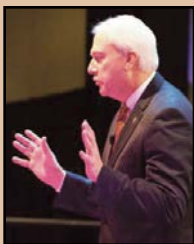


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## Church turns mission into members

BY HEATHER HAHN  
*United Methodist News Service*

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (UMNS)—Ten years ago, the ministry of Oak Forest United Methodist Church appeared to be flatlining.

Its neighborhood was going down, and so was its membership. A core of mostly elderly worshippers was all that kept the lights on.

But now, by improving the physical and spiritual health of its struggling neighbors, the urban congregation is pulsing with new life.

Here is a short list of the outreach ministries Oak Forest United Methodist Church operates:

- The twice-weekly Shepherd's Hope medical clinic
- A weekly dental clinic that does teeth extraction
- Multiple times monthly, Bart's Place vision clinic (named in honor of the healed blind Bartimaeus)
- The weekly Matthew 25 Food Pantry
- Barnabas House, a counseling center that each week offers spiritual guidance and helps people navigate local social services.



Harry and Sue Dinsmore bag chicken for the Matthew 25 Food Pantry at Oak Forest United Methodist Church in Little Rock, Ark. The couple, who have been members of the church for more than 50 years, volunteer at the pantry every week.

PHOTO FROM UMNS VIDEO BY PATRICK SHOWNES

Linda J. Pringle, the volunteer coordinator of the food pantry, said that since adding these ministries, the congregation has transformed from "a pew-warmer church" to one where disciples try to live out Jesus' words in Matthew 25.

"You are to help the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lame, and I feel that's what we're doing," the 73-year-old said. "And I pray we can continue."

As the church reaches outside its walls during the week, a new vitality is taking hold inside its

sanctuary each Sunday. Where once mainly grandparents worshipped, young adults now also join in prayer and little ones giggle through children's sermons.

A few visitors have dropped by on Sunday after being helped by one of the ministries, but the people who keep coming back tend to be those eager to volunteer to help others.

Church members are quick to point out that Oak Forest's outreach ministries would not be possible without the generosity of parishioners, partnerships with

other churches and businesses and the support of the wider United Methodist connection. That support includes grants from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas and the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

Still, the experience of Oak Forest UMC can be a model for other shrinking congregations in changing neighborhoods, said the Rev. Russ Breshears, the church's pastor.

"What we've done is not miraculous," he said. "God has [See MISSION, page 11]

## Risen from the ashes: Living Waters UMC celebrates new building

BY OMAR RIKABI  
*Special Contributor*



Children and adults alike join the party celebrating the completion of Living Waters UMC's new building.

AUM PHOTO BY OMAR RIKABI

CENTERTON, Ark.—Smoke was once again rising from Living Waters United Methodist Church, but instead of arson it was a barbecue, and instead of sorrow there was celebration. On Sept. 21, nearly two years after the Centerton church's 89-year-old building was destroyed by fire, friends and family gathered to eat, drink and celebrate the opening of their new home.

Howard Womak came to visit and was admiring the new sanctuary, with its new chairs, an altar rail donated by a church in Oklahoma, and a large cross made of salvaged wood from the old, burned out sanctuary. It was Womak's great-grandfather who had donated the land for the original church back in the late 1800s, and though a life-long Baptist, he grew up attending Bible school at the old church building.

Also examining the new worship space was Lance Schaffer, who built the sanctuary's salvaged cross. Lance's uncle, Troy Stidham, is a contractor from Missouri and built the new church at cost. Lance smiles as he talks about the past and the future of Living Waters, and his family's place in it: He and his wife, Brittany, were the last couple to be married in the old sanctuary, eight

[See BUILDING, page 6]

# Conquering the creep

BY WILLIAM O. "BUD" REEVES  
Special Contributor

There is a pall of cynicism creeping across our land. Distrust, hostility and rancor characterize our public discourse, and every word of truth is under suspicion.



**Bud Reeves**

Our culture has become so jaded that it is hard to believe in anything anymore.

The Gallup organization has been tracking American confidence in public institutions for a few decades. The most recent poll showed the most confidence in the military, small business and the police, followed by a relatively strong showing of organized religion. Ranking lower than the

church were institutions like the presidency, banks, big business and—last in the forlorn list—Congress. (For the full list, visit [gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx](http://gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx).)

Even in fourth place, organized religion has taken a hit in recent years. In the 1970s, the church warranted "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of trust from two-thirds of Americans. By 2013, that confidence had eroded to 48 percent.

Increasingly, we live in a society of people without religious affiliation—the "nones"—who profess to be spiritual but not religious. But when the dilemmas of our time cry for answers, what I hear from that segment is precisely that—"none."

## Better answers

I believe in better answers. I think people of faith can be catalysts for a renewal of our church and of our nation. I offer some strategies to conquer the creep of cynicism and despair:

**Practice a disciplined spiritual life.** It takes strength to battle negativity, and strength comes from God. We access God's strength when we spend time in prayer, stay deep in the Word, enjoy the sacraments and practice holy conversations with fellow believers. These are the means of grace, and without a steady diet of them, our outlook becomes cynical.

**Be trustworthy.** Since I have been involved in discussions of deep change in United Methodism, the first barrier to renewal always mentioned is a lack of trust—in the "system," between clergy, among laity. There has been

too much heartbreak and disappointment over the years; I have experienced it myself.

We can't make anyone trust. But we can decide to be trustworthy—honest, moral, straightforward in all our dealings and relationships. Establishing trust, we can move out of our comfort zones into the new land of change.

**Say the good word.** It's always easy to join in the gripe sessions at work, at church or on social media. Injustice, hatred, prejudice and ignorance should continue to be condemned. But we are the people of good news, bearing the message of Jesus Christ to the world. Whenever we get the chance, let's share what God is doing in the world and in our lives. As the old Johnny Mercer song goes, "accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, latch on to the affirmative."

**Seek experiences of renewal.** It is easy to let the daily grind of work, family, even church wear you down. When we are exhausted physically, emotionally or spiritually, we tend to get disillusioned and cynical.

Conquer the creep by finding fresh ways to experience God's grace. These can be organized, like a worship experience, a Walk to Emmaus, a Bible study or an educational event. Or it can just be a daily spontaneous act of revival—walk in the woods; sing a song; find a kid and go fly a kite!

Finally, to battle the cynicism of our age, **remember that our hope is bigger than our trouble.**

Whatever trials you face in your personal life, career, family, church or in the larger world, God gives us the power to be "more than conquerors." The difficulties of life are opportunities for the majesty of God to become manifest.

## Holy Spirit at work

Paul says we boast in our sufferings, because they produce endurance, which produces character, which produces hope. "And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Romans 5:5).

Ultimately, it is a Holy Spirit thing. Creeping cynicism and despair are not the work of God. But we can overcome. We can be witnesses to the good. We can be part of the revival.

*The Rev. Dr. Reeves serves as superintendent of the Northwest District.*

**'Whenever we get the chance, let's share what God is doing in the world and in our lives.'**

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Replenish**



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## EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

## An insider mentality

While on an Arkansas road trip last month, I saw signs in the yards of two churches, at opposite ends of the same county, bearing the same message:

**"EXPOSURE TO THE SON PREVENTS BURNING"**

I said a quick prayer of thanks that neither marquee belonged to a United Methodist congregation and tried to shake it off, but here I am writing about it, so it must have had some impact. A negative one, to be sure.

Church-culture insiders with an appreciation for puns may chuckle at the brief little quips commonly found on church signs. But are we trying to reach—and change the minds and hearts of—"insiders"?

Statements like the one above (as well as the harmless-yet-hackneyed variety, like "Come on in! We're prayer-conditioned!") may affirm a reader's suspicion that Christians have nothing of value to say. At their worst, these messages can repel the very people Jesus calls us to reach: those who aren't part of the church crowd... who think of Genesis as a band that was big in the '80s, not as a book of the Bible... who have no idea what that guy in the rainbow wig meant with his "John 3:16" poster.

In his Mission Plan, featured in the Sept. 20 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist* and available online at [arumc.org](http://arumc.org), Bishop Mueller outlines 10 steps for us to take as a Conference; as clergy and laity; and as local churches in our current cultural context.

Point 10 falls under the

category "Next Step for a Changing Culture": *The churches of the Arkansas Annual Conference will connect with the previously churched, de-churched and never churched, especially the "nones."*

Who are the nones? The easy answer is that they're the people who check the box "none" when asked about their religious preference.

The more uncomfortable answer: They're your next-door neighbor, your waiter at the new restaurant you tried last week, your kids' friends (and possibly your kids), the checker at the store, your pharmacist, your college buddies... we are surrounded by nones. And aside from possibly identifying with the term "spiritual but not religious," they're not going to buy into platitudes.

It's time to dig deep and learn to share what our faith really means. We must remember that we have more than platitudes to offer. We have the unreserved love of Christ, which doesn't do us any good if we don't give it away to everyone we encounter.

Many churches already use their signs to share opportunities to connect with the congregation, and that's valuable. Some signs share open-ended statements that can prompt conversations about faith. The most important way to connect, though, comes through each of us. Intentionally or not, our daily interactions proclaim our faith. We need to make certain it's not an insiders-only message.

*To reach me, send an email to [aforbus@arumc.org](mailto:aforbus@arumc.org).*



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### Submission Deadlines

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



## GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

# Revival—it's a United Methodist thing!

Sisters and Brothers,

You've heard me talk quite a bit recently about our need for significant spiritual revival. I'm excited so many of you resonate with this idea. But I also know it's important to share why I think it's so critical right now.

Our best efforts to turn our church in a new direction through adaptive learning, re-structuring, bold risks and hard work have not brought about the results for which we have prayed. Indeed, our church continues to decline in vitality, passion and fruitfulness. We experience growing polarization that literally is driving us farther apart. And recent data—as well as our own experience—makes it clear our church is increasingly irrelevant to much of the world, particularly the young.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented crisis. While we may feel most comfortable talking about it primarily in institutional terms, it's time to confess that it's primarily the result of the fact that we have moved farther away from the single greatest resource we have for our mission and life together: Jesus Christ. Simply put, we are in a spiritual crisis and our only hope is spiritual revival.

Be clear about something, however: We cannot cause spiritual revival to occur. But we certainly can prepare ourselves for it as we pray, worship and watch. When revival comes, it will deepen our relationship with God, create a passionate hunger to follow Jesus and fill us with the Holy Spirit so we have new passion, boldness and purpose in our lives and our church.

This call for revival is not a nostalgic attempt to recreate a certain kind of spiritual experience from the past. It is not an excuse to step away from the complexities and difficulties of life in the early 21st century. And it certainly is

not an effort to de-emphasize the importance of seeking justice, peace and healing in our broken world. It is a call to fully embrace the reality that all of our dreams, plans and hard work must be built on our relationship with our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Revival will be a challenge because of deep divisions in our church, powerful cultural forces swirling around us, and our own instinct to avoid change at all costs. It will be an uphill battle because we think we know better than God. But, perhaps most importantly, it will be difficult because we will have to confront the reality that we have assumed for far too long that the future of our church is primarily up to us.

Our quest for revival will have to include laity and clergy throughout our global connection who are serious about opening their hearts, minds and lives to God. We will have to get serious about living as Jesus' disciples like we never have before. And we will have to be willing to let the Holy Spirit lead us far outside comfort zones.

So what do we do?

We pray passionately. We open our hearts humbly. We wait for God patiently. And we do it starting right now. I know I'm ready. How about you?

Grace and peace,



Gary E. Mueller

## APPOINTMENTS

The following appointment changes have been announced since the deadline for the previous issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*:

- Samantha Meadors (deacon)—ASU Wesley Foundation (primary) and First UMC Jonesboro (effective Aug. 15)
- Rebecca Boggan (deacon, associate pastor)—First UMC Little Rock (effective Sept. 3)
- Chester Jones (elder, retired)—St. Andrew UMC Little Rock (effective Sept. 3)
- Melanie Tubbs (associate, part-time local pastor)—First UMC Russellville (effective Sept. 8)
- Jody Farrell (full-time local pastor)—Central UMC Fayetteville (effective Jan. 1, 2014)

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



## PRACTICAL DIVINITY

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON

# Is it holiness or discipleship? What's at stake?

We live in an interesting time for the Wesleyan tradition. There have been long periods in the history of Methodism when Methodists weren't particularly interested in the distinctives of Wesleyan spirituality, or in aligning themselves with the practices of the early Methodist revival. Today is not one of those times.

In fact, the number of conversations I have with pastors and laity about how to rediscover and reclaim the rich heritage of the Wesleyan tradition is simply remarkable. It happens every week. And the desire on the church's part to get in touch with the living tradition out of which it springs has shaped my own understanding of my calling in a profound way.

The work of bringing forward the resources of Wesleyan theology for the use of the church today is not without its hazards, though. Some parts of our tradition are better off

left in the past, while others require significant translation to be usable in the present.

Sometimes we make claims about things we think are Wesleyan when they really aren't (what a friend of mine calls "Wesleyish"). Other times, there are concepts or practices with a great deal of potential that just have a hard time gaining traction in the current life of the United Methodist Church.

### Different understandings

Let me offer an example of what I'm talking about. It has to do with the term "holiness."

We don't use the language of holiness much in the church today. In fact, in our culture the word itself is often associated with negative stereotypes: the "holy roller" who is too in-your-face with his religion, or the holier-than-thou person who looks down her nose at everyone else.

We're much more comfortable with the language of "discipleship." The mission statement of the United Methodist Church is "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." Speaking in terms of becoming a disciple is something we can understand. A disciple is a role we are called to fill. It's like the job description of someone who is living a faithful life. The word "disciple" is a concrete noun. Easy to understand.

Holiness isn't quite like that. It's an abstract noun. It signifies a particular kind of quality or character in a person. Holiness (in the biblical sense) isn't a job we are supposed to take on so much as it is the disposition of someone whose life is being transformed by grace. Even so, we don't use it very much. It just seems somehow foreign to our ears, or even old-fashioned.

Now here's what's interesting to me: Holiness was a word that early

Methodists used all the time. John Wesley had a term—"holiness of heart and life"—that became one of his favored phrases to explain what he meant by someone who was experiencing ongoing sanctification by grace.

When Wesley wrote an essay to explain Methodism to the world, he felt the need to state why a typical Methodist cared so much about pursuing salvation openly and unapologetically. To clarify what he was talking about, Wesley added, "By *salvation* he means holiness of heart and life." In other words, for Wesley it is a concept that is central to everything that Christians should care about. The language of holiness saturates Wesley's writing.

On the other hand, the language of discipleship is almost entirely absent from early Methodism. That includes Wesley. You'll occasionally see some form of the word being employed, but it isn't

common. It just wasn't a term that Wesley and the early Methodists felt the need to use very much.

Today we tend to substitute discipleship terms where the early Methodists used holiness terms. So instead of talking about embracing holiness, we talk about authentic discipleship. The early Methodists said they wanted to spread scriptural holiness across the land, whereas we talk about wanting to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

The easy attitude to this shift would be to say, "Big deal. We just use a different word for the same concept."

Well, maybe so and maybe not. Is it the same concept?

### Related, not identical

Let me say plainly that I think both terms are crucial. We need the concrete noun and the abstract

[See HOLINESS, page 5]

# An update from Bishop Gary E. Mueller regarding FaithSpring United Methodist Church

**Editor's Note:** Bishop Gary E. Mueller on Sept. 5 distributed the following letter via the Arkansas Conference Email Network and posted at [arumc.org](http://arumc.org). The Arkansas United Methodist has reproduced it here to ensure that as many Arkansas UMC leaders as possible have had an opportunity to read it.

Greetings,

I am sending this rather long communication because I want to offer you as complete an accounting as possible concerning FaithSpring United Methodist Church.

FaithSpring began when the Arkansas Conference made a strategic decision to plant a new church in the rapidly growing area of west Pulaski County in 2009. This new church start involved the appointment of a United Methodist pastor, Brock Patterson; the selection of a specific geographical area, the Ferndale community; and a significant financial investment by United Methodists.

The congregation initially located in the 4H Retreat Center, within its mission field. It began touching and transforming lives almost immediately, and started to grow quickly. Relatively quickly, however, it decided to relocate.

*The United Methodist Book of Discipline* requires congregations, whether chartered or not, to receive approval from the District Board of Church Location and Building before relocating. FaithSpring never sought or received this required approval. Instead, approximately 18 months ago, it simply signed a new lease and later informed the District Superintendent, Director of New Church Starts and District Board of Church Location and Building that it would move to the leased location on Bowman Road in west Little Rock, which was considerably outside its targeted mission field.

When I inquired of the pastor several months ago why the disciplinary procedure was not followed, he told me that he was unaware of the required process. However, I was later informed by a key lay leader in the congregation that the pastor had told him the congregation was not going to seek the required approval because he did not think it would be given.

The pastor, District Superintendent, and Central District Board of Church Location and Building all began exploring options for moving back to the originally assigned geographical location when the congregation learned earlier this year that the Bowman lease was being terminated earlier than expected. District leaders felt a return to the intended mission field of west Pulaski County was critical. The FaithSpring pastor, however, did not believe there was an appropriate facility available.

The District Board of Church Location and Building gave tentative approval to begin preliminary negotiations concerning its preferred site in west Little Rock because time

was running out and the congregation had nowhere to go. It was clearly communicated, however, that the District Board of Church Location and Building would need to give final approval before the lease was executed. The Board believed the negotiation period would be used to locate a suitable facility in west Pulaski County.

I became more deeply involved during this time period because I was concerned about two issues. First, I believed FaithSpring would be unable to raise needed capital to re-establish themselves in west Pulaski County at the end of three years since it would be investing so much in leasing a facility. Second, I was increasingly worried that it would be nearly impossible for the congregation to move into its mission field after being absent four-and-a-half years. In short, I concluded that a three-year lease in west Little Rock would be detrimental to FaithSpring's mission as originally envisioned and funded by the Arkansas Annual Conference.

District Superintendent Dede Roberts, Executive Director of Mission and Ministry Mackey Yokem and I met with four lay representatives of the FaithSpring United Methodist Church leadership team on Tuesday, July 23. Because of the approaching deadline, I stipulated that FaithSpring could sign a temporary lease in west Little Rock for no longer than 18 months. I felt a move as quickly as possible to the church's assigned mission field was so important that I agreed to commit the Annual Conference to supplement the increased rent that would result from a shorter lease. I was reassured by those present in that meeting that they would work within the parameters set by the leadership of the Central District and Arkansas Conference.

The next information that I was provided was that the FaithSpring United Methodist Church congregation had been informed, on Sunday, July 28, 2013, that they would be moving to the location in west Little Rock and, unexpectedly, that they would be doing so as an independent congregation no longer affiliated with the United Methodist Church. On the same day, Dede Roberts received letters via email from several congregational leaders and the pastor indicating they were withdrawing from the United Methodist Church.

Not only was I stunned by this action, I then received a copy of a letter sent from the pastor to the members of FaithSpring United Methodist Church—and, presumably, the new congregation—that was posted on the Internet and many of you have read. It was filled with harsh words, disappointing comments and, quite frankly, statements that are incorrect. I can only trust you will not let that letter shape your lasting impression of the United Methodist leaders who care about and have invested time, energy and resources in FaithSpring.

FaithSpring United Methodist Church did

not cease to exist when the pastor and certain lay leaders acted in the manner they did. Instead, those initiating this move left the congregation, moved to a new site, and began a new congregation called FaithSpring Community Church that we later learned had incorporated as a new legal entity on the Friday before the leaders' announcement to the congregation.

When they left, they took with them all of the assets of FaithSpring United Methodist Church. This posed a very difficult situation because financial, tangible and intellectual assets belonging to FaithSpring United Methodist Church were removed without permission. As a bishop committed to fulfilling my disciplinary responsibilities, I brought together a team including our Conference Chancellor, Associate Conference Chancellor, Central District Chancellor, Central District Superintendent Dede Roberts, Executive Director of Mission and Ministry Mackey Yokem and others to work with me to address the situation.

Our Chancellors began preparing a civil lawsuit to account for and to recover the church's property and assets. They also initiated negotiations with counsel for the FaithSpring Community Church and its leaders. As you can imagine, this took a great deal of time and effort. I am glad to report they were successful and, as a result, most of the assets that we sought to be returned, both cash and actual, have in fact been returned to FaithSpring United Methodist Church without the need for litigation at this time. There are two caveats to this about which I want you to be aware. First, while we have received a significant amount of cash, it does not equal the Conference's original investment in FaithSpring United Methodist Church. Second, after all that has transpired, we have decided it is best at this time to allow the new congregation to use the name FaithSpring Community Church and to retain the website.

You may wonder why we have not pursued litigation at this time. Frankly, it is expensive, time-consuming and hurtful, and there are no guarantees what the outcome might be. More importantly, we achieved, without formal litigation, our two major objectives of upholding the accountability embodied in *The Book of Discipline* and recouping Conference assets which will be used to plant a new church in west Pulaski County as was always intended.

This is a painful situation for all of us who have been involved and for the entire Arkansas Annual Conference. There have been many tears shed, including my own. However, I am grateful that we have brought the situation to a successful resolution. In particular, I want to thank Tony Hilliard, Michelle Ator, David Hoffman and Dede Roberts for their extraordinary leadership.

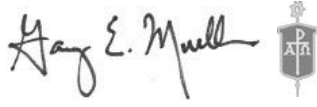
We are a connectional church guided in our life together by *The Book of Discipline* and

our shared mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ who make disciples who are equipped to transform lives, communities and the world with excellence and passion. I want to assure you that I take each of these responsibilities very seriously and will do everything in my power to provide the strongest leadership I possibly can.

I have asked Mackey Yokem to undertake a 'post-mortem' of this situation, as well as several other recent events, to provide us a better way forward in the critically important work of new church starts. He will present his findings to the Extended Cabinet at its September 11-13 retreat, and make that report available to the Conference.

There is much to be done in our world that is filled with so much pain, heartache and suffering. I wish FaithSpring Community Church well in its endeavors to carry out Christ's work. I also ask you to join me in praying for its members who are, after all, still our sisters and brothers in Christ.

Grace and peace,



Gary E. Mueller  
Resident Bishop, Arkansas Area

## Information concerning the findings presented to the Extended Cabinet

During the Sept. 11-13 Extended Cabinet retreat, about an hour of discussion followed the Rev. Mackey Yokem's assessment of recent events relating to new church starts. The conversation included making plans for formulating the final report.

A working group from within the Extended Cabinet was assigned to complete the report, which will be presented at the next meeting of the Extended Cabinet, scheduled for Dec. 5. The report will include an analysis of events involving new church starts within the Arkansas Conference, as well as recommendations for how to move forward in creating new places for new people, one of the four focus areas of the worldwide United Methodist Church. Members of the working group include the Rev. Stephen Coburn, chair of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, and the Rev. Dede Roberts, superintendent of the Central District.

# Coming full circle and forging ahead

## *A message from Dr. Johnny Moore, president of United Methodist-related Philander Smith College*

Philander Smith College is a beacon of hope and a vessel through which dreams become reality. For 135 years, the college has been exceptionally effective in creating bright futures for students with the tenacity and wherewithal to transform themselves through higher education.

Started as Walden Seminary, a place where freed slaves clamored for an education, we boldly stand as a monument to their determination and fortitude, preparing today's students for a soon-coming tomorrow. Here we are, more than a century after our founding, and our alumni ranks are filled with some of the state's and the nation's most prominent educators, attorneys, legislators, elected officials, accountants, entertainers, thought leaders and more.

I know firsthand that starting here, you can go anywhere you want in life. Upon earning my bachelor's degree in 1989 from Philander Smith College, I completed a Master of Science degree in mathematics from Arkansas State University and began my professional career as an instructor of mathematics at East Arkansas Community College in Forrest City, Ark.

After four years there, I accepted a teaching position at Indian River State College in Ft. Pierce, Fla., where I rose through the ranks from Master Instructor to tenured Full Professor of Mathematics and, ultimately, to Vice President of Student Affairs—all within a nine-year time frame. Later, I was recruited by Tyler Junior College in Tyler, Texas, to serve as the Executive Vice President. After two years there, I came full circle, back to Philander Smith College, as the institution's 13th

president.

Since taking the helm of my alma mater, I have been listening, observing and talking with numerous stakeholders who want to see the college continue to thrive. Imagine how thrilled we were to learn recently that Philander Smith College had been ranked by U.S. News & World Report as one of the nation's top 30 Historically Black Colleges and Universities!



**Johnny Moore**

While the recognition is great validation of our value, we are ever cognizant that academically qualified African-American students can attend college anywhere they choose, forcing us to compete with colleges with wider offerings and deeper pocketbooks. And threats to federal support of HBCUs loom large each year, with stricter rules on awarding loans, hampering the enrollments of not only Philander Smith College, but also

some of the nation's most prominent black colleges and universities.

And yet, we are undeterred. While proud of our recent accolades, we are compelled to become more diligent, enterprising and innovative in order to remain competitive. Toward that end, over the next couple years, some of our institutional priorities include:

- opening the new Student Center;
- increasing enrollment to 1,000 students;

- increasing the number of Arkansas students;
- increasing the number of student scholarships;
- increasing the number of business mentors and internships for students;
- enhancing alumni business collaboration;
- Increasing the number of on-campus job fairs;
- adding additional athletic programs (baseball, softball, soccer, tennis)
- adding summer academic camps and summer job programs;
- increasing faculty and staff development opportunities; and
- developing graduate degree programs.

As you can see, our work is set before us, but these goals are absolutely attainable with a strong sense of direction, unity and the support of our trustees, administrators, faculty, staff, alumni and other champions. In fact, we see Philander Smith College as becoming one of the nation's best liberal arts colleges, known and recognized by the excellence of our programs, the quality of our instruction and our desire to be a contributing partner to Little Rock, as well as to Arkansas, the United States and the world.

If our past has taught us anything, it is that our challenges serve to make us stronger, fortifying us to withstand the test of time. How glad I am to be home to have a page in the next chapter of our glorious and storied history, for truly the best is yet to come.

## Holiness (continued from page 3)

noun. We need to talk about what a disciple looks like, and we need to talk about the characteristics of holiness. Both terms are drawn from the New Testament. And both are central to what it means to live faithfully.

With that aside, I'll add that I do not think discipleship and holiness are interchangeable. With the way we use the language of discipleship, we are typically talking about what a person *does*. The faithful disciple is someone who sets the right priorities, commits his life to ministry, witnesses to the world through his actions, and loves God and his neighbor.

If we were to use the language of holiness, on the other hand, we'd speak more about who a person *is*. For Wesley, holiness is about the fruits of the spirit coming to mark a person's inner character—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and the rest. He attached the phrase “heart and life” to holiness because he believed that a person who had been transformed inwardly would bear out that new spirit in everything she thought, said or did. The heart always precedes the life, but the life will definitely be changed if the transformation of the heart is authentic.

My worry at times is that we want to think of discipleship the way we think of baking a cake. Put all the ingredients together in the right order and *voilà!* there's your product. But that only works if one of the ingredients is an encounter with the living God—something that doesn't come from us and that we don't control.

We have to be transformed inwardly for any outward change to really take hold. And that means we have to become holy, a process that Wesley equated with being filled by the love of God so that love itself becomes the defining mark of one's character.

So is it discipleship or holiness? Well, it's both. And if the second of those terms sounds stranger to our ears, that's all the more reason to reclaim it for the people called Methodists today.

*The Rev. Dr. 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@arumc.org.*

## What is #NextStepsMonday?

### *Extended Cabinet shares positive faith messages in social media*

If you're connected with a district superintendent or other member of the Arkansas Conference Extended Cabinet on Facebook or Twitter, you may have noticed something new in their social media feed: an inspiring thought or story of ministry, followed by the hashtag #nextstepsmonday.

Hashtags begin with a “#” sign and provide a way of grouping messages related to a common theme or event. A social media user may click on a given hashtag to view other messages that include it.

At its Sept. 11-13 retreat, the Extended Cabinet discussed a number of topics, from the necessity for spiritual revival, to the priorities that will affect funding of the 2015 Annual Conference budget, to moving forward with the Bishop's Mission Plan, which was published in the Sept. 20 special issue of the Arkansas United Methodist.

The #nextstepsmonday postings began on Sept. 16, as part of a larger plan offered by the Revs. Susan Ledbetter, Andrew Thompson and

Mark Norman to the rest of this group of Conference leaders. The plan uses spiritual disciplines to combat cynicism in the church, and includes committing to prayer three times daily: for the person's own ability to provide leadership; for each member of the Extended Cabinet by name; and for the entire Arkansas Annual Conference.

In addition, Extended Cabinet members pledged to witness to the positive nature of grace, particularly through social media outlets, which often brim with negativity. Some shared that they know clergy who have stopped checking Conference- and ministry-related Facebook groups because of the cynical nature of the conversations. This is where #nextstepsmonday comes into play.

To tie the effort to the Bishop's Mission Plan, which carries the subtitle, “Next Steps,” the Extended Cabinet members post a reflection once a week, using the hashtag #nextstepsmonday.

“Personally, my friends on Facebook who are non-religious, the

‘nones,’ tend to post regularly and with more passion about their non-religious positions and disdain for organized religion and Christians than my friends who follow Christ speak positively about and witness to the power of their faith and Christ in their lives,” said the Rev. Bud Reeves, superintendent of the Northwest District.

“We set a challenge to be a positive voice,” said Ledbetter, “and tell stories or remark about the good we see happening in our churches and in the world for Christ—to not be ashamed of the gospel, but instead commit to witnessing to our faith.”

### **An invitation**

Ledbetter encourages others who use social media to post positive reflections on faith or ministry, adding #nextstepsmonday as the hashtag.

“The more positive comments, the better!” she said.



LEFT: Standing near one of the twin fountains that spill forth from the facade of Living Waters UMC, the Rev. Blake Lasater talks with church member Shirley Herbaugh.



LEFT: The cross on the sanctuary wall is fashioned of wood reclaimed from the old sanctuary. In addition, the exterior brick came from the old building, the cornerstone was salvaged and incorporated into the new structure and some stained glass windows that survived the fire will be hung in the new space.



BELOW: Lance Schaffer holds his son, Brooks, as his uncle, Troy Stidham, looks on. Stidham served as contractor and built Living Waters' new facility at cost, and Brooks will be the first person baptized in the new building.

RIGHT: In its current configuration, the new building's sanctuary will seat 210 people.



## Building (continued from page 1)

months before it burned down. And in a couple of weeks their infant son, Brooks, will be the first person baptized in the new sanctuary.

### Accessibility and more

Outside, amid the big grill, live music and bounce-houses for the kids, Shirley Herbaugh repeats over and over, "This is wonderful!" Her husband Gerald is a life-long member of the church. Born with polio, as a young boy he needed to be carried up and down the stairs by groups of friends. Now, he has a building he can enter into on his own in his wheelchair.

A quick walk through the building reveals that there is more than handicap accessibility for the members of the church to be excited about. Just two miles from Bentonville, Living Waters is positioned for the growth that is already moving toward Centerton. A new high school will go in down the road, and with it new neighborhoods and new families.

In another week or two, the church's food pantry, shut down since the fire, will be back up and running in its new designated space. And in the room next door, a medical examination room waits for a planned medical clinic. Two retired doctors in the community, moved by the new construction, have already offered their services, free of charge.

And somewhere, in the midst of all the people walking around, sharing hugs, and reveling in their new digs, is the Rev. Blake Lasater. He gives tours and answers questions, and the look on his face is

one of extreme relief.

"We just got the certificate of occupancy yesterday at 4:10 in the afternoon," he says. "I wasn't sure this was ever going to happen. I'm starting to feel normal again for the first time in two years. This is a dream come true."

### A tough journey

Now a retired Navy reservist, Lasater came to pastor here in 2005, and in 2007 was shipped to serve in Iraq. In 2008, Living Waters merged with the 145-year-old Centerton UMC. On September 15, 2011, he was in Little Rock when he got a call that the church was on fire. The cause was ruled as arson, but no arrests were ever made. The sanctuary was gutted, and smoke and water damage filled the rest of the building. But the insurance company wanted to restore the old building, and would only pay half of the claim money if the church decided to tear down and build anew.

Lasater tells of how they debated what to do, and how the decision was settled by the church's oldest living member, Anna Skaggs. In her 90s at the time of the fire, Skaggs had been baptized in the old sanctuary as a child. But as Lasater says, she declared, "I wish you would tear this [old building] down and build a place I can walk into!" And that settled it.

"Once the oldest member tells you that," says Lasater, "you know you won't have a battle with the congregation."

Sadly, Skaggs died just a few weeks after the church began

construction on the new building. And that was not the only tragedy. Less than three months after the building burned down, Lasater's wife, Jan, died of cancer. As their five-year-old daughter Gracie runs through the new building and past her daddy, he watches her go by, and after a long pause he says, "There were days these last two years where I would have rather been back in Iraq."

But his smile quickly returns. There are new visitors walking around, and Lasater wants to talk about the "new stability." He tells of how during construction, new people constantly showed up asking when they would re-open.

"The old building was dilapidated and not accessible," he says. "Now we have tons of interest. It's amazing how a building sets a tone."

The congregation, which averages between 95 and 105 in worship attendance, had been meeting at Centerton Gamble Elementary. Every week they would set up the chairs, sound system, instruments and altar for worship.

"I'm never unloading 'church in a box' again," he laughs.

The following day, the district superintendent, the Rev. Bud Reeves, helped consecrate Living Waters' new home. And Lasater preached the first sermon in the new sanctuary.

The message? "The cost of discipleship."

*The Rev. Rikabi serves as director of the Wesley Foundation campus ministry at the University of Arkansas.*



The glass door to Living Waters UMC's new H2O Food Pantry holds a reflection of the bounce houses that were set up in the parking lot for the Sept. 21 celebration.

AUM PHOTOS BY OMAR RIKABI

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# Congregation commits \$100k to Imagine No Malaria

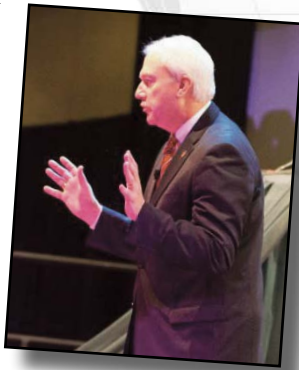
United Methodists of Arkansas took a big step recently toward meeting their \$1 million commitment to end death and suffering by malaria with a \$100,000 pledge by Central United Methodist Church in Fayetteville. The Rev. David Freeman, spokesperson for the Imagine No Malaria effort in Arkansas, expressed his gratitude to church members.

“Seeing churches commit to a pledge such as this reaffirms my conviction that United Methodists in Arkansas understand the mission and the message of Imagine No Malaria,” said Freeman. “It is overwhelming to watch the ‘thermometer’ rise, knowing that churches of all sizes are digging deep to help save the lives of children in sub-Saharan Africa.”

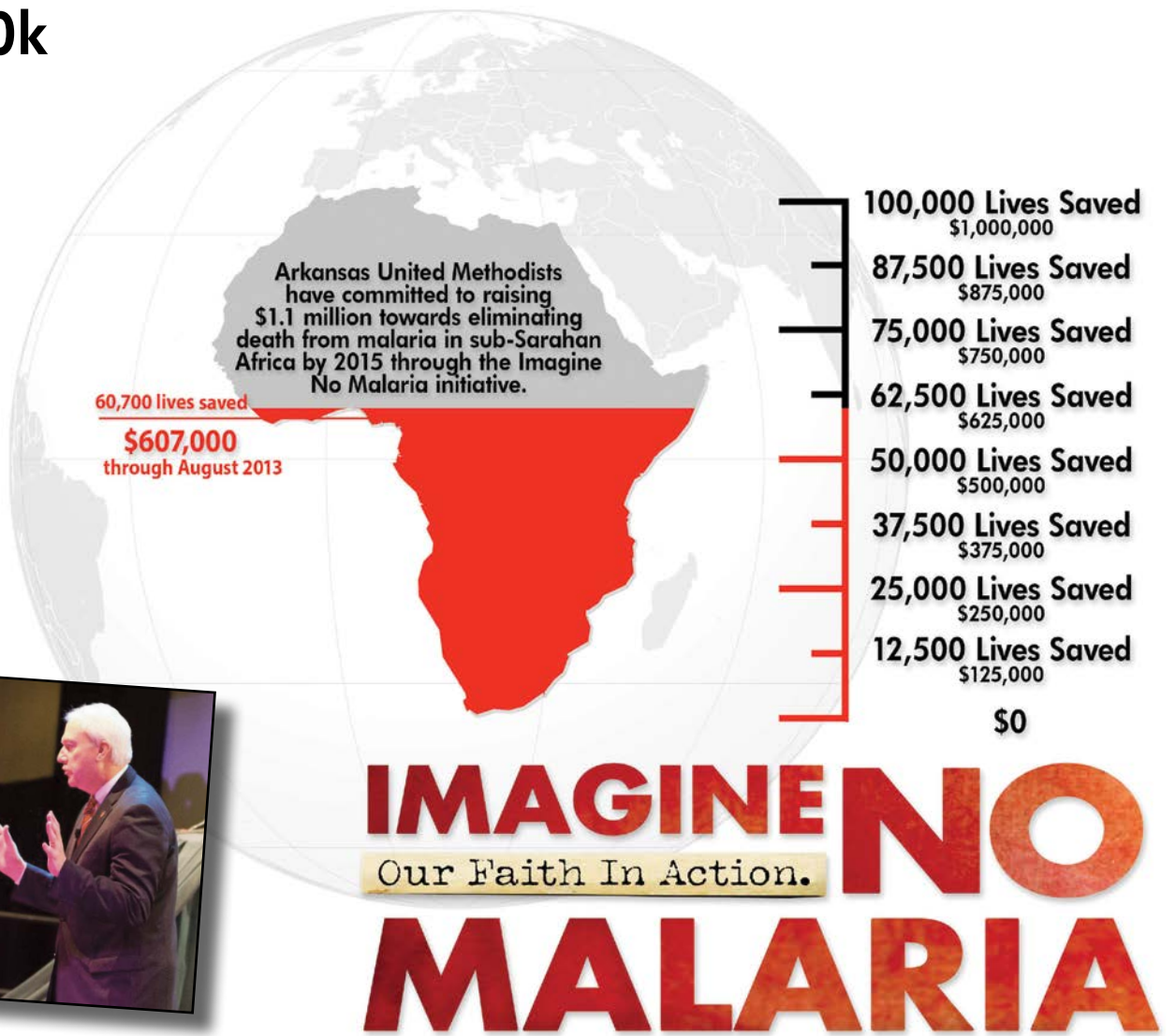
## Bishop Bickerton sermon available on The Network

There’s good news for those who were unable to listen to Bishop Tom Bickerton’s sermon about Imagine No Malaria at the 2013 Annual Conference held in June. Highlights of Bickerton’s presentation will be available for download through the Conference’s Network for Discipleship and Mission. The address for The Network is [network.arumc.org](http://network.arumc.org).

Bickerton spoke about his personal experiences with African people he has come to love and the harm caused by malaria, as well as how close the Imagine No Malaria effort is to fulfilling the hope that malaria will cease to kill women and children by 2015.



The above total reflects a dollar-for-dollar matching grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. UMFA will match every gift received through the Arkansas Conference, up to \$333,333.



“The support by lay and clergy leaders through our prayers and financial gifts is an important factor in the faithfulness of this outstanding ministry. I urge you to pray for the children, find ways to share the story and give a generous gift for our traditional December Methodist Children’s Home offering.”

— Bishop Gary Mueller

# Save the Date!

\*\*\* December 8 & 15 \*\*\*

## Methodist Family Health Christmas Offering

This Christmas, listen to your heart and help Methodist Family Health care for the children and families who need your love and support.

Methodist Family Health is a nonprofit organization that provides comprehensive psychiatric and behavioral healthcare to children and families throughout Arkansas. By donating to this special Christmas offering for Methodist Family Health in local churches across Arkansas, you’ll improve the lives of thousands of Arkansas families in desperate need of answers and guidance.

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Methodist Family Health is the management company of: Methodist Children’s Home, Methodist Counseling Clinic, Methodist Behavioral Hospital and Arkansas CARES.

## VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION & DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATES

For information on any Volunteers In Mission (VIM) project below, contact the individual listed or Byron Mann, Conference VIM coordinator, at vim@arumc.org or 870-703-8361. For Disaster Response (DR) projects, contact Byron or Janice Mann, DR co-coordinators, at disaster@arumc.org or 870-703-8359 (Janice). To connect with these ministries on Facebook, search for "Volunteers in Mission & Disaster Response - Serving Arkansas & Beyond," and join the group for updates.

### Scott County, Ark.: Workers still needed

Flood damaged homes in Scott County still need teams to make repairs. Two or three families could use help in the next few weeks before winter sets in. These are one- or two-day projects. Interested individuals or groups should email vim@arumc.org.

### Arkansas Conference VIM mission journey to Moore, Okla., for tornado cleanup

Team members are needed for a Nov. 4-8, 2013, Volunteers In Mission journey to help with tornado recovery in Moore, Okla. Meals and lodging will be provided by Oklahoma VIM; team members make their own travel arrangements. Sheri Matthews is serving as team leader. Contact Byron Mann, 870-703-8361 or vim@arumc.org, if you can be in mission with this team.

### Host a Rio Bravo mission information session Oct. 23-25

Mission coordinator Willie Berman, from Manos Juntas in Rio Bravo, Mexico, will be in Arkansas Oct. 23-25. He would like to visit some churches interested in sending teams to Manos Juntas. If your church is interested in hosting him for a presentation, contact Byron Mann, 870-703-8361 or vim@arumc.org, to schedule a visit.

### Mexico mission journey, Feb. 22-28, 2014

Volunteers In Mission of the Arkansas Conference is sponsoring a mission journey to Rio Bravo, Mexico, from Saturday, Feb. 22 to Friday, Feb. 28, 2014. Opportunities to share Christ's love include Mission Bible School, construction, home visits, painting, repairs and other tasks. For registration and pricing, contact Larry Acton, 870-420-3969 or 512-497-4154; or Byron Mann, 870-703-8361 or vim@arumc.org.

### Early Response Team training in Van Buren Oct. 12

An opportunity to become trained as an Early Response Team (ERT) member is coming up soon. ERTs deploy as soon as help is requested following a disaster. The Oct. 12 session is being held at Heritage UMC Van Buren. For information or to register, contact Bob Bretch: rbretch@cox.net.

### Taking a mission journey? Tell VIM!

VIM wants to know if your church has made a mission journey this year, or is planning one for the future. Please send 1) your destination, 2) the number of volunteers participating and 3) the estimated cost of the journey to Byron Mann at vim@arumc.org. Mann also can provide information on planning mission journeys in Arkansas, the U.S. and internationally.

## Hamburg group visits Heifer Ranch to learn, give

Sixteen children and seven adults from First United Methodist Church Hamburg on Aug. 12 traveled to Heifer Ranch in Perryville, Ark., to learn about the work of Heifer International. They saw the animals there as well as examples of housing in developing countries.

With a check for \$800.00 that was the result of their collection and fund raising for several months, the children gave gifts of a water buffalo, a heifer, a beehive and a flock of chicks, as available for giving through Heifer's website at www.heifer.org/gift-catalog. These animals, along with training provided by Heifer International, will help families create a sustainable



Children and adults from First UMC Hamburg stop for a photo during their tour of Heifer Ranch. They are visiting the section of the ranch's Global Village that recreates the slums of South Africa.

COURTESY PHOTO

livelihood.

The children from First UMC Hamburg already have begun raising

more money for a return trip to make another gift. Their next goal is to raise \$850 to purchase a camel.

## Bikes, Blues, BBQ... and UMCs!



United Methodist churches were well represented Sept. 18-21 at Fayetteville's Bikes, Blues, and BBQ, which has become the largest motorcycle rally in the U.S. that benefits local charities.

**Central UMC Fayetteville** served as a welcoming host to many of the bikers, providing free parking, passing out free water and helping any way they could. **Goshen UMC** had a tent where festival attendees could take photos on a bike. From the Fort Smith area churches, the sound man from **Midland Heights UMC** and the bass player from **Goddard UMC** performed in one of the bands.



—from the Northwest District Facebook page

## CLASSIFIEDS

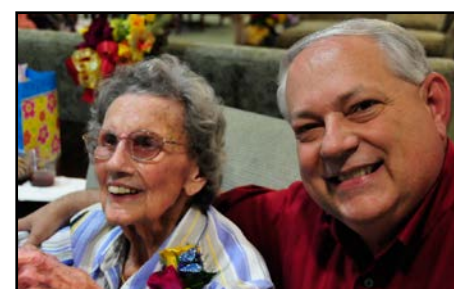
**PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED** in the *Arkansas United Methodist* for 60 cents per word, no limit. Call 501-324-8037, email aforbus@arumc.org or mail to: *Arkansas United Methodist*, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202.

**Asbury United Methodist Church, 1700 Napa Valley Dr., Little Rock, AR 72212, is seeking a full-time Minister of Youth** for a vibrant youth group with a brand new hi-tech youth facility, the Warehouse. Applicants should be a dedicated Christian with a keen desire to bring Christ to Jr. High and Sr. High Youth, through Bible study, creative activities, worship, and service. Preferred BA in Christian Education or equivalent work experience, with basic computer skills. Background in UMC preferred. Salary commensurate with experience. All interested persons should send their resume to Rev. Mary Hilliard, Senior Pastor at mary@asbury-lr.org.

**YOUTH DIRECTORS:** Still time to plan a Spring Break trip, and it's a good time to start looking at a summer trip!! If you plan your own trips and just need help chartering your bus, we get great rates from 3 different charter companies. **Kimberling Kids Travel ~ kimberlingkids@aol.com ~ 501-227-8447.**

**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).

## Church honors member for 106th birthday



COURTESY PHOTO

First UMC Pocahontas celebrated recently the 106th birthday of a longtime member. Marie Davis, a member of the church since the 1940s with years of active service in the United Methodist Women, was honored with a reception planned by the UMW and held at the senior living community where she lives.

Relatives and friends enjoyed refreshments and visiting with Davis on Sunday afternoon, July 28. She also received many cards and telephone calls wishing her well. She is pictured here with her pastor, the Rev. Dr. Rocky Starnes.



# Prepare now for Ingathering, set for Nov. 23

The 36th annual Ingathering, a supply drive to benefit relief ministries in Arkansas and worldwide, will take place Saturday, Nov. 23 from 9 a.m. to noon, at Arkansas Rice Depot, 3801 W. 65th Street in Little Rock. Sponsored by the Conference Board of Global Ministries, this year's Ingathering will include a brief devotional time, refreshments and lots of work organizing donations for storage and transport.



## What is Ingathering?

Truckloads and carloads of health kits, cleaning buckets, bulk items and more will arrive from across the state at the Arkansas Rice Depot for sorting and distribution to anyone in need. Some of the items will go to Arkansans; others will go to Sager Brown Depot, the United Methodist Committee on Relief

(UMCOR) distribution center in Baldwin, La. From there, they will make their way to people around the world affected by disaster or need.

## 'Potato drop,' other jobs

For several years now, Ingathering also has included a "potato drop" by the Society of St. Andrew. Faithful workers will be

needed to move a mountain—of sweet potatoes. The multi-ton truckload of surplus produce must be boxed for distribution to area food pantries, and the more helpers on hand, the faster the job goes.

Helpers are needed to assist in unloading vehicles and sorting items into their proper locations for packing and storage. For an assignment to work a specific job,

contact Brenda Norwood at 501-773-5749 or bnorwood3g@gmail.com.

## Instructions

**Ingathering is a request for specific sets of items.** As you prepare, visit [www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Relief-Supplies](http://www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Relief-Supplies) to learn exactly what you need to assemble the following kit types:

- Bedding Kit
- Birthing Kit
- Cleaning Bucket
- Health Kit
- Layette Kit
- Sewing Kit
- School Kit

If you have an item that isn't on the list for a kit, please donate it to a local organization instead of bringing it to Ingathering.

**Complete your Volunteer Consent forms and Ingathering Report forms before you arrive.** It

saves time, meaning you can get to work faster! Download forms at [arumc.org/ingathering2013](http://arumc.org/ingathering2013).

**Churches may send money with their Ingathering Report forms.** In fact, the Health Kit instructions ask that you include a dollar to purchase toothpaste. Rather than including money inside any of the kits, please place the money in an envelope and give it to someone at the registration table. After shipping costs are covered, any undesignated surplus funds will be used for hunger relief projects within Arkansas.

**Wear a United Methodist Church t-shirt if you have one.** It can be a Rethink Church shirt, your own local UMC or youth group shirt, a shirt from a previous year of Ingathering, a camp or retreat center shirt... it will be great to see the variety within our United Methodist connection!

## Central UMC Fayetteville recognized for reducing energy use

Central United Methodist Church Fayetteville was one of 11 Arkansas businesses to be honored with the 2012 Energy Excellence Award, given by Southwestern Electric Power Company (SWEPCO) for outstanding achievements in reducing energy use. Customers earned the award based on their total kilowatt hour savings from energy efficiency projects.

"Central has placed a strong focus on increased utilization of LED lighting and moving to more energy efficient equipment over the past few years," said Brian Swain, administrator for Central UMC. "We are very proud to receive this award and will continue our efforts to be a leader in this area."

"The leadership of Central believes that God calls us to faithful stewardship as individuals and as a community of faith," said the Rev. Dr. Steve Pulliam, senior associate pastor. "Many times, faithful stewardship in one area leads to healthy stewardship in another area. In this instance, stewardship with our financial resources enables us to be better stewards with energy resources, which has an impact on the care of God's creation."

## Church hosts post-game parking lot party, makes community connections

Salem, Ark., is the seat of Fulton County, just east of Mountain Home and west of Ash Flat. A rural area with a population of less than 2,000, the town and surrounding communities take their high school sports very seriously, so Friday night football games are major social gatherings.

With about a dozen students active in the congregation, Salem United Methodist Church launched recently its United Methodist Youth Fellowship (UMYF). As the Rev. Cherie Baker got to know the youth, she learned about what they do after home games—without many options available, they ride around town or go home.

"None of our big churches in town did anything [after games]," Baker said. "So I asked the youth if they'd like to do something '5th-quarterish,' and they were enthused."

## Church-wide effort

The idea soon gained momentum in the church, which has an average worship attendance of just more than 60 people. Adults helped with publicity, designing and distributing fliers and arranging for frequent announcements over the football game's public address

system. They contributed money for refreshments, helped with setup and take-down, volunteered to attend and served as hosts and chaperones.

The church parking lot became a party zone, with a half-court basketball area, refreshments in one corner and a DJ in another (the youth chose the Rev. Tom Baker, an Episcopal priest and husband of the Rev. Cherie Baker, to create their playlist for the night). The chaperones, who ranged in age from 28 to 80, joined in with the youth to learn the Cha Cha Slide and the dance moves to "Gangnam Style."

## No strings attached

This post-game party drew children, youth and adults who had no previous connection with Salem UMC. Baker said that several of them had a hard time believing the whole event was free, and that the only agenda was to give the kids a place to have fun and celebrate their football win (or commiserate, if they had lost).

"Some asked why would we do that, and we told them well, the love of God is free, so why not?" she said. "And the joy of the Lord is our strength, so we figured God was probably enjoying the kids dancing

and hanging out and having a good time."

At the end of the evening, a member of a larger church in town told Salem UMC that they had been planning to hold a similar event, but just hadn't finished pulling together the details. "So they are now planning to do this for the home games that we don't," Baker said. "Isn't it fun when an idea catches hold and the entire community gets on board?"

While there was no motive to increase worship attendance, Baker noticed a four-year-old evangelist in the crowd. The boy was there with his parents, who served as hosts.

"When he wasn't dancing his socks off, he was going to people and asking them if they'd like to come to church on Sunday," she said. "I heard one adult ask him if church on Sunday was this much fun, and he replied, 'Oh, yeah! Only we are inside and it's light. You wanna have church now? I can ask Pastor Cherie...'"

## Low claims bring reinvestment in ministry

When Arkansas Conference organizations insured through Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company keep their risk low and have few claims on their policies, the Conference receives a yearly dividend to reinvest in ministry. This year's check, in the amount of \$33,975, was delivered to Bishop Mueller on Sept. 25 by Brotherhood Mutual representative Kurt Hetherington (right). The funds will benefit a variety of ministries: 10 percent has been given to Imagine No Malaria, and the remaining amount will be divided between helping local churches maintain standards of financial integrity and providing more robust backup for storage of Conference data.



AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

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## COMING UP

## October

**Monster Dash 5k for Barnabas House Oct. 12**

Halloween enthusiasts and 5K fans should mark their calendars for the Barnabas House Monster Dash, set to begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 12, at Parking Lot 13 near the Jack Stephens Center at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Runners and walkers of all ages are encouraged to get into the Halloween spirit by dressing up in their favorite costume.

All proceeds from the event support Barnabas House, a ministry of Oak Forest United Methodist Church Little Rock. Barnabas House serves as a social work and counseling center where UALR students and other volunteers join social workers and medical professionals to serve the uninsured and working poor. Clients of Barnabas House have received help with housing, job placement, educational opportunities, disability determination and nutritional assistance, among other quality-of-life services. Volunteer services have also included arranging surgeries and life-saving treatments, according to event organizers.

To register, visit <http://monsterdash5k.webstarts.com>. Online registration is open until Friday, Oct. 11, but participants also may register at the event. For additional information about Barnabas House, call the Rev. Dr. Russ Breshears at Oak Forest UMC, 501-663-3136.

**Faith & Health Conference in Memphis Oct. 17**

Methodist LeBonheur and the Church Health Center are sponsoring the 12th Annual Faith & Health: Making the Connection Conference for Clergy and Congregational Leaders on Thursday, Oct. 17, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Church Health Center Wellness in Memphis, Tenn.

With the theme "The Affordable Care Act: What it Means for You, Your Church and Your Community," the conference will explain the main features of the ACA and what it means for your health care coverage, your congregation as a potential employer and the community of the Mid-South. It will include experts on each of these issues and provide clergy with important, accurate

information on the potential effects of the Affordable Care Act. The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Robinson is the keynote speaker.

To learn more or register for the event, visit [www.churchhealthcenter.org/faithhealthseries](http://www.churchhealthcenter.org/faithhealthseries).

**'Country Store' at Fairview UMC Texarkana Oct. 19**

Fairview United Methodist Church, at the corner of 16th and Laurel Streets in Texarkana, Ark., announces its annual Country Store and Soup Luncheon. Sponsored by Fairview's United Methodist Women, the event's proceeds benefit local and national missions. Hours are 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., with lunch served from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The meal includes soup, a beverage and dessert. For information, contact the church office at 870-773-1825.

**'Equip' youth ministry training Oct. 25-26**

Equip, a training event for all who work in youth ministry—as paid or unpaid servants—is set for Oct. 25-26 at Camp Aldersgate in Little Rock. Sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Youth Ministry Resource Team (ACYMRT), Equip will focus on empowering participants to build a sustainable youth ministry that can withstand transitions and challenges. The Rev. Dr. Andy Stoker, Saturday's keynote speaker, will base his address on the book *Sustainable Youth Ministry* by Mark DeVries.

Equip includes optional Friday night Sabbath activities, including a meal and worship with Bishop Mueller. The low fee includes lodging, all meals and a copy of the book. A Saturday-only reduced fee is also available. To register, visit [arumc.org](http://arumc.org) and click on "Online Event Registration," or visit <https://2013equip.eventbrite.com>. Questions? Contact Michelle Moore: 501-425-5975 or [michelle.moore@arumc.org](mailto:michelle.moore@arumc.org).

The ACYMRT recognizes the importance of giving leaders a solid foundation for ministry with young people, and will soon expand its continuing education offerings.

**Fall Adult Retreat at Mount Sequoyah Oct. 27-30**

"At the Cross," a fall retreat for senior adults, is set for Oct. 27-30 at Mount Sequoyah Retreat Center in Fayetteville. In addition to

time for spiritual renewal at this historic Methodist gathering place, the event features excursions to Crystal Bridges Museum of Art and a trip on the Arkansas Missouri Railroad. However, all participants will be able to tailor the retreat to fit their needs and wants specifically. For more information or to register, visit [www.mountsequoyah.org](http://www.mountsequoyah.org).

## November

**Craft and Bake Sale at Vilonia UMC Nov. 2**

Vilonia UMC will hold a Craft and Bake Sale on Saturday, Nov. 2, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. There will be a large variety of items for sale, including food and drinks, and all proceeds will go to the building fund for the new educational wing presently under construction. Vilonia is just a short drive from anywhere in central Arkansas. The church building is located on Highway 64B, in the center of Vilonia, and the event will take place in the front parking lot.

**Free webinar: "How We Handle Money in the Church" Nov. 14 at 6:30 p.m.**

Every church that has ever had a crisis of financial impropriety thought what they were doing was fine until the day it was discovered. What's your church's policy for handing the gifts people entrust to you? Are you protecting sensitive information? Is it appropriate for the pastor to know what people give? This free webinar tackles these sensitive topics. Ken Sloane of the UMC's General Board of Discipleship leads this hour-long session. Visit [www.gbod.org/lead-your-church/webinars](http://www.gbod.org/lead-your-church/webinars) to register, or to learn more about this and other free webinars.

**OMP sponsors Full Moon Walk to benefit Arkansas Rice Depot Nov. 17**

In its fourth year, the Full Moon Walk has a new home with organizers from Ozark Mission Project (OMP), a United Methodist-related nonprofit organization. The Full Moon Walk is a free event that aims to bring together the communities of Central Arkansas and highlight the Big Dam Bridge as a physical connection between Little Rock and North Little Rock. It is set for Nov. 17 at 6:30 p.m.

The Big Dam Bridge Foundation has awarded a grant to OMP to organize this year's event. Last year's walk drew more than 1,500 participants.

To connect this event with residents of the entire state, OMP has partnered with the Arkansas Rice Depot to collect canned goods that will be used by multiple soup kitchens and food pantries to ensure every Arkansan has the opportunity to enjoy a Thanksgiving meal. The Rice Depot works with more than 650 schools and 300 food pantries across the state. Walk attendees are asked to bring non-perishable items for this cause.

Participants will walk to the other side and back for a total of 1.8 miles on the lit Big Dam Bridge. Pets, bicycles, skateboards and skates/rollerblades are not allowed on the bridge for the walk. Strollers and wheelchairs are welcome. For information and to register, visit [BigDamBridge.org](http://BigDamBridge.org).

## Ozark Mission Project offers January 2014 mission trip for college students

Moore, Okla., a suburb of Oklahoma City, on May 20, 2013 was the site of an EF5 tornado that killed 23 people and injured 377 others. The mile-wide tornado stayed on the ground for 39 minutes over a 17-mile path.

Ozark Mission Project (OMP) is sending a mission team of college students and campus ministers Jan. 5-10, 2014, to help families recover from the devastation and to rebuild their lives.

Projects may range from cleanup to reconstruction, depending on the need at that time. In all things, the OMP team will share the love of Christ.

Each participating Wesley Foundation will provide transportation, and students not affiliated with a Wesley Foundation will have their transportation arranged by OMP.

Leaders of the January 2014 trip include Jessica Durand, Henderson/OBU

Wesley director; Eric VanMeter, Arkansas State Wesley director; Jason Molitor, Arkansas Tech Wesley director; Mark Lasater, Southern Arkansas University Wesley director; and Bailey Faulkner, OMP executive director.

For information or to register, contact your Wesley Foundation director or OMP's Mission Coordinator, Catherine Gatlin, at 501-499-9292 or [info@ozarkmissionproject.org](mailto:info@ozarkmissionproject.org).

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## OBITUARY

### WALDRON

#### Lexie Lorene Millard

Lexie Lorene Millard, 90, passed away Monday, Sept. 16, 2013, at Mercy Hospital in Waldron.

She was born Sept. 1, 1923, in the Union Hill community, east of Waldron, where she lived until she married H. Doyle Millard on June 3, 1945. He was ordained into the Methodist Church in 1959 and together they served many Methodist churches in the area, including the Altus Circuit, City Heights in Van Buren, the Hartford Circuit, Mulberry, the Dyer Circuit and finally Massard, New Hope Circuit.

She obtained her cosmetology license in 1962 and had beauty shops at several of the different places where they lived. On Sept. 20, 1973, while serving Massard in Fort Smith, she lost her beloved Doyle after 28 years of marriage. She and her daughter moved to Waldron, to the small house that Doyle and



**Lexie Millard**

Lexie had built as their retirement home. Lexie took a job cleaning the post office and worked at a toy factory in Booneville. Later on, around 1974, she and her sister-in-law, Bernice Biggs, opened a beauty shop together in downtown Waldron. They worked together until Bernice's death in 1991. Lexie continued to run the beauty shop by herself until her retirement in 2003 at the age of 80.

After retiring, she enjoyed working with her flowers, catching up on her reading, taking care of her dogs and making homemade jellies, cookies and donuts, which she gladly shared with family, friends and neighbors. Lexie was a member of First United Methodist Church Waldron since 1973, and also a member of the Order of the Eastern Star for more than 60 years.

She was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. H. Doyle Millard; her parents, Johnny and Lillie Woodard; two brothers, Haskell and Carl Woodard; three sisters; Nellie Travis, Violet Honea and Hollis Isham; and one nephew, Jerry Honea.

Survivors include her only child, Betty Ann Stamps and

her husband, Bill, of Huntington; two step-grandsons, Jason Stamps and his wife, Heather, of Anchorage, Alaska; and Darren Stamps and his wife, Brandi, of Van Buren; three step-great-grandchildren, Forist and Mercede Stamps of Alaska and Liam Stamps of Van Buren; nieces and nephews, Joan Wheatman and Renton and Sandy Lilly, both of Washington; Sharon Graves and Gary Isham, both of Duncan, Okla.; Gladys Herpich of White City, Kan.; Vernon Hamilton of Van Buren; William Hamilton of Huntington; the Rev. Pat Ray Biggs of Boles; plus numerous other relatives and three very special neighbors, Midge Bottoms, Scott Clemmons and Glen Cook.

A celebration of Lexie's life was held Sept. 19 at Martin Funeral Home Chapel in Waldron, with the Revs. Pat Ray Biggs and Diane Miller officiating. Burial followed at Union Hill Cemetery, east of Waldron. Scott Clemmons, Glen Cook, Milo Hughes, Randy Bottoms, Gary Blythe and Matt McCafferty served as pallbearers.

Memorial contributions may be made to First UMC Waldron or the Union Hill Cemetery Fund.

## Mission

(continued from page 1)

helped us. But we've done some very specific things and made some very useful partnerships. And it's worked for us. And we believe and have the faith that God can bless many other congregations that are in declining neighborhoods [and help them] transition to have a vibrant ministry."

### Small church, big impact

The church is small, with a regular worship attendance of about 70—but attendance figures tell only part of the story.

In the past year, the Shepherd's Hope medical clinic served 1,700 people. The vision clinic provided people with 400 new pairs of eyeglasses and arranged four cataract surgeries. The dental clinic removed painful teeth from about 500 people. The Shepherd's Hope gynecology clinic detected cancer in its early stages and arranged free treatment for two women at local hospitals.

The clinics usually request patients pay \$5 per visit, but no one is turned away because of inability to pay.

Physicians, dentists, eye doctors, nurses, pharmacists and technicians from a variety of religious backgrounds volunteer at the clinics. But they agree they would not be there without the support and, in many cases, the recruitment of Oak Forest members and the church's energetic pastor.

The church's food pantry, which feeds about 25 families each week, is operated entirely by church volunteers.

More than 90 percent of Oak

Forest's parishioners volunteer each week in some way to support the church's ministries, and many of the church's longtime older members are leading the charge.

They include Harry and Sue Dinsmore, both in their 80s, who volunteer every week at the church's food pantry.

"I started out during the early Depression, and I know what it's like not to have a lot of things that we take for granted today," Harry Dinsmore said. "A little bit of help now and then makes a big difference."

Breshears said he believes people never truly retire from serving God.

"It's not a biblical concept," he said. "We recycle people. So, when you are too old to run the youth group... come and work in the food pantry. And when you're too old to do anything but pray, pray for us. Encourage us. Encourage other people."

### A familiar story

The story of the 70-year-old congregation is much like that of many congregations across the United States.

In the first two decades after World War II, the church grew rapidly as veterans and their young families moved into the new subdivision and filled its pews each Sunday. But as the city grew, many middle-class families moved to newer and larger houses further west from downtown, and many churches moved west too.

The Oak Forest congregation stayed put even as more financially strapped people moved in. Many houses became rental properties,

and some were abandoned altogether. The flashing lights of police cars became a familiar sight, and the number of children dwindled.

One public elementary school remains in the neighborhood. But within the past nine years, both the Little Rock School District and the Catholic Diocese of Little Rock have closed elementary schools a few miles from the church.

That might have been the beginning of the end, but parishioners credit two changes with giving the church a new sense of purpose.

First, in 2005, members of Fellowship Bible Church—a nondenominational megachurch in prosperous west Little Rock—approached Oak Forest about opening a health clinic in an old house that the smaller church owned and was using for storage.

Shortly after, Breshears was appointed to the church. His first day coincided with clearing out the old house. Church members helped with renovations and built a wheelchair ramp to make it accessible. Lola Fish, an Oak Forest member and nurse, was among the first volunteers at Shepherd's Hope and served on its board.

"This is really what John Wesley said," she said. "You need to go out among the people. You need to help whoever is out there."

Fellowship Bible and Oak Forest members still jointly govern Shepherd's Hope. The clinic has outgrown the house and now also uses space in a Baptist church down the street.

### Expanding ministry

Breshears soon recognized the

church could serve additional needs in the neighborhood. Church members credit their pastor with inspiring them to do more, starting with adding a food pantry.

When the owner of the house next to the clinic died, Breshears urged the congregation to buy the property and turn it into a dental clinic. Then came the vision clinic, which uses the church's basement.

Gloria Minor, a member of Oak Forest for 56 years, said she initially had her doubts the church could afford the \$42,000 purchase for the dental clinic. But the church paid off the house within a year.

She said she now has faith the church can pay off its most recent purchase, a \$38,000 house across the street that holds the church's newest ministry—the Barnabas House counseling center.

"We want to pay it off by the end of this year," she said. "That's our hope. We don't know if we'll make it... We may not, but it's OK if we don't. That's our only debt."

In any case, Minor is grateful the church now engages in so much mission work.

"I think it's lifted our spirits," said the 85-year-old, who handles the vision clinic's paperwork.

### Lesson of Oak Forest

"When you get on the side of what God wants to do in the community and in the world, there somehow always seems to be enough. That is the message of Oak Forest," said the Rev. Dede Roberts, the congregation's district superintendent.

She said she has no doubt Oak Forest fits the definition of a vital congregation, and noted that the

church is slowly growing.

One of the church's new members is 27-year-old Jonathan Cupples. He visited the church on Easter after moving into the neighborhood. After a couple of visits, Breshears noticed the medical decal on Cupples' truck and persuaded the emergency medical technician his skills were needed.

Cupples said helping at the medical clinic has strengthened his Christian faith.

"People come in, and the only thing they have sometimes is their faith, and some have even lost their faith," he said. "And to see them [and] see God through some of the work that we do here is amazing."

Just about every month, Cupples said, he sees someone new at Sunday worship—sometimes a family, sometimes a young adult.

"God's not finished with us as long as we've got a breath," Breshears said. "And so we try to believe like Wesley: The best is yet to come.... And this is what we want for our denomination."

*Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for United Methodist News Service, and a former editor of the Arkansas United Methodist.*

## Learn more

The Rev. Russ Breshears says Oak Forest UMC welcomes new partners in its ministry. To learn more, visit [www.oakforestumc.com](http://www.oakforestumc.com) or email [oakforestumc@gmail.com](mailto:oakforestumc@gmail.com).

To view the related video, visit <http://goo.gl/e9K4eM>.

## Bishop's Mission Plan: a recap

The Bishop's Mission Plan, which appeared in the Sept. 20 special issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*, outlined 10 "next steps" for creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world:

1. The churches, laity and pastors of the Annual Conference must experience spiritual revival.
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.
3. District Superintendents will become skilled in developing District Mission Plans that align with the Bishop's Mission Plan.
4. The Appointive Cabinet will become proficient in making mission-field appointments.
5. More congregations will increasingly begin to look like their neighborhoods.
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.
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.
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 ministry.
9. The Arkansas Annual Conference will create vital, self-sustaining and growing African-American churches.
10. The churches of the Arkansas Annual Conference will connect with the previously churchd, de-churchd and never churchd, especially the "nones."

For details on each point in this plan, visit [arumc.org/missionplan](http://arumc.org/missionplan).



## Faith Funds

### *Spirit of Collaboration*

What characterizes the United Methodist Foundation in its 50th year? Board Chair Dr. Sandy Smith of Russellville believes it is the spirit of collaboration between the Foundation and the Arkansas Conference to strengthen Conference ministries, resources and leadership.

"And I think the Foundation is instilling a renewed spirit of giving in Arkansas Methodists," she said. "People in local churches are excited that their gifts, along with the generosity of others, may be the reason their new pastor was able to graduate from a United Methodist seminary debt free." Sandy serves on the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry Committee. She thinks the growth in Arkansans attending United Methodist seminaries is based, in part, on the UMFA Seminary Scholarship Fund.

"A good number of our grants are in the area of leadership development," Sandy explained. "Programs like Advancing Pastoral Leadership, Crossing Jordan, Small Church Leadership, the Spiritual Direction Partnership with Perkins, and the Academy for Spiritual Formation all work to harness the potential of lay and clergy leaders in our Conference."

The wife of Rev. Roy Smith, senior pastor at First United Methodist Church-Russellville, has been active at churches throughout Arkansas. She moved from her native North Carolina to Arkansas in 1981 after meeting Roy at Duke. Sandy utilizes her doctorate in Nursing as Department Head of Emergency Management at Arkansas Tech University. They have two adult children.



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