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Lacey Thomas and Tom Ware, members of the praise band at Midland Heights UMC Fort Smith, sing with those gathered on Jan. 27 at Mt. Olive UMC Van Buren. One week earlier, Barry Morton announced he was resigning as the church's pastor and leaving to form a non-denominational church. Many, but not all, Mt. Olive members followed him. Bishop Gary Mueller canceled plans to attend a bishops' meeting in Illinois to be present at Mt. Olive Jan. 27.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Van Buren church's pastor, staff, leaders leave UMC

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

VAN BUREN—Mt. Olive United Methodist Church Van Buren, founded in 2006 and chartered as a self-supporting congregation in 2010, was one of the fastest-growing congregations in the Arkansas Conference. In the past year, average weekly worship attendance doubled, reaching 500 people.

But that number on Jan. 27 took a steep dive, down to approximately 65 worshippers.

Mt. Olive's founding pastor, Barry Morton, announced on Jan. 20 that he would leave the denomination to start a new congregation, which would hold its first worship service the following Sunday. The church's staff and lay leadership also gave up their membership in the UMC.

Unexpected news

The Rev. Mackey Yokem, superintendent of the Northwest District, received at 5:45 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 20, a telephone call from Morton, who proceeded to relinquish his appointment to Mt. Olive UMC Van Buren and his membership in the United Methodist Church. Morton informed Yokem that church staff members also were resigning their positions and ending their affiliation with the

UMC, as were members of the congregation's leadership team.

Fifteen minutes later, the Rev. Wes Hilliard, lead pastor of Heritage UMC Van Buren, also received a phone call from Morton. Heritage UMC had been the "mother church" that planted Mt. Olive UMC. Morton informed Hilliard that he would be starting a new, non-denominational congregation that would meet across the street from Heritage UMC, in the Van Buren Fine Arts Center.

"I really have mixed emotions," Hilliard said of the development. "We are glad to see them thriving, but sad to see them leaving the branch that gave them birth and invested much in their success."

Hilliard acknowledged that Momentum Church's location across the street from Heritage UMC may create some odd situations, but "I have to focus on Kingdom-mindedness. God's Kingdom is growing. In that I rejoice, and seek to grow the part for which God has given me responsibility."

After Morton's announcement, a website for a new congregation, Momentum Church, launched. It featured a 13-minute video in which Morton outlines three reasons he and others at Mt. Olive had decided to leave the denomination. The issues related to the itinerant nature of full-time United Methodist clergy,

[See MT. OLIVE, page 4A]

Q&A: Christian hope in universal salvation

Can everyone be saved through Jesus Christ? The Rev. Heath Bradley, associate pastor of preaching and Christian education at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock, thinks so.

In his new book, *Flames of Love: Hell and Universal Salvation* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), Bradley builds a theological framework for the doctrine of hell that relies heavily on the Christian perspective that God is loving and merciful. He spoke recently with *Arkansas United Methodist* editor Amy Forbus.

First off, let's clarify what may be one of the big questions for AUM readers. Do you reject the existence of hell?

No, I strongly affirm the existence of hell. What I reject is the claim that hell is never-ending torment for the purpose of retributive punishment.

Hell has been understood in different ways in our Christian tradition. The dominant tradition has held that hell is endless torment for all non-Christians,

or "the wicked." There are two minority strands in our tradition, however.



Heath
Bradley

Some Christians have held that hell will destroy or annihilate the wicked, while others have held that hell serves the purpose of correcting and purifying the wicked so they can be united with God. I fall in this last camp.

Let's talk about another "h" word: heretical. Has anyone called you a heretic yet?

Yes, they have. I think many people are quick to label universalists as heretics because of two main misunderstandings of this position.

First, people often mistakenly equate universalism with pluralism. Pluralism is a very liberal approach to religious truth that says that there are many paths to God, Jesus isn't unique, and everything is OK

[See Q&A, page 8A]

Hunter, surgeon, man of faith offers reflections on gun violence

BY BILL SCURLOCK
Special Contributor

As a lifetime member of the Methodist Church and a lay delegate to General Conference in Pittsburgh in 2004, I feel it is important for me to express some of my feelings toward the present problem of gun control. As I review the resolutions we passed in Pittsburgh, I find it remarkable that although heated debates arose over other matters during that 10-day period, I do not recall any

major debates concerning gun control. But General Conference has indeed approved, and reapproved, a resolution addressing gun violence, for which I am proud.

Resolution 3426 recognizes that “gun violence is killing children throughout the world, including the United States.... The risk of handgun violence to children and youth is more prevalent in the United States today

than in any previous generation.” It goes on to state, “No appeals to individual autonomy are sufficient to justify our church’s ignorance of this threat.” The resolution advocates regulating gun ownership with registration, background checks and waiting periods. It even recommends a ban on handguns and assault weapons.

The resolution’s first recommendation, though, is that the church should respond by taking a role in the conversation surrounding gun violence. I believe this resolution is consistent with the goals and the thinking of our Methodist heritage.

However, we have continued to see an explosion of school shootings and mass casualty situations. We now have people who believe it is perfectly all right to walk into a school, a theatre or a mall, and open fire with a weapon of war for an extended length of time. This has become an almost daily event. It has become a major health problem and should be treated as such. We are good, reasonable people. Why can’t we bring our talks to a higher level?

Many of the men (and a substantial number of women) in Arkansas are hunters. We shoot guns. I own eight hunting guns. I have never felt I needed a weapon of war designed only to kill people.

In spite of all evidence against it, there is a fear that “the government will come and take our guns away.”

People who believe in that possibility have bought “weapons of war” in record numbers. The fear factor is evident. Our own people have fallen for this trap and are stocking up with these guns. Who of us will speak out in line with our church’s resolution and bring us back to our senses?

Like all of you, I was shocked with the news of still another school shooting, this time in Newtown, Conn., where the massive carnage involved a record number of first-graders trying to learn their ABCs. I have since heard all the arguments for and against gun control—both pro and con. One interesting statement in favor of guns is that Jesus told his followers, “If you don’t have a sword, get one.”

This statement may provide enough theological grounding for some folks. But others believe that this sentiment runs contrary to the overall flow of Jesus’ teachings. There are numerous references we could recite concerning peace, loving your enemies, forgiveness and doing unto others as we would have them do to us. Jesus was a man of peace. He was crucified—submitted to a brutal act of violence—for us!

Some argue that the one way to control guns in evil hands is to “put guns in the hands of good guys.” I even hear talk of putting guns in the hands of teachers so they can “shoot the bad guys and save the kids.” I am astounded by this line of thinking!

I have been a general surgeon for over 50 years. I have taken care of literally thousands of gunshot wounds. I have never seen the scenario in which the homeowner or storekeeper (the “good guy”) pulls his or her own gun and shoots the perpetrator. It may happen, but it is extremely rare. My patients either shoot themselves, a member of the family or wind up being shot by the bad guy.

All of us have seen this scene played out on Gunsmoke and other television shows. In real life, things are different. I also have noticed it doesn’t bother Matt Dillon too much

to shoot a bad guy. Once you pull that trigger in real life, whether the victim is a good or bad person, your life is changed forever.

I hope readers will consider these remarks from an old country surgeon, and not declare it a time to “shoot the messenger.”

Dr. Scurlock is a member of First UMC El Dorado. He can be reached at bbsc@suddenlink.net.



Bill Scurlock

‘I own eight hunting guns. I have never felt I needed a weapon of war designed only to kill people.’



EDITOR’S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

Lessons from dog

I began taking in foster dogs when we lived in Texas, pulling them out of animal shelters to keep them from being euthanized. Some would find permanent homes with friends of ours; others would transition to a rescue group’s care while they waited for an adopter.

Since we began fostering here in Arkansas, we’ve developed a great relationship with our foster liaison (who, we soon learned, is an active United Methodist). She spends a lot of time connecting individual dogs with the help they need. The dogs we’ve fostered have moved on to the rescue groups that sponsored their care, and several have been adopted.

Most of these four-footed guests coexist peacefully with our existing pack of two dogs before moving on to their next stop, perhaps a week later. They’re healthy, with few behavior issues.

But then there are others. Our current foster dog, Starbuck, came with a major challenge. He had a broken leg—likely from being hit by a car before the city picked him up as a stray. After diagnosis, pain medications and consultation, his rescue group paid for surgery to remove the top of his femur. Team Forbus agreed to care for him while he recovered.

Starbuck provides a living example of the maxim, “Sometimes we don’t know what’s good for us.”

He has to have physical therapy multiple times a day so his leg will have the range of motion it needs. He

doesn’t like it. He whines and squeals in protest. He writhes around and tries to use his teeth to tell us to stop.

And he tries to protect his healing leg by not putting any weight on it. If he doesn’t re-learn how to use it now, though, it will give him problems for the rest of his life. You can’t reason with a dog about this type of thing (or much of anything, for that matter). All you can do is pull back on the leash and force him to take things more slowly than he’d prefer.

These behaviors seem sensible in Starbuck’s way of thinking. He acts out of self-preservation and the instinct to have fun. He doesn’t understand that the work we’re making him do will lead to healing.

How often do we humans miss the same message? Do we complain and resist situations in which God is working for good, just because we can’t envision the outcome?

When Starbuck resists what’s best for him, I remind myself that I can see a long view that he cannot. I praise him for hanging in there. And I’m reminded that God works with a far longer view in mind than any of us can fathom.

“We know that God works all things together for good for the ones who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

—Romans 8:28 (CEB)

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GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

We've got to do it together

Time and again I keep learning a very important lesson: We've got to do it together.

We've got to do it together as a family, co-workers, communities and nations. We've got to do it together as church staffs, Sunday school classes, youth ministries, congregations, the United Methodist Church and the global Body of Christ. And we've got to do it together as Arkansan United Methodist laity and clergy.

Even as I write these words, I've got to admit that it often seems a lot easier to try to do it all by myself. After all, I don't have to worry with being wrong, dealing with the feedback of others and the "A

word"—accountability. But, while it may seem easier, it's not. Because I know I too often get myself in places I wish I had not ended up.

Community is essential. Partnership is vital. Working with others is the only way to get done what we are called by Jesus to get done. That's why Jesus created the church and the earliest Christians went to such lengths to understand that their true identity was as part of the Body of Christ called into mission and ministry on Jesus' behalf.

We United Methodists get this—at least in theory. It's part of our DNA. It's what connectionalism is all about. It's why we stress

accountability. It's the reason we find all kinds of ways to join together to make a difference, even when we don't have to.

This is a critical moment in history. The world is filled with pain that often is unbearable and indescribable. People are not experiencing the unconditional love, salvation, transformation and hope that Jesus offers. And the United Methodist Church is facing a very basic choice. We must decide whether we truly believe that Jesus Christ offers people what they need. We must choose whether we are passionate enough about Jesus to go all in. And we must figure out whether we're going to do it the only

way it will ever get done—together.

This is the heart and soul of Imagine Ministry. This is our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ who are equipped to transform the world with passion and excellence. This is what Jesus is inviting us to be part of. And this is what I'm asking you to join me in doing.

Grace and peace,

Gary E. Mueller

APPOINTMENTS

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

- Center Grove UMC Sheridan—Jim Bacon, interim appointment, from Jan. 1 to June 30, 2013.
- Portland/Wilmot/Dermott UMCs—Phil Worley, effective Jan. 15, 2013.

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

The passion of the One

BY WILLIAM O. (BUD) REEVES
Special Contributor

I love to watch basketball. It is my favorite spectator sport. One play I particularly like to see is when an agile guard is able to dribble the ball down the lane, slicing between much taller defenders, to lay the ball in the basket. That's a thrill, especially if it's a player for the team I am rooting for!



Bud Reeves

Inevitably, when such a play happens, the commentator will say something like, "You can't coach that!" Such an action on the court is a result of ability and a passion for the game. It is informed by coaching and strategy, but the thrill comes when the talent is allowed to break loose.

In the church, we spend a lot of time and thought building structures, constructing systems and working through processes. We can teach biblical studies, theology, homiletics and history. We can coach leadership, and that's all good.

But you can't coach passion. Passion is the linchpin of

renewal, of individuals and churches. But it can't be manufactured. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

In our efforts at renewing the United Methodist Church in Arkansas, we have spoken of excellence and passion (see sidebar). Excellence—the head part—is coachable. We can teach excellence, and we should, to the best of our ability.

Passion is not coachable. It is a flame in the heart that is ignited from another Source. It is like Jesus said of the Spirit/wind; it "blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes" (John 3:8).

When I was preaching every Sunday, I was not always happy with the sermon I had written. I did not always have a passion about the product. But I did have a passion for the one person who needed to hear that sermon. If God was in the process, I believed there was at least one person in church that day who needed that word from the Lord, as flawed as it might be. That faith empowered me to preach with passion.

If there is one child who learns to love Jesus from an afterschool program, if there is one teenager who makes good choices because of their youth group, if there is one

needy person who feels loved because they receive a hot meal, that ministry is worth every bit of effort it takes to produce it. The passion for one inspires us to be in ministry.

Sometimes all it takes is one to be inspired. One leader can ignite the rippling effects of passion throughout an organization—even a church! Bill Hybels has often said, "Nobody in the church is going to be more passionate than its leader." John Wesley ignited the Methodist movement with the passion of his strangely warmed heart. So often, great success can be traced to the passionate drive of one leader—clergy or lay.

Ultimately, Jesus is the One who gives birth to our passion. Our heart for the Gospel and ministry is rooted in the love that took Jesus to the cross. His heart broke for people: "Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest'" (Matthew 9:36-38).

The word translated "compassion" literally means "a turning of the

bowels"—a stomachache! Do our guts ever hurt with a passion for the troubled and helpless?

I can't tell you how to generate passion in your life. That's the whole point. If I were looking for a place to start, however, I would pay attention to the means of grace: prayer, Scripture, worship, Holy Communion, Christian conversation, acts of mercy, things like that. It would also help if you had a deep commitment to making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Passion could grow from that.

Bishop Richard Wilke liked to tell the story of Bishop Ki Chun Chang, the president of the Council of Bishops of the Korean Methodist Church, a rapidly growing and passionately spiritual part of the Wesleyan family. Bishop Chang attended a General Conference of the United Methodist Church. After a worship service, which had included some perfunctory prayers for the needs of the world, the Korean bishop said to Wilke, "I heard their prayers, but I did not see their tears."

It's time we shed tears for the lost. It's time our stomachs hurt for the young people in our neighborhoods. It's time our hearts broke for the needy in our communities. Pray for the passion of the One!

The Rev. Dr. Reeves serves as superintendent of the Northeast District. To reach him, email breeves@arumc.org.

Our Mission:

To make disciples of Jesus Christ equipped to transform the world with excellence and passion.

From Imagine Ministry:

Excellence and passion are contemporary ways of speaking about the Wesleyan balance of head and heart.

Excellence is the adherence to a high standard of vitality and effectiveness. Excellence is pursued by organized and rational efforts to achieve the best result possible in a given situation. Excellence is contextual, yet it is also measurable and based on performance or fruitfulness. Therefore, we must be equipped for excellence.

Passion is the intense desire to be faithful and fruitful disciples of Jesus Christ and to be in ministry through the church in an effective way. Passion is born in suffering, as our hearts are broken by the suffering of Christ and the suffering of the world. Passion is inspired; it is open to and indicative of the movement of the Holy Spirit in the life of a disciple or a church.

If we are thinking with excellence and have passion in our hearts, we will make disciples of Jesus Christ and transform the world.

A gift of hope—with wings

Arkansas UMs helped fund airplane purchase for Congo medical ministry

BY MELISSA HINNEN
Special Contributor

Following an outpouring of pennies, dollars and Congolese Francs, the people of North Katanga are about to receive a gift of hope with wings.

For months, an aviation team, coordinated by the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), has been looking for an airplane that would meet the needs, in a sustainable way, of rural villages in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The team traveled recently to Norway to inspect and purchase a Cessna Caravan.

But the Cessna Caravan is more than just a plane; it bears on its wings the promise of Good News, hope and healing. This “flying clinic” will bring a team of doctors and pastors to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of the people it serves through the Wings of the Morning aviation ministry.

With the density of rain forests, scarcity of resources and lack of infrastructure, aviation is the only means of accessing hundreds of remote villages.

Gaston Ntambo is one of three missionary pilots in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is part of a supply line that enables emergency medicine and other items to be delivered where needed. For Captain Ntambo, flying is more than a passion, or even a career. It's his ministry. “The best part of my life is when I'm coming down with a patient and I'm close to landing where I know they'll get help, and they're still alive,” he says.

Ntambo will take a flight-training course that will prepare him to fly the Caravan when it arrives, at the end of the rainy season this spring. In the meantime, the plane will be flown to a long-standing mission aviation partner in Ohio for refurbishing.

The West Ohio Annual

Conference raised more than \$1.5 million for the Wings of the Morning aviation ministry, including a \$1 million miracle offering at their annual conference in June. The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference raised over \$320,000 and the Arkansas Annual Conference raised another \$100,000. Individuals and churches across the U.S., including Church of the Resurrection in Kansas, contributed as well.

Twenty-five thousand dollars was raised within the North Katanga Conference—a region of the world where the average income is less than \$10 a month. In total, \$2.1 million was raised, including \$250,000 in a West Ohio long-term maintenance endowment.

According to George Howard, who leads the Mission and Evangelism unit at GBGM, “The new Caravan will increase the capacity of the leaders in North Katanga to respond to humanitarian and evangelistic opportunities.” Noting



This Cessna Caravan, pictured in front of a hangar in Norway, will soon go to North Katanga, Democratic Republic of Congo, to serve Wings of the Morning medical transport ministry.

PHOTO BY STEVE QUIGG

that the plane will strengthen the United Methodist connection, he continued, “Instead of bringing one person out of a village for health treatment, the plane will be able to deliver a medical team to treat hundreds and to prepare health workers. At other times, teaching teams will provide leadership training for pastors and leaders.”

After receiving word that the money had been raised to buy the new plane, Ntambo wrote, “You have just opened the biggest door for mission work.... You touched and changed my life with your mission work when you sent me my very first

pair of shoes at 9 years of age. Today you are sending me home with a perfect airplane to go and make a difference for our people. Thank you for believing in us and for saving North Katanga Wings of the Morning flight ministry.”

To support United Methodist aviation ministries, make a donation to UMCOR, searching for Advance #3019626 at umcor.org.

Hinnen serves as director of content and public information for the UMC General Board of Global Ministries. Reproduced from umcmission.org, where this article first appeared.

Mt. Olive (continued from page 1A)

the congregation's vision of expanding to multiple campuses and an understanding of being limited by property ownership arrangements within the denomination.

Reactions

In a Jan. 21 pastoral letter to Arkansan United Methodists (available at arumc.org), Bishop Gary E. Mueller expressed sadness over the situation, and called Morton's stated issues with the United Methodist system “factually incorrect.”

“I believe God plants bold and new visions in the hearts of laity and pastors,” he wrote. “I understand that not everyone, including pastors, can remain in the United Methodist connection in good conscience. But I must admit that my heart is hurt when a brother in Christ who is part of the covenant of connection intentionally chooses to act in a way that brings harm to those who have been supporting him in ministry for so many years.”

The intentional actions referenced by Bishop Mueller include documented instances of Morton planning to leave the UMC without discussing the possibility with his superiors. For example, regional newspaper the *Times Record* on Dec. 16, 2012, published a record of the incorporation of Momentum Church Of Arkansas, and on Jan. 20, a blog entry by Sarah Morton, a church staff member and the wife of Barry Morton, indicated that the decision to leave the denomination came in the summer of 2011.

Hilliard, the lead pastor of Heritage, values his own ties to the UMC and considers the church his “spiritual mama.”

“I am called to serve her and seek to bring life and renewal to her—to bless her,” he says of the denomination. “With that said, we need to look closely at why laity and clergy are leaving our fold—some for theological reasons, some over polity, and some for both. From my understanding, Barry Morton's issues

were with both.... Unfortunately, he did not discuss his concerns with our conference leadership.

“I wish he would have remained a part of the UMC, but he didn't,” Hilliard said. “Now we have to deal with that.”

A 10 a.m. worship service on Jan. 27 drew supporters from nearby UMCs and several Arkansas Conference leaders, as well as a handful of Mt. Olive's members—some of whom had not received word of the new church's formation until the Northwest District sent a message to the congregation's email list.

The time began with a discussion led by Yokem and Bishop Mueller. At the request of Mt. Olive members, the pair clarified details of the week's events, and Bishop Mueller offered his perspective on inaccuracies he heard in Morton's video statement.

“Just because Barry could be moved does not mean he *would* be moved,” Bishop Mueller said, addressing Morton's first point that he would eventually be moved to another church. “There were no plans for that.” The bishop noted that some United Methodist congregations in Plano, Texas, where he served before being elected to the episcopacy, have pastors that have stayed in the same appointment for 28 years or more.

“I have said prayers this week for Momentum Church, because it's possible that they're going to reach people that we can't,” he said. “There's no ‘bad guy’ in this. I want to be really clear about that. We do have concerns about lack of communication and process, but we're dealing with it. What we're concerned about is going ahead with Mt. Olive Church.”

“It is our belief that this church has in the past provided a significant and powerful ministry to this part of Van Buren, and we believe there is a very real future for that ministry to continue,” Yokem said. “So we're going to work at this with that in mind, and we're going to pray our way through this. And we're going to listen to the spirit of Christ to do the right thing about the ministry of this congregation.”

Amid the serious discussion, one member's question did

bring laughs: “Is our dress code going to change?” Yokem assured those present that the casual approach and feel of the congregation is in no danger whatsoever. Bishop Mueller let the questioner know that at a gathering the previous day, he had worn blue jeans.

Following a prayer by the bishop for the congregation, its mission field and the unity of the Body of Christ, musicians from Midland Heights UMC Fort Smith led music. The opening song: “Only Grace” by Matthew West.

After the service, a handful of members from both Midland Heights and Mt. Olive UMCs extended offers to help serve at Mt. Olive in the coming weeks.

What next?

The Northwest District staff has begun assessing Mt. Olive UMC's records and finances. They have determined that the congregation, which has a record of paying its apportionments at 100 percent, has approximately \$49,900 in cash on hand, and outstanding building improvement loans that total \$491,000.

The Rev. Bobby Bell, former superintendent of the West District who is now retired, and the Rev. Dan Williams, pastor of Midland Heights UMC Fort Smith, will serve as interim pastors of the church. Bell preached the Jan. 27 sermon, and both pastors were present and available to members.

At some point, Bishop Mueller and the cabinet will decide whether a new pastor should be appointed to Mt. Olive UMC. With leadership from Bell and Williams, the church will offer a single worship service at 10 a.m. Sundays until further notice.

While acknowledging the pain of the situation, Bishop Mueller's pastoral letter expressed hope for the future.

“We will not permit this hurtful experience to dissuade us from daring to begin new ministries in new places with new people, for we are convinced that this is the mission to which we are called,” he wrote.

Arkansas churches increase connectional giving

2012 apportionment payout tops \$13 million

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Arkansas Conference congregations in the past year improved their support of the ministries of United Methodism worldwide. The official payout of apportionments for 2012 totaled 90.19 percent—a 1.59 percent increase over the previous year.

“On top of the percentage increase, we increased by a dollar amount of over \$700,000,” said Todd Burris, treasurer for the Arkansas Conference. “For the first time ever, we received more than \$13 million in apportionments, which is really a historic number.”

Local church apportionment dollars cover everything from Conference staff salaries to the World Service Fund, which underwrites Christian mission and ministry on a global scale.

“Much like a local church, the Annual Conference pays apportionments to the General and Jurisdictional churches,” Burris said. “It looks like those will be paid out at the 85 to 86 percent range, which is up over a percentage point from last year.”

The 2012 payout doesn’t represent an all-time high; Arkansas paid 96 percent of its apportionments in 2006. But the payout percentage began to drop in 2007, “and 2008 was the last time we received 90 percent,” Burris said. The October 2008 stock market crash foreshadowed the downturn in apportionment payouts for 2009 and 2010.

Helpful at home

The 2012 uptick in financial support for ministries beyond the local church paints a brighter picture not just for worldwide missions, but also for missions within the bounds of the Arkansas Conference, such as campus ministries.

“Since we received 86 percent of our World Service and Conference benevolence funds, it also means that our Wesley Foundations will receive those excess funds,” Burris said.

The Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) had projected that it would be able to provide 83 percent of campus ministries’ allotted funds. But because of the increase in what local churches paid, campus ministries will

receive 86 percent of their budget, “it’s kind of like kicking off the year with a bonus for them,” he said.

Other Conference-related institutions that will receive more support than projected include Mount Eagle Retreat Center, Camp Tanako, Hendrix College and Philander Smith College.

Pensions drive budget

The biggest apportionment-related expense is the clergy pension fund. When many investments lost ground in 2008 and 2009, defined benefit plans became underfunded. Since then, the Conference Board of Pensions has made up that loss of revenue in two ways: by raising the budget by \$500,000 annually, and by leveraging reserve funds.

“In 2008, the Conference Board of Pensions had over \$5 million in reserve funds for their ‘rainy-day’ scenario,” Burris said. “At the end of 2012, we had reduced that down to just over \$2 million. That fund has prevented us from really having to hit the churches even harder with increases.”

The actual increase in pension payments has been more than \$2 million per year, but Burris expects the Conference won’t need to leverage its reserves in the coming years.

“The current budget amount, combined with the change to direct billing of pensions, is at the level of what we’re being asked to pay by the General Board of Pension,” he said. “We are able to meet our obligations to fund our retirees’ pension plan, which is what the church promised to do for clergy who followed their call to ministry within the UMC. When we do well with paying our apportionments, we are protecting ourselves, ensuring that we can cover those costs.”

An Annual Conference study group is working toward recommending apportionment formula changes that will affect how much churches pay. Burris describes the emerging new formula as a tithe-based approach that has the local churches, not the Conference, determining apportionment amounts.

“As opposed to just raising the budget, we’ll be set with a certain amount of how much we’re going to get,” he said. “The study group is seeking a more faithful approach that will improve our stewardship.”

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Renfroe joins staff of Conference’s Center for Technology



Butch Renfroe

A.W. “Butch” Renfroe has been named communication technologies specialist for the Arkansas Conference Center for Technology (CFT). He began work Jan. 22, succeeding Patrick Shownes, who accepted a position at United Methodist Communications in Nashville, Tenn.

Renfroe brings extensive website development experience to the CFT. He has worked with web development since 1997, when he built the first-ever website for Conway’s newspaper, the Log Cabin Democrat. Later, at Little Rock’s CBS affiliate, Today’s THV, he developed and maintained the most-visited local website in the state.

His work at the Arkansas Conference will include developing a new Conference web portal; serving as a communications systems expert for the Conference and local churches; providing for the Conference’s audio and video production needs and consulting with local churches regarding their production needs; serving as technical liaison for the Annual Conference Planning Team; and troubleshooting any communications technology issues that escalate beyond Tier I support. He can be reached at butch.renfroe@arumc.org.

Renfroe and his wife, Debbie, live in Conway, where they attend Woodland Heights Baptist Church. They have two grown sons and two Yorkshire Terriers.

Carter named director of Camp Tanako



Kim Carter

The Camp Tanako Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the hiring of Kim Carter as the Director of Camp Tanako, following a nationwide search. The position was advertised through the American Camping Association, General Board of Discipleship Camp and Retreat Ministries Leadership Ministry Division network and the Arkansas United Methodist, resulting in 27 applicants.

Carter grew up attending camps at Tanako and was on staff during her high school and college years. She has a master’s degree in early childhood special education and has worked with children for many years. She has a passion for Christ’s work through outdoor ministries, and has seen many lives changed over the years at Tanako. She heard God’s call to Camp Tanako as a new opportunity to make disciples for Christ, and has excitement and vision for new things to come at the camp.

She and her husband, Terry, live on site with their four children, Jackson, Grace, Anna Catherine and Cameron. Their family has been a foster family for more than eight years, loving and nurturing 28 young lives during this time.

Located in Hot Springs on the shore of Lake Catherine, Camp Tanako is a ministry of the Arkansas Conference. For more information on what is happening at the camp, visit tanako.org or contact Carter at 501-262-2600.

Copley honored as Peace Activist of the Year

The Rev. Stephen Copley on Saturday, Jan. 12 received the Peace Activist of the Year award from the Arkansas Coalition for Peace and Justice (ACPJ) at the organization’s annual meeting.

An ordained elder and commissioned missionary in the United Methodist Church, Copley serves as a Church and Community Worker with the General Board of Global Ministries. Much of his work has centered on the struggle for social and economic justice.

As director of Justice for Our Neighbors, he administers a program offering immigration law services for low-income immigrants in Arkansas.

As chair of the Arkansas Friendship Coalition, he formed a coalition of leaders from many backgrounds and locations who are pledged to encourage a reasonable and respectful approach to the immigration debate in Arkansas. He also serves as chairperson or board member of a number of organizations, including the Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty; Let Justice Roll, a nonpartisan coalition committed to raising the minimum wage to a living wage; the Arkansas Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice; the Arkansas Hunger Coalition; and the Arkansas Energy Network, which provides assistance for the poor in paying their utility bills.

His interest in environmental sustainability led him to become a co-founder of Arkansas Interfaith Power and Light, established by individuals and participating congregations who share a concern for the earth’s environment from a theological perspective. He has also been a tireless advocate for increasing interfaith understanding, and is currently executive director of the Arkansas Interfaith Conference.

The ACPJ is an association of individuals and organizations who support a vision of harmony with the earth and all people through education, dialogue and action. They focus on peace and nonviolence, social justice and ecology.



The Rev. Steve Copley, center, after receiving the Peace Activist of the Year award from the Arkansas Coalition for Peace and Justice. Standing with him are ACPJ board members Sara Mullally, Elizabeth Minton, chairperson Bob Estes and John Coffin.

PHOTO BY JANE ESTES

United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas celebrates 50 years with more gifts to Imagine No Malaria

Send an email during Lent, UMFA gives a dollar to the cause

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) announced in 2012 that it would match gifts made to Imagine No Malaria by the Conference's local churches and members, up to \$333,000.

Now, to celebrate its 50 years of faithful ministry, UMFA is adding to that pledge.

"This year we'll be celebrating the ministries many Arkansas individuals, churches and institutions have made possible through their association with the Foundation," said Jim Argue Jr., UMFA President and CEO since 1981. "As a part of the anniversary

celebration, UMFA will make a \$1 donation to the Arkansas Conference's Imagine No Malaria campaign that supports prevention, education and treatment of the disease in Africa for every unique email sent to malaria@umfa.org during the season of Lent."

Imagine No Malaria is a denomination-wide campaign to combat a preventable, treatable disease that still claims a victim every 60 seconds. The effort provides tools for prevention, education and treatment, with the goal of eradicating deaths from malaria worldwide by 2015. Imagine No Malaria puts our faith into action by

empowering the people of Africa to build capacity and infrastructure.

"As United Methodists, our faith and our finances are connected," Argue said. "For 50 years the Foundation has been helping us extend that connection between faith and finance, even beyond our lifetimes."

Generations of United Methodist donors have used the services of UMFA to build permanent charitable endowment funds that strengthen and expand United Methodist ministry in Arkansas, making it one of the largest United Methodist foundations in the nation with 650 funds and assets of more

How to help UMFA celebrate

- 1) During the season of Lent (the 40 days leading up to Easter), send an email to malaria@umfa.org. This year, Lent begins Feb. 13 and ends March 30.
- 2) Tell your friends to do the same! Each email sent from a unique address generates another \$1 gift.

United Methodists interested in learning more about the Foundation may visit www.umfa.org, contact Vice President of Development Janet Marshall at jmarshall@umfa.org or call 501-664-8632, toll free at 877-712-1107. UMFA is on Facebook at [facebook.com/UnitedMethodistFoundationofArkansas](https://www.facebook.com/UnitedMethodistFoundationofArkansas).

Lenten devotional has focus on Imagine No Malaria

Lent brings another opportunity for individuals and local congregations to make Imagine No Malaria a priority. A free Lenten devotional booklet is available for download at arumc.org/inm; it encourages a sacrifice of \$1 per day during Lent.

"The impact would be enormous if even one-quarter of Arkansas United Methodists would participate in this simple act," said the Rev. Martha Taylor, Arkansas field coordinator for Imagine No Malaria. "One-quarter of all of us is about 32,500 people. If that many people would contribute \$40 as their Lenten offering, we would easily exceed our \$1.1 million goal."

The close of 2012 brought good news for the Arkansas Conference's efforts to raise \$1.1 million for Imagine No Malaria. Since Annual Conference in June, more than \$107,000 had been donated by individuals and local churches. With matching funds from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, the year's end brought a \$215,000 total—the equivalent of having saved 21,500 lives.

"We are making great progress in getting churches and individuals involved with Imagine No Malaria," said the Rev. David Freeman, leader of Arkansas' Imagine No Malaria campaign.

"People have seen how easy it is. There's no formula for participation. How churches can contribute is completely up to them. Our prayer is that the Spirit continues to move through our United Methodist communities to join the fight."

The Imagine No Malaria initiative continues through June 2014, with gifts and pledges being collected through June 2015. To learn more about the Imagine No Malaria effort in Arkansas, contact Taylor at mtaylor@arumc.org or 501-324-8005.



21,500 Lives
\$215,000

This devotional guide is available as a free download at arumc.org/inm.

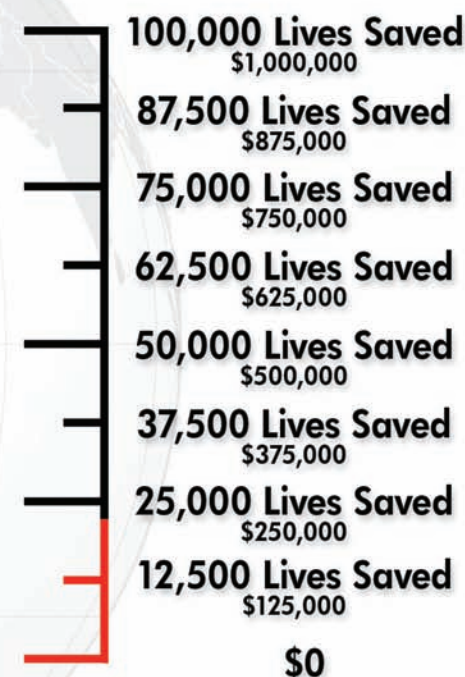
Arkansas United Methodists have committed to raising \$1.1 million towards eliminating death from malaria in sub-Saharan Africa by 2015 through the Imagine No Malaria initiative.

IMAGINE NO MALARIA
Our Faith In Action.

than \$113 million.

Income from funds not designated to specific ministries is granted to United Methodist causes as determined by the UMFA Grants Committee. In recent years,

UMFA grants have supported a variety of ministries, including Imagine No Malaria, the United Methodist Museum of Arkansas, the documentary Gospel Without Borders, scholarships for seminarians, the Imagine Ministry strategic plan for the Arkansas Conference and a number of retreats and continuing education events.



Annual Conference 2013



Discerning-Discipling-Daring

THE ARKANSAS CONFERENCE

The United Methodist Church

Making Disciples of Jesus Christ

Annual Conference theme, preachers set

The Annual Conference Planning Team has chosen “3D Faith: Discerning, Discipling, Daring” as the theme for the 2013 Arkansas Annual Conference, set for June 9-12 in Little Rock.

The theme originated with the mission developed by the planning team: “Plan the 2013 Annual Conference so it inspires, motivates, and equips Arkansan United Methodists to return to their local churches to reach out into their mission field with excellence and passion to make disciples of Jesus Christ who are so transformed they transform the world.”

The team has included in the agenda two afternoons of workshops and small-group sessions. These times outside of the business session focus on equipping members of Annual Conference with ideas and tools to take back to their local churches, helping them reach their mission fields.

Preachers for the 2013 Arkansas Annual Conference were invited to share their gifts for inspiring and motivating disciples of Jesus Christ.

- The Rev. Alyce McKenzie, Le Van Professor of Preaching and Worship and Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor at SMU’s Perkins School of Theology, will preach at June 9 opening worship;
- The Rev. Phil Hathcock, director of connectional ministries and assistant to the bishop, will preach for the June 10 memorial service;
- The Rev. William J. (Billy) Abraham, Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies at SMU’s Perkins School of Theology, will preach at evening worship on June 10;
- Bishop Thomas Bickerton, leader of the denomination’s Global Health Initiative, which includes Imagine No Malaria, will preach June 11;
- The Rev. Grace Imathiu, a United Methodist minister who has served congregations in Kenya, Washington, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin, will preach at two worship services, June 10 and 11;
- Bishop Gary Mueller will preach the June 11 ordination service.

HELP YOUR CHILD FIND THE WAY.

Methodist Family Health is a nonprofit organization that provides comprehensive psychiatric and behavioral healthcare to children and families throughout Arkansas. For more than 110 years, our mission has been to give the best possible care to those who may need our help and to treat the whole person: behaviorally, emotionally and spiritually.

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Q&A (continued from page 1A)

because God is nice. Christian universalism is actually quite conservative in that it holds that Christ is the only savior and affirms a day of judgment from a God of holy love. But it holds to the hopeful conviction that ultimately all will be saved through Christ.

Second, many people seem to have the understanding that the church at some point has declared universalism to be a heresy. The key ecumenical council in this regard is the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, where Origen, an early Christian universalist, was condemned. However, it was not belief in universal salvation as such that was condemned.

Gregory of Nyssa, who was one of the final editors of the Nicene Creed, was a universalist, but was so highly regarded by the early church that he was given the title “father of fathers.” So, if universalists are heretics, then we would be forced to conclude that one of the most revered formulators of orthodox doctrine was himself a heretic.

How did you get interested in this topic?

I grew up in a United Methodist church, and I don’t recall ever hearing a sermon on hell—although, I confess, I didn’t always pay attention—but it is just a part of the air you breathe in the Bible Belt. It

has troubled me deeply as long as I have been aware of it. I think it must deeply trouble anyone who really thinks about it.

One time a woman came to see me to talk about some “spiritual issues,” and she told me that when she was a little girl she would often cry herself to sleep at night, sometimes crying so hard that she would throw up, because her best friend was not a Christian and her church told her he was going to a never-ending hell. That actually seems to me to be an appropriate response to this doctrine. But should the good news of Jesus cause little girls to cry so hard they throw up?

I began really seriously questioning the existence of an everlasting hell when I was working on a master’s thesis in the area of philosophy of religion. I started out trying to argue against Christian universalism, but the more I studied and prayed about it, it seemed to me that Christian universalism just had stronger arguments philosophically, biblically and theologically.

That was a decade ago, but I decided to write a book on it last year because it started really troubling me that some people I know are not Christians because they think that to be a Christian means you have to believe that God will send all non-Christians to everlasting torment.

I believe that you can be a

biblical, orthodox Christian and still believe that God will ultimately save all people through Christ, and I want others to know about this perspective. There is an evangelistic impulse at the heart of this book. I believe that God is love and I feel compelled to share that message. In writing the book, I also had in mind more “liberal” Christians who have left behind any conviction of judgment and belief in an afterlife. While I believe we need to rethink the dominant view of heaven and hell, I don’t think we can completely discard them and still have authentic Christianity.

If you believe everyone gets to heaven, why is it still important to evangelize?

In the book, I talk about five reasons why I think evangelism is important within Christian universalism, but here I will just point out one: hell exists. I can’t emphasize enough that within Christian universalism there is still an integral place for divine judgment and for warning people about the destructive consequences of rejecting God.

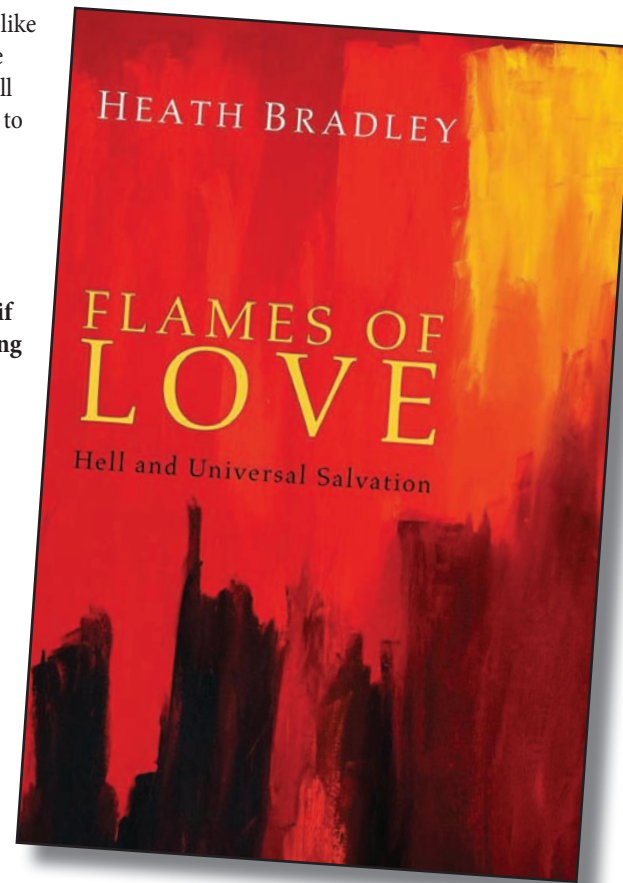
The word that Jesus used for hell, *gehenna*, originally referred to a garbage dump southwest of Jerusalem. This place of waste and destruction became a symbol for the reality of postmortem punishment for ancient rabbis. It is a powerful image, to be sure. To be told by God on judgment day that we have wasted the lives we have been given

would hurt like hell, and we should do all that we can to help others (and ourselves) avoid that.

What if you’re wrong in this belief?

Well, that would be a first! Seriously, though, I could be wrong about this, and I know that. Lots and lots of very intelligent and faithful Christians think otherwise, and that gives me pause. I came to this position through years of studying the best arguments against it, and I just think Christian universalism make more sense biblically and theologically than the alternatives.

If I am wrong, then I have a



hard time imagining that God would be upset with me for having too much confidence in the power of his love.

The Rev. Bradley writes on a variety of theological topics at his blog, thesundaydrivehome.blogspot.com.

CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED in the *Arkansas United Methodist* for 60 cents per word, no limit. Call 501-324-8037, email aforbus@arumc.org or mail to: *Arkansas United Methodist*, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202.

JOB OPPORTUNITY at Hot Springs First United Methodist, a congregation of 2000 members in the “vacation capital” of Arkansas. The director of communications will be responsible for production of all print, web, and social media as well as marketing the church in a fast-paced and highly transient environment. Previous experience and a college degree in communications, journalism, or marketing is essential as well as team-spirit attitude. Serious inquiries should include a resume and references as well as a personal cover letter. Contact Michael L. Mattox, Senior Pastor at 1100 Central Avenue, Hot Springs National Park, AR 71901 or mmattox@fumchs.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR wanted for Henderson UMC. Must oversee youth program on Wednesday and Sunday evenings, and Sunday School. Send resume to: HUMC@swbell.net.

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.

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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.

Upcoming Disaster Response and Volunteers in Mission training

Disaster Response and Volunteers in Mission District and Conference team member training - Feb. 7-9, Mount Eagle Retreat Center

Early Response Team Training - March 9, Ashdown

Volunteers in Mission Team Leader Training - Date to be announced

For more information or to register for any of these events, please contact Byron or Janice Mann (vim@arumc.org, disaster@arumc.org).

Hurricane Sandy recovery - ERT, VIM needed

Teams of combined Early Response Team Certified volunteers and Volunteers in Mission are currently being requested to respond. If interested in serving on a team and have not done so, please contact Janice and Byron Mann (disaster@arumc.org) for more information.

Cleaning buckets, health kits still needed

There continues to be a need for cleaning buckets and health kits. Your prayers, as well as your gifts to United Methodist Committee on Relief, will help UMCOR be with storm survivors over the long term of their recovery. Give to U.S. Disaster Response, Hurricanes 2012, Advance #3021787, at umcor.org or through the Arkansas Conference office.

BOOK REVIEW

New book helps readers see footsteps of Jesus in today's world

The Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus

Adam Hamilton

Abingdon Press, 2012

BY MARCIA DUNBAR
Special Contributor

After attending leadership training at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, I became a fan of Adam Hamilton. I admit I was skeptical in the beginning. How can someone create so many studies, write so many books and be authentic amid all of the commercialized fame? Then, I met him. He is approachable, sincere and, well, nice.

After listening to him preach and speak about his trip to the Holy Land, the basis for his latest book, *The Way*, I was convinced of his passion to spread the Gospel and to make disciples of Jesus Christ. *The Way* is the third in a trilogy of books that also includes *24 Hours that Changed the World*, discussing Jesus' crucifixion, and *The Journey*, focusing on Jesus' birth. Designed for study over a 40-day period, *The Way* makes a good option for groups meeting in the coming Lenten season.

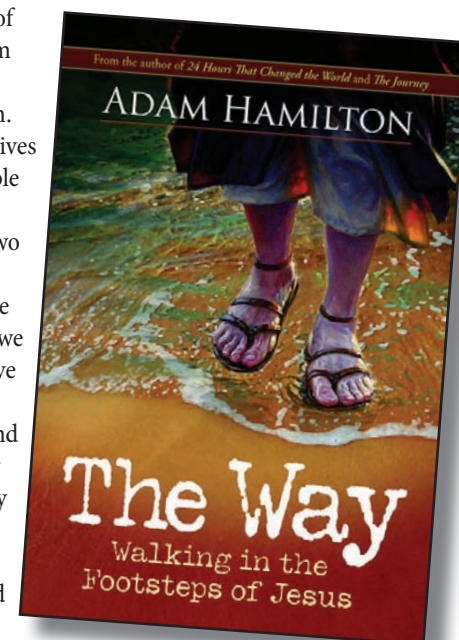
Hamilton uses scripture, historical backgrounds and his own accounts to weave together the arduous journey that Jesus made during his ministry with the trials we encounter every day. This approach allows the reader to grasp that although Jesus was without sin, he understood the temptations that people deal with today. Hamilton tells us Jesus taught in a way that reached people by "making the complex understandable."

The Way examines familiar Scripture passages of healing the sick and casting out demons from a different perspective, relating the demonic possessions of Jesus' time to what we now understand as mental illness, sadness or depression. Jesus' healings may have come in the form of releasing feelings of anger, pain and guilt through the cleansing and redemptive nature of the Holy Spirit. People were indeed healed.

For skeptics, reading the teachings of Jesus in stories and parables may be difficult, but, through Hamilton's storytelling of how Jesus has helped people today, those same stories become real, tangible. The reader can relate to the difficulties of life which Hamilton recounts. By studying Jesus' ministry, we better understand the trials and tribulations he faced—and that they were not so different from what we face.

We as United Methodists are called to go and make disciples for Christ. We want a real relationship with Christ, and we want the same for those in our lives—our families, our friends or congregations that we lead. It is not an easy task in

today's world of commercialism and desensitization. But *The Way* gives an approachable correlation between the two worlds and allows us to see that although we will always have struggles, temptations and hardships, our Savior not only gave us the tools we need to live rich and full lives, but also gave all of himself so that we may know mercy, grace and love.



Dunbar serves as director of evangelism for St. James UMC Little Rock.

Pastor 'walking for Christ' to raise funds for six causes

The Rev. Jim Cross, pastor of First United Methodist Church Ashdown and Richmond United Methodist Church, has challenged the churches he serves and the residents of Ashdown to make an impact on their community in 2013.

To kick off the effort, Cross has planned "Impact 2013: Walking for Christ," a 30-mile fundraising walk on Saturday, Feb. 16. He has trained several months to prepare for walking from Ashdown High School to the nearby town of Wilton, back to Ashdown City Park, then to the town of Ogden, and back to the Ashdown High School track—an estimated 10-hour trek.

Cross set a goal of \$5,000, which will be distributed among several causes:

- \$1,500 for the Ashdown City Park to cover baseball fees for 30 children;
- \$500 for an Ashdown High School scholarship in memory of Jalen Lewis, a student who died in 2011;
- \$1,000 to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)

which provides disaster relief in 80 countries, including the U.S., when war, conflicts or national disasters occur;

- \$500 to the Khiry Neal Fund to help a young Camden man fighting a courageous battle against paralysis;
- \$500 to the Richmond First Responders Medical Team in honor of Isaac Davis, a 17-year-old from Richmond whose life



The Rev. Jim Cross trains in preparation for his 30-mile fundraising walk.

COURTESY PHOTO

was likely saved by the first responders as they cared for him before transport; and

- \$1,000 for Relay for Life in memory of Cross' parents, Garlene and Jim Cross.

If Cross raises more than the \$5,000, monies will be distributed evenly among the projects.

He announced his plans to his congregations on Sunday, Jan. 6, and to the community and friends on Facebook the following week. Immediately, support began pouring in. A number of people have made monetary gifts and donated items to help raise more money, and proceeds from Valentine dinners at each of the two churches will count toward the total. A local elementary school will donate the proceeds of their two-week "Change for Others"

drive to Impact 2013.

Cross has based his Walk on the story of Nehemiah, centering on the message that we each have talents, and we are expected according to the teachings of Jesus to use those talents for service to others. He realized that long-distance walking was something he could use for

service, and he believes that God inspired him as the plan formed.

To help with Impact 2013, contact Cross at jim_cross@sbcglobal.net, e-mail First UMC Ashdown at ashdownfumc@sbcglobal.net, or call the church office at 870-898-5738.

—submitted by Jamie Stevens

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Hoxie church supports MFH center residents

Elaine Gilliam has had an interest in the work of Methodist Children’s Home (now Methodist Family Health) for decades. Her husband, the Rev. D. Leon Gilliam, served as a Methodist minister for 38 years, and the two of them had opened their home to Children’s Home residents at Christmastime.

When Gilliam, a member of Hoxie United Methodist Church, learned of Methodist Family Health’s Dacus Residential Treatment Center in nearby Bono, she began to think of ways she might continue to support the children of Methodist Family Health. She talked with her daughter, Linda Holt, and together they asked the Hoxie United Methodist Women

unit for support. They also contact Carrie Elam, director of the home in Bono; she sent a representative to speak to the UMW group.

Gilliam and Holt visited the Bono location and received a list of needed items, and UMW gave them \$300 to make purchases for the residents. “When Linda and I delivered these items to the home, the expressions on the faces of the residents was worth so much more than words can express,” Gilliam said.

Holt asked what else they might do for the residents, and Elam suggest that the church throw a monthly birthday party, because many of the residents had never had one. Hoxie UMC now hosts a

monthly birthday party, with many individuals and churches of the Northeast District helping to make a special celebration for the residents.

In November, Gilliam and Holt talked with the Northeast District office about what might be done for the Dacus Center residents at Christmastime. Other churches in the district joined them to purchase a new outfit for each of the residents, as well as one item from each resident’s Christmas wish list. In addition, every resident received a stuffed stocking from one helper, and a hand-crocheted toboggan-style hat from another. The party included a Christmas tree and homemade treats from across the district.



Linda Holt (left) and Elaine Gilliam with items they took on their first trip to the Methodist Family Health residential treatment center in Bono.

COURTESY PHOTO

MFH’s residential treatment centers are designed for children and adolescents struggling with chronic issues. The goal of the centers is to stabilize their behavior and return the client to a less-restrictive environment.

If your church or small group would like to provide help to residents of one of MFH’s treatment centers, contact Ashley Coldiron or Maggie Beeler at the Methodist Family Health Foundation, 501-902-9090.

COMING UP

February

“Interfaith Dialogue as a Path to Peace” in Morrilton on Tuesdays in February

Five women from Morrilton (four United Methodist and one Presbyterian) have organized “Interfaith Dialogue as a Path to Peace,” a series on world religions, which began Jan. 22.

Coordinated by Dr. Jay McDaniel of Hendrix College and the Rev. Beth Turner, a retired member of the Arkansas Conference, these dialogues are held Tuesdays from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Rialto Gallery, 213 East Broadway in downtown Morrilton. The remaining sessions include: Hinduism, from Dr. Nilu Runge, Feb. 5; Judaism, from Phillip Spivey, Feb. 12; Islam, from Sophia Said, Feb. 19; and Christianity and a summation of the series, from Dr. McDaniel, Feb. 26.

The series aims to encourage working together for justice and peace throughout the world, beginning in our own communities. For information, contact the Rev. Beth Turner at juliabturner8@gmail.com or 501-266-2068.

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.

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 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.

Imagine No Malaria training for Northeast District in Jonesboro Feb. 10

Cornerstone UMC Jonesboro will host the next Imagine No Malaria training session, open to the Northeast District and surrounding areas, on Sunday, Feb. 10. The session will begin at 2 p.m. and conclude 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 learn more, contact the Rev. Martha Taylor, Imagine No Malaria field coordinator, at

501-324-8005 or mtaylor@arumc.org.

FUMMWA’s 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 (FUMMWA). 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 michaelEkbladh@att.net.

First UMC Little Rock holds U2Charist Feb. 15 and 17

Hear the music of U2, participate in Holy Communion and support Imagine No Malaria at the U2Charist service, scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday, Feb. 15 and 9 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 17 at First United Methodist Church, 723 Center Street in downtown Little Rock.

The worship service incorporates the music of a secular band that unabashedly proclaims their faith, and what it compels them to do in the world to offer a fresh perspective on the Communion service. Offerings collected will go to Imagine No Malaria, a campaign empowering the people of Africa to focus on prevention, education, treatment and behavior change communication, with the goal of ending deaths from malaria by 2015.

The services will be held in the church’s gym. Childcare will be provided for both services. For information, Lesley Andrews at 501-425-6883 or landrews@fumclr.org.

“Gifts That Keep on Giving” free webinar Feb. 21

Regardless of size, there are opportunities for the people in your church family to make gifts that will continue to give support long after they are gone. Many other good causes are ready to answer their questions about planned gifts; is your church? The Rev. Don Joiner, Director of the Center for Planned Giving, will share how your church can be prepared to meet this need.

The United Methodist General Board of Discipleship offers a series of one-hour webinars for church leaders, addressing different aspects of congregational lay leadership. The free webinars, made possible by local churches’ support of the World Service Fund, begin at 6:30 p.m. Central time. Early registration is recommended. To register, or to view archives of webinars

you’ve missed, visit www.gbod.org/webinars.

March

“Raising Hell” conversation in North Little Rock March 3

Argenta UMC North Little Rock presents “Raising Hell: Will All Be Saved? A conversation with author Rev. Heath Bradley” on Sunday, March 3, at 5:30 p.m.

Bradley will discuss the controversial topic he addresses in his new book, *Flames of Love*, which challenges the church’s traditional view of hell and makes the case for universal salvation. The event will take place at Argenta Community Theater, 405 Main Street in North Little Rock (just down the block from Argenta UMC). Books will be available for purchase, and a signing will follow the discussion.

Confirmation Day with the Bishop happening March 9

Confirmation Day with the Bishop, an annual event for any and all youth presently in a confirmation class, who have just finished a confirmation class or are getting ready to begin a confirmation class, is set for Saturday, March 9, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock.

Confirmation Day offers opportunities to learn about the United Methodist Church. Besides spending time with Bishop Gary Mueller, attendees will worship, get to know recording artist and songwriter Celia Whitley, and have the chance to test their knowledge in games and workshop sessions loaded with information about what it means to be Christian and United Methodist.

Cost is \$10 for students and adults, and includes lunch. Registration form available at arumc.org/register. Questions? Contact Jay Clark at jclark@phumc.com.

“Consumerism and the Christian” free webinar March 21

Do you think Consumerism and Greed are the same? They are actually opposites. In spite of that, they both can be a destructive force on the people in your church family. Learn why there is a conversation about consumerism that we should be having in our churches if we hope to shape generous disciples.

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OBITUARIES

CORNING

Vernon Wayne Johnson

The Rev. Vernon Wayne Johnson passed away on Saturday, Jan. 12, 2013, at Peachtree Hospice Care at Sparks Regional Medical Center in Fort Smith, after a long illness.

He was born on April 29, 1949, in Knoxville, Tenn., to Vernon Leon Johnson and Virginia Ruth (Anderson) Johnson, who preceded him in death. A graduate of Aiken County High School in Aiken, S.C., he received a degree in psychology from the University of South Carolina, and a M.R.E. and M. Div. from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.



Wayne Johnson

Johnson, an Elder in the Arkansas Annual Conference, was a beloved minister for many years throughout the state of Arkansas, and a devoted man of God who loved to serve the Lord. Having retired after 33 years of ministry in 2009, he had had the opportunity to serve in several positions in many churches throughout the South, from Virginia to South Carolina to Arkansas. His recent assignments included Cave City United Methodist Church, Bear Creek, Sidney and Bells Chapel United Methodist Churches. Other appointments included Marmaduke, Mars-Hill, Boydsville, Bay, Augusta-Tupelo, Des Arc, Weiner, Pottsville, Hoxie, as associate pastor in Paragould, Green Ridge Baptist Church in Roanoke, Va., as children's director, Millbrook Baptist Church in Aiken, S.C., as youth director, First Baptist Church in Orangeburg, S.C., as associate minister and First Baptist Church in Corning as youth director.

He also had been employed by the Arkansas Social Services in Corning as issuance officer. He served on the Insurance Committee for the North Arkansas United Methodist Conference and as the insurance representative during the merger for the North Arkansas and Little Rock Conferences. After retiring, he and his wife enjoyed serving as visiting chaplains for the Legacy Hospice in Walnut Ridge.

Survivors include his wife, Linda Mabry Johnson of Corning; two sons, Mark Winston Stafford and his wife, Gina, of Van Buren, and Chris Eugene Stafford and his wife, Kerie, of Cabot; four grandchildren, Drake and Tori of Van Buren, and Ryan and Skylar of Cabot; a sister, Victoria Johnson Harvey and her husband, Jack; a niece, Lee Durham and her husband, Jay, a great-niece, Caroline Durham and a great-nephew, Jack Durham, all of Washington, Ga.; aunts and uncles, Barbara S. Campbell and Herbert M. Johnson of Lenoir City, Tenn., and Forrest and Anna Lou Johnson of Knoxville, Tenn.

A funeral service was held on Jan. 14 at First United Methodist Church Corning, with the Revs. Carroll Jackson, Gary Wiles, Roger Hook and Ann Ferris officiating.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to: Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation, P.O. Box 54351, Tulsa, Okla. 74145 Attn: Jon Gerrish; Legacy Hospice, Walnut Ridge, Arkansas; or First UMC Corning.

LONOKE

Lillie Adell Eagle

Lillie Adell Eagle, 90, passed away on Sunday, Jan. 20, 2013. She was a faithful member of First United Methodist Church Lonoke.

Preceding her in death was her husband, the Rev. Warren (Ed) Eagle, an associate member of the Little Rock Conference who retired in 1986. He died in 2001.

Survivors include her daughters, Phyllis Whitlow, Sandra Ray, Jackie Clements and her husband, Reggie, and Jodi O'Cain and her husband, Ronnie; grandchildren, Alecia Block

and her husband, Cliff, Mark Whitlow and his wife, Kim, David Childress, Kelly McGee, Ami Goade and her husband, Shawn, Sarah Wallace and her husband, Richard, and Corrie O'Cain; 10 great-grandchildren; a brother, Robert Moore and his wife, Jeanie; and a sister, Aline York.



Adell Eagle

A funeral service was held on Wednesday, Jan. 23 at First United Methodist Church Lonoke, with interment following in Lonoke Cemetery. Memorials may be made to First UMC Lonoke, P.O. Box 152, Lonoke, AR 72086-0152.

TEXARKANA

Jean Atkinson Wren

Jean Atkinson Wren, 77, of Texarkana, Ark., passed away on Friday, Jan. 4, 2013, at a local hospital.

She was born June 21, 1935, in Texarkana, Texas. She was a music instructor at Texarkana College for 12 years, and was a founding member of Sugar Hill United Methodist Church, where she served as pianist.

She is survived by her husband, the Rev. Dr. Herbert Wren, who was the founding pastor of Sugar Hill UMC; three sons, Allan Wren, Steve Wren and Mark Wren, all of Texarkana; one daughter, Clare Wren-Russ of Los Angeles, Calif.; two sisters, Roberta Guillory of Baton Rouge, La., and Nancy Williams of Magnolia; nine grandchildren, Kelsey Wren, Georgia Russ, Grant Adams, Lucas Wren, Hannah Wren, Garrett Adams, Hunter Russ, Carter Wren and Haylee Wren; a sister-in-law, Harriet Autrey; and a number of other relatives.



Jean Wren

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, Jan. 9, at Sugar Hill United Methodist Church, with the Rev. Greg Burks officiating. Burial followed in Hillcrest Memorial Park.

TUCKERMAN

Donita Freeman Lewert

Donita Freeman Lewert of Tuckerman and Huntsville passed away on Friday, Jan. 18, 2013, in Jonesboro.

She was born Nov. 29, 1946, in Exeter, Calif., to Don and Wanda Nadine (Routon) Freeman. In 1947, at age 21 months, she contracted polio. She was treated and spent a great deal of time recovering at the Shriner's Hospital in San Francisco. During the 1950s, she was the March of Dimes Poster Child. Although the polio virus left her walking with braces, she never let the effects hold her back.

Faith was the rock on which she built her life. As a child, every Sunday Donita would put on her braces and walk to the Farmersville United Methodist Church in the Farmersville Community of Visalia, Calif. It was there that she accepted the Lord, was baptized, began her lifelong devotion to Jesus Christ.

During the years she lived in Tulare County, Donita earned a degree in accounting at the College of Sequoias, and worked as manager of Orthopedic Associates in Visalia, California for 20 years. She was a devoted member of the Farmville Church and served as song leader, worship committee chairman, youth leader and member of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.

Because of her involvement in the PPR Committee, she met the Rev. Donald Lewert. They married on Feb. 9, 1987, at Trinity UMC in San Francisco. After that day, she began a great work as a pastor's wife, changing many lives throughout the years. The example of her deep faith had a profound effect

on her own family as well as many church families.

Donita was preceded in death by her parents; a brother, Donald Eugene Freeman; and a sister, Beryl Jean Williams.

She is survived by her husband of almost 26 years, the Rev. Donald Lewert, a son, Donald Mahon and his wife, Lori, of Visalia, Calif.; a daughter, Leah Elizabeth Lewert-Taylor and her husband, Mark, of Memphis, Tenn.; a sister, Joy Grimmer and her husband, Frank, of Florence, Ore.; three grandchildren, Gannon Mahon, Maddie Mahon and Rhia Mahon; two nieces she raised as though they were her own daughters, Robin Gregory of Glen Rose, Ark., and Kandi Williams of Lake Stevens, Wash.; sisters-in-law, Carolyn Lewert Hagan and her husband, Darrell, of Klamath Falls, Ore., and Marcia Seiter of Indianapolis, Ind.; and many beloved nieces, nephews, cousins and church families throughout California and Arkansas.

A funeral service was held on Tuesday, Jan. 22, at Tuckerman UMC, officiated by her husband. Interment followed on Thursday, Jan. 24, at the Jasper Cemetery in Jasper.

Memorials may be made to the March of Dimes, 1501 North Pierce Street, Little Rock, AR 72207, Jackson County Humane Society, P.O. Box 154, Newport, AR 72112 or Tuckerman UMC, 108 Hwy. 67 N., Tuckerman, AR 72473.

TUCSON, Ariz.

Faye Douglas Watson

Faye Douglas Watson passed away peacefully in her sleep on Monday, Dec. 17, 2012.

She was born Nov. 14, 1925, to Frank Birdwell Wiygul and Izola (Wood) Wiygul in Dorsey, Miss. The family moved to Keiser, Ark. in 1939. It was in Keiser where she met and married the Rev. Willard Douglas. He died in 1976, and two years later, she married the Rev. J. William Watson. After Rev. Watson retired, the couple moved to Marion, Ark. Rev. Watson passed away in 2001 and Faye remained in the home until 2005, when she moved to West Virginia to be near her son Willard Douglas Jr.

She was preceded in death by two husbands, who were United Methodist ministers; two sons, Gifford Douglas and Stephen Douglas; five brothers, Frank Wiygul, Jim Wiygul, Charlie Wiygul, Joel Wiygul and F.B. Wiygul; and one sister, Kathryn Tindall.

Faye was a mother, homemaker and pastor's wife in various places in northern Arkansas, including the Jonesboro area, Caraway, North Little Rock, Bald Knob, Tuckerman, Leachville, Marion, Fort Smith, and Marianna. At different times she worked as a bookkeeper for the Rural Electric Co-op in Jonesboro, Fidelity National Bank in West Memphis, and the Bank of West Memphis. From 1989 until her retirement in 2002, she served as the insurance and benefits coordinator for the North Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Faye is survived by one son, Willard L. Douglas Jr., and his wife, Martha; a granddaughter, Heidi Landon and her husband, Jim; and a great-grandson, Max. She is also survived by three stepdaughters, Annette Saig and her husband, Vic; Linda Crane and her husband, Jim; and Pat McGill and her husband, Joe; seven step-grandchildren, Bill Saig, Victor Saig, Michael Saig, Chris Crane, Christy Crane, Stephanie McGill and Jennifer McGill; several step-great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

A memorial service was held Jan. 14 at Marion United Methodist Church. A private burial of remains was conducted before the memorial service at Crittenden Memorial Park.



Faye Douglas Watson



Bishop Bennie Warner (right) returned to Liberia to attend the groundbreaking ceremony for New Hope Academy.

COURTESY PHOTO

Documentary with Arkansas and Methodist ties premieres April 5

"Black Marks on White Paper," a documentary by retired Arkansas Conference pastor the Rev. Bob Hager, will premiere in April as part of the Ozark Foothills Film Festival.

The film tells the story of Bishop Bennie Warner, who in 1980 left his home country of Liberia to attend the United Methodist General Conference. Five days after his departure, a Liberian military coup made it unsafe for Warner, a former vice president of that nation, to return home. During his time in the U.S., he has served in Oklahoma and New York, as well as two appointments in Arkansas: as pastor of St. Paul UMC Maumelle, and as a district superintendent.

"I first heard the story of 'Black Marks on White Paper' in 1998, as newly appointed District Superintendent Bennie Warner gathered us clergy for a meeting at Davis Deer Camp outside of El Dorado," says Hager. "It was this compelling story, which became the seed, which grew into the film, 13 years later."

The documentary's title comes from Warner's childhood desire to learn to read and write—to put

"black marks on white paper," as he described to his father what he had seen others do.

"By the time I was 15, I heard the word that there was a school being built nearly 200 miles from my village," he says in the documentary, "and so that really ignited my desire to want to go." He eventually traveled to the United Methodist mission to the north and enrolled in the school there.

When he made his first return visit to Liberia in 2009, the idea for starting a school in his home village was born. New Hope Academy is part of Warner's vision for helping rebuild his native land; it will serve about 200 students from 14 villages.

The premiere is set for Friday, April 5 at 6 p.m., in Independence Hall on the University of Arkansas Community College campus in Batesville. Tickets for the screening are \$5, available at the door.

Bishop Warner and his wife, Anna, plan to attend the premiere. There will be a reception in their honor following the screening.

To learn more about the film, visit www.blackmarksfilm.com.



Investing for the Kingdom

Dick Butler spent many years helping the fledgling United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas become the strong ministry partner it is today. Dick and Gertie Butler are an appropriate beginning for the story of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. One of the original incorporators in 1963, he had a hands-on, day-to-day role in managing the investments of the Foundation from the start until his death in 1999.

Gertie and Dick Butler shared a great passion for philanthropy. Just a few examples of their great generosity include their support of Hendrix College, the Butler Center for Arkansas History, First United Methodist Church in Little Rock, the Gertrude Butler Child Development Center and Wildwood Park for the Performing Arts. A strong Foundation advocate in her own right, Gertie also looked to the Foundation to help her achieve her charitable goals. Their son Richard Jr. continues their great family tradition of service as an active UMFA board member.

The Butler legacy at UMFA is a series of endowment funds that have helped the Foundation to grow to its current status as one of the largest grant-making United Methodist foundations in the country. Today's ability to make transformational grants to United Methodist ministries throughout Arkansas rests in large part on the witness, generosity, vision and leadership of Dick Butler.



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SERVANT'S GIFT: The Rev. Siegfried Johnson (right) on Dec. 20 presented to Bishop Gary Mueller a gift from St. James United Methodist Church Little Rock. The church, which hosted Bishop Mueller's Sept. 8 installation

service, commissioned Russellville artist Winston Taylor to make an additional pitcher and basin like those used by the bishop during that worship service. The rim of the basin bears an inscription from John 13:14: "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you should also wash one another's feet."

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS