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Children's ministry network taking root statewide

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

In December of last year, a group of United Methodists working in children's ministry met in the Arkansas Conference office. Inspired by a network of children's ministers in the Northwest District, they wanted to find a way to share ideas and resources statewide.

So with a small budget, the support of the Conference staff and a desire for greater connection, they began thinking creatively—and putting those thoughts into action.

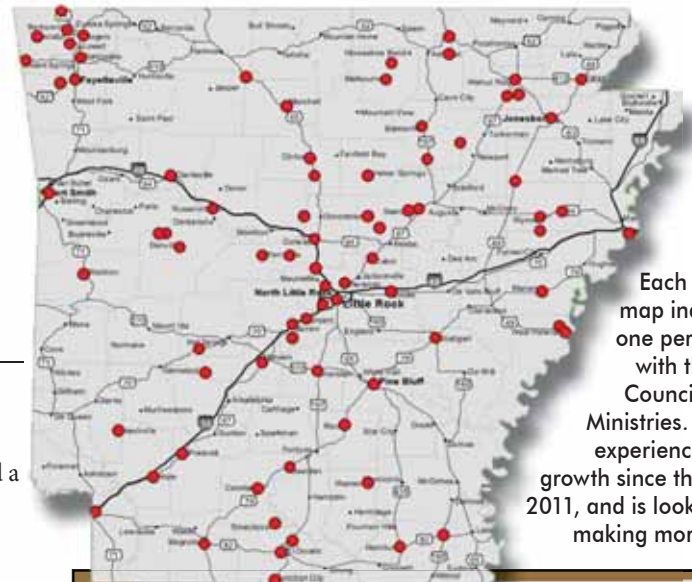
That initial meeting planted the seed for the new Conference Council on Children's Ministries (CCCM). CCCM now provides resources through its website, meets regularly online and helps establish valuable connections for children's ministry workers across the state.

"It became apparent that a large chunk of our budget would be used for travel reimbursement if we continued to meet face to face in Little Rock," said Karen Swales, minister to families with children at First UMC Springdale and Conference coordinator of children's ministries.

"Fortunately, the Arkansas Conference had invested wisely in technology," she said. "All we needed to do was maximize the technology resources we had available.... The Conference owned the web conferencing software, so the cost for this was, literally, priceless."

With the assistance of Conference communications coordinator Patrick Shownes, the group's next meeting took place via the web conferencing platform Adobe Connect, which allows participants to view materials related to the meeting at the same time.

[See CHILDREN, page 6A]



Each red dot on this map indicates at least one person connected with the Conference Council on Children's Ministries. The group has experienced most of this growth since the beginning of 2011, and is looking forward to making more connections.



The new children's ministries website, kidz.arumc.org, serves as a primary point of contact for the growing network.

Arkansas team brings pain relief to Uganda



Margaret Anena is treated for a severe toothache. She is one of hundreds of people served by the medical mission team to Uganda from Central UMC Fayetteville.

UMNS PHOTO BY GRACE NAKAJJE

BY GRACE NAKAJJE
East Africa Annual Conference

KOCH COROMA, Uganda (UMNS)—Margaret Anena had lived with acute tooth pain since her teens, but nothing could be done to cure her.

Because health centers are hard to reach and the war in Gulu District was long, Anena could not get treatment.

Now the United Methodist has received the relief she needed thanks to a medical team from Central United Methodist Church in Fayetteville, Ark.

The mobile health clinic stopped in Gulu for two days in June. The team treated a total of 436 patients—64 of them dental and 372 medical. The diseases diagnosed included respiratory tract infections, gastritis, malaria, ulcers, dental

decay and wounds.

Jody Farrell, the team leader, was on his fifth trip to Uganda and his fourth to Anena's village of Koch Coroma.

"We've kept going back to the same place so we really understand what the needs are," said Farrell, director of missions and lay mobilization at Central United Methodist Church. "People remember us. We've built relationships."

During the trip, he said, his team of 19 Arkansans shared the gospel and the message that God wants people to have a healthy body and a healthy mind.

Help for hurt teeth

Dr. Ambrose Opio at Gulu Regional Referral Hospital said Anena's case was serious because she

had tooth decay and sores on the gum, tongue and the lips.

Anena said she developed tooth sensitivity after drinking contaminated water at a swamp in Koch Goma village, where she took refuge during the civil war.

"I felt strange pain in my mouth immediately after I drank the water," she said. "So it forced me to go back where I fetched it. To my shock, I saw two decomposing bodies floating, and since then, I have no peace in my mouth."

Opio said Anena should not have any more pain. "We have extracted the most dangerous roots and given her treatment to cure the sores in her mouth," he said.

He encouraged the Arkansas medical team to provide demonstrations about how to brush teeth, use toothpaste and maintain

[See UGANDA, page 6A]



EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

How to keep being there, and being hope

Most readers of this paper probably know a particular drill to follow for disaster relief:

- 1) A disaster strikes—for example, a flood, tornado, earthquake, disease outbreak or even something created by human action.
- 2) In response, we give to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), knowing the UMCOR team is already on the move to alleviate suffering.
- 3) In addition to giving financially, many of us also will give by sending supplies—health kits, cleaning buckets and more—as well as UMCOR-certified Early Response Teams. Later, our Volunteers in Mission teams will help rebuild.

We also know that when we give through UMCOR, 100 percent of the money we offer toward a specific need goes directly to meet that need. But how does UMCOR make that happen?

The answer: One Great Hour of Sharing. Without this special offering, UMCOR wouldn't be able to route all of our disaster relief gifts to the places they will help the most—including places within the boundaries of our own Conference. Just this year, we have received \$30,000 in UMCOR disaster relief grants.

One Great Hour of Sharing keeps UMCOR's electricity on and the phone bills paid. It covers the staffing necessary to allow for quick response to unexpected need.

One Great Hour of Sharing ensures that when a disaster strikes, the infrastructure already is in place, allowing us, as many of UMCOR's materials beckon, to "Be There. Be Hope."

Yet, in 2010, just 165 out of 692 United Methodist congregations in Arkansas sent money from a One Great Hour of Sharing offering. That's fewer than 25 percent of our churches.

So I'm taking a moment of personal privilege on behalf of one of my favorite organizations to ask a blunt question:

Really, y'all?
Because I know that isn't the best we can do.

UMCOR doesn't receive any World Service funds or other apportionment dollars. So without our direct support through One Great Hour of Sharing, UMCOR couldn't continue to exist.

I've heard UMCOR described as the single most amazing and effective ministry in the United Methodist connectional system. Both Charity Navigator and the American Institute of Philanthropy give UMCOR top ratings (higher than the American Red Cross).

That's some serious recognition from outside United Methodism. And it's more reason to feel confident in making gifts to this particular cause.

The official Sunday for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering in 2011 was April 3. But the offering can be received at any time during the year.

You can give online, too. Visit umcgiving.org/oghs, and you'll see a "donate now" button in the upper right-hand corner of the page. (The website also contains plenty of educational resources, so you can learn more about what UMCOR does before you give.)

The online form even allows you to make certain your local church will get credit for your gift. I know, because I just completed the online giving process myself.

If you would rather send a check, you may mail it to GCFA, P.O. Box 340029, Nashville, TN 37203, or drop it in your local church's offering plate. In either case, be sure to write "One Great Hour of Sharing" in the memo line.

Then, the next time you learn of a disaster, you'll know that help is on the way—because you've already played a part in sending it.

And the next time you assemble a health kit or tell a friend about the wonderful work UMCOR does around the world, you'll know that you've made it easier for that work to continue.

To reach me, send an e-mail to aforbus@arumc.org.

Learning the art of leadership

BY WILLIAM O. (BUD) REEVES
Special Contributor

I was thrilled that the Imagine Ministry proposals passed at Annual Conference this year. Primarily, I thought the proposals set a good direction for United Methodists in Arkansas. But I had also invested a great deal of time and thought in the process, and I didn't want to see it all go down in flames!



Bud Reeves

Nevertheless, I also knew that the passage of the proposals was only the beginning of a long process of deep change that will take years to accomplish. My reply to those who congratulated me personally became, "One step down, a thousand to go!" But at least we're on the way.

What this process will require for the foreseeable future is an unprecedented quality of leadership in the church—from bishops, district superintendents, pastors and lay leaders at every level of the organization. While there are parallels between our situation now and earlier eras—the Wesleyan Revival, the Protestant Reformation, the apostolic church—the technology and culture in which we operate is unique. We haven't been here before.

Leadership has been a passion of mine for many years. It became a necessary survival skill as I began to lead churches 30 years ago. I am still on the learning curve, but I have picked up a few things along the way. Let me offer four strategies that may help leaders be more effective.

Leaders listen. We have to be sufficiently aware of our surroundings if we are to be good leaders. The primary listening for Christian leaders is prayer. Any church movement that is not bathed in prayer is doomed to failure. We talk to God and ask for direction and guidance, but then we'd better listen for the answer, because God talks back!

We also have to listen to our constituencies, whether the general church, the annual conference, our local church, our small groups, or the unchurched in our community. One thing we tried to do extensively

with Imagine Ministry was to listen to the constituencies in the conference, and we will have to continue that practice.

In my local church, we recently did a survey on worship practices. We have held focus groups for particular issues, and every three years we go through a strategic planning process. The point is to listen to the people, because any input is valuable. Even negative comments are instructional—maybe more so.

Leaders learn. More than two decades ago, in their book *Leaders*, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus identified the most common characteristic of successful business leaders: They are "lifelong learners." The instructional curve for leadership never stops.

There are always new ideas, books, articles, seminars that help us do our ministry better. Even after 30 years, there are new tricks this old dog can learn. We have to continually "sharpen the saw," as Stephen Covey says, or we will become dull awfully fast.

Leaders lead. One thing I have learned from listening: Where two or three are gathered together, there are diametrically opposed opinions on the proper course of action! But at some point, the surveys and studies have to end, and somebody has to decide. That would be the job

of the leader.

There are always multiple sides to every issue, but it is better to decide wrongly than to let inertia take control. At least if you're moving in the wrong direction, you're going somewhere, and you can always change directions.

Leaders must be willing to take the heat for a decision that is unpopular or goes badly, and when there is a victory, to share the credit among others who were responsible.

Leaders love. In the final analysis, we are not running a

business; we are a community of faith. If our love fails, so do we. We forget at our own peril the old saw, "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care."

Jesus asked us to do two things: love God and neighbor. Leaders remember why we're here—to love one another. The most cantankerous

Christian in the Kingdom is still a brother or sister in Christ. God will work things out. We can't give up, and we can't quit loving, either.

The next steps in our process will depend on the kind of leadership we can give and get.

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

Volume 158 • No. 014 August 5, 2011
Martha S. Taylor • Director of Communications
Amy Forbus • Editor
Patrick W. Shownes • Communications Coordinator
www.arumc.org

The *Arkansas United Methodist* is the newspaper of record for the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church. It is published once monthly, on the first Friday of each month, and four special issues during the year for a total of 16 issues per year.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Submission Deadlines	
Issue Date	Submission Deadline
Sept. 2	Aug. 18
Oct. 7	Sept. 21
Nov. 4	Oct. 20



AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

Dear Friends:

I rarely get excited about meetings, but I have been pumped up by the meeting that was held on July 9 with three task forces (ethnic ministries, children and youth ministries, and young adult ministries) and the transition team. With the Annual Conference's adoption of the Imagine Ministry proposals, the planning for the future is well underway. But it will take some time.

The task forces have been asked not to get lost in detailed planning of programs, but to think strategically about their ministry areas. They will

be seeking information on what we are currently doing in each of the areas assigned, and examining the current level of outcomes we have achieved.

Then, step by step, conversation by conversation, a new vision of where we need to be headed will begin to emerge. We are all still on a journey in the wilderness, but the excitement is building.

I was excited that so many of the task force members were able to gather on short notice for the initial training and group meetings. I was excited by the enthusiasm that was evident in the animated conversation. And I was really

excited by the fact that when the meeting was over, folks stood around talking and discussing and planning for 45 minutes more.

It is hard for me to grasp that the summer is half over. I hope that your summer has brought you some time for relaxation and re-creation, because the work and the journey continue. We have much yet to do.

Faithfully,

Charles Crutchfield



Transition team, task forces begin work



The Rev. Mackey Yokem speaks to fellow members of the transition team during their July 9 orientation session.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

On July 9, a transition team and three task forces met to begin discerning how the new mission, vision and core measures of the Conference will drive our actions.

The transition team has divided into four small groups to address 1) the organization of districts and the property belonging to each; 2) leadership structure of the Conference; 3) personnel issues and 4) budget recommendations for 2012.

The three task forces attending the July 9 meeting will focus on ethnic ministries, young adult ministries and ministry with children and youth.

Each group is asked to consider ministry needs, benchmarks for accountability and effectiveness and potential strategies for moving forward. Other task forces will deal with the formation of the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence, the Center for Technology and the Networks for Personal and Social Holiness.

Bishop Charles Crutchfield made it clear to those

present that the work ahead will take time, and that he expects no quickly-devised proposals.

"The expectation is that you will be providing an interim report in early September and, if possible, sharing something of the journey your task force has made with the called session of the Annual Conference on October 29," he told those gathered at the initial meeting.

The September and October reports will include information on the direction of each task force's conversations, but no action items requiring a vote of the Conference.

Names of the transition team and task force members will be listed at arumc.org/imagineministry, as will updates on their work as the process unfolds.

Each task force includes a member of the original Imagine Ministry team, which will remain in place, says Bishop Crutchfield, "until the 'new way' is embedded in the Annual Conference culture." He requests that United Methodists in Arkansas keep the members of all teams and task forces in their prayers.

We shared a meal of M&Ms and water

A reflection on the ministry of relationship

BY CLARK ATKINS
Special Contributor

Andy and I met one afternoon in a park in downtown Lexington, Ky. I was taking part in a cross-cultural ministry class through Asbury Theological Seminary, and a classmate and I were given the task of documenting on video what it means to be homeless through the eyes of Andy, a man living on the streets of Lexington.

During our first meeting with Andy, we learned about life on the streets and the challenges a person without a home faces in most medium-sized cities, such as finding food, shelter, clothing and employment. We also learned a little bit about Andy's particular situation.

My classmate, Ron, and I walked away from that first meeting racking our brains about what we could do to help Andy.

At our second meeting, we began to explore more of Andy's story. We began to learn from him rather than about him. We wanted to understand from his perspective what it means to be homeless.

I began to wonder if perhaps my approach to this assignment had been misplaced. I began to see Andy not as an object of observation or problem that needed to be fixed, but rather as a person.

By the third day, Ron was frustrated, but I had a new sense of hope. Ron felt that Andy would never do anything about his situation, and solutions proposed on the first day seemed inadequate; however, I saw a real breakthrough. We were beginning to form a friendship and initial barriers of communication and relation disappeared.

As Americans, we are accustomed to a task-oriented society, where we measure success by outcomes—positive or negative. But in Andy's case, we were redefining success. Success was now built on relationship. We were friends and we were beginning to learn together, the three of us.

On our last day together, I left the camera behind. We chatted and joked like friends often do.

Ron and I had offered several times to buy Andy a sandwich or a coffee, and each time he politely

refused, but on this day we shared a meal of peanut M&Ms and water. A package was opened and placed in the middle of the table and we, as friends, partook of this meal together.

Sometimes our ministry with others becomes more about expected outcomes or measures of success and we lose sight of one of our purposes, which is to form relationships and connect with those we wish to serve.

My time with Andy reminded me that not everything in ministry



Clark Atkins

can be measured in numbers. Andy certainly has several obstacles in his life, but as a person created in the image of God, he needs and deserves to be viewed first as a person. His homelessness is

not his identity. It is his current circumstance, but it is not what defines him.

During this week with Andy, the Holy Spirit revealed several things to me. Among these I learned that the problem of homelessness is a complex one that will not be fixed with any type of "one size fits all" solution. The reasons for homelessness are numerous and vary with each person.

Perhaps most importantly, I learned that being in relationship with Andy was itself a ministry of restoration. For simply becoming friends with him and sharing a meal of peanut M&Ms and water helped to restore his dignity and his identity as a an image-bearer of God.

At a time when the Church is being asked to provide concrete measures of success or effectiveness in ministry, Andy reminded me that not all success can be measured in numbers. Sometimes our success lies in the relationships we form with others.

The Rev. Atkins serves as an associate pastor at St. James UMC in Little Rock. He can be reached at clark@stjames-umc.org. To view the video of Andy, visit <http://bit.ly/video-andy>.

Safety regulations mean churches need new cribs

New standards take effect December 2012

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

The summer of 2011 brought the first change to crib safety standards in almost three decades.

New standards approved by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) went into effect for manufacturers on June 28, and child care facilities have until Dec. 28, 2012, to replace cribs that don't meet the new safety rules.

What do the new safety standards mean for churches?

"It appears to me that the law requires businesses, including churches, to comply with the new regulations if the business pays someone to care for children in their facility," says Tony Hilliard, chancellor for the Arkansas Conference. That means many

churches must purchase all new cribs by December 2012.

"All cribs manufactured after June 2011 must comply with the new safety regulations," he said. Further, the CPSC states it is very doubtful that a crib manufactured before the new regulations were issued in December 2010 will meet the new regulations, including testing.

While the new regulations don't appear to require any recalls for current cribs in homes or other locations with a volunteer-only staff, Hilliard still recommends that even churches using only volunteers to care for children examine their cribs for safety and, if possible, retrofit or replace them to meet the new standards.

"Everyone providing childcare has a responsibility to offer a safe environment for the children, and

the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission determined that older baby cribs have inherent safety problems," he said.

Therefore, the Conference strongly encourages all churches to replace their existing cribs with compliant models or bring their cribs into compliance before December 2012. As the deadline approaches, demand for the new cribs might outpace supply, so churches should not wait until the last minute to replace older cribs. In addition, churches may not resell or otherwise provide the older cribs to anyone.

"The intent of the regulations is to keep children safe," says Meredith O'Hara, child care liaison for the Arkansas Conference. "Thus, it would be prudent for a church, regardless of whether they pay their staff, to contact the manufacturer of the crib and ask if the crib complies with the new safety regulations or if there are steps that can be taken to bring it into compliance."

For details on safety and compliance, visit www.cpsc.gov/cribs.

Waste not, want not

If cribs do not comply, the units cannot be used anywhere. The new

regulations specify that any non-compliant cribs must be dismantled.

"Such cribs should be broken apart and destroyed—not placed anywhere that others may take them and re-assemble for use," O'Hara stressed.

But several churches and individuals have found creative and safe ways to re-use some parts of the cribs. At one church, a staff member saved a crib's side rails from the landfill by making matching headboards for a pair of twin beds.

For creative uses on-site, the base pieces of old cribs might become raw materials for bulletin boards and chalk boards. Self-stick cork board attached to a crib base provides a space for classroom decor, and a crib base coated in chalk board paint and mounted to a wall can provide new space for kids who like to draw.

Liaison project

Providing child care in church facilities is about much more than just cribs. The Child Care Liaison Project, with funding the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, has developed a reference guide for directors of such ministries.

The guide may be ordered online at arumc.org/child_care_liaison_project.php. United Methodist churches in Arkansas may order the guide at no cost.

As child care liaison for the Arkansas Conference, O'Hara assists churches that have weekday ministries involving the care of children ages newborn to 18. She strongly encourages churches with child care programs or other weekday care programs to complete Section 15 of the reference guide.

"This section helps churches answer important questions about responsibilities and financial matters," she said. "It offers churches a lens through which they can view their goals for providing quality care."

O'Hara also manages a Google Group to keep child care directors aware of changes and issues, and help them build a network among their peers. She urges every director of a weekday care ministry to subscribe to the group by e-mailing her at meredithoharaarumc@sbcglobal.net.

In addition to keeping directors informed on regulatory matters, the group also shares best practices and creative ideas, such as the ideas listed above for re-using crib pieces.

What churches need to know about new crib standards

- Cribs must meet new standards before December 2012. Visit www.cpsc.gov/cribs for details.
- For child care resources from the Arkansas Conference, visit www.arumc.org/child_care_liaison_project.php.
- To join the Arkansas Conference child care directors' Google Group, e-mail Meredith O'Hara, child care liaison, at meredithoharaarumc@sbcglobal.net.

SAVE THE DATE!



Meet Brian McLaren,
internationally known author
and Christian activist.

Pulaski Heights United Methodist
Church, Little Rock

Monday, September 12

Lecture at 11:30 am; followed by luncheon at 12:30 pm
with book signing and discussion

Please Be Our Guest!

Reservations by September 1: 501.664.3600

Conference Elders: Plan to attend this event on your way to the Gathering of the Order of Elders, 4 p.m. at Camp Tanako, Hot Springs.

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 VIM coordinator, 501-868-9193 or 681-2909; dweeks@arumc.org.

Ramp construction team needed

Mission UMC Ft. Smith has a building in need of a wheelchair ramp. If your VIM team is interested in this task as a weekend project, contact Don Weeks at the phone or email address listed above.

Disaster response team sign-up

To learn how your church can help those affected by this spring's storms and flooding, contact Conference disaster response coordinators Byron and Janice Mann at rainmaker@arkansas.net. They will add your team to the

volunteer list and keep you aware of opportunities to help.

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.

'This Olde Church'

This Olde Church pairs work crews and Arkansas Conference churches needing assistance with repairs and maintenance to their facilities. Visit arumc.org/vim for a listing of available projects, or to submit an application for help.

LR Wesley Foundation help

The Wesley Foundation at UALR needs help with general maintenance, clean-up, painting, etc. Contact Rev. Maxine Allen at mallen@arumc.org, 501-663-1153 (office) or 501-539-0280 (mobile).



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Arkansan among interns tackling global issues

BY JEWEL DEGUZMAN AND WAYNE RHODES
General Board of Church and Society

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Three young adults from Arkansas, North Carolina and Tennessee are serving internships on Capitol Hill with the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) this summer.

They are Sara Bayles, 21, from Springdale, Ark.; Robert Mason, 23, from Winston-Salem, N.C.; and Kelsie Overton, 20, from Brentwood, Tenn. Mason and Overton are interns in the agency's Education & Leadership Formation work area; Bayles works with Women's Concerns, which is part of the Louise & Hugh Moore Population Project at GBCS.

Interns have become an important resource for the agency since the 2003 budget cuts that led to reducing staff by half.

Frances Roberts, GBCS assistant general secretary for administration and human resources, said internships at the agency are a two-way street.

"[Interns] enable our staff members to undertake projects that have been on the drawing boards, sometimes for months, that they don't have the time to do themselves," she said.

On the other hand, Roberts says, the interns gain hands-on knowledge, most frequently about the legislative issues in the news, and acquire invaluable exposure to the U.S. legislative process.

"Most important, they learn what it means to 'do justice' in the United Methodist Church," she

pointed out, adding that interns are not limited to summer placements at GBCS.

"Justice is a year-round pursuit."

Sara Bayles

Bayles majors in religion and political science at the University of Central Arkansas. She has minors in gender studies and the feminist theology of social justice, under the auspices of Honors Interdisciplinary Studies.

Bayles said she has a passion for social justice and gender-related issues within the church. She came to Washington, D.C., to learn how the faith community can advocate on these issues.

Bayles' work as an intern primarily addresses three pieces of legislation: the International Violence Against Women Act, the Domestic Violence Against Women Act and the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women Treaty (CEDAW). She is also helping plan the UMC Global AIDS Fund Dinner and the 40 Days of Prayer leading up to World AIDS Day, Dec. 1.

Bayles has been asked to research other areas including domestic violence, teen dating violence and human trafficking.

Bayles' home church is Wesley UMC in Springdale, Ark. She attends and is on staff at the University of Central Arkansas Wesley Foundation in Conway, where she serves in its local gardening ministry.

When her internship ends August 12, Bayles will become the student pastor for two Arkansas



Sara Bayles, a member of Wesley UMC Springdale and an active participant in the UCA Wesley Foundation's campus ministry, is spending part of this summer serving as an intern with the denomination's General Board of Church and Society in Washington, D.C.

PHOTO COURTESY GBCS

United Methodist congregations: Cleveland and Overcup (Morrilton).

She also will be writing two theses on the feminist theology of social justice, and on Ozark political culture.

Robert Mason

Mason expects to enter a career in education after he graduates in 2013 with a Masters of Divinity from Duke Divinity School. He accepted the internship at GBCS because of his "curiosity about the intersection between faith and policy." He is particularly interested in how "Christ is instituted through policy."

Mason's internship involves program support and advocacy development for the denomination's Imagine No Malaria campaign.

In addition, Mason serves as resident adviser for GBCS's Ethnic Young Adult (EYA) Summer Interns Program, which places persons from around the world in a variety of social justice agencies in Washington, D.C. Besides living with the 14 EYA interns, Mason assists in program and spiritual enrichment.

Having the opportunity to see how the Gospel is lived out through the development of responsible public policy has been the favorite part of his internship, according to Mason. A political science and

history major as an undergraduate at Appalachian State University, he describes himself as passionate about global health issues, international affairs and creating sustainable education policy.

Mason's home church is Pine Grove UMC in Winston-Salem.

Kelsie Overton

Overton, a Hess Fellow at Birmingham-Southern College in Alabama, is an intern with the UM Seminar Program, a part of Education & Leadership Development. The Hess Fellows Program places students with non-profit advocacy organizations. She is the third Hess Fellow in recent summers to intern with GBCS.

Overton is studying religion at Birmingham-Southern. She will graduate in 2013 and is considering pursuing a joint degree in either divinity and public policy or divinity and law.

With the UM Seminar Program, Overton is developing a Bible study on becoming a good neighbor. She is also managing its social networking through Facebook.

GBCS has been eye-opening to Overton. "Everyone is so passionate about the causes they are fighting for," she said. "They have so much knowledge to pass on."

Overton herself is passionate

about human trafficking, violence against women, maternal health, economic justice in impoverished areas and food security.

Overton's home congregation is Brentwood (Tenn.) UMC. She will begin an internship in the fall at Woodlawn UMC in Birmingham, which she attends during the school term.

About GBCS

The General Board of Church and Society is one of four international program boards of the United Methodist Church. The board's primary areas of ministry are advocacy, education and leadership formation, United Nations & international affairs, and resourcing these areas for the denomination. It has offices on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., and at the Church Center at the United Nations.

GBCS welcomes applications throughout the year for internships and volunteer positions. For more information, contact Roberts at 202-488-5658.

DeGuzman, 23, is an Ethnic Young Adult Summer Intern in the GBCS communications department. Rhodes is the editor of Faith in Action, GBCS' e-newsletter, where this article first appeared. Reproduced with permission.

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Children

(continued from page 1A)

The organizational committee now holds monthly online meetings—saving gallons of fuel and hours of travel time—and communicates via e-mail as well.

“I love the web conferences,” said Jeremy Carter, director of children and family ministries at First UMC Magnolia. “I was worried in the beginning that there would be lots of [technical] issues, but there weren’t.

“It has been great creating new friendships and strengthening existing ones,” he said. “I love having peers in ministry to share joys and concerns with whenever I need to.”

“CCCM has become a breath of fresh air in our Conference,” says Rod Hocott, Conference minister of youth and young adults and staff liaison for the children’s ministry group. “Because of the excitement of the group and the leadership of Karen Swales, CCCM is already planning for 2012. It has been my pleasure to watch as new children’s ministers are added to the list of those who want participate in this ministry.”

Connecting, equipping

So what is the focus of these meetings? Swales says it all boils down to two main areas: connecting and equipping.

“We want to use our connectional ties to act as a resource for information, training and

support to all congregations serving children and families in Arkansas,” she says.

Following the Northwest District’s example, the CCCM created a statewide network for sharing Vacation Bible School supplies and resources. The VBS Connect Project helped churches be better stewards of time and money, so the group plans to expand the idea next year.

“It has limitless potential to help all size churches through bulk purchasing, sharing ideas and developing community,” said Swales.

Because the CCCM saved money through web conferencing, it was able develop a mini-grant program to help some smaller churches purchase supplies for VBS. One small-attendance church in each district received a grant in the form of a \$150 Cokesbury gift card and a \$50 check.

The CCCM conducted one training session in Little Rock for Vacation Bible School leaders this spring, and plans to make training more accessible for attendees statewide. Leader training sessions in 2012 will take place in five different regions of Arkansas, and the focus will broaden.

“These workshops will be more practical,” Swales said. The group plans to offer sessions on how to choose curriculum, how to do ministry with little or

no budget, how to capitalize on community resources and more.

Two more in-state children’s ministry workshops will happen before the end of 2011—one in Springdale on Sept. 10 and the other in Magnolia on Nov. 5. For information on these and other educational opportunities, visit the “Grow” tab at kidz.arumc.org.

Getting involved

Pam Lentz, director of children’s ministries at First UMC Conway, appreciates the multiple ways of connecting through the new CCCM.

“We have accomplished some really good things [through web conferencing] without having to spend extra time travel for a meeting,” she said. “I think it is still important for us to provide opportunities and to be intentional about connecting in person a few

times a year at children’s events. For me, it helps the web conferencing to feel more personable.”

Lentz also says that the CCCM activity has inspired roundtable meetings among children’s ministry leaders in the North Central District.

“[We] talk about our successes and our struggles,” she said. “We are hoping to grow

our group as more churches become aware of what is being offered.”

Carrie Drish, director of children’s ministry for First UMC Bella Vista who was active in the Northwest District network, values the relationships she has developed through the CCCM.

“Having a peer group always helps, no matter what your job is,” she said. “Before I found Karen and the rest of the amazing women and men in our district group, I was new to my job and was feeling overwhelmed. Then I met all of these wonderful people who have some of the same problems I had. It was awesome to listen to how they handled their similar situations.”

The CCCM website, kidz.arumc.org, serves as its primary point for connecting and equipping children’s ministry workers. Hosted by the Arkansas Conference, the site requires some volunteer time for updates, but incurs no expenses (see related story on page 8 of this section).

Kaylea Hutson, then-minister to families with children at First UMC Siloam Springs, used a free design from the WordPress platform to develop the site. Now serving as director of children’s ministries at St. James UMC Little Rock, Hutson continues to maintain the site as part of her involvement with CCCM.

CCCM resources and networking opportunities are available to all people serving in children’s ministries, whether in paid or unpaid roles. To connect with CCCM, contact Swales at 479.751.4610, ext. 308 or karen@fumcwired.com.

Coming Aug. 19:
a special issue of the
Arkansas United Methodist
with a focus on outreach to
children and youth

Uganda

(continued from page 1A)

general hygiene.

Opio said tooth decay is the most common ailment among the people of northern Uganda.

“Since these people stayed in the camps for a long time, many fed on sticky foods such as cassava and sweet potatoes, and they used to eat it raw, which exposed them to tooth decay,” he said.

The United Methodist Church in the East Africa Annual Conference is in the final stage of forming health boards with a mandate to take health services closer to the communities.

In the interim, Opio urges all United Methodist medical teams to teach healthy eating habits, “especially how to avoid eating sticky foods.”

Help with evangelism

The Arkansas medical team offered healing not only for sore mouths and ailing bodies, but also weary souls.

In addition to the clinic, the team offered a pharmacy and a prayer room. While people waited for their prescriptions to be filled, they could pray and talk with team members and local United Methodist pastors.

“We would talk with them about their needs, pray with them and also visit with them about their faith and if they had a desire to become Christian,” said the Rev. Tony Holifield, the senior pastor of Central UMC. Some 600 people visited the prayer room, he said.

Holifield said his congregation also plans to raise \$150,000 to help with other needs in northern Uganda, including an orphanage, church structures and water wells.

“We have so far completed a church in Koch Coroma in the Gulu District and the next plan is water,”

he said. “I encourage the church in Uganda to keep the focus on Jesus, build the Kingdom and their lives will be better as a result of being faithful to Christ.”

Nakajje is the communicator for the East Africa Annual Conference. Heather Hahn, a multimedia news reporter for United Methodist News Service, contributed to this report.

To read the mission team’s blog, visit www.cumcugandamissionproject.blogspot.com.



LEFT: Susan Flournoy, a registered nurse, attends to a child as part of the Uganda Mission Project of Central United Methodist Church of Fayetteville, Ark. RIGHT: Traci McCuistion, mission lay chairperson, hands out prescriptions in the village of Koch Coroma, Uganda.



PHOTOS COURTESY CENTRAL UMC



Paul’s Fourth Missionary Journey

Follow the Journeys of Paul with Rev. Siegfried Johnson, Senior Pastor of St. James United Methodist Church, Little Rock, on a Mediterranean Cruise visiting sites in Italy, Greece, and Turkey. We depart on May 4, 2012 to

Rome and board Celebrity’s newest ship, The Silhouette, following an itinerary including Naples, Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, Rhodes, Santorini, Crete, Venice, and more. For more information and brochure contact Rev. Johnson at sieg@stjames-umc.org.

Food: an economical, ecological, social, spiritual issue

BY LYNN CROSS KILBOURNE
Special Contributor

Several years ago the Arkansas Conference set an audacious goal: that together, we would end hunger in Arkansas.

Over the years now, the Arkansas Hunger Task Force has addressed issues of food insecurity and malnutrition. Often, we address the endemic problem of hunger with donations of food and money to local churches and organizations that supply food for those in need.

While these are faithful ways to participate in mercy and hospitality, they are not the only ways.

The question of hunger is not simply, "Does everyone have enough to eat?" It includes questions surrounding the issue of food production, quality, stewardship and dependence. In a state where obesity, malnutrition and hunger are all too prevalent, something more than food distribution must be done.

Food helps us to understand our place in the world. As beings of need, all of us need to eat. Along with our own needs, God's people are tasked to take care of the widows, orphans and oppressed. The Church must ask the question, "How can our eating be an expression of what Christ wants our place to be in the world?"

While addressing this question seems like an overwhelming task,

God has already provided God's people with the necessary resources to seek out the answer.

To truly eliminate hunger in Arkansas, we must first see great cultural changes. The very way that we think about food must change.

Food is a gift, not a commodity. Food fuels community, not just individuals. Our dependence upon food for life is ultimately a dependence upon God.

A new way to address hunger in Arkansas is through faith-based community gardens. They can look different, but have the same goals: food production, participation in creation, organically grown community and a faithful demonstration of land and food stewardship.

If your church is interested in starting a community garden, you may want to attend an upcoming event hosted by the Hunger Task Force. "Sowing the Seeds...helping to reduce hunger insecurities through faith-based community gardens" will be held Sept. 9-10 at the Mount Eagle Retreat Center.

During the event we will have theological conversations and worship centering on gardening, and workshops teaching about the initiation, care and leadership of a community garden. We will address the practical and spiritual components involved in such a ministry.

Any vegetable or fruit gardener will tell you that food truly is a gift. One can prepare the soil, plant the seed in a place with the proper amount of sunlight and provide water, but after that, it is in God's

hands.

Dr. Norman Wirzba, research professor of theology, ecology and rural life at Duke Divinity School, writes, "Gardening is never simply about gardens. It is work that reveals the meaning and character of humanity, and is an exercise and demonstration of who we take ourselves and creation to be."

And just who are we? At least one Sunday a month, we proclaim to be the body of Christ redeemed by His blood. Through Holy Communion, we are transformed into "food" to feed the world.

The Rev. Kilbourne serves as associate pastor of First UMC Conway and is a member of the Hunger Task Force.



ABOVE: The Rev. Lynn Kilbourne leads a prayer during the March 6, 2011, consecration of the community garden at First UMC Bryant. RIGHT: Terri Davidson shows off produce from the church's garden.

COURTESY PHOTOS



Interested in helping combat hunger through community gardening?

"Sowing the Seeds... Helping to reduce hunger insecurities through faith-based community gardens" will take place Sept. 9-10, 2011 (7 p.m. Friday to 3:30 p.m. Saturday) at Mount Eagle Retreat Center.

Individuals and local church teams will explore theological underpinnings and gain practical skills to begin or expand community garden programs as one response to feeding the hungry in Arkansas. Workshops include:

- Theological Conversations and Worship – Why we care
- Gardening 101 – Where to begin
- Developing a Team that Works – Who needs to be involved
- Hands-on Experience – Tour the 'almost organic' garden at Mount Eagle
- Developing Goals and Funding Your Garden – Have a plan when you leave

To register, visit mouteagle.org.

Backpacks contain numerous back-to-school ministry opportunities

BY MARTHA TAYLOR
Arkansas Conference

Many people recall with fondness preparing for a new school year: a haircut, new clothes and shoes—and of course, school supplies.

But for hundreds of Arkansas school children, back to school time brings an anxiety borne from knowing that there isn't money enough for new things, and if there was, school supplies and backpacks would be last on the list.

This concern spurred Olimpia Underwood, a Spanish professor at UALR and Arkansas Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) volunteer, to initiate the Adopt a Backpack program, providing new or gently used backpacks and school supplies

to the children of JFON clients.

Underwood noticed the need as she welcomed and assisted JFON client families from many countries, including Vietnam, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Peru and South Africa.

Backpacks will be distributed to children at the three JFON clinics in Arkansas: Dover UMC, First UMC Monticello and Oak Forest UMC Little Rock.

To participate, donate a new or gently used backpack and school supplies to fill each backpack, or give \$30 to provide one child with a backpack and school supplies. Interested churches or groups of all ages may contact the Rev. Stephen Copley, JFON executive director, at 501-626-9220, or regional attorney

Julie Larson at 501-374-3811.

Feeding hungry children

Through the Arkansas Rice Depot's Food For Kids program, hunger relief can arrive in a backpack.

"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.

Thanks to donations and

discounts Rice Depot receives, it takes just \$2,000 per academic year to support one school in the program.

In partnership with the bishop, district superintendents and the Conference Hunger Task Force, Rice Depot has sent 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 small group.

To learn more about Food For

Kids, contact McElroy at 501-565-8855 or lauren@ricedepot.org.

Backpack blessings

Several Arkansas churches invite students, teachers and any individual involved in education to a Blessing of the Backpacks before school starts. It's a way for churches to let educators and young academics know they are being prayed for throughout the school year.

Some churches include a litany, a prayer spoken by a local teacher and a special blessing during regular worship services. Others give kids a luggage tag for their backpack, bearing a reminder that "Jesus Loves You." These ideas and others can be found on the General Board of Discipleship website, gbod.org.

Grants, training for local church technology, communications

Grant apps due by Sept. 1; website training set for Sept. 10

Communications and technology are changing the landscape of churches across the U.S., and Arkansas churches are no exception. The need for better computers, projectors, signage and education is more important than ever for the local church in the 21st century.

That is why the conference communications department is awarding up to 50 matching grants of \$1,000 each, with a \$500 match required for receipt of grant funds.

Churches in small (less than 75 average attendance), medium (76-200 average attendance) and large (more than 201 average attendance) categories may apply for grants to fund communications programs, technology, equipment, publications, signage, continuing education or any action that improves communication for the local congregation. Approximately 75 percent of the grants will be awarded to small attendance churches; 15 percent to medium attendance churches; and 10 percent to large attendance churches.

"It's hard enough for local churches to find the funds they need for the ministries they provide in their mission fields, let alone to find funds for projectors, signage and such," said Martha Taylor, Conference director of communications.

"It is a priority for the conference to aid the local church that wants to improve their technology and communications efforts. The mini-grants are one way we can do that."

Grant applicants must designate a lay person or clergy member to implement communication programs at the local church, and that person must attend at least one seminar offered in the coming year by the Conference communications team. Seminars will be provided at no cost to the local church, and will be available both online and on-site.

Once a grant is received, the church will be responsible for submitting a report with the details of how the grant money was

spent, including copies of any invoices or receipts for the funded expenses and photos of projects or other evidence of how the grant was spent.

The grant application deadline is Sept. 1, with grant funds awarded in mid-September. The application may be completed online at arumc.org/minigrant, or an application may be downloaded and mailed to Martha Taylor, Arkansas Conference Director of Communications, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202.

Free web hosting, training

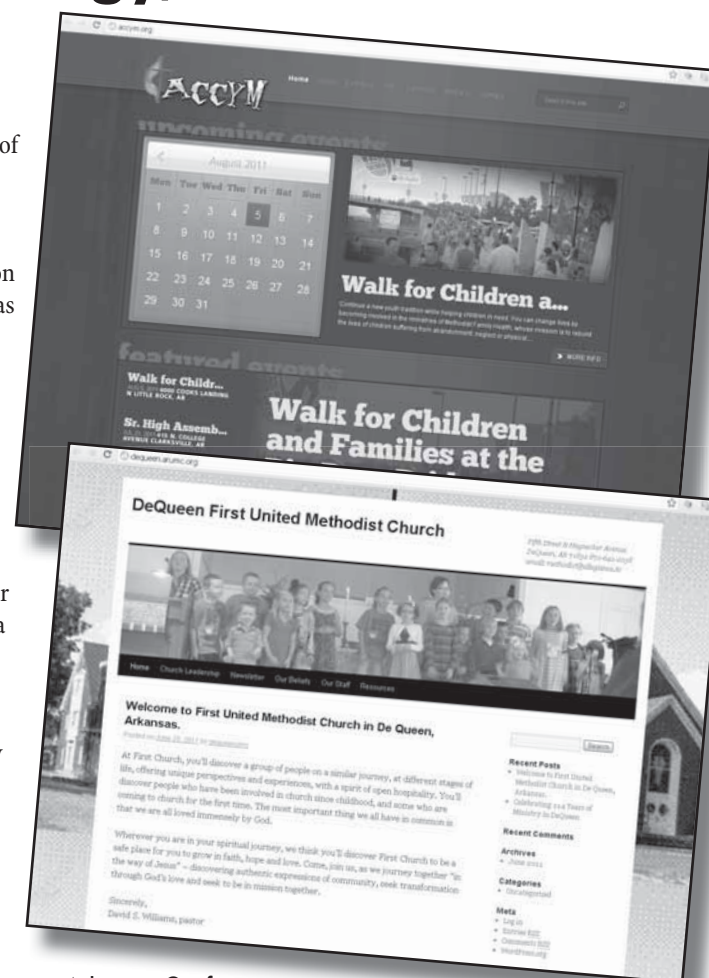
In addition, the Conference communications team is offering free web hosting for any local church interested in having a presence on the Internet. Statistics show that searching the web is the avenue of choice for newcomers or individuals looking at visiting or becoming involved with a church. To learn more, visit arumc.org/webhosting.

The communications team provides training for churches interested in the WordPress platform.

"WordPress is easy to learn and has enough flexibility to work for just about any church," says Patrick Shownes, communications coordinator for the Conference.

Whether or not a local church chooses to use the free web hosting and the WordPress platform, all are welcome to attend the training to see if it would work in their local setting.

WordPress training is scheduled for Sept. 10, with registration now open. To register, visit arumc.org and click on the "Event Registration" tab in the Quick Links section on the home page.



Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries and First UMC DeQueen are among the first to take advantage of the free web hosting provided by the Conference. Though the sites look different, both rely on the WordPress platform for managing content.

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Retired pastor preaches day after 100th birthday



Not many people who live for a full century choose to celebrate by preaching a sermon, but the Rev. Raymond Dorman did just that.

Dorman turned 100 on June 25; the next morning, the retired elder stepped up to the pulpit of Levy UMC in North Little Rock, where he served as pastor from 1949 to 1954.

Among those attending the service was the Rev. Kay Burton of First UMC Batesville. She grew up as part of the Levy congregation, and Dorman was the pastor who baptized her as an infant.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Kaleidoscope Kids Auction set for Sept. 16

Event benefits grief center for children and families

The 13th Annual Kaleidoscope Kids Auction is slated for 6:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 16 at the Junior League of Little Rock's Woman's City Club Building, 401 Scott Street in Little Rock.

All proceeds will benefit Kaleidoscope Grief Center, a program within the Methodist Family Health Continuum of Care and Arkansas' only grief center for children and families, as well as Methodist Counseling Clinics statewide. The event will include heavy hors d'oeuvres, beverages, music and more than 100 live and silent auction items. Tickets are \$75 for individuals, \$125 per couple.

For information, contact Ashley Coldiron at 501-661-0720 ext. 7304 or acoldiron@methodistfamily.org, or visit methodistfamily.org.



Serving Children & Families

Imagine Justice Summit convenes Sept. 17, features 'Catch on Fire' young adult track

In conjunction with the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church and the Arkansas Board of Church and Society, the Imagine Justice Coalition of Arkansas will host the Imagine Justice Summit on Saturday, Sept. 17, 2011, at Philander Smith College in Little Rock.

With content based on Micah 6:8, "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to

love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" the summit will deal with justice issues that affect everyone. It includes a track especially for young adults, "Catch ON FIRE: Discover Your Passion for Missions!"

Designed by the Rev. Malik Saafir and Sara Bayles, the young adult track will focus first on the theological basis for mission work, then move on to small groups and panels that will focus on putting theology into action.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., and the event concludes with a celebration of Holy Communion from 3:30 to 4:00 p.m.

The Imagine Justice Coalition includes the Arkansas chapters of Black Methodists for Church Renewal and Methodist Federation for Social Action.

For details, contact Liza Godwin, lizagodwin@sbcglobal.net, or view the brochure online at arumc.org.

Free self-study curriculum for local church Christian education staff

A self-study curriculum designed to help local church staff members obtain a sound foundation in Christian formation and education ministry is now available free of charge from the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD).

The Local Church Discipler/Educator Professional Development curriculum, developed by Diana Hynson, Director of Learning and Teaching Ministries at GBOD, is a six-module learning experience for anyone hired by local churches to fill positions related to Christian formation and education.

“The self-study guide is highly interactive,” Hynson said. “Some of it says, ‘Read this and reflect on it.’ But in other instances, the activity will be to interview your church leaders in specific position, observe the

classes and groups that are going on, or talk to the council director about how he or she leads that group and organizes for ministry.”

Designed to provide a solid first step for church staff members who want and need a sound foundation upon entering professional ministry, this course is not intended to compete with certification courses from the Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Ideally, these leaders would, over time, continue their studies through certification or other avenues.

The modules, which can be taken in any order, are:

My Call and Vocation—Self-evaluation, call/identity/vocation, your own story and self-care as a local church professional.

God and the Bible—Christian theology and Bible resources.

Faith Formation and Christian Education—Basic teaching and learning, tools for teaching, faith development and teacher development.

The United Methodist Church—History 101, polity, church structure and distinctiveness.

My Congregation and Context—Asset identification, discipleship systems, family systems and group dynamics.

Administration and Leadership—Creating a team, working with volunteers, staff-parish relations committee and other staff, policies and procedures, budget and adaptive leadership.

To obtain the full curriculum, including the modules and guides, visit the GBOD website at <http://bit.ly/kKqmI5>.

Help for your church at UMVitalCongregations.org

A new website aims to equip and empower local churches to become vital and healthy congregations.

UMVitalCongregations.org is designed to help churches move through a process of evaluation and assessment as they begin to set goals, and then find key resources to help them achieve those goals.

Part of the evaluation process involves looking at the history of the congregation, and how the past has affected where they are today. The website allows each congregation to see its “health history” over the past five to 10 years, using church profiles research from the General Board of Global Ministries.

After reviewing its history and assessing its current health, each congregation is asked to set goals to reach the vision of becoming more healthy based upon five measurable indicators of vitality: worship attendance, professions of faith, number of small groups, persons in mission and missional giving.

Congregations that need help, encouragement and support in moving toward health and vitality will have resources available to assist them in achieving these goals. Resources will be available to address all five key indicators of vitality.

For more information, visit UMVitalCongregations.org.

COMING UP

August

St. James UMC Fayetteville sesquicentennial Aug. 11-14

St. James UMC Fayetteville is holding a Sesquicentennial Celebration on Aug. 11-14, 2011. A revival on the nights of August 11-12 and a “Play Day” Aug. 13 will celebrate 150 years of ministry. The celebration ends with a Service of Divine Worship on Aug. 14 at 11:00 a.m., followed by a potluck dinner in the church’s Fellowship Hall.

Organized in 1861, St. James UMC is a predominantly African-American congregation which has been in its current house of worship since 1883. For information, contact John Manning at jfmanni@gmail.com.

American Cancer Society ‘Walking By Faith’ Aug. 12-13

Geyer Springs Baptist Church in Little Rock will host a faith-based, non-denominational Relay For Life event to raise funds and awareness for the American Cancer Society. Relay For Life: Walking By Faith will run from 6 p.m. Aug. 12 until 6 a.m. Aug. 13, and will feature activities and cancer information for the public.

For more information or to form a team or volunteer, contact Camie Wood at 870-723-7672 or visit relayforlife.org/walkingbyfaith.

“Return” youth/adult event at First UMC Conway Aug. 13

All youth and adults are invited to Return, a free event on Saturday, Aug. 13, from 5:00-9:00 p.m. at First United Methodist Church Conway. Free food will be served beginning at 5:00 p.m. The featured speaker is Jay Gamelin, who spoke to Arkansas youth at Veritas 2010, and music is by featured up-and-coming band The Advice.

Registration is not required. However, to help plan for food, if you plan to bring a group, please e-mail an approximate number to Michelle Moore at mmoore@conwayfumc.org.

Asbury UMC Little Rock picnic, silent auction Aug. 14

Asbury United Methodist Church, 1700 Napa Valley Road in Little Rock, has scheduled a Great American Family Life Picnic for 5 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 14. Enjoy a fried chicken dinner with all the trimmings (hot dogs for the kids) and entertainment by the

Asbury Praise Band.

A silent auction with items ranging from vacation condos, golf outings and hunting trips to jewelry and baked goods is on the agenda. Proceeds from the auction will go to Asbury’s Shared Ministries that support missions in Little Rock and around the world.

Tickets will be on sale before and after each Sunday worship service through Aug. 14, or in the church office during the week. For additional information, call Anita Curtis at 501-225-9231.

Register by Aug. 31 for discount on October seminar

“Captured by a Compelling Narrative: A Christian Story for a New Generation” at Garrett-Evangelical in Evanston, Ill., will feature scholars and pastors including Diana Butler-Bass, Walter Fluker and Mike Slaughter. The conference, scheduled for Oct. 27-28, will explore biblical narratives and their impact on our culture and identity in the U.S. Questions addressed will include:

- Is the Exodus model still relevant for the Church in the U.S.?
- How has the traditional narrative of the local church been impacted or changed due to our economic, social, and cultural realities?
- How can church leaders frame the good news to speak across generational and cultural lines in our current context?

Members of the Arkansas Conference who register by Aug. 31 receive a 10 percent discount. To claim the discount, enter the code “ITLC2011” at transformativeleaders.org/registration. Learn more at TransformativeLeaders.org, or contact Shane Nichols at 847-866-3866 or shane.nichols@garrett.edu.

September

Community garden workshop at Mount Eagle Sept. 9-10

“Sowing the Seeds... Helping to reduce hunger insecurities through faith-based community gardens” will take place Sept. 9-10, 2011 (7 p.m. Friday to 3:30 p.m. Saturday) at Mount Eagle Retreat Center.

Individuals and local church teams will explore theological underpinnings and gain practical skills to begin or expand community garden programs as one response to feeding the

hungry in Arkansas. Workshops include Theological Conversations and Worship – Why we care; Gardening 101 – Where to begin; Developing a Team that Works – Who needs to be involved; Hands-on Experience – Tour the ‘almost organic’ garden at Mount Eagle; and Developing Goals and Funding Your Garden – Have a plan when you leave.

To learn more or to register, visit mouteagle.org.

Christian educators’ event in Houston Sept. 16-17

Renewing Equipping Affirming Preparing (REAP), hosted by Memorial Drive UMC in Houston, Texas, will feature as its keynote speaker the Rev. John C. Holbert, professor of homiletics, SMU Perkins School of Theology. The event is open to all Christian educators in the South Central Jurisdiction, which includes Arkansas.

Workshop topics include age-level ministries, spiritual formation, technology and more. For registration details, visit www.ghles.org.

Camp Aldersgate Fish Fry moves to a Sunday—Sept. 18

Camp Aldersgate’s 28th annual Fish Fry is set for Sunday, Sept. 18, from noon to 3 p.m. (note the change from Saturday to Sunday). In addition to fun, fellowship and fish, they also will have a “country store” filled with homemade goodies. Ride the free shuttle from the Baptist Medical Center parking lot, or pick up your to-go meal at the corner of Kanis and Aldersgate Roads.

All proceeds support Camp Aldersgate, Arkansas’ only non-profit uniquely dedicated to serving children with disabilities, youth and senior adults in a camp environment.

In 2010, Camp Aldersgate served 357 campers with disabilities ranging from diabetes and autism to muscular dystrophy and spina bifida through its summer medical camp program. It also served more than 340 campers through Weekend Respite Camps. Its Seniors Day Out program began in the 1970’s, and last year served 54 senior adults.

Fish Fry tickets will be available for advance purchase at campaldersgate.net. For more information, visit the event Facebook page, facebook.com/campaldersgatefishfry, or contact Tisha Gribble at 501-225-1444 or tgribble@campaldersgate.net.

Northwest District team lends a hand to Tuck's Chapel

BY KAYLEA HUTSON
Special Contributor

Hammers, nails, paint scrapers and quarts of paint. Simple supplies, amazing results.

For approximately 70 volunteers, representing more than a dozen churches throughout the Northwest District of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, it also meant being able to help the small congregation of Tuck's Chapel, located in rural Rogers, Ark.

For several hours on Saturday, April 9, people—including a large number of youth—from several churches scraped and painted walls, replaced damaged siding and built a wheelchair ramp.

The Rev. Mackey Yokem, Northwest District superintendent, said the event was a success for three reasons: "the cooperation, the spirit, the results."

"It was work that needed to be done," Yokem said. "Here is a small church in the midst of a growing community, showing their neighbors their commitment to the ministry to congregations and surrounding neighborhoods."

"Who doesn't benefit from this kind of work? Those giving time and energy using their skills, the folks who provided the funds to purchase the materials, the local congregation that sees their building being reborn,



Volunteers scrape and replace portions of the siding of Tuck's Chapel UMC to prepare it for painting.

the community seeing a place set aside for preaching the word of God and nurturing the body of Christ, that's a win, win, and win for the Kingdom!"

For the Rev. Brian Youngs, pastor of Tuck's Chapel, the day provided several benefits.

"The outreach from our sister churches is indescribable," Youngs said. "Having been the pastor for almost a year, it was evident that the church exterior was losing its battle with Mother Nature."

"Also, it was difficult for many in our congregation to navigate the concrete steps and get into the church."

Youngs said the day "was nothing short of a miracle" as he watched the wheelchair ramp installation and the repairs made to

the building's exterior.

"Our congregation did not have the ability to undertake an effort of this size, nor did we have the financial resources to support it," Youngs continued.

"We hoped that we could restore the condition of the church to what it was, but never dreamed of the amount of work and efforts that came to be. For those of you who have never witnessed 'holy horsepower,' it is truly a sight to see. Without the gift of today's hands and feet, we are not certain of what we would have done to restore the church."

The Rev. Cleifton Vaughan, event organizer, said the project had several purposes.

"We need to do whatever we can to help one another," Vaughan



The Rev. Brian Youngs, pastor at Tuck's Chapel, leads the worship service that followed the day's work project.

said. "Something wonderful happens when we pull together as a community of faith. With over fifty people working together, we had laughter, joy, sweat, worship—in all of which, God was glorified."

"Each participant benefits as they pull together serving God. They make new friends, and visions become reality for many. And... of course, the community surrounding Tuck's Chapel will benefit. As they see the renovations to Tuck's Chapel and are led by the Spirit of God to the church, God is glorified."

Throughout the project, more than 20 youth from Central UMC Rogers and First UMC Bentonville helped scrape and paint much of the building.

Yokem said their involvement—

part of a 30-Hour Famine project—made him feel hopeful.

"I was just glad to be there with them," he said.

Vaughan agreed.

"The youth worked diligently, gracefully and with joy," he said. "Through their hard work, we were able to scrape and paint most of the church."

"I loved seeing the variety of ages of those who willingly and lovingly came to serve—from young children to students to our eldest workers."

"In these simple moments, great truths are born," Yokem said. "Working and serving together in Christ's name, the world can be transformed."

Tuck's Chapel was built in 1871 on land donated by Susan and Thomas Tuck. Logs felled on the property by local loggers and town workers helped build the chapel.

Currently, the church has five members, with an average of seven regular attendees.

Youngs said he hoped the renovations—especially the wheelchair ramp—would provide a new genesis for outreach into the community, because it would improve access to the facility.

Volunteers taking part in the event came from Grace UMC Rogers, Oakley Chapel UMC Rogers, Highlands UMC Bella Vista, First UMC Rogers, Prairie Grove UMC, Fellowship Bible Church Rogers, Mark's Episcopal Cathedral Shreveport, La., Wesley UMC Springdale, Central UMC Fayetteville, Central UMC Rogers, First UMC Bentonville, Brightwater Church Rogers, Sequoyah UMC Fayetteville and Bland Chapel UMC Rogers.

This article originally appeared as a "Pulpit Stories" feature on the website of the Northwest and West Districts, nwdist.org.



Public Notice for Accreditation Self-Study Third Party Comments

Saint Paul School of Theology is seeking comments from the public about the seminary in preparation for its periodic evaluation by its regional accrediting agency. Saint Paul will undergo a comprehensive evaluation visit September 26-29, 2011, by a team representing The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Saint Paul School of Theology has been accredited by the Commission since 1976. The team will review the institution's ongoing ability to meet the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation.

The public is invited to submit comments regarding the seminary by mail to: Public Comment on Saint Paul School of Theology, The Higher Learning Commission, 230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500, Chicago, IL 60604 or online at the Commission's website:

<http://www.ncahlc.org/information-for-the-public/third-party-comment.html>

Comments must address substantive matters related to the quality of the institution or its academic programs. Comments must be in writing and signed; comments cannot be treated as confidential. **All comments must be received by August 25, 2011.**

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.

First United Methodist Church in Mountain Home, Arkansas is seeking a Director of Student Ministries. The focus of the ministry is the spiritual development and growth of students from 8th grade through college. Averaging over 600 in weekly worship services, the congregation seeks to continue its growth through a variety of ministry and service opportunities, worship and mission experiences, and small groups. For more information about our church, please visit our website: <http://www.fumcmh.org>. For more information about Mountain Home, please visit <http://www.mtnhomechamber.com>. Interested applicants may send their resumes to rsteale@fumcmh.org.

Director of Children's and Youth Choirs: First United Methodist Church of Conway is seeking a part-time Associate Director of Music: Children's and Youth Choirs. Responsibilities involve the coordination and leadership of existing children's choirs, and working to develop a youth choir. Degree in music and experience working with children preferred. Interested applicants may send inquiries or resume to jgingerich@conwayfumc.org. Position open until filled.

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

BOOK REVIEW: 'Greenhouse' case studies offer models for empowering young adults

*Greenhouses of Hope:
Congregations Growing
Young Leaders Who Will
Change the World*

Edited by
Dori Grinenko Baker

The Alban Institute, 2010

BY MARCIA DUNBAR
Special Contributor

As a United Methodist, I know we are called to give our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness. I fondly remember a former pastor ending each sermon with the same empowering statement, "We aren't leaving the church, we go out to be the church."

Ours is a wonderful message of inspiration and hope, but as I look around at friends and younger generations, I have to wonder, what are we doing to inspire this kind of responsibility in the youth of the church?

Dori Grinenko Baker, editor of *Greenhouses of Hope: Congregations Growing Young Leaders Who Will Change the World*, explores this question. Along with seven other contributors, she frames the need to develop our young adults in various ways. The authors became a part of their respective congregational case studies and were transformed in the process.

Each of us has a responsibility to nurture those we guide on their spiritual path. Hopefully, we are challenged and the relationship becomes symbiotic. But it can only occur when we give of ourselves and open our hearts and minds to

embrace change.

A clamoring of voices cries out from weariness, "When will the young people of the church step up?" Yet when they do, the young people are not given room to breathe life into something that is theirs. We don't allow or inspire our youth to grow in their faith; instead, we deprive them of the water and nutrients they need to grow and develop.

The book defines a Greenhouse of Hope as "a Christian congregation freeing itself to experiment with both newly imagined and time-honored ways of following the path of Jesus. Its members respond to God's love through practices that genuinely embrace the gifts of the youth and young adults." These greenhouses are messy, organic,

like practice that embraces guidance based on Korean traditions. The root of the success in all of the congregations is that time was taken to cultivate, nurture and encourage young adults to find their spiritual gifts and use them to glorify God.

Creating such a greenhouse, according to Baker, can begin by VocationCARE. The acronym means: "C- Create a hospitable space to explore Christian vocation; A- Ask self-awakening questions; R- Reflect theologically on self and community; and E- Explore, enact and establish ministry opportunities."

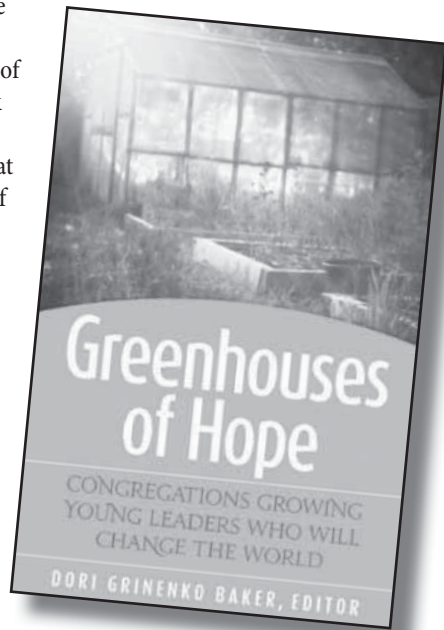
VocationCARE looks different depending on the context of the congregation, but it provides a basic beginning to discovering the untapped talents and gifts of young adults in a congregation.

The book is a testimony to success in developing the faith of young adults, and the Questions for Reflection at the end of each chapter serve as a way to introspectively assess your own congregation and whether you are cultivating the young adults of the church in a meaningful way.

We cannot expect more from our faith than what we put into it. If we truly want a new surge of activity from our young adults, we must first trust them enough to let them become active participants. In essence, we need to get out of our own way and take the chance to learn from those younger than us.

If we can do it, we will be surprised in the growth of our ministries and the blessings that come from seeing something wonderful grow to fruition.

Dunbar serves as director of evangelism for St. James UMC Little Rock.



creative, inventive and sometimes chaotic.

The case studies are diverse, from a small, remote island church empowering youth to a Korean American Presbyterian congregation that practices "mozying," a mentor-

OBITUARY

QUITMAN

John R. Chapman



John
Chapman

The Rev. John Robert Chapman, 92, of Quitman, Ark., passed away Sunday, June 26, 2011, at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock.

The son of late Jasper and Lucy (Hicks) Chapman, he was born in Cleburne County on Sept. 28, 1918.

A retired elder in the United Methodist Church, he faithfully served in several Arkansas churches, including Rose Bud, Cherry Valley, Holly Grove, Cabot, Van Buren, Brinkley, Marked Tree, Tuckerman, Batesville and Greers Ferry. His kind and loving personality endeared him to those he served.

He is survived by his wife, Gretchen L. (Nelson) Chapman of Quitman; three sons, Robert L. Chapman and his wife, Vickey Ann, of Farmersville, Texas; Nelson H. Chapman and his wife, Linda J., of Commerce, Texas; and Larry E. Chapman and his wife, Janice M., of Quitman; eight grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great-grandchild. He is also survived by other relatives and his many friends.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, June 29, with the Rev. John Miles officiating. Interment followed in Cleburne County Memorial Gardens. Grandsons Robert Dale Chapman, Richard Chapman, Keith Chapman, Kyle Chapman, Michael Chapman, Steven Chapman and Mark Chapman served as pallbearers.

Asbury UMC awards Martin scholarships

For the twenty-third year running, Asbury United Methodist Church Little Rock has awarded Martin scholarships to students among its membership.

Established in 1987, the scholarship fund is dedicated to the memory of Robert Longley Martin and his mother, Addie Virginia Wright Martin. Robert Martin, a long-time member of Asbury, chose the scholarship fund as a way for his personal ministry to live on after his death.

Members of Asbury UMC pursuing education beyond the high school level are eligible to apply. To date, 176 Asbury UMC members have received more than \$479,000 in scholarships from the fund. One of the first recipients, the Rev. Jeff Jones, used his scholarship to attend seminary and today serves as senior pastor of Grace Community UMC Fort Smith.

Twenty-two Asbury students have been awarded scholarships for the 2011-2012 academic year.

Attending Baylor University: Ashley Mullen; attending Bowen School of Law: Pierce Hunter; attending Greenville College (Illinois): Teddy Fink; attending Pulaski Technical College: Becky Scott; attending Texas Christian University: Wesley Howeth; attending the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville: Camille Gele, Megan Greenfield, Nick Hall, Cari Hunter, Andrew Kurrus, Ben Mackey, Jillian Moffett, Madeline Moffett, Victoria Pendergrass, Will Pierce, Erin Rowland, Laramie Wall; attending the University of Central Arkansas: Lisa Snider, Ben Stansell; attending the University of Missouri: Robyn Jones; attending the University of Tulsa: Alexa Robbins; attending the University of Virginia: Chris Mullen.

Each of this year's honorees received a \$599 award.

Bismarck congregation celebrates United Methodist Women's Day



Trecea Horton

Bismarck United Methodist Church in Bismarck, Ark., on Sunday, June 26 celebrated United Methodist Women's Day. The local unit of United Methodist Women provided leadership for the entire worship service, and welcomed the Rev. Jessica Durand of the HSU/OBU Wesley Foundation as guest preacher.

One of the highlights of the service was the presentation of the United Methodist Woman of the Year award. The 2011 award recipient was Trecea Horton, honored for her years of outstanding work in the UMW group and her dedication to her church. Horton serves in many areas of her church and in the Bismarck community.

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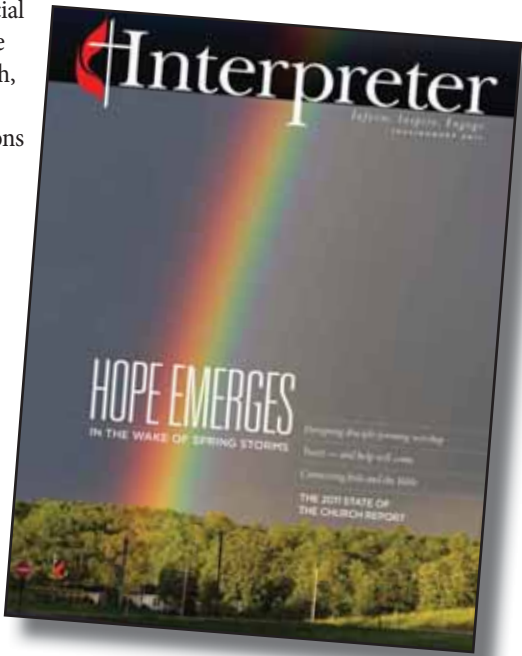
Two Ark. churches featured in denominational magazine

Interpreter, the official ministry magazine of the United Methodist Church, in its July-August issue featured two congregations from the Arkansas Conference.

The article “Fewer hymnals in the future? Black church study indicates so” includes information and quotes from Jeremy Carter, music director for Wesley Chapel UMC in Little Rock. The story outlines a recent study indicating that the need and desire for printed hymnals is decreasing among African-American congregations.

In the feature “Tweet what you need – and it will come,” Little Rock’s canvascommunity UMC is one of two churches highlighted for using social media to quickly organize humanitarian aid for their neighbors. (For more details on how the canvascommunity effort played out, see the Feb. 4 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*; archives available online at arumc.org/aum.)

To read both stories and more from *Interpreter*, visit the magazine’s website, interpretermagazine.org.



Arkansans contribute to evangelism blog

Two Arkansas clergy, the Revs. Natasha Murray-Norman and Lee Myane, are among a group of provisional elders contributing to an evangelism blog launched in May.

Dr. F. Douglas Powe, Jr., the E. Stanley Jones Associate Professor of Evangelism at St. Paul School of Theology, asked four of his then-students to join him in writing about evangelism in today’s culture. All four students specialized in evangelism while pursuing their Master of Divinity degrees.

The blog, entitled Changing World, Changing Church, offers a place for those who are “trying to redevelop the way in which we understand evangelism, and the way in which we practice it, too,” said Murray-Norman. The group hopes to spark discussion and dialogue surrounding evangelism among clergy and laity in local congregations.

“I hope others who read our blog will find connections to things they are experiencing in ministry and daily lives,” Myane said. “I hope we can help people to see the world a little differently. If we begin to see things differently, God may be found in unexpected places.”

To read the blog, visit changingworldchangingchurch.wordpress.com.

Support Camp Aldersgate!



Load your church bus with hungry passengers and head to Camp Aldersgate for our 28th Annual Fish Fry!

When: Sunday, September 18

Time: Noon to 3 pm

Where: Camp Aldersgate
2000 Aldersgate Road

New Date & Time

SUNDAY, September 18 from
Noon to 3 pm

Ticket Prices:

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

To purchase tickets call 501-225-1444 or visit campaldersgate.net



Faith Funds

Growing in Christ

Eva Lee Paysinger is always growing something good – right now she’s using her glassed-in porch and a flower bed just outside her Batesville home to grow vegetables. Early in their ministry she and her husband, the late Rev. Vernon Paysinger, were more often growing churches.

“I was the first member of Rosewood UMC in West Memphis,” recalled Eva Lee. “The DS sent us to West Memphis in 1955 with a vacant lot and money for an apartment. It took a while, and we had to get out and knock on a lot of doors. But before we left four years later, they had a fellowship hall that we used for worship and five classrooms. I still get their newsletter.”

The Paysingers grew up together as school mates and members of the Evening Shade UMC in Sharp County. After a lifetime of serving churches throughout Arkansas, they retired in Batesville to be near family.

Vernon and Eva Lee dedicated their lives to Christian ministry long ago, and it was only natural for them to plan to leave their estate to the United Methodist Foundation. After her death, the Vernon and Eva Lee Paysinger Endowment will underwrite United Methodist missions in Arkansas. It will express their love for the United Methodist Church forever.

“Vernon and I decided to put our money to good use through the Foundation,” said Eva Lee. “It’s our way of saying thanks to a church that has done so much for us.”



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

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Spiritual heroines

UM minister and author
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Growth spots

Some annual conferences
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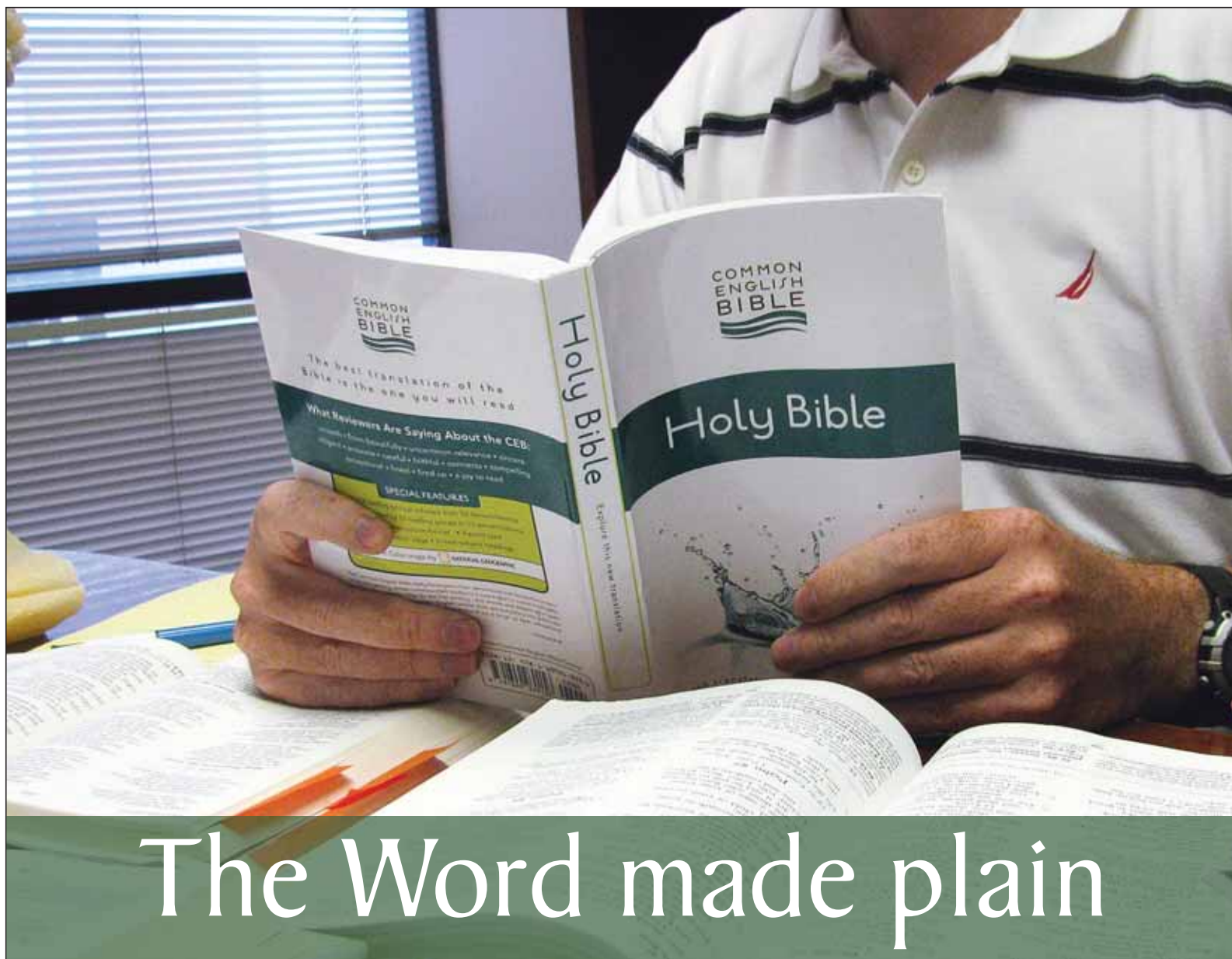


Wesleyan Wisdom

Clergy need to be
among their flock | 7B

Section B

August 5, 2011



The Word made plain

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CHERRIE GRAHAM

The *Common English Bible* enters a crowded marketplace, but the scholars behind it (including United Methodists) believe its accessibility will be a big selling point.

New Bible takes risks to be reader-friendly

BY SAM HODGES
Managing Editor

'Tis the gift to be simple, the Shaker hymn goes, and the makers of the *Common English Bible* couldn't agree more.

Their new translation—a multi-denomination effort done with considerable United Methodist input and support—puts the Bible at a seventh-grade reading level.

To do that, they dropped lots of familiar phrasing, beginning with “In the beginning.” The *Common English*

Bible kicks off Genesis instead with, “When God began to create the heavens and the earth . . .”

In this Bible the Beatitudes say “Happy are those” instead of “Blessed are those,” and Jesus calls himself “the Human One” instead of “the Son of Man.”

These days Paul Franklyn, associate publisher and project director, is busy making the case that the *Common English Bible* combines “readability” with rigorous scholarship, and thus can reach the masses effectively and responsibly.

But in the blogosphere era, he also is having to explain and defend specific word choices.

“Bible translation is not for people with weak hearts,” he said.

Diversity, speed

The *Common English Bible* is making its full print debut this summer, with the paperback out and the hardback on the way. The New Testament translation came out last year, and a digital version of both Old and New Testaments went on the market in June.

Five mainline Protestant denomination presses joined in sponsoring the \$3.5 million project, with the self-supporting United Methodist Publishing House providing the largest funding share, Dr. Franklyn said.

United Methodist scholars have been deeply involved, notably Joel Green, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in California. He's New Testament editor for the *Common English Bible*.

But the project is nothing if not ecumenical, with 24 denominations rep-

■ See 'New Bible' page 8B

Heath named new CEO of UMR Comm.

STAFF REPORTS

UMR Communications Inc., parent company of the *United Methodist Reporter*, has chosen Alan Heath as CEO.

Mr. Heath has most recently been executive director of a United Methodist church, and spent many years as a sales executive of a printing/publishing company. He begins at UMR Communications on Aug. 15.

“Alan Heath stood out among the candidates for CEO,” said the Rev. Steve Trout, UMR Communications' board chair. “His commitment to and understanding of the United Methodist Church is impressive.”

UMR Communications provides printing and other communication services to annual conferences, churches and divisions of the UMC.

“UMR offers me the opportunity to work with a great team of people to foster more effective communication within our great denomination,” Mr. Heath said.

He added: “I am especially delighted to help advance Christian mission through our working relationship with the Women's Division. I have always been a strong supporter of United Methodist Women.”

Mr. Heath, 62, has been executive director of nearly 3,000-member First UMC in McKinney, Texas, since 2006. He spent 25 years at Taylor Publishing Co. in Dallas, ultimately serving as vice president of communications and vice president of collegiate sales.

Mr. Heath earned degrees from Ambassador University in Big Sandy, Texas, and from Texas A&M-Commerce. He taught journalism at Ambassador from 1971 to 1978.

He's a longtime lay leader of Kavanaugh UMC in Greenville, Texas. He and his wife, Carole Ann, have two children and four grandchildren.



Alan Heath

FAITH WATCH

Winkler, Edgar arrested in protest

Jim Winkler, top executive of the UMC's Board of Church and Society, and the Rev. Bob Edgar, a UM elder and president of the advocacy group Common Cause, were among 11 religious leaders arrested July 28th in the U.S. Capitol. The group refused to stop its public prayers calling on Congress and President Obama to preserve federal spending for the poor.

Evangelical leader John Stott dies at 90

The Rev. John Stott, an evangelical leader within the Church of England and worldwide, died July 27th at age 90. Billy Graham once called him "the most respected clergyman in the world" and Time magazine had him in its 2005 "most influential people" list. Mr. Stott emphasized conversion and the authority of scripture, but also opposed anti-intellectualism. He wrote some 50 books.

Disciples of Christ re-elect Watkins

The Rev. Sharon Watkins has been re-elected general minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ.) She just completed a six-year term of leading the denomination, which has about 700,000 members. At a July assembly in Nashville, she told delegates, "We need to talk honestly about the gospel message as it relates to race and sexual orientation in our church."

Irish people back Vatican reprimand

The Associated Press reported that Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny is getting widespread support in his country for his recent speech demanding that the Vatican own up to its failure to deal with child abuse in the Irish church. "It's a landmark speech in emphasizing that Ireland's historic deference to the Vatican, and to the Catholic Church generally, is over," said Diarmaid Ferriter, professor of modern Irish history at University College Dublin.

—Compiled by Sam Hodges

Church leaders react to Norway tragedy

BY BARBARA DUNLAP-BERG
United Methodist News Service

In response to the bombing and mass-shooting attack in Norway that killed more than 90 people and injured scores, United Methodist and other church leaders worldwide called for prayer and solidarity.

Bishop Christian Alsted, who leads the Nordic and Baltic Area, issued a statement.

"Life in Norway that we usually experience safe and secure was brutally shaken by a violent bomb explosion in the government district in Oslo on Friday, July 22, and further by an incomprehensible massacre at a national youth camp run by the Labour party on island Utoya," he said.

Police identified the suspect in both attacks as Anders Behring Breivik, 32. The suspect appears to have written a 1,500-page manifesto ranting against Muslims and devising meticulous plans to prepare for the attacks.

"In the past 24 hours," Bishop Alsted wrote, "we have seen pictures and heard stories of events that we would not have thought could take place in a peaceful country like Norway. Young people on island Utoya have been exposed to experiences so horrifying that it will impact them for life."

The Kingdom of Norway, about the size of the U.S. state of New Mexico, is a Nordic constitutional monarchy, with King Harald V as head of state and Jens Stoltenberg as prime minister. The capital is Oslo.

"This incident affects the whole nation of 4.5 million," Bishop Alsted continued, "and families across the country grieve their loved ones. In this national tragedy, the Norwegian people need the support, care and prayers of the churches."

Gift of prayer

He urged congregations and pastors to participate actively in the care



Bishop Christian Alsted leads the UMC's Nordic and Baltic Area, which includes Norway and its 47 UM churches.

and support of affected families and friends.

"Many people will have a need to get together with others to share their thoughts and emotions in coming to terms with this terrible experience," Bishop Alsted continued.

"Therefore, we encourage congregations to make our churches available for conversation, silence and prayer. We have also encouraged our churches to organize memorial services, preferably ecumenically, to give people the opportunity to express their grief and despair and to find comfort and strength in Christ."

Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, who heads United Methodism's Germany Area, echoed Alsted's comments.

"Christians all over Germany are mourning with the families who lost their loved ones and praying for the people of Norway," she said. "We pray the Norwegian people will continue to build up their community on values like trust and respect."

She commended Norway's leaders

with encouraging openness and respect toward one another and discouraging a reaction of hatred and fear. "Christians are not guided by xenophobia, but by God's love to all people," she said.

"Prayer is the most important gift which all of us as neighbors and

The United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have a full communion agreement, which means mutual recognition of each other's sacraments as well as interchangeability of ordained clergy.

"With the people of Norway, we lament this tragic violence and renew

'We encourage congregations to make our churches available for conversation, silence and prayer.'

—Bishop Christian Alsted

friends ... can offer to them."

The Rev. Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, a consortium of 37 member communions in the United States, sent a message to the churches of Norway, and to World Council of Churches general secretary, the Rev. Olav Fykse Tveit, a Norwegian pastor.

"The member communions of the National Council of Churches join persons of faith and good will all over the world in offering our prayers and support to the people of Norway," Mr. Kinnamon said.

Need for solidarity

Mr. Tveit was in Norway and had just left Oslo when the bombing of a government building left seven dead and several injured.

"Norway has today experienced an unprecedented and horrible level of violence against innocent people," Mr. Tveit said.

He expressed shock over "attacking the core institutions of a democratic society and innocent youth gathered for a workshop to discuss political issues."

Reminding people that all are created in God's image, Mr. Tveit added, "In times like this, the Norwegian people and government need the solidarity of the international society and the prayers of the worldwide church. Now we know the reality of so many others in the world where violence pierces the lives of the innocent."

Bishop Gregory V. Palmer of the Illinois Great Rivers Annual (regional) Conference, said, "The apostle Paul was right when he wrote young Timothy, 'God didn't give us a spirit that is timid but one that is powerful, loving and self-controlled.' Once again, we are called to proclaim God's spirit provides hope in these tragic times."

Bishop Mark S. Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America sent a message of encouragement to Bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien of the (Lutheran) Church of Norway.

our commitment to be peacemakers," Bishop Hanson wrote. Reflecting on the upcoming 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the bishop spoke of the "comfort and courage" shared by global neighbors during times of national tragedy.

Fighting fear

Extending condolences to the people of Norway, President Barack Obama said the tragedy was a "reminder that the entire international community has a stake in preventing this type of terror from occurring."

The first memorial service was at the Central Church United Methodist Church in Oslo on July 24. United

Methodist Bishop Emeritus Øystein Olsen preached. While the majority of Norwegians belong to the state Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway, there are 47 organized United Methodist churches, with 98 clergy and more than 12,000 members and participants.

On July 25, the Norwegian government called for a national moment of silence, ordering trains halted as part of a nationwide observance to remember the dead and the injured.

Urging a spirit of reconciliation in Norway and globally, Bishop Alsted, said, "We ... encourage prayer for wisdom and strength for the Norwegian government and that Norway as a nation will not be ruled by fear but that we will be able to continue to live in trust and openness with each other."



Bishop Gregory Plamer



Bishop Rosemarie Wenner

THE UNITED METHODIST
REPORTER

www.umportal.org

news@umr.org

Sam Hodges, Managing Editor

Bill Fentum, Associate Editor

Mary Jacobs, Staff Writer

Cherrie Graham, Advertising Manager

Dale Bryant, Senior Designer

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

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

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Q&A: Reflecting, prayerfully, on inspiring women

The Rev. Jan Richardson would like to introduce readers to some of the most inspiring women they've never met. She wrote *In the Sanctuary of Women: A Companion for Reflection & Prayer* (Upper Room Books, 2010) which won the 2011 National Indie Excellence Award in the religion non-fiction category. An artist, writer, and ordained United Methodist minister, Ms. Richardson is an oblate of St. Brigid of Kildare Monastery, a Methodist-Benedictine community based in St. Joseph, Minn. She also leads a contemplative worship service at FUMC in Winter Park, Fla. She spoke recently with staff writer **Mary Jacobs**. Here are excerpts.

Would you describe *In the Sanctuary of Women* as a book of prayers for women, or about women?

It's both. The book draws on the lives and writings of women from scripture, history and tradition, as a way of inviting women in our own day to reflect on their own lives. I did write prayers and blessings that weave throughout the book, but what I was really interested in doing was to invite the readers to enter into the stories of women like Eve, Brigid of Kildare, the Desert Mothers and Hildegard of Bingen, so that they can reflect and ask questions of their own lives: What's going on in my life? How do I pray in the context of my own life? I don't tell women how to pray, but share stories of women who have been companions in my own journey.

Can you give me an example?

St. Brigid of Kildare was a remarkable firebrand of a woman and a leader of the early church in Ireland in the 5th and 6th centuries. We know that she established a number of monastic communities for both women and men, the most famous being the one she established in Kildare. Many centuries later, a woman named Mary Stamps, a lifelong Methodist, established a Benedictine/Methodist monastery in Minnesota. The monastery is affiliated with the General Board of Discipleship and is open to men and women of various denominations. So that's one example of someone who was inspired by Brigid, in establishing this community that is making a powerful difference in the lives who are part of that, as I am.

Brigid is someone of the distant past, but who has a word to speak to us, who inspires us to ask, "What is Christ asking of me in my own life to offer in service and in prayer?" Similarly, the Desert Mothers, in the early centuries of Christianity, left the cities and went out to the desert seeking the



Jan Richardson

presence of Christ, seeking to remove anything that would distract them. We may not literally move to the desert, but the stories of the Desert Mothers inspire us to ask, "In my day-to-day life, how am I seeking the presence of Christ? And what is Christ calling me to let go of, in order to be open to his presence?"

With this book, you sought to create a prayer book in the tradition of psalters, Books of Hours, and breviaries. Why?

We have a remarkable tradition of understanding the book as a sacred object. We see this particularly in the Middle Ages, in the time before the printing press, when artists and scribes would spend months and even years creating these prayer books as tools that helped support the life of prayer for the people who owned the books. So I designed the book in the spirit of those medieval books— not just a collection of pages stuck between two covers. I'm trying to invite people into a place of prayer.

Roger Wieck, in his book *Painted Prayers*, points out that the Books of Hours were the "bestsellers" of the Middle Ages, the most common kind of book, created to enable laypeople to pray in the same rhythm that monks and nuns prayed. They were often lavishly illustrated and were of a size that

you could carry in a pocket or a purse. Wieck refers to these books as "portable cathedrals." I love that idea, that wherever you were, you could pull out a book and in that moment – as you opened those pages – find yourself in a sacred space.

You talk about a book as a "thin place." Explain.

This is a wonderful idea from Celtic Christianity, that in the physical landscape, and in the rhythm of the year, the turning of the year, there are these places where "the veil between worlds becomes very thin, and heaven and earth meet." Places of pilgrimage, like the Isle of Iona in Scotland, have been recognized as holy places. I don't think it's that God is somehow "more there" in those places than in other places, but there is something about them that invites us to become more open and more present to the God who is always present to us. That's what those medieval artists did—to create books that were so beautiful, so compelling, so that when somebody opened one, they found themselves in a "thin place" that invited them to be more open to the presence of God.

You lead contemplative worship services at FUMC in Winter Park, Fla. Did that inform the writing of this book?

Not directly, but in both the worship services and with the book, I'm reaching back and drawing from the

ancient wellsprings of the Christian tradition. I continually receive affirmation that other people have been hungry for this kind of thing. So this is another way of responding to the hunger that we were seeing in the service. Growing up as a Christian, I didn't have any idea of, or know these women that I write about in the book. It was only as I went through seminary that I began to discover their stories. So I have been really hungry to offer these stories to others as well.

You refer in your book to the "losses and erasures that have taken place in the history of women in the Judeo-Christian tradition." Can you elaborate?

The history of many women has disappeared, too, but I do think that it's disproportionate in the case of women. For millennia, so much of the work of women had to do with day-to-day life—preparing the food and raising families, caring for the home. Because these things were seemingly so common and taken for granted, it wasn't always seen as important to record them on a day-to-day basis.

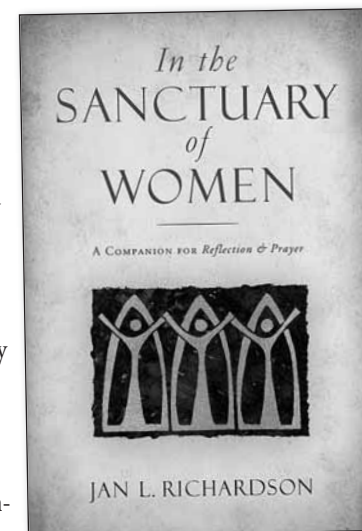
Men have primarily been perceived as the movers and shakers—and those stories are important, too—but often

it's very hard to find the stories of women. And women have had much less access to literacy in much of history. So what we often have are just fragment of their stories. In my book, I really wanted to lift up and celebrate these fragments of history, so that readers can ask: What do these bits and scraps of stories

mean to you? What do they tell about who God has created you to be?

In my book, I write about a woman named Harriet Powers, who was born into slavery in Georgia and later gained her freedom. We know virtually nothing of her. Most of the traces of her life have vanished. But we have two amazing quilts she made that have survived. They are story quilts that tell biblical stories. She pieced together the stories that she knew to make these beautiful quilts. I hope the book does the same—takes those bits and scraps and fragments and quilts them together.

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Decline remains the norm for UMC but growth areas offer lessons, hope



PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

TOP: The Rev. Edlen Cowley (far right) greets those arriving for the preview service at the Frisco, Texas, campus of St. Andrew UMC of Plano, Texas. **ABOVE:** The congregation of a new church, North Central Korean, gathers in The Colony, Texas, under the leadership of Pastor Nakhoon Cho.

BY EMILY SNELL
United Methodist News Service

Now that all the annual conferences in the United States have held their 2011 gatherings, membership and attendance numbers indicate that the decline of past years has continued – but there are signs of hope, too.

For the most part, the trend of decline continues in the three measured categories—membership, worship and Sunday school attendance. However, activity within and aside from those categories shows that conferences are trying new initiatives to connect with unreached communities.

Declines in the three measured categories have been widespread for many years. In 1990, total lay and clergy membership in the United States was 8,853,455, according to the statistical review compiled annually by the General Council on Finance and Administration. By 2000, membership had decreased to 8,341,375, and in 2009, it was down to 7,725,039. Average attendance in 1990 was 3,466,439, and by 2009, it had decreased to 3,125,513.

By contrast, membership outside the United

States has been steadily rising. In 1990, total lay and clergy membership in the central conferences was 806,841. By 2000, it had risen to 1,512,704, and in 2009, it had reached 4,412,489.

For many conferences, the decline in membership and attendance in 2010 narrowed even though 43 conferences fell in membership, 41 declined in attendance and 33 decreased in church school attendance.

Six conferences reported membership growth, five conferences increased average attendance and seven conferences reported increases in church school attendance.

Only three conferences reported increases in both membership and attendance, and, only one conference—Central Texas, which has maintained 30 years of growth—increased its numbers in all three categories. The growth for all three conferences was less than 1 percent in each category.

Indiana shifts focus

For the first time in 30 years, the Indiana Conference reported growth in both membership and attendance.

The Rev. Mark Gough, director of church de-



LEFT: Cross Timbers United Methodist Church in Moore, Okla., has seen rapid growth in its two years with a focus on younger families. This photo shows one of the church school groups called CT Kids. **RIGHT:** Young adults and campus ministry students worship at the Indiana Conference's first ever leadership retreat for young adults.



velopment for the conference, said a shift in focus was the key to Indiana's growth.

"We really began to focus on the main mission to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," he said, adding that churches have to stop worrying about survival and start asking, "How are we going to win people to Christ?"

He said the conference, created in a recent merger of the North and South Indiana conferences, now has five "remote" staff people working with churches in the districts "to really make a difference in reaching people that have not been reached."

"It's easy to get distracted in a local church by all the things we do," Mr. Gough said, adding that churches need greater emphasis on reaching people who don't know the gospel, inviting them to church and treating them well when they come.

Red Bird Missionary Conference also reported growth in membership and attendance. The conference treasurer, Judith Fowler, said the growth came from opening new churches and renovating existing ones.

Church school numbers were up in the Northern Illinois, Arkansas, New York, Kansas East, Peninsula-Delaware and Eastern Pennsylvania conferences. The Kansas East and Northern Illinois conferences grew less than 1 percent. The Arkansas, New York and Peninsula Delaware conferences saw increases between 5 and 7 percent. The Eastern Pennsylvania conference grew 15 percent.

The Louisiana, North Georgia and Rio Grande conferences reported increases in membership, and the Yellowstone, Oklahoma Indian Missionary and North Texas conferences increased in attendance.

The Rev. Jim Ozier, the center director for new church development and congregational transformation in the North Texas Conference, said new churches are the main reason for attendance growth.

The conference hosts seminars called "Getting More Members" by Jim Griffith, which teach existing churches how to be more involved in the community.

"To show increase in attendance one year is good news. To show it for two years in a row is a trend. To show it three years in a row is a pattern. And after that, it will mark culture change in the conference," Mr. Ozier said.

Mr. Ozier added that when he works with churches he teaches them to think "culture first."

"If churches just try to add new 'things' to attract people or to change their ministry, it will have very little effect," he said. "First, you have to be intentional about changing the culture of your church. And, the culture change is to become mission-field driven instead of maintenance driven."

New congregations

Despite declines in all three traditional measurement categories, the Oklahoma Conference reported encouraging numbers in three of its newer congregations.

Connect and Summit United Methodist churches, both in Edmond, Okla., are averaging more than 100 people at preview services, and Cross Timbers, a 2-year-old United Methodist congregation in Moore, Okla., has received 73 professions of faith.

'If churches just try to add new 'things' to attract people... it will have very little effect. First, you have to be intentional about changing the culture of your church.'

—The Rev. Jim Ozier, North Texas Conference

The Rev. Craig Stinson, director of connective ministries and congregational development in Oklahoma, said the conference in past years has not followed a mother-daughter format for developing new congregations, but all three of these churches are connected to a "mother" or "anchor" church in the community.

Mr. Stinson said the mother churches were concerned initially with how many people might leave and go to the new congregations.

"It turns out to be very few—under 20 in each—that are from the mother church," he said. "I was surprised."

Mr. Stinson noted that Moore First United Methodist Church, the mother church for Cross Timbers, has grown since it started the daughter congregation. He explained that sometimes mother churches have more ministries and programs in place that can meet the needs of new

families in the community. For example, if families want a church with a youth group, members of Cross Timbers would direct them to the "mom church," he said.

Mr. Stinson said Moore First has more members now than in the past five years, and he believes it is because of its association with the new congregation. He said Cross Timbers and Moore First are examples of why churches should not fear starting other new churches.

He also mentioned that the conference has created a new form of church community called "redemption churches," comprised of people who are in prison or former inmates. "It's a group of folks that were marginalized, who are being the church," he said. "It's pretty exciting to see those kinds of ministries."

In the Missouri Conference, numbers in 424 churches declined, 104 stayed the same and 302 grew.

Fred Koenig, editor in the Missouri Confer-

ence, said focusing on the "Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations" has been helpful for some churches there. The five practices, created by Missouri Area Bishop Robert Schnase, are passionate worship, extravagant generosity, radical hospitality, risk-taking mission and service, and intentional faith development.

He mentioned that two of the fastest-growing churches in the conference are associated as mother-daughter churches. Sunrise, the mother church, and Morning Star, both in O'Fallon, Mo., have benefited from starting the new congregation. Like Mr. Stinson, he said sometimes churches fear that planting a church will have a "detrimental effect" on the existing church, but in this case, just like the congregations in Oklahoma, both the mother and daughter churches grew.

The Southwest Texas Conference reported de-

creased membership of 50 people, even though it is located in an area of rapid population growth.

"The trend of that loss is unconscionable in my mind," said the Rev. David Seilheimer, conference treasurer and secretary.

Hispanic growth

He told annual conference attendees that Hispanic membership in the conference had increased by 123—nearly 2 percent. He reminded the conference that half of its delegation to General Conference is Hispanic. He also noted that Hispanic membership has doubled in the past decade, saying the conference is "doing something good that we need to do better."

"We have tremendous leadership among the Hispanic population," Mr. Seilheimer said. "The Hispanic population in South Texas is the youngest population. Sometimes I think our failure to bring in Hispanics is not the difference of race or language. It's that we're not very good right now at dealing with young people. We need to be reaching out to those people who are younger."

The Illinois Great Rivers Conference reported declines of less than 2 percent in attendance and membership. The Arkansas Conference reported less than 1 percent declines in attendance and membership and a 6.8 percent increase in church school attendance.

The Western North Carolina Conference reported declines in all three categories but noted that participation in Christian formation groups increased by more than 3,000. The California-Nevada Conference saw declines in all three categories across the conference, noting, however, that 130 churches experienced membership growth.

The Florida Conference noted that Bishop Ricardo Pereira, who leads the Methodist Church in Cuba, reported that membership there has more than tripled in the last 10 years, increasing from 9,000 to 30,000.

"I sense the stirrings of a new vitality," said retired Bishop Alfred L. Norris as he preached to the North Georgia Annual Conference. Rejecting the idea that the church is in danger of long-term decline, he said, "We need to have a passion and zeal for mission and evangelism."

Ms. Snell is a United Methodist News Service intern and a senior at Lipscomb University.

Give seminaries a break

BY BEN GOSDEN
Special Contributor

The other day I was doing my semi-normal practice of browsing the Web for news and blog sites that would tickle my theological fancy. I came to the United Methodist Portal (a regular source of enjoyment for me) and found an essay by the Rev. Sky McCracken titled, "District superintendent sees failure of theological schools." In the column, he thoughtfully speaks on the recent failure of theological schools in forming pastors into disciples before they go on to serve local churches.

Mr. McCracken argues that "the most sobering thing [he has] learned is that there is no correlation between education of clergy and clergy effectiveness." He goes on to point out that many pastors educated in theological institutions "have little or no spiritual depth, yet are appointed to churches to serve as spiritual guides and leaders."

All of this leads Mr. McCracken to express his malaise, arguing that a seminary education may not be the best training for pastors anymore, or even necessary at all.

I will admit from the outset that I am more educated than I am experienced, seeing that I graduated from a United Methodist seminary in May 2011 and am serving a second year in my very first appointment in the local church. You can imagine my surprise that after three very difficult years of seminary training, I read that there is a very credible perception that my education was not formative spiritually. To that end, I would like to offer a counter argument.

Starts in local church

Before United Methodist candidates for ministry enter seminary, they are members of a United Methodist congregation. The candidacy process requires that one have a close relationship with a local church. Inevitably, a candidate for ministry is encouraged to be involved in a local church, at least insofar as it advances them towards ordination.

I am the product of growing up in a United Methodist Church. I also set out to find my own church to be involved in when I moved for seminary.

Before I learned about the various theories on when the Gospels were written, I encountered them in Sun-

day school and Vacation Bible School. Before I was taught Methodist history and theology, I sang the hymns of Charles Wesley. And before I learned various doctrines of atonement, I knew all too well the taste of bread laced with the flavor of grape juice.

In other words, my academic learning in seminary was always undergirded by the experiences I had in the local church that served as an existential foundation. The joining of the two provided, for me, three years of spiritual formation that words cannot even begin to express.

The problem may not be in the seminaries themselves as much as with pastors who stop their educational experience when they graduate from seminary. This choice is fed by many factors including the demands of life and a heavy work load. And let's not forget the ever-present expectations of annual conference leaders who value pastors more for the work they produce than the personal growth they achieve.

Resentment of seminaries is not a new thing in our denomination. I can't tell you how many seasoned pastors lovingly told me "not to take that stuff too seriously" before I began seminary. It was made clear to me early on that the "real knowledge" was to be found in the practice of ministry and not in the academic setting of seminary.

We're all to blame

The United Methodist Church is not in decline because of its seminaries. It's in decline because of itself. We're all to blame for the fact that we, as the church, have not lived up to God's call to bind up the brokenness in our communities and be beacons of love and justice for all people. It's our fault if we've been more consumed with creating good consumers and responsible citizens than we have in making disciples, formed by the words of Holy Scripture, and committed in following the radical ways of Jesus.

If we lack spiritual depth, then it's because our church culture as a whole has forfeited the value of true commitment in discipleship in favor of a high-numerical-yield, low-spiritual-depth version of church membership as a substitute for discipleship. This isn't only the fault of our seminaries—it's the fault of our denomination as a whole!

It makes me wonder sometimes, where did we create the divide between the academy and the local church? When did it become such a taboo thing to be so educated? When did we invent the notion that a grad-



PHOTO BY DESIGN PICS

Scholarship and discipleship can connect, says the Rev. Ben Gosden.

uate school education naturally causes one to lose the ability to relate in meaningful ways to others?

If seminary is the place where we're trained in thinking theologically, and the local church is where we practice such thinking, being and doing, then the two worlds naturally depend on each other. You can't have one without the other! As a friend of mine (who's also a recent graduate of seminary) put it recently, "I am tired of hearing that education and discipleship aren't connected . . . We need more of both, and more of one should increase the other."

As a young clergyperson, I have to admit that much of the language of dashboards, metrics and "numbers do actually matter" does not resonate with me as it might with those in positions of institutional leadership. If we're called to be disciples who disciple one another, then surely there are more important matters than measuring every little thing we do and obsessing over the preservation of our institution. And we can't get too consumed in heaping blame on one another.

Maybe we should worry more about losing our lives for the sake of the one who called us into the ministry of loving, teaching and serving all people everywhere. Growth of the kingdom does not always correlate to numerical and material growth in the denomination. And we can't always track where the Holy Spirit will lead us.

But maybe I'm wrong about all of that. After all, it's just a silly lesson I probably picked up in seminary.

The Rev. Gosden is associate pastor at Mulberry Street United Methodist Church in Macon, Ga.

GEN-X RISING

Lessons learned from 'State of the Church'

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON
UMR Columnist

Reading through the State of the Church report released recently by the Connectional Table of the UMC, I am struck by three things:

First, the Church's growth in Africa and the Philippines from 1999 to 2009 has been impressive. Even accounting for the reception of the entire membership of the Protestant Methodist Church of Côte d'Ivoire into the UMC during that period, the expansion of African membership has been remarkable. The Filipino branch of the Church has grown rapidly as well.

Second, the Church's decline in Europe and the United States has—in percentage terms—been shocking. Never large in Europe, UMC membership has declined in some areas by 20-25 percent over the last decade. In the U.S., that decline has been around 8 percent (though certainly not evenly in all areas of the country).

Third, the Connectional Table is clearly putting great stock in the Call to Action initiative as a means of renewal across the connection. CTA is a plan that has been developed over the last two years by the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table. It draws heavily on statistical data compiled with help from Towers Watson, a research firm that works with corporations worldwide.

I've written previously on the CTA report and encouraged others to download a free copy for review. I think reading the State of the Church report is just as important. It is available from the UMC's main website, at www.umc.org. A lot of time and expense was put into these documents, and if studied broadly across the connection they could inform our annual conference and General Conference deliberations in a major way.

The three points I've mentioned may give the best insight into the real state of the UMC. The first two are striking in their contrasts: The Church in the wealthy, economically developed and technologically superior Global North appears to be decaying, while the Church in the poorer, more disadvantaged Global South is grow-

ing in dramatic fashion.

By the common standards of success and the assumptions we all make about how success is achieved, shouldn't we expect the opposite?

Why can't Methodists in the Global North arrest their decline, when they have advantages their Global South brethren could only dream about?

Here's where the third point bears on the first two. It's hard to imagine that the CTA report was really developed with the African and Filipino segments of the Church as the first subject of consideration.

Take the "Four Areas of Focus" for instance, which were developed prior to CTA but nevertheless figure prominently in both it and the State of the Church report. The four areas are intended to be where the UMC concentrates its ministries, and they include such items as "engaging in ministry with the poor" and "creating new places for new people and renewing existing congregations."

Do we need to remind Methodists in Africa that God is calling them to be in ministry with the poor? And do those same Methodists need to be prodded to build churches and extend mission work?

We could ask similar questions about the statistical data generated by Towers Watson. It encourages organizational commitments within local churches related to worship and discipleship formation. But such data are only necessary in a Church that doesn't seem to know what it is doing (or how what it is doing relates to any sense of faithfulness).

We are a Church whose membership outside the United States (and Europe) is booming, and yet our renewal efforts are aimed at mechanical re-ordering within the U.S. based on techniques drawn from statistical surveys.

There's a lot that's good in the CTA report, especially the ideas for reducing the church's bureaucracy. But much of that is about making what we've got more efficient rather than making new paths in the wilderness.

So here's another idea: Why don't we ask our brothers and sisters in Africa and the Philippines to show us the way to repentance, faith, and holiness? They certainly seem to be doing something right.

The Rev. Thompson maintains a blog at genxrising.com. Email: andrew@mandatum.org.



Andrew Thompson

WESLEYAN WISDOM

The importance of visiting ‘house to house’

BY DONALD W. HAYNES
UMR Columnist

I read with some sadness the recent *Reporter* article describing a week in the life of a parish minister. One duty/responsibility that was not mentioned in any of the daily logs was what John Wesley called “house to house” visitation. Indeed, Mr. Wesley had documented that in Savannah when he made a pastoral call in a home, it resulted in more frequent church attendance! He even embedded it in our ordination questions: “Will you visit from house to house?”



Donald Haynes

I have been “under appointment” since 1954, with all but nine of those years in parish ministry. For the others I was a district superintendent, a conference director of ministries, or a seminary vice president and instructor. Now, at 76, I am serving a church outside the bounds of United Methodism. It’s an Evangelical Covenant Church in a very rural community.

For 29 years, I had an associate pastor and other staff. Much of my daily and weekly schedule looked a lot like those recorded in the recent *Reporter*. However, in the earlier years of my parish ministry I made no less than 20 pastoral calls a week, either in homes, hospitals, retirement/nursing homes, or at restaurants where I picked up the tab for a meal with a parishioner or prospective member. I do that in my current position. I agree with Wesley: These one-on-one conversations make a huge difference in church attendance, renewable spiritual journeys, professions of faith, and building of relationships.

On the road again

I am finding my own ministry renewed and my spirits lifted every day I am “on the road again” in homes, offices, restaurants and hospital waiting rooms. Every pastor has a lot of one-on-one engagements, but my long experience taught me that only about 5 percent of my parishioners took the initiative to come see me at the church or to call me with the request to see them “on their turf.”

Most of these congregants fell into three categories: 1) they came to disagree with something I had said or done or failed to do; 2) they came to “get me in their corner,” supporting

them in some church issue; 3) they had loads of free time and the church staff provided them some social company!

If I make the contact and ask for an appointment to see them, I am in much greater control of the agenda and their role is more positive. Indeed, the conversation almost invariably ends with an expression of appreciation for my time.

Let me admit that there were years I was bored by home visits with older adults who tended to repeat their life stories, family lore, and aches and pains. Across the years, as I became an older adult myself, but one blessed with excellent health and energy, I have discovered a meaningful tactile ministry in giving the physically and mentally challenged a hug or by placing my hand on their head or shoulder as I pray with them.

Bruce Larson taught me many years ago that many older adults are never touched, even by their own family members. Their spouse often has been dead for years, and no one hugs them anymore!

Patricia was never allowed to go to school because of her speech impediment, but she was in no way slow except socially. Following several visits, she never misses a Sunday at church and as I go down the aisle greeting people before worship, she stands with outstretched arms and wants a kiss on the cheek. After seeing our little ritual, several members now spend time with her; she gets several hugs and kisses every Sunday, compared to years of being a recluse after her mother’s death.

Effective visiting

My work week is dramatically different from my 30 years as a “senior pastor.” We have only 65 families, so I see most about once a month. I find business people, farmers and professional people very appreciative when I see them in their workplace, learning of their worries along with the pride they have in their work.

John loves me to drop by his pizza kitchen, Wayne loves to describe the evolution of his agribusiness over the last 40 years. Megan likes to talk about her elementary school teaching experience. Angie loves showing me her late grandmother’s home that she and Keith have remodeled.

The anniversary of a spouse or parent’s death is a hard day for most people. I try to record those deaths so I can visit on the first anniversary. Most pastors make hospital calls

faithfully, but I find it very meaningful to go to the home during convalescence.

For instance, Bobby had never been baptized. I had mentioned it to him a couple of times in the 18 months I have been his pastor, but he was obviously not ready to talk about it until a recent scare when he spent four days in intensive care.

Each day at the hospital, I had a prayer and either prayed the Lord’s Prayer or quoted the 23rd psalm. When he went home, I visited the next day and from his recliner he said, “Don, I have finished my homework with the Lord and I am ready for you to baptize me.”

Members now ask me to go with them to see their siblings or close friends. Since I went to elementary and high school in this community many years ago, they have an old yearbook waiting for me! We talk about grade school teachers and high school plays and “who married whom.” Then the conversation shifts and they tell me why they asked their brother or sister to bring me to see them. They have not been in church for many years.

Most tell me why they quit going to church. Most say that no pastor has been in their home in years.

Funerals and ministry

Out on a rural road there is a single restaurant where most locals eat. I often see four or five parishioners there and they introduce me to other customers. I am complimented when they ask me to join them at their table or when they join me if I start off eat-

ing alone. Often I have called someone to meet me there for some table talk; in those cases I pick up the check. A bonus has been to get to know the table servers who make \$2.53 an hour plus tips and no benefits, not even free meals.

Funerals are another opportunity for ministry. I have never accepted honoraria for funerals or weddings. Giving the service as a gift opens doors.

One service was simply a burial. Three people came. I had called the deceased to visit him because years ago I learned he had taught Sunday school. He refused to let me come to his home. His son did not call me upon his father’s death, though I had met Jay when he was working at a ranch for blind horses.

The service was private by family request. I called the funeral home and told them to ask Jay if he objected to my simply standing with the family. He was appreciative and wanted me to have a committal and benediction. He gave a short eulogy. Afterward, I asked if I could visit him. He teared up and said, “I would like that if you give me about a week to grieve first. I believe in God, just don’t believe in organized religion.” I can hardly wait until next week when I visit him.

Today’s funeral, on my 76th birthday, was for a drowning victim. I have been at the home four times in four days. The church was packed with lots of people who have no church home. Since he was 46, lots of those at the funeral were young adults. They sought me out in the Fellowship Hall after the interment to discuss further my mes-

sage: an Arminian interpretation of “why bad things happen to good people.”

They responded positively to the assurance that God did not cause John to be drowned, that our “days are not numbered” for a certain playbook, and that God’s name is love. All they had previously heard was Calvinism.

Missionary pastor

I work out of my home study, 53 miles from the church. I go up about three or four days a week, most days driving about 150 miles with visits in four post office routes. I go to the church study only for a rare counseling session. No one goes to the church all week except for choir practice and Sundays.

Attendance was 65 when I went in October 2009; now it is from 125-135. We have received 32 new members. I carry in my billfold a list of 12 “prospects” for daily intercessory prayer and an occasional “touch” at their workplace or a restaurant meal.

I understand if you take issue with my obsolete paradigm, but to me it is part of being a missionary pastor. I still teach one seminary course most semesters, and I tell students they don’t know what they are missing if they do not follow the vow they will take upon ordination, when the bishop asks, “Will you visit from house to house?”

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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■ NEW BIBLE Continued from page 1B

resented among the 120 scholars who helped translate from the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts. They come from a wide range of universities and seminaries, representing Pentecostalism, evangelicalism, and the mainline denominations.

Diversity didn't stop there.

"This is the first major translation to have a significant number of women involved, about 35 percent of the translators," said Dr. Franklyn, an Old Testament scholar and a veteran editor for the United Methodist Publishing House's Abingdon Press.

He added that 15 percent of translators and editors were "persons of color," with ethnic diversity being another strategy to curb bias.

"Translation is always a matter of interpretation," Dr. Franklyn said. It really depends a lot on who you bring to the table."

The *Common English Bible* is notable for other reasons, including how fast it came together. Thanks to Internet communication and a "matrix" (as opposed to linear) process, the job got done in four years.

Tackling simplicity

Probably what most distinguishes this translation is the care taken to make it easy to read.

"This Bible, from first to last, was concerned with everyday Christians," Dr. Green said.

Other Bibles, notably the Good News Translation (originally called Today's English Version) have had that emphasis.

But the *Common English Bible* team took a sophisticated approach to simplicity, attacking the problem with technology and reading groups. Dr. Franklyn even recruited a readability editor—Elizabeth Caldwell, a professor of pastoral theology at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago.

"He wanted to bring to the table not just translators but an educator who could think about how it's going to sound," she said.

The scholars put proposed translation sections through Dale-Chall Readability Formula software, which calculates the grade level of prose based on sentence length and number of "hard" words. (The Dale-Chall system derives from the work of readability pioneer Rudolph Flesch.)

Meanwhile, Dr. Caldwell oversaw 77

reading groups, consisting of 500 people from 13 denominations. They too represented different ethnicities, and Dr. Caldwell insisted on age diversity, with young people fully in the mix.

Each group got a section of the translation as produced by scholars. They read it aloud for clarity, and spoke up when anything seemed unclear.

"One of their favorites was, 'This is clunky. Can you do something with it?'" Dr. Caldwell said. "Or, 'This is way too long still.'"

It's easy to imagine scholars bristling at pushback from readability experts and reading groups. But Dr. Caldwell and Dr. Green agreed that wasn't the case here.

"We did a lot of sitting and listening to each other," Dr. Caldwell said. "There weren't any fights."

Dr. Green said that everyone involved understood that accuracy of translation could not be sacrificed. But he added that in choosing an English word for, say, a Greek one, there is usually a range of acceptable options.

"They didn't tell us what to say," he said of the reading groups. "They just told us what we were trying to say wasn't as clear as it could be. That just sent us back to the text to see if there might be a more accessible way."

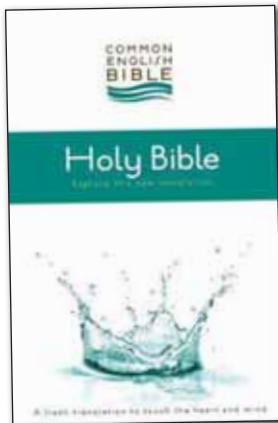
That meant, oftentimes, shorter words and shorter sentences. (Exceptions include John 11:35, usually translated "Jesus wept." The *Common English Bible* has it as "Jesus began to cry.")

It also meant dumping words that have become obscure or hard for many contemporary readers. So "alien" lost out to "immigrant," and "sackcloth" to "funeral clothing." Even "repent" got dropped, replaced by "change your hearts and lives."

The *Common English Bible* also claims to be the first major translation to make extensive use of contractions. That kept the text conversational, and helped make it about 30,000 words shorter than most translations, Dr. Franklyn said.

He added that the team worked hard to preserve literary quality. Dr. Green agreed, pointing to the Psalms, which he did not work on.

"I have just been amazed at what my colleagues have done with the imagery and with the metaphors, with the liveliness of these texts," he said.



Elizabeth Caldwell



Joel Green

Still, the main goal was to put the new translation on a comfortable reading level for nearly everyone.

"We were aiming for seventh- to eighth-grade, which is about the same as a good newspaper," Dr. Franklyn said. "We hit seventh right on the nose."

Playing defense

But to translate the Bible is to pick a fight, especially if you're willing to translate boldly.

The choice of "happy" for "blessed" in the Beatitudes made some early readers unhappy enough to write to Dr. Franklyn or post complaints on blogs.

Dr. Franklyn took to the blog on the *Common English Bible* website to defend "happy" against the charge that it's a superficial, happy face substitute for "blessed."

"We might concede that it is possible to trivialize the meaning of happiness in our culture, to mistake happiness for personal self-gratification, but the CEB editors are not willing to let a trivial misapplication of the word derail the correct use of the meaning from the Greek," he wrote.

Dr. Franklyn and his team clearly anticipated flak over "the Human One" for "the Son of Man." They address the choice in the Bible's preface, with references to Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and the Book of Daniel.

But some readers of the *Common*

VERSE BY VERSE

Samples from the *Common English Bible*:

The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing. He lets me rest in grassy meadows; he leads me to restful waters; he keeps me alive. He guides me in proper paths for the sake of his good name. Psalm 23, 1-3.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life. John: 3:16

Now we see a reflection in the mirror; then we will see face-to-face. Now I know partially, but then I will know completely in the same way that I have been completely known. 1 Corinthians. 13:12-13.

I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the LORD; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope. Jeremiah: 29:11



Paul Franklyn, associate publisher and project director, holds some of the first printed copies of the Common English Bible. The United Methodist Publishing House joined four other denominational presses in sponsoring the new translation.

English Bible are still hung up on it. One is the Rev. Dave Nichols, pastor of Bethel UMC, in Spartanburg, S.C. He's a big fan of the translation overall, but in a blog entry on it raised questions about "the Human One."

"If 'Human One' is such an accurate way to translate this, then why have no other translations done it this way?" he wrote. "I wonder if this 'Human One' isn't more politically correct than accurate."

The *Common English Bible* is in the recent tradition of gender-inclusive Bibles (while retaining male pronouns for God, Lord, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit), but Dr. Franklyn said "the Human One" has nothing to do with that. Rather, he said, it was a text-supported effort to reflect Jesus' fully human nature.

The *Common English Bible* has gotten warm endorsements from a range of scholars and pastors, and a strong review from *Library Journal*. Fuller Theological Seminary recently approved it for course use.

The *Common English Bible* New Testament has sold 200,000 copies, and demand for the 70,000-copy first printing of the full paperback edition has been strong.

"They're pretty much spoken for," Dr. Franklyn said. "Were going back to press."

The market is crowded with translations, including the New Revised Standard Version, generally considered the top choice of mainline Protestants. But Dr. Franklyn said the NRSV—written at an 11th grade level—is more popular with seminary professors and pastors than with people in the pew.

He sees an opening for the *Common English Bible* to win over readers at all levels. And he's not chagrined that its full debut coincides with the 400th anniversary of the King James Version.

"There's a lot of attention to translating because of that," he said. "So it's not a bad time. It's kind of the year of the Bible."

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