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SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

## Retiree benefits proposal: similar care, lower cost

BY AMY FORBUS  
*Editor*

The group examining retiree health benefits in the Arkansas Conference believes they've found a way to turn a lose-lose-lose situation into a win-win-win.

A proposal coming before the 2014 Annual Conference has the potential to decrease out-of-pocket medical expenses for retired clergy and their dependents, reduce liability for the Arkansas Conference

and trim the amount local churches pay to support retirees, all while still assuring they continue to receive the care they need.

The Rev. Dennis Spence, chairperson of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits, said that Stephens, Inc., the consultant hired to evaluate the Conference's current health insurance situation, confirmed that it is unsustainable.

"We're trying to get out; we're just trying to do it with dignity," he said.

The proposed replacement for the current retiree health plan involves transitioning retired clergy from the Conference's retiree health plan to a combination of Medicare Part D, for prescription coverage, and Part F (formerly called Medi-Pak), to supplement basic Medicare.

Spence presented in March to a group of clergy who are retiring at this year's Annual Conference, outlining the situation and sharing recommendations for moving

[See RETIREES, page 8]

## Active clergy benefits proposal: opt-out choice for dependents in 2014, new setup by 2016

BY AMY FORBUS  
*Editor*

For years, the health plan provided by the Arkansas Conference to active clergy, full-time lay staff and their dependents has drawn complaints from local churches and covered individuals alike. High cost and the inability for dependents with other coverage options to opt out of the plan have resulted in a benefit that most agree does not work well.

After reviewing the recommendations of consultants from Stephens, Inc., which affirmed the current plan is unsustainable, the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits has decided to recommend a sweeping change. The 2014 Annual Conference will vote on two health benefits-related proposals coming from the board.

The proposals share the same goal: easing the financial burden on local churches while providing reliable coverage with more flexibility for active clergy and their families.

### Choosing available coverage

Currently, a local church must pay Conference insurance premiums for the clergyperson appointed to serve there, as well as all dependents of that pastor—even if the dependents have less expensive coverage available from another source.

"Because the plan is self-insured, we have needed diversity and numbers in order to maintain premium costs," said Mona Williams, benefits officer for the

[See ACTIVE, page 9]

## Bishop names Roberts to CCLEL, Lancaster as DS



Dede Roberts



Richard Lancaster

BY AMY FORBUS  
*Editor*

Arkansas Area Resident Bishop Gary E. Mueller has appointed the Rev. Deidre "Dede" Roberts, who currently serves as superintendent of the Central District, director of the Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership (CCLEL), effective July 1, 2014.

"Dede's work with the District Mission Plan concept and familiarity with the Imagine Ministry process gives her the skills to help churches align with the Conference's trajectory of creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world," Mueller said. "The Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership also will benefit from her commitment to spiritual formation and her skills as a teaching pastor."

Roberts succeeds the Rev. Dr. Kurt Boggan, the founding director of the CCLEL, who will be appointed senior pastor of First United Methodist Church Bentonville.

[See CCLEL, page 5]

# Why stay together?

BY WILLIAM O. "BUD" REEVES  
Special Contributor

I recently visited the Lydia Patterson Institute, a high school run by the United Methodist Church in El Paso, Texas. It is a wonderful ministry. Seventy percent of their students walk across the bridge from Mexico to get an education.

Ninety-eight percent of their graduates go to college. Over the years, thousands of families have ended the oppressive cycle of poverty through the ministry of LPI.

As I stood in a chapel crowded with Hispanic teenagers worshipping enthusiastically, I thought how tragic it would be if ministries such as Lydia Patterson (and multitudes of others) were harmed by the division of the United Methodist Church.

There has been increasing talk about the schism of the denomination over the issue of homosexuality. There are strident voices on either end of the spectrum within the United Methodist Church. So-called "progressives" want full acceptance of all people, including the ordination and marriage of gay and lesbian people. So-called "traditionalists" support the current language of our *Book of Discipline*: "The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching." They believe the denominational stance is gracious and balanced. Many progressives have advocated for ecclesiastical disobedience, particularly in the performance of gay marriages, despite the protests from those who seek to uphold the *Discipline*.

Lately voices have been raised saying that we should just declare the issue insolvable and split the denomination according to our stance on homosexuality. Some have said we are already divided along these lines; why not form separate organizations so we can quit arguing about it?

Ironically, the calls for a denominational division have come more from the conservative end of the spectrum. Given the makeup of General Conference, the *Book of Discipline* is unlikely to change. Yet

the ecclesiastical disobedience of progressive clergy and bishops has led conservative traditionalists to advocate schism, citing the brokenness of our covenant as a connectional church.

## In the middle

I believe most United Methodists are caught somewhere in the middle of this decades-long debate. Bishop Scott Jones has characterized Methodists as occupying the "extreme center," and we do. One of the beautiful strengths of the Methodist movement has been the ability to hold divergent opinions and live in community even when we disagree. We have never practiced unanimity—biblically, theologically or socially. I have always kind of liked that.

As the convener of a task force directed to produce a resource that will allow us to have conversations on this topic, I have been intensively studying the issues surrounding homosexuality for the last two years. It has been an interesting journey with a wonderful group of people who were not at all in agreement. We learned to discuss the issues with respect for our differences and came to love one another in the process. The Wesleyan term for this practice is "holy conferencing."

This year at Annual Conference we will present a discussion guide called "A More Excellent Way: Holy Conversations About Homosexuality." I hope you will gather in your church, your Sunday school class or your small group to consider the biblical, theological and social implications of our relationships with our gay and lesbian friends and neighbors. The landscape of this issue in America has drastically changed, even in the last two years, and we need to understand it better.

What I discovered in my studying and in our discussions was that there are valid points on both sides of all the arguments. There is not an obvious "right side" and "wrong side." Both progressives and

traditionalists can produce quality arguments that make sense. In the stridency of the debate, however, what neither side seems willing to admit is that they might be wrong. As we see in our political and societal landscape, there is polarization and gridlock in the church. Bereft of love for one another, we flail blindly toward schism.

## Our deepest need

What would it look like if all sides became humble before God, if we just admitted that perhaps we are not the owners of all truth? Only God has that. Can we find a way to co-exist as God's children? If there is a possibility that we might be wrong, can we err on the side of grace?

I am convinced we can talk to one another. We can have hard conversations in community, affirming our covenant relationship. We can disagree with respect and love for one another. I've done it, and it's a holy thing. These conversations need to continue.

I'm also convinced that this is not the main thing. Our deepest need is not a coherent position on homosexuality. What we need most of all is a relationship with Jesus Christ. What our churches need is not a social agenda; it's a spiritual revival. Our mission is to make disciples who make disciples for the transformation of lives, churches and communities. Our mission is not to change—or keep—the language of the *Book of Discipline*.

It would be tragic for ministries that accomplish our mission to be harmed, diminished or destroyed by the division of our denomination. Our relationships and ministry with our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters is an important issue. We should talk about it. We should keep talking about it as long as it takes.

We should not split our church over it.

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



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

# Cop-out Christianity

As a colleague was leaving the office on Maundy Thursday, he mentioned he was headed to a foot-washing service that evening.

"Ah, a good old-fashioned foot-washing," I said.

"Well, actually, it's going to be a hand-washing," he replied. It seems they didn't want to make anyone uncomfortable by asking that they take off their shoes and get their feet wet.

My first reaction was a sanctimonious one: What a cop-out. Jesus went to the trouble to wash his disciples' feet the night before he went willingly to his death, and we won't even ask people to take off their shoes? What does that say about the depth of our faith?

Then I remembered my comfort zone wasn't always so wide open.

The first time I participated in a foot-washing was just before my senior year in college. Leaders of religious life on campus were invited on a retreat to get to know our new chaplain and plan for the coming school year. My classmate Stephen was in charge of planning the final evening's worship. He had participated in the ritual before; he had found it meaningful, and wanted to share it with us.

I, on the other hand, wouldn't wear open-toed shoes, or even flip-flops. The idea of removing my cross-trainers and socks during a worship service... not a comfortable prospect.

But even if I would prefer not to remove my shoes for Jesus, I wasn't going to be weird about it in front of other college students. Grateful that as part of the planning team I'd had advance warning, when the time came I took off my shoes and socks like it was no big deal.

Stephen started us off, and each of us washed the feet of one other person, moving across the circle in whatever order we felt led. We had no background music, no filler activity to keep us busy. Just the pure symbolism of servanthood, the sound of water sloshing in the basin—surprising power in serving, and grace in accepting the service.

Sitting on the other side of that experience, it would be easy for me to scoff at someone else's foot-washing phobia without asking a tough question: Where am I copping out in my own life of faith?

In the words of G.K. Chesterton, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried."

When we refuse to engage in the uncomfortable or unfamiliar... when we resist recognizing the holy wherever we are... when we leave the Christian life untried... we are the ones left wanting, even as Jesus invites us into something more.

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



Volume 161 • No. 05 May 2, 2014  
Amy Forbus • Editor  
Melissa Sanders • Circulation  
[www.arumc.org](http://www.arumc.org)

The *Arkansas United Methodist* is the newspaper of record for the Arkansas Conference of The United Methodist Church. It is printed monthly, on the first Friday of every month, and distributed in both print and digital formats.

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

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

The *Arkansas United Methodist* is published by the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202. Postage paid at Gainesville, TX.



Arkansas Conference  
800 Daisy Bates Drive  
Little Rock, AR 72202-3770  
[www.arumc.org](http://www.arumc.org) 501-324-8000

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**Submission Deadlines**

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
June 6	May 19
July 4	June 16
Aug. 1	July 16





## GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST

BY GARY E. MUELLER AND MARY BROOKE CASAD

# The Aldersgate Covenant gathering: an invitation

Twenty years ago, a group of laity and clergy came together to celebrate how the Holy Spirit was at work in the United Methodist Church; to address the loss of membership, resources and confidence in our denomination; and to discern how to engage a world that was increasingly indifferent, even hostile, to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The initial group met at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, and selected the name “Aldersgate Covenant” because they met on May 24, 1994. As John Wesley experienced a “heart-warming” experience on May 24, 1738 on Aldersgate Street in London, the group covenanted together to seek spiritual and missional revival for the UMC.

The Dallas-area group quickly connected with other United Methodists from across the country and sponsored gatherings in several locations. Legislation was drafted for a proposed mission statement for the UMC and endorsed by several annual conferences in their 1995 sessions.

The result of these efforts was the 1996 General Conference’s adoption of a mission statement, later amended by the 2008 General Conference, which proclaims, “The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Local churches provide the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs.” Paragraphs 120, 121, and 122 of the *Book of Discipline* were also a part of this original petition.

Nearly 20 years later, the United Methodist Church has made great strides of putting the mission of making disciples of

Jesus Christ at the forefront of what we do. Yet, at the same time, we are increasingly aware that we are in the midst of a spiritual crisis marked by a world filled with pain, struggle and injustice; a culture that seems to have little room left for God; and a church that has lost much of its passion and zeal. Perhaps more importantly, it is our confession that we have tried for too long to rely on ourselves and not on God.

In reflecting on this reality, several of the original Aldersgate Covenant leaders concluded that a new way forward is needed. Young adult clergy and lay leaders were invited into a conversation and the Aldersgate Covenant is stepping forward now because we believe that spiritual revival is the only thing that will carry us into God’s future.

Like 20 years ago, we are a diverse group of laity and clergy seeking revival that will truly enable the United Methodist Church to carry out our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world in bold new ways. We are not associated with any interest group, caucus or organization in the United Methodist Church.

So what do we mean by “revival?” Revival is not revivalism, the replication of certain types of experience rooted in the past, an attempt to hide from the rapidly changing world of the 21st century or a movement that seeks to ignore the important work of seeking justice, healing and hope for the millions of people living in poverty, oppression, violence and despair. Revival is the work of the Holy Spirit that deepens our relationship with Jesus Christ, leads to more fruitful discipleship and enables

congregations to grow in vitality so they make disciples of Jesus Christ, who in turn make more disciples, equipped to be involved in God’s work of transforming lives, communities and the world.

The Aldersgate Covenant is hosting a gathering May 16-17, 2014, at Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan. The purpose is simple. We will engage in prayer, worship and watching for a revival of the Holy Spirit over 20 hours to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit for those present, and for the United Methodist connection as a whole. Additional information and registration forms can be accessed at [www.aldersgatecovenant.org](http://www.aldersgatecovenant.org).

We believe a sign of God’s grace has already been evidenced in the timing of this event. As our church continues to struggle with various viewpoints and interpretations of the issues of our day, anxiety runs deep throughout our connection. The opportunity to gather and pray for our church’s spiritual revival is indeed timely and—perhaps more than any other time in recent years—absolutely necessary.

On May 16-17, we will gather for worship, prayer and conversation. We will gather for a Service of Covenant Renewal and celebration of Holy Communion. We will gather because we love God’s Church and want to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Won’t you come join the gathering with us?

*Bishop Mueller and Ms. Casad were part of the initial 1994 meeting of the Aldersgate Covenant.*

## APPOINTMENTS

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

Retirements effective after Annual Conference 2014:

- Joe Michael “Mike” Campbell
- Gerald “Jerry” Collins
- Roger Hook

Appointments effective after Annual Conference 2014:

- Dane Womack—First UMC Fort Smith (associate)
- Travis Langley—Gurdon UMC and Center Grove UMC
- John Palmer—First UMC Clarksville
- Carl Ownbey—requesting Voluntary Leave of Absence (Paragraph 354.2a of the 2012 *Discipline*)
- Scott Shafer—First UMC Jacksonville
- Rex Dickey—requesting Voluntary Leave of Absence (Paragraph 354 of the 2012 *Discipline*)
- David Hawkins—requesting Voluntary Leave of Absence (Paragraph 354 of the 2012 *Discipline*)
- Kurt Boggan—First UMC Bentonville
- Dede Roberts—director, Arkansas Conference Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership

- Clark Atkins—First UMC Harrisburg
- Russ Breshears—St. Paul UMC Little Rock
- Tom Frase—First UMC Mena
- Glenn Hicks—First UMC Marianna/Bear Creek Camp
- Sonna B. Key—Hunter UMC Little Rock
- Lee Myane—First UMC Prairie Grove
- Katie Pearce—Highland Valley UMC Little Rock (associate)
- Richard Lancaster—Central District Superintendent
- Michael Utley—Henderson UMC Little Rock
- Robert DeBaun—Hickory Ridge/Tilton UMCs
- Zach Underwood—First UMC Bella Vista (associate)
- Bonda Moyer—Augusta/Tupelo UMCs
- Clayton Bulice—Hazel Edwards/Oil Trough UMCs
- Blake Langston—UCA Wesley Foundation
- Carol Clark—Sparkman Charge
- Michael Blanchard—Oak Forest UMC Little Rock/University Parish
- Jana Hogg (Oklahoma Annual Conference)—UALR Wesley Foundation/University Parish
- Jonathon Bevil (Louisiana Annual Conference)—Arkansas Tech University Wesley Foundation
- Eric Van Meter—Dakota Wesleyan University (Mitchell, S.D.)

To view the official listing of pastoral appointment changes, visit [www.arumc.org/appointments](http://www.arumc.org/appointments). The online listing is updated as the Cabinet confirms newly announced appointments.

# OMP Family Camp provides mission opportunity beyond summer format

BY BAILEY FAULKNER  
Special Contributor

On the weekend of March 14, 100 people from Heber Springs United Methodist Church traveled to the Fordyce area to participate in Ozark Mission Project's first-ever Family Camp. It provided an opportunity for people of all ages to serve their neighbors by providing hands-on mission work.

In the spirit of Christ, Ozark Mission Project sends church youth groups to camp sites around Arkansas. Using the camps as a home base for the week, they serve their neighbors in surrounding communities by completing minor construction and yard work. It offers its participants a diverse cultural experience that equips them to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors.

However, participants in regular OMP summer experiences must have completed the sixth grade. With Family Camp, we removed that barrier so younger campers could attend, because even

if they are too young for the work sites they still can participate in age-appropriate activities and share in prayer and fellowship with their families and other campers.

Over the weekend, OMP campers completed 16 projects in the Fordyce area. Community leaders Todd Roark, a member of First Baptist Church of Fordyce and Larry Whitley, a member of First United Methodist Church Fordyce, did advance work alongside Ozark Mission Project to find projects for the group to complete.

Some campers built a wheelchair ramp for a couple that had just been injured by a terrible car crash. Another group did yard work for an elderly couple. It was a day filled with service, prayer and fellowship. I enjoyed seeing families



Youth work on a construction project for a neighbor during last summer's Ozark Mission Project camp in El Dorado.

PHOTO COURTESY OZARK MISSION PROJECT

work side by side to help other families in need.

After completing the projects, volunteers, neighbors and families celebrated with a community wide block party in the parking lot of First UMC Fordyce.

None of this would have been possible without the vision from Heber Springs United Methodist

Church. We are thankful for the leadership from them, as well as from board member Hank Godwin, a member of Lakewood UMC North Little Rock.

*Faulkner is the executive director of Ozark Mission Project. She can be reached at 501-396-9244 or director@ozarkmissionproject.org.*

## Adult workers needed for summer camps

OMP is looking for adults to help with the 12 camps they have scheduled across the state this summer. **Camp dates are June 8-12, 8-14 and 22-28; and July 13-17 and 13-19.** Open volunteer positions include:

- worship leaders
- tool coordinators
- construction coordinators
- adult chaperones
- directors in training

OMP also needs volunteers year-round for additional roles, such as board members, steering committee members, office assistance, the annual college mission trip, family camps and pop-up projects.

To learn more about OMP or schedule a speaker to teach your small group about the organization and its work, contact Bailey Faulkner at 501-396-9244 or director@ozarkmissionproject.org.

# Council offers resources for ministry with older adults

## May is Older Adult Recognition Month



Dr. Carol Orsborn will be a presenter at "Builders, Boomers and Busters: Bridging into the 21st Century," set for Oct. 3-4 at St. James UMC Little Rock.

COURTESY PHOTO

BY DOUG COLLINS  
Special Contributor

It was 50 years ago that I set off to college and began my journey into adulthood. I would never have imagined living in Little Rock near two of my three children, a daughter-in-law, son-in-law and five grandchildren.

When I left for college in 1964, I traveled 1,738 miles from New Hampshire to the wilds of South Dakota where I attended a Methodist university. While I was driving across the country in my 1960 Volkswagen Bug, and on all the subsequent trips back to my hometown, I didn't give much thought about what I would do if I

had a breakdown or needed some assistance.

I didn't give it much thought because I was a young man on an adventure. But I also didn't worry because I knew if I needed help along the way, all I had to do was find the nearest Methodist church, knock on the door, and when the door opened, say "I'm a good Methodist from New Hampshire and I need help!" My belief in our connectional system gave me a strong confidence that help and compassion would be provided no matter what might befall me.

It's that same confidence that motivates me now to volunteer my time on the Older Adult Ministry Council in the pursuit of providing help, compassion, and resources to the aging adults, Methodist and non-Methodist, in Arkansas. Over the last several years, the Adult and Older Adult Council of the Arkansas Conference has been proactive in creating awareness and providing

resources to adults and older adults in and around the church.

The council's *Living with No Regrets* video series, produced in 2010, has been revised and updated with funding provided through a grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. The study has received national recognition, including a Telly Award.

October 3-4, 2014, the Older Adult Council is hosting a conference, "Builders, Boomers and Busters: Bridging into the 21st Century," at St. James United Methodist Church Little Rock. Among the workshop leaders and keynote presenters is Dr. Carol Orsborn, Ph.D., a national expert on the Boomer generation and editor-in-chief of *Fierce with Age: The Digest of Boomer Wisdom, Inspiration and Spirituality*. She's authored 21 books, including *Fierce with Age: Chasing God and Squirrels in Brooklyn* (Turner, 2013).

Also presenting will be Will

Randolph of the Office of Aging and Older Adult Ministry, United Methodist General Board of Discipleship; and Randy Frazier, a motivational speaker from Little Rock known for his wisdom, humor and storytelling. More information will be available in the coming weeks and months about this top-notch conference.

In honor of Older Adult Recognition Month and for the connectional system we call the United Methodist Church, I want to encourage you to use your talent, influence and spirit to thank those who have come before us and honor them by continuing their good work of caring for the least and the lost, and reaching beyond the walls of the church to care for strangers.

*Collins is a member of Trinity UMC Little Rock and the Arkansas Conference Older Adult Ministry Council.*



# Solution Center format changes exhibit space at Annual Conference

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

—Trajectory of the Arkansas Conference

With a greater focus on resourcing local churches for the work of making disciples, this year's Annual Conference exhibit area will look quite different. The Solution Center will have a limited number of exhibitors focused on sharing with church leaders ways to better reach their mission fields, including improving or enhancing their use of technology and other resources.

The Solution Center will be located in Ambassador A-E, alongside the Cokesbury bookstore and the concessions. (The Methodist Le Bonheur Health Fair will be located in Salon C-E.)

Annual Conference attendees can expect to see resources from Nashville-based United Methodist Communications and the Arkansas Conference Center for Technology, which will have a display that includes a charging station for mobile devices, and the Bishop's Mission Plan video series available on DVD to make it easier for churches with slower connections to use the videos as discussion starters. Other exhibitors offering technology and productivity solutions for local churches will be present, as well.

As planning team members discussed logistics for the June meeting, many recalled how disappointed vendors



were in 2009 when the Arkansas Annual Conference last met in Rogers. At that time, many exhibitors had to be placed in side rooms where there was little foot traffic.

"The planning team was already aware of the challenges a large number of exhibits presented in Rogers, as there was negative feedback from both attendees and exhibitors," said the Rev. Martha Taylor, communications, marketing and training for the Center for Technology. "It may be that this is the only year exhibits will be handled in this way."

Taylor added that the planning team will come together in late summer and will use the 2014 evaluations to help shape the 2015 conference, which will be held in Hot Springs.

## CCLEL (continued from page 1)

"Kurt has brought a great deal of energy and creativity to the development of the Center in the two years since it began," said the Rev. Mackey Yokem, executive director of mission and ministry for the Arkansas Conference. "The Conference is grateful for his leadership, and we look forward to seeing him continue to lead in Bentonville and the surrounding mission field."

Roberts, ordained an elder in 1991, has served as a district superintendent for five years, during a time of transition in which nine Arkansas Conference districts merged to become five. Her local church ministry included appointments in both associate pastor and solo pastor roles. Immediately before her appointment to the Central District, she served five years as associate pastor of First UMC Conway.

"I'm thankful for the foundation Kurt has put in place at the Center," Roberts said. "It provides an excellent launch point

for work with lay and clergy leaders across the state to help them discern what world-transforming work they are called to do within themselves, their churches, their neighborhoods and beyond."

Roberts is a graduate of the University of Indianapolis and Duke Divinity School. She and her husband, the Rev. Michael Roberts, senior pastor of First UMC Conway, have three children.

With Roberts making the transition to Conference staff, Bishop Mueller has appointed the Rev. Richard Lancaster superintendent of the Central District, also effective July 1, 2014. Lancaster currently serves as senior pastor of Lakewood UMC North Little Rock.

"Richard has demonstrated fruitfulness in his ministry and a passion for helping others grow as disciples," Mueller said. "I have confidence that as a district superintendent, he will encourage pastors and churches to embrace opportunities for transformation."

A graduate of Hendrix College and SMU's Perkins School of Theology, Lancaster was ordained an elder in the Little Rock Conference in 1978. Before his appointment to Lakewood in 2007, he served a decade as senior pastor of Cabot UMC. Previous appointments included First UMC Lonoke, Primrose UMC Little Rock, the Mt. Ida/Oden Charge, and the Wesley Foundation campus ministry at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He and his wife, Becky, have two adult children and three granddaughters.

"I'm excited about the potential for the new direction that we're taking as an annual conference, and about the kind of focus that we are bringing to local churches and ministries," Lancaster said. "I think as the church moves out into the world, the possibilities for new kinds of ministry partnerships will grow, and take us to new and exciting places."

The Central District includes United Methodist congregations and ministries in seven counties: Conway, Faulkner, Lonoke, Perry, Prairie, Pulaski and Saline.

## PEOPLE OF FAITH

### Hampton named secretary of the Arkansas Annual Conference



**Jeff Hampton**

Every four years, the Annual Conference must elect a secretary. Following the Rev. Dr. Bob Crossman's retirement from that role, Bishop Gary E. Mueller has appointed the Rev. Dr. Jeffery B. Hampton until the Annual Conference meets in June when the body can formally elect him.

"Bob Crossman has served with distinction as the Arkansas Conference secretary for the past 25 years, and as my mentor. His service will never be duplicated," Hampton said. "I am honored and overwhelmed to be asked by Bishop Mueller to serve as the secretary for the Arkansas Conference, and I am looking forward to working with the entire Annual Conference leadership team."

For the past 16 years, Hampton has served at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church Little Rock, currently as associate pastor in charge of caring ministries. Hampton has served in a wide variety of pulpits and staff assignments in both the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church, coaching lay ministry teams, performing pre-marital and grief counseling and visioning spiritual growth plans for congregations as small as fifty and as large as 4,000.

Hampton graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Ga. He earned a Master of Divinity and a Doctor of Ministry from Memphis Theological Seminary, Memphis, Tenn.

A Disciple Bible Study and Christian Believer Bible Study leader, he has completed studies in building covenantal relationships, Shalom Leadership, Stephen Ministry Leadership, marriage and grief counseling, and he has a passion for prison outreach. In 2012, Parkhurst Brothers Publishers released his book *Meditations in Black & White: Beyond the Comfort Zone*, a tool for reaching out to the imprisoned and those not connected with church life.

Hampton and his wife, Cynthia Ann Puckett Hampton, have two daughters, Joya and Cheyanne.

Though not yet formally approved as secretary by a vote of the Annual Conference, Hampton will begin working with the Conference Session Planning Team to prepare for this year's gathering, June 19-22 in Rogers.

## AC2014: registration open until May 31

Registration for the 2014 Arkansas Annual Conference, held June 19-22 at the John Q. Hammons Convention Center in Rogers, continues through May 31. Members of the Annual Conference may register using the packet mailed to them, or online at [www.arumc.org/ac2014](http://www.arumc.org/ac2014).

A late registration fee applies for those who register after the May 31 deadline.

Hotel reservations must be made separately. For lodging information, visit [www.arumc.org/ac2014](http://www.arumc.org/ac2014) and click on "2014 Annual Conference Hotels.pdf."

## AC2014 request for prayer shawls

*Calling all knitters and crocheters!*

The Arkansas Conference has an annual tradition of presenting a prayer shawl made by a Conference member to the family of each person we remember at the Memorial Service during Annual Conference (which is set this year for Saturday afternoon, June 21, at 4 p.m.). Please send your shawls to Annual Conference registration on Thursday afternoon with your pastor or your church's lay member of Annual Conference. The Rev. Sam Meadors will be collecting the shawls in the registration area.

Questions? Contact the Rev. Jeanne Williams at [jeanne.williams@arumc.org](mailto:jeanne.williams@arumc.org).

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## Step 7 of the Bishop's Mission Plan: Unleash Lay Leadership

BY MARTHA TAYLOR  
Special Contributor

When a pastor says something in a sermon that you do not like, goes the old joke, the pastor has “gone from preaching to meddling.” The pleasant and comforting stories (or enjoyably convicting stories about the sins you don’t commit) cease and the interfering with your life has begun.

Some may see Step 7 of the Bishop’s Mission Plan, Unleash Lay Leadership, as just that: meddling with the comfort laypersons have with their role in their churches and the expectations church membership holds.

In a recent interview, Bishop Gary Mueller said that that kind of thinking cannot continue if we hope to have vital United Methodist churches in the future.

“A mistake I think we make in church is we think it’s someone else’s job—a pastor’s, or a committee chairperson or a volunteer leader,” said Mueller. “They’re the ones called to do ministry. The work of ministry belongs to the people of God, to the disciples of Jesus. Sometimes I don’t think we take that seriously enough.”

To help prepare laity for this new work, the Bishop’s plan calls for coaching and mentoring that assists laity to “increasingly demonstrate passion, boldness and excellence in faith sharing, servant ministry, stewardship and utilizing their spiritual gifts.”

“A lay person is asked to live as a disciple of Christ, to do these amazing things, and yet is not equipped to do that,” Mueller said. “We’re going to work to develop training and resources to help them carry out the trajectory God has given us.”

Conference lay leader Karon Mann thinks every United Methodist in Arkansas has the potential to be “unleashed.”

“I love the phrase ‘unleash lay leadership,’ because it calls up a visual image of a bundle of energy that’s been harnessed and is about to be let go to go across the land,” said Mann. “I believe unleashing lay leadership means giving laity in Arkansas the permission to live up to their fullest potential as Christians.”

Mann says she’s witnessed the difference between an enthusiastic Christian and the lukewarm Christian John Wesley warned his followers not to become.

Enthusiastic Christians “are always looking for ways to serve, ways to learn, and they want to be guided by the Holy Spirit in the directions that God wants them to work,” said Mann.

Mann believes her role as Conference lay leader in part is to keep her eyes open for

opportunities for the Conference to be a resource to local congregations.

“I’m most excited about our Center for Clergy and Laity Excellence in Leadership and the Center for Technology,” said Mann. “Both of those centers will be wonderful resources to members in Arkansas. I view my role as trying to connect the dots, make the link or improve the connection.”

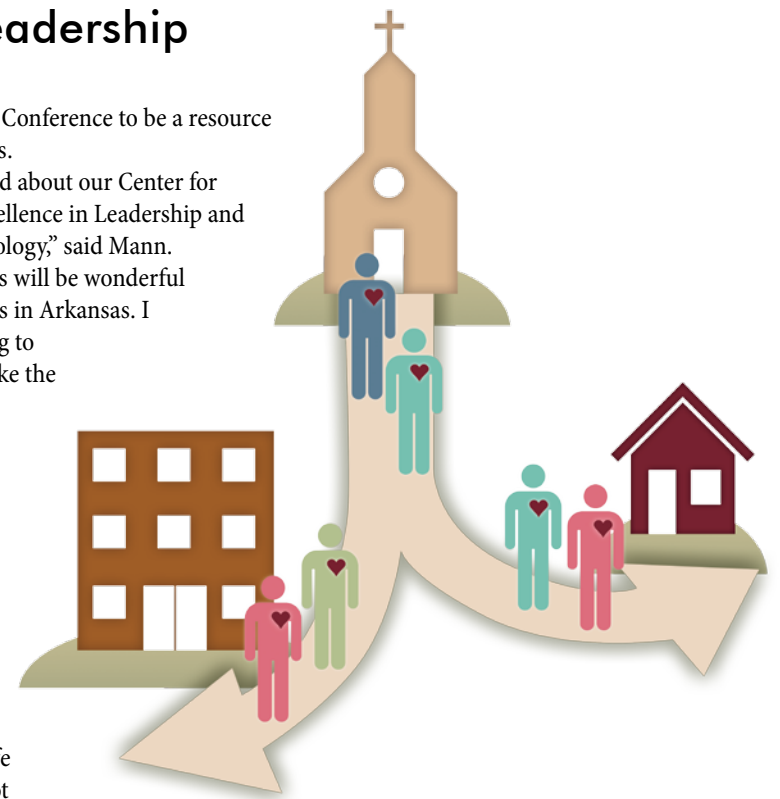
Mann is optimistic about the ability of the United Methodists of Arkansas to rise to the challenge and that there is a new focus and energy in the Conference.

“I see signs of life in a focus that I’ve not necessarily seen before,” said Mann. “I believe it’s taken our Conference a few years to move from thinking about new ideas in a new way to coming up with a plan to implement those ideas. And now with the Bishop’s Mission Plan, we will all have specific roles, goals and things we can do to continue to move us forward.”

Mann feels strongly that if laity and clergy make themselves available to the Holy Spirit and God’s direction that amazing things will happen in Arkansas.

“We are so limited by what we can imagine that we cannot even comprehend how God can use us if we are willing to be used.”

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



## Laity of Trumann UMC unleashing plans, seeing results

A city worker fills an abandoned lot near Trumann UMC’s building in mid-April to help the church carry out its plan of beginning a community garden. With city support including site preparation and installation of a water line, the church has begun planting a community garden, and also has enough room for a pumpkin patch this fall. Neighbors in the surrounding area have already begun to engage with the church through the garden.

COURTESY PHOTO



BY AMY FORBUS  
Editor

At an April 9 meeting of Trumann United Methodist Church’s Vision Team and Leadership Table, the group looked at the needs of their surrounding community. Northeast District lay leader Charles Long and Center for Clergy and

Laity Excellence in Leadership (CCELEL) associate director the Rev. Dr. Candace Barron guided the group in examining data from MissionInsite, the demographics resource available to all Arkansas churches through the CCELEL.

Two of the issues they identified were food insecurity and the need to promote healthy habits, such as wise

nutrition choices and physical activity. The lay persons present decided that a community garden could help answer two of the needs, and one person offered to ask the mayor if they could use some abandoned lots near the church for the garden.

By the end of the next day, Trumann UMC had permission to

To view a series of videos addressing the steps of the Bishop’s Mission Plan, visit

[www.arumc.org/missionplan](http://www.arumc.org/missionplan).

use nearby lots. The city even offered to clear the land, removing tree trunks and tilling the soil to help the church get started, and has since installed water at the site. In the span of less than two weeks, the church gained access to enough land not only for a community garden, but also for a pumpkin patch.

As the adults and youth from the church started planting the garden, people from the neighborhood came by and began to get involved, to the delight of the pastor, the Rev. Jeff Weaver.

“I did not expect such an immediate response from the neighbors,” he said. “It’s been great

to see.”

On the healthy living front, the laity decided to open the church to a bi-weekly Zumba class, which started the week of April 13. Its first day drew 20 people, a number of whom might not have been comfortable with coming into a church building for worship.

“I am pleased with how fast the laity moved when they got excited about these projects,” Barron said. “They are doing this all on their own.” She also noted that Trumann UMC reported a total of four professions of faith last year, and has already matched that number in the first four months of 2014.



# Small churches: Grow your ministry with young people

## Youth Ministry Cohort applications due by July 15

Does your church have an average worship attendance below 150? Do its people have a desire to be in ministry with youth? If so, your church may want to apply for the 2014-2015 Arkansas Conference Small Church Youth Ministry Cohort.

Arkansas Conference coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Ministries Michelle Moore has created a collaboration with the company Ministry Architects to address the youth ministry needs of small churches within our Conference. Funded in part by a grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, the nine-month cohort will guide churches in developing their unique vision and mission for ministry with young people, while also helping each team make a strategic plan for realizing that vision.

### Participant reviews

A pilot group of Arkansas churches spent the past year in the inaugural Small Church Youth Ministry Cohort. Among the participants were Melinda Southerly and Beth Coyle, volunteer youth leaders and family ministry coordinators at Prairie Grove United Methodist Church, where about 40 youth are active in Sunday school, Wednesday night youth gatherings and worship.

Southerly describes the youth

group there as “incredibly missional,” noting that the students are used to getting out into the community to live their faith. But she and Coyle had no formal training, and found the idea of the cohort appealing.

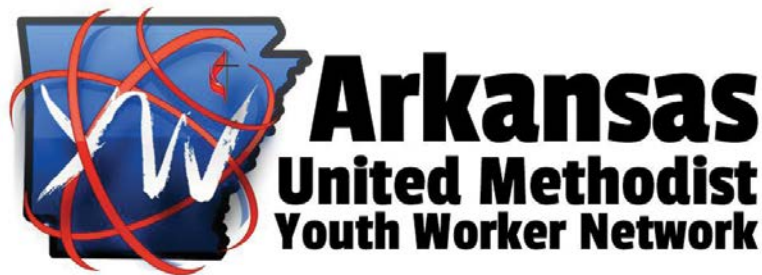
“We were wanting an opportunity to learn how to be the best youth leaders we could be,” Southerly said.

Prairie Grove UMC’s team was paired with Stephanie Caro of Ministry Architects as their coach.

“She gave us confidence and affirmed things we were doing right, and helped us change in areas we needed to grow and do better,” Coyle said. “We recommend this to anyone who wishes to gain the confidence and knowledge to have a better youth program.”

Paris UMC was another participating church in the inaugural cohort. Tina Mosley, a volunteer co-leader of the youth ministry team there, has deep roots in youth ministry—the child of a pastor, she was the president of her District Committee on Youth Ministry as a teen. She has drawn on that background in her role leading youth, but was open to learning more through the cohort. The church’s team prayed together about it and made the commitment to participate.

“I thought they were supposed to help us fix things, but [Stephanie] systematically went through



everything with us and said, ‘No, you’re doing everything right.’ It gave us enthusiasm for what we do with our kids here in Paris,” Mosley said.

She also valued the on-site training, which gave them the opportunity to connect with other churches, discuss common challenges and share successes.

“I’ve always appreciated those connections more than book knowledge,” she said. “It is nice to have a program where you get to talk about what’s working or what’s not working.”

Mosley added that the process helped her recharge and remember the priorities of ministry.

“You can get in the trenches for so long that you forget... the nuts and bolts aren’t what’s important,” she said. “When you go through a cohort like this, you re-focus on what’s important: these kids’ lives.”

### Deciding to apply

Churches selected to participate will be trained in the best practices of ministry with young people, while developing opportunities for sharing

in ministry with other churches in their community and district.

Churches participating in the Small Church Youth Ministry Cohort must:

1. Form a team of three to five people, including the pastor, a lay leader, the youth ministry leaders, and at least one other person involved in the youth ministry, such as a volunteer or parent. This team will work together to prepare for training days and coaching calls, as well as to develop a vision and plan for ministry.
2. Attend four on-site training days in central Arkansas for instruction and coaching in the best practices of small church youth ministry. Training days will be led by Stephanie Caro of Ministry Architects and Michelle Moore, Youth and Young Adult Ministries coordinator for the Conference.
3. Participate together in coaching calls led by Stephanie Caro of Ministry Architects in each month without an onsite training day.

Church teams selected to participate must agree to the following time commitments:

1. Participating in the duration of the program, from September 2014 to May 2015.
2. Reading the four assigned books.
3. Attending the four on-site training days.
4. Setting aside approximately one hour a month, excluding the months that contain an onsite training day, to participate in a coaching call.
5. Meeting as a church team to continue working on a vision and plan for the individual church’s youth ministry.

The estimated cost per church for this cohort experience is \$1,400, but the majority of the cost will be funded through a grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. Participating churches will be asked only to pay a total of \$300 to participate in the nine-month program, half on Sept. 1 before the cohort begins, and half on May 1 as it comes to an end.

Applications are due July 15; all church applicants will know by Aug. 1 if they have been selected for the 2014-2015 cohort. Dates for on-site sessions will be given at that time.

To request an application, contact Michelle Moore, Youth and Young Adult Ministries coordinator, at [michelle.moore@arumc.org](mailto:michelle.moore@arumc.org) or 501-425-5975.

## Celebrate striking out malaria at June 21 game

### Naturals tickets now available

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 at 6:05 p.m.. All are invited to come cheer for the home team!

**To buy a group of tickets, download the ticket purchase form available at [arumc.org/ac2014](http://arumc.org/ac2014). Tickets also are available as part of Annual Conference registration.**

In addition to \$5 tickets available through the Arkansas Conference, perks for UMC Night at the Naturals include free parking (normally \$3), as well as free wristbands that give children access to the Kansas City Royals Kidszone (also normally \$3). **If you have questions, contact Cathy Hughes: 501-324-8020 or [chughes@arumc.org](mailto:chughes@arumc.org).**



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## Retirees (continued from page 1)

forward. He said the proposal received positive feedback from attendees.

"We're recommending that they get onto a plan that's most like ours," he said.

As part of the replacement proposal, retirees who have served full-time appointments within the United Methodist Church for at least 10 years, the last five years within the Arkansas Conference and in its insurance plan, would receive a monthly gift to go toward payment of their Medicare supplement

premium. Years of service would affect the amount of the monthly gifts, with the maximum set at \$200 for a retired clergyperson and \$150 for a spouse.

"Our hope is that the cost savings on each person's coverage will provide the cash flow to start Healthcare Reimbursement Accounts," said Mona Williams,

said that if the proposal is approved, her office will guide retirees through the transition.

"In many ways, Plan F is better than our existing plan because it

covers most, if not all, of Medicare's deductibles and coinsurance," she said. "It also includes a free membership in the SilverSneakers Fitness Program."

The full proposal should be available for review by May 10 at [www.arumc.org/ac2014](http://www.arumc.org/ac2014). If

approved by the

Annual Conference, the transition from the Conference retiree benefits plan to the Medicare supplement-based plan would take effect Jan. 1, 2015.

**'In many ways, Plan F is better than our existing plan because it covers most, if not all, of Medicare's deductibles and coinsurance.'**

—Mona Williams, Conference benefits officer

benefits officer for the Conference. A Healthcare Reimbursement Account can be set up with automatic deductions to pay premiums for Medicare Parts D and F. Williams

## All laity and clergy invited to Aldersgate Covenant prayer gathering May 16-17

Registration is now open for the Aldersgate Covenant Gathering. This 20-hour event, which includes prayer, worship, holy conferencing and Holy Communion, begins Friday, May 16 at 4 p.m. and concludes at noon on Saturday, May 17. For background on the gathering, see the

commentary by Bishop Gary Mueller and Mary Brooke Casad on page 3 of this issue.

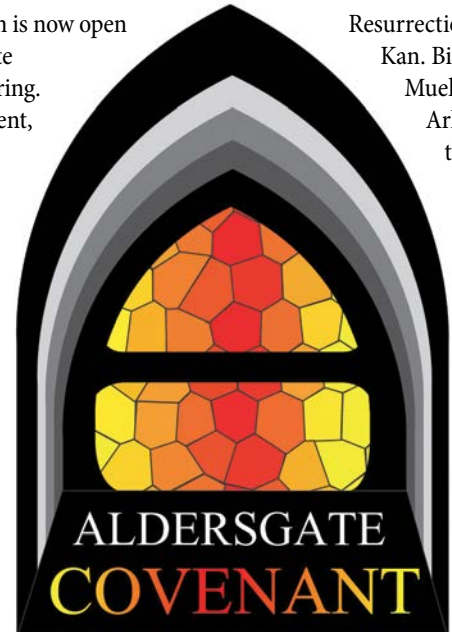
The gathering will be held at the United Methodist Church of the

Resurrection in Leawood, Kan. Bishop Gary Mueller of the Arkansas Area of the UMC and the Rev. Andrew Thompson, an elder in the Arkansas Conference who teaches at Memphis Theological Seminary, are part of the steering team.

As part of registering to attend the gathering,

participants enter into a covenant with others who are seeking spiritual revival for the United Methodist Church. The covenant is included in the online registration form.

To register, visit [www.aldersgatecovenant.org](http://www.aldersgatecovenant.org) and click "Join the Gathering." Registration does not include lodging.



## Human Sexuality Task Force to present guide for holy conversation at AC2014

The Task Force on Human Sexuality, appointed in response to a resolution passed by the 2012 Annual Conference, will soon present the results of its work.

Its assignment was to develop a curriculum to facilitate conversations related to the issues of human sexuality, using the

Wesleyan concept of holy conferencing. The resulting resource, entitled "A More Excellent Way: Holy Conversations About Homosexuality," will be published in June and presented at the 2014 Arkansas Annual Conference.

A printed guide will be

included in the Annual Conference packets, and additional material and a video will be available for download through the Learning Management System.

Conversations may take place in local churches, Sunday school classes or other small groups.

For more than 40 years,

homosexuality has been a controversial topic in the United Methodist Church and at its quadrennial General Conferences. This task force hopes this resource will help facilitate respectful, scripturally-grounded conversations, to come to a better understanding of all sides of the issues involved.

## CLASSIFIEDS

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

**All Souls Interdenominational Church in Scott** is searching for a pastor. Parsonage available. Please send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, c/o Stuart Vess, 11221 Craig Road, Scott, AR 72142 or email to [svess@aol.com](mailto:svess@aol.com).

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## Active (continued from page 1)

Arkansas Conference. "And we wanted to be certain that churches were caring for their pastors' whole families as they moved to and from appointments."

But the once-practical reasoning behind that requirement began to create other problems. For example, health insurance costs sometimes can have a bearing on where a pastor might be asked to serve, which can affect the ability to make the best possible match for a congregation and mission field.

"It's hard to make mission-field appointments when a church can't afford to cover the whole family," said Bishop Gary Mueller. "Letting dependents take available coverage from other sources will help that."

If the Annual Conference approves a recommended change to the rules stating who must participate in the Conference health insurance plan, it would mean that clergy spouses and dependents with coverage available under another health insurance plan would be free to choose that option. That change would go into effect July 1.

Family members who do not have employer coverage available would remain in the Conference plan provided by the local church or other ministry setting where they are appointed.

### Health insurance exchange

Bigger changes that would take effect in 2016 are part of another proposal the Annual Conference will consider: discontinuing the Conference's self-insured medical plan at the end of 2015.

"A big reason we have a self-insured plan was to avoid the problem of clergy families with pre-existing conditions having to find new insurance when they move to a new appointment," said the Rev. Dennis Spence, chair of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits. "The Affordable Care Act prohibits denying someone health insurance because of a pre-existing condition, so that isn't a problem anymore."

In addition, the board's research has found comparable plans at lower prices through the state's new health insurance exchange ([www.arhealthconnector.org](http://www.arhealthconnector.org)). For example, covering a clergyperson, spouse and dependents under the Arkansas Conference's current plan costs approximately \$21,000 per year. A similar plan priced through [arhealthconnector.org](http://arhealthconnector.org) would range from \$6,000 to \$17,000 per year depending on age, county of residence and coverage options.

Large employers who cancel coverage for their full-time employees face penalties in future years from the federal government, but the United Methodist Church in Arkansas is not considered a single employer for this rule, called the employer shared responsibility rule or employer mandate.

"While clergy are treated as self-employed for payroll tax purposes, they are considered

'employees' for income tax and benefits purposes," Williams said. In its employer mandate rules, the IRS allows churches, conventions and associations of churches (like the Arkansas Annual Conference) to rely on a good faith view of the rules to determine who is a large employer.

"We believe that it is a reasonable good faith interpretation of the IRS rules to treat each local church separately as a small employer of their clergy and lay employees under the Affordable Care Act," she said. "Each church has its own tax ID number, so the consensus is that they fall under the small employer rules and will not be mandated to offer employer-provided health coverage. As a Conference, for many years we have been acting analogously to an association plan (for the many small church employers), or a union plan of sorts for covered clergy, in providing benefits at the Conference level."

Stephens, Inc. is not recommending an immediate move to the health insurance exchange because there isn't enough data on the performance of the new program, so the board plans to wait another year and watch its performance. The proposal being presented to the 2014 Annual Conference keeps the existing insurance plan in place until Dec. 31, 2015.

### Funding the switch

If the proposal to end the Conference health benefits plan passes, churches will need to make financial adjustments. Instead of paying health insurance premiums of up to \$21,700 to the Conference, churches instead will be asked to increase the pastor's salary by approximately \$12,000 (an amount subject to change depending on insurance marketplace rates). Clergy would then purchase their own health insurance using the additional funds in their paychecks.

Todd Burris, director of the Center for Finance and Administration for the Arkansas Conference, acknowledged that under the health insurance exchange, an individual cannot pay premiums pre-tax. He expects that the lack of a tax break in that area will likely be balanced by an increase in pension and Social Security benefits because the pastor's reported salary will be higher.

"We don't want this to be a hidden pay cut for the pastors," he said.

If the proposal passes, provisions for a recommended compensation adjustment will come before the 2015 Annual Conference for approval, as will a comprehensive process to discontinue the self-insured health benefits plan and a clarification of how the Conference benefits office will support clergy, dependents and Conference staff in navigating the transition.

The Board of Pension and Health Benefits expects to have the proposal available for review by May 10 at [www.arumc.org/ac2014](http://www.arumc.org/ac2014). If approved by the Annual Conference, the transition would not begin any sooner than Jan. 1, 2016.

**The Board of Pension and Health Benefits expects to have the proposal ready for review by May 10 at [www.arumc.org/ac2014](http://www.arumc.org/ac2014).**

## 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](mailto:vim@arumc.org) or 870-826-0268. For Disaster Response (DR) projects, contact Byron or Janice Mann, DR co-coordinators: [disaster@arumc.org](mailto: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' project May 16-17

Two "This Olde Church" work days have been scheduled at De Ann UMC (Hempstead County) March 16 and 17, 2014. Volunteers In Mission will be removing and replacing siding, doing some carpentry repair and painting. If a licensed electrician or plumber is available, some electrical work and plumbing are needed. VIM will provide lunch both days and a Disaster Response trailer will be on site with tools and some supplies. De Ann will supply all materials, and arrangements have been made to haul away the debris. For more information or to sign up, contact Jacky Simmons at 870-703-4134 or Byron Mann at [vim@arumc.org](mailto:vim@arumc.org) or 870-826-0268.

Local churches may request a VIM team to lend a hand with "This Olde Church" projects, including small repairs to buildings and grounds, painting, cleaning, yard work, landscaping or building wheelchair ramps. If your church wishes to give or receive such help, contact Byron Mann, 870-826-0268 or [vim@arumc.org](mailto:vim@arumc.org).

### Early Response Team training in Fort Smith May 24

The next Early Response Team (ERT) Training will be held at First UMC Fort Smith on Saturday, May 24. This is a required training session for anyone who wishes to be part of a

team that serves in the immediate aftermath of a tornado, flood or other disaster. In many instances, when the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is invited to assist with disaster response efforts, only certified ERT teams may enter an affected area. For more information or to register, contact Janice Mann, Conference Disaster Response coordinator, at [disaster@arumc.org](mailto:disaster@arumc.org) or 870-703-8359.

### VIM Team Leader training June 7

A Volunteers In Mission training session for Team Leaders will be held Saturday, June 7, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Grace Community UMC Fort Smith. The registration fee is \$25; to register, contact Byron Mann, Conference VIM coordinator.

### Openings on medical VIM team to Liberia, Nov. 1-15, 2014

The Oklahoma United Methodist Conference Volunteers in Mission is planning for a medical team to go to Ganta United Methodist Hospital, Liberia from Nov. 1-15, 2014. The team will work with the health professionals at the hospital and to observe Community Based Primary Health Care at the Nenhwa Project that serves 110 communities in the region.

All are invited, but dentists, family practitioners/

internists, nurses and surgeons are particularly welcome. Cherian Thomas, M.D., from the Kingswood Institute of Mission will coordinate and accompany the team.

Information on the Ganta United Methodist Hospital is available from [www.umcor.org](http://www.umcor.org), as well as on YouTube. For details, contact Lorin Foster, Coordinator, Oklahoma Volunteers in Mission, at [lfoster@okumc.org](mailto:lfoster@okumc.org).

### Individual VIM opportunities abroad

The Individual Volunteer Program of the General Board of Global Ministries offers opportunities for individuals and couples to serve in mission in placement settings around the world, for time frames ranging from two months to two years.

One placement site that is in need of a volunteer is the UBL - Universidad Biblica Latinamericana (Latin American Biblical University) in San Jose, Costa Rica. The volunteer will provide administrative support in the Department of Development and Promotion, and coordinate the logistics for mission and study groups. Some Spanish language proficiency is preferred. The duration of this volunteer placement will be at least one year.

To learn more about this placement and others, visit [www.umcmmission.org/individualvolunteers](http://www.umcmmission.org/individualvolunteers). If you are being called to this important and vital ministry, contact Malcolm Frazier at [mfrazier@umcmmission.org](mailto:mfrazier@umcmmission.org) or call 212-870-3659.

## COMING UP

## May

**Free concert by Chris August at First UMC El Dorado May 15**

Contemporary Christian singer-songwriter Chris August will perform a free concert at First UMC El Dorado, 201 S. Hill Avenue, on Thursday, May 15 at 7 p.m. It will be held outdoors in the church's Jackson Street parking lot. Attendees are encouraged to bring their lawn chairs.

August is a Dove Award-winning artist, named New Artist of the Year and Male Vocalist of the Year at the 42nd Annual GMA Dove Awards, where his album *No Far Away* received the Pop Contemporary Album of the Year award.

The concert also features Mr. Talkbox (Byron Chambers), who has received a Dove Award in the Hip-Hop Song of the Year category.

Part of the church's new Lusk Concert Series, the concert is made possible by a gift from church members John and Becki Lusk.

**Spark12 opens fellowship for innovative ministry; apply by May 16**

Young adult leaders and those working with young adults who have innovative ideas they believe will change the world are invited to apply to Spark12 for funding, coaching, and other resources.

Supported by the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Spark12 is accepting applications from teams or individuals who want to bring their ideas to life. The deadline for applications for grants has been extended to May 16.

"The world is constantly changing as are the needs of our neighbors. The church needs new ideas infused into its work to keep what we're doing relevant and meaningful," said the Rev. Trip Lowery, director of Young Adult Ministry Discernment and Enlistment at GBHEM who oversees Spark12. "There are young people today with innovative ideas that will transform our communities. Spark12 is designed to help support promising ideas and individuals as they bring innovative solutions to a world in need of transformation."

Those selected as Spark12 fellows will receive funding, mentors with expertise in a related field and a network of peers eager to perfect the work of the team. Spiritual formation coaches will help fellows remain grounded and oriented toward doing the most good.

Spark12 fellows will be challenged to refine their vision, learn how to express their goals, and be networked with people and organizations that might be inclined to support an idea like theirs. Organizers believe the process will help participants be more successful than if they launched their ideas alone.

Finalists will be interviewed in June, and those selected as fellows will be invited to a retreat in Nashville in August for coaching and mentoring sessions. For more information or to submit an application, visit [www.explorecalling.org/spark12](http://www.explorecalling.org/spark12).

**Barnabas Award nominations due May 24**

The Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry will present the 2014 Barnabas Award at the Clergy Session of Annual Conference. The Barnabas Award is presented to a person, lay or clergy, known to have "a heart for pastors." Established in honor of the Rev. Jim Beal, we present the award to persons who show special interest in aiding pastors in the entry process, as well as in the work of ministry, as Beal did.

Nominations for this year's recipient are now being sought from among Arkansas United Methodists. If you would like to submit a nomination, please email your nomination to the Rev. Tom Sullinger at [tsullinger@arkwest.com](mailto:tsullinger@arkwest.com) no later than Friday, May 24. Please include the name of the person you wish to nominate and an explanation of why you feel this person should receive the 2014 Barnabas Award.

## June

**Salem Camp Meeting set for June 8-14**

The Rev. (Col.) Wesley Hilliard, senior pastor of Heritage UMC Van Buren and Senior Army Command Chaplain for the Arkansas Army National Guard, is the evangelist for this year's Salem Camp Meeting, held June 8-14, 2014, in the open-air arbor of Salem United Methodist Church, 1647 Salem Road, approximately 5 miles north of Benton. Services begin with music each night at 7 p.m., and a different music group will perform each evening.

In addition to the special music offerings, Lynn Hoggard will lead congregational singing, and Kathleen Dockery will serve as pianist.

On June 8, to kick off the week-long meeting, Salem UMC will provide a dinner at 5:30 p.m., featuring Richard Bondurant speaking on the history of the more than 150-year-old gathering.

A nursery is provided, and group activities are scheduled for children ages 6 and under. Refreshments and fellowship will follow each service.

The Salem UMC youth group invites all youth of surrounding communities to join them for a week of fun and spiritual fellowship connected with the camp meeting. For information on youth activities, contact Rachel Powell at the church office.

For additional information on Salem Camp Meeting, contact the church office at 501-316-2282 or Anne Beyers at 501-316-8316.

## REVIVAL IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

### The Confessing Movement of Arkansas Annual Breakfast

Friday, June 20, at 6:30 a.m.  
Grand IX and X, John Q. Hammons Convention Center

**"Revive Us Again"**

Dr. Janice Gilbert, guest speaker

Dr. Janice Gilbert is the senior pastor at St. James United Methodist Church Beaumont, Texas, where she serves as a teacher, preacher, evangelist, writer, counselor and visionary with a passion for empowering and equipping individuals through life changing faith. She received her Ph.D. in Christian Counseling from Cornerstone School of Theology in Oklahoma and her M. Divinity from Perkins.

Dr. Gilbert has been active in United Methodist Women and Black Methodists for Church Renewal. She has received the Copeland Award for growth in a mid-sized church twice and is a delegate to General Conference from the Texas Conference. She serves as a board member of Good News. Dr. Gilbert has written several manuscripts on "Prayer", a Young Adult Bible Study series, and Kingdom Workers Bible Studies.



Dr. Gilbert—A Servant Leader

Tickets are \$15.00. Purchase tickets as part of your registration for the Arkansas Annual Conference, or by contacting Karen Millar, 501-268-4859 or [karenmillar@hotmail.com](mailto:karenmillar@hotmail.com) by June 13.

## UMCMarket: shop online, get donations for your church

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.

In the last half of 2013, nearly \$49,000 was given to local churches and other United Methodist organizations through UMCMarket.

**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 (excluding UMC or United Methodist). If you have trouble finding your church by name, add the city.

**3) Shop:** Browse the categories and choose from hundreds of stores that will donate a portion of your purchase 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.

Every time you shop by logging in to UMCmarket, 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. Spread the word!



## OBITUARIES

### LITTLE ROCK Gerald K. Fincher

The Rev. Gerald Kemp Fincher, 84, passed away Saturday, March 22, 2014. He was born Oct. 26, 1929, in Waldo, Ark., to Grady Lee Fincher and Lois Blake Fincher. A graduate of Waldo High School, he attended Magnolia A&M College and Hendrix College, where he received a degree in Business Administration. He went on to Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, where he received his Masters of Theology.



**Gerald Fincher**

Ordained a United Methodist elder in the Little Rock Conference, he spent 42 years in active ministry. He served as senior pastor at several congregations in various locations in Arkansas, including Primrose UMC Little Rock, Star City, Prescott, Mabelvale and Hot Springs Village. He served the Little Rock Annual Conference as Conference Statistician and later as Conference Secretary. He also served on the Conference's Board of Evangelism and Council on Finance & Administration, as well as several other boards and committees. In retirement, Gerald joined his family in attending St. James United Methodist Church Little Rock.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife of 62 years, Julia Ann Keith Fincher; and his brother, Maj. Donald Blake Fincher of the Air Force. He is survived by his son,

Larry Robert Fincher and his wife Patricia; his daughter, Janet Fincher McDowell and her husband, Joe; grandsons Matthew and Michael Fincher of Conway; granddaughters Jennifer and Melissa McDowell of Little Rock; a brother, Grady Glen Fincher and his wife, Martha, of Fayetteville; a sister-in-law, Phena D. Fincher of Prescott; and a brother-in-law, Gerald Keith and his wife, Cledra, of Camden.

A memorial service was held April 12 at St. James United Methodist Church Little Rock, with the Revs. John P. Miles and Seigfried Johnson officiating.

### TEXARKANA Barbara Gilbert

The Rev. Barbara Jo Benefield Smith Gilbert, 67, of Texarkana, Ark., passed away Saturday, March 29, 2014, in Little Rock.

She was born July 1, 1946, in Haynesville, La., to Herbert and Lucy Benefield. She was the pastor of Fairview United Methodist Church and Ogden United Methodist Church, serving as a full-time local pastor in retired relationship, having retired from the Arkansas Conference in 2012. Before becoming a pastor, she was an administrative assistant at Panola College, Southern Arkansas University and Ouachita Baptist University.



**Barbara Gilbert**

Barbara found great joy in traveling to Romania with the

Rocking Romania organization of Magnolia, Ark., which did mission work for the orphanages in that country. She also volunteered her time as a chaplain for local hospitals and hospice agencies. She was a member of Fairview United Methodist Women and the Fairview Chancel Choir.

She was preceded in death by her father, Herbert Benefield, and her husband, the Rev. Denzil Gilbert.

Survivors include her mother, Lucy Benefield Morris of Center, Texas; two daughters and a son-in-law, Lawanda Smith Bridges of Texarkana and Kendra and Curt Bates of Atlanta, Texas; one son and daughter-in-law, David and April Smith of Carthage, Texas; one sister, Jan Datson of New Zealand; two brothers and a sister-in-law, Bob and Lila Benefield of Logansport, La., and Fred Benefield of Longview, Texas; four grandchildren, Claire Bates of Atlanta and Taylor Ryals-Smith, Alexis Ryals-Smith, and Ruby Jo Smith of Carthage; her "adopted" children, Tony, Patti and Carrie Lyle of Texarkana; her very dear friends, Jeanne Miller of Magnolia, Gail Burnette of Texarkana and Scotty and Luellyn Bates of Atlanta; the father of their children, Bill Smith and his wife Tommie of Carthage; and many other family and friends.

The funeral service was held Thursday, April 3, at Fairview UMC, with the Rev. David Kassos officiating. Burial followed at Pine Crest Cemetery in Atlanta, Texas.

Memorials may be made to Fairview United Methodist Church, 1524 Laurel St., Texarkana, AR 71854, or Ogden United Methodist Church, 241 Pine St., Ogden, AR 71853.

## Now available: free podcast series on grace by Conference Wesley Scholar

A five-part audio series by the Rev. Andrew Thompson, the Wesley scholar for the Arkansas Conference, is now available on the Network for Discipleship and Mission, [network.arumc.org](http://network.arumc.org).

Meant to be used by both laity and clergy, the series helps listeners better understand how fundamental grace is to Methodist theology, and that it is one of the cornerstones of our unique faith perspective.

To reach all podcasts in the series, plus an introductory blog post by Thompson, visit <http://bit.ly/1mvxf1q>. The posts appear in reverse chronological order; scroll to the bottom to start the series.



**The Network**  
for Discipleship and Mission

Looking for a place to

- share ministry ideas?
- connect with others interested in spiritual formation?
- tell your story of transformation?
- discuss what reaching the mission field means for your church's context?

Join **The Network for Discipleship and Mission** to connect with fellow United Methodists in Arkansas for all of these reasons!

Visit [network.arumc.org](http://network.arumc.org) to sign up or sign in. Remember to check The Network regularly for new content. To get the greatest benefit, join in or start a discussion!

## Museum salutes history of African-American Methodism in Arkansas



Edna Ricks, chair of the African-American Task Force for the United Methodist Museum of the Arkansas Conference (UMMAC); William Brown, historian and former church historian of Wesley Chapel UMC Little Rock; Linda Baker, curator of UMMAC; and Archie Moore Jr., noted local historian, collector, speaker on African-American culture and current church historian of Wesley Chapel UMC Little Rock, were among the attendees at a March 30 reception at UMMAC.

PHOTO BY DON NOLLEY

The United Methodist Museum of the Arkansas Conference (UMMAC) on March 30 held a reception to salute African-American Methodism and showcase several new gifts to its collection that are reflective of African-American Methodism in Arkansas.

African-American pastors of the Little Rock area, historians, church historians, and other African-Americans interested in

United Methodist history received invitations to the reception. It included a brief program featuring Edna Ricks, chair of the African-American Task Force for UMMAC; the Rev. Don Nolley, president of the Historical Society; and museum curator Linda Baker. Following the presentation, Baker gave a guided tour of the museum. UMMAC volunteers Martha Sowell and Keith Martin also served as hosts.

Housed in downtown Little Rock at First United Methodist Church, 723 Center Street, UMMAC is open for tours by appointment. To request a tour, contact curator Linda Baker directly at 501-372-4685. UMMAC is an excellent resource for confirmation classes and other groups interested in learning more about the Methodist heritage of our area.



## Methodist Family Health helps children in their care enjoy camp, their own Bibles



The Reverend Robert Regnier Memorial Church Camp at Camp Tanako includes kayaking and other outdoor activities to provide a full camping experience for children under the care of Methodist Family Health.

PHOTOS COURTESY METHODIST FAMILY HEALTH

A summer camp experience is something every child should have a chance to enjoy. For children in the care of Methodist Family Health residential group homes, camp is not only a place of spiritual growth and making memories, but also a highlight of their summer.

Methodist Family Health (MFH), the management company of the 115-year-old Methodist Children's Home and other programs, sponsors the annual Reverend Robert Regnier Memorial Church Camp at Camp Tanako, the United Methodist camp near Hot Springs. Now in its 14th year, the camp held each June is not only a treat, but also a major therapeutic benefit for the children and youth who live in the eight MFH group homes around the state.

The camp is made possible by contributions to the Methodist Family Health Camp Fund, managed by the MFH Foundation. Churches, groups and individuals may support this effort by giving generously to the MFH Camp Fund.

Likewise, every child in the care of a Methodist Family Health residential program is provided an age-appropriate Bible or Bible Storybook. This effort is supported by the MFH Bible Fund.

"United Methodists around the state can make a difference in the spiritual lives of these youth by donating to these special funds," says Maggie Beeler, Methodist Family Health's Director of Development.

To give to the MFH Camp Fund or Bible Fund, make checks payable to Methodist Family Health and mail to Methodist Family Health Foundation, P.O. Box 56050, Little Rock, AR 72215. Please indicate "Bible Fund" or "Camp Fund" in the memo line. For more information, contact Beeler at 501-906-4220 or mbeeler@methodistfamily.org.



A teen in the care of Methodist Family Health with her own Bible, given to her through the MFH Bible Fund.



Artist: Betty Ruth Dortch Russell McMath

### *Investing for the Kingdom*

Dick Butler spent many years helping the fledgling United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas become the strong ministry partner it is today. Dick and Gertie Butler are an appropriate beginning for the story of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. One of the original incorporators in 1963, he had a hands-on, day-to-day role in managing the investments of the Foundation from the start until his death in 1999.

Gertie and Dick Butler shared a great passion for philanthropy. Just a few examples of their great generosity include their support of Hendrix College, the Butler Center for Arkansas History, First United Methodist Church in Little Rock, the Gertrude Butler Child Development Center and Wildwood Park for the Performing Arts. A strong Foundation advocate in her own right, Gertie also looked to the Foundation to help her achieve her charitable goals. Their son Richard Jr. continues their great family tradition of service as an active UMFA board member.

The Butler legacy at UMFA is a series of endowment funds that have helped the Foundation to grow to its current status as one of the largest grant-making United Methodist foundations in the country. Today's ability to make transformational grants to United Methodist ministries throughout Arkansas rests in large part on the witness, generosity, vision and leadership of Dick Butler.



**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](http://www.umfa.org)