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Concealed handgun law: what UM churches can do

BY MARTHA TAYLOR
Editor

The passage of Act 849 by the 2017 Arkansas Legislature made it legal for an individual to carry a concealed handgun into any church or place of worship effective September 1. That is, unless congregations take action through the appropriate administrative body to prohibit them and provide notice that complies with the law's provisions.

The proposed legislation was covered extensively in the news media and received heavy support and criticism from individuals and groups on both sides of the issue. With local United Methodist churches and leaders seeking guidance regarding the new law, Bishop Mueller engaged conference leaders and Conference Chancellor Michelle Ator to fully review the issue and to craft a response to the complicated matter. The result of that work was released in mid-July and included resources for local churches to use as they addressed the new law in their communities.

In a July 11 email communication to pastors and local churches, Mueller acknowledged that United Methodists of Arkansas have differing opinions regarding the concealed carry law and the complexity of the matter. He expressed his hope, "that every United Methodist congregation in the Arkansas Annual Conference will adopt a policy

banning concealed carry handguns."

"Doing so will simply be a continuation of the current law that does not allow concealed handguns in churches," Mueller wrote in the email. He added that handguns had already been banned in public government buildings, restaurants, sports venues and bars.

In consultation with Mueller, Ator prepared three resources to aid the leadership of local congregations navigate the issue.

The first resource, "New Arkansas Law Regarding Concealed Handguns on Church Property," summarizes the recent changes in the law and provides local congregations with actions they should take prior to September 1 if they choose to prohibit concealed handguns on their property. These steps include placing the appropriate signage with the proper wording (a picture prohibiting guns is not sufficient) at each entrance of the church and providing written or verbal notice to concealed carry licensees that they are prohibited from possessing a concealed handgun at the physical location where a church meets.

The resource offers suggested language for written policies prohibiting the carrying of handguns on church property and for other communication tools such as newsletters, websites and bulletins.

Two additional resources are available: a sample

resolution which could be prepared and approved by the local congregations council or administrative board and a signage sample.

The full text of Mueller's letter as well as the resources may be found by visiting <http://arumc.org/concealed-guns-in-churches/>. The Rev. Jim Polk, assistant to the bishop, is available to answer questions. He may be contacted at jim.polk@arumc.org or by calling 501-324-8042.



Local churches displaying the proper signage will prohibit concealed handguns from their campuses.

2017 Episcopal "Vital" message inspires, motivates

Editor's Note: Bishop Gary E. Mueller gave his Episcopal Address on June 19, 2017 during the Arkansas Annual Conference held at the Bank of the Ozarks Arena in Hot Springs, Arkansas. More than the theme for the event, *Vital* focuses on four ministry areas considered to be central for congregational vitality: accountable discipleship, personal stewardship, faith sharing and the Conference initiative, 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger. Readers of the Arkansas United Methodist readers will see each of these topics explored in the coming months, beginning with this issue's special section on 200,000 Reasons. Because of the significance of *Vital!*, we will provide Conference Lay Leader Karon Mann's address and the Youth Address in upcoming issues of the Arkansas United Methodist.

"It is good to be back with you. I fell in love very quickly with the people of Arkansas and grew in my deep appreciation of the mission and ministry and vision you have

and so it really is an honor and a joy this day to share my fifth episcopal address.

In the most recent issue of "Legacy" published by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, Jim Argue writes about why he so values this annual gathering, he said:

"In a few weeks, many of us will come together at Annual Conference for holy conferencing, worship, and to conduct the business of the UMC in Arkansas. But that's not what makes it one of the best times of year for this PK (preacher's kid). I cherish Annual Conference as a time to catch up with my extended family, United Methodist family."

Jim is right. This is a family gathering. And what a family we are.

We are a family comprised of all kinds of people from all kinds of places with all kinds of experiences—including people with whom you might not normally spend time, people who have a radically different way of

understanding the Christian faith, and people whose life experiences could not be more dissimilar than yours.

We are family that intentionally, and I want to underscore that, intentionally, has entered into a covenant around the Wesleyan understanding of how we live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a deep understanding of connectionalism, our shared doctrine and discipline and the sacred promises we make when we join the church or are ordained as clergy.

We are a family related by blood. Not in the sense that we are all cousins, although I discover more and more every day just how many of you are indeed cousins. But because we are related by Jesus' blood that has transformed us and saved us and called us to live together in his Body.

We are a family under a great deal of stress, let's just be honest about that. We live in a culture characterized by a hateful "us versus them" mentality, a world plagued by terrorism and a church rocked

by issues growing out of significant differences concerning human sexuality. Not only that, we seem to have fewer and fewer answers because there are fewer and fewer basics upon which we can agree.

So here we are, Arkansas Conference, at our annual family reunion. And at this reunion one of the most important questions we must answer is, "What kind of family do we want to be?"

We can choose to be a cynical, fearful, paralyzed, dysfunctional and divided family. But I don't think that's the choice we are going to make; in fact I know it's not. And here's why: because of who we are. And that's what I want to talk about. Remembering who we are.

We are a family rooted in the simple reality witnessed to in the third chapter of John's Gospel that changes everything about everything,

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish

[See VITAL, page 9]

Love your neighbor, and your camper

BY JESSICA FRAZIER-EMERSON
Special Contributor

In July 2013, I rolled my zebra print suitcase through the Wesley Center doors at Cabot United Methodist Church for the first time. I had my air mattress tucked under the crook of my arm, and I was terrified. I was an awkward 15 year old girl who had just made her profession of faith and joined the church in April. I had never been to summer camp before, let alone a mission trip. I had no idea which side of the hammer to actually hit the nail with, and I didn't know the difference between a drill and a screwdriver. I believed that I was in for a long, rough week heading into my first camp experience with Ozark Mission Project. Looking back four years later, I think it was one of the best decisions I could have ever made.

Fast-forward to July 2017 as I once again rolled that same zebra print suitcase through the Wesley Center doors at Cabot United Methodist Church. This time I had my clipboard and Ozark Mission Project accordion folder under my arm. I walked in as a college staff member for an organization that had defined my faith only four years prior. I was ready to see how fifty youth were going to impact the local Cabot community. I was eager to meet the citizens that made this community what it was, and I was excited to see how high school youth would abandon the social and



Jessica Frazier-Emerson

material trappings of their lives in order to meet their neighbors' needs. The decision I made to attend Ozark Mission Project in 2013 altered and revitalized my life in indefinable ways. After four years of being a camper, I was finally a college staff. Being a college staff has been more than I ever anticipated it to be, in all the best ways.

The Wednesday before camp begins, college staff arrive at their host church and begin moving in and planning first visits. This summer, Ozark Mission Project hosted 13 camps in 13 cities across Arkansas: Texarkana, Hot Springs, Mountain View, Marianna, Magnolia, Little Rock, North Little Rock, Blytheville, Siloam Springs, Pine Bluff, Mountain Home, Cabot, and Rogers. Once at camp, high school and middle school students are divided into groups and complete projects for citizens within the community; OMP refers to them as neighbors. Camper projects range from building wheelchair ramps and porches to yard work and painting.

I was a major group leader. Each week, I worked with 15-20 youth and observed their spiritual and emotional growth. I had the opportunity to meet their neighbors first hand. I assigned groups of youth to their projects, and I proudly watched as they formed close bonds with their neighbors. I witnessed these youth not only transform someone's home, but their lives.

Before I was on college staff, I was a camper. I joined the church right before I began high school; therefore, OMP played a vital and large role in my faith journey. In all honesty, that first camp was the first time I truly felt a tangible, genuine connection with God. Youth group

meetings, conferences, and Sunday school classes discuss how we can serve others. Ozark Mission Project is one of the few times in my life that I have had the ability to serve God and create faith bonds with others in a raw and real setting.

As a college staff member, I get to be the hands and feet of God, had the privilege to watch youth be transformed by the neighbors for whom I had selected and planned projects. As a camper I had 1-2 neighbors I served a week, but as a college staffer I had 8-10 individuals. Being on college staff allowed me to bond with my fellow staff, and every single camper during every week of camp. As college staff, I came to truly understand the mission and meaning of Ozark Mission Project. Ozark Mission Project is more than construction, painting, worship or fellowship. It is about showing Christ's love to others, and most of the time, without realizing we are doing it.

This summer, I had the opportunity to serve in three different towns across Arkansas: Hot Springs, Magnolia and Cabot. During my first camp on staff at Grand Avenue United Methodist Church in Hot Springs, I met Grace Smith*. She was a volunteer at her local hospital, mother, and had been paralyzed her entire life due to cerebral palsy. When I pulled up in front of her home a local transit was dropping her off. The first thing she said to me was, "I was praying on my way home that I hadn't missed you, and look, I was blessed with perfect timing."

As I walked up her ramp, I felt uneasy. The boards underneath my feet bent with every step, and there was a large hole on her porch that was covered with sagging



Campers Kevin Wise, Autumn Stoll, Jeni Rooney, Stafford McQuerrey, Anna Dawson, and Kaitlyn Savage take a picture with a neighbor after completing their 42 foot wheelchair ramp at an Ozark Mission Project camp based out of Hot Springs, Arkansas.

plywood. As we got acquainted, she told me about her dog, son, and her boss who encouraged her to apply for a new wheelchair ramp. That conversation was the first of the summer that made me question the career I had been pursuing throughout my first year of college. Not only was OMP a period of personal spiritual growth and development, it was a time of maturity. I learned more about myself and the community around me as college staff than I ever had in a classroom.

That week, I viewed Grace sitting on her porch every day. She watched with a never-ending smile on her face as the campers began building the wheelchair ramp. She talked with them. She ate with them, and she laughed with them. She cared about them. She knew their quirks, and their passions. She went from brief daily interactions with a few people at the hospital; to making five fast friends in only three days.

On Thursday evening at camp, we invited the neighbors we had been working with all week to dinner at the church. Every evening during camp worship, the campers share about how they witnessed God during the day. At our meal, we asked the neighbors if they would like to share how they saw God

that week. That night, Grace stood up and shared about how she had been born with cerebral palsy, and that "this ramp had been the nicest ramp I've had in my entire life." She said, "I think I got more out of this experience than these kids did, and I hope they visit me in the future." Tears welled in my eyes as I thought about how a ramp turned into a life-changing relationship for Grace and for the campers. As a camper, you are a piece of that relationship. As a college staff, you play a part in the formation of that relationship. You are a piece of it, and you watch it grow.

Before camp began, I had the shallow expectation that I would have a summer filled with cheesy camp songs and splinters from split 2x4s. In reality, it was a summer filled with spiritual and emotional transformation, and the opportunity to truly put others before myself.

**Name has been changed for privacy purposes.*

Jessica Frazier-Emerson will be a sophomore at Hendrix College where she is studying English and Neuroscience. In addition to being an OMP college staff member, she is the summer intern with the Conference Center for Communication. Email: Jessica.Frazier-Emerson@arumc.org.




Top: Matthew Lacaze, Kevin Wise, Gage Maris, Mary Ashleigh Harper and Jeffrey Robinson. Bottom: Jessica Frazier-Emerson, a neighbor, Tabitha Eiland and Anna Grace Mills. Campers and staff eat dinner with a neighbor during Neighbor Night at the Ozark Mission Project camp based out of Cabot, Arkansas.



College staff team: Nicole Ross, Maggie Mae Rogers, Jessica Frazier-Emerson and Rylee Marsh. The staff was based out of camps located in Hot Springs, Magnolia and Cabot.



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Submission Deadlines

GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

Successfully Plan to Fail



BY GARY E. MUELLER

Our Journey

You have heard me say for five years now that I have hopes and dreams galore about what God can do through the United Methodist Church in Arkansas. I truly am persuaded that lives can be changed, communities transformed and the world touched in astounding ways.

I believe with everything in me that our churches can be filled with disciples who make new disciples, that those disciples can be equipped to serve, and that they willingly will leave the safety of the church to engage the mission field. And I am convinced that spiritual revival can become a reality in every single one of our congregations.

This is not merely my idea of what should happen. I believe at its heart it's God's vision that has become clear through Scripture, being in community with you and being attuned to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

But there's so much more we need to learn from God. So here's what I want to invite you to do. Let's pray. Let's pray so we can better understand what God's up

to. Let's pray so we can each understand what God wants us to do to be part of what God's doing. And let's pray that we will be committed enough to go all in for God. Do it every day. Do it when you gather for worship or Bible study. Do it at home with your family. And do it when you gather in committee meetings.

I'm not sure where all of this will take us, I really don't. But I do know that being a disciple of Jesus Christ is serious enough that we have to be willing to listen to God, confess our shortcomings, and venture out of our comfort zones at the very moment when we most want to be safe and snug. I also know this. I am grateful to God that I am on the journey with you.

Come, Holy Spirit, come!

Gary E. Mueller

BY CHARLES COOPER
Special Contributor

A farmer told me once, "Preacher, folks don't lose their farms because they have a bad year. It's because they have a good one."

He happily broke it down, "A farmer will have a good year, so he will take his profits and buy his neighbor's farm. The next year he will need more equipment and more help, and he will borrow some money. Then he has a couple of an average years followed by a bad year, and he has to borrow more money. Finally he has another bad year, and maybe he's under."

"The way I farm is five years at a time. In five years, I will have a good year, but I cannot say about the rest. That's what I have, a good year and a lot of I-don't-know-years."

"You understand, Preacher?"

I thanked him for giving me a sermon illustration for the seven lean and seven fat years of the Joseph story.

Our successes and failures are illusory—one of Wayne Eliot's favorite words—a smart business man whom I served as pastor. Every bar graph I have seen moves up and moves down, just as every pulse I have felt rises and falls. To me this means I have what I have for five, ten, or fourteen years or more of a pulse, of a rising and a falling.



Charles Cooper

The further I extend this thinking out, the better I understand birth to death, the first rise to the last fall. I am not only who I am now, but who I have been and who I will be, all the rises and all the falls. That is who I am, a pulse.

"I bet you were a good preacher," said Jay Thomas, a friend of mine from the Fayetteville Farmer's Market.

"It depends on who you talk to," I replied. "And they are all right."

He responded with a knowing nod of his head.

I can't run from the past. It will catch me. I will be passed. I will be the past. There is no point denying the future either and its inevitabilities. I should figure them up the way my insurance company does. I will be wiser and more profitable.

That's how Joseph saved Egypt and his family in a time of famine, how he saved Israel, the Patriarchs and Matriarchs of the past, and how he saved the future Israel, the descendants.

Joseph, the sheltered son in the fancy coat, who played at home while his brothers worked. He who went out to the fields, spied on his siblings and tattled on them. Justifiably, they were mad at him (as I would be) and threw him down a hole, and later sold him as a slave (perhaps, going further than I would). Joseph who went to prison and who went from prison to a palace; this man understood how illusory our present successes and failures can be. He knew it was best to make a plan that includes both, lest our successes be as much our undoing as our failures.

[See PLAN page 4]

vitaldisciples.org
Take the next steps toward vital discipleship

Discern Next Steps!
What are actionable next steps, and responsibilities. Pastors and Lay members work together.

Develop a Team!
Pastors and Lay members identify and recruit one person with special skills and gifts in each of the four VITAL! areas of focus.

Start the Journey!
Follow the calendar to start a year-long focus on creating vital disciples.

Plan the Year!
Watch plenaries, become familiar with study materials and resources, answer questions in guidebook, use the calendar to plan your church focus on the four areas of VITAL!

Accountable Discipleship
Experience God's grace in community! Learn how to use Wesleyan small groups to grow deeper as vital, accountable disciples.
● Small Group Leader Tools
● Companion Resources
● Promotional Tools & Sermon Starters

Faith Sharing
Sharing your story creates a doorway to invite others into relationship with Jesus Christ. Equip vital disciples to share their faith with others.
● Curriculum & Video Teachings by Kay Kotan & The Center for Vitality
● Promotional Tools

200,000 Reasons
Vital discipleship means putting your Christian faith into action. 200,000 children in Arkansas, one of every 4 kids, struggles with food insecurity. Fight childhood hunger through feeding ministries, public witness and education.
● Devotional & Teaching
● Feed, Provide, & Garden Toolkits
● Advocacy & Witness

Stewardship
Vital disciples practice a life of generosity. Discover the power of personal stewardship to shape your soul and to invest in building the kingdom of God.
● Month by Month Reason to encourage a spirit of Generosity
● Local Church Resources

2017 Annual Conference Coverage Plan to Fail

(From page 3)

Nine ordained elder, deacon



Bishop Mueller (front center), took time for a photo with the men and women ordained during the 2017 Arkansas Annual Conference. Front row, l to r: William Sardin, Jr., Zeke Allen, Mueller, Michelle Whitfield (Deacon), Carissa Rodgers. Second row, l to r: Todd Lovell, Sara Bayles, Colin Bagby, George Michael III, Eric Meyer.

Nine individuals were ordained on June 20 in the Bank of the Ozarks Arena in Hot Springs.

During the evening ordination service, Bishop Gary Mueller spoke to the group saying they have the right to be called "Reverend", but that accepting the title meant accepting God's complete call on their lives.

"Remember you are far more because you are transformed by the renewing of your mind and spirit," said

Mueller. "You must see God's mercy. Ministry is a gracious gift from God and graciously accept it."

Bishop Mueller exhorted all of the congregants to keep the main thing the main thing and that thing is Jesus.

"Take the grace that Jesus gives you and allows you to be filled and serve with grace," said Mueller "It means Christ dwells in you and you follow him, sharing His love. Lead in compassion and justice."

Bryant, Pottsville UMC receive One Matters Award

The One Matters Discipleship Award was created in 2015 with the purpose of lifting up churches who have in recent years moved from no baptisms and professions of faith into positive numbers as they began to focus on intentional discipleship.

The 2017 Arkansas Conference recipient of the award was Pottsville United Methodist Church, led by the Rev. Millie Bryant. The church was recognized for having close to 40 percent of their congregation participating regularly in small groups. The church reaches their neighbors by providing a home-cooked meal for individuals that come to the food pantry for food boxes. Bryant said several of those visitors have begun attending worship and a small group. One of the newest avenues of connection is the "Bible 101" class which has appealed to those who feel they are not well-versed in the Bible and want to learn in an intentional, non-threatening environment.

Bryant gave all the credit to the congregation saying they were "hard-working, love their community and love each other."

"The mission of Discipleship Ministries is to challenge and support local church and annual conference leaders for the task of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," said the Rev. Bob Crossman,



The Rev. Millie Bryant accepted the One Matters award on behalf of the Pottsville UMC members. The Rev. Bob Crossman, Path 1 presented the award.

Discipleship Ministries' Path1 Strategist for the South Central Jurisdiction and a retired elder in the Arkansas Conference. "We do this by offering resources, consulting training and networking in our ministries areas: Leadership Ministries, Young People's Ministries, Path 1 (or New Church Starts), The Upper Room, Discipleship Resources and Discipleship Resources International."

Holifield receives Defender of the Faith Award

Each year the Confessing Movement of Arkansas gives a Defender of the Faith award to someone who has stood up for biblical orthodoxy, Wesleyan theology, and the *Discipline* of The United Methodist Church. Retired elder, the Rev. Tony Holifield was selected to receive the award during the Confessing Movement breakfast which was held June 19 at the Union Missionary Baptist Church in Hot Springs. Nearly 200 clergy and lay members were in attendance.



The Rev. Matthew Johnson (l) presented Rev. Tony Holifield with the Defender of the Faith Award at the Confessing Movement breakfast held during the 2017 Annual Conference in Hot Springs, Ark.

Joseph understood the fullness of time and could change bad dreams into good advice. Those were remarkable talents. Perhaps even more remarkable was that Joseph so freely shared them with others: with strangers, the Egyptians who abused and then rewarded him, and with his family who once nurtured him and then sold him to strangers.

They all become one in the pulse of our living, brothers and enemies, good years and bad. Sage Joseph knew this so he knew to plan ahead for good and bad behavior in weather and people. He knew that bigotry against others, even enemies, is bad business, and that mercy satisfies more than settling an old score.

Joseph's talents were not

possessions to be hoarded or wasted, but rather gifts to be shared with others. Through his generosity the past and the future were miraculously changed so that what might had been meant for evil was turned to good, and a grim future was made bright again with the promises of old.

Our gifts are never ours, at least not for long. The Spirit rains them down upon us during the good years of planting and harvest. The storehouse of our grain is from God and is for the earth, the whole earth, to which it will return.

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

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GLOBAL MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church



200,000 REASONS TO FIGHT CHILDHOOD HUNGER

"VITAL DISCIPLES CREATE VITAL CONGREGATIONS WHO MAKE DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST WHO HAVE A VITAL IMPACT ON THEIR MISSION FIELD."

Rev. J.J. Whitney speaks about 200,000 Reasons initiative at Annual Conference. Photo by Debbe Kelly.



United Methodists: Faith in Action through 200K Reasons

BY REV. J.J. WHITNEY
Special Contributor

When the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784, the preachers in Baltimore decided that their task was to "reform the Continent and to spread scriptural Holiness over these Lands" ("Reexamining the Public/Private Split" in Perspectives on American Methodism, Jean Miller Schmidt).

Since our beginning, Methodists have been those who've overstepped the boundaries between "private and public." It is in our DNA as Methodists to do something about the problems we find around us. We don't sit inside the church; we go out to be the church to a world that needs us.

When I was selected to sit on the Bishop's Extended Cabinet, we were reminded to consider that Methodist DNA. How do we as United Methodists stand out as Christians? As United Methodists in Arkansas, we began to see some of the common problems in our communities and it became very clear that childhood hunger in our state has gone on too long. While the national average of childhood hunger is 1 in 5 kids, in Arkansas it is 1 in 4. When kids don't eat, they don't have the brainpower to learn, they miss school because they are sick, and they fall behind in the classroom. Childhood hunger goes beyond a meal or two; it leaves that child without the resources to grow and develop into a healthy and thriving member of our community.

Since the beginning of the 200,000 Reasons Childhood Hunger Initiative in 2014, I have witnessed the impact many of our Arkansas United Methodist churches are making through feeding ministries in their communities. In 2014, the state had around 200,000 hungry kids; today we have about 176,000 children in Arkansas who are food insecure. I know that if we work together as the connectional church we are, we can make a big difference in helping Arkansas children.

Even though we are making an impact toward eliminating childhood hunger, it is the stories of transformation that have inspired me. I shared some of those stories during the 200K Reasons Vital! Plenary at Annual Conference. At Dover UMC, one teacher in the congregation felt a tug to care for hungry school kids

in the summer which led to 14 kids getting confirmed in the church. White Memorial UMC decided to have snacks for kids when they got off the bus from school and then those kids started coming to church. Trumann UMC had access to land to start a community garden and today they are providing a homeless shelter through the church. And with the help of several churches in the community, Sheridan UMC is providing over 6,000 meals this summer to hungry kids.

These churches are getting outside the doors, opening their eyes to the needs, and inviting people to be a part of the church family. And through this relationship, everyone is changed. When the disciples asked Jesus in Matthew's gospel, Chapter 25, "When did we see you hungry and give you something to eat?" and Jesus said, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you have done it unto me." The Risen Christ is present when we get out into the mission field, when we meet our neighbors, and find a way to know them. Being involved in a transformational 200K Reasons ministry can bring on a spiritual revival for Arkansas United Methodist churches!

I'm inviting you to put your faith in action. What can your church do to let the Holy Spirit be at work in transformational ministry? Where are the resources in your congregation? Who are the volunteers in your church? Where are the hungry kids in your community? Look outside the doors for potential partners and collaborators. Go to our webpage to look at our "Getting Started Guide." Ask your Sunday School class or small group to engage in the 200K Reasons Bible Study during the month of September. Step out in faith.

What amazing things happen when we respond in faithfulness to the call that God places on our hearts! As people of faith, let us believe in the vision that God has given us. Let us have patience that the work we do for that vision will be brought to completion through the Holy Spirit. And, let us witness the 200,000 reasons that God works through the spirit of a people called Methodist.

TAKE ACTION

FEED

Offer ready-to-eat food items, after school meals, holiday, and summer feeding ministries.

GLEAN

Give fresh produce to hungry neighbors, local food pantries, or start a community garden with neighbors.

PROVIDE

Backpacks filled with food for the weekend, canned goods for a school pantry, assistance with SNAP Application forms, or breakfast in the classroom.

TEACH

Offer cooking, budgeting, shopping and financial management skills through such programs as Cooking Matters Classes and Cooking Matters at the Store.

WITNESS

Become local champions, advocating for relief programs and teaching local agencies, representatives, and school boards about issues that affect the working poor and hungry.

200,000 REASONS

to fight childhood hunger

GRANT APPLICATION INFORMATION

With the mission of 100 percent of United Methodist churches in Arkansas participating in the 200,000 Reasons childhood hunger relief initiative, small grants will be available to churches who demonstrate the following priorities:

1. New, on-going or expanded ministries that target children who are hungry.
2. New, on-going or expanded ministries that target hungry children in the following underserved counties in Arkansas: Ashley, Chicot, IZard, Lafayette, Montgomery, Newton, Prairie, Searcy, Sharp, Stone.
3. Programs through local United Methodist churches or ministries that start or sustain existing feeding ministries, public witness, or education programs.
4. Programs that partner with other local United Methodist Churches.
5. Programs that engage the mission field of the local United Methodist Church.
6. Programs that demonstrate cooperation and shared resources between community partners.

**APPLICATIONS ARE DUE
OCTOBER 13**

Visit 200kreasons.arumc.org to download a grant application

Fill-a-bag ministries for local churches

What is Fill-A-Bag Ministry?

Church members fill a reusable grocery bag once a month and bring it to church on a specific Sunday. All the items collected will be shared with a local food pantry or distribution ministry.

How do we get the bags?

200K Reasons will supply them free of charge to churches worshipping 50 or fewer. Bags may be purchased at cost plus postage for churches worshipping more than 50 every Sunday.

STEP 1

CHOOSE A PARTNER:

A local partner can be any church or organization that is providing food to children and their families as part of their feeding ministry or program: a food bank, food pantry or backpack program, or a food distribution service that includes children.

STEP 2

WORK OUT THE LOGISTICS:

With your partner, determine if specific food items are needed for each collection and how to communicate this with your congregation. Arrange how the food collected will get to the distribution site.

STEP 3

COMMUNICATE YOUR COMMITMENT:

Email Mary Lewis Dassinger at mdassinger@arumc.org and briefly state your commitment to support the agency with food collections as part of the 200K Reasons Initiative.



STEP 4

RECEIVING THE BAGS:

Expect delivery within one month from the time we receive your information. If the bags wear out, we will replace them at no charge for churches worshipping fewer than 50.

STEP 5

KEEP US POSTED:

Let us know how it is going and once a year we will ask you to find out from your partner agency how many children they think were served the past year.

Ingathering 2017: 40 years fighting hunger in Arkansas

The first “Consciousness Raising Event on Hunger,” was held November 12–13, 1977 on the Hendrix College campus with more than 200 individuals in attendance. That event is considered to be the first of what is now known as Ingathering and 40 years later Ingathering is the single largest group event held at the Arkansas Foodbank.

This year’s Ingathering is scheduled for Saturday, November 18 from 8 am–Noon at the Arkansas Foodbank, 4301 West 65th Street in Little Rock. According to organizers, there will be even more activities for the volunteers to do: receiving and sorting relief supply kits, boxing up sweet potatoes, packaging meals for the Foodbank’s Food for Kids and Food for Seniors programs, affixing labels to

produce packaging and more.

Groups and individuals may go online to register at etouches.com/Ingathering2017 to register for one of two shifts: 8 am–10 am; or 10 am–noon. This year, special Ingathering tshirts and sweatshirts may be purchased online at the time of registration. As a reminder, the Foodbank has safety regulations which require volunteers be at least 8 years of age. Also a 5 to one child to adult ratio is required to meet Safe Sanctuaries requirements.

Watch for more information in upcoming issues of the *Arkansas United Methodist* and on social media. For more information, email Mary Lewis Dassinger at mdassinger@arumc.org

Cooking Matters at FUMC MH (Tom Kiley, Susan Gregory, and participants. Submitted photo



Cooking Matters at the Store Event: Carol Petty, FUMC MH. Submitted photo.



Cooking Matters impacts community

The Food Bank of North Central Arkansas has partnered with First United Methodist Church in Mountain Home to provide Cooking Matters and Cooking Matters at the Store events at the church. Beginning in 2016, and continuing in to 2017, the church and the community have seen positive results.

Cooking Matters at the Store, "pop up"

Mountain Home First United Methodist Church provided Cooking Matters at the Store "pop-up" for youth group on March 15. Thirty-two youth participated in the event. Most Cooking Matters at the Store events consist of a trained Cooking Matters volunteer leading an informative tour of the grocery store, illustrating how to shop for healthy food on a budget. Cooking Matters at the Store "pop-up" takes this class outside of the grocery store. This version of Cooking Matters is more

mobile, and extends the reach of Cooking Matters. The one hour "pop-up" version of the store tour has been a different way for those at the Food Bank to present the event without having to have everyone be present at the store. Cooking Matters trained volunteers verbally go through each of the departments of the store, illustrating how to shop for healthy food in an inexpensive and efficient way, similar to how it would have been at the grocery store.

Cooking Matters, and more

First United Methodist of Mountain Home concluded their second trial of Cooking Matters classes in July. The first event was held in March and April with leaders from the church, the Food Bank, and Arkansas State University Mountain Home (ASUMH). This class was filled with both church and community members. Those from the community who participated have or will be participating in multiple classes offered

by the Food Bank and ASUMH. In addition to Cooking Matters at the Store and Cooking Matters classes, include Getting Ahead in a Just Getting by World, and Ready2Work, both of which teach life and job skills. At the conclusion of the first class, a participant said "the timing of the class was perfect," and when she heard the class was being offered, she thought this was "an answer to prayer."

Joining together

The Food Bank hosted its annual Agency Conference at First United Methodist Church Mountain Home on July 29. As a part of the training experiences, they presented

mock classes for Cooking Matters at the Store and Cooking Matters. Participants were leaders from local churches, food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, back pack programs

and summer/after school meal sites. This allowed more area leaders to be equipped to make a larger impact within the community.

Clarendon UMC hosts "Feeding Our Friends" event

Clarendon United Methodist Church hosted their first ever Feeding Our Friends event on June 17. The Feeding Our Friends event provided Clarendon UMC members and volunteers the opportunity to feed their community and build relationships with those that stopped to eat. Although the event began at 10 a.m., local volunteers and church members packed and prepared 150 meals that morning. Each meal was comprised of a pulled pork sandwich, a bag of potato chips and a bottle of water. All of the meals were distributed within an hour

and a half, and church volunteers delivered meals to homebound members.

The event was a success, in part because the execution was a group effort. A church member allowed the volunteers to use her business to prepare the meals, and also provided the event location. The church sought out monetary donations to purchase pork butts, potato chips, water, lunch sacks, foil sandwich wrappers, napkins, and water. Southeast District Superintendent the Rev. Mark Norman brought volunteers from the

White Hall community to help prepare sandwiches, bag and serve lunches.

The event saw positive feedback, and Clarendon UMC has plans to host another later this year.

"I think it was good for our church because it gave us much needed exposure," Clarendon UMC volunteer Greg James said. "We were able to introduce ourselves to some folks that we normally wouldn't be able to reach."

Emma Hunt harvests fruits and vegetables at Greenwood community garden. Submitted photo.



Greenwood youth makes community garden come to life

The spiritual seed was planted early in her life. The mental seed was planted in 2016 at MITTO, a United Methodist Youth conference.

Emma Hunt brought a call to mission home to her youth group and others at Greenwood United Methodist Church. She felt called to alleviate poverty and hunger within her community.

Hunt was the catalyst that began the GUMC Community Garden on the church campus. To Hunt, a garden was an affordable and healthy option that could decrease hunger within her community. With resounding approval and encouragement, Hunt, with parents, Darren and Jenny Hunt, began with soil testing. They gathered the needed equipment and tools for the Garden, and the work began.

After their day jobs and on weekends, the Hunts and those from the community began plowing the soil in April.

The garden has seen positive results, and has made an impact in the area. Planting and watering has provided fresh vegetables to supplement non-perishable food each month to the approximately 140 families (400 people) who visit the Food Bank.

In addition to the garden, a Blessing Box has been installed on campus. It is readily accessible on North Main Street for anyone wishing to partake.

With vision to the future, 17-year-old Emma Hunt hopes to expand the garden with raised beds, berries, and fruit-bearing trees. The seed was planted, and now watch it grow.

Vacation bible school raises hunger awareness through art

Oak Forest UMC's "Heart of Little Rock." Submitted photo.



Members of Oak Forest United Methodist Church in Little Rock concluded their Hero Central VBS on July 16 including a presentation of their "Can-struction" mission project, "Heart of Little Rock." Over 30 children participated in Oak Forest's Hero Central VBS and all worked under the direction of church member Mason Ellis. The children assembled over 478 cans of vegetables including corn, beans, green beans, tomatoes and potatoes, 53 boxes of spaghetti noodles, and 3 cases of water, to create replicas of landmark

buildings in downtown Little Rock. The buildings include the Clinton Presidential Library, the state capitol, three iconic towers, and the Arkansas River. The scene is dominated by a red heart, a reminder to the children and church members that God's Heroes have heart. VBS Director and Children/Youth Coordinator Nicole Ellis said, "All food items used in the project will be donated to the Oak Forest Food Pantry to help feed our neighbors in need and nourish the heart and soul of the Oak Forest community."

When churches work together

Grace Food Pantry is located at Grace United Methodist Church in Rogers. It is supported with volunteers, monetary gifts and food by all the Rogers United Methodist churches—Central, First, and Oakley Chapel.

Last year, the pantry fed 17,676 citizens. While present, prayer is provided at a client's request. As needed, a retired social worker talks with clients and assists them in seeking assistance with local social services. Local

schools are aware of the pantry and seek help in providing food in an emergency.

A community meal is also provided from 4 to 6 pm on Sunday evenings in the Fellowship Hall at Grace UMC. Volunteers from Central, First, Grace and Oakley Chapel United Methodist churches serve the meal on a Sunday each month. Every fifth Sunday, a group of friends called "empty nesters" serves the meal. Food is served to around 100 people each Sunday.

The community meal allows diners to take home fresh vegetables. The vegetables are donated by the local farmer's market vendors, and picked up by those in charge of the meal that evening.

This collaboration between the UM churches in Rogers has been going on for a number of years. The network of people being able to reach out to the community has grown along with the number of people that have been helped.

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“Vital” message inspires

(From page 1)

but may have eternal life.¹⁷ Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Remember this, remember who we are, Arkansas Conference. We are a family that claims our primary identity as disciples of Jesus Christ who understand that Jesus has made us part of His Body and this means, it is not an option for us to say that what matters to us as individuals is more important than what matters to Him.

Remember who we are, Arkansas Annual Conference. We are a church that has experienced spiritual revival so powerful we are compelled, we have no choice, we want to gracefully, passionately and joyfully reach out to those around us.

Remember who we are, Arkansas Annual Conference. We are a church absolutely overjoyed to be part of the Holy Spirit’s work of creating vital congregations that are filled with passion, and energy, and joy.

Remember who we are, Arkansas Annual Conference. And in case you need help remembering, this is what we look like! [Video shown of several “glory sightings” around the Conference]

Do you remember now? Isn’t it wonderful! We actually probably could have had a video that lasted not just a minute and a half but an hour and a half. That’s just a little bit of who we are. We are a family of vital, living congregations making a real difference in the lives of members, but also increasingly in the community outside our church doors. Vital congregations fueled by the Holy Spirit so that people find themselves doing things they could never imagine doing on their own. Vital congregations that are vibrant, passionate, energetic, excited, enthusiastic, hopeful and fruitful in their unique context. Vital congregations clearly focused on our mission. Vital congregations that are aware of the issues and challenges facing them, but always, always, always choosing to make the main thing the main thing—and the main thing is making disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world. Vital congregations and this is why we are at this Annual Conference. Vital congregations that want to create more congregations that are even more vital.

So how are we going to be that kind of conference that creates more congregations that are more vital? And how are we going to do it with a passion and a longing and a deep

commitment.

I recently read a wonderful little book entitled, “How to Make Your Bed,” by retired Admiral William H. McRaven. His premise is that there are 10—and these are his words—‘little things that can change your life...and maybe change the world’, and you start by making your bed every day. I’m glad this book wasn’t around when I was a kid.

I’ve been thinking a lot about the Admiral’s words and he is spot on. Taking care of the basics day-after-day, month-after-month and year-after-year is what we need to do if we’re serious about creating more vital congregations that are more vital.

So here is Mueller’s list of five things that will result in more congregations being more vital.

- **Start doing those things that bring about vitality:** implement a discipleship formation process, know your community and reach out to it, grow in stewardship and equip laity. Vitality doesn’t just happen. It takes prayer, intentionality and hard work. And while you are here at this Conference, you are going to be blessed by four amazing teachers who will help you know what to do to inspire you that you will be ready to hit the ground running when you get back home.
- **Value numbers:** worship attendance, professions of faith, first-time visitors, people involved in discipleship formation groups, baptisms, participation of young adults and those involved in mission. Now I know all the problems with numbers and I know some of you just hate numbers. And I will be honest, there are times I hate them too. In fact there are times I hate them so much I try telling my cardiologist that my cholesterol numbers don’t matter, but he knows they do and I know they do. And the same thing is true for us. Numbers tell us what we need to know, they help us know what questions to ask, they help us learn who we are so we can become who God’s calling us to be.
- **Celebrate stories of transformation: stories involving real people in real life** that range from the way someone’s individual life has been changed to how a church has reduced childhood hunger in its neighborhood. You know what matters to God is how real people have been transformed in real ways through the Gospel

[See VITAL, page 11]

Lydia Patterson Institute Interns Boost Ministries At Congregations

Four Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI) interns are working in Arkansas congregations this summer. The interns are students of the United Methodist college preparatory school in El Paso, Texas, sponsored by the South Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church and were provided grants for their summer experience by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA)

“We should all be proud and thankful for the UMC’s ministry at Lydia Patterson,” said Jim Argue, Jr., UMFA President and CEO. “I’ve been there. I’ve seen the commitment and the gratitude shown by these students. If you visit LPI, you’d be inspired, too. Believe me; we are transforming the world at LPI.”

Bishop Gary Mueller, who also recently visited LPI, agrees.

“These internships are an excellent way for our Arkansas congregations to get to know the work of LPI,” Mueller said. “Christian faith, values, and knowledge converge at the school to give students from Mexico a cross-cultural educational opportunity.”

Felixhy Dominguez, a recent LPI graduate whose goal is to become a church communications professional, is getting a taste of that job this summer at Central UMC in Fayetteville.

“It’s working out fabulously,” said the Rev. Jan Davis, Central’s senior pastor. “She wants to learn to communicate for God and here she’s writing blogs, taking photographs, and posting on social media for church activities.”

Felixhy will attend Central Methodist University in Lafayette, Missouri, this fall to begin formal training for her communications career. Her experiences at Central UMC have also included working with children and youth.

“I just got back from OMP in Little Rock where I did a lot of scraping and painting,” said Dominguez. “It was a hard job, but we were working for God’s children and not for ourselves.”

Ozark Mission Project is just one of the ministries Pamela Marquez has undertaken during her internship at Pulaski Heights UMC in Little Rock. She helped a mission team

get ready for an August trip to Guatemala by sorting and packing supplies. A good cook already, Pamela wants to study culinary arts at El Paso Community College.

“I’m an extra hand when needed, and I’ve had the

opportunity to make new friends and practice my English,” said the 11th grader from LPI. “I’ve helped with youth, and I think they are learning about a different culture by getting to know me.”

Karla Delgadillo, another LPI junior, attended Annual Conference with the First UMC, Conway, youth delegation and the Hendrix Youth Institute where high school students discussed their calls to ministry. She’s also helped teach Vacation Bible School and operated the food pantry.

“Karla has given our congregation a wonderful opportunity to practice hospitality, build relationships, and learn from someone from another country,” said the Rev. Michael Roberts. “She’s been able to expand her understanding of the possibilities for church ministry while being exposed to a new culture.”

The Rev. Roy Smith of First UMC Russellville, is enthusiastic about the contribution Santiago Tarin made to a recent mission trip to Acuna in Mexico.

“Our youth have been building houses in Mexico for several years, but Santiago enriched this experience with his people skills and translations,” Smith said.

“I want to speak the word of God,” said Santiago, who will start his junior year at LPI this fall. “I asked God to show me if that is my call. Now that I am here, I can see what it is to be on the inside of church work and how it operates.”

The support of United Methodist congregations is essential for the students’ success according for the LPI Director of Development Richard Hearne.

“Without the support of United Methodist congregations, our LPI students would be on the streets in Mexico,” Hearne said. “Through the internship program, the LPI students see exactly what living in the U.S. is about and when they leave Arkansas at the end of the summer they will not be the same, nor with the churches they are serving.”

LPI recently launched a capital funds campaign seeking gifts to help address critical facility issues. To support the LPI campaign, UMFA also has made a commitment that it will match donations up to \$250,000 to LPI from Arkansas UMC local churches and members until June 30, 2020. To be eligible for the match, gifts should be made directly to UMFA and designated to the LPI campaign.



Karla Delgadillo



Felixhy Dominguez



Santiago Tarin (l)



Pamela Marquez

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COMING UP

Equip youth worker event coming August 26

Registration for the Equip youth worker conference is open. Any individual that works with youth can benefit from attending one of the four tracks offered by organizers. Set for 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. on August 26 at Pulaski Heights UMC in Little Rock, the keynote speaker is Rod Hocott, youth minister at First UMC Conway. The day's schedule includes workshops panels and discussion time. Registration is \$20; visit www.arumcywn.org/equip for more information or to register.

Leadership Unleashed Dates Announced for Northwest District

The Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality is hosting Leadership Unleashed gatherings in the Northwest District in August and September. The two hour gatherings will provide space for laity to participate in meaningful conversation by sharing stories of fruitfulness, learning from the work of ministry in congregations, discussing action plans, and praying for each other's mission field ministries.

There are six coffee and dessert gatherings:

- Tuesday, August 8, 6:30–8:30 pm, Cavanaugh Fort Smith
- Thursday, August 10, 6:30–8:30 pm, St. Paul Harrison
- Wednesday, August 23, 6:30–8:30 pm, Rogers FUMC
- Thursday, August 24, 6:30–8:30 pm, Wesley Russellville
- Tuesday, September 12, 6:30–8:30 pm, Marshall UMC
- Thursday, September 14, 6:30–8:30 pm, Mena UMC

All lay persons are welcome to any Leadership Unleashed event regardless of the district in which their local church is located. To register for the event, visit <http://vitality.arumc.org/leadership-unleashed/>

SCJ Mission Academy to meet in Nebraska

South Central Jurisdiction Mission Academy, a three-day training for individuals who want to serve others through hands on mission, is scheduled for September 10–13 in Aurora, Nebraska. Five sessions will be held throughout the event with multiple courses offered during each session. The Academy offers a variety of courses

relevant to all types of hands-on mission experiences. Tickets are between \$150–\$350 depending on the courses selected. Course descriptions and registration information is available at www.scjumc.org/academy.

Sweet Life Café Women's Retreat

Mount Eagle Retreat Center will be the setting for an Oct. 6–8 retreat for women. Led by Amy Machen, director of adult ministries at First UMC El Dorado, the Sweet Life Café Retreat is designed to provide an experience that allows women to slow down and savor time with God and each other. The retreat cost is \$125 and includes lodging and five meals. Visit <http://www.mounteagle.org/events/> for registration information. Space is limited to 40 people and the deadline to register is September 30.

"Raise Our Ebenezer" Celebrating 200th UMC Anniversary

The Historic Washington State Park in Washington, Arkansas and the Commission on Archives and History are sponsoring a celebration of 200 years of Methodism in

Arkansas. The event is scheduled for Saturday, October 14 marking the anniversary of the raising of the first Methodist church building in Arkansas, "Henry's Chapel" near Hope, Arkansas.

The day's activities include a worship celebration and communion led by Bishop Gary Mueller, tours of the Washington UMC, Historic Washington State Park, the museum and carriage rides. A free hamburger lunch will be provided at the WPA

Gymnasium across the street from the church. Visitors are encouraged to dress in character and walking shoes are recommended.

Guests are encouraged to arrive in Washington by 10 a.m. to ride a bus to the worship site. Buses will leave from the WPA Gymnasium, 124 Hwy.195 So., Washington, AR, 71862. Email washingtonmethodistchurch@gmail.com or call 870-703-8256 for event information.

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Simple Act, Big Impact

Cornerstone UMC in Jonesboro is demonstrating their desire to be a good neighbor to the community and to families in a unique way.

A newly renovated, fenced playground now serves as a welcoming call at the front of the church property. Once located behind the brick and stone sanctuary, the playground was an oasis for young church members but was hidden from the view of the surrounding community.

The Rev. Chris Hemund, Cornerstone's senior pastor, said the reason for the move came from an exchange as he was leaving the church one afternoon with a young mother and her son.

"As we were visiting, her son kept asking to go to the playground

which was located behind our building in a remote area," said Hemund. "She told him he could not as she could not see him while she walked."

Her comment stuck with Hemund, enough so that he raised the issue during the next meeting of the church trustees. The group opted to move the playground to the front of the church building.

"After moving the playground, we learned from our neighbor, the NEA Baptist Medical Center, that they had no outdoor area suitable for children," said Hemund. "In reaching out to NEA, our playground is now a resource for them to offer as they minister to families in need."

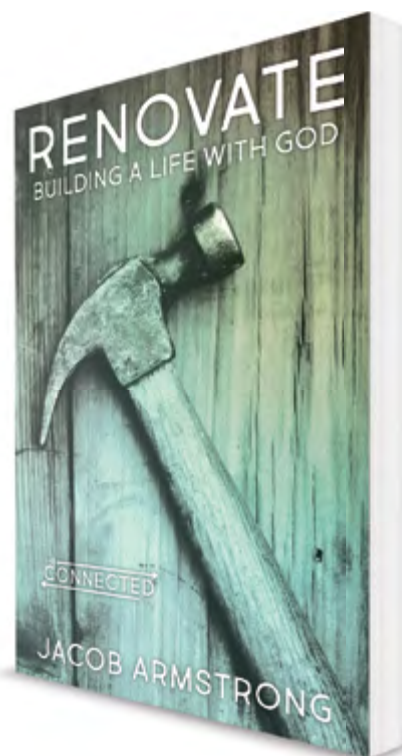
Special workdays were held to refurbish playground equipment and to install new trellis swings. The play area is fenced for the protection of the children but the gate is not locked.

Jim Tolewitzke, member of Cornerstone's trustees spoke of the project saying, "The playground is one small way for Cornerstone United Methodist Church to be an increasingly positive part of our community."

Plans are underway to provide soccer goals and a permanent basketball goal in the same area, according to Hemund.



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Thankfully, spiritual renovation is not a do-it-yourself project, and Renovate, part of Armstrong's The Connected Life series, emphasizes how we need God's great power in us to renovate our lives through the Holy Spirit.

Additional components for a six-week study include a comprehensive Leader Guide and a DVD.

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CLASSIFIEDS

PLACE A CLASSIFIED AD in the *Arkansas United Methodist* for 60 cents per word, no limit. Call 501-324-8035 or email mtaylor@arumc.org. Deadlines appear in page 2 of this issue.

First United Methodist Church of Batesville has a part-time position open for an organist. Interested persons should contact the church office via email batesvillechurch@yahoo.com or by phone (870) 793-3803 to apply.

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.

“Vital” message motivates (From page 9)

of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, transformation is not an intent, a plan or even numbers—it’s how Jesus’ followers, and that’s you, it’s how Jesus’ followers go all in so that God’s will becomes just as real in the lives of individuals and communities and the world as it already is in heaven.

- **Innovate and experiment** by trying new things in new ways. Sometimes I think the culture of the church is we want to be comfortable, we want to feel pious, we want other people to think we are holy and spiritual. Well look, it’s not about how comfortable we are, it’s not about how pious we are, it’s not about how we fulfill others expectations of how good United Methodists do things. The world is dying. People are suffering. They don’t know Jesus’ love. It’s time that we get over our comfort, over ourselves—and get about the work of reaching out beyond our comfort zone to go into the world. If you want to reach addicts, which we are called to do, then you’ve got to go where they are. If you want invite hurting people into the churches, you’ve got to know their pains and reach out to them not the way you want them to be, but the way they are. If you want to reach ‘the nones, dones and never been theres’, you’ve got to be willing to go where they are—and sometimes that means doing things that United Methodists don’t normally do. Like being willing to experiment with new ideas like ‘Beer and Hymns’ or ‘Tavern & Theology.’ If we are so serious about Jesus’ love that we believe he came to save the world and if we have experienced that ourselves we will let nothing be a barrier to sharing it, period. And if we fail to innovate and experiment, we may feel good but we will be good and dead.

- **Seek spiritual revival** like you mean it. Couple of years ago we had a big emphasis on spiritual revival. That was not a program that was done when the year was done. Keep seeking spiritual revival, day in and day out, because you know in your soul that no congregation can be vital without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit unleashing you to do what you otherwise could never do on your own. Spiritual revival is not just something you seek because you know it’s biblically, spiritually and religiously true. Spiritual revival is reality itself, ultimate reality. It

is God’s life and it is so real and it is so important, you’ve got to be willing to bet the future of your life and your congregation’s on it.

Many of you are aware of my personal journey since becoming your bishop five years ago. For many of those years that journey involved a great deal of pain, struggle and heartbreak. You were with me every step of the way; and you were loving me through it even when you were not aware that was what you were doing. Then my dear Karen came into my life and blessed me, and we are experiencing a brand new life filled with joy and hope and a journey God’s taking us on through grace and new life.

I know what it means to experience life moving from just surviving to thriving, and I want the congregations of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas to experience the very same thing.

Some people say—maybe even some of you—that the United Methodist Church is dying in small towns, can’t reach out to people of color, is clueless when it comes to the young, has lost that Holy Spirit induced fire-in-the-belly and is about to implode over issues of human sexuality.

Well, I don’t believe it. In fact, I believe from the bottom of my heart that more and more congregations can become more vital so that dying churches can come alive, fearful church members can become excited disciples and going-through-the-motions-congregations can experience new life, hope and joy.

So how is it going to happen? I want to share a wonderful quote from a letter John Wesley wrote to Alexander Mather on August 6, 1777,

Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw, (I’m not sure if whether that was a curse word in Wesley’s time) whether they be clergymen or laymen (clergywomen or laywomen); such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on Earth.

That’s it. That’s how we move to become more vital so there are more vital congregations becoming more vital. We need to believe Brother John. And what we need, what I need, what I long for is a group of vitalizers to step forward.

And, in case you haven’t figured it out by now, I’m talking about you. You are that vitalizer! And I

want to say when I walked in this room after taking a quick break just before we began, I looked down and most of the preachers and Annual Conference lay professionals who have been year after year were sitting in the back. You know who was sitting in the front...stand up front row, turn around! (Refers to the youth lay members.) I need vitalizers! The Arkansas Conference needs vitalizers! Jesus needs vitalizers! And, quite frankly, I don’t give a straw if you are a saint, or someone still trying to figure out what this Christian thing. I don’t care if you are young or old. I don’t care if you are lay or clergy. I don’t care if you have sensed God calling you for a long time or are just this

moment hearing it. All I care about is that you are passionate about the way God can use the people called Methodists to make an eternal difference for Jesus.

I am absolutely serious about this. More than you can ever know. And I think—no, that’s not right, I know—that you are ready to step forward, not just 1, or 10, or 100 as Mr. Wesley talked about but 1000, and I know it because I know who we are, Arkansas Conference. We are a people deeply committed to creating more vital congregations that are even more vital so that we can make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

Come, Holy Spirit! Flow among your people here and in all the towns and cities of Arkansas! And fill us to overflowing with your vitality! Say it with me: Come, Holy Spirit! Flow among your people and in all the towns and cities in Arkansas! And fill us to overflowing with your vitality! Stand now and say it like you mean it: Come, Holy Spirit! Flow among your people and fill us to overflowing with your vitality! May it be so! Amen!”

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OBITUARIES

SHERIDAN

Albert Cherington Marlar

The Rev. Albert Cherington Marlar, 66, passed away on Sunday, July 16, 2017 surrounded by family. He was born in Willisville, Arkansas, on June 19, 1951, to Tilman and Jessie Marlar.

After earning a business administration degree from Southern State College, he began working for Arkansas Social Services, now known as the Arkansas Department of Human Services where he continued for more than 42 years. He was serving as the Saline County Administrator at the time of his death.

He began his service to the Lord early in life: as a teen he was the Waldo First UMC youth director; and was the Willisville UMC treasurer while he attended college; followed by a number of other leadership roles in the local church.

He married Pam Rose Bissel on September 8, 1978. Soon after he became a Certified Lay Speaker and served in the former Camden District. He received his license to preach and served Bethel UMC in Ico (Grant County), Ebenezer UMC, Tull, Ark., and Alzheimer UMC.

Survivors include his wife of almost 39 years, Pamela Rose Bissel Marlar; daughter Shiloh Melody Marlar; and sisters Anita Dickerson and Amber Kenny.

Funeral services were held Wednesday, July 19, 2017 at Willisville United Methodist Church with the Rev. Kem Reeder officiating.

Memorials may be made to the Willisville Cemetery Fund, P.O. Box 14, Willisville, AR, 71864; Alzheimer

United Methodist Church; or the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (pancan.org).

JACKSONVILLE

Lois Ann Stone Anderson

Lois Ann Stone Anderson, 83, passed away, July 16, 2017. She was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on April 9, 1934 to Merle Clinton and Clara Mary Stone.

Her father died when she was just weeks old; the family lived with her paternal grandparents until tragically, her grandfather’s life was cut short in a train accident. Her mother moved her and her sister, Irene, back to the Philadelphia area to live with family members.

She met Thomas E. Anderson, a member of the Naval Aviation Supply Depot, on a blind date and they were married in 1953. They became parents of daughter, Lois Ann, and son, Thomas, Jr. During her husband’s military career, they traveled to Newfoundland; Maryland; Virginia, Luzon, Philippines, and Washington, D.C.

Following retirement from military service, the family settled in Arkansas where her husband attended college to become an educator and where he responded to his call to ministry. They served in the former Morrilton Parish, and later at Central United Methodist Church in Richwood, Ohio. Later family returned to Arkansas where they served the Marshall-Leslie charge, Hoxie-Clover Bend charge,



Manila UMC, Fisher Street UMC, and Clarendon-Holly Grove charge.

Following Rev. Anderson’s retirement from ministry, they enjoyed living as full-time recreational vehicle enthusiasts and were active in Good Samaritan activities throughout the mid-South. She was an avid needle work artist, enjoying crochet, knitting and cross stitching.

She is survived by her best friend and soulmate, the Rev. Thomas E. Anderson of Jacksonville; daughter Lois Ann Glass (Gary) and children Christopher and Leigh Ann of Richwood, Ohio; son Thomas E. Anderson, Jr. (Nancy) of Albuquerque, New Mexico and children Renee Lewis-Andersen of Opepegard, Norway; Aaron Lewis of Renton, Washington; and Victoria Anderson of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; sister, Irene, and niece, Stacy Degreffenreid of Chula Vista, California.

In her last two decades of life she counted the many blessings her life journey had delivered to her. In recognition of her bounty, she endeavored to share her talents, gifts and service through active support of Fishnet Missions of Jacksonville and Trinity United Methodist Church in the Rose City neighborhood of North Little Rock.

Funeral services were held, July 21, 2017 at the Smith-North Little Rock Funeral Home. Interment followed at Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Fishnet Missions, PO Box 972, Jacksonville, AR 72078 or Trinity United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 17029, North Little Rock, AR 72117.

Dollars for Scholars Grants Awarded to 49 Arkansas Students

A total of 49 students received Dollars for Scholars awards to begin or continue their education at United Methodist colleges, universities, and seminaries. For each recipient, the students' local churches gave \$1,000 and the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation matched that contribution. Then the

United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas gave \$1,000 and the student's selected college contributed \$1,000 for a significant \$4,000 award to each student.

UMFA is proud to grant \$49,000 in scholarship contributions to these students:

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Tiaara A. Anderson
Ethny M. Ashcraft
Gwen T. Boone
Edward J. Boyd
Aubrey N. Brink
Ashley D. Buford
Lexie N. Burleson
Samuel E. Byrd
Jalan J. D. Caffey
Christina G. Choh
Joseph R. Coker
Samuel M. Coker
Hannah N. Cozart
John D. Davis
Anna R. Delony
Matthew F. Esterer
Erin E. Farrah
Andrew D. Fleming
Ava Z. Graves
Liam R. Hankins-Hull
Robert R. Harris
Marlee L. Hoggard
LaKendrick D. Lewis
Deviontae T. Martin
Michelle M. McDonald
"Annie" Mary J. Meek
Tyler J. Odell
Jasmine A. Owens
Harper L. Purifoy
Daniel K. Reece
Faith A. Reynolds
Madison E. Shaddox
Katherine E. Skartvedt
Alexander M. Shannon
Javante Q. Smith
Wendell P. Smith, II
Victoria L. Spradley
Andrea R. Stitt
Makala J. Strang
Kayla M. Vann
Seth R. Wagoner
Delaney G. Wells
Mary E. Wigley
Russell R. Williams, III
Emily L. Wollenberg
Margaret A. Young

SEMINARY STUDENTS

Andrea' L. Cummings
Robin G. Roark
Meghan L. Hatcher

HOME CHURCH

Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
Lakeside UMC, Pine Bluff
First UMC, Conway
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
Sequoyah UMC, Fayetteville
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
Lakewood UMC, North Little Rock
First UMC, Malvern
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
Hope Korean First UMC, Little Rock
First UMC, Conway
First UMC, Conway
Faith UMC, Little Rock
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
First UMC, Fort Worth
First UMC, Bentonville
Central UMC, Fayetteville
Grand Ave. UMC, Hot Springs
First UMC, Bryant
First UMC, Little Rock
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
Geyer Springs UMC, Little Rock
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
Trinity UMC, Little Rock
Clinton UMC
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
First UMC, Malvern
First UMC, West Memphis
Grace UMC, Hensley
Cabot UMC
First UMC, Russellville
Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
Pulaski Heights UMC, Little Rock
Vilonia UMC
Fairfield Bay UMC
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
First UMC, Batesville
First UMC, Charleston
First UMC, Monticello
Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
First UMC, Clarksville
Lakeside UMC, Pine Bluff

HOME CHURCH

Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock
White Hall UMC
Central UMC, Fayetteville

COLLEGE

Philander Smith College
Hendrix College
Hendrix College
Philander Smith College
Hendrix College
Philander Smith College
Hendrix College
Hendrix College
Philander Smith College
Hendrix College
Hendrix College
Hendrix College
Oklahoma City University
Philander Smith College
Oklahoma City University
Southern Methodist University
Drew University
Hendrix College
Hendrix College
Hendrix College
Philander Smith College
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Hendrix College
Centenary College
Philander Smith College
Philander Smith College
Hendrix College
Hendrix College
Hendrix College
Dillard University
Hendrix College
Hendrix College
Oklahoma City University
Philander Smith College
Oklahoma City University
Hendrix College

SEMINARY

Candler School of Theology
Saint Paul School of Theology
Wesley Theological Seminary



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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