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Mission field awareness leads to new after-school program



ABOVE: Rex Winkley touches up paint in a newly-remodeled room of Kynette UMC Forrest City. The space will house a new after-school program to reach out to elementary-aged students and their parents. LEFT INSET: The Rev. Kennis Key and his wife, Marvella, developed the vision for the new program. RIGHT INSET: Sue Winkley, Patt Greenlee and Rex Winkley are among the helpers who traveled from Lakewood UMC North Little Rock to help with the project.

PHOTOS BY SUE WINKLEY AND HANK GODWIN

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

In a small building tucked away on a side street in Forrest City, Kynette United Methodist Church gathers each week. With an average worship attendance of 15 to 20 people, it certainly fits the definition of “small church.”

But its size won't stop it from reaching out into its mission field in a new way this year: through Key's Afterschool Homework Club, housed in a newly-remodeled room of the building.

Dreaming

Marvella Key and her husband, the Rev. Kennis Key, who serves as part-time local pastor of the congregation, began in the summer to dream of new ways the church could have an impact on the surrounding community. Their time at the 2012 Arkansas Annual Conference served as a catalyst.

“My husband and I were thinking the word ‘mission’ came up so much [at Annual Conference]... being in mission with the community,” said Key, who once pursued training toward becoming a United Methodist deaconess.

“We sat there and we began to think... We know we do things for the community, and in the community, and what have you. But it came to me to say, ‘Why don't we begin something to really get out there to help the children... and in turn, help the parents?’”

A retired teacher with 31 years of experience in the classroom, Key knew that local elementary schools had students in need of extra help with their

schoolwork, and that such help can make a long-term difference in a child's life. She also knew that the church building would need a lot of work to be certified as a child care center, a necessary step for any after-school program. She began her research by calling the Department of Human Services (DHS)—and learned that the pre-training session for certification would begin the following Wednesday.

It was the beginning of things falling into place to help make Key's Afterschool Homework Club a reality.

Connections and help

The Keys both attended the initial training session with DHS, and a helpful connection emerged: A fellow student in the session learned about their goals and offered free use of a van to pick up the children from school. They hope to eventually purchase the van.

DHS outlined various zoning concerns and building requirements. Key went to the local fire department for help assessing changes needed for the building to meet the standards. “They were very helpful in looking at the building,” she said.

Some of the required changes would take significant work. The Keys shared their vision with the Rev. Kirk Doering, the circuit elder for Kynette UMC. He, in turn, shared with the Rev. Susan Ledbetter, superintendent of the Southeast District; and she and the Rev. Phil Hathcock, director of connectional ministries for the Conference, helped Kynette UMC secure

[See MISSION FIELD, page 5A]



PRACTICAL DIVINITY

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON

The gift of new birth, and the joy of holiness

Many people can point to the specific time when they came to a sense of living faith in God.

This powerful moment goes by a number of different names: the new birth; conversion; spiritual regeneration; or simply coming to personally know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Spiritual rebirth is a biblical teaching, of course. Historically it has also been emphasized in the Wesleyan tradition. That is not always the case in United Methodist churches in the present, but in early Methodism it certainly was.

A view of the new birth as a palpable milestone in the life of the Christian believer requires a strong belief in the power of the Holy Spirit. John Wesley himself certainly had such a belief. And I think there are some signs that Methodists today are more open to the presence and work of the Holy Spirit than perhaps they were in recent decades.

Only the beginning

But an equally strong element of Wesleyan faith is the notion that spiritual rebirth is not the sum total of salvation in this life. In fact, it is much closer to the beginning of the spiritual journey than it is to the end.

Wesleyans see the core of the Christian life as wrapped up in what Wesley called “holiness of heart and life.”

The “holiness” in that phrase is the biblical notion of being transformed into the likeness of God. Saint Peter refers to it when he says, “Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all that you do; for it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

And the Book of Hebrews teaches about it as well, where it tells us that God disciplines us for our own good, “in order that we may share in his holiness.” For Hebrews, this is a “holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:10-14).

Wesley uses the phrase “holiness of heart and life” because he sees a certain logic to how holiness comes

to reside in a Christian believer. That is, holiness is a gift that must be given initially by the Spirit in—of course!—the new birth. And it is when the “heart” is renewed inwardly that the outward “life” can be lived in a holy manner as well.

Recovering ‘holiness’

The language of holiness has become somewhat strange or unfamiliar for many Christians today. And that’s a shame, because it is thoroughly biblical. I think we should work to recover the term and the concept for exactly that reason.

I also think Wesley can be of real help to us in just this task. He helps to put meat on the bones of the idea of holiness because he connects it to love—the love of Jesus Christ for us, and the love we receive from him with which we can love God and neighbor.

For Wesley, this is the only real source of happiness. When we begin to grow in holiness, we come to find ourselves filled with a love that we did not know beforehand. That love makes everything else in life pale in comparison. It gives us a sense of joy of the truest kind.

To become holy is to become sanctified. It is the very meaning of present salvation. The experience of new birth is the first step into the sanctified life. But after that initial step, the whole of the Christian life becomes a growth in ever-increasing maturity. In other words, there is no limit to holiness.

The mission statement of the United Methodist Church is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” Like holiness, making disciples is a biblical concept. It comes from the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, where the risen Jesus sends his followers out into the world to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them and teaching them Jesus’ commandments.

The language of discipleship is likely more familiar to most Christians than the language of

holiness. Methodist folk tend to like it a lot, because it sounds like something we can do—“making disciples” calls for activity, with people outwardly focused and socially engaged!

Our mission, God’s power

We can run into a problem, though, when we start to think we can make disciples the way we bake a cake. It is not just a question of getting the ingredients right (or having the right church programs, or teaching the right curriculum).

For a disciple to be truly “made,” that disciple has to be called by Jesus Christ and reborn through the Holy Spirit. We join in that work as we are given the power to do so by grace, but we should make no mistake: The work of transformation is God’s work.

Becoming familiar again with the New Testament’s teaching about new birth and holiness actually might be the best way we can really grasp what it means to fulfill our claimed mission of making disciples. These other concepts are clearly and obviously connected to the work of the Holy Spirit. They simply cannot be carried out by us. They require us to rely on God, and in doing that, they humble us before God.

The Holy Spirit can seem frightening to some people. Spiritual power is unpredictable. We can’t control it, because it doesn’t come from us.

Then again, if it is truly God’s power, it doesn’t have to seem frightening at all. For God’s power is ultimately the power of the cross, the power of self-giving and sacrificial love.

It is the power for our salvation, if we will but open our hearts to receive it.

The Rev. Thompson serves as Wesley scholar for the Arkansas Conference and teaches at Memphis Theological Seminary. He may be reached at athompson@memphisseminary.edu.



EDITOR’S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

New pursuits require stretching, physically and spiritually

Something strange happened around Thanksgiving 2012: I began to jog.

My fitness background lies in more creative pursuits, primarily ballet and other forms of dance. I am not, nor will I ever be, a “runner” in the traditional sense. Jogging is a real stretch for me, in more than one sense of the word.

But I had to do something to take better care of myself. It’s hard to find time for a dance class, and even more difficult to find other like-minded grown-ups to participate. My husband is training for the Little Rock Marathon, and frankly, all of his running and getting in better shape had become an annoyance. So in keeping with the adage, “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em,” I decided it was worth seeing if I had five kilometers in me.

My first jog took me around my very hilly neighborhood. I’ve never been more thankful for an Australian Cattle Dog who won’t stop pulling on the leash—Angus kept me moving forward on even the steepest inclines.

Thanksgiving morning, I chose a level piece of ground near the river and built a playlist of up-tempo music. While John cycled on other, longer paths (did I mention he’s also training for a triathlon after that marathon?), the dogs and I navigated a system of trails closer to my car and their water bowl.

I took the same trails the following day. The path was nearly

deserted, so when the right song flowed through my earbuds, I started skipping instead of jogging... a little tip of the hat to my years of jazz and hip-hop.

By the Saturday after Thanksgiving—my fourth run—I had managed to jog five kilometers in a single session, with just one brief break for stretching. I wasn’t going fast, but thanks to a diverse playlist on my iPod and a supportive husband jogging beside me (after the 11 miles he’d already covered that morning), I was learning how to persist in this new pursuit.

Unlike me, John has the ability to speak while running, and he explained it to me this way: When you run, picture yourself digging a hole to store your supply of gumption. Each time you run, you dig a slightly larger hole and fill it with more gumption, giving you the ability to go a little further next time.

The same goes for practicing spiritual fitness. The more we try things that intimidate us (silent meditation, anyone? or is it just me?), the more comfortable we get with doing what once seemed impossible. In this new year, may you look for new ways to stretch, physically and spiritually. You just might find something that helps you strengthen your connection with God and God’s people.

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



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Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
Feb. 1	Jan. 17
March 1	Feb. 15
April 5	March 21



GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

A Prayer for the New Year

Dear Lord,
 We've made it through another year.
 Some of us have experienced great joy.
 Others of us have struggled with tremendous pain.
 And still others of us have seen unexpected changes in our lives.
 But all of us are filled with hopes, dreams and questions.
 Questions about our lives, our loved ones, our world and you.
 Deep questions. Powerful questions. Haunting questions.

As we begin this new year, fill us to overflowing with your grace.
 —and let us be shaped, molded and transformed by it.
 Give us generous hearts brimming with compassion.
 —and let us lead with it in all our dealings with others.
 Place in us abounding joy.
 —and let us share this gift with a world that often seems so dark.
 Transform us into people of hope.
 —and let us live out of this reality every day.
 Help us do all this through the gift of your Son, Jesus.

Our savior, our Lord, our brother and our friend.
 By loving, following and sharing him.
 With our words.
 Our hearts.
 Our attitudes.
 Our actions.
 Our time.
 Our talents.
 And our money.
 We pray this through his name, spirit and love.

Amen.

APPOINTMENTS

The following mid-year changes in pastoral appointments have been officially announced:

- Pangburn/Mt. Pisgah Charge—Donna Harvey, effective Dec. 2, 2012.
- Black Rock/Lynn/Powhatan Charge—Jim West, effective Jan. 1, 2013.
- Rockport UMC—Troy Cate, effective Jan. 1, 2013.

To see pastoral appointment changes as they become official, visit the appointments page of the Conference website: arumc.org/appointments.

'And whose will it be?'

BY CHARLES COOPER
Special Contributor

In retirement I find myself thinking more about money than I did when I had better things to think about. Recently I read an article on the Internet about rolling over a traditional IRA into a Roth IRA. Basically, if you follow the rules, the traditional IRA is a tax-deferred retirement account, meaning that your deposits and the money your deposits gain are not taxed until you take distributions.

The Roth is different. You make your deposits after paying taxes, but capital gains, dividends and interest are tax free—again, if you follow the rules.

I read the article, and I did what I often regret doing. I read the opinions of other readers at the end of the page. Most were afraid that

the government would change the tax code on the Roth, and so tax their capital gains or, even worse, make them pay a double tax on what they invested.



Charles Cooper

I wrote a comment to post with the others—something I do not often do, but always regret. It went like this: “Some of you will not roll over your traditional IRA into a Roth because you are afraid that the government—meaning, the legislature which passes the tax code and the president who signs the tax code into law—will change the rules on the Roth. I do not understand. If the code for the Roth can be changed, so can the code for the

traditional IRA. Why would you be safer in one than the other?”

IRAs let ordinary people be capitalist (that's somebody who makes money with money). Lots of liberal and conservative people in government have thought that a good idea, and it certainly has benefited many folks, big and small, but not all.

As for Roth or traditional IRA, or bank accounts, or precious metal, or a fruit jar under a tree in the backyard, I am no financial advisor, just a worn out preacher (as the *Book of Discipline* once called us) living on a pension. I remember one of my professors from seminary, James Efird, used to say, “You pays your money and you makes your choices.”

So, you choose. My choice was the Roth, though I confess that I am not a perfectly trusting soul. Yes, the

law might change, but no matter what I do, the law or something else which has power over my wealth might change—or rather, will change.

Steve Jobs had billions; then, one day, he did not. Something changed. His heirs had billions. Charles Cooper has piddling, and someday he will not; his heirs will get piddling; which is to say that I suspect that all this political paranoia and worry about wealth comes down to the human awareness and associative fear of death.

That certainly seems to be where Jesus often goes with the matter. “And whose will it be?” he asks concerning the rich man who

built more barns for his abundance and died. So, if we are concerned with the Kingdom, it would be wise to use what we have to a good end

before our end comes, and it is all taken away.

I am not just talking about money, the unrighteous mammon, but also about life. I need to use the substance of my life well, for I do not know what fool will have charge of it when I am not around. Or, perhaps it will be someone wiser and better than I am. That's a pleasant thought, and perhaps reason

enough to leave something from my labor behind for someone after I am gone.

The Rev. Cooper is a retired elder in the Arkansas Conference. To reach him, email brocorbeau@gmail.com.

'I suspect that all this political paranoia and worry about wealth comes down to the human awareness and associative fear of death.'

**Recycle
 Reuse
 Replenish**



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

Congregational coaches trained, ready to help churches

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

The first class of 44 congregational coaches have completed initial training sessions to begin work with the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership. This month, churches who have been assigned coaches will receive official introductions to those coaches from Bishop Mueller.

The Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership expects to have 80 congregational coaches trained by Jan. 31. Coaches will receive additional training at regular intervals, and will remain in communication with the Center for Excellence between those sessions.

What will a congregational coach do? Ultimately, the goal of coaching is to foster conversations that help the local church grow in vitality and in making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Congregational coaches will begin by establishing a relationship with the circuit elder and pastors for the churches they will coach. After outlining their role for that group of pastors, the coach will start

conversations with the lay leaders of each of those congregations.

One 2013 goal for local churches is to have the Staff/Parish Relations Committees complete a Mission Field Self-Assessment. These assessments include learning about the church's surrounding community using the demographic tool MissionInsite. Congregational coaches have received MissionInsite training, and are available to assist local churches with completing that portion of the assessment.

A coach is not a mentor, a consultant or a trainer," said the Rev. Kurt Boggan, director of the Center for Excellence. "A coach asks questions, walks alongside a congregation and encourages commitment and accountability, but doesn't tell them what to do. Instead, he or she helps them develop their own solutions."

The congregational coach will visit with the leadership of each assigned congregation to learn the congregation's story, according to John Crawford, associate director for lay coaching.

"The future of the church is rooted in these stories," he said,



A group of congregational coaches on Dec. 6 received an orientation to MissionInsite, a demographic tool that helps local churches understand the mission field surrounding them. Most participants attended the session at the Conference office, while half a dozen others unable to travel to Little Rock that evening participated via webinar.

"whether it's in extending that story into the next logical chapter or taking it in a new direction."

Toward the end of the year, congregational coaches will guide churches into discussion of various self-assessment categories. Churches will then choose the ways they will build on their stories—and how they will seek to transform and become more fruitful.



Sylvia Borchert, a member of Pulaski Heights UMC and a congregational coach, asks a question during the Dec. 6 training session.

AUM PHOTOS
BY TODD BURRIS

BOOK REVIEW

Author offers candid, even-handed discussion of church and homosexuality

Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate

Justin Lee

Jericho Books, 2012

BY HEATH BRADLEY
Special Contributor

Justin Lee has a voice and a story that everyone needs to listen to. He is the leader of The Gay Christian Network (gaychristian.net), a regular blogger (gcjustin.tumblr.com) and the author of *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate*.

In this, his first book, Lee offers his readers a wide-ranging discussion of the gay debate in the church today, including very even-handed and brief overviews of the biblical and scientific debates surrounding homosexuality. Far and away the strongest aspect of this book, though, is the honest and

candid nature in which Lee shares with us his own story.

I have never met the author, but after reading *Torn* I feel as though I know him, and can't help but like him. He's funny, for starters. How he manages to keep a sense

of humor in the midst of such difficult and painful struggles is pretty amazing. He also obviously has a strong desire to live his life as a faithful Christian and to take the Bible very seriously, and readers can almost feel this desire coming through every word he writes.

Living as a faithful Christian, however, is complicated by the fact that Lee is gay. He grew up in what he describes as an ideal evangelical home. He has always had a strong interest in being a disciple of Christ (so much so that in school he was labeled "the God-boy"). He very candidly shares his deep and painful struggle with his emerging awareness of his sexual orientation. Lee also lets readers in on his failed

attempts at "fixing" himself through so-called "ex-gay" ministries.

For most Christians, this issue comes down to what they think the Bible teaches, and rightfully so. Lee has done his homework, and is very fair about how difficult it is to determine what the best interpretations are.

For those who already find themselves on the liberal side of the biblical debate, my hope is that this book would help you cultivate more understanding toward those who ultimately interpret the Bible as condemning all same-sex relationships. Not all conservatives on this issue are hate-filled bigots, and the conversation isn't advanced by assuming otherwise.

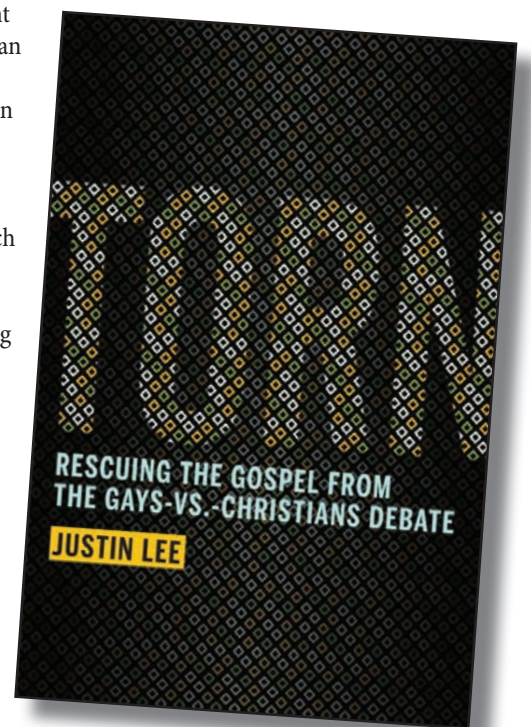
For those who already find themselves on the conservative side of this issue, my hope is that this book would help you appreciate the thoughtfulness of the way in which Christians on the other side approach the biblical texts. This discussion would take a huge step forward if we could all acknowledge that neither position is obviously

true, and that intelligent and loving Christians can come to different conclusions, as we do on virtually every other theological and ethical issue.

Regardless of which view we hold, we are taking something of a risk. We might be giving in too much to the culture around us. We've done that before and we might be doing it now. Or, we might be blocking the movement of God's Spirit among us and putting a bucket over the fresh light that is waiting to break forth from God's Word.

We've done that before and we might be doing it now.

The church is torn over which view is true, and probably will be for a good while. In the meantime, I am thankful for people like Justin Lee who set the proper tone by writing



with such honesty and grace. Everybody can learn from that.

The Rev. Bradley serves as pastor of preaching and Christian education at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock.

Mission field (continued from page 1A)

\$1,500 in grant funding from the Arkansas Conference Global Ministries and New and Refocusing Ministries.

Key also contacted Dr. Lyle Heim from Lakewood UMC North Little Rock, who had taken an interest in the Kynette congregation in years past. He shared the need for volunteer labor with others in his congregation, which is how Hank Godwin learned of the need.

Godwin, freshly retired and with many summers of experience in the leadership of Ozark Mission Project, had been seeking a way to use his newfound free time in service to Christ. Kynette UMC's need for a mission-driven renovation provided an answer.

Kynette UMC became Godwin's temporary home; he worked, ate and slept there for several days. Along with Godwin's labor and that of several others, Lakewood UMC provided materials that cost about \$1,500. "They have bent over backwards," Key said.

Godwin gave thanks that fellow Lakewood UMC members Patt Greenlee and Rex and Sue Winkley made several trips to Forrest City to help. "I hate to paint, and they were very willing," he said.

"Everything just fell into place. There were no gaps," Key added, noting that Kynette has received additional help from other congregations, including First UMC Conway and Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock.

Looking toward launch

Key's Afterschool Homework Club will begin by serving about a dozen students from two local elementary schools, between ages five and 12, who are performing below their grade level. DHS keeps a waiting list of such students who need extra help. Key hopes to be able to accommodate some students who are not referred by DHS, as well. "We want it to be open to everyone," she said.

'Everything just fell into place. There were no gaps.'

—Marvellia Key

The program, which will operate Monday through Friday from 3 to 6 p.m., will aim to build a foundation of learning to not only raise students' test scores, but also help shape them into the leaders of tomorrow by stimulating curiosity, enhancing critical thinking and eventually going beyond academics by incorporating ballet and music

into the curriculum.

Key's Afterschool Homework Club will hold an open house and dedication on Jan. 20. The program is scheduled to launch on Feb. 1, but the church still needs a few more supplies, such as a wall oven, a third sink to bring the kitchen up to standards, educational games, two small laptop computers and

monetary gifts to help buy a van. To provide any of these items or offer other assistance, contact Key at marvelli@cablynx.com.

"We're so excited, we don't know what to do," Key said. "This is God-given...it's built in the light of Christ."

Joe Roitz contributed to this report.

Hope in Forrest City

BY HANK GODWIN
Special Contributor

"Four more years! Four more years! Obama wins!" The words startled me from my shaky cot at exactly 10:24 p.m. on election night.

Amazingly, I was instantly alert and mentally grasping the familiarity of my temporary home, Kynette United Methodist Church of Forrest City. It was only the day before that I'd set up camp in the sanctuary of this little



Hank Godwin

Delta church. I was here to offer my very average gifts to fulfill a vision and hope of this congregation, and specifically, of Marvellia Key.

They have a vision of providing an afterschool program for children in kindergarten through second grade. As my own home church understands, Kynette UMC feels that they must be a driving force in their community. The vision is solid, and based on my brief meeting with Marvellia, the focus and passion is there to make it happen.

I'm not sure how I got to this moment in time. James Wear, a fellow member of Lakewood UMC, quietly approached me one week in the Illumination worship service about sizing up a new mission project in Forrest City. Lyle and Julie Heim, who have had a long relationship with Kynette, contacted our mission team about the need for remodeling. Since then, a sequence of events occurred—not the least of which was my own working career retirement—and I'm in Forrest City for three days, ripping out wood paneling and replacing it with drywall.

My first day was full of meeting new folks, including the Rev. Kennis Key. He would be my right-hand man as we tore out the old and built something new. The Keys had arranged for additional help on each day. Troy had plumbing skills. Russell and Freddy had done drywall work. These choices were "God things," because I talk a good game, but lack skills in both of these areas.

Kynette UMC member Helen King bounced through the fellowship hall door with her hands full of food multiple times on the first day. Every church has a Helen King: endless energy, highly connected and a servant of the Lord through and through. There

was so much amazing food! And where there is food, there is fellowship. The food kept my energy high enough to complete the tasks, but it was the fellowship that will bring me back to help another day.

Back to what woke me up. Several children of the neighborhood were running around the block screaming at the top of their lungs. It went on for several laps around the block, alternately fading and coming into a much more defined focus each time. After the yelling stopped, I contemplated a word that had been associated with the campaign: "hope." I realize that we all need it.

I personally need the hope the church provides me. I feed off the passionate hope of screaming youth. I pray I'm never threatened by it, and that I truly listen. I also pray I can always recognize a passionate vision of hope for a community and have the wherewithal to apply my gifts to Christ's service. I lay there with a huge smile on my face. Hope is such a comfortable blanket.

I'm pleased my church is supportive of Kynette's new ministry. There is work left to do before the program's expected opening date. I hope several more Lakewood UMC members get a chance to share fellowship with this great sister church.

Godwin is a member of Lakewood UMC North Little Rock.



Hank Godwin and Rex Winkley, both members of Lakewood UMC North Little Rock, traveled to Forrest City to help Kynette UMC make upgrades to its facility. The remodeling work paves the way for the church to host a new after-school program as a community outreach.

PHOTO BY SUE WINKLEY

BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL DIRECTORY

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Arkansas field coordinator among



Dee Stickle-Miner of Columbus, Ohio, records the results of a Capitol Hill visit during Imagine No Malaria's Days on the Hill in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 4, 2012. Attendees from each conference added their experiences to this "success wall."

UMNS PHOTOS BY JAY MALLIN

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

More than 100 United Methodists from 30 states and 40 annual conferences on Dec. 2-5 gathered in the nation's capital to talk with their elected officials. The reason: to advocate for retaining dollars for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in the federal budget.

The Rev. Martha Taylor, Imagine No Malaria field coordinator for the Arkansas Conference, was among the participants in "Days on the Hill," which included time in worship, prayer, training and visits to House and Senate offices. Some attendees had visited Capitol Hill in the past to speak as advocates, but many—including Taylor—had never made such visits.

"The organizers brought in local church pastors, policymakers, United Nations personnel and individuals from other non-profits to teach us how to make the most of the limited time we would have with members of Congress," she said.

Among those instructors: Mike McCurry, a United Methodist and former press secretary to President Bill Clinton. McCurry is now the head of Public Strategies Washington, Inc., and a student at Wesley Theological

FIRST MILESTONE REACHED:

As of Nov. 30, the latest date for which official numbers were available at press time, the Arkansas Conference Imagine No Malaria giving total had topped \$100,000. Special thanks to the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) for providing the matching gifts that pushed us past that first big milestone! UMFA will continue its dollar-for-dollar match of gifts until it has donated \$333,333. Any gift made through www.arumc.org/inm is eligible, as are gifts sent using the form on page 7A.

Seminary. He gave tips framed as "the five Cs" for effective communication as an advocate: credibility, candor, clarity, compassion and commitment. To help break the tension many new advocates felt, he even role-played an exchange between a constituent and an elected official—with a little comedy thrown into the mix.

Rose Farhat of Liberia, a Wesley Theological Seminary student who serves as an intern with the General Board of Church and Society, shared her personal perspective with the advocates. She told stories of thankful mothers in Liberian villages receiving insecticide-treated bed nets, giving them power to protect their children from a disease that can kill.

"She drove home the point that there is a clock ticking for these mothers: 'When will my child become ill and perhaps die from malaria?'" Taylor said. "Her passion reminded us that there is urgency behind our work, even while we are looking to 2015 as our end goal."

The advocates took time to reinforce what they already knew about global health funding, particularly as it relates to the U.S. government's anti-malaria efforts. For example, President George W. Bush's 2005 creation of the Presidential Malaria Initiative has helped keep global funding on the upswing, but even more help is needed to reach the goal of ending deaths from malaria by 2015. And though the death rate from malaria has been cut in half since 2010, a child still dies every 60 seconds as a result of the disease, which means the work is far from over.

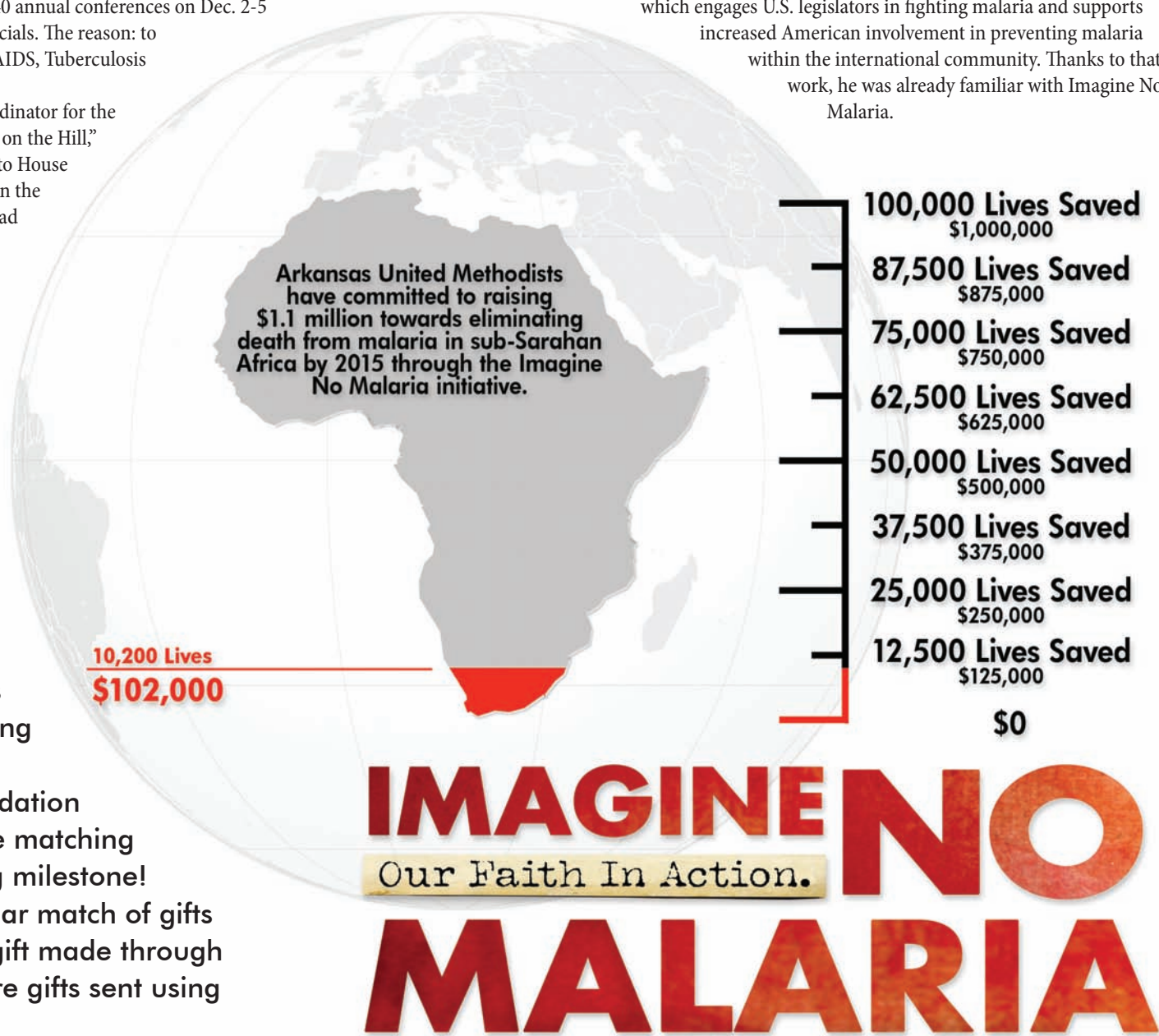
Taylor paid her first visit to Sen. Mark Pryor's office, just down the National Mall from the White House. Senator Pryor was not available, but she met with his legislative assistant, Sarah Holland, a Russellville High School graduate.

"I shared our request to retain global health funding at the current level and the important return on that small investment, which is less than one percent of the total budget," Taylor said. "She acknowledged the difficult situation with the approaching 'fiscal cliff.'"

Taylor met with two representatives on Sen. John Boozman's staff, and then spoke with the senator himself.

"I was interested to hear that he and some of his family members had traveled to Africa and had seen first-hand malaria's impact on the people there," Taylor said. She also learned that

Boozman had served as co-chair of the Congressional Malaria Caucus, which engages U.S. legislators in fighting malaria and supports increased American involvement in preventing malaria within the international community. Thanks to that work, he was already familiar with Imagine No Malaria.



anti-malaria advocates in D.C.

“It was wonderful to talk with him, not only about the success we are seeing in the fight against malaria, but also the larger issues of how malaria keeps people in a cycle of poverty,” she said, “and the bright future the people of Africa will have once malaria is conquered.”

Taylor also had a brief visit with Rep. Tim Griffin, who stepped out of the House session between votes to meet with her.

“Congressman Griffin listened intently, asked several pointed questions and quickly returned to his duties,” she said. “I was left feeling that he would carefully consider our request and would do what he could.”

Given just five minutes to speak with Griffin, Taylor appreciated the preparation the advocates received from McCurry and others. She was able to deliver the Imagine No Malaria message succinctly and with passion.

Taylor said that overall, Days on the Hill participants felt encouraged by their visits to elected officials.

“We all felt we were taken seriously, and were welcomed as representatives of Imagine No Malaria,” she said. “And I was reminded that regardless of someone’s political leanings, the message of saving lives resonates with everyone.”



LEFT: Former White House press secretary Mike McCurry speaks on his Five C’s for effective communication at last month’s Imagine No Malaria conference in Washington, D.C. BELOW: Bishop Thomas Bickerton, chair of the United Methodist Global Health Initiative, talks with Roger Sullivan, counsel for Imagine No Malaria, as they walk to the conference.

This New Year's, make a resolution you'll want to keep. Resolve to save a life.

Every gift made to Imagine No Malaria through the Arkansas Conference office will be matched by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, up to \$333,000. For every \$10 given, two lives will be saved. Now that’s something to celebrate.

How to give:

- Donations can be made on-line at www.arumc.org/INM

OR

- Complete the form below and send it with your gift to: Arkansas Conference Treasurer, P. O. Box 3611, Little Rock, AR 72203-3611. Make checks payable to Arkansas Conference - INM.

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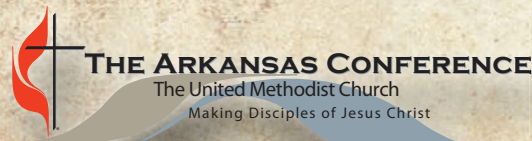
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And in Arkansas, the work continues...

A small group from First UMC Springdale worked with their kids create handmade ornaments and magnets to sell at the church's Alternative Christmas Market, raising over \$1,800 for Imagine No Malaria. With the matching gift from UMFA, that's 360 lives saved by one small group in one church!

Program connected with Little Rock church helps addict 'let go'

BY BARBARA DUNLAP-BERG
United Methodist News Service

Pointing to a pretty brick bungalow just blocks from Little Rock's historic Central High School, the smiling, affable man says proudly, "That's mine. Twenty years ago, I would never have believed my son and I would be living here. I was homeless, on the streets, on drugs.

"I bought that home this year. God is good."

Monte Payne has nothing but positive things to say about Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church, named for the Philander Smith College graduate, now 87, who headed the Women's Division of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries for 22 years.

One of the congregation's greatest strengths is its Hoover Treatment Center, which for 20 years, has provided affordable, accessible and quality substance-abuse treatment. The center is an integral part of Better Community Developers Inc., formed in 1981 as the focal point for the church's outreach ministries.

Payne credits the center with giving him "a diagram for living."

Born in Los Angeles 48 years ago, Payne served in both the Air Force and the Army National Guard. His abuse of crack cocaine and alcohol started there. Soon he was living on the streets.

"I was raised in a church," he said, "but I had no spiritual component. I had issues with God. I was bitter at God. I thought there was no such thing as God 'cause if there was such thing as God, why would I be homeless when I was raised in such a spiritual home?"

'Dying spiritually'

Moving to Russellville, Ark., at age 22, he continued battling his demons. He finally wound up at the Hoover Treatment Center in 2004.



Monte Payne works as a counselor at Will's House in Little Rock, Ark. He credits the programs at Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church for his recovery from addiction and his growing faith.

PHOTO BY SONGHAI NELSON/BETTER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, INC.

The only licensed, faith-based provider of its kind in Arkansas, the center provides a structured, 24-hour, intensive residential and outpatient program that addresses the chemical dependency needs of men and women.

"I was really pretty much beat down," Payne admits. "I was ready to listen.

"I believed in God but didn't follow any of his teachings," he said. "I didn't try to be honest; I didn't try to do the right thing.

"I was ignorant to the fact that I was dying spiritually."

Payne realized he had to change.

"I opened my mind, and I started trying to pray, started trying to meditate and then, most importantly, I started trying to act as if I was righteous, so to speak. I tried not to lie. I tried not to harm folks. I tried to be a good father."

After a while, people started to respect him. "I started getting something I never had," Payne says. "I started getting ... a natural high.

"I finally realized that there is a God, and then his Holy Spirit started to breathe in me. I started to get to the point where I would say things, and I know it was not of me. I know that it came from somewhere else. Then I realized that God is the ultimate power. When I need him or I need some help, I need to go to God."

Today, Payne works full time as a counselor at Will's House, also related to Hoover UMC. Will's House

provides supportive housing for men and women in recovery, some of whom have spent time in prison. Payne supplements his income by delivering newspapers at night.

He says there is no average age of people in treatment. One man now living at Will's House relapsed at age 62. "That could have been me" eventually, Payne said.

'I've been there'

He also leads recovery group meetings at the church. It's a natural fit. "I've been there. I've been homeless. I've been crack-addicted.

I've been an absent parent. I've had no hope," he tells the group.

The counseling helps participants look toward the future. "A lot of the counseling," Payne explained, "like helping with jobs, helping with finances, helping with parenting, would seem simplistic to the average American — but they didn't lose 10 or 15 years of their life in drug addiction ... and in the endless consequences of addiction.

"I know that someone had to love me 'til I could love myself. And that's what I try to do with the people that come through our doors."

The neighborhood around the church breeds the problems and negative assumptions that Payne strives to repair. But Better Community Development ministries are making a visible difference. Its credit-repair and mortgage-attainment program paved the way to home ownership for Payne.

Payne has custody of his son, Errin, who plays football at Little Rock Central High. Nurturing the father-son relationship is high on this dad's list. He wants things to be different for Errin, who will graduate next spring.

Of the struggles before he found Hoover, Payne said, "I was blind to the truth. One thing I love about the truth is no one can take it away from me. I know it. I learned it. I lived it. I lived in the dark, and now I live in the light.

"To change, you have to let go."

Dunlap-Berg is internal content editor at United Methodist Communications, Nashville, Tenn.

Human Relations Day offering furthers ministry

Better Community Development Inc. is just one of many programs that benefit from the annual Human Relations Day offering, which United Methodists will share on Jan. 20, 2013.

One of six churchwide special Sundays with offerings, Human Relations Day calls United Methodists to recognize the right of all God's children in realizing their potential as human beings in relationship with each other. Celebrated on the Sunday before the birthday observance of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., this special offering supports community ministries that teach and advocate for justice, especially among people struggling to survive in the margins of society.

Gifts given for Human Relations Day support:

- Neighborhood ministries through Community Developers
- Community advocacy through United Methodist Voluntary Services
- Work with at-risk youth through the Youth Offender Rehabilitation Program.

CLASSIFIEDS

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TRAVELING ARKANSAS "Sunday Evening Music & Message" by Dr. David W. Bush. Donations go to the Arkansas Retired Ministers Day. For booking or info: contact David at 870-830-7777.

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

Bledsoe assigned to New Mexico, Northwest Texas

Bishop Earl Bledsoe, whose involuntary retirement by action of the 2012 South Central Jurisdictional Conference was overturned by the United Methodist Judicial Council, has been assigned by the Council of Bishops to lead the Northwest Texas/New Mexico Episcopal Area, effective Jan. 1, 2013.

“The Council of Bishops supports Bishop Bledsoe through our prayers and through the collegial brother- and sisterhood, as he prepares to move to his new episcopal area,” said Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, President of the Council. “May God bless the ministry of all United Methodists in the Northwest Texas/New Mexico area as they make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”



Mission-minded in Monticello

On Oct. 20, First United Methodist Church Monticello's "Mission Minded Methodists" effort gathered 24 volunteers of all ages to support the church's neighbors. These servants painted, installed wheelchair ramps, hung window screens, shored up a porch, washed windows, installed a new storm door, raked, trimmed shrubs and trees, weeded, mowed and hauled off six 16-foot trailer loads of yard waste. They helped eight homeowners, showing their love and receiving blessings through helping others.

COURTESY PHOTO

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Marsh joins Northwest District staff

The Northwest District Committee on Superintendency has selected Cindy Marsh to fill the position of assistant administrator for the district. Selected from a field of ten applicants, Marsh began work in her new position on Dec. 3.

She is a native of Van Buren and a graduate of Van Buren High School. She attended the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith and Arkansas Tech University, receiving a bachelor's degree in accounting from Arkansas Tech. She is also a Certified Public Accountant.

Marsh has work experience both in the secular workplace and in the United Methodist Church. She has served as church administrator of Journey UMC Fort Smith, and as treasurer for St. Paul UMC Fort Smith.

Her secular work experience began at Beverly Enterprises, where she served as a staff accountant. She then spent 19 years with Wal-Mart, becoming a regional manager with supervision responsibility for approximately 1,500 hourly associates.

Marsh's responsibilities in the Northwest District Office include Shoal Creek Camp support, communications, website design, District Committee on Ministry support and providing assistance to circuit elders. She can be reached at the district office, 479-783-0385, or cmash@arumc.org.



Cindy Marsh

COMING UP

January

Russian dance troupe finishes Arkansas performances

Central Arkansas has enjoyed a "Russian Children's Christmas Dance tour" sponsored by Peacework, a non-profit organization promoting economic development partnerships and service around the world, and Grand Jete, a famous Russian dance school from Moscow. This wonderful group of dancers has performed in area United Methodist beginning Dec. 28. Two performances remain:

- Jan. 4: Highland Valley UMC Little Rock, 6:30 p.m.
- Jan. 5: First UMC Hot Springs, 5 p.m.

Yekaterina Enseva established Grand Jete in Moscow upon completion of her professional career with the Bolshoi Ballet. Her students range in age from 5 to 18 and have won top honors in competitions across Europe and Russia. For their third U.S. tour, they have showcased traditional Russian Christmas folk dances as well as tap, jazz, ballet and modern dance. Their costumes, all handmade, add a special element to the wonder of the dances.

There is no charge for the performances; they are a gift from Grand Jete. Donations will be accepted to help defray expenses. If you have questions, contact the Rev. John Dill at 870-833-2678. For information on Peacework's mission, visit peacework.org.



Grand Jete Dancers

Veritas registration now open

Registration is now open for Veritas, the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries' flagship event, to be held March 1-3

at the John Q. Hammons Convention Center in Rogers. This year's event features keynote speaker Jeniffer Dake; worship band The Museum; and special guests 321 Improv. Hotels are filling up fast, so early registration is recommended.

Register online or download a printable registration form at www.accym.org.

Online training for Imagine No Malaria: four opportunities

January brings four different opportunities for online training relating to Imagine No Malaria:

- Jan. 8 at 2 p.m.
- Jan. 16 at 11 a.m.
- Jan. 24 at 7 p.m.
- Jan. 31 at 4 p.m.

Participants will learn about the extraordinary effort of the UMC to end death and suffering from malaria by 2015. The presentation includes tools and information to help your church become part of the movement and take advantage of a dollar-for-dollar match for all funds raised.

To receive the link to a session and the access code for the accompanying conference call, email Martha Taylor at mtaylor@arumc.org.

Free webinars for church leaders available in January

The General Board of Discipleship of the UMC is offering a series of free, one-hour webinars in January. Each webinar addresses a different aspect of congregational lay leadership.

- Jan. 10: Stewardship and Finance: Getting it Right at the Starting Line
- Jan. 15: SPRC Plans the Year
- Jan. 17: Lay Leader: What Do I Do?
- Jan. 22: Trustees Plan a Year of Ministry
- Jan. 29: Church Council Leads Discipleship
- Jan. 31: Nominations Committee Develops Leaders

The webinars begin at 6:30 Central time. Early registration is recommended. To register, visit www.gbod.org/webinars.

Imagine No Malaria session in El Dorado Jan. 20

First UMC El Dorado on Sunday, Jan. 20 will host an informational session on Imagine No Malaria. The 2:30 to 4 p.m. training will teach participants more about the extraordinary effort of the UMC to end death and suffering from malaria by

2015. The presentation will include tools and information to help your church become part of the movement and take advantage of a dollar-for-dollar match for all funds raised. Register online at www.arumc.org/register.

February

Disaster Response Training retreat at Mount Eagle Feb. 7-9

Registration is now open for the 2013 Disaster Response Training meeting and retreat, scheduled for Feb. 7-9 at Mount Eagle Retreat Center near Clinton.

District Disaster Response (DR) coordinators and other DR committee members, as well as anyone interested in serving on District or Conference DR teams, should plan to attend. Note: District and Conference Disaster Response Teams differ from Early Response Teams (ERT), Care Teams and Volunteers in Mission (VIM) teams in that these teams are the operational teams for a local church's response to a disaster event. They function according to the Incident Coordination System (ICS) model.

In addition, anyone interested in serving on a District or Conference VIM Leadership Team is invited to attend. VIM will be part of the training and discussion, with one session having a VIM focus.

The registration deadline is Wednesday, Jan. 16. The fee for two nights of lodging and five meals is \$80 for double occupancy or \$94 for single occupancy. For more details or to register, contact Janice Mann at disaster@arumc.org.

Worship Fair set for Feb. 15-16

"From Generation to Generation: Worship for the Ages" is the theme of Worship Fair 2013, presented by the Arkansas chapter of the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts. Held at First UMC Little Rock, the Feb. 15-16 event features clinicians the Rev. Dr. Zan Holmes presenting on preaching; Jean Anne Shafferman on adult music; and David Bone, children's choir. The Rev. Donna Hankins-Hull and Pam Snider will present on children's worship, and the event also features artist and musician Deitra Blackwell.

For a brochure and registration information, contact the Rev. Pat Henry at brassypat@hotmail.com or Michael Ekbladh at michealekbladh@att.net.

VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION

For information on any project listed in the Volunteers in Mission update, contact the individual listed or Byron Mann, Conference VIM coordinator, at vim@arumc.org or 870-703-8361.

Hurricane Sandy recovery—ERT update

Now is the time to form Early Response Teams (ERTs) and register with the Arkansas Conference Disaster Response co-coordinators, Janice and Byron Mann (disaster@arumc.org), if you wish to be part of an ERT for Hurricane Sandy recovery. To serve on an ERT, you must have completed ERT training and have an ERT badge.

Even for those who have been trained, now is not the time to travel to the Northeast. For those who have formed teams and registered, the next task is to wait until Disaster Response officials in the affected areas extend an invitation to schedule your team. Teams from within the Northeastern Jurisdiction of the UMC are being invited first, and those from other jurisdictions will follow. Arkansas is part of the South Central Jurisdiction.

All groups must be self-sustaining, with the ability to provide their own meals and adjust to flexible conditions.

Hurricane Sandy recovery—VIM update

Volunteers in Mission (VIM) Teams will be needed in addition to ERTs. A timeline is not yet available. To register for a VIM Team that will take on the tasks of repairing and rebuilding, contact Byron Mann at vim@arumc.org.

VIM Team Leader needed for Sandy recovery

Arkansas currently has a group of Volunteers in Mission interested in helping in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, but the group still needs a trained VIM Team Leader. If you're a VIM Team Leader interested in serving, contact Byron Mann at vim@arumc.org.

Cleaning buckets, health kits needed

Though Ingathering 2012 has passed, there will always be a need for more cleaning buckets and health kits. Relief workers already have distributed thousands of kits to individuals affected by Hurricane Sandy, and will need thousands more. Your prayers, as well as your gifts to United Methodist Committee on Relief, will help UMCOR to be with storm survivors over the long term of their recovery. Give to U.S. Disaster Response, Hurricanes 2012, Advance #3021787, at umcor.org.

Statewide VIM Leadership Team needs district representatives

The Conference Volunteers in Mission (VIM) coordinator is assembling a leadership team including representatives from across Arkansas. The team will include two individuals from each district to serve as points of contact for when Volunteers in Mission are needed, and to help local congregations plan and prepare for mission trips. The team still needs members from the Northeast, Southeast, Southwest and Central districts. To learn more, contact Byron Mann, vim@arumc.org.

Manos Juntas seeks ministry partners

Manos Juntas Ministry, which in recent years has hosted four Arkansas VIM teams on trips to Rio Bravo, Mexico, is seeking partners to support its continuing work. Partners may direct their gifts toward a specific area of ministry, such as job skills training, educational programs, health clinics, spiritual sustenance or teaching children to serve in mission.

To learn more about the ministry, visit handstogethermexico.org. To receive details on partnership options, contact Byron Mann, vim@arumc.org.

New Salem holds 'Undie Sunday' drive for rescue mission



New Salem UMC Hot Springs has been in ministry for over 135 years, and still seeks to reach out and transform the world in the name of Christ. The most recent outreach they have undertaken is "Undie Sunday." On Dec. 9, this small church contributed 145 sets of men's underwear and 114 pairs of socks to the local Samaritan Ministries Rescue Mission for homeless men. During their annual Christmas dinner, church members contributed an additional \$112 to accompany the underwear.

Undie Sunday honored the memory of the Rev. Bill Leslie, who passed away in 2012. Several years ago, Leslie initiated an Undie Sunday at Christ of the Hills UMC Hot Springs Village to collect underwear for area children in need. New Salem routinely supports a local women's crisis center, so the church decided to set aside a Sunday to assist homeless men in their area.

With limited resources and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, small churches can accomplish much and make a difference by serving God and neighbor.

In addition to paying apportionments, this small church has supported Cadence International, caring for the needs of Christian servicemen and women overseas; Miles of Pennies, which assists local charities in helping the homeless; and a monthly food drive for Jackson House of Hot Springs. In January they will sponsor a two-day retreat, "Disregarding the Shame, Reaching Out for the Joy," a healing opportunity for survivors of sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

—Submitted by the Rev. Dennis Horvath

United Methodist and Episcopal congregations find common ground

Churches of two denominations have found working together with an ecumenical spirit far more productive than working separately.

St. Paul United Methodist Church and St. Mark Episcopal Church, both of Jonesboro, find common in two areas of ministry: running a soup kitchen and a stewardship campaign.

Over a year ago, the two churches decided to start "Two Saints Kitchen," named after their respective churches, Saint Paul and Saint Mark. The kitchen is open every Saturday in St. Mark's fellowship hall, and provides a free meal to anyone who needs it.

After a first year with low attendance, the two churches debated shutting down the ministry.

But they knew there were hungry people in their city. St. Paul member Clint Orr began taking the church van to several pick-up locations around town, bridging the gap between the ministry and those who would most benefit from it.

"A diverse group of people as well as families are being picked up by the van," said the Rev. Charles Sigman, pastor of Saint Paul UMC. "We make runs to the library, Salvation Army, and other places as needed."

Two Saints Kitchen now averages about 35 people per week, and with the help of transportation for those who need it, the number is rising.

Not only have the two churches worked together in the kitchen, the Sigman and St. Mark's pastor the Rev. Jesse Perkins have shared pulpits and attended meetings during each other's stewardship campaigns.

"This must be a first," said the Rev. Jesse Perkins, rector of Saint Mark. "Two different denominations working jointly in their stewardship campaigns."

Perkins and Sigman's relationship goes beyond the pulpit. The two share friendships as well as ministry ideas. They agree that their joint efforts make a good example of what reaching across boundaries can accomplish.



The Revs. Charles Sigman and Jesse Perkins of Jonesboro have cultivated a cross-denominational connection that has resulted in fruitful ministry.

PHOTO BY AMY LONG, COURTESY OF JONESBORO OCCASIONS

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OBITUARIES

JONESBORO

Betty Vernon Sellars

Betty Sellars, 78, of Jonesboro, passed away Friday, Oct. 12, 2012, in McCrory.

She was born on Dec. 13, 1933, in Alamo, Tenn. A retired pharmacy technician, she had worked at St. Francis Pharmacy in Lake City, Ark.

She was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. Graham W. Sellars; a brother, William Miller; a sister, Frances Vernon; and her parents, Hobart and Lou Edna Vernon.

Survivors include her children, Lawrence Neil Sellars and Shelia Sellars; and a grandchild, Lori Holt.

Graveside services were held Monday, Oct. 15, at Vandale Cemetery in Cross County.

LITTLE ROCK

Ruth Mae Bacon Johnson

Ruth Mae Bacon Johnson of Little Rock completed her 98-year journey on this earth Friday, Nov. 30, 2012, in Raytown, Mo., passing away peacefully to join those who

departed before her in their heavenly home.

Born on March 3, 1914, she graduated from Langston University in Langston, Okla., receiving a teaching certificate;



Ruth Mae Johnson

Philander Smith College in Little Rock, receiving a bachelor of arts degree in elementary education; and the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, receiving a master's degree in special education. She served as a teacher in the Little Rock School District and for the state at the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

Her greatest work came with serving her Lord and family. She was very active in the United Methodist Church, and was a dedicated member of the United Methodist

Women. Her life's efforts reflected her concern for the community in which she lived during a difficult social era in American history. Her legacy lives on in the hearts of those who witnessed her compassion, commitment and selfless ways.

She is survived by her daughters: Marsha Johnson of Louisville, Ky.; Maud Thomas and her husband, Rupert, of Raytown, Mo.; Bettye Johnson and her husband, M.W. Shabazz, of Little Rock; and Edna Johnson, Ph.D., of Alexandria, Va.; her grandsons, Rapheal Johnson of Denver, Co.; Rupert Thomas Jr., Emmanuel Thomas and Lowell Thomas, all of Raytown, Mo.; a sister, Mozelle Goosby of Kailua-Kona, Hawaii; and nephews, Waymon Goosby of Los Angeles, Calif., and Stanley Goosby of Honolulu, Hawaii.

She was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. Emanuel M. Johnson; parents, Hezekiah Bacon and Maude Lovie Bacon Taylor; daughter, Emily Ruth Johnson Bunting; grandsons, William Earl Bunting and Eric LaMont Bunting; and niece, Sandra Goosby Bonner.

A celebration of her life was held Saturday, Dec. 8, 2012, at White Memorial United Methodist Church. Burial followed at Rest in Peace Memorial Gardens in Hensley.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to the United Methodist Women, White Memorial United Methodist Church, 2801 Wolfe Street, Little Rock, AR 72206.

United Methodist organizations to receive discounts at Staples Congregations, UMCOR will benefit from agreement with office supply company

In the face of rising costs of copies, office supplies, cleaning supplies and other services, the United Methodist Church's General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) on Dec. 12 announced that it has entered into an agreement with Staples, one of the world's largest office products companies, to provide churches with preferred pricing and discounts on purchases.

Staples Advantage is the business-to-business purchasing program available to churches, district offices, annual conferences, jurisdictions, general agencies and other United Methodist-related institutions.

"While GCFA does not typically endorse commercial enterprises, we are excited that we were able to enter into a purchasing agreement to gain some competitive pricing in a way that extends the pricing availability to the whole connection," said the Rev. Alan J. Morrison, director of support services for GCFA.

Through Staples Advantage, United Methodist organizations will receive preferred pricing on an established list of office and cleaning supplies, as well as on a custom list of supplies particular to the individual congregation, office, or agency's needs; a 15 percent discount on all other items; the ability to order online and receive next day delivery; and an annual one- to three-percent volume-based rebate.

The total of all sales to United Methodist organizations will result in a one percent annual rebate to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

To start the process, visit www.StaplesAdvantage.com/UnitedMethodists. When you complete the online form with basic contact information, a Staples sales representative in your area will contact you to answer questions about the program and sign up your church.

In the wake of tragedy, a message from Methodist Family Health

Methodist Family Health, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Little Rock, provides comprehensive mental health, psychiatric and behavioral healthcare to more than 1,400 Arkansas children under age 18 every day. In light of the terrible tragedy in Newtown, Conn., and the discussion about mental health that has resulted, please feel free to call on us as a resource for topics related to mental health. We have psychiatrists, therapists and others with extensive experience who can provide information and guidance and address concerns related to mental health issues and children. To learn more, visit methodistfamily.org or call 501-661-0720.

Disaster Response Ministry seeks volunteers for preparedness, response

The Conference Disaster Response Ministry is seeking volunteers to serve on both district and conference levels in local preparedness and response efforts. Volunteers will be trained to serve on district and conference teams. These teams will differ from existing Early Response, Care and VIM teams in that they will help to plan for and operate response to a local disaster event. Those interested in serving should contact either your District Coordinator through your District office or Byron and Janice Mann at disaster@arumc.org by Friday, Jan. 11.

Harrisburg church honors member for half-century of service

When Clyde Ford and his wife, Twila, moved to Harrisburg, Ark., in 1962, they joined First Methodist Church (now First United Methodist Church Harrisburg). After just a few months of getting settled into their new church home, Ford began to direct the church's chancel choir, and he continued to do so for most of the next 29 years. In addition to directing the choir, he led congregational singing and music for special occasions, produced cantatas and served as the congregation's only liturgist. He continues to direct the choir on special occasions.

His service extended beyond the music ministry. He also served as chair of the church's administrative board, as a member of various committees and as a Sunday school teacher. He was First

UMC Harrisburg's lay member to Annual Conference for several years, served as a trustee of the Old Harrisburg Cemetery and wrote a history of First UMC Harrisburg.

Ford was recognized recently for his 50 years of service to First UMC Harrisburg. The church presented him with a plaque during morning worship, and former choir director Patrick Adams and organist Jane Steinegger performed the anthem "A Quiet Place" in Ford's honor.

Ford's half-century of service has reached beyond the local church, as well. He served as chair of the North Arkansas Annual Conference Worship Committee and of the Conference Insurance Committee; and as a member of the Board of Discipleship, the Board of Pensions and the Commission on Evangelism. He served as chair of



Clyde Ford

the Jonesboro District Conference on Ministries twice, and as the Forrest City District Lay Leader. He was president of the Arkansas Methodist Historical Society and was on the Conference Committee on Episcopacy for two bishops. He also served an eight-year term on the Methodist Hospital board of directors in Memphis.

Youth use mission trip skills to serve at home



Christian O'Neal and Mallory Hudkins, members of First UMC Hope, work on the railing of the wheelchair ramp they helped build for Riley Williams and his family.

COURTESY PHOTOS

Members of the youth group from First United Methodist Church Hope worked recently to build a wheelchair ramp for a family in their community.

Riley Williams, 3, has cerebral palsy. His father gave up his job as a house painter to care for him, and his mother is in the process of completing her education in physical therapy. Riley has been fitted recently for his first wheelchair, so the family needed a ramp to make their home accessible.

A member of First UMC Hope serves as Riley's speech therapist. When she learned of the need, she remembered that the youth of the church had built a wheelchair ramp during their summer mission trip to Joplin, Mo. A fellow church member had even taught them some basic carpentry skills. She asked youth minister Rose Gagnon if the group might be able to help the Williams family.

"I contacted a group called Hands and Feet Ministries, which makes getting a wheelchair ramp possible for anyone who needs one," Gagnon said. Hands and Feet is connected with DeAnn and Hinton UMCs. Gagnon learned about it through one of its members, Byron Mann, who also serves as the Arkansas Conference coordinator for Volunteers in Mission.

Hands and Feet Ministries prepared the sections of the ramp in advance, and worked alongside the youth to help them complete the project. Mann explained that the organization seeks to share the love of Christ through serving with no strings attached.

"We do it to bless others," he said, "but we always receive a blessing from sharing with others."



The work group included members of First UMC Hope and Hands and Feet Ministries. They are pictured here with the Williams family (top row, right).



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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