

# *The* Arkansas United Methodist

**LIVING OUR FAITH**

August 2018 | Volume 166, Issue 1

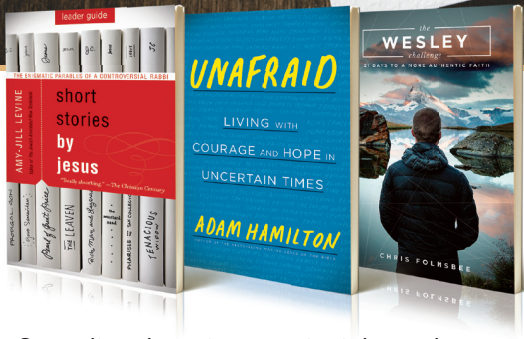


*Digital*  
**First Edition**

**GROWING  
DISCIPLES  
SUMMIT**

**OZARK  
MISSION  
PROJECT**  
Serving the State

**INTERVIEW**  
with  
Rev. Maxine Allen



The Scriptures tell us to “...go and make disciples...” Cokesbury can help your church do just that with small-group studies that explore the Bible, help us grow spiritually, and shape our Christian journeys.

- ♥ Studies that give new insight and expand our understanding of the Scriptures, such as Amy-Jill Levine’s *Short Stories By Jesus*.
- ♥ Relevant biblical and topical studies from best-selling authors, such as Adam Hamilton’s latest churchwide study, *Unafraid*.
- ♥ Studies that connect us to our denominational heritage or reach out to specific age groups, such as Chris Folmsbee’s *The Wesley Challenge*.

At Cokesbury, you can find everything you need for faith formation in your church. Explore what we have to offer today and help your congregation grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.



*Equipping Leaders to Make Disciples*

**Rachel Nicklas**  
Conference Resource Consultant  
rnicklas@cokesbury.com  
501.553.8614



800-672-1789 | Cokesbury.com  
Call a Resource Consultant





# Faith Funds

## *Transforming Lives for Christ*

Rev. Mark Norman, Southeast District Superintendent, sees the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas as moving beyond support of the ministries of United Methodism in our state and toward transformation that makes disciples for Jesus Christ.

“I see the Foundation connecting people and communities to transform the Body of Christ, a living organism, not an organization,” said Rev. Norman. “One example is the lay members and clergy from a three-point parish in the Delta who studied at the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City. From that experience, funded by UMFA, the congregations were able to create a new direction.”

He said the Foundation helps churches in his district more efficiently manage their endowment funds, allowing the earning to be used to better serve their mission fields. Rev. Norman also highlighted innovative regional programs like the partnership between local congregations and UMFA to create mission opportunities for churches with different backgrounds to work together to address issues like crime and poverty.

“UMFA has sponsored many innovative projects that signal to me that the best is yet to come for the Arkansas Conference,” Rev. Norman said. “I shudder to think what the Conference would become without change and growth.”



**The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas**

5300 Evergreen Drive • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205

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

## Lawyers Conference free to UMC attorneys

United Methodist attorneys in Arkansas are invited to attend the annual Lawyers Conference Sept. 19 at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel in Little Rock. Financial sponsor is the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, and there is no cost to attend the full-day event.



Beth Deere, UMFA Board Chair and U.S. Magistrate Judge in Little Rock

“Bill Waddell began this conference in 2008, and largely through his efforts, it has grown to be an annual event that attorneys throughout the state look forward to,” said Beth Deere, UMFA Board Chair and U.S. Magistrate Judge in Little Rock. “I’ve attended every conference, and I’ve always learned something new. Presentations at the conference provide legal updates as well as information about resources available to lawyers through the Foundation to better serve their local United Methodist churches and their clients.”

Lawyers Conference sessions help lawyers understand how to best apply the Discipline and handle issues and road blocks they may face in helping their local churches.

Fellowship among the attorneys who participate creates valuable relationships and builds community. In addition to earning free CLEs, lawyers gain confidence in their ability to help their local churches and develop resources to call upon if they need help during the year.

“Part of an attorney’s job is to counsel clients about financial and estate planning. I’ll be making a presentation this year about tools the United Methodist Foundation offers to help lawyers in advising their clients about effective ways to leave legacies to local churches or other United Methodist institutions,” Deere said.

For registration information, UM lawyers may emailing Haley Klein at [hklein@umfa.org](mailto:hklein@umfa.org) or call 501-664-8632 before the Sept. 12 deadline. Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credits will be awarded to those who attend.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Editor	4
Growing Disciples Summit	21
New Directions	23
Farmer's Market Trail	25
200,000 Reasons	26



VOLUME 166, NO. 1 • AUGUST 3

Caleb Hennington, Digital Content Editor

Amy Ezell, Director of The Center for Communication

The *Arkansas United Methodist* is the publication 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.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

For information on subscribing to the digital edition, visit [www.arumc.org/our-news/arkansas-united-methodist/](http://www.arumc.org/our-news/arkansas-united-methodist/) or call 501-324-8023.

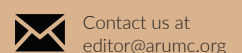
## FOLLOW US



## VISIT US ONLINE



## STORY IDEA?



# A New Chapter

I thought a lot about what I would write for my first From the Editor column.

I thought about mentioning my background in journalism, how I've always loved writing and was inspired to pursue journalism thanks to my high school English teacher who encouraged me to go after something of which I had no prior experience.

I also thought about mentioning how although I did not grow up in the United Methodist Church, – I grew up in the Missionary Baptist Church, and then, later in college, attended Southern Baptist churches – I have garnered so much reverence for the UMC and its commitment to social justice, racial reconciliation, and living out biblical truths by showing Christ's love to others.

I thought about mentioning how I was nervous about starting this position because, although I knew of the United Methodist Church, I did not know the inner workings of the church; the difference between clergy and laity, deacons and elders, bishops, district superintendents, boards, centers, The Way Forward, General Conference, Annual Conference, the Book of Discipline, and so on and so forth.

And then thoughts came to me about the new online magazine.

I thought about how we are changing up the format of the "Arkansas United Methodist" from a printed newspaper to a digital magazine, which, honestly, sounds scary to many people.

I understand that fear, and I know that change isn't always the easiest idea to comprehend.

There's a fear that we will not be honoring the rich 138-year history of the Arkansas United Methodist. That we are changing things up for the sake of change, and the quality of the reporting will drop with this new format.

As the new editor, barely a month into my job, I hear all of the critiques and I understand the concern.

But what I really want to share with you is not a message of fear and apprehension about a new direction for the "Arkansas United Methodist;"

what I really want to talk about is hope, faith, and optimism.

Hope that the new format will be well received.

Faith that this is the right direction for the publication.

And optimism for the future of not only the "Arkansas United Methodist,"

but for the United Methodist Church in general, that the church will remain intact, and continue to create vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

In our debut issue, I believe that we are starting out on the right foot to accomplish those goals.

Our cover story is focused on the Rev. Maxine Allen, a legendary figure within the Arkansas Conference who was the first African-American woman to be ordained as an elder in the United Methodist Church in Arkansas.

We also have a story about the Ozark Mission Project and some of the incredible work that the young volunteers have done for those in need all over Arkansas.

There are stories about the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, 200,000 Reasons, Camp Tanako's 70-year anniversary, and, yes, even stories about books you should be reading and all of the fantastic farmer's markets that can be found around the state!

The "Arkansas United Methodist" is starting a new chapter in its long and honorable history. And it's a chapter that I hope you will join me in navigating.

Because, at the end of the day, this is not my "Arkansas United Methodist," your "Arkansas United Methodist," or even Bishop Mueller's "Arkansas United Methodist."

This is our "Arkansas United Methodist," and we will write its story together.



**Caleb Hennington**  
Digital Content Editor

## It's Time

BY GARY E. MUELLER  
*Bishop of the Arkansas Conference*

---

### It's Time to Get Honest

One of the most important responsibilities a leader has is to offer her or his best assessment of the way things are. This means being honest - even when that honesty is painful, difficult and disruptive - because we must have as complete an understanding as possible about the way things are or we will be vulnerable to making all kinds of bad choices about our future. And whether we think we are ready or not, the fact of the matter is that we will be making a number of critically important choices in the coming months about who we are going to be.

So, even as I confess my own limitations and the possibility I could be wrong in the analysis that follows, here's how I honestly see things right now in our beloved United Methodist Church in Arkansas.

Too many congregations reflect our nation's polarized culture, which means that division and anger have too often replaced passion and love. Many good United Methodists have become so caught up by our secular culture that they think being active in church is no more important than any of the myriad of other activities in which they participate.

Clergy often feel isolated, and many clergy wonder whether there will be churches for them to serve in the coming years. Congregations accept ongoing decline of attendance, baptisms and professions of faith as if it is just the new normal. Almost everyone is experiencing anxiety as we inch closer and closer to next February's Special Session of General Conference. And perhaps most disturbing of all, far too many of us seem to have lost our hope.

At the same time, however, some congregations are vibrant and growing in worship attendance, professions of faith, small group discipleship groups and outreach in the mission field. Some laity and pastors are passionate about following Jesus Christ and growing as disciples. Some mira-

culous transformation is occurring in individual lives, communities and the world. And faithful saints in United Methodist congregations in Arkansas are busy sowing seeds of hope in our state and around the world. But here's the point. While these signs of vibrancy are real and we should celebrate them, they do not begin to measure up to Jesus' deepest longing for his church.

This kind of assessment is not one I want to offer. It is, however, one I must share. Quite frankly, it has shaken me to the core. So much so, I now wrestle with a question every single day from the time I wake up until the moment I finally fall asleep: "Why have we ended up like this?"

As I have prayed, argued with God and reflected on this question, I find a similar answer emerging time and again. We have lost our energy, passion, clarity of mission, joy and hope because we have forgotten who we are.

I'm not sure exactly how this has happened. But the antidote is obvious. It is time for us to start remembering those things that are at the very core of who we are as Wesleyan Christians at this defining moment of the United Methodist Church in Arkansas. When we remember who we are, we can begin to act like who we are.

### It's Time to Remember Who We Are

We need to remember who we are - not creators of a faith that is comfortable, relevant or acceptable to the culture, but receivers of the historic orthodox Christian faith that has had the ability across the centuries to shape in large and small ways how we understand ourselves, see others, and live day-in and day-out.

We need to remember who we are - ambassadors of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who offers the salvation we absolutely need, but can



never get on our own.

We are who we are because of him. We live out our unique identity as the church because of him. We don't attempt to beat people up with Jesus or act as if we're superior because of our relationship with him. We simply believe with everything we've got that people need Jesus and it's our responsibility to share him with them.

We need to remember who we are – people who are embraced by the fullness of God's love. In traditional Wesleyan terms, this means talking about holiness, going on to perfection, and grace that is prevenient, justifying and sanctifying. In more modern language, it might be termed growing in God's unconditional, invitational and transformational love.

Too often in the past, Christians have failed to share the unconditional love we have received. Too often now, we are convinced unconditional is so important that we fail to realize that the depth of God's love means God is not content to leave any of us just the way we are.

We need to remember who we are – a church that keeps the main thing the main thing: creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

This is not about being successful, or even getting enough people in Arkansas to help Methodism survive. It is the mission God has given the church. And it means we are serious about investing in growing disciples, creating accountable disciples, evangelizing more disciples, and equipping all disciples to live their faith outside the doors of the church.

We need to remember who we are – disciples who take our faith out the front door of our churches. We reach out to those no one else seems to care about. How we reach out into the mission field that begins right outside the doors of our congregation to get to know people, share Jesus' love, meet them at their point of need and help them become Jesus' disciples who, in turn, makes disciples and work to transform lives, communities and the world.

We need to remember who we are – brothers and sister in Christ, especially when that seems most difficult because of all our differences. We choose to live with an attitude of humility, a willingness to repent and a life of service. We choose to make the church a community of acceptance and redemption. We choose to engage in the hard work of actually loving each other as sisters and brothers in Christ, instead of treating one another as adversaries.

## It's Time to Make Some Choices

While absolute honesty is a necessary beginning, and while knowing what steps we need to choose to take in the coming months and years is essential, there's still one more thing we need to do.

We have to choose to see our future through the hope God has made real in Jesus Christ. This means we see the struggles and challenges, but we see them through the lens of Christ. When we do, we see something else.

We see all the faithful disciples in the 660 congregations that comprise the United Methodist Church in Arkansas just waiting to go to work. We see the God-sized possibilities of what God is going to do through these laity, pastors and congregations because God is still God and God is making God's Kingdom just as real on earth as it already is in heaven.

And perhaps most importantly, we see even before it occurs what the people called United Methodists are going to do during the next six months, the next six years and the next six decades.

Yes, choices matter. And that's why I want to ask all of us to join together in the coming months as we choose to remember who we are, choose to embrace who we are and choose to live who we are. I am convinced we will make these critical choices. After all, God sent Christ into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world. And that reality has already changed everything about everything!

Come, Holy Spirit, come!



# The Reader's Nook

Each month, we ask a featured contributor to the *Arkansas United Methodist* to tell us what they're reading, and why we should be reading it as well. This month's contributor is the Rev. Dr. Michelle Morris, Lead Equipper for the Center for Vitality. Each of the books reviewed this month deals with the tension between relating to the world and holding to tradition.

## **Sticking Points: How to Get Four Generations Working Together**

*Haydn Shaw*

Shaw tackles the difficult reality that there are four generations in the workplace right now: Traditionalists, Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. The old way of waiting your turn to change things is no longer working, as each generation asserts its identity. In the church, which has five generations, this means evaluating our mechanisms of functioning (like meetings, dress code, and committees) in order to reach new people for Jesus, while still valuing all five populations. Shaw gives practical ways to lead people to work together regardless of their specific perspectives.

## **Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now**

*Walter Brueggemann*

Using his trademark style of contextualizing biblical texts, Brueggemann recovers Sabbath as a resistant practice that allows us to more fully focus on God, other people, and creation. Sabbath was a gift given to the Hebrew people immediately after they escaped Pharaoh's system of non-stop production which fed Pharaoh's relentless consumption and wealth accumulation. Brueggemann then applies this description to our own 24/7 world that commodifies time as money. He challenges us to reclaim that holy practice of rest for God's distinct people despite what the culture around us defines as good.

## **How to Be a Perfect Christian: Your Comprehensive Guide to Flawless Spiritual Living**

*Babylon Bee*

If you are unfamiliar with Babylon Bee, you are missing out on some of the sharpest satire on the hypocrisies of Christianity. While their quick wit is aimed at the non-denominational megachurch, this humorous book reflects on how much we accommodate culture in an effort to fill seats. Are we sacrificing theological depth for the sake of the show? Are we creating environments in which people make church all about themselves rather than God? Behind the satirical questions of looking for a church whose name sounds like a nice retirement home are deep questions on the nature of discipleship and the purpose of church. Their humor encourages us to recover God at the center of worship and to grow in our own discipleship in intentional ways.





Like us on



**@arkansasumc**



# Building Bridges, Creating Change

An interview with the Rev. Maxine Allen

BY REGINA GIDEON  
*Featured Contributor*



**T**he Rev. Maxine Allen recalled her thoughts waiting in line for the laying on of hands – about to become the first African-American woman in the Arkansas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church ordained an elder in full connection in 1999. “This conference is never going to be the same again,” she thought to herself.

Her thoughts proved prophetic, a term she uses to describe her ministry and mission. Her service spans nearly five decades as a proponent for social justice, human rights and the grace of God. At Annual Conference 2018, Allen retired from her position as Assistant Director of Mission and Ministry for Mission Field Engagement in the conference office.

“Maxine Allen has helped to prick the conscience of the annual conference,” Bishop Gary Mueller of the Arkansas Conference said. “I think her legacy to me is to speak out and advocate for those who otherwise would be overlooked, forgotten or otherwise on the fringe. She is a champion of deep faith being married to real life change.”

The scope of her ministry has been and continues to be wide and deep – from her work in the Little Rock community and Arkansas government, interfaith organizations, The Arkansas United Methodist church, The United Methodist Church and mission trips internationally. But ask Allen what most captures her spirit and she will quickly say “young people.”

## Building Bridges to Young Adults

Her eyes shine and her smile grows large talking about “Philander Forward Theological Institute,” a summer program for high school juniors and seniors that offers an opportunity to explore Scripture, think theologically, apply Scripture and theology to local context, and reflect upon where God might be calling them. Allen wrote the curriculum for this program from inception for Philander Smith College of Little Rock, Arkansas, now in its second year. She co-wrote a Lily grant and the curriculum. Allen serves as a resource to the workshops for the youth who attend the program and experience worship, leadership and servanthood across Little Rock. This year’s program component included a trip to Memphis to visit both the Staxx and Civil Rights Museums as the focus was hip-hop.

“Young people keep me young,” Allen explained. “They challenge convention. When you look at cultural shifts, it is not old people with gray hair that make shifts.”

Allen wrote this year’s Philander Forward Theological Institute experience around rap culture, connecting it to hip-hop, jazz, graffiti, civil rights and Scripture. To Allen, it is vital as a Christian and clergyperson to stay in touch with the current culture in order to reach people in the current context.

“We don’t know how to bridge pop culture with ancient culture,” she said, referring to the church today. “I believe we are called to serve the present age...whether you are 75 or 18, we must bridge the culture.”

Allen has worked and continues to keep in contact with mentees as they live out their calls. She sees a large part of her legacy in those she has mentored.

One of these mentees is Carissa Rodgers, adjunct professor at Philander Smith College, owner of RevBeads, life coach and self-defined “cultural curator.” Rodgers and Allen met due to

Rodgers spending lots of time around Philander Smith’s Wesley Chapel. She made lots of suggestions for ways Rodgers could look at making a difference in the world, including more exploration through an internship at the General Board of Global Ministries, where Rodgers ended up serving twice and then felt a call to ministry.

“She identifies gifts and graces and sees what [students] are good at naturally,” Rodgers said. “But she never tried to give me the answer. She was like an arrow.” As Rodgers’ call has evolved from serving in the church to serving the community she said Allen “is still always asking, ‘how can I support you?’”

Allen gives to Rodgers what she never received in her own discernment calling.



Rev. Maxine Allen accepts the Philander Smith College Living Legend at a ceremony in 2015. Pictured alongside her are, from left to right, Philander Smith College President Roderick Smothers and Philander Smith College Chaplain the Rev. Ronnie Miller-Yow.

## Answering Her Call to Ministry

It was Thanksgiving 1964 and Allen was attending the last night of a revival, when people went door-to-door knocking and from church-to-church for the revival. At the end of the service, the pastor’s altar call came for those called into ministry. Allen and another female friend, both age 14, went forward but the evangelists only took the boys to kneel at the altar.

“We don’t think you understand what you are saying,” the revivalists said to her, explaining to Allen the types of ministries God had for women.

“I believe that God is calling me into ministry,” Allen replied to the male pastors. “Not Africa’s missionary, a Christian educator or to be a preacher’s wife. God is calling me into ministry.”

Allen had been equipped early to speak truth to power in her home. She grew up in a home where the Bible was talked about by her mother, a president of the United Methodist Women at their church. Allen was accustomed to her mother pulling out Bible commentaries, dictionaries and various versions of the Bible after church on Sunday to discuss the Bible and theology. Her work for social justice began with her youth, when she toured with an interracial and cultural performance group, “Sing Out America,” at a time when many prohibited integration. At age 13, she was thrown off a Central Arkansas Transit bus for refusing to sit in the back, which was in line with segregation practices in the early 1960’s.

Yet instead of pastoral ministry, Allen went on as an adult to work for Bell telephone company, rising to the level of an administrator writing training manuals for service representatives in the business office. One night, she saw the first African-American woman to be elected bishop preach barefoot at Theressa Hoover United Methodist Church. Bishop Leontine T.C. Kelley changed everything for her.

“I can do that!” she realized at that moment. “It was all a big lie. The Methodist Episcopal Church told me in 1964... that God does not call women to preach. And I believed that for 30 years.”

Not wasting time, she began her undergraduate education at age 39. She became a Philander Smith alumna in 1993, and a 1997 graduate of Gammon Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia with a Master of Divinity, where she currently serves on the Board of Trustees. In 2008, she received the Alumna of the Year Award from Gammon Seminary.

Mueller holds great respect for Allen and her clarity of vision in moving into a life of ministry. “She stopped a career where she was well remunerated and listened to God’s call on her life,” Mueller said. “It shows an incredible passion.”

## Building Bridges in the United Methodist Church

God called Allen to many places in her ministry, but if you were there to hear what she had to say at Annual Conference 2018, her call was simply to service.

She wore outfits that included her signature red or purple, and worked the Conference registration table, where she greeted people and herded large groups in the correct direction with just her voice. Allen also offered the benediction with the words of the apostle Paul and Al Greene, “I have said these things that your joy may be complete,” she said, adding, “and let’s stay together, let’s love one another.”

She holds a lifetime of leadership with the Arkansas Annual Conference and to the United Methodist Church. She was a lay delegate to Annual Conference and General Conference and an alternate clergy delegate to General Conference. Nationally, she served as the secretary for the Black Clergywomen of the United Methodist Church, and she wrote worship materials for Discipleship Ministries.

In the Arkansas Annual Conference, Allen is distinguished for some of the “firsts” that she held in the conference as well, in regards to race and gender.

It began with her ordination, which Rev. C.E. McAdoo -- an African-American former district superintendent who was on the Board of Ordained Ministry at the time -- recalled as being historically significant.

“It was very important to have a credentialized [African-American female] voice that would bear fruit in the Annual Conference like Rev. Allen,” McAdoo said.

Allen went on to bear much fruit in the Annual Conference with firsts: first African-American female clergy to hold a position on the Arkansas Annual Conference office staff, first on the Board of Ordained ministry, first Wesley Foundation Director, first cross-racial appointee to an entirely Caucasian central Arkansas church and first to be a chaplain at Philander Smith College.

“She showed grace with a real face so that people could deal with an African-American female elder instead of listening to the myths and stereotypes,” Mueller said.



Rev. Maxine Allen’s family has a rich history of strong female leadership. From left to right are Dr. Edith Irby Jones, Allen’s grandmother Jewel Porter, and Daisy Bates at a reception at the Arkansas Governor’s Mansion.

She paved the way for women, of any race. She was the first woman to serve as President of the Little Rock Christian Ministerial Alliance, and she chaired the Commission on the Status and Role of Women in the Arkansas Annual Conference.

Allen is known for knowing nearly everyone in the Annual Conference and nearly all parts of Little Rock, where she is a fifth generation community activist. She is the most well-connected person Bishop Mueller said he has ever met.

“When I needed to make sure I didn’t have too narrow of a view, I knew she would tell me the truth from her perspective,” Mueller said. “She has a great deal of wisdom. I could go down to her office and have her as a wise counselor and witness covering the horizon.”

## Warrior for Change

When Allen was 5 years old, she saw a pair of yellow shoes she loved at Sterling Department Store at the intersection of 5th and Center Street. Visiting with her mother and father, she was not allowed to try on the shoes because she is an African-American. Allen became quite upset that her parents could not purchase them. Because the manager knew Allen’s father as the night janitor there, he made an exception. She could try them on behind closed doors in the back of the shop. She went home with the shoes.

No one puts Allen in the back of the shop today. In fact, she is very active in Interfaith Arkansas where she chairs the committee on racial reconciliation, starting conversations about racism in rural churches. But her work is not just for racial justice, she has also served Interfaith Arkansas, often on the Board of Directors, advocating for a number of issues including a fair minimum wage, poverty, and disaster recovery.

“For me her legacy is that she’s very passionate about her faith driving her into the community and speaking about justice,” Steve Copley, executive director of Interfaith Arkansas, who has worked with her for 20 years on social justice issues in the state, said.

Allen has proved a formidable warrior for positive social justice. According to her colleagues, she brings to the table an excep-



Rev. Maxine Allen presents a message at Annual Conference 2017.

tional combination of skills in wisdom, administration and marriage of faith with action.

In 2017, Allen received the Ethel K. Millar Award for Religion and Social Awareness at Hendrix College.

Naming the President of the Children's Defense Fund Marian Wright Edelman as her contemporary role model, Allen has been instrumental in working for children, youth, and women in Arkansas. Before coming to professional ministry, Allen lent her voice to KABF Community Radio, providing children's and public affairs programming for the first time. Now known as Women and Children First, Allen laid the groundwork with the first abused women's shelter, successfully lobbying the legislature in the '70s and '80s for stronger laws against domestic violence. She served as the founding executive director for Second Genesis, a transitional home for women leaving prison.

"I have always found her to be very wise, good counsel, a good thinker and a good strategist," Copley said.

Copley and Allen both presently serve on the board of Arkansas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. She also worked with Copley in the late 1990's on lobbying for wage parity and safe working environments, including service to the Interfaith Worker Justice advocacy network.

She now serves as the gubernatorial appointee to the Arkansas Judicial Discipline and Disability Commission, as she did under the previous two governors of Arkansas.

### **Bridges Beyond Retirement**

It should come as no surprise that when Allen held a retirement gala at the Mosaic Templars Center for more than \$50 a plate, it was not for her own benefit. Instead, she used her official retirement to raise money for Philander Smith College, Gammon Seminary and The United Methodist Church Dollars for Scholars program.

Two days after Annual Conference 2018, a new charge was

announced; the Cabinet appointed Rev. Maxine Allen to St. James United Methodist Church of Pine Bluff. The bishop remarked that her "skills, graces and experience," in addition to her formal training as an interim pastor, make her the best pastor for the charge.

Allen will continue her involvement in community activism, running a consulting business with her daughters, Tufara Waller Muhammad and Rev. Danita Waller Paige, and spending time with her granddaughter.

It is safe to say that Allen is not really retiring, other than in the formal sense that she is no longer beholden to the bishop to say "yes" when she is asked to serve a church.

Beyond interim pastoring, Allen intends to travel in her retirement. She said she feels very "at home" outside the state of Arkansas – in Memphis, Tennessee, in Branson, Missouri, or in her travel and missions to the Holy Land, Jamaica, Belize, Aruba, Russia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti. Her future travel destinations include the slave castles in Africa, Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was a prisoner of apartheid, the Washington D.C. National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Journeys of Paul cruise and Egypt.

She has something clearly in common with Paul, known for his own manner of truth-telling in the early church letters.

"Maxine is very straightforward. If she believes something, she will tell you what she believes. She does not beat around the bush," one of her former district superintendents the Rev. Philip Hathcock explained. "Yet, you can disagree openly and honestly to have open conversation. That is how bridges are built if you can have truth-telling and willingness to listen. She has a willingness to listen and a willingness to be a truth-teller."

Per Allen's point of view, her truth-telling and work for social justice in and outside the church are part of her call. A call that will never go away.

"I fight because it is right. I fight because it is the only way people coming behind me can survive," Allen said. "I fight to build bridges. I fight because silence is compliance."



Two volunteers with the Ozark Mission Project repaint a house for a resident in North Little Rock.

# ‘We’re all a work in progress’

BY CALEB HENNINGTON  
*Digital Content Editor*

---

When you ask Arkansans to think of a group that’s made the most impact in their communities, one organization usually comes to mind right away: the Ozark Mission Project.

The Ozark Mission Project – shortened to OMP in most references – is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit mission of the Arkansas Area United Methodist Church. It began in 1986 with only one camp and fewer than 40 volunteers, but with a noble mission of being a ministry that helps those in need in response to Jesus Christ’s call to servanthood.

More than 30 years later, OMP has grown to over 1,000 youth and young adult volunteers in 12 camps, and works hard to serve all four corners of the Natural State through a variety of improvement projects.

When our team caught up with an OMP group in Little Rock this summer, it was near the end of a long and hot week in June. We visited three different works sites all over Little Rock; from North Little Rock to Southwest Little Rock.

At every sight, we were greeted by hardworking and happy young women and men, nearing the end of their week-long projects. Their faces – smudged with dirt, sweat, paint, and a variety of other materials – showed the hard work that they had put into their projects. But they also showed genuine joy at what they had accomplished together that week, from painting houses to building wheelchair ramps, and even teaching a young boy to ride a bike for the very first time.

I have to admit, I felt a bit unworthy driving up to each work site in our nice, air-conditioned vehicle only to pop out for a few minutes, grab some quotes, pictures and video, and then hop back into the car to drive away to the next site on our list. I almost wanted to drop the work that I was doing, and join in with these young volunteers to help them finish their tasks.

It’s inspiring to see people from different age groups, genders, financial backgrounds, and experiences work together to help someone that, for various reasons, may not be able to help themselves. It’s the work that Jesus encourages all believers to practice in countless verses throughout the Bible.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill

the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:2

These commandments are evident in the lives of the many volunteers who serve with OMP.

Joshua Holt, a director with OMP who has served in many different areas in the organization for the past 13 years, sees helping those in need as more than just building a ramp or painting a house.

“One of our big focuses is building lasting relationships with people in the community. We don’t want to just do a project and then leave. We want to bridge that connectional gap and become friends with these people we are helping,” Holt said.

“When I think of going out and serving our neighbors, what I see is God has given us so much love and has given us so many blessings, and this is an opportunity for us to mirror his actions by going out and serving in any way that we can. It serves as reflection of what we have received from Christ,” he continued.

Bailey Faulkner, executive director for OMP, has seen young women and men fulfill that call to serve others and watched the organization grow during her six years with them.

She recalls many years ago when she was just starting out with the group and they were doing everything -- planning, meeting, organizing -- in her house.

“We didn’t have a database, we didn’t have a website, we didn’t have a letter head. And now, we have full time staff, and we have a wonderful team that helps out with all we do. It’s amazing.”

She has also seen many former college staffers from OMP 101 – a 3-day training camp for fourth and fifth-graders – go on to serve in some form of ministry, as well.

“You know, it almost makes me sad seeing these great college staffers leave OMP and go on to do other things. Part of me wants them to stay and continue to help out here. But I’m also glad! Because we’re growing the church that way. We’re helping, in some way, to create leaders for the future of the church,” Faulkner said.

Daulton Coffey of Siloam Springs United Methodist, another volunteer with OMP who was working on painting a house for a family in North Little Rock, shared what he has learned from the past week.

“We’re all a work in progress, just like this house has been a work in progress. We have to remain faithful on God’s plan. At the end of the day, if we’re able to stay on God’s plan, if we’re able to stay on the plan that’s given to us in life, we’ll all be in pretty good shape.”

More information about Ozark Mission Project can be found by visiting their website, <http://ozarkmissionproject.org/>. If you’d like to volunteer for future projects, you can fill out a volunteer form online at <http://ozarkmissionproject.org/volunteer/>.

# OMP 101

OMP 101 is a 3-day camp for youth who have completed 4th and 5th grades. Campers learn how to serve others through hands on mission projects, games, worship and fellowship. We caught up with the youth at one of the two camps this year at St. Paul United Methodist Church in Little Rock and observed the fun, but mission-oriented, work that they were doing. This summer is dedicated in memory of Jim Argue and the invaluable work he dedicated to UMFA and OMP over the years.



A group at OMP 101 poses with their finished bookshelf. They youth sanded and painted each of the bookshelves, which will be given to Methodist Family Health's group homes.



Youth participate in painting a bookshelf that will be given to Methodist Family Health's group homes.

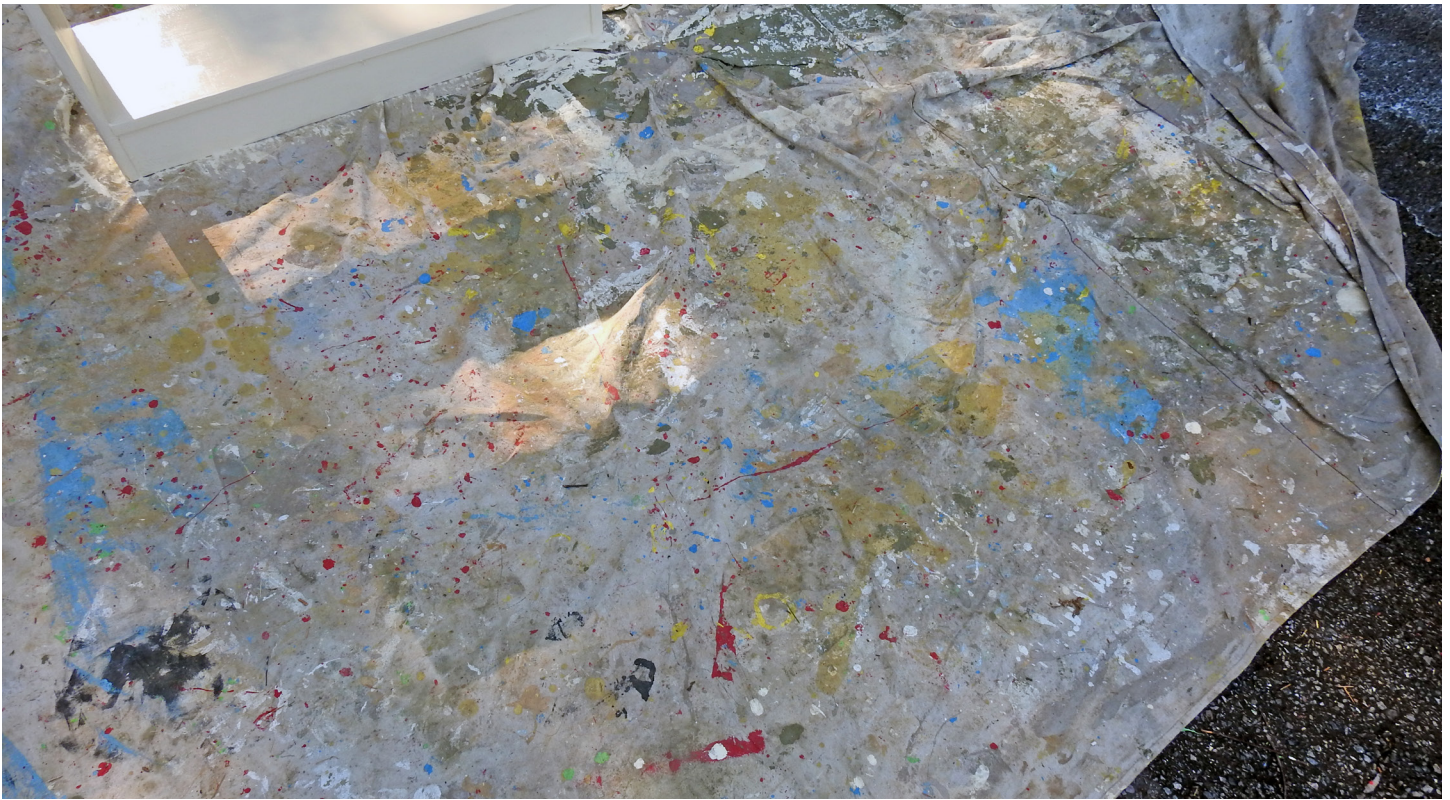


A young girl sands down wood for a bookshelf being built by a OMP 101 group.



Alyssa Burselon, Recruitment and Logistics Assistant, explains the Biblical story of Zacchaeus to a group of students at OMP 101.





A drop canvas splattered with paint drops shows the many years of hard work that OMP has put into serving communities in Arkansas.



A trailer full of supplies used by OMP on their various work projects around the state.



Left to right: college staffers Grace Rogers, Jack Vaughn, Ben Cameron, Alexis Faupel, and Jessica Emerson pose for a picture at OMP 101.



A young camper raises her hand to ask a question during a workshop session at OMP 101.



The youth participate in a yoga session led by local news anchor Donna Terrell.



# Photo Showcase

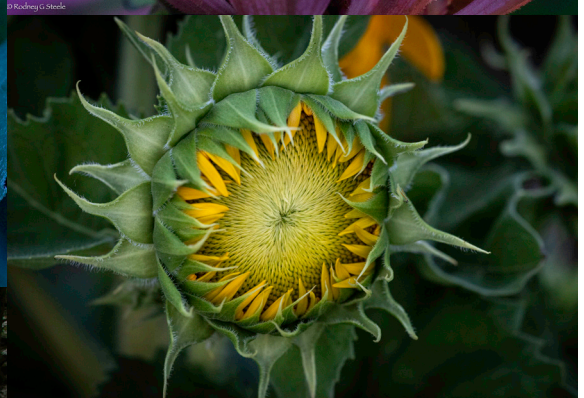
An observant four-legged friend sees something of interest in the distance.



© Rodney G. Steele



A wildflower opens up to bloom in the summer sun.



© Rodney G. Steele



Petit Jean State Park in the summer.

All photos captured by the  
Rev. Rodney Steele.

Steele is the District Superintendent  
for the Southwest District of the  
Arkansas Conference of the United  
Methodist Church.



SCoburnImages

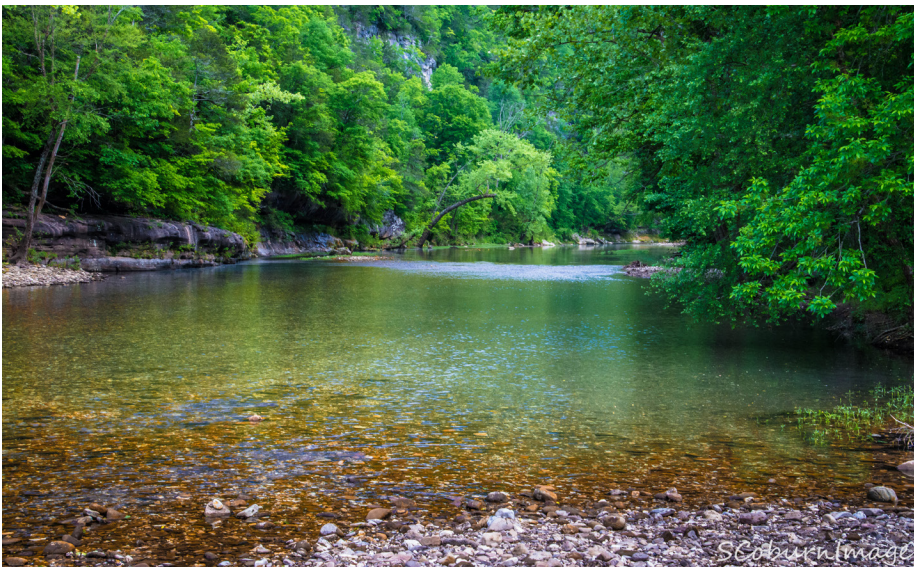
A lone kayaker wades along in the fog of Beaver Tailwaters below Beaver Lake Dam.



Beautiful urban art found in Fort Smith, Arkansas.



Petit Jean Mountain State Park, captured during the February Conference Cabinet Retreat.



A beautiful summer view of the Buffalo National River.



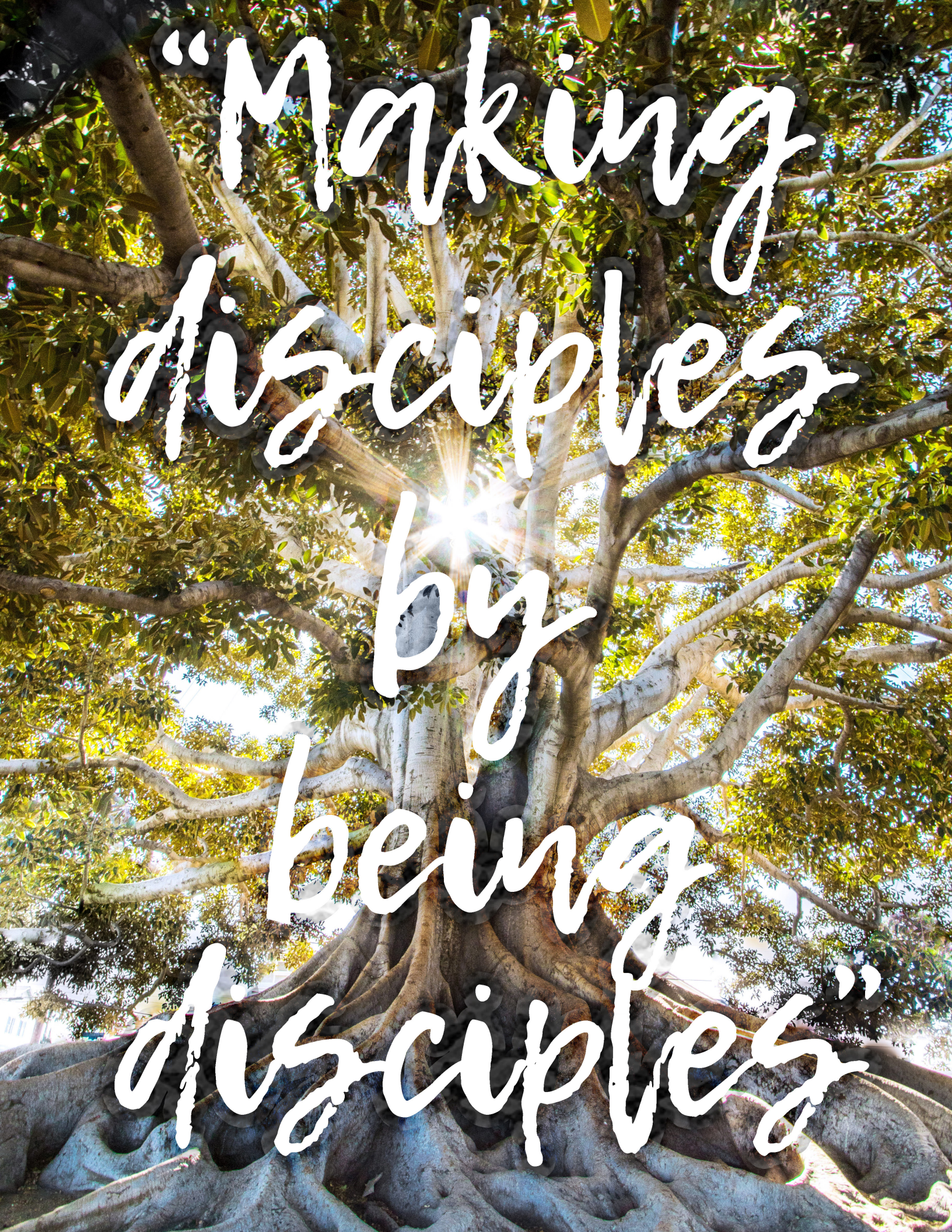
The summer sun shines through Glory Hole Falls in Boxley, Arkansas.



Beaver Dam Site in Rogers, Arkansas.

All photos captured by the Rev. Stephen Coburn.

Coburn is the District Superintendent for the Northwest District of the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church.



"Making  
disciples  
by  
being  
disciples."

As United Methodists, one of our most important callings is to make disciples of Jesus Christ in every nation. It's the Great Commission that was laid out by Jesus Christ at the end of Matthew 28, saying "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

And even within our own Arkansas Conference, is it the driving message that steers everything that we do. We are called to create vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world.

The 2018 Growing Disciples Summit, which takes place on Saturday, Aug. 25 at St. James United Methodist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, is seeking to help clergy and laity achieve that mission.

The intention of this Summit is to bring that discipleship message to church leaders, and help them to learn the hows and whys of intentional discipleship systems.

Center for Vitality Director Dede Roberts explains that disciples are more than just church members.

"Every congregation I know engages in some of these practices, but few of us have a pathway -- an intentional system -- in place to help people grow from one stage of faith to another. If we are going to be disciples who make disciples, we need deeply committed followers of Christ who have been equipped to share their gifts and graces with others in the church and the community," Roberts said. "The Summit will offer inspiration, information and models for moving members to mission and nominal Christians into the mission field.

The Summit will give participants a chance to build their own discipleship pathway -- also known as an intentional discipleship system -- through, not just keynote speakers, but hands-on workshops as well.

A new challenge will also be offered to 20 congregations in Arkansas: a commitment to applying what they learn at the Summit in their local setting.



The Twenty, as it is known, is a learning group offered to congregations that commit to planning and putting into motion an intentional discipleship system by Dec. 31, 2018.

A number of benefits are available for those who join The Twenty, including: one-on-one help from the Center staff who will meet with members as they plan their new system, a coach that will assist a congregation's pastor for the duration of the process, communication and promotional assistance, reserved places for congregations at the upcoming MissionIn-site in-depth training course, connection to other congregations who are participating in The Twenty, recognition and plan presentation at Annual Conference 2019, and placement on the early notification list for future Center for Vitality events.

"We are committing most of our resources of both time and talents to this endeavor, because we believe the mission is what matters most," Roberts said. "It is God's work and we've been

commanded to do it. Making disciples is our main thing, our reason for being 'church', and the Center for Vitality can resource Arkansas congregations to fulfill that mission. We are challenging 20, but we will work with more!"

More information about The Twenty will be given at the Summit.

All-in-all, Roberts and the Center for Vitality crew are excited for what this year's Summit has in store for its attendees.

"The Summit has been designed to be more than just another conference. It is our hope that the Summit will serve as a 'think tank' where we all come together as spiritual leaders, both lay and clergy, to learn, share ideas, make connections and then go back to our churches to do something new, something bold, something that will transform a life for Christ," Roberts said.

For more on the Growing Disciples Summit, visit [vitality.arumc.org](http://vitality.arumc.org), or contact Lay Program Coordinator Cathy Hall at 501-324-8011 or [cathy.hall@arumc.org](mailto:cathy.hall@arumc.org).



# New Directions

The Center for Reaching New People seeks to bring in a diverse group of believers into the UMC

BY CALEB HENNINGTON  
*Digital Content Editor*

Although Arkansas has about 3 million people living in the state, only about 30 – 40 percent of those people are actually attending a church on Sundays.

The Center for Reaching New People, a new vision and a new focus for the Arkansas Conference, wants to change that statistic and get more people involved in their local churches and ministries.

Jeff Jackson, Director of New Faith Communities, has a couple of ideas for how to get more people into churches.

“What we’re wanting to do is, one, establish some new churches. There are many places in Arkansas that need a new church presence,” Jackson said. “But we’re also looking to help other churches establish new ministries outside the church where they are reaching new people in a new way. Not just the people that are currently in church.”

One of the ways that Jackson, along with Rev. Rashim Merriwether – Developer of Ethnic Faith Communities – are looking to reach those people is by thinking outside of the box when it comes to reaching out

to people who may not be your typical “church people.”

“People are looking for churches that meet their needs physically, spiritually, and emotionally. I have a sign that hangs in my office that says ‘If you always do what you always did, you’re always gonna get what you already got.’ A lot of us have in our minds what church is like, and for a lot of other people out there, that’s not what church is like for them,” he explained.

He also expressed the need to “keep the main thing, the main thing,” which is keeping Christ at the center of everything that the Center for Reaching New People, and the Conference, do in Arkansas.

“We are guilty in the church of focusing on our own needs, instead of focusing on the needs of others. We’re not reaching the least, the last, and the lost that Jesus calls us to reach.”

But the Center isn’t looking to reach just one group of people in the church; they want to reach everyone.

“Millennials are leaving the church at a very high rate these days. And that’s because we are doing church the way we have always done church. Even with younger children, they have their own children’s ministries and children’s church, and they learn about Christ and have fun doing it! But when they come back to the main



church services, it isn't church for them. We have got to do a better job of reaching all of those age groups by making church familiar to them again," Jackson said.

Merriwether will also be working within the Center for Reaching New People to help create a more ethnically diverse congregation.

Merriwether grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and through his time attending and serving at King Solomon Community Temple United Methodist Church, his local church led by Rev. Dr. Benjamin J. Ward, he learned a lot about what it takes to bring in people from all different skin colors, ethnicities and nationalities into the church.

The church was part of the original "uniting," which happened 50 years ago this year, when the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church came together in 1968.

It sat on a line in Milwaukee where Jewish, Hispanic, African, West Indies, white Catholic, and African-American communities surrounded it. The church brought together all of these different cultures under one church roof, where they could worship together as one body in Christ. This cultural church melting pot is one of the major things that influenced Merriwether's trajectory for his position as the Developer of Ethnic Faith Communities.

But Merriwether wants to make it clear that he is not trying to create African-American churches, or Korean churches, or Hispanic churches; his goal is to bring the message of Christ to all people, regardless of their ethnicity, which will then lead them to become a part of their local United Methodist Churches, further growing the beautiful diversity of believers within these churches.

"We are seeking to listen to people's needs and attend to those needs first, whether that be a physical need or a spiritual need for the message of Christ. If I'm

looking to bring in people of color only, then I risk leaving out the people who are in need. If I seek out people in need, then I can identify how those conversations [about race] happen within," Merriwether explained. "Never forget the big picture, in order to help out with a smaller one."

One of the weaknesses that Merriwether sees the United Methodist Church struggling with right now is bridging the gaps in disparity between people in the church that has existed for years.

"We've lost the ability to tell the whole story to people. The story of where we were before Christ transformed our lives and then where we are now. We tend to just tell people about where we are now, and that doesn't adequately explain how amazing the transformation in our lives was" Merriwether said. "When we connect with people who have similar struggles, we learn to bridge those gaps between us. And we start to listen to what they actually need from us, rather than just telling them how we're going to help them."

Right now, The Center for Reaching New People is working on a few projects for the future. Jackson is working with the Rev. Dane Womack on a Fresh Expressions Workshop for Young Pastors. This would be a program where pastors would come in and talk about how they have had great success with events such as Burritos and Bible Study, and how these programs can help local churches reach new people.

Merriwether is focused on researching where there is a lack of healthy, growing faith communities in Arkansas, and how the Center can begin to reach out to those communities to listen and help where they are needed.

For more information on the work that the Center for Reaching New People is participating in, contact Jeff Jackson at [jeff.jackson@arumc.org](mailto:jeff.jackson@arumc.org) or Rashim Merriwether at [rashim.merriwether@arumc.org](mailto:rashim.merriwether@arumc.org).



# A TRIP TO THE FARMER'S MARKET

BY CAROLINE EZELL  
*Featured Contributor*

As a child, my grandmother took me on walks down Main Street in Blytheville to buy small, juicy tomatoes from an old man selling from a crate he held in his lap. She helped me pick peaches in a sprawling orchard not too far from there and I would eat them over the porch railing, honeysuckle drowning the steamy air.

My first job was working at a produce stand in Jonesboro. I would buy zucchinis ladies would bring from their garden and sell them to young mothers shopping for supper. Arkansas farmers helped raise me just as carefully and tenderly as they raised their crops. As an adult, I experience a deep, nostalgic thrill visiting my local farmer's market. The Natural State boasts an ideal environment for cultivation of all kinds. Fertile soil, dense mountain forests, rivers and lakes, all make Arkansas the beautiful, natural haven it is. At the height of the summer season, our markets and stands are thriving under this sweet heat and bustling with local charm, communal dwelling places to appreciate the bounties of our Earth.

A few years ago, my grandmother moved to Texas. She insists I bring her local tomatoes when I visit. If you didn't know already, tomatoes are an Arkansas staple. They are the state's official fruit and vegetable, after all. In 1987, it was signed into law by former governor, Bill Clinton. Former state Rep. John Lipton who made the proposition said in his statement "the South Arkansas vine-ripe pink tomato has a taste, texture, appearance, and aroma second to none" and promised 20 lbs. of them to any of his colleagues who voted in favor of the measure.

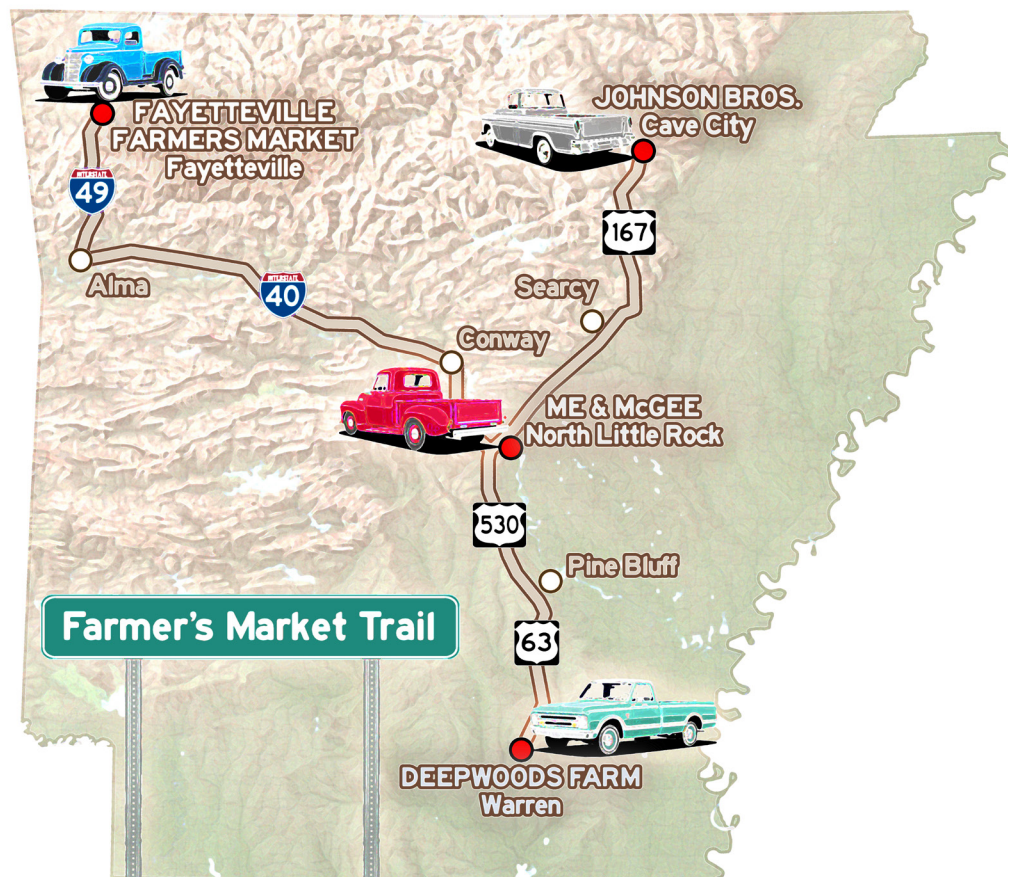
## Southeast

Deepwoods Farm in Warren, Arkansas is one place to find these notable tomatoes among many other varieties. Deepwoods is owned by the Donnelly family who has been perfecting tomato farming for more than 60 years. They have an onsite farmer's market, canning workshops, and offer the opportunity to try your own hand at tomato picking. Make sure to bring one back for grandma.

## Northwest

Saturday mornings in Fayetteville, Arkansas, are something of a great tradition. The Fayetteville Farmer's Market is award-winning and entirely saturated in whimsy. Throw on your sunhat and get there early. Each stand in the historic

downtown square bears testament to Fayetteville's "funky" claim, offering anything from miraculously intricate hand-woven baskets to delicate, shell-pink mushrooms. Gorgeous, organic flower arrangements are abundant and there are always plenty of dogs to pet, homemade soaps to smell, and local musicians stringing along tunes for dancing children and adults alike. It's an ideal southern atmosphere with a lot of quirk and a lot of quality. One, out of its almost 80 vendors, is Osage Creek Farms out of Green Forest, Arkansas. Their stand is run by the young, energetic couple, Kelton and Aubree Hays. Osage Creek specializes in grass-fed, grass-finished beef, free of antibiotics and hormones. Their cows are farm-born and raised, eating nothing but Arkansas grass from the pastures they are free to roam. Grass-feeding cows is a patient and more ethical process as it allows them to eat as they were biologically intended and reach a reasonable weight at a normal pace. "Grass-fed" is often a loaded term as it isn't legally regulated. Arkansan consumers can rest easy knowing that when Osage Creek says "grass-fed," that's exactly what they mean. "They wouldn't know what grain was if you hit them with it," Kelton says. Aubree's family has been in the business for years. Her grandfather started with only 80 acres after the Great Depression and today it has expanded to more than 1,000. Fayetteville's unique atmosphere lends so many opportunities for locals to really show off, and show off they do.



## Northeast

In Northeast Arkansas, the tiny town of Cave City prides itself as “Home of the World’s Sweetest Watermelons.” The Johnson Brothers are third generation farmers from just outside the town. Phillip and Gary Johnson have been growing their entire lives. When asked about his decision to carry on his family’s watermelon tradition, Gary Johnson, the younger half of the namesake, laughed and said he “doesn’t have enough sense not to.” When their father grew ill in 1976, the brothers, then 13 and 25, took it upon themselves to tend the beloved crops. Now, they sell from a single stand in Cave City and people travel far and wide to buy their fabled melons. You might wonder, what makes them so sweet? Rich and sandy regional soil takes partial credit, but the real secret is vine-ripening. The Johnson family takes great care to ensure each watermelon is picked ready to eat. They are selectively harvested at the height of their sugar content, and begin their deterioration the moment they are plucked. With that in mind, distributing to grocery stores and shipping long distance is nearly impossible because of their limited shelf life, making them a truly local treasure. Cave City even hosts an annual festival honoring these legendary watermelons and their various growers in the area. Take advantage of these while you can, the season is beginning and they won’t be Johnson-certified delicious for long.

## Central

Me & McGee is a delightful little market in North Little Rock. Anyone who walks in the door is welcomed by their honorary greeter, Roxie, a sweet, brown dog who loves to visit. Roxie’s friendly “hello” is a total embodiment of the warmth at the heart of Me & McGee. The clever name may sound familiar. Janis Joplin’s classic, Me and Bobby McGee, sings the virtues of love, contentment and freedom. These ideas are not far off from the vision of Debbie and her very own Larry McGee. The husband and wife duo got started selling pecans from their orchard at a roadside stand in 2011. Now, they exist as a family-run marketplace and it’s, by no exaggeration, a bounding success. It’s an outlet for all kinds of goods including homemade breads, salsas, dill chips, and pickles just to name a few. Written on one of their chalkboards is the phrase, “you can’t buy happiness, but you can buy plants, and that’s pretty much the same thing.” It’s a tribute to their goal of keeping it simple and rejoicing in the small things.

When you shop Arkansas local, you can always count on a lot of heart, a lot of community, and a whole lot of fresh Southern eating.

---

# Seeking an end to childhood hunger

*Since 2014, 200,000 Reasons to Fight Childhood Hunger has worked to fulfill their mission of making sure no child in Arkansas goes hungry. Check out the video by subscribing to the digital edition of the Arkansas United Methodist.*

**200,000  
REASONS  
to fight childhood hunger**

 United Methodists of  
**Arkansas** disciples making disciples  
united against childhood hunger

# Growing the Kingdom by Serving Local Churches and Members

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas helps local churches establish and grow endowment funds. It's a great tool for local church members who want to leave a lasting legacy for their local church. Vice President of Development Janet Marshall can assist in starting an Endowment Committee or resourcing an existing Endowment Committee. The Foundation provides free written materials, and Janet will travel to your church to provide information and answer questions.

UMFA also offers Provide & Protect seminars to local church groups. The seminars are led by Janet and a local attorney to help individuals make decisions on wills and estate planning. As part of this free seminar, participating members receive a *Wills Guide*, a workbook for creating a will, and a copy of the book *Provide & Protect* by Charles Schultz.

The Foundation also helps individuals who want to support their church and other United Methodist institutions beyond their lifetimes by providing guidance on life income gifts. Weekly information is also offered to church members at no cost through the *News You Can Use* email newsletter.

Give Janet a call today or contact her at [jmarshall@umfa.org](mailto:jmarshall@umfa.org) to learn more about how UMFA can help your local church build endowments and provide planned giving assistance.



*Vice President of Development,  
Janet Marshall*



**The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas**

5300 Evergreen Drive • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205  
501-664-8632 • Toll free 877-712-1107 • Fax 501-664-6792 • [www.umfa.org](http://www.umfa.org)

