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Miller Wilbourn, left, and Channa Childs confer before making a rebuttal in the final round of a SUMMA debate tournament focused on the issue of separation of church and state.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

## Faith seeking understanding

### SUMMA engages students in theological debate

BY AMY FORBUS  
Editor

A March 2 debate tournament at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Little Rock marked the culmination of a new program designed to foster theological reflection among young people.

SUMMA, a program of the Institute for Theological Studies at St. Margaret's, for the last half of 2012 and beginning of 2013 provided high school students with an unusual extracurricular activity: the opportunity to

discuss and debate matters of Christian theology.

The Rev. Adam Kirby, a United Methodist deacon, serves as one of the leaders of SUMMA. Kirby is appointed to serve beyond the local church, teaching philosophy, U.S. history, world geography and civics at Little Rock Central High School. His appointment gives him opportunities to teach students the hallmarks of rational and critical thinking, and to build relationships that help students grow.

It was that last part that got the attention of the Rev.

[See DEBATE, page 9A]

## Conference begins review of health insurance needs

BY KAYLEA M. HUTSON  
Special Contributor

Just as a builder consults experts before making structural changes to an existing building, so too does the Conference seek expert assistance before changing its pension and health benefits.

In March, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits, chaired by the Rev. Dennis W. Spence, entered a conversation with Stephens Insurance, LLC, part of Stephens, Inc., of Little Rock, with the goal of

beginning a three-year study examining the Conference's insurance and pension needs in the face of a changing health care industry.

According to Spence, the study and its forthcoming recommendations are needed to help congregations. Many local churches struggle to meet the needs of clergy and dependents amid the rising demands of insurance premiums.

"Due to the rapid inflationary rates of medical insurance, many congregations are letting the increased premium each year be the

only salary increase to the pastor," he said. "Others are requesting a single pastor, since those premiums are \$9,000 less each year."

Additional congregations, he continued, have dropped their clergy requests from full-time to part-time status, to get out from under the "heavy burden of health care."

"If a local church was a person, the cause of death for some would be listed as 'Death by Insurance,'" Spence said. "Our board truly feels the burden of managing health care for pastors

[See INSURANCE, page 8A]

## Bishop announces cabinet changes

Bishop Gary Mueller has announced changes to the Arkansas Conference cabinet, effective June 30.

The Rev. Mackey Yokem, superintendent of the Northwest District, will become the executive director of mission and ministry for the Arkansas Conference, and the Rev. Mark Norman, associate pastor of First UMC Benton, will become Southeast District superintendent.

Two superintendents will move to new districts: The Rev. Bud Reeves will move from the Northeast to the Northwest District, and the Rev. Susan Ledbetter will move from the Southeast to the Northeast District.

Yokem will succeed the Rev. Phil Hathcock, director of connectional ministries and assistant to the bishop,



**Mackey Yokem**

who is retiring. Yokem's new title encompasses the functions of the previous position, as well as additional tasks related to the ongoing implementation of Imagine Ministry.

Yokem, 62, entered pastoral ministry in 1976 as associate pastor of Lakeside UMC Pine Bluff. He then served at Primrose UMC Little Rock; as director of Camp Aldersgate; in church relations for Hendrix College; congregations in Gurdon, Lonoke and Warren; and as senior pastor of First UMC Russellville. He has served as a DS since 2007.

Norman, 40, began pastoral ministry in 1992 at St. James UMC Lonoke. He served in Kansas City, Mo., during seminary, and in the Kansas East Conference while



**Mark Norman**

his wife, the Rev. Natasha Murray-Norman, attended seminary. He has served St. Paul Maumelle UMC and Wesley Chapel UMC. He has served at First UMC Benton since 2011.

Superintendents the Rev. Mike Morey, Southwest District, and the Rev. Dede Roberts, Central District, will continue in their current roles.

# Prayer ministry expands into mission field

*Moving beyond church walls provides community connection, opportunities for growth*



COURTESY PHOTO

BY PATTY PRINCE  
Special Contributor

Every Thursday, a group of people meet in the Cedar Lodge library at Good Samaritan Society's Hot Springs Village campus, a local senior living community. Their purpose is simple: to pray together.

For years, members of Village United Methodist Church had met at the church building for prayer, but most often, the same six or seven people showed up each week. Sandi Matthews, prayer coordinator at Village UMC, felt called to reach beyond the congregation and bring the surrounding community together to pray. She could tell that the prayer gathering wasn't growing, and believed that a significant change could invigorate it.

Matthews wondered if God wanted the prayer gathering to be moved out of the church and into the community. She felt that a new location might welcome others from the community to join the existing core group. She shared the idea with Village UMC's senior pastor, the Rev. Dr. George McCoy, who wholeheartedly agreed. With his encouragement, Matthews recommended to the prayer group that they move their weekly prayer gathering to the home of Wilma Flud, a member and former prayer coordinator at Village UMC.

In the spring of 2012, the prayer gathering met for the first time at Flud's home. But soon after, Flud developed health problems and announced she would be moving to Texas. Once again, Matthews found herself seeking a location for the prayer gathering.

Sally Davidson, a resident of Good Samaritan's Cedar Lodge and a member of Village UMC, asked Matthews if their prayer gathering might be held at Good Sam's.

Davidson rarely could come to the weekly prayer gatherings because of health issues, but she would be able to get there if it were held closer to her home. Meeting at Good Sam's would not only provide an opportunity for its residents to pray together, but it also would provide more

space for others in the community to join them.

Matthews spoke with the manager of senior living at Good Sam's about the possibility of the prayer group meeting there. The manager immediately offered the library as a meeting place, but told Matthews the only time it was available was on Thursday mornings. Matthews was elated! Thursday morning was when the prayer group always met.

And, the Cedar Lodge library at Good Sam's was just the sort of place that was conducive to prayer. It was quiet, had plenty of natural light, was roomy and had enough tables and chairs to accommodate a good-sized group.

The prayer gathering began meeting at Good Samaritan in October 2012. Since changing to a more community-focused location, the gathering has continued to grow. Although started by Village UMC, it now includes members from a variety of different churches and denominations. Many who attend believe that praying together already has changed lives in their community and beyond. They have laid aside denominational differences to unite in prayer for their churches, families, community, the military, government, nation, world and each other. God is doing awesome things through this faithful group of pray-ers.

The structure of the gathering frees participants to pray in a manner that is comfortable for them. Some come and pray silently. Some pray using Scripture as a guide. Others prefer to read prayers that are printed for that particular week.

All are welcome and encouraged to be part of this ministry. Those unable to attend may submit prayer requests to Village UMC's church office at 501-922-1030.

For more information on this ministry, or for ideas on starting a similar prayer group in your own community, contact Sandi Matthews at 501-915-9299.

*Prince is a member of Village UMC and a participant in the weekly prayer gathering.*

# Strengthening ethnic ministries in Arkansas

BY RONNIE MILLER-YOW  
Special Contributor

The Committee on Ethnic and Language Concerns sees our primary purpose as discerning ways to empower and strengthen ethnic ministries in this Conference. We are excited about our new mission and our new purpose, given to us by the Imagine Ministry Team and affirmed by the Arkansas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

To accomplish this goal, we convened The Ethnic Summit, a Feb. 16 gathering which persons of all ethnicities were invited to attend.

This event gave us new synergy around making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It brought together different ethnic persons from around the Conference to discuss ways in which we could better work together to fulfill our gospel mandate.

At the summit, we discussed ways we can further strengthen our connection by using our retired ethnic pastors as resources for our local congregations. We also discussed ways in which we can use our funding from the Conference to strengthen ethnic ministries in strategic ways that will produce the most fruit for the Kingdom.

The other two major discussions in our gathering

centered on ways we might better engage our bi-vocational pastors, so that they feel the sense of connection which helps churches enter into partnerships that further expand ministry. Another important discussion dealt with recruiting laity to serve as lay coaches in connection with the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership. Lay members left this informative session feeling empowered to make a difference in church leadership.

The Rev. Dr. Sharma Lewis gave our keynote address, challenging members of the different ethnic groups present to really work hard to find ways to work together. True cooperation will involve Conference staff, district superintendents and all others for effectiveness in God's church.

We are grateful to Bishop Gary Mueller, the Rev. Dede Roberts and the Rev. Maxine Allen for their leadership and support during our gathering. We move forward knowing that we do not stand alone, but that our bishop and the cabinet desire for us to excel in reaching our goals.

Events similar to this one are being planned to further build upon our connection and to increase our vitality, so that the ethnic churches will be able to do our part in making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

*The Rev. Miller-Yow, senior pastor of Wesley Chapel UMC Little Rock and chaplain at Philander Smith College, serves as chair of the Conference Committee on Ethnic and Language Concerns.*



Ronnie Miller-Yow



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**Submission Deadlines**

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
May 3	April 18
June 7	May 22
July 5	June 20

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## A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

# Let's get all wet!

I have entered into a covenant with several other newly elected bishops to read one chapter in the New Testament every day for a year. We began January 1 with the first chapter in Matthew's Gospel, and it's been a spiritual discipline I approach with great anticipation every day. I recently read John 13—the chapter in which Jesus washes his disciples' feet—and was struck by what he says as soon as he finishes that unexpected act:

*"Do you know what I've done for you? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you speak correctly, because I am. If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you too must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example: just as I have done, you also must do."* (Common English Bible)

I think it's abundantly clear what Jesus wants the world to see when people look at those of us who proclaim him as Savior and Lord:

people so filled with his love that we gladly and joyfully serve each other. But I must confess that I've been haunted by the question of what people outside the church actually see when they look at us.

Sadly, I don't think it's us washing each other's feet—either literally or figuratively. Instead, I am convinced they see megachurch pastors flying around the world in their private jets, being treated like rock stars. Or congregations that have turned the Christian faith into partisan politics of the left or the right. Or pastors who are guilty of sexual abuse being protected by churches that have covered it up. Or churches whose mission is actually to keep things as comfortable as possible for their members. Or Christians who are smug, self-righteous and judgmental.

It's not a pretty picture. But it's one we have to look at closely if we

are ever going to be the church Jesus calls us to be, and the church I think we truly long to be. And, if we are willing to look, God will draw us back to Jesus' words to his disciples. He doesn't just say it's a good idea for the disciples to wash each other's feet or to do it if they feel like it. He tells them it's what they must do. And he's right. Not just about them, but also about us.

So let's get all wet. Pick up your towel and basin, fill it with water, take off someone's shoes and start washing. Love each other. Pray for each other. Care for each other. And serve each other. Because it's out of such simple acts that the world is transformed.

Grace and peace,

Gary E. Mueller



## PRACTICAL DIVINITY

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON

# The danger of a disappearing faith

People who know Jesus generally want other people to know Jesus too. This is a large part of the motivation for what we call evangelism.

We also do evangelism for other reasons, of course. Probably the main reason is because we're told to do so—to "make disciples of all nations" as Jesus says in Matthew 28:19-20. But if we only evangelized out of a sense of duty, my guess is that it wouldn't be very effective. Evangelism is about faith-sharing, and the most effective faith-sharing comes from people who have a vital faith to begin with.

In other words, the best way to introduce a person to the God who changes lives is for that person to get to know someone whose life has been changed by God.

Evangelism is a vital ministry of the church. It is what we mean by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ to those who have never received it. Evangelism is also the

task of initiating such people into the faith for the first time by helping them to learn the practices of discipleship: worship, prayer, Bible study and the like.

Through such initiation, new Christians then learn the deep calling to reach out and care for others with the love of Christ.

So all evangelistic work depends on the ministry of people who themselves have a strong faith. But can we always count on that in the church?

It's not always clear that those in the church have a strong faith. That's true even for some people who did have a strong faith in the beginning.

A big part of John Wesley's own concern was around the danger of "dissipation." He used that word to describe what can happen to faith when it is not continually nurtured over time. Neglected faith can dissipate like a pool of water under a

glaring sun.

This is a very important concept for us to come to grips with. The dissipation of faith is often a gradual, almost unnoticeable process. It happens over time, as once earnest disciples allow their attention to be progressively drawn to worldly temptations. The scary aspect of the process of dissipation is that it lulls otherwise faithful people into a state of apathy so subtly, they sometimes don't realize what is going on.

In Wesley's view, dissipation doesn't necessarily involve a traumatic event or crisis of faith. On the contrary, he believed everyone was in danger of dissipation simply by the fact that all of us live in a fallen world.

Wesley comments on this idea in his sermon, "On Dissipation." He writes, "We are encompassed on all sides with persons and things that tend to draw us from our centre. Indeed, every creature, if we are not continually on our guard, will draw

us from our Creator. The whole visible world, all we see, hear, or touch, all the objects either of our senses or understanding, have a tendency to dissipate our thoughts from the invisible world, and to distract our minds from attending to him who is both the author and end of our being."

Elsewhere he sums up dissipation as the "uncentring of the soul from God."

Wesley's perspective is every bit as relevant today as it was then. If our faith is always somewhat fragile in a fallen world, that means we need to be very intentional about nurturing it.

We can cultivate our faith much the way we cultivate a garden. It must be tended daily, given the right care and assisted in its growth. None of this is a denial that faith is a gift of God's grace. It is simply that a part of the grace God gives is the invitation to really participate in our own salvation.

## APPOINTMENTS

The following appointments, effective June 30 unless otherwise noted, have been announced as of press time on March 28, 2013:

- Marion UMC—Andrew Thompson (part-time Associate Pastor, in addition to existing appointment at Memphis Theological Seminary); effective April 1
- Executive Director of Mission and Ministry, Arkansas Conference—Mackey Yokem
- Superintendent, Northwest District—Bud Reeves
- Superintendent, Northeast District—Susan Ledbetter
- Superintendent, Southeast District—Mark Norman
- First UMC Batesville—Justin Ledbetter
- Campus minister, Vanderbilt University—Heath Bradley
- Central UMC Fayetteville—John C. Robbins (appointed from the Texas Annual Conference)
- First UMC Paragould—John Fleming
- First UMC Arkadelphia—Jim Polk
- First UMC El Dorado—Keith Dodson
- First UMC Harrison—David Williams
- First UMC Forrest City—Bill Buchanan
- Center for Clergy and Lay Excellence in Leadership—Candace Barron (Associate Director)
- Pulaski Heights UMC—Belinda

- Price (Associate Pastor)
- Pulaski Heights UMC—Jacob Lynn (Associate Pastor)
- Arkansas Conference Staff; Secondary appointment: Faith UMC Little Rock—Martha Taylor

The following retirements are effective July 1 unless otherwise noted:

- Kay Burton (Feb. 1, 2013)
- Judy Wilson Clark
- James Edward Conn
- John D. Darnall
- Rita Kay Hammett Evans
- William "Bill" Ferguson
- Michael S. Fikes (June 1, 2013)
- Marion Fleming
- James J. Fort
- Jackie Ann Gregory
- Ella Harris (Nov. 1, 2012)
- Phil Hathcock
- Tony Holifield
- Susan "Sue" D. May Howe
- Donnie "Donna" J. Huie
- Everett P. Isom
- Carroll D. Jackson
- John H. Kidwell (Oct. 1, 2013)
- Barbara Grimes Lewis
- Jerry L. Lumpkin
- Richard D. McKinnie
- Bob McMillon
- Andy Newbill
- Charles A. Perry
- Bob W. Sanders
- John Soward
- Jimmy Keith Teeter
- Marilyn Webb (Jan. 1, 2013)

To see clergy appointment changes as they become official, visit [arumc.org/appointments](http://arumc.org/appointments).

The cultivation of our faith is also every bit as practical as gardening. Just as we plant, water and prune to bring a garden to maturity, so too do we feed our faith through worship, Bible study, prayer and outreach to one another.

Faith cultivation requires a community, of course. None of us can do discipleship on our own. We need one another, which is why God puts us in relation to one another by virtue of our baptism into the body of Christ.

Dissipation is a danger, but it need not be deadly. And that's because the source of our faith is none other than Christ Jesus who tells us, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33; NIV).

*The Rev. Thompson, Wesley scholar for the Arkansas Conference, teaches at Memphis Theological Seminary and serves as associate pastor of Marion UMC. He may be reached at [athompson@memphisseminary.edu](mailto:athompson@memphisseminary.edu).*

# In-store worship service marks Cokesbury's closing

BY AMY FORBUS  
Editor

The afternoon of Friday, March 1 found more than a dozen people in the Cokesbury Bookstore at the corner of 7th and Center Streets in downtown Little Rock. Some shared in conversation; others browsed the mostly-bare shelves for last-minute deals offered at a 90 percent discount on the store's last day of operation.

Most of those present gathered in a circle near the store's front door as the tune for "Hymn of Promise" came from the keyboard of the Rev. Anne Holcomb, associate pastor of Quapaw Quarter UMC Little Rock.

## Honoring the ministry

The Rev. Harriett Akins-Banman, pastor of Faith UMC Little Rock, gave words of welcome at the brief service. Weeks earlier, she had approached store manager Yvonne Armstrong and asked to create a service of farewell as a way of honoring the store's ministry and the work of its staff.

"She was very open to the idea," Akins-Banman said.

"I was shocked by the news, saddened by the loss and concerned for the staff—that's how the idea came about... a way of closure for a unique ministry from Methodism's start that has spanned years."

To Armstrong, the time between the November 2012 announcement that all Cokesbury stores would close and the last day of business in the Little Rock store seemed "like a very long funeral."

"It's just time to let go and move forward," she said. Her immediate plans are to rest, spend time with her father (her mother died in January), tackle some organization of her home and look for her next job.

"I think we have done an honorable job of closing this, and doing it well," she said.

## Gathering of friends

During a time of sharing built into the worship service, many of those present spoke of unexpected

reunions and new friendships made when they stopped by the Cokesbury store. Its role as a gathering place drew comparisons to the proverbial old corner drugstore, as well as the bar from the 1980s sitcom "Cheers"—where everybody knows your name.

"I can remember calling more than once in an eleventh-hour panic" for some worship supply or piece of curriculum, Akins-Banman said, noting that the staff was always extremely helpful and understanding of her plight.

The Rev. Mary Jane Cole, who serves as associate pastor of First UMC Little Rock and thus works in the same building as the space that housed Cokesbury, shared memories similar to Akins-Banman's. "It's been great to be your neighbor," she told the staff.

"Whether we were looking for something to cheer us up, or to stir our souls, we knew we could come here and find it," said retired Bishop Kenneth Hicks, who offered a pastoral reflection as part of the service.



As part of a March 1 worship service held in the Little Rock Cokesbury store, the Rev. Harriett Akins-Banman and retired Bishop Kenneth Hicks serve Communion to store employee Jean Baker and manager Yvonne Armstrong.  
AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

"This doesn't mean that energizing by the Almighty is ceasing," Bishop Hicks said in his reflection. "This doesn't mean that things are ending; it means we don't know what's coming yet."

## Next for Cokesbury

The United Methodist Publishing House plans to hire a

Little Rock-based Cokesbury sales representative, who will serve as a resource for local churches and maintain a Cokesbury retail presence at events like Annual Conference. In addition, the Publishing House is making improvements to cokesbury.com to create a better online shopping experience.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Praise for viewing state's camp and retreat ministries on equal footing

"Rather than viewing each of the Conference-related gathering places—Bear Creek, Mount Eagle Retreat Center, Shoal Creek, Tanako and Wayland Spring—as separate entities, the planning team seeks to understand them as different facets of a single ministry." (from "Looking to the future of camps and retreat centers" in the March 15, 2013 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*)

I am thrilled to see Shoal Creek, Bear Creek and Wayland Spring camps finally getting some recognition alongside the so-called "conference camps." Those three camps, from the old North Arkansas Conference, have provided thousands of people with some wonderful experiences over the years, yet they often seemed to be treated as unwanted step-children by the merged Arkansas Conference. Maybe we can finally see some equality in action in our camping ministries.

The Rev. Michael Jennings  
Timothy UMC  
Camden

### Letters to the Editor policy:

All letters must be signed (name and city/church) and include the writer's phone number or email address. Letters may be sent to editor@arumc.org, or to 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202.

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

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

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

## 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.

**Bentonville First United Methodist Church is seeking a full-time Director of Music and Worship.** This position requires a candidate who holds beliefs consistent with those of the United Methodist Church, can lead with integrity, and is passionate about worship. The Director of Music leads worship during two Sunday morning services weekly and other special services as needed. He or she will also direct, coordinate, and manage all church music, programs, and musicians, either personally or through other directors or volunteers. Essential to this position are the abilities to complete assignments promptly and efficiently and to work well with church members, co-workers and the general public. Salary based on experience and education. Candidates may send a resume to Rev. Rex Dickey at email address rex@fumcbentonville.org or First UMC; 201 NW 2nd St., Bentonville, AR 72712. The complete job description and employment application can be found at fumcbentonville.org/Employment.

**Full-time Director of Children's Ministries position available at St. James United Methodist Church** (stjames-umc.org), a 3500 member congregation in Little Rock. Director will strategically lead creative ministries for children, nurture and equip volunteers, and oversee the program for ages 3-11 including Sunday School, 500 child VBS, and Upward. Applicants should have a calling to children's ministry, in addition to strong team building skills, excellent communication and organizational skills, and an ability to relate well to children, parents and volunteers. Send letters of interest and resumes to Rev. Blake Bradford (Blake@stjames-umc.org).

**Join Wayne and Rev. Lynn Lindsey on Educational Opportunities trip to Italy** November 5-15, 2013. Registration deadline: May 1, 2013. Approximate cost: \$4,000. Questions: Lynn, 664-3600

**Swamp Angel Ministries is traveling Arkansas!** Donations go to the Annual Arkansas Retired Ministers Day. For info: contact David Bush at thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org.

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

Arkansas Annual Conference 2013



# Laity gathering has different spin for 2013

Life is a party—well, at least for those attending the laity gathering at the 2013 Arkansas Annual Conference.

Forgoing typical plans for the usual banquet-style laity dinner, organizers are instead planning an informal gathering at the nearby Dickey-Stephens Park, home of the Arkansas Travelers baseball team. The park is in North Little Rock, just across the river from the Statehouse Convention Center, where most of this year's Annual Conference will take place.

"It will be a celebration of the laity in Arkansas," said Karon Mann, lay leader of the Arkansas Conference. "Think of it more as a party than a dinner."

Initial plans include having a buffet of "ballpark food"—hamburgers, hot dogs, baked beans, chips and more—set inside the shaded concourse area. Organizers hope to include a praise band or other forms of entertainment. No speaker is slated for the event.

Mann said the team chose Dickey-Stephens Park because it provides a unique setting for the gathering.

"We hope for this to be a meet-and-greet or mixer type event, where laity from around the state can mingle and have a relaxed, enjoyable dinner," she said.

## Everyone invited

Mann added that the event is not limited to lay members of the Annual Conference.

"Family, friends and United Methodists in the community are invited," Mann said. "I would love for people to come and celebrate the work of United Methodist laity in Arkansas."

The event is slated for the Conference dinner break on Monday, June 10. Tickets will be available online at [ac2013.arumc.org](http://ac2013.arumc.org). The ticket price covers the cost for the annual event.

"I am thinking of this event as a party we are throwing for ourselves," Mann said. "Come out and have fun!"

—Kaylea M. Hutson

# Partners in Ministry event for clergy spouses June 9

All spouses of active and retired clergy are invited to the Partners in Ministry Reception, held in conjunction with the 2013 Annual Conference. The reception is set for Sunday, June 9, from 4 to 5:30 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, 7th and Center Streets in downtown Little Rock. Parking will be available across the street from church, and shuttles will be provided from the

Statehouse Convention Center, where this year's Annual Conference is being held.

The reception will provide a relaxed and informal time to visit with friends from other districts. The Southwest District is hosting the event; no tickets or RSVP required. For additional information, contact Charlotte Morey at 501-230-5012.

## PEOPLE OF FAITH

### Barron named associate director of Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence



**Candace Barron**

The Rev. Dr. Candace Barron has been appointed associate director of the Arkansas Conference's Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership, effective July 1.

An ordained Elder in the Arkansas Conference, Barron earned her Master of Divinity degree at SMU's Perkins School of Theology, and went on to earn a Doctor of Ministry degree in pastoral leadership and small group ministry from Houston Graduate School of Theology.

The Rev. Dr. Kurt Boggan, director of the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership, noted that Barron's training in spiritual formation and small group ministry will be an asset to the Conference.

"Candace will be working with both clergy and laity in developing a team approach to the revitalization of ministry at the local church level," he said. "She will spend a significant amount of time in working with the small membership church and bringing resources, training and equipping to enable a process of engagement with the mission fields. The outcomes of this work with pastor and

laity, circuit elders and congregational coaches will be transformed lives, transformed mission fields and vital congregations."

A native of Espanola, New Mexico, Barron moved to Texas with her family during her teen years. She enlisted in the U.S. Army after high school and spent eight years as a military police officer, stationed in Yuma, Ariz.; Fischbach, Germany; and Kaiserslautern, Germany, where she served as personal security to the Commander of the 21st Support Command.

After the military, Barron worked in the pharmaceutical industry before returning to Texas. While in college, she worked as the administrative assistant for Cheatham Memorial UMC, which is where she first felt God calling her into ministry.

Barron has served in pastoral ministry at Golden UMC in the Texas Conference; at Trinity UMC Little Rock; and in her current appointment as pastor of Geyer Springs and St. Luke UMCs.

### Taylor selected for training and marketing role on Conference CFT staff

The Rev. Martha Taylor has joined the Center for Technology staff of the Arkansas Conference as the training and marketing team member.

A provisional deacon, Taylor first became part of the Arkansas Conference staff in 2006 as the communications director. She holds professional certification in Christian Communications.

"I'm glad to have the opportunity to serve the Arkansas Conference," she said. "I am looking forward to working with the leadership and finding new ways of telling the stories of transformation that are happening across Arkansas."

Taylor's most recent role with the Conference was a six-month stint as Imagine No Malaria field coordinator. Her new role will include continuing to shepherd that fundraising initiative.

Taylor will facilitate a variety of training opportunities for United Methodists in Arkansas in conjunction with the work of the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership; work with Conference leaders to develop a cohesive marketing strategy to communicate the Conference's mission and core measures of fruitfulness; serve as chief storytelling strategist as the work of the Imagine Ministry initiative continues to offer local congregations new ways to be the church; serve as the liaison for the Disaster Response Team; and coordinate communication amid disaster or crisis situations that may arise.

"We are so excited to have Martha on board in the training and marketing role," said Mark Epperson, director of the Center for Technology. "She brings a wealth of experience, along with a deep knowledge of the connection in the Arkansas Conference. She is a valuable addition to our team, and will enable us to work in new ways as we begin to tell the story of Imagine Ministry."



**Martha Taylor**

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# Imagine No Malaria: Local churches find creative ways to save lives

Throughout Arkansas, churches and individuals are finding ways to contribute toward the goal of eradicating deaths from malaria by 2015. The first \$333,333 raised for Imagine No Malaria will be doubled by a generous grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. The progress graph below reflects \$154,500 of that matching gift. To learn more about Imagine No Malaria, visit [arumc.org/inm](http://arumc.org/inm).

## 'Piñata Bash':

The Piñata Bash, held recently at Village UMC, raised nearly \$2,000 for the Imagine No Malaria campaign. Bashing the piñata was the congregation's way of symbolically "bashing" Malaria in Africa in an effort to save children's lives. Children's Sunday school classes competed to raise the most money for the Imagine No Malaria campaign. One member donated \$60 in change to the youngest children's class, which pushed them over the top to win. Each child was blind-folded and given three chances to bash the piñata. When it broke open, the children happily scrambled to retrieve the candy and toys.



## 'Painting for a Cause':

First UMC Springdale held a "Painting for a Cause" class that raised more than \$600 for Imagine No Malaria. A \$35 fee covered supplies and sent a \$20 gift to Imagine No Malaria. The church has planned a second Painting for a Cause event for the end of April.



## Upward sports ministry devotional and offering:

Imagine No Malaria was the focus during two recent Upward Basketball games held at St. James UMC Little Rock. At halftime, the devotional focused on the life-saving work of Imagine No Malaria, and buckets were passed around for donations, which totaled nearly \$2,000.

Has your church or small group organized a creative Imagine No Malaria fundraiser? Send a brief description and photo to Martha Taylor, [mtaylor@arumc.org](mailto:mtaylor@arumc.org).

## Annual Conference goal: save 3,000 lives

3,000 minutes. 3,000 lives. 100% participation.

Help save a life a minute during Annual Conference!

Every minute Annual Conference is in session—approximately 50 hours or 3,000 minutes—we will be saving lives from malaria. How? With every church in the Arkansas Conference bringing a gift or affirmation of gift\* to Annual Conference, we can save lives—one or more per minute! No gift is too small to make a difference!

\*find an affirmation of goal form at [arumc.org/inm](http://arumc.org/inm).



## Be a Skeeter Beater at Annual Conference!

Join other Skeeter Beaters at 6 a.m. Wednesday, June 12

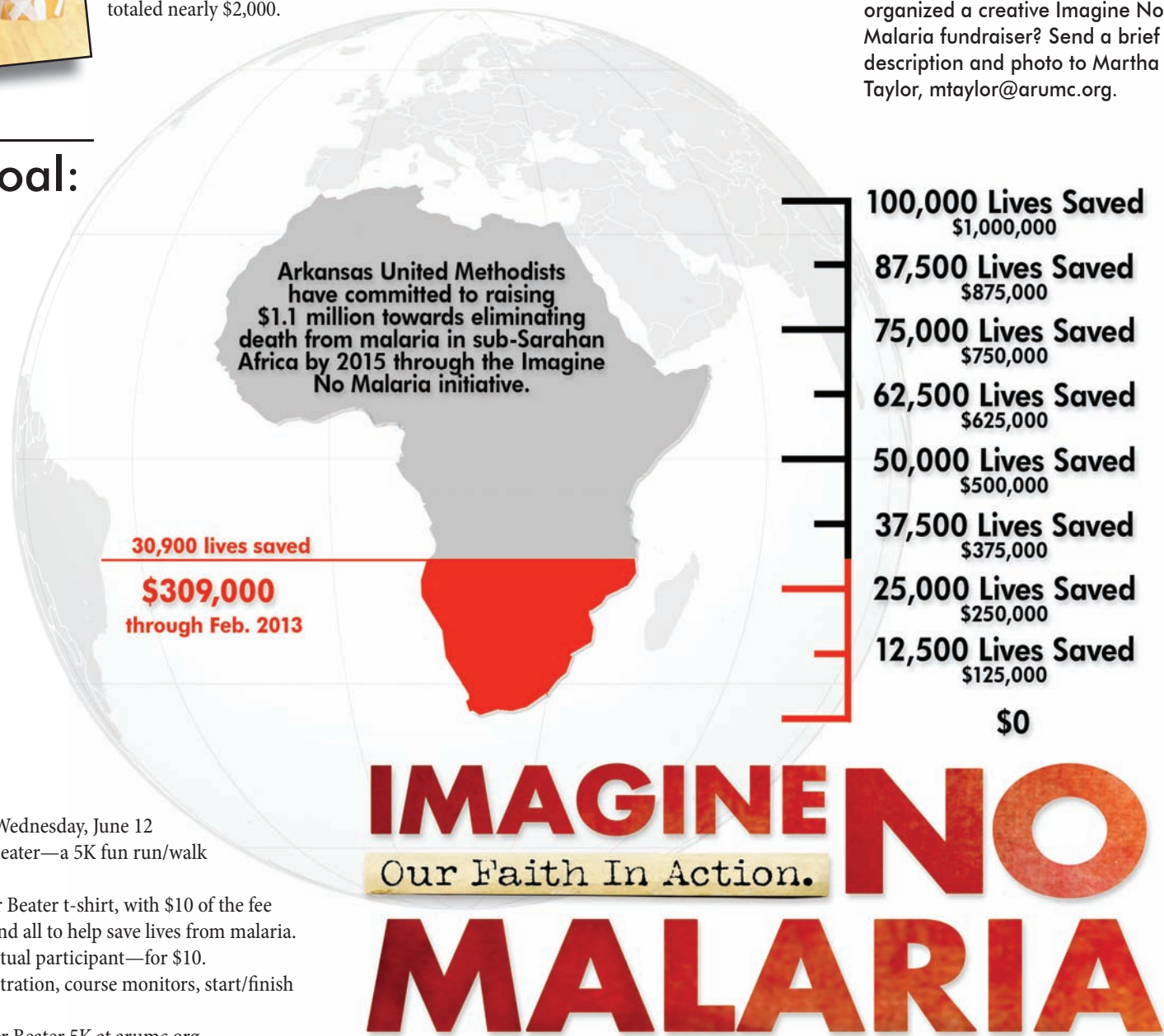
for the first-ever Arkansas Conference Skeeter Beater—a 5K fun run/walk on the Arkansas River Trail.

A \$15 registration fee gets you a one-of-a-kind Skeeter Beater t-shirt, with \$10 of the fee going to Imagine No Malaria. Prizes, refreshments, fun—and all to help save lives from malaria.

Don't want to get up early? Be a Skeeter Sleeper—a virtual participant—for \$10.

Don't want to walk/run? Be a Skeeter volunteer—registration, course monitors, start/finish line, refreshments, etc.

Learn more about our goals and register for the Skeeter Beater 5K at [arumc.org](http://arumc.org).





As part of a missions workshop at Veritas, youth fill a van with goods for a local food bank.

PHOTO BY MIKE MEEKS



Chris Brink of the band The Museum leads music during worship at Veritas.

PHOTO BY GREG FALLON



Bishop Gary Mueller was among the Veritas attendees, and presided over a celebration of Holy Communion. Here, he serves the bread to Mallory Fallon. Mallory and her sister, Sydney, come to Veritas each year with their parents, Greg and Lori Fallon. Lori serves as youth minister of First UMC Monticello, and Greg serves as a Veritas chaperone. Six-year-old Mallory has now attended Veritas seven times.

PHOTO BY REBECCA PHILLIPS

# Veritas creates space for worship, life-changing experiences for youth

BY JESSICA WILSON  
*Special Contributor*

Veritas 2013, held March 1-3 in Rogers, was an incredible weekend of fun, fellowship, an inspiring speaker and band and a wonderful God. Sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM), Veritas brought together more than 1,400 junior- and senior-high students and youth leaders from all over the state for worship and fellowship.

The Veritas theme this year was "FIREPROOF: In the flames, but not consumed." The idea came from the Bible story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were thrown into the fiery furnace for not bowing down to King Nebuchadnezzar's idol. The three men were tossed into the flames, but they were not harmed. The passage tells us that the king and his advisors witnessed a fourth man in the flames. As a task force, we understood through this story that God is with us in even the most troubling times. We may have hard times or "flames" in our lives,

but with the help of Jesus Christ, we are not consumed by them.

Our speaker for the weekend was Jeniffer Dake, who inspired hundreds of youth with her hilarious stories and incredible understanding of Scripture. Veritas 2013 also featured a phenomenal band, The Museum, who blew away the students with their friendly personalities and natural talent. On Saturday night, three options were offered for the youth: karaoke, Not For Sale (a mission to stop human trafficking) and a performance by the 321 Improv Comedy team.

All in all, Veritas 2013 was an inspiring weekend that will not be forgotten. It was a weekend of fellowship, fun and lives being changed forever.

*Jessica ("Jessa") Wilson served as youth chair of the Veritas Task Force and is currently the secretary of ACCYM. She is active in the youth ministry at First UMC Conway. For information on upcoming Conference youth events, visit [accym.org](http://accym.org).*

## Confirmation Day: a Bishop's-eye view



PHOTO BY GARY E. MUELLER

Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock on March 9 hosted Confirmation Day with the Bishop, an annual event for students who are presently in a confirmation class, have just finished a confirmation class or are getting ready to begin one. It offers opportunities to learn about what it means to be Christian and United Methodist, and includes an opportunity for each local church's confirmation class to have a group photo made with Bishop Gary Mueller.

"I stood on the steps to the chancel, and every church that came had their picture made with me," Bishop Mueller said. "It was wonderful seeing the sanctuary filling up more and more."

But the bishop decided he wanted his own photo, too.

"Since they had a picture with me, I decided it would be fun to take their picture," he said. "So I told them to wave, and I took it!"

## Insurance (continued from page 1A)

and churches. It is why we are seeking the best of the best when it comes to managing our Conference plan.”

### How it began

Initially, Bishop Charles Crutchfield assigned a task force to review Conference retiree benefits and funding. At last year's Annual Conference, that task force recommended that the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits contract with an independent consulting firm to review the current plan for best practices and sustainability.

In December, following the task force recommendation, the Conference board sought proposals from outside sources to conduct the study. Three firms responded: Bean Hamilton Corporate Benefits, Lipscomb Pitts Insurance and Stephens Insurance.

Mona Williams, Conference benefits officer, said the board selected Stephens Insurance after a series of interviews in February.

“The insurance consulting firms did a great job. All were highly qualified to partner with the Conference, and they provided the

board with a wealth of information,” she said. “Stephens Insurance recommended a more long-term approach and because of the changes mandated to employer health care, the board found that very appealing.”

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas has provided a \$45,000 grant to help pay for the study. Williams said the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits will cover any expenses beyond the grant amount.

“Health care reform is on-going,” she said. To take the changing health care landscape into account, the board expects to contract with Stephens Insurance for a three-year period.

### By Annual Conference

The board has requested that Stephens Insurance provide an executive summary with answers to 12 questions related to health care and the current Conference plan. The board hopes to receive the answers soon enough that they may be addressed during the 2013 Annual Conference.

“Initially [the board hopes] to have answers to our specific

As the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits sought to review the current Health Insurance Plan, it asked each applying firm to address these questions:

1. The Affordable Care Act: How may the changes affect church organizations?
2. Exchanges: How will they work and will they affect our Plan?
3. Is the Conference Plan large enough to remain self-funded?
4. Is it typical that an employee pays a portion of the insurance premium?
  - a. Does that lead to better self-care?
  - b. Does that lead to better cost/benefits?
5. Provide the Conference with recommendations on incentives (positive or negative) that may lower health claim cost.

questions and how they impact our Conference plan,” Williams said, adding that while recommendations for change may be discussed at Annual Conference, the earliest date any changes could become effective is Jan. 1, 2014.

Williams said Stephens Insurance consultants will be tasked with reviewing the current medical, routine vision, routine dental benefits, Plan structure, PPO discount network and Third Party Administrator (claims payer) for

## 12 questions for a thorough study

6. Do non-clergy employees have a positive or negative impact on claim cost?
7. What are the options for an HSA (Health Savings Account) or Cafeteria section 125 Plan?
8. Should dependents be mandated to participate in the Plan?
9. How do retirees affect our Plan?
  - a. Is participating in the Plan to their benefit?
  - b. Does their participation benefit the Plan?
10. Deductible: How important is the rate of deductibles to claim costs?
11. Should we offer multiple plans with premiums set according to deductible/benefits?
12. Is our current Third Party Administrator, PPO Network and prescription provider the best fit for our Conference Plan?

best practices.

“The Affordable Care Act limits benefit reductions or changes to the ones currently in place,” she said. “The Arkansas Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits needs help in navigating the health care guidelines and mandates.”

Williams explained that working with an outside firm

provides the Conference with an independent, impartial set of recommendations.

“Stephens Insurance will offer any recommendations to lower cost while providing the best to care for the members of the Arkansas United Methodist Conference, and complying with the Affordable Care Act mandates,” she said.

## 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.

### Costa Rica opportunities in May and June

Strong Missions has openings available on UVMIM teams traveling to Costa Rica from May 21 to June 17. For information, contact Darryl Teske, program assistant, at darryl.teske@gmail.com or visit [www.strongmissions.com](http://www.strongmissions.com).

### Teams needed for Mississippi tornado recovery

Janice and Byron Mann traveled recently to Hattiesburg, Miss., to survey the tornado damage there and attend a Disaster Assessment training session hosted by Mississippi Conference Disaster Response.

A total of 1,731 homes were affected by the storm. If your church is planning a mission trip this spring or summer, please consider helping in the Hattiesburg area. More information on needs will be available over the next few weeks and months. Contact Byron Mann, vim@arumc.org, to receive news of opportunities to help.

### Volunteers In Mission trip to the Holy Land

Each year Volunteers In Mission offers an “open” trip for those who would like to participate in a VIM experience but who cannot coordinate with enough people from their area to make up a full team. This year's open trip, scheduled for Sept. 21-Oct. 4, is to the Holy Land, and will include international partners. Having an international component adds to the team dynamics and gives folks a chance to learn from others with differing experience. This trip seeks to combine the spirituality of a pilgrimage, the educational aspect in meeting with our partner organizations and the ministry of being in service to others.

For details, contact Byron Mann, Arkansas Conference VIM coordinator, at vim@arumc.org, or Janet Lahr Lewis, Methodist liaison in Palestine and Israel, at [Jlahrlewis@yahoo.com](mailto:Jlahrlewis@yahoo.com).

# ANNUAL ARKANSAS RETIRED MINISTERS DAY



Bishop Gary Mueller

Monday May 20, 2013 at 12 noon  
First UMC of Benton

Keynote – Bishop Gary Mueller

Everyone is welcome to this great  
celebration!

“O Come, Come, Come, Come”

To RSVP – Contact David Bush:

870-673-1131

or

[thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org](mailto:thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org)



## Pastor covers 30 miles on foot, raises triple his goal

The Rev. Jim Cross, pastor of Ashdown and Richmond UMCs, walked 30 miles on Saturday, Feb. 16. Cross' wife and numerous church and community members joined him at different points on the 10-hour journey. The walk far surpassed its fundraising goal of \$5,000, dividing \$16,051 among six causes:

- Ashdown City Park baseball and basketball fees: \$4,500 (90 scholarships).
- Ashdown High School Scholarship Fund in memory of Jalen Lewis: \$1,700.
- UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief): \$3,176.
- Khiry Neal Fund: \$1,800
- Richmond First Responders Team: \$1,700
- Little River County Relay for Life, in honor of James Cross and in memory of Garlene Cross (the Rev. Cross' parents): \$3,175.

The walk fulfilled three goals Cross had stated: it glorified God, brought the community together and raised money for those in need.



## Celebrating 50,000 Care Caps by making more



AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Mary Becker, a member of Diamondhead UMC Hot Springs, pieces together a Care Cap during a March 11 gathering at Greenbrier Church of the Nazarene. The workday doubled as a celebration of a major milestone: the making of the 50,000th Care Cap.

Care Caps is an Arkansas-based support project that provides free handmade caps to patients undergoing treatments at major cancer centers. United Methodist organizations are among the hosts for Care Cap events, including Diamondhead UMC and Mount Eagle Retreat Center near Clinton. The next Care Cap retreat at Mount Eagle is set for June 3-4. Visit [www.mounteagle.org](http://www.mounteagle.org) for details.

Diamondhead UMC's Care Caps group meets the second Tuesday of every other month. To verify the next sewing date, contact the church office at 501-262-4009.

For more information on getting involved with Care Caps, visit [www.carecaps.org](http://www.carecaps.org).

## 'Wings of the Morning' Congo missionaries available to speak to Arkansas congregations in May

When U.S. missionaries serve internationally, they plan occasional stateside trips to visit local churches, sharing with them what they have been called to do, where they live and whom they serve. **Beginning May 12, two missionary doctors associated with Wings of the Morning, a United Methodist medical transport ministry in the Democratic Republic of Congo, will be available for speaking opportunities at local churches within the Arkansas Conference.**

To invite one of these missionaries to speak at your church, contact Conference coordinator of missionary personnel Deaconess Colleen Caldwell at 501-529-0604 or [DeaconessColleen@gmail.com](mailto:DeaconessColleen@gmail.com); or Conference Board of Global Ministries secretary Marleene Calvin at 501-771-1644, 501-425-0157 or [igot5onit@sbcglobal.net](mailto:igot5onit@sbcglobal.net), as soon as possible.

For more information on Wings of the Morning, visit <http://www.northkatangaumc.org/wingsmorn.html>. To learn how the Arkansas Conference has contributed to that ministry, visit <http://tinyurl.com/hopewithwings>.

## Debate (continued from page 1A)

Scott Walters, an Episcopal priest and a parent of one of Kirby's students. When Walters learned that a colleague of his, the Rev. Dr. Chris Keller of the Institute for Theological Studies at St. Margaret's, was interested in starting a theological debate program for high school students, he introduced Keller and Kirby. Keller had the idea, but lacked a connection to recruit public school students, which Kirby provided.

The Institute, connected with St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, offers lectures and seminars that further theological education among laity and clergy. SUMMA extends those opportunities to a different audience than the Institute typically reaches.

Standing in a hallway between rooms filled with debate teams brushing up on their arguments, Kirby gives credit for SUMMA's development to Keller. "It's his brainchild, completely," he says.

"That may be true, but it wouldn't have happened without him," Keller said in response.

### Selection

Students from several public and private schools in central

Arkansas attended informational meetings before applying to SUMMA. The application included questions about students' intellectual curiosity and faith, and required a letter of recommendation from a teacher. Keller and his colleague, the Rev. Cindy Fribourgh, selected 50 students from among the applicants.

Channa Childs, a junior at Little Rock Central High School, has been a member of her school's debate team, but applied to SUMMA because she saw it as a unique opportunity.

"It was kind of attractive adding Christianity into the argument," she said. "I thought it would be cool to try out a different kind of debate."

Miller Wilbourn, a United Methodist and a junior at Episcopal Collegiate School, applied to SUMMA for a number of reasons: he is discerning a call to ministry, and he wanted to learn more about debate and improve his public speaking skills. The most important reason to him, though, was the faith component.

"I chose to participate because of the opportunity to test and expand my faith by asking difficult questions," he said. "I'm interested in examining controversial issues in the context of

Christianity and the larger world."

### Summer retreat

SUMMA began with a late-July retreat at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn. It included daily lectures on theology and debate skills, as well as recreation time and sessions to prepare for the debate tournament at the end of the retreat. The topic up for discussion: Is the death penalty morally valid in a Christian context? Kirby worked with a group of four students to guide them through the theological task of exploring such a complicated issue.

"There were kids who, through no pressure from an adult, no proselytizing, no heavy-handedness, but through their own research, their own study, their own prayer... at the end of the week were like, 'I have a completely different view on the death penalty,' or 'I have a completely different view about my faith in general,'" he said. "And it was never in a negative way."

"SUMMA is made up of a wide range of people, attending several different schools and holding various belief systems," Wilbourn said. "When I have talked to my friends who think and believe in such diverse

ways, I've had to re-examine my own beliefs and ask questions that have served to vulcanize certain beliefs and cause me to reconsider others."

### Tournament prep

In the fall, SUMMA students began gathering on Sunday afternoons to tackle a new topic: separation of church and state. As they discussed related readings that spanned several centuries of world history, students worked to develop supporting and opposing arguments, in preparation for arguing both sides in the March 3 tournament.

One of the readings directly involved Arkansas: the 1982 opinion written by U.S. District Court Judge William R. Overton in the ruling on *McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education*. The court case concerned Act 590, "Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science Act," signed into law by Governor Frank White. Plaintiffs included clergy of several denominations, who argued that the act infringed upon the establishment clause in the First Amendment.

"It raises all the issues about how science relates to faith, and then also teeing up the questions of church and state," Keller said.

The ruling included a quote from Justice Felix Frankfurter that formed the proposition for the debate: "Complete separation between state and religion is best for the state and best for religion."

Seven rounds of debate March 2 and 3 yielded the winning team of Childs, a Baptist, and Wilbourn. Two additional team members, Hannah Tackett, a United Methodist and a junior at Central High, and Cally Cochran, a United Methodist and a junior at Mount St. Mary Academy, helped develop the team's arguments but were not able to attend the tournament.

"There were lots of other amazing debaters, and our continued success was almost more than Channa and I could believe," Wilbourn said. "Winning the tournament was such a thrill for us, but the real congratulations go to the entire SUMMA program for finishing its inaugural year successfully, and achieving its foremost goal of developing 'faith seeking understanding.'"

To learn more about SUMMA, or to request an application to participate in its 2013-2014 debate season, visit [summa-debate.org](http://summa-debate.org), or contact Fribourgh at 501-801-0272 or [cf.itssm@gmail.com](mailto:cf.itssm@gmail.com).



## Small church pastors gather for conversation with bishop

Some 50 pastors serving small congregations gathered on March 16 for a conversation with Bishop Gary Mueller. Sponsored by the Small Membership Church Commission, the gathering gave pastors an opportunity to share their experiences of ministry in their unique mission fields; tell stories of challenges and victories; and to ask questions of the bishop.

Bishop Mueller offered a word of encouragement to small churches, which make up the vast majority of United Methodist congregations in Arkansas. He urged those present to invite and involve those in their communities, and also to encourage revival among members, helping them transform into disciples. “We are first and foremost ministers of the gospel,” he said.

He issued several challenges to small churches for the coming year: to begin at least one small group; to have at least one new profession of faith; to bring at least three new children into the congregation—in addition to those born to existing members; and to increase average worship attendance by two people.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

## COMING UP

### April

#### UMC Historical Society of Arkansas’ annual meeting April 6

Local church historians and others interested in the history of Methodism in Arkansas are invited to the luncheon and annual meeting of the United Methodist Historical Society of Arkansas, Saturday, April 6 at First UMC Little Rock. The guest speaker this year is the Rev. George Hankins-Hull, director of chaplaincy at UAMS. A native of Ireland, Hankins-Hull will share some of the history and present state of Methodism in that sister country. The cost of the meal, payable at the door, is \$10. For information, contact the Rev. Don Nolley, 501-351-4493.

#### VBS Regional Training choices: April 6, 13, 20; five locations

The Arkansas Conference Children’s Ministry Council presents five opportunities for leaders to begin preparing this summer’s Vacation Bible School experience.

Information covered in the 9 a.m. to noon training is the same at every location, and includes VBS curriculum options from three different publishers.

April 6: First UMC Jonesboro

April 13: Goddard UMC Fort Smith; First UMC Pine Bluff

April 20: First UMC Hope; First UMC North Little Rock

Online registration is available; choose your date and location from the list at [arumc.org/register](http://arumc.org/register) and pay online or at the door. The fee is \$10 per person, or \$8 per person for groups of five or more registering together from the same church. Registration closes one week before each event. Walk-up registration is \$25 per person.

Topics include decorating/crafts (how to create the atmosphere and crafts for VBS); storytelling (new ways to tell old stories, with an emphasis on creative storytelling rather than a specific curriculum); and “Directors 101” (how to run a successful VBS, from budget, schedules and registration to publicity and volunteers).

#### VBS mini grants available; deadline April 15

Up to five \$250 grants (one per district) will be awarded by the Arkansas Conference Children’s Ministry Council. To apply, complete the “2013 VBS Mini Grant Online Application” available at [kidz.arumc.org](http://kidz.arumc.org) by April 15.

For more information, contact Karen Swales, Conference children’s ministry coordinator, at 479-751-4610, ext. 308 or [karen.swales@arumc.org](mailto:karen.swales@arumc.org).

#### Asbury UMC Little Rock to mark 125 years April 7

As part of a year-long celebration of 125 years in ministry,

Asbury United Methodist Church Little Rock will hold a single worship service on April 7 at 10:45 a.m., with Bishop Gary Mueller preaching. The congregation invites anyone who has ever attended or served at Asbury to join in that day’s celebration. A birthday luncheon will follow the service; tickets are available March 10 through April 1 (\$10/adults, \$5/child or \$25/family), and can be purchased in person on Sundays, or through the church office by calling 501-225-9231.

The people of Asbury UMC will maintain throughout 2013 a special history display with photographs and memorabilia. Established in 1888 as a “west Little Rock” church located around 10th and Bishop Streets, Asbury was located at 12th and Schiller during most of the 1900s. As Little Rock grew westward, Asbury moved to its current location, 1700 Napa Valley Drive.

#### Callahan among speakers at SCLI April 14-18

Dr. Ken Callahan is coming to Arkansas for the South Central Jurisdiction’s Small Church Leadership Institute, April 14-18 at Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference Center in Fayetteville.

A sought-after church consultant, speaker and author of 15 books, Callahan is best known for his ground-breaking *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*, helping congregations advance their focus on mission growth. Thousands of congregations and tens of thousands of church leaders and pastors around the world have been helped through his writings and workshops.

Presenters include Ken Sloane, Lindsey Bryan, Carmen Johnson, Jeremy Basset and Bob Crossman. Worship will be led by the Revs. Ramiro Lizcano and Rob Williams of First UMC Springdale’s Agape Campus. To register, visit [mountsequoyah.org](http://mountsequoyah.org).

#### ‘Courage to Lead’ at First UMC Springdale April 22-25

The Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership is sponsoring “Courage to Lead,” an April 22-25 workshop geared toward young United Methodist pastors in Arkansas. The Rev. Janice Virtue, an experienced facilitator who has developed pastoral leadership centers at Perkins School of Theology and Duke Divinity School, will help participants explore personal leadership style and development, in addition to what it means to be a leader in the church. Through identification of gifts and limits, participants will discover and develop their particular leadership capacity.

The event is underwritten by First UMC Springdale and the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership. Lodging is participants’ only expense. Registration is limited to 25 participants. To register, contact Che Dolan, [cdolan@arumc.org](mailto:cdolan@arumc.org).

#### Cizik to keynote at GreenFaith event in Little Rock April 27

Evangelical environmental leader the Rev. Richard Cizik is coming to Arkansas to speak at Ground for Hope. The initiative is sponsored by GreenFaith, an interfaith coalition that works with houses of worship, religious schools and people of all faiths to help them become better environmental stewards.

The day-long event, set for Saturday, April 27, 2013, St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church in Little Rock, includes workshops on the Bible and the environment; environmental challenges facing Arkansas; environmental health and justice; energy savings in congregations and households; worship, spiritual practices and the environment; and environmental advocacy and the faith community. To view the schedule and to register, visit <http://greenfaith.org/programs/ground-for-hope>.

### May

#### reTHINK children’s conference at First UMC Magnolia May 4

First UMC Magnolia will host its fourth annual reTHINK Children’s Conference on Saturday, May 4 from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. This event is for anyone who works with children, in paid or unpaid roles—Sunday School teachers, VBS workers, nursery workers, children’s ministers, Mother’s Day Out workers, child care workers, Child Development Center directors, etc. The \$10 cost includes a catered lunch and take-home resources. To learn more or register, visit [www.magnoliafumc.org/children](http://www.magnoliafumc.org/children).

#### Camp Healing Hearts for grieving children May 17-18

Kaleidoscope Grief Center, a service of Methodist Family Health, has announced plans for this year’s Camp Healing Hearts, a free overnight grief camp, set for May 17-18 at Camp Aldersgate in Little Rock.

Camp Healing Hearts brings together children ages 5 to 18 and their families who have lost a loved one. It provides a safe environment where children and families can develop coping skills, both individually and within a community. The work of play encourages a new sense of normality and allows children to find a voice for their grief. Camp Healing Hearts unites families in the grief process by encouraging parents and guardians to attend the event alongside their children.

Participants will convene at 5 p.m. Friday, May 17, and stay until 5 p.m. Saturday, May 18. Campers participate in therapeutic and recreational activities, as well as traditional camp activities such as a campfire with s’mores, fishing, swimming, arts and crafts and a ropes course.

For information and event details, visit [www.methodistfamily.org](http://www.methodistfamily.org) or contact Jane Dennis at Methodist Family Health, 501-661-0720, ext. 7157.

## OBITUARIES

### ARKADELPHIA

#### Carolyn Cypert Trieschmann

Carolyn Cypert Trieschmann, 84, passed away Friday, March 15, 2013, in Arkadelphia.

She was born Aug. 10, 1928, in Little Rock, the daughter of the late Thomas Jefferson and Leona Rebecca Bell Cypert Jr. Her parents preceded her in death when she was very young, and she was raised by her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jefferson Cypert Sr.

She was the widow of the Rev. Robert Watson "Bob" Trieschmann, a United Methodist minister who served in the Arkadelphia area for many years. She was a member of Manchester United Methodist Church, outside of Arkadelphia.

Survivors include one brother, Eugene Cypert; three sons, Robert "Bobby" Watson Trieschmann Jr., John Cypert Trieschmann and Thomas Henry Trieschmann; one daughter, Rebecca Trieschmann Elrod; eight grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Monday, March 18, at Manchester United Methodist Church with her grandson the Rev. Brad Elrod and the Rev. George Whitney officiating. Burial followed at Rest Haven Memorial Gardens.



**Carolyn Trieschmann**

Memorials may be made to Clark County Historical Association, P.O. Box 516, Arkadelphia, AR 71923.

### CLARKSVILLE

#### Frank R. Clemmons

The Rev. Frank Raymond Clemmons, 82, of Clarksville passed away Thursday, Feb. 21, 2013.



**Frank Clemmons**

He was born April 1, 1930, in Clarksville, the son of the late Charles A. and Ann Hasseltine Simmons Clemmons.

He was a graduate of Clarksville High School, University of the Ozarks and Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga. An elder in the North Arkansas Conference, he was appointed to attend seminary in 1955, and remained under appointment until he retired in 1993. He served at churches in Fort Smith, Russellville, Dover, Paris, Piggott, Charleston, Waldron, Dardanelle, Beebe, Heber Springs, Helena and Booneville.

He was preceded in death by his parents and one brother, Charles.

Survivors include his wife, Carolyn; three sons, David Clemmons of Texas; Mark Clemmons of Booneville; and John Clemmons of Mississippi; three sisters, Dorothy Salminen and

Marion Blythe, both of Texas; and Carole Zahnd of Kansas; and six grandchildren.

Services were held Saturday, Feb. 23, at First UMC Clarksville. Burial followed in Oakland Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to First United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 535, Clarksville, AR 72830.

### ST. PETERS, Mo.

#### Robert I. Doom

The Rev. Robert Isaac Doom, 82, passed away Sunday, Jan. 6, 2013.



**Robert Doom**

He was born April 2, 1930, to Raymond and Flossie Doom. A full member of the North Arkansas Conference, he served churches in Harrison, Gentry, Calico Rock and Cotter before his retirement in 1995.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Mary Lou Doom; children, Robert Doom Jr.; James Doom; John Doom and his wife, Mei; and David Doom; grandchildren, David, Steven and Jackie; and great-grandchildren, Jacob and Macy.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Delcena Helton.

## 'Sons of Thunder' crosses denominational lines, reinvigorates UM Men

What happens when Christians truly unite? Their work begins to make a bigger difference in the world, and lives can be transformed. In Searcy, that type of transformation is happening. Denominational walls have come down and men's lives have been changed as they share their common love for Jesus Christ. A key instrument in these changes: a United Methodist-based group known as "Sons of Thunder."

In February 2010, John Byrd and his wife, Judy, attended a Lay Witness Weekend event at St. Mark United Methodist Church in Tuscaloosa, Ala. They stayed with a family from St. Mark that included a member of that church's United Methodist Men. As a leader of First UMC Searcy's United Methodist Men, John was curious about how the ministry was going at St. Mark.

As he visited with his host, John learned that following some changes, the Tuscaloosa group was flourishing. They had moved their customary meeting time from breakfast to supper, and invited men from the community, not just from their own church. They also decided to give the group a new name: "Sons of Thunder."

"When I heard the name, chills ran down my back," Byrd said. "That name was what Jesus had called James and John in Mark 3:17. James and John were zealots for Christ."

Byrd was so intrigued and moved by what was happening in Tuscaloosa that when he returned



Fifteen minutes before every meeting, Sons of Thunder leaders, the pastors from the host church and the speaker for the night gather for prayer.

COURTESY PHOTO

home, he presented it to the United Methodist Men's group at First UMC Searcy. They voted to make similar changes, and several men worked alongside Byrd to help organize it.

In May 2010, the first Sons of Thunder meeting took place in the fellowship hall at First UMC Searcy. Leaders were hoping to simply spread the word by serving a steak dinner to approximately 50 men. The group was blown away when 97 men from 14 different denominations arrived.

The men ate together, sang praise and worship songs, and several gave testimonies of what God was doing in their lives. "It was a Spirit-filled night that was unlike anything most of us had ever seen," Byrd said.

After that gathering, a leadership team of five First UMC Searcy members formed to plan monthly meetings. The group decided Sons of Thunder would meet on the second Tuesday night of each month.

In 2012, the leadership team

added a member from non-denominational church The River, and one from College Church of Christ. The team offers direction and assistance for Sons of Thunder events, but its main function is to pray and seek God's guidance for the ministry.

### Open doors

To emphasize that Sons of Thunder was truly open to all denominations, the leadership team sought other churches willing to host. Several congregations offered their space, so the gathering moves to a different location each month. Byrd estimates average attendance at about 350 men, with an all-time high of 750.

"The primary goal of Sons of Thunder is, and always has been, to help men come together as believers of Jesus Christ," he said. "The positive responses by the churches have been overwhelming."

As Searcy is home to Church of

Christ-related Harding University, that denomination has a prominent presence in town. The men of First UMC Searcy were not sure how a cross-denominational effort would be received, but one of the first churches to host a Sons of Thunder gathering was Downtown Church of Christ.

Assembly of God, Baptist, Nazarene, CME, non-denominational and Bible churches, as well as fellow UMC congregation St. Paul, have hosted or co-hosted meetings. The host church provides the meal and plans the worship, testimonies and any other activities for the night. The meal is free; donations are accepted.

### 'All about Jesus'

Byrd has heard good feedback and seen amazing outcomes of these meetings. He says that sometimes the leadership team hears from wives of attendees, who let them know how their husbands' lives have been changed for the better. Byrd believes in the value of "guys seeing guys worship," and noted that many men have given their lives to Jesus Christ as a result of the ministry.

"Something special happens when men of different denominations come together and set aside their differences to praise and worship Jesus Christ together," he said. "Theology is not mentioned. It is all about Jesus."

The group decided to follow in Jesus' footsteps by adding service as a part of each month's gathering. The

host church chooses a charity and men are notified by email of items to bring. Pickup truck-loads of peanut butter and jelly have gone to the Good Samaritan Food Bank, a trailer full of cleaning supplies to Jacob's Place temporary housing and Hope Cottage women's shelter. Sons of Thunder also has given money to the White County Senior Center and White County Foster Parent Association, and bottled water to the Police and Sheriff's Departments.

At each meeting, a sign-in sheet asks for each attendee's name, email address, telephone number and church. The email list now includes more than 1,300 men who have attended at least one Sons of Thunder meeting, representing more than 110 churches from across the state.

Some of those visitors have taken the concept to their own communities. United Methodist men's ministries in Heber Springs, Jonesboro and Mabelvale all have begun following the Sons of Thunder model.

"We have no ulterior motive. We are not trying to take men from other churches," Byrd says. "We only want to strengthen men's faith and give them the tools to stand up and be the men that God meant for them to be in their families and church. We want them to know that 'Jesus loves them and there is nothing they can do about it.'"

For more information, visit [www.sonsofthunderhq.com](http://www.sonsofthunderhq.com) or email [jbird4391@yahoo.com](mailto:jbird4391@yahoo.com).



AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

## Pondering a post-pulpit future

Clergy considering retirement within the next 10 years and their spouses attended on March 14 a seminar focused on what financial and benefits considerations Arkansas Conference clergy need to keep in mind as they prepare to retire. Lynette Rice, benefits educator with the denomination's General Board of Pension and Health Benefits, was the featured presenter. Rice also led a workshop for clergy who will retire at this year's Annual Conference.



**Dr. John Holbert**  
will lead the  
**John and Marjem Gill**  
**Preaching Workshop**

Topic:  
*That Troubling Man*  
*from Uz: Preaching*  
*the Book of Job*

April 15 & 16

at Hendrix College in the Student  
Life and Technology Center

Registration: \$75 (includes all meals)



1600 Washington Ave.  
Conway, AR 72032

Dr. Holbert will also preach in Greene Chapel, April 15 at 6:30 p.m.  
The worship service is open to the public at no charge.



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