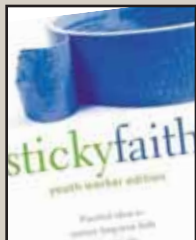


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WORKING WITH RESURRECTION

The Rev. Russ Hall reads Scripture as worshipers at Decatur UMC follow along on the new projection screen. The church received multimedia equipment from the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., which is leading a new Partner Church program. Most Sundays, the sermon at Decatur is projected on-screen, delivered by Resurrection's senior pastor, the Rev. Adam Hamilton.

PHOTO BY KAITY WHITMAN

Two Arkansas churches enter pilot program

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., fits the definition of "megachurch": a congregation of 15,000 people spread across multiple campuses. But one of its key goals, renewing the mainline church, breaks the megachurch mold.

Church of the Resurrection has a history of reaching out to help other United Methodist congregations. Its latest partnership effort includes two churches in the Arkansas Conference, Decatur and Highfill UMCs.

What does the partnership mean for these two small congregations? Several things, but the most obvious is that in 2012, about two-thirds of the Sunday sermons come not from their local pastor, but on video from the Rev.

Adam Hamilton, senior pastor of Church of the Resurrection.

Selection process

Conference director of connectional ministries the Rev. Phil Hathcock last summer alerted district superintendents to a Facebook post from Hamilton, who was seeking partner churches for a special project. Northwest District superintendent the Rev. Mackey Yokem forwarded the message to the Rev. Russ Hall, pastor of the Decatur, Highfill and Springtown churches.

Hall figured the odds were slim that his charge would be chosen to participate.

"I thought and prayed about it a little bit, and then I decided it doesn't hurt to try," he said. He submitted the online application on behalf of the two worshipping congregations he pastors (Springtown, with two

regular attendees, currently shares in Decatur's worship services).

Near the end of July, Hall found himself on a Skype conference call with a team from the Kansas church. At that point, he alerted leaders in his charge that partnering with one of the largest churches in the denomination was a real possibility.

In August 2011, Hall, a licensed local pastor, began coursework at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Okla. The news came on his first day of class.

"I was sitting there being a little blown away by God and where he'd brought me in such a short period of time," he said. "I was already kind of in a thankful and worshipful mood to begin with, when during a break, I thought I'd check my email. And that's when I got the email from Church of the Resurrection saying, 'Hey, you're on the list of churches to [See PILOT PROGRAM, page 10A]

Bishop names two new district superintendents

Bishop Charles Crutchfield has announced the appointment of two new district superintendents, effective July 1.

The Rev. William O. "Bud" Reeves, currently senior pastor of First United Methodist Church Hot Springs, will become the Northeast District superintendent, and the Rev. Susan Ledbetter, currently associate pastor of First UMC Bentonville, will become superintendent of the Southeast District.

The vacancies were created by the Bishop's appointment of the Rev. Kurt Boggan to the new Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership, and the Rev. Dennis Spence to First UMC Monticello.

Reeves, 55, entered pastoral ministry in 1980, serving the Oppelo/Houston charge. He has previously served the congregations of Watson UMC, Lakeside UMC Lake Village, Montrose UMC and First UMC



Bud Reeves

Bryant. He has served at First UMC Hot Springs since 2006.

Ledbetter, 35, began serving in pastoral ministry in 2004 as interim pastor of Hollywood UMC. She has previously served as associate pastor of First UMC Benton and as pastor of Wiggins UMC Fayetteville. She has served at First UMC Bentonville since 2008.



Susan Ledbetter

The continuing district superintendents are the Rev. Mike Morey, Southwest District; the Rev. Dede Roberts, Central District; and the Rev. Mackey Yokem, Northwest District.

New district boundaries take effect at Annual Conference. The old and new district maps are available at arumc.org/districts.php.

United Methodist HBCUs: the Social Principles in action

BY WALTER M. KIMBROUGH
Special Contributor

One of our most important historical stories is the work of the Methodist church in establishing education for newly freed slaves. This work was consistent with the work of John Wesley, who actively fought against slavery. So while President Lincoln established the Freedmen's Bureau in 1865 to assist newly freed slaves with food, housing, education and employment, the Methodist Episcopal Church established the Freedmen's Aid Society the very next year.

The Board of Bishops of the church made an awesome declaration at a New York meeting in November of 1866. They wrote,

"The emancipation of four millions of slaves has opened at our very doors a wide field calling, alike for mission and educational work... The time may come when the States in the South will make some provision for the education of the colored children now growing up in utter ignorance in their midst. But thus far they have made none, nor perhaps can it soon be expected of them. Christian philanthropy must supply this lack. We cannot turn away from the appeal that comes home to our consciences and hearts. Nor can we delay. The emergency is upon us, and we must begin to work now."

This declaration led to the founding of our historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Today, there are 11 of those institutions which remain, organized as the Black College Fund of the United Methodist Church.

Educational emergency

The United Methodist Church, the first mainline denomination to articulate social principles, actualizes its social gospel through a variety of means, including HBCUs. Of the various denominations and religious groups which organized HBCUs after slavery, it is widely acknowledged that the United Methodist Church has the model system for support.

And yet, many wonder if the time for these institutions has passed, and that the church, suffering from a slow decline, may need to use its resources in other

ways.

Many rightfully note that America is different than the America of 1866, when the bishops saw the health, education and welfare of Blacks as an emergency. Some note the advances in education, an increasing number of Black billionaires, and the extraordinary successes of national leaders including Condoleeza Rice, Colin Powell and, of course, President Barack Obama.

But even as we near the 150th anniversary of the end of slavery, an emergency still exists. Law professor Michelle Alexander, in her book *The*



Walter Kimbrough

study indicating that regardless of race, people use and sell drugs at similar rates, but Black men are sentenced at rates 20 to 50 times greater than that of white men, creating a Black prison population in the U.S. today that is a greater in proportion to that which existed in South Africa during the height of apartheid.

In addition, a study by Brandeis professor Thomas Shapiro, author of *The Hidden Cost of Being African American*, noted that "Even when African-Americans do everything right—get an education and work hard at well-paying jobs—they cannot achieve the wealth of their white peers in the workforce." The study found that by 2007, White median wealth was \$100,000. It was \$5,000 for Blacks. With Black unemployment double that of whites for more than thirty years, the wealth gap continues to grow.

Preparing students

The church is blessed to have a set of institutions that are poised to take the lead in addressing these modern-day emergencies. And this is empowering for students who have lived these injustices. Disproportionately they have known the new Jim Crow through friends and relatives, and with 70 percent of United Methodist HBCU students

being low income (versus only 21 percent at other UM schools), this "hidden cost" presents challenges when trying to earn a degree.

HBCUs live out a social gospel not only by educating their students, but preparing them to solve these issues. Wiley College hosts an annual ethical student leadership conference which strengthens student values. Claflin University's mission is preparing visionary leaders for global challenges. Dillard University partnered with the National Institutes of Health to study and correct health care disparities. Bennett College launched a global studies and entrepreneurship program. Similar programs exist at Huston-Tillotson, Paine, Rust, Bethune-Cookman and Meharry. And of course, at Philander Smith College we changed our mission to focus on social justice.

United Methodist HBCUs live the call of John Wesley who, according to Irv Brendlinger, "had no tolerance for the kind of Christianity that was egocentrically occupied with one's own spiritual state, and therefore blind to the human needs nearby."

Our HBCUs ensure that we focus on issues at home, and are working to continue the legacy of the church by living our social principles. They represent our social principles in action.

Dr. Kimbrough serves as president of Philander Smith College in Little Rock, and this summer will become president of Dillard University in New Orleans. Both institutions are United Methodist-related HBCUs.

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EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

Notice anything?

Things tend to become invisible to us when they're around all the time.

In local churches, it's often the case with a bulletin board. Perhaps nothing on the board changes for a few weeks. By the time new information arrives, we no longer look for it.

But it's the 21st century, so by now, many churches have a television or projection screen that scrolls through announcements before worship. Still, how many of us don't even look in that direction until the service begins?

Or perhaps a "find us on Facebook" note appears somewhere in every issue of a periodical... perhaps immediately below what you're reading right now... but you haven't acted on it. (No, I'm not above making a cheap plug for the Conference.)

Our own homes, and our houses of worship, fall victim to this phenomenon all the time. Familiarity breeds inattentiveness.

When we make an intentional effort to see a room with fresh eyes, we might notice things that guests would immediately see. Cobwebs in the corners? A water stain on the ceiling from the leak that showed up during last spring's storm? Noticing something is the first step toward

changing it.

We're in the season of Lent. This year, I'm trying to live Lent as 40 days of noticing.

Noticing the gritty feel of ashes being applied to my forehead.

Noticing the abundance I have, which God insists that I must not keep for myself.

Noticing that every person who comes across my path is God's beloved child.

Noticing that without the valley of Good Friday, we wouldn't have the peak that is Easter.

With awareness comes the opportunity to act. Going back to obliviousness is an option, but not a fulfilling one. Besides, Jesus challenges us to follow him. If we really want to be his disciples, we have no choice but to notice where he's leading us—even if it means sacrificing our time or being kind when we don't really feel like it.

So notice the dusty corners of your church buildings; clean and prepare them for Holy Week and Easter. But don't forget to do some housecleaning within yourself, too. After all, you're God's beloved child. Noticing who you are is the first step toward acting like who you are.

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



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

 Volume 158 • No. 044 March 2, 2012 Martha S. Taylor • Director of Communications Amy Forbus • Editor Patrick W. Shownes • Communications Coordinator www.arumc.org	 THE ARKANSAS CONFERENCE The United Methodist Church Making Disciples of Jesus Christ Arkansas Conference Communications 800 Daisy Bates Drive Little Rock, AR 72202-3770 www.arumc.org 501-324-8000								
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AN OCCASIONAL WORD from the Bishop

BY CHARLES CRUTCHFIELD

Dear Friends:

I am writing on Mardi Gras. Fat Tuesday. Carnavale. I checked the internet and the major stories were about a parade float in New Orleans that slammed LSU's football team. That's big news in the "Big Easy!"

There was news about Nevada being the first state to allow "driverless cars." The story about the \$852 quadrillion it would cost to build the Star Wars "death star" and the answer to whether or not Elvis was "part ape" also drew my attention.

I also know that Whitney Houston's dress is up for auction, the NFL draft is on the horizon, LSU (them again) will not be playing the Razorbacks in Little Rock next year, and there was an earthquake somewhere. Oh, and that the economic bailout for Greece is not a done deal. It seems that, for the most part, the news fits the spirit of fun and silliness of the day.

As you read this, it will no

longer be Fat Tuesday. We will be in Lent. For followers of Christ, it is a season when we supplant the silliness of Mardi Gras with serious introspection—a season when prayer and spiritual growth will become a high priority. It is the season of preparation for Easter.

The practice at our house is to use Lent as a time for fasting as a discipline to help us focus on the centrality of Christ. As we fast we think of Jesus and the sacrifice of Christ for us. It is a little discomfort in our lives to remind us of the enormous sacrifice of Christ and of the power of the resurrection. I commend it to you.

Some folks like to take on special projects during Lent. Others set aside additional time for prayer and for studying the Scriptures. Anything that focuses our attention on Christ is worthy of embracing during Lent.

Truth be told, if it focuses our attention on Christ it is worthy of

doing the year 'round.

I was reminded in the sermon last Sunday by the Rev. Britt Skarda that 2012 is the year that marks the end of the world in the Mayan calendar. While neither Rev. Skarda nor I would share in affirming the veracity of that prediction, it did remind me that we are to live each day as a day of preparation for whatever God's future may hold.

Just maybe, it might be more important for me to say a prayer for the people of Afghanistan than to read again about whether or not "Bigfoot" really exists. Some things are worthy of our embrace for a lifetime. Some things are just plain silly.

Disciples of Jesus Christ know the difference.

Faithfully,

Charles Crutchfield

APPOINTMENTS

The following pastoral changes and retirements have been officially announced as of press time on Feb. 24.

More appointment changes will be announced in the April 6 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*. To see appointments as they become official, visit arumc.org/appointments.

Retirements effective before 2012 Annual Conference

- Judyth Ross (effective Jan. 1, 2012)
- William J. "Bill" Thompson (effective Jan. 1, 2012)
- Jerry G. Westmoreland (effective March 1, 2012)

Retirements effective at 2012 Annual Conference

- Donna Alberts
- Robert C. Armstrong
- Doyle Berckefeldt
- Rex Darling
- Ronald W. Durham

- William "Bill" A. Eason
- Keith Goza
- Gail Davis Hocott
- Samuel A. Long
- Charlie E. (C.E.) McAdoo
- Vaughn Marsden
- Spencer G. Plumley
- Terry L. Sager
- Charles T. Settle
- Michael Sutton
- David E. Swift
- Beverly Watkins
- Janice Williams
- Ron C. Williams
- Garren E. Hagemeyer

Confirmed appointment changes at Annual Conference (effective July 1)

- First UMC Monticello—Dennis Spence
- Northeast District Superintendent—William O. "Bud" Reeves
- Southeast District Superintendent—Susan Ledbetter

Sticky faith? Helping faithful youth become faithful adults

BY JAY CLARK AND KATYE DUNN
Special Contributors

In 2011, we had the chance to participate in Sticky Faith, a year-long learning cohort at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. It was an interdenominational group of youth ministries from around the U.S., and ours was one of two United Methodist youth ministries to participate.

The cohort included two meetings at Fuller and monthly video conference calls. Our time together centered on keeping young peoples' faith active after they graduate from high school.

One Barna Group study indicates that 40 percent of graduating seniors drift from their faith and fail to connect with a faith community after high school. This is a startling statistic, and one that makes us ask what our churches can do differently to make sure that youth and young adults stay connected to God and to the church after they leave us.

Stats worth noticing

Here are some findings of Fuller's Sticky Faith Project:

1. Parents are the primary

influences on a kid's faith. Parents need to ask questions and, even more importantly, share about their own faith.

2. A student's relationship with their church is important. More than anything else, participation in corporate, intergenerational worship is linked to a mature faith.

3. Many youth group graduates' view of the gospel is more of what Dallas Willard would call a "gospel of sin management" than a gospel rounded in grace that overflows into obedience.



Katye Dunn

4. Both in high school and college, students who feel that God cares about their lives, who feel close to God, and who feel valued by God are more likely to show "sticky faith."

5. Expressing doubt—and having a safe place to do so—seems to be connected to stronger faith.
6. Graduating seniors consistently wish that they had been given more opportunities to engage in

service and justice work. Mission experiences tend to be their most significant and impactful spiritual experiences.

7. Only one in six students surveyed felt prepared to transition to college. (How can the local church help with that transition?)

One of the things we are now trying to incorporate into the life of our church is the five-to-one rule that author and teacher Chap Clark advocates. Clark stresses the importance of every single student having a network of caring adults to help support them throughout their faith journey.

Our goal is that each youth, when they graduate, have at least five adults that help, pray and love them through the transition to college; people who will keep in touch with our college students and care about how they are doing.

Connecting generations

Where are the intergenerational connections made in our church? Are we operating in silos, separated from the greater life of the church? Where can we work together? How do we connect youth to older adults or to children? How do we integrate

students and help develop them as leaders based on their gifts (tech team, children's helpers, ushers)?

Participating in the Sticky Faith cohort has made us realize how crucial it is for us to focus on these questions and more.

'...40 percent of graduating seniors drift from their faith and fail to connect with a faith community after high school.'

For some of these changes to happen, it may mean scaling back the program pieces of youth ministry and changing ministry as we have been doing it. It may mean canceling youth group one night so the youth can attend something with the rest of the life of the church.



Jay Clark

It may mean offering a family night at church, or a family youth group night in place of our normal Sunday night routine. Family youth group night may even be a youth group outline you

provide to a family and they have "youth group" in their home with another family.

You can find this information and much more in two books based on the Sticky Faith project: *Sticky Faith Teen Curriculum* (Zondervan,

2012) and *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition* (Zondervan, 2011), both by Kara E. Powell and Brad M. Griffin. Both books are great resources to give to those working with young people. Or, to explore online, visit stickyfaith.org.

It may seem challenging to break out of the youth ministry mold that's typical in many of our churches. But with the future of young people's faith at stake, can we do any less?

Clark (jclark@phumc.com) is minister with youth and their families and Dunn (kdunn@phumc.com) is the associate youth minister at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock.

Two perspectives on grief

Accepting that 'God is always right'

BY DEENA MARIE HAMILTON
Special Contributor

When I was the pastor of McCabe Chapel United Methodist Church, I preached a sermon entitled "New Year, New Life" to celebrate the new year. Through out the sermon, I continued to say, "New year, new life—new life in Christ."

As I continue dealing with the sudden death of my mother, I remember that sermon and realize that she is experiencing new life. Even though I felt as though I was being reborn from ashes like the phoenix, I continued to believe that there is new life in Christ.

I remember going to church right after my mom had passed. One of my fellow church members came up to me and said, "Deena, you're so brave to be here right after your mom died. Now, I'm gonna tell you something that you may not want to hear, but God is always right."

She was right. I didn't want to hear that, but the truth in what she said was profound, and I just accepted it.

Even though there are those that believe that in Christ we have new life, we all know that life can have a bitter sting to it. But we have a Savior that can relate to us

even through those moments, for he loved and lost just as we do.

The Lord said that we are blessed when we've lost it all because that's when we find God's kingdom. We are blessed when tears flow freely because joy comes in the morning.



Deena Marie Hamilton

'I didn't want to hear that, but the truth in what she said was profound, and I just accepted it.'

When it comes to grieving, not even our Lord and Savior was beyond reproach. That's the most comforting thing I can ever imagine. My Best Friend empathizes with every tear I have cried and every frustration I have or will face in this life.

When Christ showed his humanity before making the ultimate sacrifice, he prayed and he

asked God for another way. But Christ knew that God is always right. When it was time for him to endure Calvary, he knew that it was something that only he could do. It probably was the hardest thing that he ever had to do—to die for people who didn't appreciate God or know him.

Giving my mom's eulogy was the hardest thing that I have ever done in my life, but in the end I was better for it because my faith was renewed and

fortified.

Despite the curve balls that life will always throw our way, we can endure all. What Christ did for us showed us that God is always right. Because of what he did, his name was exalted above all names.

He did what he was mandated to do, so therefore we must go out and do what we've been commissioned to do in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What Christ did for us gave us the opportunity to be closer to God and each other.

Let us celebrate the new life that we have in Christ because guess what y'all—God is always right!

Be blessed and empowered!

Hamilton is the president and founder of New Horizons Foundation, Inc. She can be reached at pinktitration14@gmail.com.

Good grief begins with a good God

BY BEN WITHERINGTON III
Special Contributor

Having recently gone through the devastating experience of having our beautiful 32-year-old daughter die, completely unexpectedly, of a pulmonary embolism, I was determined from Day One (Jan. 11, when she was found dead in her home in Durham, N.C.) to be open to whatever positive thing there might be to glean from this. I cling by my fingernails to the promise of Romans 8:28 that "God works all things together for good for those who love him..."

The first point that was immediately confirmed in my heart was theological:

God did not do this to my baby. God is not the author of evil. God does not terminate sweet children's lives with pulmonary embolisms. Pulmonary embolisms are a result of human fallenness and the bent nature of this world.

One of the primary reasons I am not a Calvinist and do not believe in such predestinings from the hand of God is (1) because I find it impossible to believe that I am more merciful or compassionate than God.

Also, (2) the biblical portrait of God is that God is pure light and holy love; in him there is no darkness, nothing other than light and love.

(3) The words "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away," from the lips of Job, are not good theology. They're bad theology. According to Job 1, it was not God, but the Devil who took away Job's children, health and wealth. God allowed it to happen, but when Job said these words, as the rest of the story shows, he was



Ben Witherington

'God did not do this to my baby. God is not the author of evil.'

not yet enlightened about the true nature of where his calamity came from and what God's will actually was for his life—which was for good, and not for harm.

So, for me, the beginning of good grief starts with the premise of a good God. Otherwise, all bets are off. If God is almighty and malevolent, then there is no solace to be found in God. If God is the author of sin, evil, suffering, the fall and death, then the Bible makes no sense when it tells us that (1) God tempts no one, that (2) God's will is that none should perish but have everlasting life, and that (3) death is the very enemy of God and humankind that Jesus, who is life, came to abolish and destroy.

"He came that we might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). If there are promises I cling to, as I weep for my sweet Christy, it is this promise, not the sorry solace and cold comfort of "God did this but we do not know why." No. A thousand times, no! God and his will are always and only for what is good, and true, and beautiful, and loving and holy.

As I stared at my baby in the casket—who did not even resemble herself at that juncture—I was so thankful that the God of the resurrection had a better plan for her than that cold comfort that "It's all God's will." I believe

in a God whose Yes to life is louder than death's No—not because God likes to hold antinomies like life and death together in some sort of mysterious unity, but because God is in the

trenches with us, fighting the very same evils we fight in this world, like disease, decay, death, suffering, sorrow and sin.

They don't call him the Great Physician for nothing. He, too, took the Hippocratic Oath: "Do no harm."

Dr. Witherington serves as professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary. Reprinted with permission. This commentary appeared as the first in a series on his blog, patheos.com/blogs/bibleandculture. The entire series is being offered as an e-book from Christianity Today at ctebooks.com.

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PEOPLE OF FAITH

Three Arkansas youth ministers earn certification from SMU Perkins

Brandon Bates, Todd Lovell and Michelle Moore, youth ministers serving in the Arkansas Conference, have met the requirements for certification in youth ministry from SMU's Perkins School of Theology.

The certification process requires five graduate-level classes, generally taken once a year for five years, as well as a significant screening process, including a medical and psychological evaluation and an interview with the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.



Brandon Bates

Brandon Bates, who in 2011 began serving at First United Methodist Church Bentonville, grew up attending First UMC Beebe. As a youth, he was active in ministries on the local, district, Conference and Jurisdictional levels.

A 2002 graduate of Hendrix College in Conway, Bates spent parts

of his college years in youth ministry at Goddard UMC Fort Smith, White Hall UMC and St. Paul UMC Searcy. Before graduating, he began working as youth minister for First UMC Benton, and from 2004 to 2011 served at Lakewood UMC North Little Rock.

He has served as a district youth co-coordinator, the financial coordinator of the Jurisdictional Youth Team and as youth coordinator for the Little Rock and Arkansas Conferences. In 2004, he received the Youth Minister of the Year award from Hendrix College. He was also twice selected as a delegate to the quadrennial Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly.

Bates enjoys answering his call, especially helping provide opportunities for youth to connect beyond the local church and to live out their faith by serving God and others.

Todd Lovell currently serves as the youth minister for First UMC North Little Rock, a position he has held since 2007. He grew up in

Perryville, where he was involved in various church activities. In 2006, he received a degree in Christian



Todd Lovell

studies with an emphasis in Christian theology from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia. Before arriving at First UMC North Little Rock, Lovell worked in several different Christian ministry settings, such as summertime youth ministry positions at camps, retreat centers and churches. He also served as a resident assistant and campus ministries leader during college. He strives to use all of his experiences in a unique approach to connecting young people to God and the church.

"Certification is a great opportunity that the UMC and my local congregation afforded me to receive upper level training in the area of youth ministry," he said. "As

youth ministry continues to evolve in our cultural context, it is vital that our church leaders take full advantage of training opportunities provided by our denomination."

Michelle Moore is currently serving as the director of youth ministries at First UMC Conway. She also serves as the adult coordinator for the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries, overseeing youth and adults charged with planning seven statewide youth events each year. She is the 2011



Michelle Moore

recipient of the Youth Minister of the Year award from Hendrix College.

Moore is a 2006 graduate of Hendrix, where she studied religion and received a four-year United Methodist Youth Fellowship scholarship. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in specialized ministry, with an emphasis in youth

ministry, at Southwestern College Professional Studies in Winfield, Kan.

In addition to her current ministry position, Moore has served as a staff member and program coordinator for Ozark Mission Project, as the associate minister of youth at St. James UMC Little Rock, as minister of youth at Greenbrier UMC and as an intern youth minister at Cabot UMC.

Moore has found value in the certification process.

"I think certification in youth ministry holds me and other youth ministers to a higher standard," she said. "I think it shows that I'm called to this ministry and passionate about learning all there is to know about not just doing my job, but doing it well and as God intended. I hope that this level of education becomes the new standard in the Arkansas Conference and beyond."

All three youth ministers have completed the coursework, and their certifications will be presented at the Arkansas Annual Conference, June 10-13, 2012.

Preschool's ministry, director honored at quarter-century mark

BY DAVE MCGOUGH
Special Contributor

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, And wisdom to know the difference."

These words, known as the Serenity Prayer, ring true to people in many different walks of life. They take on a special meaning for the individuals who go out every day and do work for God's kingdom.

Just ask Myra Harris. She recites the prayer every morning before the first child arrives at the Asbury Christian Child Development Center (ACCDC).

A little more than 25 years ago, Harris was asked by the leadership of Asbury UMC to take on the task of opening a Christian-based preschool at the church. The church had moved to west Little Rock a few years earlier and saw an opportunity to reach out into the community and spread the word of Jesus Christ.

At the time, Harris was working at Trinity UMC. She and her husband, Rod, and children, Susan and Scott, had joined the



Myra Harris (center), director of the Asbury Christian Child Development Center, poses with Daisy (Asbury UMC Director of Children's Ministries Laura Stinnett) and Donald (ACCDC assistant director Kelly Roberts) during an event celebrating the ACCDC's 25th anniversary. Harris has been the director at the ACCDC for all 25 years of its existence.

PHOTO BY AUSTIN PITTMAN

congregation at Asbury shortly after the move because of the proximity to their home. The match made sense. The rest, as they say, is history.

The ACCDC on Jan. 26 celebrated its 25th anniversary during a special "birthday party" held at the church. Students past and present were among the more than 200 attending the event, which also

served as a special recognition for Harris, who has been the director every single day of those 25 years.

She readily admits she has needed God's strength for her 36 years of work as a servant of Christ and watching over his precious gifts.

"I was too young to be scared," Harris said of taking on the task of a building the school from the ground

up. "I had a lot of faith and did a lot of praying that it would all fall into place."

Harris said the school's first class had around 20 children. Today, the school can accommodate approximately 110 students. Harris estimates that around 2,500-3,000 children have walked through the doors of the ACCDC in its 25 years.

"It brings a chuckle to my soul," said the Rev. Dr. Bryan Fink, Asbury's senior pastor, when asked what he thought about children who have grown closer to Christ through the ACCDC. "When you think about the number of kids that have experienced the warmth and grace of Christians and learned some of the basic biblical truths, it brings joy to my heart.

"And that's just the kids. You add the parents, grandparents, etc., and that means we have influenced thousands of people with the good news of the Christ Jesus. We may never know just how God has used us to impact these lives. But one thing is certain, we have."

Harris said she has no idea how many more years she wants to

continue, but the work "does [her] heart good." She has leaned on her family and faith through the good times and through the struggles. And she gets to see the fruits of her work almost daily.

"I see the parents of the past students nearly every week," she said. "They always tell me what a great experience their child had here at the ACCDC and what a great start their child had here. I go home fulfilled because I see children that are happy, staff that have had a good day and parents who are very complimentary of our work. I feel that we are doing what is right for these children."

"Myra has put her heart and soul into this outreach ministry of Asbury," said Fink. "She has seen it through some lean times, as well as times of plenty. She loves her teachers and staff and, most importantly, the children and their families.... God has used ACCDC as a means of grace to make the lives of children and their families better."

McGough is a member of Asbury UMC Little Rock.

New research from United Methodist Communications reveals that churches that provide opportunities to help their communities are viewed much more favorably because of their active, “outside the church” approach.

United Methodists are gearing up for the third annual Change the World event, May 19-20. Change the World is a movement to connect United Methodists by building community locally in service projects and fighting malaria globally with Imagine No Malaria to end preventable deaths from malaria in Africa. Local service projects vary and include raising

CHANGE THE WORLD

build community, fight malaria • May 19-20, 2012

funds for worthy causes, feeding the hungry, planting gardens, advocating for peace and justice and more.

Congregations throughout

the world are hosting community projects that invite newcomers to be a part of the mission and message of the church. Last year, some 2,000 events took place

across 15 countries.

Visit umc.org/changetheworld to find resources, ideas and inspiration, and umcom.org/changetheworld

to register your church's event. Register by April 16 and receive a free marketing kit that includes a lawn banner, sermon series DVD and t-shirt.

The event is based on a concept originated by the Rev. Mike Slaughter, pastor of Ginghamburg UMC in Tipp City, Ohio, and author of *Change the World: Recovering the Message and Mission of Jesus*. Other partners include United Methodist Publishing House, the General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, the General Board of Discipleship, and the General Board of Church and Society.

Souper Bowl of Caring food drives make a difference

United Methodists have a gift for feeding people, so it's no surprise that each year, many congregations participate in the national Souper Bowl of Caring food drive (held on the same day as a certain “big game” sponsored by the National Football League). Here are just a few of the results from this year's efforts in Arkansas. Thanks to these churches for responding to our request for information via the Conference's Facebook page.

Diamond City UMC: It was a soup collection “Battle of the Pews” on Feb. 5 at Diamond City UMC. The center aisle of the sanctuary was the dividing line between Team Helen and Team Ruth, named for Helen Largent and Ruth Siefert, directors of the Good Neighbor Food Cupboard housed at the church. Teammates spent weeks cheering each other on (with a little trash-talking to the other side), and phoning each other to pass along the best grocery store sale prices. The church collected more than 700 cans of soup, and Team Helen took home the victory.

During the counting of the soup, the church had a special half-time show featuring the song “Drop Kick Me, Jesus, through the Goal Posts of Life.” After worship, all members were invited to participate in the Parade of the Soups by grabbing a bag, a case or a can of soup and taking it downstairs to the food cupboard.

Good Faith Carr UMC Pine Bluff: Good Faith Carr UMC's youth raised more than \$400 in cash and collected stacks of canned goods on Souper Bowl Sunday. The proceeds went to Pine Bluff's Neighbor to Neighbor organization, which provides food, clothing, meals, assistance with meals and many other community service needs.

Leslie and Marshall UMCs: The United Methodist Youth Fellowship of the Leslie-Marshall Charge coordinated the Souper Bowl of Caring for both churches this year. On Jan. 29 and Feb. 5, the youth collected donations in three huge soup pots at the end of services. The pots were labeled “Giants,” “Patriots,” and “Who CARES???” Congregants had fun using their donations to vote for their favorite team (Giants won, with Who Cares??? coming in a close second).

In addition to the soup pot collection, the youth held a spaghetti supper on the evening of Jan 29. The end result: Almost \$1,000 raised.

St. Paul UMC Little Rock: This year

marked the ninth time St. Paul UMC Little Rock has participated in the Souper Bowl of Caring effort. The youth group raised \$1,025.26 to help address hunger on the local level. In all its years of participation, the church has raised about \$7,600 through this special funds drive.

Vesta UMC: The Beginning Believers children's class at Vesta UMC recently delivered food items and money collected from the church's Souper Bowl event to the Charleston Ministerial Alliance. Through a soup luncheon on Feb. 5, the group collected \$550 and 203 food items to donate to the local food pantry.

For more information on the Souper Bowl of Caring, visit tacklehunger.org.



LEFT: Youth from Good Faith Carr UMC Pine Bluff gather donations for Souper Bowl of Caring. BELOW: Members of the Vesta UMC Beginning Believers class present the results of their Souper Bowl of Caring fundraiser to the Rev. Bill Buchanan, pastor of Charleston UMC, here representing the Charleston Ministerial Alliance.

COURTESY PHOTOS



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In the past three years, Helen “Peg” Daniel has knitted more than 750 stocking caps for homeless individuals who receive assistance through the Little Rock Compassion Center.

“She has difficulty walking, but is always busy working for the Lord,” says Ella Mae Carter, administrative assistant for Primrose UMC Little Rock, the congregation where Daniel is a member. Carter notes that in addition to her knitting ministry, Daniel coordinates the congregation's prayer chain and participates in other activities through United Methodist Women.

As she knits each cap, Daniel prays for the person who will wear it. The Rev. Clayton Bulice says a prayer over them, too, before a member of United Methodist Women delivers them to the Compassion Center.

This photo shows 25 hats Peg Daniel knitted in January of 2012—just a fraction the more than 750 stocking caps she has made for Little Rock's homeless population.

COURTESY PHOTO



The Rev. DeeDee Autry helps with the makeover of a client room at Russellville's battered women's shelter Jan. 29 as part of Wesley UMC's Be the Church workday.

Pick a date (or three) to work for change

May 19-20 may be the official Change the World weekend for 2012, but that doesn't mean your church can only participate in that 48-hour time span. The Change the World registration page includes a field to enter your own dates for participating in this outreach effort—so if your church can't participate on the third weekend in May, don't make the mistake of thinking you can't be part of Change the World.

Some churches in Arkansas already have decided to engage in works of service on more than one weekend a year. For example, Wesley UMC Russellville's "Be the Church" initiative is a direct response to the challenge represented by the Change the World annual event.

Be the Church includes both congregations of Wesley UMC, the established one on Cumberland Avenue and the newly-started one that will soon move from the Arkansas Tech campus to downtown Russellville, changing its name from Wesley @ Wesley to The Crossing.

"Since April of 2011, we have had three of these mission events," said the Rev. DeeDee Autry, the church's pastor, "and each time, they have grown in participation and impact."

In months that have five Sundays, the church uses that fifth Sunday as a Be the Church day of service. This January, they reached out to their local battered women's shelter.

Part of the funding for Be the Church came from a \$5,000 Parish and Community Development grant provided through the Arkansas Conference. Autry says that Wesley UMC is working to make the most of the grant, combining it with local donations for more power (donations for the Jan. 29 event alone had an estimated financial value of more than \$5,000).

Wesley UMC plans to hold its next Be the Church event on April 29.

lawn banner like this one?

church registers for Change

world to register.

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warm hat at a time



Members of Wesley UMC Russellville sort donations given for the local battered women's shelter as part of their most recent Be the Church workday.

COURTESY PHOTOS

With help from sister churches, warming center changes lives for second year running

Last winter, canvascommunity UMC Little Rock made news in central Arkansas when, in sub-freezing weather, it opened its building as a warming center for its neighbors living on the streets (see the Feb. 4, 2011 issue of the Arkansas United Methodist). Last month, the church again extended the welcome.

"This year we partnered with the city of Little Rock in an official capacity," said the Rev. Jamey Bentley, canvascommunity's pastor, "but the work we do in providing a warm, dry place with hot food and some of the conveniences that many of us take for granted every day would not have been possible without the support of our connectal system."

Churches that helped their sister congregation included Argenta UMC, FaithSpring UMC, First UMC Little Rock, Primrose UMC, Pulaski Heights UMC, Quapaw Quarter UMC and St. James UMC. Bentley says there were likely additional churches that provided help but didn't sign in when they delivered supplies.

Dozens of individual United Methodists from churches throughout the area gave of their time and resources as well.

Over the course of three days and nights beginning Feb. 11, the church served more than 1,200 meals and provided shelter from the cold for approximately 90 people per night.

In addition to food and warmth, several individuals received medical attention, and four persons were admitted into drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities. Holding the regularly scheduled Monday night worship service resulted in several people recommitting to their faith journey or professing a desire to come to know Jesus in a more personal and intentional way.

The people of canvascommunity wish to thank their fellow United Methodists for "your kind words, support, donations of food, clothing, blankets, pillows, coffee and willingness to take time out of your day to meet some of our friends who rely on the kindness of strangers in times like these," Bentley said.

"Thank you for helping us provide a safe, warm place full of fellowship, community, and an opportunity to see the Gospel alive and at work in the community of Little Rock."

Church's dollar-a-week offering yields gifts for several causes



Christ of the Hills UMC through its 2011 Dollar-A-Week offering provided a box trailer for Arkansas Freedom Fund. Pictured, from left, are Mark Leonard, chair of the board of AFF; the Rev. Walter Smith of Christ of the Hills UMC; and Sylvia Matthews, member of Christ of the Hills UMC and the AFF board.

COURTESY PHOTO

At Christ of the Hills UMC Hot Springs Village, worshipers give just a little extra, and it adds up to a lot.

The church's Dollar-A-Week Giving Program for 2011 raised \$27,566—enough money to help five different organizations. A non-profit with a need to haul equipment received a new box trailer, two food pantries now have cold storage, a sister church has a sports court and another non-profit organization received funds for building maintenance.

Anyone who attends Christ of the Hills may participate by placing a dollar bill in the offering plate. At the end of each year, these offerings go to designated projects meeting three requirements: the grantee must be a faith-based organization; the project must provide something that would not otherwise have been possible without the grant; and it must benefit a local organization.

The Arkansas Freedom Fund (AFF), arkansasfreedomfund.org,

was among the organizations helped by the 2011 offering. AFF provides support for Arkansas veterans and their families, with a focus on rehabilitative sports and cycling events designed to restore the mental and physical wellness of wounded soldiers. The trailer will provide a way to transport custom-equipped cycles to and from rides, as well as carry the necessary supplies needed to support a long-distance ride.

Additional gifts made through the 2011 offering include a standalone cooler for Faith and Fellowship Food Pantry; a three-door commercial refrigerator for Project HOPE Food Bank; a sports court for Haven UMC Hot Springs; and help with building maintenance for the Charitable Christian Medical Center.

For more information about the Dollar-A-Week Giving Program or Christ of the Hills UMC, call 501-922-4503 or visit cohunc.com.

— Submitted by Sheila McCallum

Clergy Spouse Retreat

Register now 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: Loss and Life."

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.

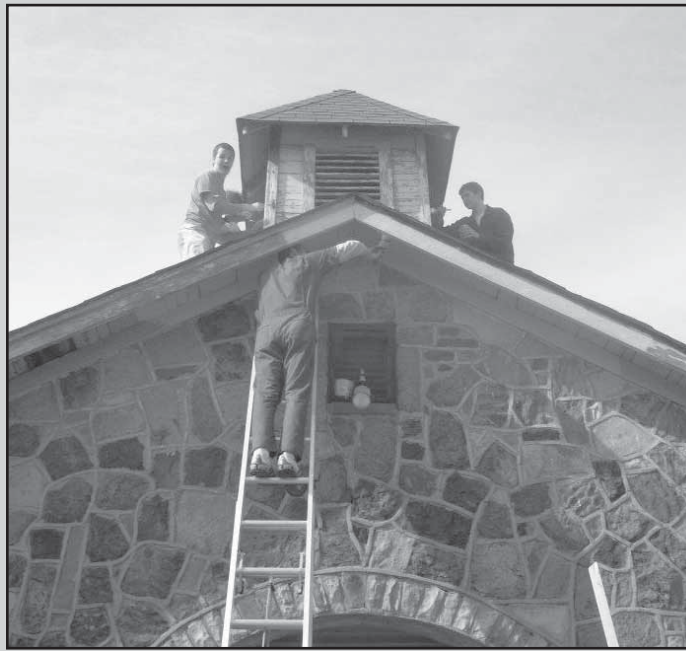
Saturday afternoon will include time to explore some hobbies that

help with daily life, so attendees should bring their cameras, knitting needles, walking shoes or other items.

For a schedule and registration form, visit the "Happenings" section of mounteagle.org, or find it at 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.

UCA campus ministry works to spruce up Overcup UMC



Students from the University of Central Arkansas Wesley Foundation on Jan. 28 worked to make repairs to the building of Overcup United Methodist Church.

Located in Conway County off of Highway 9, Overcup UMC's 1938 structure was in need of a major facelift. With members of the church working alongside them, students spent the day repairing and painting the steeple, facing, window frames and the church sign.

Students became interested in the project after they visited the church in October of 2011. Overcup, along with Cleveland UMC, is part of a two-point charge that has long been served by student pastors from the UCA and Hendrix campuses. Sara D. Bayles, a UCA student and leader at the Wesley

Foundation, currently serves as a local pastor to both churches.

"It was a day that all involved were able to experience the love of Christ," she said. "It is not often that college students would wake up at 8 a.m. on a Saturday morning, but all were able to partake in a day of loving God and loving our neighbors."

David Goodwin, a former Ozark Mission Project college staff and student leader at the UCA Wesley Foundation, spent the day atop the steeple, replacing boards and painting.

"No matter how big or small a project, it's all about making something new and beautiful for this tight-knit community of faith," he said.

The workday, which included a fellowship lunch provided for the students by Overcup members, was so enjoyable that the students plan to return in April to continue working on the building.

ASU Wesley Foundation alumni: an invitation to reconnect

Whether you identify as an Indian or a Red Wolf, if you were involved in the Wesley Foundation during your time at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, the campus ministry wants to hear from you.

The ASU Wesley Foundation is seeking stories from its alumni. What difference did your involvement with ASU Wesley make in your college experience, and in your life going forward? How are you answering Christ's call on your life?

"We're seeing campus ministry as a conduit for helping students become Christian leaders beyond their college years," said the Rev. Eric Van Meter, director of the ASU Wesley Foundation. "We'd like to track down more of those people who value their Wesley experience, whether it was from five or 45 years ago."

Even if a particular story doesn't come to mind, ASU Wesley would still like its alumni to share contact information so they can reconnect with each other and the ministry. To submit contact information, class year and stories, send an email message to Van Meter at eric@astatewesley.org, call ASU Wesley at 870-932-2061 or find it on Facebook at facebook.com/astatewesley.



wesley

A-State's United Methodist Campus Ministry

COMING UP

March

'U2charist' to benefit Imagine No Malaria, Methodist Family Health at First UMC Little Rock March 9 and 11

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.

All U2charist service offerings must go toward one of the United Nations Millennium Goal projects. First UMC has chosen Imagine No Malaria, a United Methodist initiative, as its global focus, and Methodist Family Health as its local focus.

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@fumclr.org. To learn more about the causes this U2charist will benefit, visit imagineinomalaria.org and methodistfamily.org.

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.

Besides spending time with Bishop Charles Crutchfield, attendees will get to know recording artist and song writer Celia Whitley, 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.

Steel-Hendrix, Youth Minister of the Year nominations due by March 30

Hendrix College is now accepting nominations for the Steel-Hendrix Awards. The Mary and Ira A. Brumley Award recognizes outstanding religious education, and the Ethel K. Millar Award honors outstanding religion and social awareness.

The college is also accepting nominations for the Youth Minister of the Year Award, given during the 2012 Arkansas Annual Conference. Full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer youth workers who have exemplified outstanding leadership are eligible. Nominees should be a member of and work in a United Methodist Church in Arkansas. They must be involved with the connectional system, participate in district and Conference youth events and be intentional on making disciples of Jesus Christ through missions,

Bible studies, outreach, and evangelism and Christian fellowship. Nominees must also have participated in some type of continuing education in the area of youth ministry.

Nominations for all awards should include a letter detailing the individual's career highlights and reason for nomination. Nominations may be submitted to the Rev. J. Wayne Clark, Hendrix College, 1600 Washington, Conway, Ark. 72032, or to clark@hendrix.edu by March 30, 2012.

April

Easter sunrise service at Pinnacle Mountain, pancake breakfast at Winfield UMC

Pinnacle Mountain State Park, on Highway 300 in Little Rock, will be the site of Winfield UMC's sunrise service on Easter Sunday, April 8, at 7 a.m. The public is invited to this "come as you are" service, and asked to bring lawn chairs for seating. Immediately following the service, the United Methodist Men of Winfield UMC will be serving a free pancake breakfast at the church fellowship hall, 20100 Cantrell Road. For details, visit wclr.org or call 501-868-4225.

'Come Together' youth worker training April 21

Come Together, a training opportunity for all youth workers in the Arkansas Conference, will be held on Saturday, April 21, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Lakewood UMC North Little Rock.

Designed to provide a learning experience for full-time and part-time youth workers as well as volunteers, Come Together includes workshop sessions, a panel discussion and more. Participants need not be United Methodist to attend. Cost is \$10 per person, which includes workshops and lunch. Register by March 20 at arumc.org/register.

Annual John and Marjim Gill Preaching Workshop
Featuring Dr. Billy Abraham



April 16-17
Student Life and
Technology Center
Hendrix College

Cost: \$60 if payment is received before April 1 and \$75 after that date.

For a detailed schedule, visit www.hendrix.edu/preachingworkshop.

For registration information, contact Rev. J. Wayne Clark at clark@hendrix.edu or 501-450-1263.

Dr. Billy Abraham is a Professor of Wesley Studies at Perkins School of Theology at SMU. His teaching specialties include Religious Epistemology and Doctrine of Revelation.



1600 Washington Avenue • Conway, Arkansas

Living Holiness

March 31 seminar for young adults 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.

"As a college student, my previous experiences with seminar programs have brought new insights and depth to my faith life," said Sara Bayles, a student local pastor. "The Arkansas Conference Young Adult Seminar Program is a great way to make local connects with other young people interested in issues of social justice."

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, search for "ARUMC Seminar Program 2012" on Facebook or call the Rev. Brittain Richardson Watson at 501-224-6047.

Pilot program (continued from page 1A)

be considered. I was pretty well amazed by that.”

Church of the Resurrection representatives made a site visit and explain what the partnership would mean for the congregations.

“And of course, we had to decide for ourselves whether or not we wanted to accept their offer,” Hall said.

The Church of the Resurrection visitors included Travis Morgan, who directs Resurrection Online and the Partner Church Ministry; Debi Nixon, managing executive director of regional campuses; and Jack Highfill (no relation to the Highfill church), chair of the staff-parish relations committee at Church of the Resurrection. The visit provided an opportunity for the Kansas congregation to outline the concept of the partnership, and for leaders from all of the churches to get to know each other.

One week later, the Decatur and Highfill churches agreed unanimously to join Church of the Resurrection's Partner Church Program.

How it works

The inaugural class of the Partner Church Program includes churches in three different settings.

Decatur and Highfill churches are in small-town rural areas; St. Luke UMC Odessa, Texas, is in an area of the mid-sized city that is seeing renewed growth; and Hampton UMC Baltimore, Md., is an urban church with waning membership, but the promise of young professionals moving in to populate the surrounding neighborhood.

“Some of it was around demographics, some of it was around just a fit with the church leader and leadership of the church,” Morgan, the Partner Church Ministry director, said of the selection criteria. In this first year of the program, the team wants to see whether the model they have devised works in different contexts.

Each church selected made a one-year commitment to work with Church of the Resurrection for worship planning, technology improvements and leadership coaching.

“We pilot with these three churches, we determine if this is a viable option for creating partnerships with congregations that may be either struggling or looking for ways to reclaim their vitality,” he said.

At this point, the Partner Church Program team expects to find that the model helps pastors

who have part-time appointments or who must split their time among multiple churches. Having access to Hamilton's sermons will free the local pastor to focus on outreach, first-time visitor follow-up, missions programs and caring for congregants. “If they're part-time, those get pushed off a little bit when they're having to prepare a sermon each week,” Morgan said.

Neither Decatur nor Highfill had the necessary equipment to show video in worship, so Church of the Resurrection provided the technology package needed for both churches—including a sound system, projection and the capability to play DVDs.

‘It’s not about my ministry, but it’s about God’s ministry, so let’s do this thing. Let’s do everything we can to help this little church start growing again.’

—The Rev. Russ Hall

In exchange for the setup, Church of the Resurrection asks that if the partner church gets the opportunity, it pay back part of the investment to help further this type of ministry. Decatur and Highfill received almost \$12,000 in grant money from the Arkansas Conference, which enabled them to provide repayment.

“That money is available and will be used in the next phase to help make sure that another church gets the technology that they need,” Hall said.

In addition to what goes on inside the congregation, the churches receive help with marketing. A direct mailing went to the surrounding communities before the first Hamilton sermon series, and Hall says they had some new first-time guests. They plan to continue the mailings in advance of each series. By reaching out repeatedly, churches gain credibility with their neighbors.

“Usually it takes three or four mailings for people to really start responding,” Hall said.

Hall also has regular contact with coaches. He talks with Morgan each Monday, and he and Jack Highfill also touch base during the week. On Wednesday afternoons, the pilot church pastors, Morgan and other team members have a call that focuses on worship planning and scheduling. Monthly webinars deal with topics related to helping the church grow and be more effective.

“It’s neat to be able to work with

a team, when usually it’s just me,” Hall says. “It’s a little bit like being an associate pastor in a big church or something like that—an experience I hadn’t had an opportunity to be a part of yet.”

On the weeks that Hamilton preaches for the partner churches, the rest of the service still keeps a local focus and feel.

“[We get] every bit of flexibility,” Hall says. “The only thing that is required is Adam’s sermon. Otherwise, the order of worship is our own, the music we select is our own; everything else is our own.”

Church of the Resurrection also provides shells for worship bulletins

17 percent.

At the end of May and beginning of June, Hall will preach three Sundays in a row, and will formulate his own sermon series for those weeks. Similar breaks happen in Hamilton's series throughout the year.

Results so far

In September, Hall, lay leader Ike Owens and Flo Dickinson, a layperson from Decatur UMC, traveled to Kansas to participate in the Leadership Institute at Church of the Resurrection. Dickinson says she found the Institute inspiring.

“I see where some of the things that they have put into practice for their church would be excessive for our small congregation, but still, it would be valuable to put it on the same scale as our numbers,” she said. Not only was it worth the trip, but she also thinks it would be worth a return visit this fall.

She reflected on the decision to participate in the Partner Church Program.

“When I first heard [about] it, I thought, ‘This church is such a megachurch, and we are so small,’” she said. “And I thought, you know, it really wouldn’t be that practical, but you’re always willing to learn, I hope. And I was willing to go and listen.”

Now, Dickinson is glad the church is part of this experiment, and finds Hamilton and his preaching impressive. An 81-year-old widow, she says the first sermon series, which focused on marriage, didn’t connect as well with the part of their congregation that is older and single. But she found it valuable for applying to other relationships.

She already can see a positive impact of the Partner Church Program, and hopes Decatur and Highfill stay involved for the long haul.

“I am excited about it,” she said, “and I do believe that it is a very good and positive thing.”

Morgan expressed excitement, too, about possibilities this model may bring for other UMCs.

“Ultimately, the idea would be that Church of the Resurrection might be kind of a hub for multiple partners throughout the country,” he said. He hopes other large United Methodist churches might also become hubs, forming circuits with smaller churches.

Hall would like to see the model expand, too.

“It’s pretty amazing,” he said. “For all we know, this may be the beginning of a new revival within the Methodist Church.”

to all partner congregations. Hall receives final information on the Scripture selection and sermon title by Thursday morning of each week to complete the bulletins.

The sermon comes last. Hamilton preaches at Church of the Resurrection's Saturday evening service, and that sermon is available for Hall to download by 9 or 9:30 p.m. He burns two DVDs of it, one for each church to use the next morning.

Yielding the pulpit

While giving up the opportunity to preach every Sunday may help with time management during the week, it still would give many pastors pause. Such was the case with Hall.

“You know, I had to pray about that one,” he said, adding that he still considers himself “a rookie pastor.”

But ultimately, he remembered it isn’t about him.

“It’s a pretty obvious answer that Adam Hamilton is a far better preacher, so essentially, what’s best for my congregation? It’s not about my ministry, but it’s about God’s ministry, so let’s do this thing. Let’s do everything we can to help this little church start growing again.”

He already sees signs that it’s happening.

“Just during this first five weeks, we’ve had more first-time visitors than what I’d experienced over the previous year,” he said. Attendance at Highfill has risen by nearly 24 percent, and at Decatur by

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Christian Education Director/Administrative Assistant: Winfield UMC in West Little Rock is seeking a multi-talented, self disciplined person who desires to be in ministry with children on Sunday mornings and during our Wednesday Kid’s Club program. This is a full time position, but would consider part time for the right person. Those interested may contact Rev. Larry Hughes, at revlughes@gmail.com or 501-773-9130.

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

OBITUARIES

LEWISVILLE

Russell M. Bailey

The Rev. Russell Murphy Bailey, 74, passed away Sunday, Jan. 22, 2012, at his home in Lewisville.

He was born May 28, 1937, in El Dorado, to Russell Victor Bailey and Johnnie Mable Hood Bailey. He served in the Marine Corps for ten years, including on President John F.



Russell Bailey

Kennedy's honor guard. He also worked as a coal miner for eight years.

An ordained Elder the United Methodist Church, he served at churches across Arkansas for 35 years, including the Bond charge, Tyronza, Centerview, Weiner, Marvell, Lewisville and Gillett.

Mr. Bailey was preceded in death by his parents and one son, William Victor Bailey.

He is survived by his wife of fifty years, Peggy A. Bailey; two daughters and sons-in-law; Debra Johnson and her husband, Ted, of Hazen; and Sharon Thompson and her husband, Raymond, of Stamps; and three granddaughters, Heather Johnson, Melissa Johnson and Shannon Thompson.

A celebration service was held Friday, Feb. 3, 2012, at the First UMC Lewisville, with the Rev. Ron Eldridge officiating. The family asks that in lieu of flowers, donations may be made to First UMC, 3061 Columbia 15, Lewisville, AR 71845; United Methodist Children's Home, Methodist Family Health Foundation, P.O. Box 56050, Little Rock, AR 72215; Make a Wish Foundation (www.wish.org); or the Lafayette County Department of Human Services Food Pantry, 2612 Spruce Street, Lewisville, AR 71845.

LITTLE ROCK

Lois Elmore Clayton

Lois Elizabeth Elmore Clayton, 100, passed away Monday, Feb. 13, 2012.

She was born Oct. 19, 1911, in Magnolia, the youngest of eight children born to Dr. and Mrs. A.B. Elmore. She graduated from high school and college in Magnolia.

She taught tap dancing and expression, and for many years she was an elementary school teacher. She married her childhood sweetheart, the Rev. John Ralph Clayton, on June 12, 1933. Together, they shared more than fifty years in the Methodist ministry in Arkansas. She served in many capacities, including



Lois Clayton

children's education and music ministry. She was the consummate hostess and a loving, devoted wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 67 years, and a grandson, John Michael Clayton. She is survived by her children, the Rev. Mike Clayton and his wife, Ann, of Benton, and Anna Carolyn Bradley and her husband, Bob, of Little Rock; five grandchildren: Rob Bradley (Christy), Greg Bradley (Patti), Neil Bradley (Mary), Shelley Gentry (Brooks) and Beth Clayton (Patricia); and great-grandchildren, Justin, Jessica, Rebecca, Tyler, Alex and Victoria Bradley and Clayton and Sterling Gentry.

A celebration of Lois' life was held at Trinity UMC Little Rock on Thursday, Feb. 16, 2012. A private interment preceded the service. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Trinity United Methodist Church, 1101 N. Mississippi St., Little Rock, AR 72207, or to a charity of your choice.

MABELVALE

Doris Morrison Fish

Doris Elizabeth Morrison Fish, 83, of Mabelvale, passed away Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2012.

She was born Sept. 23, 1928, to Josie and Hale Morrison, who preceded her in death, as did her brother, Bob Morrison.

Her service to the United Methodist Church and United Methodist Women was second only to serving the family she loved and nurtured. She served 13 years on the United Methodist Women's Executive Committee of the Little Rock Conference and four years as president. She was a delegate to the World Methodist Conference in Nairobi, Kenya in 1986.

She served as a delegate from the Little Rock Conference to the General Conference in 1984 and 1988, and was the first woman to lead the Little Rock Conference delegation to General Conference. She served for two quadrennia as a director on the General Board of Global Ministries, and traveled to mission sites all over the world. In Africa, she was made an honorary citizen. She proudly served on almost every committee of the United Methodist Women's organization, a perfect example of faith, hope and love in action.

Survivors include her husband of 61 years, Louis Fish; three sisters, Wanda Majors West and her husband, Morris; Sue Majors and her husband, Gerald; and Jackie Byrne and her husband, James David; two daughters, Karen Fish Moore and her husband, Jerry, and Judy Fish Lowery and her husband,



Doris Fish

Allen; two sons, Ray Fish and his wife, Pam, and Richard Fish and his wife, Lola; 10 grandchildren, Cameron Cogbill and his wife, Elizabeth; Amanda Terry and her husband, Ryan; Ben Fish, Jonathan and Samantha Fish, Seth, Nathan, Josh, Allison and Ben Lowery; and two great-grandchildren, Madelyn and Hunter Terry.

Funeral services were held Sunday, Feb. 5, at Mabelvale United Methodist Church, with the Rev. Bob Marble officiating. Pallbearers were Seth Lowery, Josh Lowery, Jonathan Fish, Benjamin Fish, Ryan Terry, Cameron Cogbill, Brad Byrne, Paul Majors, Greg Majors and Jeff Majors. Burial followed at Cornerville Cemetery in Star City.

Memorials may be made to Mabelvale United Methodist Women as a gift to mission: 10500 Woodman Street, Mabelvale, AR 72103.

PARAGOULD

Don Russell Williams

The Rev. Don Russell Williams, 81, passed away Wednesday, Feb. 1, 2012, at Arkansas Methodist Medical Center in Paragould.

He was born Feb. 24, 1930, to Jones Ellis and Sybil Calberta Cooper Williams, who preceded him in death, as did an infant brother.

An ordained Elder in the Arkansas Conference, he attended First United Methodist Church Paragould. Before his retirement, he served churches in the Little Rock Conference, including Salem and Congo UMCs, both in Benton, Good Faith UMC Pine Bluff, Vantrease, C.V. Galloway, Spring Hill, De Ann and the Keith charge.

Survivors include his wife, Roella Williams; three daughters and sons-in-law, Alma Rita and James Hastings of Beech Grove, Ark.; Rhonda Gail and David Wicker of Tomball, Texas; and Donna Roberta and Brian Williams of Paragould; two brothers, David McNeil Williams and Moyl Williams, both of Paragould; grandchildren, Carman Slate, Adam and Ryan Saulsbury, Evan Curtis, Brian Williams Jr. and Brionna Williams; and seven great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Friday, Feb. 3, at Heath Colonial Chapel, with the Revs. David Bush and Angie Gage officiating. Burial followed in Memorial Gardens Cemetery.

Memorial gifts may be sent to First UMC, P.O. Box 667, Paragould, AR 72451-0667.



Don Williams

Forrest City historian presents gift to Conference Archives

Mauzell Beal, left, and Marcia Crossman, right, accept from Violet Baldwin, center, a gift of historical documents to the Arkansas United Methodist Church Archives. Baldwin presented the compilation of historical documents to the archives in honor of her late husband, William T. Baldwin.

Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin worked for more than 20 years gathering information about First UMC Forrest City. Upon completion of the research in 1994, the church was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Baldwin also gave the archives a book, *How to Build a Church* by John Gaisford, who was the architect for the Forrest City church and others, including First UMC Conway. Baldwin recently retired from her role as church historian for First UMC Forrest City.

The Conference archives are housed in Bailey Library at Hendrix College in Conway. Those who may have items of interest to the archives may contact Crossman at ArkMethodist@hendrix.edu or 501-450-1370.

— Submitted by Kathy Finch



COURTESY PHOTO

Charleston church breaks ground for new gathering space

About one hundred persons on Feb. 12 attended a groundbreaking at First United Methodist Church Charleston. Construction will soon begin on a new 3,000-square-foot facility known by the congregation as "MY BRICK," which stands for "Methodist Youth Building Relationships in Christ's Kingdom."

The new facility will provide three new classrooms, as well as an attractive, safe place for young people in the community to meet for fellowship, spiritual enrichment and discipleship. The building answers a need for more educational space for Sunday School, small groups and Bible studies, as well as for its growing youth ministry.



ABOVE: People of all ages participated in the groundbreaking for First UMC Charleston's new "MY BRICK" building.

LEFT: The Rev. Bill Buchanan, pastor of First UMC Charleston, turns a shovel of dirt as part of the Feb. 12 celebration.

COURTESY PHOTOS



Faith Funds

Foundation for Excellence

Rev. Ben Crismon, Associate Pastor of Evangelism and Young Adult Ministry at Cabot United Methodist Church, credits the seminary scholarship he received from the United Methodist Foundation with building a foundation for excellence in service to local churches in the Arkansas Conference.

"Because of the scholarship I was able to work in church ministries during my time at Perkins, and I did not have to take a secular job for expenses," said Rev. Crismon. "I didn't have to wait until I was done with seminary to begin to apply the principles I was learning. Now in full-time ministry I constantly use the lessons cemented in real life experiences."

He preaches weekly at a Thursday evening casual service and every other week at the Sunday contemporary service. "Writing sermons weekly pushes you to continue to maintain a consistent high quality and balance that with the other requirements," he said. "It's great preparation for when I am a solo pastor fully responsible for a congregation."

Rev. Crismon said the fact that people from his Conference loved him enough to provide for him during his seminary education makes him want to serve diligently, passionately and with gusto to return the gift he received back to the people of Arkansas.



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Plea to bishops

Lead the UMC to full inclusion | 7B

Section B

March 2, 2012

Ethnic groups urge denomination to stay course

BY HEATHER HAHN
United Methodist News Service

Leaders of five groups that represent the denomination's ethnic constituencies have some suggestions for increasing the number of vital United Methodist congregations.

They urge the United Methodist Church to:

- cultivate new leaders who can reach a racially diverse mission field; and
- continue support for the denomination's national plans for racial/ethnic ministries.

The Inter-Ethnic Strategy Development Group made these recommendations in its second statement regarding the Call to Action Initiative and the proposed consolidation of nine of the denomination's 13 general agencies under a 15-member board. General Conference, the denomination's top-lawmaking body, will take up proposals to reorganize the denomination's general agencies when it meets April 24-May 4 in Tampa, Fla.

The group's statement released in September 2011 raised concerns that the proposed restructuring would minimize the participation of people of color and work against the denomination's principle of inclusiveness.

Its February statement maintains that earlier position but also endorses the Call to Action charge "to mobilize the whole church for vital and effective mission" and suggests thoughts on how to reach that goal.

"We affirm the Call to Action's vigorous Call for Leadership but would urge a heightened emphasis on differing dynamics of leadership that will reach a more racially diverse world parish," the statement said.

If the United Methodist Church wants to reverse decades of declining and aging U.S. membership, the denomination will need to do more to reach people of color, group leaders say. That means nurturing more leaders who are ethnic or racial minorities. It also means doing more evangelism among immigrant populations and making church more inviting for more people.

"We seek a structure where racial ethnic persons are not invisible," the statement says.

The inter-ethnic group includes leaders of the denomination's five official ethnic caucuses: Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Metodistas Asociados Representando la Causa de los Hispano-Americanos, National Federation of Asian American United Methodists, Native American Interna-



UMNS PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE

Worshippers sing during a Wednesday evening gathering last year at Kingdom Builders Center, Windsor Village UMC in Houston. Leaders of ethnic groups within the UMC are urging that reforms not distract from ongoing efforts to diversify the denomination.

tional Caucus and Pacific Islander National Caucus of United Methodists.

"We say we want to be diverse, but what are we showing the world? Look at our leadership," said Anne Marshall, chair of the Inter-Ethnic Strategy De-

velopment Group. She is also chair of the Native American International Caucus.

"You talk to younger generations and they'll say it doesn't matter what someone's color or race is, but then

they'll turn around and say I don't know if I will belong because there's no one who looks like me," she added.

The five Unified National Plans for Strengthening Ethnic/Racial Min-

■ See 'Ethnic' page 8B

Author McLaren finds warm UM welcome—mostly

BY SAM HODGES
Managing Editor

Brian McLaren is not now nor has he ever been a United Methodist.

But the popular—and controversial—Christian thinker keeps showing up in Methodist circles, and even adding UM affiliations, such as joining the board at Claremont School of Theology.

"I'm such a big fan and believer in Wesleyan theology," Mr. McLaren said in a phone interview. "A number of my friends tell me I'm a closet Methodist. I just feel there is a huge amount of unfulfilled potential in what the Methodist heritage has to offer in this challenging time."

Mr. McLaren was named by *Time* magazine as one of the country's most influential evangelical leaders, but he's perhaps better known as a leader in the emerging church movement.

His innovative ideas about church and culture had a kind of incubator at non-denominational Cedar Ridge Community Church in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C., area. He left a career in college teaching to be founding pastor there, and stayed about two decades, influencing other churches along the way.

Since then, he's focused on writing and teaching, and the titles of some of his books—including *The Church on the Other Side*, *A New Kind of Christianity* and *Naked Spirituality*—suggest

the extent of his critique of the institutional church, whatever its theological bent.

"Brian transcends the traditional boundaries and asks questions which force both evangelicals and mainline folks to recognize that their assumptions may be based more in culture than in beliefs about God and the witness of Scripture," said the Rev. Jay Voorhees, pastor of Old Hickory UMC in Nashville, Tenn., and a reader of Mr. McLaren's works.

Mr. McLaren insists that his words and ideas, however they may jolt, aren't intended to send an anti-denomination message.

"Many people wrongly, I think, as-

■ See 'Welcome' page 2B



PHOTO BY COURTNEY PERRY

Brian McLaren sees a future for mainline churches.

UMC in U.S. still shrinking

BY SAM HODGES
Managing Editor

UMC membership and average worship attendance in the United States continue to drop, according to the latest figures released by the denomination's General Council on Finance and Administration.

GCFA said membership dipped 1.4 percent in 2010, having declined 1.2 percent in 2009. Average worship attendance was down by 2.3 percent in 2010, compared to a drop of 1.9 percent the year before.

In 2010, only 54 percent of churches reported receiving any members by profession of faith or faith restored.

But participation was up by 4 percent in 2010 for Christian formation classes, and by nearly 11 percent in covenant discipleship groups. Vacation Bible School participation rose by almost 6 percent.

Non-apportioned giving to mission increased by more than 10 percent, and direct giving to UMC-related causes went up more than 29 percent.

Local UMC churches in the United States reported serving 1.1 million people through day-care and education ministries. Nearly 26.3 million people were served through ministries of outreach, justice and mercy.

"Amid some of these worrisome trends, we continue to have strong signs of life in our churches," said Scott Brewer, assistant general secretary for connectional services at GCFA.

Giving in 2010 to the Advance, including contributions to the United Methodist Committee on Relief

(UMCOR), rose by 146 percent over 2009. That was due in part to contributions to Haiti for earthquake relief.

"In times of great need, such as the devastation caused by natural disasters, we have seen United Methodists respond with tremendous generosity," said Laura Chambers, senior researcher for GCFA.

The agency also reported that 17 annual conferences paid 100 percent of their general apportioned funds for 2011. In 2010, 15 conferences hit that mark.

The Holston Conference increased from 61 percent in 2010 to 100 percent in 2011.

shodges@umr.org



Scott Brewer

WELCOME Continued from page 1B

sume that the emerging church is an alternative to more traditional, denominational churches," he said. "Right now one of the primary ways this whole emerging phenomenon is happening is through many of our traditional denominational churches."

Mr. McLaren has plenty of critics, especially among conservative evangelicals, but he's been embraced by many within the UMC.

Recently, Mr. McLaren signed on as theologian-in-residence for Life in the Trinity, a ministry run by the Rev. Joseph Stabile, pastor of Cochran Chapel UMC in Dallas, and his wife, Suzanne.

Mr. McLaren won't actually be living there, but he's agreed to lead a series of workshops that will be taped and distributed via DVD.

Life in the Trinity is an ecumenical ministry, focused on fostering personal growth and community; but its Micah Center (named after the famous verse Micah 6:8) is on the Cochran Chapel UMC campus.

And the Stables consider Mr. McLaren a Wesleyan in spirit.

"He displays an extraordinary amount of understanding of grace, God's grace falling on everybody, and he also has a deep sense of social justice, which I think connects very much to John Wesley," said Mr. Stabile.

Ms. Stabile noted Mr. McLaren's emphasis on spiritual practices.

"Wesley seemed to know what to do that would keep people going on the next part of their journey," she said. "That's what we try to do here at Life in the Trinity, and that's what Brian tries to do."

'Historic step'

Last fall, Mr. McLaren also joined the board of trustees of the Claremont School of Theology in California, one of the official UMC seminaries.

"Our academic dean, Phillip Clayton, is friends with Brian and they have done several events on emerging trends in Christianity," said Jerry Campbell, the seminary's president. "So Phillip reached out to him and in-

vited him to join our board."

Claremont has made news, and generated controversy, by helping to start and becoming part of the new Claremont Lincoln University, a consortium of professional graduate schools that includes the Academy for Jewish Religion, California, and the Islamic Center of Southern California's Bayan College.

The Mississippi Conference of the UMC last summer passed a resolution calling on the upcoming General Conference to cut the denomination's ties with Claremont because of its role in a consortium providing clerical education for non-Christian faiths.

But that's part of what drew Mr. McLaren to Claremont.

"I'm very interested in the whole area of Christian identity in a neighborhood relationship with other faith identities," he said. "Obviously Claremont has taken a bold, really historic step, trying to grapple with that issue."

Mr. McLaren is a frequent guest speaker in UMC settings, such as last year at the Michigan Area's School for Pastoral Ministry. He's been a repeat visitor at the Perkins School of Theology, part of Southern Methodist University.

Fans there include the Rev. Elaine Heath, associate professor of evangelism, director of the Center for Missionary Wisdom and an ordained UMC elder.

"He understands holiness as both an inward and individual life of piety and a communal life of justice, hospitality and prayer," Dr. Heath said. "He understands God first and foremost as a God of grace. He embodies, as few others do, the kind of holy ecumenism John Wesley advocated in his sermon 39, 'Catholic Spirit.' In all these ways he is a good friend to us in the UMC."

Taking issue

But the Rev. Rob Renfroe, president of the unofficial conservative UMC caucus Good News, offers a different perspective, including on the McLaren-Claremont relationship.

"Both McLaren and Claremont be-

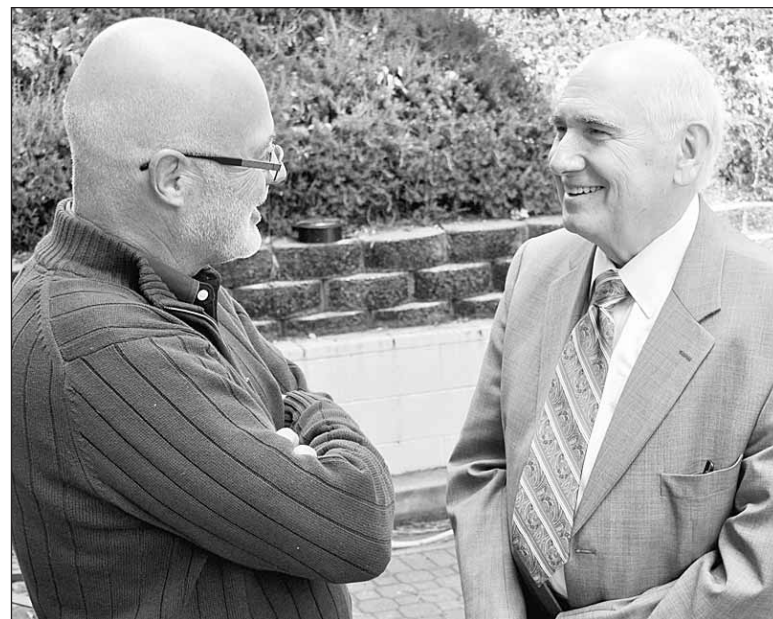


PHOTO COURTESY CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Brian McLaren (l) chats with Jerry Campbell, president of UMC-affiliated Claremont School of Theology. Mr. McLaren recently joined the Claremont board.

lieve it's very hip to ask questions, dialogue and never provide any answers that would give what St. Paul referred to as 'the offense of the cross,'" he said. "And they both seem certain they have been chosen to invent, in the words of McLaren, 'a new kind of Christianity.' Of course, what they claim to be new is little more than a repackaging of an old Protestant liberalism which has led the UMC into decades of decline."

The Rev. Jason Byassee, pastor of Boone UMC in North Carolina, offers caution from another perspective. He has reviewed books by Mr. McLaren for *Christian Century*, the venerable mainline Protestant magazine, and calls him "a great speaker and occasionally better writer."

But he notes that Mr. McLaren is not a trained theologian—his graduate work was in English—and says he "often doesn't know when he's innovating and when he's saying something that's been around forever."

Dr. Byassee too has issues with the McLaren-Claremont relationship.

"My fear is his association with Claremont lets them think, 'See, we're

so open as to include evangelicals, when he's either not one anymore or isn't the kind who will make them wrestle with the genuine diversity in the Christian church in America," he said.

Mr. McLaren is known for disarming gentleness in response to critics of all stripes, and goes out of his way to offer verbal support to the UMC and other mainline denominations.

They have a future, because they're getting real, he argues.

"With several decades of alarming statistic about size and age and so on, just about all mainline Protestants are waking up to the very simple but jolting reality that whatever the future will be, it will not be a just a continuation of the past," he said.

"One of the very encouraging responses to those disturbing statistics is a question, and that question is, 'What is our mission? Why are we here?' When people, especially leaders, start focusing on mission, that opens up enormous possibilities for renewal."

shodges@umr.org

U.S. divided on mandate

WASHINGTON (Religion News Service)—Americans are split on a federal mandate requiring nearly all employers—even institutions with strong religious affiliations—to provide insurance covering contraception.

That's according to a new poll that found that 62 percent of Americans are aware of the controversy, which has pitted the Obama administration against Catholic bishops and evangelical Christian leaders.

The poll, from the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public

Life, showed that of those familiar with the issue, 48 percent support an exemption for religiously affiliated institutions that object to providing contraception coverage; 44 percent said these institutions should provide it.

Among Catholics, 55 percent favor an exemption, and 39 percent oppose it.

That compares to 68 percent of white evangelicals who favor an exemption (22 percent opposed) and 44 percent of mainline Protestants (46 percent opposed).

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UM CONNECTIONS

Texas foundations agree to acquisition

The Texas Methodist Foundation in Austin has acquired most assets and liabilities of the Central Texas Methodist Foundation, based in Fort Worth. The move was initiated by CTMF and coincides with the retirement of Patricia Sprayberry-Hall as president. "We will work with our clients to ensure a smooth transition to the Texas Methodist Foundation," she said. The acquisition, effective Feb. 16, leaves TMF with more than \$400 million in assets.

Full term for Hays at Duke

The Rev. Richard B. Hays has been appointed to a full term as dean of Duke Divinity School, a role he began on a two-year basis in 2010. Duke officials said Dr. Hays was chosen for the full term after a six-month national search. "I will do everything I can to lead the Divinity School forward faithfully and imaginatively," he said. Dr. Hays' books include *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*.



Richard Hays

UM history group focuses on music

The Texas United Methodist Historical Society will have its annual meeting March 23-24, on the theme "Texas Methodist Musical Heritage." Scheduled speakers include Jane Marshall, the well-known sacred music composer; David Music, professor of church music at Baylor University and director of the Baylor Sacred Harp Sing; and Michael Hawn, director of the sacred music program at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. The meeting begins at noon on the 23rd, at the Micah Center on the campus of Cochran Chapel UMC, in Dallas. Registration is \$50. Make checks payable to Texas United Methodist Historical Society and mail to Jean Traster, TUMHS Treasurer, 2014 Iron Horse Court, Arlington, Texas 76017.

—Compiled by Sam Hodges

Group wants more Wesley in reforms

BY SAM HODGES
Managing Editor

A small group of United Methodist clergy and laity, wanting more theological and particularly Wesleyan content to the Call to Action reform effort, has crafted a document called "A Missional Manifesto for the People Called United Methodist."

The Rev. Jay Voorhees said he and others behind the statement agree the denomination, fast approaching its quadrennial General Conference, needs to make changes to arrest numerical declines in the United States.

But he said the denomination also must make a theological case for itself.

"The Call to Action stuff is a lot about church practices but it doesn't say very much about what the people called Methodists bring to the kingdom of God," said Mr. Voorhees, pastor of Old Hickory UMC in northeast Nashville, Tenn.

The Rev. Ken Carter is a district superintendent in the Western North Carolina Conference and, with Mr. Voorhees, a signer of the new document.

"With the Wesleyan 'Missional Manifesto' we hope to move the conversation beyond institutional structures and congregational vitality to our reason for being: the mission of God in the world," Dr. Carter said.



Ken Carter



Proposals from the Call to Action initiative will be considered at the 2012 General Conference of the UMC, set for April 24-May 4, in Tampa, Fla.

Delegates to General Conference, set for April 24-May 4 in Tampa, Fla., will consider proposals to restructure general church agencies, end guaranteed appointment for clergy and redirect millions in funds toward boosting the number of congregations deemed "vital" by statistical measures.

The denomination's Call to Action to Action Steering Committee drew on two outside studies in making its case that major change is needed and that "vital congregations" are the key.

Mr. Voorhees said he and a few others attending a leadership meeting in Nashville last fall began talking about what they felt was missing from the Call to Action report and the reform effort generally.

Since then, he said, about 15 clergy and laity have contributed to the statement, which recently went up on a website.

The three-page document has an introduction and conclusion, and between them are sections titled, in order, "God sends," "God sends United Methodists," "God sends United Methodists to proclaim the reign of God," "God sends United Methodists to proclaim the reign of God and to make disciples" and "God sends United Methodists to proclaim the reign of God and to make disciples for the transformation of the world."

Each section contains theological "bullet points," elaborating a Wesleyan understanding of Christian faith and practice.

The latter section title nearly duplicates the UMC's mission statement of "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," but adds the phrase "to proclaim the reign of God."

"We feel like if we don't proclaim the reign of God, to just make disciples of Jesus Christ doesn't explain how Jesus Christ is significant in the world," Mr. Voorhees said. "There are lots of people who believe in Jesus. They think he's a good teacher or a great prophet, but we believe Jesus is God and Jesus came proclaiming God's reign. It's a theological claim about who Jesus is."

Mr. Voorhees said his group had the example of another missional manifesto, drafted by various evangelical leaders, but wanted to put forward one that emphasized Wesleyan and

Arminian beliefs.

"Not that we're in competition with them, but we do have a different understanding," he said.

Mr. Voorhees added he and others in the group have received input on the "Missional Manifesto" from United Methodist theology professors and a couple of bishops.

He reiterated that the manifesto-backers favor change for the UMC, but want it buttressed with theology.

"I think the Call to Action, for reasons that I understand, sort of assumed a theological perspective and went straight to the data and the practices," he said. "But what many of us experienced is this disconnect between that sort of, for want of a better term, market-driven analysis, and this understanding that we're a church."

The "Missional Manifesto" can be read in full at www.missional-methodist.org. It asks that those who support it leave their name and contact info.

But don't necessarily look for the statement to lead to a movement.

"It's not a caucus. It's not an organization," Mr. Voorhees said. "We see this really as an ongoing conversation about who we are as Methodists and how God is sending us out in the world."

shodges@umr.org



Jay Voorhees

LETTERS

Don't end guaranteed clergy appointment

To General Conference delegates, regarding legislation:

One of the freest pulpits in the world is and has been the United Methodist pulpit. One reason is that once ordained and received as a member of an annual conference, that person has a guaranteed appointment. This should not be done away with. There are already in place ways to deal with incompetence and chargeable offenses.

Please do not vote to give us "set-aside" bishops. We do not want a single bishop to represent us, be our face, or any such abominable thing. The economic cost to the church of such a position cannot be justified. The step to move us toward the hierarchical type of episcopacy should be

stopped. Instead of putting bishops to work outside their conference leadership roles, United Methodism needs to move as quickly as possible to a system of term episcopacy. Why should any leadership position like bishop be for life?

From what I can read of the proposals to change clergy pension and benefits, they do not appear to best serve our servants.

Oh, when will we have a General Conference that does not feel it necessary to tinker with our ecclesiastic language and structure? The language and structure of our denomination's mission as Christ Jesus' people should not have to be radically changed every four years.

We need to take back our United

Methodist doctrine related to Holy Communion and baptism. Our present statements, liturgies and practice (especially related to Holy Communion) are little more than Roman Catholic practice in Methodist clothing!

The Rev. R. Dulaney Barrett
Retired elder, New Mexico Conference

I heard the voice of the institutional church speaking through the voice of the Rev. Matt O'Reilly ("Sacred worth" isn't enough for ordination"; Jan. 20 *Reporter*). I did not see or hear the heart of or any reference to Jesus, the Lord of the church.

I agree that it takes more than "sacred worth" to qualify for ordination as a minister of Christ. However,

I did read qualifications of Ms. S. Vance Goodman that, without reference to her personal experience, would surely have met church standards. Her honesty about her sexual orientation seems to be the issue of the day.

I relate to the New Testament teaching that Jesus calls us to follow him, but does not define what the qualifying characteristics are.

Albert E. Bohnstedt
Member, Good Shepherd UMC
Fort Wayne, Ind.

The Reporter welcomes brief, civil letters, and reserves the right to edit for space and clarity. Send to news@umr.org or The United Methodist Reporter, 1221 Profit Drive, Dallas, TX, 75247.

WORTHY PARTNERS

Two churches get support for preservation, outreach

BY JOAN G. LA BARR
Special Contributor

DALLAS—Years of diligent work and big dreams have paid off for two North Texas Conference congregations. In January two of Dallas' historic urban congregations, Oak Lawn and Grace UMCs, received word they would be rewarded generous grants from Partners for Sacred Places, a national organization that matches community-oriented historic congregations with donors who want to support their work.

Partners for Sacred Places, which has one of its three regional offices in nearby Fort Worth, announced Oak Lawn would receive \$100,000 and Grace \$25,000 from donors who chose to remain anonymous.

Other regional offices are in Chicago, Ill., and Philadelphia, Pa. Attesting to the organization's national scope, another recent major grant is directed toward repurposing space vacated by three Roman Catholic congregations in Johnstown, Pa., following the merger of five former parishes into one.

The Rev. Judith Reedy, Grace UMC pastor, said the grant will help complete the fourth and final phase of the church's 20-year capital campaign. Oak Lawn UMC is assessing needs as leaders determine how the grant will be used. One likely possibility is replacing 54,000 square feet of flat roof that covers all of the sprawling building with the exception of the sanctuary, said the Rev. Frank Drenner, pastor.

The two grants are the most recent and by far the largest of a total of \$145,000 awarded to North Texas churches since 12 congregations completed the required and rigorous New Dollars/New Partners for Your Sacred Place Training in 2008, said Texas Region director and program manager Suzanne Yowell.

Ms. Yowell said both churches were surprised to receive word of the grants, which will provide a significant boost for two congregations renowned for their vital community outreach as well as for their beautiful, but aging, structures.

Change upon change

Grace UMC's striking French Gothic Revival style building, with its soaring steeple, has been a landmark since it was built in 1903. At the turn of the 20th century the community was one of the most affluent in the city. Parishioners lived nearby in large, stately homes. As decades passed the neighborhood saw dramatic change. By century's close, waves of immigrants of different ethnicities moved in and then out as their fortunes improved.

Being on the city, state and national historic building registries did not stem Grace's precipitous membership decline. The faithful dwindled to some 30 worshippers. Then, something remarkable happened. A pastor challenged the remnant to turn their attention to the neighborhood and embrace mission. Some 30 years later Grace is a vibrant, vital and diverse congregation of almost 300 members and worship attendance is on the rise.

The building bustles with activity seven days a week. The Open Door Preschool offers aca-



PHOTOS BY THE REV. JOAN G. LA BARR

The Rev. Judith Reedy (l) leads weekly chapel services for children at Grace UMC's Open Door Preschool.

demical preparation including instruction in English to children, many of whom are immigrants. This year's lively group includes 3- and 4-year-olds from homes where Spanish, Korean, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Kirundi and Swahili are the primary languages.

Walk down a level and you'll see dozens of adults and children lined up to see medical professionals volunteering at the Agape Clinic. Alley's House is an education and empowerment program to help teen mothers achieve inde-

pendence, and it's housed next door to Grace UMC in an old home that was once the pastor's residence.

Allison Whitehead, executive director, was excited to find ample space in the building, allowing more room for education and programming for the young women and their children.

Grace UMC also hosts a pro bono legal clinic staffed by volunteers from Legal Aid of Northwest Texas; and Perkins School of Theology uses a church-owned property for a program in which

students live a monastic lifestyle while reaching out to the community.

On Sundays a diverse array of worshippers comes from across the city. The associate pastor, native Kenyan the Rev. Mary Miriti, leads an African outreach. One volunteer-led class is held in Kirundi, the language of the east African nation of Burundi.

To date Grace UMC has raised \$1.7 million for three phases of repairs that included infrastructure upgrades, replacing wiring, plumbing and air conditioning, and restoration of woodwork and stained glass windows.

The fourth phase, which will benefit from the grant, targets needs including updating the kitchen and fire sprinkler system, expanding the Agape Clinic space (including adding a new entrance for clients), and restoring the historic steeple, which once housed Sunday School classes and is now in serious need of repairs. Ms. Reedy is especially excited about the kitchen renovations, which will enable food service for the preschool and allow for expanding its hours of service. Plans call for increasing its enrollment.

Community anchor

Three miles west, Oak Lawn UMC is located in one of Dallas' trendiest areas, one which has also experienced dramatic population shifts. In the 1960s the area was a haven for the counter-cultural movement. Numerous members of the gay and lesbian community joined hippies already living there as many church families moved to the suburbs.

Today, upscale high rise apartments, townhomes and condos draw urban professionals.



PHOTO BY THE REV. KERRY SMITH

Oak Lawn UMC's Community Outreach Center organized distribution for Thanksgiving meal ingredients for low-income families, in cooperation with a Kroger grocery and nearby Medrano Elementary School.



LEFT: A nurse practitioner examines a young patient at the Agape Clinic in the basement of Grace UMC. RIGHT: Allison Whitehead, who stands behind Alley's House clients, leads a program that offers career counseling, tutoring and life skills training to young single mothers from 13 to 21. It's housed in the old Grace UMC parsonage.



PHOTOS BY THE REV. JOAN G. LA BARR

Stately old Oak Lawn UMC, built in 1916 with its brick Gothic style sanctuary and art glass windows, stands out among the hip restaurants and bars. Oak Lawn, which was once one of the city's larger congregations, also suffered a decline in membership and its financial base as the neighborhood changed.

Oak Lawn endured some rocky times, but throughout it all, the congregation which remained considered the church to be an anchor in the neighborhood and center for community activity. At the end of 2010 Oak Lawn reported 260 members with a worship attendance of 180. Mr. Drenner, who was appointed senior pastor in June of 2011, reports significant gains in attendance, which most Sundays averages well over 200.

In addition to the crumbling flat roof, Mr. Drenner said the church building has numerous other needs, including a new elevator and stairwell. He looks across the back parking lot that borders Welborn Street and envisions a new building, perhaps with underground parking.

Before Mr. Drenner's arrival the church had completed renovations including new offices, church parlor and an open, welcoming hospitality center. "The hospitality center has breathed new life into the space. It's a sort of magnet," Mr.

Drenner said. He added that the next project, renovation of the existing fellowship hall, including the addition of audio-visual capabilities, will offer the potential for starting a new worship service.

All week long

The affluence of the Oak Lawn area does not mean that there are not persons in need nearby. Through its Community Outreach Center, directed by local pastor the Rev. Gregg Alan Smith, the church offers information and referrals, financial assistance, food, clothing and financial literacy classes on a weekly basis. One of its best-known missions is "Gayle's Kitchen Angels," named for former associate pastor, the Rev. Gayle Landis, who started a Sunday night service of home-cooked meals for the homeless. The meals, which are prepared and served by volunteers, continue in the Outreach Center every Sunday at 5 p.m.

One innovative new program about to launch is a horticultural center in green space on the south end of the property. The Dallas City Council has given approval to what will be a teaching center able to host school groups and other education efforts geared toward sustainability.

All of this is right in line with Partners for

Sacred Places' priorities. "It is very important for churches to use space creatively, to seek new outreach," said national president Bob Jaeger. He noted that in its 23-year history the organization has raised more than \$3 million from donors who have placed trust in the process. "Donors really trust us to train leaders in the churches and spend their money well, and we are very honored by the trust," he said.

Though many participating churches are on various historic registers, this is not a requirement. What is important is that a building has cultural importance in the neighborhood and that it is architecturally important and significant in its own setting.

The required training for churches—along with site visits from Sacred Places staff and volunteers—ensures that the projects are sound and that the structures are worth saving, Mr. Jaeger explained. Such care also helps ensure successful outcomes, he added.

At the end of a year of training, congregations have learned strategies for building support from not only members, but also the community at large. The four-person teams from each church are trained to write a case statement for funding support, assess building needs, organize a capital campaign and, finally,

develop a plan to pull the elements together and make it work in their setting, Ms. Yowell explained.

Ms. Yowell also reinforced Mr. Jaeger's point about seeking new outreach, which is as important in the grant process as is preservation of a historic building.

"Most know what takes place in a sacred meeting place one or two days a week. It is what takes place the remainder of the week that is nothing short of astonishing, and the impact goes far beyond Sunday.

"Congregations open up their buildings to serve children and seniors, neighborhoods and arts groups, the hungry, the grief-stricken, and anyone else in need. They open their doors for community-wide celebrations, and can just as quickly become centralized command centers and safe havens when disaster or tragedy strikes. All of this becomes dangerous when an aging building reaches a dangerous state of decline due to years of deferred maintenance," she said.

More information about Partners for Sacred Places is available at www.sacredplaces.org, or by phone at (215) 567-3234.

The Rev. La Barr is the former director of communications for the North Texas Conference.



PHOTO BY THE REV. KERRY SMITH

The Rev. Frank Drenner of Oak Lawn UMC poses with wife Christy (left) and Bryan and Reba Clark. Mr. Clark, a longtime church member, died in January.



PHOTO BY THE REV. GREGG ALAN SMITH

Rob Baker and Barbara Gibbons are volunteers for Oak Lawn UMC's Gayle's Kitchen Angels program, which provides home-cooked meals for the homeless.

Church's gaze must be turned outward

BY KAREN GREENWALDT
Special Contributor

"What will the United Methodist Church be like in 80 years?" When asked this question recently, I responded, "Most of us now living will be gone." Then I responded, "Goodness. . . . We need to ponder this question intentionally and purposefully."

What will the church be like in 80 years? I believe the Church of Jesus Christ—the body of Christ—will be present and active. However, I wonder if the United Methodist Church will be a vibrant presence. Will the UMC be relevant? Will it engage the people of the world in deep, penetrating conversations about "Why Jesus? Why the Church? Why Now?"

Will we be making a case for why Wesleyan theological perspectives are necessary? Will we be inviting people



Karen Greenwaldt

to follow Jesus? Will we be a spirited movement of God that will reach the hearts, minds, imaginations, hopes and dreams of millions of people who have yet to encounter the living Word of Christ?

These questions are worth pondering. There are no quick or snappy answers. Rather, they strike at the heart of who we are as United Methodists.

Frankly, I worry that we United Methodists are so worried about membership statistics, finances and other important issues that we have dropped our gaze to the immediate future. Every four years, the UMC gathers to make decisions that will affect the church. In this upcoming General Conference, delegates will be making decisions about pensions, structures of the general church, ordering of ministry, leadership systems for the episcopacy, and many other items. Will the delegates to this General Conference lift up their heads to consider the long-term effect of their decisions? Will they and we ponder the potential impact of decisions on a church 80 years from now?

Years ago at a previous General Conference, a restaurant server asked me, "Are you one of those Methodists meeting down the street?" I responded that I was. His reply continues to haunt me—"I hope you [they] remember that the world is watching."

Reach out to millions

Indeed, the world is watching. It is listening, waiting, hoping and wondering if anyone is paying attention. Many wonder occasionally or often if there is a Holy One who cares for them. Does the UMC have anything to say to these people who seek God but who likely do not have the language, the theological training, or even the impetus to engage in a journey of Christian faith?

We who are part of the church have decided already that the UMC is relevant to our lives and our lives of faith. Yet, there are untold millions who have yet to encounter our church or to engage the questions about whether our church provides any relevance for their lives.

What will the church be like in 80

years? No one knows the answer. However, I am convinced that we must lift our eyes from the immediate future to engage in ministries that reach outward to the world's people. We do have choices that will affect the realities of what the church will be like tomorrow and what it will be like in 80 years.

Our choices will affect the future. Let's not continue to talk to ourselves, to circle the wagons of "ain't it awful" as we attempt to rescue our church from decline or to rearrange our organizational systems. Rather, we can turn our faces to the people "out there" who are watching and who are waiting for a word from the Lord. These people will tell us whether we are relevant or not. They will tell us how we are helping (or hurting) them as they seek to find hope and faith in the midst of their daily lives. They will tell us how

we need to change—if we will listen.

We are a church that relies on the leading and grace of God that calls us forward to follow Jesus. Let us pray for a massive invasion of the Spirit to

'We do have choices that will affect what the church will be like tomorrow and in 80 years.'

turn us from our focus on internal organizational struggles to a life centered in response to the leading of God—the One who seeks the lost and all those who struggle with the issues of daily life. May we become people who

follow the commandment to love God and our neighbors—as (much as) we love (and care for) ourselves.

The Rev. Greenwaldt is top executive of the General Board of Discipleship. "Dreaming of Vital Congregations," a series of five films produced by the GBOD that can be used as discussion starters, is online at www.gbod.org/dreaming/.

UM bishops should favor discipleship, not *Discipline*

BY WILLIAM K. MCELVANEY
Special Contributor

In their Nov. 10 letter to the United Methodist Church, the Council of Bishops declared their commitment once again to uphold the *Book of Discipline* prohibition against UM clergy conducting same-gender unions. I have no doubt that our bishops' intent is to serve as faithful witnesses to the faith as they perceive it.

Unfortunately, there is considerable doublespeak in the words and actions of the bishops. Is enforcing the exclusion of GLBTs from pastoral services offered in love by clergy a "more excellent way" (I Corinthians 12:31) as stated in the bishops' letter? The claim of offering grace upon grace to all in the name of Christ is disingenuous at best and simply hollow in the eyes and ears of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. The bishops blame deep pain throughout the church on those clergy who have declared they will perform union services without discrimination. Yet the bishops make no mention of the pain of lesbian and gay members as well as that of their families and friends. It's clear that our bishops have turned a deaf ear to UM GLBTs.



William K. McElvaney

The bishops have made the *Book of Discipline* into an ultimate covenant in place of the Book of Discipleship that for Christians is centered in the life, teachings, example and death of Jesus. The bishops' more excellent way, as difficult as it may be, is not finally to be ecclesiastical enforcers of church law but to be courageous educators and exemplars of God's radical agape for all through Jesus Christ.

Many UM clergy who favor enforcing the *Discipline* as mentioned above have assured their listeners and readers there will be a mass exodus of UM members if the church does not continue to insist that gay sexuality and same-gender unions are unacceptable. Similar claims were made when the denomination moved towards racial justice and equality. No mass exodus took place. Likewise, the same dire warning was issued when women gained full ordination rights in the UMC. Again, these scare tactics proved to be false.

Current movements towards equal rights for GLBTs in the Lutheran and Presbyterian churches have caused no great departure. Is UM membership so anchored in fear of full inclusion of gays in holy unions and ordination that our connection will fall apart? Can this fear and rejection fulfill our stated mission to transform the world?

Our task is not to save the church, as though that were needed or even possible. Our task is to be the church.

Who among us would not claim that the church is stronger in Jesus Christ for having become more just and inclusive in racial and women's rights?

About 'incompatible'

Since 1972 the UM Social Principles have stated: "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching" (*Book of Discipline*, 2008, Social Principles, page 103).

This position constitutes a basic dilemma facing the UMC. The phrase "incompatible with Christian teaching" is absolute and misleading. True, in the past Christian teaching has been largely negative towards sexuality, especially homosexuality. The same claim can be made for much Christian tradition that favored racial exclusion and oppression, as well as exclusion of women from equality. Thank God the UMC has made significant progress in breaking through these inconsistencies with the gospel of Jesus.

Today there are many Christian teachers who do not teach exclusion and never have. Why is Jesus not mentioned instead of the amorphous, nebulous term "Christian teaching"? Was it considered too risky to mention Jesus by those at General Conference seeking to condemn GLBT sexual life?

There is a critical distinction frequently unrecognized by bishops, board and agency leaders, and rank and file UMs as to the use of the term "incompatible." The use of the term in the Social Principles relating to war states, "We believe war is incompatible with the teaching and example of Christ" (2008 Social Principles, page 128). So in relation to war the UMC ties its belief directly to Jesus Christ whereas a more generic term, Christian teaching, is used to place restrictions on GLBTs. When Jesus is omitted or banned in exchange for outworn tradition, we likely find human attachment to law rather than grace.

Authority of Scripture

The church should be concerned with being biblical in the deepest sense. What might that look like? The ranking of a few statements by Paul above all the persuasive and powerful texts related to God's radical love through Jesus Christ can hardly qualify as serious biblical inquiry and authority. Paul and his generation had no knowledge or awareness of long-term consensual same-gender loving relationships so prevalent today.

To be profoundly biblical from a Christian standpoint is to give prominence and priority to texts in which Jesus lifts up God's unconditional and inclusive grace. This is what I am calling the Book of Discipleship as dis-

tinct from the *Book of Discipline*. How can Christians miss the comprehensive "magnetic field" of New Testament texts bearing the word and deed of inclusion? These are pervasive and found in all the Gospels. Particularly striking is Jesus' friendship and affirmation of those rejected or dismissed by the religion or culture around him.

When the church gives signals that GLBTs are a threat to the church—not eligible to be considered for ordination, not worthy to receive pastoral blessing for holy unions, although we bless animals and athletic events—and defective sexually because of loving "the wrong neighbor," the church tacitly approves anti-gay oppression within and beyond the church. These rejections are incompatible with the Christian gospel of God's love best known by Christians through Jesus Christ.

I urge our bishops and our UMC to embrace GLBTs to become our mentors in how together we can experience Jesus' beloved inclusive community of courage, reconciliation, and "just" love.

The Rev. McElvaney is a retired UM pastor in Dallas and professor emeritus at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology. He also served as president of Saint Paul School of Theology, and he's the author of the book *Becoming a Justice Seeking Congregation*.

WESLEYAN WISDOM

Church history sheds light on ordination proposals

BY DONALD W. HAYNES
UMR Columnist

If the Call to Action reform effort is adopted in full by General Conference, there will be a major paradigm shift in both “guaranteed appointment” and the relationship of ordination to conference membership.

Always seeming a bit awkward to persons of other communions, United Methodism has kept conference membership locked in tandem with ordination. In practice, the annual conference has voted persons into conference relationship and recommended them for “orders” in a business session, followed by ordination from the hands of the bishop, all in the same conference session.

This has meant that even a seminary graduate with a Master of Divinity degree has to serve a minimum of two years in the parish before becoming eligible for ordination. During this period, the seminary graduate is technically licensed for the practice of parish ministry, but not ordained. For second career people, ordination has seemed a very long wait.

If the new recommendation is adopted by General Conference, the graduate of the Course of Study or the recipient of the Master of Divinity degree will become immediately eligible for ordination as an Elder. If one is on the “Deacon track,” the same qualifications will apply upon completion of 24 credit hours in an approved seminary. Then, after two or three years (depending on the annual conference policy) as a Provisional Member of the conference, the Deacon or Elder may be received into Full Connection with all the rights and privileges appertaining to that conference relationship.

Historically, the “License to Preach” which evolved into the status of “Local Pastor” was clearly seen as an annual license to practice the tasks and duties of a parish minister. Over several quadrennia, the rights and privileges of Local Pastors have been enhanced and enlarged to encompass clergy status in most annual conference business, administration of the sacraments and pension participation. The future of this relationship has not been clarified.

The proposed action to separate the timing and requirements for ordi-

nation and conference membership offers a good time to reflect on the history of both.

‘Sons in the gospel’

John and Charles Wesley were ordained upon completion of their academic work at Oxford, needing only the approval of the ordaining bishop. Since John Wesley’s ordination came through his being a Fellow at Lincoln College, Oxford, not a geographic diocese, he could later say to Bishop Butler in Bristol, “the world is my parish.” Conference membership was a Methodist phenomenon, not an Anglican tradition.

With the paucity of Anglican clergy who supported Wesley’s post-Aldersgate ministry, he hesitantly resorted to using laity as preachers. Though Thomas Maxfield at the old Foundery in London might not have been the first lay preacher, his approval by Wesley was a watershed moment. Around 1740, in Wesley’s absence but his mother Susanna’s presence, Maxfield began to preach at the Foundery after being “insensibly led to go further than he had at first designed.” When Wesley objected, his mother retorted, “He is as surely called to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself.”

Richard Heitzenrater researched the response of one Henry Moore who recorded that Wesley “bowed before the force of truth and would only say, ‘It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.’” Lay preachers who agreed to work for Wesley were subsequently called “sons in the gospel.” He appointed them to territories, villages or parishes to preach. According to historian Rupert Davies, Wesley “set about training and preparing his lay preachers for the word which he now saw they would be able to do. He chose them for their personal knowledge of salvation, and at first set a period of one year for their probation.”

Much of the language still in the *Book of Discipline* as the bishop interrogates Deacons and Elders for full connection comes from Wesley’s 1754 “Twelve Rules of a Helper.” One of the requests no longer made is to spend five of every 24 hours reading and the rest in “the business of evangelism and personal work.”

Some of those chosen were women. And it was mostly lay preachers who organized and shepherded the bands, class meetings, and often, the societies. Wesley established a conference connectional membership,

but did not ordain anyone until 46 years after Aldersgate.

In America Bishop Francis Asbury had little formal education, and his ordination as Deacon and Elder and consecration as General Superintendent all occurred in a three-day period during the Christmas Conference of 1784. Asbury added a major factor to his ordination at the hands of Thomas Coke by insisting that his ordination was contingent upon the vote of the conference. Those who fear in the new paradigm that bishops can ordain “ex cathedra” are wrong; conference approval following recommendation by the Board of Ordained Ministry will still stand.

Clergy model

Methodism, by 1844, had become the largest organization in America outside the federal government; but it had no seminaries until 1857. While the legendary circuit riders were for the most part “traveling preachers,” for nearly two generations none was a seminary graduate. Those who were ordained came through the Conference Course of Study which was prepared by the bishops until the 1930s.

Well into the 20th century, most rural circuits were being served by “Approved Supply” preachers who lacked ordination, conference membership and guaranteed appointment.

The clergy model for me was an uncle who had two years in a Methodist college designed for second career clergy. He practically memorized Adam Clarke’s *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, giving him a strong Arminian understanding of the Scriptures. He served 35 years as an “Approved Supply” with no guarantee of appointment.

During the Great Depression, my uncle was not needed for three years during which time he was a barber, and he organized a new Methodist church! In 1934, he delivered to the conference a new congregation in Greensboro, N.C., and was appointed to a six-point circuit where he served 15 years. At his retirement in 1954 the Board of Pensions, in special legislation, asked the conference to provide him a modest pension. He had literally lived out the covenant prayer of Wesley, a prayer he taught me as a child:

“I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. . . . Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee . . . I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. . . .”

His life was my understanding of

what might lie in my future when I answered God’s call to preach the month I became 16. Just after my 19th birthday, in my senior year of college, I was appointed to the church from which this uncle was retiring: a small textile mill village church for which the parsonage was a former mill house. The annual salary was \$2,400. I never thought to ask about the non-existent travel allowance or the pension benefits that would come with probationary membership.

The lockstep connection and timing between conference membership and ordination has evolved. I was appointed in 1954, received into probationary conference membership in 1955, ordained Deacon in 1956. Probation did not come through seminary but through the completion of a brief correspondence course provided through the Methodist Church headquarters in Nashville. I was received into Full Connection and ordained Elder in 1958, the same year I finished Duke Divinity School.

Missionary pastors

It makes sense to ordain a person upon completion of the Master of Divinity degree. Without simultaneous conference membership, however, ordained United Methodist Elders might not ever be elected to “Full Connection” and, like UMC Deacons, might not be appointed to churches with remuneration. We have a precedent for this. In our illustrious history we had many “located Elders” and ordained clergy who had chosen “Honorable Location” and rendered great service

in local communities where there was no voice for Wesleyan grace theology.

We are an institutional church supported by disciplined Christians; if we have failed to mentor the conversion and discipling of sufficient numbers of God’s lost children, the corollary will be an atrophy of funds. The “perks” that came with institutional strength—guaranteed appointment, pensions, housing allowances, travel allowances and medical insurance—might have to be reduced.

Perhaps the 1989 statement of Kennon Callahan is accurate: “The age of the local church is over; the age of the mission station has come,” and “The age of the local pastor is over; the age of the missionary pastor has come.”

Perhaps the personal preface to the reading of appointments for every individual “called to ordained ministry” (knowing that some are about to be “laid aside”) is Wesley’s Covenant Prayer. Those “given work” will feel blessed and will go forth like Gideon’s army to build vital congregations and see the Holy Spirit transform the structures of prejudice into communities of faith. That would have the markings of a “movement,” the kind of movement that adopted as a mission statement “to reform the continent and spread scriptural holiness throughout the land.”

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

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istries offer tools to address this problem, the inter-ethnic group said. The group urges that any restructuring plan General Conference approves continue the work of the national plan.

Need for plans

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, racial and ethnic minorities accounted for 91.7 percent of the nation's population growth during the previous decade. People of color are now the majority in Washington, D.C., and four states—Hawaii, New Mexico, California and Texas. Yet, the denomination's General Council on Finance and Administration reports that the church's U.S. membership has come nowhere close to this diversity.

As of 2009, the U.S. lay membership was 91.2 percent white, 5.9 percent black, 1.1 percent Asian, 0.9 percent Hispanic, 0.4 percent multiracial, 0.3 percent Native American and 0.2 percent Pacific Islander. The denomination has about 7.7 million members in the United States.

The five national plans for ethnic ministries established by General Conference have begun the slow work of drawing more people of color into the pews, the leaders say.

These initiatives are the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry, the UM Council on Korean-American Ministries and the Asian American Language Ministry, all housed at the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. In addition, the initiatives include the Native American Comprehensive Plan and Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century, both part of the General Board of Discipleship.

A petition before the 2012 General Conference would establish a sixth such initiative—the Pacific Islander National Plan. The UM Council on Korean-American Ministries is seeking to change its name to the Korean Ministry Plan to reflect its global scope. Among their efforts, these ethnic initiatives work with annual conferences and local churches to help plant new congregations and identify, recruit and train new leaders.



The Rev. Fred A. Allen has questions about proposed restructuring for the UMC.

The plans have a track record of fostering “growth in membership and worship attendance from our racial ethnic constituency and ensuring the presence of a younger generation,” the inter-ethnic group's statement said.

National plans

For example, the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries since 2009 has worked in partnership with 23 annual conferences to establish 57 new Hispanic/Latino congregations. The plan also has deployed 22 missionaries to assist 14 annual conferences in ministering to growing Hispanic populations, said the Rev. Francisco Cañas, the plan's executive director.

Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century has concentrated on leadership development and church revitalization. It has established 17 Congregational Resource Centers to sponsor training events and partner with congregations in every U.S. jurisdiction. It also has launched a coaching network to work with predominantly African-American congregations.

The Korean plan since 2009 has started 23 new congregations and trained 1,000 people in small-group ministry, says the Rev. Paul Hak-Soon Chang, the plan's executive director. According to the Call to Action research, small groups are among the drivers of vital congregations.

The Rev. Jonathan S. Lee, senior pastor of Holliston United Methodist Church in Pasadena, Calif., credits the Korean initiative with helping his 600-member congregation to plant a new Korean-American United Methodist congregation across the country in Hicksville, N.Y. The national plan provided financial support. The five-year-old New York Dream Church now has an average weekly attendance of 50 people.

“I hope and I pray the national plan will continue so they can impact not only the Korean-American church but also help develop the second-generation leaders,” Mr. Lee said.

In 2009-2011, the Asian American Ministry Plan started 12 new congregations and led 13 annual training events in Asian languages for Cambodian, Vietnamese, Hmong, Chinese, Filipino, South Asian and Lao laity and pastors.

Many Asian-American immigrants to the United States “first came to know Christ in refugee camps through Methodist missionaries,” said the Rev. Nam-Jin “N.J.” Jun, the plan's executive director.

However, in earlier decades, few United Methodists reached out to these recent arrivals. “That's why we as a general church need to show to Asian Americans, who are still coming in as immigrants, that we welcome



UMNS FILE PHOTO BY HEIDI ROBINSON

Young adults perform a traditional dance during a Samoan worship service at Calvary UMC in Tacoma, Wash.

them,” he said.

Such a welcome requires establishing places where immigrants can worship with people who share their language and a connection to home, he said.

The Korean and Asian-American initiatives also help develop global partnerships between U.S. congregations and United Methodist missions around the globe.

“All these hyphenised-Americans living in this country have very close and strong ties with friends and relatives back home because most are immigrants or refugees,” Dr. Jun said. “So they evangelize them . . . and they start mission partnerships.”

‘No retreat’

The ethnic caucus leaders consulted with the leaders of the national plans in drafting their statement. Leaders of the plans said they are concerned because they received little or no consultation about the new structure proposed by the Interim Operations Team, which developed the restructure proposal endorsed by the Connectional Table and Council of Bishops. The Connectional Table drafted the legislation.

“We don't know where we fit,” said the Rev. Fred A. Allen, national director of Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century. “We have not been convinced that the proposed restructure will either help or hurt where we are as the national plans.”

Retired Bishop Roy I. Sano, a signer of the inter-ethnic group statement and member of the National Federation of Asian American United Methodists, was even more pointed.

“The color blindness in the [Interim Operations Team] and [Call to Action] diverts us from the most pervasive missional challenges and opportunities in the massive global migration of people different from ourselves inundating our neighborhoods in the U.S. and in regions abroad,” he said.

Neil M. Alexander, president of the United Methodist Publishing House, and Illinois Area Bishop Gregory V. Palmer have been leaders throughout the Call to Action process. They said in a joint statement that they have proposed “no retreat whatsoever” from the denomination's commitment to diversity.

“We expect diversity in the governing bodies and staff would be continued and expanded going forward,” their joint statement said.

The Rev. Jorge Mayorga Solis, a district superintendent in the Wisconsin Annual Conference, said the National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries' partnership with his conference has led in the past 20 years to 13 new predominantly Hispanic congregations and at least 600 new United Methodists.

“Any restructuring at General Conference should not take away the national plans,” he said. “They are providing a methodology and tools for ministry.”

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