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## CAMPING MINISTRIES



Making space  
for encounters  
with God



Camping provides opportunities for children and youth to grow in their faith through the study of Scripture, exploration of the natural world and fellowship with friends. United Methodists in Arkansas have a variety of camp and retreat centers available for use by groups and individuals of all ages.

PHOTOS COURTESY CAMP TANAKO

The term “summer camp” may bring to mind a range of images and experiences. It may mean different things for Scouts than it does for 4-H members. It may even mean different things for Christians, depending upon the traditions of their upbringing.

For United Methodists in Arkansas, “summer camp” likely spurs thoughts of places such as Tanako, Bear Creek, Shoal Creek and Wayland Spring. Campers may recall friendships forged, mission-related experiences, learning through action, singing, games or just plain fun.

Go deeper, though, and you may hear stories of what Celtic Christians

would describe as “thin places”—locations where heaven and earth seem to touch, where God seems more readily present. Our camp and retreat centers provide surroundings and interactions that prime us for encounters with the Holy One.

How many people, clergy and lay alike, have felt their first inkling of a call to ministry at one of our camps? We humans may not even be able to estimate the number.

May it grow again this summer.

[See CAMPS, page 4A]

## Q&A: The spiritual discipline of financial stewardship

The Rev. Dr. Clif Christopher's 2008 book *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate* has sold more copies than any other stewardship finance book released by its publisher, Abingdon Press.

Its new sequel, *Whose Offering Plate Is It? New Strategies for Financial Stewardship* (Abingdon, 2010), addresses common questions raised by people who have read the first book.

Christopher, founder of Horizons Stewardship, lives in Cabot and speaks and teaches around the country. He spoke recently with editor Amy Forbus.

**You say pastors need to know how much their members give. What do you say to pastors who disagree?**

There are very few who disagree anymore. It is easily the most talked-about piece of either book, and it's why several chapters are devoted to it in the second one.

Pastors, the few now who say, “I've still made this decision,” frankly tell me they've made that choice for all the wrong reasons. They tell me they're afraid they won't be able to separate their knowledge of someone's giving from the need to be their pastor.



**Clif Christopher**

I find that very disturbing, because our hope certainly would be that all pastors

would be able to know about the sacrifices and the failures of their members to live out the Christian life, and help them appropriately along that path.

**So it's not just about money, it's about the spiritual discipline of giving.**

It's almost never about money. Pastors are aware, and I haven't found one to refute it, that the love of money is easily the most prevalent thing that is separating their members from loving God as fully as they should. In other words, it's the greatest sin of their congregation. They know that.

Being a pastor is an extraordinarily hard job. It's hard to blame someone when they say, “I know I'm

walking through a mine field when I deal with this, and by golly, I just don't want to get hurt. It's easier to survive if I just stay away from it.”

**But that does a disservice.**

It does a great disservice to the church, to the Kingdom and I think to the donor, who is able to fool themselves that a non-stewardship lifestyle is an appropriate lifestyle for them to be a follower of Christ.

And it's the job of a pastor to be honest and open with our people, loving them the entire time, but pointing out to them, “These things are separating you from a walk with Christ that I want you to have.”

Because the fact is, most of our members are not having an affair.

[See Q&A, page 5A]

# Helping teens discover their calling to serve God

*Miller Center provides free summer opportunity for 14 students*

BY J.J. WHITNEY  
Special Contributor

When I was sixteen, I felt God call me.

It was during a worship service when my dad, a pastor, shared his own call to ministry experience.

Now, I have opportunity to work with young people as they discern their vocations in ministry. It has verified two things I experienced in discovering my own call: One, hearing stories is a powerful way that God calls people into the work of the kingdom. And two, being in a group of peers discerning ministry is an excellent way to feel assured that one is on the right path.

Thanks to a generous gift from Bob and Nadine Miller of First United Methodist Church Fort Smith, Hendrix College hosts the Hendrix Miller Summer Institute (SI) for high school youth. SI is open to those entering their junior year of high school to recently graduated seniors.

We invite a group of fourteen youth to explore their callings during the June 13-17, 2011 event at First UMC Conway with staff and students from the Hendrix Miller Center, as well as Rod Hocott, Arkansas Conference minister to youth and young adults.

"Summer Institute is easily the most refreshing thing I do with youth all year long," says Hocott. "The kids who attend are there to get their questions answered. SI is planned in such a way as to be both fun and educational, and the hope is that they take away from this experience the knowledge that God can, and will use them no matter what decision they make."

We spend the week hearing stories of how ordained and lay ministers have responded to God's call upon their lives. We learn through worship and Bible study, in shadowing ministers for a day "on the job," in community service with United Methodist churches and by discerning spiritual gifts for ministry.



J.J. Whitney



Students attending the 2009 Summer Institute visited the offices of the Arkansas Conference during their week of discernment.

COURTESY PHOTO

The Rev. Will Choate of Argenta UMC will share his call to ministry at the opening worship service.

"Any time one has the opportunity to wrestle with the passions God has placed in them, it is an important time," Choate says. "The beauty of Summer Institute is that it provides this opportunity within the context of Christian community."

Other special guests include Rev. Dede Roberts, superintendent of the Central District, who will lead participants through the differences between the orders of deacon and elder in the UMC, and the steps through the candidacy process. An upcoming graduate of Vanderbilt Divinity School, Andrew Fiser, will preach at the closing worship service. Fiser participated in SI as a high school student.

Student participants from past Institutes found the week helpful in a variety of ways.

"Summer Institute was a critical part of my discernment process in pursuit of a call to ordained ministry," says Chase Green, a current seminary student at Wesley Theological Seminary. "Without their advice, experience and mentoring to those who are discerning, I would not have had the opportunity to really clarify and pinpoint where I am called to serve in God's church."

Katy Dunn, associate youth minister at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock, found support and confirmation of her calling during the SI experience.

"As a high school senior I knew in my heart that I was being called into ministry, but my head was still

wrestling with the questions, 'But how do I make that happen?' and 'Who will help me?'" she says.

"Summer Institute helped me to answer those questions. For me, it was a week where my heart and head intersected and I heard God speaking, 'I'll be with you. They'll be with you. You can do this.'"

"I think the best thing about SI is that it provides a resource to students at a time when they may not know where else to go," says Rachel Kincannon, a seminary student at SMU's Perkins School of Theology.

"They don't know, as in my own case, if people will accept them, if they are 'good enough,' or how it will all work out. It taught me more than anything that 'God doesn't call the equipped, God equips the called.' SI was a way that God 'equipped' me for ministry."

No costs are involved for the youth who attend, as the Hendrix Miller Center funds the entire week. Not only do the youth engage in ministry opportunities and spend time in worship and discipleship together, but they also have opportunities for fellowship through bowling, swimming, skits, games and time shared together with the staff.

For more information or to receive an application, please contact me at [whitney@hendrix.edu](mailto:whitney@hendrix.edu) or 501-450-4590. The deadline to apply for one of the 14 spots is April 29, 2011.

*The Rev. Whitney serves as associate director of the Hendrix Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics and Calling.*



## EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

## Transitions in the works

This morning I breathed a huge sigh of relief for the church I no longer attend.

As many readers of this paper know, it's appointment season in the United Methodist Church. On page 4A of this issue you'll find confirmed Arkansas Conference appointment changes announced as of press time. More confirmed changes will appear in the May 6 issue.

Bishop Crutchfield and the appointive cabinet have entered a phase of prayerful discernment. I know I'm understating the situation when I say they have a tough job. My office isn't too far from the conference room where they hold their meetings. I've seen the weight of this responsibility on their faces in recent weeks.

Back in my old Conference, the church we called home for a decade has known for months that Pastor Woody will retire this summer. Since that information became common knowledge, people have wondered...

"Who will we get?"

"Will it be a man or a woman?"

"Someone younger or older?"

"Is there any chance we'll get one who can play the guitar? Our guitarist is about to move to Idaho."

"Will this person help us grow—numerically and spiritually?"

Among those more familiar with clergy in the Conference, there's been guessing and hoping for specific individuals.

Yesterday, I heard that a clergyman had been spotted entering a Staff-Parish Relations meeting. The eyewitness couldn't provide any other information besides, "He was tall."

Immediately I began mentally reviewing the taller clergy in North Texas. I settled on an option and called him on his mobile line. (Yes, I was behaving badly. Sorry, folks—I'm human.) No, my friend said, it wasn't him. But it might be *this guy*.

I don't know *this guy*. So I called another clergy friend. (Yep, still misbehaving, and unabashedly so.) What do you know about *this guy*? Not a good match, she said. Uh-oh. I felt a knot in my stomach.



Then, this morning, official-yet-unofficial word arrived in my email inbox. A credible source, naming a clergyman I know. And the sigh of relief flowed forth.

I believe his gifts will mesh well with the congregation I still love. I believe he has the capacity to both nurture and challenge the people there, and help them introduce more souls to the love of Christ.

All that said, I know my angst over the decision-making process was nothing compared to that of those directly involved. The calls made by bishops and district superintendents change the courses of many lives. Thankfully, they rely on God and the information available to them, and ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Whether or not your church is expecting a change in pastors, please pray for our leaders in this season of transition.

*To contact me, send an e-mail to [aforbus@arumc.org](mailto:aforbus@arumc.org), or write me at 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202.*

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## AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

Dear Friends:

Several years ago I met pastors from behind the "Iron Curtain" at an event sponsored by the World Methodist Council on Evangelism.

Pastors from Estonia, Russia, Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia (it was still united then) met with counterparts from the United States, Great Britain, West Germany and Australia, spending several days together at a Methodist retreat center in Finland.

We discussed, played, prayed and worshiped. It was a powerful experience.

The "star" of the presenters was the venerable Australian Methodist

evangelist, Sir Alan Walker. Sir Alan, as expected, was in rare form as a passionate preacher and evangelist. He was wonderful, but others made a more lasting impression on me.

I met a gentle bear of a man from Estonia who was in word and deed as close to a Slavic saint as I have ever seen. His very image belonged on an icon.

Hungarian and Czech pastors told of being hauled to the police station at regular intervals for "questioning." I heard stories of privation, denial of job opportunities for Christians, jail for slight offenses taken, services of worship disrupted.

And again and again I heard and experienced the resiliency,

strength and vitality of Christian brothers and sisters who would not deny their faith in Jesus Christ at any cost. These were first century Christians living in the 20th century.

Fast forward almost thirty years. While there are challenges and difficulties encountered in churches all over the former Soviet Bloc, there are very real and open opportunities for us as United Methodist Christians to make disciples for the transformation of the world.

The faith of those first-century/20th-century Christians kept the doors of hope and faith open. And now, in places once thought inaccessible to the Christian

faith, the church is again on the move. In Russia, China, Vietnam, Cambodia... the list goes on.

Working with indigenous Christians, we are helping through our World Service shared giving and through Advance Specials to provide funding for everything from Bibles to pastors' salaries, to seminary training for new pastors.

This last week I met with Dr. Sergei Nikolaev, the President of Moscow Seminary. Our annual conference has provided some financial support for the seminary in the past, and the need is still great. One of the two foreign mission emphases of our conference is the Russia Initiative.

Bishop Hans Vaxby has indicated that the seminary is in critical need of our continued support. I told Bishop Vaxby he could count on the people of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas to support the training of pastors for the church in Russia.

During the remainder of Lent, I am going to make a special effort to keep our sisters and brothers from around the world in my prayers. We are a world-wide family.

Faithfully,

Charles Crutchfield

# Holy ground: Reflections on a VIM trip to Haiti

BY GAIL BALDWIN  
Special Contributor

*There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus, No, not one! No, not one!*

*None else could heal all our soul's diseases, No, not one! No, not one!*

*Jesus knows all about our struggles, He will guide till the day is done;*

*There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus, No, not one! No, not one!*

As we sat in the Sunday morning worship service at the Methodist Church in Petit Goave, Haiti, we listened to this beautiful gospel song in Haitian French. It sounded as if we were in the middle of a 200-member choir; the four-part harmony was incredible.

It was a holy moment on holy ground, and I found myself struck by the reverence with which these impoverished, oppressed people sang and worshiped the Lord. The church was full. The children came to Sunday school and church dressed like it was Easter Sunday. The children's choir was impressive as well.

Haiti holds many paradoxes. The beautiful mountains and gorgeous coastlines contrast with the crowded streets filled with smog, dust and waste in Port-au-Prince. The children begging in the streets contrasted with mothers raising their children in the rural community of Fond Doux, where the Arkansas Volunteers in Mission (VIM) team,

led by Rev. Dr. Walter "Bubba" Smith of Christ of the Hills UMC, labored to rebuild a Methodist church.

The February journey was the first by an Arkansas VIM team to the epicenter of the 2009 earthquake.

### How it happens

With 10 individuals, our team had the largest number of participants permitted by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). By year's end, more than 2,000 people will have made VIM trips to Haiti in groups of this size.

Each VIM team coordinates their efforts through their Conference Volunteers In Mission coordinator—in our case, Don Weeks, who approached Bubba about leading our team. After the leader is confirmed, the team begins to take shape and a project is assigned.

In addition to covering travel expenses, each team must provide \$3,500 toward their work project, an amount matched by the UMCOR Haiti Relief Fund.

Our team was housed at the annual conference center for the Methodist Church of Haiti in Petit Goave, located approximately 40 miles southwest of Port-au-Prince. Smith, who had participated with

the VIM team that dismantled the church in Fond Doux in May 2010, reported there was much improvement in the area since his first visit.

To a first-timer, though, it seemed as if there was still so much that needs to be rebuilt.

We sifted sand and rocks to form concrete for use on the walls of the church. Our team replaced the screens on the parsonage of the district superintendent. Members of our team assisted in forming the metal doors and windows for use in the church building.

We played with children in both communities, forming bonds with laity and church leaders alike in order to show the love of Christ to our brothers and sisters who have suffered greatly as a result of the earthquake of January 2010.

We celebrated the sacrament of Holy Communion at the Fond Doux church on our last day at the worksite; we held hands as we closed with "Just as I Am." I was moved to tears as the members of the church embraced us and as the children waved goodbye.

### Resilience and hope

There are many obstacles to rebuilding the beautiful country of Haiti, and I grieve for the children, truly "the least of these." Resources are still very limited for the ones who need the most assistance. Many children lack proper clothing and are unable to attend school due to lack

of funds.

The lack of sufficient infrastructure and proper oversight of the relief efforts seems to be hindering the rebuilding of Haiti by the many agencies that are there to assist.

However, the people of Haiti, especially the people of the Methodist Church of Haiti, remain hopeful. They trust their Maker to be with them, to supply their needs, and they continue to persevere, knowing there is nothing in the entire world that can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord. Their faith and their resilience are amazing.

The Arkansas VIM team was comprised of five UM clergypersons and five lay persons from Arkansas, Florida and Ohio. But before the week was over, we became more than that. We became the Body of Christ poured out for our new friends in Haiti.

I pray that the Body of Christ and the United Methodist Church will continue to support these amazing people with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness.

*The Rev. Baldwin serves as associate pastor of First UMC Russellville.*



Gail Baldwin



The Arkansas Conference sent a Volunteers in Mission team to Haiti Feb. 21-28. Front row, from left: The Rev. Gail Baldwin, First UMC Russellville; Mary Lewis Dassinger, Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock; Mike Hedges, Cabot UMC. Second row: Will Smith and Norman Bushee, Christ of the Hills UMC Hot Springs Village; the Rev. David Broyles, Ohio; Back row: the Rev. Bubba Smith, Christ of the Hills UMC Hot Springs Village; the Rev. Wes Steele, Ohio; Paul Moore, Star City UMC; and Bill Lee, Miami, Fla.

COURTESY PHOTO

# Camps release 2011 schedules

(Continued from page 1A) Grade-level references indicate the grade the student will enter in fall 2011.

The following camps had released their schedules as of press time. They are open to any campers of the age group listed.

## Wayland Spring Camp

In addition to holding the sessions listed below, Wayland Spring Camp, located in the Northeast District town of Imboden, may be reserved for your church or group's gathering. For information or to check availability, contact Shannon May at smay@fumcjonesboro.org. To learn more about camp amenities, visit waylandspring.org.

June 9-11  
3rd & 4th Grade Camp

June 12-14  
5th & 6th grade Camp  
Features a June 14 canoe trip on the Spring River

June 17-18  
Northeast District Youth Rally

July 11-12  
7th & 8th Grade Camp  
Features a July 12 canoe trip on the Spring River

## Camp Tanako

On the edge of Lake Catherine outside Hot Springs, Camp Tanako offers year-round camp and retreat opportunities for children, youth, and adults. For information on any of the camps listed below, visit tanako.org.

May 27-29 CIT (Counselor in Training leadership weekend): Grades 9-12

June 3-5  
Fishing Camp: Grades 3-7

June 13-17  
Senior High: Grades 9-12

June 20-22  
Younger Elementary Extravaganza (YEE!): Grades 1-2

June 27-July 1  
Junior High I: Grades 7-9

July 5-8  
Middle Elementary I: Grades 3-4

July 11-15  
Older Elementary I: Grades 5-6

July 15-17  
Middle Elementary II: Grades 3-4

July 18-22  
Junior High II: Grades 7-9

July 25-29  
Older Elementary II: Grades 5-6

## Shoal Creek Camp

Located in the West District town of New Blaine, Shoal Creek Camp is available for your church or group's gatherings in addition to offering the programs listed below. For information, contact Angel McPeak at 479-883-0420 or amcpeak74@gmail.com.

June 7-10  
West District Youth Mission Week

Friday, June 10  
Grades K-2 Day Camp

June 27-29  
United Deaf American Sign Language (ASL) Camp

Friday, July 8  
Grades K-2 Day Camp

July 11-15  
Music Camp: Grades 3-6

July 24-26  
Jr. and Sr. High: Grades 7-12

July 27-30  
Upper Elementary: Grades 5-6

August 1-4  
Middle Elementary: Grades 3-4

Monday, Aug. 8  
Grades K-2 Day Camp

## Mount Eagle Retreat Center offers activities for adults and families

Located just outside of Clinton, Mount Eagle offers the following events this summer, and can also be reserved for your own church or group retreat. For information, call 501-723-4580 or visit mounteagle.org.

### May 1-3, 2011, Clergy Golf Retreat

Enjoy two days of golf with evenings of fellowship and worship at Mount Eagle, coordinated by David Baker, perumc@windstream.net and Steve Wingo, browingo@sbcglobal.net. Arrive at Mount Eagle Sunday, May 1, for a light dinner. First day of golf starts at 9 a.m. Monday at Mountain Ranch (Fairfield Bay). Tuesday golf will be at Tannenbaum (east of Greers Ferry). Worship and fellowship time will be a part of both evenings at Mount Eagle. Cost: \$160, which includes double occupancy with private bath at Beal Lodge for two nights at Mount Eagle, two breakfasts and dinners at Mount Eagle, two days of golf with cart, range balls and prizes. Register at mounteagle.org by April 26.

### June 20-24, 2011, Family Folklore Camp

An intergenerational event with two days of crafts, music & folklore at the Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View, led by Shirley Waggoner, a member of Central UMC Fayetteville. This camp is for grandparents/families with children ages 10 and up who want to learn about Ozark crafts and culture while enjoying Christian fellowship and worship. Participants will stay at Kaetzell Lodge at Mount Eagle. Cost: \$175 per person, which includes all Folk Center fees, craft fees, meals and lodging. Register at mounteagle.org by the first of April.

### Sept. 9-10, Community Gardening Workshops

Sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Hunger Task Force, this event will introduce participants to a variety of gardening options for local churches, families and food pantries. Beginning on Friday evening with a theological foundation for feeding the hungry, attendees will end the day Saturday with tools and resources to start a program in the local church. Gardening 101, Gardening Philosophy, Developing a Team, Goal Setting for Garden Programs, and a tour of the Mount Eagle organic garden are all on the schedule. Local churches are encouraged to send a team of up to three persons for this training. Registration forms will be available at Annual Conference, and by mid-June at mounteagle.org.

## APPOINTMENTS

The following pastoral retirements, appointments and changes have been officially announced as of press time on March 25. To see appointments as they become official, visit arumc.org/appointments.

### Retirements effective before 2011 Annual Conference

- Don J. Hewett
- Bruce T. Howard
- Margaret Sue Kelly
- Kay Wiggins

### Retirements effective at 2011 Annual Conference

- James L. Bacon, Center Grove
- Charles Cooper, Trumann/Tyronza
- Ronnie Eldridge, Lewisville
- John Farthing, First Greenbrier
- Denman L. Gillett, Salem (Benton)
- Fred Haustein, St. James (Little Rock)
- Daryl Hines, Foreman

- Chester Jones, South Central District
- Ed Kerr, Incapacity leave
- Nicholas C. Lascaro, Bull Shoals/Yellville
- Aline McCracken, Cedar Grove/Floral
- Ralph G. Riley, Lisbon
- Gene M. Ross, Friendship
- Sidney Royce Savage, Sparkman Charge
- David D. Scroggin, Wesley (Russellville)
- James Scruggs, White Memorial
- David Smith, Everton/Valley Springs
- Billie Jean Tate, Incapacity leave
- Virginia Sue Trexler, Incapacity leave
- Julia Beth Turner, Concord (Lonoke)
- Raymond Vining, Cabot, Associate
- Edward Warren, Leslie/Marshall
- Keenan C. Williams, Old

- Washington
- Billy D. Wise, Dogwood Charge

### Incapacity leave

- Regina Gideon, First Conway, Associate
- Michael Winberry, Grace (Rogers)

### Other changes

- Susan Howe, Faith (Little Rock)—taking appointment in Great Britain
- Harry Cross, Grace (Rogers)—appointed military chaplain
- Judyth Ross, Bayou Meto—appointed to CPE program
- Dane Womack, Plummerville—appointed to attend seminary
- Josh Allen, Cleveland/Overcup—appointed to attend seminary

### Confirmed appointment changes at Annual Conference (effective July 1)

- Saint James (Little Rock), Senior Pastor—Sieg Johnson

## VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION

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

### Teams still needed for Cincinnati, Ark. tornado recovery

The people in the Cincinnati area of northwest Arkansas still need help recovering from the damage done by the Dec. 31, 2010, tornado. Fields must be clean of debris before residents' livestock can return to them for grazing. If you have a team ready to offer help, contact Kristin Marlatt at 479-422-4157. There is need for both skilled and unskilled laborers.

### VIM Team Leader training April 9

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



Debbie Vest



## Q&A: The spiritual discipline of financial stewardship (continued from page 1A)

Most of our members do not have gambling addictions or alcohol addictions or whatever, but most of them need it pointed out to them that they're in love with material things, and that's what they're having the affair with.

They don't want you to point that out, but that's our job.

**You write that focusing on financial stewardship just one month out of the year is a mistake. How can churches break out of that pattern?**

There's nothing wrong with a particular emphasis. Churches that do that, and most of them do it on a very disciplined basis: "October is our stewardship month. We know the preacher will preach on it. We'll get a card..." and it's almost as if we just set October aside.

But I think people also put that in measurement. They say, "You know, stewardship is like one-twelfth of the Christian life." Where stewardship, and our being a steward of what we have, needs to be felt as a 12-month-a-year deal.

If we said, "Look, July will be our Bible month. In July, we're going to read the Bible every day..." but we don't really talk about studying Scripture the other eleven months, that communicates to folks that July is the Bible month, but that means the other eleven are not.

And if you go down the list of other spiritual disciplines, we don't do that with any spiritual discipline other than giving.

Churches that are successful, that have a per capita giving that's five, six, ten times the average, have

financial stewardship as a part of their DNA. It's who they are. They don't any more have to have a month on it than you have to have a month on breathing.

That's where the Methodist church was in its founding—very high expectation, very high accountability, very high in spiritual discipline, and we didn't set a month aside. Wesley talked about all of these things as going on in our lives on a daily basis. That's where our churches need to be.

My experience is that something like one out of 52 [sermons], or at the most, two, is what 90 percent of our churches get. Jesus talked about material things and their role in our life one in every six times.

So, our preachers, if they were following Jesus, would easily be preaching about financial stewardship and material things seven to eight times a year, which still leaves 44 sermons that aren't on that.

But we don't study it, we don't talk about it prior to people joining, we don't want to talk about it after they join, and it's a real crime. It's part of what's led us to the problem we're in.

**What is one thing you hope readers will get out of this book?**

That number one, people would realize that they have got to change the culture of stewardship within their church: how it's viewed, how it's talked about, how it's studied, how it's communicated across the board.

The world has really changed, and by and large, we still do the annual stewardship campaign much like we did it in the 1950s. And it's part of why we've lost such a huge amount of market share with the charitable dollar. So the first is that we've got to make a real systemic change.

Second would be that our church has got to move to a high expectation level. Our members are succeeding in living up to the expectation that our leaders have communicated to them. And we wonder, "Why

don't more of them attend, why don't more of them go into the mission field, why don't more of them tithe?"

Part of the reason is that our communication to them on the very front end was that discipleship is not a big deal, it's membership. So they've joined the club, but they're not committed to the cause.

**Your last chapter is entitled, "Can you just make it simple for me?" Will you give Arkansas United Methodist readers a sneak preview of that chapter's advice?**

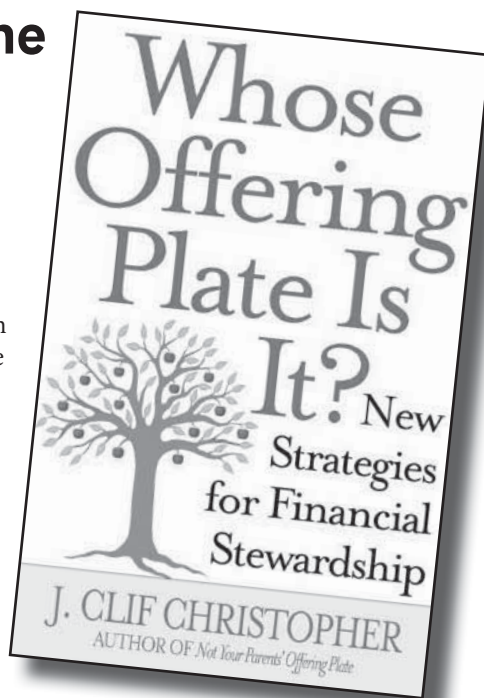
I think the simplest thing that people need to understand is that churches are in the mission and ministry business, they're not in the money business. And the better they are in mission and ministry in ways that people understand—i.e., changing lives—the more money they will give.

A lot of pastors will say to me, "What do I really need to do to get more money?" and my quick and flippant answer to them always is, "Do your job."

Save souls for Jesus, bring persons into discipleship, help them to fall in love with Christ, and then communicate those stories to your congregation so they see it. People will give to that. It's what we're in business to do.

They have come to meet Jesus, they have come to experience a life change, they have come to make a difference for the Kingdom, and worship's been boring, and they don't see people going out in mission, they don't see the community or society being improved by something that we're doing, and they decide they're not going to shop there anymore.

So, the biggest thing you can do is do your job.



## 'Catch the Vision' and help transform lives

**May 1 special offering goes toward starting new United Methodist churches in Arkansas**

BY BOB CROSSMAN  
Special Contributor

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus puts our mission in these words: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (NRSV).

One of the most effective ways we can carry out that mission is by starting new congregations.

On Sunday, May 1, all Arkansas United Methodist congregations are asked to receive a "Catch the Vision" special offering. The funds received through this offering are used exclusively to give birth to new UMCs in Arkansas.

In the past five years, we have started 19 new UMCs across the state: Victory UMC, Forrest City; Waltreak UMC, Waltreak; canvascommunity UMC, Little Rock; FaithSpring UMC, Little Rock; Riverside UMC, Siloam Springs; Wesley@Wesley UMC, Russellville; Vietnamese UMC, Van Buren; Argenta UMC, North Little Rock; North Hispanic Mission, Fort Smith; Christ Way UMC, Jonesboro; Pontiac UMC, Springdale; Woodlands UMC, Fort Smith; Crosspoint UMC, Conway; Vietnamese UMC, Fort Smith; Grace UMC, East End; Living Waters UMC, Centerton; Christ UMC, Cabot; Journey UMC, Fort Smith; and Mt. Olive UMC, Van Buren.

These new churches are yielding great benefits for the Kingdom, including 504 professions of faith, 351 baptisms and 44 reaffirmations of faith.

Lyle Schaller, author and

respected authority on UMC demographics, proposes that an annual conference our size needs to start seven churches each year to offset churches that disband or "move into the terminally ill state of their institutional life." Schaller also says that if our goal is "substantial growth," we should start between 14 and 21 new churches each year.

The current yearly apportionment for new church starts is \$300,000. That amount provides a great beginning, but to reach the Conference goal of starting at least three new churches and two extension campus churches each year, we must have ever-increasing support of the Catch the Vision offering.

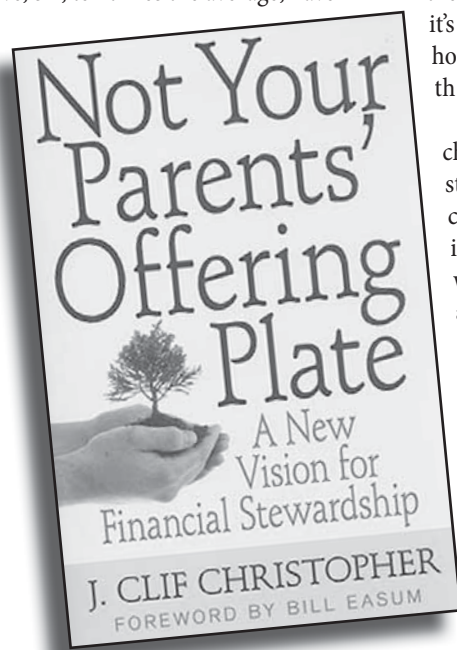
We have identified additional sites, and are only waiting for the financial resources that your gift to Catch the Vision will provide.

Arkansas' population has grown by 371,700 in the past decade. According to the research of Percept Inc., 675,000 Arkansans have no faith involvement. Your financial support to Catch the Vision will help develop new congregations in response to the changing demographics of Arkansas.

On behalf of the new churches that will be started, the new professions of faith in Jesus Christ that will be witnessed, the new baptisms, the broken lives that will be healed, the salvation that will be found, thank you for your generosity.

To request bulletin inserts for the May 1 offering, send me an e-mail: [bcrossman@arumc.org](mailto:bcrossman@arumc.org).

*The Rev. Crossman is director of new church starts and congregational advancement for the Arkansas Conference.*



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



# A lot can happen if...

BY VINI SCOTT  
Special Contributor

A youth minister can go through a lot of ups and downs on the best of weeks.

Add a two and a half-hour road trip to the mix, stir in a heaping helping of adolescent energy, a smidgen of van trouble, a taste of directionally challenged youth sponsors, and don't forget an extremely late departure, and *voila!*—you have the recipe for a typical youth group road trip for Kadash.

*Kadash* is the name of our youth group at Midland Heights UMC. It's also a cool Hebrew word that means, "To make holy, to sanctify, or set apart as holy." Coming from diverse cultures and backgrounds, the teens in Kadash have the common goal of becoming holy.

It can be a really cool thing when you pack all that "diversity" into two 15-passenger vans, which is what we did when we set out for Hot Springs to attend Veritas 2011, the event that gathered 1,200 youth from across the Arkansas Conference.

One of the coolest things about being a youth minister is that you get spiritually fed along with the students. You get a spiritual lift from serving the Lord as a minister to young people. That's one of the reasons we do what we do. It feels good, right?

That said, if all I took home this year from Veritas was the awesome feeling of watching the students have a great time getting to know God and each other, that would have been more than enough. Instead, what I took home was an *experience*.

And the experience was truly amazing. Imagine going to a rock concert, or a Broadway show on opening night. You are at ground zero; the energy is palpable. On Saturday morning after a near-sleepless night, 1,200 teenagers and 200 adults descended on Horner Hall at the Hot Springs Convention Center. The feeling at Veritas was nothing short of electric... In fact, that was the exact word I used to update my Facebook status from my phone!

As we filled the huge auditorium to capacity, I knew that all of the promises I had made to the students were going to be met, and then some. The sheer scope of a conference youth event of this size is enough to make you want to just stand there in awe of what God is doing in the lives of our young people.

This event has increased in size considerably in the last several years—so much so that the Conference Council on Youth Ministries had to close registration early this year in order to accommodate the venue's limitations! In the words of our conference youth coordinator, Michelle Moore: "This is a good problem to have!"

All of these things are good, but what did God have to say to us on this weekend? That's the real story, and let me tell you, the Holy Spirit was moving.

The reason Veritas is so successful is because of the Biblical principle of relationship at work. Our very foundation as United Methodists and Christians is built upon our covenant relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Young people know the power of relationship. It's the superglue that binds peer groups together, and keeps a youth group growing.

But what happens when you take all of these little families and throw them together in a weekend of worship, workshops and fancy hotels? *Ministry* happens. We are in the business of relationships, folks, and from the smallest group with the greenest youth director to the mega-church teen army, we gathered under the banner of Christ.

As the Body of Christ, we saw lives being changed, proclamations of faith made, and new relationships being formed. The message of speaker Brent Gambrell convicted both young and old hearts alike.

You might be wondering, *Is this just a big spiritual pep rally that the youth will forget about when they get home?* To get your answer, just ask any young adult who was active in district and conference youth, and they will tell you that the friendships and memories built at Veritas will not only last a lifetime, but have shaped who they are as Christians today.

I can't personally speak for any but myself, but what I can say without a doubt is that I was able to watch my young inner city squad, youth who deal with rough lives every day, see the other side of the fence. The smiles didn't leave their faces the entire weekend. Seeds were planted, and truth told.

A lot can happen if we only take the time to throw a big party and watch God work. Veritas 2011—mission accomplished!

*Scott serves as the youth pastor of Midland Heights UMC in Fort Smith.*

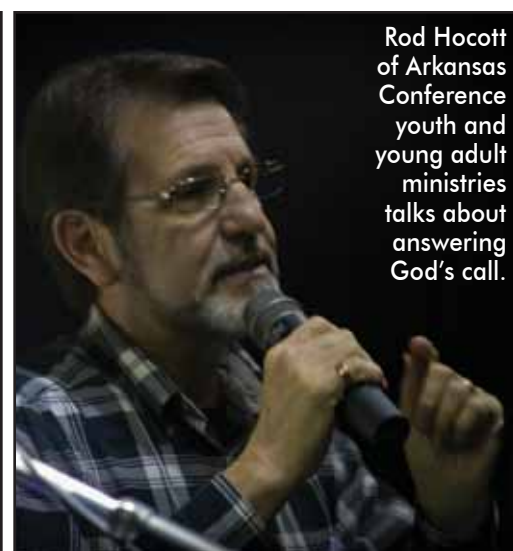
## Reflections on Veritas 2011



Cliff Preston, lead singer of the band Two Empty Chairs, rocks out in front of a crowd of 1,300 at Veritas, the Arkansas Conference's annual youth gathering.



Two teens dive into the start of an inflatable obstacle course during "hang time" at Veritas 2011.



Rod Hocott of Arkansas Conference youth and young adult ministries talks about answering God's call.

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FAR LEFT: A peephole view of a Veritas 2011 music workshop led by Bill Skaggs.

LEFT: A youth sculpts with clay in an art workshop.

BELOW: A sampling of the sculptures created during that same workshop.

AUM PHOTOS BY PATRICK SHOWNES



Methodist Family Health Presents the 2nd Annual



## THIS LENT, DON'T JUST GIVE SOMETHING UP. GET UP & GIVE.

This Lent (March 9 – April 23), consider collecting **NEW** necessity items for the children and families served by Methodist Family Health for our **40 Days of Collecting**. From the basics to the fun stuff, your generosity will bring a smile to the faces of the clients we serve in our Methodist Children's Home, behavioral hospital, residential treatment centers, group homes, day treatment schools and clinics throughout Arkansas. Collect individually, as a family or through one of your church/community groups.

**After the 40 Days of Collecting, you can drop off the new items you collect at any of our Counseling Clinic locations statewide from April 25-29, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.**

### NEW ITEMS MOST NEEDED BY CHILDREN/FAMILIES IN OUR PROGRAMS

- Socks
- Underwear
- Diapers
- Paper Towels
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Toilet Paper
- Detergent (clothes)
- Detergent (dishes)
- Books
- Coloring Books
- Crayons/Markers
- Board Games
- Backpacks/Duffel Bags

**Batesville**

1539 Harrison St.  
870.569.4890

**Heber Springs**

407 S 7th St.  
501.365.3022

**Little Rock**

1600 Aldersgate Road  
Suite 100B  
501.661.0720

**Fayetteville**

2592 N. Gregg Ave.  
Suite 16  
479.582.5565

**Jonesboro**

2912 King St.  
870.910.3757

**Magnolia**

617 E North St.  
870.234.0739

**Join us for our celebration/drop-off event, A Day of Celebration, on Sunday, May 1 from 2-4 p.m. at our Counseling Clinic in Little Rock at 1600 Aldersgate Road.**

Bring your collected items (**new only**) and join us for live praise music, refreshments and guided tours of the clinic. Hope to see you there!

For more information and event details, please visit [www.methodistfamily.org](http://www.methodistfamily.org) or call us today at 501.661.0720.





## TRANSFORMING THE WORLD



Dr. Ted Penick administers vision testing to Wynona Morgan, the first patient at Bart's Place, Oak Forest UMC's eye clinic.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

### Vision clinic opens at Oak Forest UMC

Thirteen patients received eye exams on March 14, the opening day of the new vision clinic at Oak Forest UMC in Little Rock.

It is the newest of three health care clinics operated by Oak Forest, an expansion of its Shepherd's Hope Medical and Dental Clinic ministry.

Ten of the patients seen on that first day needed eye glasses, said the Rev. Russ Breshears, pastor of Oak Forest UMC.

"Some were extreme cases," he said. "We have identified one patient who may need a major eye surgery, and we treated one patient with Bell's Palsy."

The new clinic serves patients who meet a number of criteria: They must be employed, fall within the specified income guidelines, have no health insurance and be either an existing Shepherd's Hope patient or live in ZIP code 72204 or 72209.

Walmart helped make the clinic possible by donating approximately \$40,000 in optical equipment. The United Methodist Committee on Relief also provided a \$15,000 grant to help with start-up costs.

Though officially part of the Shepherd's Hope medical ministry, the eye clinic has received the nickname "Bart's Place"—a reference to Bartimaeus, the man whose sight Jesus restored in Mark 10.

Dr. Ted Penick served as the on-duty optometrist for the opening day of Bart's Place. Dr. Susan DeBlack donates her time to the ministry as well, as do members of the church and several optical technicians.

Bart's Place will serve its next patients on Monday, April 18. To volunteer, contact Breshears at 501-663-9407 or oakforestumc@gmail.com.

### Lakewood UMC teen fights hunger with music

When Vaughn Mims heard about the opportunity to engage in a "Start Something" program at a North Little Rock Mayor's Youth Council meeting, the 14-year-old member of Lakewood UMC immediately thought of organizing a concert to help combat hunger.

Vaughn, a musician, spent months coordinating the details of the Feb. 18 concert and silent auction to benefit the Arkansas Rice Depot's Food For Kids program. Food For Kids supplies backpacks full of ready-to-eat food to children who are doing poorly at school because of hunger at home. (See related story on the back page of this section.)

The line-up of three local bands included Vaughn's own band, Live For The Day, and the silent auction featured a jacket autographed by *American Idol* winner Kris Allen. The event raised \$1,300, and more donations continue to arrive.

"We couldn't have done it without the Mayor's Youth Council, my church, family, friends and God," Vaughn said in an article printed in Lakewood UMC's newsletter.



COURTESY PHOTO

### UMCs in Conway and Magnolia give clean water to Congo villages

Two congregations on March 13 presented to the Arkansas Conference the results of their collections for the Congo Well Project.

First UMC Magnolia presented its Well Project check in the amount of \$8,352.19 to the Rev. Philip Hathcock, director of connectional ministries and assistant to the Bishop. That same morning, First UMC Conway presented its check for \$9,079.95 to Bishop Charles Crutchfield.

Both collections will go toward the same effort: providing a water well to a village in the Democratic Republic of Congo, ensuring that two communities will have clean drinking water. Each church raised enough money to fund the cost of one well.

At First UMC Magnolia, the children of the church led the way. The fundraising began as a Vacation Bible School mission project last summer. The children collected more than \$1,000 the week of VBS. It soon became a church-wide project.

In Conway, the Congo Well Project was the primary focus of the First UMC's Advent Conspiracy emphasis in December. In addition to the money raised to build the well, participants gave to more than 50 other ministries and non-profit organizations as part of Advent Conspiracy.



Bishop Crutchfield (second from left) tells First UMC Conway about the Congo Well Project. Also pictured are the Rev. Rodney Steele, district superintendent; Granger Davis, church council chairperson; and the Rev. Charles Murry, senior pastor.



Children of First UMC Magnolia present \$8,352.19 to the Rev. Philip Hathcock for the Congo Well Project. The money will ensure that a village in the Democratic Republic of Congo has clean drinking water.

COURTESY PHOTOS

### Cavanaugh UMC opens House of Hope for cancer patients



Barbara Bidwell, past chairperson of the Cavanaugh UMC administrative council, cuts the ribbon for the opening ceremony of the House of Hope. After the ceremony, the home was opened for tours.

COURTESY PHOTO

Cavanaugh United Methodist Church in Fort Smith has launched its House of Hope ministry. Based in the church's former parsonage, the House of Hope works with the Reynolds Cancer Support Foundation to provide free, short-term housing for cancer patients.

Fort Smith is a regional center for cancer treatment, so short-term housing is a growing need. Patients sometimes drive hundreds of miles for treatment. Many do not have insurance or have reached insurance maximums. The ministry frees these patients from the financial burden of paying for lodging.

House of Hope is designed for patients who drive to Fort Smith for a radiation treatment, but are so exhausted they cannot drive back to their homes, or for patients who receive a battery of radiation and chemotherapy treatments over a three-day time frame.

After receiving a grant from the Arkansas Conference and West District, Cavanaugh UMC remodeled the old parsonage, built a handicap-accessible ramp and completely furnished the home.

House of Hope has three bedrooms, a fully supplied kitchen, local phone service, Internet access and television.

"This is a wonderful example of using the tools we already have for new ministry," said Ginger McCutchen, chairperson of Cavanaugh UMC's administrative council, adding that the old parsonage had been vacant for several years. "What's amazing is that it only took three months from the visioning process to ribbon cutting."

"This is a ministry that is able to draw support from every small group within the church," said the Rev. Troy Conrad, Cavanaugh's pastor. "The United Methodist Men helped to remodel and build the handicap ramp. The United Methodist Women have provided kitchen utensils and decorated, and the United Methodist Youth have helped with yard work and clean-up."

"It has been really wonderful to see all of the groups working together in ministry."

There are ongoing ways to help with the House of Hope. For example, Sunday school groups from Hackett UMC have supplied dietary supplements such as nutrition drinks, and individual private donations have helped offset utility bills.

House of Hope is expected to serve three to five families per month.



COMING UP

**Bishop William Willimon in Bentonville April 10**  
First UMC Bentonville welcomes Bishop William Willimon on Sunday, April 10, for a one-day motivational event. He will speak at 8:45 a.m. at Old High Middle School, 406 NW 2nd Street in Bentonville, and at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. in the sanctuary of the church building, 201 NW 2nd Street.

The event is part of the Zoe Ann Haynes Celebration Ministries, established in 2008 to bring nationally recognized Christian speakers to Northwest Arkansas.

Bishop Willimon has been recognized as one of the twelve most effective preachers in the world, and is the second most widely-read author by Protestant pastors. Before his election to the episcopacy and assignment to the North Alabama area, he served as Dean of the Chapel at Duke University for more than two decades.

**Vital Signs/Imagine Ministry event in NLR April 16**  
First UMC North Little Rock, 6701 John F. Kennedy Blvd., serves as the host church for Vital Signs 2011, a day of worship, training and discussion centered on the vitality and effectiveness of our congregations.

The Imagine Ministry team will present a preview of proposals to be made at Annual Conference. Clergy and laity from across the state who are unable to attend the meetings near them earlier in the spring are especially encouraged to attend Vital Signs.

Vital Signs participants will have opportunities to become engaged in the Imagine Ministry process through five different workshops, each led by a different Imagine Ministry team member. Dr. Gil Rendle, Imagine Ministry consultant, will deliver the keynote address.

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

The registration fee is \$15 per person and includes lunch. For complete descriptions of the workshops, see the second page of the Vital Signs online registration form at [arumc.org/register](http://arumc.org/register).

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

Registration deadline is April 12. Walk-up registrations will be accepted the morning of the event, but adequate seating and meals cannot be guaranteed.

**Central District lay speaking courses April 29-30**  
The Central District will offer Basic and Advanced lay speaking courses on Friday, April 29, 6:30-9:30 p.m. and Saturday, April 30 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Henderson

UMC, 13000 W. Baseline Road, Little Rock. Cost is \$25, covers books and snack. Please bring a sandwich for lunch.

The basic course Lay Speaking Ministries will be taught by Tom Crawford, along with Elizabeth Minton, Harold Hughes and Joyce Moore.

There will be two Advanced courses: Lay Pastoral Care Giving, taught by Steve Golnik and Alicia Finch-McCastlain, Ed.D. and Wesley 21st Century, taught by Bo Baker and Charles Watson.

Registration for either course can be made by sending your name, address, phone and email along with \$25 to: Central District, 800 W. Daisy Bates Dr., Little Rock, AR 72202-3770.

**Vacation Bible School training April 30**  
The Arkansas Conference and Cokesbury will co-sponsor a Vacation Bible School training session on Saturday, April 30, at First UMC Little Rock.

The training will relate specifically to the Cokesbury “Shake It Up Cafe” and “Island Odyssey” Vacation Bible School curricula for 2011. Workshops will include sessions geared toward helpers in the programs’ various leadership roles: VBS Director, Recreation Leader, Crafts Leader, Assembly/Discovery Leaders and Pre-school/Kindergarten Leader.

Gathering begins at 9 a.m., and the event will end by 12:30. Cost is \$10 per person. The Cokesbury store, housed at First UMC Little Rock, will be open for your convenience.

Reserve your seat before April 22 by contacting Rod Hocott, 501-324-8008 or [rhocott@arumc.org](mailto:rhocott@arumc.org).

**Community mission study in Mabelvale April 30**  
The Mabelvale United Methodist Women will hold their annual community mission study on Saturday, April 30, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Family Life Center of Mabelvale UMC, 10500 Woodman in Mabelvale.

The study, “For the Love of God,” will be taught by the Rev. David Baker and Lynn Baker. This event will satisfy one of the criteria for United Methodist Women working to become a Mission Today Jewel Unit. To make reservations for the free luncheon, contact Goldie Haynes, 501-455-6168, by April 15.

**CrossPoint in concert at Western Hills UMC May 22**  
CrossPoint, a southern gospel quartet, will perform at Western Hills UMC on Sunday, May 22, at 10:45 a.m. The church is located at 4601 Western Hills Ave. in Little Rock. Everyone is welcome to attend this free event.

# Worldwide UM leadership summit scheduled for April 6

## All United Methodists invited to participate online

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

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

critical issues facing the denomination.

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

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

The web address for the Leadership Summit will be posted on the Arkansas Conference website, [arumc.org](http://arumc.org), as soon as it becomes available.

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## CLASSIFIEDS

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

- **YOUTH MINISTER** - Growing opportunity in Fort Smith, AR for someone with a vibrant faith and a heart for students. First United Methodist Church is looking for a team player who is passionate about leading youth with the message of Christ. Candidate must be a student of the youth and young adult culture with experience in youth ministry. Must be committed to leadership development; training and equipping youth for life's challenges is essential for spiritual growth and spiritual health. Candidate would oversee holistic ministry for 7th-12th grades and their families. For more information give us call at 479-782-5068 or contact Stephen at [sdickinson@cox.net](mailto:sdickinson@cox.net).

- **PIANIST** - Norphlet UMC seeks pianist familiar with southern gospel, traditional, and contemporary music. Contact [bonsalljames@yahoo.com](mailto:bonsalljames@yahoo.com) or call 870-310-5271 to learn more.

- **MINISTER TO YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES** - First UMC Paragould is accepting applications for the position of Youth Minister. This position is full-time in a church of 1,000 members, with potential for a wide range of discipleship, fellowship, and

growth in youth ministry. A college degree in youth ministry and/or theological studies is preferred. Please contact Tom Letchworth, Senior Pastor, with a cover letter, resume and references at First United Methodist Church, Paragould, P.O. Box 667, Paragould, AR 72451.

- **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DIRECTOR** - First UMC, Paragould is accepting applications for the position of Christian Education Director. This position is full-time in a church of 1,000 members, with potential for growth in the areas of discipleship with children and adults. Rotation Sunday School experience preferred. Ability to provide teacher training is essential. A college degree in Christian education and/or theological studies is desirable. Please contact Tom Letchworth, Senior Pastor, with a cover letter, resume and references at First United Methodist Church, Paragould, P.O. Box 667, Paragould, AR 72451.

**Home Study:**  
Save \$\$\$ Christian Bible College, P.O. Box 8968 Rocky Mt., NC 27804 Phone (252) 451-1031; [www.christianbiblecollege.org](http://www.christianbiblecollege.org)



# Peace with Justice helps teen moms along path to success



From left, Larry Long, age 18 months, Kaeden Solis-Boone, age 21 months, and Ella Harlan, age 2, enjoy a snack together at Conway Cradle Care following their afternoon naps.

PHOTO BY DANYELLE DITMER

BY DANYELLE DITMER  
Special Contributor

Lydia Wyatt became a mother at age 15, but that has not stopped her from maintaining a near perfect grade point average at Conway High School.

She credits much of her success, and her upcoming graduation in May, to the support of a mentoring program for teenage parents at Conway Cradle Care.

Conway Cradle Care (CCC) is just one of the ministries that received a Peace with Justice grant last year. In 2010, the Arkansas Board of Church & Society awarded grants totaling \$4,145 to eight Peace with Justice ministries. The grants are awarded in conjunction with the United Methodist Church's Peace with Justice Sunday, which witnesses to God's demand for a faithful, just, and secure world.

The CCC ministry was

established in 1995, with a mission to help teens who become pregnant or have a child complete their education by supporting their academic and emotional needs as well as the developmental needs of their children. Currently, 44 students are served through the daycare and mentoring programs, and 15 children attend the daycare.

Ongoing research supports the need for programs like CCC. Statistics prove that teen mothers are more likely to drop out of school, remain unmarried, and live in poverty; daughters of teen mothers are more likely to become teen parents themselves and sons of teen mothers are more likely to be incarcerated.

CCC believes that by providing mentoring for the teens and a safe, quality, state-certified, low-cost childcare for their infants and toddlers, they give teen parents a better chance of completing high school and going on to advanced education.

The United Methodist Church declares that peace with justice will be celebrated when all people have access to adequate jobs, housing, education, food, health care, income support and clean water. In the meantime, we work toward peace and justice by supporting and encouraging ministries like Conway Cradle Care.

You can help by supporting the annual Peace with Justice special offering. Traditionally, Peace with Justice Sunday is observed on the first Sunday after Pentecost, which is June 19 this year. However, congregations are welcome to celebrate Peace with Justice Sunday at any time.

*The Rev. DITMER serves as pastor of Atkins and Bell's Chapel UMCs and as the Arkansas Conference Peace with Justice Coordinator. To learn more about Peace with Justice Sunday, visit [umcsgiving.org/peacewithjustice](http://umcsgiving.org/peacewithjustice).*

## BOOK REVIEW: Navigating new concepts of 'connection' and 'community'

BY CHARLES LONG  
Special Contributor

Connection is the key to happiness. We need a true connection with our own hearts and minds; with one another; and with a loving God who has wanted a connection with each of us from the beginning.

In *The Church of Facebook*, author Jesse Rice describes some fascinating research that illustrates how important connections really are to us. Connection can make us happy, and disconnection can make us unhappy. No matter how it is tested, connectedness matters. (We could perhaps remember the creation of Eve as God's answer to the desire for connectedness.)

Is there a force capable of aligning a population into an order? Could this force generate completely unpredictable results? Would that population have to adapt its behavior to live in this order?

According to Rice, "There is a force that is capable of synchronizing a large population in very little time, thereby creating spontaneous order." The force in action is Facebook.

The vast majority of Facebook's members—140 million at the time of Rice's writing—have only been on the rolls since February of 2007. He believes that Facebook is a radical example of spontaneous order.

### *The Church of Facebook: How the Hyperconnected Are Redefining Community*

By Jesse Rice

Published by David C. Cook, 2009

Rice suggests that Facebook feels comfortable to so many people because of its home-like qualities:

- **"Home is where we keep all the stuff that matters most to us."** More than 850 million photos get uploaded to Facebook every month.
- **"Home is wherever we find family."** Facebook makes it possible to gather all of the people closest to us under one roof and have access to them all the time.
- **"Home is where we feel safe because we can control the environment."** An important factor in a person's sense of well-being is whether they maintain a reasonable sense of control. In other words, on Facebook they are able to make the connections they want to make.
- **"Home is where we can 'just be ourselves.'"** I think everyone wants to be themselves, to drop the masks and enjoy being with

others who are real. Acceptance is a wonderful gift. In Jesus' day, sharing a meal was a sacramental symbol that implied total acceptance. When Jesus ate with sinners, he symbolically offered them total acceptance: "I love you and choose you just as you are." When people are accepted, a healing freedom happens.

But what about the other side of this coin? There is a thing called hyperconnection. We can think of it as having literally too much control and too many choices.

Hyperconnection makes relational focus extremely challenging because it overwhelms us with options.

Rice writes about one of the unpredictable consequences of hyperconnection, "continuous partial attention"—a state of mind in which a person is always "on," anywhere, any time and any place. It's a mindset of artificial crisis. There are even chemical reactions in

the brain that increase stress hormones associated with continuous partial attention.

Remember the idea that connection is the key to happiness? The problem with being always "on" is that we find ourselves responding to the urgent rather than the important.

The question of how to adapt to Facebook as a powerful force in our lives is an ongoing debate. Some think that a "real" community and a virtual or online community are entirely different things. Others think that at the very least, the two communities are intertwined. I agree

with author Anne Jackson, who says that what happens online is connection—not community.

When Jesus talked with the woman at the well in John 4, he was intentional, humble and authentic. These qualities allowed Jesus to form a very important relationship. Rice goes on to explain the importance of such an approach as each of us participates in "co-creating the world of Facebook." He offers a few suggestions:

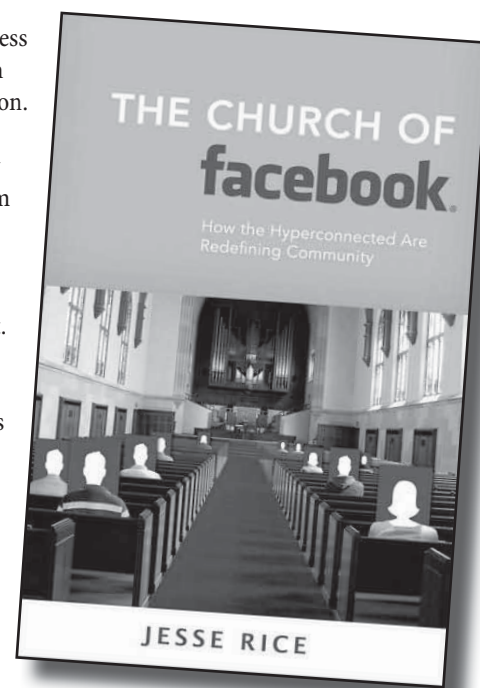
1. Practice regular check-ins.
2. Make the intention to not go online immediately before bed

and immediately after waking up.

3. Practice mindful Facebooking.
4. Practice authentic Facebooking.
5. Adopt one or two Facebook friends for one month.

I think *The Church of Facebook* reinforces the idea that real friendships happen face to face. Facebook, like all electronic media, is meant to be a tool, not a substitute, for relationship.

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





## OBITUARIES

### CONWAY

#### Irma Bookout Thomason

Mrs. Irma Bookout Thomason, 96, passed away on Feb. 23, 2011.

She was born in Rector, Ark., on June 18, 1914. She was preceded in death by her husband of 60 years, the Rev. Elmo A. Thomason; her parents, Simon Bookout and Finer Wagner



**Irma Thomason**

Bookout; her nine siblings; and her foster grandson, Philip A. Bookout.

Survivors include her son, Dr. Dana A. Thomason and his wife, Martha, of Russellville; her grandson, Jonathan M. Thomason of Alexandria, Va., and his mother, Catherine Pierce Thomason of Conway; her foster son, Simon D. Bookout and his wife, Paula, of Little Rock; her granddaughter, Amy Bookout Christie and her husband, David; and great-

grandchildren, Nicholas Philip Christie and Olivia Margaret Christie of Waltham, Mass. She is also survived by a sister-in-law, Glenna Bookout of Rector; and several nieces and nephews.

A graveside service was held at Woodland Heights Cemetery in Rector, with the Rev. Edward Pruett officiating.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, memorials be made to First United Methodist Church in Conway.

### LONOKE

#### Withers McAlister Moore

The Rev. Withers McAlister Moore, 84, passed away on March 23, 2011.

Born in Cabot on Nov. 12, 1926, to the Rev. Dr. Robert Bowen Moore Sr. and Mary Lillian McAlister Moore, he was a fifth-generation Methodist minister.

After graduating in 1943 from Pine Bluff High School, he enrolled in the U.S. Navy V-12 Commissioning Program at Arkansas A&M in Monticello. He was commissioned an Ensign at age 18 and served out the last days of World War II in the Pacific theater.

Following the war, Withers returned home and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Hendrix College in 1946. In the

summer of 1948, while attending training for public school teachers, he met Betty LaVerne Moore. They married on August 18, 1948.

After a short teaching career, he enrolled at Perkins School of Theology at SMU and earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1951. He was ordained an Elder in the Little Rock Conference and appointed to the Sherrill/Tomberlin Charge.

In June 1953, Moore was selected for Active Duty in the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps. Over the course of the next 27 years, he served in a variety of challenging assignments in many parts of the world.

In May 1964, he completed additional studies at Yale University to earn a Masters Degree in Systematic Theology. In the years following, he served in such assignments as Chaplain aboard the USS Little Rock, Staff Chaplain for the Commander-In-Chief of U.S. Naval European Forces and as the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet Chaplain.



**Withers Moore**

He was promoted to Rear Admiral in 1975, and oversaw the entire world-wide ministry of the 1,400-member U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps. Admiral Moore retired from Naval service on July 1, 1980, after serving his final tour of duty as Deputy Chief of Chaplains in Washington, D.C.

Upon returning to Arkansas, he was appointed to serve as pastor of First UMC Des Arc from 1982 to 1988. He and Betty then enjoyed 23 years of retirement together in their Lonoke home.

Moore spent a lifetime in loyal service to God; he was a strong and gifted leader, generous beyond measure, and a man of gentle humor.

He is survived by Betty, his wife of 62 years; two daughters, Catherine Reynolds of El Dorado and the Rev. Dr. N. Robin Moore of Little Rock; a son, the Rev. Dr. Russell R. Moore of Crossett; a brother, Rev. Dr. Robert B. Moore, Jr. of Benton; a sister, Martha Sue Jefferies of Little Rock; eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

A memorial service was held on Saturday, March 26, 2011 at Trinity UMC, with the Rev. Britt Skarda officiating. A private graveside service also was held at Pinecrest Memorial Park.

Memorials may be given to Trinity UMC, 1101 N. Mississippi St. Little Rock, AR 72207 or First UMC Crossett, 500 Main St., Crossett, AR 71635.

### WHEATLEY

#### Wilbert R. Feagan

The Rev. Wilbert R. Feagan, 88, passed away on March 22, 2011.

He was born Aug. 7, 1922, in Herrin, Ill., one of four children born to the late Andrew and Cordelia (Sanders) Feagan. He received early education in the local school, continuing with two years in college.

At age 20, Feagan enlisted in the Army in Green County, Arkansas. He served nearly seven years before being discharged in 1947. On March 5, 1946, he and Perley Williams were married in Paragould.

In September 1957, he was ordained as a Methodist minister and began 31 years of preaching the Gospel in churches throughout Arkansas.



**Wilbert Feagan**

Feagan began his ministry with the church in Brightwater, and held his last full-time pastorate with Hickory Ridge UMC. Upon his retirement in June 1988, he moved from Hickory Ridge to Wheatley, where he became well-loved and respected in the community. Other churches he pastored included Antioch, Desha, Elm Springs, Cherry Valley, Jasper, Joiner, Cotton Plant, Gravette, Melbourne and Cave City.

After the passing of his wife, he continued serving the Lord in his daily walk of life and enjoyed being near his daughter and family. He took much pleasure in fishing, caring for animals and serving as a volunteer in a hospice program. He lived his 88-year journey as a man of simplicity, with deep assurance of one who knew and loved his Savior, Jesus Christ.

Feagan is survived by his daughter, Linda Tharp and her husband, Bob, of Wheatley; one grandson, Timothy Tharp and his wife, Genea, of North Little Rock; and one great-grandchild, Sean Tharp.

## Edith Martin Scholarship applications due May 1

As a young woman, Edith Martin heard the call to the mission field. A missionary working in the Belgian Congo wrote to her, "This is a new country and you will need to know so much. Learn everything you can, you will need it all." Edith set out to do just that, attending Methodist-related Galloway College on an anonymous scholarship.

Martin then attended Arkansas State Teacher's College and taught school for six years, to be sure that she was being called to the Congo. Finally, through a scholarship given by the women of the North Arkansas Conference of the Methodist Church, she attended Scarritt and Peabody Colleges to train for her work in Africa.

To honor the memory of "Miss Edith," the United Methodist Victory Women of First UMC Harrison offer the Edith Martin Scholarship to others preparing for Christian service through the United Methodist Church.

Students interested in applying for the scholarship must hold full membership in a UMC for at least one year before applying; be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident and live in the Arkansas Conference; be enrolled in a full-time degree program (graduate or undergraduate) at a regionally accredited educational institution in the U.S.; have a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5; and be pursuing a career in United Methodist Christian service.

Scholarship recipients receive \$1,000. To request an application form, contact First UMC Harrison at 870-741-2351. The application deadline is May 1.



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## Faith Funds

### *Spirit-filled Service*

Rev. Heather Spencer Clawitter felt the spirit of God as a young adult during a church service at Bryant United Methodist Church. “In that pew I realized I wanted to spend the rest of my life working full time for God, and nothing else would do.”

Now senior pastor at Bismarck United Methodist Church, Heather left her corporate job to attend Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. While exploring ways to meet the financial demands, her mentor and then pastor Bud Reeves suggested she apply for the United Methodist Foundation Seminary Scholarship.

“I had loans from undergraduate studies at Hendrix, and the United Methodist Foundation Seminary Scholarship enabled me to go to Perkins, take a full 12-hour course load, spend all my time on my studies and not have additional debt,” Heather said.

Initially Heather pursued Deacon’s orders to focus on teaching and pastoral care. “As an Elder in my first appointment, I’ve come to understand that preaching is a part of pastoral care, and I’ve felt the Spirit of God affirm and encourage my gifts for preaching,” Heather said. “Today I feel I am steadily becoming the woman God created me to be.”



### The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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Arkansas Rice Depot  
hunger no more

## Wanted: Food For Kids Club members

People of faith can help provide a solution to childhood hunger in Arkansas. One way is through a new partnership with the Arkansas Rice Depot’s Food For Kids program.

“There is hunger just down the street from where you worship each Sunday,” says Lauren McElroy, vice president of Rice Depot. “There might even be students within your church that you don’t even realize are benefitting from a program like this.”

Food for Kids feeds more than 30,000 students in 600 schools across the state. Students receive backpacks stocked with kid-friendly food items—some nightly, some on weekends and others less often. Rice Depot provides extra food to share with younger siblings.

“You don’t have to fit into this perfect description to be able to receive food,” McElroy said. “It’s really customizable to the needs of the child.”

Thanks to donations and discounts Rice Depot receives, it takes just \$2,000 per academic year to support one school in the Food for Kids program.

That’s where United Methodist congregations enter the picture:

Churches can join the Food For Kids Club and cover that expense.

In partnership with Bishop Charles Crutchfield, the district superintendents and the Conference Hunger Task Force, Rice Depot is sending a Food For Kids Club invitation to every United Methodist pastor in Arkansas.

If your church cannot sponsor a school on its own, that doesn’t mean you can’t help, says the Rev. Lavon Post of First UMC Malvern, a church already involved in Food for Kids. “We may have two smaller churches go in together to help one school,” he said.

Food For Kids Club also can be a project for a Sunday school class, youth group or other ministry within a church.

Post believes United Methodists across the state will step up to provide for the most basic needs of hungry children in Arkansas.

“When Methodists are given a practical, effective way to help, they respond in a way that makes you drop your jaw,” he says.

To learn more about Food For Kids, contact McElroy at 501-565-8855 or [lauren@ricedepot.org](mailto:lauren@ricedepot.org).

## Prayer shawl too big? Try a prayer square



The prayer shawl ministry at Sylvan Hills UMC has served members, their relatives and friends since January 2005. A group of women pray as they knit and distribute the resulting shawls to those in need of prayer.

But they discovered that in some situations, a prayer shawl is just too big. So they added two-inch “prayer squares” to their repertoire. A prayer square can be carried in a pocket, purse or wallet.

The ministry first distributed them to students during a backpack blessing. Others in the congregation asked for prayer squares that day, too, for themselves or for loved ones.

Since then, their use has broadened. One member of the prayer shawl group has crocheted pink prayer squares for everyone on the church’s “Race for the Cure” team last fall. Another prayer square was given to a church member deployed overseas.

Sylvan Hills’ pastor, the Rev. Dr. Bev Watkins, keeps several prayer squares in her office to help provide comfort for people as needed. “We think of them as a ‘booster shot’ of the love and prayers given in a regular prayer shawl,” she said.

COURTESY PHOTO



# REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

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## Where was God?

Finding our faith in the wake of disaster | 6B



## Jesters Ministry

Giving the disabled a place to shine | 4B



## Windsor Village

'What happens when love meets needs' | 8B

Section B

April 1, 2011



PHOTO BY MARK BARDEN

Participants at the recent Preachers' Kids Weekend in the Western North Carolina Conference lay hands on Bishop Larry Goodpaster, following a question-and-answer session, after the bishop asked them to pray for him.

## Pastors' children look back on life in the 'fishbowl'

BY MARY JACOBS  
Staff Writer

When she was 16, Maren Oehl's mom, the Rev. Karen Oehl, was appointed to a new church, an hour away. Her parents gave her a choice: Move with her mom to the new town, or stay behind with her father during the week. She opted for the latter. The Oehls became a "commuter family" so that Maren could finish her last two years in the same high school.

"The experience made me feel very negative toward the church at the time," said Maren Oehl, now a junior at Ohio Wesleyan University. During those two years, she got in an accident, totaling her truck, and her

mother wasn't there. Another time, she needed a physical for a sports team, and she had to book the appointment and go by herself. "It feels silly now, but it was a big deal then," she said.

It's still a big deal in the mind of Karen Oehl, who's now pastor of Brecksville (Ohio) United Methodist Church.

"I missed her last two years of high school," she said.

### Unknown sacrifices

The Oehls' story isn't unusual. "Preachers' kids make lots of sacrifices on behalf of the church that are really unknown and unheralded," said the Rev. Mary John Dye, a

preacher's kid herself and now a district superintendent in the Western North Carolina conference.

When a pastor is called in an emergency, family vacations are interrupted and school events are missed. Members of the congregation usually remain unaware about how the pastor's children are affected. When there's ugliness or disruption in the congregation, children of the clergy feel it acutely.

For pastors, that's just part of the territory, Ms. Dye says, "but these kids were born into it. They're not there by choice. I believe passionately that, in our connectional system, there ought to be a way for the church to say, 'We notice and we care.'"

With that in mind, Ms. Dye spearheaded a Preachers' Kids Weekend, a retreat for 37 young people in the Western North Carolina conference, held in February. Everyone who participated, including the adult leaders, was a preacher's kid, or "PK."

"Preachers' kids are in a whole different category," said Ms. Dye. "This is one place they can go where they're not the exception."

### Preachers' Kids event

Participants put on skits about life in the church and made lists of "items you can find only in a parsonage." The PKs played "The Appointment Game," to learn about United

■ See 'Fishbowl' page 3B

## UMR launches search for new chief executive

### STAFF REPORTS

DALLAS, Texas—The board of directors for UMR Communications is seeking a dynamic leader to take the role of the organization's new chief executive officer. Applications will be accepted through June 1.

UMR Communications is the parent company of the award-winning *United Methodist Reporter*. The weekly newspaper has been publishing since 1847, when it began as the *Texas Christian Advocate*.

UMR's mission is to publish quality religion news and provide print and digital resources for communication and education.

The national, independent ministry provides weekly print and electronic media—the *Reporter* is its flagship product—as well as custom design, variable data printing, marketing and targeted mailing services.

Board members say the CEO will 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. Recommendations will be made without regard to ethnicity, race, color or gender.

"Knowledge of the United Methodist Church and a calling to serve its people is imperative," said UMR board member Shari Goodwin. "UMR truly is a ministry—not just a business—and we have a real opportunity to help build the church by telling God's story. We seek someone who is excited about that mission."

UMR shares a common commitment to Christian ministry with the United Methodist Church, operates in accordance with the denomination's Social Principles and works in partnership with representatives from many faith groups.

To find out more, visit [www.umportal.org](http://www.umportal.org) or email a resume and statement of interest to [ceosearch@umr.org](mailto:ceosearch@umr.org).



## FAITH WATCH

**Obama taps seminaries for community service**

The White House hopes to recruit America's seminary students in a nationwide interfaith service campaign. According to Religion News Service, the Obama administration will solicit plans from colleges, universities, seminaries and rabbinical schools for year-long community service projects including food drives and mentoring. The proposal grew out of recommendations from advisers to the Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

**Church offers support to N.J. flood victims**

The United Methodist Greater New Jersey Conference has coordinated the distribution of cleanup kits to those affected by flooding in the northern part of the state. The Rev. Derrick Doherty, the conference's disaster-response coordinator, told United Methodist News Service the best thing church members outside the state can do is assemble cleanup kits for the denomination's Committee on Relief.

**Malaysian government releases seized Bibles**

Malaysia's government agreed March 16 to release 35,000 imported Bibles that had been seized because the translation uses "Allah" as its word for God. Authorities will require that the Bibles be stamped "For Christians Only." Sunni Muslim groups in Malaysia have protested against Christian use of the word, calling it an attempt to confuse and convert members of the country's Islamic majority.

**Smithsonian plans to restore Jefferson Bible**

The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History announced March 10 it will restore a Bible that U.S. President Thomas Jefferson cut and pasted together in 1820 to reflect his beliefs. The nation's third president assembled the Bible for personal use from portions of the New Testament, including the teachings, crucifixion and burial of Jesus but not his resurrection or miracles attributed to him.

## Mission work continues in Japan, despite fears

BY LINDA BLOOM  
*United Methodist News Service*

It's planting time at the Asian Rural Institute in northern Japan, and the staff is in the fields when they aren't cleaning up damage caused by the powerful March 11 earthquake that shook the region.

But they keep an eye to the coast, where efforts are ongoing to contain radiation leakage from the damaged reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

"We continue to be worried about the power plant, which has now become the major obstacle to recovery," Jonathan McCurley, a United Methodist missionary assigned there, wrote on his March 16 blog.

Mr. McCurley said that he, his wife, Satomi, and others at the school were taking precautions to avoid contamination from radiation, even though he noted that the radiation levels there, while above normal, were "nowhere near the levels to harm one's health."

Later that same day, the head of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission warned Americans to stay 50 miles away from the Daiichi plant, about 170 miles north of Tokyo.

The United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) has given all personnel permission to evacuate from Japan if they wish to do so. A few have left. Debbie Umipig-Julian, based in Tokyo, and her two sons

are now in the Philippines, as are Lamberto and Angelita Valino, based in Yokohama. All are Filipino natives.

The *London Telegraph* reported that people were leaving the district around Koriyama, the major town closest to the stricken plant, and traveling 25 miles away to the railway station at Nasushiobara, so they could travel farther south.

At the Asian Rural Institute, also located in Nasushiobara, the staff has set up shop at a retreat center for the Student Christian Fellowship in Japan. The ecumenical institute, founded in 1973, conducts a nine-month Rural Leaders Training Program each year from April to December, focusing on sustainable agriculture, community development and leadership. The GBGM has had Asian and African participants in the program.

In an email to United Methodist News Service, Mr. McCurley said most of the staff that left the institute after the earthquake had returned. "The hardest thing in Japan right now is trying to get the correct information," he added. "There's so many voices saying this and that, but when we look at the people in the community, although worried, they are carrying on as normal."

The institute had accepted three people who came seeking shelter from the evacuated areas near the nuclear plant. "We continue to meet, pray and see what we can do to help those who are in the middle of the really affected areas," Mr. McCurley said.

**Reaching friends**

A former missionary, the Rev. Michael Southall-Vess, has been contacting friends in the Fukushima area, where he and his wife, the Rev. Marable Southall-Vess, served from 2001 to 2005.

Mr. Southall-Vess, now pastor of Arlington (Va.) Forest United Methodist Church, said friends in Japan were concerned over a lack of



UMNS PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFFREY MENSENDIEK

**Cars were tossed like toys in the Sendai area when a tsunami followed the powerful March 11 earthquake in northern Japan.**

food and fuel. One friend in Kitakata, about 60 miles from the coast, "said the grocery store shelves are empty and they have no gasoline." Without gasoline and with train travel disrupted in the northeast, he added, it is difficult to move supplies.

Residents of Tokyo continued to endure rolling electrical blackouts and aftershocks in the days following the earthquake.

On March 17, the blackout started at 3:30 p.m. and lasted about three hours. The Rev. Claudia Genung-Yamamoto, a United Methodist missionary, spent the day handling email queries from overseas for the National Christian Council in Japan, to which she is assigned, and tending to the needs of members of West Tokyo Union Church, where she serves as a part-time pastor.

One church family was looking for bread, "which was not to be found in any of our neighborhood stores," she said. But a neighbor from Ghana—whom Ms. Genung-Yamamoto had provided with a flashlight during a blackout the night before—had extra food and bread and was "grateful" that she could help someone else.

**Korean churches**

Ms. Genung-Yamamoto had dinner later at the home of Kumsoon Lee, a member of her congregation, and her husband, the Rev. Songwan Hong, the top executive of the Korean Christian Council in Japan, a partner organization of the United Methodist Church. Two aftershocks occurred as they spoke together about the effects of the earthquake.

Mr. Hong reported that most "newcomers"—Koreans who have not lived in Japan as long as those who are second- or third-generations there—were returning to Korea, as were many of the Korean students.

Five churches affiliated with the council were badly damaged by the earthquake, and the Korean Consulate is helping evacuate Koreans from the Sendai area close to the epicenter.

The Rev. Seo Eongill, a missionary of the Korean Methodist Church, has remained in Sendai, although his family evacuated to Korea. Other Korean pastors are fine, but many church members in the area are not yet accounted for, Mr. Hong said.

The Center for Pacific and Asian American Ministries at United Methodist-related Claremont (Calif.) School of Theology has written to United Methodist Chicago Area Bishop Hee-Soo Jung about "what we, as a faith connection, could collectively do together" to respond to the disaster in Japan.

"Could the Council of Bishops, as in instances in the past where massive humanitarian action is needed in concert, once again lead our church to make an effort to undertake relief and reconstruction in a manner commensurate with our ability as a connection, and beyond what UMCOR is normally able to do?" the letter asked.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief is working with the United Church of Christ in Japan and GlobalMedic to bring immediate relief to the affected communities in Japan.

**How to help:**

Gifts to UMCOR can be left in church offering plates or mailed to UMCOR, PO Box 9068, New York, NY 10087. Please write "Japan Emergency, UMCOR Advance #3021317" on the memo line of your check. Credit card donations are accepted at (800) 554-8583 or online at [www.givetomission.org](http://www.givetomission.org).

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■ **FISHBOWL** *Continued from page 1B*

Methodist polity and clergy appointments.

“We tried to personalize the process in a simple way,” said Ms. Dye. Because the lives of clergy families are so dramatically affected by appointments, she wanted the kids to understand that the process is not random.

Most importantly, the retreat provided a safe place for PKs to talk.

“You are put in a fishbowl and everybody stares at you and expects you to be on this high pedestal,” said Melissa Mason, a ninth grader whose father is a pastor in Stony Point, N.C.

“It was great to be with other PKs and for once I was not the only PK, because you kind of get branded with that at other retreats,” said Stephen Mayo, an eighth grader whose mother is a pastor in Belmont, N.C.

Bishop Larry Goodpaster, the only “non-PK” in attendance, made an informal presentation to the group. “When we call up a profile of your parent, your name and age pops up too,” he told the attendees. “We know you and we care about you.”

Despite the negatives of life as a PK, the event “was not a complaining time,” said Ms. Dye. “The kids felt that being a PK is overwhelmingly positive. They feel noticed and cared for.”

The event “made a world of difference to these kids,” Ms. Dye said. “I’ve been flooded with thank you notes from parents. It’s touched a real need.”

## A lifelong bond

On a Facebook page for children of United Methodist clergy, there’s a laundry list of 38 “ifs.” You know you’re a United Methodist preacher’s kid, the page says, “if you’ve attended

schools from multiple school districts, if you know why January and June are the most stressful months of the year, if you’re one of the few youth in your church who actually attend regularly, or if your mom or dad uses your embarrassing moments in sermons.”

As the page suggests, the experience of growing up as a “preacher’s kid” is a defining one. Many adult PKs say they belong to a fraternity, of sorts, to which they’ll belong for the rest of their lives. Growing up in a parsonage, in the middle of the action in a community of faith, left them with a set of lessons and memories that few others share.

Although the frequent moves were difficult, many say they benefited from the experience, too. For Maren Oehl, the years without her mom made her more independent.

“Moving around helped me learn to make friends and to be OK with change,” said Blaire Scott, youth minister of Granbury (Texas) United Methodist Church and daughter of the Rev. Donald Scott, now a district superintendent in Waxahachie, Texas.

Preachers’ kids also share the unique life experience of living in a parsonage. “We used to have a joke,” said Scott Shirley, a member of Arborlawn UMC in Fort Worth, Texas, whose father was a United Methodist pastor. “‘Parsonage’ was Greek for ‘substandard housing.’” While he thinks things are better now, his family didn’t enjoy central air conditioning until he reached the age of 10. Every minor change or repair in their living space required the approval of a church committee.

Preachers’ kids also had to deal with the preconceptions that church members often have about them.

“People think we’re either all really rebellious, or goody two shoes,” said Ms. Scott.

Whenever the young Scott Shirley got into trouble, the scolding often included this additional reprimand: “And you’re the preacher’s son!”

“People sometimes expect this inhuman level of holiness from PKs,” he said. “You’re held to a higher standard.”

When Maren Oehl got her nose pierced in high school, parishioners immediately filed her in the rebellious category. It was a relief, she said, to go to college, where people didn’t know her, at least initially, as a PK.

“I’m not a rebel and I’m not super-conservative,” she said. “I’m somewhere in the middle, like most people.”

Preachers’ kids also know about the joys and pains of growing up in the “fishbowl.” Many PKs say they enjoyed the attention that came with being the child of the pastor—until they got a little older.

“When I became a teen, it felt everyone was watching me,” said Maren Oehl. “I didn’t like that. I wanted to blend in.”

“I definitely think people felt more entitled to my personal business,” said Ms. Scott.

In the long run, however, she thinks that helped her. “It gave me a sense of accountability,” Ms. Scott said. “I had to think more about my actions and what they look like.”

Mr. Shirley loves sharing tales of the devilish trouble he got into as a PK. His family lived next door to the church and he and his friends were allowed to play there during the day. On top of getting “ridiculously good at ping pong,” he pulled a few stunts, like snacking on communion wafers (to the horror of his Catholic friends) and playing the church carillon in the middle of the day.

A PK herself, the Rev. Karen Oehl remembers annual conferences, held at a resort community on Lake Erie called Lakeside, and reuniting with her fellow “PKs” every summer. “There’s this sense that you are connected,” she said. When she returned to Lakeside with her own daughters, they made friends there with other PKs, too.

One time her daughter brought home a fellow PK for lunch, and informed the visitor that her mother was a PK, too.

“The girl looked at me and said, ‘And you became a minister?’ as if I should’ve known better,” said Ms. Oehl.

Mr. Shirley remembers how his family always stayed with other pastors’ families whenever they traveled.

“All the older kids got thrown into one room,” he said. “We would build

forts with furniture and blankets.” He’s still in touch with many of those fellow PKs, and “we have a bond that will last forever.”

And not all those sacrifices that PKs made went uncompensated. As a kid, Ms. Scott figured out a way to profit from one of the indignities that many “preachers’ kids” face: being cited as “sermon examples.”

Whenever her father, the Rev. Donald Scott, told a story about her in a sermon, he had to pay her, in cash. (The amount varied, depending on how embarrassing the story was, and how old it was.)

And Mr. Shirley notes another benefit. While in high school, a popular song, “Son of a Preacher Man,” seemed to boost his popularity among the young ladies.

“PKs may have this ‘wild image,’ but chicks dig it,” he jokes.

## Special gifts

Aside from funny memories, PKs inherit a precious spiritual legacy, according to Timothy Tyson, author of *Blood Done Sign My Name* and the son of a United Methodist pastor.

He was the keynote speaker at the Preachers’ Kids retreat in Western North Carolina. He encouraged participants to follow their dreams, in whatever professions they choose.

“The wonderful thing about being a PK is you become a storyteller of love . . . one of the interpreters of what matters,” he told the attendees.

“The question becomes less and less, ‘Are you going to become a minister like your daddy or like your momma?’ but instead, ‘What kind of minister are you and how will you carry this torch?’”

Karen Oehl agrees. Despite the sacrifices, she believes that life as a



**Joshua Williams from Southmont, N.C., was one of 37 participants during a Preachers’ Kids Weekend in the Western North Carolina Conference.**

PK offered one of the best childhoods a kid could have.

That was confirmed the first time she attended a church as a “regular person” instead of as the daughter of the church pastor. People were friendly, but she didn’t get the special attention she usually enjoyed.

“It was so odd,” she said. “I felt kind of lonely.”

For all the complaining that we might do, being a PK is a lot of fun.”

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**Mark L. Barden, director of communications for the Western N.C. Conference, contributed to this story.**



PHOTOS BY MARK BARDEN

**Participants in the Preachers’ Kids retreat act out a skit portraying a church committee.**

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# Finding a voice

## Jesters troupe showcases special needs cast

BY MALLORY MCCALL  
Staff Writer

DALLAS—The worship hall is packed and buzzing with excitement. People of all ages sit at the edge of their seats with flowers, cameras and balloons in hand. Members of the youth group usher visitors down the aisles and *Willy Wonka's* "Pure Imagination" plays over the sound system.

This is not the typical church gathering at Highland Park United Methodist Church. This is the premiere of a new ministry in Texas—Jesters, a performing arts program for people

with special needs. "This truly captures the spirit of theater," said director Lisa Schmidt. "It's all about giving a voice to those who are seldom heard." Jesters, founded in 1978 at the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, Ind., was originally designed to teach drama to mildly and moderately mentally and physically disabled children, giving them the opportunity to develop creative expression and positive self-image. Although the program was initially designed for children ages 8-14, over the years many Jesters have found the experience so rewarding that they continue to participate as adults.



ABOVE: The Jesters program showcases the talents of adults with special needs through music, dance and even multimedia projects. TOP: The 30-member cast spent six months writing and rehearsing their original play.



ABOVE: Volunteers from HPUMC and the Dallas area help prepare the performers on and off stage. RIGHT: The cast takes a bow after their performance.







Hal Gunderson, founder of the Jestors program, once said: “We’ve noticed that some of the Jestors have improved their mobility skills and their memorization skills in addition to their improved sociability. They are part of a team. They know they belong.”

### Coming to Texas

For three years Sue Ringle, a member of Highland Park UMC, watched her nephew perform with the Fort Wayne troupe. Last spring, she decided Dallas needed a Jestors program and that Highland Park UMC was the place for it.

She teamed up with the church’s pastors and special needs consultant, volunteers from the church and community and even the Shakespeare Festival of Dallas to make Jesters a reality in Texas.

For six months the 30 member cast, ages 16 to 62, gathered at Highland Park UMC every Saturday to write an original musical play and rehearse their creation. Performers traveled from surrounding cities—one coming from as far as

115 miles away—to participate. Some have performed in theatrical presentations before, but many are new to the stage.

“It’s a great opportunity for people who have never had a chance to shine to shine,” said Jo Beth Huff, whose 20-year-old son wrote and sang a solo in the Dallas production.

John Huff has always been interested in acting and songwriting but never had the formal platform to explore the arts. So when his counselor from the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services mentioned the launch of the Dallas Jesters program, he jumped at the opportunity to meet new people and showcase his talents.

“It was cool when I got up and sang my songs in front of everybody,” he said. “It’s just a really amazing feeling, and the applause is worth it all.”

### Guiding themes

In the first six weeks of brainstorming, the cast developed two guiding themes—“we all must accept the hand we are dealt in life,” and “we are all the same on the inside.” These

themes were central to the plot, the song lyrics and the overall spirit of the program in which everyone plays a meaningful role.

“There’s a lot of emphasis on process versus the product,” says Allison Ballard, director of the Fort Wayne Jesters program. All the Jesters are included in the creating and planning process, and even the softest voices are heard.

“Sometimes all the feedback we get from an actor is a wide smile,” said Ms. Ringle. “But those are golden.”

The Dallas-area Jesters pitched in their ideas and talents, compiling their love of comedy, dancing, singing, guitar playing and athletics into their original musical play, *Dave’s Circle of Friends*. Not only does Jesters build community, it also encourages and empowers each participant, regardless of their skill level or the challenges they face, says Ms. Ringle.

“We have actors who haven’t spoken a word since we met them in September,” she said. “But they seem perfectly happy with what they can do.

“It’s a testament to parents and caregivers that our Jesters participants are so well adjusted.

LEFT: Jesters, founded in 1978 at the University of Saint Francis in Fort Wayne, Ind., teaches drama to mildly and moderately mentally and physically disabled people. BELOW: The troupe gives participants the opportunity to develop creative expression and positive self-image.



It is obvious an effort has been made to help them make the most of what they can do and not be frustrated by what they can’t.”

After six months of hard work, the Dallas Jesters took to the stage Feb. 12-13 to wow a packed house of about 1,000 people in Highland Park UMC’s Wesley Hall.

“I’m pretty sure John Wesley would like what’s been going on in here since September,” said Ms. Ringle as she welcomed the audience.

Jesters wasn’t created as a ministry, said Ms. Ballard, but church leaders and program leaders at Highland Park UMC believe the Jesters program helps open doors and offers a space where all people can be loved as children of God.

“They may have never been the academic stars or stars on the football, baseball or soccer field, but [here] they are our stars,” said Ms. Ringle.

To learn more about Jesters at Highland Park United Methodist Church, visit [www.hpumc.org/jesters](http://www.hpumc.org/jesters).

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COURTESY PHOTOS BY KEITH PEELER

ABOVE: The musical play, *Dave’s Circle of Friends*, mixes fantasy with reality, and humor with a message of friendship. RIGHT: Raphael Parry and the Shakespeare Festival of Dallas helped outfit the Jesters in costumes and microphones.





## GEN-X RISING

## How should Christians live in the face of evil?

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON  
UMR Columnist

If we ever needed a reminder that we live in a broken world, the past few weeks have shown it to us in spades.

Devastating earthquakes struck the Pacific nations of New Zealand and Japan, causing untold damage to life and property. Tsunamis and nuclear power plant failures have only compounded the problems facing the Japanese, who suffer with no end in sight.

Meanwhile, relatively bloodless revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt have not been matched in the case of Libya. There, a full-fledged civil war appears to be in progress. Western nations are finding themselves once again drawn into armed conflict in a majority Muslim country.

Christians tend to be inured to the *individual* evil that regularly confronts them. We all experience dishonesty, greed, gluttony and violence. Sometimes we ourselves perpetrate such sins. But the suffering from individual evil is sometimes easier to understand because its source seems so clear: Individual sins committed by individual people. It doesn't make the consequences of sin any more pleasant, but it doesn't leave us with unanswered questions of "why?"

Then there's evil that comes in larger doses, like the evil of war or weather. Those consequences are harder to bear. There are plenty of Japanese and Libyan people who have suffered recently who did absolutely nothing to deserve their fate. How do we—and they—come to grips with the evil that is so clearly impacting their lives?

Christian theologians have traditionally distinguished between *natural evil* and *moral evil*. Natural evil is that evil we see and experience that comes as a consequence of living in a fallen world. Earthquakes and floods are examples of it, but so are diseases and even the "natural" process of aging. Natural evil is found anywhere we see the forces of (fallen) nature acting in ways that are detrimental to life. This is decidedly not the same thing as God purposefully inflicting the suffering of an earthquake or a disease on particu-

lar people. But it is a view that sees the experience of such things as the reality of life before Christ has finished the work of making all things new.

Moral evil is the kind of evil that is specific to human beings, including individual evil but also going beyond it. War is a good example, in that the suffering it causes is always greater than the sum total of individual acts by the participants involved.

I realize that talk about evil in this way can seem clinical and cold in the face of real suffering. And you can be sure that no pastor worth his salt is going to offer a discourse on categories of evil to a hurricane victim or at a hospital bedside.

On the other hand, it can be helpful to Christians to think seriously about evil as we try to better understand the world in which we live. Meditating on evil's many faces from a place of relative un-suffering can help to form in us the virtues necessary to endure when we do find ourselves in the context of real suffering.

Wesleyans have generally taken a couple of different approaches to the practice of their faith as it relates to the brokenness of the world. One is a belief in the perfectibility of individuals (holiness) and the other is a belief in the perfectibility of society (social justice). Both can trace their views from John Wesley and other early Methodists in part, though neither usually gets the Wesleyan view entirely correct.

Wesley's own view did not rest either on the potential perfection of individuals as individuals, or on the perfection of society as society. He emphasized instead the potential for followers of Jesus to be transformed within the Christian community as they partook together of the means of grace and "watched over one another in love."

This, in fact, is the core meaning of that oft-misunderstood term "social holiness."

We live in a "git 'er done" culture that doesn't always cope well with the patience needed to participate in the slow but inevitable work Jesus Christ is doing to inaugurate his kingdom. But if we admit that it is *Jesus'* kingdom after all, then living in such a way that we are ready for its arrival will help us face the myriad troubles we experience in our own day.

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



Andrew Thompson

## Finding our faith in wake of disaster

BY BISHOP ROBERT HOSHIBATA  
United Methodist News Service

The earthquake in Japan and the tsunami that it triggered are abrupt reminders that creation, replete with beauty and wonder, is unpredictable and sometimes causes calamity and catastrophe.

The age-old question resurfaces in the wake of this disaster. When we see structures built by human hands torn apart by the violent shaking of the earth or the fury of rushing waters, or consumed by fire, we wonder, "Where is God in the midst of such devastation and loss?" Watching images of anguish in the faces of people who search for loved ones or a place for shelter or food, we ask, "Was God present in these moments of loss?"

Even faithful Christians question why all this suffering occurs. Why doesn't God prevent sad things from happening? Wouldn't it be a better world if God would simply prevent all human suffering and pain? Isn't that what we mean when we say that we believe that God is "all powerful"?

### 'Mystery of faith'

I don't pretend to know all the answers. I often wish I did. However, I realize all too well that our human wisdom is limited in its ability to know everything about God. Try as we might, much of how God works in our world is relegated to the "mystery of faith" category. These are the divine mysteries we cannot know and will not know until the answers are revealed to us in God's time.

I find comfort in some of the bedrock statements of faith: God does not punish us by causing death and destruction; God is always present with us in Spirit; and Christ calls each of us to care for others in love.

In this moment when we are confronted by the earthquake and tsunami, words of faith from our hymnody give us food for thought:

*God of the earthquake, God of the storm, God of the trumpet blast, How does the creature cry, Woe? How does the creature say, Save? God of the ages, God near at hand, God of the loving heart, How do your children say, Joy? How do your children say, Home?*

—"God of the Sparrow,

God of the Whale," Jaroslav J. Vajda

God is present, even in times of



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE U.S. NAVY/MATTHEW M. BRADLEY

A mother and daughter pause for reflection as they find a family photo amid the wreckage of their home in Ofunato, Japan.

earthquake and storm, in hurricane and flood. These catastrophic events are part of God's natural world. God does not promise that there will be no such calamities, but we are promised that even in our darkest moments, God abides with us!

God does not send natural disasters to punish any of God's children. When any of us cries out in pain and sorrow, God hears our anguish. When we are overcome with despair and woe, God is present with those who are enduring physical, emotional or spiritual pain and suffering. God's steadfast love is with us.

God is also known through the love of others who come to give help and comfort. The agony and the sadness evident in the images of destruction and loss break our hearts as thousands mourn loss of loved ones, destruction of home, and loss of life and livelihood. We experience a tenderness of heart because at the center of our faith is Christ, who knew human suffering and pain. As we know Jesus, we understand his deep compassion for all of the human family. His heart was with the poor and the lost.

### Family in Christ

We who follow Jesus Christ know Christ calls us to reach out to those who are in need. That is what we expect of one another. When human hearts cry out in woe, we respond with compassion for those who are suffering, because all of us are created and beloved by God, and we are all sisters and brothers in Christ.

I now hold in my prayer the colleagues and friends in Japan who are living in the chaotic aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami. In several visits to Japan, I have met and worshipped with many of our Christian sisters and brothers in Christ. I have experienced the evangelistic passion of laypersons, missionaries, pastors

and teachers in Japan laboring tirelessly to make disciples of Jesus Christ. They reach out in love and offer hope to persons of all faiths, occupations and nationalities, loving all persons as Christ loved us. As a result, churches, schools, hospitals and other ministry settings are connected to all United Methodists and all Christians around the globe because of this shared history.

I cannot begin to imagine the difficult work of rebuilding. My hope is for a generous response of love and prayers and donations as our sign of solidarity and compassion. We can all be grateful and proud that our United Methodist Committee on Relief is already responding and that we United Methodists will be present for the long journey of recovery ahead through UMCOR and through our Christian partners in Japan.

In moments such as this, a message we offer to all in Japan who face the despair of the moment is for them to turn to God for comfort and reassurance in all difficult times through Jesus Christ. Remember that God is our refuge, our eternal home! From Eugene Peterson's *The Message* comes a statement of our faith that God is "ready to help when we need him. We stand fearless at the cliff-edge of doom, courageous in sea storm and earthquake, before the rush and roar of oceans, the tremors that shift mountains." (Psalm 46:1-3)

Join me in prayer as we ask for God's mercy and care in a time of devastation, loss and woe. Join me in asking God to give us all generous hearts to respond in love and as we pray for the people of Japan and all others who are in need of God's grace and our love this day.

Bishop Hoshibata, a third-generation Japanese American, serves the Portland (Ore.) Area of the United Methodist Church.

## WESLEYAN WISDOM

# Why we must never forget we're Arminians

BY DONALD W. HAYNES  
*UMR Columnist*

A septuagenarian friend of mine, a graduate of Asbury College and Duke Divinity School, said to me recently, “Don, I think I understand Wesley’s grace theology, but the word ‘Arminian’ is an oblong blur to me. Tell me again what you mean when you say that we are Arminians.”

He’s not alone. Recently, while teaching a group of 25 older adults, many of whom had advanced degrees, I asked, “What was the most helpful thing you gained from reading my book, *On the Threshold of Grace*?”

Hands of octogenarian Ph.D.s went up around the room and one by one said, “I learned that I am an Arminian, but I did not ever know it until now!” No subject in my book has elicited as much response as the chapter, “Methodists are Arminians—what is that?”

So I think it’s worthwhile to dig again in the quarry from which all children of Wesley have been hewn—the “quarry” of Arminianism.

Jacob Arminius was a Dutch Calvinist who came to believe that Calvinism was contrary to the character of God. God is sovereign, but chooses to express His sovereignty as love, not power. We hear so much “generic Calvinism” with statements like “It was his time to go,” when a beloved grandparent dies or a loved one is killed in an accident.

Some still say, “It’s all up to God,” even when we just took a loved one to the best available surgeon. We fail to recognize the contradiction in having surgery at all, if the dates of our deaths were all predestined by the Almighty.

Millions have inhaled Rick Warren’s *Purpose Driven Life* and it has been taught without rebuttal in thousands of United Methodist Churches. If we are Arminians, though, we must take issue with passages like this, where Mr. Warren writes, “He planned the days of your life in advance, choosing the exact time of your birth and death.” If we took that literally, we would discount the effects of smoking, asbestos, alcoholism, diet-induced diabetes, obesity and occupational hazards, car wrecks or battlefield deaths. Do we not see the human hand in our ability to abbrevi-

ate our days upon this earth?

The cardinal principle of Wesley’s Arminianism is unlimited atonement. That is, Jesus died for all, not just the predestined elect.

Jason Vickers at United Theological Seminary is one of a growing number of superb Wesley scholars in our seminaries. In the *Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, which he edited with Randy Maddox of Duke, Dr. Vickers has made a significant contribution to any conversation about Arminianism and Calvinism. For instance, note Wesley’s letter to Mary Bishop in 1778, “Nothing in the Christian system is of greater consequence than the doctrine of Atonement.” Most scholars jump directly from that statement into the age-old debate of the doctrinal theories of the atonement, but Dr. Vickers adroitly takes us to Wesley’s prior treatment of Creation and the Fall.

For Wesley, according to Dr. Vickers, “the divine will or purpose in creation is moral law given at creation. God is manifested to his creatures as they are able to bear it, manifested to give and not to destroy life that they may see God and live.” Wesley continued, “The moral law is the heart of God disclosed to man.” In his Sermon No. 34, Wesley insists, “The law of God . . . is a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature . . . the visible beauty of the Most High.”

## Covenant of grace

We need to say that about the character of God and the “moral law of God” reflected in us when we are created “in God’s own image” (Genesis 1:27). Wesley insisted that Adam did “know God, did unfeignedly love God and uniformly obey God.” Wesley calls this “original righteousness.” This is the original content of the covenant of grace—a good and loving God creating humankind to love our Maker and each other.

If you are still “with me,” you are no longer a Calvinist. But don’t stop here or you will misquote Mr. Wesley. Let’s get the rest of the story.

Another dimension God’s grace is the liberty that God gave us to choose relationship or independence. We often call this “free will” which it is, but not in the context that humanists assume. Liberty and free will are God’s loving gifts to us—the same gifts we give to maturing children as we cut the apron strings and let them make decisions, some of which may break our hearts. Wesley’s mother, Susanna, wrote to him in college that “foreknowledge does not mean pre-

destination.” She illustrates that by saying that she foreknows the rising of the sun tomorrow, but she observes it rather than causing it.

God is like the guide who gives us a long rope as we descend a dark and treacherous cave. We can use that rope as a lifeline with which to find our way back to light and freedom or we can use that rope as a noose. So it is with God’s love. In Wesley’s words in his sermon “The Image of God”: “Man was made . . . either to keep or change his first estate; it was left to himself what he would do. . . . So that, in this sense, he was the sole lord and sovereign judge of his own actions.” No Calvinist could tolerate this Wesley statement.

We know the Genesis story well. Adam and Eve abused their liberty, broke the moral law, hid themselves from God and entered into an estranged relationship. We call it “the Fall.” The theological consequence we call “original sin.” As Dr. Vickers sums it up, “In other words, they were now in the bondage of sin.” We must get this part of our Methodist message straight again, because it was grossly distorted in late-19th-century theological liberalism. To gloss over Wesley’s conviction about original sin is unconscionable.

Listen to our “dear old father”: “Our sins . . . are chains of iron and fetters of brass. They are the wounds wherewith the world, the flesh, and the devil have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and our spirits, and bring us down to the chambers of the grave.” Arminians recognize the de-

pravity of sin; we just do not forget the morning of creation or the noon of salvation.

We are indebted to Shelton Smith, a Congregationalist, for ferreting out this virtual heresy: “The doctrine of immanence afforded liberal religious thought a basis upon which to conceive of man as being essentially divine in the depths of his being, and therefore as containing within himself the essential principle of his own worth and government.” Dr. Smith quoted A.C. McGiffert, “Education should be such as to convince everybody that things can be controlled and moulded by the power of man. Democracy demands a God with whom men may cooperate, not to whom they must submit.”

## Losing our message

The result was a generation of Methodist Sunday School literature reflecting no original sin, very little Christology, a “marriage” to psychology and sociology, and a naïve worldview. In the very influential periodical “Religious Education,” Dr. Smith found words typical of the times: “We are making religion new. . . . In this view the value of the Bible lies chiefly in its power to stimulate a religious quest that will result in the creation of spiritual norms that transcend those embodied in the Bible. The ‘normal’ process of change is better conceived, not as catastrophic and sudden, but as a ‘normal outcome of wise and continuous training.’”

In short, “gradualism” replaced “conversion” as the premise of most Sunday School literature with the re-

sult that all subsequent Methodist growth was out of the cradle, not from “the last, the least and the lost” as it was in “old Methodism.” That was the zenith of grossly distorted Arminianism. To this day, Calvinists use that era of liberalism in caricaturing Arminianism as “works righteousness.”

Let us do our Arminian homework. Arminius’ insistence on “universal salvation” means that Jesus died for everyone, not just the Elect. Contrary to Calvinism, grace is resistible. Human liberty equally insists that just as human love can be rejected, so divine love can be rejected. We must have a moment or a season of “coming to faith.”

As Wesley said: “Christian faith is then not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, . . . a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as *given for us*, and *living in us*. It is a sure confidence which a man hath in God that through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven and he is reconciled to the favour of God.” In a word, grace is universally given but is not irresistible.

Wesley affirmed the “whispering of the Spirit” upon the soul. This is a divine initiative we call “preparing grace” that comes at some juncture in life to every person. Whosoever will may come.

Let us get our Arminian message straight and get it out!

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

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# Houston church builds new social landscape

BY KATHY L. GILBERT  
*United Methodist News Service*

HOUSTON—When the Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell was appointed to Windsor Village United Methodist Church in 1982, there were about “25 faithful members” in the pews on Sunday.

The neighborhood was underserved, underdeveloped and full of blight.

“After the bishop told me I was



The Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell

coming here, I peered through the front door, and I saw pill bugs, and I saw cobwebs. And I saw a Lawrence Welk organ. And I saw a pulpit and a piece of the microphone and a cross. And I thought, ‘That’s all we need,’” said Mr. Caldwell, who is now senior pastor of the largest United Methodist congregation in the United States.

Windsor Village now has a membership of more than 18,000. The neighborhood has grown from blight to a mini-city with a housing development, shopping, fast-food restaurants, medical facilities, schools, a YMCA and the 190,000-square-foot Kingdom Builders Center with a sanctuary inside.

To Mr. Caldwell and members of Windsor Village, this 234-acre community—Pointe 2.3.4—is the result of what happens when love meets needs.

“I remember very clearly Pastor Caldwell talking about developing the 234-acre vision, and being able to build a community for affordable housing. And I thought that was just phenomenal,” said Millicent Haynes, director of ministries and a longtime church member.

“You see children going to school, folks going to work, people living in nice houses . . . you see health-care fa-

cilities open to the least, the last and the lost. . . . This is what God said we should do in the book of Genesis,” Mr. Caldwell said.

Turn at the intersection of South Post Oak and West Omen in central southwest Houston, and it looks like any other busy corner in a large city. A CVS pharmacy, Walgreens, Taco Bell, McDonald’s and Advance Auto Center flank both sides of the entrance.

The first clue that this is no ordinary neighborhood is the name of the subdivision: Corinthian Pointe.

Corinthian Pointe is a residential area with 462 low- to moderately-priced houses. When Corinthian Pointe was built five years ago, the median price for homes was \$90,000 to \$110,000. The market value has now risen about 30 percent.

## Part of the kingdom

Lining streets with names like “Miracle Lane,” “Faith” and “Majesty” are rows of neatly manicured lawns and driveways full of cars, trucks and kids’ bikes. There are almost no “for sale” signs, and no homeowners are in foreclosure, Mr. Caldwell said. Most of the people living here are first-time homeowners who received financial counseling from Windsor Village be-

fore purchasing their homes.

Mr. Caldwell said he knows some folks might view the massive project as “an extracurricular activity relative to the Bible,” but he views it as part of the Wesleyan spirit. He also sees it as evangelism because it has generated a lot of enthusiasm from people in Houston.

The housing development is about 45 percent Hispanic. “Back in the day, they said black and brown folk, especially middle-class, couldn’t live together,” Mr. Caldwell said. “And they do it with joy and thanksgiving right there in Corinthian Pointe.”

In addition to the subdivision, there is also Corinthian Village, a 121-unit independent-living facility for older adults. Texas Children’s Pediatrics, located in a cluster of retail and medical clinics, offers services for children regardless of their parents’ ability to pay.

Jean Hines Caldwell Elementary School—named for Mr. Caldwell’s mother—serves 750 children in the subdivision and surrounding area.

The YMCA is the first built in a predominantly African-American community in Houston in 50 years.

Future plans include a prayer center and a new sanctuary. When everything is complete, its projected value

will be more than \$173 million and will generate more than 400 permanent jobs.

But this massive undertaking is just one of 75 active ministries ongoing at Windsor Village.

“The range of ministries is numerous, and they are designed to meet any needs that we have within the congregation,” said Ms. Haynes. There is an ongoing monthly recruiting effort through the new membership class and an annual ministry fair that issues a call for action for all members of the congregation to get connected to the life of the church, she said.

“Pastor Caldwell reminds us all the time that sheep beget sheep,” she said. “We make it a priority to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.”

Mr. Caldwell said he has heard some pastors make fun of churches with a lot of ministries. “I heard one pastor refer to a church as ‘Six Flags Over Jesus.’” But both Jesus and John Wesley had a “pretty cool, diversified ministry,” he said.

“Not only is the spirit of Jesus still alive and well, but the spirit of Wesley is alive and well because Wesley was a great spiritual entrepreneurial leader. And when I grow up, I want to be like him.”



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