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May 17-18 covenant gathering to focus on lasting revival

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Aldersgate. The word may have multiple meanings for a United Methodist, such as the name of a beloved camp or church. Its significance comes from the experience John Wesley recorded in his journal on May 24, 1738:

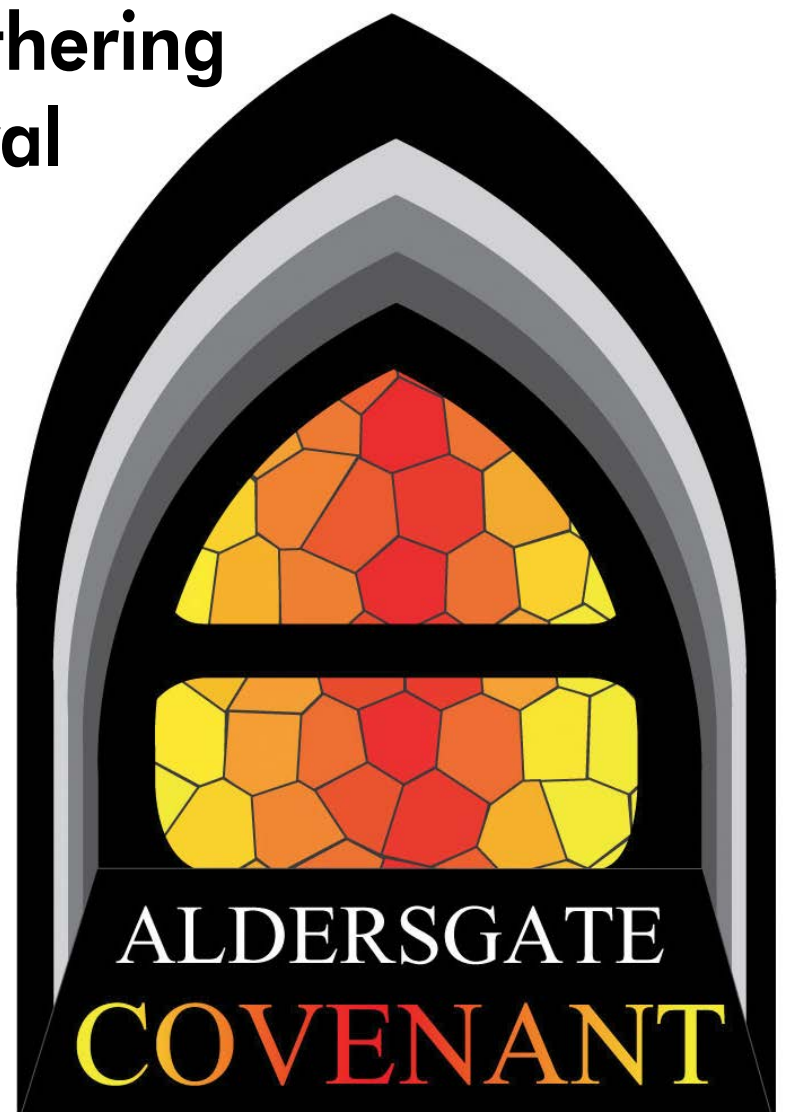
"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

A group of United Methodists hope the word "Aldersgate" will signify present-day revival, too. A Gathering of the Aldersgate

Covenant will take place May 17-18, 2014, in Leawood, Kan., at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection. This 20-hour prayer gathering, which is open to everyone, has roots in a meeting that occurred 20 years ago.

In 1994, a group of United Methodists first met as the Aldersgate Covenant. Among them were two future episcopal leaders: Scott Jones, now the Bishop of the Great Plains Area, and Gary Mueller, now the Bishop of the Arkansas Area. According to aldersgatecovenant.org, they gathered "to celebrate signs of hope in the United Methodist Church, address the loss of membership, resources and confidence in our denomination, and discern how to engage a world increasingly indifferent to the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Bishop Mueller says the Aldersgate Covenant's first goal was to unify the United Methodist [See ALDERSGATE, page 4]



Church reaches out to persons, families with special needs

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Like many congregations, First United Methodist Church Jonesboro has long provided Christian education opportunities for all ages on Sunday mornings.

But since October, its children's ministry has offered something many churches do not: a therapeutic Sunday school classroom setting that provides learning and activities designed for persons with special needs.

Known as Abilitrees, the ministry relates to the church's children's department from an administrative and curriculum perspective. Its tree-themed logo and name come from the same historic oak tree on the church's property that inspires the children's ministry logo. Though it was founded with children in mind, it quickly grew to minister to people of all ages who have developmental challenges.



Demonstrating a welcome

Much of the time, persons with special needs can do well in a typical Sunday school classroom. They may be assigned a "buddy" for the hour, or have accommodations made for certain activities. But others have challenges

that make it difficult to participate in a traditional Sunday school or worship setting. The common result: Families who have members with special needs tend to stay away from church entirely.

Shannon May, children's minister at First UMC Jonesboro, knew of such families through friends who work as special education teachers. She began to learn more about what types of changes would help church become a more welcoming place for those families.

"We developed a therapeutic Sunday school classroom with a lot more gross motor activities and appropriate things for special needs," she said. "We wanted to be sure there was an environment that was safe and beneficial for all children."

The dedicated classroom has a foam floor, a therapeutic swing and tactile lessons. A nursing student from Arkansas State University is on hand in case a participant has any physical problems during the hour—for example, some participants have gastrostomy tubes, and others are prone to seizures, so the presence of a medically trained professional provides an extra level of comfort to the parent or full-time caregiver.

"We just want to give parents that one hour to worship and not worry about their children," May said.

Adults with special needs have options at other churches in the area, but often they rely on buddy-system-style integration, which doesn't work for everyone. In this city of 70,000 people, First UMC is the only church May is aware of that offers this level of accommodation for persons of any age with

[See ABILITREES, page 7]

Learning on the border

BY RUSS HALL
Special Contributor

BorderLinks (www.borderlinks.org) began 25 years ago as a spin-off of the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s. Its purpose is to educate and raise awareness to inspire action against injustice along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. In October, I was part of a student delegation from Phillips Theological Seminary that flew to Tucson, Ariz., to learn from BorderLinks. The experience broadened my perspective on the problems faced by those who cross our southern border.

We received an overview of the history of our border with Mexico, and met with local social justice figures such as Ken Kennon, an original member of the “Gang of Four” in the Sanctuary Movement for Salvadorian refugees seeking political asylum in the 1980s. We met a young undocumented student Dario, currently enrolled at Pima County Community College, and heard his story about DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which grants temporary residency documents so undocumented students may qualify for college admission. Dario and other students have formed Scholarships A-Z, an organization helping undocumented DREAM Act students with college education resources.

A woman from Casa Mariposa (restorationproject340.wordpress.com), an organization that provides assistance to migrants picked up in the desert, informed us about a federal court program, Operation Streamline, that mass processes migrants and can charge them with a felony and sentence them to jail time before deporting them back to Mexico. Later that day, our group would witness an Operation Streamline court proceeding at the federal courthouse in Tucson. Afterward, all of us doubted that any of these migrants, with only a 15-minute consultation that morning with a public defender, had received justice.

That same day Rick Crocker, an agent of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (www.ice.gov), shared slides and video of ICE’s primary mission: to investigate smuggling operations into and out of the U.S. Some of that illegal activity is the smuggling of immigrants. Rick is married to a legal Guatemalan immigrant and supports reform of U.S. immigration laws, believing that a Guest Worker Program could allow migrant workers to earn a living without fear of abuse by U.S. employers.

Action, prayers, protests

My most meaningful encounters took place as we ventured into the Arizona desert and into Mexico to meet people who were engaged in making a positive difference for the poor of the borderlands. Our trek in the desert outside of Green Valley gave our delegation a taste of what migrants face in their multi-day journeys through land filled with spiny cholla and barrel cactus.

Our guide, Laurie, a member of the Green Valley Samaritans (www.gvsamaritans.org), took us to three desert sites where remains of migrants had been found, all within one mile of her own home. At each site we read a poem, said a prayer and left a gift of water or a stone to honor the life of our migrant brother or sister who perished.

In Douglas, Ariz., we met with Mark Adams, a Presbyterian minister and director of Frontera De Cristo (www.fronteradecristo.org), a border

ministry involved in migrant, health and desert water ministries, and a just-trade center. Our group met with Mark and others for a prayer vigil for those who died in the desert while migrating into the U.S.



Russ Hall

I was particularly moved as we gathered up marker crosses printed with the names and dates of death of migrants who perished in the desert. As a protest for No More Deaths (www.nomoredeaths.org), each person would call out the name on the cross they held up, and the entire group would respond with “Presente!” as a means to remember those who died in the desert.

Our delegation’s first overnight visit to Mexico began at HEPAC (translated as “home of peace and hope,” www.borderlinks.org/education/partnerships/hepac), a community center in Nogales. That evening we experienced gracious Mexican hospitality at the home of Estella Torres, who started HEPAC’s feeding ministry. Estella fed us American Anglos a wonderful home-cooked Mexican meal. She had started out feeding neighborhood kids in her home, and expanded it into a program that daily feeds more than 100 children of maquilas workers. With support from Mexican and American churches, HEPAC expanded to provide basic education for maquila workers so they can get better jobs, become self-sufficient and be able to stay in Mexico.

Human toll of injustice

Each evening our group discussed the issues we encountered through the day’s experiences: unfair economic trade policies, inhumane treatment of migrants, a federal legal system that feeds the private prison industry, militarization of the border, poverty-wage jobs, unsafe work conditions in the border factories and second-class status of undocumented workers in the U.S., just to name a few.

Our views often differed, but we all agreed that because we learned first-hand of the moral and ethical issues surrounding immigration, how we respond in the future will be very different from our responses in the past—because we have met the people, heard their stories and witnessed for ourselves how unfairly and oftentimes inhumanely migrants are treated at our own border.

This unjust system is not the America I know and admire and love. A change is badly needed to bring economic equity, allowing people to support themselves in their own homelands. And for those already living within our borders, a fair and comprehensive immigration policy would provide an opportunity for their American dream, allowing people to work, to educate themselves and become citizens of the America that I *do* know and will always love.

The Rev. Hall serves as pastor of Decatur and Highfill UMCs.



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).



EDITOR’S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

The gift of silence

It takes effort for me sit in complete silence for an hour.

But what a gift it was.

The field trip arose from a weekly small group connected with the United Methodist congregation where I’m a member. As we considered the many ways people experience God, one of our number confessed that though she had attended a college founded by the Society of Friends, she had never in her four years there attended a Quaker meeting.

Several of us expressed interest, and before long, we had arranged to visit the local gathering of Quakers.

And so, on a Sunday morning at 11:00, I stepped into the circle in the front room of the Meeting House, chose a vacant seat near the door, accepted a tri-fold brochure explaining the gathering, opened my Bible on my lap and waited.

Patently, to my own surprise.

Feeling prompted to turn to the first chapter of John, I read the passage. Verse 16 stood out: “From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.”

I don’t know how long I meditated on that verse. But I do know that when someone else in the meeting felt moved by God to share a word on the life and witness of Nelson Mandela, who had died just more than a week before, the message she spoke dovetailed with the fullness, the grace upon grace that I’d contemplated through the words of John 1:16.

It’s an experience I probably could have every day, if I develop the discipline and commitment to doing so. Until then, I receive it as a gift from God through my sisters and brothers who call themselves Friends.

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

In 2013, readers of the *Arkansas United Methodist* saw two major changes: the loss of our national section, the *United Methodist Reporter*, and a redesign to match the new look of the Arkansas Conference.

2014 brings another change: the frequency of the paper will move from 16 issues per year to 12. Eliminating the four special issues will reduce the financial and scheduling demands created by additional preparation and distribution cycles. We still plan to focus on special topics on occasion, but instead of receiving an extra issue, readers will find additional pages within a regular, first-Friday-of-the-month issue.

We expect this change to allow opportunities for other forms of storytelling: for example, more articles with links to companion videos, slideshows and audio. Watch for these features in the year ahead.

As United Methodists in Arkansas seek to reach an ever-changing mission field, the *Arkansas United Methodist* will continue to share stories that inspire readers to realize our common vision: “Congregations and surrounding communities transformed by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate love of God and neighbor, holy living and justice.”



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Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
Feb. 7	Jan. 20
March 7	Feb. 18
April 4	March 18



GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

A new way in a New Year

Dear Ones,

It's a New Year—which means you are filled with new hopes and dreams or, at the very least, with hopes and dreams that things will get better.

I've recently noticed something about myself. I'm not just hoping and dreaming about the results I want to see in the Arkansas Conference (even though I know you know that I do want to see certain kinds of results!). I'm focusing increasingly on how I can get more serious about going "all in" to be the kind of disciple of Jesus Christ who makes other disciples who are serious about letting God use them to transform lives, communities and the world with passion and excellence.

This is a significant change for me because it doesn't begin with what I think the outcomes of our work should be. Rather, it begins with God beginning with me, so I can contribute faithfully to God's outcomes.

It also has powerful implications for the mission plan I've developed as part of our trajectory, addressing what I believe the Annual Conference, laity, pastors and congregations need to do

next. I'm grateful that I've received enough positive feedback to reach the conclusion that most laity in pews and pastors in pulpits support the direction this plan is taking us.

The question, however, is how we'll get there. By "structuring" them into existence? No. By "planning" them into existence? No. By "accountabilizing" them into existence? No. We'll get there by starting with heart work. Or, more to the point, with all of us getting truly serious about God, starting with our hearts.

There are no best practices we can employ, programs we can implement or workshops we can attend to do this. There's only the serious work of opening our hearts, minds, spirits and lives to God. Laying ourselves bare. Walking through some dark nights of the soul. Praying like we've never prayed before. Going deeper with God than we ever thought possible. And following Jesus one step at a time as his disciples.

This new work is the heart and soul of the revival we need. It's why revival is "#1" in my mission plan for the people called United Methodists in Arkansas. And it's why I want to share a simple prayer with you that I hope you will join me in praying

every day this New Year.

*God, You are sharing grace that is amazing.
Help me give myself to Your love every breath I take.
Jesus, You are reaching out to the real me in my real life.
Enable me to follow as Your disciple every step I take.
Holy Spirit, You are transforming me from the inside out.
Empower me to rely on You with everything that is within me.*

May you experience God's richest blessings to overflowing in this New Year, and experience great joy as you share them with those around you who need to experience the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace,

Gary E. Mueller



PRACTICAL DIVINITY

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON

Our search for happiness

'Tis the season to be jolly.

It's right there in how we greet people this time of year: *Merry Christmas. Happy Holidays.* The Christmas season is supposed to be a time of joy—Joy to the World, in fact!

Nowadays Christmas comes at us in two forms. There's a church Christmas, and then there's a cultural Christmas. The first of these—church Christmas—is about things we know very well. It celebrates the birth of Christ into the world and pushes us back to those wonderful stories that tell us about angelic visits, prophecies fulfilled, and a virgin birth. The Christmas of the church shows us the mystery of the Incarnation.

The second Christmas is the Christmas of culture. It feeds off of the other Christmas and relies on many of its symbols in order to thrive. But the story it offers is really about something else. It's about eggnog and fruitcakes, holiday sales and office parties, Frosty and Santa Claus.

The Christmas of the church is something to be proclaimed. The

Christmas of culture is something to be marketed.

Selling happiness?

When I was growing up, these two Christmases were merged seamlessly in my experience. We'd go around with a church group singing Christmas carols in the evening, and I'd come home afterward and catch the Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Christmas Special on TV. On Christmas Eve, my family always attended worship and the service was powerful. But my awe at our church's candlelight service did not dampen the enthusiasm with which I tore into gift-wrapped presents when we got home.

I think things have changed in the past few decades, though. The reach of the cultural Christmas has grown more powerful and pervasive. I have a three year-old daughter, and it's hard to get her to focus on anything *other* than the consumerist side of the holiday season. I think that's a problem.

So I don't start to sound like a

bona fide Grinch, let me explain what I'm getting at. I don't think this issue is as simple as the well-worn criticism that says our culture is trying to "take the Christ out of Christmas."

Truth be told, you can leave the Christ in Christmas and still celebrate a holiday that has very little to do with what Christmas is supposed to be about.

I want to get down to a fundamental question: What is it that can finally make us happy?

The Christmas of culture is pretty sure it has this question figured out. Happiness, according to its view, comes by gratifying the desires of our senses at every level. This is partly about Christmas trees with blinking lights, gingerbread cookies and wassail. But it's even more about the local shopping mall, from "Black Friday" deals after Thanksgiving to after-Christmas sales going on right now.

Culture's Christmas is designed to sell us a particular kind of experience—which we're under pressure to piece together lest

(horror of horrors) our children be disappointed. And if there is anything that parents are taught to be anxious about, it is the moment-by-moment happiness of their kids.

Revealed, not bought

There's that word again. Happiness.

I'm just not convinced that the experience cultural Christmas wants us to have really merits the word *happiness*.

One of the fascinating things I found when I began to read John Wesley's writing is how much he comments on happiness. Wesley doesn't use the term the way we tend to use it. He speaks of happiness to describe what it means to live the most fully flourishing life. The happy person, in his sense, is the person who is living the best kind of life that can be lived.

You can't connect happiness with anything that can be bought, in Wesley's view. In fact, you can't connect it with anything you can lay claim to in this world at all.

Happiness is rather that state of life you enter into when you come to know Jesus Christ. Wesley puts it this way: "This begins when we begin to know God, by the teaching of his own Spirit. As soon as the

Father of spirits reveals his Son in our hearts, and the Son reveals his Father, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; then, and not till then, we are happy."

Given the season we've been in, it's a remarkable statement. It says so much about what is right about the Christmas of the church, and so much about what is wrong about the Christmas of culture.

The culture's view is that Christmas only becomes Christmas when the marketing of it is right. Only then can we experience true happiness.

Wesley, on the other hand, will have none of that. He has no doubt about how happiness comes about.

In his sermon "Spiritual Worship," Wesley says that happiness comes about when Jesus Christ "has taken the full possession of our heart; when he reigns therein, without a rival, the Lord of every motion there; when we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us; then we are completely happy; then we live all 'the life that is hid with Christ in God.'"

Those words paint a wonderful image. They are both an antidote to the consumerism that so infects this season of the year and a reminder of what we should be teaching our children at every opportunity.

Aldersgate (continued from page 1)

Church around a common mission. The group ultimately proposed to the 1996 United Methodist General Conference a mission statement drawn from Jesus' own words in Matthew 28: "to make disciples of Jesus Christ." Adopted by that General Conference, it was amended in 2008 to the mission statement the UMC knows today, "To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

20 years later

In 2013, discerning that the time for true revival is upon us, some original members of the Aldersgate Covenant called

together a steering team to plan another gathering. It includes a variety of laity and clergy who already are working to shape the time of focused worship and prayer.

Bishop

Mueller says that this gathering will focus on calling United Methodists to spiritual and missional renewal; following where the Holy Spirit leads; and experiencing and sharing the love of Jesus.

"True revival does not result in an event or institution," he said. "We need to begin with a notion of what we're having revival for: depth of commitment, passion, engagement... renewed relationship with Christ, commitment to God's mission in the world."

Unlike many church conferences and events, the Friday night portion of the gathering will be near-continuous worship. Saturday will conclude with a covenant service, which Bishop Mueller will lead.

Serious and lasting

He cautions against any preconceived notions of the word "revival"—there will be no tent with a sawdust floor—and emphasized that every faithful United Methodist should consider attending.

"The kind of revival we're talking about is this renewed depth of faith, a closer relationship with Jesus, openness in being led by the Holy Spirit, renewed commitment to God's mission in the world," he said. "And

it leads to the kind of discipleship that is truly engaging people, and truly trying to bring transformation in lives, communities and the world."

Mueller noted three things this concept of revival is not: "It's not an event. It's not hiding from the realities of the 21st

century. And it's not walking away from justice and mercy."

"We're looking for people who are serious," he said, "but also people who somehow have been prodded. They don't know where they are, but somehow God has prodded them to come check this deal out."

The group plans to post information on lodging options and other details at www.aldersgatecovenant.org. Look for updates there between now and early February.

"The churches, laity and pastors of the Annual Conference must experience spiritual revival."

—Point 1 of the Bishop's Mission Plan

Annual Conference schedule shifts to include weekend

The 2014 Annual Conference will see a change to its agenda that was first discussed years ago: moving the meeting so that part of it takes place on a weekend. Both the 2014 and 2015 dates have been set with this shift in mind.

The rationale for the change, as stated in the 2013 Conference Journal: "to hopefully increase the attendance of laity and part-time local pastors who would typically only have to take one day off of work instead of three; and hopefully this would allow younger lay members to be elected by local churches."

Dates for Annual Conference 2014 were originally set as June 20-22, a Friday through Sunday. The time frame has now been extended to June 19-22, because the current Conference Session Planning Committee determined that part of Thursday, June 19, would be needed, as well. The revised schedule has the lay and clergy sessions convening on June 19 at 3 p.m. Even with that extension, the schedule still reduces by one weekday the amount of time a layperson or part-time local pastor would have to take off work to attend.

As part of the move to a



weekend schedule, ordination will take place on Sunday at 1 p.m. While this change may make it easier for the families of ordinands to be present, the Conference Session Planning Committee acknowledges that it will require adjustment on the part of local churches, who will not have their pastors in the pulpit that day.

"Local churches may have options that look a little different from their regular Sunday worship and other activities," said the Rev.

Jeanne Williams, chair of the Annual Conference worship team. "We're exploring ways to connect congregations with what's happening at Annual Conference. For example, a church may choose to somehow serve their community that morning, gather for lunch, then worship together by live-streaming the ordination service in the afternoon."

Look for updates on plans for Annual Conference in future issues of the *Arkansas United Methodist*.

Wanted: disciple-making stories

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

There are stories of disciple-making happening every day in Arkansas. Using communication tools at our disposal, such as the *Arkansas United Methodist*, the newly redesigned Conference website (arumc.org) and the Network for Discipleship and Mission (network.arumc.org), these stories can be shared with multiple audiences in multiple ways.

Share your story

If you know of a group or individual who is living out the church's shared mission, "to make disciples of Jesus Christ equipped to transform the world with excellence and passion," the rest of the UMC in Arkansas needs to know about it.

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

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

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

Core Measure 1

We will be enriched by our Wesleyan heritage of Scriptural holiness so that we are connected by our mission of making disciples instead of being connected by our apportionments, appointments, and benefits.

Core Measure 2

We will establish the mission field as the primary focus of our attention and resources instead of directing the majority of our attention and resources to mere maintenance of congregations and clergy.

Core Measure 3

We will equip laity and clergy to transform individuals, communities and the world instead of trying to satisfy the personal preferences of current members and ensure congregational preservation.

Core Measure 4

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

CLASSIFIED

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.

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

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

Allergy awareness: sample policy and plan now available for Arkansas churches

Though the average church member may not think about it, something as simple as a snack-sized package of peanuts can present a real danger to someone with severe food allergies. Foods that trigger allergic reactions can pose significant risks in a church environment, especially with young children.

"In Arkansas as well as nationally, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of children with food-related allergies in recent years," said Karen Swales, children's ministry coordinator for the Arkansas Conference. "These reactions range from mild to life-threatening. Our local congregations can be proactive in preventing a medical emergency by following a few simple procedures."

To provide guidance for local churches, the Arkansas Conference has developed a sample Allergy Awareness Policy and Action Plan to help congregations prepare for, address and respond to the wide-ranging allergies and allergic reactions common among children.

The sample Allergy Awareness policy

consists of a single page with three categories of information:

- responsibilities of the parent or legal guardian;
- rules outlining who may provide or purchase food for the children's ministry environment; and
- procedures that will be followed concerning medications and emergencies.

For example, in a church with an Allergy Awareness Policy, the first time a child participates in an activity there, the child's parent or guardian should complete a Child Health Form. This form includes reporting on several categories of allergies, because while food may be the most likely trigger for severe allergic reactions, other allergens, such as latex, pollen or animal dander, also may appear in a church environment.

In addition to the form, any time a parent signs a child in for an activity, that parent should make a note about the allergy next to the child's name. For nursery- and preschool-

aged children, the parent also should place an allergy alert sticker on the child's nametag.

If a child's allergic reaction may necessitate the use of an epinephrine autoinjector (sometimes referred to by the brand name "EpiPen"), the Child Health Form includes a page for a parent to complete, sign and include in a sealable bag with the child's prescribed autoinjector.

District superintendent the Rev. Dr. Bud Reeves believes many churches have never developed any type of policy dealing with

allergic reactions.

"This [policy] could prevent a disaster happening," he said.

The sample plan and forms can be found under the Safe Sanctuaries menu at <http://kidz.arumc.org>.



Resources for churches to teach children about human sexuality

At a time when children are bombarded with visual images, song lyrics, commercials and actual life experiences where sexuality is not viewed as a gift from God, we as United Methodists should be proud of our denomination. For decades now, the UMC has had a faith-based human sexuality curriculum, and updates it regularly to address the needs of today's children.

Created by God is the United Methodist human sexuality curriculum, designed for children in 5th and 6th grades. Students, their parents and adult leaders come together for a faith-filled, comprehensive study of human sexuality—including anatomy, growth and development, reproduction and God's call to intimacy and responsibility.

Created by God teaches:

- I am uniquely created as God meant me to be;
- I am a good creation;
- God expects me to make responsible choices for myself, including those having to do with sexuality;
- How male and female bodies change during puberty and how reproduction occurs.

Course structure

Created by God provides time for answering questions the children have about sexuality. All questions and discussion are within a context of respect for one another and the faith that sexuality is one of God's good gifts. As with any gift, we are commissioned to be stewards of that which has been received. *Created by God* seminars take 11 hours of contact time. Most often, sessions are held on Friday nights from 6 to 9 p.m. and Saturdays beginning at 9 a.m., with parents returning at 5 p.m.

for a closing session with their children. Large group presentation, small group discussion and review as well as frequent question-and-answer sessions fill the time spent together.

Each seminar begins with group-building and after a comfort level is achieved, values and choices are addressed. For this reason, families must make a commitment to attend all of the sessions.

In addition, a parent orientation is required before a child participates in the seminar. At this time parents will receive an overview of the material, combined with the denomination's approach and reasons for concern in the area of human sexuality.

The materials, which include a Student Book, Parent Guide and the Leaders' CD-ROM are available for purchase from www.cokesbury.com. **Anyone may teach the seminar using the Leaders' Guide as long as they lead it only within their own congregation. Many churches offer this opportunity, finding that parents, teachers, social workers and persons with medical backgrounds are all great resources to use from within.**

Certified instructors an option

However, for a variety of reasons, such as lack of time for planning and gathering materials or feeling less than comfortable with the subject matter, churches may wish to contact one of the Arkansans currently certified to teach *Created by God* in any congregation:

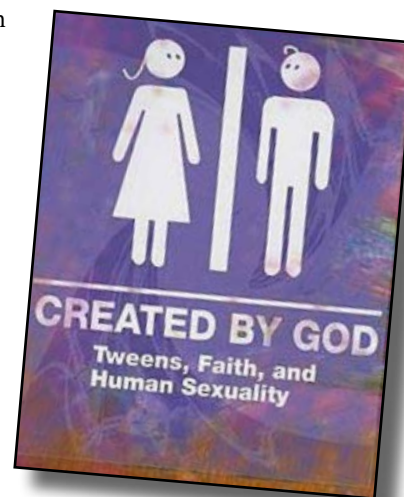
- Liz Wright, director of family ministries at St. Paul UMC Little Rock, has been certified to teach this course since 1995 (MizLiz-1@sbcglobal.net).
- Karen Anderson, director of children's ministries at Central UMC Rogers, completed her certification in the fall of 2013 (kanderson@cumcrogers.com).

In addition to traveling to churches in Arkansas to teach *Created by God*, these instructors will talk with anyone who wishes to lead their own sessions if that would be helpful. United Methodist churches within Arkansas who have used certified

leaders in the past include: First UMCs in Cabot, Clarksville, Hot Springs, Jacksonville, Little Rock and Springdale, Goddard UMC Fort Smith, Piney Grove UMC Hot Springs, Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock and St. James UMC Little Rock.

Though not a certified instructor, Pam Lentz, director of children's ministries at First UMC Conway (plentz@conwayfumc.org), has led *Created by God* for that congregation since the 1990s. She provides guidance for others interested in offering the seminar in their own congregations, and can serve as a resource for churches beginning to plan.

For more information about *Created by God*, including a list of frequently asked questions, visit <http://kidz.arumc.org/curriculum/created-by-god>.



Awareness-raising part of INM effort, says Camden pastor



"We got some strange looks," the Rev. Deanna McCormack said about the Christmas float Timothy United Methodist Church entered in the annual Camden, Ark. Christmas parade.

The float, put together by members of Timothy UMC Camden, featured a malaria net over several children sitting on a pallet. "Mosquitoes" made of plastic foam balls and pipe cleaners clung to the outside of the net.

Entitled, "Away in the Manger," the float declared the church's Christmas Wish (the theme of the parade) to be, "All Children Everywhere Safe From Malaria." It included the initiative's web address, www.imagenomalaria.org.

The float was voted "Best Religious Theme" by parade organizers.

"We chose INM for our float because of all the information we've received about how malaria affects children," McCormack said. "And we had seen the banner on Imagine No Malaria Arkansas Facebook page which reads, 'One child forever changed our world. Will you change one child's life?'"

McCormack admits that the fight against malaria probably isn't well-known in Camden, outside of local United Methodists.

"But if even one person along the parade route saw the float and went home and looked up Imagine No Malaria on the web, it was worth it."

COURTESY PHOTOS



UMCs anti-malaria efforts recognized at international conference

The United Methodist Church was the only faith-based organization recognized at the 4th Global Fund Replenishment Conference, held in Washington, D.C. in early December.

While most other participants at the conference represented their country, Bishop Thomas Bickerton, the head of the UMCs Global Health Initiative, represented all United Methodists engaged in the fight to end death and suffering from malaria by 2015.

Bickerton told the international audience about the UMCs commitment and expressed gratitude that the church was given the opportunity to participate in the life-saving effort.

"The United Methodist Church is the first faith-based organization to directly support the work of the Global Fund," he said. "The United Methodist Church has developed health initiatives in Africa for more than a hundred years. We provide clinics, hospitals, and community-based health services without regard to race, religion or political creed."

The conference theme, "No Time to Lose: Sharing the Responsibility to Save Lives," resonated with Bickerton as he told the group about how local churches in sub-Saharan Africa are committed to assisting families in the remote areas in which they are

located.

"Often they have no road access or electricity," Bickerton said. "Yet, the church is there providing a significant presence and influence."

Following the conference, Bickerton shared his personal observations by email with United Methodist and Imagine No Malaria campaign leaders. He emphasized how extraordinary it was that the people of the United Methodist Church were recognized for their effort, alongside entire countries.

"But when the United Methodist Church was named, all eyes turned our way," Bickerton wrote. "It was a different voice, a different organization, a different pledge of commitment. There is no doubt that as a faith-based partner, we play a critical role in the world scene in this ongoing fight to eliminate killer diseases."

The church's ministry and mission in Africa make it an invaluable partner, Bickerton continued.

"We may not have the pledging capacity of a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. We may not have the power of a large country," he wrote. "But what we do have is an understanding of the local communities and villages that benefit from this collaborative effort. What we do have is a relationship with people through traditional birth

attendants, rural clinics, and hospitals."

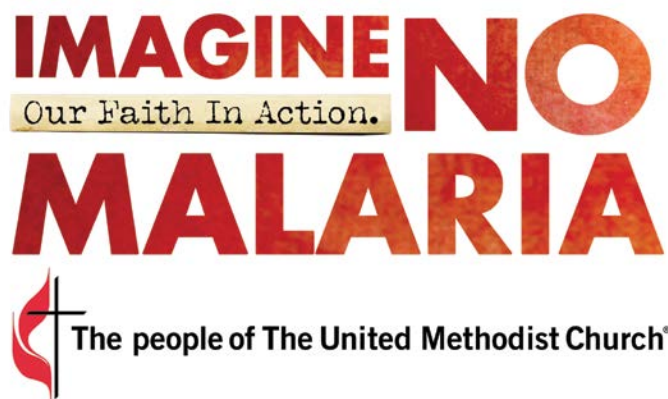
The efforts of the United Methodist Church and other faith-based organizations are essential in the fight against malaria.

"Often we underestimate our worth," Bickerton wrote. "We will not eliminate the killer diseases on our own. But today it was very evident that the killer diseases will not be eliminated without us. We are an essential piece in the puzzle of making the world a healthier place for all God's children."

"During the conference, these representatives sat at tables, each taking their respective turn in making a pledge from their organization," Bickerton wrote. "Country after country took the microphone and made their pledge for the 2014-2016 cycle."

Bickerton noted that as the pledges continued, some persons began looking at their cell phones.

Then Nafsian Mboi, the Indonesia Minister of Health and Chair of the Global Fund Board called upon the representative from the United Methodist Church.



Latest WHO report substantiates success

The World Health Organization's latest report, released in December, says three million lives, mostly those of children, have been spared thanks to efforts like Imagine No Malaria. The death rate has been cut by nearly half.

The large increase in financing for malaria control efforts has had a major impact on cutting the death toll, according to Dr. Robert Newman, head of the organization's global malaria program.

The financing has "purchased lifesaving commodities like long-lasting insecticide treated bed nets, insecticides for indoor spraying, diagnostic tests, especially rapid diagnostic tests, and anti-malarial medicines," Newman said.

"I think we are going to see an incredible decade of success ahead, especially as people realize that this is a proven public health investment and that we have millions of more lives that can be saved over the next 10 years," he said.



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Abilitrees (continued from page 1)

special needs.

Judy Steinegg, recreation director with the David E. Puryear Center, says that the approach taken by Abilitrees makes a big difference for the center's adult clients.

"Abilitrees has given our clients a place to worship where they feel comfortable going," she said. "They are also excited to go. I couldn't believe the first month we went. I got there to pick them up for church and they were ready. They were excited to go to church."

Custom approach

Working with special education teachers who give of their time to help, May has developed a curriculum that meets the specific needs of the eight or so persons who currently participate. The younger the person, the more individualized attention they get at Abilitrees.

For adults, Abilitrees includes a music- and movement-oriented worship time as part of the Sunday school hour.

"They play instruments, they can sway or dance to the music, and it's a short, maybe 10-minute worship," May says. Each week's

lesson centers on one simple concept or phrase, such as "Jesus wants to be my friend" or "Jesus loves me forever."

After the worship time, participants break into small groups, with craft projects or other activities appropriate for their various physical and developmental levels.

While they clearly have found a way to address a need in their community, May expects the ministry to grow and adapt as they continue to learn more about persons of all ages who can benefit from Abilitrees. But being in learning mode doesn't mean they're taking things

slowly: They already are making plans for a developmentally appropriate Vacation Bible School curriculum.

People have asked May exactly what types of special needs First UMC Jonesboro can accommodate. So far, the answer has been, "Well, we don't really know. Let's just try."

"It's definitely a work in progress," she said. "We are so blessed. The people of FUMC are really behind it."

While not every church can provide a dedicated space like the one First UMC Jonesboro has developed, May believes every church can learn more and do some things to become more welcoming. She will be leading a workshop based on her experiences with Abilitrees at Beyond, an upcoming Arkansas Conference Children's Ministry retreat at Camp Tanako Jan. 31 through Feb. 1, 2014. Visit <http://kidz.arumc.org> for details or to register.

To learn more about Abilitrees, contact May at 870-932-7479 or smay@fumcjonesboro.org.



First UMC Jonesboro has developed a therapeutic classroom setting for its Abilitrees ministry.



The younger the participant, the more individualized attention he or she receives at Abilitrees.



Adults who live at the David E. Puryear Center in Jonesboro spend time worshipping through music as part of Abilitrees, a ministry of First UMC Jonesboro that focuses on providing opportunities for worship and Christian fellowship for persons of all ages and developmental levels.

COURTESY PHOTOS

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Conference Nominations Committee seeks your assistance

ARKANSAS CONFERENCE APPLICATION FOR NOMINATION TO CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP POSITION



Use this application to be considered for nomination to a conference leadership position.
Please complete all sections.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____
Street City State Zip

PHONE: (Cell) _____ (Home) _____

EMAIL: _____ LOCAL CHURCH: _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY: (Check applicable category in each column if any apply.)
(Gender, age, ethnicity and church membership information assists the Conference Nominating Committee in the great effort for inclusiveness.)

- | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lay Youth: 12-18 | <input type="checkbox"/> Clergy under 35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian/Anglo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lay Young Adult: 18-35 | <input type="checkbox"/> Clergy 36-64 | <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> African-American/Black |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lay Middle Adult: 36-64 | <input type="checkbox"/> Clergy 65+ | | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino(a) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lay Older Adult: 65+ | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired clergy | | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American/First People |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Pacific Islander |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ |

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: (If you need more space, please attach pages.)

1. What is your current occupation? (If retired, indicate so and list previous occupations.)
2. What positions have you held in your local church? What are you most passionate about in ministry?
3. How do you live out your vows to uphold the church with your prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness? What community activities are you involved in?
4. What special skills or spiritual gifts do you have that may be valuable in a conference leadership position?
5. Why do you want to serve in a leadership position at the conference level of the Arkansas Conference?
6. How do you embrace the mission and vision of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church?*
7. Is there anything you would like to communicate that may assist the Nominating Committee in its work, such as your ministry interests and advocacy concerns?

*“Our Trajectory for the coming years: Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.” (Bishop’s Mission Plan: September 2013, Bishop Gary E. Mueller)

A message from
the Rev. Beth Waldrup,
committee member

The Arkansas Conference Committee on Nominations is already at work forming the leadership teams needed to guide us collectively towards our mission of making disciples who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world. Each committee, board, and agency has a unique opportunity to guide our local churches, districts, and Conference forward as we seek to be faithful stewards of the Kingdom.

Imagine Ministry has provided new guidelines for both how we organize and how we visualize our work. The Committee on Nominations needs your assistance to make the transition into this new approach toward fulfilling our mission.

The right person is out there for every position in Conference leadership; you know them, but we may not. We are giving you the opportunity to either put your name forward or to nominate someone you know who may have a passion for a particular area of service or ministry. Please use this Nominations Form to tell us as much as you can. If you have multiple areas of interest, include them all so you will be considered as positions become available.



Beth Waldrup

Please send this
completed form to:

Arkansas Conference
800 Daisy Bates Drive
Little Rock, AR 72202

Or, to complete the form online,
visit www.arumc.org/nominations.

Our connectional system is one of our greatest attributes. We can do so much more working together than we can as a single individual or congregation!

Steel-Hendrix Awards to honor Beal, Matthews, Schrick

Brueggeman lecture follows March 20 banquet

The 2013 Steel-Hendrix Awards will be presented Thursday, March 20, 2014, at a banquet held in Worsham Performance Hall in the Hendrix College Student Life and Technology Center.

The banquet begins at 5:30 p.m. and will honor three award recipients: Mauzel Beal, the Rev. Ed Matthews and Zach Schrick.



Mauzel Beal

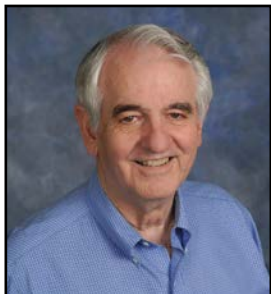
Beal served as an Arkansas United Methodist archivist for more than 20 years, and also as president of Church Women United, president of North Arkansas Conference Ministers' Wives and District Wives organizations, and a volunteer, leader and member of many other committees and organizations.

She will receive the Mary and Ida Brumley Award for Religious Education, which honors those who have provided distinguished service in the field of religious education. The award celebrates the legacy of Mary and Ida Brumley,

long-time Christian education leaders in the North Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church.

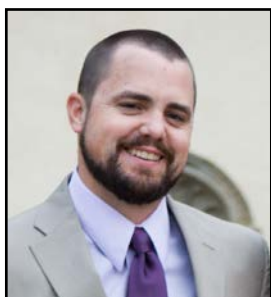
Matthews retired in 1998 as the senior pastor of First United Methodist Church Little Rock, and has since been an interim pastor at First UMC Jacksonville, Horseshoe Bend and Mountain View. In addition to his numerous volunteer activities and church leadership, he has consulted with Methodist Family Health and the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

He is the recipient of this year's Ethel K. Millar Award for Religion and Social Awareness. The award recognizes persons whose lives have been distinguished by a passion for social justice and a commitment to the general welfare of all people. The award is given in memory of Ethel K. Millar, a long-time Hendrix College librarian whose passion for peace, commitment to a variety of social organizations and work as a role model inspired Hendrix students to devote their lives to the pursuit of the highest ideals of peace and justice.



Ed Matthews

Schrick is the director of youth and young adult ministries at First UMC Magnolia, and serves on the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries and the Conference Council on Young Adult Ministries. The award he will receive, Youth Minister of the Year, was created in 2003 to honor individuals who have been outstanding in their service to young people through the United Methodist Church in Arkansas.



Zach Schrick

Tickets for the banquet are \$20 if payment is received by March 12; the price increases to \$25 after March 12. For more information or to

register, contact the Rev. Wayne Clark, Hendrix College chaplain, at clark@hendrix.edu or 501-450-1263.

Following the banquet, Dr. Walter Brueggeman will give a lecture that is free and open to the public. Brueggeman is the William Marcellus McPheeters professor emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary and author of more than 100 books, including *The Prophetic Imagination*, *Message of the Psalms* and *Truth Speaks to Power*.

Founded in 1876, Hendrix College in Conway, Ark., is a national leader in engaged liberal arts and sciences education. It has been affiliated with the United Methodist Church since 1884.



Walter Brueggeman

VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION 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.

Openings on VIM District Leadership Committee

The Central, Southwest and Southeast Districts currently have open seats on the Volunteers in Mission (VIM) District Leadership Committee. Interested persons need to have some experience with VIM work, and should be prepared to become trained as a VIM Team Leader if they have not already completed that training. Committee member responsibilities include serving as the VIM representative for their respective districts, attending quarterly meetings and assisting local churches with planning VIM missions and related functions.

The Central District and Southwest District each have one opening, and the Southeast District has two openings. To learn more, contact Byron Mann: 870-826-0268 or vim@arumc.org.

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.

'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

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.

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- 1) Under "Join now," enter your email address and a password of your choice.
- 2) Find your church: Enter the name of your home church. If you have trouble finding your church by name (excluding UMC or United Methodist), add the city.
- 3) Shop: Browse through the categories and choose to shop from hundreds of stores. Every time you shop, the stores will donate a portion of your purchase back to your home church. Be sure to log in before going to the stores, and have an empty shopping cart before you start to shop.
- 4) Every time you shop by logging in to UMCmarket.org, your purchase will generate an email to you that states the amount of your micro-donation. In any month when your church builds

an accumulated value of \$100 or more in donations, UMCmarket will issue a check to the church. If the total is less than \$100, it will roll over to the next month.

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Girls' small group celebrates 'sweet 16' by blessing others

At first UMC Russellville, youth in 8th through 12th grades meet weekly in "Impact" small groups, divided by age and gender. The sophomore girls' Impact group recently began thinking of all the things they didn't need for their approaching 16th birthdays. They decided that as they spent this year celebrating, they would use it as a time to give, sharing 16 blessings with their community.

The girls planned to share blessings with staff members at their

schools, firefighters, police officers, nursing home residents and random strangers. Stocked with goodie bags, money and handmade cards, they set out Dec. 4 for an evening of blessing others.

"They thanked a fireman for his service and left a goodie bag with him," said Melissa Jones, director of youth ministries and an Impact group leader. "They surprised a stranger in a parking lot with a goodie bag and were energized by her joyous reaction. One lady at a

nursing home held her card as a precious gift and said she couldn't wait to show it to her children."

Each of their blessings included the same note:

In honor of our Sweet 16 birthdays, we are sharing 16 random "blessings" with those around us. Enjoy! - The FUMC 10th grade girls Impact group

"It was one of those nights where love is shared and ministry happened," Jones said, "and it won't soon be forgotten."



Students of First UMC Russellville's 10th grade girls' Impact group celebrated their birthdays by sharing random blessings with their community, including leaving money for the next person who uses this vending machine.

COURTESY PHOTO

COMING UP

Free training event in Southwest District Jan. 18; register by Jan. 12

All Southwest District laity and pastors are invited to attend "Small Church Leadership," a workshop led by the Rev. Dr. Candace Barron, associate director of the Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership (CCLEL). First UMC Arkadelphia will host the event, which is set for Saturday, Jan. 18, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Topics include: An Introduction to the Center for Clergy & Laity Excellence in Leadership; Small Church Leadership; and Best Practices for Hospitality & Evangelism. This workshop will be offered in each district between Jan. 18 and March 1; see the information for remaining districts at the end of this section.

While there is no participation fee, pre-registration is recommended. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/CCLELJan18> to reserve your seat. The registration deadline is Jan. 12.

Children's ministry 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 gmlfellow@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>.

Free training event in Southeast District Feb. 8; Central District Feb. 15; Northwest District Feb. 22

"Small Church Leadership," a workshop led by the Rev. Dr. Candace Barron, associate director of the Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership (CCLEL), is coming to all corners of the state. All laity and pastors are invited to attend.

Grand Avenue UMC Stuttgart will host the Southeast District event, which is set for Saturday, Feb. 8. First UMC Conway will host the Central District event on Feb. 15. First UMC Ozark will host the Northwest District event on Feb. 22.

All events will begin at 9:30 a.m. and conclude at 12:30 p.m. For a list of topics to be addressed, see the Jan. 18 training event at the beginning of this section. While there is no participation fee, pre-registration is recommended.

For the **Southeast District** training event, visit <http://tinyurl.com/CCLELFeb8> to reserve your seat. The registration deadline is Feb. 3.

To reserve a seat for the **Central District** session, visit <http://tinyurl.com/CCLELFeb15>. The registration deadline is Feb. 10.

For the **Northwest District** session on Feb. 22, visit <http://tinyurl.com/CCLELFeb22> to reserve your seat. The registration deadline is Feb. 17.

The **Northeast District** event is set for March 1; registration for that session will open soon.

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OBITUARIES

HUNTINGTON**Jimmie Dee Robison**

The Rev. Jimmie Dee Robison, 98, passed away Monday, Dec. 2, 2013, at his home.

He was born Sept. 15, 1915. He was retired from Southwestern Electric Power Company (SWEPCO) and a retired United Methodist local pastor, having served from 1981 to 1991 in the North Arkansas Conference, including the Hartford/Midland, Leola/Moore's Chapel and Branch/Coles Chapel charges. He was a member of Huntington United Methodist Church, a Navy veteran of World War II and a 50-year member of the Huntington Lodge #498 F&AM.



Jimmie Robison

He is survived by his wife, Frances; one son, Jimmie M. Robison of Dequincy, La.; two daughters, Gretchen Maertens of Huntington and Jane Boddie of

Hattiesburg, Miss.; four grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

A funeral service was held Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2013, at Huntington United Methodist Church. Burial followed at Huntington Cemetery. Pallbearers were Conner Fisk, Steven Fisk, Jack Maertens, Fred Romo, Lynn Boddie and Jimmie Robison.

SHERWOOD**Jimmie L. Kirkwood**

The Rev. Jimmie L. Kirkwood, 76, passed away Friday, Dec. 13, 2013.

He was born Feb. 3, 1937, and was a 1960 graduate of The University of Texas and was a member of Sigma Chi Fraternity.



Jimmie Kirkwood

He held master's degrees from SMU and Perkins School of Theology. He was the human resources manager at Orbit Valve and Worthen Bank in Little Rock. Jimmie served his country in the U.S. Army for 30 years and was a retired Colonel USAR. His last assignment was as Deputy Chief of Staff Logistics, 122 Army Reserve Command. He was a Free Mason with Sylvan Hills Lodge 754.

A retired United Methodist elder, he served 13 years at churches in the Little Rock, North Arkansas and Arkansas Conferences, including the Few Memorial/Holly Springs Charge, the Gravette/Sulphur Springs Charge, Charleston, Marianna/Bear Creek and Hawley/Wesley Charges.

He is survived by his wife, Mae; children, Jas (Julie), Fred (Debbie), Donna, David Gardner and Darryl Gardner (Robin); and six grandchildren.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, Dec. 18, at Lakewood United Methodist Church North Little Rock. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, 5300 Evergreen Road, Little Rock, AR 72205.

ST. LOUIS, Mo.**Nellie Elizabeth Wingo**

Nellie Elizabeth Wingo, 87, passed away Saturday, Dec. 7, 2013, at the Riverview Care Center in St. Louis, Mo.

Formerly of Ellsinore, Mo., Elizabeth had resided in St. Louis for the past few months due to her failing health. Born Dec. 2, 1926, in Hunter, Mo., she was the daughter of the late George Augustus "Gus" and Cora Edna (Withee) Gearhart. She

spent her childhood in Hunter and was a graduate of the Ellsinore High School.

She was a homemaker and pastor's wife, assisting her husband in service to the Lord in many churches in Missouri and Arkansas. She was a member of the United Methodist Church in Ellsinore, where she was pianist for the church choir and other church services. She also played the piano for many funeral services and for school programs. Elizabeth was very civic-minded and loved to volunteer. She loved her children and was very family-oriented. She was proud of her heritage and loved to serve the church and her husband.

The Rev. James Wingo, her husband of 50 years, preceded her in death, as did one daughter, Kathy Wingo, at the age of 22; and two brothers, Newton Aubrey Gearhart and Richard Gearhart.

Survivors include two sons, George Wingo and his wife, Janice, of Paris, Ark., and the Rev. Steve Wingo and his wife, Regina, of Fort Smith, Ark.; two daughters, Julie Rains and her husband, Paul, of Ellington, Mo., and Susan Dinter and husband, Ed, of Boynton Beach, Fla.; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; one brother, Milton Gearhart and his wife, Nancy, of Hunter, Mo.; and many other relatives and friends who will mourn her passing.



Elizabeth Wingo

The funeral was held Wednesday, Dec. 11, 2013, in the United Methodist Church in Ellsinore, with the Rev. Robbie Calvert officiating. Burial followed at Henson-Hilltop Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, please make memorials to the United Methodist Church, 16 E. North Avenue, Ellsinore, MO 63937.

St. Andrew UMC partners with City of LR to house Neighborhood Alert Center

BY MARTHA TAYLOR
Special Contributor

Partnerships between local churches and their communities are taking shape throughout the Arkansas Conference. Feeding ministries, after-school care programs, and providing a place of safety for at-risk youth are just some of the ways local churches are responding to the mission plan set forth by Bishop Mueller. (To read the Bishop's Mission Plan, see the Sept. 20 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist* or visit www.arumc.org/missionplan.)

St. Andrew United Methodist Church, located in southwest Little Rock, is among those responding to the call for greater involvement in the "mission field" surrounding the church.

Effective immediately, St. Andrew is opening its facility to house a Little Rock Neighborhood

Alert Center. The church signed an agreement with the city for the next five years. The contract allows for an additional two-year extension if needed.

City personnel approached the Rev. Chester Jones, St. Andrew's senior pastor, after they learned the current alert center located in Baseline Elementary School would need to relocate. The church had three rooms available with a separate entrance and ample parking.

Most important, it was in the perfect location for the city's purposes and is already a familiar place for those in the neighborhood.

"The church is located right on the main drag," the Rev. Chester Jones said. "And the people in the area are already coming to the church for the food pantry. Jenni [the Rev. Jenni Duncan, minister of Hispanic outreach] has 50 or more

Hispanic individuals coming for language classes and other types of activities."

According to the City of Little Rock website, Neighborhood Alert Centers exist to create a climate of achievement and neighborhood empowerment, and foster partnerships between the City and neighborhood organizations. The centers also can house various city services.

"Now we are walking on both sides of the street," Jones said. "It's a good partnership for the church and being in the business of reaching people; they provide safety for the community's physical safety and we are caring for their spiritual well-being."

The Rev. Taylor handles marketing and training for the Arkansas Conference.



2013 Ingathering total over \$300,000 higher than previous year

Totals from Ingathering 2013 are in, and Arkansas churches gave \$2,886,105.44 to mission in 2013—up almost \$342,000 from the 2012 total.

Melissa Sanders, statistician for the Arkansas Conference, says gifts for 2013 indicate that even in an economy that may present challenges for churches, United Methodists in Arkansas still place a priority on responding to those in need.

"I'm proud of all the churches," she said, "and the great turnout of volunteers this year, too."

The sum includes gifts delivered at the Nov. 23 Ingathering event, with monetary value assigned to non-cash items such as health kits, tornado tubs and other relief supplies. It also includes donations given for mission throughout the year, within the local churches' own communities as well as around the state, nation and world.



Caraway church feeds responders in tornado's wake

Following an F-1 tornado that struck the town of Caraway, Ark., Oct. 31, members and friends of Caraway UMC took action to support those working to clear debris and restore electrical power. They prepared meals for numerous early responders, giving them not only sustenance, but also an opportunity to sit down and take a break before returning to their work. Beginning the night of the tornado and continuing through the following three days, the church provided between 350 and 400 meals.

COURTESY PHOTO

Learning Management System provides 12-session communications training for Arkansas Conference churches

The Arkansas Conference Center for Technology (CFT) and the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership have teamed up to provide the Learning Management System at <http://arumc.adobeconnect.com>.

An agreement with Sayge Resources of Houston, Texas, is making available to all Arkansas clergy and laity a 12-session series to 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 through the LMS.

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

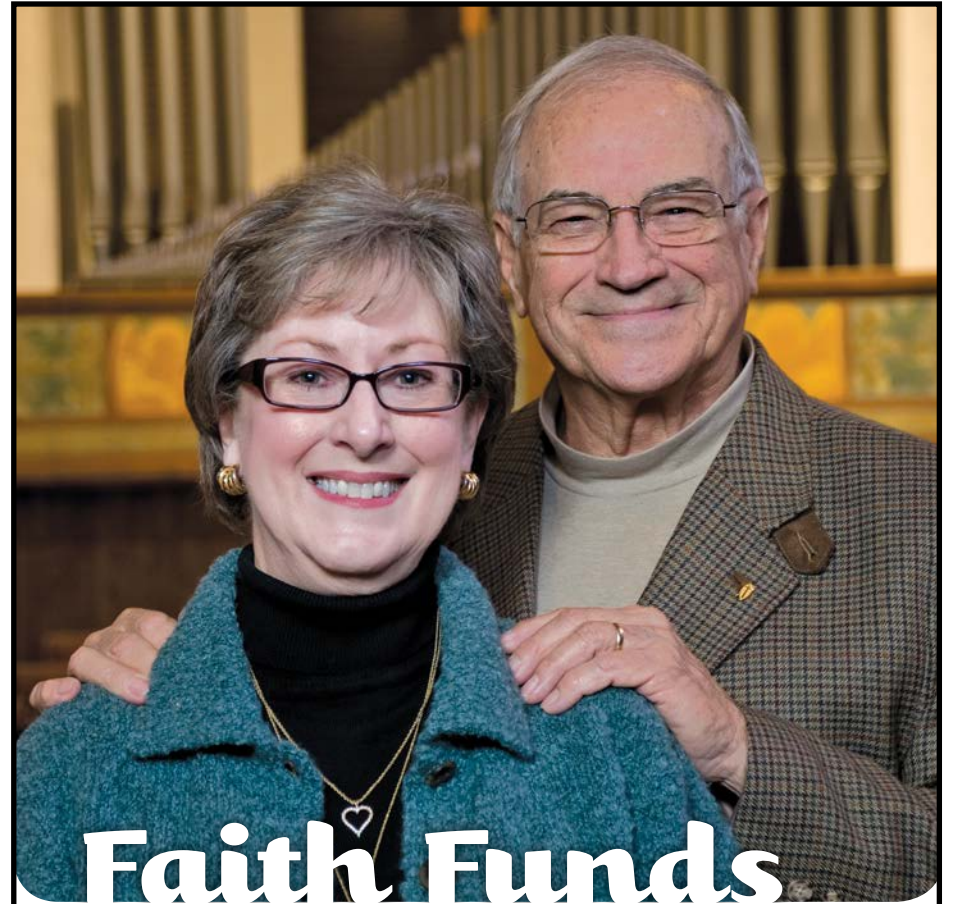


- Audience Connection
- External Marketing
- Project Systems
- Creative Leadership

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.

"We hope this will be the first of many partnerships with providers of online content that we can deliver through the Learning Management System," said Mark Epperson, director of the CFT. In-house training products are in the works as well.

The LMS is accessible to anyone with an arumc.org email address. To request an arumc.org email address, visit <http://my.arumc.org>.



Faith Funds

A Local Church Legacy

John and Becki Lusk love their church – First United Methodist Church of El Dorado. He was a hands-on Board of Trustees Chairman and has participated in mission trips to the Mississippi coast and Haiti. Becki has made three mission trips to Mexico, is a leader in UMW and helped with interior design for the refurbished Fellowship Hall.

John, a stockbroker for 31 years, decided after retirement to create a \$1 million endowment to support his local church. The couple chose the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas to manage their Faith Fund because John had researched the Foundation's past financial performance and had heard President and CEO Jim Argue, Jr. speak. "We know the people at the Foundation are the best people to manage our gift," John said.

Most of the couple's blended family of six children, 12 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren no longer live in El Dorado or in Arkansas, but the Lusks chose to leave a legacy for their home church that will touch many families through mission work, music ministry and youth ministry forever.

"My feelings are that to whom much is given, much is asked," said Becki, a retired Bank Trust Officer. "It is a special pleasure for us to be able to make a lasting gift to our church."



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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