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Russellville church makes coffee, music, relationships

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

A guitarist plays onstage. Two teens face off in a game of checkers. The espresso machine stays busy as a line forms at the cash register. Some people take the opportunity to listen to the music; others claim a corner of the room for conversation and listen to each other.

It's a typical weekend evening at The Crossing, a non-profit coffeehouse on Russellville's West C Street.

Or is that a church on West C Street?

Actually, it's both.

The Crossing is a ministry of Wesley UMC Russellville. The congregation in 2010 launched a satellite worship service at the Arkansas Tech Wesley Foundation. Called "Wesley @ Wesley," it drew a good number of college students and some other folks, too, but leaders felt called to take a greater risk in reaching out. They began

looking at potential locations for a re-launch and found the empty storefront near the railroad crossing.

"We decided 'coffeehouse,' and I just went crazy," said Paula Reeder, an elementary school teacher who manages the food-and-beverage side of The Crossing. "I got a 'how to start a coffeehouse' book, located a website that sold coffeehouse equipment and started talking with those people."

She also started attending Wesley UMC finance committee meetings, bringing home-baked desserts and her ideas. "I literally got the finance crew eating out of my hand," she said, "and convinced them that yes, the church needed a coffeehouse."

With the go-ahead from the finance committee and grants from the Catch the Vision and the Arkansas Conference's new church start fund, the church signed a lease on the storefront and invested in a commercial-grade

[See CROSSING, page 6A]

School year's start offers opportunities for ministry

For many families, back-to-school time means the fun of choosing new clothing, new shoes and new school supplies. But many households feel strained because of those expenses, and some children have no choice but to begin the school year without all of their needs met.

Each year, United Methodist congregations across Arkansas work to lighten the burden for families who need help to prepare for the start of school. The following three examples represent dozens more churches engaged in similar ministries throughout the state.

Samaritan's Feet

"My feet feel so much better!" said the 9-year-old boy, just minutes after receiving a pair of brand-new tennis shoes. He hopped up and down, grinning from ear to ear with happiness. His wide smile spread to those around him.

That atmosphere of joy infused the second annual Samaritan's Feet event held on Saturday, Aug. 4 at First UMC Bentonville.

The non-profit organization Samaritan's Feet (samaritansfeet.org) provides children with new shoes just in time for the start of the school year. By the end of the day, 462 Bentonville-area children had been fitted with shoes, and smiles were everywhere. The vision of First UMC Bentonville member Laura Easley made the event possible.

Easley's first experience with a Samaritan's Feet event occurred in 2011 at Shiloh UMC Springdale. She was among a group of volunteers from First UMC Bentonville, and they witnessed first-hand the need for assistance in their part of the state.

"In the Springdale event, volunteers served over 250 underprivileged children," she said.

[See OUTREACH, page 8A]

They were together in one place

A Pentecost experience in Fort Smith

BY STEVE POARCH
Special Contributor

Feedback through the speakers made a horribly loud noise, and although it would likely never be confused with “the rush of a violent wind” described in Acts 2, it caused this pastor to make a “Pentecost” connection.



Steve Poarch

Maybe it was because it happened during worship on Pentecost Sunday, or because it abruptly and effectively grabbed everyone’s attention, or because it happened in the midst of a bilingual baptism and confirmation service, but I couldn’t help but recognize the Holy Spirit’s presence in both the sound itself and in the “one place” in which the people of the St. Paul and Vietnamese United Methodist Churches in Fort Smith had gathered to worship on that beautiful morning of May 27, 2012.

History of sharing

Since 2001, when the Vietnamese Mission was initiated, the two congregations have worshiped under one roof on Sunday mornings, but almost always in different worship spaces. They have shared the building, held special events together and demonstrated a mutual love for each other and for Jesus Christ for the past 11 years, but have only occasionally had the opportunity and means to worship together.

The mission church was started as an attempt to overcome the lingual and cultural barriers that made it difficult for members of the Vietnamese population in Fort Smith to enter into and fully participate in the life of the Church. For several years, the Vietnamese Mission, encouraged, loved and supported by St. Paul, the West District and the Arkansas Conference, has met in the St. Paul facility while reaching out to the Vietnamese community. In 2009, the Vietnamese Mission was officially chartered as Vietnamese UMC.

While still meeting at St. Paul, Vietnamese UMC purchased land and began planning for a day when they would have a worship center of their own, giving them even more visibility within the community. Soon, the members of Vietnamese UMC and their pastor, the Rev. Terry Gallamore, will be lifting prayers and praises from a beautiful new facility at the corner of Alabama and Albert Pike Avenues in Fort Smith.

With this reality approaching, leaders from both congregations began exploring ways to celebrate the years of ministry shared together. With a confirmation class made up of students from both congregations, they decided to observe Confirmation Sunday together, and that Pentecost Sunday, the birthday of the Church, would

present a great opportunity to do so. What transpired in the planning and the implementation was nothing short of an incredible Spirit-filled experience.

Two languages, one voice

More than 200 worshipers from both congregations filled St. Paul’s sanctuary to sing praises, lift prayers, celebrate baptisms and confirmations and hear the message of Pentecost proclaimed. Musicians and singers from both churches led the congregation in familiar hymns and praise songs, sung in both English and Vietnamese.

They began by alternating verses, but on more than one occasion, a split screen of lyrics had congregants singing in both languages at one time. It was amazing to hear two languages woven into one beautiful melody on songs like “Standing on the Promises” and “How Great Thou Art.” Even for those who were limited to one language, there was a sense of being able to hear and understand the gospel message when the other language was being sung.

Confirmation leaders, along with a host of parents, family members and confirmation mentors, presented three students for baptism and four students for confirmation. The liturgy proceeded in both Vietnamese and English as pastors, family members and mentors from both congregations laid hands on and prayed for each of these seven youth as they were baptized and confirmed.

A sense of God’s presence and a feeling of unity filled the sanctuary as these seven youth were welcomed into the Church and into each congregation. Spontaneous applause broke out in response to this special moment.

Leaders read the Pentecost story from the Book of Acts in alternating blocks of Vietnamese and English. The sermon celebrated the churches’ shared ministries and fellowship, as well as the unity found in the one Spirit that will carry both congregations forward to reach even more people as we face a future in separate locations.

For just as the Holy Spirit came upon those gathered in one place some two thousand years ago, enabling them to begin the spread of the gospel in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth, we know that the Spirit, whose presence was felt in Fort Smith as we gathered in one place, will enable these two congregations to remain unified in God’s love. What’s more, that Spirit will enhance our abilities to share the love and grace of Jesus Christ with even more people as we extend beyond the physical walls of St. Paul UMC.

Oh, and in the tradition of good United Methodists, we topped off the worship celebration with some great table fellowship as both congregations gathered for a huge potluck meal. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

The Rev. Poarch serves as pastor of St. Paul UMC Fort Smith. Vietnamese UMC’s new building is scheduled for completion by the end of 2012.



EDITOR’S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

Back to school

After years of not having to pay attention to the first day of school, this August we experienced a change in our household. My husband, John, began working toward a master’s degree.

Or, as he puts it, he entered the 17th grade.

Times have changed since we last dealt with formal education. Though he had an in-person visit with his academic adviser, he accomplished most other enrollment-related tasks online. He had no need to wait in line at the bookstore. The dreaded automated phone system for class registration has been replaced by more advanced technology, too. No surprise there; in fact, I think I would’ve been more surprised had it still existed.

One change, though, did catch me off guard: My husband, who has *magna cum laude* prominently displayed on his undergrad diploma, was nervous about starting school.

He realized that he has spent just as many years out of school as in school. And the release of the Beloit College Mindset List for the Class of 2016 didn’t exactly help. As it does with increasing intensity each year, this year’s version of the list gave us a taste of how little we have in common with this year’s incoming college freshmen.

In particular, the third item on the college’s list stuck with me: “The biblical sources of terms such as ‘Forbidden Fruit,’ ‘The writing on the wall,’ ‘Good Samaritan,’ and ‘The

Promised Land’ are unknown to most of them.”

Wow.

I can place all of those references almost without thinking. And so can John, who spent a decade teaching junior high Sunday school, incorporating games he devised to prevent that very type of ignorance.

But, as we noted, times have changed.

At first, I was disappointed by this display of blatant biblical illiteracy. *We’ve failed. What happened?*

Then a friend pointed out that this lack of knowledge also presents an opportunity. We can see it as shameful that this generation has a blank slate when it comes to the heritage of our faith; but we also can remember that a blank slate represents a fresh start. Those who don’t know basic biblical references can approach the Bible without the same baggage we carry—baggage that we may have accepted from our ancestors and left unopened, unexamined.

It’s never too late to learn, in academia or in the spiritual sense. To borrow a thought from Socrates, the unexamined faith is not worth living. Perhaps those of us who think we have it all figured out could stand a little refresher course.

After all, not even a 17th-grader has all the answers.

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



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Issue Date	Submission Deadline
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Nov. 2	Oct. 17
Dec. 7	Nov. 16

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GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY MUELLER

Doing new old things

Let's just be honest. There's a whole lot of new going on! I'm a new bishop. You have a new episcopal leader. The Arkansas Annual Conference is beginning a whole new way of doing things through Imagine Ministry.

But it's not all new. In fact, it's not nearly as new as we might think. That's because it's the same God whose grace has been around forever. The same Jesus who is our Savior and Lord. The same Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples. The same Holy Spirit who sends us out with a vision and the power to do ministry. The same kind of real people who have followed Jesus for nearly 2,000 years.

So here we are—all of us doing new old things together. Wink and I are truly blessed to be here with you. Your incredibly warm and loving welcome has overwhelmed us. We are excited to get to know you and for you to get to know us in the coming months.

I believe Arkansas United Methodists are on the cutting edge of what the United Methodist Church needs to be doing in the 21st century. I am convinced this state is filled with passionate and faithful laity and clergy who are hungry to follow Jesus. I know in my heart of hearts that something special is going to happen in the coming years. Now, I know I'm supposed to say

these things as your new episcopal leader. But I want you to know I really do believe it.

Those who know me will be the first to tell you I have high expectations. So let me share just a couple of them. First, I expect us to be focused like a laser on our mission to make disciples. Second, I expect to see more and more vital local congregations reach people with Jesus' love, help them grow deeper in their discipleship and then send them out into the world to be about God's transformation. Third, I expect to join hands with you to laugh, pray, cry, worship, grieve, play, eat, visit and imagine what God's up to next!

Life is pretty chaotic for the Muellers, between finding socks that got lost in the move, locating the grocery store and helping our cats get used to their new home. So please be patient with me. I would love to meet everyone by tomorrow, but will have to settle for doing it as quickly as I possibly can.

In the meantime, I have an old request for my new friends. Please pray for Wink and me.

Grace and peace,

Gary E. Mueller

Installation Service for Bishop Mueller Sept. 8

The Arkansas Conference Episcopacy Committee extends an open invitation to the Installation Service for Bishop Gary E. Mueller. The worship service, hosted by St. James UMC Little Rock, 321 Pleasant Valley Drive, will begin at 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 8.

Youth involvement: Are we asking the right questions?

BY JAY CLARK
Special Contributor

I read with great interest the commentary "Not so fast: Stats don't show youth fleeing UMC," which appeared in the *United Methodist Reporter's* June 22 issue. In that piece, the Rev. Mike Ratliff highlights some encouraging growth in levels of youth participation in the United Methodist Church. While he acknowledges that many congregations do struggle with youth involvement, he drives home the point that overall, the UMC's ministry with young people is growing.

Every year when it is time to fill out charge conference reports, the questions about youth and young adult ministry get asked. Over the years, these questions have changed. Over the years, as different paid staff and volunteers in local churches have answered these questions, there have emerged as many answers as biblical translations.

Within our own Conference, as the battle cry rang out for why we needed change in the way we staff youth ministry, one of the statistics often touted was that while youth ministry events on the Conference level are increasing, the youth ministry numbers in local churches are decreasing. This common argument is sometimes used as a scare tactic to prompt the conclusion that our church is dying.

I am not so fast to jump on that bandwagon. First, many don't share the same understanding of what is being asked on the charge conference forms. Second, clergy differ from one another in the way they answer the questions. Yet, people want to see numbers increasing. I agree that numbers are important—but not as important as the relationships young people have with adults within the local church.

We all know that young people are busier now than ever

before. Are we really doing them a favor by planning 18 more things to do at the church in the name of faith formation, just so we can get our numbers up?

Where does the once-coveted "family time" come in? Where is that statistic reported? I would love to see how our churches are encouraging families to be together and not dividing them up into their nice, neat columns of statistics. I wonder what Jesus' statistical report would have been?

Many of our youth ministers in the Arkansas Conference are being increasingly more intentional about their continuing education so their ministries can talk more theology with our young people—really working on getting our young people to think about what they believe and why. For most youth ministries, pizza-and-a-game youth nights have been traded in for something with more substance. Sure, sometimes that "pizza-and-a-game" will get your numbers up, but what is the long-term outcome for the Kingdom of God? When we get caught up in the numbers game, we can lose the ability to dive into that relational piece of ministry and only skim the surface.

The more I write this commentary, the more I fear I am beginning to sound like the Andy Rooney of Youth Ministry. I'm really not complaining about everything, in fact, I think there is a lot to celebrate! And while I am taking this moment to

celebrate, let me say a word to each local church reminding you how important your youth ministry is—*whether or not you have young people in your church*. What is your church's relationship with the young people of your community?

What other questions are we not asking? Maybe we should ask how many of those new members we report each year are upholding their obligations of support through prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness?

Lastly, let's get one thing straight: We are a connectional church. Yes, we wave that flag all the time, but we are not connectional unless we are using the connections. There are many resources to help you move forward in your youth ministry within your local church. I can name several youth ministers within our state that would be glad to help, plus the Division on Ministry with Young People (globalyoungpeople.org) always has good resources and advice.

Many of us need to refocus on what we are offering the young people in and around our congregations. They don't want a program... they get enough of those. They want us to offer Christ, and Christ has a lot to offer.

Clark serves as minister with youth and their families at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock. He can be reached at jclark@phumc.com.

'...let me say a word to each local church reminding you how important your youth ministry is—whether or not you have young people in your church.'



Jay Clark

School of Christian Mission encourages learning at all ages

BY DONI AND FRED MARTIN
Special Contributors

CONWAY—Eight years ago, when Katie Grover led the youth program during the Arkansas Conference School of Christian Mission (ACSCM), she had no idea she would be invited to return as a study leader for “Immigration and The Bible,” one of this year’s ACSCM subjects.

Currently a student at Asbury Theological Seminary and a candidate for ordained ministry in the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Grover was a General Board of Global Ministries US-2 missionary in Calico Rock when she served as youth leader in previous years.

To her surprise, six teenagers she instructed in the past have become an integral part of the ACSCM staff, working with other youth and teens. They joined her on stage to a standing ovation of appreciation.

Organized and directed by dean Mary Blassingame, a member of Mission UMC Fort Smith, the 2012 ACSCM was held August 1-4 on the campus of Hendrix College. More than 250 persons attended, 64 of

those for the first time. The total included 14 clergy and 66 children and youth.

ACSCM is sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Board of Global Ministries and Arkansas Conference United Methodist Women, with financial support from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas and the Elizabeth Thornburg Workman Fund.

As participants arrived on campus, many brought donations of supplies for the Arkansas Rice Depot’s Food for Kids Backpack Program. The outpouring of donations kept growing during the week.

The school included hymns, songs of praise and the introduction of new music to reinforce study topics. In recent years, music leaders have been involved in Regional School of Christian Mission at the same level as study leaders, which helps them incorporate music into the ACSCM studies.

A time of morning praise began each day’s activities as large groups gathered for a time of singing, praise, devotion and prayer. Worship and plenary sessions gave participants opportunities to share information, education, worship and

fellowship. The final session included the celebration of Holy Communion.

During the four-day event, children and youth were involved in activities centered around mission to others, under the guidance of professional educators and others who have years of involvement with ACSCM.

Through the course “Immigration and the Bible: A Guide for Radical Welcome,” study leaders centered instruction for adults on how the Bible is the leader in providing guidelines on immigration, past and present. Adults’ other new study option was “Poverty,” edited by Jack A. Keller, Jr. Last year’s geographic study on Haiti returned as another study option.

Planning for next year’s event, which will be called “Arkansas Conference Mission U” because of



Youth attending the Arkansas Conference School of Christian Mission perform in a “flash mob” during lunch in the Hendrix College cafeteria.

PHOTO BY FRED MARTIN

changes made at the 2012 General Conference, has already begun. The spiritual growth study will be “Living Sacramentally and Walking Justly”; the geographic study will be

“The Roma of Europe”; and the social issue study will once again address poverty. The Rev. Pam Estes will serve as dean. Mission U will be held July 31 through Aug. 1, 2013.

ARKANSAS CONFERENCE JOB POSTING

The Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church is seeking a **Tier II Support/Application Development Specialist**. This experienced support engineer will play a key role in the development and day-to-day operation of a technology center that supports the digital connections used to fulfill the mission and goals of the Church.

Essential Job Functions and Responsibilities

Problem Solving and Support: Able to install, troubleshoot, and solve advanced hardware, software, and systems integration issues and problems; troubleshoot and solve more advanced trouble tickets that have been escalated by Tier I Help Desk; diagnose and debug across multiple network topologies, platforms and operating systems; solve fundamental wide area network-related problems; diagnose and solve web-related problems, including trafficking and security issues.

Systems Integration: Knows how to use new and existing commercial technologies to solve a wide range of user needs across multiple technologies. Provides technology direction with a working understanding of a vast array of technology solutions that focus on helping users improve their operations.

Webmaster/Web Design: Provides oversight, day-to-day management, and development of the Arkansas Conference website, and assist in upcoming website overhaul/redesign.

Project Management: Prepares estimates of time, personnel and any other resources needed to complete a unit of work ranging from a single application to a complete system or other large project. Important considerations include the accuracy with which required resources and time requirements are estimated.

Information Technology Industry: Possesses knowledge of the information technology industry and advanced technological savviness. Maintains a comprehensive familiarity with current and future trends of the IT industry. Able to analyze end user technology needs and requirements and research IT solutions.

Research: Identifies and assesses new applications, systems or related technologies for end users. Includes surveying end users to clarify desired outcomes and identifying the general purpose for the new applications, systems, etc. Compares and contrasts existing technologies with other vendor technologies. Identifies all variables affected by implementation, changes or enhancements.

Written and Oral Communications: Able to create written presentations on complex systems and applications per end user requirements, working in a variety of presentation media. Analyzes appropriate presentation level for audience before communicating. Maintains accurate and current documentation of installation settings, specifications and network design. Works with end users and Tech Center personnel to develop, recommend and implement policies and procedures. Writes reports summarizing actions taken to solve problems.

Additional Skills, Abilities and Position Requirements

Working knowledge of web-based applications, search engines and Help Desk Management application; advanced computer skills (file management, communications, build-repair, etc.); advanced familiarity with computer hardware, including mobile applications, audio-video peripheral devices.

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Compensation Package: Market-competitive salary plus outstanding benefits including comprehensive health care coverage (individual/family health, LTD, dental, vision care, wellness), 403(b) tax sheltered annuity retirement savings program and generous vacation, sick pay and paid holiday plans.

Reports to: Director, Center for Technology; **Location:** Little Rock, Arkansas

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The Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty seeks a part-time employee to coordinate its outreach to the faith community. For more information and how to apply, visit www.ACADP.org or email info@ACADP.org.

Ozark Mission Project seeks a part-time Administrative Assistant to support and continue building a comprehensive and successful mission program. Qualifications include a commitment to youth and underserved populations in Arkansas; demonstrated skills in: organization, efficiency, information management, creative and timely management of online communication, event and process logistics coordination as directed; an ability to take ownership and initiative without direct supervision; an ability to manage tasks with exceptional attention to detail; and excellent interpersonal and communication skills. Preferred candidates will have strong ties in Arkansas, especially the United Methodist Church and community development programs, and previous experience with Ozark Mission Project. For more information regarding Ozark Mission Project and for a full job description, please go to www.ozarkmissionproject.org.

Children’s & Family Ministry Director: Vibrant, growing children’s ministry. Full-time. Salary commensurate with experience. First UMC, Bartlesville. Send resume to Staff-Parish Relations Committee, 500 S. Johnstone, Bartlesville, OK 74003 or email to kevin.tully@fumcbville.org.

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

Taylor named field coordinator for Imagine No Malaria

The Rev. Martha Taylor has been named the Imagine No Malaria (INM) field coordinator for the Arkansas Conference. She will serve as the full-time contact for information and resources related to Imagine No Malaria through February 2013.

Taylor joined the Conference staff in 2006 as the communications director. She is a provisional deacon and holds professional certification in Christian Communications.

"I had just started as the communications director when I learned about the Nothing But Nets initiative," Taylor said. "Sharing with others how they could to save the life of a child or mother-to-be with a \$10 gift for a bed net was something I was able to speak about with passion, and local churches responded with generosity. Now I get to do that again for Imagine No Malaria."

"Martha's role as Imagine No Malaria field coordinator is a great win for Arkansas and the fight against malaria in general," said the Rev. David Freeman, leader of Arkansas' Imagine No Malaria campaign. "While we want Imagine No Malaria to be a movement of the people in churches, we also need someone who has their eyes on the big picture to make sure we're all moving in the same direction. I'm really glad Martha is that person."

Taylor is receiving requests to preach at local churches and to make community presentations. She, as well as other trained clergy and laity, are available to provide ideas and support for INM fundraising events or to visit group, church or community gatherings to talk about the initiative.

"This is an extraordinary opportunity for the United Methodist Church to put our faith into action," said Taylor. "We are the only faith group represented among the global partners. The United Methodist reputation among our partners is that we have the knowledge and commitment to take on a huge task and succeed."

Youth involvement and churches working together has helped make the initial push a



Martha Taylor

success, says Taylor.

Since 2010, close to 850,000 insecticide-treated mosquito nets have been distributed, 5,000 local community health workers have been trained to implement programs and 15 in-country health boards have been established and trained to oversee planning and programs in Africa. The number of deaths from malaria, estimated at close to one million annually in 2006, has been cut nearly in half.

"Arkansans helped make that happen through their gifts," Taylor said. "Small or large, they all make a difference."

Arkansas also has a special role: The first \$100,000 raised will be used to help purchase a Cessna Caravan aircraft for Wings of the Morning, which will transport medicine, medical personnel and bed nets to remote areas.

Arkansans who give to Imagine No Malaria have the opportunity to double their gifts through a matching grant provided by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA). The Foundation will match gifts given, up to \$333,333. To take advantage of the match from the Foundation, send gifts to the Arkansas Conference Treasurer's office.

INM is a four-pronged attack on malaria, which is caused by a parasite carried and transmitted through the bite of the female *anopheles* mosquito. The initiative includes prevention, treatment, education and communication.

To schedule a presentation or to discuss making a gift to INM, contact Taylor at mtaylor@arumc.org or 501-324-8005.

Opportunity to serve: Network for Holiness of Heart and Life issues call for facilitators

The Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church will be launching the Network for Holiness of Heart and Life ("the Network") in the late spring of 2013. This user-friendly system will enable churches, groups and individuals to easily make statewide connections for missions and study. The Network is seeking facilitators who can help these connections get rolling.

The Network will be a place for laity and clergy to generate discussions and share unique mission projects, personal study and testimonies of lives changed. You will be able to access links to resources, accountability groups and ethnic and age-related groups all across the state.

"We are very excited about connecting the churches here in Arkansas to facilitate conversations, share ideas and resources," says Sandy Watson, lead facilitator for the Network.

Andrew Thompson, the Conference's Wesley scholar, will be a Network contributor. He will share, guide and teach the means of discipleship and grace through study, fasting and prayer.

The content of the Network will be mainly grassroots. Disciples from all over the state are needed to volunteer to help with the content. Ideally, Network facilitators will:

- know how to locate existing resources in their area of the state
- demonstrate willingness to work with their District Superintendent and Circuit Elders to learn and develop mission field strategies
- step beyond their local church to reach out to other churches and groups of all ages, ethnicities, gender, demographics, etc.
- have good listening, organizational and communication skills
- help develop strategies for churches to network with different business, non-profits, agencies, etc.

The goal is to "Network" groups and individuals by bringing them together to share mission ideas, challenges, resources, results and stories—growing disciples at work in their mission fields all the while.

If you would like more information or feel that you may have a calling to be a facilitator, contact Sandy Watson, lead facilitator of the Network for Holiness of Heart and Life, at swatson@arumc.org.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thoughts on Aug. 17 "Caring for our Neighbors" issue

Bless you for the article on Cooking Matters and the commentary from Rev. Steve Copley. I've seen first-hand the devastating effects of hunger, not only on the body, but also on the soul.

I remember a woman I met at a food pantry. She and her husband had been living on his Social Security and her paycheck as a convenience store manager. She was laid off. Her son, who had also lost his job, moved in, bringing his girlfriend and her child. The family went from two people with two paychecks to five people with one. She told this story through tears. "I have always been a giver," she said. "I don't know how to receive."

Last fall, Pulaski Heights UMC partnered with the Arkansas Foodbank to start a school-based pantry in southwest Little Rock. The school had a backpack program, but leaders noticed students' families also were hungry. The pantry served 30 families a month and helped increase parent involvement. PHUMC is continuing the pantry this year.

Congregations can help relieve hunger in many ways: church pantries, church/school partnerships, community gardens. Let's have a groundswell of voices spreading the word about hunger and what Methodists can do about it.

Phyllis Haynes
CEO, Arkansas Foodbank
Member, Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock

Archives helpful for preserving churches' heritage

Mountain View Methodist Church, in western Pulaski County, was founded just after World War II and existed under this name until 1988, when it

merged with Winfield United Methodist Church and took that name. Since the merger, much of the Mountain View church's infrastructure has been replaced by a beautiful new sanctuary, education building and community building. Many Mountain View members are aging or have passed away, so some members of Winfield are documenting the history of the Mountain View Methodist Church to preserve this important part of our past.

In addition to reviewing documents at the church and interviewing members, we also have relied upon the Arkansas Conference Archives. The Archives are located in Bailey Library on the Hendrix College campus and contain a wealth of information on the history of Methodism in Arkansas, including files on individual churches and ministers. In addition to being a source of information, the Archives collect and preserves historical documents from churches. Archivists Marcia Crossman and Carole Teague are very knowledgeable and helpful.

The Archives are open on Thursdays and available to anyone. The archivists may be contacted at 501-450-1370 or arkmethodist@hendrix.edu.

Glen Harrison
Winfield UMC Little Rock

Letters to the Editor policy:

All letters must be signed (name and city/church) and include the writer's telephone number or email address.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Letters longer than 200 words will not be considered for publication.

The Arkansas United Methodist will not print letters containing personal attacks.

The Arkansas United Methodist reserves the right to publish Letters to the Editor in print, on the web, or both.

To have your gifts credited toward the UMFA Imagine No Malaria matching grant:

- send checks to the Treasurer's Office, Attn: Imagine No Malaria, Arkansas Conference Ministries, P.O. Box 3611, Little Rock, AR 72203, or
- visit arumc.org/donate, click the Imagine No Malaria button and be sure to include the name of your local church to receive the match.

Crossing (continued from page 1A)

espresso machine.

Since its April 20 opening, The Crossing has expanded from one Sunday worship service to two, held at 9:30 a.m. and 8 p.m. It also has extended its coffeehouse operating hours, offering a light lunch menu on weekdays, an open mic night on Tuesdays and—coming soon in response to a request from some regulars—Thursday karaoke night.

Giving back

In many ways, The Crossing looks like a typical coffeehouse-style performance venue. But one feature stands out: the Giving Wall.

The Giving Wall demonstrates The Crossing's commitment to its community. Each person who buys a specialty coffee drink (such as an espresso or a latte) receives one dollar in "play money" for the Giving Wall. They then use that voucher to choose which local cause will receive a dollar from their beverage purchase.

In little more than four months, the Giving Wall has generated more than \$2,500 to be distributed among nine different causes, only some of which are church-related. The rest of

"The Giving Wall" lets customers direct a portion of The Crossing's profits back to various non-profits in the community.

AUM PHOTOS BY AMY FORBUS

the money covers operational expenses. Making a profit doesn't figure into the business plan—because it's actually a ministry plan.

"We've just spent a lot of time building community with the people who have come on Friday and Saturday nights who are looking for a place to be," said the Rev. DeeDee Autry, Wesley UMC's pastor. She counts the informal work of building trust as one of her chief goals.

"People are learning that I'm the pastor of the church that's doing this," she says. "I don't push it on anybody. It's just about making connections and relationships with



people, reaching the community."

Artists' haven

Musicians and visual artists are among the community members who see The Crossing as a valuable part of the city.

Guitarist John Cotton has become a regular performer there, both as a solo act and with a jazz quartet. Musicians like Cotton play The Crossing for tips, and some sell their own CDs and merchandise.

"We used to play at Higher Grounds a lot, and that's been closed now for seven years or so. And so a lot of the musicians haven't had a venue to play in Russellville at all," he said. "It's a real nice place to play. They've got a really nice sound system, so I just have to bring my guitar and plug in."

Liz Chrisman, a photographer who is finishing her master's degree in multimedia journalism, helped with the initial marketing ramp-up for The Crossing, donating graphic design services and one of her photos to decorate the space. She set up a showing of her photography at The Crossing during one of downtown Russellville's recent Art Walk events.

"It seems like the community's kind of embraced [The Crossing] really quickly," she said.

Even when she isn't showing her work there, Chrisman stops by for the musical acts as well as for the

desserts and coffee.

"They handcraft every beverage," she said. "They grind the espresso beans right there in front of you. It's some of the best coffee I've had."

Growing

With more than 1,100 people following The Crossing on Facebook, weekend events—including 8 p.m. worship—bring solid attendance.

"Most of the people who come on Sunday nights originated from our Friday and Saturday night crowds," said Billy Reeder, a worship leader who also shares some preaching duties. "There is really a deep sense of community that's growing around the place."

On many music nights, The Crossing's crowd spills out onto the sidewalk. They've added exterior speakers for the folks who gather outside, and sometimes they even get permission to block off the street to make more room for everyone.



Liz Chrisman (center) visits with friends at The Crossing. Chrisman, a graduate student and photographer, showed some of her artwork at The Crossing on a recent Friday night.

Ozark Mission Project celebrates summer of ministry

Ozark Mission Project's 26th summer is in the books as yet another successful series of completed missions.

"We had an incredibly blessed summer full of wonderful campers, adult drivers, volunteers, and college staff," said Nancy Mulhearn, the organization's executive director.

Youth and adults of OMP come together to serve individuals and families, known as "Neighbors," who are in need of minor construction and yard work. In addition to the physical service projects, OMP groups strive to meet social and emotional needs by spending part of their time visiting, including sharing lunch and a devotional with their neighbor, if the neighbor so chooses.

Mulhearn offered special thanks to "an unbelievable group of college students that dedicated their summer to serving the Lord. These men and women provided a unique service for OMP, and we are so thankful for their gracious hearts!"

Most of the OMP camps are hosted by local churches—and for churches without shower facilities, that means members open their homes so campers can wash up after each day of work. This summer's host churches included Lakewood UMC, First UMC West Memphis, Grand Avenue UMC Hot Springs, First UMC Magnolia, First UMC Siloam Springs, Cabot UMC, First UMC Blytheville, First UMC El Dorado, Cornerstone UMC Jonesboro and Winfield UMC Little Rock. Shoal Creek Camp in New Blaine, Bear Creek Camp in Marianna and Camp Preston Hunt in Texarkana hosted camps, as well.

Ozark Mission Project gives thanks for every donor, volunteer, college staff member, adult, cook, youth, parent, church, youth director and pastor who has helped make the dream of this ministry a reality for 26 years and counting. To learn more, visit OMP's website, ozarkmissionproject.org. The 2013 camp schedule will be posted on the site when dates and locations are confirmed.



Campers at the Ozark Mission Project camp hosted by Grand Avenue UMC Hot Springs paint a fence as an act of service to God and neighbor.

PHOTO BY MARY DUNLAP

OMP 2012 by the numbers

Participation:

- 645 campers
- 105 volunteer staff
- 12 full-time college student staff
- 46 participating churches
- 13 camp locations

432 projects completed, including:

- 71 home exterior paint jobs
- 82 wheelchair ramps
- 61 yard work jobs
- 25 interior painting jobs
- 22 porches

Walk celebrates sixth year of success

Some eager participants in the Walk for Children and Families break into a run at the starting line.



A little sun, a lot of water and generous amounts of care and compassion for children added up to a successful special event for Methodist Family Health Aug. 3.

The Sixth Annual Methodist Family Health Walk for Children and Families drew more than 800 participants, including dozens of United Methodist youth groups. A major annual fundraiser for Methodist Family Health, this year's Walk for Children and Families

brought in more than \$84,000, thanks to corporate and individual sponsorships and participant fees.

With festivities headquartered on the North Little Rock side of the Big Dam Bridge, which spans the Arkansas River above Murray Lock and Dam, participants of all ages hiked at their own pace across the bridge and back. Upon returning, all were treated to free pizza, ice cream and water, and music by the Gable Bradley Band of Hot Springs. Ice-soaked bandanas and T-shirts

were part of the package as well.

Honorary chairperson Clint Stoerner, a former Razorback and Dallas Cowboys quarterback, was on hand to greet participants and register his support for the 113-year-old organization that cares for children and families.

"This is a great organization that helps kids of all ages," Stoerner said. "I am really impressed with everything Methodist Family Health does to help kids get back on track when they're having trouble."



Honorary event chair Clint Stoerner did a Q&A with Walk participants.

COURTESY PHOTOS

Proceeds from the 2012 Walk for Children and Families are earmarked for the purchase of new bed and dresser sets for rooms at the 60-bed Methodist Behavioral Hospital in Maumelle, which is part of the Methodist Family Health network of services. In the past, proceeds from the Walk have funded makeovers of buildings, therapeutic play areas, playground equipment and a security fence.

First established in 1899 by Methodists in Arkansas as an orphanage, the nonprofit organization today provides behavioral and psychiatric healthcare services to more than

1,400 Arkansas children and their families each day. Methodist Family Health's programs and services range from acute psychiatric hospital care and therapeutic foster home care to counseling clinics and emergency shelters.

Recognition of church groups that participated in the 2012 Walk included awards to First UMC Conway for having 67 participants from their church; to First UMC Bentonville for traveling the greatest distance to participate; and to First UMC Magnolia for making the largest church contribution to the Walk over and above their participants' registration fees.

THANK YOU.



Methodist Family Health's Walk for Children and Families was a huge success again this year thanks to our dedicated participants, volunteers and generous sponsors. We offer our heartfelt appreciation to everyone for taking steps with us to support our ongoing mission of providing compassionate care to children and families in need.

www.MethodistFamily.org • 501.661.0720

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Outreach (continued from page 1A)

"I was shocked at the number in need."

Easley approached then-associate pastor the Rev. Susan Ledbetter about the possibility of their church organizing its own Samaritan's Feet event. Both Ledbetter and senior pastor the Rev. Rex Dickey encouraged Easley to pursue it.

The August 2011 event was a huge success, providing new shoes for 285 children.

"I had many church members tell me it was a 'mountain top' experience for them," Easley said.

Preparation for the second annual event started months beforehand, with help from church members, volunteers and numerous organizations and businesses in the northwest Arkansas area donating time, money, food and shoes. On Aug. 3, the church doors opened for the second annual Samaritan's Feet event.

As the children received socks and shoes, they also learned a lesson from the Bible: Why were church volunteers washing their feet?

"Jesus washed his disciples' feet, and we want to wash yours as a show of love and hope to you," they said. When finished, they shared a moment of prayer. At right, church member Laurie Dereszynski prays with a child.

Gratitude is shown in different ways. Some give hugs, others shake hands. But for a child in need of shoes, a smile says it best. And it's contagious as well.



PHOTO BY EDGE CARLSTROM

Community block party helps families prep for school year



PHOTO BY JENA BARBER

At left, a Springdale-area dad adjusts the fit of his daughter's new backpack at the Aug. 12 Community Block Party hosted by First UMC Springdale. The event, which drew approximately 3,000 people, served as a hub for connecting with neighbors and provided 1,374 meals, 1,234 backpacks and about 500 bags of school supplies for the back-to-school crowd.

"The block party was a wonderful expression of compassion and love of neighbor," said the Rev. Stephen Coburn, the church's senior pastor.

Such a large event required

large-scale coordination, too. "It truly was one of those events where every single member did something to make it happen," said Jeannie Smith, a member of the congregation.

North Pulaski UMC Gravel Ridge hosts back-to-school health fair

On Saturday, Aug. 11, North Pulaski UMC and the Gravel Ridge Lions Club joined forces to hold a Back-to-School Health Fair for children ages pre-kindergarten through fifth grade.

Held at North Pulaski UMC, the event drew about 150 children, each of whom received a see-through backpack and school supplies. Available services at the fair included vision and hearing screening, dental care information, instruction for proper hand washing, free haircuts, an opportunity for fingerprinting, free new school uniforms and gently-used uniforms.

The Sherwood Fire Department was on hand to teach lessons on fire safety, and also brought their rescue unit on site to help teach the children about how they handle emergencies.

"This is a small church, but there are things we can do when we work with the community," said the Rev. Carol Goddard, the church's pastor.



COURTESY PHOTO

Ingathering 2012 scheduled for Nov. 17



The 2012 Ingathering, set for Saturday, Nov. 17, marks the 35th year of this annual supply drive to benefit relief ministry in Arkansas and worldwide.

Truckloads and carloads of health kits, cleaning buckets, bulk items and more will arrive from across the state at the Arkansas Rice Depot, 3801 W. 65th Street in Little Rock, for sorting and distribution to anyone in need. Some of the items will go to Arkansas families; others will be taken to Sager Brown Depot, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) distribution center in Baldwin, La. From there, they will make their way to people around the world affected by disaster or need.

This year's event, organized by the Brenda Norwood, a member of St. Paul-Maumelle UMC, will include worship, music, refreshments and work organizing the donations for storage and transport.

Helpers are needed to assist in unloading vehicles and sorting items into their proper locations for packing and storage. Individuals and groups are encouraged to register to volunteer by visiting arumc.org/register.

For lists of supplies to include in the various kits, see www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Relief-Supplies.

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Argue named secretary of General Council on Finance and Administration

Jim Argue Jr., president and CEO of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA), has been named secretary of the United Methodist Church General Council on Finance and Administration

(GCF), making him a member of the Coordinating Committee of this global board.

GCF was created by the General Conference to perform defined responsibilities of review and oversight on



Jim Argue

behalf of the General Conference in relation to the other general agencies receiving general church funds.

When Argue arrived at UMFA in 1981, the organization had assets of less than \$100,000. Today, it is one of the largest United Methodist foundations in the nation, with \$109 million in assets. UMFA develops and administers permanent, charitable endowment funds to

support United Methodist ministries in Arkansas, including more than 600 separate charitable trusts for individuals, local churches and other United Methodist institutions.

Raised in a United Methodist parsonage, Argue grew up in Little Rock at Pulaski Heights UMC and earned a degree in history and political science from Hendrix College, a United Methodist institution.

Elected to the Arkansas Legislature seven times, Argue is a former president pro tempore of the Senate, and chaired the Senate Education Committee from 2003 to 2008.

Argue is past chair of the administrative board of Pulaski Heights UMC. He currently is on the board of Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and chairs the board of the Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science.

He holds an honorary doctorate from Philander Smith College, and Hendrix College has recognized him with the Ethel K. Millar Award for Religious and Social Awareness.

Youth learn, worship, have fun at Assembly 2012

FINALLY! The time had arrived. Youth everywhere waited all summer for this exciting event. It was time to head to the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville for Junior and Senior High Assembly.

Assembly is one of the events organized by the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM), where youth all over the state of Arkansas spend four July days together worshipping. Pretty incredible, right? It was, indeed. This year the two events ran simultaneously. The band for the week was The Adam Wheatley Band, a group of incredible musicians and worship leaders who made a huge impact on everyone who attended.

For the Senior High youth, the Revs. Nathan and Lynn Kilbourne led the worship devotionals on the theme “renovatus.” *Renovatus* means to be changed and reformed—to be renovated into a better follower of Jesus. The Kilbournes said that if they could choose one thing for

the youth to take away from their teaching, it would be “the practices that God has given us help to renovate us. They are gracious gifts of God and they have deep meaning, more than just to make us feel good.” They were phenomenal speakers who reached out to many youth during the week.

The Junior High youth spent the week learning ways to be anchored in Christ, led by Runks (runks.com), their speaker during worship. He said that it was extremely important to be grounded in your relationship with God. “You don’t have to live in the ways of the world, you *get* to live the way God wants you to.” Runks said that what he wanted the youth to get out of the week was to “go home and read your Bible, and to live weak” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Assembly touched many young lives, giving them a new hope for the coming school year.

—submitted by Jessica Wilson, ACCYM secretary



PHOTO BY CAITLYN HENDRICKSON

COMING UP

September

Installation Service for Bishop Gary E. Mueller Sept. 8

The Arkansas Conference Episcopacy Committee extends an open invitation to the Installation Service for Bishop Mueller. The worship service, hosted by St. James UMC Little Rock, 321 Pleasant Valley Drive, will begin at 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 8.

Tomes, Johnson to receive Hicks Peace Awards Sept. 17

Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock, 4823 Woodlawn Drive, will host Chicago gang violence peace broker Bill Tomes on Monday, Sept. 17th at 6:30 p.m., where he will receive the Bishop Kenneth Hicks Peace Award. The Rev. Benny Johnson of Little Rock also will receive the award for his “Stop the Violence” campaign.

As part of the evening program, film actor and Tomes supporter Judge Reinhold will interview Tomes, offering a time of questions from the audience. Tomes, a nationally recognized advocate for peace among rival gangs in the public housing projects of Chicago, took a vow of poverty and devoted his life to showing unconditional love to Chicago’s youth, whose lives have been devastated by the drugs, violence and poverty of their surroundings. He is in his thirtieth year of offering a ministry of presence by spreading the message of love and peace to rivaling Chicago gang members and their families.

Johnson cofounded “Stop the Violence” in 1991 to combat the growing gang violence in Little Rock by showing love and support to families and children affected by crime. Johnson has further impacted the Little Rock community by giving bicycles to less fortunate children and highlighting the increasing violence against immigrants, including Hispanics.

Bishop Kenneth Hicks is the inspiration for the Hicks Peace Award, presented yearly to individuals and groups who have contributed to peace and reconciliation. Some past recipients include Betty Bumpers, Theresa Hoover UMC, Little Rock Universalist Church, the Clinton School of Public Service and Philander Smith College. For information, contact Jay Clark at 501-664-3600.

Hocott, Martin, Swales receive Steel-Hendrix Awards Sept. 18

The 28th Annual Steel-Hendrix Award Banquet will take place on Tuesday, Sept. 18, 2012. Honorees are Karen Swales, recipient of the Mary and Ira A. Brumley Award for Religious Education; Doni Martin, recipient of the Ethel K. Millar Award for Religion and Social Awareness; and Rod Hocott, the Hendrix College Youth Minister of the Year.

The Banquet will be held in The Worsham Performance Hall at 5:30 p.m. and will be followed by a lecture featuring Dr. Leonard Sax at 7:00 p.m. in Mills A. The cost for the Banquet will be \$20 until Sept. 10, when the cost will go up to \$25. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Better Community Development’s 2012 Recovery Summit Sept. 23-25

The 2012 Recovery Summit, set for Sept. 23-25 at the Willie Hinton Neighborhood Resource Center, 3805 West 12th Street in Little Rock, is dedicated to addressing addiction and recovery issues and responding to the needs of families, congregations and communities. The summit offers resources for creating your own approach to recovery ministry, incorporating early intervention, prevention, transitional living, healing, recovery support and more.

Participants will hear about recovery programs from some of the most dynamic speakers, practitioners and professionals in the field, and will learn about building a more effective ministry that helps set people free from the power of addictions, the pain of abuse and the effects of wounds and losses.

Sponsors include Better Community Development, Inc.; Hoover Treatment Center; the United Methodist Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence; and the General Board of Global Ministries. The event is held in partnership with Theresa Hoover UMC.

For information or to see the schedule and download a registration form, visit bcdinc.org.

‘Friends Without Homes’ training for working with homeless Sept. 29

A workshop designed to provide preparation for engaging with and helping our neighbors who have no homes is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 29.

“Friends Without Homes” will include time to listen to a panel of people currently living on the streets and in homeless camps in central Arkansas; a “homelessness 101” session that sheds light on the hidden rules of poverty; a review of rules for volunteers in ministry with the homeless; and breakout sessions for peer learning and reflection.

The event, held at canvascommunity UMC, 1111 W. 7th Street in Little Rock, is free and includes lunch for pre-registered participants. To pre-register, contact Jennifer Sullivan at gordosully@att.net by Sept. 24.

Fiesta de Colores benefits Hispanic ministry at Lakeside UMC Pine Bluff Sept. 30

As a celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, Lakeside UMC, 1500 S. Olive Street in Pine Bluff, extends an invitation to Fiesta de Colores, held at noon on Sunday, Sept. 30. The event features authentic Mexican food and live entertainment. Proceeds will benefit the church’s Mi Casa ministry, which helps people with expenses such as medical bills, utility bills or providing food for people who are unemployed.

Hispanic and Anglo volunteers work together to make the

event happen. The menu includes red mole, green mole, picadillo, pico de gallo, Mexican rice, desserts and soft drinks. Adult tickets are \$8, children \$5, with a maximum of \$25 per family. Carry-out orders are available. For information, call the church at 870-329-5088.

October

Disaster Response Academy at Mount Sequoyah Oct. 1-4

The South Central Jurisdiction’s Disaster Response Academy, scheduled for Oct. 1-4, will be held at Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference Center in Fayetteville.

The academy includes a choice of four tracks, allowing participants to choose the level that will give them the greatest benefit: Basics of Disaster Response, Connecting Neighbors Training, Early Response Team (ERT) Leadership, and an Advanced Track. For details about the tracks, registration, housing and meals, visit scjdra2012.eventbrite.com.

Camp Aldersgate Fish Fry set for Sunday, Oct. 7

Camp Aldersgate’s 29th annual Fish Fry is set for Sunday, Oct. 7, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (note it is still on a Sunday). In addition to fun, fellowship and fish, they also will have a “country store” filled with homemade goodies provided by UMW groups.

All proceeds support Camp Aldersgate, Arkansas’ only nonprofit uniquely dedicated to serving children with disabilities, youth and senior adults in a camp environment. In 2011, Camp Aldersgate served through its summer medical camp program 357 campers with disabilities ranging from diabetes and autism to muscular dystrophy and spina bifida. It also served more than 340 campers through weekend respite camps. Its Seniors Day Out program began in the 1970’s, and last year served 54 senior adults.

Fish Fry tickets are available for advance purchase at campaldersgate.net. For information, visit Camp’s Facebook page, facebook.com/campaldersgateAR or contact Tisha Gribble at 501-225-1444 or tgribble@campaldersgate.net.

Methodist Federation for Social Action Brunch Oct. 20

The Arkansas Chapter of the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) will have its Fall Brunch on Saturday, Oct. 20, at Lakewood United Methodist Church, 1922 Topf Road in North Little Rock.

Barbara Wendland, creator of *Connections* newsletter, will be the featured speaker. Her topic is “Following Granddaddy or Following Jesus?” Tickets are \$15 per person. For reservations, contact Liza Godwin at lizagodwin@sbcglobal.net or 501-580-8476.

Upper Room's Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation coming to Arkansas in 2013

The Arkansas Conference Spiritual Formation Committee has announced that a Five-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation is scheduled for Feb. 17-22, 2013 at Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference Center in Fayetteville.

A program of the Upper Room, the Academy for Spiritual Formation has had a dramatic impact on the spiritual lives of clergy and laity for almost 30 years. The program is open to both lay and clergy.

The faculty for the February Academy will be Jane Vennard and Roger Owens, both well-known authors and spiritual directors.

"Meeting together in community

for intentional spiritual growth can be vital for the health and well-being of all persons," said the Rev. Bill Buchanan, a committee member who will serve as retreat director. He also noted that the practice of is part of the ordination covenant for clergy.

In addition, the committee believes attending to spiritual formation will help laity and clergy as they adjust to new elements of the Arkansas Conference's structure.

"We feel that this can be a very helpful component in Circuit Elder ministries, holiness of heart and life and being equipped to serve effectively with excellence and passion," Buchanan said.

The committee sponsored Five-Day Academies in 2003 and 2004 which included participants from across the jurisdiction. Last year they began exploring a return of the Academy to Arkansas. The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas provided a grant to help fund the Five-Day Academy.

Participants who register before Jan. 1 receive a discount. Visit arumc.org/k_rel/Academy_Brochure_14.pdf for the complete brochure and a link to online registration. For additional information, contact Buchanan at revbuck7@hotmail.com or the Rev. Dede Roberts at droberts@arumc.org.

Human Sexuality Task Force members announced

Bishop Charles Crutchfield in August named a group to study issues surrounding human sexuality, particularly in reference to homosexuality and the church.

The group was formed in response to a resolution passed at Annual Conference in June of 2012 entitled "Encouraging Sacred Conversations Regarding Human Sexuality" (for the full text, see the 2012 Journal of the Arkansas Conference, p. 358).

The resolution encourages all churches to hold sacred conversations, in the tradition of Wesleyan holy conferencing, around our views of human sexuality. The outcome of the group is to be a curriculum that can be used by churches to facilitate and resource sacred conversations.

Members of the group include Maxine Allen, David Bush, John Farthing, Roger Glover, Harold Hughes, Karen Millar, Michael Roberts, Andrew Thompson, Teresa Holt and Kathy Webb. The convener of the group is the Rev. William O. "Bud" Reeves, superintendent of the Northeast District.

Progress of the Task Force will be shared through Conference media outlets, including the *Arkansas United Methodist*.

Keeping up with the Crutchfields

As the Crutchfields made the transition to retirement, they asked that the *Arkansas United Methodist* share their new contact information. They cherish the relationships they built during their time in Arkansas and extend an invitation to keep in touch.

Mailing address:

Bishop Charles and Karen Crutchfield
2916 Charing Cross Road
Oklahoma City, OK 73120

Home phone:

405-286-6330

Email:

cncrutch@aol.com (Bishop)
kcrutch@aol.com (Karen)

Keaton to speak at Methodist Healthcare Foundation's Cancer Center Luncheon



Academy Award-winning actress Diane Keaton will reflect on her life, values and upbringing, as well as her journey to becoming a successful actress at the annual Methodist Cancer Center Luncheon on Friday, Nov. 16, 2012, at 11:45 a.m. in the Grand Ballroom at The Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tenn. Keaton will share her thoughts on gender and aging in Hollywood, being fearless and

balancing work and family. Individual tickets start at \$125 and a table of ten starts at \$1,250. Tickets are available for general, preferred, and prime seating. To reserve your seat, call 901-516-0500 or purchase tickets online at methodisthealth.org/cancerluncheon. Proceeds from this year's luncheon will benefit the Methodist Cancer Center in Memphis.

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

Elm Springs UMC women and friends quilt and sew for those with needs

Every Tuesday from around 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., about 15 to 20 women, most members of Elm Springs UMC, join with friends and neighbors from the community (Baptist, Catholic, Church of Christ and a few who are unchurched) to sew quilts, baby blankets and clothing for neighbors who live nearby in Washington and Benton Counties, and also in such faraway places as Kenya and Tanzania.

"They are fantastic witnesses to how much fun there can be in serving God and neighbor," said the Rev. Dixon Platt, Elm Springs' pastor. "[And] they are making a significant difference in people's lives.

"They just got a request for pants for an orphanage in Guatemala with 49 residents," he said. "They will knock that out in a few months, and someone will present another need."

Platt noted that the group is self-sufficient. "Recently I asked if they had ever needed to ask for or purchase material. 'Never,' was the quick reply. 'The Lord always supplies the kind of material and amount needed!'" For example, Sequoyah UMC Fayetteville recently provided material for clothing. "What a great reminder and example of God's guidance and involvement in the missions we are all called to perform," Platt said.

According to Mildred Smith, who founded the group, they have provided more than 4,000 clothing items in the last couple of years. Their quilts and baby blankets have been distributed to victims of fire and residents of special housing facilities. On occasion, they will also sell a selection of quilts and baby blankets to raise funds for special church projects.

The group also provides valuable fellowship for its members—and for the church's pastor, too.

"Since I arrived here in July, I have a standing lunch date every Tuesday," Platt said. "Their cooking skills are not bad, either!"



ABOVE: A few of the women who meet regularly to share their sewing talents in service to others.

BELOW: Children in a Guatemala orphanage wearing dresses sewn by the women of the Elm Springs UMC sewing and quilting group.

COURTESY PHOTOS



OBITUARIES

HOT SPRINGS

Peggy Crooks

Peggy Crooks, 73, passed away on Thursday, Aug. 2, 2012, at Mercy Hospital in Hot Springs, from injuries sustained in a bicycle accident.



Peggy Crooks

She was born on Jan. 9, 1939, to Richard and Madge Calrow. An adventurous spirit, she was involved with caving, backpacking, hiking, paddling, motorcycling, bicycling, almost anything outdoors. She was educated primarily in San Antonio, Texas, finishing her work at Saint Mary's as a registered nurse. As a youngster she lived in Venezuela part of the time, where her father was an engineer with an oil company.

She was preceded in death by her parents; one brother, Fred Larneed; one son, George Mutschler II; and two husbands, George Mutschler and Dr. Willard Schwartz. She is survived by her husband of 25 years, the Rev. David Crooks, a retired Elder in the Arkansas Conference; a sister, Shirley Caskey; two daughters, Mary Anderson and Amy Warren; three sons, Mark Crooks, Bob Schwartz and Charles Schwartz; seven grandchildren, Christine Phifer, Jason Vinklerek, Alicia Pham, Justin Anderson, Ian Waren, Caroline Warren and Evan Crooks; one great-grandson, Dylan Morgan; and a host of cousins, nieces, nephews and friends.

Peggy was active in the Arkansas Canoe Club, Adventure Cycling, League of American Wheelmen, Hot Springs Village Bicycling Group, Ouachita Mountain Hikers and Volunteers in Mission of the United Methodist Church.

A memorial service was held on Saturday, Aug. 11, at Grand Avenue United Methodist Church Hot Springs.

Memorials may be made to Grand Avenue United Methodist Church, 841 Quapaw Ave., Hot Springs, AR 71901.

PARAGOULD

William B. Leslie

Rev. William B. (Bill) Leslie, 62, passed away on Wednesday, Aug. 22, 2012, at his residence.

He was born Jan. 15, 1950, to Willis B. and Oralee Bryant Leslie. An ordained Elder in the Arkansas Conference, he served as the senior pastor of First United Methodist Church Paragould at the time of his death.



Bill Leslie

Before moving to Paragould, he had served churches in Garland, Texas, and in Arkansas at Magnolia, Norphlet, Mount Ida, Warren, Hot Springs Village, Fort Smith and Paragould. He was a member of the Paragould Rotary Club, as well as the Arkansas Methodist Medical Center board of directors. Bill loved to hunt, fish and be with his dogs.

Bill was preceded in death by his parents and a daughter, Tara Leslie Kortenber. Survivors include his wife, Brenda Leslie; a daughter, Brooke Whisenhunt of Springfield, Mo.; a son, Kyle Leslie of Chesapeake, Va.; two aunts, Olga Boles of Nacogdoches, Texas, and Charlotte Leslie of Texarkana, Texas; and six grandchildren.

A memorial service was held on Friday, Aug. 24, in the sanctuary of First UMC Paragould, with the Revs. Jack Wilson, Steve Poarch, Angie Gage and Sue Kelly officiating. Visitation in the church's welcome center preceded the service. Burial took place at a later date in Glenwood, Ark.

The family has requested that memorials be made to First

United Methodist Church, 404 W. Main Street, Paragould, AR 72450.

RUSTON, La.

E. Earline Robken

Emily Earline Robken, 89, passed away on Monday, July 30, 2012.

She was born on Jan. 23, 1923, in Mexia, Texas, to Sam and Mae McCulley. She was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. James E. Robken Sr., a retired United Methodist Elder.

She was a graduate of the Life Bible College, Los Angeles, affiliated with the Four Square Gospel Church. She served in Christian ministry of numerous congregations with her husband for 35 years in the Little Rock Conference of the UMC.

During her ministry, she was an active leader with Womens Aglow and wrote numerous faith and healing publications and articles. After retirement, they resided in Maumelle until entering a nursing home in Ruston, La.

Earline is survived by one brother, Ray McCulley of Dallas, Texas; two sons, Jim Robken and his wife, Sheri, of Ruston, La., and Phil Robken and his wife, Grace, of Hot Springs; seven grandchildren, John Robken and Emily Robken of Ruston, La., Jay Robken and Jenny Mehmedovic of Lawrence, Kan., Phillip Robken of Bentonville, Jared Robken of Fayetteville and Eric Robken of Houston, Texas; two great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

A funeral service and celebration of life was held on Friday, Aug. 3, at First UMC Maumelle, with Brother Matt Scully of Trinity Church, Hot Springs, officiating. Burial followed at Riverwood Memorial Gardens in Maumelle.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the "Our House Building Fund" at First United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 13984, Maumelle, AR 72113.

Memorial cross given to Scruggs Chapel UMC by St. Paul UMC Little Rock

St. Paul UMC Little Rock on Sunday, Aug. 13, held a special dedication and consecration during the morning worship service.

Ella Parham has worked part-time in building maintenance at St. Paul for many years, where she is loved and valued by the staff and members. The people of St. Paul were saddened to learn that law enforcement officer Barbara Dukes Ester, killed in the line of duty at Brickey Prison in January, was Parham's sister.

The congregation wished to do something in support of Parham and in memory of Ester. Because several members of St. Paul have expertise in stained glass work and a room dedicated to the craft, fashioning a memorial gift of stained glass was a fitting choice.

Gail Wells and her brother, Keith Newton, created a stained

glass cross identical to the one that decorates St. Paul's annex chapel. The cross was presented to Parham and approximately nine family members who attended the worship service, and will be displayed in memory of Ester at Scruggs Chapel UMC in Moro, near Marianna. Ella Parham and her family grew up as part of that congregation, and Barbara Dukes Ester continued to worship there until her death.

During the service, the cross was brought to the chancel area by two members of the Short family, who are 3rd- and 4th-generation members of St. Paul. The Rev. Jerry Collins, Ester's family members and the congregation then participated

in a responsive reading to dedicate and consecrate the cross.

The two congregations share another bond, as well: Members of St. Paul later learned that the missionary they help support, Evelyn Banks-Shackelford, also grew up in Scruggs Chapel UMC and attends there still.

—submitted by Tyna Moore

Gloria Green (left), Ella Parham and Tameka Jordan, sisters and niece of Barbara Duke Ester, and the Rev. Jerry Collins with a cross made by members of St. Paul and given in memory of Ester. The cross will be displayed in Scruggs Chapel UMC, the family's home church.



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Delta Pride
Blake Schrepfer and Courtney Chipman make a birdhouse in the Delta Pride handiwork workshop. Later, the arts and crafts workshop students decorated the birdhouse for installation at the Arkansas State University Wesley Foundation in Jonesboro. Delta Pride is a summer camp for youth grades 7-12, planned and staffed by students at the ASU Wesley Foundation. The camp gives junior high and high school students a taste of life on a college campus that includes Bible study, worship, arts and fellowship.
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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.



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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