Embraced by Grace: Reflections on My Trip to Berlin

By Bishop Linda Lee

From July 21st through 26th, the Global Young People’s Convocation and Legislative Assembly brought together young United Methodists from around the world to share their life experiences, struggles, gifts and realities. It was a time of worship, legislative work, fellowship and immersion in the city and culture of Berlin, Germany, where the event and great excitement took place. Sponsored by the Young People’s Ministries, a division of The General Board of Discipleship, about 350 young United Methodists representing 32 countries—from Angola to Zimbabwe—were in attendance.

Bishop Deb Kirsey and I represented the North Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops. My husband Lamarr was also able to share this experience with me. Each bishop present was assigned to specific legislative sessions to offer support and counsel as needed—which we were all glad to do. A couple of the Bishops led Bible studies, and I was asked to preach at the closing service. The general theme for the event was “One Lord, One Church, One World” as reflected in the idea of the Body of Christ from Ephesians 4.

Heartfelt Hospitality

I met youth, young adults and adult workers. I was very pleased to see Cody Wisman, one of our own Wisconsin Conference youth lay members from Trinity UMC in Waldo, Wisconsin, in attendance…as well as other young people from Africa, the Philippines, the U.S. and several other countries whom I had met and worked with before during my journey of ministry in the United Methodist Church. I was most impressed and blessed by the warm hospitality we received at the airport when we arrived and throughout our visit. It felt as if we were embraced by grace as young people guided us to the busses and trains, which were our primary mode of transportation throughout the trip.

While in Berlin, we were able to choose two places to visit, so Lamarr and I went to the preserved portion of the Berlin Wall, which is now an art exhibit entitled Checkpoint Charlie, and to the Jewish Museum. After each visit, the participants from each site were hosted by a different congregation for dinner, a time of worship, and sharing about the ministry of that church. Again, we were welcomed by our hosts who received us with great grace and warmth.

While we were aware that this is a place, like in other countries, that still has social problems and concerns, we were proud to see that the United Methodists were among the people who are working to address them. Another highlight of our trip was a visit to the Berlin Cathedral. It was a great privilege to worship in a place that once represented the division of a city and a culture, but now is a place where various religions worship together.

Difficult Discussions; Yet Undeniable Unity

But what I was most impacted by was the interactions among the youth at the event. There had been much good work done by the young people in making decisions about resolutions to be sent to General Conference. There were some tense moments as they worked to honor one another when they differed in belief and perspective. There were some painful words spoken. But the young people at the meeting were able to agree on 10 petitions that will be heard at General Conference in 2012. Those petitions included resolutions denouncing killings in Africa and the Philippines, ensuring young people are properly represented on general boards and agencies, and promoting alternatives to abortion.

They were also able to come together to celebrate their diversity. Each nation represented was asked to share something about their culture.

Some shared a dance or indigenous practice. Others shared a song or a story. In every case, it was authentic and from the heart and soul of those sharing. Everyone was surrounded with acceptance and love. During these celebrations, the embrace of grace created holy ground.

Practicing What I Preached

At the closing, I affirmed our differences as well as our unity of spirit in Christ. We are diverse in many ways. Each culture, each race, each people offer unique gifts to the church and to the world. Each offers gifts that no one else can. Yet, we are reminded that in Christ Jesus, we are ONE. This was unmistakably demonstrated by the young people at the Convocation. They had practiced exactly what I had been inspired to preach about. They demonstrated that true unity doesn’t mean that you have to share a skin color or culture or language or country. Unity shares faith in a God who still speaks to all of us. It was a wonderful privilege to be with the young people of today, who are leading the church now, and will surely be the great leaders of the church tomorrow.

As one of the young people said to me, “Don’t worry, the church is going to be all right.”
UMCOR establishes relief supply network
The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) has formed a relief supply network. Kathy Kraiza, executive director of UMCOR relief supplies, said the collaboration provides different places for U.S. congregations to send or drop off kits and supplies and allows the denomination to respond more easily to disasters from depots located close to the affected areas. The network includes UMCOR Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, La.; UMCOR West Depot, Salt Lake City; Mission Response Center, Terrell, N.C.; Midwest Mission Distribution Center, Chatham, Ill.; Eastbrook Mission Barn, New Castle, Pa.; and the MERCI Center, Goldsboro, N.C.

UM agency supports Washington march
The United Methodist General Board of Church and Society has announced its support for the march “One Nation Working Together for Jobs, Justice and Education for All” set for Oct. 2 in Washington, D.C. Other supporters include the NAACP, National Urban League, National Council of La Raza and the National Education Association. Black Methodists for Church Renewal, a caucus of the United Methodist Church, also plans to participate.

Long Island church marks 225 years
Glen Cove (New York) United Methodist Church, formerly Carpenter Memorial, is celebrating its 225-year anniversary in 2010. Originally founded in 1785, it is the oldest church in Glen Cove and one of the oldest Methodist congregations on Long Island. As part of the anniversary, local officials gathered for a special celebration and a plaque was presented to Howard G. Nielsen, who joined the church 68 years ago in 1942.

—Compiled by Mary Jacobs

GOOD WORKS

Robes enrich man’s retirement

BY BOYCE BOWDON
United Methodist News Service

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla.—At 57, Morgan Green retired from his job as a salesmen and spent his first year of freedom doing two things he loved—gardening and fishing.

“But then January came, and I had nothing,” he said. “All my friends were still working, so I was fishing alone, and fishing by myself was not fun—especially when the fish were not biting.”

Mr. Green is one of a growing number of Americans who knows how it feels when the newness wears off of retirement.

According to the U.S. Census, during the next decade 70 million Baby Boomers—nearly one fourth of the U.S. population—will reach 65. Many will retire from their current lines of work. But research indicates that many retirees struggle to grasp a new identity apart from the “somebody” they used to be.

A new calling

Mr. Green found the identity he was seeking at Chapel Hill United Methodist Church in Oklahoma City.

“I was listening to another layman tell how a mission project our church was doing in Mexico was having a powerful impact on people,” he recalled. “He said volunteers were needed to help with the work, and when he described what the volunteers would be doing, I said to myself, ‘I can do that.’”

That moment, Mr. Green said, was the beginning of a big change in his life. He went from being a “chronic couch potato” to active missionary.

Now 70, he estimates he has been on about 25 mission trips during the past 11 years. He has worked in Antigua, Honduras, Venezuela and the Holy Land, and has made 16 trips to Mexico.

More churches should be intentional about inviting retirees into ministry, said the Rev. Richard Gentzler, director of the Center of Aging and Older-Adult Ministries at the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship.

Mr. Gentzler said many older-adult church programs focus on “meeting and eating.” While that kind of fellowship is important, he noted, retirees often want to be involved in activities that give them a sense of purpose.

“Churches have a role in helping older adults connect to meaningful fulfillment. They want to grow spiritually and serve their neighbors,” Mr. Gentzler said. He suggested that churches offer opportunities for retirees to tutor elementary-school students or for empty nesters to serve as “foster” grandparents to local youngsters.

And as Mr. Green discovered, purpose-giving ministry also can include the excursion of short-term missions.

Not a vacation

Contrary to what some people think, a mission trip is not a vacation, Mr. Green said.

“It isn’t a whole lot of fun to pay your own way to Venezuela, sleep in a hammock, eat boiled fish and get dirty digging ditches in the heat,” he said. “But you get back way more than you put in it.”

Mr. Green says his involvement in mission work at his church has given him opportunities to:

Invest his gifts and experience in a worthy cause. “One of my responsibilities has been to recruit people for mission teams. As a salesmen, I was accustomed to asking people to do things, and it didn’t break my heart when they said no. So, now I don’t mind asking people to join a mission team.”

Build rewarding relationships. “Almost all the people who volunteer for missions are really neat. We travel together and work together and support one another. Even after we get back home we feel special bonds.”

Be a Christian influence on people in need. “When we go on missions, we not only improve the health and living conditions of impoverished people, we minister to those who have barely enough to eat, you can find a place of service that can transform your life and the lives of others.’

“You can find a place of service that can transform your life and the lives of others.’

—Morgan Green

‘Growth closer to the Lord. “The move I have shared the love of Christ with others, the more my love for Christ has grown.”

Being involved in the church, Mr. Green said, is enabling him to enjoy his retirement years to the fullest.

He encourages Christians who are struggling with the losses that retirement sometimes brings to become more involved in a church.

“If mission work is not your thing, you can find something that’s just right for you,” he said. “There’s all kinds of stuff you can do around a church that will ease the staff’s load and extend the church’s ministry. You can find a place of service that can transform your life and the lives of others.”

Dr. Bowdon is a freelance writer in Oklahoma City, Okla.
Tips on making changes in life, business, church

By Mary Jacobs
Staff Writer

Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard
Chip Heath and Dan Heath
Broadway Books, 2010
Hardcover, 320 pages

As United Methodists look for ways to stem declining membership numbers, most will agree that something’s got to change. But getting people and institutions to change is never easy.

That’s why it’s imperative to understand exactly how and why people change, according to Chip Heath and Dan Heath, authors of the new book Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard (Broadway Books).

Change involves getting people to act differently by engaging both their hearts and minds. “Often the heart and mind disagree,” the authors warn. “Fervently...Human beings have struggled against this dilemma for thousands of years. Even people who sincerely desire to change often end up stymied. (‘We’re all loophole-exploiting lawyers when it comes to our own self-control,’ the authors write, a truth that any failed dieter will ruefully recognize.)”

Jesus nodded to this dilemma when he warned followers about temptation, saying, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” And while a strong faith helps, even the apostle Paul struggled with self-control. “I do not understand what I do,” he wrote in Romans 7:15, “For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate, I do.”

In response, we tend to muster up our willpower and resolve. Switch suggests that instead we need to think more sharply about how people make change.

Consider the Clocky, an invention for people who have trouble making a change. They can’t stop hitting the “snooze” button too many times and sleeping in too late.

Like a conventional alarm clock, the Clocky emits a loud and annoying sound. But it also rolls around the room, requiring its sleepy owner to wake up, get out of bed and chase it down.

With the Clocky, the authors say, the individual’s rational side (the desire to wake on time) can outsmart the emotional side (desire to sleep in) so that often derails our best intentions.

That leads to the central metaphor of the book: an Elephant and its Rider.

The Elephant represents human beings’ emotional side. It’s big and powerful, but not always easy to control. The Rider represents our rational side. Its motivations are sound, but it’s not always strong enough to control the Elephant.

To solve the problem, the authors propose three approaches: direct the Rider, motivate the Elephant and shape the path.

“‘What looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity. If you want people to change, you must provide crystal-clear direction.’

In an organization, directing the Rider means visionary leadership that helps people envision change clearly. The self-control that’s needed to help make a change is an exhaustible resource; ambiguity “tires out the Rider,” putting efforts at change at risk.

“What looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity,” the authors write. “If you want people to change, you must provide crystal-clear direction.”

To clarify goals, the authors advise, highlight “bright spots.” Most organizations ask the wrong questions: “What’s broken and how do we fix it?” A more effective approach asks: “What’s working and how can we do more of it?” In situations where some have embraced the desired behavior, the authors urge, “publicize it.”

Motivating the Elephant in an organization involves engaging members’ hearts. While a business best operates with discrete, rational and measurable goals, to really motivate people, think BHAG: “Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal.”

“A BHAG shouldn’t just be big and compelling, the authors assert, it should ‘hit you in the gut and it should appeal to both the Rider and the Elephant.’”

Finally, “shaping the path” means finding concrete ways to facilitate a desired change. The authors described an experiment where moviegoers were given popcorn in containers in two different sizes. In both cases, the popcorn was so stale it was almost inedible, and in both cases, each person was given a container with more popcorn than he or she could possibly eat. Nobody finished their popcorn, but the people given the larger containers ate more.

Lesson learned: “What looks like a people problem is often a situation problem,” the writers assert.

Switch doesn’t speak specifically to the problems of churches or denominations. But as United Methodists continue to “rethink church,” Switch engages readers to rethink change—and what it really takes.

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Japanese post-war hymn sought healing of nation

By C. Michael Hawn
UMR Columnist

“Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather”
Tokyo Yamaguchi, translated by Everett M. Stone
The UM Hymnal, No. 552

Here, O Lord, your servants gather, hand we link with hand. Looking toward our Savior’s cross, joined in love we stand.

As we seek the realms of God, We unite to pray: Jesus, Savior guide our steps, for you are the Way.*

Could be many reasons for this, but one interpretation could be that Koizumi wanted to indicate Christ had supplanted the emperor as the supreme sovereign of his life.

Stanza one proclaims that Christ is “the Way.” Stanza two acknowledges both the diversity of Asia—“Many are the tongues we speak”—and “our one[ness] in Christ.”

The second stanza follows the pattern of many Asian hymns that refer to age and youth; Asian cultures revered the maturity and wisdom of age.

The stanza concludes with a reference to Jesus as teacher who “dwell[s] with us” and imparts the “Truth.” This is close to the idea of Christ as a rabbi offered in the Gospels.

Stanza three opens with what I believe is a thinly veiled reference to the destruction of the atom bomb: “Nature’s secrets open wide...” The stanza continues with references to “weary souls” seeking the “source of peace” amidst “endless strife.” Jesus, the healer, is the one who brings life.

The final stanza offers a series of petitions leading to a final request that “Jesus, Master, be our Way; be our Truth, our Life.” Imagine the power of this hymn among Christians around Asia after a war that had been the source of so much pain and destruction. They linked “hand...with hand” and declared that Christ is indeed our unity.

I know of no other hymn in any culture that provides as rich an exposition on John 14:6.

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Dr. Hawn is professor of sacred music at Perkins School of Theology, SMU.
The core team at New Hope is supported by an involved membership.

A New Church Built on Hope

Hope is about many things—possibility, change, perseverance—but most of all, it is about faith; about not only looking to the future, but also accepting that we do not have full control over it.

It is appropriate then that New Hope United Methodist Church has incorporated the word into their name. The new church start in De Pere, Wisconsin was built on hope. “As we were working to launch the church, every week we were talking about how God was opening doors for us,” said New Hope pastor and affectionately-named “church planter” Greg Jewison. The church started out as a group of six. “It was a very small group at first; my wife Kerry and I and four other people—Jay and Nancy Hamann, Rose Markowicz, and Ron Vinger. This little church group met in the dining room of our home at first, and we dreamed of one day growing and ‘moving up’ to our living room.” The church indeed grew, with the current 140-person membership vastly exceeding their expectations…and their living room.

Needing a bigger space, the church members found hope in the form of a rather hopeless place. They hadn’t even been looking for a week when a “for rent” sign went up in an abandoned bar. The doors were falling off of their hinges, and the building needed extensive renovations. Yet, the church members saw the underlying potential that the site possessed. After several months of renovations, the former bar was given new life. Church members and the building needed extensive renovations. Yet, the church members saw the underlying potential that the site possessed.

“After several months of renovations, the former bar was given new life. Church members agreed that “it may not have a steeple on the outside, but it is an excellent church facility on the inside.” About a month later, the church received another addition when an altar was donated by Bellin Memorial Hospital from the hospital’s original chapel. Amazingly, it fit exactly into place, as though it were meant for the spot.

The church now supports more than 300 people, including members, children, and visitors, and is bustling with activity. According to Jewison, “Four years ago, it was empty much of the time, and now it is crammed with activities all throughout the week.” These activities include Bible studies, groups for music, health and short-term grief support, and mission opportunities. The church also has a relationship with the Methodist church in Russe, Bulgaria. The two churches occasionally hold services “together,” using the video chat software Skype.

Of course, not everything fell into place so easily. The majority of the church staff, including Jewison, worked as long-term volunteers when the church was getting started, and a lot of the start-up money came from their own pockets. (The church later received grants from The Conference Board of Congregational Development and The Wisconsin United Methodist Foundation.)

However, with growing numbers, an involved membership, and a church that is bustling with activity, New Hope UMC has reason to be hopeful. Although a lot of work, planning, and resources have gone into starting the church and maintaining the church’s spirit of invitation and welcoming, at the end of the day, it is the church’s ability to hope that has made them so successful. Said Jewison, “We have focused on relying on God’s strength rather than our own.”

Wisconsin United Methodists Administer Flood Program and Restore Hope to 30 Counties

Last fall, the Wisconsin Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC) was selected to administer more than $6 million in federal funds to help Wisconsinites whose homes were damaged during the floods and storms of 2008. Working in collaboration with Project Recovery’s case workers in 30 counties, the 2008 Flood Recovery Program (FRP) to date has already helped more than 500 families, providing repairs, replacement of appliances, temporary housing, and more.

The Wisconsin Conference UMC has conducted a survey of the families who have received help from the program. The responses have been overwhelmingly positive. According to one Marquette County resident, “The 2008 Flood Recovery Program case manager Marjorie Matthews and Project Recovery outreach worker Sam Mergenthaler helped me through some very difficult times this year. Because of their compassion, hard work and financial assistance, I was able to get my septic system and well repaired and my basement waterproofed—which helped restore my health and emotional well-being.”

Bishop Lee is very pleased the 2008 Flood Re-

Come to the NCJ Commission on Religion and Race Event October 15th-17th

The Wisconsin Conference UMC invites you to attend the 2010 North Central Jurisdiction Commission on Religion and Race Learning Event October 15th-17th at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center. This year’s theme is Challenging Business as Usual: Visions of Racial Justice. Speakers will include Reverend Leonidis Fuller, associate minister at New Covenant Bishop Church in Milwaukee (keynote speaker); Bishop Linda Lee, Wisconsin Annual Conference; Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, Northern Illinois Annual Conference; Jorge Lockwood, director of the Global Praise program of the General Board of Global Ministries; and Reverend Grace Imathiu, Biblical scholar and pastor at Brown Deer United Methodist Church. Register online at www.wisconsinumc.org or call Karen Lamoree at 888-240-7328.

Invite Your Youth to Senior High Convo November 12th-14th

Your youth can join 1, 000 high schoolers for fun, fellowship and faith-building during 2010 Senior High Convo November 12th-14th at the Chula Vista Resort in the Wisconsin Dells. Peace, Love, Happiness! is the theme of the event, which will include worship and music by The Sidewalk Prophets, a presentation by Greg Speck, testimonies from youth leaders about their faith in God, and seminars that allow for deeper learning in a smaller group setting. Register online at www.wisconsinumc.org, or call 888-240-7328. To make hotel reservations, call Chula Vista Resort at 800-388-4782 and mention “Senior High Convo” room block.

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United Methodist Children’s Services: A Shining Example of What We Do for Children

At the 1961 Wisconsin Annual Conference, Bishop Loder asked the Conference Hospitals and Homes Committee a simple, but transformative question: “What are you doing for the children?” In response, the committee organized United Methodist Children’s Services (UMCS), a ministry that would serve low-income children and families. Forty-five years later, UMCS is a valuable part of the Milwaukee community and offers four interrelated programs that serve residents and neighbors.

The four programs consist of the Transitional Living Program, the Growing Tree Children’s Center, the Family Resource Center, and most recently, an Affordable Rent Housing Program. The Transitional Living Program provides 18 apartment units for single women and their children. Women in the program work with UMCS staff to identify and meet goals to help them become financially independent. The Growing Tree Children’s Center is a state-licensed childcare program that serves families who participate in UMCS programs, as well as neighbors from the community. The Family Resource Center offers a range of services, including the largest emergency food pantry in Milwaukee County; a stock-boss program for senior citizens, post-partum women, and older children; and a clothing and household goods pantry. The Affordable Rent Housing Program helps remove the obstacle of finding housing for those who might otherwise be unable to afford the current cost of market rate housing. People in the program include women who are ready to move on from the Transitional Living Program, families that are at risk or were formerly homeless, referrals from the Milwaukee County Department of Behavioral Health, and others.

Although these programs provide valuable resources to many who come to UMCS, a personal connection with the staff is the most important resource of all. Reverend Cindy Thompson, fund development director for UMCS, tells a story of a woman who lived in housing provided by the Transitional Living Program, and had many difficulties to overcome, including a serious case of depression. Several years after she completed the program, she stopped to see Perry Huyck, the executive director of UMCS. She told him that the thing that got her through her hardest days was a simple response he gave when she told him that no one cared about her. He said, “God cares about you, and thousands of United Methodists in 500 churches all over Wisconsin care about you.”

The staff of the UMCS has always valued their positions as ambassadors of the church. “We are the face of the United Methodist Church in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in Milwaukee,” says Thompson. A mix of paid employees and volunteers, the staff is not only the face of the United Methodist Church, but the heart of UMCS and the lifeline of the community they serve. For them, the words of the mission statement—“Based on the fundamental belief in God’s love, United Methodist Children’s Services of Wisconsin, Inc. values the dignity, potential and worth of each individual and creates a nurturing environment of community in which miracles happen”—are a driving force behind their work.

“This are not just words on a plaque somewhere,” says Thompson. “They are lived out in the way we work in ministry with our residents, clients, and neighbors.” It is quite possible that Bishop Loder did not realize the impact his question—“What are you doing for the children?”—would have when he asked it in 1961. And yet, years later, with a slew of programs and success stories to its name, United Methodist Children’s Services continues to provide an answer to that question. If you want to help this important ministry, call 414-344-1818.

Stewards of What, Exactly?

By Dan Dick, Director of Connectional Ministries

A constant irritation to those who teach and preach stewardship is the common response: “Oh, no, not another appeal for money!” It’s inescapable. You cannot talk about stewardship without including money, but Christian stewardship is about so much more than simply giving what we give to the church or to worthwhile causes.

There is a story about a young Christian novitiate in the 13th century sitting with his teacher, who asked, “What in life is worthy of my full attention and what should I simply ignore?” His teacher offered, “Only concern yourself with those things created by God. All else you may ignore.” This raises the question, “What part of all that exists did God not create? We are to be concerned with, well, everything. Christians are ‘trustees’ of God’s creation.

Biblically, what we call stewardship is about power—how we will exercise “dominion” over our creation. We have the power to create or destroy, to give or to take, to share or to hoard, to be selfish or selfless—and all of these either/or options are decisions we must make. (To decide not to decide is to decide!) The decisions we make define our stewardship. This is why giving, generosity, charity, sacrifice, and commitment are all central tenets of our conversation about stewardship.

How we relate to money and material possessions is just one facet of a rich and complex array of lifestyle choices. We are also “stewards” of our time and energy, of our relationships and our communities, of our planet and environment, of our emotions and our actions. We are “managers” of our values—what we will truly treasure and organize our lives around. We are “caretakers” of many gifts, entrusted not to waste or squander any opportunity to witness to God’s goodness or celebrate God’s blessing. All of these concepts are aspects of “stewardship.”

Wisconsin Conference Edition of the United Methodist Reporter

October 11th
Healthy Boundaries Make-up Session
First UMC, Waukesha

October 12th–13th
Local Pastors Annual 24-Hour Retreat
Pine Lake

October 15th–17th
NCJ Commission on Religion and Race
Learning Event
Milwaukee Hilton

October 15th–17th
Inquiring Candidates Retreat
Pine Lake Camp

October 22nd–23rd
Clergy and Laity Retreat with Bishop Lee
Portage UMC

October 25th
Regional Visit with Bishop Lee
Chippewa Region, Barron First UMC

October 26th
Regional Visit with Bishop Lee
Heartland Region, Marshfield Zion UMC

October 27th
Conference Circuit Leaders’ Gathering with Bishop Lee
St. Paul’s UMC, Stevens Point

October 27th–28th
Not In Our Pews—Domestic Violence Conference
Olympia Resort, Oconomowoc, WI

November 5th
Extravagant Generosity Stewardship Seminar
Bethany UMC, Green Bay

November 6th
Extravagant Generosity Stewardship Seminar
Crossroads UMC, Waukeake

November 7th
Extravagant Generosity Stewardship Seminar
Community UMC, Watertown

November 8th
Healthy Boundaries Make-up Session
First UMC, Rice Lake

November 12th–14th
Senior High Convocation
Chula Vista, Wisconsin Dells

November 28th
Regional Visit with Bishop Lee
Circuits 51 & 53, Dodgeville UMC

For a more comprehensive list of events and training opportunities, visit our website www.wisconsinumc.org
Q&A: Can movies still reach all ages?

*Flipped,* the latest movie directed by actor-turned-filmmaker Rob Reiner, has received only limited release in theaters since it debuted in late summer. Perhaps its early-1960s suburban setting seems too alien to contemporary moviegoers. But Mr. Reiner says audiences at screenings hosted by Boys and Girls Clubs and some church groups have enjoyed the film.

Based on a book for young readers by Wendelin Van Draanen, the film follows two eighth-graders (newcomers Madeline Carroll and Callan McAuliffe) in their hesitant steps toward first love.

The director recently talked with associate editor Bill Fentum about *Flipped* and the difficulty in marketing non-blockbusters.

What about this particular novel made it stand out for you?

I read it with my son Nick, who at the time was 11 years old. He brought it home from school and said, "Dad, let’s read this together." And I literally flipped over it. It reminded me of the time when I was first having those very confusing, powerful feelings of falling in love. And I loved how intelligently it was written, how insightful it was to really understand what kids go through when they experience those feelings. I also liked that it was told from both points of view. I thought that was really a good convention.

The book is set in the present. Why did you choose to make it a period film?

That’s the period in which I came of age. And the other reason I did it was that I wanted to strip away the distractions kids have today with Facebook, Twitter, texting and all that, and focus purely on the emotions.

And perhaps reach older viewers too?

Sure. What’s nice about the film is that even though it’s a story about kids, and kids will enjoy it because they’re going through those things now, I think adults actually will get more out of it because they’ll think back to their own first love. Which you never forget—it stays with you forever.

You’ve had a very eclectic career as a director, everything from *Stand By Me* and *The Princess Bride* to *When Harry Met Sally* and a few years ago, *The Bucket List.* Is there any one element you look for in choosing your next project?

Most of the time I look for a theme that I can connect with. The main characters have to be going through something that I can relate to and that I can see myself in. I really don’t know how to tell a story unless I can connect with it in some way.

In other interviews you’ve talked about a lack of middle-budget films that focus on compelling narratives and characters.

Yeah, basically what you’ve got now are these huge, expensive $150-$200 million franchise pictures that come out of Comic-Con, the superhero-type movies. And then you’ve got these very small-budget, independent films that are made for under $15 million. And there’s really very few—they do make ‘em once in a while—of what I call middle-budget, serious-themed, adult-themed dramatic movies. The kind of film I made with *A Few Good Men* in 1992 would be almost impossible to produce now, even with stars.

Do you see any chance of the pendulum swinging back?

Boy, I hope so. Every year you have something. Like last year, they had *The Blind Side.* That film did enormous business. It wasn’t an expensive movie and it did really well. What I come up against is that studios will say, "Well, that’s an anomaly. We got lucky with that one." But every year, there’s one of those films.

The *Bucket List* is one example: We did $185 million around the world, an enormous hit. But the studios want something easy to market. If they know a movie is for kids and there’s a lot of action and explosions—there’s a superhero—they know they can market those things.

I’m turning 50 this year, so I come from a generation raised on films with great stories.

Absolutely. I’m a little bit older than you, but I have often said we’re from a group where we like to go to the movies and actually focus attention on the movie—not texting or playing a video game while we watch it. I mean we actually focus in on it. We’ve had screenings of *Flipped* for AARP, because we know there are audiences out there that want to see movies about real people. I make movies about human beings that live on Earth. I think there’s an audience for that.

*Creation Museum thrives despite uncertain economy*

**BY DENNIS O’CONNOR**

Religion News Service

PETERSBURG, Ky.—Ken Ham, the Australian-born creator of the Creation Museum, looks around the throng of about a thousand guests on a hot, August morning and notes that "for a Tuesday, this is not a bad crowd."

In fact, more than three years after it opened in this remote corner of Kentucky, the 70,000-square-foot "walk through the Bible" consisting of animatronic displays, video features, theaters and restaurants has evolved into a thriving enterprise.

"We have consistently surpassed our own forecasts for attendance," said Mark Looy, a co-founder of the museum and spokesman for the center. He noted that the museum had recently counted more than 1.2 million guests since it opened in 2007.

Mr. Ham, who was instrumental in the startup of the Creation Museum’s sponsoring organization, Answers in Genesis, said that despite the economic recession, families, individuals, church groups and even bus tours continue to pour into the museum, often spending a couple of days in the region to sample other attractions. "The recession has not in any way affected us," he said.

**Evangelical support**

Tom Caradonio, president of the Northern Kentucky Convention and Visitors Bureau, believes one of the Creation Museum’s greatest strengths is the interest and support it has garnered from evangelicals, a large demographic group. "When Answers in Genesis did their demographic studies for the museum," he said, "they obviously knew that they had a group of people who would be highly motivated to visit."

Pastor Brad Bigney of nearby Grace Fellowship Church in Florence, Ky., said another reason for the museum’s steady flow of guests is Mr. Ham’s frenetic schedule, which puts him on the road up to 250 times a year. "He’s a great spokesman for the museum, and he plants the seed for individuals and groups to make the trip to Northern Kentucky," Mr. Bigney said.

Four years ago, the project was beset by feuds over zoning issues, and opposition from many corners of the scientific community.

**Criticism continues**

That sideshow has not gone away, Mr. Ham said. Anti-creationist bloggers continue to pan the facility and some critics have taken shots at the museum’s concept and staff. The pinnacle of ridicule came in the form of cable television star Bill Maher, who snuck into Mr. Ham’s office one day to do a taping for his movie, *Religulous.*

But according to Mr. Caradonio, the biggest doubt over the museum was whether organizers could raise the $27 million they needed to launch the project.

"If you go back to the issue of private funding—there was no government money involved in this project—you will see that about $5 million came from big donors, but and large the other contributions came from individuals who were giving $25 or $50 from all over the country," Mr. Caradonio said. “With that many people invested in the project, you have built a huge audience that says ‘Hey, I’ve put some money into this, and now I want to see the place.’ That became a tremendous incentive for people to visit.”

**The Creation Museum in Petersburg, Ky., has drawn some criticism from the scientific community for exhibits that show humans co-existing with dinosaurs.**

**PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS**
By Karen L. Shaw
Special Contributor

At a museum in Kigali, Rwanda, wooden sculptures depict the rape, torture and killing of thousands of people during the country's genocidal massacre in 1994. Outside the museum, 250,000 people are buried, victims who could not be identified or who had no family.

After a group of mission volunteers left the museum one day in July, a Rwandan tour guide shared from the heart her message of hope. Her words still make Lonnie Rhodes choke up.

“She told us to make sure we told people in America that it’s not going on any longer,” said Mr. Rhodes, a member of Spring of Life United Methodist Church in Orlando, Fla.

But while Rwanda is now at peace, disease and poverty still ravage the East African nation. Between genocide and AIDS, the country has one of the highest populations of orphans in the world, according to the U.S. State Department.

It was those orphans who brought Mr. Rhodes, his wife, Kathy, and 11 other United Methodists to Kigali, some 8,000 miles from home, on a mission trip planned by the East Central District of the Florida Conference.


Empowerment

Hope Companions was started by Epiphanie Mujawimana, a survivor of the genocide. In two to three years, orphans in Rwanda are often ostracized and isolated, one of the first steps is to pull together individuals into working groups of 60 to 80 children. In many ways, these groups become new families.

The children decide what kind of help, support each other to break the cycle of poverty,” said the Rev. Gasston Warner, ZOE’s director of church relations and strategic planning.

“Traditional Western aid tends to follow a model where Westerners will go over and do something for Africans,” Mr. Warner said. “ZOE Ministry is much more about partnership. We go over and come alongside the orphans just enough so they can do for themselves.”

That means ZOE staff and volunteers don’t dig ditches or wells. They meet with program participants and community leaders, conduct workshops, and perhaps most importantly, witness the orphans’ miracles.

“We are going over and seeing people who can do for themselves, but no one thinks they can, “ said Mr. Warner. “We are being with these children in whose lives God is doing a powerful thing.”

The Florida team worked alongside volunteers from Texas and North Carolina. For Risé Wilson, a member at University Carillon UMC in Oviedo, Fla., the trip felt like her destiny. “I know that was why God sent me. “

Ms. Wilson has been to Costa Rica and poverty-stricken parts of Appalachia. She also went last fall on a mission trip to Uganda. “God, through my experience, my growth in faith, has prepared me to go forward,” she said. “At a younger age, I would not have been able to handle what I had seen and be effective.”

Since orphans in Rwanda are often ostracized and isolated, one of the first steps is to pull together individuals into working groups of 60 to 80 children. In many ways, these groups become new families.

The children decide what kind of leadership structure their group needs and then elect leaders. They choose an adult mentor, usually someone who already advocates for their rights in the village, and a project to undertake—perhaps a small communal farm or group garden—to generate income for the group. ZOE provides micro-grants for these projects.

Education

Every month, group leaders and adult mentors are trained in farming, hygiene and health, including information about malaria and how AIDS is spread. Sessions also cover children’s rights, housing, education for milk and fertilizer—he instead cut the grass so Jean could go to training.

“The group would stand with him, even in the midst of his mistakes,” Mr. Wiatt said.

Before the Rwanda trip, Terry Canfield had never traveled overseas but knew she had to go. “I knew this was something God was sending me to do,” she said. “He made it very obvious and possible for me to go.”

The $3,000 cost of the trip was intimidating, but after receiving an e-mail about the mission from her pastor at Flagler Beach UMC in Palm Coast, Fla., Ms. Canfield couldn’t get Rwanda out of her mind. “Every bit of the money I needed was made available to me,” she said.

During the trip Ms. Canfield met Bernadette, a 19-year-old orphan who had been born with a birth defect never seen before in her remote village. People had thought she was cursed or possessed by an evil spirit.

“My heart started pounding in my chest,” Ms. Canfield said. “My daughter was born with that birth defect … I know that was why God sent me.”

The trip ended after 10 days, but team members say the work has only begun. Mr. Rhodes hopes to raise funds at Spring of Life UMC to support as many as 100 orphans.

“Empowerment—that’s our word now,” he said. “It’s ZOE’s word, of course.”

Reprinted from the Florida Conference e-Review.
The Wisconsin Annual Conference UMC took place in La Crosse, WI, June 13th-16th, featuring the theme “Give Wholeheartedly,” which was woven throughout the four days of activities. The conference highlighted individuals and groups who give above and beyond what is expected, including our 14 Health and Welfare Ministries; the 2008 Flood Recovery Program; and the generous giving from UMC congregations throughout the state for Haiti ($449,000), Chile ($more than $15,000), and for the Ingathering, which consisted of thousands of donated mission items and money (an estimated total value of more than $80,000). Additionally, more than 3,000 health kits and items were donated and delivered to the Midwest Mission Distribution Center prior to the Annual Conference session.

Bishop Linda Lee delivered a lively sermon on the “ridiculously lavish” love that God has for us and declared that “God is in the neighborhood!” She used the example of her own family reunions to illustrate how love can unite different people—even those who disagree. Reverend Jeremy Deaver, a newly ordained elder, spoke at the Commissioning of Provisional Members service on the theological, emotional and physical oneness of the human race.

Mark Geisbhardt, chairperson of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, presented Bishop Lee with a special recognition certificate from the GCFA for Wisconsin’s 100% apportionment payment for 2009. This is the 19th year in a row that the Wisconsin Conference has received this recognition. The Conference attendees also demonstrated their willingness to give enthusiastically during several special offerings: $4,378 for the Central Conference Pension Initiative of the United Methodist Church, $1,855 for Ministries for Children and Youth in Wisconsin, and $1,937 for the Dongbu Annual Conference of the Korean Methodist Church Scholarship Fund and the Clergy in Transition Fund. The Conference also donated $5,244 for school books for orphans in East Angola.

The plenary session included a presentation on the new Catalyst Team to help identify a new vision and new possibilities for churches, and the Community in Conversation—a period of open dialogue in which members of the Conference came together to discuss homosexuality and living into God’s future. The Conference also welcomed delegates from the Dongbu Conference in South Korea to honor the sister partnership between the two Conferences, and celebrated ethnic ministries within the Conference, like Monona UMC in Monona, WI and Korean UMC in Kenosha, WI.

Bishop Lee ordained five elders. Nine persons were commissioned as provisional elders and three persons were commissioned as provisional deacons. Ten persons were licensed as new persons—a total of 19 pastors retired.

Several Conference Action Items were voted on. The approved items include the formation of a new Discipleship Leadership Team, a call to action on Immigration Reform, a new Covenant of Affiliation with Hilcrest Family Services, the 2011 budget and the closing of the Bay City UMC, which was formed in 1889.

### VIM Trip to Cuba: 10 Days that Will Last a Lifetime

In June, an International Volunteer in Mission Team traveled to Cuba. Primarily from Madison First UMC and led by Donna Veatch, John Stolzenberg and Bill Helwig, the team of nine volunteers spent a week working at the Methodist Church in Guanabacoa, on the outskirts of Havana. Their task was to help construct a new sanctuary, the congregation having outgrown the current one.

It was not all work, though. The VIM group also immersed themselves in Cuban culture through fellowship with their church counterparts as they worked together on the ongoing construction project. The VIM team was able to accomplish much over their 10-day trip; and the memories, lessons, and friendships that they gained will last for years to come. The team also visited churches damaged by hurricanes that the Wisconsin Conference continues to help rebuild.

A Wisconsin Conference-wide VIM team will again travel to Cuba in January 2011 and has a few positions still open. If interested, contact Donna Veatch immediately at DVeatch@aol.com or 608-212-3374.

### Highlights from the Wisconsin Annual Conference Session

**Action Item 1**: Local Church Campaign Coordinator
- Approved*

**Action Item 2**: Camp and Retreat Extension Sunday
- Approved*

**Action Item 3**: New Camp Participants
- Approved*

**Action Item 4**: United Methodist Women’s Sunday
- Approved*

**Action Item 5**: United Methodist Youth Sunday
- Approved*

**Action Item 6**: Resolution on Lay Speaking Ministries
- Approved*

**Action Item 7**: Designation of Earnings from New Ministries Fund
- Approved*

**Action Item 8**: A Resolution on Health Care in Our Social Community
- Approved as Amended

**Action Item 9**: A Resolution on Our Economic Community
- Approved as Amended

**Action Item 10**: Resolution Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired or Disabled ClergyPersons of the WI Conference
- Approved*

**Action Item 11**: Resolution on Past Service Amenity Rate
- Approved

**Action Item 12**: Resolution on Minimum Compensation
- Approved

**Action Item 13**: Resolution on 2010 Formal Funding Plan for Pre-1982 Pension Liability
- Approved*

**Action Item 14**: Resolution on 2010 Formal Funding Plan for Retiree Medical Benefits
- Approved*

**Revised Action Item 15**: Proposed Rewrite of Conference Policy 10.1.5: Apportionment
- Approved

**Action Item 16**: Proposed Additions to Conference Policy 60.4.0: Minimum Parsonage Equipment & Conference Policy 130.1.0: Minimum Standards for Local Churches
- Approved

**Action Item 17**: Proposed Amendment to Conference Rule 3.3.2: Membership of Conference Program Boards
- Referred to DLT

**Action Item 18**: Closing of Bay City United Methodist Church
- Approved

**Action Item 19**: Resolutions Regarding Anti-Gay Legislation
- Out of Order

**Action Item 20**: Covenant of Affiliation between Milwaukee Family Services & the Wisconsin Conference of The United Methodist Church
- Approved

**Revised Action Item 21**: Resolutions Related to the Wesley Foundation of Wisconsin, Inc.—Madison
- Approved

**Action Item 22**: Proposed 2011 Conference Budget
- Approved

**Action Item 23**: Proposed Discipleship Leadership Team (DLT)
- Approved

**Action Item 24**: Conference Budget Reduction Percentage Resolution
- Referred to DLT

**Action Item 25**: Resolution Regarding Our Current Crisis
- Points 1 & 2 Approved, Point 3 Rejected

**Action Item 26**: 2010 Call to Action on Immigration Reform
- Approved as Amended

*Indicates the item was approved on the Consent Agenda.
Churches give new meaning to ‘contemporary worship’

By Mallory McCall
Staff Writer

Though many United Methodists might say contemporary worship is anything that takes place outside of the sanctuary and doesn’t use a hymnal or an organ, experts argue it’s about much more than musical style.

Today, contemporary worship is all about participation. Many Christians of all ages no longer find it satisfying to go to church and sit through a service; they want to be part of it. The informality of these modern services gives congregants the freedom to participate in worship in a more personal way.

According to a recent survey commissioned by the United Methodist Church, offering contemporary worship services in addition to traditional services is a mark of high-vitality congregations.

And the 2008 American Congregations report, a national survey of congregations hosted by Hartford Seminary’s Institute for Religion Research, shows that 64 percent of congregations that adopted some model of “contemporary” worship within the last five years have experienced at least a 2 percent increase in worship attendance.

But what does it mean to be contemporary in worship? Experts say such services—often called emergent or alternative worship—have a more relaxed tone, with a sense of informality in the way people dress and the language that is used. This creates a greater sense of accessibility for those attending, says Lester Ruth, professor of Christian worship at Asbury Theological Seminary and author of A Little Heaven Below: Worship at Early Methodist Quarterly Meetings (Kingswood Books).

The songs are easily accessible too. Most of the praise music played in today’s contemporary worship services is heavily influenced by pop music as seen in both the instrumentation and the repetitive choruses, adds Dr. Ruth. “We learn to participate well in things, oftentimes not by conscious effort but by repeated exposure.”

Such choruses are often popular with younger generations who find them more familiar sounding.

Q&A: Christian compassion for animals

Laura Hobgood-Oster believes humans lose out if we ignore the animal kingdom in our spiritual lives. A Disciple of Christ pastor and professor of religion at United Methodist-related Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, she is also president of Friends of the Georgetown Animal Shelter and the shelter’s dog-rescue coordinator.

She spoke recently with special contributor Amy Forbus about her new book, The Friends We Keep: Unleashing Christianity’s Compassion for Animals (Baylor University Press).

Why do you think animals don’t seem to play much of a role in many Christians’ faith?

Except for our pets, we are not around animals as much. They used to play more of a role in our everyday life—farm animals and whatever animals we would eat were very much a part of our life when they were alive, not just after they had become food.

And not to demonize the Enlightenment or the rise of humanism, but humans had for a long time defined ourselves as superior to animals. That gets heightened with the Enlightenment: the focus on humans as the center of everything.

See ‘Animals’ page 28

See ‘Worship’ page 48
I was surprised at how little I knew about saints and their companions. I thought St. Francis was the only one who “belonged” to animals, but you write about others.

Protestant Christianity sort of forgot all the saints, so because we don’t have those stories, it’s another reason why animals started to disappear. For a thousand years, one of the ways you would determine that someone was a saint or a particularly holy person is because they had these special relationships with all creatures, including animals.

Of the ones I find particularly intriguing, one is St. Brit, a Celtic saint. There are numerous stories of her feeding dogs who come to the house. I actually think one of those stories is really reflecting on the idea that Jesus is the stranger who knocks at the door, you’re not sure who this is, and so you feed the stranger. In doing that, you’ve accepted angels or God; you’re providing hospitality.

Another one is St. Anthony of Padua, a second-generation Franciscan. He preaches to fish; there’s a story of him offering the Eucharist to a male. Then St. Anthony Abbott, the official patron saint of animals, is usually pictured with a pig. He lived in the wilderness with animals being his primary companions.

Of the pet overpopulation problem in the U.S., you write, “It is difficult to imagine a Christian theology that would find such a situation acceptable.” Yet, it’s all around us.

Right. I think that both pet overpopulation and factory farming are two dominant aspects of U.S. culture that most of us keep blindingly about. You just can’t walk into a grocery store and pretend [factory farming] doesn’t exist, not with that spread of meat in front of you. There’s just no way that amount of food is being produced without a big industrialized system being part of it. So you have to live in denial there.

I think the same is true with pet overpopulation. We have animal control facilities all over the country killing millions of dogs and cats every year because there are no homes for them. Only one out of every 10 dogs in the U.S. lives in the same home their whole life. Nine out of 10 are moved from home to home, or end up in an animal control facility and have to be euthanized because there is no home for them. So again, we really must have blinding on if we think they are all in stable homes.

Pets are a very interesting aspect of our culture. They’re starting to have a pretty big impact. I think that dogs and cats may actually be the pivot point that turns us around to thinking about animals differently.

Do you think our culture can develop a greater sense of sacred relationship with animals? I think we’re already starting to. It’s been 40 years since the first Earth Day was celebrated, and not too long after that the Cathedral of St. John the Divine had its first official blessing of the animals on the Sunday closest to the Feast of St. Francis in early October. And in the most recent count I did, there are more than 500 blessings of animals in the U.S. It speaks to the increasingly significant role of pets in our lives now. If there is something so significant about the way we live with our dogs, and they have a life worth living, they can feel pain, they can understand play on their love to run. It’s a different category than dog fighting, but it’s one we need to question.

You’re a vegan… Vegetarian. I do eat eggs from a friend of mine who has chickens, so I’m very particular about animal products. I don’t eat any meat or fish at all, and haven’t for 20 years. But if I do eat animal products I know where they’ve come from, and I know they are from animals who are happily and humanely raised.

So what do you tell people who want to consider eating more mercifully even if they can’t go vegetarian?

Even starting out with one less meat-based meal a week helps a lot. Working toward eating less meat is better for you, anyway—we just eat way too much meat in this country. So cutting back, not assuming that for a dinner to be complete there has to be meat on your plate. There are other very interesting ways to eat. Also [find] local farmers markets and local meat. A lot of farmers markets will have somebody there who’s selling local, usually more-humanely raised, free-range meat. It’s more expensive sometimes, so there are economic class issues here in terms of who can afford to buy the animal products that are better.

It’s part of Christian practice, to have a day where you don’t eat meat. Maybe make that two days, then look locally for meat that you know has been humanely raised.

What about endangered species? We need to think about ways to take up less space, to live with a lighter footprint, because it’s our use of the resources that provide homes for other animals that’s really the problem: cutting down forests so we have more land to graze cattle and more materials to build things.

It’s very much embedded in Christian practice, a kind of asceticism, monks and nuns for generations living lightly and with less stuff. Changing the way we live and eat—very much a kind of religious practice—will help us consume less, which means we’ll take up less of the land where other animals live.
Methodists develop Safe Sanctuaries training

BY FRED KOENIG
Special Contributor

Christ was clear in his instruction regarding children: They are the most precious among us; to care for them is to care for God; to allow harm to befall a child is a terrible thing.

While most people feel this way, establishing practical measures to keep children safe can be complex. In the Missouri Conference, however, United Methodists have been designing and refining a Safe Sanctuaries system for years and are now sharing their methods and knowledge with others.

The conference will host a training event Nov. 18-19 for other conferences in the United Methodist Church.

“This is our way of giving back to the connection what we’ve learned,” said Sherry Habben, director of connectional ministries. “This will help others get the tools they need to put their own processes in place.”

Commissioned task
Safe Sanctuaries originated in 1996, when a resolution was passed at General Conference requiring all conferences to adopt policies to safeguard children and youth. The General Board of Discipleship (GBOD) was given the charge to develop written resources for these policies.

GBOD commissioned Joy Melton for this task. A deacon in full connection, Ms. Melton is also an attorney who had experience working with children’s ministry. Her first Safe Sanctuaries book was published in 1998 by Discipleship Resources (now the Upper Room).

United Methodist annual conferences varied in how quickly they established their new policies, but Ms. Melton says, “From the beginning, Missouri was one of the stellar conferences with leaders who were committed to working hard to keep children and youth safe.

“I always use Missouri as an example of best practices,” she added. “The leaders there have established good standards and applied them across the board.”

The Missouri Conference Safe Sanctuaries certification process involves a self-disclosure application, an application fee, background screening, personal references, a reference from the applicant’s pastor and online training. The process requires recertification every four years.

Continual need
The Missouri Conference has around 13,000 people who are Safe Sanctuaries-certified. Each year there are more adults who need certification, including about 700 camp counselors, 500 adult chaperones for an annual youth rally called WOW, and more than 300 adults on mission trips involving youth. Online training was introduced in the Missouri Conference in fall 2007. Several trainings per year were held throughout the conference. Going to an online training had multiple advantages. People seeking certification in outlying areas no longer had to travel for hours to a training session. And the training could be taken at any time, day or night, so people didn’t have to miss work.

In 2007, the certification process was taking about eight weeks. Organizers wanted to cut that time in half. Three years later, they’ve done much better than that.

“If everything is clear, we can now certify someone in one to two weeks,” said Nancy Cady, Safe Sanctuaries administrator.

“The process that used to exist entirely on paper has now shifted to 95 percent online.”

“The pastors love it, because it’s easier for them to get the references back to us,” Ms. Cady said. “Many of them have stopped by just to thank me.”

Streamlining the process hasn’t just made it faster, it’s made it better.

“We’ve got to be able to process these applications efficiently so you have time to properly address an issue when something comes up,” Ms. Cady said. “It can be very tedious work, but it’s so worthwhile when you make a difference in a situation.”

Live training offered
The Missouri Conference still offers one to two Safe Sanctuary live trainings per month, for areas with limited Internet access or for people who prefer not to use a computer. A registered trainer leads these sessions, using a compact disc PowerPoint presentation to share the information. The same way it is presented in an online training.

Ms. Melton has worked for United Methodist Property and Casualty Trust since 1997, and continues to develop and refine Safe Sanctuaries resources. The book is now in its fourth edition. PACT has partnered with Track-1 Technology to offer its own version of online Safe Sanctuaries training.

Other conferences are showing a lot of interest in adopting an online training.

“If you had a dozen conferences contact me on the phone asking about our process,” Ms. Cady said. “Most of them are not this far along yet.”

These inquiries were the catalyst for developing the training being offered this November. United Methodists in other conferences will be able to network together and share what they’ve learned as well.

For information about the Safe Sanctuaries training, visit www.moumethodist.org.

Mr. Koenig is editor of publications for the Missouri Conference.
In the 1970s, praise bands mostly resembled garage-rock bands. But today, they include soft
music, then it’s a smaller step to sing Christianchoruses than to sing a classic hymn which is almost like an epic story. “When we discussed what type of group we
would like to be, we wanted to have a worship service that is a little more intimate than the typical church service, says Mr. Wilson. “It’s always changing, but it always connects to
the sermon theme, says Dave Wilson, Corner-stone’s director of contemporary music. “I don’t want it to be a ropes-vibe, where everybodycomes in and knows what to expect with thesame group of songs, “ he said.

The eleven20 service brings new faces into
the church—struggling young people who once
left the church in disorientation or who have
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space for one thing, says Mr. Wilson. “Peoplecrammed into a room, eleven20 averages about
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“When we discuss what type of group we wanted to attract, we’ve realized we want a more
demographic. Instead of seeing ourselves as youthpeople, said the Rev. Mary Scifres, FUMMW A’sworship interest area coordinator. “We’re starting to reclaim
some of those things. ”

All-age appeal

A VIP Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas—ranked by Outreach Magazine in one of the nation’s premier United Methodist churches in America—contemporary worship services
are constantly changing things up.

On any given Sunday at Cornerstone, elderly couples hold hands and young, elderly, children
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The 2010 Florida Annual Conference worship team band includes members of several churches: Christ Church United Methodist in Fort Lauderdale, First United Methodist Church in Lakeland and Kiliman United Methodist Church in Tallahassee.

Dr. Ruth points out. T ake, for example, this stanzafrom a variation of the hymn, “My Savior’s NameI’ll Gladly Sing”:

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In many cases, the initial push for more rele-
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Rethinking the church involves remembering

By Andrew C. Thompson
UMR Columnist

Part of our “Rethinking” the church has got to be “Remembering” the church. And that’s a challenging thing to do in our current cultural climate. There are a couple of ways to think about the church member. One is that it means calling something forgotten back to mind. I can remember an old classmate’s name when running into him at the grocery store. Or I can remember where I put my car keys last night. But in order to remember is to put something back together that has been taken apart. It is literally to “remember” that thing, so that the various “members” that made up the “whole” are put back into a unity. Both senses of remembering are needed in the church today.

The current issue of Circuit Rider—the United Methodist Church’s magazine for clergy—contains an energetic set of articles looking at ways we can reframe what it means to be the church. The perspectives come from urban congregations, small-town settings, and overseas missions.

Editor Jessica Kelley says the point of the Rethink Church campaign is to help people realize they are called to be the church, not just to go church. Reading about the breadth of ministry and witness across the church is inspiring. It reminds me what a challenge it is to live as a faithful disciple of Jesus in our contemporary world. We can follow Jesus heart-breakingly easily enough, but where in the Scripture does it call for a half-hearted faith?

That’s why remembering is so important. When the people of Israel were suffering under slavery to Pharaoh, God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 2:23-24), and raised up Israel. Unlike God, however, our own memory hasn’t proven so reliable in the church today.

Today’s culture could be the poster child for distraction and forgetfulness. We have a standard of living that is unmatched in human history. Development in agriculture, technology, medicine and education have resulted in a prosperity even Pharaoh would have envied.

But there are downsides. Significant ones.

Our prosperity means that all the stuff that surrounds us can have the effect of so many golden calves. We worship: food, material goods, techno-gadgets, cars and homes.

Compounding our conspicuous consumption is that it is so increasingly individualized. The marketing that gets beamed from every possible media outlet encourages us to think about ourselves as singular individuals, with a whole set of felt needs that deserve to be met cheaply and quickly. In the process, God gets squeezed out.

Following a Savior whose call is to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow is about counter-cultural as it is possible to be. And the notice that only in following such a calling can we find true happiness? Why, that sounds downright un-American.

Un-American it may be, but it’s not un-Christian. In fact, it’s centrally Christian.

If we want to really be the kind of church the Rethink Church program is pointing us toward, we’ve got to turn down the culture noise long enough to let our memories come back to us. Because only in remembering the story given to us, from the apostles and down through time to the present, can we start to re-member the body of Christ.

Do we need to rethink our church, in the sense that many of us aren’t in the habit of thinking much about it—or our place in it—at all.

The church is not just an idea, or a once-a-week opportunity for fellowship, or a handy place to drop your kids off at daycare. The church is a people. It is the community where we can find the redemption God wants to give to us (and through us, to the world).

The old Easter hymn says, “You ask me how I know he lives. He lives within my heart.” That’s a shaky statement on which to base your salvation. Jesus doesn’t want to live in our hearts. He wants us to live in his kingdom.

And that’s a thought worth remembering every day of the week.

The Rev. Thompson maintains a blog at genersinging.com. E-mail: andrew@mandatum.org.

On being United Meth-old-ist

By Dan Dick
Special Contributor

We’re not getting older; we’re getting better. Well, actually we are getting older, but this doesn’t mean we can’t get better as well. The graying of our church—a subject of great concern and incredible misplaced anxiety—is worth looking into, but as opportunity, not a problem to solve.

In many parts of our country, the age trend will be at the upper end of the spectrum: more old people with more resources (translated “disposable income”), more time, more energy and more productive years.

In demographics, a golden opportunity to exploit a market. But will the church pay attention? That is the problem that most leaders in the church refuse to use common sense when it comes to planning. Research shows that more than eight out of 10 United Methodist churches are pinning their hopes for the future on “young families with children.”

Congregation after congregation nostalgically pines for the glory days when their Sunday schools were packed to bursting, and when 20- and 30-somethings sat shoulder to shoulder with mom, dad, grandma, grandpa and Aunt Flo. The vision for the future looks like a rerun from 1959.

In a day when the average length of membership for young adults is less than two years, die-hard’s in the church look to rebuild their congregations on the shoulders of today’s young. Good luck with that.

Hey, if you have a lot of young people to draw from, go for it; but this is not the reality for a significant number of our churches. Younger families are heading to non-methodist congregations with plenty of resources and technology, where demands and expectations are very modest.

And these growing independent churches have no delusions that the young will pay their own way. The trend is in providing ministry “to” and “for the young,” not “with” them (or expecting them to pony up the cash to pay for it).

A tiny number of United Methodist congregations have the resources or leadership to go toe-to-toe with the “big guns.” And when I visit a small congregation with one 9-year-old and one 14-year-old (generally brother and sister), and they are envisioning revitalization through an active Sunday school and youth program, I have to scratch my head and wonder what they’re thinking.

Most assuredly we need to do everything in our power to provide spiritual support, education and guidance to people of all ages, but let’s target real people, not mythical wish-people who don’t exist, and even if they did they probably wouldn’t come to our church.

There is ample evidence that people who connect with a congregation connect through building relationships. But as important as multi-generational relationships are, these tend to succeed best in families.

The relationships that bond people to churches are relationships between peers—social, educational, cultural equals who reach out and invite each other into relationships. We tend to cross bridges into familiar territory, so if our landscape is middle-aged on up, then that’s whom we are most likely to attract.

How nice for us that 55-and-older will be the largest growing demographic over the next 25 years, and that over 40 percent of this Boomer demographic has no church affiliation. The harvest has not been so ripe in the last 60 years?

Boomers (individuals born between 1946-1964—our current 46- to 64-year-olds) love relationships. This generation wants to be active and engaged in things that help others and that make themselves more comfortable. This age group spends more money on themselves than any other, and they are the easiest touch for charity. There have never been more people entering retirement who are looking for something worthwhile to do.

Churches that are paying attention to the realities of our aging demographics in the U.S. are going to start growing—not with young adults, but with middle adults, retirees and older adults. And the wonderful thing about older adults is that we’re constantly making more!

Culturally, interest in church and religion is hitting later in life—just like about everything else. When I did the spiritual seeker study for the denomination in 2003-2006, “spirituality” became a high priority for the majority of 41- to 60-year-olds as they approached 50.

Also, the largest segment of “lapsed” church members—inactive, those who have drifted away, those who have relocated and never reconnected—is in the 50+ category. It is time for churches to figure out the difference between dreaming and planning, wishing and strategizing. We can say we want a return to the 1950s, with full Sunday schools and happy young families, but let’s be honest. For the vast majority of United Methodist churches, this just isn’t going to happen.

So if we don’t have that, can we have? A much greater number of our churches can have vibrant, vital, highly interactive ministries with middle adults, retirees and older adults who attract and serve the audience they actually have instead of only wish they had.

Now let me be clear: If you have a viable children’s, youth, young adult or young families ministry, then by all means do it and do it well. I am not saying we abandon one for another.

What I am saying is this: The fastest growing, non-ethnic demographics in most of the country for the next 25 years will be in the 55-and-older category. Almost half of this group has little or no church affiliation.

An opportunity? I think it is worth exploring.

The Rev. Dick is director of connectional ministries for the Wisconsin Conference.
Let’s rethink the outdated Charge Conference!

By Donald W. Haynes
UMR Columnist

No one really likes the Charge Conference—not laity or clergy or superintendents. Let’s give the connectional family pet a decent burial and replace it with local dialogue led by the superintendent whose job is “to oversee and supervise” ministry in those charges as an extension of the bishop’s office.

Tom Frank, probably the foremost analyst of United Methodist polity, piqued my interest in a recent e-mail when he noted that the last book written on the role and function of the district superintendent was Murray Leiffer’s 1960 volume, The Role of the District Superintendent. The Book of Discipline referenced was the 1956 edition. That means that no one has written a book about this connectional office in the entire history of the United Methodist Church!

The district superintendent has been considered the linchpin of the connectional ministry. As Leiffer notes, “No other office . . . is more important to the functioning of the total organization.” Bishop Harmon called them “the applied end of the episcopacy.”

The job varies some with every conference, every bishop and every superintendent, but two of the D.S.’s responsibilities are paramount: the making of appointments and the local church Charge Conference.

Outmoded model

The season for the Charge Conference is upon us. Who is excited about this outmoded model of dull reports and braggadocio?

In horse and buggy days the “Presiding Elder” visited every charge four times a year because it was at what was then called the “Quarterly Conference” that the business of the charge was conducted.

Many lay preachers could not commute, so the tradition of “taking communion four times a year” was part of the “Presiding Elder’s” quarterly visits.

Those visits were “rally days” of both attendance and spiritual revitalization. The office carried great prestige among both clergy and laity.

By the early 20th century, however, most local church “temporal and spiritual affairs” were conducted by the Board of Stewards and the Board of Trustees, and the quarterly visits of the D.S. were reduced to two.

Most annual conferences followed harvest time in an agrarian culture. Leiffer says the First Quarterly Conference, scheduled by Christmas time, was devoted to planning and acceptance of appointments. At the second and third Quarterly Conference, the elder either preached or conducted a special session for some local church business, such as borrowing money or property issues.

By 1952, the Board of Stewards and Board of Trustees were combined to make The Official Board the governing body of the local church, except for specific matters reserved for the Quarterly Conference, such as appointments, pastoral compensation, officers for the next calendar year, recommendations for License to Preach and removal of members.

Exaggerated reports

The Q.C. gradually became a time of exaggerated reports to impress the “D.S.!” Consider this appraisal in 1956: “The Quarterly Conference is a dull, lifeless meeting. Any free democratic discussions either wind around aimlessly or get nowhere.” Or this: “The Quarterly Conference is set up . . . to impress the district superintendent. Time can be used more constructively for planning, envisioning the future of the church.”

Can you believe that we still have a Charge Conference with the same agenda we had in 1956? Moreover, can you believe that those critiques have not yet been addressed?

By the late 1950s, the First Quarterly Conference had been dropped, which meant there was no time for the superintendent to have an annual dialogue for planning. In that same decade, annual conferences were changed to May or June. The only Quarterly Conference was in the fall.

With the strengthening of the role of the Finance Committee and the Administrative Board, the budget had been adopted and the salaries had become the D.S. arrived. Thus the report of the Nominations Committee and election of new officers. We must be the only organization in which the incumbent officers elect their successors!

In 1968, the Quarterly Conference became the annual “Charge Conference,” the time-honored Steward became a “Member at Large,” the formerly influential Sunday School Superintendent became an optional office, and the Council on Ministries, with a membership dominated by Christian education officers, eclipsed the role of the new Administrative Board. The work of the Charge Conference was mostly rubber-stamping previous decisions.

Scheduling Charge Conferences is a challenge for the D.S. Often he or she schedules four or five Charge Conferences in a given Sunday; there is no time for conversation or “inspecting” the property. The agenda! A devotional by the D.S. followed by reports that are surreal in their glowing optimism, or a convoluted worship service where the reports must represent the commitment of the local church to the connectional church.

Missouri Bishop Robert Schnacke’s charge for a fruitful congregation are being studied widely, but few Charge Conference agendas use them.

Worse still, many superintendents found the annual visit too burdensome and created in the late 20th century the “cluster Charge Conference,” which groups churches to conduct confidential business before relative strangers. Pride prevents candor in reports, and any underlying dysfunction is denied. Fewer and fewer laity have a personal relationship with the superintendent.

Prevents dialogue

The typical Charge Conference seems deliberately structured to prevent any dialogue regarding the effectiveness of the pastor or the true dynamics in the pastor-parish relationship. When any conflict arises, the D.S. is at a disadvantage because there are so few bridges of collegiality.

The Charge Conference as traditionally conducted is a dinosaur. Long ago, laity learned that the business of the Charge Conference has little relationship to the church’s ministry. Only respect for the connectional system or arm-twisting by the pastor gets a handful of laity to come.

Redemptive developments are happening in some annual conferences. Bishops can require a Church Conference that allows every church member to vote on congregational concerns such as approving candidates for ordained ministry, endorsing conference appointments, settling clergy compensation and electoral officers.

Paperwork burden

Another innovation is for the local Staff-Parish Relations Committee to have an hour with the D.S. before Charge Conference. Reports can be sent by fax or e-mail ahead of time, leaving the charge conference as a place for true dialogue. Membership and financial reports should all come at year’s end.

Relieved of reports, the visit of the superintendent could occur any time.Full could be reserved for meeting with Staff-Parish Relations Committee members who want to discuss human resource issues related to appointed clergy. Following a one-on-one with those clergy, the superintendent could then be on-site in January. Other Charge or Church Conferences could be scheduled throughout the year.

If the D.S. is to be the linchpin of the connection, the Church Conference needs to be a working seminar! If the D.S. distributes statistics for that church over the past 20 years, for instance, the figures are a reality check. Serious work with the church’s strengths and weaknesses is screaming for attention.

If we could get really brave, our “Call to Action” would include the elimination of both the District Superintendent’s office and annual appointment of clergy. Quadrennial appointments could be “brokered” by the bishop with a covenant component, giving both clergy and local churches some ownership while retaining the episcopal right of veto.

As for the making of appointment, the bishop could appoint a “stationing committee” of clergy and laity quadrangle— a paradigm similar to British Methodism. Clergy would be pastors or persons in extension ministry or retired relationship.

Beyond appointment-making, the tasks of the District Superintendent could be met by a cadre of clergy or laity with training and aptitude for specific congregational needs.

These specialists would receive compensation through contracts with local churches for services rendered, relieving conference budgets of the expense of having a D.S. and a district office.

Our first hue and cry will be, “We’ve never done it that way before!” But as a colleague said to me recently: “Time is running out on our mutually beneficial United Methodist “Call to Action.” If we do not get unstuck soon, our holy history from will end on a sad note.” This colleague is no carping critic: She has been elected to five General Conferences, served as chair of her conference Board of Ordained Ministry, been a district superintendent and chaired the jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy.

She also has great confidence in the new “Call to Action” committee. Would we dare hope for some radical departures from outdated polity at the 2012 General Conference?

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Bishop Mathews, ardent missionary, dies at 97

By Heather Hahn
United Methodist News Service

United Methodist Bishop James K. Mathews, who had a lifelong passion for mission work and evangelism, died Sept. 8 in Washington, D.C. He was 97.

The son-in-law of noted evangelist E. Stanley Jones, Mathews traveled the world as a Methodist missionary. He made more than 60 trips to India, 28 to Africa, 16 to Latin America and a dozen to Korea and Japan during his lifetime.

Throughout his travels, he brought a commitment to Christian service, said his daughter Anne Mathews-Younes.

“He loved life, he loved to serve and he was always willing to share of himself,” she said. “He worked all the time because that’s what you do when you’re a Christian. There’s always something to do.”

John “Jack” L. Ewing Jr., the executive director of the Foundation for Evangelism, called Mathews one of “the giants of the faith.”

However, the office of bishop was not a distinction he sought.

Mathews declined the post when he was first elected to serve as bishop in India in 1956. He suggested that Indians should be ministered to by their own people.

In 1960, he was on a mission trip in India when he was elected to the episcopacy again. This time, he accepted. He served as bishop of the New England Area for 12 years and then the Washington (D.C.) Area for eight before retiring in 1980.

In 1985, Mathews came out of retirement to serve as bishop in Zimbabwe for a year and during his tenure helped establish Africa University. He was called into service again in 1990, leading the newly created Albany Area in upstate New York until 1992. He later served as bishop of the New York Area starting in 1995, when its bishop went on medical leave.

He retired again in 1996 as one of the longest-serving bishops of the United Methodist Church.

Wesleyan evangelism

In many ways, Mathews embodied what was best about Wesleyan thinking, friends say.

David McAllister-Wilson, president of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington and a longtime friend, said Mathews combined John Wesley’s ideal of “knowledge and vital piety.”

The late bishop also had a very Wesleyan understanding of evangelism that combined personal holiness with social holiness, said Dr. Ewing.

“Mathews clearly understood it is not just about our personal relationship with God, our personal holiness,” Dr. Ewing said. “It is about our responsibility for our fellow human beings through social holiness.”

He was equally passionate about giving an altar call and calling for civil rights, Dr. McAllister-Wilson said.

As a bishop, he participated in the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech. In 1978, he participated in “The Longest Walk” in Washington, which drew national attention to the plight of Native Americans.

On Easter Sunday in 1964, he and African-American Bishop Charles Golden were barred from entering an all-white Methodist church in Jackson, Miss.

Decades later, Ms. Mathews-Younes said, her father was invited to preach at the church. The church is integrated now.

“My dad was on the right side of the issues,” his daughter said. “He wasn’t a rabble rouser at all. He was just patiently on the side of justice and Jesus.”

Medicine to mission

One of eight children, Mathews was born Feb. 10, 1913, in Breeze-wood, Pa. His father was an itinerant Methodist preacher, but Mathews initially aspired to become a physician and was a pre-med student at Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tenn.

While in college, he had a “profound conversion experience,” his daughter said, and his now-deceased brother, the Rev. Joseph W. Mathews, convinced him to enter the clergy.

He used to joke that he “saved a lot of lives by not becoming a surgeon,” Ms. Mathews-Younes said.

Mathews received a second bachelor’s degree from Biblical Seminary in New York City, earning his way teaching newly arrived immigrants at the Five Points Mission on New York’s Lower East Side.

He was ordained a Methodist minister in 1937. He then earned a master’s degree in theology from Boston University School of Theology where a lecture by an Anglican bishop from India inspired him to become a missionary.

In 1938, he set sail for India. The following year at the Sat Tal Christian Ashram in northern India, he met E. Stanley Jones, and just as importantly, Jones’s daughter Eunice. The two married in June 1940.

After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, Mathews returned with his wife to the United States where he pursued his Ph.D. in theology at Columbia University under the G.I. Bill. He also took a post with the Methodist Board of Missions, the predecessor of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries.

As a missionary, he crossed the Atlantic Ocean some 220 times and mastered several languages, including the Indian languages of Marathi, Hindustani, Urdu and Sanskrit.

He was “one of Methodism’s mission stalwarts of the 20th century,” said Thomas Kemper, the top executive at the General Board of Global Ministries.

“His mission was the message of God’s love in Jesus Christ, proclaimed in acts and words,” Mr. Kemper said. “He wrote, preached, taught and traveled for the gospel.”

As part of his ministry, he also met a number of powerful people. He was lifelong friends with Mahatma Gandhi’s grandsons. He met with Jackie Robinson, the black player who integrated Major League Baseball.

Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun spoke when he retired as the Washington Area’s bishop in 1980.

He was invited to the White House to discuss civil rights with President Kennedy. During the administration of President George H.W. Bush, he helped establish an interdenominational chapel at Camp David. He flew on Air Force One with President Clinton on the way to help lead a ceremony at Pearl Harbor to commemorate the end of World War II.

His survivors include his wife of 70 years, Eunice; his daughters, Ms. Mathews-Younes and Janice Stromsem; and son, J. Stanley Mathews, as well as six grandchildren and soon to be three great-grandchildren.

Gifts can be made on behalf of missionary work in India through the E. Stanley and Mabel Jones Foundation at the General Board of Global Ministries, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115.