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Annual Conference registration now open

Members urged to register by June 1 to avoid late fee

Registration for the Arkansas Annual Conference is now open.

The 2018 Annual Conference, with the theme “Pathways to Hope,” will be held June 17–20 at the Bank of the Ozarks Arena in Hot Springs. Official hashtags of Annual Conference are #arumc18 and #pathwaystohope.

Online registration is available through June 1 at <http://ac2018.arumc.org>.

The official webpage is ac2018.arumc.org. The website includes a two-page downloadable, printable registration form for those who wish to register by mail. The form also has been mailed to all clergy and lay members of Annual Conference.

The 2018 Pre-Conference Journal is now available for free download at www.arumc.org; print copies may be purchased as part of the registration process or on-site upon arrival at Annual Conference.

All members of the annual conference, laity or clergy, active or retired, who register *after* June 1 will be charged a \$50 late registration fee. Retirees who register *after* June 1 will have the \$50 deducted from their per diem.



New clergy pictorial directory planned

A new pictorial directory of clergy in the Arkansas Conference will be produced and released later this year as part of the 2018 Journal and the 2018 Conference Directory.

All clergy are asked to have their photograph taken for these two publications during the Annual Conference session June 17–20 in Hot Springs.

Conference Secretary Aubrietta Jones reports that Stuart Holt Photography will be set up across from Hall D of the Hot Springs Convention Center 30 minutes prior to the June 17 Clergy Session and continue at the same location the following two days. Photos will be emailed to all participants at no charge.

Volunteer marshals and pages sought for 2019 Special Session of the General Conference

Volunteers may now apply online to serve as marshals or pages during the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. The denomination’s top legislative assembly will meet Feb. 23–26, 2019, in St. Louis, Mo.

Approximately 150 volunteers are needed to serve as marshals and pages during General Conference.

Applicants must be able to serve all four days of the Special Session.

Marshals will be part of the team that will assist delegates, guests and staff with seating, checking credentials, providing information and other duties as assigned.

[See Volunteers, page 3]

GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST: A word from the Bishop

Anxiety

BY GARY E. MUELLER

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

By the time you read this, the Council of Bishops will have met and made a recommendation to the Called 2019 General Conference. I have some theories—but no real certainty—about what will happen when we gather to listen, study, pray and talk together about what we think the best way forward is for the United Methodist Church. I have even less certainty about whether we will reach a consensus or, like much of the United Methodist Church, be divided.

As I have spent time in conversation with you, read emails and made appointments during the last several months, I’ve encountered quite a bit of anxiety on the part of laity, clergy and congregations. This has expressed itself in a number of ways—some that are healthy and some that have played out painfully.

I understand your anxiety. Indeed, I also have had my share of anxious moments as I think about what the future may be like and how we will get there. That’s because the future will be different; perhaps quite a bit different. And that’s hard, because it means losing something that we cherish.

But that is exactly why it is so important to emphasize just how much will be the same. And in these days and months of uncertainty, it’s really important to focus on what will be the same. Partly as a reminder, but also as a way of anchoring ourselves to what truly matters most.

God still is God. The Holy Spirit is still the Holy Spirit. And Jesus Christ is still our Lord and Savior. Nothing can change the fact that God still loves us and longs for us to experience the fullness of God’s unconditional, invitational and transformational love. Nothing can cover up the reality that Jesus still calls us to be his disciples, experiencing the deepest faith

[See Anxiety, page 3]



How will we be known? What is in our church's future?

BY WILLIAM O. "BUD" REEVES
Special Contributor

I'm going to go out on a limb here.

The Commission on a Way Forward, the group established by the Council of Bishops at General Conference in 2016, will soon present a final report to the Council, who will then present a proposal to a special General Conference in 2019. The question at hand is how we deal with the division of opinion on the issue of human sexuality. The future of the United Methodist denomination hangs in the balance, and something is going to happen in the next few months.

So far, the Commission has



William O. "Bud" Reeves

presented three options. (<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward>) We held some "town hall" meetings around the Arkansas Conference, and the three options were described as "divisive," "harmful" and "confusing." (<https://goo.gl/X1nw11>) Not a promising start.

However, I believe one of the options holds more promise than the others. It is the so-called "One Church" option. (<http://unitingmethodists.com/one-church-model/>) As described in the town hall meeting, "This model removes restrictive language and places a high value on contextualization. It also specifically protects the rights of those whose conscience will not allow them to perform same gender weddings or ordain LGBTQ persons." This option is not perfect, either, and I am praying for something better to be worked out. But the reason I believe the "One

Church" option is the best so far is that I believe it would be a travesty for the United Methodist Church (or the future branches thereof) to be defined by our position on human sexuality.

The United Methodist Church should be defined by our Wesleyan heritage, not a particular social issue. Our DNA is not about human sexuality. It is about a theology of grace, hearts warmed by the Holy Spirit, and an open table at Communion. We are the people of the "extreme center," balancing faith and works, conversion and social justice, the centrality of Scripture with tradition, reason and experience. We can remain one church and allow grace for a variety of opinions; we always have. We can give room for different applications of the Gospel in various contexts, as long as the fundamental values of the faith are maintained. We can "think and let think."

I have to admit that my thinking on this issue has changed in the 40-plus years I have been considering it. I grew up with traditional, conservative South Arkansas values. My first memory of this issue is a presentation I made on the new Disciplinary language to a conference youth camp in 1974. I have written columns defending traditional understandings. I still understand them.

My broadening began when I actually studied, researched and conversed with a group of diverse people as part of a human sexuality task force a few years ago. (We produced some brilliant resources that were universally ignored!) For the first time, I read cogent, yet divergent opinions on human sexuality, from Biblical interpretation to psychological research. I found good arguments for both traditional and progressive viewpoints. Applying the criterion of "reasonable doubt," I found myself unable to render a verdict for either side to the exclusion of the other.

The turning point for me came when I went through a divorce. Jesus, though reportedly silent on homosexuality, had plenty to say about divorce, and it was not positive. Yet, I had to be honest with my churches, colleagues and supervisors about what was happening. To a person, all I received was grace, love and forgiveness. My ministry was never questioned. The support was wonderful, though not very "Biblical."

At that point, the question hit home, "If we can be that gracious toward people going through a divorce (and we should), why can't we be that gracious toward LGBTQ

brothers and sisters?" We could be wrong, but as I have said before, it is better to err on the side of grace than judgment. We are not going to find ourselves being more gracious than Jesus.

I feel very vulnerable sharing my opinion so bluntly; I'm sure there will be conversations to follow. But I believe it is high time for those of us in the "Methodist middle" to have the courage of our convictions and express our passion for the future of this church we love.

I'm not interested in changing anyone's opinion about human sexuality. That's not the point. The point is, we should be able to differ on this issue and live together for the sake of our shared values and mission. I am interested in the United Methodist Church being known for the right reasons, making a unified witness in a fractured, polarized world, producing ministry that makes disciples of Jesus Christ and vital congregations.

Whatever happens, there is going to be pain, and most of the pain will come at the local church level. Some will not be able to stay, whatever we decide. Painful times for the church are not unprecedented, and God has always brought us through.

I am a cradle Methodist. I have stayed one because of the Wesleyan DNA. I hope, in some far distant future, to die one. I just don't know what that is going to look like. So I am praying, waiting and hoping. Maybe right now that is the most faithful option.

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

COMING UP

Pearle McCain exhibit opens this month

The Arkansas Conference United Methodist Museum will unveil a new exhibit this month on Arkansas native Pearle McCain, a Methodist missionary in China and Japan.

The exhibit, which will explore the history and life of McCain, will open with a special reception and showing from 3-5 p.m. May 20 in the Fellowship Hall of First United Methodist Church, 723 Center St., Little Rock.

Housed at First United Methodist Church, the museum is open Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and other times by appointment. For more information, call (501) 412-3294 or email ummac.lr@gmail.com.



District conferences set for June 3

District conferences will be held June 3 in all five districts of the Arkansas Conference. These include:

- **Southwest District:** First UMC, 107 N. 9th St., Arkadelphia, 3 p.m.
- **Central District:** First UMC, 1610 Prince St., Conway, 3 p.m.
- **Northwest District:** Central UMC, 2535 W. New Hope Road, Rogers, 3:30 p.m.
- **Northeast District:** First UMC, 304 N. Main St., Searcy, 3 p.m.
- **Southeast District:** Grand Avenue UMC, 705 S. Grand Ave., Stuttgart, 3 p.m.

Pastors, lay delegates, church leadership, and all interested persons are encouraged to attend.

Information will be presented concerning various issues that will be coming before the Annual Conference.

Important district business will be conducted, including the election of officers and committee members, adoption of the 2019 district budgets and proposed changes to the district structure.

ASU site of Delta Pride camp

Delta Pride 2018, a camp hosted by the Arkansas State University Wesley Foundation for youth entering grades 7-12, is planned for July 11-14 on the ASU campus in Jonesboro. The four-day "Rooted in Christ" camp will guide campers in learning how to ground their lives in Christ.

Cost is \$200 if registered by June 8 and \$225 after that date. Groups of eight or more are eligible for a special discount. All meals, accommodations, supplies and T-shirts are included. Erin Gately is camp director.

For more information, contact deltapride@astatewesley.org or (479-629-4735 or P.O. Box 2775, State University, AR 72467.

Tour of Wesley sites coming in November

Central United Methodist Church in Fayetteville is hosting a Wesley Heritage Tour Nov. 6-14. United Methodist pastors Rev. Tony Holifield and Dr. Jack Wilson will lead the tour of England and the land of the Wesleys. For a brochure and more information, contact Holifield at tholifield45@aol.com or (479) 283-7514.



Recycle Reuse Replenish

Be sure to recycle your Arkansas United Methodist when you're through reading it (or give it to a friend).



Volume 165, No. 5 • May 4, 2018
Jane Dennis, Interim Editor
Cat Boose • Circulation
www.arumc.org

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

Send subscription inquiries and updates to: Arkansas United Methodist, 800 Daisy Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202; or email Cat Boose, cat.boose@arumc.org. Send submissions to: communications@arumc.org.

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

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



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

Subscriptions

- Annual and biannual subscriptions are available for the print edition of this newspaper.
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For information on subscribing to either edition, visit www.arumc.org/aum or call 501-324-8023.

Advertising is welcomed. For a rate sheet or more information, call 501-324-8000 or send an inquiry to communications@arumc.org. While all advertising is reviewed before acceptance, it should not be considered endorsed by this newspaper or the Church.

Submission Deadlines

Issue Date	Submission Deadline
June 1	May 15
July 6	June 15

Anxiety (from page 1)

imaginable. And nothing can get in the way of the Holy Spirit empowering us to make disciples who are equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

People still need Jesus.

Certainly, that includes the nones, dones and never-have-beens. But it also includes us. Jesus offers every single person what we absolutely need but can never get on our own: forgiveness, salvation, new life, joy, hope and the chance to join Jesus in making God's kingdom just as real on earth as it already is in heaven.

We still need each other.

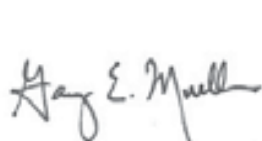
To be a disciple of Jesus Christ automatically makes us part of the Body of Christ that is made up of all kinds of Christians in all kinds of places. We may think it's more comfortable to retreat into groups of people just like us. But we know from experience that the Apostle Paul is absolutely right when he talks about the different gifts, perspectives and experiences that we need from others in the Body of Christ.

We still need to celebrate that God is not done with us yet. The history of the Christian church has not always been pretty. Indeed, sometimes it's been filled with sin and ugliness. But God has worked with fallen human beings (some of whom have been leaders) to help the church be molded and shaped into what God needs us to be. I may be disappointed in myself, others and the institution called the United Methodist Church. God, however, does what only God can do and still takes everything that happens and works it for God's purposes. Not just now, but in the future.

I continue to pray for our future. I ask you to keep joining me in that prayer. And I ask you to hold tight to Jesus, who is our pathway to hope.

Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Grace and peace,



Gary E. Mueller
Bishop

Volunteers (from page 1)

Pages will assist delegates, staff, bishops, members of the Judicial Council and official guests with communication and other needs. They distribute approved materials and deliver printed information. Pages should expect to do a great deal of walking.

Marshals and pages are responsible for their own travel and

expenses. Those interested should submit an [online application](#) before the deadline of July 31. If you have additional questions, contact Dick Hooton at revshoot@gmail.com.

A separate process will be opened at a later date seeking marshals and pages for the 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis, Minn.

Planting the seeds to grow disciples

Churches impacted, energized by participating in Summit

BY MICHELLE MORRIS
Special Contributor

"The material was valuable, relatable, and digestible enough to bring to the local church that I thought the entirety of my laity would benefit." Daniel Thueson, pastor of Alma and Kibler UMCs attended the Grow By One Summit, organized by the Center for Vitality in May 2016. Kay Kotan served as the keynote speaker, while several Arkansas pastors and laity spoke in breakout sessions meant to share knowledge and better equip Arkansas United Methodists to reach out to their community and grow their churches.

The summit was well attended, but more importantly, attendees left with inspiration. Rev. Thueson took that inspiration and held a Grow By One mini-event that fall. He used videos of the keynotes for main

"Of the over 1,000 people who attended, we started building relationships with 70 new families that did not have a church home," said Thueson. Since then, as a direct result, one of his churches doubled the size of their after-school children's program, and one saw 12 new youth baptisms. The material from the Grow By One Summit helped his people understand the importance of personal connection in evangelism, and gave them the tools to put such knowledge into action.

It is this kind of practical value that inspires the upcoming Fall 2018 Growing Disciples Summit. Having equipped churches to get people in the doors, the Center for Vitality recognizes we now need the tools to help them stay and become lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ.

"Every church has a discipleship system that is producing exactly what



Rev. Dede Roberts, director, Center for Vitality

By One, the Growing Disciples Summit will focus on practical ideas for every church to create their unique intentional system that moves new folks and long-time members alike to love Jesus more and use their gifts for ministry."

Make plans to take the next step in connecting your community by planning to attend the Growing Disciples Summit on Saturday, Aug. 25 at St. James UMC in Little Rock. Rev. Vance Ross of Discipleship Ministries will be the keynote speaker, building off of material presented by Rev. Junius Dotson at Annual Conference. The cost will be \$20 per person (or \$100 for a team of six) and will include lunch and a book about Intentional Discipleship Systems. Watch your email and the *Arkansas United Methodist* for details on when registration opens. We look forward to taking this next step forward with you as we seek to make disciples who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities, and the world.

Michelle Morris is incoming assistant director of the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality.

"The Summit will help teams of laity and clergy from churches across the conference learn and plan their own discipleship system for their context."

Rev. Dede Roberts, director, Center for Vitality

sessions and then included additional breakout sessions hosted by area pastors. Not only did this additional event allow churches on the western side of the state who had been unable to attend the main one gain some of the knowledge, it also taught his people what they needed to know about putting on a bridging event (an event meant to draw in people from the community). In the summer of 2017, empowered through training, Thueson's two churches held a Splash Bash at the local water park in Alma. They gave away prizes, provided dinner, and paid for entry for more than 1,000 people.

it is designed to produce," explains Dede Roberts, Director of the Center for Vitality. "It's just that many of us have never thought of it that way. Junius Dotson, General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries and our Conference teacher this year, says, 'Intentional discipleship means that we know and have planned out the many ways that people new to faith enter into our churches and move through it on their way to growth and maturity.' The Summit will help teams of laity and clergy from churches across the conference learn and plan their own discipleship system for their context. Like Grow

May 14 workshop to focus on pastoral transitions

A workshop designed to facilitate a smooth transition for pastors moving to new appointments is planned for 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 14 at St. James United Methodist Church, Little Rock.

Hosted by the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality, the Pastors in Transition Workshop will be held in the church's Christian Life Center, 320 Pleasant Valley Dr.

The doors will open at 9 a.m., and

a continental breakfast will be served from 9:30-10 a.m.

The workshop is an effort led by the Center for Vitality in conjunction with the Episcopal Office and the Appointive Cabinet. All full-time pastors moving to new appointments are required to attend; part-time pastors are welcomed as well.

In announcing the event, planners explained: "Along with the Cabinet,

the Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality has assembled some resources and information to assist pastors, leadership teams, and Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committees as you journey through this season of simultaneously saying 'goodbye' and 'hello' to your pastors."

Full-time pastors scheduled for a move should register with Vicki Davis in the Bishop's Office.



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GLOBAL MINISTRIES
The United Methodist Church

Methodist initiatives and leadership bring new hope to the faithful of Bulgaria

[Second of a two-part story on one Arkansan's experiences in Bulgaria.]

BY NECHI FULLERTON
Special Contributor

While visiting Bulgaria in December, my university daughter and I were treated to a Saturday afternoon at the Gorno-Ezerovo United Methodist Church in the Turkish Roma community of Bourgas on the Black Sea.

Surrounded by the church's delightful children, we took part in a passionate Sunday worship one rainy morning in a small building that is literally collapsing. We lit the fourth Advent candle beside a pole decorated for Christmas that was holding up the building. A large crack angling the entire back of the building and a leaky, moldy ceiling in the children's room appeared unlikely to survive the winter snows. Plans for a new building are approved but awaiting funds. The proposed Christian center will allow more intense religious, cultural, social and literacy activities, which are important for the Turkish Roma who have fewer educational opportunities in segregated schools.

After driving up the coast to Varna to meet with the Bulgaria-Romania Conference Superintendent, Rev. Dr. Daniel Topalski, we drove to the medieval former capital, Veliko Tarnovo. The refurbished United Methodist church sits under ruins of one of Europe's mightiest citadels, Tsarevets Fortress, which appears even more mystical with snow falling. Rev. Ivan Morunov pastors the historic church where the first worship service was held by the Methodist missionaries on Christmas Eve 1859.

One of the newest initiatives is serving lunch daily to the Roma children of the school next door. The church has rooms for students, usually pastors' children, attending one of the country's largest universities, and a room for guests. In the smaller nearby town of Lyaskovets, with no other Protestant churches, Rev. Ivan established a United Methodist congregation in 1999 to serve the Roma Community. An after-school program in a restored building helps integrate Roma into society with literacy tutoring and a variety of activities.

Prayer and rejoicing

Rev. Ivan, a professional musician who has performed around the world, includes music lessons with instruments he buys second hand in Germany. An annual weeklong summer camp at a resort overlooking Lyaskovets provides a year-round ministry that is praised by city and school officials. Rev. Ivan, assisted by his wife and daughter, is hoping to soon connect with a church to pray and rejoice together.

During this visit, I learned there was an "American" Church of the Nazarene missionary in Bulgaria who recently married a Bulgarian United Methodist pastor. During the recent Bulgaria-Romania Annual Conference, Jessica



LEFT: Roma children enjoy camp and music lessons with Rev. Ivan. BELOW: Rev. Ivan, a professional musician before becoming a minister more than 20 years ago, uses music to reach Roma children and others in the community. BELOW LEFT: Arkansas native Rev. Jessica Morris Ivanova (center) is joined by Bulgaria-Romania District Superintendent Rev. Dr. Daniel Topalski and Central and Eastern European Bishop Patrick Streiff at the recent Romania-Bulgarian Annual Conference where her ministerial credentials were recognized.



Morris-Ivanova was officially recognized as a full elder in the United Methodist Church and her husband, Ivaylo Ivanov, as a provisional pastor.

Imagine my surprise when I discovered the "American" was an Arkansan who would be visiting her family in back home in Arkansas in January! This further affirmed my "call" to Bulgaria.

Returning to Bulgaria in mission for a second time in 2009, Jessica says, despite its beauty, it is the country's people she "really fell in love" with. "They know what Southern hospitality is," she said. I couldn't agree more.

Welcomed in Sophia by the United Methodist pastor as we flew in and out of the capital city inhabited by over 1 million people, I'm forever grateful for the global connectedness of the United Methodist Church.

Seeking partners

The newest United Methodist Church in Dobrich, Bulgaria, has recently partnered with a

Kansas United Methodist congregation.

The *IN MISSION TOGETHER 50/50 Partnership program* exists to develop a healthy long-term relationship between brothers and sisters in Christ across cultures with honest and open interaction through God's grace that is transformative and inspirational creating a collective vision to participating equally and proportionally in a ministry or project. For more information:

- <http://www.umcmmission.org/Get-Involved/Partnerships/In-Mission-Together>
- <http://www.umcmmission.org/get-involved/partnerships/in-mission-together/50-Partnership->

Currently, six ordained elders, two of whom are retired, probationary and local pastors seek to spread the Gospel serving 24 churches with approximately 2,700 members and friends.

"Our mission is to reach the unreached and to accept the unacceptable," one pastor told me. An active prison ministry and support for

orphanages are other outreaches.

Primary goals are financial sustainability, leadership development, church infrastructure for newly established congregations and further development of the ministry among ethnic minorities. Many members are resource poor, providing challenges with expansion of the United Methodist Church.

The minority religion in a heavily orthodox country, the Bulgarian United Methodist Church could feel isolated and forgotten. Our prayers and encouragement in their phenomenal work are appreciated. If you would like to partner with a Bulgarian UMC in prayer and in ministry, or learn more about what God is doing in Bulgaria, contact:

- Mission coordinator Rev. Iliev, tsvetan.iliev@methodist.bg;
- the author, Nechi Fullerton, nfullerton@yahoo.com, (501) 766-8151.

Nechi Fullerton is a United Methodist Volunteer in Mission from Little Rock.

McClurkin Pavilion dedicated at Shoal Creek Camp

Shoal Creek Camp dedicated a new open-air pavilion April 14 in memory of Rev. Herschel McClurkin.

Shoal Creek, located in west Arkansas' Logan County near New Blaine, will celebrate 60 years of camping ministry in 2019. Rev. McClurkin helped lead camps for more than 50 of those years. Many campers and co-workers shared stories of his impact on their lives at the dedication.

"Herschel led the very first camp, a senior high camp, at Shoal Creek in 1959," said his wife, Mardell McClurkin.

Ina and Rev. Paul Kelley gave the land for Shoal Creek Camp in 1957, and McClurkin was among the volunteers who constructed eight cabins, two bath houses, a dining hall and kitchen. "Those original structures are still being used today," Mrs. McClurkin said.

Memorial contributions given to the camp after McClurkin's death in 2017

were used to construct the pavilion that bears his name.

"We have led camps at Shoal Creek since before we were married, which was in 1967," Mrs. McClurkin said. Rev. McClurkin led camps even after he retired in 1999. She will continue that tradition and lead a camp for upper elementary and middle school students in July.

"The pavilion is in a beautiful spot," Mrs. McClurkin noted.

More than 140 people braved the day's cold temperatures to learn more about the history of the ministry of the camp and McClurkin's ministry. A fish dinner was served following the dedication.

The children of Vesta United Methodist Church presented funds they had raised through the sale of Bolivian jewelry. Their gift will be used to upgrade a cabin for year-round use.



Bishop Gary Mueller and Mardell McClurkin visit at the dedication of McClurkin Pavilion.

PHOTOS BY STEVE COBURN



Current and future campers at Shoal Creek Camp took part in the dedication of McClurkin Pavilion and the celebration that followed.

APPOINTMENTS

The following **appointment changes**, effective July 1, have been announced by the Cabinet:

- Pam Jackson—Lewisville
- Sarah Lowenberg—Associate, Russellville First
- Henry A. "Buddy" Ratliff—Lakeside Lake Village
- Doug Phillips—Alma/Kibler
- Daniel Thueson—Charleston
- Rob Holifield—Lonoke
- Zeke Allen—Wesley Fort Smith/Cavanaugh
- Matthew Johnson—Associate, Central Rogers
- Michael Lowenberg—Wesley Russellville
- Andrew Suite—Associate, Maumelle First
- Lyn Poplin—Associate, Greenwood First
- Patti Butler—Wesley Conway/Plumerville
- Jay Stephen Simpson—Associate, Texarkana First
- Judy Rudd—St. Paul Searcy
- Deborah Bell—Hoover Little Rock (Lay Supply)
- Nancy Scott—Morning Star (Lay Supply)
- Carlton Cross—Ozark
- Gail Brooks—Canvas Little Rock
- Bryan Fink—Stuttgart First
- Ulysses C. Washington—Highland Valley Little Rock
- Taylor Loy—Associate, Benton First
- Billy Vanderbilt—St. Paul, Jonesboro (Full-time Lay Pastor)
- Rollie "Tom" Mullins Jr.—Osceola (Full-time Lay Pastor)
- Kathryn Burchfield—Camden/Westside
- Regina Turner—Christ of the Hills, Associate, Hot Springs Village
- Laura Butkvic—Faith/Gardner, Hot Springs
- Shari Day—Parkview/New Hope, Pastor
- Jeff Everetts—Sharp/Oakridge (Lay Supply, effective April 22)

Explore a fresh and timely interpretation of Jesus' most popular parables.



Jesus knew how to tell a story. He knew that in order to get his message across he needed to relate to the people who gathered to listen—first century Jews—who lived in a very different world than the one in which we live today. In *Short Stories by Jesus*, author Amy-Jill Levine takes you back in time and explains how original audiences understood Jesus' parables. You'll learn how new interpretations of the parables continue to challenge and provoke contemporary readers two thousand years later.

Components of the Bible study include a Participant Guide and Leader Guide that provide introductions to the main text as well as further Scripture commentary and reflection questions. In addition, you will find a six-session DVD featuring Amy-Jill Levine offering a fresh, timely reinterpretation of Jesus' narratives. The video segments are approximately 10–12 minutes each (with closed captioning) and, when combined with the six book chapters, make an ideal six-week group study.



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VITAL CONGREGATIONS



The example of strong, married couples was celebrated recently at Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock.

Black Marriage Day observed at Wesley Chapel UMC

Wesley Chapel UMC, Little Rock, observed Black Marriage Day April 15 and celebrated the marriages and examples set by 16 married couples whose unions range from one month to 52 years. The church's Marriage Ministry is led by Anthony and Renisha Ward.

Married and engaged couples served as liturgists and greeters for the service, and pastor Ronnie Miller-Yow preached a sermon entitled "The Ten Commandments of Marriage." Using the second and third chapters of Genesis as a text, he stressed the importance of knowing how to deal with adversity is a key to maintaining the commitment it takes to sustain a marriage. Studies show that growing up in a household with married parents

gives children more stability emotionally, financially, educationally, socially and behaviorally. Celebrating black marriages brings awareness to these benefits.

"Our goal is to show that marriage is ordained by God, is not to be taken lightly, and can be a beneficial and rewarding part of life," says Renisha Ward. "While sustaining a healthy marriage is not an easy task, fulfilling the commitment is tantamount to fulfilling God's commandments and other instructions ... It's time for Christians, especially African Americans, to stand up for this covenant with God. Sure, there are bad days and struggles, but we can show that staying committed is worth it."

Da Vinci 'Last Supper' painting brought to life

In a spectacular Holy Week drama, 13 men of Sheridan First United Methodist Church portrayed Jesus and the disciples as they appear in the 1494 Leonardo da Vinci painting "Last Supper." One by one the players captured the tension of the moment when they described their relationship and belief in Jesus after he said, "One of you will betray me." Each disciple concluded by asking Jesus, "Is it I?" The drama ended with Jesus presenting the broken bread representing his broken body, and the cup, representing his shed blood, which are the basis of the Eucharist and Holy Communion services which have been observed by



Sheridan First UMC actors staging Da Vinci's "Last Supper" are: (from left) Jerrod Williams (Bartholomew), Andrew Archer (James the Lesser), Deric Wyatt (Andrew), Jeff Archer (Judas), Seth Glaze (Peter), Scott Hines (John), Sam Green (Jesus), Stephen Shirron (James), John Robinette (Thomas), Michael Skorcz (Philip), Joe Archer (Matthew), Chris Goins (Thaddaeus) and Brent Reichenbach (Simon the Zealot).

Christians for centuries.

The dramatization was directed by Summer Scott, a Sheridan High

School teacher, and the scripts were from the works of Dr. Ernest Emurian and Pat Underwood.



Helena First UMC children present \$500 for a Heifer International animal to pastor Mike Wilke.

Coins add up at Helena

Children at Helena First United Methodist Church held a coin drive using "Jingle Pans," or metal cooking pans, to receive donations. They collected \$500 to purchase and donate a cow through Heifer International.

Creative team from Fort Smith Wesley UMC advances

The Destination Imagination team from Fort Smith Wesley UMC has been invited to take part in the Destination Imagination global competition in Knoxville, Tenn., May 23-26. The team took second place at the state competition, which earned them a lottery bid for the global event, and they were selected. The team members are: sixth-grader Rylee Tuck, eighth-grader Luke Schluterman and ninth-graders Titus Schluterman and Soren Morris.

The Destination Imagination program is a hands-on system of learning that fosters students' creativity, courage and curiosity through open-ended academic challenges in the fields of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), fine arts and service learning. Participants learn patience, flexibility, persistence, ethics, respect for others and their ideas, and the collaborative problem solving process.

While competing in Project Outreach, the Fort Smith Wesley team took on discrimination, or society's tendency to judge others without really knowing who they are, as a community issue they wished



Members of the Destination Imagination team from Fort Smith Wesley UMC are preparing for the organization's global competition.

to address. They held a Friendly Game Night in which they polled the attendees about their demographic data, then played games that allowed people to learn more about each other. After, participants were polled again to see what they learned about one another. The team also served pancakes with various toppings so you could express who you are in what you eat.

At competition, the team had to create a presentation about their event. They imagined humanity is the Titanic, and if we can't work together better, we will all sink. They created a humorous presentation using sock puppets to show how divided we are and how destructive it is to discriminate.

The Confessing Movement of Arkansas Annual Conference Breakfast

June 18, 2018 6:30AM at Union Missionary Baptist Church

wearecma.com

Speaker Madeline Carrasco Henners

Rev. Madeline Carrasco Henners is a United Methodist elder and has served as a pastor in the Rio Texas Annual Conference area for over ten years. Since its inception, she has been part of the Wesleyan Covenant Association and serves as secretary.

Madeline graduated from Duke Divinity School with her Master of Divinity after completing her Bachelor of Arts from Southwestern University in Georgetown, TX. In May of 2019, Madeline hopes to complete her doctorate from United Theological Seminary. She recently authored a 30-day devotional challenge as part of her doctoral project, "Ascending the Mountain," which guides participants into a deeper relationship with God and increased ability to hear God's voice. Link to "Ascending the Mountain" on Amazon.

Madeline's passion is helping people discover the amazing love God has for them and the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, offered to all God's children. She desires to continue growing in her ability to hear



God's voice, especially as it helps others come to Christ.

As a native Texan, Madeline grew up mostly in the Rio Grande Valley. In 2007, she married her husband, David, who was born and raised in Liverpool, England. An architect by trade, David is an amazing ministry and prayer partner. Together, they seek to serve the Lord with all that they are.



Place: Union Missionary Baptist Church

Date: Monday, June 18, 2018 at 6:30AM

Cost: \$15 (Tickets available through Annual Conf. registration)

Contact: admin@wearecma.com

Oak Forest's Shepherd's Hope Clinic expanding services

Shepherd's Hope Clinic, a ministry of Oak Forest United Methodist Church in the south midtown area of Little Rock, is expanding its services.

Located on the church campus at 2404 S. Tyler St., the clinic has been open since July 2006. The ministry offers primary care, dental care and vision care services from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday.

The clinic's mission is to provide care to the uninsured in the south midtown area, but patients from other neighborhoods are served as well.

"We are expanding our services in the dental area and adding

gynecological services," according to Lola Fish, a member of the clinic leadership team. "We have volunteer opportunities in multiple areas." There is a need for additional nurses, interpreters, dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants and social services personnel, she said. Persons who can help prepare meals served to volunteers at each clinic are also sought.

For more information or to volunteer at Shepherd's Hope Clinic, contact Fish at (501) 993-5916, or Veeta Biggers at (501) 681-6491, or Kathy Ransom at (501) 680-9446.

Mike Blanchard is pastor at Oak Forest UMC.

VITAL CONGREGATIONS

Shared programs help Cabot families stretch food dollars

Members of Cabot United Methodist Church partnered in March with members of ReNew Community Church to serve lunch over Spring Break to children who are participants in the local school backpack program or who qualify for the free lunch program. Food budgets for many low-income families double when children are not in school, and the lunch partnership, Lunchbox Connection, is one attempt to alleviate that strain on families. Soul Food is another program the Cabot church supports, serving hot meals to unsheltered persons on the streets.



Children from Cabot UMC help with Lunchbox Connection.

Volunteers needed to assist with Stamp Out Hunger drive

The Arkansas Foodbank is seeking volunteers age 8 and older to unload food donated May 12 to the National Association of Letter Carriers' annual Stamp Out Hunger food drive. Help is needed from 6-8:30 p.m. at the foodbank, 4301 W. 65th St., Little Rock. Contact Amber Bryant (501) 569-4320 or abryant@arkansasfoodbank.org or sign up

online at arkansasfoodbank.org.

To participate in the Stamp Out Hunger food drive, residents of areas where letter carriers are participating are encouraged to leave a sturdy bag of non-perishable foods next to their mailboxes prior to the time of regular mail delivery. No glass or handmade items.

ROGERS

Kay Hammett Evans, 70, retired elder, died at her home in Rogers on March 19, 2018.

She was born March 2, 1948, in Beebe, to Norma Jean (West) and Rev. Gerald Hammett. She was a graduate of Beebe High School, Hendrix College and Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University.

Her ministry included pastoral service at Tillar Charge, Jonesboro First, Dardanelle First, Rogers Central, Alma, North Little Rock Trinity, Newark Hazel Edwards Memorial and Batesville Asbury. She retired in 2013 after serving 27 years as a United Methodist pastor in Arkansas.

She was preceded in death by her father, and the father of her children, Rev. T. Nichols (Nick) Evans.

She is survived by her mother and her children, Rev. Hammett N. Evans (Michelle Pounds) of Bryant, Brice Evans of Little Rock, and Eleanor Evans of Rogers.

A memorial service was held March 26 at First United Methodist Church, Bryant, followed by burial at Meadowbrook Memorial Gardens, Beebe. Memorials may be directed to Heifer International.

SILOAM SPRINGS

Henry Franklin Cook, 77, retired associate member, died April 13, 2018. A Celebration of Life was held April 21 at Decatur UMC.

He was born Jan. 19, 1941, on a houseboat on the Black River in Pocahontas, Ark., to Minnie Stokes Cook and Jim Cook. He



was a minister for 52 years, most recently pastoring Lincoln and Morrow United Methodist churches.

He was a man who loved unconditionally. He always carried a stone in his pocket as a reminder not to cast the first stone. His favorite saying was "Never judge anyone. We are all sinners saved by grace. Except for God's grace, that could be me."

His entire life was dedicated to the service of others. He helped build homes in Mexico. He would give his last penny to anyone in need.

He was a Master Mason of Masonic Lodge #364 in Huntsville, a member of Christian Motorcyclist ASC and a member of Kiwanis.

He was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, J.T. Cook. Survivors include wife Theresa of the home; son Terry Cook of Mountain Home, daughter Jerrie Duncan and husband Shorty of Decatur, son Daniel Cook and wife Rie-C of Marshall; son Matthew Cook and wife Sarah of Aurora, Colo.; son Hank Cook and wife Amanda of Osage; 19 grandchildren, 4 great grandchildren and a host of friends.

Memorials may be directed to Heifer International or the United Methodist Children's Home.

STAR CITY

Thomas Alonzo Abney, age 88, retired elder, passed away April 22, 2018, at the Gardner Nursing and Rehabilitation Center of Star City, Arkansas. He was born to the late Thomas Mark and Willa Ione Abney in Houston, Texas.

He served United Methodist

congregations in Texas and Arkansas. He was a graduate of Stephen F. Austin University and also held degrees from the University of Texas and Southern Methodist University.

He began his ministry as a student local pastor in 1957. His appointments in the former Little Rock Conference included Malvern, Ashdown, Camden-Fairview, University of Arkansas at Monticello Wesley Foundation, Monticello First and Wilmar. He retired in 1994. He served as conference secretary of the Little Rock Conference for a number of years. He was a recipient of the 1984-85 Hendrix College Ethel K. Millar Award for Religion and Social Awareness.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Joyce, his parents, a son, Alford Thomas Abney, and a granddaughter, Anna Elizabeth Abney.

Survivors include two sons, Mark C. Abney and wife Teresa of Wilmar, and Timothy E. Abney and wife Diana of Sherwood; two daughters, Linda G. Pierce of Sapulpa, Okla., and Rebecca L. Davison and husband Ross of Springdale; a daughter-in-law, Peggy Abney of Star City; a brother, Brian M. Abney of Star City; a sister, Jean Ludwig of Henderson, Texas; and two stepsisters, Gloria Levingston of Houston, Texas, and Twila Thurman of La Grange, Texas; as well 8 grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

A memorial service was held April 28 at Rock Springs United Methodist Church.

OBITUARIES



CLASSIFIEDS

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

WE NEED SPONSORS! The 20th Annual Arkansas Retired Pastor Day will be held Monday, October 22, at 12 noon at the Arkansas Governor's Mansion. All Arkansas UM retired pastors, spouses and surviving spouses are invited to attend. Our speaker will be Dr. Dennis Swanberg! If you would like to be a sponsor of the 2018 event, contact Dr. David W. Bush, First UMC, Stuttgart, at (870) 673-1131.

ORGAN FOR SALE: One owner Rodgers 805C Organ. Recently checked by certified audio technician; computer and electronics are in good condition. Keyboards need removed and replace bad key weight glue, 2 speakers need repair. \$10,000 as is, or \$12,000 with all repairs made. Wesley UMC, 2200 Phoenix, Fort Smith, AR. Call church office (479) 646-9702 or Harley Strang (479)646-9329 to arrange inspection.

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Faith Funds

An Everlasting Tribute

Ben Queen of First United Methodist, Morrilton, wanted to honor the faith and service of his late wife Anne Crofoot Queen. What better way than to create an endowment in her name at the United Methodist Foundation that would benefit her local church forever?

Ben, an Arkansas native, moved back to his home state from Lufkin, Texas, where he was a retired oil company executive. He and his late first wife had three sons. Anne and her late first husband had been friends with Ben and his late wife since they met soon after World War II as college students at the University of Arkansas.

Ben and Anne reconnected soon after his return to Arkansas and were married 10 and a half years. Anne was a beloved former English teacher at Morrilton High School who had friends and former students all over the state.

“I grew to love Morrilton and our church here,” said Ben. “Anne was a member of this church for more than 30 years, a Sunday School teacher here, and she served on almost every committee we have.”

Ben is an advocate of endowment funds as an excellent way to ensure local churches have steady financial resources for the future. “When you have an endowment, it is easier for the church to thrive during thick or thin,” he said.



The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas

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A counselor (left) and two campers are ready to take on a host of traditional summer camp activities at Camp Aldersgate.

Summer camps start in June at Camp Aldersgate

Camp Aldersgate summer camps will be beginning soon. Held from June through August, summer camps are among the many programs offered at the 100-acre facility founded by Methodists in 1947.

Camp Aldersgate summer camps serve children with medical, physical and developmental needs. The ratio of campers to staff is never greater than 2 to 1, which ensures that campers consistently have individual encouragement, personal attention and safety during all camp activities.

Camp Aldersgate hosts weeklong medical-specific camps for children and youth with medical conditions including muscular dystrophy, spina bifida, diabetes, cardiac conditions, arthritis, kidney conditions, asthma, oncology and bleeding disorders.

In addition to the weeklong summer medical camps, there are two Kota Camps that serve children and youth with special needs who are not covered under the summer medical camps. Kota Camps allow participants to bring a friend or sibling to camp with them to participate in the programs and activities.

Weekend camps are provided

for individuals from August to May. During all programs, campers are provided the highest quality of care by Camp Aldersgate's counselors, staff, volunteers, nurses and volunteer physicians.

The camps offer traditional summer camp activities such as campfires and singing, canoeing, fishing, arts and crafts, swimming and nature hikes. Other adventures are an accessible challenge ropes course and carousel, zip lining, archery, disc golf and talent show. All activities are fully accessible and designed to allow every camper to participate and succeed.

According to the Camp Aldersgate web site, the camps and activities are “designed for our participants to learn there are no limitations.”

Camper application forms are available at www.campaldersgate.net, or call (501) 225-1444 for more information.

Camp Aldersgate, located at 2000 Aldersgate Road in Little Rock, is a program of the Women's Division of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries.



Camp Aldersgate summer camps serve children with medical, physical and developmental needs.