

## IN THIS ISSUE



From providing food to creating lasting change

2



ACCYM: Assembly and coming events

9



Highlights from 2016 Mission u

13

# 'Bridge events' connect churches and neighbors

BY AMY FORBUS  
Editor

A safety fair. A back-to-school bash. A cooling station at an outdoor festival.

Each of these events could be sponsored by any group or organization. So what difference does it make when a church is behind the effort?

With planning and prayer, it begins to build a bridge of relationship between the church and its community.

The concept of "bridge events" has gained traction since being highlighted in the 2013 book *Get Their Name: Grow Your Church by Building Relationships*. Each attendee of this spring's Grow By One Summit sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality received a copy of the book, and one of its co-authors, Kay Kotan, served as the keynote speaker.

Those who have read the book or who attended the summit learned that congregations create bridge events as "P-Free Zones": no preaching, no prayers, no pressure, no pocketbooks. Authentic relationships take time, so bridge



A member of Morrilton UMC gives a tune-up to a young neighbor's bicycle as part of a July safety fair the church hosted at a local city park.

PHOTO COURTESY KATIE PEARCE

events seek to lay a foundation for effective faith sharing.

### Lay-driven connection

Among those working on Vilonia United Methodist Church's first bridge event, "There was a lot of recognition in terms of the goal here is not to convince people to come to our church," said the Rev. James

Kjorlaug. "It is to be in community and to offer the love of Christ in a tangible way."

Members of Vilonia UMC who attended the Grow By One Summit studied *Get Their Name* together. Their recent bridge event, a back-to-school bash, offered free food, school supplies and games to all attendees. They also had prize drawings—for backpacks, gift cards,

even an Amazon Kindle Fire. Entries into the drawing meant the church got the names of its neighbors, just as the book's title instructs.

Kjorlaug was newly appointed to Vilonia in July, and one of the first emails he received from the previous pastor, the Rev. Nathan Kilbourne, included an apology that an event was already in the works. But Kjorlaug was thrilled to know Vilonia laity were so energized about their plan for outreach.

"My emailed response was, 'Save the apology; it's not necessary,'" he said.

The Rev. Katie Pearce found a similar situation when she arrived at First UMC Morrilton. The previous pastor, the Rev. Todd-Paul Taulbee, had read *Get Their Name* and shared it with laity in a workshop format. By the time Pearce arrived, the leadership council had spun off into groups to make plans for connecting with their community. "And it was all lay-driven," Pearce said. "They were all charged with doing whatever event they felt called to do."

One bridge event the Morrilton church held was a safety fair at a local park. Two laity certified as car [See BRIDGE EVENTS, page 7]

# Marion football mentoring program grows Patriots into positive young adults

BY K.D. REEP  
Special Contributor

Back to school. It's charged with excitement, anxiety, anticipation and new opportunity.

While parents across Arkansas prepare their students for a new year, some young men are navigating school and sports without their dads. Jed Davis, head coach of the Patriots football team at Marion High School and a member of Marion United Methodist Church, is addressing this situation with positivity and strength.

"Jed is a great guy, and he is doing some amazing things with the guys," said the Rev. Robert Cloninger, pastor of Marion UMC. "There is a lot of fatherlessness in the area, and a lot of lack of support in the home, so Jed started a mentoring program. He leads retreats for fathers and sons, and if a son doesn't have a father, Jed finds them a stand-in from our church or the community. That stand-in dad supports the student for the football season—they come to the games and offer the players encouragement when they don't have a family to do that."

This is the third year Coach Davis has spearheaded the mentoring [See MENTORING, page 14]



Coach Jed Davis of Marion High School, a member of Marion UMC, releases football player Javier Soto into a "trust fall" exercise with teammates and mentors during a team retreat at Mount Eagle.

PHOTO COURTESY WOODY WHEELLESS

# More than food: lasting change

BY MARY LEWIS DASSINGER  
Special Contributor

I recently watched “North of Dover,” a YouTube video produced right here in Arkansas telling the story of Dover United Methodist Church. Their story epitomizes my hopes for the 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger initiative.

Our motivation is Christ’s call to serve, combined with the knowledge that approximately

200,000 Arkansas children go to bed hungry each night. Our mission is for 100 percent of UMCs in Arkansas to participate in this initiative to significantly reduce childhood hunger through feeding ministries, public witness, and education for long-term stability. But our mission ultimately can lead to so much more.



Mary Lewis Dassinger

It can lead to *lasting change*, the kind for which Christ lived and died and rose from the grave. Meeting the physical need for food is a great starting point, and we hope United Methodist congregations will build relationships and be instruments of change in the emotional and spiritual lives of hungry children and their families.

Watching the video about Dover UMC, I heard how they responded to the immediate need of providing food. In taking time to get to know the students they were feeding, they invited them to come to Vacation Bible School. Then, their families started coming to church. After welcoming the families into the faith community, they have continued to care for them. No one is the same; they have all experienced a lasting change.

Are the families still hungry? I would assume some hardships still exist. Yet, now they have a community that is a source of

To learn how to add education, advocacy and public witness components to your congregation’s ministry with the hungry in your community, attend the Paysinger Hunger

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support and encouragement. The Holy Spirit is not done yet. *Change is still happening*.

Unfortunately, I don’t think we can end hunger for everyone; the poor will always be with us. Yet, our churches can make a difference in the lives of so many. Donations, food distributions, hot meals and emergency food give kids one more meal, moms one more week, families one more month. But is it lasting change? That’s not easy to answer. Nonetheless, it’s a necessary starting place for lasting change.

## Risks, time, priorities

We will have to risk more, spend more time building relationships, and prioritize these relationships over doing what is easiest or feeling good about ourselves. I do believe that United

Methodists can end hunger for a significant number of Arkansans. It requires that we do more in addition to meeting immediate needs.

According to research, hunger ministries that include SNAP (food stamp) application assistance, financial skills training, cooking classes and training in shopping skills tend to bring lasting results. These ministries empower hungry families and teach them how to make changes that can provide more stability.

They also require more time and vulnerability from those of us who already have that stability.

For example, First UMC Little Rock’s ministry called Friends and Neighbors Network (FANN) is a unique food distribution program. Hungry neighbors and church members have regular community meetings where they order and

# 200,000 REASONS

to fight childhood hunger

distribute food together as well as offer skills training. The neighbors are empowered to make decisions for their group and their families in regards to the food bought and training they want. Church volunteers stand alongside them in these decisions offering guidance, education and support.

The result is a more connected community centered on faith and friendship. Through ministries like FANN, *lasting change can continue to happen*.

## Getting personal

Moreover, personal relationships with the hungry we serve have an impact on our assumptions about poverty and hunger. We as Christians, called to be compassionate about the plight of the poor, must extend that compassion by being public witnesses.

We must stand alongside those who need a louder voice in society because of lack of resources, education and power. When we change our societal and economic policies so they empower the hungry

to get the assistance they need and provide real opportunities for improvements and employment, then more people have a better chance to change their circumstances.

Arkansas United Methodist churches make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform the world. Christ’s transformative power does not leave us as we are. Likewise, hungry children cannot remain hungry and reach the potential God designed for them.

Christ has asked the church to help—to serve, to include and to empower. 200,000 Reasons is about meeting people where they are and inviting them into relationship—relationship that can bring transformative power and infinite possibilities.

*Dassinger serves as coordinator for 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger. She is a member of Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock and holds a Master of Arts in Religion from Memphis Theological Seminary. To view “North of Dover,” visit <https://goo.gl/4ktRW4>.*

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

BY GARY E. MUELLER

# The 'disciple' filter

You may not be aware of it, but you wear filters that have a great deal to do with how you see others, interpret events in the world and make decisions. Sometimes these filters are a particular ideological perspective; at other times, your personality; and at still other times, your life experiences.

The fascinating thing about these filters is how powerfully they impact your life. Indeed, you and another person can experience exactly the same thing, but because you are wearing different filters, you end up having two very different experiences.

Of course, this isn't all bad because it ensures that life is never boring. But it does raise an interesting question about what kind of filters you consciously are choosing to put on as a Christian. And that's exactly why the 'disciple' filter matters so much.

The disciple filter arises out of your conscious decision to respond to how Jesus gives you what you absolutely need but can never get on your own. First, it's a filter of grace. You don't have to do anything to earn Jesus' love because it's just who Jesus is and what Jesus does.

Second, it's a filter of new beginnings. You can stop the destructive things you're doing to yourself, others and God, and experience healing and new life.

Third, it's a filter of hope. You can live boldly and confidently because you know that nothing that happens in life or in death can ever separate you from God's love in Jesus Christ.

So what do you experience when you choose to spend your life wearing the disciple filter? A life of grace, compassion, passion, self-giving, new life, joy and hope—even when that doesn't seem possible to those around you.

Grace and peace,

Gary E. Mueller

## Our Trajectory

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

equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

# Interning with the ARUMC: A retrospective

BY JACOB TURNER  
Special Contributor

**Editor's note:** Turner spent this summer working with the Arkansas Conference through the cooperation of Hendrix College's Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics, and Calling, which provides guidance and funding, and the Hendrix Office of Career Services, which provided support.

As the Center for Technology intern, I had the opportunity to work in communications and social media strategy, branding development, storytelling, video recording and post-production, information technology helpdesk services, end-user management, website development, production assistance for the *Arkansas United Methodist*, graphic design, application systems development and worship technology.

However, my internship was more than just a crash course in IT work for a religious organization. It was an opportunity to experience how technology has applications in ministry, an idea that I've struggled with for a while now. I would summarize what I learned in three points:

### 1. Technology can be a ministry.

For a long time, I saw ministry as "the guy in the pulpit every Sunday," and that was really it. At my first job as the "worship technician" for First UMC Sheridan, I saw what I did as just a job. However, with this internship, I learned that technology truly has applications in the church beyond "just a job."

"Ministry" can be defined as "any activity someone carries out to express or spread the faith." I hope all of my work for the Conference fulfilled this definition. I do feel like that was the case, especially with the REcharge Initiative, which I consider my proudest achievement of this summer internship.

To me, REcharge is a ministry to churches, and is based on the idea that technology is a rapidly expanding and increasingly effective way of communication. It's especially useful in communicating with my demographic (commonly known as the Millennials or Generation Y), who have not known a world without cellular-based communication and (for some) social media. However, even with the rapid spread of technology, it can be an expense some churches cannot afford.

The REcharge Initiative will refurbish gently used technology that is being stockpiled (or worse, thrown away) as devices are more frequently replaced in favor of the latest and greatest, even though they may have quite a bit of use left in them. These devices, in turn, allow churches to create new ministries and enhance existing ones. REcharge also keeps equipment out of landfills and other areas where they would be toxic to the environment (in accordance with the ideas laid out in the United Methodist Church's Social Principles, specifically the section on "The Natural World").

As I took part in developing this initiative, churches shared plenty of plans for new ministries if they had the technology they wanted, from starting after-school programs, to assisting the homeless with applying for jobs, housing and public assistance, to enhancing worship with larger-print Scripture and hymn lyrics. These aren't ideas that a group of people came up with as potential uses for the REcharge initiative. These are real ministries that real churches will now be able to do.

### 2. Storytelling is immensely important.

As an intern, I got to see the development of a series of videos for Annual Conference called *Spiritual Revival: A Moment to a Movement*, which highlighted ministries across the Arkansas United Methodist connection, from community gardens to ethnic ministries. What really caught my attention was how each video told a different but important story.

Stories as a means of communication even have a "storied" (pun intended) history in the church, as Jesus himself had stories

that he shared as religious lessons (we just call them "parables" instead of stories). Methodists even sing a hymn that starts off like this:

*I love to tell the story  
of unseen things above,  
of Jesus and his glory,  
of Jesus and his love.*

However, there can be more to stories than just communication. Stories can promote causes and bring about change. We see stories in the news that expose injustices in the world, that start movements to change society for the better. As I watched the *Spiritual Revival* videos and saw the reactions to them, I started to talk with people about what other stories we could be telling, both in the church and outside of it.

With that goal in mind, I actually have two more projects to work on, telling the stories and experiences of four very different groups of people. For now, I will only say that I hope to tell them and do them justice, because they are important stories to share.

### 3. I could never really thrive in the corporate world.

Yeah, this may sound like the stereotypical thought of a college kid, but I sincerely mean it. My experiences with the Conference office showed me that I can work in an office and be just fine, but I would only be truly happy if I am actually doing work that helps the world in ways that may not always turn the biggest profits, but are the most beneficial.

Right now, I see that as working for the church (whether that's back in the Conference office, at a church-affiliated organization or even a local congregation or a startup focused on church-related IT work). Whether my life actually plays out like that, who knows? But as of now, I know what track I want to be on.

*This commentary is adapted from a post on Turner's blog. Find his original and related posts at [www.jacobturner.me/arumcintern](http://www.jacobturner.me/arumcintern). For more information on the REcharge Initiative, see page 16 of this issue.*

## PEOPLE OF FAITH

### Snider selected as Conference children's ministry coordinator

Pam Snider has joined the Arkansas Conference staff in the part-time role of children's ministry coordinator.

Snider has worked in children's ministry for nearly two decades, and will retain her full-time position as director of children's ministries for First UMC Little Rock while serving at the Conference level. Her previous experience has included serving as the children's ministry coordinator for the Central Texas Conference of the UMC (Fort Worth area).



**Pam Snider**

Her parents' involvement in church from the time she was a small child, combined with the encouragement of others in her home congregation, helped nurture her calling to ministry with children before she was aware of it.

"The interests I had as a little girl transformed into a passion for children's ministry through my college education in Early Childhood, work experiences and ongoing practice," she said. "I love to dream big and ignite excitement in leaders and volunteers."

Snider has led national workshops and served on numerous curriculum teams, and enjoys building relationships that help others succeed. She looks forward to facilitating fruitful connections for children's leaders across the state. To contact her, send an email to [pamela.snider@arumc.org](mailto:pamela.snider@arumc.org).

### Cain joins Center for Administrative Services

Cat Cain has begun work on the Arkansas Conference staff as the administrative assistant for the Center for Administrative Services (CAS).

A Nashville, Tennessee native, Cain hold a bachelor's degree in business management with a minor in entrepreneurship from Middle Tennessee State University, as well as a meeting and event planning certificate from Belmont University's Center for Executive Education. Her previous work experience includes serving as an event coordinator and executive assistant, as well as assistant roles within two United Methodist general agencies: United Methodist Communications and the General Council on Finance and Administration.

In her role with the Arkansas Conference CAS, Cain serves as the registrar for various Conference events and as a meeting scheduler and host; assists the CAS staff in accounting and data entry; manages advertisement billing and subscriptions for the Arkansas United Methodist; and will organize vendor displays for Annual Conference. She may be reached at [cat.cain@arumc.org](mailto:cat.cain@arumc.org).



**Cat Cain**

## Adventure theme shapes kids' experience at Shoal Creek Camp



Emily Foster makes a walking stick for one of the adventures at Great Adventure Camp, held July 24-26 at Shoal Creek.

PHOTO BY MIKE HENSON

Shoal Creek Camp hosted a "Great Adventure Camp" for the Northwest District July 24-26, 2016, for students entering first through sixth grades. The camp drew 68 campers and counselors from 10 different churches in the district, who together explored lessons of different adventures within the Bible, such as the Israelites in the wilderness, Peter walking on water and Jesus in the boat in the storm. Youth and adults of City Heights UMC Van Buren provided staffing and small group leadership.

To learn about Moses and the Israelites' life in the desert, campers built tents, hiked, found "manna" and talked about what it might have been like to wander through the desert for 40 years. Leaders emphasized how God took care of the people and how God takes care of us today, no matter where we go.

Shoal Creek's growing camping ministry provided two-day and three-day camp opportunities this summer. With its brief time frame, the Great Adventure Camp is an ideal way for young students to try out an overnight camp. To learn more about this camp situated near New Blaine, visit [www.shoalcreekcamp.com](http://www.shoalcreekcamp.com).

—Submitted by Renee Henson

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The start of Methodist Family Health's Walk for Children and Families is a race for youth eager to make their way up the Big Dam Bridge over the Arkansas River and Murray Lock and Dam. Nearly 300 participants joined in the 10th annual Walk held on Aug. 5.



Max DeKunffy, William Roberts, Eamonn Mayo and Jordan Anderson from Conway provided live music for the Aug. 5 Walk for Children and Families.

PHOTOS BY JANE DENNIS

# Bridge walkers step out for Methodist Family Health

Methodist Family Health's 10th Annual Walk for Children and Families was held Aug. 5 at the North Little Rock side of the Big Dam Bridge. And, yes, it was hot. But it was worth it: The event brought in nearly \$90,000 for Methodist Family Health.

With the waters of the Arkansas River swirling below, the event was supported by nearly 300 participants of all ages who walked over the bridge and back, approximately 1.6 miles, in

support of the children and families served by Methodist Family Health.

Live music was provided by a Conway contemporary Christian band led by Eamonn Mayo. Free ice cream treats and pizza were served. Participants were invited to write messages of hope and inspiration to Methodist Family Health clients on 8-foot-tall graffiti walls.

"It was great to see everyone come out on a very warm August evening and help raise money for MFH programs that benefit children and families in Arkansas," said Denise Luft, associate director of development for the MFH Foundation and chair of the Walk.

"We really do appreciate all those who have supported the Walk over the past 10 years."



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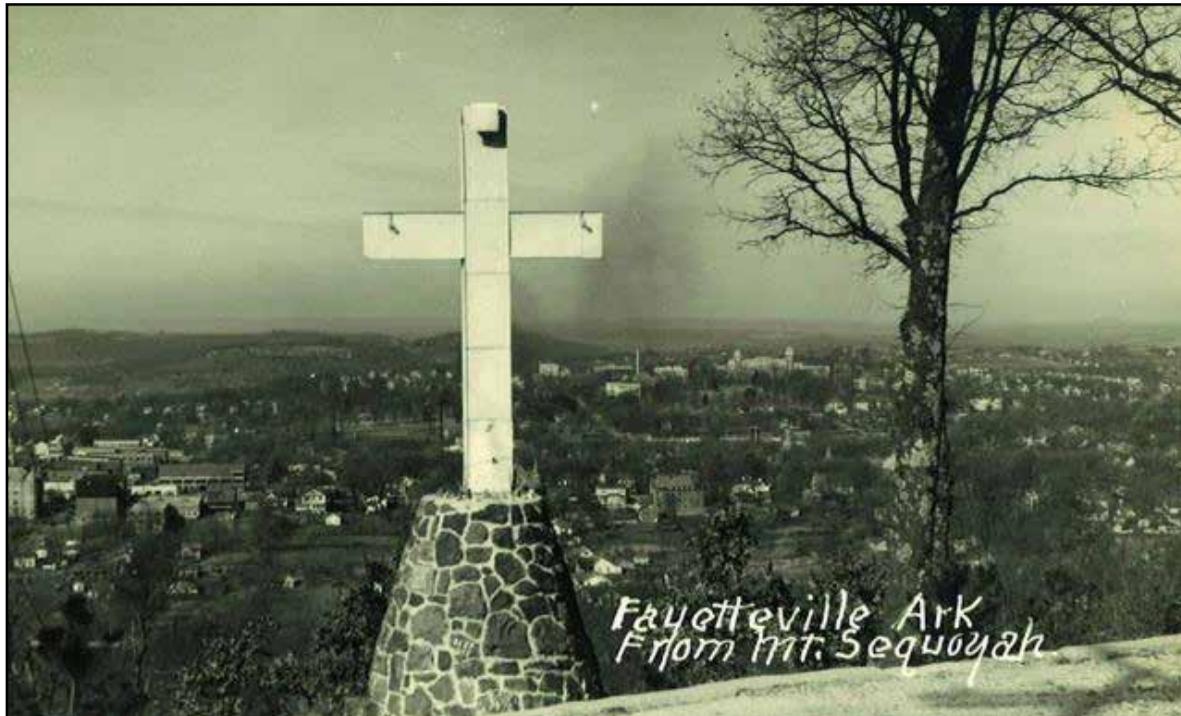
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# Mount Sequoyah leaving Methodist fold after 94 years



In 1922, the mountain overlooking Fayetteville, Ark., won the competition to be a new Methodist retreat center. Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference center has been a part of Methodist life ever since, but ownership of the center is now shifting to a local nonprofit.

PHOTOS COURTESY MOUNT SEQUOYAH RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

BY SAM HODGES  
United Methodist News Service

In 1922, the mountain overlooking downtown Fayetteville, Arkansas, won a tough competition to be a new Methodist retreat center. The day the decision was announced, Fayetteville churches rang their steeple bells in celebration.

“Not just Methodist church bells,” said Dewitt Smith, chair of the board that oversees Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference Center. “All the church bells rang.”

For the past 94 years, Mount Sequoyah—with its prominent cross, lovely woods and gorgeous vistas—has been a part of Methodist life, hosting camps, training sessions, bishops’ meetings and more.

That relationship is poised to change when final paperwork is signed, handing ownership from the South Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church to a nonprofit.

Delegates to last month’s South Central Jurisdictional Conference approved the recommendation of the jurisdiction’s Mission Council and College of Bishops to let Mount Sequoyah go.

“We all were clear that Mount Sequoyah’s future was best served by it becoming independent in terms of governance,” said Great Plains Area Bishop Scott Jones.

Smith agreed.

“I don’t anticipate that we will ever lose our Wesleyan tradition,” he said of Mount Sequoyah. “It’s

embedded in the land up there. But, this format and the new independence will allow us to serve our local community and other faith groups in a more effective way.”

## Financial considerations

The deal shifts ownership of property and other assets to Mount Sequoyah Center Inc., a non-denominational nonprofit. The current all-United Methodist board will continue, but as future slots open, people outside the denomination will be considered, said the Rev. Jess Schload, Mount Sequoyah’s CEO.

Those involved say the transaction is more of a spinoff than a sale, but Mount Sequoyah will pay the South Central Jurisdiction 50 percent of any operational surpluses for the next 15 years, up to \$1 million.

If the nonprofit sells part of the 32-acre property, half the proceeds would go to the jurisdiction, counting toward that \$1 million, Schload said. If the entire property were sold, the jurisdiction would get half the proceeds, he said.

The Rev. David Severe, executive director of the South Central Jurisdiction, said any funds the jurisdiction gets would go to Lydia Patterson Institute, a jurisdiction-owned school in El Paso, Texas.

The jurisdiction has been contributing some \$135,000 annually to Mount Sequoyah, about 8 percent of the retreat center’s

budget, Schload said. That stops with the deal.

“The jurisdiction’s budget has the relief of no longer subsidizing Mount Sequoyah, and Mount Sequoyah has been freed up to do some areas of ministry that weren’t possible as long as it was owned by United Methodist entities,” Jones said.

## Advantages of independence

Both sides agreed Mount Sequoyah needed to move toward independence. The jurisdiction’s College of Bishops decided earlier this year to quicken the pace—in part because the quadrennial Jurisdictional Conference loomed.

“It was either get it done now or wait four more years,” Jones said.

Mount Sequoyah’s leaders are confident it can keep going as a retreat center.

They note that it has operated in the black in recent years. Schload said the loss of the jurisdiction’s subsidy will make that harder, but a new, lucrative cell phone tower contract will help.

Mount Sequoyah has been perceived locally as “a bit of a Methodist enclave,” Smith said.

He and Schload believe independence will be an advantage in marketing to a range of religious and other nonprofit groups in the Fayetteville area, though they expect United Methodists to still be a big part of the mix.

Retired United Methodist Bishop John Wesley Hardt said



Mount Sequoyah was envisioned as a west-of-the-Mississippi River counterpart to Lake Junaluska, the United Methodist retreat center in the North Carolina mountains.

For decades, Mount Sequoyah was indeed a “destination trek” for denominational groups, Smith said, including bishops of the jurisdiction who would come with their cabinets.

But the bishops meet elsewhere now. Regional training events are rarer and tend to be held within annual conferences, in big cities with easy airport access, Severe said.

Getting United Methodists from around the jurisdiction to come to Mount Sequoyah has proved a challenge.

“We’re not centrally located in the South Central Jurisdiction,” Smith said. “It’s a long way from Albuquerque to Fayetteville.”

Mount Sequoyah has faced the challenge of updating its facilities in recent years, as well as a lawsuit filed by a former CEO who had been fired. That suit was eventually withdrawn, Smith said.

Donations (including a matching grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas) have helped with important renovations and other improvements, he added.

“Over the course of the next

decade, we’ll need to raise some larger funding for some more major renovations,” Smith said.

## The need to be vital

The Rev. Kevin Witt, director of camp/retreat ministries for United Methodist Discipleship Ministries, said that in the past 20 years the number of camp/retreat centers associated with annual conferences has dropped from about 235 to 190.

The other trend he’s seen is toward greater self-sufficiency and sustainability.

“We’re just at that point, in terms of the church’s life, in which all of us have to be stronger,” Witt said. “Just like our congregations are being asked to be more vital, we are, too.”

Independence came faster than expected for Mount Sequoyah, but truly is in its interest, according to Smith.

“As much as I would have liked to have retained a United Methodist flag, it’s best that we have the Wesleyan and United Methodist tradition, but without the flag,” he said.

Hodges, a United Methodist News Service writer, lives in Dallas. Contact him at 615-742-5470 or [newsdesk@umcom.org](mailto:newsdesk@umcom.org).

## CURRENT MISSION NEEDS: VIM AND 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.

### Louisiana flood relief: How to help

Louisiana is currently inundated with teams wanting to help with flood recovery, but needs are still being assessed. Arkansas' own disaster response co-coordinators will participate in that process. For now, though, the best way to help our neighbors to the south is to send money through the United Methodist Committee on Relief, [www.umcor.org](http://www.umcor.org) (choose "U.S. Disaster Response"). Another option is to assemble cleaning buckets to replenish the supply sent to the Baton Rouge area; visit [www.umcor.org/umcor/relief-supplies](http://www.umcor.org/umcor/relief-supplies) for assembly instructions.

### Southeast Arkansas is ready to welcome your team—now!

Before flooding in the Baton Rouge area made national news, the southeast Arkansas communities of McGehee, Lake Village, Crossett, Dermott and others experienced significant flooding. Volunteers in Mission teams are needed now to repair these flood-damaged homes.

**If your church is looking for an inexpensive nearby mission, consider Southeast Arkansas.** They need help now. To schedule a team, contact Janice Mann at [disaster@arumc.org](mailto:disaster@arumc.org).

At press time, Byron and Janice Mann, the Arkansas Conference disaster response co-coordinators, were in McGehee helping with setup of long-term recovery. "The big plus for a local mission to the Southeast District is that McGehee has a wonderful facility to host teams," Byron Mann said. The climate-controlled space has real beds (not cots), a kitchen and large common room. Several churches in town take turns feeding teams each evening.

"Louisiana is going to need help for a couple of years, but we are ready now right here in Arkansas," he said. He offered some considerations for planning your next mission journey:

- Louisiana has received many offers of help. Southeast Arkansas has had very few offers.
- Travel from central Arkansas to Baton Rouge takes an average of six hours. Travel from central Arkansas to McGehee is one and one-half hours. A mission to Louisiana includes a minimum of two days travel for three days of work. A mission to Southeast Arkansas will allow a team to work five full days and make a much larger impact.
- Teams staying in Arkansas can use less money for travel and more to help storm survivors in Arkansas buy materials for restoring their homes.
- Louisiana was awarded a FEMA Recovery Grant; southeast Arkansas was denied a grant.
- Most flood survivors in Louisiana had flood insurance; very few of those in southeast Arkansas had flood insurance, meaning their individual needs are greater.

**Need training before you come to help?** Read on for an opportunity coming up soon.

### Get VIM/DR training at SCJ Mission Academy, Sept. 11-14

**Register now** for the South Central Jurisdiction's Mission Academy, Sept. 11-14 at Mount Sequoyah Retreat and Conference Center in Fayetteville. It includes instruction from Volunteers in Mission, as well as disaster response training from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), preparing individuals and teams to serve wherever they are needed. Learn more or register at [www.scjumc.org/mission/academy](http://www.scjumc.org/mission/academy).

## Bridge events

(continued from page 1)

seat installation inspectors offered a drive-through inspection station for anyone who wanted to be sure their child's car seat was properly installed. And, like the Vilonia church, First UMC Morrilton used a prize drawing as a way of getting contact information and providing special perks for attendees.

"We had three bicycles that we gave away, with helmets, and four car seats," Pearce said. They even laid out a track to teach rules of the road to young cyclists. With the activities, free hot dogs and refreshments, and educational visits from police, firefighters and EMTs, some children stayed pretty much the entire day.

"It was successful enough that we want to repeat it," Pearce said, noting that next time, they will adjust based on what they learned—such as planning it for fall or spring rather than in the heat of July.

Kaila Parker, a layperson in charge of organizing the safety fair, said they met about 50 people not previously connected with the church, and about half of those provided contact information by entering the various prize drawings. She noted that one family in particular really seemed to appreciate the day's offerings, eating once at the beginning of the fair and again before they left.

"I was so happy that we had decided to serve food when I saw that," she said. "Their oldest son won a bicycle, and they won a car seat for



Members of Vilonia UMC serve food at their recent back-to-school bash.

PHOTO COURTESY JON NICHOLS

"You know, if we need more, we're going to go get more."

The team in charge of meeting people that day wrote follow-up

notes to those whose names and addresses they had gathered. "We did parse them out so that if a person had particular contact with someone, they wrote the note," Kjørlaug said. He followed up with a pastoral note; both messages extended an invitation to church the following Sunday for a backpack blessing and prayer for teachers and students.

"I was overwhelmed by the laity effort and how actively they worked towards it," he said. "I came in and pretty much just got to be the cheerleader for something that was organized and well thought out, for an effort that was very prayerfully and thoughtfully done."

First UMC Magnolia's administrative council began work on bridge events in February, when they read *Get Their Name* and met with the Rev. Blake Bradford of the Center for Vitality.

"He went through a part of the book with us and helped us get started with ideas and things that we could do," said lay leader Bonnie Adcox.

One idea was to begin the

bridging process at existing community events. Their first effort was in May, at the annual Magnolia Blossom Festival. The church's back parking lot sits along a convenient path to the festival, so they set up canopies bearing the church logo, tables, fans and water to provide "a place to be cool, to sit down and eat from the food vendors, and just take a break and give the children and the

Athletes from Southern Arkansas University stop by the First UMC Magnolia welcome station at Blue and Gold Day, a university-sponsored event held downtown.

PHOTO COURTESY BONNIE ADCOX



older people a

chance to cool off," Adcox said.

First UMC Magnolia had more than 400 people visit the cooling station, and got about 350 individuals' contact information by offering a free drawing for giveaway items, including a quilt made of past Magnolia Blossom Festival t-shirts.

And of course, follow-up was for everyone, not just prize winners.

"We sent out a card and just told them we were glad they stopped by the cooling station," Adcox said. "And a little information about our church, with our website and our service times."

They have seen an increase in website traffic, with site visitors

looking at upcoming events and reading the newsletter online. And following the book's and Bradford's recommendation to continue contacting those neighbors for at least six months, the church invited them to Vacation Bible School. That same list of neighbors also will receive invitations to the church's fall festival and Christmas events.

First UMC Magnolia continued

their family member who they stated really needed it. They were so happy.... It made us all feel good to know that we had done something to help someone face to face."

Afterward, Parker sent thank-you cards to all attendees who provided contact information "to let them know that we are glad they came, that we hope they had a good time and we hope to see them again."

### Joining existing events

The Vilonia church coordinated its event to take place during the operating hours of the food pantry across the street and the farmers' market at the other end of the church parking lot. Attendance was so strong that they had the best of problems: They ran short on food.

"It was an interesting scramble as we ran out of food and had to rush to go get more," Kjørlaug said. "The laity reaction to that was so overwhelmingly ecstatic, in the midst of concern about 'Oh goodness, are we going to have enough?' and willingness to just say,

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 Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church, Little Rock  
 Mount Sequoyah Conference Center, Fayetteville  
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 Northeast District, Batesville  
 Northwest District, Fort Smith  
 Oaklawn United Methodist Church, Hot Springs  
 Oakley Chapel United Methodist Church, Rogers  
 Philander Smith College, Little Rock  
 Piney Grove United Methodist Church, Hot Springs  
 Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church, Jonesboro  
 Primrose United Methodist Church, Little Rock  
 Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church, Little Rock  
 Quapaw Quarter United Methodist Church, Little Rock  
 Redfield United Methodist Church, Redfield  
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 Saint James United Methodist Church, Little Rock  
 Saint Luke United Methodist Church, Little Rock  
 Saint Paul United Methodist Church, Little Rock  
 Saint Paul United Methodist Church, Maumelle  
 Salem United Methodist Church, Benton  
 Salem United Methodist Church, Conway  
 Salem United Methodist Church, Salem  
 Sequoyah United Methodist Church, Fayetteville  
 Shiloh United Methodist Church, Paragould  
 Spring Creek United Methodist Church, Calico Rock  
 Southern Arkansas University Wesley Foundation, Magnolia  
 Trinity United Methodist Church, Fayetteville  
 Trinity United Methodist Church, Little Rock  
 Trinity United Methodist Church, North Little Rock  
 Village United Methodist Church, Hot Springs Village  
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 Wayland Springs Camp, Jonesboro  
 Wesley Chapel United Methodist Church, Little Rock  
 Wesley United Methodist Church, Conway  
 West Helena United Methodist Church, West Helena  
 Westside United Methodist Church, Camden  
 White Hall United Methodist Church, White Hall  
 Winfield United Methodist Church, Little Rock

If your church or United Methodist institution isn't taking advantage of the investment services offered by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, contact Clarence Trice, CFO, at [ctrice@umfa.org](mailto:ctrice@umfa.org) or give him a call to learn about the benefits of fund management at the Foundation.



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# Assembly 2016 provides opportunities for worship, fun, spiritual growth

Junior and Senior High youth from across Arkansas converged on the Hendrix College campus July 25-29 for Assembly, the annual summer gathering sponsored by the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM). Assembly includes mission activities, worship, small group time, games and more, all designed for and by youth entering grades 7 through 12.

Several youth who participated in Assembly 2016 agreed to share glimpses of their experience with readers of the *Arkansas United Methodist*.

Small group time helped youth from across the Conference get to know each other and opened doors for sharing in a common life of faith.

PHOTOS COURTESY ACCYM MEDIA TEAM



“As a co-chair of the Junior High Assembly task force, I got the opportunity to experience this amazing event from a more behind-the-scenes perspective. From hanging out with Joshua Price and the other members of our worship band to talking with Mark Norman, I loved knowing that I was playing an important role in the start of deeper commitment of younger students’ lives in Christ. I have always loved this event, from being an attendee to being on task force; it’s just so humbling to be able to watch the plans you helped make come into focus and touch the lives of such incredible kids. To be able to mentor and help our youth grow in their journey with God is one of the most amazing experiences I’ve had the honor to be a part of. I hope that every youth would have the opportunity to experience Assembly, because I have watched it change lives and had my own life changed by it.”

—Darbi Owen, St. Paul UMC Searcy



The Joshua Price Band led worship for Assembly 2016.

“Through Assembly, the Conference has given me and hundreds of other youth a place to cultivate creativity, fellowship, and a better, stronger relationship with Christ. As a part of ACCYM, we are not looked down upon or told that we are too young; instead we are told to stand up, take responsibility, and find ways to lead more youth to Christ. We are disciples making disciples even at our young, pre-adult age.”

—Kevin Herrington, Mountainside UMC Hot Springs Village

“Being a part of the United Methodist Church has given me countless opportunities to grow as a young Christian. Conference youth events have given me a place to become friends with people that have a similar passion for Christ. I think the United Methodist Church, and especially the Arkansas Conference, really values its youth and sees the importance in our spiritual lives.”

—Lexie Burselson, Lakewood UMC North Little Rock

“My favorite part of Assembly was getting to meet lots of new people who never judged you.... The small group I was in couldn’t have been any better. We all became so close through the week of Assembly. We played games, did a lip sync battle, had a scavenger hunt, and plus went Pokémon hunting as a group. There are not enough words in this world to describe how much Assembly changed my life; I saw God in everybody. And if our God is that powerful to show his love to hundreds of people, I asked myself why isn’t everyone living out their lives for him, including me? And that was my God moment, when I really started to live for him, pray to him, and give all my trust and hope to him. If you have never been to Assembly, you are missing out on a whole new life.”

—Krystal Green, Greenwood UMC

The Rev. Mark Norman, superintendent of the Southeast District, served as the featured speaker for Junior High Assembly.



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### 2016-17 events for Arkansas youth

For details or to register for any of these events, visit [www.accym.org](http://www.accym.org) or contact Michelle Moore, Conference youth and young adult ministries coordinator: 501-425-5975 or [michelle.moore@arumc.org](mailto:michelle.moore@arumc.org).

**Refuge (Grades 6-9):** Nov. 4-6 and Nov. 11-13  
 Shepherd of the Ozarks Retreat Center  
 Registration now open; early bird rate until Sept. 18

**Mitto (Grades 9-12):** Nov. 18-20; St. James UMC Little Rock  
 Registration opens Sept. 4; early bird rate until Oct. 24

**Veritas (Grades 7-12):** Feb. 24-26, 2017; Rogers Convention Center  
 Registration Opens Dec. 1; early bird rate until Feb. 1

**ACCYM Choir Tour (Grades 9-12):** June 10-17, 2017  
 Registration open Oct. 1-31

**Jr. High Assembly (Grades 6-8):** July 24-28 (tentative)  
 Hendrix College  
 Registration opens Feb. 28; early bird rate until June 5

**Sr. High Assembly (Grades 9-12):** July 24-28 (tentative)  
 Hendrix College  
 Registration opens Feb. 28; early bird rate until June 5

## COMING UP

### Youth workers: EQUIP 2016 at First UMC Conway Sept. 10

Everyone working in youth ministry is in a different place on their journey. EQUIP provides four tracks to meet the needs of youth workers at any stage. This is not an event just for youth directors! Part-time, full-time, volunteers, confirmation workers, college-age ministry facilitators, still trying to figure it out-ers... all are welcome for this one-day learning opportunity set for Saturday, Sept. 10 at First UMC Conway. For more details or to register, visit [www.arumcywn.org/equip](http://www.arumcywn.org/equip).

### Museum hosts reception for church photography exhibit Sept. 11

The United Methodist Museum of the Arkansas Conference (UMMAC) on Sunday, Sept. 11, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. is hosting an opening reception for an exhibit featuring fine-art photography of historic Methodist church buildings in Arkansas. All are invited.

Two dozen works have been selected for display, most by fine-art photographers from the 600-member group Arkansas Women Photographers. Several AWP members whose work was accepted for the show will be present. Awards donated by Bedford Camera and Video will be presented to those whom Mike Anderson, a Little Rock professional fine-art photographer, chose for first, second, third places and honorable mentions. The photographs will be for sale during the reception and exhibition, with 25 percent of each sale being donated to the museum. A file of the print and the history of each church is being given to the museum for its archives.

The exhibition runs from Sept. 6 through Nov. 8 at the UMMAC, located in the lower level of First UMC, 723 Center Street in Little Rock. For information, or to book a museum tour, call curator Linda Baker at 501-680-1089.

### United Methodist Lawyers Conference Sept. 15

The 2016 United Methodist Lawyers Conference has been set for Thursday, Sept. 15, at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock. 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, 501-664-8632 or [jmarshall@umfa.org](mailto:jmarshall@umfa.org).

### 'Some Assembly Required': PAUMCS fall meeting Sept. 22

All church administrative professionals are invited to attend the fall meeting of the Arkansas chapter of the Professional Association of United Methodist Church Secretaries (PAUMCS), to be held Thursday, Sept. 22 in the Kendall Center on the campus of Philander Smith College in Little Rock. The theme of the event is "Some Assembly Required."

Registration begins at 9 a.m., and the meeting concludes at 3:30 p.m. The registration fee is \$5 to help offset the cost of the provided lunch. For a registration form, contact Cindy Parker, Southwest District administrator, at 870-230-1118 or [cparker@arumc.org](mailto:cparker@arumc.org).

### Bethesda Campground UMC to celebrate 175 years Oct. 3-9

Bethesda Campground United Methodist Church, located 10 miles west of Batesville, will hold its 175th anniversary celebration the week of Oct. 3-9, 2016. The first deed written for the church and property is dated October of 1841. There is some belief the church existed before then, but the deed is the earliest written record available. Activities to mark the occasion include:

Monday through Friday evenings: visiting time with finger foods in Fellowship Hall 6:30 p.m.; worship led by previous/guest pastors in the sanctuary at 7 p.m.; and additional fellowship time with coffee and dessert in Fellowship Hall following the service.

Saturday: outdoor games at 3 p.m., followed by a picnic at 5 p.m. After a time of singing in

the sanctuary, the church will bury a time capsule, join together in a worship service led by district superintendent the Rev. J.J. Galloway, and a coffee and dessert reception will follow.

Sunday: 9 a.m. worship led by Bishop Gary Mueller; brunch follows in the Fellowship Hall. Questions? Contact Kay Hermansen-Pool at 870-793-3867.

### 'Re-Firement' retreat for older adults at Mount Eagle Sept. 20-22; registration deadline extended to Sept. 7

Are you a senior adult looking for a great opportunity for fellowship, with time to worship God and experience Creation at a stunning location? Register for the Re-Firement Retreat at Mount Eagle and enjoy great programming, small group Bible studies, passionate worship, fun games, wonderful food, relaxation, guided walking or motorized tours, and opportunities to just be alone and listen for God. Don't miss out on this chance to come and have your battery fired up. The Rev. Dan Brand of Holiday Hills UMC will serve as leader; to register, contact Sarge Leonard, 501-723-4580 or [director@mounteagle.org](mailto:director@mounteagle.org). Information available at [www.mouteagle.org/events.htm](http://www.mouteagle.org/events.htm).

### 'Seminary day' for young adults hosted by Hendrix Sept. 22

Hendrix College will host a seminary day featuring United Methodist seminaries (and more!) on Thursday, Sept. 22 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Worsham Hall in the Student Life and Technology Building. For details, contact the Rev. J.J. Whitney, [whitney@hendrix.edu](mailto:whitney@hendrix.edu).

### Register now for Bear Creek Confirmation Camp Oct. 7-9

Registration for the second Confirmation Camp of 2016 is now open; it will be Oct. 7-9 at Bear Creek Camp near Marianna. The camp covers five key confirmation topics, and take-home lessons are available for those churches using the retreat as the bulk of their confirmation experience. Cost is \$45 per person for the weekend, and the deadline to register is Sept. 26. For details, visit [http://arumc.org/events/confirmation\\_camp-october\\_2016](http://arumc.org/events/confirmation_camp-october_2016).

### Youth workers/spouses: Marriage retreat at Mount Eagle Oct. 21-23

Relationships are hard work! Ministry is hard work! Put them together and marriage can be stressful and hard to balance. Youth workers and their spouses are invited to Mount Eagle Retreat Center near Clinton, Ark., to enjoy a meaningful time away to strengthen their relationship with each other and with God.

This marriage retreat will provide an opportunity for communication, sharing and reflecting. It also will provide time to meet other couples who share the same challenges and struggles. While some topics will be general to all marriage, others will be more specific to those issues that arise in marriages with one or both spouses involved in ministry settings.

The retreat includes a two-night stay, three meals on Saturday and one meal on Sunday. Part of the registration fee is covered through the ARUMC Youth Ministry budget. To register, visit [www.arumcywn.org/event/marriage-retreat-youth-workers-spouses](http://www.arumcywn.org/event/marriage-retreat-youth-workers-spouses). Registration forms and payments must be received by Oct. 1, 2016. Spaces will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

### Silent Centering Prayer retreat at Mount Eagle Oct. 23-26

Consider giving yourself the gift of a silent retreat in the foothills of the Ozarks this fall. This retreat will be conducted in silence following evening prayer on Sunday until breakfast on Wednesday. It will conclude after a time of debriefing and fellowship over Wednesday lunch. There will be an opportunity for three hours of centering prayer in community each day, as well as live and video teaching on the contemplative journey. The retreat will be facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Bill Buchanan, the Rev. Gail Brooks, the Rev. David Fleming and lay spiritual director Susan Jett. To learn more or to register, visit [www.mouteagle.org/events.htm](http://www.mouteagle.org/events.htm).

### ServSafe training at St. Andrew UMC Little Rock Nov. 10; scholarships available

St. Andrew UMC Little Rock will host a ServSafe training for any United Methodist churches who wish to send kitchen staff, food pantry directors or childcare food preparers. Ten churches may receive team scholarships, which also include one free resource book and certification exam. Others can certify or take the course at cost.

The course is 8:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., and the certification exam runs from 3 to 5 p.m. For details on scholarships or to register, contact the Rev. Jenni Duncan, 501-551-2141 or [jenni.duncan@arumc.org](mailto:jenni.duncan@arumc.org).

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# Local churches take action to fight hunger



## Cooking Matters shower held by Little Rock church's United Methodist Women

The United Methodist Women Summer Circle of Asbury UMC Little Rock in July held a Cooking Matters shower in support of the 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger initiative. The Cooking Matters educational program teaches people how to shop on a budget and prepare healthy, nutritious meals. The course, which features six classes, is being taught by local United Methodist churches after they receive training from the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. This Cooking Matters shower provided kitchen tools for participants to help them implement their newly learned skills at home. Besides dozens of spatulas, measuring cups, mixing bowls and bakeware, the shower also brought in three complete sets of cookware.

Deaconess Colleen Caldwell, project manager for 200,000 Reasons, delivered the items collected to the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, where they will be distributed throughout the state. Pictured at left are Alex Handfinger, field manager for Cooking Matters at the Store; Caldwell; and Cooking Matters director Rachel Townsend. For information on how to hold a Cooking Matters shower, visit <http://200KReasons.arumc.org>.

## Music camp offering benefits local food ministry

First UMC Fort Smith's 25th annual Music Camp was held July 25-29, 2016. Campers worked all week and at the culmination of camp presented the musical "By the Sea" by Mary Nelson Keithahn and John Horman. Participants included 37 campers, 14 youth helpers and 19 adult volunteers. The love offering of \$1,725 collected at the performance of the musical was presented the Antioch Discovery Garden, a project of the Antioch Food Ministry.



## NLR church assembles Pack Shack meals for several area feeding ministries

First United Methodist Church North Little Rock on July 31 hosted a meal-packing party in the church's fellowship hall in an effort to carry out their mission statement, "Together, proclaiming Christ by loving God and serving God's people," as well as to help with the Arkansas Conference's 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger initiative.

From feeding the hungry on the last Monday of every month in downtown North Little Rock with the Broadway Bridge Project, to holding holiday food drives and partnering with Indian Hills Elementary for its backpack food program, First UMC North Little Rock sees the need for meals in their city and community.

Working with The Pack Shack, 185 participants of all ages packed close to 32,000 meals in one hour. The meals went to the Amboy Community Food Pantry, the Gardner Memorial UMC Food Pantry, First UMC's weekend backpack food program and to schools in Sherwood and North Little Rock.



## Foreman area churches work with Pack Shack for community mission



First UMC Foreman and Wade's Chapel UMC on July 30 sponsored a special event in the Foreman Community Center: a Pack Shack meal-packing party that included participation by six area churches. In addition to the sponsoring congregations, Winthrop UMC, First UMC Ashdown, St. Matthews Baptist Church of Foreman and Trinity Presbyterian Church's Heroes Pantry of Texarkana participated.

More than 80 volunteers from the churches and community put together a total of 16,704 meals for stocking area food pantries. Helpers from age three to age 85 participated in this mission.

First UMC Foreman and Wade's Chapel UMC financed the event with the help of a grant for a mission project for hunger relief and food pantries in Little River County, and the Heroes Pantry of Texarkana.

## Church gives golf tourney proceeds to 200K Reasons



St. James UMC Little Rock held its ninth annual Golf Classic on Saturday, June 25, at the Burns Park Championship Course. The event designates a cause each year, and this year is donating the \$8,500 raised to 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger, the current United Methodist initiative to reduce childhood hunger in Arkansas.

COURTESY PHOTOS

# Hunger Summit: register now

Time is running out to register for the Paysinger Hunger Summit, an opportunity to plant seeds of hope in your community and help end childhood hunger in Arkansas. Part of the 200,000 Reasons childhood hunger initiative, the summit will be held **Saturday, Sept. 10** at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock. Welcome and check-in begins at 9:30 a.m. for the 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. event. Workshop topics include:

- Community gardens
- SNAP: Fallacies, Facts and How Your Church Can Help
- Cooking Matters
- Food Pantries: Making them work in EVERY Context
- Public Witness: Voices for Good
- Come and Get It: Meals Beyond the School Day
- Friends and Neighbors Network (FANN): Food Cooperatives

The summit is named for the late Rev. Vernon and Eva Lee Paysinger, who dedicated their lives to Christian ministry and were lifelong advocates for programs designed to eradicate hunger in Arkansas. Their legacy of caring is reflected in the establishment of the Vernon and Eva Lee Paysinger Endowment Fund, administered by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA). The endowment's purpose is to support Arkansas ministries that work to eliminate hunger.

To register, visit [www.eventbrite.com/e/paysinger-hunger-summit-tickets-25646361959](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/paysinger-hunger-summit-tickets-25646361959).



## 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 appear on page 2 of this issue.

**First UMC Jonesboro is seeking a full-time youth minister.** Salary commensurate with experience; send resume to [jmiles@fumcjonesboro.org](mailto:jmiles@fumcjonesboro.org) by September 30.

**Swamp Angel Ministries is "TRAVELING ARKANSAS!"** For more info contact Dr. David Bush @ Stuttgart FUMC - (870) 673-1131 or [thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org](mailto:thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org) call or text @ (870) 830-7777.

**MAYFLOWER UMC in Mayflower, Ark., seeks a pianist** to accompany our worship service at 10:00 a.m. each Sunday morning. We enjoy singing from the United Methodist Hymnal as well as Heavenly Highways. Candidate should be able to sight-read music, accompany three hymns, provide soft prelude as people are seated, play during the offertory and Holy Communion, and play a brief postlude after worship. Salary is \$75 per week. Contact Rick Wilkins, [Revrickwilkins@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Revrickwilkins@sbcglobal.net), or Brad Frakes, [brazlewood@yahoo.com](mailto:brazlewood@yahoo.com), with questions. To schedule an interview, email [nancyacre@gmail.com](mailto:nancyacre@gmail.com).

# As kids return to school, congregations reach out in love

As Arkansas' children prepared for the start of the school year, many churches took time in worship services to offer prayer for students and teachers as they returned to classrooms or began a new phase of life and work. "Backpack Blessing Sunday" has become a common back-to-school ritual across communities.

During this same season, students and their parents search for just the right clothes, backpacks, notebooks and other school supplies. For many, it's a time of excitement—but for some households, the expense of all that's needed can create a burden greater than a family can bear. Summer break draws to a close, and families face a

momentous time of year that can all too easily become weighed down with larger than expected costs and even bigger amounts of stress.

That's where many of our churches step in to help. Here are just a few examples of the countless ways United Methodists of Arkansas reached out to lighten the load for their neighbors.



**ABOVE:** Cabot United Methodist Church hosted the community's fourth annual Back-2-School Fair on Saturday, Aug. 6. With beginnings as the brainchild of a former Cabot UMC congregant, the Back-2-School Fair has grown exponentially over the past four years. With the help of Cabot Public School counselors, area churches, banks, businesses, civic organizations and numerous citizens, the Back-2-School Fair provides clothes, shoes, toiletries, underwear, socks, backpacks and school supplies to students in need throughout the community. The fair also provided free haircuts, a pancake breakfast and door prizes. A total of 295 students had needs met through this event.

**BELOW:** Oaklawn UMC Hot Springs partnered with a local Great Clips hair salon to provide free back-to-school haircuts at the church.



## Church makes 'teaching dolls' as help for pediatric patients



COURTESY PHOTO

During the past year, the people of Wickes UMC worked to make 88 teaching dolls to be used by patients at Arkansas Children's Hospital. The congregation consecrated the dolls as part of their July 17 worship service.

About 15 people—from elementary age all the way through retirement age—helped cut, sew and stuff the dolls. The patient who receives the doll has the opportunity to finish it by drawing its clothes, face, fingers and other features. This creative process also gives nurses an idea of a patient's developmental level, which helps medical staff explain upcoming procedures so the child has an understanding of what to expect.

Wickes is a small community in western Arkansas (Polk County, Northwest District) with a population of about 900.



**LEFT:** For a number of years, Sardis UMC Bauxite's Dare2Share ministry has sought to provide everything a young student needs to be prepared for school. Here, a group of the church's helpers stock donated backpacks with school supplies.

**BELOW:** Greer's Chapel UMC Magnolia called students forward for a backpack blessing prayer as the congregation surrounded them in support.

COURTESY PHOTOS



# Mission u moves more than 200 to spiritual and social action



Elementary-age students made terrariums as part of the "God's Extravagant Garden" climate justice study at Mission u 2016.



Participants of all ages attend Mission u, and they joined together to help assemble snack items that will fill backpacks of school-age children served by the Arkansas Food Bank.

COURTESY PHOTOS

BY DONI AND FRED MARTIN  
*Special Contributors*

Calling it an opportunity for "learning together for the transformation of the world," Mission u dean Rosemary Kirby welcomed 204 persons to Arkansas Conference Mission u 2016, held July 27-30 at the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville.

With roots dating to 1941 when annual study meetings were held in various districts in the state, Mission u (until a few years ago called School of Christian Mission) this summer celebrated 75 continuous years of providing studies centered on mission and serving others.

Mission u is sponsored through the cooperative efforts of United Methodist Women, the Conference Board of Global Ministries and the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

"It is my prayer that every person attending Mission u 2016 will enjoy the fellowship, learning experience, and Christian atmosphere and leave here transformed to be Jesus' hands and feet in the world," Kirby said.

The planning team of more than 40 dedicated workers developed a shared statement to expand upon the event's theme, "Learning Together for the Transformation of the World":

"As followers of Jesus Christ, we hold fast to God's intention to bring hope and wholeness to the world. We know that our mission with God is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Mission education helps us maintain our connections. We know that God wants us to use our heads, our hearts, and our hands in serving the world. We will study together, learning more because of one another. Here we shall determine

how to work in local and global missions so that others may know the Savior we serve with joy."

As participants arrived Wednesday afternoon, many brought bags and boxes filled with food from their homes and United Methodist Women units around the state for the Arkansas Food Bank. Youth and children sorted 415 bags for the Food Bank's backpack program, 52 boxes and 11 miscellaneous boxes filled with snacks for distribution to hungry Arkansans. According to information shared by registrar Beth Cobb, there were 39 persons attending Mission u for the first time; 16 clergy; and 48 children and youth.

This year's Spiritual Growth Study, "The Bible and Human Sexuality: Claiming God's Good Gift" was led by the Rev. Russ Breshears (Hot Springs), the Rev. Pam Estes (Magnolia), the Rev. Nathan Mattox (Tulsa, OK), Danita Waller-Paige (Little Rock), the Rev. Carissa Rodgers (Little Rock) and the Rev. Vida Williams (Little Rock).

Instructors for "Climate Justice: Call to Hope and Action" were Lu Harding (retired UMC deacon), Gretchen Hicks (Little Rock), John S. Hill (Washington, D.C.) and Scharmell Roussel (Little Rock).

Laura Palmer (Russellville) led "Latin America: People and Faith."

Muriel Schrepfer, the assistant dean for children and youth, guided children and youth leaders in focusing on "God's Extravagant Garden" and "Joining Voices for Climate Justice." Leaders included Amanda Baltz, Blayne Schrepfer, Pat Hoerth, Jennifer Fox, Jessica Butler, Reagan Martin and Aric Conrad.

Morning Praise coordinator Pam Moore helped everyone start each day with an early worship that even included bagpipe music by

Korley Martin, as everyone joined in singing "Amazing Grace."

Throughout the event, music director Lynn Baker was assisted by pianist Julia Frost.

Dates have not been confirmed for Mission u 2017, but it will once again be held at the University of the Ozarks. Celia Wadsworth will serve

as dean, the Rev. Maxine Allen will be assistant dean and LaDonna Busby will handle registration. Many who have served on the 2016 planning team will return in their same capacity next year.

The 2017 studies will include "A Covenantal Community (Part 1)," "The Missionary Conferences of the

United Methodist Church" and "Climate Justice: Call to Hope and Action" (a repeat from 2016). Mission u is open to women and men, children and youth, laity and clergy—anyone who wishes to learn more about living out the mission of the United Methodist Church in our current world context.

## FIRST CHURCH

United Methodist

First United Methodist Church seeks an experienced, highly motivated team player to serve as our next Minister of Music. The ideal candidate will have both technical and relationship skills that will continue to build a comprehensive music ministry from an already established program. Primary responsibilities include leadership of chancel choir, handbell choir, & children's music program, as well as administration of budget and personnel within the music & worship program.

Full job description at [firstchurchspringdale.org](http://firstchurchspringdale.org)

First United Methodist Church  
206 W. Johnson Ave.  
Springdale, AR 72764  
479.751.4610

# Museum intern's find leads to Pearle McCain exhibit proposal

BY CANDACE BARRON  
Special Contributor

Late in 2015, the board of the United Methodist Museum of the Arkansas Conference (UMMAC) decided to make some changes with the goals of revitalizing the organization and helping it meet the stated goals of educating and preserving historical items for generations to come. One of the ideas was to hire an intern in conjunction with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. The UMMAC board asked Dr. Charles Romney, director of the UALR graduate program for history, to recommend several students that he thought would work well with our organization. They selected Jason Littleton for the internship.

Littleton, working closely with Dr. Paul Brown and curator Linda Baker, was able to successfully integrate the new "Past Perfect" computer program into the museum, which will allow sharing of historical finds across the spectrum of researchers, students, historians

and the public. During this process, he came across an important find: the work of Dr. Pearle McCain, an early 20th century missionary to China. The find includes an oral history interview with McCain. This discovery benefits both the museum, as it is the basis for an exhibit proposal developed by Littleton, and Littleton's education, as his master's thesis project will be based on the discovery of the materials and development of the proposed exhibit.

McCain, a native of Arkansas, was educated at Scarritt College, Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary. She arrived in China in 1929, where she remained until 1942, when World War II forced her to return to the United States. She returned to China in 1946, only to be forced out by the Communist government in 1949.

In 1951, McCain was sent to Japan, where she taught for 20 years. The oral history includes discussions of her work in Peking, Shanghai and Sungkiang. She comments on her



Pearle McCain, shown in a 1929 photo at left during her service in China, and later, above, during her years in Japan, was an Arkansas native and Methodist missionary who retired in Little Rock.

PHOTOS COURTESY LINDA BAKER, UMMAC

educational work, the Japanese invasion, personal relationships, travel, local customs, seminary work and the effect of World War II on China. She also shares views of the

Communist government, departure from China, college teaching in Japan and a return visit to Japan and Shanghai in 1980.

Thanks to this internship and

the work Littleton carried out, an important piece of Arkansas history will be preserved and expanded for generations to come.

Though the proposed exhibit on McCain has yet to be added to the museum calendar, UMMAC currently has a collection of Pearle McCain artifacts on display.

UMMAC also has a new photography exhibit beginning on Sept. 6, as reported in last month's issue of the Arkansas United Methodist. It features photographs of old United Methodist church buildings across the state.

The museum is open for informal drop-in visits on Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or other times by advance appointment. Guided tours are also available by appointment. For information about a particular exhibit or to book a tour, call Linda Baker, UMMAC curator, at 501-680-1089.

*The Rev. Dr. Barron, pastor of Gardner Memorial and Amboy UMCs in North Little Rock, chairs the board of UMMAC.*

## Youth Ministry Cohort and Equip youth worker training event benefit from UMFA grants

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas announced in an Aug. 16 news release that a total of \$5,015 in grant funding has been given to support the 2016 Youth Ministry Cohort and the Sept. 10 Equip youth ministry training event.

"Providing accessible, affordable one-day training for youth ministry workers and making it possible for five churches to take a deep dive into a six-month youth ministry training cohort both fall in line with our United Methodist Foundation grants goals of supporting Conference leadership and training," said Jim Argue Jr., UMFA president and CEO.

2016 marks the first time five churches—Grace Community UMC Fort Smith, Lakewood UMC North Little Rock, St. Paul UMC El Dorado, First UMC West Memphis and White Hall UMC—will participate in this training and mentoring project led by veteran youth workers. Without the UMFA grant, it would have cost each church \$1,200 to participate; but the grant makes the participation in the cohort affordable for churches of all sizes.

"Our goal with the cohort is to provide the tools and resources that allow churches to have a

consistent, sustainable youth program," said Michelle Moore, Conference youth and young adult ministry coordinator. "We ask that from each church the youth leader, pastor and three other congregation members participate in this six-month program."

Equip, which started four years ago with only 25 attendees, this year is projected to have 75 participants.

"It is training for youth workers, by youth workers, to enhance youth ministries and help create family ministries for churches throughout the Conference," Moore said. The grant from UMFA allows the Conference to keep the cost of the attending workshop down so that all churches have the ability to participate, and some churches can send more than one person as needed.

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas manages \$140 million in endowment funds and other charitable assets that benefit local churches and other United Methodist ministries. Founded in 1963, UMFA is one of the largest United Methodist foundations in the country and is responsible for over 750 funds that support United Methodist ministries.

## Mentoring

(continued from page 1)

program and retreat at Marion High School. He also pursued this program in Mayflower for seven years before taking over head coaching duties for the Patriots. Coach Davis took inspiration for this program from the head coach at Rogers High School, Ronnie Peacock, who developed something

similar in northwest Arkansas. Davis begins each year of this program with a weekend retreat at Mount Eagle Retreat Center, an Arkansas Conference-owned center near Clinton.

"On Friday, we play games and learn how to hug," he said. "We have each father and son give each other a cheek-to-cheek hug and maintain it for four to five seconds. Then, they move around the group and hug the other

[continued]



Football team member Devin Blakely, right, gives instructions to his blindfolded mentor, Marion UMC member David Fogleman, to help him navigate through a "minefield" obstacle course.

PHOTO COURTESY WOODY WHEELLESS

## OBITUARIES

**DESHA****Cathy Wheeler**

Cathy Wheeler, 71, of Desha, died Tuesday, Aug. 16, 2016, in Little Rock.

She was born in Lansing, Michigan on Sept. 12, 1944, and was the daughter of Basil Adelbert and Geraldine Grace (Cory) Ealy.

She attended the University of Nebraska. Cathy was a member of the Cushman United Methodist Church; was also a member of the United Methodist Women's organization and a devoted child of God. She was a homemaker, a devoted and loving wife, mother and best friend. Cathy loved and was also devoted to her grandchildren.

Cathy is survived by her husband of 52 years, the Rev. James D. Wheeler of Desha, a retired local pastor serving Cushman UMC and Cornerstone UMC Pleasant Plains; a son, Jeffrey Wheeler and his wife, Shylo, of Rusk, Texas; a daughter, Michelle Lively and her husband, Chris, of Batesville; five grandchildren, Nikko Wheeler, Thaylan Bowman, Blaire Lively, Chris Thorne and Devin Thorne. She is also survived by her sister, Donna Edgmon of Wolverine, Michigan.

She was preceded in death by her parents and a brother-in-law, Carl Edgmon.

The funeral was held Friday, Aug. 19, 2016, at Roller-Crouch Chapel with the Revs. Paul Seay and Steve Long officiating. Burial followed at Alderbrook Cemetery in Desha. Pallbearers were Nicky Pearson, Gary Hodge, Kary Don Clark, Terry Clark, James Inman and Tom Inman.

Memorials may be made to Cushman United Methodist Church Food Pantry, 25 Martin Street, Cushman, AR 72526.



**Cathy Wheeler**

**JONESBORO****Wanda Stahl**

Wanda Stahl, 88, passed away Monday, Aug. 1, 2016.

She was born Aug. 7, 1927, in Boydsville to the late William and Gertrude Butler Owens. She was a homemaker and a member of the First United Methodist Church Jonesboro. She



**Wanda Stahl**

will be remembered as a loving wife, mother and grandmother who loved the Lord and walked in his path.

She was preceded in death by her husband, the Rev. Orvil Stahl, who served the North Arkansas Conference first as a full-time local pastor and then as an associate member; a daughter, Robin Meadors; and nine brothers and sisters.

She is survived by her children: George Stahl of Indiana; Teresa Crisco of Little Rock; JoElla Weir and her husband, Cory, of Jonesboro; Charlotte Sanders and her husband, Thomas, of Rosie; and Phyllis Stahl of Jonesboro; a sister-in-law, Neala Stahl of Fayetteville; eight grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

A celebration of her life was held Thursday, Aug. 4, 2016, at First United Methodist Church Jonesboro with the Rev. Patty Soward officiating. Interment followed at Woodland Heights Cemetery in Rector. Her grandsons served as pallbearers.

Lasting memorials may be sent to First United Methodist Church Care Team, 801 South Main Street, Jonesboro, AR 72401.

**LITTLE ROCK****Merline Bass**

Merline Bass, 74, of Little Rock, passed away July 25, 2016.

She was a loving mother, wife, sister and friend. She was always considered the "caretaker of the family," a faithful long-time member of the Holy Temple Cathedral Church of God in Christ as an active church mother and choir member who served in church administration.

Merline is preceded in death by her husbands, Cornelius James Roberts and the Rev. William Harry Bass Sr., an ordained United Methodist elder who served in both the Little Rock, Wisconsin and North Arkansas Conferences; her parents, Porter Woodbury Sr. and Ida Lee Woodbury; and a brother, Porter Woodbury Jr.

She leaves memories with her children, Carl Roberts, Edward (Bryndalyn) Roberts, Simone Ajaero (Theon) Barnes, Christopher (Stacy) Roberts, and Stephanie (Myron) Bass



**Merline Bass**

Jackson; siblings, John (Emma) Porter Woodbury, Mary L. (Warren) Dotson, Gertrude (Joseph) Brown and Charles (Eddie Mae) Woodbury; eight grandchildren; one great-grandchild; and a host of family and friends who will miss her dearly.

Services were held Saturday, Aug. 6, at Holy Temple Cathedral Church in Little Rock.

**NASHVILLE, Tennessee****George Samuel Jones**

Dr. George Samuel "Sam" Jones, 79, of Nashville, Tennessee, passed away Aug. 2, 2016, while attending a National Rose Society convention in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

Jones was a retired minister of the United Methodist Church, holding membership in the Little Rock Conference and then the Arkansas Conference. He held a Ph.D. in counseling psychology, and a master's degree in psychology and in divinity. He was active in the American Rose Society and the West End United Methodist Church. He enjoyed gardening, his grandchildren and traveling.

He is preceded in death by his parents, William "Billy" Jones and Doris Nolley Jones.

He is survived by his loving wife of 56 years, Nancy Newcome Jones; three daughters: Nan Cowan and her husband, Leland; Lucy Gaines and her husband, Jeff; and Margaret Moore and her husband, Brian; two brothers, Murphy Jones and Cris Jones; two sisters, Charlotte McKiever and Angie Shelton; and 10 grandchildren.

Funeral services were held Friday, Aug. 5, 2016, at West End UMC Nashville, Tennessee. Graveside services took place Saturday, Aug. 6, 2016 in the Hamburg (Arkansas) Cemetery with the Rev. Don Nolley officiating.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the American Rose Society at [www.rose.org](http://www.rose.org) or the West End United Methodist Church, 2200 West End Ave., Nashville, TN 37203.



**Sam Jones**

[continued from previous page]

fathers and sons.

"Afterwards, we talk about the students' goals, and they each have to give three: one for the football season, one for their senior year and one for their next five to 10 years."

Saturday brings trust-building work, such as blindfolded trust walks and falls, rappelling, sharing stories and one attention-getting exercise known as the minefield. The blindfolded students are sent out on an obstacle-covered volleyball court. They must listen to the voice of their dad or mentor for guidance. As the mentors all yell instructions at the same time, all of the coaches bang on pans and shout, too, immersing the students in chaos.

"The point of this is to let them know that life is going to get crazy,

and they are going to be in chaos," Davis said. "What they have to do is stop, take a deep breath, focus on God and listen to our Father's voice."

The retreat serves to open lines of communication between the student and adult in his life. If a senior player doesn't have a male adult to stand in for his father, Coach Davis finds one for him.

"Sometimes, the players' dads aren't in the picture for a number of reasons," he said. "It could be they are in prison or dead or just not around. I will find someone to serve as that player's mentor. I make an announcement at church, send out an e-blast, talk about it in Rotary and ask business leaders to put me in touch with men who are interested. The majority of our mentors come from churches, and they will go to the students' football games and cheer them on.

Throughout the year, the dads and mentors work with the students, teach them values and help them navigate life after high school."

Another part of the program is community service, and this year, the students have served in a homeless shelter in downtown Memphis, washed all of the police cars for the City of Marion, picked up litter and played bingo with residents at a nursing home. But Davis credits the positive change in the team members' self-esteem and outlook on the world to the emotional and spiritual work involved in the program.

"Football is under scrutiny these days, but if people really understood what coaches do, they would see the game is the last thing we pursue," he said. "We work to instill faith in each of our players and the men in their lives."

## Mount Eagle seeks help with Hermitage Cabin completion

Work teams have made great progress on the new Hermitage Cabin at Mount Eagle Retreat Center, owned by the United Methodists of Arkansas and located near Clinton. More tasks remain, though, to make it ready to accept reservations for one- or two-person retreats.

The two remaining jobs are the construction of a wheelchair ramp to make the cabin accessible to all, and interior finishing work.

To arrange a time to donate your skills, contact Sarge Leonard, [sarge.leonard@arumc.org](mailto:sarge.leonard@arumc.org), [director@mounteagle.org](mailto:director@mounteagle.org) or 501-723-4580.

Mount Eagle's mission is to provide Christian hospitality and opportunities for holy listening. To learn more about its facilities and programs, visit [www.mounteagle.org](http://www.mounteagle.org).



## REcharge Initiative connects local churches to share electronics through CFT



Palmer Lee, support specialist with the Arkansas Conference Center for Technology, arranges donated equipment that has been evaluated and tagged for distribution to local churches through the REcharge Initiative.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

The REcharge Initiative is a new service launched by the Arkansas Conference Center for Technology (CFT) to provide gently-used computers and other electronics to Arkansas United Methodist churches and affiliated organizations at no cost.

In August, St. Andrew UMC Little Rock became the first congregation to receive refurbished hardware through REcharge—a laptop and docking station to use for projecting visuals in worship services.

“We needed one with a VGA connection and that our volunteers could use for YouTube in worship,” said the Rev. Jenni Duncan, associate pastor. “I will use it for worship presentations, so I was thrilled that it came with open source software similar to programs I used in the past. I have been bringing my personal laptop or trying to use a donated one, in which the entire coding was in Spanish. That made it dependent on me, so this will really help the laity to claim their ministry.”

“One of the keys to success with this initiative will be donor churches,” said Mark Epperson, director of the CFT. “We know we’ll get lots of requests for hardware, and a great way for a larger church to help others through our connection is to think of REcharge when it’s time for them to upgrade.”

This initiative is designed to empower ministries with technology and to repurpose electronics in an eco-friendly way—and also to help churches follow faithful practices of caring for God’s creation when electronics cannot be re-used.

“We can only accept hardware that can be refurbished for use by other churches,” Epperson said. “In cases where we don’t have the ability to repurpose something, we will respond with information on where a local church can recycle those electronics to keep them out of landfills.”

**REcharge Initiative**  
A project from the Arkansas Conference Center for Technology

Want to participate in the REcharge Initiative?

Visit <https://goo.gl/forms/Zw1h7KIIMsLNFWSG2>

to request electronics for your church, or to make a donation of electronics for other churches.



## Faith Funds

### *Legal Education on Church Issues*

Anthony A. “Tony” Hilliard, President Elect of the Arkansas Bar Association and former Chancellor of the Arkansas Conference, believes the UMFA-sponsored annual gathering of United Methodist lawyers helps Arkansas lawyers, local churches and the Conference.

“It’s free CLE to help Methodist lawyers give free legal advice to their churches and the only continuing education I know of that serves Communion,” Tony said. “I find it interesting how many attorneys have known each other for years but didn’t know they were Methodist until Bill Waddell started this conference.”

In addition to earning free Continuing Legal Education credits, lawyers gain confidence in their ability to help their local churches and develop resources to call upon if they need help during the year. The 2016 event will be held in Little Rock on Thursday, September 15. Contact Katie Holley at [kholley@umfa.org](mailto:kholley@umfa.org) if you are a United Methodist attorney interested in participating.

Tony is an active member of Asbury UMC in Little Rock where his wife, Rev. Mary Hilliard, is senior pastor. “I believe I’m the longest tenured itinerate lay UMC preacher’s husband in Arkansas,” he said. They have two daughters and a granddaughter. He is a tax, probate and estate attorney for Ramsay, Bridgforth, Robinson and Raley LLP in Pine Bluff.



### **The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas**

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