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Annual meeting provides encouragement, instruction for church professionals

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

More than 85 administrative assistants, secretaries and a few pastors gathered Sept. 24 at Philander Smith College for the ninth annual meeting of the Arkansas chapter of the Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries (PAUMCS). Attendance surpassed last year's record-setting gathering of 73 participants.

Arkansas attendees of the organization's national meeting in July secured one of the speakers from that event as the keynoter for the Little Rock gathering: the Rev. Jasmine Smothers, associate director of connectional ministries for the North Georgia Conference.

A child of two pastors and now a clergywoman herself, Smothers first addressed the crucial, above-and-beyond nature of the job that PAUMCS members take on day in

and day out: "You make financial sacrifices, you make time sacrifices, you make all kinds of sacrifices, and I can't say thank you enough," she said. "So if nobody else says 'thank you' to you, hear my words of deep gratitude for your commitment to this crazy life."

Smothers spoke on the importance of the Vital Congregations Initiative, and on the use of social media in ministry.

Count what we value

Smothers called out the reluctance of many churches to keep up with the demands of the Vital Congregations Initiative through its reporting tool, known as the VitalSigns Dashboard (accessible at <http://goo.gl/jXEKGd>). The Arkansas Conference is among those using the dashboard as a resource for identifying trends in local congregations. What's more,



The Rev. Jasmine Smothers addresses the annual meeting of the Arkansas Chapter of PAUMCS, the Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

congregations can learn about themselves by reviewing their own statistics.

In the North Georgia Conference, Smothers leads the charge to increase the number of vital congregations. Part of that task involves measuring discipleship.

"The Vital Congregations

Initiative is a call to intentionality around what we're doing," she said. "It values an intentional discipleship process. If we don't make disciples, then what's the point of being the church?"

One complaint Smothers hears about the VitalSigns Dashboard is [See PAUMCS, page 6]

Donor, recipient share stories ahead of Donor Sabbath



David Nichols, Hadleigh Jo Nichols, Courtney Nichols, Al Morvin, Melissa Morvin and Lance Morvin attended together a Donate Life dinner in Pasadena, Calif., just before the 2015 Tournament of Roses Parade. Courtney Nichols rode in the parade, on the Donate Life float, in memory of her lung donor, Matt Morvin of Arkadelphia.

COURTESY PHOTO

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

"Basically, it was one of those things where we thought that he had

his whole life ahead of him.... That's the last thing that you think, that your child is going to die."

But four years ago, Melissa Morvin and her husband, Al,

received news that no parent wants: Their 19-year-old son, Matt, had attempted suicide. They returned from out of town and hurried to his bedside; he lingered for three days before dying on Aug. 14, 2011.

During that devastating time, the Morvins, who are members of First United Methodist Church Arkadelphia, faced an important choice.

"The neurosurgeon was actually the one who came in and said, 'Have you thought about organ donation?'" says Melissa Morvin. "My husband said, 'Well, you know, Matt had talked to us about that when he got his driver's license... he had signed up to be an organ donor, so yes, we would definitely be interested in donating his organs if he doesn't make it.'"

At that point, a representative from the Arkansas Regional Organ Recovery Agency (ARORA) became part of the conversation.

"We met with Natalie Mills

from ARORA," Morvin said. "She explained it to us, and we knew it was the right thing.... I couldn't see that the blessing of this wouldn't be smiled on by God."

Matt Morvin and his family made a choice that is supported by the beliefs of a majority of the world's religions. The United Methodist Church not only supports organ donation and transplantation, but it also encourages local churches to observe National Donor Sabbath each November.

'A double-edged sword'

The Rev. Bill Sardin, associate pastor of First United Methodist Church Searcy, has designated himself as an organ donor on his driver's license as long as it has been an option. He will observe Donor Sabbath Nov. 15 by leading his congregation in a responsive reading during worship, but that's not all; he

[See DONOR, page 16]

As state wrestles with death penalty, a call to remember redemption

BY STEPHEN J. COPLEY
Special Contributor

Governor Asa Hutchinson recently scheduled eight executions in Arkansas over a four-month span of time.



Stephen Copley

They were to occur once per month, on designated days in October, November, December and January, with two executions per day.

All eight executions have since been stayed, pending a court case regarding Arkansas Act 1096 of 2015. The act prohibits the public disclosure of the supplier of execution drugs, except through a court order, which an attorney for the inmates is seeking.

As I write this commentary, I reflect on the lives involved in each of these situations, from the family and friends of the person whose life was taken to the person who did the killing and their family. It is a time of great pain and struggle. It's hard to make sense of what happened in a senseless situation. As a pastor, I find it is a difficult time to assist people in dealing with their feelings of anger and pain. When an issue stirs so much emotion, it becomes challenging to deal with the legal and political dynamics involved in each case.

The United Methodist Church has long opposed capital punishment in our Social Principles (and predecessor statements dating back to *Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church, 1956*). The Social Principles are the manner in which the church attempts to address issues in our society through the lenses of Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. The denomination's position is as follows:

"We believe the death penalty denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore and transform all human beings. The United Methodist Church is deeply concerned about crime throughout the world and the value of any life taken by a murder or homicide. We believe all human life is sacred and created by God and therefore, we must see all human life as significant and valuable. When governments implement the death

penalty (capital punishment), then the life of the convicted person is devalued and all possibility of change in that person's life ends. We believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and that the possibility of reconciliation with Christ comes through repentance. This gift of reconciliation is offered to all individuals without exception and gives all life new dignity and sacredness..." (Social Principles: The Political Community, Paragraph 164G)

At the heart of the United Methodist Church's understanding is the belief that all life is sacred. In spite of the deep challenges that the loss of life brings, we must remember that God has valued the redemption of life in Jesus Christ.

Where does the situation in Arkansas stand at the moment? At this writing, the case challenging Arkansas Act 1096 of 2015 was in Pulaski County Circuit Court. The argument was made that there was a need to identify the drug supplier and manufacturer to determine whether the drugs and protocol for administering them

would cause cruel or unusual pain or suffering during executions. The Arkansas Supreme Court ruled after the Circuit Court that there should be a stay of executions until the lower court could resolve the constitutionality of the Arkansas act.

The lower court began hearing the case Oct. 27. It will be mid-November before

the court rules whether state prison officials can keep secret the source of execution drugs. Much of what comes next will be determined by the lower court's ruling.

I believe deeply that all life is sacred to God, and that the death penalty removes the chance for the redemption and reconciliation of a relationship with God that each of us has experienced. In the midst of the many issues that are involved in the loss of life during a homicide, we must not lose sight of every person's deep need for a relationship with God. For this reason, I will continue to work for the abolition of the death penalty in Arkansas.

The Rev. Copley, an elder in the Arkansas Conference, serves as a Church and Community Worker through the General Board of Global Ministries, and as chair of the Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

'In the midst of the many issues that are involved in the loss of life during a homicide, we must not lose sight of every person's deep need for a relationship with God.'

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EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

#OptOutside

Think ahead for a moment, to the end of this month. Specifically, to the day after Thanksgiving: Black Friday, a revered financial holy day that ensures many businesses finish the year "in the black."

I remember shopping on Black Friday once in the mid-1990s. I dashed into a store as it opened at 7 a.m. to get a particular leather jacket that I knew would have a lower price tag on that day. I finished my retail pursuit by 7:10 (and I still wear that jacket).

I know some people who thoroughly enjoy the Black Friday shopping experience. I know others who make the best of it, having come to depend on its sales to obtain gifts that they normally couldn't afford to buy. And every year, I pray none of them wind up on www.blackfridaydeathcount.com.

This year, there's a new development: Outdoor recreation retailer REI has announced that it will close on Black Friday. Instead of following industry expectations, they're giving employees a paid day off and encouraging them to spend time outdoors. They've introduced the social media hashtag #OptOutside to promote the occasion.

Quite the way to buck a trend that seems to take more and more of workers' time with their families every year, as stores require working Thanksgiving Day to prepare for Friday's avalanche of shoppers—or even to welcome early birds who can't wait until midnight.

In its *News & Ideas* daily email, Duke Divinity School linked to Micah Solomon's Forbes.com commentary on REI's announcement. "Customers today strive to align their purchases with their values (at least where they can afford to do so)," he writes. "They are fans of 'attached meaning': getting something more (a social good) along with their purchase, in addition to the good or service received."

Our household has bought exactly two things from REI, ever. That was eight or nine years ago. But I think the company's strategy is working on me, and my buying habits may make a turn in their direction. (Granted, we don't have even an REI store in Arkansas, but there's always online shopping.)

I find REI's decision refreshing. It could make the company a leader in our culture—and can serve as a positive example for the church.

What if the church were to #OptOutside a little more often?

Outside of the consumerism that has us overindulging at cash registers and cultivating a "what's in it for me?" approach to religion.

Outside of our comfortable circle of Christian insiders.

And yes, outside of our buildings, too.

"We believe that being outside makes our lives better," writes Jerry Stritzke, REI's president and CEO.

What if, one day soon, the Body of Christ can say the same?

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



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Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
Dec. 4	Nov. 13
Jan. 1	Dec. 11
Feb. 5	Jan. 14



GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

A new kind of thanks

Thanksgiving may seem to be living more and more in the shadow of Christmas, but it's still a profoundly important day on which we give thanks for all of our blessings.

I am so very thankful for mine.

I am deeply thankful for my family; for my friends; for my brothers and sisters in Christ; for the people called United Methodist in Arkansas—both laity and clergy; for shelter, medical care, food and clothing; and for beauty, laughter, celebration and unplanned moments of grace.

But while I am genuinely thankful, I also have to admit I sometimes struggle with being thankful. And, sadly, it's on me because I too often default to making my thanks all about me.

It's easy to be thankful when things work out the way I think they should, when I get what I

want, when good things happen to those I love and when potentially devastating outcomes don't occur. And, frankly, I'm really good at offering flowery thanks to God for managing things just the way I want.

But I know in my gut that my self-focused thanks to God often ends up putting a barrier between God and me. So this year I'm working on giving a new kind of thanks.

I am thankful God loves me unconditionally. Yes, it's all about grace. God loves me just the way I am—in my best moments, my worst moments and all those moments in between. And nothing ever will negate this love.

I am thankful God loves me transformationally. God loves me so much God is never satisfied with me staying just the way I am. Indeed, God is at work

in my life right now, transforming me from the inside out, in a great adventure filled with graceful surprises and painful pruning.

I am thankful God loves me invitationally. God loves me enough to invite me to be part of God's mission in the world. Imagine it. God calls me to share Jesus' Good News, to make disciples and to transform lives, communities and the world—all on God's behalf.

And here's what I'm discovering. The more I give this new kind of thanks, the more I experience the fullness of life that God has created me to live and to share with others.

Thanks be to God!

Grace and peace,

Gary E. Mueller

APPOINTMENTS

The following appointment changes have been announced:

- Alicia McCastlain (part-time local pastor)—Pleasant Hill UMC Alexander; effective Oct. 1
- Kem Reeder (full member of other denomination: General Baptist)—Cedar Grove/Pleasant Ridge UMCs (new charge alignment); effective Nov. 1

For the most recent appointment changes, visit www.arumc.org/appointments.

Our Trajectory

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



PRACTICAL DIVINITY



BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON

Vision and visibility, then and now

Times, they are a-changin'.

The past 25 years have seen advances in technology that have dramatically changed our daily lives. Many of those changes affect the ways we communicate with one another. Both the Internet and the devices we use to access it have become fixtures in our lives in a way we couldn't have imagined a few years ago.

One challenge local churches face is how to keep pace with the level of change so they can reach both their own members and the unchurched people in their communities.

This is a question of both **vision** and **visibility**. How well do we communicate our vision? And how visible are we making it to others?

As unlikely as it may seem, there are insights to be had by looking at the way 18th-century Methodists asked these questions about vision and visibility. The time period and the technology were different then, but the need to focus and flex according to circumstances was similar.

Vision

The vision of the early Methodists can be seen in the way that they locked in on what they believed the word of God was calling them to be about. The Methodists

envisioned a world where all men and women encountered the transforming grace of God. They wanted hurting, broken and sinful people to experience the wonder of salvation here and now.

We can find that vision articulated in the "Large Minutes," a collection of pastoral advice and doctrinal teaching used by the Methodist movement under John Wesley. Wesley's own counsel to the Methodist preachers in the Large Minutes is clear: "You have nothing to do but to save souls," he says. "Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those that [need] you, but to those that [need] you most."

Also present in the Large Minutes is a kind of mission statement for the early Methodist movement. In answering the question about the reason God has had for raising up the Methodists, the Large Minutes state, "to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land."

There are other ways to understand the vision of the early Methodist movement, of course. Wesley often summarized the three main doctrines of Methodism as repentance, faith and holiness—a

kind of shorthand for how one experiences the joy of salvation. The key is that however it was stated—through mission language, practices of ministry or doctrine—the point was always to express clearly what it meant to move toward the vision God had given the movement.

Visibility

As the vision of the early Methodist movement was being articulated, its visibility was pursued in a whole host of ways so that the vision could start to become a reality on the ground. One of the most obvious ways was the missional spread of Methodist preachers themselves. By establishing a circuit plan and then deploying preachers strategically, Wesley was able to constantly press out into new areas of activity.

Less obvious is the way in which Methodists used the cutting-edge technology of the day—mass-market printing—to carry their message to a wider audience. Wesley published sermons, doctrinal essays and his own journal as a way to reach thousands more people than would ever hear his voice. In the 1770s, he began publishing the *Arminian Magazine* on a monthly basis as the voice of the movement. In addition to

his own writing, the *Arminian* featured testimonies and letters of other Methodists known to live exemplary lives.

What can we learn?

Vision and visibility were a large part of the Methodist movement's success in the early years. There are many parallels with our own situation, from which contemporary churches can learn a great deal.

For example, think about the multi-level challenge today of simply identifying a church's vision for its own mission and ministry. Is it business as usual? Or does work need to be done to specifically name what it is your church should be focused on? We've heard a lot in recent years about the need to form "vital congregations." But how should a church capture its own vision of what that will look like within its context?

In the 18th century, there were plenty of competing visions that the early Methodists had to buck against. One of the most compelling was the vision that the Enlightenment was holding up for society, which had a boundless confidence in the godlike power of Reason and in the progress of human society as propelled by human beings themselves. Another vision was of a religious situation that was largely moralistic in tone, and which certainly avoided the kinds of

religious enthusiasm that had gripped various parts of Britain in the previous century.

In other words, it wasn't easy for the Methodists to cast their vision of the transforming power of God's grace and the incredible experience of present salvation. They had to maintain a laser-like focus, and they also had to make creative use of vehicles like mass-market publishing, whose potential they themselves ended up revealing most fully.

How much these early Methodist examples will teach us depends on how seriously we take them. In a changing world with many options for people to choose, we need to be keenly focused on what it is we believe and are offering the world. We also need to use all the means at our disposal very strategically, where those are "old media" or "new media."

Church-by-inertia just isn't going to cut it anymore. Our spiritual forebears knew as much in their own time. Now it's time for us to learn the same thing.

The Rev. Dr. Thompson serves as senior pastor of First UMC Springdale. He can be reached at www.andrewthompson.com.

PEOPLE OF FAITH

OMP announces new board members and mission coordinator



Baker



Martens



Shearer



Simmons



Smith



Watson



Tarkington

Ozark Mission Project (OMP) has named six new members to serve three-year terms on its board of directors, and has hired a new mission coordinator.

The new board members are: Steven Baker, a member of Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas and a former OMP college staffer; Kirby Martens, an OMP volunteer and member of First UMC Mountain Home who serves that church as director of student ministries; Dr. Zack Shearer, a member of Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock and a former college staffer for OMP; BK Simmons, a member

of Crossroads Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, who became involved with OMP when the organization provided assistance to a member of his family; Donna Smith, a member of St. Paul UMC Little Rock and an OMP volunteer; and the Rev. Brittany Richardson Watson, pastor of Sylvan Hills UMC Sherwood and an OMP volunteer.

OMP's new mission coordinator, Carissa Tarkington, is originally from north central Arkansas and graduated from Southwestern College in Winfield, Kan., with a Bachelor of Arts in youth ministry. She now lives in Conway with her husband, Tark, and their two sons, Michael and Westley, where they attend First United Methodist Church. Before joining the staff at Ozark Mission Project, Tarkington spent more than a decade working in youth ministry. She may be reached at info@ozarkmissionproject.org.

Arkansas NOMADS attend annual meeting

A dozen Arkansans attended recently the 27th annual meeting of Nomads On a Mission Active in Divine Service (NOMADS). The meeting was held Sept. 27 through Oct. 1 in Kalamazoo, Mich., with more than 300 NOMADS in attendance. Each day's agenda offered various activities including Bible studies, devotions, seminars to enhance work skills and leadership, entertainment and fellowship.

NOMADS offers persons with recreational vehicles the opportunity to share their skills and time in United Methodist projects at locations such as churches, camps, mission agencies, local neighborhoods and sites that have a need for rebuilding following a disaster. NOMADS has more than 950 active members.

Arkansas NOMADS at the meeting included, from left:

Paul and Kathy Bauer of Cherokee Village, Dan and Virgie Brown of Rogers, Howard and Carol Stoner of Texarkana, Cecil and Doris Jones of Royal, Al and Debbie Leth of Hot Springs Village and Jerrell and Linda Fielder of Conway.



Johnson honored with Marie Award

Amy Dunn Johnson, a member of First UMC Little Rock and executive director of the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission and Arkansas Access to Justice Foundation, on Oct. 19 received the 2015 Marie Interfaith Civic Leadership Award for her work on creating medical-legal partnerships. The ceremony included a panel discussion featuring Johnson and co-honoree Vince Morris, director of the Arkansas Legal Services Partnerships and the Arkansas Pro Bono Partnership.

The Marie Award recognizes outstanding Arkansans who have made a significant contribution to the advancement of the public interest by word, action and example through interfaith engagement and civic service over a number of years.

A graduate of Hendrix College and the UALR William H. Bowen School of Law, Johnson coordinates efforts to address the civil legal needs of low-income Arkansans through policy initiatives, resource development, public education and legislative advocacy. She manages the IOLTA program in Arkansas, which collects interest earned on lawyers' trust accounts and makes grants to support civil legal aid. She also is one of the founders of Harmony Health Clinic in Little Rock.



Johnson

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Response to October issue cover story

Upon opening my *Arkansas United Methodist* this week I was shocked to see the headline where [Hillary] Clinton visited on the presidential campaign trail. That looks too political for a church newspaper in my opinion. It would have been better to say Clinton speaks at Philander Smith College without mentioning anything about politics. It is fine for the article to mention she is a Methodist and that should be done for anyone speaking at such an event but it does not need to look political.

Irene Gray
First UMC Searcy

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.



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ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
LITTLE ROCK
DECEMBER 18, 7:30 P.M.



Arkansas churches find inspiration at Leadership Institute

Thanks to the generosity of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality led a group of more than 100 lay and clergy leaders from more than 20 churches to the Leadership Institute at United Methodist Church of the Resurrection (COR) in Leawood, Kan.

In a gathering of approximately 2,000 laity and clergy from around the U.S. and world, the Arkansas Conference brought the largest unified group to the event, which ran from Sept. 30 to Oct. 2.

“What excites me about the Arkansas contingent that went to COR is that we took local church teams of lay and clergy leaders,” said the Rev. Blake Bradford, assistant director of the Center for Vitality. “Then those teams are able to return home to lead their churches. It’s in sending a group that we find new potential to really transform a community.”

Attendees participated in inspiring worship services, including teaching from COR’s senior pastor, the Rev. Adam Hamilton, and preaching by Bishop Violet Fisher. They chose from a number of learning sessions on topics ranging from effective time management for leaders to discovering spiritual gifts to navigating change in healthy ways.

“COR LI was a great source of fresh new ideas,” said the Rev. Ryan Rush, pastor of Good Faith Carr and Redfield UMCs, “as well as reminders of things that are easy to forget about making ministry truly vital.”

Many of the ideas presented had immediate practical application back home in local churches.

“I learned that 67 percent of people are visual learners and that people retain information 400 percent better when the information is accompanied with a visual image,” said the Rev. Deanna McCormack, pastor of Timothy and St. Mark UMCs, both in Camden. “I was reminded that we can provide visual images without screens, and that projecting text on a screen does not count as a visual image.”

“I was also reminded of the power of metaphor—that if I can connect an abstract idea to a concrete item, then that everyday item, such as bread and wine, becomes a constant reminder of the Gospel,” she said. “These things are more present in my mind now when I plan and prepare for worship.”



Members and pastors of Arkansas UMCs prepare to depart Sept. 29 from Philander Smith College in Little Rock to attend the Church of the Resurrection's Leadership Institute in Leawood, Kan.
AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

“It is always a joy when over 1,000 voices join together in prayer and praise,” said the Rev. Deanna McCormack of worship at the COR Leadership Institute.
PHOTO BY BLAKE BRADFORD





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UMCOR Depot benefits from Arkansas helpers

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has a long and rich history of serving others in times of distress. UMCOR Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La., welcomes more than 3,000 volunteers of all ages and skill levels each year, and the latest helpers from Arkansas traveled there in mid-October. Groups from First UMC Newport and the Arkansas Conference Ministry Center, along with staff members from two district offices, traveled to Louisiana for one of these five-night mission experiences. They spent their time helping prepare relief supply kits for shipment around the world to wherever they are needed, and some of them undertook facilities maintenance and construction projects to help keep Sager Brown running smoothly.

For information on future opportunities for working at Sager Brown, contact Cathy Hall Hughes at chughes@arumc.org or 501-324-8020.



Among the approximately 50 volunteers working at UMCOR's Sager Brown Depot the week of Oct. 18 were Connie Thomas, administrative assistant for the Northeast District (second from left); and Barbara Clark of First UMC Newport (right).



Arkansas Conference staff members Palmer Lee, Tier I Support with the Center for Technology, and Todd Burris, director of the Center for Administrative Services, tackled a drainage problem during their time at Sager Brown Depot.

PHOTOS BY CATHY HUGHES

PAUMCS

(continued from page 1)

that it's too difficult to keep up with counting people each week. Yet, she pointed out, almost all churches have a team to count the offering, and to log where it came from and where it's going. The Vital Congregations Initiative exists to help churches pay attention to what matters. If we value spiritual development, she says, we should pay attention to it.

"Money is not as important as people," she said. "And we have all of these elaborate systems to track our money, but we don't have systems to disciple our people.... That's the line of work that we're in, so somewhere along the line we've gotten this twisted."

Analysis and goals

Smothers walked attendees through a business process churches can use to prepare for setting goals: the SWOT analysis (SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses,

Opportunities and Threats).

"What are you attempting to do that is so big that without God, you're bound to fail?" she asked. At the same time, she encouraged them to be kind and realistic as they set faithful goals.

As PAUMCS members shared different items to place in the categories of the SWOT analysis, the phrase "That's the way we've always done it" emerged in the "Weaknesses" category.

"Whether they're 1,500 members or five members, I know that a church is in trouble when they tell me, 'Because that's the way we've always done it,'" Smothers said. "I'd put that down under 'Threat.'"

With the analysis complete, Smothers guided the group through setting SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic (or "Realistically Faithful," she says) and Time-bound. She encourages churches to include benchmarks in long-term goal-setting to ensure that progress evaluations happen regularly.

She then walked attendees through the VitalSigns Dashboard, reminding them in the financial

reporting section that "we're focusing on people here, primarily, and money as a result of people, not people as a result of money."

Smothers answered questions about what type of gathering may be counted as a small group (if it includes prayer or study, yes; if not, no), and how to count the number of persons engaged in mission. She also encouraged PAUMCS members to share the responsibility of keeping statistics up to date.

"Do not do this by yourself," she said. "There are people [in your church] who enjoy this kind of thing."

Social media matters

During her presentation on social media ministry, the 32-year-old Smothers explained that she is a "digital native"—someone who grew up with access to computers and the Internet. She encouraged attendees not to mail printed church newsletters to digital natives, or to expect them to stop in the hallway to read a bulletin board. Instead, use a variety of tools—email, mail, text messaging, social media—to push

news to a diverse audience.

Regardless of format, she cautioned against using unexplained acronyms and listing locations without directions.

"Our communications strategy is dependent on people coming to us," she said. "It uses insider language—'We're going to have the UMW potluck at Mrs. Such-and-Such's home; bring what you brought last year. Oh, yeah, everybody's welcome. Well, who is Mrs. Such-and-Such? Where is her home? And I didn't come last year, so I can't bring what I brought last year.'"

Most people perform a Google search as part of deciding whether to visit a church, so one of the worst things churches can do is leave old information on their websites, or have no online presence at all.

"If your church doesn't have a website or some social media account and they can't find out any information, they're not even going to bother to darken your doorstep," she said.

Smothers stressed that social media should extend invitation to people who are not yet a part of the

church, rather than post insider-oriented information.

"Make sure you're making the most of social media by presenting a message that matters," she said.

Smothers emphasized using the right tool for the intended audience, and reviewed which demographics of people use which social media platforms (for data from Pew Research, visit <http://goo.gl/MULhTQ>). She recommended signing up to receive emails from mashable.com as a way to keep up with social media trends.

The group also heard presentations covering a host of other matters related to church administration, including recent changes to clergy compensation and how local churches' apportionments are calculated; a review of this year's required forms for charge conferences; and information on the professional certification program PAUMCS offers.

The day closed with a celebration of Holy Communion led by the Rev. Richard Lancaster, superintendent of the Central District.

VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION & DISASTER RESPONSE NEEDS

For information on any Volunteers In Mission (VIM) project, 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). On Facebook, join the group "Volunteers in Mission & Disaster Response - Serving Arkansas & Beyond" for updates.

South Carolina flood recovery sign-up

As they recover from widespread flooding, the people of South Carolina will need help from Disaster Response and Volunteers in Mission teams. There will be years of work ahead of us as they move through the relief phase and then on to recovery. Please keep them in your prayers as they put structures into place to make possible the deployment of teams from outside the state. To register a team from Arkansas for work in South Carolina, contact Janice Mann at disaster@arumc.org.

UMCOR Sager Brown opportunities

The Arkansas Conference's December journey to UMCOR Sager Brown Depot has been postponed. Check this space for more opportunities to travel to Baldwin, La., in 2016.

For more information on Sager Brown Depot visits, contact Cathy Hall Hughes at 501-324-8020 or chughes@arumc.org.

Recovery and VIM work in Arkansas

There are multiple Disaster Recovery and VIM projects around the state awaiting volunteer workers. Funding is becoming an issue in completion of projects, so donations are welcomed and much appreciated. To learn more or get involved, contact Janice Mann (disaster@arumc.org or 870-703-8359) or Byron Mann (vim@arumc.org or 870-826-0268).

Kindling the flames of discipleship

Your giving through the Arkansas Conference



Benevolence Guide 2016

Presented by
the Arkansas Conference Center for
Administrative Services

In the book of Acts, when the apostles were gathered together in one place, the Holy Spirit descended upon them as “tongues of fire”—the flames of Pentecost. And two thousand years later, we still call upon that same Spirit for the fire, the passion, the inspiration to declare and share our faith in Christ.

Just as those who gathered together on that miraculous day, we live in Christ more fully when we don't do it all by ourselves. We rely on each other, because faith grows in community. Each person has the potential to help others become closer to Christ. Together, individual sparks become a steady fire, and the Holy Spirit works in ever more powerful ways.

We learn from those who go before us—those who feed our faith, as a fire must be fed to continue burning. In turn, we fan the flames, and we see new ministries nurtured and the love of Jesus shared in new places, with new people.

We use the resources at our disposal—spiritual, financial, educational and more—for transformation. When we carry out life-changing work in the name of Christ, we see more vital ministry not just in our churches, but also in the mission fields surrounding them. When we pass the flame to others, everyone benefits from the results.

These four pages include information about what the United Methodists of this Conference have promised to support for the coming year. Inside, you'll find:

- the 2016 budget approved in June by this year's Arkansas Annual Conference
- an explanation of how the Arkansas Tithe Initiative will be phased in over the coming year, including a timeline
- the Arkansas Tithe Initiative formula that determines each congregation's share of apportioned giving to ministries beyond the local church.

Through this benevolence guide, the Arkansas Conference Office of Administrative Services seeks to share why your giving matters, and how and where it makes a difference. Thank you for your part in kindling the fire that enables us all to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make more disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

Arkansas Conference 2016 Budget

Fund #1: Clergy and Retiree Benefits

(determined by the Pension and Health Benefits Committee)

Conference Staff Pension (clergy only)	150,000
Retiree Health Care	800,000
Disability Health Care	120,000
Reserve Funding	200,000
Subtotal Clergy and Retiree Benefits	1,270,000

Fund #2: General Apportionments

(determined by General Conference)

World Service Fund	1,313,189
Ministerial Education Fund	450,844
Black College Fund	179,846
Africa University Fund	40,260
Episcopal Fund	423,321
General Administration	158,547
Interdenominational Cooperation	35,276
Subtotal General Apportionments	2,601,283

Fund #3: Jurisdictional Apportionments

(determined by Jurisdictional Conference)

Jurisdictional Administration	24,745
Lydia Patterson Institute	52,833
Mount Sequoyah	12,634
Subtotal Jurisdictional Apportionments	90,212

Fund #4: Conference Administration

(determined by the Conference Council on Finance and Administration)

District Superintendents	621,700
DS Travel	97,500
DS Health Insurance	0
Finance and Management	517,182
Episcopal Residence	24,000
Episcopal Office	25,000
Episcopal Discretionary	12,000
Board of Ordained Ministry Administration	134,980
Pastors Moving Expense	85,000
Administrative Boards	202,600
Stabilization	200,000
Subtotal Conference Administration	1,919,962

Fund #5: Resourcing Local Congregations

(determined by the Extended Cabinet)

Conference Ministries Office	501,074
Equitable Compensation	83,000
Conference Center for Vitality	462,052
Conference Center for Technology	667,216
General & Jurisdictional Conference Delegate Expenses	7,500
Connectional Ministries*	1,730,519
Subtotal Resourcing Local Congregations	3,451,361

Fund #6: Institutional Ministries

(determined by the Extended Cabinet)

Camp Aldersgate	114,000
Hendrix College Student Scholarships	288,000
Philander Smith College	320,000
Subtotal Institutional Ministries	722,000

Total Conference Budget \$10,054,818

Special apportionment for Pre-1982 Clergy Pension Fund \$600,000

* Connectional Ministries include:

New & Refocusing Ministries, Committee on Episcopacy, Committee on Nominations, New Church Development, Leadership Development, Age-level Ministries, Board of Church & Society, Disaster Preparedness & Response, Discipleship, Board of Global Ministries, Higher Education & Campus Ministries, Board of Laity, Outdoor Ministries, Commission on Religion & Race, Commission on the Status & Role of Women, Connectional Allowance, Connectional Ministries Travel, Volunteers In Mission.

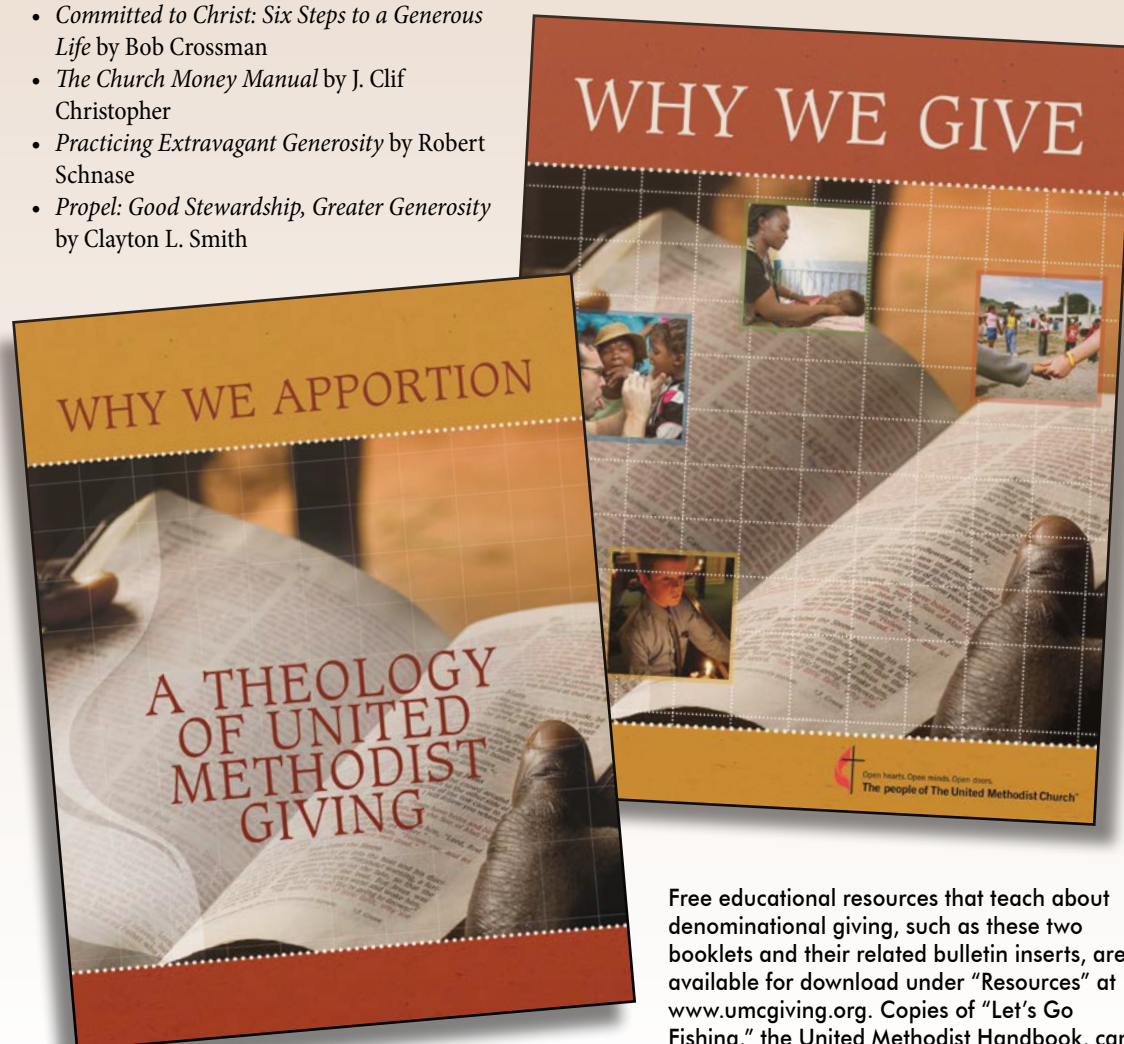
Giving as part of discipleship

Growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ includes developing a greater hunger to give back to God. Among the many stewardship, generosity and giving resources available for local church finance leaders and pastors, the selection below features some of the top United Methodist-related materials.

- **Discipleship Ministries, www.umcdiscipleship.org/stewardship** – includes digital downloads, self- and leader-guided online webinars, DVDs and videos, guides for budget building, capital campaigns and planned giving.
- **UMC Giving, www.umcsgiving.org** – includes many free resources related to connectional giving, such as The Advance and Special Sundays. Digital downloads and DVDs available.
- **National Association of United Methodist Foundations, www.naumf.org** – includes links to training, publishers and professional organizations.
- **General Council on Finance and Administration, www.gcfa.org** – local church resources including information on audits, real property matters and legal services.
- **Vital Congregations, www.umvitalcongregations.org**.
- **Lewis Leadership Center, www.churchleadership.com** – resources such as the *Theology of Stewardship and Biblical Generosity, Fostering a Culture of Generosity* and *Funding Ministry in Changing Times*.
- **United Methodist Church of the Resurrection stewardship resource page, www.cor.org/stewardship**.

Numerous books and studies related to the spiritual practice of giving are available through Cokesbury, the retail division of the United Methodist Publishing House. Contact Arkansas' Cokesbury Community Resource Consultant, Rachel Nicklas, at 501-553-8614 or rnicklas@cokebury.com; or purchase resources online at www.cokesbury.com. This listing includes church-wide stewardship programs as well as individual studies and books.

- *The Paradox of Generosity: Giving We Receive, Grasping We Lose* by Christian Smith & Hilary Davidson
- *Earn. Save. Give.: Wesley's Simple Rules for Money* by James A. Harnish
- *Treasure* by Jacob Armstrong
- *Committed to Christ: Six Steps to a Generous Life* by Bob Crossman
- *The Church Money Manual* by J. Clif Christopher
- *Practicing Extravagant Generosity* by Robert Schnase
- *Propel: Good Stewardship, Greater Generosity* by Clayton L. Smith



Free educational resources that teach about denominational giving, such as these two booklets and their related bulletin inserts, are available for download under "Resources" at www.umcsgiving.org. Copies of "Let's Go Fishing," the United Methodist Handbook, can be ordered in print, also at no charge.

Our shared ministry makes a difference...

...in young lives:

Each year on the first weekend of March, more than 1,200 youth and youth leaders gather for Veritas, the largest annual Arkansas United Methodist youth event. They experience passionate worship, spiritual renewal and community building. Some of these young people begin to discern a call to a lifetime of ministry and Christian service. Without local churches' apportionment giving, life-changing events such as Veritas would not happen.



...in restoring hope:

When disaster strikes, United Methodists of Arkansas get to work. Our connection enables us to respond quickly, not just with people ready to clear storm debris, but also with specially-trained care teams to attend to emotional and spiritual needs of those who have suffered a loss. Local churches' gifts make it possible for our Disaster Response Team to act quickly and efficiently in times of trouble.

AUM FILE PHOTOS

Center for Administrative Services



The staff of the Arkansas Conference Center for Administrative Services is here to answer your questions about apportionments, health care coverage choices, clergy pensions and more. Front row, from left: Diane Denham, assistant treasurer; Wendy Brunson Daniels, assistant benefits officer; Melissa Sanders, office manager and Conference statistician. Back row: Cathy Hall Hughes, church relations liaison; Todd Burris, treasurer and director of administrative services; Mona Williams, benefits officer. Not pictured: Che Dolan, administrative assistant/receptionist.

How to reach Center for Administrative Services staff

Mailing address: P.O. Box 3611, Little Rock, AR 72203

Physical address: 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202

(Second floor of the Kendall Center, Philander Smith College)

Phone: 501-324-8020; **Toll-free:** 877-646-1816

Arkansas Tithe Initiative

A new system for sharing our gifts

At the 2015 Arkansas Annual Conference, clergy and lay members approved a measure known as the Arkansas Tithe Initiative. One of the primary goals of the Tithe Initiative is to more closely relate connectional giving to the biblical model of a tithe—10 percent. The formula seeks to keep the bulk of local church offering—90 percent—available for use within the congregation's mission field.

The new formula, based on income received by the local church, creates a more transparent and equitable calculation process than the system based on a local church's expenses. Every church will use the same calculation, rather than a complex structure that can feel unjust even if it is not.

This formula ties the conference budget directly to the financial health of local churches, thus enhancing the sustainability of future conference and local church budgets. By basing the local church apportionment on the total revenue available to that congregation to spend on normal operating expenses (and thus their ability to pay apportionments), the system avoids penalizing congregations for decisions on how they will spend their revenue.



The Arkansas Tithe Initiative:
A New Way to Share Ministry

Implementation timeline for the Arkansas Tithe Initiative

- Oct. 1, 2015 – Monthly income reporting began: local churches send information to Conference Statistician
- March 2016 – Conference Council on Finance & Administration prepares final Tithe Initiative recommendations for the Annual Conference
- June 19-22, 2016 – Arkansas Annual Conference finalizes income and exclusions; 2017 Conference budget set
- Feb. 10, 2017 – Monthly tithe due for January income
- March 10, 2017 – Monthly tithe due for February income
- Tithes for subsequent months will be based on a local church's income during the previous month.

Worksheet: How pension for full-time clergy will be billed in 2016

Beginning Jan. 1, 2016, local churches will pay 100 percent of their own full-time clergy's pension costs. The Conference will bill churches for pension based on Plan compensation of the full-time pastor or pastors appointed there. The pension invoice will include clergy retirement, known as CRSP-DB and CRSP-DC, along with CPP, the premium cost for clergy death and disability benefits. Churches will no longer be billed for health plan premiums. Each church is billed on a quarterly basis, but may choose to pay monthly.

In 2015, 75 percent of total pension costs were billed to local churches, with the remaining 25 percent included in the Conference budget and covered through Ministerial Support apportionments. For 2016, the Clergy and Retiree Benefits Fund will provide for retiree/surviving spouse healthcare premium stipends; Conference-responsible Extension Ministry benefits; and healthcare premium stipends for clergy on approved Medical Leave.

2016 Pastor's Gross Salary*	\$ _____
2016 Housing**	\$ _____
Total Plan Compensation	\$ _____
Plan Compensation Amount x 0.15	\$ _____
Total Pension Bill for 2016	\$ _____
2016 Monthly Billing Amount (÷ 12)	\$ _____

Example: Susannah Wesley UMC, Anytown, Ark.

2016 Pastor's Gross Salary*	\$50,000.00
2016 Housing**	\$12,500.00
Total Plan Compensation	\$62,500.00
Plan Compensation Amount x 0.15	\$9,375.00
Total Pension Bill for 2016	\$9,375.00
2016 Monthly Billing Amount (÷ 12)	\$781.25

* Does include UMPIP contribution. Does not include professional expense accounts.

**Housing is the actual allowance amount or, in the case of a parsonage, 25 percent of gross salary.

Worksheet: Calculating apportionments for Arkansas churches in 2016

Information for this worksheet should be gathered from Tables II and III of the local church's Statistical Report for the Calendar Year 2014, to which the line numbers refer. If you do not have this report, you can obtain a copy from your church office, or from the Conference Center for Administrative Services (see contact information on page 8).

Section I: Calculate the Expense-based apportionment

Health insurance paid to Conference (Line 47)	_____	
Pastor's salary (Line 48)	+ _____	
Associates' salaries (Line 49)	+ _____	
Utilities and allowances (Line 50)	+ _____	
Accountable reimbursements paid to pastors (Line 51)	+ _____	
Other cash allowances (Line 52)	+ _____	
Deacon ministry compensation (Line 53)	+ _____	
Diaconal ministry compensation (Line 54)	+ _____	
Other staff compensation (Line 55)	+ _____	
Current program expenses (Line 56)	+ _____	
Current operating expenses (Line 57)	+ _____	
Church Total Expense Consideration	= _____	
Conference Expense Financial Consideration		÷ 76,304,143.00
Church Expense Decimal		
(0.00000000: use the first 8 places to the right of decimal)	= _____	
2016 Conference Budget		x 10,054,818.00
TOTAL Expense-based Apportionment		
(Conference budget x Church Expense Decimal)	= _____	

Section II: Calculate the Tithe-based apportionment

Total Income for Annual Budget/Spending Plan (Line 62)	_____	
Total Income for Connectional and Other Institutional Sources Outside the Local Church (Line 64)	+ _____	
Church Total Income Consideration	= _____	
Tithe		x 0.10
TOTAL Tithe-based apportionment	= _____	

Section III: Calculate average of Expense-based and Tithe-based apportionment amounts

Church's Expense-based apportionment amount	_____	
Church's Tithe-based apportionment amount	+ _____	
Total of Expense-based apportionment amount and Tithe-based apportionment amount	= _____	
Calculate average		÷ 2
Average of church's Expense-based apportionment amount and Tithe-based apportionment amount	= _____	

Section IV: Calculate Pre-1982 pension apportionment amounts

Average of church's Expense-based apportionment amount and Tithe-based apportionment amount	_____	
Total of Conference average expense and income		÷ 10,055,272.00
Pre-1982 Decimal		
(0.00000000: use the first 8 places to the right of decimal)	= _____	
Pre-1982 Conference budget amount		x \$600,000.00
Pre-1982 apportionment amount	= _____	

Section V: Calculate 2016 Apportionment

Average of church's Expense-based apportionment amount and Tithe-based apportionment amount	_____	
Pre-1982 apportionment amount	+ _____	
TOTAL 2016 apportionment	= _____	

Example: Susannah Wesley UMC, Anytown, Ark.

Section I: Calculate the Expense-based apportionment

Health insurance paid to Conference (Line 47)	_____	11,280
Pastor's salary (Line 48)	+ _____	70,000
Associates' salaries (Line 49)	+ _____	4,700
Utilities and allowances (Line 50)	+ _____	6,500
Accountable reimbursements paid to pastors (Line 51)	+ _____	5,120
Other cash allowances (Line 52)	+ _____	4,000
Deacon ministry compensation (Line 53)	+ _____	2,500
Diaconal ministry compensation (Line 54)	+ _____	2,500
Other staff compensation (Line 55)	+ _____	154,794
Current program expenses (Line 56)	+ _____	46,010
Current operating expenses (Line 57)	+ _____	150,146
Church Total Expense Consideration	= _____	457,550
Conference Expense Financial Consideration		÷ 76,304,143.00
Church Expense Decimal		
(0.00000000: use the first 8 places to the right of decimal)	= _____	0.00599640
2016 Conference Budget		x 10,054,818.00
TOTAL Expense-based Apportionment		
(Conference budget x Church Expense Decimal)	= _____	60,293

Section II: Calculate the Tithe-based apportionment

Total Income for Annual Budget/Spending Plan (Line 62)	_____	539,309
Total Income for Connectional and Other Institutional Sources Outside the Local Church (Line 64)	+ _____	0
Church Total Income Consideration	= _____	539,309
Tithe		x 0.10
TOTAL Tithe-based apportionment	= _____	53,931

Section III: Calculate average of Expense-based and Tithe-based apportionment amounts

Church's Expense-based apportionment amount	_____	60,293
Church's Tithe-based apportionment amount	+ _____	53,931
Total of Expense-based apportionment amount and Tithe-based apportionment amount	= _____	114,224
Calculate average		÷ 2
Average of church's Expense-based apportionment amount and Tithe-based apportionment amount	= _____	57,112

Section IV: Calculate Pre-1982 pension apportionment amounts

Average of church's Expense-based apportionment amount and Tithe-based apportionment amount	_____	57,112
Total of Conference average expense and income		÷ 10,055,272.00
Pre-1982 Decimal		
(0.00000000: use the first 8 places to the right of decimal)	= _____	0.00567979
Pre-1982 Conference budget amount		x \$600,000.00
Pre-1982 apportionment amount	= _____	3,408

Section V: Calculate 2016 Apportionment

Average of church's Expense-based apportionment amount and Tithe-based apportionment amount	_____	57,112
Pre-1982 apportionment amount	+ _____	3,408
TOTAL 2016 apportionment	= _____	60,520

What is 'Pre-1982 pension,' and why do our churches still pay it?

The purpose of Section IV in the worksheet above has raised some questions among Arkansas Conference churches.

The pension plan for clergy who served in the years before 1982 was a defined benefit plan—that is, a type of plan in which the sponsor (in this case, the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church) promises to pay retirees a specific monthly benefit upon retirement. The amount of that benefit is predetermined by a formula based on the employee's earnings

history, tenure of service and age—unlike the current plan, which depends on individual investment returns.

Changing economic conditions led to that pre-1982 plan becoming under-funded in 2008. Since then, the Conference has been required to make "catch-up payments" to ensure that the plan is fully funded. The \$600,000 listed in Section IV is the sum of the catch-up payments planned for 2016.

We believe the pre-1982 pension plan will become fully

funded over the next couple of years. Because this budgeted amount will cease to be a part of the regular budget in the near future, the Conference Council on Finance and Administration and the Arkansas Tithe Initiative Task Force did not include it in the budget during the transition to the Arkansas Tithe Initiative apportionment formula. For now, though, it remains part of our responsibility as United Methodists of Arkansas.

BOOK REVIEW

Book offers spiritual and practical post-retreat guidance

Loving the World with God: Fourth Day Living

Rebecca Dwight Bruff
Upper Room Books, 2014

BY AUBRIETTA JONES
Special Contributor

Many attend retreats designed to motivate them to Christian service, only to find themselves at a loss when returning home. Some struggle to re-enter life outside the retreat setting. Others are impatient to get started in meaningful service, but don't know where to begin.

The Rev. Dr. Rebecca Dwight Bruff's book *Loving the World with God: Fourth Day Living* is written with these individuals in mind. She sums up the entire book's message on page 11: *What would it look like if the Christians in the pews on Sunday took their faiths into the world the other 167 hours of the week?*

The book's audience is "Fourth

Day" movement participants. As Bruff aptly explains in the book, Fourth Day retreats include talks revisiting Christian teachings and powerful worship. The goal is to enliven the faithful to live the faith on all the days following the retreat (collectively, "the Fourth Day"). Whether the reader comes from Cursillo (Roman Catholic), Tres Dias (interdenominational), the United Methodist's Walk to Emmaus or another Fourth Day experience, the book applies.

Using vignettes from the lives of returning "pilgrims" in each chapter, Bruff acknowledges the gamut of feelings Fourth Dayers could experience upon coming home. She then pivots to recount ways each returning pilgrim incorporates service into their lives. These examples show the reader the possible scope of their own callings. The author's guidance continues as she touches on surprises and disappointments a mission field neophyte encounters. Listening for God, making spiritual sense of mission experiences and developing

relationship with those receiving assistance are identified as components of missional living.

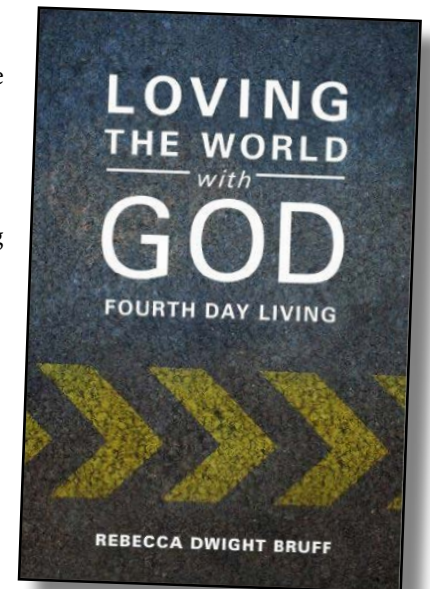
Bruff's approach to the subject is refreshing. It is at once spiritual and practical. The book is seasoned with Bible quotes and Bible stories. Prayer, not spiritual gift inventories or searching for mission opportunities, is the starting point for direction. And she rightly identifies Christian service as bringing glimpses of the kingdom, rather than being the way God's kingdom is permanently established on earth.

At just under 100 pages, this book makes for a quick read for the average adult. All Fourth Day language is defined, and there is no academic jargon. Each chapter ends with an opportunity to *reflect* on a Scripture passage, to *ponder* a personal experience akin to what is described in the passage, a call to *pray* and an invitation to put faith into *practice*.

I believe that all Christian outreach should be in concert with a verbal or written witness about the

One who summons us to acts of charity. Given that some in mission share faith in destructive ways, I would have liked to have read more about how witness best accompanies mission. This book does not explore that issue, but it does address the surprising signs of God's presence among those in need, and invites the reader to connect with Jesus in the least, the last and the lost.

I enjoyed this book personally and I would recommend it to Fourth Day participants—particularly the newly initiated. If paired with the other aspects of Fourth Day living, such as accountability groups and spiritual disciplines, this book could indeed be an impetus to do what the author suggests at the end of the foreword: "...get over yourself and



go love the world already."

The Rev. Jones serves as pastor of First UMC Lonoke.

The book review series that began in the Aug. 7 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist* comes from a reading list recommended by Bishop Gary Mueller. Look for the final review in the series, *Calvin vs Wesley: Bringing Belief in Line with Practice* by Don Thorsen, in December.

Hendrix adds partners to Aspire scholarship program



Nancy Rousseau, principal of Little Rock Central High School, and Bill Tsutsui, president of Hendrix College, sign a commitment that includes the high school in the Hendrix Aspire Scholarship program.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

LITTLE ROCK—Hendrix College on Oct. 5 finalized agreements that will give more Federal Pell Grant-eligible students from the Little Rock area the means to pursue their undergraduate education at the United Methodist-related college in Conway.

The Hendrix Aspire Scholarship program is designed to help level the playing field for those who may be restricted by the cost of higher education, said the college's president, Dr. Bill Tsutsui, at the event held in the Darragh Center of

the Little Rock Public Library's main campus. Tsutsui and leaders of the Arkansas Commitment program, Catholic High School for Boys, Little Rock Central High School and Mount St. Mary Academy signed memoranda of understanding at the conclusion of the gathering.

Aspire Scholarships will cover the full cost of attending Hendrix, including tuition, fees, on-campus housing and meal plans—and, in some cases, even textbooks and other expenses—for up to four students from each

program. The college also will provide academic support services to ensure the recipients graduate in four years.

"Hendrix has been a social escalator for this state and this region, giving a foot up to generations of students who went on to become physicians and lawyers, ministers and teachers, accountants and executives, artists and activists," Tsutsui said. "Now more than ever, we need to keep fulfilling this role, and to do even more to open our gates—and our pocketbook—to all the deserving, striving students out there."

Hendrix already had partnered with the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) to provide scholarships for Latino and Latina students; and with KIPP Delta Public Schools to provide scholarships for students from the Arkansas Delta. The first students from those partnerships arrived on campus this semester. The additional partnerships were made possible in part by alumni and donor gifts, including the recent \$26 million gift from the estate of Mary Ann Dawkins announced in August (and in the Sept. 4 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*).

"Adding a single first-generation college graduate to a family significantly increases the prospects of a better life for its members for generations to come," said David Knight, chair of the Hendrix board of trustees. "So congratulations to all of the organizations here today for coming together to provide opportunity and hope for some very fortunate young Arkansans."

"I commend Hendrix College for strategically developing relationships not only with high schools, but also with community-based organizations such as ours,"

said Jason Hamilton, executive director of Arkansas Commitment, a nonprofit organization created to identify academically talented African-American high school students throughout central Arkansas and guide them to become leaders of society at large and within the African-American community.

"To think that we would be able to send qualified students to a college as prestigious as Hendrix and graduate with a great education and very little or no debt, to me, that's just wonderful," said Nancy Rousseau, principal of Little Rock Central High School.

CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE YOUR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENT in the *Arkansas United Methodist* for 60 cents per word, no limit. Call 501-324-8037 or email aforbus@arumc.org. See deadlines on page 2 of this publication.

MLP BENEFITS - Mike Proctor: 870-315-3931, mlproctor@sbcglobal.net. Sells Individual Major Medical and Life Insurance to Individuals, Families, and Groups. Sells Medicare Supplements to age 65 and over. Please call for a quote: 870-315-3931.

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

Northwest Arkansas students support food pantry beyond Spring Break trip

In the spring of 2015, youth from First United Methodist Church Rogers undertook a traveling mission, helping several food pantries in the rural east Arkansas Delta. The experience that stood out was their time at the Delta Dream pantry in Marianna, part of a United Methodist ministry run by Evelyn Banks-Shackelford, a Church and Community Worker (CCW) missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church.

200,000 REASONS
to fight childhood hunger

we left Delta Dream with a check for over \$830 and let them know we wanted to continue to find ways to help their cause. Our students left Marianna, but continued to dream and pray for what more we could do not just for them, but *with* them.”

By summer, the youth had put together “Be the Dream Night”: a dinner and silent auction to benefit Delta Dream. An envelope lay on each table; inside were various hopes for Delta Dream. That night, each and every hope for the ministry was specifically prayed over. They raised almost \$3,500 for facilities improvements.

For their annual fall retreat, the students invited youth Central UMC Fayetteville and Central UMC Rogers, and asked that each person bring a canned good. The three student ministries together collected 120 cans for Delta Dream.

Edwards delivered the food and

the check to Marianna, along with the message of the students’ commitment to providing more help to Delta Dream in the future.

For information on how you can help the Delta Dream food pantry of Marianna, contact First UMC Rogers or the Southeast District office and ask to join “the Dream Team.”



Students from First UMC Rogers working in the Marianna Larger Parish Delta Dream food pantry. COURTESY PHOTO

Spiritual Revival: Local church resources arriving soon



Rev. Richard Lancaster, Central District DS, speaks at the district’s Spiritual Revival Preview Event, held Oct. 17 at St. James UMC Little Rock.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Hundreds of United Methodist pastors and laity attended the Spiritual Revival Preview Events held in October at five different locations around the state. If you didn’t make one of these events, the printed materials are currently being mailed to every church, and additional resources will be posted over the coming weeks at <http://spiritualrevival.arumc.org>.

Near the close of the Oct. 17 Central District preview event, district superintendent the Rev. Richard Lancaster spoke about the significance of this effort:

“Please understand these are resources for your local church. But also please understand the spiritual power of every United Methodist church being aligned for a short period of time,” he said. “Twenty years ago, Billy Graham said the United Methodist Church was uniquely positioned for a renewal and outpouring of the Holy Spirit in America. That’s Billy Graham saying that. He said that because we’re connectional. And if we could get all of our churches moving in the same direction at the same time, it would create a movement that would empower the Holy Spirit for another Great Awakening.”

Local churches are encouraged to pave the way for spiritual revival among United Methodists of Arkansas by:

- Forming a prayer team to focus daily on spiritual revival
- Praying for spiritual revival in every worship service
- Beginning an intentional, church-wide 40-day prayer effort on Jan. 1
- Joining in the three-week focus on God’s unconditional, transformational and invitational love beginning Jan. 24
- Participating in the “RElent” small group study between Ash Wednesday and Easter.

Look for the entire Spiritual Revival Resource book, along with video and worship graphics downloads, at <http://spiritualrevival.arumc.org>.

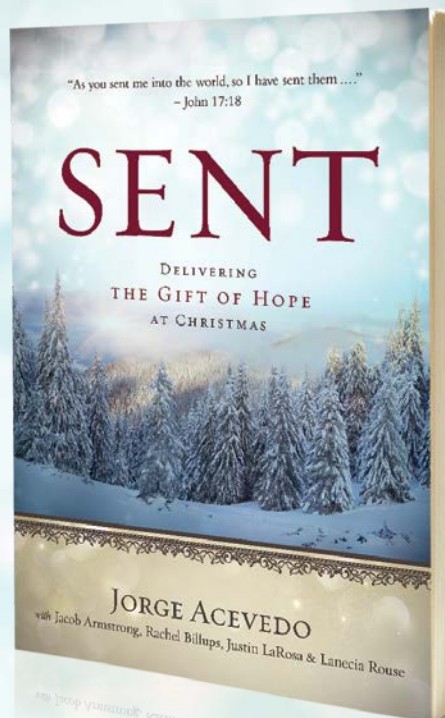
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Ingathering early drop-off locations announced

The Arkansas Conference's annual Ingathering at Arkansas Rice Depot is coming up Nov. 21, so now is the perfect time to assemble disaster response supply kits. These gifts from United Methodists of Arkansas will be transported to UMCOR's Sager Brown Depot in Louisiana, and UMCOR will distribute the kits wherever they're most needed.

For those who may not be able to make their deliveries on Nov. 21, several churches will serve as drop-off points for relief supplies in advance of Ingathering:

First UMC Harrison
1100 W. Bower Avenue
870-741-2351

Drop-off days: Tuesday, Nov. 17 to Thursday, Nov. 19

Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (please call ahead for deliveries during lunch hour)

First UMC Hot Springs
1100 Central Avenue
501-623-6668

Drop-off day: Saturday, Nov. 14
Hours: 9 a.m. to noon

First UMC Magnolia
320 W. Main Street
870-234-4530

Drop-off days: Tuesday, Nov. 17 to Thursday, Nov. 19

Hours: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.



For free registration, details and schedule, visit www.arumc.org/Ingathering2015.

First UMC Russellville
304 S. Commerce Avenue
479-968-1232

Drop-off days: Tuesday, Nov. 17 to Thursday, Nov. 19.

Hours: 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (please call ahead for deliveries during lunch hour)

First UMC Springdale
206 W. Johnson Avenue
479-751-4610

Drop-off days: Tuesday, Nov. 17 to Thursday, Nov. 19.

Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (at the north entrance of the church)

Goddard UMC
1922 Dodson Avenue, Fort Smith
479-785-1415

Drop-off days: Tuesday, Nov. 17 to Thursday, Nov. 19.

Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (please call ahead for deliveries during lunch hour)

Please take your Ingathering items to one of these locations on one of the dates listed above, or deliver them directly to the Arkansas Rice Depot, 3801 West 65th Street, Little Rock, on Saturday, Nov. 21.



Colleen Van Nostrand cuts flannel to make a jacket that will become part of an UMCOR Layette Kit. First UMC Jacksonville's UMCOR Room has been the starting point for countless layettes and more than 10,000 School Kit bags, in addition to sewing projects related to several other ministries.
PHOTO BY JOYCE WHITE

Jacksonville church's 'UMCOR Room' meets needs year-round

For about nine years now, members of First United Methodist Church Jacksonville have kept an area of their facility dedicated to working with fabric in the name of ministry, primarily by making supplies to send to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). Four years ago, the arrangement became more formal when a new building included a space bearing the name "the UMCOR Room."

While UMCOR Room workers do take on local projects—such as a quilt to benefit the Open Arms shelter in nearby Cabot; prayer shawls for ailing church members and friends; and head coverings for chemotherapy patients at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences—their handiwork reaches people in need all over the world. In particular, they produce baby sweaters or jackets for UMCOR Layette Kits, and have supplied more than 10,000 of the bags that hold the contents of UMCOR School Kits.

"We were down there one year and they had run out of bags," says Joyce White, a member of First UMC Jacksonville who makes an annual mission trip to Sager Brown Depot in Louisiana. "And we decided we could do that here—we could sew bags for them. So every year we take unfilled bags down so they're available whenever they want to fill them, because they can go through 14 or 15,000 in a week's time if they're doing a shipment."

The vast majority of the supplies in the UMCOR Room come from the generosity of church members and friends.

"Everything has been donated, and some money, as well," said Colleen Van Nostrand, a regular UMCOR Room worker. "We get fabric—people say, 'Mother died, and she had this room full of fabric,' and we say 'Thank you,' and we take it. And if we can't use it, we give it to somebody else who can."

The two women have started a beginner's sewing class open to anyone interested in learning. As they teach, they hope to gain some more workers with enthusiasm for the UMCOR Room's mission.

Church hosts aid station for 100-mile cycling tour

Wye Mountain UMC on the weekend of Sept. 24 served as a premier aid station for the 68-mile and 100-mile routes of the Big Dam Bridge 100 Bike Tour. The Big Dam Bridge 100 attracts almost 3,000 cyclists annually, most of whom choose the longer routes that pass by the church property. This was Wye UMC's second year to host the aid station.

Providing hospitality for a large event like this one enhances the congregation's mission to be a source of ongoing Christian hospitality to those riding the Wye Mountain loop, which is popular for riders in Pulaski, Faulkner and Perry Counties. Members of Wye Mountain UMC enjoyed greeting the cyclists on the tour, some of whom turned out to be fellow United Methodists. The church also has a budding relationship with a Christian riders' organization for central Arkansas cyclists.

And, in the spirit of Jesus' lesson in the ninth chapter of the Gospel of Mark, the church offers all riders self-serve refills of cool water from its flagpole hydrant, 365 days a year.

—submitted by Rev. Richard Gifford



COMING UP

Pew Research author to speak at Interfaith Arkansas' annual assembly Nov. 12

Dr. Jessica Martinez of the Pew Research Center will be the guest speaker for Interfaith Arkansas' Annual Assembly, set for Thursday, Nov. 12 at Christ Episcopal Church, 509 Scott Street in Little Rock. Registration opens at 9:30 a.m., with the event beginning at 10 a.m.

Martinez, a senior researcher for the Pew Research Center, was a contributing author to the Pew Center's study released in May of this year titled, "America's Changing Religious Landscape" (available at <http://goo.gl/vpSEQF>). The study involving 35,000 Americans creates potential for interesting discussions for faith communities in the U.S. The report highlights the fact that the Christian share of the U.S. population is declining, while the number of adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing.

After Martinez speaks about the study, representatives of the Millennial generation (those between the ages of 18 and 33) will be on hand to discuss related issues.

The \$10 event registration fee covers the cost of lunch. To register, email interfaithark@aol.com and pay at the door, or send a check to Interfaith Arkansas, P.O. Box 2441, Little Rock, AR 72203.

Fiser-Christie Endowed Missions Lectureship marks UMCOR's 75th anniversary with agency's top exec Nov. 15-16

St. James United Methodist Church, 321 Pleasant Valley Drive in Little Rock, will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) through this year's Fiser-Christie Lectureship. The Rev. Denise Honeycutt, UMCOR's deputy general secretary and top executive, will speak Sunday and Monday, Nov. 15 and 16. UMCOR, the relief and development arm of the United Methodist Church, is active in more than 80 countries.

The lecture series provides several opportunities to learn more about UMCOR, and what United Methodists in Arkansas are doing through UMCOR around the world:

- Sunday, Nov. 15, in all morning worship services: "Miraculous Expectations" (the 11 a.m. service will be live-streamed at www.stjames-umc.org).
- At the youth rally, 5:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15, Honeycutt will emphasize UMCOR's impact in Arkansas.
- The Lunch & Learn lecture on Monday, Nov. 16, will focus on the history and early days of UMCOR. The luncheon is free with RSVP; to reserve a seat, contact Susie Brannon at 501-217-6752 or susie@stjames-umc.org by Nov. 10.

The Paul Martin Fiser, M.D./Rev. James and Marie Christie Endowed Missions Lectureship is envisioned to support a stimulating lecturer annually, hosted by St. James, on the topic of the church's responsibility for, and activities in, missions, domestic and international. To learn more about the lectureship, contact the Rev. Claire Caldwell, claire@stjames-umc.org or 501-217-6710.

Shane Claiborne at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock Nov. 15

Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church on Nov. 15 will host Shane Claiborne, best-selling author, renowned activist and speaker. He is a founding partner of The Simple Way, a radical faith community that lives among and serves the homeless in the Kensington neighborhood of

Philadelphia, Pa. He has written or co-written numerous books, including *The Irresistible Revolution*, *Jesus for President* and *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*.

Claiborne will preach "Resurrecting Church" at the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Sanctuary services, with a simulcast into the New Heights worship services in Wesley Hall. A reception will be held in the Gathering Hall between services.

A noon luncheon and keynote, "Tearing Down the Walls," will follow in the Great Hall; make lunch reservations by Nov. 10 at www.phumc.com/shane.

Shiloh UMC Dry Fork holds 175th Homecoming Nov. 15

Shiloh UMC, in the Dry Fork community of Northwest Arkansas, invites former pastors and anyone else with a connection to the church or community to attend its 175th Homecoming celebration, set for Nov. 15. Worship will begin at 11 a.m., and a potluck lunch will follow at noon. Those attending will have an opportunity to share their memories of Shiloh and Dry Fork.

For information, contact the Rev. Lon Hudson at 479-200-5347 or lnudson111@gmail.com.

Children's Ministry Forum coming to Arkansas Nov. 17-19

After summer's excitement and the rush of back-to-school activities, children's ministry workers may find themselves weary and a little run down. But there's an opportunity to recharge coming soon!

For the first time in history, Discipleship Ministries is presenting the biennial Children's Ministry Forum (CMF) leadership development conference in Arkansas on Nov. 17-19, 2015. This conference will be hosted by First United Methodist Church Little Rock. While it is marketed for children's ministry leaders in large United Methodist churches, classes will contain relevant information for ministry in all size congregations.

CMF is sponsored by United Methodist Discipleship Ministries, the Large Church Initiative and the United Methodist Publishing House, and offers opportunities for worship, spiritual renewal, continuing education, fellowship, networking and most importantly, support. There will be more than 100 classes taught by nationally recognized leaders in the fields of spiritual formation, teaching, volunteer recruitment, technology, communication, administration and leadership development.

To register, find answers to your questions or to learn more, visit the Arkansas Conference Children's Ministry website, <http://kidz.arumc.org>; or contact Laura Stinnett, 501-225-9231 or laura@asbury-lr.org.

Perkins School of Youth Ministry offers early-bird registration through Nov. 20

The Perkins School of Youth Ministry (PSYM) is a dynamic training and networking conference for youth ministry pastors, practitioners and volunteers who are passionate about youth ministry. The 2016 session is set for Jan. 11-14 at Highland Park UMC Dallas. Registration is now open, and a significant discount is available through Nov. 20.

The theme for PSYM 2016 is "Make the Connections," focusing on helping youth ministry workers make the connections between ministry training, experience and practice. For details, visit www.smu.edu/Perkins.

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OBITUARIES

MAUMELLE

Thomas Macaulay Babington III

The Rev. Dr. Thomas Macaulay Babington III, 81, passed away Friday, Oct. 2, 2015.

He was born in Franklinton, La., to Thomas Macaulay Babington Jr. and Selma Mafin Richardson. Tom served during the Korean War in the Coast Guard/ Navy and later in the U.S. Army Reserve. He attended seminary at SMU's Perkins School of Theology and received his Doctor of Ministry degree from Vanderbilt. Serving as chaplain for the Department of Veterans Affairs in Brooklyn, Nashville, Dallas and Alexandria, La., he trained institutional chaplains through the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education. He also trained chaplains at Lady of the Lake Catholic Hospital, Baton Rouge and Jefferson Regional Memorial Center, Pine Bluff.



Tom Babington

An elder in the Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church, he served in pastoral appointments at St. John's UMC Baton Rouge, and Arkansas Conference United Methodist churches at Oil Trough, Hazel Edwards Memorial (Newark) and Bethel-Jacksonville. He mentored innumerable individuals over his more than 60-year career.

He was preceded in death by his parents and sister, Sallie Knight. A devoted husband and father, he is survived by his wife of 57 years, Sybil Blankinship; his daughter, Kelly French; his son, Thomas Daniel; and a grandchild, Cayla French.

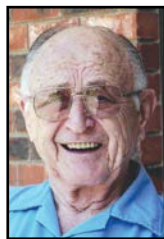
A memorial service was held at First United Methodist Church Maumelle on Tuesday, Oct. 6. Memorials may be made to First UMC, 1201 Edgewood Drive, Maumelle, AR 72113.

TAHLEQUAH, Okla.

Ivan Charles Bys

The Rev. Ivan Charles Bys, 93, passed away peacefully on Oct. 18, 2015, in Tahlequah, Okla.

He was born in 1922 in Fairfax, Iowa, to Esther Marie and Frank Henry Bys. As a boy, he was active in the Bohemian-Moravian Church near Ely, Iowa, where he learned to worship in spite of the fact he did not understand the Bohemian language. The family



Ivan C. Bys

moved to Center Point, Iowa, during his first year in school and was active in The Evangelical Church which became Evangelical United Brethren and finally United Methodist. The family moved to Walford/Amana, Iowa, during his first year in high school. He graduated from Norway High School.

In the spring of 1941, a tornado struck the Bys farm, destroying all but the house. He said this event "got my attention" and provided the setting for his call to the ministry. His co-pastors, Emma and Irving Arnold, persuaded him to conduct services at Swisher, a nearby town, and there he found himself "on the right track."

In 1942, he enrolled in Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, beginning eight years of academic studies. Through the Arnolds, he began to hear about Ada Caroline Clark, a parishioner at one of the Arnolds' five churches. As a young girl, Ada felt she would be the wife of a minister, and this came to be on June 4, 1942. They spent their honeymoon at Annual Conference, where he received his first pastoral appointment to Mineral Ridge and Mackay. He entered Simpson College in Indianola, graduating in 1948.

Bys' schooling was interrupted by World War II. He entered the U.S. Army in March of 1943 and was honorably discharged in November of 1945. His seminary training was at Boston University School of Theology, where he was ordained a Methodist pastor in 1952. While there he pastored the Saxonville (Mass.) Methodist Church.

In addition to the churches named above, Bys served Norwalk/Linn Grove/Spring Hill, Lanesboro, Carroll, Perry, Waterloo, Osceola and Des Moines Staves Memorial, all in Iowa. He retired in 1980 from the Iowa Conference of the United Methodist Church and he and Ada moved to Bella Vista, Ark.

While in Bella Vista, Bys and his wife were very active in Lions International, organizing the Bentonville Noon Lions Club; he also became the state membership chair. He worked two years for Cooper Communities until the Lord called him back to the ministry in 1982.

Bys served First UMC Russellville, Bella Vista UMC, Wesley UMC Russellville and Highfill UMC before his retirement from the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1994. In 2001, he and Ada moved to Go Ye Village in Tahlequah, Okla., where they continued their involvement in the United Methodist Church.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his brother, Glenn (Eva); his beloved wife of 64 years, Ada; a son-in-law, Tom Woodin, and a daughter-in-law, Linda. He is survived by

a sister, Leona Sandersfeld of Dewey, Ariz.; three sons, Neil (Bernice) of San Antonio, Texas; Evan of Garland, Texas; and Roger (Sida) of Gurnee, Ill.; daughter Deanna (David Bothwell) of Billings, Mont.; and foster daughter Bobi Woodin of Creston, Iowa; eight grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, many nieces and nephews and a host of friends.

A Celebration of Life was held Saturday, Oct. 31, at First UMC Tahlequah, Okla. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to First UMC, 300 W. Delaware, Tahlequah, OK 74464.

NASHVILLE, Tenn.

Virginia Merdell "Delle" Cox

Virginia Merdell "Delle" Woodard Cox, recently residing in Nashville, Tenn., passed away on Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 7, 2015. She would have been 82 years of age on her next birthday.

Delle was born on Sept. 11, 1933, in Dutch Creek, Ark., to the late Virgil Clifton Woodard and Annie Merle Williams Woodard. After spending her formative years in Arkansas and California, she married Billy Howard Cox of Huntsville, Ark., who was a Methodist minister serving as a chaplain in the U.S. Army. They were married for 55 years, raised four sons and were stationed throughout the United States and Europe.

Since grammar school, Delle enjoyed writing poetry, songs and plays, mainly for self-expression. In 1974, she shared a collection of her poems in her book, "The Heart is Sometimes AWOL." AWOL is the military acronym for Absent Without Leave.

Family and friends were Delle's passion and delight, second only to her devotion to God. She was an avid student of the Bible and always willing to teach the truth in love.

In addition to her parents and husband, Delle was preceded in death by her two brothers, Gerald and Eugene Woodard. She is survived by her four sons, William Howard (Laura Taylor) Cox of Nashville, Tenn., Timothy Christian (Suzanne Eagye) Cox of Pegram, Tenn., Thomas Whitney (Sheri Ferguson) Cox of Graham, N.C., and Jonathan Marcus (Janna Bray) Cox of Fairview, Tenn.; fifteen grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and one sister, Maxine Woodard Herring of Danville, Ark.

A funeral service was held Saturday, Sept. 12, 2015, at the First Baptist Church in Danville. A graveside service followed at the Earl Ladd Memorial Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, 322 Eighth Avenue, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10001.

U of A Wesley launches alternative Christmas giving campaign

Walls and trusses are rising from red clay along Lindell Avenue in Fayetteville as students and leaders anticipate the opening of the U of A Wesley College Ministry's new Wesley House.

U of A Wesley College Ministry has raised \$1.7 million toward the \$2 million total cost of the Wesley House, thanks to numerous donors from Wesley's initial capital campaign, the support of Central United Methodist Church in Fayetteville, a grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas and recent donors who have claimed naming opportunities in the building.

Now, only months away from

moving in, U of A Wesley is focusing on furnishing its new home through an alternative Christmas gift-giving campaign called Making Our House a Home.

"Making Our House a Home is about filling the new Wesley House with everything that will make it a true second home for the students in our ministry," said the Rev. Emily Burch, U of A Wesley's college pastor. "The location on Lindell Avenue places us right on the daily path of students, and we are excited about having that daily touch with students between classes and on evenings and weekends."

Students are just as excited as

Burch about how the new Wesley House will expand the ministry and give peers a landing place.

"I can't wait for our new building to be done!" said Camryn Clarke, a member of Wesley's leadership team. "We can give students a place to be, a place to rest and a place to connect—not just with others, but with the Lord."

Donors can purchase a piece of furniture or even furnish a whole room in the new house. Gifts can be made in honor or memory of a loved one, and a holiday acknowledgement will be sent to a designated recipient. To make a gift, or for information on Making Our House a Home, visit www.uawesley.com.



ILLUSTRATION BY MILLER BOSKUS LACK ARCHITECTS, P.A.

Donor (continued from page 1)

also will share the experience his family had when his mother, Lynn Richardson, became a transplant recipient earlier this year.

"It became this incredibly miraculous experience," he said of his mother's double lung transplant, "but it was also a heart-wrenching experience."

Richardson, who had pulmonary fibrosis, agrees.



Lynn Richardson

"I'm blessed, and whatever time it gives me, I kind of feel guilty that I rejoiced, and the lady that gave me the lungs, her family was going through a funeral," she said. "They were coping with that while I was rejoicing. It's a double-edged sword."

Richardson has no doubt that God was involved in her transplant, as a number of factors must match between donor and recipient to make a transplant possible.

"I was never afraid," she said. "I wasn't afraid of dying—if that was what was going to happen, that was what God wanted. I was just in his hands."

She has had no problems post-transplant, and expects to have one more follow-up test in the spring.

Sardin wrestled with a theological quandary as they waited for donor lungs to become available.

"At some point, you're wondering, 'How can I pray for my mother to receive these lungs knowing that someone has to die for her to receive them?'" he said. "But I think the turning point for me was when I realized I'm not praying for someone to die, I'm praying for God to do something miraculous out of a tragedy. And someone just like me that has believed in it their entire lives is able to offer this gift of life to another person."

Blessings and miracles

Today, while the Morvins still grieve, they also see the blessings and miracles that unfolded through Matt's gifts to others. Seven people benefited from his organ and tissue donations.

After donating Matt's organs, the Morvins made an additional decision: that they would be open to hearing from any recipients of Matt's organs who wished to contact them. They have heard from several, including Courtney Nichols, who suffered from cystic fibrosis and received a double lung transplant from Matt.

"Courtney has actually kind of become a part of our family. She is like our extended family," Morvin said. The two women talk often, and their families have even vacationed together. And because Matt's gift provided life for Courtney, she and her husband were able to adopt a child.

"God's blessing just keeps going," Morvin said.

When she looks back on that dark time four years ago, Morvin realizes how little they knew of what would come from donating Matt's organs.

"Now I can see how God has taken a tragedy such as this and has given us such blessings through Courtney and her wonderful, sweet family," she said. "How awesome is the power of God?"



Matt Morvin



Faith Funds

Laying the Groundwork

Every organization needs people who can be counted on to provide ongoing support. For the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, that group is the Bishops' Club. More than 100 Bishops' Club members give \$1,000 each year, or a one-time gift of \$15,000, to support United Methodist ministries in our state.

Bill and Karon Mann joined the Bishops' Club because they believe UMFA is a resource for the entire Arkansas Conference. Bishops' Club members make the Foundation's ministry possible. Because of their generosity and foresight, the Church is strengthened and more is done in the name of Jesus Christ.

"In addition to helping the Conference as a whole, the Foundation makes a big difference for local churches," said Bill. "Congregations all over the state who participate in programs like leadership education at the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City or have a pastor who was a UMFA Seminary Scholar feel the impact of UMFA grants."

Karon is lay leader for the Arkansas Conference and active in United Methodist Women on a national level. Bill is head usher at Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock, where they have been members since Palm Sunday of 1980. Bill serves as an operational board member for Methodist Family Health. The Manns have two adult children and four grandchildren.



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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Resources for observing Donor Sabbath

- The United Methodist Church encourages local congregations to observe Donor Sabbath, which in the U.S. is set two weekends before Thanksgiving. In 2015, Donor Sabbath weekend is Nov. 13-15. For information and resources for observing Donor Sabbath, visit www.organdonor.gov/materialsresources/donorsabbath.html.
- "We believe that organ transplantation and organ donation are acts of charity, agape love, and self-sacrifice. We recognize the life-giving benefits of organ and other tissue donation and encourage all people of faith to become organ and tissue donors as a part of their love and ministry to others in need. We urge that it be done in an environment of respect for deceased and living donors and for the benefit of the recipients, and following protocols that carefully prevent abuse to donors and their families." —2012 *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, Social Principles, Paragraph 162W
- To learn more about organ and tissue donation in Arkansas, including how to ensure you are signed up as an organ donor, visit the website for the Arkansas Regional Organ Recovery Agency (ARORA), www.arora.org.