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Birth of a church



The praise team of Christ Way UMC leads worship music during the Jan. 22 service that marked its transition from new church start to fully constituted congregation.

AUM PHOTO BY MEGAN HEYL

Christ Way UMC constituted as new congregation

BY MEGAN HEYL
Special Contributor

Five years ago, in a Sunday school classroom at Jonesboro's St. Paul United Methodist Church, Christ Way UMC Jonesboro had its first meeting. On Jan. 22, 2012, the startup congregation celebrated being officially constituted into the United Methodist Church.

On the afternoon of their constitution, the Rev. Herschel Richardson, founding pastor of Christ Way, preached to the congregation. He had everyone present turn to their neighbor and say, "We came this far by faith."

"Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen," he read from Hebrews 11 (New Living Translation).

Richardson preached that this faith, this confidence, has brought Christ Way to where it is today. "It wasn't by luck," he said, "it was by the plan of God."

Moments before Richardson spoke these words, Dr. Kurt Boggan, superintendent of the Northeast District, had led the people of Christ

Way through the constitution ceremony. Those who desired to become members of the new church were asked to come to the front of the worship space.

Chairs shuffled as people left them behind to go forward. After a few moments, more than 40 individuals stood at the front, and applause rang throughout the sanctuary. They all proudly reaffirmed their vows to the United Methodist Church.

Alphonzo Robinson was named lay leader of the new congregation, though he shook his head at any praise of his work at the church. "I'm just a servant," he said.

Robinson has been with Christ Way since the beginning, and watched it grow from a Sunday school room to having its own building, which was donated by Frank Fletcher, owner of Fletcher Dodge Chrysler and Jeep. Now the church carries out its ministry from that facility at 3400 Stadium Blvd. in Jonesboro.

"It's been a long journey and it hasn't always been easy, but it seems every time we need something, God provides," Robinson said.

Dr. Bob Crossman, Arkansas Conference director of new church starts and congregational advancement, spoke to those gathered for the constituting service.

"I believe the Lord has placed you in just the right place," he said. "Just within two miles of this building, 9,000 people live. On a typical Sunday, about 6,500 of them stay home. Christ Way can reduce that number."

Bishop Charles Crutchfield offered encouragement to the congregation: "Use the gifts of God, and this church will not only be a success, it will be a roaring success," he said.

At the end of the process of constitution, Boggan gave Bishop Crutchfield the final word. The bishop stepped forward with a smile and officially proclaimed, "You are constituted now." Applause, cheers and shouts of praise filled the sanctuary.

Heyl, a member of Brookland UMC, is a journalism major at Arkansas State University, and is active in the Wesley Foundation campus ministry.

Life cycle of a congregation

Short-lived church starts bring blessings

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Each year, churches within the United Methodist connection are born—and each year, United Methodist congregations make the decision to close. Some of these churches existed for decades or centuries, while others seem young in comparison.

Since 2008, when the denomination began its Path 1 initiative (www.path1.org), church planting in the U.S. has increased by 58 percent. With this intentional focus on new faith communities, the survival rate of new church starts has increased. But the fact remains that not every congregation will live a long life.

"It is hard to get a new church started," says the Rev. Bob Crossman, director of new church starts and congregational advancement for the Arkansas Conference. "Every local church has a life cycle, a life span."

Crossman says that a colleague of his in another conference has declared new church starts a mystery.

"They have put what they thought was the right person in the right place, and it hasn't worked. They have been hesitant to place a person in a location, and it thrives," he said. "It's not a cookie-cutter process."

But a short life is not a useless life. Congregations that survive only a few years can still bear fruit for the Kingdom of God.

'This one family'

Crosspoint UMC, a new church start in Conway born out of a partnership between two existing churches, Grace UMC and Salem UMC, began holding worship services in September 2008, and closed its doors on Aug. 19, 2011.

"No one really told us when the end was," said the Rev. Tammy Garrison, the founding pastor. "And [See LIFE CYCLE, page 4A]

'Feed my sheep': food pantry serves God and neighbor



Joyce Walters (left), Madalyn Goodwin and Paulette Wilson prepare bags of groceries for the Body and Soul Cupboard at Asbury UMC Magnolia.

COURTESY PHOTO

BY MIKE DANIEL
Special Contributor

It began with a desire to serve, and became a portrait of genuine mission.

Two members of Magnolia's Asbury United Methodist Church saw a community need for food security in Magnolia. They sought ways to address this need, driven by the spiritual wisdom of James' admonition to the Church:

"If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food ... but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" (James 2:15-16)

Church leaders researched available resources as well as the experiences of others in the community, and in 2002, the Body and Soul Cupboard food pantry came to life.

In its early days, the ministry struggled to adequately feed even 35 persons, but through private and corporate donations, it has grown even as need has increased. Body and Soul now serves approximately

240 families each month.

Donations include goods from food drives at various schools—including nearby Southern Arkansas University—and regular distributions from the Arkansas Rice Depot. The numbers served fluctuate monthly because many recipients come only when their need has become acute due to family emergencies, sudden unexpected expenses or job loss.

Many of Asbury's members, as well as friends from outside the congregation, help by sorting, rotating, stacking and bagging most of the food the day before distribution.

Frozen meats and refrigerated items are pulled on the day of distribution (the second and fourth Thursdays of each month).

Recipients may visit only once per month, but having two distribution days facilitates a more orderly process.

Each sack is filled with several

cans of various food items; bags of rice, beans, flour and sugar; meat, cheese, pasta, soups and cereals. In addition to these staples, recipients receive a copy of *The Upper Room* devotional guide, and also enjoy the warm reception and fellowship of the volunteers who serve them and assist them in carrying the groceries to their vehicles.

The recipients are predominantly elderly women on fixed incomes who helped to build a nation even before the Civil Rights era. Stop for a chat and you'll find they can tell inspirational stories from years past: of faithfully enduring adversity in a culture of discrimination, of a willful determination to make a better way for subsequent generations. Many look forward to the fellowship they find from the familiar faces at Body and Soul Cupboard.

All express their gratitude for the blessing they receive. They are proud people who have found themselves in challenging circumstances after spending a lifetime making a home; working two and sometimes three jobs to feed, clothe and educate their children (including college!); and trying to make ends meet with very little left to save for the inevitable "rainy day." They persevered with the knowledge and faith that the Lord would see them through.

Body and Soul typically operates under USDA eligibility guidelines, which include certain income restrictions. Because of USDA support, Body and Soul is required to restrict distribution according to these eligibility requirements on certain food items.

However, because of generous local support and private contributions of food items and cash, Body and Soul will let no one go away empty-handed. After all, we are not a government agency; we are the Body of Christ. We can do no less.

The Rev. Daniel is a licensed local pastor who serves at Asbury UMC Magnolia.



Mike Daniel

EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

Processing, communicating, praying

As I write this column, I've just returned from the pre-General Conference briefing in Tampa, Fla. The two and a half days I spent there included presentations on some of the biggest issues our delegates will face during the 10-day legislative gathering, held April 24-May 4.

We heard denominational leaders speak about pensions, benefits, budgets and restructuring. Logistics for a meeting of 1,000 delegates. How to hold challenging discussions with a measure of grace. The business of the church.

And we heard about plans for the church to repent for past sins and acknowledge the need for healing. About ways to make more dedicated disciples of Jesus Christ. About how best to transform the world. The mission of the church.

These topics seem to lie at opposite ends of a spectrum, but they all are parts of the same whole. They will factor into everything the delegates experience—worship, committee work, hallway chats, plenary sessions, voting.

The lay and clergy heads of our delegation also attended this gathering. In his effort to process and communicate some of the information we received, the Rev. Rodney Steele has started a blog: steeleumc.wordpress.com.

In his first post, "Two Schools of Thought (Trying to Understand General Conference)," Rodney reflects upon what he sees as competing views of how to run the organization we know as the UMC. Issues surrounding power and representation seem to put different groups in the church at odds

with each other.

He concludes with, "These opening ideas are just that, an opening at an attempt to bridge the gap and bring us together for a shared future and ministry. My hope and prayer is that we will recognize what is best in each philosophy and use them in meaningful changes that will help the UMC follow God into the future and into the mission field."

Arkansas has 12 seats on the floor of General Conference. But these delegates are not the only Arkansans who can help bridge the gap. You can help, too, by lifting them in prayer.

The Upper Room has developed a free downloadable guide, *50 Days of Prayer Before and During General Conference 2012*. You can find it at upperroom.org. The prayers begin on March 16, covering the 40 days before General Conference and the 10 days it takes place.

I could've waited until the March 2 issue of the paper to mention this prayer effort. I think it's important enough, though, that it deserves more than last-minute attention. Imagine the power of even a small percentage of United Methodists praying the same prayer every day!

We are feeling the uncertainty of change at the Conference level through Imagine Ministry. General Conference faces many of the same issues, but on behalf of the UMC worldwide.

If you're not already praying for the people called United Methodist, now is a great time to start.

To reach me, send an email to aforbus@arumc.org.



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AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

Dear Friends:

Recently, Karen and I had the opportunity to visit the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas. It is an interfaith chapel where all are welcome.

The octagonal chapel is very spare—high ceiling, natural light—with walls dominated by the mural canvasses of Mark Rothko, a Russian-American painter (1903-1970). The mural paintings invite contemplation and meditation. The sanctuary is filled with the kind of silence that invites you to listen to God. It is indeed a sacred space.

Outside the chapel is a reflecting pool with a large, dramatic sculpture in memory of Martin Luther King Jr. As I approached it, a middle-aged woman standing by the

pool, bundled against the chill of the day, asked if I would take her picture. Though she spoke with a heavy accent, her English was impeccable.

After the picture was taken, I handed her the camera and, in my most solicitous voice, asked if she were a visitor here. I wanted to be welcoming and helpful if she were visiting our shores for the first time.

The response was not what I expected. Across her once smiling face fell the veil of fear. Her eyes began to dart, as if looking for a route of escape. She reached into her pocket and pulled out her passport—the passport of a citizen of this nation. She said, with fear cracking her voice, “Do you have any problem with this?”

I was trying to be friendly and

kind and welcoming to a person who might be visiting our country. She, it turned out, had been a U.S. citizen for many years. Physically, there was no indication of her country of birth (Honduras). She did not have a darker skin or any facial characteristics that would indicate she was from Latin America.

Yet, because she had not lost the accent of her childhood, she had been singled out, harassed and hassled. We had both just walked out of a sacred space, a sanctuary of peace, and suddenly a gesture of friendship brought fear and terror to her life.

I now have a role to play in that woman's life even though I shall never see her again. I do not want my grandchildren to grow up in a society, a culture where fear is a

dominating motif in our common life.

As a child of God, a disciple of Jesus, I know that attitudes of animosity and hate toward the stranger have no place in the Kingdom of God. As a person of faith I am to be a builder of a world, a society, a culture where no one standing in a place of sacred beauty and stillness is ever again confronted by fear.

Faithfully,

Charles Crutchfield



Lay delegate unavailable for Gen. Conference

Because of the demands of her education, Sarah Steele, Arkansas' second-elected lay delegate to the 2012 United Methodist General Conference, will be unable to attend the quadrennial gathering, to be held April 24-May 4 in Tampa, Fla.

Steele's spring semester schedule conflicts with the dates of General Conference.

“Not attending GC was one of the more difficult decisions I've had to make, especially when I feel like I have experience that could benefit the delegation and my subcommittees,” she said.

“[But] I know that others on the delegation will represent the Arkansas Conference just as well, if not better.”

Deborah Bell, the first lay alternate to the Arkansas delegation, will serve in Steele's place at General Conference.

Steele expects to be able to resume her duties for the South Central Jurisdictional Conference, July 18-21 in Oklahoma City. In the meantime, she plans to keep her fellow delegates in prayer while they attend “a conference so much more physically, spiritually and emotionally demanding than my finals week.”

Should our leaders be electable?

BY WILLIAM O. (BUD) REEVES
Special Contributor

The political season has been in full swing for some time now, as many states are holding their primaries earlier and earlier. One of the words that I have heard many times in the last few weeks has been “electability.” Candidates are judged by their likelihood of winning the upcoming election.

The question is not their ability or their policies, but their appeal. To me, electability seems to mean, “Can they make enough people like them?” Or worse, “Can they pander to the self-interests of enough individuals and groups to win?”

Perhaps politics has always been that way to some extent. But it seems our electoral process has declined into a morass of images and sound bites, and the real need has been ignored—the need for leadership.

It occurs to me that most of the biblical examples of leadership were not very electable. Jacob was known for his underhanded deals. Moses

had a speech impediment. David was an adulterer, attacked by his own son. The prophets? Give me a break! Paul caused riots wherever he went. And of course, Jesus was arrested and crucified. Not a good politician in the bunch!

In the intervening centuries, Christian leaders have seldom been popular. Martin Luther split the Church. John Wesley created havoc across England. Frances Willard upset the good old boys of General Conference. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.

Politicians can be leaders, and I admire those who give of themselves to suffer the blows of public service (well, *some* of them). But the leadership that comes from God and is necessary in our church and society today is leadership of a different order.

Godly leadership is based on **vocation**. Real leaders answer a spiritual call to serve, whether the call is to run for Congress, to teach Sunday School, lead a mission trip or pastor a church. We are always inadequate on our own. We need the direction of the Holy Spirit, leading and guiding our steps on the right path.

Godly leadership requires **focus**. With the call comes a Kingdom vision, and we have to

laser-focus our energy and resources on achieving the vision. As politicians, we can yield anything that does not affect the vision, but as leaders, we cannot lose sight of the picture of the future God has given us.

Because God has called us into leadership and given us a vision (whether it's for the country, the community or the congregation), we lead to an audience of one. Sure, we have to build coalitions and motivate masses to achieve goals, but ultimately the only One we have to please is God. He's the One in charge of eternity. At several points along my leadership journey, when riding a wave of unpopularity, I have had to say, “I'd rather have 100 Methodists mad at me than one God!”

Godly leadership demands **passion**. Politicians test the waters, put their fingers to the wind, and run things up the flagpole to see if anyone will salute. Leaders engage the future with a passion born of a holy conviction. They are willing to suffer the consequences of their vision, even if it means sacrificing their power or position. They could lose the election! Our ultimate Leader, Jesus Christ, endured his passion to achieve the vision—a sinful world reconciled to a holy God.

As we—clergy and lay people—lead the church into the future, it will require some political expertise. From the local church to General Conference, there are huge issues lying in the pathway. Jesus said we must be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” But ultimately, our way forward will be accomplished not by politics, but by leadership.

I attended recently an annual event to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a passionate, focused leader called by God. In the program, he was quoted:

“Cowardice asks the question—is it safe? Expediency asks the question—is it politic? Vanity asks the question—is it popular? But conscience asks the question—is it right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular; but one must take it because it is right.”

We are called by God with a holy calling to be leaders in this historic moment of change. Let's keep our eyes on the Kingdom vision. Let's lead with passion!

The Rev. Dr. Reeves serves as senior pastor of First UMC Hot Springs. Email: brobud@fumchs.com.



Bud Reeves

Luncheon to benefit Good Shepherd

The Bishops' Luncheon to benefit the programs and services of Good Shepherd Ecumenical Retirement Community is scheduled for Wednesday, March 7, at 11:30 a.m. in the Great Hall of Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church Little Rock.

Good Shepherd was founded in 1975 by the then-presiding Bishops of the Episcopal, Catholic and United Methodist churches, and later joined by the Presbyterian Church of Arkansas. Bishop Charles N. Crutchfield will be among the honored guests.

Dr. John L. Dornhoffer, director of the Division of Otology/Neurotology at UAMS, will speak at the luncheon. He is widely recognized for his research in the field of deafness and for surgical reconstruction of a patient's hearing.

Tickets are \$150 each, and tables of 10 may be reserved. To purchase, contact Chandra Vaughn at 501-320-1155.

Life cycle (continued from page 1A)

so we kept going until we couldn't go anymore. I even went part-time, and took a position at UALR so we could keep the doors open, because we were seeing some things happening in individual lives."

She tells of one family that had no previous involvement with a faith community, and first came to Crosspoint because of a flier the launch team distributed at the county fair parade. The father of that family and all four of his children eventually chose to be baptized.

"It's possible that Crosspoint existed simply to help this one family be introduced to Christ and to begin a Christian journey," Garrison said. "We feel like, if nothing else, that was worth all of our work and effort. But I think we made some progress in other people's lives, too."

She spoke of situations where Crosspoint may not have gained new members, but still served to reconnect people with a faith that had gone dormant.

"We had a Vacation Bible School, it wasn't huge—we had 12 children who came—but one of those children was a little girl whose family was Catholic, and who had disengaged from their faith.

"Grandma and Grandpa brought her. She had such a wonderful time, and they saw her—for the first time, I think—really paying attention to the

fact that she was learning about God. They decided that after it was over, they were going to go back to church."

When Crosspoint held its closing service, Garrison said there were some sad moments, but the overall outlook was that of celebration.

"I don't think anybody was sad or disappointed to be a part of what they were a part of," she said. "I think everybody was glad that they'd had that opportunity and really felt like they had a purpose and had made a difference, that they had been there for a reason. Whether [Crosspoint] made it or not as a congregation, they really felt like it was not time wasted."

Closing, not failing

Foundry UMC was a new church launched in Lowell (northwest Arkansas) in 1999. Michelle Morris, in her twenties at the time, was baptized through that church's early ministry, and soon became a leader in the congregation, which closed in 2004.

"One of the questions people usually ask is, 'Why do you think Foundry failed?'" Morris said. "I correct them right away. Foundry didn't fail. It closed. There is a difference."

For evidence that Foundry didn't fail, Morris points to her own

transformed life. Now a student at SMU's Perkins School of Theology, she earned her Master of Divinity degree in 2009, and has stayed there to pursue a Ph.D. in religious studies with an emphasis on the New Testament. She hopes to return to serve within the Arkansas Conference in 2013.

Morris isn't the only former member of Foundry to recognize the valuable impact of its brief existence. A majority of Foundry's members transferred to Elm Springs UMC and contributed to making that already strong congregation even stronger in its witness.

"I think the discipleship we learned at Foundry goes with us and allows us to contribute to the building of God's reign wherever we have been planted," Morris said. "The tiny mustard seed has indeed grown into a huge plant."

Crossman emphasizes that no matter a church's age, people must remember that their work fits into a much larger picture: furthering the Kingdom of God, not their particular congregation.

"Local churches do not last forever. I don't believe any of the churches the Apostle Paul started are still open every Sunday," he said.

"It's not a human enterprise. We can't make people want to be in a church... and if we did, that wouldn't really be the church. This is a faith adventure."

Now-closed church still changing lives

BY MICHELLE MORRIS
Special Contributor

I did not grow up going to church. My parents had both been disillusioned by their experiences with organized religion. Still, they did not forbid us from going to church. My brother and I both became perpetual visitors, going from church to church with whoever invited us that weekend.

I married a Methodist, and we began looking for a church in northwest Arkansas. We tried many congregations, but I struggled to find a place there.

Then I learned that my high school next-door neighbor, Elizabeth, had married a young pastor, and he had been appointed to start Foundry UMC in Lowell. I called her, she arranged for my husband and me to meet Todd-Paul, and the next thing I knew I was being baptized in my living room.

We began meeting in small Sunday school groups. Perhaps because I missed the Sunday when the vote took place, or maybe because the group saw in me something I did not yet see in myself, they elected me to take the role of leader. I was shocked, but I found that I loved leading Sunday school. I was fulfilled in a way I had rarely experienced in my life.

Two years into my life at Foundry, I signed up to take Disciple Bible Study. Then, two weeks before our study began, I found myself trapped in Kimpel Hall on the University of Arkansas campus while police surrounded the building. My graduate advisor, Dr. John Locke, had been killed by

a fellow student of mine. Dealing with Dr. Locke's murder forced me to ask the great questions of theodicy: Why do bad things happen to good people? Why is there evil in the world? What kind of God allows these things to happen? Disciple Bible Study showed me I could ask the questions I had always had about the Bible but had assumed would get me kicked out of church if I actually voiced them.

The convergence of a serious and deep Bible study with a paradigm-changing life event and a key role as a leader in congregation led me to understand my call. I did not know why there was evil, but I did know that my God stood for peace against the chaos, and I was called to stand on God's side. By the time we reached the spiritual gifts lesson at the end of Disciple I, I was confident I could say I was called to full-time ministry.

My experiences at and through Foundry were instrumental to discerning my call. Could God have taken me to this point without it? I don't know. My life makes so much more sense now, so I hope I could have arrived here in any number of ways. But Foundry opened the door, let me in when I was not so sure I was supposed to be there, and then sent me forth better equipped for the journey. I think many of us from Foundry could say the same thing.

Foundry didn't fail; it closed. There is a difference, and the difference is all of us.

Editor's note: For a longer version of this story, visit arumc.org/news and search for Michelle Morris under "Viewpoints."

Dorcas Ministry clothes newborns in need

"Stitched with love, embroidered with promises and bound with devotion."

This message accompanies layettes sent by the Dorcas Ministry at First UMC Bentonville to newborn babies who are in need.

Led by Maxine Hines, wife of the Rev. Ben Hines, Pastor Emeritus, this group of women spends many hours creating tiny apparel. The layettes are taken to local hospitals, shelters and homes to ensure that the babies there can be surrounded with the love that the Lord wishes for all.

In addition, the ministry makes blankets and cot sheets for older children in the Head Start programs and the church nurseries, and sends hand-sewn school bags with the Ingathering kits assembled by the church's United Methodist Women.

A highlight of all the effort poured into the making of a baby layette is shown above. The group gathers around and gives a spirit-filled blessing, with prayers for each "little baby dear."



—Submitted by Carol Carlin

Kids' confirmation uploaded for deployed dad

On the fourth Sunday of Advent, the Revs. David A. and Carol Moore confirmed six young people into church membership at First UMC Hamburg. Among the confirmands were Sarah and Ethan Harrod (pictured above), siblings whose father could not attend the service because he is on active military duty in Kenya. Commander David Harrod of the U.S. Navy is the officer in charge of the joint task force off the horn of Africa at Camp Simba. The church captured the moment on video and uploaded it to YouTube so that he might see his twins' confirmation service as soon as possible.

During the worship service another person joined the church, for a total of seven new members on that day.



COURTESY PHOTO

UM Museum of Arkansas reopens in new home

The United Methodist Museum of Arkansas on Jan. 14 celebrated its grand reopening in its new location, First UMC Little Rock.

"This museum joins a number of other like-minded opportunities around here in historic Little Rock, to remind Arkansans and out-of-state visitors of the rich heritage of the people within our borders, and show that we have much on which to build our future," said Tyler Thompson, chair of the Conference Commission on Archives and History, in his opening remarks.

"This particular museum shows just how important Methodism has been in the spiritual growth of the people, and the

potential and promise that it has for us, now and tomorrow."

A number of volunteers were present to witness their work come to fruition. Among them were two members of First UMC Little Rock: Linda Baker, volunteer curator, who unpacked and prepared items for display and wrote text for the signage; and Keith Martin, a museum exhibit specialist for Arkansas State Parks, who designed the display panels that educate the museum's visitors.

The Rev. Ed Matthews, chair of the museum board, read from Psalm 145: "One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts." He then presented

the museum to Bishop Charles Crutchfield, who led a litany of dedication.

"Museums hold for us both the good and the bad, and from that we can learn," said Crutchfield, noting that the history of Arkansas Methodism includes darker times, such as the Civil War and racial segregation.

"This museum and the archives of all the preceding Conferences in Arkansas capture the movement of our personal and corporate history as people of God."

To share with the museum

artifacts of historical value, or to serve as a volunteer tour guide, contact Martha Sowell at 501-224-9333 or mars75@abcmglobal.net. Local churches wishing to invite a speaker to present a program on the museum and the history of

Methodism in Arkansas should contact Sowell, as well.

To schedule a tour visit for a confirmation class or other study group, contact the Arkansas Conference office at 501-324-8000 or toll-free 877-646-1816.

Among the United Methodist Museum of Arkansas' artifacts is the pulpit suit at right, worn by Dr. Virgil Morris, who served as a Methodist minister in the Arkansas and Louisiana Conferences and as secretary of the South Central Jurisdiction.

The Revs. Michael Mattox of First UMC Little Rock and Jimmy Mosby of Umsted Memorial and Emory Chapel UMCs pause in front of a collection of commemorative plates from churches across Arkansas.

AUM PHOTOS
BY AMY FORBUS



The Rev. Don Nolley, left, a member of the team that worked to secure a new home for the United Methodist Museum of Arkansas, visits with Bishop Charles Crutchfield at the museum's re-opening celebration.

Congregation marches to celebrate Human Relations Day



PHOTOS BY PAUL FISER

Quapaw Quarter UMC Little Rock on Jan. 16 participated in the Martin Luther King Jr. "Marade" (a combination of a march and parade) sponsored by the Little Rock chapter of the NAACP. This was the eighth year that the church has participated in the Marade as part of its Human Relations Day celebration, demonstrating the congregation's welcome to all and belief in the brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind. Twenty Quapaw Quarter members, from age three up to around age 90, joined the 3.3-mile parade and march.



Among the participants was Mabel Harris Webb, a 93-year-old civil rights advocate who is a member of First UMC Little Rock. She is pictured at left with this year's grand marshal, Annie Abrams, a civic leader who was instrumental in organizing the first Marade in 1986.

'Christmas Carol' a church's gift to community



During Oaklawn UMC's production of *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge (portrayed by the Rev. Fred Hunter), left, receives a visit from two gentlemen (B.J. Smith and Mac Guinn) soliciting help for the poor, as Bob Cratchit (Sonny Hines), right, looks on.

COURTESY PHOTO

About three dozen members of Oaklawn UMC Hot Springs, ranging in age from 3 to 83, worked together as cast and crew to present "A Christmas Carol" as a gift from the congregation to the surrounding community. The play, publicized through fliers, local newspaper articles and radio spots, drew approximately 400 people to its three performances on Nov. 27 and Dec. 2 and 3.

In addition to providing a gift to those outside the congregation, the event helped members of the church understand that they can use a variety of talents to spread the gospel and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Oaklawn UMC plans to continue using drama as an evangelistic tool in 2012. During the coming Easter season, the church will stage its fifth annual production of "The Living Last Supper."

Helping and understanding: a reflection on MITTO 2011

BY JACKSON FLOYD
Special Contributor

The true meaning of the Christmas season is to give to others because God gave Jesus to us. This is exactly what youth from all across the state did for one week after Christmas.

MITTO, meaning “to send” in Latin, is a brand new Conference event where senior high youth go out to help those in need in our own communities. At MITTO, we realized that there is a lot of mission work that you can do in your own area—you don’t have to travel to distant places to make a difference.

I attended MITTO with my youth group. We packed our bags and left for Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church Dec. 26. At first, I was slightly upset that I couldn’t be at home for a week of my vacation, but it turned out to be worth it.

The event had been orchestrated by two senior high youth, Max Hocott and Caitlyn Hendrickson, with the help of youth leaders from the participating churches. Each day consisted of mission work during the day and contemporary worship services during the evening. Each night, a Hot Springs-based youth band, Visitors Parking, led worship music, and Jamey Bentley, pastor of canvascommunity UMC, delivered a devotional.

When it came to mission work, we were split into small groups who not only went to different sites together, but also had group study every night after worship, often discussing our experiences during the day. The first day of work, my group and I interacted with older



MITTO participants prepare lunch for members of the homeless community at Little Rock Compassion Center. From left: Natalie McCormick of Pulaski Heights UMC, Morgan Vaughn of Cabot UMC and Bailey Moon of Marianna UMC.

PHOTOS BY CAITLIN HENDRICKSON

adults of PHUMC at a roundtable meeting they hold in the mornings.

Our second day, my group and another small group teamed up and went to the Wesley Foundation at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. A handful of youth stayed inside and painted the main hallway, while others went outside to rake leaves (which, in such a large yard, is easier said than done).

We put two coats of paint on the hallway and managed to make it look good, then ate lunch and went outside to rake leaves with the others. Despite the task, we had fun!

The third day we teamed up once again and went to the Compassion Center near the State Fairgrounds to clean up the mess hall, clean out the closet and help cook lunch for the residents. Before lunch, though, a small group of people (including me) got to go outside and rake up cigarette butts and throw them away. I am proud to

report that the Compassion Center’s back yard now has significantly less trash in it. When we finished that, we assisted with the cooking. I’d never actually made a salad before.

The fourth day, my group went to the Methodist Children’s Home and played with the three- and four-year-olds, first in the gym and then in their classroom. I could definitely tell they enjoyed it as much as we did. So many kids wanted piggy back rides that I walked away from there with sore joints.

The last day, we held one final worship, packed our bags, and said our goodbyes. Even though we had only shared almost an entire week together, we had already become excellent friends with those we barely knew. You would be surprised how much a handful of teenagers could bond over the course of six days.

It was disappointing to have to leave, but I easily got back into the



The Hot Springs-based band Visitors Parking led worship each night at MITTO.



Some of the hands that prepared chicken salad for lunch at the Little Rock Compassion Center.

swing of normal routine. I left with one important lesson: Even the people who seem to have it all together could be falling apart on the inside. The world needs the Kingdom of God, and the first step

to building it is understanding others.

Floyd, a high school student, is a member of Highland Valley UMC Little Rock.

‘Get Up & Give’ for Methodist Family Health Collection during Lent benefits children and families



Often, when a child or family arrives at a Methodist Family Health facility, they have only the clothes they’re wearing. They lack basic necessities, such as socks, underwear and toiletries.

The season of Lent, which begins Feb. 22, is traditionally a time to give up something. Methodist Family Health encourages United Methodists in Arkansas to use Lent as a time to “get up and give” something that will make a difference in the lives of others. This year marks the third annual Get Up & Give collection for Methodist Family Health, a nonprofit organization providing emotional and behavioral health services for more than 1,400 children and families each day.

Churches, church groups, community groups and individuals are encouraged to collect necessity items for

children and families served by the Methodist Family Health hospital, alternative schools, group homes and clinics throughout Arkansas. Items on the collection list include socks, underwear, diapers, baby wipes, paper towels, toothbrushes, toothpaste, toilet paper, backpacks and duffel bags. All items must be new.

Items may be dropped off at any of the seven Methodist Family Health counseling clinics around the state—in Batesville, Fayetteville, Heber Springs, Jonesboro, Little Rock, Magnolia and Mount Ida. Drop-offs may be made the week of April 9-13, during regular business hours.

“The generosity of our communities will bring a smile to the faces of the kids and families we serve on a daily basis,” says Andy Altom, Methodist Family Health chief executive officer. “Many of the children who arrive here come with nothing more than the shirt on their backs. Get Up & Give is an opportunity for us to engage our surrounding community to make a difference in these children’s lives.”

For more information, contact Jane Dennis at Methodist Family Health, 501-661-0720, ext. 7157.

Multi-college mission team helps to rebuild Joplin



ABOVE: Students work with a local plumber to dig a trench and replace a broken water line for a Joplin family of four in need.

LEFT: Kristina Villines, a student active in the Arkansas Tech University Wesley Foundation, helps tear down a garage that was hit by a tree. The wood was recycled to be used at another home.

PHOTOS BY JASON MOLITOR

During the winter break, 35 college students traveled to Joplin, Mo., to help rebuild.

On May 22, 2011, a tornado ripped through the city of Joplin, leaving behind a 14-mile path of destruction. One hundred fifty-nine people were killed, 7,000 homes destroyed and 5,000 workers displaced.

College students from Henderson State University, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkansas State University, Arkansas Tech University, Southern Arkansas University and Philander Smith College took a week out of their Christmas break to travel to Joplin to assist in the rebuilding of homes and businesses.

These students focused on being the hands and feet of the church by reaching out to those in need. They saw the impact of these missions in the lives of their neighbors as well as their own. While working in Joplin, these 35 students also created a community, building fellowship at night while eating together, playing games and leading worship services.

Please continue to pray for the families in Joplin that are rebuilding not only physical structures, but also rebuilding lives.

—Text from Ozark Mission Project
(www.ozarkmissionproject.org);
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To speak with someone who can help, please call (501) 803-3388.

Living Holiness: New seminar for young adults March 31

Event is free with pre-registration

The Arkansas Conference Board of Church and Society is sponsoring "Living Holiness," a seminar program for young adults, on Saturday, March 31, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Kendall Center at Philander Smith College, Little Rock. Participants will take a deep look into God's call to holiness, both personal and communal. Registration is free until Wednesday, March 28, and will be \$5 at the door.

The goal of the Living Holiness seminar is to provide a space where college students and young (and young-at-heart) adults can explore the importance of social holiness in a life of faith.

Seminar leaders, a collection of Arkansas clergy, seek to provide participants with a theological foundation on which they can build an understanding of how to live out their faith. The day-long event will provide real-life examples of how churches and faith communities are finding ways to transform the world through works of social holiness.

The day will include field trips to central Arkansas churches, including First UMC Little Rock and Quapaw Quarter UMC, to explore some of the exciting ministries already happening.

To ask questions or reserve a spot, email arumcseminar@gmail.com or call the Rev. Brittany Richardson Watson at 501-224-6047.

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

'U2charist' at First UMC Little Rock to benefit Imagine No Malaria, Methodist Family Health

First United Methodist Church in downtown Little Rock will present its second U2charist worship service on Friday, March 9 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, March 11 at 9 a.m.

U2charist is a Eucharist, or Communion service, featuring songs and videos by U2, the Grammy-winning Irish rock band, which proclaims a message about God's call for global reconciliation, justice for the poor and oppressed and the importance of caring for others.

The U2Charist began in 2004 when young leaders in the Episcopal Church began setting celebrations of the Eucharist (Holy Communion) to the music of U2. Playing on the similar-sounding word, Eucharist, those celebrations became known as "U2charist," blending the name of the band with the name of the celebration of the sacrament.

All U2charist service offerings must go toward one of the United Nations Millennium Goal projects. First UMC has chosen both a local and a global project to receive the offerings.

Imagine No Malaria, a United Methodist initiative, will be the global focus. The United Methodist Church, together with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Foundation and others, has formed Imagine No Malaria with the goal of eradicating malaria in our lifetime. The denomination has pledged to raise \$75 million to take part in making the goal a reality.

"The United Methodists have made this their business," Melinda Gates said recently of the fight against malaria. "They will make a difference."

For its local project, First UMC has chosen Methodist Family Health. Established in 1899 as the Arkansas Methodist Orphanage, the agency has grown into a comprehensive residential treatment facility with youth group homes throughout Arkansas. Today, Methodist Family Health provides the only comprehensive behavioral healthcare system available to children and families of Arkansas.

More information on both Methodist Family Health and Imagine No Malaria will be available at both U2charist services.

The First Word Band will celebrate U2charist with popular U2 songs, along with liturgy, prayers, Holy Communion, and Scripture readings. The Friday service will include guest speaker the Rev. Nathan Mattox, senior pastor at University United Methodist Church in Tulsa, Okla. Both services will be in the gym at First UMC, on the corner of 7th and Center Streets in downtown Little Rock. Childcare will be provided.

For more information, contact Lesley Andrews at 501-372-2256 or landrews@fumcl.org. To learn more about the causes this U2charist will benefit, visit imagineinomalaria.org and methodistfamily.org.

Hendrix prof receives GBHEM Exemplary Teacher Award

Hendrix College religious studies professor Dr. Marjorie Jane Harris has been selected to receive an Exemplary Teacher Award from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) for fall 2011. Harris is one of 11 professors at United Methodist-related colleges, universities and theological schools to receive the honor.

Faculty members were nominated and selected based on exemplary teaching, service to students beyond the classroom, and commitment to values-centered education. The program expresses the church's support of and appreciation for outstanding teaching at UM-related colleges and universities.

"The 2011 Exemplary Teachers demonstrate a variety of pedagogical approaches that create engaging experiences for their students," said Dr. Gerald D. Lord, associate general secretary of GBHEM's Division of Higher Education. "The Division of Higher Education presents these awards with great pride, recognizing that excellent teaching is a hallmark of United Methodist-related institutions."

GBHEM's Division of Higher Education provides a certificate and a monetary award to those selected.

"Jane Harris was an early exponent of Asian Studies, long before it became fashionable," said Dr. Robert L. Entzminger, executive vice president and provost of the college. "Her professional journey began in Taiwan, and she wrote her dissertation on female missionaries in China."

"She is likewise a devoted mother and churchwoman, lending her considerable singing talents to her church choir," he added. "As much as anyone, Jane epitomizes the Hendrix motto 'unto the whole person' both in her approach to her work and, more important, in the example she offers to her students."

To learn more about United Methodist-related educational institutions, visit www.gbhem.org/education.



Jane Harris

Arkansas clergyman behind denomination's 2012 stewardship campaign

The Rev. Bob Crossman, Arkansas Conference minister of new church starts and congregational advancement, has written *Committed to Christ: Six Steps to a Generous Life* (Abingdon Press), which has been selected as the 2012 stewardship program for the United Methodist Church.

The six-week campaign includes plans for a kickoff Sunday and a series of sermons, worship, study and devotions focusing on the six commitments of Christian discipleship: prayer, Bible reading, worship, service, financial giving and witness.

Crossman developed the plan while he served as pastor of Grace UMC Conway, and with its use, the church saw a 58 percent increase in pledges and a 64 percent increase in financial giving.

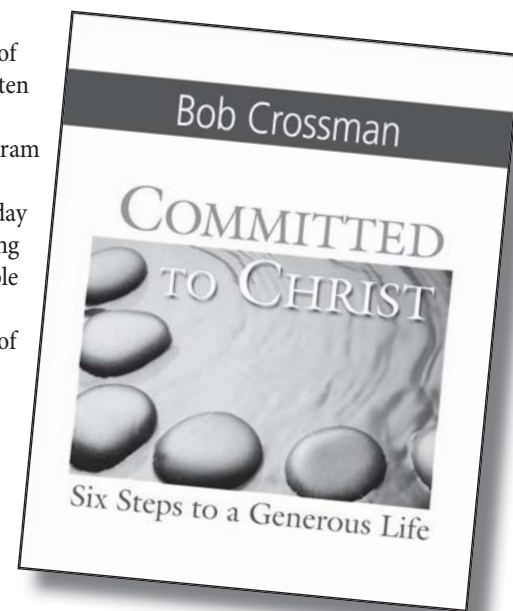
But the series is about more than money.

"*Committed to Christ* presents giving as a lifelong journey, beginning with the all-important decision to accept Christ as Lord and Savior," Crossman says. "The six-week stewardship program, in truth, is a comprehensive discipleship program."

A preview book, *Six Steps to a Generous Life: Living Your Commitment to Christ*, made its debut in January at the Congress on Evangelism, held this year in Nashville, Tenn. The full *Committed to Christ* boxed kit will be released in April at General Conference in Tampa, Fla., and will be available at Cokesbury stores in May.

The kit contains the Program Guide with CD-ROM, readings and a study book for adults, a leader's guide for small group discussion, DVD of worship loops, and suggested blog entries, Facebook and Twitter prayers.

Crossman has more than 35 years of experience as a pastor and has served as pastor or staff member in congregations from 13 to 3,000 members. He conducts workshops across the country on topics of holistic stewardship, developing a vision, and overcoming growth barriers in a range of settings from new church starts to established congregations. He has been the recipient of the Denman Evangelism Award and holds a doctorate in evangelism from SMU's Perkins School of Theology.



COMING UP

February

Worship Fair in Little Rock Feb. 17-18
“Ancient Ways, Future Paths,” the 2012 Worship Fair presented by the Arkansas Chapter of the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts, will take place Friday and Saturday, Feb. 17-18, at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock.
Clinicians include the Rev. Britt Skarda of Pulaski Heights; Dr. Dean B. McIntyre of the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship in Nashville; and the Rev. Les Oliver of Central UMC Rogers. The event features a special Friday night recital by James O'Donnell, organist and master of the Choristers of Westminster Abbey. To learn more, visit arkansasfummw.org.

Vessels for the Lord Conference in North Little Rock Feb. 17-18
All women and men are invited to attend “Vessels for the Lord,” an inspiring conference on Saturday, Feb. 18, at Lakewood UMC North Little Rock. There is no admission charge; a love offering will be taken. Registration begins at 9 a.m. Saturday, and the conference will end around 2 p.m. A light lunch will be provided. Ministering in word and deed will be the Revs. Treccie Cook, Dorothy Jones and Mary Welch. Friday night, Feb. 17, from 6:30-9:00 p.m., will be a special time of teaching and prayer to prepare for the spiritual atmosphere of the Saturday conference.
Plan to attend and expect blessings while sharing in fellowship, good food and special music, Spirit-filled messages that can be applied to daily life, powerful praying time and moving of the Holy Spirit.
Lakewood UMC is located at 1922 Topf Road in North Little Rock; phone: 501-753-6186. For details, visit www.vesselsforthe lord.org or contact Michelle Dubar, conference coordinator, at 870-215-3980 or mdubar@vesselsforthe lord.org.

VBS regional training events in Hope and Springdale Feb. 18, Conway March 3
Come join the fun at one of three 2012 Vacation Bible School

(VBS) training events sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Council on Children's Ministries (CCCM). Though it had previously held VBS training only in Little Rock, CCCM has expanded it to three locations to become more accessible to churches across the state.
Scheduled for Feb. 18 at First UMC Hope and First UMC Springdale, and March 3 at First UMC Conway, all events will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at noon.
All three events will include door prizes from Cokesbury bookstore (including a gift card), and a “swap table” for churches wishing to trade gently used VBS materials.
VBS is one of the most important outreach events of the year for children in local churches. This year's training will focus on practical how-to skills for all sizes of churches rather than teaching participants about a specific curriculum.
Registration fees (\$10 early registration, \$25 at the door) will go toward mini-grants for small-membership congregations to assist with funding for VBS. Grants of \$250 will be awarded on the basis of need and available funds. For more information and to complete a grant application form, visit kids.arumc.org.

Veritas statewide youth event in Rogers Feb. 24-26
All Arkansas youth in grades 7 through 12 are invited to attend Veritas at the Rogers Convention Center, Feb. 24-26. Veritas draws more than 1,000 attendees and is the annual “big event” for young people in the Arkansas Conference, bringing youth together to celebrate, worship, learn, experience and be energized to serve God.
For details on Veritas 2012, visit www.accym.org. Register before Feb. 10 at www.arumc.org/register.

March

Adult/Older Adult ministry event in Little Rock March 10
A popular author and an expert in spiritual formation are among the presenters at a March conference addressing ministry with a

wide age range of adults.
The Adult and Older Adult Ministry Conference, scheduled for Saturday, March 10, at St. James UMC Little Rock, features Missy Buchanan, author of *Don't Write My Obituary Just Yet* and several other books published by Upper Room; and Carol Krau, director of adult formation and discipleship at the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship.
Workshop leaders include the Rev. Jennifer Pasco, Oklahoma Conference, and Sheila McCallum, Christ of the Hills UMC Hot Springs Village. Register online at arumc.org/register.

Confirmation Day with the Bishop in Little Rock March 10
Confirmation Day with the Bishop, an annual event for any and all youth presently in a confirmation class, who have just finished a confirmation class or are getting ready to begin a confirmation class, will be held Saturday, March 10, at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock.
Confirmation Day offers young people an opportunity to learn about the connectional system of the United Methodist Church. Besides spending time with Bishop Charles Crutchfield, attendees will get to know recording artist and song writer Celia Whitler, as well as have the chance to test their knowledge in a game loaded with all kinds of information about what it means to be Christian and United Methodist.
Cost is \$10 for students and adults, and includes lunch. Register online at arumc.org/register. Questions? Contact Rod Hocott at rhocott@arumc.org or 501-324-8008.

Faith and Environmental Justice retreat March 23-24
Arkansas Interfaith Power & Light is offering a two-day retreat on Faith and Environmental Justice, March 23-24, at Ferncliff Camp in western Pulaski County. The keynote speaker is Dodd Galbreath, founding director of the Institute for Sustainable Practices, Lipscomb University, Nashville. The event includes multiple workshop choices. For additional details and registration, visit www.arkansasipl.com.

Professional training, certification available for church admin assistants

The Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries (PAUMCS) will conduct its 2012 Institute in Nashville, Tenn., July 15-20.
The PAUMCS Institute provides outstanding advanced professional training and enrichment for administrative assistants. A participant who completes the program and meets requirements set forth by the General Council on Finance and Administration may apply for certification as a Professional United Methodist Church Secretary.
The five-day program is designed to stimulate professional growth and development of the individual, resulting in better informed and more effective church administrators. Participants study business concepts required for understanding financial operations of the church, as well as relationships

with the pastor, church employees and members of the congregation.
The United Methodist General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) endorses and supports the Institute. The classes are held at the GCFA building in Nashville. For more information, contact Libby Gray, president of Arkansas PAUMCS, at 501-324-8027 or lgray@arumc.org.

Free webinars provide tips, training for local church leaders

Free web-based seminars (webinars) for church leaders are among the resources provided for local churches by the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship. Registration is open for the next two webinars:
• **10 Commandments for Church Websites**, Feb. 9 at 6:30 p.m. CST, will teach insights into how your website is the new front door to your church.
• **Healthy Church Leaders: Key Factors**, Feb. 23 at 6:30 p.m. CST, will share key factors for a healthy ministry environment.
To register for either of these webinars, visit



www.gbod.org/committee_resources and look for the registration links in the right-hand sidebar.
The page also includes links to archived webinars on such topics as:
• Handling God's Money in the Church;
• Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee;
• Church Council Leadership; and
• Easter Living for Church Leaders.

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Supreme Court shields churches from bias laws



The Rev. Eric Pridmore, who is visually impaired, uses a computer program that displays the pages of books as large, white type on a black background to help him read. Pridmore and his wife, Lisa, pastor a three-point charge in Rolling Fork and Cary, Miss.

UMNS PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

BY HEATHER HAHN
United Methodist News Service

A landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision this month establishes that the United Methodist Church and other religious groups are free to set their own rules for choosing and dismissing leaders without government interference.

The high court on Jan. 11 for the first time recognized a “ministerial exception” to U.S. employment anti-discrimination laws, a rare unanimous decision many legal analysts are calling the most significant in many years regarding religious liberty.

One likely result is that church leaders will face fewer lawsuits related to employment. However, the ruling also puts more responsibility on the UMC to prevent discrimination and do justice in its hiring practices, say denominational leaders.

The ruling “affirms the historic separation of church and state by allowing the church autonomy of its religious practices,” said Bishop Grant Hagiya of the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference.

“I believe it will help annual conferences [of the United Methodist Church] avoid frivolous lawsuits out of greed or self-interest,” he said. “But, this means that the onus is on our UMC polity to be fair and allow for due process at all costs.”

At least one church leader says the court’s decision could have implications for the denomination’s 2012 General Conference, where delegates will weigh whether to eliminate job guarantees for elders in good standing.

Case details

The case before the Supreme Court—Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical

Lutheran Church and School v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission—dealt with a teacher at a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod school who said she was fired in retaliation for her discrimination claim under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The teacher, Cheryl Perich, had narcolepsy.

“The interest of society in the enforcement of employment discrimination statutes is undoubtedly important,” Chief Justice John G. Roberts wrote in the ruling joined by all nine justices. “But so too is the interest of religious groups in choosing who will preach their beliefs, teach their faith, and carry out their mission.”

Roberts added that by imposing an unwanted minister, the state would infringe on the First Amendment’s right to free exercise of religion and violate its ban on Congress establishing religion.

The UMC’s General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) joined other denominations in a friend of the court brief on the prevailing side.

Lower courts have endorsed the concept of “ministerial exception” for some 40 years, and all federal appellate court circuits accepted it before this month’s ruling. However, the Supreme Court has set a strong precedent, said Rick Rettberg, general counsel with GCFA.

The denomination does not keep track of the employment discrimination lawsuits that Conferences and other church bodies have faced. “But there are such cases,” Rettberg said, “and I would expect that if people choose to bring them at all in the face of this decision, the likelihood is those cases are not going to get very far in the courts.”

Where the Supreme Court’s ruling is less clear is just who qualifies as a minister under the ministerial exception. The chief justice wrote that the court was reluctant “to adopt a rigid formula” on the question.

The Lutheran Church had commissioned Perich, who taught religion courses as well as secular subjects and led students in prayer and daily devotionals.

Undoubtedly the exception

applies to ordained clergy, Rettberg said, and could to some agency and conference lay staff as well.

Doing justice

However, Rettberg and other church leaders are quick to point out that the Supreme Court’s decision should not lessen the UMC’s commitment to preventing discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender or disability.

“If the E.E.O.C. guidelines don’t apply to the church, then we need to make sure we are advocating for those justice concerns within our own structure,” said the Rev. Darryl W. Stephens, the staff executive who oversees advocacy and sexual ethics for the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

The court’s ruling, he said, makes the case for “the heightened relevance” of his commission and the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race, agencies charged with monitoring race and gender discrimination.

The Rev. J. Eric Pridmore, a United Methodist pastor in Mississippi and co-chair of the United Methodist Association of Ministers with Disabilities (www.umdisministers.org), said clergy must be both physically and mentally healthy to be ordained. But, he added, that the *Book of Discipline*—the denomination’s law book—is clear that disability by itself should not be a disqualifier from ministry.

“As a denomination, we recognize that those with disabilities have something to offer and they can and should be included in ordained ministry,” said Pridmore, who is co-pastor with his wife of First United Methodist Church in Poplarville, Miss. “However, the way in which that gets practiced is sometimes problematic.”

He said clergy sometimes struggle with appointments that do not take into consideration their physical challenges or the disability of a family member. For example, a wheelchair-bound pastor may be appointed to a church with a parsonage that is not handicap-accessible. Pridmore, who is blind, said bishops and cabinets

occasionally don’t take into account the importance of accessible public transportation for the legally blind.

“It’s a difficult situation, and I think we all realize it’s a difficult situation,” he said. “There is some concern out there that in tough economic times how will the church treat (those with disabilities)? ... I would hate to see us hide behind the ministerial exception to avoid employing people with disabilities.”

General Conference

Pridmore said one particular concern is legislation going before General Conference, the denomination’s top lawmaking body, to drop “security of appointment” for elders. The 2012 General Conference will meet April 24-May 4 in Tampa, Fla.

The Study of Ministry Commission has submitted legislation that permits bishops and their cabinets to give an elder in good standing a less than full-time appointment. The legislation also would permit bishops and their cabinets, with the approval of their boards of ordained ministry and annual conference’s executive clergy session, to put elders on unpaid transitional leave for up to 24 months.

Pridmore said the recent court ruling may inform the debate on the proposed change.

Guaranteed appointment offers “a real safety net for those of us with disabilities will be appointed and not presumed to be incapable,” he said.

However, Hagiya—a bishop and member of the ministry study group—said he does not see the ruling having much impact on the proposed legislation.

“We believe our internal polity must change in order to make better missional appointments,” he said. “The Ministry Study totally believes in protection of women, ethnic minorities and prophetic pulpits, and we name a process to provide a check and balance to ensure the rights of such clergy from arbitrary appointment decisions.”

Hahn is a multimedia reporter for United Methodist News Service, and a former editor of the Arkansas United Methodist.

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Contemporary Worship/Student Ministry Leader: Greenwood UMC is looking for a full time Contemporary Worship/Student Ministry Leader. As a 270 worship attendance congregation in the growing community of Greenwood, Arkansas, we need a multi-talented person that can assist us in planning all aspects of contemporary worship including leading our volunteer praise band, and who has a passion for youth and for helping youth grow in their faith. Those interested send resume and references to Rev. Craig Russell (craig_russell@ymail.com).

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



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OBITUARIES

BATESVILLE**Byron McSpadden**

The Rev. Byron Luster McSpadden, 94, passed away Dec. 23, 2011, at a nursing home in Batesville.

He was born Sept. 6, 1917, at Bethesda, Ark., to George W. and Hattie Love McSpadden. During his young adult life he worked on the railroad and as a farmer and woodsman. After hearing the call to preach the gospel, he studied at Arkansas College (now Lyon College) and graduated from Hendrix College. He completed the Course of Study School and was ordained an elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

He served as pastor to many churches throughout the North Arkansas Conference of the UMC, including Elmo, Oil Trough, Charlotte Circuit, Greenbrier, Ola, Mountain Home Parish, Trumann, Corning, Jacksonville, Marked Tree, Forrest City, North Little Rock, Gardner, Heber Springs, Moorefield and Cushman.



Byron McSpadden

After he retired, he and his wife, Irene Brightwell McSpadden, lived in Batesville in a house he had built. They worshiped faithfully at Central Avenue UMC in Batesville. In 2001, they celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary.

In addition to serving as a pastor, his great love was gardening. While he resided at Wildewood Independent Living, he put in many hours of labor to keep that garden going. He also enjoyed woodworking, and used a lathe to turn vases from many varieties of wood. When he had to give up his lathe, he began to create wooden walking staffs. He donated hundreds of them to be sold at Mount Eagle Christian Center, Wayland Springs Camp and the Old Independence Museum as fund-raisers for those organizations.

He was predeceased by his parents, his wife, brothers and sisters. He is survived by Larry McSpadden and his wife, Ginny; Lynn McSpadden and his wife, Mary Catherine, all of Mountain View; one grandson, Brad McSpadden and his wife, Tasha; two step-grandchildren, Katie and Jim Hurley; four great-grandchildren; three step-great-grandchildren; two sisters-in-law; a brother-in-law; and many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

The family offers deep gratitude to those who cared for Byron at Wildewood, at Eagle Mountain Assisted Living and especially at Woodlawn Nursing Home.

Graveside services were held Tuesday, Dec. 27 at the Bethesda Campground Cemetery with the Rev. Steve Wingo officiating. A memorial service followed on Monday, Jan. 2, 2012, at Central Avenue UMC with the Rev. Paul Seay officiating, assisted by the Revs. Ed Matthews and Steve Wingo.

The family requests no flowers, and that memorial donations be made instead to Methodist Family Health System, 1600 Aldersgate Rd., # 200, Little Rock, AR 72205;

Mount Eagle Christian Center, 935 Beal Rd., Clinton, AR 72031; or Old Independence Regional Museum, 380 S. 9th St., Batesville, AR 72501.

BOONEVILLE**H. Gaylan Cope**

The Rev. H. Gaylan Cope, 73, of Booneville passed away Sunday, Jan. 15, 2012, at home.

He was born April 21, 1938, in Granby, Mo., a son of Harry and Virginia Cope. He graduated from Laura Speed Elliott High School in Boonville, Mo., in 1957; graduated from the University of Missouri with a B.A. in political science and history in 1961; and a Master of Divinity and Theology in 1980 from St. Paul School of Theology, Kansas City, Mo. He moved to Arkansas in 1982. On Dec. 23, 1989, he married Suzanne Sims.



Gaylan Cope

He served in the Army National Guard, and as an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, he served 35 years in United Methodist congregations of Arkansas and Missouri, including First UMC Mena, Rector, St. Paul in Searcy, Wesley in Springdale, and Lincoln. After retiring in 2005, he continued to serve as the pastor of Washburn United Methodist Church, Washburn, Ark., until his death. Gaylan devoted his life to the service of others and was dearly loved by family and friends.

Survivors include his wife, Suzanne; four brothers, Greg Cope and his wife, Connie, of Omaha, Neb.; Reggie Cope and his wife, Ellen; Danny Cope and his wife, Mary, all of Sedalia, Mo.; and Jonathan Cope, and his wife, Julia, of Springfield, Mo.; two daughters, Debbie Williams of Blue Springs, Mo., and Lisa Middlebrooks and her husband, Tom, of Springfield, Mo.; two stepsons; five grandchildren; and two step-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Saturday, Jan. 21 at First United Methodist Church Booneville, with the Revs. Sam Williams Jr. and Gerald Hollaway officiating.

JONESBORO**Jim Chaplain**

Jim Chaplain, 54, of Jonesboro passed away on Saturday, Jan. 14, 2012, at St. Bernards Medical Center.



Jim Chaplain

He was born in Newport on May 28, 1957, to Ralph and Pauline Chaplain. He was the crew chief for an award-winning NHRA drag racing team. He graduated magna cum laude from Memphis Theological Seminary, and served as a United Methodist pastor for nine years. He served the Northeast District at Brookland/Union Grove and Shiloh, and in the West District at First UMC Mena. A provisional elder in the Arkansas Conference, he made

his church home at Weiner United Methodist Church. He also had great success and joy working as a political consultant.

Survivors include his wife, Charlotte Brown Chaplain; four brothers, Thomas Chaplain of Brookland, David Chaplain of Fisher, John Soden of San Antonio, Texas, and Allen Soden of Waldenburg; five sisters, Anita Troxler of Cash, Barbara Russell of Harrisburg, Betty Lacko of Flora Vista, N.M., Sybil Crutchfield of Kissimmee, Fla., and Agnes Stallings of Port Arthur, Texas; many nieces and nephews that he viewed as his own children; and family and friends too numerous to mention.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Ralph and Pauline Chaplain of Weiner; and three brothers, Arthur Chaplain, Howard Chaplain and Robert Soden.

Funeral services were held at Tuesday, Jan. 17 at Roller-Farmers Union Chapel in Jonesboro, with the Rev. Tommy Toombs officiating. Burial followed at Oak Grove Cemetery in Weiner.

Pallbearers were Lloyd Wofford, Tommy Bowden, Tommy Toombs Jr., Micky Schisler, Robert Thompson and Scott Ellington.

The family requests that lasting memorials be made to Oak Grove Cemetery, P.O. Box 361, Weiner, AR 72479; Arkansas Heart Hospital, 1701 S. Shackleford, Little Rock, AR 72211; or Shepherds Fold Ministry, 201 E. Loeb St., Cardwell, MO 63829.

PIGGOTT**Morton Harlin Shelton**

The Rev. Morton Harlin Shelton, 84, of Piggott, passed away Wednesday, Dec. 28, 2011, at his residence.

Born on Feb. 27, 1927, in the Strangers Home community near Alicia, he graduated from Swifton High School, and farmed until he entered into the ministry in 1978. After attending the course of study at SMU Perkins School of Theology in Dallas and St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Mo., as well as one year at Hawaii Loa College, he returned to Arkansas and served churches at Imboden-Smithville, Umsted-Hope, Shiloh-Stanford, Marvell-Lexa, Desha-Southside, Mammoth Spring and Camp.



Harlin Shelton

Survivors include his wife, Vondala Shelton; one son, Morton Harlin "Butch" Shelton, Jr.; two daughters, Sandra Rodriguez of Fort Worth, Texas, and Deborah Campbell of Yellville; five stepchildren; two brothers, Ronnie Shelton of Jonesboro and Donnie Shelton of Springdale; six grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Saturday, Dec. 31 at Shiloh United Methodist Church Paragould, with the Revs. John Sandine, Eddie Harris and David Swift officiating. Burial followed in Strangers Home Cemetery.

Clergy Spouse Retreat

Registration now open for March 23-25 event

This year's Arkansas Conference Clergy Spouse Retreat will be held March 23-25 at Mount Eagle Retreat Center near Clinton. The retreat

speaker is Karen Crutchfield, the spouse of Arkansas Area Bishop Charles Crutchfield. She will present "The Gifts of Nothing: Journeying

through Grief"

The Clergy Spouse Retreat will be a casual time for spouses of United Methodist clergy to explore

and strengthen their relationships with God and one another.

Saturday afternoon will include time to explore some hobbies that help with daily life, so attendees should bring their cameras, knitting needles, walking shoes or other items.

For a retreat schedule and registration form, visit www.mounteagle.org and go to

"Happenings" on the menu, or find it at www.arumc.org/forms.

Clergypersons are encouraged to download a copy of the form and hand-deliver it to their spouses with a word of encouragement to attend.

For more information, contact Gina Wingo, coordinator of the 2012 retreat, at 870-819-1859 or ginawingo@yahoo.com.

Camp Tanako announces lodge dedication, spring/summer schedule

On Sunday, April 15 from 2 to 4 p.m., Camp Tanako in Hot Springs will hold an open house event to dedicate the new Everitt Staff Lodge. The day will include camp tours, games and refreshments, as well as the dedication ceremony.

“This is a time for campers past, present and future to come and enjoy Tanako and see what is going on,” says Becky Campbell, director of the camp.

In addition to the 2012 camp schedule below, Tanako will once again host Spring Break Missions, which last year drew more than 40 children and adults. Available projects include trail maintenance, painting, working on the challenge course and building and planting a garden. Groups also can use Tanako as a base camp for mission work in nearby communities, such as Hot Springs and Malvern.

Camp Tanako is the outdoor ministry center of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. It offers year-round camping, hospitality and fun for all ages. For information on any of the camps below, or to register, visit www.tanako.org.

Camp Tanako 2012 Schedule

- April 13-14: Family Camp (Ellie Jones, dean)
- May 25-27: CIT (Counselor in Training leadership weekend for grades 9-12)
- June 1-3: Fishing Camp (grades 3-7)
- June 11-14: Middle Elementary Camp I (grades 3-4)
- June 18-20: Y.E.E. Camp I (Younger Elementary Extravaganza, for grades 1-2; Greg Perry, dean)
- June 25-29: Junior High Camp (grades 7-9; Mike Meeks, dean)
- July 5-7: Y.E.E. Camp II (Younger Elementary Extravaganza, for grades 1-2; Michale Kuntz, dean)
- July 9-13: Older Elementary Camp I (grades 5-6; Bill Fish, dean)
- July 16-20: Senior High Camp (grades 10-12; Hammett Evans, dean)
- July 20-22: Middle Elementary Camp II (grades 3-4; Mary Kimbell, dean)
- July 23-27: Older Elementary Camp II (grades 5-6; Brad Elrod, dean)

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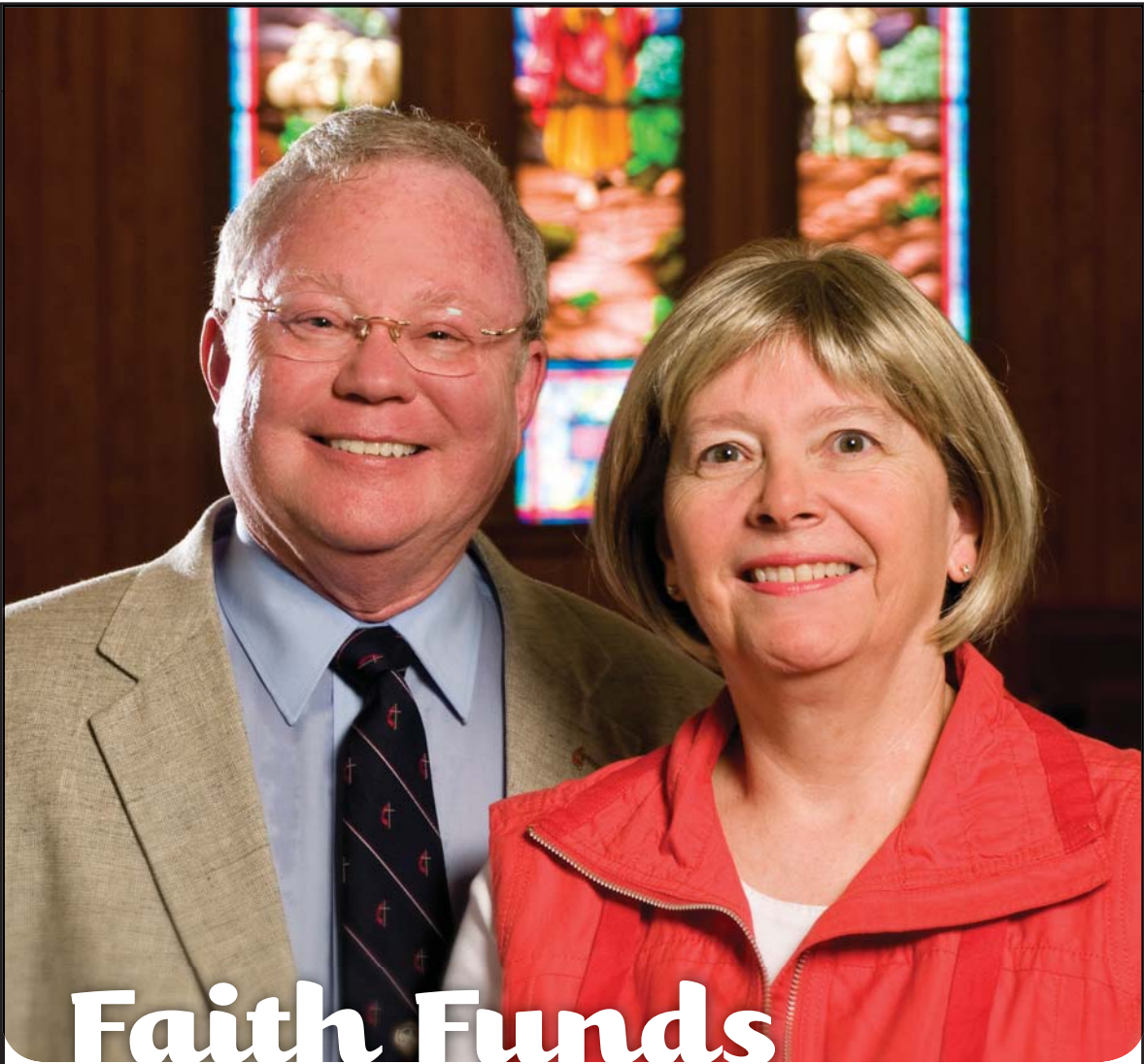
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Peace of Mind

Rev. Tony and Barbara Hill want to make the transfer of their estate to their four children and five grandchildren as easy as possible during what they know will be a difficult time in the future. “I’ve seen lots of families torn apart because there was no will, and we’ve seen for ourselves the difference it makes,” said Tony, senior pastor at Osceola United Methodist Church.

“My mother did it the right way. She had a will, a living will and plans for her burial,” said Barbara. “It made things much easier in a time of grief.” Barbara and Tony want to do the same, and a tool that is helping them gather information to work with an attorney on their estate plan is the will planning document from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. The will planner is available online at www.umfa.org. A free printed will planner is available by calling Janet Marshall at the Foundation at 501-664-8632 or by emailing her at jmarshall@umfa.org.

“Using the will planner made us think about a lot of things we would not have considered,” Tony said. “We’ve talked about how to make the division of our property fair for our children and what charitable gifts we may be able to make.”



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

5300 Evergreen Drive • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205
501-664-8632 • Toll free 877-712-1107 • Fax 501-664-6792 • www.umfa.org

REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

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SPARK¹²

Justice in motion

New ministry model for young adults in UMC | 2B



Sharing beauty

Philly area youth create art to inspire others | 4B



Wesleyan Wisdom

1995 memo sounds a lot like Call to Action | 7B

Section B

February 3, 2012



Exemplary Teachers

PHOTO BY ALEXANDRA CRUMP/COURTESY OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Karen M. Poremski, associate professor of English at Ohio Wesleyan University, was one of 11 professors at UM-related colleges and universities honored with the denomination's Exemplary Teacher Awards this fall.

UM agency awards professors at 11 schools

BY MARY JACOBS
Staff Writer

Karen Poremski excels in the classroom, but her teaching often takes her—and her students—well beyond the campus of Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio.

The associate professor of English is passionate about Native American history and culture, and takes students on field trips to twice-annual pow-wow gatherings of Native Americans at a nearby state park. During spring break, students have been known to forgo relaxing on sunny beaches to follow Dr. Poremski to frigid South Dakota, where they help with building projects and other work at Rosebud Reservation.

"Karen just radiates enthusiasm,"

said David O. Robbins, provost of Ohio Wesleyan. "She goes out of her way to be involved with students, both academically and in social mission."

That enthusiasm has been noticed. Dr. Poremski was one of 11 professors at United Methodist-related colleges, universities and theological schools who received the Exemplary Teacher Awards from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry last fall. (See list, pg. 8.)

The recognition, which includes a certificate and a \$500 monetary award, is the denomination's way of honoring excellent teachers.

"They are relatively modest awards, but they do serve to recognize pedagogical excellence," said the Rev. Gerald Lord, associate general secretary of GBHEM's Division of Higher

Education. And that's important, he adds, because "high-quality higher education is in the Methodist DNA."

Methodism's founder, John Wesley, placed a high value on education, and in the 19th century many U.S. education institutions were founded with Methodist money and Methodist initiative. Today, there are 120 United Methodist-related schools, colleges, universities, theological schools and affiliated organizations in the U.S.—the largest connection of private, non-Catholic institutions in the U.S., according to Dr. Lord. All told, the number of students attending those schools outnumbers that of any state school system in the U.S.

"With that many students sitting at the feet of master teachers, if we can in some small way encourage

pedagogical skills, I think that's right at the heart of our mission," Dr. Lord said.

All UM-affiliated institutions are eligible to nominate an Exemplary Teacher, with the exception of research institutions. (The denomination offers a separate honor, the Scholar-Teacher of the Year Award, for those schools.)

Faculty members are nominated by their institutions, based on exemplary teaching, service to students beyond the classroom and commitment to "values-centered education," according to GBHEM officials.

Following those criteria, each campus defines its own selection process. Some involve students in the selection; others consider student evaluations as part of the process.

■ See 'Teachers' page 8B

UMC reforms face test at General Conf.

BY SAM HODGES
Managing Editor

TAMPA, Fla.—The United Methodist Church's General Conference is still nearly three months away, but issues likely to dominate—such as consolidating general agencies and ending guaranteed appointment for clergy—got a dress rehearsal hearing in a briefing for delegates and others held here Jan. 21-23.

The pushback was plentiful.

For example, Bishop Minerva Carcaño of the Phoenix Area voiced concern about what she saw as the "disregard" for general agencies in the reform proposals, and for how a combination of reorganization and budget cutting could leave them much weakened.

"We may lay unreasonable expectations on our agencies, crippling their efforts, and in the process we may lose some critical functions in ministry that serve the connection and its work," Bishop Carcaño said.

But she did not dispute the need for a strong shaking-up of the denomination, and there seemed to be broad consensus at the briefing that change is required, given the denomination's four-decades-long slide in U.S. membership and other statistics illustrating decline.

"We're in a crisis situation," Bishop

■ See 'Reforms' page 3B



Bishop Minerva Carcaño

FAITH WATCH

N.J. synagogue hit by explosives

A fourth New Jersey synagogue has been attacked, prompting rabbis to say they will re-examine security. Congregation Beth El in Rutherford was hit by explosives, including Molotov cocktails on Jan. 11, causing a fire in the second-floor bedroom of Rabbi Nosson Schuman. Bergen County prosecutor John L. Molinelli said the latest incident would be investigated as an attempted homicide.

Bishop mourns loss of granddaughter

Hannah Moran, 9-year-old granddaughter of Bishop Earl Bledsoe of the UMC's North Texas Conference, died Jan. 23 at a children's hospital. The death occurred after an accident at her Fort Worth home, the conference said in a statement. A service was scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 28, at First United Methodist Church, Fort Worth. Johnson Family Mortuary of Fort Worth was handling arrangements.

Supreme Court won't review prayer case

The U.S. Supreme Court has let stand a 4th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that bars a North Carolina county from invoking Jesus' name in prayers at commission meetings. The Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty filed a brief in the Forsyth County case, arguing that while the Constitution permits "legislative prayer," prayers that favor one religion over another violate the Constitution's Establishment Clause.

SEJ bishops urge two conferences to merge

Meeting in January, the Southeastern Jurisdictional College of Bishops, in consultation with the Southeastern Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee, approved a statement "strongly recommending" the Memphis and Tennessee Conferences begin moving toward merger. "There is a strong feeling in the College that these two conferences would be a more viable witness ... if they would unite structurally, spiritually and economically," said Bishop Benjamin R. Chamness (Nashville Area).

Young adults lead social justice startups

BY TITA PARHAM
United Methodist News Service

The United Methodist Church is taking a page from the tech startup world, and the resulting initiative enables young adults to be leaders in ministry.

Called Spark12, it is an incubator for social justice ministries developed and implemented by young adults. It is one way the denomination is working to develop principled Christian leaders, one of four areas of focus adopted by the 2008 General Conference, the church's top legislative body.

Directed by the Council of Bishops' Leadership Table, a young adult team began in May 2011 to develop the initiative, which helps young adults bring to fruition their ideas for life-changing social justice ministries. The Council of Bishops endorsed the plan at its November 2011 meeting.

The project allows young adults to take the lead in ministry, rather than fitting into existing projects or ministry models.

"This [initiative] empowers young adults and meets them where they are," said the Rev. April Casperson, admissions director at Methodist Theological School in Ohio.

According to Ms. Casperson, the project also enables young adults to be in ministry much sooner than expected. They need not wait until they've earned a degree from college or seminary to work on a ministry about which they are passionate.

The project is all about "connecting people with the resources to do something truly amazing," said the Rev. DJ del Rosario, executive for young adult ministry discernment and enlistment at the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM).

In many cases, he said, Spark12 will help young adults who have always had a passion for social justice ministry or are already working on an

issue but are uncertain of what to do next. The goal is to give them the resources to move forward.

How it works

The team models itself on a company called TechStars, which secures seed money from investors and provides three months of intensive mentorship. At the program's start, company leaders can request investment funds to continue their work.

Ms. Casperson said Spark12 is not designed "to make money or a profit, but [rather] to develop sustainable ministry in the world."

Another program model to develop sustainable ministry, she said, is the denomination's Imagine No Malaria campaign, which is working to eliminate death and suffering from malaria through improved health infrastructure, research and treatment, public policy advocacy and health education. The campaign has reached more than \$19 million of its \$75 million fundraising goal.

Both Mr. del Rosario and Ms. Casperson say the nature of Spark12 is not to compete with existing initiatives but to generate new ministry and encourage collaboration among individuals, ministries and programs to achieve each project's goal based on its context for ministry.

"This isn't about one agency or group," Mr. del Rosario said. "It has everything to do with getting the work done with the resources at hand."

Teams of two to four young adults ages 18 to 35 will submit ministry proposals to an executive design team that includes Ms. Casperson, Mr. del Rosario and Patrick Scriven, associate director of connectional ministries with young people in the Pacific Northwest Conference—as well as representatives from general agencies, profit and nonprofit advisers and young adults. The design team will determine which ministries they will fund during each cycle.

The young adults leading the ministries have 18 weeks to launch, using funding from various investors, including general agencies, local churches, existing ministries and individuals.

"Eighteen weeks is just long enough for a young adult to take a semester off [from college or seminary] without penalty and long enough to get a foothold in a project," Ms. Casperson said. Spark12 "is meant to be a catalyst—to create a good, solid foundation."

The projects must be innovative, with a social justice focus. The motivation must be the team members' response to their faith and the belief that God is calling them to undertake the ministry. Team members need not be candidates for ordained ministry.

Regarding the types of programs to be funded, Ms. Casperson said the design team has left that "deliberately open and deliberately vague" because they don't want to limit ideas.

"The goal is making a difference in the world," she said. "The focus is to do something truly sustainable."

Mr. del Rosario cited several projects as examples of the caliber of ministries the team hopes to fund. One is the Polaris Project, a U.S. organization that fights human trafficking. Its founders are two Brown University students. Another is Ambatana Threads, a handmade-clothing business that employs the business skills and creative ideas of refugee women.

During the launch period, a theological and spiritual leader will help team members "discern where God is in the midst of their work and how they are becoming co-creators in the transformation of the world," Ms. Casperson said.

For guidance and support, team members also will have access to coaches, professionals and technical experts within their project's ministry field. At the end of the 18 weeks, representatives from the teams will go before the reviewing committee to make a case for continued funding so their ministries can be sustained long-term.

According to Mr. del Rosario, "sustainable" can mean several things. An existing group might fold a project into its ministry. The project might go forward on its own with the original team members and perhaps others. Team members might collaborate with other groups or agencies to continue the project.

Mr. del Rosario said he even envisions encouraging team members to join an existing ministry, such as the US-2 Program—a domestic, two-year, faith- and justice-centered mission and service program for adults ages 20 to 30—instead of continuing with



UMNS PHOTO BY KATHLEEN BARRY

Theon Johnson III, a member of the Spark12 design team, is pursuing graduate studies at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

their proposed ministry.

The nature and context of the ministries chosen for funding will determine which groups and individuals help the teams throughout the launch period and into sustainability. The pool of professionals will go "beyond church leaders to high-end executives," Mr. del Rosario said.

What remains consistent is the theological coach, who is "invested in the focus of developing principled Christian leaders," according to Mr. del Rosario. He said the coach—lay or clergy—should be "someone with a strong theological understanding of what this is all about: God's justice."

Next steps

The Spark12 website (www.spark12.org) launched on Jan. 21. Applications will be available on April 1. The first program cycle begins Jan. 6, 2013. Mr. del Rosario said he would like Spark12 to fund six pilot programs per cycle.

The team has secured initial investments totaling \$175,000 from the Leadership Table, the GBHEM, the General Board of Church and Society, and individual investors. Other agencies have committed staff and resources.

In addition to its website the team will advertise the project through diverse channels so young adults and potential investors who may not be well connected to church groups can learn about the opportunity.

More information is available by emailing Ms. Casperson and Mr. del Rosario at info@spark12.org.

Ms. Parham is a freelance writer, editor and communications consultant in Apopka, Fla.

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Dallas pastor resigns from ministry after complaints

BY SAM HODGES
Managing Editor

DALLAS—The Rev. Tyrone Gordon has surrendered his ordination credentials and resigned as senior pastor of St. Luke “Community” United Methodist of Dallas, effective Feb. 15, according to a statement released by Bishop Earl Bledsoe of the North Texas Conference.

Bishop Bledsoe said Mr. Gordon had been the subject of complaints from individuals in and outside of the congregation. The complaints were of “both an administrative and judicial nature,” the bishop said, but did not provide details.

St. Luke, with 5,136 members at the end of 2010, is the largest predominantly African-American church in the North Texas Conference and one of the largest such churches in the UMC.

Its pastor emeritus, the Rev. Zan Holmes, will serve as interim pastor until another appointment can be made, Bishop Bledsoe said.

Bishop Bledsoe said the judicial complaints against Mr. Gordon “could not be resolved through the supervisory process” and had been referred to counsel for the church, as provided for under the *Book of Discipline*, the UMC’s law book. From the counsel, the matter would go to a committee on investigations that would decide whether reasonable grounds exist for a church trial.

Mr. Gordon’s decision to resign and surrender his credentials ends the church’s investigation of him, Bishop Bledsoe said.

A call to Mr. Gordon’s office was not returned. Bishop Bledsoe said Mr. Gordon offered “both private and personal” reasons for stepping down.

“My hope and prayer is that we will continue to pray for all parties and to respect Rev. Gordon’s privacy and personal decision in this matter,” Bishop Bledsoe said. He added in his statement that he would not be commenting further.

Mr. Gordon earned a master of divinity degree from Perkins School of Theology and led Saint Mark UMC in Wichita, Kan., before coming to St. Luke.



Tyrone Gordon

■ REFORMS Continued from page 1B

John Hopkins, of the East Ohio Conference, told those gathered for one session.

The Pre-General Conference Briefing, a United Methodist Communications event, allows delegates (many of them chairs of delegations) and Annual Conference communicators a chance to hear about key proposals in some depth.

The briefing was held at the Tampa Convention Center. That’s where General Conference—the quadrennial gathering that settles questions of church law, policy and budget—will occur April 24-May 4.

Then nearly 1,000 delegates will gather. Here the crowd numbered about 300.

They got to tour the convention center, learned about rules changes and absorbed tips about how to stay healthy and grounded during the long days and nights of considering more than 1,100 petitions.

“In every General Conference, we take somebody to the hospital,” the Rev. Fitzgerald “Gere” Reist II, secretary of General Conference, said during a briefing session. “We don’t take care of ourselves.”

Tough questions

The briefing was dominated by intense discussion and pointed questions about proposals aimed at reforming the church.

Clergy members of the Study of Ministry Commission presented on guaranteed appointment, with the Rev. Amy Gearhart of Columbia, Mo., arguing for change.

“We need to be nimble and creative, and as long as we are locked into the commands and demands of the guaranteed appointment, that makes it impossible for us to put the mission before the structure, instead of the structure before the mission,” she said.

The Rev. Tom Choi, district superintendent for Hawaii and another Study of Ministry Commission member, agreed.

“At this time, we need to focus, not on security of appointment, but on securing the future of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ,” he said.

But the Rev. We Hyun Chang, pastor of Belmont UMC in Belmont, Mass., and a New England Conference delegate, pressed the panel during a question-and-answer period.

“Guaranteed appointment gave me the freedom to speak truth,” he said, speaking of cross-cultural church appointments he has had. “It gave me the room to be prophetic. . . . I think that’s missional.”

One briefing session focused on the episcopacy, namely the proposal for creating a “set aside” Council of Bishops president who would be able to focus on executive leadership and

not have to oversee an Annual Conference.

Bishop Larry Goodpaster, current Council of Bishops president, said at the session that he found it “nearly impossible” to meet the demands from around the UMC while still tending to the needs of the Western North Carolina Conference.

But some delegates took the microphone to suggest that creating the set-aside bishop position, combined with proposals to end guaranteed appointment and consolidate general church agencies, amounted to a power shift in favor of the episcopacy.

“There’s a pretty significant strengthening of the role of the Council of Bishops,” said Randall Miller, a lay delegate from the California Nevada Conference.

Bishop Goodpaster said he and his colleagues are focused on their stated goal of boosting the number of vital congregations in the UMC, and that proposed reforms would actually reduce the bishops’ participation on general church boards and allow them to focus more on the local churches in their conferences.

He noted that at the upcoming General Conference, as at all such gatherings, bishops would have no vote.

“I don’t think those balances of power change at all,” he said. “I don’t think any of us [bishops] saw it that way. We understand who we are. We are United Methodists, and our system is that the General Conference speaks for the United Methodist Church.”

Tall order

A lengthy briefing session focused on church restructuring. The proposal that came out of the Call to Action reform effort (initiated after the 2008 General Conference) would move nine agencies into a Center for Connectional Mission and Ministry governed by a 15-person board. That new organization would be overseen by a 45-member board.

Such a change would eliminate various agency boards and the travel costs incurred by hundreds of board members. But critics say that power in the UMC would be concentrated and diverse viewpoints diminished.

The session on restructuring generated lots of specific questions, including about whether the General Council on Finance and Administration would lose its independence, and whether program and finance tasks would be merged in violation of traditional UMC polity.

Don House, a veteran General Conference lay delegate from Texas, used a question-and-answer period to voice his concerns about GCFA losing autonomy. During a break, he said he



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

Mary Brooke Casad (right), top executive of the UMC’s Connectional Table, discusses church restructuring during the Pre-General Conference briefing in Tampa, Fla. Listening are the Rev. Amy Valdez Barker (left) and Tracy Merrick of the Methodist Federation for Social Action.

thought the proposal could easily be amended to keep GCFA outside the new structure.

Mr. House is among those who favor major change for the denomination. But he said the current reform proposals may be too many and too complex for General Conference to consider, amend and pass in the few days allotted for legislative committee work.

“It worries me,” he said.

Robert Williams, general secretary of the UMC’s General Commission on Archives & History, provided historical background on UMC polity during one session. But in the hall afterward, he expressed concern about the fate of his agency if it doesn’t have its own board, but instead has to answer to a 15-member board responsible for a wide array of church business.

“We’ll get lost,” he said.

‘More excellent way’

Other sessions dealt with the proposed \$606 million quadrennial budget (the first to see an actual reduction in spending); possible changes to the church’s pension plan; and plans for a service of repentance at General Conference, addressing the UMC’s historic involvement in crimes against Native Americans and other indigenous peoples.

The briefing included a session on “holy conferencing” about difficult issues, and the discussion focused on the church’s evergreen controversy over homosexuality. The church’s official position remains that the practice of homosexuality is outside of Christian teaching, and the U.S. church remains deeply divided over ordination of gay clergy and whether UMC clergy should officiate at same-sex unions.

The UMC’s *Book of Discipline* currently prohibits both.

Bishop Sally Dyck of the Min-

nesota Conference noted that recent General Conferences have seen so much controversy over sexuality issues that people arrive for the next one feeling “dread-full”—and that fear and suspicion of opposing factions are prevalent.

“I’ve come to believe that there are more conspiracy theories in the United Methodist Church about each other and different groups than there ever was about the assassination of John F. Kennedy and 9/11 put together and multiplied,” she said in presiding at the holy conferencing session.

But she also said her experience showed that United Methodists can demonstrate a “more excellent way” in working together despite strongly held, opposing beliefs. Others on the panel agreed, but none held out hope of compromise any time soon.

“It seems like some of the issues that we face, and not just the issues around sexuality . . . are, at least in the foreseeable future, unresolvable,” said the Rev. Tom Lambrecht, vice president of Good News, an unofficial conservative caucus within the UMC.

There was more optimism that structural changes of some sort would be adopted, if not as far reaching as those originating in the Call to Action process and backed by the Council of Bishops and Connectional Table.

Between now and General Conference, lots of preparation needs to be done, and will be, to find common ground, said Jay Brim, a lay delegate from Austin, Texas, who helped craft the proposals that would so dramatically reorganize the general church.

“I will definitely be looking for a set of changes that will be acceptable within the goals we’ve set, to make the church more nimble,” he said.

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Sharing beauty**Philly kids make stained glass to brighten lives**

BY JOANN LOVIGLIO
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA—In the fluorescent-lighted basement of a stately old church in an uneasy part of town, a special ritual unfolds every Wednesday evening.

It begins with about a dozen students, each gingerly pulling what looks like a pizza box marked with their name from a metal shelf, carrying it to a cluster of pushed together tables and opening the lid. The bits of colorful glass inside will be cut and sanded, edged in copper, joined with solder, celebrated and admired, then given away.

Based in the First United Methodist Church of Germantown, built in 1896 for a congregation established in 1796, the Stained Glass Project is both a little known and widely admired after-school program. None of the students involved previously considered themselves artists. Most had never had an art class. The group is small in part because the work demands patience, commitment, collaboration and analytical thinking—not necessarily teenage attributes.

“It’s not for everyone,” project co-founder Paula Mandel said. “Glass breaks. Even that’s a lesson.”

Those who do take to it become part of an extended family, meeting for meals, tutoring and advice far beyond their three-hour weekly artistic meet-ups.

The closeness was evident in a recent class after their return from delivering a dozen artworks to a New Orleans school destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. More proficient kids helped others with cutting and soldering; street-wise teens greeted their



PHOTOS BY JOAN MYERSON SHRAGER

Students in the Stained Glass Project at First UMC in Germantown, Pa., traveled to New Orleans in December to give artwork to children at Morris Jeff Community School. The school, in a neighborhood that was devastated by Hurricane Katrina, reopened after a three-year rebuilding project.

comparatively sheltered teachers with heartfelt hugs and kisses; all chatted and joked like the most comfortable of old friends.

After completing some elaborate soldering work, a beaming Deshawn Brewer held aloft his piece for an upcoming exhibition at Drexel University to applause, oohs and ahhs.

“I did textures instead of colors,” he explained of his work combining clear glass panels etched with differ-

ent geometric designs. In the center is a circle with a blue “eye,” in keeping with a theme incorporating eyes (seeing people for who they are) and hands (reaching out to others) for an exhibition next spring at Drexel.

Cornell Gilliland, a Germantown High senior and two-time marathoner, is combining his passions for running and art in his latest work: a foot crossing a yellow finish line, eyes on either side witnessing the—

symbolically, his—accomplishment.

“Many of these kids don’t have much, yet they make these beautiful things and they give them away,” Ms. Mandel said.

The students have not decided who the recipient of their latest works will be after the show. It is a given, however, that they will be donated again to people facing dark circumstances and in need of some light.

Barbara Mitchell, a retired

Philadelphia vice principal who runs the after-school program for students from adjacent Germantown High School, spearheaded the project in 2005. The first students learned to make jewelry and other decorative objects but Ms. Mandel and co-founder Joan Myerson Shrager saw the opportunity for a larger lesson.

Using donated glass, the kids in 2009 and 2010 created 18 windows to brighten a rural South African school



During their visit to New Orleans the students were housed at St. Mark’s UMC, where they were honored during a worship service.



Students in the program are trained to make stained glass. Then they donate their creations to other young people who face challenges and need inspiration.



for children orphaned by AIDS. They were displayed before the trip at a visitor center in Philadelphia's Love Park, where dignitaries offering kudos included former President Bill Clinton and South Africa Consul General Fikile Magubane.

As the group mulled the destination for their next project, NaNa Yaw Effah, a Germantown High School senior originally from Ghana, suggested New Orleans. They learned about New Orleans' iconic music, landmarks, food and traditions, incorporating the themes into the one-foot-square leaded windows with fleur-de-lis, trumpets, masks and streetcars.

"They have suffered so much since Katrina," NaNa said. "We wanted to do something to help . . . to show sympathy for what happened to them."

Seven of the young artists and six adults flew to New Orleans in December with 12 artworks for Morris Jeff Community School, destroyed by Katrina and almost not rebuilt. A grassroots coalition saved the elementary school, which has a mission to cultivate diversity and academic achievement.

"It was the first time I was on an airplane," Cornell said with a smile. "Everyone was so great to us, the way they welcomed us and treated us, it was unbelievable."

They were greeted by 300 children—many who ran up and leaped into the teens' arms—a zydeco band and a feast of creole, jambalaya and other local dishes made by parents and teachers. Firsttrust, a community bank Ms. Shrager wrote for help, paid for the students' airfare.

"We're calling it the 100 handkerchief trip. It was very emotional," Ms. Shrager said. "The kids in our program are inner-city kids who go to an inner-city school, they get to New Orleans and are greeted like superstars. They were just blown away."

Their embattled high school, like

others in Philadelphia, has been plagued with violence. Fights between African-American students and their African immigrant classmates are not uncommon at school but no such clashes exist among their group, Ms. Shrager said.

"We are young, old, all denominations of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, African American and African," she said. "Nobody knows the troubles some of these kids have seen . . . but the affection they have for each other, and for us, is incredible."

To learn more, visit www.fumcog.org/stained-glass-project.html.



ABOVE: Children at Morris Jeff Community School browse the donated stained glass. LEFT: The group shows off its work at Dooky Chase Restaurant in the New Orleans French Quarter.

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Fear shouldn't govern us in restructuring the UMC

BY GARY M. KEENE
Special Contributor

Fresh proposals for restructuring the United Methodist Church are generating concerns such as those expressed by the Rev. Tim McClendon (*Reporter*, Nov. 11, 2011). Some of the issues have deep roots in our constitution and polity, while others are of a more recent vintage; all merit discussion.

Dr. McClendon is straight-up about his fundamental concern, and he is not alone: "Actually, I think money-saving is a smoke screen to hand more power over to the Council of Bishops." This concern about power is paralleled by the "frightening thought" that "oversight will come from a 45-member group" chaired by a set-aside bishop.

There are three aspects to this concern: the historic separation of powers; the loss of diversity in the representative process; and the pollution of the church by business-driven principles. Let's take the last one first:

It's in vogue to blame the UMC's decline in part on its embrace of 1950s business principles, which were codified by the 1968 merger in the *Book of Discipline*. Yet business principles have never been inherently antithetical to the church.

Today, church leadership is drawing upon resources informed by research in business (*Good to Great* by Jim Collins is widely read among pastors). Our institutional error was encoding organizational knowledge of one era such that it has been virtually impossible to adapt to ongoing change and learning. The proposed legislation is an explicit attempt to address that.

Something of value

What is troubling is the inference that business principles used by faithful laypersons are somehow unworthy of the "church world." Is not God also at work beyond the church, even in business? Might there be something there of value—including better stewardship of resources?

More interesting and frankly disturbing is how quick we are to repudiate business principles, yet blindly cling to principles of governance that may be more outdated and counterproductive than 1950s organizational theories. Which brings us to the separation of powers.

The mildest student of Methodist

history knows that John Wesley did not set out to establish a new church; he wrote sermons, not polity. So when the Wesleyan movement gained enough critical mass to require long-term leadership and management, the emergent U.S. government offered a handy and acceptable solution. With that came the principle of separation of powers.

Dr. McClendon and others make much of this principle of separation, and are quick to quote Judicial Council decisions and the *Discipline* to assert it. And yet the prejudices of successive generations of General Conference actions, and later, Judicial Council decisions—all codified into the *Discipline*—have together functioned as a self-reinforcing loop that in different eras sustained slavery, excluded women from membership and ordination, and continues to leave us behind the curve of graceful inclusion of all persons regardless of sexual orientation.

Even if we lay this to "going on to perfection"—oh so slowly—the fundamental question must be asked: How is it that we have not only codified but elevated principles of gover-

'How is it that we have . . . elevated principles of governance over our gospel? More acutely, how is it that we have willfully incorporated the principle of fear in the governance of Christian community?'

nance over our gospel? More acutely, how is it that we have willfully incorporated the principle of fear in the governance of Christian community?

The gospel that defines us is incarnational, not constitutional. God comes as a child, a body, a man, who preaches, heals, suffers, dies and is resurrected. We hold that the Church universal, and our Wesleyan expression of that, is the Body of Christ now incarnate in and witnessing to the world. The primary model for governance of the United Methodist Church *should be* the human form itself.

In contrast, the U.S. Constitution was formed in the context of literal war with England and its monarchy. Thus, our constitution was infected from the beginning with an adversarial approach to governance and its necessary use of power. If one wishes

to find a culprit for our lack of denominational leadership, here is the leading candidate.

Pervasive mistrust

While this separation is not without some value, carried to the extreme (as it has become) it can only fuel distrust into the kind of fear expressed in handing more power over to the Council of Bishops with a "quasi pope" as its leader. Our unquestioned and vigorous assertion of this fear at the root of our polity has displaced the "perfect love that casts out fear" that 1 John 4:18 describes, and proves one denominational leader's comment: that today, we are more American than we are Christian.

Admittedly, streamlining governance by concentrating representation in a smaller group is sure to increase the already pervasive mistrust in our system; but amplifying representation has not increased trust, only polarization and stasis.

In the human body, there is a distribution of powers, not a division of powers. The church needs to reclaim the incarnate gospel if it is to truly

offer an alternative to the ways of the world. In business terms, we can either "play the game or change the game," and we have played the current version of the divided, hyper-representational game long enough to see the results.

Kierkegaard said, "The purpose of Christianity from the very beginning was to change the world." If that's truly our mission, then we need to use all the tools at hand, including some new ones and some really old ones.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4:18-19 NRSV)

The Rev. Keene is executive assistant to the bishop for the Los Angeles Area (California-Pacific Conference).

Corporate world answers all wrong for the church

BY CHRISTOPHER P. MOMANY
Special Contributor

The church's present obsession with success guarantees its eventual irrelevance.

I know, movements that are threatened with extinction tend to chase fads. It sounds proactive, bold and edgy, but a lot of these so-called leadership initiatives are little more than warmed-over tripe from the business world. Additionally, much of the "latest" thinking among the church has already been discredited in the business world.

My critique may sound like sour grapes—the rant of one imprisoned by the past, one unwilling to change or face the future. The opposite is the case. The church is not in decline because of the gospel's timeless truths. The church is in decline because we are afraid to live the gospel, and that gospel is about unconditional love.

We should think very carefully before giving ourselves to ideas that dominate corporate culture. Instead of demonstrating foresight and courage, the series of ideology-trumpeting customer service models and business-style "coaching" lacks theological vigor and depth. Customers receive services for a price. There is nothing wrong with this when it applies to legitimate economic transactions, but it is hardly the logic of grace.

Most of the trendy approaches to revitalization of the church are inherently conditional—meaning people are valued as long as they advance the agenda of someone in power. That just doesn't sound like the gospel.

Sure, we can write off this analysis as retrenchment, but before we do, let's consider a beautiful irony. Only by living with abandon for the Lord of unconditional affirmation will we grow. The fixation on outcomes, metrics and measurement distorts our theology and gives it a very conditional quality. In an attempt to grow the church, we risk losing the truth our world craves. By losing ourselves in unconditional love, we will find a church bursting with people and grace. As I recall, Jesus said something like that (Matthew 10:39).

Intrinsic worth

I work as a college professor and chaplain. I live among the self-styled hip and *au courant*. Young adults do not ask me if I am following some

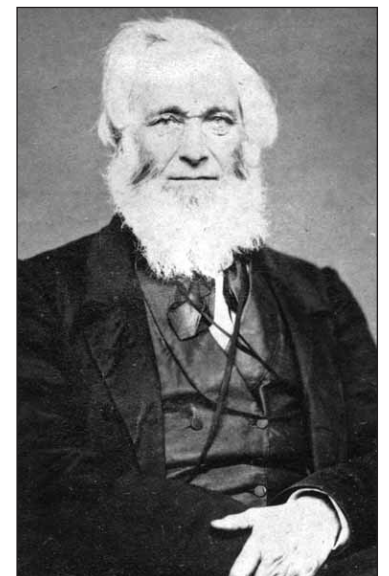
method for growing the church, implementing "best practices," or demonstrating worth according to a bottom line. I am asked about the nature of love, the meaning of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, the value of all people. And I am swamped with young adults who want to get in on the action. They believe the gospel and (like me) are desperate to throw themselves upon the power of something more substantial than business theory.

We have a saying in our ministry: People possess an "intrinsic worth" regardless of performance, usefulness, mistakes or accomplishments. In other words, the worth of all is unconditional. We did not make this up. Our indigenous source of inspiration can be found in the personal papers of Adrian College's founder, Asa Mahan.

The "Old Doctor" (as students called him) was a philosopher and teacher of ethics who helped lead the Underground Railroad and the mid-19th-century movement for women's rights. His 150-year-old notebook underscores the worth and dignity of everyone. Few would dispute his claim, but that does not mean we always live according to his insight. I actually thought this emphasis might have been overplayed in our chaplaincy until I received a surprise gift from a huge crowd of college students.

The gift? A custom coffee mug imprinted with the words: "intrinsic worth." They get it. I hope the rest of us will before it is too late.

The Rev. Christopher P. Momany is a part-time professor and the chaplain at United Methodist-related Adrian College in Michigan. He is the author of *Doing Good: A Grace-Filled Approach to Holiness* (Abingdon Press, 2011).



Asa Mahan

WESLEYAN WISDOM

'Signs of the times': Pages from my '95 notebook

BY DONALD W. HAYNES
UMR Columnist

Kennon Callahan revolutionized my ministry when he wrote, "The age of the local church is over; the age of the mission station has come." Then he followed with, "The age of the local pastor is over; the age of the missionary pastor has come."

Similarly, Lyle Schaller taught me that the most important question every pastor and every parish must ask is, "What time is it?" (He said most thought it was still 1957!)

In 1995, the Rev. Lovett H. Weems had just published *Church Leadership* in which a professor at Harvard Business School had written in the Foreword, "Leaders are not satisfied with the status quo. Leaders therefore must be change masters."



Donald Haynes

Dr. Weems himself wrote, "The only way to preserve values over time is to be involved continuously in renewal and change."

Cleaning out an old file this week, I found a memo entitled "Signs of the times—prepare and prevent or postpone and repent." I sent it out just before the annual conference in 1995 when I was ending my brief tenure as a district superintendent.

If you read this, you will quickly see why my term as a "D.S." was short! My memo included some zingers, such as:

- "Laity want pastors who are magicians; pastors want churches that are plum trees."
- "We are more excited about purging rolls than saving souls."
- "We are more dedicated to the care, feeding and shearing of sheep-fold sheep than rescuing and redeeming hillside sheep."
- "We spend more energy battling over established turf than expanding new frontiers."
- "We are more skilled in defining and defending process than in achieving measurable results."

In the memo, I concluded that "Managers climb the ladder of success while leaders determine if the ladder is enabling us to climb the right wall."

Following an introduction with those radical words, I became more iconoclastic and perhaps out of touch with the reality of the times in 1995. Now we are 17 years down the road and I am retired and replaced every-

where except at the computer and in the pulpit of a rural church!

'95 proposed paradigm

So let's look at those proposals from my 1995 memo.

"District and conference Boards of Ordained Ministry must be better 'gatekeepers' for those entering the ministry, recognizing that this generation is in need of 'Gideon's Army.' By the same token, we must develop a faster lane" for those with obvious gifts, track records, and high interview reviews.

"It is frightening to think about it, but guaranteed appointments must go. We shall soon be like many industrial labor unions that fought for sustained protection from emerging reality until the plant closed. Though these paradigms are foreign to our system, we must encourage more 'tentmaker ministries,' allowing people to remain at least part-time in secular work and serve churches part-time.

For pastors who are "perennially in a mode of conflict [or] forced moves" and whose churches consistently show membership loss and attendance decline—"they must be moved to smaller parishes where they once excelled or counseled to take retirement."

"Appointments should reflect merit, not seniority. Only those with continuing measurable excellence should expect 'promotions' to larger churches after they have served sufficient years to have developed standards of excellence. If, upon looking at one's profile, no church at the present level of appointment will welcome a pastor of demonstrated mediocrity, he or she will be moved to a place of less compensation. By the same token, there should be more dramatic 'jumps' for pastors of demonstrated excellence without regard for seniority.

"We need to abolish the norm of June appointments and let the bishop and cabinet make appointments throughout the year, especially in September, January, and just after Easter. This would require no constitutional change. This would give a longer time for the cabinet to look at the 'missional profile' of the church and the gifts, energy, and leadership style of any number of pastors until a match could be made for the benefit of the Kingdom, not the 'system.' It might also lead to more clergy asking to remain for longer pastorates and move us away from our 'itinerant ethos.'"

"More pastoral appointments are 'land-mined' by entrenched staff than

any other single cause. Before any appointment is finalized, there should be a parish visit that provides both parties a candid, on-site analysis of the church's needs and the pastor's gifts. This enhances the role of all stakeholders. This should include the right of the possible incoming pastor to interview staff. The incoming pastor could either recommend some staff changes if he or she were coming, and give appointed staff an opportunity to ask to be moved along with the senior pastor. This might be more crucial if the incoming pastor is a woman. Women should not have to fight 'gender battles' before they get their books unpacked!

"Bishops should be elected for eight years with the options of being re-elected for unlimited subsequent eight year terms, but always in a different episcopal area. Some bishops have the renewed vision to serve many years. . . . All should have to go back to their jurisdictional base for affirmation after eight years. The Council of Bishops should be the primary 'think tank' of the denomination.

"The district superintendency should be retained but they should be nominated by the bishop, elected by their peers (a policy first suggested in 1792), and reconfirmed annually. Again, some clergy make more effective superintendents than they do pastors, but being an effective pastor does not mean that one will be an effective 'D.S.'"

"Disperse conference staff geographically and have a diversity of skills and training. These would be 'experts' available to the local churches. They must also initiate training, supervise missional min-

istries, and work more closely with district superintendents.

"Have three general program boards—Evangelism, Nurture, and Missional Outreach; two boards for the ordained clergy—Ordination and Pensions; and GCFA as it is today. Representatives to general boards should be elected by the annual conference, not the delegations to Jurisdictional and General Conference.

"Allow apportionments to be a contractual agreement between the D.S. representing the connection and the local church. This need not require a Charge Conference. This provides dignity for the church to make a true covenant and provides the district, conference, and general church a much more accurate expectation of payments.

"Let pensions be a required personal benefit paid for the pastor of a charge, not payment into a connectional fund. Like a 401(k), the pastor could designate more or less of the total compensation to pension. He or she also, with responsibility for investment risks, may be allowed to 'go outside' the Board of Pensions, but this could not be an 'in and out and in again' decision. Once out, always out."

Update and conclusion

So it was written in 1995. Some I would change today, but many of those ideas still have some merit.

In January 2012, I am still reading Lovett Weems except that now he is director of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership! He recently noted that the Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and United Methodist Church are all in member-

ship decline and are all trying to "downsize the denominational structures, focus more on congregational ministry than denominational ministry, permit more flexibility for congregations and less regulation by headquarters, reduce denominational budgets, and meet in assemblies less often."

Dr. Weems insists that if we "devalue legitimate concerns," people will become more turf-protective. Heretofore turf protection has been mostly among the clergy controlled arenas, but the new breed of protectionism might be the laity if we do not respond realistically and willingly.

He quotes Gil Rendle: "Norms outlive the people who develop them." That is much like George Santayana's wisdom saying, "If you marry one generation, you will be widowed in the next." Change happens, whether proactively or reactively.

Looking at my memo of 1995 to the Charlotte District, I recall the outcry of negative reaction. Upon leaving I was given a pair of dimes and told that what they would remember about me was my always calling for "new paradigms." Interestingly, a lot of these concerns and proposals are reflected in the 2012 General Conference "Call to Action" proposal.

The rest. . . . Well, God is not yet through with this Methodism; let us pray for the General Conference delegates!

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

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■ **TEACHERS** *Continued from page 1B*

This fall's recipients represent a broad range of academic disciplines—from English and education to Hebrew Bible and chemistry—but, Dr. Lord says, all share a gift and a passion for engaging students.

One awardee, Martin Gonzalez, associate professor of biology at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, is clearly passionate about his subject. As one of the first members of his family to attend college, he recalls vividly the moment in an undergraduate class that sparked his fascination for biology.

A microbiology professor opened a sterile agar plate (a type of Petri dish), exposing it to the air, for a brief moment.

“At the next lecture, we got to see what had grown, and that plate was just teeming with life,” he said. “I went berserk. There’s life all around us, just floating on dust. It’s easy to get excited about this subject.”

When asked, Dr. Gonzalez wasn’t sure what makes his teaching so special. But he did say that, when he lectures, he sometimes folds himself on top of his lectern and moves his entire body, to help students visualize how a protein functions. He’s been known to show up at the library late at night, to assist study groups who are struggling with an assignment.

Eric Waggoner, associate professor of American Literature and Cultural Studies at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon, W.Va., was similarly stumped to explain what makes his teaching “exemplary.” But colleagues often turn to him for advice on teaching, and students describe his style as both challenging and fun. Dr. Waggoner has published on topics as varied as freshman composition, Ernest Hemingway, Bob Dylan and the rock band U2.

“I try to bring students into the conversation,” he said of his classroom style. “It’s about the exchange of ideas.”

When students wander into Dr. Poremski’s office, they will often find her occupied by an old-fashioned spinning wheel, a hobby she took up to relieve stress.

“All of the thread and fabric available before 1830 in the U.S. was spun by hand, which astounds me,” she says. “I tell my students that one unmarried daughter would typically do the family’s spinning, and thus the term ‘spinster’ came along.”

Infectious passion

Spinning also relates to Dr. Poremski’s area of specialty, early American literature. As a result of research in that subject, she developed a fascination for Native American literature in early America and, later, contemporary Native American literature. The field trips to the pow-wow and the reservation are outgrowths of that passion.

And it’s infectious. Dr. Robbins says that many students who have joined her on trips to South Dakota have expressed an interest in going back to the reservation and continuing their study of Native American culture, literature and history.

The trips also serve to raise students’ awareness. Many are shocked by the poverty at Rosebud.

“If they haven’t been to a reservation before, they haven’t seen what it’s like,” Dr. Poremski said. “The housing is substandard. You might see a two-bedroom house with a family of 12 living there, with the plumbing and furnace broken, no insulation, and it’s 20 degrees outside.”

Jane Harris, a professor at Hendrix College in Conway, Ark., and another



COURTESY WEST VIRGINIA WESLEYAN COLLEGE

award recipient, has been teaching Religious Studies for 21 years, but, she says, it never grows old.

“I constantly change the texts we read,” said Dr. Harris. “I continue to learn, myself.” This past year, she assigned Rob Bell’s *Love Wins*, a controversial bestseller asserting that a loving God wouldn’t condemn anyone to hell. The goal was to expose students to a trend in the contemporary American religious landscape as well as “a tremendous national conversation,” she said.

Dr. Harris is convinced that her course will help students, regardless of the careers they eventually choose.

“Being able to work with folks who have different views of the world will be very important for people in the 21st century,” she said.

Honoring teaching

Colleges and universities typically promote faculty members based on their teaching, research and publications, but at some schools, “the balance is sometimes tipped too far in the direction of research and publication,” Dr. Lord says. The Exemplary Teacher Awards, he says, reward top classroom teaching, which is “crucial to students’ intellectual, emotional and moral development.”

Dr. Harris echoes that.

“To me, the award says that teaching is important, and what happens in the classroom matters,” she said.

Every recipient interviewed for this story expressed surprise at receiving the honor.



COURTESY HENDRIX COLLEGE

ABOVE: Jane Harris, professor of Religious Studies at Hendrix College. **LEFT:** Associate professor of English Eric Waggoner (left) receives GBHEM’s Exemplary Teacher Award from Larry Parsons, dean of West Virginia Wesleyan College.

combine that, you have a person who’s making an impact on campus, with students, and the world.”

And that’s why, even at a time when denominational resources are scarce, Dr. Lord believes the Exemplary Teacher awards are important.

“We ought to do anything we can, as a church, to underscore the importance of effective pedagogy,” he said, “because that’s who we are, dating right back to Mr. Wesley.”

mjacobs@umr.org



PHOTO BY ALEXANDRA CRUMP, OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

Associate professor of English Karen Poremski at the spinning wheel in her office at Ohio Wesleyan University.

Exemplary Teacher Awards

The following faculty members were selected in the fall of 2011 by their institutions for the Exemplary Teacher Award. (Some institutions give the award during the spring semester; others make the award in the fall.)

- Beth Myers, professor of English, Adrian College
- Sandra Young, assistant professor of English, Columbia College
- Laura Hainsworth, associate professor of Chemistry, Emory & Henry College
- M. Jane Harris, professor of Religious Studies, Hendrix College
- Jennifer Lorenzen, assistant professor of Education, Nebraska Wesleyan University
- Karen Poremski, associate professor of English, Ohio Wesleyan University
- Karin Warren, associate professor and Herzog Family Chair of Environmental Studies, Randolph College
- Martin Gonzalez, associate professor of Biology, Southwestern University
- Lisa Dryden, professor of Education and director of graduate programs in Education, Texas Wesleyan University
- Denise Dombkowski, professor of Hebrew Bible, Wesley Theological Seminary
- Eric Waggoner, associate professor of English, West Virginia Wesleyan College.