

The Arkansas United Methodist

LIVING OUR FAITH

April 2019 | Volume 167, Issue 4

Jesus

"He is Risen"

Podcasting in
ARKANSAS

#Disciple365

LOVE &
Immigration



A WESLEYAN VIEWPOINT

“My Methodist roots can be traced back to the 18th Century in Virginia; so I was exposed early and often to Wesleyan theology,” said Dewitt Smith of Bella Vista. “I believe that Wesleyan theology is more relevant than ever for our children as they are faced with a myriad of 21st century challenges. As United Methodists we are called to be practicing Christians in every phase of our lives.”

His wife Cindy said the church is very important to her family, “I didn’t grow up Methodist, but I see how it influenced Dewitt, and I am so happy our daughter and our son had good experiences in the church. “It’s now being passed on to our grandchildren.”

The Smiths support the training of pastors in United Methodist seminaries so they can help the next generation learn and experience the Wesleyan tradition. UMFA Seminary Scholarships fund three-year educations at United Methodist seminaries for student pastors who agree to come back to the Arkansas Conference to serve local churches.

And the Smiths are personally reaping the benefits of the scholarship program. They are members of Oakley Chapel United Methodist Church in Rogers, where two pastors have been UMFA Seminary Scholarship recipients — Rev. Brian Timmons and Rev. Shane Pair, their current pastor.

 **The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas**
601 Wellington Village Road • Little Rock, Arkansas 72211
501-664-8632 • Fax 501-664-6792 • www.umfa.org



Attendees at Pre-Retirement Seminar hosted by The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas. || *Photo provided by UMFA*

UMFA Sponsors Pre-Retirement Seminar for Clergy

By Haley Walker Klein
UMFA Contributor

Over 30 pastors, nearing retirement age, along with many of their spouses participated in a Pre-Retirement Seminar sponsored by The United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas on February 12 and 13.

“As people retire, they have many productive years left,” said Rev. Mackey Yokem, UMFA Grants Administrator who also works on leadership development ministries for the Foundation.

“Our goal with the seminar was to help pastors and their spouses determine how best to apply their time, wisdom, and creative ideas to the 15-20 years after retirement. We desire to help clergy be effective leaders throughout their life, and this seminar brought ideas about how best to apply their passions after the appointment process is over.”

Keith Lawrence, a nationally recognized retirement authority and author of *Your Retirement Quest: 10 Secrets for Creating and Living a Fulfilling Retirement*, provided timely and easy-to-use hints about how to deal with retirement – even before it starts.

“I highly recommend this seminar to other clergy members and their spouses,” said Rev. Dr. Naomi Rogers, FUMC, Des Arc. “I attended with my husband, and it has allowed us to make our retirement plans a true reality.”

Other speakers included Ronald Theodore and Peter Hang of Wespeth Investment Management, a United Methodist agency that is also responsible for managing the UMC’s \$21 billion in pension assets, who presented retirement facts and figures and demonstrated how to complete necessary forms for retirement benefits.

Bob Fairbrook from EY Financial Planning also offered the opportunity for attendees to meet one-on-one with a financial advisor.

UMFA Vice President of Development Janet Marshall made a presentation about the resources the Foundation can provide to help with creating a will and making charitable gift decisions.

Interested in attending a future Seminar? Contact Mackey Yokem at (501) 664-8632 or myokem@umfa.org.

ALUMNI EVENTS

Thursday, May 30

Candler Alumni Dinner - 5:30 p.m. - Self Pay

Purple Cow, 1490 Higdon Ferry Road, Hot Springs
Contact: Jessica Durand, (870) 403-2177

SMU Perkins School of Theology Alumni - 6:00 p.m. - Self Pay

Rolando's Nuevo Latino Restaurante, 210 Central Avenue, Hot Springs
Contact: Daniel Thueson, daniel.thueson@arumc.org or (479) 459-6189

Saint Paul School of Theology Alumni Dinner - Self Pay

Brick House Grill, 801 Central Ave., Hot Springs, AR 71901
Contact: Melissa Pearce, Director of Alumni, melissa.pearce@spst.edu

Duke Divinity School Alumni and Friends - Self Pay

Taco Mama, 1209 Malvern Avenue, Hot Springs, AR
Contact: Sara Bayles, sara.bayles@arumc.org

Friday, May 31

Asbury Seminary & Friends Alumni Luncheon - Noon - Self Pay

First Wok Chinese Super Buffet, 4510 Central Ave., Hot Springs
Contact: Daniel Kirkpatrick, (501) 690-8488 or daniel.kirkpatrick@arumc.org



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas

FELLOWSHIP OF Assoc. Members & Local Pastors

Wednesday, May 29 at 5:00 p.m.

Hall D, Hot Springs Convention Center

**Contact: Glen Harris (479) 957-7700
or email glenharris@windstream.net**

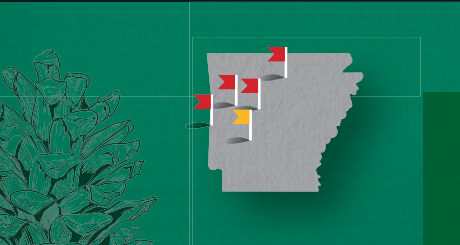


Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas



EACH DAY IS A
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OCCASION**
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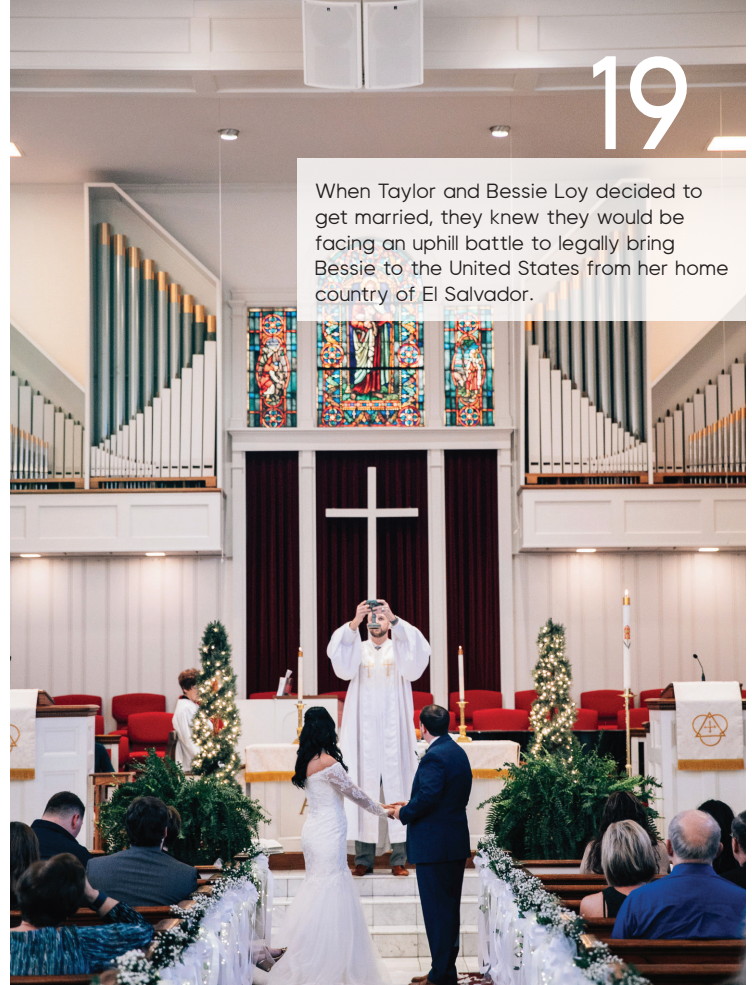
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When Taylor and Bessie Loy decided to get married, they knew they would be facing an uphill battle to legally bring Bessie to the United States from her home country of El Salvador.

Spring & Easter



2019 Ordinands and Provisional Members



Snacks at the Bus Stop



Podcasting in Arkansas



VOLUME 167, NO. 4 • APRIL 5

Caleb Hennington, Digital Content Editor

Amy Ezell, Director of The Center for Communication

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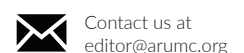
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STORY IDEA?



A time, and a season, for everything



Caleb Hennington
Digital Content Editor, [@arumceditor](#)

Like many wonderful things in life, there are two sides to every coin. Spring is no exception. On the one hand, I love the warmer weather. I love hearing the sounds of birds singing again, and the vibrant green growth popping up all over Arkansas on once bare and cold trees.

On the other hand: allergies. As soon as I start seeing flowers, you can bet that I'm going to start sneezing, getting headaches, and continuously rubbing my itchy eyes.

Spring is a time of renewal and rebirth; it's certainly a stunning reminder of the beauty of God's creation.

The Bible speaks on this two-sided coin in Ecclesiastes, in the much-quoted first eight verses of chapter three – if you can't remember the scripture, sing The Byrds' classic anti-war song "Turn! Turn! Turn!" to yourself.

King Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, uses chapter three to present contrasts between things like weeping and laughing, silence and speaking, loving and hating, and war and peace. According to Solomon, there is a time for everything in life; a season for every activity under heaven.

One thing to note about these verses is that Solomon does not decide on whether these different items are good or bad; he merely presents them as everyday occurrences that almost everyone will face.

I think that's important to remember as we enter different stages in life.

Although we may face hardship, even dismay, the good news is that tough times don't last forever. Even though the sun goes down at night, you can always count on it to rise again in the morning. When trees lose their leaves in the fall, they are reborn in the spring.

And when life is too tough to bear, and we feel like we can't go on anymore, remember that things will get better. They have to. There's another side to that coin and a new season to experience.

So, I'll get through my itchy eyes and my runny nose, and you'll get through whatever you're facing in life as well.

For everything there is a season, and seasons always change.

There is a time for everything, and a season
for every activity under the heavens...
– Ecclesiastes 3:1–8

A MATTER OF HOPE:

They're Our Kids Too



Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church
committed to supporting

Lydia Patterson Institute

The only United Methodist institution on the border committed
to forming bilingual and bicultural leaders for the church and society.

Collection Sunday:
Mother's Day, May 12, 2019



Free promotional materials at <http://arumc.org/lpi2019>



The "Realer" Life of the Resurrection

I've been thinking a lot about real life. Things like cancer, the opioid crisis, sex trafficking, my own mortality, and what the division in the United Methodist Church means for the future. I'll be honest, doing this can be hazardous for my spiritual health; or, at least, raise my level of anxiety.

At the same time, I've also been pondering something I can best describe as "realer" life. It's what I experience in the resurrection of Jesus Christ that has the power to overcome death, sin, hatred, hopelessness and the worst real life has to offer. Focusing on "realer" life gives me hope I know can only come from God.

It takes an incredible amount of faith for me to see "realer" life in the midst of real life. Faith God created all that is. Faith God has made humanity (even me!) in God's image. Faith God is so personally involved that God sent Jesus to do what I absolutely need but never do on my own - save me through the amazing grace of the cross. Faith God wants me to grow in grace. And faith God has unleashed in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead the greatest power in the universe.

This kind of faith - stumbling and bumbling as mine is at times - does something astounding. It enables me to experience how every bit of real life is transformed through the "realer" life God offers in the resurrection. Not just long ago on that Easter Sunday, when the women discovered the tomb was empty, but also right now!

I know more than I want to know about real life because I live it every single day. I'm grateful Jesus is helping me experience more and more of the "realer" life he is unleashing as he makes all things new. Sure, this is a journey that lasts a lifetime - and beyond. And, yes, it is spiritual. Perhaps, even mystical. But isn't that the point? To be so shaped by the "realer" life of Jesus' resurrection that what I see is transformed, what I experience is transformed, and what I do is transformed because I am being transformed.

He is risen - He is risen, indeed!



Gary E. Mueller
Bishop of the Arkansas Conference

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Lifting up singles in the church

A few simple ways to help singles feel more welcome and wanted

On my last Sunday in my first appointment, my family drove to attend my last church service there and to accompany me on my move to a new city. After worship, several members approached my parents with well wishes and compliments. However, a few well-intentioned church members expressed a troubling sentiment along the lines of, “We’ve loved having your daughter as our pastor, and we were so worried when she was announced because she was so young and single.”

When this message was relayed to me, I was shocked for several reasons. This church was known as a church that welcomed female pastors; when I left they requested the cabinet send another female pastor! They were loving and accepting of me from my first Sunday (and I’m sure some of my early sermons required some grace on their part). I had no idea that they had concerns, not about my calling, experience, or abilities, but about my marital status.

Since then, I have served churches of various sizes, in different districts and vastly different communities, but despite their differences, I have heard whispers of concern about my singleness at each. I am no longer shocked by these comments, but I continue to struggle to understand the reticence of Christian communities to welcome a single pastor.

There are notable single leaders in the Bible: Jeremiah, Paul, many of the disciples, John the Baptist, Mary Magdalene, and of course, Jesus. Paul lifts up singleness as the preferred way of life for Christians in his first letter to the church at Corinth. Paul wishes, in chapter seven, that all Christians could be like him and remain single, but if one cannot practice self-control, it is better to marry. The New Testament models a new type of community that is not based on biological connections or marriage, but is based on our commitment to Jesus. Despite all the strong biblical examples of singleness, often the church continues to view unmarried people as odd, immature, or someone to be pitied.

Our attitude toward single people leads to behaviors that compromise our evangelism efforts. About 57% of millennials



have never been married, and 35% of unmarried millennials do not plan to marry.

Gen Z will likely continue this trend of having lower rates of marriage than previous generations. If the church is not welcoming to singles and supportive of their lifestyle, we will not be able to reach younger generations, a demographic with whom the UMC already struggles to connect.

Never married adults are a growing demographic, and they are a group that is looking for community. The United Methodist Church should focus more on reaching single adults in order to make new disciples. To reach new single people, one of the things we must do is follow Wesley’s rule to “do no harm” by avoiding hurtful comments and actions. I do not believe many of the negative attitudes and comments toward single people are intentional. Even intentionally helpful comments can drive single, divorced, and widowed Christians away from the church.

Here are some ways to welcome single people into your church.

First, singles groups are great, but many churches do not have enough single people to form a small group or Sunday School class. In these cases, be sure to invite single people to join couples their age instead of having events and groups that are only open to married people. When you form these groups with married and single people, avoid names like Pairs and Spares; single people aren't spare tires! Single people, especially younger singles without children, often travel for work, to visit family, or for recreation on the weekends. Offer weeknight activities so that single people can regularly participate in the life of the church. Do not assume singles without children are not interested in volunteering with children and youth ministries. Help them to find a way to contribute to the church.

Do not offer to set up your single pastor (or a single layperson) with another single church or family member. This creates an awkward situation for that person. Avoid comments like, "God has someone picked out for you," "I'm sure the right person is around the corner," etc. This may not be true; many people are lifelong singles. It also presumes that marriage is the only life path instead of one of several options. Many people are happily single and do not want any pity from their church family. When in doubt, it is usually better not to comment on someone's personal life.

In the Bible we see different types of families lifted up: married couples, never married people, and widows. As the church, we should imitate the model we see in scripture by welcoming all families, whether they have one or 10 members.

- From an Arkansas Conference clergy member

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BOARD OF Church & Society



Friday, May 31 at 12:00 a.m.

Agenda: Potential 2020 General Conference Delegates

Grand Avenue UMC

841 Quapaw Avenue, Hot Springs

Contact: Jay Clark, JClark@phumc.com



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas

AR Black Methodists for Church Renewal

Dr. Negail Riley Dinner



Wednesday, May 29 at 5:00 p.m.

Haven UMC, 107 Burroughs, Hot Springs

Contact: Deborah Bell, dbell@bcdinc.org



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas

A Moment

with



Getting Up and Giving Back

By Rev. Nathan Kilbourne
First United Methodist Church of Jacksonville

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? – Isaiah 58.6-7

The world around us is burgeoning - daylight saving time has given us more sunny hours in our days, Spring has brought new color to our landscapes, and the celebration of the resurrection of our lord Jesus Christ is only days away. All of these things came about with much contemplation, patience and hope.

Many people think of the Lenten season as a time to deny themselves from something; to empty themselves so they can be replenished spiritually is a humble act that helps us individually.

But I like to consider another aspect of Lent that can fulfill a person's spirit just as much: helping someone else. When I study on Isaiah's words, it reminds me of Jesus Christ's entire ministry: to love one another. As simple as that statement is, it encompasses everything he demonstrated in his life: bringing justice to the marginalized, giving hope to the poor, encouraging love among all people. He showed how a few fish and pieces of bread could feed thousands simply by sharing what one has with someone who has nothing. I can think of no better way to celebrate his teachings while filling your own spirit than to help someone in need.

Methodist Family Health has just such a way to do this. The 10th Annual Get Up & Give collection project takes place throughout the 40 days of Lent, and Arkansas's United Methodists can contribute to children and families who are abandoned, abused, neglected and managing psychiatric, emotional, behavioral and spiritual issues. Both children and adults can participate by donating personal hygiene items,



clothes, shoes, school supplies, bedding, funds and other necessities.

The mission of Methodist Family Health is to provide the best possible care to those who may need their help. Many of the children in their care are in the foster care system or have families with few monetary resources. By providing them things like new underwear, deodorant, their own school supplies – even books and toys – demonstrates to our neighbors that someone they have never even met cares about their well-being. The simple act of giving to those who have nothing brings justice to the marginalized, hope to the poor, and love to us all.

If you are so encouraged, I ask you to consider contributing to Methodist Family Health during this season. All items should be new, and a list of what's needed can be found at MethodistFamily.org/get-up-and-give. Monetary donations also can be contributed so specific items can be purchased to meet the needs of the Arkansas children and families in their care. Contributions can be delivered to the Methodist Family Health Counseling Clinic serving the community closest to you, and drop-off locations include:

- Alma: 1209 Hwy 71N, Suite B, Alma, AR 72921; phone 479.632.1022
- Batesville: 500 E. Main St., Suite 310, Batesville, AR 72501; phone 870.569.4890
- Fayetteville: 74 W. Sunbridge Dr., Fayetteville, AR 72703; phone 479.582.5565
- Heber Springs: 407 S. 7th St., Heber Springs, AR 72543; phone 501.365.3022
- Hot Springs: 100 Ridgeway, Suite 5, Hot Springs, AR 71901; phone 501.318.6066
- Jonesboro: 2239 S. Caraway, Suite M, Jonesboro, AR 72401; phone 870.910.3757
- Little Rock: 1600 Aldersgate Road, Suite 100B, Little Rock, AR 72205; phone 501.537.3991
- Magnolia: 621 E. North St., Magnolia, AR 71753; phone 870.234.0739

Regardless of how you renew your spirit, remember to do justice, show compassion and love without limits.

A life-changing experience at Perkins School for the Laity

By Kay Brockwell
Featured Contributor

When I received the email inviting me to apply for one of the scholarships offered via the Arkansas United Methodist Church foundation to attend the Perkins Theological School for the Laity, I didn't hesitate. Yes, I wrote back, I was most definitely interested.

It may have been 40 years since I graduated from college, but I have never lost my love for learning. I don't miss a chance to go back to school.

Then I looked at PTSL's website – and I knew I HAD to go. Besides hearing Dr. Adam Hamilton in the wake of the 2019 General Conference, the array of classes spanned the Bible and many of my major interests. Choosing my courses wasn't easy; I opted for the class on Abraham, because of my fascination with history, and the class on intercessory prayer, because, well, prayer, and I can always learn more about THAT.

So Wednesday morning, March 27, found me settling into my car to head for Dallas. That night, I met several of a group of 15 Arkansas Methodists with whom I'd spend the next three days worshipping, learning, praying, eating, sharing fellowship, having fun.

And Thursday afternoon, class began.

Hamilton was, as expected, excellent. Ever since General Conference, I have been fretting about what would happen to the Methodist Church into which I was born and to which my family has belonged since circuit riders ranged across West Tennessee in the early 1800s. After hearing Hamilton, I still do not have the answer, but I have more of a sense of peace about the subject. The Church, he noted, has been subject to conflict since the big debate over circumcision Luke details in Acts, and compromises, throughout the centuries, have not always worked. But it is possible, he reminded us, to be orthodox United Methodists and read the Bible differently; we don't have to agree as long as we love people. And, he noted, the Bible must always be interpreted in the context of the times, and what we believe must be consistent with what we know of the heart of God as manifested in Jesus.

In other words, we can disagree on the Discipline as long as we agree on love.

Next up was Abraham's Righteousness, an all-day seminar on Friday from Perkins professor Roy Heller. Viewing the stories of Abraham through the triple lens of obedience, faithfulness and righteousness, the class both stretched my mind and altered my view of the Biblical patriarch. While Abraham knocked it out of the park on obedience, Heller noted, he did not do so well on faithfulness, and fell far short, in many of the stories, of righteousness. The class challenged my assumptions and gave me an entirely new way of looking at characters of the Bible, from



Early morning sunrise behind Perkins' Chapel at Perkins Theological Seminary.
|| Photo by Cathy Hall

the perspective that righteousness is always the most important thing, from which obedience and faithfulness will flow. It was a huge step beyond the Vacation Bible School-level understanding many of us have of characters in the Old Testament. I'd always been taught, for example, that Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac was him passing God's test of obedience; but, Heller said, it could be seen just as easily as Abraham failing God's test of righteousness.

Mind blown for the evening.

The next day was Mark Stamm's class on Intercessory Prayer. It opened with exploring our Biblical directives to pray, moved on toward the link between prayer and baptism, and finally, focused on prayer as a means of transforming the world. Prayer is one step, he said, toward realizing the Kingdom of God. He urged students to pray regularly for those suffering, noting the praying for the suffering leads to ministering to them, as if we were ministering to the needs of Jesus on the cross. It expanded my understanding of prayer, and encouraged me to be more faithful to and methodical in my prayer schedule; as he noted, "It may be that showing up is the critical thing."

Evenings were filled with lots of conversation over dinner, and part of the group braved an unseasonable cold front to attend a Rangers-Cubs baseball game. As we scattered Saturday evening and Sunday morning, we agreed we wanted to remain connected in a community of faith and to look for other opportunities for Bible study and learning, both together and in our own congregations.

I don't think it's an exaggeration to call the weekend a life-changing experience. I know it has greatly expanded my understanding of the Scriptures and has left me hungry for the next opportunity. I cannot express my thanks sufficiently to the Arkansas Methodist Foundation, the Arkansas Conference, and Perkins School of Theology for making it possible.

Spring symbols remind us of Resurrection



By Rev. Mark Price
Minister of Spiritual Formation, Christ UMC in Franklin, Tennessee

When the weather turns warmer and the grass grows greener, it's easier to understand the promise of new life and renewed hope that Christians proclaim as "Easter people." The reminders are all around us so be sure to keep an eye out on your next spring stroll.

Birds

The robin, a very common bird in the U.S., has a red breast and a legend to explain it. Seems that once a gray robin flew to Christ's crown of thorns to draw out a thorn, and when it did, a drop of Christ's blood fell on its breast, leaving a stain forevermore.

Bees

It takes lots of buzzing bees to spread the pollen and make flowers grow. The honey these creatures create is a biblical symbol of God's favor. The Torah agrees, for it describes God's promised land again and again as "flowing with milk and honey."

Flowers

Long considered a symbol of hope and new life, the daffodil is one of the blooms most often connected to the Resurrection. Tradition says that giving a gift of daffodils will ensure happiness for the receiver—but always give a bunch: a single bloom signals doom.

The flowering shrub known as the forsythia is what I call the Easter tree, because when its spidery branches are moving with the wind, they seem to be arms waving in praise of the season. According to tradition, forsythia means anticipation—an appropriate companion word for Resurrection.

It is said the dogwood tree used to grow straight and tall, but after it was used as a crucifix for Christ, God made it short and twisted with a thin trunk so it could never be used as a cross again.

The dogwood bloom has four parts, each with a rusty red color on the end and a small hole, a reminder of where the nails were driven into the cross.

The center stamens look like the crown of thorns.

Faith

The traditions that developed around these spring symbols helped explain the concept that God in the flesh took on death and came back to tell us there is life on the other side. What

UNITED METHODIST

Men



Thursday, May 30 at 12:00 p.m.

Contact: Clay McCastlain (501) 908-4105

jclaymccastlain@gmail.com



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas

fantastic news!

This spring, be a witness to the good news that Christ is risen:

- Learn about the symbols and notice them when you are outdoors this season. Even better: plant some dogwoods and flowers in your yard and on the grounds of your church.

- Fashion a cross from cuttings of spring flowers. Invite others to help. Set it out in front of your church, or even your house, for all to see.

- Make (don't buy) a gift for someone who needs to be reminded of the love of God made known in the Risen Christ.

- Play. Not a video game or a phone app. Physically play. Move. Dance. Interestingly, the Irish jig and tap dancing have their roots in an early Saxon tradition called the "hop-egg." The purpose was to step among a dozen eggs as if walking the Stations of the Cross. This egg dance is likely the distant relative of hopscotch.

The Council at Nicaea in 325 AD gave the Church a revised creed. The last line reads: "We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."

As Easter people, we don't have to look further than spring for an exclamation point to that affirmation. ✝

This story was originally published on May 14, 2014.

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/spring-symbols-remind-us-of-resurrection>



2019 Ordinands

The 2019 Ordinands and Provisional Members will be ordained and commissioned at this year's Annual conference. Read about the 2019 ordinands and provisional members on the next few pages.

Katye Chambers



Deacon Track

Hometown:
Little Rock, AR

Education:
Little Rock Central High School; BFA Dance Performance and BA Religious Studies - Southern Methodist University; Master of Divinity - Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary; Complementary Certificate in Ecumenical Studies - Ecumenical Institute at Bossey/University of Geneva

Current Appointment:
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (Director of Vocational Networking)

James Kjorlaug



Elder Track

Hometown:
Paragould, AR

Education:
B.A. in English from Arkansas State University; Master of Divinity, Duke Divinity School

Current Appointment:
Vilonia United Methodist Church

Gary L. Maskell



Elder Track

Hometown:
Point Pleasant, NJ

Education:
Brookdale Community College;
Monterey Peninsula College; Life
University; Asbury Seminary

Current Appointment:
Marvell and Lexa United Methodist
Church Charge

Future Appointment:
Magnolia First United Methodist
Church

Rashim M. Merriwether Sr.



Elder Track

Hometown:
Fort Smith, AR

Education:
Bachelor of Science in Information
Technology, Computer Networking,
University of Arkansas - Fort Smith;
Master of Divinity, Saint Paul School
of Theology

Current Appointment:
Hunter United Methodist Church,
Developer of New Ethnic Churches,
Ministries and Fresh Expressions

Corey A. Tyson Read



Elder Track

Hometown:

Jacksonville, AR

Education:

University of Arkansas - Little Rock;
Duke Divinity School

Current Appointment:

Wesley Foundation at Southern
Arkansas University

Judy Wills Rudd



Elder Track

Hometown:

Little Rock, AR

Education:

Hendrix College; University of Arkansas
- Little Rock; University of Arkansas at
Little Rock School of Law; Memphis
Theological Seminary; Garrett
Evangelical Theological Seminary

Current Appointment:

St. Paul United Methodist Church,
Searcy, AR

2019 Provisional Members

Roy Elizabeth Kelley



Elder Track

Hometown:
Harrison, AR

Education:
Bachelor of Arts in English, Arkansas Tech University; Juris Doctor, University of Arkansas School of Law; Master of Divinity, United Theological Seminary

Current Appointment:
Atkins First United Methodist Church and Bell's Chapel United Methodist Church

Future Appointment:
Fort Smith United Methodist Church

Shawn Michael Gustin



Elder Track

Hometown:
Searcy, AR

Education:
Indiana Wesleyan University; Asbury Theological Seminary

Current Appointment:
Quitman United Methodist Church

CONFESSING MOVEMENT *of Arkansas*



Thursday, May 30 at 6:30 a.m.
Union Missionary Baptist Church,
217 Gulpha St., Hot Springs
(behind Convention center)

Contact: Karen Millar, karenlmillar@hotmail.com



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas

Jesse C. James III



Elder Track

Hometown:
Sherwood, AR

Education:
Associate of Arts and Bachelor of
General Studies, University of Arkansas
Monticello; Master of Divinity,
Memphis Theological Seminary

Current Appointment:
Weiner United Methodist Church/Fisher
United Methodist Church Charge

LAY SERVANT MINISTRIES BBQ

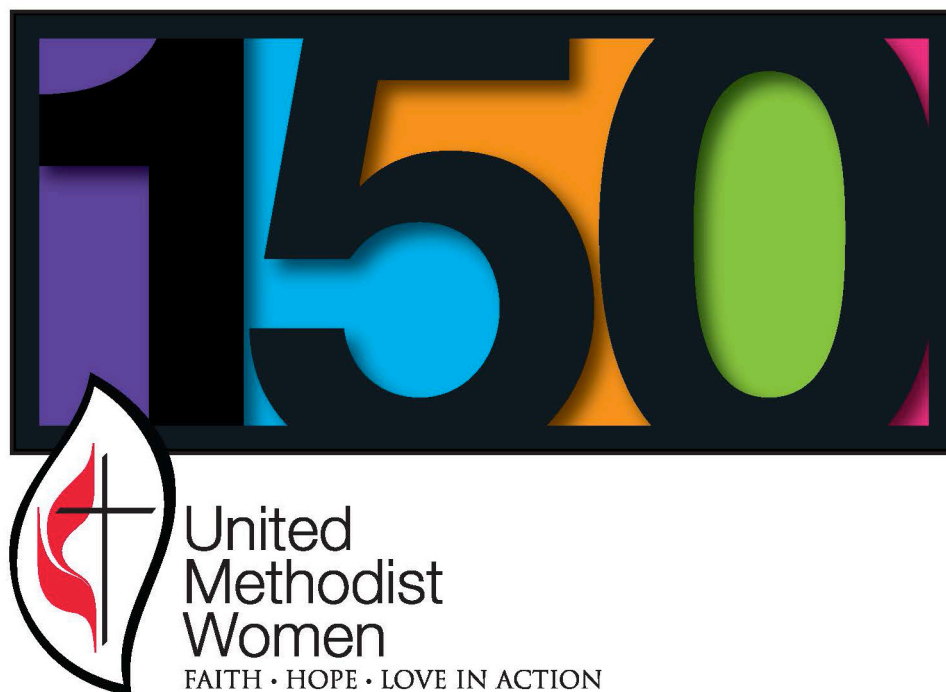


Wednesday, May 29 at 5:30 p.m.
Grand Avenue UMC, 841 Quapaw Ave., Hot Springs

Contact: Jimmie Boyd, jimmie.boyd@arumc.org



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas



United Methodist Women celebrate 150 years of service

By Caleb Hennington
Digital Content Editor, [@arumceditor](#)

On March 23, 2019, the United Methodist Women celebrated its 150th anniversary with a special Day of Giving and reflection on the many strong female leaders that have been a part of the organization since its inception.

The beginning of UMW, as we know it today, came about in 1869 when a small group of eight women met at Tremont Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston to organize the Women's Foreign Missionary Society. That group of women raised enough money to send Dr. Clara Swain and Isabella Thoburn, a teacher, as missionaries to India to serve the women living there.

Exactly 150 years later, the United Methodist Women has continued to evolve and is now the largest women's faith-based service and advocacy organization in the world.

Since 2014, UMW has taken up a special offering each year on March 23, which helps to fund the Legacy Fund Endowment Campaign. According to the UMW website, "The Legacy Fund is a forward-looking permanently invested endowment, the earnings of which will strengthen our organization, so that future giving can be even more directly linked to our projects and partners, addressing injustice and alleviating suffering."

The goal is to raise \$60 million for the Legacy Fund, and since 2014 UMW has raised more than \$24 million, about 40

percent of its goal, to help fund future mission projects and services.


Cathy Blackwood, president of the Arkansas Conference United Methodist Women, rejoices in the many blessings that she has received over the years from United Methodist Women.

"United Methodist Women has helped me grow in my faith, and realize the value of women mentoring and supporting me while I have been putting my faith into action," Blackwood said. "I find it amazing that when my family moved from Northeast Arkansas to Northwest Arkansas, United Methodist Women was the group that kept me rooted while we looked for a new church home."

Blackwood sees the 150-year celebration of UMW as a momentous event in the organization's history.

"When I think about how the world was 150 years ago -1869- our country was still putting itself together after the Civil war, women couldn't vote - it underscores how vulnerable women and children were then. It also reminds me of the limited resources women had to help other women at that time in our history.

"I hope that all United Methodist Women realize this year, and in the years to come, that it is our turn to be passionate and tenacious in ensuring this legacy of women being in mission to women, children and youth continues for another 150 years!"

For more information on the work of United Methodist Women and the progress of the Legacy Fund, visit <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/150/home>. 

Left to right: Taylor
and Bessie Loy.
|| Photo by Caleb
Hennington



Love & Immigration

By Caleb Hennington
Digital Content Editor, [@arumceditor](#)

The Rev. Taylor Loy didn't realize it yet, but he was about to meet his future wife. At the time, Taylor was a seminary student at Duke Divinity School. Part of the academic requirements for students is to enter into an internship program to get practical ministry experience outside the walls of the classroom.

Many Duke students choose a domestic option, shadowing a pastor at a local church in the U.S.

Taylor wanted to do something different. He wanted to travel outside of his comfort zone and try his hand at ministry in a foreign country. El Salvador was his destination.

"Part of that program, aside from the cultural immersion, is that you learn as much Spanish as you can for the 10 weeks that you're there," Taylor said. "It just so happened that I was in the academy where you learn a language, and I saw this woman walk in. I thought 'she cannot possibly be my teacher here.'"

The woman, Bessie, ended up being his tutor for the entire time that he was in El Salvador.

The two saw each other for four hours a day, five days a week for 10 weeks.

"I immediately thought Bessie was incredibly beautiful. But what turned my feelings into something more was a time when we were in class, and she was showing me pictures of her family," Taylor said. "And some of her cousins have various health issues. And she was telling me how much she loved them and how worried she was about them. I could see the love that she had for her family as she was telling me this story. I remember thinking to myself at that moment, 'whoever gets to marry this woman is a very lucky man.'"

But it wasn't until after Taylor left El Salvador and returned home to Duke that they realized their feelings for each other amounted to more than just friends.

"In the beginning, when I was his teacher, I didn't know that I was in love with him," Bessie said. "It was after he left that I felt really sad and knew that I wasn't going to see him again. My friends knew that I loved him because of how I treated him, but I didn't notice that until later!"

Communication via video calls continued for months after Taylor returned home, and he traveled back to El Salvador four more times after that first trip, spending a total of six months in the country to be with Bessie.

Eventually, after much discernment and prayer, Taylor asked Bessie to marry him.

But the story of their love and eventual marriage didn't end there. Since Bessie was a citizen of El Salvador, and Taylor a citizen of the United States, their relationship became far more complicated once they decided to return to and live in the States.

Getting into the Country

To enter the United States from another country, it's not merely a process of acquiring a passport; a visa is also necessary. Unless you're from one of the 38 countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program -- which waives the need for a visa -- you can spend months, even years of waiting to find out if your visa application is approved.

In the fiscal year 2018, the U.S. government issued a total of 533,557 new immigrant visas -- visas for people looking to permanently live in the United States -- to citizens of foreign countries.

The total number of visas issued to countries in the Western Hemisphere, which includes Central and South American countries, was 235,596; visas for citizens of El Salvador made up 15,965 of that number.

But according to recent data from the U.S. Department of State, a total of 460,840 immigrants were denied visas in 2018 due to ineligibility findings, an increase of 39 percent from the fiscal year 2017.

"The most difficult aspect of immigration seems to be just getting into the country," Taylor said. "A lot of people expected that I could just go to El Salvador, marry her, and then just bring her back to the U.S. And when we got back here, then we would just start the citizenship process. [The immigration process] consistently blew the minds of everyone that I talked to.

"It is incredibly difficult to get legal entry into the country."

With close to 50 percent of visa applications denied by the U.S. government, Taylor and Bessie knew that the process would be long, difficult and stressful.

Not only would Bessie have to go through a waiting period to see if her visa had been approved or denied, but the mountains of paperwork and documents required to simply apply for a visa weighed heavily on their minds as well.

So, Taylor and Bessie had two options: either get married in El Salvador and then wait about a year for her visa to be approved so she could enter the country, or start the visa process



The streets of a town in El Salvador, surrounded by the jungle and mountains. || Photo provided by Taylor Loy

now, pray that she is accepted, and then get married within the required number of days after entering the country. Taylor and Bessie chose the latter.

"We chose the cheapest, the easiest, and the fastest visa, and yet it took a year for her to even get here, and it will be seven years or longer until Bessie can become a citizen."

The visa that the Loys chose was a fiancé(e) visa: simply put, it's a visa for couples seeking to get married in the U.S.

The catch is that a citizen of a foreign country who chooses to come to the U.S. on a fiancé(e) visa must legally marry his or her U.S. citizen fiancé(e) within 90 days of arriving in the country.

"Bessie got here on Oct. 5, 2018, and we got married on Nov. 4, 2018. December is a crazy time for pastors and January felt like we were pushing it too close to the deadline. So we did it in less than a month."

The Complicated Visa Process

Applying for a visa is more than just a one-page form with basic information about yourself; for any visa, a complex stack of forms and mountains of documents are required before you can come here to prove to the U.S. government that you won't be a detriment to the country.

First, the Loys had to apply for a visa; in their case a K-1 visa, also known as a fiancé(e) visa.



During one of his many trips to El Salvador, Taylor proposed to Bessie on a picturesque beach in El Salvador. || *Photo provided by Taylor Loy*

Every part of the visa process starts in the U.S. Taylor had to put together a packet of information that contained details on each of their lives, their family histories, employment records, how many times in the last year Taylor has visited El Salvador, and so on.

The couple applying for a visa must also prove that their relationship is authentic, which is done through photos, written statements from people who know you as a couple, and other forms of correspondence.

There are also requirements for the U.S. citizen in the relationship to meet specific income requirements. For the fiancée visa, the U.S. citizen must earn at least 100 percent of the federal poverty guidelines when applying for the visa. Currently, the federal guideline for a single person in the U.S. is \$12,490 a year.

But because of Taylor's status as a recent graduate, his tax records showed that he fell below that federal guideline and he was required to find someone else to co-sponsor Bessie's entry into the country.

And the application for the visa doesn't come cheap: Taylor and



Taylor and Bessie Loy with Bessie's mother, Ana Rosa Sintigo. || *Photo provided by Taylor Loy*

Bessie said that a fee of \$1,200 was required to submit the form and move on to the next step in the process, getting an interview with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

There is a lot of uncertainty during the application process. The packet of material is sent through multiple government offices for approval, including the USCIS and National Visa Center which sends the paperwork to the U.S. embassy closest to where the foreign fiancé(e) lives -- for Bessie, this was the U.S. embassy in El Salvador. The USCIS or the embassy could deny the application, for any number of reasons, and the application process could be terminated at that point: meaning the visa fees paid during the process would not be reimbursed to the couple.

If the application is approved, the foreign fiancé(e) must then schedule an examination by a medical professional and then schedule a time for an interview with the U.S. embassy.

"The doctor examines everything, from my head to my toes. They were even checking the spaces between my fingers to make sure nothing was there," Bessie said.

After the interview, if all goes according to plan and the USCIS and State Department approve of the foreign fiancé(e)'s documents, they are issued a visa stamp on his or her passport and are allowed to enter the country within six months of the visa approval.

The couple then gets married within 90 days, files a green card application with an additional \$1,000+ fee, and begins another long and complicated process of receiving a green card.

Help from the Church

Despite the overwhelming and complex nature of applying for a visa, Taylor and Bessie were never truly alone in the process.

Much of the help and encouragement they received came from Taylor's appointed church, First United Methodist Church of Benton, Arkansas.

"Even before I came here, they were asking about me and offering their help to us. When I came here, everyone already acted like they knew me and were saying 'Hi, Bessie! How are you?' and things like that.

"I also had ladies from the church take me out to lunch

and talk to me to get to know me better. They even planned a wedding shower for us and helped us plan the wedding at the church," Bessie said. "Any question I had, or any doubt I had about where to buy something, they have helped us a lot."

Taylor said that not only were people volunteering to help once Bessie arrived in the U.S., they were also consistently asking about her every time they saw him.

"Every Sunday morning, I was asked, 'Where are you in the process? How soon is she going to be here? Is she prepared for this winter? How's Bessie doing?' I had some people who said 'We already love her. We haven't met her, we haven't seen her, but we know that we already love her.'"

Bessie has felt the love from the church, as well. Since coming to Arkansas, she has received overwhelming support from the staff and congregation of Benton First.

"They have become like my second family here. They are very protective, and they are always asking me how I feel," Bessie said.

"We have had tremendous support from this church," Taylor added.

The Loys also believe that because Taylor and Bessie went through this process while he was a pastor at Benton First, the congregation became more aware of the difficulties of immigration because they were also experiencing it firsthand.

"I had people asking me to explain to them, in the simplest terms that I could, the visa process," Taylor said. "And without fail, every time I would do that, they were shocked at how difficult and complicated this process was.

"I heard over and over again 'But you're a citizen? You're an upstanding guy; why can't you just bring her over?' They couldn't understand why she had to be in El Salvador while we were doing all of this paperwork."

Taylor also said that immigrants have a much more difficult job of proving why they want to enter the country, and proving that they want to come for the right reasons, than many Americans realize.

"People are not just pouring into this country from all over the world with ease. There is a ton of scrutiny placed on immigrants. There's a huge burden of proof placed on immigrants to prove that they have legal and reasonable right to



Photo by Melissa Albey



Taylor and Bessie had their wedding at Benton First United Methodist Church. The church helped immensely with helping the Loys plan their wedding, and continue to help them with the immigration process. || *Photo by Melissa Albey*

enter the country,” Taylor said.

For the Loys’ future, there is still a lot of work to be done before Bessie can become a full citizen, granted all the rights of every other American. The green card application process is where the Loys stand as of right now. About seven more years of waiting and vetting will happen before the United States government can recognize Bessie as a legal resident.

When the visa process was in its early stages, Taylor prayed that he and Bessie could get through the process and that a better way could be found in America to welcome people into the country.

Taylor’s prayer now has expanded and shifted to a hope that others would learn to connect with immigrants and hear about their journey to America.

“My prayer now would be that people would not try to be educated about the immigration process by watching MSNBC, CNN or Fox News; that they would turn those channels off and go and talk to an actual immigrant and ask them about their story.

“Because ... when it comes to immigrants, scripture is pretty clear. Leviticus 19:34 reads ‘The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.’ And Matthew 25:35, ‘For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.’

“We are so grateful that this church has listened to the voice of Jesus and welcomed Bessie with open arms ... and have been in constant prayer and support whenever she was trying to get here.” ✝



Taylor and Bessie embrace at the airport after not seeing each other for months. || *Photo provided by Taylor Loy*

School bus stop ministry keeps kids happy and full

By Sam Pierce

Featured Contributor, [@sjamespierce](#)

For Andrea Gentry, a former teacher, kids have always been near and dear to her heart.

“I love helping people, and this was a neat and ongoing experience where I could help kids on a regular basis and eventually develop relationships with these kids,” Gentry said.

Gentry, a member of the First United Methodist Church in Wynne, has organized and started a school bus stop ministry for the Wynne School District. She and other volunteers will hand out snacks to kids once they reach their bus stop.

“Honestly, this area of town, (the kids) are just happy to have it and will take anything,” Gentry said. “They are so thankful. I’m hoping to get to know them a little better, build a relationship and eventually be a mentor-type person.

“The kids are very welcoming, and I get hugs every now and then.”

Gentry said the idea of the ministry stemmed from 200,000 Reasons initiative by the United Methodists of Arkansas. She said she received a grant of more than \$1,000 in October, but thanks to donations and support, has not had to fully dip into the funds for the snacks.

“I have had great community support, and they have provided snacks for me,” she said. “They will buy them and give them to me.

“By sharing it on Facebook, and word of mouth, we have received wonderful community support. People will volunteer their time, or donate money or donate snacks for us to use. We have a closet full of snacks.

“It has really been unbelievable the amount of support we have received. One of our Sunday School classes has committed to helping me on a monthly basis, once the grant money runs out.

“But I’m doing great. The community support we have is just amazing.”

Gentry is from and works in Perkin, which is a part of the Wynne School District. She said Perkin is a high poverty area and she believes “they needed it the most.”

“I see 50 to 60 kids in Perkin every day, and I have been giving snacks to 20 kids at each stop,” Gentry said. “When deciding on where to be, we think about the area and what area of town needs it the most. We also wouldn’t want to post up where only one or two kids get off.”

Casey Shaw, who met Gentry through a Relay for Life volunteer event, said she reached out to Gentry through Facebook after seeing one of her posts about the ministry.



A group of kids from Wynne head home after school. || Photo by Andrea Gentry



School children grab a snack before heading to school. Andrea Gentry, a member of Wynne First United Methodist Church, started a school bus stop snack program for local kids in the Wynne School District. || Photo by Andrea Gentry



Two volunteers help pass out snacks to kids during cold and wet weather.
 || Photo by Andrea Gentry

“My mom manages an apartment complex (in Wynne), and it is mostly a low-income apartment complex,” Shaw said. “We just had a feeling like we wanted to do something there and it just kind of went from there.”

Shaw said they serve about 20 kids at Cliffridge Apartments in Wynne and then another 15 at their other stop, closer to her house. Shaw said she has always had an interest in doing volunteer work.

“I like to do anything to help people,” Shaw said. “In this case, a lot of these kids don’t get much when they get home from school. And I’ve got nieces and nephews, and I use this as a teaching tool to help them learn about giving back and helping others.

“You can tell your kids and teach them about (giving back), but until they actually get out and experience it, and see how excited others are for something we are blessed to have every day – you don’t get a better feeling than that.”

Shaw, a member of Calvary Apostolic Church, said it is impossible to know what everybody’s home life is like, and for some, the snacks they give out may be the only thing they’ll have for the night.

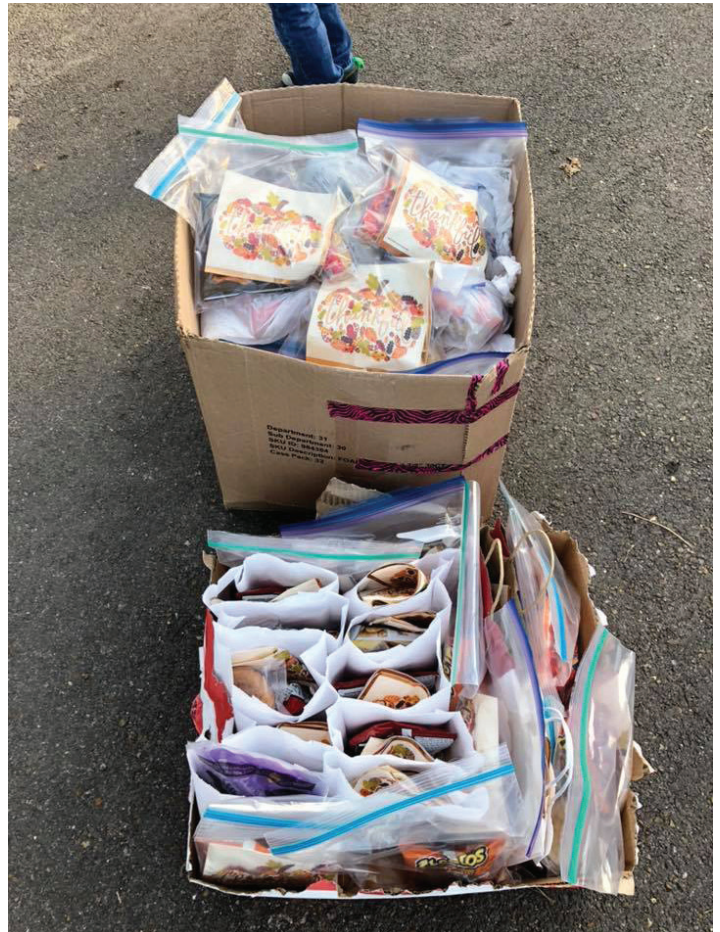
“I do see the same kids on a regular basis, and I always talk to them,” Gentry said. “I’ll also give bus drivers a snack, or the parents a snack.

“...I did have a friend, whose son said he was amazed by how excited the children get when they see my car.”

Gentry said Chelsea Brawner, another member of United Methodist Church in Wynne, will begin volunteering for the ministry and will add a third stop. Gentry said the church has been really supportive.

“The church themselves hasn’t made a donation, yet, but members and classes have stepped up and helped,” Gentry said. “Women from my church have volunteered their time and snacks and will help out regularly.”

“We don’t know their life,” Shaw said. “But to me, it is an easy way to reach out to other people and take a little time to build that trust with every single one of them.” ☘



Pictures above and below: examples of the snack packs that Gentry and other volunteers put together for the children in the Wynne School District.
 || Photo by Andrea Gentry





'Small things lead to big things'

#Disciple365 seeks to tell positive stories from the church community

By Sam Pierce

Featured Contributor, [@sjamespierce](#)

Christ called his followers to be his disciples. He called them to follow his example and to do more than just attend church on Sunday. However, asking someone to “be a disciple” can sometimes be scary or off-putting, but with #Disciple365, the idea is to showcase how even the littlest things can be used to glorify God.

“It doesn’t have to be something difficult or huge, but could be something that is already part of your life,” the Rev. Bill Sardin said. “We can share the gospel with our neighbors, our coworkers or anyone else that we can interact with on a daily basis.

“... It is the small things that you do that can really make a difference.”

First Corinthians 12 discusses how “we are part of the body of Christ, and we each have a little thing that we can do to build the kingdom of God,” Sardin said.

“That is what we are wanting to focus on, is these little things, that anybody can do at any time,” Sardin said.

He said it could be as simple as a hug for someone that is suffering from a loss.

“Maybe their mother or their best friend died, and you are there to hug them,” Sardin said. “We want to start collecting stories of people doing these small things and through video, share the stories with people to inspire others to go out and make a difference.

“We want to do small things to change the world because small things lead to big things.”

Sardin is the senior pastor at Hot Springs First United Methodist Church and is finishing up his second year with the church. In March, he went on a mission trip to Israel.

“I’m taking a group of people — most of them for the first time,” Sardin said. “I want to help our conference as much as possible and share the kingdom of God with Arkansas.

“I feel like #Disciple365 is the most basic stepping stone for offering the kingdom of God to every part of Arkansas because it is on an individual level.”

The idea for #Disciple365 stems from Love 365 and Jen Kramer. Kramer spent a year in 2018 writing letters to friends, family members, and even strangers. She was a guest on Sardin’s podcast, *The Happy Hippie Jesus Show*.

“I was really interested in publicly taking this on, to alter the way I use social media,” Kramer said on the podcast. “...Very typically, I posted a picture of the person, I wrote anywhere from five to eight sentences, who that person is and why they were important to me.”

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“... The irony is when I embarked on this exercise, I didn’t have a plan. I didn’t have a strategy,” Kramer said. “... There were times it was very clear who I was going to write about, but there would be other times where it would be 8 or 9 at night, where I would have to reflect on my day or my interactions and see who would show up.”

Kramer’s message inspired the Rev. DeeDee Autry, who has been the lead for #Disciple365.

“If we are a church-goer or a follower of Christ, it is not something we can just check off this list,” Autry said. “If we claim to be a follower, then we are a disciple — that is part of our identity.

“#Disciple365 is telling those stories and how can we raise up those stories that others may not see as their discipleship, although it very much is.”

Autry said the goal is to kick off the campaign and engage with some people during the Arkansas Annual Conference at the end of May.

“The ultimate goal is to use different platforms for people to share their stories,” Autry said. “In 2020, we would be compiling these stories as a daily devotional, and telling the story of people living out their discipleship.”

Autry said many people don’t consider what they are doing in their everyday life as their identity as a disciple.

“When people volunteer at the clothes closet or food pantry or pick up trash and just numerous things that people do — just being good people — I don’t think we often claim that as our discipleship,” Autry said. “There is some mystery around what being a disciple is, and it is about something bigger than we are, but we don’t recognize it.

“...Nothing is insignificant. It is not always on a big scale, but it is little things that add up. ... This is what I believe Jesus calls us to do, is to help the least of these and there are trillions of ways that we can do that.”

Autry said her discipleship starts with her family, and extending grace and love and supporting all of her family.

“If it means I can help them, and support them in whatever they do and walk alongside them, I try to do it,” Autry said. “I see it as my role as a pastor and choose to extend a hand and make sure (my congregation) has everything they need to be the best they are.

“...If I can do that for others, that means a lot to me.”

Autry — who has served local congregations for 28 years — lives in Fort Smith and recently launched her own coaching business, as a lifestyle ministry coach.

“We have to find ways to affirm who people are and help them realize they have great gifts in them and really acknowledge it,” Autry said.

Autry said she has been a part of the Arkansas United Methodist Church for many years and has seen some things come and go, so the challenge or the hope of #Disciple365 is that “it becomes ingrained into us.”

“We are in a time where the world needs to see faith in a positive point of view,” Autry said. “It is not something gimmicky or trying to tout numbers, but it is about changing the culture or claiming who we say we are.

“... When we begin to practice it and make it a part of our culture, it becomes very natural.” ✝



Wednesday, May 29 at 5:00 p.m.
Ballroom, The Hotel Hot Springs
305 Malvern Avenue, Hot Springs

Contact: Patti Butler (479) 886-0848
or email patti.butler@arumc.org



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas

UNITED METHODIST *Women*



Thursday, May 30 at 12:00 p.m.
First UMC, 1100 Central Ave., Hot Springs, AR

Contact: Maybelline Strong at (501) 993-7420
or maybellinestrong@att.net



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas

Talking God on the Pod

Arkansas United Methodists use podcasts to reach a new audience



By Caleb Hennington
Digital Content Editor, [@arumceditor](#)

Podcasts have become sort of a worldwide entertainment phenomenon in the past decade. The shows, which are similar to radio talk shows but available on the internet and downloadable for on-demand listening, can cover a wide-range of niche topics.

Love hearing award-winning long form stories? Tune in to *This American Life*. Interested in historical documentaries with a unique perspective and masterful narration? Check out *Hardcore History*. Want to know more about your favorite serial killers or cult leaders? Try the aptly named *Serial Killers* or *Cults* podcasts.

Even Christian leaders are getting in on the podcast craze, with shows dedicated to right-leaning, left-leaning and centrist theologies covering a wide range of hotly debated religious topics.

For United Methodists in Arkansas, podcasts create an outlet for reaching more people in the conference – and oftentimes outside of Arkansas – in ways that were never possible before.

“We started the show to have fun, but the overall goal is one of inspiration. We try to interview people that are doing positive things in the world and inspire other people to go out and do it,” said the Rev. Bill Sardin, co-host of the *Happy Hippy Jesus Show* podcast.

Sardin, along with the Rev. Jeremy Pressgrove, set out to create a show that could spread some positivity in a world

overrun by harsh and negative thoughts. The *Happy Hippy Jesus Show* came out of talks that Sardin and Pressgrove had about the current state of the world.

“Bill asked me what kind of show I wanted this podcast to be. I said all I know is I’m sick of all of the negativity. I’m bored with it,” Pressgrove said. “He said to me, ‘so you basically want the happy hippie Jesus show?’ And that’s where the name came from.”

On every episode, Sardin and Pressgrove interview a new guest; typically, someone who has an inspirational story or an amazing idea for empowering and growing the church.

Their first guest was the Rev. Jonathan Griesse, senior pastor at Elm Springs United Methodist Church, but many of their guests also come from outside the Arkansas Conference. Lisa Hess -- professor of practical theology and contextual ministries at United Seminary and author of “*The Companionable Way*” -- and Brandon Clements -- pastor at a Midtown Fellowship in Columbia, South Carolina and co-author of “*The Simplest Way to Change the World*” -- have both been guests on the podcast.

For Sardin and Pressgrove, the goal is not to seek out people in the United Methodist Church who think and believe the same way they do; they are simply interested in telling positive stories.

Stephen Copley, executive director of Interfaith Arkansas, also chooses to look outside the United Methodist Church for guests on his podcast, *We Are Arkansas*.

Much like Interfaith Arkansas, which seeks to connect believers from all faith traditions toward a common goal of unity and celebration of diversity, Copley’s podcast invites believers



from many different religious backgrounds to discuss their faiths, including Buddhists, the Baha'i community, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Unitarian-Universalists and others.

"Whether we're Jewish, Muslim, Christian, immigrants, folks who have been in prison, folks who are low income, or those who are wealthy, we really are Arkansas. We really are more alike than different. And that's where the podcast name comes from."

Copley, who is an elder in the United Methodist Church and a commissioned missionary, started We Are Arkansas to get the message of Interfaith Arkansas to a wider audience.

Typically, Copley interviews a special guest from a local faith tradition. By asking questions and digging into the lives of his guests, Copley is able to shed

some light on religions that many people in Arkansas – a state that is 79 percent Christian, according to a Pew Research Center study – might not know about.

In the future, Copley is planning on shifting the focus from exclusively religion to social topics that affect Arkansans, such as the recent opioid epidemic that has claimed the lives of hundreds of Arkansans in the past few years.

"We want to connect these topics to local congregations. How could this impact someone who is in a local Methodist church or the local temple or mosque? We want folks at that level to learn and understand. And we want them to engage with their community and realize how something like this affects all of us."

Sometimes, podcasts are used by existing organizations to reach their listeners in new ways; particularly millennial and Generation Z listeners.

Alyssa Burlison, a volunteer with the Ozark Mission Project, started the OMPodcast for exactly that reason.

OMP Executive Director Bailey Faulkner brought the idea to Burlison after she was a guest on The Happy Hippie Jesus Show.

"At first, we started the podcast to share stories about OMP and interview past OMP volunteers and workers, but the more we did it, the more we realized that the podcast was a great way to let the youth and their parents know about our events and what we have going on during the summer," Burlison said.

One of their latest episodes covers OMP 101, a mid-summer 3-day-camp for fourth and fifth graders who are interested in



learning more about OMP and the work that they do.

"I think having this podcast is great because OMP is known primarily for our summer camp ministry, but we have employees working year round on events."

Podcasting can be a full-time job; so much so that lots of people who once thought of podcasting as just a hobby have now turned it into their main source of income.

With so much time and preparation required for producing a high-quality podcast, it might seem like it's a hobby that's far too burdensome for those with other full-time jobs.

According to podcasters, though, if you love what you're doing and you make space for it, it won't seem like a strain; it's a chance to do something more with your time.

Sardin and Pressgrove, who are both full-time pastors at United Methodist Churches, find time to do the podcast during the week and don't see it as a time-consuming task. They believe it's an extension of their ministry as clergy and, as Sardin explains it, "a way to feed our soul."

"In all work, you can find time to do the things that are important to you. And as long as we don't schedule an interview on a Sunday morning, then we're all set," Pressgrove said.

Burlison, who is preparing to attend seminary this year and will soon be a full-time student, manages to find time to record the podcast in the midst of her busy schedule. But for her, recording an episode is never a burden.

"Every time I get done recording, I'm just in the best mood and the best spirits because speaking to so many different people who have the biggest heart for service is so incredible to hear," Burlison said. "And I just hope that something that was said during the podcast struck a chord with them and they choose to keep listening." ❀



Kayla Tullos, left, and Nick Garrison, right, create videos at Maumelle UMC for various events and activities. Some of their past videos include a spring cleaning video, a Feast and Family Table promotional video, and a Trunk or Treat video. || *Photos provided by Kayla Tullos*

Lights, Cellphone Camera, Action!

By Melinda Shunk
Children's Ministry Coordinator

Nick Garrison, the youth director at Maumelle UMC, was in a planning meeting with his senior pastor a year ago discussing how they could get the whole church involved in a spring cleaning of the church grounds. The suggestion was made that they could make a video of what needs to be cleaned and what doesn't need cleaning. Nick knew it had to be comedic to get people's attention. He quickly set forth recording a video that had him grabbing items that needed to be sent to the trash and others that clearly should not be thrown in the trash! They used only jesters with no sound, and it became very slapstick in nature. Nick put it together and posted on the church Facebook page. It was a hit. People were sharing the post on their pages, and the pastor used it to invite congregation members to sign up during announcements on the screens in their worship space.

After the debut of the first very simple video, the staff knew they were on to something. Together they discussed that the positive feedback from the first video was just the beginning. Kayla Tullos, the Children's Minister at Maumelle UMC, knew this would be a great way to introduce Feast and Family Table as it was going to be a new Wednesday night program. Parents needed to see what they would be making time for in their family's busy week. Kayla and Nick joined their beginner level video skills and created another promotional video for Kayla to

use to promote Feast and Family Table. It had a little comedy and at the end of the video posted exact times and dates. The video clip promotion worked again!

The video creation duo extended its acting cast to the entire church staff. Kayla needed trunks for an upcoming trunk or treat event. She and Nick had different staff members playing different roles as they went "running in fear from Kayla who was carrying the sign-up sheet" to get people to volunteer their car. It had always been a struggle to get enough vehicles to volunteer their trunks. Before the video, she would have about 15 volunteers, and after this year's video recruitment for Trunk or Treat she had 40! Nick says people don't always take time to read a big write up about a volunteer need, but they will watch the 30-second video. Kayla and Nick continued to make promotion videos about Trunk or Treat, like where and when it would be held. They knew the promotions were working when people who were not from their church would come up to them in a store and comment on the video they saw on Facebook last week.

The more they made the videos they more they learned how to do it better.

They found that by asking congregational members to be actors, they had more views and shares on each video. Having staff and members in videos helped others get to know the leaders in the church. It made it easy for members to invite their neighbors when they would share a video event on their social media page. Kayla feels that video sharing on social media lets people know exactly what they are getting invited to as well



Top: Maumelle First's Feast and Family Table video. Bottom: A testimonial-style video with an older member of the congregation at Maumelle First. To view the videos, visit FUMC Maumelle's Facebook Page, at <https://www.facebook.com/FUMC.Maumelle.Page/>.

as the culture of the church. They have found it to be a very connectational resource for all ages in their church. They have not only used the videos for promoting events, but for sharing about stewardship and highlighting specific ministries.

Kayla and Nick's belief is that no matter the church size and tech-savvy abilities any church can make a video. They shoot all of their videos on their cellphones! Yes, a cellphone; so, reach in your pocket. You don't have to invest in expensive equipment. They recommend and use the iPhone X and iMovie and Video Leap. They suggest that videos are no longer than two minutes

for Facebook or a church website. Instagram is best for the 20 and under church members, so those videos must be 30 seconds. They use the videos during announcements at the traditional and contemporary worship service. If you don't have a screen in your worship space, then no worries. Nick recommends your church get the Church App with Sub splash. It is a subscription-based program that sends a text of the church announcements (video included) to a member's phone once their geo-tracking shows they are in the church building — no need to have a screen projection because it is right in their hand or pocket. 📱

Preparing for the future with Train to the Plan

By Janice Mann
VIM/Disaster Response Coordinator

Arkansas Conference Volunteers in Mission and Disaster Response is hosting the spring meeting of VIM and DR Coordinators from the South Central Jurisdiction (eight states, 11 conferences) this week in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

Our time here will include a full day's work at ECHO village. More info on the meeting and pictures to follow in the next issue.

Train to the Plan

We are excited to announce that the Disaster Response Plan for the conference has recently been revised. A "Train to the Plan" event that included a tabletop exercise was held on Monday, March 25 at Sequoyah UMC in Fayetteville. Many thanks to those who attended and to Denni Palmer, Northwest District Coordinator, for helping make the event a success. We will be offering this same training event and exercise to any church, church group or district who would like to schedule. The plan is a guide for how local churches, districts, and the conference will organize and respond to disaster. It also includes the roles and functions of key persons in the local church, district, and conference. For more information, or to schedule an event, contact Janice at disaster@arumc.org.

Disaster Response WANTS YOU!

Local church involvement when disaster strikes is vital in assisting individuals and families affected. Disaster Response wants to help local churches understand how important they are as partners in this ministry. We would love to come talk to your group, class, or church and begin a partnership that will make a meaningful difference when disaster strikes. Contact Janice at disaster@arumc.org to find out more.

Current In-Conference VIM projects:

- ECHO Village
- Crawford County Tornado Recovery
- Marion County Tornado Recovery
- Delta Dream Facility Repair

Contact Byron at vim@arumc.org for more information and to schedule.

Follow us on Facebook - <https://goo.gl/tpV1mE>

We're on the website now!!

Arkansas Volunteers in Mission and Disaster Response now has a page on the arumc.org website.

Check it out at <https://arumc.org/our-ministries/vim-and-dr/>

There is lots of good information there for individuals, teams, and local churches.



OPEN ARMS

Reconciling Methodist



Thursday, May 30 at 7:00 a.m.
Phils Restaurant - 2900 Central Avenue, Hot Springs

Contact: Harold Hughes (501) 612-0902
harold.hughes@arumc.org



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas

Children's Ministers BBQ



Wednesday, May 29 at 5:00 p.m.

@ Home of Melinda Shunk
(address will be emailed upon registration)

Contact: Melinda Shunk, (515) 707-5537,
melinda.shunk@arumc.org



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas

ARKANSAS

CLERGY WOMEN'S LUNCHEON



Friday, May 31 at 11:30 a.m.

Visitors Chapel AME Church
319 Church Street, Hot Springs

Contact: Katie Pearce, (501) 354-4077,
katie.pearce@arumc.org



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas

Retiree Luncheon

*free for
Retired Clergy & Surviving Spouses*



Thursday, May 30 at 11:30 a.m.
Hall D, Hot Springs Convention Center

Contact: Mona Williams (501) 324-8028



Annual Conference 2019
Hot Springs, Arkansas



United Methodists of
Arkansas
disciples making disciples