

The Arkansas United Methodist

LIVING OUR FAITH

January 2020 | Volume 168, Issue 1

DISASTERS DON'T SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS

Arkansas Gears Up For Disaster Response Academy, Pg. 9

St. Paul Fort Smith distributes diapers for a needy community - Pg. 13

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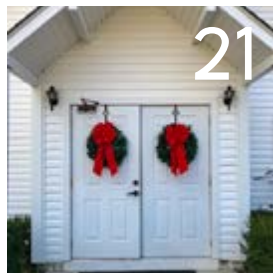
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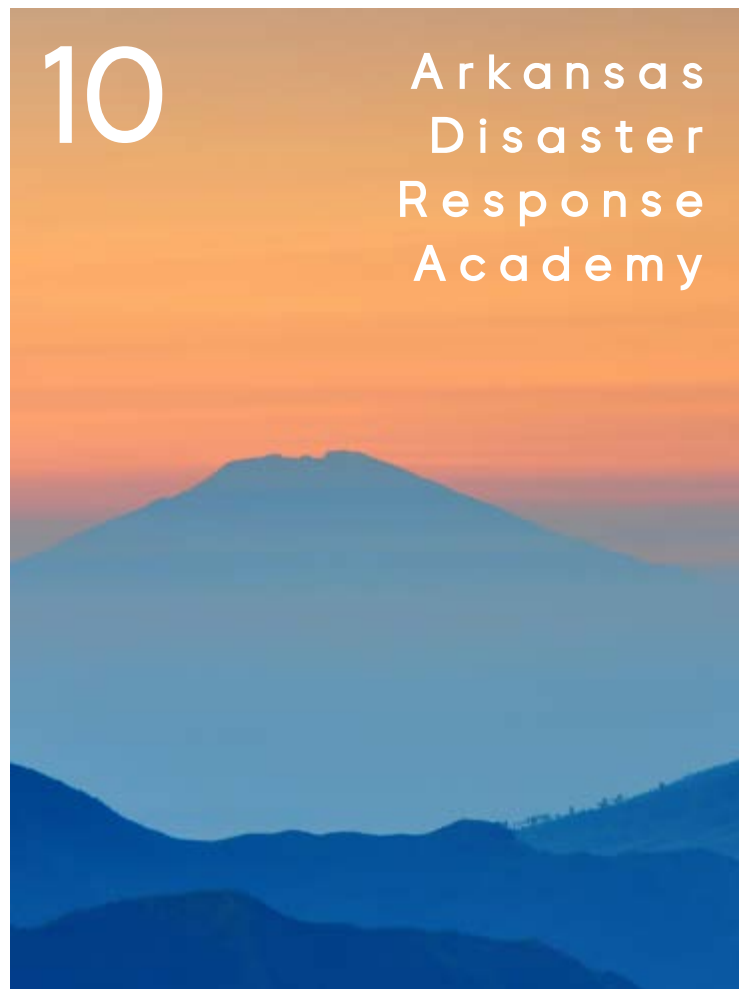
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Caleb Hennington, Digital Content Editor

Amy Ezell, Director of The Center for Communication

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STORY IDEA?



Hope for Healing



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

As 2019 seems to leave just as quickly as it arrived, I'm left thinking about everything that took place this year and what will inevitably occur in 2020.

This past year was a rough one for many of us in the United Methodist Church. Of course, everyone knows what happened in February in St. Louis, so I'm not going to spend time reopening a wound that has yet to even begin to heal.

Rather than reminisce on the darkness of 2019, I want to look forward to the light of 2020. Or rather, my hope for the light in 2020.

While a vocal group of people sees a split in the church as an inevitability, there are also many people in our church, voices that often don't get as much media coverage, seeking reconciliation from our past fights and looking for ways that we can stay together, both physically and spiritually.

I have hope that a message of unity and love will break through the division and hate that seems determined to cast a heavy cloud over 2020.

I hope that all of us, no matter which side of the argument we fall

on, can remember that, despite our differences and strongly held convictions, we are still sisters and brothers in Christ. We are still called to love one another with the same love that Christ so graciously extends to us.

The night that the final vote occurred in St. Louis, I posted the lyrics to the hymn "Blessed Assurance." I found comfort in the lyrics, and I said then, as I still believe today, that I sometimes find deeper meaning in hymnals than I do in scripture.

So as I think about 2020, and I hold onto the hope for reconciliation and redemption, another famous hymn comes to mind.

Read the lyrics below, and I hope you'll join me in praying -- and hoping -- for a peaceful and compassionate 2020.

*My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
But wholly lean on Jesus' name
On Christ the solid Rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand*

-*"My Hope is Built on Nothing Less" or
"The Immutable Basis for a Sinner's Hope" by Edward Mote*



DISASTER RESPONSE ACADEMY

Presented by UMCOR and the Arkansas Conference

Be ready to help - Disasters don't schedule appointments!

January 29 to February 1, 2020

Trinity United Methodist Church

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PURPOSE

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Promote preparedness for and response to disasters

Recruit participants - volunteers, local churches and leadership

Educate, train and equip participants

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The Local Church in Disaster Response Ministry

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Long Term Recovery from Disaster

Local Church, District, and Conference Leadership and Coordination in Disaster Response

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It's Still About Your Church

By Gary E. Mueller
Bishop of the Arkansas Conference

I am ready to admit something I've been in denial about for a long time. Even though I've invested a great deal of blood, sweat and tears trying, I simply cannot fix what's broken in the United Methodist Church. I can't fix the polarization that now imprisons us. I can't fix the outcome of this May's General Conference. And I can't fix the uncertainty we face as a church.

Even more significantly, the Holy Spirit has helped me realize I don't have to fix the church. It belongs to Jesus, and he's got it covered. This doesn't mean I'm stepping back, shrugging my shoulders and saying, "It's going to be what it's going to be." Rather, I will be focusing on what Jesus is calling every United Methodist congregation in Arkansas to do - becoming the most Jesus loving, disciple-making and sharing Jesus' love church you can be.

I love the United Methodist Church and the way of being Christian it shares. But ultimately, local congregations matter more than denominations - even our beloved United Methodist denomination. People need your local church, not a denomination. Your community needs your local church, not a denomination. And most importantly, Jesus needs your local church, not a denomination.

This means the single most pressing task is enabling your church that has a unique location, is filled with a unique group of people and possesses a unique history to become the church Jesus wants you to be - a vital congregation that makes disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities and the world.

Embrace your identity. Your church is literally the Body of Christ. So act like it! Love Jesus, follow Jesus, grow in Jesus, be transformed in Jesus and share Jesus in ways that make it clear whose you are. Get serious about investing in those things that form you as the Body of Christ: prayer, Bible study, involving people in intentional discipling groups and reaching out to your neighborhood in ways that touch real people in real ways with real love.

Live out your purpose. Jesus uses your church, and the disciples in it, to continue his mission of making disciples, forming disciples, and equipping and sending disciples to transform lives, communities and the world. Help people discover their spiritual gifts, bless them and then unleash them in your congregation and into the mission field that begins right outside the doors of your sanctuary.



Demonstrate the difference Jesus makes. Almost every congregation has figured out how to thrive with a diverse group of people who have perspectives that are diametrically opposed. Don't see this as a problem; see it as a wonderful opportunity to show how Jesus brings together people who normally wouldn't give each other the time of day. Keep people worshipping together on the same pew, praying together, studying together, serving together and caring for each other.

I want to be absolutely clear about something that some people may consider to be a scandalous idea. Yet I am convicted of its truth. The future of your church is not dependent upon what happens in the United Methodist Church. Don't let the uncertainty, or brokenness, paralyze you. Move ahead boldly and confidently. Your church will still be part of the Body of Christ. Your church will still make disciples of Jesus Christ. Your church will still form deeper disciples. And your church will still equip and send disciples to transform lives, communities and the world.

The painful reality is that we United Methodist Christians face an uncertain future. As Jesus leads us toward it, I want you to know something. I consider it an honor and a privilege to walk with you. I believe in you. I trust you. And, most importantly, I love you.

A Moment with **Methodist** FAMILY HEALTH

Sowing the Fruit of the Spirit



*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
- Galatians 5:22-23*

By Kelli Reep
Methodist Family Health

Can you imagine what your life would be like if your mother was addicted to drugs, your father was abusive to you before leaving your family altogether, and you were never certain if you would eat that day or the next?

Can you imagine how you would behave?

While not all the children and teenagers in our continuum of care at Methodist Family Health come from situations like this, many do, and all have some sort of a traumatic experience in their lives. Abuse, abandonment, neglect or a combination of these coupled with psychiatric, behavioral, emotional or spiritual issues produce a child who desperately needs someone to show her or him the way to a stable life.

It can be overwhelming to think about teaching and guiding children who have experienced so much crisis in their lives. How can you understand where a child has been or why she or he acts out in a way that's harmful when you, as an adult, haven't experienced trauma yourself? To be sure, it takes a lot of grit and determination, but to reach anyone – child, adolescent, adult or senior – on her or his level is to start with love.

Love is what everyone seeks, and from love stems everything else: acceptance, confidence, value, peace. When you don't trust you are lovable just as you are, everything about you changes. Behavior, then, becomes our soul's way of screaming for help.

At Methodist Family Health, we utilize a complete continuum of care to address both positive and negative behaviors so the children and families in our care understand they are loved. From this, our children and families learn how to develop healthy and positive social, relational and interpersonal skills. Whether it's talking with a therapist one-on-one or participating in group counseling, creating an art project to communicate what cannot be said, building trust in the adult caregivers who provide three meals a day, every day, in a secure and stable home, or reading a new Bible provided by an Arkansas United Methodist, we at Methodist Family Health use every resource available to make the children in our care know they are loved – by us, by their communities and by you, Arkansas's United Methodists.

Recently, we finished our Christmas appeal, Share the Light, in which we asked Arkansans to contribute funds to Methodist Family Health to support our work. It can seem like contributing money or toys or prayer may not help much with a child who is hurting so badly as to think of killing her or himself. It also can seem like the amount of care to help a teenager who is so angry and hurt is insurmountable. But the truth is it takes one person providing one kindness to sow seeds of hope. How powerful it is to know someone thinks enough of you to keep you in prayer! How compelling it is to know someone thought enough of you as a person to make sure you receive the care and necessities to get better. How awesome it is to know you are loved by people you have never or will ever meet who want the best for you. It's the fruit of your spirit that sows the tender shoots of the fruit of others. For this, and so much more, we at Methodist Family Health are grateful to you.

Q&A w/ Janice & Byron Mann



How did you two get started volunteering with Disaster Response and Volunteers in Mission?

Our local church. Two things led us down the VIM/DR path: A mission trip to Mexico (where we got hooked on missions) and our church becoming a Red Cross shelter (where we got hooked on disaster response). Both of these happened in the late 1990s, early 2000s. We also connected with Don Weeks who was the VIM Coordinator at the time. We happened upon an announcement of an UMCOR Academy taking place in Mississippi, but we had to have a recommendation from Don to attend. He gave us the OK and gave us some classes he wanted us to attend while we were there. When we came back, we got wind of a new Disaster Response Committee forming at the conference level. We asked Don if we could sit in on that committee meeting. We left that meeting as Southwest District DR Coordinators. In 2011, the DR Coordinator and Chair of that conference committee had to step down and he and Don recommended us for the conference position. When Don retired in 2012, Byron applied for the VIM position, so now we do both. We absolutely love this ministry!

What is the purpose behind the Conference having a Disaster Response and VIM ministry?

Disaster Response is a direct ministry to persons in need to “alleviate suffering and be a source of help and hope.” When disaster strikes, those affected need help fast AND for the long haul. Disaster Response Ministries provides relief, response, and recovery assistance to individuals, families, and communities affected by a disaster. We lean heavily on UMCOR for training, consultation, and funding and on our other partners for sharing of information and resources. This ministry provides ongoing opportunity to serve and is a means to train and equip volunteers, teams and local churches for disaster response ministry.

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission’s goal is “to promote, encourage, and enable Christians to exemplify Christian Love in Action through short-term mission service locally, nationally and internationally.” This is done through consultation and training for teams and team leaders, by matching volunteers with mission opportunities, and by mobilizing volunteers when needs are identified.

Names:

Byron & Janice Mann

Hometown:

Ponca, AR

Title:

**Co-Coordinator of
Disaster Response and
Volunteers in Mission**

Thinking back to when you first began volunteering, do you have an estimate of how many people you’ve been able to help assist through this ministry?

Oh my, no idea! Byron’s heart is in local missions. He has led so many local (within the state) mission journeys. Any church we have attended or pastored, he brings that passion. Wheelchair ramps, minor home repairs, and those types of projects - we have no idea how many he’s done. Then, add to that, the consultation and training he provides to teams serving out of state and in foreign missions; how would we even begin to number those assisted? In disaster response, starting with that local church opening a shelter during an ice storm, through the 2014 Central Arkansas tornado to the current recovery effort after the Arkansas River flood and flash flooding around the state - we lost count way back.

Who is someone that inspires you in your daily life, and why?

Both of our thoughts went to UMCOR. The staff and consultants and their dedication to local communities and conferences who have been affected by disasters. They not only support us in what we do but they also inspire us in our work, and the friendships we have developed mean the world to us. Our counterparts in other conferences are right there also as are our core team members here in Arkansas.

What are your most essential needs at this time to help your ministry succeed?

For Disaster Response, we need volunteers, local church involvement in disaster response ministry, and engagement when disaster strikes. We hope that every local church will consider disaster response as an ongoing ministry of their church.

For VIM - sharing your stories of mission: local, domestic, international - there's a place on our website to do so ([https://](https://arumc.org/our-ministries/vim-and-dr/volunteers-in-mission/resources/)

arumc.org/our-ministries/vim-and-dr/volunteers-in-mission/resources/). Your stories inspire others and provide ideas and potential opportunities for others to serve and for more needs to be met.

What is the most important thing you've learned through this ministry?

In Disaster Response, the importance and blessing of partners - partners being volunteers, local churches, the conference staff, our counterparts in other conferences, UMCOR, and other response organizations and government on the local and state levels. Those who have been around us know the biggest blessing we get is seeing all the walls come down and everyone there doing the same thing for the same reason after disaster strikes.

Also, the reality that we can't do everything for everyone affected. We've also learned how to be good stewards of the resources we have by prioritizing, vetting, and seeking out the most vulnerable when providing assistance - the last the least and the lost. 🙏



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Disaster Response Academy Aims to Equip Volunteers When Disaster Strikes

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

Disasters don't schedule appointments, which is why the team behind the upcoming Disaster Response Academy is making it easier than ever to be prepared when a disaster eventually makes its way to your community.

The Disaster Response Academy is a 4-day event, Jan. 29 - Feb. 1, 2020, that seeks to prepare attendees with all of the information and training they need to assist in the immediate and long-term cleanup process after a disaster strikes.

Taking place at Trinity United Methodist Church in Little Rock, the event is a partnership between the Arkansas Conference Disaster Response and Volunteers in Mission Ministries, as well as the United Methodist Church's national UMCOR ministry.

"The next disaster will strike at any time. Our goal in presenting this academy is to enhance Disaster Response Ministry by building capacity and capability for response and recovery," said Janice Mann, co-coordinator for the Arkansas Conference Disaster Response and Volunteers in Mission Ministries.

The Academy will focus on four main areas of disaster recovery, including the local church's response; early response to disasters; long-term recovery; and the importance of local church, district and conference leadership's coordination when a disaster occurs.

"Participants will gain awareness of the different aspects of the ministry, be trained in how to respond appropriately and in the most effective ways, and have the opportunity to hear from experts in the field," said Byron Mann, co-coordinator for the Arkansas Conference Disaster Response and Volunteers in Mission Ministries. "We will worship, network, and fellowship

together, all while learning from the best of the best in the field."

The Manns said that since the 2014 Central Arkansas tornado outbreak that tore through communities in Mayflower and Vilonia, they have had little to no breaks from disaster events, both large and small. In 2019, in addition to tornadoes and severe storm damage, the Manns were heavily involved in the immediate and longterm response to the historic Arkansas River flood, which devastated communities from Fort Smith to Pendleton.

One of the areas in which the Manns are needing more help is local volunteers. There is usually a shortage of volunteers when it's time to assist a disaster zone. This is one of the many ways that the Academy can prepare local churches for future disasters.

"We hope and pray that every local church would consider sending at least one participant," Janice said.

Besides training volunteers, the Manns are hoping that this Academy encourages local churches to start their own disaster response ministry. The more churches involved in some type of disaster response ministry, the easier it will be to mobilize volunteers and response to affected areas.

"Everyone should be more aware of this important ministry, who it helps, how it helps, and how it works in general. We hope and pray every local church will consider disaster response as a part of your church's ongoing ministry."

To sign up for the Disaster Response Academy, visit <http://bit.ly/disaster-response-academy>. You can also find a schedule of events on the sign-up page. 



Photo by Clay Banks on Unsplash

20,000 Miles and Counting

Part 1: The Center for Communication

By Amy Ezell

Director of the Center for Communication

Over the last 21 months, I have had the great pleasure of traveling around the state to visit with people from our Arkansas United Methodist churches. I have learned much from church leaders and church members. I have also had the opportunity to listen to and learn from many who are not part of any church.

When I introduce myself to lay people for the first time, I usually must also explain what the Conference is and then also explain what I do for the Conference. I was shocked at first that so many lay people did not understand the purpose of the Conference Centers and that we even exist.

While planning for the new year, I couldn't miss the opportunity to share the incredible discipleship support that the Centers offer to each and every Arkansas United Methodist.

I am beginning this series with a spotlight on the Arkansas Conference Center for Communication.

The Rev. Dr. Michelle Morris, shared a devotional with the Center for Communication team a few weeks ago about the importance of communication in the Bible. Beginning in Genesis 1:3, "God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light.'" God used communication by speaking throughout the entire first chapter of Genesis.

The Center for Communication is made up of six professionals with varied roles. Our team works directly to support the Bishop, the Center for Administrative Services, the Center for Multiplying Disciples, the Center for Connectional Ministry

and its Ministry Coordinators, the District Superintendents and Administrators, the Arkansas Conference Communication Commission, the Board of Ordained Ministry, the clergy for all local churches, and lay leaders for all local churches.

Caleb Hennington is the Digital Content Editor and has been with the ARUMC for 20 months.

He manages the multi-award-winning Arkansas United Methodist: Living Our Faith online magazine that is published each month. This includes writing and gathering stories, photography, layout design, publication marketing, engagement analytics and advertising clientele. Caleb manages the outgoing email prayer requests, obituaries, press releases to secular media, and event engagement marketing (sign up for a Conference-sponsored event and you will see how cool this is). He reports on all of the major events, including Annual Conference and General Conference. He plays a very important role in supporting social media, videography content and overall communication strategy.

Day Davis is the Social Media Specialist and has also been with the ARUMC for 20 months.

Day manages all of the social media platforms for the ARUMC that includes the main ARUMC Facebook page, ARUMC News Facebook page, ARUMC Instagram, ARUMC Twitter, ARUMC YouTube and 200K Reasons Instagram. She manages the weekly email newsletter that is distributed to approximately 6,700 individuals and also provides onsite training to local churches on developing an effective newsletter through email. Day manages all of the communication project "traffic" such as printing, media buys, and event promotion planning. She is also our lead

in-house graphic designer. In 2018, she developed the ARUMC Social Media Principles that have been utilized and promoted on a national platform by COSROW.

Jacob Turner is the ARUMC Communication Liaison and Website Developer.

In 2018, Jacob built the award-winning ARUMC website. He manages the hosting services for local churches and provides training for local churches in website maintenance and web marketing. Jacob serves as our local church liaison and has worked with more than 40 Arkansas churches over the last six months to build effective communication strategies. These “communication audits” are conducted onsite and include the church staff to identify any opportunities for improvement in communication and marketing practices. Ask anyone who has been through a communication audit for their church and they will tell you how valuable this is for building and streamlining their internal and external communications.

The Rev. Dr. Michelle Morris is the CouRSe Coordinator. She is an Elder in Full Connection, has authored numerous publications, served in an adviser/professor role for numerous universities and has served as a Circuit Elder, Pastor and Associate Pastor. Michelle is appointed to the Center for Multiplying Disciples but is on loan to the Center for Communication due to the transition of the online learning system project ownership.

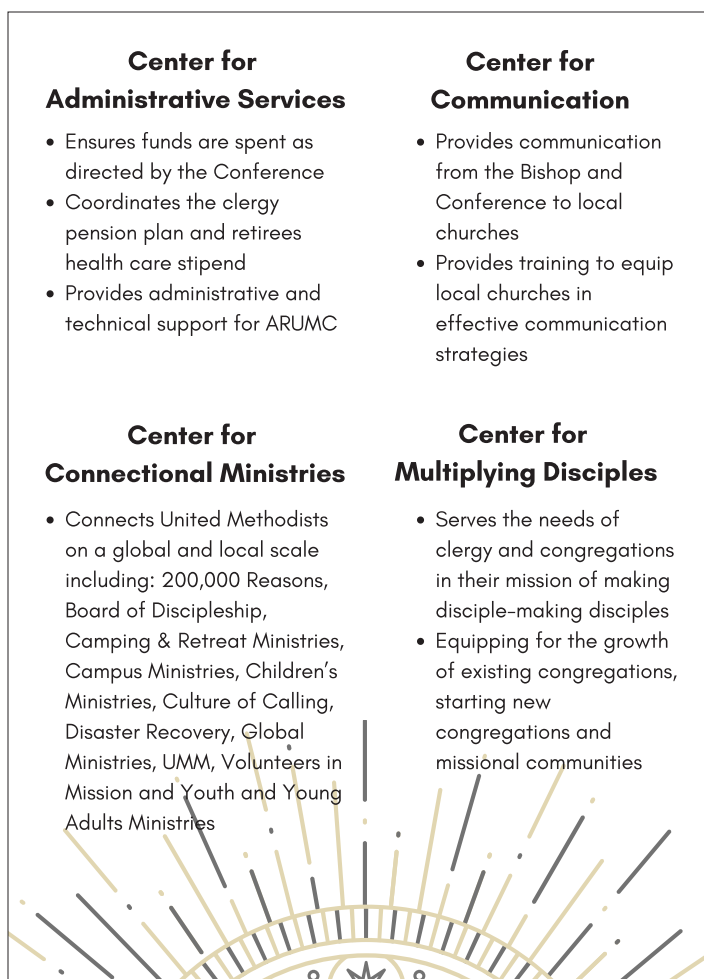
Michelle announced the launch of CouRSe (Congregation Resourcing System) at the 2019 Arkansas Annual Conference thanks to a valuable partnership with the United Methodist Foundation. This discipleship tool has been able to serve more than 500 people in 2019 with a variety of courses to enhance and equip local churches. Michelle manages the catalog of courses offered and works with local churches to determine needs for education. She coordinates each course including research, video and content, based upon preset goals and manages the analytics of CouRSe to better the program in its entirety.

Christina Choh is the Videographer for the ARUMC. Joining the Conference as an intern during the summer of 2019, Christina is experienced in full video production and graphic design project management.

Christina has served as the lead videographer for more than 30 video projects in 2019, including many offsite shoots that involved overcoming weather, sound and lighting barriers. She has also provided design work for various Conference-sponsored events throughout the year.

Saying that I am blessed to work with these aforementioned communication pros is an understatement. They inspire me every day by their passionate work ethic and dedication for doing things right.

As the Director of the ARUMC Center for Communication, I work directly with the Bishop on overall messaging for the Conference and strategic campaigns that enhance the Conference trajectory. I have the honor of serving on the



ARUMC Cabinet that includes Bishop Mueller, all of the District Superintendents, Center Directors and Lay Leader, Karon Mann.

I am the Chief Media Officer for the Conference. I work directly with local and national media for our Bishop, districts and local churches, as needed. I work with the Bishop on the ARUMC Crisis Communication Team and provide media training/coaching and crisis communication training to leaders across the Arkansas connection. I recently served as a media spokesperson for the South Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church.

As the Center Director, I manage our team of communication professionals. I coach on streamlined strategy and integration of all platforms to promote the Conference trajectory. I am most proud that we have been able to stay laser-focused with the Bishop's and Conference messaging and also incorporate training for local churches as an added priority.

I hope you have enjoyed learning about the ARUMC Center for Communication. I also hope you understand that we are here to support the local church - no matter the size - improve its communication strategies to make disciples of Jesus Christ, who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities and the world!

This article is the first of a four-part series that will highlight the Center for Administrative Services, the Center for Communication, the Center for Connectional Ministries and the Center for Multiplying Disciples. 📖



Residents of Fort Smith line up to receive diapers, wipes and more from St. Paul UMC's Diaper Dandies Ministry. || Photo provided by St. Paul UMC - Fort Smith

Diaper Dandies Ministry Works to Break the Cycle of Poverty in Fort Smith

By Sam Pierce
Featured Contributor, [@sjamespierce](#)

About five years ago, the Rev. Steve Poarch, of St. Paul United Methodist Church in Fort Smith, became concerned after noticing a large number of babies with unchanged diapers in his community.

"He really wanted to address this situation," said Mary Huss, the chairwoman of the Diaper Dandies Ministry. "And because we have a large low-income population that comes in and out of our church, it was very common."

"We have people that are looking for assistance frequently," Poarch said. "They need help with rent or utility bills and we just happen to notice that several times they would bring their children and their diapers would be saggy and hadn't been changed."

"One of the things we began to realize is if there is a financial crisis in the family, diapers, as expensive as they are, are not being purchased."

The diaper ministry has been in effect for a little over four years now and it was just recently awarded a \$40,000 grant from the Windgate Foundation. The grant will fund the ministry's continued efforts to "improve the health and welfare of our community's most vulnerable members by providing diapers,

diaper wipes, and diaper rash ointment to families in need," according to Poarch.

Poarch said, currently, the ministry distributes about four times a year and each distribution provides a two-week supply to an average of 100 infants and toddlers.

"Starting in 2020, we are going to move to six times a year thanks to the grant," he said. "It will also help provide diapers to be on hand for emergency situations and provide for the education programs and parenting classes."

Huss said the ministry will be fully funded for the next two years thanks to the grant.

"Thirty-six thousand of the grant will be used for the purchase of diapers, wipes and ointments and \$4,000 will be used for parenting classes for the clients," Huss said. "This grant will also allow us to extend our outreach to foster parents, schools and social workers."

The parenting classes will be hosted by St. Paul through a partnership with Child Care Aware of Northwest Arkansas.

"We are going to help these parents understand issues of child welfare and potty training," Poarch said. "The systemic causes of poverty is probably too large of an issue for one church to address."

“But we are trying to expand how we meet that need and reach out to our community.”

Huss said because she refuses to file and keep a lot of documentation, there aren't many requirements for those who need diapers. People are asked to provide basic contact info and date of birth of the children.

“We determined early on that we would operate on the honor system,” she said. “And we would develop a sense of trust for these populations.”

Poarch said at the first distribution they served about 29 babies, some of which were multiple babies in one family. He said that it was a shock to be able to do that many.

“When we open the door at 10 a.m., there is already a line of people,” he said. “The response, the need, is overwhelming. If we advertise publicly, we could serve way more than what we are able to serve now – but the need is so much greater than what we can provide.

“We only have enough supplies for about 100 to 120 and if we had it listed on a public forum, we wouldn't be able to keep up. The need is so great in our community, as I would imagine it is in a lot of communities.”

“Steve is a wonderful leader and he has a huge heart for outreach for this community,” Huss said. “He is wonderful, and very much has a servant's heart.”

Poarch said the congregation is 100% behind this ministry.

“... I think we all feel that it is a blessing and fulfilling to be able to help. When we help these babies, we spend about \$30 a baby, because diapers are so expensive. Because we are able to do this for a family, that's \$30 extra into their budget and many families have two babies, so that's a \$60 return.

“Which may seem like a small amount to many people, but to this population, it is a lot.”

Huss said the church also hosts a back-to-school supply carnival that consists of a new backpack for every child and school supplies.

She said they set it up with a series of games and after they play each game, they win a school supply, which includes a box of crayons, pencils, and binders for the older children.

“It is a joy to see those little faces,” she said. “We are very humbled by the response that we get from these families because it is not often they are given help, without having to prove anything.

“Their gratitude is a huge gift. It is always very satisfying when you can help those less fortunate. It is very rewarding work.”

Poarch said generational poverty is a huge issue, not only in the



St. Paul recently received a \$40,000 grant from the Windgate Foundation to continue providing infant supplies to Fort Smith's low income residents. || Photo provided by St. Paul UMC - Fort Smith

state but throughout the country.

“We know it is an issue in our community and people struggle to break the cycle of poverty,” he said. “It is a bigger issue than putting diapers on babies.

“If we can be compassionate and provide a little bit of assistance and a healthier situation – then that's what we are called to do.”



A Missional Community Movement

Jesus said, “The first in importance is, ‘Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.’ And here is the second: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ There is no other commandment that ranks with these.”

Mark 12:29-31 The Message (MSG)

By Kay Kotan
Director, CFMD

We have all heard the statistics. Depending on what study you are reading, the unchurched is a growing percentage of our population ranging from 60-70%. We have come to understand there is simply a population of people who will never darken the doors of any church for a whole variety of reasons. Churches will not have the opportunity to receive them as a guest for worship. Ever. Rather than bemoan the facts, complain about why “they won’t show up,” and/or give up, we must remember we are still called to reach those very people in our mission field. But how?

We are indeed a called people. We are called to GO (not stay) and make disciples. We cannot just wait or hope they show up. We must go into our mission fields. It always warms my heart

when I see a congregation out in the community sharing Jesus with those T-shirts on saying “the church has left the building.” These are people who are “going!”

What does it mean and look like to leave the building to reach people in our communities that will likely never be a part of the church as you and I know it? First, we need to intentionally be in places where unchurched people hang out. You are likely already in those places. This could be activities, events or hobbies you love such as volleyball, dinner group, book club, the gym, knitting group, cooking class, canoeing, wine-tasting, attending sporting events, etc. The options are endless! Basically, you are hanging out with unchurched folks doing the very things you love to do. You may already be part of a group. Or you may have the opportunity to start a new group around your own affinity.

Start the H.A.R.V.E.S.T of a Fresh Expression

- Hear* Hear the needs of the community. What could a Fresh Expression look like here?
- Advance* Spur feelings of love and service in the community where you hope to plant a Fresh Expression.
- Reach* Reach the community who will help the Fresh Expression sprout.
- eleVate* Raise the discipleship stakes. Prayer or scripture set in a relational environment is a great place to start.
- Engage* Bloom by establishing a community that regularly gathers to foster spiritual growth.
- Spread* Spread the seeds of inspiration to a new leader and start a Fresh Expression somewhere new.
- Teach* Teach others to start new Fresh Expressions - allows for exponential growth as we grow new mature disciples.

Once we have heard the affinity possibilities in our mission field, we then begin the process of developing the missional community. The development process for this group is what we refer to as HARVEST.

Every church can have a missional community or two! In fact, some churches have a network of missional communities reaching more people than in their Sunday morning worship service. And in reality, every disciple could be investing in and building up a missional community or two. Just imagine what could happen! If we really began to intentionally raise up missional communities, there would be a whole new (potentially huge) movement where new people in our mission fields around Arkansas can begin to build authentic, trusting relationships with other Christians and with Jesus!

If you are curious and would like to learn more about why missional communities are needed, how to get started building one, and/or how to develop the missional communities, gather a team from your church and sign up for one of the two trainings coming up Jan. 18 or 19. You can register at bit.ly/reaching-missional-communities.

Come join us in this exciting movement to reach new people in new ways for Jesus Christ! 🌱

Sylvan Hills' United Methodist Men is an Intergenerational Group of Hard Workers

By Sam Pierce

Featured Contributor, [@sjamespierce](#)

In an effort to reciprocate the devotion of one of the elderly members of Sylvan Hills United Methodist Church in Sherwood, members of the congregation, including the United Methodist men and women, and youth group, built a wheelchair ramp for easier access to her daughter's house.

"This lady has participated and contributed so much to the church and all of its activities over the years," said Newton Skiles, the treasurer for the men's group. "It was a way to repay her for everything she has done and helped with over the years."

"She is a very special person and a very personable lady ... This was something we needed to do and wanted to do for her."

The elderly member was a former nursery supervisor for the church and recently moved in with her daughter in Jacksonville.

Skiles said she and her family have been members of the church for many years. He said the daughter was worried her mom, who primarily uses a cane to maneuver, would fall. He said one of the young ladies brought it to the group's attention and they were able to get the youth involved as well.

"The Methodist men and women were able to split the cost of the materials," Skiles said. "We have a couple of members who are excellent carpenters and who have built ramps before."

"We were able to finish in a little over a day."

"There was a need expressed by one of our members who was moving into her daughter's house," said the Rev. Sara Bayles Charlton. "The cost of materials was donated at a discount from the lumber supplier and they were able to finish it that Saturday by mid-afternoon."

Bayles Charlton has been the pastor at Sylvan Hills for a year and a half.

"I thought it was a very moving gesture and a multi-generational mission as we cared for each other as a church family," she said.

Bayles Charlton said the men's group has about a dozen members and the women have well over 50 members. She said about five or six members from the youth group showed up to help build.

"Our church is unique because we have six or seven different generations," Bayles Charlton said. "We had kids as young as



Members of Sylvan Hills UMC's United Methodist Men recently built a wheelchair ramp for a former nursery supervisor at the church. The group is intergenerational, making it unique compared to many other UMM groups. || Photo provided by Sylvan Hills UMC

three or five helping build the ramp – we had a whole range of people helping there.

"The church life at Sylvan Hills is amazing. A wide range of ages coming together for the mission of the gospel."

Bayles Charlton said construction of the ramp was a need that arose, "but the men's group can do just about anything – all sorts of projects. It really depends on the need."

The church also hosts a monthly wellness clinic and in 2019, collected 5,000 pounds of food for its food pantry. She said they also have a community garden and a blessing box.

“We have an abundance of ministries that bless our community and church,” she said.

The wellness clinic usually meets the first Thursday of every month and allows members of the community to receive blood pressure and sugar checks, doctor visits, immunizations for back to school, as well as physicals and flu shots.

“We held a vision and hearing test in December and we will hold a dental check in February,” she said. “It is all free for our community. We probably serve 4 to 5,000 people a year and we host in different communities as well.”

The church has hosted the clinic for a little under five years.

“I think it is a real vital ministry,” she said. “We see all sorts of people.”

Skiles and his family joined the church in 1990 and he was the president of the men’s club in the mid to late 90s and has been the treasurer for more than a decade. “We have had an active group over the years,” he said.

Skiles said the men’s group has several fundraisers throughout the year, but its biggest is its annual golf tournament in May.

Some of their projects include supporting the church’s ministry partnerships with the local schools in the community, as well as assisting with the Angel Tree and the church’s early learning center or preschool.

This month, the Methodist Men’s group will host its annual chili cook-off and Dessert Diva competition on Jan. 19.

There is no cost for entry, but donations are accepted. Proceeds from the event will benefit both groups. Bayles Charlton said the donations go towards ministries like the wheelchair ramp or other local mission projects. She said last year they had 10 entries for chili.

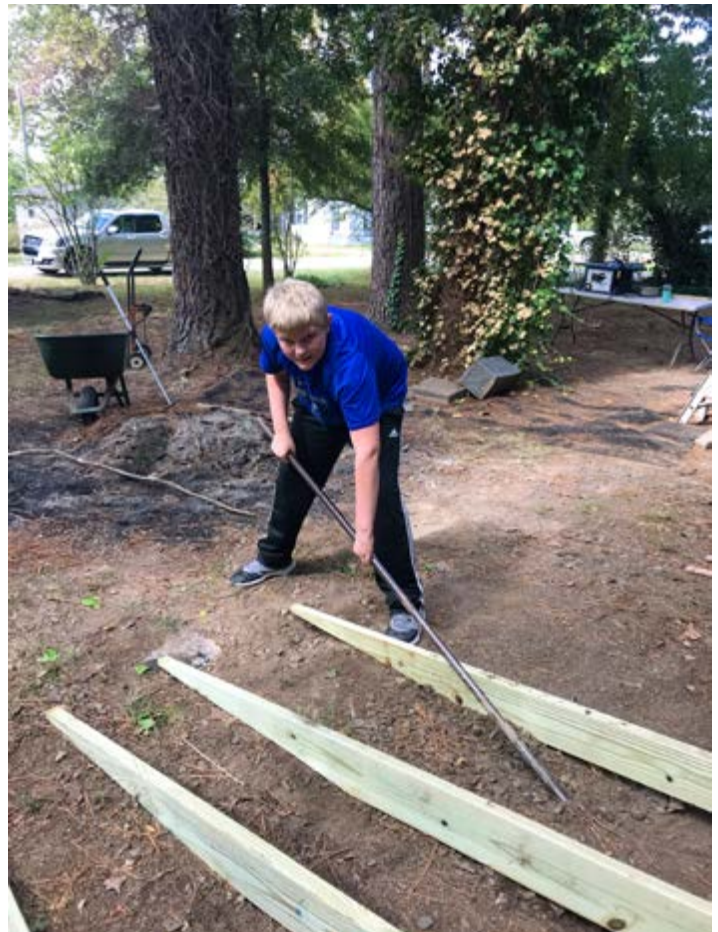
“The chili cook-off has been around for 25 years or so,” Skiles said. “In the early days of Sherwood, one of our mayors, Bill Henson, was a longtime member of the church and really liked chili.

“After he died, we started thinking about ways to honor his memory. We took this one as a project and every January, we have a chili cook-off. We have had quite a number of pots of chili.”

He said a few years ago, they added the Dessert Diva, where members of the women’s group will bake desserts to go along with the chili. Skiles said he has been named the Chili King a couple of times over the years.

“There are some excellent recipes, which always amazes me,” he said. “It always amazes me that you can have so many different kinds of chili with basically the same ingredients.

“It really is a unique thing.”



A young member of Sylvan Hills’ UMM group helps to build a wheelchair ramp for a lady who has difficulty walking. || Photo provided by Sylvan Hills UMC



A New CouRSe for Arkansas

The Online Congregation Resourcing System Is a Great Way to Learn More About Our Church and Our Ministries

By Rev. Michelle Morris

CouRSe Coordinator

One of the exciting developments that occurred in 2019 was the launch of our online Congregation Resourcing System, also known as CouRSe. This system is the result of a visionary partnership between the Arkansas Conference and the United Methodist Foundation of Arkansas (UMFA). CouRSe allows anyone in the state to log on and receive training for a variety of topics, from creating child-friendly worship services to discerning a new ministry for addressing hunger to training as a Lay Servant.

The system launched in early May with “Orientation to Annual Conference,” a course to help members to Annual Conference better understand the process. Then, at Annual Conference we launched seven topic-specific courses on such subjects as generational differences and intentional discipleship. There was also a step-by-step walkthrough for building a church Facebook or Instagram page. Following Annual Conference, we created a course around the material Dr. Greg Jones brought to us on the Heart of Methodism. That course, which is still available, can easily be used as a small group or Sunday school class study, something several of the courses could be used to do.

The initial courses gave us an opportunity to assess the possibilities of the system and to poll people on subjects that interest them. People are interested in engaging Scripture and studying through the system. The Arkansas clergywomen met that need this past month by providing a daily Advent devotional written by clergywomen and lay women from across the state. The course included video and text devotionals, including one in Spanish.

CouRSe students have also expressed a need for practical training. January includes the rollout of training courses in the major church committees: Administrative Council, Trustees, Finance, and SPRC. If you have been nominated to serve on these committees, taking these courses will help you better understand the work before you. You could take the course as an individual, or use a committee meeting to work through it together. Also in January, we will offer our first Zoom based live courses for the “Lay Servant Ministry Basic Course.” These will meet either Tuesday or Thursday evenings in January and February, and enrollment is limited to 12 for either session. If you have been interested in training as a lay servant, but have trouble attending the live courses, you can join us through CouRSe and make that next step in serving Christ.

Later in the year, we will offer a course on basics in General Conference, as well as an updated “Orientation to Annual Conference” course. We will also add courses to help people better utilize and understand the work of the UMFA. We will add more and more training in social media, communications, hospitality, financial planning, worship design, and other topics that will help make work in the church easier and more fulfilling.

CouRSe is free and open to anyone. To sign up, go to arumc.myabsorb.com. Once you have completed the signup, you can enroll in courses in the catalog. A great starter course can be found in the Featured Courses line: “Getting the Most Out of CouRSe.” Also, if you have any questions about the system, or you have ideas for content, send an email to course@arumc.org. CouRSe is overseen by the Center for Communication, due in large part to the media demands of creating courses, and organized by CouRSe Coordinator Michelle Morris. 

CATALOG

Alphabetical

200K Reasons
Curriculum

Enroll

2019 Advent Devotional
Online Course

Enroll

Adult Small Group / Sunday School Curriculum
Curriculum

Enroll

Boundaries
Curriculum

Enroll

Boundaries Part 1 of 3
Online Course
★★★★★ (1)

Enroll

Boundaries Part 2 of 3
Online Course
★★★★★ (0)

Enroll

Boundaries Part 3 of 3
Online Course
★★★★★ (0)

Enroll

Children's Ministry
Curriculum

Enroll

Communication and Technology
Curriculum

Enroll

Culture of Call
Curriculum

Enroll

Empowering Rising Generations
Curriculum

Enroll

Follow Up Survey - Orientation to Annual
Online Course

Start

Getting the Most out of CourSe
Online Course

Enroll

Intentional Discipleship: Your Why, Who, and How
Online Course

Enroll

Lay Servant Ministries - Basic Course (Thursdays)
Instructor Led Course

Enroll

Lay Servant Ministries - Basic Course (Tuesdays)
Instructor Led Course

Enroll

Leadership Development
Curriculum

Enroll

Mission u Orientation
Online Course

Enroll

Orientation to Annual Conference 2019
Online Course
★★★★★ (0)

Resume

Practice Instructor Led
Instructor Led Course

View

Prepare, Discern, Pray, Act: Getting Started with 200K
Online Course

Enroll

Social Media Basics: Facebook and Instagram
Online Course

Enroll

The Heart of Methodism
Online Course

Enroll

Understanding Millennials and Gen Z
Online Course

Start

Worship for All
Online Course

Enroll

CouRSe lessons that currently can be found on the website. If you would like to sign up for CouRSe, visit go to arumc.myabsorb.com. Once you have completed the sign up, you can enroll in courses in the catalog.

The Arkansas Conference of the United Methodist Church seeks to create vital congregations that make disciples who make disciples equipped and sent to transform lives, communities, and the world.

Christmas From Around the Conference



*Paragould
First UMC*

*Lakewood UMC
North Little Rock*



Ozark UMC



Concord UMC - Lonoke



Hamburg FUMC



Searcy FUMC

Hazen UMC



Trinity-Gurdon UMC

De Valls Bluff UMC

Value Your Volunteers

Cindy Burns of PHUMC offers 4 simple ways to treat your volunteers right!

By Melinda Shunk
Children's Ministry Coordinator

Cindy Burns has been the children's minister at Pulaski Heights for more than 11 years, and a day doesn't go by that she doesn't value and give praise to every volunteer that helps minister to the children that walk through their church doors! At a district small group meeting, Cindy had once shared with me that she had a once-a-year meeting that normally filled all of her volunteer positions. She had my interest, but we didn't have time to get into a deeper discussion on it until recently at lunch when we circled back to the ins and outs of how volunteering works with a once-a-year sign-up.

I was curious because PHUMC worships more than 1,000 parishioners each Sunday, has about 25 kids in each classroom K-5th grade, and has at least 30 special events for children a year. That is a lot of volunteer opportunities and most need at least two volunteers in the classroom, while many like VBS need 100 or more. Like anyone serving in Children's Ministry, you don't want to burn out the same amazing volunteers by asking them to do everything. You don't want to ask anyone to do anything out of their range of Spiritual Gifts. You never want to fill a position because their only qualifier for the position is that they pass all Safe Sanctuary checks.

Each year before her need to recruit volunteers, Cindy spends a lot of time in prayer. She prays that God may offer a call of service to her church as they offer up the opportunities to serve.

"In a church, one might use the word volunteer but I prefer to think of it as a service to God and to the church and to others," Burns said. "If most of us can serve in some way, then no one person has to do it all. God provides! My calling is to be sure I am reaching out to enough folks to give the opportunity to serve as many as possible!"

In mid-January each year, she holds her once-a-year volunteer sign-up. The whole church is invited directly after worship for a fellowship lunch with childcare provided. Sign-up sheets are posted with every ministry event position, time commitment, and description of gifts used to do the job.

For some of the sign-up boards, she asked long-time returning volunteer teachers to stand next to the sign-ups to answer questions and explain why they keep coming back to serve. By the end of the afternoon, she and her Children's Ministry team



Cindy Burns, children's minister at Pulaski Heights UMC, has some crucial advice that leaders can follow in order to show their volunteers that they are loved and appreciated. || Photo provided by Melinda Shunk

will have the majority of the positions filled. She also reaches out with a phone call to those who were not able to attend the lunch with opportunities about the slots that still need to be filled.

Cindy has this advice to give when making sign-up sheets and phone calls:

1. Break-down the jobs as small as you can. Many hands make light work. Example: For VBS: a.) snack purchaser b.) snack sorter for each day c.) snack distributor. Instead of one person in charge of the overwhelming task of being the VBS snack person.
2. When talking to a member about serving, Cindy says, "If your reaction to this request is -I would rather walk on hot coals than do this ... God probably is not calling you to this service. If your reaction is butterflies in your stomach and thinking that you're not sure if you are worthy, I might encourage folks to put themselves out there and give it a try."
3. Have all the materials the teacher may need to do the lesson ready in the classroom. Always have a detailed description of what to say and do so that classroom volunteers can show up shortly before class and still teach a good lesson. Many folks are so busy these days they don't have extra time outside of the church. Don't give them homework.
4. Let volunteers know how much you and the children value their service. Cindy can't say enough praise for those who serve the children in ministry at Pulaski Heights.

