

## SPECIAL ISSUE

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at any age

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## 'Friends' group builds relationships with youth

BY AMY FORBUS  
*Editor*

They attend the same church,  
and that could've been all there was  
to the connection.

Instead, they began working to  
build relationships.

Avis and Paul Frazier, the  
teaching parents at Methodist  
Family Health's Winfred C. Polk  
Boys Home, are active members of  
First United Methodist Church  
Heber Springs. Each Sunday, they  
load up the van and take all eight of  
the home's residents to attend  
worship and Sunday school.

That's where Jill LaRosa first  
met some of the adolescent boys, a  
little less than three years ago. She



Lee Childers, left,  
and Jill LaRosa  
sign cards to send  
to the residents  
of the Winfred C.  
Polk Boys Home  
while they are  
away at church  
camp. Sending  
cards to the boys  
is one of many  
ways the group  
stays involved on a  
personal level.  
COURTESY PHOTO

was leading a small group study, and  
one of the boys in the group was  
talking about his approaching  
birthday. She wondered if her family  
might do something special for him,  
so she approached the Fraziers about  
having a small birthday party at a  
local restaurant.

Later, her teenage daughter  
asked, "Why are you going to just do  
something for one person?" The

question made her think about what  
else she could offer.

The LaRosa family soon became  
more involved. Jill and her husband,  
Tony, submitted to the background  
checks necessary for working with  
the boys, received training from Paul  
Frazier and kept in touch concerning  
the variety of ways they could help.  
When other people expressed  
interest in helping, too, an official

group, Friends of the Heber Springs  
Boys Home, was born.

### Fulfilling varied needs

The group now has a monthly  
board meeting at the LaRosas' home.  
An average agenda includes some  
discussion of fundraising, but  
focuses mainly on how to address

[See FRIENDS, page 6A]



## AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

Dear Friends:

It is quiet in the cabin now. The grandchildren have left. I already miss the  
noise and buzz of nine-year-old Heather, and her 12-year-old brother, Adam.  
We have been enjoying a vacation week with them (and their parents).

The week has included hiking to high mountain lakes, trout fishing  
(Adam and I supplied the fish for the traditional fish fry!), pitching washers,  
embracing fields of glorious alpine flowers, picnics surrounded by the glories  
of the Rocky Mountains and all manner of evening table games. (We have no  
TV at the cabin!) It has been just wonderful!

It has also been the week in which the first memorial services were held  
for the young victims of the horrific, senseless shooting in Norway. It has been  
a week when the politics of brinkmanship in Washington, D.C. has taken  
precedence over the art of good, thoughtful governance. It has been a week in  
which the disposition of billions of dollars for highly compensated athletes and  
owners of professional football teams has been front page news.

It has been a week in which the curtailing of services to the poor and  
homeless has been noted, almost in passing. It has been a week in which  
dozens of Syrians have been killed by a government more interested in  
self-preservation than serving its citizens. There is something wrong with this  
picture. It is not "just wonderful."

The juxtaposition of the events of the week serve to remind me just how  
important it is to provide the foundation of Christian faith for our children.

There is no place in our faith for hatred. There is no place in our faith for lack  
of compassion. There is no place in our faith for failure to care for the weak  
and the poor. There is no place in our faith for selfishness and greed.

The Christian faith is a faith of sacrificial love. The Christian faith is a faith  
that is about far more than me or my needs alone. The Christian faith is a faith  
that walks the second, the third, the fourth mile in care and concern for others.  
The Christian faith is a faith that remembers its responsibility to the world,  
because we are all God's children.

The Christian faith is a faith that does not stop at the doors of government  
or at the turnstiles of a stadium. The Christian faith is a faith that does not play  
the "blame game," but seeks to mobilize the resources God has provided to  
care for the world and the people that God has created. The Christian faith is a  
faith that starts at home.

We begin with worship and prayer and a loving, generous, and  
compassionate spirit. We are bequeathing to our children a difficult, even  
dangerous world. We have serious work to do. It can begin with the sharing of  
our faith in deed and word with our children.

Faithfully,



Charles Crutchfield



# There will be fishing...

BY JENNI DUNCAN  
Special Contributor

“Will there be fishing?” the little boy, Thomas, asked, stopping me mid-stride.

He was talking about an Oak Forest/FaithSpring UMC swim night, to which we had invited Latino neighbors and clients of Shepherd’s Hope medical clinic. I was going to be involved with the buses, so I couldn’t guarantee fishing. I hesitated.

“Tell her your idea,” prompted his father. Thomas peered up. “See, I thought I could share my bait with someone.”

Excellent! That’s the right idea. Outreach is not solely for adults. Children and youth have a vital role. Who hasn’t been inspired by the

innocent faith of a child or the impassioned mission stories of youth? Young people hear Christ’s call to go into the world and are ready to act on it literally.

How does it happen? One child can tell another, when the other person is feeling devalued by teasing or rejection, “God gives us all talents and interests. I think you are good at...” A missional-minded youth can tell a troubled friend, “I know God cares about you. Why don’t we pray right now about this?”

Outreach is, first and foremost, reaching out to others with God’s love known in Christ. When someone is longing for God, we must give the witness, whatever our age.

The church often formalizes outreach, creating mission trips and tours—valuable short-term experiences. Ozark Mission Project, the Society of St. Andrew and Appalachian Service Project are among the many organizations providing mission sites.

Last June my husband, Glen, and I spent a week with youth repairing homes through the Hinton Rural Life Center in the Smokies. Sites nearby such as Arkansas Rice Depot and Camp Aldersgate also welcome volunteers.

Some churches organize their own mission experience. St. James UMC Little Rock takes a weekend at Bear Creek Camp near Marianna.

They help at the local food bank and host a carnival in a park. The prizes are crackers, granola bars and other food items. Neighborhood children come running when they see the canopies going up. They pitch in, saying, “Can I help?” and “I remember you.”

With various mission groups at Bear Creek, Camp Tanako and Mount Eagle, we have cleaned cabins and grounds, raked leaves, dug ditches, replaced flooring and screening, built shelves, cut up fallen trees and, inevitably, wielded paintbrushes. In Shiprock, New Mexico, missionaries went to nursing homes, offering manicures. In Mexico, some gave out bandannas and scarves. Worship and song brightened the day.

Children and youth work on such tasks with adults teaching the skills—an important part of intergenerational mission. Adults teach students to hammer or saw or measure. They watch while young people try it themselves. With each project, young people add skills for the long-term.

When leaders and parents invest a chunk of time, students learn what they value. They observe that following Jesus is more than sitting in a pew.

Not all mission is manual labor. Generosity flourishes in the young. Books, shoes, toys—they’ll choose to give from among their own belongings and go door-to-door to ask others to give. Let young people experience the joy of giving up in order to give.

The whole church can think also “outward.” FaithSpring, a new church start, meets only on Sundays at the Arkansas 4-H Center, so youth choir concerts are held elsewhere, such as at a retirement center or out in the community. Could your student group share faith that way?

Maybe they could become involved with “Under the Bridge,” where many churches in the central Arkansas area feed the homeless? During extreme weather, canvascommunity UMC provides shelter for those without. Students can help by putting together mac ‘n’ cheese or brownies. (Be sure they get to deliver it themselves.)

A common emblem for outreach is two hands joining. Put a face with those hands and strengthen our affirmation: “We’re here because Jesus loves us all.” Our motivation is not to share from our abundance; that’s patronizing. It’s to offer and be with Jesus.

Speaking of Jesus, don’t let the spiritual aspect of outreach be an afterthought. When we go out in mission, we open ourselves to what God might be doing, and God works in us. Reflect on how we’ve been changed. Recognize the gifts and resources of the people that you go to serve, and where God was already at work.

Back to the swim night: Even though there wasn’t an opportunity for Thomas to share his bait, he did get to fish, so to speak. He and his family volunteered to set up the refreshments and greet the first arrivals. He was there to play in the pool when the first guests jumped in. He and his family said ¡Bienvenidos! They looked up the words “agua” and “limonada” to label the water and lemonade. They were welcoming the stranger, as described in Matthew 25.

Jesus promised his first disciples they would be fishing for people. The mission continues today, for young people as well as for adults.

*The Rev. Duncan serves at FaithSpring UMC Little Rock.*

## Where to begin?

Here are just a few entry points for getting young people involved with mission and service.

**Church and Community Workers in Arkansas can connect you with outreach opportunities for kids in your church:**

- Evelyn Banks-Shackelford, Marianna Larger Parish/Delta Dream: 870-295-3171, 870-662-0672 or mlpcw@aol.com.
- The Rev. Stephen Copley, Justice For Our Neighbors: 501-626-9220 or arjfon@aol.com.
- Allyne Solomon, Lower Delta Parish Community Outreach: 870-501-1810 or allynesolomon@yahoo.com.



## EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

## Planting seeds we won't see blossom

Last summer, we plowed under our garden patch.

At our previous house, we had two raised beds in the backyard. We grew corn, black beans, squash, cantaloupe, cucumbers, tomatoes, okra and peppers—with varying degrees of success. (Okra was the clear champion.)

It wasn't a pretty garden. It was a productive garden. But its productiveness wouldn't outweigh appearances—and when you're selling a house, appearance is everything.

So when it came time to put the house on the market and prepare for the move to Arkansas, we took down the less-than-picturesque wire fencing that kept the neighborhood rabbits away from the vegetables. We knocked aside the boards that held the dirt, and we spread out the soil to let it once again be taken over by the surrounding grassy area.

Sometimes I wonder about the garden. Did any straggling seeds sprout this year? Were the new owners of the house surprised by a squash blossom or a cucumber vine? The chance is small, and either way, I'll never know.

But it reminds me of other seeds I may never see sprout. Just because I can't see them doesn't mean they're not there.

For one year, I helped teach fourth- and fifth-grade Sunday school. The experience confirmed

that teaching the faith is not among my spiritual gifts. But just because I didn't feel comfortable doing it doesn't mean it was a useless effort. God can give growth to even the most haphazardly scattered seeds.

This special issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist* focuses on reaching out to young people. It's easy to go about life paying attention only to our own tribe—children in our households, our extended families or our churches. But God calls us to care for more than our own. God calls us to care for *God's* own.

When we make meaningful contact outside our usual circles, we open ourselves to acknowledging that we are not in control. It's not up to us to do everything, but it is up to us to do something.

In the face of alarming statistics about denominational decline, I have to remind myself that helping make new disciples isn't about helping to grow the UMC. It doesn't matter whether a child takes our membership vows. What matters is that we plant the seed that allows that child to experience Christ's love.

“So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.”—*I Corinthians 3:7*

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Sept. 2	Aug. 22
Oct. 7	Sept. 15
Nov. 4	Oct. 20

# Change from within helps church reach out to kids

BY MEGAN HEYL  
Special Contributor

Brookland United Methodist, my home church, is not what anyone would call a large congregation. Attendance rarely reaches the triple digits.

However, there is something remarkable about my church: At any given event, 25 to 50 percent of our attendance is children. Growing our attendance has been a goal shared by all at Brookland UMC, and expanding our dwindling youth group was the first step.

We began by clearing out and remodeling our youth center, adding vibrant colors to the walls and soft furniture to lounge on. We decorated with crafts and original paintings made by the kids.

To put the youth center to use, we started Sunday night youth activities, a skill-based activity time for learning music, drama, arts and crafts, computers, photography and more.

This open time slot on Sunday afternoons where children could come when they wanted, for as long as they wanted, transformed the youth center into a community center. It brought in youth from the surrounding neighborhoods who normally didn't attend church. It marked the first time we saw real

growth in our youth group.

Even with this success, our youth group was still relatively small and attendance wasn't regular. We wanted to start something completely different to keep our youth coming back.

Coupled with the traditional Sunday morning service we offered,



**Megan Heyl**

we decided to offer something very non-traditional: a contemporary worship that young families would feel comfortable about attending, and that would fit into the hectic lifestyle that many of us find ourselves in.

We wanted something loose, active and most of all enjoyable for the younger ones in attendance. Our Thursday night contemporary worship was dubbed "Ignite," and it has been one of the best things that has happened to our church.

Worship at Ignite is an interactive and casual experience. Jeans, t-shirts and tennis shoes make up the usual attire. The congregation gets up and dances to contemporary Christian music while singing out loud and lifting up their praise. The preacher preaches from down among

the congregation and interacts with them through questions, pictures or a personal story.

Starting Ignite alongside our traditional Sunday morning worship offered different ways for people to experience God. People could attend the service where they felt most comfortable.

However, they haven't all stayed with a single style of worship. Many of those who started out coming to Ignite now also attend Sunday morning worship, and many of our Sunday morning regulars are coming to Ignite. Our church is growing larger and the congregation is becoming more active.

Last Easter, a wonderful blessing fell upon our church. On Easter Sunday, 13 people joined the church, seven of whom were children. The children were all baptized, too, along with one adult. I've never experienced anything as moving and uplifting.

When I went forward to take a group photo of the new members, I found myself having to step back to fit everyone into the frame. This was a step in the right direction!

There are many influences factoring into the growth of our congregation and youth group. I haven't even mentioned Sunday school, children's church, Vacation Bible School or the Brookland UMC



Young people attending Brookland UMC's Ignite worship service lead the congregation in a song that includes hand motions.

COURTESY PHOTO

block party, all of which have attracted more children.

The truth is, there is no one thing we did to increase our attendance. Offering a variety of activities and worship services, and having a warm, welcoming congregation is what has given our little church more than 30 regularly attending youth.

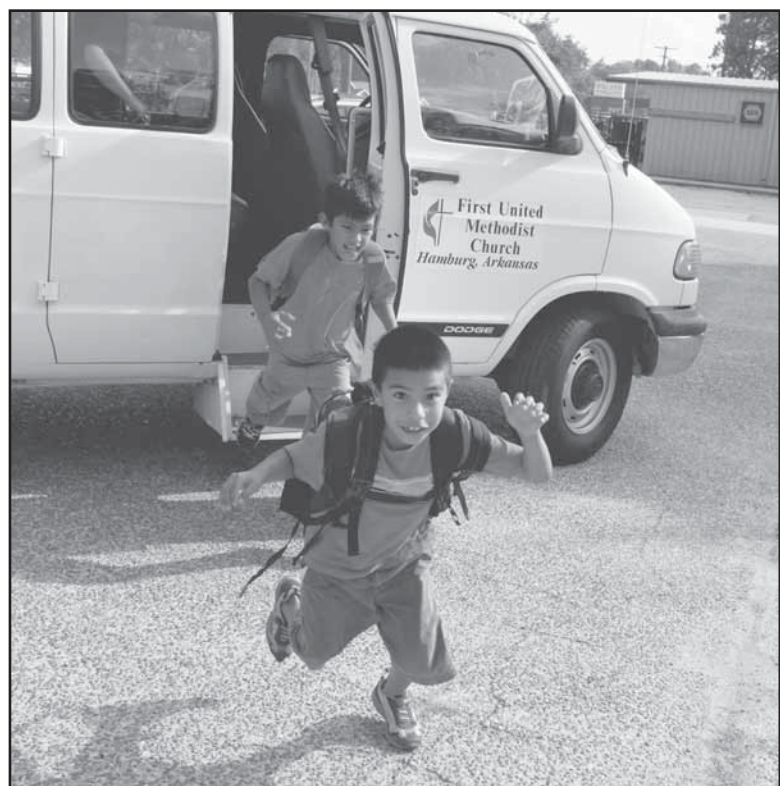
Watching these children grow up and get more excited about Jesus has shown me the wonderful ways in which God works. God has blessed our church and helped us to build a

loving, safe environment for the local youth. Their faces light up when they get to church, and when it's time to go home, they give the classic protest, "But, Mom...!"

If that's not a miracle, I don't know what is.

*Heyl grew up at Brookland UMC, where she serves as a volunteer in youth ministry and produces a monthly newsletter with the youth. She is a junior at Arkansas State University, where she majors in journalism.*

## After school a prime time for connecting with students



Kids tumble eagerly from the church van to participate in Selah, First UMC Hamburg's after-school ministry.

PHOTO BY TRICIA TYSON

BY AMY FORBUS  
Editor

"I miss Power Express. When can we start it again?"

It's a question heard often over the summer at Leslie United Methodist Church. For five years now the church, which has an average attendance of about 60 people, has provided Power Express, a weekly after-school program for elementary students. It serves more than 30 children, three-fourths of whom come from outside the congregation.

Each Tuesday afternoon during the school year, the church van picks up kindergarten through sixth-grade students from the community's elementary school. "We sometimes have to make two trips," said Thelma Derickson, one of the leaders of Power Express.

The afternoon begins with time on the playground, which gives everyone ample time to arrive (some participants attend school in nearby

Marshall). Snack time comes next, usually featuring soup and sandwiches.

Next comes story time with the pastor, usually followed by singing and sharing prayer requests. Students then split into classroom groups to discuss what they've learned from the pastor and participate in a craft project that reinforces the lesson.

At the start of each school year, the church works with the school to distribute a note of explanation and a permission form. Participation is free; parental consent is the only requirement. Some of the students have attended every year the program has existed.

Ten to twelve people participate each week in helping make Power Express happen; some cook, some teach and others play on the playground with the kids. High school students are among the helpers.

"We all enjoy it and think it's important. And I think that's the reason God blesses it," said

Derickson.

At First UMC Hamburg, a similar ministry called Selah provides elementary-age kids with Wednesday afternoon snack time, recreation, fun and engagement with the Bible. Now entering its second year, Selah has become one of just two U.S.-based ministries to receive a grant from the Children's Mission Fund.

Selah ended the 2010-2011 school year with 64 students enrolled, and their racial and ethnic diversity reflects the surrounding community.

"We served white, Hispanic and African-American children," said the Rev. Carol Moore, director of Selah.

The new year of Selah begins Sept. 7, using the "Discovering God's Love" curriculum from Pioneer Clubs.

The Hamburg church also operates Break Free Youth Center, an after-school hangout for middle- and high-school students, three days a week. It was featured in the May 6 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*.

# VBS

## Vacation Bible School can provide

Vacation Bible School remains a popular summer activity for children, whether or not their families regularly attend a church. Some churches even find that the majority of their VBS participants come from outside of their own congregation—which presents a wonderful opportunity for welcoming entire families, helping them experience God's love and grow in relationship with Christ.

RIGHT: Mallory Walsh tries her hand at using an orange as a bowling ball while some friends wait their turn. At First UMC Crossett's Vacation Bible School, reusing household items for activities and crafts was part of teaching children to use resources wisely.

Crossett kids loved "Shake it Up Café," Cokesbury's cooking-inspired VBS theme. The church had 60 children attend this year, 32 of whom came from outside their congregation. The last night of VBS featured a family picnic for all participants and their families.

For the VBS mission project, kids collected food for the Crossett Food Pantry. Their donations' weight totaled 139 pounds.

PHOTO BY KIMBERLY MOORE



ABOVE: Some of the four-year-olds at Lakewood UMC's "Shake It Up Café" VBS show off their newly decorated chef hats and aprons. They saved them to use throughout the week when they made crafts and for playtime in their "kitchens." Lakewood UMC had 174 kids at VBS, half of whom came from outside the church. "It was the largest crowd we've ever had, and you can bet we're reaching out to the parents who don't attend LUMC," said Joseph Roitz, Lakewood's director of communication ministries.

PHOTO BY KARENA WILKINS

ABOVE RIGHT: Students taking part in St. James UMC Little Rock's "Shake It Up Café" VBS participated in two mission projects during the annual event in July. Students and adult volunteers brought items like water bottles, crackers and other individually packaged food items to be made into "St. James Care Bags" which will be used in the church's outreach to the homeless through Little Rock's Under the Bridge Ministry. Participants also raised more than \$1,700 for Out of the Woods Animal Rescue of Arkansas.

PHOTO BY JULIE GRAHAM-JOHNSON

RIGHT: A youngster takes a snack break amid the scenery of Wynne UMC's VBS, "PandaMania: Where God is Wild About You" (Group Publishing). Wynne UMC hosted 45 total attendees, 15 of whom came from outside the congregation. The kids collected money for local community needs with a fundraiser called "Mission Spare Change."

PHOTO BY MIKE SMITH



# first step in reaching out to neighbors and friends



ABOVE: At Piney Grove UMC Hot Springs, the VBS theme was “Hometown Nazareth: Where Jesus was a Kid” (Group Publishing). Shopkeepers prepared and sold their wares in the marketplace as children learned about life in biblical times. Eighty-two children, 43 of whom were non-members, attended the four-day event. Forty-eight adult and youth volunteers led the tribes, worked the marketplace and decorated buildings. For their mission project, the children and church members collected more than \$650 to buy backpacks and Bibles for Latin American children.

PHOTO BY JANET CHEEK

LEFT: The Rev. Carl Palmer, pastor of Elm Springs UMC, leads singing at the church’s “PandaMania” VBS with the help of Gretchen Palmer, left, and Carly Perrine. During the week-long event, students raised approximately \$1,000 for the Arkansas Rice Depot. Because participants exceeded their goal for the mission project, Carl Palmer and Mike Myers agreed to eat “panda food” (edible crickets and larvae) while dressed as pandas at the closing celebration.

PHOTO BY KAYLEA HUTSON

LEFT: Layton Haught and Hannah McCarver hold up two of the personalized backpacks created during “PandaMania” VBS at First UMC Siloam Springs. Students decorated approximately 100 bags, which were distributed later in the month in Haiti by a mission team from Fellowship Baptist Church in Neosho, Mo. Each bag reads “Bondye renmen ou,” which means “God Loves You” in Haitian Creole. Fellowship Baptist traveled to Haiti with the Joy House, a northwest Arkansas ministry.

PHOTO BY KAYLEA HUTSON

BOTTOM LEFT: Tommy Martin explains the rules of the “bouncy-ball race” to Jacob, Jason and Nikko as class leaders Madonna Bell and Kim Cody look on. Of the 42 kids registered for VBS at Foreman UMC, 32 came from outside the congregation. “Many of that number were grandkids of our members,” said church member Ruth Cleghorn. “But, praise the Lord, our younger generation membership is growing.”

PHOTO BY RUTH CLEGHORN

BELOW: Children at First UMC Harrisburg show off some of the craft projects they made July 6-8 at the church’s “Shake It Up Café” VBS (Cokesbury). The congregation experienced a record-breaking attendance of 68 children, with 27 volunteers on hand to help. Forty-two of the children who attended came from outside the church’s membership.

PHOTO BY AMY KING



How did these churches come to be featured in our VBS round-up? They responded to the call for photos posted on the Arkansas Conference Facebook page. “Like” the Arkansas Conference on Facebook to begin receiving Conference information in your news feed. Visit [facebook.com/arkansasumc](https://facebook.com/arkansasumc) to connect with us.

# Friends (continued from page 1A)

any current needs the boys have and help them pursue their interests.

"The house parents submit some goals they have for the boys," Jill LaRosa said. "Sometimes it's items they need or a trip they want them to take. And other times, it's just lessons they want them to learn. For example, this last month when we met, Paul and Avis had said they really wanted the boys to start learning some responsibility, maybe with a business."

So the board tapped its own members to develop a plan. One member is a financial advisor, one is an accountant and another has had a lawn care business in the past. These three men have begun working with the boys on how to start a small business—setting up bookkeeping, learning about profit and loss, planning, advertising and more.

Jill has approval from the board to respond to urgent needs, such as when a 10-year-old arrived at the Boys Home. The home normally receives adolescents, so they didn't have any properly-sized clothes for him. With just a few minutes' notice, Jill met Avis late that evening to buy some essentials that would fit the new resident.

The whole LaRosa family participates in helping at the Boys Home. While Jill and Magan help out indoors and keep an eye on 2-year-old Julia, her husband will often be outdoors tackling other tasks.

Tony LaRosa races hobby-grade remote-control cars, an activity that provides the boys with an easy way to get to know him.

"I'm kind of a big kid anyway, so I can relate with them pretty easily," he says.

For him, the motivation to spend time with the boys is personal. Someone gave similar attention to him when he was struggling as an adolescent, so he wants to do the same for other kids.

"You think it may be just a small thing that you do, but kids pay attention," he said. "They pick up on things like that. I definitely did."

The LaRosas' reliable presence means the boys have someone in addition the house parents who they can turn to for support. "I don't want to be a parent [to them]," Jill LaRosa says. "I want to be more of a friend, more of an aunt—someone who can listen to them."

At first, some of the boys seemed uncertain about the LaRosas' motivations, but now the relationships are comfortable.

"These boys have accepted my family, and they're just great," she says. "They have taught me so much about love and family and forgiveness."

"One of them went off to college this summer, and he has all my contact information. I'm there for him forever."

## Enriching environment

In the farm-like setting of the Boys Home, the residents learn how to care for animals, ranging from Cody the house dog, to pet rabbits, ducks, goats and chickens, to the sheep some of them are preparing to show at this year's county fair. All of these experiences are part of an environment that helps residents learn valuable life skills.

Rodney Bise, a member of First UMC, has been volunteering at the Boys Home for several months, helping clear land and repair fences around the property. Recently, he has headed up a new building project: transforming part of a barn into a game room.

The wiring work required an electrician, but Bise and some of the boys living at the home did the other work. One of the adult Sunday school classes at First UMC Heber Springs helped with the painting. The room has areas for video games,

weightlifting and other activities.

Such help is vital to providing enriching activities, says teaching parent Avis Frazier. She says that it's because of outside assistance that they can have their animal program and the game room.

Paul Frazier said the game room doesn't yet have all the furnishings they envision for it, but he knows they will come.

"The Lord always provides for us, and it's a marvelous process," he said.

## Loving community

While Friends of the Heber Springs Boys Home is the most formally organized effort, Avis Frazier says plenty of people in First UMC Heber Springs and the community at large offer help to the home's residents.

"Paul and I knew from the moment we walked into that church that this was home, this was where we want to be, and this is where these boys need to be," she said, adding that with such a tight-knit community, Methodist Family Health could not have chosen a better town for the group home.

"These are people that have gotten to know the boys," Avis Frazier said. "That's a very, very important thing to have for the kids, is outside relationships, other than people that are paid to be around them. I think that's what helps make them resilient."

"The church here is absolutely wonderful," said Sandy Knott, one of the alternate house parents on staff at the home. "They do so much for these boys."

"It's not just Christmas... they're always helping."

Lee Childers' whole family has built relationships with the Boys Home residents. Her two teenage sons, Austin and Grant, have befriended the boys, as has her husband, Cliff.

Austin, 17, plays on the high



Cristy Birdsong, left, and Brigettee Watson discuss the t-shirt design Friends of the Boys Home is preparing for its next fundraiser.

COURTESY PHOTO

school football team with two of the boys, so he provides their transportation to and from practices.

"He's just really enjoyed getting to build a relationship with them," Childers said.

Lee and Cliff both helped paint the barn-turned-game room, and they hope to increase their level of interaction with the home's residents. They plan to host a family cookout—"Their family and our family," she said. "Just grill burgers, like you do with your neighbors."

"Of all the things I'm involved in—community, church, civic—this is the most rewarding," Childers said. "It's great. Love the boys."

People from other churches and communities have begun to get involved, too. Tyler Whittaker met Jill LaRosa through his occupational therapy work with students in the Heber Springs School District, where Jill works as a special education supervisor.

One day, Jill mentioned her activities with the Boys Home residents, and told him a bit about Friends of the Boys Home. Just hours later, the youth pastor at Whittaker's church, House of Prayer in Greenbrier, asked him if he knew of any youth-related mission opportunities in north Arkansas.

"It was definitely more than

coincidental that Jill had just told me about it, and then I got the phone call saying, 'Our kids are looking at getting into missions,'" Whittaker said.

The youth at House of Prayer wanted to serve in another country, but their leaders encouraged them to get started somewhere close to home.

"We wanted to teach our kids that there are ministry opportunities all around us," he said. The House of Prayer youth group held a fundraiser for Friends of the Boys Home, and the money helped pay for the new game room.

Whittaker, who now serves as secretary of the Friends group, says the youth are particularly interested in helping other people their own age. They haven't yet met the Boys Home residents, but he hopes they will soon have an opportunity to help on-site.

Like the others, Whittaker says his involvement is about more than providing for the boys' physical needs: "I want them to have material things, you know, but I also want them to feel loved."

"It's more than money they give," Avis Frazier says of the Friends group. "It's of themselves that they give."

For Jill LaRosa, the reason for her generosity is simple: "These are my boys."



A Boys Home resident plays with Cody, the house dog.



Two Boys Home residents shoot some hoops.

AUM PHOTOS BY AMY FORBUS



Methodist Family Health teaching parent Paul Frazier, second from left, with the LaRosa family: Jill, Julia, Magan and Tony.

COURTESY PHOTO



Children enjoy making crafts during the Vacation Bible School in Pine Bluff's Central Park. First UMC Pine Bluff on three consecutive Sunday afternoons hosted VBS and a back-to-school bash for the surrounding neighborhood.  
PHOTO BY MICHAEL TARKINGTON



Sterling Gentry, a member of Pulaski Heights UMC, helps a Methodist Children's Home resident with a craft project during the Vacation Bible School put together by the fifth- and sixth-grade students of Pulaski Heights.  
AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

# On location: Bible school beyond the walls

Vacation Bible School doesn't have to happen in a church building. Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church Little Rock and First UMC Pine Bluff this summer created off-site opportunities for Bible school-style learning and fun. The week of July 10, Pulaski Heights UMC took VBS to preschoolers at the Methodist Children's Home campus in Little Rock—and they couldn't have done it without their fifth- and sixth-grade church members. Pulaski Heights has noticed that students in this transitional age group—not quite little kids, not quite youth—can start to lose enthusiasm for Vacation Bible School curriculum and activities. So during VBS week, the church offers more mission-oriented activities for that age group.

In past years, the fifth- and sixth-graders have used their VBS time to carry out service projects, such as working at the Arkansas Rice Depot or helping with landscaping projects for Methodist Family Health. Taking VBS to the Children's Home campus provided a new, person-to-person opportunity for service. The program began with a Sunday afternoon kickoff at Pulaski Heights UMC. The church provided transportation from the Children's Home for that opening celebration. For the following four days, preschoolers spent the morning hours doing VBS in the Children's Home gymnasium, guided by 25 to 30 older elementary-aged helpers from Pulaski Heights.

In Pine Bluff, First UMC took VBS out into a public space. They reserved the city's Central Park for three Sundays in a row. Then they began inviting people by distributing flyers in the neighborhood surrounding the park. "Our pastors also invited children in the neighborhood as they visited a feeding program that happens in the park during the week," said Carissa Tarkington, the church's director of youth ministries. A few days before their first Vacation Bible School session, they unfurled a banner in the park as a high-visibility reminder. And on Sunday, July 31, about 30 volunteers of all ages from First UMC Pine Bluff welcomed some 90 participants to "Island Odyssey" VBS in Central Park. Part two of the park-based VBS took place the following Sunday, Aug. 7, and the next Sunday, Aug. 14, First UMC sponsored a back-to-school bash at the same location.



Youth helper Catherine Morgan makes a new friend at the Vacation Bible School event her church, First UMC, held in Pine Bluff's Central Park.  
PHOTO BY MICHAEL TARKINGTON



A group of fifth- and sixth-graders from Pulaski Heights UMC act out a Bible story as part of the VBS they held for preschoolers of Methodist Children's Home.  
AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS



The Aug. 2 Back to School Bonanza hosted by Central UMC Lincoln drew 101 families. The event helped a total of 180 children prepare to begin the school year well-equipped for learning.  
PHOTO COURTESY WASHINGTON COUNTY ENTERPRISE-LEADER

## Back to School Bonanza helps 180 kids

Central United Methodist Church in Lincoln, Ark., on Aug. 2 sponsored its second annual Back to School Bonanza. The church pulled together resources from around the community to serve 180 children—and increase of more than 20 percent over last year's total. The event grew from a conversation three years ago at the Northwest District picnic. Farmington UMC hosts a "Bonanza" every year, and members of Central UMC Lincoln used Farmington's experience as a model for their own event. Central UMC Lincoln received a Parish and Community Development Grant, as well as a grant from the Peace with Justice Committee of the Arkansas Conference, to help with the cost of the Bonanza, which is free to the community. The area covered by the Lincoln School District has a high poverty rate, so the services provided at the Back to School Bonanza make a real difference in students' preparation for the academic year. Bonanza attendees received essentials such as backpacks, shoes, socks and school supplies. Numerous community organizations participated, making it possible for kids to receive immunizations, haircuts, dental health screenings, New Testament Bibles and more, all in one location.

**Recycle  
Reuse  
Replenish**



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

# 'We Share': Summer party launches 'Compartimos' ministry

Two Pulaski county churches teamed up recently to make the intense summer heat a little more bearable for neighborhood children.

FaithSpring and Oak Forest United Methodist Churches invited children and their parents from two trailer parks to a Summer Splash on July 11 at the 4-H Center in Ferndale, where FaithSpring meets for weekly worship.

People from both Little Rock-area churches spent two days knocking on doors in 100 degree heat to extend invitations, in addition to inviting clients of Shepherd's Hope, the free medical and dental clinic at Oak Forest UMC. St. James UMC Little Rock provided buses and drivers to transport guests to the event.

"Since this was a first-time event for us, I wasn't sure what the response would be," said the Rev. Jenni Duncan, pastor of outreach at FaithSpring. "I had a hard time gauging if anyone would accept our invitation, so I was thrilled when we pulled up at the first stop and there were 15 people waiting to be taken to the 4-H Center."

Duncan said that more than 90 people attended, and at least two-thirds of those spoke Spanish as their primary or only language.

The event launched a cooperative effort between Oak Forest and FaithSpring: Compartimos, a term meaning "we share." Another translation for the word is "fellowship."

"What we learned is that there are resources that can be shared that strengthen relationships and develop trust which, in turn, lead to more ways of connecting with the Latino community and with one another," said Duncan.

Compartimos includes English classes, mother and child learning groups and meals to connect Hispanics and Spanish-learners. Additional church partners are welcome. For more information, contact the Rev. Jenni Duncan, [jduncan@faithspringchurch.org](mailto:jduncan@faithspringchurch.org) or 501-551-2141.

Members and guests of FaithSpring and Oak Forest UMCs spent the afternoon of July 11 swimming, canoeing, eating and enjoying fellowship at the Summer Splash party that kicked off Compartimos, a new ministry of fellowship with the Hispanic community in the Pulaski County area.

PHOTOS BY JENNI DUNCAN AND MARK JOHNSON



# REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

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Section B

August 19, 2011



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BLADE

The Rev. Cheri Holdridge is pastor of The Village Church in Toledo, Ohio, one of a handful of innovative United Methodist church plants that are ministering in urban environments.

## Urban church planters rely on innovation, mission

BY MARY JACOBS  
Staff Writer

Nothing about the Rev. Jerry Herships' church plant in Denver, Colo., says "church."

First, there's the name: AfterHours Denver. Then there's the fact that worship takes place in the basement of a bar called The Irish Snug. (Beer coasters advertise the gatherings with the slogan, "More Love, More Laughs, Less Judgment.") Then there's the way that virtually every AfterHours worship

service involves some act on behalf of others, like preparing food for the homeless.

As Mr. Herships likes to say, "Making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches is our call to worship."

At least three times a week, AfterHours participants make sandwiches to pass out at a city park, where they also share communion with whoever turns up hungry: homeless people and, occasionally, drug dealers or prostitutes.

AfterHours Denver is one of a

handful of United Methodist church plants that are gaining traction in places where many once-stalwart United Methodist churches are failing—cities. Church plants like the Urban Village Church in Chicago, The Village Church in Toledo, Ohio, and Embrace Church in Lexington, Ky., are experimenting with a variety of unconventional ways to "do church" in urban environments, and they're making inroads with that most elusive of demographic groups, young adults.

These innovative ministries are

reaching people who might not otherwise set foot in a church. They're adept at networking and community organizing and nimble enough to thrive on shoestring budgets. Unfettered by building overhead, they gather people in theaters, bars, storefronts, or in one case, the auditorium of a Jewish museum.

These urban plants represent only a small niche within the denomination's efforts to start 650 new congregations by 2012. While they're

■ See 'Urban' page 4B

## Q&A: Jim Winkler on Capitol sit-in, arrest

Jim Winkler has been top executive of the UMC's General Board of Church and Society, its public policy and social justice agency, since November 2000. He has been in the news often through the years, and he made headlines again when he and 10 other religious leaders (including the Rev. Bob Edgar, a United Methodist elder and president of Common Cause) held a sit-in prayer session under the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol.

The protest, prompted by Congress' debt-ceiling and budget negotiations, led to their arrest. Mr. Winkler answered questions about that episode from managing editor Sam Hodges.

### Why did you join the July 28 protest at the Capitol?

I am and was frustrated at the inability of our nation's leaders to protect programs that assist the needy and most vulnerable people in the U.S. and around the world from bearing the brunt of budget cuts. The voice of people of faith on behalf of the last, the least, and the lost must be heard in the halls of power.

### What's your view of the debt-ceiling ■ See 'Capitol' page 2B



Jim Winkler

## FAITH WATCH

**Historic cut likely for UMC budget**

The UMC's General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) recently finalized the quadrennial budget to be presented to the 2012 General Conference, April 24-May 4 in Tampa, Fla. It recommends apportioning \$603 million for 2013-2016, a reduction of 6 percent from the budget approved in 2008. It's the first time a smaller budget will go before General Conference for approval.

**Birth control provision irks Catholic hospitals**

Catholic hospitals are concerned that federal health care reform may require them to cover birth control free of charge to their employees. The new law expands preventive health care benefits for women, and that includes birth control with no copays, the Obama administration said recently. There's a proposed "conscience exemption," but the Catholic Health Association complained that it's so narrowly written that it would only apply to houses of worship.

**Gallup: U.S. Muslims feel loyal, hopeful**

A new Gallup Poll showed that 93 percent of Muslim Americans feel loyal to America. Muslim Americans also had high confidence in U.S. elections and were more hopeful over their lives than other religious groups surveyed. But 48 percent reported experiencing racial or religious discrimination, far more than other groups. President Obama enjoys 80 percent support among Muslims, the survey showed.

**Hiring female pastor gets church ousted**

The Flat Rock Baptist Church in Mount Airy, N.C., has been expelled from the local Baptist association for calling a woman as pastor. The Surry Baptist Association voted overwhelmingly to "disfellowship" the church two weeks after the Rev. Bailey Edwards Nelson began work. Those who voted to remove the church believe the Bible restricts the role of pastor to males, Associated Baptist Press reported.

■ **CAPITOL** *Continued from page 1B***deal arrived at by Congress and President Obama?**

While the agreement does head off a potentially catastrophic debt default, it does so by putting in place a downward spiral on programs such as Head Start, aid to developing nations, law enforcement, heating assistance for the poor, education and juvenile justice.

**Do you think the Capitol protest, combined with earlier advocacy work by you and like-minded religious leaders, made a difference, and in what ways?**

Not to the extent I hoped and prayed for.

**Did you go in knowing that arrest was likely?**

Yes.

**You've been arrested before in protests. How do you decide whether a particular issue merits civil disobedience?**

My arrests have been against the nuclear arms race, the invasion of Iraq, and cutting assistance for poor and needy people. I have prayed for guidance and joined these actions when I have felt Jesus would have been willing to risk arrest for the

same reasons.

**In the Capitol protest, did you feel you were representing yourself or the UMC? If the latter, did you consult with the Board of Church and Society board about whether to join in?**

I only represented myself, but I consulted with the president of our board before making my final decision.

**What exactly are you charged with, and where do things stand with your case?**

"Unlawful conduct" is the charge. We have a Sept. 7 court date.

**Who pays your fine and legal fees in a situation like this?**

I pay them.

**Anything particularly memorable about the time you were in custody?**

Jail is always uncomfortable, but I am grateful the U.S. Capitol Police were polite and professional. Additionally, each time I have been arrested it has been an honor to be with impressive, committed people of faith.

**How much feedback have you gotten from United Methodists?****about the Capitol protest, and how does it break down as far as support and opposition?**

I have been gratified to discover the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from United Methodists across the church.

**What's your response to United Methodists who are concerned about the extent of the federal debt and think reduced spending on Medicare and Medicaid might just be part of what's needed to guarantee those programs long-term, as well as the overall financial stability of the country?**

Trillions of dollars have been wasted over the past decade on wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and on tax cuts for the wealthy. Elimination of such wasteful spending will ensure the financial stability of the country.

**The United Methodist Building is right there on Capitol Hill, and it's home to lobbying offices of various religious groups. This summer the building has been a center of interfaith activism related to the debt and budget decisions. What does that mean to you as a leader of United Methodists?**

It's like this all the time. I wish



UMNS PHOTO BY JEWEL DEGUZMAN

**Jim Winkler, top executive of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, was among 11 faith leaders arrested July 28 for refusing to stop public prayers in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda.**

United Methodists in local churches understood how great a sense of appreciation exists and is expressed regularly to us by people of other denominations and faiths for the presence of the United Methodist Building in such a strategic location.

shodges@umr.org

# World Methodist honor goes to mental health pioneer

## STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Rosalind Colwill, a champion of mental health care in Nigeria, is the 2011 recipient of the World Methodist Peace Award. She was at the World Methodist Conference in Durban, South Africa, on Aug. 5 to receive her award from John Barrett, chair of the World Methodist Council.

"When it was intimated to me about this award, I felt three very distinct emotions," Ms. Colwill said in accepting the award.

"Firstly, unworthiness in the light of the former recipients; secondly, I

reflected on my strong Irish Roman Catholic mother who taught me so much, but never imparted any conflict resolution skills to me which has dogged me my whole adult life; and thirdly, upon further reflection, I feel the emotion of great joy and gratitude."

Ms. Colwill, who these days works in spite of limitations from a stroke, serves as a mission partner from the British Methodist Church on assignment with the Methodist Church in Nigeria.

A trained social worker, she initially worked with leprosy sufferers in

Nigeria. She encountered many with mental health problems and became increasingly aware of the number of impoverished people with mental illnesses and learning disabilities where she worked. She gathered support locally and internationally and in 1990 developed a pioneer project in a small village in the Southeast of Nigeria.

Ms. Colwill developed a holistic and community-based approach to care. The project known as Amaudo Itumbauzo has over the years become known internationally for pioneering mental health care in the region.

The project has treated and supported hundreds of adults and children in their own homes, developing education, training and awareness and in so doing, reducing stigma and ultimately preventing destitution and homelessness.

Currently, the organization has six major projects, including Amaudo Okopedi, a center for the rehabilitation of mentally ill adults; a long stay village for former Amaud Okopedi residents and adults with learning disabilities; Project Comfort, a com-

munity-based outreach to children with learning disabilities; a community mental health program active in five Nigerian states; and a mental health awareness program.

The World Methodist Peace Award is presented annually to an individual or group who works for peace, justice and reconciliation in their lives and in their ministries. Ms. Colwill joins the ranks of peace ambassadors such as former South African President Nelson Mandela, Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, and former President Jimmy Carter.

Other recipients are the late former president of Macedonia, Boris Trajkovski, the community of Sant'Egidio in Rome, and the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina.

For more than three decades the World Methodist Council has presented the World Methodist Peace Award. Criteria for the award are courage, creativity and consistency in work and witness to peace.

The 20th World Methodist Conference took place for the first time in South Africa on Aug. 4-8, at the International Convention Centre Durban (ICC) in Durban.

This assembly convenes every five years to bring together members of the worldwide association of churches in the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition.

## THE UNITED METHODIST REPORTER

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## UM CONNECTIONS

**Common English Bible reaches third printing**

The Common English Bible, supported by the United Methodist Publishing House and four other mainline Protestant denomination publishers, has gone into its third printing, with 500,000 copies in print. The new translation drew on 120 scholars from a range of denominations, but also involved “readability” experts and focus groups, in order to reach a broader audience. The New Testament portion debuted last year. The full Bible came out this summer, first in digital form, then in print.

**University of Memphis leases Lambuth site**

The University of Memphis will have control of the Lambuth University campus, under a lease agreement approved by a federal bankruptcy judge. Lambuth, a United Methodist-affiliated school in Jackson, Tenn., closed after the spring term due to long-standing financial and accreditation woes. The lease lasts one year, and the University of Memphis plans to use just seven of 22 campus buildings. But it will maintain the others. The University of Memphis will offer classes on the Lambuth campus beginning Aug. 27 and has agreed to admit all Lambuth students in good academic and social standing.

**New program leader for Hinton Center**

The Rev. Amy Spivey is the new director of program ministries for the Hinton Rural Life Center, a mission agency of the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference, located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina, two miles from the Georgia line. The center offers vacation and retreat rentals, meeting space for local groups, mission volunteer opportunities and an affordable housing program. Ms. Spivey is a graduate of Greensboro College and Duke Divinity School, and was ordained an elder by the Western North Carolina Conference.

—Compiled by Sam Hodges

# Developing multicultural congregations

BY MELISSA HINNEN  
*Special Contributor*

DALLAS—Using the story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10 as an illustration of crossing boundaries in ministry, the Revs. Doug Cunningham and Dionisio Salazar led a diverse group of church leaders through three sessions at the 2011 United Methodist School of Congregational Development about how to build a multicultural congregation.

Participants at the July 27-31 event included representation from clergy, laity, conferences, local churches, agencies and district levels of the denomination who were interested in sharing ideas and learning meaningful ways to build multicultural community in their churches.

Mr. Cunningham, the founding pastor of New Day United Methodist Church in New York City, started the church as a way to connect people with God by crossing boundaries—race, sexual orientation, class and age—and to confront the injustice in those boundaries.

Pointing out that United Methodist demographics do not reflect the demographics in the U.S., Mr. Cunningham said that boundaries are socially constructed realities designed to keep people in or out of different areas. To be truly reflective of the Kingdom, it is necessary to stretch beyond being inclusive—which implies accommodation—and to become intentional and courageous about building the body of Christ.

The group discussed challenges they are facing in their congregations. One pastor explained that while some see a “black” church when they look at his congregation, the reality is that his church is multicultural, with people from Africa, the Caribbean, and different economic backgrounds, as well as African Americans. There is a richness of experience, but also a need to understand the dynamics at work among the different cultures and the heritage they each bring that blend into a fullness of worship.

Another pastor said that her mostly Anglo church provides outreach to the Spanish-speaking community but does not have an intentional way to welcome them in the congregation.

Mr. Salazar, who leads the Office of Hispanic/Latino Ministries at the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), offered helpful suggestions for crossing boundaries in a way that is inviting to Hispanic communities. He pointed out that most importantly conversation must happen with those in the community. There is no one model



GBGM PHOTO BY CASSANDRA ZAMPINI

**Clergy and lay leaders participate in a workshop at the recent School of Congregational Development in Dallas, Texas.**

that will fit every situation, and open and honest dialogue is the only way to fully understand the realities and needs in a particular mission field.

Mr. Salazar also said that investing in children and youth ministry opens numerous opportunities. Providing a safe space for young people often meets a critical need in communities; the children can grow in God's love and be nurtured by the community. Children's programs provide the parents with an entryway to the church. Because most of the children speak English, they can serve as interpreters if their parents don't speak English.

After discerning what God is al-

munity, it is time for a leap of faith—with the understanding that it will not be done perfectly.

The Rev. Cecil Stone, one of the participants, agreed, saying, “Where there is no vision, there is no creativity, and when there is no creativity, there is death. We are sometimes afraid of failure because we are part of a system that grades us. We can forget that it is God we are to please.”

Looking at boundary crossing through the experience of Pentecost, Mr. Cunningham said, “It is the nature of the Spirit to cross boundaries and move people to action. Of everything the Spirit could have done at Pentecost, it caused the people to speak in

‘We are sometimes afraid of failure because we are part of a system that grades us. We can forget that it is God we are to please.’

—Cecil Stone

ready doing, connecting with key leaders and identifying resources in the community, the heart, head and hand can come together and learn through doing. While the focus is on the local community and ministry, churches should understand and utilize the resources of the conference and of United Methodist agencies. Mr. Salazar and Mr. Cunningham advised that once all the leaders are in place through the connection and the com-

every language.” He asked, “Is it possible to do Spirit-filled ministry without crossing boundaries?”

Looking at the Scripture, he pointed out “they were all together in one place in preparation.” When opening a church to the community, there needs to be a commitment from all who are involved that each person will shift as needed to allow for the Spirit to move in a way that incorporates the gifts of all God's children.

Mr. Salazar reminded the group that when weaving in the Wesleyan heritage in a new multicultural community, the language and style of the traditional United Methodist liturgy and hymns might be foreign to the congregation. “Be intentional with shaping the Methodist traditions in a way that is meaningful to the people you are trying to reach,” he advised.

Changes in an existing structure will be necessary to become a truly multicultural community. The shifts may include leadership, music and language. It may include embracing someone whose gifts are not apparent to the pastor—but could very well be the connector for someone who walks into the church for the first time. Leadership in the church must be multiethnic, and when a primary language is used, worship can be supplemented with translation, multilingual readings and different traditions of music.

Mr. Cunningham concluded, “To build a multicultural congregation is to overcome our own fears of crossing boundaries and trust the Spirit in building a community of people who listen to one another, aren't afraid to make mistakes, and are willing to stand up for each other.”

The School of Congregational Development is an annual event sponsored by the GBGM, the General Board of Discipleship and Path 1.

**Ms. Hinnen is the information officer for the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries.**

growing, none are yet financially self-sustaining, nor are they turning out large numbers of newly minted United Methodists who will fill the pews every Sunday and tithe regularly. They're creating something much more fluid and harder to quantify—but, leaders would say, much more exciting.

"We're not building a church as defined in the 1940s or '50s," said Mr. Herships. "We're much more interested in building disciples."

## People before property

Church growth experts say these new congregations thrive precisely because they are church plants, rather than established churches.

"When a church is planted fresh, it's planted after looking around and saying, 'Who's here and how are we going to design what we're doing with them?'" says Paul Nixon, new church strategist for Path 1, the denomination's church planting resource team.

That's how the Urban Village Church in Chicago got started: with a vision dreamed up by two United Methodist elders, the Rev. Christian Coon and the Rev. Trey Hall, friends who attended a two-year training course in church planting in the Northern Illinois Conference.

Before launching regular worship, the pair devoted almost a year to building relationships in the community. They networked in the downtown Chicago area and hosted informal gatherings. They used social media and Meetup.com to start small groups. When they launched regular worship services on Palm Sunday 2010, a campaign of ads in city trains and train stations promoted the gatherings with taglines like: "Bored or burned by religion in the past? We're doing church differently."

Today, about 175 people worship each week at one of two Urban Village sites: a downtown location, in the theater of The Spertus Institute for Jewish Studies, and in rented space in a Lutheran church in the Wicker Park neighborhood. A third is slated to open in October in the Andersonville neighborhood.

"People before property" is an Urban Village catchphrase, and the pastors say they're following in the footsteps of Methodist circuit riders. The Urban Village doesn't own a building—or have any plans to buy one.

"I haven't spent one day waiting for a plumber or praying over a boiler," Mr. Hall said. "We are freed because we own nothing."

And that freedom keeps the Urban Village nimble and flexible.

"We go where the people are," Mr. Coon said. "People in the city are more likely to worship in their own neighborhood. We're embracing different neighborhoods." Worship at each site has its own flavor, he added, tweaked to fit the folks who live in the area.

## Church for the unchurched

All four church plants strive to connect with folks who would not otherwise find church appealing, like Luke Haim, a 23-year-old graduate student in Denver. While he's a faithful attendee at AfterHours, he calls himself an agnostic.

"There's no BS," he says. "There is no one telling people how to do the right thing. It's just, have a beer, and make a sandwich, and it's going to feed someone tomorrow. You don't need an M.Div. to do that."

Similarly, the Rev. Cheri Holdridge, pastor of The Village Church in Toledo, says that she's careful to make worship accessible to those who have



PHOTO BY ANDREA BROWN

**The Rev. Jerry Herships, left, leads AfterHours Denver's weekly worship at the Irish Snug, a local pub.**

little if any church experience.

"We don't use church language," she says. "We don't say 'bulletin,' we call it a program. We don't use words like 'Pentecost' without explaining what they mean."

That approach worked for Rock Hoffman, now a member of The Village. When she moved from Seattle to Toledo last October, Ms. Hoffman found herself at a low point. She had struggled with addiction for years. She didn't know anyone in the area other than her son and his family. She visited one church in the community, where she was ignored.

When she came to The Village, however, she liked the informal worship services, held in a former restaurant in an otherwise empty strip mall. The worship space looks more like a jazz club than a church. The bar is still there, but now serves coffee.

A church member called Ms. Hoffman on Monday morning after her first visit. Ms. Holdridge soon buttonholed her to discuss ways she could serve the church, and discovered she was good with repairs.

"The more involved I got in the church, the more my life started changing for the better," Ms. Hoffman said. "Now I have lots of friends. I have someone to talk to. I'm doing all kinds of service work at the church."

"I don't think I can ever tell anyone how much this church means to me. I'm alive and doing life," she said. "My son is 34, and he says, for the first time in his life, he has a mother."

Ms. Holdridge points to Ms. Hoffman's story as one of the most rewarding aspects of planting an urban church—the chance to minister to the wide diversity of people that live in the city.

"At our gatherings, you'll find a county prosecutor sitting across from someone who's been in jail," she said. "We have people who are Ph.D. therapists next to people with long-term mental health issues who are just trying to hold their lives together."

Embrace Church, a church plant in downtown Lexington, Ky., also attracts a diverse crowd, including young professionals, college students, young couples, empty-nesters and the homeless.

Embrace started with a small group of people meeting in the one-bedroom apartment of the Rev. Rosario Picardo, Embrace's lead pastor. Today, about 300 people attend weekly worship at two locations: the historic Kentucky Theatre in downtown Lexington, and at Embrace's Epworth campus in another low-income neighborhood of Lexington.

"Not everybody looks the same," said Mr. Picardo. "That helps with outreach."

An urban location, too, is a plus for attracting young people who are often more interested in outreach and service projects than in Bible study, according to Mr. Picardo. With homeless people right in the neighborhood, that's actually appealing to young adults who, he says, are "tired of playing church and wanting to actually roll up their sleeves."

## Financially sustainable?

While they're generating a lot of attention, the four urban church plants haven't shown they can stand on their own financially. Leaders of the

Urban Village were given seed money by the conference but say they expect to become financially sustainable in another year or two, as planned. This year, they were able to get pledges from members for at least \$200,000 of the church's annual \$300,000 budget, with the remaining \$100,000 coming from the conference. The Village in Toledo partnered with the United Church of Christ to get the startup funding to launch. With unemployment hovering between 12-14 percent in Toledo, Ms. Holdridge says that long-term financial viability remains a challenge.

"We have to be able to welcome people who are hurting and living on the edge, and be prepared to deal with their brokenness," she said. While she'd like for The Village to be financially self-sufficient, it's difficult given that many at her church are struggling to make ends meet with their low-to-moderate income.

Finances may prove to be another realm in which urban church plants need to revise the conventional model, Mr. Herships says. Currently, the Rocky Mountain Conference pays his salary,



PHOTO BY DEBI TIPTON

**Participants in AfterHours Denver visit a city park three times a week to minister to the homeless.**



PHOTO BY HELENA HAU

**Downtown urban ministries, like Embrace Church, often include homeless folks among their ranks of worshippers.**

and he raises the rest to meet his budget. He doesn't expect to collect enough from offerings. But he finds that local businesses, with no religious agenda, are often willing to support his ministry to the homeless, as are some suburban church members who have donated to AfterHours.

Another monetary challenge: The young adults who attend these urban church plants haven't proven to be reliable sources of funding. Some are transient. Most have entry level jobs and can only donate small amounts. Some will participate regularly and enthusiastically for a few months, and then disappear.

"Being patient is key," said Mr. Coon. "The prodigal son is a huge story for us."

### Spiritual entrepreneurs

It takes a certain breed to lead urban church plants successfully, according to Mr. Nixon, who coaches the pastors of The Village, Urban Village and AfterHours.

"They are all entrepreneurs," he said. "They

like to color outside of the box. They love God, they really love people, and they do not fit into church culture." Mr. Nixon adds that successful church planters are also indefatigable networkers. They know how to meet new people and make connections.

"Church planters have to be extroverted and you have to know how to network," said Ms. Holdridge. "I network like other people breathe oxygen."

Similarly, Mr. Herships' email signature identifies him with two titles: "Chief Love Monger" and "Lead Spiritual Entrepreneur."

Mr. Nixon says that, in whatever locale they're ministering, United Methodist churches can glean lessons from the experiences of these urban ministries.

"Every church has to keep looking outside at its community," he said. "They remind us to keep looking outside of the walls of our churches, and be aware of other people who matter as well."

[mjacobs@umr.org](mailto:mjacobs@umr.org)

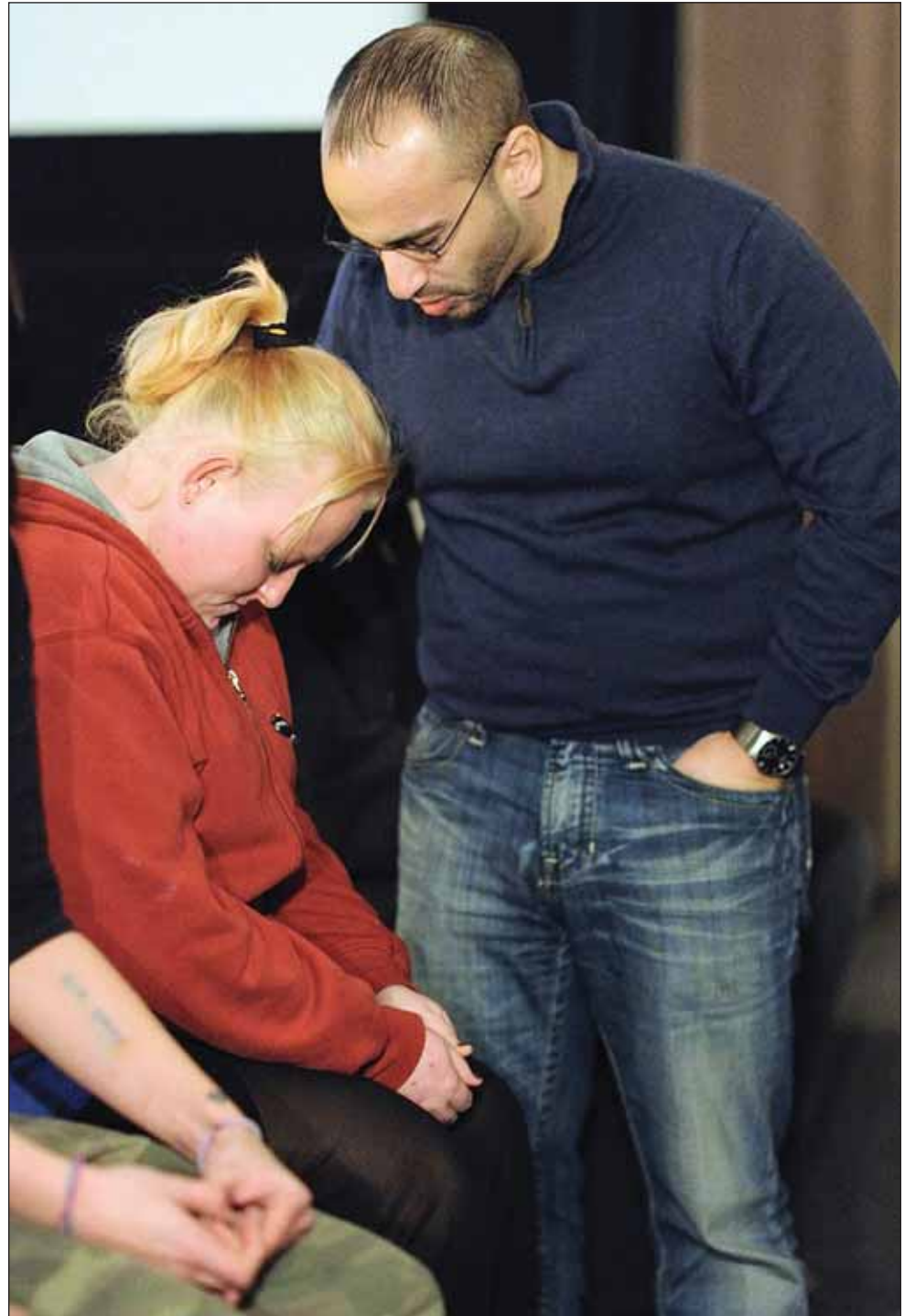


PHOTO BY HELENA HAU

**ABOVE: Urban church plants like Embrace Church, led by Rev. Rosario Picardo (right), are making inroads in reaching young adults. BELOW: Embrace Church holds one of its Sunday morning worship services at the historic Kentucky Theatre in downtown Lexington, Ky.**



PHOTO BY DEBI TIPTON

**A homeless man takes communion, offered along with sandwiches at a city park in Denver by AfterHours Denver, a United Methodist church plant.**



PHOTO BY JOSEPH REY AU

## AGING WELL

# Older adult ministries: Truths to keep in mind about the senior years

BY MISSY BUCHANAN  
UMR Columnist

There are certain truths about aging that are important for churches and individuals to remember. Some truths make us squirm. Others bring comfort. All should make us think.

**1. There's no line in the sand.** Think about it. When do you become old? Is it the day you discover that McDonalds gave you a senior discount and you didn't even ask for it? Is it when you get an invitation to join AARP? Or when you receive your first Social Security check?

The thing is, there's no definitive line in the sand that you cross and are suddenly old. Aging is a gradual process that begins at birth and continues over a lifetime. That's what makes talking about aging a tricky thing. In a culture that honors youth, we tend to talk about aging as if it begins when a person is in their 50s or 60s. We forget that young men and women in their 20s and 30s are aging, too. God designed the aging process, so there is purpose in the journey.

**2. Growing old is not easy.** It's true what they say about growing old not being for sissies. Physical or mental decline will come if you live long enough. Aging also brings loss, including the loss of independence and the loss of loved ones through death. Though we desperately want to be like Betty White, living into our 90s in a good state of health and mind, it is not the reality for most people.

Aging is a state of mind, but it is also a state of physical body. We should care for our bodies, but we must also recognize that bodies will eventually wear out. When we try to stand in the orthopedic shoes of older adults, we can better understand their frustrations and fears. The church has an important role in encouraging and nurturing those who face physical decline. We must never forget that for many older adults, this is the toughest season of their lives.

**3. You don't outgrow sinful nature as you age.** We'd like to think

that growing old somehow gives us a free pass on sin. It doesn't. Even in old age we are accountable for what we say and do.

The truth is, not every older adult is wise. Wisdom comes when we walk closely with Christ, even as we continue to age. Growing old is not a license to grumble and complain. It is an opportunity to confess and draw closer to the One who understands our frustrations and fears.

**'God designed the aging process, so there is purpose in the journey.'**

**4. There are joys in aging.** Ask an older adult about the perks of growing old and you will likely get funny responses about senior discounts and sleeping late. Others say that as they have aged, they care less about the expectations of others or about material things. They also speak of the blessings of family celebrations and watching children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren grow up.

For many, the greatest blessing of growing old is looking back over the years and recognizing how God has been faithful through every obstacle and hardship.

**5. Your story is not yet finished.** Life is not over just because you celebrated another milestone birthday, so why close the book? Many people see the golden years as a time to sit back in the recliner and savor the fruit of their spiritual labor. Somehow they fail to see their biblical calling to keep serving until their last breath.

The church has a role in helping older adults find new ministry opportunities. At the same time, older adults should turn the page to a new chapter and remember that people are always watching and learning from them.

**Ms. Buchanan, a member of FUMC Rockwall, Texas, is the author of several books, including *Don't Write My Obituary Just Yet: Inspiring Faith Stories for Older Adults* (Upper Room Books.)**



Missy Buchanan

# New places for new people, a goal for church planters

BY GARY SHOCKLEY  
Special Contributor

Approaching 10,000 feet, the plane shuddered and banked right as the pilot worked to compensate for the turbulence. The young, recent college graduate sitting next to me instinctively grabbed my arm and let out a squeal.

"I am so sorry about that!" she said. "I hate flying!"

"You don't fly very often?" I asked.

"Well, yes, I do. But I'll never get used to it. I guess I'm just afraid of dying!"

Now, you don't let a comment like that go by no matter how weary you are from traveling, so I asked her about her fear of death. For the next 45 minutes, she told me her life story—all 22 years of it.

Bethany had been raised in, what she described as, a legalistic and somewhat abusive religious family. Every experience she had of church as a child confirmed for her that God was angry with her because she was never good enough. She wasn't keeping all the rules. She could never do enough to earn God's favor.

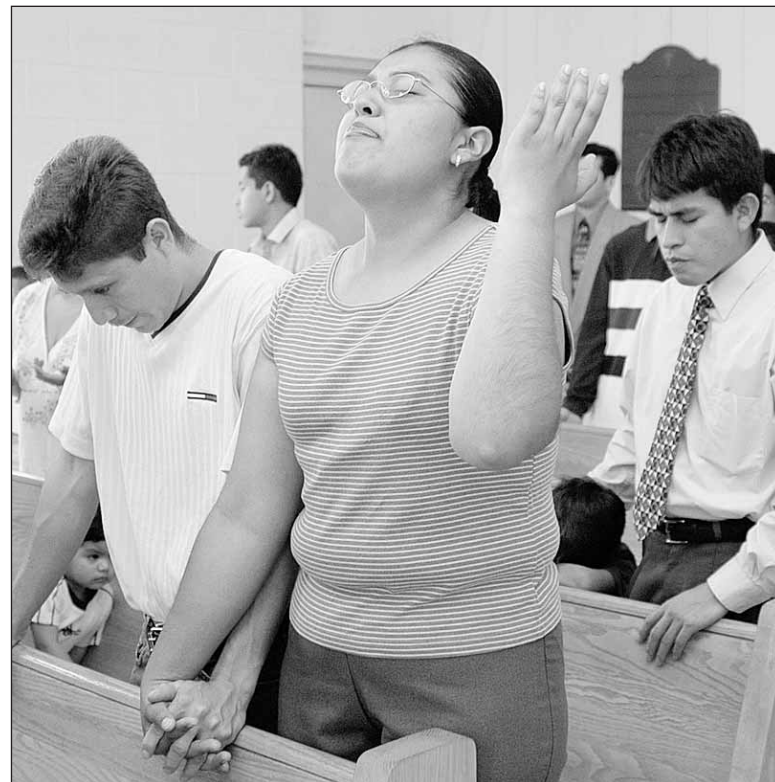
She turned to me at one point, took a deep breath, and said with a long sigh, "Honestly, I guess I gave up on church and religion because I got tired of hearing how horrible I was as a person. I just wanted to hear some good news. Now I'm afraid if I die I will go to hell."

She looked down at her hands tightly folded together in her lap. "Bethany, can I tell you some really good news?" I asked. She nodded yes, and for the remainder of the flight I shared the Good News of God's grace with her and then, gently answered each question posed.

Right now, we're investing a tremendous amount of time, energy and financial resources to transform our existing churches and plant new ones. That's a good thing, as long as we remember why we are doing it. Is it for the sake of institutional survival? Is it to ensure that those of us who are already inside the church have the institutions we need to care for our varied needs? Is it to make sure that what has always been always will be?

Gosh, I hope not!

"I just want to hear some good news!" is a plea echoing all around us.



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE FILE PHOTO BY NEILL CALDWELL

**Almost half of new United Methodist churches are planted in racial/ethnic communities, notes the Rev. Gary Shockley, who leads the denomination's Path 1 movement for the General Board of Discipleship.**

We, United Methodists, have some really good news to share with the Bethanys of the world. Path 1, New Church Starts, was birthed out of our last General Conference to help us do that.

The Path 1 movement has a mandate to reach more people, more young people, more diverse people as disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by creating new places for new people, like Bethany! Our short-term quadrennial goal is to find and train 1,000 church planters to start 650 new churches in the United States by the end of 2012. Our long-term, big-hairy-audacious goal is to resource a movement that seeks to start at least one new church each day. (Visit [www.path1.org](http://www.path1.org) for more information, including our definition of what constitutes a new church.)

To date, with 85 percent of our annual conferences reporting, 451 new churches have been planted in the U.S. since January 2008 with a closure rate of 9 percent. Compare that to 256 new churches planted during the previous quadrennium, where the closure rate was 27 percent. The most exciting bit of news in all of this is that nearly half of our current new church starts are racial-ethnic plants. We are sharing good news with the Bethanys of our world.

While the staff of Path 1 has experience and expertise in church planting, we don't claim any of these successes as our own because we understand that Path 1 is a movement larger than the national staff. It encompasses bishops, district superintendents, congregational developers, annual conference leaders, pastors, planters, lay leaders and people like Bethany who are looking to find and share good news with others.

When our flight landed in Phoenix, Bethany thanked me for the conversation and then added, "Oh, I forgot to ask you what you do for a living." I smiled at her and said, "I get to work with great people all across the country that are working hard to create new churches for people just like you!"

Some days, this work of helping to lead a movement within an institution is extremely frustrating. On days like that, especially, I close my eyes for just a moment and picture the Bethanys I have met in my travels and remind myself it is for them that I do this. I say a quick prayer for each of them and get back to work. They are worth my best efforts!

**The Rev. Shockley is executive director of Path 1 New Church Starts for the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship.**



Gary Shockley

WESLEYAN WISDOM

# Grace: 'Connecting the dots' in a broken world

BY DONALD W. HAYNES  
*UMR Columnist*

Within the subculture of drug and alcoholic addiction, there is an “evangelistic” spirit. Non-users are promised ecstasy and freedom from all the ways they feel they are not measuring up. Like hypnotists, the hawkers draw young people and adults alike to take a baby step down a slippery slope that quickly turns into a snake pit from which they cannot escape.

The same process is true of so many forms of brokenness, alienation and estrangement—in marital infidelity, in gambling, in abusive or manipulative behavior. What, indeed, does it mean to be created in God’s own image when we evolve from being “in control” to being “out of control”? What has happened when our self-portrait sounds like St. Paul: “The good that I want to do, I don’t do; the evil I don’t want to do, I am doing” (Romans 7:19)? Like Paul, we Christians often admit, “I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in me.”

I remember talking with a woman whom I had known since she was valedictorian of her high school class. That was long ago. Now she was in deep trouble, having betrayed her father’s trust as she had power of attorney once he was in a nursing home. Her embezzlement addiction became so entrenched that she finally was caught after writing tens of thousands of dollars in checks to herself. Her sisters were confronting her with a simple accusatory question, “How could you?” They could have added, “How could you do this while you sang in the choir, took communion, and impressed the church financial secretary with what she thought was generosity?”

## Many sad stories

I thought back through the years to when I sat in a rural school auditorium, hearing her deliver the valedictory address that we had rehearsed in the church. I remembered how pretty she was as a bride when a proud father escorted her down the aisle of the church where she had been every Sunday since she was on the cradle roll.

In a sharing session where parents

or grandparents describe family life when their bright and beautiful daughter or son was on drugs or alcohol, I hear them say, “Our family was in a very dark place.” Parents who are medical doctors or high school principals or guidance counselors speak of their feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Late teens and college age adults begin to stand one by one and say, “I have lived in the far country. I could not win in my struggle with my demons.”

From these many years of ministry, I take many sad stories like these into my study as I prepare a new sermon every week. I remember Dr. George Washington Carver in his little laboratory in south Alabama in the damnable days of systemic racism, which was manifesting itself as malnutrition. Tired and sleepy, he worked deep into the dark summer nights poring over his notes and squinting his eyes into his microscope, searching for the nutritional potential in a peanut. One night he put an ordinary peanut in his hand, walked into the starlit night, opened his uplifted hand and asked, “Mr. Creator, show me what you had in mind when you made this peanut.” He went on to discover the amazing nutrition in something that the poorest family could grow in a garden.

I have asked of God, “O Holy Creator, what did you have in mind when you made us mortals in your own image?”

## Grace is with us

Wesley preached that one dimension of the Image of God is our conscience. George Hunter’s books were my teacher that showed me John Wesley’s goal in preaching was very different from revival meeting theology. Hunter documented that Wesley preached to the “awakening of the soul.”

Aha! That is prevenient grace at work. Each of us is like Simba in Disney’s *The Lion King*, when Rafiki found the little lion living among the warthogs. He took Simba back through the dark hyena country to a promontory overlooking the jungle over which he was the rightful heir, lifted him up and said, “Simba, you are more than you have become.”

This is what Paul Scherer enunciates in his powerful book *The Word God Sent*. Yes! That is the word God sent: Each of us is more than we have become! You are more than your behavior, more than your attitude, more than your addiction, more than the sum of your sin. You are a daughter or

son of the most high God—stamped indelibly with a “made by the Lord God Almighty” imprimatur. We have seen a distorted version of who we are. With God’s grace we see our real face—forgiven, replanted, restored.

Recently, I went to visit a man in prison whose name is Jerry. I met his daughter as a table server in our local rural restaurant. She comes to church every Sunday and is filling a pew with others, but she wanted me to see her daddy in prison.

After some pleasantries in getting acquainted, my first words to him were, “Jerry, do you really believe in your heart that God loves you?” He responded, “Don’t you know why I am in here?” I said that I did know, but we needed to go beneath what he did to who he was. God is love and God loves us, warts and all! We become God’s children at birth, not with straight A behavior. That is prevenient grace, the “grace that will not let us go.” Society was right in making him spend time in the penitentiary for his crime, but God never stopped loving him when the jail door clanged shut.

## Our fears relieved

Fanny Crosby, a Methodist, wrote in 1867, “Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter, feelings lie buried that grace can restore. Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness, chords that were broken can vibrate once more.”

In a tract I am having printed on “God’s Way of Salvation,” I number the “points.” The first “point” on most of

these kinds of tracts is “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 8:23) You are a sinner and you deserve to go to hell.”

But this is most certainly not Point #1.

Point #1 is, “God is LOVE. Salvation is rooted in the character of God, not in my character and certainly not in my behavior or attitude.” Grace theology begins with Adam’s creation, not his fall. The fall is deep and real and the chasm is wide. Our sin is real and cannot be glossed over, but the fall and our sin is secondary. The Image of God is primary.

Here I am, an old Methodist preacher, now on the leeward side of 76, hearing from 30-year-old college graduates who tell me that grace theology is enabling them to “connect the dots.” Yes, love quickens one’s conscience! As Newton wrote in the world’s favorite hymn, “Twas grace that taught my heart to fear.” But don’t stop there. The rest of the sentence is “and grace my fears relieved.” Then, “How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.”

## When we get home

Like the prodigal son in the pigsty, we “come to ourselves.” We say, “I am more than a shuck-feeder in a pig sty. I am my father’s son. I will go home and work on his farm as a hired hand.” So it often is as one’s conscience is first quickened, as one’s soul is first awakened. But he had only a glimmer of restoration from his vantage point in the pig pen. He is in for

the big surprise of grace-filled love when he gets home! The “prodigal son” did not appreciate grace until he felt his father’s tears wetting his feet as the waiting, loving daddy put sandals on his boy.

In Rembrandt’s 1642 painting “Return of the Prodigal Son,” each of his father’s hands is portrayed differently—a male hand of encouragement and a female hand of comfort and assurance.

“Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, calling to you and to me, ‘Come home. . . . You who are weary, come home.’” How many people in your network would like to “connect the dots” in their life back to God’s love and seeing themselves as a daughter or son of the most High God?

We must “flesh out” our grace theology and explain to God’s children who have lost their way and cannot get home alone that before we seek God, God is seeking us. We will be the “loving heart that awakens with kindness,” reaching out and touching the weary, the wounded, the lost, and the lonely—even those that are entangled in the thickets of “dangers, toils, and snares.”

Oh yes, and as a by-product, your church will grow because no community surrounding any church is short of “the lost.”

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.



Donald Haynes

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# Churches hope to break Kenyan poverty cycle

BY J.A. BUCHHOLZ  
*Special Contributor*

First UMC of Winter Park, Fla., and United Methodist churches in Naivasha, Kenya, established Panua Partners in Hope to serve orphans and other children in Naivasha. The partnership started nine months ago.

Panua is Swahili for “expand” and that’s what members of the Winter Park church hope these children will do—expand the possibilities for their futures by participating in this partnership.

The Rev. Bob Bushong, senior pastor at First UMC, said he was always hopeful that a chance encounter at the 2004 General Conference of the United Methodist Church in Pittsburgh, Pa., would grow into something meaningful.

It was during a meal at a Pittsburgh sandwich shop that Dr. Bushong, along with a small group from the Florida Conference, offered a seat to the Rev. Paul Matheri, a delegate from the Naivasha District of Kenya in the East Africa Conference. After the meal, the men exchanged business cards and email addresses and promised to keep in touch.

They did, and a friendship that transcends culture and continents blossomed, helping begin Panua Partners in Hope. Dr. Bushong said he is thrilled about the partnership.

“I was hopeful, even after that very first meeting, that something like this would happen,” he said. “We are excited about what’s happening.”

His excitement stems from the partnership’s three-year program, which is designed to empower children to break the cycle of poverty and achieve long-term sustainability.

It differs from traditional orphanage models because the children continue to live together in their own households and become part of a larger network of other children who are also the heads of their households.

“This method works in keeping siblings together and children within extended families and communities, allowing them to grow with the support of a family environment,” according to the program model as described at [www.panua.org](http://www.panua.org).

The village elders or community leaders identify children for the program, which currently is serving 400 children divided into 90 households. Each household joins with others to form “Partner Groups,” with 14 households per group.

The program model calls for the group members to elect a leader and choose a community mentor, whose role is to help guide the children. As a group, the children support one another with concerns such as food and housing, spiritual development, education and vocational training, business ownership, HIV/AIDS education, legal issues and health care.

## ‘Scary leap’

Jensie Gobel, mission and outreach coordinator at FUMC Winter Park, said the start of the partnership for her was “a scary leap of faith” because of the potential impact on the lives of Naivasha children.

Ms. Gobel, Dr. Bushong and several others from their church make up the Winter Park team that locally spearheads the partnership. Four teams from the church have visited Naivasha.

“It just seemed so huge and I wondered if we could do it from so far



PHOTOS COURTESY FIRST UMC WINTER PARK

**Volunteers from First United Methodist Church in Winter Park, Fla., pose with Kenyan UMC officials and recipients of a house built with Panua Partners in Hope funds. The program works with orphans and other needy Kenyan children.**

away,” Ms. Gobel said. “I have seen God’s hands in this the entire time and I know that with God, yes we can.”

Seeing the children face-to-face made the partnership tangible, she said. A recent mission trip also provided an opportunity to see the program in action, as well as to talk with participants who were curious about why people had traveled so far to visit with them.

“I told them it was primarily to see ‘habari’—Swahili for ‘How are you?’” Ms. Gobel said. “We wanted to meet the youth in the program, deepen relationships with Panua Partners in Hope staff and board members and together assess the program thus far and determine future direction.”

Tasks included working sessions with Panua staff and board members, two house blessings, informational sessions for Naivasha business and government leaders, and a commissioning of a borehole at Trinity UMC in Naivasha, led by East Africa Conference Bishop Daniel Wandabula. Also, Dr. Bushong, Mr. Matheri and the Rev. Jeff Stiggins, executive director of Florida Conference Congregational Excellence, held a pastors’ conference.

Meeting people face-to-face was important, Ms. Gobel said.

“There was no replacing actually walking through the streets of the neighborhoods, meeting the wonderful mentors, seeing the businesses the youth had begun through the program and talking with the amazing youth whose lives had been transformed,” she added.

“Seeing the program in action left us with a sense of great hope that de-

spite the overwhelmingly great need, we were making a difference in Naivasha. And our lives were also transformed by seeing God at work, doing ‘immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to His power that is at work within us.’”

## A way out

Susie Rush, chairwoman of the Panua Mission Agenda, believes that the program will be successful in the years to come because at the heart of the partnership is empowerment.

“These children now have a way out of poverty,” Ms. Rush said. “Once these children have transitioned into adulthood, they will in turn assist

others on the path out of poverty because they know what it’s like. That’s the beauty of the program; they will teach others how to fish.”

In Naivasha, related ongoing ministries of First United Methodist Church, Winter Park, include pastors training; site development of the Trinity UMC in Naivasha; development of a fresh water supply for the community on the Trinity UMC campus; and Panua Expanding Hope, a micro-finance ministry for small business owners. For information, visit [www.panua.org](http://www.panua.org).

**This article first appeared in the Florida Conference Connection.**



**Panua Partners in Hope helps young Kenyans break the cycle of poverty, including through small businesses. Mary Nyarobi Ngotho works at her hair salon, grooming FUMC Winter Park team member Jensie Gobel.**

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