

# The Arkansas United Methodist

LIVING OUR FAITH

October 2018 | Volume 166, Issue 4

# How

the Lydia Patterson Institute  
changes lives on the border

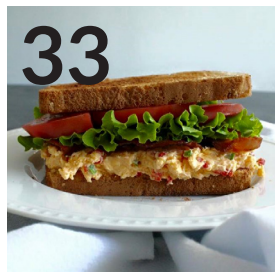
Forrest City UMC  
**COFFEE  
HOUSE**

Ingathering  
**2018**

**ALL  
SAINTS  
DAY**

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## STORY IDEA?



# Being thankful when it's tough



**Caleb Hennington**  
Digital Content Editor

It's finally November; a month typically associated with giving sacrificially and being thankful for your blessings.

At least, that's what November is supposed to be about. But these days, I feel like it's becoming increasingly more difficult to reflect on what I'm thankful for in this world.

Maybe it's because I'm keenly aware of all the pain and sadness that's going on in the world. As a journalist, I can't help but pay attention.

When I turn on the news at night, or open up Facebook and Twitter, or read the breaking news notifications that seem to constantly ping on my phone these days, the reality of how bad this world has genuinely gotten comes fully into focus.

Immigrant children separated from their families at the border; homeless individuals forced to beg on the streets and sleep stretched out on benches during cold, harsh nights; not enough food to feed all the hungry mouths and empty bellies; folks who can't afford to visit a doctor because of rising health care costs; violent and vulgar rhetoric constantly streaming from a place historically revered in American society as an honorable institution. If you take the time to stop and think about all the things wrong with the world today, you run the risk of spiraling into a deep, dark and depressing place.

Recently, I was able to get away from it all for a weekend camping trip at one of my favorite places in The Natural State: The Buffalo National River in the majestic Ozark Mountains. My wife and I, along with our pup, spent some time in nature, truly

roughing it in a small, 4-person tent, cut off from running water, electricity and any trace of a decent cellphone signal.

And it was wonderful.

Cut off from texting, calling, tweeting, posting, emailing, and – most importantly – the 24-hour news cycle, I was forced to retreat into the quiet of nature and my personal thoughts.

It was the perfect environment for reflection; not just on the things that make this world tough but the things that make it beautiful, as well.

I can tell you this, there's no better place to think about the elegance and majesty of God's handiwork than when you're sitting in an 8-foot by 9-foot tent with only a thin layer of polyester separating you from the cold chill of an autumn thunderstorm and the flooded ground outside, slowly creeping its way up to your tent.

And I did reflect. I reflected on the things I've been blessed with so far: a great life, married to a beautiful woman who cares for me and helps me to navigate my way out when I fall into the trap of dark thoughts. A fantastic job that allows me to tell the wonderful stories of the good people who belong to the United Methodist Church in Arkansas. My amazing support group of family and friends that are there when I need to vent about something that's bothering me or share the joy of something that's making me laugh that day.

And a God that cared enough about me – a person who's just a minor hiccup in the timeline of creation – to create an escape plan from the sin and hurt of this world through the sacrifice of his Son more than 2,000 years ago.

So, as we move into November and everything that comes with this season of thankfulness and giving, remember that no matter how bad the world gets, there's always a reason to be thankful.

There are countless ways you can learn to give back to others who may not be feeling so thankful about their life situation right now, like volunteering at food pantries or donating clothing and other supplies to shelters.

And if you need to, take a page from my book and learn to get away from the distractions of this world that seek to cause you stress. You'll be glad you did.

# What Kind of Church Do We Want To Be?



**Gary E. Mueller**  
Bishop of the Arkansas Conference

**W**hat kind of church do we want to be? In a sense, it's so audacious to think I could possibly answer such a question that I need to repent for even considering trying. But it's also so important that it's essential to try, even if I fall short.

The question about the future of the church is never merely theoretical because many of us have lived our faith in the United Methodist Church and long for it to be as vibrant and faithful as possible. It is never asked in a vacuum, but in the midst of real life that involves everything from the upcoming 2019 Special Session of the General Conference, to the reality that our church's place in the culture has moved from being privileged and at the center to marginalized and at the edges, to the painful admission that we continue to grow smaller and older in spite of all our best efforts. And, perhaps most importantly, it can never be reduced to simplistic answers that revolve around defining the church merely by a theological stance, worship style or size.

So, here is what I hope United Methodist churches will be like in Arkansas in the coming years. Some of what follows is fully developed and some still a vision yet to be grasped. Some of it has staying power, and some probably needs to be tossed aside. Some is ginormous in scope, and some may be insignificant. But that's okay. Such is the nature of seriously listening to God, immersing myself more and more in the deepest pain and longings of the world, and going deeper in my journey as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

I pray we will be a church rooted in the 2,000-year-old Orthodox Christian faith that is shaped by the Wesleyan understanding of grace – Jesus' unconditional, invitational and transformational love. Think what a difference it could make if each

of us grew for a lifetime into the riches of the Christian faith and were filled with such compassion that we cannot wait to share with others the blessings of salvation, healing, hope and joy that we have received as a free gift when we needed it most.

I long for us to be a church so filled with the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to do things we otherwise would never do. Think what a difference it would make if we could not wait to get out of 'our church' to share Jesus' grace in a snarkified culture, were united in Christ in a polarized world and took Jesus to the people instead of waiting for them to come to us.

I hope we will be a church that is so passionate that we are willing to invest, innovate and take risks to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Imagine what a difference it would make if we took to heart that Jesus selected ordinary people as his disciples, sends the Holy Spirit to empower us, and is still telling us to go out and make disciples with boldness because he is with us always.

I pray we will be a church that is so authentically humble we take Jesus absolutely seriously, but not ourselves. Think what a difference it would make if we were to listen as well as talk, receive as well as give and welcome as well as seek.

I hope we will be a church that lives out the Wesleyan heart that transformed America. Imagine what a difference it would make if we truly 'see all the people' and go to them because we care so much that they experience Jesus' love in real ways that we work to make an actual difference in the lives of those who are hungry, sick, struggling to find hope and suffering oppression.

I want us to a church that grows. Imagine what a difference it would make if towns where churches are closing become towns where churches are growing, if members were growing into disciples, if congregations were growing in their ministry with the people right outside their doors and if churches were growing in the number of people worshipping, participating in intentional discipling groups, being baptized and professing faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

When all is said and done, all we really have is Jesus. He is the Shepherd, and we are the sheep. He is the vine, and we are the branches. He is the head, and we are his body. Imagine what a difference it would make if we were passionately in love with Jesus, proclaimed him as Lord and Savior, made him the reason for our being and were so serious about him that we actually tried to live the way he shows us.

We would be Jesus' church not just in name, but in spirit; not just on Sunday in the sanctuary, but every day out in the world; not just with those with whom we feel comfortable, but with those on the edges; and not just as another institution, but as the Body of Christ that shares his saving, healing and joyful love with a world that longs for it even if it doesn't know it yet.

May it be so.



## Faith Funds

### *A Wise Steward of Resources*

Local church endowment funds can be a powerful way to expand the church's ministry," said C. E. McAdoo, senior pastor of Saint Andrew United Methodist Church in Little Rock. "Churches with successful endowment programs have educated their members about creative giving alternatives, and they've been wise managers of the funds entrusted to them."

Rev. McAdoo, who previously served more than 10 years on the board of the United Methodist Foundation, says the Foundation helps local churches with both of these key ingredients for success. The Foundation is a great source for expertise in charitable giving, and the Foundation has a great track record in providing investment management services to local churches and institutions.

"Thanks to the expertise and experience housed at our United Methodist Foundation, local churches can focus on educating and encouraging their members to support their church's endowment. The Foundation handles investments and reporting for over 150 local churches."

"Make or plan an endowment gift today, and know it will support the church you love forever. That's a story that needs to be told. And then told again."



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## Get benefits of gift annuities now, help the church down the road

BY JESSICA SZENHER

*UMFA Contributor*

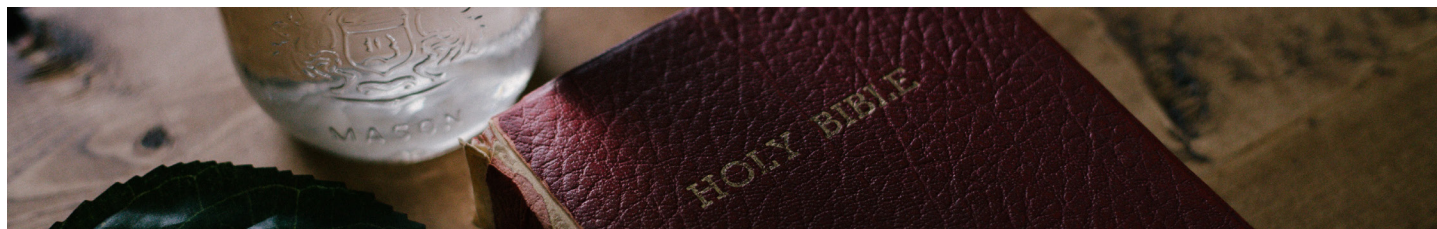
**T**he United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas' gift annuities can be a powerful giving tool, especially for seniors on fixed incomes. They offer attractive rates of return on invested funds as an alternative to CDs or savings accounts.

"Gift annuities provide a guaranteed lifetime income that can continue to a surviving spouse," said Janet Marshall, UMFA Vice President of Development. "They also provide an immediate income tax deduction, and part of the annual income from the gift annuity is tax-free." Gift annuities are also extremely safe; the Foundation's obligation to make required annuity payments is backed by all of the Foundation's own assets."

In addition, gift annuities provide the security of either immediate payments or larger payments deferred to a future date. They can be established with a gift of cash or appreciated stock. Annuity payments can be made monthly, quarterly, twice a year, or annually. Annuity payment amounts depend upon the donor's age, whether it is a one-life or two-life agreement, and the amount of the gift.

Most importantly, gift annuities allow faithful stewards to create a future gift to the United Methodist Church, a gift that can continue the work of the Kingdom after their lifetimes.

The Foundation provides a free, personalized, confidential analysis regarding a gift annuity to interested church members who contact Janet at [jmarshall@umfa.org](mailto:jmarshall@umfa.org) or call 501-664-8632. Using the analysis, church members can easily determine how their gift annuity would work, what their guaranteed lifetime income would equal, and how much they could immediately deduct on their next State and Federal income tax returns.



# At The Table

BY REV. MARK K. NORMAN

*Featured Contributor and General Conference Delegate*

**Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” - Matthew 14:16**

**T**he past few years have honestly been a whirlwind, as I recall the time spent in prayer before attempting to run for the delegation. I am what is called “an Annual Conference Baby.” I can remember always being in the church. My grandfather was a presiding elder in the segregated Central Jurisdiction, and my father was an elder in the Little Rock Conference. I recall being in the first row of Hot Springs First United Methodist Church and falling asleep during the sermon, but waking up to hear the words of Bishop Wilke ordaining my father. Years have come and gone, but one constant in my life has been the people called United Methodist in the state of Arkansas.

Another memory that I recall was when my grandmother came to visit for a meeting at Philander Smith College. My ears still ring with the stories of the great women and men of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Conference. The heated discussion about the impact of being integrated into this new thing called the United Methodist Church. What would they lose or gain by integrating? Would they have a place to serve God? What could happen to their local church?

I’m humbled to have the opportunity to be the lead clergy delegate to the 2019 General Conference for the Arkansas Conference. The past three years were a year of firsts: first time to run for the delegation and first time attending the general/jurisdictional conference. Now as I prepare for the called session of General Conference, I am still praying, still learning and always humbled by the opportunity to attend the special session of General Conference in Saint Louis.

For most of us, it is the first time that we face a paramount in our denomination. Whether there is a decision made or not made, I think we can all agree that we are not going to be the same church on February 26. We have had numerous discussions about the Commission on A Way Forward, and I have heard from many of you in both the rural and urban areas that make up our state. I appreciate the heart and honesty of Arkansas United Methodists; you have shared your hopes and fears about the future.

There has also been much discussion about schism. Schism is “a division between people, usually belonging to an organization, movement, or religious denomination.” It seems that ever since

1972, the United Methodist Church has dealt with the issue of human sexuality. The decision before us is about so much more than human sexuality; it’s about our understanding of scripture, the mission of the church, our doctrine, polity, and the list goes on and on. It leaves many of us confused, frustrated, and just downright furious!

When I served at Saint Paul Maumelle, the question was often asked, “Preacher, Is there a word from the Lord?” Friends, I believe there is a word! I am even crazy enough to believe that there is a word for the United Methodists of Arkansas! For the past two weeks, I’ve heard Bishop Mueller proclaim from the pulpit what kind of church we are called to be: A JESUS CHURCH. He has shared the passage from Matthew 14 where Jesus feeds over 5,000 with two fish and five loaves of bread. While reading this scripture, the words of verse 16 began to ring in my ears. The Message states, “THERE IS NO NEED TO DISMISS THEM. YOU GIVE THEM SUPPER!” The disciples were trying to scatter the people away, but Jesus called them to have a meal with the people. The disciples were at a point in their ministry with Jesus that they felt the teaching and healing was over, and it was time to disburse.

What if we did the latter? Instead of scattering ourselves, what would it look like if we had supper together? Instead of dividing ourselves based on The Traditionalist Plan, The Connectional Conference Plan, or The One Church Plan, what if we had dinner with someone supporting a different plan? We group ourselves in our formal silos of people who affirm and reflect what we believe. While we all may not agree on how to address what my colleague Rev. JJ Galloway calls “Hurricane February,” can’t we decide to come to the table with people who may look or think differently from us?

The purpose of this article is not to solve the problems of our church. I know it is not simple. I want to challenge us not to dismiss each other but invite each other. When is the last time you had a meal with a colleague outside of our group from this Conference? When was the last time that you may have had someone who you didn’t agree with over for supper? Instead of dismissing each other, can we invite each other to a meal? I challenge all the United Methodists of Arkansas, both clergy and lay, meet at the table. What better time than now to come to the table when our world encourages us to stay apart.

*This is part of a continuing series from members of the Arkansas Delegates who will be traveling to St. Louis for General Conference in February 2019.*

# Generating Gratitude

BY REV. WILLIAM O. (BUD) REEVES

*Featured Commentator*

**D**o you ever have a hard time feeling grateful? Maybe it's the age I am—I'm entering my "curmudgeonly years." Or maybe it's the age we live in. But some days it's just hard to give thanks.

- The political chaos of our country and the world is so disheartening. I still read a daily newspaper, but I've taken to calling it "my daily outrage."

- Our denominational future is at best uncertain; I vacillate daily between hope and despair.

- People are hurting everywhere I turn: sick, dying, hungry, poor, lonely, dealing with grief, divorce, mental illness, and dementia. I hurt for them, and sometimes for myself.

- I worry about the future of our church, our nation, our planet, and my children and grandchildren.

Some days I find it hard not to live with a "bunker mentality"—hunkered down, drawn inward, just trying to protect myself and my loved ones and hang on as we slide down the tubes.

That's no way for a disciple of Jesus Christ to live! We are called to "give thanks in all circumstances." (I Thessalonians 5:18) How do we generate an attitude of gratitude? In this season of Thanksgiving, how do we give thanks?

I remember the Cokesbury hymnal song from days gone by: "Count your blessings, name them one by one; count your blessings, see what God has done." When we think about it, we really can.

- God has brought us through tumultuous times before, both in our country and in our church. Our "better angels" have always prevailed.

- In our personal struggles, sometimes a time of trial turns out to be a time of great spiritual growth. "In all things, God works for good." (Romans 8:28) Through my worst times, I have still grown and learned. Even death is not the final answer; we have eternal life in Jesus.

- The Word of God assures us, over and over, that we need not fear; God is ultimately in charge, and we can trust in God's providence. Scripture gives us reasons to be thankful.

- If we can get quiet before God, we can hear the "still, small voice" say "peace," and in our hearts we know it's true.

Of all the saints I have known—men and women, clergy and laity, young and old—the one universal quality of character I have seen is gratitude. To a person, the saints are thankful. I don't think that's an accident.

Gratitude generates stewardship. When we realize that everything we have is a gift of God, we strive to take care of what we have been given.



|| *Photo by Nathan Dumlaio on Unsplash.*

- Thankful for creation, we care for the planet, from individual acts of conservation to advocacy for the big issues of recycling, climate change, and responsible development.

- Thankful for our country, we participate in the process. We get informed; we vote; we engage in dialog for our best values.

- Thankful for our church, we serve with our "prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness." Regardless of what happens with our denominational structure, we have a vital mission to make disciples and transform the world.

When we stop and think, God has been gracious to us in so many ways. So, in return, "like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. ...Whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen." (I Peter 4:10)

I think I'll put up my bad attitude, put down my "daily outrage," pick up my Cokesbury hymnal, and sing!

# The Forgotten Books of the Bible

Hendrix professor places ideas of Five Scrolls into current social context

BY MICHELLE MORRIS

*Featured Contributor*

In just a few sentences in his introduction, Hendrix Associate Professor and Mercy Community Church of Little Rock founder, Dr. Robert Williamson captures the aim of his book: “I hope that reading this book may open up a little-known part of the Bible to you in new and unexpected ways. These forgotten books have a lot to say. I don’t expect you will agree with everything they (or I) have to say, but I do hope they may provoke you to think and act in more theologically rich ways – as they have done for me” (xix). About halfway through his book, I realized how true that statement was. Each of the biblical books he examines are contrary voices to some dominant perspectives of Scripture. Then Williamson himself applies the texts to amplify voices in our current context that at times struggle to be heard.

Williamson studies the Five Scrolls, the Jewish name for the books of Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. He points out that while each of these books have come to take a precious place in Jewish faith, as readings from these books are all tied to significant moments in the Jewish year, they are frequently ignored in Christian circles. Perhaps the reason for sidelining these texts is that they present somewhat challenging theological perspectives. In fact, Williamson shows through his careful study how these works challenge the voices of other biblical texts.

Song of Songs, with its joyful celebration of sexual expression, stands in contrast to the restrictive passages of Leviticus and some of Paul’s letters. Ruth is a bold answer to Ezra-Nehemiah’s call to cast out the foreign wives and children, as Ruth is a Moabite woman who not only integrates into Judah but becomes the great-grandmother of King David. Ecclesiastes presents a voice with little to no hope in an afterlife and a theology that God can be unreliable, which stands in notable contrast to much of the New Testament. Esther tells a Jewish story from a position of oppression which, while many of the biblical texts are written from similar perspectives, are not necessarily the voices we most like to hear.

At the center of the book, though, Williamson’s discussion about Lamentations may capture the heart of his project, and

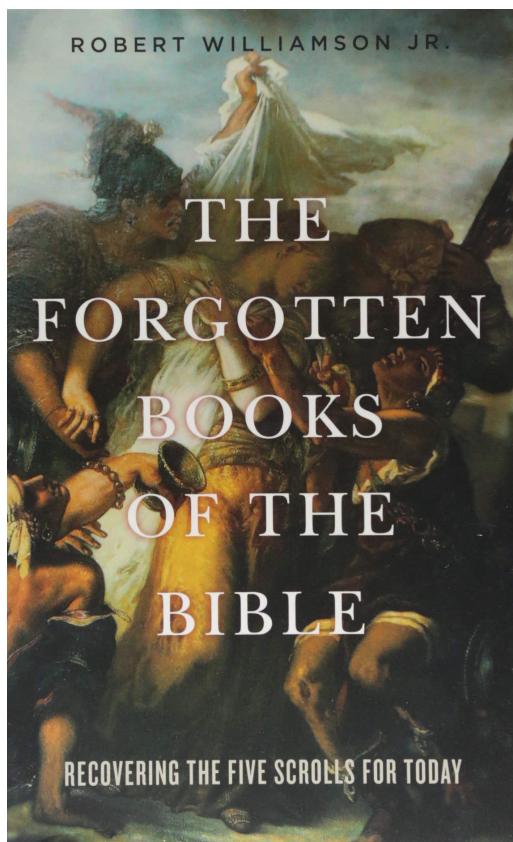
may also serve a great need in the church, and our society, today. Williamson points out that there are five voices in conversation in Lamentations: the Funeral Singer, Daughter Zion, the Strong Man, the Scoffer, and the Community Voice. Williamson takes time to distinguish the unique social and theological perspectives of each voice. In the end, however, the Community Voice finds ways to hold all of them together. That final voice recognizes that there is wide diversity in how we respond to situations, notably traumatic situations, and that all of those voices have their validity. They should all be heard, and they should all hold together to make a complete whole. This word is one we desperately need in our church today as we struggle to find unity amidst diversity.

This book might serve as a way to begin such “holding together” work. In his application of the biblical texts to current issues, Williamson deals with the #metoo movement (Song of Songs), immigration (Ruth), Black Lives Matter (Lamentations), Terror Management Theory (Ecclesiastes), and the rise in white nationalism (Esther). Because these issues can be very divisive ones, there is a distinct possibility that this book could exacerbate some division among us. However, because this book is structured as an invitation to see these biblical books as additional voices in the conversation, perhaps Williamson’s work could inspire frank conversation that is respectful and loving. After all, if the Bible can canonize diversity of thought and ways of living, can we not also model such a community? Surely there is hope amidst lamentation.

Should this book prove too controversial to attempt as a study, I do think it would serve as a welcome resource on the Five Scrolls for pastors and seasoned teachers of the Bible. Williamson’s exegesis is careful and also

accessible. Though he works often with the Hebrew, he does so in a way that is not intimidating but rather inviting. His headings in the chapters could allow someone who chooses to do a sermon series on the scrolls quick reference to notable points about the works and their contexts.

You may not agree with everything Williamson says in this book, but do not seek agreement in reading it. Instead, seek a space for rich conversation, for in such spaces relationships grow. This potential for growth in knowledge of the Bible and each other is the central usefulness of Williamson’s work.





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7:30 p.m.

**December 2**  
4 p.m.

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book online at [bit.ly/hdxcandle2018](http://bit.ly/hdxcandle2018)  
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501-450-1495 for more information.

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## TOUR SERVICES

**First United Methodist Church > Bentonville, AR**  
December 13 > 7:30 p.m.

**Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church > Little Rock, AR**  
December 14 > 7:30 p.m.

# Ingathering preps for 2018 event

37,000 pounds of beans, 40,000 pounds of sweet potatoes to be sorted

BY CALEB HENNINGTON

*Digital Content Editor*

**M**ore than 300 United Methodist volunteers from around the state are expected to gather at the Arkansas Foodbank for this year's annual Ingathering event. Ingathering -- the largest volunteer event for United Methodists in Arkansas and the Arkansas Foodbank -- takes place from 7 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 17.

Volunteers will have the opportunity to sort, package and label produce, including 37,000 pounds of dried beans and 40,000 pounds of sweet potatoes. According to Mary Lewis Dassinger, project coordinator for 200,000 Reasons and Ingathering, that is double the number of beans from last year's Ingathering.

Volunteers at the event are divided up into various groups, where they are then given the task of either sorting produce, packaging produce into bags or bins, or labeling the packaged produce according to their contents.

Once volunteers sort the items, churches who signed up to take produce back to their food pantries will receive a certain number of items. The Foodbank stores the remaining unclaimed items until they are ready for distribution.

Two shift times are available -- 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. -- with 30 minutes of worship time between the shifts.

In addition, churches from around the state are expected to bring supplies that the United Methodist Committee on Relief will use for their disaster response kits.

This year, Ingathering is only accepting supplies for hygiene, post-disaster cleaning, and school supply kits. UMCOR distributes these kits to areas of need in the event of a disaster, such as the recent hurricanes that have hit both the Carolina coast and the Florida Gulf Coast. [Their website](#) lists the supplies needed for each of these kits.

Dassinger expects this year's Ingathering to be a great success, thanks to the growing number of volunteers who have signed up to participate.

"What I love about Ingathering is the intergenerational day of service that we can have statewide. We have very few events that bring us all together," Dassinger said. "I always hope that through Ingathering those people, especially laity, who haven't had a chance to connect with others in the Conference will have a chance to do so through Ingathering."

This year's Ingathering also brings many new opportunities for United





Top: Volunteers from 2017's Ingathering event gather for a group photo. Bottom right: Two volunteers sort beans at the Arkansas Foodbank.  
 || File photos from the Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church

Methodists to give of their time and resources.

In addition to packing produce, Ingathering is also collecting items for a Thanksgiving holiday food drive.

They are asking for churches and individuals to bring food items to the Arkansas Foodbank on the day of Ingathering. These items will help to provide holiday meals for families in Arkansas, and volunteers will be sorting and storing these items for later distribution by the Foodbank as well.

Some of the items that are needed include canned meat, canned vegetables, cornbread/stuffing mix, and canned fruit. A full list of accepted items can be found [here](#).

Another new option for Ingathering in 2018 is the opportunity to be a sponsor for the event.

Sponsorship options range from \$50 to \$1,000, and varying levels of incentives are available for each sponsorship package. Businesses that are interested in becoming a sponsor can fill out the [sponsorship information form](#) and mail it – along with a check – to the Arkansas Conference office.

For those that choose to volunteer at this year's Ingathering, it's not just an opportunity to spend a weekend gathering together with fellow Arkansas United Methodists; for Dassinger, it means much more than that.

"I really hope volunteers gain a sense of accomplishment for helping to provide food for those who need it around the state. And I hope they get to experience a sense of glorifying God in their work that day," Dassinger said.

To sign up as a volunteer for Ingathering, visit the [Ingathering event page](#) and fill out the registration at the bottom of the page.

Necessary forms for waivers and remittance can also be downloaded and printed by clicking on the links at the bottom of the Ingathering page.





## How Julie got her daughter back and her life

*This story is true, written by Steve Brawner, a syndicated columnist in Arkansas, and published in the August 22, 2108 issue of the Pine Bluff Commercial. Mr. Brawner graciously permitted us to reprint this column in whole.*

**O**n Jan. 11, 2013, Julie Johnson's daughter, Anna, didn't come home from day care. At first, Julie didn't know where Anna was, but at least she knew who had taken her: the state of Arkansas.

Before long, she began to appreciate why. She and her estranged husband were meth addicts, and their homes were no longer safe.

Eight months later, Julie (whose name and Anna's were changed for this story) was getting the help she needed, and Anna was back in her custody. On June 6, 2014, their case closed for good.

How did Julie get her daughter back and her life? With help from people who cared.

Before losing Anna, Julie and her husband had been traveling a downward path. She'd immigrated from Australia, married, and settled in Mountain Home. They started using methamphetamine. Eventually, they separated, and Anna split time between their homes. There were sessions involving the Department of Human Services. One day, Julie's husband was doing a drug deal and didn't pick up Anna from day care. The owner took her home, DHS was called, and Anna was placed in foster care.

From that point, Julie's downward path became a spiral. Heartbroken and guilt-ridden, she began using more drugs to ease the pain. Her husband moved away. She slept at his office with other drug addicts, but no one was paying the bills and they couldn't stay. Eventually, they divorced, and she became involved

in an abusive relationship, allowing herself to be beaten almost daily because she thought she deserved it.

Eventually, she sought shelter in Gamma House, which serves homeless women and children in Mountain Home. She was given a voucher to rent a one-bedroom place. Her DHS caseworker, Chuck Hurley, would drive her eight hours round trip to see Anna, who was staying with her foster parents, Nanny and Pop.

They were, she said, "the sweetest people."

"I was just so thankful, because that's where Anna began to really shine and feel like she was in a family again, and I just thank them for being the people that they were and for looking after my child when I couldn't," she said.

She eventually spent five months at [Arkansas CARES](#), a rehab facility in Little Rock operated by Methodist Family Health for women with small children and for pregnant women. It was a tough program that emphasized accountability. While there, Anna was returned to her on Sept. 19, 2013, a moment that felt "like a part of me was back." She and the other residents' children were bused to a nearby school.

Editor's note: Arkansas Centers for Addictions Research, Education and Services (Arkansas CARES) is one of the programs within Methodist Family Health's statewide continuum of care helping Arkansas children and families rebuild their lives. Next month, learn how Julie reassembled her family and began a new life because of the gifts and prayers of Arkansas's United Methodists. You can share your light this season by [making a financial gift to Methodist Family Health](#).

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517

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Lydia Patterson Institute students listen intently to their teacher during a class at the Institute. || *Photo courtesy of the Lydia Patterson Institute*

# Service, love, opportunity

*More than 100 years of educational achievement at Lydia Patterson Institute*

BY SAM PIERCE  
*Featured Contributor*

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**T**here are 322 students currently enrolled at the Lydia Patterson Institute in El Paso, Texas, and around 90 percent of those students live in Juarez, Mexico and make the daily trek — about a two-hour walk — on a regular basis.

“As I observe the drive these students have to make their lives and those of their families’ lives better, I have come to the realization that these children do not take this opportunity for granted,” Ernesto Morales, the principal at Lydia Patterson Institute, said. “Some students will be here at seven in the morning to work hours that are required for the scholarship they have been given.

“Some of those same students will be here late into the evening for student activities and sports. Any free time after school will be used for homework and studying.

“When we think of determination, I can think of few instances where I see more.”

Stephen Coburn, the Northwest District Superintendent for the Arkansas Conference, traveled to El Paso to visit the Institute last year. He had the opportunity to go to the border and walk with the kids.

“Their day starts at 4 o’clock in the morning in order to get to the border,” Coburn said. “The students that I had an opportunity to interact with are very committed to their education. They are just like students here in the United States.

“They are eager to learn, hopeful for the future, dreaming dreams and trying to pursue them.”

The Lydia Patterson Institute dates back to 1913 and is the only institution of the United Methodist Church that sits right on the border, just a few blocks from the U.S. and Mexico border in El Paso. It is also the only institution that predominantly serves Hispanics and is supported by the South Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church, according to Socorro De Anda, the president of Lydia Patterson Institute.

“We are a middle school and high school, grades 7 through 12,” De Anda said. “Seventy percent of our students cross the border every single day, and half of those students are U.S. citizens living across the border, and the other half are Mexican students that have student visas.

“Our mission is to help students that might not be able to continue their education because of a lack of resources or a lack of opportunity.”

De Anda said in the late 1800s, there was an influx of Mexican people coming into south El Paso, fleeing from the Mexico Revolution and settling in southern El Paso. She said those families had children of school age, but they were not allowed in



Students pose for a group photo during a volunteer project at the Institute. Every year, 98 percent of graduating seniors at LPI go on to attend college. || *Photo courtesy of Stephen Coburn*

the schools in El Paso, because the schools were for residents only.

Lydia Patterson, who was a member of what is now Trinity-First United Methodist in downtown El Paso, took it upon herself to travel to the barrio and teach English and the Bible to these children in their homes. When she died, her husband gave \$75,000 to the Methodist Church and asked that a school be built in memory of his wife.

“We bring them here, we teach them English, and we put them through high school, and we send them off to college,” De Anda said. “We are sending about 98 percent of our seniors to college every year, and many of them go through United Methodist colleges or universities that work with us.”

She said the minute a student enrolls at LPI, “we start training them.”

“You are not here to graduate high school and go to work,” she said. “You are here to go to college.”

“Their mindset from the very beginning, that’s what they are going to do. When the time comes, if they can’t afford it, we are going to make sure they go to college.”

“These kids are like any other kids anywhere in the United States,” Coburn said. “They are just teenagers, normal kids trying to get an education, but they work hard.”

“The commitments they have to make is just incredible. One hundred percent of their graduates go on to college somewhere. They have very high academic standards.”

“Talking to the kids, not one student complained about how hard they have to work. They were just grateful for the opportunity.”

Currently, the Lydia Patterson Institute is undergoing a capital campaign to raise money for renovations for the school and build a new chapel. De Anda said the school has outgrown its current chapel.

“The buildings were built in 1960 and are more than 50 years

old, so they need to be renovated,” she said. “We need to make sure the school remains here for the next 100 years.”

“... We have to have two chapel services because we don’t fit in our old chapel. I want a place where we can worship together under one roof.”

According to the website, the existing facilities will be stripped to the bare structure and rebuilt to the latest standards, including “updated lighting, information technology and accessibility needs.” The new chapel will also house a dining area, specialized classrooms and student gathering areas, according to the website. For more information, visit [www.lpi-elp.com](http://www.lpi-elp.com).

The school holds chapel services on a weekly basis, and the students are required to take Bible classes as part of their graduation requirements.

“This is a place where one feels like you are making a difference,” De Anda, who has been the president for 26 years, said. “You are making a difference in the life of a student; you are changing their life.”

“I have a background in finance, and people ask me why I gave that up for a nonprofit, and I always say, ‘I don’t think I made that decision. I think somebody up there made it for me.’”

“I feel like I can make a difference in the lives of our students and sometimes their entire families.”

Mackey Yokem, the grants administrator for the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, said LPI is “basically a college prep school for young people in the El Paso area.”

“We have been involved with them in raising money,” he said. “We don’t have input in their operation, but just help provide a major capital campaign.”

He said the Institute is trying to raise \$15 million, including \$500,000 from the Arkansas conference, and are probably a third of the way there.

“Their overall campaign, which is spread across the eight



states of our jurisdiction, still has about a year to go,” Yokem said.

Bishop Gary Mueller of the Arkansas Conference expressed the need to support the Lydia Patterson Institute in their fundraising campaign.

“We, as Arkansas United Methodists, are called to create vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped to transform lives, communities and the world,” Bishop Mueller said. “By supporting the Lydia Patterson Institute, we are answering this call. Join me as we learn more about this powerful ministry in the upcoming months and how we may further support the work being done to change young lives each and every day.”

Michael Roberts, the senior pastor at Conway First United Methodist Church, said he had the opportunity in 2017 to experience the school first-hand. He was impressed by their mission and their work in the community.

“I was impressed with the number of students who do go to college and graduate from college,” Roberts said. “... I was very impressed by the work ethic of the students and their willingness to get up early in the morning and make their way to the border.

“It takes a lot of commitment to do that. They are motivated by their education and the possibilities and opportunities that it is going to give them.”

LPI is not a seminary school, but it does offer what is known

as the Lay Ministry program. with 25 students currently enrolled in the program. The program affords students the opportunity to preach, lead worship, and serve in churches and communities both locally and around the country.

Karla Delgadillo, a student at LPI, was assigned to Conway First Methodist Church as an intern last year. Roberts said she was one of several students that came to Arkansas that summer.

“We were blessed to share life with her and experience her culture through her,” Roberts said. “She made presentations at the church, but she also went to a leadership institute at Hendrix College.

“She wasn’t here to work, necessary, but she was here to share her life and experience life in the Arkansas Conference.”

Morales said LPI holds firm in the belief that “we are here to demonstrate Christ by how we love and serve.”

“Many of our students serve as interns in churches across the country and also make missionary trips to other countries to serve in whatever capacity is needed,” Morales said. “Our student activities participate in helping the needy both here (in El Paso) and our sister city, Ciudad Juarez. Service and love, coupled with educational opportunity, make up the philosophy of Lydia Patterson Institute.

“God is definitely at work in the lives of these students and their families.”



Lydia Patterson Institute students work on classroom assignments using tablets provided by the school.

*|| Photo courtesy of the Lydia Patterson Institute*



# Loans, scholarships from GBHEM provide future opportunities for Arkansas Methodist students

BY CALEB HENNINGTON  
*Digital Content Editor*

**D**uring the last Sunday in November of each year, United Methodist congregations from around the U.S. come together to celebrate United Methodist Student Day, one of six Special Sundays with offerings in the United Methodist Church.

Offerings collected during this weekend will go toward providing scholarships and loans for students who meet the qualifications of each United Methodist scholarship. According to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 36 Arkansas United Methodist students received more than \$78,500 in scholarships in 2017, thanks in part to offerings taken during United Methodist Student Day.

After this year's Student Day on Nov. 25, the net receipts collected by the treasurer of the General Council of Finance and Administration, will be sent to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and placed in the United Methodist Student Loan Fund in order to give future students the means to attend an institute of higher education.

Scholarships are divided into four categories – general scholarships, racial-ethnic specific scholarships, ministry as a career scholarships, and doctorate-level scholarships – while loans are divided based on loan amounts and interest rates.

Rachel Shepherd – a psychology and religious studies student at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas – said the scholarships she received from GBHEM have allowed her to focus greater energy toward her academics.

“Even as I still have to take out some loans to make sure everything is paid for, I feel so much more comfortable in my investments because the scholarships that I have received have significantly lowered the amount of student loan debt that I will face in the future,” Shepherd said.

Shepherd said the religious studies part of her degree focuses



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on social justice, and she hopes to attend graduate school at a seminary where she can pursue a degree in pastoral care and counseling, mental health care, and/or spiritual direction.

Chad Hornsby, another student of Hendrix College, agrees that the scholarships he's received from GBHEM have allowed him to focus on other areas without having to worry about his financial situation.

“For me, having scholarships gives me the freedom to volunteer and work on projects that develop my skill sets because I don't have to worry about only doing what can make me money so that I can pay for education,” Hornsby said.

Shepherd recently started the candidacy process to become an ordained deacon in the Arkansas Conference, and she hopes to return to Arkansas to serve a local church in some capacity or as a

# Together, we educate students so they can make a difference in the world.



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mental health provider in a clinical setting.

She received the Ethnic Scholarship – awarded to racial-ethnic undergraduates who have been a member of the UMC for at least one year – and the UM Allocation Award – given to undergraduate students enrolled at and nominated by a United Methodist-related college or university.

Hornsby, a sophomore, plans on attending seminary after graduating from Hendrix, and then seeks to pursue a PhD in Church History. He also plans to return to Arkansas and serve in the state throughout his ministry path.

“I think when we see the rich diversity of our history, then we can more easily learn to sympathize with others who might believe differently than us,” Hornsby said.

Andrea’ Cummings, recent graduate of Candler School of Theology at Emory University, received the Excellence in Clergy Leadership Scholarship from GBHEM. Her scholarship allowed her to enroll at a school where she learned invaluable information and skills for future success in the United Methodist Church.

“Each day, I rely on what I have learned through my studies, contextual education and advanced summer internships,” Cummings said. “I am thankful for GBHEM’s desire and commitment toward seminarians.”

Cummings currently serves as an associate pastor at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church in Little Rock at the St. Luke campus.

Students wishing to apply for a loan or scholarship from the GBHEM must first meet the eligibility requirements of either a loan or scholarship and then apply for the financial award online.

More information about loans and scholarships administered by GBHEM can be found on their website at [www.gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships](http://www.gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships).



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# All Saints

We bless your holy name, O God,  
for all your servants who,  
having finished their course,  
now rest from their labors.

Give us grace to follow the example  
of their steadfastness and faithfulness,  
to your honor and glory;  
through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

(ENGLAND, 20TH CENT., ALT.)

All Saints Day is a special celebration every year for many in the United Methodist Church. Taking place on Nov. 1, it is a time to remember those who have gone before us in the faith. John Wesley had a particular fondness for the day, writing in his journal in 1767 that it is “a festival I truly love.” This year, the *Arkansas United Methodist* remembers pastors and their spouses who have gone before us this past year, with a special recognition for former United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas President Jim Argue.

# Special Recognition

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## James B. “Jim” Argue Jr, 1951-2018

**J**ames B. “Jim” Argue Jr. of Little Rock died May 3, 2018, at St. Vincent Infirmary following a brief illness. He was born August 19, 1951, in Carthage, TX, to Dr. James B. Argue and Ann Bourland Argue. The family moved to Little Rock in 1964 when Dr. Argue was named senior pastor at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church. Jim graduated from Hall High School in 1969 and Hendrix College in 1973, where he earned a degree in history and political science.

Following college graduation, Jim began a 45-year calling in finance and investments, including as a vice president at Commercial National Bank. In 1981, Methodist philanthropists successfully recruited Jim and he went on to become the longest serving president of the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, where he stayed until his death. Under his leadership, Foundation assets grew from an initial investment of \$67,000 to a current value of \$164 million, making it one of the largest United Methodist foundations in the country.



In early 1980, Jim spotted a beautiful new alto in the choir loft. Their love was almost instant, and he and Elise Carey were married on May 30, 1980. They enjoyed a 38-year marriage of shared devotion, raising two daughters, Sarah and Emily, who Jim cherished with great love and enormous pride. He loved his new role as “Granddaddy” to Charlotte and Anderson and found great joy in this new season of his life.

In 1990, frustrated with the legislature’s failure to provide adequate resources for public schools, Jim successfully ran for the Arkansas House of Representatives as a proud Democrat. He served a total of 18 years in both the House and the Arkansas Senate, 16 of those serving on the education committee of both bodies. State Senate colleagues elected him as president pro tem during the 85th General Assembly. Recognized as one of the key architects in the state’s response to the 2002 Lake View Supreme Court decision, Argue was lauded by colleagues as committed, tenacious, and unwavering in his successful efforts towards major school reforms and improvements.

When his time in the Arkansas Legislature came to a close, Jim and Elise embarked on a series of world travels. Jim especially enjoyed connecting with distant family, the “Argue Clan” of Ireland. A devoted Methodist, Jim was the former chair of the Administrative Board of Pulaski Heights UMC and a member of the denomination’s General Council on Finance and Administration.

He was named a 2017 Distinguished Alumni of Hendrix College. He was an honoree at the 2016 Philander Smith College Living Legends Banquet and received the JCA’s Father Joseph Biltz award in 2000. He was also a devoted St. Louis Cardinals fan and belonged to a group known as the St. Louis Six, longtime friends who traveled to St. Louis together for big game weekends for more than 30 years.

Jim is survived by his wife, Elise; daughters Sarah Argue and Emily Argue Stotts (Jeff); grandchildren Charlotte and Anderson Stotts; sister Marsha Argue Bozeman; brother Robert Argue; nephew Ryan Bozeman, and sister-in-law Ellen Tarkington. He was preceded in death by his parents, sister Elizabeth, and nephew Bradley Tarkington. Funeral services were held May 9 at Pulaski Heights UMC.

### **Thomas Alonzo Abney, 1929-2018**

Thomas Alonzo Abney, age 88, retired elder, passed away April 22, 2018, at the Gardner Nursing and Rehabilitation Center of Star City, Arkansas. He was born to the late Thomas Mark and Willa Ione Abney in Houston, Texas. He served United Methodist congregations in Texas and Arkansas. He was a graduate of Stephen F. Austin University and also held degrees from the University of Texas and Southern Methodist University. He began his ministry as a student local pastor in 1957. His appointments in the former Little Rock Conference included Malvern, Ashdown, Camden-Fairview, University of Arkansas at Monticello Wesley Foundation, Monticello First and Wilmar. He retired in



Mauzel Beal of Conway died on Thursday, September 20th at age 88. Mauzel was preceded in death by her husband Rev. Jim Beal, son Rev. Roger Beal, grandson Zachary Beal, brother Steve Matthews and brother-in-law Gene Beal. Born on October 22, 1929 in Old Joe, to Joe and Willie Garner Matthews, Mauzel graduated from Calico Rock High School and from Hendrix College where she met the love of her life and future husband, Jim. Jim and Mauzel were married on August 24, 1951. Mauzel enjoyed over 50 years of service along with Jim as a United Methodist Church minister's wife across Arkansas. Being a partner in the ministry with Jim was truly her calling. Mauzel loved her family dearly and especially enjoyed being a Grandmom. She is survived by her daughter Laura Middlekauff (Steve) and Joy Beal Meriwether (spouse of Roger) of Conway, grandchildren Dr. Wesley Beal (Courtney) of Batesville, Megan Middlekauff West (Chris) of Conway, Molly Middlekauff of New Orleans and four great grandchildren Reed Beal, Ana Beal, Jackson West and Jameson West. She is also survived by brothers Joe Matthews of Wenatchee, Washington and Rev. Ed Matthews (Pat) of Little Rock, sister Betty Jane Perryman of Pine Bluff, and sisters-in-law Betty Matthews of Pine Bluff and Martha Beal of Conway, and beloved nieces, nephews and treasured friends.

### **Gertrude Regina Bitter, 1924-2018**

Gertrude Regina Bitter, having had a "life well lived" for 94 years, died May 4, 2018, with grace, gratitude and faith in the Christian hope of a heavenly home. She was the surviving spouse of Rev. Melvin Bitter, whose last appointment in Arkansas was Good Faith Carr UMC, Pine Bluff. The daughter of Gertrude Regina Jungen and John Jacob Jungen, Gertrude was born in Manhattan, NY, on January 26, 1924. While growing up in the Bronx with her younger brother, John J. Jungen, Gertrude enjoyed equestrian activities and becoming an exceptional classical pianist. At age 15, she was the organist at her local church. At 16, she auditioned on the piano in Carnegie Hall before the longtime conductor/director of the New York Philharmonic Symphony, Walter Damrosch. Although she did not continue on the path to be a classical pianist, it was while Gertrude was playing the piano at the USO during World War II that she met and fell in love



1994. He served as conference secretary of the Little Rock Conference for a number of years. He was a recipient of the 1984-85 Hendrix College Ethel K. Millar Award for Religion and Social Awareness. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife Joyce, his parents, a son, Alford Thomas Abney, and a granddaughter, Anna Elizabeth Abney. Survivors include two sons, Mark C. Abney and wife Teresa of Wilmar, and Timothy E. Abney and wife Diana of Sherwood; two daughters, Linda G. Pierce of Sapulpa, OK, and Rebecca L. Davison and husband Ross of Springdale; a daughter-in-law, Peggy Abney of Star City; a brother, Brian M. Abney of Star City; a sister, Jean Ludwig of Henderson, Texas; and two stepsisters, Gloria Levingston of Houston, Texas, and Twila Thurman of La Grange, Texas; as well 8 grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

### **Mauzel Beal, 1929-2018**

Mauzel was active in many United Methodist Church organizations and served in many volunteer roles. She served as an archivist for the North Arkansas United Methodist Conference for 21 years. She loved working with children and youth ministries, United Methodist Women, Church Women United, FolkLore Camps, local and national United Methodist archives, Disciple Bible Study, Missions Committee, Literacy Councils, Heifer Ranch, and the Conway Cancer Foundation Board. Mauzel and Jim often sang duets together and she sang in their church choirs. A service of celebration was held at First United Methodist Church in Conway on Friday September 28 with a reception after the service in the Fellowship Hall. A private family service of interment of ashes will be held. Mauzel's family is thankful for the care provided by Home Instead Caregivers and the doctors, nurses, therapists and staff at Conway Regional Hospital, Conway Regional Rehab, Heritage Rehab, and Arkansas Hospice. Memorials may be made to Mount Eagle Christian Center or Hendrix College.



with a young sailor who for 71 years would be the love of her life. Together, she and Melvin were blessed with six children, including two sets of twins. After Melvin became an ordained minister, Gertrude blessed others with her gift of music, playing pianos and organs in Lutheran, Congregational and Methodist churches throughout the United States. Although she was a city girl, she joined Melvin in his love for adventure and the outdoors. They sailed their boat "Windborne" in the waters off Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. They motorcycled through the countryside of New England, Arkansas and Florida. She accompanied Melvin when he felt the call to missionary service in the Truk Islands. Their love of camping brought them to the mountains of North Carolina and to their home of the last 25 years in Hayesville. Along with her parents and brother, Gertrude was preceded in death by her husband Melvin and daughters Regina and Christine. She is survived by her sons, Paul (Martha McAfee), John (Mary Johnson), and Mark, and daughter Pam (Cliff Obertuck), along with many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

### Venita Bruner, 1931-2018

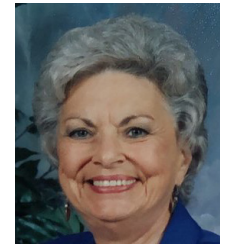
Venita Fern Bruner, 87, died Thursday, May 3, 2018. She was born in Bay on February 24, 1931 to Jack and Ola Isbell. Venita was a 1949 graduate of Bay High School and attended Arkansas State University. She was a homemaker, but also worked outside the home a number of years, including working for Bay Schools for two years as secretary and teacher. She assisted her husband,



Rev. Jesse Bruner, in the work of the United Methodist Church for thirty-five and one-half years, serving as organist, pianist, secretary, and church custodian, whatever she could do. She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, Jesse; two sisters, Dorothy Bruner, and Jean Scott; a son, Allan; a granddaughter, Audrey Faye Bruner; and great grandson, Bryson Colby Corter. Survivors include a son, Greg; a daughter, Jan Corter; a sister, Jackie Hancock; seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

### Novella Carter, 1934-2018

Novella Carter, 84, of Hot Springs Village, Arkansas, died October 6, 2018. She was born August 20, 1934 in Blossom, Texas to the late Acy and Lilly (Thompson) Luttrell. Novella was a faithful pastor's wife and fun-loving mother. She was loved by many. She manifested a spirit of selflessness and loved her family unconditionally. Loving survivors include her husband of 68 wonderful years, Norman Carter; son Guy Carter (Gina); daughters Norma Jean Carter Arey and "Rockie" Carter Evans (Britt); grandchildren Curt Arey (Erica), Carter Natarajan (Raj), Shannon Rucker (Garrett), Anna Hudson (Chad), and Tiffany Parker (Todd); great-



grandchildren Wyatt and Nolan Arey, Ren, Jude, Bodhi and Violet Natarajan, Kaitland Foster, Abigail Novella Parker, Jackson Criner, and Amelia and Strat Rucker; and great-great-grandchild Parker Foster. A celebration of Novella's life was held Monday, October 15, 2018, at Village United Methodist Church in Hot Springs Village, Arkansas. Memorial donations may be made to [arkansashospice.org](http://arkansashospice.org) or a charity of your choice.

### Mazie Chesser, 1935-2018

From William Chesser: I'm going to tell a few stories about my mother. Mazie Chesser is my mom and people just loved her. She was a teacher for 40 years. Over the years, on several occasions, when I would state my name to total strangers they would say something like, «Are you related to Mazie Chesser?» to which I would say, "Yes, I am her son."



Then they would say some variation of, "She was my favorite teacher I ever had." These people ranged in age from their 20s to their 50s, but my mom was an elementary school teacher. Many people remembered her and the impact she had on their lives. She taught at an all-black girls' school in North Carolina during segregation. She was the only white teacher (I imagine the only white person) there. She couldn't sit with her fellow teachers when they went to the movies because they were forced to sit in the balcony. When my mother asked if she could sit with them up there, she was not allowed to do so. She remained furious about this her entire life, I think. When the girls at the school wanted to go to the store, they had to get a teacher to take them. They knew my mother to be a soft touch, so they would often talk her into taking them. The first time she took them, as mom tells it, they were all waiting in line. The white cashier looked over all the heads of the girls in line and asked my mother, "Can I help you, ma'am?" My mother replied, indignantly, "THEY are all in line. You can help THEM." My mother was the truest Christian I ever expect to meet. She was the person against whom I always compare every other person who claims to be Christian. She was caring, kind, loving, accepting and forgiving. I have to admit that I infrequently find people who measure up to her (at least, in my mind), and I live in a family full of ministers. When my mother taught in Waldron in the 1980s, she had a sink

in her room. One of the students was absolutely fascinated with the sink. Eventually she found out that the student didn't have running water at home. "You just go use that sink whenever you want," she told the student. "You don't even have to ask me. Just get up and use it." That's the way my mother handled things. She saw something that wasn't working and, scarcely without thought, she would just correct the problem. It wasn't even second nature to her. It was her first nature. She was kind and caring without even thinking about it. She was grace personified. I wouldn't be here and who I am without her in several real senses. She had always wanted more children than my father (she wanted six) but they had stopped having children after the first two. A decade later, she insisted that she wanted another. So it was that I was born when she was a month shy of 40, in 1975. She (and dad) always claimed that I kept them young. Well I may have kept her young, but she made me the person I am. If I am a good teacher, it is because of her. If I am patient when I otherwise wouldn't be, it's because of her. If you ever catch me in a moment of grace, it's because of her. Don't get me wrong, I love dad too, but mom is the person that softened all my otherwise hard edges (and, for those who know me, imagine what I would be like had she not). I love my mother, Mazie Chesser. I am happy to say that many other people do too. She passed from this earth on the morning of Sept. 26, peacefully in her sleep at the age of 83. I will miss her terribly. Mazie was preceded in death by her parents, Ross and Clara Louthan. She is survived by her husband Lewis; her daughter, Dawn Chesser and husband Scot Danforth of Knoxville, Tenn.; two sons, Wilburn Chesser and his wife Frances of Washington, D.C., and William Chesser and his wife Alison of Fayetteville; her sister, Annie Isreal and her husband Bud of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.,; and her brother, William Louthan and his wife Laveda of Aurora, Colo. She is also survived by her five grandchildren, Gill Giese, Christopher Giese, Leith Chesser, Lila Chesser and Ares Chesser.

## Robert Blackwell Cloninger, Sr., 1954-2018

Robert Blackwell Cloninger, Sr., beloved husband of Reverend Kim Kelton Cloninger and very proud father of Reverend Robert Blackwell Cloninger, II (Betsy) and Reverend Mark Lawrence Cloninger and grandfather to Caroline Elizabeth Cloninger and Robert Blackwell Cloninger, III, passed from this life on July 13, 2018.



Bob loved his family with all of his heart, animals (especially his German Shepherd, Belle). He loved God and honored Him by supporting a family of ministers and being actively involved as a longtime member of Goddard United Methodist Church. Bob was an avid gardener, and especially loved tending his rose bushes. Bob was a computer-engineering instructor at the University of Arkansas—Fort Smith. Bob held a bachelor's degree in psychology from Hendrix College, a master's degree in adult education from the University of Arkansas—Fayetteville, and a master's degree in information quality from the University of Arkansas—Little Rock. In May 2018, Bob was awarded the Lori Norin Faculty Appreciation Award given by the Student Government Association. Over the course of the last

Henry Franklin Cook, 77, retired associate member, died April 13, 2018. A Celebration of Life was held April 21 at Decatur UMC. He was born January 19, 1941, on a houseboat on the Black River in Pocahontas, AR, to Jim and Minnie Stokes Cook. He was a minister for 52 years, most recently pastoring Lincoln and Morrow United Methodist churches. He was a man who loved unconditionally. He always carried a stone in his pocket as a reminder not to cast the first stone. His favorite saying was "Never judge anyone. We are all sinners saved by grace. Except for God's grace, that could be me." His entire life was dedicated to the service of others. He helped build homes in Mexico. He would give his last penny to anyone in need. He was a Master Mason

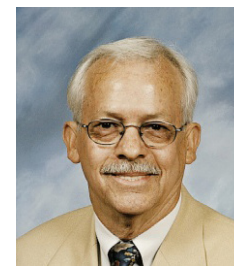
of Masonic Lodge #364 in Huntsville, a member of Christian Motorcyclist ASC and a member of Kiwanis. He was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, J.T. Cook. Survivors include wife Theresa of the home; son Terry Cook of Mountain Home, daughter Jerrie Duncan and husband Shorty of Decatur, son Daniel Cook and wife Rie-C of Marshall; son Matthew Cook and wife Sarah of Aurora, CO; son Hank Cook and wife Amanda of Osage; 19 grandchildren, 4 great grandchildren and a host of friends.

eighteen years, Bob was able to instruct and guide a number of his students, which he counted as one of his greatest blessings. At the age of seventeen, Bob enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and served his country on active duty for four years and he finished his military career serving in the inactive reserves. Those who will continue to celebrate his memory include Kim Kelton Cloninger (his wife of forty years), his sons, Robert Blackwell Cloninger, II (the daughter-in-law whom he loved, Betsy and their beautiful children, Caroline Elizabeth and Robert Blackwell, III) and Mark Lawrence Cloninger. His siblings include Susan Bradley Cloninger (Matt), John Lawson Cloninger (Louise), and Fred Maxey Cloninger (Polly); and his mother-in-law, Renna Kelton. He is survived by many nieces and nephews. Bob fought the good fight, he ran the good race, and he is now no longer in pain.

Memorial service was Wednesday, July 18, 2018 in the Goddard United Methodist Church under the direction of Edwards Funeral Home. The family greeted friends following the Memorial Service in the Church Parlor. Memorials may be made to Goddard United Methodist Church, The Goddard Hospital House, The Goddard Weekday Ministries, or the Hope Humane Society.

## Henry Franklin Cook, 1941-2018

of Masonic Lodge #364 in Huntsville, a member of Christian Motorcyclist ASC and a member of Kiwanis. He was preceded in death by his parents and a brother, J.T. Cook. Survivors include wife Theresa of the home; son Terry Cook of Mountain Home, daughter Jerrie Duncan and husband Shorty of Decatur, son Daniel Cook and wife Rie-C of Marshall; son Matthew Cook and wife Sarah of Aurora, CO; son Hank Cook and wife Amanda of Osage; 19 grandchildren, 4 great grandchildren and a host of friends.



## Edwin B. Dodson, 1922-2018

Dr. Edwin B. Dodson, a retired clergy member, of Texarkana, AR, died May 18, 2018. He was born Dec. 22, 1922, in Cotton Plant. He graduated from Marianna High School, Hendrix College and Perkins School of Theology. He was awarded a Doctor of Divinity Degree from Hendrix College. Dodson served as a minister in the United Methodist Church from 1946 until his retirement in 1984. He served churches in Becker, TX, Widener, Round Pond, Madison, Tuni, Berryville, Pocahontas, Siloam Springs, Batesville, Benton, Camden and Texarkana. During his final appointment at Texarkana, he served as chairman of the Board of Directors of the Southwest Arkansas Mental Health Center, the Texarkana Religious Emphasis Committee and the Volunteer Services Bureau. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Tri-State Chapter of the American Red Cross, Senior Citizens Services of Texarkana, the Temple Memorial Treatment Center,



Hospice of Texarkana and Awareness of Crime in Texarkana. He was also a member of the Executive Committee of United Way, where he was a recipient of the United Way Cline Cup Award, and the Institutional Review Committees of St. Michael Hospital and Wadley Hospital. He was the founder and first president of the board of One Point of Light, which became Harvest Texarkana, which channels surplus food to feed hungry children and adults. He was a former member of the Board of Trustees of Hendrix College. Dodson was predeceased by his parents, Francis and Mary (Molly) Dodson and his brothers and sister, Hendrix Dodson, Morris Dodson, Delle Paulk, Frank Dodson and Eugene Dodson; his wife, Ellen Becker Dodson; his son, Don Dodson; and daughter-in-law, Kathy Dodson. He is survived by his children, Bob Dodson and Dick and Cheryl Dodson; five grandchildren, Mark Dodson, Robert and Katie Dodson, David Dodson, John and Christen Dodson, and Mason Dodson; and five great-grandchildren. A memorial service was held May 23 at Texarkana First UMC, with interment at the Becker Family Cemetery in Becker, Texas.



### **William D. “Bill” Elliott, 1932-2018**

**W**illiam D. “Bill” Elliott, 85, of Maumelle died May 6, 2018, surrounded by his family. He was born October 19, 1932, in Texarkana, AR, to Ruth and James Ira Dean Elliott. He graduated from Texarkana High School. Hearing the call to preach at age 12, he later graduated from Hendrix College and seminary at Southern Methodist University. He met Ethel Lu Teague at Camp Tanako. After becoming engaged on their second date, they were married November 27, 1964. During their 54 years of marriage, they



traveled to 47 states, Europe and Asia. With more than 40 years of pastoral service, his first appointment was associate at Magnolia First, followed by the Chidester Circuit, Conference Youth Director, Winfield (associate), DeQueen, Pine Bluff Wesley, Monticello, Little Rock Trinity, Searcy First, Stuttgart First and Little Rock Winfield. He retired in 1998. He is survived by his wife Lu; sons Dean (Jacquelyn), Lee (Astrid) and John Paul (Rhonda); sisters Emma Owenby and Ann Honeycutt; and five grandchildren whom he adored and who brought him great joy. He was predeceased by his parents and one brother, James. Services were held May 11 at Trinity United Methodist Church, Little Rock.

### **Kaye Hammett Evans, 1948-2018**

**T**he Rev. Kaye Hammett Evans, 70, retired elder, died at her home in Rogers on March 19, 2018. She was born March 2, 1948, in Beebe, to Norma Jean (West) and Rev. Gerald Hammett. She was a graduate of Beebe High School, Hendrix College and Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University. Her ministry included pastoral service at Tillar Charge, Jonesboro First, Dardanelle First, Rogers Central, Alma, North Little Rock Trinity, Newark Hazel Edwards Memorial and Batesville Asbury. She retired in 2013 after serving 27 years as a United Methodist pastor in Arkansas. She was preceded

in death by her father, and the father of her children, Rev. T. Nichols (Nick) Evans. She is survived by her mother and her children, Rev. Hammett N. Evans (Michelle Pounds) of Bryant, Brice Evans of Little Rock, and Eleanor Evans of Rogers. A memorial service was held March 26 at First United Methodist Church, Bryant, followed by burial at Meadowbrook Memorial Gardens, Beebe.



### **Marion Eugene Fleming, 1944-2018**

**M**arion Eugene Fleming, 73, of Cherokee Village, a retired elder, died April 25, 2018, at the White River Medical Center in Batesville. He was born Sept. 10, 1944, in Malvern, to Leo Joseph Schweitzer and Ruby Jean (Dickey) Schweitzer. He attended the University of Arkansas at Monticello and Memphis Theological Seminary. He was an active duty member of the Air National Guard, a past lieutenant governor and president of Kiwanis, and a dedicated member of



the Jonesboro Emmaus community. Beginning in 1975, he served local churches including Tillar Circuit, Horatio, Dierks Circuit, Dierks, Foreman, Norphlet, Hawley Memorial, Corning, Marked Tree, Jonesboro First, Leachville, Weiner, Pottsville and Salem. He retired in 2013. He was preceded in death by his parents and his first wife, Judy Lynch Fleming. Survivors are his wife Vicki Richardson Fleming; son Greg (Jennifer) Fleming of Clinton; brothers Gary (Maryland) Fleming of Little Rock and Jerry David Fleming of Morrilton; and granddaughter Katie Fleming. A celebration of life was held May 19 at First United Methodist Church, Cherokee Village.

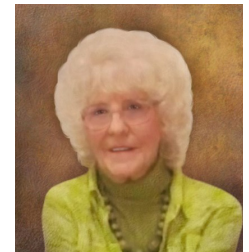
### **Eleanor Gramling Forbes, 1932-2018**

**E**leanor Gramling Forbes, 85, of Noel, Missouri, formerly of Hartford, Arkansas passed away Saturday, June 9, 2018 in Bentonville, Arkansas. She was born at Bishop, Virginia to Andrew and Helen Marie Martin. She was a beautiful woman from the inside out, talented baker who loved to feed the souls of others with her love and most of all was adored by all who knew her. For years, she cooked for the students of Hartford Schools and then in later years for those at Hartford and Mansfield Senior Centers. She attended Hartford Assembly of God Church.

Funeral service was Thursday, June 14 at Hartford Assembly of God Church with burial at Hartford Memorial Park under the direction of McConnell Funeral Home of Greenwood. Viewing was Wednesday at the funeral home, where the family visited with friends.

She is survived by her husband, Barney Forbes; one daughter, Tina Durham and husband, David of Little Rock; three

sons, Robert Chick and wife, Pamela of Hartford, William Chick and wife, Wilma of Hartford and Paul Gramling and wife, Michelle of Springdale; three step-children, Mary Correia and husband, Paul, Charles Forbes and wife Mary and Marty Luebker and husband, Herman; one brother, James Steele and wife, Iris of Mansfield; two sisters, Dean Luton of Mansfield and Wanda Suttles of Moore, Oklahoma; eighteen grandchildren, nineteen great grandchildren, and a host of friends. She was preceded in death by her husbands, Bernard L. Chick and Joe Gramling, a local pastor in the United Methodist Church; her parents, Andrew and Helen Marie Martin; two sisters, Betty Woosley and Frances Keener and one brother, Morris Buck Steele.



## Wayne Crittenden Jarvis, 1935-2018

Wayne Crittenden Jarvis passed away on September 19, 2018. He was born September 7, 1935 in Evanston, Illinois to Crittenden Curtis Jarvis and Marjorie Ackerman Jarvis. He was preceded in death by his brothers, Bert Jarvis PhD and Doug Jarvis. He is survived by his beloved wife of thirty-two years, Frances Ramoly Jarvis; son, Curtis Jarvis and wife, Susan; daughter, Pam Jarvis; step-son, Steve Benton; step-daughter, Robyn Garrett; granddaughter, Evie Jarvis Nichols; step-granddaughters, Brooke Jackson, Jackie Myers, Stephane Benton; step-grandsons, Shawn Garrett and Brian Garrett, Jr.; and four step-great grandchildren; brother, Critt Jarvis and wife, Amy; sisters-in-law, Pat Jarvis, Mary Jarvis, Sue Abshire and husband, Dale, and Barbara Ramoly; and several nephews, nieces and many friends.



He served in the United States Army. He then graduated from Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas in 1959 with dual degrees in History and Political Science. He graduated from Perkins Theological School at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas in 1962 with a Masters Degree in Theology. He also attended Arkansas State University with thirty hours in graduate history.

He was ordained Deacon with the United Methodist Church in 1960 and ordained Elder in 1963. He served numerous churches in Arkansas as a senior pastor and after retirement as an associate pastor for a total of more than fifty years, as well as, District Superintendent and Associate Director Conference Council on Ministries. He retired in 2000 and as a retired minister, he served as Pastor of Christian Care of Maumelle United Methodist Church until 2013.

Peggy Joy Miles Lann died on January 1, 2018. Peggy was born to Ina Pearl Miles and J.B. Miles on March 14, 1942, in Leesville, LA. She is preceded in death by her parents and her brothers, Rev. John Miles and Warren Miles. Peggy is survived by her husband, retired local pastor Rev. James Lann, and their children, Cindy and John Reister, Andy Lann, Debbie and Andy McDade, Audrea and Greg Duckworth; grandchildren, Amber and Billy Quick, Nikki and Tommy Taylor, Taylor and Ana Byrd, Karyn and Eric Sanders, Jimmy and Erin Lann, Katie and Lucas Hancock, Jessica and Sergeant David Lambert, Emily McDade and Theodore Goodwin, Jessie Green and Shelly Green; great grandchildren, Harley Kozak, Caleb Kozak, Lucas Quick,

In the 1980's he completed two marathons, one in Arkansas and one in Dallas, Texas but his favorite pastimes were playing golf and spending time with his children and grandchildren.

Other areas he served were Annual Conference Leadership, Secretary Board of Education, Secretary Board of Pensions, Chairman Committee on Higher Education and Campus Ministry, Chairman Board of Church and Society, Secretary Board of Missions, Secretary Committee on Structure, Delegate to South Central Jurisdictional Conference 1976, Lab Leader for Children's Ministries, Chairman Area Disaster Response Committee, Disaster Response Consultant United Methodist Committee on Relief, Member Catastrophic Disaster Response Team of the United Methodist Church, extensive disaster response work in Arkansas and around the country, expertise in earthquake disaster response and the New Madrid Seismic Zone, member Governor's Advisory Committee on Earthquakes, assisted in Organization of Our House Board, assisted in organization of Grace Community Food Bank in Helena, assisted in organization of Reading Program for Phillips County, assisted in organization of Phillips County Transitional Employment Assistance Program and Chairman for two years, member Phillips County Disaster Response Team, board member of Arkansas Committee Against the Death Penalty, chaired Arkansas Interfaith Hunger Task Force, worked with the prison ministry, and worked with President Bill Clinton when he was Governor of Arkansas on social issues.

The family wants to thank the loving caregivers of Baptist Home Health and Baptist Hospice with special thanks to Fleshia and Nathan; and also, to Rev. Jerry Meeks, and most of all to his sister-in-law, Sue Abshire, for her unending and loving devotion in helping to care for him during his final days, and to everyone else who showed their love to him.

## Peggy Joy Miles Lann, 1942-2018

Gage Quick, Brice Quick, Hayden Quick, Mason Quick, Cade Quick, Ashlyn Taylor, Madilyn Taylor, Kinley Brooke Sanders, Eli Lann, Nathaniel Lambert and Mason Porter; and sister-in-laws, Sarah Jo Murphy and Joy Miles; her nieces and nephews, Deborah Miles, John Miles, Rebekah Miles, Heather, Martin, and Michael Miles, Shannon Vickers, Kayla Hatcher, and extended family and friends. She was loved by all. A memorial service was held January 20 at Marshall United Methodist Church, with internment at Leslie Cemetery.



## Thomas Mark Letchworth, 1955-2018

Tom Letchworth, 62, went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, June 27, 2018. He was born Aug. 20, 1955 in Dayton, Ohio to Clarence and Billie (Wood) Letchworth. Preceded in death by his parents, Tom is survived by his wife of 37 years, Celesta Lynne (Shaulis); his sons, Sam and Joe; and his big brother Steve (Nancy). Other survivors



include his nephew, Dan (Koh); his sister-in-laws, Zola (Will) and Jane (Joseph); and his niece, Mila (Jesse). The son of an Air Force chaplain, Tom grew up in Ohio, France, Maine, Spain, Michigan, Japan and California.

Tom received the call to ministry while he was a student at San Jose State University in 1974. "I discovered that God is Real. And if God is Real, life is meaningful. And if life is meaningful, I wanted to tell everyone I possibly could. From this seed, my understanding of God's love — revealed in Jesus Christ and

confirmed through the Holy Spirit — has continued to grow.”

Tom graduated from the University of California, Riverside with high honors and was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He graduated cum laude from Perkins School of Theology with a Master of Theology degree. Tom was ordained an Elder in the Little Rock Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1985.

Tom pastored dynamic churches of varying sizes throughout his ministry since 1980. Twice, Tom received appointments as a full-time General Evangelist, in which he enjoyed adding drama to his sermons. He preached, taught and wrote as a means of fulfilling his call to ministry.

Tom and Celeste wrote full-length plays published by Lillenas Drama: *Mysteries With a Message*, Volumes I and II; and *Meet Me at Luigi's*. Their two favorite “creative collaborations” are Sam and Joe.

**G**erald Bruce “Gary” Lunsford, of Lincoln, a retired associate clergy member, died January 24, 2018, at the Willard Walker Hospice Home in Fayetteville. He was born August 3, 1942, in Westville, OK. The son of Bruce and Rosa Lee Lunsford, Gary began his life in Arkansas when the family moved to Bentonville and then settled in Fayetteville. Gary attended Washington Elementary and was a 1960 Fayetteville High School graduate. He played for the 1957 undefeated football team and embraced Fayetteville’s public schools’ integration. He began his mastery of carpentry and woodworking by working with and learning from his dad. He was part of the construction crew that built the Mountain Inn across from the Washington County courthouse. Gary joined the Marine Corps in 1960 but in less than six months received an honorable discharge after an accident from faulty explosives caused deafness in his left ear. He returned to Fayetteville where he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Arkansas. Gary’s incredible life experiences continued when he moved to Washington, D.C., in the 1960s and joined the Capitol Hill police force. During his time away from Fayetteville, he learned how to skydive, snow ski, and race stock cars. When Gary returned to Fayetteville he worked various jobs including: being a bouncer, teaching art at Woodland, operating the horse-riding concession at Devil’s Den, and opening

Tom’s book, *War Ain’t No Picnic: 30 Civil War Stories & Devotionals*, was released by Fermata House in August, 2017. Since the Lectionary calendar cycles every three years, Tom’s weekly Bible studies will continue to be posted at [soarlectionarybiblestudy.wordpress.com](http://soarlectionarybiblestudy.wordpress.com).

Tom earnestly attempted to “speak the Truth in Love.” The week prior to his death, the Confessing Movement of Arkansas acknowledged Tom’s life work by awarding him the Defender of the Faith award.

Tom’s life was celebrated on Tuesday, July 3rd at Searcy First United Methodist Church, with viewing before the service. In lieu of flowers, donations to Heifer International are appreciated.

Interment will be in Keene Cemetery, Keene, Kentucky at a later date.

### Gerald Bruce “Gary” Lunsford, 1942-2018

a woodworking shop. Then he married the love of his life, Marty Jones. He continued carpentry, woodworking and substitute teaching until he received the call to go into ministry. He organized and travelled on several mission trips to South America, Africa and Russia. Gary served as pastor of visitation at Central United Methodist Church. He pastored several United Methodist churches in Northwest Arkansas, including St. James and Wiggins in Fayetteville and congregations at Rheas Mill, Winslow, Lincoln and Morrow. He loved God, his family, the Razorbacks, riding his motorcycle, old cars, down-home cooking, chocolate cake, stray dogs, Siamese cats, mission work, talking about old Fayetteville, storytelling, traveling, Sunday afternoon drives, backyard barbecues, swimming in the river and woodworking. Most of all, Gary loved people. He was preceded in death by his parents and two brothers, Porter and David Lunsford. He is survived by his wife, Marty, three sons, Jason, Quentin and Allan; five grandchildren, his sister, Barbara Pryor, and his brother, Scott Lunsford. A memorial service was held January 30 at Central United Methodist Church in Fayetteville.



### Lillie Raney Major, 1919-2017

**L**illie Raney Major, 98, died October 21, 2017. Born on January 14, 1919, to Thomas Jefferson Raney and Inez Brannon Raney, she was the youngest daughter of 10 siblings. Lillie raised three children while successfully balancing a career in education and supporting her husband of 75 years, the late Rev. Dr. James E. Major. Together they served the United Methodist Church and Hendrix College. Lillie received her BA from Sullins College in Virginia and her Master’s degree from the University of Central Arkansas. She was very instrumental in establishing the Foreign Language programs in the Little



Rock Public Schools. She taught school in every city where she and Jim lived starting with Durham, North Carolina, while Jim went to graduate school. In her role as a missionary in Santiago, Chile, she taught at the Sweet Memorial Institute alongside her husband. She was the quintessential “Preacher’s Wife,” devoting her life to God, the Church, and her family. Lillie is survived by her daughter, Mary Susan Major Holton (Len) of Little Rock, her son, Thomas R. Major (Carla) of Little Rock, and her son, James V. Major (Tamara) of Medford, MA; as well as grandchildren, Mike Major (Nikki), Lauren Major Averill (Chris), Alexis Major Jameson (Neil), Wesley Major, and six great-grandchildren. A service celebrating Lillie’s life was held at First United Methodist Church in Little Rock on Wednesday, October 25.

## Carlos Martin, 1924-2018

Rev. Carlos Martin, retired elder, of Brandon, MS, died January 28, 2018. He served churches from 1951 to 1987, primarily in the former Little Rock Conference.

He was born December 27, 1924, at Austin, AR, the son of Rev. and Mrs. J.R. Martin of Cabot. A graduate of Prescott High School, he served 3½ years in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After his discharge, he attended Hendrix College and received his degree. He then earned his Master of Divinity degree from Perkins School of Theology. His



pastoral appointments included Greenbrier, Winfield-Little Rock, St. Luke-Pine Bluff, Lewisville, St. Paul-El Dorado, Hamburg Charge, Carlisle, Oaklawn-Hot Springs, St. Luke-Little Rock and First Church Hot Springs. Following retirement, he was named Pastor Emeritus at Hot Springs First. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife of 54 years, Verlene Richardson Martin, a daughter, Judy Martin Cook, and an infant brother, Clyde. Survivors include his son, Ron of Brandon, MS; a son-in-law, Toby M. Cook; five grandchildren and one great-grandchild. The Service of Celebration was held February 1 at First United Methodist Church, Hot Springs, with interment at Crestview Memorial Park.

## James Robert McElhannon, 1944-2018

Rev. James Robert “J.R.” McElhannon, a longtime resident of Jonesboro, reached his eternal home in heaven on Wednesday, October 17, 2018

He was born in Henryetta, Oklahoma on July 19, 1944 to Rev. M.K. and Rosetta Been McElhannon.

He was an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God for nearly 50 years, pastoring churches in Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee and Kansas. After retiring from full-time ministry, he had pastoral charges with the United Methodist Churches in Mammoth Spring and Camp, Arkansas. At the time of his death, he was serving as pastor of Pleasant Hill Methodist Church in the Lorado community and Pine Log Methodist Church near Brookland. One of his passions was providing mentorship to those fulfilling the call of God in their lives. In earlier years, he held several children’s crusades in Oklahoma and Arkansas, ministering as Busooka the Clown, captivating children with puppets, slight of hand tricks, and making Bible stories come to life.

In recent years, he enjoyed traveling with his wife; was an avid Arkansas State University football and basketball fan; and thoroughly enjoyed spoiling his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. His favorite thing to do was to “pester, pester, pester” them. He also never met a stranger, and he touched many lives with his humor, wit, and charisma.

He proudly served his country in the United States Army Reserve, training troops deployed to Vietnam. He married the love of his life, Gwendolyne Hill McElhannon on February 21, 1964. They have shared 54 years of love and commitment.

## John P. Miles I, 1929-2017

The Rev. John Pershing Miles I, a United Methodist pastor, died November 2, 2017 surrounded by family. John was born to Esther (Martin) and J.B. Miles on November 11, 1929 in Crowley, Louisiana. With his brother, Warren, he was raised in Crowley, Baton Rouge, Beaumont, Los Angeles, and Hot Springs. As a young man at Hot Springs Methodist, John accepted a call to ordained ministry and was licensed to preach 70 years ago. While at Hot Springs High he won the Arkansas Golden Gloves Featherweight Boxing championship. At Hendrix College, he was an All AIC nose guard



He was preceded in death by his parents; his father & mother-in-law, Rev. Alva & Ella Mae Hill; brother, Marvin Lee McElhannon; sister-in-law, Nadine McElhannon; and nephew, Rev. Rick McElhannon.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by his children, Michele (Glen) Dunnam, and Rev. Shawn (Sherry) McElhannon, both of Jonesboro; grandchildren: Jonathan (Brandi) Dunnam of Pocahontas, Jeremy (Ashley) Brown of Paragould, Stephen (Emily) Dunnam of Jonesboro, Jordan Brown of Bay, Thomas Dunnam, Shayden McElhannon, Shyler McElhannon, and Shelsi McElhannon, all of Jonesboro; great-grandchildren: Kingston Dunnam, Aubrey Dunnam, Brantley Brown, Harper Brown, Jack Dunnam, Everett Brown, and an unborn great-grandchild arriving in March; his brothers Edgar (Ruth) McElhannon of Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Walter (Barbara) McElhannon of Seminole, Oklahoma; sister-in-law Debbie (Ed) Taylor of Tulsa, Oklahoma; nieces, Regina (Jeff) Lang, Dianna McElhannon, Dawnita Hill, Amanda (Joseph) Rudolph, Jennifer (Joseph) Geilfuss, and Meghan Taylor; nephews, Reggie McElhannon, Charles (Bonita) McElhannon, Chris (Donna) McElhannon, and Denton McElhannon; special family members, Harriet McElhannon Parker, Beth Anne Dunnam, Christin Brown, and a host of loving friends and family members across the country.



at 135 pounds. While taking his last college courses, John went to an event at Conway First Methodist and met JoAnn Ridgway, a student at State Teacher’s College. They married in June 1952 at First Methodist in Forrest City. After honeymooning at the Methodist annual conference in Hot Springs, they moved to Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, where they welcomed the first of their three children. John was a faithful, buoyant, and effective pastor in the churches to which he was appointed—the Hamilton Circuit, Wilmot, Eudora, Star City, Fairview, Oaklawn, Arkadelphia First, St. James in Little Rock, and, finally, Hot Springs First, as an emeritus pastor. He received honorary doctorates from Shorter College and Hendrix College and served on many boards including those at Hendrix and

Perkins. A gifted and outlandish raconteur, John won national and state awards for preaching, evangelism, and church growth. He was a yellow dog democrat and a passionate advocate for people and issues on the margins. A loving pastor to senators and presidents, the felons and the faithful, and everything in between, he was known to be encouraging to sinners and exasperating to saints. To all, he preached a message of graceful and loving acceptance, faithfulness to God and one's covenants, and dogged self-discipline. Preceded in death by his wife JoAnn and his brother Warren, John is survived by his children Deborah Miles and Marc Rudow, John and Susan Miles, and Rebekah Miles and Len Delony; his beloved

grandchildren David, Caleb, Joshua, and Galit Rudow; Trey and Kelsea Miles; Zoe and Brandon Loeser, and Anna and Katherine Delony; his lady friend Corrine Gooch; his brothers and sisters, Peggy and James Lann, Joy Miles, and Melvin and Kay Ridgway; his nieces and nephews Heather, Martin, and Michael Miles, Jeffrey and Michael Pratt, Bonnie James, Mel Brooks, Suzanne Childs, Cindy Reister, Debbie McDade, Andy Lann, and Audrey Duckworth; and a wider community of extended family and friends. A celebration of life was held on Saturday, November 11 at Hot Springs First United Methodist.

### Rebecca “Becky” Jones Miller, 1956-2018

Rebecca “Becky” Jones Miller of Van Buren died March 15, 2018, at the age of 61. She was the spouse of Rev. Randy Miller, pastor of City Heights United Methodist Church, Van Buren. She was born May 20, 1956, to James Ray and Jo Ellen Jones of Van Buren. She was the Principal Broker of J.E. Jones Real Estate in Van Buren. Becky was a member of the City Heights United Methodist Church in Van Buren. She was a past president of the Crawford County Board of Realtors, former Realtor of the Year and Rookie of the Year for the Crawford County Board of Realtors. She was a graduate of the Realtor Institute, a Certified Residential Specialist, and a past Zone Director of the Arkansas Realtor Association. She was a graduate of Van Buren High School and Arkansas Tech University, a former assistant children’s leader in Bible Study Fellowship and a gifted children’s

teacher at her church. She was preceded in death by her mother, Jo Ellen Jones. She is survived by her father, James Ray Jones of Van Buren; her husband of 40 years, Randy Miller of Van Buren; one brother, J.R. Jones and his wife Maryanne Pace Jones of Atlanta, GA; a son, James Aaron Miller of Van Buren; a daughter, Anna Miller Daily and husband Samuel Daily of Fayetteville; three grandsons, Ray Miller, Andrew Miller and Luke Daily; one nephew, Brandon Jones of Mooresville, NC; two dogs, Adler and Daisy, who watch the door for her to come home; along with numerous cousins and a multitude of close friends and family. She was greatly loved and will be greatly missed.



### Calvin D. Mitchell, 1928-2018

Rev. Calvin D. Mitchell, 90, of Little Rock died July 4, 2018. He was born January 10, 1928 to Dewey and Eunice Mitchell. Calvin graduated from Dumas High School, University of Arkansas and Perkins School of Theology. He served in the United States Coast Guard during the Korean War. He was a United Methodist minister, serving churches across Arkansas for 35 years. In 1985 he received the Mary and Ira A. Brumley Award for Religious Education. In retirement he served as Pastor Emeritus at St. Luke United Methodist Church and co-managed the Broadmoor Neighborhood Pool with his wife, Pat. He was preceded in death by his parents and daughter, Tracy Boxley.



He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Pat Mitchell and his children, Michael Mitchell, Terri (Fred) Rowlan, Mark (Mark Giles) Mitchell, Toni (Jim) Bemis, Tami (Jim) Cross, son-in-law, Mark Boxley; grandchildren, Luke (Jill) Rowlan, Drew Mitchell, Victoria (Jonathan) Pennington, Eric (Keara) Cross, Matthew Bemis, Brandon Bemis, Austin Cross, Isaac Cross, Logan Bemis and Cassandra Schlatter; great-grandchildren, Nylah Cross, Shayne Pennington, Logan Schlatter and dear friend, Lee Boozer. He lived his life as he taught, be kind, love your neighbor and serve others. The family would like to thank the staff of VA Hospital, 4C, 1B and Palliative Care for the wonderful care he received. A memorial service will be held July 13, 2018 at 1:00 p.m. at St. Luke United Methodist Church, 6401 West 32nd street, Little Rock, AR 72204.

### Sylvia Lynn Nasic, 1934-2018

Sylvia Lynn Nasic, 84, of Sherwood, a retired clergy Associate member of the Arkansas Conference, died May 19, 2018. She was born February 9, 1934, in Little Rock, to Evans Vaughn Sanders, Sr. and Pauline Omelia Sanders. Retired from the U.S. Postal Service, she earned a bachelor’s degree in theology and was an ordained United Methodist minister. During her ministry, she served as pastor at Quitman, Dumas Memorial in El Dorado, Wye Mountain and Western Hills in Little Rock. She loved God and her family. She was preceded in death by her parents and a brother, Evans Vaughn Sanders, Jr. She is survived by her four children, Paula Miles (Bruce), Patricia Patton, Diana

Roberts and Anita Johnston (Chris), all of Sherwood; six grandchildren, Randy Roberts, Jr. (Jessica), Amber Patton (Justin), Stephanie Roberts, Matthew Hodges, Tom Watson, and Cory Watson; four great-grandchildren, Avery, Patrick, Eden and Ezra; and other family members whom she loved dearly. Services were May 30 at Griffin Leggett Rest Hills in North Little Rock, with burial at Roselawn Memorial Park, Little Rock.



### **Eva Louise Horton Pettus, 1947-2018**

**E**va Louise Horton Pettus died February 17, 2018, at CrossRidge Community Hospital in Wynne, AR. She was the spouse of Rev. Glen Pettus, pastor of Wynne First United Methodist Church. She was born March 20, 1947, to J.B. Horton and Melba Farris Horton in Detroit, MI, and grew up in New Madrid, MO. She attended Arkansas State University, earning a Bachelor of Music Education degree in 1970 and a Master of Science in Education degree in 1971. She performed with the ASU Concert Choir, Madrigal Singers, Marching Indian Band and Concert Band. She was president of Kay's Hall, Associated Women Students and Sigma Alpha Iota. She was a member of the ASU President's Roundtable and Lecture-Concert Committee, as well as the hospital auxiliary at St. Bernard's Hospital. Among her many honors and awards were the ASU Distinguished Service Award, Alpha Omicron Pi Music Award and Sigma Alpha Iota Sword of Honor. Eva led mostly choral music in schools in Missouri and Arkansas, including Tuckerman, Lakeside Hot Springs and Pochahontas. As a United Methodist, she served as Sunday School teacher, choir director, organist, pianist and



director of children's and youth choirs. She was active in United Methodist Women and served on many Conference and District committees. Instrumental in bringing Walk to Emmaus and Chrysalis to Arkansas, she was Chair of the Arkansas Emmaus and Chrysalis Formation Committees, Lay Director of the Women's Walk and Girls' Chrysalis Flight and served on the International Emmaus Board and National Chrysalis Board. Eva was a certified adjudicator with the National Piano Guild and a National Certified Teacher of Music through the National Teachers of Music Association. She was a member of the Music Educators National Association, Sigma Alpha Iota, American and Arkansas Choral Directors Associations, Choristers Guild, Suzuki Music Association, Musicgarten, Kindermusik, Musical Coterie, Music Club and PEO. She was a member of Wynne First United Methodist Church, United Methodist Women, American Legion Auxiliary, Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln Presenters and the Kelly's Roundtable. Her greatest gift was her enormous love of others and especially her love of her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. She was preceded in death by her father, J.B. Horton. In addition to her husband, survivors are her mother, Melba Horton, sisters Janelle (Kenny) Burch and Karen Horton of Sikeston, MO, and extended family. A memorial service was held February 20 at Wynne First UMC.

### **Ralph Gary Riley, Sr., 1938 - 2018**

**R**alph Gary Riley, Sr., 79 of Stephens, AR passed away in his home surrounded by those he loved on Wednesday, August 01, 2018. Gary was born November 24, 1938 to Ralph and Lou Neal Riley.



He was an Army Veteran of the Korean War, Pastor with First United Methodist Church and associate Pastor of Rolling Hills First Assembly of God. Gary was a devoted husband, a loving father and the world's greatest papaw and a friend to all he met.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Ralph and Lou Neal Riley; brother, Marcus Don Riley; and son, Michael Eugene Riley. He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Jeanie Riley; six children, Jamie Collins of Paragould, AR, Gary Riley, Jr. of Little Rock, AR, Mike Kinley of Frenchport, AR, Dennis Kinley of White Hall, AR, Lisa Smith of White Hall, AR and Devonna Campbell of Camden, AR; twenty grandchildren; twenty one great grandchildren; and six great great grandchildren. A memorial service was held Saturday, August 04, 2018 at Proctor Funeral Home with Larry Goza, Mike Kinley, Jamie Collins and Terry Walthall officiating. The family recieved friends Saturday before the service.

### **Carol Ann Robbins, 1944-2018**

**C**arol Snowball Bell Robbins, 73, died April 23, 2018 at Parkside Home in Hillsboro, Kansas. She was born November 28, 1944 to Ralph and Florence (Neuschafer) Snowball in Ellsworth, Kansas. She was the surviving spouse of retired United Methodist local pastor Ronald L. Robbins who served the Cedar Grove/Pleasant Ridge charge in Yellville from 2003 to 2008. She was a registered nurse for many years.

Carol married Ronald Robbins in 1987, and they spent many

wonderful years in Yellville, Arkansas, before moving to Salina, Kansas. Survivors include: son, Creigh Bell of Hillsboro; daughter, Stacey Gingell of Delphos, Kansas; grandchildren, Surinda Bell, Sonareigh Bell, Robert Gingell, Jamie Gingell.



### **Betty Ann Embrey Robertson, 1929-2017**

**T**he Rev. Betty Ann Embrey Robertson, 88, died October 25, 2017. She was born March 9, 1929 in Fort Smith, AR, the daughter of Blake and Anna Louise Andres Embrey. She was a retired United Methodist clergywoman and elder. She graduated from Fort Smith (Northside) High School, Fort

Smith Junior College (University of Arkansas Fort Smith), and the University of Arkansas Little Rock with a BA in Elementary Education. She then earned a Master of Divinity from Memphis Theological Seminary in Memphis, TN. Betty Ann substituted in elementary schools in Fort Smith, taught third grade at

Jefferson Elementary in Little Rock and at Smackover Elementary in Smackover, AR. She was director of education at Western Hills United Methodist Church in Little Rock and at the Batesville South Parish in Batesville. She pastored United Methodist churches in Tumbling Shoals, Cedar Grove, Crawfordsville and Salem-Viola in Fulton County, taught Disciple Bible Study classes, served on several United Methodist Conference Committees, including Finance and Administration, Education, the Board of Diaconal Ministry and served as District Coordinator of Children's Ministries. She was a past president of Chapters BD,



DB, I of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, and a national officer in the Delta Beta Sigma Sorority. Preceded in death by her parents and her husband, Rev. Robert Wilson Robertson, she is survived by her children, Dr. Blake Robertson and wife, Dr. Charlotte Robertson, of Springdale and Diana Myklebust and husband, Mark, of Maumelle; sister, Marian Bartlett of Russellville; grandchildren, Matthew Robert Myklebust and wife, Melanie, Mary Kay Myklebust-Steves, Jonathan Blake Robertson and Stephen Lane; and great-grandchildren, Logan Robertson, Ashtyn and Coltyn Lane, Morgan, Mason and Maddox Myklebust, and Victoria Myklebust-Steves; and a host of other family and friends. Services were held on Friday, October 27 at St. James United Methodist Church.

### Robert P. Sessions, 1926-2018

**R**obert Paul ("Bob") Sessions was born on October 5, 1926 in Hardy, AR and died on March 26, 2018 at his home in Asbury Methodist Village in Gaithersburg, MD. An ordained United Methodist minister, university professor and college president, he is survived by his wife of 57 years, Julia Sessions, as well as four daughters, ten grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. He was buried on March 30, 2018 at the Greenwood Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Richmond, VA.

When Bob graduated from high school he joined the Navy and served from 1944-1946. He was in the officer's training program at Dartmouth College and Brown University. He graduated with honors in 1948 from Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas, TX, earning a Master's degree in theology in 1950. That year he was ordained as a United Methodist minister and was assigned to St. John's Methodist Church in Van Buren, AR, serving there as pastor from 1950-1956. Bob married Martha Rae Rutledge from Batesville in 1950. They had two daughters, Laura and Teresa.

From 1956-1962, Bob served as pastor of the First United Methodist Church in Booneville, AR. In 1957 he and Rae divorced; Laura and Terri continued to live with Bob. In December 1960, Bob married Hendrix College graduate Julia Margaret Anderson from Conway, AR. They had two daughters, Kathy and Sarah. In 1962, the family moved to East Braintree, MA for Bob to attend Boston University School of Theology, where he studied sociology and race and ethnic relations. He supported the family as minister of a small United Methodist church in Braintree.

He earned a PhD in Theology in 1967. After graduating, Bob became an assistant professor of sociology and religion at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon, WV. In 1970 he became a sociology professor and department chair at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, TN.

He was tapped to become president of Southwestern College in Winfield, KS in 1980 and served there from 1981-1984. From 1984-1988 he was dean of the Graduate School and director of institutional planning of Kearney State College in Kearny, NE. Seeking to be closer to his daughters' families as he neared retirement, Bob finished his academic career as professor of the University of Richmond from 1988-1992. He was intellectually curious throughout his life and cared deeply about the state of his community and society.

He was passionate in the belief that every person was loved

in the eyes of God and deserved the right to be treated fairly. This conviction was tested during his years as a young pastor in Arkansas communities that were being challenged to desegregate in the 1950s-1960s. His statewide sermons on fairness and race relations found a mixed response, from criticism by the governor and a KKK cross-burning on the family lawn, to staunch supporters.



In 1961 Bob wrote an article entitled "Are Southern Ministers Failing the South?" that was published in *The Saturday Evening Post* calling on Southern ministers to reflect Christian values in supporting racial equality.

These events culminated in his decision to pursue graduate studies, to understand and help others understand the interplay of social and religious forces. Bob's stance for racial equality remained one of the things Bob was most proud of in his life. Music and the creative arts were also his passion.

He loved musicals and sang, along with his wife Julia, for decades in church choirs. He wrote Christian music that was often incorporated into services of his home churches. Upon retirement he took piano lessons and wrote a musical called "Remind Me to Tell You" which was performed by local groups in Tennessee and Maryland. Bob's most enduring passion was for family.

Born to Adolphus Wann Jernigan and Mattie Orel (Gibson) Jernigan in 1926, his childhood was interrupted by the death of his father. His mother found work in a cotton mill and placed Bob and his older brother Adolphus in a children's home in Arkansas run by the Freemasons. Bob, Adolphus and their sister Laura were later adopted by Loys Rutherford Sessions.

He was a very devoted husband, father, grandfather, and – just before his death – great-grandfather. He loved each family member including a succession of dogs and cats, penning an argument in his last book that they too would surely enjoy an afterlife in heaven.

Bob enjoyed every family gathering, regularly expressing his pride in and affection for his relatives, and often talked about how lucky he was to have such a loving family. The family he helped build will keep him in their hearts and hope to sustain his legacy of curiosity, good humor, and decency.

### **Wensil Allene Lowery Smith, 1935-2018**

**W**ensil Allene Lowery Smith, 82, of Butterfield, the spouse of retired elder Rev. David Smith, died February 5, 2018. She was born on March 11, 1935, in Cooper, the daughter of Granville Allen and Clara Anita James Lowery. She graduated from Magnet Cove High School where she met her husband, David.



She was preceded in death by her parents, three of her siblings, sister Delores Lowery Lawrence, brothers Hulon and Donnie Lowery. She is survived by her husband of 63 years, David Smith of Butterfield; children Debra Smith (Jerry) Segers of Canton, GA, and Philip "Fritz" (Cathleen) Smith of Kennesaw, GA; sisters Jannis Lowery Smith of Hot Springs and Reta Lowery (Clarence) Woosley of Malvern; brother-in-law Howard Wilson of Tuscaloosa, AL, sisters-in-law Eva Jean Hathcock Lowery of Malvern, Rosalind Crawford of Houston, TX, and Frances (Van) Wells of Ruston, LA; seven grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and a host of other relatives.

Genealogy was one of her favorite pastimes and she gathered a wealth of family information for more than 60 years. Remembered for her wit, kindness and generosity, Wensil loved her God and her church.

A preacher's wife much of her adult life, she had a quiet way of supporting behind the scenes. She was active in Girl Scout leadership and her local PEO chapter. She was an exceptional bookkeeper, working for Sears, Millsaps College, Capps Funeral Home and was Deputy Tax Collector for Walthall County in Mississippi. She highly valued education and provided "Nana Scholarships" to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Wensil credited her creativity to growing up in the post-Depression years saying, "We always had to make something out of nothing." She enjoyed life and preparing special tea parties for her grandchildren.

She loved butterflies, was a marathon shopper and inquisitive world traveler. She claimed her greatest accomplishment was raising her two children to become caring, productive adults. Services were held February 9 at J.A. Funk Funeral Home in Malvern, with interment at Cooper Cemetery.

### **Judith Stroud, 1938-2018**

**J**udith Stroud, surviving spouse of Rev. William "Bill" Stroud, died June 19, 2018, in Almagordo, NM.

### **Dorothy Yarnell Warden, 1934-2017**

**D**orothy Yarnell Warden, 83, surviving spouse of the late Rev. Frank Warden, died November 21, 2017 at Searcy Healthcare Center. She was 83. Dorothy was born May 4, 1934 in Searcy to the late John Harbin and Doris Neeley Yarnell. Dorothy grew up in Searcy. She attended Hendrix College, where she met Frank Warden, and they were married August 14, 1954. He preceded her in death November 14, 2012. Dorothy attended Peabody College in Nashville, graduating with an education degree, while her husband was attending law school at Vanderbilt. After graduation they relocated to San Antonio and California where Dorothy taught school. They returned to Little Rock where Frank practiced law in Little Rock for the Friday firm until he heard the call to ministry. During this time they were charter members of Lakewood United Methodist Church where Dorothy was active in the choir. They moved to Dallas in 1969



so Frank could attend seminary. After being ordained, he was assigned to Highland Park United Methodist Church. Dorothy was very active in the life of the church during his pastorate there, serving as the wedding hostess for the church, among other duties. They wrote and published Trinity Bible Studies while in Dallas, traveling the world over teaching the methods and training other pastors. Some years later they retired to the Searcy area where both were involved at First United Methodist. Dorothy was constantly giving to her community as a facilitator in cancer support groups, working with families of the addicted and alcoholic, and as a writer of a weekly column for the Searcy Daily Citizen in addition to her manifold work for the local churches. Dorothy's great love was music. She was an accomplished soprano and a teacher of voice both in Searcy and Dallas. She was deeply committed to the music programs of every church they attended. She is survived by one son, Clark Warden of Searcy; daughter, Elizabeth Warden of Dallas, TX; and grandson, Matthew David Warden (Tiffany) of Mt. Vernon, AR.

### **Sondra Lynn Scott Warren, 1948-2018**

**S**ondra Lynn Scott Warren, 70, of Morrilton, the surviving spouse of Rev. Ellis Edward Warren, died May 22, 2018. She was born May 19, 1948, in Morrilton, AR to Thomas and Jessie Ruth Scott.

She obtained a master of science in education degree with an emphasis in history from the University of Central Arkansas.

She taught at Morrilton Junior High School for two years before devoting her life to being a United Methodist preacher's wife and stay-at-home mother. She is survived by her children,

Christopher (Kathy) Warren of Fort Worth, TX, Courtney (Thomas) Turner of Marvell, Scott Warren of Russellville, Jennifer Warren, John Warren, William Warren and Joshua Warren, all of Morrilton; and grandchildren, Nathan, Lauren and Wesley Turner, Michael and Andrew Warren.





# History Corner: Mallalieu United Methodist Church

BY MARCIA CROSSMAN AND CAROL TEAGUE

*Arkansas Conference United Methodist Archives*

Recently, we at the Archives have been speaking with Gilbert Scoggins as he asked us to share what we have on the church of his childhood, which was Mallalieu United Methodist Church in Fort Smith. This was a church in the Fort Smith District of the Southwest Conference, and it has been closed for quite some time.

This was a beautiful church, as you can see in the picture. Now there is only one brick wall standing including a cornerstone. Mr. Scoggins is an architect living in Vacaville, California, and he is drawing a plan of the old church as he remembers it.

His grandfather was the Rev. C.C. Hall who was District Superintendent of the Fort Smith District and pastor of Mallalieu Church in the Southwest Conference in the 1940s and 1950s. We sent him copies of our Mallalieu file, but no one could read the words on the cornerstone.

We called and asked Becky Neighbors, administrative assistant of the Northwest District Office, if she could find someone to take pictures of the cornerstone that could be read. She did it herself



and sent them to us.

Thank you, Becky! For many years, the office of the Church and Community Worker, Euba Winton, worked out of this church.

If you are searching for information about a former or present pastor or a church, contact us at the Arkansas Conference Archives at [arkmethodist@hendrix.edu](mailto:arkmethodist@hendrix.edu).

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# United Methodist community coffeehouse serves up hot drinks, friendly faces in Ark.

BY SAM PIERCE  
*Featured Contributor*

In February of 2017, a small group of volunteers from Forrest City First United Methodist Church traveled to Tanzania to work with local missionaries who have planted churches in the area. During their trip, they met some of the preachers for those planted churches. It was there where Maurica Dooley came up with the idea for a community coffee house.

Dooley, a member of the church, said one of the pastors is majoring in theology and graduates from school this year. The church has pledged to pay his tuition.

“Part of what we are hoping to accomplish with this coffee house is for the proceeds or profits to go towards our partnership with the missions in Tanzania,” Dooley said. “So we want to be self-sustaining and actually make a profit.”

Holy Grounds Community Coffeehouse, located at 620 E. Broadway, opened in January and is found inside a newly remodeled parsonage house.

“It got to a point where we either needed to tear it down or do something with it,” Dooley said. “So many of our members didn’t want to tear it down.

“So we were trying to come up with something to do with this building, so we came up with this coffee house idea.”

The house is roughly more than 100 years old and has 12-foot ceilings and wood floors, according to Dooley. Last year, the church celebrated its 100th anniversary and held a capital campaign to raise money for maintenance for the church as well as the remodel work for the coffee house.

“We exceeded our goal actually quite a bit,” Dooley said. “We had several maintenance things for the church, but we also used the money to make the house into a coffee house.

“That’s what paid for that.”

Forrest City United Methodist Church’s pastor, the Rev. Dixon Platt, said whoever was in charge of remodeling the house did a fantastic job.

“It was a group effort,” Dooley said.

Dooley, who volunteers at the coffee house, said they reach out to the community and are a presence in the city through the coffee house.

“It is for people who wouldn’t necessarily enter through the front door of our church; this was sort of like a backdoor idea I guess,” Dooley said. “It is an outreach to the community for people who don’t have a connection to a church.”

She said there had been a couple of people that had come to visit the church that were initially introduced to it through the coffee house.

“We also have a pay-it-forward jar for people to put their change in,” Dooley said. “Then when underprivileged people



A Java Shake (top) and a Pumpkin Spice Chai Latte (bottom) are just a few of the delicious coffee drinks served up at Holy Grounds. || Photo provided by Holy Grounds Community Coffeehouse

come in and don't have enough money to buy a coffee or a sandwich, we use those funds from the pay-it-forward jar to give them a sandwich, coffee or something like that.

"We have a few regulars who come get a sandwich or something, and that may be the best meal they get that week."

The idea of the pay-it-forward jar came from their full-time employee, Janet Peckham. Dooley said she is a "God-send."

"She is awesome and a perfect fit," Dooley said. "We have volunteers that help during the rush, and we also have a part-time employee that relieves her when she needs it."

The coffee house is open Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and is open until 6 p.m. on Wednesdays to accommodate the church crowd. The restaurant offers sandwiches, soups, cakes, and muffins and has different specials each week. The coffee house gets its beans from Westrock Coffee Company, which operates its own mission by using direct trade with the farmers who grow the beans. For more information, visit [www.holygroundscurrencycoffeehouse.com](http://www.holygroundscurrencycoffeehouse.com).

"The community has really embraced it," Dooley said. "They are very tickled to have a coffee shop in this town."

"Before, the only coffee offered around here was from McDonald's. So it has been very well received and very supported by our community."

Platt said the coffee house gets many customers coming off the interstate.

"They have stopped by for coffee or whatever they might want to pick up," he said. "We are centrally located downtown, directly across from the post office."

"It is a food establishment, and those are hard to establish, but we are doing well."

The coffee house has housed several committee meetings such as the downtown revitalization committee and other groups, according to Platt.

He said Briuana Green, who graduated from Forrest City High School and graduated from Harvard University recently, held a book signing for her book, "The Fall."

"Our small groups from church use it after hours because it is a quieter spot than most," Platt said. "We also have local artists display their artwork in the building."

"A young man from our church has sat with his guitar and done a set," Dooley said. "It has been very nice, and it is open for all kinds of people or anything the community would like to use it for."

Platt said the church's mission statement is to, "Make disciples of Jesus Christ by bringing people in, building people up and sending people out."

"Holy Grounds is part of making that mission happen," Platt said. "I think God was working in and influencing the ministry from the beginning when the seed was planted in Tanzania, then through the planning, to the fundraising, to the remodel and now through the menu, the service, the volunteers, and the staff," Platt said. "Each one of those steps has potential pitfalls, numerous pitfalls, but God works and influenced the dreamers, the planners, the donors, and now the operators."

"Holy Grounds is reaching people inside and outside the church including our neighbors in need who stop by for a meal, a coffee and a friendly face."



**Top:** Holy Grounds Community Coffeehouse is located at 620 E. Broadway in Forrest City, Arkansas. **Bottom:** a Delta BLT with pimento cheese, one of many tasty offerings at Holy Grounds. || Photo provided by Holy Grounds Community Coffeehouse



# Little blessings, big impact

Farmington UMC's Little Free Pantry provides meals for community in need

BY CALEB HENNINGTON

*Digital Content Editor*

**E**very act of kindness – no matter how large or small – has the potential to impact those in need of a blessing in ways that are unpredictable. In the case of Farmington United Methodist Church and their Little Free Pantry, the blessing arrived in a manner that surprised the congregation.

The Little Free Pantry is Farmington UMC's version of the blessing box. Blessing boxes aren't a new concept; they've been around, in one form or another, for many years. Typically, these boxes are similar in size to the small community libraries – sometimes known as little lending libraries – found on sidewalks and in front of neighborhood parks.

Inside the boxes, people place items like food, blankets, diapers, money, and sometimes even clothing. These items are free to be taken by anyone who needs them, and takers are also encouraged to leave something in the box for the next visitor if they have the means to do so. It works in the same way as a food pantry but is based on an honor system, where it's implied that you should take only as much as you need and leave the rest for other visitors to the box.

The Rev. Dee Harper, pastor at Farmington UMC, said the idea for a blessing box started from another church that he pastored before his current appointment. The church – Des Arc First United Methodist Church – had launched a blessing box as a way to serve the community, and when Harper was appointed to Farmington UMC, church members there were looking for ways to reach out and provide to the community as well.

Harper said that even though the church is a small to medium-sized congregation, they are a very mission-minded church and look to do whatever they can to help out their community.

“One of the things that was expressed to me when I got here in 2017 was a desire to expand the food pantry ministry at the church,” Harper said. “We were inspired by the work of 200,000 Reasons and other food pantries, and one of the great ways that we figured out how to reach more people was through the blessing box.”

It was at the beginning of September – nine months after the blessing box went up – when Lay Leader Elizabeth Floyd was restocking the box and noticed a surprise inside in the form of a handwritten note.

On a single piece of paper left inside the box, a grateful recipient had written the following note: “I just



The Little Free Pantry blessing box provides food and other supplies for the community in and around Farmington. It was constructed by the Farmington High School FFA based on designs for a chicken coop that they had previously built.

*|| Photo provided by Farmington United Methodist Church*

want to say thank you to anyone and everyone who has ever donated to this pantry. My family and I have been able to eat on nights we had nothing because of you guys. I can only hope one day we will be able to help another family like you guys have helped us. We appreciate everything you've done. Thank you so much.” The note was signed “A family in need.”

In response to that note, another visitor to the blessing box wrote on that same piece of paper a letter of encouragement to the family.

**"WE CAN DO  
NO GREAT  
THINGS, ONLY  
SMALL THINGS  
WITH GREAT  
LOVE."**

- Unknown

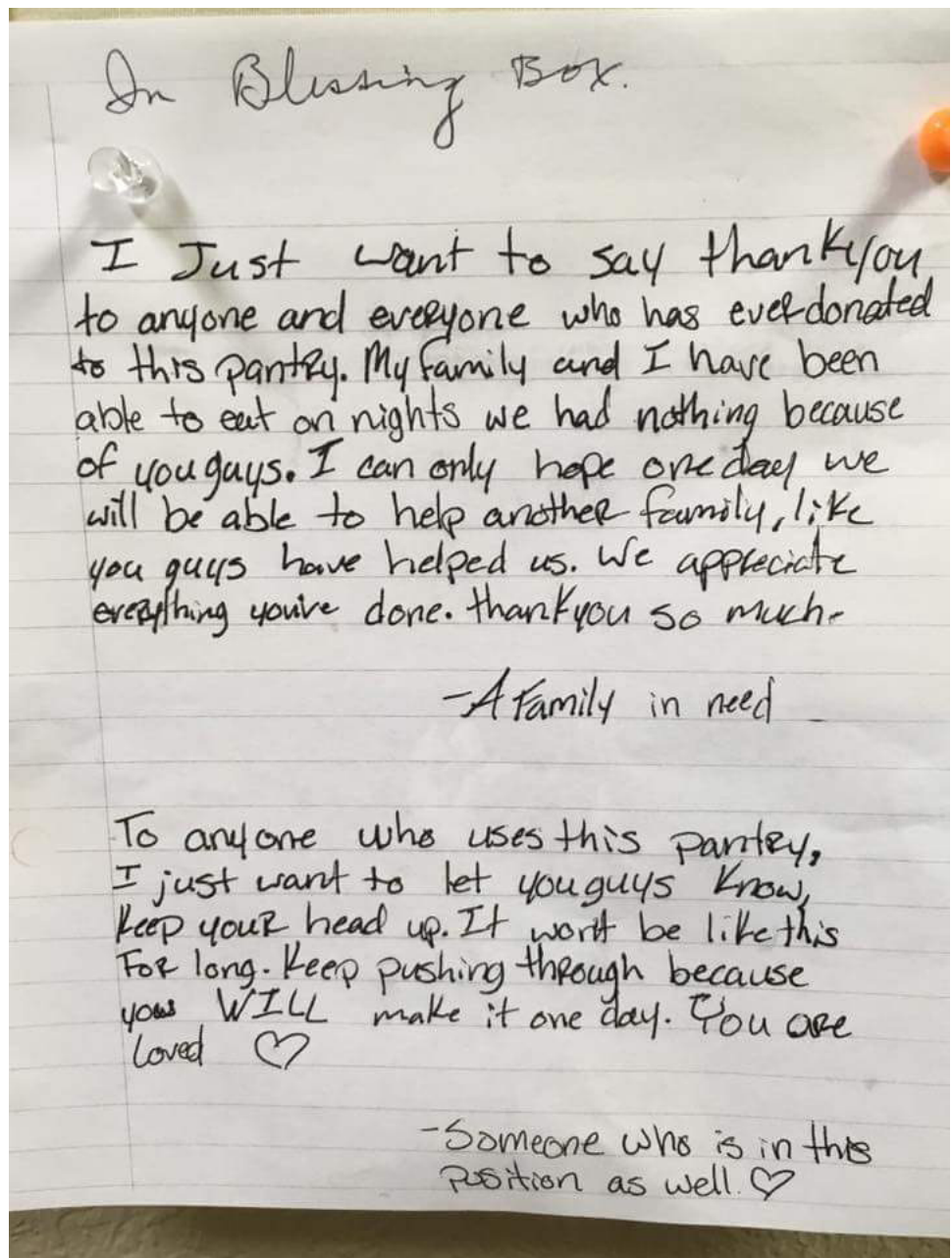
"To anyone who uses this pantry, I just want to let you guys know, keep your head up. It won't be like this for long. Keep pushing through because you WILL make it one day. You are loved."

"It was very moving," said Harper, when asked about the note. "To see that what you're feeling led to do has helped someone. And that somebody would take the time to write that out and put it in the box to let us know they were helped by the box...it was very moving. It makes you feel like you were being led directly by God and used by God to help others."

As far as where the food that typically goes into the box comes from, Harper said the church does a monthly drive where they hand out reusable grocery bags at the beginning of each month – along with a list of needed items – and ask people to bring those bags back filled with the items for the food pantry and blessing box.

It's not just church members who are helping to fill the box each month, either. Harper says that others in the Farmington community have heard of what the church is doing with the Little Free Pantry and have donated their own supplies to help fill the box as well.

The blessing box itself is a large wooden structure that resembles a chicken coop. In fact, one of the reasons it resembles a coop so closely is thanks to Farmington High School's Future Farmers of America group, which built the box for Farmington



The church received this handwritten note in their blessing box sometime in early September. Two different families had written notes indicating they had received blessings from the Little Free Pantry. || Photo provided by Farmington United Methodist Church

UMC based on plans for chicken coops they've assembled in the past.

According to Harper, other versions of the blessing box have been made from items such as old medicine cabinets and display cases from stores. Written on many of these blessing boxes, you might find some version of the saying "Take what you need. Leave what you can. Above all, be blessed!" Some even reference the words of Jesus, taken from Matthew 25:35, where He says, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in." (NIV)

For Harper, when he contemplates the impact of the blessing box ministry and the people it has helped, he remembers a quote that has resonated with him in a powerful way.

"We can do no great things, only small things with great love."

"I hope that people will be encouraged to find those ways – whether it's a blessing box or something else – to serve other people. Little blessings have more of an impact than we think they do," Harper said.



Lisa Bryant, back, sings with the children on Children's Sabbath Sunday at Lakewood UMC. Bryant sings with the preschoolers each Sunday during the Sunday School hour. || *Photo provided by Melinda Shunk*

## Lakewood UMC children participate in Children's Sabbath Sunday

BY MELINDA SHUNK  
*Children's Ministry Coordinator*

**L**akewood United Methodist Church in North Little Rock is a mid-sized church that worships about 450 congregates every Sunday. Lakewood sees such value in ministering to children that they have created a team!

Most importantly, this dynamic duo has recognized each other's spiritual gifts, and they know exactly the role each has as they minister to the children and their families at Lakewood UMC.

Rochelle Gray previously worked as a public school teacher but started working part-time in Children's ministry 10 years ago. Her senior pastor really wanted her to go full-time five years ago, but she tried to keep a work/home balance that was right for her family.

Rochelle noticed Jill Dillman as a new member taking on more volunteer roles in Children's Ministry. Jill approached Rochelle about her leading a children's musical production. Jill was a high school drama and speech teacher, so she was drawn to creatively sharing God's love in a musical production by children. Rochelle thought her over-eager volunteer was on to an excellent thing for the kids, so they began working on the musical.

For the last four years, Rochelle and Jill have collaborated to plan their six-week Wednesday night programming that is designed to conclude with a Children's Sabbath. They start by choosing specific scripture that focuses on a theme or big idea that they teach the 60 children that come to their Wednesday evening program. This year's theme happened to be "Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly."

Rochelle found Bible lessons that focused on the theme and worked on creating the artistic, hands-on aspects like the bulletin covers, offering bowls, paper floral arrangements and alter art that the children could work on each night. Jill wrote the service and assigned the dramatic skit parts. Jill teaches the children all aspect of worship: welcome, the passing of the peace, affirmation of faith, morning prayer, offering prayer, and the benediction.

The other part of their creative team is Gigi Parkhill who helps with the kids and the songs they learn on Wednesday nights. The Kindergarten through fifth-grade students rotates through Wednesday evening classes. Lisa Bryant works with the pre-kindergarten kids on Sunday morning so that they can be prepared to be part of the Children's Sabbath.

At the end of the six weeks, parents were asked to have their children at church on Oct. 14 to lead two worship services for the congregation. More than 90 percent of the children and families who participated in classes on Wednesday night had their child there to lead worship that morning.

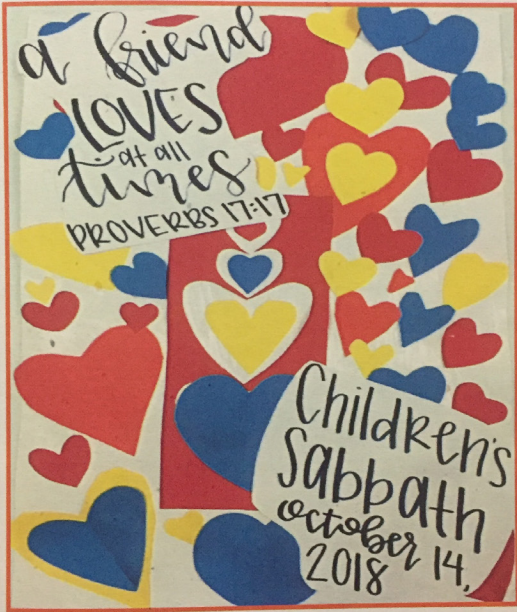
Members donated money so that all the children could have a uniformed worship T-shirt to wear. Music selections were a beautiful blend of traditional and contemporary choices. The third-graders received their Bibles during the Children's moment and what usually would be the sermon time was something all ages would understand. For the sermon, the pastors were asked to come up while the students asked previously prepared questions they wanted to know about God. All were thoughtfully asked and answered questions by child and pastor.

Children's Sabbath is just the beginning for the children at Lakewood UMC. Children are part of every worship, but one day a year they get to do it all. We are all children of God, so isn't every Sunday Children's Sabbath?

# Welcome!

## Children's Sabbath

October 14, 2018



...Seeking, Serving, Sharing  
the message of Jesus Christ...

Lakewood  
United Methodist Church



Two children act out a scene from one of two dramas performed on Children's Sabbath Sunday. || Photo provided by Melinda Shunk



The children's choir sing one of three songs that were performed on Children's Sabbath Sunday. || Photo provided by Melinda Shunk

