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AC2014 to include 'Night at the Naturals'

Baseball game will serve as celebration for striking out malaria

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

United Methodists of Arkansas have reached their minimum fundraising goal for Imagine No Malaria, the denomination's effort to end malaria deaths in sub-Saharan Africa. And on Saturday, June 21, in conjunction with Annual Conference being held in Rogers, everyone's invited to join in the celebration at UMC Night at the Naturals.

The Northwest Arkansas Naturals, a Double-A Texas League baseball team affiliated with the Kansas City Royals, will play the Tulsa Drillers at Arvest Ballpark in Springdale. United Methodists are invited to cheer for the home team while reveling in a job well done.

"I'm so proud of Arkansas for not only reaching, but surpassing this goal," said Bishop Gary Mueller. "Our support of Imagine No Malaria is making a difference. It's fitting that we take time to celebrate this world-transforming effort."

Game details

The first pitch (rumored to be thrown by a United Methodist leader) is set for 6:05 p.m. Saturday, June 21. The first 2,000 fans will receive a one-of-a-kind Naturals



AUM ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN GIDEON

Rubber Ducky, which also bears the United Methodists of Arkansas logo.

All United Methodists of Arkansas are invited to attend. The Arkansas Conference will offer reduced-price tickets with preferred seating, and there is no minimum quantity for the group rate. They will be available for pick-up at Annual Conference 2014 in Rogers.

Beginning May 1, they will be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis, with the purchase form available for download at arumc.org/ac2014. If you have questions, contact Cathy Hughes at 501-324-8020 or

chughes@arumc.org.

Those who cannot attend may listen online at NWANaturals.com, or on the radio at 92.1 FM The Ticket (KQSM Fayetteville), the Naturals' flagship station. Select games are broadcast on News/Talk 1030 AM (KFAY Fayetteville). During this game and throughout the 2014 season, listeners will hear a message from United Methodists of Arkansas.

Getting here, going further

Thanks in part to a \$333,333.33 matching grant from the United

Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, churches and individuals from across the state have topped \$1 million in donations to the Imagine No Malaria initiative. Fundraising projects have ranged from lemonade sales to 24-hour golf challenges.

"Our goal sounded daunting when we first started out," the Rev. Martha Taylor, who spent a year serving as full-time Imagine No Malaria field coordinator for the Arkansas Conference. "But people are still raising funds, so now it's going to be fun to watch us exceed it."

[See NATURALS, page 12]

Stats show vital ministry on the upswing in Arkansas

Gains in baptisms, professions of faith, membership and attendance; apportionment payout steady at 90 percent thanks to extra mile giving

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

A look at the numbers reveals that for United Methodism in Arkansas, 2013 was a good year.

The statistical reports from local churches have been tabulated, and the news is encouraging. In the past year, the Arkansas Conference saw increases in four significant categories:

- **Baptisms:** 1,551 (up 4.9 percent from 1,479 in 2012)
- **Professions of faith:** 2,044 (up 1.8 percent from 2,008 in 2012)
- **Average weekly worship attendance:** 50,294 (up 1.2 percent from 49,704 in 2012)

- **Membership:** 132,771 (up 0.8 percent from 131,749 in 2012).

"I give thanks and celebrate the ministries of our congregations that have resulted in this very positive report," said Bishop Gary Mueller. "It confirms we are on our stated trajectory: creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world."

The Rev. Mackey Yokem, executive director of mission and ministry for the Arkansas Conference, sees a number of factors that may have contributed to the upturn.

"I don't think it's any one thing," he said. "Part of it is that churches and pastors have a greater sense of direction." He noted that last year was the first

[See STATS, page 3]

From the people of God in Camden, N.J.

BY ALEXANDER ROSS
Special Contributor

Summer 2013 began with words from the Book of Worship prayed over me by my local church, Trinity UMC Fayetteville: *All who take upon themselves the name of Christ are called into ministries of love and service by the example of Christ. As these members of our community begin their work among the people...*

A few days later, I boarded a Greyhound and set off to go where it seemed Jesus was calling me: Camden, New Jersey, a city known for its gun violence and persistent poverty.

Intentional community

I lived with the Camden Community Houses, a group of Christian friends and families who live, eat and pray together. Some friends of mine and I are starting something similar in Fayetteville.

I first learned of the group when I read a book by Shane Claiborne, *Jesus For President: Politics for Ordinary Radicals*. As I gleaned from it how discipleship shapes one's political identity, I found a section titled "Practicing Resurrection," about creating beauty out of rejected chaos:

"We try to use the trash of a disposable society. We do a fair amount of dumpster diving, and at most of our potlucks you can find food labeled 'vegetarian,' 'vegan,' or 'rescued' (meaning it came from the trash). In our gardens, you'll find old refrigerators serving as compost bins, veggies growing out of toilets and tires, and gutted computers and TVs converted into flower pots. One of the most revolutionary practices you can participate in is growing your own food. Some of the kids here in the city see tomatoes growing in our gardens and they can't believe their eyes. 'You can't eat that,' they say, and we laugh and say, 'Oh yes; that, my dear, is a tomato. They aren't made in factories. They are God's miracles.' How can we fully love the Creator when we've grown so far from the creation?"

Having read about these practices, I felt famous participating in their common life. One resident started a community farm program for the local youth, teaching an economy of food cultivation in the midst of poverty. To conserve energy, they water plants with stored rainwater, pumping it out with a stationary bicycle. Brilliant!

Camden has a history of receiving the area's "environmental bads" (the sewage treatment for Camden County; the incinerator; a

licorice processor, which results in a burnt-peanut smell). Children grow up in the midst of this pollution, and the elderly acquire more illnesses. In Camden alone, there are two Superfund sites and a few Brownfields, sites we don't have the technology to reclaim from pollution.

Seeing hope

But there's more to Camden. Like any city, it has real people: vulnerable, fragile persons who struggle to live in union with God and their neighbors. And some there, both rich and poor, have begun to recognize our common fragility. This is where I see hope—not just for Camden, but for the world.

We mustn't forget we are personally responsible for what happens everywhere, including Camden. When someone is killed, we must all remember that we nailed God to a cross; and, as Martin Luther King Jr. said, that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"—including Arkansas (which does have a homeless population, doesn't it?). Arkansas' inability to address food insecurity offers no hopeful witness or example to the people of Camden. If anything, the Camden Houses Community is teaching the church in Arkansas to care for Christ in our neighbors.

We'll have to be creative, making new forms of dignified work as we realize the miracle of food coming up out of the ground and God's vision for an entire created order resurrected, renewed and restored. We'll have to bring our gifts into both big cities and small rural towns, and pray and dream with them where Christ is leading us.

A group that predates the Camden Community Houses is Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Some of the community partners work with its Catholic school, and I worked with its community farm project.

At each morning's mass, the priest welcomes any who have been baptized in the name of the Trinity—breaking Catholic canon to invite Protestants to the table. The sharing in bread and wine at the table became a transformative part of my day: time stopped, and heaven was revealed in a tiny, ordinary

wafer.

I spent most of the summer teaching teens how to cook, primarily with food from the farms, which they worked on. Tuesdays and Thursdays we taught cooking and nutrition to 9- to 13-year-olds. One day another intern and I planned to give the children a tour of the gardens, but it rained, so we instead watched Dr. Seuss's 1972 *Lorax* cartoon, a classic for teaching care for the environment.

The story illustrates how resources are eroded and entire species wiped out when we aren't good stewards of the earth. We weren't sure how to facilitate discussion with children who were living with the consequences of the culture we identified with, so we decided to let them teach us. As the narrative progressed and resources were eroded, one young man had an epiphany. In the middle of the film he said, "This looks like Camden."

Go 'there'

So how can I write about this city in New Jersey? Is it my role? My last week there, I asked friends what they tell people about it. One friend said, "I didn't come here to help. I came here because my heart was awakened to something that would allow me to create what I want to create... I can paint poetry on the wall in Camden!" Her beautiful murals are little sanctuaries of God's beauty, taking the world by surprise.

Another said, "I tell them I was here." Not that she was Camden's savior or was making a difference, but that she simply went there because Jesus told her to. Isn't that what the Gospel is about? The whole story of Jesus, from the nativity to the cross, is about God saying, "Tell them I was here." In the deepest valley of our human suffering, there you will find God.

So, my recommendation is to go "there." You know where "there" is: any place where people are hurting. The place where people have stopped hoping. Maybe you are "there" right now. Maybe you are hurting. God raised Israel out of Egypt. God raised Jesus from the dead. When you get "there," you have only one thing to do: ask the question, *What is God going to do next?*

Ross is a student active in the University of Arkansas Wesley Foundation and is an intern at Trinity UMC Fayetteville's Parish House Community.



Alexander Ross

Be part of the Mission Plan conversation

In addition to regular stories that will appear in this publication, such as the items found on page 6 of this issue, a series of videos relating to the Bishop's Mission Plan will be released throughout the spring and summer.

Each video highlights one of the 10 "Next Steps" outlined in the plan. An online discussion with Bishop Mueller, open to all Arkansas UMC laity and clergy, will follow each video release. The schedule for the remaining videos and online discussions is:

Video: Broaden Disciple-Making through District Mission Plans – March 3
Online discussion – March 7 at 3 p.m.

Video: Make Mission-Field Appointments – March 17
Online discussion – March 19 at 3 p.m.

Video: Look Like the Neighborhood – March 31
Online discussion – April 4 at 9 a.m.

Video: Grow by "1" – April 14
Online discussion – April 15 at 11 a.m.

Video: Unleash Lay Leadership – May 1
Online discussion – May 13 at 2 p.m.

Video: Grow Passionate and Excellent Clergy – May 19
Online discussion – May 28 at 11 a.m.

Video: Create Vital African-American Congregations – June 2
Online discussion – June 3 at 1 p.m.

Video: Reach the "Nones" – June 16
Online discussion – June 17 at 9 a.m.

Reminders about the videos, along with login instructions for the online discussions, will be sent several days before each event via the Conference Email Network and posted on the Conference Facebook page.

The video series, as well as archive recordings of the online discussions, will be available at www.arumc.org/missionplan.



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Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
April 4	March 18
May 2	April 15
June 6	May 19



GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

A necessary prelude

It's here. Beginning with Ash Wednesday on March 5, we enter that chunk of time before Easter that those of us in the church world call Lent.

These 40 days (which don't include Sundays, because they are always "little Easters") are a time of repentance, confession, honest self-assessment, reflection and lament that prepare you to fully experience the wonder, mystery and joy of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. The point is not just to check religious rituals off a list, as if that will automatically get you where you need to be. The intention is for you to get absolutely honest with God like you never have before.

Of course, that's seldom fun. And, in point of fact, it can often seem quite painful. That's because it involves you stripping away barriers, layer after layer of pretense, illusions and all those distractions that seem so important but ultimately distract you from what matters most in life.

So why does Lent matter? More importantly, why is embracing a spiritual discipline for so many days important? And, perhaps most importantly, why do you need to go through such a laborious process in order to experience what Easter's all about?

It's simple. This kind of honesty with God is a necessary prelude to the revival that Christ's resurrection brings in your relationship with God, identity

as Jesus' disciple and faith that is quite simply the most important thing in life. But remember, you don't bring this revival. You prepare yourself for the gift of revival the Holy Spirit brings into your life.

In recent months, I've been thinking, praying, writing and talking a great deal about my belief that true spiritual revival is the most important need in our church. In particular, I've been reflecting a lot about the importance of United Methodist Christians in Arkansas embracing this need more seriously than ever before. And maybe—just maybe—we can, if we join together to start embracing a new kind of journey through Lent to Easter.

I'm ready.
How about you?

Grace and peace,

Gary E. Mueller

APPOINTMENTS

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

- Bob Hager (retired elder)—Harrisburg/Pleasant Valley UMCs (interim; effective Feb. 16 to June 30, 2014)
- Melanie Tubbs (local pastor)—Ola/Plainview UMCs (effective Jan. 12)

Retirements effective July 1, 2014 (the end of the Annual Conference year):

- Ben H. Anderson
- Kenneth Anderson
- William C. Bradford
- Robert O. "Bob" Crossman
- Cornelia DeLee
- Jerry Eubanks
- Louise O. Finney
- William Grothe
- Donald Hall
- David Hanshaw
- Larry Hughes
- Larry Hunt
- Edna Morgan
- Jack Lester "Les" Oliver
- Deborah Perry
- James T. "Jim" Rowland
- Rebecca S. Wiseman
- Edward E. "Ed" Wyers

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

Stats (continued from page 1)

time pastors and staff-parish relations committees have received a written rationale for appointment changes. He also believes the 10 "next steps" of the Bishop's Mission Plan, first announced at the 2013 Annual Conference by Bishop Mueller and Conference lay leader Karon Mann, are gaining momentum in churches.

"We achieve what we measure," says John Crawford, associate director of the Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership. "The uptick that we're seeing means that we have finally turned the corner and all the arrows are pointing in the correct direction. Now the challenge is to get them to continue upward."

He encourages churches to look to the parable of the talents Jesus

told in Matthew 25.

"The thought is that whether you've inherited one, two or three talents, you're supposed to return more than what it was when you started," he said. "There is a day of accountability for everybody, and we will want to hear 'Well done, good and faithful servant' on that day."

"We have begun to turn our focus from consuming—looking inward at our own needs—to reaching out, and that's bearing fruit."

Shared ministries

Arkansas' collective apportionment payout, the share of dollars supporting ministries of the United Methodist Church around the Conference and the world, matched 2012's total of 90 percent.

For a number of years, the Arkansas Conference has been

moving toward a tithe-based budgeting formula, in which 10 percent of a local church's operating income supports ministry at the district, conference, jurisdictional and general church levels of the United Methodist Church.

Approximately 90 percent of the offering a church receives stays with that local church for ministries of their choosing.

Some churches participate in "extra mile giving"—paying more than is required of them by the apportioned giving formula. The plan originated as a proposal from the Rev. LaVon Post of First UMC Malvern.

The Arkansas Conference Center for Administrative Services credits extra mile dollars toward the balance of churches that were unable to pay their apportioned giving in full. The breakdown of extra mile

giving among the five districts is as follows:

- Central District: \$1,211.88
- Northeast District: \$740.95
- Northwest District: \$7,684.84
- Southeast District: \$1,576.37
- Southwest District: \$3,510.86

A long extra mile

One congregation that went the extra mile in 2013 surprised itself with its ability to contribute.

When the Rev. James Harris arrived in July as the new pastor of First UMC Nashville, the church was behind on its apportionment giving, standing at only 3 percent for the year. They hadn't paid apportionments in full since 2008, and in 2012 topped out at 44 percent.

Though catching up seemed unlikely, Harris talked with church members about the significance of apportionments, and they developed a plan to do as much as possible to support United Methodists' work beyond the local church.

Starting in September, the church made available special "Christmas offering" collection envelopes, with the designation that any giving through that fund would go toward apportionments. The church set a goal of raising \$22,015 for apportionments by year's end.

People began to think of changes they could make to ensure that First UMC Nashville was a full participant with the UMC's worldwide ministries. Attendees of a small evening worship

service discussed the goal and decided to designate that service's offerings to the apportionment fund.

By December, Harris and the church's finance committee realized that a 100 percent payout was within their reach. With the momentum building, Harris asked the church if they would be willing to pay an extra percentage point to help another church reach 100 percent.

"By this time, they were excited," he said.

No local ministry was diminished in any way. The church continues to offer Sunday school and Bible study opportunities, Mother's Day Out twice a week and a Kids' Club each Wednesday that reaches out to children who aren't members of the church. They also maintained their ministry partnership with the local health center and a food pantry.

"As a matter of fact, there was improvement in the regular giving," Harris said. "Not only offerings, but attendance was up. It's just been a real blessing."

The following congregations paid more than 100 percent of apportionment giving in 2013:

Central District

Adona UMC
First UMC England
First UMC Greenbrier
Mount Carmel UMC Benton
Oakland UMC Holland
Saint Andrew UMC Little Rock
Trinity UMC North Little Rock

Northeast District

Farm Hill UMC Harrisburg
First UMC Harrisburg
Keiser UMC
Melbourne UMC

Mount Carmel UMC Jonesboro
Pleasant Grove UMC Jonesboro
Russell UMC
Walnut Ridge UMC
Warren's Chapel UMC Paragould

Northwest District

Central UMC Rogers
Everton UMC
Faith UMC Fort Smith
Hatfield UMC
Paris UMC
St. Paul UMC Gravel Hill
Valley View UMC Harrison

Southeast District

Bethel UMC Sheridan
Grand Avenue UMC Stuttgart

Montrose UMC
Moore's Chapel UMC Leola
Redfield UMC
Sheridan UMC

Southwest District

De Ann UMC Hope
Grand Avenue UMC Hot Springs
Greer's Chapel UMC Magnolia
Harmony Grove UMC Camden
First UMC Malvern
Mount Zion UMC Arkadelphia
First UMC Nashville
Okolona UMC
Richmond UMC Ashdown
Sweet Home UMC Murfreesboro
Lewisville UMC

Academy of Faith and Money offers practical, biblical instruction

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Church leaders from nearly a dozen states and several denominations spent Feb. 3-6 in North Little Rock for the Horizons Academy of Faith and Money.

Hosted by Cabot-based Horizons Stewardship, the event covered topics related to stewardship, fundraising and basic finance concepts. The students, most of whom were pastors, spent time focusing on an aspect of ministry that may not have been addressed in their theological education.

"As elders in the United Methodist Church, we're called to Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. One of those areas which is fairly delinquent in seminary is Order," said the Rev. Matt Rawle, pastor of The Well UMC in Ponchatoula, La. "And it is something that we are called—ordained—to do, is to order the life of the church. Part of that is teaching a congregation how to order mammon, or 'stuff.' It's part of our job."

Whose abundance?

Countering a church culture that often shies away from discussing money, the presenters stressed the biblical connections between faith and finances. The Rev. Lisa Greenwood, vice-president of leadership ministry for the Texas Methodist Foundation, sees stewardship as highly integrated with a pastor's work of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

"There is nothing quite like engaging people with their pocketbooks to help them get closer to Jesus," she said, explaining that stewardship is similar to other aspects of ministry. In all areas, finances included, the pastor is to be a spiritual leader and the primary communicator of the Gospel and God's call for our lives.

While acknowledging that

pastors must deal with their own "money demons"—debt load from seminary, for example—Greenwood emphasized that discipleship is the deeper issue.

"Our relationship with wealth has the greatest potential to be an obstacle in our relationship with God," she said, pointing out that the Scriptures mention money about four times as often as prayer, so God knows that we need assurance and accountability surrounding our finances.

"When we think of our abundance as for our consumption, then we have absolutely missed the point," she said. "We've become hoarders of a sort.... Is our abundance for our consumption, or is it for God's use in the world?"

Greenwood, as well as other presenters at the academy, declared the tithe (offering 10 percent of income) a minimum starting point for faithful giving. She cited the instructions Jesus gave to the rich young ruler to sell all he had and give the money to the poor.

"He's not talking about giving 10 percent and holding the rest back," she said. "Jesus is talking to us about going all in."

She spoke of the need to lead others into recognizing the true motivation for generosity. "We don't give because when we give, God will love us more," she said. "We give because God has already loved us. God loves us, and therefore, it is our generous response. We are saved because of God's grace, and we respond with a living faith."

The Rev. Dr. Clif Christopher, president of Horizons Stewardship, stressed the importance of a pastor developing a trusted team in his or her ministry setting.

"Preachers isolate themselves way too much," he told the clergy. "You need care and nurture from other pastors, no question, but in the leading of your church most effectively, it's not other pastors. It



The Rev. Lisa Greenwood, vice-president of leadership ministry for the Texas Methodist Foundation, was among the presenters at the Horizons Academy of Faith and Money, held Feb. 3-6 in North Little Rock. Attendees came from several states and denominations, and the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas provided funding for a dozen Arkansas clergy to participate.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

will be that small core... that really becomes your core group of wrestling with what it is God is saying."

Christopher advised the pastors to choose this group from those whose actions are motivated by their relationship with Christ. "These are people who, when you don't have all the answers, will engage with you in trying to make the best decisions for that church," he said. "When you have that, it can make all the difference in the world."

Worthwhile resource

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas provided funding for 12 Arkansas pastors to attend Horizons Academy of Faith and Money, including the Rev. Brittany Richardson Watson, who was preparing for a transition to a senior pastor role. She said the academy provided her with

thoughtful and faithful ways to address stewardship that she never encountered while in seminary.

"I now understand that money is not just something to begrudgingly address each fall, but instead an important part of living out our faith year-round," she said. "The academy has changed the way that I will move forward as a leader in matters of stewardship."

The Rev. Don Joiner, Director of Operations and Stewardship for the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship (GBOD), attended the academy to determine whether the denominational agency might recommend it as a resource for churches. He appreciated that the presenters shared personal stories from their own real-world experience in local congregations.

"People are saying, 'This is what has worked for me. This is the experience that I've had,'" he said. "I think that's what really stands out

about all the leaders that have been in here so far."

Joiner mentioned Horizons staff member Joe Park's presentation on clergy personal finances as useful for people in all stages of ministry. He said that a number of attendees had concerns about tax-related matters and where to get the appropriate guidance. They received not only practical tips, but also found peers who would be available for further discussion.

"So many of us [clergy] feel that we are alone; nobody is experiencing what we're experiencing," he said. "Something like this really gives a chance to find other people."

Joiner says he expects GBOD to promote future offerings of the academy in the stewardship resources section of gbod.org.

"Frankly, I came because we wanted to see if it was worthwhile," he said. "And it is extremely worthwhile."

Moore resigns from Philander Smith College presidency

Dr. Johnny Moore has resigned as president of Philander Smith College in Little Rock to pursue other personal and professional opportunities, according to a Feb. 20 news release from the college.

He had served as president of the United Methodist-related historically African American college since July of 2012, and was formally invested on May 3, 2013.

"While he is no longer president of Philander, Dr. Johnny Moore remains a valued alumnus and much-honored former athlete, with strong ties to our college," said Artee Williams, chair of the college's board of trustees.

The board of trustees will soon initiate a

nationwide search for a 14th president for Philander Smith College. In the meantime, Dr. Lloyd E. Hervey, assistant professor of education at the college, will serve as interim president, working with faculty, students, alumni and donors to continue Philander's mission to graduate academically accomplished students who are grounded as advocates for social justice, determined to intentionally change the world for the better.

Founded in 1877, Philander Smith College is known nationally for its social justice initiative. It has an enrollment of more than 500 students working toward four degrees: bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, bachelor of business administration and bachelor of social work.

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BOOK REVIEW

Gladwell offers inspiring twist on familiar story

BY ERIC VAN METER
Special Contributor

The story of David and Goliath provides a metaphor that reaches far into American culture, from church to business to athletics. It is the quintessential celebration of the underdog. The little boy with no chance of success miraculously triumphs over the giant warrior.

But there is a problem with our telling of the story, author Malcolm Gladwell tells us. Namely, that we have it all wrong.

Gladwell, a writer for *The New Yorker* and author of bestsellers *The Tipping Point* and *Outliers*, opens his latest book with a different telling of 1 Samuel 17. David, he argues, is not a simple shepherd boy, but a young man trained to fight—only in a different discipline. Goliath may have been enormous, but his strength was also his weakness. He was an immobile infantryman, and no match for the deadly aim of someone skilled in artillery.

David was not an unlikely hero. He was the perfect champion—in no small part because he could see his advantage when others could not.

David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants

Malcolm Gladwell
Little, Brown and Company
October 2013

Gladwell derives two primary lessons from his understanding of David and Goliath. First, that we find tremendous value and beauty in stories of triumph in the face of overwhelming odds. And second, that we usually misinterpret how these conflicts happen. We give too much credit to giants, and too little to underdogs.

With that in mind, Gladwell examines a variety of apparent disadvantages that, when viewed in a different light, open the door to innovation and success. By contrast, he also notes that some advantages—including small class sizes in public schools and admission to elite universities—

have hidden downsides.

But Gladwell also takes this idea a step further. Some disadvantages are not just obstacles to overcome, but keys to victory. A surprising number of CEOs are dyslexic. An astounding percentage of U.S. presidents grew up in single-parent families. Although these are not ideal situations and certainly crush many who endure them, they can in some people produce skills that they might otherwise never have developed.

The third and final section of *David and Goliath* looks at the battle from the side of those with advantages. Power, Gladwell asserts, has some very clear limits—especially when that power employs the use of force. As civil rights leaders and wartime dissidents have found out, the abuse of power can actually lead to a freedom from fear that galvanizes supposedly powerless people into an indomitable resistance.

Although not written for a religious audience, *David and Goliath* is filled with Christian themes, many of which reflect the author's Mennonite upbringing. His thoughts on perseverance, compassion, justice and forgiveness make this book more than simply interesting. It becomes in many ways beautiful.

Gladwell's latest has much to teach those who work from a position of powerlessness, including church members and church leaders. His skill with language and rhetoric make the book a compelling read. *David and Goliath* could serve as a terrific personal resource, or an outside-the-lines small group study.

The Rev. Van Meter directs the Wesley Foundation at Arkansas State University. This review first appeared at ministrymatters.com.

Eureka Springs congregation latest in Arkansas to become 'Reconciling'

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

First United Methodist Church Eureka Springs on Jan. 29 voted to affiliate with the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN). RMN is an independent organization that advocates for fully including persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life of the United Methodist Church.

First UMC Eureka Springs is the third Reconciling Congregation in the Arkansas Conference. Quapaw Quarter UMC Little Rock affiliated with RMN in 2010, and Mount Pleasant UMC Little Rock followed suit in 2013. In addition to these three congregations, the Arkansas chapter of Methodist Federation for Social Action and half a dozen Sunday school classes in the state are listed as "Reconciling Communities" on rmnetwork.org.

Since 1972, the United Methodist *Book of Discipline* (the church's law book) has declared the practice of homosexuality "incompatible with Christian teaching." A decade later, a group of United Methodists who disagreed

with the statement began to coalesce. RMN is a result of that movement.

Last summer at the Eureka Springs church, the Seekers Sunday school class began examining homosexuality and the Bible. After the study ended, they offered it as a Wednesday evening series, which kicked off with a viewing of the documentary *For the Bible Tells Me So*. The screening drew 60 people in a congregation that has an average attendance of about 100. In the remaining weeks of the study, 20 to 25 people participated. When it concluded in October, there was immediate talk of joining RMN, but leaders decided to wait until 2014 to make a final decision. The group drafted a welcoming statement and sent it to the administrative council for consideration and prayer.

"We wanted people to have time to really absorb this," said Suzie Bell, a member of First UMC Eureka Springs' administrative council, and of the Sunday school class that began the Bible study.

After discussion at the Jan. 29 council meeting, the vote on affiliating with RMN was taken by

secret ballot. It passed, but not unanimously. In the weeks that followed, leaders prepared for the possibility that those who disagreed would leave the church. So far, Bell says, that hasn't happened.

In an area with a strong presence of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons, First UMC Eureka Springs sees its Reconciling affiliation as a move to reach out to the surrounding community.

"A lot of them are unchurched, they feel unwelcomed, they've been hurt by the church from past experiences—the church in general, not the Methodist church," Bell said. "We just feel like we've got a vast mission field open to us."

Bell sees the RMN affiliation as in line with the congregation's character.

"We already have LGBT members of our congregation; that's never been a secret," she said. "We just wanted to make this official and we wanted to affirm them, because they are leaders in our church. They're not just members, they are flat leaders."

"If we say we're 'open doors,' we'd better practice it," she added.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

An open letter

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We have been struggling far too long with the issue of gay ordination. The church is in decline, souls are being lost every day, drug use among our youth has reached epic proportions and we spend our energies and time arguing about a minor problem.

Our *Book of Discipline* is plain in its view. I say we should move on to more pressing issues such as seeking out the least, the last and the lost. It is time to return to proclaiming Christ's offer of salvation and relationship to the world. If a Methodist preacher does not support the laws of the church, they are invited to leave and Lord bless. If the Lord has put it on your heart to serve the gay community, by all means go forth with God's blessing and start a gay fellowship. Those who disrupt meetings and conferences with arguments are a hindrance to those who accept and support the Methodist church. Some say they are helping the church with this debate. I say if they spent

as much time and energy caring for their flocks as they do thinking up ways to change church law, the church just might find itself in revival.

In Christ,
Rev. Bill Grothe
Melbourne and Cushman UMCs

Letters to the Editor policy:

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

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

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

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

Do you want to be part of lasting revival?

Check www.aldersgatecovenant.org this month for registration information on the May 16-17 Aldersgate Covenant prayer gathering, hosted by Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan.

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3 When a plan comes together

BY WILLIAM O. "BUD" REEVES
Special Contributor

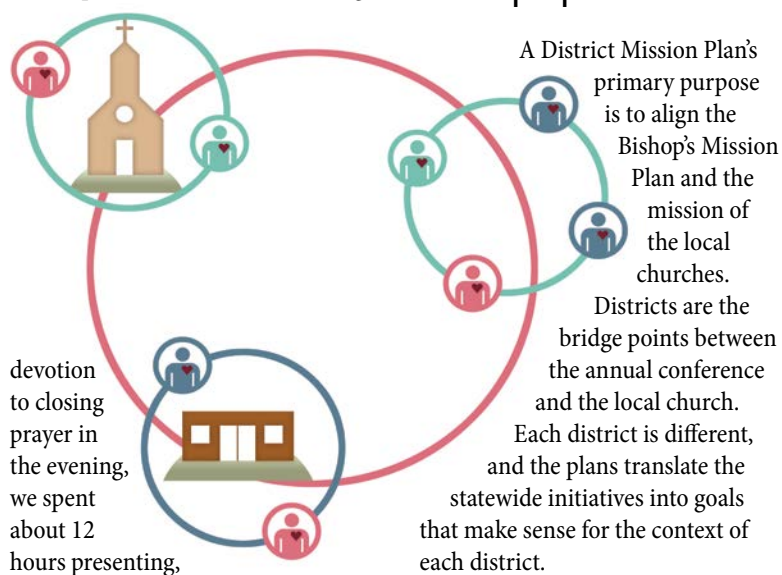
As I put together this column, I have just finished a day with the Cabinet on retreat. (The Arkansas Conference Appointive Cabinet consists of the bishop, the five district superintendents, the executive director of mission and ministry, and the director of the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership.)

We spent the day going over the District Mission Plans written by each superintendent. From morning

Methodist Church in Arkansas.

The Bishop's Mission Plan, published last fall, includes Next Step #3: "District superintendents will become skilled in developing District Mission Plans that align with the Bishop's Mission Plan." Since the Bishop published his plan, each DS has been working on a plan for his or her district, customized for the challenges and opportunities particular to each section of the state. What will a District Mission Plan mean? What purpose does it serve?

Three purposes



devotion to closing prayer in the evening, we spent about 12 hours presenting, discussing, and questioning our plans, hopes and dreams for each district in our annual conference.

It sounds riveting, I know. But in fact it was an engaging and interesting day, because this conversation is critical to the success of our plan to revitalize the United

The trajectory we are trying to reach is stated in the bishop's plan: "Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world." That's something that can only happen at the local level, so we

want to use the resources of the annual conference and the districts in ways that encourage, empower and enable success in local congregations.

A second purpose of a district plan is to help us think strategically. Too often in the past, churches, districts and the Conference have been connected only by the institutional expressions of church life. Our connection is stronger, deeper, and more spiritual than that! A District Mission Plan allows us to see where we can focus our resources on the mission rather than the maintenance of churches.

It was pretty exciting to hear about the plans and possibilities each DS envisioned for his or her district. Thinking strategically before we set about appointing pastors will help us make appointments that better serve the mission fields where congregations do ministry.

The third purpose of a district plan is to orient our action to outcomes. If an organization doesn't know what it is supposed to do, it does what it has always done—and what we have always done in the church doesn't work so well any more. So our mission plans include

specific, measurable outcomes that we believe are crucial to healthy churches. Achieving these outcomes will help create more vital congregations, make disciples who make disciples, and transform lives, communities and the world.

Accomplishing something

A popular TV show of the 1980s was *The A-Team*. The leader of their dangerous missions was John "Hannibal" Smith, whose catchphrase has endured a couple of decades of re-runs: "I love it when a plan comes together."

That statement usually accompanied something exploding.

Not only do we love it when our plans can come together around some strategic goals, but we also love to see we are making a difference. In this issue of the paper, you can read that in 2013, every measure of vitality for the United Methodist congregations in Arkansas trended in a positive direction. Maybe not in an *A-Team* explosive kind of way, but it is a significant shift in course from the past several years.

The Bishop's Mission Plan and the District Mission Plans will be

useless unless they accomplish something—unless we make a transforming difference in lives, churches and communities. And we won't make a difference without the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

The first step in the Bishop's Mission Plan is to experience spiritual revival. That is the foundation of all the plans. Revival won't happen because we are smarter, more organized or more strategic. It won't happen because we have the resources of the institutional church. And it won't happen because we had a guest preacher for a few nights in a row.

It will happen if we use the resources of the church to encourage and enable local churches to be open to the movement of God in their midst, so that they make disciples of Jesus Christ who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

That's when revival will happen. That's when the plan will come together.

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

4

Step 4 of the Bishop's Mission Plan: "Make Mission-Field Appointments."

As the next steps of the Bishop's Mission plan begin to take root in the life of conference and local church leaders, Step Four: Make Mission-Field Appointments is likely to produce the most anxiety among clergy and congregations.

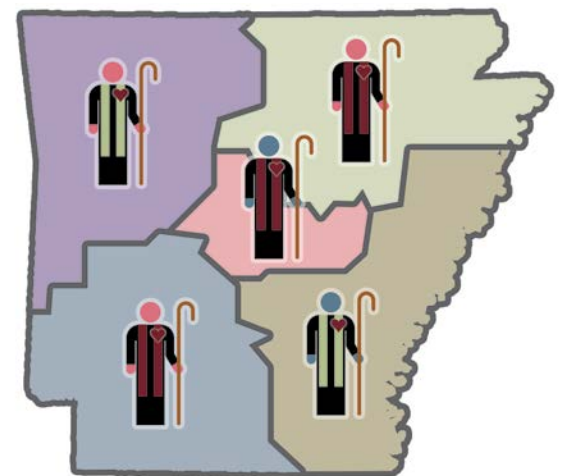
The Bishop's plan allows that this step "may be one of our most challenging undertakings" that will require the Appointive Cabinet to "work harder, smarter and more prayerfully to match the right pastor with the right gifts in the right mission field at the right time."

In a video segment to be shared conference-wide later in March, Bishop Gary E. Mueller acknowledges the difficult task that has been set before the cabinet, and that the process of mission-field appointment-making will focus more on matching passionate pastors with congregations ready and willing to engage in their mission fields and less on trying to "keep everyone happy."

"It means changing how we have thought about the appointment of pastors to churches," Mueller said. "Making mission-field appointments means we look beyond the pastors and congregations to the people who do not yet know Jesus' love."

Executive director for mission and ministry the Rev. Mackey Yokem said that the process of making appointments in this way involves using much more information than in the past.

"Not only are a pastor's skills being matched to mission field needs, district superintendents are looking



at community demographics and the readiness of a congregation to accept new members and look beyond themselves," he said. "All of these factors change year to year, making what appears to be a fairly simple task more complicated."

One of the newest appointive cabinet members, Southeast District superintendent the Rev. Mark Norman, says the needs of the various mission fields have been the foundation for appointment-making since last year. He points to some cross-racial appointments made last year in his district as evidence of this focus.

"Appointments are being made out of concern for the people outside the church," said Norman.

"We are sending pastors who can help the church reach out into the mission field, to help them know Jesus' love and experience the transformation that God makes possible," Mueller said.

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Core Measures support 10 'next steps'

As we continue examining the 10 "next steps" of the Bishop's Mission Plan in the *Arkansas United Methodist*, keep in mind the Core Measures approved by the 2011 Arkansas Annual Conference. These concepts are included in the full version of the Bishop's Mission Plan, and helped lay the groundwork for 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."

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.

Arkansans challenged to 'Get Up and Give' during Lent to help children and families

Lent, which this year begins March 5 and continues through April 20, is traditionally considered a time to give up something. For the fifth year running, Methodist Family Health is asking people to "get up and give" during Lent to make a difference in the lives of others.

The Get Up and Give collection drive benefits those served by Methodist Family Health, a nonprofit organization providing behavioral and mental health services for children and families across Arkansas. Get Up and Give typically receives more than one ton of donations per year, given largely by the United Methodist churches in Arkansas that support the effort and Methodist Family Health.

Arkansans are encouraged to collect necessity items for the more than 1,400 clients served daily by the Methodist Family Health hospital, group homes, therapeutic treatment schools and clinics throughout Arkansas. Clients sometimes arrive with no personal belongings whatsoever. Items on the collection list include socks, underwear, diapers, paper towels, toilet paper, backpacks, duffel bags, twin-size and crib sheets, toothbrushes, toothpaste and wireless composition books. All items must be new. Monetary gifts donated to the drive will be used for laundry detergent and other unmet needs.

Churches, church groups, community groups and individuals may drop off items at any of the eight Methodist Counseling Clinic locations across the state—Batesville, Cherokee Village, Fayetteville, Heber Springs, Jonesboro, Little Rock and Magnolia. (Another clinic location is slated to open soon in Hot Springs.) Drop-offs may be made during regular business hours the week of April 21-25.

"The generosity of the people of Arkansas is always impressive," says Andy Altom, Methodist Family Health chief executive officer. "Supporting Get Up and Give is one way to care for children who need an extra measure of love and support. We appreciate each and every donation."

The mission of Methodist Family Health is to give the best possible care to those who may need our help and to treat the whole person: behaviorally, emotionally and spiritually. For details on Get Up and Give, contact Jane Dennis at 501-906-4210 or jdennis@methodistfamily.org. Further information is available at www.methodistfamily.org.



Holly Barton and her grandson, Brody, in 2013 delivered Get Up and Give items donated by Congo UMC Benton.

COURTESY PHOTO

Methodist Family Health presents

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Get Up & Give

Methodist Family Health invites church groups, families, friends and neighbors to join us in collecting necessity items during the season of Lent! Your generosity will bring a smile to the faces of those we serve in our hospital, alternative schools, group homes, clinics and other programs throughout Arkansas.

After the 40 Days of Collecting, you can drop off the new items you collect at any of our Counseling Clinics from April 21-25 during regular business hours.

40 DAYS OF COLLECTING

Batesville
500 E. Main St.
Suite 310
870.569.4890

Cherokee Village
35 Choctaw Trace
870.376.4502

Jonesboro
2239 S. Caraway Rd.
Suite M
870.910.3757

Fayetteville
74 W. Sunbridge Dr.
479.582.5565

Little Rock
1600 Aldersgate Rd.
Suite 100B
501.537.3991

Heber Springs
407 S. 7th St.
501.365.3022

Magnolia
621 E. North St.
870.234.0739

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- Twin sheets
- Crib sheets
- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Toothbrushes/toothpaste
- Wireless composition books
- Monetary donations for laundry detergent and other unmet needs

For information: contact Jane Dennis at 501.906.4210 or jdennis@methodistfamily.org. Monetary donations may be sent to: Methodist Family Health Foundation, P.O. Box 56050, Little Rock, AR 72215 (put "Get Up & Give" in memo line).

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Fayetteville church's ministry maintains relationships with senior friends

A volunteer went to visit an elderly man one day. As they sat down and looked into each others eyes, the man said, "I thought the church had forgotten me."

In the words of Mother Theresa, "The most terrible poverty is loneliness, and the feeling of being unloved." If it gets caught up in perpetual activity, a church can lose track of the "cornerstones" of its organization. To alleviate that type of poverty, Sequoyah United Methodist Church Fayetteville began its Connections Ministry, offering hope and encouragement and a reminder that yes, those who cannot regularly attend worship are still valued members of Christ's body.

"Often, life circumstances prevent someone from attending worship and church activities. When this happens, there can be a real sense of loss of connection for that person and their church family," said the Rev. Sara Pair, pastor of Sequoyah UMC. "The Connections ministry seeks to restore that connection and keep it strong."

The ministry's motivation stemmed from Deb McHaney Stogsdill's memory of the joy and love that had been extended to her mother by Marmaduke United Methodist Church. Connections started with five Sequoyah UMC congregants who realized the church could facilitate and support a circle of caring and comfort with those who no longer attended services, but wanted to continue a relationship with the church.

Connections extends that circle in a myriad of ways throughout the year—to Sequoyah UMC's own members, as well as to church members' parents living in nursing homes. Projects tend to focus on the church calendar, birthdays, major holidays and experiences that allow recipients to stay joined to Christ and their community of faith.

Offering Holy Communion and delivering weekly worship bulletins are both integral parts of Connections. In addition, the team members know that showing love through something as basic as a Christmas or Valentine card, or a pumpkin during Halloween, can

bring light to the darkest of places. The church youth get involved to help provide such gestures of caring.

"We have come to realize that showing up is only part of the process," said Dave Clark, who is one of the 27 current participants in the Connections Ministry team. "We let God work out the finer details."

Some examples of those finer details include doing a little something extra during a Connections

community resources. When that groundwork has been laid, team members volunteer for Connections assignments, allowing them to bond with others in their church family.

Clark says that through Connections, he and others have been called to leave their comfort zones—and it's a joy to accept that call.

"In a world that constantly challenges our understanding of religious community and the importance of connecting to a larger idea of church, [by] bringing faith and hope into that world, we may find ourselves transformed along the way," he said.

Another joy is to hear directly from those they visit about the difference

Connections makes.

"Sometimes we feel a bit sorry for you all," says one Connections recipient. "Sorry that you are not yet eligible to receive this loving attention—not old enough!"

And from another: "Here is a great big loving thank you for all the wonderful things you have done for us in recent months! There must be others who are more needy and more deserving, but surely no one is more grateful."

To learn more about Sequoyah UMC's Connections Ministry and how you might start something similar in your congregation, contact Deb Stogsdill: deb.stogsdill@gmail.com.

'Who thought that turning a mattress or washing a car could keep the circle unbroken?'

—Dave Clark, Sequoyah UMC

visit. Household chores that may be simple tasks for a Connections team member might be impossible for the person they're visiting.

"Who thought that turning a mattress or washing a car could keep the circle unbroken?" Clark asked.

The ministry welcomes new team members through a process that begins with current members sharing their experiences, giving new members a sense of what to expect, "which is usually the unexpected!" Clark says. After background checks are complete, new team members receive the Connections handbook, written by the original members. It includes a mission statement, guidelines and

Lay Servant Ministries: a tool for transformation

A message from Jimmie Boyd, director, Arkansas Conference Lay Servant Ministries

The Lay Speaking Ministries program received a new name as a result of 2012 General Conference legislation. Now we are called "Lay Servant Ministries" (LSM)—because all laity should be servants, shouldn't we? We all could use training in our spiritual walk, and the LSM program provides just that. LSM includes both Lay Servants and Lay Speakers, and provides training, certification and accountability processes for persons interested in either of these roles.

LSM presented at least one class in every district this past year, and the number of Lay Servants keeps growing. We are in the process of confirming those who have turned in their required Annual Lay Servant report, and those who have attended classes in the last three years.

We will offer two sets of classes at Mount Eagle on March 13-15. One runs from Thursday afternoon to early Friday afternoon, and another begins Friday evening and ends early Saturday afternoon. For information, contact the Rev. Lu Harding: lu@mounteagle.org or 501-723-4580.

The Southeast District has classes planned for two Sunday afternoons in April: from 2 to 7 p.m. on April 6 and April 13 at First UMC Monticello. For other districts' schedules, check with your district LSM director or district office.

We still have areas in the Conference that are underserved by LSM, but I believe we can change that. The LSM leaders feel that the program is strategically placed to advance the vision and mission of the Arkansas Conference. If pastors and laity in every church embrace what LSM is doing, we can join forces and increase our commitment to our communities.

With the support of our bishop, the Conference, the Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership and most of all our pastors, we can realize big dreams and show real progress in making disciples. It will take several years, but a journey starts with the first step, and we have already taken that step.

I encourage you to connect with your district Lay Servant Ministries director. The contact information below also appears on the Conference's LSM page, www.arumc.org/lay_servant_ministries, along with links to other resources.

District directors for Lay Servant Ministries

Central District:

Thomas C. Crawford
thomascr@swbell.net
501-346-3044

Northeast District:

Rev. Marion Fleming, co-director
Marion021@centurytel.net
870-257-3335
Richard "Rick" Neeley, co-director
rneeley@asu.edu
870-761-3799 or 870-972-3106

Northwest District:

Paul Hewitt
phewitt@uark.edu

Southeast District:

Jimmie Boyd
jimmie.boyd@arumc.org
870-718-3649

Southwest District:

Rev. David Kassos
davidkassos@aol.com
870-774-4091

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COMING UP

'Provide and Protect' free seminar at Asbury UMC Little Rock March 12

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) and Asbury United Methodist Church Endowment Committee present "Provide and Protect," a free 90-minute seminar addressing important financial and medical decisions, Wednesday, March 12, 2014 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the Wilson Activity Center of Asbury UMC, 1700 Napa Valley Drive in Little Rock.

Presenters will be Jim Argue, president and CFO of UMFA; and Baker Kurrus, an attorney and member of Asbury UMC. Attendees will receive a complimentary Wills Guide, and a copy of *Provide and Protect*, an estate planning book by Charles Schultz, J.D.

The "Provide" section of this seminar shows you how to make decisions to help your family in the future. The "Protect" section explains how you or a family member can best make important medical decisions. Information presented is designed to help young families who need to select a guardian for their children; those with grown children who may need to update their estate plan due to life changes; and senior adults who need to be certain their medical forms and plans are in order.

A 5:30 p.m. meal and childcare will be provided for those who request it by submitting an RSVP to sharon@asbury-lr.org or 501-225-9231 by Sunday, March 9.

Flu prevention and health promotion summit March 14

The Arkansas Department of Health presents a Faith and Community Based Flu Prevention and Health Promotion Summit in Little Rock on Friday, March 14, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the C.A. Vines 4-H Center, located at 1 Four H Way, Little Rock (Ferndale area). There is no charge to attend.

Presenters include the Rev. Dr. Cynthia D. Davis, a United Methodist district superintendent from the Memphis Conference; José L. González, director of the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health for the Minnesota Department of Health; and Venerable Geshe Dr. Dorgee Thurpten, Geshe Lharampa (Ph.D), director of the Tibetan Cultural Institute of Arkansas and assistant professor, University of Arkansas - J. William Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences. For more information, email joy.carrington@arkansas.gov.

Small Church pastors' coffee with Bishop set for March 22

Pastors of churches with an average weekly attendance below 70 are invited to join Bishop Gary Mueller for coffee and conversation on Saturday, March 22, at 10 a.m. This gathering will be held in the Nugent Room of the Kendall Center, Philander Smith College, Little Rock. Please RSVP to rkuonen@arumc.org if you plan to attend.

Nominations for Steel-Hendrix Awards, Youth Minister of the Year Award due by April 1

Hendrix College is accepting nominations for the Steel-Hendrix Awards to be presented in the 2014-15 academic year. The Mary and Ira A. Brumley Award recognizes outstanding religious education, and the Ethel K. Millar Award honors outstanding religion and social awareness.

The college is also accepting nominations for the Youth Minister of the Year Award, which will

be given during the 2014 Arkansas Annual Conference. Full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer youth workers who have exemplified outstanding leadership are eligible. Nominees should be a member of and work in a United Methodist Church in Arkansas, be involved with the connectional system; participate in district and Conference youth events; and be intentional on "making disciples of Jesus Christ" through missions, Bible studies, outreach, evangelism and Christian fellowship. Nominees must also have participated in some type of continuing education in the area of youth ministry.

Nominations for all awards should include a letter detailing the individual's career highlights and reason for nomination. Nominations can be submitted to the Rev. J. Wayne Clark, Hendrix College, 1600 Washington Ave., Conway, AR 72032, or emailed to clark@hendrix.edu.

Wilson featured in El Dorado preaching series April 13-15

The Rev. David B. Wilson is the featured speaker for this year's Adele McFarlane Preaching Series, set for Sunday, April 13 through Tuesday, April 15 at First United Methodist Church El Dorado.

The four-sermon series begins Sunday morning, April 13, at 10:50 a.m. with "When Disappointments Punctuate Life" (Luke 19:29-44). It continues Sunday evening with "Does Everything Happen for a Reason? Dealing with Life's 'Why' Questions" (Psalm 88:1-12), Monday evening with "We Can't Unring a Bell, But... A Sermon on Forgiving Ourselves" (Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75) and concludes Tuesday evening with "What to Do When Faith Loses Its Vitality" (Psalm 42, Matthew 26:26-35). All evening services begin at 6 p.m.

A retired member of the Arkansas Conference, Wilson served as an associate pastor of First UMC El Dorado upon completion of his seminary education. His wife, Carolyn, is an El Dorado native. He served 15 years as senior pastor of First UMC Hot Springs before retiring in 2006, and in 2010, he became a part-time associate pastor of Christ of the Hills UMC Hot Springs Village, where he served for six months as interim senior pastor. A former district superintendent, he has been elected five times as a delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences.

The series has been an annual event in El Dorado since 1982, when Eulalie MacFarlane Nobles and James Hutton Nobles set up a trust to support a program of annual lectures or sermons in memory of Adele MacFarlane.

Spring Handbell Festival at Central UMC Fayetteville April 26

Central UMC Fayetteville's annual Spring Handbell Festival is set for Saturday, April 26, 2014, with optional Extreme Ring on Friday evening, April 25. This year's festival features nationally in-demand composer/arranger Joel Raney as clinician. Full and partial handbell choirs of all denominations are welcome. Ringers will learn new techniques and refine existing techniques, work together and network with other ringers, build choirs' music repertoires, equip bell choir members to ring with confidence and to glorify God to the best of their abilities... and to have fun! Registration forms and other information available at www.centraltolife.com; click on Ministries, then Worship Ministries, then Handbell Festival.

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: vim@arumc.org or 870-826-0268. For Disaster Response (DR) projects, contact Byron or Janice Mann, DR co-coordinators: disaster@arumc.org or 870-703-8359 (Janice). To connect on Facebook, search for "Volunteers in Mission & Disaster Response - Serving Arkansas & Beyond," and join the group for updates.

'This Olde Church': available 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, 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.
- **Southbend UMC** fell victim to arson on Oct. 16. Teams are still needed to help with recovery. To schedule your team, contact the Rev. Garren Hagemeyer 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.

April 5 chainsaw safety certification

The Conference Disaster Response Team is holding a Chainsaw Safety Training course Saturday, April 5, at Mount Eagle Retreat Center near

Clinton. Chainsaw safety certification is **required** for anyone working with a chainsaw on an Early Response Team or Disaster Response Team. To register for this course, visit www.mount eagle.org/events.htm.

VIM journey to Rio Bravo June 1-8

A VIM group led by Rev. Jim Benfer will convene in McAllen, Texas, to travel to Manos Juntas Mission in Rio Bravo, Mexico, June 1-8, 2014.

Possible mission opportunities during this journey include construction, medical clinic and leading Vacation Bible School. The registration deadline is March 31. A \$275 team fee is due at that time, and a \$300 mission fund fee is due by April 30.

Team members will need to arrange their own travel to and from McAllen; gather Spanish language elementary school books to bring along; and pack clothing and toiletries. Bedding and towels are provided.

To join this mission team, contact Jim Benfer to request an application (jbenfer@centurytel.net or 479-699-4683), and if you do not have a U.S. passport, start the process of getting one.

May 6 golf tourney benefits Wesley Foundation at ASU

The Wesley Foundation United Methodist campus ministry at Arkansas State University will hold Golfing for Wesley 2014 on Tuesday, May 6, at Sage Meadows Country Club in Jonesboro.

The four-person scramble event begins with lunch at noon, and teams will tee off at 1 p.m.

For non-golfers, tournament sponsorships provide a way to support this ministry that shares Christ with young adults. Businesses, congregations and Sunday school classes are welcome as sponsors. The sponsorship deadline is April 15, and the registration deadline for the tournament is April 30.

Registration and sponsorship forms are available for download at www.astatewesley.com/golf-tournament-2014.

Order of Elders meets for worship, learning

Clergy from across Arkansas met Jan. 31 at Cabot UMC for a gathering of the Order of Elders.

The event, open to ordained and provisional members of the Arkansas Conference, began with a worship service and celebration of Holy Communion. Bishop Gary Mueller preached, offering appreciation and encouragement to those gathered.

Even considering the challenges of ministry in a world where religion doesn't often take center stage, Bishop Mueller insisted there has never been a better time to be a United Methodist pastor.

"We have the opportunity to help people fall in love with Jesus, and be transformed by Jesus, and follow Jesus and serve other people like no one else has ever before," he said. "We are much more like the days of Paul than we were the 1960s and 1970s. And it's a much better thing that someone says, 'Hey, I want to follow this Jesus,' because they've experienced the difference he makes than following Jesus just because that's what everyone else in town is doing."



The Rev. Dr. Doug Hester answers questions from clergy who attended the Jan. 31 gathering of the Arkansas Conference Order of Elders.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

The Rev. Dr. Doug Hester of San Antonio, a Lutheran pastor who also works as a marriage and family therapist, spoke about change and adventure. "Change forces us to experiment and adapt. That's how we learn and grow," he said.

An expert in Family Systems Theory, Hester encouraged pastors to examine their churches as living systems, and to be willing to introduce new elements. "Rather

than trying to come up with new answers to the same old questions, adventure changes the very questions we ask," he said.

Freeing the imagination can disturb people's mindsets in refreshing ways, Hester said, changing how people think.

"The human brain thrives on novelty," he said. "As much as people may say they don't like change, their brains would disagree with them."

Get donations for your local church by shopping online

UMCMarket.org is an online shopping service specifically designed for members of the United Methodist Church to shop at hundreds of retailers and get a percentage of their total shopping purchase donated to the local church of their choice.

Since July, more than 2,500 United Methodist churches have participated in UMCMarket and received donations as a result.

Between July 1 and the end of 2013, nearly \$49,000 was given to local churches and other United Methodist organizations—more than half of it in December alone.

Here's how to earn donations for your church through www.UMCmarket.org:

1) Under "Join now," enter your email address and choose a password.

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.

The more people in your congregation know about UMCmarket, the more your church benefits. So, spread the word!

Arkansas Conference scholarships available for active UM students

Applications are now being accepted by the Arkansas Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry for the **Hood Memorial Scholarship** and the **Conference Merit Scholarship**. The application deadline for both scholarships is April 15, 2014.

The Hood Memorial Scholarship was established through an endowment given by Mary Hood Reed and Martha A. Hood in memory of their parents, the Rev. John T. Hood and Martha Yancy Hood. This \$1,000 award goes to a full-time undergraduate or graduate student in good academic standing at an accredited college, university or seminary approved by the University Senate of the UMC, who is preparing for full-time Christian service in ministry; and who has spent at least one year active in a United Methodist campus ministry.

The Conference Merit Scholarship, funded by a portion of the United Methodist Student Day Offering, is a \$500 award. It will be given to a full-time student at a United Methodist-related college or university who has been a member of a United Methodist Church or United Methodist campus ministry for at least one year, with documented involvement in the local church or campus ministry.

Applications are available at any Wesley Foundation in Arkansas, Hendrix College and Philander Smith College. For additional information, contact Roy Smith at rsmith@fumcrsvl.org or 479-968-1232. A downloadable application is available on the Forms page at www.arumc.org ("Scholarship program - Candidate Application.docx" and "Scholarship program - certification of church membership.doc"). The application forms are the same for both scholarships.

For information on other scholarships and loans available to United Methodist students, send a message to umloans@gbhem.org.

Monticello team helps UMCOR

Nineteen Volunteers in Mission from First UMC Monticello feel blessed to be a blessing after serving Jan. 26-31 at Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La. Sager Brown is part of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), and the work is instrumental in helping relief supplies reach the areas of the world where they are most needed. This way of serving has become an annual tradition for Monticello First. Since beginning in 1998 with just a few volunteers, the journey has grown to include 18 to 20 persons each year. Their 2015 trip is already set, and the sign-up sheet is filling up fast.

This year's team included, from front row left: Judy Murphy, Kathy and James Tumilson, Mike Johnston, Mary Ann Jones, Joe Meeks, Elgenia Ross and Bill Wisener. Back row, from left: Brenda Wright, Mary Jo Wisener, Charlotte McKiever, Phyllis Jones, Charlena Johnston, Jean Tedford, Janette Goolsby, the Rev. Dennis Spence, Sheere Scogin and Kay Johnston.



COURTESY PHOTO

Four Habitat honorees share congregation in common

Christ of the Hills UMC Hot Springs Village has supported Garland County Habitat for Humanity since 1996, when the first house was built in Hot Springs. That first house crew included Christ of the Hills member Joe Allen. In 2000, Glen Phillips and Ade DeHaan became involved with the weekly building program, and in 2002, Gene Lichliter got the Master Gardeners involved by landscaping each new house.

These four Christ of the Hills members have each been recognized for their service by being named Volunteer of the Year—Joe Allen in 2009, Gene Lichliter in 2010, Ade DeHaan in 2012 and Glen Phillips in 2013. They have contributed a combined total of 50 years of service to Garland County Habitat for Humanity, and they continue to help construct Habitat houses in Hot Springs, which now number more than 100.

Christ of the Hills continues to support Garland County Habitat for Humanity with other gifts and funds. The church funded one house in its entirety, and has been a partner of the Apostle Build houses from the beginning of that program. Members of Christ of the Hills have had a part in presenting each new home owner with gifts, and several other members volunteer regularly on the building crews. Gene Lichliter and senior pastor Dr. Walter Smith serve on the organization's board of directors.



Christ of the Hills United Methodist Church is proud to have four members who have been named Volunteers of the Year with Garland County Habitat for Humanity. From left: Gene Lichliter, Volunteer of the Year 2010; Joe Allen, Volunteer of the Year 2009; Glen Phillips, Volunteer of the Year 2013; and Ade DeHaan, Volunteer of the Year 2012.

COURTESY PHOTO

OBITUARIES

ARKADELPHIA

Wynona Wagner

Wynona Madge DeWeese Bridgewater Wagner, 96, passed away Monday, Jan. 27, 2014, in Malvern.

She was born in Marshfield, Ohio, on Aug. 15, 1917, the daughter of Hamilton T. and Fleuteau Hunter DeWeese. She was adopted and raised by Joseph E. and Vera Maffin Bridgewater.

She was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. Stanley Wagner, an associate member of the Little Rock Conference who served churches in the area from 1961 through 1999; three sons, Charles Edwin, Earl Jr. and Haldor ("Mike"); five brothers, Grant, Oliver, Clark, Harry and George; and five sisters, Stella, Sara, Alice, Ruth and Mary.

She is survived by three daughters, Jean Gaspard of Crowley, La., Georgia Crumpler of Texarkana and Lauana Milnes of Benton; one son, Robert "Bobby" Wagner and his wife, Rachel, of Sand Springs, Okla.; 15 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren; seven great-great-grandchildren; a brother-in-law, Bobby Joe Wagner of Stockbridge, Mich.; and one niece, Ruth Holmes and her husband, Dale, of Pataskalu, Ohio.

Services were held Friday, Jan. 31, at Ruggles-Wilcox Funeral Home, with the Rev. Jim Polk officiating. Interment followed in Rest Haven Memorial Gardens.

ATKINS

Cloyd Stephen "Steve" Wiseman

The Rev. Cloyd Stephen "Steve" Wiseman, 64, of Atkins passed away Feb. 15, 2014, at Hospice Home Care in Little Rock. He was born Jan. 26, 1950, in Missouri to Bob and Velva Lee Wiseman.

He worked many years for the poultry industry in Northwest Arkansas. He later served as pastor to churches at Jasper, Lepanto, Joiner, Hughes, El Dorado and Berryville, and was an ordained elder in full connection with the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church.



Steve Wiseman

Steve is survived by his wife of 17 years, the Rev. Rebecca Searcy Wiseman; a daughter, Christina Lynn Wiseman Musick and her husband, Joey, of Romance, Ark.; a son, Clement Brian Wiseman and his wife, Madalyn, of Collinsville, Okla.; stepsons, Stephen Titus and his wife, Angie, of Alexander, Ark., and Mark Titus of Little Rock; a grandchild, Tiffany Ann Moffitt of Romance; four step-grandchildren, Sarah, Hogan, Josiah and Zoe Grace Titus of Alexander; his father, Bob J. Wiseman of Springdale; a brother, Robert Wiseman and his wife, Peggy, of Lincoln, Ark.; a niece, Donna Ramsfield, and nephew, Gene Wiseman, of Watts, Okla.; and his beloved dog, Annie Mae. He was preceded in death by his mother, as well as a cousin, Gaylon Cope.

A memorial service was held Feb. 18 at First United Methodist Church Benton, with the Revs. David Jones, William "Bud" Reeves and Dede Roberts officiating.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Hermitage Fund at Mount Eagle Retreat Center, 935 Beal Road, Clinton, AR 72031.

HICKORY RIDGE

Pauline Freese Hutto

Laura Pauline Freese Hutto, 92, passed away Sunday, Jan. 26, 2014.

She was born Sept. 17, 1921, in Waldenburg, Ark., to John Henry and Laura Rennie Freese.

A member of the Hickory Ridge United Methodist

Church, she served as president of the United Methodist Women. She attended the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, where she received her bachelor's degree in teaching, and worked as an elementary school teacher for the Cross County Elementary School. She was also a member of the Arkansas Retired Teachers Association. She enjoyed working crossword puzzles, going to church functions, watching game shows and canning fresh garden foods. She enjoyed life and spending time with her family and friends.



Pauline Hutto

Pauline was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, the Rev. Joe Hutto, an ordained elder who served United Methodist churches in the North Arkansas Conference; one son, Joseph Allen Hutto; one daughter Laura Jo Grigsby; four brothers Otto Freese, Henry Freese, Clarence Freese and Charles Freese; and three sisters, Louise Knapple, Emma Horst and Mary Stahly.

She was survived by four grandchildren: Dean Grisby, Lee McMillan, Shelly Hutto and Joseph Hutto; four great-grandchildren; and many nephews and nieces.

Funeral services were held Thursday, Jan. 30, 2014, at Hickory Ridge United Methodist Church, with interment following in Lewis Cemetery in Hickory Ridge, Ark.

JACKSONVILLE

Billy Howard Cox

Chaplain Colonel Billy Howard Cox (U.S. Army retired), 85, passed away Thursday, Feb. 6, 2014.

The Rev. Cox was born Feb. 27, 1928, in Huntsville, to Roscoe Harrison Cox and Laura Calico Cox. After graduating from Hendrix College, where he played basketball, he attended seminary and earned his Master's Degree from Southern Methodist University.

He served as a United Methodist minister for 67 years, 29 of which were as a Chaplain in the U.S. Army. A retired elder in the Arkansas Conference, he served churches in the North Arkansas and Little Rock Conferences in addition to his work in the chaplaincy.



Billy Cox

He is survived by his wife, Delle Woodard Cox; four sons, William Howard Cox and Timothy Christian Cox, both of Nashville, Tenn; Thomas Whitney Cox of Graham, N.C.; and Jonathan Marcus Cox of Fairview, Tenn; 15 grandchildren; and one sister, Betty Gaskill of Huntsville. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by two brothers, Jim and Bobby Cox.

A funeral service was held Sunday, Feb. 9, in the chapel of Moore's Jacksonville Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Arkansas Hospice, 14 Parkstone Circle, North Little Rock, AR 72117.

JONESBORO

John Roy Soward

The Rev. John Roy Soward, 67, of Jonesboro died Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2014, at St. Bernard's Medical Center.

He was born Sept. 23, 1946, to Sidney and Anna Soward, and lived in Jonesboro most of his life.

As an ordained elder, John was a member of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church and served the Lord most recently through First United Methodist Church Jonesboro. He also served several churches in the old North Arkansas Conference. He graduated Cum Laude with his Master of Divinity degree from Memphis Theological

Seminary. He served as a minister for more than 40 years.

He was a member of the Jonesboro Exchange Club, and enjoyed fellowship with his friends as a member of the Burger King and the McDonald's Coffee Club. In every community where he served, he was very civically active.



John Soward

Survivors include his wife, Patty; sons, Sid and John; one sister, Phyllis; three grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, Donnie Wayne Soward; and a sister, Shirley Sims.

A memorial service was held Saturday, Feb. 1, 2014, at First United Methodist Church Jonesboro, with the Revs. John Miles, Rex Darling and Herschel Richardson officiating. The burial was private.

For lasting memorials, please consider the First UMC Chapel Sound System Fund, 801 S. Main St., Jonesboro, AR 72401.

LONOKE

Patricia Litts

The Rev. Patricia Litts, 71, passed away Feb. 19, 2014.

Pat was a Remington Arms employee and a retired associate member of the Arkansas Conference. She served appointments at a number of United Methodist churches, including First UMC Lonoke, Perry, Clarendon, Holly Grove, Hughes and Widener.



Patricia Litts

She was preceded in death by her husband John Litts.

She is survived by her daughter, Janie Sexton, and one son, Fred Hallum, and his wife, Christy; grandchildren Mallory Sexton, Amanda Sexton and Sydney Hallum, all of Lonoke; three stepchildren, Wendy Richard, Johnny Litts and Robin Rivera; and seven step-grandchildren, all of Connecticut.

The funeral service was held Sunday, Feb. 23 at First United Methodist Church Lonoke. Memorials may be made to Lonoke Exceptional School, 518 NE Front Street, Lonoke, AR 72086 or First UMC Lonoke, P.O. Box 152, Lonoke, AR 72086-0152.

SEARCY

Carl Vincent Strayhorn

The Rev. Carl Vincent Strayhorn, 93, passed away Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2014.



Carl Strayhorn

He was born in Searcy, the son of William and Mary Hooper Strayhorn. He was a retired associate minister who served in several United Methodist churches in the North Arkansas Conference.

He is survived by a son, Darrell Strayhorn and his wife, Patricia; a daughter, Carolyn George and her husband, William; four grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and two great-great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Emma Alto (Britt) Strayhorn; four brothers, Finis, Redus, Ollie and Otha Strayhorn; and a sister, Lucy Boyd.

Funeral services were held Saturday, Jan. 25, at Powell Funeral Home. Interment followed at the Weir Cemetery in McRae, Ark.

Naturals

(continued from page 1)

God calls us to transform the world, and this is part of how we answer that call.”

As enthusiasm for Imagine No Malaria grew throughout the United Methodist Church, deaths from malaria began to decline. Now, the toll has been cut by half, from an average of one death every 30 seconds to one every 60 seconds. But that's still not enough improvement.

“We may have reached our goal here in Arkansas, but the big goal remains: eliminating deaths from malaria by 2015,” Taylor said. “It really is within our grasp. The suffering malaria causes is unnecessary, but thanks to research, education and treatment, its days are numbered.”

Imagine No Malaria provides training, education, treatment and prevention efforts in areas where malaria continues to disrupt daily life. The effort aligns with one of the Four Areas of Focus lifted up by the UMC at the 2008 General Conference, “combating the diseases of poverty by improving health globally.” Through Imagine No Malaria, the UMC partners with global leaders in the fight against malaria, including the United Nations Foundation; the World Health Organization; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

You're invited to UMC Night at the Naturals!

Saturday, June 21, 6:05 p.m.
Arvest Ballpark, Springdale

The Arkansas Conference will offer preferred seating at reduced-price rates (no minimum group size). Beginning May 1, the ticket purchase form will be available for download at arumc.org/ac2014. If you have questions, contact Cathy Hughes: 501-324-8020 or chughes@arumc.org.



Faith Funds

Growing Assets

Granger Davis of Conway combines his professional experience as a Financial Advisor with Edward Jones and his lifelong commitment to his church to serve on the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas' Board of Directors and Investment Committee.

“We are very thankful for those who give money to the Foundation,” he said. “It is our fiscal responsibility to keep those funds as safe as possible, but also to continue to grow the resources needed to spread United Methodism and its ministries.”

Granger, his wife Jan, and children Carson and Emma are active at First UMC, Conway, his home church. He has served his local church in many capacities from youth group to chair of the Church Council, and he is committed to its ministries. Connectional ministries like Ozark Mission Project and Imagine No Malaria, which have received support from the Foundation, also are important to him.

Granger added, “Programs like the UMFA Seminary Scholarships have benefitted my family and church. Our associate pastor Lynn Kilbourne is one of the scholars. I also believe that as a board member helping make decisions on fiscal matters, you need to have some skin in the game. Those are two great reasons why Jan and I give to the Foundation.”

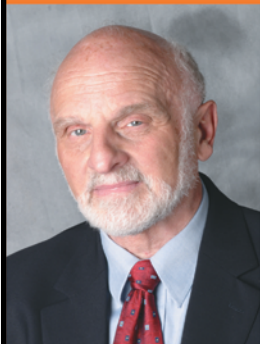


The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

5300 Evergreen Drive • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

501-664-8632 • Toll free 877-712-1107 • Fax 501-664-6792 • www.umfa.org

2014 Willson Lecture



Dr. Walter Brueggemann

One of the world's leading Old Testament theologians, Walter Brueggemann approaches the Bible as a testimony to an alternative way of living in the world that stands in opposition to the dehumanizing powers of global capitalism.

Thursday, March 20 • 7 p.m.

Mills Center, Room A • Hendrix College campus

Free and open to the public

Reception and book signing after the lecture

Part of the Word in the World Lecture Series. Co-sponsored by the Hutton Odyssey Professorship and the Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics, and Calling.

The 29th Steel-Hendrix Awards

will be presented to

Mauzel Beal, Zach Schrick, and the Rev. Ed Matthews

Banquet & Awards at 5:30 p.m. • Worsham Performance Hall

The banquet cost is \$20 if registered before March 12 or \$25 at the door. For more information or to register, contact Rev. J. Wayne Clark at 501-450-1263.

