

Leading congregations to lead people to actively follow Jesus Christ



Sand Man

Artist to share gospel at Annual Conference. **3A**



Bridge

Annual Conference offering to maintain connection. **5A**



Action

Church steps out into community on Sunday. **5A**

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Two Sections, Section A

Gray leaves legacy of courage, kindness

The Missouri Conference was in mourning in May, saying farewell to the beloved Mai Gray.

Gray, 88, died on May 6. She was hospitalized after falling at the UMW Assembly 2010 a few days before, and never recovered.

"She was doing what she loved," said Rev. Kevyn Amos of St. Andrew UMC in Kansas City, Gray's home church. "She loved the church and serving in mission."

Gray was very active at St. Andrew's, serving on committees and in the UMW. Her husband, Rev. C. Jarrett Gray, had been pastor at St. Andrew UMC two times,

and the couple made it their home church after Rev. Gray's retirement. He died in July of 2009.

Amos describes Gray as being known for her gentle manner and style.

"She was so close, that emotions fill us as we share about her in the church," Amos said. "It was hard to talk about her without breaking down."

Amos describes Gray as a gingerly person, but one who would offer substantial guidance.

"She was a very gracious, very informed, loving person," Amos

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Mai Gray addresses the UMW Assembly 2010.

Proposed Conference budget has no increase

The Missouri Conference is holding the line on the proposed budget this year, with no increase from 2010. The bottom line on the proposed budget for 2011 is \$13,743,824, exactly the same as 2010.

"The CFA (Conference Finance and Administration) Team really wanted to keep to a 0 percent increase in the budget this year," said CFA team chair Rev. Lynn Dyke of Kimberling City UMC. "We recognize that the economy in the state has been down, and some of our churches are struggling."

It's not that costs aren't going up. Insurance went up 8.1 percent. Apportionments to the General Church went up about \$48,000, or 1.2 percent.

The Missouri Conference is able to propose a balanced budget without an apportionment increase by taking advantage of some unique situations that occurred in 2010. Because the Center of Pastoral Excellence didn't have a director in 2010, it was over-funded, and the carry over funds will supplement that line item, allowing a reduc-

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Leaders gather at CMU to learn about church renewal

CMU sees enrollment increases

The third annual Leadership Institute at Central Methodist University took a different approach this year, opening registration to clergy and laity leadership, rather than gearing the event as a clergy day apart. The result was success, as 60 clergy persons and 120 lay persons attended the event, which was much larger than previous years.

While they had an audience, CMU personnel took a few minutes to share some information about the institution.

President Marianne Inman reported that CMU has had five consecutive semesters of increased attendance. This spring registration for the Fayette campus topped 1,000 for the first time.

Larry Anderson, Linn Memorial UMC member and director of admission, is pleased with how enrollment is increasing.

"If you know a potential student who you think would be a good fit, we would love to have you recommend them to us, either online or in person," he said.



Hamilton: UMC can connect to young adults

Rev. Adam Hamilton of the Church of the Resurrection billed his talk on how the United Methodist Church is perfectly poised for growth. But before his crowd got into that message of hope, he shared a very bleak current picture with them.

"In 2008, the United Methodist Church declined by 55,000 per

weekend of worship attendance," he said. "It would be like closing every United Methodist Church in Missouri except in St. Louis and Cape Girardeau"

At the current rate of decline,

See Hamilton, pg. 2A



Farr: Opportunity is present for growth

Bob Farr started his presentation on turning church around by refuting any ideas people may have about their not being anyone in the neighborhood to invite to church.

"Most counties in Missouri

only have 16 - 19 percent of their population active in a church," he said. "That means that 80 percent of your surrounding population is your mission field."

If the book UnChristian is

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Budget continued from page 1A

tion of \$66,000 for 2011. Carry over funds in Mission, Service and Justice Ministries created a \$6,000 reduction in their budget. Reducing the number of district superintendents from 12 to 11 allowed for a \$76,000 decrease in the budget.

"It was very helpful to have reserve funds to work with this year," Dyke said.

It is also helpful that the overall payment of apportionments has been increasing.

"Apportionment payout has been really good. So far this year it is even better than last year," Dyke said.

The Conference budget has only increased once (by 3 percent) in the past six years. In 2006 the budget was more than \$16 million.

Although the budget this year is likely to be well received by the members of Annual Conference, they will hear words of caution about churches not being able to count on the Conference budget remaining flat.

"We can't absorb insurance premium increases indefinitely while continuing to hold or lower the budget," said Kendall Waller, Missouri Conference director of Financial Ministries.

Dyke noted that next year the same reserve funds won't be present to supplement the budget, and it's not yet known whether the Conference will continue to have 11 district superintendents, or go back to 12.

More detailed information will be provided at the workshop, "Digging into the Budget," led by Waller, on Saturday at 3:15 p.m. in the Taneycomo room at University Plaza. If you have questions about the budget, apportionments or financial policies and procedures, this is your chance to ask the treasurer.

Hamilton continued from page 1A

all United Methodist Churches would be gone in 60 years. But because the average age of a United Methodist is 55-60, and that age does not have children, the decline is likely to accelerate.

"What will the average age be in 30 years, 78?" Hamilton asked. "Thank God for all of our 78 year-olds, but if we don't do anything to change, we have no hope."

Hamilton mentioned a recent initiative by the Council of Bishops to lower the average age of United Methodists from 57 to 47 in 10 years.

"That is such a cool idea, and such an impossible idea," he said. "I believe with God everything is possible, so it's not really impossible. But consider that Buick spent hundreds of millions of dollars in an attempt to lower the average age of its customers, and the average customer age dropped from 63 to 61.8."

Hamilton cited books like *UnChristian*, a survey-based text that surmises that most young adults are open to spirituality, but perceive the church as being hypocritical, intolerant, and opposed to scientific reasoning. Here in lies the hope.

"We have an approach to the

gospel that speaks to the questions and concerns of young adults today," Hamilton said. "John Wesley integrated the head and heart. John Wesley believed in intellect, study and learning. It was okay to ask questions."

Hamilton said most young adults have experienced their parents divorce and have moved five times by the time they graduate high school. They are looking for a church that is open to new ideas, but grounded in where it stands."

The combination of evangelical and social gospel found in the United Methodist church will appeal to young adults, Hamilton said. The gospel just needs to be shared with them in a compelling way that speaks to the head and the heart. He shared three aims for all of his sermons:

1. Teach people something they didn't know before: "That means I need to learn five things," Hamilton said. "People love to learn when they are in church." For example, when Hamilton preached on the crucifixion, he studied crucifixion methods, and learned that the commonly held idea of someone being way up in the air on a cross in false. With most victims of crucifixion, their

feet were no more than two feet of the ground. To illustrate this, Hamilton stood on a chair and had someone approach him. "This is the relationship Jesus had with the Pharisees when he was saying, 'Father forgive them...'"

2. Inspire people, touch their hearts: "This doesn't mean you have to always tell the story about the little boy who died," Hamilton said. "Sometimes people need to laugh."

3. Always call people to action – "Close the deal. Tell people what you want them to do. Every sermon should have an ask."

Hamilton invites his congregations to share with him what they want him to preach about in the coming year. During a recent sermon series on forgiveness, he asked people to send him messages about how they had struggled with forgiveness, and ended up with 20 pages of story illustrations to use in his sermon. He encourages interaction, and making the sermons personal.

"Last year we set up a Web site where people could share ideas and concerns with us, and we had more young adults join us than ever before," he said.



THE BISHOP'S *Journal*

Blog subscription keeps readers up to date on posts

You can subscribe to receive all of Missouri Bishop Robert Schnase's blog posts via e-mail on the Conference Web site. Just go to www.moumethodist.org/stayconnected, and select "Bishop's

Blog." While there, you may want to also subscribe to other Conference Communications, like Net News, the daily e-mail newsletter, or the e-mail version of the *Missouri Conference Review*.

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right, and Adam Hamilton is right about the United Methodist Church being positioned to give young adults what they seeking, why aren't they coming? Farr attributes that not to our theology, but to our delivery system.

"The way we do church today is not the way it's always been done," Farr said. "We may be coming into our own. We don't do well unless we're under pressure. Now we're under pressure. If it feels hard to be a church today, be at peace, it is. It feels a little like building a plane, or at least trying to take it apart and reassemble it, while you're flying."

Farr said the church must consider what isn't working, and accept cultural change as a reality. Although churches need to renovate, which means tearing down things that aren't relevant and building something new, most just want to redecorate.

"I had a church that was real happy with all of the baptisms they were having, until someone had to give up their classroom space to turn it into a nursery," he said.

Other churches become stagnant out of a strong desire to avoid conflict. Farr said one church he is working with is stalled because people there still remember a fight they had 30 years ago that split the church, and no one wants it to happen again.

"If you don't push through con-

flict, you get decline," Farr said. "It takes change to create momentum. Wesley called one of his revivals successful, even though 40 people withdrew. He said it was addition by subtraction."

To maintain momentum after change, Farr said the change must be executed with excellence.

"Consider one thing you can change to produce momentum that you can continue to do very well," he advised. "Successful churches do what unsuccessful churches refuse to do. A lot of us spend a lot of time in committees thinking we're in ministry."

Farr said in doing church consultations, he hears from virtually every congregation that there needs to be better communication in the church.

"Think of multiple ways to do your communication: e-news and print, Facebook and a bulletin board, technology and face-to-face," he said.

Like Hamilton, Farr stressed that sermons should be relative to the congregation's day-to-day life. He calls this application preaching, with a formula of you + me + Bible = how we go forward and live our life.

"People want three clues, or three examples of how you live your life as a Christian through the week," Farr said. "We're in an application world. My iPhone has apps on it, it doesn't have theories on it."

**VISION: GROWING, FRUITFUL,
VIBRANT CONGREGATIONS
CHANGING LIVES THROUGH
JESUS CHRIST.**

THE MISSOURI CONFERENCE REVIEW

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said. "She would tell it like it is, but in a way that doesn't give offense. She helped me see things from a different perspective."

Gray's ministry extended well beyond the Missouri Conference. She was the first African American president of the Women's Division of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Women's national administrative body, served as a Women's Division director from 1972 to 1976 and as its president from 1976 to 1980.

Women's Division chief executive Harriett Jane Olson said Gray's determination to participate in the Assembly action on immigration was another example of her lifelong commitment to racial justice.

"When we invited Gray to participate and explained it echoed her leadership in 1978 Assembly, when women marched in silent vigil in Louisville, Ky., the place where the Methodist Episcopal Church had split over the issue of slavery more than 100 years earlier, she immediately responded that she intended to march," Ms. Olson said. "She committed a lifetime to racial justice."

Thomas Kemper, General Secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries, extended a personal note to the Gray family. "[Gray's] legacy within the Methodist connection is unsurpassed in dedication to mercy, justice, and the humble walk with God," he said. "The United Methodist Church and the entire Christian family rejoice in the life of your mother, who embodied hope, faith, and love in action."

Gray served on the historic "committee of 24" that drafted the Purpose statement and structure for the newly formed United Methodist Women, which transitioned women's mission groups of the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist Church into a single organization in 1972. "As the second president of United Methodist Women in its combined 'new' structure following church merger, Gray played a significant role in shaping how the new organization would continue to engage with the conflicts of its time," Olson said. "Her grace and thoughtfulness set a high bar for the staff and directors, and represented the membership well at a critical time in our formation." Former Women's Division staff said Gray provided steady and

gracious leadership for United Methodist Women as the church and nation went through great upheavals.

"Mai was Women's Division president during turbulent times!" said Barbara Campbell, former Women's Division assistant general secretary who retired in 1995. "The United States, society and the division were struggling with ERA [Equal Rights Amendment] ratification, the Law of the Sea, South African apartheid and matters of racial equality. The division was also developing new policy statements, growing into the new structure and terminology of United Methodist Women, and dealing with diversity and justice issues. Through it all, Mai's experience as a teacher, school administrator and mission leader, as well as her poise and gracious manner, enabled her to provide quiet, effective leadership. She was a very special person."

Gray's tenure with United Methodist Women's national leadership team included the final years of the Vietnam War and the Iranian hostage crisis, when Iranian students and militants took over the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and held 66 Americans from Nov. 4, 1979 to Jan. 20, 1981. Gray was part of delegation of religious leaders who met with President Jimmy Carter to pray with him and urge him to pursue diplomatic rather than military means to resolve the situation.

"She commented about how deeply he bowed when they were praying with him," recalled Jon Gray, Gray's son. "The next day was the failed rescue attempt. She thought that must have been weighing on him as they prayed." Peggy Billings, former head of Women's Division's Christian social action section, remembered Gray as providing solid leadership through such difficult times.

It was a time of controversy," said Ms. Billings, author of *Speaking Out in the Public Space*, a book documenting United Methodist Women's Christian social action work during her 1968-1984 tenure. "Mai partnered with Theresa Hoover, then chief executive of the division, and they were a great team in the midst of very difficult times. Mai was one of the most gracious of women and always carried herself with an almost regal bearing. It was my privilege to work with them."

Gray was an educator by profession and served as an elementary



school teacher, an instructor of teachers and a principal in St. Louis and Kansas City, Mo., public schools from 1953 to 1983.

Education was a priority in the Gray household.

"All of us knew that we had to go to college at a minimum," Jon Gray said. "We were encouraged and fortunately all of us were able to get advanced degrees."

Gray brought this concern for children to her work with United Methodist Women.

"She had a feel for children, and she was always expressing it," said Chiquita Smith, former Women's Division executive for ministries with women, children and youth. "When I would talk with her after she left the division, she was always interested in what we were doing in the community, what action were we taking for children."

Gray also served as a trustee of St. Paul School of Theology from 1976 to 2005.

Gray was born February 19, 1922 in Jackson, Tenn. In addition to Jon Gray, an attorney, former judge and current member of the United Methodist Judicial Council, she is survived by her other son, the Rev. C. Jarrett Gray, Jr., a United Methodist elder; her daughter, Dr. Frances Gray, a physician; four grandchildren and a sister, Dr. Darlene H. Anderson.

Gray's memorial service will be on Saturday, May 29, at 11:00 am at Kresge Chapel on the Saint Paul School of Theology campus, 5123 E Truman Road, KCMO. A reception will follow in Holter Center.

Gifts of remembrance may be sent to Saint Paul School of Theology - c/o Mai Gray Scholarship Fund, 5123 East Truman Road Kansas City, MO 64127-2440 or to Africa University - Reverend Dr. C. Jarrett and Mrs. Mai Gray Endowment Fund, c/o Missouri Annual Conference, 3601 Amron Court, Columbia, MO 65202

Yvette Moore, news editor for the United Methodist Women, and Linda Bloom, reporter for United Methodist News Service, contributed to this report.



HIGH-TECH Chat

Streaming, Web tools helps more experience Conference

By Fred Koenig
Missouri Conference Editor

This year the theme of Annual Conference Session is "Growing Deeper," relating to deepening one's faith and spirituality. One way to gain deeper faith is to enrich your understanding. To help facilitate that, the Missouri Conference is trying to employ all available communication tools to facilitate conversations and increase discussions.

Something new being introduced this year is the live streaming of the Ordination Service on Saturday night. This will be the first time the Missouri Conference has shared live video from Annual Conference Session via the Internet. To view the video, go to www.moumethodist.org/ac10video. The video Web cast will begin at 7 p.m. on June 5. This is a great way for people who have never seen an ordination service before to get a glimpse of one without making the trip to Springfield. It's also a good way for family and friends of the ordinands who are not able to attend to share in the occasion. The next day, the Sunday morning worship service at 11 a.m. will also be shared via a live streaming video feed at the same Web address.

Another new feature of Annual Conference this year will be a Technology and Communication Learning Center that will be open during the breaks of Annual Conference Session. The center will be located in the back corner room of the exhibition hall. It will be staffed with members of Annual Conference who have expertise in specific areas of technology. A small computer lab will be set up, and people will be able to receive advice and instruction in areas like social networking, e-newsletters, Web site management, worship service software and church business management tools. The center is being coordinated by Curtis Olsen, chair of the Missouri Conference communications committee.

For additional communication technology instruction, Steve Cusamano, Missouri Conference Web services administrator,

will be leading a workshop called "Branching Out: Discover Conference and Other Online Resources." He will discuss how the Missouri Conference is using technology to connect churches with each other and their congregations. There will be a walk-through of our revamped Web site, a look at new tools available for churches and districts, and a brainstorming session on how churches can use social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and Foursquare to connect with their communities. There will be a computer lab set up so you can use these tools firsthand, or you can bring a personal laptop to connect wirelessly.

Last year just before Annual Conference session started, we set up a Facebook group. Within a few days, the group went from one member to more than 250. It was used to share videos, photos and facilitate a few discussions.

This year, rather than using the group, we're going to use the Missouri Conference Facebook fan page, located at www.facebook.com/moumethodist. There is already a lot of Missouri Conference resources posted on this page. Info (including photos and videos) from Annual Conference Session will be posted here as they become available.

Last year twitter was used throughout Annual Conference Session, with a hashtag of #moac09 so everyone's tweets could be on the same page. This year the hashtag will be #moac10. You can begin adding this to your Annual Conference-related tweets at any-time, and start the conversation.

The Daily Journal, the daily account of the news of Annual Conference Session, will still be printed and distributed on the floor of the Annual Conference each day. As in the past few years, this publication will also be available as a PDF on the Conference Web site. The Daily Journal team is considering making the publication Web-based only next year, and is seeking feedback on that during this Annual Conference session.

If you have questions, e-mail fkoenig@moumethodist.org.

Youth groups encouraged to attend Annual Conference on Sunday

Sunday, June 6 is Youth Night at Annual Conference. The youth will be leading worship Sunday evening, 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Joe Castillo, the Sand Artist, will be sharing the Good News. Local churches are invited to attend, especially youth groups. This would be a great climax to Confirmation. Come on Sunday afternoon and witness a bit of the legislative session, 2-4 p.m. The youth, camping and college students will be giving their report

the last thing of the afternoon session. There is a supper break from 4 to 6:30 pm.

Following evening worship at Annual Conference on June 6, all youth are invited to the Springfield downtown YMCA from 8:30 pm to 10:30 pm. There is no charge. For entrance, they must have their pastor bring them to the YMCA or someone from Annual Conference that has a name badge. There must be adult sponsors with the groups. At the

YMCA there will swimming, rock wall, basketball, volleyball, dodgeball and other games. If you need housing in a local church on Sunday night, e-mail bevboehmer@aol.com. There are a couple of churches planning to spend Monday at Branson.

Sand artist Joe Castillo works on one of his projects.



© Joe Castillo

Check out Conference benefits at Annual Conference

The Missouri Conference staff are coordinating the following services for Annual Conference Session:

Pension Consultations

The Conference will be sponsoring pension consultation meetings on **Saturday, June 5 and Sunday, June 6, from 8:30am – 5:00pm** during Annual Conference. These will be thirty minute, confidential consultation appointments. There are a limited number of appointments. Please see Jenny Gragg at the Benefits Booth to see if there are still appointments available if you are interested in talking with a GBOP representative.

Benefits Booth

There will be a Benefits booth in the exhibitor area that will have information and handouts regarding Clergy Benefits. If you are new to the conference and serving for the first time as a local pastor, or provisional member, please stop by to get an enrollment packet for your pension and health insurance if you did not receive one at the Right Start Event or Licensing School.

Procheck Screening (Blood Draw) - you may be eligible to receive 2500 Healthmiles

At this year's annual conference, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in Procheck—a simple blood test that provides a comprehensive health screening for many common diseases and conditions. The Procheck screening will be the only opportunity to qualify for the incentive this year. Doctor office visits will not qualify this year as they have in previous years.

Eligibility and Costs

All annual conference attendees are eligible to participate in Procheck health screenings even if they are not enrolled in HealthFlex.

Procheck health screenings are available at **no cost** to HealthFlex participants and their covered spouses. The full cost of the screening is covered under the HealthFlex wellness benefit. HealthFlex participants must present their plan ID card as proof of HealthFlex enrollment at the time of the screenings.

For those who are not participants of HealthFlex, you may still receive the Procheck health screening at a cost of \$115 a person, payable by cash, check or credit card, at the time of the screening. Procheck offers significant savings. A comparable health screening could cost hundreds of dollars more if done through a hospital, clinic or other medical facility.

Screening Preparation and Results

For the most accurate results, individuals should **fast** for a minimum of eight hours (except for water) before taking the Procheck health screening. Fasting, however, is not mandatory.

After the screening, participants will receive an easy-to-read report from Procheck containing important information about their results and any health risks. The report is mailed directly to each screened participant within two weeks of the event. Individuals can share the report with their doctor to make more informed decisions about their health.

2500 Healthmiles Incentive

The Missouri Conference will give **2000 Healthmiles** to those who have participated in the Procheck Screening if they are a primary participant, or spouse in Healthflex Active Plan. Then the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits will credit another **500 Healthmiles** for a total of **2500 Healthmiles** for participating in the Procheck Screening. **You must also enroll in the Walking Program to receive this incentive.**

Date/Time/Place

Plan to participate in the Procheck blood testing while at Annual Conference. You do not need an appointment, simply come to the **upper level of the Expo Center**, follow the signs for Procheck wellness screening, and bring your insurance card. The Procheck screening will be the only opportunity to qualify for the incentive this year. Doctor office visits will not qualify this year as they have in previous years.

Saturday, June 5 and Sunday, June 6

6:30AM to 10:30 AM

Health Risk Analysis – Health Quotient (HQ)

Healthflex participants are asked again this year to complete the Health Risk Analysis. We will have computers available at Annual Conference for you to complete this analysis. Participants and covered spouses in the HealthFlex active plan will be expected to complete the HealthQuotient™ (HQ) online health risk assessment by August 31, 2010. **Those who do not complete the HQ by August 31 will have an extra cost added to their 2011 medical deductible (\$250 for**

individuals or \$500 for families). Therefore, your deductible for 2011 would be \$1250 for individual and \$2500 for family if you do not complete the HQ by August 31, 2010. Individuals will not receive any monetary HealthCash incentives for completing the HQ in 2010. However, individuals who complete the HQ during 2010 will be awarded 500 HealthMiles. If both clergy and spouse are enrolled in HealthFlex, **both must complete** the HQ to avoid the deductible surcharge.

By assessing the individual's risk for chronic conditions, the HQ potentially allows for earlier and less-costly intervention and treatment. The HQ also triggers or guides the individual to other health support tools provided by HealthFlex. Data from past years shows that individuals who have never taken the HQ tend to have higher total health claims compared to those who take the HQ each year. Increase in health claims attribute to higher insurance premium costs. By addressing risks that are highlighted in the HQ, participants should be able to lower their health costs, which would help minimize increases in insurance premiums. Information from the HQ is not shared with the Annual Conference, it is private and secure information and is HIPAA compliant.

Go to <http://www.gbophb.org/> today and click on HealthFlex/WebMD. Then click on HealthQuotient under Get Started. Log in to your WebMD account, then click on Update HealthQuotient Now. It will take approximately 20 minutes to com-

plete the HQ. **Complete the HQ by August 31, 2010 to avoid a surcharge to your 2011 deductible.**

To complete the analysis, participants will need to know their userID and password for WebMD. The Conference does not have access to this information. Instructions for completing the analysis will be available at the Benefits booth.

Virgin HealthMiles Walking Program – earn up to \$300

The Virgin HealthMiles walking programs is sponsored by HealthFlex and the Center for Health to help you become healthier by becoming more active. Accrue Health Miles for doing things like increasing your physical activity and taking a closer look at your risk factors and health history. As Health Miles add up, redeem them for HealthCash in the form of major retailers' gift cards or a check payable to you, your church or a charity of your choice. Remember, you must be enrolled in the Virgin HealthMiles walking program to earn HealthFlex incentives during 2010. **Go to www.gbophb.org, log in to your HealthFlex/WebMD account and click "Join Now!"**. Your spouse also can enroll in the walking program to earn incentives if he or she is covered by HealthFlex.

Medicare Workshop & Booth

Come visit with Jenny Gragg, our Federally Certified Medicare Specialist, at her booth in the display area. There will also be a workshop available on Saturday afternoon for those who have Medicare questions. Jim Day, CLAIM Lead Regional Liaison, will lead the workshop.

Mozambique leaders invite people to “Meet Under the tree”

It's not an ordinary display! Stop in for worship or prayer under the tree at Annual Conference in Springfield. Sit on a tree-trunk “pew” and visit with friends. Hear dynamic singer and preacher Salvador Bacar. Experience the hospitality and spirituality of worship in Mozambique in the upstairs lobby of the Expo Center at Annual Conference!

Mozambique Initiative Breakfast

The Mozambique Initiative invites you to share breakfast at University Plaza at Annual Conference on June 5th (7-8 am). Learn details about the transformation of covenant partnerships and see the latest video of our missionary and representative at work, serving as the bridge on behalf of the Missouri and

Mozambique conferences. Visit personally with Missouri's guest, Education and Evangelization Director, Rev. Salvador Bacar from Mozambique. Meet other partners, Missouri staff and MI Team members. Register online when you register for Annual Conference or for an additional meal, or contact Mike Harrison at mharrison@moumethodist.org to register. Cost is \$16.

The Bridge Between Missouri and Mozambique

Carol Kreamer (Mozambique Initiative Coordinator) and Ezequiel Nhandumbo (Mozambique Initiative Representative in Mozambique) form an important bridge between our congregations in Missouri and those in Mozambique. Early most every morning (afternoon in

Mozambique) Carol and Ezequiel visit by Skype working out the details of the many relationships and partnerships between our congregations. Most of the support that makes this possible comes from donations rather than apportionments. This offering will be used to support this important bridge between our conferences. A short promotional video showing Carol and Ezequiel communicating with each other is available online at <http://MOMissionCast.com> (#161). Please give generously to offering during the Sunday morning during the worship and memorial service.

Mozambique Retired Pastor Fund – CCPI Offering

The Missouri Mozambique Initiative continues to provide assistance by participating in

this permanent endowment fund called CCPI – Central Conference Pension Initiative. The Saturday morning offering during the celebration of retirement, commissioning and recognition, will be designated to this fund, which makes the retirement decision less difficult for pastors in countries like Mozambique.

Education/Evangelization Director – Rev. Salvador Bacar from Mozambique

Rev. Salvador Bacar, an ordained elder and graduate of Africa University, now on staff



with the United Methodist Church in Mozambique, will be our guest.

Covenant Partnership Transformation

MI is working with the UMC to take covenant partner into a different future...a self-sustaining future. Details will be revealed during the 2010 Annual Conference session!

Platte Woods UMC shows outward focus by “Takin’ It to the Streets”

Weekend attendance at worship services held at Platte Woods UMC May 1-2 was a record-setting zero. Zero adults, zero children: and Dr. Steve Breon, senior pastor at the church, is thrilled about it.

PWUMC held their first-ever Faith in Action Weekend, with service in the community as the primary form of worship. With the theme of “Takin’ It to the Streets,” the congregation did just that, filling the community with their orange T-shirts and service. This was a tremendous discipleship opportunity, with volunteers logging over 3,800 hours of serving as the hands and feet of Jesus over the two days. Projects ranged from local assistance to international hunger aid.

The largest number of servants came to pack rice-based meals through Numana Inc., an international hunger relief organization. During the two days of work, 300,000 meals were packed at PWUMC. These meals will be in Haiti for distribution to those in need by Tuesday, May 11, giving nearly immediate impact.

The event drew people of all ages and backgrounds, with congregation members working alongside community members who have a passion for helping others. Each work station had opportunities for all: those who needed to be seated found opportunities manning the scales, and preschoolers flattened the bags for packing. The original goal of 285,000 meals in two days seemed daunting, but by God's

grace the volunteers came and shattered that number.

Not all the projects were geared toward those a long distance from Platte Woods. Members hit the streets locally, with work ranging from park cleanup to landscaping for widows and shut-ins, to helping Hillcrest Ministries, a local ministry dedicated to helping those at risk of homelessness. This work brought hope to those who needed it, but also a smile to all around. Workers at a local park were asked by a passerby what all the orange T-shirts were about. When they explained their work, she thanked them for tidying the rose bush she jogs by every day. Workers stayed two extra hours at the home of a 100-year-old man who lives alone, spending much-needed time cleaning his kitchen. An elderly woman who was receiving help noted that she doesn't have a church home, but “... if PWUMC will do projects like this, then that's something I want to be part of.”

PWUMC volunteers at Camino Verdad Y Vida United Methodist Church, a local Hispanic United Methodist Church, worked alongside teams from other churches to organize their food pantry and other areas. Habitat for Humanity benefited from a team who assisted in a building project in Independence, Mo. Children's choirs, a service choir and others visited two retirement communities, bringing song and smiles to the residents.

Rev. Angie Olsen, associate pastor at PWUMC, spearheaded the church's Faith in Action effort, from early planning to implementation, working with local agencies and city mayors to arrange the projects. “We used the Outreach Marketing materials for Bible studies and to get us started, then really made it our own,” she said. “This weekend took the work of so many people, including all of our project leaders.” Project leaders took on the task of working through the details of each project, freeing Olsen and the other church pastors and staff to work on promoting the event.

“As part of our church's mission to be outwardly focused, we wanted to give people in our community not just the opportunity to BE helped, but also to HELP. So we put the word out through social media, newspapers and a postcard, inviting the community to sign up to help with us,” Olsen said. “The Haiti meal packing was really a good opportunity for those without a current connection to the church to make a difference. We were blessed with groups from a variety of places: Northland UMC, North Cross UMC, Girl Scouts and others.”

Not everyone in the area got the memo, of course, and so there was the issue of first-time visitors coming to the church for worship and finding, instead, hundreds of orange-clad volunteers and Haitian music playing over the loudspeakers. Rather than see-



Volunteers filled the gym and dining hall of PWUMC to pack meals for Haiti with help from Numana, Inc.

ing an obstacle, Dr. Breon saw an opportunity. “I personally welcomed several families who had come for Sunday worship services, an opportunity that doesn't usually go beyond the end-of-service receiving line. We talked about the many ministries that Platte Woods UMC has, and how they could fit in. Most of them even stayed to pack Haiti meals with us. It's not very often that we plug people into service during their first visit, but this gave a chance to show them that we're not just paying lip service to having an outward focus: we're living it,” Breon said.

The congregation gathered at 4:30 p.m. for a special celebration service. In order to accommodate the entire congregation for one service, the event was held at a local high school auditorium. Participants were so excited about the weekend of service they are already looking forward to the National Faith in Action Day, to be held 10-10-10, as well as to the



Rev. Curtis Olsen proclaims the total meals packed (300,000) at the celebration worship service Sunday afternoon.

many service opportunities that will be available before that time.

Platte Woods UMC is located in the Northland of Kansas City, Mo., and recently celebrated its 50th anniversary.

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Conference Calendar

Date	Event	Location	Phone #	Contact
6/4/2010	2010 Annual Conference Child Care	Grace UMC	(573) 441-1770	Mike Harrison
6/4/2010	2010 Annual Conference Session	Springfield Expo Center	(573) 777-1217	Mike Harrison
6/13/2010	Youth Workcamp Sikeston	Sikeston	(573) 291-9122	Bev Boehmer
6/18/2010	Early Response Team (ERT) Training	Blue Springs First UMC	573-474-7155	Jeff Baker
6/20/2010	Youth Workcamp-Memphis TN	Memphis, TN	(573) 291-9122	Bev Boehmer
6/27/2010	Youth Workcamp-New Orleans	New Orleans	(573) 291-9122	Bev Boehmer
7/5/2010	Youth Workcamp-Jefferson City/Columbia	Jefferson City	(573) 291-9122	Bev Boehmer
7/8/2010	SC Convocation of Archivists	Central Methodist University	(660) 248-6240 /6602486279	John Finley/Joy Flanders
7/10/2010	BOM Psych Testing	Conference Center	(573) 777-1213	Jenny Gragg
7/11/2010	Youth Workcamp-Cherokee Nation, OK Week 1	Oklahoma	(573) 291-9122	Bev Boehmer
7/18/2010	Youth Workcamp-Cherokee Nation, OK Week 2	Oklahoma	(573) 291-9122	Bev Boehmer
7/23/2010	Missouri Conference School of Lay Ministries	Central Methodist University	(573) 441-1770	Mike Harrison

Job Postings

Worship Leader - Lebanon First UMC

Lebanon First UMC is seeking a worship leader who will be responsible in leading worship in our 11a.m. contemporary worship service, assisting in worship service music selection, and in the recruiting and training of praise band members. This is a part-time position requiring a minimum of five hours per week for rehearsal and worship. E-mail pastordavid@lumclebanon.com.

Organist/Accompanist - St. Marks UMC, Florissant

St. Mark's UMC in Florissant is accepting applications for an organist/accompanist to share and implement the mission and vision of St. Mark's UMC through our music ministry. They would accompany the traditional choir and traditional congregational singing at our 9 a.m. service and be available to plan music and play at weddings and funerals as needed. Accompany the choir at rehearsal once a week and play at special worship services. The position is salaried part-time. E-mail expeditor66@att.net.

Pianist/Keyboardist - St. Paul UMC, Fayette

Growing and active church with multiple devoted choirs and musical ensembles is in needs of a dedicated pianist/accompanist. Familiarity with the church is not a requirement, SINNERS WELCOME!. Rehearsals three times a week and Sunday morning worship required. Reading music is not a requirement, playing by ear a plus. The church is located in Fayette, MO 300 E. Davis St. We are prepared to offer competitive salary. Interested musicians should contact Pastor Andre Fulton at 660-890-4479 or st_paulumc@att.net.

Director of Children and Youth - Holden UMC

Duties: Lead weekly youth meetings, supervise some after school activities, Teach Sunday School Class. Qualities desired: strong faith, good communication, organizational skills and desire to help young people grow in faith. 20 hours per week. Good pay for right person. E-mail patmkelley@att.net.

May 17, 2010

Name	To	From
Richard Casady	Bethany UMC	Mendon, Sumner Charge
Sally DeMasters	First UMC Bethany UMC, Braymer/Breckenridge Charge	Northern Boulevard UMC
David Howlett	Memphis UMC	Noel Southwest Charge
Terry Lippstreu	Pleasant Grove, McCredie Charge	Memphis UMC
Bill O'Neal	Waynesville UMC	Waynesville UMC - Associate
Kim Ross	Mt. Sequoyah - Spiritual Director	Sabbatical
Antonio Settles	Beloved Community, Unity Charge	New Spirit, Shaw Ave. Charge
Londia Granger Wright	St. Luke's UMC (Kansas City)	Waynesville UMC

May 10, 2010

Name	To	From
Carol Blackwell	Arcadia Valley UMC	Pleasant Grove, McCredie Charge
Cindy Buhman	Savannah UMC	Bethany UMC
Shawn Franssens	Woods Chapel UMC - Associate	Life Spring UMC
Jerry Geisert	Retirement	Marquand, Patton, Rhodes Chapel Charge
Sarah Hamilton	Marquand, Patton, Rhodes Chapel Charge	Byers Ave UMC
David Lucas	Maysville UMC	New Hampton, Martinsville, Mitchelville Charge
Meg Hegemann	Wilkes Blvd UMC	Sturgeon, Riggs Charge
Jacki Moore	New Hope, Terrace Lake Charge	Trinity UMC (Kansas City)
Keith Morgan	Concord Trinity UMC	St. Luke's UMC (Kansas City)
Cathy Myers	Oak Grove UMC	St. Mark's UMC (Independence)
Amanda Ross	Immanuel UMC (Canton)	Polo UMC
Keith Vessell	Missouri UMC - Associate (Full Time)	Missouri UMC - Associate (Part Time)
Barron Willer	Maple UMC (Cape Girardeau)	First Braymer, Breckenridge Charge



Haiti and Chile kits to be collected at Annual Conference

An offering of Kits will be collected on Friday evening of Annual Conference, before the Tables of Grace Dinner on June 4. The Festival of Sharing trailer will be parked just outside of the building entrance.

Both Health Kits and Layettes will be collected for persons affected by the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile. The kit contents for each kit are listed below. In February congregations from 20 plus denominations sent nearly 15,000 health kits and 800 layette kits to Haiti through the Festival of Sharing. This amazing number of kits was collected in just two weeks. Kits have continued to be made and we expect to have another large shipment ready to send in June.

All Kits should be in cardboard boxes that are labeled with type of kit and number of kits enclosed and secured with packing tape. Please do not enclose any money inside kits or kit boxes. All shipping monies must be in a separate envelope and made payable to "Festival of Sharing".

Remember to stop at the Office of Creative Ministries booths at Annual Conference for information on additional ways your congregation can continue to serve people in need around the world, or call the office at 573-474-7155. Questions about kits and 2010 Festival of Sharing can be directed to Terri Williams (festival@socket.net).

Health Kit (value \$11) Shipping—\$2/kit

- 1 hand towel (16" X 28")
- 1 wide-tooth comb (packaging removed)
- 1 nail clipper (packaging removed)
- 1 bar of soap (bath size in wrapper)
- 1 washcloth
- 6 Band-Aids
- 1 toothbrush (in original packaging)

Seal all items in a one-gallon plastic bag with zipper closure. Make plastic bags as flat as possible and leave zipper open a half inch. Toothpaste will be added by Church World Service.

Layette (value \$39) Shipping—\$2/kit

- 6 cloth diapers
- 2 diaper pins
- 2 t-shirts or undershirts (no onesies)
- 2 washcloths
- 2 gowns or sleepers
- 1 sweater or sweatshirt
- 2 receiving blankets (1 can be a knitted blanket)

All items must be new and under 12 months in size. Bundle items inside one receiving blanket and secure with diaper pins.

OCM announces new mission start-up grants

The Creative Ministries Team will be awarding some 2011 grants for launching new mission projects. Email your one-page only grant proposal to Max Marble by email by October 1, 2010. The proposal needs to include a mechanism for evaluating the success of the mission after 6 months and 12 months. In addition to the one-page only proposal send a budget showing anticipated income and expenses and showing where additional funds will be received. Three \$3,000 grants and six \$1,000 grants will be awarded. Building projects do not qualify.

Tom and LaVerne Fulton shared a passion for social work

in their professional lives. Their activism was a calling, rooted in faith and given further expression through the outreach ministries of the United Methodist Church.

It is not surprising that this dedicated couple created an estate plan that would continue to reach out to a world in need. With a bequest of \$338,000, the Fultons created a permanent endowment benefiting missions through the Global Connections Team of the Missouri Conference. (A smaller portion of the endowment income benefits the historic Coldwater United Methodist Church Cemetery.)

The Fulton's fund is in memory

of Tom's grandparents, Albert and Angeline Costner, founders and sustainers of the Coldwater Methodist Church and his parents, Frederick and Minnie Fulton.

Tom and LaVerne met and married when both were social workers in Washington, D.C. in 1947. They moved to Columbia, Missouri in 1964 when Tom accepted a faculty position at the University of Missouri. Tom died in 1996.

As Reverend Dick Blount stated in his eulogy for LaVerne in 2002, "She followed her faith and was true to her commitments to the end of her life on earth."

Health ministry workshops scheduled

Two health ministry workshops have been scheduled for the Mark Twain District. The first one will be held at First UMC in Kirksville on Friday, June 25th from 5:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. and the second one on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at Arch UMC in Hannibal. The workshops entitled "Health Ministry Through Clustering and Collaboration" will be presented by parish nurse, Julie Taylor. The

registration fee is \$15 for the first person and \$5 for each additional person from that church. This includes a meal for all participants and a packet for each congregation which includes information about the various models of health ministries, a list of Web site resources, and the UM General Board of Global Ministries guidelines for health ministry.

Workshops were held earlier this year in Joplin and Sedalia

and others will be scheduled in different parts of the state to be held later this year and in 2011. For information about workshop content, please contact Julie Taylor at fcnjulie@gmail.com. For registration information, please contact Dora Thackery at the Office of Creative Ministries at 573-474-7155 or at Thackery@umocm.com.

Retreat center takes shape

The construction of a cottage at the Hermitage Spiritual Retreat Center continues to progress as seen in this week's photo. The last week of April 2010 Jeff Baker led a construction team to continue work on the cottage which will provide solitude for those seeking spiritual retreat. Jeff will lead future teams to complete construction of this cottage. If you are interested in taking part in this volunteer opportunity please contact Jeff Baker at baker@umocm.com.



Visit the Office of Creative Ministries Web site at www.umocm.com.

REPORTER

THE UNITED METHODIST

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'David & Goliath'

Wallis initiates hard conversations | 3B



Devastating tornadoes

Deadly twisters, hailstones rip across Oklahoma | 4B



Recover Arminianism

We're paying the price for neglecting roots | 6B

Section B

May 28, 2010



Responding to God's call

PHOTO COURTESY OF FAITH UMC

The 2009 confirmation class at Faith United Methodist Church in Grain Valley, Mo., shown here with the Rev. David Hackett, pastor, marked a record number of boys and girls. United Methodists see confirmation programs as a key way to help develop faith formation in youth that lasts a lifetime.

Confirmation helps youth grow their faith

BY MALLORY MCCALL
Staff Writer

Most confirmation programs today in the United Methodist Church, which typically end in May, go well beyond a few classes in church doctrine. It's now a process that can take up to two years, and might include in-depth Bible studies, mentoring relationships, team-building obstacle courses and even civil rights bus tours.

The goal is the same as always: to help youth understand God's call and

respond to it. But confirmation directors say they recognize that it takes time and a variety of experiences to help a young person form their faith.

By the time they're done, middle-school students are learning what it means to claim the names "Christian" and "United Methodist."

"The blessing confirmation gives us is it's an intentional time with young people to lay a more critical foundation on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and how that is lived in the United Methodist Church," said Susan Hay, director of youth min-

istries for the denomination's General Board of Discipleship (GBOD).

It's the next step in making a young person's faith a reality they can live out.

Their journey began with baptism, usually when they were infants. Based on John Wesley's doctrine of "prevenient grace"—that God's love is alive whether people are aware of it or not—United Methodists practice infant baptism to show that God's love is active even before a baby can respond to it. The child's parents, family and congregation vow to nurture the child

in the faith and set an example of Christian love.

Even so, faith cannot be inherited. And by the time a young person gets to an age of accountability—where he or she may understand, accept and live out God's justifying grace through his or her own faith—it's time to make it personal. That's when young people take the next step and prepare to make a public profession of faith through confirmation.

Before publicly claiming the United Methodist name and commit-

■ See 'Confirmed,' page 8B

Q&A:

Making the 'Five Practices' a personal habit

Missouri Bishop Robert Schnase's first book, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, has been a bestseller in United Methodist circles since its release in spring 2007. Through the book and his blog (fivepractices.org), Bishop Schnase has generated a conversation on what makes a vibrant church.

He makes it personal in his new book, *Five Practices of Fruitful Living* (Abingdon), outlining how the practices can impact an individual's faith journey. He spoke recently with managing editor Robin Russell.

Your first book has had such phenomenal success that you're nearly the Rick Warren of Methodism. Have you been surprised at how churches have embraced it?

No one—least of all me—had any notion of how that would be received. Over 120,000 copies have been sold, and an estimated 5,000 United Methodist congregations have done some kind of sermon series, or small group work or leadership retreat with it. The book has been translated into German, Spanish and Korean, and I could never have imagined that.

■ See 'Practices,' page 2B



Bishop Robert Schnase

FAITH WATCH

Retired UM bishop Owen dies at 78

Retired United Methodist Bishop Raymond Owen, 78, died on May 15. Owen served as a pastor in the Oklahoma Conference for three decades before his election to the episcopacy in 1992. He retired in 2000 after the leading the South-west Texas Conference and the Rio Grande Conference. He also served on the World Methodist Council and was elected to its executive committee in 1986.

UMW racial justice leader dies at 88

Mai Gray, a retired teacher and former president of the Women's Division, United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, died May 6 at age 88. Gray helped craft the United Methodist Women's current Charter for Racial Justice in 1978. In late April she attended the 2010 Women's Assembly in St. Louis, Mo., where she was hospitalized after a fall. "My mom was in a place she wanted to be with people she wanted to be with," her son Jon Gray told United Methodist News Service.

Suit against inaugural prayer fails on appeal

A federal appeals court upheld on May 7 the dismissal of a lawsuit that sought to stop President Obama from using the words "so help me God" when he took the oath of office in January 2009. Plaintiffs had also wanted the court to eliminate religion from future inaugurations. The panel of judges said practices such as prayers and the oath of office are constitutional.

Ecumenical group seeks end to Cuba travel limits

Two ecumenical leaders sent a letter May 5 to President Obama urging an end to restrictions on religious travel to Cuba. The letter signed by the Rev. Michael Kinnamon, head of the National Council of Churches, and the Rev. John McCullough, a United Methodist minister who leads Church World Service, noted that travel restrictions imposed in 2005 "have the effect of severely limiting participation in Cuba missions by U.S. churches and congregants."

■ PRACTICES Continued from page 1B

Where did the concept of the Five Practices come from?

In 2004 I heard [West Ohio Conference] Bishop Bruce Ough talk about the significance of having a common language, using "radical hospitality" and "passionate worship." I started playing with that language and developed it into five practices, added generosity, reworded some of the others and made it more consistent. And then I just started teaching and preaching it. It's the adjectives that draw us in and make us ask: Are we really doing our utmost and highest in any of these?

You hear these terms—radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking service and extravagant generosity—everywhere now.

It is amazing. I hear it in sermons, I see it in newsletters, church banners, sermon blogs—and that's all right. The language is bigger than the book and my ideas about it. It's meant to stimulate and to have that kind of use, and I'm thankful for that.

Besides the popularity of the first book, what prompted you to write this sequel?

From the time I wrote the first book I realized there was another dimension to this. Fruitful congregations are based on the lives and leadership of people who are maturing in Christ. If the first question is, "How do we become the church that God would want us to become to fulfill our mission?" this one is, "How do I become the person that God created me to be? What are the lifelong practices that will help me cooperate with the Holy Spirit in becoming what God created me to be?" It seemed almost incomplete to speak at congregations without also talking about the faith journey.

You emphasize that these practices are a gift of grace. So why practice them?

Practices are those habits and patterns that place us in the most advan-

tageous place to open ourselves to God's grace. They're ways that we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in our own maturing in faith. Grace is the gift-like quality of God's love, but it requires our response. It isn't just being a sponge and receiving; it's allowing that grace to begin to form us.

"Practices" is a language we find in Scripture, in the early church, in the monastics and our faith ancestors. Our name "Methodist" is derived from that almost eccentric, methodical way by which we organize our lives in order to create openings to God and place ourselves in God's service. It's in our practices that we embody our faith. It's how we move from being hearers of the word to being doers of the Word.

When I read about "radical hospitality," I thought it would be about reaching out to others, but you connect that to opening ourselves to God.

If someone walked up to you and said, "I'm interested in exploring the spiritual life," we invite them to church. The *very* first thing should be, "Open your own life and heart and mind and invite God in, and make room in your heart for Christ." In terms of the movement of the Spirit in someone's life, among the very first elements is receptivity to God. All the other practices follow from that.

Are the five practices progressive in a Christian's life?

You can enter by any gate and start anywhere. For some people, the first experience of the spiritual life comes in service, and others in a worship service and others in a community of support following a grief or a loss. But at some point there comes, "Am I closed to the spiritual life or am I

open? Do I say 'yes' to God's grace or close that part out?" By putting radical hospitality first, it means among the very basic things is to develop a posture of saying, "Yes, Lord. Come on in."

Given the cultural voices we hear that pull us away from such a commitment, how can we continue to invite God into our lives in a radical way?

This approach is not an individualist "just me and Jesus." It embeds us in a community of faith. It's not doctrine-based or emotion-based; it's practice-based. The combination of practice and community helps us remain faithful in a culture that would pull us off-course. We covenant together in this walk: in our worship life, prayer life together, small group life, serving each other, serving the world together. We hold each other accountable to the regular practice of the faith that holds us through times of joy and loss.

You write about the mystery in worship, which affects us so deeply that "realities beyond conscious reach become accessible to us." Explain.

There are elements of this thing that are really mystery—sheer grace—that form us beyond our conscious awareness. God uses music to speak to us in ways no words could reach us. There are truths of life that can be communicated better without words—by music, by sacraments. Even when we try to explain some of these things, there is always that which is beyond our ability to express. The regular habit and practice of worship, of the sacraments and the music and of prayer will form us into something that we would not come to on our own. Thoughts will be there that were not there before, even if we're unable to explain how that happened. And that is the work of the Holy Spirit in shaping us anew.

You use the example of becoming a birder to describe how a person will begin to notice God's activity in a fresh way.

When we begin to use language about the spiritual life and join a community of people that practices that, it opens our eyes to the spiritual dimension of life that we may not see otherwise.

There are people who love architecture: Drive through a city with them and they see things we don't see.

And there are people who love rocks and minerals, or trees and flowers, and they actually see things that other people don't see. It's the same for spiritual things. It's in the community where we focus on God's word that we begin to develop the capacity to see things: joy, love, grace, peace, justice, forgiveness, hope.

Many United Methodists are already keen on serving others. When does it cross over into "risk-taking" service?

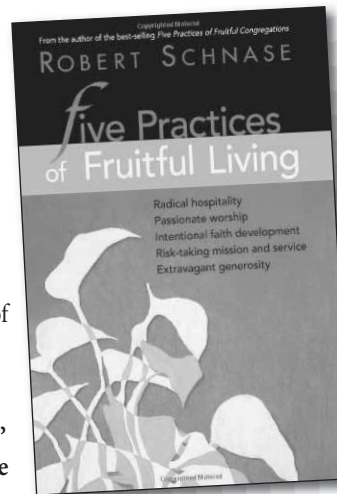
Many United Methodists do a great job in trying to make a positive difference, and I commend that. By using the word "risk-taking," I'm talking about an attitude or practice of service that stretches us and causes us to do things we would not do of our own natural inclination. Many of the good things we do, we do just as good neighbors and good citizens. But it's helpful sometimes to think, "What do I do that I would not do if I were not a follower of Christ?" That takes us into a different terrain. And so you have these Volunteers In Mission on rooftops in other parts of the country, or people working with children in afterschool programs or soup kitchens. When we trust and follow Christ, it takes us to surprising places that we would never have come to.

Let's talk about extravagant generosity. There are practical reasons why Christians give financially, such as helping a congregation thrive. What are some deeper spiritual reasons why we should give?

One of the fundamental reasons that we give extravagantly gets past that notion of ownership. Are the things that I say I possess, are they mine to do with what I want, and I give some of mine to God and God ought to be happy with what God gets? Or do the things that I say I possess really belong to God, and I'm the temporary steward and I return it to God? Extravagant gives give without even having to be asked. They *have* to give. What I save and what I spend and how I earn it—all of that falls under stewardship and is a reflection of my relationship with God. Because after we're gone, much of that stuff is still going to be here. It doesn't just belong to us.

I think God also uses our giving to reconfigure our interior lives. The opposite of generosity is selfishness, greed, self-absorption—we've got enough teachers of that. But when we practice generosity, God uses that to change us inside, to give us contentedness. We realize that we have enough, and that we can voluntarily even give of what we have.

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UM CONNECTIONS

McFee named director for 2012 GC worship

The Commission on the General Conference has selected Marcia McFee as worship and music director for the 2012 General Conference in Tampa, Fla. Dr. McFee, who served as worship and music co-director for the 2008 General Conference, is a well-known worship designer and leader with experience in music, theater and dance. She will oversee liturgy and music throughout the 11-day assembly, including inviting choirs and worship groups from across the church to participate. Dr. McFee earned a Master of Theological Studies at Saint Paul School of Theology and a Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies at the Graduate Theological Union.

TWU appoints pastor as interim president

Beginning June 1, the Rev. Lamar Smith, associate minister of First United Methodist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, will serve as interim president of Texas Wesleyan University during the search for a permanent president. The private university's board of trustees named Dr. Smith following the April announcement that President Harold G. Jeffcoat would retire June 1. Dr. Smith earned his bachelor's degree and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Texas Wesleyan.

Heritage Center names new part-time director

The Southeastern Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History has announced that



Nancy Watkins

Nancy Watkins will be the new director of the SEJ Heritage Center at Lake Junaluska, N.C. Ms. Watkins will work part-time as director, spending half her time at Lake Junaluska and the other half in Atlanta, Ga., with her husband, the Rev. Roy Watkins, pastor of Mt. Zion UMC. From 1999-2009, Ms. Watkins served as assistant university archivist at Emory University.

Wallis encourages having hard conversations

BY MARY JACOBS
Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Instead of ignoring talk-show host Glenn Beck's comments on social justice in churches, Sojourners founder Jim Wallis engaged him and launched conversations across the country about what that term means for Christians.

That "David and Goliath story" offers a lesson for church publishers as they struggle to deliver their messages with rapidly shrinking resources, Mr. Wallis told attendees at the Associated Church Press convention May 6-9.

The gathering of about 80 people included editors and staff from dozens of denominational and ecumenical Christian publications.

"Having to do more with fewer people . . . helps you to focus, clarify and rethink what your mission is," said Mr. Wallis.

'Historically, political power doesn't make change. Social movements make change.'

—Jim Wallis

He recounted how Mr. Beck had urged listeners to leave any church that taught "social justice," which he called code words for socialism and communism, and to report pastors who do so to their church authorities.

"One response would be to ignore him," said Mr. Wallis. "But we thought, let's make a play out of this so the whole country starts talking about social justice."

Christians from several denominations responded in unexpected ways. Mr. Wallis said many church leaders began preaching more often on social justice, and pastors in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) began "turning themselves in" to their denominational authorities. Top leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints disputed the assertions of Mr. Beck, who is a Mormon, and invited Mr. Wallis to Salt Lake City, Utah, to tour the church's social justice ministries.

"Sometimes Goliath loses and David wins," Mr. Wallis said. "Our challenge is how do we figure out how to be effective in our smallness? How do we use our smooth stones with integrity to raise the issues we want to raise in the broader community?"

Though he was a strong supporter of Barack Obama during the 2008 election, Mr. Wallis made comments that were critical of the current administration.

"We forget that historically, political power doesn't make change," he said. "Social movements make change. Electing someone new or having access to political power doesn't change things."



Jim Wallis

Cokie Roberts

In a keynote address, ABC News political commentator and National Public Radio senior news analyst Cokie Roberts said that religion is a central part of the U.S. culture, but Americans are conflicted when it comes to how religion should inform politics.

"The question of the role of religion in the public square is something I grapple with as a political reporter

because it comes up constantly," she said. Citing a Gallup poll that showed 92 percent of Americans believe in God and 83 percent believe God answers prayers, she said, "We are a very religious country. We keep showing that over and over again."

While a majority of Americans are comfortable with public displays of religious symbols, she noted, "The polls also say—and I just find this astounding—Americans don't believe clergy should be involved in talking with politicians about issues like the death penalty or abortion.

"The notion that our religious leaders should stay quiet about issues that are essentially moral issues, I think, is a terrible idea. I think it's one that people come to because they are very nervous about religion in the public square. I think that's a shame."



Cokie Roberts

Religion shouldn't be a test for public office, but needs to remain part of the dialogue, she said.

"The same people who were thrilled when clergymen were supporting civil rights and opposing the Vietnam War are horrified when clergy weigh in against abortion and gay rights," said Ms. Roberts. "But, constitutionally, this comes out of the American tradition, to have the church commenting on these kinds of issues, and that's been true from the beginning."

As to how her Catholic faith informs her own work as a journalist, Ms. Roberts quoted Patrick Glynn, author of *God: The Evidence*: "Religion does its real work in politics not by arousing moral indignation but by awakening the individual conscience. Moral indignation drives us to condemn others; conscience prompts us to question ourselves.

"As journalists, I think that's a good guide for all of us."

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ANXIOUS MOMENTS

Deadly twisters blast across Oklahoma

BY BOYCE BOWDON
Special Contributor

TECUMSEH, Okla.—About 5 o'clock on the afternoon of May 10, in this town of nearly 7,000 about 75 miles southeast of Oklahoma City, the Rev. Keith King—pastor of the Broadway United Methodist Church—was leaving home to go mow a friend's lawn.

His wife called him back.

"Aimee told me I had better take a look at the TV weather report," Mr. King recalls. "So we looked at the Doppler Radar and saw the tornadoes were getting pretty hairy and coming our way fast. I decided I had better stay close to home and mow the yard later."

Fifteen minutes later, Keith and Aimee and their two daughters—Ella Kate, who is 5 and Mary Beth, who is 15 months old, were heading across the street to a neighbor's storm shelter.

"About 15 of us were in there waiting until the storm passed over," says Mr. King. Ella Kate—the 5-year-old—says she was scared. "I was praying," she said. Did it help? "A little," she says.

When the Kings and their neighbors came out of the shelter, they saw several big trees had blown down near them. Roofs and carports were gone.

"Our parsonage had missing shingles," says Mr. King. "Our fence was down. Part of a neighbor's trampoline was up against our house. But one of the most amazing sights was the big tree in our front yard. It had been twisted—a branch that had hung over the street was now hanging over our house—but the tree was still standing."

Ronnye Perry Sharp, who lives two houses down the street from the Kings, says she and her 80-year-old mother knew something was going to happen when the wind stopped blowing and it suddenly got quiet.

"I said, 'Mama, it's time for us to get in the closet under the stairs.' Mother has a spinal cord injury and it's hard for her to move. We got in the closet just in the nick of time."

Several large trees in Ms. Sharp's yard were uprooted. One fell on a car she had sold that afternoon, but papers had not been signed and the buyer had not paid for it. The car was totaled. "I'm thankful it was insured," says Ms. Sharp. "The tree was a bigger loss. It must have been a hundred years old."

Ms. Sharp says she feels fortunate.

"My little mother and I are still standing and our house is still standing. We didn't lose anything compared to many of our friends and neighbors. Walk just a block down this street and you will see real devastation."

Mr. King and his wife have walked through the neighborhood asking people what they needed most. They've found a wide range of needs.

A 90-year-old woman asked for help removing a tree that had fallen on her house. Several others requested help removing trees and debris. Men from the church, equipped with chainsaws, responded quickly.

Ms. King says during their walk through the neighborhood they asked a policeman who was directing traffic if they could get him anything. "He said, 'Could you get me some sunscreen?' He



PHOTOS BY LEANNE CHAFFIN

Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Tulsa, Okla., sustained damage when a storm hit about 5 a.m. The Rev. Marcia Shoemaker, pastor, reported no injuries. The parsonage is just across the street from the church, and the family was awakened by the city's tornado sirens and rushed downstairs into a closet.

had shaved his head recently and the sun was getting to him. So we went to our parsonage and got a big bottle of Baby Magic sunscreen, and took it to the officer. He was pleased," says Ms. King.

Mr. King says churches in Tecumseh work well together. Mark Winders, president of the United Methodist Men, agrees. "We are like most small towns in Oklahoma," he says. "When we see folks in trouble, we don't ask them what denomination they are. It doesn't matter if they are Methodists, Baptists or atheists. We take care of each other."

The tornado that struck Tecumseh was one of more than a dozen twisters that occurred May 10 along a patch stretching from the Red River near the Texas-Oklahoma border to the Kansas-Oklahoma state line.

The Oklahoma Department of Emergency

Management initially reported that at least five persons in the state were killed, but the department revised their report on May 11 when they found that three children who had previously been reported dead are alive and being treated in an Oklahoma City hospital.

The children's mother was killed when a tornado destroyed their mobile home. Another woman suffered a heart attack while trying to get to a storm shelter. The death toll now stands at two. More than 100 people were treated at Oklahoma hospitals for storm-related injuries and five of them are hospitalized in critical condition.

The state Department of Emergency Management reports that the twisters destroyed more than 100 homes and 40 businesses, and damaged more than 130 other homes.

Gov. Brad Henry declared a state of emergency for 56 Oklahoma counties.



UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE PHOTO BY GINNY UNDERWOOD

The kitchen in Darryl Tonemah's home in Norman, Okla., stands open to the sky after a tornado ripped off the roof.



PHOTOS BY LEANNE CHAFFIN

Members of Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Tulsa, Okla., began storm cleanup on May 13.



Tornado damage

OKLAHOMA CITY—Two people were killed and nearly 60 others were injured—two critically—when approximately two dozen tornadoes cut a path May 10 from border to border across Oklahoma.

The twisters flattened buildings of all sizes, tossed cars and 18-wheelers off the road, snapped trees and knocked down major transmission lines, leaving at least 35,000 homes and businesses without power.

Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management spokesman Jerry Lojka reports that two people were killed in Oklahoma City and three were killed in Cleveland County, south of the city. In addition, an Oklahoma County woman suffered a fatal heart attack while heading for a storm shelter.

Many people were leaving work when tornado sirens started screeching at about 5 p.m. May 10 in the Oklahoma City metro area, where about 50 homes were destroyed and another 40 were damaged.

Interstate 40—an east-west highway—was closed several hours while emergency personnel cared for the injured and cleanup crews removed debris and downed power lines from the road.

Interstate 35 near the Kansas-Oklahoma border was also closed while tractor-trailers, which had been blown over and were blocking all lanes, were removed.

High winds blew out windows of buildings at the National Weather Service campus in Norman. The helicopter that transports victims to the Oklahoma University Medical Center's Level 1 trauma center was also damaged by the storm.

In Seminole, about 70 miles east of Oklahoma City, the tornado heavily damaged buildings and planes at the municipal airport.

In parts of the state, hail—some bigger than baseballs—accompanied the wind, smashing windshields and windows.

The storms—which forecasters had been predicting for a week—were part of a violent weather system that also spawned twisters in Kansas and hit Arkansas after leaving Oklahoma.

—Boyce Bowdon, Disaster News Network



PHOTO BY BOYCE BOWDON

One of the windows at Broadway United Methodist Church in Tecumseh, Okla., was blown out by the high winds that struck the church. "We found the part of the glass that is the focal point—showing the Holy Bible," says the Rev. Keith King. "We hope a new window can be built around it."

GEN-X RISING

What's at the heart of the Christian life?

BY ANDREW THOMPSON
UMR Columnist

Editor's note: This is the last in a series of columns on the means of grace.

Theologian Albert Outler didn't start out as a Wesley scholar. He was trained in the history and theology of the early Church. But the more Outler read of John Wesley in the 1950s and '60s, the more he became convinced that Wesley needed to be taken seriously as a theologian.

If that statement sounds unremarkable to Methodists today, it is largely due to Outler's influence. Wesley had long been admired as an evangelist and revival leader, but he hadn't been seen much as a true theologian whose writings should serve as a guide to the Church of the present.

"Wesley has been invoked often than he has been read," Outler said in an address. "And usually has been read with a low-church anti-intellectual bias that celebrates his warm heart and worn saddlebags, unconcerned with his theology."

Methodists today owe Outler a debt of gratitude. While thinking of Wesley as a patron saint and idealizing him every May 24 on Aldersgate Day makes for nice sentiment, it does nothing for the aspect of the Christian life that Wesley himself considered most important: How we, as followers of Jesus, are going about the business of working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

In the past few columns, I've been attempting to do just that with reference to Wesley's teaching on the role of the means of grace in Christian practice.

These practices of worship and discipleship cannot—in Wesley's thinking—be engaged in willy-nilly. Means of grace are not like online shopping, which can be done quickly, with little thought and a minimum of effort.

We tend to think as consumers, because that is the way society teaches us to think. But there's a reason the Bible doesn't use shopping metaphors to describe Christian discipleship. Instead, it uses images of farming, athletics and even soldiering.

These biblical motifs suggest time,

attention, effort and commitment. Perfection (in the biblical sense, completeness) takes a lot of hard work.

Our problem is that we're lazy, and we live in a world that tries its hardest to cater to our laziness. Even worse, it's often combined with radical self-centeredness. We live in a society whose all-consuming quest is for each person to be able to meet every felt need, no matter how superficial or even pathological.

I think Wesley would view such a situation as sick. And his remedy is, for people of our mindset, simply scandalous: We need to be saved.

Shown the perfection of God's law, we can suddenly realize the misery of our condition. And that realization prepares us to receive the incomparable gift that God has prepared for us: Jesus Christ, who condescended to take on our very flesh that we might be redeemed.

Jesus' redemption involves a claim God has on our entire lives. It requires a lifelong commitment of following Jesus so we can know him more and more fully. We don't earn such a relationship. We receive it initially, and thereafter we are called to respond by joining together with other Christians in engaging the practices to which Jesus points us.

In a recent *Catalyst* article, Henry Knight, professor of Wesleyan studies at Saint Paul School of Theology, connects the individual use of the means of grace with the overall character of a church. God's word is couched in the free love of Jesus Christ, but for that word to be effective in an evangelistic sense, it needs to be proclaimed by disciples who have had their own lives transformed.

Dr. Knight says the mission of the Church should recognize that "it is now God's purposes and promises to which we must attend. For God to be at the center of our worship and life takes discipline, that is, the regular and accountable practice of [the] means of grace. . . . To ignore these is to ignore [the] prime avenues God uses to enable us to receive and grow in new life."

The means of grace are essential to every aspect of discipleship. Such is Wesley's teaching, for us and for the Church to which we belong.

And that's a teaching worth taking seriously.

The Rev. Thompson maintains a blog at www.genxrising.com.
e-mail: andrew@mandatum.org.



Andrew Thompson

How full is your menu?

BY MARK WALTZ
Special Contributor

Occasionally I like to visit a local Mexican restaurant. As I scan the menu, I search for items I've never tasted. However, I often feel a little overwhelmed by the menu that gives me pages and pages of options.

Don't get me wrong; I love variety. I love the adventure of trying new foods, but even I feel overwhelmed by so many choices.

After 15 minutes of reading the daunting menu, I look up at the server and ask, "What do you recommend?" Decision made. I use both hands to give the encyclopedia back and wait for my surprise.

People want freedom

Every human being wants to be free. Nothing threatens our sense of liberty more than believing we have no options. So we insist on choices. Doubt that? Take a stroll through your local grocery store and count the variety of cereals, salad dressings or soups. We do want choices. But we are inundated with options.

In 2000, researchers studied the impact of choices on consumers. A specialty grocery store in California offered 24 flavors of jam under one brand label. During week one of the study, shoppers were offered the opportunity to taste any one of the 24 flavors. During week two, shoppers could taste only six of the 24 flavors, although all 24 were still available for purchase.

Only 3 percent of those consumers who were given the option of tasting all varieties made a purchase. Amazingly, when customers were given the option of tasting only six flavors, sales hit nearly 30 percent.

This study along with others suggests that when people are given too many choices, they are less inclined to choose anything at all.

You and I experience this all the time. And so do the guests, attendees and members of our churches.

Ever opened a church bulletin and played 52-Card Pickup? Colored fliers from every conceivable ministry fall to the floor: short-term mission trips, Sunday school classes, family picnics, small groups, the new message series, the building program, a comment card, student ministry, a blood drive.

It's not a bulletin; it's a catalog; it's an encyclopedia!

Through these fliers, we hope to achieve many goals. We hope that people will: be well-informed and able to make decisions about where and how



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When people are given too many choices, they are less inclined to choose anything at all. The same holds true for participating in church programs, says Mark Waltz.

to be involved in the church; see what the church is doing and begin to share its vision; and eagerly step into one or more of the options.

Instead, the results more closely mirror those in the Menlo Park grocery store. Turnout is poor, effort seems wasted and people's lives remain uninfluenced.

When we offer too many options, most people simply don't choose. If they do make a choice, they often don't follow up because they begin to doubt that their choice was the best way to spend their time and resources. After all, there were so many choices. How can they be certain they chose the best one?

Other menus in life

While our people are perusing the dozens of choices we're pushing, they're also making choices about whom and when and how to date or marry; their kids' sporting options; how to get everything done in their jobs; purchasing, maintaining or remodeling their homes—the list is endless.

So while we're encouraging people to join a small group, attend a marriage seminar or participate in a membership class, they're often not connecting our list of options to the list of decisions they're already trying to make. They're merely adding our list of options to the already overwhelming list of demands on their time, resources and energy.

The result is a crushing burden of choices that may lead to dismissing the church's options altogether.

As leaders, we must carefully and strategically consider how to help

people integrate all their choices so that they live out God's kingdom on earth. Otherwise we risk encouraging them to continue living life in categories where church and spiritual development have little to do with marriage, raising kids, work or prioritizing time, resources and energy.

Examine the way your church talks about the choices it offers. What if you intentionally talked about next-step options as though they really connected with the decisions people are already trying to make? Does the marriage seminar answer the questions people are already asking? Say so. Offer the seminar as a potential part of the journey they're already on.

When we make an announcement, print a promotion or mail an invitation, our people ask the same thing: "So what? How does that help me right where I am?"

I challenge you to scrutinize every activity on your church calendar and ask, "So what?" What are you hoping people will gain from each experience? Among all the choices people face, which steps do you believe would be best—not merely good—steps to take?

As you answer these questions, you'll begin to narrow your church's menu, allowing people to make reasoned decisions to belong and grow.

Mr. Waltz is pastor of connections at Granger Community Church in Indiana. This article is adapted from his book *Lasting Impressions: From Visiting to Belonging* (Group Publishing, 2009). Reprinted by permission from *Leading Ideas*, a free online newsletter of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary, available at churchleadership.com.

WESLEYAN WISDOM

Recovering the Arminian foundation of grace theology

BY DONALD W. HAYNES
UMR Columnist

My small childhood Methodist church on a five-point circuit was never served by a seminary graduate as pastor. Neither of my parents had gone to college. Our bookshelves were meagerly stocked, but included Hurlbut's *Story of the Bible* (which I practically memorized), a Cokesbury Worship Hymnal we used in Sunday school, a Methodist hymnal and a Methodist *Discipline*.

My family was committed to this church. My grandfather had given the property on which the church was built in 1904. The women in the church, beginning with my grandmother, taught Methodism to their children.

Their impact was great: From a congregation that never numbered over 35, I was the seventh to enter the ministry.

Mama taught me never to argue with my elders, but she also made clear that Methodists did not believe in predestination.

During my teen years I was influenced by the Nazarenes, so that by the time I left for college, Mama was afraid I might not be a Methodist preacher.

She waited until the night before I left to ask, "You *are* going to be a Methodist preacher, aren't you? I muttered something like, "I guess."

Then she said, "Son, as far back as we know, our people have been Methodists. That also means we are Arminian, not Calvinists, and I am sure you will hear a lot about both."

Sadly, Mama was wrong; I did not hear the name of Jacob Arminius in college and very little in seminary.

Becoming an Arminian

After my Daddy died in the summer when I turned 12, I worked as a hired hand for farmers. Most of them were Primitive Baptists who believed in a rigid form of Calvinism.

They called predestination "what is to be will be," long before a popular song crooned the words "Que Sera, Sera." They documented predestination with biblical proof texts to clinch their argument. Like young Wesley, I could not be convinced that God uses his omnipotence as a controller, but instead as a liberator.

Wesley saw human liberty as the greatest attribute of being created in

the image of God. I did not become an Arminian through pastors, professors or mentors, but rather through the same logic of Susanna Wesley—that God whose name and nature is love could not be responsible for anyone's being lost.

This amazing "Mother of Methodism" wrote to her collegiate son in 1725, "Tis certainly inconsistent with the justice and goodness of God to lay any man under either a physical or moral necessity of committing sin, and then to punish him for doing it." She continued, "faith should never derogate God's free grace nor impair the liberty of man."

By the late 19th century, the giants of Methodist theology came under the influence of German theologians and Arminianism was quietly muted. Fundamentalism in the early 20th century adopted a Calvinistic paradigm and emphasized "total depravity."

The cross was taught as Jesus' paying for our sins by placating the anger of God with his death. Some explained the atonement as a ransom paid to the devil and others, in the ethos of Old Testament sacrificial language. Both were theories of the atonement reflecting medieval feudalism.

Little doctrinal teaching

Until the Methodist-Evangelical United Brethren merger in 1968, Methodism opted out of most doctrinal teachings. The EUB Church retained more of its Wesleyan doctrine, which it brought to the table in 1968 in its Confession of Faith. But authors like Edwin Lewis did not get much traction. At that point in our history, the Methodist academic community was not interested in Wesleyan doctrine so much as ecumenical commonalities. There was almost no emphasis on Arminianism.

We have paid heavily for failing to accent our Arminian roots.

Twentieth-century fundamentalism was rooted in Calvinism, but most seminaries and mainline denominations either ignored or denigrated it. Fundamentalist Bible colleges were considered to be on the fringes of the American religious scene. Their media influence was minimal as the FCC catered instead to radio programming by denominations in the National Council of Churches. Only the Mutual Broadcasting System would air programs like Charles Fuller's "Old Fashioned Revival Hour."

By the end of the century, however, that had changed. Mainline denominations were declining in membership, attendance and influence in the

public square. And Jacob Arminius was almost forgotten.

In 2009, *Time* magazine, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Christianity Today* and just about everyone else was calling John Calvin the "comeback kid," declaring him one of the 10 most-often quoted people in America. In a world of moral ambivalence, the term "God's plan" has developed amazing traction.

Calvinism's influence

Bright young women fill seminars taught by neo-Calvinist Beth Moore. Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* is bedside reading for millions who are being taught that everything is preordained, preprogrammed and predetermined.

Mr. Warren writes: "Because God made you for a reason, he also decided when you would be born, every single detail of your body and the uniqueness of your personality, and how long you will live. He planned the days of your life in advance, choosing the exact time of your birth and your death.

"God also planned where you would be born and where you'd live. . . . It doesn't matter if your parents were good, bad or indifferent. God knew that those two individuals possessed exactly the right genetic makeup to create the custom 'you' he had in mind. They had the DNA God wanted to make you.

"Many children are unplanned by their parents, but they are not unplanned by God. God's purpose takes into account human error, even sin." This is hard-core Calvinism—nothing happens by accident.

Amazingly, this has tremendous appeal today. According to *The Chris-*

tian Science Monitor, "Calvinism's malleable doctrines and view of God as an all-powerful potentate who decides everything is winning over many Christians—especially the young. . . . [T]he movement's biggest impact may not be in the pews. It's in publishing circles and on Christian blogs, in divinity schools and at conferences . . . where the rock stars of Reformed theology explore such topics as 'The Sinner Neither Able Nor Willing: The Doctrine of Absolute Inability.'"

To me, this is scary.

Methodism has never been Calvinist. We need to learn what it means to be Arminian.

As John Wesley wrote in his "Image of God" sermon, "What made His image much plainer in his human offspring was the liberty he [humankind] originally enjoyed. . . . Man was made with an entire freedom either to keep or change his first estate. . . . He was the sole lord and sovereign of his own actions. . . . The liberty of man necessarily required that he should have some trial; else he would have no real choice, hence no liberty at all."

Wesley consistently refuted predestination in his preaching. The standard sermon "On Predestination" was preached in Ireland in 1773 and published in 1788, when Wesley was 85!

Human freedom

In this sermon, Wesley reasons, "If man were not free, he could not be accountable either for his thoughts, words or actions." Without freedom, "the stones of the earth would be as capable of reward and as liable to punishment as man. Yea it would be as absurd to ascribe either virtue or vice

to him as to ascribe it to the stock of a tree."

If United Methodism is to influence young adults, we must teach Arminianism again. The rise of Calvinism can be very damaging.

Yesterday I visited a 27-year-old woman whose mother called my lay leader to ask if I would visit. I drove 60 miles to a regional hospital to see this young woman. Her ovarian cancer has now metastasized. She can tolerate no more chemotherapy.

Only she and her fiancé were in the room. After a few minutes of conversation, I said: "Lisa and Tim, I know you must ask why this is happening. I am not here to tell you that I know, but I do want to reinforce that God is love and this cancer is not from your Heavenly Father.

"Jesus said, 'If you love your children, how much more does your Father in heaven love them. If they ask you for bread you will not give them a stone.'

"Lisa, God is weeping that you are not getting well."

She brightened and said, "I believe that. We were going where the preacher said that everything that ever happens to us is from God, and we quit."

This generation needs to hear about Wesley's understanding of human liberty as part and parcel of being created in God's image. This generation also needs to know that God is LOVE.

Dr. Haynes is a retired member of the Western North Carolina Conference, an adjunct professor at Hood Theological Seminary and current interim pastor of Kallam Grove Christian Church. e-mail: dhaynes11@triad.rr.com.

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■ **CONFIRMED** *Continued from page 1B*

ting to a Christian lifestyle, confirmands must first learn about the history and beliefs of the Christian faith, and the United Methodist Church in particular.

Learning their heritage

"Historically, confirmation has been defined as a comprehensive overview of what it means to be a Christian," said the Rev. Walt Marcum, minister to youth and families at Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas.

But relaying information about the roots and beliefs of the church is the easy part, he says. It's the actual formation of faith that requires time and experience.

"We have long viewed confirmation as a membership course on steroids," said the Rev. Andy Stoker, associate director of connectional ministries for children, youth, family and camping in the North Texas Conference. "Confirmation is not membership; confirmation is an extension of our baptismal covenant to recognize God is at work in our lives, presently and in the future."

Typically, confirmands are between 11 and 14 years old and have been nurtured in the church since their infant baptism. But Dr. Stoker believes confirmation should not end in middle school.

Instead, the process of confirmation should continue through young adulthood, he says, when the prefrontal cortex of the brain, which allows people to discern who they are and how they should behave, is fully developed. According to neuroscience research, that happens at about age 26 for females and 29 for males.

"Confirmation for a 12-year-old should simply be foundational," he said.

Confirmation programs also emphasize the formation of lifelong



After confirmation at Centenary UMC, youth serve the church as acolytes, lighting the altar candles as a symbol of the presence of Christ entering the worshipping community.

Christian disciplines and continued spiritual growth.

"We do a confirmation program, not a class," said Mr. Marcum, "because a program is more about experiences. We have retreats, worship services, mission trips and fellowship."

Jack Eckeberger, a sixth grader in the confirmation class of 2010 at Highland Park UMC, said the program was fun and involved much more than just reading the Bible.

"I thought confirmation was just another boring thing in church, but it wasn't," he said.

The United Methodist confirmation process should help youth recognize the need to also grow in social holiness, said Dr. Stoker. This year some 53 sixth graders and their parents from North Texas churches set off on a civil rights bus tour during Martin Luther King Day weekend. They visited Little Rock, Ark.; Memphis, Tenn.; Atlanta, Ga.; and Montgomery, Birmingham and Selma, Ala.

"For a young person to not know that history, they would be missing a significant part of what it means to be called Christian," said Dr. Stoker. "Deepening relationships with neighbors is just as important as deepening a young person's relationship with God."

Formation

At Centenary United Methodist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C., confirmation is a five-month-long class for seventh graders.

"My favorite thing is to walk into the room and see how full of hope the kids are," said Tammy Clark, the director of ministries to youth and their families. "They are just like clay waiting to be molded."

Ms. Clark usually starts the confirmation course off with a study of the Apostles' Creed. "Confirmation is faith formation," she said, "and where better to start than then the church's affirmation of faith?"

Although the confirmation process at Centenary UMC only lasts from January to May, confirmands build relationships that last much longer. Students in the program choose a mentor from the congregation and meet with them weekly, in addition to attending confirmation classes.

Mentors and confirmands both vow to invest in a relationship that extends beyond the course. They are encouraged to grow in their discipleship throughout the student's high school career.

"Beautiful bonds form when you talk about such intimate things as Jesus and God," said Ms. Clark. "These relationships become lifelong companionships."

Meeting one-on-one and worshipping together not only bring the men-



COURTESY PHOTO

Sixth graders from several churches in the North Texas Conference participate in a civil rights bus tour, visiting sites such as Little Rock's Central High School.

tor and mentee closer to each other, but also bring their families together, ultimately uniting the body of Christ.

"I believe this is absolutely how God intended the church to be," said Ms. Clark.

The process of confirmation ends with a young person's public declaration of faith during the confirmation service. This year the Highland Park sanctuary was overflowing with supportive friends, family and church members as the confirmation class of about 200 youth lined the altar and responded with "I do" to the historic questions of faith and Christian discipleship:

"Do you desire to be baptized and/or confirmed in the faith? Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world and repent of your sin? Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they may present themselves?"

"Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to all people of all ages, nations and races?"

Confirmation Sunday

During the ceremony, parents, family members, mentors and small group leaders lay hands on their confirmand as the pastor individually baptizes and confirms each young person. The class vows to be loyal to the church of Jesus Christ and the United Methodist Church, and in turn, the congregation renews its vow to support the church with its prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.

"It feels so good to be a part of the church and to know so many people

are there for me," said Highland Park confirmand Jack after the service.

The entire congregation should be involved in the confirmation process, said Ms. Hay at GBOD. Besides mentoring roles, adults in some churches participate in Bible studies that parallel with what the young people are learning in their confirmation classes.

"For the congregation," said Dr. Stoker, "confirmation ought to be a recognition of their own affirmation of faith."

More than 100 parents are involved with the confirmation program at Highland Park, leading small groups, helping teach and organizing events. For them, it's a way to fulfill the vows they make at a child's baptism, said Mr. Marcum.

Churches need to be intentional about helping their young people become fully involved in the congregational life once they are confirmed, adds Ms. Hay. But that doesn't always happen.

"We treat confirmation as a rite of passage," she said, "and once a young person completes confirmation, we say they are ready for leadership in the local church. We just don't live that out."

Youth and adults would each benefit from post-confirmation curriculum and activities, Ms. Hay said. "Christians are always growing in their discipleship, and confirmation is just the beginning."

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PHOTOS BY TAMMY CLARK/CENTENARY UMC

At Centenary UMC in Winston-Salem, N.C., confirmands and mentors, also known as "shepherds," play games to get acquainted with one another, including having youth throw marshmallows into their mentors' mouths.