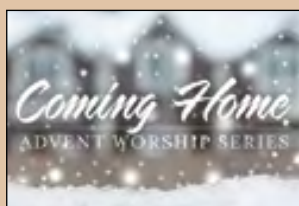


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Cowboys, Coffee and Breakfast: innovative ministries creating community

BY MARTHA TAYLOR
Interim Editor

Cowboy Church. Holy Grounds Community Coffeehouse. Morning Manna. What each of these have in common is a desire to find and know the people who live, work and play in their communities. Each is the result of continuous prayer, thoughtful planning, and more than a little persistence on the part of the congregations connecting with their neighbors.

Cowboy Church

If you want to see a cowboy or girl in church, you best hold your service on Tuesday evening. Why? Because those folks travel and work on the weekends, moving from town to town on the rodeo, county and state fair circuit. So when Cowboy Church gathers, it's Tuesday evenings at John and Pat Poole's place, Adonai Tsurii, in Van Buren, Arkansas.

Poole and his wife, and members of their Heritage UMC life group, had a vision of reaching people in the cowboy culture. According to Kip James, a member of the life group, the Poole's vision was to offer a place where someone could come straight



COURTESY PHOTO

Holy Grounds honors the past by repurposing a church building to house a new outreach ministry.

from feeding cattle or work, and experience welcome and belonging.

That vision became reality with the construction of Adonai Tsurii, Hebrew for "God Our Rock." The building is nestled in a bucolic setting overlooking a lake. Women and men—most of them laity—share the responsibility of delivering the message, and music leans toward bluegrass, country and hymns.

"The Poole's wanted to offer a service where everyone was welcome,"

James wrote in an email. "There are no expectations about your background in the Christian body, if you have been to a church or never been to a church."

The relaxed, come-as-you-are atmosphere has appeal for all ages, and it's not unusual to see multiple generations worshipping together.

"You always want to come to see how the Lord has worked in people's lives," James wrote. "To understand that God still is at work in this world

and how much he truly loves us."

Adonai Tsurii Cowboy Church meets at 7 p.m. each Tuesday at 4500 Old Uniontown Road, Van Buren. For more information about Adonai Tsurii, visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/adonaitsurieventvenue/>.

Holy Grounds Community Coffeehouse

When an out of town guest suggested they getting a cup of coffee, the Rev. Bill Buchanan realized that a national food chain was the only place in Forrest City to get one. He also recognized that there was a need for something different, someplace that served up more than a cup of joe.

That's where Buchanan and the members of First UMC Forrest City found the inspiration for Holy Grounds Community Coffeehouse. The congregation, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, owns a house that had served as a district office and parsonage but hadn't been used in some time. Constructed in the 1930s, the two-story building was ideal for the project and could be brought back to life with some remodeling.

[See COFFEE, page 5]

Local church health clinic serves Little Rock's homeless

BY DIANE DRILLING WRIGHT
Special Contributor

For many, the winter season brings happiness and cheer, warm fires on cold nights. But for others, the winter can mean flu, respiratory illnesses and staying healthy becomes more difficult. And for those living on the streets, a simple cold can quickly turn deadly.

For Little Rock's homeless population, Canvas Community, a downtown United Methodist congregation has been a welcome blessing for several years. And 2017 saw the church extend that blessing with the opening of a health clinic serving their neighbors without homes.

Thanks in part to a grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA), Canvas' health clinic, which operates in partnership with ARCare, is open from 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. each Wednesday.

The clinic provides primary care, wound care, lab services, HIV/STD screenings and counseling, and pharmaceutical services. They are also able to assist with transportation to hospitals or ARCare as well as offer help with referrals and insurance aid.

According to the church's pastor, the Rev. Carter Ferguson, because Canvas has been intentional about being in community with the homeless persons in the neighborhood, the addition of the health clinic had credibility from the start.

"[Canvas has helped the homeless community already] by giving the medical clinic our stamp of approval and the validity of Canvas," Ferguson said. "It helps people who are willing to go to the doctor, some who haven't been there in 10-11 years."

The clinic is fully-functioning with trained medical staff to help accommodate the medical concerns and needs of their patients; currently they see between 15-25 patients each week. Some patients suffer from illnesses as serious as collapsed lungs or diabetes serious enough to require hospitalization.

UMFA's grants administrator, the Rev. Mackey Yokem, worked with Ferguson to prepare the grant application and provided additional information for the committee reviewing the grant.

"The UMFA grant was the catalyst for start-up funds and an invitation for other organizations to see the need for these types of services," Yokem, said. "The Foundation's willingness to invest in the project gave others the incentive to join in the

effort."

Ferguson said Canvas is proud of how the clinic is already helping the downtown community.

"At Canvas, we want to do more than just come and worship," Ferguson said. "We also want to do mission work within our community. So, our question became, how do we expand it? This led us to opening the health clinic."

Yokem added that Canvas' homeless neighbors are among the most vulnerable.

"This is a segment of our population that has extremely limited access to healthcare while having a significant need for medical treatment and prevention," Yokem said.

Although the clinic has been extremely successful having served an estimated 150 patients since August, Ferguson would like to add a podiatry clinic, mental health groups and individual therapy.

To learn more about the health clinic or Canvas Community, go to www.welovellittlerock.com, or visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/canvascommunity>.

Wright is the director of youth ministries at Sardis UMC. Email: diane1230@ymail.com.

Lessons from Baby Jesus

BY HEATHER HAHN

“Dear 8-pound, 6-ounce newborn infant Jesus, don’t even know a word yet, just still a little infant so cuddly but still omnipotent, we just thank you for all the races I’ve won and the \$22.1 million—love that money.” Well, that’s one way to say grace.

In the comedy “Talladega Nights,” Ricky Bobby takes some well-deserved chiding for praying to “Christmas Jesus” rather than “Grown-up Jesus.” Behind the joke is a theological lesson.

“It does seem like praying to cuddly infant Jesus is a convenient way for the character Ricky Bobby to ignore some of Jesus’ teachings that push against some of the other things he says (and even prays for),” said Susan E. Hylén, a New Testament professor at United Methodist Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. “Jesus’ teachings against the love of wealth come to mind.”

Especially at Christmastime, it’s easy to be a bit like Ricky Bobby—imagining Jesus simply as a sweet babe bestowing worldly blessings.

“Perhaps we should also wonder if we love the Christmas Jesus because we are not challenged by the message we hear at Christmas,” Hylén said.

If anything, scholars say, Christmas should remind us just how

radical God’s arrival in the world is. Even in the nativity, Jesus turns worldly notions of power and justice upside down.

Sondra Wheeler, Martha Ashby Carr Professor of Christian Ethics at



COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

United Methodist Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, puts it this way: “In truth, I think we should be shocked, and even a little terrified by the whole notion of God taking on vulnerability.”

Born in need

For Hylén, one of the most striking things in Matthew and Luke is just how dependent on humans Jesus was—even before his birth.

Luke tells how Mary welcomes the angel’s birth announcement, and Matthew details how Joseph accepts Jesus because of an angel in a dream.

However, Matthew, in particular, makes clear that Mary’s pregnancy was a scandal that could have

ended her betrothal to Joseph—a break tantamount to divorce in their culture. Worse yet, if Joseph had complained to the religious authorities, he could have put Mary at risk of stoning for adultery.

“Both had good reasons not to welcome this fragile yet powerful life, and it would have been possible for them not to,” Hylén said. “But in the end they chose to do as the angel asked.”

Julie Dotterweich Gunby, a nurse midwife in Athens, Georgia, works mainly with uninsured mothers. Her clients generally have a lot more in common with lowly Mary

than the wealthy Rick Bobby.

Yet, it was among the marginalized rather than the McMansion set where God sought and found home.

“I think of Jesus needing the hospitality of a woman’s body and nursing,” said Dotterweich Gunby, who is also mother of three and wife of a United Methodist pastor. “That is one of the things that God allowed himself to experience.”

She pointed out that one of the first physical needs all newborns have is for warmth. Mary takes care of that need too, wrapping the babe in swaddling clothes.

“In some ways it sounds kind of heretical to talk about God having lack, but that’s part of the scandal of

the Incarnation, that God knows what and has needs met.”

Born amid death

Bringing Jesus into the world required human effort and kindness. Sadly, as Matthew tells it, his arrival also was accompanied by great human loss.

In all the excitement about angelic dreams and visiting magi, Althea Spencer Miller—a New Testament professor at United Methodist Drew Theological School—urges Christians not to overlook Herod’s savage reaction to news of a coming Messiah.

In a move reminiscent of the

pharaoh of Exodus, the wicked king orders the murder of all children in Bethlehem and surrounding areas who are 2 and younger. Matthew, quoting Jeremiah, describes the parents’ cries for their lost children.

Meanwhile, Joseph—on angelic advice—has fled with his wife and young child to Egypt. Spencer Miller, like many Christians, thinks of Matthew’s account when she sees images of today’s refugees fleeing violence and oppression. “This is the story of a family running for their lives from authorities,” she said.

The Roman Catholic Church
[See LESSONS, page 3]

Kneeling

BY DAVID BAKER
Special Contributor

I don’t kneel as often as I should. As a United Methodist clergy person, pastor of two churches, a religious and spiritual person, I should kneel at the kneeling rail every day. I should pray while I am kneeling that God would give me the strength and wisdom to do what I need to do. I should give thanks to my God and Savior for the gift of love, mercy, and grace which have been shown to me and to all of God’s children.

I don’t kneel often enough to offer my prayers of thanksgiving for the gifts of God, for the wonder of God’s grace, for the privilege to live in a nation which has been blessed by our God, and for the rights which I have been given and to which I am only one of many who have received these great and wonderful gifts.

Now I pray, don’t get me wrong. I pray for our churches, for our church leaders, for the mission and ministry of the church, for our national leaders, for our military personnel, and for our nation. I also pray for persons who are different from me. I pray for

police officers, for law enforcement personnel, for those who judge and defend the persons who have committed crimes, or are accused of committing crimes. I believe that all lives matter—no one should be forgotten.

With that being said, I should kneel more often. I should kneel in prayer as the Nation Anthem is being played or sung. I should kneel more often when the flag is being raised. I should have an attitude of thanks and prayer as those who have given their lives for my freedom are being honored. I should also pay my respect for those have lost their lives due to excessive or unwarranted force.

As a pastor, Christian, religious/spiritual person, I understand what it means to kneel. For this reason, I am not distressed by persons who kneel, instead of stand, for the playing/singing of our National Anthem. I should kneel more often.

O Lord, bless our nation. In your name. Amen.

The Rev. David E. Baker is the senior pastor of Wesley UMC Conway and Plummerville FUMC. Email: david.baker@arumc.org.

Sparkly Shoes and Pretty Hair Ribbons

BY DEEDEE AUTRY
Special Contributor

Recently I wandered the aisles of the discount store to fill my Operation Christmas box. I have often had reservations of such outreach methods. I wonder if the box will really make it to a child or if the items included be scrutinized and perhaps removed for resale. I know, I shouldn’t be so skeptical. I mean, we are taught in scripture to love our neighbor without condition.

As I meandered around the store to decide what should be included in my box, I was quickly taken down memory lane. At one point I even stopped and focused on some little toy which reminded me of the day when such an inexpensive little toy would bring joy to my daughters. The many times we would agonize over which toy to buy with the tooth fairy money they found under their pillow... and even those times when I had to say no, not today, your birthday is almost here, or Christmas is just around the corner. So many memories flooded my mind: picking up said toys off the floor, getting them out of that ridiculous packaging or trying to fix them when they broke.

The other thing that I was reminded of as I filled the box was that my girls had a lot of toys over the years. On



DeeDee
Autry



birthdays and Christmas they squealed with delight when they unwrapped that package that held Candy Land, Legos, or new dress-up clothes (complete with high heels and a crown). And then I considered the little one that might receive the box. Of course, I was purchasing for a little girl, so I wondered if she lived with her parents. Did someone read her stories at night before bed? Did she get to build forts out of blankets and play “house” with all her stuffed animals, and rock her babydoll to put her down for a nap?

The truth is I won’t ever really know but I do know this: that the boxes do reach children. Recently a friend shared with me how her adopted grandson had once received one of these boxes. He spent a portion of his childhood in an orphanage, a place devoid of love and joy. He was careful to recount to his grandmother how the gift of the box made him feel. For the first time he felt he had something to call his own, a gift meant only for him.

While many may scrutinized the value of such projects, I’ve decided I can’t do that anymore. But I can pray that a sweet little girl will open the box and squeal with joy as she quickly puts on those sparkly shoes and new ribbons in her hair.

Jesus says we are to love the “least of these,” and when we do, we have loved the Lord.

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GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop



BY GARY E. MUELLER

The Heart of Christmas

Since it's true, I'll just go ahead and admit it. I'm a Christmas Geek. I love this time of the year with all the decorations, parties, carols and just about anything and everything Christmas...except the commercialization, of course. Which means, once again, I will enjoy it all without any guilt whatsoever. And I hope you do as well.

But in some of my quieter moments, I wonder whether my delight with all things Christmas camouflages what matters most about Christmas. And that's why I hope you will join me in doing something essential and urgent in these days leading up to Christmas—get to the heart of Christmas.

Here is the heart of Christmas: For reasons we can never begin to comprehend, God decided to overlook all our sin and turning away from God and become one of us. God did this in order to give us what we absolutely need, but can never get on our own—salvation. In other words, God loves us so much God doesn't give up on us. Doesn't turn away from us. Embraces us. And is deeply involved in our lives.

So why does this matter?

The heart of Christmas changes everything. It impacts how you see yourself. The heart of Christmas influences what matters most to you...how you deal with others...

the ways you spend your money...how you decide to vote...even how you feel about your life. In fact, if you let the heart of Christmas take root in your own heart, it literally will shape your life forever.

But this can only happen if you are serious about focusing more on the baby Jesus in the manger than you are on all the wonderful things of Christmas. So the question you have to answer is just how serious you are willing to get about all of this. Not just in general, but when enmeshed in the Christmas frenzy. Or exhausted. Or when the family leaves. Or when the decorations come down. Or when you think you'll get sick if you hear "Santa Baby" one more time. Or especially when it's time to pay off the credit card?

May the reality of the incarnation that is the baby Jesus who has come to us as one of us live in your heart—now and forever.

Merry Christmas!

Gary E. Mueller



RIGHT: Wesley Foundation students from three colleges provided leadership at the fall event.

BELOW: The "Zombie Dilemma" was just one of many fun activities youth experienced at Shoal Creek's Great Get-Away event.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHOAL CREEK CAMP

Youth experience fall fun at Shoal Creek Camp

Shoal Creek Camp hosted its first Annual Fall Youth Great Get-Away on November 4-5. More than 50 youth from six churches participated. Wesley Foundation students from Arkansas Tech University, Southern Arkansas University and University of Arkansas at Fort Smith led small group seminars, team building exercises, games and worship.

The youth event is part of Shoal Creek Camp's effort to provide camping ministry that helps grow disciples in partnership with youth and children's ministries in small churches. For more information about Shoal Creek Camp and upcoming events, visit their website at www.shoalcreekcamp.com.

Lessons (from page 2)

annually remembers Herod's "slaughter of innocents" on Dec. 28. Spencer Miller urges all Christians to remember the children whose parents didn't have the power to protect them from Herod's political might.

"It troubles our complacency that the birth of Jesus is all about joy and a wonderful gift to the world," she said. "It draws our attention to those who sacrifice ultimately for the good that is to come. Jesus is not the only one who gives his life."

Wheeler, the Christian ethicist, sees Herod's massacre as "a reminder of the brutal lengths to which power will go in its own defense, then as now."

Yet, even in a world of tyranny and slaughter, God chooses weakness.

Born to die

Get beyond the Christmas carol imagery of singing angels and silent nights, and God's saving work looks like a "crazy strategy," Wheeler said.

"If you were God and your aim was to overcome evil in the world and redeem creation, would this be how you approach it?" she asked.

She admits to having a lot of sympathy for Jews like the Zealots who, confronted with the occupation of Rome, expected their Messiah to

come with a plan for conquest, not crucifixion by that same occupying power.

Faced with the real hatred in today's world, Wheeler is also sympathetic to fellow Christians who want Jesus to return now and take names.

Confronted with grave injustice, she said: "We honestly want to call out the Marines."

However, suppressing evil with the threat of superior force only offers a temporary respite, she said. Sooner or later, the cycle of violence will continue.

"If you ask me as an ethicist, 'What does the nativity teach us?' That God is operating with a whole different understanding and idea of what the conquest of the evil looks like."

When reflecting on baby Jesus, Wheeler suggests heeding the words not of a fictional racecar driver but of Christian novelist Graham Greene: "You cannot conceive, nor can I, of the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God."

Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for United Methodist News Service. This article first appeared on umc.org, December 14, 2016. Reprinted with permission. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

Coming Home theme for Christmas series

In the United States, Christmastime and thoughts of home just go together. "I'll be Home for Christmas," and "There's No Place Like Home for the Holidays," are

two of the most popular holiday songs, year after year. Christmas movies and television

shows regularly feature stories of people going to their family home or extended family home over the holidays.

Among the rituals we create for this darkest time of the year in the Northern hemisphere, perhaps the majority of them are associated with either going home or doing special things at home—whether lighting candles and having a time of family prayer during Advent, or decorating a Christmas tree, or caroling through a neighborhood, or hosting festive "open house" parties for friends, neighbors, and colleagues. It's all about home.

Advent and Christmas Season are about another kind of homecoming, the homecoming of Christ to redeem and renew us, this earth, and all

creation till "heaven and nature sing" with joy eternally. The Scriptures the church uses for Advent focus first on the final fulfillment, and later on the beginning of that fulfillment in Jesus.

As they seek God's joyous desire, they also make plain just how far from it we have been and

challenge us with just how far we have to go, ourselves, to begin to live into it.

This year's Discipleship Ministries Advent and Christmas Season series embraces the secular seasonal metaphor of homecoming to wrap the challenging biblical texts this season gives us. The resources available at www.discipleshipministries.org include sermon starters, worship planning, multimedia files, bulletin covers, and more. Each week's service invites congregants to "unwrap" something that leads toward making hearts, lives, families, communities, and the world more like the home Christ's ultimate homecoming will make it to be. Go to <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/advent-through-christmas-season-2017-series-overview>.



Learning to be (better) leaders: Leadership Institute inspires

Once again, the Arkansas Conference was well represented with 198 individuals from 46 churches present at the 2017 Leadership Institute at Church of the Resurrection (COR) in Leawood, Kansas. In fact, they were the largest contingent attending the September 27–29 event.

The Rev. Adam Hamilton, senior pastor at COR, led two of the General sessions while others featured national speakers, whose presentations ranged from deepening prayer life in the midst of the noise to reaching and engaging emerging generations.

Attendees had more than 80 different workshops from which to choose covering wide range of topics including worship, discipleship, leadership, website design and social media, children's and student ministries, issues of governance, and many more.

The Rev. Dede Roberts, director of the Conference Center for Vitality, led the group of 198 laity and clergy. She was joined by the Rev. Blake Bradford, Assistant Director for Clergy Development, who presented a lunch and share session on "Adapting Resurrection's Leadership Learning to be (better) leaders: Leadership Institute inspires Institute Principles for the Small Church."

The Arkansas contingent is large due in part to a generous grant

provided by the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. The grant allowed more than 100 individuals to attend the event.

"The grant was a blessing from God, a drop to your knees moment," the Rev. Gary Maskell said. "This is something I've heard about for years and years, and people have extolled the virtues of attending, so this is a blessing and a half." Six persons from Maskell's churches, Marvell and Lexa UMCs, were able to participate.

Carrie McMasters, a lay person from First UMC Rogers, is just getting started in children's ministry. She was impressed with COR's children's ministry program but felt she could bring back valuable information to implement in her church. "I'm looking forward to taking little pieces from them [COR] and growing our children's program," McMasters said.

Next Steps

The Center for Vitality followed up with participants with workshops across the conference where church teams worked on action plans based on their learnings at COR.

One pastor, the Rev. Katie Pearce of First UMC Morrilton, had eight church members attend the institute, most of whom were laity. Pearce said they spent time on the way back home and at a follow-up session in Russellville sharing their learnings

and brainstorming how to put them into action.

"We have several big dreams for the future, but the new ministry we have decided to start is a Wesleyan small group ministry," Pearce said. "We plan to start meeting with the COR team as a seed group that will meet for eight weeks and go through Kevin Watson's book, *The Class Meeting*," Pearce said. "At the end of those eight weeks we will discern how the Holy Spirit leads us to continue and expand this ministry."

Pearce added that the church has already implemented some ideas such as small renovations to the children's wing to make it more welcoming and navigable for first time visitors, scheduling a hospitality training, and utilizing multimedia more fully in worship. Pearce said that the church members plan to look for ways to implement other ideas gleaned from the leadership institute experience.

"I have been to Leadership Institute before but going with a group, especially a group comprised largely of laity, made this the most fruitful trip," Pearce said. "We came back with so many ideas, but we also came back energized about what we can do together."

First UMC Bella Vista also sent a team to the Leawood, Kansas campus for leadership development. Following their visit, the group joined



PHOTO BY BLAKE BRADFORD

Following their COR Leadership Institute experience, local church teams met to work on their action plans for the coming year.

other attendees to develop their action plan.

"One of the things we decided to do was write daily devotionals for each other and send them via email," Bella Vista's pastor, the Rev. Jeanne Williams said. "This allows us to be centered and reflecting with one another in our daily meditations—putting God first in our work, and allowing us to also get to know one another better, too."

Williams said participating in the leadership institute and the follow-

up session has given their church a jumpstart on developing a common language among parishioners.

"Our next steps include a Lenten worship series centered around how to share our faith stories, developing an intentional faith development process, and developing a vision and next steps for our church," Williams said. "I feel like we are a year ahead of the game in the process simply because we had this intensive time to build community and learn from experts."

Back from the brink: Northwest Arkansas church experiences new life

BY MARTHA S. TAYLOR
Interim editor

Why are we surprised when the Holy Spirit moves among us? Scripture and our own experience tells us it's happening all around us, all the time. We are to not rely on our own understanding but to see the way Jesus did: to look beyond facts, figures and logic and open ourselves to possibility.

That's why Gina Hamlin is delighted but not surprised that the Spirit is moving amongst the members of Hartman UMC, a small church located in Johnson County, Arkansas. Less than a year into her first appointment as a part-time local pastor, Hamlin credits the Spirit for the new life happening there: new families and their children connecting with the church, new ministries and a new sense of vision and mission.

"When I first got there [to Hartman], they were very welcoming and it made me feel so good and just excited to start," Hamlin said. "It was pretty small, but the people were very open. I was very excited to talk to them and learn that they're wanting growth.

They want to experience God."

Hamlin was pleased to find some children and youth in the pews. That positive was a good starting point for conversation as she began to develop relationships with families in the community. Once parents realized that even the most boisterous of children were welcome in worship, the pews began to fill up. At first one pew, then two, and now three pews full of children.

That led to the next movement of the Spirit, from the pulpit of all places.

"When they came and brought their kids, I felt like God said, 'Ask for a teacher,'" Hamlin said. "When I did that, that particular Sunday, a lady



COURTESY PHOTO

As Hartman UMC has doubled in size, so has the number of children and youth.

approached me and said, 'I feel like God wants me to teach this younger class.' The woman was concerned, though, because she was not a member of the church. Hamlin laughs lightly as she recounts the story.

"I said, well, we can fix that and in a few weeks she joined the church, her son joined the church and they both were baptized."

Hamlin repeatedly points out that it's the Holy Spirit at work and that she is humbled to bear witness to what is happening. She is astonished at the willingness of the congregation to try new things, things that haven't been tried in the past.

"Here's the truth, sometimes we have to be, including me, to be uncomfortable with the way things are for the Holy Spirit to act because the Spirit wants to reach everybody, not just a certain group of people within the church," Hamlin said. "He wants everyone to be ministered to, to be healed, so that we can be servants for him."

The church is hosting a monthly potluck and has recently started a new women's group. Every fifth Sunday, with guidance of long-time

church member, Brenda Hurst, the children and youth plan and lead the entire worship service. At the time of this publication, a community Thanksgiving was being planned, the first in many years and with an

anticipated 250 meals to be prepared.

A new children's choir is the most recent addition and one Hamlin feels is very important going forward.

"Because I want them to know [See EXPERIENCES, page 8]



THE HENDRIX COLLEGE CHOIR
PRESENTS THE ANNUAL

CANDLELIGHT CAROL TOUR SERVICES

DECEMBER 14 AT 7:30 P.M.
First United Methodist Church
1928 Ross Avenue › Dallas, Texas

DECEMBER 15 AT 7:30 P.M.
First United Methodist Church
723 Center Street › Little Rock, Arkansas

FREE AND OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC



Coffee (from page 1)

Excitement grew as the idea of repurposing the building as an outreach ministry took root.

In addition to offering Westrock fair-trade coffee and a simple menu, Holy Grounds will be serving up a place for people to meet, read, and talk. And if those conversations turn to the subject of God, well, Buchanan is okay with that.

“A lot of churches have found that a coffee house is a comfortable place to start the ‘God conversation,’” Buchanan said. “It can be a gateway into the church for some people, a jumping off place for mission and ministry for others, and, for some, it will just be a place to hang out and enjoy a quality cup of coffee.”

Any profit the shop generates will be used to support the ongoing missions of the church, especially those in Tanzania, Africa, where the congregation has supported missions for a number of years.

Buchanan points out that the primary purpose for Holy Grounds is to be a gathering place for everyone, one that comes with a faith-based perspective.

“It isn’t about recruiting new members, although we do encourage and welcome anyone seeking a church home,” Buchanan said.

The congregation is intentional in making the coffee shop a place for community use. They want to make it available for book clubs, small groups, artists to exhibit their works and musicians to perform.

Buchanan said the mission for the coffee shop is simple: “welcoming our neighbors, and partnering with local mission through delicious, fair-trade coffee.”

Holy Grounds Community Coffeehouse is located at 620 E. Broadway in Forrest City. For more information and hours of operation, visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HolyGroundsCoffee/>.



COURTESY PHOTOS

ABOVE: Morning Manna’s invitation for their first worship service. LEFT: The Adonai Tsuru (God Our Rock) venue offers a tranquil setting for Cowboy Church which meets there Tuesday evenings.

Morning Manna

Jesus was pretty clear that no matter what people were hungry for—forgiveness, healing or a full stomach—it was the believers’ job to feed them. The Rev. Jody Farrell, pastor of Genesis Church, a satellite campus of Central UMC Fayetteville, takes that teaching pretty seriously.

Any Sunday you’ll find members and the neighbors of the south Fayetteville campus, serving up coffee, fruit, bacon, eggs, pancakes, and the like with a side of genuine interest in one another’s lives.

The idea of providing a meal has been around for years, and the campus was already a haven for homeless persons living nearby and who often came for a meal. But Farrell sought something different. He envisioned worship incorporated into the meal, a breaking of bread between members of the same community.

“We needed to do something with the same kind of relationally-driven approach to ministry to enter into people’s lives,” Farrell said. “The

idea is, that rather than doing the sacraments, like we’d normally do in our traditional kind of setting, that we look at the meal as a sacramental opportunity to break open the bread of life.”

It was this past spring that the concept came together when Farrell and the staff heard Verlon Fosner speak at a conference in Tulsa. Their task was to bring church to those in attendance as God revealed it in Christ, especially in regards to mealtime.

By August, and with frequent communication to the meal goers, the Sunday morning breakfast transitioned into a worship called Morning Manna. Everything that happens during the service is done within the context of the meal: music, a Gospel message and extemporaneous prayer. The message is always a story about Jesus interacting with everyday people and it’s given in a conversational manner that gives churchgoers an opportunity to think about it in terms of their own lives.

On any given Sunday, Farrell said, you can

find individuals from each end of the socioeconomic spectrum talking, eating and praying together. He believes diversity is all part of God’s divine plan.

“There is power of different types of people coming together, where our differences are real, but they pale in comparison to the unity that we have in the spirit of Christ,” Farrell said.

Farrell is hopeful that more Morning Manna mealtime worship experiences will be replicated across northwest Arkansas. With the worship service averaging 130, Farrell says it is attracting new as well as seasoned Christians because they see ministry possibilities through the experience.

“In this way, evangelism and discipleship are occurring simultaneously with the idea that if Christ is at the Table and if Christ is in you, then Christ will come out of you around the table,” Farrell said.

For more information about Genesis Church and the Morning Manna service, visit <https://centraltolife.com/genesis/>

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Matthew 5:15

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.



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COMING UP

Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation

The theme for the 2018 Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation is "Journey to Wholeness," and the retreat will take place on April 15–20 at Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center, 1820 Ferncliff Road, Little Rock.

Co-sponsored by the Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi Annual Conferences, the ecumenical retreat is designed to deepen clergy and lay participants' relationships with God through a daily rhythm of prayer, worship, study and reflection.

The retreat leader Pat Luna is a writer, speaker, teacher and consultant in the areas of spiritual

formation, stewardship and fundraising. She is joined by Howard Thurman, author of *Disciplines of the Spirit*, a seminal work about how the disciplines of growth, prayer, commitment, reconciliation and suffering can lead to greater healing and wholeness. Elise Eslinger, editor of the *Upper Room Worshipbook* and a leader in worship, music and spiritual formation, will be the retreat worship leader. Jerry Webber, a pastor at Chapelwood UMC in Houston and spiritual director of the Center for Christian Spirituality, will focus retreatants with the topic, "Unfolding: Scripture, Stories and Poetry for Uncovering the Self in God."

Ferncliff Camp and Conference

Center is 1200 acres located just ten miles west of Little Rock. This Earth Care Award winning camp focuses on hospitality, sustainability, and outreach. All participants have available either private or shared rooms with private bathrooms, linens and towels. Delicious meals are provided and special diets are accommodated.

Retreat costs including a single room, board and tuition is \$575 before Jan. 15, 2018; \$625 after that date. Shared accommodations, board and tuition is \$475 before Jan. 15 and \$525 after that date. A non-refundable deposit of \$75 is required. Space is limited; register at: <http://academy.upperroom.org/events/34>.

Confirmation Camp

Hot Springs' Camp Tanako will be the location for the Feb. 9–11, 2018 Confirmation Camp. Confirmation Camp can serve as a final retreat for churches with long standing confirmation class activities or as an opportunity for confirmands of smaller churches to learn the main tenets of confirmation over two days, with follow-up lessons to be completed after the retreat. For more information and to register, go to <http://arumc.org/events/confirmation-camp-5/>.

Veritas set for Feb. 23–25

Each year over 1,200 youth in grades 7 through 12 come together to celebrate what it means to be connected. Through inspirational words and music led by nationally-known speakers and musicians, young people encounter the Lord in new and deeper ways. Veritas guest speaker is Jeniffer Dake, known across the country for her "lifestyle evangelism," a theology that encompasses everything the body of Christ desires to impart to young people today—to live in such a way that those around you will be eternally impacted for the kingdom of God. I Am They, a musical group which gained national attention with their 2015 self-titled album will lead

worship. Veritas 2018 will be held Feb. 23–25 at the Convention Center in Rogers. The registration fee up to Feb. 1 is \$45; it will be \$55 after that date. Visit <http://accym.org/veritas/#> for more information.

Choir Tour Registration Open

Choir Tour is the only conference event that brings worship to others. It's a different kind of worship experience filled with music, song, movement, reflection, and fun! Our mission is to minister to the local church by leading worship that provides an opportunity for connection and experiencing the love of God. Students interested in participating will find more information at <http://accym.org/choirtour/>

The \$195 registration fee includes a tshirt, meals, lodging and transportation. Choir Tour registration closes December 5. Local churches who wish to host the group on their tour, may also apply at <http://accym.org/choirtour/>

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OBITUARIES

LITTLE ROCK

Lillie Raney Major

Lillie Raney Major, 98, died October 21, 2017. Born on January 14, 1919, to Thomas Jefferson Raney and Inez Brannon Raney, she was the youngest daughter of 10 siblings. Lillie raised three children while successfully balancing a career in education and supporting her husband of 75 years, the late Rev. Dr. James E. Major. Together they served the United Methodist Church and Hendrix College.



Lillie received her BA from Sullins College in Virginia and her Master's degree from the University of Central Arkansas. She was very instrumental in establishing the Foreign Language programs in the Little Rock Public Schools. She taught school in every city where she and Jim lived starting with Durham, North Carolina, while Jim went to graduate school. In her role as a missionary in Santiago, Chile, she taught at the Sweet Memorial Institute alongside her

husband. She was the quintessential "Preacher's Wife," devoting her life to God, the Church, and her family.

Lillie is survived by her daughter, Mary Susan Major Holton and her husband, Len, of Little Rock, her son, Thomas R. Major and his wife, Carla, of Little Rock, and her son, James V. Major and his wife, Tamara, of Medford, MA; as well as grandchildren, Mike Major and his wife, Nikki, Lauren Major Averill and her husband, Chris, Alexis Major Jameson and her husband, Neil, Wesley Major, and six great-grandchildren.

A service celebrating Lillie's life was held at First United Methodist Church in Little Rock on Wednesday, October 25. The family requests that in lieu of flowers, memorials be sent to First United Methodist Church, 723 Center Street, Little Rock, AR 72201.

LITTLE ROCK

Betty Ann Embrey Robertson

The Rev. Betty Ann Embrey Robertson, 88, passed away October 25, 2017. She was born March 9, 1929 in Fort Smith, Arkansas, the daughter of Blake and Anna Louise

Andres Embrey. She was a retired United Methodist clergywoman and elder. She graduated from Fort Smith (Northside) High School, Fort Smith Junior College (University of Arkansas Fort Smith), and the University of Arkansas Little Rock with a BA in Elementary Education. She then earned a Master of Divinity from Memphis Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee.

Betty Ann substituted in elementary schools in Fort Smith, taught third grade at Jefferson Elementary in Little Rock and at Smackover Elementary in Smackover, Arkansas. She was director of education at Western Hills United Methodist Church in Little Rock and at the Batesville South Parish in Batesville. She pastored United Methodist churches in Tumbling Shoals, Cedar Grove, Crawfordville and Salem-Viola in Fulton County, taught Disciple Bible Study classes, served on several United Methodist Conference Committees, including Finance and Administration,



Education, the Board of Diaconal Ministry and served as District Coordinator of Children's Ministries. She was a past president of Chapters BD, DB, I of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, and a national officer in the Delta Beta Sigma Sorority.

Preceded in death by her parents and her husband, Rev. Robert Wilson Robertson, she is survived by her children, Dr. Blake Robertson and wife, Dr. Charlotte Robertson, of Springdale and Diana Myklebust and husband, Mark, of Maumelle; sister, Marian Bartlett of Russellville; grandchildren, Matthew Robert Myklebust and wife, Melanie, Mary Kay Myklebust-Steves, Jonathan Blake Robertson and Stephen Lane; and great-grandchildren, Logan Robertson, Ashtyn and Coltyn Lane, Morgan, Mason and Maddox Myklebust, and Victoria Myklebust-Steves; and a host of other family and friends.

Services were held on Friday, Oct. 27 at St. James United Methodist Church, officiated by Rev. Greg Schick. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to St. James United Methodist Church, 321 Pleasant Valley Dr., Little Rock, AR 72212.

HOT SPRINGS

John P. Miles I

The Rev. John Pershing Miles I, a United Methodist pastor, died November 2, 2017 surrounded by family. John was born to Esther (Martin) and J.B. Miles on November 11, 1929 in Crowley, Louisiana. With his brother, Warren, he was raised in Crowley, Baton Rouge, Beaumont, Los Angeles, and Hot Springs.



As a young man at Hot Springs Methodist, John accepted a call to ordained ministry and, seventy years ago this fall, was licensed to preach. While at Hot Springs High he won the Arkansas Golden Gloves Featherweight Boxing championship. At Hendrix College, he was an All AIC nose guard at 135 pounds. While taking his last college courses (repeating in the summer a few classes he had failed in the winter), John went to an event at Conway First Methodist and met JoAnn Ridgway,

[See OBITUARIES, page 8]

Endowment Will Continue the Ministry of Memories

Martha Sowell of First UMC, Little Rock, has created the Historic Arkansas Methodist Museum Endowment to support the work of the museum that displays, collects, and preserves historical materials from the Arkansas Conference.

The initial gift of \$20,000 from the Sam and Martha Sowell family will be invested and annual distributions will be used for essential operations of the museum. The museum's board of directors will determine the best use of the annual distributions each year.

"The Foundation has supported historical preservation projects over the years," said Jim Argue, Jr., President and CEO of the Foundation. "We believe it honors those who have gone before us. We would love for others to make gifts to this new endowment, or plan a bequest directed to this endowment in the wills. Call us if you would like to explore your options."

"An example of artifacts we need to preserve and display is the Pearl McCain diary donated by her niece," said Martha. "A Methodist missionary to China in the 1930s, Pearl was a member at Trinity UMC, Little Rock, in her later years. She was one of our stars!"

The museum is considering an exhibit of quilts made for pastors from throughout the conference. On

display now is a pump organ that Sam Sowell's grandfather donated to Smyrna UMC. Sam was able to purchase the organ and restore it for the museum.

"Our Book of Discipline urges every Conference to have a way to preserve and protect historical artifacts, but we are one of the most organized in our approach," said Rev. Ed Matthews, a retired pastor who with the late Rev. Jim Beal was one of the moving forces behind the museum. "With Martha's gift and the support of others we hope to be able to hire a professional curator to help preserve the important record of those whose shoulders we stand upon."

Mauzel Beal, who worked as an archivist for the Conference before her retirement, remembers that her husband Jim's travels around Arkansas included time spent collecting memorabilia. One of her favorite artifacts in the museum is a painting of an old-time brush arbor meeting that shows a pastor and people kneeling in the Tabernacle, but also a mother in a wagon nursing a baby and children playing. It hung for a long time in her home, but she donated it to the museum so that more people could experience it.

"We are what we are because of who they were." It's one of Mauzel's

favorite quotes. "It is important to know the background of most anything you are involved in. The museum and archives provide that background for Arkansas United Methodists," she said.

The need to preserve artifacts from past United Methodists in Arkansas led to the formation of the Historical Society of Arkansas, which was incorporated in 1986. That society gave birth to the museum which opened May 5, 1994 at its first location in Quapaw Quarter UMC, Little Rock. From September 2008 to February 2010, the museum was a part of Asbury UMC, Batesville. Then artifacts were stored until they were moved to the present location at First UMC, Little Rock in 2012.

Rev. Fred Day, now the general secretary of the Commission on History and Archives for all United Methodists, visited the members of the Historical Society a couple of years ago.

"Arkansas is one of the very few Conferences with a museum to preserve and display objects related to our United Methodist history," he said.

The late Katy Rice of First UMC, Little Rock, took classes at UA Little Rock in historic preservation and was one of the organizers of the museum. Others who have made significant

contributions include Carl Miller, the late Rev. Bob Bearden, the late Rev. Vernon Paysiner and the late Rev. Byron McSpadden.

"A whole lot of people have worked for decades to preserve pieces of our past," said Rev. Matthews. "I'm hoping this fund will allow us to have exhibits that bring hundreds of Arkansas United Methodists to the museum to learn from the past in this ministry of memories."

Grant provides for museum enhancements

The Museum recently received a \$6,275 grant from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA) for one-time capital improvements at its location in the basement of First UMC, Little Rock.

The grant was provided 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 Argue. "This important part of our United Methodist heritage is a treasure that all members of the Conference have an opportunity to visit."

The Methodist Museum is located on the first floor of First UMC Little Rock, 723 Center Street. 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.



The enhancements to the Methodist Museum create a pleasant environment for visitors.



Faith Funds

Twice the Grace

When UMFA Seminary Scholar Lynn Cross met Nathan Kilbourne at Duke Divinity School, congregations in the Arkansas Conference received a double measure of grace. In 2009, Lynn and Nathan graduated from seminary, married and began serving local churches in Arkansas.

Rev. Nathan Kilbourne previously served at Asbury UMC, Little Rock, and Vilonia UMC. He is now senior pastor at First UMC, Jacksonville. Rev. Lynn Kilbourne's ministry has taken her to First UMC, Bryant, and First UMC, Conway. Today she is senior pastor at First UMC, North Little Rock. Nathan and Lynn have one daughter.

"The Foundation allowed me to go to the United Methodist seminary of my choice without the anxiety of taking on debt," Lynn said. "Knowing people in Arkansas had invested in me and would welcome me back meant a lot when I was in seminary."

The Arkansas Conference quickly became Nathan's home, too. "Today we are a part of the Advancing Pastoral Leadership program, funded by a UMFA grant," he said. "Without the help of the Foundation, one of us might have been able to participate in this important leadership development program — but definitely not both of us."

The Foundation is pleased to know the Kilbournes will be serving our local churches for decades to come.



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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Obituaries (from page 7)

a student at State Teacher's College; they married in June 1952 at First Methodist in Forrest City. After honeymooning at the Methodist annual conference in Hot Springs, they moved to Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, where they welcomed the first of their three children.

John was a faithful, buoyant, and effective pastor in the churches to which he was appointed—the Hamilton Circuit, Wilmot, Eudora, Star City, Fairview, Oaklawn, Arkadelphia First, St. James in Little Rock, and, finally, Hot Springs First, as an emeritus pastor. He received honorary doctorates from Shorter College and Hendrix College and served on many boards including those at Hendrix and Perkins. A gifted and outlandish raconteur, John won national and state awards for preaching, evangelism, and church growth. He was a yellow dog democrat and a passionate advocate for people and issues on the margins. A loving pastor to senators and presidents, the felons and the faithful, and everything in between, he was known to be encouraging to sinners and exasperating to saints. To all, he

preached a message of graceful and loving acceptance, faithfulness to God and one's covenants, and dogged self-discipline.

Preceded in death by his wife JoAnn and his brother Warren, John is survived by his children Deborah Miles and Marc Rudow, John and Susan Miles, and Rebekah Miles and Len Delony; his beloved grandchildren David, Caleb, Joshua, and Galit Rudow; Trey and Kelsea Miles; Zoe and Brandon Loeser, and Anna and Katherine Delony; his lady friend Corrine Gooch; his brothers and sisters, Peggy and James Lann, Joy Miles, and Melvin and Kay Ridgway; his nieces and nephews Heather, Martin, and Michael Miles, Jeffrey and Michael Pratt, Bonnie James, Mel Brooks, Suzanne Childs, Cindy Reister, Debbie McDade, Andy Lann, and Audrey Duckworth; and a wider community of extended family and friends.

A celebration of life was held on Saturday, Nov. 11 at Hot Springs First United Methodist. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be given to a charity of your choice or to Hot Springs First United Methodist Church, 1100 Central Avenue, Hot Springs, AR 71901.

Scholarship available for UM women

The Nancy Wood Scholarship is now accepting applications for the 2018–19 academic year. Named for Nancy McDonald Wood, the scholarship was established and funded through the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA).

The scholarship is available to any young woman who has been a member of an Arkansas United Methodist church and has demonstrated a commitment to historic Methodist values. Applicants must have shown sound academic ability, leadership qualities and exceptional character, should have been accepted by an accredited college, and plans to begin classes the following fall semester.

Wood, a lifelong Methodist and former high school teacher, hopes scholarship recipients will become strong lay leaders in United Methodist churches after completing their college education.

To download a scholarship application, go to <https://goo.gl/9fojys>

Experiences (from page 4)

they're a part of our church and they're a big part," Hamlin said. "They're the ones that are eventually going to take the church over."

Hamlin, 50, is well aware of the trap of playing a numbers game with the church having nearly doubled in size. To guard against that, she prays.

"I pray every day for my church, I pray that the Holy Spirit will show me what my church needs, and I pray that the Holy Spirit will draw people from the north and the south and the east and the west to my church, the ones that need to be there," Hamlin said.

She adds that the church's

new vision of "Renewal, Revival and Restoration," is also divinely inspired, having come from a time of intense prayer. And she's asked the congregation to share in asking God how they can fulfill that vision.

"It isn't all about me, it isn't anything about me because this is God's thing," Hamlin said. "Because I have no experience. It shouldn't be happening, you know what I mean?"

Yes, we know what you mean. And it shouldn't be happening, but it is. And if it can happen in Hartman, who are we to question where the Spirit may move next?