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Mobile food pantry serves student households

BY MARTHA TAYLOR
Special Contributor

What college student hasn't eaten their weight in ramen noodles while waiting on a paycheck or financial aid to arrive? Making ends meet and having a bit of food in the cupboard is difficult for a single person; the challenge multiplies when you are a young parent, working full-time while trying to be the first person in your family to earn a college degree.

For students attending Arkansas State University's two-year programs in Beebe, Harrisburg, Marked Tree and Newport, the burden of feeding themselves and their families was lightened this past fall when the Bread of Life Mobile Food Pantry began providing groceries for students.

The pantry, housed in a truck purchased and outfitted thanks to a grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, visits each campus on the first, second or third Wednesday of the month. The fourth Wednesday of the month, the volunteers fill backpacks with non-perishable food for distribution to Harrisburg Public School students. It is one of over 200



Students from the Wesley Foundation campus ministry at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro prepare bags of groceries and load them into the Bread of Life Mobile Food Pantry truck.

PHOTO BY SAM MEADORS

members of the national Campus and University Food Bank Alliance (www.cufba.org.)

In addition to the UMFA grant,

the Northeast District of the United Methodist Church provided seed money to purchase food and to cover fuel expenses.

A ministry partnership between First United Methodist Church Harrisburg and the ASU Jonesboro Wesley Foundation, the Rev. Clark Atkins, Harrisburg's pastor, said that 946 persons—483 students and their families, including 151 children—received more than 8,500 pounds of food between mid-September and the first week of December. Another 30 to 40 school-aged children in the Harrisburg School District received approximately 800 pounds of food through the Backpacks for Kids program.

Knowing the needs

The mobile pantry idea came from the Rev. Clark Atkins, pastor at First UMC Harrisburg. Atkins spent 18 years in higher education at four- and two-year institutions before entering ministry, so he saw first-hand the difficulties students experienced.

"I saw students trying to break the cycle of poverty, working two or three jobs, receiving financial aid and still struggling to make ends meet for their families," Atkins said. "The students genuinely want to make a better life for themselves and [See MOBILE PANTRY, page 6]

Prison chapel close to becoming reality

United Methodists among those contributing funds for long-held dream

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

For more than seven years, inmates and staff at the Ouachita River Correctional Unit in Malvern, Ark., have worked toward a dream: a building dedicated to worship, study, prayer and learning. On Nov. 12, after saving, giving and raising amounts from ten cents to tens of thousands of dollars, they broke ground for the prison's chapel.

Since the Arkansas Department of Correction (ADC) approved fundraising for a chapel at the unit in 2008, \$200,000 has been raised. More is needed, though, to finish construction, which is slated to

begin in early 2016.

"Through perseverance and a lot of prayers, we have come to see this day," Warden Nurzuhl Faust told the audience gathered for the groundbreaking ceremony. "Our future chapel will serve—as Chaplain Gillom puts it—as a 'House of Hope.'"

The Rev. Norma Gillom, an African Methodist Episcopal Church itinerant elder, knows the need for a house of hope. She has served as an ADC chaplain for more than a decade. The Ouachita River Unit houses inmates with all types of needs, including mental health care, hospital care and nursing home or hospice care.

[See CHAPEL, page 8]



Mason Robinson, center, the reentry and employability instructor at Riverside Vocational Technical School, sings with an inmate choir during the ceremony that preceded the Nov. 12 groundbreaking for the chapel at the Ouachita River Correctional Unit in Malvern.

PHOTO BY KATHLYN ATKINSON, ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Espiritu Santo Ven (Come, Holy Spirit)

Mission to Cuba offers glimpse of revival

BY NATASHA MURRAY-NORMAN
Special Contributor

The word *revival* conjures different thoughts, emotions and mental images in different people. It is a word with its own traditions that mean so much to so many. Revival is a buzzword for evangelical and religious folks, but it can be hard to grasp or live out.

As a Conference, we have been challenged to experience revival in our congregations and to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us through that journey. But what does that truly mean?

This past October in Holguin, Cuba, I experienced, dare I say, *revival* in a way that transformed my understanding it. No longer put off by the buzzword, I am in search of reclaiming revival as a lifestyle and spiritual discipline.

During my mission journey to Holguin, I witnessed what many of us here in the United States long for. I witnessed a church that had once died experience the meaning of resurrection. The Methodist Church in Cuba is vital! From worship to discipleship, the message of Jesus Christ is transforming lives and allowing people to experience the Good News.

I wish I could explain all that I experienced, but I cannot. My experience left me feeling renewed and revived. Was it the worship? Partly. Was it the testimonies? I suppose. Was it the fellowship in the house churches? Maybe. Honestly, I believe it was all of that and more. Here are a few things that I think changed my perspective of living a life that is seeking renewal and revival:

Commitment to collective prayer: It would seem obvious that prayer would be at the center of everything we all do. However, according to The Pew Research Center, 55 percent of Americans spend part of their day in prayer. That may seem like a large number, but how often do we encourage prayer as a vital part of the life and functionality of the church? Not just individual prayers that we pray in our own private devotion time, but the collective prayers we pray together as a body?

Each day that we spent with our team in Holguin began in prayer and devotion. We witnessed so many people in the church spending their time in prayer before they began their work. Prayer was the pep rally that helped people do the work that they were committed to doing. I am pretty sure some church folk who read this



Natasha Murray-Norman

'No longer put off by the buzzword, I am in search of reclaiming revival as a lifestyle and a spiritual discipline.'

will challenge me and say, "We pray all the time!" But how often are we calling our members to come and pray at the church?

Commitment to discipleship: We witnessed a lot of professions of faith. We also witnessed that those who had professed their faith then went through a discipleship class. In order to be baptized and to minister to people, all new converts were required to attend a study and complete all three phases of that discipleship course.

Commitment to worship: I think worship that is done with passion is attractive. Worship should not look and feel like a production; it should be about leading people to where they feel connected to God.

I ask those of you who are pastors: In preparing for worship each week, what do you want the people to experience? If it is all about your sermon, then think again. Worship should appeal to all senses and have a purpose. Worship is not about what you can get done in an hour. It is about setting aside time to be in the presence of God.

Commitment to God's work: My experience in Cuba helped me realize that perhaps at times I am not fully committed to doing the work of God. I'm committed to work, but does my work reflect the will of God? Most importantly, is my work a reflection of God?

The women and men in Holguin were committed to doing the will of God and carrying it out so that all would know God. Because of their commitment to doing the will of God, they were eager to express their love of God and share how God had transformed them. How committed are we to sharing the gospel, knowing that there are risks involved? Our sisters and brothers in Cuba face so many obstacles and are in danger of facing persecution because of who they believe in. How committed are we? But mostly, what are we committed to?

I believe that revival can come to the United Methodist Church of Arkansas. I believe that all of God's people can experience revival. I believe that if we are truly open to God's Holy Spirit, we will find ourselves immersed in prayer and committed to carrying out the mission that God has given us.

The Rev. Murray-Norman serves as associate pastor of First UMC Pine Bluff.

To learn about opportunities for mission with Cuban Methodists later this year and next year, including Vacation Bible School, a youth conference and an upcoming visit to Arkansas by a Cuban pastor, contact Nechi Fullerton, nefullerton@yahoo.com.

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EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

Drop the blanket

We've seen a variety of responses to the Dec. 2 mass shooting in San Bernardino, Calif. Some have criticized or condemned the entire Muslim faith based on the actions of a few of its adherents.

The Arkansas Interfaith Rapid Response Team, which includes two United Methodists along with Muslim, Buddhist and Jewish members, has suggested ways we can learn about, respect and show compassion to our diverse neighbors:

- As an individual or as a congregation within a community of faith, invite people of the Muslim faith to your home or congregation for a meal.
- Smile and be kind to everyone without discrimination.
- If you see or hear something unkind about one of our neighbors, kindly say something to let it be known that you disagree.
- Tell stories about your friends that share your practice of embracing everyone in your life without discrimination.
- Visit a mosque or Islamic Center to show your support for our Muslim neighbors.

Note that several of these simple, straightforward options apply to everyone, regardless of the religion they embrace.

Just before I received this list of suggestions, my friend Omar published a blog post, "My Muslim Problem." His perspective is a unique and valuable one. To read this reflection from a Christian pastor who has spent his life interacting with Muslim family members, visit omarrikabi.com.

With these two pieces of writing fresh in my mind, I read a post by writer and musician Jason Soroski (jasonsoroski.net): "Just Drop the Blanket."

Soroski explains that he noticed something for the first time while re-watching "A Charlie Brown Christmas": As Linus shares the real meaning of Christmas through the narrative of Luke 2:8-14, he lets go of his security blanket. When? At the moment the angel says to the shepherds, "Fear not."

Soroski continues, "Looking at it now, it is pretty clear what Charles Schulz was saying through this, and it's so simple it's brilliant.

"The birth of Jesus separates us from our fears.

"The birth of Jesus frees us from the habits we are unable (or unwilling) to break ourselves.

"The birth of Jesus allows us to simply drop the false security we have been grasping so tightly, and learn to trust and cling to Him instead."

As this first issue of 2016 reaches you, we're approaching Epiphany—a term that refers to our observance of the Magi visiting the Christ Child, and which also means "a sudden realization."

So as I wish you Happy New Year, I also wish an epiphany for us all: May this be the year in which we truly realize we can live out the angel's command alongside all our neighbors:

"Fear not."

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



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Melissa Sanders • Circulation
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Arkansas Conference
800 Daisy Bates Drive
Little Rock, AR 72202-3770
www.arumc.org 501-324-8000

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Submission Deadlines

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



GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

Honesty is the most faithful policy

I believe in being honest. Of course, honesty can be difficult, even painful. But I also have experienced over and over how God uses honesty for good in the most amazing ways.

So here's my honest take. I am convinced we are in the midst of a crisis. It may not seem as real as terrorism or the death of someone you dearly love, but the results are even more devastating. It's a spiritual crisis. And I'm not just talking about the real and challenging declines in professions of faith, attendance and the presence of young adults in our churches. I'm talking about the worst possible kind of spiritual crisis—one that exists because we have lost our passion for Jesus.

I'm baffled by it because I know we are committed Christians. We strive to live as Jesus' disciples and invest deeply in making disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world. But it is what it is. And that means we have to deal with it.

This is why I am so serious about spiritual

revival. It's time to admit we need the Holy Spirit to empower us to do what we can't seem to do on our own—draw us closer to Jesus and his unconditional, transformational and invitational love so we are infused with his life-changing passion.

Spiritual revival is never about what other people are doing wrong or what they need to do. It's always about us and what we need to do. Because we are the ones who will remain absolutely stuck—and wonder why nothing is changing—until we begin to get serious about spiritual revival like we've never gotten serious before.

Our emphasis on spiritual revival is not just another conference program that will come and go, only to be replaced by the next conference program that will come and go. Spiritual revival is fundamentally about who God is, who we are and how we will live—as individuals and the church. This means we are in it for the long haul.

With each passing day, I sense we are becoming more and more serious about seeking

spiritual revival. But I honestly believe God has a whole lot more in store for us so that we become more passionate than we imagined possible, are filled with more joy and hope than we knew existed and become people who actually do more to change lives, communities and the world than we dreamed.

So here's what I need from you. I need you to join me in getting serious about getting serious! Serious about getting hungry to follow Jesus. Serious about how he does for us what we absolutely need, but can never do on our own. Serious about the power of the Holy Spirit to wake us up. And serious about doing it with everything we've got.

Come, Holy Spirit come!

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*:

- U.C. Washington (elder)—Theresa Hoover Memorial UMC; effective Jan. 15
- Rashim Merriwether (part-time local pastor)—Hunter UMC; effective Jan. 15
- Jonathon Bevil (provisional elder)—Lakewood UMC North Little Rock (associate); effective Jan. 1
- Andrew Kjolraug (elder)—First UMC Charleston; effective Jan. 1
- Shane Pair (elder)—Oakley Chapel UMC (charge realignment); effective Jan. 1
- Ramiro Lizcano (elder)—Grace-Rogers Hispanic Ministry (charge realignment); effective Jan. 1
- Nancy Rainwater (retired associate member)—Griffin Memorial UMC (interim); effective Jan. 1

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

- LaVon Long (part-time local pastor)—effective Jan. 1 (will continue serving Moorefield UMC)

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



PRACTICAL DIVINITY

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON

Cultural changes bring challenges for churches

The most recent data about religious trends in the United States gives the church a snapshot of the challenges it is currently facing.

The Pew Research Center's most recent survey on the religious landscape in the U.S. reveals two particularly troubling findings: a drop in the number of Christians as a share of the overall population and a sharply rising number of people indifferent to organized religion. The latter group is often termed the "nones" in reference to their response when asked which religious category they identify with.

Within the American population, the Pew survey shows that "each successive age group is less connected than that group's parents," according to Cathy Lynn Grossman of Religion News Service ("Christians lost ground, 'nones' soar in new portrait of U.S. religion," May 12, 2015).

The nones stand at 22.8 percent of the U.S. population. When Pew Research conducted its first survey of the U.S. religious landscape, that number was at 16 percent. While there has also been an increase in

the number of people who claim to be atheist or agnostic, these are not the same as what the nones represent. Nones may be believers in God, but simply refuse to affiliate with any organized religion, much less a Christian church.

Evangelism, outreach

What we face is a dual challenge related to both our evangelism and our discipleship formation. When it comes to adults in the "none" category, we need to begin strategizing about how effective evangelism can bring them to a living faith in Jesus Christ.

We know that hellfire-and-damnation preaching will not be a good strategy. But otherwise, the church should use any means necessary. A task force within my congregation is having an extended conversation about "vision and visibility" relating to how we reach the unchurched and dechurched in our area. We are examining our deeply held vision about Wesleyan ministry for our city, then asking how we can make it visible to the

community in a compelling way.

When we asked how people around the table in that group were attracted to our congregation, the answers were fascinating.

A number of them grew up in the church, were effectively formed as disciples and have remained into adulthood. Others were attracted by children's and youth ministries. Essentially, they began attending because there were strong Christian formation programs for kids, and the parents got hooked along the way.

A couple of people were personally invited by members of the congregation to attend a worship service or some other activity of the church (what is sometimes called "relational evangelism").

And one person said that her family began attending because our church popped up on a Google search one Sunday morning when they were looking for worship services in the area.

Because people expend time and energy in widely varied ways, having a multipoint and flexible strategy for evangelism is crucial. It must include effective interpersonal

outreach, as well as effective use of both print and digital media. And every congregation needs to be intentional about how to develop and implement its strategy. For some churches, a whole culture change will be required.

Disciple formation

Then there is the question of how we form children and youth to be committed disciples of Jesus Christ as adults. Because it's not just that unbelievers are failing to be converted; it's also that Christian kids raised in the church are falling away when they reach adulthood.

Here I think it is time for us to face a hard truth: The world will not make our children into Christians.

For so long, we were able to assume that Christian children would become Christian adults as a matter of course. But just think about this illustration I often used in the classroom when trying to get across the profound challenge we have today in discipling our children:

Imagine walking into the home
[See CHANGES, page 11]

Our Trajectory

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



PEOPLE OF FAITH

Jones nominated as new secretary of Annual Conference

Bishop Gary E. Mueller has appointed the Rev. Aubrietta Jones to serve as secretary of the Annual Conference until the Conference convenes in June and the body can formally elect her.

Jones, ordained an elder in 2003, currently serves as pastor of Lonoke United Methodist Church. Her previous appointments include co-pastoring with her husband for a new church start, Christ UMC Cabot (now The Journey UMC), and associate pastor roles at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock and First UMC Conway. She holds a bachelor's degree from Drury University in Springfield, Mo., and a Master of Divinity degree from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.

Jones and her husband, the Rev. Jeff Warrick, have two daughters, Sabrina and Daphne.

Though not yet formally approved as secretary by a vote of the Annual Conference, Jones will begin working with the Conference Session Planning Team to prepare for the 2016 gathering, June 19-22 in Hot Springs.



Aubrietta Jones

Tanako director joins national camping ministries board



Kim Carter, executive director of Camp Tanako, has been elected as the newest South Central Jurisdiction representative to the United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministry Association (UMCRM) Board of Directors. Carter will serve a four-year term, with a possibility of re-election for a total of eight years of service. She will join the board for its annual in-person meeting, Jan. 19-22 at the Aldersgate Retreat Center in Pacific Palisades, Calif.

Formerly the National Camp and Retreat Committee (NCRC), the UMCRM Association was formed in 2013 with the vote of confidence and pioneering spirit of its charter members. The UMCRM is a membership organization open to all who share its mission of resourcing, advocating, inspiring and networking to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of camp and retreat ministries.

The UMCRM Association seeks to provide support and benefits in addition to the excellent resources currently provided by United Methodist Discipleship Ministries (formerly the General Board of Discipleship) through its resource person, Kevin Witt.

Steel-Hendrix Awards honor Holifield, Falkowski, Fallon

Hendrix College has announced the winners of the 2016 Steel-Hendrix Awards: Dr. Brooks Holifield, Anthony Falkowski and Lori Fallon. All three leaders will be honored at the Steel-Hendrix Awards Banquet on Thursday, March 10, 2016. The banquet and the lecture that follows are sponsored by the Marshall T. Steel Center for the Study of Religion and Philosophy.

Holifield, the Charles Howard Candler Professor of American Church History at Emory University, will receive the Mary and Ida Brumley Award for Religious Education, which honors those who have provided distinguished service in the field of religious education. The award celebrates the legacy of Mary and Ida Brumley, long-time Christian education leaders in the North Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church.

He graduated from Hendrix College in 1963, then Yale Divinity School and the Yale Graduate School. He has written seven books on American religious history, including *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (2003), which won the Outler Prize from the American Society of Church History. He also has written more than 175 articles, encyclopedia entries and book reviews, and received numerous research fellowships.

In 2011, Holifield was elected as a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He retired from Emory after 41 years of teaching in the Candler School of Theology, the Graduate Division of Religion and the graduate program in history.



Brooks Holifield



Anthony Falkowski

Falkowski, director of missions and outreach for First UMC Little Rock, will receive the Ethel K. Millar Award for Religion and Social Awareness, which recognizes persons whose lives have been distinguished by a passion for social justice and a commitment to the general welfare of all people. The award is given in memory of Ethel K. Millar, a long-time Hendrix College librarian whose passion for peace, commitment to a variety of social organizations, and work as a role model inspired Hendrix students to devote their lives to the pursuit of the highest ideals of peace and justice.

A Delaware native, Falkowski moved to Arkansas 10 years ago. A graduate of the University of Delaware, he holds a B.A.A.S. degree with a major in sociology and a minor in psychology. He led men's discussion groups for 18 years, worked with at-risk-youth and participated in a University of Delaware micro business program in Panama. He became the Mid-Atlantic coordinator for The Earthstewards Network,

working in the Middle East, Central America and the former Soviet Union.

Falkowski has co-chaired the Central Arkansas Homeless Coalition and reignited the ecumenical Urban Ministers Alliance in downtown Little Rock. First UMC Little Rock and its SERVE ministry have received numerous mission and outreach awards during his tenure.

Fallon will receive the Youth Minister of the Year Award. A life-long United Methodist, she grew up in a small, rural town in Louisiana. She graduated magna cum laude from Louisiana Tech University, and from University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences with a B.S. in Nuclear Medicine Technology. After running the nuclear medicine technology department at Delta Memorial Hospital in Dumas, Fallon was recruited to work at St. Francis Medical Center in Monroe, La., as a nuclear medicine technologist. She then opened a new nuclear medicine technology department in the Monroe Surgical Hospital.

Fallon moved to Monticello in 1997. Six years later, she completed a Disciple I course and was asked to help with the youth program at the First United Methodist Church Monticello. In January 2005, Fallon became the church's full-time youth minister. She has now 12 groups of high school seniors during her time in youth ministry.

In addition to her work with Monticello youth, Fallon has served as a small group leader at a number of Conference and district events. She is currently co-coordinator of the Southeast District youth team, a member of the Arkansas Conference Youth Ministers Task Force, and has recently been chosen to be a small church cohort mentor for Dover United Methodist Church.

Following the awards banquet Dr. Carol Newsom, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Old Testament and past president of the Society of Biblical Literature, will give a lecture that is free and open to the public. Tickets are required for the banquet; see the advertisement on page 7 of this issue for details.

Frase tells tale from church on radio show

The Rev. Thomas Frase, senior pastor of First UMC Mountain Home, appeared recently on the radio show *Tales from the South* to share a story from his early days in ministry. In the story, titled "Come to Life," Frase recounts a humorous event that took place in the small southern Arkansas congregation he served as part of his first appointment out of seminary.

The episode, Part I of "What Happens in Church..." was recorded Oct. 30 at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in North Little Rock, and aired on KUAR (Little Rock area) Nov. 19 and on KUAF (Fayetteville area) Nov. 21. It is currently available in podcast form at www.TalesfromtheSouth.com.



Lori Fallon



Tom Frase

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Another view on capital punishment

[In response to the commentary "As state wrestles with death penalty, a call to remember redemption" by the Rev. Stephen Copley, Nov. 6 issue]

The issue of capital punishment has been debated for many years in Methodist circles. Belief for or against capital punishment is not an essential to the faith. So Christians can and do disagree on the subject. However, I respectfully disagree with my liberal friends. We Methodists start with Scripture. So what does the Bible say?

Some have contended that capital punishment is wrong because it violates the Sixth Commandment. But the Hebrew word translated "to kill" in the Decalogue is "rasah." It really means "thou shall not murder."

What does the crucifixion mean in terms of this discussion? As we read the Passion narrative, there is no evidence that Christ used this chance to abolish the death penalty. In Luke's version, we find the penitent thief admitting, "For we are

receiving the due rewards for our deeds." In this case redemption wasn't perverted, but enhanced by capital punishment, because Jesus promised him a special place in paradise. My liberal friends get their words confused. A reprieve comes from the governor. It is temporary. Redemption is from God and it is forever. Capital punishment is the last resort of a just society.

Rev. Roger E. Glover
Mt. Carmel UMC Benton

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, online, or both.

Walmart grants benefit UM ministries and partners

The Walmart Foundation on Dec. 9 presented State Giving Grants to eight Arkansas nonprofits—half of which had connections to United Methodism. Each organization received grant funding of at least \$25,000, including:

- **200,000 Reasons**, the Arkansas Conference initiative to fight childhood hunger. The funds will provide the resources for 10 United Methodist churches to provide Cooking Matters classes to a total of 360 families in 2016. A part of Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign, the Cooking Matters program helps families learn to shop for and cook healthy meals on a budget.
- **Shepherd's Hope Medical Clinic**, a ministry of Oak Forest UMC Little Rock, provides medical, dental and vision care to neighborhood residents who would not otherwise have access to these services. The clinic will use its grant toward the purchase of an ultrasound machine and other needed supplies.
- **Philander Smith College**, a United Methodist-related historically black institution, will use its grant to purchase computer equipment for a workforce training program.
- **The Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention (ArCOP)**, a partner of the 200,000 Reasons Task Force, will use its grant to increase access to fruits and vegetables for low income Arkansans. Its sub-grants will allow farmers markets to double spending power of SNAP (food stamp) recipients who purchase locally-grown produce in 14 pilot counties.

Other grant recipients were Arkansas Dream Center, for its mobile summer feeding program; ArVets, for programs that help veterans transition into the civilian world, including workforce development; Baptist Health, for its BHealthy Initiative Farmers Market Program, which makes nutrition education and local produce available through farmers markets at hospital sites; and Blessings in a Backpack, for its summer and weekend feeding program.



Those attending the Dec. 9 presentation of Walmart State Giving Grants included, from left, Michelle Shope, Elvia Perez, Kathy Ransom and Veeta Biggers with Shepherd's Hope Neighborhood Health Center, a ministry of Oak Forest UMC; Andi Ridgway, chair of the Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention and a partner with the 200,000 Reasons initiative; Michael Lindsey, director of public affairs and government relations at Walmart; Dr. Roderick Smothers, president of Philander Smith College; the Rev. J.J. Whitney and Bishop Gary Mueller, representing 200,000 Reasons; and Kathy Webb, executive director of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, a 200,000 Reasons partner.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

Hendrix receives Lilly grant to help high schoolers discern calling

Hendrix College on Dec. 4 announced a grant of \$598,164 from Lilly Endowment Inc. to create the Hendrix Youth Institute (HYI), a summer program that will help high school students discern a call to ministry. The college plans to use these grant funds to offer HYI for four consecutive summers.

HYI will engage the concept of engaging "head, heart and hands" to enable youth to understand God's call. Student participants will take classes in the Bible, Wesleyan heritage, worship and spiritual formation; shadow a minister and participate in worship, small-group Bible study, local service opportunities, and discernment exercises; and attend an orientation to ministry event sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Board of Ordained Ministry of the United Methodist Church.

The two-and-a-half-week program will culminate in a mission trip in which participants will work together, building relationships with those they serve and learning from one another. Through service to others, the students will better

understand themselves and be able to further discern their call.

"I am extremely grateful that Lilly Endowment has entrusted us with this grant for very important work with high school youth," said the Rev. J. Wayne Clark, the college's associate vice president for development and dean of the chapel. "The College has been blessed to receive funds that have helped Hendrix students discern their vocational call, as well as helping clergy in their early ministry careers look at civic engagement and is thrilled for this next partnership. What we hope will be created is a culture of call that begins with high school youth, is nurtured in the college years and is sustained beyond seminary."

Hendrix is one of 82 private four-year colleges and universities participating in the initiative. The schools are located in 29 states and the District of Columbia. Although some schools are independent, many reflect the religious heritage of their founding Christian traditions, including Baptist, Brethren, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Presbyterian

and Reformed churches, as well as Catholic, non-denominational, Pentecostal and historic African-American Christian communities.

The Indianapolis-based Lilly Endowment is giving \$44.5 million in grants through this initiative, part of its commitment to identify and cultivate theologically-minded young people who will become leaders in church and society.

"The colleges and universities participating in the youth theology initiative are well-positioned to reach out to high school students in this way," said Dr. Christopher L. Coble, vice president for religion at the Endowment. "They have outstanding faculty in theology and religion who know how to help young people explore the wisdom of religious traditions and apply these insights to contemporary challenges."

Hendrix College in Conway is a private liberal arts college affiliated with the United Methodist Church, nationally recognized in numerous college guides, lists and rankings for academic quality, community, innovation and value. For more information, visit www.hendrix.edu.

CORRECTION

The Dec. 4 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist* listed the first-ever recipients of 200,000 Reasons and Vernon and Eva Lee Paysinger grants, which provide support for reducing childhood hunger in Arkansas. One of the listings failed to name all of the participating churches.

The Camden/Fairview area Backpack Program that received a \$2,500 grant is a cooperative effort among four United Methodist congregations: Timothy UMC, St. Mark UMC, Fairview UMC and Westside UMC. The money will help provide weekend meals for students in the Camden Fairview school district, which these churches serve in partnership with The Hub, an ecumenical community group.

200,000 REASONS
to fight childhood hunger

CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD in the *Arkansas United Methodist* for 60 cents per word, no limit. Call 501-324-8037 or email aforus@arumc.org. Deadlines on page 2 of this issue.

Grand Avenue UMC, Stuttgart, Arkansas is seeking a part-time Children's Ministry Director. The director is responsible for developing and growing the ministry program for children which includes Children's Bible Study, VBS, Sunday School, and other children's activities. Director should work a minimum of 10 hours per week, including Sundays and Wednesdays. A full job description will be given at time of interview. Please send resumes to grandavenue@live.com.

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Mobile pantry

(continued from page 1)

their families, and the mobile food pantry is creating a space to help them do that.”

Atkins approached the Rev. Sam Meadors, Wesley Foundation director at ASU Jonesboro, about a partnership whereby she and student volunteers would stock the truck, prepare the bags and distribute them across the three campuses and in Harrisburg. From the beginning, Meadors knew the mission was one her students would embrace.

“As a Wesley Foundation director the biggest thing that comes out of this ministry is getting connected with our students and seeing them in service and mission with people their own age,” said Meadors. “What I hear over and over again from students is that they want to be the church, not just go to church, and this is giving them that opportunity.”

Meadors is especially pleased with the response the ministry received after Wesley Foundation students wrote letters to their home congregations letting them know about the Bread of Life ministry and asking for donations of specific

VIDEO:

See the Bread of Life Mobile Food Pantry in action at www.youtube.com/arkansasumc.



AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

items such as peanut butter, a student favorite. With ties to churches in four of the five districts in the Arkansas Conference, enough donations came in to allow for a special December distribution that included 135 Christmas hams and all the sides to make dinnertime at Christmas special.

The Harrisburg congregation has operated a food pantry for the

past eight years, and members were ready to assist with the new mobile venture by handling administrative tasks, such as keeping up with the number of individuals served and amount of distributed food.

Other area churches are supporting the ministry as well. The Rev. Thompson Murray, pastor of First United Methodist Church Newport, volunteers with the

ministry and sees the benefits for the students, area churches and the schools themselves.

“The ministry connects the church with students,” said Murray. “This is an avenue of making contact, and what I’ve experienced already is a growing relationship with the administrators of the schools. They can help me know what role I can play to better serve the students here.”

Immediate benefits

Two of ASU Newport’s top administrators, vice chancellor for student affairs Jacqueline Faulkner and dean of students Kimberly Long, say the benefits of having the mobile pantry were immediate.

With many of their students receiving financial aid and holding down jobs while attending school and caring for their families, Faulkner said students often seek out help making ends meet. The school has looked to local food pantries for assistance, but the need is greater than can be addressed.

“When we met and discussed this, I knew that there would be a need,” Faulkner said. “I couldn’t imagine the impact until we got a couple of visits under our belt and received the feedback from our students,” Faulkner said.

“It’s been a God-send to our students,” Long said. “We’ve gotten so many emails, so many personal face-to-face testimonials saying it’s really been a good benefit.”

Both Faulkner and Long said the mobile pantry has gained the approval and attention of faculty and staff, who have asked how they can help support the mission.

While Bread of Life is

strengthening the connection between students, local churches and administrators, it’s the students themselves who are feeling physically and spiritually nourished.

Student Gwendolyn Conley was feeling the pressure of her responsibilities, and having Bread of Life as a resource helps lighten that weight.

“It’s kind of intense because we’re going to school every day, so it’s hard for me to work full-time,” Conley said. “I’ve been truly blessed by this ministry. [They’re] doing a great job.”

Atkins and Meadors are looking forward to February, when Bread of Life will again distribute food following the winter break. They are excited about the future, their partnership and newly-forged relationships with the administrators of the campuses they serve.

“We hear stories from the administrators who are actively trying to be partners in this ministry serving their students,” Atkins said. “Their willingness to work with us is heartening as we go forward.”

Grateful for the local church support they’ve received for Bread of Life through funding, volunteers and in-kind donations, Meadors says any local church wanting to help fight hunger need look no further than their own communities.

“First, donate food or funds to your local food pantry,” she said. “There are unmet needs all across Arkansas.”

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

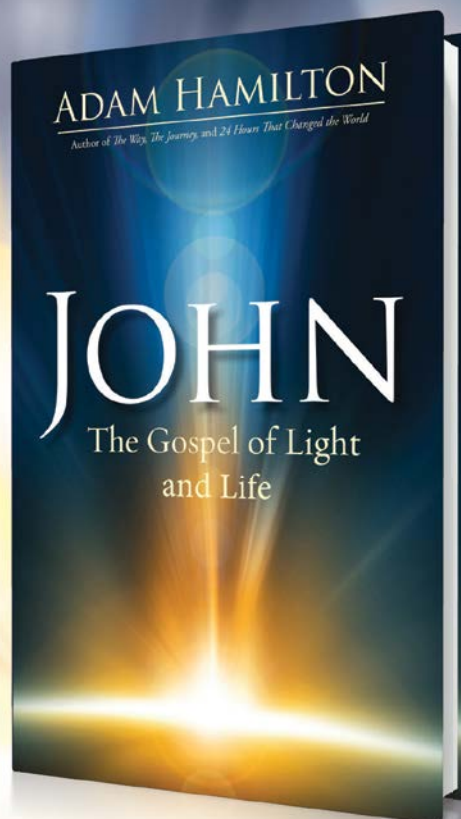
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Join ADAM HAMILTON this Lent and Easter in exploring the major themes of the Gospel of John

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:

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- Leader Guide
- Children’s Study
- DVD
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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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GLOBAL MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church

Church joins Mission Possible Kids

The children of First United Methodist Church Hope are on a mission: to do God's work locally, statewide and globally. The church's children's ministry (known as M&M's - Missions and Music) joined a group called Mission Possible Kids (MPK) at the start of the school year in August and have been on a roll ever since.

The goal of church-based MPK chapters is to bring kids closer to God through missions, Scripture and fun. As a registered member of MPK, First UMC Hope has joined a larger group across the country helping others. Sometimes all the chapters share in the same missions; other times, they come up with their own.

As they help to complete a mission, the children earn stars. For every six missions they complete, they rise in the ranks. All children start out as Special Agents and recently, most of First UMC Hope's children earned a promotion to Special Agent First Class.

The children of First UMC Hope have done much through MPK, ranging from baking cookies and delivering them to all the first

responders in Hope to writing Christmas and thank-you cards to send to troops stationed overseas. They have boxed shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child, gone door to door collecting food for the local food pantry and made "busy bags" for area hospitals to give to children as they wait in the waiting rooms. Parents and children alike have been excited about giving back and are always ready for the next mission.

Missions planned for 2016 include making and sending heart pillows for Syrian refugee children, collecting items and baking dog biscuits for the local animal shelter, and painting wooden pocket crosses to give away during Lent to help children learn how to share God's Word with others.

For information about the MPK program at First UMC Hope, contact Rose Gagnon, children and youth



Members of First UMC Hope's Mission Possible Kids group build "Busy Bags" for children in hospital waiting rooms.

COURTESY PHOTO

minister, at rgagnon50@outlook.com or the church office, 870-777-8816. To learn more about MPK itself, contact the organization directly at 1-877-MPKIDS-1 or through its website, www.mpkids.org.

—submitted by Rose Gagnon

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about
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Resourcing
Praying
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Spiritual revival-focused resources
for Lent now available at no charge

"Get Serious About Spiritual Revival" materials have been mailed to all Arkansas Conference pastors and lay leaders. Graphics, resource books and the *ReLent* five-week adult study leader's guide may be downloaded at <http://spiritualrevival.arumc.org>. Print copies of the resource book and *ReLent* adult study leader's guide are available at no charge; to request them, email communications@arumc.org or call 501-324-8000.

2016 Willson Lecture & Steel-Hendrix Awards

**HOPE IN A TIME OF CLIMATE CHANGE:
A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE BIBLE
AND SCIENCE**

Dr. Carol Newsom, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Old Testament and Past President of the Society of Biblical Literature.

THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 7 P.M.
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Continue the Revival

GROW

by one* summit

*worship | profession of faith | small group | connecting with neighbors

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, April 30, 2016

St. James United Methodist Church - 321 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock

Kay Kotan, Keynote Speaker
Co-author *Get Their Name: Grow Your Church by Building New Relationships*

Attend the Grow By One Summit to learn the hows -- and whys -- of effective relational evangelism, faith-sharing as storytelling, and connecting with your neighbors.

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United Methodists of
Arkansas
Center for Vitality

VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION & DISASTER RESPONSE

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.

Wanted: Driver to deliver relief supplies to Sager Brown in Louisiana

Arkansas Conference VIM/Disaster Response has a large load of supplies ready for delivery to the United Methodist Committee on Relief. If your church or group is planning a trip to UMCOR's Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La., and has a team member willing to drive a rental truck for the one-way delivery, please contact Byron Mann at 870-826-0268 or vim@arumc.org.

The truck will be rented and loaded for the team; the driver's only responsibilities are to first ensure the supplies reach Sager Brown and then to return the rental truck.

Early Response Team training at Mount Sequoyah: choose Jan. 14 or Feb. 11

As United Methodists, we are blessed to be able to respond following disasters and be a Christian presence. Effective response requires preparation, so Early Response Team (ERT) training at Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference Center in Fayetteville will teach disaster response protocol and include the opportunity to be certified for early response. The one-day class will be offered on Jan. 14 and Feb. 11; choose the date that works best for you.

The Rev. Troy Conrad, Northwest District disaster response co-coordinator and pastor of Farmington United Methodist Church, will lead the training. Check-in begins at 8:30 a.m. and class begins at 9 a.m. The fee of \$25 per person includes materials and lunch. To register, visit www.mountsequoyah.org/portfolio-type/mount-sequoyah-programs.

Donations needed to finish recovery work in Mayflower and Vilonia

Most tornado recovery repair projects in Mayflower and Vilonia are complete, but there are still several rebuild projects pending. Volunteers are scheduled—Christian Aid Ministries and the NOMADS are committed to staying in the area until the efforts are complete—but funding is running short.

"Recovery is over when the last need is met or the resources are exhausted," says Janice Mann, disaster response co-coordinator for the Arkansas Conference. "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."

Send donations to the Arkansas Conference UMC, 800 W. Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202, designated for "Central Arkansas tornado recovery."

Teams forming now for U.S.-based flood recovery work

Arkansas Conference Volunteers in Mission (VIM) has received requests for VIM Teams and Early Response Teams to travel to the Central Texas, Detroit, Oklahoma, 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.

Ozark Mission Project receives UMFA grant to expand staffing

Ozark Mission Project, an Arkansas ministry that transforms lives through worship, fellowship and hands-on mission, has received a \$50,000 challenge grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) to add a recruitment officer to its staff.

"The recruitment officer will work to engage United Methodist youth and adults from more Arkansas congregations in this vital ministry," said Jim Argue, UMFA president and CEO, in a Nov. 20 news release. "Our UMFA grants committee wants to be a part of expanding OMP's capability for outreach."

Ozark Mission Project has transformed the hearts of youth, adults and the neighbors they serve for nearly 30 years. The experiences campers have at OMP, serving others and working with fellow United Methodists from across the state, have a lifelong impact. Many campers continue to be involved in their local churches throughout their youth and into adulthood.

According to Bailey Faulkner, executive director of OMP, the organization served a record number of

neighbors in 2015, but with fewer campers registered to participate.

"We are so thankful for this grant because it marks a turning point in our ability to grow OMP," she said. "To have a full-time person focusing on recruitment means so much to us, but also to the United Methodist Church. Because of this grant, more people will be in the mission field doing work for our neighbors across the state."

The grant requires that OMP raise \$20,000 toward support of the recruitment officer position in the next two years. To meet that challenge, the OMP board of directors has added \$10,000 to its fundraising goals for 2016 and 2017. "Through house parties, offerings and online gifts as a part of the statewide ArkansasGives Day April 7, 2016, we will meet the \$20,000 challenge," said Faulkner.

One of the largest United Methodist foundations in the country, UMFA manages \$135 million across more than 750 endowment funds and other charitable assets that benefit local churches and other United Methodist ministries.

Chapel (from page 1)

"It is a very unique unit—seven acres under one roof—and we have to minister to all the people here, both staff and inmates," she said.

The chapel will include seating for 250; a full-service library; and classrooms for studies like PAL (Principles and Applications for Life), a faith-based inmate program. And as a multi-purpose building, it can be used for any large gathering the unit needs to have.

A variety of gifts

Numerous churches and community groups, the Ouachita River Employee Corporation and the Ouachita River Inmate Council have helped raise chapel funds, Gillom said. Each ADC unit has been asked to donate, and inmates and staff have given individually, as well.

Larger gifts include \$87,000 from Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church Little Rock, and a \$25,000 grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA).

"We thought this project was highly compatible with our Wesleyan roots and with scriptural direction," said Jim Argue Jr., president and CEO of UMFA. "Wesley ministered to prisoners and fought for prison reform.... We're following in his footsteps."

Argue noted that Larry Norris, a retired director of ADC and an active United Methodist, wrote to UMFA to request the grant. Gillom expressed gratitude for support from Norris and other leaders through the years.

The Rev. Jeff Hampton, pastor of congregational care at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock, points out that the fundraising has involved many people of different faith backgrounds.

"The chapel at Malvern is for all faith traditions," he said. "Anyone can use it. We need to build up all communities, and reach out to everyone, even if they do not believe as we do."

Hampton sees the Ouachita River chapel as the beginning of something bigger. "We need to raise about \$500,000 to build other chapels around the state," he said.

Lives changed

Joe Brawley has served more than 20 years of a life sentence and is active in religious life at the Ouachita River Unit.

"I've seen men that's come to the chapel change their lifestyle," he said. "They've given their life over to what's right."

While Brawley looks forward to having a library of study materials in the new space, the bottom line for him is simple: "We need a bigger chapel so that we could have more men come to the knowledge of Christ."

Lennelle Burns entered prison at age 16. "It's kind of hard to explain, but the chaplain program really reached out and accepted me when nobody else would," he said.

He sees promise in having more space. "I can imagine what it will be if we can reach out to more of the population, and be able to change more lives and do more for the people

here," Burns said. He looks forward to helping with the chapel's construction: "I'm willing to do anything. I'm going to do whatever it takes."

William Scheel is serving a 40-year sentence. "I thought it was just a dog-eat-dog world in prison, and I've come to find out that it's not, if you want something better for yourself," he said. In his five years in the PAL program, he has seen inmates' participation in religious life increase. "Where we're at now we usually run around 90 [attendees], but it's pretty crowded."

Scheel believes the new building will "give more people an opportunity to be recognized as someone reaching out and seeking a better way."

Lewis Wallace says prison has evolved during the 39 years he has served of his life sentence. He now spends time mentoring juveniles who were sentenced as adults.

"We actually show these young men how to become productive citizens," he said, adding that the chapel space won't feel like a prison setting, and that makes a difference.

"I think, as an answer to prayer over the years, that prison becomes a real rehabilitative center," Wallace said. "In the form of what God said, it becomes a refiner—you come in one way, you go out another way."

More funding is needed to complete the Ouachita River Unit chapel. Inmates will build it, and construction is expected to take about a year. Those interested in helping to fund this and similar projects may contact Gillom at Norma.Gillom@arkansas.gov or 501-467-3408.

Faith is touchstone for part-time politicians

BY SAM HODGES
United Methodist News Service

In LaGrange, Ga., public housing has long been kept on the wrong side of the tracks.

Jim Thornton, mayor of the community of 30,000, means to change that. “What we’re finding is that by historically concentrating poverty in certain sections of town, families and children suffer,” said Thornton, who has a law practice in LaGrange. “We are actively trying to unwind that policy.”

Thornton has been part of First United Methodist Church LaGrange his whole life. He’s a trustee of the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church, a lay speaker in the denomination and the lawyer for United Methodist-affiliated LaGrange College, his alma mater.

As mayor, Thornton works with people of all faiths and no faith, and has appreciated the welcome he’s received in a range of local churches. But he doesn’t mind drawing a dotted line between his own denomination and public service.

“Our denomination has been a leader in going outside the four walls of the church and trying to address community concerns,” he said. “I think that goes back to the time of John Wesley and some of his work, particularly with the poor.”

The ranks of well-known United Methodist political figures include former President George W. Bush, current presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and 43 members of Congress.

But across the country, many more United Methodists like Thornton serve part time in local or state political offices, drawing on their faith as a resource.

They’re often balancing careers as well as deep involvement in their church. But they report finding challenge and satisfaction in public life.

“It’s like church work,” said Lee Denney, a state representative in Oklahoma. “It’s an opportunity to give back.”

Hog farms and a United Methodist camp

Denney, 62, once described herself in an essay as “Methodist to the bone” and grew up attending First United Methodist Church Cushing, Okla. She has been singing in the chancel choir there since age 14, and as an adult she’s served on a range of church committees and gone on mission trips.

By profession, she’s a veterinarian. She’s also a mother of two grown children.

Eleven years ago, her family and work responsibilities parted enough for her to follow her dream of running for the state legislature. She didn’t have any divine message to do that, but she doesn’t believe the circumstances that led to her election were altogether accidental.

“I feel like God did have a hand in working that perfect scenario,” she said.

Denney, now president pro tempore of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, has worked on a range of issues, including getting DNA samples on arrest (to help solve crimes and bring victims and their families resolution), promoting animal welfare and boosting public education.

At the request of Bishop Robert E. Hayes Jr. of the Oklahoma Conference, she worked with hog farmers to minimize the problems their facilities were causing for Canyon Camp, a United Methodist facility.

Working things out and cutting red tape are tasks she enjoys.

“I’ve been able to help normal citizens that don’t know which way to turn to access state government to get the help they need,” Denney said. “That’s been the best part of this job for me.”

Taking a stand

It’s not uncommon for United Methodist public officials to cite their faith as guiding them on a particular issue.

For Jean Medlen Timbes, longtime council member in Conway, S.C., it’s whether to allow alcohol at city festivals.

“I vote against that every time, but we still have it,” said Timbes, a retired

math teacher and past president of United Methodist Women at First United Methodist Church Conway, S.C. “That’s a position I won’t change on.”

For Dwight Boykins, council member in Houston and a longtime member of Windsor Village United Methodist Church there, working for job programs for hard-to-employ people and free housing repairs for needy seniors have been causes close to his heart.

“It’s just the right thing to do,” he said.

In 2014, Boykins voted against the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, a broad anti-discrimination measure. It passed the city council but was recently rejected by Houston voters, after opponents alleged that it would allow men dressed as women to enter women’s restrooms.

Boykin’s vote put him at odds with some who had backed him, but he said he was reflecting the will of most of his constituents, as well as his own understanding of Scripture.

“I will be an outcast if it comes to jeopardizing my biblical beliefs,” he said.

But, as has been demonstrated often, the United Methodist Church is a big tent, with people drawing on their faith yet coming to different conclusions.

Kathy Webb, a longtime member of First United Methodist Church Little Rock, Ark., and a “preacher’s kid,” successfully sponsored an anti-discrimination ordinance as Ward 3 representative to the Little Rock Board. Earlier she served in the Arkansas legislature, and was its first openly gay member and the first woman to co-chair its Joint Budget Committee.

Webb is happily aligned with the United Methodist Church on most of its Social Principles, but strongly opposes church law declaring the practice of homosexuality to be “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

“I’m a child of God and made the way I’m made,” Webb said. “Being a lesbian is part of who I am, and if anything has made me more able to see the suffering and pain of others.”

Webb plans to stay in the denomination and work for change, as she has in government. She believes that’s an act of faithfulness.

“My parents had a plaque in their bathroom that says, ‘What you are is your gift from God. What you become is your gift to God,’” Webb said. “While I, like everyone, fall short on a regular basis, I try to keep those words in mind.”

Prayer and public life

Local governments vary widely on whether they begin public sessions with prayer or meditation, and that goes for those led by United Methodists.

But private prayer for guidance, especially in regard to temperament, seems close to universal among those in the denomination serving in public life.

“Before the meeting I’m sitting in my chair there at the council desk, and I just close my eyes and say a short prayer—‘Please help me get through this, Lord, and get the right answers,’” said Dave Bishop, mayor of Jesup, Iowa and a choir member and trustee in the town’s First United Methodist Church.

Bishop also wears a ring with an engraved cross that his wife, Denise, bought him. That’s proved helpful when the stress level gets high at council meetings.

“I look down at that and keep on going,” said Bishop.

Public life is, well, public—and that means United Methodist office holders can get cornered at church by someone who wants to talk politics.

“I would say that it’s not frequent, but it does happen that people will stop me and make some comment about some initiative or request. But I have not found it to be inappropriate,” said Thornton, the LaGrange mayor.

Denney, the Oklahoma legislator, said it happens to her too.

But given her profession, she more often has legislator colleagues seeking her out for reasons other than state business.

“I get a lot of veterinary questions,” Denney said.

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

Rio Texas bishop resigns

Bishop James Dorff of the Rio Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church will voluntarily resign and surrender his credentials effective Jan. 1, 2016.

The announcement came Dec. 4 from Bishop Michael McKee, president of the South Central Jurisdictional College of Bishops. The College of Bishops accepted Bishop Dorff’s resignation following a complaint.

Bishop Dorff stated the following in a letter:

“It is so difficult to admit and share, but I must inform you that I did not uphold the sacred vows I made to God at my wedding, at my consecration as bishop, and at my ordination as elder. I crossed what were the clear expectations of relational boundaries.



James Dorff

“For this transgression, I am profoundly sorry. I offer my sincerest apologies to all concerned. My actions have caused pain to many, including my family, the person involved, each of you, members of the annual conference, and the greater church. I am so, so sorry.”

Bishop McKee, who is assigned to the North Texas Conference, will provide episcopal oversight until an interim bishop is appointed to serve the Rio Texas Conference.

“This is a difficult situation for everyone involved, but we are confident that the ongoing ministries of the conference will continue under the capable leadership of the experienced, faithful conference staff and laity,” said McKee, who will work with the leaders of the Rio Texas Conference to assure a smooth transition.

During the South Central Jurisdictional Conference in July 2016, a new bishop for the Rio Texas Conference will be appointed to a term beginning on Sept. 1, 2016. The Rio Texas Conference serves South Texas, with nearly 400 churches.

Dorff was elected to the episcopacy in 2008. Before his election, he served 36 years as a pastor in the North Texas Conference.

COMING UP

Ugandan Kids Choir singing at Sardis UMC Jan. 3

The Ugandan Kids Choir kids will perform at Sardis United Methodist Church, 10517 West Sardis Road in Bauxite, on Jan. 3 during the 10:45 a.m. worship service.

These 10 children have been given hope through Childcare Worldwide Sponsorship Program, and now they spread that hope to audiences all across the United States. The choir has performed nationwide at churches, schools, Disneyland, the Seattle Seahawks' Qwest Field and on the steps of the White House. Attendees will enjoy traditional African song and dance, as well as help children in need all around the world. For more information about their organization or to view the tour schedule, visit www.childcareworldwide.org/choir.

'Praying Like Jesus' conference in Memphis Jan. 21-23

Prayer is more than spiritual communication or religious ritual. It is a relationship shared with us by Jesus as he "went away" for time with God the Father. This relationship transformed human history and paved the way for humanity's personal connection with the creator of the universe. However, most of us think of prayer only at meal times or before we go to bed. But what if prayer could be so much more... what if prayer is meant to be so much more?

A free conference hosted by Christ UMC Memphis Jan. 21-23 brings a spiritual challenge that has the power to change your life. To learn more, visit <http://cumcmemphis.org/prayerconference>.

Beyond! Children's ministry leadership conference Jan. 28-30

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 details, visit <http://kidz.arumc.org/2016-beyond-january-28-30-2016>.

Young UM women in Arkansas: scholarship applications due by Feb. 1

Applications for the 2016 Nancy McDonald Wood Scholarship, a \$3,000 award for Arkansas United Methodist young women, are being accepted through Monday, Feb. 1. The scholarship is funded through the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

Wood, a lifelong Methodist and former high school teacher, hopes scholarship winners will become strong lay leaders in United Methodist churches after completing their college education. Any young woman who has been a member of an Arkansas United Methodist congregation and has demonstrated a commitment to historic Methodist values is a candidate for the scholarship. She must also have shown sound academic ability, leadership qualities and exceptional character. She must have been accepted by an accredited college and plan to begin classes the following fall semester.

Interested applicants may obtain a copy of the Nancy McDonald Wood Scholarship application through their local United Methodist youth minister, or from Michelle Moore, Arkansas Conference youth and young adult ministry coordinator, at michelle.moore@arumc.org.

Completed applications should be mailed to Nancy M. Wood, P.O. Box 7404, Little Rock, AR 72217 and postmarked by Feb. 1, 2016. Finalists for the scholarship will be invited to attend a scholarship luncheon early in April.

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Ministers Week at SMU Perkins set for Feb. 1-2; early registration discount available until Jan. 11

Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas invites Arkansas clergy to attend its 2016 Ministers Week, scheduled for Feb. 1-2. This year's event features a shorter format requiring only one overnight stay, and features a variety of workshops as well as keynote speaker Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Bishop Janice Huie as preacher, and Dr. Loida Martell-Odero delivering the Barton Lecture. Registration ends Jan. 25, but those who sign up by Jan. 11 receive an early registration discount. Visit www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms/MinWeek for details on speakers, workshops, schedule and more.

Confirmation Camp Feb. 26-28: registration now open

The first Confirmation Camp of 2016 is set for Feb. 26-28 at Camp Tanako, and registration is now open through the Conference website, www.arumc.org. 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.

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

'A Day with the Bishop' for grades 5-7 at St. James UMC Little Rock March 12

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! The event will take place from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Please join us for this exciting day of fellowship and fun. Questions? Contact Michelle Moore, 501-324-8048 or michelle.moore@arumc.org.



New retreat for high school seniors at Tanako April 15-16

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 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 link to register at www.arumc.org.

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OBITUARIES

LITTLE ROCK

Luanna Reddin

Luanna Reddin, 84, of Little Rock passed away peacefully at home Friday, Dec. 4, 2015, with her husband of 57 years at her side.



Luanna Reddin

She was born July 30, 1931, to Malcolm and Bertha Knox. She was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Donny Knox. She is survived by her husband, the Rev. Dr. G. Randall Reddin of Little Rock, an elder in the Arkansas Conference who served charges at Bethlehem and Sulphur Springs before his retirement; sisters, Paula Rainey of Denton, Texas, and Maxine Weisbrod of Wichita, Kan.; a son, Randy Reddin and his wife, Bridget; a daughter, Lori Sanders and her husband, Sandy; and two granddaughters, Madison and Samantha Sanders.

The funeral service was held Monday, Dec. 7, 2015 at Roller-Chenal Funeral Home, 13801 Chenal Parkway, Little Rock. Entombment followed at Riverwood Memorial Gardens, Maumelle.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Justin Church of Christ, 424 S. Snyder Ave., Justin, TX 76247.

FLOWER MOUND, Texas

Diane Vogler

Diane Clark Vogler, 70, of Flower Mound, Texas, passed away Friday, Nov. 27, 2015. She was born in Lake Village, Ark., on Jan. 11, 1945, to the late Stuart and Tompye Clark. She was a 1963 graduate of McGehee High School, and also

graduated from the University of Arkansas at Monticello and the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

Diane spent 44 years in education, working with children as a teacher and principal prior to her retirement. She remained a member of the Arkansas Retired Teachers Association. Her commitment to education was apparent to all who knew her.

In 2004 and 2008, Diane served on the Arkansas delegation to the South Central Jurisdictional Conference. She was passionate about her work with the United Methodist



Diane Vogler

Women, for which she received many awards and recognitions, and served as vice-president of the National United Methodist Women. Diane's family and friends were most important to her. Spending time with her grandchildren was her greatest joy.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Richard Vogler. Survivors include daughters, Amy Vogler of Flower Mound, Texas and Jodi Vogler of Lewisville, Texas; and grandchildren, Jackson Vogler and Campbell Vogler.

A celebration of Diane's life was held Friday, Dec. 4, 2015, at First United Methodist Church North Little Rock. Interment followed on Saturday, Dec. 5, at McGehee Cemetery in McGehee, Ark.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Flower Mound United Methodist Church Sanctuary Fund, 3950 Bruton Orand Blvd., Flower Mound, TX 75022.

RICHARDSON, Texas

Kay Owen

Helen Kay Burbridge Owen, 54, passed away Thursday, Nov. 19, 2015.

She was born Sept. 8, 1961, grew up in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and graduated from J.J. Pearce High School in Richardson, Texas. She received a bachelor's degree in social work from Baylor University in 1984 and a master's in religious education with an emphasis in Old Testament theology from Southwestern Theological Seminary in 1987.



Kay Owen

She was a Christian and served for many years in mission work in Honduras, Mexico, Brazil and the Rio Grande Valley. She volunteered with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) in Waco, Texas. As a part-time local pastor in the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, she served as pastor of Asbury United Methodist Church Batesville and Cushman United Methodist Church, as well as the director of the inpatient rehabilitation department at White River Medical Center in Batesville.

She was a quilter and a Girl Scout troop assistant leader. She collected unique thimbles and had a collection of Santa Clauses. She was the leader of the women's Bible study at First United Methodist Church Batesville.

Survivors include her husband, Donnel Owen; a daughter, Adele Owen; her parents, Wallace and Pat Burbridge; two sisters, Julie Tanner and Ellen Comer; and several nephews and nieces.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Changes

(continued from page 1)

of your great-great-great-great-grandparents. Let's say they lived in a one- or two-room log house somewhere on the American frontier. The year is about 1840.

What do you think you would see when you walk into that home? What would make it different from your home today?

It would be a much smaller dwelling, of course, with fewer household furnishings. Also missing would be a ubiquitous feature in contemporary American life: things with screens. No TVs, computers, iPads or smartphones.

Your ancestors wouldn't have had a whole lot in the way of books, probably not more than a single shelf full. But there's one book they would have almost certainly had: a King James Bible.

Now imagine what things were like after supper, with family gathered and a fire in the fireplace. If family time involved some kind of technology, the only technology really available was that single Bible. So people read it, to themselves and to each other. The most advanced technology of the day that engaged people's minds (a printed book) and

the Christian faith overlapped perfectly.

That isn't the case now. The devices with screens that fill our homes today give us access to wonderful worlds. You can find the Bible there, but you can find a whole lot else, too. People have options, and the world is always going to offer things that are more enticing on a superficial level than is the Christian faith.

So if the culture isn't going to make our kids into Christians, who will?

It must start in the home, and extend into the local congregation. Only if we pattern our children's lives by the means of grace—as opposed to the consumerist whims the world will impress upon them—will they be formed as disciples who stick.

Church programs geared toward discipleship formation are often a mile wide and an inch deep. That has to change. Families must be equipped in a serious way to practice their faith inside church and out. If we focus on that now, we will be taking the first step toward a more vital church.

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

UMC-rooted ministry receives Spirit of Arkansas Award

A nonprofit organization closely connected with Mountainside UMC Hot Springs Village on Nov. 29 received a Spirit of Arkansas Award from the central Arkansas ABC affiliate, KATV Channel 7.

Starting Over Ministries was founded in September 2009 by Nick and Alice Hilt, members of Mountainside UMC. The ministry was featured in the Dec. 7, 2012 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist* for its work providing beds and other

furniture to families whose children are returning to them from foster care.

Since its beginning, the organization has helped hundreds of families meet the requirement for having a suitably furnished home to welcome their children back from foster care after a job loss, struggle with addiction or other tragedy.



AUM FILE PHOTO

The Spirit of Arkansas Award includes \$500, which Starting Over Ministries has allocated toward the purchase of new beds for children.

Scholarship available for church professional to attend national PAUMCS conference

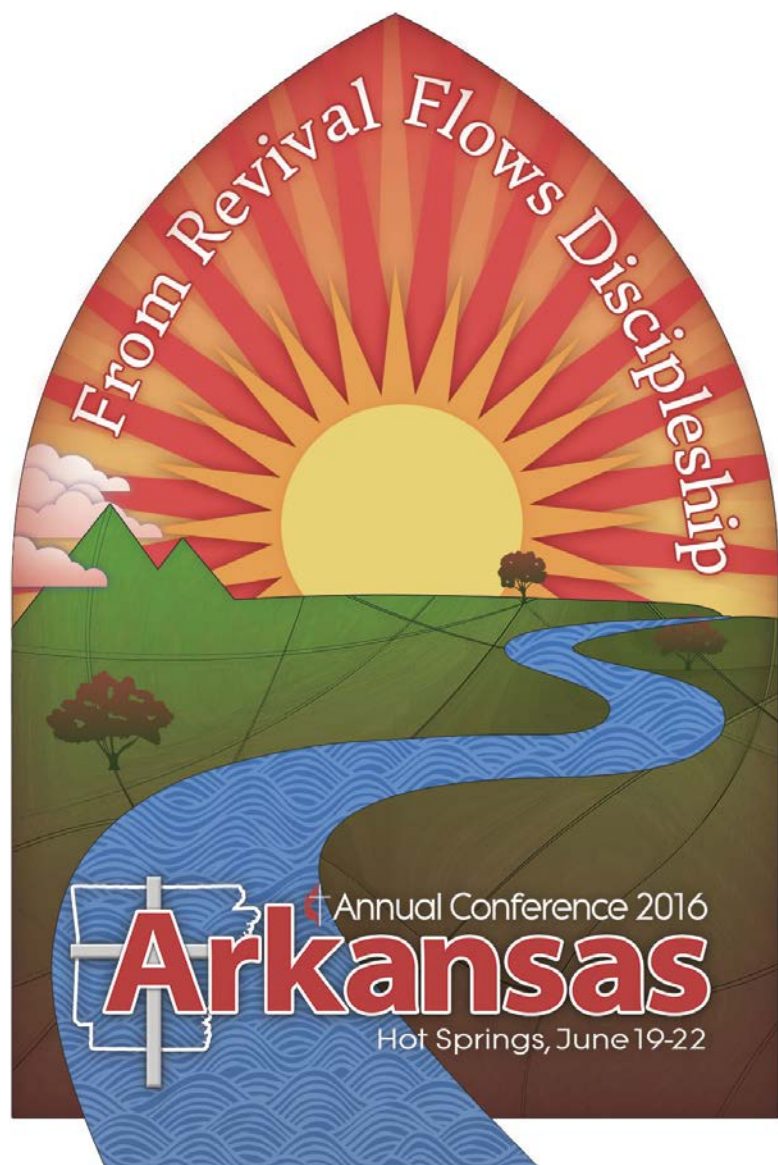
Applications due by Feb. 1

The Arkansas Chapter of the Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries (PAUMCS) will be awarding a \$1,200 scholarship to a local church secretary or administrative church staff member who wants to attend the national PAUMCS Conference, scheduled for April 14-16 in Wichita, Kan.

This scholarship is open to all church professionals

who have never attended a national PAUMCS conference. Applicants must be members of the Arkansas Chapter of PAUMCS and include with the application a letter of recommendation from the supervising pastor or Staff/Parish Relations Committee chair. The application deadline is Feb. 1.

To apply for the scholarship or to join PAUMCS, contact Arkansas chapter president Fonda Kirkman to request the appropriate form(s): fkirkman@arumc.org or 501-851-1433.



AC theme, logo announced

"From Revival Flows Discipleship" will be the guiding theme of the 2016 Arkansas Annual Conference gathering, set for June 19-22 in Hot Springs.

Building upon last year's theme, "A Call to Spiritual Revival," this theme emphasizes the need for ongoing Christian formation to sustain the energy that comes from the Holy Spirit's presence in our faith communities.

The logo, designed by Conference staff member Stephen Gideon, depicts features common in Arkansas' landscape, with a river symbolizing the ongoing nature of a disciple's journey.

Information on the 2016 Annual Conference will be posted as it becomes available at <http://ac2016.arumc.org>.

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Foundation for Excellence

Rev. Ben Crismon, Senior Pastor of White Hall United Methodist Church, credits the seminary scholarship he received from the United Methodist Foundation with building a foundation for excellence in service to local churches in the Arkansas Conference.

While serving as a pastor in Cabot and now in White Hall, he has continued to benefit from leadership training made possible by UMFA grants. Ben and his wife attended Rev It Up in Chicago to learn more about personal and church finances, he participated in a leadership program at Cox School of Business at SMU, and he traveled with members of his congregation to participate in the Church of the Resurrection Leadership Institute.

"I've worked with UMFA to open two endowments for White Hall UMC so that we have savings for future needs," he said. "Recently a large bequest was made to our church. As a young pastor having the Foundation backing me was instrumental. Their help allowed me to celebrate the gift and use it for mission and ministry instead of worrying about processes and paperwork."

Ben said the fact that people from his Conference loved him enough to provide for him as a UMFA Seminary Scholar has inspired him to serve diligently, passionately and with gusto to return that gift.



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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