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Annual Conference
2014
June 19-22, Rogers, Ark.

THE WAY FORWARD

LIVE for God
LOVE as Christ
LEAD with Excellence

United Methodists of
Arkansas
disciples making disciples



Adam Hamilton



Jorge Acevedo

Hamilton, Acevedo set to teach and preach at Annual Conference

Two nationally known United Methodist pastors will serve as featured teacher and preacher at the 2014 Arkansas Annual Conference, set for June 19-22 at the John Q. Hammons Convention Center in Rogers. “The Way Forward: Live for God, Love as Christ, Lead with Excellence” is theme for this year’s event.

The Rev. Adam Hamilton, founding pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., will teach three sessions during the course of the gathering—two on Friday afternoon and the third on Saturday morning. He will focus on leadership, the third element of this year’s theme.

Hamilton lectures frequently across the U.S. on evangelism, leadership and preaching. The author of numerous books and small group studies, he has been named a Distinguished Evangelist of the United Methodist Church by the Foundation for Evangelism, and one of the “Ten People to Watch in America’s Spiritual Landscape” by Religion and Ethics Newsweekly.

The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, begun in 1990, has grown under Hamilton’s leadership from four people to more than 18,000 adult members, with an average weekly worship attendance of more than 8,800 in 2012. The congregation has a three-fold focus:

1. Reaching non-religious and nominally religious people and helping them become committed followers of Jesus Christ;

2. Equipping and inspiring members to live their faith in mission to the community and world; and
3. Acting as a catalyst for renewing the mainline church.

The Rev. Jorge Acevedo, lead pastor at Grace Church, a multi-site United Methodist congregation in southwest Florida, will preach during worship on Thursday and Friday evenings. Already in the planning stages, these worship services will revolve around the second element of this year’s theme, Jesus’ commandment to love each other as he has loved us.

Under Acevedo’s leadership, Grace Church has grown from a weekend worship attendance of 400 to more than 2,600. It is recognized as having one of the largest and most effective recovery ministries in America, with over 700 people involved on a weekly basis. Rescued from a life of addictions himself, Acevedo says his greatest delight is connecting people to Jesus and the Church. The Foundation for Evangelism has named him a Distinguished Evangelist of the United Methodist Church.

Grace Church first branched out into multi-site ministry by adopting a declining congregation in east Lee County. They later purchased a former grocery store and opened Grace Community Center, which serves as an outreach center in addition to a worshipping community. The church now holds weekly services at four campuses: Cape Coral, Fort Myers Shores, Fort Myers Central and North Fort Myers.

Related story: A changing of the guard

After more than two decades of serving as secretary of the Annual Conference, the Rev. Dr. Bob Crossman will be stepping away from the role. He will retire in June 2014 from his role as director of new

church development for the Arkansas Conference, but will end his tenure as Annual Conference secretary in just a few short weeks, at the end of 2013.

Crossman shared recently with

the *Arkansas United Methodist* some reflections on his time as Conference secretary; here are excerpts.

On accepting the challenge:

“In 1990, Bishop Wilke asked

[See CROSSMAN, page 8]

Reaching 'nones' means knowing our neighbors

BY ERIC VAN METER
Special Contributor

"The big thing about pastoring in Arkansas is that you have to understand the culture in Arkansas."

That statement, coming from one of our retired clergy colleagues, sounds like a line from Yogi Berra, or maybe Larry the Cable Guy. But like all the best comedy, it's funny because it reveals something true about us.

I think of this in relationship to the "nones," the self-proclaimed religiously unaffiliated that have gotten so much attention since the release of a Pew Research Center/Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly survey a little over a year ago. Churches were shocked to find that "none" is the fastest growing religious group in the country, and that one-third of adults under the age of 30 do not affiliate with any religious group.



Eric Van Meter

Pew tells us plenty about the nones, which is both helpful and terrifying to us religious folks. Most of them are young. Most believe in God. About one-fifth of them even pray every day. They view organized religion as a societal good, especially in care for the poor.

But they still believe the church is motivated primarily by money and power, and so they stay away.

What to do?

The reaction to the data has ranged from worry to outright panic. Almost overnight, the nones became the church's most targeted group. People wrote books, launched websites, hosted online chats. Nones feature prominently in the strategic plans of many churches and annual conferences, including here in Arkansas.

All of which may indeed be a good start. We are more aware now of a trend that has been years in the making. As a group, Christian churches are like children caught making faces in a mirror. When we realize someone else is watching, we change both our focus and our behavior.

In our haste to address the situation, however, we may have gotten a bit ahead of ourselves. We may buy into the idea that we can correct the entire problem at once, searching for a magic formula (social media, anyone?) that will bring the nones back into the church fold.

The problem with broad data is that it unintentionally implies broad solutions. It tells us in general terms what is happening in the religious (or irreligious) landscape of our country. But it fails to remind us that blindness to individuals is part of what shaped this landscape to begin with.

We need to remember that, while "none" may be a helpful category for academic discussion, the group it identifies consists of individual human beings, each with a unique story and perspective.

Person by person

As a campus minister, I work with those who would be classified as nones every day. In fact, I have a sub-congregation in my ministry—one that does not come to

'The only point of entry they will consider is relationship—when one person cares enough to be a Christ-like presence with no strings attached. It's terribly inefficient, but it's the best we've got.'

Bible studies or worship, but that shows up regularly nonetheless looking for help with life. They don't identify as United Methodist, and some would not even call themselves Christian. But they find meaningful connection with a United Methodist student group. Why?

Because we know what it's like to be a college student on this campus, regardless of religious conviction or practice. We know their names, their majors, their family situations. We answer their questions about God and try to speak faith into their lives, but we never let that become a pretext for our relationship. We try to act like Jesus would when we are with them, and we keep the door to more formal religious participation always open.

So far, it has not turned out to be a wildly successful strategy in terms of numerical growth. The 15 or so nones in our congregation represent only a fraction of the population of ASU. We'd love to see more.

But there's another important piece of data for us to remember. The vast majority of the nones (90 percent) have no desire to be part of a religious group. They will not be convinced by slick marketing or refined "product."

The only point of entry they will consider is relationship—when one person cares enough to be a Christ-like presence with no strings attached. It's terribly inefficient, but it's the best we've got.

All of which brings me back to my friend's statement about knowing Arkansas. And it makes me think of an image my colleague Sam uses.

"People want to fix the church with a seining net," she says. "But fish around here are too smart for that. You'll do better and have more fun using a single hook."

If we are to reach the nones, we won't do it through mass marketing or strategic planning. We will do it through individual connection and caring. The most important thing we need to know about the nones is who they are in the places where we live.

We can't love categories in the name of Jesus. We can only love people. And that starts not with research summaries, but with knowing our neighbors.

The Rev. Van Meter serves as director of the Wesley Foundation at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. He may be reached at eric.vanmeter@arumc.org.



EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

October and November of 2013 brought some significant controversial events in the life of the United Methodist Church.

First, on Oct. 26, retired Bishop Melvin Talbert officiated at a same-sex union. Following his action, the Council of Bishops on Nov. 15 issued a statement respectfully requesting that a formal complaint be filed against Bishop Talbert for undermining the ministry of a colleague (Paragraph 2702.1f of the 2012 *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*) and conducting a ceremony to celebrate the marriage of a same gender couple (Paragraph 2702.1b).

The second event was the church trial of Pennsylvania pastor the Rev. Frank Schaefer, who on Nov. 18 was found guilty of violating church law by performing the same-sex marriage ceremony of his son Tim in 2007. Schaefer is currently serving a 30-day suspension and will likely surrender his clergy credentials at the end of that period.

Seeing our connection

experience pain in very public ways can prove difficult. I've read stories and commentaries from a variety of perspectives, on both church-focused and secular news websites. Having spent my career in church communications, I've learned that in complicated situations like these, writers who are most familiar with the United Methodist Church do the best job of relating the facts. If you're seeking information on either of these matters, I recommend that you begin with two sites operated by United Methodist News Service: www.umconnections.org and www.umns.umc.org.

Readers will note that these sites hold a vast array of reporting on the work of the church, which continues despite any controversy. Even as we wrestle with tough issues, let's remember that Christ's command to fulfill our disciple-making, world-transforming mission doesn't change.

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

Arkansas United Methodist receives UMAC award

The *Arkansas United Methodist* was among the publications and organizations receiving honors at the 2013 meeting of the United Methodist Association of Communicators (UMAC), held October 24-27 in Chicago, Ill. A first-place writing award in the opinion/editorial category went to Amy Forbus for "Lessons from dog," her Editor's Corner column that appeared in the Feb. 1, 2013 issue. Judges commended Forbus for her concise writing, great metaphor and excellent message.



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Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
Jan. 3	Dec. 13
Feb. 7	Jan. 20
March 7	Feb. 18




GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

A Christmas prayer

Lord,
It's unimaginable, incomprehensible, mysterious and miraculous.
Yet it's also absolutely true.
You, the God of all creation, came to us in the most personal way possible.
Living as one of us.
Born in a stable to parents who were alone, afraid and scandal-plagued.
Earning a living with the hands of a carpenter.
Dying in an act of sacrificial love.
And sharing everything we need to know about You.
This Christmas, may the Christ child be born in our hearts—
Maybe for the first time.
Maybe in a brand-new way.
Maybe for the first time in a long time.
This Christmas, help us experience the reality of Your love—
A gift so unconditional it loves us just the way we are.
A gift so transformational it just can't leave us that way.

A gift so powerful nothing can ever separate us from You.
This Christmas, empower us to follow Jesus in all we do—
As we share his love every day.
As we do so with all our quirky imperfections.
As we act in ways that amaze even us.
But most of all, Lord, revive us this Christmas.
Now.
Every day.
And for all eternity.
I pray this through the Christ child, who is our Savior, Lord and Brother.
Amen.

Gay E. Mueller 

APPOINTMENTS

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

- Donna Alberts (associate member, retired)—Bald Knob UMC, interim (effective Nov. 19, 2013 to June 30, 2014)
- Treva Mills (local pastor)—Russell UMC (charge realignment; effective Nov. 24)
- Marion Fleming (elder, retired)—Hardy UMC, interim (effective July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014)

To see pastoral appointment changes as they become official, visit arumc.org/appointments.

Our last, desperate hope

BY WILLIAM O. "BUD" REEVES
Special Contributor

One of the most popular entertainment genres right now is apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic movies and TV.

In these shows, an earth-shattering crisis threatens the world with destruction, or else the

cataclysm has already occurred, and the survivors are trying to pick through the pieces and carry on. Whatever the crisis—alien invasions, nuclear holocaust, zombies by the

millions—there is a last desperate hope for humankind, and our heroes fight against unimaginable odds to save the planet.

Reflecting our reality

I believe these plot lines are so popular because they mirror the reality we experience. We all navigate personal crises that threaten the security of our world: death, disease, divorce, addiction, heartbreak and anxiety. We run to church and hear the cataclysmic stories of decline, financial struggles, leadership failure and conflict. We look to our culture and see a technology-driven

apocalypse, a chaos of political gridlock, cut off from the anchors of tradition and morality, spinning wildly out of control.

Dr. Greg Jones, a professor at Duke Divinity School, has said, "We don't know where we are going, but we are doing it at warp speed." It's a good question: Where *are* we going? Where is our hope?

Age-old struggle

Neither our struggles nor our questions are new to humanity. The disciples asked for a sign of the coming Kingdom of God that would give them hope—while the Son of God stood in their midst!

Each of the synoptic Gospels has a "little apocalypse" in which Jesus warns of the trouble that will come before the Kingdom does (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). And the Book of Revelation lays out in poetic detail the end of the world and the new heaven and earth.

Apocalyptic hope has always been popular in troubled times. The message of biblical apocalyptic literature can be summed up in three statements:

- 1) It's going to get worse before it gets better.
 - 2) In the end, God wins.
 - 3) Those who endure in faith will share God's victory. That's some good hope!
- In these cataclysmic times, we

welcome the Advent hope: "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The coming of Jesus fulfilled the desperate hope of a people oppressed by poverty, military occupation and religion. They had waited for centuries for the One promised by the prophets.

His coming is still our hope. For all our personal brokenness, for all the struggles of the Church, for all the suffering of the world, Jesus is still the answer. Every Advent we wait, and every Christmas we celebrate the One of whom we sing, "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight."

And in Advent we anticipate his coming again to redeem creation and establish the eternal reign of God. This has been the faith of the Church from the beginning, and we recite it every time we share the sacrament of Holy Communion: "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." That, too, is some good hope!

The battle for planet Earth is long and hard. We have one last desperate hope. His name is Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." Thanks be to God!

The Rev. Dr. Reeves serves as superintendent of the Northwest District. Email: breeves@arumc.org.

Southeast District gets its hands dirty through Mission Center

Clergy and laity from the Southeast District spent Oct. 26 working on a Jefferson County Habitat for Humanity build as part of a new initiative in the district known as Dirty Hands Mission Center.

The Mission Center is designed to help United Methodist congregations and pastors reach their mission-field, which includes the poorest counties in Arkansas. The focus is currently Jefferson County, where racial and socioeconomic divides have a history of hindering cooperation among the churches. Through the work of the Mission Center, churches will come together to share resources and ideas, with the goal of discovering new ways to impact the mission field. Dirty Hands Mission Center will offer mission experiences and seminars that address the issues of poverty, racism and justice.

"Right now we are focusing on building and creating a Missional YOUth Academy," said the Rev. Natasha Murray-Norman, regional mission coordinator for the Southeast District. This academy for youth

workers and youth meets once a month for worship, a fellowship meal and an hour of instruction. The first meeting was held in October at Good Faith Carr UMC, and several youth took the opportunity to help out at the church's Pumpkin Patch.

COURTESY PHOTO





Local church communications training available through Learning Management System

The statistics help tell the story. The U.S. Department of Education reported in 2009, “Students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction.”

Large secular organizations have been using e-learning or online training for years with much success. For example, IBM has found that participants in their eLearning program for managers learn nearly five times more material without increasing the time spent training.

So is there a place for online learning in the church? The Conference Center for Technology and the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership believe so, which is why they have teamed up to provide the Learning Management System (LMS) at <http://arumc.adobeconnect.com>. And a new Communications Training Module on the LMS gives all churches in Arkansas an opportunity for online learning.

An agreement with Sayge Resources of Houston, Texas, is making available to all clergy and laity a series of 12 sessions that will guide local church leaders in developing a comprehensive communications plan for reaching their unique mission fields. Arkansas churches will have 18 months to take advantage of this resource.

Each session includes a coaching video, a downloadable e-book and an action tool. Ideally, local churches will form a small team of leaders to work together on each of the sessions toward the goal of improving communications with their communities.

The 12 training sessions are:

- Vision Identification
- Guest Experience

- Social Media
- Communications Strategy
- Volunteer Mobilization
- Web Essentials
- Brand Standards
- Storytelling Principles
- Audience Connection
- External Marketing
- Project Systems
- Creative Leadership

Through the LMS, Sayge Resources will provide live webinars with church communications leaders and other resources and videos. New videos will include nationally-recognized authors and speakers such as Donald Miller.

“Through the online content developed by Sayge Resources, we are providing excellent resources and tools for local churches of any size so that they can improve their communications,” said Mark Epperson, director of the CFT. “We hope this will be the first of many partnerships with providers of online content that we can deliver through the Learning Management System.”

In-house training products are in the works as well.

“A four-session segment on the Means of Grace, featuring the Rev. Andrew Thompson, the Wesley scholar for the Conference, is in post-production now,” Epperson said. “It will be available on the LMS by year’s end, and we have other projects scheduled for early 2014.”

The CFT expects to have the full Communications Training Module available on the LMS by Dec. 15. A sample of the first session is currently loaded on the LMS.

Found at <http://arumc.adobeconnect.com>, the LMS is accessible to anyone with an arumc.org email address. To request an arumc.org email address, visit <http://my.arumc.org>.

Cuban Methodists visit Arkansas



Yasmín Sandoval Heredia, center, translates from Spanish to English for her husband, Pastor Aramis Cosío Núñez, left, during a meeting with the Revs. Kurt Boggan and Candace Barron of the Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership (CCLEL). The couple traveled to Arkansas to share stories of the work of the Methodist Church in Cuba. Núñez pastors one of Cuba’s 320 Methodist congregations, and serves as district superintendent over 33 more. Looking on is Nechi Fullerton, right, a United Methodist from Little Rock who has made multiple mission-focused journeys to Cuba this year.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

LITTLE ROCK—Two Methodists from Cuba spent time recently in Arkansas to build relationships with the United Methodist Church here.

Pastor Aramis Cosío Núñez, Pinar del Rio, Cuba Metodista Iglesia district superintendent and his wife, Pastora Yasmín Sandoval Heredia, traveled to the U.S. in late October and early November. Pastor Núñez serves as superintendent of 33 churches in Cuba’s largest district and pastors the 400-member San Pablo Metodista Iglesia. Heredia serves as his interpreter, and also writes praise music.

One of the stops on their journey was a visit to the Arkansas Conference offices for a meeting with the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership (CCLEL). The Rev. Dr. Kurt Boggan, director of the CCLEL, already had heard news of work in Cuba from a colleague in the Florida Conference, and appreciated the opportunity to learn more directly from Cuban pastors.

“The Methodist Church in Cuba is currently experiencing a great revival in making disciples of Jesus Christ that is changing the religious landscape of the country,” Boggan

said after the meeting. “One unique feature is the intentional manner in which the Methodist Church is working with small groups.”

Núñez and Heredia shared an overview of how home gatherings are structured to emphasize growth in discipleship. In addition, they shared that seminary in Cuba is not seen as a resource only for pastors. While Havana is home to a seminary for clergy in training, there are seminaries in each of the country’s six districts to help educate the laity.

“All of the church in Cuba is emboldened for making leaders,” Núñez said.

He shared stories about the action of the Holy Spirit among the Methodists in Cuba. Three-day fasts are common among the committed Christians there, and churches are growing quickly. Núñez called Cuba “a factory of pastors”; the country has about 320 Methodist churches, and more than 600 missionaries waiting to become pastors of churches.

There are now more Methodists in Cuba than Roman Catholics, and in keeping with the legacy of John Wesley, this growth is fueled by class meetings. They follow a discipleship manual common to all Methodist churches in Cuba.

“Sheep have more sheep,” Núñez said, meaning that it’s up to disciples to make more disciples.

Bishop Gary Mueller also had the opportunity to meet Núñez and

Heredia, and has heard additional stories from Arkansans who have traveled to Cuba, such as the Rev. Wes Hilliard of Heritage UMC Van Buren.

“God is at work in amazing ways in Cuba, including the bringing of revival!” Bishop Mueller said.

Nechi Fullerton, who accompanied Núñez and Heredia to the meeting with CCLEL staff, is leading an Arkansas Volunteers In Mission journey to Cuba in 2014 or early 2015. For information on this mission and how to apply to join the team, see page 9 of this issue.

For information on an upcoming Volunteers In Mission opportunity in Cuba, see page 9 of this issue.

Invitations bring diverse disciples to Leachville UMC

BY ERIC VAN METER
Special Contributor

When Ronnie and Sandra Kennett began inviting their Hispanic coworkers to church, they did not know what to expect. But three years after a young boy bridged the cultural gap, Leachville UMC has been rejuvenated by the Hispanic members of their congregation.

According to U.S. Census data from 2010, Leachville's population of Hispanic/Latino residents sits at 12.6 percent, a more than three percent increase from 9.54 percent in the 2000 census. Ronnie Kennett, now retired, recalls his time working alongside many Hispanic persons at Adams Land Company, a cotton gin in Leachville.

"They were hard workers, and I developed tremendous respect for them," he says. "But most of them had no church background."

That changed when an 11-year-old boy asked his mother about visiting church. She remembered Kennett's invitation, and the two began attending Leachville UMC.

Now, three years later, Kennett estimates that nearly a quarter of the

70 or so Sunday morning worshippers are of Hispanic origin. Many of these are children or youth, although half a dozen adults also have started attending regularly.

The influx caught the attention of the owner of Adams Land Co., who donated a van to help shuttle the children back and forth to church.

"The kids add so much to the church," Kennett says. "They are bright and energetic, and they are involved in athletics and other community events. They've really been a new spark in our lives."

Others in the Arkansas Conference have taken note of the new spark Kennett describes. Northeast District Superintendent the Rev. Susan Ledbetter says that Leachville's efforts are a perfect example of what the Bishop's Mission Plan hopes to accomplish. She especially notes the plan's fifth point, which describes the need for congregations to look more like their neighborhoods.

"If we think of our 'neighborhood' as any place in our community and individuals' lives where invitations to know and experience Jesus Christ may be

made, then our neighborhood is the place where we take the time to develop the relationships and reach out to the people we see every day," Ledbetter said.

"This story is the heart of faith sharing," she added. "It's a story about church transformation—coming alive in a new way and experiencing new fruit of vitality."

Leachville UMC pastor the Rev. Doug Criss leads worship services in English, which Kennett says most of their Hispanic friends understand well. And when they don't, children often step in to translate for anyone who has difficulty, particularly with the sermon.

Now that so many new people have become part of the Leachville UMC family, the Kennetts have turned their attention to sustaining the church's outreach. Ronnie Kennett sees hope in the younger adults who have gotten excited about ministry.

"My wife and I are both in our seventies," he says. "We love working with the kids, but someone else is going to have to step forward if it's going to be sustainable. And I believe we're starting to see that."



Children of Leachville UMC pause for a photo during rehearsal for this year's Christmas cantata.

COURTESY PHOTO

"More congregations will increasingly

begin to look like their neighborhoods."

—Point 5 of the Bishop's Mission Plan

Tsutsui named next president of Hendrix College

The Hendrix College Board of Trustees announced Nov. 1 that Dr. William M.

Tsutsui will become the 11th President of Hendrix College beginning June 2014.

Tsutsui comes to Hendrix from Southern Methodist University where

he led Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences, the largest of SMU's seven colleges and schools, as dean and professor of history. A specialist in modern Japanese business and economic history, his

published books examine topics ranging from banking policy to the film icon Godzilla.

"We are extremely pleased and excited to welcome Dr. Tsutsui as the 11th President of Hendrix College," said David Knight, chair of the Hendrix College Board of Trustees and co-chair of the search committee, in a news release from the college. "We are very fortunate to have such an accomplished academician and administrator to lead Hendrix into an exciting new era."

Before joining SMU, Tsutsui served as Associate Dean for International Studies in the College of Arts & Sciences at the University of Kansas where he was a history professor and director of the Kansas

Consortium for Teaching About Asia in KU's Center for East Asian Studies.

A Texas native, Tsutsui received a Ph.D. in history at Princeton University in 1995, and a Master of Arts in history there in 1990. He received a Master of Letters in Modern Japanese History from Oxford University's Corpus Christi College in 1988 and graduated summa cum laude from Harvard University with a Bachelor of Arts in East Asian Studies in 1985.

"I am deeply honored for the opportunity to serve as president of

Hendrix," Tsutsui said in the news release. "Today, despite the challenges faced by all liberal arts colleges, Hendrix holds an enviable position. Your Hendrix Odyssey has clearly energized the campus and provided focus, identity, and national profile in a crowded academic marketplace. I firmly believe that Hendrix is well prepared for the challenges ahead and I look forward to working with the trustees, faculty, staff and students to make a real contribution to Hendrix's future."

Tsutsui's wife, Dr. Marjorie Swann, received a Ph.D. in 17th

Century British Literature from Oxford University's Corpus Christi College and will join the Hendrix faculty in the English department.

Tsutsui succeeds Dr. J. Timothy Cloyd, who has served as president of Hendrix since 2001. W. Ellis Arnold, Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Dean of Advancement, will continue to serve as acting president until Tsutsui's presidency begins in June 2014.

Located in Conway, Ark., Hendrix has been affiliated with the United Methodist Church since 1884.



William Tsutsui



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).

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

Recent ruling on clergy housing brings no immediate change

A message from Todd Burris, director of administrative services for the Arkansas Conference

On Nov. 22 a federal district judge in Wisconsin ruled that the tax-free status of a clergy housing allowance violates the establishment clause of the First Amendment, giving preferential tax benefit not available to similar non-religious organizations.

What does a potential change in the taxability of a housing allowance mean for clergy in Arkansas? When Justice Barbara Crabb issued the ruling, she prevented the IRS and Treasury department from enforcing the law until the appeals process is completed—so, for the moment, nothing will change.

If the government does not appeal this decision in 60 days, it will become law, but only in Wisconsin. The U.S. Supreme Court will have to affirm this decision before it has any effect on clergy in Arkansas. So in 2014, both active and retired clergy may continue to receive tax-sheltered housing allowances. (This ruling, if it takes effect, would not affect pastors living in church-owned parsonages.)

Attorneys with the United Methodist Church's General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits, as well as the General Council on Finance and Administration, are closely monitoring this case on behalf of the church. We will keep you informed on this and any other developments relating to clergy and church tax laws. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at tburris@arumc.org.

The perfect Christmas gift: saving a life

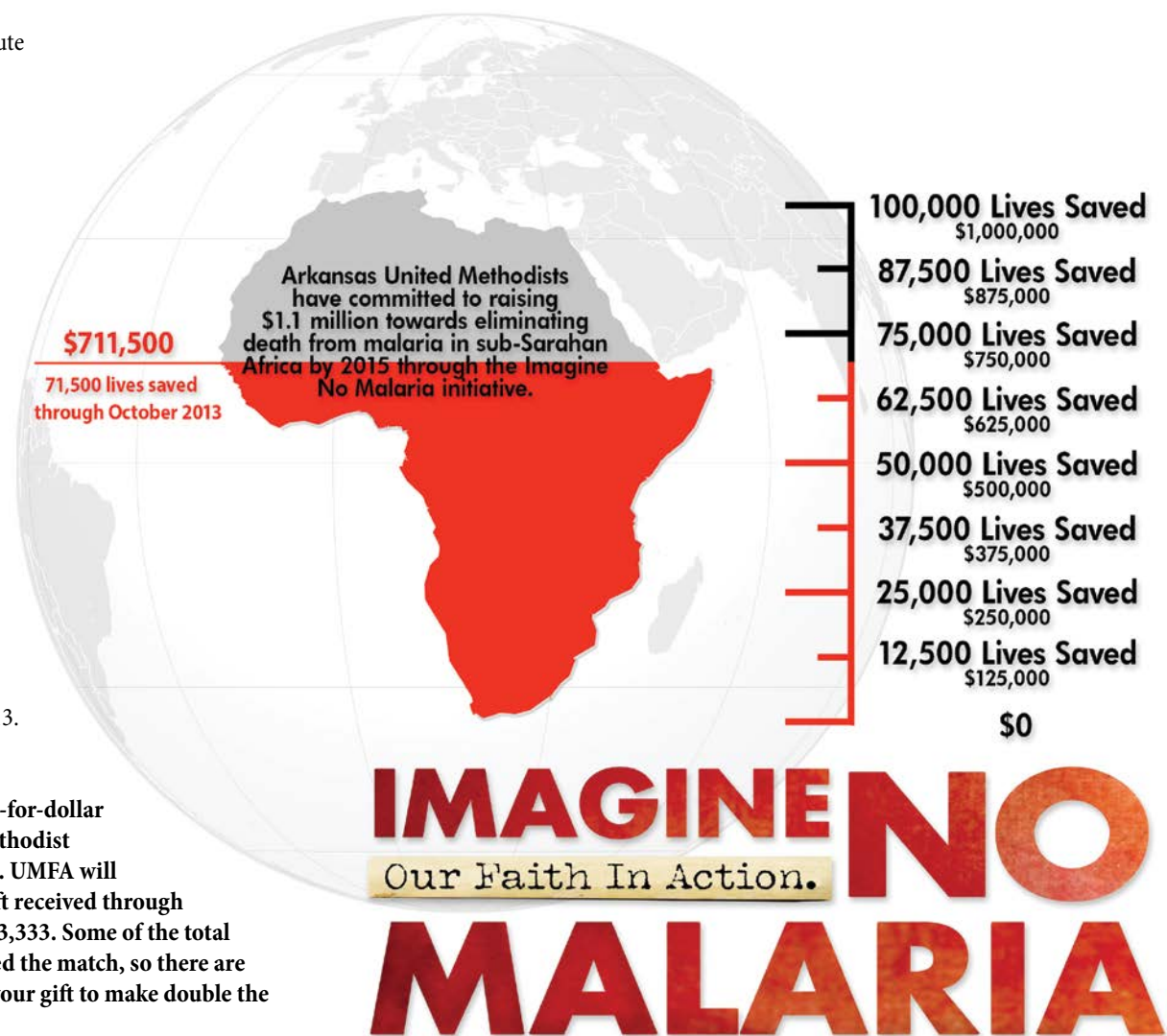

Imagine No Malaria's approach to eradicating this deadly disease is focused on four key areas: prevention, education, communication and treatment. The United Methodist Church provides a vital and trusted part of the healthcare delivery system on the continent of Africa. Using our existing network of more than 300 hospitals, clinics and health posts, plus the communication resources of the United Methodist radio station in Cote d'Ivoire and personal delivery of preventive resources such as insecticide-treated bed nets, we are making progress toward eliminating deaths from malaria.

Who wouldn't want to be a part of saving lives as a celebration of Christ's birth? Visit www.arumc.org/inm to make a gift.

It's not too late to make Imagine No Malaria a part of your Advent and Christmas celebrations. You might:

- Set a churchwide goal to contribute \$2 for every worshipper in attendance during Advent.
- Take up a special offering during your Christmas Eve service.
- Decorate a Christmas tree. For every donation of \$10, add a green INM wristband to the tree, or start with the tree decorated with the wristbands and take them off one by one with each donation. Light a treetop star when you reach your fundraising goal. Wristbands are available at the Conference office.
- Use the free Advent resources available at <http://docs.arumc.org/advent2013>.

This progress graph reflects a dollar-for-dollar matching grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (umfa.org). UMFA will match every Imagine No Malaria gift received through the Arkansas Conference, up to \$333,333. Some of the total above was given *before* UMFA offered the match, so there are still a few thousand dollars left for your gift to make double the difference!

HENDRIX

The Hendrix College Choir presents the 49th Annual

Candlelight Carol Service Tour

The farewell performances of director Nancy Fleming and organist Ansley Fleming

December 19 at 7:30 p.m.
First United Methodist Church
206 West Johnson Avenue • Springdale

December 20 at 7:30 p.m.
Trinity United Methodist Church
1101 North Mississippi • Little Rock

Reservations are not required.



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Ingathering brings together Arkansas UMs for generous service

Rod Hocott, left, director of mid-teen ministries for First UMC Conway, works with students Ian Bush and Aaron Johnson to pack relief supplies to send to UMCOR, the United Methodist Committee on Relief. From UMCOR's Sager-Brown Depot in Baldwin, La., the supplies will make their way around the world to people who need essentials in the wake of disaster.



An Arkansas Rice Depot worker provides instructions for a group of youth ready to delve into work at Ingathering 2013.



PHOTOS BY TRICIA BURRIS

On the Saturday morning before Thanksgiving, more than 100 United Methodists from all corners of the state converged on the Arkansas Rice Depot in Little Rock to deliver items of help, hope and food, for Arkansans and for many thousands of people around the world.

"As the rain fell on Thursday and Friday and the weather predictions were gloomy, my prayer was for the rain to cease and volunteers to show up," said Brenda Norwood, coordinator of the event. "My prayers were answered in tenfold."

The clouds held back their rain as caring United Methodists, some whom drove for more than two hours, came with their relief supply items and servant hearts and hands. They sorted donations for disaster victims and families in crisis, delivered school kits and packed potatoes for the hungry in Arkansas.

Even in the cold, all felt the warmth of music provided by the Rev. Greg Schick, contemporary worship pastor at St. James UMC Little Rock. Bishop Gary Mueller offered words of inspiration to remind attendees of their reason for gathering there. He spoke of Jesus' words from Matthew 5:13-16: "You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world."

"You are being salt and you are being light for God in a world that needs your saltiness and needs your light more than ever," he told the crowd.

Rice Depot staff arranged to move much of the work indoors, and the added warmth of the warehouse proved helpful for those working to load relief supplies for shipment to the United Methodist Committee on Relief's Sager-Brown Depot in Baldwin, La.

"The staff [of the Rice Depot] was amazing, and I truly appreciate their efforts to make Ingathering a successful event," Norwood said. She added that she always finds it inspiring to see so many individuals and churches come together for Ingathering.




"I'm so proud to be a part of the people known as United Methodists of Arkansas who generously respond to the hurts and needs of people everywhere," she said. "To God I give all the glory and praise."

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Methodist Family Health is a nonprofit organization that provides comprehensive psychiatric and behavioral healthcare to children and families throughout Arkansas. By donating to Methodist Family Health, you'll improve the lives of thousands of Arkansas families in desperate need of answers and guidance. This Christmas, listen to your heart and help us care for the children and families who need your love and support.

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-  Make checks payable to Methodist Family Health Foundation and mail to P.O. Box 56050, Little Rock, AR 72215
-  Call 501.906.4209

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Crossman

(continued from page 1)

me to accomplish two things as the new Conference secretary. He said, 'I want the Journal fast, and I want it accurate.' That sounds simple, but it proved to be a challenging assignment.

"I started several months before the Annual Conference session gathering information and reports that would not be affected by any motions at the conference session. I adopted much of the formatting that Chris Cooper was using as the Little Rock Conference Secretary. By the time of the opening gavel, I was able to have three or four hundred pages of the Journal ready for the printer.

"I was also able to pull together a dozen people such as Jim Lane, Ron Newberry, Marcia Crossman, Charles Crossman, David Crossman, Nettie Jane Goss, Tammy Garrison, Paul Strang, Jane Dennis and Bob Hager who worked until 2 or 3 a.m. each night of the Conference session to prepare the final 200 pages of the Journal. It was a team effort by very dedicated volunteers."

On the workload:

"Most of the members of the Conference only see the Conference Secretary at work during the four days of the annual conference session. However, the actual duties are spread out during the entire year. The first half of the year is a basically a time of gathering information in preparation for the Annual Conference, while the last half of the year involves reporting the actions of the session to the General Agencies, Judicial Council and the General Conference."

On changes over the years:

"Twenty-five years ago for the North Arkansas Conference sessions, we met at Hendrix College and my two teenage sons were the entire technical crew. We used an overhead projector, a 12-foot screen, four microphones—and the session was recorded on audio cassette tapes.

"Today during our Annual Conference sessions we have dozens of microphones, stage lighting, live Internet video streaming, live camera projections on 40 to 60 feet of screens, tweeting, Facebook, and DVDs available to order.

"When the Little Rock and North Arkansas Conferences merged



The Rev. Dr. Bob Crossman makes announcements to those gathered for Annual Conference 2013. Crossman served as secretary of first the North Arkansas Conference, then the Arkansas Conference, from 1990 to 2013.

AUM FILE PHOTO

in 2004, our attendance numbers doubled. The larger attendance called for greater efficiency in registration and balloting procedures, and has required larger convention centers that can offer expanded meeting, banquet and worship spaces.

"It's been an honor to work closely with four different bishops during my tenure as secretary of the Conference."

On Journal production changes:

"Those first years I personally collected new addresses for pastors who were moving, changes in committee and board membership, memoirs, and entered the appointment changes.

"In the first few years, everything in the Journal had to be entered by keyboard, and each page of the Journal, including the photographs, had to be pasted up by hand for the printer. This involved hundreds of hours by my team.

"Now, with advancements in computers and email, almost every portion of the Journal is sent to me electronically. My task these last few years has been to remind the team to prepare their portion of the Journal and send it to me on a timely basis.... These last five years, most of my team completed their work by 7

p.m. each night of the Conference session instead of working until 2 or 3 a.m. to complete the task.

On good memories:

"My favorite part of serving as Conference secretary has been to hear the closing gavel, and to know that my team as served faithfully—all 700 pages of the Journal are complete and ready for proofreading by the officers and districts of the Annual Conference.

"I clearly remember the closing gavel of the Conference session first year or two as Conference secretary. When my team spread out four dozen three-ring binders on the stage, each containing a proof copy of the 600- to 700-page journal, the body was in awe that the Journal was complete."

On his plans for future Annual Conferences:

"To be honest, before election to serve as Conference secretary, I did not attend every minute of the Conference session. I had the pleasure of spending time at the Cokesbury display, and renewing friendships in the lobby over a cup of coffee. This coming year I might actually get to attend a banquet or two, and spend some time having a cup of coffee in the lobby with old friends."

'Refuge' youth event breaks last year's record attendance



Wayne Kerr leads worship at Refuge 2013, an event that provided a retreat opportunity for junior high youth from across the state.

COURTESY PHOTOS

Refuge, a junior high youth event sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM) was held Nov. 8-10, 2013.

In its second year at Shepherd of the Ozarks near Harriet, Ark., Refuge drew some 370 attendees—the largest Refuge to date, and an increase of about 100 attendees over last year's record-breaking number.

The next two Conference youth events are MITTO, a mission opportunity for high school students held Dec. 30, 2013 through Jan. 2, 2014, at First UMC Pine Bluff; and Veritas (ACCYM's largest event) for grades 7-12, scheduled for Feb. 28 through March 2, 2014, in Rogers.

To learn about any of these events, or how your youth group can get involved, visit accym.org or contact Michelle Moore, coordinator of youth and young adult ministries for the Arkansas Conference, at michelle.moore@arumc.org.



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VIM opportunities in Mexico with Manos Juntas

Video available online with more information

Willie Berman, right, visited recently with Byron and Janice Mann, Arkansas' Volunteers In Mission and Disaster Response coordinators, to share information about mission



opportunities through the Rio Bravo, Mexico-based ministry Manos Juntas (www.handstogethermexico.org). Berman, a missionary with the UMC's General Board of Global Ministries, shared the need for work teams with various skill levels to travel to Mexico in 2014. While at the Arkansas Conference Center, he recorded a video message that provides more information about Manos Juntas. The video includes images of Arkansans in mission there. View it at <http://youtu.be/S6bt4ncRqog>.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Arkansas VIM team helps with Oklahoma tornado recovery



Larry Hensin, right, of Bismarck UMC, works with a homeowner, center, and a local contractor volunteering her time, left, to help replace the roof of a home in Harrah, Okla., during a Nov. 6-10 Volunteers In Mission journey to help with tornado recovery. Eight Arkansans participated, representing UMCs in Bismarck, North Little Rock, Hope and Bella Vista. The group logged 163 volunteer hours.

"As with every mission, we do all we can for the homeowner, but have to remember

that rarely will we finish a project," said Sheri Mathews, who served as team leader. "We did trash cleanup, running wiring in a horse barn, worked on a new roof, built a shelter for the well pump and most importantly, we visited with the homeowners." She added that the people of the Moore, Okla., area still need further assistance, as well as prayers.

COURTESY PHOTO

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 870-826-0268. 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.

Cuba VIM team being formed

Nechi Fullerton is forming an Arkansas VIM team for travel to Havana, Cuba, in late December 2014 or January 2015 to build housing for the Methodist Seminary there. Exact dates are to be determined. The 12- to 14-day mission journey will cost approximately \$2,500 per person (all inclusive) and is limited to 12 people. Construction skills are not required, but physical stamina is. Building relationships, witnessing the Methodist revival in Cuba and spiritual exchange with our Cuban Methodist brothers and sisters are important components of the visit, in addition to the actual construction project.

A "dream team" would include a pastor or other spiritual leader; several individuals with construction experience and aptitude; someone with musical gifts and a portable instrument, such as a guitar; a detail-oriented person (or two); a medical professional or to serve as team doctor or nurse; a photographer/journalist to tell the team's story; Spanish speakers (although an interpreter is provided); and a balance of ages and genders. This mission journey requires flexible, adaptable, positive folks with lots of passion and enthusiasm. To request an application or more information, contact Nechi Fullerton: nefullerton@yahoo.com.

Philippines: Typhoon Haiyan response

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is providing relief supplies, mainly food and water purification tablets, to the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. The typhoon destroyed more than 250,000 homes and impacted more than 11 million people across 44 provinces. At least 3,500 people were killed. About 1,500 families, or 7,500 people, benefitted from UMCOR relief packages the weekend after the storm "thanks to the generous outpouring of United Methodists," said Jack Amick of International Disaster Relief. UMCOR is continuing to assess needs and plans additional

assistance, including material aid through the UMCOR Relief-Supply Network.

Donations to International Disaster Response, Advance #982450 at www.umcmmission.org, will support disaster survivors in need. **At this time, teams are not requested** or encouraged to go to the Philippines. Long-term recovery teams will be sent at later dates. Please continue to pray for survivors.

Midwest tornado damage

Pray for those affected by tornadoes in Illinois, where there was widespread damage and several deaths. There were 250-500 homes destroyed or damaged in the town of Washington, Ill., alone. UMCOR has reached out to the affected annual conferences to assess immediate needs. No requests for teams have been made at this time. Donations to help the relief and recovery efforts can be made to U.S. Disaster Response Advance #901670 at www.umcmmission.org.

'This Olde Church' projects

Local churches may request a VIM team to lend a hand with a "This Olde Church" project: small repairs to the church and grounds, such as painting, weatherproofing, cleaning, yard work, landscaping or building wheelchair ramps. To give or receive help through "This Olde Church," contact Byron Mann, 870-826-0268 or vim@arumc.org. Current needs include:

- **DeAnn UMC** in Hempstead County is in need of some remodeling work in the sanctuary and some exterior paint and maintenance. For information, contact Jacky Simmons at 870-703-4134.
- A combined mission team from three North Little Rock churches—First UMC, Lakewood UMC and Argenta UMC—helped recently with fire damage clean-up at **Southbend UMC** in Lonoke County. Southbend fell victim to arson on the morning of Oct. 16. More teams are

needed to help with the recovery. To schedule your team, contact the Rev. Garren Hagemeyer, Southbend UMC's pastor, at garren.earle@gmail.com or 501-247-7134.

- **Oak Grove UMC** in Hempstead County is in need of some roof repair work. To learn more, contact the Rev. Revel Kidd at 870-777-4950.

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, 870-826-0268 or vim@arumc.org.

Caraway, Ark. Tornado response

Response to the Oct. 31 tornado in Caraway included delivery of Tornado Tubs and extra totes from Arkansas UMC Disaster Response Ministries, as well as work gloves and flashlights from Arkansas Rice Depot. Assessment included contact with local officials, Red Cross, the local pastor and survivors and observation of damage in the affected areas. Arkansas Conference Disaster Response determined there was no need for team deployment, as victims were receiving an abundance of family and neighbor assistance. Please continue to pray for those affected as the community recovers.

Scott County, Ark. flood recovery update

Recovery efforts are winding down, but there are still a few projects that could benefit from outside help. If you have a team available to help in Scott County, contact Janice Mann at disaster@arumc.org or 870-703-8359.

COMING UP

December

Northeast District Lay Servant Training in Newport Dec. 14

First UMC Newport will host two all-day Lay Servant Ministry training courses Saturday, Dec. 14 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Basic Lay Servant Training Course will be taught by Bob Turman. The Advanced Course (open to those who have already had the Basic course), "Polity, Practice, and the Mission of the United Methodist Church" will be led by Jim Markley, district director of Lay Servant Ministries; Thomas Frank's book by the same title provides the course reading.

The cost is \$20, and includes a copy of the textbook. Registration deadline is Dec. 9; all persons whose registrations are received by that date will be mailed their copy of the book.

To ask questions or request a registration form, contact LaDonna Busby, lbusby@arumc.org or 870-793-5247.

"Mrs. Santa's Kitchen" at Sequoyah UMC Dec. 14

Homemade cookies, candy, bread and gifts will be featured at Mrs. Santa's Kitchen, an annual fundraiser held at Mount Sequoyah UMC, 1910 Old Wire Road in Fayetteville.

The event takes place Saturday, Dec. 14, 2013, from 9 a.m. to noon. All proceeds benefit local missions. For more information, call the church office at 479-442-8677.

"Lessons and Carols" service at First UMC Morrilton Dec. 16

Two guest musicians will be featured at the 18th annual "Festival of Lessons and Carols" candlelight service Monday, Dec. 16 at 7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, 201 S. Chestnut St. in Morrilton. The public is invited and a nursery will be provided.

Vocal soloist Holly Ruth Gale, assistant professor of music at Arkansas Tech University, and Alisa Coffey, principal harpist of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, will perform with the First United Methodist Chancel Choir under the direction of music minister Preston Sweeden. The Rev. Todd-Paul Taulbee will read the Scriptures.

The 29-voice choir will sing both a cappella and with accompaniment. Various pieces will be accompanied by the harp, flute, percussion instruments, pipe organ and piano.

The "Festival of Lessons and Carols" is a service of Scripture

and song that dates to the late 19th century. Each Scripture lesson—from Genesis, the prophetic books and the gospels—is followed by a carol or other song that reflects on the lesson's message. The original liturgy has been adapted and used by churches all over the world.

January

Children's ministers retreat at Camp Tanako Jan. 31-Feb. 1; register by Jan. 15

"Beyond! 2014 Children's Ministry Conference" for those working in United Methodist children's ministry in Arkansas, is set for Jan. 31 through Feb. 1, 2014.

Mary Jane Pierce Norton, associate general secretary for leadership ministries at the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, will be the event's keynote speaker. Worship will be led by Bill Skaggs, with Bishop Gary Mueller presiding over Holy Communion at the closing worship service. The overnight retreat includes breakout sessions on a variety of topics relating to ministry with children and their families. To learn more or to register by the Jan. 15 deadline, visit the Arkansas Conference Children's Ministry website, <http://kidz.arumc.org>.

UMC offers mission service opportunities for young people: apply by Jan. 15

Is God calling you to help change the world through mission service? Young people all over the world are encouraged to apply to serve as a United Methodist Global Mission Fellow or Global Justice Volunteer. The rolling application final deadline is Jan. 15. For more information visit the Global Ministries website www.umcmmission.org/gt, video www.vimeo.com/gbgm/gtpromo or email gmfellows@umcmmission.org.

Grant applications for Local Church Racial/Ethnic Ministries due Jan. 15

Applications for grants up to \$10,000 to help local United Methodist churches build ministries that strengthen and support racial and ethnic church concerns are due Jan. 15.

Racial Ethnic Local Church Concerns (RELCC) grants from the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD) will be available for

each year of the current quadrennium. The ministry/project contained in the grant application must be a project of a local United Methodist church or of the United Methodist connectional system, and also must:

- Contribute directly to the mission and ministries of making disciples of Jesus Christ
- Be consistent with the doctrine and social principles of the United Methodist 2012 Book of Discipline
- Focus on developing and strengthening the racial ethnic local church for witness and mission
- Involve racial/ethnic church members in the planning, leadership and decision-making.

In addition, the ministry must be related to one or more of these services provided by GBOD's ministry areas: accountable discipleship, Christian education, curriculum resources, evangelism, family and life-span ministries, lay ministries, leadership development, spiritual formation, stewardship and worship.

Priority will be given to new programs for the 2013-2016 quadrennium, rather than programs that were funded during the 2009-2012 quadrennium. For more information and to download a grant application, visit www.gbod.org/ethnic. Applicants with questions are encouraged to contact Cheryl Walker toll-free 877-899-2780 Ext. 7167, or clwalker@gbod.org.

Shift Happens conference on transition, renewal, Jan. 16-18

Shift Happens: Hope in the Midst of Transition, an event for those leading renewal in rural and urban settings, is set for Jan. 16-18, 2014, in Houston, Texas.

Speakers and workshops will cover such topics as congregational renewal in both the rural and urban context; grant writing, asset-based community development, Circles out of Poverty, effective combating of racism, cross-cultural hospitality and networking theory and practice.

The event is sponsored by iRUN (The International Rural and Urban Network of the United Methodist Church), Church and Community Workers and the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. To learn more, visit <http://goo.gl/xG1cRg>.

First UMC Conway fund drive benefits Bethlehem House

Judi Lively, center, executive director of Bethlehem House, on Oct. 1 received a check for \$8,000 from the Revs. Michael Roberts and Lynn Kilbourne of First United Methodist Church Conway.

The funds came from several projects, including the church's Quarters for Quarters project; a homeless awareness fundraiser by the MidYouth; a Mission Committee donation; proceeds of the Taste-a-Licious event; and a grant from the Taylor Fund through the church.

First UMC and three other Conway churches joined together and committed to fund the construction of two rooms at Bethlehem House dedicated to emergency housing. The Quarters for Quarters project allowed congregation members of all ages to participate. Medicine bottles were distributed to fill with quarters—\$9 in quarters filled the bottle.

For many years, the church has used a portion of emergency outreach funds to provide overnight hotel stays for persons with special and immediate need for shelter. The new rooms at Bethlehem House will accommodate these needs in the future.

—submitted by Colleen Holt



New location for Northeast District satellite office, Jonesboro

Effective Nov. 7, the Jonesboro satellite office of the Northeast District has moved to office space at Cornerstone UMC Jonesboro, 1910 Disciple Drive. The mailing address remains the same: P.O. Box 1765, Jonesboro, AR 72403, as do the telephone and fax numbers—and Connie Thomas will still be the person answering the phone when you call.

The Northeast District staff offers thanks and gratitude to First UMC Jonesboro, which graciously hosted the district for many years in its previous office space.

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OBITUARIES

LITTLE ROCK

Julia Ann Keith Fincher

Julia Ann Keith Fincher, 82, passed away Thursday, Oct. 31, 2013, after a lengthy illness.

She was born March 22, 1931, to Constine and Rena Keith. She was a native of Camden and a graduate of Fairview High School. She was preceded in death by her parents, as well as a sister, Mary Elizabeth Walker.



Julia Fincher

She is survived by her husband of 62 years, the Rev. Gerald K. Fincher, a retired elder who served churches in the Little Rock and North Arkansas Conferences; a son, Dr. Larry Fincher and his wife, Pat, of Conway; a daughter, Janet McDowell and her husband, Joe, of Little Rock; a brother, Gerald Keith and his wife, Cledra, of Camden; two granddaughters, Jennifer and Melissa McDowell of Little Rock; and two grandsons, Matthew and Michael Fincher of Conway.

A memorial service was held at St. James UMC Little Rock on Saturday, Nov. 9, with the Revs. John Alston and Greg Schick officiating.

NORTH LITTLE ROCK

Clinton David Burleson

The Rev. Clinton David Burleson, 83, a United Methodist minister for six decades in Arkansas, passed away Saturday, Nov. 16, 2013, at Fox Ridge Assisted Living Center in North Little Rock.

Clint was born in Nashville, Ark., to C.H. Burleson and Martha Adams Burleson and raised in Gurdon, Ark. He was a graduate of Gurdon High School in 1948 and Hendrix College in 1952. He lettered for the Hendrix Warrior Football team, playing four years under Coach Ivan Grove. While at Hendrix, Clint met Shirley Simpson, the beginning of a union that was

to last 59 years. Clint and Shirley moved to Dallas in 1953 where Clint attended Perkins School of Theology at SMU. Their first charge was the Rosser circuit, consisting of several small churches southeast of Dallas.



Clint Burleson

Clint served as senior pastor at several churches including St. Andrew UMC Arkadelphia, Wesley UMC Pine Bluff, Oak Forest UMC Little Rock, First UMC West Memphis, First UMC Camden, Lakewood UMC North Little Rock and First UMC Little Rock. He also served as the superintendent of the Paragould, Forrest City, Jonesboro and Little Rock Districts.

He was active in Methodism on all levels. His service to the church included membership on the boards of Hendrix College, Philander Smith College, Camp Aldersgate and Youth Home. While senior pastor at First UMC Little Rock, he was instrumental in the planning and construction of its Child Development Center. In 1970, he received an honorary doctorate from Hendrix College. He served as a delegate to Jurisdictional and General Conferences, and was a delegate to the World Methodist Conference in Denver, Colo., in 1971.

In retirement, Clint joined his family and became active in Lakewood UMC North Little Rock, where he continued his teachings and ministry in any way he could.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife, Shirley Simpson Burleson; a daughter, Lucy Horton; a sister, Carolyn Staggs; and a son-in-law, Richard Hall. Survivors include his brother, Joe Burleson of Little Rock; a daughter, Katie Hall of Union City, Tenn.; a son, David Burleson and his wife, Angela, of North Little Rock; a son-in-law, Terry Horton of North Little Rock; and grandchildren Amanda Addison and her husband, Brent; Stephanie Hall; Andrew Hall; Matthew Horton; Amber Horton; Lindsey Horton; Alyssa Burleson; Lexie Burleson; and

Leah Burleson.

The family would like to thank those at Fox Ridge Assisted Living Center in North Little Rock who offered Shirley and Clint friendship and care over the past three years.

A memorial service was held Thursday, Nov. 21 at Lakewood UMC North Little Rock. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the First UMC Little Rock Child Development Center, 324 W 8th Street, Little Rock, AR 72201, or the Lakewood UMC Endowment Fund, 1922 Topf Road, North Little Rock, AR 72116.

PERRYVILLE

Robert L. "Bob" Reynolds

Robert L. "Bob" Reynolds, 83, passed away Wednesday, Nov. 20, 2013.

He was born Dec. 22, 1929, in Wilmington, Del., where he and his family lived until moving to Arkansas in 1978. Bob was retired from Winterthur Farms, Delaware, Alltel Communications and Heifer International Ranch, Perryville. He was a member of Adona United Methodist Church and Gideons International.

He was preceded in death by his mother Lucy Reynolds Wood, and a son, Richard John Reynolds.

Bob is survived by his wife of 61 years, the Rev. Frances "Frankie" Reynolds; three daughters, Roberta "Bobbi" Byers of Conway; Diane Jackson and her husband, Bob, of Wilmington; and Sally Wise and her husband, Tommy, of Conway; seven grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

Bob donated his body to the Genesis Program of Memphis Methodist Hospital. A memorial service will be held at Perryville United Methodist Church on Saturday, Dec. 7, at 10:30 a.m.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial donations be made to Adona United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 34, Adona, AR 72001.

Former mission intern McCuiston dies

Traci Lynn McCuiston, 47, a longtime member of Central United Methodist Church Fayetteville who committed her life to serving Jesus and the people of Uganda, died Nov. 8, 2013, at Willard Walker Hospice Home.

She had traveled on many missionary journeys, including an extended time in 2012 working with Congolese refugee women and a number of women's groups through the United Methodist Church in Uganda. Coverage of that experience appeared in the Oct. 5, 2012 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*

("Arkansas mission intern carries out work in Uganda," written by Grace Nakajje of the East Africa Annual Conference).

In Fayetteville, McCuiston served Central UMC as a lay leader



In this 2012 file photo, Arkansas United Methodists Jody Farrell and Traci McCuiston, right, present bicycles to clergywomen serving in the Gulu district of Uganda.

and a visionary in beginning The River worship and prayer service.

A funeral service was held Wednesday, Nov. 13, in the Great Hall at Central United Methodist Church, with Jody Farrell officiating.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Uganda Mission Fund at Central UMC Fayetteville, 6 West Dickson St. Fayetteville, AR 72701; or to the Willard Walker Hospice Home, 325 N. Longview, Fayetteville, AR 72703.

'Equip' provides renewal, education for youth ministry workers

More than 50 volunteer, part-time and full-time youth workers gathered October 25 and 26 at Camp Aldersgate in Little Rock for Equip 2013, a time of sabbath, spiritual renewal and continuing education.

On Friday evening, Bishop Gary Mueller joined the gathering for an uplifting and motivational time of worship that provided a transition from a time of rest and renewal to the next day filled with information, learning and application. The Rev. Dr. Andy Stoker, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church Dallas, Texas, gave the keynote address. Stoker based his presentation on Mark DeVries' book *Sustainable Youth Ministry*, concentrating on some fundamental parts of any successful youth ministry. In addition, an afternoon panel discussion addressed a variety of topics related to ministry with youth.

The weekend was a funded partially by the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church and the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, which made it possible for the event to be of little cost to the participants. The Conference Youth Ministry Resource Team hopes to offer additional continuing education opportunities throughout the year for those who work with youth. The next Equip is already set for October 24-25, 2014.

If you would like to receive the Arkansas Conference Youth Ministry Email Newsletter twice a month to stay up to date on all continuing education opportunities, email Michelle Moore, Conference youth and young adult ministry coordinator, at michelle.moore@arumc.org.

Philander Smith students build prison cell replica



The Rev. Thompson Murray, left, of Quapaw Quarter UMC Little Rock, works with Philander Smith College students to assemble a replica of an isolation cell. Students with the college's Social Justice League approached Murray this spring for help designing and building the cell. Arkansas death row inmates provided measurements and details to inform the design.

A Nov. 21 event at Philander Smith College included a student-driven project that provided a replica of a death row isolation cell, which is smaller than the average parking space and confines a prisoner for 23 hours each day.

The cell, sponsored by Philander Smith's Social Justice Initiative (SJI) and assembled by students with the help of the Rev. Thompson Murray of Quapaw Quarter UMC Little Rock, made its debut in conjunction with a screening of "Herman's House," a documentary about the cruelty of solitary confinement in the prison system. A panel discussion followed, and attendees were invited to spend time inside the cell before and after the screening and discussion.

Ahmad Williams, a Philander Smith student and president of the campus Social Justice League who attends Wesley Chapel UMC Little Rock, was one of several students on hand to help assemble the cell. He said it can be reassembled in other locations, for churches or other groups that wish to learn more about isolation living conditions in prisons.

Dr. Joseph Jones, founding executive director of the SJI, said many of the 15 students active in the Social Justice League attend area United Methodist churches. (Jones himself attends Wesley Chapel UMC, located on the Philander Smith campus.) He said United Methodist beliefs influence every project of the SJI.

"One of the things that we intentionally do with our office is to try to align our efforts with the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church.... Even though we don't explicitly say it to students, in the language and in the activities we do, we still try to make sure a Methodist presence is there," he said.

Paragraphs 164G and 164H of the 2012 *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* deal with the death penalty and with criminal and restorative justice. Paragraph 164H reads, in part, "In the love of Christ, who came to save those who are lost and vulnerable, we urge the creation of a genuinely new system for the care and restoration of victims, offenders, criminal justice officials, and the community as a whole."

To learn more about the project, contact the Social Justice Initiative office at 501-975-8546 or socialjustice@philander.edu.



Ahmad Williams, president of the Social Justice League at Philander Smith College, is interviewed by a television reporter while standing inside the replica of an isolation cell used to house Arkansas death row inmates.

AUM PHOTOS BY AMY FORBUS



A Solid Choice

Nancy and Craig Wood are leaders at First United Methodist Church in Little Rock. They are pleased to know the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas manages their local church's endowment funds.

"Dick Butler Sr. was a member of our church. He was a big advocate and supporter of the Foundation," said Craig. "We know and trust Jim Argue and his staff for their expertise and their commitment. Also, working with the Foundation takes some politics out of the fund management decision when church members have ties to different financial institutions."

"We are both lifelong Methodists, and we are very proud of the work of our state's Foundation. It is one of the largest in the nation," said Nancy. "I am particularly impressed with the UMFA Seminary Scholarship Fund. Through board service at the national level, I've begun to understand the high cost of a seminary education. Folks coming out of seminary don't get a huge salary, and it is really important for people in Arkansas to financially support educating our clergy."

Craig and Nancy's confidence in UMFA is grounded in the institution's 50-year history. "They got off on solid footing at the beginning, and they have continued to be a solid organization," said Craig.



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