



THE MISSOURI METHODISTS



MAY 2019

School Partners

Missouri Conference Awards

Crisis in Mozambique



Fred Koenig, Editor

Published by The Missouri
Conference of the United
Methodist Church
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Columbia, MO 65202

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ABOUT THE COVER
Students at the Wildcat
Academy alternative
school in Harrisonville
listen to presentations
regarding how to obtain a
job at Harrisonville United
Methodist Church.

A Trail Forward

If you've ever been in New Orleans and found you wanted to get back to Missouri as quickly as possible, you may have found yourself taking a long drive across a lot of water. In 1956 a road was built straight through the middle of Lake Ponchartrain. It was the longest continuous bridge over water in the world. It didn't connect people to anywhere they couldn't get before, it just made it more convenient for the people of New Orleans to get to the north side of the lake, cutting down their drive time by about half an hour. Thirteen years later another bridge was built right next to it, making a tie for the longest continuous bridge over water in the world only a few yards from the first one.

Clearly, the 1950s and 60s were eras in which the people of the United States thought we could do big things.

In 2016, the utility company that owns the Rock Island railway that runs across Missouri announced they would donate the corridor to the state to be used as a trail, similar to the popular KATY trail that runs across a different part of the state now. They pulled up at the tracks and railroad ties and cut back the brush that had overgrown the line, leaving behind a cleared, dirt path. The state would need to repair bridges that were built to support large trains filled with coal and make sure they are strong enough to support walkers and bicyclists.

Whereas most state parks involve an expensive purchase of land, in this case all of the land was being donated. For three years, the state has been reluctant to accept this donation, and the fate of the corridor is still undetermined. Having a trail across mid-Missouri may be more than we can handle. When it gets muddy we will have to put gravel on it. We would need to keep the brush cut back. We're thinking that collectively, as a state, having a trail through mid-Missouri may just be more than we are capable of pulling off.

Apparently in 2019 we are no longer in the mindset of trying to do big things.

Thank God for the church, where people of faith gather who aren't afraid to try to do big things. Within the United Methodist Church in Missouri people are excited to be moving forward. I worry about a lot of things, but I never worry about running out of stories to fill the pages of this magazine. Even if it was being published weekly there would still be ample stories to tell about United Methodist in Missouri who aren't afraid to try to do big things. Practically every story I write for this magazine involves people stepping up to try to do something new. In each case, those people could have had a mindset that said, "I can barely handle what I have going on now. I don't need to take on anything more."

This month you'll read about the United Methodist Church in Harrisonville partnering with their local alternative school. You'll read about the recipients of several Conference awards, all of whom decided they were capable of doing the exceptional. You'll read about mission work accomplishments and opportunities across the street and around the world.

Politically, societally, culturally, it is certainly easy to get overwhelmed with the tasks we have to do day in, day out, just to keep things going. It's the world we live in. I continue to be blown away by the United Methodists in Missouri who have a mindset of abundance and continue to help others around them stretch toward things people may have not thought we were capable of.

Fred Koenig, Editor
Missouri Conference Publications



VISION The Missouri Conference will relentlessly lead our churches to become outwardly focused and spiritually centered Christ followers.

MISSION Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



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From Fellowship to True Hospitality

If people visit your church once or twice but don't return, you may have a "guest readiness" issue, according to Dr. Kim Pope-Seiberling, professor at Lindsey Wilson College and elder in the West Ohio Conference.

It is not unusual to hear a parishioner say, "We are a friendly church. Why don't visitors come back?" Many congregations struggle to understand why they get visitors who seem to enjoy their visit and say they are returning soon, but never visit again. This can be extremely frustrating, especially for a congregation seeking to grow. The question is, "Why don't they come back?"

Many people can relate to the stories that are shared with me by someone seeking to find a church home. They are generally single or married families who have recently moved to a new area, not really knowing anyone and hoping to find a welcoming community of believers. They are looking for a church where they can grow spiritually, where people have fun being in ministry with others, where you find a real sense the church is supportive of people during difficult times. They are seeking ministry settings that are diverse and inclusive and that offer inspiring and life-giving worship. Too often what they experience when visiting a church are greeters who briefly shake their hands with a smile, show them where the coffee is and then leave them to introduce themselves to others. They are handed a bulletin or flyer with announcements of

activities that are poorly explained in worship service. Visitors then go into the sanctuary trying to navigate the safest place to sit where they can feel comfortable in a setting that feels pretty cold. They are then asked during the greeting time to greet the person nearest to them. People are good at saying, "We are glad you are here" and then turn away immediately to enthusiastically hug their friends – often holding longer conversations that are met with laughter as the worship leader says it's time to sit down. Guests are then invited to fill out a visitor's card that they don't have enough time to complete as the ushers come by.

As the guests are leaving, they are greeted by the pastor who shares appreciation for their coming to worship. They then get into their car and say to themselves: The message and service were good overall, but I felt like an uninvited guest at a family reunion.

The truth is, every church believes it is a welcoming and friendly fellowship, but that is not always the case. Because the friendship circles of the members are so strong, guests are isolated and closed to the meaningful relationships spiritual seekers want today. Radical hospitality is at the core of the Gospel, and we believe that God longs to be in relationship with everyone. There are several factors that suggest hospitality is more than fellowship with one another:

- Surveys have shown that approximately 80 percent of people who visit a congregation come because they were personally invited.

Radical hospitality is at the core of the Gospel, and we believe that God longs to be in relationship with everyone.

Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

HEBREWS 13: 1-2

- The majority of seekers who visit a congregation decide within the first 10 minutes or less following their arrival at church whether or not they will return.
- The motivation for many who will decide to return to a particular church is often the personal connections that were developed by members of the congregation rather than the greeters or even the pastor.
- The follow-up with first time guests is critical to visitors feeling their presence mattered to the worshipping community.
- Such hospitality is a larger part of intentional discipleship.

How do we move from fellowship to a culture of hospitality? What can we do to ensure that first-time guests know they are welcomed, loved and invited to come back again? Let me share a few ways for us to be a good host – to welcome strangers as they yearn for meaning, relationships, service, worship and a place of hope.

Create a hospitality team that has a vision of how its efforts turn casual interactions into meaningful engagement with newcomers. Be intentional about introducing yourself to new guests, and see that they are introduced to others so that they are familiar with a few people as they worship.

Develop signage that helps people know how to find their way around your facility. Make sure your space is inviting from the minute people drive up to the church. Think about the landscape of the church property and entering to find a warm decluttered space inside.

Regularly teach and preach hospitality to the entire congregation.

Offer uplifting worship and a relevant Word that help newcomers to better understand the Bible and the power of prayer in their lives.

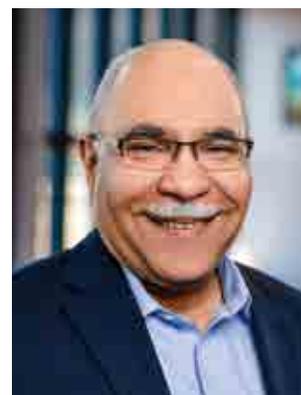
Help guests know what is happening as they worship – whether it's taking time to share how communion will be served or highlight important announcements. It is imperative to be brief and clear.

Listen to the newcomers' stories and questions they may have about the church. Gather feedback on how guests respond to your church through surveys, interviews and reviewing with your leadership team what you do well and what needs improvements.

Make sure your website answers key questions as church guests are seeking information about the location, staff and activities of the church.

Prepare yourself for guests. Extend hospitality that is felt even in the parking lot and outside the front doors. Have greeters with umbrellas on a rainy day, and especially care for people arriving on snowy days like we had this year.

May you be blessed with new people who return because they have experienced God's love and grace: the stranger, the weary traveler, an angel, the very presence of Christ.



Cody Collier, Assistant to the Bishop, The Missouri Conference of the United Methodist Church

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS



One of 25 students from the Wildcat Academy practices his interview skills with one of several adult volunteers conducting mock interviews.

Church Connects with Alternative School



In a church conference room at Harrisonville UMC, a local business leader asked the high school student she was interviewing basic job interview questions.

“What have you accomplished that you are most proud of?” she asked the 16 year-old.

“Well, I’ve been sober for quite a while,” he responded. “I used to drink and do drugs a lot, but I haven’t now for about a year.”

In the classroom next door another interviewer queried a different 16 year-old.

“Here’s just a light, fun question: If you could be any person for day, like a celebrity or someone from history, who would it be?”

“That’s easy, definitely my girlfriend,” he replied.

“Really, that’s interesting. Why your girlfriend?” she asked.

“Because she’s always saying to me, ‘You just don’t understand what it’s like to be pregnant.’ So I’d like to be her for a day, so I’d know what it’s like.”

Down the hall, a manager of home care services interviewed a third young man.

“Tell me about a stressful time in your life and how you dealt with it,” he said.

“Just the other week, when my brother was arrested and taken to jail. That was really stressful,” he said. “I guess I dealt with it by forgiving him, but I haven’t told him I forgive him. I’m not ready for that yet.”

A fourth teenager began each interview by explaining to the interviewer that the disfigurement of his face was the result of a suicide attempt.

These four were a small sample of 25 students from the Wildcat Academy, who participated in mock interviews that day. The alternative school is a place where many of the high school students are grappling with adult problems. For the past four years, Harrisonville UMC has been extending a hand to help.

The mock job interviews are a big aspect of the church-school partnership that occur in April. The church recruits volunteers from the community to interview the students

as though they were interviewing them for a job, and then provide them with some coaching on how they could more strongly present themselves in an interview.

The process is very organized. The interviewers are given a list of questions they can ask, score sheets for each student they interview and a schedule to follow. Doors are kept open and a hall monitor keeps people moving to ensure the schedule is followed. Although the interviews are just for practice, there have been students hired from the process. Local labor union representatives participate, and students have been hired into union jobs from making contacts through the program. One year they took the students to visit a chiropractor to learn about his business. Now one of the students from that group is about to complete chiropractor school.

The interviews and vocational connections are just a small part of the partnership between the church and school. Initially volunteers from the church went to the school, but now the students take the school van over to the church each month for the day. It's a low-key time of relaxation and relationship-building most months, with celebrations for 90 percent or better attendance and birthdays.

Rev. Kevin Shelton found the school very willing to accept a partner. "There wasn't really any separation of church and state issues here. They gave us a lot of leeway," Shelton said.

The church volunteers do recognize that they are there to support the students, not convert them. Shelton says the volunteers in the school partnership program have built relationships with the students and their families.

"We weren't reaching them any other way," he said. People who otherwise would have remained strangers



now have a friendly relationship when they see each other around town.

The church initially started partnering with the Wildcat Academy four years ago as part of the Bright Futures program. Bright Futures is an initiative that started at Joplin and is now in many schools around the state. The organization strives to help students achieve success by matching student needs with resources through partnerships between the schools and the community.

"A lot of these kids are working jobs, or have babies, or have other issues that make participation in a regular school especially challenging," said Liz Morse, Harrisonville UMC Wildcat Academy team leader. "The school has told us they've noticed a difference due to our positive influence. We enjoy building these relationships. It's a win/win."

“A lot of these kids are working jobs, or have babies, or have other issues that make participation in a regular school especially challenging. The school has told us they’ve noticed a difference due to our positive influence. We enjoy building these relationships. It’s a win/win.” LIZ MORSE

During the monthly visits to the church the students can work on art projects, play sports or just spend time talking with the adults. Sometimes there are special themes, like teaching the students how to make a Thanksgiving dinner.

“Being at the church puts the teachers in a different environment with the students and helps them build relationships,” Morse said. “This has been a positive thing for the church and school from the get-go. It doesn’t take them much to do it. We have five to six volunteers making a one day a month commitment to be here. Once you get it planned it’s really not a lot of work.”

As a graduation gift, the church give the students a Bible, movie gift certificate and roses. When the program first started, the graduation celebration at the church was the only graduation the Wildcat Academy students. Now, they are also allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony at the high school.

“These kids are in a system where they are looked upon with suspicion,” Shelton said. “The issues these kids are



dealing with tend to be the same poverty-related issues that you can find all over Missouri.”

Morse said as the school’s relationship between the church matures, it has continued to be an uplifting ministry for the volunteers involved as well as the students, with its overall purpose meeting a basic need that every young person has.

“Our goal is for our volunteers to be positive, loving role models,” Morse said.

MOZAMBIQUE HIT HARD BY

Cyclone



1.85M

Affected
People

>198K

Houses Destroyed
or Damaged

598

Deaths

ne Idai

When disaster strikes in an underdeveloped country, reporting on the tragedy is often sketchy at first, as major media outlets aren't on the scene. Days after the storm multiple news outlets were reporting that Cyclone Idai was one of the worst storms ever to make landfall in the Southern Hemisphere. The month following the storm has only and unfortunately confirmed these fears.

A United Nations report delivered in early April began to detail the scope of the tragedy. The numbers are staggering: 1.8 million acres of crops were ruined, 198,300 houses were destroyed, 151,000 students were forced out of school and 3,344 classrooms were lost. 131,000 people were still sheltering across 136 temporary sites, 1,741 cases of cholera have been reported and the death toll has climbed to 598. The spread of waterborne diseases, daily impacts of lost work and increased scarcity of food linger. The situation for many remains critical.

In addition to the national tragedy, several United Methodist churches and structures were likewise damaged in the storm. Central UMC and Manga UMC had just dedicated new worship spaces in December — both were destroyed by the storm. The Dondo Orphanage was completing a second dormitory facility when Idai arrived and tore the roof off both the original and soon-to-be complete building, leaving the children exposed. Three wells drilled through Mozambique Initiative were flooded and compromised. The North Conference Office in Beira was flooded and its contents destroyed. Many United Methodist buildings and congregations have been affected.

The United Methodist Church in Mozambique has responded. In the days after the storm, Ezequiel Nhantumbo, Mozambique Initiative Representative, reported that the storm ignited an intense solidarity movement among the

United Methodist Conferences of Mozambique. The Gondola Training Center, for example, both sustained damage and served as an emergency facility for people in the local community. Churches from across the country gathered resources in worship to send aid to the affected areas.

Disaster funds in the Mozambique Initiative were immediately deployed to support emergency efforts in the North Conference region. Bishop Nhanala and Ezequiel Nhantumbo are identifying the areas of most need, deploying funds and analyzing how the Mozambique Initiative might best help in the days to come. Donations received now from individuals and churches are providing immediate and emergency support.

Long term recovery is the pressing need, and projects that involve securing clean water, supporting access healthcare in affected areas and finding ways to help stabilize local economies will be increasingly important. The Mozambique Initiative is well-positioned to support in all of these ways. We will need partners, however, to realize lasting change.

Maybe you have considered being a part of our collective work in Mozambique — now is a great time to become engaged. Perhaps your church has had a sister church in Mozambique for years, and it is time to restart or strengthen that connection. Transformation is the goal of our work: Transforming the community, transforming the heart and mind, and transforming the body. We are trusting that transformation will occur as we work together to find healing and hope.

If you would like to know more about the Mozambique Initiative or how you can become more involved, please contact Rev. Lucas Endicott at lendicott@moumethodist.org and visit www.mzinitiative.com.



PROGRESS IN PUERTO RICO

STORY & PHOTOS BY SARAH DUMAS

Around this time a year ago, a team of four college students and a pastor from Missouri began repairing damage from Hurricane Maria in Vieques, Puerto Rico. At that time the goal was to fix the roof of the guesthouse so future mission teams wouldn't have to worry about rain coming in.

The island was still littered with debris, several businesses that would normally be in the peak of tourist season were closed and the church didn't have a roof. Resources were slim, so the team relied on two hammers, two shovels, a pick axe and a ladder to build six columns to support the roof. An efficient system for teams to come to the island was not in place yet, so they got a taste of what it was like to be a local for a week, including experiencing life in Spanish.

This team of five trailblazers led to a team of 60 students and adults in 2019 when five college-age ministries joined Next Generation Ministries to head to this beautiful country for two weeks.

A lot has changed since that first team, with nearly \$100,000 of a \$150,000 goal being raised and over 300 people from Missouri serving on over 32 teams. In the past year, the overall mission goal in Vieques has moved from repairing the guesthouse to getting the roof back on the church to now serving at homes in the community.

Students from Southeast Missouri State University, Truman State University, Central Methodist University, University of Missouri-Columbia and Northwest Missouri State University saw the best of Puerto

Rico. With the help of radically hospitable translators, teams were able to see a new beach nearly every day, tourist attractions and shops, and some of the best local food there was to offer.

These daily rewards were necessary after long work hours in the hot sun. Students broke into small groups to serve at different houses around the community with the goal of transforming the house into a home by the end of the week. To achieve this, teams helped in a wide variety of tasks including demolition, power washing away dirt and mold, making rebar, plaster, painting the interior and exterior of homes, and many other odd jobs that make a big difference. Considering many of them had never used a hammer, it was inspiring to see groups step out of their comfort zones and do whatever possible to serve the homeowners.

During the first week of spring break two teams were relocated to Arecibo and Patillas due to repairs being done to the ferries that travel to Vieques. While the trip didn't go as planned, both groups were still positive and walked away with an unforgettable week.

Despite the hard work and improvement that was made on the physical buildings in all three communities, the biggest impact of the week was made in the relationships built between Missouri teams and the homeowners, construction teams, site hosts, translators, community members and with each other. While it was important to work as hard as possible, repairs would be completed no matter who did them, so groups were mindful of the significance a personal connection could make because that was the once in a lifetime opportunity.

While there, teams studied the story of the Good Samaritan, being reminded every morning that it doesn't take someone special to make a difference because God works in each and every one of us despite our shortcomings.

“But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil



and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him...’ Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’ The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise,’” Luke 10:25-34, 36-37.

The story of the Good Samaritan teaches that it doesn't take the expert or the priest or the “qualified” to make the biggest impact in the lives of those who need it, but rather it's the one who stops, pays attention and shows mercy that inherits eternal life. Many times, students are forgotten as useful tools in growing the Kingdom of God; they don't have disposable income, they're constantly preparing for the next final, and they're learning how to be on their own for the first time. But it was these students that stopped, paid attention and showed mercy to the communities of Puerto Rico.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019 OFFERINGS

OPENING WORSHIP (FRIDAY)

Pathway Out Of Poverty

Empowering the next generation for a different tomorrow is one of the Conference's priorities. The Pathway Out of Poverty initiative dreams of supporting children in Missouri with resources for increased literacy and school success. Contributing financially to this collective effort provides resources for local church initiatives, training and holy conferencing as we seek to make a transformative difference in lives of children across our state.

MEMORIAL SERVICE (SATURDAY)

Puerto Rico Disaster Response

Missouri's commitment to assist with the Hurricane Maria disaster recovery efforts of the Iglesia Metodista de Esperanza in Vieques, Puerto Rico, is nearly complete. Teams from across Missouri have traveled to help, individuals and churches have contributed financially to help this community where over 40 percent live in poverty, and poco a poco (little by little) change has come. Your financial gift will add a blessing and provide the necessary funds to finish our commitment, including completion of the children's ministry area, a kitchen for healthy cooking classes, and the replacement of the water-damaged worship stage and altar.

COMMISSIONING & ORDINATION (SUNDAY)

Mozambique Initiative

In late March, Mozambique was hit by one of the worst cyclones to make landfall in the southern hemisphere. The numbers are staggering: 1.8 million acres of crops destroyed, 198,000 houses either severely damaged or destroyed, 3,334 classrooms lost, and worst of all, 598 deaths. In the days following the storm, the Mozambique Initiative responded. Disaster resources were immediately released, and MI joined in the solidarity movement that began within the Mozambican Conferences. Resources are in short supply for their long-term recovery. Your donation today will transform the community as MI works with local churches to restore clean water, provide access to healthcare and restart education in affected areas. This is the work of lasting change.

FESTIVAL OF SHARING ANNUAL CONFERENCE COLLECTIONS

WRAP US IN FLEECE!

Blankets can bring warmth and comfort to a variety of populations. Please bring unused, pre-cut, solid colored fleece measuring 60 x 80 inches.

**BRING TO:
CONVENTION CENTER MAIN ENTRANCE
JUNE 7-9, 2019
SPRINGFIELD, MO**

- We will take these pieces of fleece to the Sharefests and have volunteers cut and tie the edges, weaving a little bit of love as we work.
- Fabric of the above dimensions will allow us to make queen sized blankets.
- Acceptable fabric can be purchased at Wal-Mart, JoAnn Fabrics, Hobby Lobby, and on Amazon.
- Checks with the memo line of "Blankets" will be accepted in lieu of fleece. Bring to Festival of Sharing info booth in the Exhibit Area.

leadership EXCELLENCE

Southwest District Superintendent Mark Statler is not leaving the Missouri Conference Cabinet, but he will soon be serving churches in Missouri in a new way. This June he will be appointed to Conference staff as the new Director of Leadership Excellence.

“We’re very excited to have Rev. Mark Statler appointed as Director of Leadership Excellence,” Bishop Bob Farr said.

“He has extensive local church and leadership development experience that will make him invaluable to ministerial leaders across the Conference. He has been active on the Board of Ordained Ministry for several years and recently chaired our dCOM task force, so he is very familiar with the vision and direction of BOM and the Center.”

Statler said he is humbled by the appointment and knows he has a big role to fill.

“I hope to bring as much energy and growth to this area as Karen has. She has done amazing work in her tenure in this position,” Statler said.

Karen Hayden moved to Missouri from Mississippi to serve at the Director of the

Center for Pastoral Excellence. She personally structured many of the practices that are in place in that office now and most recently led it through a transition from Pastoral Excellence to Leadership Excellence, an effort to be more inclusive of laity leadership development. She will now be taking an appointment as lead pastor of King’s Way United Methodist Church in Springfield.

In Hayden’s role on Conference staff she initially worked closely with Bishop Bob Farr, who was Director of the Center for Congregational Excellence when she first came to Missouri. Now as Bishop Farr, he is excited that she will be continuing her ministry here in Missouri while serving the local church.

“Karen spearheaded the creation of the Center for Leadership Excellence as we know it,” Bishop Farr said. “During her tenure as director, she laid the foundation for the Center’s good work and has helped it become the core of our recruiting, discernment, training, continuing education, peer learning, mentoring and coaching for clergy and laity alike.”

That experience will lend itself well to her new role.

“I find joy in helping churches find ways to better engage in ministry.”

MARK STATLER

“Karen’s pastoral commitment to the local church, experience in larger church systems and gift for mentoring clergy and laity will be a blessing to King’s Way,” Bishop Farr said.

Leadership Excellence has also offered many learning opportunities and resources related to clergy wellness. Statler said that as a District Superintendent, he did a lot of personnel work related to clergy health and wellness, with similar goals to that of Leadership Excellence.

“That helped me gain insight around various issues related to clergy wellness,” he said, expressing that he looks forward to continuing that work.

He also enjoyed working with his District Committee on Ordained Ministry to help make their process more local-pastor friendly. He enjoyed his time as a District Superintendent.

“I liked going into local churches and helping them find ways to strengthen their ministries. I find joy in helping churches find ways to better engage in ministry.”

Statler is the son of a retired elder from the Missouri East Conference, Jerry Statler. Statler graduated from high school in St. Clair and earned a degree in music from Central Methodist College (now University). Following college he was recruited to Platte Woods UMC to be a youth director.

Feeling the call to ministry, Statler attended Duke Divinity School. Upon completion of his studies, he spent his first year of appointment in Scotland. Then it was back to Missouri, where he started out serving the Liberty/



Pleasant Grove charge near Chillicothe. He was then on to Sunrise and Asbury in Springfield, Fredericktown, and Arch in Hannibal. He was associate pastor for disciples and missions at Saint Paul’s UMC in Joplin from 2009 to 2013.

The appointment change means Statler will be relocating from Joplin to Columbia. Statler’s father was on staff at Missouri UMC in Columbia when Statler was born, and was baptized in that church. Statler was also ordained there, but this will be his first time living in Columbia since he was a small child.

Statler’s youngest daughter is currently in the sixth grade. His oldest daughter just completed her degree at the University of Missouri-Columbia. His son will start school there in the fall and was surprised to learn his father was being appointed to Columbia.

“He asked if it was too late to apply to Arkansas,” Statler said.

alice fowler

NAMED SOUTHWEST DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

If the name “Rev. Alice Fowler” sounds familiar, it may be because she was the preacher for the Sunday morning worship service at Annual Conference Session in 2015. It will soon be a name you hear more often: Fowler will be the newest member of the Missouri Conference Cabinet this June.

Fowler, currently pastor of Trinity UMC in Bloomfield, will be the next Southwest District Superintendent.

“Rev. Fowler has offered excellent pastoral leadership in her ministry among us in Missouri, loves the local church, and has earned the respect and support of her clergy colleagues,” Bishop Farr said. “We look forward to adding Alice’s voice and insight to the Cabinet, and I know the Southwest District will be in capable hands.”

Fowler is the daughter of a Methodist pastor and experienced some big moves growing up, the biggest being for education rather than appointments. She was born in South Dakota, moved to Kentucky when her father attended Asbury Theological Seminary, and moved to New Jersey when her father continued his

education at Princeton. She spent most of her youth in Nebraska, graduating from high school in Milford, Nebraska, and earning a Bachelor’s of Science in music education from Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln.

A career in ministry wasn’t on her radar at that point – she was planning on a career in teaching music in elementary school. She moved back to Kentucky, this time for her husband to attend seminary at Asbury.

When he finished and they moved back to Nebraska, rather than returning to teaching she focused on raising their three children and helping with the church in various clergy spouse roles, like teaching Sunday school classes, directing kids club and playing the piano.

When her children were grown she assumed she would go back to teaching and was accepted into a graduate school program to take a couple of additional classes that she needed. But as time drew close, it didn’t feel like the right course. Her husband asked, “If you could study anything, what would it be?” “I answered ‘Theology,’” she said. “The question clarified in my mind where my heart was.” She

“Serving Van Buren was a very affirming experience for me. I felt my call stronger and stronger.” ALICE FOWLER



took her first class and loved it. But she still clung to her resistance to becoming a pastor.

“I thought, a Master of Divinity is versatile. Perhaps I could teach or write,” she said.

It was her turn at Asbury, but rather than moving there again she participated in their distance-learning program, where most of her classes were completed at home, interspersed with intensive, short-duration classroom experiences at Asbury. She did this on her own, not informing the Conference or Board of Ordained Ministry.

But her district superintendent found out. When Rev. Harold Foster died, Fowler was asked if she would start serving as a supply preacher at Van Buren UMC. She said no.

“Then my 80 year-old father said he would help me out by filling in once a month, and that kind of shamed me into doing it,” she said.

That preaching supply request soon led to a part-time appointment. Once she finally found herself in the pulpit, her reluctance fell away. “Serving Van Buren was a very affirming

experience for me,” she said. “I felt my call stronger and stronger.”

Following Van Buren, she was appointed to Trinity in Bloomfield, also in the Southeast District. Despite her reluctance to enter pastoral ministry, the experience of living it has been very rewarding.

“I have loved seeing people get a hold of faith and experience a new life in Christ,” she said. “It is a privilege to walk with them through their highest highs and their lowest lows in life.”

Serving the local church isn’t always easy, but she has found it is always fulfilling. And she’s looking forward to serving as a district superintendent.

“I’m excited to see what opportunities I will have to help churches make disciples of Jesus Christ,” she said.

Stepping Out in Faith

Conference Recognizes Courageous Leaders

It takes faith to push forward and try something new. For the people being honored at the Missouri Conference Award banquet on April 10, having the faith to take that initiative yielded great fruit toward their purpose of making disciples.

“We’re celebrating individuals who have given of themselves in a special way,” said Rev. Cody Collier, special assistant to the bishop, as the evening kicked-off.

For the third year, people being honored with annual awards were recognized at a special event, held this year at the Country Club of Missouri. Bishop Bob Farr added that all steps forward in ministry are a group effort.

“These leaders have done great work, and behind each of them were a whole group of people working to make a difference in the kingdom,” he said.

Marble Mission Award

The first award presented was the Robert and Martha Marble Mission Award to Mary Ann Sander. Mary Ann, with her husband, Tony, were one of the first couples who attended the first Walk to Emmaus, when Rev. Brent Mustoe was pastor. He introduced the Walk to Emmaus in the (then) Missouri East conference. Mary Ann did each of the roles involved in team service and served on the Emmaus Board for many years. She has also



Mary Ann Sander, second from the left, received the Marble Mission Award.

had a lifetime of experience in mission. “We were blessed to have Rev. Cleo Kottwitz introduce us to organizations like Heifer Project International and Habitat for Humanity,” Sander said in accepting her award.

Her passion for mission took her to Haiti and Peru, but she is also engaged in mission close to home. Her church, Centralia UMC, has a school supply giveaway that is held each August in preparation for the beginning of school. They supply about 130 students, from kindergarten through high school. Sanders keeps supplies year-round, and the families in her community know that they can come to church throughout the year if children are in need of them.

For more than 10 years she has headed up the Free Café at her church. This takes place the last Wednesday of the month, every month. She plans, purchases food, and with other volunteers, prepares

the meals. It is fully supported by donations, no money is requested or expected. Extra food is sent home with those needing it, often supplying meals for a few days. There is even a service for those who cannot get out to have food delivered to their homes.

Sanders has been a co-leader in an annual coat giveaway project, which coincides with her church's garage sale. There are normally over 120 coats given away each year, from infant to adult.



Rev. Dr. Lydia Pavlovna Istomina, fourth from the left, received the Unity Award.

Unity Award

The second award presented was the Unity Award, which celebrates the spirit and work of an individual in light of the values of the Conference with particular emphasis on inclusiveness, justice and worth. The award was presented to Rev. Dr. Lydia Pavlovna Istomina of Francis Street First UMC in St. Joseph.

“Rev. Dr. Pavlovna Istomina believes that the tapestry of American culture is not complete without including the stories of everyone, especially the marginalized,” said Director of Mission, Service and Justice Tina Harris.

“Working with diverse communities, she applies the principles of the Shalom Community and lays the groundwork for spiritual, economic and social change.”

Istomina started reaching out to Slavic speaking immigrants in October 2017. Since that first gathering, she has hosted several opportunities for this diverse group to fellowship and serve together. These events have been a bright light of

inclusiveness in a dreary atmosphere of division. Over the past year, Istomina led her church to participate in the Conference priorities by partnering with a local elementary school. This partnership offers ESL classes for the students and created connection between the church and the students' families.

In addition, Istomina held a “Keep Families Together” worship service in conjunction with The Immigration Alliance.

Approximately 200 people participated in this moving worship experience last summer. All faith communities were represented including the Islamic Center. They worshiped and they served through giving. They collected 160 pairs of tennis shoes and sent to the local schools.



Red Bridge UMC accepts the One Matters Discipleship Award.

One Matters Discipleship Award

The “One Matters” Discipleship Award was presented by Discipleship Ministries General Secretary Junius Dotson via video to Red Bridge UMC. From 2017 to 2018, Red Bridge UMC went from one profession of faith to 12 professions including four confirmations.

Red Bridge has gone “all-in” on reaching new families with children. The church is very intentional about connecting with their weekday child care ministries. Pastors and laity are involved in welcoming and offering opportunities for parents to talk and learn. Red Bridge has designed a regular family-oriented worship experience called Messy Church, the focus of one of the New Places for New People videos debuting at Missouri Annual Conference 2019, in order to better connect with families in their community.

The general focus of including and resourcing young families led these families who had not been involved in church to join with the Red Bridge faith community.



Mitch Buhman, second from the left, received the Denman Award.

Denman Award – Laity Recipient

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award honors one lay and one clergy for their exceptional ministry of evangelism - expressed in Word (what), Sign (why) and Deed (how) – that brings people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.

Mitch Buhman was the laity recipient of this year’s award. Director of Congregational Excellence Roger Ross introduced him as a high energy, self-starter with a passion for showing people that they are loved by Christ, not just telling them.

“He has always found joy in serving others, and this year, he had the opportunity to take the lead in starting a new site of his home church,” Ross said. “He could hardly wait to see what God could do with his energy and passion to serve those with a spiritual need.”

Kearney was growing on the west side of town. Buhman gathered a team of 20 energetic, Christ-filled leaders from the originating congregation and formed them into teams to design and lead various parts of a brand-new service. This new service would meet in a school gymnasium with a casual yet intimate atmosphere where everyone can be fully known and fully loved.

The new site launched on December 2, 2018. So far in 2019, they have had 16 baptisms, formed three small groups, and welcomed and engaged in

worship with over 100 new people. The site has an average worship attendance of 175.

Everyone has an opportunity to serve in Sunday morning operations which opens the door for endless opportunities for conversation and ministry. Through relationships being formed and connections be made, those in need are being loved through all sorts of hard life situations: addiction, divorce, death, parenting struggles. Their ministry has an amazing ability to love and support their new congregation with exceptional hospitality, relationship and prayer, while providing them with an intimate and worshipful Sunday morning experience.



Tim Schulte, second from the left, received the Denman Award.

Denman Award – Clergy Recipient

This year’s recipient of the Denman Evangelism Award for Clergy goes to Rev. Tim Schulte. After leaving a 15-year career as a general contractor, Schulte entered ministry as a High School Youth Director at Eureka UMC in 2008. Since then he has served as the Middle School and High School Youth Director and Associate Licensed Local Pastor.

Upon completing his course of study at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary he was appointed full-time pastor of Eureka UMC on February 12, 2017. Since his appointment, Eureka has welcomed 69 new members, 25 baptisms, 44 professions of faith and has confirmed over 20 people with 8 currently enrolled in 2019. Upon obtaining his local licensed pastor status in July 2018 he was appointed senior pastor.

Schulte began to serve on the local ski patrol to encounter people outside the walls of the church.

In the winter storm of 2010, instead of closing the church due to the large amount of snow, Schulte decided to hold a ski contest in the church parking lot. Through Schulte's leadership and several volunteers, truckloads of snow were brought to the church and the front entry steps of the sanctuary were turned into a ski ramp. The parking lot was turned into a ski contest area for barrel jumps and other ski tricks. A wood-fire warming station was set up for guests and participants. Coffee and hot chocolate was served to make people feel welcomed. This event hosted over 100 people.

On December 30, 2015 tragedy hit home at Eureka UMC. The region was decimated by torrential rains and most of the local area was submerged in a historic 1000-year flooding event. Schulte personally spent a week responding to the clean up using a Bobcat skid steer. When UMCOR brought disaster relief buckets to the church, Schulte loaded up the church van and spent days delivering these buckets to the local people devastated by the flooding.

Schulte became a founding member of the Eureka Disaster Relief Committee in 2016, and he currently serves as chairman. Because of his selfless desire to reach the lost and hurting members of our society, the Eureka community came to know that Eureka UMC was a focal point of relief and comfort after the 2017 flooding event.

"Tim doesn't just preach the love of Christ, he becomes the embodiment of Christ to those suffering members of our society surrounding Eureka UMC," Ross said. "He leads the congregation by personal witness and acts to show that Christ needs us to be His hands and feet to reach a hurting world, if they are to receive His love."

Schulte's leadership through the Healthy Church Initiative is leading to new initiatives through Celebrate Recovery, additional worship spaces, a new discipleship pathway, and a "home makeover" of the church's interior space to be more welcoming.

The advertisement features a background of a blue sky with white clouds and a bright sun. A white cross is centered in the upper half. The text "Saint Paul School of Theology" is written in white, with the cross acting as the letter "P" in "Paul". Below this, a black horizontal band contains the text "DOCTOR OF MINISTRY" in large white letters, and "Spiritual Leadership in Unsettled Times" in smaller yellow letters. Underneath the black band, the text "Offered in partnership with the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Gamaliel, and Metro Organization for Racial and Economic Equity" is written in white. At the bottom, the website "spst.edu" is displayed in white, followed by the email "admiss@spst.edu" and the phone number "913-725-8289" in white.

Paid Advertisement

Common Causes

You could fill volumes of books detailing the intrinsic differences between the United Methodist church and the Catholic church. But the leaders of both in Missouri have found that they have much in common, including the challenges they face in society and their highest hopes for the future.

Archbishop Robert James Carlson of St. Louis and Bishop Robert Farr of the Missouri Conference sat together on a panel in St. Louis at the National Workshop on Christian Unity in the first week of April and discussed what they faced as adjudicatory leaders.

One thing that sets heavy on the hearts of each also relates to the events that brought them together: racism.

Bishop Farr described that he felt flat-footed in the midst of the riots in Ferguson following the shooting

of Michael Brown. There were 60 United Methodist churches in the St. Louis area, including one in the heart of Ferguson, but knowing the appropriate response was challenging. Bishop Farr and Archbishop Carlson met during this tumultuous time and agreed they should do more to work together.

Bishop Farr said people need to act, while staying vigilant regarding the motivations of their actions.

“What are you in it for? If people think you are in it for yourself, you lose,” he said.

“You’re in it to bring the word of God to hurting world.

You’re in it for Jesus Christ.”

Even in the rigid hierarchical structure of the Catholic church, episcopal decrees have their limits.

Archbishop Carlson put out a notice to all of the priests in his dioceses wanting them to preach on the sins of racism on a certain Sunday.

Immediately one priest called him and said he couldn’t do it because it would cause such a rebellion within his congregation that it would likely be his last sermon there.

Both bishops pointed toward the segregated nature of the city of the St. Louis, and of

.....
“You’re in it to bring the word of God to hurting world. You’re in it for Jesus Christ.”

BISHOP FARR
.....

the churches within it, as being barriers to addressing the sin of racism.

Archbishop Carlson lifted up the quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, in which he described Sunday morning at 11 a.m. as being the most segregated hour of the week in the nation.

Bishop Farr agreed, saying even the segregation within Methodism presents barriers to working together. He mentioned he has participated in the Pan-Methodist Proclamation Day service the last two years and sees few United Methodist present there.

“We don’t even know where each other’s churches are within our own state,” Bishop Farr said.

Farr said he sometimes feels inadequate to insert himself in matters of race, because he doesn’t share the same burden of discrimination that African-



Americans have experienced, but that is not a reason to opt-out from addressing the sins of racism in society.

Bishop Carlson recalled a time when he was a young priest, serving one of the few African American parishes in an inner-city church in Minnesota. He was nervous and talking too much. A parishioner let him know.

“She said, ‘Honey, if you want to learn something you’d better hush-up,’” he recalled.

Bishop Farr said he encourages his clergy to develop relationships. One pastor just out of college was eager to start a multi-cultural church. When he queried him about how he had reached out in his personal life and formed friendships that

crossed cultural lines, he found he had not done this at all.

“He wasn’t ready to start a multi-cultural church,” Bishop Farr said. “I told him to make 10 friends and call me back.”

Both Bishops pointed toward their friendship as one way to reach out to form a relationship outside of normal channels and said intentional efforts need to be made to cross not just denominational lines, but also lines of race, class and other societal barriers.

“This is my 41st year of ministry, and I know it is so easy to get pigeon-holed and caught up in just minding your own store,” Bishop Farr said.

YES, YOU CAN!

Gift Planning In Uncertain Times

From time to time in Methodist publications, one encounters a typo: the letters in “United” are transposed into “Untied.” While this has always generated a knowing chuckle, it now seems like a plausible name for our beloved community of believers as it is roiled by disagreement and division.

As you plan a gift to your church or any other favorite UM charity, you may be wondering whether your plans will be upset by unknown changes ahead. There are two things to remember:

1. There have always been, and will always be, unknown changes ahead.
2. Wise planners can – and should – build clarity and flexibility into their gift plans.

IF / THEN

In any gift document (will, trust, beneficiary designation) clearly identify your intended beneficiary (e.g., the First UMC of Cityville, Missouri), its name, physical location and tax ID number, if available. The second important step is to think about what are called “contingencies.” In other words, you can give

written instructions that “...if something changes, then my gift plans will change in the following way...”.

A common example of this occurs at the Foundation when a donor creates a standard endowment that provides an annual income distribution to the donor’s church (the charitable beneficiary). The administrative document often says, “if, however, the Beneficiary ceases to exist, then the annual distribution shall be paid to...” another named church or charity. A final catch-all contingency is added that says, “...then to the Foundation to use within its sole discretion for purposes as near as possible to my original charitable intent.”

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

The possibility of denominational splits or name changes may demand some additional specificity. Therefore, many donors may want to include instructions such as, “If the Beneficiary changes its name or denominational affiliation but maintains its primary charitable and religious operations and mission, then it shall remain



the Beneficiary.” In any event, strive to express your wishes clearly and build in some flexibility for your future fiduciary to adapt to changing times.

Your Missouri UM Foundation is here to help you and your professional estate planning advisors. We can share sample documents and help you make a well-planned gift. We are a fiduciary for the administration of permanent endowments, gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts and donor advised funds. We ensure that donor instructions are followed and funds are administered prudently and appropriately. Our mission is perpetual, and the mission continues!

Contact us at 800-332-8238 and visit us on the web at www.mumf.org.

MAKING ARRANGEMENTS

This month I would like to share some thoughts about arranging music. As many church musicians know, the challenge of leading music effectively can sometimes be the instrumentation of the worship team or ensemble. Obstacles can arise when sheet music for a choir or other ensemble requires specific voices or instruments that your church may not retain. On the other hand, contemporary worship recordings often display many instruments, voices and effects that are difficult to duplicate in a live church environment. Let's discuss some ways to get around these issues.

When arranging music for an ensemble that may lack parts or instruments required by the score or recording, remember that the vocal melody is always the top priority. Regardless of the end product the lead vocal part must always be heard. The primary practical objective of leading music in the church is to provide a stable example for congregants to follow. If the melody is not presented clearly, we have missed the mark.

Prioritization beyond the vocal melody may be argued at length. I would propose that chordal accompaniment from at least one instrument would be the next objective, but some congregations may require something different. If the accompaniment in the score or recording you're working with includes instrumentation that you don't retain, the obvious response is to generalize chords and rhythms.

However, remember that capturing the appropriate "feel" of the music is important. If you can duplicate the basic rhythms of the original along with the correct harmonies, this would be the best first step. Including the bass line and instrumental melodies or "signature" parts are helpful as well. Beyond that, some discretion may be used. In the event that you're working with an accompaniment score for piano or multiple instruments that requires some unattainable complexity, generalized versions can sometimes be found online — particularly from songselect.ccli.com. There is a subscription fee required, but this resource may be regularly useful to you and your congregation.



Ryan McClouth,
Assistant Professor of
Music, Music Ministry
Program Coordinator

Beyond basic accompaniment, supporting vocal parts such as harmonies and responses are another priority. These parts can occasionally be challenging to arrange for depending on how many singers and parts you have in your ensemble. Supporting harmonies are typically not imperative, but remember that most tonal music features parallel and/or diatonic thirds above or below the melody. An inversion of a sixth is acceptable, but parallel and open fifths and fourths are highly atypical.

TOP 3 ARRANGEMENT PRIORITIES

1. Vocal melody with a stable example for congregants to follow
2. Chordal accompaniment from one instrument and capturing the feel of the music
3. Supporting vocals, harmonies and responses

Electing the 2020 Delegations

It is the season in the life of the church where leaders across the Conference along with Conference staff are preparing for Annual Conference. The residents of Springfield, Missouri will be invaded by laity and clergy from across our Conference on the weekend of June 7th. Our Conference theme this year is *New Places for New People* which lifts up one of our three conference priorities. It will be exciting to celebrate the stories of how new places are touching new people in communities across our Conference.

Besides business, learning times and worship services, the three-day format will include election of delegates for General and Jurisdictional Conferences 2020. The Conference Lay Ministry Team is responsible for establishing procedures on preparation, publicity and distribution of information to facilitate the election of qualified lay delegates. You may be wondering what are the qualifications to be a lay delegate to General Conference? The answer can be found in the Book of Discipline. In paragraph 36 it states the following: “delegates shall have been professing members of The United Methodist Church for at least two years, shall have been active participants in The United Methodist Church for at least four years, are members within the annual conference electing them at the time of holding the General and jurisdictional conference.”

Laity with an interest in serving as a lay delegate to GC or JC should begin by praying about the responsibility and commitment, as well as have some conversations with trusted individuals to discuss this opportunity. It may also be helpful to watch the informational webinar that is available on the conference website. Laity with an interest in serving can learn about the expectations of elected lay delegates and about the self-nomination process on the conference website at www.moumethodist.org/2019layelections.

The challenge, as we prepare for elections, is the difficulty in knowing laity from across the Conference. The Conference Lay Ministry Team is committed to fairness, encouraging a balanced, diverse pool of candidates with opportunity for voters to know them. With all that in mind, a self-nomination process was developed so

that interested laity can complete a laity profile, which provides an opportunity for lay members to Annual Conference to get acquainted with the interested candidates prior to our voting session. The laity profiles will be posted online for review in the order they are received. The Lay Ministry team is also hosting an informal meet and greet with the self-nominated laity following the Laity Session on Friday night of Annual Conference.



Amy Thompson,
Conference
Lay Leader

The Missouri delegation will be composed of 12 lay delegates and 12 clergy delegates. The first six laity elected will attend General Conference, and all 12 laity elected will attend Jurisdictional Conference. Two alternate delegates will also be elected. The Lay Ministry Team is seeking a laity delegation that can be reflective of our Conference through diversity in age, race and gender as well as representative of our varied viewpoints. I encourage lay members to Annual Conference to begin praying for the election process, to read the profiles and attend the meet and greet with candidates, and to be Spirit led in casting your votes.

We are a connectional system. If you are attending Annual Conference, I challenge you to meet three new people and share your experiences with ministry in the local church. If you are not attending Annual Conference, I invite you to participate in our connectional system from afar. Pray for all those attending, and pray for the worship leaders and presenters. Ask questions when your lay person returns home from annual conference.

First time attending Annual Conference?

Register for the first time laity lunch when you register for Annual Conference. Be an informed voter. Review the submitted laity profiles for elections to GC/JC 2020. Find the profiles at www.moumethodist.org/2019layelections.

FILLING IN — FOR 50 YEARS

Ken Cleeton got a call asking him if he could do some pulpit supply at a local Methodist Church. He was born and raised Baptist but became a Methodist when he got married. He agreed and went to work on a sermon. He practiced it at home on a tape recorder and had it down so it was 20 minutes long, right on the money.

“Then when I got up in front of people I was so scared that I preached it in 10 minutes,” Cleeton said.

Fortunately, few preachers get turned away for going too short. That first sermon for Cleeton was in 1969, and for the past five decades you could find him in the pulpit of a church in Montgomery County. He is currently serving Mineola UMC.

Fifty years is a long time to preach as a lay speaker without becoming a licensed local pastor. Cleeton has his reasons.

“If I were licensed or ordained, I would have to attend meetings,” Cleeton said. “As a lay speaker, I attend if I want to, and if I don’t, I don’t.”

Lay Speakers don’t consecrate communion elements, so Cleeton attends Communion Sunday when the pastor there is serving communion and receives consecrated bread and juice for communion at Mineola.

“We put what we don’t use in the freezer, and it lasts us for months,” he said.

You don’t have to be licensed to preside over a funeral, and as the preacher for several aging congregations, Cleeton has preached for more funerals than he can say. He remembers an early one, when as soon as the casket lid clanked closed, the entire front row jumped up “as if they were on a spring” and ran outside. The piano played on as the funeral director followed them outside, consoled them, and brought them back into the church. The finality of it was too much for some of the family members.

At a different graveside internment, as the casket was being taken to the freshly dug hole, the distressed funeral director approached Cleeton and said the deceased’s daughters said they just wanted to see Mama one more time. The funeral director asked Cleeton what he should do.

“I told him I thought we should let them see their Mama one last time,” Cleeton said, so they opened the casket again before it was placed in the ground.

Cleeton has found some rural churches to be very accommodating and appreciative to have someone to preach on Sunday morning.

“One time when I asked, ‘What time do you start your service?’ the man replied, ‘You can start it anytime,’” Cleeton said.

Cleeton has outlasted many of the churches that he served. He preached at Grace United Methodist Church in



Truxton for “quite a few years.” Later he went by and looked into the building and saw you could see the sky through the ceiling. Now the building is gone.

Cleeton files all of his sermons away, along with the bulletin from that day so he has record of the date, the order of worship and what was going on in the life of the church that week. This gives him a large resource file to turn to as he prepares his next sermon.

Currently Cleeton is lay speaker at Mineola UMC. Visit that church today, and you’ll find that at the back of the church a couple of pews are turned toward the back of the sanctuary so people can face each other.

“We have those set up for having coffee and treats before the service,” Cleeton said.

Cleeton’s not the only one who is going on half-a-century of service. His wife alternates playing the piano every other week with the church secretary.

As a lay speaker, Cleeton does not get any retirement pay from the Methodist church, but he’s happy with the meeting-avoidance trade-off. Cleeton was never too worried about making a career out of his ministry – it seems when it comes to work, work always found him. After he graduated high school in 1948 he entered the Air Force. In his four years in the Air Force he was a radio operator, then instructor, then worked on maintenance.

He took the skills he learned there into civilian life, operating a radio and television repair shop in Montgomery City from 1952 – 1989. After that someone handed his wife, who was working at the local IGA, an application to Radio Shack and asked her to ask Ken to fill out. He then worked as the manager of the senior center in Montgomery City, until he was asked to fill in as the manager of the senior center in Warrenton. That fill-in job lasted eight years.

You can now find the Cleetons at the senior center in Montgomery City Monday through Friday, glad not to be in charge but grateful to have the place to stay in connection with others in their community. On Sundays they’ll be at church.

VICTORY OVER — *Sin & Death* —

When we pray the Great Thanksgiving during the celebration of the Lord's Supper, we often say these words together: "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again." This is the ground of our hope as Christians in this age and in the age to come.

John Wesley echoes this affirmation in his "Letter on Preaching Christ." In it, he notes that wherever one finds Methodists who are "alive, strong, and vigorous of soul, believing, loving, praising God their Saviour" it was because they "had been continuously fed with" the "wholesome food" of the gospel, promising not only forgiveness of sins but a new life in Christ. "From the beginning they had been taught both the law and the gospel. 'God loves you; therefore love and obey him. Christ died for you; therefore die to sin. Christ is risen; therefore rise in the image of God. Christ liveth evermore; therefore live to God, till you live with him in glory.'"

This what he and his preachers had proclaimed, and what the Methodists believed. This is, he says, "the scriptural way, the Methodist way, the true way. God grant we may never turn therefore, to the right hand or to the left."

There is, I think, a strong connection between the four points of this Methodist message. "God loves you; therefore love and obey him" is close to Wesley's favorite verse of scripture, I John 4:19: "We love him because he first loved us." In his Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, Wesley calls this "the sum of all religion, the genuine model of Christianity."

How much and to what extent does Christ love us? "Christ died for you; therefore die to sin." As Paul says in Romans 5:8, "But God proves his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Charles Wesley states it even more powerfully: "O Love Divine, what hast thou done? The immortal God

hath died for me." (UM Hymnal 287) But note the result: if Christ has died for us, we are to die to sin. This doesn't only mean our sin is forgiven. It means that Christ has died to break sin's power over in our lives, to ultimately put it to death.

The triumph of the resurrection is the victory over sin and death: "Christ is risen; therefore rise in the image of God." We are given a new life, through Jesus Christ. It is a life in which, through what Christ has done for us and what the Holy Spirit does in us, we are increasingly enabled to love as God loves. Our dispositions, motivations and desires are remade until love fills our hearts and governs our lives. It is then that we are once again in the image of the God who created us.

This is a life that, because Christ is risen, death cannot take from us. "Christ liveth evermore; therefore live to God, till you live with him in glory." We love and serve God now and through all eternity. Thus we can sing with Charles Wesley,

*Love's redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won,
Death in vain forbids him rise,
Christ has opened paradise.*

*Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head,
Made like him, like him we rise,
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.*

(Christ the Lord is Risen Today, UM Hymnal 302)



Dr. Hal Knight,
Professor of Wesleyan
Studies, Saint Paul
School of Theology

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

McKendree Chapel Bicentennial Quilt Show

FRIDAY, MAY 3 TO SATURDAY, MAY 4

Location: Centenary UMC, 300 N Ellis St.,
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

A Quilt show will be held at Centenary United Methodist Church in Cape Girardeau on May 3 and 4. Each church is invited to loan just one or two antique quilts for display. Dates may be approximate, and if the oldest quilt is of fairly recent construction, it's still the oldest one from your church. The quilt may also relate to their history. Featured at the quilt show will be a quilt created by the McKendree Chapel Bicentennial Committee that has a picture of each active church in the Southeast District.

Pre-Conference Meeting

THURSDAY, MAY 21

Location: Livestream

Contact: Heather Birge, hbirge@moumethodist.org

On May 21, join us via livestream or live in Columbia as we celebrate the work of many Methodist organizations, like United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, the Missouri United Methodist Foundation and Central Methodist University, as well as the work of our Conference. If you can't make the date, the video recording of this informative time together will be available following the live event.

UM Family Day at Busch Stadium

SATURDAY, MAY 25

The Cardinals have strengthened their team going into the season and are one of the co-favorites in a very strong division. Join us for the 6:15pm game on Memorial Day weekend! We are encouraging local men's groups to solicit donations to cover the ticket price of children/family of deployed members of our armed forces. We have also changed the structure of this program to enable it to provide fund raising opportunities for local men's groups.

This is a Methodist and friends' event so don't hesitate to invite folks from outside the church. Local businesses may be willing to join us or to support our veterans with donations.



For more event Information visit:
<http://www.moumethodist.org/events>

PARTING SHOT BY ERIC MATTSON



My current daily devotional is Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day by Peter Scazzero. Today began with the scripture reading of 1 John 2:15-17. The entry includes a quote from Thomas Merton about the Desert Fathers.

Ever since I went to where Merton was cloistered away at Gethsemane in

Kentucky, I've pondered on his take that finding a desert away from the world makes us more fit to live in that world.

One of my formative books has been Geography of Holiness: The Photography of Thomas Merton. Photography has opened for me a means to carve out my cleansing desert. To Merton, the

contemplative monk/photographer who contends the world of the spirit and the world of the senses are inseparable and form a single whole, "Solitude is not something you must hope for in the future. Rather, it is a deepening of the present, and unless you look for it in the present you will never find it."