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Life Together

Students build intentional Christian community

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

CONWAY, Ark.—Education by its very nature involves growth and change. At United Methodist-related Hendrix College, one group of students pursues a particular method of growth and learning outside of their time in class: The residents of Bonhoeffer House commit to living together in an intentional Christian community.

The idea originated at a 2005 Lilly Endowment conference several Hendrix students attended along with the Rev. J.J. Whitney, the current chaplain of Hendrix who then served as the college's assistant chaplain and program coordinator for the Hendrix-Lilly Vocations Initiative (now known as the Miller Center for Vocation, Ethics, and Calling).

At the conference, the students heard a group from Valparaiso



Residents of Bonhoeffer House and their guests gather in the Hendrix College residence hall's common area for a Saturday evening meal and movie.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SCHYLER FERGUSON

University speak about their communal living experience. They also watched a documentary about the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the 20th-century theologian who became part of the resistance to the Nazi regime and who, before the events of World War II, spent time living in community with fellow pastors.

The group from Hendrix decided they wanted to give communal Christian living a try. They chose to name the experiment after Bonhoeffer "because of their desire to wed together their discipleship with their action," Whitney said.

Not like the dorm

Some may point to dormitory housing as proof that living in community already happens nearly everywhere on a college campus. But Bonhoeffer House is based on more than proximity: It includes accountability—to each other, to God and to a common covenant agreed upon by all participants.

"There's a lot of different points of view [at Hendrix], and sometimes to find the Christian community seems harder when you're living in the dorm," Whitney said. "So the students really wanted a way to grow in discipleship with one another,

have space to make a meal and to practice prayer and devotion time that would help them grow, and do acts of service together."

The first Bonhoeffer House at Hendrix launched in the 2006-07 academic year. The group lives in Brown House, one of the smaller on-campus residences which also is the designated substance-free housing option—meaning that no alcohol, tobacco or illicit substances are to be kept or used there. This year, Brown House includes 12 Bonhoeffer House residents, two additional residents not participating in the covenant and one resident assistant.

[See BONHOEFFER, page 13]

Sharing God's love—and the kitchen, too

BY KAY BROCKWELL
Special Contributor

One church's experience with Cooking Matters

St. Paul United Methodist Church Jonesboro takes seriously Jesus' admonition to "feed my sheep."

The church, with its neighbor, St. Mark's Episcopal, has operated the Two Saints Kitchen free Saturday noon meal program for more than five years, with volunteers from the two churches cooking for, transporting and feeding about 60 people weekly. It also supports the Neighbors Helping Neighbors food pantry and the Salvation Army homeless shelter.

And for six weeks early this fall,

it opened its kitchen and family life center to local residents who wanted to learn how to cook healthy meals on a budget, through the Cooking Matters class sponsored by the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance and the United Methodists of Arkansas's 200,000 Reasons campaign.

Why does the church do it? Speaking as a member of the congregation, I believe we do it because we're Methodists! We love a potluck, and we'll break bread together at any provocation. When I learned about Cooking Matters, it just seemed to me to be a great way

to spread the love of God and help our community at the same time.

The inaugural effort, funded by a grant from the Conference, took six students through the six-week course. Each Wednesday night, a team of volunteers and the students held a quick lesson on some facet of shopping or cooking; then they cooked a meal together, ate, and cleaned up the kitchen together. Each participant received a homework assignment each week: Prepare a recipe from their Cooking Matters book, using a church-provided gift card from a local

grocery store to purchase the ingredients.

The program suggests pre-purchasing the ingredients and giving them to students each week in a take-home bag. We tried that for the first week, but because we hadn't been certain of how many students we would have, we wound up purchasing too much. One of the volunteers, Steven Henley, came up with the gift card idea as a substitute, and that worked well.

Students were able to choose a recipe in the book that appealed to [See COOKING MATTERS, page 12]

Lying down in green pastures

BY CHARLES COOPER
Special Contributor

If our girls were afraid at night, they wanted Becky. If one called out for me and I went, she would say, "Dad, get Mom."

Once I asked, "What's wrong with me?"

"You're cross," Beth replied with startling honesty.

Of course. Waking up at 2 a.m. does that.

They did not want me for comfort. They wanted me for stories.

I made them help: "What would you like the story to be about?"

Always they wanted it to be about animals or Granny, or animals and Granny.

A grownup might ask for stories about courage or peace, or something else beautiful and abstract. But with kids it's animals and Granny. Nothing wrong with that.



Charles Cooper

I remember a few of the stories.

So, *Granny was reading in her chair when she saw a spider. She took a jar and a piece of paper and she scooped the spider into the jar. She took the spider outside to eat the bugs on her roses.*

When she came back and sat down in her chair, she saw another spider. She scooped it up and took it outside to eat the bugs that ate her roses.

When she got back, there was another spider, and she scooped it up and took it to her roses.

Granny thought, "I don't want to see anymore spiders," and she sat down in her chair and looked around and around and around and around.

"Good. No more spiders," she thought.

Then she cried out, "Oh no! It's a cricket."

She scooped the cricket up into the jar and started for the door, but the cricket said, "Granny, Granny, you can take me outside, but please, please don't take me to the roses."

"So, where did Granny take the cricket?" Sarah asked.

"To a grassy place with lots of crickets," I said.

"Were there spiders in the grass?"

"Yes, but they all became friends."

The girls liked the story. It told them they would be okay. As they faded off into the backyard of dreams, a kind hand would not place them close to danger in the roses, but would carry them to green pastures, where spiders and crickets lie down together.

When I go to bed, those feelings are not strange to me. *Oh Lord, you can take me where you will, but please, please, not too near the roses—not yet, anyway.*

I confess that I was not always nice. One night the girls wanted to hear about Granny and Dinosaur Rex—their name for T-Rex. So, I said, *Granny was sleeping in her bed when she heard a thunderous noise and felt the house tremble. She put on her robe, and as soon as she stepped out the door, this huge face dropped down from above and opened its mouth and showed its enormous, nasty teeth and the breath from its nostrils knocked Granny down.*

Beth interrupted, "And then they became friends."

No. *Then Dinosaur Rex ate Granny.*

(Gasp)

I added, *But Granny spoke from inside Dinosaur Rex's belly, "What am I?"*

Dinosaur Rex laughed and said, "Indigestion."

So, *Granny repeated, "What am I?"*

Dinosaur Rex said, "A human being."

Granny said, "So, if I am here, then you cannot be here."

And the power of Granny's reasonable words made Dinosaur Rex disappear into the long ago, and Granny went back to bed.

I hope that story is about courage in the valley of the shadow, and the first story about peace in green pastures, though my intention at the start was just to rattle Granny and a spider, and Granny and a T-Rex, around in my head and see how they shook out. That's what my children asked me to do.

I believe through telling a story—and even more, living a story—without knowing fully the outcome, we better understand courage and peace, whether we walk in the valley of the shadow or lie down in green pastures.

The Rev. Cooper is a retired elder in the Arkansas Conference. Email: brocorbeau@gmail.com.



EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

Reconnecting, and giving thanks

I don't feel old enough to have gone 23 years without seeing a friend, but it happened. And it was past time to bring that particular streak to an end.

One perfect autumn Saturday in October, I found myself sitting on the patio of a Dallas restaurant, having brunch with someone I first met when we were both third-graders. We took such a quick and deep dive into the catch-up process that our server had to remind us to order food.

The conversation covered all the expected topics: where we've lived and worked all these years, where we might have crossed paths but didn't, the people we love, the places we travel, the experiences that have shaped us, the pursuits that give our lives meaning.

I learned that he and I have something in common that we didn't in our younger days: the United Methodist Church. Having found a home within this denomination as an adult, he's now active in his local congregation, particularly the Church and Society committee. He shared stories of that group's regular involvement with people who need the support of a nurturing community, and of his recent mission experience in Guatemala.

Just as it has for the past 23 years, time raced by on that day. Four hours into a conversation that seemed to take only a few moments, we said our goodbyes again, this time with information and plans that will help us keep in touch.

This isn't the first time I've reached out to renew a long-dormant friendship, then discovered that our mutual involvement in the United Methodist Church has added an extra cord to the ties that bind us together. Yes, we had always shared a common faith in Christ, but the particular way we live out that faith as United Methodists brings with it another layer of kinship.

So as we enter the time of year when Americans' thoughts turn to giving thanks, I have a freshly recognized gift to add to my thankfulness list: I'm thankful for friends who can sit down with me as if three months, or a decade, or yes, even 23 years hadn't passed since we last met. I believe connections like these truly reflect the love and care God has for each of us, always, whether we're doing the work it takes to stay connected to Jesus or experiencing a season of distance. To borrow a verse from "The Servant Song" by Richard Gillard,

*We are pilgrims on a journey,
we're together on this road,
we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.*

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

Looking for Christmas gift ideas?

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GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

Christian citizenship

It's time to vote for the next president of the United States.

Some of you are very clear about the person you'll vote for and why. Others of you are still in the process of making up your mind. But many of you are struggling with a choice you don't like because you're tired of the rhetoric, the polarization and the lowering of the bar of political discourse.

As your bishop, it's not my job to tell you whom to vote for—and I never would. However, I do want to offer some reflections for your consideration as we approach Election Day 2016.

First, vote. It's a privilege you have been given and it is your duty to use it. The reason is very basic. It is one of the most important things you can do to seek to increase the

common good as much as possible.

Second, let your faith guide how you vote. That means deeply mining how your identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ (which indeed is your primary identity) shapes how you vote in the same way it shapes everything you do. Of course, this does not mean all United Methodists in Arkansas will vote the same. But you have a responsibility to prayerfully seek God's guidance so that your vote is a faithful reflection of the values, strategy and character you embrace as a Christian.

Third, demonstrate Christian generosity as you deal with others who vote differently from you. Don't demonize them and put up barriers. Instead, seek to understand and build bridges, because it takes

everyone working together to make our nation better for everyone.

Fourth, understand that the things in this election that make you so uncomfortable are a current reflection of America's soul. This is not limited to one candidate or one political party, but is systemic and impacts everything. It concerns me deeply because I believe that, fundamentally, we are dealing with a spiritual issue that mandates a spiritual response.

So what is your response? Pray, seeking God's guidance. Grow deeper in your own discipleship. Reach out to make a difference in the lives of individuals, your community, our state and nation through acts of mercy and actions that bring long-term change. But most importantly, continue to seek

revival that changes all of us from the inside out.

Being a citizen is messy business because life is complicated. Being a Christian citizen means having the courage to participate in public life in ways that help make God's will just as real on earth as it already is in heaven. Not through power and might, but through faith, service and power of the Holy Spirit that gives us what we need but can never get on our own.

I am blessed to be an American. I am grateful to live in Arkansas. I give all praise, honor and glory to God who calls me to abundant life in Jesus Christ—in every part of my life.

God bless 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.



How to thank veterans? Offer help

BY CANDACE BARRON
Special Contributor

As I reflect on Veterans Day, I look back on my life and remember the years gone by: years when I didn't even notice Veterans Day, years when I was serving on active duty, years as a layperson when I stood as the pastor recognized veterans, years as the pastor when I invited veterans to stand and be recognized.

For me, these memories raise the question: Beyond giving them a moment in the middle of a worship service once a year, what can we do in the United Methodist Church to help the veterans in our congregations and communities?

Now don't get me wrong; having veterans stand up is good—but we need to stand up for our veterans, too. Because only a small percentage of our current population has actually served in the military, we sometimes have a hard time

relating to the issues faced by veterans. Many veterans and their stories are invisible unless they tell you or you ask.

Partnerships needed

Education is central to making our churches more effective partners with the Veterans Administration (VA) and working with other veterans' organizations. I was happy to see many United Methodist pastors at a recent VA Community Action Board (CAB) Summit. We were standing up and standing in for our veterans and their dependents at that meeting.

I saw some of the same people at the VA Mental Health Summit the week prior, and was impressed with the Suicide Prevention Panel that spoke to us. It reminded me of the lectionary text from October 9 about the 10 lepers (Luke 17:11-19). Only one was willing to return and thank Jesus, and Jesus asks, "Were not all healed?" Jesus is central to the healing of our veterans from the visible and invisible wounds of war.

Recovering from moral injury—the experience of a veteran who has witnessed or participated

in an act that contradicts deeply held moral beliefs—is a significant area for clergy and churches to partner with the Veterans Administration. There are six VA CAB groups in the state: El Dorado, Russellville, Searcy, North Central, Jonesboro and Hot Springs. Connect with the CAB in your area to learn how you can make a difference right there in your community. For more information, send a message to vaclergypartnership@gmail.com.

Tangible thanks

One of the questions I hear often is "How can we thank our veterans?" We have all benefited from their sacrifices, and it is time for us to do something to help. This is how I answer that question:

Personally, I'm not concerned with whether someone chooses to stand for the national anthem, as we've seen covered recently in the news. I stand, but I served so that you can make that decision for yourself—and besides, it's largely symbolic. What I care about far more is making sure that our veterans have access to health care. What I care about is that our

veterans have access to **mental** health care. What I care about is that female veterans are acknowledged and treated. What I care about is that we put our money where our mouth is and fund said care.

What makes me angry, as angry as Jesus in the temple, is that 20 veterans a day are killing themselves, and the state of Arkansas is not giving a single dollar to help prevent it. We don't even have a state-run call center. So when an Arkansas veteran or civilian has suicidal thoughts and reaches out for help, the call might be answered in Tennessee or Michigan or Washington D.C., not by someone who can understand the perspective of a rural Arkansan.

How can we thank our veterans? By providing the help they need and deserve. Be aware. Advocate for changes in state priorities. Can you imagine if 20 kids were dying every day from a treatable disease what a massive reaction we would have in the media, and from politicians, doctors and churches? Saying "thank you" is great, but fighting for veterans' wellbeing is where we can make a

real difference. We can say thank you all day long and not help anyone. It is harder to be an advocate, sometimes in ways that may go against our own financial interests. But the situation of many of our veterans brings this Scripture passage to mind:

"What if one of you said, 'Go in peace! Stay warm! Have a nice meal!'? What good is it if you don't actually give them what their body needs?" (James 2:16, CEB)

I am proud to be a veteran and a United Methodist. Our church has had a positive impact on the world with our passion, dedication and determination, from working on the eradication of malaria to fighting childhood hunger. I am convinced we can have a positive impact on reducing veteran suicides in our state and through our faith help our veterans come all the way home.

The Rev. Dr. Barron, pastor of Gardner Memorial and Amboy UMCs, served five years on active duty in the U.S. Army and three years in the U.S. Army Reserve. She was stationed as a military police officer both stateside and in Germany. To contact her, email candace.barron@arumc.org.

PEOPLE OF FAITH



Sonya Schmidt Murphy

Murphy joins Camp Aldersgate as CEO

The board of directors for Camp Aldersgate, a United Methodist-related camp that offers experiences for individuals with special needs, has announced the selection of Sonya Schmidt Murphy as the camp's new chief executive officer. Murphy succeeds Sarah Wacaster, who was employed with Camp Aldersgate for 21 years.

A Little Rock native who grew up in Magnolia, Murphy comes to Camp Aldersgate with experience in the healthcare, education, banking and nonprofit sectors. She has spent the majority of her career in nonprofit management, including serving as executive director of Economics Arkansas and president of the St. Vincent Foundation.

Murphy is a life-long United Methodist and an active member of St. James UMC Little Rock, where she serves as a member of the Church Council, and she and her husband, Mark, are both members of the Genesis Sunday School Class.

"Our board of directors knew we needed someone with vision, energy, leadership, strong community relationships, and a giant heart," said board chair Cathy Engelkes. "Each of these are critical as we look to take Camp in new strategic directions. And we are convinced Sonya has demonstrated each of these key qualities throughout her many years of service in Arkansas. Her energy and enthusiasm are contagious, and when combined with her vision and leadership, we just knew we had found the right person. Camp Aldersgate is a 'one-of-a-kind, wonderful place,' and it takes a 'one-of-a-kind, special person' to lead it. We are absolutely thrilled to have Sonya on our team!"

As the only camp of its kind in Arkansas, Camp Aldersgate's mission is to create extraordinary experiences for individuals with special needs, enabling them to expand their worlds, and express their unique voices. It serves more than 1,700 individuals with and without special needs each year through its year-round programming, including Summer Medical Camps; Kota Camps for children with and without special needs; a Seniors Day Out program for central Arkansas senior adults; and Weekend Camps that provide opportunities for campers with special needs to experience activities that promote their cognitive, physical, emotional and social growth.

McCastlain receives interfaith leadership award for suicide prevention efforts



William McCastlain

For the third year in a row, a United Methodist is among the recipients of the Marie Interfaith Civic Leadership Award.

William McCastlain, a member of Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock, was honored Sept. 25 for founding the #3people4life campaign in memory of his older brother Cal, who took his own life at age 19 while a student at Ole Miss. With the help of his youth minister, the Rev. Jay Clark, McCastlain created #3people4life, which urges youth to always have three people they

know they can contact in any time of need, whether it is just one bad day or an ongoing slump or depression. The #3people4life campaign asks young people to have those three names and numbers written somewhere they will see them often, such as in their wallet or purse, or on a mirror, as a constant reminder that

these three people are always available to help.

The son of Cal and Heather

McCastlain, he is a Human and Organizational Management major at Vanderbilt University in Nashville. He graduated from Little Rock's Episcopal Collegiate School in 2015. He created a memorial page for his brother through the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), raising over \$24,000 through wristband sales, online donations and direct mail. He will serve as 2017 treasurer of Active Minds, a student-run club at Vanderbilt that works to challenge the stigma surrounding mental health and disorders. Next year Active Minds will have a Suicide Awareness Week on Vanderbilt's campus, and they hope to work with the Nashville Chapter of AFSP to coordinate events and speakers as a prelude to their "Out of the Darkness Walk."

This year's Marie Awards were presented at Temple B'Nai Israel in Little Rock. The Marie Award recognizes outstanding Arkansans who have made a significant contribution to the advancement of the public interest by word, action and example through interfaith engagement and civic service over a number of years. To learn more about the Marie Award and its recipients, visit www.themarie.org.

Burris takes on new duties for UM Publishing House board



Todd Burris

Todd Burris, a layperson from First UMC Conway and the director of administrative services for the Arkansas Conference, has begun his second term on the board of the United Methodist Publishing House (UMPH), during which he will serve as chair of the Audit Committee, as a member of the

Products and Services Committee and on the board's Executive Committee. The UMPH board met at its Nashville headquarters building Oct. 10-12 to organize for the 2017-2020 quadrennium. Now consisting of 25 members (reduced from 43 members by action of the General Conference to achieve a more workable size and decrease costs), the board worshipped, reviewed priorities including new initiatives for building digital capabilities for serving now and in the future, affirmed the next year's budget, welcomed new president and publisher the Rev. Brian K. Milford and elected officers.

UMPH is a publisher and distributor to Christian clergy and laity, with primary responsibilities for publishing (through Abingdon Press) and distribution (through Cokesbury) for the United Methodist Church. The Publishing House is a fully self-supporting agency and receives no general church funds.

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Join hundreds of fellow United Methodists Nov. 19 at the Arkansas Foodbank, 4301 West 65th Street in Little Rock, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. for a brief worship time at 10 a.m., followed by multiple opportunities to put our faith into action. For more than 30 years, the work done at Ingathering has provided useful disaster response and relief supplies while energizing Jesus' followers in their call to service. Pre-registration includes a free Ingathering t-shirt for the first 300 registrants. Visit www.arumc.org/ingathering to register or to learn more.



Strong response to cleaning bucket need changes focus to health kits, school kits

Following flooding in the Baton Rouge area, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) requested that churches send cleaning buckets to the Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, Louisiana. Members of Perryville UMC, pictured above, sent more than 100 of this particular type of disaster response kit, and they were not alone. UMCOR has now received enough cleaning buckets for the current need and for restocking the warehouse, and has requested that we focus on health kits and school kits during Ingathering 2016. Visit www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Relief-Supplies for instructions on assembling health kits and school kits. (Any cleaning buckets your church has already assembled will still be accepted on Nov. 19.)

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Conference youth choir seeking stops for summer 2017 tour

The task force for 2017's Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM) Choir Tour is now accepting requests for host churches for their tour in June 2017. All applicant churches will be considered as the task force seeks to fill the choir's six tour stops.

If your church is interested in hosting, review the tour details below and contact Be Guinn by Dec. 31, 2016.

Dates

Choir Tour 2017 begins Saturday, June 10 and continues through Saturday, June 17. The choir will set up and run a sound check at each church before conducting a 7 p.m. worship service.

Locations

In addition to providing meaningful worship through music, another goal is to tour in as many of Arkansas' five districts as possible. The choir members also will plan for a day of fun before the end of the tour.

The choir's needs

Please prayerfully consider the following requirements before putting in a request to host the ACCYM Choir.

- Sleeping space for roughly 60 people, most of whom have cots or air mattresses. Typically the choir and crew have twice as many females as males.
- A common space for youth and adults to enjoy fellowship with each other and your church

members.

- Dinner the evening of the worship, and breakfast the morning after.
- Showers for everyone, either at the church or private homes. A final headcount will be supplied after our first rehearsal in January 2017. You can be creative in your housing and showering. Some churches find a school, a gym or boys and girls clubs that will allow choir members to shower. Please be aware that transportation will be needed to and from the shower location.
- A worship space that accommodates the choir, the band and their equipment to hold an hour-long worship service.
- Optional laundry capability: Occasionally, host churches are able to wash the choir members' tour shirts – a blessing to have clean shirts for the next day.
- Optional RV hookup: There is a possibility that our sound team will have their own RV so electric and water hook-ups would be greatly appreciated.
- The opportunity to worship creatively with your church using music and other liturgical performing arts.

To apply to host a tour stop, contact Be Guinn by Dec. 31, 2016: beguinnym@gmail.com or 501-944-3294. Email requests are preferred.

The task force will make its final decision by Jan. 28, 2017, and will notify approved churches by Jan. 31, 2017.

Prepare now for #GivingTuesday, Nov. 29



After the retail extravaganzas of Black Friday and Cyber Monday, Giving Tuesday reminds us to support ministries and missionaries with our Christmas giving.

Take some time before Nov. 29 to visit www.umcmmission.org/giving-tuesday/resources. Learn about ways you can help, and download a toolkit and images for promoting Giving Tuesday in your local church.

VIM AND DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATES

For information on any **Volunteers In Mission (VIM) project**, contact the individual listed or Byron Mann, Conference VIM coordinator: vim@arumc.org or 870-826-0268. For **Disaster Response (DR) projects**, contact Byron or Janice Mann, DR co-coordinators: disaster@arumc.org or 870-703-8359 (Janice). On **Facebook**, join the group "Volunteers in Mission & Disaster Response - Serving Arkansas & Beyond" for updates.

Update on Hurricane Matthew recovery in Haiti

From Audrey J. Phelps, director of Volunteers in Mission and Disaster Response for the South Central Jurisdiction:

Hurricane Matthew was a Category 4 storm that caused significant loss of life and property along Haiti's Tiburon Peninsula. We pray for the lives that were lost and the families that mourn them. The communities most significantly impacted were rural and it is estimated around 200,000 homes were destroyed as well as crops, roadways, and more. Due to widespread damage and the scarcity of resources, Haiti is still in the emergency phase of response. Global Ministries and the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) are working with the Methodist Church of Haiti (EMH) to develop a response plan. As of Oct. 21, UMCOR had provided \$85,000 to EMH for much needed food, water and supplies, and more grants are forthcoming for future response. Many teams will be needed to assist with EMH's response; however, they need time to develop an effective response plan. Please be in prayer for EMH and the people of Haiti as they discern the best way to move forward. As plans for mission teams become available, they will be shared here and via your local Conference Coordinators. In the meantime, please continue to provide your prayerful support and donations to UMCOR's International Disaster Response fund. Thank you for your continued prayers and support, and for your desire to serve the people of Haiti in the wake of this disaster.

Southeast Arkansas is ready to welcome your VIM team

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. To schedule a team, contact Janice Mann at disaster@arumc.org.

The climate-controlled host facility in McGehee has real beds (not cots), a kitchen and large common room. Several churches in town take turns feeding teams each evening.

Donations are still needed for continuing recovery efforts. Give to flood relief by sending checks

to Arkansas Conference Disaster Response, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202.

Help Mount Eagle complete the new Hermitage Cabin

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

Cuba mission opportunities in July, November 2017

Contact Nechi Fullerton at 501-766-8151 or nefullerton@yahoo.com to learn more about these opportunities with the Methodist Church in Cuba:

- **July mission:** Another VIM team is forming to travel to Holguin, Cuba, to lead Bible school, with the one-week journey tentatively scheduled for July 2017. Now is the time to consider joining the team. In addition to morning Bible School, the team will worship with the 2,000-member Catedral de Holguin, visit missions, house churches, small groups and see the sights. Those not interested in volunteering at Bible school can be valuable team members, as well.
 - If you cannot travel but would like to **sponsor a child's Bible school experience** in Holguin, Cuba, supplies, craft projects and snacks are needed. Sponsorships of even a few dollars make a real difference in enriching the mission team's abilities to connect with and teach the students. Follow-up photos provided.
 - **November 2017 mission:** Be a part of a one-week November 2017 Mission Team to experience the Cuban Methodist revival while supporting and worshipping with Catedral de Holguin, the second largest Methodist Church in Cuba. This immersion experience includes large church services, missions, house churches, small groups and the sights of Holguin, Cuba.
- To keep up with these and future opportunities in Cuba, visit "Arkansas Methodist-Cuba Metodista Connection" and "Catedral Metodista de Holguin" on Facebook.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

Grace Community Church in Fort Smith, Ark., is seeking a full time Youth Pastor to oversee a ministry to students in grades 7-12. Competitive salary commensurate with experience and education. Resumes should be sent to Pastor Jeff Jones at jeff@gracefs.com.

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

BIBLICAL *giving*

Your 2017 guide to the benevolences of
the Arkansas Conference

Completing the transition to the Arkansas Tithe Initiative

A process designed to more closely align our churches' connectional giving to the biblical model of a tithe—10 percent—is nearly complete.

The Arkansas Tithe Initiative, approved by the 2015 Annual Conference, preserves 90 percent of local church offerings for use within the congregation's mission field.

Beginning in January, every church will use the same calculation to determine connectional giving, doing away with the previous apportionment formula. Now, our shared ministries will be funded by an equal proportion of giving from each congregation.

Last fall, churches began reporting monthly income as a way to prepare for the transition to tithe-based connectional giving. This summer, the members of the Annual Conference finalized the rules for reporting local church income and exclusions, and set the budget for 2017 based on the data gathered from the income reporting.

The transition to the Arkansas Tithe Initiative will be complete in January 2017, when local churches will report their income in preparation for their first monthly tithe, which is due Feb. 10, 2017. Tithes will be due by the 10th day of each month thereafter. Every tithe payment will be based on a local church's income during the previous month.

This biblically-based formula ties the conference budget directly to the financial health of local churches, enhancing sustainability. By basing connectional giving on the total revenue available to a congregation, this new system avoids penalizing congregations for decisions on how they will carry out ministry in their unique ministry context, giving them more flexibility to follow Jesus' call to make disciples, and creating more opportunities to transform lives, communities and the world.



The Arkansas Tithe Initiative
A New Way to Share Ministry



Tithe Initiative connects us in the Spirit

BY BRUCE BENNETT
Special Contributor

“At that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the reign of Claudius. The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea; this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.” (Acts 11:27-30, NRSV)

Since the earliest days of the Church, Christians have organized in ways that demonstrated their “connection” in the Spirit. The Church, united and working together, has always pursued the work of transforming lives by combining resources and efforts. For more than a hundred years, the apportionment system has been the United Methodist way of organizing “to make disciples of Jesus Christ,

who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.”

The Arkansas Conference will soon complete its transition to a new way of connecting and uniting in the Spirit. In a bold and exciting move, the Conference has adopted a biblical model that is easy to understand and fair to all: the Arkansas Tithe Initiative.

In 2017, the churches of the Arkansas Conference will contribute a tithe of each month’s adjusted revenue to the ministry we share through the Conference and the General Church. The tithe (10 percent) is the basic standard of giving in the United Methodist Church (see *The Book of Discipline*, Paragraph 630.5.e). So, while we



Bruce Bennett

extend the ministry of the local church and unite with others in Conference, Jurisdictional and General Church ministries through the Arkansas Tithe Initiative, we will also be reminded of our personal commitments to give generously to God by beginning with a tithe.

We are excited in this benevolence guide to show you the ministries that the Arkansas Tithe Initiative will support. But more than that, the Arkansas Tithe Initiative empowers the local church to model and teach every disciple this basic stewardship model. Start using the Tithe Initiative to begin a discussion in your church about tithing, and watch for upcoming Conference resources to assist your church in making true disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Rev. Bennett, senior pastor of First UMC Texarkana, serves as chair of the Conference Stewardship Committee.

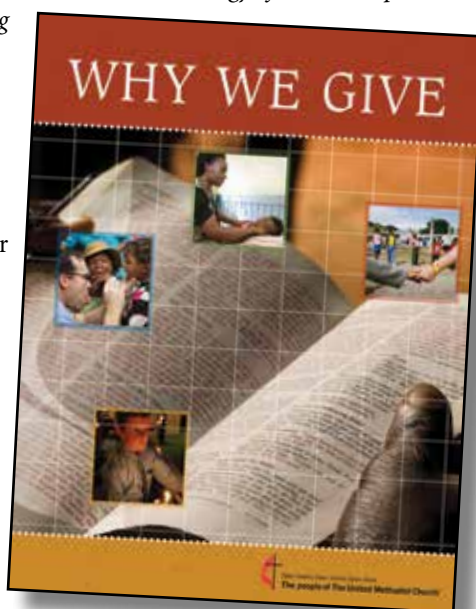
Tools available for growing generous disciples

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

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

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

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



Where does our giving go? A narrative budget for 2017

As a church that works through a connectional system to accomplish more together for Jesus Christ than individual congregations could do on their own, the United Methodists of Arkansas contribute to a number of budgeted funds. Please use the following descriptions of those ministry areas as a resource for your church’s finance committee, church council or other leadership teams, as well as for anyone who wants to know more about how we structure our ministry together.

The **Clergy and Retiree Benefits Fund** provides health care stipends for retirees and their spouses, as well as for ministers on disability leave. This fund also covers the pension benefit for district superintendents and other clergy serving on the Conference staff.

The **General Apportionments Fund** is our share of the denomination’s connectional funds as set by General Conference. The seven general funds are: The **World Service Fund** is the financial lifeline of our shared ministry throughout the world. The **Ministerial Education Fund** educates men and women to serve our Church. The **Black College Fund** supports United Methodism’s historically Black colleges and universities that create vibrant spiritual environments that encourage pride and self-esteem. The **Africa University Fund** is transforming Africa by educating and empowering students from across the African continent. The **Episcopal Fund** pays bishops’ salaries, covers their office and travel expenses and provides their pension and health-benefit coverage. The **General Administration Fund** implements trustworthy administrative oversight, supports the legislative processes of the church and curates the United Methodist Church’s rich history. The **Interdenominational Cooperation Fund** works in partnership with ecumenical organizations to bear witness to a common Christian faith. (Information from www.umcsgiving.org/how-we-give#umc)

The **Jurisdictional Apportionment Fund** has been reduced to only two funds. The Jurisdictional Administration fund covers the annual cost of the jurisdictional office and the quadrennial meeting to elect bishops. The remaining fund benefits Lydia Patterson Institute (www.lydiapattersoninstitute.org), the only United Methodist institution on the Texas/Mexico border. The school strives to form bilingual and bicultural leaders for the church and society.

The **Conference Administration Fund** covers the costs associated with district superintendents, the Board of Ordained Ministry, pastors’ moving expenses, the Center for Administrative Services, and other administrative boards. It also provides supplemental support for the Episcopal Office.

The **Resourcing Local Congregations Fund** provides funding for the mission and ministries of the Arkansas Conference. This includes funding for the Center for Mission and Ministry, the Center for Technology and the Center for Vitality. Also, New Church Starts, Equitable Compensation, Mission Local Church support and Wesley Foundations are just a few of the ministries supported by this fund.

The **Institutional Ministries Fund** provides funding for three United Methodist-related institutions: Hendrix College (hendrix.edu), Philander Smith College (philander.edu) and Camp Aldersgate (campaldersgate.net). These self-governed institutions have historical ties to United Methodism in Arkansas. These funds help support our mission through their work with youth and young adults.

Proportions of giving to budgeted funds

Clergy and Retiree Benefits (\$1,255,000.00):	12.38%
General Apportionments (\$2,636,467.00):	26.02%
Jurisdictional Apportionments (\$81,807.00):	0.81%
Conference Administration (\$1,940,152.00):	19.14%
Resourcing Local Congregations (\$3,673,837.00):	36.25%
Institutional Ministries (\$547,000.00):	5.40%
Total (\$10,134,263.00):	100.00%

Caring for our clergy

A summary of pension benefits and how local churches contribute

Clergy pension benefits include three components: the Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP), the Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP) and the United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP). Clergy appointed full-time participate in CRSP and CPP. All clergy (as well as laity employed by the church) are eligible and encouraged to participate in UMPIP.

The Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) offers full-time clergy security through a defined benefit component that provides a lifetime retirement income, and flexibility through a defined contribution component that provides you with an account balance you can access as your retirement needs require. Participants must contribute a minimum of 1% of eligible compensation to their UMPIP to receive the full employer CRSP-DC contribution. Churches are billed for this amount by the Conference Office of Administrative Services on a quarterly basis.

The retirement formula for 2017 is:

- The monthly CRSP- defined benefit is 8% of eligible "Plan" compensation.
- The CRSP defined contribution benefit is 2% non-matching contribution and 1% matching of eligible "Plan" compensation.

"Plan" compensation includes the actual housing allowance or parsonage equivalent (25% of Plan compensation).

CPP death benefits are payable upon the death of an active or retired participant, his or her spouse or surviving spouse, and his or her children under age 19. Benefits also may be payable

for a child over age 19 if the child was disabled before age 19, or if the child was receiving a surviving child educational benefit.

CPP also provides:

- Supplemental benefits for surviving spouses (may be available upon the death of an active participant).
- Educational benefits for surviving children (may be available upon the death of an active or retired participant).
- Comprehensive disability benefits (including monthly benefit payments, annual increases, continued retirement contributions, enhanced return to work program, and assistance with application for Social Security disability benefits).

Church contributions for the death and disability plan (CPP) premiums for eligible full-time appointed clergy will be 3% of eligible plan compensation, up to 200% of the denomination average compensation, referred to as the DAC.

The UMPIP retirement plan is billed and administered by Wespath Benefits and Investments—the largest denominational pension fund in the world. UMPIP is designed to provide one piece of an overall retirement portfolio. Its features include:

- Convenient before-tax, Roth and/or after-tax contributions in a flat dollar amount or percentage of eligible compensation, up to Internal Revenue Code limits
- Plan sponsor may elect to contribute matching contributions or a percentage of eligible compensation
- Taxes are deferred on before-tax contributions and investment earnings until distribution
- Roth contributions are made after taxes are withheld, but

Roth contributions and earnings are not taxable at distribution if qualified

- After-tax contributions are made after taxes are withheld, but earnings on after-tax contributions are taxable at distribution
- Accepts eligible rollovers from most retirement plans (including Roth accounts) and traditional IRAs
- Variety of investment fund options
- LifeStage Investment Management and LifeStage Retirement Income account management suite
- Hardship loans and withdrawals
- Age 59 ½ and rollover account withdrawals
- Distributions available upon termination of employment, retirement, disability or death
- Lump sum, partial lump sum or cash installment distribution options
- On-demand and quarterly account statements
- Access account information 24/7 through Benefits Access (www.benefitsaccess.org) and through Wespath's automated phone system
- Participant forms and other information available at www.wespath.org

—information from Wespath Benefits and Investments (formerly the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits); www.wespath.org.

How to reach the Arkansas Conference Center for Administrative Services

The staff of the Arkansas Conference Center for Administrative Services is available to answer your questions about the Tithe Initiative, health care coverage choices, clergy pensions and more. Their offices are on the second floor of the Kendall Center at Philander Smith College.

Mailing address for correspondence:

P.O. Box 3611, Little Rock, AR 72203

Address for tithe and apportionment payments and giving to other designated funds:

P.O. Box 55588, Little Rock, AR 72215

Address for pension payments:

P.O. Box 55971, Little Rock, AR 72215

Physical address:

800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202



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Calculating local church apportionments for 2017 under the Tithe Initiative system

Information for this worksheet should be gathered from Table II of the local church's Statistical Report for the Calendar Year 2015, to which the line numbers refer. If you do not have this report, you can obtain a copy from your church office, or from the Conference Center for Administrative Services (see contact information on the previous page).

Calculate the Tithe

A. Total Gross Income for previous month, including designated giving and other funds		
Less the following Approved Church Exclusions:		
B. - Income for capital campaigns (not including LOC/mortgage payments)	-	
C. - Income for memorials and endowments	-	
D. - Income from the sale of church-owned real estate (not used for operational expenses)	-	
E. - Income from tuition-based services (preschool, daycare, etc.)	-	
F. - Direct costs of fundraising (this does not include the income raised)	-	
G. - Income from pass-through/outreach ministries	-	
Church Total Income (Line A minus Lines B, C, D, E, F, G)	=	
Tithe percentage	x	0.10
TOTAL Tithe to remit to Conference for previous month	=	

Calculate the District Apportionment

Health insurance paid to Conference (Line 47)		
Pastor's salary (Line 48)	+	
Associates' salaries (Line 49)	+	
Utilities and allowances (Line 50)	+	
Accountable reimbursements paid to pastors (Line 51)	+	
Other cash allowances (Line 52)	+	
Deacon ministry compensation (Line 53)	+	
Diaconal ministry compensation (Line 54)	+	
Other staff compensation (Line 55)	+	
Current program expenses (Line 56)	+	
Current operating expenses (Line 57)	+	
Church Total Expense Consideration	=	
District Expense Financial Consideration (your district will provide this number)	÷	
Church Expense Decimal (0.00000000: use the first 8 places to the right of decimal)	=	
2016 District Budget (your district will provide this number)	x	
TOTAL District Apportionment (District Budget x Church Expense Decimal)	=	

Determine the Total 2017 Apportionment

District Apportionment amount		
Projected Tithe amount	+	
TOTAL 2017 apportionment	=	

Example: Charles Wesley UMC, Yourtown, Ark.

Calculate the Tithe

A. Total Gross Income for previous month, including designated giving and other funds		22,916
Less the following Approved Church Exclusions:		
B. - Income for capital campaigns (not including LOC/mortgage payments)	-	1,500
C. - Income for memorials and endowments	-	125
D. - Income from the sale of church-owned real estate (not used for operational expenses)	-	208
E. - Income from tuition-based services (preschool, daycare, etc.)	-	1,000
F. - Direct costs of fundraising (this does not include the income raised)	-	60
G. - Income from pass-through/outreach ministries	-	1,000
Church Total Income (Line A minus Lines B, C, D, E, F, G)	=	19,023
Tithe percentage	x	0.10
TOTAL Tithe to remit to Conference for previous month	=	1,902.30

Calculate the District Apportionment

Health insurance paid to Conference (Line 47)		10,440
Pastor's salary (Line 48)	+	30,600
Associates' salaries (Line 49)	+	15,000
Utilities and allowances (Line 50)	+	8,900
Accountable reimbursements paid to pastors (Line 51)	+	2,500
Other cash allowances (Line 52)	+	2,400
Deacon ministry compensation (Line 53)	+	6,000
Diaconal ministry compensation (Line 54)	+	0
Other staff compensation (Line 55)	+	21,400
Current program expenses (Line 56)	+	2,100
Current operating expenses (Line 57)	+	30,000
Church Total Expense Consideration	=	129,340
District Expense Financial Consideration (Northwest District, in this example)	÷	21,398,838
Church Expense Decimal (0.00000000: use the first 8 places to the right of decimal)	=	0.00604425
2016 District Budget (Northwest District, in this example)	x	237,000
TOTAL District Apportionment for 2017 (District Budget x Church Expense Decimal)	=	1,433
Divide by 12 to calculate monthly District Apportionment:		119.42

Determine the Total Monthly Tithe and Apportionment

Monthly District Apportionment amount		119.42
Projected monthly Tithe amount	+	1,902.30
TOTAL monthly Tithe and District Apportionment	=	2,021.72

Your church has received an estimate of what your 2015 tithe would have been if the Tithe Initiative had been fully implemented during that year. Please use that number for budgeting purposes only. Your actual tithe will be calculated using the form above.

District apportionments and the ongoing work of CFA

In adopting the Tithe Initiative, the Arkansas Conference strived to create a balanced approach to funding ministry beyond the local church while keeping the vast majority of funding at the local church level. Many local churches were spending 15 to 20 percent of their income to pay their annual apportionments, while others were paying significantly less. Clearly, a tithing system was the most logical way to solve this disparity. Council on Finance and

Administration (CFA) members had many discussions with other conferences that had adopted some form of a tithe system. Through these discussions, two points became obvious: One, make the change because it is a terrific way to



fund shared ministry, and Two, don't set a tithe at a figure other than 10 percent (which is the proportion usually implied by the word "tithe" in the Bible and elsewhere). CFA worked hard to make the change as soon as possible,

identifying targeted reductions in order to live within the expected tithe. While this change was a perfect fit for the Conference budget, it was not for District budgets. Currently, District administrative budgets total nearly \$1,000,000 and are established by the five District Conferences. CFA discussed these amounts, and it ultimately decided not to include them in the tithe calculation at this time. To do so now would

mean sudden and significant reductions to both District and Conference budgets, significantly unbalancing the current funding scale. Over the next quadrennium, CFA will determine a way to include District, Conference, Jurisdictional and General church shared ministries in the 10 percent tithe. As we work toward this promise, we will explore options to help avoid significant cuts to ministry funding.

OMP hosting adult groups for year-round mission

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

As part of its strategic plan, Ozark Mission Project (OMP) has expanded into programs beyond its well-known summer camps for youth and school break experiences for college students, with the goal of being able to provide year-round mission opportunities.

The organization's executive director, Bailey Faulkner, credits a grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA), which funded the hiring of a recruitment and logistics coordinator, for helping make possible the latest expanded offerings. Michael McMurray has been working in that role since May of this year.

One recent result of OMP's expanded capabilities was the October arrival of a Volunteers in Mission team from First UMC Appleton, Wisconsin. The group of 26 United Methodists, most of whom are retired, divided their attention among projects OMP arranged at the Arkansas Foodbank, Our House, United Cerebral Palsy and the homes of three different OMP-identified Neighbors in North Little Rock who needed ramps or porches to make



Volunteers in Mission team members from First UMC Appleton, Wisconsin, take a break from doing some painting at Our House in Little Rock.

their homes accessible.

"The work needed to be done sooner than in the summer," said Bailey Faulkner, OMP's executive director.

Appleton UMC's team, which tends to choose a different destination each year, expressed appreciation for a wonderful and rewarding experience.

"This year I was able to work on several different projects and felt God's presence in the amazing families I connected with and the committed and caring staff at OMP," said Donna Frick.

"The staff at OMP made everything so convenient for our team when we came there to work," said fellow team member Anne Bremer. "The families we served were welcoming and helpful, directions and guidelines were clear and thorough, and the churches who hosted our meals were welcoming. OMP manages its programs in an efficient, compassionate, and professional manner. It was a joy to be part of the operation for a week!"

First UMC Appleton's pastor, the Rev. Jayneann McIntosh, was making her third trip with this



Members of the Wisconsin team, which served in central Arkansas through Ozark Mission Project, in an orientation session at the Arkansas Food Bank. COURTESY PHOTOS

group, but she said some of its members have been engaging in mission together for more than 20 years.

"From the first, I've been amazed and delighted by their commitment to this ministry," McIntosh said. "They've worked with both storm damage and poverty relief, traveling to New Jersey, the Dakotas, New Mexico and now Arkansas, as well as many other places nearer and further from home." The team looks for opportunities with jobs for everyone, so that someone with health

problems can serve in a non-construction setting, while those with advanced carpentry skills can put those talents to work, too. They also address the spiritual aspects of service to others.

"This trip, I particularly encouraged us to try to look beyond our own context," she said. "What assumptions or judgments were getting in our way of meeting people where they were—loving and accepting them as our neighbors?"

To connect with OMP, visit www.ozarkmissionproject.org.

UMFA supports local churches through grants to attend Leadership Institute



More than 100 clergy and laity from 18 churches received grants this year from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) to attend the 2016 Leadership Institute, held Sept. 28-30 at Church of the Resurrection (COR) in Leawood, Kansas. COR, one of the largest United Methodist congregations in existence, holds this annual event to help enrich the ministries of sister churches from all over the U.S. and beyond.

Staff from the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality (CFV) accompanied the grant recipients. The CFV will follow up with each of those congregations, helping them develop action plans and providing leadership coaching. In addition to these UMFA grant recipients, more than 100 other United Methodists from Arkansas attended as well, making Arkansas the most represented conference at the Leadership Institute other than the Great Plains Conference, where COR is located.

For more information on the Leadership Institute, visit <http://li.cor.org>.

'Faith of Timothy' scholarships available for five annual youth events

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young..."

—1 Timothy 4:12

The Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM) has begun offering the Faith of Timothy scholarship to one student at each of five annual events: Refuge (a retreat for students in grades 6 through 9), Veritas (a worship gathering for grades 7 through 12), Choir Tour (grades 9 through 12), Jr. High Assembly (grades 6 through 8) and Sr. High Assembly (grades 9 through 12).

Find the application form at www.accym.org/resources. It includes three questions each applicant must answer: "What does 1 Timothy 4:12 mean to you?" "Why do you want to attend this event?" and "Why do you need financial



assistance for this event?"

Applications are due 30 days before the early-bird deadline for the event the student wishes to attend.

For additional information on Conference-wide youth ministries, visit www.accym.org.

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Students in a Cooking Matters class held at First UMC Little Rock practice their knife skills under the supervision of local chef Cash Ashley.
PHOTO COURTESY OF ARKANSAS HUNGER RELIEF ALLIANCE

Cooking Matters

(from page 1)

them, and then come back and report on their project to the class. Sometimes it was to say, “Don’t cook this; it’s awful,” or to suggest some changes in a recipe, and I think that gave people more exposure to different things they may not have cooked before.

When I learned about the Cooking Matters program from my friend Kathy Webb, executive director of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, I immediately started thinking about how to implement it at St. Paul. I went online and learned all I could about

the program, and talked to the folks at the Alliance, and then I started to talk to people at church about it. When I approached our pastor, the Rev. Charles Sigman, he told me, “It’s great. Let’s do it.”

We indicated our interest to the Hunger Relief Alliance, and just a month or so later, the Arkansas Conference of the UMC contacted me to ask if the church would like to try conducting a class using a grant from the Conference to defray the expenses.

That request sure sounded like God speaking to us. It was time to quit talking about it, and start doing it.

After a couple of false starts—

we had to learn how best to publicize the classes and attract students—the classes got under way immediately after Labor Day.

We distributed fliers via the local food pantry and Two Saints Kitchen, as well as sending them home with students who are in the backpack food program sponsored by one of St. Paul’s Sunday School classes. We ran notices in the newspaper and public service announcements on local TV, and put fliers at other locations, including the public library. (For our next class, we plan to walk the neighborhood near the church with fliers, inviting people to participate, and to post notices at neighborhood businesses.)

A team of volunteers assembled each Wednesday to teach and cook. The flow of questions and answers back and forth between participants and volunteers opened up many new, inexpensive meal options for participants.

“We heard about the classes when we went to the food pantry because we were going through a tough time,” one student said. “We thought it sounded like a great idea. It’s really been a blessing to me to learn how to cook some new, healthy meals cheaply.” Her husband, she

noted, is diabetic and has high blood pressure, so learning how to use healthy proteins and whole grains was a big help.

Students also learned some new techniques. One night’s dinner of chicken cooked with cumin, coriander and cinnamon got raised eyebrows as it was being prepared, but students agreed that, served with rice and mixed vegetables, the unfamiliar flavor profile made a good change of pace in a weekly menu plan.

The classes heavily emphasize menu planning and careful shopping, as well as using tips and techniques for stretching more expensive ingredients like meat. For example, substituting half the ground beef in a Mexican casserole recipe with black beans cuts the cost

of the dish significantly, with little difference in flavor or nutritional value. “Recycling” the leftovers from a chuck roast or roasted chicken into a different dish means getting more meals for the dollar with more variety, as well.

But best of all was the opportunity to put the church’s love of God to work in a very practical way. As volunteer Donna Walpole explained it, “The people who came to that class are the people God wanted to come to that class, because he wanted us to minister to them. And that’s what we did.”

Brockwell, an enthusiastic home cook and member of UMC Jonesboro, has a long history of involvement in hunger ministries, including Two Saints Kitchen and Cooking Matters.

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Abingdon Press
Growing in Life, Serving in Faith

‘The Lord God made them all...’

October includes the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi on the fourth day of the month, and a growing number of churches hold special services in conjunction with it to recognize and give thanks for God’s gift of animals. First UMC Mena on Sunday afternoon, Oct. 2, celebrated “The Blessing of Animals” with approximately 30 people and 32 pets attending. The Rev. Ann Ferris led the out-of-doors gathering in a service of praise and prayer, Scripture reading and music, and administered individual blessings to the animals and their friends.



COURTESY PHOTO

Though one cat in attendance became too excited and escaped from his carrier, resulting in several anxious minutes of searching, his safe return was welcomed with thanks to the Lord God who made them all... creatures great and small.

—submitted by Flora McChristian

Bonhoeffer

(continued from page 1)

Bonhoeffer House participants decide together how they will behave on campus. They agree upon standards for how to conduct themselves at parties, how to handle hosting significant others, etc., in ways that do not reflect poorly on their community. Using the Covenant Discipleship model, a Wesleyan class meeting form outlined by Discipleship Ministries of the UMC, the group seeks to share life through worship, acts of mercy, justice and devotion. In addition to writing a covenant concerning these areas of their lives and their general behavior, the group has a weekly common meal together and shares in prayer and devotion time. They decide together how they want to approach works of service, taking on at least one service project as a group. They are studying Bonhoeffer's book *Life Together*.

"The accountability piece, I think, although it does seem like a 'have-to,' tends to make people relate more to each other, because they signed up to do it," Whitney said. "They made a covenant."

Discovering diversity

While they share a desire to deepen their Christian discipleship, Bonhoeffer House residents don't all approach their lives of faith in the same way. In addition to United Methodists, this year's group includes students from Roman Catholic and various Evangelical Christian traditions. Not all of the students are from the U.S., either—there's one Bonhoeffer House member this year from Rwanda. These elements of diversity create an environment with more differences within the community than an outside observer might assume.

Whitney notes that in *Life Together*, one of the concepts Bonhoeffer introduces is that living in such a community is "grace and joy"—an idea that she has seen tested when students' beliefs differ. "When you are in conflict over beliefs, how do you practice grace and joy with each other, and how do you see it as a gift to be in community even when you disagree?" she says.

Schylar Ferguson, a junior who serves as the chaplain associate in Bonhoeffer House, says it's been interesting to agree on the big things and to then discover smaller, but still significant, disagreements. She has found herself checking in with each student, making sure the house's conversations don't come off harshly when there are different perspectives. "How can we build off of each other's

strengths? How can we recognize where we ourselves have weaknesses in the way that we approach our religion in the world?" she asks. "That's been one of the things that I've really enjoyed."

Andrew Fleming, also a junior, pointed out that many of this year's residents knew each other before they began living as an intentional community. In some ways that has helped, he said, but not in all ways.

"I think that sometimes maybe has detracted a little bit from our discussions," he says. "Not even just detracted from our ability to get through discussions, but detracted from our desire to *have* those discussions because we don't want to step on any toes, and we don't want to hurt anybody's feelings." Both he and Ferguson have noticed a tendency for the group to simply go silent when they encounter disagreement, and they are trying to find ways to work through that discomfort.

Making adjustments

Bonhoeffer House recently moved its weekly communal meal from Saturday supper to Friday breakfast. It freed up the Saturday gathering as a time to extend invitations and hospitality to those who don't live in the house and who might be curious about it.

Each week at Friday breakfast, a different house member offers a devotional, opens discussion on a particular topic or shares part of his or her faith story.

"The first morning we did that, we all prayed for the person next to us," Ferguson said. "You could tell it was harder for some of the people who didn't know each other really well, but in the act of praying for somebody, you have to be very close in order to do that, and so I think that was really helpful."

Since then, others have introduced elements of their own faith traditions during the communal meal, such as when an Episcopalian member shared a closing prayer that had been part of his church's worship service the Sunday before.

Another major adjustment: removing the group covenant requirement that they celebrate Holy Communion together. Whitney had noticed that though each group member had agreed they should share in the sacrament, it didn't work well. Several non-United Methodist house members felt uncomfortable receiving the bread and cup somewhere outside their own denomination, or from a clergy woman when their tradition ordains only men.

She tried offering blessings for

those who didn't want to receive the Communion elements, but even that felt exclusionary and awkward. "That was actually harming community rather than helping community, because they felt isolated in the circle," she said. Admitting that it just wasn't going to work for everyone was what finally put people at ease.

Awareness

Fleming says at times he's been disappointed that life in Bonhoeffer House doesn't always revolve overtly around being Christian, but he has begun to reconsider that view because he can see his life changing.

"I've been more engaged with other spiritual and religious life activities around campus," he said. "I've been going to chapel more, I've been talking to J.J. more, I've been going to Communion every week.... I've been more active in my faith, and that actually has felt really good."

Whitney suggests that the behaviors Fleming has noticed may have to do with the general awareness of Christian identity that comes from living in intentional community.

"It's not even so much the accountability," Fleming said. "It's just the people living in the house and the people who I'm in community with

outside the house, I want to be in worship with them... I'm hunting after that."

Ferguson says that knowing her environment is comfortable with faith expression makes a difference for her. She previously had a roommate who wasn't a person of faith, so living in Bonhoeffer House has given her new opportunities to host Bible studies and other activities.

"It's so much better to be able to invite people into a space where they feel comfortable talking about faith, and some of the shortcomings that they're having, and feel like there is a space that is community-based and loving," she said.

"In campus ministry, I think there is something important about carving out space, a physical space and metaphorical space for community to happen," Whitney said. "I think having a place like Bonhoeffer House really does kind of *jell* together a community that could be on the fringes or scattered.... We are very fortunate at Hendrix that they're like, 'Yes, we love this idea. Please have one of our housing options be a Christian housing option.' It's not something that would happen at a lot of schools."

The Rev. Chase Green, who currently serves as associate pastor at Asbury UMC Little Rock, lived in

Bonhoeffer House twice, in 2007-08 and 2009-10. He says his time there increased his understanding of what it takes to commit to a Christian life.


"The intentional Christian community creates an atmosphere where your own devotion to God is held accountable, which is often not addressed at all in the life of the church," Green said. "We are called to not just be pushed out of our comfort zones, but to realize the grace of God wants to lead us where we freely walk out of our comfort zones and embrace a more disciplined way of life."


The Rev. Colin Bagby, associate pastor at First UMC Maumelle, lived in Bonhoeffer House during 2008-09, when the group wrote a 7 a.m. prayer time into their covenant.

"For a young college student, this was not the most fun practice, but I see direct fruit from that experience in my own spiritual practice and discipline now," he said.

Bagby didn't realize at the time that he was gaining practical ministry experience by living, working and struggling within a Christian community.

"If I could do it again, I would," he said. "There were many frustrating times in our community, but I grew in Christian maturity and grew in my faith."





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Council of Bishops names 32 commission members

The United Methodist Council of Bishops on Oct. 24 announced the membership of the Commission on a Way Forward.

“After three months of diligent and prayerful discernment, we have selected eight bishops, 11 laity, 12 elders and one deacon to serve on the Commission,” said Bishop Bruce R. Ough, president of the Council of Bishops, in a news release from the United Methodist Communications office of public information. “This group is representative of our theological diversity.”

Ough said the makeup of the 32-member commission is roughly comparable to U.S. and Central Conference membership.

All of the members of the Commission have already indicated their willingness and availability to serve. The team of moderators—Bishop Ken Carter, Bishop Sandra Steiner-Ball and Bishop David Yemba—will soon convene the Commission to begin to organize their work and finalize their meeting schedule.

The Commission’s mission is to “bring together persons deeply committed to the future(s) of the United Methodist Church, with an openness to developing new relationships with each other and exploring the potential future(s) of

our denomination in light of General Conference and subsequent annual, jurisdictional and central conference actions.”

The 2016 General Conference gave a specific mandate to the Council of Bishops to lead the United Methodist Church in discerning and proposing a way forward through the present impasse related to human sexuality and the consequent questions about unity and covenant.

The Commission is a group appointed by the Council of Bishops to assist the Council in fulfilling this mandate. As such, the Council has appointed bishops from across the global connection to serve on the Commission alongside laity and clergy. While clergy and laity will vote at a General Conference on these matters, the bishops have the responsibility to lead the church. Thus, the Commission is designed to inform the Council’s leadership of the General Conference. After hearing concerns that the proposed composition did not include enough laity, three additional laypersons were added from the original pool of more than 300 nominees.

At their fall meeting (set for Oct. 30-Nov. 2), the Council of Bishops will make a decision about a called General Conference and will

review a plan to conduct additional and complementary work in annual conferences designed to broaden the conversation with hundreds of lay and clergy members.

The members of the Commission are:

Jorge Acevedo
USA, Florida, elder, male

Brian Adkins
USA, California, elder, male

Jacques Umembudi Akasa
Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo, laity, male

Tom Berlin
USA, Virginia, elder, male

Matt Berryman
USA, Illinois, laity, male

Helen Cunanan
Philippines, elder, female

David Field
Europe, Switzerland, laity, male

Ciriaco Francisco
Philippines, bishop, male

Grant Hagiya
USA, California, bishop, male

Aka Dago-Akribi Hortense
Africa, Côte d’Ivoire, laity, female

Scott Johnson
USA, New York, laity, male

Jessica LaGrone
USA, Kentucky, elder, female

Thomas Lambrecht
USA, Texas, elder, male

Myungae Kim Lee
USA, New York, laity, female

Julie Hager Love
USA, Kentucky, deacon, female

Mazvita Machinga
Africa, Zimbabwe, laity, female

Patricia Miller
USA, Indiana, laity, female

Mande Guy Muyombo
Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo, elder, male

Eben Nhiwatiwa
Africa, Zimbabwe, bishop, male

Dave Nuckols
USA, Minnesota, laity, male

Casey Langley Orr
USA, Texas, elder, female

Gregory Palmer
USA, Ohio, bishop, male

Donna Pritchard
USA, Oregon, elder, female

Tom Salsgiver
USA, Pennsylvania, elder, male

Robert Schnase
USA, Texas, bishop, male

Jasmine Rose Smothers
USA, Georgia, elder, female

Leah Taylor
USA, Texas, laity, female

Deborah Wallace-Padgett
USA, Alabama, bishop, female

Rosemarie Wenner
Europe, Germany, bishop, female

Alice Williams
USA, Florida, laity, female

John Wesley Yohanna
Africa, Nigeria, bishop, male

Alfiado S. Zunguza
Africa, Mozambique, elder, male

MODERATORS

Sandra Steiner Ball
USA, West Virginia, bishop, female

Kenneth Carter
USA, Florida, bishop, male

David Yemba
Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo, bishop, male

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Do you prefer keeping up with church news on social media? Check out the Facebook pages for UMNS, www.facebook.com/umnews, and the Arkansas Conference, www.facebook.com/arkansasumc.

OBITUARY

MOUNTAIN HOME Martha Leona Bonsall

Leona Bonsall, 85, of Mountain Home, passed away Oct. 6, 2016.

She was born Sept. 1, 1931, on a farm in Page County, Iowa (outside of Clarinda, Iowa). She was the youngest of 10 children of Edward Jefferson Bean and Ora Langloss Bean. Leona graduated from Clarinda High School in 1949. She married Allen Bruce Bonsall Sept. 04, 1949, at the Clarinda Methodist Church.

Leona and Allen moved to Texas in June 1952, where Allen was ordained a Lay Minister of the Texas Conference of the Methodist Church in 1960 and Leona became a minister’s wife. She was active in the Methodist Women and with the youth of the churches they served. In the summer of 1965 Allen, Leona, and their children were transferred to the Little Rock Conference in Arkansas. Appointments included Mount Carmel in Rison, where Allen served when he was ordained an elder in full connection; the Wesley Foundation in Magnolia; Oak Forest UMC Little Rock; Fairview UMC Texarkana; First UMC Prescott; and Horseshoe Bend UMC.



Leona
Bonsall

Leona was a past president of the United Methodist Women of the Little Rock Conference. She resided in Horseshoe Bend for 25 years before moving to Mountain Home in 2014.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband of 54 years, the Rev. Allen B. Bonsall; seven sisters; and two brothers. She is survived by three children, Vicki Packer and her husband, Clyde, of Mountain Home; Jim Bonsall and his wife, Mendal, of Norphlet; and Judy McCulloch and her husband, Mike, of Fulshear, Texas; grandchildren, Chris Packer; Beth Packer Avery and her husband, Chris; Craig Bonsall and his wife, Amanda; Brooke Bonsall; Erin Bonsall Williams and her husband, Chris; Jeffrey McCulloch and his wife, Becca; Kyle McCulloch and his wife, Taryn; 12 great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces and nephews.

A graveside service was held Oct. 29, 2016, Evening Shadows Memorial Park Cemetery in Horseshoe Bend, with the Rev. Heather Spencer Clawitter officiating.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Hospice of the Ozarks, 701 Burnett Drive, Mountain Home, AR 72653; or Horseshoe Bend United Methodist Church, 600 West Church Street, Horseshoe Bend, AR 72512.

Ozark Mission Project

2017 Registration is now open

www.ozarkmissionproject.org/register2017

Senior High Camps

<u>June 11-17</u>	<u>June 25-July 1</u>	<u>July 9-15</u>
North Little Rock	Blytheville	Rogers
Hot Springs	Little Rock	Cabot
Mountain View		Pine Bluff

Middle School Camps

<u>June 11-15</u>	<u>June 25-29</u>	<u>July 11-15</u>
Texarkana	Magnolia	Mountain Home

Berryville church takes to parking lot for weekday ministry



Berryville UMC member Mary Chew visits with Berryville School District students who stop by the church on their way to classes each morning.

COURTESY PHOTO

Monday through Friday during the school year, members of Berryville UMC arrive in the church parking lot at 6:30 a.m. They bring soft drinks, hot chocolate, coffee and snacks, and will spend the next two hours serving and visiting with local students who walk by the church property to get to school.

It's a simple ministry of presence and hospitality, but one that has had enthusiastic support for several years. While the official need is for four adults per morning, more almost always come, simply because they enjoy helping young people get a good start to the school day.

Everything provided is free to the students. According to the Rev. Andy Hughes, September's parking lot ministry brought an average of 68 individual contacts per day, and some of those interactions went deeper than a greeting and the gift of a snack. There is a place for students to submit written prayer requests, or they may choose to pray with someone.

"There have been more than 30 prayers, including prayers for healing, family crisis, guidance, a desire to know Jesus and numerous other needs," he said. "There have been many adults ministered to also."

Foreman church hosts pumpkin patch



COURTESY PHOTO

First United Methodist Church Foreman on Friday, Oct. 14 sponsored its annual "Pumpkin Patch" for the kindergarten and first-grade students of the Foreman Elementary School.

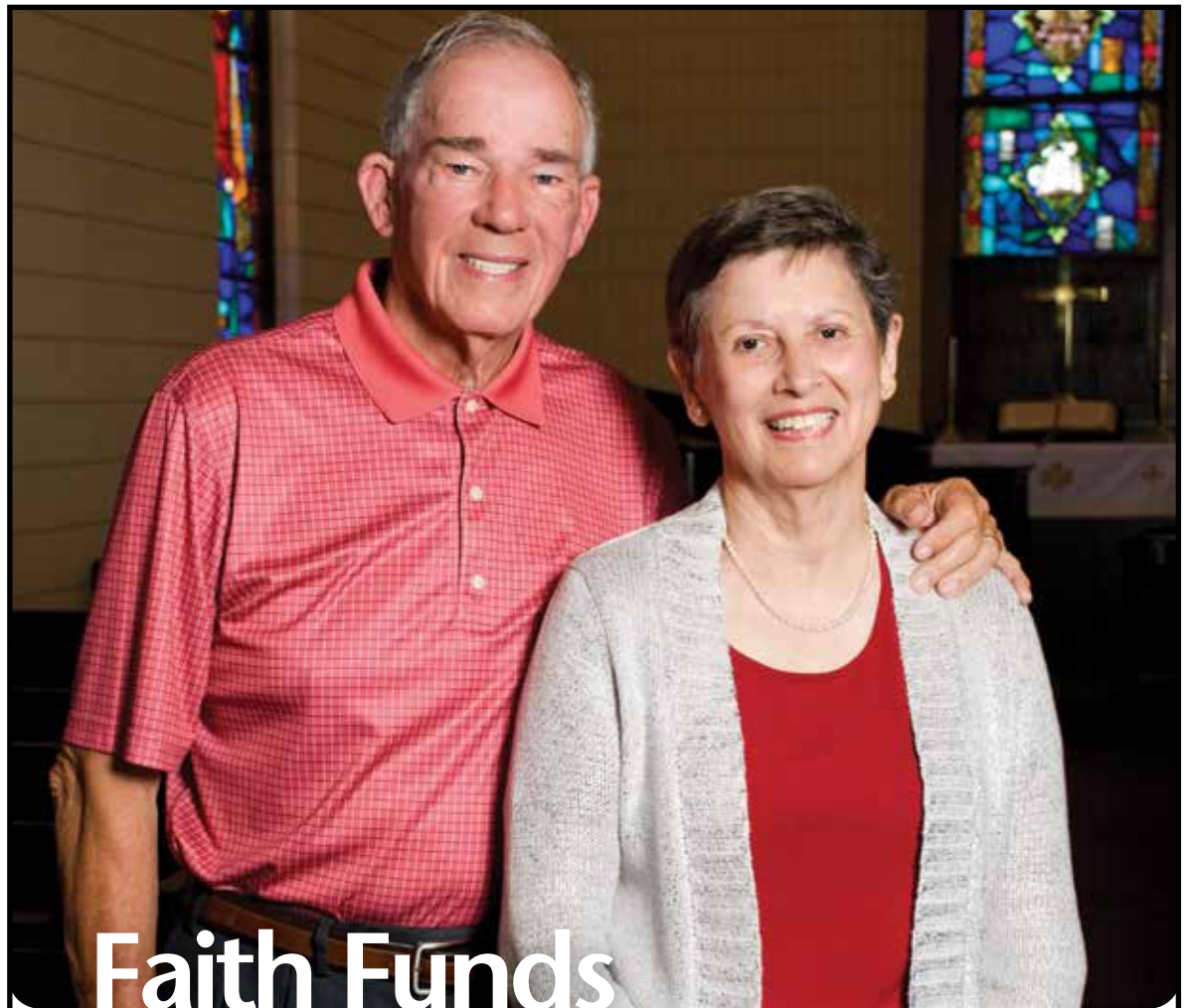
Approximately 75 excited and eager students began the day with a picture story from the children's book *Before We Eat: From Farm to Table* by Pat Brisson. Students got to see crops that become common foods and hear stories of beekeeping with visual aids. They also sampled popcorn popped on the cob as a special treat.

Creative activities included cupcake decorating and making butter, and of course carving a pumpkin while learning about how pumpkins grow and how they can be used—including the nutritious, delicious seeds. A cheer went up as the lights were turned out and the newly carved Jack-O Lantern came to life.

After a sack lunch, the students went outside to the Pumpkin Patch for group photos, and each child selected a small pumpkin to take home.

Upon seeing the smiles and receiving hugs and thank-yous from the students as they loaded the buses, the teachers, parents and volunteers declared Pumpkin Patch Day a big success. The church can hardly wait until next year!

—submitted by Kat Burchfield



The Long Run

Bob Willson and the late Joanna Willson had been members of First UMC, North Little Rock, for 40 years after they moved from Lake Charles, Louisiana. High school sweethearts, they were married more than 60 years, with two children and two grandchildren.

Bob is a full-time golfer, former teacher, and retired insurance man. He knows about planning for the long run. When his friend Paul Lasseigne told him about charitable gift annuities from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, he thought it sounded like a good idea. He created a charitable gift annuity with the Foundation that provides a fixed, guaranteed annual income to him during his lifetime, saves money on his income taxes, and benefits the transportation ministry at his local church upon his death.

Joanna, who passed away in the summer of 2016, decided to create a second charitable gift annuity at UMFA to benefit the building program at their church. Always active, she spent Tuesday mornings with a craft group at the church, swam three times a week, and was a Master Gardener. She was a teacher, bookkeeper, and piano teacher before retirement.

"It is a shame that more people don't know about charitable gift annuities," Bob said. "It is a good investment for now, and we have the opportunity to support our church after our lifetimes." For more information, call Janet Marshall or email jmarshall@umfa.org.



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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