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Forgotten disasters

A year later, Arkansas neighbors still need recovery help

Extensive flooding resulting from March 2016 storms caused damage to many homes in this neighborhood in the southwestern part of McGehee, Arkansas. A significant amount of disaster recovery work is still needed there.

PHOTO COURTESY DONNIE PEACOCK

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

Did you know that in the first quarter of 2017, Arkansas experienced 17 tornadoes? They've been smaller than the one that hit Mayflower and Vilonia in 2014, but those who lost a home to such a disaster cannot dismiss the

experience as a "small" tornado.

Everyone hears about widespread disaster when it happens, and many people arrive to offer help, but sometimes recovery continues for months and years. The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and Arkansas Conference Disaster Response worked for two years in central

Arkansas after the April 2014 tornado. In fact, UMCOR is known in the disaster response community as the organization that stays until all recovery work is completed.

But eventually, most volunteers move on and media coverage of a disaster dwindles. And that shift in focus can happen before all of the people who need help with recovery

have received it.

In some cases, a disaster barely receives any media coverage. For example, storms caused flooding that devastated parts of southeast Arkansas in March 2016, but because the floods were more severe in parts of Texas and Louisiana, much of the attention went to those

[See FORGOTTEN, page 8]

Veritas 2017 urges youth to move with God's direction



"I will instruct you and teach you about the direction you should go. I'll advise you and keep my eye on you."

—Psalm 32:8
(Common English Bible)

Focusing on the theme "Move" drawn from Psalm 32:8, nearly 1,400 participants—including groups of attendees from 89 different churches, guest speakers, musicians and ministry partners—converged on the John Q. Hammons Convention Center in Rogers for Veritas 2017. For years, Veritas has been the largest annual event planned and carried out by the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries (ACCYM).

The Feb. 24-26 gathering featured the bands Stars Go Dim and Summerhill, the Rev. Samuel Yun, [See VERITAS, page 7]

PHOTO COURTESY ACCYM MEDIA TEAM

Why can't we all just get along?!

BY KATYE DUNN
Special Contributor

That's the question Christians and non-Christians alike often ask when we look at all the denominations that exist within Christianity today. And as United Methodists, we know about these struggles all too well as our denomination currently wrestles over issues concerning the marriage and ordination of LGBTQ persons.



Katy Dunn

Questions of Christian unity—how we can work together to overcome differences and continue to be in conversation and relationship even when differences can't be overcome—are at the heart of the ecumenical movement. From September 2016 to January 2017 I had the privilege of representing the United Methodist Church as a student at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland. The Institute, which is a part of the World Council of Churches, brings together pastors and church leaders from different Christian denominations—Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox—from all over the world to spend five months living, studying, worshipping and praying together as we seek a way toward unity.

My time at the Ecumenical Institute opened my heart and mind, shaping and challenging me as I make a path for myself within the Arkansas Annual Conference and the United Methodist Church. My experiences there brought home one point over and over again:

When "unity" means everyone should believe and worship like me, we are doomed to fail.

As we studied the history of the ecumenical movement, we learned that for the first few decades, its approach to unity was *unity in uniformity*. The goal was to return to a time when all Christians believed and worshipped the same way—but the truth is that such a time never existed.

Followers of Jesus have *always* had a variety of differing beliefs and styles of worship. We see this in the Gospels and even more clearly in the letters of Paul, as he wrote about how to handle disagreements between Jewish and Gentile Christians. And in every city where Christianity developed as it spread across the world, worship took on different styles of liturgy and music depending on the culture.

This notion of unity as uniformity was doomed to fail. It also doesn't make sense theologically. We worship God as Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We profess

that the three persons of the Trinity, although each unique, are one God. God's very Self is *unity in diversity*, not uniformity. The ecumenical movement has taken this approach for the past several decades, with great success. We celebrate one another in all our diversity, because it reveals to us the nature of the God we worship and serve. We teach and learn from one another, because through our conversation our vision of God becomes richer and fuller, not watered down or muted.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, wrote in a sermon on having an ecumenical spirit: "But although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works."

Students at Bossey spoke different languages. We came from vastly different cultures and backgrounds. We represented different denominations. And those differences didn't disappear when we came together to pray and work for unity. On the contrary, we brought all those differences to the table and allowed the light of Christ to shine on them, allowed the love of Christ to transcend them.

Our five months together held challenges, but they also were filled with great joys. We got a glimpse of the unity of all believers for which Jesus prayed to God in John 17. We were able to find unity in our love for one another and our common mission, and there we found hope. We became

fellow pilgrims on the journey toward justice and peace.

We affectionately called Bossey our "ecumenical laboratory," a safe place to experiment in ecumenical living. But now the true work begins. Now that I am home from my time at the Ecumenical Institute, my fellow students and I have the responsibility of figuring out how to invite others to join us on that pilgrimage—united even in the midst of our diversity—in the various places to which God has called us.

It's not easy. But my time at the Ecumenical Institute proved that Christian unity really is possible. I hope you'll join me, in prayer and in practice, for this holy experiment.

The Rev. Dunn is a provisional deacon working as associate pastor with youth and families at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock. Email: katie.dunn@arumc.org.

'We teach and learn from one another, because through our conversation our vision of God becomes richer and fuller, not watered down or muted.'

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EDITOR'S CORNER

BY AMY FORBUS

God-given moments

At the United Methodist Association of Communicators annual meeting in March, I took pages of notes as I listened to reporters, pastors, bishops, social media experts, public relations professionals, fellow editors and writers sharing their experiences and expertise. (And I brought home some awards for our team; see page 6 for details.)

One thought that has stayed in my mind is something the Rev. Shawn Anglim said in a Thursday morning sermon.

Anglim serves as senior pastor of First Grace UMC in New Orleans, which hosted a half-day of our meeting. The church resulted from a post-Hurricane Katrina merger of two congregations: First UMC, an aging Anglo church, and Grace UMC, an African-American church. As Anglim told the story of how these people of God faced challenges and came together to create something new, there came a point where he cupped his hands and held them out.

"Sometimes God gives you a moment, and you have to decide what you're going to do with it," he said.

Since merging, First Grace UMC has cupped its collective hands to receive more moments from God. Many of these moments don't look comfortable or easy to sort out. But because of that receptiveness, First Grace UMC has become a multiracial church, has a Hispanic/Latino community and ministry, and recently voted unanimously to become a sanctuary congregation for those dealing with immigration issues—and for anyone else who might feel unsafe for any other reason. They founded Hagar's House, a residential ministry, and Project Ishmael, a companion ministry providing legal help for immigrant families. The church's unlikely path is bringing abundant life.

In recent weeks, I've had three friends face major disappointments. One had predicted the outcome and seemed ready to shrug it off and get on with life; another expected the discouragement but still wrestled with what it might mean; and still another was blindsided with a blunt reminder that sometimes life dumps you at a crossroads with no good direction to take.

And as my friends weathered their storms, I found myself in a sanctuary in New Orleans where the water had once stood five feet high. Sunlight streamed down from high windows as the pastor held out his cupped hands and said, "Sometimes God gives you a moment, and you have to decide what you're going to do with it."

I can't say for certain that my friends will re-frame their disappointments into something they recognize as God giving them a moment. And I can't hold their moments for them or decide what to do with them. But I can draw from my own challenging experiences to offer support. I can feel the sunlight where flood waters once stood... see the new life in unlikely places... and I can open my hands to receive.

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Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
May 5	April 17
June 2	May 17
July 7	June 16



GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

BY GARY E. MUELLER

Needing all of Christ

It's easy to show up on Easter morning to celebrate the joy of Jesus' resurrection... to get swept up in the lilies, the crowds and the beautiful music.

But you can't isolate Easter from Jesus' birth, where you experience how passionately God loves you. You certainly can't separate it from his life and teachings, where he shows you how to live the way God created you to live. And there's no way you can pry it from his death on the cross, where you experience how far Jesus will go to save you by giving you what you absolutely need, but can never get on your own.

You need it all because you need all of Christ—his birth, his death and his teaching, as well as his resurrection—so you can personally experience how Jesus loves you so much he willingly showed up for you, shared the fullness of God's love with you through word and deed, died to save you and was raised from the dead for you to have eternal life that begins right now.

When we experience Jesus' love, it changes everything about everything. Jesus gives us freedom from the past and freedom for our future. He

transforms us from what we were into what we can be. He moves us from despair to compassion, to generosity, joy and hope.

It doesn't matter what you've done, what you think about yourself or what anyone else says about you. Jesus has come for you, died for you and been resurrected for you.

If this doesn't fill you with a hunger to follow Jesus, to live as his disciple, to help others experience his love and get on board with him to transform lives, communities and the world, I don't know what will.

Christ is risen.

He is risen, indeed.

Grace and peace,



PRACTICAL DIVINITY

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON

John Wesley and the power of Christian doctrine

John Wesley was passionate about doctrine. In fact, his love of doctrine is one of the more underappreciated (and sometimes even unknown) parts of his leadership of the Methodist movement.

Wesley was such a believer in the importance of doctrine that it was—ironically—one of the things that caused him to get in trouble with his own Church of England. We see an example of that in a sermon from 1789 called "Prophets and Priests." In answering critics who claimed that his actions amounted to separation from the church, Wesley responded: "I hold all the doctrines of the Church of England. I love her Liturgy. I approve her plan of discipline, and only wish it could be put in execution."

His appreciation for the way that the church's doctrine and discipline were laid out on paper led Wesley to want to see them truly put into action. In fact, he believed that's what the Methodist movement was attempting to do. When people would criticize him for planning Methodist services in the city of Dublin at the same time as regular church services, one of the reasons Wesley gave for why he did such a thing was to ensure that the people would have a chance to hear "that sound doctrine which is able to save their souls."

Nowadays there are all kinds of misconceptions about the nature of the message that Wesley preached and wrote about. Sometimes he is depicted as an excitable evangelist that just wanted to get people pumped up about their faith. Other times you'll hear people make comments like, "I just really appreciate Wesley's message

about grace."

Both of these points of view miss the fact that there was actually a lot of concrete content to what Wesley was trying to get across. It wasn't just about being energetic for Jesus (though that is certainly a good thing!). And it wasn't just a generalized message about grace or love. Wesley's understanding of the Christian gospel had fundamental doctrinal content—and he believed that content was of paramount importance for people to hear.

When pressed to summarize the Christian doctrine he thought most central to the Bible, Wesley typically spoke in terms of a three-part scheme: the doctrine of sin and the need for repentance; the doctrine of justification by faith and new birth; and the doctrine of sanctification or holiness. He imagines these three doctrinal heads as the porch, door and house of religion in a famous example from the *Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained* in 1746.

Wesley writes, "Our main doctrines... are three, that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third is religion itself."

Wesley's intense commitment to core Christian doctrine can be explained by the fact that he really believed people's salvation was at stake in what was being preached by Methodist preachers. The pulpit was not a place to go off into flights of theological fancy, nor was it the proper arena for the preacher to test out his own pet

theories about the Bible. It was a place solely meant for the preaching of the meat-and-potatoes gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the last retrospective essays Wesley wrote about the Methodist movement was a short 1786 piece called "Thoughts upon Methodism." It is there that he shared his thoughts about the prospects for the Methodist movement in the years to come. And since Wesley was not a man to mince words, he stated exactly what he thought the dangers were to the revival that he had led, by that point, for over 45 years.

He writes, "I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out."

Our present age is one in which all three of those points Wesley makes are being tested in the extreme—doctrine, spirit and discipline. The Methodist movement may go one of any number of directions in the years to come. If it is to go in a Wesleyan direction, the Methodists themselves must surely take heed of Wesley's advice and embrace the biblical doctrine that Wesley himself embraced in the movement's first flourishing.

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

APPOINTMENTS & RETIREMENTS

The following **appointment changes** have been announced since the last publication deadline of the *Arkansas United Methodist*. Changes take effect July 1, 2017.

- Hazen/DeValls Bluff UMCs—Deanna McCormack
- Atkins/Bell's Chapel UMCs—Roy Beth Kelley
- Sardis UMC Bauxite—Troy Conrad
- Jaimie Alexander—First UMC Texarkana
- Kathleen Mc Murray—Cornerstone UMC Jonesboro
- Pat Bodenhamer—First UMC Paragould (associate)
- Bruce Bennett—First UMC Malvern
- Bryan Diffe—First UMC Crossett
- Clark Atkins—First UMC Siloam Springs
- Zach Roberts—First UMC Blytheville
- Chris Hemund—Village UMC Hot Springs Village
- Corey Tyson Read—SAU Wesley Foundation
- Dan Read—Greer's Chapel UMC Magnolia
- Susan Howe—Hollywood/Prescott Charge (moving from interim to permanent status)
- Nan Nelson—Clarendon/Holly Grove Charge (continuing in retired relationship)
- Mike Wilkie—First UMC Helena (continuing in retired relationship)
- Debbie Perry—Bismarck UMC (interim)
- Chase Green—Primrose UMC Little Rock
- Siegfried Johnson—Christ of the Hills UMC Hot Springs Village

And the following **retirements** have been announced (effective July 1, 2017):

- Mary Love Loftis
- Russell Moore
- Bonda Moyer
- Charles Murry
- Sara "Nan" Nelson
- Bill Steele

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

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Sanders named financial controller for ARUMC Center for Administrative Services

A 25-year employee has been selected for the new role of financial controller in the Arkansas Conference Center for Administrative Services.

Melissa Sanders has most recently served as office manager and Conference statistician, coordinating registration for Annual Conference, assisting with yearly audits, providing statistical analysis as well as calculation, entry and reporting of the Conference title and district apportionment payments. For her first 11 years with the United Methodists of Arkansas, she worked in the communications department, handling the financials and the mailing list for the Arkansas United Methodist.

Sanders' new position was created as part of a departmental reorganization following the retirement of assistant treasurer Diane Denham.

"Melissa has earned the praise and support of everyone she has worked with in the Conference for the last 25 years," said Todd Burris, Conference treasurer and director of the Center for Administrative Services. "This new role brings opportunities for her skills and knowledge to provide even greater benefit for the Conference."



Melissa Sanders

Arkansas Conference elder honored as part of USAF-Europe Religious Support Team of the Year

The Religious Support Team of the 496th Air Base Squadron recently received a top honor from its higher headquarters. Air Force Chaplain Capt. Ronald Feeser, an elder in the Arkansas Conference, and Staff Sergeant Cedric Johnson were recognized as the United States Air Forces-Europe Religious Support Team of the Year for 2016.

As the sole Air Force ministry team at Morón Air Base, Feeser and Johnson provide religious, spiritual and resiliency support to nearly 3,500 U.S. Air Force, U.S. Marine Corps and Spanish personnel at a geographically separated unit in southern Spain.

They provide this support through a variety of programs,

including focused outreach to Airmen work centers, Airmen dinners, mentoring events and worship services. They also serve as the primary advisors to Squadron leadership on potential mission impact of religion, as well as the religious, ethical and moral health of the unit.

They are also developing a unique Airmen and Family Ministry Center that will serve the needs of Airmen and their dependents at Morón. The center will provide support to the physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of all members. This



Capt. Ronald Feeser and SSgt. Cedric Johnson

summer, SSgt. Johnson will continue serve as the NCOIC of Chapel Operations while Chaplain Feeser will be transitioning to a new assignment with the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota.

Arkansas UMs among Living Legend Award recipients at Philander Smith College

Philander Smith College's 10th Annual Living Legends Banquet, held Feb. 23, 2017, included four United Methodists of Arkansas in the list of honorees: Lynda Byrd, the Rev. Jimmy Mosby, Lorraine Mosby and Frances O. "Freddie" Nixon.

Byrd, a native Arkansan and alumna of Philander Smith College, spent several years in education, then more than 20 years with Southwestern Bell Telephone and SBC (now AT&T), but her most challenging and rewarding career was with the General Board of Global Ministries, the mission agency of the United Methodist Church. Byrd served there as director of Communities of Shalom, working with interfaith partners in economic development, asset-based community development, strengthening multicultural relationships and effecting systemic change. She designed and developed training to embrace differences in community composition, as well as cultural, economic and racial differences; the training reached more than 400 teams in 37 states, Ghana, West Africa and Zimbabwe. In addition, her collaboration with three other Philander Smith alumni and colleagues (Edward Moultrie, Brenda Norwood and the late Dr. William T. Carter)

helped secure a \$6 million grant to the college through the Kendall Fund.

In retirement she has served as president of the Blue Bird Auxiliary, a volunteer organization supporting four Methodist Hospital facilities in the San Antonio. She also volunteers with Haven for Hope, where her work focuses on forming partnerships with faith communities across the city to accompany the previously homeless in assimilating into the community with confidence and dignity.

The Rev. Jimmy Mosby is a native of Hazen and graduated from Philander Smith College with a BA in elementary education. He also attended UA Little Rock, graduating from the University of Arkansas Fayetteville with a Master's degree in Public School Administration, spent 31 years working in the Little



Lynda Byrd

Rock School District and became the first African-American from Arkansas elected president of the Student Arkansas Education Association. After discerning a call to ordained ministry, he graduated from Memphis Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree. Now a retired elder in the Arkansas Conference, he has served as an associate pastor of Wesley Chapel UMC Little Rock, associate chaplain of Philander Smith College, and as pastor of Newport's Emory Chapel and Umsted Memorial UMCs, White Memorial UMC Little Rock and Levy UMC North Little Rock.

He is married to fellow award recipient Lorraine Mosby, and they have three children who graduated from Philander Smith College; a total of 17 of their family members have attended and graduated from Philander Smith College.

Lorraine Mosby, a native of Carlisle and a Philander Smith College alumna, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education and went on to earn a Master of Arts degree in guidance counseling from UA Little Rock. She retired from the Little Rock School District after serving more than 35 years as a teacher and counselor, working at seven different campuses and being selected as Educator of the Year at several schools. As a member of Henderson UMC Little Rock, she serves in the United Methodist Women and the Seekers Sunday school class. She is also active in the Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority and the Philander Smith College Alumni Association.

Nixon was born in Little Rock and grew up in McGehee. A graduate of Hendrix College, she is married to the Rev. Victor H. Nixon, and they have one daughter. Nixon served on the staff of Bill Clinton during his tenure as Arkansas attorney general and his first term as governor. When Dr. Grant Shockley was president of Philander Smith College, she served first as director of church relations and then as director of development. During this time, the apportionment for Philander Smith College was adopted by the Little Rock and North Arkansas Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church. While living in Batesville, she served as director of campus ministry at Arkansas College, now Lyon College, and then as national volunteer coordinator for Heifer International.

Now retired, Nixon sings in the choir at Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock and is active in United Methodist Women. She is a former Camp Aldersgate board member and president. For the past 10 years, she has served on the Perkins School of Theology board and for the past six years, the board of the United Methodist Theological Seminary in Moscow, Russia. She also serves on the President's Advisory Board for the seminary, as well as the boards of the Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, Shepherd's Hope and the Fred Darragh Foundation.

Other Living Legend honorees included Dr. Frances R. Harris, Sen. Linda Pondexter Chesterfield, the Hon. Mary Louise Williams, Tarai Rolle, Teresa Young and Marcel Jagne-Shaw.



Lorraine Mosby



Freddie Nixon



Jimmy Mosby

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Young people attend Day with the Bishop

Fifth- and sixth-grade students from churches around Arkansas gathered March 11 at First UMC Little Rock for A Day with the Bishop, an annual Arkansas Conference event designed for young people who are preparing to be confirmed as professing members of the United Methodist Church. Participants enjoyed games, worship, breakout sessions, a photo booth and more, including music from Loved By Hymn, the youth band from St. James UMC Little Rock. Bishop Gary Mueller spoke during opening worship and prayed with and for the attendees.

AUM PHOTOS BY AMY FORBUS



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UMFA grant helps renovate space for homeless healthcare clinics at CanvasCommunity Church

UAMS College of Nursing to lead clinic initiative

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) on March 17 announced an anonymous gift of \$25,000 from a Little Rock family to help renovate the facility at CanvasCommunity Church at 1111 West 7th St. in Little Rock, to house clinics for a homeless healthcare initiative led by the UAMS College of Nursing.

“The clinics *will* save lives,” said the Rev. Carter Ferguson, senior pastor at CanvasCommunity, in a news release. “But they also allow CanvasCommunity to do things to love our friends on the street in ways that we were simply never able to do before because of lack of resources.”

Thanks in part to a group of teenage volunteers from Baptist Preparatory School who took on demolition tasks as part of their school’s annual Missions Week, renovations began in March. With construction professionals now handling the remodeling phase, the work should conclude in early April. The congregation and UAMS hope to open the clinic the week of May 1.

The College of Nursing will coordinate with its faculty and

students to hold weekly clinics at CanvasCommunity—likely with operating hours overlapping the church’s existing Dinner and a Movie ministry held each Wednesday. With a different focus each week of the month, the clinic will provide education and screenings for mental health, women’s health issues, general health promotion topics and foot care. The clinic’s programs will offer educational experiences for UAMS nursing students while potentially leading to a reduction in unreimbursed medical care associated with the homeless population, according to the College of Nursing.

“Providing much-needed healthcare to the Little Rock homeless population is an effort that follows the footsteps of Christ,” said Jim Argue Jr., UMFA president and CEO. “We are pleased to have a role in making healthcare services available to our brothers and sisters on the street.”

A United Methodist mission congregation, CanvasCommunity has been working with homeless individuals for six years, providing worship services, fellowship, food,

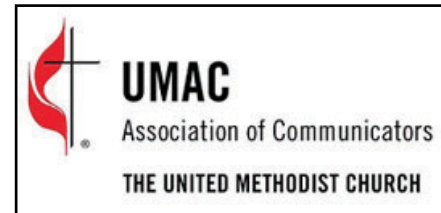
clothing and more. The idea for the clinics grew out of a ministry providing women’s hygiene products to those on the street.

“Our intent is to continuously expand our programming and deepen our medical involvement, which has already grown beyond women’s health before it began,” Ferguson said. “We appreciate and thank the United Methodist Foundation for an additional grant of \$20,750 which will allow us to bring our facilities up to medical code so that the clinics can begin.”

Services already being offered through CanvasCommunity’s homeless outreach efforts, such as HIV testing and screening for sexually transmitted diseases, will continue as currently supported through a partnership with ARCare. In addition to support from secular community organizations, a number of other United Methodist churches have signed on to support CanvasCommunity and its clinic, including First UMC Little Rock, St. James UMC Little Rock, Salem UMC Conway and Oaklawn UMC Hot Springs.

UMAC honors Arkansas Conference staffers for writing, design projects

First- and third-place awards for work appearing in the Arkansas United Methodist



The United Methodist Association of Communicators (UMAC) held its annual meeting March 22-24 in New Orleans. During the March 23 UMAC awards dinner, three members of the Arkansas Conference Center for Technology team were recognized for their work.

Arkansas United Methodist editor Amy Forbus received honors for two of her Editor’s Corner columns: First Place recognition for “Hello, my name is...” which appeared in the April 1, 2016 issue of this publication; and Third Place for “Celebration,” in the March 4, 2016 issue.

The Rev. Martha Taylor earned a Third Place award in feature

writing for her Jan. 1, 2016 *Arkansas United Methodist* cover story, “Mobile food pantry serves student households,” which highlighted the Bread of Life Mobile Food Pantry, a

ministry partnership between First United Methodist Church Harrisburg and the Arkansas State University Wesley Foundation.

Stephen Gideon also received a Third Place award for his graphic design work on materials for the Paysinger Hunger Summit, which was held Sept. 10, 2016.

“I’m thrilled to see the talent of these individuals recognized across the United Methodist connection,” said Mark Epperson, director of the Arkansas Conference Center for Technology. “This whole team considers their daily work a ministry of service to the United Methodists of Arkansas, and it’s great to see them honored for the quality of what they do.”

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Response to executions set for April

I haven’t always been against the death penalty. In fact, when I was younger, “an eye for an eye” sounded pretty good.

I have close friends in the legal profession. They assure me they would never seek the death penalty unless they felt the crime was so heinous, the person so evil, that their removal would make this world a better place. However, where does grace enter this equation? Can God continue to work on a heart? Can God take something horrible and turn it into something beautiful? I believe God can—and that executions deny God that opportunity.

To my knowledge, no state has executed so many prisoners in such a short amount of time since the Supreme Court revived the death penalty in 1976. Also, by state law, a minimum of six Arkansas citizens must witness each death.

I find it interesting that these execution orders were given the week Lent began—the season we ponder the meaning of that first-century capital punishment, the cross.

We can celebrate Jesus’ resurrection on April 16,

but it may be a little premature; for eight men, those witnesses and our state, the season of Lent grew by 10 days this year.

Rev. P. Jay Clark

Chair, Arkansas Conference Board of Church & Society
Pulaski Heights UMC Little Rock

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.

Ministry needs servants to go to prison



The Rev. David Hanshaw says that one of the most common questions he received as a pastor was, “Why doesn’t God still do miracles like He did in the Bible?” His answer is that God still does, and he has seen them happen.

In his retirement, Hanshaw sees miracles in his work as part of a Kairos ministry team that serves inside the Pine Bluff Correctional Unit.

“As I sit at a table with my brothers in white, I see God transforming them from the inside out!” he says. “I watch them as they enter the conference room on a Thursday night looking a bit hesitant, perhaps even a bit frightened. Then for the next three days I get to see God working His grace on them and in them, and watch the light come on! It is awesome to behold!”

Hanshaw invites both clergy and laity to participate in what God is doing inside prison walls right here in Arkansas and says participating in a Kairos team provides rich spiritual blessings. Kairos is an offshoot of the Walk to Emmaus ministry, but Kairos teams are open to anyone wishing to serve, whether or not they have experience with the Walk to Emmaus.

There are currently eight teams working in different prisons throughout the state, with hope for expansion into more prison units.

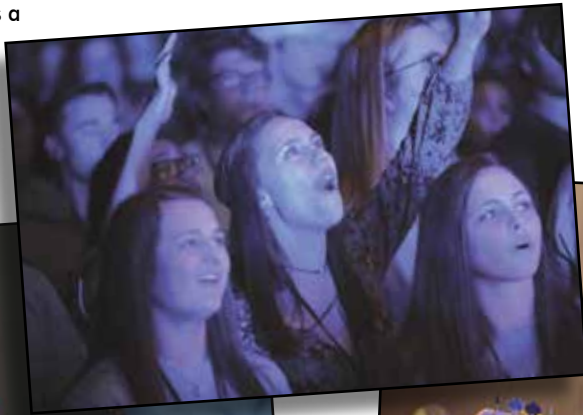
“Remember that our Lord said that when we visited the prisoner we visited Him,” Hanshaw said, citing Matthew 25:41-43.

To learn more about working with a Kairos team, contact Jim Dalton at jim.dalton1953@gmail.com (clergy); Dave Yacko at dyacko@hotmail.com (laity); or Hanshaw at dkhanshaw@suddenlink.net or 479-214-3388 (general inquiries).

RIGHT: Passionate worship is a hallmark of Veritas.

BELOW: Bishop Gary Mueller prepares to serve Holy Communion, with ACCYM president Lexie Burluson assisting.

BELOW: This year's worship concert featured the band Summerhill.



PHOTOS COURTESY ACCYM MEDIA TEAM

Veritas (from page 1)

Hannah Foust, Christian illusionist Danny Ray and youth group devotionals written by youth members of the Veritas Task Force. As an event with a consistent high level of spiritual impact upon attendees, Veritas has begun to attract attention from beyond Arkansas.

"We even had five participants from the Great Plains Conference there to check out the event and to see how we run things," said Zach Schrick, youth minister at First UMC Conway and a member of the Veritas Task Force.

To connect with Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries activities, resources and events, visit www.facebook.com/arkansascym, www.accym.org, the YouTube channel at youtube.com/arkansascym, and follow @accym on Twitter and arkansascym on Instagram.

Rev. Samuel Yun

Youths' thoughts on Veritas:

"During our meetings, the Veritas task force was encouraged to 'create a space for God to fill.' With our hearts set on that, planning Veritas was not as overwhelming as it may have seemed. God placed every piece of the event in our paths. Veritas is an extremely rewarding event because the task force gets to actively participate in the planned activities and worship.

"The most valuable part of Veritas was being a part of such a moving worship. The room was filled with young people overflowing with excitement to worship God and they truly poured their hearts out. Without fail, Samuel Yun delivered an impactful message each session. He has a talent for encouraging and empowering youth along with sharing the unconditional love God has for us. All weekend, we were told of our potential and light that we have automatically, just because God created us to do good and spread His love.

"Through the opportunities to engage in fellowship, learn about missions, and worship, Veritas created a weekend to satisfy the spirits and souls of the United Methodist youth of Arkansas. Being a part of Veritas is my biggest blessing and I am so thankful for the encouragement and support we get from the Arkansas Conference to be able to impact so many lives."

—Lexie Burluson, Lakewood UMC North Little Rock, president of ACCYM

"Every year I'm a little more amazed with how God uses Veritas to speak directly into the hearts of teens. This year, the week leading up to Veritas was filled with tears from the stress of work and school. I left for Veritas with a bad attitude and no desire to spend the weekend worshipping the Lord. Thankfully, God knew Veritas was exactly where I needed to be and gave me exactly what I needed to hear through Samuel Yun. When Samuel spoke about how Jesus paid a high price for us and it's our duty to serve him, I felt a sense of peace. His words reassured me that earthly things like beauty, money and popularity do not matter.

"Just like Jesus went to the mountain top, Veritas serves as my mountain top experience. This mountaintop experience has helped me rekindle my prayer life. I left Veritas feeling physically exhausted but mentally restored."

—Mallory McClure, First UMC Batesville, Veritas Task Force member

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June 24-30

SENIOR HIGH CAMP 9th - 12 grades - \$438
July 17-21



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Forgotten (from page 1)

situations. Many who needed assistance in Arkansas have yet to receive it.

"The request for teams has been out there, big time, but the response just isn't there," said Janice Mann, who with her husband, Byron, serves as co-coordinator of Arkansas Conference Disaster Response Ministries, and who also chairs Arkansas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). "We still need teams."

Mann says that regardless of the size of a disaster, those affected by disaster need help, hope and the experience of God's love as shared through God's people, the church.

"Communities need local United Methodists to be involved and engaged in disaster response," she said. "Your individual families,

your church family and your community need you as a church to be prepared and to help them prepare for disaster. The Conference Disaster Response staff can help you with that."

The Manns and other leaders in disaster response can offer training and consultation, and they can facilitate connections with government, faith-based and other

disaster response partners for local churches, even before a disaster occurs. To get started, email disaster@arumc.org.

"When the call goes out for help after a disaster, there is never enough help," Mann said. "More often than not, there is no response at all to the call. Yes, the help and funding came after the 2014 tornado, but what about those 17

tornados this year and those affected by them? Volunteers are needed in Disaster Response Ministry. Individuals are great, but the greater need is for local churches to offer teams of volunteers with sound leadership."

Arkansas Conference Disaster Response would like to see 15 to 20 church- or area-based Early Response Teams (ERTs) strategically located throughout the state, and a Disaster Response Team (DRT) in every county. As part of their work for the Conference, they provide training for such teams; all a church needs to do is assemble a group that will participate in training and pledge to remain equipped and

ready to respond when a disaster occurs.

Disaster response ministry has many facets. "It's so much more than supply kits and Early Response Teams," Janice Mann said. The Manns are available to share a Disaster 101 course with your congregation or a group within your church, and to help your church determine the most effective ways it can prepare to assist in a disaster situation, both within your community and beyond. Contact them at disaster@arumc.org to inquire about opportunities to learn, to receive training and to deploy that training to provide help when needed.



VIDEO:

Learn more about the flooding in southeast Arkansas, and the work still needed to help the communities there recover, in the video "100-Year Flood: The Recovery," available on the Arkansas Conference Vimeo channel, www.vimeo.com/arkansasumc.

Disaster response: Where to begin?

Disasters are categorized as follows:

Low-level: a small event, few homes affected, can be handled by the local community; no outside assistance is needed.

Medium-level: may or may not overwhelm the local community; outside assistance may or may not be needed.

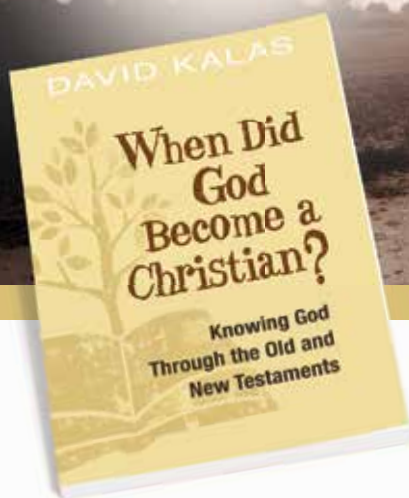
High-level: widespread damage involving multiple communities; completely overwhelms the affected area(s); outside assistance is necessary.

A United Methodist local church engaged in disaster response with its community should be able to handle a low-level disaster; a district should be able to handle a medium-level disaster; and in a high-level event, the response would probably be Conference-wide. Sometimes even a jurisdictional (multi-Conference) or denomination-wide response is needed.

Contact Janice and Byron Mann, co-coordinators of Arkansas Conference Disaster Response Ministries, at disaster@arumc.org. **Now is the time to schedule training, so that when a disaster of any magnitude occurs, your team is prepared to help.**

If your church has a Volunteers In Mission (VIM) team that serves domestically and internationally, consider checking with Byron Mann at vim@arumc.org for in-state recovery needs before scheduling the team's next trip abroad.

Reconciling the nature of God in the Old and New Testaments



The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament is the same God, right? Then why does God seem so different depending upon which part of the Bible you read? Christians have struggled with this question throughout history.

This book by David Kalas helps you explore the unity of the Scripture, biblical history, and the two primary attributes of God: love and holiness. You'll come away with a better understanding of the nature and integrity of God, leading you to love, worship, and trust God even more.

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 GLOBAL MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church

Conference fitness tracking plan to be evaluated by Board of Pension at May 2 meeting

When the Arkansas Annual Conference voted in 2015 to terminate the Conference health care coverage, one of the benefits that remained was Virgin Pulse.

Known as Virgin Healthmiles when the Conference began enrolling participants in 2010, the program relies on a pedometer or other fitness tracking device to raise awareness and provide incentives for participants to develop or strengthen healthy habits. Participants accrue points which translate into reward dollars and can be redeemed for gift cards, direct-deposited into a bank account or donated to a charitable cause.

The Conference contracts with Virgin Pulse through an arrangement with Wespeth Benefits and Investments, the United Methodist Church's pension and benefits organization (formerly known as the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits). When the Arkansas Conference voted to end its health care plan, the Conference's Board of Pension and Health Benefits decided to continue participating in Virgin Pulse through Wespeth on a year-by-year basis.

"In order for the board to make a recommendation at Annual Conference to continue or terminate the plan for another year, we will be reviewing plan participation at our next meeting scheduled for May 2," said Stark Ligon, chair of the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits.

The board will take into account the trends of participation in Virgin Pulse among eligible Arkansas Conference clergy, lay employees and spouses.

"Only about one-third of our eligible members are enrolled, and the same handful of people remain active each quarter," said Mona Williams, benefits officer for the Conference. "Having spent my career in benefits, it's good to see a program that gives people the opportunity to improve their overall fitness and be rewarded for it."

Although numbers were not available at press time, Williams said the program likely experienced an increase in participants after the 2016 Annual Conference, when it was

announced that Virgin Pulse would be evaluated each year. "I'm curious to see how many came on after Conference 2016, and if they have been active," she said.

About the program

When it was branded as Virgin Healthmiles, the program focused mainly on walking or running, but now as Virgin Pulse, it encourages participants to track a number of healthy behaviors through the mobile app or related website. Virgin Pulse is part of Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group business conglomerate, and through Wespeth, the Arkansas Conference covers the employee costs and rewards for its members.

Virgin Healthmiles primarily focused getting participants walking, and awarded points for mileage goals reached. Today, Virgin Pulse supports a more encompassing vision of healthy behavior, rewarding participants for keeping a journal of other activities, such as swimming, which may not be counted by a pedometer or other tracker; to set nutrition goals; to track other wellbeing goals; and to challenge friends. The Virgin Pulse program helps participants address all areas of wellbeing, including financial, social, emotional, spiritual and physical.

The first pedometer is free to newly enrolled participants. If a participant already has a preferred fitness tracking device, the program will sync with many available brands and models, including Fitbit and Apple Watch.

Rewards

Wespeth Benefits and Investments (formerly named the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of the United Methodist Church) spent several years correlating the quantities



of steps uploaded into Virgin Pulse with annual medical costs for the participants in the HealthFlex health plan for many years. They found that participants who upload higher levels of steps generally spend less in medical care.

In addition to the rewards of healthier living, participants can earn up to \$275 per calendar quarter, with increasing dollar amounts given as each of four levels of point accrual is completed.

Points toward reward levels can be earned through activity, and also by reporting healthy habits on the mobile app or website.

Who is eligible?

All active clergy and spouses, as well as Conference-employed laity and spouses, may enroll in Virgin Pulse if they are not already participating. Those who may have lost momentum (and possibly their pedometer) can rejoin the plan at any time between now and Annual Conference.

Enrolling

Eligible individuals may begin tracking activity and habits and earning rewards through Virgin Pulse immediately. To enroll, visit <http://join.virginpulse.com/wespeth> and select Arkansas as plan sponsor when prompted. If you have questions or need assistance, contact Mona Williams at 501-324-8028 or mwilliams@arumc.org.

Camp Healing Hearts confronts grief and loss felt by children and families *Free to participants; register by May 1*



Last year's Camp Healing Hearts attendees participate in the candlelight memorial service included in the weekend experience.

PHOTO COURTESY METHODIST FAMILY HEALTH

Camp Healing Hearts, a free overnight grief camp for children ages 5 through 18 who have experienced the death of a loved one, will be held May 19-20, 2017. The registration deadline is May 1.

The annual camp is hosted by Kaleidoscope Grief Center, a program of Methodist Family Health. Held at Camp Aldersgate in Little Rock, Camp Healing Hearts unites families in the grief process.

Daylan Houston and his mother, Sarah Ann Mashburn, of East End (Saline County) are among those families. They found comfort and help after being devastated when Daylan's older brother, Aaron, contracted meningitis and died at age 13.

"Grief is like riding a

rollercoaster," Mashburn says. "You are up and down and all over the place, feeling sad and angry," and then pausing to cherish fond memories. Kaleidoscope Grief Center and Camp Healing Hearts provided this family with understanding and stability in a difficult time. Daylan, who has attended several camp sessions, considers Camp Healing Hearts "awesome." He especially enjoys the games and the crafts that are created with his big brother in mind.

"Grief can be a very isolating experience, particularly for children," says therapist and camp director Janet Breen. "Camp Healing Hearts provides a safe environment where children and their families can

develop coping skills, both individually and within a community of others. The work of play encourages a new sense of normalcy and allows children to find a voice for their grief."

The 24-hour experience of Camp Healing Hearts begins at 5 p.m. Friday, May 19, and concludes at 5 p.m. Saturday, May 20. Caregiver participation is required.

Campers participate in therapeutic activities, including "Heart to Heart" sessions and a candlelight memorial service, and traditional camp activities, like a making s'mores around a campfire, arts and crafts, fishing, swimming and boating.

To learn more or register, visit www.methodistfamily.org, or call 501-537-3991.

Q&A: Pastor's book highlights holy moments in life's chaos

When the Rev. Betsy Singleton Snyder was ordained an elder in 1993, she was the only woman in her Little Rock Conference ordination class. Her vocation, her marriage to former U.S. Representative Vic Snyder and the four sons they have together shape the approach of her first book, *Stepping On Cheerios: Finding God in the Chaos and Clutter of Life* (Abingdon Press, April 2017). She spoke recently with *Arkansas United Methodist* editor Amy Forbus about the book's themes and lessons. What follows are excerpts from their conversation.

When I saw the book title, I remembered that you used to have a blog by the same name. How much does this book draw from that previous experience of writing about life?

Probably quite a bit. Abingdon Press editors and I... talked about a number of topics. Abingdon has different departments: there's Christian living, there's leadership and theology, there's a lot of different areas and books are constantly in the pipeline. As we talked more, we decided, "Well, if this is my first book, maybe people need to meet me to see where I'm coming from, because my experience in life is a bit different from a lot of women."

[Blogging] was a fun experience because I wasn't writing sermons at the time. For the first time in my life as an adult woman at the age of 47, I had no ministry other than my home life, and yes, that is a ministry, a very valid and important ministry—but there was a big loss for me when I discovered that I had to go on disability. I was on disability for two and a half years, and I didn't know at the time if I would get better

or not. So I had to kind of grieve whether I would be a pastor or not, and the writing really allowed me an opportunity to do that to a broader audience, to talk about my life. I wasn't always explicitly religious, but people certainly knew that I wrote out of that perspective.

This book is geared toward mothers with young children, and you even address the readers as "Sisters" occasionally. Do you see ways others outside that group could benefit from reading it, too?

Yes, in fact, I saw some of the people who commented on it, one was [former First Lady of Arkansas] Ginger Beebe, and also one of my former professors, Dr. John Holbert—both commented that they thought men would benefit greatly from reading it. And I think that's true.

But I felt that I talk a certain way and I wanted to share this like I was sitting with a good friend and talking, because that's generally how I write, and how I preach, even. Probably how I teach. I don't get to teach quite as much in my current setting, but when I do it's sassy at times, and tart, and I wanted the freedom to treat it as a relaxed conversation—hopefully more of a conversation than a monologue. It's hard with a book to have a conversation, but I thought at least it might reach women who are overwhelmed parents—and what I've come to see is, frankly, in a season of having children who are 10 and now

eight-year-old triplets, it never really gets easier, it just changes.

What do you hope readers learn from this book?

Well, let people know that you need help. That's a huge one. [Former U.S. Senator] Blanche Lincoln actually told me that. She had twins, and we ran into her in the airport as soon as it was public [that we were having triplets], and she said, "Oh, never turn down help." That's truth, and I think too many of us are ashamed, embarrassed or feel guilty to ask for help. It is a chronic female condition, and I confess I still fight it.

I think we can make ourselves sick, or distressed—or distress makes us sick. We can be in a very spiritually deadening place of comparing ourselves to other people *ad nauseam*, instead of finding our own voice and our own path. I think being an older parent allowed me to not be so worried about what other people say and do. Now, there have been exceptions to that... but I see a lot of younger mothers totally plagued by, "Am I doing this right?" "What is right? Can someone please tell me what's right?" I think that does us, as women, an injustice in not trusting our own instincts, our own voices, even our abilities to get information, to fashion a family life and parenthood as we have to in the world that we live in today, which is also very challenging.

You mention the Jesuits several times in your writing. How do you incorporate their practices into your life?

I read a lot of James Martin. I loved his book *Between Heaven and Mirth*. It's about humor in the

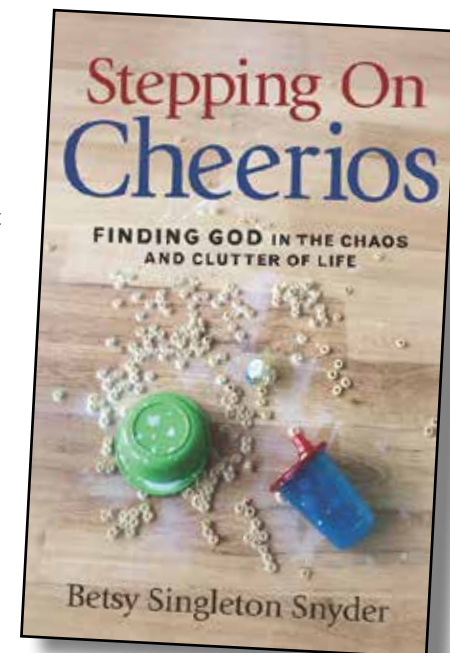
Christian faith, and I developed a sermon series around it.

Jesuits invite us not to separate God into a compartment, but to see our spirituality as everything that happens, from the dirty diaper to the argument with a family member. All of those are grist for the mill in understanding our relationship with God because they involve hammering out real life, and discipleship in real life. I had no idea the Jesuits were so earthy, and I was just really drawn to that practical kind of spirituality.

I think a lot of people don't think that somebody who is in a monastic type of community, they really sell them short: "Oh, you wouldn't understand what it's like to be a spouse or in a relationship..." [but] actually, living in community is extremely hard. And so at a different level, Jesuits have to struggle with the same kinds of things. It helps me to understand that no matter what our situation or our setting, and this is across the board, from a celibate Catholic order, to me, as a wife, mother, pastor in a Protestant denomination, we have similarities as Christians and can walk together.

Any favorite things you'd like to share about the book?

One of my favorite chapters is "The Wisdom of Albus Dumbledore," because it goes back to how do we talk with, deal with, help our children process bad things? I think this is especially pertinent for Christians.



There are things that people say about God in difficult times that don't reflect good Christian theology or teaching about the nature of God. And so I don't want parents to fall into that trap with their children, of coming up with platitudes that don't work. Children can spot fake in a New York minute.

For a fun chapter, I like the one about our family bake-off, because I think starting traditions that anchor you are another way that kids learn. Christianity's full of traditions, liturgically, that can really ground us when we're faced with uncertainty, and questions, and the fear of being isolated or lonely.

Singleton Snyder's book launch coincides with her new website, WomenadeStand.com, which will include a blog, podcasts and other content geared toward Christian women about women's issues, women's concerns and Christian leadership.

Helena church gives comfort to kids, safety to households

The Helena-West Helena Police Department has teamed up with First United Methodist Church Helena for a new community outreach program called Blue Lights and Big Smiles. First UMC Helena members have donated stuffed animals to help police officers connect with children who have been involved in either a minor traffic accident or other traumatic experiences. Pictured are the Rev. Mike Wilkie, pastor of First UMC Helena, and Chief Virgil Green of the Helena West Helena Police Department.



First UMC Helena's pastor the Rev. Mike Wilkie serves as the Red Cross Disaster Services representative for Phillips County, and as part of that role he partnered recently with Red Cross and AmeriCorps volunteers to install free smoke detectors in a number of homes in Ward 1 of Helena West Helena. This is a beginning of a mission to provide free smoke detectors to every residence in need in Phillips County. Red Cross and AmeriCorps canvassing efforts to determine needs will continue through each ward and throughout the county over the next few months.

COURTESY PHOTOS

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.



Kevin Overholt of Leslie UMC, chainsaw safety trainer for Arkansas Conference Disaster Response, observes Clint Johnson of Vilonia UMC as part of the recent training course held at Camp Tanako in Hot Springs.

COURTESY PHOTO

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.

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. Visit www.missionserviceproject.org for details and to download paperwork, or contact Susan Hellums at shellums@mcfirst.com.

Mission in central Texas 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.

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 details, contact 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. Crisis can occur anywhere, at any time, and 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. If your church is gathering kits, notify Byron so he can arrange transport.

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.

Perryville church offering Alzheimer's and dementia caregiver support group

Perryville United Methodist Church has begun an outreach ministry to its surrounding community in the form of a caregivers' support group for those who care for relatives with Alzheimer's Disease or other forms of dementia.

All caregivers, specifically those living in Perry County and Conway County, are invited to this support group to learn from and share with each other.

The group's first gathering, held March 1, was hosted by three facilitators connected with the congregation, and drew 13 caregivers, one guest and a guest

speaker, Priscilla Pittman, program director of Alzheimer's Arkansas. Facilitators were pleased with the attendance.

"I knew there was a great need in our community, but you just never know how many people will turn out for something like this," said Ida Rose, one of the facilitators. "We had wonderful feedback from the caregivers after the meeting."

The gathering meets the first Wednesday of each month at 1:30 p.m., at Perryville UMC, 123 Cross Street, near Arkansas Highway 9. For more information, contact Rose at 501-208-3105.

Spiritual formation retreat set for May 22-24 at Mount Eagle

"We're starved for a life that not only senses the sacred in the world around us but savors it. We're famished for experiences that are real, relationships that are deep, work that is meaningful."

—Ken Gire

Mount Eagle Retreat Center will be the site of a three-day spiritual formation retreat for clergy and laity, "Seeing What Is Sacred: A Practical, Real-World Spirituality for Both the Head and the Heart," May 22-24, 2017.

The text for this retreat will be Ken Gire's book *Seeing What Is Sacred: Becoming More Spiritually Sensitive to the Everyday Moments of Life* (formerly published as *The Reflective Life*). This powerful book teaches a practical, accessible, real-world spirituality that can be applied to anyone's everyday life. Retreat participants will learn and apply a three-step spiritual practice which will help you see and respond to what God is doing in every area of your life.

This retreat will be based on the Academy for Spiritual Formation/Benedictine retreat model and will provide time for worship, learning, prayer, community, constructive dialogue and quiet reflection. Goals for the retreat will include both spiritual renewal and practical application.

The Rev. Dr. Bill Buchanan, Arkansas Conference chair for spiritual formation and the pastor of First United Methodist Church Forrest City, will serve as retreat leader.

Visit www.mounteagle.org/events for pricing, scholarship information, details and a registration form.

Located in southwest Stone County near the towns of Clinton and Shirley, Mount Eagle is a United Methodist year-round retreat center. It sits atop a mountain surrounded on three sides by the Middle Fork of the Little Red River.

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Annual Conference Update

Annual Conference registration opens April 17

Registration for the 2017 Arkansas Annual Conference will open April 17 at <http://ac2017.arumc.org>, and will continue through June 2.

In addition to online registration, a downloadable, printable registration form will be available on the Conference website, and also will be mailed to all clergy and lay members of Annual Conference.

The 2017 Pre-Conference Journal will be available for free download as of April 17; print copies may be purchased as part of the registration process or on-site upon arrival at Annual Conference.

All members of the annual conference, laity or clergy, active or retired, who register after June 2 will be charged a late registration fee.

Construction alert for those traveling west to Hot Springs

Attendees of the 2017 Arkansas Annual Conference may experience construction delays if they travel along U.S. Highway 70 between Interstate 30 and Hot Springs. Highway 70 is being widened to five lanes from Interstate 30 in Saline County to the intersection with Highway 128 in Garland County. According to information posted at ConnectingArkansasProgram.com, construction is expected to last throughout 2017 and part of 2018. The Annual Conference Planning Committee recommends that those who normally travel on this portion of Highway 70 to reach Hot Springs consider taking an alternate route for this year's gathering.

For more information about the construction process and alternate routes, visit <https://goo.gl/bylsqb>.

A prayer for the 2017 Arkansas Annual Conference

Living God, breathe your Holy Spirit into us, that your life may become our life. Fill these days of conferencing with all that we need to become vital disciples. We surrender this time to you and embrace the bold hope that your church can transform lives, communities, and the world. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, the one who lived, the one who died, and the one who rose, all to enable us to experience the fullness of life in You. Amen.

Changes come to Cokesbury retail space for AC2017

Display to be organized around key ministry areas

Instead of its traditional wide assortment of books for browsing, Cokesbury, the retail arm of the United Methodist Publishing House, will take a new approach to its display space at this year's Annual Conference.

"There are still going to be things to purchase—the newest titles, the best-sellers, we'll have all of those," said Rachel Nicklas, the Cokesbury resource consultant for Arkansas. "But for programming resources, we'll be giving folks an opportunity to be hands-on, to see more pieces of the puzzle before placing an order. We hope it will be a nice place for people to sit down with a cup of coffee and learn about possibilities for their ministries."

The space will feature:

- "Ministry stations" with an array of materials for review, such as curriculum for all ages, youth ministry guides, small group studies and stewardship materials
- New and best-selling titles for immediate purchase
- Books from Bishop Mueller's recommended reading list
- Free shipping for all orders placed during Annual Conference for products not available on-site
- Trained consultants available to meet with church leaders interested in Bible school curriculum, congregational studies, sanctuary furnishings, church signage, pulpit robes and more.



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

Our Partners



www.familypromisepc.org



www.theoneinc.org



www.therockofhope.org



From His Throne Ministry:
www.facebook.com/fromhistrone

St. James United Methodist Church | 321 Pleasant Valley Drive | Little Rock, AR 72212 | 501-217-6700 | www.stjameslr.org

OBITUARIES

ALMA

Herschel McClurkin

The Rev. Herschel Herbert McClurkin Jr., 88, of Alma, passed away Monday, March 20, 2017, at his home. He was born July 24, 1928, in Stephens, Arkansas.

He was raised in Mulberry, Arkansas and graduated from Mulberry High School. Herschel received a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Master of Science in Animal Husbandry from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and was a member of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity. He later received a Master of Divinity from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, Dallas. Herschel served on active duty with the Air Force and then retired as a major from the Air Guard Reserves.

Early in his career, Herschel served as youth director at First UMC Fort Smith and First UMC Garland, Texas, while attending Perkins. On Aug. 13, 1967, he married Mardell Christello of Fort Smith. They would have celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary this summer.

Through his 30 years in full-time ministry and 18 years of "post-retirement part-time" ministry, Herschel served many appointments across the state of Arkansas, including Gentry/Springtown/Highfill, Wesley Russellville/London, Walnut Ridge/Alicia, Newport, Wynne/McElroy, superintendent of the Conway District, Greenwood, Kibler UMC and on staff at First UMC Fort Smith.

Herschel also had extensive training in United Methodist camping ministry. He was a member of the planning committee of Shoal Creek Camp and directed its first camp.

Herschel served on numerous boards and agencies. He was a member of the board of Arkansas Methodist Children's Home, Philander Smith College and the University of Central Arkansas. He served as a member of the Arkansas Inter-Faith Conference, a conference representative to Perkins Alumni Council, a member of the board of directors Wesley Foundation at Arkansas Tech University and Arkansas State University, secretary of the Alma Community Outreach Center, and on the Ozark Chinquapin Foundation board. He was Chaplain of the Ligon Family and Kinsmen Association, a member of the Fort Smith Rotary Club and a Paul Harris Fellow.

On Feb. 10, 2017, he and Mardell received the Fort Smith Exchange Club's Book of Golden Deeds Award.

Herschel lived his life full of LOVE for the church, his family, friends and the Razorbacks; JOY for the Lord; PEACE through his gratitude in all circumstances; PATIENCE in his marriage, raising children, being a grandfather and father figure to so many; KINDNESS to everyone he met; GOODNESS in what he saw in others and through his keen sense of humor; FAITHFULNESS in his work, service for others and devotion to his family; GENTLENESS in his pastoral care, ministry and how he handled difficult situations; and SELF-CONTROL in only eating one serving of ice cream a day!

He is survived by his wife, Mardell Christello McClurkin of Alma; his brother, John McClurkin of Mulberry; daughter, Alice Scheer and husband Dr. Blake Scheer of Little Rock; son,



Herschel McClurkin

Trey McClurkin and wife Tammie of Conway; and grandchildren, Graham and Ella Scheer of Little Rock and Emma, Siah and Hayes McClurkin of Conway.

The service was held in the sanctuary at First United Methodist Church Fort Smith on Saturday, March 25, 2017. Visitation followed in the church narthex, and burial took place at the Alma City Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests contributions be made to Shoal Creek Methodist Camp, c/o Renee Henson, 1102 Northview Drive, Van Buren, AR 72956; or any United Methodist Church or Methodist organization of your choosing. The family would like to thank the many friends, family and Peachtree Hospice for their loving care.

LITTLE ROCK

Anne Bobo Vinson

Anne Bobo Vinson, also known as "Mama Anne" to many, 91, of Little Rock, passed away Sunday, March 12, 2017.

She was born April 4, 1925, in Watson Chapel, daughter of Loyd C. and Sarah Lindsay Bobo. She was raised in Watson Chapel, graduating from Watson Chapel High School.



Anne Vinson

She married the Rev. Everett Moseley Vinson, a Methodist pastor in the Little Rock Conference, on March 28, 1947, in Pine Bluff. Mrs. Vinson served churches throughout Arkansas well as a dedicated minister's wife until her husband passed away in Smackover in 1980. After his death, Mrs. Vinson moved to Little Rock, where she became an active member of St. Paul United Methodist Church.

She enjoyed time with family, playing bridge, traveling and serving the church. She was a fantastic cook, known especially for her pies.

Along with her parents and her husband, she was preceded in death by her son, James Paul Vinson; two brothers, Lindsay and Marion Bobo; sister, Margaret Singer; and two grandchildren, James Paul Vinson Jr. and John Vinson.

Survivors include two daughters, Sarah Short (Russ) of Little Rock and Suzanne Dunn (Jim) of Fort Smith; a daughter-in-law, Barbara Vinson of Little Rock; five grandchildren, Amy Johnson (David), Rusty Short (Amanda), Holt Short (Katie), all of Little Rock, Julie Stewart (Eric) of Fayetteville and Matt Dunn (Vanessa) of Boise, Idaho; and ten great-grandchildren.

A celebration service was held March 16 at St. Paul UMC Little Rock, with the Rev. Rich Mitchell officiating. A reception followed at the church; burial was private.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to St. Paul United Methodist Church, 2223 Durwood Road, Little Rock, AR 72207 or Goddard United Methodist Church Pantry, 1922 Dodson Avenue, Fort Smith, AR 72901.

MARKED TREE

Mary Wells Steele

Mary Wells Steele, 79, of Marked Tree, passed away on March 12, 2017 at St. Bernard's Medical Center.

Mary was an X-ray technician/surgical assistant working at a variety of locations in the north central Florida area, before moving to Marked Tree. She was a member of Branford United Church.

Survivors include her husband, the Rev. William Steele, an elder in the Arkansas Conference; her daughter, Melanie Lockhart (Charles Tomlinson); her son, Lane Hurst; her brother, William Wells; two sisters, Gail Whiteford (Bob) of Gainesville, Florida, and Ann Canty of Tallahassee; six stepchildren, 19 grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

A celebration of her life took place March 25, 2017, in the fellowship hall of First United Methodist Church Marked Tree, as well as on April 1, 2017, in the O'Brien Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Gainesville, Florida.

Mary's wishes were to be cremated, and interment will be held privately at the O'Brien Cemetery.

TULSA, Oklahoma

Ellavee H. Swift

Ellavee H. Swift, 91, of Tulsa, Okla., passed away Sunday, March 19, 2017, at Legend Senior Living. She was born June 5, 1925, in Dierks, Ark., to John Preston and Ethel Lee Hobson.

On Sept. 28, 1945, she married the Rev. Clyde N. Swift, and during their 64 years together she served with him in ministry for 45 years at various Methodist and United Methodist churches in the Little Rock Conference. Following her husband's official retirement, they both continued to serve in ministry in small churches.

Ellavee is preceded in death by her parents; her husband, the Rev. Clyde N. Swift; a sister, Geraldine Edge; and a son-in-law, Pastor Billy Joe Daugherty of Tulsa, Oklahoma. She leaves cherishing her memory one son, the Rev. David E. Swift and his wife, Ann, of Tulsa; one daughter, Pastor Sharon Daugherty of Tulsa, Okla.; six grandchildren: Sarah Wehrli and her husband, Caleb, of Orlando, Florida; Matthew Swift and his wife, Season, of Jones, Oklahoma; Ruth Sanders and her husband, Adam, of Frisco, Texas; Ella Wisley and her husband, Josh, of Fayetteville, Arkansas; John Daugherty and his wife, Charica, of Tulsa; and Paul Daugherty and his wife, Ashley, of Tulsa; nine great-grandchildren: Isaac and Elizabeth Wehrli; Sophie, Samuel and Bonnie Swift; Tovah and Ziva Sanders; Blythe, Jude and Monte Daugherty, Liam and Beniah Daugherty; Kathryn Wisley; and a number nieces, nephews and other relatives.



Ellavee Swift

A memorial service was held Friday, March 24, 2017, in the main sanctuary of Victory Christian Center. Interment took place Thursday, March 23, at East Memorial Gardens in Texarkana, Arkansas. To honor Ellavee's memory in lieu of flowers, consider contributing to Victory Special Needs ministry, Tulsa Dream Center or Billy Joe Daugherty Legacy Library.

Bishop May, 'holy boldness' advocate, dies at 81

BY SAM HODGES
United Methodist News Service

Bishop Felton E. May often spoke of the need for "holy boldness"—and his admirers said he lived the phrase.

He was a forceful preacher and a force away from the pulpit.

"You did not have to ask him to enter the fray," said James H. Salley, associate vice chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa

University, a United Methodist school. "If he saw it and felt it was wrong, he opposed it. If he felt it was right and something he needed to support, he did it."

May died Feb. 27 at age 81, at

his home in Ellicott City, Maryland. He had been under hospice care for pancreatic cancer. Survivors include Phyllis Henry May, his wife of 53 years; two children, Daphne May Brown and Felton May II; and eight

grandchildren.

Bishop La'Trelle Easterling of the Baltimore-Washington Conference announced May's passing and called him "a giant of

(continued on page 15)

COMING UP

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. 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. For 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 awards are named in honor of Marshall T. Steel, a prominent minister and former president of the college. 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 Burriss, 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, AR 72032, or e-mailed to whitney@hendrix.edu by April 29, 2017.

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.

Hill to speak at Mount Sequoyah May 1-2

Dr. Craig Hill, dean of Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, will speak May 1-2, 2017 at Mount Sequoyah Center, 150 N. Skyline Drive in Fayetteville. The author of *Servant of All* will address status, ambition and the way of Jesus. Overnight and commuter rates are available for this event. To learn more, contact Denni Palmer, Christian education and spiritual formation coordinator, at denni.palmer@mountsequoyah.org. To register, visit www.mountsequoyahacademy.org/conferences.

Retired Pastors Day luncheon in Stuttgart May 8

The 19th Annual Arkansas Retired Pastors Day will be held on Monday, May 8, at noon in the new Christian Life Center at First UMC Stuttgart, located at 307 East Fourth Street. All retired pastors, spouses, surviving spouses and sponsors are invited to attend. Special music will be provided by the Swamp Angels and Amy Law & the Soul Sisters. Questions? Contact the Rev. David Bush, thepastor@stuttgartfumc.org.

Herbs of the Bible workshop in Hot Springs May 28

A presentation on "Herbs of the Bible" will be held at Garvan Woodland Gardens in Hot Springs on Sunday, May 28 from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. Cindy Faulk will present an overview of herbs, spices and other plants referenced in the Bible. Her presentation will focus on the various uses of these plants, such as making essential oils, medicinal benefits, culinary uses and symbolisms found in literature. Participants will make an infused oil similar to what would have been used in biblical times. There is a fee to participate, and a discount for members of the gardens; call 800-366-4664 to make a reservation.

United Methodist Men national gathering set for July 7-8

A thousand men are expected to come together for worship, workshops, service projects and fellowship at the National Gathering of United Methodist Men on July 7-8, 2017. Held at St. Luke's UMC Indianapolis, Indiana, the event will inspire attendees to embrace new possibilities for ministry and discipleship.

"This is not an event to just have a good time and learn things—it will change your life and change the lives of people around you," said Gil Hanke, general secretary of the General Commission on United Methodist Men (GCUMM). "This gathering challenges men to change their behavior, encouraging them to become more Christ-like in their daily lives."

Speakers will include:

- Bishop Jonathan Holston, resident bishop of the South Carolina Annual Conference
- Bishop James Swanson, president of GCUMM and resident bishop of the Mississippi Annual Conference
- Shan Foster, director of Men End Domestic Violence (MEND)
- Dr. Kevin Watson, assistant professor of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies at Candler School of Theology.

Attendees will choose among 19 workshops focusing on leadership, ministry development, personal growth and spiritual development. With subjects ranging from cyber bullying and local church visioning to stress management and small group ministries, there are topics to support men no matter their age or their role in the local church. An extensive ministry fair will offer ideas to enrich and support outreach and service initiatives.

Three community service experiences will support people in need both in Indianapolis and around the world. Attendees will build hand-cranked mobility carts distributed internationally through Mobility Worldwide, sort and pack produce for local distribution through the Society of St. Andrew and build wheelchair ramps for local homes.

Visit www.UMMGathering.org for further details, including lodging options and an online registration form.

Music and worship national gathering in Little Rock 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.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER: Lakewood UMC (North Little Rock) is searching for a modern worship leader. This is a part-time position with an average of 6 hours per week, with the exception of church holidays and special services (more hours added). Pay is \$20 per hour. For information or to apply for this position, please send your resume and cover letter to Rev. Jonathon Bevil at bevums@gmail.com or call at 479-567-4486.

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH of Springdale, Arkansas, seeks a full-time Family Ministry Coordinator to support the ongoing development, coordination, and administrative support of the Family Ministry of First Church. Applicants should be self-confident, trustworthy, detail-oriented, and an effective communicator. Applicants should send a cover letter and resume to the Rev. Todd Lovell at todd@fumcwired.com. Include references that can speak to organizational ability and communication skills. Submit applications by April 15.

WESLEY CHAPEL, downtown Little Rock, is in need of a Minister of Music to be responsible for planning and executing all music activities, including rehearsals and choir direction; providing music for worship services, funerals, and other events; and supervising and/or coordinating with other musicians. The preferred candidate will be able to play hymns as well as gospel/inspirational selections. Interested parties should submit a resume detailing qualifications and experience to wesleychapellr@gmail.com by April 21st with "Minister of Music" in the subject.

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.

May (from page 15)

the United Methodist Church.”

“I urge us all to actively keep his family and all those who loved him in our prayers,” she said.

During five decades of ministry, May led United Methodist churches, conferences and agencies. He was the first African-American bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. He helped start both Africa University and the denomination’s Communities of Shalom movement.

May made church-related visits to the White House, but also accepted a first-ever “set-aside” episcopal assignment to the streets of Washington, during a spike in drug-related violence.

Through his ministry, he acted on a deep concern for those on the margins.

“What I saw was a person who showed bold leadership, a person who was visionary and a person who didn’t mind taking risks on behalf of those who tended to be left outside,” said Bishop Marcus Matthews, who was a district superintendent under May. Matthews retired as bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in 2016.

May was born in Chicago in 1935. He grew up in an apartment on the South Side and regularly attending a Baptist church with his mother and siblings.

While a student at local Judson College, May worked part-time at a reform synagogue. Rabbi Louis Leopold Mann recommended that he become a part of St. James Methodist Church, which had a commitment to integration.

“I think God has called you to be a minister,” May, speaking in 2009 at Wesley Theological Seminary, recalled the rabbi saying.

May also remembered being incredulous at the rabbi’s assertion, but was soon involved in leading Sunday school and youth programs at St. James.

“And then I began to read Methodist literature and its social witness, and it made sense to me. I felt I was called by God to do that,” he told the Baltimore Sun for a 2001 profile.

May was active as a young adult in civil rights work, including Operation Breadbasket. He was ordained as a deacon in the Northern Illinois Conference in 1962 and served two pastoral appointments in Chicago, one of them a church start.

To get Maple Park Methodist going, May and his wife knocked on doors, started a children’s ministry and held worship services. The



United Methodist Bishop Felton May condemns the U.S. government’s denial of visas for some United Methodists from Africa and the Philippines to attend the church’s 2004 General Conference in Pittsburgh. May died Feb. 27 at age 81.

FILE PHOTO BY MIKE DUBOSE, UMNS

church was chartered with 15 families and grew to 300 in weekly attendance during May’s time. It also was active in civil rights and other social justice advocacy.

In 1968, May transferred to the Peninsula Conference and became associate executive director of the Methodist Action Program in Wilmington, Delaware. After earning his master of divinity degree from Crozer Theological Seminary, he was ordained a United Methodist elder in 1970.

May would again serve as a church pastor, then as a district superintendent and as director of the Conference Council of Ministries.

In 1984, he was elected bishop and assigned to the Harrisburg Episcopal Area.

The Rev. Dean Snyder, now retired, worked on May’s staff in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Snyder said some top church leaders buckle under the responsibility, and complain about all the decisions they’re supposed to make.

Not May.

“Felton never felt sorry for himself, and he never apologized for exercising his responsibility and authority,” Snyder said.

Snyder added that May could be intimidating, but also strongly backed those under him who took a risk in social justice ministry.

“He’d say, ‘I’ll be with you all the way,’ and that was true,” Snyder said. “If people took a prophetic stance, no matter what, Felton was with them.”

May, as a bishop and as president of the General Council on Ministries, was one of those successfully pushing for the 1988 General Conference to

establish Africa University. He would later serve as vice president of its board of directors.

“He was there from the beginning, and there are a number of students who have graduated because of his personal intervention in providing funding,” Salley said.

May also had a key role in forming Communities of Shalom, which the 1992 General Conference started in response to race riots in Los Angeles. Later he successfully pushed for expanding the program into Africa.

“He was the organizing bishop and brought it out internationally,” said the Rev. Michael Christensen, director of the Shalom Initiative for Prophetic Leadership and Community Development at Drew University.

Perhaps May’s highest-profile role came in 1990-91, when he served on special assignment, leading the United Methodist Bishops’ Initiative on Drug and Alcohol Abuse and Violence in Washington. No other bishop has been asked by the Council of Bishops to leave an episcopal area for a special assignment on its behalf, and then return to active service.

In Washington, May and his wife took an apartment in the United Methodist Building, but he spent much of his time working with pastors in the toughest neighborhoods.

“He would be on the street, meeting people where they were,” said Stephen Drachler, who worked with May on the Washington assignment.

Drachler recalled that May heard another pastor refer to churches as “saving stations,” and seized on that

term. May and clergy colleagues borrowed tents and erected them on the street, where they held revival-style worship services but also invited drug counselors in to help people battling addictions.

The saving stations concept brought coverage from the *New York Times* and other news organizations.

“We must mount a holy war against drugs and reclaim our streets,” May told the *Times*.

May would reprise the strategy in Baltimore during his final episcopal assignment, leading the Baltimore-Washington Conference. The saving stations idea would be adopted elsewhere and would help lead to the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries’ Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence.

All along as bishop, May showed a deep interest in combatting poverty and other social ills in the United States and worldwide.

In 1994, he visited Rwandan refugee camps as part of a United Methodist fact-finding team. He returned two years later to help dedicate a tent village for orphans provided by United Methodists, a change he called a “miracle” compared to lethal conditions he’d seen earlier.

May also served on a White House Presidential Commission on AIDS, travelling across southern Africa in 1999. The trip helped increase U.S. spending on AIDS worldwide by \$100 million.

Under May, the Baltimore-Washington Conference formed a partnership with the Zimbabwe Conference.

“He gave birth to that,” Matthews

said, who also would lead the Baltimore-Washington Conference. “I’m proud to say it’s still going.”

In 2004, May retired from the episcopacy, but his work pace hardly let up. He served as dean of the Harry R. Kendall Science and Health Mission Center at United Methodist-affiliated Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas.

From 2007-2008, May served as interim top executive of the Board of Global Ministries. During his tenure at the agency, May and three other general secretaries presented four new areas of focus to the denomination at the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. The Four Areas of Focus were celebrated by the delegates and have guided much of the church’s work since then.

Late in life, May became a church pastor again, serving both Turning Point United Methodist in Trenton, New Jersey, and Theresa Hoover Memorial United Methodist in Little Rock.

“He was more than willing to come,” said New England Conference Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar, who as Greater New Jersey Conference leader asked May to take on the Trenton church. “He was always a pastor, always a prophet and always a great colleague.”

Devadhar noted May didn’t work alone.

“One cannot speak about his ministry without mentioning Phyllis, who was his loyal supporter and true partner,” he said.

May’s indefatigable efforts in social outreach were guided by an unapologetic evangelical fervor.

“Programs have had their day,” he said in his 2009 address at Wesley Theological Seminary. “The power of Christ must rest upon us and our institutions.”

Services were held April 1 at Asbury United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., and an Arkansas memorial service was held Saturday, March 25 at Theresa Hoover Memorial UMC. The May family asks that memorials be made to either Project H.O.P.E. or the Africa University Development Fund. Donations to Project H.O.P.E., Feeding Hungry Children, can be sent to Theresa Hoover United Methodist Women, c/o Dr. Etta Carter, 6403 Shirley Drive, Little Rock, AR 72204. Donations to the Africa University Development Fund can be made online or mailed to P.O. Box 340007, Nashville, TN 37203.

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

'Sharing Fridge' now open

Variation on Blessing Box/Little Free Pantry concept arrives in Conway



Salem UMC member Rosalee Lovelace places items in the Sharing Fridge. PHOTO BY BRICE SMITH

BY AMY FORBUS
Editor

With a growing number of churches installing a "Blessing Box" or "Little Free Pantry" to share nonperishable food items, toiletries and more with neighbors, Salem UMC Conway is trying out a twist on that model to help hungry individuals gain access to food that might otherwise go to waste.

Just before the evening Ash Wednesday service on March 1, the church blessed its new Sharing Fridge. The refrigerator, which sits just outside the Fellowship Hall, has guidelines posted on the door, and a page of the church's website provides details about the ministry.

The Sharing Fridge began as an idea from a National Public Radio news piece about a "Solidarity Fridge" in a town in Spain. A team of interested Salem UMC members soon began researching how they might make it a reality in Conway.

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, an estimated 40 percent of food in the U.S. doesn't get eaten, even as one in eight Americans experiences food insecurity (www.nrdc.org/issues/food-waste). The Rev. Todd Vick, Salem's pastor, hopes that the Sharing Fridge helps bring the Conway area's food surplus to those who need it. Several area restaurants, including the catering department of Central Baptist College, are participating by donating food.

"We are still working to get more restaurants on board," he said. "We really want it to be a place where one can find a meal ready to eat when money is tight and the pantry is bare."

Because it is outdoors in a covered, lighted area, anyone in the community may contribute to or select from the items in the Sharing Fridge at any time, day or night. Any individual or organization with a surplus of prepared food may leave it in the refrigerator, properly packaged. The church supplies stickers and writing utensils for those donating food to label it with the contents and the date it was prepared. To reach potential consumers, they distribute information at multiple locations around town, including the interfaith clinic, Boys and Girls Club, senior citizens center, library, college ministries, government organizations and more. They also have a brief fact sheet to share with individuals, businesses and other churches that might be potential givers. It even addresses liability concerns by providing information on the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act of 1996.

"So far, there is food coming and going often," said Teri Moffitt, the Sharing Fridge ministry team leader. "Seldom do the fridge's contents stay the same from day to day, which is exactly what we were hoping for." In case something does hang around for a few days, though, Sharing Fridge team members come by to check the date on the food and freeze it or dispose of it, as appropriate.

If this Sharing Fridge continues to work well, Salem UMC hopes to join with community partners to establish similar refrigerator-equipped stations around the city.

Visit www.saleumconway.org/missions/solidarity-fridge to learn more.



Making Lifelong Disciples

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

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

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

Starting in 2017, a day camp called OMP 101 will expand the ministry to fourth and fifth graders. "We believe that the sooner we can expose youth to missions the better," said Bailey. "Having additional staff allows us to expand our programming to better serve our youth and state."



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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