

IN THIS ISSUE

## 'Let Love': Veritas 2016 inspires, helps youth connect with God



Preparing for Annual Conference  
**7**



'Free Prayer' sign helps pastor get to know community  
**12**



Disciple Bible Study co-founder dies  
**14**



PHOTOS COURTESY ACCYM MEDIA TEAM



Approximately 1,450 youth and adults from 86 churches across Arkansas attended Veritas, the annual flagship youth gathering of the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM), held March 4-6 at the Hot Springs Convention Center. This year's event, built on the theme "Let Love," featured live music, a performing poet, workshops, small group time and powerful worship experiences. It also included service to others: 500 care bags for homeless individuals were assembled at Veritas for churches to take back to distribute in their local communities.

Bishop Gary Mueller was among the attendees; he facilitated the small group discussion time and led the celebration of Holy Communion.

*Youth describe Veritas in their own words...*

"Coming home after such an amazing weekend, I feel so humbled and blessed. This weekend was everything we hoped it would be and more. There [See VERITAS, page 5]

## First UMC West Memphis fields Destination Imagination teams

BY AMY FORBUS  
Editor

A *Wizard of Oz* send-up used as a tool to talk about suicide. A parody of Adele's hit song "Hello" to highlight the need for emergency medical services in an Arkansas Delta town. How do these things happen, and what do they have to do with the church's mission?

They're inventions of the two Destination Imagination (DI) teams affiliated with First United Methodist Church West Memphis, and each of them led to a third-place finish at the state competition March 12 in Pine Bluff. The teams worked

with the Project Outreach component of DI, which focuses on community impact—or, in church terms, carrying out mission and ministry in ways that help their neighbors.

DI ([www.idodi.org](http://www.idodi.org)) is a non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring and equipping young people to become the next generation of innovative leaders. The connection of DI and church happened thanks to the Rev. Dr. Michelle Morris, associate pastor of First UMC West Memphis.

While living in the Dallas area to attend seminary at SMU's Perkins [See IMAGINATION, page 8]



Lily Catt, Emma Burnett, Soren Morris, Mary Claire Weaver, Blake White and Spencer Foster celebrate after receiving their third place ribbons at the DI state competition. Not pictured are Christopher and William Blake and team coaches Michelle Morris and Stephanie Foster.

# What's your 'Next Big Thing'?

BY WILLIAM O. "BUD" REEVES  
Special Contributor

It seems like we are always looking for the Next Big Thing. We don't stay satisfied for long. Our attention spans are short, and the thrill of the moment is soon gone.

Advertisers are always trying to entice us with the Next Big Thing to empty our bank accounts. The latest technology, the newest vehicle, the most exciting place to go or food to eat—it's the Next Big Thing.

As Christians, we have just experienced the Big Thing. You know, Easter. We prepared for it all the way through Lent, had multiple worship experiences during Holy Week, and got up before sunrise on Easter morning.



**Bud Reeves**

The church was packed; the music was magnificent; the preacher outdid herself. It was a Big Thing!

So now what?

After the high of Easter, the next holy day is called Low Sunday, because it usually is that, both in attendance and mood. I normally experience a post-Easter letdown. Partly it's exhaustion after a full Lent, Holy Week and Easter. Partly it's because I wonder what's next.

I'm guessing the disciples experienced something similar. After the intensity of the drama surrounding the crucifixion of their Master and after the amazement of

the Resurrection, I'm sure they were exhausted, too. Two of the Gospels tell of the disciples returning to Galilee. It felt good to go home to peace and quiet, maybe to do a little fishing.

But Easter is not the end of the story. Easter is the clarion call of the Kingdom. Easter is the launching pad into the future. The resurrection is the reason that the Jesus story is far from over. In a sense, it is just beginning.

Every Gospel has some story that sends the disciples out into the world after Easter. In Matthew, the risen Jesus gives the still-doubting disciples the commission to "make disciples of all nations." In Mark, Jesus tells them to "go into all the world and proclaim the good news," accompanied by remarkable signs of power. In Luke, Jesus tells them to start in Jerusalem and spread out, after they have received power from God. And in John, Jesus calls Peter three times to feed his sheep, then to follow him.

Do you sense a theme here?

The Next Big Thing for Christians after Easter is to get the word out about what happened in the three days that changed the world. Sure, I know that was 2,000 years ago, and many things big and small have happened since. And I figure Easter 2017 will come around in about a year. But what if we were to use this Easter experience in 2016 in the way it is supposed to be used, as a springboard for discipleship, evangelism and mission to a world that is still lost, broken and clueless about the meaning of life?

In fact, we do know what the Next Big Thing is. Fifty days after Easter, by the timetable of Luke and Acts, the festival of Pentecost rolled around. The disciples who had been waiting to receive power got it—in wind, fire and strange languages. From the blaze of Pentecost they were catapulted into a world-changing movement, never to be the same again. In a generation, they "turned the world upside down."

In our upside-down world today, we need disciples who see the Next Big Thing and won't stop until we get there.

Early one recent morning I was driving down I-49 from Fayetteville to Alma, through the beautiful hills and valleys of the Ozark Plateau. The fog was intermittent, and at one point it covered the far end of one of the long, sweeping bridges traversing the valley below. For just a moment it appeared that I was driving on a bridge that disappeared into a cloud. For a split-second it scared me to think I might be going somewhere I couldn't see. Then it sort of thrilled me to imagine launching out into the unknown, sailing into the foggy abyss, trusting that whatever forces were at work, I would land in a better place.

Easter is the bridge that launches us into the future of God's Kingdom, into communities that need transformation, into lives that need healing. I don't know exactly where God will take us if we get serious about pursuing the Kingdom. I believe and I trust it will be the Next Big Thing. I'm ready to go there. Are you?

*The Rev. Dr. Reeves serves as senior pastor of First UMC Fort Smith. Email: [breeves@arumc.org](mailto:breeves@arumc.org).*



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it (or share it with a  
friend).

## EDITOR'S CORNER



BY AMY FORBUS

# Hello, my name is...

I've always embraced the maxim, "Friends don't let friends wear name tags in public." Wearing a work ID while off-duty brings with it the chance that I'll be unintentionally representing an organization during my down time. Additionally, I'll admit that I don't like giving complete strangers my name without even a basic introduction.

But when my friend Marcia and I met for lunch a couple of weeks ago, I didn't suggest she remove her name tag, and I'm grateful for it. Without it, we might have seen James, but I doubt we would have really met him.

James is a manager at a local fast-casual restaurant. As Marcia and I placed our orders with the cashier, he walked up behind the counter and noticed Marcia's cross-and-flame name tag that identified her as a staff member of a United Methodist congregation.

"Hey, I'm United Methodist, too," he said, adding that he had just moved to the area. With nobody in line behind us, the conversation grew. As it turned out, our cashier was a member of a local CME congregation, so we took a moment to celebrate that four Methodists had found each other. Marcia and I each invited James to attend worship in case he was seeking out a place to belong in his new city.

When he came by our table to see how we were enjoying our food, James asked more about our churches. I explained how he could search for my congregation's

smartphone app, and a few minutes later he came back to confirm he'd found the right one.

Two Sunday evenings later, as my husband and I prepared to find a seat for worship, our friend Paul gestured to a man facing away from us and asked, "Have you met James?" Yes, I had—and what a joy to learn that my new friend had responded to my invitation!

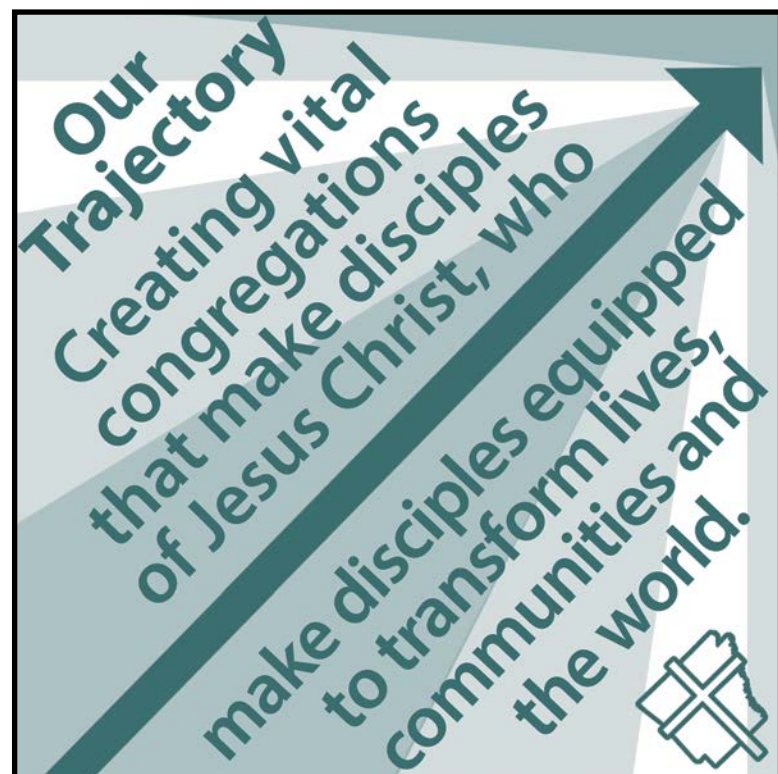
That night, as James and I sat beside each other, an outburst interrupted the Communion liturgy: a disturbance by a church member who lives on the street and faces many difficulties. As a few of those who know her best went to help calm her, I leaned over to James and whispered, "Sometimes things like this happen here." His response: "That's OK. It's part of what happens when you really do welcome everyone."

I'm pretty sure James gets this Jesus thing.

I've seen him often since then, and one night before worship, our conversation turned to name tags: situations when we like having them (in church); when we don't (leaving work still wearing one); and how a name tag that belonged to neither of us helped us get to know each other.

If something as simple as a name tag can help us find connection, we have new reason to appreciate that even things we may find inconsequential or annoying, God can use for good.

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



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**Submission Deadlines**

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
May 6	April 18
June 3	May 11
July 8	June 17



## GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

# Lessons from our youth

I recently spent three weekends in a row with youth of the Arkansas Annual Conference: Confirmation Camp, where I spoke on the sacraments and led worship and Communion; Veritas, where I taught, “hung out” and led closing worship with Communion; and A Day with the Bishop, where I got to know some of our outstanding fifth- through seventh-graders as I taught, preached and presided over Communion.

I am extremely grateful for what I learned from our youth those three weekends—not just about them and their faith, but also about what it means to be a Christian in a world that has dramatically changed.

Lesson #1: Youth don’t care about how “cool” worship is. Sure, the style of music they often prefer may be different from what other generations like. But they genuinely want to worship and experience the presence of God in a life-changing way.

Lesson #2: Youth are looking for pastors who will preach an authentic faith and share about a real Jesus in a real world. They long for their leaders to be real—no pretense, no talking-down and no attempt to impress.

Lesson #3: Youth really do love Jesus and are serious about wanting to live as his disciples. They deeply desire to live out their faith in the midst of a world that is far more troubling, frightening and risky than when I was their age. What’s more, they are looking for all the help they can get to do it.

Lesson #4: Youth are committed to transforming lives, communities and the world. They want to make a difference in the name and power of Jesus. And that means they are willing to get out in real life with real people and let the power of the Holy Spirit help them make a real difference.

As I reflect on my recent experiences—which, by the way, were simultaneously exhausting and

exhilarating—I realize the biggest lesson I learned from our youth is what spiritual revival looks like. We have to want it. We have to seek it. We have to embrace it when the Holy Spirit sends it. And we have to understand that it’s not the end of our heart’s longing, it’s just the beginning.

Thank you, youth of the Arkansas Annual Conference. It is my earnest prayer that what I experienced with you in recent weeks is what we will all experience in our congregations in the coming months.

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*. They are effective July 1 unless otherwise noted.

- Lauren DeLano (provisional elder)—First UMC Conway (associate)
- Bill Cato (elder)—First UMC Arkadelphia
- Russell Hull (elder)—Mount Ida/Joplin UMCs
- John Embrey (elder)—Greenwood UMC
- Katie Pearce (elder)—First UMC Morrilton
- Steve Wingo (elder)—Lakeside UMC Pine Bluff
- Kim Cloninger (elder)—Goddard UMC (senior pastor)
- Lynn McClure (elder)—St. Paul UMC El Dorado
- Jacob Lynn (elder)—White Hall UMC
- Jan Davis (elder)—Central UMC Fayetteville
- Lynn Kilbourne (elder)—First UMC North Little Rock
- Nathan Kilbourne (elder)—First UMC Jacksonville
- Ben Crismon (elder)—First UMC Benton
- David Moseley (elder)—First UMC Hot Springs
- Michael Mattox (elder)—First UMC Rogers
- Patti Butler (provisional elder)—Christ of the Hills UMC Hot Springs Village (associate)
- Todd-Paul Taulbee (elder)—First UMC West Memphis
- Pam Estes (elder)—First UMC Magnolia
- Larry Kelso (elder)—First UMC Clarksville
- Betsy Singleton Snyder (elder)—Sabbatical leave; effective April 1
- Phil Hathcock (elder)—Trinity UMC Little Rock (interim); effective April 1

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

- Bill Mills (part-time local pastor)
- Mike Smith (part-time local pastor)

For the most recent appointment changes, visit [www.arumc.org/appointments](http://www.arumc.org/appointments).



## PRACTICAL DIVINITY

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON

# Problems and possibilities with getting your message out

Research shows that the number one reason why people begin attending a new church is because they were personally invited by someone in that church. The term for that practice is “relational evangelism.”

It proves that the best way to reach new people with the gospel is to *reach out* to them, one by one.

Yet the fact that most new attenders come from a personal invite doesn’t mean pastors should just sit back and rely on our church members to start knocking on doors in their neighborhoods. There is groundwork to be laid—both with respect to the church’s connection with the larger community and within the congregation itself. And that groundwork has to do with how we are preparing our church members to be relational evangelists and how we are priming the larger community to receive them.

### Motivating the base

One of the greatest challenges that we face in our outreach to the unchurched is in helping people

already a part of our congregations to understand their own pivotal role. While statistics show that the most effective form of evangelism is a personal invitation, they also show that most churchgoers are not offering those personal invitations. People just aren’t inviting their neighbors, friends and co-workers to church in great numbers.

Committed Christians need to realize that a part of faithful discipleship is responding to Christ’s call to go out and make more disciples of him.

Political campaigns sometimes use the phrase “motivating the base” to describe what it means to generate excitement in voters who are already planning on supporting a particular candidate. In the church, we need to motivate our own base (the congregation) to get out and share the good news about the ministries and mission that our church is pursuing.

It is very easy for churchgoers to slip into a passive attitude with respect to their church. Yet nothing about the message of Jesus suggests that passivity about the gospel is

appropriate! Jesus is constantly calling people to leave what is comfortable to follow him. He sends them out into the mission field, and sometimes he even expects them to bear a cross.

The best potential marketers for any product are the satisfied consumers of that product. Likewise, the best potential evangelists for any particular church are the Christ followers whose lives have been changed in that church. Helping our congregations understand that point is crucial.

### Getting our message out

In a recent conversation, a youth minister mentioned that he thinks a good measure of a church’s faithfulness can be found by asking the question, “If this church suddenly went away tomorrow, would the community it is in miss it?”

That’s a question that really drives at two things. One of them is whether the church is doing effective ministry and mission. The other is whether its ministry and mission are visible to the larger community.

If a church is not doing effective ministry, then it has a truly fundamental problem. If it is just going through the motions or is in hospice mode, then it probably has a deep problem at the level of its spiritual DNA. But if a church is doing a lot of effective ministry and still has a problem being visible to its larger community, then the issue may be simply with its communications approach to that community.

Lack of visibility to the larger community is a problem a church can start tackling immediately.

We live in an era when people are influenced by media sources as diverse as old-school newspapers and new-school social media. In any given day we’re likely to engage sources of information that come to us from the U.S. Mail and roadside billboards, and we’re also likely to read information from Facebook and email.

There’s good and there’s bad in all of that. The good is that there are dozens of different ways to broadcast a message to a potential audience. The bad is that so many media [See PRACTICAL DIVINITY, page 13]

# Two churches partner to feed neighbors in Brinkley

Wesley Chapel UMC Brinkley and Salem UMC, near the town of Moro, have joined together to minister to residents of Brinkley on the fourth Saturday of each month. The two congregations, one primarily African-American and one primarily Anglo, serve a free lunch to anyone in need of a meal. They have discovered that the neighborhood surrounding Wesley Chapel seems to have more children than adults seeking nourishment through this ministry.

The Revs. Bill Thompson of Wesley Chapel and Michael Bolin of Salem are in prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance to successfully reach all of the hungry children within the community.

"One thing for sure, we have learned that partnering together has afforded us the opportunity to be more fruitful in ministry than simply working independently," Bolin said. "This is another great example of the connectional system within the United Methodist Church."

These two churches gather at Wesley UMC from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to provide lunch for those who can get to the building on their own. To reach areas where children live without transportation, members of Salem UMC use their church van to deliver lunches.

As summer approaches, Wesley Chapel and Salem UMCs hope to partner with other churches in the community to form cooperative ministries that continue to share the love of God through hospitality.



The Rev. Bill Thompson of Wesley Chapel UMC Brinkley (seated) and the Rev. Michael Bolin and Lynn Davenport of Salem UMC prepare to welcome attendees of a recent fourth Saturday lunch at Wesley Chapel.

COURTESY PHOTO

## Search for the Whole Truth by Comparing Common Christian Clichés

They are simple phrases. They sound Christian—like something you might find in the Bible. We've all heard these words. Maybe we've said them. They capture some element of truth, yet they miss the point in important ways.

The clichés include:

- Everything happens for a reason.
- God helps those who help themselves.
- God won't give you more than you can handle.
- God said it, I believe it, that settles it.
- Love the sinner, hate the sin.

Join Adam Hamilton in this 6-week Bible study to search for the whole truth by comparing common Christian clichés with the wisdom found in Scripture.

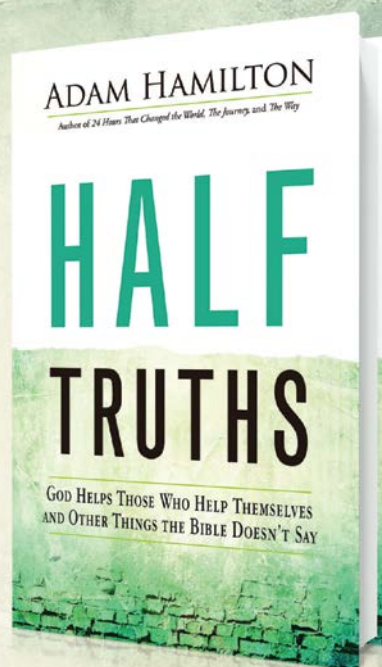
### Resources Include:

- Book
- DVD
- Leader Guide
- Youth Study



Learn more at [AdamHamilton.org](http://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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# 200,000 REASONS

to fight childhood hunger

## Three camps offer one-day seminars to jump-start local church hunger ministries

Local congregations are invited to attend any or all of these day-long seminars to learn more about starting hunger relief ministries in their communities:

### Feeding Ministries

#### May 7, 2016 at Bear Creek Camp

Does your church want to start or maintain a feeding program such as a food pantry, a backpack ministry or another opportunity for children to receive food when the meals they get at school are unavailable to them? This seminar will provide training for these types of community outreach efforts.

Bear Creek Camp is located near Marianna, in the Southeast District.



Bear Creek Camp

### Community Gardens

#### June 11, 2016 at Shoal Creek Camp

This seminar will train teams from local churches on how to start and maintain a community garden for the families of their local community.

Shoal Creek Camp is located near New Blaine, in the Northwest District.



Shoal Creek Camp

### Cooking Matters Training

#### Sept. 17, 2016 at Wayland Spring Camp

Teams from local churches will receive training on conducting Cooking Matters classes at their church for families in their community. Cooking Matters is a key component of the national No Kid Hungry campaign because it teaches participants how to cook healthy, affordable meals.

Wayland Spring Camp is located near Imboden, in the Northeast District.



Wayland Spring Camp

Registration for each seminar should be online soon at [www.arumc.org](http://www.arumc.org); check the website or contact director of camping ministries Michelle Moore, [michelle.moore@arumc.org](mailto:michelle.moore@arumc.org), for further information.

# Veritas

(continued from page 1)

were so many people that put so much work into making this event what it was, and I couldn't be more thankful to them. The hard work that everyone put in was not for personal recognition, but was to make Veritas an environment where people could worship God freely and comfortably, and I am so humbled to get to spend time with people who have such a heart for the ministry. Thank you to Gary Mueller for an amazing message this morning and for your continual support of the youth. The Arkansas United Methodist youth are so lucky to have a bishop that desires to be involved with what we are doing and encourages our spiritual revival. ACCYM and Veritas have impacted my life in so many ways, and I will be forever grateful for the influence it has on my life. God is so good."

—posted to Facebook by Lauren Lovelady, ACCYM president

"I really liked how all the speakers got us more involved. During the small group time, personal stories were shared. I saw more people go forward to pray. I felt more connected." —Lamon Wade, First UMC Paris

"We had an amazing worship service with a band who sang some very awesome songs. We also had a poet, named Levi the Poet, who talked to us about God's love and God's life through poems. The speaker taught us about how we can use John Wesley's three types of grace, prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace, to help us



understand God's unconditional love, and how we need to turn to him always, in the good times and the bad times. Not only did we have an amazing worship but we got to experience workshops if we wanted to. One of the workshops that I went to we got to experience poverty by using real life poverty situations." —Rebekah Curtis, Sardis UMC

"God works in the greatest and most mysterious ways! Veritas is about learning of God's grace... His beautiful and absolutely FREE grace. Through music, sermons, testimonies, and fellowship, we learn, along with so many more youth groups, how deep God's love is for us. It is unconditional and irrevocable. And we learn that we, as God's children, are to 'Let Love' take over in our lives.... Let love find you, surprise you, redesign you, claim you, unchain you and rename you." —Makayla Fulkerson, Oaklawn UMC Hot Springs



PHOTOS COURTESY ACCYM MEDIA TEAM

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April 7, 2016

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**United Methodists of Arkansas**  
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## PEOPLE OF FAITH

### O'Connor receives OMP Community Builder Award

Bailey Faulkner, executive director for Ozark Mission Project, on March 5 presented OMP's Community Builder Award to Michael O'Connor for his commitment to OMP and to serving Arkansas. She made the presentation



Michael O'Connor, left, receives the OMP Community Builder Award from Bailey Faulkner.

COURTESY PHOTO

graduate James Hayes, the Community Builder Award is given to someone who lives out the mission of OMP year-round: to transform lives through worship, fellowship and hands-on mission.

Not only has O'Connor led the OMP cooking team at Lakewood UMC's camp for the past eight years, but he also works with a Lakewood team year-round to cook and serve meals to the area's homeless population through the community's Under the Bridge ministry.

"I love OMP and don't think my contributions ever match those of any camper toiling in the sun to help neighbors," O'Connor says. "OMP is the embodiment of Christians spreading God's love. Every year, I see new campers (young and old) meeting new neighbors, helping, learning and trying to help any way they can. For one week, anything is possible, and campers take that spirit back with them and keep moving forward. It's a privilege for someone like me (who never met a nail I couldn't bend!) to be able to help make the camps a success."

### McMurray moves from intern to recruiting and logistics director for OMP

Ozark Mission Project (OMP) announced March 7 that its current intern, Michael McMurray, will become the organization's recruiting and logistics director in May, following his graduation from Hendrix College with a



Michael McMurray

Bachelor of Arts degree in religious studies.

McMurray's involvement with OMP began in eighth grade, when he first attended as a camper. After participating for several summers, he went on to become a college staffer, camp director, volunteer staffer and intern.

"This summer Michael will attend his 16th, 17th and 18th camps," said Bailey Faulkner, executive director of OMP. "We are so excited to see the great things that he will do with our organization. Michael's love for Jesus combined with his passion for OMP makes him a perfect fit for this job."

A member of First UMC Little Rock, Michael has volunteered his time with the mid-youth ministry at First UMC Conway, as well as participating as a confirmation teacher and basketball coach at his home church in Little Rock.

OMP's staff expansion was made possible through a matching grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. The new position will focus on recruiting new churches and volunteers to be in hands-on mission.

"I am honored to work for an organization that not only creates leaders in the United Methodist Church, but also works to help our own neighbors in Arkansas," McMurray said. "I look forward to traveling the state meeting with churches and youth directors about participating in this wonderful mission."

### Williamson named to lead vocations initiative at Hendrix

Hendrix College religious studies professor Dr. Robert Williamson has been named the new director of the Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics, and Calling. He succeeds the Rev. J.J. Whitney, who has become the college's chaplain.

The Miller Center provides resources and programming for Hendrix College students, faculty and staff to explore the work and life to which they are called.

"For more than a decade, the Miller Center has been helping students grapple with what it means to live meaningful lives—ones in which their gifts, talents, and passions intersect with the real needs of the world," Williamson said. "It has reminded us that our value systems, from those of all religions and those of no religion, have a place in the conversation about what it means to be educated 'unto the whole person,' as our college motto insists."

Williamson joined the department of religious studies at Hendrix in 2008. He has served on the Miller Center Advisory Board since 2011, and also as faculty associate to the Miller Center. He currently holds the Margaret Berry Hutton Odyssey Professorship which, like the Miller Center, focuses on the intersection of academics, service and vocation in the context of faith and values.

His Odyssey Professorship project, "The Word in the World," explores the intersection of the Bible and faithful living through several hands-on activities, including a semester-long reading group; a speaker series of renowned theologians and biblical scholars; and mission trips in communities at home and abroad.

"From mission service projects to ministry exploration programs and much more, the Miller Center is a vital part of the Hendrix community and the experience of our students, faculty, and staff," said Hendrix Provost Dr. Terri Bonebright. "Dr. Williamson's academic interests and passion for the Miller Center's mission make him an excellent fit for the leadership of this critical program."

For more information, visit [www.hendrix.edu/millercenter](http://www.hendrix.edu/millercenter).



Robert Williamson

### Wollenberg selected for Nancy Wood Scholarship

Emily Wollenberg of Clarksville has been named the 2016-2017 scholar for the Nancy McDonald Wood Scholarship. A senior at Clarksville High School, Wollenberg will attend Oklahoma City University in the fall. The Nancy McDonald Wood Scholarship was established "to educate and develop strong committed female lay leadership for United Methodist churches and the communities they serve."

The scholarship is awarded annually to an Arkansan United Methodist young woman entering college, who has demonstrated strong community service and is active in her local United Methodist congregation. The purpose of the scholarship is to create lifelong lay service to a United Methodist church. The scholarship funds are managed by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

Wollenberg was chosen from a pool of 35 applications from 30 United Methodist churches in the state. All applicants demonstrated high academic achievement and varied volunteer service in their community, Conference activities and local church positions.

An active member of First UMC Clarksville, Wollenberg sings in the adult and teen choirs, and participates in the contemporary service, the children's ministry on Wednesday evenings and as president of the youth group. In addition to church, she is involved in the Pack for Hunger program, the local homeless shelter and the Mustard Seed Thrift Store. She has earned first place at University of the Ozarks Science Day, and has been selected for All State choir and for All Region honors in band. She also works as a waitress at a local café.

Emily chose to attend OCU because it provides a highly rated program in musical theater, as well as because of its Methodist affiliation. She hopes to pursue a career in theater after graduation.



Nancy Wood, left, with new Nancy Wood Scholar Emily Wollenberg, whose scholarship was announced March 20 at her home church, First UMC Clarksville.

COURTESY PHOTO

## 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](mailto:aforus@arumc.org). Deadlines on page 2 of this issue.

**First United Methodist Church, Magnolia, Arkansas, is interviewing for a full time Director for our growing youth ministry.** Candidates should have significant experience with both junior and senior high school students and have strong leadership skills. They should be able to recruit, coordinate and empower volunteers. The person who fills this position will be highly organized, technologically savvy and have excellent communication/coordination skills. Appropriate use and knowledge of social media is a plus. The successful candidate will have a strong Christian and biblical background in order to provide spiritual leadership to our youth. Candidates must be committed to the United Methodist Church and Wesleyan theology. Salary commensurate with experience and education. Resumes may be sent to: Search Committee, First UMC, 320 W. Main St., Magnolia, AR 71753.

**Forrest City FUMC is seeking a Chancel Choir Director.** Send resume to: FUMC-SPR, P.O. Box 66, Forrest City, AR 72335.

# Tanako, First UMC Hot Springs offer Annual Conference child care options free with pre-registration

First United Methodist Church of Hot Springs and Camp Tanako will be hosting child care for the 2016 Arkansas Annual Conference, June 19-22. Age-appropriate activities for children ranging from 8 months to 12 years of age (separated into age-appropriate groups) including curriculum-enriched, hands-on, creative activities, arts & crafts projects, active games, and more.

- All childcare is available at no cost to Annual Conference attendees **who register their child or children by May 31, 2016**. After May 31, all late registrants will pay \$10 per hour, per child.
- Walk-ins are not permitted. Children must be registered no later than June 17 to receive care, so that adequate workers are scheduled and supplies are purchased for the well-being and safety of the children.
- All child care for children ages 8 months to 5 years will be held at First UMC Hot Springs in the Christian Life Center, 218 Pratt Street.
- Children who have completed Kindergarten through 6th grade will check in each day at the First UMC Christian Life Center, and Monday through Wednesday they will then ride in the church vans out to Camp Tanako for a fun-filled day of camp activities. Sunday and weeknight child care for grades K-6 will be available at First UMC Hot Springs in the Christian Life Center.

**IMPORTANT:** All elementary-age children *must* register online with both First UMC Hot Springs *and* with Camp Tanako.

To register for First UMC Hot Springs child care:

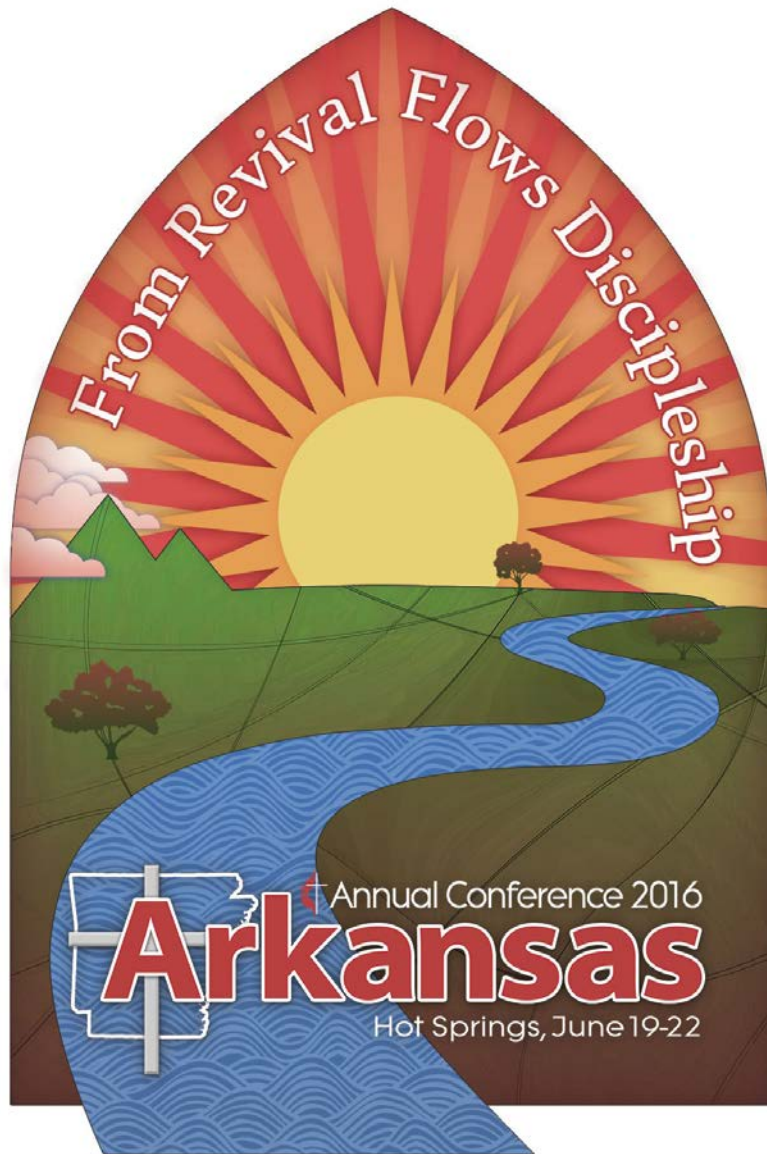
<https://fumckidz.wufoo.com/forms/arkansas-annual-conference-childcare/>

To register for Camp Tanako Day Camp:

<https://registration.campbrain.com/Portal/Login.aspx?H=CampTanako&G=978>

For questions regarding child care at FUMC Hot Springs, please contact Michelle Wilkins, children's minister at First UMC Hot Springs, [mwilkins@fumchs.com](mailto:mwilkins@fumchs.com) or 501-318-3977.

For questions regarding Day Camp at Camp Tanako, contact any of the staff at Camp Tanako, or Kim Carter, camp director, at 501-262-2600.



## Pre-Conference materials for AC2016 to arrive mid-April

Lay and clergy members of the Arkansas Annual Conference should expect to receive their packets with information about Annual Conference the week of April 17. The Pre-Conference Journal will be available online for free at <http://ac2016.arumc.org>, or members may choose to order a print copy. Orders for print copies will be filled as they are received by the Conference office.

## Sign up for the 2016 Arkansas Annual Conference Choir

This year during the opening worship service for Annual Conference, there will be a special Conference Choir made up of United Methodist singers and musicians from all over the state. This choir will be directed by Dr. Andrew Morgan, director of choral ensembles at Hendrix College. Any choir or singer from any church in the Conference may sign up, but please be aware that space is limited. For more information or to reserve your spot in the choir, contact the Rev. Andrew Kjørlaug, pastor at First UMC Charleston, [andrew.kjorlaug@arumc.org](mailto:andrew.kjorlaug@arumc.org). Watch the Arkansas Conference Facebook page ([facebook.com/arkansasumc](https://facebook.com/arkansasumc)) and the AC2016 website (<http://ac2016.arumc.org>) for updates regarding rehearsals and music selections, as well as the launch of an online signup form.



**Andrew Morgan**

## Clergy pension fund need for 'catch-up' payments expected to end this year

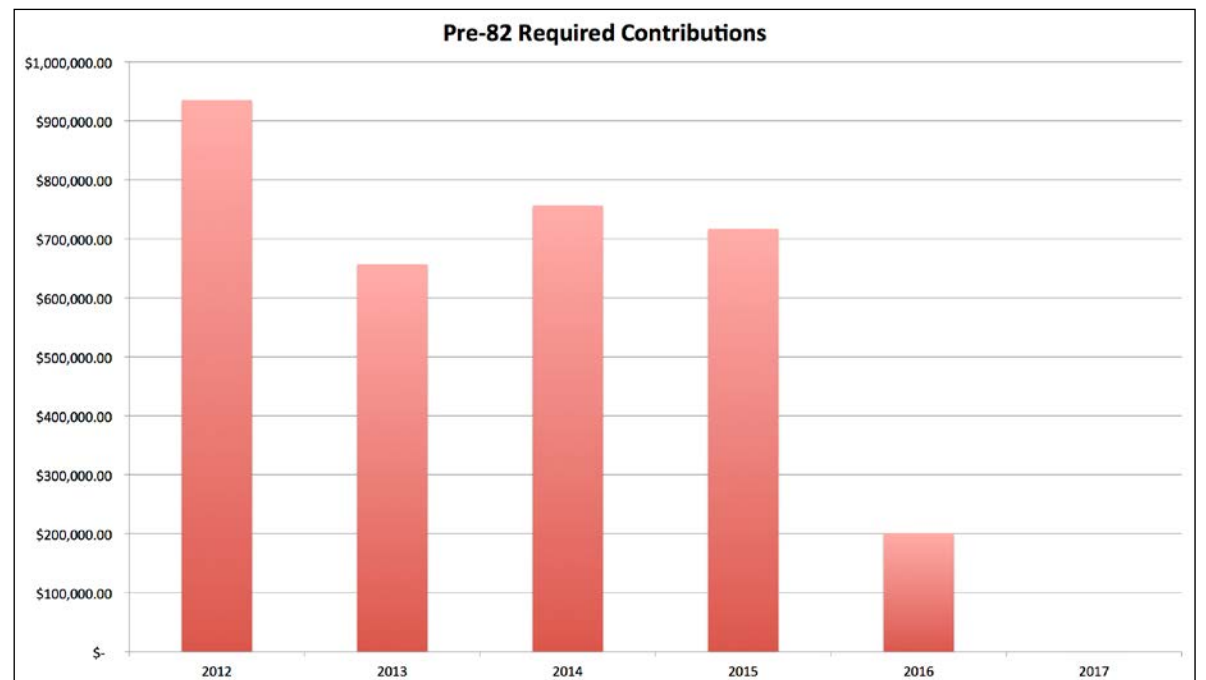
The Pre-1982 pension plan is on track to once again be 100 percent funded. This plan was fully funded until the market downturn of 2008. Beginning in 2010 the Arkansas Conference was required to make catch-up payments to restore the plan to a fully funded status.

The Pre-82 portion of the clergy retirement plan is a defined benefit plan, meaning that upon a clergy person's retirement, the Conference guarantees to pay a defined amount for every year that the clergy served prior to 1982, regardless of market returns. As long as market returns are at or above projections, no additional funding is required.

"In 2008, the market losses caused the plan to be underfunded by more than \$6 million," said Todd Burris, director of administrative services and treasurer for the Arkansas Conference.

After six years of a special apportionment to local churches, the Pre-82 pension plan for retired clergy is projected to be 100 percent funded by 2017. Reaching this milestone means that the \$650,000 Conference-wide apportionment to cover pre-1982 pension payments will end in 2016.

In an effort to prevent another round of special apportionments, the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits will recommend establishing a reserve fund, using most of the money remaining from the group health insurance plan that ended at the close of 2015. More details on this recommendation will be available closer to Annual Conference.



## Imagination (continued from page 1)

School of Theology, Morris, like most theology students, had more than her own academic interests on her mind. She stayed connected with her son Soren's academic pursuits, too, and one way she did that was by serving as a coach for his elementary school's DI team.

Soren missed DI when the family moved to West Memphis, so Morris looked into how she might start a team there and connect it with their congregation. The church now has two teams, one for sixth-through eighth-graders and another for ninth- through 12th-graders.

This year DI changed the rule that required senior high teams to be sponsored by a member of the Arkansas Activities Association—the governing board for high school athletic programs. Morris says the change appears to be a result of her inquiries about church team sponsorship.

### 'Project Outreach'

Morris was particularly interested in Project Outreach because she saw the potential the program had for teaching children and youth about making a difference—and about how their

faith drives the differences they make.

"In some ways it's a grand experiment," she said. "I hope to start talking about ways for our churches to get their youth involved and teach them mission and ministry and empower them for that."

The junior high team picked a daunting community issue for Project Outreach: The only hospital in West Memphis had closed its doors in 2014, and the people of their city still need emergency medical care. (Crittenden County voters on March 1 overwhelmingly approved a measure to direct an existing one-cent sales tax toward building a new hospital, but construction is expected to take two years.)

"At first they were like, 'How are we going to raise enough money to open a hospital?' and I said, 'Slow down!' Morris recalled with a laugh. "You just have to do something to help with the challenges."

The team came up a plan for a community-wide rally including a 5K run. And though the 5K was canceled because of inclement weather, the team transformed it into an information fair at the

church, where they sold their 5K t-shirts, hosted a blood pressure screening station and had information available about Smart 911. They raised almost \$2,500 for the ambulance service of the West Memphis Fire Department.

"They are like our emergency room right now," Morris said of the fire department. "They are the ones that stabilize everybody and get them across the river or to Forrest City or wherever they need to go."

The four junior high school students on the team amazed Morris with the amount of planning they carried out for the event.

"I'm so excited for them and what they have done, and so proud of them," she said.

The senior high team chose suicide as its community issue. They remembered that the church youth room is dedicated in memory of a girl who died by suicide; they learned that one group member had dealt with thoughts about suicide; and team member Emma Burnett's grandfather had taken his own life, as well.

"We just felt that was meant for us to do," Burnett said. To tackle a difficult topic with many personal connections, they arranged for Arkansas attorney general Leslie Rutledge to speak on Jan. 25 about



Soren Morris and William Blake play around while they wait to present at the DI state competition. The dryer hose was part of a costume for a half-human, half-machine android who would receive care in the future in the new West Memphis hospital. The group's presentation included singing a parody of Adele's "Hello" to share the successes and obstacles they encountered as they tried to address the issue of the closed hospital in West Memphis.

COURTESY PHOTO

suicide and its impact on the community; prepared and delivered their own presentation; and planned a service of remembrance and mourning for suicide victims and their families.

### Framed by the familiar

Morris believes DI's roots as an academic competition create a comfortable space for students to explore reaching out to their community.

"It fits into their world, it also gives them something on college applications that other places will recognize," she said. "And since it's Project Outreach, they're doing ministry. They're taking responsibility for an issue in their community and doing something about it."

"It's been incredibly empowering, and it's been an amazing way to teach kids how to design their own mission."

Faith works its way into the DI experience in a number of ways. During practices before competitions, Morris designed sample "instant challenges" that helped the teams learn more about their faith. And for the back of their team t-shirts, the senior high team

chose Jeremiah 29:11, "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

"They've asked, 'Can we talk about Jesus, can we talk about God in our presentation?' and I said, 'Absolutely,'" says Morris. "The folks that run DI know they're coming from a church, they expect that, there's no restriction on that."

### New to the area

DI, for its part, is excited about having more teams in a part of the state that has had very little exposure to the program. "It gives them a whole new avenue to approach," Morris said.

"Most of our teams originate through a school district, but our goal as an organization is to reach the children of Arkansas, and that doesn't exclude home school, no school, church school—it doesn't exclude anybody," says Mike Mitchell, the DI affiliate director for Arkansas. "If they're a child in Arkansas, they deserve the opportunity to experience this program."

He calls the West Memphis teams and the adults who worked



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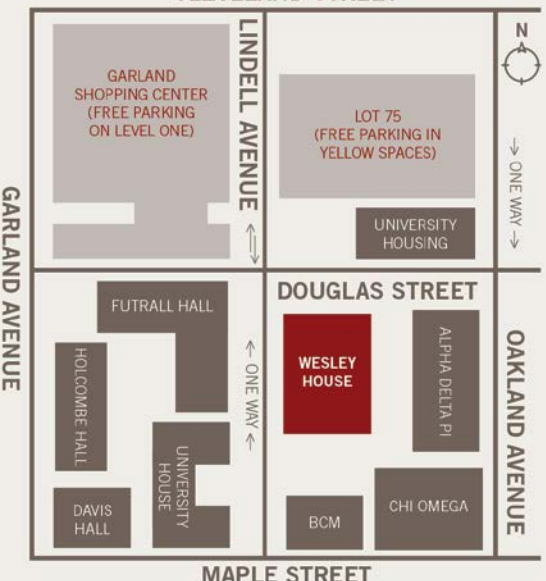
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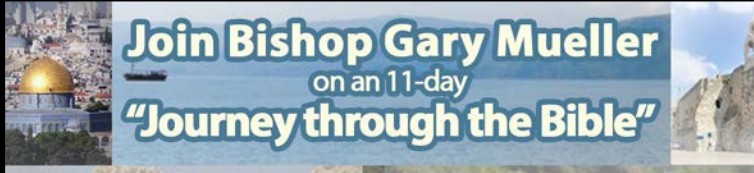
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with them “absolutely wonderful.”

“We are looking for growth in that West Memphis area, and we would like to replicate that and bring more people in,” he added. “Michelle anticipates that we have sown the right seeds in the right place.”

Mitchell pointed out that though competition doesn’t begin until older elementary grades, Destination Imagination has developed programs for students as young as pre-kindergarten, and there’s also a university level competition.

### Competition

At competition, Project Outreach teams are not scored on how much money they raise or how successful they are at their community outreach. They’re scored purely on their presentation at the competition, including an Instant Challenge for one-quarter of their score.

The senior high team had taken first place at regionals in Overall and Instant Challenge, but they weren’t satisfied with their scores. So they

**‘It’s been incredibly empowering, and it’s been an amazing way to teach kids how to design their own mission.’**

**—Rev. Dr. Michelle Morris**

threw out their entire presentation and re-did it for state in about eight days’ time.

“They built new sets, new costumes, new scripts... I was so, so proud of them. They worked so hard,” Morris said. Their efforts paid off: Even though they placed lower at the state competition, they did so by earning double the score they made at regionals.

“It was fun, but at times we struggled a lot as a group,” said senior high team member Burnett of the preparation to compete. “We wouldn’t work together... we didn’t use our time wisely leading up to it.”

But, she says, the team definitely learned from those mistakes.

“When someone would be talking we would probably try to

interrupt them if we thought that we had a better idea,” she said. “Now I know that we need to just let them talk, then we can talk, and we can decide that way instead of talking over each other.”

She looks forward to participating again next year, including helping new people get involved.

The Junior High team also earned third place in their division.

“What they did for their communities, seeing them get excited about how they could do something in the world... and how well they took care of each other—the judges can’t see that, but I knew it was there, and I was so proud of them,” Morris said.

Like Burnett of the senior high team, junior high team member William Blake also noticed how team members learned to work better together over time.

“We argued a lot. But then during the competitions we all listened to each other, so I think competition might bring the best out in all of us, which I thought was very meaningful,” he said.

Morris sees a future for the DI

teams, too, even though she knows she will be moving to a new appointment at a different church this summer. There’s strong support in place from other team members’ parents, which she’s confident will carry the students into a strong start

for the 2016-17 academic year.

“I can’t get them to stop practicing!” she says. After competition season ended, the teams arranged a time to come clean up the youth room and wound up making plans for next year.



Senior high DI team members Christopher Blake, Lily Catt, Emma Burnett and Blake White prepare for their performance at state competition March 12. Their task, to creatively describe the process of preparing for their community service project of suicide awareness and prevention, led them to tell the story of a young girl named “Smorthy” who was picked up by a tornado and dropped in a world where she had to follow a red brick road to get to the Attorney General, who would talk to her about suicide. Along the way, she encountered others who bullied her and asked her questions about how why her group was interested in addressing suicide and how they would go about organizing their event.

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## COMING UP

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

The new Senior Retreat from Arkansas Conference Camping Ministries provides 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. To register, visit [www.arumc.org](http://www.arumc.org).

### 'Narrative Preaching' training in White Hall April 16

A team of Arkansas clergy affiliated with the Perkins School of Theology Center for Preaching Excellence are hosting a Narrative Preaching training for local pastors and lay servants. This event, held at White Hall United Methodist Church on Saturday, April 16 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., will equip local pastors and lay servants/speakers with new tools to more effectively share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Open to all Arkansas local pastors and lay servants, the Southeast District-sponsored workshop will center on storytelling, preaching and overall communication.

The leaders of this event have gone through a two-year educational process on Narrative Preaching and Storytelling. The time together will include three breakout sessions in which participants can both learn and apply new skills in a small group setting.

Registration for the event is \$10, payable at the door. Pre-registration is required before April 11; to register, visit <http://sedist.arumc.org/2016/02/narrative-preacher-training-april-16th>. To learn more about the Center for Preaching Excellence, visit [www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms](http://www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms).

### Historical Society annual luncheon and meeting April 16

The Annual Spring Luncheon Meeting of the Arkansas United Methodist Historical Society will be held Saturday, April 16, 2016, in the fellowship hall of First United Methodist Church, 723 Center Street in Little Rock.

The meal, which begins at noon, will be followed by the program "Historical Reflection: An Oral Historical Set of Perspectives." A brief business meeting follows the program, during which the Society will elect new officers, share announcements and close with a benediction.

To reserve your spot, send your name, address, phone number and \$10 luncheon reservation fee to Barbara Clark, Treasurer, 2605 Normandy Drive, Newport, AR 72112, before April 10. You may also call her at 870-523-6178 to reserve by phone. Payment may be made on the day of the luncheon, but reservations by April 10 are required for planning purposes.

### Kay Warren to keynote Methodist Healthcare Mental Health Breakfast April 21

The second annual Living Well Network Mental Health Breakfast will take place on April 21, 2016 at 8 a.m. at the Hilton Hotel, 939 Ridge Lake Boulevard in Memphis, Tenn. The event will feature keynote speaker Kay Warren, best-selling author, co-founder of Saddleback Church and wife of senior pastor Rick Warren. Kay will speak about depression, grief and choosing joy.

Kay Warren cofounded Saddleback Church with her husband Rick Warren in Lake Forest, Calif. She is a passionate Bible teacher and respected advocate for people living with mental illness, orphaned and vulnerable children, as well as for those living with HIV and AIDS. Kay is the author of *Choose Joy: Because Happiness Isn't Enough, Say Yes to God* and coauthor of *Foundations*, the popular systematic theology course used by churches worldwide. Her children are Amy and Josh, and Matthew who is in Heaven, and she has five grandchildren.

To purchase tickets individually or as a table of 10, visit [www.methodisthealth.org/livingwellbreakfast](http://www.methodisthealth.org/livingwellbreakfast), or call 901-516-0500.

The Living Well Network Mental Health Breakfast brings together mental health professionals, community and business leaders to raise awareness about the importance of mental healthcare. Proceeds from the event support the Dennis H. Jones Living Well Network, a Methodist Healthcare

Foundation resource to help individuals navigate depression, stress and other challenges of life. The network serves the Mid-South area.

### U of A Wesley to hold building consecration April 24

U of A Wesley, a United Methodist college ministry at the University of Arkansas, will celebrate the opening of its new 8,000-square-foot ministry facility with a consecration service at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, April 24. With the opening of their new building, the Wesley ministry launches a new chapter in its more than 90 years of faithful ministry to students and staff at the University of Arkansas.

All are invited to the service, which will be held in the new facility at 520 Lindell Avenue in Fayetteville. The day will include a reception and open house for touring the facility and will celebrate the ministry's unique nature as a partnership of Central UMC Fayetteville and the Arkansas Conference. Alumni and friends are encouraged to join Bishop Gary Mueller and the Rev. Dr. John Robbins, senior pastor of Central UMC Fayetteville, as well as Wesley students and staff in marking this milestone in the ministry's work at the University of Arkansas.

For additional information, visit [www.uawesley.com](http://www.uawesley.com) or contact the Wesley office at 479-442-1820 or [wesleyoffice@centraltolife.com](mailto:wesleyoffice@centraltolife.com).

### Retired Ministers Day Luncheon set for May 3

The 18th annual Arkansas Retired Ministers Day Luncheon will be held at noon on Tuesday, May 3, at First UMC Benton, 200 N. Market Street. Guest speaker this year will be the Rev. Dr. Chester Jones. All retired pastors, spouses and sponsors of this event are invited to attend. For more information, contact David Bush at [thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org](mailto:thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org) or 870-673-1131.

### Clergy golf retreat at Mount Eagle, May 1-3

Clergy: Are you looking for a great opportunity for food, fellowship, worship time and a chance to experience God's creation at a stunning location? Visit Mount Eagle Retreat Center May 1-3 and enjoy some time on the greens at two great nearby golf courses (Mountain Ranch and Tannenbaum). Lunch will be on your own at the golf course, and Monday night at Mount Eagle features a grilled steak dinner. Even if you do not play golf, clergy are invited to attend for the fellowship, relaxation and opportunities to explore God's creation. To register, visit [www.mounteagle.org/events.htm](http://www.mounteagle.org/events.htm).

### Bethlehem UMC Lonoke to celebrate centennial of church sanctuary May 22

Bethlehem United Methodist Church Lonoke will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the church sanctuary on Sunday, May 22. All former members, pastors, and interested public are invited to join the church members for the celebration.

The sanctuary was erected by church members in 1916 from hand-hewn logs from trees on the church's property. Pews were also built from trees on the land. In its early years the congregation numbered more than 400, with the Sunday school having 108 enrolled.

Anniversary events will include a special worship service at 11 a.m. on Sunday, May 22; a fellowship potluck dinner; singing after lunch; and visitation at Salem Cemetery.

The church was founded in 1871 and continues serving the Lonoke area communities including Austin, Ward and Bethlehem. Members also travel from Jacksonville, Cabot and Beebe to worship with the church. Bethlehem UMC is well known for its annual Road to Bethlehem displays along Bethlehem Road every December. Nearly 40 scenes from the Bible story of Christ's birth and the journey to Bethlehem are displayed on the lawns of residents along Bethlehem Road, culminating in the full nativity scene on the church lawn.

For more information about the centennial, contact Freddie or JoAnn Abshure, 501-438-2272.

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### Central District Lay Servant Academy in Jacksonville July 21-23

The Connection Center of First UMC Jacksonville will be the setting for the Central District's Lay Servant/Lay Speaker Academy July 21-23, 2016. Lay Servant Ministries courses are open to all laity and clergy, regardless of home district. The structure for this particular Academy creates the option for participants to attend for one, two or three days. Course topics include Spiritual Gifts, Worship, Heritage & Polity, Prayer and Preaching. Books should be ordered and read in advance of the courses; because of this requirement, they will not be available for purchase at the event. Late or at-the-door registrations will not be accepted. The registration deadline is July 15. For a list of required reading or a registration form, contact Fonda Kirkman in the Central District office, [fkirkman@arumc.org](mailto:fkirkman@arumc.org) or 501-851-1433.



# UMFA grant allows first-time attendees to experience Mission u at no cost

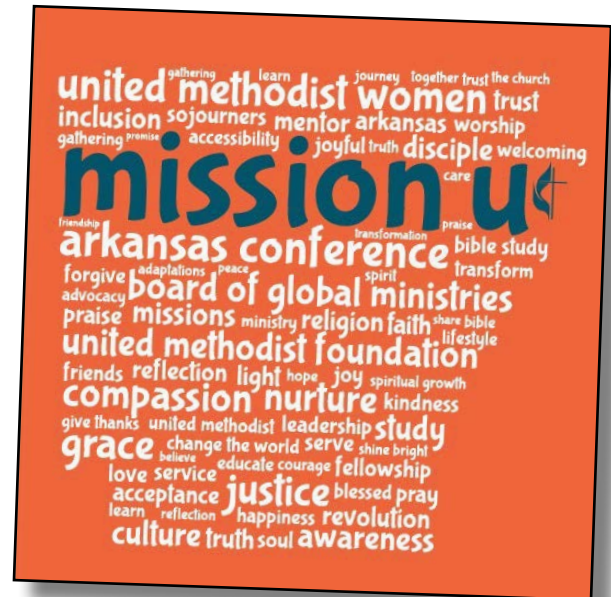
The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) recently made an \$8,000 grant to Mission u to fund scholarships for first-time attendees.

Mission u is an annual United Methodist Women-sponsored opportunity to study current issues that have an impact on society, with particular attention to the responsibilities of women in fulfilling the mission work of the church.

This year's session, scheduled for July 27-30 at the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville, features studies on Latin America, Climate Justice and The Bible and Human Sexuality. The children's study is "God's Extravagant Garden," and the youth study is "Joining Voices for Climate Justice." To apply for a scholarship, visit [www.armissionu.weebly.com](http://www.armissionu.weebly.com) and complete the application by June 27. To register, visit the same site by July 10.

"We are appreciative of the grant from the foundation," said Rosemary Kirby of Sardis UMC, this year's dean of Mission u. "We hope to have a record number of women, men, children and youth from throughout the state come together for learning and fellowship."

"Mission u participants grow in understanding the mission of the church in the current world context," said Jim Argue Jr., UMFA president and CEO. "We are excited about the opportunity to give those who have



never experienced Mission u the opportunity to attend at no cost."

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas manages \$131 million in endowment funds and other charitable assets that benefit local churches and other United Methodist ministries. UMFA is one of the largest United Methodist foundations in the country, managing more than 750 funds that support United Methodist ministries.

## Jr. and Sr. High Assembly registration now open

Registration is now open for Jr. and Sr. High Assembly, the last event of the year for the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM). Assembly, held this year from July 25-29 at Hendrix College in Conway, is actually two events that run simultaneously, but with different schedules and programs for junior and senior high school students.

Jr. High Assembly is for youth exiting grades 6-8, and Sr. High Assembly is for youth exiting grades 9-12. Both Assemblies are formatted to emphasize the small group experience. As the longest event ACCYM offers, it allows for more time for youth to be in small groups with other youth their age and two adult leaders. These small groups provide fellowship, discussion and many times an opportunity for lifelong friendships to begin. In addition to small groups and worship, there are group games, activities and much more offered during afternoon and evening sessions.

The early bird rate of \$185 will be available until May 31; the registration price increases to \$200 on June 1; and registration ends July 3. Visit <http://accym.org/assembly> to register. A detailed event schedule and packing list will be emailed to registered participants the week before the event begins.

# Thanks to UMFA, congregations will go to COR Leadership Institute, young clergy to COR Young Preachers Festival

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) has awarded two grants to be administered by the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality that will send local church congregations and clergy to the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection (COR). One will enable Arkansas United Methodists to attend COR's Leadership Institute, and the other will send youth and college students to COR's Young Preachers Festival.

For the fourth year, UMFA will provide \$75,000 to send 100 Arkansas clergy and local church congregation members to Leawood, Kan., to attend the Leadership Institute this fall. Churches interested in participating may contact their district offices, and the Conference cabinet will determine which churches receive grant funding.

"I know it is a good investment," said Janet Marshall, UMFA vice president for development, who has attended the event in the past. "Everyone comes back renewed, revived, excited and ready to hit the ground."

For the second year, a UMFA grant of \$15,000 will

send a group of young men and women from the Arkansas Conference to the Young Preachers Festival at COR. "Sending 30 young people to this event fits well with our efforts to recruit and train highly qualified pastors for the future," said Jim Argue, Jr., UMFA President and CEO.

The Rev. Dede Roberts says the Center for Vitality is seeking rising seniors, graduating seniors and college students to participate in the program. Those who are interested in attending or know someone who may be interested should contact her at 501-324-8000 or [droberts@arumc.org](mailto:droberts@arumc.org), or talk to their youth minister or local church pastor.

"We are grateful for the generosity of UMFA donors who allow us to help recruit, train and support young, talented clergy leadership through programs like the Young Preachers Festival," Roberts said. "And the foundation's support of programs like the COR Leadership Institute ensure that young pastors will have creative, vibrant congregations to serve."

## College seeks nominations for Steel-Hendrix, youth minister honors

Hendrix College is now accepting nominations for the Steel-Hendrix Awards, which include the Mary and Ira A. Brumley Award for outstanding religious education and the Ethel K. Millar Award for outstanding religion and social awareness. Honorees will be selected by the Steel-Hendrix Committee, and the awards will be presented in the 2016-2017 academic year.

Hendrix also is accepting nominations for the Youth Minister of the Year Award. This award is given to an outstanding youth minister, youth director or youth counselor. Full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer youth workers who have exemplified outstanding leadership are eligible. Nominees should be a member of and work in a United Methodist Church in Arkansas. They must be involved with the connectional system and participate in district and Conference youth events, and be intentional about making disciples of Jesus Christ through missions, Bible studies, outreach and evangelism and Christian fellowship. Nominees must also have participated in some type of continuing education in the area of youth ministry.

Nominations for all awards should include a letter detailing the individual's career highlights and reason for nomination. Send nominations to the Rev. J.J. Whitney, Hendrix College, 1600 Washington Ave., Conway, AR 72032, or to [whitney@hendrix.edu](mailto:whitney@hendrix.edu). The nomination deadline is April 29, 2016.

The Steel-Hendrix Award Committee is chaired by Whitney; lay members include Todd Burris, Ruth Jones, Michelle Moore and Zach Schrick; clergy members are the Revs. Vic Nixon, Brittany Richardson Watson, Marie Mainard O'Connell and Wayne Clark.

The awards are sponsored by the Marshall T. Steel Center for the Study of Religion and Philosophy. The Steel-Hendrix Awards were inaugurated in 1984 to celebrate the college's 100 years of relationship with the United Methodist Church. The award is named in honor of Marshall T. Steel, a prominent minister and former president of the college.

Hendrix College ([www.hendrix.edu](http://www.hendrix.edu)) is a private liberal arts college in Conway. It is nationally recognized in numerous college guides, lists and rankings for academic quality, community, innovation and value.

# Pastor introduces 'free prayer' station at Corning cafés

BY AMY FORBUS  
Editor

When the Rev. John Michael read the essay "Why I offer 'free prayer' in a coffee shop," the idea resonated with him.

The piece, written by the Rev. Thomas Rusert, a Lutheran pastor in Pennsylvania, appeared in *Faith & Leadership*, an online magazine published by Leadership Education at Duke Divinity ([www.faithandleadership.com](http://www.faithandleadership.com)). Rusert explained how his weekly practice of working at a table in a local coffee shop with a small sign advertising "Free Prayer" on his table has helped him create connections with those who would never walk into his church office.

Michael, the pastor of Corning UMC, took note of Rusert's experience, as well as his tips for starting such a prayer station. Knowing that the church's mission field includes every part of its surrounding community, Michael asked permission to set up his "Free Prayer" sign at a local restaurant where he's a regular customer, and they were receptive to the idea.

"In Corning, I want to be the community's pastor," he says. "And I think that we should all be doing that."

That first day, Michael simply set up the sign, had breakfast and worked on his sermon notes. One customer took note of the sign and stopped to share with Michael about his beliefs; another came over to ask a few questions. And just as he was thinking of



PHOTO COURTESY JOHN F. MICHAEL

packing up for the day, one of the wait staff asked for prayer for some specific situations.

"I got a chance to pray with her right there, and I don't think that would've happened if I hadn't tried this," he said.

Following Rusert's recommendation, Michael posts on social media each time he sets up for prayer at a local restaurant, which also piques the interest of some who know him but have

no formal connection with the congregation. And like Rusert, he has experimented with how he presents himself, and has found that wearing his clergy collar makes a positive difference.

He says that while the actual requests for prayer have been relatively few in the four times he has used the sign, the interactions with community members are growing.

"The more often I do it, the more often people say, 'Oh, look at that kooky guy over there with the sign,'" he says. "Maybe they come in the next week and I'm there again, they say, 'Oh, wow, he's back. I wonder why; I wonder what he's up to.' And then maybe the next week they say, 'Hmm. Maybe that guy is onto something.' Slowly, I'm hoping that they're talking themselves into maybe coming up to me and saying, 'Hey, what's the deal?'"

Michael says other clergy have expressed interest in knowing how his experience turns out.

"This is an interesting experiment," he says, "to go out and say, 'I'm here, I really do

want to talk to you and pray with you if you want. I want to be your pastor; otherwise I wouldn't be here with this sign on the table."

He encourages other clergy to try it out in their own communities and see what happens.

"You've got nothing to lose," he says.

## 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](mailto:vim@arumc.org) or 870-826-0268. For **Disaster Response (DR) projects**, contact Byron or Janice Mann, DR co-coordinators: [disaster@arumc.org](mailto:disaster@arumc.org) or 870-703-8359 (Janice). On **Facebook**, join the group "Volunteers in Mission & Disaster Response - Serving Arkansas & Beyond" for updates.

### Mission Academy scheduled for Sept. 11-14 at Mount Sequoyah

Mark your calendars for the South Central Jurisdiction's Mission Academy, set for Sept. 11-14 at Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference Center in Fayetteville. It will include instruction from United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, as well as disaster response training from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). Watch this space for more information, as course offerings are under development. To learn more about the event's location, visit [www.mountsequoyah.org](http://www.mountsequoyah.org).

### Seeking team members to help with Bible School in Cuba

A Bible School team is forming for Catedral de Methodist, Holguin, Cuba, Aug. 19-26.

The cost to depart from Florida is \$1,400, which includes charter flight to Holguin with insurance, baggage fees, religious visa, housing, food, transportation, translation, a busy schedule and a love offering. A \$700 non-refundable deposit is required in early May to secure religious visas and the charter flight. (The journey likely requires a Friday night return stay in Florida; the alternate dates of Aug. 23-30 might require a Monday night stay in Florida.)

Catedral de Holguin is the fastest growing church in Cuba, second in membership and attendance only to their bishop's church in Havana. The more than 2,000 members have a music, dance and drama program that supports the children's ministry and will provide plenty of volunteers. The Arkansas team will bring supplies and resources for Bible school, lead crafts and assist with games and snacks—and, of course, sing and dance along with them!

Bible School will be held in the mornings; in the afternoons the team will prepare for the next morning, sightsee or rest. Evenings include worship with Catedral de Holguin or home churches, attending small groups or visiting a mission.

The team will stay in dorm-style housing at the church, with air conditioning and hot water. Delicious and plentiful Cuban cuisine is served. As space permits, United Methodists who are not interested in the children's activities, but who wish to worship with and learn about the

Methodist Church in Cuba may travel with the team.

The love offering portion of the team's fee will go to build additional bathrooms for the Catedral. This large church with a staff of 25 and activities around the clock currently has one single-stall primitive restroom for each gender. Using the love offering funds, they plan to build two four-stall restrooms.

If interested, contact Nechi Fullerton, [nechifullerton@yahoo.com](mailto:nechifullerton@yahoo.com). In the past three years, she has made seven visits to the the Methodist Church in Cuba, leading three UMVIM teams and staying two months last fall in the Catedral de Holguin.

### Other upcoming opportunities for mission in Cuba

- An adult exchange and immersion is tentatively planned for the third or fourth week in September 2016. Costs and accommodations will be similar to those listed above for the August Bible School. We will worship with Catedral de Holguin and visit their missions, ministries, home churches and small groups. There will also be time for sightseeing. Deposit is required by mid-June for religious visa application.
- The 2017 Arkansas UMVIM construction team will return to Havana Jan. 19-20 to Jan. 30-31 to build housing for the Methodist Seminary. Cost from Arkansas is \$2,200-\$2,300 (final cost is determined by airfare). Team is limited to 12 persons; deposits due mid-July.
- March 2017 will feature a spring break retreat/exchange for college students and young adults with the young people of Catedral de Holguin. More information to come.

To learn about these and future opportunities in Cuba, visit "Arkansas Methodist- Cuba Metodista Connection" and "Catedral Metodista de Holguin" on Facebook.

# Day with the Bishop attendees explore questions of identity, faith

Three hundred participants from 29 churches across Arkansas attended "A Day with the Bishop," held Saturday, March 12 at St. James UMC Little Rock. Beginning with the theme, "Who Am I?" the fifth- through seventh-grade students delved into several related questions.

- Students painted self-portraits to explore the question, "Who am I right now?"
- By playing the game Human Knot, participants saw how they are connected to others and helped answer the question, "Who am I as a part of the Body of Christ?"
- Bishop Gary Mueller led the attendees to think on the question, "Who am I because God loves me?" For a related activity, they used emoji to create stories about God's love.

The next Day with the Bishop event is tentatively set for March 11, 2017.



Students begin painting self-portraits as part of answering the question, "Who am I?" PHOTOS BY MARCIA DUNBAR



TOP: Attendees of A Day with the Bishop join together in prayer during worship time. ABOVE: Bishop Gary Mueller uses his smartphone to take a selfie with the 300 attendees of A Day with the Bishop.

## Practical Divinity (continued from page 1)

sources mean that there's a lot of white noise out there to drown out any individual message.

So for a church to make sure that its vital ministry and mission is being heard, it needs a strategy. The pastor, a staff member or a group of laypersons in the church needs to focus on developing a strategy for how to make the congregation and its work visible to the world around it.

### Comprehensive, integrated approach

Ultimately, the best approach to making the church more visible is one that is both **comprehensive** and **integrated**.

A comprehensive approach asks the question, "Have all the options for getting our message out been attempted?" And the options, of course, are as diverse as social media, print media, personal appeals (in worship), pastoral letters, worship handouts and email blasts. Not every single source needs to be employed on every occasion, but the question at least needs to be asked so that nothing is left out.

An integrated approach, on the other hand, is one that asks whether various resources are used in conjunction with one another maximize reach. An integrated strategy on publicity and outreach is

actually becoming easier by the day, as newer forms of web-based media are becoming better and better at playing off one another.

A dogged, persistent effort at the marketing of ministry has the potential to do good on multiple fronts. For one, it can certainly work to motivate your congregation—to get your folks excited about wanting to share with others the good ministry that your church is doing. And that can lead to relational evangelism!

For another, such efforts can also spread the word about your church to the larger community. Even widespread, effective publicity

doesn't always convince unchurched folks to visit. But it does mean that the level of awareness about your church is increased so that when a personal invitation does come, it is more likely to be accepted.

What is abundantly clear is that putting our churches on cruise control is not an option. We've got to get hungry about winning new believers for Jesus Christ. And it is through that hunger that we'll be moved to keep searching out new ways to gather lost sheep into his fold.

*The Rev. Dr. Thompson serves as senior pastor of First UMC Springdale. He can be reached at [www.andrewthompson.com](http://www.andrewthompson.com).*

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## Own a Piece of Hendrix History

The Raney Building, home to the Philosophy and Religious Studies departments for nearly half a century, is coming down this summer.

A limited number of bricks will be preserved and offered to Hendrix alumni and friends.

Each \$100 brick features a commemorative brass plate and includes a \$60 tax-deductible donation to the Hendrix Annual Fund or to scholarship funds established in memory of the Rev. Jon Guthrie '56 or Dr. Francis Christie '44.

*Celebrate your connection to the Raney Building and support future Hendrix students.*

Contact the Rev. J. Wayne Clark '84 at 501-450-4574 or [clark@hendrix.edu](mailto:clark@hendrix.edu).

[www.hendrix.edu/raneybrickproject](http://www.hendrix.edu/raneybrickproject)



1600 Washington Avenue  
Conway, Arkansas 72032

## OBITUARY

# Julia Wilke, co-creator of Disciple Bible Study, 1932-2016

Julia Kitchens Wilke, 83, wife of Bishop Richard B. Wilke, passed away Feb. 25, 2016, in Houston, Texas, following a stroke suffered during major surgery.

She was born on July 28, 1932, in Texarkana, Texas, the daughter of Chester Kitchens, M.D., and his wife, Edith. She attended Southern Methodist University, where she met her future husband, and graduated with a degree in elementary education in 1953.

The couple married on June 20, 1953, in Texarkana, Ark. They moved to New Haven, Conn., where she taught elementary school and he studied at Yale

University Divinity School. She joined her husband in his native Kansas to begin his United Methodist ministry that took them to pastorates in Scandia, Salina, Winfield and



Julia Wilke

Wichita. She was an active church volunteer and leader, singing in choirs and teaching both children's and adult Sunday school classes.

After Wilke's election to the episcopacy in 1984, they moved to Little Rock, Ark., where he served as bishop for the Arkansas area for 12 years. During that time, they co-wrote the Disciple Bible Study series, a United Methodist Publishing House curriculum that has been completed by millions since its introduction in 1986. Over the years, they traveled the world as ambassadors for Disciple, which has been translated into several languages.

She also was a major fundraiser for both Camp Aldersgate and Camp Tanako. In 1986, Camp Aldersgate presented her with its President's Award in recognition of her volunteer service.

Additionally, she served for 21 years, including a term as president, on the International Foundation for Ewha Womans University, a school in Seoul, South Korea, founded by a Methodist missionary.

In 1996, she was honored for her work on Disciple Bible Study by the Commission on the Status and Role of Women of the North Arkansas Annual Conference. In 1999, the Wilkes were honored again for their Disciple work, receiving the

Mary and Ira Brumley Award from Hendrix College in Conway for "dedicated and fruitful service in religious education."

After retiring in 1996, the Wilkes moved to Winfield, where he has served as bishop in residence at Southwestern College. In 2003, the college named its Institute for Discipleship in their honor.

Survivors include her husband, of Winfield; son Steve Wilke and wife Beth, Winfield, and children Krista (Ranby), Katie (Johnson), Joel and Julie; son Paul Wilke and wife Janelle, Derby, Kan., and children Michelle and Matthew; daughter Susan Fuquay and husband Rob, Indianapolis, Ind., and children Julie, Sarah and Anna; daughter Sarah Wilke and spouse Nancy Kruh, Nashville, Tenn.; sister Elizabeth Gordon, Hackettstown, N.J.; six great-grandchildren; sister-in-law Beverly Dockhorn and husband Robert; and niece Kate Gordon and husband Steve Cox.

Services were held Thursday, March 3, at First United Methodist Church Winfield, Kan.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Richard and Julia Wilke Institute for Discipleship at Southwestern College, 100 College Ave., Winfield, KS 67156.

## MFSA announces meetings, service opportunities for remainder of 2016

The Arkansas chapter of the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) has announced plans for its remaining meetings of 2016.

"We plan to do something of service to each community in which we meet," said Carol Roddy, co-chair of the chapter. The March 5 meeting was held at First UMC Conway and featured a program on Conway's Bethlehem House. Attendees were invited to bring towels and toiletries for the house's residents.

The May 7 meeting will be at Oak Forest UMC in Little Rock, with service to the congregation's Shepherd's Hope Medical Clinic.

The Arkansas Food Bank will host the July 9 meeting, with attendees participating in a hunger relief project.

On Sept. 24, MFSA will sponsor a joint dinner with the Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) at Philander Smith College.

The last meeting of the year will be held at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock, with the Rev. Wendell Griffen speaking on the death penalty activation.

In addition to the bi-monthly

meetings, MFSA will join with BMCR at a dinner during Annual Conference, June 19. Also at Annual Conference, MFSA will present the Lucy Foster Service Award to a member who has continually shown excellence in achieving and supporting the mission of social action. Previous recipients include Lucy Foster, Freddie Nixon and Bishop Kenneth Hicks.

From its beginning in the late 1990s, Arkansas MFSA has promoted social justice, supporting the living wage and immigration issues. In 2011 it formed a coalition with BMCR, co-sponsoring the Imagine Justice Summit that year. In addition, MFSA has worked closely with the Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, Reconciling Ministries Network and the Social Justice Institute of Philander Smith College.

Membership in MFSA is open to anyone. Guests are always welcome. Meetings begin at 10 a.m. and conclude at noon. For additional information concerning the Arkansas chapter, search for Arkansas MFSA on Facebook.

## ArkansasGives Day is April 7

### 12-hour window has potential for big impact on nonprofits

The Arkansas Nonprofit Alliance serves and connects more than 600 nonprofits, businesses and individuals across the state, including many United Methodist-affiliated organizations. And on Thursday, April 7, any gift you give to those organizations through ArkansasGives will make a bigger impact, thanks to matching gifts and bonus dollars available for that day only.

A project of the Arkansas Community Foundation, ArkansasGives is a 12-hour event, in which each donation made through [www.arkansasgives.org](http://www.arkansasgives.org) to your favorite nonprofit organization(s) will be increased by a percentage of a pool of additional bonus dollars. In 2015, the inaugural



year for ArkansasGives, Arkansans came together to invest \$2 million in their communities, through online gifts both large and small. This year's target is set at \$4 million.

Many nonprofits beloved by Arkansas United Methodist readers will be counting on their supporters to step up on April 7 between 8 a.m. and 8 a.m. to make a gift of \$25 or more. To view the full list of nonprofits participating in ArkansasGives on April 7, 2016, visit [www.arkansasgives.org/organizations](http://www.arkansasgives.org/organizations). You'll find several groups connected with United Methodist causes. Start making your gift list now.

## Save the date: UM Lawyers Conference Sept. 15

The 2016 United Methodist Lawyers Conference has been set for Thursday, Sept. 15, at Pulaski Heights UMC. This time of fellowship and learning covers a variety of matters pertinent to lawyers who may assist United Methodist local congregations or other affiliated organizations, ranging from sexual harassment and misconduct to property dealings and the intersection of church and secular law. Thanks to sponsorship by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, attorneys may attend and receive CLE credits at no charge. For more information, contact Janet Marshall, [jmarshall@umfa.org](mailto:jmarshall@umfa.org).

## OBITUARIES

### MOUNTAIN VIEW

#### Denzel Stokes

The Rev. Denzel Eugene Stokes, 85, passed away in Mountain View, Ark., on March 20, 2016.

He was born in the Neighbors Corner Community south of Marmaduke on Dec. 12, 1930, to Vurley and Edna (Lamb) Stokes. He graduated from Marmaduke High School in 1948. He married Frances Stahl on May 26, 1950. He graduated from Arkansas State College in 1964.



**Denzel Stokes**

He was a Methodist minister for over 45 years, and graduated with a degree from St. Paul's School of Theology in Kansas City, Mo. He enjoyed his time as a minister, visiting with his kids and grandchildren. He also was a big Arkansas State football fan and had season tickets for many years.

He served as pastor to many churches through the years, including the Lorado Circuit, Stanford, Browning (Mo.), Mountain View, Berryville/Shiloh, Marion, Horseshoe Bend, Piggot, North Little Rock, Tuckerman, Marianna, Booneville, Fairfield Bay, Melbourne and Holiday Hills.

Denzel is survived by his children: daughter Debby Nesbitt and her husband, Jim, of Mountain View, and son David Stokes and his wife, Suzanne, of Austin, Texas; five grandchildren: Stacy Woody and husband, James, of Salem, Ark., Cindy Crisman and husband, Rick, of Fayetteville, Jeff Nesbitt and wife, Karman, of Mountain View, Kristin Jones and husband, Ben, of Dallas, Texas, Margaret Beyer and husband, Brandon, of Hollywood, Fla.; 10 great-grandchildren: Courtney, Jessica, and Hannah Woody of Salem, Ark., Caitlin and Cameron Crisman of Fayetteville, Avery Jones of Dallas and Dusty, Rocky, Delaney and Eli Nesbitt of Mountain View. He is also survived by his brother, Denver of Farmington, Mo.; brother-in-law Perry Glore of St. Louis, Mo.; and two sisters-in-law, Neala Stahl of Fayetteville and Wanda Stahl of Jonesboro, as well as many nieces, nephews, extended family and friends.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 57 years, Frances; his parents; and sisters Ella Mae and Mary Katherine.

Funeral services were held Friday, March 25, at First United Methodist Church Mountain View, with Revs. Steve Johnson and Paul Coy officiating. Burial followed at the Historic Cemetery of Mountain View.

Pallbearers were James Woody, Rick Crisman, Mark Rector, Gary Don Condrey, Wayne Turner and Coy Moore. Honorary pallbearers were H.T. Graddy, Herbert Poff, Van Rosa, and Kenny Wyatt.

### NORTH LITTLE ROCK

#### William E. "Buddy" Arnold Jr.

William E. "Buddy" Arnold Jr., 83, of North Little Rock passed away March 5, 2016.

He was born Aug. 25, 1932 in El Dorado to the late Ellis and Marguerite Arnold. He was preceded in death by the love of his life and wife of 58 years, Jo, and a son, Steven, who passed away at birth. He was also preceded in death by his brother, Billy Bob Arnold.

Buddy was a graduate of the United States Naval Academy with a degree in mathematics and was a



**Buddy Arnold**

professional engineer. Upon graduation he served his country in the U.S. Air Force and with his family moved from Little Rock to Okinawa and ultimately to strategic air command headquarters in Omaha. Having risen to the rank of captain at an early age, he made the decision to serve his country outside the military, and returned from Omaha to North Little Rock. Buddy was a civil engineer at the Little Rock Air Force Base where he served as chief missile engineer, chief civil engineer and ultimately was the chief base engineer. He was widely recognized as an expert on energy and conservation years before others thought of them as a priority. His work with energy leaders and his frequent testimony before the Arkansas Public Service Commission made him a well-known champion for energy conservation in the 1980s. Before his retirement he was named "Outstanding Federal Employee" worldwide from over 16,000 Military Airlift Command employees.

As dedicated as he was to his profession, Buddy made the decision to retire at an early age and devote the remainder of his life to serving his church. While Buddy and Jo were always active members and leaders at Lakewood United Methodist, Buddy chose to dedicate the decade after his retirement to serving the church in state, national and international capacities. From Conference Lay Leader to his selection to lead the North Arkansas Conference delegation to General Conference, Buddy was a leader within the state and beyond. He served on national boards and commissions and ultimately international commissions. Through his work with the church, Buddy and Jo traveled from Kenya to Hong Kong, from Brazil to Russia and throughout Europe. Although Buddy received numerous awards, he will most be remembered for his positive attitude, his contagious energy, his integrity, his love of people, his devotion to his family and that he led a life based on prayer and love of Christ.

He is survived by his son, W. Ellis Arnold III and Kim, and by two granddaughters for whom he had enormous pride, Laura Elizabeth Arnold and Grace Ellis Arnold.

A memorial service was held Wednesday, March 9 at Lakewood United Methodist Church. Graveside services for the family followed at Pinecrest Memorial Park. Memorials may be made to Lakewood United Methodist Church, 1922 Topf Road, North Little Rock, AR 72116.

### TEXARKANA

#### Herbert Wren III

The Rev. Dr. Herbert Benjamin Wren III, 87, passed away Tuesday, March 15, 2016, at his home in Texarkana, Ark.

He was born Feb. 4, 1929, in Shreveport, La. He practiced general and thoracic surgery at Collom and Carney Clinic from 1962 until his surgical retirement in 1994, and was director of the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) from 1987 to 1995, starting the family practice residency training program in 1993. He and his wife Jean started the Sugar Hill United Methodist Church in that same year.

He is survived by his children, Allan Wren and his wife, Amy, Steve Wren and his wife, Peggy, and Dr. Mark Wren and his wife, Carla, all of Texarkana, and one daughter, Claire Wren-Russ of Los Angeles, Calif.; one sister, Harriett Autrey of Texarkana; nine grandchildren, Kelsey Wren-Kuhn and Collin Kuhn, Georgia Wren-Russ, Lucas Wren, Hannah Wren, Hunter Wren-Russ, Carter Wren, Haylee Wren, Grant Adams and Garrett Adams; and nieces, nephews, cousins and friends

too numerous to count.

Wren attended Tulane University on a football scholarship in 1947. He then attended Tulane Medical School, completing his degree in 1954, when he married Jean Atkinson, his wife of 59 years, who preceded him in death in 2013. He completed an internship at the University of Colorado, and then served in the U.S. Navy as a general medical officer from 1955-57. After a general surgery residency and cardiothoracic fellowship at Tulane, he returned to practice in Texarkana in 1962. His mentors at Tulane included the world famous heart surgeon Dr. Michael DeBakey, Dr. Alton Oschner and Dr. Oscar Creech.

In 1998, Tulane selected him for the C.D. Taylor Award, the most prestigious award for community service among all Tulane Medical alumni and named for its president. He was adjunct faculty at UAMS, teaching surgical residents twice monthly under support of renowned surgeon Dr. Mas Harah. He was also adjunct faculty of LSU in Shreveport for several years. Over the years he served as chief of staff of both Wadley and Saint Michaels hospitals, and was instrumental in forming one of the most harmonious collaborative relationships among community hospitals in all of Arkansas or Texas, including the Cancer Registry, to track cancer occurrence in the region. He formed the first intensive care units (ICU) in Texarkana, to better serve critical care needs of Texarkana, and repaired the first successful abdominal aortic aneurysm rupture. Along with Dr. John Griffin, he implanted the first pacemaker in Texarkana. Early in his career, he created the first vascular lab for study of peripheral vascular disease. On one amazing occasion, he rode on the train to New Orleans with a patient with a traumatic ventricular septal defect needing urgent repair at Tulane. He was accepted into one of the most prestigious surgical associations in the country, the Southern Surgical Society. Wren had an incredible passion for education. In his efforts to launch a family practice residency program for young doctors and establish several allied health curricula while at the AHEC, he personally met and received support of then-governor George W. Bush, and Bill Clinton.

Wren was president of the Texarkana Chamber of Commerce, Salvation Army, Texarkana Arkansas School Board, and loyal member of Texarkana Kiwanis Club. He was awarded the Palmer Award by The Chamber of Commerce. He served as Texarkana Arkansas Police Chaplain for many years. He served on boards of numerous organizations including Twin City Bank, Morgan Plan Loans and Coca Cola Bottling Company of Magnolia. He loved all sports, ranching, and fishing and was honored to serve as the Razorback team doctor for over 35 years, rarely missing a game. He and Jean established the Herbert and Jean Wren Fighting Heart Memorial Scholarship to foster a "fighting heart" attitude in the students in their lives beyond high school athletics. He was asked by the Bishop of the United Methodist Church to establish a church on the north side of Texarkana; he was the pastor of Sugar Hill United Methodist Church for five years, and pastor emeritus for the past 17 years.

Funeral services were held Saturday, March 19 at Sugar Hill United Methodist Church with the Rev. Greg Burks officiating. Burial followed in Hillcrest Memorial Park. In lieu of flowers please send Memorials to the Alzheimer's Alliance Tri State, 100 Memory Lane, Texarkana, TX 75503 or Sugar Hill UMC, 1621 Sugar Hill Rd., Texarkana, AR 71854.



**Herbert Wren**

## Vilonia food pantry reopens; Conway church helps stock shelves



Members of First United Methodist Church Conway on March 1 delivered some 3,000 pounds of non-perishable food items to the Spirit of Vilonia Food Pantry, a cooperative effort among churches belonging to the Vilonia Ministerial Alliance, including Vilonia United Methodist Church.

During the April 2014 tornado outbreak that hit Vilonia, the building that housed the previous community food pantry was destroyed. Thanks to contributions from a variety of sources, construction on a new, larger facility was recently completed, enabling the pantry's organizers to serve more clients than in the past.

First UMC Conway responded with such generosity toward Vilonia in 2014 that its mission committee was able to hold some of the funds until this year, specifically for purchasing grocery items from the Arkansas Foodbank to help the Vilonia pantry.

"On behalf of the Spirit of Vilonia Food Bank, we are extremely grateful for the generosity of First UMC Conway," said the Rev. Nathan Kilbourne, pastor of Vilonia UMC and current president of the Vilonia Ministerial Alliance. "Their continued support and care has allowed us to get back on our feet and serve people in Jesus' name in our community."



First UMC Conway members Wayne Gregory and Frank Bartrow unload boxes of cereal and canned goods for the Spirit of Vilonia Food Pantry, a ministry of the Vilonia Ministerial Alliance.

PHOTOS BY COLLEEN HOLT



## Faith Funds

### *Making Lifelong Disciples*

Bailey Faulkner grew up a Presbyterian and joined Pulaski Heights UMC when she married Will Faulkner in 2009. A friend told her about a job at Ozark Mission Project, and Bailey sensed immediately that OMP was a part of God's plan for her life.

Today she leads Ozark Mission Project, a United Methodist affiliated ministry that transforms lives through worship, fellowship and hands-on mission. The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas provided a matching grant that will allow OMP to expand its staff to include a Recruiting and Logistics Director who will work to engage United Methodist youth and adults from more Arkansas congregations in this vital ministry.

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

Ozark Mission Project has transformed the hearts of youth, adults, and the neighbors they serve for 30 years. The experience of more than 1,000 campers each summer in serving others and working with fellow United Methodists has a lifelong impact.



### The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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