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## Ingathering 2017: 40 years of giving

BY MARTHA TAYLOR  
Editor

This year marks the 40th year of Arkansan United Methodists caring for their neighbors, both near and far, through the annual event known as Ingathering. And with the devastation caused by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, leaving thousands without even basic necessities, the need for support is as great as it's ever been. (see VIM AND DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATES, page 12)

This year's Ingathering is scheduled for Saturday, November 18 from 8 a.m.–Noon at the Arkansas Foodbank, 4301 West 65th Street in Little Rock. Volunteers are asked to register online for one of two shifts, 8 a.m.–9:45 a.m. or 10:15 a.m.–Noon. A brief worship service will be held between the two shifts to bring all the volunteers together and to allow time for the Foodbank staff to replenish their food stocks.

Ingathering volunteers will box up sweet potatoes gleaned and donated by the Society of St. Andrew, package rice and beans and label canned goods. Others will be needed to unload kits and supplies brought from across the state and load them directly into a trailer bound for the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) distribution center in Baldwin, Louisiana.

Organizers say there will be plenty of activities for

volunteers regardless of age and ability.

Because Ingathering has grown in recent years, those who register online have an additional opportunity to increase their impact by purchasing a commemorative 40th anniversary Ingathering t-shirt for \$10 or hooded, full-front zipper sweatshirt for \$30. The proceeds from the shirt sales will help to provide more product for volunteers to pack and sort during the event, and by doing so, will be feeding more hungry children. Participants may also make a donation online when registering.

Mary Lewis Dassinger, program coordinator for the 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger in Arkansas and the 2017 Ingathering coordinator is excited about this year's event.

"Ingathering is an example of the long history United Methodists have for caring for those in need and 200K Reasons seeks to do the same through the involvement of local churches across and state," Dassinger said. "It's a natural partnership that holds incredible potential for reducing the number of hungry children here in Arkansas."

Local food pantries can also benefit from



Ingathering. Those who register in advance will be able to take home two boxes of sweet potatoes and two boxes of packaged rice or beans for distribution to their communities.

In advance of Ingathering, Dassinger wants local churches to call ahead before bringing Ingathering items to their district Ingathering drop

[See GIVING, page 12]

## Youth Address: Past, Present and Future

**Editor's Note:** The 2017 Annual Conference Youth Address was presented on Wednesday, June 21 at the Bank of the Ozarks Arena in Hot Springs. More than the event's theme, 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. Additional resources for Vital! may be found at [vitaldisciples.org](http://vitaldisciples.org).

**Lauren Lovelady**  
2016 President, Arkansas Conference  
Council on Youth Ministries

Hello. My name is Lauren Lovelady and my church home is here in Hot Springs. I have just finished up my freshman year of college studying finance, and I am now considered a young adult of the church. I proudly serve on the conference episcopacy committee and the nominations committee. Last year at Conference, I had the opportunity to speak about the importance of youth and young adults being included. Not only do I think that young people need to feel needed by the church, but I also feel that it is so important for us as youth and young adults to feel that we need the church, that we wouldn't dare do it alone.

I would be here all day if I were going tell

you all the ways that being a youth in the United Methodist Church has shaped my life and my relationship with God, but I will share a couple today. I started attending Conference Council on Youth Ministries, also known as CCYM, events when I was in sixth grade, with my first being Refuge. At the time, I was not very serious in my faith journey, so I was mainly attending for the

social aspect.

It wasn't until my second Veritas that it really clicked for me. I realized that the United Methodist Church, specifically CCYM, is where I wanted to invest my time for the rest of my high school career. The community and love that I saw was so evident, and I knew that these people were true

[See YOUTH, page 4]



Lauren Lovelady, Lexie Burlison and Rebecca Dodson are the 2016, 2017 and 2018 presidents of the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministry and presented the Youth Address to the annual conference.



# Scripture and the Life of God—a gift to the church

BY ANDREW C. THOMPSON  
Special Contributor

The church always stands in need of engaging, theologically sound writing from pastor-scholars that can “equip the saints for the work of ministry.”

Yet while the need is always present, its fulfillment can be elusive.

Scholars typically write for the academy, and such writing is often not appealing to a broad audience.

Occasionally there is a scholar who has retained his ability to write for the whole church, though. And when that happens, the church stands to benefit in spades.

Such is the case with the Rev. Dr. David Watson, an elder in the West Ohio Annual Conference who also serves as academic dean and professor of New Testament at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

With Watson’s new book, *Scripture and the Life of God* (Seedbed, 2017), we have a work that promises to renew our approach to reading the Bible in the contemporary church. It is an outstanding example of how important solid theological writing can be when aimed at the people in the pew.

Watson’s intent is both to diagnose what’s wrong with the way we’ve been taught to read



Andrew C. Thompson

the Bible and to prescribe a remedy.

So much modern reading of the Bible wants to treat the God we find there as a deity that only acted in powerful ways long, long ago. Such an assumption treats our own era as if we’re living in a kind of shadow land, where the clear light of God’s action just does not penetrate.

Watson rescues us from such an impoverished approach to Holy Scripture. As he puts it, “The Bible isn’t just a book of statements about God; it is a pathway into God’s very life” (p. 6). And the God into whose life Scripture leads us is just as active as he was in the days of ancient Israel.

There are many factors that can lead us to treat Scripture as a dead book of ancient literature rather than as the revelation of the Triune God. Watson touches on many of them: a misunderstanding of the nature of science and religion, an inability to see the Bible as a form of divine communication, a desire to tame the Bible to fit our own cultural mores, and even a spiritual numbness caused by First World affluence.

What all these pitfalls have in common is a failure to read the fullness of the Bible as

*Scripture*. When we read the Bible as Scripture, we understand that it is divinely inspired—literally, “God-breathed”—with the ability both to reveal to us the true character of God and to show us God’s incredible vision of salvation.

Surely what is most exhilarating in Watson’s account is his fourth chapter, which takes a hard look at the widespread tendency in the

modern church to limit our view of what God can do. Watson points to *active disbelief* and *passive disbelief* in this regard. The former is the adoption of a worldview that excludes any possibility of God’s supernatural work in the world. The latter, while not categorically opposed to the miraculous, still maintains a detached skepticism towards it.

Watson sees all such disbelief and skepticism as failing to take seriously that the God of the Bible is the same God we have *now*. He contends “that we should not only be open to the kinds of acts that God performs the Bible, but actively seek them” (p. 83).

It is at this point that Watson starts to sound a lot less like most Methodists you probably

know (much less a New Testament professor at a UMC seminary!). But for me, at least, the change is a refreshing one.

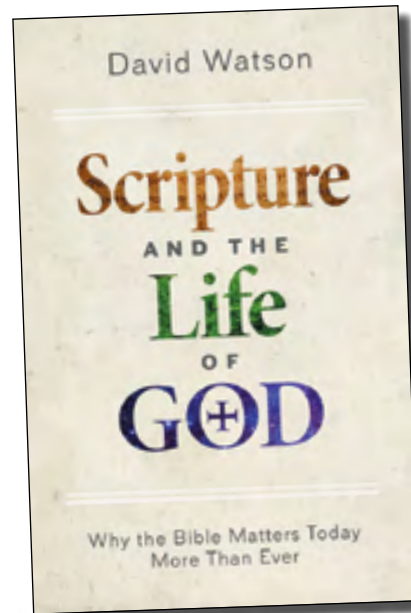
Watson’s critique about the contemporary church is that we simply fail to expect enough of God. He says, “Most Christians are entirely comfortable talking about gifts of wisdom and faith. But healing? Miraculous powers? Prophecy? These may be harder to believe—but why? Simply put, the less a particular gift seems to require of God, the easier it is for us to believe. We have been taught not to expect very much of God, and our prayers match these expectations” (pp. 83–84).

That passage is indicative of the content of *Scripture and the Life of God* from beginning to end. Watson is determined to show us that the Bible has much, much more to offer us than we’ve ever let ourselves believe. It can, he wants to say, draw us right into God’s own life.

And there is great spiritual power there, indeed.

There is, in fact, a new movement afoot in the church. (Or perhaps it is just a very old movement that is being rediscovered.) It is both deeply scriptural and profoundly open to the work of the Holy Spirit in the church today. Watson is representative of it, and his new book on the power of Scripture promises to introduce many more people to its fruits.

The Rev. Dr. Thompson serves as senior pastor of First UMC Springdale. He can be reached at [www.andrewthompson.com](http://www.andrewthompson.com).



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Response to a future with hope for UMC

In the September 1 issue of the *Arkansas United Methodist*, Carol Roddy wrote a response to an editorial by Dr. Andrew Thompson regarding Wesley’s sermon on schism. I found her concluding statement of interest. She writes, “those who speak of schism are only playing on fear as the UMC moves into a ‘future with hope.’”

Many United Methodists don’t just speak of schism; we are convinced that schism has already occurred. The election of Karen Oliveto, a self-avowed, married lesbian as a United Methodist Bishop was an act of schism. Her election was a clear rejection of Scripture, the historic tradition of the church and a violation of our UMC *Discipline*. I find it difficult to see a “future with hope” when a whole jurisdiction places themselves above our *Book of Discipline*.

Ms. Roddy and I may disagree about the future of the United Methodist Church, but surely, we can agree that we are bound to follow our established rules of

order. Without a willingness to live by our covenant, pleas for unity are pointless. When one part of the church intentionally disregards our covenant, schism has already occurred.

Rev. John P. Miles  
Senior Pastor, Jonesboro First UMC

*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](mailto: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.*

## Stewardship as a Spiritual Practice

BY WILLIAM “BILL”  
BUCHANAN.  
Special Contributor

Spiritual practices are, by definition, a means of grace. Through spiritual practices we embody our faith, we attend to the things of the spirit through activities of the body, and we open ourselves for God’s sanctifying grace to do its work in us.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin: “We are not human beings on a spiritual journey; we are spiritual beings on a human journey.” A way that I paraphrase that is, we are not physical beings trying to cultivate a spiritual life; we are spiritual beings trying to find faithful ways to live a physical life.

The incarnational paradox is such that our faithful spiritual practices are by no means an effort towards a “works salvation” but are merely a means by which we place ourselves at God’s disposal so that God can do the work in us. We make ourselves



William “Bill” Buchanan

available to God, we make “space” for God, we submit to God and we cooperate with God. Thomas Merton once said the biggest part of prayer is showing up. Through the spiritual practices, we “show up” for God.

Spiritual practices are the ways in which we open ourselves to the working of God’s sanctifying grace, which is part of what differentiates us from other Christian spiritual traditions. We believe there is more to the Christian faith and life than just fire insurance—and that

is sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace will not work without our cooperating with God through spiritual practices. Spiritual formation (sanctifying grace) is what *God* does and spiritual practices are what *we* do.

Financial stewardship is an important one of those. It is one of the physical ways we live out our spiritual lives, hence, a spiritual practice. This is why Jesus said so much to indicate [See STEWARDSHIP, page 3]



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### Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
Nov. 3	Oct. 13
Dec. 1	Nov. 10



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



BY GARY E. MUELLER

# Great News

A massive change is occurring that already is dramatically impacting your congregation. But you're not alone, because it's also touching every other United Methodist congregation in Arkansas. And while you may not fully understand it, you must come to grips with what's going on because it is the 'new normal' that will shape how your congregation makes disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

This new reality is the result of an American culture that previously favored a Christian orientation becoming decidedly post-Christendom and caring less and less about what the Church has to say. Indeed, this new reality shares much more in common with the Apostle Paul as he evangelized in the formative years of the church than it does with the world of my childhood in the 1950's and 1960's.

Here's what this means. You cannot expect the people you encounter—and this is especially true for the young—to believe they have any need for God, the Christian faith or being part of a church. You cannot expect cultural values to automatically reflect the basic tenets of the Christian faith. You cannot expect the church of the future to be like the church of the past.

But there's more. You can expect that upwards of one-third of our United Methodist congregations in Arkansas will close in the next 15 years or so. You can expect your church to decline unless you begin praying for spiritual

revival and are willing to adapt how you do things in your church. You can expect to continue to hear about the necessity of walking out of your church doors into the mission field that surrounds you.

All of this may seem to paint a bleak picture. But don't be disheartened. This is an incredibly exciting time to be a United Methodist Christian! God is at work stirring up people of all ages in all kinds of churches empowering them to be vitalizers who are growing as Jesus' disciples, making disciples and being involved in God's transforming work of lives, communities and the world. And here's what excites me so much: People will not just become Christians because they are expected to become Christians; they will become Christians because they really want to be Christians!

So here's the Great News! People still need Jesus. The people called United Methodists offer an understanding of Jesus' Gospel built on God's unconditional, transformational and invitational love that people are longing for—even if they don't know it yet. And God is inviting you and your congregation to be part of this incredible experience.

Come, Holy Spirit, come!



Gary E. Mueller

## Bishop to meet with laity across Arkansas

Bishop Gary Mueller has begun meeting with United Methodist laity across Arkansas for the purpose of updating them on a number of important issues.

The "Laity Coffees with the Bishop" are casual gatherings of lay leaders, lay members to Annual Conference, Finance, Trustee, SPRC and Administrative Chairs and any others who may be interested in joining the conversation.

Mueller will share information about a new conference resource, [www.vitaldisciples.org](http://www.vitaldisciples.org), and Vital!, an initiative that began earlier this year. He will also update laity about the work of the Commission on a Way Forward, a group proposed by the Council of Bishops and approved by the 2016 General Conference to do a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church.

The first two of five events took place in September; the three remaining gatherings are scheduled as follows:

<p><b>Central District</b> Trinity UMC, Little Rock Oct. 15—2:30-4 pm</p>	<p><b>Southeast District</b> Star City FUMC Oct. 22—2:30-4 pm</p>	<p><b>Northwest District</b> Fort Smith FUMC Nov. 12—3-4:30 pm</p>
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## Stewardship

(from page 2)

that our relationship with money and material things is a reliable barometer of our spiritual health and the quality of our spiritual lives. He would not separate the physical/financial and the spiritual.

All true spiritual practices are both physical and spiritual. Even such things as centering prayer, which we think of as deeply contemplative, are grounded in physicality: ("Sit comfortably, close your eyes, relax the tension in your muscles, breathe deeply," etc.). There really is no distinction between spiritual and physical. Spiritual practices help us move toward an integrated spirituality. St. Paul wrote in Romans 12:1—"Present your bodies (physical) a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (spiritual)." Spiritual practices are ways we embody what we say we believe.

As a pastor and spiritual leader, I

feel it is important for me to lead by example in the area of stewardship just as much as areas such as prayer and other spiritual practices. One of the ways I do this is in the weekly worship service. Even though I make my church contributions through electronic giving (I highly recommend this: most people don't carry checkbooks any more, and when we installed e-giving it increased our giving considerably), I print out the receipt and place that in the offering plate as a physical act of worship. The receipt itself is worth nothing, but for me it is a powerful physical symbol of my commitment and love for my Lord and His church.

*The Rev. Buchanan is senior pastor at Forrest City FUMC and a member of the Conference Board of Discipleship. Email: [William.buchanan@arumc.org](mailto:William.buchanan@arumc.org)*

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## Celebrating two centuries of Methodism in Arkansas

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, "Raise Our Ebenezer" 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 United Methodist Church, 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.

According to the Rev. Fred Day, General Secretary, General Commission on Archives and History, an "ebenezer," refers to a story found in 1 Samuel 7 and is translated from a Hebrew word meaning "stone of help."

"The prophet Samuel literally lifts up a stone as a monument for people to look upon. There has been a great victory, a surprising triumph over the Philistines at Mizpah, so the prophet establishes a 'memorial,'" Day writes. "An Ebenezer is a marker commemorating a God-moment when people overcame



Washington UMC will be part of the celebration of two centuries of Methodism in Arkansas.

overwhelming odds stacked against them."

Day goes on to write, "Ebenezers are meant to be so much more. They are a place, a marker of a moment sparking with God's Spirit. That spark ignites a re-imagining of the present and future because people, in Ebenezer moments—experiencing God in those moments—are stirred to new possibilities and potential."

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 across the street from the Washington United Methodist Church at 124 Hwy. 195 So., Washington, AR, 71862. Email [washingtonmethodistchurch@gmail.com](mailto:washingtonmethodistchurch@gmail.com) or call 870-703-8256 for event information.

### Methodist Museum receives capital improvement grant

The Methodist Museum of the Arkansas Conference recently received a \$6,275 grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas for one-time capital improvements at its location in the basement of First UMC, Little Rock. The grant was made to purchase track lighting, install high definition digital monitors and facilitate proper display and storage for historic quilts.

"We are pleased to make the experience of visiting the museum better through these improvements," said Jim Argue, Jr., UMFA President and CEO, "This important part of our United Methodist heritage is a treasure that all members of the Conference have an opportunity to visit."

Hours for the museum are 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesdays and other dates by appointment. Call Linda Baker, curator, at 501-680-1089 to schedule a group tour of the facility at 723 Center Street in Little Rock.

## 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](mailto:mtaylor@arumc.org). Deadlines appear in page 2 of this issue.

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

## Youth (from page 1)

disciples of Jesus Christ. I began going to every event that I could, eventually leading me to join DCYM and later CCYM. Through these events, I met the most amazing friends and mentors that pushed me and challenged me in my faith journey like I had never been before.

My last year of CCYM was a very busy one, but it was definitely the one that shaped me the most. I was elected president, and began leading the most wonderful group of people. All in this year, I attended Youth 2015 in Orlando, chaired Veritas, went to multiple events, and grew in my relationship with God, the most I ever had, and the reason for that was the United Methodist Church. It was my faith-based friendships, my mentors, youth leaders, the bishop, and so many other people that pushed me in my faith and encouraged me to lean on God and the church.

This past July I was given the opportunity to attend Jurisdictional Conference as a youth observer, which was definitely an eye-opening experience for me. Our church is in a very broken and divided place right now, and I was able to see that firsthand. Some things were very shocking to see, and some were

very reassuring. This conference challenged me in what I believed and pushed me to a point in my relationship with God and my church that I had never experienced before. I found myself doubting and questioning many things, but I also felt a love for this denomination that was overwhelming.

Even though some things were hard at this conference, the thing I remember most about it was the hope I felt after leaving. I felt hope

I left with the feeling that I needed to lean on the church more than ever before and also that the young people, the voices of young people, are more important than ever before.

While being a youth in the United Methodist Church during this time was not simple and still is not simple, it taught me the utmost importance of my spirituality. It taught me that I need to be firm in what I believe in, but also have an open heart and mind in difficult

**'If not for CCYM, I would never have known these people. Vitality is about being active and engaged. Vitality is about being energetic.'**

—Lexie Burleson

in our church. I felt hope through the spiritual conversations that I had with other youth, hope in our church that we could stay in Christian conferencing peacefully, and hope in the future that the young people of the church will lead with open hearts and in the direction that God and only God is calling them to lead.

situations. It taught that in all situations, prayer is the answer. We have to be vital, powerful, and active in our relationships, and the youth and young adult ministries of the Arkansas Conference have taught me and so many others how to do that.

[See YOUTH, page 9]



**Embrace God's gifts of hope, love, joy, & peace this Christmas.**

Go on an Advent journey with beloved teacher and storyteller James W. Moore, exploring the spirit of Christmas. As you light the candles of your Advent wreath, reflect on the unbreakable gifts that God has given us: hope, love, joy, and peace. And remember God's greatest gift, who comes to us as a baby and leads us through all the days of our lives.

This revised edition of the popular book includes stories, Scriptures, and thoughts to warm your heart throughout the season, as well as devotions by Jacob Armstrong and a new fifth chapter for Christmas Eve/Christmas Day.

Resources for the entire church include book, Leader Guide, five-session DVD study, and materials for youth and children.

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STEWARDSHIP

BENEVOLENCE GUIDE

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

# The spiritual (and vital) discipline of stewardship

BY MARTHA TAYLOR  
Editor

Ever since his 2017 episcopal address, where Bishop Mueller called those gathered at the 2017 Annual Conference in Hot Springs, Arkansas, “vitalizers,” clergy and laity have been asking themselves how their congregations could become more vital in four key areas: accountable discipleship, faith sharing, stewardship and the 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger initiative. To assist with answering that question, a website, [vitaldisciples.org](http://vitaldisciples.org), features tools and resources in each of the four areas. Once there, online visitors will find videos of the four Vital sessions from Annual Conference, Bible studies, promotional materials worship tools and more.

The Stewardship webpage features a downloadable six-week Bible study, *Living for Giving: A Wesleyan View of Stewardship*. Originally produced for the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, the study has been updated and revised to include a session based on the material the Rev. Dr. Clif Christopher’s covered during his Vital presentation at Annual Conference, “Creating a More Generous Church.” The remaining five sessions look at stewardship through a variety of lenses:

- Stewardship as Christian Discipleship
- Stewardship as Sharing in God’s Life and Mission
- Stewardship of Vocation
- Stewardship as Living Simply
- Stewardship as a Call to Strategic Generosity

Each session of the study is formatted to be used in adult Sunday school or small group settings.

“You will expand your view of stewardship as a gift from God, a spiritual discipline and a means of God’s grace,” Bishop Mueller writes in the study’s forward. “An understanding of stewardship in this light produces the joy through giving that God intends for each of us.”

*As Christians, we believe we are not truly owners of material possessions, but rather stewards. We also understand God wants us to enjoy and share when He provides. This includes tithing and when possible, giving extra when it comes to finances. By sharing our resources, we are showing the love Christ showed us and help spread the Word and goodness to our fellow Christians and ultimately to non-believers.*

—Allison and Bill Alexander, Searcy FUMC

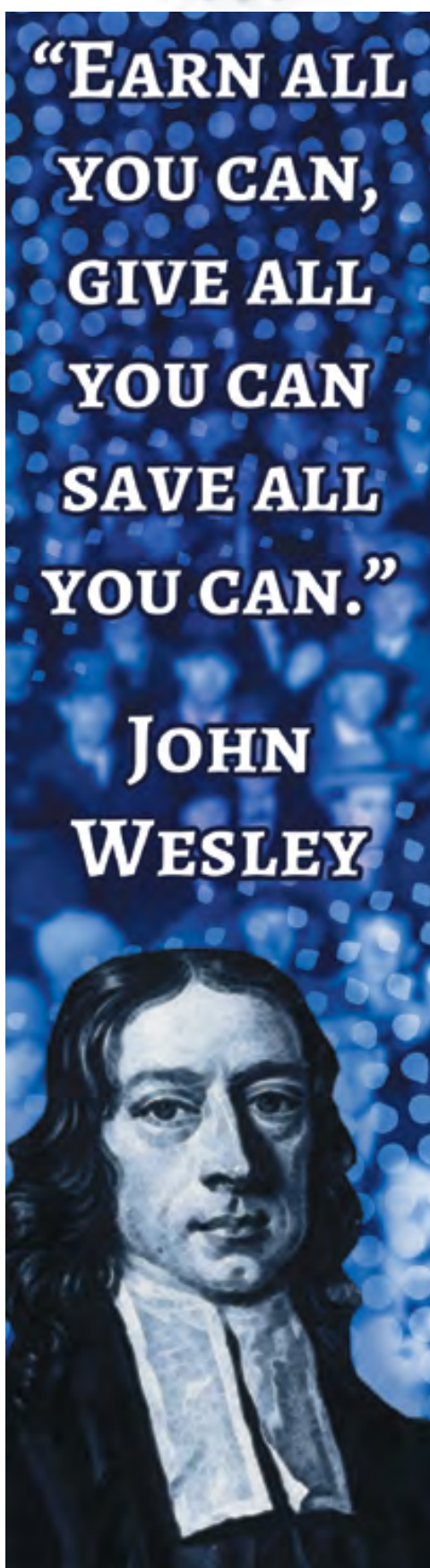
The [vitaldisciples.org](http://vitaldisciples.org) website provides links to other United Methodist materials produced by denominational sources and leaders. A recommended reading list highlights contemporary religious thought about stewardship for adults, youth and children.

Additional materials will be added to the site throughout the fall and spring.

## Beyond [vitaldisciples.org](http://vitaldisciples.org)

As one of the four key components of what makes a congregation more vital and develops disciples into mature followers of Jesus Christ, stewardship is something to be explored and embraced. The selection below features some of the best United Methodist-related materials.

- Discipleship Ministries, [www.umcdiscipleship.org/stewardship](http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/stewardship)—includes webinars, books, a capital campaign toolkit, and self- and leader-guided studies
- UMC Giving, [www.umcsgiving.org](http://www.umcsgiving.org)—includes free connectional give resources such as The Advance and Special Sundays. The site provides downloadable materials for small groups and worship
- General Council on Finance and Administration, [www.gcfa.org](http://www.gcfa.org)—local church resources including information on audits, real property matters and legal services.
- United Methodist Church of the Resurrection stewardship resource page, [www.cor.org/stewardship](http://www.cor.org/stewardship).
- Cokesbury, the retail division of the United Methodist Publishing House, offers church-wide stewardship programs as well as individual books and studies related to personal and corporate generosity. Visit [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com) or contact Arkansas’ Cokesbury Community Resource Consultant, Rachel Nicklas, at 501-553-8614 or [rnicklas@cokesbury.com](mailto:rnicklas@cokesbury.com).





# Where does our giving go? A narrative budget for 2018

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

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

The **General Apportionments Fund** is our share of the denomination's connectional funds as set by General Conference. The seven general funds are: The **World Service Fund** is the financial lifeline of our shared ministry throughout the world. The **Ministerial Education Fund** educates men and women to serve our Church. The **Black College Fund** supports United Methodism's historically Black colleges and universities that create vibrant spiritual environments that encourage pride and self-esteem. The **Africa University Fund** is transforming Africa by educating and empowering students from across the African continent. The **Episcopal Fund** pays bishops' salaries, covers their office and travel expenses and provides their pension and health-benefit coverage. The **General Administration Fund** implements trustworthy administrative oversight, supports the legislative processes of the church and curates the United Methodist Church's rich history. The **Interdenominational**

**Cooperation Fund** works in partnership with ecumenical organizations to bear witness to a common Christian faith. (Information from [www.umcgiving.org/how-we-give#umc](http://www.umcgiving.org/how-we-give#umc))

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

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

provides supplemental support for the Episcopal Office.

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

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

## Proportions of giving to budgeted funds

Clergy and Retiree Benefits	(\$1,165,000.00)	11.50%
General Apportionments	(\$2,700,861.00)	26.66%
Jurisdictional Apportionments	(\$86,709.00)	0.85%
Conference Administration	(\$1,838,189.00)	18.15%
Resourcing Local Congregations	(\$3,975,498.00)	39.24%
Institutional Ministries	(\$363,634.00)	3.60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>(\$10,129,891.00)</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



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- Promotional Tools & Sermon Starters

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- Curriculum & Video Teachings by Kay Kotan & The Center for Vitality
- Promotional Tools

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### 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



# Tithe Initiative invites sharing of abundance and joy

BY BRITTANY RICHARDSON WATSON  
Special Contributor

I remember the first Council on Finance and Administration meeting I attended. I felt like I was there by mistake, that they accidentally put my name on the committee not realizing who I was. I had received an email telling me to be there and I am a rule follower, so there I was. I sat at the table quietly, raking over the numbers in front of me and trying not to draw attention to myself. That is until Jim Polk, the chair of the committee, began talking about the idea of converting our apportionments into a true tithe of church income. At that moment I knew that I was in right place because this was a conversation I believed could change our churches, our conference, and the world.



**Brittany Watson**

I had the honor of serving on the task force that worked on the feasibility and implementation of what would become known as the Tithe Initiative. After a few years of study, education and number crunching, we were ready to present a new way of living out our connectional commitment, instead of a Conference assigned number based on numbers from two years previous. We would ask for a real-time tithe from every church. In the same way churches asked their members to give ten percent of their income to support the church's

ministries, the Conference would ask the churches to give ten percent of their income to support the ministries of The United Methodist Church at large. In 2015 this new way of giving and collecting apportionments was approved by the Arkansas Annual Conference to be fully implemented in 2017. I believe that this was an incredible leap of faith for our conference and an exciting testament to our belief in the strength of the local

## The Tithe Initiative moves us well beyond apportionments and into a deeper sense of abundance and connection.

church. In that vote in the Hot Springs Convention Center on warm June day in 2015, we proclaimed to the world that we had faith in the ongoing health of the local church and had belief in a God who would provide what we need. Just as we offer members of our churches the opportunity to give back to God with a heart full of abundance and thanks, we were offering our local churches the same blessing. No longer would they be asked to pay a monthly bill, but instead make a sacred offering to God's work well beyond the walls of our church.

Two years later and we are moving to the end of our first year of fully living into this new tithe-based system. Churches

have been asked to make many changes in the ways they reported their income and paid their apportionments, and are responded dramatically. Of the 645 churches in Arkansas, 566 have participated in this new way of giving. That is 88%! Our CFA and Conference Office have been thankful to see such a great involvement.

While I cannot speak for all 566 of these participating congregations, I can speak for one. I serve Sylvan Hills United Methodist Church in Sherwood, Arkansas. For the past three years we have struggled mightily to pay our apportionments, a number that at times crept up to almost 18% of our annual budget. This struggle became disheartening for a congregation who saw themselves as vital and active. However, we are proud to say that we are completely up to date in apportionment giving for 2017. While I would like to say that this because of an abundance of new members or a massive increase in giving, it is because we were able to shift our understanding of apportionments. Our tithe is no longer a number tied to the church we were two years ago that we were required to pay; now it is an offering that we have the opportunity to give based on the health and life of our church right now. For us, paying our tithe has become a celebration as we get to share our abundance and joy with the conference, the church, and the world. I pray that all our churches will join this celebration.

*The Rev. Brittany Richardson Watson is the pastor of Sylvan Hills United Methodist Church. Email: [brittany.watson@arumc.org](mailto:brittany.watson@arumc.org)*

**“Stewardship isn't between me and the church. It's personal; it is between me and the Lord. For me, the way I honor that commitment is by financial gifts and service through my church.”**  
—Theresa Moore, Springdale FUMC

## How to reach the Arkansas Conference Center for Administrative Services

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

Mailing address for correspondence:

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

Address for tithe payments, pension payments and giving to other designated funds:

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

Physical address:

800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202

Phone: 501-324-8020; Toll-free: 877-646-1816



**Todd Burris**

Director of Administrative Services and Conference Treasurer  
[tburris@arumc.org](mailto:tburris@arumc.org)  
501.324.8024



**Mona Williams**

Benefits Officer  
[mwilliams@arumc.org](mailto:mwilliams@arumc.org)  
501.324.8028



**Wendy Brunson Daniels**

Assistant Benefits Officer  
[wbrunson@arumc.org](mailto:wbrunson@arumc.org)  
501.324.8029



**Melissa Sanders**

Financial Controller  
[msanders@arumc.org](mailto:msanders@arumc.org)  
501.324.8022



**Cat Boose**

Financial Coordinator  
[cat.boose@arumc.org](mailto:cat.boose@arumc.org)  
501.324.8023



# Tithe Initiative streamlines local church financial task

Information for this worksheet should be gathered from Table II of the local church's Statistical Report for the Calendar Year 2016, to which the line numbers refer. If you do not have this report, you can obtain a copy from your church office, or from the Conference Center for Administrative Services (see contact information on the previous page).

## Calculate the Tithe

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

## Calculate the District Apportionment

Senior Pastor's salary (Line 44a)	+	_____
Associates' salaries (Line 44b)	+	_____
Deacon ministry compensation (Line 44c)	+	_____
Senior Pastor's utilities and allowances (Line 45a)	+	_____
Associates' utilities and allowances (Line 45b)	+	_____
Deacon utilities and allowances (Line 45c)	+	_____
Accountable reimbursements paid to pastors (Line 46)	+	_____
Other cash allowances (Line 47)	+	_____
Other staff compensation (Line 48)	+	_____
Diaconal Ministry compensation & expenses (Line 48b)	+	_____
Current program expenses (Line 49)	+	_____
Current operating expenses (Line 50)	+	_____
<b>Church Total Expense Consideration</b>	=	_____
<b>District Expense Financial Consideration</b> (your district will provide this number)	÷	_____
<b>Church Expense Decimal</b> (0.00000000: use the first 8 places to the right of decimal)	=	_____
<b>2018 District Budget</b> (your district will provide this number)	x	_____
<b>TOTAL District Apportionment</b> (District Budget x Church Expense Decimal)	=	_____

## Determine the Total 2018 Apportionment

District Apportionment amount	_____
Projected Tithe amount	+ _____
<b>TOTAL 2018 apportionment</b>	= _____

## Example: Susannah Wesley UMC, Yourtown, Ark.

### Calculate the Tithe

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

### Calculate the District Apportionment

Senior Pastor's salary (Line 44a)	+	30,600
Associates' salaries (Line 44b)	+	15,000
Deacon ministry compensation (Line 44c)	+	6,000
Senior Pastor's utilities and allowances (Line 45a)	+	7,900
Associate Pastors' utilities and allowances (Line 45b)	+	1,000
Deacon utilities and allowances (Line 45c)	+	0
Accountable reimbursements paid to pastors (Line 46)	+	2,500
Other cash allowances (Line 47)	+	2,400
Other staff compensation (Line 48)	+	21,400
Diaconal ministry compensation & expenses (Line 48b)	+	0
Current program expenses (Line 49)	+	2,100
Current operating expenses (Line 50)	+	30,000
<b>Church Total Expense Consideration</b>	=	118,900
<b>District Expense Financial Consideration</b> (NW District, in this example)	÷	21,986,108
<b>Church Expense Decimal</b> (0.00000000: use the first 8 places to the right of decimal)	=	0.00540796
<b>2018 District Budget</b> (Northwest District, in this example)	x	237,000
<b>TOTAL District Apportionment for 2018</b> (District Budget x Church Expense Decimal)	=	1,282
<b>Divide by 12 to calculate monthly District Apportionment:</b>		128.20

### Determine the Total Monthly Tithe and Apportionment

Monthly District Apportionment amount	_____	119.42
Projected monthly Tithe amount	+ _____	1,902.30
<b>TOTAL monthly Tithe and District Apportionment</b>	= _____	2,021.72

Your church has received an estimate of what your 2016 tithe would have been if the Tithe Initiative had been fully implemented during that year. Please use that number for budgeting purposes only. Your actual tithe will be calculated using the form above.

**Raising three kids on one income was tough, and we always gave "what we could," to the church. The act of putting God first was made clear to us during a building campaign a few years ago. We couldn't afford to increase much, but we decided to step out on faith and believe God would take care of us. Before we even made the first increase in giving my job changed, along with enough increase in pay that we never noticed the increase in church giving. The best tool to make this happen smoothly is auto debit from our checking account.**

—David and Lynne Carter, Grace Church



## Youth (from page 4)

The foundation that has been given by CCYM and local ministries is one that has allowed us to build up the kingdom of God in the way that we are called to do. I've had to accept that I will never have all the answers in my spiritual journey, but there is one thing that I do know: we serve a powerful and faithful God, and we have been given a wonderful conference to serve through. Thank you.

### Lexie Burleson, 2017 President Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministries

I'm Lexie Burleson, a member of Lakewood United Methodist Church, and I serve as the current CCYM president. My youth experience has been all about building a temple. That's what I've been doing for 18 years. Sure, the foundation was laid for me, but this is a temple for God. 1 Chronicles 22:19 tells us to devote our heart and soul to seeking the Lord. Our conference's youth understand that actively seeking Christ is in our identity as temple-builders, and we know that creating lives that seek Christ is the meaning of spiritual vitality, that it is vital to know our savior.

Our youth ministry has created a safe space for its youth to build a relationship with God. With the learning, serving, and fellowship opportunities it provides, it's no wonder our youth have such a deep love for Christ. When one is a part of our conference's youth ministry

since. They're the ones I've created substantial memories with. Like at last year's annual conference, when I sat down with my two roommates and we wrote an entire sermon on *The Bee Movie*, a Dreamworks animated film that is just about bees. We thought it was awesome. We thought it was golden. And we gave it to the bishop, and I'm 99% sure he's never used it.

But these are the friends that grew with me throughout high school, and they're the ones I'm going to college with. They're a big reason as to why I chose a United Methodist School. These are long-term friendships rooted in Christ. These are the vital relationships and fellowship that our conference provides for its youth. If not for CCYM, I would never have known these people. Vitality is about being active and engaged. Vitality is about being energetic. God is at Veritas when our youth is shaking the room in worship, and God is in our assembly small groups when we meet our lifelong friends.

CCYM events bring the youth of this state together to learn with and from each other, and drastically change lives in our church's favor and in God's favor. And we take this out to our communities, and we share this without brothers and sisters in Christ. This isn't happening anywhere else. Our conference's spiritual vitality brings excitement to our faith and our spirituality.

The best part about being involved in our youth program is

**'When we look to the future, it at times seems scary and uncertain. There are three vital things to do: pray about it, unify because of it, and change it.'**

—Rebecca Dodson

and its programs and events, they are a part of a temple-building process. This process includes being a part of the local church. At my home church, mission has always been important to its youth. I've witnessed the importance in serving in communities that are two plane rides away, or a 10-hour bus ride, or a walk across the street. My youth group has also taught me the power of worship and praying together and sharing scripture. Our local youth groups are a constant tool available to our conference's teenagers to learn and develop in God's grace.

Beyond our local churches, we have conference events, like Veritas and Assembly. As a junior high student, I met my closest friends at CCYM events, and they have been a part of every major event in my life

the way CCYM and my local church has helped me foster a relationship between me and my savior. I have many adult leaders and mentors, whether it be clergy or volunteers who are strong in their faith and passionate about young lives, who devote hours encouraging me, teaching me, and praying for me.

Can anyone who has once been a teenager please raise their hand? That's everyone. Many of you likely have memories about growing up in the United Methodist Church and can tell stories of the long-term relationships you have because of those days. I hope the friends I've made will be lifelong. I hope the United Methodist Church benefits from these relationships as we take the next step as leaders. I hope our youth and our conference as a whole



Bishop Gary Mueller led a prayer with the annual conference body following the Youth Address.

moves forward together as one in creating more temple-builders and in spreading the love God has for us all. Our youth groups provide a fun, safe, accepting, and exciting place to seek the Lord and the Lord's grace. That is temple-building.

Being a part of our youth ministries has shaped every part of me. It has given me a heart for Christ and the United Methodist Church. It has given me the passion and relationships I need to dedicate my actions and my future to serving our church and our God. That is seeking and serving. That is building a temple with vitality. Thank you.

### Rebecca Dodson, 2018 President, Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministry

My name is Rebecca Dodson from First United Methodist Church in El Dorado, and I will be next year's ACCYM president. CCYM had a really successful year and a multitude of successful events. Our final events this year are Jr. and Sr. High Assembly, which will take place at Hendrix College at the end of July. The speakers, worship sessions, and small groups will give youth a unique opportunity to deepen their relationship with Christ and others.

When I was in eighth grade, I attended my first CCYM event, Refuge. My eyes were opened to the fact that these events were made possible not only by other members of the conference but by other youth. I remember the bus ride home was probably excruciating for my youth minister, because I could not stop asking how I could become a part of such a meaningful organization.

When I promised myself I would make it on to ACCYM, I never knew this is where I would meet my best friends, develop a stronger faith, or create such crazy memories. ACCYM helped not only my mind but my heart seek Christ more actively, and it continues and will continue to do that as we look into the future.

What makes the Arkansas Conference and its youth ministry so different is the opportunities we give our youth to assume positions with responsibilities and the number of them willing, and even excited, to take on these roles. One of the main reasons I love Arkansas so much is because I have so many opportunities to be involved and learn from more experienced adults and even my peers. As youth, we begin our new experiences and prepare for life beyond our homes and humble beginnings. Our minds are shaped the most during these years. Since our conference's Council on Youth Ministries is so prevalent in our youth's lives, we have clear expectations to serve and love like Christ did, and we are surrounded by encouragement and love to grow in.

Because of ACCYM, we are molded into disciples. As disciples, we are called to make more disciples with our strong faith and spiritual vitality. As one famous person has said, "We create a disciple cycle." How do we as a church body continue to help not only ACCYM but the conference as a whole to maintain a safe, accepting, and welcoming environment for everyone, not just youth? I say "we" because it's not just me or you or our churches with a small attendance or the one's with the

large attendance. It's us. It's everyone in this room and everyone in our churches and communities who are being called to work with the most important team member: God.

We strive to make relations with every age alive to give a better structure to everyone. We choose to love even when it's hard. We accept all who are broken, just as God and Christ have done, and as they have called us to do. And we do this for and with one another, because together we all have the same dream: to see God's kingdom grow and flourish through the spread of love and grace.

When we look to the future, it at times seems scary and uncertain. There are three vital things to do: pray about it, unify because of it, and change it. It is vital that we create inter-generational relationships starting right now and continuing out as the years pass, because I know you all have things to share with us to help us in our individual futures and the future of the United Methodist Church. But we, the youth in your churches, have a vision to share with you all as well.

Thank you for the opportunities that you have given not only me but every youth in our conference. I want to always be able to say I am proud to be from Arkansas, the place where we are revived and seek to deepen our faith. It's past time to take action.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." And in the same way, we must keep moving forward. Thank you.



## COMING UP

**Evangelism for Non-Evangelists Online**

Evangelism for Non-Evangelists Online is a five-week introductory online evangelism course team-taught by Dr. Heather Heinzman Lear, the Director of Evangelism at Discipleship Ministries, and Dr. Mark Teasdale, the Professor of Evangelism at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

This course invites you to grow deeper in your own faith and, as you do, reflect on why you believe God is good, articulate your faith in a way that is authentic to that belief, and develop creative practices that grow from those beliefs. It also equips you to implement those creative practices in a congregational setting.

The course meets from 6:30 p.m.–8 p.m. Central Time on Thursdays, October 19–November 16. There is no charge for the course. For more information and to register, visit <https://www.umdiscipleship.org/resources/evangelism-for-non-evangelists>

**Silent Centering Prayer Retreat**

Mount Eagle Retreat Center is hosting a Silent Centering Prayer Retreat on October 22–25. The retreat focuses on listening for God in the silence. Participants will experience centering prayer in community, live and video teaching on the contemplative journey. The retreat will be facilitated by the clergy and lay spiritual directors: Rev. Dr. Bill Buchanan, Rev. Gail Brooks, and Rev. David Fleming.

The retreat cost is \$175 and includes meals and single room

lodging while at Mount Eagle. Scholarships are available. For a retreat brochure, schedule and registration form, visit <http://arumc.org/events/silent-centering-prayer-retreat/>.

**Faith and Health Conference**

Methodist Healthcare in Memphis is presenting the 16th Annual Faith & Health Clergy and Congregational Leadership Conference, “What’s Working: Tools for Faith Leaders” from 8 a.m.–2:30 p.m. on November 2 at Mississippi Blvd Christian Church, 70 North Bellevue Blvd., Memphis, Tennessee.

The Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois, is the keynote speaker. Moss has spent the last two decades calling attention to the problems of mass incarceration, environmental justice and economic inequality.

There is no cost for the conference but attendance is limited to 300. To register online, visit <https://tinyurl.com/Faith-HealthConference>. Registration closes on October 19.

**Refuge and Mitto set for November**

Two youth events are scheduled for November. Students in grades 6–9 interested in learning about the Arkansas Conference Council on Youth Ministry (ACCYM) activities are invited to attend Refuge on November 3–5 or November 10–12. Refuge takes place at Shepherd of the Hills. The registration fee of \$175 includes meals, 2-nights lodging, community activities and a t-shirt.

To register for Refuge, visit <http://accym.org/refuge/>

Mitto (Me-toe) is a mission-focused weekend set for November 17–19 for students in grades 9–12. Students will participate in a number of hands on mission events including Ingathering. Registration fee of \$35 includes meals, lodging, and a t-shirt. To register for Mitto, visit <http://accym.org/mitto/#>.

**Young Adult Discernment Gathering**

Exploration 2017, sponsored by The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, will take place November 3–5 in Portland, Oregon. The 3-day event is designed for young adults ages 18–26 to listen, discern, and respond to God’s call to ordained ministry.

The registration fee includes all workshops and meals. Visit <http://www.explorecalling.org/exploration>.

**Spiritual Leadership Practices: Living into God’s Vision**

Jacqui King, Director of Leadership for Congregational Vitality will lead this online event at 7 p.m. Central on Tuesday, November 14.

Focusing on building and transforming small groups, this webinar will share insights about moving forward with implementing healthy annual learning schedules that promote increasing spiritual practices to support small groups, Sunday school, leadership and community mission experiences.

Visit [Spiritual-leadership-practices-living-into-gods-vision](http://spiritual-leadership-practices-living-into-gods-vision) for more information and to register.

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## PEOPLE OF FAITH

**Five Arkansans elected to attend global gathering**

Youth from nine annual conferences representing the South Central Jurisdiction gathered over Labor Day weekend at Glen Lake Camp near Glen Rose, Texas for the purpose of leadership training, worship, and electing delegates to the 2018 United Methodist Global Young People’s Convocation in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The South Central Jurisdiction elected five voting representatives, five alternates and five observers for both youth and young adults. In addition to those 30 individuals, two adult youthworkers and their alternates were elected.

The following individuals from Arkansas were elected to represent the jurisdiction at the July 18–22, 2018 convocation:

**Creighton Polk**

*FUMC Conway*  
Youth Voting Representative

**Miller Wilbourn**

*Pulaski Heights UMC*  
Young Adult Voting Representative

**Lauren Lovelady**

*Hot Springs/Henderson State Wesley Foundation*  
Young Adult Alternate

**Brooke Hobbs**

*Hot Springs Village/University of Arkansas Fayetteville Wesley Foundation*  
Young Adult Observer

**Brandon Bates**

*FUMC Little Rock*  
Adult Youthworker Voting Representative



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## OBITUARIES

### SHERIDAN

#### Albert Cherington Marlar

The Rev. Albert Cherington Marlar, 66, of Sheridan, Arkansas went to be with our Lord and Savior on Sunday, July 16, 2017. He passed peacefully at 3:13 a.m. at Baptist Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas with Pam and Shiloh by his side.



Albert was born to Tilman and Jessie Marlar of Willisville, Arkansas on June 19, 1951. Siblings are Anita Marlar Dickerson and Amber Marlar Kenny. He is survived by his wife of almost 39 years, Pamela Rose Bissell Marlar and their daughter, Shiloh Melody Marlar.

Albert started delivering the GRIT newspaper and selling the TV Guide at a young age. He spent his teenage years fixing flat tires at Marlar Grocery and mowing the church cemetery. Albert earned a Business Administration Degree from Southern State College.

He started working for Arkansas Social Services on October 2, 1972—currently Arkansas Department of Human Services. He devoted 42 years and 9 months of service to Arkansas and held numerous leadership roles for DHS throughout

those years. Albert had retired from the state level after serving as Assistant Director in different divisions and was currently the County Administrator in Saline County.

Albert started serving the Lord at an early age: he served as youth director in his teenage years at Waldo First United Methodist Church; treasurer at Willisville United Methodist Church during his college years and numerous other leadership roles throughout his lifetime. Albert and Pam married on September 8, 1978 and early in his marriage he became a Certified Lay Speaker for the Arkansas United Methodist Church and served the Camden District for many years. Albert received his license to preach and served Bethel UMC in Ico, Ebenezer UMC in Tull, (both in Grant County) and Altheimer UMC (in Jefferson County). He participated in numerous UMCOR Mission Trips and volunteered his time and labor in multiple states due to hurricanes and floods. His favorite sermon to prepare and deliver was for Pentecost Sunday. Christmas Eve Communion Services were a close second—each year he would set up luminaries, poinsettias, candles and music outside to welcome families as they would prepare to take communion together. Albert also took great pleasure in bringing

the community together sharing the love of God by having big 4th of July cookouts/celebrations at Bethel UMC for eight years. Albert believed in doing good and working for the good of all whenever he had an opportunity. (Galatians 6: 9 & 10) Albert loved “serving others” and dearly loved The United Methodist Church! He wanted to do all he could to help.

Albert and Pam enjoyed spending time together playing PacMan on the Atari, taking their boat to Lake DeGray to water ski, remodeling their home, and gardening. He became an avid softball fan after Shiloh was born. From the days of plastic bats and balls to high school varsity and everything between—Albert coached Shiloh both on and off the field. Since those early days, his coaching cap identified him as “Shiloh’s Dad” and he loved spending countless hours teaching her to pitch and hit.

Mrs. Alvarene G. Peace of Magnolia, Arkansas was very influential in Albert’s life and stated: “It was my good fortune to have had Mr. Marlar as a student during his days at Southern State College. He told me about his job with the Department of Human Services and it was obvious that he would be a most valuable and helpful employee—his heart and caring seemed so big! The

contributions made through Mr. Marlar’s work with the Department and the Methodist churches have contributed untold good memories to all those he met and served. The world was made a better place through his gifts.”

Visitation was held on Tuesday, July 18, 2017 at A.O. Smith Funeral Home, 805 Thomas Street in Stamps, Arkansas. Funeral services were Wednesday, July 19, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. at Willisville United Methodist Church in Willisville, Arkansas.

The Rev. Kem Reeder officiated and uplifting music was provided by Amanda Oldner Hooper and Rodney Rowe. Amanda played the grand piano that Albert’s mother once played. Pallbearers were many friends who volunteered to carry Albert’s body to his final resting place.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Willisville Cemetery Fund—P.O. Box 14, Willisville, Arkansas, 71864; Altheimer United Methodist Church—P.O. Box 759, Altheimer, Arkansas 72004; Pancreatic Cancer Action Network—[pancan.org](http://pancan.org) or your favorite charity.

### BATESVILLE

#### Dewey Dark, Jr.

Dewey Dark, Jr., age 87, died on Thursday, August 17, 2017. He was born April 30, 1930 in Possum

Grape, Arkansas, and was raised in Hardy, Arkansas, to where the family returned in 1932. He was one of four sons and four daughters born to Dewey Dark and Ona Dell Groom Dark.

In 1951 he met Bonnie Lee, Youth Director at Clarksville First Methodist Church, at a youth sub-district meeting in Ozark. They married at McCrory Methodist Church in 1952, and moved to their first appointment together in Lavaca. Through the years they joyfully worked together in ministry.

Among his many talents he used in ministry were counseling and building, renovating parsonages, and building churches. He built an A-frame cabin on Spring River in Hardy, which became home and roots for the family of four children.

He retired to Cherokee Village after serving 40 years as a United Methodist minister in the North Arkansas Conference, where he served as Conference Secretary for eight years. His ministry included Superintendent of the Paragould District, pastor at Wynne, Mountain Home, Marianna, Beebe, Trinity at Fayetteville, Midland Heights at Fort Smith, Central Avenue at Batesville, Prairie Grove, Bald Knob, Lavaca, Alix Circuit, and Bard/Morning Star.

He was a graduate of Hardy High School, College of the Ozarks, and Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Georgia. While a student he started Glencoe United Methodist Church there.

Following retirement, he served on the Cherokee Village City Council, oversaw the zoning of the newly classified city, and led in the redesign of a spacious house into apartments for Fountain Place, an independent living facility sponsored by churches in Cherokee Village.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his brothers and sisters, and son Paul Douglas Dark.

He is survived by his wife Bonnie, daughter Lee Ann Kendrick of Fayetteville, sons Stan Dark of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Barry (Susi) Dark of Nashville, Tennessee; grandchildren Heather Holaway, Chelsea Kendrick, and Alexa Dark; great-grandchildren, Marti Pearl and Penelope; and many nephews and nieces.

Funeral services were held Monday, August 21 at Cherokee Village United Methodist Church with Interment at Bronaugh Cemetery, Hardy, Arkansas.



## VITAL CONGREGATIONS

### Marion FUMC adopts school district

When the Marion First UMC congregation found out that the Marion School didn’t have a backpack/feeding program to make sure children were eating through the weekends and over the summer, they jumped into action. Hoping to cover at least a few of the schools within the district, the outpouring was “crazy in a good way,” as senior pastor, the Rev. Robert Cloninger, put it. So much so that the church is now providing for the entire school district, serving approximately 90 children..

### Local churches support students, award scholarships

Funds can be a scarce commodity for students returning to school each fall. Many have found a welcome source through local churches that award scholarships for students.

**Eight members of St. Paul United Methodist Church in Jonesboro** received scholarships totaling \$7,000 to apply toward tuition and books during the church’s Scholarship Day on August 6. Since 1988 the ministry has awarded more than \$148,000 in scholarships and book stipends to young college students. This year’s recipients were Quentin Sigman, Sierra Peel, Zachery Couch, Zachariah Gibson, Andrea Richardson, Alex Rorex, Nathan

Simons and Stephan Simons.

The **Mildred K. Blanks Memorial Scholarship**, given by her daughter, Liz Witherington, is a \$5,000 scholarship available for members and former members of Hamburg First United Methodist Church for post-graduate studies. It is given to those who have a strong tradition of Christian service and will be entering the serving professions including the fields of ministry, medicine, dentistry, nursing, social work and psychology. The 2017 recipient is Julie Barnes, a wife and mother, who along with her husband, Gene, serve the youth and young adults of the church and community. Barnes is attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and plans to receive a degree in Biblical Counseling.

### UMCs, community aid injured firefighter

Earlier this year, an El Dorado, Arkansas firefighter, Lt. Trey Sewell, was severely injured in a car accident that required the amputation of his right leg and surgery on his pelvis and left knee. Learning of the extent of his injuries and the associated medical expenses, more than 50 members of St. Paul UMC, members of Dumas Memorial UMC, local firefighters and business owners, organized a hamburger plate lunch sale

which generated more than \$11,000 in proceeds which were deposited in a special account to assist Sewell.

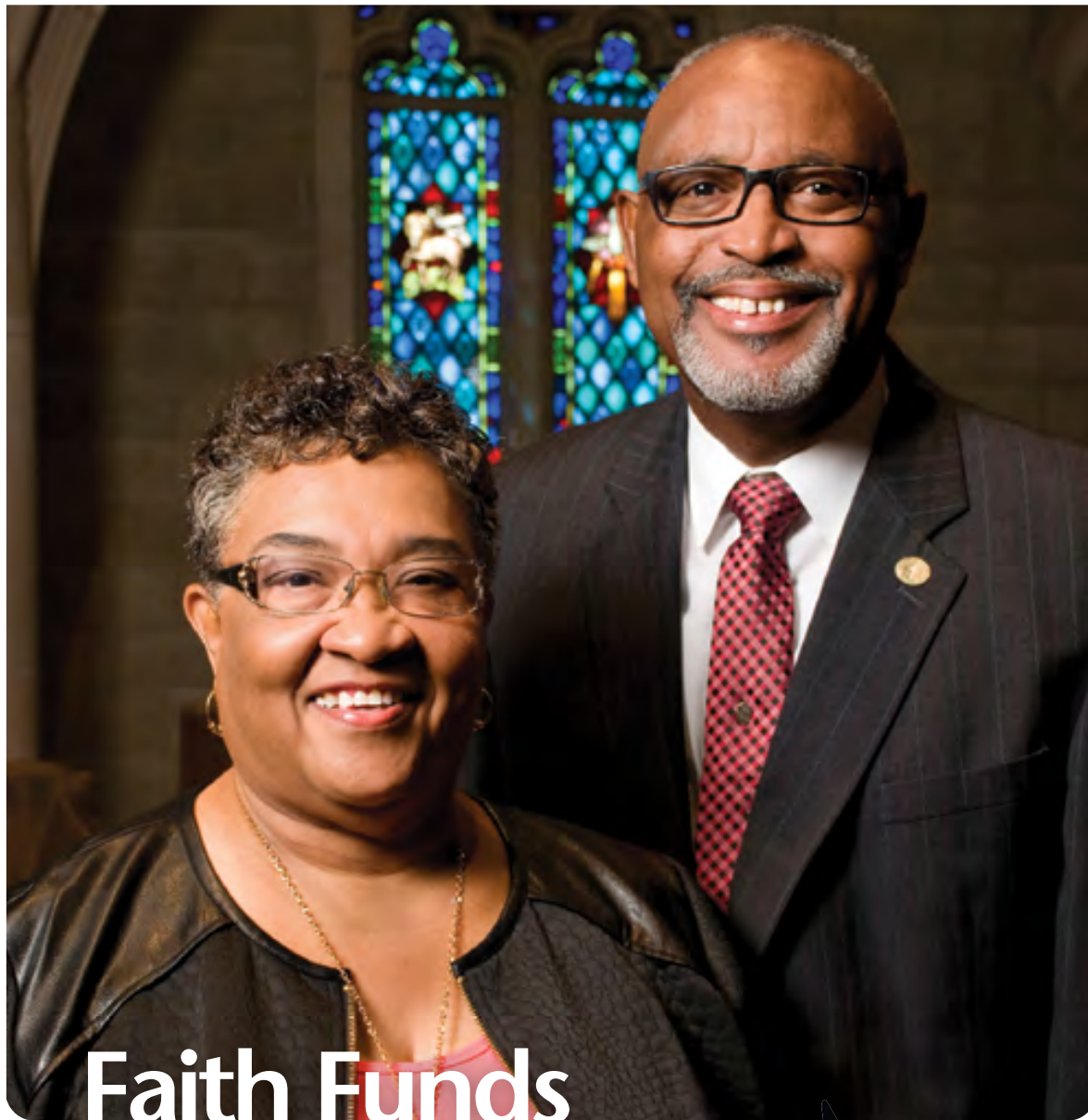


The Greenbrier UMC youth recently launched a new ministry, “Welcome Walk.”

### Roll Out the Welcome Mug

The youth of Greenbrier First United Methodist Church literally roll out the welcome wagon and “mug” members of their community on a regular basis. The students were inspired to reach out into their mission field and elected to create a coffee mug out of a large barrel. They put the mug on a wagon and walk through the neighborhoods near to the church. They give standard-sized mugs to visitors who have shared their address with the church. The mugs include information about the church’s mission, worship times, and connection information.





## Faith Funds

### Honoring Our Bishops

Each year Rev. Jimmy and Lorraine Mosby choose to make a second mile gift to support the United Methodist Foundation and to honor the bishops of the Arkansas Conference, past and present, through their membership in the UMFA Bishops' Club.

"I believe in the Foundation because of the good it does for the Conference. Being a Bishops' Club Annual Member is my small way to be a part of the Foundation's worthwhile ministries like seminary scholarships," said Jimmy. "My goal is someday to become a Life Member."

Jimmy, Lorraine, and all of their children are graduates of Philander Smith College in Little Rock. "In all, 17 of our family members have graduated from Philander," said Lorraine. Their five grandchildren may be future graduates!

Members of Bishops' Club gather annually in the fall for a luncheon to hear a keynote speaker and visit with friends from throughout the Conference. For information on becoming a member, contact Janet Marshall at [jmarshall@umfa.org](mailto:jmarshall@umfa.org) or call the Foundation today.



### The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

5300 Evergreen Drive • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

501-664-8632 • Toll free 877-712-1107 • Fax 501-664-6792 • [www.umfa.org](http://www.umfa.org)

### VIM AND DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATES

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

### Hands-On Recovery

**Outside of Arkansas:** At the time of publication, three annual conferences—Rio Texas, Texas and Louisiana—were affected by Hurricane Harvey, are ready for ERTs and have extended an invitation to respond. Only the Texas Conference is accepting mixed (non-trained with trained) ERTs.

When registering to help in any of the hurricane affected areas, please notify the Mann's at [disaster@arumc.org](mailto:disaster@arumc.org). This will allow coordination with other teams and individuals who might want to deploy.

**In Arkansas:** Currently there are 10 projects in the Northeast District that are ready for volunteer help. Other projects are expected to be ready by mid-October in the Southeast District. Project work involves the packing out of household items, clean out, removal of base cabinets and subflooring; subfloor repair, laying of laminate flooring, base cabinet installation; hanging, taping and mudding of drywall; painting, and replacement of porches, steps, and ramps.

### HURRICANE RELIEF DONATIONS

- Hurricane Relief: Donations may be made online at <https://tinyurl.com/ya2nfy2q>. Gifts may also be mailed to Arkansas Conference, 800 Daisy Bates Dr., Little Rock, AR 72202. Include the memo: Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund.
- UMCOR donations for Disaster Relief, United State (#901670) may be made by visiting the UMCOR online donation page at <https://tinyurl.com/9ltuy2h>

### Giving (from page 1)

off locations.

"Following Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, there were many district drop off locations for the specific items needed at that time," Dassinger said. "I strongly encourage verifying the Ingathering drop off locations with district coordinators as they may be different than those designated for hurricane relief supplies."

Groups and individuals may go online to register at <https://www.eiseverywhere.com/ingathering2017>. There they will find a liability release form and an Ingathering Donation Remittance Form, which

tracks mission-oriented gifts the local church has made as well as the hours its members have spent in mission. Both forms should be completed and turned in on the day of the event. Release forms for minors must be signed by a parent or guardian. As a reminder, the Foodbank has safety regulations which require volunteers be at least 8 years of age. Also a 5 to 1 child to adult ratio is required to meet Safe Sanctuaries requirements.

For more information, email Mary Lewis Dassinger at [mdassinger@arumc.org](mailto:mdassinger@arumc.org).

### 200K Reasons Grant Application deadline approaching

The 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger Initiative is accepting grant applications through October 13 for the fall funding cycle. Grants will be awarded for new, ongoing, or expanding ministries that are designed to assist in the reduction of *childhood hunger* and demonstrate the following priorities:

- New, on-going or expanded ministries that target **children** who are hungry
- 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*
- Programs through local United Methodist churches or ministries that start or sustain existing feeding ministries, public witness, or education programs
- Programs that partner with other local United Methodist Churches
- Programs that engage the mission field of the local United Methodist Church
- Programs that demonstrate cooperation and shared resources between community partners

The 200,000 Reasons Initiative of the Arkansas United Methodist Church seeks to engage 100 percent of its churches in this initiative to fight childhood hunger by providing long-term stability to hungry families through ministries that meet immediate needs; providing nutrition education; building relationships for empowerment and support; and offering a public witness to Arkansas communities about the needs of hungry children.

Grant applications may be downloaded at [www.200kreasons.arumc.org](http://www.200kreasons.arumc.org).