

The Arkansas United Methodist

LIVING OUR FAITH

March 2020 | Volume 168, Issue 3

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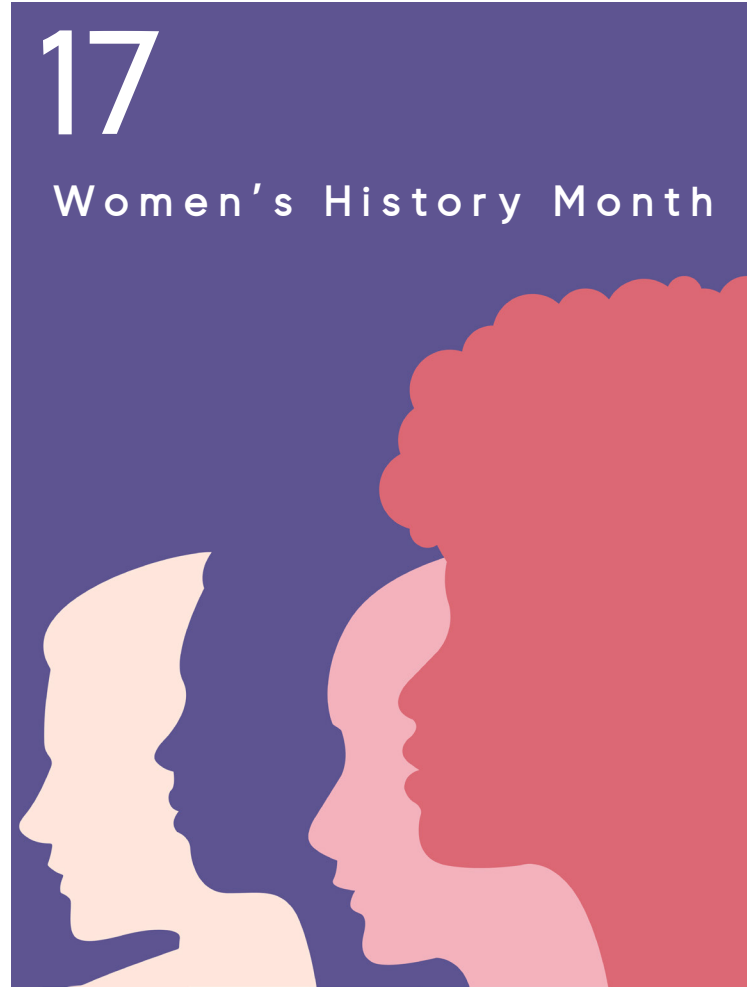
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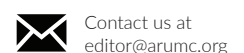
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STORY IDEA?



The Best Laid Plans

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

Have you ever prepared for a presentation, planning out your key points, creating a PowerPoint, memorizing your wording exactly, and then the day of the event completely scrap your entire plan and just wing it?

That's pretty much what I did a few weeks ago. My mom had asked me and my older brother to speak to her class at Crossett High School for career day. It was mostly a "here's what I did with my life and make sure you go to college, kids!" kind of presentation.

If you know me, you know that speaking in front of large groups of people is by far one of the most uncomfortable things for me to do. After all, that's why I went into print journalism instead of TV journalism.

But because it was my mom who asked me (and I know better than to say no to a request from my mother) and because I love my job, I agreed to do it.

So I spent the last month -- yes, month because I am somebody who overthinks and overprepares for everything -- looking back over my portfolio of writing materials and planning out exactly what I was going to say to these kids.

I had a full list, full of bullet points about what my entire educational experience, every job I worked, all the articles I had written, the exact things I was going to say, when I was going to say it, etc.

But, as I said at the beginning, the day of the presentation, something happened and I completely scrapped my PowerPoint and my talking points.

I was reminded that I usually do my best writing when I put my fingers to the keyboard and let the words flow out, so I did that with my speech as well.

I still hit all of the points I wanted to, but instead of reading

accomplishments off of a script like a robot, I talked to the kids and asked them questions and connected with them in a way that I wouldn't have been able to with a planned out script.

Many of the kids couldn't care less about what I had to say, of course, but I could tell that some of them were really hearing me and contemplating my words. And maybe I convinced a few of them to pursue a career in communications!



One of the things I learned about this experience is that you can't plan for everything, and sometimes you'll do better by not preparing and just letting things happen as they will.

Our Church is kind of like that now. There are all of these groups working on plans and hammering out legislation and advocating for their causes, in the hopes that their plans will come to fruition and everything they hoped for will work out in the end.

But like with my speech on career day, things don't always follow a script or a formula. We don't know what will happen. As much as we plan, we can't plan for everything.

As the saying goes, "the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry."

We're only a few months away from General Conference 2020 and at the end of it, there will be people who get their way and people who don't.

I don't know that the legislation submitted at the beginning of the General Conference will be the same legislation we end with. Everything could change between May 5 -15.

But maybe we'll be better off if we get away from the planning for a bit, let the Holy Spirit come in and give us hearts of peace and compassion, and just wing it.

I hope and pray that something better and fairer and more compassionate and more loving comes out of it than anything we've planned so far.

A Paper Mache Church

By Bishop Gary Mueller
Bishop of the Arkansas Conference

Art classes were still an important part of the elementary school curriculum when I was in the first grade. While I don't remember much about my art career because it was not at all memorable, I do remember venturing into the world of paper-mache and discovering what fun it was to put treated wet newspaper strips on a wire frame to bring to life an animal or globe or cowboy. When dried and painted, it was a masterpiece I could take home to my mother, who would 'ooh and ah' over my talent.

When you paper-mache, you need to add enough strips to cover the wire form and give the piece its shape but be careful not to add so many that you end up with an unrecognizable blob. Which, of course, I accomplished more than once because I was so busy adding strips that I never noticed what I was creating.

I wonder if this is exactly what we are doing to Jesus' Church. We have been so busy adding strips that it has become a blob that fails to resemble the Gospel frame we have been given in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. No wonder we are fracturing, treating brothers and sisters in Christ like enemies, and failing to reach people with the Gospel that brings abundant and eternal life.

So what strips are we adding to the Gospel frame that have turned Jesus' Church into a blob? They are many and varied, and include things like our own political perspectives, our desire to make the church in our image, our excitement about embracing the latest cultural fad, our haste in making God small enough to fit in our pockets, our racism, our desire to be comfortable and our tendency to think that making people happy is the ultimate good.

I know my words are painful, even convicting. But they are not written about one group of people. They are for all of us, especially me; which is why we have to wrestle with the painful reality that we are turning the church into a blob that does not resemble the Church Jesus calls us to be.

Lent provides a wonderful - indeed mandatory - season of serious engagement with Jesus. What if we were to use this time to peel off some of the strips we have added to the Gospel, one at a time?



Photo by Mel Poole on Unsplash

Peel off the demonization of others. Peel off the desire to have the Gospel reflect our particular ideological perspective. Peel off the insistence that our congregation looks just like us. And peel off the assumption that Jesus' top priority is to meet every one of our wishes and desires the way we think he should. Sure, it will be hard work. But we can succeed because Jesus will be working alongside us the entire time.

I'm not sure what the Church will be when we finish this work. But I'm incredibly hopeful that we will be a Church that is truly the Body of Christ filled with Jesus-followers who are filled with passion to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities and the world with joy, passion, and gratitude.

Come Holy Spirit, come!

Lent provides a wonderful - indeed mandatory - season of serious engagement with Jesus. What if we were to use this time to peel off some of the strips we have added to the Gospel, one at a time?

Wrestling With the Bible



By Miller Wilbourn
General Conference Lay Delegate

My relationship with the Bible has not always been a comfortable one, but it has shaped me at every stage of my life. When I first started reading, the Bible felt like a straightforward manual on how to be a good Christian—it seemed that if I could only read constantly and keep its words on my heart and lips, I would always know how to please God and love my neighbor. I glossed over contradictions, rules that not even my pastors seemed to follow, and disturbing passages, and trusted that everything would make sense in time. As I grew older I found—much to my dismay—that the words I read only became more complicated. It began to seem that memorizing verses, wearing them on T-shirts, or sharing them on social media was less important than trying to understand them. I began to wrestle, to pray, to question and struggle my way through the Bible, and my relationship to God became both more difficult and more personal.

Today I still struggle with the Bible—I struggle to understand how I and others whom I love and respect find such disparate truths within the same pages, and often even within the same

verses. I struggle to understand what the words say about my own life and the lives of those I love. I've come to respect the ways that others read the Bible, but I also believe that to truly love others and honor God, I am called to push back against readings that contradict the laws which Jesus says are at the heart of scripture: to love God with everything you are, and to love your neighbor as you love yourself.

As I keep reading, I find myself asking new questions. A verse that never made sense suddenly yields a new meaning, and that meaning, in turn, illuminates other verses. Sometimes a parable that I've highlighted and underlined and studied extensively seems strange and unfamiliar. So I read again. And sometimes, God speaks again.

I don't think that the Bible is meant to be simple or easy to understand. I think that I honor God by wrestling with it. I think we honor God through honest, loving conversation about the different ways we read and the alternate sources of direction we find. I think that this complicated, frustrating, holy book challenges me to be more humble and more loving with every new question it raises, and I suspect that this is the point. But I'm still learning!

Struggling Into Love

**“Mercy and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.”
(Psalm 85:10)**

By Rev. Michael Roberts
General Conference Clergy Delegate

To build upon a Jewish Midrash (an art form that Jesus regularly used through parables) there is a story that tries to make sense of this verse. In the story, the angels of heaven are debating about whether or not humans should ever have been created, and the debate quickly broke into two general camps.

Those on the side of righteousness, justice, and faithfulness to the law argued that humans should never have been created because all they do is pervert God’s law, engage in self-justification, and turn God’s truth into lies. In contrast, those on the side of mercy and peace said, “But they are so beautiful.” “They sing lullabies to their children; they care for one another with such compassion; they find a way to bring love into all the pain.” “We are so glad they were created because we want to see how the stories they create are going to end.” Both sides were adamant, so God got involved. God tells them that one of the reasons for the creation of humans was to bring these two camps together. Since both sides truly loved God and wanted to do God’s will, they met in the middle, embraced and kissed.

I was asked to share how the scriptures have shaped my life. This story came to mind. As a pastor, I have witnessed the church engaged in this continuous struggle, played out in many different ways. I have come to see this struggle as a blessing. Israel was born in this struggle. The name Israel means to wrestle and struggle, and it is only in the struggle that we are able to find a faithful way forward. These two sides – priests and prophets, grace and holiness, head and heart, evangelism and social justice, traditional and progressive perspectives -- provide the energy needed to bear one another in love and to seek for unity of spirit and the bond of peace (Eph 4:1-3). Without this tension, this calling would be way too easy.

I see the scriptures as our primary guide for how to navigate this



struggle with faithfulness and fruitfulness. As we move towards General Conference, it is true that some form of division is likely. There are seasons in the life of the church when we need to give each other “room to breathe” and where some form of separation can be healthy. We may be at that place right now. I will predict, however, that this “room” will not free any of us from the tension. Within minutes of any separation, God will continue to bring transformation to human hearts, different insights into the scriptures will touch hearts, and the struggle will continue. God will see to that. The scripture will continue to be our guide.

Using scripture as his guide, John Wesley called all of us to the “middle way.” This is my hope for the United Methodist Church that stays together. When Wesley used this term, he was not talking about politics, party, or opinion. He was talking about behavior. Even with strong opinions, Methodists are to BEHAVE in the middle.

We are called to practice true holiness, which Wesley consistently defined through the virtues of humility, gentleness, patience, temperance, and “kindly affection for all.” Wesley calls us to filter all challenging texts, and all struggles with interpretation, through the lens of God’s steadfast and eternal love, pointing out that Jesus calls “love” the summary of it all. This love is patient, kind and does not insist on its own way (I Cor 13:1-8). Discovering this hermeneutic (or method of interpretation) helped scripture come to life, not only in thoughts, but in my behavior.

As we go into this season of conferencing, my hope is to make decisions that will help the United Methodist Church cultivate this witness. My hope is to help cultivate a church where there is room for all, where a high(er) view of scripture is affirmed beyond proof-texting to justify opinions, and where righteousness and peace can embrace. With a Wesleyan optimism that we really can be transformed and can learn how to love, I know that this is possible. The Bible tells me so.

Momma's Kitchen Table

By Rev. Mark Norman
General Conference Clergy Delegate

I am so thankful for my Methodist mother! Most of my life and ministry have been impacted by my mother's teaching me about her faith. She played the piano and instilled the hymns in my public and private worship. However, the most important lesson was how important and vital the Bible is to my life. I will always remember my mother cooking the best breakfast with bacon, eggs, biscuits, and baked apples. She would spread it all out and say, "Go get my Bible." Nestled in her Bible would be the upper room devotionals, and we would read them every day. If the meal was fancy, we read that Bible. If it was the end of the day, we would do those upper room devotions. If we had a road trip, before we got out of the driveway, we would read that devotional.

The Bible has shaped my faith in so many ways. From the foundation that was laid for me, I found the Bible as a source of spirit and life for me. In the preaching moment (when I was preaching every Sunday), I continue to be amazed by the mystery and power that comes from those sacred pages. Those pages express a passion and directions that guide me for the rest of my life. Proclaiming the truth and empowering people to live for God is such an honor. Our calling as pastors is to declare a liberating gospel that sets people free. The Bible is saturated with the instruction, love, and grace that God pours on us every day.

The Psalmist writes in Psalm 119:105-107(Message Bible):

By your words, I can see where I'm going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path. I've committed myself, and I'll never turn back from living by your righteous order. Everything's falling apart on me, God; put me together again with your Word.

My life is a constant rat race from one meeting to another, but the Bible centers me to a place that I am connected to the Triune God. I could not imagine my life without the Word of God, ordering my steps and guiding my thoughts and soul. I love my iPad. I preach from a Bible app; however, I love the stories that people have about their Bible. It may be a family Bible that has passed from one generation to the next. It may be the Bible from their very first appointment. This written work has guided and shaped lives like no other book.

To quote Mr. Wesley, "My ground is the Bible... I follow it in all things, both great and small."
(From the Journal: "June 5, 1766")





Press, Shake, Run and Pour Blessings During Lent

By Kelli Reep
Methodist Family Health

The Lenten season is one in which we can strip away what keeps us from fully appreciating our relationship with God and realizing just how full of abundance our lives are. Rather than fast from something like chocolate or sodas, Methodist Family Health has a way for Arkansas's United Methodists to press down on what we truly value so we can pour it out on those who need so much.

The 11th Annual Get Up & Give collection project asks Arkansans to contribute necessities to the children and families in our care – those who are abandoned, abused, neglected and managing psychiatric, emotional, behavioral and spiritual issues. Get Up & Give is during the entire 40 days of Lent – Wednesday, Feb. 26 through Thursday, April 9 – and both children and adults can participate by donating personal hygiene items, clothes, shoes, school supplies, bedding, funds and other necessities to the Methodist Counseling Clinic in their community.

“We care for children, youth and their families who have significant psychiatric, behavioral, emotional and spiritual issues,” said Kelli Reep, director of communications at Methodist Family Health. “Some of the kids in our 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 – our community demonstrates to them that there are people who care about them and their well-being.”

If this is something you, your family, Sunday School, small group or church would like to take on as a mission during Lent, you will be demonstrating Christian love for the least of these. Methodist Family Health asks that all items contributed through Get Up & Give are new, and monetary donations also can be contributed so specific items can be purchased to meet the needs of the Arkansas children and families in our care. Contributions can be delivered to the following locations, including:

- 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: 515 N. Main 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
- The Methodist Foundation of Arkansas, 601 Wellington Village Rd, Little Rock, AR 72211; phone 501.664.8632

For a shopping list, flyer or more information, visit <https://www.methodistfamily.org/get-up-and-give.html> or call 501-906-4201.

Out-Preached at the Super Bowl

By Rev. Michelle Morris
CouRSe Coordinator

“**T**he ancient Greeks had four words for love.”

That was all I needed to hear to turn my attention away from my Facebook page to the television screen. Like millions of Americans, I was sitting in front of the television with the Super Bowl on, and also like at least some of those millions, I didn't care about the game. I was participating in a cultural rite. The only joy I had from it was being part of the collective. Well, and the fun of watching the commercials. But I was distracted by a myriad of other things because all of us now carry with us more entertainment in our back pocket than we can process in a lifetime. So I was only half paying attention, until I heard those eight words. Then I looked up, and I was transfixed.

The commercial went on to visually represent *philia*, *storge*, *eros*, and then culminate in *agape*. Each explanation was accompanied by simple text and compelling images. When the commercial was over, I sat back, moved by the message and defeated by its power. I had, just a couple years before, preached a whole sermon series on those words. And New York Life, an insurance company, had just out preached my weeks of words in 60 seconds.

Then I really began to pay attention. Suddenly I noticed that over the course of the evening, I was hearing sermon after sermon after sermon. Sermons that were calling us to break down our silos and start cooperating (like we saw as Charlie and his Tide appeared in commercials for other products, and in the Proctor and Gamble When We Come Together commercial). Sermons that were inviting us to relish the everyday in new and exciting ways (like in the Groundhog Day Jeep commercial). Sermons that invited us to make room for new and young voices, even as we recognize the talent that comes with age (Cool Ranch Doritos with Lil Nas X and Sam Elliott). And sermons that invited us to quit acting and be who we really are (the Hyundai Sonata Boston ad).

In reflecting on this experience, I brought it into conversation with something I have learned as I have trained in effective online education. We have this myth that people's attention spans are getting shorter. That is not actually true. In reality, attention spans may actually be getting longer. Want proof? Look at how long movies have become. Or how often people will binge an entire season of a series. What has actually become shorter, though, is the length of time we now have to grab someone's attention. That is down to just a few seconds. But grab it, hook into a compelling story, and you can hold someone's attention almost indefinitely.



We have the best story ever told in the Gospels. A powerful witness of love, redemption, and resurrection to new life. It is a story the world is always desperate to hear. But are we grabbing attention as we start to tell it? Or are we using outdated means that then make the story seem unrelatable?

That New York Life commercial caught my attention in eight words and then held it with a simple but beautifully told story. I could learn from that example. The first few seconds of our worship services should be compelling, as should the first few seconds of our sermons. Because then, once we have people's attention, we have a simply told and beautiful story that can transform the whole world. And it is a story everyone needs to hear.

STEPPING UP TO SUPERVISION



By Rev. Michelle Morris
CouRSe Coordinator

In mid-March, the Rev. Susan Beaumont, a leading voice in resourcing church leaders, will come to Arkansas to provide tools for church leaders to manage challenges from the mundane to the extraordinary.

Any church leader who has responsibility for understanding or managing staff would benefit from the two-day Stepping Up to Supervision event. Held on March 18 and 19 at Winfield United Methodist Church in Little Rock, Beaumont will share on such topics as writing an effective job description, creating helpful accountability, and setting and evaluating goals with staff. Cost for both days is \$79 and includes lunch both days as well as a copy of Beaumont's book that she co-authored with Gil Rendle, *When Moses Meets Aaron: Staffing and Supervision in Large Congregations*. If you bring a group, there is a discount available for groups of four or more.

On March 17, the Methodist Foundation for Arkansas will host Beaumont in the Lusk Training Center as she shares *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going*. Based on her book of the same name, Beaumont will share how to keep a clear vision and lead even in times of disorientation and uncertainty about the future. We do not need to define ourselves in such times in terms of failure or loss, even as we acknowledge that we do not always know what needs to happen next. For those who can attend onsite, registration is \$50 and includes lunch and a copy of the book. If you cannot attend in person, there is an online option as well. The registration fee of \$100 allows any number of participants to gather in one space and includes a discount code to order the book at a 30% reduced rate and an electronic copy of the workbook.



Rev. Susan Beaumont, author of *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You're Going* and *When Moses Meets Aaron: Staffing and Supervision in Large Congregations*

Beaumont is a consultant, author, and coach who served as a senior consultant for the Alban Institute for nine years before establishing her own practice. She has corporate experience in human resource management and organizational development and is an ordained American Baptist minister. She currently teaches at Wesley Theological Seminary.

To register for either event, visit bit.ly/cfmd-events. For any questions, contact Michelle Morris in the Center for Multiplying Disciples at michelle.morris@arumc.org or 501-324-8017.

Bishop Mueller Visits New Additions to FUMC Paragould



Bishop Gary Mueller visited First United Methodist Church Paragould on Feb. 9 to fellowship with members and visit the new additions to the church, which includes a great hall, contemporary worship center, fellowship hall/gym and bathrooms. Renovations to the old fellowship hall, which is now children's classrooms and a youth space, were also celebrated. Bishop Mueller preached at all three services on Sunday morning. From left to right: Bishop Gary Mueller, Northeast District Superintendent John Fleming, Associate Pastor Rev. Chase Burns, and Senior Pastor Rev. Dane Womack. || *Photo by Karole Risker*



Photo by Karole Risker



Photo by Karole Risker



South Central Jurisdiction UMW Host Quadrennial Meeting in Little Rock

By Caleb Hennington
Digital Content Editor, @arumceditor

In its regularly scheduled quadrennial meeting, the United Methodist Women of the South Central Jurisdiction will come together to worship, conduct important business, and be in fellowship with their fellow sisters in Christ, March 26-29.

The theme of the 2020 meeting is “Calling” and pulls inspiration from Scripture in Romans 1:5-6: “5 Through him, we received both the generous gift of his life and the urgent task of passing it on to others who receive it by entering into obedient trust in Jesus. 6 You are who you are through this gift and call of Jesus Christ!” (MSG)

The Arkansas Conference is in a unique position at this year’s meeting as the host of the event, which will take place at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The South Central Jurisdiction is comprised of eight states, Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

“Little Rock was chosen after site visits to other cities because of the lovely facilities at the Statehouse Convention Center and LR Marriott, and the convenient downtown location near the airport,” said Carolyn Schumacher, Vice President of the South Central Jurisdiction United Methodist Women.

Schumacher is a resident of Arkansas and attends First United Methodist Church North Little Rock, and was instrumental in bringing the quadrennial meeting to Arkansas.

She said one of the most important items of business that will be addressed at this meeting is the election of five members to the Board of Directors for the National United Methodist Women.

Two Arkansans, Lynn R. Baker and Marleene Calvin, are on the list of director nominees for the next quadrennium.

The keynote speaker for this year is the Rev. Darryl Burton, associate pastor at The Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas and co-founder of Miracle of Innocence, a Kansas City-based non-profit that seeks to exonerate those wrongly convicted and imprisoned in the United States.

According to their website, Burton was wrongly convicted of a St. Louis, Missouri, murder in 1984. He was proven innocent and exonerated on Aug. 29, 2008, after serving over 24 years in prison as an innocent man.

The Rev. Pam Estes, senior pastor at St. Paul UMC - Little Rock, will be this year’s Bible Study Leader.

“I’m to present the study of the theme verses: Romans 1:5-6 in a format so that the group can vote. So, my study will be flexible, to say the least. To be ready to segue away from the Word to action is typical of UMW gatherings,” Estes said. “The Message

reads ‘Through him (Jesus) we received both the generous gift of his life and the urgent task of passing it onto others.’ It is most apt for the United Methodist Women. UMW is all about the Good News of Jesus for women, children, and youth through direct ministries of education, health, and justice.”

Shannon Priddy, national president of UMW, and Harriet Olson, CEO of the national United Methodist Women, will also be speakers at the meeting.

There were also be workshops focusing on a wide variety of social justice topics, including climate justice, economic justice, maternal and infant mortality, and stopping the school to prison pipeline. A full schedule can be found on the UMW SCJ website, <https://www.umwscj.org/copy-of-schedule>.

With General Conference happening only a few months after the meeting, the fate of The United Methodist Church, as well as the United Methodist Women, will be on many people’s minds.

Although General Conference is not scheduled to be specifically addressed at this meeting, Schumacher said that she expects Olson will discuss how UMW will face the future, no matter what decision results from General Conference.

Cathy Blackwood, president of the Arkansas Conference United Methodist Women, said she hopes that the women attending this meeting will walk away from it with a deeper appreciation for the work of the organization and its more than 150 years of serving the world through mission.

“The 150-year-old mission organization that we are members of have weathered changes in the church in the past, as we are experiencing now. Many women who are unable to attend Assembly can experience the spiritual, educational and leadership activities that are usually only available at a national/global gathering. Come and enjoy the experience of a mini-Assembly!” Blackwood said.

Schumacher hopes that this meeting will bring together United Methodist Women in a shared global mission and vision.

“We hope to go away encouraged and excited about the next four years of work UMW will address. The bond of Sisterhood in UMW is strong and lifelong as we meet sister-friends from Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico as well as bond with new sisters.”

For more information on the meeting, visit umwscj.org.

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Wye Mountain UMC Daffodil Festival Brings 10,000 Visitors Annually to Central Arkansas

By Caleb Hennington
Digital Content Editor, @arumceditor

For more than 70 years, Wye Mountain United Methodist Church has given visitors a reason to smile, stay awhile, and revel in the beauty of their amazing field of thousands of daffodils.

The Wye Mountain Daffodil Festival is an annual event that happens each spring at Wye Mountain UMC, 22300 Arkansas Hwy. 113, Bigelow, AR 72016. This year's festival takes place 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily, Saturday, March 7 through Sunday, March 15, 2020 (with potential to extend through Sunday, March 22, if the flowers are still blooming).

The church's history extends all the way back to the early 20th century. It was founded as the Wye United Brethren Church in 1919 by Dr. Ira Holbrook. The first pastor of the church was the Rev. L.W. Beardsley in 1919, and his successor, Austin Harmon, was instrumental in getting the Daffodil Festival started at Wye Mountain.

In 1948, the Harmon family, who were members of the church, began planting daffodils on the 7-acre lot next to the church. The next year, the daffodils were picked and brought to Little Rock to

sell at the local Curb Market, as well as on street corners and in other stores in the city.

Over the years, the family began to sell their flowers in other markets, and even in other states, traveling to Oklahoma and as far away as Kansas selling their blooms.

The funds earned from the sale of daffodils helped to sustain the ministry of the church, which was and still is a small congregation in Perry County.

After Austin Harmon's death in 1965, the flower business was put on hold. There was no longer an effort to bring the flowers to markets as none of the church members had the time to do so.

So, the decision was made to bring people to the flowers instead of bringing the flowers to them, and the Daffodil Festival was born. Visitors were allowed to visit the beautiful flowers and take bundles of daffodils home for themselves.

According to Bobby Younger, communications specialist at the church, the church sees an estimated 10,000 visitors each year. There are more than 40 varieties of daffodils in bloom on the 7-acre plot.



Left: Two young girls share a sweet moment among the field of Daffodils at Wye Mountain UMC.

Below: The field of daffodils at Wye Mountain stretches more than 7 acres. As a nod to its Christian message and Methodist roots, a wooden cross stands in the middle of the field to greet visitors.

|| Photos provided by Bobby Younger



Younger says that what draws people to the festival each year is not only the beautiful flowers but the scenic drive and fresh early spring mountain air that folks can experience on the drive up to Wye Mountain.

Although daffodils can still be picked, changes in the rules have worked to preserve the flowers until the very end of the festival. Festival-goers aren't allowed to pick the daffodils until the last two days of the festival, for a donation of \$1 per dozen flowers.

Younger says this helps to preserve the flowers for all visitors throughout the season, as well as help to fund the ministries of the church, including the festival.

The Rev. Richard Gifford, pastor at Wye Mountain UMC, said the Daffodil Festival is very important to the history of the church and the community of Wye Mountain.

"The Daffodil Festival is important because it reminds our church family of our heritage among the bold missionary families who planted our church among laborers in timber camps over a century ago," Gifford said.

"More importantly, the Daffodil Festival enables us to demonstrate to new generations our fully-Trinitarian love for God and people. The glory of the flower field enables us to point to our creative Father. The cross in the flower field and hosted

tours of our historic stone chapel enable us to promote Jesus as our Savior and Lord. Our expressions of unconditional welcome and hospitality enable us to demonstrate a Spirit-guided holiness of heart and life."

The Wye Mountain Daffodil Festival is a free event with free parking but Younger said donations are always welcomed and accepted.

In addition to the flowers, various vendors, food trucks, live musical performances and other events will occur during the festival.

Church tours of the historic Wye Mountain Church, the only congregation in the state of Arkansas with roots in the United Brethren Church, are also available at the festival.

"Our prayer is that the Festival is a modern expression of light shining before everyone (Matthew 5:16) so that they see past us to the living God who loves us all!" Gifford said. "We are blessed each year that the Daffodil Festival connects new individuals and families more substantively to our parish mission in Perry County, across the state, and around the world."

For more on the Wye Mountain Daffodil Festival, visit their Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/DaffodilsOnWyeMountain/>. 📷

CELEBRATE HER ACHIEVEMENTS

MARCH 2020

WOMEN'S
HISTORY
MONTH



In 1981, Congress passed a resolution, signed by President Jimmy Carter, which authorized the first week of March 1982 as Women's History Week. For the next five years, that resolution continued to be authorized, but in 1987, after a request from the National Women's History Project, Congress passed another resolution declaring the entire month of March, not just the first week, as a celebration of the impact of women throughout American history.

Since 1988, Women's History Month has been celebrated throughout the United States, and has also spread throughout the world to other countries. It is a time to celebrate the amazing accomplishment of the many strong women who have shaped our nation and changed history forever with their innovations, ideas, and leadership.

For this year's Women History Month, we asked some of our Arkansas Conference clergywomen to tell us about some of the women who have immeasurably influenced their lives.



Rev. Sara Bayles Charlton

This Women's History month, I am grateful for Susanna Wesley and her life, ministry, and inspiration to the church. Susanna Wesley is known by the people called Methodist as the mother of John and Charles Wesley, as well as 17 other children; but what I find most compelling is how she used everyday spaces, such as her kitchen at Epworth to shape and nurture Christian discipleship. My life has been deeply enriched, and even transformed, by her faithful witnesses. I've learned much from studying Susanna over the years, in that: life is full, the pace is fast, the days are long, yet time flies by, but surely this is where we encounter grace, from the everydayness of the Epworth kitchen to continual bustle of life among us all.

Rev. Lupita Chavarria

Throughout my life, there have been many women who have shaped my life and my way of seeing life ... From those closest to me; of course my mom Maria, my three sisters Lely, Oly and Nena, my grandmother Angelita ... Some women who are historical personalities like Marie Curie, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, Frida Kahlo. And my favorite author Isabel Allende. Each is intelligent, strong and has very defined personalities; I like people like that.

In this new life and path in the Methodist ministry, there are two women who, besides being very good friends, have become role models for me in my areas of interest: the service to the most unfortunate and social justice. Both are very strong women, fighters, hardworking, who inspire, support, guide and help other women around. They have taught me many things that I did not know about the Methodist faith, but above all, they have taught me the way to live the Methodist faith; that is the most important thing. This note is a good way to say thank you for being my inspiration. Their names: Rev. Dr. Candace Barron and Rev. Betsy Singleton Snyder.





Rev. Andrea Cummings

I am who I am because of the strong women in my life. My mother has been influential in shaping my life most. She instilled in me the importance of education and faith. The very first verse that my mom taught me was, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).” I look forward to being the mother she has been to me and my siblings.

Moreover, many women have come before me, and without their struggles and sacrifices, I would not have the opportunities that I am blessed to experience today. I stand on the shoulders of great women! If it had not been for the women, where would we be?

Rev. Jan Davis

The woman that most influenced my life in ministry is the Rev. Donna Whitehead, pastor at Lovers Lane United Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas. As a young woman, I was wrestling with a call to ministry. For years I knew God was calling me to something, but what could it be? Living in a new town, I visited the local United Methodist Church one summer Sunday morning. The senior pastor was on vacation and his associate, a woman, preached. As she spoke, it was like a wave of the Holy Spirit washed over me and God spoke words to my heart, “This is what you are called to do – preach.” Donna became my pastor, mentor and dear friend. She has coached and encouraged me for the last 30 years through motherhood, seminary, ordination, delegation work, and four ministry appointments.



Rev. Lori Fallon

My father died when I was 21 months old, leaving behind my mama, me and my baby brother. My mama has always been a constant support in my life. She is strong and kind with a twinkle in her eye and a strong faith in God that has always flowed through our family. My grandmother, my mama’s mother, was the wife of a United Methodist minister, whom we affectionately called D-Daddy. Grandmother was strong and kind, full of grit but with a solid, trusting faith in God that flowed through our family. These two women helped shape the woman I am today. Mama believed in me and encouraged me while always loving me. She taught me to pray and how to trust my life to God. When someone was sick, she made them a cake or a casserole. Grandmother taught me how to cook and how to pray on my knees. Grandmother loved me fiercely. Grandmother frequently showed her love to others by cooking for them. Grandmother died in August of 2016. After 20 years of living in different states, Mama now lives less than two miles away from me. Their influence continues



to radiate in my life. When someone in my congregation is sick, they get my prayers and occasionally a pot of soup or a casserole. I hope my own two daughters are feeling the influence of the two great women in my life through my prayers and my cooking. Shalom.

Rev. Judy Hall

My family has had a great influence on me - many strong women there! My great aunt, Zola Casbeer, the only child of logging pioneers born and raised in a cabin/commune in the Pacific Northwest who had no children, was one of the Rosie the Riveters in WWII, wrote poetry and loved to travel. She was eccentric, but grounded and said the best money is spent on travel and education. I find her voice echoing in my head often. Women of color, especially those who write and sing, speak my heart language. I readily identify with their stories. Some of my greatest influences are Alice Walker and Maya Angelou (who I took an English Lit class from), and singers Etta James, Joan Armatrading, and Janis Ian, who I listened to in person every chance I was able. Lately, I am inspired by the young women who give me great hope for the future. I see all the efforts of the past coming to fruition in them. I am thankful to be doing my part to make the path wider for them.



Rev. Katie Pearce

The first time I ever heard a woman preach was in chapel my freshman year of Hendrix College. I had received my own call to ministry two years before hearing Rev. JJ Whitney (or any woman) preach. Although I did not have the example of a clergywoman at my home church, I did witness many faithful women in ministry at Springdale FUMC: Sunday School teachers, my confirmation mentor, Millie Lou Brown, and my mother, Mary Jane Pearce who was the children's minister. As a clergywoman, I am grateful for the continued witness of clergywomen in our conference, and for the support I receive from many laywomen at each church I have served.

Rev. Melissa Maskell

The women who have been influential in shaping my life would be my mother and my grandmother, who were strong women of faith. However, I never imagined growing up and becoming a pastor, though I have always felt God had a higher purpose for me. It was not until I met my husband, Rev. Dr. Gary Maskell, I was exposed to the Methodist church and heard Pastor Pam Brûlée, who filled in for my husband one year, and I thought, "wow," God can use women in ministry this way.





Rev. Judy Rudd

If we are fortunate, someone comes along whose presence changes our spiritual path forever. I have been blessed to have two such women walk with me on my faith journey: Diana Cain for nearly 20 years and Rev. Treccie Cook for only six months. Not only do they embody the love of Jesus Christ through their encouragement and wisdom, but also they taught me about seeking, discerning and following the leading of the Holy Spirit. In their own unique ways, each of these women forever changed who I am as a person and a pastor.

Rev. LaToya Shepherd

There have been many women who have influenced my life greatly, I have had many spiritual mothers and supporters. The woman from my childhood who has been most influential in my current journey is Dr. Nila Wilson. She is a retired educator and counselor in Michigan. She introduced me to the ecumenical community, the multicultural community and the educational community. She took a suicidal, depressed young person and poured her heart and soul into helping me know my value as an African American young person and woman of God.



Rev. JJ Whitney

I had not seen many clergywomen before I felt called to ministry at age 16. My youth minister, Renee Waggoner Henson, was such a formative part of my Christian journey and an example to me of professional church leadership. As I grew into my call to ministry, my dad introduced me to ordained clergywomen like the Rev. Sara Bainbridge and the Rev. Marty Cashburless. One of my most significant mentors was Bishop Janice Riggle Huie who helped me in my first years of ministry to understand the balance between ministry and family as well as practicing self-care. I'm indebted to these women for their encouragement, support, and paving the way for me.



Veritas Unites Thousands of Youth in NWA

The theme of Veritas this year was “United,” and the annual event that brings more than 1,400 youth together in one place certainly lived up to that name.

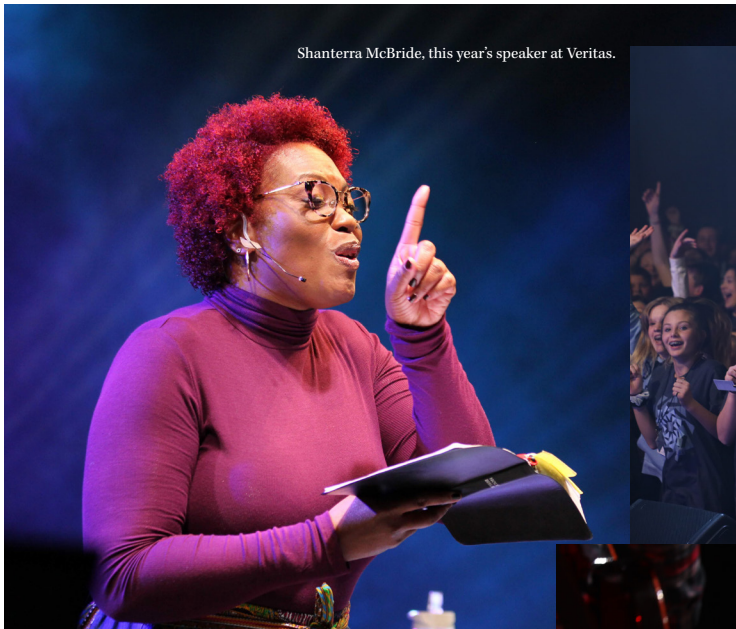
Worship was led by Phoenix, Arizona contemporary Christian band Army of Light, who energized the crowd and prepared their hearts for engaging worship. This year’s speaker was Shanterra McBride, a motivational speaker who has traveled all over the country speaking at youth events

and encouraging youth and young adults to pursue their passion and fight against injustice everywhere.

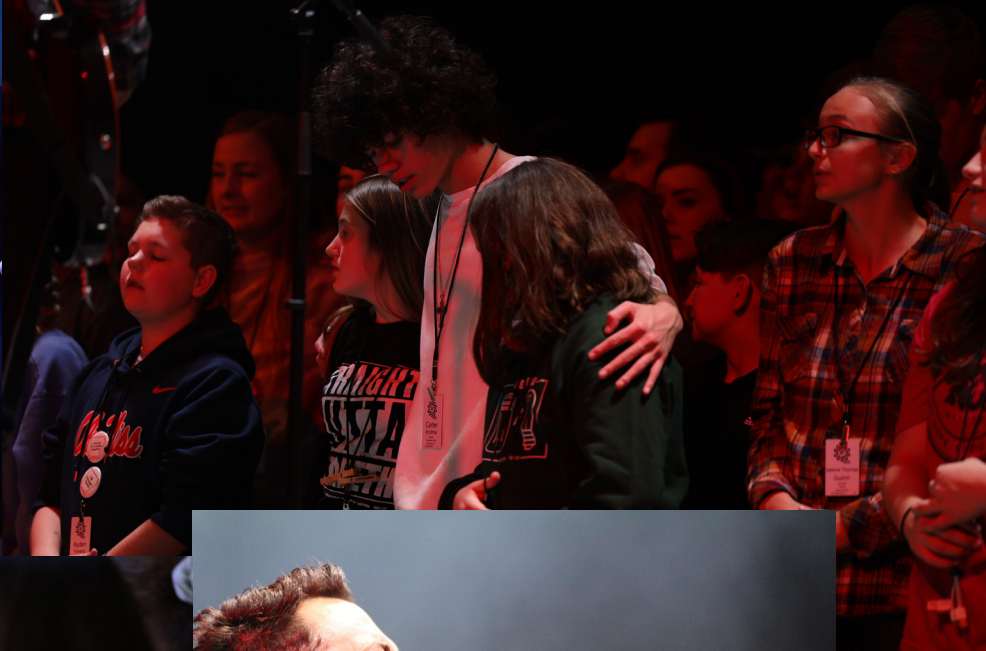
Bishop Mueller spoke to the youth on Sunday morning and served communion to all who were gathered, and by the end of the weekend, 90 youth declared that they were exploring a call to ministry.

Check out some of the incredible photos from the weekend and be sure to keep Veritas 2021 on your mind for next year!

Shanterra McBride, this year’s speaker at Veritas.



Bishop Mueller speaks to the gathered youth.



Army of Light lead worship at this year’s Veritas.



HOPE VILLAGE
A SMALL HOME COMMUNITY

Hope Village Gives Homeless in Conway a New Lease on Life

By Sam Pierce

Featured Contributor, [@sjamespierce](#)

Samantha Hewett was raised in southeastern Detroit by a homeless heroin addict.

“I’ve been a child in those circumstances,” Hewett said. “And for children, it is a situation they can’t help, and 588 of the 964 homeless individuals in Faulkner County are minors.

“There is a misconception about why people become homeless, and for the most part, it is not true. Having been through that experience as a child and as an adult, I know first hand.”

Hewett, her husband, and her children were homeless for a month after her husband lost his job and wasn’t able to obtain employment again.

Hewett said most people believe homeless people have either mismanaged money or got into an addiction habit. She said the truth of the matter is that most people are hoping they don’t get sick or lose their job unexpectedly.

“I try to remind everybody that it could happen to anybody,” she said. “I remind people, they are one sickness, or major illness or accident, from being in the situation.”

Hewett is the director of Hope Village, a nonprofit that seeks to address homelessness in Conway. “Hope Village is a little different because it helps provide for an immediate need and is intended to totally transition human beings and be productive members of society,” Hewett said. “It helps them earn the skills needed to become members of society again.”

Hope Village recently received a check for \$29,800 from a pair of fundraisers through First UMC Conway and Wesley UMC in Conway. She said they also have an ongoing fundraiser for bricks that will be placed on the walkways of the home, for \$100 each. She said they get a few of those each month.

It takes approximately \$30,000 to \$40,000 to build one of the homes.

“It will cost about \$100 per square foot and each lot is somewhere between 400 to 600 square feet,” she said. “That will probably be edited as we meet with contractors and construction workers who are able to donate time and resources, and learn the land and lay foundation.”

The land for Hope Village was purchased back in 2018.

Hewett said the budget has been broken up into phases with Phase II being some of the most expensive work. She said as time goes on, and the word gets out and they meet with more people, it will bring the final cost down.

“It will be a mix income community that will serve both income families or individuals, not necessarily just those who are homeless,” she said. “It will help those individuals establish a new income, and get a job.

“It is very difficult to get work without their own physical address. We can help them with those resources and a percentage of their income will help cover rental cost.”

The Rev. JJ Whitney serves on the steering committee and assists with the fundraising effort and assists in getting the word out. She said Hope Village, once built, will follow the same kind of example as the Hope Home, which is already built but is for men only.

“The Hope Home is for men who are experiencing homelessness,” she said. “Someone handles their case and the men commit to certain things such as caring for the house and saving money and learning life skills to help them transition from living on the streets to having full-time employment.

“It’s a model that Phil (Fletcher) would like to try in the Hope Village. People can think about transitioning and also be in a

place that forms communities for folks. It's more than just finding housing for people, it's creating a community."

She said it takes quite a bit of money to build one of the model homes, so there are several fundraising events planned in Conway throughout the year.

"The city has been really receptive, honestly," Whitney said. "A lot of people are upset that folks are experiencing homelessness ... There are some that are very willing to give money, it is just going to take time."

Whitney said Hewett has quite a vision on how to raise money for the village.

Phillip Fletcher is the executive director of the City of Hope Outreach, or CoHO, which will oversee Hope Village. He said the goal is to build 10 homes in Conway that will serve homeless individuals, veterans and low-income families. He said there will be five one-bedroom homes and five two-bedroom homes, and the village will be built near the current existing houses on East Robins Street.

"I have two motivations for this project," Fletcher said. "Back in 2015, I lost a friend to a fire at the Oakwood trailer park, so part of my motivation is to provide stable housing here in Conway and to provide quality housing for people with limited needs."

Fletcher said CoHO focuses on three primary areas for community renewal including education, housing and community development.

The Hope Home is a three-bedroom, two-bath house that is able to house six men with an overnight and day staff. It provides housing for up to 18 months and assists the men with finding employment opportunities and financial development. Once they are finished with the program, they are able to graduate to their own housing.

John Leland is the Hope Home Director, which helps men transition out of homelessness or jail time and be reoriented into society by establishing a job and managing income.

"It teaches them responsibility and helps them get back on their feet," Hewett said. "We want to take that program and apply it to more people."

Hewett said for the Hope Village, there is going to be at least two homes for veterans and two homes for low-income families.

"There will be an application process for Hope Village, which will be a lot like what they are doing at the Hope Home," Hewett said. "We are currently developing a program to determine what the eligibility might be."



First UMC in Conway presents a check to Dr. Phil Fletcher, founder of CoHO, and Sam Hewett, director of Hope Village. || Photo provided by CoHO



Wesley UMC in Conway presents a check to Dr. Phil Fletcher, founder of CoHO. || Photo provided by CoHO

Fletcher said right now he is focused on sharing his plan with individuals and organizations and "persuading them that this is an effort worth investing in with both money and time."

"We are thankful for the Methodist churches in town, who rallied together to provide a significant boost," Fletcher said. "God has always been providing financial resources and volunteers — people with a passion to help other people."

"There are tons of stories of people being helped in a multitude of ways and God has opened the doors with financial resources and the opportunity to advocate what a person in poverty faces on a daily basis."

For more information, visit hopevillagecoho.org or email cohoconway@gmail.com. 📧



Photo by Kat Caserta

Holy Week: Clergy, don't feel it's all on you!

By Melinda Shunk
Children's Ministry Coordinator

Holy Week for Christians is a time to spiritually follow the journey of the disciples and Jesus through worship experiences so that we all can be reminded why we feel joy on Easter morning.

The tradition of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Saturday Easter vigil is important. I would argue that without those services, can we really appreciate and pass down the stories to our children of why Easter Worship is a celebration?

However, over my time in ministry, I have seen these important worship services dwindle in attendance, and dare I say get dropped from the Holy Week worship schedule altogether due to lack of staffing and attendance. I am not judging. I was on staff at a mid-size church for 10 years. I understand the struggle in planning worship that people say they don't have time or interest to attend.

Barna Group just published some research that tells us we can do better in creating inspired, encouraged, and forgiving worship experiences for our members.

Overall, church members say they leave worship services feeling inspired (37%), encouraged (37%), forgiven (34%), as though they have connected with God or experienced his presence (33%) and challenged to change something in their life (26%). A plurality of

church members also express always feeling like attending service was the most important experience they had all week (29%) and that they learned something new (28%). (Barna Group, 2020)

To be clear, I am not putting blame on senior pastors, but I would rather like to encourage them to not feel the weight of their entire congregation's spiritual needs being met by one pastor at every service. Because as we are all designed differently, we all learn differently.

A senior pastor also knows how to see spiritual gifts in others so create a worship team and use their gifts. You can't possibly do it all every week and especially not a week with at least four services. Sticking with just one way of worship and not relying on the parish members to offer other forms of teaching keeps people at 37%, but if a pastor seeks out the gifts of others to help with the planning and leading of worship more of the congregation will be touched in multiple ways, thus guaranteeing that people leave worship with positive feelings.

During our first session of Beyond Conference 2020, speaker Rev. Dr. Leanne Hadley taught us that although we are called to minister to children, we are also called to let children minister to us!

You read that correctly. Children minister to adults. Every time I work with children, I have at least one experience when a child ministers to my soul. Children are part of the congregation; let them minister to adults during Holy Week.

The best way to learn something is to have to teach it. Challenging a group of fifth and sixth graders to lead service will help them learn parts of worship and the Gospel stories. Your congregation will be inspired and intrigued to see and hear the excitement of the message being taught to them through the voice of innocence. Parents will not miss an opportunity to be part of the worship that their child is helping to lead. It becomes an “everybody” worship instead of a “You” and “Them” worship. Here are some examples of Holy Week Everybody Worship that may inspire you:

1. All can feel part of Palm Sunday at the call to worship by starting in the Narthex handing out palms as the music plays. Don't let them file into their pews as usual. Not allowing the normal entry and comfort seating interrupts the habit and rote worshipers creating a sense of alertness to the specialness of the day.

Create a special multi-age Palm Sunday choir that starts the procession into the sanctuary and have clergy bring up the end of the processional. The pastor can begin worship by explaining the importance of the Palm as each congregant holds it in their hand. Some churches already do this with a few members or just the choir, but I recommend making it all-inclusive as a symbolic way of “walking into Holy Week” as a congregation just as Jesus knew what he was walking into that day.

2. Take a look at a photo from Lakewood UMC's Maundy Thursday service last year. Lakewood's Youth Minister Kat Caserta had her junior high youth lead the worship with a Living Last Supper. They used costumes, set up a Seder meal, and washed feet. They learned Holy Communion, the Lord's Prayer and learned why the washing of feet teaches us to serve others in a way that creates lasting understanding for the kids who lead. Kat reported to me, “This year, we're doing it again in our sanctuary and making it more of a blended service with the rest of the congregation. The action will be a big part of the worship service. The youth and children will continue to be a big part of it.” It was so well received they are continuing to lead Holy Week worship.

3. Two years ago, the Rev. Bill Sardin and Children's Minister Michelle Wilkins at FUMC Hot Springs incorporated multi-generational readers, shadow mimes, and object bags to tell the Good Friday story. All who attended worship could feel and touch the story because volunteers made small bags with a thorn, a die, a sponge, a cross and a nail that the congregation members



The youth at Lakewood UMC lead worship with a Living Last Supper on Maundy Thursday in 2019. Having children or youth lead worship during Holy Week is a great way to take the pressure off of clergy. || Photo by Kat Caserta



Photo by Kat Caserta

could hold and look at as the scripture was being read. Church members had visuals, tactical objects, and the spoken word of the Gospel as they were taught the Good Friday story. It was the largest multi-generational Good Friday worship the church had experienced in several years. 📖

Central UMC Rogers Operates Largest Faith-Based Childcare in Northwest Arkansas

By Sam Pierce

Featured Contributor, [@sjamespierce](#)

The job of Kris Mickna, the executive director of child development at Central United Methodist Church in Rogers, is all about priceless opportunities and awesome responsibilities.

“Connect with each child and working together for the betterment of this next generation, that’s what we’re here for,” Mickna said. “You often hear the words, ‘it has to be your passion’ to work in this field with all the rules and regulations, the low pay, etc. Some days I truly know and feel that!

“And oftentimes, it is difficult to take my heart out of the equation. But then there are other days, I also know it’s my obligation, as just a person in this sometimes crazy world.”

Mickna has been the executive director for 13 years but has been involved with the church since 1997 when it first moved to its current location. She oversees the largest faith-based childcare program in Northwest Arkansas.

She said of the three programs combined -- including Mother’s Day Out, Tiny Tots Preschool and the Central Child Care Center -- there are currently 309 children enrolled. However, it should be noted that some of those are duplicated numbers because there are some families that choose to utilize two programs simultaneously. Of the 309, 55 of those students are enrolled in more than one program.

“We do a lot of family events throughout the year to help us make and foster true relationships with the families that we serve,” Mickna said.

She said they host events such as Muffins with Mom, Donuts with Dad, Goodies with Grandparents, Arkansas Children’s Week family picnic, a summer luau or end of school year parties. She said they also have Breakfast with Santa, Thanksgiving Family Potluck, a Fall Festival, and other Christmas and holiday programs.

“We also do quite a bit with our community, such as having food



Photo provided by Central UMC Rogers

drives and delivering all of it to our local food pantry are our sister church or visits to the nursing homes for things like trick-or-treating or Christmas caroling for the residents there,” she said. “Of course, all of this doesn’t replace simply greeting parents as they arrive with their children each morning, calling them by name, and wishing them a good evening when they pick up their kiddos at the end of their day.

“One-on-one conversations are just as vital and always welcomed by having an open-door policy. I know I spoke about being ‘hands-on’ administratively and that in itself also helps to make a lot of personal connections.”

Mickna said she and her directors are not the kind of people to sit in their offices and not be involved. She said they are constantly in the hallways and classroom, and talk with parents throughout the day because of their mobile app.

“I think it would be really hard to not make connections,” she said. “We spend more time seeing these kids in activities than their parents do because we have them up to 11 hours a day, so we see them awake more than they do.

“We are constantly sharing pictures back and forth with their parents. We are very hands-on and I think if I didn’t do that, I wouldn’t enjoy my job as much. It is about making those connections.”

Through the Central Child Care Center, the children participate



Central UMC Rogers operates the largest faith-based childcare program in Northwest Arkansas, serving roughly 300 children in the Rogers area. The church operates three programs: Mother's Day Out, Tiny Tots Preschool and the Central Child Care Center. || Photo provided by Central UMC Rogers

in chapel time, library time, art, music, science, math, learning centers, and imaginative play.

“Right before I was hired, the pastor at the time, Biff Averitt, saw a need for her position. She said prior to her coming, each ministry had its own board and “they all ran pretty independently from each other.”

“So they created this position, created just one board that governs over all three programs,” she said. “I have a total of 40 staff members including 35 for the Central Child Care and the Mother’s Day Out Program and five for Tiny Tots.”

She said she also has a bookkeeper that works part-time but does the books for both programs.

She said the childcare field as a whole is not a lucrative place to work, “but our board has worked really hard to create a new pay structure so that we can be competitive in the field.”

“I have a lot of staff that has been here a long time, so that is a definite plus,” she said.

Mickna said most of the new families come to the program through word of mouth, with a waiting list for every age group. She said she loves her staff and her teachers and said her directors are phenomenal and “truly do love the kids.”

“I love that we have the versatility and can provide a lot of options under one roof,” Mickna said. “We take up three wings of the church on the bottom floor.

“It also gives parents options, because our programs complement each other. We have students in Mothers Day Out and Tiny Tots simultaneous, because parents may need a longer day.

“It does get a little tricky because we are providing so many



Photo provided by Central UMC Rogers

options for parents versus a set schedule. ... But we are trying to fill a need that everyone wants.”

“It’s not me, it’s not one person, it is the team that we have built here,” Mickna said. “The vast majority of our families are not church members.

“And we take that in the light, as an awesome opportunity. Because they may never step in the doors of the church, but they will come in through one of our programs and that’s amazing.

“To be able to share the love of Christ every day and let our families see Christ through you.”

For more information, visit cumcrogers.com. 📱

Creating Connectionalism, Supporting Spiritual Growth

Part 3: The Center for Connectional Ministries

By Amy Ezell
Director, Center for Communication

The word “connection” is defined as a relationship in which a person, thing, or idea is linked or associated with something else. John Wesley recognized the need for an organized system of communication and accountability and developed what he called the “connexion,” a network of classes, societies, and, in our modern context, annual conferences.

The Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church provides the Center for Connectional Ministry with 13 very important ministry areas that create connectionalism while supporting spiritual growth.

The Rev. Jim Polk is the director of the Center for Connectional Ministries and has been with the conference for four years. Before this appointment, Polk was at Arkadelphia FUMC, El Dorado FUMC and Nashville FUMC.

Rebecca Davis is the Administrative Assistant for the Center and has served in this position for three years.

The 200,000 Reasons initiative, led by Mary Lewis Dassinger, is an effort to reduce childhood hunger in Arkansas. This ministry works with other churches, hunger agencies, local food pantries and feeding programs, community gardens, and gleaning projects and has a goal of 100% support from Arkansas United Methodist churches. Ingathering is an annual event that supports the 200K initiative.

The Conference Board of Laity, chaired by Karon Mann, is the elected lay leadership of the Annual Conference. This board represents, and is accountable to, the Annual Conference.

The 2016 Book of Discipline (Paragraph 631) is clear that the Board of Lay shall have responsibility for the following:

- Fostering an awareness of the role of the laity
- Developing the advocacy role for laity
- Increasing the participation of laity in the life of the church
- Encouraging laypersons in the general ministry of the church
- Developing and promoting programs to cultivate an adequate understanding of the theological and biblical basis for lay life and work
- Developing and promoting stewardship of time, talent and possessions
- Providing for the training of lay members to Annual Conference
- Providing support and direction for such lay programs as lay



- speaking, the observance of Laity Sunday, and the work of lay leaders on the local and district levels
- Organizing a conference committee on lay speaking ministries

Campus Ministry is the missional presence of the United Methodist Church on college and university campuses across Arkansas. The purpose of this ministry is to make disciples of

Jesus Christ by connecting campus, community, and Christ. This work is overseen by the Conference Board of Higher Education, chaired by the Rev. Roy Smith. Our conference is blessed to have 11 campus ministry centers across the state. To see all of the campuses where the ARUMC is present, or to connect with a clergy leader, please visit arumc.org/our-ministries/campus-ministries/

Melinda Shunk is the Children's Ministry coordinator for the Arkansas Conference. This connectional ministry provides equipping events, resources and support to children's ministers in Arkansas and beyond.

Quest is a newly created event where students and their leaders from throughout the Conference gather at a central location for food, fun, fellowship, worship AND to participate with their leaders in developmentally appropriate experiential learning about the year's focus.

Beyond is the annual 3-day conference for children's ministry leaders that equips leaders and is growing every year! VBS support, Safe Sanctuary policies, small group connection and hiring resources are just a few parts of this ministry.

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW), chaired by the Rev. Sara Bayles-Charlton, advocates for full participation of women in the total life of The United Methodist Church.

Through training, education, research and monitoring, COSROW:

- Nurtures clergy and lay leaders in the church
- Raises awareness of women's issues and opportunities
- Educates church leaders and seminarians on sexual ethics and policies
- Supports victims/survivors of sexual harassment or abuse
- Develops guidelines for inclusive and expansive language
- Trains and supports Central Conference women
- Monitors annual conferences and the General Conference for inclusiveness

Creating a Culture of Calling is a vital part of creating disciples who create disciples. When we create a space to openly, routinely, and clearly articulate the questions and conversation involved in exploring a call to ministry, we allow people of all ages to listen to God's voice and be better prepared and ready to answer as God's call becomes clearer. For this reason the newly designed Culture of Call ministry was created and is led by Michelle Moore.

The DisAbility Ministries, chaired by Mark Lasater, ministers through advocacy, empowerment and education, to include people with disabilities and their loved ones in worship, missions, leadership and ministry

Byron and Janice Mann lead the Disaster Recovery and Volunteers in Mission ministries. These ministries exist to promote, encourage, and enable Christians to exemplify "Christian Love in Action" mission service at home and abroad.

The work of Ethnic Ministries is coordinated by the Committee

on Ethnic and Language Concerns, chaired by the Rev. Ronnie Miller-Yow. Their word is to keep the vision of ethnic local church concerns before the annual conference and to provide guidance, resources and training to church leaders in the annual conference as they minister with and to ethnic constituencies.

The Board of Global Ministries, chaired by Brenda Norwood, is responsible for maintaining the connectional relationship of the General Board of Global Ministries to the conference and with providing a wide array of global ministry opportunities for local churches, including Volunteers in Mission, advocacy for the poor, parish and community development, disaster response and mission personnel advocacy.

Lay Servant Ministries, chaired by Carole Blanks, is a leadership development program in The United Methodist Church focused on equipping and empowering laypersons who have responded to the call of God to serve in mission and ministry. These laypersons are called to live out their own discipleship as servants in leadership through the ministries of leading, caring, and communicating.

Camping and Retreat Ministries, chaired by the Rev. Ben Crismon, supports the Church's mission to nurture Christian discipleship and to engage persons in the transformation of the world through love and justice. According to umc.org resources, Christian camps and retreats invite persons and groups to sacred settings typically within the natural world where the creation can speak to their hearts of God.

The Arkansas Conference supports the ministries of Bear Creek Camp, Camp Tanako, Mount Eagle Retreat Center, and Shoal Creek Camp.

The mission of United Methodist Men is to support spiritual growth among men, helping men to mature as disciples as they encourage spiritual formation in others. The president of the Arkansas UMM is Clay McCastlain.

Youth and Young Adult Ministries, chaired by Michelle Moore, is committed to reaching and discipling the next generation, and there are a variety of opportunities for youth and young adults throughout the conference to grow in their faith. The Veritas event reaches more than 1,300 youth each year. Check out pictures from this recent event on page 22 of the March AUM.

The ARUMC Youth Worker Network was developed by the Youth and Young Adult ministry team to connect all those who work with youth – volunteers, part-time and full-time youth staff, pastors, youth parents, interns, and anyone who works with youth.

The Center for Connectional Ministries supports the trajectory of the Arkansas Annual Conference in all that it does: Creating vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities and the world!

For more information about the Center for Connectional Ministries, please visit arumc.org.

