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Beyond 2021 Moves Online

Conference Will Focus on Dismantling Racism

Nov 17, 2020 | Arkansas United Methodist



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Next year's Beyond Conference will take place entirely online, Jan. 22 – 23, 2021. The two-day event will focus on the Arkansas Conference's mission of dismantling racism in our

church and society, with the Bible verse Micah 6:8 as the main biblical focus.

The Beyond Conference is unique to the Arkansas Children's Ministry. Very few UMC conferences offer professional development for faith formation staff and volunteers. Even fewer have a conference coordinator dedicated only to the ministry to children and their families. ARUMC has a history of investing in early faith formation.

More than eight years ago, a group of children's ministers wanted to combine the two-state locations with limited training and pool their resources. They wanted to bring everyone together and share ideas and learn new tools for ministering to children and their families. I was not living in this state eight years ago, so I had to go back to one of the original planning team members, Karen Swales.

Karen currently sits on our Conference Children's Ministry team. She shared with me that they did a lot of research and found that there were few to no workshops for Children's Ministers at the end of January, so they quickly chose what has become the traditional date. It also worked out to be a slower time for people to step away from church work for two days since it was after Christmas and before Lent.

The first four Beyond conferences were alternately held retreat-style at Tanako and Mt. Sequoyah, but in 2018 it was brought to Philander Smith College in Little Rock. Bringing Beyond into Little Rock allowed for it to become more of a professional training rather than a getaway. Bringing children's ministers to the Conference office connected them with ARUMC staff as well letting them see what the city had to offer in entertainment during their stay. No matter the location of the Beyond Conference the planning team has always looked for keynote speakers that shed new light on how we can best minister to children. Faith formation training is the continual focus at every Beyond training.

Beyond 2021 is no different, except of course the location has changed once again. Planning quality keynote speakers for Beyond usually takes six months to a year to book. In June of 2020, the CCM planning team had to decide if we would be able to plan for an in-person conference. We looked at the Bishop's Task Force guidelines and thought about how we could hold in-person within the safety guidelines.

We have 10 members of our team plus special speakers, so under the guidelines for in-person, we would be able to have less than 35 attendees. In January of 2020, we had 90 attendees with five different states represented. We couldn't plan a conference that would leave out half of our attendees in 2021!


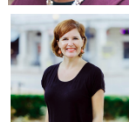

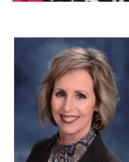
I had Zoom conferences with our chosen keynote speakers to ask if they felt comfortable adapting their presentations to a webinar/Zoom format. They overwhelmingly agreed to the new format. I put in a webinar request with our award-winning ARUMC Communications director to see if Director Amy Ezell could supply the technical support we would need to go to an all-virtual format. Director Amy Ezell was in full agreement that

Beyond 2021 could be offered in a virtual format with her team's expertise in bringing it together.

If you have been to Beyond in the past you will note that the format has changed to two half-days of learning. In our research, we have found that all-day webinars/Zooms do not allow for the best learning. However, our theme for this year follows the Bishop's proclamation that this would be a year of study and reflection for Dismantling Racism across our Arkansas UMC Conference.

The CCM team chose our focus verse to be Micah 6:8 with a focus on Justice, Mercy and Humility. Our keynote speaker is the Rev. Dr. Y. Joy Harris from New York who just co-authored the book *the ABC's of Diversity*. [Click here](#) to take a closer look at the speaker and break-out sessions. The virtual option allowed for more authors in our break-out sessions.

Join us on both days or just one. Beyond 2021 is an affordable training for all in the comfort of your own home. Arkansas Conference attendees will also receive books and materials in the mail the last week of January, so please register before the deadlines. We hope to see you and your pastor on January 22-23, 2021!

	<p>Keynote Speaker Rev. Dr. Harris-Smith is a scholar in the field of Communication & Culture. She is currently a senior lecturer in Speech Communication at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, NJ. In addition, to demonstrating excellence in her teaching and presenting Dr. Harris-Smith is co-author of <i>The ABCs of Diversity: Helping Kids (and Ourselves!) Embrace Our Differences</i> published by Chalice Press (June 2020)</p>
	<p>Sadie Stratton Certified Candidate for Ordination and current full time Children and Family Minister at Bentonville FUMC. She was mentored by Mark Burrows and inspired by his Children First Worship. She is in her sixth year of ministry as well as perfecting the Children First Worship as a monthly service church members look forward to attending. Sadie is also a trained Wonderfully Made human sexuality trainer and presenter.</p>
	<p>Geania Dickey holds a B.S. in Education and a Masters in Public Administration. Her twenty-six years in ECE has focused on administrator and leadership development as well as state and federal systems in support of strengthening early childhood program quality and access. Geania will be leading Session #1 Racial Equity and Inclusion – a VERY BIG subject for small humans: Equal vs Equitable... Microaggression...White fragility...How can I possibly help children understand, when I am having trouble myself? If you need PDR credit for your job, be sure to bring your ID number with you to this breakout session, PDR credit will be provided for Geania's session.</p>
	<p>Rev. Dawn Spragg MS LPC received a BS in Psychology from John Brown University, attended Phillips Theological Seminary and received a MS in Counseling from John Brown University. She is an ordained Deacon in the United Methodist Church and serves as Pastor of Contemporary worship at Central United Methodist Church in Rogers. Rev. Spragg will teach Session#2 From Pandemic and Beyond: Caring for Families and Children at the request of the the CCM team. How do you know when a Family's pain needs our listening ear or a referral to those trained in Family Counseling. She will have an Arkansas Resource list for family therapy.</p>



Sarah Flannery a two time author will be sharing with us from her newest book **Children and Family Ministry Handbook**. Her chapter on **Marriage & Divorce in Family Ministry** will be the topic for **Session 3**, participants will discuss the ways both healthy and unhealthy marriages affect the family, the secrecy and shame that can hamper marriages that struggle, and ways to love and support families through divorce and beyond. Sarah will teach **Session #6** from a chapter in her book called **Disability Ministries**. How to can we make accommodations for all in with the worship and ministry setting? How do we talk openly about needs?



Dr. Marietta Collins and Dr. Ann Hazzard worked together for two decades as Emory University School of Medicine faculty members serving children and families in Atlanta. They are psychologists who have been involved in community advocacy efforts focused on children's behavioral health and social justice. In 2018, they wrote the book **Something Happened in Our Town**. In **Session #4**, they will teach you how to use this picture book (and others) to deepen children's understanding of racial division and inspire them to stand up for justice in their daily lives.



Rev. Dr. Michelle Morris is an elder serving at First United Methodist Church in Conway. She earned her PhD in New Testament from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. She is the author and trainer for her book **Gospel Discipleship 4 Pathways for Christian Disciples**. In **Session #5**, she will teach you how you can change your volunteer pool for your Children's ministry when you understand what motivates people in their discipleship. The four Gospels reveal those paths of motivation, and Michelle will explain how to see that.

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