

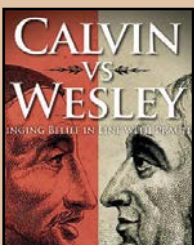
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Giving, advocating, receiving at Ingathering

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Hundreds of United Methodists from around the state spent the morning of Nov. 21 at the Arkansas Rice Depot in Little Rock for Ingathering, the annual pre-Thanksgiving "gathering in" of relief supplies to send to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) for distribution around the world.

In addition to sorting and sending a truckload of relief supplies to UMCOR's Sager Brown Depot in Louisiana (with such good response that a second truck will make the trip in the weeks to come), this year's Ingathering brought a special focus on the 200,000 Reasons initiative to fight childhood hunger in Arkansas.

Some participants chose to help box 40,800 pounds of sweet potatoes from the Society of St. Andrew for the Rice Depot to distribute to area food pantries, while others prepared packaging that would allow bulk rice to be distributed among individual



United Methodists hold up lunch sacks they signed during Ingathering as part of the 200,000 Reasons childhood hunger initiative. The lunch sacks include a message asking Arkansas' elected officials to take action that will help alleviate childhood hunger in the state.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

households. A third group worked with The Pack Shack to assemble more than 40,000 meals to be distributed to Arkansas food pantries. Church groups with their own local food pantries each

received 288 meals to distribute locally from the stock they helped create that day.

Advocacy was another piece of the 200,000 Reasons emphasis. As helpers checked in for the day, they

received a paper lunch sack with a note asking elected officials to consider taking the SNAP Challenge (living on \$5 of food per day for a week), and to remember hungry [See INGATHERING, page 6]

National forum energizes children's ministers



The Rev. Telley Gadson of Taylors, S.C., served as the preacher for the 2015 Children's Ministry Forum, a national event hosted by First UMC Little Rock.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

With the opening hymn "How Firm a Foundation" reminding them where their ministries are anchored, more than 200 children's ministry

workers converged on First United Methodist Church Little Rock Nov. 17 for the three-day national Children's Ministry Forum.

Sponsored by Discipleship Ministries (formerly the United Methodist General Board of

Discipleship), the Large Church Initiative and the United Methodist Publishing House, the forum drew on the theme, "Rock On: Renew. Discover. Respond." Attendees had opportunities for spiritual renewal, as well as for learning and networking with others who share the same calling to help children grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Holy Spirit at work

The Rev. Telley Gadson, pastor of St. Mark UMC in Taylors, S.C., served as the event preacher. The Pentecost story found in Acts 2:14-21 led her to ask the congregation at opening worship, "Do you have the fever?"—that is, the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

She gave thanks that the disciple Peter "spoke what was real, relevant and even relational on the day of Pentecost. Could it be that God positioned Peter to challenge

the people to Rock On? And not just rock on to a familiar or comfortable cadence, or the beat of one's own familiarity, but to rock on where God would get the glory. Why? Because Peter got the fever, and he couldn't keep it to himself?"

Gadson's energetic preaching brought amens and applause as she related the fever of the Holy Spirit to their work in ministry with children.

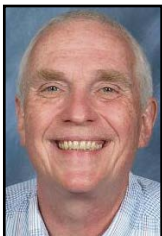
"Are we equipped and excited about having children involved in the life and ministry of our churches, not as window dressings? Not as pew fixtures?" she asked. "Not for our demographics and our end-of-year reporting, but to truly know without a shadow of a doubt that unless we come as children, and have the faith of a child in Christ, we will not please the one who creates us and calls us his own."

Confessing that she's "an acronymaholic," Gadsen left the congregation with inspiration for [See FORUM, page 4]

Shakeyhead the Crow

BY CHARLES COOPER
Special Contributor

I had a pet crow. The prophet Elijah had many corvine birds, but I had one, Shakeyhead. Unlike Elijah's birds, mine did not feed me. I fed him. That's how Shakeyhead came to take up with my family, years ago when we lived at the foot of Mount Sequoyah in a gray stucco house on Olive Street. It's still there.



Charles Cooper

One winter an ingratiating crow came to our home. My mother fed him corn out of a can; then I started. I fed him on the banister of the porch, then from my hand; then one day he perched on my arm.

Shakeyhead would follow me to school. I went to Saint Joseph's, not because my family was Catholic, but because my father had just retired from the Marines and one of his service buddies lived in Fayetteville and was Catholic. He must have said, "Rod, those nuns are tough. They'll get that boy ready for Harvard" (or maybe it was Notre Dame).

Shakeyhead would follow me down Olive Street to Lafayette. The kids waiting on their rides to public school would say, *There he is. There he is with his crow. Hey, where did you get that crow?*

We were celebrities.

Laundry helper

People back then hung their laundry out on lines. Everybody had a line in the backyard. I used to help my mother. We taught Shakeyhead how to pull clothespins. He would light down and yank them up with his beak. I would follow along and fold the sheet, the pillowcase, the towel and so on.

Shakeyhead loved it. He loved it so much he started helping the neighbors with their laundry. Yank. Yank. Yank. And with a shoulder shrug down would fall a shirt.

That's when trouble started. People complained about our crow. I heard my parents talking about it, about taking Shakeyhead to the country.

I decided I needed help. I needed my little sister to like Shakeyhead. So one day in the backyard, I had my crow on my arm. I asked Mary, who was just four and had long cotton top hair, to come over. I said, "He won't hurt you."

I don't know what happened. I think Mary shook her head *No*, and the crow shook his head *No*, and it scared Mary, so she turned and ran, and that scared the crow. He tried to fly away—or at least I think he tried to fly away; my wife has another theory.*

Anyhow, somehow Shakeyhead got all tangled up in Mary's hair, and there she was running and screaming and my crow bouncing up and down and flapping his wings behind her, all the way to the backdoor where my

parents were standing and shaking their heads *No*, no more Shakeyhead.

My father took him to the country. I brought him into the house on my arm, a terrible betrayal for which I felt terribly guilty. My father snatched him in a pair of muleskinner gloves and stuffed him into one of my mother's hatboxes and tied it up with twine. I could hear the scratching and pecking against the box. I felt that I was in there with him. This relocation happened three times, and each time Shakeyhead was perched on the banister of the porch when my father drove up the drive. I think they went as far as Prairie Grove the last time.

Finally my father found some humane folks who had an aviary around a tree in their front yard, and he convinced them that this Ozark crow was peculiar enough to keep company with their parrots and cockatoos.

I remember going there once. I held Shakeyhead on my arm as in the old days and scratched him under a wing, which he loved more than doing laundry.

After that visit, we drove by, never stopping, though I begged and begged. Shakeyhead would be perched on a limb inside that huge wire cage, and he would see me hanging out the window, and his head would turn and turn and turn as we drove by, and my head would turn and turn and turn until we were gone.

Godsends

I don't know how Elijah felt about his crows. He was a preacher, thrown out of his pulpit. He had spoken against the royal couple of Israel, against Ahab and Jezebel, and he had prophesied bad weather, a drought: never a popular sermon with the farmers in the congregation.

Elijah was in trouble and all alone, hiding out by a river. Some crows came to the river. They brought him something to eat—meat they took from the marketplace or grain from the barns, maybe a robe or two from someone's clothesline.

God sent those birds to Elijah. I think God sent Shakeyhead to me.

We had just moved from base housing at Camp Pendleton, where I had a lot of friends, and this was a new place, and I didn't have any friends. We weren't going to be here long, just until my father finished a few courses and could find a teaching job.

God sent me a friend down from heaven.

God does that, you know: sends us the people (or the birds) we need to love. Just look around.

* *Becky is right: the crow, caught between flight and fight, did both. Domesticating wild animals comes with risk and is often illegal. There will never be another Shakeyhead.*

The Rev. Cooper is a retired elder in the Arkansas Conference.

Denominational leaders speak in Arkansas



The Rev. Dr. Denise Honeycutt, deputy general secretary of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), preached at St. James UMC Little Rock as part of the church's Fiser-Christie Endowed Missions Lectureship.

PHOTO BY MARCIA DUNBAR

Two leaders of United Methodist agencies spent time in Arkansas in November: the Rev. Dr. Timothy Bias, general secretary of UMC Discipleship Ministries (formerly called the General Board of Discipleship), and the Rev. Dr. Denise Honeycutt, deputy general secretary of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

Bias addressed the Bishops' Club Luncheon hosted Nov. 13 by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. He spoke on how love and legacy shape us as disciples.

"It's all about making disciples—Christ-followers—who will make more Christ-followers, who love one another as they've been loved. God is making good things happen through you," Bias said. "I think God can do good things through you and me, but it's based upon relationship. It's based upon the Word made flesh. It's based upon how we speak to one another."

The Fiser-Christie Endowed Missions Lectureship of St. James UMC Little Rock hosted Honeycutt

Nov. 15-16 to celebrate UMCOR's 75th year. She preached at all worship services and spoke at a Sunday evening youth rally and Monday luncheon.

Honeycutt emphasized that through UMCOR, United Methodist congregations reach out in ways that no local church can do alone—offering help after natural disasters and amid the Ebola outbreak in Africa, and walking alongside refugees fleeing Syria. "We've been doing that long before it ever hit the news on our TV screens," she said. UMCOR is looking for congregations to participate in water and sanitation partnerships.

She encouraged the congregation to remember that mission is the calling and responsibility of all believers, not just another church project. "As mission people there is already that next thing, that next miraculous expectation that God is holding out for you," she said.

"Just imagine if were all people of miraculous expectation, what a difference we could make. Just imagine."



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Issue Date	Submission Deadline
Jan. 1	Dec. 11
Feb. 5	Jan. 14
March 4	Feb. 16

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GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

The Word moved into the neighborhood

*The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighborhood.
We saw the glory with our own eyes,
the one-of-a-kind glory,
like Father, like Son,
Generous inside and out,
true from start to finish.*

—John 1:13, *The Message*

Eugene Peterson's unfamiliar interpretation of these familiar words gets to the heart of Christmas.

Of course Christmas is about the presents, decorations, great food, family, wonderful traditions, parties and, unfortunately, red Starbucks cups and culture wars. But it is ultimately about a whole lot more. How The Word became flesh. How God's only Son was fully incarnated as a human being. How the King of the Universe volunteered to come to us as a vulnerable child born in poverty. How God came

to us in the most personal way imaginable to give us what we absolutely need but can never get on our own.

The fact that God moved into each of our neighborhoods is the best possible news in a world in which too many people find the Christian message irrelevant at best and hostile at worst; all of us struggle to address the suffering that starts right outside our doors and stretches to the other side of the globe; and we too often feel hopeless in the face of terrorism that threatens life as we know it.

Think about what it means that Jesus has moved into the neighborhood. You don't have to find him—Jesus has come to find you. It doesn't matter how many mistakes you've made or how much you're struggling—Jesus comes to you just the way you are. You never have to prompt Jesus to help—Jesus gives you the healing, transformation and hope for which you long.

One of my favorite Christmas carols, "What

Child is This?" asks a question that resonates deep in my spirit:

*What Child is this who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?*

For me, the answer to this question is very simple. This Child whose birth we celebrate is the one who has moved into my neighborhood and continues to live here.

May it be so for you as well.
Merry Christmas.

Grace and peace,

Gary E. Mueller



APPOINTMENTS & RETIREMENTS

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

- Soniyah B. Key (provisional elder)—Personal leave of absence; effective Oct. 1
- J.J. Whitney (elder)—chaplain, Hendrix College; effective Nov. 10
- Nat Grady (retired elder)—Faith UMC Little Rock (interim); effective Dec. 1
- Randy Reed (part-time local pastor)—Salem UMC Benton (associate); effective Jan. 1
- Jason Sutfin (elder)—Fisher Street UMC Jonesboro; effective Jan. 1

Retirements (effective July 1, 2016, unless otherwise noted):

- Chuck Coffelt (elder); effective Jan. 1, 2016
- Rob Walker (elder)
- Mackey Yokem (elder)

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

Christmas in a new place

BY WILLIAM O. "BUD" REEVES
Special Contributor

As I have at several points along my journey, I will be experiencing Christmas in a new place this year.

Every church family has their own special holiday traditions, and as the new preacher at my church, there is much I need to learn. What is on the calendar? When are the Christmas Eve services? What community events should I attend? Are all the behind-the-scenes details—candles, decorations, volunteers for all the tasks—taken care of? By whom, so everyone gets thanked?

There is much to learn, but it's all good. Even though I might feel a twinge of nostalgia for Christmases past, it is exciting to be in a new place with new friends and traditions.

Many people are in a new place this Christmas. Some have moved to a new town or into a new house.

But not all of our new places are physical.

Some of the new places may be more emotional or spiritual: a new relationship, a new baby or in-law in the family, a new or renewed walk with Christ. Holidays are special times to celebrate blessings that have happened in the last year.

But some of the new places are hard to bear. For some, a new location is a painful transition, and they miss home. For others, there will be an empty chair at the Christmas table this year, as a loved one has died, along with a part of their heart. Some families have weathered a divorce in the last year, and the kids for the first time will have to have Christmas with Mom and Dad on different days. Some will struggle through Christmas because the new reality of illness has invaded their body. Some families will struggle to

put food on the table, with the breadwinner newly unemployed.

We all know how hard the holidays can be. While the culture is all about consumption and celebration, and it seems like everyone else is at the party, some of us are lonely, estranged from family and friends, feeling unwanted in an unfamiliar place.

Every Christmas we remember the first Christmas, which was a new experience for everyone involved. Joseph and Mary, newly married, gave birth to their first Child. But they weren't at home, surrounded by family and friends. They were on the road, in a strange place among unknown people, forced to give birth in a stable. Even

though they had been briefed by the angels and knew the nature of this miraculous event, I am sure they were still anxious and

'Every Christmas we remember the first Christmas, which was a new experience for everyone involved.'

Our Trajectory

Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples

equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.



Forum

(continued from page 1)

ministry associated with each letter of the word “fever”: Faith, Energy (“I don’t care if you’re 22 or 92, you need energy” to be in children’s ministry, she said), Victory, Engagement (“we’ve got to meet our children right where they are”) and Redemption.

Plentiful resources

Attendees chose from dozens of workshops led by ministry professionals from around the country, including Arkansas-based experts such as Michelle Moore (“Organizing Your Ministry”), the Rev. Jenni Duncan (“Engaging Children as Peacemakers”), Pam Snider (“Beyond VBS”) and Lesley Andrews (“Quick Tips & Tools for Communication”).

In addition to inviting workshop presenters and keynote speakers, event organizers had created multiple spaces for prayer and reflection throughout the building, including special prayer stations focusing on the previous week’s terrorist attacks on Paris, France.

Event staff, along with the design team that had spent months

planning the forum’s schedule, provided key information and guidance for participants, and volunteers from First UMC Little Rock and other churches in Arkansas offered hospitality in numerous ways.

Holistic ministry

The Rev. Leann Hadley spoke the morning of Nov. 18, sharing her vision for a holistic model for children’s ministry. She’s working with churches in four annual conferences—North Texas, Central Texas, Kentucky and Rocky Mountain—to study children’s ministry, and has started the Facebook page A Time for Children (www.facebook.com/leannahadleyatimeforchildren1) as a place for those churches to share successes. This public page also invites all Christians to stop and pray for children one minute of every day.

The founder of First Step Spirituality, a ministry that provides support to hurting children and teens, Hadley believes the church needs to give more attention to the spiritual needs of the youngest people in our churches, and that the need to do so isn’t new.

“There was a confusion at the



The Rev. Leann Hadley was one of three keynote speakers at the 2015 Children’s Ministry Forum, a national event held at First UMC Little Rock.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

time of Jesus,” she said. “There were two ways of looking at children.” People lived under the influence of Greco-Roman culture, where children were viewed as disposable, and the Jewish culture, where they were seen as blessings.

“The Greeks and Romans had a huge influence on the Jews, as secular society has on us,” she said. “And they understood children in a much different perspective than Jesus did.”

Hadley outlined three existing models of children’s ministry: 1) Adults pour knowledge into children and interpret God for them; 2) a mix of pouring in knowledge while using discipline to purge children of original sin; and 3) seeing children as incapable, leaving the focus purely on adults’ spirituality.

Instead of these models, she proposes children’s ministry rooted in three concepts:

- Children are innately spiritual and capable of relationship with God—in fact, that they already have a relationship with God before they are born;
- Children are our greatest blessing; and
- Children and adults need each other.

“Adults are needed by children to pass on the stories, the faith, to give them the prayer tools, to bless them, to let them know that they’re a blessing,” she said. “Adults are critically important in the lives of children—but we need children just as much, because they are critical to our spiritual development, too. And if we put them off in a corner, or if

we’re so busy indoctrinating and pouring our information into them, we cannot receive from them.”

Hadley contends the church has lost the togetherness that brings the presence of the Spirit of God. Jesus demonstrated this unity by showing adults how he valued children as part of the Kingdom.

“I believe that ministry to children will revitalize the church,” she said. “Not because children will grow up to save the church, but because as we start interacting with children, the Spirit of God will be so present in churches that it will grow, from the smallest to the greatest.”

She encouraged children’s ministers to bless the children every time they leave a gathering.

“If you do nothing but bless your children, you’ll change the culture of your church in no time,” she said.

Emory Molitor, children’s director assistant and children’s choir director at First UMC Russellville, attended a workshop led by Hadley.

“I learned that it doesn’t matter what curriculum we buy to teach the Bible stories,” Molitor said. “What matters is listening to children and creating sacred space where they don’t have to be perfect. In providing that for them, we bless them to be blessings to others.”

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Whitney named Hendrix College chaplain

Hendrix College, a United Methodist-related liberal arts institution in Conway, Ark., announced Nov. 10 that the Rev. Judith J. “J.J.” Whitney has been named its new chaplain.

Whitney, a 1996 Hendrix graduate and an ordained elder in the Arkansas Conference, was selected following a national search by a committee including alumni, clergy, faculty, staff, students and Arkansas Area Bishop Gary E. Mueller.



J.J. Whitney

She succeeds Hendrix chaplain the Rev. J. Wayne Clark, a 1984 Hendrix graduate who in April was named the college’s associate vice president for development and dean of the chapel. Whitney has served as interim chaplain since Clark’s new appointment took effect.

“Our historic relationship with the United Methodist Church has been strengthened and nurtured by visionary clergy who have served the Hendrix community as chaplain,” said W. Ellis Arnold III, the college’s senior executive vice president, general counsel and dean of advancement. “Rev. Whitney has been a vital part of that tradition for more than a decade, and we are proud to have her lead our campus religious life program into an exciting new era.”

After graduating from Hendrix, Whitney earned her master’s degree with a concentration in pastoral care in campus ministry from Boston University’s School of Theology. She served as chaplain associate for Boston University’s Marsh Chapel and later as pastor of Hunter UMC Little Rock.

She returned to her alma mater in 2002 to serve as program coordinator for the Hendrix-Lilly Vocations Initiative (now known as the Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics and Calling). She created and implemented co-curricular programs, mentored a ministry exploration group, coordinated seminary visits, led international and domestic mission trips, oversaw scholars in service work, planned vocation conferences and visiting scholars, and created and led a week-long ministry discernment opportunity for United Methodist youth. She was named associate director of the Miller Center in 2009.

In 2005, Whitney was named assistant chaplain and began assisting the chaplain with preaching and worship planning, leading a women’s Bible study, creating and implementing a weekly Christian fellowship group, providing pastoral care and mentoring candidates for ordained ministry. She received the 2005 Francis Asbury Award for Fostering United Methodist Ministries in

Higher Education from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church, and she was named associate chaplain in 2013.

“I’m thrilled for the opportunity to serve Hendrix College as chaplain, and I’m humbled to follow in the footsteps of Rev. Jon Guthrie, Dr. Rock Jones, and Rev. Wayne Clark,” Whitney said. “Since 2002, my role in the Hendrix Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics and Calling has allowed me the privilege of serving in the ministry setting of a church-related, liberal arts college. The work has nurtured my passion to serve and walk alongside students, staff, and faculty. I’m excited by the opportunity to be a voice on campus to advocate for faith commitments in the context of a student’s journey in uncovering gifts and engaging the community.”

Hicks among those honored by Interfaith Arkansas

Bishop Kenneth Hicks, who served the Arkansas Area of the United Methodist Church from 1976 to 1984 and has made his home in Little Rock during retirement, on Nov. 12 was presented with the Mimi Dortch Award for Interfaith Work during the Interfaith Arkansas Annual Assembly at Christ Episcopal Church in Little Rock. Pictured with him is Madalyn Dortch, who presented the awards named in honor of her late mother.

Other Mimi Dortch Award recipients for 2015 were Rabbi Gene Levy of Little Rock, and the late Ernestine Henderson McKinney, who was a member of Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock. All three were honored for their work in strengthening ecumenical and interfaith relations in the state.



United Methodist Women called to action

National president addresses Arkansas' gathering

Yvette Richards, national president of United Methodist Women, speaks to the annual meeting of the Arkansas United Methodist Women Nov. 14 in Conway.

PHOTOS BY COLLEEN HOLT



BY COLLEEN HOLT
Special Contributor

If the United Methodist Women of Arkansas learned one thing at their annual meeting on Nov. 14, it was this: United Methodist Women are on the move, and God is the power behind the motion.

National United Methodist Women president Yvette Richards brought a dynamic message to the more than 200 women attending the meeting, held at First United Methodist Church Conway. Bishop Gary Mueller presented the afternoon keynote address and presided over a service of Holy Communion with the help of the Rev. Dede Roberts, director of the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality. The Rev. Michael Roberts, senior pastor of First UMC Conway, welcomed the group to the church's sanctuary, which was completed 100 years ago in November.

President's address

Richards' focus for her address was on the event's theme, "Growing in Blessedness." She chose Isaiah 14:26 as her guiding Scripture: "This is the plan, the plan for the whole world, and this is the hand that will do it, reaching every nation," she read to those gathered. "Doesn't that sound like United Methodist Women?"

As Richards broke down the phrase word by word, the women learned that "growing means to increase in size, to become better,

improved, more developed. Do you see United Methodist Women in there?" she asked. "Blessedness comes from blessing and is used to make a statement more powerful. Connected with God, feeling joyful, blissful, happy."

She recalled the United Methodist Women motto of "Faith, Hope, Love in Action" as a perfect guide for living. "That's what we are about as United Methodist Women," she said. "We are on the go... constantly on the go. We are called to be in action, not to be sitters. We could have been anywhere today, but we chose to be here today to give honor to those who went before us. God gives us that joy."

Richards recalled the birthday of United Methodist Women, March 23, 1869, when a group of women in Boston said, "Enough, I've had enough. We're going to make a difference in the world." Because of that moment, there are now 96 national mission agencies in the world working every day of the year changing lives. God "put a favor" on the organization 147 years ago, she said, and now it's this group's job to spread the good work throughout the world.

"Are we growing in the blessedness? I have to say yes, we're in the right place and the right time in this organization to see us blossom and grow, blossom and grow, blossom and move forward," she said. "Why? Because still in this 21st Century we have women being violated by domestic violence, still have boys and girls in human

trafficking, we still have immigration problems. We have climate control, climate justice problems."

Changing lives

Richards emphasized that the \$74 million of United Methodist Women money is wisely invested to be used for mission, not to put new carpet and drapes in offices.

"We helped in Sierra Leone when they had Ebola. Now they are Ebola free," she said. "We have to understand and know how our national programs affect lives. Every year we have an opportunity to affect lives of women, children and youth. We're growing because of you, because of something you have done

and someone has seen it and said 'I'm going where she's going. It looks like fun.'"

Richards shared the story of how her life was changed by United Methodist Women at a young age. She was introduced to Mission U (then known as School of Christian Mission) as the place "where the old ladies go." Just out of college, she attended Mission U for a weekend and "had the time of my life. I listened to seasoned women talk about UMW." Their willingness to share with her changed her life, and today's United Methodist Women members "have to be willing to share with our young women," she said.

United Methodist Women are uniquely positioned to help make lives better, Richards said.

"So how blessed are we?" she asked. "If you are able to wake up in a house with electricity, you are blessed. If you have shoes on your feet, you are blessed. In United Methodist Women we stand for those with no shoes, no heat, no clothes on their backs.

"As women, we have to get certain things done," she said. "We will do whatever needs to be done to get things done, to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We are going to turn things around. That's why we're growing in the blessedness of UMW. This is a group that changes lives. So grow in blessedness—reach out in blessedness, keep the faith hope and love growing in your spirit, soul and mind."

A true encourager, Richards brought a special message for the Arkansas group. "Not every pastor, every person, every woman is a fan of United Methodist Women," she said. "The Arkansas UMW group, however, has women who are willing to say 'We as United Methodist Women will not be stuck in a corner.'" She added that Arkansas is lucky "to have a bishop that supports you, loves you and is proud to talk about you and what you do."

Other highlights

Also at the meeting, the Leslie/Marshall United Methodist Women received the Susannah Wesley Award for the creation of a summer meal program for children in Searcy County. The group served 1,300 free lunches during the summer of 2014, their first year, and continued the effort in 2015. For 2016, they have received a grant from Walmart for \$30,000 to fund the program and purchase some kitchen equipment.

In his address to the group, Bishop Mueller called his Saturday a "bonus day," as two of his favorite groups were meeting at First UMC Conway that day—United Methodist Women and the Conference Council on Youth Ministries. "I have 'grown into blessedness' today," he said, echoing the meeting's theme, and then took a selfie with the group, to great applause.

Holt serves as communications assistant for First UMC Conway.



The United Methodist Women unit of Leslie and Marshall UMCs in Searcy County received the Susannah Wesley Award for their work feeding hungry children in their communities.

200,000 Reasons bearing fruit with local ministry grants

200,000 REASONS
to fight childhood hunger

Seventeen Arkansas UMCs and partner organizations learned recently that they will be the first-ever recipients of 200,000 Reasons and Vernon and Eva Lee Paysinger grants, which provide support for new and ongoing projects to reduce childhood hunger in Arkansas.

With approximately \$22,000 in available grant funds, members of the 200,000 Reasons Task Force reviewed 43 grant applications and selected 11 projects across all five districts that best reflected the initiative's priorities of feeding ministries, public witness and education for long-term stability. Grant recipients are:

Camden and Fairview UMCs Backpack Program, in partnership with The Hub, an ecumenical community group, will provide weekend meals for Camden area school children, \$2,500.

Cave City UMC Food Pantry, a new ministry to be located in the church and which will assist local children from this underserved county, \$1,000.

First UMC Harrison "Fruits of the Spirit," a new program in which the church partners with the elementary school and a local food bank to provide fresh fruit to school children, \$2,500.

Lakeside UMC Lake Village "Loaves and Eggs," provides a hot breakfast for 75 to 100 children in Chicot county, \$2,500.

First UMC Mountain Home's Summer Feeding Program, providing summer meals for 700, or nearly one-third, of the food insecure children in Baxter County, \$2,314.73.

Oaklawn UMC Hot Springs, "Matthew 24 Food Pantry," a new pantry providing for the needs of Hot Springs area children, operated cooperatively among several UMCs and Project Hope Foodbank, \$2,500.

Mount Ida UMC/Joplin UMC Charge, Ouachita Village Inc./Montgomery County Food Pantry Mount Ida, "Children's Emergency Backpack Program," a new

cooperative ministry to provide meals for children in three schools in Montgomery County, \$1,000.

The Journey UMC Cabot, "Brownbag Summer Feeding & Homework Help Meals," a weekly after-school homework help time, meal and Bible study for school-age children and youth; and a twice-weekly brown bag lunch program during the summer, \$2,500.

First UMC West Memphis, "Family Dinner Night," providing a monthly meal along with cooking instruction, kid-friendly demonstration and take-home ingredients for families in this underserved area, \$2,500.

Six other projects were funded through the Dr. Vernon and Eva Lee Paysinger Endowment, administered by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. The Paysingers were passionate about relieving hunger in Arkansas, and after Mrs. Paysinger's death in 2014, the endowment was established to provide for hunger ministries.

In a cooperative effort between the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Ozark Mission Project (OMP) and local churches in **Hot Springs, Mountain View and Rogers**, OMP campers and community members will be able to participate in Cooking Matters classes, where they will learn how to make healthy food choices and how to prepare those foods. Each of the three communities received \$2,139.33 in grant funds.

Little Rock and West Memphis will see new community garden projects become reality through a cooperative effort between Ozark Mission Project and First UMC Little Rock and First UMC West Memphis. These projects each received \$400 to allow campers to help build and plant the gardens, which will then provide fresh produce for a local elementary school and health clinic.

The last Paysinger grant awarded \$440 to the **Senior High Assembly Task Force** for a Hunger Banquet and Missions seminars during the 2016 Senior High Assembly. High school students will learn about Arkansas' hunger issues and will participate in mission opportunities for reducing childhood hunger.

Ingathering

(continued from page 1)

Arkansas children as they make decisions that affect funding for

feeding programs. Participants signed the sacks with their names and addresses and returned them to be sorted and sent to the appropriate member of the state legislature.

Visit www.arumc.org/ingathering2015 for Ingathering photos, video, and media links.

One child forever changed our world.
Will you change one child's life?

The United Methodists of Arkansas have committed to reducing childhood hunger in Arkansas through feeding ministries, public witness and education for long-term stability. This Christmas, join others who are supporting new and on-going ministries across the Natural State by giving a gift in memory or honor of someone.

For each \$20 gift, you and your designated recipient will each receive an acknowledgement card and a 200K Reasons water bottle.

How to give:
One-time donations can be made by completing the form below and sending it with your gift to:

200,000 REASONS
to fight childhood hunger

Arkansas Conference Treasurer
P.O. Box 3611, Little Rock, AR 72203-3611

Make checks payable to: +
Arkansas Conference - 200K Reasons.

Donor Information
Rev. / Mr. / Mrs. / Ms. (circle one) _____
Spouse's name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Email _____ Phone _____

of gifts _____ X \$20 = \$ _____ total contribution
(please make copies of form or attach extra pages for additional contributions)

I would like to speak to someone about additional giving opportunities.

This is a gift in _____ in honor of _____ in memory of _____

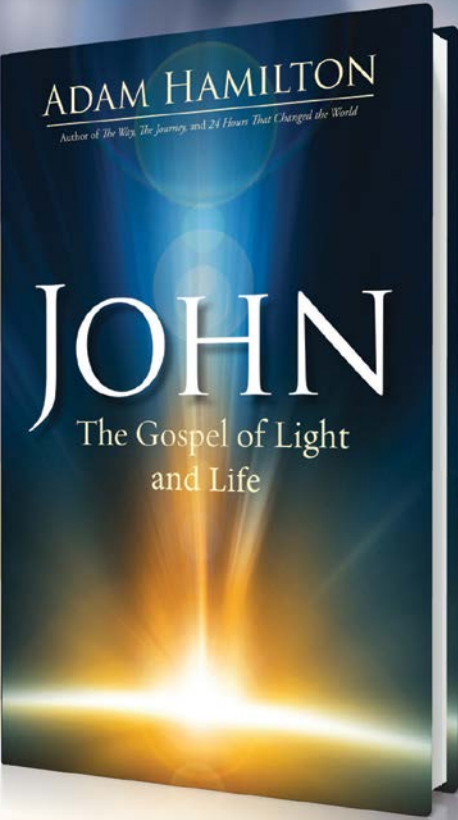
Person's Name: _____

Please send an acknowledgement card to:

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
From _____
(list exactly how it should appear on the card)

Arkansas united against childhood hunger
United Methodists of Arkansas disciples making disciples


Join
ADAM HAMILTON
this Lent and Easter in exploring
the major themes of the Gospel of John



The Gospel of John is the most deeply spiritual of the four gospels. It includes some of the loftiest and most loved verses in all the Bible: "And the Word became flesh..." "or God so loved the world..." "You who are without sin cast the first stone..." "I am the resurrection and the life..." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." The writing is filled with rich images and profound truths, but John notes that his aim in writing the gospel is that his readers will not only believe in Jesus Christ, but that they "may have life in his name." Each chapter concludes with a segment of the gospel of John from the CEB translation.


Resources Include:

- Participant Book
- Youth Study
- Leader Guide
- Children's Study
- DVD
- 40 Day Devotional

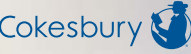


Learn more at
AdamHamilton.org

Adam Hamilton is senior pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, named by The Church Report as the most influential mainline church in America. Hamilton is the best-selling author of *The Call*, *Revival*, *The Way*, *24 Hours That Changed the World*, *The Journey*, *When Christians Get It Wrong* and *Seeing Gray in a World of Black and White*.



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'Refuge' middle school retreat makes room to grow

Almost 400 United Methodists gathered Nov. 6-8 for Refuge, the Conference-wide annual weekend retreat for students in sixth through ninth grades. Held at Shepherd of the Ozarks Retreat Center, Refuge provides youth with opportunities for worship, games, time in the outdoors, small group engagement and optional events like horseback riding and a ropes course.

Visit www.accym.org/refuge for video of the messages from Refuge featured speaker Tim Palmer, and www.accym.org/webisodes for video updates released during Refuge by



the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries media team.

The final webisode brought a big announcement regarding next year's event: To accommodate the retreat's continued growth, Refuge 2016 will happen twice, on the first two weekends in November, allowing more youth to attend. To receive updates on Refuge 2016 and other upcoming youth events, email michelle.moore@arumc.org.

PHOTOS COURTESY ACCYM MEDIA TEAM



Christmas offering for children a longtime tradition

The tradition of Arkansas congregations taking special offerings during Christmas for Methodist Family Health is almost as old as the agency itself.

The Methodist Orphanage was founded in 1899 and later was operated as the Methodist Children's Home. Today, the Children's Home is the cornerstone program of Methodist Family Health, which also operates Methodist Behavioral Hospital and other programs that provide behavioral and emotional healthcare and spiritual support to children and families all across Arkansas. The agency cares for more than 2,400 children daily through its inpatient, residential and outpatient programs.

The annual Christmas offering is believed to have started during the orphanage's heyday in the 1920s. The tradition has endured and continues in the 21st century.

Currently the Arkansas Conference recognizes the second and third Sundays in December as dates for receiving the "Children's Home Annual Christmas Offering."

For 2015, congregations are asked to collect the Christmas offering on Dec. 13 and Dec. 20.

"The Christmas offering makes a tremendous impact on what we are able to do and the extent to which we can help more children and families," says Methodist Family Health Foundation executive director Carolyn McCone. "We deeply appreciate the churches and individuals who give so generously to the Christmas offering."

For more information on Methodist Family Health or the Children's Home program, or how to support MFH and help the children this Christmas, contact McCone at 501-906-4202 or cmccone@methodistfamily.org.

Share the light!

Your gift helps Methodist Family Health help Arkansas children.

Your donations help us minister to children and families close to home.

Children all around us are hurting. But you can let the joy in your life shine into theirs! Methodist Family Health is a nonprofit organization providing comprehensive psychiatric and behavioral health care to 2,400 Arkansas children and families daily. We can help restore a happy home. Sometimes we even become the home. And with your support, we bring healing and hope all year long.

Giving is easy! Share your love by choosing one of these options:

- Visit www.methodistfamily.org for online giving
- Make checks payable to Methodist Family Health Foundation and mail to P.O. Box 56050, Little Rock, AR 72215
- Call 501.906.4209



Rebuilding the Lives of Children and Families Since 1899

MethodistFamily.org

Methodist Family Health is the management company of: Methodist Children's Home, Methodist Counseling Clinic, Methodist Behavioral Hospital and Arkansas CARES.

New acquisitions on display at Methodist museum

A number of recently donated items are on display at the United Methodist Museum of the Arkansas Conference (UMMAC) in Little Rock:

- “The Southern Methodist Bishops,” an original print from Harper’s Weekly, June 23, 1866. Donated by Bishop Charles Crutchfield, it had belonged to his father, Bishop Finis Crutchfield.
- “Meeting House on the Mountain,” a watercolor painting by the Rev. John S. Polk, depicts an early frontier Methodist structure similar to written descriptions of Henry’s Chapel, built in 1817 near Ozan, Ark.
- A replica of Bishop Francis Asbury’s pocket gavel, handmade by R.H. “Red” Bond of Dyersburg, Tenn. It belonged to the late Rev. Joel Cooper and was donated by his son, the Rev. William Christopher Cooper.
- A small New Testament (pictured) owned by three generations of Methodist ministers: the Revs. Willis E. Cooper, Joel Cooper and William Christopher Cooper.
- Offering box, circa 1889-1900, handmade with inscription, “God Loveth a Cheerful Giver.” It was used in a Sunday school class at Frenchman Mountain Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which became Cato Methodist Church. Donated by W.H. “Bill” Burgin.
- Pin from the Woman’s Society of Christian Service, a forerunner of United Methodist Women; donated by Kathie Henderson.
- “The Little Shepherdess,” a print of an oil painting by William-Adolphe Bouguereau. A gift to Mabel Harris Webb by Elizabeth Galloway, wife of Bishop Paul V. Galloway, Webb has now donated it to the museum in memory of Mrs. Galloway and several other pastors’ wives.



COURTESY PHOTO

For more information on the UMMAC, including contact information for scheduling a free tour, see the advertisement on page 12 of this issue.



NOMADS reunion brings Mount Eagle improvements

Arkansas NOMADS gathered the week of Nov. 2 at Mount Eagle Retreat Center in Clinton for their annual reunion—a time that combines fellowship and facilities improvement.

NOMADS (Nomads On a Mission Active in Divine Service) seek to live their retirement years in service to others. They travel in their own RVs to serve as mission volunteers and share their Christian faith. The NOMADS mission statement is “Rebuilding lives, homes and facilities with God’s love and our hands.”

The week included morning devotions, fellowship, building a new deck for Kaetzell Lodge, putting wood preservative on the new cottage deck, grinding up tree limbs and mulching various trails, and cleaning and organizing the workshop.

Attendees included Carolyn and Howard Stoner of Texarkana, Dan and Virgie Brown of Rogers, Dave and Connie Masters of Heber Springs, Bobby and Donna Price of Russellville, Jerrell and Linda Fielder of Conway, David and Pat Crooks of Hot Springs and Cecil and Doris Jones of Royal.

To learn about NOMADS, visit www.nomadsumc.org; call toll-free 866-4-NOMADS (866-466-6237); or email director@nomadsumc.org.

VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION & DISASTER RESPONSE OPPORTUNITIES

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.

Funds needed to finish recovery efforts in Mayflower and Vilonia

An update from Janice Mann concerning the tornado recovery efforts in Mayflower and Vilonia:

“We are to the point that we have a final project list (most repair projects are done; there are still several rebuild projects pending) and volunteers scheduled to help finish up, but funding is running short. Christian Aid Ministries and the NOMADS are committed to staying with us until the efforts are complete. Recovery is over when the last need is met or the resources are exhausted. At this point it looks like it may be the latter. We have priority projects identified and are hoping to at least have enough funds come in to finish those.”

Please send donations to the Arkansas Conference UMC, 800 W. Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202, designated for “Central Arkansas tornado recovery.”

VIM journey teams forming now for flood recovery work in U.S.

Arkansas Conference Volunteers in Mission (VIM) has received requests for VIM Teams and Early Response Teams to travel to the Central Texas, Detroit, Oklahoma (confirmed a trip to the Tulsa area Dec. 9-13; contact Bradley Clyne, bradleyc.everysoulmatters@gmail.com or 479-737-5518), Rio Texas and South Carolina Conferences to assist in recovery from recent floods. If interested, contact Byron Mann at vim@arumc.org. We will announce possible dates as soon as we can confirm them with the host sites.

Spaces available on mission education tour of Colombia in March-April 2016

Methodism is growing like wildfire in Colombia, and there’s an opportunity to see it first-hand March 29-April 13, 2016.

This 14-day educational tour will introduce participants to the Colombian nation, its energetic Metodistas, and their missional challenge. See the Holy Spirit at work, making disciples, spreading love and peace across the land! It’s an exciting opportunity to be partners with Colombian Methodists.

Methodist work in Colombia began in the mid-1990s, initiated by a group of evangelical seminarians. They studied Wesley together, got more and more excited, and when they graduated started Methodist churches.

In 2004, seven local congregations formed a national church, the Iglesia Colombiana Metodista (ICM). Ten years have seen ICM grow seven-fold. There are now 50 congregations and another 25 forming—a staggering growth rate.

The tour group will meet at Miami International Airport for orientation and team building; stop in three major cities with visits to nearby Methodist sites; meet grassroots Methodists and their leaders, urban and rural; attend a seminar on Colombia’s politics, economy, and culture; dialogue on Colombian Methodists’ missional plan; experience the capital city Bogota; and tour Cartagena’s striking old city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Flights must be booked by the end of 2015. For more information, contact the Rev. Rick Edwards: 218-728-8943 home; 218-349-1695 mobile; 218-485-4605 church (Moose Lake UMC in Minnesota); revricked@gmail.com; or, for a connection within Arkansas, contact the Rev. Bill Fish, bfish@ipa.net.

Support Arkansas-Cuba mission relationships in 2016 and 2017

The 2016 UMVIM construction-focused journey to Havana, Cuba is full, but there are new opportunities to support the growing Methodist Church in Cuba. A Bible School Team for Catedral de Holguin’s more than 100 children is now forming for late August 2016. A religious exchange/immersion for adults in Autumn 2016 and a Spring Break 2017 youth conference for college students and young adults to Catedral de Holguin have both been scheduled. The Catedral is the second largest Methodist Church in Cuba, with over 1,800 members. “Like” their Facebook page to follow their activities, which are too numerous to list. Their pastor and district superintendent of Cuba’s largest district, Holguin Central, will visit Arkansas in April 2016. If you would like to host or attend these services in Arkansas, contact Nechi Fullerton (nfullerton@yahoo.com) for information.

An immediate need in Holguin is a meeting place for a “house church;” \$600 to purchase a house for their meetings and services, because the government just tore down their temporary structure. Photos and details provided if your church or group would like to sponsor this mission.

Plans for 2017 include the annual construction UMVIM team going to Havana, as well as a UMVIM journey from northwest Arkansas. If you would like to travel to Cuba on a religious visa or support the Methodist revival in Cuba in other ways, contact Nechi Fullerton at the email address above. Currently, the number of religious visas to Cuba is limited, so these positions fill quickly.

Hendrix Institute for Clergy and Civic Engagement holds first retreat



The Hendrix College Institute for Clergy and Civic Engagement (ICCE) in November held its first retreat in Hot Springs. The newly formed program is underwritten by a five-year, \$500,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc.

Hendrix received the grant to help early-career Hendrix alumni pastors and Arkansas pastors develop and enhance leadership skills and ministry capacity, enabling them to lead their churches and communities in addressing major community issues and meeting the needs of the mission field outside the walls of the church. The retreats also offer a time of spiritual renewal for the participants.

The retreat was led by the Revs. Jeanie Burton, J. Wayne Clark, Mary Jane Cole and J.J. Whitney. The Rev. Karen Oliveto, senior pastor of Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, California, was the keynote speaker.

Discussion at the retreat centered on confronting controversial issues and engaging in prophetic pastoral leadership. The group will meet in six retreats and one summer mission trip over the next two years.

Those pictured are (first row) Mitchell Boone, Courtney Jones, Katie Pearce; (second row) Wayne Clark, Molly Gordon, Zach Roberts; (third row) Nathan Mattox, Karen Oliveto, Marie Mainard O'Connell, Heather Clawitter; (fourth row) Mary Jane Cole, J.J. Whitney and Jeanie Burton.

Hendrix College is a private liberal arts college in Conway, Arkansas, founded in 1876 and affiliated with the United Methodist Church since 1884.

COURTESY PHOTO

Big Sunday at a small church: 15 new members Nov. 1 at Magazine UMC

"People have asked, 'Was it like you preached this amazing sermon and you had an invitation and all these people came forward?' It wasn't like that. It was very methodical," said the Rev. Judy Hall, pastor of Magazine UMC in rural Logan County.

But a methodical, yet Spirit-led approach—having conversations with regular attendees about their faith—resulted in the church welcoming 15 new members on a single day. Six of those persons made first-time professions of faith; some came forward to be baptized; and others transferred membership from previous churches. What's more, two existing members publicly reaffirmed their faith.

"That is an amazing day for a congregation that has averaged between 44 and 46 in worship attendance for over 10 years," Hall said.

In preparing for this year's



COURTESY PHOTO

charge conference, Hall had made a list of people who attended regularly but were not on the church membership roll. She asked the church council to pray for those people, and she began to have conversations with them, including asking if they were baptized.

"More than once the answer was 'No! But I have been wanting to

Church leaders speak up for Syrian refugees

BY SAM HODGES
United Methodist News Service

Some United Methodists are protesting efforts by U.S. governors to try to keep out Syrian refugees after the Nov. 13 Paris terrorist attacks.

Leaders of ISIS have claimed credit for the attacks, which killed 129 people. A Syrian passport, possibly a fake, was found near the body of one of the suicide bombers in Paris.

Bishop Gary Mueller of the Arkansas Conference responded to Gov. Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas, who is among more than two dozen governors who now want their borders closed to Syrian refugees.

"Certainly, we cannot allow an unregulated flow of refugees into our state," Mueller said. "But it solves nothing to categorically exclude a group of people whose lives have been torn apart, as the governor has indicated he would like to do concerning Syrian refugees."

Mueller said he favored heightened security but also

"heightened compassion towards Syrian refugees who are suffering at the hands of ISIS in ways we can only begin to comprehend."

'Running for their lives'

The Rev. Wes Magruder, pastor of Kessler Park United Methodist Church Dallas and board president of Refugee Services of Texas, was critical of Texas Gov. Greg Abbott for joining in the call to keep Syrian refugees out.

"The Syrian refugees—they're running for their lives," Magruder said.

He added that the process of getting refugee status in the United States takes far longer and is far more stringent than in Europe.

"It's ludicrous to suggest that we don't already have, in our refugee settlement system, adequate vetting and security," Magruder said.

Magruder's church on Saturday had its second annual "First Thanksgiving" event for recent refugees, treating them to turkey and dressing and in other ways acquainting them with the U.S. holiday.

Two Syrian families attended.

"For our church in particular to wake up on Monday morning and hear the governor say, 'No more Syrians' was just very heartbreaking," Magruder said.

S.C. governor joins call

But Gov. Nikki Haley of South Carolina, a United Methodist, joined in the opposition to entry of more Syrian refugees.

In a letter to Sec. of State John Kerry, Haley cited gaps in intelligence on those fleeing Syria.

"This lack of historical and verifiable intelligence with many Syrian refugees makes it difficult, if not impossible, to thoroughly vet individuals seeking to enter the United States as a refugee," she said.

Immigration policy rests with the federal government, but states cooperate in the process.

Since 2012, fewer than 2,000 Syrian refugees have been allowed to settle in the United States. President Obama has said the U.S. will take 10,000 more, which is a small fraction of the number who have

arrived in Europe as warfare in Syria has intensified.

The Rev. John L. McCullough, president and chief executive officer of Church World Service and a United Methodist pastor, criticized efforts to close borders to Syrian refugees.

"Syrian refugees are fleeing violence perpetrated by ISIS—violence that has destroyed their country," McCullough said. "To blame vulnerable people for the acts of their perpetrators is unjust and inhumane. We must react not with hate toward one another, but instead with unity and resolve to see that these horrendous crimes are not repeated."

The Rev. Susan Henry-Crowe, top executive of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, noted that states are obligated to protect their citizens, but also said governments and religious groups have a "common responsibility" toward refugees.

"Christian witness should reflect the special care that Christ offers migrants, refugees and the vulnerable," she said. "As United Methodists, we know that fearful responses are not reflective of Christian life and witness. Instead, Christ calls us to a love for humankind and compassion for all."

Thomas Kemper, top executive for the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, also addressed the subject:

"The events of Paris may encourage border restrictions in the name of security and prohibit the entrance of Syrian and Iraqi refugees who have endured terrorism for years. We pray that governments and people may resist anti-refugee sentiment and continue to offer sanctuary to those in need."

Bishop Julius Trimble of the Iowa Conference, who chairs the United Methodist Interagency Immigration Task Force, said: "We cannot claim to be the church and not challenge our governors to be the voices of reason and respect and promoters of peace not fear."

Hodges, a United Methodist News Service writer, lives in Dallas. Contact him at newsdesk@umcom.org.

COMING UP

Confirmation Camp Feb. 26-28: registration opens Dec. 10

The first Confirmation Camp of 2016 is set for Feb. 26-28 at Camp Tanako, and registration opens Thursday, Dec. 10. Churches of any size are encouraged to attend. If your church has a long-term confirmation program, this camp can serve as your confirmation retreat. If your church has a smaller confirmation class, Confirmation Camp can serve as the bulk of the confirmation experience, with follow-up lessons designed to be done at the local church after the retreat. Registration closes Feb. 15, or sooner if all spaces are filled. Look for the registration link at www.arumc.org.

Can't make this session? Another Confirmation Camp will take place Oct. 7-9 at Bear Creek Camp, and registration will open Aug. 1.

Mrs. Santa's Kitchen at Sequoyah UMC Fayetteville Dec. 12

Sequoyah United Methodist Church, 1910 Old Wire Road in Fayetteville, will hold its annual Mrs. Santa's Kitchen on Saturday, Dec. 12, from 9 a.m. to noon. The event features homemade cookies, candy, bread and gifts, with all proceeds going to local missions. For details, contact the church office at 479-442-8677.

Community craft fair at Mountainside UMC Hot Springs Village Dec. 12

Mountainside UMC, 301 Elcano Drive in Hot Springs Village, will host its 10th Annual Community Craft Fair Saturday, Dec. 12, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

A handful of women at Mountainside United Methodist Church began raising funds through handmade crafts in the congregation's early days. In November 2001, five of them pooled their creative efforts and sold handmade crafts at the Coronado Arts and Crafts Fair. Despite bad weather, they raised \$806 to donate to the Potter's Clay crisis shelter for women and children, which had an immediate need for funds to help rebuild their shelter destroyed by fire.

In the following years, the Mountainside women came up with even more creative ideas for crafts and held several successful fundraisers—both for mission efforts, and for expenses such as kitchen appliances and other necessities when the church building was ready for move-in.

In 2006, Bettie Land and Mary Sue Privatte approached then-pastor the Rev. Chris Hemund with the idea of opening the church to the community and inviting vendors to sell their crafts. He agreed, and they were blessed with more than 30 vendors the first year; that count has steadily increased. With God's guidance, and support from the many loyal vendors and volunteers, the Mountainside women have raised more than \$30,000 for missions in the craft fair's first decade.

Perkins School of Youth Ministry in Dallas Jan. 11-14

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.

The theme for PSYM 2016 is "Make the Connections," focusing on helping youth ministry workers make the connections between ministry training, experience and practice. Featured speakers include the Revs. Rudy Rasmus, Amy Valdez-Barker, Andrew Beard and Mark DeVries. Two Arkansas youth ministry professionals, Michelle Moore and the Rev. Jay Clark, are among the workshop presenters, as is retired Bishop Max Whitfield, who serves as bishop in residence and director of the Center for Religious Leadership at Perkins School of Theology, and was elected to the episcopacy from Arkansas. For details, visit www.smu.edu/Perkins.

Beyond! Children's ministry leadership conference Jan. 28-30; registration opens Nov. 15

The next Beyond! Children's Ministry Conference is set for Jan. 28-30, 2016, at Camp Tanako near Hot Springs. Keynote speaker will be the Rev. Dr. Tanya Eustace, a deacon in the United Methodist Church who serves as director of children's and intergenerational ministries at Discipleship Ministries (formerly known as the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship). A member of the Rio Texas Conference, she has 17 years of experience as Christian educator and minister to children and families in the local church.

For the most up to date information, including scholarship applications, visit <http://kidz.arumc.org/2016-beyond-january-28-30-2016>. Registration opens Nov. 15; scholarship applications are due by Dec. 31.

Fusion worship conference Feb. 4-6; registration now open

Discipleship Ministries (formerly the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship) has set Fusion: The Future of Worship in the UMC for Feb. 4-6 at Edenton Street UMC in Raleigh, N.C. This conference will bring together practitioners from vital congregations and recognized expert professors to delve into current worlds of worship resources and leadership in the areas of music, worship planning and design, preaching and sacraments.

Fusion will be three days of worship, inspiration, practical instruction and networking designed for clergy and lay people from both large and small churches, in addition to seminarians and professors. For more information or to register, visit www.fusionworship2016.org.

New retreat for high school seniors April 15-16: registration opens Jan. 15

Arkansas Conference Camping Ministries announces its first Senior Retreat, an opportunity for graduating high school seniors to spend time learning what to expect on their post-high school journey, and how to navigate new challenges and situations. Topics will include sessions about college life, relationships, finances, and faith after high school. Camp Tanako will host this overnight retreat April 15-16; registration opens Jan. 15. Look for the registration link next month at www.arumc.org.

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BOOK REVIEW

Comparison highlights Wesleyan understanding of faith

Calvin vs. Wesley:
Bringing Belief in
Line with Practice

Don Thorsen

Abingdon Press, 2013

BY MICHAEL ROBERTS
Special Contributor

In contemporary American Christian culture, Calvinism is prevalent and its proponents are aggressive. However, our Wesleyan theological heritage differs significantly from the concepts laid forth by John Calvin. So what's a United Methodist to do?

In Calvin vs. Wesley, Don Thorsen invites Wesleyans to let our light shine more boldly. He argues that Wesley's less systematic, more pastoral and practical approach to Christian living is thoroughly

biblical and needed in the world. To paraphrase some of the chapter titles, John Wesley offers a theological lens that focuses more on love than on sovereignty, more on freedom than on predestination, more on salvation offered to all, and in support of a church that is more catholic (universal) than magisterial, less top-down and more open to the work of the Spirit in all disciples.

For example, Calvin's theology is centered on the sovereignty of God, arguing that nothing takes place without divine determination. While Wesley affirms God's sovereignty, he does so through the lens of love, arguing that a biblical understanding of God is grounded less in power and more in love. In creation, the sovereign God lays a certain amount of power aside in order to facilitate the possibility of a free and life-giving relationship.

In several places, Thorsen explores the different views on salvation between Calvin and Wesley. For Wesley, salvation is

viewed less in the judicial sense and more as a reconciled relationship with God, a relationship characterized by love. In this relationship, we partner with God in becoming more spiritual, more holy, more loving, more like Jesus Christ.

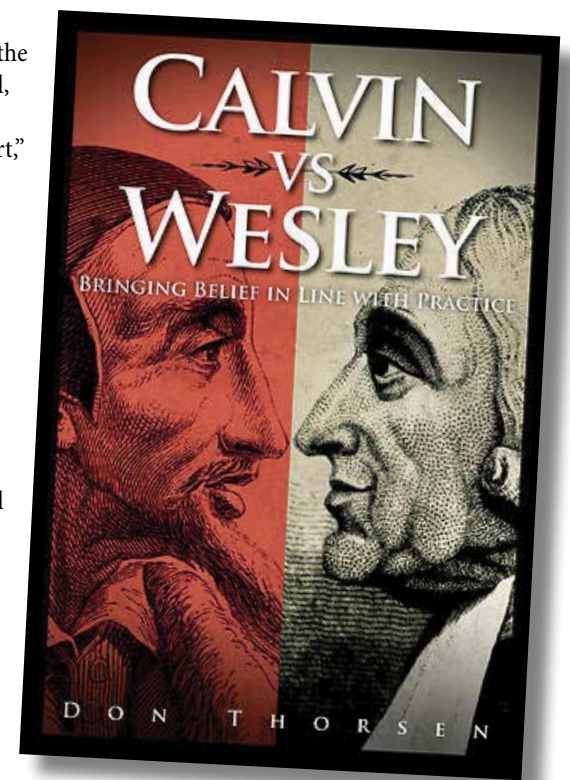
As Thorsen shows, this positive outlook is suspicious from a Calvinist perspective. From that perspective, all talk of perfection, holiness, and victorious Christian living "should be avoided, lest Christians be tempted to believe that they had somehow contributed to their sanctification."

Wesley could not find biblical justification for such resignation and acceptance of sin. He also believed that Calvinistic views of sovereignty and predestination made God responsible for sin—which is hard to reconcile with a loving God who seeks relationship with all.

This book has been offered in support of our bishop's call to spiritual revival. Wesley's practical theology was born in revival and

motivated by the fruits of revival. In the midst of this revival, Wesley affirms a "religion of the heart," "a concept too categorically unsystematic and Spirit-oriented for Calvinists."

Perhaps a renewed engagement of Wesley's understanding of Christian living will help open the way for revival among us today. In support of this movement, theology matters! This book is an excellent resource for helping those of us in the Wesleyan tradition to align our practice with our beliefs and to let our light shine.



Roberts serves as senior pastor of First UMC Conway.



SAVE THE DATE

MARCH 12, 2016 at
St. James United
Methodist Church
Little Rock

A Day with the Bishop is a great opportunity for 5th through 7th graders to meet and spend time with our own Bishop Gary Mueller, learn about the connectional ministries of the United Methodist Church, and get a sneak peek at what's to come as a United Methodist youth!

Please join us for this exciting day of fellowship and fun.

Questions? Contact Michelle Moore, 501-324-8048 or michelle.moore@arumc.org.

CAMP & RETREAT
INFORMATION GUIDE

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The Senior Retreat is an opportunity for graduating seniors to spend time learning what to expect on their post-high school journey, and how to navigate new challenges and situations.

Topics may vary each year but will include sessions about college life, relationships, finances, and faith after high school.

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For more information, visit ARUMC.ORG, or contact Michelle Moore: michelle.moore@arumc.org

'Generation Transformation'

The Rev. Rudy Rasmus takes a selfie with students he met during the Nov. 2 Sankofa Generation Transformation tour stop at Philander Smith College. Rasmus, the Baby Boomer pastor of Houston's St. John's United Methodist Church



AUM PHOTO BY BRENNEN BOOSE

Downtown, and Romal Tune, a Gen-X social entrepreneur and founder of Faith for Change, Inc., are visiting historically Black colleges and universities supported by the Black College Fund. They share the mission story through intergenerational conversations on matters of social justice and advocacy and invite young adults to serve as short-term missionaries.



Faith Funds

Twice the Grace

When UMFA Seminary Scholar Lynn Cross met Nathan Kilbourne at Duke Divinity School, congregations in the Arkansas Conference received a double measure of grace. In 2009, Lynn and Nathan graduated from seminary, married and began serving local churches in Arkansas.

Rev. Nathan Kilbourne has served as associate pastor at Asbury UMC in Little Rock and now as senior pastor at Vilonia UMC. Rev. Lynn Kilbourne began her ministry as associate pastor at Bryant First UMC and is in her fourth year as Conway First UMC associate. They have one daughter.

"The Foundation allowed me to go to the United Methodist seminary of my choice without the anxiety of taking on debt," Lynn said. "Knowing people in Arkansas had invested in me and would welcome me back meant a lot when I was in seminary."

The Arkansas Conference quickly became Nathan's home, too. "Today we are a part of the Advancing Pastoral Leadership program, funded by a UMFA grant," he said. "Without the help of the Foundation, one of us might have been able to participate in this important leadership development program — but definitely not both of us."

The Foundation is pleased to know the Kilbournes will be serving our local churches for decades to come.



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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