

SPECIAL ISSUE



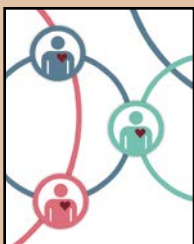
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Q&A: Bishop on a mission—alongside all of us

Bishop's Mission Plan involves laity, clergy, congregations, Conference and a changing culture

In mid-September 2013, Bishop Gary Mueller announced a 10-point Bishop's Mission Plan that invites every United Methodist in Arkansas into the next steps of the Conference-wide Imagine Ministry journey. As part of the plan's launch, he spoke recently with *Arkansas United Methodist* editor Amy Forbus.

We heard the beginnings of this plan at the 2013 Annual Conference, didn't we?

Yes, the joint Episcopal-Lay Address that Karon Mann and I presented contained the seeds of the plan. I've done some rearranging and refining, but much of the groundwork was laid this spring, as Karon and I worked together to discern what message God would have us convey to the people gathered at Annual Conference. And that's how much of it should be carried out—as a collaborative effort between clergy and laity. We're in this together.

You've framed the 10 items as assignments for different groups of United Methodists in Arkansas—laity, clergy, congregations, district superintendents. Why?

Well, a 10-point plan is ambitious, but achievable, especially when we can break it down into bite-sized pieces. The pieces themselves may still be big, but I believe God expects big things from us, and rightly so.

We have a lot of work to do, and it helps to identify where the work begins. If we share the load, I think we can begin to see some significant progress across Arkansas in just a few months. The whole process will take years, and we will make course corrections along the way, but it's beyond time to get started.

If you could visit individually with each person in the Arkansas Conference and share a message about this Mission Plan, what would it be?

I would emphasize that while the plan is about big change, it's also up to us as individuals to make it happen.

As disciples of Jesus, we all need to take seriously what he wants us to do: to make disciples, who make disciples, who go on to transform the world in his name. We have no reason to wait any longer to take action. Our calling is clear. Let's go!

To read Bishop Mueller's Mission Plan and discover your part in it, see page 3 of this issue.

During the sermon at his Sept. 9, 2012, installation service as episcopal leader of the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church, Bishop Gary E. Mueller challenged those gathered to roll up their sleeves and get to work. "Imagine you are never alone," he said. "Imagine the support, imagine the partnership, imagine what it's like to be filled and in community and going out to serve. And then not only imagine it, do it!"

Coaches ready as resources for churches

BY JOHN CRAWFORD
Special Contributor

One of the big steps associated with implementing the Imagine Ministry plan was forming a group of committed laity to become coaches for congregations.

To date, we have 76 congregations working with congregational coaches. We have 38 coaches already working with churches, with more trained and ready to put into action.



John Crawford

Some real progress has taken place, with churches moving forward in the mission we all share: making disciples of Jesus Christ equipped to transform the world with excellence and passion.

Congregational coaches help foster a strong partnership between the pastor and laity. A coach serves as a resource, keeping leaders focused on the objective to make disciples and help them work to establish solid goals. Pastors and laity are learning that

they are not merely information recipients and conduits; they are God's instruments for forming disciples.

The relationship with a coach lasts as long as the congregation finds the process helpful. There is no financial cost to the congregation.

A coach can guide a church in:

- empowering laity to be responsible for fruitful ministry of

the church;

- interpreting demographic data from the MissionInsite program and forming a plan to engage the church's mission field;
- building congeniality, connection and spiritual support among the leaders of the congregation;
- connecting with resources and partners in their community and the Conference;
- generating solutions from the congregation's own expertise in its mission field.

The first step for a church to become involved is for the church's Vision Team and Staff-Parish Relations Committee to complete a Mission Field Self-Assessment Form. To obtain this form, contact the Rev. Dr. Kurt Boggan, director of the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership, at 501-324-8016 or kboggan@arumc.org. After this assessment process, the church will be matched with a congregational coach.

If you are interested in learning more about coaching or becoming a coach, contact me at 501-324-8011 or jcrawford@arumc.org.

Crawford serves as an associate director of the Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership.

About the role of a congregational coach

In relationship with the church: Walks alongside laity and provides resources to help churches create and realize ministry and mission goals; understands the reality of the church's context and changing needs; assists in vision planning, minor conflict mediation; interprets expectations and hopes the Conference has for the church.

In relationship with the pastor: Listens to and guides pastors toward meeting established goals and expectations; provides training and resources in conjunction with the circuit elder and district superintendent.

In relationship with the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee: Helps shift focus toward the vision and ministry goals for Kingdom growth; helps foster collaboration with the

pastor to encourage leaders to make changes; provides resources, shares information from the Conference and other parts of the United Methodist connection; assists with interpreting demographics and statistics to aid in the church's self-assessment of opportunities in its mission field.

When to contact your coach: When discussing reaching the church's mission field; when establishing goals and benchmarks for leadership, skill building, ministry goals and pastoral expectations; when discerning accountability and responsibility in the ministry of the laity.

To ask about having a congregational coach assigned to your church, contact the Rev. Dr. Kurt Boggan at 501-324-8016 or kboggan@arumc.org.

Information really is vital

BY CANDACE BARRON
Special Contributor

This time last year, I was serving an appointment to two local churches. One of the items on my weekly to-do list was to input each church's attendance, participation and offering statistics into the Vital Signs dashboard. It usually took less than five minutes of my time for both churches combined.



Candace Barron

Why did I do it? Well, for starters, my bishop told me it was required, and when I accepted an appointment as United Methodist clergy,

I agreed to operate under the authority of my bishop.

In addition, I felt it was important for several reasons—for example, keeping a running total made my end-of-year statistical reporting much easier. And always having the up-to-date numbers within reach let me know how my churches were doing as a whole. As an organization's leader, that seemed like valuable information to have on hand.

Anyone can view the recent statistics of any United Methodist congregation in the U.S. at [http://](http://vitalsigns.trendsendapp.com)

vitalsigns.trendsendapp.com. All you have to know is:

- the Jurisdiction (ours is South Central)
- the Annual Conference (Arkansas)
- the District (see the map at arumc.org/districts)
- the name of the church (instead of scrolling through church names, you may begin typing your church's name to bring it up as an option).

Before you go look, a point of clarification: Anyone can view the recent statistics for any congregation in the U.S. *that keeps up with its regular reporting through the Vital Signs dashboard.*

Why doesn't every church enter the information? I wonder if some churches are operating under the influence of one or two myths.

Myth 1: Nobody looks at them

Perhaps pastors and churches who don't plug in their statistics think that no one bothers to look at how many people showed up at Particular UMC in Yourtown, Ark., for the last five weeks... so why waste valuable time filling out yet another form that will only be ignored?

When I moved to this appointment with the Center for

Clergy and Lay Excellence in July, I began looking at local churches' statistics. I kept finding holes, though—missing information that, if present, could help all of us learn.

Attendance and giving information is months old by the time the statistical tables are published in the Conference Journal. For real-time information, a tool like the Vital Signs dashboard offers us a rich resource.

Most of my work relates to the vitality of small congregations in Arkansas. If I have no idea of a congregation's trends in attendance, participation in mission or financial giving, it's harder to determine when that church might be ready to take advantage of certain resources we can offer—such as a congregational coach, or a discussion group for pastors of small churches.

The bottom line: Yes, those of us working in the Center for Excellence do look at those numbers. And the more the reporting tells us, the more quickly and efficiently we can meet the needs behind the numbers.

Myth 2: Numbers don't matter

Over the years, I've heard many opinions for and against counting things in the church. Sometimes those on one side of the issue will

level accusations at the other: "Are you worried that if your numbers are down, you'll be moved?" A common reply is that ministry is not about numbers, it's about people. The counting proponents respond that there's a person behind every number... and the exchange goes on.

In truth, we have a human need to quantify ministry, which we know isn't always quantifiable. But when we do have information, I believe sharing it works in our favor. When paired with personal stories, numbers can give us clarity in our ministry and mission.

Numbers matter to pastors and to the churches themselves. We have to know where we are starting to tell where we are going. How can a

leadership group make good on the statement, "We want to increase our average attendance by 10 people next year" if they don't know how many people are attending now?

The Rev. Gil Rendle writes, "Leaders must know who they are, what resources they have, and what resources they need for the demands of their future." Reporting through the Vital Signs dashboard provides the first two elements, and points to the third.

Cooperation counts

I was surprised when I learned that there were some Arkansas churches not using the Vital Signs

[See VITAL, page 3]



Volume 160 • No. 10 Sept. 20, 2013
Amy Forbus • Editor
Melissa Sanders • Circulation
www.arumc.org

The *Arkansas United Methodist* is the newspaper of record for the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church. It is printed monthly, on the first Friday of every month, with four special issues during the year for a total of 16 issues per year.

Send correspondence & subscription updates to: Arkansas United Methodist, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202; or email Melissa Sanders at msanders@arumc.org.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Arkansas United Methodist, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202.

The *Arkansas United Methodist* (USPS periodicals permit pending) is published 16 times per year by the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202. Postage paid at Gainesville, TX.



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Little Rock, AR 72202-3770
www.arumc.org 501-324-8000

Subscriptions
- Annual and biannual subscriptions are available for the print edition of this newspaper.
- The online edition is free.
For more information on subscribing to either edition, visit www.arumc.org/aum or call 501-324-8002.

Advertising is welcomed. For a rate sheet or more information, contact Amy Forbus at 501-324-8037 or aforbus@arumc.org. While all advertising is reviewed before acceptance, it should not be considered endorsed by this newspaper or the Church.

Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
Nov. 1	Oct. 17
Dec. 6	Nov. 19
Jan. 3	Dec. 13



Bishop's Mission Plan

"Next Steps"
Bishop Gary E. Mueller
September 2013

The Imagine Ministry Journey

When the Arkansas Annual Conference began the Imagine Ministry journey, you were reacting to a projected future characterized by financial unsustainability, decreasing membership and more and more churches focused primarily on survival instead of faithfulness. Thankfully, Phase One was short-lived as Imagine Ministry quickly moved into its next two phases.

Phase Two involved the Annual Conference adopting a mission, vision, and core measures (since revised in response to feedback from local congregations) that articulate the future you believe God envisions for Arkansas United Methodists.

Vision: Congregations and surrounding communities transformed by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate love of God and neighbor, holy living, and justice.

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

Core Measures used to evaluate the deep change necessary to make disciples of Jesus Christ and transform the world:



Vital (continued from page 2)

dashboard. Since last year, the dashboard has existed as part of our covenant with each other. It need not be the senior pastor who gets this particular job done; many churches have assigned Vital Signs reporting responsibilities to a staff member or

a designated layperson. (In fact, laypersons who discover that their church is not using the dashboard may want to offer to help serve their church in this way.)

United Methodists are a connectional people. That means we

share the good and the bad, the positive and the negative—and the high and low plot points on the charts and graphs.

The Rev. Dr. Barron serves as an associate director of the Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership.

Phase Three began when significant changes in Annual Conference structure, alignment, staffing and budgets were implemented in order to re-direct resources toward fostering greater vitality in local congregations. This work is now underway, and will continue to unfold in the next several years under the leadership of the Extended Cabinet and the Executive Director of Mission and Ministry.

Since being assigned as your bishop a year ago, I have spent a great deal of time observing, asking questions, learning, consulting, reflecting and praying in order to answer the question, "What's next?" It is now clear to me that we are ready for Phase Four of our journey together: embarking passionately and intentionally on a trajectory that focuses fully on the only place that actually can do what God is calling us to do: the local church.

Our Trajectory for the coming years:

Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

I believe the churches, laity and pastors of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas need to embrace the 10 "Next Steps" in order for us to move ahead on this trajectory God has charted for us. However, there are two important things to remember about these next steps. First, they have been shaped by the previous phases of the Imagine Ministry journey. Second, we will only be able to see the fruit of these next steps as we fully utilize the resources provided through the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership, the Center for Technology and the Network for Discipleship and Mission.

Next Steps for the Arkansas Annual Conference

- 1. The churches, laity and pastors of the Annual Conference must experience spiritual revival.** We need to experience in deeper ways how Jesus' love is so unconditional he accepts us just the way we are, so transforming he is unwilling to leave us the way we are and so powerful he gives us what we absolutely need but can never get on our own—reconciliation with God, healing and a new way of living that is eternal in every sense of the word. This revival is foundational for everything we do, because we can only passionately share Jesus' love that brings healing, hope, justice and transformation in lives, communities and the world when we first have been transformed ourselves.
- 2. The Annual Conference will tell Phase Four of the Imagine Ministry story as it communicates how the 10 "Next Steps" are bearing fruit in local congregations.** The Annual Conference will communicate intentionally, consistently and in a variety of ways the story of how local congregations are becoming vital in order to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

Next Steps for District Superintendents

- 3. District Superintendents will become skilled in developing District Mission Plans that align with the Bishop's Mission Plan.** This is a major new role for District Superintendents. Often it will involve working with existing churches to reach out in mission to their community in new ways. Sometimes it will mean finding new ways to reach new people. But the goal is always the same: to create and develop vital congregations who are ready and willing to make new disciples in new mission fields.
- 4. The Appointive Cabinet will become proficient in making mission-field appointments.** This may be one of our most challenging undertakings, because we have spent so much energy over the years trying to keep churches and pastors content rather than focusing primarily on the people outside our doors in the mission field surrounding every congregation. The Appointive Cabinet will need to work harder, smarter and more prayerfully to match the right pastor with the right gifts in the right mission field at the right time, instead of paying primary attention to salary, tenure and age.

Next Steps for Congregations

- 5. More congregations will increasingly begin to look like their neighborhoods.** A church's neighborhood is the heart and soul of its mission field. A church that looks like its neighborhood has taken the time to develop relationships with the people there, reach out in

[See MISSION PLAN, page 8]



Show your care for God's creation!
Be sure to recycle your copy of the Arkansas United Methodist when you're finished reading it (or share it with a friend).

imagine ministry *stories of churches reaching out with excellence and passion*

Fayetteville church provides home for growing Korean congregation



Young people attending the Arkansas Korean United Methodist congregation, which shares a building with Trinity UMC Fayetteville, enjoy fellowship on a Sunday morning. To watch the video about this ministry, visit the Arkansas Conference YouTube Channel: youtube.com/arkansasumc. Search for "Imagine Ministry" to find the entire series.

Last year, Trinity United Methodist Church Fayetteville had an opportunity to extend a welcome to a sister congregation.

The Rev. Mackey Yokem, then superintendent of the Northwest District, contacted Trinity about the

possibility of sharing their space with a Korean United Methodist congregation in the area.

"The Korean Methodist Church mission was in Springdale, but they were going to be moving," said the Rev. Terry Gosnell, pastor of Trinity.

"And [Mackey] said it would be wonderful to bring them closer to the university, because most of the congregants are students at the University of Arkansas. So it was a perfect mission field opportunity."

Situated in the heart of

Fayetteville, Trinity UMC lies about a mile north of the University of Arkansas. Gosnell says the area bustles with activity that includes people from a variety of backgrounds.

"There are large numbers of Korean students here, there's a lot of diversity in our neighborhood, and so why can't we be a part of that?" he asked.

When the Korean congregation moved from Springdale, where they had an average attendance of 38 people, to the more centralized location of Trinity, the numbers began to grow. Since the relocation, average attendance has grown by more than 30 percent.

"There are so many exciting things going on," Gosnell said. "Rev. Kwan Shin is the young new pastor, and he's been there for not even a year yet, but they are really growing."

The arrangement has

contributed to positive changes for Trinity's worshipping community, as well.

"It's not a club anymore," Gosnell said. "It's a vibrant community. It's a community where we don't lay claim to one part of the building; we're learning to share. We're learning that it's not just about the building, that it's about being the body of Christ, in many parts. And it's so amazing."

Gosnell sees this type of flexibility as an example of what churches may be called to do through the Imagine Ministry process.

"Imagine Ministry is all about thinking outside of the box—rethinking church, so to speak—and being more missional," he said. "We did have some amazing missional opportunities right in front of our faces—to break out of our comfort zone, and embrace diversity, and truly be a welcoming congregation."

Core Measure
4

We will address the unique context of each mission field instead of depending on standardized programs and structures.

Church shows love of neighbor at Russellville laundromats

"The first time, we just kind of all got some quarters in our hands, and some detergent, and we walked around and said, 'Can we help you do your laundry?'"

That's how the Rev. DeeDee Autry explains the start of Loads of Love, a ministry of Wesley UMC Russellville that takes the church out into local laundromats to connect with the community.

Wesley UMC already had begun a new type of community connection last year with The Crossing, a coffeehouse ministry in a storefront near the railroad crossing in downtown Russellville. Autry says a conversation that took place at The Crossing set in motion the Loads of Love ministry.

"Probably about six years ago, I read about a community group that was doing this laundry project in Northwest Arkansas," said Beth Latham, a Wesley UMC member who was part of that initial conversation. "And I thought, wow, if that's what your need is, what an amazing thing to do for somebody."

The first effort was simple, and didn't require a lot of advance

planning. In addition to bringing laundry detergent and rolls of quarters, the group took along some snacks and toys, guessing—correctly—that children would be there.

"And we just showed up," Autry said.

The first time, the group spent about \$65 helping people wash and dry their clothes. On the next outing, the outlay nearly doubled. And it continues to grow every time.

While many of the people doing laundry at a laundromat simply don't have a washer or dryer at home, others may not have a home at all.

"In a town the size of Russellville, we have about 50 or 60 people that are homeless, not to mention those that are displaced, either by loss of job, or eviction, or whatever," Autry said. "So there's a variety, but there's a fairly good number of people out there that are not living in homes and don't have the things that many of us have."

The church began Loads of Love in a single laundromat, but has started to move it to other locations around town to reach different

neighborhoods. And recently, a child in the church held her birthday party at The Crossing as a benefit for the laundry ministry. Instead of gifts for herself, she asked her guests to bring items such as detergent,

laundry baskets and even children's toys to be used for the Loads of Love project.

"I just see our whole community beginning to step back and recognize that if we don't open

our eyes, we don't see what's out there, and we don't see our neighbors that are hurting, and we don't see our neighbors who are hungry, and lost and lonely," Autry said. "This is just a way for us to recognize that, and to be with them in a common place."



As part of Wesley UMC Russellville's Loads of Love ministry, Beth Latham gives quarters to a man washing clothes at a local laundromat. To watch the video about this ministry, visit the Arkansas Conference YouTube Channel: youtube.com/arkansasumc. Search for "Imagine Ministry" to find the entire series.

A new visual identity for United Methodists in Arkansas



With a renewed focus on local congregations and mission field ministry, many felt the time was right for a visible expression of the hopeful future God has in store for Arkansas United Methodists. With the assistance of Bishop Mueller, Conference leaders and staff, Stephen Gideon of the Center for Technology developed a new logo design. It was revealed during the September extended cabinet retreat.

The new logo will be implemented between now and the end of 2013 across print and digital communications of the Arkansas Conference.

About the new logo

The cross and flame: This is the identifier of what it means to be part of the United Methodist Church, and is recognized across the globe as a symbol of hope and healing.

“United Methodists of Arkansas”: The wording in the previous logo placed emphasis on the structure of the Conference. But it is the people of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas who

demonstrate the tenets we uphold in our vision statement, “love of God and neighbor, holy living, and justice.” To reflect that truth, this logo highlights the people called Methodist, not the organization.

Color scheme: The colors used in the logo, especially visible in the Arkansas graphic, represent the rich diversity found throughout the Connection and Arkansas, as well as the God-given natural beauty of our state.

The cross laid over the image of Arkansas: Although we are diverse in so many ways, we are united by the cross and what it represents, and we are united by our United Methodist connection. The cross reaches beyond the state’s borders, like many forms of our ministry.

The tagline, “Disciples making disciples,” is an abbreviated version of our mission statement: “To make disciples of Jesus Christ equipped to transform the world with excellence and passion.”

MyARUMC.org offers access to education, interaction, support

Helpful resources, good deals, and ease of use were three of the objectives driving the development of a website where United Methodist clergy and laity could go to get help with technological problems and ways to streamline their work.

MyARUMC.org, launched this past spring, has made progress toward fulfilling its mission. The site contains links to Center for Technology services such as a helpdesk, free website hosting for local churches, and information to help pastors and laypersons make the most of their new arumc.org email address. Visitors to the site also can sign up to receive text messages relating to disaster response.

More services are slated for this fall, such as a list of preferred technology equipment vendors offering discounts for United Methodists. Be sure to sign up for an arumc.org email address or activate the one you have already established to receive the full benefit of MyARUMC.org, the Learning Management System and the Network for Discipleship and Mission.

Mission field priorities drive five-year plan

An update from the Rev. Dr. Kurt Boggan, director of the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership

The Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership (CCLEL) in the next year will focus on five priorities relating to local churches and their mission fields. The goal before us all: to create an environment and process that leads clergy and laity of the conference toward excellence in leadership development and congregational vitality to make disciples of Jesus Christ equipped to transform the world with excellence and passion. The priorities we have identified for the CCLEL are:

1. Recruiting, training and deploying 97 Circuit Elders to the mission field in 2013. We have made progress toward this goal, with 97 active circuit elders already connecting with groups of their clergy peers.

2. Recruiting, training and assigning up to 80 Congregational Coaches in 2014. At present, 57 coaches are in the process of starting conversations with circuit elders and congregations across the Conference, and 38 coaches are actively working with congregational leaders. Congregational coaches are trained laypersons who walk alongside churches, helping them find ways to connect with their mission fields and bear more fruit in ministry.

3. Developing, equipping, training and holding accountable church leaders for creating vital congregations that make disciples who engage in transformative ministry.

4. Developing, equipping and training clergy for their leadership in growing vital congregations that make disciples with excellence and passion.

5. Deploying a strategic process for equipping congregations and pastors to increase the vitality of their ministry. This process is voluntary; churches may begin it by calling the CCLEL, or if they already work with a congregational coach, through conversations involving their coach, the pastor and the laity. When a congregation commits to the process, their district superintendent is notified of their willingness to take risks and initiative to grow toward vitality. The pastor stays in the appointment for the entire transformation process, and a coach will continue mentoring during that time.

The CCLEL also will pursue three long-term outcomes as part of a five-year plan:

- **Transformed lives, transformed mission fields and an increase in the number of vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ.** We need more highly vital congregations because they change lives, bringing the Kingdom of God closer. Vital congregations make and mature disciples, grow over time and engage disciples in the local mission field and beyond. Vital congregations carry out ministry that transforms lives, addressing social issues

with excellence and passion. Vital congregations practice the Wesleyan means of grace and share the grace of Jesus Christ in the world.

- **Foster an increase in professions of faith**, from the current Conference average of one profession of faith for every 25 people in worship, to a higher average of one profession of faith for every 20 people attending worship.
- **Over the next five years, assist 350 churches with a transformation process for vitality to make disciples and engage the mission field.** Through the dedicated work of congregational coaches and circuit elders, help committed and passionate congregations take the initiative and risk of pursuing revitalization. To help extend the reach of the transformation process to 70 churches a year, the CCLEL will partner with the Center for Technology to more effectively share resources across the conference. The Learning Management System currently being launched will play a crucial role in this process.

All of these goals align with the new Bishop's Mission Plan; we are addressing each of its 10 points in our work through the CCLEL, and will join others in working on these next steps. To learn more, or to become involved, contact me at kboggan@arumc.org or 501-324-8016.

Learning management system active; new website planned

A message from Mark Epperson, director of the Center for Technology

In an ongoing effort to help equip and resource local churches, the districts and the Conference, the Center for Technology (CFT) continues to make progress on several significant Imagine Ministry initiatives. The Conference-branded email account project is nearing completion, and all arumc.org email addresses are now loaded in the appropriate systems to receive Conference communications. Response has been positive, and engagement is broad.

The Learning Management System is live and is accessible through MyARUMC.org. Members of the conference will use their arumc.org email address as the username to gain access to this system. Accounts are finalized and all users with an arumc.org email address will be notified with credentials via email, with many already having received notification.

Martha Taylor and Stephen Gideon are the experts in the CFT that will work with the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership, as well as other resources, to bring training modules to fruition. As courses are developed and rolled out, users will automatically be enrolled and notified via a message sent to their arumc.org email address.

The CFT is also rebuilding the Conference website, arumc.org, from the ground up. CFT staff member Butch Renfro has taken the lead on this project. User experience will drive the ultimate final layout.

The new website will be completely rebranded and feature an up-to-date, modern look with rich video and interactive content that will integrate easily with Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites. The new site will be "responsive" in

nature, which means it will interface well with mobile devices such as tablets and smartphones.

Prominent placement will be given to storytelling and the Centers, with links to MyARUMC.org and the Network for Discipleship and Mission. Users will also have opportunities to view a new video message/devotional series from Bishop Mueller, as well as featured spotlight stories and relevant headlines. Ministries of the Conference will be included with up-to-date information and richer content. We also will use the website to provide higher-quality Live Event Video Streaming, with no commercials, for events like Annual Conference and Veritas.

Look for the Beta launch of the new arumc.org on Oct. 15.

Network for Discipleship and Mission to launch in mid-October

BY MARTHA TAYLOR
Special Contributor

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn.... So many social networks, so little time. Why would a United Methodist lay- or clergyperson want to be a part of another one?

"The Network is an exciting development in our common ministry in the Annual Conference," said Dr. Andrew Thompson, the Conference's Wesley Scholar and assistant professor at Memphis Theological Seminary. "It has the potential to build bridges between congregations in their mission and discipleship formation ministries."

With an anticipated launch date of mid-October, the Network will provide a space for stories to be shared of individual, community and global transformation. Content for the Network will be gathered from across Arkansas as well as from outside news and blogging sites.

"We hope the Network will be a place for a different type of conversation," said the Rev. Susan Ledbetter, an original member of the Spiritual Formation Task Force that envisioned a network where United Methodists in Arkansas could go to discuss current issues surrounding the church as well deepen their knowledge of Wesleyan practices and theology.

Thompson agrees.

"By sharing stories of our ideas and experiences with one another, we will open up the potential for ministry cross-pollination," Thompson said. "This is really about using new technologies as a way to increase our witness to one another—so that we'll be better equipped to make disciples of Jesus Christ!"

The Network will be accessible from www.MyARUMC.org. In addition to the Network website, it is expected that clergy and



laity will receive a weekly electronic communication with three or four topics of interest and that the website content will be refreshed daily.

As one of the first discussion pieces for the Network, Thompson will be contributing a four-part series entitled "The Means of Grace."

The Rev. Taylor works in marketing and training with the Center for Technology.

Your Conference Staff...sharing your mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world with excellence and passion.

Friends,

This list is provided to you as an additional resource for your ministry in your local congregation. The skill and talent of these persons is a tremendous asset for you as you make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of your community and world. Feel free to seek their assistance and you will sense the passion they have for our ministry together. You will be blessed by their expertise and creativity! This directory, along with a quiz to help you get to know the staff a little better, is also posted at arumc.org.

—Rev. Mackey Yokem, Executive Director of Mission and Ministry, Arkansas Conference

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How she can help you: schedules the bishop's calendar for preaching, visiting, meetings, etc.

OFFICE OF CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES

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Rev. Mackey Yokem, Executive Director of Mission & Ministry
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How he can help you: helps prioritize and align Conference ministries and structure with stated Conference vision, mission and objectives.



Nancy Meredith, Secretary, Board of Ordained Ministry
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How she can help you: assists persons entering into ordained ministry and with Board of Ordained Ministry administrative tasks.



Rev. Maxine Allen, Ethnic Ministries Coordinator
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How she can help you: ethnic church leadership development and all Ethnic National Plans.



Karen Swales, Children's Ministry Coordinator
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How she can help you: connects and equips anyone serving in children's ministry, curriculum resources, Safe Sanctuary, etc.



Michelle Moore, Youth & Young Adult Ministry Coordinator
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How she can help you: provides advice and guidance on all things related to youth ministry.



Byron Mann, Volunteers in Mission Coordinator
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How he can help you: provides information to laity and clergy about how to be in mission—in their backyard or across the world.



Janice Mann, Disaster Response Coordinator
disaster@arumc.org | 870.703.8359
How she can help you: provides disaster preparedness consultation and training, disaster event response and assistance.

CENTER FOR CLERGY AND LAITY EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP



Rev. Dr. Kurt Boggan, Director
kboggan@arumc.org | 501.324.8016
How he can help you: resources, equips & trains clergy and laity to create vital congregations, Circuit Elder and Congregational Coach (laity) training; help laity and pastors identify vitality drivers that will enhance the making and maturing of disciples.



Rev. Dr. Candace Barron, Associate Director, Clergy
candace.barron@arumc.org | 501.324.8017
How she can help you: help clergy and laity learn how to grow their churches using a variety of tools like MissionInsite, leadership training, mission field engagement and evangelism. Developing a Small Membership Church Academy. Assists churches wanting to reflect their neighborhoods and better connect with them.



John Crawford, Associate Director, Laity
jcrawford@arumc.org | 501.324.8011
How he can help you: helps laity form leadership teams with clergy.



Rev. Dr. Bob Crossman, New Church Development
bcrossman@arumc.org | 501.908.8177
How he can help you: assists clergy persons and local congregations with decisions related to new church planting.

NETWORK FOR DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION



Rev. Dr. Andrew Thompson, Wesley Scholar
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How he can help you: consults with pastors and laity on matters related to Wesleyan spirituality and discipleship; leads workshops and retreats on subjects connected to our practice of ministry and the Wesleyan tradition.

CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGY helpdesk@arumc.org



Mark Epperson, Director
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How he can help you: assists clergy and laity in determining technology, communication and training needs and then develop affordable and effective solutions.



Rev. Martha Taylor, Communication, Marketing & Training
mtaylor@arumc.org | 501.324.8035
How she can help you: crisis communications, Rethink Church, The Network, marketing plans, resources & information, Email Network, prayer requests, Imagine No Malaria.



Butch Renfroe, Communication Technologies Specialist
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How he can help you: website technical support, training and web/tech advice.



Palmer Lee, Tier I Support/Help Desk
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How he can help you: assists laity and clergy with solving hardware and software problems.



Stephen Gideon, Tier II Support & Application Development
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How he can help you: researches and recommends technology solutions, web and graphic design, videography, software application development.



Amy Forbus, Editor, Arkansas United Methodist
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How she can help you: gathers and reports news and information about United Methodists in Arkansas fulfilling their mission, provides information about learning opportunities, strengthens Conference social media presence.

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

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Todd Burris, Director of Administrative Services
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How he can help you: assists clergy and laity with financial issues and property and liability insurance.



Diane Denham, Assistant Treasurer
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How she can help you: prepares financial reports and handles finance-related issues.



Mona Williams, Benefits Officer
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How she can help you: maintains service records, answers clergy & laity benefits questions, is there through life changes such as retirement.



Wendy Brunson-Daniels, Assistant Benefits Officer
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How she can help you: assists with insurance and pension billings, enrollment and answering clergy & laity questions.



Cathy Hughes, Church Relations Liaison
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How she can help you: event registration, manages Conference website calendar, supports finance and administrative services staff.



Melissa Sanders, Office Manager and Statistician
msanders@arumc.org | 501.324.8022
How she can help you: statistics, apportionment and other fund-giving questions, assists with Arkansas United Methodist subscriptions and circulation.

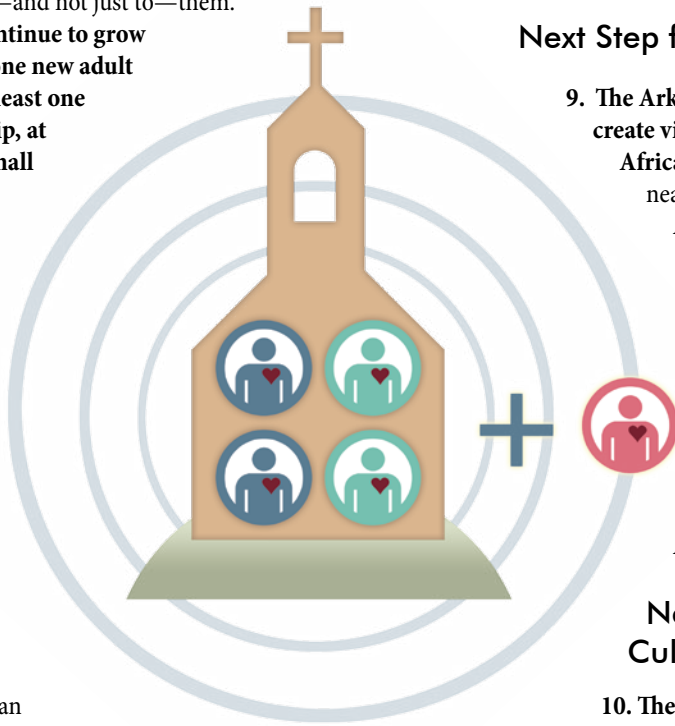


Che Dolan, Administrative Assistant/Receptionist
cdolan@arumc.org | 501.324.8000
How she can help you: directs laity and clergy calls to correct staff person, schedules meetings and meals for conference meeting rooms, provides administrative support for Conference staff.

Mission plan (continued from page 3)

ways that make a real difference in their lives and begin being in ministry with—and not just to—them.

- 6. More churches will continue to grow every year by at least one new adult profession of faith, at least one more person in worship, at least one additional small group and at least one more ministry that reaches into the mission field.** Only 310 of our 683 churches had a profession of faith in 2012. Sadly, this statistic indicates a lack of vitality and readiness to face the mission field of too many churches in the Annual Conference. Every single church—regardless of its size—can be vital and reach its mission field with excellence and passion.



ministry. Our clergy leaders must demonstrate these basic competencies if they are going to lead vital churches that successfully engage the mission field.

Next Step for the Arkansas Context

- 9. The Arkansas Annual Conference will create vital, self-sustaining and growing African-American churches.** There are nearly 450,000 African-Americans in Arkansas, and only a handful of vital, self-sustaining and growing African-American United Methodist congregations. Strong churches must be developed in order to reach the mission field for which God has given us responsibility. This is not just an issue for African-Americans; it is vitally important for the entire Arkansas Annual Conference.

Next Step for a Changing Culture

- 10. The churches of the Arkansas Annual Conference will connect with the previously churched, de-churched and never churched, especially the “nones.”**

Twenty percent of adults in America—including more than one-third of those under 30—identify themselves as religiously unaffiliated. Many of these “nones” consider themselves spiritual in some way, but reject traditional congregational life. Laity are in positions to build relationships and share Jesus’ love through local churches. Clergy need to be committed to training, nurturing and supporting laity in this work.



Taking the Next Steps

These next steps will take time, involve ongoing adaptive learning and send us on some unexpected detours, because there is never an easy shortcut to deep and lasting change. The rigors of this journey over the next several years, however, are worth it because it is Jesus himself who is inviting us to join him.

How will we move from theory to these 10 “Next Steps” becoming realities that move us along God’s trajectory for our future? First, the Extended Cabinet and I will convene Launch Teams to begin the work of each initiative. These Launch Teams will be responsible for the creation, development, implementation, review and re-calibration of the team’s plans, including involving more people in their work. Second, Launch Teams will be accountable to the Extended Cabinet. Third, the Center for Technology will provide regular updates concerning the progress of the 10 “Next Steps” and seek appropriate feedback.

What You Can Do

You can play an essential role in these next 10 steps as you join in fervent, sustained and corporate prayer; focus more on the future than the past; challenge your local church to reach out into your mission field; share your joy at being part of Jesus’ mission; and long for our church to become a Spirit-led movement again!

Next Step for Laity

- 7. Laity will be coached and mentored so they increasingly demonstrate passion, boldness and excellence in faith sharing, servant ministry, stewardship and using their spiritual gifts.** Disciples make other disciples. Increasing the number of new disciples who are equipped to contribute to the vitality of their congregations so they can make disciples who make disciples will enable churches to reach their mission fields with excellence and passion.

Next Step for Pastors

- 8. Pastors will be coached and mentored so they increasingly demonstrate passion, boldness and excellence as spiritual leaders through personal discipleship, preaching, evangelism, mission-field engagement, stewardship and equipping laity for**

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Disciple-making stories take priority for coming year

“Story is not just where we are, it’s where we came from and where we’re going,” writes Scott McClellan, author of *Tell Me a Story: Finding God (and Ourselves) Through Narrative*.

There are stories of disciple-making happening every day in Arkansas. Utilizing communication tools like a redesigned Conference website (coming in October), the *Arkansas United Methodist* and the Network for Discipleship and Mission, these stories will be shared with multiple audiences in multiple ways.

“Technology has changed the

way we share information and talk with one another,” said the Rev. Martha Taylor, charged with marketing and training for the Conference. “There are new and exciting ways for telling the stories of transformation that are happening in our midst.”

Share your story

If you know of a group or individual who is living out the church’s shared mission, “to make disciples of Jesus Christ equipped to transform the world with excellence and passion,” the rest of the UMC in

Arkansas needs to know about it.

Likewise, if you know of a church holding itself accountable to one or more of the Core Measures listed on page 3 of this issue, we want to hear that story, too. Sharing these stories, such as the two that appear on page 4, helps inspire others to think about the ways they can reach the mission field within their own communities.

If you have a story of faithful Arkansans reaching their mission field or making disciples in new ways—or both!—contact Taylor at mtaylor@arumc.org or 501-324-8035.