

## SPECIAL ISSUE

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# Caring for God's world



AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Mount Eagle Retreat Center's outdoor chapel provides a majestic view of its natural surroundings. In recent years, the Arkansas Conference-owned center near Clinton has implemented ecologically friendly practices that reduce consumption of resources and place special emphasis on caring for the environment as a God-given task.

## Making changes for environmental stewardship

BY AMY FORBUS  
Editor

The task is as old as human existence.

Just twenty-six verses into Genesis, we see God's first declaration about humankind's purpose. Immediately after we are made in the image of the Creator, humans receive the job of caring for the rest of creation.

The United Methodist Church's theology of environmental stewardship is summarized in its *Book of Resolutions* (2008):

"God chose to give human beings a divine image not so we

[See CARING, page 4A]

## AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop



BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

"The grass is rich and matted.... Stand unshod upon it, for the ground is rich and holy, being even as it came from the creator. Keep it. Guard it. Care for it, for it keeps man, guards man, cares for man. Destroy it, and man is destroyed."

—Alan Paton,  
*Cry, the Beloved Country*

Who has not thrilled to see an eagle circle a lake, catch an updraft, and soar thousands of feet up into the sky?

Who has not seen the palette of God at work in the colors of an "alpine glow" on a canvas of sheer granite, or watched the glory of a magnificent sunset?

Who has not felt the smile of God in the blossom of a tiny alpine forget-me-not clinging to life in a tundra meadow?

These and many more experiences announce the wonder of a creation that God has given to us to keep, guard, and care for.

Among our many gifts from God is the gift of the creation which God has authored and for which we now have responsibility. The stewardship we practice with this gift from God is defined in how we treat the land, air and water, and each other.

It is more than just keeping the shoulders of the highway free from trash—as important as that is. Our

stewardship of creation is also about how we treat all of God's creation, including our relationships with one another. We, too, are part of God's creation.

The human family lives together. The pollution of greed, of violence, of arrogance, of self-indulgence is as poisonous to the atmosphere as a factory or power plant spewing cancer-causing pollutants into the air. The pollution of trash for the mind on television and in the movies, and through video games and obscene literature, damages our life together and weakens our culture as surely as a mine dumping toxic heavy metals into the aquifer and into streams

and rivers.

The point is we are all interconnected. Our actions have consequences. Life is not just all about me. It is about how I relate to and affect the creation God has given to me...to you...to us, to keep, guard and care for. The care I give touches you. Pray that our touch is like a caress from the hand of God.

Faithfully,

*Charles M. Crutchfield*

Charles Crutchfield







EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

What else can we do?

*“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it...” —Psalm 24:1*

The opening verse of Psalm 24 serves as a touchstone for a friend of mine. In essence, it has become her rule of life. We live in a disposable culture. I’m reminded of it whenever it’s cold outside and I reach for the jacket I’ve had since about 1994. Many people would’ve given away that jacket by now. I don’t guess its design exactly blends in with current fashion, but it’s still my go-to attire for winter weather.

Yes, the jacket could be used by someone else. It wouldn’t have to go in the trash. It reminds me, though, of all the other things we toss out. Disposable forks, disposable napkins, snack baggies... the list continues.

It’s been more than two years since I returned from General Conference 2008 with a few extra canvas bags among my belongings. Across our ten-day stay, we delegates had gathered up a lot of papers, books and other assorted items, so it seemed natural that bags to help us carry it all home would be a welcome addition to the excess.

Then, I found myself back at home, not needing to lug so much stuff around with me. The bags sat in a corner, along with all the other things I hadn’t yet found the energy to store in a more sensible place. What was I going to do with them next?

It marked a turning point for me when I started keeping the bags in the car and taking them inside the grocery store as a substitute for disposable plastic bags.

We had already begun to take recycling seriously at our house. It’s common for us to have far more material in our recycle bin than our trash bin when it’s time for the weekly pick-up. And, where we lived at the time, we had the ability to designate that we wanted our electricity to come from wind- and water-generated power, so we had made that change, too.

But carrying the bags around meant that I had a tangible way of taking my earth-friendly practices beyond my household. What’s more, these particular bags bear symbols of my faith. The images that decorate them provide an extra reminder that I’m not just avoiding plastic bags for my own good, but also for the well-being of God’s creation.

This change in practice also shifted my attention to the question, “What else can we do?”

Something I’ve come to realize is that there’s always a “what else.” We can always do more. (I believe John Wesley might include that realization in the category of “going on to perfection.”)

My friend who relies upon Psalm 24:1, Scharmel Roussel, has given me some ideas for doing more. She’s had solar panels installed on her roof, and they do make a difference.

Last week, she showed me her electric meter—which might normally be a strange thing to show someone. But on that sunny day, it was something I really wanted to see: The power her solar panels generated meant her meter was running backward.

She also showed me her solar oven, which can be used to cook a range of foods: vegetables, desserts, chicken and more. In the summer, she likes to take it over to the neighborhood swimming pool and make spice cake to share. It’s a neighborly act that also helps others see the possibilities for using clean energy.

“What else can we do?”

I visited Mount Eagle Retreat Center recently, for the first time. The Rev. Lu Harding showed me the system they use for guests to keep track of their cloth napkins so they don’t have to wash them after each meal.

When I got home that evening, I put away our paper napkins, pulled out our cloth ones and implemented the system. It’s easy. I wish I’d known about it years ago.

“What else can we do?”

Creature care is another way of caring for creation. In our house, we care for two dogs—and have been known on occasion to add a foster dog to the mix.

We spay and neuter the animals under our care so they won’t contribute to the pet overpopulation problem. They have current vaccinations, too, and are protected against harmful parasites. (Don’t ask me to care for the parasites, please—I still am not sure why God created those.) And they always have shelter, the right amount of food and plenty of clean water.

“What else can we do?”

Our neighborhood’s location allows us to accomplish a fair number of errands on foot. In an age of rising fuel prices, and with the knowledge that what comes out of our cars’ tailpipes isn’t good for anyone, why drive when we can walk?

When it comes to caring for the world God made and entrusted to us, I’ve learned that “What else can we do?” isn’t a question to be asked in desperation. It’s the kind of question that always has a constructive answer. We can always do something more.

May we all learn to ask more often, “What else can we do?”—and may we ask it with a sense of hope, knowing that when we choose to make changes, large or small, we participate in renewing God’s creation.

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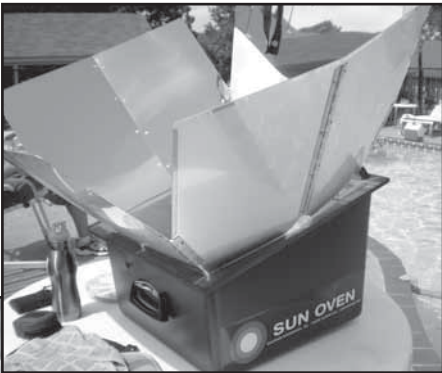


Installing rooftop solar panels can result in a substantial reduction in residential electricity costs. AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

RIGHT: A solar oven can harness enough power to bake cakes and cook meat.

BELOW: Scharmel Roussel’s solar oven roasts squash and stuffed tomatoes.

COURTESY PHOTOS



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# Garden provides new experiences, strengthens Christian community

BY SARA D. BAYLES  
Special Contributor

Last spring, the handful of students on the leadership team for the University of Central Arkansas Wesley Foundation sought to use some of our property to connect with the community while building a fruitful ministry group. The leadership team developed a vision: Using student interest in growing food as momentum, we would try developing a community gardening project.

Through growing our own produce, we sought to cut expenses while providing fresher food and forming community bonds with those who also share an interest in gardening.

Our garden took shape throughout the spring and summer. We now have ten plots containing a variety of peppers, tomatoes, corn, squash, watermelons, strawberries, onions, lettuce, collard greens, broccoli, cabbage and a bountiful herb garden. Additionally, we incorporated composting practices and a pesticide-free policy.

## Community roots

When our leadership team first met to plan for the garden, we were careful to consider the community interest involved. Deciding to develop the garden in a highly traveled area of the University of Central Arkansas campus meant that many would pass by these garden beds.

During the spring and summer planting, many passersby stopped and chatted about their garden experiences, and relationships began to form. Numerous professors, students, faculty and local congregations have all benefitted from the garden. We also have donated some of the produce to the Bethlehem House, a local food pantry.

Through the summer, it was not an uncommon lunchtime sight to see various UCA staff members picking peppers for their lunches. Some of my peers on campus have raved about the watermelon and tomatoes from the fall harvest. As part of our graduating senior celebration last spring, we served fresh vegetables from the garden.

Often, our pre-worship fellowship meals would include

some of the lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes or peppers from the garden. And on Mondays, as an outreach to the UCA students, the Wesley Foundation serves a free lunch that feeds between 120 and 150 students, faculty and local community members. When possible, these lunches include salad made up of greens from our own garden.

The Wesley Foundation family has rallied around this project: On garden work days, more than half of our worship attendees would also stop by the garden to lend a weeding or harvesting hand. I found that these ten garden plots served as conversational cornerstones that connected people from all walks of life into our ministry.

Because the garden provides this kind of connection, I cannot help but think of it in relation to the biblical story of the Samaritan woman at the well. I imagine the conversations around the well, how it functioned as a place of connectedness for all those who passed by, and I see the same thing happening around our garden beds.

## Personal effect

Having the Wesley Foundation Gardening Small Group gather around this project and fellowship has been an inspiration. I ponder Teresa of Avila's words, "The beginner must think of himself as of one setting out to make a garden in which the Lord is to take His delight, yet in soil most unfruitful and full of weeds. His majesty uproots the weeds and will set good plants in their stead."

I see those very actions taken by the students of Wesley who work long, hot, laborious hours in the garden. And again, I hear Teresa of Avila:

"We have now, by God's help, like good gardeners, to make these plants grow, and to water them carefully, so that they may not perish, but may produce flowers which shall send forth great fragrance to give refreshment to this Lord of ours."

Teresa of Avila's entire work of

using the garden as a symbol, interconnected with a fruitful ministry, rings true to the Wesley garden. Through this gardening project, I have seen my fellow students grow through toiling in the soil, to form stronger relationships with God and one another.

Many students have little garden experience before coming to work on the garden. Often students are surprised by how much work must go into the garden beds to yield fresh vegetables. Through this work, students come to value creation and the hard work that goes into preserving the soil.

Something about sweat, soil and common interest help to bond our campus ministry community closer, creating more functioning, loving, relationships that honor our God and his creation.

*Bayles is a member of Wesley UMC Springdale and an intern and small group leader at the UCA Wesley Foundation. She plans to become a certified candidate for ministry.*



ABOVE: Craig Hudson, left, of West Memphis and Kelly Hale of Texarkana begin turning the soil for spring planting at the UCA Wesley Foundation's community garden.

BELOW: Colleen Smith, left, of Conway and Sara Bayles of Springdale remove fallen leaves from the strawberry patch. The plants survived the winter, and the students expect to see a higher yield of berries this year.

AUM PHOTOS BY AMY FORBUS



## Does your church or ministry have a community garden? Are you thinking about starting one?

If so, you may wish to attend the community garden workshop being offered at Mount Eagle in September. Details on page 6A.





The Rev. Lu Harding unplugs Mount Eagle Retreat Center's electric-powered four-wheel-drive buggy. It minimizes the use of gasoline-powered vehicles around the grounds, making a quieter and cleaner mode of transportation available for guests who may not be able to walk long distances.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS



## Caring for God's world (continued from page 1A)

would exploit creation to our own ends, but so we would be recognized as stewards of God. To have dominion over the earth is a trusteeship, a sign that God cares for creation and has entrusted it to our stewardship" (page 80).

So how does the United Methodist Church in Arkansas fulfill that role of trustee? This feature examines changes within just a few local churches and three of Arkansas' camping and retreat centers. Some of these practices may seem small, but together they make a difference for a healthier, cleaner Earth.

### Local churches change

Disposable paper goods may speed the post-potluck clean-up process, but do churches really need to send so many bags of trash to the landfill? Susanne Darter of Atkins UMC doesn't think so. The Atkins congregation invested in matching dishes for their kitchen and avoids using disposable dinnerware.

"We've got the dishwasher, so there's no sense in using Styrofoam," Darter says. The church even asks outside groups, such as the Lions' Club, to avoid using disposable cups and plates when they use the church building. And the 4-H group she leads uses the dishwasher-safe plastic cups and bowls purchased for the church's younger members.

As president of United Methodist Women for the North Central District, Darter gained a greater awareness of caring for the environment as a priority for

Christian living when she attended the Arkansas Conference annual meeting and heard Ellen McNulty of Pine Bluff speak about being a member of the United Methodist Women's Green Team.

Darter's philosophy is simple: "Let's save what we can save," she says.

The town of Atkins doesn't currently offer recycling pick-up, so the church serves as a collection station for newsprint, aluminum and plastic, as well as for office paper they recycle along with spare worship bulletins.

It has become part of the rhythm of events at the church to have the scrap bucket set out so that food waste can be composted instead of put in the garbage. Most members have developed the habit of scraping their plates after meals. Darter encounters occasional resistance, but she maintains a focus on the goal.

"Some of them are just like, 'We've never done it that way, and we're not doing it now,' and I say, 'OK, fine, you don't have to—give me your plate,'" she explains with a laugh.

Reusable dishes can work for larger congregations, too: First UMC Jonesboro and Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock have changed their practices in a manner similar to Atkins, increasing their dish-washing duties to avoid producing the larger amount of trash that disposable dinnerware generates.

"We have put out receptacles for cans and bottles, plus changed the paper we print our bulletins on to an

easier to recycle and less costly type," says Ellen Pollock, director of Christian activities for First UMC Jonesboro.

She adds that they encourage people to bring their own coffee cups on Sundays, and for those who don't, they have changed their disposable coffee cups from plastic foam to a biodegradable paper option.

Last summer, Lakewood UMC answered North Little Rock's request for faith-based organizations willing to partner with the city to distribute QuikSaver Energy-Efficiency kits.

Each kit includes compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), a high-efficiency showerhead, six feet of pipe wrap, a kitchen aerator, bathroom aerator and energy-efficiency information. Once installed, the kits help North Little Rock residents save energy and money on their utility bills. Volunteers from Lakewood distribute the kits at neighborhood association meetings in various areas of the city.

And twice a year, Lakewood collects electronics for recycling. They schedule their collection on the weekend before a similar event at Verizon Arena, so they can collect and drop electronics that might not otherwise end up at the larger event. The next drop-off at Lakewood is Sunday, April 3.

"We always have an entire trailer full of electronics to take [to the arena]," says Liza Goodwin, who coordinates Lakewood UMC's eco-friendly efforts. It's a welcome act of community service because it

helps safely dispose of items that might wind up in landfills. It has even inspired other area churches to launch similar events.

### Teaching creation care

The United Methodist Church encourages its camping and retreat centers to function in environmentally responsible ways. In fact, one of the Seven Foundations of UM Camp and Retreat Ministries is "Teaching Creation Care and Appreciation" (see [gbod.org/camping](http://gbod.org/camping) for details; look for the Seven Foundations links in the left-hand sidebar).

One place the children and youth of Arkansas can experience such education is at Camp Tanako in Hot Springs. Camp Tanako teaches its campers to be responsible stewards of the earth, says camp director Becky Campbell.

"By taking care of the natural world, we are showing God how we care for him—because he created it," she says.

Programs at Tanako teach the importance of caring for God's creation through curriculum as well as through experiential learning. Hikes include time for thinking about how campers can help preserve the natural world.

The learning extends to other recreation options, too: "We practice catch and release when we fish, and even dig our own worms!" says Campbell.

And this summer, they're adding plastic and cardboard to their recycling program. But one tangible benefit at Tanako comes from the recycling they already do.



Each year, campers recycle enough aluminum cans to fund a scholarship for one camper.

### Conservation a priority

At Mount Eagle Retreat Center near Clinton, guests learn practices that help them care for God's creation, including recycling, composting and conserving water and energy.

In 2001, the Rev. Lu Harding, director of Mount Eagle, enrolled in the certification program for camp and retreat ministries at Drew Theological Seminary.

"The Theology of Ecology class, and others like it, felt as if they were written for Mount Eagle," she said.

At the end of the three-year program, she became part of the group that worked with the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship to establish creation care as one of the official foundations of camp and retreat ministries.



LEFT: Lakewood UMC works with the City of North Little Rock to distribute QuikSaver Energy-Efficiency Kits. Each kit contains materials that enable residents to make small changes that help households save money and energy.

BELOW: Recycling stations like this one at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center have become common sights at United Methodist camps.

RIGHT: Mount Sequoyah's Fair Trade Gift Shop carries home décor and jewelry made from repurposed and recycled materials.

COURTESY PHOTOS



"Mount Eagle was green before it was politically correct, and we do it because we believe that honoring and caring for creation is a way to honor Creator God," Harding says.

Attention to conservation begins before guests even depart for Mount Eagle. The staff asks groups to travel there in as few vehicles as possible.

They can carry their lessons back home, too—literally.

"Everybody takes their trash home with them," she says. "If you recycle and you compost, you don't have much trash."

Harding has noticed that guest behavior does change over time. For example, a group that ends its first retreat at Mount Eagle with five bags of trash may have just one trash bag at the end of the second stay.

Recycling doesn't make the biggest difference of all the eco-friendly practices at Mount Eagle, but it makes people more aware of



ways they can help, which does have a lasting impact.

Energy-conscious design makes a substantial difference. Screened-in porches help keep buildings cool; window positioning maximizes air flow; ceiling fans and other strategic choices make air conditioning a minimal need at Mount Eagle, even in the summer months.

For example, when Beal Lodge was built, the utility company set it up for billing as a commercial structure. But after a year of observation ("They thought maybe the meters weren't running," says Harding), the company saw that the building never rose above 52 percent of its expected maximum energy usage. They downgraded the nine-bathroom facility to residential billing, so saving energy translated into saving dollars, too.

When it comes to construction, Mount Eagle tries to make the most of materials already on the property. Thanks to a donor's support, they recently purchased a small sawmill, which enables them to cut hardwood timber. Construction of new pavilions and tent pads will rely upon timber gathered and cut on-site.

Harding says they seldom cut down a tree. Instead, they gather trees felled by storms, and they strive to use every part of those timbers. Limbs too small to be milled are chipped into mulch, and sawdust too fine to be used as mulch

joins the compost pile.

They avoid pouring new concrete by using areas left over from the days when the land served as a hog farm. Concrete slabs from the old hog barns now hold the sawmill and wood shop, and one will soon become a new pavilion.

This practice of re-use saves money, of course, and it also preserves natural resources by preventing the erosion that would occur as a side effect of bringing large trucks onto the property.

Mount Eagle provides a safe habitat for a variety of wildlife. A few summers ago, the Audobon Society ecology camp that meets there discovered a rare leopard toad living in the small wetlands area near Beal Lodge. Since that discovery, the staff has preserved that area in its natural state, and the frog population has increased.

Partnerships

Another United Methodist retreat in Arkansas sits in what may now seem an unlikely place for a getaway: within the city limits of Fayetteville. But Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center uses their location as an opportunity for building relationships that help the natural world.

Even the souvenirs sold at the retreat center seek to make a lesser impact upon the earth. The Fair Trade Gift Shop at Mount Sequoyah



Mount Eagle encourages guests to use the same cloth napkin for more than one meal. After the first use, guests choose a clothespin labeled with a biblical name to help them keep track of which napkin is theirs. The practice saves water and eliminates a need for paper products.

Mount Eagle volunteer John Harding, who lives on-site with his wife, the center director, is building Stations of the Cross tableaus from hardwood scraps. The timber being used for the project was felled by storms.

AUM PHOTOS BY AMY FORBUS



stocks items made from recycled and re-used materials.

People who have attended events at Mount Sequoyah in recent years know to expect some attention toward conservation. Guests are asked to re-use towels and bed linens for the duration of their stay, and may carry ceramic coffee cups from building to building to avoid using the disposable variety. (Mount Sequoyah does provide biodegradable cups when a guest needs a beverage to-go.)

They're thinking outside the bounds of their campus, too.

"We are partnering with the City of Fayetteville to create wildlife habitat, and with Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks to create more bird-, butterfly- and bug-friendly landscaping across our campus," says John Altland, who with his wife, Sheri, shares the role of executive director of Mount Sequoyah.

More conservation initiatives are in the works, Altland says. "We are using solar lighting to light certain signs and gazebos on campus... [and] we are partnering with the city to make three of our

most-used buildings more energy efficient."

**Inspiration and witness**

Not everyone who sets foot in United Methodist churches and retreat centers is part of a faith community, so practicing good stewardship of God's creation in these places can introduce others to a faith that seeks to make a positive difference in the world.

"When I do an orientation with a group upon their arrival at Mount Eagle, I remind them of our Earth Care practices and encourage them to participate while here," Harding says. "For non-profits that aren't faith-based, it gives an opportunity for personal witness and introduction to some of the UM social justice work."

"I have received e-mails from a few people who let me know they visited or were planning to visit a United Methodist church after being at Mount Eagle and learning a little more about us," she says. "I'm hoping they found a faith community with open hearts, open minds and open doors!"



# Van Buren youth group collects quarter-ton of recyclables

In February, the youth group of City Heights UMC Van Buren extended a congregation-wide challenge: They asked the congregation, which has an average attendance of about 55 people, to save their paper, aluminum and plastic for recycling.

At the end of the month, the youth picked up recyclables from those who participated. To measure the impact of their action, the youth decided to weigh all the recycling. They collected 561 pounds of recyclable materials.

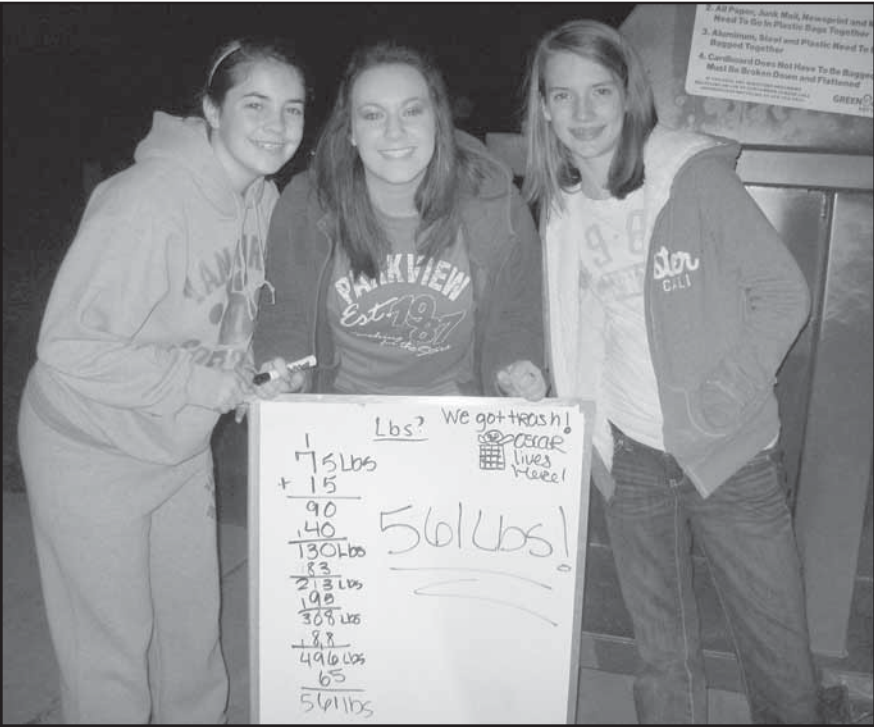
The City of Van Buren does offer curbside recycling pick-up, but only within city limits, and not every church member lives within that boundary. The youth wanted to help raise awareness for those who can have recycling picked up from their homes, and help find ways for those who don't have the service to participate, too.

City Heights youth minister Renee Henson conducted an

unofficial poll of the small congregation, and she learned that about five families in City Heights UMC recycled before the February emphasis. That number has now doubled.

"I know that at least six families have started recycling to some degree because of our emphasis at church," she said.

"We, as a church, have been talking about recycling for over a year," Henson said, noting that during that time, her own household has become more attentive to what materials can be recycled. As a result, her family has reduced its weekly volume of trash by half.



Will Henson, Kylie Gordon, Anna Grace Mills, Kenzie Williams and Nick Cline sort through some of the bags of recyclable materials collected from households active in their church.

Anna Grace Mills, Kylie Gordon and Emily Humphreys display their tally of the recyclable material gathered from City Heights UMC members during the month of February.

COURTESY PHOTOS

## Does your congregation have an Earth Advocacy Team Leader? (Could it be you?)

An Earth Advocacy Team Leader's job is to lead the congregation to understand that care of the planet Earth and its resources is part of Christian discipleship. This person also plans, implements and evaluates efforts for care of the planet and its resources.

People with the spiritual gifts of servanthood, teaching, exhortation (encouragement), giving, leadership, compassion, wisdom, healing, helping and administration may find that they are a good match for this type of role within the church.

Someone who feels called to be an Earth Advocacy Team Leader must have passion for Earth care as a component of Christian stewardship. This person will have skill in researching issues, planning and implementing programs for education and

advocacy, the ability to network with others in the congregation and community, and the ability to delegate tasks and follow up on getting jobs done.

This leader should reach out to, and work with, people of all ages; often, children and youth are strong advocates for sustainability.

An Earth Advocacy Team Leader should:

- Maintain a healthy and growing personal spiritual life and lead others to do the same.
- Lead the congregation in theological and biblical reflection to understand the foundations for environmental awareness and Christian responsibility for Earth stewardship.
- Coordinate planning and implementation of congregational and

community action to care for the Earth and renew resources.

- Lead the congregation in celebration of the Annual Earth Day, Arbor Day and/or other efforts for local and community environmental awareness.
- Link with organizations, people, and resources in and beyond the congregation that are concerned with environmental issues.

For a complete description of the Earth Advocacy Team Leader's role in a local church, as well as ideas for getting started as one, visit [gbod.org/camping](http://gbod.org/camping) and click on the link in the right-hand sidebar.

Source: General Board of Discipleship, [www.GBOD.org](http://www.GBOD.org).

## Arkansas Hunger Task Force schedules community garden workshop for September

One of the 2011 goals of the Arkansas Conference Hunger Task Force is to focus on the development of community gardens. To that end, the task force is partnering with Mount Eagle Retreat Center to conduct a community garden workshop.

The first such event is scheduled for Sept. 9-10, 2011. Mark your calendar now, and look for more details in future issues of the *Arkansas United Methodist*.

Mount Eagle Retreat Center has a fruit and vegetable garden on-site, so this workshop will include hands-on experiences. Anyone interested in learning how to develop a community garden through a local church may attend.

Recycle

Reuse

Replenish

Be sure to recycle your copy of the *Arkansas United Methodist* when you're through reading it (or share it with a friend).



# Q&A: Caring for creation as a faithful act

Ellen McNulty, a member of St. Luke UMC in Pine Bluff, has made caring for creation a priority in her life.

She has been involved with the Arkansas Wildlife Federation, currently serving as a board member, and she's a member of the United Methodist Women's Green Team, which includes members from around the world.

McNulty and editor **Amy Forbus** held conversations recently via phone and e-mail. Here are excerpts of their conversations.

## How did you get involved in the United Methodist Women's Green Team?

I first learned of the Green Team when the social justice coordinator in my local United Methodist Women's unit sent me an announcement asking for individuals interested in applying for a position on the Green Team. I applied for the position, using past experience as State Watershed Coordinator for the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality as my selling point.

## And you're involved with Interfaith Power and Light (IPL), too. How did that come about?

The Arkansas affiliate of IPL began as an offshoot from the Green Faith Alliance, a group that began at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church. Other churches, some United Methodist and some not, began asking Pulaski Heights UMC for assistance in beginning their own church green teams.

The Pulaski Heights group decided to start the Green Faith Alliance as an interfaith group interested in promoting creation care and green opportunities to their congregations. At the time, I was working for the National Wildlife Federation and the Arkansas Wildlife Federation as a consultant on the Clean Energy Works national campaign.

Through a series of meetings titled "A Faithful Response to Climate Change," attendees had the opportunity to network with other faith leaders as well as listen to speakers from the National Wildlife Federation's Fair Climate Program, the National Council of Churches EcoJustice Program, Audubon Arkansas, RePower Arkansas and other organizations that understand the important role faith leaders play

in protecting God's creation.

As faith leaders began to understand the importance of creation care as a moral issue, it became more apparent that we must advocate for comprehensive climate change legislation. It acknowledges that all people are not affected by climate change equally, and the most vulnerable are the ones that contributed the least to global warming. They are also the group that is least able to adapt to climate change.

As momentum began to grow, the IPL organization seemed like the next step. The steering committee formed and a working plan was developed. Having the national support and direction of IPL was helpful in focusing efforts that help communities and educate individuals on actions they can take to reduce their carbon footprint and reduce greenhouse gases.

## When did you begin taking a personal interest in creation care?

I really cannot remember a time when I wasn't interested in creation care. As a child, I grew up on a rice, soybean and catfish farm in Arkansas County. My dad was also an avid sportsman. He enjoyed the outdoors and my family felt blessed to have a good wholesome life.

Even when it was encouraged to farm from turn row to turn row and drain and clear wetlands and forested areas, my dad did not believe we should farm that way. He always left wooded areas and what wildlife biologists call wildlife corridors.

He also believed in conserving and reusing water on the farm. He believed that we should be good stewards of God's creation and he instilled those values in my brother and me.

## What difference has it made in your daily life?

It has made me more aware of the natural beauty of the earth. I feel a deep responsibility for creation care and expect others to make special efforts to do their part.

## What advice would you give to someone considering some first steps toward treating the earth more kindly?

The United Methodist Women's Green Team page [new.gbgm-umc.org/umw/work/social-action/environment/green-team] is a good place to start for anyone. It suggests practices that can become a part of a

spiritual discipline. These actions will help individuals become aware of the outcome of their actions, reduce their impact on others, and walk lightly on the earth.

## Has your congregation made any "green" changes to its behavior?

As a small church, we really don't have a large carbon footprint to begin with, but we have started to talk about creation care and how we can make small changes to reduce carbon emissions. We practice recycling and, like all churches, struggle with issues like Styrofoam plates and proper disposal of recyclables. I do see members trying to do the right thing. It is a learning process.

During the morning worship service a few weeks ago, I talked about the Council of Bishops' pastoral letter, *God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action*. It is a powerful and moving letter and study. All the documents, study sessions, and tools and resources are available at [hopeandaction.org](http://hopeandaction.org).

## Is there any particular piece of Scripture relating to care for God's creation that you find especially helpful or inspiring?

Psalm 65:9-13 gives a detailed picture of God's care for the world viewed as a hard-working farmer driving home a wagonload of grain. The image of God as a humble farmer gives me focus on the soil on which all life depends. It is a powerful and holy image of the God-given, exacting, and joyful work of earth care.

## A summary of 'God's Renewed Creation,' a pastoral letter from the Council of Bishops

In 2004, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church authorized the Council of Bishops to revisit an earlier pastoral letter and study document from 1986 called *In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace*.

The resulting document, *God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action*, does not replace the 1986 letter, but it does expand its focus to include three interrelated threats—pandemic poverty and disease, environmental degradation and the proliferation of weapons and violence.

These interconnected threats are caused by all of us. The three threats are indicators of neglect, selfishness, and pride. But despite the fact that we all contribute to these problems, God still invites us to participate in the work of renewal.

God asked us to begin by being renewed in our own hearts and minds. We cannot change the world until we change our way of being in it. We must begin with ourselves.

The letter asks three things of us, and these three things are the foundation of our beliefs:

**1) The letter asks us to orient our lives toward God's holy vision.** As disciples of Christ, we must take God's promise as the purpose for our lives.

**2) We are asked to practice social and environmental holiness.** John Wesley preached social holiness, and we practice social and environmental holiness by caring for God's people and God's planet and challenging policies and practices that neglect the poor, exploit the weak, hasten global warming and produce more weapons.

**3) We are asked to live and act in hope.** As people of the Wesleyan tradition, we understand reconciliation and renewal to be part of the process of salvation. We are not hemmed into a fallen world. We can faithfully respond to God's grace and call to action.

To learn more, visit [www.hopeandaction.org](http://www.hopeandaction.org).

—compiled by Ellen McNulty



Ellen McNulty says her father instilled in her a love of the outdoors, and he also operated the family farm in a way that ensured good stewardship of natural resources.

COURTESY PHOTO



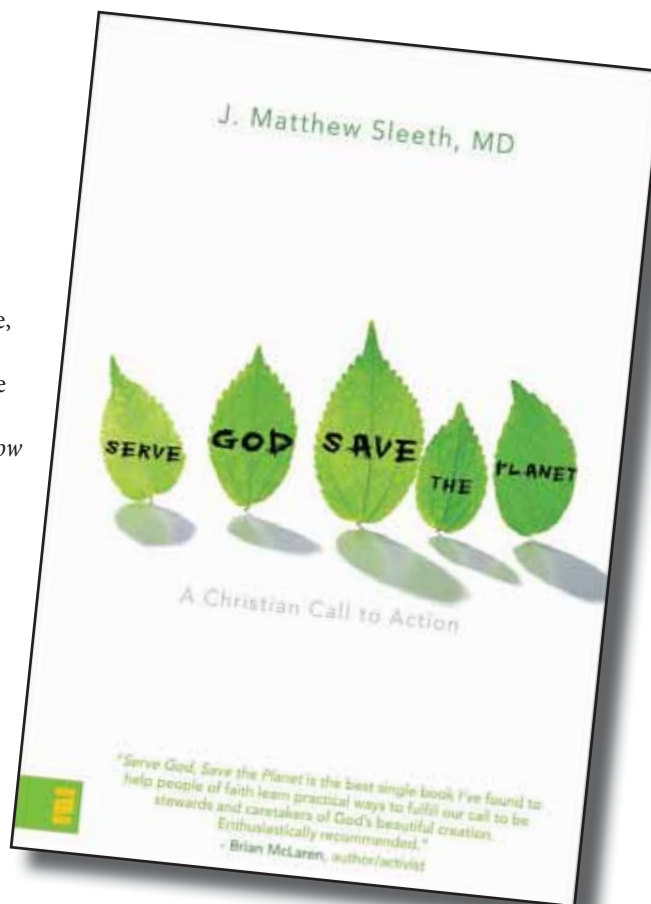
# More answers to the same question

OK, you've made it to page 8. And if you even glanced at my column on page 2 of this section, you know the question I'm about to ask: What else can we do?

If you'd like to read more about caring for the environment from a Christian perspective, check out *Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action* by Dr. J. Matthew Sleeth (Zondervan, 2007). The author and his family (who, incidentally, are United Methodist) have made some drastic lifestyle changes so they can treat Earth more kindly in their daily living.

Ready to take it to your congregation? Have a look at *50 Ways to Help Save the Earth: How You and Your Church Can Make a Difference* by Rebecca Barnes-Davies (Westminster John Knox Press, 2009). It outlines a variety of ways to incorporate care for the Earth with Christian discipleship, making a clear connection between faith and environmental stewardship.

For some more short-form reading, visit [umc.org](http://umc.org) and type "green for life" in the search bar. You'll get several links in the "Green for Life" feature series from United Methodist News Service and UMTV.



If you're ready to act, one thing you can do is make your own environmentally-friendly cleaning products. A web search for "homemade cleaning products" yields seeming endless results; choose what seems right for your needs.

Here's one simple formula I use regularly: To make glass cleaner, combine equal parts vinegar and water in a spray bottle.

It cleans mirrors and other non-porous surfaces quite well, and for me, the scent is a bonus because it reminds me of coloring Easter eggs as a child. (If the scent isn't a pleasant one for you, don't worry—it does dissipate.)

You might take a field trip. If you live near Perryville, a visit to Heifer Ranch will provide lessons in sustainability. And if downtown Little Rock is more convenient for you, Heifer Village offers similar education in an urban setting. And to top it off, tours of both locations are free.

If you'd consider a more intensive learning experience, see the advertisement on this page. (And if you don't have a smart phone with which to scan the QR code in the corner, you also can get information on the event by visiting [www.mountsequoyah.org](http://www.mountsequoyah.org).)

And this year, the liturgical observance related to Earth Day, Festival of God's Creation, falls on April 24—Easter Sunday. As we celebrate the miracle of the Resurrection, we can give thanks for all the new life God has created and is creating, both in and around us.

Thank you for reading this special issue on creation care.

Blessings,  
Amy Forbus



## Are United Methodists expected to recycle?

Here is how information posted on [umc.org](http://umc.org) answers the question:

United Methodists understand that we have been given the responsibility to care for God's creation.

The United Methodist Church believes that "misuse and overconsumption of natural and nonrenewable resources, particularly by industrialized societies... jeopardizes the natural heritage that God has entrusted to all generations."

United Methodists are encouraged to reduce consumption and recycle. It's recommended that the general agencies of the church use recycled and chlorine-free paper products.

"In addition to reducing consumption and reusing materials in lieu of purchasing new ones, recycling is an important and easy step toward a more sustainable future.

"We support measures which will lead to a more careful and efficient use of the resources of the natural world. We urge United Methodists to analyze their consumption patterns and to seek to live a simple and less resource-dependent life.

"We encourage programs which will recycle solid materials of all sorts—paper, glass, wood, building materials, metals, plastics, etc.

"We urge United Methodists to participate actively in community recycling programs and urge the establishment of such programs in communities without these programs."

—Excerpts from  
"Environmental Stewardship," *The 2008 Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*

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# REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

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UMC rings in future with restoration | 4B



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UM pastor serves as cruise chaplain | 8B

Section B

March 18, 2011



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO BY PAUL JEFFREY

Some observers at the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, stood together to protest the assembly's vote retaining the denomination's ban on homosexual clergy.

## Debate heats up again on UMC's homosexuality stand

BY HEATHER HAHN  
United Methodist News Service

A call from 36 retired bishops for the United Methodist Church to eliminate its ban on homosexual clergy has outraged some members and encouraged others.

Since the bishops' statement was released Jan. 31, groups within the denomination on both sides of the ordination dispute have issued strong responses.

And the debate has hit home for individual United Methodists who are either gay or have struggled with unwanted same-sex attractions. Two men in particular, coming at the issue from different personal perspectives,

have shared reactions of both hope and dismay in interviews with United Methodist News Service.

The retired bishops' statement has focused new attention on the issue as the church approaches the one-year countdown to its 2012 lawmaking assembly. When bishops talk, people tend to listen.

### Condemnation, praise

When the retired bishops issued their statement, the first responses came from fellow bishops. Some expressed support and others disappointment, but all of them affirmed their commitment to uphold church law.

Other United Methodists are also

having their say.

The Renewal and Reform Coalition, representing six unofficial evangelical renewal caucuses in the denomination, called the bishops' document "woefully inadequate" in a Feb. 17 statement.

The retired bishops did not address "the clear pronouncements of Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments and almost 2,000 years of Christian history," the coalition said. "The teaching of The United Methodist Church on human sexuality is consistent with the teaching of the church universal."

However, the retired bishops received an "Amen!" from the Common Witness Coalition, which encom-

passes three unofficial church caucuses that advocate for greater inclusion of homosexual members.

In a Feb. 25 statement, the coalition said it hoped the bishops' call will become "a catalyst for a new 'watershed moment' in the life of the United Methodist Church!"

Black Methodists for Church Renewal, an official caucus for black United Methodists, also endorsed the retired bishops' statement at its annual meeting on Feb. 25, though the vote was not unanimous. The other ethnic caucuses have not officially weighed in on the retired bishops' statement.

The *Book of Discipline*, the United

## Q&A:

### Engaging new generation of ex-Christians

Drew Dyck, managing editor of the *Leadership Journal* at Christianity Today International, has a heart for the growing mass of young adults who "once were found but now are lost."

In his book, *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults are Leaving the Faith and How to Bring Them Back* (Moody Publishers), he identifies six types of "leavers"—the postmodernist, the recoiler, the modernist, the neo-pagan, the rebel and the drifter, offering specific advice for effectively engaging each prodigal.

He spoke recently with staff writer Mallory McCall.

The faith trends of young people are a hot topic right now, with books and research about the millennials, unChristians, next Christians, almost Christians and so on. Why write about the "deconverted Christians"?

You mentioned some titles there with which I am familiar. *unChristian* looked at the perceptions outsiders—people who have never been a part of the church—have of Christians. One statistic that really caught my eye when I was reading that book was

■ See 'Engaging' page 3B



Drew Dyck

■ See 'Debate' page 2B



## FAITH WATCH

**Supreme Court rules for Westboro Baptist**

The Supreme Court ruled March 2 that the constitutional right to free speech protects Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., the congregation known for picketing the funerals of U.S. soldiers to protest the nation's tolerance of homosexuality. The court's 8-1 decision ended a lawsuit by Albert Snyder, who had sued Westboro for protesting at his son Matthew's funeral.

**Faith groups protest gun sales amendment**

Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence, a coalition of 26 denominations and national organizations, sent a letter March 1 to U.S. senate leaders, protesting an amendment to the federal budget that would block the government from monitoring bulk sales of assault rifles along the U.S.-Mexico border. Jim Winkler, top executive of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society and chairman of the coalition, said in the letter "it is imperative that law enforcement has the ability to detect and interdict illegal gun trafficking patterns."

**Christian official killed by gunmen in Pakistan**

Shahbaz Bhatti, a government official in Pakistan who had called for changes in the country's controversial blasphemy law, was killed March 2 in a gun attack near an Islamabad market. Bhatti, the country's minister for minorities, was the only Christian in the Pakistani cabinet. Under the law, anyone found guilty of speaking against Islam or the Prophet Muhammad could be put to death.

**Pope says Jews not to blame for Jesus' death**

Excerpts released March 2 from a new book by Pope Benedict XVI include biblical and theological arguments against blaming the Jewish people as a whole for Jesus' crucifixion. In a statement, Abraham Foxman, U.S. director for the Anti-Defamation League, called the book an "important and historic moment for Catholic-Jewish relations."

—Compiled by Bill Fentum

■ **DEBATE** Continued from page 1B

Methodist law book, 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 of Counsel to the Church asks that this passage be removed. About 42 percent of the denomination's 85 retired bishops have signed the statement.

Only General Conference, the denomination's top lawmaking body, can change the *Book of Discipline*.

The subject of homosexuality has sparked discussion at each quadrennial General Conference since 1972, and delegates consistently have voted to keep the restriction. Neither active nor retired bishops are allowed to vote at the gathering.

But both supporters and opponents of the church's current stand expect the topic to surface again when General Conference next meets April 24-May 4, 2012, in Tampa, Fla.

**Not an abstract issue**

For many United Methodists, homosexuality is not an abstract issue that comes up at each General Conference but something that affects their daily life and the way they serve out their ministry.

Chett Pritchett said he first recognized his calling as a disciple of Jesus Christ while a student at United Methodist-affiliated West Virginia Wesleyan College. Around that time, he also realized he was gay.

"For me, my faith in Jesus Christ and my acknowledgement of my sexual orientation have always happened in tandem," Mr. Pritchett said.

He studied at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington initially with the goal of merely learning more about religion. His congregation, Dumbarton United Methodist Church in Washington, helped him discern that he had the gifts and graces for or-

dained ministry. So he started the ordination process in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference.

Mr. Pritchett said he was never asked about his sexual orientation, and his candidacy process was largely positive. Still, he ultimately decided to withdraw from the process partly to be in solidarity with his gay and lesbian friends. He said he "didn't want to be part of the problem" that was causing so many to leave the church.

He remains an active, engaged layperson at Dumbarton. The United Methodist Church is his home, Mr. Pritchett said, and he wants to help the church be an open and hospitable place for all people.

He called the retired bishops' statement a "huge step forward."

"I realize it brings difficulty within the Council of Bishops for the active bishops," he said. "But as a gay man, to read that statement, it made me realize that there are leaders in this church who understand this issue and who understand how it has affected so many people over the years."

Not everyone who experiences same-sex attraction sees it as part of God's plan, as a man in the southern United States can attest.

The United Methodist, who asked that his name not be used, said he has "struggled with same-sex attraction" for much of his life.

"I have never lived a gay lifestyle," he said. "I don't identify myself as a gay person, but I have wrestled with those feelings in my life. While my church and my family never bashed homosexual people, I just sensed that this is not what God was asking of me or what he wanted for me."

He grappled with his desires in secret and shame until he was in seminary and discovered a Christian ministry that offered a support group for people dealing with different kinds of "sexual brokenness." He said he realized for the first time that he wasn't the only Christian dealing with unwanted attractions. That gave him



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO BY PAUL JEFFREY

**United Methodist Bishop Beverly J. Shamana laid a strip of black cloth on the altar during the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, in protest against the assembly's vote to retain the denomination's ban on homosexual clergy. Now retired, she was among 36 retired bishops who signed a statement in January calling for an end to the ban.**

hope.

He has since discovered Transforming Congregations, which helps United Methodist churches minister to "the sexually confused, broken and sinful." Transforming Congregations was among the unofficial caucuses that denounced the retired bishops' statement.

The man now is married and has two children, but he says he still deals with same-sex attraction and thinks it will likely be a life-long struggle.

"I feel like I have gained power over it when I choose to trust in the power of the Holy Spirit," he said. "It's just like any other temptation that faces any other Christian. I still have a choice on whether to fall to temptation or whether to walk with Christ and overcome it."

He ultimately decided not to continue on the ordination track, in part because of his struggle. He thinks the retired bishops who advocate changing the *Book of Discipline* mean well but are wrongheaded.

"I think all Christians, clergy or non-clergy, are called to holiness—to be set apart in life—and we are all called to pursue and go on to perfection as [John] Wesley said," the man said. "As I read Scripture and as I pray to God . . . I've always felt that God had made it very clear that [homosexuality] was not a life that God wanted for me personally or really for any of his followers."

Still, he—like Mr. Pritchett—said the church should not turn anyone away, homosexual or otherwise.

**Issue of Scripture**

The Renewal and Reform Coalition includes the Confessing Movement within the United Methodist Church, Good News, Lifewatch, RENEW,

Transforming Congregations and United Methodist Action.

The Common Witness Coalition includes Affirmation, Methodist Federation for Social Action and Reconciling Ministries Network.

The disagreement between the two coalitions often boils down to a different understanding of Scripture.

The Rev. Rob Renfro, the president and publisher of *Good News* magazine, said the retired bishops in their statement fail to treat Scripture as authoritative in determining sexual ethics.

"We see the Bible very differently, and the saddest thing is that we see Jesus very differently," Mr. Renfro said.

He worries whether some of the retired bishops agree with John 14:6 that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that no one comes to the father except through him. Homosexuality, Mr. Renfro said, is just the presenting issue in this division.

The Common Witness Coalition's statement offered another take, citing Jesus' reminder that the two greatest commandments are for people to love God with all their heart, soul and might, and their neighbors as themselves.

The standard for interpretation, this coalition insisted, "is always found, first and foremost, in the consequences it has for our complete giving of ourselves to God, and . . . how it expresses that complete love of God in our love for others and self."

The retired bishops "breathe Gospel life into putting in policy what we know to be true," said the Rev. Troy Plummer, the executive director of Reconciling Ministries Network.

Both coalitions don't expect the discussion to end anytime soon.

THE UNITED METHODIST  
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■ **ENGAGING** *Continued from page 1B*

that, according to their research at Barna, 65 percent of young adults report making a decision for Jesus Christ at some point in their lives. Yet, [David] Kinnaman [president of the Barna Group and co-author of the book] concludes that only 3 percent of those people have a biblical worldview. I think most Christians would agree that nowhere near 65 percent of young adults in this country could be described as authentic followers of Jesus. So, all to say, I started to realize that the problem wasn't just unChristian, it was ex-Christian.

As I moved through my 20s (I'm now in my early 30s), I started to see that more of my friends were leaving their Christian faith—either explicitly denouncing their faith and disowning the Christian label or just drifting away to a point where they may not make any declaration about where they are spiritually.

#### What role has the church played in this exodus?

I don't want to bash on youth ministers in particular—I was one—but at the same time, this is all of our fault. It goes back to the shift we saw in youth ministry in the '80s. Historically the *raison d'être* for the youth ministry movement was biblical education, but as business thinking really

started to impact the church, especially in the '80s, we saw a shift toward more of an entertainment model.

We thought if [kids] had a good time at church, they'd be more likely to stick around. But that was a tragic miscalculation. I have nothing against pizza and video games but they're tragic replacements for spiritual formation and biblical education.

When I did my interviews not one of the people I talked to had something bad to say about youth group. They loved youth group, but they aged out of those ministries—and that's another problem. We segregate people into age-related ministries so that, in the case of young people, their connection is to the youth group, not to the church. So they age out of those ministries and age out of the church altogether.

#### Is it too late to change that?

Well, for the ones who have left I think we need to employ certain

strategies, but we can stem the tide for the junior high and high schoolers who are still in the church by changing our philosophy when it comes to youth ministry—trying to integrate the age groups.

Also, a huge part of this is parents. A lot of parents have the mentality they can drop off their kids at youth group and let the “professionals” make their kids into good Christians. Of course, having kids for two hours on a Friday night can't compete with what goes on at home 24-7. The work of parents and youth ministers needs to be integrated as well.

#### How can churches reach out to this generation of ex-Christians?

First of all we need to do some detective work and find out where they're at. That means listening, and of course that's exactly the opposite approach we often have when it comes to evangelism. We come in with our guns blaring, and we want to deliver an-

swers before questions are even asked, but we need to reverse that and lead with our ears and listen.

Then we need to identify why it is they actually left, and build bridges of trust and established relationships with them, then hopefully down the road we will have the privilege of engaging them in the kind of conversations that lead them back to God. But it's a slow slog and it takes a lot of prayer and time.

#### How should Christian parents talk to their grown children who have left the faith?

It's so important to be moderate in your approach because your kids already know exactly where you stand. Another piece of advice I give parents when they're engaging their grown children is to enjoy their faith. That's the cruel irony of this whole issue. When it is your kid who's rejected the faith it's heartbreaking, so we adopt this sour demeanor when we are around them, rather than enjoying our faith and having a dynamic relationship with Christ. I encourage parents to resist that impulse and instead demonstrate the benefits of [their] faith.

Another thing I talk about in the book is don't fight proxy wars. Don't rail against their moral choices or lifestyle

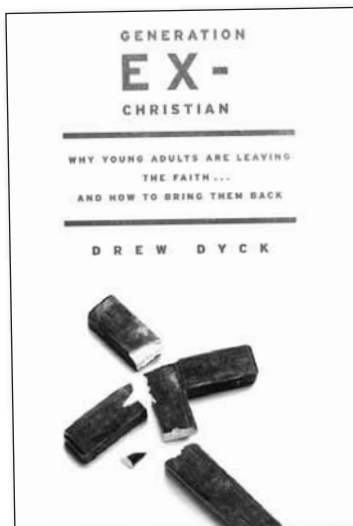
choices, clothing choices or political views. Those are bad hills to die on. You really want to save your conversations with them to be about the gospel itself and the person of Jesus.

#### You say in the book that God is still working in the lives of those who reject him, making our job as Christians easier. Talk about that.

After talking to so many people who had walked away from the faith, it was numbing, discouraging and depressing. What was encouraging though was to see signs of spiritual life—especially when I asked them if they still prayed and found that these people who seemed so hardened and closed off to God had moments when they'd break down and call out to God and give these beautifully honest and desperate prayers.

That was heartening for me because I think sometimes with this issue we throw it all on our shoulders. We think we bear the full responsibility of turning someone around and getting them back in the family of God, and that is a lie. We're giving ourselves too much credit in that case because ultimately, this is God's job. He cares far more than we do about these people and this issue.

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*Old becomes new*

# UM congregation restores historic building

BY JOAN G. LABARR  
*Special Contributor*

GAINESVILLE, Texas—When Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe led a rededication service on Jan. 23 for the renovated sanctuary building at First United Methodist Church in Gainesville, it was a joyous affirmation that the 1892 structure remains a place of worship and celebration.

The day was a time to look back at the church's history and to look forward to another century of serving God and community.

The church dates back to the mid-18th century when settlers reached the Red River, near the border of Texas and the territory that would eventually become Oklahoma. The pioneer group gathered for a conference at Basin Springs in what is now Grayson County, Texas, asking that Methodists establish a church in the area. Then, in May 1853, the Rev. David Stovall became the first Methodist clergyman to preach in Gainesville.

Two years later a church building was erected in the settlement, shared by Methodists, Cumberland Presbyterians, Baptists and other denominations. The building also served as the community school and Masonic Hall. Laypeople including Lemuel Gooding, who had come to Texas from Portland, Maine, provided consistent leadership between visits from circuit riders. When the present sanctuary was built, the most prominent stained-glass window was dedicated to Gooding's memory.

First UMC—which now has a state-of-the-art fellowship and contemporary worship center—has come a long way since Gooding's time, when the daughter of a circuit rider wrote that the church had a Sunday school with “no literature except the Bible” and a musical repertoire of two

hymns. Both of the hymns, “I Want to be an Angel” and “There is a Happy Land Far Away,” suggested the worshippers looked forward to an eternal home free from the harsh conditions of the frontier.

In 1892 the congregation, then called Denton Street Methodist Church, built one of the largest and most beautiful Methodist houses of worship in North Texas. When the sanctuary opened, the *Gainesville Weekly Hesperian* spared no adjectives in describing the new structure and the community it served:

“Methodism is a live, working force that keeps up with the age. When the country was rude and wild, it came and gathered the hearty pioneers into its improvised churches. Now that wealth and refinement have spread their softening influences [in] the land, it still keeps its place in the front ranks as one of the great agencies for spreading civilization and Christianity. . . . The new congregation is proud of their new house, and well they may be, for it is one of the neatest, most comfortable and prettiest houses of worship in the state.”

## Striking beauty

The historic Gothic Revival sanctuary has remained a place of striking beauty. Few buildings have been as carefully maintained. Old files record numerous projects, large and small, dedicated to preserving the treasured structure.

But in 2008, the church received news that put the future of the sanctuary in serious doubt. An engineering report showed the building's exterior brick and stone veneer posed “an unsafe, dangerous condition due to a lack of proper anchorage, degraded mortar and excessive distortion which creates unstable conditions.”

Bottom line: The exterior could collapse, and

had to be replaced to preserve the building. Pieces of limestone accent were falling to the sidewalk below, while buckling was increasingly visible in the brick walls. The south tower and steeple also required major repairs, and church leaders were warned to stop one of First UMC's beloved traditions—ringing the church bell on Sunday mornings.

Aside from being a treasure for the church, the building was one of North Texas' architectural gems. In 1976 the Texas Historical Commission designated it as a landmark. There was little doubt the congregation would meet the challenge of preserving it, but the cost would be significant. In the midst of the worst recession since the

Great Depression, the estimate for the restoration totaled nearly \$1.2 million.

Undaunted, the church launched a capital campaign in January 2010. A few months later, pledges and gifts had already surpassed the goal and the church conference unanimously approved the project. Children at the church had contributed more than \$1,500, collecting change and selling greeting cards with pictures they had drawn of the sanctuary.

The whole effort was a labor of love, says the Rev. Don Yeager, senior pastor at the church.

“This project is more than just a cosmetic restoration of our historic 1892 sanctuary,” he said. “It was necessary to preserve the building for coming generations. It expresses our appreciation for those who handed this building down to us and it embodies our commitment to preserving a symbol of the heritage, not only of our congregation, but also of our community.”

“God's love is in this church, and this is how we get things done,” said Gwen Grove, a lifelong First UMC member who served for decades as the volunteer congregational care coordinator. “We are happy, and we work together. I'm sure there are glitches along the way, but there is rarely anything you ask someone to do that they will not do it for you. . . . The love and joy in this congregation accomplishes a lot.”

The work began last summer when scaffolding went up around the building for the tedious process of brick removal. Once the old brick was gone, workers reinforced the original structure with steel studs; insulated and waterproofed the walls; repaired or replaced exterior wood and sheet metal; made improvements to the roof and drainage system; rebuilt the bell tower; and painted and added interior lights around the tower windows. Other challenges included re-



**TOP: The Rev. Don Yeager (center) helped children at First UMC in Gainesville, Texas, understand the importance of restoring the church's sanctuary during a recent dedication service. The children raised more than \$1,500 toward the project. ABOVE: The church building's original cornerstone marks the date of its construction in 1892.**





**LEFT:** Plans for the restoration were launched after church leaders at First UMC in Gainesville, Texas, learned the sanctuary building's aging exterior might cause it to collapse. **BELOW:** The Rev. Elwood Poore (left), pastor emeritus, and church member Allen Pierce participated in the Jan. 23 rededication service with Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe (in back) and the Rev. Don Yeager (right).



pairing damage to the church's pipe organ and constructing a new steeple.

In a statement read during the rededication, Bishop James Dorff of San Antonio—who served as the church's pastor in the early 1990s—praised the congregation's "can do" attitude.

"They are pastoral, productive and forward looking. This is a rare combination in our churches today," Bishop Dorff said. "... The Spirit was and is alive and well at First UMC, Gainesville, where the old becomes new and

every day is a new beginning."

Nothing could have illustrated his words more vividly than the end of the service, when 6-year-old Story Tatum, who had won a competition among the children, walked to the south tower to pull the bell rope. The old, familiar tones signaled the start of a new era.

**The Rev. LaBarr is the former director of communications for the North Texas Conference.**

## Bell-ringing tradition

The bell now restored to its perch in the south tower at First United Methodist Church in Gainesville, Texas, has been a part of the church since 1969. Before that time, it called the faithful to worship in the Red River hamlet of Marysville, some 20 miles north of Gainesville.

Marysville remained a small but viable farming community until 1942, when the U.S. government took most of the surrounding land to build Camp Howze, an Army training facility. During World War II, the camp was home to 40,000 soldiers and several hundred German prisoners of war.

The presence of the camp swelled the population of Gainesville, but had the opposite effect in Marysville. When Camp Howze was decommissioned in 1946, families were offered the opportunity to regain their land, but few of them returned. Marysville Methodist Church disbanded in the late 1950s, and the church building stood abandoned, its bell gone silent.

In 1969 a group from First UMC was granted permission to recover the bell and install it in their church's south tower. Several men were dispatched to recover the bell, including the pastor and a representative of one of the old Marysville families.

Since then, the children at First Church have served as ringers each Sunday morning, a practice that resumed in January on the day the restored sanctuary was dedicated.

—Joan LaBarr



**A tradition at First UMC in Gainesville, Texas, calls for children in the congregation to ring the church bell each Sunday morning.**



COURTESY PHOTOS

**ABOVE:** The exterior of the 119-year-old sanctuary building at First UMC in Gainesville, Texas, was restored at a cost of \$1.2 million. **BELOW:** Work on the south tower steeple of the church required a crane with a 140-foot boom.





## GEN-X RISING

# The wind at our backs as we travel with Jesus

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON  
UMR Columnist

There's a traditional Irish blessing that begins, "May the road rise to meet you, may the wind be always at your back."

I think about those words when I find myself having to walk into the wind rather than with it. The experience can be unpleasant. The wind burns your eyes, making them tear up, and throws painful bits of dirt and sand in your face.

The words of the ancient blessing also leapt into my mind recently as I was reading a Scripture passage connected with the season of Lent.

At a certain point, it seems that Jesus resolved to gather his disciples and begin the hard journey that would end at Calvary. The Gospel of Luke records, "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51).

We're in the middle of Lent now, making that journey again with Jesus as his disciples of another time. And I think the abrupt moment of transition in Luke's gospel offers us a perspective on our own faith.

## Selfish faith

Our time is one that tempts us to think of faith as something individual, a private transaction between each of us and God. The illusion of limitless choice our culture tries to impress upon our minds spills over into every aspect of our lives. We are encouraged to put ourselves at the center of our universe, treating people and products as good only insofar as they contribute to our own sense of satisfaction.

It's a tragic message, because the result of it is always bound to be anything other than true satisfaction. We live instead with the anxious feeling that there's always a greener pasture just on the other side of the fence.

As a result, all our relationships become thin. We don't commit ourselves too deeply to one another, because the hard work of love sometimes causes wounds. And if there's anything our society tries to pound into our minds with the message of limitless choice, it is that we shouldn't

have to suffer.

Suffering, of course, is exactly what brought Jesus to Jerusalem.

He didn't go alone, either. He took the disciples with him, even as he knew that they would fall away from him one by one in the hour of his greatest need.

But Jesus went anyway. And in his passion and death—and ultimately in his resurrection—he offers us a new model for how we can relate to God and one another. In the cross Jesus won a victory over all those forces of death and dissolution that even today cause us to crave new choices to limit our pain.

## For our sake

That's good news, especially for a people who have little patience with the idea of suffering for one another as a fundamental part of what it means to love.

The book of Hebrews counsels that we should travel our path in life with perseverance, "looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

That statement by itself might offer us the hope of a great exemplar, but Hebrews doesn't end there. It goes on to remind us that this Jesus is the one "who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of God."

It's an odd follow-up on the face of it, since the cross seems to represent anything but joy.

But the joy set before Jesus was not a joy for himself alone. It is our joy that was before him, for his sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection from the dead won a victory over death that opened the way to life for all of creation.

It is *our* joy that was forefront in Jesus' mind. And the suffering he endured was a suffering undergone on *our* behalf. In the process he gave us more than a great example. He gave us salvation.

If the victory is already won, that means we can take great risks for ourselves and for our churches, knowing that ultimately all our efforts to live as his faithful followers will be redeemed.

And in the end, the wind will indeed be at our backs carrying us toward the New Jerusalem.

The Rev. Thompson maintains a blog at [genxrising.com](http://genxrising.com). E-mail: [andrew@mandatum.org](mailto:andrew@mandatum.org).



Andrew Thompson

# Cultivating faith in adolescents

BY JESSICAH DUCKWORTH  
Special Contributor

Congregations have been doing a lot with teenagers, but it isn't always leading to consequential faith, maintains Kenda Creasy Dean in *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church* (Oxford University Press, 2010). Urging congregations to move beyond emphasizing self-fulfillment and entertainment, Dr. Dean invites them to embody self-relinquishment and a missional imagination.

"Mission means participating in the very life of God, taking part in the 'to die for' love of Jesus Christ, which is the purpose of the church," she writes. For missional congregations Jesus Christ has ultimate significance, and participating in Jesus' self-giving love shapes consequential faith.

Simple? Not quite. What keeps Dr. Dean awake at night is an alternate faith that is dulling the imaginations of teenagers.

As a participant in the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), Dr. Dean interviewed many of the more than 3,300 American teenagers surveyed in this research. She found that American teenagers largely confess a faith that Christian Smith and Melissa Denton call Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) has little to do with God or a sense of a divine mission in the world. It is a self-emolliating spirituality aimed at achieving personal happiness and helping people treat each other nicely. It offers comfort, bolsters self-esteem and helps solve problems by encouraging people to do good and feel good while keeping God at arm's length.

This faith has two significant purposes for teenagers in American culture. It supports relationships in a pluralistic society by de-emphasizing Jesus and any other Christian peculiarities in favor of a benign faith. Second, MTD provides a safe religious experience to foster happiness and self-fulfillment.

The study revealed something else. American teenagers, for the most part, mirror their parents' religious faith. MTD is the default faith for teenagers because it is essentially the default faith taught and practiced in congregations. While this keeps Dr. Dean up at night, oddly enough, it also provides a substantial ground for hope.

"The best news about MTD is that



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A study shows that parents who share their faith with others are more likely to have children who do the same.

teenagers do not buy it as faith. They buy into it—it shapes them nicely for fitting into American society, since it conforms so neatly to American dominant cultural ethos," she writes.

The good news is that teenagers and the adults that surround them do not really buy this pseudo-faith, but neither are most connecting deeply with the authentic traditions of their particular religious faith.

How can congregations cultivate consequential faith in adolescents? Dr. Dean considered the small percentage of American teenagers who are highly devoted to religious faith, found primarily in "Mormon, conservative Protestant, and black Protestant communities."

## Role of parents

**Parents matter.** The NSYR found that parents who share the story at the heart of their faith are more likely to have children who do the same. Dr. Dean suggests that adults convey the good news of Jesus Christ as love, not as information, and that teaching moments revolve around trust more than content.

Talking about Jesus is very different from falling in love with Jesus. "The question lurking beneath the data surfaced by the NSYR is," says Dr. Dean, "Do we as adults love Jesus enough to want to translate the Christian conversation for our children?"

**Faith language.** Highly devoted teenagers have a faith language because they hear a faith language spoken by their families, in their congregations and among their friends. For instance, 74 percent of Mormon teenagers have families who talk about religious things every few days or weeks, compared to 23 percent of mainline Protestant teenagers.

Further, teenagers participate in faith practices because they are offered the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the practices with their families, in the congregations and with their friends. Among Mor-

mon teenagers, 65 percent spoke publicly about their faith in a religious service or meeting in the past year as compared to 33 percent of mainline Protestant teenagers.

Dr. Dean invites congregations to "look for places where adults can move beyond their comfort zones and talk about their faith in teenagers' presence."

## Spiritual wonder

**A contemplative spirit.** Finally, Dr. Dean advocates that congregations embody a contemplative spirit, offering children, youth and adults opportunities for spiritual pause and wonder. Contemplative experiences open spaces for reflection that blur the distinction between people we know and people we are coming to know.

A contemplative spirit might not react to difference but could explore the nuances of difference in an act of self-giving. And this act of the contemplative spirit is closely akin to a missional imagination that ultimately conforms to Jesus Christ, whose self-giving love shaped consequential faith.

Thus to cultivate consequential faith among American teenagers, at least two elements are necessary: parents and a missional imagination.

"What Christian adults know that teenagers are still discovering is that every one of them is an amazing child of God," Dr. Dean writes.

Teenagers need to hear this confession and together with adults live into the good news of a self-giving love that is sent forth through the church into the world. This is the consequential faith that lets us all wake in the morning after a deep sleep.

The Rev. Duckworth, an ordained member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is an assistant professor of Christian formation and teaching at Wesley Theological Seminary. Reprinted from *Leading Ideas*, the online newsletter of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership.



Jessica Duckworth



## WESLEYAN WISDOM

## Taking Methodist fundamentals into the future

BY DONALD W. HAYNES  
UMR Columnist

I love the rendering of Habbakuk 2:2b in the New English Bible: "Write the vision ready for a herald to carry it with speed." *The Message* paraphrases the same verse as writing the vision, "so that it can be read on the run." An older scholar, A. B. Davidson, wisely exegetes this passage, "The vision bears upon the future and must be preserved; it is of common interest to all, learned and unlearned."



Donald Haynes

The challenge for United Methodism right now is to "write our vision" and motivate clergy and laity to "read it and run." Certainly it "bears upon the future."

The verse points to a recurring theme in my writing of this bi-weekly column for almost seven years: If Methodism could get its message straight, as Wesley and Old Methodism had it in their time, and if we could use contemporary media to get it out, United Methodism could cast a vision that would bring masses to journey with us.

Methodism began as a movement of renewal, not a doctrinal schism. We began as one man's vision of the world as his parish and his mission to spread scriptural holiness. When Wesley was an old man and laying the cornerstone of Wesley Chapel on City Road in London, he posed the question, "What is Methodism?" His answer was "the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church . . . none other than the love of God and of all mankind."

But at a time when religious fundamentalism is on the rise, Methodists are often caught short in knowing what we, as Wesley's children, believe.

### We must prepare

The 2012 General Conference will debate and likely adopt some version of a proposal titled, "A Call To Action." It's exciting, but I have one caveat. What if we arrive on the front lines of today's cultural quest, and sound the trumpet to march, but have no message, no vision, nothing to "heal the sin-sick soul" and "make the wounded whole"? What are our "Methodist fundamentals"?

At the risk of redundancy for long-time readers of this column, I am

compelled to summarize what we mean as "Methodist fundamentals" or the essence of the Gospel as we understand it.

First of all, salvation does not begin with our sin. The millions of tracts touting "God's Plan of Salvation" insist that our behavior and attitudes define us. Not so. What Wesley called "way of salvation" rather than "plan of salvation" begins with God's character, not ours. Genesis 1:27 defines us: "God created humankind in his image." Aha! I am not defined by my sin. My sin is a symptom of my dis-ease and I need to "take the cure" which only God's saving grace can give. Instead, the cornerstone of Methodist fundamentals is best couched in the language of John the Elder: "God is Love and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them." (1 John 4:16)

Wesley insisted we are "saved by grace through faith," but God's grace is not defined as God's power, but as God's love. Power is the mindset of a controller, a dictator, one who is afraid of freedom. Love runs the risk that freedom will breed resistance. Love is vulnerable in that it risks not being loved in return. God's characteristics are omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence, but God's character is love. Over and again Wesley preached from and referred to the text: "We love because God first loved us." (1 John 4:19) In his sermon "Free Grace," Wesley admits that some Scripture is hard to understand, but categorically states, "No Scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works." This is a Methodist fundamental.

### All can be saved

If, then, our salvation is rooted in God's character and that character is unrelenting love that surpasses any human love, then we believe that everyone can be saved. That means we are not Calvinists as are many of today's neo-evangelicals, who insist that God's power nullifies my freedom to make bad choices which result in bad consequences. We are Arminians, not Calvinists. A Methodist fundamental is that God's love is for all humankind, not just the Elect. We reject the notion of "limited atonement." We believe "Whoever comes . . . he will not cast out." Charles Wesley has us sing, "Come sinners to the gospel feast, let every soul be Jesus' guest. Ye need not one be left behind for God hath bidden all humankind." God wills all his children to "come home."

Secondly, God's love is not abstract

philosophy but incarnationally invested in the old rugged cross. God's love is a seeking, whispering, awakening, convicting love. Jesus describes this in the three parables Luke places in his 15th chapter. Wesley called it "prevenient grace." Many now call this "preparing grace." This is totally divine initiative, beautifully stated in the anonymous hymn numbered #341 in *The UM Hymnal*:

*I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew he moved my soul to seek him seeking me.*

*It was not I that found, O Savior true; no, I was found of thee.*

*I find, I walk, I love, but oh, the whole of love is but my answer Lord to thee!*

*For thou wert long beforehand with my soul, always lovedst me.*

Calvinists consider us so totally depraved that we cannot hear the whisper of the Holy Spirit; we have to be arbitrarily elected. This makes salvation all divine initiative with no human will to resist or embrace. We believe God's grace can be resisted by free will and embraced by free will. If and when we tire of our life-mess or lack of meaning and "with many a conflict, many a doubt" we can, metaphorically speaking, "throw ourselves on the mercy seat of a loving God," whom we see most clearly through Jesus' words and supreme sacrifice. In short, we all sin but the image of God is not obliterated.

Wesley preached to "awaken the soul" of his listeners. Sensing God's tenderly calling us, we can repent of our sins and receive God's saving

grace. Our journeys are very different. Some have no conscious memory of accepting Jesus as personal savior because of the Christian nurture in family and home church. For others, it is a dramatic, identifiable moment. The Greek word for repentance is "metanoia," which means turning and going a different way. Repentance is quite different from remorse, which leaves us wallowing in our guilt. Wesley

let God, in Charles Wesley's words, "breathe . . . thy loving spirit into every troubled breast. Let us all in thee inherit; let us find that second rest." He concludes this "love divine, all loves excelling" as setting "our hearts at liberty." We can always backslide (another Methodist fundamental!) but perfecting grace does make us "more like the Master."

With this understanding of grace

'Wesley insisted we are "saved by grace through faith," but God's grace is not defined as God's power, but as God's love.'

ley called this the "threshold" through which we step, a volitional acceptance of God's amazing grace and forgiving love. This experience of grace is another Methodist fundamental.

### Perfecting grace

Wesley's major contribution to the history of Christian doctrine is what we now call "perfecting grace." Historically this was called sanctification or Christian perfection, but both got embroiled in legalistic moralism. The participle "ing" implies an ongoing interaction with the Holy Spirit. If becoming a Christian is crossing the threshold of saving grace, perfecting grace is God's taking us "room by room" through the nooks and crannies of our relationships, habits of heart, addictions and what Wesley called "transgressions and infirmities." Perfecting grace is our pilgrim journey as the Holy Spirit leads us to

theology, Wesley used the term "grace upon grace." To insure our growth in grace, he employed what he called "means of grace." This leads us to what he called "holiness of life and heart," our final Methodist fundamental. The list varied, but Wesley always included "searching the scriptures," prayer, frequent communion, and what he called "holy conversation."

To echo A.B. Davidson, "The vision bears upon the future and must be preserved; it is of common interest to all, learned and unlearned." Wesley gave us this vision in our powerful Methodist fundamentals; it's up to us to learn them and bear them into the future.

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.

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# Cruising UM pastor ministers on high seas

BY MARY JACOBS  
Staff Writer

ABOARD THE MS AMSTERDAM, SOMEWHERE NEAR COCHIN, INDIA—The call of ministry can take a clergy person just about anywhere. For retired United Methodist pastor, the Rev. Jack Giguere, his ministry is taking him almost everywhere—by way of the high seas.

Dr. Giguere and his wife, Joyce, are sailing on their fourth round-the-world cruise on the Holland America cruise line, as he serves as the Protestant chaplain on board. The job involves leading worship services for passengers and crew members, teaching daily classes and ministering to anyone who needs prayer or encouragement.

“I’m available for all other spiritual needs onboard,” he said. That includes counseling, visiting patients in the ship’s hospital unit, or ministering to a family if someone dies aboard ship.

Dr. Giguere serves along with a Roman Catholic priest and Jewish rabbi for the 110-day cruise, and because he handles these duties, the couple travels free of charge. (Retail fare for a worldwide cruise starts at around \$25,000 per passenger, and can run as high as \$100,000 for a penthouse suite.)

## Easy decision

The Giguere first discovered cruising after he retired in 1999 from the pastorate of Grosse Pointe (Mich.) United Methodist Church. After a few trips, he wrote to the cruise line’s entertainment department—that’s the department that hires chaplains—and expressed his interest in serving as a chaplain.

Within a week, he received an invitation to serve as chaplain on a 15-day

Hawaiian Islands cruise. Shortly after that, he received another call: The chaplain for the 2008 Grand World Cruise had just fallen ill—would Dr. Giguere be available to replace him?

The decision wasn’t very difficult. The Giguere said, “Yes,” rushed to pack, prepared classes and made their travel arrangements, and within a few weeks, they were on the boat.

On each four-month cruise, Dr. Giguere is charged with leading worship for the ship’s 1,200 passengers as well as separate services for those members of the crew who are Christian. Every day the ship is at sea, he teaches a class, Windows on the Biblical World, looking at Bible stories that relate to places the ship visits.

The classes are attended by people of many different faiths, from nations all over the world, so Dr. Giguere skips the doctrinal message and focuses on

the historic and cultural background of each story.

Jews, Roman Catholics and Protestants of every variety, as well as those without faith, attend the classes, and the experience has shown Dr. Giguere that “people are drawn more by spiritual questions than by religious answers.”

Pastoral counseling is also part of the job. “For passengers, it’s an opportunity to tell their story to someone they will never see again,” he said. “When they see a chaplain, they feel free to pull up a chair.” Family and relational issues are the most frequent topic that require his listening ear.

## Three rules

While he’s serving as chaplain, the Giguere must abide by three rules: Never be intoxicated, never be seen in the casino and never take the front

row seats in the evening entertainment shows.

Many of his closest pastoral relationships, Dr. Giguere says, have developed with members of each ship’s crew. The worship services he leads for crewmembers take place at 11:30 p.m., after a long day of work.

“They are away from their families, and they need encouragement and support in terms of their faith walk,” he said.

This year’s 110-day journey left Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on Jan. 5. The ship, the Amsterdam, sailed westbound to Puerto Limón, Costa Rica, before crossing the Panama Canal. Other ports of call included Callao, Peru—gateway to Machu Picchu—and Easter Island, Chile, known for its famous giant stone statues. The ship’s itinerary includes

stops at ports throughout Australia, Asia and the Mediterranean. Finally, it’ll cross the Atlantic and head back to the United States.

When he’s not sailing, Dr. Giguere serves as teaching pastor-in-residence at St. Mark’s United Methodist in Easton, Maryland. He says he’ll keep serving as a seagoing chaplain as long as he’s invited and as health allows, citing the words of a hymn by Jessie Adams: “If hope but light the water’s crest, and Christ my bark will use, I’ll seek the seas at his behest, and brave another cruise.”

“Each year, we have met wonderful people from all over the world,” Dr. Giguere said. “It is a date with God that I never expected in retirement.”

mjacobs@umr.org



COURTESY PHOTOS

Retired United Methodist pastor, the Rev. Jack Giguere (right), and his wife Joyce are traveling around the world on a cruise on which he is serving as chaplain.



The Giguere are traveling aboard Holland America’s cruise ship, the MS Amsterdam.

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*Notes of The Fund are not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Securities Investor Protection Corporation (SIPC), or any other federally or state-regulated institution.*

For an Offering Circular or more information, call or write to us at:  
**475 Riverside Drive, Room 310  
New York, NY 10115**

**For an Offering Circular and application:**

Telephone: 1-800-862-8633

Email: [umdf@gbgm-umc.org](mailto:umdf@gbgm-umc.org)

Website: [www.gbgm-umc.org/umdf](http://www.gbgm-umc.org/umdf)



## CEO POSITION UMR COMMUNICATIONS

### ABOUT US:

UMR helps churches connect effectively. UMR shares a common commitment to Christian ministry with the United Methodist Church, operates in accordance with the denomination’s Social Principles and also works in partnership with representatives from many faith groups. UMR’s mission is to share God’s story by publishing quality religion news and providing print and digital resources for communication and education. The UMR corporate office is located at 1221 Profit Drive in Dallas, Texas.

### CEO DESCRIPTION AND QUALIFICATIONS:

The primary responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer is to provide visionary leadership, operational guidance and enhanced denominational relationships for UMR Communications. Candidates must have a broad understanding of and appreciation for the United Methodist Church and its structure at all levels. Searches and recommendations will be made without regard to ethnicity, race, color or gender.

To find out more, visit [www.umportal.org](http://www.umportal.org). To apply for this position, please submit a resume and a brief statement of interest to [ceosearch@umr.org](mailto:ceosearch@umr.org) or mail to UMR Communications, Attn: Search Committee, 1221 Profit Dr., Dallas, Texas 75247. For questions, please e-mail: [ceosearch@umr.org](mailto:ceosearch@umr.org)

