

The Arkansas United Methodist

LIVING OUR FAITH

September 2018 | Volume 166, Issue 2



Why
Women
Should Lead

**BUILDING
HOPE**

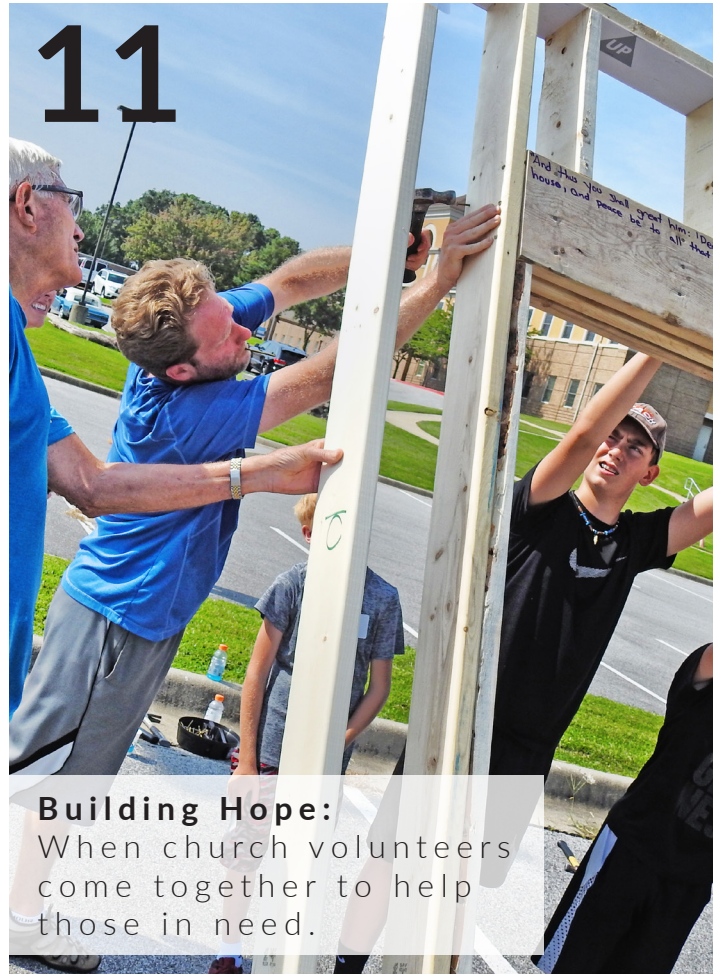
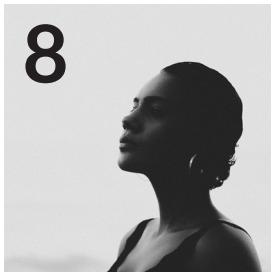
**ENDING
HOMELESSNESS**
in Eureka Springs

**HISPANIC
HERITAGE
MONTH**

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VOLUME 166, NO. 2 • SEPTEMBER 7

Caleb Hennington, Digital Content Editor

Amy Ezell, Director of The Center for Communication

Cover: Volunteers gather on Aug. 11 at Central United Methodist Church in Rogers, Arkansas to rebuild a home for a man whose home was destroyed by an April 13 tornado.

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.

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STORY IDEA?





Caleb Hennington
Digital Content Editor

Hands and Feet

Do you ever feel inadequate as a follower of Christ? On the outside, you appear to be following Christ's instructions to care for the widowed, the poor, the orphans; anyone who needs a little help in this harsh and sinful world. But on the inside -- when you take the time to reflect on what you've done -- you can't remember the last time you volunteered your own time and energy to lend a hand to someone else.

This past month, I visited a volunteer project in Rogers, Arkansas, where close to 100 volunteers from many Northwest District churches met up at Central United Methodist Church to help build the wooden frames for a man in Mountainburg whose house was destroyed by the April 13 tornado.

Seeing all of those folks -- both young and elderly, women and men, skilled and unskilled in carpentry -- work to build a house for someone who was left with nothing thanks to the fury of nature was both inspiring and, to be perfectly honest, convicting.

When was the last time I did something like this? How many days, nights, weekends, could I have volunteered to help out others who had less than I had? I was there doing my own part by capturing the work, sure, but how could I say I was doing as much as those who were literally sweating and toiling to build this man a brand new house?

I mention this thought not to make anyone who reads this feel bad about their own commitment to volunteer work; If anyone should feel convicted, it is I and I alone. But I mention this to remind us all what it means to truly sacrifice what you have been blessed with in this life in order to help out a fellow human being who cannot help themselves.

If we are truly called to be the hands and feet of Christ on this earth, then maybe it's time we use those hands and feet to better the lives of another.

Volunteering time and effort isn't easy; if it was, then it wouldn't be a sacrifice.

“...Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Matthew 25:40 (NIV)



Faith Funds

Good Advice

The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas provides financial advice to local congregations and individuals, according to John Stroud, a former UMFA Board member, attorney, and former Arkansas Supreme Court Justice and Arkansas Court of Appeal Chief Judge.

“Janet Marshall and other staff members travel the state to meet with local churches and tell them about their mission to start endowments,” he said. “They also offer expert advice and assistance on lifetime and testamentary gifts. Many people put off making these decisions and are hesitant to see an attorney to get the process started.”

John calls the *News You Can Use* newsletter emailed from UMFA to over 14,000 Arkansas United Methodists “full of good advice and information about taxes and other matters.” If you would like to begin receiving this fact-packed electronic e-newsletter, email jmarshall@umfa.org.

As one of his first actions when he joined the board in 2006, John helped his church, First UMC in Texarkana, move \$837,000 from several money managers to UMFA for investment management. Through excellent investment performance and the addition of new funds raised for an endowment to provide for maintenance of church facilities, the church’s total endowment had grown to \$2,507,135 at the end of 2017.

If your church is interested in learning about investment management options at the Foundation, email ctrice@umfa.org or call Clarence Trice at 501-664-8632.



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LPI interns serving churches in Texarkana, Fort Smith

Three Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI) interns are working in Arkansas congregations this summer thanks to \$1,500 grants to support each internship from the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas.

The interns are students or recent graduates of the college preparatory school in El Paso, Texas, supported by our South Central Jurisdiction.

“Without the support of United Methodist congregations, the students who are flourishing there would be on the streets in Mexico,” said LPI Director of Development Richard Hearne. “The LPI student interns are experiencing exactly what living in the U.S. is about. When they leave Arkansas at the end of the summer they will not be the same, nor will the churches they are serving.”

Peter Hernandez has been busy this summer teaching Sunday School class, leading youth ministry games, attending mission camps, helping the church staff with the building renovation tasks, and serving as a “big brother” to youth is in his second year as a summer intern at First UMC, Fort Smith. The First UMC, Texarkana, congregation is hosting two LPI interns, Santiago Tarin and Raquel Escalero-Alvarez.

These interns are assisting with Vacation Bible School, the church music department, children’s ministry, and a ministry serving foster children’s clothing needs.

“Lydia Patterson Institute is an important jurisdictional ministry,” said Rev. Mackey Yokem, UMFA Grants Administrator. “The internships help Arkansas congregations get to know how Christian faith, values, and knowledge converge at the school to give students from Mexico an excellent educational experience.”

In addition to grants for LPI interns, UMFA has made a commitment to the Arkansas Conference to match LPI donations up to \$250,000 over three years ending in 2019. Several members of local churches in the conference have taken trips to the school in the past two years to learn more about its mission.

Every Christian can share Jesus' love



Gary E. Mueller
Bishop of the Arkansas Conference

I did not become a Christian because of a pastor, program or congregation. While each of these things eventually played an important role in my faith journey, I became a Christian because a high school friend invited me to a United Methodist Youth Fellowship meeting, shared about her relationship with Christ in a way that made sense to me, and then walked with me as I explored, questioned and dug deeper.

This is evangelism, and I doubt my friend had any idea at all that's what she was doing. In fact, she probably would have denied it fervently if she had! It was real, relevant and filled with grace. It was personal – for her and me. And it helped me find what I did not have any idea I had been looking for all along.

At its heart, evangelism is simply Jesus' followers caring enough about people to get to know them, love them and share their story about the difference Jesus makes in their lives. Evangelism must be grace-filled and grace-fueled. It has to acknowledge that Jesus' disciples have to earn the right to share their story because they have first demonstrated how much they love. It must treat others as people precious to God and not objects to be converted. And perhaps most of all, evangelism must demonstrate the same love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross. In fact, I am convinced this is the only type of evangelism that will be able to tear down the walls that have been created by a church characterized by prosperity gospel televangelists who manipulate the poor for their own gain, rocked by sexual abuse scandals and too easily mistaken as just another manifestation of the Republican or Democratic parties.

We human beings are created by God to thrive through living in relationship with God. If we don't experience this kind of

relationship, we struggle to survive. This is a relationship both God and human beings long for, even if we don't always acknowledge it. God is so serious about this relationship that God took the initiative to send Jesus, his only Son, to do whatever it took to give us what we absolutely need but can never get on our own: salvation, healing, abundant life, hope and eternal life. Indeed, Jesus doesn't just give us enough in this life to scrape by; Jesus gives us more than we can ever use.

This is why the best person to share this reality in real ways is someone who already has experienced it so deeply she or he can't wait to share it with others. Quite simply, it is why Jesus calls his disciples to be the ones who make more disciples. As unbelievable as it may seem, Jesus is inviting you to join God's mission in the world of helping others experience Jesus' unconditional, invitational and transformational love.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ who makes disciples begins with your relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It involves you taking the time to get to know someone and genuinely care about her or him. It continues as you share how Jesus has made a difference in your life. It includes walking with that person through her or his questions, concerns and deep reflections. It insists that you make room for the Holy Spirit to work.

Far too many church members refuse to be evangelists because they don't feel worthy or able to handle such a huge undertaking. While this is understandable, it is also sad. It's also why this is the time to work at unleashing a new culture in the church based on an entirely new assumption. Every Christian can share Jesus' love in real life through real ways with real people.

This column originally appeared on UM New's website under "Many Voices, One Faith." The original article can be found here <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/commentary-every-christian-can-share-jesus-love>.

It takes a church to raise a village

BY REV. DR. WILLIAM O. REEVES
Featured Commentator

If I might be forgiven of the sin of pride, I'd like to brag a little bit. Recently the chair of the team that oversees our mission ministry reported to one of our Sunday School classes that our church sponsors eleven different mission projects throughout the year, some annually, but some as often as weekly, mostly local, but some international. In addition, we are involved in 23 mission partnerships with projects and non-profits in our community. If something good is happening in our town, there are probably some Methodists at work. Finally, we have two church-wide mission activities each year, both of which support our conference initiative, 200,000 Reasons, to end children's hunger.

I can be proud of the involvement of the church because I have very little responsibility for it. Most of it was happening before I became their pastor. I do encourage a missional spirit, but then I just get out of the way and let the lay people work. It's pretty amazing.

In this issue of the Arkansas United Methodist, you can see several examples of lay folk in ministry. Lay ministry is the key to vitality in the church now and our hope for the future. Historically, the ministry of the church was in the hands of the laity. In the 20th century, as the ministry became more "professional," clergy began to dominate, and churches began hiring staff to do ministry. As the church began to decline 40 years ago, the paradigm began to shift back to our historic roots, and the empowerment of lay ministry became a critical component of church growth. Nowadays, vital churches have abandoned the "attractional" model of the past century and adopted a "missional" model that reaches outside the church, mostly through lay people, to transform lives, communities, and the world. (Does that phrase sound familiar?)

Lay ministry is a response to a CALL. We all have a call from God to be in ministry, and God has given each person gifts to perform ministry. (See Romans 12:3-8 and I Corinthians 12:4-27) Some are called to representative ministry as pastors or full-time Christian workers. Most of us are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our everyday lives, in our workplace, school, and home. God does amazing work through ordinary folks who actually have more contact with the lost, broken, hurting people of the world than those of us who spend most of our time inside our ecclesiastical walls.

Lay ministry can be so much more FRUITFUL than professionalized ministry. Remember when Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38) One professional scythe-slinger can only cut so much grain, but put 200 workers in the field, and they are through before lunch. One pastor in a church can work herself to exhaustion and



still not get everything done. If 20 or 200 lay people serve the Lord only two or three hours a week, it exponentially multiplies the ministry. The Kingdom work bears more fruit.

Lay ministry can be more EFFECTIVE. I was called and gifted to be in ordained ministry; hopefully I have been effective at the tasks I do. But my church would not be effective if they had to rely only on the things I'm good at. I have seen people do amazing works of God in areas that are beyond my capability. I have seen people spend hours, days, even weeks caring for broken souls in times of sickness and grief. I'm not as good at children's and youth work as I once was. I cannot lead a choir, play the piano, produce a spreadsheet, or build a wheelchair ramp as well as some of my lay people can. I don't need to, because they can! And so the church is more effective.

Lay ministry brings its own REWARD. Service to God does not escape our Master's notice. Jesus said, "Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward." (Matthew 10:42) This is not the reward of salvation; we are saved by faith, not by works. But it is the reward of satisfaction and joy at making a difference in the lives of others and in the Kingdom of God. Deep down, I think we all long to hear those words from Jesus at the end: "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Master!" (Matthew 25:23)

The vitality of the church now and forever belongs to the vast majority of disciples of Christ who are not ordained, professional Christians. For almost four decades I have been privileged to serve in ordained ministry. But it would have been a long, hard, lonely and unproductive road without the dedicated and effective lay ministers who have walked the path with me. Thanks be to God for that incredible gift! If you are a lay person and have persevered to the end of this column, I encourage you to be that gift to your pastor, your church, and your Lord.

Somebody fell down

BY TODD BURRIS
Featured Commentator

The week following Annual Conference, my family and I headed to Dauphin Island, Alabama for a much needed vacation. Some dear friends joined us, which meant there were nine people in a small house for the week. I've never been one to make annual trips to the beach, but I can see why so many people do. After a couple of days, time seemed to slow down. The peace and joy of being surrounded by family and friends is always uplifting, and the toughest decision I had to make was whether to go for a Yahtzee or settle for three of a kind.

One night on that trip, we saw a big storm building across the Mississippi Sound. Having never been to Dauphin Island before we didn't know the normal weather patterns, and we were therefore unsure if that storm was coming at us or if it would pass by. As I think back I realize some strong similarities to where we are as a Church. We can all see the storm, but we don't know which way it's heading. In our local churches, we are surrounded by our families and friends. We have felt insulated from the storms building in our communities, in the nation, or even around the world. The storm clouds of contention continue to grow, and this time we appear to be directly in its path.

As a delegate to the 2016 General Conference, I felt like I was in the middle of a social media argument. You know the type, where each side labels the other as either ignorant or uncaring, socialist or conservative, Christian or non-Christian. Sometimes they throw out all civility and label each other as a Democrat or Republican. I remember thinking, this doesn't represent the church family I worship with because we would never talk to each other like this. The relationships we have allow us to see each other as children of God and not just an opinion. And until we are able

to share that love and grace with each other as a global church, we will continue to treat symptoms of a much bigger problem. John Wesley in his sermon on "Catholic Spirit" said, "Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may."

A few weeks ago I was fixing a leaky pipe in my front yard. This required me to lie on my stomach as I was trying to replace the offending section.

As I lay on the ground singing the "praises" of home ownership in the heat and humidity, I heard a family walking down the street behind me. Being familiar with the sound of a child's electric vehicle I realized it had stopped and this sweet, innocent little voice said "somebody fell down." His parents quickly assessed the situation and told him that I was just fixing a pipe. But that loving little boy refused to leave again saying, "somebody fell down."

We have all fallen down. I know I have fallen well short of this calling God has placed on my heart. But yet that little voice refuses to be silenced. The Holy Spirit manifested through a friend, colleague, spouse, or stranger sees when we fall down... and refuses to walk away. I am comforted by the fact that God's love remains and challenged by the words to the Ephesians, "I therefore the prisoner in the lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3 NRSV)



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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. Will Choate, founding pastor of Argenta United Methodist Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

The Spirituality of Fundraising by Henri Nouwen

I just completed my first capital campaign. I would have preferred God to have just given us our beautiful new building rather than asking me to ask others for the money to build it. However, as Nouwen highlights, fundraising is not just a means to an end but is a ministry that is just as important as the ministry for which we are raising funds. Fundraising, whether we are asking or being asked, is always a call to conversion.

Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self by Richard Rohr

We often directly — or indirectly — ask, “Who am I?” and “Who is God?” Rohr helps me embrace the idea that the discovery of our true self is also at the same time a discovery of God. While our false self and its misplaced motives and desires help us create God in our own image, when we discover our true self we realize that now is enough, God is enough, and we are enough.

American Gospel by Jon Meacham

Last month, the Satanic Temple installed a statue depicting their winged half-goat, half man deity on the lawn of the Arkansas State Capitol. This was in protest to the nearby Ten Commandments statue, which is protected by thick concrete bollards due to its first installment being destroyed by a man driving his Dodge through it while yelling, “Freedom!”

Meacham reminds us that, from our founding, the American balancing act of church and state has never been easy. He highlights how our founders were neither apostles nor secularist — as the extremes would hope — but intended to create a nation where all people, regardless of belief, could uncover what Lincoln called “the better angels of our nature.”

*Are you an avid reader? Do you want to submit your own books for recommended reads? Contact Caleb Hennington at caleb.hennington@arumc.org to submit your list for consideration, and you could be printed in next month's *Arkansas United Methodist*.*



4 reasons why women should lead

BY KAT ARMAS

Featured Commentator

The topic of women in Christian leadership has been a hotly debated one since the Church's inception. When we take a look at our current culture, particularly the scandal surrounding #MeToo and #ChurchToo, it becomes apparent that there isn't a more prudent time to talk about women within the Church.

Thankfully, we come across many reasons in Scripture of why women should be included in leadership.

Here are four:

Women were equal in creation

In Genesis, both men and women are given equal responsibility to bear God's image and have dominion over creation. Unfortunately, many assume men possess a greater charge to lead partly due to the fact that the word "helper" is used in reference to woman (Genesis 2:18). However, the Hebrew word ezer that is translated as "helper" does not imply a subordinate role. In fact, 17 out of the 20 times it is found in the Old Testament, it refers to God. The other times it is used to describe a military aide.

In Hebrew, ezer refers to someone in a superior position that has the power to help another person. God is called ezer because he helps his people do what they cannot do on their own. Thus, when the first woman was called a "helper" it meant that she was unlike the animals in that she was of the same nature as man with the same capacity for a relationship with God.

The creation narrative affirms that women are suitable companions of men, created with equal power and strength to rule over creation.

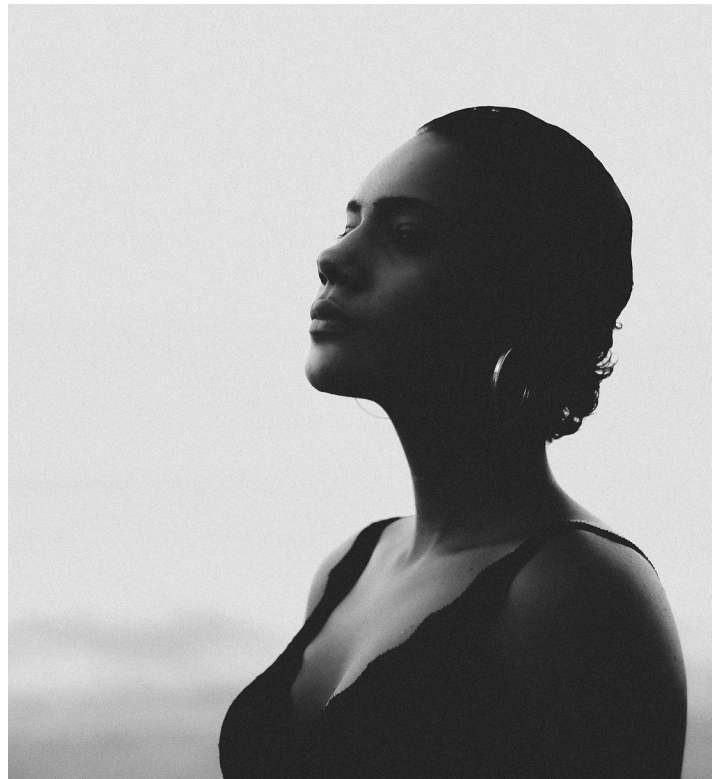
Jesus affirms women

When we read about Jesus against the backdrop of first-century, Middle Eastern, Judaic culture, we can't help but notice his radical inclusivity toward women.

For example, he broke traditional and cultural norms by engaging with a Samaritan woman in public, who in turn, became the first evangelist to Samaria. He also called a woman who had been "bound by Satan for 18 years" a "daughter of Abraham" (Luke 13:16). The expression "son of Abraham" was common in this patriarchal culture, but no records show that "daughter of Abraham" had ever been used. By saying this, Jesus declared this woman—an outcast of society—an equal heir to his new kingdom.

Jesus also affirmed that Mary of Bethany was doing the right thing by "sitting at his feet" instead of partaking in hospitality, which was the cultural norm for women at the time. In antiquity, the phrase "sitting at the feet" literally meant, "being a disciple."

Similarly, Luke 8:1-3 describes by name several women disciples traveling with Jesus, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna



and Susanna, who financially supported Jesus' ministry.

Women played a significant role in the early church

Women were not only an important aspect of Jesus' earthly ministry, but they played a significant role in the early church. Besides the women at the tomb being the very first witnesses and preachers of Jesus' resurrection, we know of Lydia, the first convert and leader in Philippi (Acts 16), Priscilla, who instructed Apollos about Jesus (Acts 18), Junia, who was praised by Paul as a well known apostle, and Phoebe, who delivered, translated, and most likely funded Paul's letter to the Roman Church (Romans 16). We also read about women who led churches in their homes including, Mary the mother of John Mark, and Nympha, a leader in Laodicea. (Acts 12:12, Colossians 4:15).

The Spirit's gifts are not gendered

When Joel the Prophet prophesied about Pentecost, he claimed that "in the last days" God will pour out his Spirit on all people, both sons and daughters, men and women (Joel 2:28). This is realized in the early church, as the "gifts of the Spirit" are not gender-specific when spoken of in any New Testament text.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses both "brothers and sisters" when speaking of the spiritual gifts, claiming some will perform miracles, some will prophesy, some will be teachers, others evangelists and even others pastors. The Spirit endows gifts to both men and women, as God sees fit, for the building up of the Church.

Homes for the Homeless

ECHO Village works to end homelessness in Eureka Springs

BY CALEB HENNINGTON

Digital Content Editor

Buried deep within the Ozark Mountains of Northwest Arkansas sits Eureka Springs -- a town of just over 2,000 citizens -- where the intersection of faith and art meet in endlessly unique ways.

There's the famous Great Passion Play, a weekly event that takes place from May through October of each year and retells the story of Jesus Christ's last days on earth.

There's the Eureka Springs Art Colony, which sits at the base of the road leading up to the Great Passion Play, and is a place where artists from all over the country live and work together with other artists to display their artwork through various mediums.

And there's also the town of Eureka Springs itself, a beautiful Victorian-era spa town which many consider to be the most LGBT-friendly town in Arkansas, and -- perhaps -- the most LGBT-friendly small town in America (an anomaly in a typically conservative state in the South).

All of these different cultures and lifestyles intersect in the town to create a community where uniqueness is celebrated, diversity is welcomed, and "weirdness" is the norm.

But it isn't just Eureka Springs dedication to being different that make it a fascinating place to live; it's also the dedication of its citizens to make the town a better place for all, no matter what a person's living situation happens to be.

That's where ECHO Village comes into the picture. ECHO Village is the brainchild of Suzie Bell and her husband, Dr. Dan Bell.

ECHO Village is a living community for individuals who are homeless, low income, or in need of financial assistance in some form (single mothers, people recovering from drug addiction, former prisoners, etc.)

The idea for the community sprung from conversations that Suzie and her husband were having while working and managing ECHO clinic -- which stands for Eureka Christian Health Outreach -- a faith-based free medical clinic for uninsured, low-income individuals who are at or below the federal poverty level.

The Bells founded ECHO together in 2005 through conversations they had at their local United Methodist Church's Bible study. They realized there was a need in the town for a health clinic for those who were unable to pay for medical care on their own.

The clinic provides medical, dental, optometry care, physical therapy, counseling, pharmaceutical needs, and other services, and is staffed completely with volunteer doctors and physicians. Its mission is to "joyfully provide the best health care possible to individuals in need, so that all feel God's love through the



One of the eight houses in ECHO Village sits nearly complete on a 10-acre plot of land in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.



A volunteer sits on top of one of the homes to help assemble the roof of a new house in ECHO Village.

experience.”

Over the years, ECHO clinic has seen people of all backgrounds and needs come through its doors. An astounding number of clinic patients – more than 40 percent, according to Suzie – are housing insecure, meaning they are either homeless or living with a friend or family.

“We realized that when we’re treating patients – let’s say someone who has bipolar disorder, for example – and we’re giving them the help they need, but then sending them back out into the world without a healthy environment to live, then we’re really not solving the problem,” Suzie said. “That’s why we decided that we had to do something more to give them some assistance.”

As a simple solution, ECHO was putting people up in motel rooms, but a motel room is only a temporary fix for someone who is living without a permanent home. Something more needed to be done.

So, Suzie set out to find a way to solve the problem of homelessness in the town. She wrote a grant application to receive funding for a mental health home, with the intention of providing a place that could serve as a stepping stone for people to pull themselves out of whatever dire situation they may be in at the time.



A volunteer paints the outside of one of the ECHO Village homes.

After receiving their grant money for the first home, the Bells purchased 10 acres of land on Passion Play Road, and have dedicated the land for as many as 26 small homes to be built on it.

The houses will be built in phases, with phase 1 consisting of the first eight homes that will make up the inaugural ECHO Village community.

These are not “tiny homes,” however – they are full size residencies for families. The smallest of the homes is 450 square feet but the largest homes can be as large as 1,400 square feet. The homes will come furnished with necessary appliances, including a washer and dryer.

The task of building the homes in ECHO Village is being completed by volunteers from various church groups around Arkansas, and even some outside of Arkansas. They also partnered with World Mission Builders – a group that normally builds churches around the country – and in a few short days, a group of 66 volunteers had the framework of the first eight houses up and set into the foundation.

First United Methodist Church Eureka Springs has also been a huge asset for the work of completing the homes in the Village. They have volunteered time and money to sponsor the building of



A volunteer paints the outside of one of the ECHO Village homes.

a 2-bedroom home in the Village, and once residents have moved into the Village, church volunteers will also be offering their time to teach free classes at the Village. These classes will cover topics such as how to balance a checkbook, how to budget your money, how to write a resume, and other courses that will help residents make a better life for themselves.

As far as requirements for applying to live in ECHO Village, residents will need to agree to follow the covenant of the Village in cooperating with one another and helping each other when a need arises.

“If you’re a single mom living there, and you need someone to watch your child until you get off work at 5, then maybe it will be the elderly neighbor next door who provides childcare for you while you are away. You have to agree to work together and share the gifts that you have with others in the community,” Suzie said.

Rent fees required to live in ECHO Village will be based on the residents’ incomes, and will be adjusted to a fair rate based on higher or lower income.

Residents are also required to undergo a police background check. No violent offenders or sexual predators will be allowed to live in ECHO Village, in order to ensure the safety of all residents.

Those who are homeless – with no source of income – would either qualify for a transitional residency in the Village until they can provide for themselves, or ECHO will work with individuals to get them HUD qualified, meaning 100% of their rent would be paid by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Suzie expects the first eight homes to be finished sometime this fall, with residents moving in soon after, if all goes according to plan.

“There’s going to be pride in this. We hope that we can get these people in these homes soon” Suzie said. “They aren’t going to be fancy, but they’re going to be nice and it’s going to be something that we hope will give them great pride in themselves.”



The 40 assembled walls were placed in the back of Byron Mann's trailer, as well as other trailers, to be transported to the build site in Mountainburg, Arkansas.

Building Hope

Methodists from Northwest Arkansas
rebuild a home for Mountainburg resident

BY CALEB HENNINGTON
Digital Content Editor

Shortly after 4 p.m. on April 13, 2018 – Friday the 13th, as it happened to be – a devastating storm barreled through Western Arkansas, hitting parts of Crawford County. The majority of the storm's damage – and what was later discovered to be an EF-2 tornado with peak winds of up to 120 mph – devastated the small Ozark Mountains town of Mountainburg.

The tornado cut a path through almost 12 miles of Crawford County, uprooting trees, snapping power lines, flipping cars and trapping residents inside of their homes. In total, the tornado damaged dozens of homes and injured four residents of Mountainburg in the process.

But for one resident of Mountainburg, the tornado did more than just damage his home; it completely destroyed it, leaving him without a place to call his own.

Jay Dollard – a Mountainburg resident whose home was destroyed by the April 13 tornado – was unsure of his future after that fateful spring day. Left to pick up the pieces, Dollard was forced to move in with a gracious friend while he figured out what to do next.

At the same time that Dollard was contemplating his future, another group of people were contemplating how to help the people of Mountainburg in any way that they could.

Always Ready

Janice and Byron Mann, who oversee the operations of the United Methodist Church's Volunteers in Mission and Disaster Response groups of the Arkansas Conference, were immediately aware of the need for help in Mountainburg the day after the damaging storm came through.

Whenever an emergency happens, they get notified through Emergency Management, Red Cross, and other emergency response partners. Once they are aware of a disaster need, they can then try to connect with a community through a local church in the area.

"When a local Methodist Church opens its doors and steps out and responds to disaster in their community, then that opens the doors for us as the Conference to come in and bring resources," Janice said.

Mountainburg, however, was a bit different for VIM and Disaster Response, because there was no local United Methodist Church in the town. But the group was able to show up to Mountainburg on the Saturday after the storm and connect with a local non-denominational church in town, as well as city officials, in order to begin the process of delivering aid to those in need.

In a typical situation, VIM and Disaster Response works like this: in order to help with emergency relief, they first need to know where their services are needed. Byron hits the road in his Disaster Response vehicle and scouts out locations that are in need of help. Then, he gathers basic information from people in the affected community to find out their immediate needs. Once that information is gathered, VIM and Disaster Response go back and reconnect with people through case management to figure out what those in need can do for themselves to recover and what VIM and Disaster Response can do to help them further. The needs can range in scale anywhere from basic necessities -- like food, clothing and medicine -- to major projects, like a brand new home.

A new home was exactly what Dollard needed; once the Manns found out about Dollard's situation, they set to work figuring out a way to make a new home happen for him.

Separate Projects, Same Idea

While overseeing a separate project called ECHO Village to build homes for the homeless and low-income in the small town of Eureka Springs, Byron and Janice found exactly the group they needed to get the Mountainburg project off the ground and running.

Help Build Hope – a program of Crossroads Missions – dedicates their time and resources to training volunteer workers how to build wooden frames for new homes. They provide the training staff, instructions and tools for volunteer events and then teach people how to accomplish the hard work of building a home.

According to their website, Help Build Hope is about "Building Partnerships, Building Relationships, Building Community and



A group of young and older volunteers work together to assemble a wall of Dollard's new home. The volunteers that showed up on Aug. 11 were both men and women, young and old.



Jay Dollard, whose home was destroyed by the April 13, 2018 tornado in Mountainburg, was present during the building of his home, even joining in to assemble the walls of his home with volunteers.

Building Homes." Since 1999, the group has worked to build more than 900 homes for people all over the United States. And they do it all with the help of selfless volunteers who are dedicated to giving their time, effort, and resources to helping others.

This was the gift from Heaven that the Manns were looking for, and Byron quickly worked to set up a volunteer weekend in Northwest Arkansas to build Dollard a new home.

Done In A Day

After presenting the idea of rebuilding Dollard's home to the Northwest District, three churches in the area – Bentonville First UMC, Rogers First UMC, and Central United Methodist Church – jumped at the opportunity to help Dollard out.

4'-0" X 4'-8" DBL HOLLOW CORE DOR
2'-8" X 4'-8" SOLID CORE POCKET DR



Volunteers lift one of the interior walls built during the build weekend in Rogers, Arkansas. Volunteers were encourage to write Bible verses or words of encouragements on the boards of the walls that were assembled. In all, 40 interior and exterior walls were assembled on Aug. 11.

The weekend of Aug. 10 and 11, a group of volunteers consisting of those original three churches – plus Eureka Springs First United Methodist Church and Harrison FUMC – arrived at Central United Methodist Church in Rogers to help build the framework of the new house.

The fundraising for building the house was an ecumenical effort by a variety of groups in Arkansas, including Arkansas Episcopal Disaster Relief, Arkansas United Methodist Disaster Response/UMCOR, Christian Aid Ministries, Presbytery of Arkansas/PDA, and The Salvation Army of Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Building supplies were provided by a number of local businesses, including Brian McCain Construction, Hugg & Hall, Meadors Lumber, Mid Continent Concrete, Mountainburg Outreach Tornado Relief, Ridout Lumber of Rogers, Robert Berry, Ronnie Stout and Company and the Backroads Band, Shane Parker Plumbing, and Sunrise Truss.

In total, there were more than 80 volunteers that showed in the parking lot at CUMC to rebuild Dollard's home. Women, men, children and the elderly all worked together – following the carefully laid out instructions provided by Help Build Hope – to put together all of the interior and exterior walls for Dollard's new home.

Amazingly, the group was able to finish 40 frames and load them into the Disaster Response truck in fewer than 3 hours. The frames were then driven down to the build site in Mountainburg and unloaded by another team of volunteers.

A few weeks later, once the concrete foundation of the new house was poured, another group of volunteers stood the frames up in preparation for the next steps in the homebuilding process.

All-in-all, the house being built for Dollard will be a two bedroom, one bath house that is around 940 square feet.

As of the publication of this article, the concrete foundation, walls, and metal roofing of the house had been completed.

More Than Just A Project

It wasn't just Dollard that received a blessing from a new house being built for him, although it certainly was the main focus of the project.

Although Dollard was humbled and amazed at the people who showed up for the building project, he saw something else in the volunteers that day.

"The way a lot of have talked that I've met, they feel like they're receiving a blessing by helping me and it makes them feel good as well," Dollard said.

Janice echoes Dollard's feelings of a higher spiritual benefit from doing volunteer work.

"Right along with the Conference trajectory, these folks out her are doing activities that are creating relationships with each other, creating relationships with the homeowner, creating relationships with the folks that are coordinating this, and working together – which is exactly what Jesus wants us to do as disciples," Janice said. "And if there's anyone out here that doesn't know Jesus personally, this could very well be the place that they meet him."

Byron also believes in the spiritual power of volunteering.

"I've always said that we're blessing the people that we're doing this for, but folks that are doing the work – the ones that are putting their hands on the work and meeting the affected families – it just shows Christ love in a real way," Byron said. "They aren't expecting a blessing, they are being one, by being the hands and feet of Christ."

But Janice stressed that they don't do these projects to convert non-believers or those of a different faith to believe in the teachings of the United Methodist Church. However, going out and volunteering to help those who are less fortunate opens the door for conversations about faith and spirituality.

AS UNITED METHODIST

FIN FLR 100'-0"

The Future

For Disaster Response and VIM, the work is never truly done. There's always a house to rebuild, concrete to be poured, clothing and food supplies to be delivered, or someone who just needs a little help getting through the hard times in life.

Right now, Disaster Response is in the process supplying help to a few other families in Mountainburg besides Dollard. They have replaced a couple of mobile homes in Mountainburg that were damaged from the storm, but they are still needing volunteers to come out and help build the steps, porches, and a wheelchair ramp. They are also finishing up projects in Northeast Arkansas – in the Pocahontas area – that were affected by the 2017 Black River flooding.

ECHO Village, an ongoing project for many years in Eureka Springs, is also being assisted by Volunteers in Mission and Disaster Response.

And of course, the group is always ready to assist when a disaster hits anywhere in the state.

“Our goal is, when we have these small storms all around Arkansas that cause damage and are not FEMA declared as disaster areas, that we can pull these efforts together in other locations,” Byron said.

As the work for the day came to a close, Dollard stood watching it all, in awe of the many people who devoted their time to helping him have a new home.

“I'm really just trying to absorb all of this right now. It's amazing,” Dollard said.

It was no surprise to Janice, however; the labor they had done together that day, in a church parking lot in the middle of the sweltering summer sun, was evidence of a higher power at work.

“When we see that everything has fallen into place – like it has with this project – then we know that God has had a hand in it,” Janice said.



Top: After assembling the walls and setting the concrete foundation, volunteers in Mountainburg, Arkansas worked to stand up and place together the walls of the new house. Bottom: The completed home sits at its new location in Mountainburg, with a brand new roof, provided by Sunrise Truss.



Young people from around the world meet for 2018 GYPC in South Africa

BY CALEB HENNINGTON
Digital Content Editor

The 2018 Global Young People's Convocation was an exciting time, particular for those in the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Five Arkansans were selected to attend the GYPC, which took place July 18 – 22, 2018 in Johannesburg, South Africa. These were the most Arkansans that have ever been selected to attend the event, so it was a great honor for the young women and men who were given the chance to go.

The GYPC is an event that takes place every four years, and brings together youth from all over the globe to a new location every year. While attending the event, youth get to worship God in a variety of languages and expressions; fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ from different social, economic, cultural, political, and theological backgrounds; learn vital leadership skills that they can bring back to their home countries; and participate in a Legislative Forum where they will discuss issues being faced by the church and the world in which they live.

Lauren Lovelady, one of the five delegates selected from Arkansas, was elected into the Young Adult's category as a non-voting delegate. While at GYPC, she participated in small groups and workshops where she listened to diverse conversations and shared her opinion with other delegates.

"The most memorable thing I learned was that no matter the culture or language spoken, God can break down those barriers and allow us to communicate in a magnificent and beautiful way," Lovelady said. "I was so moved by the worship, and at times I really had to take a step back and think about where I was and what I was experiencing. It's not every day that you get the chance to have so many people from different parts of the world in one place, and I felt truly blessed to get the chance to experience that."

When delegates registered for the event, they were able to choose topics that they were most passionate about, and the small groups they were placed in were based around those selections.

Lovelady's choices were Poverty/Economy, UMC Theology and Spirituality, and Sexism/Feminism. She was also able to attend workshops that focused on various topics of global interest. One of the workshops that impacted her the most was a session on climate change.

"We split up in small groups to talk about changes in weather over the past 10 years, and the members of my group represented the Philippines, Latvia, the Congo, and South Africa. Despite the distance between us, we all came up with similar answers about the weather patterns in our country. After leaving that session, we all felt very motivated to come home and make a difference in our own communities."

Brandon Bates, an adult youthworker voting representative from Little Rock, also had a lot to take away from his small group



Delegates from the South Central Jurisdiction gather for a photo at the GYPC. From left to right: Brooke Hobbs - Central Fayetteville, Miller Wilbourn - Pulaski Heights, Creighton Park - Conway FUMC, Brandon Bates - FUMC Little Rock, and Lauren Lovelady - Piney Grove UMC.

experience.

Bates was in a group of nine; three from Germany, one from the Philippines, and the remaining five from the United States. Two of the American representatives from the South Central Jurisdiction were the children of immigrants from Nigeria and Kenya, but were born in America. But Bates said that the differences between them were actually a strength.

"With all of the seeming differences, we quickly bonded, found a lot of common ground and agreements on issues that we discussed," Bates said. "That's not to say there were not any disagreements, especially during our times of voting, but we were able to share about our lives and local contexts, and have better understanding of one another, even when words were shared through a translator."

Aside from the applicable knowledge that Lovelady was able to take away from the GYPC, she also had an eye-opening experience learning about the host country where GYPC was held this year, South Africa.

With the end of apartheid in South Africa being a relatively new law – apartheid legislation was repealed in the early 1990's thanks to the efforts of activist Nelson Mandela and others – many of the effects of that dark period of racism and segregation are still felt in the city of Johannesburg.

"The city contained visible division between races and genders, which was surprising to see. In some ways I felt like I was in a time capsule, seeing some of the struggles of those in the Civil



Members of a South African Choir lead worship during a session of the 2018 Global Young People's Convocation in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Rights Era in the United States,” Lovelady recalled. “It was hard to see that reality first hand, but it also helped me become more educated about their struggles. The effects of the apartheid are still very prominent in the country, especially in the capital city of Johannesburg.”

Overall, Lovelady sees the GYPC as a vital part of the growth of youth within the United Methodist Church; not just in the United States but globally.

“I have been a member of the United Methodist Church for my whole life, but I never had the chance to experience it globally. It was amazing to see how impactful our church is around the world and to listen to stories about what others are doing in the church,” Lovelady said. “Despite our differences in culture and

beliefs, we were all still able to be united with each other and remember the reason why we were connected in the first place. GYPC is a life-changing experience that allows you to see the Church and the world in a different and extremely impactful way.”

Bates also views the GYPC as an important piece of the global United Methodist Church body.

The voices and opinions of young people within the UMC aren't always fully represented at the General, Jurisdictional, and Annual Conferences, but the GYPC, according to Bates, helps to express those voices in a more unified way.

The next GYPC will take place in 2022.

For more information on GYPC and this year's event, visit <https://umcyoungpeople.org/about/gypc-2018>.



The South Central Jurisdiction from the United States gathered together at a table to discuss their experiences while attending GYPC.



Hispanic Heritage Month a time to celebrate culture, diversity of United Methodist Church

BY CALEB HENNINGTON
Digital Content Editor

Each year – from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 – people from all different backgrounds and nationalities come together to celebrate their Hispanic-Latino heritage during Hispanic Heritage Month.

According to HispanicHeritageMonth.gov, Hispanic Heritage Month is a celebration of “the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.”

Hispanic Heritage Month can trace its history all the way back to 1968 – a year that should be very familiar to those in the United Methodist Church – when President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed that Sept. 15 would be the beginning date of Hispanic Heritage Week.

President Johnson – through the signing of Proclamation 3869 on Sept. 17, 1968 – brought attention to the many outstanding improvements that people of Hispanic descent have contributed to the United States national heritage, through areas such as our national culture, business, science, and military service.

Later, in 1988, President Ronald Reagan expanded Hispanic Heritage Week to encompass a 30-day period, from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15, inaugurating the official celebration of Hispanic Heritage

Month.

Sept. 15 is not an insignificant date for those of Hispanic descent – it is the anniversary of independence for many Latin American countries including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile also celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively.

In the United Methodist Church, the contributions and importance of Hispanic church members also cannot be ignored.

In an article written for the Discipleship Ministries website, the Rev. Liana Perex-Felix of the Memphis Conference urges church members to avoid falling behind in Hispanic Heritage Month celebrations, noting again the astounding contributions that they have made to this nation. She also lays out some ways that churches can participate in the month-long celebration, including:

- a formal dinner with traditional cuisine and music from Hispanic-Latino countries that are represented in your congregation
- special worship services where elements of Hispanic-Latino culture are included
- guest speakers who focus on issues that Hispanics/Latinos are facing
- independence celebrations for the various Hispanic and Latino countries represented in your congregation
- sermons and Sunday school classes with Hispanic Heritage

Month themes

- coloring books for children that show Hispanic-Latino heritage

In addition to celebrating the varied cultures that are already found in church congregations, there are also ways to reach out and build new congregations of Spanish-speaking and Hispanic churchgoers.

Through groups like the various Conference Hispanic/Latino Ministries and The General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Churches are working to not only serve the needs of these communities, but to help grow vital and sustainable church homes for Spanish-speaking individuals as well.

Path 1 is one way that these groups are being reached within the UMC.

According to the Discipleship Ministries website, “Path 1 is a team of mission-driven, passionate and diverse leaders drawn from national, regional and local levels of the United Methodist Church, providing collaborative leadership to evangelize the United States through new congregations.”

In Arkansas, a Path 1 Hispanic Ministry Training course will be offered for those who wish to receive vital training that will help them to create new congregations of Spanish-speaking and Hispanic United Methodists.

The Rev. Jim Benfer, one of two clergy who will be leading training sessions at the Path 1 training courses this fall, sees a need in Arkansas for more churches to reach out to those Hispanic communities that have been forgotten in the past.

“Whether we realize it or not, here in Arkansas we have a large community of Spanish-speaking people, and they are often ignored when we talk about reaching new communities for the United Methodist Church,” Benfer said.

That’s the problem that Path 1 is hoping to fix. The training will take place at the Nueva Vida United Methodist Church in Dardanelle, Arkansas, and the curriculum will highlight key topics and tools that will help churches create more diverse, Spanish-speaking congregations.

The curriculum will include discussions on basic church planting information, basic structure and polity of the United Methodist Church, theology and spiritual disciplines that follow the Wesleyan tradition, creating action plans to reach communities, growing and multiplying ministries to build healthy church DNA, and more.

Training will take place in Spanish, with English translation also available.

The training dates for Path 1 are Sept. 15, 22 and 29; Oct. 27; Nov. 3 and 10; Dec. 1 and 8; and Jan. 5 and 12. All training dates are free of charge.

In addition to Rev. Benfer, the Rev. Vitalino Mendez will also be leading training sessions for these dates.

For more information on Path 1 training and how you can get involved in growing Hispanic and Spanish-speaking congregations in your community, contact Rev. Benfer at jim.benfer@arumc.org or call the Nueva Vida UMC office at (479) 229 – 3720.



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Fond Memories of Camp Tanako

This summer, [Camp Tanako](#) celebrated its 70-year anniversary. Over the years, the camp has meant many things to many different people, but the overall feeling toward the camp has held consistent throughout generations of campers: a place where people can grow in their faith by experiencing the beauty of God in nature. We've gathered some of the fond memories from past campers -- and current camp deans -- along with pictures from the past to attempt to capture what this camp means to so many United Methodists. All photos courtesy of the Rev. Hammett Evans.

Mackey Yokem

When did you attend Camp Tanako, and did you attend as a camper or as a volunteer?

I began attending Tanako in 1963, first as a camper in Junior High Camp and then Senior High Camp and Conference Camp. Later, as a young pastor in the Little Rock Conference, I began leading camps and then as the Conference Youth Coordinator I was responsible for planning and leading Conference Camp (a camp for local church UMY leaders).

What are some of your best memories of Camp Tanako?

My favorite memories are the people that I met and the lifelong friends made while at Tanako. (Gladwin Connell, John Miles Sr., Ed Matthews, Don Riggan, Billy Boyd Smith) These are people that helped me make significant life decisions and have nurtured me my entire life. I still see people today that were fellow campers at Tanako. We laugh and remember our time together. I do remember the camp songs, skits and the jokes we played on each other. But I guess the most significant thing is the foundation that Tanako gave me for a life long ministry in the church.

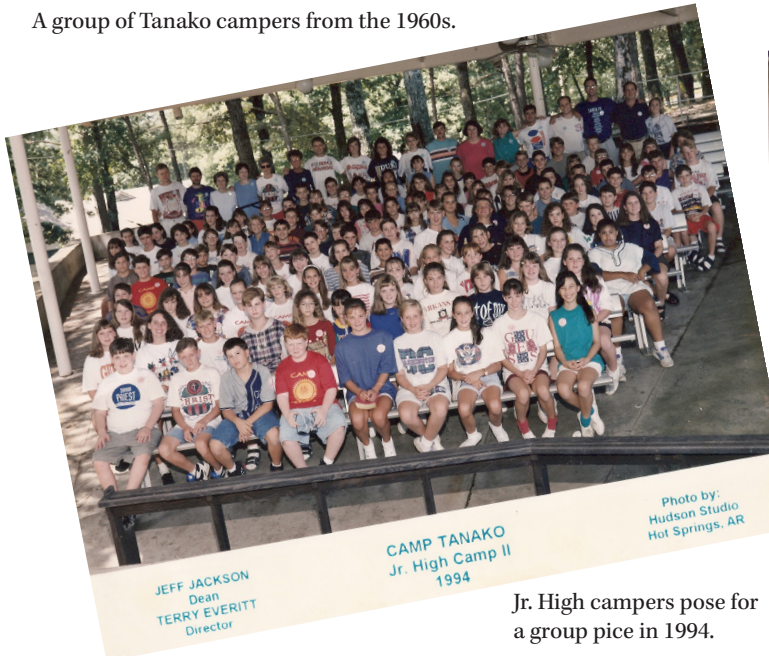
What are one or two stories from your time at camp that you would like to share?

No stories, just memories:
Chuck's singing "You done stomped my Heart flat!"





A group of Tanako campers from the 1960s.



JEFF JACKSON
Dean
TERRY EVERITT
Director

CAMP TANAKO
Jr. High Camp II
1994

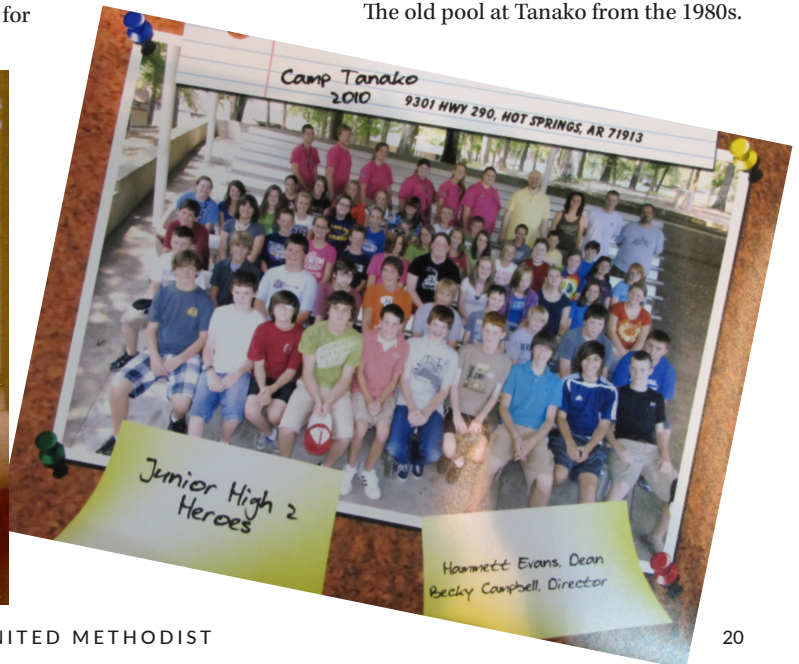
Photo by:
Hudson Studio
Hot Springs, AR

Jr. High campers pose for a group pic in 1994.



The old pool at Tanako from the 1980s.

A camper poses for photo at the Camp Tanako chapel.



Camp Tanako
2010
9301 HWY 290, HOT SPRINGS, AR 71913

Junior High 2
Heroes

Hammett Evans, Dean
Becky Campbell, Director

Running underwear up the flagpole.
Food fight in the Mess Hall.
Girlfriends (that's all I need to say about that!)

How do you think the camp has changed or stayed the same since you first attended?

Tanako is different because the world is different. The curriculum has modified due to the change in society with the attempt to

make the Gospel relevant to the youth of today. There has been expansion of facilities and upgrades. While some of the buildings are still in use when I was there, some necessary updates have occurred.

I do believe that some things have remained the same, and I am grateful for them. The caring and challenging staff, the spiritual environment, and the sharing and teaching of the Gospel in an outdoor setting.



A camper gets a pie to the face during Winter Weekend.

Hammett Evans

When did you attend Camp Tanako, and did you attend as a camper or as a volunteer?

From 1974-1981 I went to Camp Tanako for church retreats (with Hunter UMC in LR and Wesley UMC in Pine Bluff). I attended Choir Camp in the summer of 1982 as a camper. Sometime around 1980, my brother, sister, and I stayed with my mom when she served as a volunteer at Senior High Camp (I remember she led a small group discussion on the Social Principles).

I served as a volunteer counselor from 1993-1995 at Junior High Camp and from 1996-1999 at Senior High Camp (as well as LR Conference Winter Weekends). After I got back from seminary, I served as the preacher at Senior High Camp in 2004. I served as camp dean for Junior High II from 2006-2011 and have served as dean for Senior High Camp since 2012.

What are some of your best memories of Camp Tanako?

Watching the sunrise during morning worship in the chapel. Serving as a volunteer counselor in my mid-twenties helped me to clarify and respond to my call to pastoral ministry. Getting kicked out of the pool by Rev. Carr Dee Racop. The terrifying moment during a water balloon fight when the counselors suddenly realized we were way outnumbered by junior high campers. The way Terry Everitt helped me to overcome my homesickness when I was a camper. Digging marbles out of canned dog food with my toes.

What are one or two stories from your time at camp that you would like to share?



The first year I was dean, I met this young man named Tyler. Good kid. Big kid. He was one of the boys in my cabin, and he was the kind of kid you like to have in your cabin, just loves camp and wants to have fun, doesn't bother anybody.

Tyler came back the next year, and he was in my cabin again. Tyler was a big boy and more country than most of the other kids in my cabin, and they started picking on him ruthlessly. One young man tried to get them to stop, and I did the best I could, but they just kept on and on and on...

That Thursday night in worship, we talked about how Jesus was treated the last week of his life, and the bullies realized they had treated Tyler that way. They seemed to be truly sorry for what they had done, and they apologized to him.

Tyler told me he didn't care what they said. He didn't have any use for them, especially the ringleader who had been so vicious, and he wouldn't accept their apologies.

A year went by, and Tyler came back to camp. After the worship service Thursday night, some of the boys came and asked if they could go back to the chapel and pray. I gave them permission to go with a counselor and told them I'd be right up.

When I got there, I could hardly believe what I saw. There was the ex-bully ringleader, head in his hands, balling his eyes out. He was having a tough time with some stuff going on back home. Tyler was right there beside him, with his arm around his old enemy, praying for him.

Later that night, Tyler said, "Hammett, this is my last year at junior high camp, and I want to tell you what I learned. I learned humility, I learned unconditional love, and I learned forgiveness."

Top: Campers worship during a service in 1998, led by Rev. Britt Skarda.

Right: Brice and Eleanor Evans with two other PKs stand behind Milroy at Camp Tanako, circa 1980.

Bottom: The Rev. John Fleming smiles for the camera while attending Camp Tanako.



How do you think the camp has changed or stayed the same since you first attended?

The facilities are much improved, and the way the camp operates (with staff counselors, etc.) has changed, but the mission of welcoming children, youth, and adults to a place set apart where they can grow in faith by experiencing God in nature, spending time in community, and responding to the call of the Holy Spirit is the same. Over the last 25 years, I've seen the lasting difference that Camp Tanako's ministry has on the lives of young people, and I'm grateful to have had a small part of that.

Registration for Camp Tanako's Fall Family Camp, Oct. 5-6, is now open. To register, follow this link <http://tanako.org/family-camp/>.



