

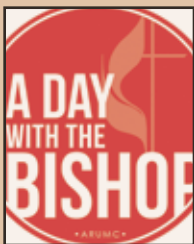
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Reactions to travel ban vary among Arkansas UMs

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

United Methodists of Arkansas were among those reacting to a Jan. 27 executive order signed by President Donald Trump.

The order, which was stayed by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, placed a 90-day ban on travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries entering the U.S. and stopped refugee resettlement already in progress, some for 120 days and indefinitely for refugees from Syria. It sparked protests at locations across the U.S., including international airports receiving such travelers, state capitols and college campuses.

Hendrix College in Conway, a United Methodist-related institution, was among the schools where demonstrations were held. Students organized the Jan. 30 event via Facebook, and it included time for sharing personal stories and concerns related to the travel ban.

"Stories came from students, faculty and community members from Conway," said the Rev. J.J. Whitney, chaplain of the college. "Students and faculty offered some helpful ways to get in touch with



The Rev. J.J. Whitney, chaplain of United Methodist-related Hendrix College in Conway, embraces student Roshaneh Ali following a speech Ali delivered as part of a Jan. 30 on-campus demonstration opposing President Trump's executive order that restricted immigration from seven predominately Muslim countries. Students "shared their stories, spoke their hearts, encouraged one another to act and stood as allies for our Muslim and immigrant neighbors," Whitney said.

PHOTO BY LEXI ADAMS, HENDRIX COLLEGE

government officials to let voices be heard."

Whitney expressed her personal opposition to the executive order by saying Jesus commands us to open our homes, churches, schools and communities to the stranger among us. She said the executive order

"does not honor who we are as Americans, and it does not follow the way of Jesus Christ."

First UMC Little Rock made news with two words on its digital sign: "Refugees Welcome." Church members and at least one television station shared photos of the sign on

social media, and the response was mostly positive.

"However, we did get several anonymous calls from people who were upset about it," said the Rev. David Freeman, the church's senior pastor. "We thanked them for their [See REACTIONS, page 9]"

One pastor's legacy: Three churches add up dollar bills to make a difference

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

For the fourth year in a row, St. Paul United Methodist Church Fort Smith has carried out a mission-driven offering rooted in a simple premise: Any dollar bills placed in the offering plate go into a special fund to be given to local ministries that benefit the surrounding community. The Fort Smith church has encouraged the discipline of giving a dollar per week for this specific purpose.

"It's a reminder that when we worship, we bring something to offer God—ourselves, our resources, our time, our talents," says the Rev. Steve

Poarch, the church's pastor.

It's also a piece of the legacy left by a pastor who never served that church. St. Paul UMC Fort Smith modeled this offering after a tradition carried out at First UMC Paragould and Christ of the Hills UMC Hot Springs Village. Both of those churches started the dollar-a-week offering when the late Rev. Bill Leslie served as pastor. Leslie started the offering at the Hot Springs Village church in 2002, and Poarch served his



Bill Leslie

seminary internship there. Leslie died in 2012, when he was senior pastor of First UMC Paragould.

"Bill felt that even though we tithe and give regularly, each time we come to worship we should put an offering in the plate in gratitude to God for all our blessings," said Kathy Bracke, office administrator for Christ of the Hills UMC.

Bracke says the average total from the dollar-a-week offering at Christ of the Hills comes to about \$25,000. To date, they've given away \$342,169 through this ministry. Since Leslie's death, the largest grant given each year has been designated the "Bill Leslie Memorial Gift." The most recent of these gifts went to Habitat

for Humanity, and the box truck purchased with the funds bears the church's logo and the words, "in Memory of Rev. Bill Leslie."

First UMC Paragould has collected and given away \$63,647 since Leslie started the offering there in 2010. Recipients have included faith-based organizations such as the Future and Hope Christian Women's Job Corps, as well as community organizations like the Greene County Rescue Squad, Court Appointed Special Advocates and the Greene County Tech Parent Center.

St. Paul UMC Fort Smith has collected a four-year total of \$12,124. Each year, the church staff and the [See DOLLAR, page 8]

Disconnected: Conclusions from the smartphone experiment

BY CARTER FERGUSON
Special Contributor

Editor's Note: This is the second installment in a two-part series. The first part appeared in the Feb. 3, 2017 issue of the Arkansas United Methodist.

"We got this cell phone for you so you could call us in an emergency, or when you inevitably do something completely ridiculous and get caught," my parents told me in high school. That's all it was for. But with advancements in cellular technology, that view has changed, and so has the world.

Now, smartphones can tell you where you are; they can tell you where your friends are; they can tell you how to get from where you are to where your friends are. They can tell you about your health. They connect to your car, your watch, your shoes, your Fitbit, your HVAC system, your baby monitor and even your doorbell. The ways we can use our phones to affect the world around us seem limitless.



Carter Ferguson

Perhaps the most significant thing smartphones do is connect us. They make it so easy it to call, text, send pictures and broadcast what we are doing that the daily experience of life has become one in which we are nearly always in contact with one another. The smartphone has shrunk our world in a way never before seen. But this connectivity has not come without a price. Studies are beginning to show that, along with that large data plan and fancy case for your phone, you may have also bought an instrument that has the ability to, in the most terrifyingly clandestine ways currently imaginable, help cultivate (if not outright cause) emotional, psychological, relational and perhaps even spiritual brokenness.

Evidence is beginning to mount that frequent social media use, constant connectivity to the internet and constant connection to others is hurting us, even as we think it's helping us.

I was skeptical, so, as I wrote last month, I decided to experience life in the pre-iPhone, pre-iMessage, pre-Apple mail, pre-Facebook stone

age. I disconnected my iPhone 7, moving to a flip phone to observe how my life would change. I've noticed several things as I've been bereft of my iPhone.

Smartphones and social media aren't real connection, but we don't truly understand that.

Social media-based friendships are not true friendships, and they cannot truly provide the connection God designed us to need.

Now, we say we understand this concept. I've heard people say—and I've said myself—that we know social media is no substitute for the real thing. But what should truly scare us is that while we say these things, we still settle for digital connection. We text friends across town instead of talking to the ones standing in front of us, and sometimes we even choose to text people across the room instead of talking directly to them.

We think that we think one thing about relationships, smartphones and social media use, yet we function in a contradictory way. That means we are at least one step from reality, which suggests we're entering into the realm of actually being a little insane.

Social media use may be popular because it's easier.

Over the past month, I've had to repeatedly ask myself why I yearned to have social media apps back on my phone. The conclusion I reached, when I was finally willing to be honest with myself, is that digital community is easier than real community.

Bluntly put, I could unfriend, unfollow or block emotionally needy, grumpy, irritating and annoying posts if they really began to grate on my nerves. I could simply not answer messages. I could "walk away from my computer" or "lose my phone" when you made me mad. Or I could just say awfully nasty things about you out loud that you'd never hear, and I'd never be held accountable for, because we're communicating digitally. You don't get to do that to a person face to face.

Real-life relationships are far more difficult. And while it may seem relatively unimportant to experience those difficulties, in truth, it is precisely those interpersonal struggles that make us better.

Social media relationships are more innocuous; they rub us wrong

less often, and therefore leave more rough edges on our personalities and souls. Yes, we can control our social media relationships more, but as Richard Rohr puts it, "It's the things that we can do nothing about or with that do the most with us."

What are we missing out on by settling for social media relationships above the real thing?

It's easier to be content without a smartphone.

Perhaps the single most shocking result of being without the constant connection to social media has been how much better I feel. Initially, I was kind of unhappy and grumpy, like I hadn't had enough coffee or something. But eventually I began to notice I was simply more content in the midst of the disconnection.

I suspect the studies are right, that cell phone and social media connection do have a drug-like effect on the brain, which we see as making us happier. In reality, though, it's just making us numb.

I believe that without the smartphone, my sermons are better, my marriage is better, I'm a better pastor, I'm a better father. In fact, when I go back to my iPhone, I've decided I'll keep restrictions on it to disallow social media.

Setting aside the smartphone has uncovered a vast reservoir of emotions, both comfortable and not, within me. As a response, I've had to spend far more time navigating those emotions with God.

The Rev. Ferguson serves as pastor of CanvasCommunity, a United Methodist mission congregation in Little Rock.



Show your care for God's creation!

Be sure to recycle your copy of the Arkansas United Methodist when you're finished reading it (or share it with a friend).

EDITOR'S CORNER



BY AMY FORBUS

Awakening

It seemed that if something bad was going to happen in 2016, it was going to happen to my friend Allison. Broken relationships. Totaled car. Family problems. Financial problems. Health problems. If you can imagine it, she was dealing with it.

I knew it was bad, but I didn't understand just how awful until one Sunday night when I received a text message from her saying she had tried to kill herself, but had changed her mind and sought help.

Just before her admission to the psych ward, I got some time on the phone with her—long enough to say a few *I love yous* and not much else.

On that day and every day since, I thank God she didn't succeed in her attempt.

Having known a fair number of people who relied on harmful theology that considered suicide an unforgivable sin, I've been grateful for the United Methodist statement on suicide since the first time I heard it existed. Rooted in the declaration found in Romans 8:38-39 that nothing can separate us from the love of God, it refuses to condemn or stigmatize those who complete suicide or who are affected by the suicide of a loved one. And by extension, it implies that neither should we shame or place a stigma on those who attempt suicide, but don't complete it.

Since that terrifying day in December, I've learned so much from my friend: about the health care and mental health care systems; about managing chronic illness; about priorities and persistence; about the value of honesty with oneself and openness with those we love.

I've also witnessed new life springing forth, right in the middle of a literal and metaphorical winter.

Allison has decided to live—*really* live. It's a choice she makes every day, sometimes every moment. She flat-out refuses to be miserable. She asks to be held accountable for her personal growth (and, as a pleasant side effect of that request, we talk a lot more often than we did before). She reflects through journaling and counseling. She takes better care of herself, physically and emotionally. She acknowledges imperfection; when she makes an occasional misstep, she owns up to it, surrounds herself with support and keeps moving forward.

There's something miraculous about walking alongside someone in the midst of an awakening: rediscovering what might have been lost, renewing a sense of gratitude, remembering that rebirth can happen whenever and however it needs to happen. Gifts from God bloom all around us, if we awaken our souls to receive them.

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



Volume 164 • No. 3 March 3, 2017
Amy Forbus • Editor
Cat Cain • Circulation
www.arumc.org

The Arkansas United Methodist is the newspaper of record for the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church. It is printed monthly, on the first Friday of every month, and distributed in both print and digital formats.

Send correspondence & subscription updates to:
Arkansas United Methodist, 800 Daisy Bates Drive,
Little Rock, AR 72202; or email Cat Cain at
cat.cain@arumc.org

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
Arkansas United Methodist, 800 Daisy Bates Drive,
Little Rock, AR 72202.

The Arkansas United Methodist is published by the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202. Postage paid at Gainesville, TX.



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

Subscriptions

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- The digital edition is free.
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Advertising is welcomed. For a rate sheet or more information, contact Amy Forbus at 501-324-8037 or aforbus@arumc.org. While all advertising is reviewed before acceptance, it should not be considered endorsed by this newspaper or the Church.

Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
April 7	March 17
May 5	April 17
June 2	May 17



GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

Living in a culture of snark

It's an understatement of ginormous proportions to say we are living in "interesting times." Social media outbursts are the norm. Shaming others has become an art form. Personal attacks are increasing in intensity. And the media and President are engaging in an increasingly hostile dance that seems oddly mutually beneficial.

But there is a great deal more going on than individual tweets, posts and jabs. These individual acts have become pervasive. This pervasive behavior has created a pattern. The pattern has become the norm. Suddenly this new norm has created a culture that it is divisive, hostile and negative. And sadly in such a culture, anything seems to go.

So how are you going to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ in a culture of snark?

Recognize reality for what it is. Get honest, and honestly confess how you may have been swept up by the world around you without even knowing it has happened. You can't do this alone. You need God's help to engage in an honest assessment of your world and yourself.

Embrace how your relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord changes you. What Jesus does for you fundamentally changes your life. So much so, that even when it seems most difficult you are not throwing shade, snarking others or adding to the flood of hate. Rather you are sharing Jesus' unconditional love that he already shared with you. Quite simply, you live out grace in a world desperately in need of it.

Focus on less snarking and a lot more praying. Frankly, it can be a real challenge to do all of this when people hurt you deeply, try to sabotage you, and do things that make you righteously—as well as rightly—angry. So start praying. Pray to understand what's going on with others. Pray that they will not poison you. Pray that you will not respond in kind. Pray that you will cling to God. And pray for them, even if it's hard. While your prayers may make a difference for them, they definitely will make a difference for you.

Our current culture of snark began with individual tweets, posts and jabs. God's promise of a new world begins with individual prayers, conversations, acts of mercy and relationships. I pray that you will become excited about all the ways you can help God transform the world by starting in your small corner of it right now.

Come, Holy Spirit, come!

Grace and peace,

Gary E. Mueller

A new discipline for Lent

BY WILLIAM O. "BUD" REEVES
Special Contributor

You're never too old to do something dangerous.

The youth group at our church is going skiing over spring break. My daughter is in the youth group. They needed chaperones. So I am signed up to go snow skiing—for the first time in 40 years!

Therefore, I have added some additional exercises to my usual gym routine. I have been doing squats and lunges to try to get my back, hips and knees in shape for the slopes.

As we begin the season of Lent, we normally add some exercises to our faith routine to get our spirits in shape for Easter. We call them disciplines, and historically, they go back to the days when those preparing for baptism made a 40-day intensive effort at spiritual cleansing.

The traditional Lenten disciplines come from the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 6, Jesus tells his followers to give, but not to make it public. He tells them to pray, but to pray in secret, not for show.

He tells them to fast, but not to act all pitiful about it; just fast and go about your business.

Extra giving, praying and fasting are still good and relevant disciplines.

Fasting in particular is a discipline that we are not as familiar with. Lately, some of the most interesting discussion around fasting has been about eliminating two distractions that are the most destructive of community: electronics and social media (see Carter Ferguson's commentary on page 2).

Related to that, I would like to propose a new Lenten exercise: the discipline of listening. There is so much noise in our world; it hardly ever gets quiet enough to really hear. What would happen if we took 40 days to really listen? There may be a "still, small voice" that is speaking to us.

We need to listen to God. Listening is a vital part of prayer that

is often ignored, as we present our long lists of intercessions and supplications. We need so much, and we want God to take care of it all. But prayer is a conversation, and conversations go two ways. This Lent, listen! Get still, quiet, undistracted before God. Somehow God will speak.

We need to listen to our family and friends. They have something to tell us. Sometimes their message is a cry for help. Our kids—even teenagers—want us to know what is going on in their world. Recently I saw a story (yeah, on Facebook!) about a day care center that put up a sign asking the parents to turn off and put away their phones before entering the building. The director said it was common to see a child crying for attention while the parent paid reverence to the electronic god.

We need to listen to our enemies. We are deeply divided in our churches, communities and nation over social, ethical and political issues. Social media makes it worse, because it is not really a conversation. We just spew our hostility onto the internet, and whoever reads it can just deal with

it—or spew back! Until we can understand what our enemy thinks and why he or she thinks that way, there will be no steps toward reconciliation.

As St. Francis prayed centuries ago, "O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek ... to be understood, as to understand." Real conversation, respectful dialog, is the currency of change, and that can't be done in 140 characters—**ESPECIALLY IN ALL CAPS!**

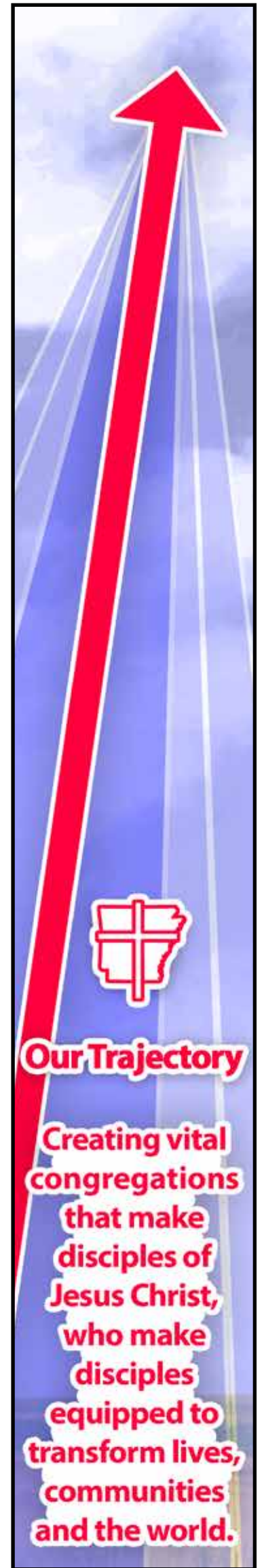
The good thing about Lent is that it ends. After 40 days, the burden of discipline and the shame of the cross give way to the joy and glory of Easter. (After spring break, I plan to let up on the squats, too.) The exercises of Lent are hard, but they are also productive: "Now discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11).

If you make the effort to really listen this Lent—to God, to your family and friends, even to your enemies—I believe you can expect to experience the peaceful fruit of the Spirit in your life.

The Rev. Dr. Reeves serves as senior pastor of First UMC Fort Smith. Email: breeves@arumc.org.



Bud Reeves



PEOPLE OF FAITH

Christian Ministerial Alliance honors Robinson, McAdoo; Allen named president



Three United Methodist clergy were among those honored Feb. 20 at the Christian Ministerial Alliance's annual L.C. and Daisy Bates Luncheon. From left, the Rev. Maxine Allen, who was named the first female president of the organization; the Rev. Dr. Bill Robinson, inaugural recipient of the social justice award named in his honor; and the Rev. Dr. C.E. McAdoo, another recipient of the same award.

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

The Christian Ministerial Alliance (CMA) on Feb. 20 presented the inaugural William H. Robinson, Jr. Social Justice Award to the person for whom it is named, retired United Methodist pastor the Rev. Dr. Bill Robinson. The award was presented during the CMA's annual L.C. and Daisy Bates Luncheon, held this year at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock.

The CMA created this award to honor Robinson's many years of activism. As one of the founding members of the CMA, Robinson has been instrumental in assisting the organization to envision its mission and advocacy. A native of Little Rock, Robinson served as senior pastor of Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church for the 31 years. Now renamed Theresa Hoover Memorial UMC, the church has become a national icon known for rebuilding lives and restoring communities.

Other recipients of the Robinson Award on Feb. 20 were the members of the Little Rock School Board who were removed from service shortly after their election, upon the state Board of Education's January 2015 takeover of the district. Among those board members is the Rev. Dr. C.E. McAdoo, a former district superintendent who currently serves as pastor of St. Andrew UMC Little Rock.

The luncheon also included the installation of new officers, including the Rev. Maxine Allen, the Arkansas Conference's assistant director of connectional ministry for mission field engagement, as the first female president of the organization.

The Christian Ministerial Alliance is an ecumenical/interfaith group of religious leaders whose goal to create an environment whereby faith and ethical action is evidenced in the Little Rock community.

Arkansas leaders attend national camping ministries training event



From left, John and the Rev. Lu Harding, retired from Mount Eagle; Denni Palmer, Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center; Sarge and Marietha Leonard, Mount Eagle Retreat Center; Rachel Wade, Camp Tanako office and communications manager; Kim Carter, director of Camp Tanako and member of the UMCRCM Board of Directors; Geoff Fielder, Camp Tanako assistant director; and Alex Warner, Camp Tanako intern. Not pictured is Amy Machen, adult ministries coordinator at First UMC El Dorado, who attended in her role as a board member of Mount Eagle.

COURTESY PHOTO

Ten United Methodists of Arkansas attended the United Methodist Camp and Retreat Ministries (UMCRM) National Gathering held Jan. 26-Feb. 3 at Lakeview Methodist Conference Center in Palestine, Texas. The biennial event offered learning and networking opportunities for those who hold a variety of roles in

camping and retreat ministry settings, from conference staff to maintenance directors.

Featured speakers included the Rev. Jenna Morrison, child and adolescent development expert Bob Ditter, the Rev. Kevin Witt and worship leader Leslie Burroughs. Participants chose from dozens of workshops in numerous categories,

ranging from issues surrounding camp accreditation and staffing to ideas for marketing, hospitality and strategic planning.

Event design volunteers for this year's gathering included John and the Rev. Lu Harding, who retired as director of Mount Eagle Retreat Center near Clinton, Arkansas.

Rahmaan joins United Methodist Museum of Arkansas as curator

The board of the United Methodist Museum of the Arkansas Conference (UMMAC) has selected Shakeelah Rahmaan as the museum's new curator.

Rahmaan, who will graduate in May with a master's degree in public history from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, has spent time as an intern with the curatorial staff of the Old State House Museum and as a graduate assistant at the Historic Arkansas Museum. In both roles, she gained experience with installing items for exhibit,

photographing and processing artifacts, helping with exhibit maintenance and storing collections.

In addition to her schooling and her work for UMMAC, she works as a library assistant and coordinates youth and teen programs at Millie Brooks Library in Wrightsville, and also



Shakeelah Rahmaan

teaches art and drama at the Mohammed Schools of Little Rock.

Rahmaan works at the museum on Wednesdays, when drop-in visits are welcome from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and is available to give tours on other days by appointment. To schedule a tour for your Sunday school class, confirmation class or other group, send an email to ummac.LR@gmail.com.

The museum is located at 723 Center Street in downtown Little Rock, on the lower level of First United Methodist Church.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Arkansas United Methodist (AUM) welcomes the opportunity to hear from its readers. To be eligible for publication, letters to the editor must meet the following guidelines:

All letters must be signed with the writer's name, city and church, and include a phone number or email address. Letters may be sent to editor@arumc.org,

or to 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Letters longer than 200 words will not be considered for publication.

The AUM will not print letters containing personal attacks.

The AUM reserves the right to publish Letters to the Editor in print, online or both.

'Get Up & Give' gifts touch lives of children and families

United Methodists of Arkansas invited to help

Methodist Family Health (MFH) invites United Methodists across Arkansas to honor the season of Lent and "get up and give" items that will make a difference in the lives of children, youth and families served by the 118-year-old organization.

The eighth annual Get Up & Give collection drive will be held in the weeks leading up to Easter, March 1-April 13. All donated items will benefit those who rely on MFH for behavioral, emotional and spiritual care. The organization's programs, including the Methodist Children's Home, are part of the statewide network that includes a 60-bed hospital, eight group homes, two residential treatment centers, two therapeutic day treatment schools, nine counseling clinics and other specialized programs that provide psychiatric and behavioral healthcare.

The Get Up & Give "wish list" includes school supplies, bath towels, socks, underwear, paper products, recreational toys and activities like sports balls, games and coloring books. All items must be new. Monetary gifts are welcome, too, and will be used for client and program needs.

"The donations are an amazing blessing," says Jane Dennis, MFH's director of communications and coordinator of Get Up & Give. "Every gift is a very tangible sign of love to those who turn to Methodist Family Health for hope for the future."

Donations may be dropped off at any Methodist



LEFT: Get Up & Give contributions from Sardis UMC Bauxite are delivered to Methodist Family Health by Hanna Guinn and her son Greyson.

LEFT: Sara Shaw and Jean Landrum display some of the Get Up & Give items collected last year by members of First UMC Little Rock.



RIGHT: Neill Sloan unloads items collected in 2016 at Lakeside UMC Lake Village.

PHOTOS COURTESY METHODIST FAMILY HEALTH

Counseling Clinic location. Clinics are located in Alma, Batesville, Cherokee Village, Fayetteville, Heber Springs, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Little Rock and Magnolia.

For information and event details, visit www.methodistfamily.org or contact Dennis, 501-906-4210 or jdennis@methodistfamily.org.

Methodist Family Health presents



THE 8TH ANNUAL
Get Up & Give

40 DAYS OF COLLECTING
MARCH 1
THROUGH
APRIL 13

Methodist Family Health invites church groups, families, friends and neighbors to join us in collecting much-needed items during the season of Lent! Your generosity will bring a smile to the faces of those we serve in our hospital, group homes, emergency shelter and other programs.

After the 40 Days of Collecting, you can drop off the new items you collect at any of our Counseling Clinics from April 17-21 during regular business hours.

<p>Alma 1209 Hwy 71N Suite B 479.632.1022</p>	<p>Batesville 500 E. Main St. Suite 310 870.569.4890</p>	<p>Hot Springs 3632 Central Ave. Suite B 501.463.5003</p>
<p>Cherokee Village 35 Choctaw Trace 870.257.2181</p>	<p>Fayetteville 74 W. Sunbridge Dr. 479.582.5565</p>	<p>Jonesboro 2239 S. Caraway Rd. Suite M 870.910.3757</p>
<p>Heber Springs 407 S. 7th St. 501.365.3022</p>	<p>Little Rock 1600 Aldersgate Rd. Suite 100B 501.537.3991</p>	<p>Magnolia 621 E. North St. 870.234.0739</p>

OUR WISH LIST

<p>SOCKS & UNDERWEAR For boys and girls, up to age 17, especially larger sizes, boys' white T-shirts and boxers, and all size soft bras (no underwire)</p>	<p>ACTIVITY ITEMS Recreation items such as basketballs, kick balls, footballs, soccer balls, etc. Board games, cards, dominoes, crayons, coloring books, colored pencils</p>	<p>MISCELLANEOUS Paper towels Toilet paper Twin size sheet sets Bath towels and washcloths (white only)</p>
<p>SCHOOL SUPPLIES Wireless composition books Backpacks</p>	<p>BABY ITEMS Diapers, all sizes, including training pants like Pull-Ups Crib sheets</p>	<p><i>Monetary donations will be used for these needs as well. To view a detailed Wish List, go to www.MethodistFamily.org/wish.</i></p>

Monetary donations may be sent to: Methodist Family Health Foundation, P.O. Box 56050, Little Rock, AR 72215 (put "Get Up & Give" in memo line).

MethodistFamily.org

For information: contact Jane Dennis at 501.906.4210 or jdennis@methodistfamily.org.



Rebuilding the Lives of Children and Families Since 1899

Becoming advocates for the hungry in Arkansas

Advocacy gives opportunities for people of faith to ensure the hungry are not forgotten by those who have tremendous power to effect change.

The Arkansas Conference's 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger initiative asks United Methodists around the state not only to imagine what life is like for hungry children and put faith into action by providing ministries to help reduce hunger, but also to become advocates for change, recognizing that it takes many partners working together to alleviate hunger in Arkansas.

Mary Lewis Dassinger, project coordinator for 200,000 Reasons, on Feb. 15 joined other volunteers and representatives from hunger relief agencies who are passionate about relieving the suffering of the hungry for Hunger Lobby Day at the State Capitol. Hosted by the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, the group gathered to let state legislators know that hunger relief in Arkansas is important to their constituents and needed in their districts. There is no district untouched by hunger.

"We found that there are legislative leaders who are fellow advocates, encouraging their peers to do more," Dassinger said, noting that the group heard several legislators speak. Senator Larry Teague (D-Nashville) said that Arkansas produces too much food for anyone to have to go hungry in our state, especially children. Senator Missy Irvin (R-Mountain View) and Rep. Eddie

Armstrong (D-North Little Rock) offered ideas of how their colleagues can help by encouraging participation in different programs in their districts, such as Hunters for the Hungry and Breakfast in the Classroom. The three legislators are among the co-chairs of the Arkansas Hunger Caucus.

How can you begin to advocate for the hungry?

Write, email or call your legislator. Find your legislator's contact information on www.arkleg.state.ar.us.

- Respect their time and say:

- Who you are and why hunger relief is important to you.
- That 200,000 Reasons is an initiative of the United Methodists of Arkansas that seeks to have 100 percent of our churches participating in hunger relief ministries.
- That Arkansas ranks among the highest in the nation in household and childhood food insecurity. Share the food insecurity rate of their counties as found at <http://map.feedingamerica.org>.

- Ask them to:

- Remember the hungry and help provide relief when legislation comes before them.
- Advocate for hunger relief programs in their district.
- Consider becoming a member of the Arkansas Hunger Caucus if they are not already.

200,000 REASONS

to fight childhood hunger



Mary Lewis Dassinger of the 200,000 Reasons initiative, left, visited with Senator Missy Irvin, a fellow United Methodist, on Hunger Lobby Day at the State Capitol.

COURTESY PHOTO

Examine the most famous prayer in the world to find rich spiritual guidance.

Seventy words were all Jesus needed to cover the breadth of the Christian message and experience. You already know The Lord's Prayer by heart and can easily recite it...and that may be the problem. We know those 70 words so well most of us rattle them off never thinking about their meaning.

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Hendrix College and Philander Smith College Present Faith in Black and White: The Church and Race in 'Colorblind' America

A public speaker series to explore the systems of racial injustice in contemporary American culture and the role of the Church in creating a more racially just society.

All events are free and open to the public.



THE BIBLE IN BLACK AND WHITE

Dr. Nyasha Junior:

Tuesday, March 14 | 7 p.m.
Kendall Nugent building at
Philander Smith College

Dr. Junior is a professor of Biblical Studies at Temple University.

(IN)JUSTICE

Dr. Emilie Townes:

Wednesday, April 5 | 7 p.m.
Mills Center at Hendrix College, Room A

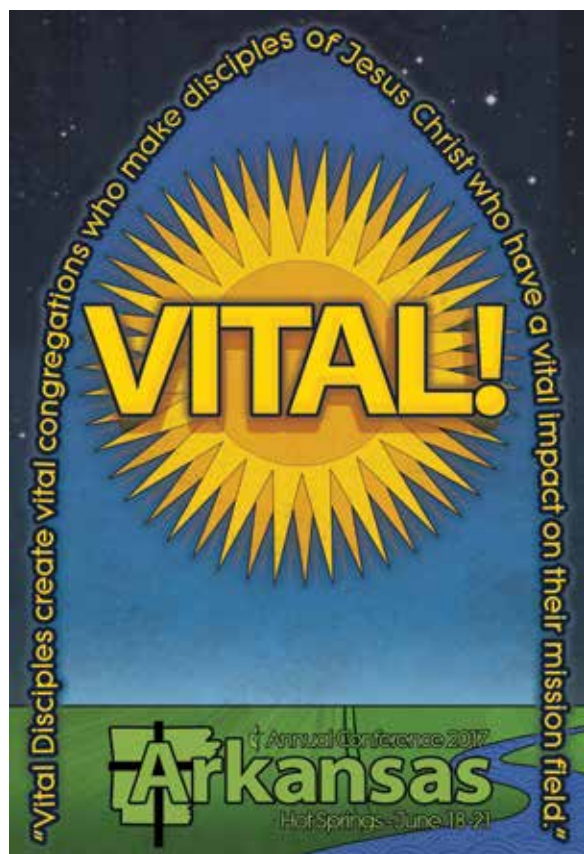
Dr. Townes is the Dean and Carpenter Professor of Womanist Ethics and Society at the Vanderbilt University Divinity School.



For more information, contact Dr. Robert Williamson at williamsonr@hendrix.edu or 501-505-1559 or Rev. Ronnie Miller-Yow at rmiller-yow@philander.edu or 501-370-5344.

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FORWARD



CFT to accept electronics donations at Annual Conference 2017

Does your church have gently-used electronics that could be repurposed by another congregation? The Arkansas Conference Center for Technology (CFT) team will be accepting donations of certain electronics for the REcharge Initiative at their table in the display area at Annual Conference. Bring any of the following items:

- CPU towers
- Laptops
- Printers
- Flatscreen LCD monitors



Please be aware that because of space constraints and logistics, items not on this list will not be accepted at Annual Conference.

Launched last year by the Arkansas Conference Center for Technology, the REcharge Initiative seeks to provide gently-used computers and other electronics to Arkansas United Methodist churches and affiliated organizations free of charge. REcharge is designed to empower ministries with technology while caring for God's creation by reusing and recycling electronics in an eco-friendly way.

If your church is interested in giving to or receiving from the REcharge Initiative, please complete the form at <https://goo.gl/forms/Zw1h7KIIMsLNFWSG2>, or contact Palmer Lee with the Center for Technology at 501-324-8039 or palmer.lee@arumc.org.

Check the AC2017 website for updates

Ready to make plans for Annual Conference? Or just want to learn what's planned? At ac2017.arumc.org you can see who will be preaching and teaching, where to stay and more. And for those who aren't attending AC2017, it's where the live video stream will be available.

The Pre-Conference Journal will be posted as a downloadable file on the site, as well as other information as it becomes available. Annual Conference is set for June 18-21 at Bank of the Ozarks Arena in Hot Springs.

Constitutional amendments head to vote at annual conferences

BY HEATHER HAHN
United Methodist News Service

General Conference delegates had their say last year. Now, it's up to annual conference voters to determine whether five amendments will become part of the United Methodist Church's constitution.

In the coming months, the voters will consider changes that address matters of gender equality, inclusiveness in membership, delegate and bishop elections, as well as bishop accountability.

To be ratified, a constitutional amendment first requires at least a two-thirds vote at General Conference, which happened in May 2016. Then, it must win at least a two-thirds majority of the total voters at annual conferences around the world.

The voting starts at the Liberia Conference, scheduled for Feb. 13-19, and will continue through potentially early next year, depending on when annual conferences schedule their meetings. The Council of Bishops will certify the results at its next meeting after the voting concludes.

Here is an overview of the amendments in the order submitted to annual conference voters.

Gender equality

This amendment declares, "men and women are of equal value in the eyes of God." It goes on to say that maleness and femaleness are

characteristics of human bodies, not the divine. It also asserts that the United Methodist Church will "seek to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, whether in organizations or in individuals, in every facet of its life and in society at large."

The amendment, if ratified, would become the new Paragraph 6 in the *Book of Discipline*, the denomination's governing document. Subsequent constitutional paragraphs would be renumbered. General Conference approved the measure by a vote of 746 to 56.

Carol Napier, a Sunday school teacher for 17 years at Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church in the North Georgia Conference, submitted the amendment.

"I hope that this amendment will help churches remember that girls and women are of equal worth to boys and men because everyone is made in the image of God," she said. "I believe that when churches remember and live out of this truth in all of their ministries, then villages, cities and even nations will be transformed to reflect Jesus' perfect love for all of us."

Inclusion in membership

If adopted, this amendment would add gender, ability, age and marital status to the list of characteristics that do not bar

View the proposed amendments at <https://goo.gl/LsH1gK>.

people from membership in the church. Specifically, the amended Paragraph 4 would say that no member shall be "denied access to an equal place in the life, worship and governance of the Church because of race, color, gender, national origin, ability, age, marital status or economic condition."

The vote at General Conference was 509 to 242.

The United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women submitted the amendment and put together a site seeking to answer frequently asked questions about the changes. For example, the agency notes that gender refers simply to men and women. The amendment also has the support of United Methodist Women, Discipleship Ministries and the DisAbility Ministries Committee.

"Paragraph IV, Article 4 protects people in the United Methodist Church against discrimination in membership based on age, gender, marital status and ability, while still protecting exclusivity in groups like United Methodist Women, youth groups and singles ministries, to name a few," said Dawn Wiggins Hare, top executive of the Status and Role of Women agency. "We are enthusiastically supporting the ratification of this amendment for the betterment of the United Methodist Church."

Delegate elections

This amendment to Paragraph 34 specifies that elections of delegates to General Conference as well as jurisdictional and central conference meetings will include open nominations from the floor at annual conference sessions. The measure also calls for the election of delegates "by a minimum of a simple majority of the ballots cast."

General Conference supported the amendment by a vote of 767 to 22.

Paul Clinton Law of the Democratic Republic of the Congo submitted the amendment. The

current provision in Paragraph 13 states that delegates "shall be elected in a fair and open process by the annual conferences." Law said that is "unduly vague in some cultures without a democratic tradition."

Bishop elections

This amendment to Paragraph 46 states that central conferences are to elect bishops at a regular, not an extra, session of the central conference "except where an unexpected vacancy must be filled." General Conference voted for the

[See AMENDMENTS, page 9]

Dollar (from page 1)

missions chairperson have determined which agencies and ministries receive grants, taking into account requests made by church members or the agencies themselves.

“We look for how the request is addressing a specific need or needs, and how it will make a positive impact in our community,” Poarch said. He says that so far, the church has been able to at least partially fund every grant request it has received, but they expect that requests will grow, so they are starting a ministry team that will define the selection criteria and develop a grant request process.

The St. Paul UMC dollar-a-week offering total for 2016 came to \$3,535, and the funds went to local nonprofit projects, only two of which are connected to the church. Community-based recipients include Albert Pike Elementary School, Community Rescue Mission, the Sebastian County Humane Society and the Children’s Emergency Shelter. Two outreach ministries of the church without budgeted operating funds received grants, as well: Diaper Dandies, a ministry of St. Paul UMC that provides diapers and other infant care supplies to

families in need, and St. Paul Bike Mission, which provides new bicycles to children at Christmas and refurbishes bicycles to give away to kids and adults throughout the year. Over the past nine years, the mission has given away about 900 bikes.

Poarch says the church always allocates the dollar-a-week offering funds for projects that reach out and have an impact in the community.

“It can be tempting when budgets get tight to slide these funds into operating budget or areas of need within the church, but it has

been vital to this ministry’s success to maintain the focus on those outside our walls,” he said.

“It is amazing to see what God can do with our combined gifts, no matter how small they may seem to us individually.”

For Poarch, the offering at St. Paul holds special personal meaning because the idea came from his longtime friend and mentor.

“While the dollar-a-week offerings honor God ultimately, for me they also honor the memories I have of Bill,” he says.



First UMC Paragould in 2016 gave a grant from their 2015 dollar-a-week offering to Focus Development Center, which serves people with developmental disabilities. The center used the grant to purchase a new couch and loveseat.



Christ of the Hills UMC now names its largest grant from the dollar-a-week offering the Bill Leslie Memorial Gift. That gift provided a truck for the local Habitat for Humanity ReStore in 2016.



The Rev. Steve Poarch distributed checks to the organizations chosen by St. Paul UMC to receive the fruits of their 2016 dollar-a-week offering. Here, he is pictured making the grant presentation to Ashley Ahlert of the Children’s Emergency Shelter.

COURTESY PHOTOS

The Fiser-Christie Endowed Missions Lectureship proudly presents:

Hearts for the Homeless

Focusing on homelessness in Central Arkansas



Keynote Speaker:
Keith Wasserman,
a nationally recognized
advocate for the
homeless and founder
of Good Works, Inc.,
www.good-works.net.

Schedule of Events

Saturday, April 29, Children’s Event - 3:00pm
Guest Speaker **Aaron Reddin**, The Van
Dinner and worship to follow

Sunday, April 30, Sunday Morning - 8:30am, 9:30am, 10:55am

Keith Wasserman featured in all worship services

Sunday Evening, Youth Event 5:30-7:30pm

Speaker **Keith Wasserman**
Guest Speaker **Rocky Chenall**, Rock of Hope
Youth will assemble backpacks for the homeless
Dinner to follow

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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.

Mission opportunity for youth near the Texas/Mexico border

The El Valle District of the Rio Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church is hosting Mission Service Project (MSP) from June 11-17, 2017. Middle school- and high school-aged youth and adult leaders are invited to travel to the area of McAllen/Mission/Pharr/Edinburg, Texas, for a week of experiencing relational ministry through home repair, daily devotions, meals and activities.

MSP is a mission experience where missionaries come to share their God-given gifts of service with others. Visit www.missionproject.org for details and to download paperwork, or contact Susan Hellums at shellums@mcfirst.com.

Central Texas mission for high schoolers and adults

The Central Texas Conference is looking for groups of three or more people from high school age (with adult supervision) to adults to work on 36 damaged homes in Hood County (Granbury area), Texas. The work varies: installing sheetrock and insulation, laying flooring, painting and more. On-the-job training is available. To inquire about possible work dates, contact volunteer coordinator/case manager Kathryn Meroney, kathrynmeroney@gmail.com.

The Corsicana area has 76 homes waiting for the same types of repairs. To serve in that area, contact Agustin Soto, floodrelief.navarroco@gmail.com.

Both locations have local United Methodist churches to house work teams, with showers and a kitchen included in accommodations.

Nearly a year past flooding, teams still needed

Southeast Arkansas is seeking teams to help with repairs needed as a result of the March 2016 floods. The damage incurred is a result of the same storms that devastated areas of Texas and Louisiana. Organization of long-term recovery was delayed for various reasons, but is now in place and operational. Projects are identified and funding secured, but volunteer help is little to none. When considering mission opportunities, please consider our neighbors in Southeast Arkansas. Several priority cases are waiting. To volunteer, contact Ron Jones, site volunteer coordinator, at woodrat3@live.com or Janice Mann, disaster response coordinator, at disaster@arumc.org.

Leadership development mission to Mexico in May

The South Central Jurisdiction of the UMC, which includes the Arkansas Conference, is offering a leadership development mission experience to Manos

Juntas in Rio Bravo, Mexico the first week of May 2017. Scholarships are available in the amount of \$300 per person for those willing to participate in partnership as described in the mission brochure: www.scjumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/SCJ-Leadership-Manos-Juntas.pdf.

For more information, contact the team leader, Audrey Phelps, vimphelps@gmail.com.

UMCOR's Sager Brown Depot: Health and bedding kits needed

Because of your past generosity, UMCOR Sager Brown has been able to replenish its inventory of disaster relief supplies, better positioning it to respond to disasters. Although inventory has increased, they are still in need of health and bedding kits. If you and your congregation are able to assist with this request, that would truly be a blessing. Crisis can occur anywhere, at any time, just as with the recent tornadoes that hit Hattiesburg, Mississippi. UMCOR wants to be prepared to answer the call when our brothers and sisters need us. Visit www.umcor.org/reliefsupplies to find answers to questions about kit assembly.

Byron Mann is coordinating sending kits gathered with teams scheduled to travel to Sager Brown in the coming weeks. If your church is gathering kits, notify Byron so he can arrange transport before April or May.

Storm recovery in multiple states

Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Georgia storm recovery is ongoing. Updates may be received from Janice Mann upon request: disaster@arumc.org.

You can help by giving to Disaster Response, United States (Advance # 901670) through the Arkansas Conference office or at www.umcor.org.

Cuba mission opportunity in July

A Volunteers in Mission team is forming for a one-week journey to Holguin, Cuba, to lead Bible school in July. 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, craft projects and snacks are needed. Even a few dollars make a real difference in the mission team's abilities to connect with students. Follow-up photos provided.

To keep up with these and future opportunities in Cuba, visit "Arkansas Methodist-Cuba Metodista Connection" and "Catedral Metodista de Holguin" on Facebook. Contact Nechi Fullerton at 501-766-8151 or nefullerton@yahoo.com to learn more about opportunities with the Methodist Church in Cuba.

Reactions (from page 1)

feedback and responded with grace. Most didn't like that either.... I guess I just see that as evidence of our brokenness right now. Even those who don't agree with those kinds of statements share in the brokenness because we're part of that broken community."

After a week, the church changed its sign to read, "All are welcome. Matthew 25:36."

"It's the same message, but many will find it less incendiary—although the first was not intended to be incendiary," Freeman said.

Some pastors made statements on social media or to their parishioners.

The Rev. Daniel Thueson, pastor of Alma United Methodist Church, while in seminary worked at Lovers Lane UMC Dallas, where he met refugees from several different countries. He sparked discussion with a Jan. 29 Facebook post about immigration that didn't name the executive order.

Thueson sees fear of Islamic terrorism as a common thread influencing the current political climate, but says Christians are called not to be afraid.

"When we look back at Scripture, God reminds us not to fear—that God is with us, Emmanuel," he said. "If the

disciples and the apostles lived by the kind of fear that much of our country is, they never would have spread the church."

The Rev. Michael Daniel, pastor of Asbury UMC Magnolia, shared a statement with his congregation Jan. 30 that cited Matthew 25:34-36 and pointed out needs closer to home.

The church had heard from a representative of The CALL (thecallinarkansas.org) in worship the previous day, so the need for more foster families in Arkansas took precedence in his thoughts.

"The idea of welcoming and housing international refugees is somewhat complicated, but protesting the president's international action while there is such a great need domestically is only theoretical if we are unwilling to provide a literal 'safe space' for children right here at home who have been displaced due to tragic and often dangerous circumstances," Daniel wrote. "It may not be a fair comparison, but why fight by protest via social media when there is a great need and a solution, quite literally, right before us? If we are unwilling to open our hearts and our homes to children whose needs are so great, how can we protest the president's action?"

At press time, President Trump was preparing a new executive order rather than appeal the court's ruling.

Amendments

(from page 7)

change by 621 to 15.

Lonnie D. Brooks, a member of the Alaska Conference, said the amendment aims to treat bishop elections in the central conferences—church regions in Africa, Asia and Europe—in much the same way they are treated in U.S. jurisdictions.

When bishops are elected in a special session, he said, "some of the delegates who would be present at the regular session will either not be present at a special session or will be placed in a hardship condition by the call of a session for the purpose of electing bishops."

Bishop accountability

Under this amendment to Paragraph 50, General Conference can adopt provisions for the Council of Bishops to hold individual bishops accountable. General Conference approved the amendment by 715 to 79.

The Western Pennsylvania Conference submitted the legislation to address a ruling by the denomination's top court, the Judicial Council. That ruling holds that it is unconstitutional for the Council of Bishops to hold its members

accountable. Currently, any complaints against bishops are to be handled in the jurisdictions or central conferences where they are elected.

The Rev. Robert Zilhaver, who wrote the legislation, said the goal is to keep primary responsibility for bishops' accountability where they are elected, while also creating a mechanism for the Council of Bishops to step in for global accountability if needed. Zilhaver is the senior pastor of DuBois Lakeside United Methodist Church in Pennsylvania.

"It moves us to a position, where in our church we might hold ourselves accountable for a sin that rises to global expressions," he said, pointing to the example of a bishop holding slaves, which led to the denomination's split in 1844. At the same time, he said, he wants to protect "cultural expressions from being labeled a sin and being prosecuted."

Hahn is a reporter for United Methodist News Service (newsdesk@umcom.org). Julu Swen, a communicator in Liberia, contributed to this story.

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COMING UP

A Day with the Bishop for grades 5 and 6 at First UMC Little Rock March 11; register by March 6

Registration is open until March 6 for A Day with the Bishop, a great opportunity for fifth- and sixth-grade students to meet and spend time with Bishop Gary Mueller and to learn about the connectional ministries of the United Methodist Church. This March 11 gathering time also provides a sneak peek at what these students can expect at United Methodist youth events when they're just a little older.

First UMC Little Rock, 723 Center Street, will host A Day with the Bishop this year.

To register for this time of fellowship and fun, visit www.arumc.org/2017/02/a-day-with-the-bishop-registration. Contact Pam Snider, Conference children's ministry coordinator, with questions: pam.snider@arumc.org or 501-240-3535.



Spring Lay Servant Academy at Mount Sequoyah March 10-11

The Basic Lay Servant Ministry Course for United Methodists will be offered during Session 1 of this March 10-11 training opportunity at Mount Sequoyah Conference and Retreat Center in Fayetteville. Advanced Course options will be available during both sessions, and include:

- Leading Prayer
- Living Our Connection (United Methodist Polity)
- Discover Your Spiritual Gifts
- Lay Pastoral Care Giving

Session 1 is March 10, and Session 2 is March 11. Commuter and on-campus rates are available. To learn more or to register, visit www.mountsequoyah.org/2809-2.

Immerse Conference in Houston March 16-17

Immerse: Where Spirituality and Innovation Intersect, is scheduled for March 16-17, 2017, at St. John's UMC in downtown Houston, Texas. Hosted by the Rev. Rudy and Juanita Rasmus, Immerse is for people in churches and communities who encounter the spiritually, emotionally and economically impoverished in their ministries. Thursday evening will focus on spiritual centering, and Friday will feature dialog on spirituality and innovation.

For details or to register, visit www.immerseconference.com; use the code CONFVIP50 at registration for a 50 percent discount.

Camp session for hunters and boaters at Bear Creek March 24-26

Bear Creek Camp, a year-round camp and retreat facility located in the St. Francis National Forest on Bear Creek Lake near Marianna, will be hosting a Hunters and Boaters Education camp session March 24-26, 2017.

For a registration form, visit <http://sedist.arumc.org/2017/02/bear-creek-camp-news>. Questions? Contact the Rev. Glenn Hicks, camp director, at 870-295-3681, 870-662-1279 or 870-821-1560.

'Open to Your Neighbor' discussion and meal at St. Andrew UMC Little Rock April 2

St. Andrew UMC Little Rock, 4600 Baseline Road, on Sunday, April 2 will host Open to Your Neighbor, a discussion about reaching your church's neighbors, serving with them, forming partnerships and looking like your neighborhood (Step 5 of the Bishop's Mission Plan). Open to Your Neighbor will begin at 2:30 and continue until 5 p.m. At 5 p.m., participants will have the option to stay for a meal cooked by the congregation's Hispanic ministry.

The Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality is covering the cost of the meal. A goal of this

gathering is to establish an ongoing network to share what works and discuss challenges for churches that truly seek to make their neighborhood their mission field. To ask questions or register, contact the Rev. Jenni Duncan, jenni.duncan@arumc.org.

Congregational care training for laypersons April 27-29

Congregational care is critical in every local church, and no one person can address all the hurt of a congregation or community. The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection's Congregational Care Team invites you to join them in Leawood, Kansas, April 27-29 for comprehensive training and networking with other local church leaders regarding congregational care best practices and standards. The seminar is designed to train volunteers to become partners in ministry with pastors and staff to provide care for a congregation.

Several years ago, Church of the Resurrection developed a program transforming the way care is provided for the congregation. The church equipped volunteers to be Congregational Care Ministers (CCMs) and deployed them to work alongside pastors and staff to minister to and holistically care for the congregation. This partnership between lay and clergy has enabled Resurrection to provide a more consistent and deeper level of care to the church family. The ministry of Congregational Care is deliberate in connecting the church with people during difficult times.

New this year is a Pre-Conference, Thursday, April 27 from 10 a.m. to noon, with a choice of two topics: Creating a Care Group or Depression, Anxiety and Addictions.

Registration is limited. Super early bird rate of \$140 for the Seminar and \$25 for the Pre-Conference is available through Feb. 15. The early bird rate of \$160 for the Seminar and \$30 for the Pre-Conference is available Feb. 16 through April 5. The regular registration fee is \$200 for the Seminar and \$35 for the Pre-Conference. For more information, visit www.cor.org/ccm-seminar, or contact Kathy Carter, kathy.carter@cor.org or 913-544-0272.

Nominations for Steel-Hendrix Awards, youth minister honors due by April 29

Hendrix College is now accepting nominations for the Steel-Hendrix Awards to be presented in the 2017-2018 academic year.

The Mary and Ira A. Brumley Award recognizes outstanding religious education, and the Ethel K. Millar Award honors outstanding religion and social awareness. Awardees for each will be selected by the Steel-Hendrix Committee: the Rev. J.J. Whitney (chair), Todd Burris, Ruth Jones, Michelle Moore, Zach Schrick, the Revs. Carissa Rogers, Mackey Yokem, Marie Mainard O'Connell and Wayne Clark.

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

Nominations for all awards should include a letter detailing the individual's career highlights and reason for nomination, and should be submitted to the Rev. J.J. Whitney, Hendrix College, 1600 Washington, Conway, Ark. 72032, or e-mailed to whitney@hendrix.edu by April 29, 2017.

The awards are sponsored by the Marshall T. Steel Center for the Study of Religion and Philosophy. Inaugurated in 1984, these awards celebrate the college's 100-year relationship with the United Methodist Church. The awards are named in honor of Marshall T. Steel, a prominent minister and former president of the college.

Clergy golf retreat at Mount Eagle April 30-May 2

Looking for a great opportunity for food, fellowship, worship time and experiencing God's creation at a stunning location? April 30 through May 2 is your opportunity. Stay at Mount Eagle Retreat Center and enjoy some time on the greens at two great golf courses (Mountain Ranch and Tannenbaum Golf Courses). Lunch on your own at the golf course. Grilled steaks for dinner on Monday night. Even if you do not play golf, come for the fellowship, relax and explore God's creation. The Revs. David Baker and Steve Wingo will serve as retreat leaders. For details or to register, contact Sarge Leonard, director@mounteagle.org or 501-723-4580.

Music and worship national gathering July 24-27

The Fellowship of United Methodists in Music & Worship Arts (FUMMWA) invites you to Little Rock on July 24-27, 2017, for its biennial convocation. Four days filled with seminars and workshops that will allow learning and growing in ministry, as well as providing moving worship experiences and fellowship.

To learn more, visit <https://awaken2017.wordpress.com>.

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.

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.

OBITUARY

MURFREESBORO

Otha Freeman Henderson Jr.

The Rev. Otha Freeman Henderson Jr., 90, of Murfreesboro passed away Sunday, Feb. 12, 2017. He was born on Sunday, May 30, 1926, in the Saline Community to the late Otha Freeman Henderson Sr. and Effie Pollard Henderson.

He was a proud graduate of Murfreesboro High School, class of 1944. After graduation he joined the Navy, where he held a Quartermaster ranking and served for two years. Afterward, he joined the Army Reserves for three and half years, where he held the rank of Sergeant. Following his military service, he was employed at Murfreesboro Hardware for 26 years. Freeman answered his call to preach the Gospel



Freeman Henderson

and served as a United Methodist part-time local pastor of the Delight, Antoine and Smyrna UMCs from 1978 to 1996.

Freeman was very active in the community. He was the voice of the Murfreesboro Rattlers for 50 years. He served on the Hospital Board, the School Board, and the Equalization Board to name a few. He also had a very well received column in the Murfreesboro Diamond expressing views and opinions, and he covered all the sports.

He is survived by his wife, Helen Lingo Henderson; three sons, Bill Henderson and wife Dian of Murfreesboro, the Rev.

Jim Henderson and wife Susan of Delight and Mark Henderson of Murfreesboro; and a daughter, Christy Coccarelli of Murfreesboro; seven grandchildren, Todd and Mariel Henderson of Benton, Amy and David Lott of Delight, Kayla and Aaron Thompson of Texarkana, Jade Wolfe of Arkadelphia, Cory Coccarelli of Murfreesboro, Matt Taylor of Eureka Springs and Zach Taylor of Los Angeles, California; and eight great-grandchildren, Adam Lott, Valorie Lott, Brian Lott, Erica Staggs, Chad Staggs, Hadley Staggs, Evan Henderson and Aiden Henderson.

Services were held Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2017, at First United Methodist Church Murfreesboro with the Rev. James Wainscott, Bro. Al Terrell and the Rev. Jim Henderson officiating. Burial followed at the Murfreesboro Cemetery.

Conference office partners with ARORA for organ donation awareness



The Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church on Feb. 15 became an ARORA Workplace Partner. Staff members heard stories from Paul Owen (right), whose daughter's organs saved five lives, and received information on becoming an organ donor from ARORA representatives Stacy Robinson (left) and Audrey Coleman (third from left).

AUM PHOTO BY AMY FORBUS

The Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church on Feb. 15 became a Workplace Partner with the Arkansas Regional Organ Recovery Agency (ARORA).

At the February staff meeting, the Conference welcomed Stacy Robinson, workplace partnership specialist with ARORA; Audrey Coleman, ARORA's director of communications; and Paul Owen, a "donor dad" and the children's minister at Trinity UMC Little Rock, to share information about organ donation and donor registration.

Robinson and Coleman shared statistics and addressed facts and myths about organ donation. For example, approximately 122,000 people are currently on the national waiting list for some kind of organ transplant, and only about one percent of registered donors will qualify to be a match for those waiting.

Owen's daughter Melissa had registered as an organ donor before her unexpected death from a stroke two years ago, at age 38. He shared the story of how her choice to be an organ donor has saved five lives around the country, including that of a single mother living in Little Rock, whom the Owens have since been able to meet.

In addition to registering as an organ donor when renewing a driver's license, Arkansans may register to donate organs, tissues and eyes through www.arora.org or www.donatelifearkansas.org. ARORA representatives and donor family members are available to answer questions and to speak at churches, health fairs and workplaces.

The meeting with ARORA concluded with a prayer led by the Rev. Blake Bradford, whose father lived an extra 10 years because he received a heart transplant. Bradford prayed for those waiting for transplants, as well as for those experiencing the tragedies that make organs available.

Update from the moderators of the Commission on a Way Forward

The 32-member Commission on a Way Forward, appointed by the Council of Bishops to assist the bishops in their charge from the 2016 General Conference to lead the church forward amid the present impasse related to human sexuality and resulting questions about the unity of the church, held its first meeting Jan. 23-26. The following is an excerpt from a Feb. 15 statement by the Commission's three moderators, Bishops David Yemba, Sandra Steiner Ball and Ken Carter:

In reflecting on the first phases of our work, we have noted several of the challenges that are inherent in our group, and a corresponding set of strengths or assets.

Challenges

1. Building trust—among some, this is the result of past experience; among others, it is simply the newness of relationship.
2. Experiences of suffering and harm—some in the group approach the work from experiences of marginalization, a call to advocate for these voices and to include them.
3. Silos—many have strong senses of identity within well-defined groups, in whom they are viewed as leaders.
4. Desire to gain turf—most of us have a desire to see our own positions grow in influence and our own power increase, even if we believe that our motives are sound.
5. Language differences—this simply reflects the need for careful communication, definition of terms, and arriving at a pace that allows for sharing and listening among all.
6. Cultural diversity—within the U.S., there are different cultures, and across the four continents represented, there is profound diversity as well.
7. Complexity of human sexuality/LGBTQ—we are moving beyond an "issue" to deeper relationships that

reveal the truths that we see and speak.

Assets

1. Leadership gifts—the commission includes many extraordinary leaders and their presence helps the work to progress.
2. Spiritual maturity—there is a deep bond of faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, and within this well are resources of patience and humility.
3. Common ground—many of these leaders have witnessed the strengths of the church, across the world, and have shared in the mission of our denomination.
4. Desire for unity—while the "we" of The United Methodist Church is contested, at the moment, there is a fundamental commitment to seek unity.
5. The gift of time—the Council of Bishops via the General Conference has given us the gift of time and space, to be used for reflection and discernment.
6. Spirit of collaboration—as a conciliar body, our outcomes will not be the will of any one person, but the result of work done together.
7. Larger purpose—this work can be a part of our mission, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. It is not an interruption or a distraction from that work.

The assets that are present in the commission are truly gifts from God and we believe them to be sufficient to respond to the challenges, and indeed to transform our challenges into gifts. This is and will not be a human achievement, but is the unfolding work of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

For more information on the Commission, including the full text of the Feb. 15 statement, visit www.umc.org/wayforward.

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Hamburg church's children make second \$5,000 gift to Heifer International

First UMC Hamburg has helped missional giving come alive—for the children of the congregation, and for those who receive their gifts.

By teaching the children about the work of Heifer International (www.heifer.org), a Little Rock-based nonprofit with the goals of ending world hunger and poverty and caring for the earth, the church inspired its youngest members to find ways to save and give. Their first fundraiser included lemonade stands, special offerings during worship and earning money by doing household chores. In August 2013, they had \$800, so they traveled to Heifer Ranch in Perryville to learn more about the organization and to donate the money—enough to purchase a water buffalo, a heifer, a beehive and a flock of chicks.

At the ranch, the children saw a camel, and decided that their next goal would be to raise \$850 to buy a camel for Christmas, as a birthday gift to Jesus.

The next year, their goal grew even more: For Christmas 2014, they raised \$5,000 to give Jesus an Ark through Heifer International. Heifer's website lists the contents of a Gift Ark as "two water buffalos, two cows, two sheep and two goats, along with bees, chicks, rabbits and more." An Ark helps provide food and income and improves families' lives.

The children of First UMC Hamburg reached the \$5,000 goal a second time by Christmas 2016. This time, instead of traveling to Heifer, they asked a representative to attend worship so they could present the gift there and teach the congregation more about Heifer's work. On Feb. 12, Lindsey Brown of Heifer International accepted the check and shared



Natalie Juante (left) and Gracie Riley (right) bring a goat into the sanctuary of First UMC Hamburg on Feb. 12. The goat served as a teaching tool to help children learn about the work of Heifer International on the Sunday that they presented their latest \$5,000 gift to the organization.

COURTESY PHOTOS

information about how the money would be used. A family in the church even brought a goat to worship as a way "to help make Heifer real" for the children who haven't been able to travel to Heifer Ranch, said the Rev. Greg Comer, the church's pastor.

Comer expects the children's fundraising through a special offering each Sunday to continue.

"[This offering] has become such an integral part of our worship that I sincerely doubt if our children will ever stop," he said. "Some of the faces have changed as our children have grown, but new faces seem happy to take up the mantle."



Faith Funds

Called to God's Service

A warm smile and enthusiasm for her calling characterize Natasha Murray-Norman, associate pastor at First UMC, Pine Bluff. As a UMFA seminary scholar, she received grants that allowed her to attend seminary and made a commitment to return to Arkansas to pastor local churches.

Natasha and her husband Rev. Mark Norman relocated their family to Rossville, Kansas, where she attended St. Paul School of Theology with campuses in the Greater Kansas City and Oklahoma City areas. Now teenagers, her two children were in elementary school when she was a seminary student.

She commuted 90 miles to campus and worked as student pastor of Campus Ministry at Washburn University and student pastor for the Auburn-Scranton UMC charge. Her hectic schedule would have been very difficult to manage without financial help from the United Methodist Foundation.

"Knowing I wouldn't have a large debt upon graduation allowed me to give more energy to my schoolwork and student appointment," she said. "And knowing I would soon serve in Arkansas kept me connected to home."

Since returning to Arkansas, Natasha has served several appointments in the Arkansas Conference. Today she coordinates missions and outreach programs like the Feed the Funnel program and the Quad W internship program at First UMC, Pine Bluff.



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