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The Rev. Blake Lasater sifts through the ashes of the Living Waters at Centerton UMC altar, looking for pieces of his Communion chalice.

PHOTO BY OMAR RIKABI

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

A Sept. 15 fire that rekindled early on Sept. 16 and gutted the building belonging to Living Waters at Centerton United Methodist Church was officially ruled an arson on Sept. 29. At press time, it remains under investigation by the Centerton Police Department.

The northwest Arkansas congregation, the product of a merger two years ago between long-standing Centerton UMC and three-year-old Living Waters UMC, won't have a permanent home for some time, but it still meets each Sunday. Just two days after the fire, they worshiped in their food pantry, about a block away from the damaged sanctuary—even though

the warehouse-style facility does not meet city safety codes for occupancy. They met in Centerton City Hall the following week.

The church petitioned the city planning commission for a conditional use permit, which would have allowed them to meet in their food pantry building for up to four weeks, but the permit was denied at a Sept. 27 commission meeting.

So as they search for another place to meet, Living Waters at Centerton, which has seen worship attendance as high as 124 people, will continue gathering in a City Hall meeting room that holds only 100 people.

The City Hall meeting room does not include any space suitable for a nursery or other children's [See FIRE, page 7A]

Notice of a Called Session of the Arkansas Annual Conference

A Called Session of the Arkansas Annual Conference shall be held for the purpose of adopting the revised 2012 budget of the Arkansas Annual Conference. The conference will begin at 10:00 a.m. in Horner Hall of the Hot Springs Convention Center on October 29, 2011. The conference will conclude by 12:30 p.m.

In addition to the adoption of the budget, brief progress reports from several of the Imagine Ministry task forces will be shared. These will be presented for information only.



Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield

Called session of Conference to vote on budget, receive reports

The Oct. 29 Called Session of Annual Conference has a clear purpose: to approve the proposed 2012 budget for Conference ministry and administration. The business session should last no more than two hours.

In addition to voting on the budget, those gathered will receive status reports from several groups working to implement changes associated with the Imagine Ministry process.

Informational materials for this

session may be downloaded from arumc.org/ac2011. No printed copies will be mailed. Materials available on the website include the proposed budget, as well as status reports on three new elements of Conference structure:

- The Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence
- The Center for Technology
- Holiness of Heart and Life: The Network of Discipleship and Mission (originally named the [See CALLED SESSION, page 3A])

THE CASE OF MELBA AND MELVIN METHODIST

Social Principles can encourage discussion, shape discipleship

BY BILL MARTIN
Special Contributor

As long-time United Methodists, Melba and Melvin Methodist are aware that their denomination has a long history of social concern.

They occasionally recite as part of worship the World Methodist Social Affirmation, found in the back of the *United Methodist Hymnal* (No. 886). Once in a while, their pastor follows the recommendation in the *Book of Discipline* that the Church's Social Creed "be frequently used in Sunday worship." Recently, following the 2008 meeting of the General Conference, they have also joined in affirming the new Companion Litany to Our Social Creed (*Book of Discipline*, paragraph 166).

Their Sunday School class has done a series on the Social Principles. The couple learned there about official denominational views on a wide variety of ethical concerns, including caring for the environment, family and sexual ethics, medical and genetic research, human rights, family farms and sustainable agriculture, the separation of church and state, war, capital punishment and the United Nations.

When Melvin became a member of the church council, they learned that one criterion for his selection was that he was "loyal to the ethical standards of the United Methodist Church set forth in the Social Principles" (paragraph 244.3).

As a member also of the Charge Conference, Melvin is responsible for encouraging "socially responsible investments" that are in accord with the Principles (paragraph 247.19).

Melba has served a term as a trustee. On that board she learned that permission for an "outside organization" to use church facilities could "be granted only when such

use [was] consistent with the Social Principles." Melba also learned that the trustees are "encouraged to invest in institutions, companies, corporations, or funds that make a positive contribution toward the realization of the goals outlined in the Social Principles of our Church" (paragraph 2532.3 and .5).

As her term as a trustee came to an end, their pastor, on behalf of the committee on nominations and leadership, asked Melba to be the church lay leader. At the same time, he asked Melvin to become chair of the church council.

Reviewing the council's many responsibilities together, they have been particularly struck by the requirement that it "give attention to local and larger community ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy" (paragraph 252.2b). They realize that many of the congregation's specific ministries will need to have a foundation in the Social Principles.

They are thinking of proposing that the church's various committees and work areas take a serious look at how the Social Principles might affect what they do. They will suggest that each of these groups prepare a specific plan to implement one provision in one of the six areas covered there: the natural world and the nurturing, social, economic, political and world communities (paragraphs 160-65).

The couple is beginning to reflect on ways that Melba as lay leader can encourage "ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world" (paragraph 251.1a) and foster an understanding that "[t]he standards of attitude and conduct set forth in the Social Principles are an essential resource for guiding each member of the Church in being a servant of Christ on mission" (paragraph 220).

Melba and Melvin are making these plans with some trepidation, because they know that some

influential members of the church disagree with many of the Social Principles. They themselves are bothered by a few statements there which do not jibe with their growing understanding of Christian ethics that their church has helped to nurture.

But they hope that through open and honest discussion, the congregation can face up to the challenges that the Social Principles bring. They even foresee that, as their church broadens its understanding of discipleship, it may decide to work to make a few revisions to the Principles.



Bill Martin

On the personal level, Melba and Melvin have also determined that they will pick one section that especially speaks to them from one of the six areas of the Social Principles and begin to explore in depth how it might change their lives.

They take this step with some trepidation, but they believe that the Church that calls them to leadership invites them to continue to deepen their understanding of what it means to be "disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

The Rev. Dr. Martin is Professor of Religion Emeritus at Oklahoma City University and a retired Elder in the Arkansas Conference.

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(or give it to a friend).**



EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

Challenging assumptions

Preparing this issue for publication has been an exercise in challenging my assumptions.

In the brief time I've served as editor, the only issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist* with a section that ran longer than 12 pages was the one immediately following Annual Conference. We had a lot to report then.

So I assumed I would be able to keep things to the usual number of pages for this issue. But with the called session of Annual Conference this month, Ingathering next month and the need to cover last month's fire that destroyed one of our congregations' buildings, the issue began to get a little full. Even with expanding the page count, I know I've omitted some items that people sent for consideration.

Obviously, I was wrong in my assumption that a dozen pages would suffice.

Many of us operate on assumptions in daily life, even when we try to avoid it. We assume that traffic signals will function properly as we drive to work or worship. Most of us probably assume that when we turn on a faucet, the water will be clear and safe to drink.

Sometimes those assumptions turn out to be invalid: busy intersections become haphazard four-way stops, or water becomes contaminated.

In my childhood and teen years, I assumed that our government was doing the right thing when it authorized and performed executions. I now believe that I made an invalid assumption. A quick summary of my position: I don't believe that putting people to death is how God wants us deal with each other. (For a longer explanation, see Paragraph 164G of the Social Principles in the 2008 *United Methodist Book of Discipline*.)


In a 2010 Gallup poll, 64 percent of Americans supported using the death penalty against persons convicted of murder. So when I changed my mind about it, I became part of the minority.

I suspect my view may be in the minority among United Methodists in Arkansas as well, but we don't have to agree on everything to be United Methodists together. Unity and uniformity are two distinct concepts. Unity leaves room for variety—and thank God for that.

What types of assumptions do we make in the church that may not hold true? That our style of worship is superior? That money given to people living on the street will be used only to feed addictive habits? That new members will come flooding into our congregations if we can just find that one elusive hook?

We are human. It's pretty much impossible for us to quit making assumptions. But if we learn to recognize when we're making them, it just might help us pause long enough to consider whether we are getting in the way of what God would have us do.

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Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
Nov. 4	Oct. 20
Dec. 2	Nov. 15
Jan. 6	Dec. 14

Called session


(continued from page 1A)

Networks for Personal and Social Holiness in the adopted Imagine Ministry proposal).

To register online, visit arumc.org/ac2011. The registration fee of \$10 for all voting members may be paid online with pre-registration, or at the door with walk-up registration. Guests and visitors do not need to register.

Schedule for the Oct. 29, 2011 Called Session of Annual Conference (as of press time)

- Horner Hall, Hot Springs Convention Center**
- 8 a.m. Registration Opens
- 10 a.m. Opening Worship
- 10:30 a.m. Call to Order
- Action Item: Proposed 2012 Budget
- Interim Reports:
- Transition Team
 - Center for Technology Imagine Ministry Task Force
 - Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership Imagine Ministry Task Force
 - Network of Discipleship and Mission Imagine Ministry Task Force
 - Conference Task Force on Children and Youth Ministry
 - Conference Task Force on Ethnic Ministries
 - Conference Task Force on Young Adult Ministries
- 12:30 p.m. Adjournment



AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

Dear Friends:

On Oct. 29, the Arkansas Annual Conference will share in a called session to adopt the budget for the 2012 fiscal year. We will also hear brief interim reports from several task forces which are thinking about the future of the Annual Conference program. The only action item will be the budget.

Our transition from the past to the future will not be completed with this called session. Indeed, it will probably not be completed with the 2012 Annual Conference session in Fort Smith. In the spirit of John Wesley, we will be going on to perfection, not yet achieving it!

The journey this Annual Conference is making into the future God is calling us to embrace will continue. One of the most interesting aspects of all this to me is that beyond Arkansas, leaders in our church are suddenly beginning to look to us as being on the cutting edge of what the church will look like tomorrow. It is all very flattering. But I am remembering the old aphorism, "Pride goes before a fall." The hard work is just beginning.



I was at a church groundbreaking some years ago when the preacher of the day said, "Everybody's excited today. But in a month or two when hard decisions must be made, the sin of cynicism, the devil of doubt, the siren song of self-interest and the fearsome demon of fear will be heard in the whispers of a few." Then the preacher roared:

"Be bold. Be courageous. Be the church. Be faithful. Shout the devil down!"

While I do not believe there will be those kinds of whispers in our Conference about the future, the warning is well taken. We must keep the faith, be the church, face the challenges and, with prayer and holy conferencing, ultimately make the hard decisions that keep us on track to embrace the future God has prepared for us. The coming called session of our Conference is but a step along the way.

Please keep me and all those working hard to prepare us for the changes that are inherent in the Imagine Ministry process in your prayers.

Faithfully,



Charles Crutchfield

Baptism: the surest sign of God's grace

BY WILLIAM O. (BUD) REEVES
Special Contributor

Did I mention that I've become a grandfather? I have told a few people! Walker was born in April. And on the last Sunday of July, I had the privilege of celebrating for him the sacrament of Christian baptism.

Before he was born, I had already decided that I was not going to bring it up with my son and daughter-in-law. I wanted to respect their responsibility as parents and my daughter-in-law's Baptist upbringing. But when they asked me if I would do it, they didn't have to ask twice!

Baptisms are always special moments in the life of a family. When I baptize adults, I don't get to watch their faces like I do the babies, since they kneel. But seldom do they stand up after the baptism with dry eyes.

When I baptize young people at confirmation, and their parents join in the laying on of hands, it is a beautiful thing to see the pride and the joy in the parents' faces. And when I baptize babies, more often

than not, the baby will pause in its squirming and look at me, as if it knows something significant is going on. It is a powerful moment.

With my own grandchild, I was worried that I would become a blubbing idiot. For several days before, every time I thought of what

I was going to do, a lump would come to my throat and a tear to my eye. But surprisingly, the most emotional moment came when I asked my son and daughter-in-law to profess their faith in preparation for the baptism.

I looked at those two outstanding young adults, and I remembered how my wife and I had celebrated our sons' baptisms all those years (or was it just days?) ago. Their lives flashed in front of my eyes, and I felt suddenly overwhelmed by God's grace, and my throat began to knot up.



Then Walker grinned at me, in all his toothless glory, and that broke the tension. I carried on. It was an unforgettable moment and a great day for our family.

Baptism is one of the two most powerful acts we do in the church. Along with our other sacrament, the Lord's Supper, it is a human act which incorporates the activity of God. In the sacraments, God is present in a real way and acts to convey his grace.

I love the United Methodist tradition of baptizing infants. To me, it is the clearest sign we have of the prevenient grace of God. Like babies, we are included by God in his family before we are even able to respond or understand

his grace. Our understanding grows until we can make our own profession of faith, at confirmation or later. In addition, the parents pledge to put forth some effort to raise the child in a Christian home, until the child can make the decision of faith responsibly.

Baptism is also a sign of the importance of the community of faith. If "it takes a village to raise a child," it takes a church to raise a disciple of Jesus Christ. Except in extreme circumstances, we do not baptize unless there is a contingent of the church in attendance. The church witnesses the vows of the parents or the one being baptized, in order to hold them accountable.



Walker and the Rev. Bud Reeves, on the day of Walker's baptism.

COURTESY PHOTO

And the church makes its own vow to uphold and support the family or the new Christian in their faith walk. As Wesley said, there is no such thing as solitary religion, at least not the kind Jesus taught.

Baptism is also a call to personal holiness. Every time we witness a baptism, we are reminded of our own need for God's grace and call upon our lives. I like the words of the old baptismal ritual in which the parents are asked, "Do you accept as your bounden duty and privilege to live before this child a life that becomes the Gospel?"

As baptized Christians, we bear the watermark of God. We become the Gospel in the world. It is who we are, and it tells the world whose we are.

So welcome, Walker Reeves, into the family of God. You don't know what that means yet, but one day, by God's grace, you will. And it will choke me up again.

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

Imagine Justice Summit encourages moving beyond imagination

BY DEBORAH BELL AND
DEENA MARIE HAMILTON
Special Contributors

On Sept. 17, 2011, more than 100 people from around the Arkansas Conference participated in an event that challenged its participants to envision—and bring about—social, political and environmental justice.

The Imagine Justice Summit, held at the Kendall Center on the campus of Philander Smith College (PSC) in Little Rock, was co-sponsored by the Arkansas Conference, the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA), the Arkansas chapters of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) and the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA), as well as the Imagine Justice Coalition, the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) and the Arkansas Conference Committee on Religion and Race.

UMFA provided funding that waived the registration fee for participants age 25 and younger.

Susan Burton, director of seminar design, education and leadership formation with GBCS, spoke at the opening session and delivered the noon keynote address, which covered a variety of topics including racial reconciliation, the value of the denomination's Social Principles and the importance of preparing to speak from a faith perspective when talking with those who hold political office.

"Whether or not [politicians] take in what you say, make it about being able to use your voice," she said when asked for tips to avoid becoming frustrated with the political process.

Regarding the Social Principles, Burton revealed that she did not know they existed until she was 28 years old, despite being raised in a United Methodist congregation. She reflected upon an experience in eighth-grade Sunday school, in which she discovered she was the only person in the room who was against the death penalty.

"I didn't know that I was not by myself," she said, pointing out that the denomination holds an anti-death penalty stance. Years later, she discovered that the guidance in the Social Principles provided a theological foundation to support her position.



Susan Burton of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society delivered the keynote address at the Imagine Justice Summit, held Sept. 17 at Philander Smith College in Little Rock.

PHOTO BY CHRIS SPATZ

Burton recognized the partnership between the Arkansas chapters of MFSA and BMCR, noting she hopes that it continues through the Imagine Justice coalition.

"I feel this needs to happen, and I hope my presentation today inspires that," Burton said.

Workshops included a session on family justice led by the Rev. Edna Morgan of First UMC Pine Bluff; "Imagine an Inclusive Church" led by Circuit Judge Wendell Griffen, who also serves as pastor of New Millennium Baptist Church; and a panel discussion on political justice featuring Dr. Joerg Rieger of SMU's Perkins School of Theology, Dr. Jay Barth of Hendrix College and Dr. Terrance Thomas, assistant director of the social justice initiative at Philander Smith College.

A special track for young adults focused on mission. The Rev. Malik Saafir of Theresa Hoover UMC Little Rock and student pastor Sara Bayles of Cleveland and Overcup UMCs co-lead the workshop on the theology of mission, and Tanika Harris of the General Board of Global Ministries led the session on putting mission into action.

Saafir also led the "Imagine Environmental Justice" workshop, which initiated meaningful conversation about how faith communities can better care for the environment.

"It would be a start to offer recycling opportunities [at our churches]," he said. "But the church needs to transform structures that are no longer being used for congregational growth and development into structures and land available to the community to offer urban farms, social renewal projects and community training centers."

Bishop Charles Crutchfield, who led the event's closing service of Holy Communion, sees the Imagine Justice Summit as the beginning of longer-term efforts.

"I see this as a template for modeling and encouraging other elements of the Annual Conference to step up and be involved, not only in issues that relate to social justice, but in any manifestation of the Kingdom of God," he said. "I think that it is right to say that this a magnificent first step towards getting into a prolonged conversation about justice in our Conference."

"We are not going to influence any congressman today, but I hope that there will be someone in this room that will write an eloquent letter to his or her congressman to change a vote for something just and right, rather than for something that is convenient."

Bell (dbell@bcdinc.org) is chair of Arkansas BMCR and director of Better Community Development. Hamilton (pinktitration14@gmail.com) serves as interim minister of family ministries and outreach at Wesley Chapel and Duncan UMCs in Little Rock. Amy Forbus contributed to this report.



The Rev. Malik Saafir and Sara Bayles lead a discussion on the theology of mission for the youth and young adult participants in the Imagine Justice Summit.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Church administrative professionals gather for education, networking

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Sixty-three administrative professionals on Aug. 23 attended the seventh annual meeting of the Arkansas chapter of the Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries (PAUMCS) at the Kendall Center on the campus of Philander Smith College.

The agenda included Conference communications coordinator Patrick Shownes presenting on the proper use of Facebook as an official communications channel for churches; the Rev. Mackey Yokem on "What is happening to my church?—a review of Imagine Ministry"; and Officer Brian Grigsby of the Little Rock Police Department, who addressed church office safety concerns.

The number of attendees at the August event was more than double the Arkansas chapter's 30-member roster.

"We have more and more attending for the first time every year," said Libby Gray, one of the chapter's founding members and its current president. "We were thrilled to have Patrick teach us more about Facebook's capabilities—everyone loved it."

"They also appreciated the practical safety tips from Officer Grigsby, and I think many of them were amazed to learn more of what's going on with Imagine Ministry."

Mitzie Whitten, administrative assistant at Cornerstone UMC Jonesboro since January of this year, was a first-time PAUMCS attendee.

"It was good to meet others who do the same job, or at least parts of it, and share information," she said.

In addition to networking with her peers, Whitten also found value in all three workshops.

"It seems that technology is a

big part of our future," she said concerning the Facebook session. "We as administrative assistants or secretaries need to be learning more about the resources available to us."

Membership in PAUMCS is open to all persons, paid or volunteer, who presently work or have previously worked as an administrative assistant in a local church or UMC extension ministry, or administrative professionals who hold membership in a UMC.

Arkansas PAUMCS is active at the national level, too. Three of its officers—Libby Gray, Fonda Kirkman and Cindy Parker—serve

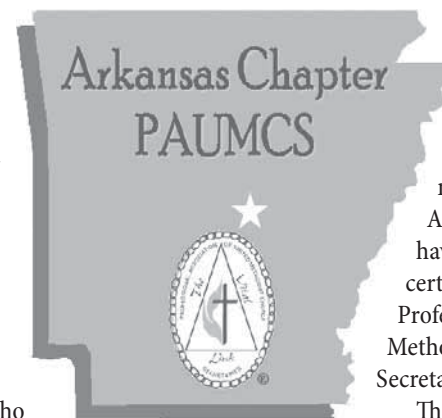
on committees for the national organization, which comprises more than 380 members. Seven Arkansas members have earned certification as Professional United Methodist Church Secretaries.

The certification process involves completing a course held at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Ga., as well as approval by the professional's local church. The process is endorsed by the General Council on Finance and Administration, and certified members must keep up with continuing education requirements to retain certification.

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) has recognized the value of having a professional organization through which church professionals can share knowledge, support, prayer and spiritual growth opportunities. For the past two years, UMFA has given the chapter a grant to help with expenses.

Arkansas Chapter PAUMCS dues are \$15 per year, and the membership year runs from January through December.

For more information, including where to send membership dues, visit the chapter's website at ar-paumcs.org and click on "About Us."



Delegation begins prep for General, Jurisdictional Conferences

Steele declines to become a candidate for bishop

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Arkansas Conference delegates to the 2012 General Conference of the United Methodist Church and the 2012 South Central Jurisdictional Conference met Saturday, Aug. 27 to begin preparing for the work that will take place at the two gatherings.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to determine whether Arkansas would endorse a candidate for bishop. United Methodists in the U.S. hold episcopal elections every four years at the five Jurisdictional Conferences. The vast majority of people elected to the episcopacy carry the endorsement of their own Conference delegation.

To make such a determination, the Arkansas delegates followed a process common among delegations in the South Central Jurisdiction (SCJ). It began with a discussion of qualities that delegates would value in a bishop. After the conversation, balloting began, with individuals writing names of those they would be willing to support as a candidate.

"All elders serving as a delegate were eligible for selection," said Asa Whitaker, chair of the Arkansas

delegation. "Balloting resulted in identifying the Rev. Rodney Steele as the only candidate for continuing in the endorsement process."

The next step in the process relies upon discernment by each person named as a potential candidate. An individual the delegation would support may choose not to stand for election, which is the choice Steele made.

"Our process clearly states that anyone can remove themselves from the process at any time," Whitaker said. "On announcement of the vote, Rodney announced that he did not wish to continue in the process."

Steele has stood as a candidate for bishop twice before, in 2004 and 2008. In 2004, he withdrew from consideration after participating in the interview process across the Jurisdiction, but before the Jurisdictional Conference convened.

In 2008, he withdrew from consideration on the floor of Jurisdictional Conference, breaking a deadlocked balloting process and opening the path to the election of Bishop James Dorff, who now serves as episcopal leader of the San Antonio Area.

This time around, Steele says,

the timing just isn't right.

"I'm humbled and honored by [the delegation's] consideration," he said. "However, I don't believe that I can be a part of the Jurisdiction's interview process due to my recent appointment as Senior Pastor of First UMC in Mountain Home. I believe it would be detrimental to the momentum of growth which the congregation is experiencing for me to give the required time and attention to the interview process."

Steele, whose previous appointment was as superintendent of the North Central District, emphasized the crucial nature of ministry at the local level.

"I have always said that the most important purpose of the church is making disciples of Jesus Christ, and that occurs primarily in local settings," Steele said. "This is an opportunity for me to practice what I preach with a wonderful congregation and staff who are committed to reaching the mission field in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ. I feel so blessed."

Whitaker noted that while the delegation was disappointed that they would not have the opportunity to endorse Steele as a candidate, "we

clearly expressed our love, support, and deep respect for his decision."

Election process

Upon the 2012 retirement of Bishop Charles Crutchfield, the Arkansas Conference will receive a new episcopal leader. Episcopal elections for all five Jurisdictions will be held July 18-21, with the SCJ meeting in Oklahoma City.

The interview process for episcopal candidates will take place in early 2012. In past years, the candidates have begun by responding to a set of written questions. After delegations have had time to review those responses, candidates have traveled to meet with each delegation in the SCJ. Each interview typically lasts about an hour.

At the 2012 SCJ gathering, new bishops will be elected to fill vacancies created by four retiring bishops (the SCJ is reducing its number of bishops by one, in accordance with a decision made at General Conference 2008).

Immediately after the elections, the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee will meet to assign

bishops to episcopal areas through a group discernment process. The Arkansas Area may receive a newly elected bishop, or one already serving within the SCJ. Each Conference in the Jurisdiction has one lay and one clergy representative on the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee.

New and continuing bishops begin their four-year assignments on Sept. 1, 2012.

Other topics

In other delegation business, the group heard from Bishop Charles and Karen Crutchfield regarding two different matters to be taken up at General Conference.

Karen Crutchfield, an ex-officio member of the Insurance and Pensions Task Force, gave a briefing on proposed General Conference legislation related to clergy pensions. Bishop Crutchfield briefed delegates on changes to candidacy and ordination that the Council of Bishops plans to recommend.

"These presentations were for the delegation's awareness," said Whitaker. "Therefore, no action was requested, required or taken."

'Pumpkin Patch' events a form of ministry

Each October, a number of churches transform their lawns from green to orange, covering their property with pumpkins of all shapes and sizes. But all the decoration isn't just for fun. In most cases, there's ministry behind the bright autumn colors.

For example, from its high-profile location at the intersection of I-530 and U.S. Highway 79 in Pine Bluff, Good Faith Carr UMC last year held its first pumpkin patch, selling more than 2,000 pumpkins and raising several thousand dollars for the area's Neighbor to Neighbor program and other local missions that provide assistance with food, shelter, transportation, utilities and home repairs.

Simply stocking up with the pumpkins benefited a good cause. Purchased from Pumpkins USA, Good Faith Carr UMC's inventory came from the Navajo Indian Reservation in Farmington, N.M., which meant the project helped support the United Methodist Navajo Center, providing both jobs and income for the reservation.

In 2010, the church's patch hosted more than 1,000 children from the Jefferson County area, in groups of 10 to 300. "We expect to double that number this year," says the Rev. Mike Wilkie. Besides the pumpkins themselves, activities such as storytelling, face painting, snacks, hay rides, a maze and a bounce house provided a lot of fun for those who attended.

The effort didn't belong exclusively to one church, either. Groups and individuals from several area churches, non-profits, scout troops and others helped

with the unloading. Some returned to work at the patch, helping with storytelling, maintenance and crafts.

Wilkie reports that during the past year, people have approached church members asking if they will once again host a pumpkin patch. "It was a tremendous outreach program for the church, resulting not only in new members, but a general increase in attendance and stewardship," he said.

This year's pumpkin patch at Good Faith Carr UMC runs from Oct. 16 to 30.

TOP RIGHT: A group visiting Good Faith Carr UMC's pumpkin patch prepares to go on a hayride.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Children on a field trip each get to select their own pumpkin from the patch.

BELOW: The Rev. Mike Wilkie speaks at the dedication of Good Faith Carr UMC's first pumpkin patch. The event drew people from the surrounding community and earned money for several mission efforts.

COURTESY PHOTOS



Documentary, panelists encourage faithful discussion on hot-button issue

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

LITTLE ROCK—New Millennium Baptist Church hosted the Sept. 13 premiere of “Gospel Without Borders,” a new documentary that encourages people to consider the issue of immigration through the lens of Christian faith. Arkansas Area Bishop Charles Crutchfield participated in the panel discussion that followed.

Produced by EthicsDaily.com with primary funding provided by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, “Gospel Without Borders” owes its existence to its Arkansas connections.

“This documentary would not be possible without the vision and determination of Steve Copley,” said its producer, Dr. Robert Parham of EthicsDaily.com. The Rev. Steve Copley, an elder in the Arkansas Conference and director of Arkansas Justice for Our Neighbors, began the conversation with Parham that ultimately led to filming.

After viewing the half-hour short form of the documentary, the audience had the opportunity to hear from Bishop Crutchfield, immigration attorney Paul Charton and Bishop Anthony



Participants in a Sept. 13 panel discussion on immigration included, from left: Paul Charton, immigration attorney with the Catlett Law Firm; Bishop Anthony Taylor, Catholic Diocese of Little Rock; and Bishop Charles Crutchfield, Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church. The discussion followed the premiere of the documentary “Gospel Without Borders,” which featured all three panelists speaking about immigration issues.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Taylor of the Catholic Diocese of Little Rock, all of whom gave interviews for the documentary.

The DVD, available for purchase through EthicsDaily.com, includes a longer version designed for viewing in segments, making it ideal for a four-session group study. Bishop Taylor began his remarks by noting that he is sending a copy of the DVD to all priests in the Diocese of Little Rock, as well as to all U.S. Catholic bishops, asking that they and their churches use it as a Lenten study in 2012.

Bishop Crutchfield expressed gratitude to Bishop Taylor for his outspoken courage in addressing such a politically and emotionally charged issue. He added that while the documentary does not directly address the issue of family values, “Christians are concerned about family values. It goes against family values to separate families.”

He cited the recent

failure of the DREAM Act to pass the U.S. Senate as an example of a lack of compassion for young people who did not choose their undocumented status: “Who ever gave us the right to go to war against children?” he asked.

All three panelists expressed hope that the documentary leads to productive conversation in faith communities.

“The rhetoric in the immigration debate is usually so heated that no one actually learns anything,” said Charton.

Parham, who moderated the panel discussion, noted that EthicsDaily.com has free downloadable leader’s guides for those who wish to engage in a study of the documentary.

“If we can distribute tens of thousands [of copies]... we can nudge the national ethos in a constructive direction,” he said.

To learn more about “Gospel Without Borders,” download the free discussion guides, view excerpts or order the DVD, visit ethicsdaily.com.

50 local churches receive communications technology grants

More than 100 local churches or extension ministries responded to the opportunity to receive a \$1,000 grant to start or improve their ability to reach people in their communities. Fifty of those churches last month received the good news that their grant requests were being funded.

In an initiative that was the first of its kind for the Arkansas Conference, fifty matching grants were made available through the Communications department of the Conference office. The grant program was announced at the Annual Conference meeting in June, and the office received applications through Sept. 1.

Individuals from outside the Conference office reviewed and evaluated the grant applications. Grants were awarded based on a 100-point rating system and four criteria:

- a description of the project
- how the grant would meet the local church’s communication need
- how the funds would be used to make disciples for Jesus Christ
- the total budget for the project.

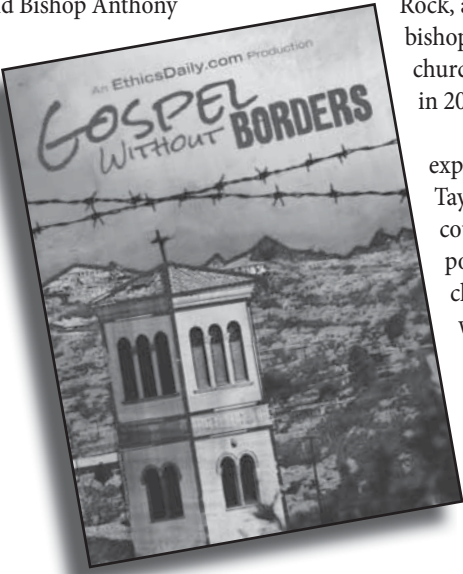
To qualify for consideration, congregations were required to identify a communications contact person, agree to send that individual to a free communication or technology training session sponsored by the Conference and pledge to provide documentation of the local church’s commitment to provide \$500 toward the project.

Thirty-five grants were awarded to local churches or ministries with an average worship attendance of 75 or fewer. Ten grants went to churches with an average worship attendance of 76 to 200, and five churches or ministries with an

average attendance of more than 200 received grants.

The churches selected to receive grants are:

- Amboy (North Little Rock)
- Argenta (North Little Rock)
- Ash Flat
- Berryville
- Bethel (Jacksonville)
- Brookland
- Calico Rock
- Christ (Cabot)
- Cornerstone (Jonesboro)
- Decatur
- Diamondhead
- Dover
- Ebenezer (Benton)
- FaithSpring (Little Rock)
- First Marked Tree
- First Trumann
- First Jacksonville
- First Batesville
- First Bella Vista
- First Hamburg
- Fisher
- Gardner (Hot Springs)
- Grand Avenue (Hot Springs)
- Grand Avenue (Stuttgart)
- Highfill
- Journey (Fort Smith)
- Kibler
- McElroy
- Melbourne
- Mission (Fort Smith)
- Mount Pleasant (Heber Springs)
- Mount Olivet (Rison)
- Naylor
- Portland
- Quitman
- Salem (Benton)
- Southside (Batesville)
- St. Andrew (Arkadelphia)
- St. James (Fayetteville)
- St. Luke (Pine Bluff)
- St. Paul (Harrison)
- St. Paul (Fort Smith)
- Theresa Hoover (Little Rock)
- Vietnamese (Fort Smith)
- Wesley Foundation (Arkansas State University)
- Wesley Foundation (Arkansas Tech University)
- Wesley Foundation (University of Arkansas at Little Rock)
- Wilson
- Winthrop
- Yellville



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Fire (continued from page 1A)

ministries.

“We can’t stay there,” said the Rev. Blake Lasater, the church’s pastor. “We’re actively looking for someplace else.”

Extensive damage

Though not officially declared such, it appears Living Waters at Centerton UMC’s 91-year-old building is a complete loss. A fire restoration company estimated that two months of around-the-clock labor would result in a clean shell ready for rebuilding.

Lasater says that everything except the masonry and brick shell of the structure would have to be removed before considering a rebuild. “That’s probably going to max out our insurance policy,” he said. “And then the question becomes, even if you do rebuild, and you go to attach a new roof or a new floor, are the walls going to stay intact? Because the mortar between the bricks is crumbling.

“The fire was just so hot that the bricks, the integrity of the mortar’s just not there. One engineer said, ‘I’d seriously worry about drilling a hole in the wall and the thing just crumbling around you.’”

One bright spot in the tragedy: Though they have small cracks, the building’s stained glass windows seem to be salvageable. Lasater said having the 1970’s-era exterior doors replaced had been something he’d wanted for three years, but their weakness actually saved the



ABOVE: Two days after their sanctuary was destroyed by arson, the people of Living Waters at Centerton UMC gathered for Sunday worship in their food pantry.

PHOTO BY ALLISON RUPP

RIGHT: Firefighters work to ensure they have completely extinguished the flames.

PHOTO BY OMAR RIKABI



windows. The fire created a backdraft that blew open the weakest point of the building—and it turned out the doors were weaker than the stained glass.

“If we had had new doors there, it would’ve blown the windows out,” he said.

The congregation hopes to incorporate the historic windows into whatever facility follows the destroyed one.

The bigger bright spot, though, is that the people remain defined by their faith, not by a charred structure on their property.

The church’s lay leader, J. Harris Moore, received a phone call from another member a little after 8 p.m. the evening of the fire, telling him the news. He left his home to meet other church members at a car lot near the church, where they waited for an hour or two until firefighters and police permitted them to get closer to the building.

When the group did walk in, they saw that chair

upholstery and ceiling fan blades had melted, basement windows were blacked out and the building had sustained smoke and water damage throughout.

“Then we as a group went down to the bottom of the stairs, out of the way, and had prayer,” Moore said. “It was a prayer of unity, community and togetherness...an uplifting prayer that this was not the end for the congregation.”

Unexpected generosity

In the early stages of recovery, the people of Living Waters at Centerton UMC have been surprised to receive unsolicited love offerings from within and beyond Arkansas and United Methodism.

A couple from Prescott—“I don’t even know if they’re connected to a Methodist church or not,” he said—sent a small letter of condolence and a \$1,000 check.

And when Rylee Griffin, a kindergartener from Lasater’s hometown of Cecil, saw news of the fire reported on television, he

contacted Lasater’s mother to get an address for where to send help. When Lasater opened Rylee’s letter, he found a handwritten note with \$5 from the boy’s savings.

Churches are sending help, too. Nearby, First Baptist Church of Centerton took up a \$1,500 love offering for Living Waters at Centerton. And across state lines, two churches in the Louisiana Conference served by the Rev. Henry Stone, a seminary classmate of Lasater’s, sent a couple hundred dollars.

“With everything else going on in the world, these people are taking the time to send what they can,” said Lasater.

Looking forward

Though the leadership team has not yet gathered to begin the process of deciding where, when and how to rebuild, ideas for features of a new gathering space have begun to rise up from the old building’s ashes.

“We do know that it’s not going to be fast. It’s not going to be next week, it’s not going to be next month,” Moore said. “The leadership team still has to meet and make that decision.... I think we will do whatever is best for the congregation as a whole.”

Moore acknowledged it’s OK to not make the decision right away. “I think the point is that we’re still going to be the church,” he said.

“We’re looking at metal buildings, something that’s going to be functional and practical,” Lasater said. “We can make the front of it look aesthetically pleasing pretty cheaply. We’re not trying to build a monument. We’re just trying to build a functional, practical building.”

Lasater said the building and its contents were covered for up to \$950,000 in damage, so Living Waters at Centerton UMC will have some resources to work with as they discern how to move forward.

He said one of the struggles of this early recovery phase has been identifying damaged equipment and finding documentation of the building’s contents for insurance purposes. He urges other churches to remember that this type of disaster may happen in any building, and to keep those types of details cataloged.

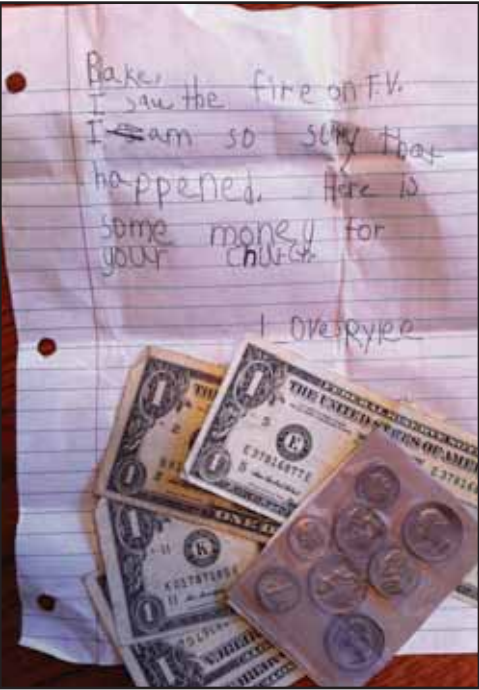
“That’s stuff that needs to be documented and stored off-site, [so] you can immediately pull up and say ‘Here’s what we lost’ and go from there,” he said.

In some ways, the fire presents an opportunity to fix some problems. For example, accessibility was an issue with the old facility, which had an abundance of stairs. Lasater says that a handful of members who had attended the original Centerton church since childhood were among the first ones who pointed out that they can now design something that doesn’t present challenges for people who have difficulty walking.

“I was surprised,” he said. “They were ready for the next chapter.”

“It just seems like all of us are on the same page, and we’re just kind of almost excited about what the future’s going to bring.”

“The church is not the building, no matter how historical it is,” Lasater says. “You kind of have to just get beyond that and realize that God’s not left you. You’ve still got a mission and a ministry.”



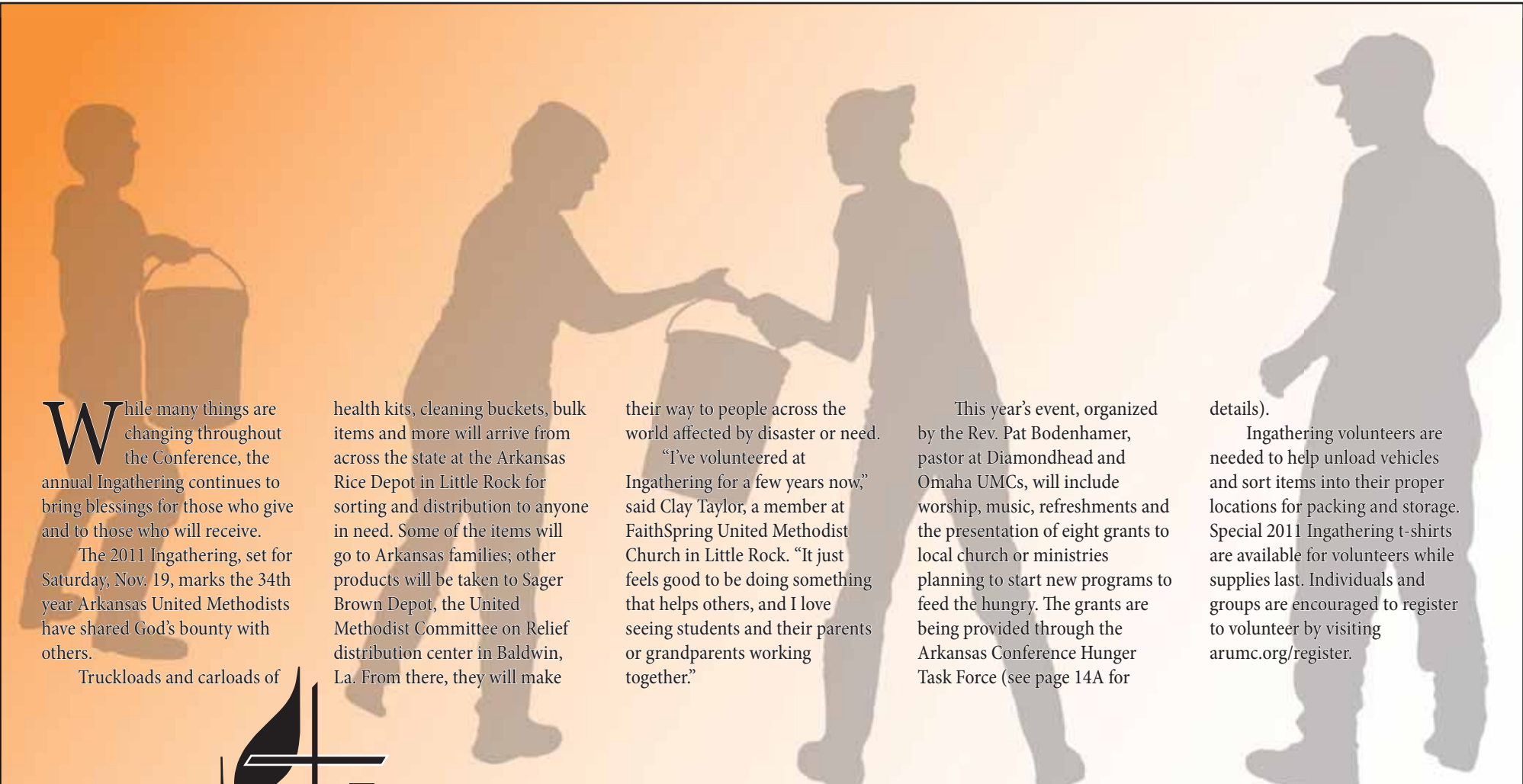
Rylee Griffin, a kindergartener from Cecil, Ark., was among the first to send financial help for the congregation’s rebuilding effort.

PHOTO BY BLAKE LASATER



Decades-old Sunday school records from the early days of Centerton Methodist Church sustained damaged from the fire.

PHOTO BY OMAR RIKABI



While many things are changing throughout the Conference, the annual Ingathering continues to bring blessings for those who give and to those who will receive.


The 2011 Ingathering, set for Saturday, Nov. 19, marks the 34th year Arkansas United Methodists have shared God’s bounty with others.

Truckloads and carloads of health kits, cleaning buckets, bulk items and more will arrive from across the state at the Arkansas Rice Depot in Little Rock for sorting and distribution to anyone in need. Some of the items will go to Arkansas families; other products will be taken to Sager Brown Depot, the United Methodist Committee on Relief distribution center in Baldwin, La. From there, they will make their way to people across the world affected by disaster or need.

“I’ve volunteered at Ingathering for a few years now,” said Clay Taylor, a member at FaithSpring United Methodist Church in Little Rock. “It just feels good to be doing something that helps others, and I love seeing students and their parents or grandparents working together.”

This year’s event, organized by the Rev. Pat Bodenhamer, pastor at Diamondhead and Omaha UMCs, will include worship, music, refreshments and the presentation of eight grants to local church or ministries planning to start new programs to feed the hungry. The grants are being provided through the Arkansas Conference Hunger Task Force (see page 14A for details).

Ingathering volunteers are needed to help unload vehicles and sort items into their proper locations for packing and storage. Special 2011 Ingathering t-shirts are available for volunteers while supplies last. Individuals and groups are encouraged to register to volunteer by visiting arumc.org/register.



INGATHERING

Saturday, Nov. 19
9 a.m.-11 a.m.
Arkansas Rice Depot
3801 W. 65th Street
Little Rock

School Kit items

Value: \$11 per kit

- 1 pair blunt scissors (rounded tip)
- 3 pads (or loose leaf) of 8 1/2” x 11” ruled paper
- 1 30-centimeter ruler
- 1 hand held pencil sharpener
- 6 unsharpened pencils with erasers
- 1 eraser, 2 1/2”
- 1 box of 24 crayons (only 24)

Prepare a 14” x 16” (finished size) cloth bag with handles and an optional closure (Velcro®, snap or button) and place items in the bag. Patterns are available from UMCOR Sager Brown or umcor.org.

Bulk material needs

(listed in order of priority)

1. Terry cloth hand towels (15” x 25” or 16” x 27”—no kitchen towels)
2. Metal nail files or fingernail clippers (no emery boards, no toenail clippers)
3. Children’s blunt scissors
4. Pencil sharpeners (plain, small, individual sharpeners with no emblems)
5. Baby sweaters (open in the front)
6. Cloth baby diapers (cloth only—no disposable diapers)
7. Ruled paper (pad, spiral, or loose leaf)
8. Baby gowns or sleepers
9. School Bags (finished size 14” x 16”)

Birthing Kit items

Value: \$8 per kit

- 1 hotel-size bar of soap (1 oz. and up)
- 1 pair of clean latex gloves
- 1 square yard of clear 4 mil plastic sheeting
- 3 pieces of clean string each 12” long
- 1 clean single use razor blade (carefully wrap the blade in paper or plastic to protect it and keep it from causing injury)
- 2 flannelette receiving blankets, each 1 square yard

Place these items inside a sealed one-gallon plastic bag.

- All items included in kits must be **NEW** items.
- All emergency kits are carefully planned to make them usable in the greatest number of situations. Since strict rules often govern product entry into other countries, it is important that kits contain only the requested items—nothing more.
- Do NOT include any personal notes, money or additional materials in the kits. These things must be painstakingly removed and will delay the shipment.

Important kit assembly information

Packing the kits

- Keep the weight of the box in mind. Each packed box cannot exceed 66 pounds.

- ### Shipping the kits

 - Complete 2 packing lists—one for your records and one to put on the shipping box.
 - Paste the shipping label/packing list on the outside of each box you send. The shipping list helps the depot to quickly process kits.
 - Processing & Shipping Costs: Please enclose an envelope containing at least \$1 for each kit you send. This donation enables kits to be sent without delay to areas in need. For Cleaning Buckets: \$1.50.

Need a grant for a new or existing hunger ministry?

See page 14A to learn how Ingathering funds can help your church make a difference right where you live.

Items specific to Arkansas

In addition to the kits we will send to the UMCOR Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La., we also will receive the following items for use by Arkansas Rice Depot:

Children’s Disaster Kits

- 1 coloring book
- 1 box of colored pencils
- 1 storybook (preferably about feelings)
- 2 small toy vehicles (these should be emergency vehicles such as police cars, fire trucks, ambulances)
- 1 soft, cuddly stuffed toy

Place all items in a large zip-lock bag or box.

Disposable diapers (all sizes)

Donations of diapers will be distributed through the Rice Depot’s Arkansas Diaper Depot initiative, aimed at providing struggling mothers, families and their infants with much-needed diapers.



Mabelvale duo provides warmth for 258 babies

Dixie Bour, left, and Frankie Beard, members of Mabelvale UMC, organize sweaters they have crocheted for layette kits that the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) will distribute. Bour made 143 sweaters, and Beard made 115. The results of their handiwork will be delivered on Oct. 9 to UMCOR’s Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La., where a team of 18 people from Mabelvale UMC will travel for a mission trip, taking with them the 258 sweaters that will be included in kits shipped all over the world to help new parents care for their infants.

Want to start a similar project? Contact Mabelvale UMC at 501-455-2503 to obtain the pattern the women used for these sweaters.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Cleaning Bucket Kit items

Value: \$55 per bucket

- 5-gallon bucket with resealable lid
- Bleach (two 1-quart bottles or one 82-oz. bottle. Do not include bleach if you are shipping the bucket through the U.S. Postal Service, UPS or FedEx.)
- 5 scouring pads
- 7 sponges
- 1 scrub brush
- 18 cleaning towels (reusable wipes)
- Liquid laundry detergent (two 25-oz. or one 50-oz. bottle)
- 1 household cleaner, 12-16 oz. bottle
- Disinfectant dish soap, 16-28 oz. bottle
- 50 clothes pins
- Clothes line (two 50 ft. or one 100 ft.)
- 5 dust masks
- 2 pair latex gloves
- 1 pair work gloves
- 24-bag roll of heavy-duty trash bags, 33-45 gallon (remove roll from box before placing in bucket)
- 1 Insect repellent spray, 6-14 oz. can (If aerosol, cans must have protective caps. See Special Requirements.)
- 1 air freshener, 8 or 9 oz. can (If aerosol, cans must have protective caps. See Special Requirements.)

Special Shipping Requirements: All cleaning agents must be liquid and in plastic bottles. No powders. Pack them inside a bucket or strong outer box. If including aerosols or flammables, ship kits by UPS Ground, Fed Ex Ground, or by truck. Do NOT ship by U.S. Mail or DHL/Airborne freight.

NOTE: if the requested item size is not available, go down to the next available size. If nothing is available in the requested or smaller size, put masking tape on the outside of the bucket saying, “This bucket contains no _____”

Layette Kit items

Value: \$35 per kit

- 6 cloth diapers
- 2 shirts or 2 one-piece body suits
- 2 baby washcloths
- 2 gowns or sleepers
- 2 diaper pins
- 1 sweater open in the front
- 2 receiving blankets

Bundle the items inside one of the receiving blankets and secure with the diaper pins.

Sewing Kit items

Value: \$18 per kit

- 3 yards of cotton or cotton-blend, solid color or print fabric (must be 3 yards of uncut fabric)
- 1 pair sewing scissors
- 1 package of needles
- 1 spool of thread
- 5-8 matching buttons

Wrap sewing notions in the fabric and place in a sealed one-gallon plastic bag.

Bedding Kit items

Value: \$50 per kit

- 2 flat double-bed sheets
- 2 pillowcases
- 2 pillows

Health Kit items

Value: \$12 per kit

- 1 hand towel (15” x 25” up to 17” x 27”—no kitchen towels)
- 1 washcloth
- 1 comb (large and sturdy, not pocket-sized)
- 1 nail file or fingernail clippers (no emery boards or toenail clippers)
- 1 bath-size bar of soap (3 oz. and up)
- 1 toothbrush (single brushes only in original wrapper, no child-size brushes)
- 6 adhesive plastic strip sterile bandages
- \$1.00 to purchase toothpaste

Place these items inside a sealed one-gallon plastic bag.

NOTE: UMCOR Sager Brown is now purchasing toothpaste in bulk to be added to health kits before shipping to ensure that the product does not expire before they are sent.

On Oct. 10, click to end malaria

Arkansas Conference sponsoring Day 1 of 10-Fold

What if you could help wipe out malaria simply by visiting a website and clicking on a link?

On Oct. 10, you can.

10-Fold, a campaign of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and The Advance (also part of the General Board of Global Ministries), launches its second annual 10-day promotion on Monday, Oct. 10. Each day highlights a different mission effort the United Methodist Church supports.

This year, the Arkansas Conference is sponsoring the first day of 10-Fold. For each person who clicks on the appropriate link at the 10-Fold website, the Conference will give a dollar per click, up to \$10,000, toward Imagine No Malaria.

Imagine No Malaria is the UMC's campaign to eliminate malaria deaths in Africa by 2015, by delivering resources that empower the people of Africa to beat a disease that kills a child every 45 seconds.

Advocates of 10-Fold pledge to

support the project through "prayer and share,"—praying for the mission and sharing information with their families, friends, colleagues and fellow church members. Become an advocate by signing up at 10-Fold.org.

The website provides opportunities to participate in live webcasts, online chats and watch videos that feature the project of the day. Bishop Charles Crutchfield is participating in the video message for Day 1.

The Conference will promote 10-Fold and Imagine No Malaria on its Facebook page (facebook.com/arkansasumc), and asks that local churches with a Facebook presence do the same. Individuals should share the message in social media, too, making it easy for their friends to click. Website banners may be downloaded at 10-fold.org/share.

Recordings of the live webcasts, streaming video, online chats, and other media will remain available on 10-Fold.org throughout the ten days, providing many opportunities for United Methodists to share with their friends and ask them to help make a difference.



One child means the world to somebody.



On October 10, click to save a life.

The Arkansas Conference has joined the fight to stamp out malaria.

Our partners are the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and the Advance through their 10-Fold campaign.

10-Fold highlights 10 different mission efforts the United Methodist Church supports.

For each person who visits 10-Fold.org on October 10 and clicks the appropriate link, the Arkansas Conference will give \$1* toward Imagine No Malaria.

*(up to \$10,000)

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Monday, Oct. 24, 2011
7 p.m., Greene Chapel

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TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

Kids' music camp helps medical ministry fly

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

How can five days of musical fun pay for medical help in the Congo? One answer to that question comes from First United Methodist Church Fort Smith.

Campers from 14 churches and four states gathered at First UMC Fort Smith Aug. 1-5 for Music Camp, a tradition of the church's music ministry spanning two decades. Each year the camp chooses a different mission focus.

"The last few years we have chosen the mission that the Arkansas Conference chooses in June," says Nancy Vernon, music coordinator and organist for First UMC Fort Smith.

This year, that meant giving the money to Wings of the Morning, one of several mission efforts supported by the Conference. A United Methodist ministry, Wings of the Morning saves lives by providing air transport so people in remote villages of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) can reach the medical care they need.



Participants in Music Camp at First UMC Fort Smith play hand chimes at the concert that finished out their week. The love offering from the concert helped them raise funds for Wings of the Morning, a medical mission of the United Methodist Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

PHOTO BY CHARLES PARIS

do great things.

Everyone involved participated in multiple ways: Each camper had a speaking part and a vocal solo in the musical. The campers also played hand chimes, which gave some the opportunity to pick up a new musical talent and others the time to sharpen their existing skills.

his experiences there and the needs he witnessed.

"Billy gave a heartfelt, sincere and well-received testimony to the needs of the people of the DRC, whom he obviously loves," Vernon said.

At the end of the musical, the love offering for Wings of the Morning totaled \$4,425.

"Last year we raised \$3,800 for a water well in the DRC," Vernon said, noting that with two additional events and individual donations, the church was able to donate to the Congo Wells Project the \$8,000 required to pay for one well.

The Wings of the Morning offering total is the highest amount raised to date at any of the church's summer music camps.

To give to the ministry, visit umcor.org and search for "08596A." Or, make a donation through the Congo Gift Catalog on the Arkansas Conference website at arumc.org/congo.

More than music

As the week progressed, the children searched their homes for loose change and gave the money to daily offerings for the Wings of the Morning. By Friday, they had gathered more than \$100 for the cause.

Then came the Friday night spaghetti supper and performance. Before the children presented the musical, the crowd heard from a special guest: Billy Reeder, a former communications director for the Arkansas Conference who has traveled to the DRC. He spoke about

Camp experience

First UMC Fort Smith's Music Camp is a day camp, limited to 55 children entering the second through seventh grades. The campers spent five days learning music and rehearsing for a performance on the evening of Friday, Aug. 5.

This year the group presented "Table for Five... Thousand! The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes" by Tom Long and Allen Pote. The plot shares the biblical story mentioned in the title, and conveys the message that with God's help, everyone can

New education wing for Greenbrier church



First UMC Greenbrier broke ground recently for its new education expansion. Participants in the ceremony included, from left: Zach Brown and Tommy Lott of Salter Construction; the Rev. Donna Bennett, associate pastor; Jim Kirk; Tim Maddox, architect; the Rev. Kevin Lyon, senior pastor; Dr. John Farthing, retired pastor; Carolyn Baker, building committee chair; Bruce Welch; Landon Yant; the Rev. Dede Roberts, district superintendent; Greg Bray; John Welch; and Carol Putnam.

PHOTO BY BJ FOX

BY BJ FOX
Special Contributor

It has been a long time coming, but on Sunday, Aug. 28, First United Methodist Church Greenbrier was finally able to break ground for expanding the education space for its facility on the corner of Highway 65 and Tyler Street.

"To the glory of God, I now direct that ground be broken for the Greenbrier First United Methodist Church... a place devoted to the teaching, worship, and glory of our almighty God," declared the Rev. Dede Roberts, superintendent of the Central and North Central Districts, in a ceremony led by the church's pastors, the Revs. Kevin Lyon and Donna Bennett. Special guests at the groundbreaking ceremony included Roberts and Dr. John L. Farthing, who retired as pastor of First UMC Greenbrier in June.

Farthing was a driving force behind the expansion. Attendance at youth programs, worship and Sunday school increased during his tenure; when it became difficult to find vacant rooms for meetings, Farthing in 2009 urged the formation of a building committee.

"I never dreamed that I would ever be a part of such an amazing

undertaking in the life of a church," he said.

The building committee investigated ways to grow responsibly, serving both church members and the community, while staying within a budget. Though many desired a new sanctuary, a new kitchen and a new community fellowship center, expansion of classroom space won out as the first phase. The capital campaign raised \$350,000, so the expansion was scaled back to two phases—classrooms first, then other needs—to meet the budget.

Construction on the new educational wing is expected to last 100 days, which should put children in new classrooms by Christmas.

First UMC Greenbrier has a history of reaching out to its surrounding communities. Not only do scout troops and other groups hold regular meetings in the facility, but there is also a Parents Day Out program, a food pantry and clothes pantry, regular Red Cross blood drives and a very active mission program.

BJ Fox served two years as lay leader of First UMC Greenbrier. She also writes for The Log Cabin Democrat in Conway, Ark.

Save the date: grand re-opening of Ark. UM museum set for Jan. 14

Saturday, Jan. 14, 2012, marks a new beginning for pieces of the past as the United Methodist Museum of Arkansas opens the doors to its new space at First UMC Little Rock.

Originally housed at Quapaw Quarter UMC Little Rock in 1994, the museum moved to Asbury UMC Batesville in 2005, where it remained until early 2011.

"Because of something of a silent, gradual beginning and the various locations, the Conference Museum has been something of a best kept secret," says the Rev. Ed Matthews, a retired pastor involved in the museum's relocation. "Yet, there has always been a diligent effort in Methodism in Arkansas to collect and preserve its historical material and data."

With a reorganization made official at the 2011 Annual Conference, the museum became part of the Conference Commission on Archives and History, under the same umbrella as the Arkansas Conference Archives. The archives, housed in Bailey Library on the campus of Hendrix College in Conway since their establishment in 1990, will remain in their current location. The archives deal primarily with papers, photos and records, while the museum began as a repository for three-dimensional artifacts.

The museum's grand re-opening will be hosted by the Conference Commission on Archives and History, including its Historical Society Board and the Museum Committee.



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

New Tanako staff housing under construction



The new Everitt Staff Lodge at Camp Tanako is rising from the foundation of the camp's old recreation building. Named for Terry Everitt, who served as Camp Tanako's director for 33 years until his death in 2010, the new facility will fulfill one of his dreams for Tanako, according to Becky Campbell, the camp's current director. "Staff housing is something that Terry had wanted to build for a while, so we are dedicating the project to him," she said. Campbell expects to hold a dedication for the lodge before the end of 2011. The project began with about \$37,000 in gifts made in memory of Everitt, and Tanako would welcome more gifts to help pay off the \$300,000 construction loan. Visit tanako.org to learn more about the building's purpose, make a donation or keep up with the progress of construction via a link to the camp's Facebook page.

CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED in the *Arkansas United Methodist* for 50 cents per word, no limit. Call 501-324-8005 or mail to: *Arkansas United Methodist*, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202; or e-mail mtaylor@arumc.org.

First United Methodist Church, Fort Smith is currently taking resumes for Director of Multimedia Ministry. Applicants must be ministry minded and able to manage the technological needs of the church offices and worship services. Must-haves for this position include: an expertise in sound management/light engineering, and a working knowledge of video production/software, and web design. Send resumes to Robert Cloninger at First United Methodist Church, Fort Smith at 200 N. 15th Street, Fort Smith, AR, 72901 or email at rcloninger@fsfumc.org.

First United Methodist Church of Maumelle is seeking a full-time Youth Director. Salary package based upon experience. Send resume or requests to luke@fumcmaumelle.org.

10-day group tour of Ireland April 18-27,2012, \$3,069 air, lodging, 2 meals & guides, from New York. Optional pre-tour to Ellis Island. Tour hosts Jenni and Glen Duncan. Information or sign-up with jduncan@faithspringchurch.org or 501-551-2141.

Vilonia UMC would like to hire a part-time youth director. This person would have responsibilities for 8th-12th grades. Send resume to Rev. Belinda Price viloniaumc@windstream.net.

Give the gift of mobility to disabled children and adults in developing countries by supporting The Red Thread Promise's All Terrain Wheelchair (ATW) program. \$350 sends an ATW across the globe to someone in need. For more information visit www.redthreadpromise.org (keyword: wheelchair) or call 817-320-6522.

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

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Solomon named scouting ministry specialist



Allyne Solomon

Allyne Solomon, a church and community worker for the General Board of Global Ministries, has been certified as a scouting ministry specialist. A member of First UMC Hamburg, Solomon is helping Hamburg churches and agencies develop programs to meet the needs of the poor and disenfranchised. Solomon is also helping area churches understand how scouting and other youth-serving organizations can expand their outreach to young people. "As a program specialist I am a resource person for our Cub pack and Girl and Boy Scout troops," said Solomon. "Last year we started having a Girl Scout unit meet at the church and this year we are going to start having a Boy Scout troop." The Nashville-based General Commission on United Methodist Men has recruited and trained 127 persons to serve as scouting ministry specialists across the U.S. These volunteers help churches view scouting and other youth-serving agencies as ways to reach out to their communities and touch the lives of unchurched families. There are now three scouting ministry specialists in Arkansas: William Byrd (BillByrd1@yahoo.com) and Herrn Northcutt (herrn@hvumc.org), both of Little Rock, and Solomon (allynesolomon@yahoo.com). Persons interested in becoming scouting ministry specialists may contact Larry Coppock, director of scouting for the commission, at LCoppock@gcumm.org or 615-620-7261.

Three to receive 2011 Steel-Hendrix Awards

Hendrix College will recognize three outstanding church and community leaders during the Steel-Hendrix Awards banquet on Monday, Oct. 24 at 5:30 p.m., in Worsham Student Performance Hall in the Student Life and Technology Center. Pam Lentz, a Hendrix alumna and director of children's ministries at First United Methodist Church Conway, will receive the Mary and Ira A. Brumley Award for Religious Education. Dr. Alice Hines, professor of English studies at Hendrix, will receive the Ethel K. Millar Award for Religion and Social Awareness. Hines is a member of Zion Temple CME Church in Menifee. Michelle Moore, director of youth ministries at First UMC Conway, will receive the Youth Director of the Year Award. Hendrix inaugurated the annual Steel-Hendrix program in 1984 to celebrate a century of official relationship with the United Methodist Church. The program was named in honor of Marshall T. Steel, a prominent minister and former president of the college. The awards were named in honor of three Hendrix alumni who distinguished themselves in these fields. Tickets for the awards banquet are \$18 if purchased by Oct. 17, and \$25 after Oct. 17. For tickets or more information, contact Rev. J. Wayne Clark, chaplain of the college, at clark@hendrix.edu or 501-450-1263. Following the awards, there will be a special chapel service featuring best-selling author and Christian activist Shane Claiborne at 7 p.m. in Greene Chapel. For more information on Claiborne, visit thesimpleway.org/shane.



Pam Lentz



Alice Hines



Michelle Moore

Hoey honored for service



Mary Hoey

At the Aug. 23 celebration of its 10th anniversary, Butterfly Community Ministries honored the Rev. Mary Hoey for her service as director of the organization. A deacon who retired from the Arkansas Conference in 2010, Hoey served through Butterfly Ministries for the past five years, combining her experience in pastoral ministry—including 14 years as a missionary in Bolivia—with her passion for working with the Hispanic community. Butterfly Community Ministries is a faith-based community outreach organization established to respond to local areas of need by providing resource identification, access and intermediary human service support for the underserved population of northern Pulaski County.

Barnes receives evangelism award

Jim Barnes, a member of Green's Chapel UMC Dierks, was presented this summer with the Denman Evangelism Award for the Southwest District. The award recognizes his dedication to making disciples of Jesus Christ. "Jim is always faithful to spread the gospel in any and every effective way possible," said the Rev. Robert Lyons, Barnes' pastor. Denman Evangelism Awards also honor the memory of Harry Denman, a noted Methodist lay leader and evangelist who co-founded the Foundation for Evangelism.



Jim Barnes

Churches send care packages for deployed troops

The Rev. Walter “Bubba” Smith, an Elder in the Arkansas Conference and wing chaplain serving at the Joint Base in Balad, Iraq, opens care packages sent to him by First UMC Arkadelphia. Smith, who has been deployed since June, says he has received more than 150 care packages from seven United Methodist churches in four states. Chapel volunteers sort the contents of the care packages and distribute them to soldiers and airmen within 24 hours of their arrival.



COURTESY PHOTO

Can We Talk? Jurisdictional event Nov. 18-19 to feature Bishop Palmer



Bishop Gregory Palmer

“How does the Call to Action impact African American churches?” is the question to be discussed at Can We Talk?, an event hosted at Philander Smith College Nov. 18-19, 2011.

Bishop Gregory Palmer (Iowa Area), a former president of the worldwide United Methodist Council of Bishops, will be the keynote speaker and preacher. In addition, Saturday’s events include a roundtable discussion with bishops from throughout the South Central Jurisdiction.

Can We Talk? is an established and safe forum in which African Americans can enter and then exit a “no holds barred” dialogue about God’s preferred future for the African American church.

Visit arumc.org and look under “Upcoming Events” for the Can We Talk? brochure and online registration form. An early registration rate applies for forms received by Nov. 1.

COMING UP

October

Retired Ministers Luncheon in Stuttgart Oct. 10

The Arkansas Retired Ministers Luncheon will be held on Monday, Oct. 10, at 12 p.m. at the Grand Prairie Center, 2709 Highway 165 South in Stuttgart. The keynote speaker will be Bishop Charles Crutchfield. Following the luncheon, the Rev. Dennis Spence and members of the Bishop’s Task Force on Retiree Health Benefits will make a presentation outlining the challenge the conference faces on this matter. All retired pastors, spouses and surviving spouses of the Arkansas Conference are invited to attend. Contact the Rev. Dr. David Bush at thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org to make reservations.

Wesleyan Leadership Conference, Nashville, Tenn. Oct. 13-15

The 2011 Wesleyan Leadership Conference Oct. 13-15 will explore the vision, message and method that helped John Wesley lead a revival among the people called Methodists.

Sponsored by the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship (GBOD), the event features Dr. Elaine Heath from SMU Perkins School of Theology in Dallas. She will discuss her vision for new models of Wesleyan community.

For more information, contact Steve Manskar, GBOD’s director of Wesleyan Leadership, at smanskar@gbod.org, or register at gbod.org/wesleyanleadership.

‘Run for Shelter’ to benefit ministry with homeless Oct. 15

The Hillcrest Run for Shelter 5k and fun run is the premier road race in Little Rock’s most popular running neighborhood. The race kicks off Hillcrest Harvest Fest and aims to help end homelessness in Central Arkansas. Organized by Pulaski Heights UMC, the Hillcrest Run For Shelter will benefit the efforts of Little Rock’s canvascommunity UMC, which is working to “end homelessness one life at a time.” The 5k begins at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 15. To register or learn more, visit runforshelter.net.

Village UMC ‘Time of Renewal’ with Stan Cosby Oct. 16-17

Village UMC, 200 Carmona Road in Hot Springs Village, will host its sixth annual Time of Renewal on Sunday, Oct. 16 and Monday, Oct. 17. The Sunday schedule includes services at the regular worship times of 9:30 and 11 a.m., with an additional service at 6:30 p.m. Monday includes an 11 a.m. gathering with luncheon following and a 6:30 p.m. service.

Dr. Stan Cosby, senior pastor of St. Stephen UMC Amarillo, Texas, will speak at the event. Cosby received degrees from Asbury Theological Seminary and Oral Roberts University. He is

a published author and has traveled the world as a missionary speaker and evangelist.

Call the church office at 501-922-1030 to make a reservation for the Monday luncheon. For additional information, contact the office or visit villageumc.org.

Faith and Health Conference in Memphis Oct. 20

The 10th annual Faith and Health Conference for Clergy and Congregational Leaders takes place Thursday, Oct. 20, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Church Health Center Wellness, 1115 Union Avenue in Memphis. The conference focus is “Dying Well.”

Dr. Thomas G. Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, will deliver the keynote address. His most recent book is *Accompany Them With Singing: The Christian Funeral*. The conference also features Richard Payne, M.D., Professor of Medicine and Divinity and director of the Institute on Care at the End of Life, Duke Divinity School. The event is preceded by a worship service at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 19, at St. John’s UMC, 1207 Peabody Avenue.

The Faith and Health Conference is sponsored by Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare, the Church Health Center, St. John’s UMC and Methodist Theological Seminary. Admission is free, but limited to the first 300 registrants. Register online at churchhealthcenter.org/conferenceregistration.

Fairview UMW Country Store set for Oct. 22

The United Methodist Women of Fairview UMC, Texarkana, will hold their annual holiday Country Store and Luncheon on Saturday, Oct. 22 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. The event features handmade holiday gifts, baked goods and more, including a drawing for a handmade queen-size quilt at 2 p.m. The soup and chili luncheon runs from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Proceeds from the event benefit both local and national missions.

Hendrix College’s United Methodist Experience Day Oct. 28

The Office of the Chaplain and Office of Admission at Hendrix College, 1600 Washington Ave. in Conway, will host a special United Methodist Experience Day on Friday, Oct. 28, beginning at 8:30 a.m. Prospective students and their families will have opportunities to learn more about the admissions and financial aid process, tour the campus, attend a class and meet faculty members and current students.

There will also be a special forum featuring faculty and students discussing Your Hendrix Odyssey: Engaging in Active Learning and an open house in the Chaplain’s Office and Hendrix Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics and Calling. Reservations may be made at hendrix.edu/campusvisit or by calling 800-277-9017.

Hendrix has been affiliated with the United Methodist Church since 1884. For more information, visit hendrix.edu.

November

HollyFest at First UMC North Little Rock Nov. 4

First UMC North Little Rock, 6701 JFK Blvd., will host its annual HollyFest from 5 to 9 p.m. Friday, Nov. 4. In addition to the chili and hot dog supper, the family-friendly event features live entertainment, a live and silent auction, bake sale, toy sale and handmade gifts. The North Little Rock Mayor’s Youth Council will lead an area of free children’s activities with crafts and more. The new church cookbook, *Still Standing at the Stove*, will be available for \$20. HollyFest is sponsored by United Methodist Women, and last year raised more than \$7,500 for missions.

‘Refuge’ retreat for youth Nov. 4-6

Refuge, a weekend getaway for youth in 6th through 9th grades, includes games, awesome worship and small groups. The event has a summer-camp feel, with the aim of helping re-light the fire in youth’s hearts. Held at Camp Wyldewood in Searcy, Refuge runs from 7 p.m. Friday, Nov. 4, to 11 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 6.

Worship music will be provided by the band Visitor’s Parking. Mike Meeks, a youth minister in the UMC for the past 14 years, will share life lessons through his sermons in a funny, inspiring and attention-getting way that relates well to young people, helping them discover how their own lives are part of God’s great story. Visit accym.org to register.

Renewing the ‘County Seat’ Church Nov. 9-10

“Renewing the ‘County Seat’ Church” is an event designed to focus on strategies and methods for increasing the impact of ministry in a “county seat” setting. Clergy, laity and staff of such congregations are invited to the two-day workshop at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center in Fayetteville, Ark. For more information or to register, visit mountsequoyah.org.

Small Church Leadership Institute Nov. 13-17

The Small Church Leadership Institute (NCLI) is designed to equip laity and pastors with the knowledge and skills to lead their small-attendance churches into the future. The next NCLI will be held Nov. 13-17 at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center in Fayetteville, Ark. For information on speakers, preachers and workshop leaders, or to register, visit mountsequoyah.org.

Ingathering funds supply hunger ministry grants

Apply by Oct. 31; new and existing ministries eligible

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Undesignated funds associated with Ingathering will soon find their way to feeding-related ministries around the state.

Each year, churches from around the Arkansas Conference contribute relief supplies to Ingathering, an event that benefits both the Arkansas Rice Depot and the United Methodist Committee on Relief's Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La.

Often, churches will send money in addition to Ingathering supplies such as health kits, bedding kits and cleaning buckets (see pages 8-9A for details). That money has traditionally covered administrative costs related to organizing the effort, such as transporting supplies to Louisiana.

After a number of years of good stewardship, though, the reserves have grown to \$35,000—a larger amount than needed for covering that type of overhead. The Rev. Pat Bodenhamer, chair of the Conference Board of Global Ministries, contacted the Rev. Steve Copley, chair of the Conference Hunger Task Force. They developed a plan to award grants to feeding ministries associated with the United Methodist Church in Arkansas.

Widespread economic hardship has led to increased activity for ministries that provide food for those in need. According to an August 2011 report released by the national non-profit Feeding America, 28.6

percent of Arkansas children under age 18 face food insecurity (defined as limited availability of or access to food) on a regular basis.

To ensure the money is distributed statewide, the nine districts will each receive \$3,000, from which they may award grants of up to \$500 each to help existing feeding ministries in their area.

The Hunger Task Force has reserved the remaining \$8,000 to divide among emerging hunger relief ministries across the Conference. They expect to award grants of up to \$1,000 each to selected emerging ministries.

"Churches engaging in feeding, community gardens, advocacy, education—anything to fight hunger" may apply to receive grant funding, said Bodenhamer. Districts will award their grants at their discretion; the Hunger Task Force will determine the recipients of the other grants, which will be announced at Ingathering on Saturday, Nov. 19.

Bodenhamer believes that the accumulation of cash was God's way of providing an answer to the current higher demand on the state's food pantries.

"I think he saved it for this time," she said.

The deadline for grant applications is October 31. To apply, visit arumc.org/forms and select "District Hunger Grant Application" for an existing ministry or "Emerging Hunger Ministry Grant Application" for a new ministry.

Art project made as gift to nursing center



As their 2011 Vacation Bible School community outreach project, young people from Richmond UMC and First UMC Ashdown created a bird bath for the Little River Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. All children and youth participated by breaking dishes to create mosaic tiles for covering the bird bath form. Their design featured the United Methodist cross and flame.

COURTESY PHOTO

OBITUARY

BEEBE Britt Cordell

The Rev. Britt Cordell, 96, passed away on Sept. 21, 2011.



Britt Cordell

He was born in Beebe to Henry and Ninnie Cordell, and was raised by Edward and Emily Cordell. He served in

the ministry of the United Methodist Church for 65 years. Cordell served churches in several states, including Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, South Dakota, Iowa and Arkansas.

He was preceded in death by his wife of sixty-five years, Velma; his parents; five brothers; two sons, Lonnie and Francis; and one son-in-law, Don Junke.

He is survived by two daughters, Carolyn Juhnke of

Springdale and Sharon Albert and her husband, Cliff, of Beebe; seven grandchildren; fourteen great-grandchildren; and three great-great-grandchildren.

The funeral was held on Saturday, Sept. 24, 2011, at Antioch Community Church, with burial in Antioch Cemetery. Memorials may be made to Methodist Children's Home, 2002 S. Fillmore, Little Rock, AR 72204, or to a charity of your choice.

UMFA grant supports Small Church Leadership Institute

The Small Church Leadership Institute (SCLI) received recently grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA), enabling SCLI to offer continuing education events to pastors and lay leaders of the 582 churches in the Arkansas Conference with an average attendance lower than 125.

"We have been supporting the Small Church Leadership Institute since it was first organized in 2009," said UMFA President Jim Argue, Jr. "We believe their goal of equipping laity and pastors with the knowledge and skills that will help lead their churches into the future is essential to the Arkansas Conference."

Grants from UMFA have enabled SCLI to offer five continuing education events since 2009. More than 300 pastors and lay leaders have attended these events designed to invigorate small attendance churches.

Top tier speakers in the field of revitalization of the small attendance church like Dr. Gil Rendle and Julia Kuhn Wallace have made presentations at Small Church Leadership Institute events. In addition, Arkansas'

transformational small attendance churches, such as Midland Heights UMC and Spadra UMC, have shared their stories.

"The financial support of the United Methodist Foundation has helped us attract additional grants from the Oklahoma Foundation, the Missouri and Kansas Annual Conferences," said the Rev. Bob Crossman, who coordinates SCLI.

The next SCLI event will be held Nov. 13-17 at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center in Fayetteville. Keynote speakers include Edward Kail, former chair of town and country ministries at Saint Paul School of Theology; Kwasi Kena, director of evangelism ministries for the UMC; Bishop Bruce Blake; Diana Northcutt, director of discipleship for the Oklahoma Conference, and Michael Roberts, director of Connected in Christ. The Rev. Nathan Mattox will be the event preacher, and will offer preaching workshops during the week. To register for the November event, visit mountsequoyah.org.



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Tornado aftermath leads to new friendship, house

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Three United Methodist churches from Fort Smith and one from Texas came together on Labor Day weekend to help a neighbor rebuild a home.

During the May 24 EF3 tornado that tore through the communities of Denning and Etna, Leonard Bland's 17-foot trailer rolled several times and was destroyed. For a while, he thought he had also lost his dog, Coco, to the storm, but his canine companion returned the next day, unharmed.

As people began to sort through the damage, Cheryl Gilmore, a member of St. Paul UMC Fort Smith, arrived in the area to help.

"I met Leonard the day after the tornado hit, when I stopped to offer him assistance," Gilmore said in an e-mail interview. "We became fast friends."

She soon began to think of ways to help her new friend get a new place to live. Gilmore learned that some friends from Hawkins UMC in Hawkins, Texas, were eager to come to Arkansas and help with storm recovery. She soon took on the role of project coordinator and chief fundraiser.

Bland had an empty concrete slab on his property, and the team determined that they could build on it. Together, Gilmore and the Texas team raised funds for supplies and began the process of gathering donated materials to meet Bland's needs.

The Texas group began framing the small house before they left home. They hauled the pieces of the walls from Hawkins on the afternoon of Friday, Sept. 2, and by that same evening, the walls of the



Leonard Bland and his dog, Coco, with part of the construction team. Workers came to the Etna area from Texas and Fort Smith to assist with the project.

PHOTOS BY CHERYL GILMORE AND BECKY NEIGHBORS

house were raised with Bland working alongside the team.

The next day, workers from St. Paul UMC, Midland Heights UMC and Grace Community UMC, all in Fort Smith, arrived to help set trusses and continue other work on the house. By Labor Day, Sept. 5, the exterior of the house had been finished, even down to the paint job. The intense weekend of work meant Bland, who had been sleeping outdoors, once again had shelter.

"He is now able to get in out of the elements," said Becky Neighbors, one of the Midland Heights members who worked on the build.

Neighbors noted that one of her fellow church members, in the process of receiving a home through Habitat for Humanity, came to work on the project even though it

was a rare weekend off from building "sweat equity" hours in her own house.

"She wanted to come be a part of this build because of the blessings she has received so far," Neighbors said.

Plans for plumbing and finishing out the interior are in the works, and between group work days Bland continues to make progress on the construction with available time and materials. Gilmore is planning a fundraiser for late October, and says the goal is to have the house completely finished by the end of Thanksgiving week.

"We went from a flat slab to a 244-square-foot home over the weekend," Gilmore said. "This is truly the house that God built."



Volunteers raised walls, set trusses and more to get Leonard Bland's house "in the dry" over the course of a single weekend.

Nixon to join Hendrix as director of church relations

The Rev. Vic Nixon of Little Rock will soon return to his alma mater, Hendrix College, in a new position as director of church relations. He will begin work at Hendrix on Nov. 1.

A native of Lavaca, Ark., Nixon is a 1962 Hendrix graduate and an alumnus of the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, from which he has received the seminary's distinguished alumni award. A retired elder in the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, he served most recently as senior pastor of Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock. He also has served multiple terms as a member of the Hendrix board of trustees.



Vic Nixon

"Hendrix College has had an enormous impact upon my life, beginning with the opportunity to experience quality higher education in a United Methodist-related college," Nixon said. "I met my spouse at Hendrix. Our daughter and both of my brothers are graduates. Many of my best friends and associates are graduates."

"Hendrix is the institutional embodiment of John Wesley's desire 'to unite those two so long disjoined: knowledge and vital piety,'" he added. "Hendrix continues to have a positive impact on my life and I am delighted to serve the college as director of church relations."

"I am thrilled that Vic will be working with the college as director of church relations," said the Rev. Wayne Clark, chaplain of the college. "As a trustee member, he has been a great supporter of the college and very involved in the major decisions. I have admired Vic's leadership in the Conference and look forward to this new relationship."

Nixon expects to work with the office of the chaplain as well as with the advancement office to strengthen relationships with clergy and churches across Arkansas, as well as to assist with fundraising as it relates to programs of a religious nature, such as the Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics, and Calling.

"I care a great deal about my alma mater, and I'm excited about what it's done," he said. "I really look forward to assisting in any way that I can to strengthen Hendrix College."

Hendrix College has been affiliated with the United Methodist Church since 1884. For more information, visit www.hendrix.edu.

Elders gather for discussion, renewal

The Arkansas Conference Order of Elders gathered at Camp Tanako for its annual retreat Sept. 12-14. Discussions centered on defining and measuring clergy effectiveness. Other activities included a smoked chicken meal provided by First UMC Hamburg, an address by Bishop Crutchfield, worship, Holy Communion and free time for fellowship and rest.



ABOVE: Clergywomen sport their new "Preach Like A Girl" T-shirts at the 2011 Order of Elders retreat. LEFT: The Rev. Hammett Evans leads the Order in song at Camp Tanako's outdoor tabernacle.

PHOTOS BY BETH PURDUE

Campolo, McLaren visit Little Rock churches

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Two prominent contemporary theologians on Sept. 11 spoke at Little Rock United Methodist churches: Dr. Tony Campolo and Brian McLaren.

Campolo, an author, professor emeritus of sociology at Eastern University and the founder and president of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education, spoke at Trinity UMC, preaching in morning worship and delivering an afternoon lecture followed by a booksigning.

His sermon, "10 Years After: What do we offer to a post-9/11



Tony Campolo

world?" challenged concepts many Christians see as foundational to faith.

"The Western church has been duped by the phrase, 'God is in control,'" he said, citing 1 John 5:19 and John 14:30 as scriptural evidence contradicting that statement. Campolo posits that God made the decision to give up power in favor of love. "Control freaks cannot express love," he said.

"We are weeping, and we ought to weep," he said concerning the events of 9/11. "But I worry about America that reacted by seeking revenge."

He lifted up Ephesians 4 as an example of a better course of action.

"It's time for Christians to react as Jesus told us to react—to overcome evil with good," he said. "It's time, as the Scriptures said, to beat the swords into ploughshares, and to talk about war no more. War is not the answer."

In a Sept. 8 CNN Belief Blog article, Eric Marrapodi writes that Campolo relishes the role of guest preacher, as it frees him to say what he feels God is calling him to say.

"If I anger people, I'm gone. It's easier for me to sound the prophetic voice than someone who is there all the time," Campolo told CNN.

He may have stepped on some toes at Trinity UMC, but he brought the congregation to a standing ovation.

The church has made Campolo's

sermon and lecture available at tumclr.org/listen_online.html.

McLaren, an author and activist, was this year's guest for Pulaski Heights UMC's Raney Preaching Series.

His Sunday evening lecture drew his friends Campolo and Jay Bakker as audience members. Bakker, pastor of Revolution Church and the son of Jim Bakker and the late Tammy Faye Messner, was in Little Rock to speak at Open Door Community Church.

In his Monday morning lecture, McLaren focused on the challenges churches face in an environment of swift change.

"I think we in the church have to stop beating ourselves up, we have to stop feeling ashamed," he said, "but we also have to start waking up to these changes that are going on."

McLaren says Christianity is on the verge of rediscovering the priesthood of all believers. He pointed out that John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, helped with that discovery in his own day.

He suggested that current changes in the Church bring a time to celebrate the creativity of God.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there's liberty and there's freedom to experiment, there's evolution, there's adaptation, there's diversification, there's all kinds of new forms emerging and erupting," he said.

He believes that the view of clergy as service providers and laity as consumers will soon end.

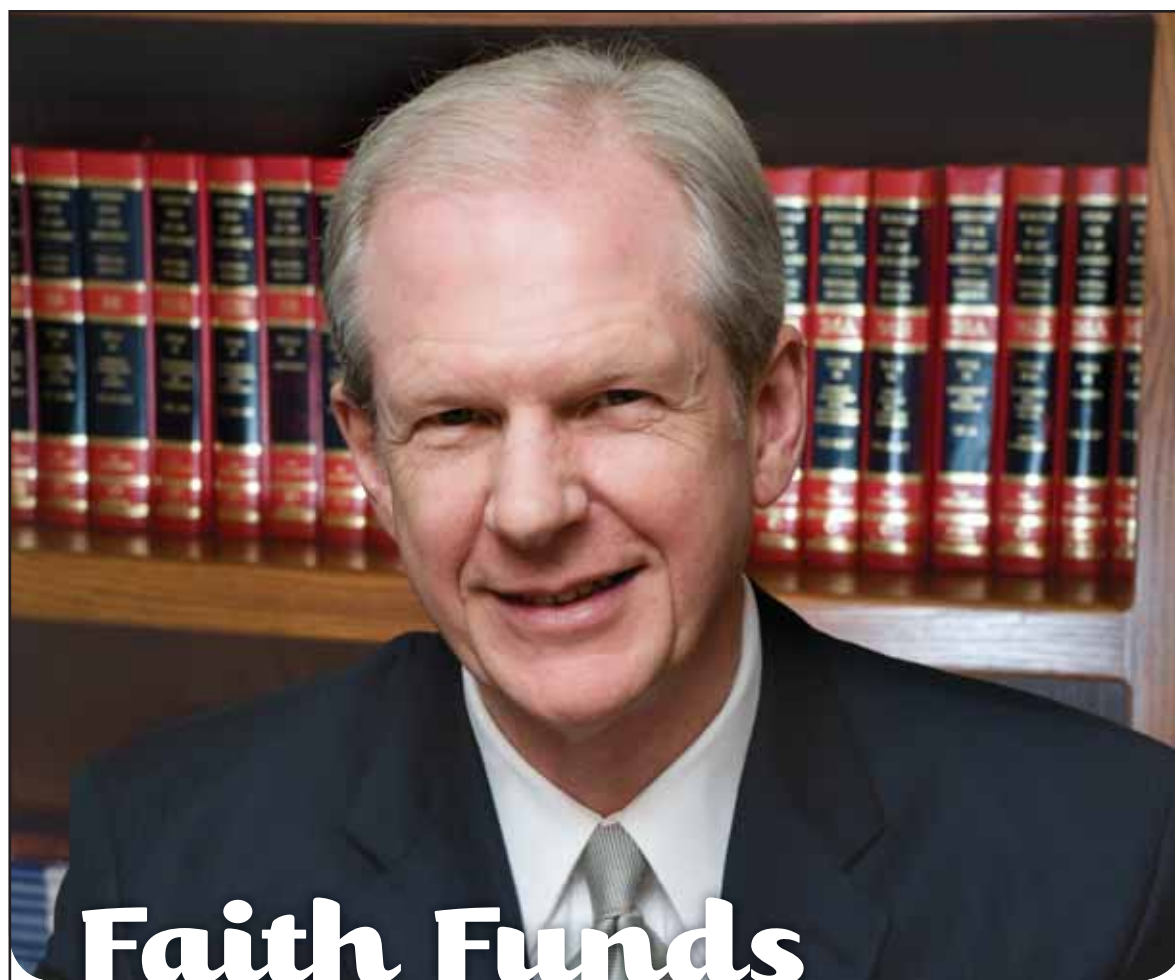


Brian McLaren

"We'll start to see the church in a sense as becoming the local seminary, training people to live out the faith... Christians themselves are disciples and apostles being brought in to learn and sent out to teach."

McLaren reminded those gathered that the Christian faith doesn't depend on the Church's struggling structures, "but the good news is, financial unsustainability unleashes amazing creativity."

To order a DVD of McLaren's sermon and lectures, call Pulaski Heights UMC at 501-664-3600.



A Plan for Eternity

"When I talk to a client about estate planning, my mission is to determine what the client wants to do, then get it done," said attorney Carl Crow, Jr. of Hot Springs. "The United Methodist Foundation is perfectly suited for this process when Methodist clients want to leave money to their church or another United Methodist organization. It exists to assure clients that gift assets will be wisely managed and safeguarded. And the Foundation has extremely competitive fees compared to corporate trustees."

A five-year board member of the Foundation, Crow is also on the Board of Trustees and the Endowment Foundation Board at First United Methodist Church in Hot Springs. He says it's the greatest feeling in the world when a client comes to him and expresses the wish to make a bequest to an endowment fund for his church or another church in the care of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

"The staff at the Foundation is eager to help and very professional," he said. "The work product is excellent and they are prompt, thorough and reliable." He believes the work of UMFA frees the church staff from burdensome administration, provides professional management of the endowment funds and allows the donor or the church to direct the assets according to their preferences.



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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Gen-X Rising

On quarterbacking and the life of faith | 6B



A better way

A retired bishop's take on measuring churches | 7B



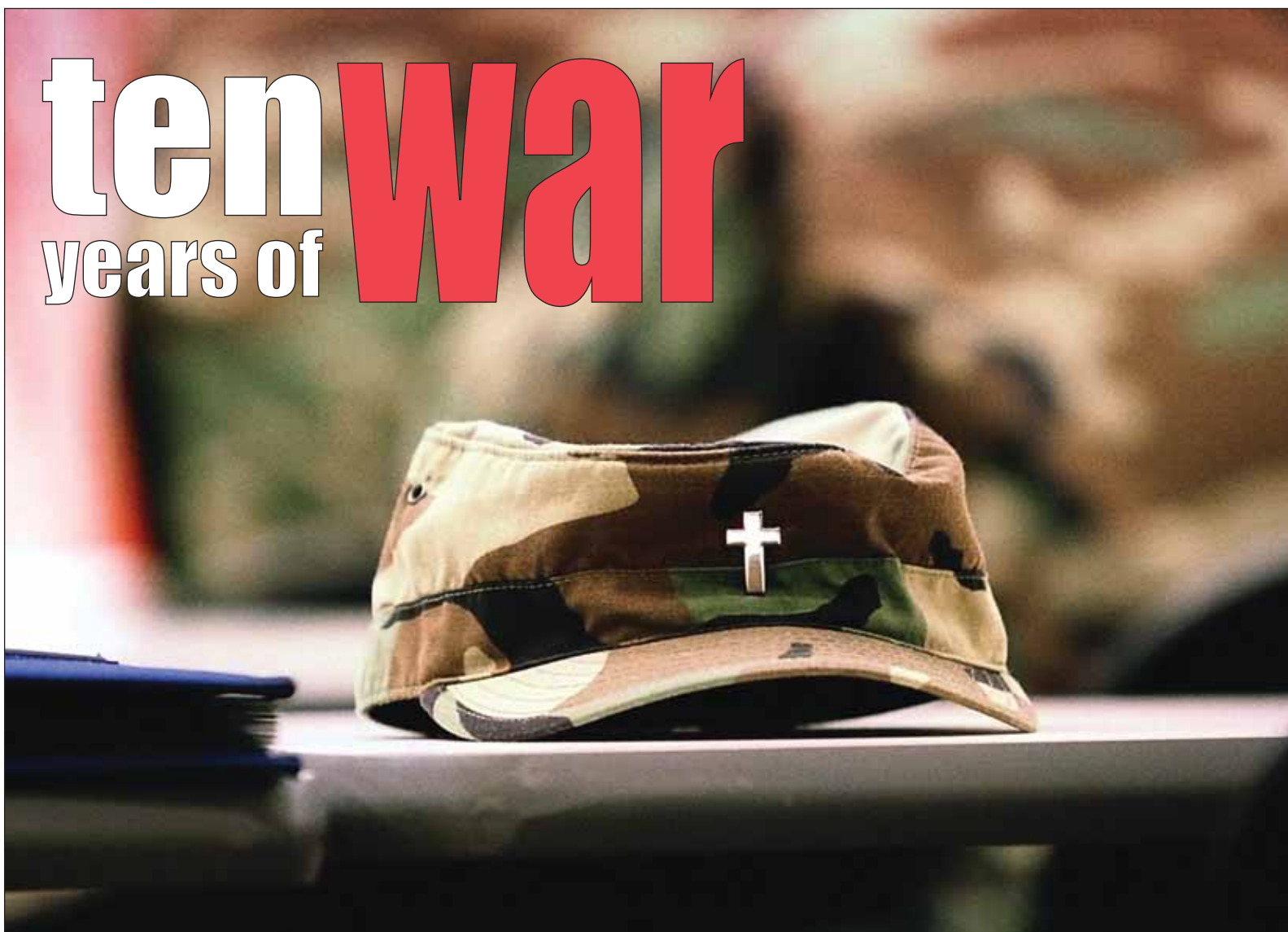
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Section B

October 7, 2011

ten years of war



UMNS FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

The 9/11 attacks sparked the war on terror, which in turn has had profound consequences for UMC clergy serving as military chaplains. They report strong support from the public, including United Methodists. But some say the church could do more for returning vets.

UM military chaplains find support, stress

BY KATHY L. GILBERT
United Methodist News Service

Thousands of U.S. Reserve and National Guard members found themselves called suddenly into active duty and deployed when the war on terror started 10 years ago.

Among them were United Methodist pastors called out of their pulpits in local churches to go with the troops as chaplains.

That turned out to be a blessing, said the Rev. Tom Carter, a retired Army chaplain, who served during the Vietnam conflict.

The American public—including the United Methodist Church—became more aware and supportive of

service members, said Mr. Carter, director of the agency that endorses UM pastors as chaplains and pastoral counselors.

“That is radically different than Vietnam,” he said. “Although the wars are not extremely popular, the military personnel were not branded as the baby-killers.”

One example of that support from UM churches was a campaign started on Veterans Day in 2003 to send pre-paid phone cards to veterans.

“That program grew out of the love of individuals within our United Methodist churches,” Mr. Carter said.

The United Methodist Endorsing Agency, part of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

(GBHEM), collected the money, bought the cards and handed them out to UM chaplains to distribute to anyone who needed to call a loved one.

Online communication such as Facebook, Twitter and Skype make it easier for service members to connect with home so the phone card campaign ended in 2010, but not before more than 17 million free minutes were distributed.

Church responds

The Rev. Dale C. White, a Navy captain who was deployed to Iraq for 13 months, said the United Methodist Church has been “very responsive” to the needs of service members, from

the phone cards to developing liturgies for churches to send members into combat and then welcome them back home.

Capt. White was part of a meeting in 2007 between the GBHEM and the General Board of Church and Society. Active and retired military chaplains met with agency staff to form a task force to write those liturgies.

“United Methodist chaplains bring a unique balance of grace and faith to the military,” Capt. White said. “We have deep ecumenical and interfaith traditions, perfect for the pluralistic military environment. I truly believe we are extremely well suited for this chaplaincy setting and have tremen-

■ See ‘Military’ page 4B

Youth pastor pay averages about \$40,000

BY SAM HODGES
Managing Editor

Youth will be served, the saying goes, but United Methodist pastors who serve kids directly certainly don’t get rich in the process.

A new report finds the average annual salary for a full-time United Methodist youth pastor is \$40,065, though pay varies by region, church size and gender, with men making considerably more than women.

Overall, the UMC apparently lags in youth pastor pay.

A 2010 survey by *Group*, a youth ministry magazine, found the average salary across denominations and non-denominational churches was \$44,000.

Hank Hilliard, director, young people’s ministries development for the General Board of Discipleship, did the UMC study. He’d seen the annual *Group* survey, and felt the UMC should have something similar.

“One of the most asked questions I get from churches and youth pastors is about compensation,” he said.

“Churches want to know what to expect to pay a youth pastor, while youth pastors want to know how their pay matches up compared to others.”

The Rev. Kenda Creasy Dean, professor of youth, church and culture at Princeton Theological Seminary, and a United Methodist elder, praised Mr. Hilliard for shedding light on youth pastor pay. She got an advance look at the results, and said they merit attention.

“Buying a house or sending your kids to college—or preschool, frankly—is very, very tough on a youth minister’s salary,” she said. “If those financial goals are in your future, you’re going to leave youth ministry when you decide to, say, get

■ See ‘Youth’ page 2B



Hank Hilliard

FAITH WATCH

Judge rules on Alabama law

U.S. District Judge Sharon Blackburn, in a Sept. 28 ruling, chose not to block much of Alabama's immigration law, but did temporarily block the part making it a crime to transport or harbor an illegal immigrant. Bishop William Willimon, of the UMC's North Alabama Conference, joined other church leaders in suing to block enforcement of the law, and that provision was among their concerns.

Presbyterians may divest of Caterpillar

A committee of the Presbyterian Church (USA) will recommend that the denomination add heavy equipment company Caterpillar to its divestment list. The committee chair, the Rev. Brian Ellison, said Caterpillar equipment has been used to demolish Palestinian homes and help build Israeli settlements and Israeli-only roads in Palestinian communities. Mr. Wright said efforts to lobby the company for change had not been successful.

NRB unhappy with new media platforms

A National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) report has found a "clear and present danger of censorship" from Facebook, iTunes and some other new media platforms. The report highlighted the removal of two applications from iTunes and iPhone app stores because the "apps" took a traditional religious view against homosexuality. The NRB is supported by many conservative religious media organizations.

Jail time or church for minor offenders

Misdemeanor offenders in Bay Minette, Ala., can choose between going to church or jail to work off their sentences. "Operation Restore Our Community" requires those who choose the church option to attend every Sunday for a year. They can choose which church, but have to check in with the pastor and police. Fifty-six churches are participating in the program, the Associated Press said.

■ YOUTH *Continued from page 1B*

married, have children, or move out of your apartment."

Mr. Hilliard put together a 12-question Internet survey, using the software SurveyMonkey, and sent the link to youth pastors through email and Facebook. About 300 responded, though Mr. Hilliard limited his results to the 201 who work full-time.

The survey showed that churches with more than 2,000 members paid youth pastors, on average, \$50,665 per year. Pay descended by size category, with churches between 1,500 and 2,000 members paying \$43,970, and churches between 101 and 300 members paying \$30,273.

There's considerable variance among UMC jurisdictions, too. The survey found South Central (\$40,972) and Southeastern (\$40,131) paid the most, with Northeastern (\$35,436) paying the least.

Mr. Hilliard noted that the southern jurisdiction churches have more large churches than other jurisdictions. He added that cost of living is higher in the northeast, where pay for youth pastors is particularly low.

"That means the Northeastern Jurisdiction people are even farther behind," he said.

The male youth pastors who responded to the survey were paid, on average, \$42,273, while their female counterparts averaged \$35,904.

"Maybe the most unsettling part of the study is the gender gap it revealed," Dr. Dean said. "We really need to look into that."

The explanation may be the "stained-glass ceiling" problem, with women struggling to gain leadership in large churches.

Nearly twice as many men than women responded that they were working full-time as a UMC youth pastor. (The gap was much narrower among part-time pastors.) And of the 50 who responded from churches with more than 2,000 members, 39 were male.

Mr. Hilliard said that confirmed his anecdotal impressions.

"From what I know, most churches that are large churches have a male as youth pastor," he said.

Rod Hocott oversees the youth ministry department of the UMC's Arkansas Conference, and has done salary surveys of UMC youth pastors in that area. He's glad to see some national data, and he hopes Mr. Hilliard's work will lead to better pay.



UMNS PHOTO COURTESY KENTUCKY CONFERENCE

Youth from the UMC's Kentucky Conference collected donated canned goods during an afternoon of service last year in Covington, Ky. They pushed grocery carts filled with food to a local food pantry.

"In hiring a full-time youth minister, churches have got to understand that they are putting someone in place that will be second only to the parents in a youth's spiritual development," he said. "Because this is such an important position, churches have to compensate adequately, offer good benefits, and demand that the youth ministers take time off and recruit volunteers so that they are not doing

the whole thing alone."

Mr. Hilliard said he hopes to do the UMC survey annually, expanding the number of respondents by working more closely with annual conferences, and also adding questions. Those who want to be in touch with him about this year's results can email him at hhilliard@GBOD.org.

shodges@umr.org

Minnesota UM clergy pledge to do same-sex unions

BY SAM HODGES
Managing Editor

Seventy-seven United Methodist clergy in Minnesota have released a statement saying they will officiate at same-sex unions, though church law prohibits that.

"Our call as clergy is to offer God's blessing to all who come to us," said the Rev. Bruce Robbins, pastor of Hennepin Avenue UMC in Minneapolis.

Nearly all of the 77 signed their names. The statement's release on Sept. 19 was timed to coincide with the launching of a faith-based campaign against a proposed state consti-

tutional amendment to limit marriage to heterosexual couples.

Minnesota statutory law already bans same-sex marriage.

"We can offer the blessing of Christian marriage to all prepared couples, including same-sex couples, regardless of civil law," Dr. Robbins said.

At the Minnesota Annual Conference meeting in May, Dr. Robbins began a movement to have UM clergy pledge in writing to officiate at same-sex unions. It spread to other conferences, and he said that more than 1,000 UM clergy have signed statements to that effect.

But there has been a backlash, with a group of 59 pastors recently calling on the Council of Bishops to issue a statement promising to enforce the *Book of Discipline*, the denomination's law book, against clergy who say they'll officiate at same-sex unions.

The same group of 59 pastors is sponsoring a website (www.faithfulumc.com) where clergy and laity can add their names to the campaign to pressure the bishops. As of Sept. 28, more than 1,700 clergy and more than 5,100 laity had signed.

Minnesota Episcopal Area Bishop Sally Dyck commented in writing on the 77 Minnesota clergy who promised to officiate at same-sex unions.

"Simply to make the statement as opposed to actually officiating a same-sex union is not a chargeable offense according to the *Book of Discipline*," she said. "As I've said all along, I will uphold

the *Discipline*. Our church is not of one mind on this. Our communities are not of one mind. There are many ways in which families and churches and communities differ in their understanding about the way to go forward. It is important for us to be mindful of each other and recognize differences and hold each other in grace."

The *Book of Discipline* describes the practice of homosexuality as "incompatible with Christian teaching," prohibits "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" from serving as clergy, and says UMC clergy cannot officiate at same-sex weddings or other ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions.

Efforts to change those positions have failed at General Conference, the quadrennial gathering of clergy and lay delegates that governs the church.

Dr. Robbins and others on his side have acknowledged the *Book of Discipline* ban against officiating at same-sex unions, but emphasize that the *Discipline* also has strong language against discrimination and in favor of inclusiveness.

The Minnesota clergy's statement noted that some congregations in the conference are considering using their church buildings "for all prepared couples desiring Christian marriage."

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More Americans designing make-your-own religion

BY CATHY LYNN GROSSMAN
Religion News Service

If World War II-era warbler Kate Smith sang today, her anthem could be “Gods Bless America.”

That’s one of the key findings in newly released research that reveals America’s drift from clearly defined religious denominations to faiths cut to fit personal preferences.

The folks who make up God as they go are side by side with self-proclaimed believers who claim the Christian label but shed their ties to traditional beliefs and practices. Religion statistics expert George Barna says, with a wry hint of exaggeration, America is headed for “310 million people with 310 million religions.”

“We are a designer society. We want everything customized to our personal needs—our clothing, our food, our education,” he said. Now it’s our religion.

Mr. Barna’s new book on U.S. Christians, *Futurecast*, tracks changes



George Barna

from 1991 to 2011, in annual national surveys of 1,000 to 1,600 U.S. adults. All the major trend lines of religious belief and behavior he measured ran downward—except two:

- More people claim they have accepted Jesus as their savior and expect to go to heaven.

- And more say they haven’t been to church in the past six months except for special occasions such as weddings or funerals. In 1991, 24 percent were “unchurched.” Today, it’s 37 percent.

Mr. Barna blames pastors for those oddly contradictory findings. Everyone hears, “Jesus is the answer. Embrace him. Say this little Sinner’s Prayer and keep coming back. It doesn’t work. People end up bored, burned out and empty,” he said.

The consequence, Mr. Barna said, is that, for every subgroup of religion, race, gender, age and region of the country, the important markers of religious connection are fracturing.

When he measures people by their belief in seven essential doctrines, defined by the National Association of Evangelicals’ statement of faith, only 7 percent of those surveyed qualified.

“People say, ‘I believe in God. I believe the Bible is a good book. And

then I believe whatever I want,’” he lamented.

Southern Baptist-affiliated LifeWay Research reinforces those findings: A new survey of 900 U.S. Protestant pastors finds 62 percent predict the importance of being identified with a denomination will diminish over the next 10 years.

Exactly, said Carol Christoffel of Zion, Ill. She drifted through a few mainline Protestant denominations in her youth, found a home in the peace and unity message of the Baha’i tradition for several years, and then was drawn deeply into Native American traditional healing practices.

Yet, she also still calls herself Christian. “I agree with the teachings of Jesus and . . . I know many Christians like me who keep the Bible’s social teachings and who care for the earth and for each other,” Ms.

Christoffel said. “I support people who do good wherever they are.”

And it’s not only Christians sampling hopscotch spirituality. The Jewish magazine *Moment* has an “Ask the Rabbis” feature that consults 14 variations of Judaism, “and there are many,” said editor and publisher Nadine Epstein.

“The September edition of *Moment* asks ‘Can there be Judaism without God?’ And most say yes. It’s incredibly exciting. We live in an era where you pick and choose the part of the religion that makes sense to you. And you can connect through culture and history in a meaningful way without necessarily religiously practicing,” Ms. Epstein said.

Sociologist Robert Bellah first saw this phenomenon emerging in the 1980s. He sees two sides to the one-person-one-religion trend. On the positive: It’s harder to hold on to prej-

udices against groups—by religion or race or gender or sexuality—if everyone wants to be seen individually.

“The bad news is you lose the capacity to make connections. Everyone is pretty much on their own,” he said. And all this rampant individualism also fosters “hostility toward organized groups—government, industry, even organized religion.”

Paul Morris, an Army medic at Fort Bragg in North Carolina and veteran of six tours in the Middle East, said he has seen Christianity, Judaism and Islam in action, for better and for worse, and, frankly, he’ll pass.

Mr. Morris grew up “old-style Italian Catholic,” but said he never felt like his spiritual questions were answered. So, “I just wiped the slate clean. I studied every major religion on the face of the planet. Every one had parts that made sense, but there was no one specific dogma or tenet I could really follow,” Mr. Morris said.

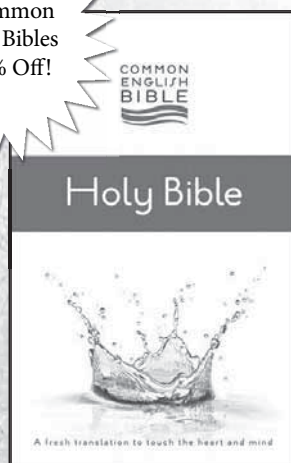
“So now, I call myself an agnostic—one who just doesn’t know. What I believe is that if you can just do the right thing, it works everywhere.”

Ms. Grossman writes for *USA Today*, where this story first appeared.



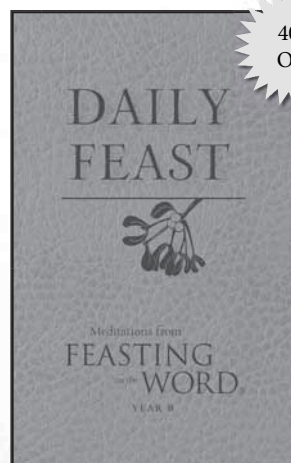
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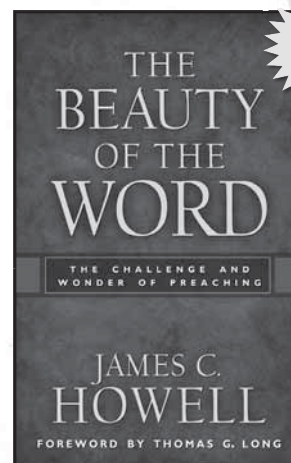
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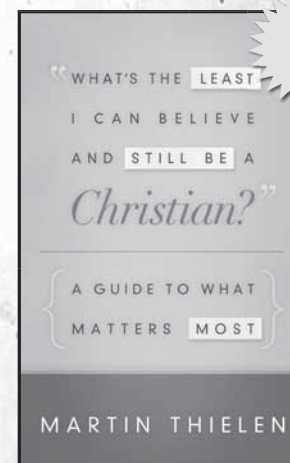
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UMNS FILE PHOTOS BY HILLY HICKS

ABOVE: Retired UM Bishop Woodie White (right) blesses United Methodist chaplains David Smith and Gary Brown, while Chaplain Matt Woodberry stands in the foreground. **LEFT:** U.S. Army Chaplain John Read and Bishop White pray with a wounded soldier in February 2007 at the U.S. Army Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany.

■ **MILITARY** *Continued from page 1B*

dous influence on those we serve.”

However, service members, including chaplains, still must deal with the effects of long and repeated deployments in harm’s way thousands of miles from home.

Capt. White’s long deployment took “a tremendous toll” on his family.

“Four years later I am still rebuilding the relationships with my daughter and son.”

The Rev. Dave Smith, Army colonel and chaplain now serving in Iraq, said there is more the church can do for returning veterans.

Active service members have sup-

port agencies on their posts when they return, he said, while Reserve and Guard members often do not find the necessary agencies to help them.

“I believe the church is missing a chance,” Col. Smith said. “I think the church could be in mission to our returning veterans. I have addressed some ideas to my conference. The cabinet and bishop agreed to the importance, but the idea did not move further than an idea. In my opinion, we could do more.”

Col. Smith said there has been a lot of stress placed on service members and their families in the last 10 years. Still, he sees something good that has come from this experience.

“The Army has recognized the importance of developing resiliency in our soldiers and families through comprehensive soldier fitness. One of the five pillars of this program is spiritual fitness,” he said.

Chaplains develop spirituality through worship, Bible study, counseling, Strong Bonds training events, praying and visiting soldiers and their families, Col. Smith added.

Next great generation

The wars have been long and costly, said the Rev. Ashley Bell, assistant chief of chaplain service with the Department of Veteran Affairs in Nashville, Tenn.

“What’s been called ‘The Long War’ has been the longest and most costly in history,” she said, pointing out the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have lasted longer than World War I, World War II, the Civil War or the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

“It exceeds the inflation-adjusted cost of all wars, except World War II,” she said. “This war has the highest percent of amputees since the Civil War due to IEDs (improvised explosive devices).”

More than 7,000 U.S. and coalition

forces have died since 2001.

“The men and women of this generation have volunteered. They serve in very difficult circumstances and austere situations,” Col. Smith said. “They do so because they love their country and they desire to serve. As a chaplain I am proud to call them brothers and sisters in arms as I witness their sacrifice each day while in Iraq or Afghanistan. They are true heroes.”

Capt. White also finds the young men and women serving today are strong and committed to their mission to serve.

“They are committed, sacrificial, love their country, and have no regrets about their decision to serve when faced with challenges,” he said. “I hear this repeatedly—when I was in Iraq and provided ministry to wounded Marines, they would often say, ‘Chaplain, if I had to do it all over again, I would—despite the hardships, injuries and risks.’”

Comes down to faith

Many UM chaplains were on active duty on Sept. 11, 2001.

Capt. White was at the Pentagon on 9/11 as the deputy director of plans and operations, office of the Chief of Navy Chaplains. He said it is hard to put into words how that day changed him and his ministry.

“Ultimately, it helped me reshape and reprioritize what is important. There is nothing more precious than life.”

Capt. Smith was assigned to the 35th Signal Brigade (Airborne), Fort Bragg, N.C., as a brigade chaplain on 9/11.

“Prior to 9/11, we were an Army preparing and training for war. Since, we are an Army engaged in two wars,” he said. He said that has increased the relevance for religious support and has given chaplains expanded staff re-

sponsibility as the religious adviser to the commander. Part of that work is to help the commander understand the religions of the countries where the military are stationed.

“This assists the commander not to make mistakes with regards to religion and customs, therefore not making a critical mistake affecting the success of the mission to win the hearts and minds of the local people,” he said.

The Rev. Robert T. Williams, Navy captain, was chaplain at Camp David on 9/11. When President George W. Bush, his family and some cabinet members gathered for worship the Sunday after 9/11, Capt. Williams offered them words of comfort from Psalm 27:13: “I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”

“I never really focused much on the attacks themselves. I was much more focused theologically on the response,” Capt. Williams said. He tried to live out one of St. Ignatius Loyola’s famous maxims: “Act as if everything depended on you; trust as if everything depended on God.”

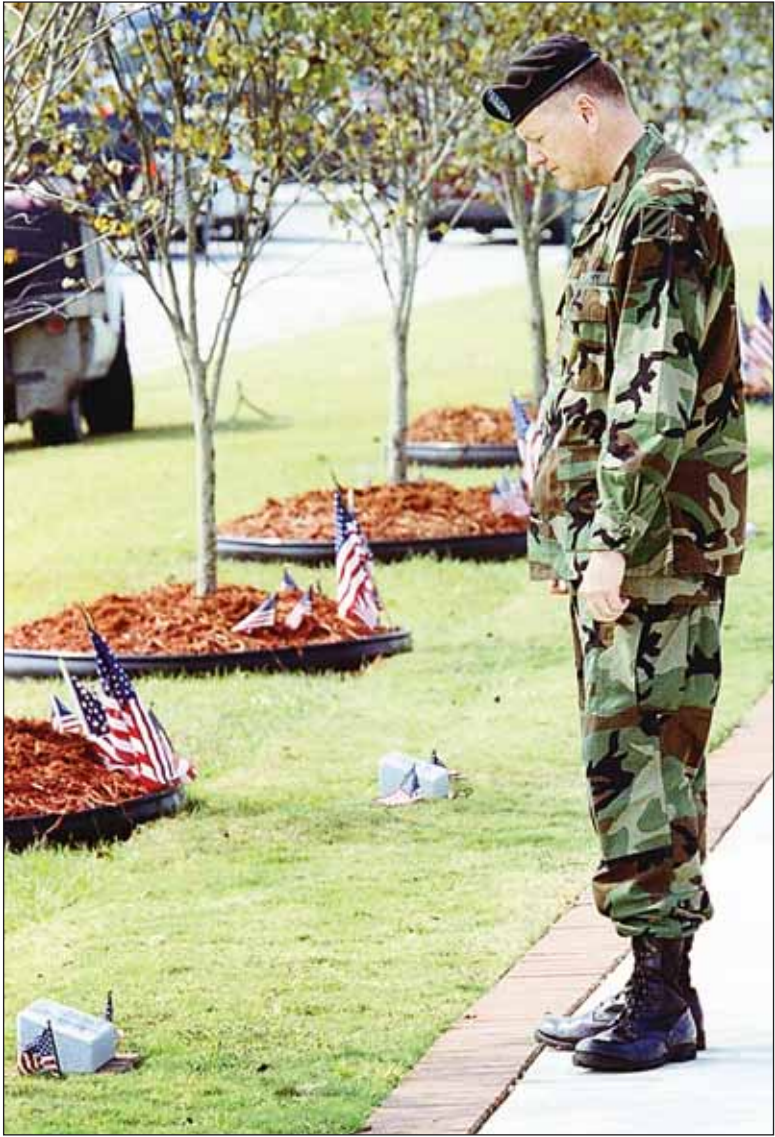
Now 57, he is fleet chaplain for the U.S. Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk, Va.

“I was very much taken aback by the sacrifices of the people that day, by the patriotism and by the concern and compassion of the people of America,” he said. “It made a lasting impression on me because of the way the faithful responded.”

Capt. White is back at the Pentagon in the exact place he was on 9/11.

“It is kind of surreal, but a stark reminder that life is not forever and our faith is what is most important in this life.”

Heather Hahn of United Methodist News Service contributed to this story.



UMNS FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

U.S. Army Chaplain Mitchell Lewis, in a 2003 file photo, visits a memorial at Fort Stewart, Ga., for soldiers of the Third Infantry Division who were killed in Iraq.



UMNS FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF CHAPLAIN FRANK YERKES

In 2006, United Methodist Chaplain Frank A. Yerkes (far right) with members of the 447th Air Expeditionary Group stationed in Baghdad, showed their appreciation for phone cards sent to them.



UMNS FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF THE REV. CLARK CARR

The Rev. Clark D. Carr (left) led hundreds of religious activities during nine months of serving as a U.S. military chaplain in Iraq.



UMNS FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. NAVY

United Methodist chaplain Laura Bender conducts the first religious service aboard the USS New York, in 2009.



UMNS FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF CHAPLAIN MITCHELL LEWIS

A Division Artillery soldier choir located near the Baghdad airport sings during a Palm Sunday worship service in 2003.



UMNS FILE PHOTO COURTESY OF CHAPLAIN JERRY SIEG

United Methodist Chaplain Jerry Sieg conducted a baptism service in Kuwait for soldiers of the Third Infantry Division before the Iraq war began in early 2003.

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GEN-X RISING

A quarterback's example, applied to life of faith

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON
UMR Columnist

Sports and faith can sometimes overlap to an uncanny degree. And the lessons of one often bear quite a bit on the other.

Consider the following.

The stat line for the NFL quarterback was remarkable: 32 of 48 passing for 517 yards through the air. He threw 4 TDs against only 1 INT. The one interception the QB offered up can be excused, considering that he had made 358 regular-season passing attempts since his last pick.

Tom Brady is the quarterback. And those statistics are the ones he racked up in a season-opening game against the Miami Dolphins.

Brady is the 34-year old signal caller for the New England Patriots. He's won three Super Bowl championships with the Patriots. But in some ways the recent regular-season performance against Miami was the most impressive of his career.

It wasn't just that he threw for a lot of yards, or that he found the end zone so frequently.

It was the way he dominated the game, running a no-huddle offense that left the Dolphins exhausted and confused.

One measure of an athlete's dominance is the reputation he has among his peers. And it can safely be said that Brady's reputation is as high as anyone's in the NFL right now.

Following the Miami game, ESPN anchor Stuart Scott broke down the game with former NFL players Steve Young and Tedy Bruschi (both of them outstanding NFL players in their

own day).

Listening to Young and Bruschi talk about Brady's performance was like listening to junior high kids talk about their sports hero. They were positively giddy.

The former QB (Young) and former line-backer (Bruschi) waxed eloquent about the way Brady seemed to control the game from start to finish. And then they veered into a topic that perked up my ears.

Young and Bruschi argued that Tom Brady is at just such a point in his career where he does not have to "think" when he's doing his job directing the Patriots offense. Brady's training and experience work together so that all his forethought, split-second decision-making, and physical acting simply meld into a seamless expression of football brilliance.

It isn't the kind of thing that happens by accident, of course. The man possesses the necessary physical traits, of course. But Brady's ability to transcend the level of almost all other NFL quarterbacks has more to do with a level of discipline, study and training that most others just aren't willing to pursue.

It won't last forever—it *can't*—but it wouldn't be the case at all if Brady hadn't committed himself to a certain kind of athletic training from a young age and done it over the course of years. He has reached a stage where he has mastered football as much as anyone ever can, playing the most difficult position at a level few have ever approached.

The lessons Brady's example offers for the Christian faith are numerous. There is a great deal of talk today about the formation of *discipleship*. The stated mission of the United Methodist Church is "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Likewise, there's a lot of emphasis in current discussions about how the church should

be structured for the future around effectiveness in our ministry and mission.

I think we all want at some level to make our discipleship look the way Tom Brady makes quarterbacking look: like a complex thing made to seem effortless, and done with great excellence in both attitude and outcome.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with that, so long as we're honest about what it requires of us.

Anyone who goes to church much will likely hear an eventual reference to sports made as a sermon illustration. There's good reason for that, and good precedence too.

"Don't you know that all runners run in a race, but that only one wins the prize?" the Apostle Paul says to the church in Corinth. "Therefore run so that you may win that prize," he goes on. And he likens the athlete's wreath of victory to eternal salvation one can win in Christ.

To St. Paul, using the image of the runner or the boxer was only natural because he saw the path of faithful living as so analogous to athletic training.

For us the accurate contemporary analogy may go to a further—and more troubling—degree. There aren't too many Tom Bradys in the world, after all. But there are a whole lot of us who like to watch him. We marvel at what the combination of athletic ability and a lifetime of discipline allows him to do. But we are fundamentally spectators; he is the athlete. We watch him not because he inspires us to similar feats but rather because he entertains us.

And that's the culture we have around us now. An entertainment culture. A whole society of people devoted to spectator sports (and television, and websites, and video games).

So what should we expect from the faith of such a people? Probably not much. Because a



PHOTO COURTESY WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady warms up for a preseason game.

faith that is lived out in active discipleship is hard, like athletic training.

It doesn't have to be that way, though. Tom Brady could have been a football fan too. He decided instead to be a quarterback. And then he set about, through daily toil and ceaseless dedication, to be one of the best quarterbacks ever.

Discipleship isn't so different from that at all. And unlike quarterbacking, all of us have the gifts to do it.

The Rev. Thompson is an instructor in historical theology & Wesleyan studies at Memphis Theological Seminary. Reach him at athompson@MemphisSeminary.edu

Clergy are models, and must find time for God

BY DAN DICK
Special Contributor

Are we really all too busy to spend time with God?

I was in a situation recently where one group was bashing another group and I innocently asked if they had ever gotten together to pray. You might have thought I suggested they mate with animals. The idea that we "waste" time praying with "those" people was reprehensible. Now, if I suggested they get together to debate and fight, that would have been fine. We have plenty of time for that.

In another setting I was speaking to a group of colleagues about personal devotions. They all lamented that they simply didn't have time;

they were too busy for prayer, devotional reading, contemplation and reflection, worship apart from that which they led. This morning, I find myself feeling the same—too much on the plate to take care of my own spiritual, physical or emotional needs. What's wrong with us?

Preachers sometimes forget that their actions are as important as their words. What we model is every bit as powerful as what we say. Clergy are above the national norm in obesity, stress-related illness and disease, fatigue and a host of other dysfunctions and disabilities. Is this the life of glory we invite others to?

I'm not judging anyone beyond myself. I'm working 70-hour weeks, am significantly overweight, and suffer chronic pain. I am a poster child for what NOT to do and be. Yet, I do maintain a morning ritual of prayer, reading, quiet and writing (some of it ending up here, like today). I hold onto a slim discipline that I find necessary and very valuable. Without it I

would be in big trouble.

And I guess it is from this perspective that I wonder how spiritual leaders can function without some spiritual nurture and regular practice. Where do they draw the energy

'Preachers sometimes forget that their actions are as important as their words.'

from? What well feeds their soul? What replenishes them when they give and give, yet receive nothing themselves? I think it is a sad and dangerous situation. It explains a lot of the

burnout and stress.

When I did the clergy morale study a few years ago, almost two-thirds of the pastors were on mood-enhancing drugs. More than 90 percent were on some form of medication for stress or blood pressure. Only 21 percent had a regular prayer/devotional life.

If clergy are too busy for God, they are too busy, period. We cannot preach that which we refuse to practice. We cannot judge those too busy for church when we are too busy with church. We need to hold one another accountable to healthy and centered practices (rather than payment of apportionments and increased worship attendance). We need to remember who we are and get our priorities in order.

Make room for God. Take time to be holy.

The Rev. Dick is director of connectional ministries for the Wisconsin Conference.



Andrew Thompson



Dan Dick

REFLECTIONS

Diversity is reminder of oneness in Christ

BY BISHOP WOODIE W. WHITE
UMR Columnist

The conversation took place more than 25 years ago, but I have never forgotten. My friend, a United Methodist of Mexican American background, was describing to me the region in which he had spent his life. He said there were many people in the area that “loved” Mexican culture, music and especially food.

“They just don’t like Mexicans!” he said.

My friend then broke out into raucous laughter. I joined him in laughter as he went on to talk about the inconsistent character of prejudice.

Many marginalized people have developed a unique sense of humor as a way of surviving racism and prejudice. My friend and I would share stories out of our mutual sense and experience of being the objects of scorn, discrimination and often victims of violence. I learned much from my friend as he tutored me in his culture, traditions and history.



Bishop Woodie White

Diversity’s value

America, for the most part, is a nation of immigrants—our ancestors coming here from other countries. This reality was conspicuous to me, growing up in New York City. As I rode a bus or subway, it was common to see other riders reading newspapers in a variety of languages. My high school was comprised of students (all male) who were bilingual because in so many instances their parents or grandparents spoke little or no English.

I learned early to embrace diverse cultures and ethnicities. Such ethnic diversity was the founding character of America.

The annual observance of National Hispanic Heritage Month runs from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15. It began in 1968 as a weeklong observance, but was expanded to a month in 1988. While the early settlers of America came from Europe, more recent immigration patterns are from Latin America, Africa and Asia. National

Hispanic Heritage Month recognizes our citizens and ancestors who have come from Spain, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. They represent diverse cultures, colors and traditions, and during this time we celebrate their histories and contributions to America. Such diversity enhances life and culture in our nation.

Prophetic witness

The official United Methodist caucus, Methodists Associated Representing the Cause of Hispanic Americans—commonly known as MARCHA—recently celebrated its 40th anniversary with a festive gathering in El Paso, Texas. Laity and clergy came from across the United States to honor those who have provided leadership in the General Church and local communities.

MARCHA has provided a prophetic witness as it has urged greater United Methodist engagement in Hispanic communities, as well as congregational growth and development. The denomination is richer because of such a 40-year presence.

I hope communities across the nation will find opportunities to celebrate with these our Hispanic citizens as we all remember our unity in diversity. Indeed, because United Methodists are ethnically diverse, we are uniquely in a position to minister with and learn from a wide range of members. We do not have to wait until this national observance in the fall of each year.

Congregations in the same or neighboring communities can gather together for worship and Bible study. They can get involved in mutual mission projects near and far. And what better model could we seek than United Methodist parsonages and homes becoming places where people of different races, colors and ethnicities join together to demonstrate—and not just talk about—our oneness in Christ?

So during National Hispanic Heritage Month, I say especially to our United Methodist brothers and sisters: ¡Dios te bendiga al salir adelante en tu ministerio en el nombre de Cristo!

Retired Bishop White is the denomination’s Endorsing Agent for Chaplain Ministries and bishop-in-residence at Candler School of Theology.

Better ways to measure churches

BY JOE E. PENNEL JR.
Special Contributor

Numerical growth and institutional maintenance have captured the thinking of many who write about the vital signs of effective congregations. I must admit that when I was serving as a pastor and as a bishop I was caught up in the same swirl of understanding. I am now feeling that there should be a different standard of measurement for meaningful congregational life.

Instead of numerical growth and stabilizing the institution, we need to put strong determined effort into a deeper set of measurements such as growth in compassion, forgiveness, mercy, kindness and justice. These are the benchmarks that bear kingdom fruit. It is possible for a congregation to experience financial and numerical strength and not grow in the fruits of the spirit.

I recently served as interim pastor of a congregation. As I was leaving the office one day to make hospital calls, I met a lady on the parking lot of the church whom I did not know. After a rather casual greeting, she pointed to the church building and said, “Is there someone in there who can teach me how to pray?”

I was stumped by her question. She was pointing to a full service megachurch that offers day care, a weekday school, athletic leagues, mission trips, social services, worship, choirs, a vibrant youth ministry and Sunday school for all ages. At a deeper level, she was inquiring about learning how to practice the spiritual disciplines. I had no answer to her question. I gave her my card and requested that she give me a call so that we could have conversation. She never called and I never saw her again.

When I got back to my office I looked at the calendar of activities for the week and not one had anything to do with learning, experiencing or keeping the spiritual disciplines. How can believers grow in the fruits of the spirit if spiritual practice is neglected?

Since 1996 I have preached in over 400 congregations. In each of these I have looked at the “opportunities for the week” that are listed on the worship sheet. It has been rare for me to see any emphasis on how to pray, how to search the Scriptures, how to do spiritual reading, or how to practice deeds of mercy and kindness. Yet these are the disciplines that strengthen the inner life. These help



Bishop Joe Pennel

us to be formed into a living, loving relationship with God.

If we pay attention to spiritual practices we will be more able to get in touch with the gifts of a particular congregation. I hold to the belief that God has gifted every congregation. It is not necessary to search frantically for new gifts. We, as pastors and lay leaders, need to build on the gifts that are already present in the congregation. Not all congregations are gifted in the same way but all are gifted in some way. Wise leaders find ways to maximize the spiritual gifts that are already in the hearts of the people. This has nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with the size or location of a congregation.

‘How can believers grow in the fruits of the spirit if spiritual practice is neglected?’

United Methodist people are searching for a meaningful relationship to the sacred, one that allows us to remain working, playing and loving; a path that enables us to experience the holy in the kitchen, in nature, in art, and in others. There is a gnawing hunger for doors to be opened to deeper levels of meaning and living. The church needs more and more congregations which truly believe that

the inner life is more important than numerical and financial growth.

So, if we are focused on spiritual practices what would be the return? It would evoke harmony and genuine love toward the people around us, our families, spiritual associates, the poor and the marginalized. For others the return might be doing deeds of mercy and kindness in the community. For some it would result in a deepening of one’s commitment to meditation, prayer, cultivation of virtue and a more regular association with some who have the same desire.

I cannot prove it but I am of the opinion that congregations that focus on growing in compassion, forgiveness, mercy, kindness and justice have a stronger and more authentic commitment to social witness than those that are not so concerned. Such congregations are better able to organize themselves around the pain that is in the community where they happen to be located. Mr. Wesley taught us that real social concern grows out of vital piety. It is the latter that is missing from the church at all levels.

I am now 72 years old and I have been a pastor since 1959. As I look back over my years as a pastor I find myself wishing that I had organized my congregations around worship, searching the Scriptures, more Holy Communion, deeds of mercy and kindness, prayer, meditation and Christian fellowship. I now see that these are the most important means of Grace.

Retired Bishop Pennel is a professor at Vanderbilt Divinity School.

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FIRST PERSON

Hope among ashes of Central Texas wildfires

BY MARJI BISHIR
Special Contributor

On Sept. 25, I returned from a disaster response trip to Bastrop, Texas, a town of approximately 7,000 people, where recent wildfires have destroyed entire neighborhoods. I was the team leader of a group of seven who came to help homeowners sort through the ashes of their homes.

The disaster was so extensive that a Presidential Disaster Declaration has been received for Bastrop County. Since Sept. 4, a total of 1,814 homes have been destroyed by wildfires. While we were there, three new fires broke out. Our team heard sirens and saw helicopters flying overhead, hauling buckets of water.

Our early response team was comprised of people from all different churches in the North Texas Conference. None of them knew each other before we left, but they'd all taken an



Marji Bishir

UMCOR basic early response team class, had badges, and were able to go with just a few days' notice. We had four men and three women. The main thing they shared in common was the desire to serve others—and to be a Christian presence.

When we arrived, we received a debriefing from our UM Volunteers in Mission field coordinator, Larry Etter. Larry described our task as “doing funerals for houses.” Most of the homeowners, who are required to be present with the team, just want to find something they can keep as a reminder of their previous lives. Usually, they hope to recover jewelry or other precious items.

Unfortunately, our team didn't find a whole lot that survived the extreme heat of the fires. Using mesh screens, we dumped buckets of ashes and sifted through them. At one house, we found the Navy dog tags that belonged to the father of the homeowner. Periodically we'd unearth ceramic items that survived completely intact.

On our first day, my team was joined by Vickie Huffman from San Antonio and Sean Raybuck from

Wimberley, Texas. They had taken a special UMCOR class in spiritual and emotional care last July. Vickie and Sean's purpose on the team was to act as listeners who would be especially sensitive to the tangled ball of emotions present in the fire survivors.

However, my team soon discovered that others in the community were suffering as well.

One night our team was confronted by a firefighter who was a church member. He saw the lights on in the church where we were staying and thought we might be looters (which has been a problem in Bastrop). Once he realized we weren't looters, he sat down and visited with our team for a while. The firefighter was struggling with a massive sense of guilt because he'd been in a position where he had to decide which houses were saved, and which ones burned. He knew all of the people who lived in those homes.

One homeowner we were helping was angry because his auto insurance company was questioning whether his burned-out van was “really totaled”—even after he'd sent them a picture. He also told us his children were so

“afraid of the trees” that their family decided not to live in another wooded area. They were relocating to town.

The Rev. Paul Harris, pastor at Cedar Creek United Methodist Church, said almost 30 families in the congregation were burned out, “maybe 40 if you count the families in the preschool,” he added. Most of them are starting to disperse and Pastor Harris thinks they probably won't come back. He suspects this is because of the unique natural area that these folks lived in, called Lost Pines. Central Texas doesn't have a lot of pine trees, but there was one isolated pine forest, and that entire area burned. Since it won't be a pine forest again in their lifetimes, many families will relocate somewhere else. This leaves the church struggling. First UMC of Bastrop is in the same position.

Some families had only 15 minutes' notice to grab what they could and get out the door. Our team wondered what we would have done if we'd been in that position. I commented that it would take me 15 minutes just to get my elderly dog in the car. Then we met a family who had

been on vacation the day of the fire. They told us all of their pets had burned in the fire.

Despite all of this trauma, we also saw signs of hope. We saw a green shoot growing out of the ground where everything else was charred and black. We saw the community coming together to help each other out. First UMC of Bastrop fed people lunch each day. They welcomed our team—even though we were covered with grit and filth. I think our presence there was a sign of hope as well—to the people of Bastrop.

It will be a long time before this town recovers. The drought (which caused all of this to begin with) continues. The fires aren't 100 percent contained. Yet I know from the grateful smiles directed my way and the hugs I received that we made a difference in the lives of those we served. I echo the sentiment we saw spray-painted on the side of one burned-out house: “How Great Is Our God.”

The Rev. Bishir is North Texas Conference associate director of the Center for Missional Outreach.

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