ thru printed apparel.



Saving Bowbells

Rural churches keep hope alive

UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

The increasing mechanization of agriculture means there are fewer small farms—and fewer large farm families—populating rural communities and churches.

BY DAVID BRIGGS
United Methodist News Service

BOWBELLS, N.D.—The fields of wheat and flax stand higher than they normally would on this mid-September day. Anxious farmers who sweated through an arid summer now pray for two solid days of sun to dry out their crops so they can be harvested.

John Redmer, still able at age 90 to do a full day's work on the combine, barely notices the raw wind coming across the prairies and through a graveyard on the outskirts of town.

"Gee whiz, I know almost everyone here," he remarks.

He points to the stone markers of his grand-

parents, all homesteaders who helped build the town near the Canadian border. With a sweep of his hand, he identifies friends and family members, some who died at an early age and others who lived to make Main Street a community beacon on Saturday night and fill the churches on Sunday morning.

But Main Street, along with the churches built around it, is dying in towns like Bowbells and thousands of similar rural communities across the United States. While the harvests grow ever greater due to technological advances, the laborers are fewer as machines do more of the work and family farms give way to corporate farms.

And the United Methodist Church, which has an estimated 20,000 rural churches today—rep-

resenting more than six in 10 of the denomination's congregations—faces the challenge of how it will continue to minister to some of its most faithful members.

Many rural church leaders fear the denomination has decided to forsake them in favor of larger churches in growing suburbs. A survey of more than 1,000 rural congregations reveals concerns that national agencies ignore smaller churches, that district superintendents often assign them their least experienced clergy and that their churches will be the first to be sacrificed in a time of declining resources.

But to understand the rural church, vitality must be measured by more than numbers, rural church members say. Vitality also is written in

the stories of people who endured lifetimes of hardship to build and maintain the faith.

Steadfast faith

Decades ago, a farmer could make a living on 320 acres. Today, it takes at least 1,000 acres, and some farms are 10,000 acres or more. Small farms where large families once worked and took up a whole pew on Sunday have been replaced by corporate farms where itinerant laborers are hired.

The farm crisis and the steady exodus of businesses and jobs and young people to the cities and suburbs are taking an increasing toll. While the U.S. population steadily grows, half of the nation's 2,050 non-metropolitan counties



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE PHOTOS BY JAN SNIDER

ABOVE: From left, Russell Bott, Elvina Rockeman, Marilyn Bott and Cheryl Knecht worship at the Donnybrook United Methodist Church. **LEFT:** The church is one of the last institutions standing in rural communities such as Donnybrook, N.D.



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE PHOTOS BY JAN SNIDER

Robert and Faye Sundin praise God at Bowbells United Methodist Church. Behind them are Dean and Sally Verstrate.

lost population from 1998 to 2008, the government reports.

In a United Methodist Rural Fellowship Survey earlier this year, only 21 percent of ministry leaders spoke positively about the health of their community. And less than four in 10 had positive comments about the health of their congregation. The national survey of 946 rural ministry leaders was administered by United Methodist Communications.

“People in small towns have lost so much. They’ve lost the things that made them burgeoning communities. . . . Their children in many cases have gone away,” says the Rev. Kathy Hammond, pastor of the United Methodist churches in Bowbells, Kenmare and Donnybrook. “And yet they hang on to that faith.”

Stand in the middle of Main Street in Bowbells at the end of the day, and one can look out in either direction to a vista of amber fields whose colors are amplified by the brilliance of the setting sun.

Yet the downtown where Mr. Redmer’s clan and other farm families would bring in eggs and cream to sell, and spend hours visiting with their neighbors, is empty of pedestrians.

What remains open amid the shuttered storefronts and cracked sidewalk concrete are a couple of banks, a senior center, a gas station, a bar—and the churches: an old stone Catholic Church a block from downtown, a Lutheran church and a United Methodist church near one another on Main Street.

As other parts of the community fabric unravel, and depression, alcoholism and divorce rise among a population facing the brutal North Dakota winter in increasing isolation, the church is more important than ever, the faithful say.

Images of Christ

As much as rural churches represent God’s presence to the community, so much more do the church members represent the body of Christ to one another.

At the Pizza Hub in Kenmare, where older people in need of companionship sometimes stop in twice a day or more for coffee, church members gathered for lunch say they look after one another.

Cori Strokland, 59, says congregants can sense just by being around each other when someone is down.

When her mom was sick and her dad was dying, she felt surrounded by prayer. Pointing to the church members on either side of her, she says, “They’re there when you need them. They’re there, just like God.”

Sundays for the pastor, following in a tradition of circuit riders serving these three churches, are a ballet of pastoral care and time management.

Ms. Hammond arrives early for the 8:30 a.m. service at Bowbells, rushes down back country roads for the 9:45 service at Kenmare and, if the weather is good, arrives in time for the 11 a.m. service in Donnybrook.

Her sermon in all three places on a recent week is on Luke 15:1-10, the parable of the lost sheep. She incorporates different local landmarks at each church, but the message is the same: “We are all God’s creation, and he doesn’t want to lose any of us.”

It is a message at the heart of the mission of the United Methodist Church, which grew into the most geographically diverse Protestant denomination in the United States by taking the gospel to “every small crossroads there could possibly be,” says Robert Williams, top staff executive of the United Methodist General Commission on Archives and History.

In a time when many of those communities are struggling, rural church leaders say, Methodism founder John Wesley’s message to his clergy continues to ring true: “Don’t go where you’re needed. Go where you’re needed the most.”

Next to the graveyard where John Redmer stands are two roads.

The first, a winding road that used to be the main thoroughway into Bowbells, is where he remembers coming into a town in a buggy with his grandmother, who would complain about the horseless vehicles causing a commotion.

The second road, a little farther out, is the highway that can take residents quickly into the city of Minot some 65 miles away, and the Targets and Wal-Marts that spelled the end of downtowns in places like Bowbells. These communities fear they will become little more than speed traps along US-52.

The people in the United Methodist churches in Bowbells, Kenmare and Donnybrook and in many other rural congregations across the nation also know they are at a crossroads.



The Kenmare congregation has increased attendance since moving down the street to the more accessible senior center.

They are not looking to recreate what sociologist Mary Jo Neitz of the University of Missouri refers to as the image of the rural church in most people’s minds, that “of the simple white building with a steeple, the heart of the community, the heart of a vanishing America of two-parent families and family farms.” The irony of holding on to that mythic image of the rural country church, Dr. Neitz says, is that it “prevents us from seeing what are really there—both the challenges and possibilities.”

Every soul matters

The folks at Kenmare United Methodist Church closed their simple white building with a steeple two years ago. The foundation was crumbling, the furnace was shot, and the 10 members left could not afford the \$5,000 a year to minimally heat the building. They now meet at the Kenmare senior center.

The National Congregations Study directed by Duke University sociologist Mark Chaves found that between the two waves of the survey in 1998 and 2006-2007, the percentage of people who attend congregations in rural areas fell from 23 percent to 18 percent. The percentage of congregations in rural areas declined from 43

percent to 33 percent.

“Congregations may be opening new doors in America’s suburbs, but doors are closing in rural communities. There is good reason for worry about the plight of the rural church in America,” the study reported.

But no one is giving up.

“If we intend to abandon the rural neighborhoods, then we need to quit kidding ourselves about promoting scriptural holiness throughout the land,” one church leader wrote in the rural fellowship survey.

An uncertain future

At 90, Mr. Redmer knows the resurrection awaits. “I’ve always been a Christian and I’ve always followed the Bible,” he says. “I believe what the Bible says: A day with the Lord is like a thousand years.”

He is at peace standing in the graveyard where his ancestors are buried. A smile crosses his face as he looks at the spot reserved for him next to his wife.

It is his hope that on the day of his funeral he will begin his final journey in the church that nurtured him.

But no one can make any promises.



The Rev. Kathy Hammond visits with nursing home residents after a weekday Bible study in Kenmare, N.D.

GEN-X RISING

Lent: an old concept that holds new value

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON
UMR Columnist

Lencten.

It's probably not a word you've heard recently. But to English-speakers a thousand years ago, it was the everyday word for "spring." As Old English evolved into Middle English, *lencten* became *leinte*. And as Middle English continued to change into the language we speak today, the word eventually became *lent*.

We don't use *lent* as a way to say "spring" anymore. But we do use it to refer to a season of the Christian calendar that overlaps with springtime itself.

I'm talking about the season of Lent, of course. It is the 40-day period leading up to Easter. Lent is a time when Christians have traditionally prepared for the great holiday of Jesus' resurrection from the dead by engaging in disciplined practices such as fasting and intentional times of prayer.

Just as Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness prepared him for his public ministry, the 40 days of Lent prepare us for the event that culminated his time on earth and inaugurated the church's public ministry in the world.

Ah, but Lent seems hopelessly out of step with the modern world. Our culture just isn't very conducive to any kind of disciplined practice. And fasting? Good luck.

Contemporary culture worships at the altar of innovation. We have a never-ending hunger for the "new." We assume that the latest version of anything must surely be better than the older version.

Companies that market consumer products play into this cultural addiction. Whether it's candy, cars, or computers, advertisers want you to know that the product on offer now is much, much better than the one that was available yesterday.

This kind of thing can get plain ridiculous. The company that makes my razor wants me to buy a new version that fits five razor blades on the head of its razor—you know, just to make sure that every whisker is cut as close as possible. I'm not sure what that fifth razor blade is going to catch that was missed by the first

four, but . . . oh, never mind.

In a world where we are fast approaching a half-dozen blades on a single razor, how could a concept as old as Lent ever hope to compete? The very name itself sounds strangely archaic—which it is, of course—and the season of the Christian year it describes is even older.

Most of us today want our Christianity on-the-go. We don't have time to do much more than get to church on Sundays. Asking ourselves to commit to a real (gasp!) discipline is simply beyond the pale.

Isn't it?

Actually, I think we are seeing signs that people in our culture are tiring of the insatiable hunger for the new. We should at least ask ourselves whether we have found anything truly redemptive in the past few decades of conspicuous consumption. Has it made us happy, in the deepest sense of that word?

My guess is that for most people the answer is "no." Our problem is that we don't know how to take our foot off the gas pedal. Advertisers tell us what we ought to want, and the satisfaction-is-just-a-mouse-click-away ease of the Internet age keeps our brains occupied with little synaptic spurts of pleasure.

But it's not real happiness. It's a mirage that has made us think we should be satisfied with a bowl of Cocoa Puffs when there's filet mignon to be had.

Here's where Lent invites a serious reconsideration. The purpose of Lent is to prepare us for what God is doing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Witnessing that work on Easter Sunday will surely elicit praise and worship from us. But it calls first for deep preparation that will give us a greater understanding of the mystery of resurrection.

Through the disciplined preparation of Lent, we can start to catch a glimpse of a life lived according to something other than the ever-shifting winds of culture. That life finds value not in the new but in the old—in the ancient, in fact. The life of discipleship is not about innovation; it's about the *renovation* of our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. And that's a possibility worth slowing down for.

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



Andrew Thompson

Letting God work through us

BY KAREN GREENWALDT
Special Contributor

Editor's Note: This is the first in monthly series of columns from staff of the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, on issues faced by church leaders.

Is it possible for the church to be renewed? Yes!

While it is easy to engage in conversation about how we are failing as a church, Rosamund and Ben Zander tell us in *The Art of Possibility* (Penguin, 2002) to avoid "downward spiral conversations." These negative conversations do not help us as a church unless they guide us to redirect our efforts in positive ways. Conversations that serve only to reinforce or create entrenched positions function to defeat our spirits and to foster negativity within our church.

True, it is hard to disengage from negative conversations, and I confess that I have participated in many. Yet, I truly believe that it is possible for the church to be renewed. In fact, I believe that renewal is occurring right now.

My optimism comes from seeing all sizes and types of churches living out John Wesley's admonition to engage in acts of vital piety and social holiness. Young people are embracing the church's ministry with hope and expectation as they enter pastoral leadership or take lay leadership positions in local churches. Hope comes from assurance found in reading these words from Isaiah 43:16-19 (NIV):

*This is what the LORD says—
he who made a way through the sea,
a path through the mighty waters . . .*

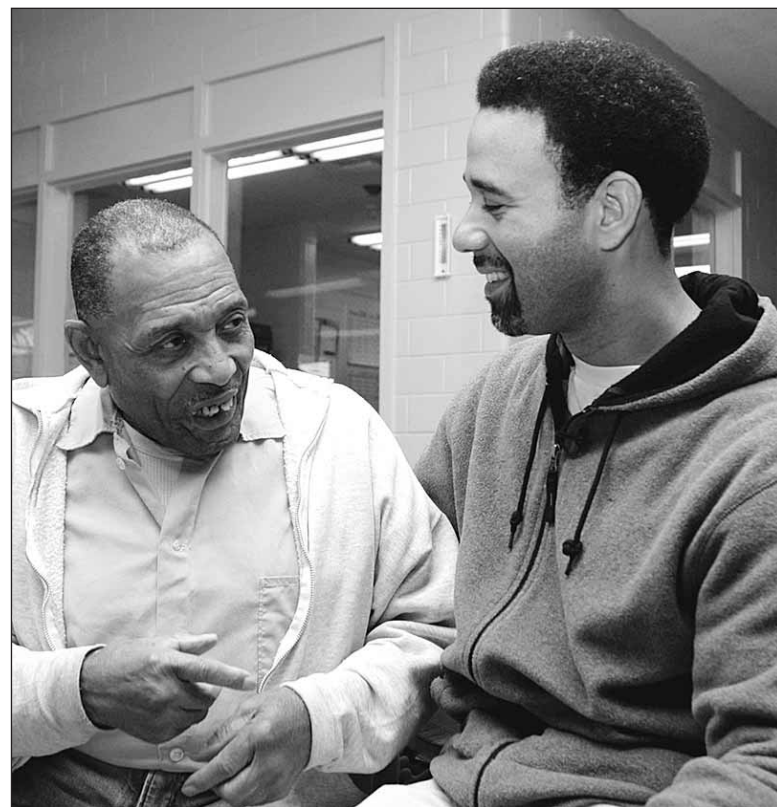
*"Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.*

*See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland . . .*

The church is being renewed when we place its mission at the center of our lives. When we focus on the mission of the church—making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world—not as a tired cliché but as a powerful instrument, we remember our roles as



Karen Greenwaldt



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO BY JOHN GORDON

"The church is being transformed when it experiments with how to reach new people for the sake of the gospel," says the Rev. Karen Greenwaldt.

Christians in this world.

Our mission reminds us that membership in the church is not our goal. Nor are discreet outreach efforts that only make us feel better. Our mission empowers us to learn what Jesus did and how he lived in order to follow his example into all of the places where we live and work.

Care for neighbors

Our mission clearly links how we are growing as communities of committed believers and followers of Jesus and how we are witnessing to discipleship in our everyday lives. When we see ourselves as God's agents in the church and in the world, miraculous renewal occurs—not by our own doing but by God's activity through us.

Recently on a cold wintry night, a young woman checked on an older neighbor who had not been seen that day. The neighbor lives in the shadow of the young woman's local church but is not a member.

When she arrived at the man's home, she realized that something was wrong. The newspaper was on the porch, and no lights were on in the house. However, the man's voice could be heard when she rang the doorbell. She called emergency responders who discovered that he had fallen.

When asked, "Why did you go out on a cold night to check on this neighbor?" the woman replied, "I've learned in church that we must care for our neighbors. I was worried, and

I prayed for him. Then I decided that wasn't enough, so I went to check on him."

Months later, this neighbor came to worship and made a profession of faith.

Church's mission

The church is being renewed when it stands as a beacon to God and to the glorious work that God is doing in the world to connect people to the Spirit's powerful presence. The church moves strongly into the future when powerful worship and learning about the Christian faith sends us out across the world to take on the principalities and powers that seek to destroy. The church is being transformed when it experiments with how to reach new people for the sake of the gospel.

The church is being renewed, and not by itself alone. When the church remembers its mission and when it throws itself on the mercy and deliverance of God, transformation takes place. God is doing a new thing, and we are God's co-workers (1 Corinthians 3:9).

We can sense creative energy among the many United Methodists who pay attention to the church's mission, follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and seek each day the wisdom of God who actively is at work in the world and in the United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Greenwaldt is the top executive of the General Board of Discipleship in Nashville, Tenn.

WESLEYAN WISDOM

Recovering the power of Wesleyan preaching

BY DONALD W. HAYNES
UMR Columnist

When bishops' cabinets and staff-parish relations committees throughout United Methodism begin the process of matching clergy with local churches, the question is always asked, "Can she or he preach?" Usually this is followed by the lament, "We don't have enough giants in our pulpits."

One concern of laity is that sermons across the connection are too similar, even in their illustrations and what we traditionally call "application." Lectionary preaching is more popular with preachers than with lay members.

The Rev. Lyle Schaller defines a good sermon by two criteria: First, is it true to the scriptural text? Second, does it talk to the people in the room? Dr. Schaller enlarges on this by saying that each sermon should offer both eternal truth and an application to existential reality.

The risk is that the truth in a sermon can be abstract, failing to interface with what is going on in today's world, in the local parish and in the lives of individual congregants. Or the application may be relevant to current or local issues, rhetorically inspiring, intriguing and entertaining—but not biblical.

John Wesley never separated Scripture from theological reflection, but one must be quite skilled to follow his tradition and still maintain a dialogue with listeners. Are we answering questions that no one is asking?

We have so many obstacles to overcome in preaching. Henri Nouwen, in his book *Creative Ministry*, noted that sermons run a high risk of redundancy. He remembered asking children in a Catholic school, "Who invented the steam engine?" Weary of trite answers, a precocious little boy replied, "I suppose it is Jesus again." We preachers tend to develop repetitive phrases or points of reference, and our people know the outcome of a sermon long before we get there!

Nouwen also warned that we can frighten people off by insisting on the radical transformation that the gospel demands of us. Who among the affluent wants to hear that "the first shall be last"? The truth of the gospel does indeed have a radical cutting edge, a

prophetic dimension that is often perceived as invective.

Likewise, loving our enemies is essential to Jesus' message but it is a hard sell, especially coming from pastors who are known to have stacked staff-parish relations committees with their friends and virtually muted the voices of their critics.

The bottom line to which Nouwen brings us is that the "Good News" is often viewed as neither "news" nor "good." Rather, worshippers typically take their pews without anticipating that anything new will be learned or that life in the coming week will be any more exuberant, meaningful or even bearable because of the message they are about to hear.

When I assign Wesley's sermons in seminary classes, students often ask with a rather puzzled expression, "Are these really the sermons with which Wesley revived England?" But we miss Wesley the preacher if we judge him only through the published sermons—which were written to be distributed as tracts.

Wesley's actual preaching was done in the radical style he called "extempore," or on the spur of the moment. That is, he had no notes and most often no pulpit or lectern. Alas, though, how many of us could preach an articulate sermon without notes, props or a prompter?

Students are always moved when I take them to Hanham Mount overlooking the city of Bristol. In the rural setting of Wesley's day, the spot provided a rise above the surrounding topography and allowed thousands to see him speak. Wesley's preaching was almost a spectacle, a marked contrast to the parish rector in a Gothic chancel.

David Hempton, an Irish Methodist who teaches at Harvard Divinity School, writes in his book *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (Yale University Press, 2005), "Methodism was largely an oral movement, but its history has been constructed mostly from written sources. Living voices of an oral culture are not easily extracted from such materials."

Dr. Hempton describes Wesley's critics, who often used the phrase "nonsense and noise" as they decried the enthusiasm and emotion associated with Methodist preaching. But, he says, "for those enraptured attendees at love feasts or camp meetings, there was nothing nonsensical about the noise. . . . Itinerants preached, exhorters exhorted, class members confessed, congregations sang, and revival meetings throbbed with ex-

clamatory noise."

Nathan Hatch, president of Wake Forest University, believes that "it was the Methodists more than anyone else who were responsible for making Christianity a mass enterprise. Everyday folk rather than college-educated gentlemen scrambled to claim the office of minister. Rejecting the standard sermon as a read discourse with a stiff theological spine, Methodists crafted sermons that were audience-centered, vernacular, and extemporaneous."

Dr. Hatch quotes sociologist David Martin, who says that "Arminian evangelical Protestantism provided the *differentia specifica* of the American cultural ethos" and that "the whole American style is Methodist, insisting on openness and sincerity rather than form and privacy." For these reasons, both Dr. Hatch and Dr. Martin agree that in America, because of Methodism, "popular culture remained more religious than did high culture." One can only wonder if this fundamental reality is something our seminary faculties missed in the evolution of Methodist preaching during the 20th century.

According to Dr. Hempton, Methodist preaching from Wesley's time through the 19th century was:

- based on a selected biblical text (not a prescribed one);
- delivered extemporaneously or from a loose structure of notes;
- designed to evoke a response—conversion, sanctification or "warmed up" spirituality;
- delivered in plain language, enlivened by illustration, anecdote or humor;
- within the accepted canon of

Wesleyan-Arminian theology

- measured by fruitfulness, not eloquence;
- communicated more from heart to heart than from head to head, not bypassing the mind but not aimed directly at it;
- based on accepting the authority of the Scripture at face value; and
- preached by preachers of much the same social status as their listeners.

Dr. Hempton concludes that in terms of career advancement, "the road to wider influence and power within Methodism was through preaching."

Only a fraction of Methodist sermons in early America were published, but Dr. Hempton has done unprecedented research on what he calls the "spidery sermon outlines of the foot soldiers" in American Methodism. He concludes that the sermons were not the garden variety of "hell fire and brimstone" preaching so often associated with the entire revival movement. Rather they focused more on "the blessings of faith rather than the accursedness of infidelity." He adds that the most frequently recurring themes were "grace, godliness, redemption, temporal and eternal joy, perseverance, vigilance and assurance."

In his book, Dr. Hempton prints the notes found in one family trunk to illustrate the style and content of typical Methodist preaching. Daniel Webb, preaching in Massachusetts in 1806, concluded his sermon on Romans 8:28 about the witness of the Spirit: "1) from divine revelation, God has told us so; 2) from experience, we

have found it so." Dr. Hempton concludes in his own words, "Here, pithily expressed, are the common centerpieces of the Methodist message."

I learned from Robert Wall of Seattle Pacific University, "Opponents still accuse Wesley of abandoning reason for experience. They do so without understanding [that his theology] is firmly anchored by the hard evidence of transformed hearts and changed lives."

Dr. Wall rightly reminds us that "the Bible was Wesley's second language." He notes Wesley's proclivity for "stringing quotations of biblical texts together," convinced that this "envisages a deep reverence for the Bible's sacred words without need for human mediation." In Dr. Wall's words, Scripture turned "his sermons into sacraments—a means for the body of Christ to ingest the sacred words and experience in them afresh the Holy Spirit's active presence in our hearts" (*Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, 2009).

Somewhere in the work of these scholars, United Methodist preachers can find clues to enhancing their sermons as means of grace. I make no claim to being a great preacher, but D.T. Niles once defined evangelism as "one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread."

That is the mission of this column week after week. This week, the "bread" is preaching!

Dr. Haynes is a retired member of the Western North Carolina Conference. He is the author of *On the Threshold of Grace: Methodist Fundamentals*. E-mail: dhaynes11@triad.rr.com.



Donald Haynes

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING • CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING • CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

EMPLOYMENT

FELLOWSHIPS AVAILABLE

Bridwell Library of Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University is accepting applications for the 2011-2012 Visiting Scholars and Ministers Fellowships. Six one-month fellowships, including a \$3000 stipend, will be awarded. The program is open to all active scholars from Ph.D. students to retired professors, and to religious leaders of all faiths. Deadline for applications is April 30, 2011. For more information see: <http://smu.edu/bridwell.aspx>; call 214-768-3483; or e-mail: bridadmin@smu.edu

MISCELLANEOUS

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.

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 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.

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.

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

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

■ YOUTH *Continued from page 1B*

ordinary people to do extraordinary things,” said Mr. Thornell.

The team of dreamers actually left the retreat without a theme decided, and it wasn’t until Mr. Thornell reviewed his discussion notes from the weekend that a theme became obvious.

“The words ‘more than’ kept popping up everywhere,” he said. “We want this to be more than just another conference that people attend and love, but then leave and forget.”

Fred Lynch—lead pastor of Tha MYX, a new urban church in Dallas, Texas, and founder of UrbNet, a national network of urban youth workers—will kick off Youth 2011 with the message that God loves each of us more than we could ever imagine.

The Rev. Jim Walker, author of *Dirty Word: The Vulgar, Offensive Language of the Kingdom of God* (Upper Room Press) and the founding pastor of the Pittsburgh-based Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community, which has United Methodist and Presbyterian sponsorship, and the Rev. Motoe Yamada, senior pastor at Sacramento Japanese UMC and member of the World Council of Churches Central Committee, will talk about the church as a community of believers and the global nature of the United Methodist Church.

After each worship message, students will break out into small discussion groups called LABs—a time and place where they can “learn, act and believe,” diving deeper into the topics presented on the main stage and discussing how they can apply what they’ve heard to real-life situations back home.

The last night will be centered on a youth-led service and a challenge for participants to “be more.” Zach Hunter, a self-described “painfully normal teen” who at age 12 launched a social justice campaign to end mod-

ern-day slavery called Loose Change to Loosen Chains, will speak and then interview United Methodist youth like 12-year-old singer/songwriter Gracie Schram, who has raised over \$19,000 to build fish ponds in Africa and an orphanage in Haiti through the Global Orphan Project by selling her original CDs.

“It’s going to be an empowerment night,” said Mr. Thornell. “It will be a challenge to be more than yourself with God and the community they’ve hopefully built during the event.”

Worship leader Kristian Stanfill, a singer/songwriter out of Alpharetta, Ga.’s North Point Community Church who recently released his debut album, *Mountains Move*, and Rezlife Band from the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in the Kansas City area will lead worship at both Youth 2011 gatherings. Christian rock bands Firelight, Chasen and Philmont are among the list of vibrant entertainers who will shake the main stage.

“There’s a lot of everything for everybody,” said Brad Whittemore, a high school junior from Rochester, N.Y. and member of the design team. “But we can’t forget it is more than just a simple event. Although there may be times you’re playing Frisbee or meeting new friends and exchanging Facebook [contacts], there will also be some pretty deep spiritual moments with Kristian Stanfill and the other artists we’re bringing in. They’ll lead some deep worship sessions that will really let you be open to God’s word.”

Serving others

Some youth groups will forfeit summer mission projects in order to afford and make time to attend Youth 2011, but that doesn’t mean they won’t get a chance to serve others. There will be a variety of on-site mission projects at both Youth gatherings.



UMNS PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

United Methodist teens danced to the music of Kirk Franklin during Youth 2003 at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

Participants will have the opportunity to package dehydrated, high protein meals to be used in crisis situations and school feeding programs in developing countries in collaboration with Stop Hunger Now, an international organization dedicated to ending world hunger.

As of now, Youth 2011 has budgeted to package 10,000 meals at each site, but the hope is that more monetary donations will provide volunteers with 30,000 meals to package at each site. Each meal costs 25 cents, and anyone can make a donation at youth2011.org/missions/.

There will also be drop-off stations for video games, board games, books, toys and craft supplies to be given to several children’s hospitals in California and Indiana.

“If people wanted to start a drive at their church or in their community, that would be a great thing to send along with a group that’s coming,” said Mr. Thornell.

Youth may also opt to have their

hair professionally cut and donated to Children with Hairloss, an organization that provides free real-hair wigs for children who have lost their hair. Or the youth can spend some time crafting greeting cards, posters and bookmarks to share with Kairos Prison Ministry International, Inc., which addresses the spiritual needs of incarcerated men, women and children.

Building community

In addition to the concerts, mission projects, worship services and small groups, participants will also have plenty of informal opportunities to meet new friends, ultimately growing the Christian community and connecting the denomination.

“I am so excited to see it all come together,” said EmmaJulia Jones, 16, a design team member serving on the hospitality committee. EmmaJulia is also helping plan the late-night activities, which will include a poetry reading, movie night and inflatable games.

“We want this event to be meaningful for youth leaders as well, and we encourage adults to fully participate in all of the activities and programming at Youth 2011 with their youth,” said Mr. Thornell.

Veteran youth pastors and seminary professors will lead training workshops for adults, and there will be a youth worker lounge where adults can also be in community and learn from each other and an exhibit hall showcasing an array of creative ministries and resources.

“In the past, many people who have attended the Youth events have said it was the place they felt their calling to ministry,” said Mr. Thornell. “We hope that Youth 2011 will inspire many to discern their calling and that they will minister in their own communities when they return home.”

To learn more and register for Youth 2011, visit www.youth2011.org before March 31.

mmccall@umr.org



UMNS PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

Teens from Fennimore (Wis.) United Methodist Church created a banner to support the Nothing But Nets campaign against malaria at Youth 2007.



PHOTO COURTESY OF DIVISION ON MINISTRIES WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Youth 2011 events will be held in two locations, at Purdue University July 13-16 and at the Sacramento Convention Center in California July 27-30.