Reflections on Our Dong Bu Partnership and Other Blessings in Wisconsin

By Bishop Linda Lee

This past September was the beginning of my eighth year as Bishop in the Wisconsin Conference. Quite a few things have changed since I first arrived. Yes, we have had to face great challenges such as the economic crisis and its effects on all aspects of our mission and ministry. And most recently, we have come through the pain of a church trial. However, many great things have happened. We have new processes for clergy and lay leadership development and healthier congregations, such as our “catalysts” teams. Our circuits and congregations have launched creative new ministries. The ministry plans in most of our congregations have resulted in renewed vision for ministry and transformed lives. We have a Discipleship Leadership Council to realign our Conference form to be more consistent with our function. Our communications efforts and training programs have been greatly expanded, and are more effective and professional. Our work with our Health & Welfare Ministries continues to grow and improve. Our collaboration with Wisconsin Volunteers Active in Disaster and the Wisconsin Council of Churches has helped us reach out in ministry beyond the doors of our churches. Our partnerships with East Angola and Native American Ministries have enabled us to help these underserved populations.

All of these efforts have remained true to our vision to Live, Give, and Love—Beyond All Expectation, and to our focus for this third year of this Quadrennium—to Love Unconditionally.

Experiencing Unconditional Love from Dong Bu

As we consider our focus of the 2011–12 Conference year—Love Unconditionally—I am also reminded of our sister Conference, the Dong Bu Methodist Conference of South Korea. I had the honor of spending time with these loving partners and their congregations during my trip there last April. The remarkable people of Korea consistently show the unconditional love of Christ to their visitors, as well as through the ministries and missions they share with their communities and the world.

One congregation’s love was expressed in their discovery that many of the elderly in their community did not know how to read. Although the congregation was not very large by Korean standards, and didn’t have very much extra money, they demonstrated a lot of compassion. They started a teaching ministry, which then grew into other ministries as new needs became apparent—like necessities such as food and healthcare. It was their faith in God and desire to express the love they had experienced themselves that gave them the courage to step out and begin that ministry. As a result, the finances they needed came from various places and all were blessed.

Many of us here have seen God move in similar ways as we have stepped out from our hearts to offer the unconditional love of Christ to those in need around us.

Another gift that could be seen as an expression of unconditional love in Korea is ginseng. In their culture, it is a great honor to receive ginseng as a gift. And it shows great respect and love on the part of the giver. This is because this plant has been shown, through medical testing and personal experiences of many people, to have consistent and beneficial effects for the well-being of the person who uses it. Ginseng has been shown to improve the eyes, settle the heartbeat, boost the immune system, and generally enhance well-being. As a gift from one person to another, it is a way of expressing and offering the gift of life—wholeness—shalom.

Showing Love Can Change the World

As we focus on loving unconditionally, what we offer to others can be as simple as ginseng. It can be a warm smile or opening a door for another. Unconditional love can also be a much greater sacrifice, as in giving our life for another, like so many of our young who have given their lives in war. Whether we are in the midst of strangers, involved in whatever our day-to-day life entails, or living comfortably in the midst of loved ones, let us consider this year one way we can offer the love of Christ each day. It will make a world of difference and, one by one, transform it.
Panel urges UMC to become more global

BY HEATHER HAHN
United Methodist News Service

The time has come for the United Methodist Church to get serious about its global nature and be less U.S.-centric, says an international panel of United Methodist leaders.

“We are really hoping to shape the hearts and minds of the church,” said Bishop Scott J. Jones, chair of the Committee to Study the Worldwide Nature of the United Methodist Church. “We want the leaders to understand our worldwide nature and the diversity that we think is a real blessing in the life of the church.”

To that end, the 28-member committee has issued a report and proposed legislation to General Conference, the denomination’s top lawmaking body.

The legislation would:
• Incorporate a new worldwide United Methodist Church covenant into the Book of Discipline, the denomination’s law book. The covenant will be accompanied by a “Litany for the Covenant of the Worldwide United Methodist Church.”
• Make clear in a new global Book of Discipline what decisions the General Conference makes, and which areas of ministry and organization are adaptable by central conferences outside the United States.
• Clarify how general agencies function in a worldwide rather than U.S.-centric church.
• Set in motion a process for annual conferences to study a proposed new model for a worldwide church. This study process may result in petitions for greater structural change at the 2016 General Conference.

Passing this legislation will require a majority vote of General Conference delegates. The next General Conference meets April 24-May 4, 2012, in Tampa, Fla.

Studying and listening

The United Methodist Church has nearly 40,000 congregations in the United States, Africa, Europe and the Philippines. As of 2010, the denomination’s membership topped 12 million members worldwide.

However, the denomination’s U.S. membership has been declining for more than 40 years, even as the church in Africa and the Philippines has been growing. Today, about 7.8 million United Methodists live in the United States.

The 2008 General Conference authorized the formation of a worldwide nature study committee to examine the denomination’s changing demographics and take recommendations to General Conference.

The group met six times between August 2009 and July 2011. In addition, members traveled around the globe for listening sessions with United Methodists in the Philippines, Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Europe as well as the United States.

In its report to General Conference, the panel listed some of what members heard in their travels to central conferences, including desires for more ministerial education, greater communication with general agencies and the ability to adapt the Book of Discipline.

Overwhelmingly, Bishop Jones said, he heard “a strong desire for the worldwide unity of the church at the same time as a desire for greater mutual understanding and respect.”

“The dynamic with which we were working was the desire to clarify what holds us together while allowing for greater freedom in other matters,” he added.

Proposed changes

The committee is particularly eager to get United Methodists on board with adding the new covenant to the Book of Discipline, said Bishop Jones, who also oversees the Kansas Area. The covenant puts into words values most church members already embrace but may not be fully aware of, he said.

“United Methodists throughout the world are bound together in a connectional covenant in which we support and hold each other accountable for faithful discipleship and mission,” the covenant says in part. “Integrally holding connectional unity and local freedom, we seek to proclaim and embody the gospel in ways responsible to our specific cultural and social context while maintaining a vital web of interactive relationships.”

The proposed legislation to clarify the Book of Discipline specifies that matters such as the denomination’s doctrine, constitution, Social Principles and structure would not be subject to adaption. However, the legislation, if passed, would empower annual conferences outside the United States to set some different educational standards for ordination as elders and deacons.

At General Conference, the committee also wants to set in motion consideration of a new worldwide model that would have the United Methodist Church organized in the same central conferences structure, with the five U.S. jurisdictions constituting a new central conference.

Under the model, jurisdictions would still elect bishops in the United States, and larger central conferences would have the right to form jurisdictions within their boundaries.

In 2009 and early 2010, voters at annual conferences rejected constitutional amendments approved by the 2008 General Conference that would have formed similar regional bodies.

“The key lesson of the constitutional amendments passed by the 2008 General Conference is that the church must take time to think these issues through as carefully as possible,” the committee said in its report. “The committee is proposing a model for conversation during the next (four years). This model, we hope, will stimulate proposals for action in the 2016 General Conference to change our worldwide structure.”

Ultimately, committee members said, conversation about the denomination’s global nature must continue beyond next year’s General Conference.

Liberia Area Bishop John G. Innis, a committee member, said he hopes next year’s gathering will promote church unity.

“Let us prepare ourselves for General Conference to sing praises to God and preach a common word,” he said, “so that we who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior can make the world a better place.”
Leader shares his journey in faith

By Bishop William H. Willimon
Special Contributor

Unexpected Destinations: An Evangelical Pilgrimage to World Christianity
Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
Win. B. Eerdmans, 2011
Paperback, 312 pages

“God’s invitations” are a central theme in this autobiographical work, which reflects on the author’s journey through the church and the challenges of the contemporary American church. Through personal reflections and theological insights, Granberg-Michaelson invites readers to engage with their own journeys and to embrace the many invitations God presents to us.

Keeping open to God’s invitations

By Mary Jacobs
Staff Writer

Invitations from God
Adele Ahlberg Calhoun
InterVarsity Press, 2011
Paperback, 208 pages

This collection of essays explores the theme of God’s invitations in various contexts, from personal experiences to theological discussions. It encourages readers to be open to God’s guiding in their lives.

British hymn appeals for peace in our time

By Irene Ting-Ting Lai
Special Contributor

“We Utter Our Cry” by Fred Kaan
UM Hymnal, No. 439

This hymn, written by Kaan, reflects on the importance of peace and the role of Christians in promoting it. It invites readers to join in prayer for peace and to act on their convictions.

Resources | 3A

United Methodist Reporter | October 14, 2011

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Ms. Ting-Ting Lai, a Methodist from Mayitas, is a student of Dr. Michael Hawn and a candidate for the master of sacred music degree at Perkins School of Theology.
Wisconsin Health & Welfare Ministries Lauded for Stellar Outreach Efforts

The Wisconsin Conference Health & Welfare Ministries were highlighted at the United Methodist Association national Transformation Summit, held in Milwaukee, WI, this past summer. In addition to highlighting our ministries, the purpose of the summit was to create a new UMA that's relevant, irreplaceable, essential and priceless.

Several key presenters from Wisconsin talked about how the Conference and Health & Welfare Ministries work together as partners. The spokespeople included Gary Gansemer, President and CEO of Hillcrest Family Services; Steve Polster, our assistant to the Bishop; Ken Arneson, President and CEO of Evergreen Retirement Community; Mac Weddle, Executive Director of Northcott Neighborhood House; John Lawson, Chair, Operating Officer of Three Pillars Senior Living Communities; and David Green, the Chair of the Health & Welfare Ministries Committee.

The Wisconsin Conference currently has within its boundaries 14 Health and Welfare Ministries serving persons of all faiths and races as an outreach of the United Methodist Church. The ministries serve poor families and children, the elderly and disabled, and those requiring health and hospital chaplaincy services. These 14 ministries are partially supported by the apportionment dollars received from congregations throughout Wisconsin.

Ken Arneson spoke about how special the Church connection is to the ministries. “The Conference gives the ministries a sense of belonging, and a sense of serving something greater than you,” he said.

Steve Polster indicated that “without our Health and Welfare ministries, the Church can’t fully live out our ministry in the world.” David Green agreed, explaining that the Church needs the ministries as much as the ministries need the Church. “Half of our commitment as United Methodists is to help those in need; a major opportunity to fulfill that commitment is through our support of the Health and Welfare Ministries,” Green said.

Mac Weddle said that Northcott Neighborhood House, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary of providing low-income families and communities in Milwaukee with a variety of programs and services, “couldn’t serve 10,000 people every year without the United Methodist Church.” He also talked about their sponsorship of June-tenth, an annual event commemorating the freeing of slaves. The participants have grown to about 80,000 annually, and this year, the event was declared a state holiday.

Barbara Cerra-Werner from Harbor House Crisis Shelters in Superior, WI, was also in attendance and explained how blessed they are to be connected to the United Methodist Church. She said that recently their funding was dramatically down, and they were concerned how they could keep their doors open. Then she received a call about a woman who passed away and wanted Harbor House to receive a bequest of $70,000. “This reaffirmed for me that we’re on the right track,” she said.

For more information about the United Methodist Association, visit the UMA website at http://umassociation.org. For more information about the Health and Welfare Ministries in Wisconsin, visit www.wisconsinumc.org or contact David Green at greend@uwosh.edu or 920-235-2702.

Wisconsin panel included (left to right): Ken Arneson, John Lawson, Mac Weddle, Steve Polster, Gary Gansemer, and David Green (at podium).

Mujila Falls Agriculture Centre Empowers People to Help Themselves

Living in the United States, it is hard to imagine not having easy access to food. There are several grocery stores and restaurants in most cities, and anybody who has been to a CostCo or Sam’s Club knows that in the U.S., the options and amounts of food available are practically endless. But in many parts of the world, food does not come in such abundance, or even at all. Such was the case in Mujila Falls, a region in the African country of Zambia, where for many years massive hunger, malnutrition, and protein deficiency were daily realities. Mujila Falls had the highest infant mortality rate in Zambia, and many babies and children bore the red-colored hair of protein deficiency, and the bloated bellies and watery eyes of severe malnutrition. The people of Mujila Falls—hunter-gatherers by trade—were having difficulty obtaining enough food to feed their families and provide them with adequate nutrition.

The Mujila Falls Agriculture Centre (formerly the Musokatanda Agriculture Project) was started as an agreement between the Lunda-Ndembu tribal chief and the United Methodist Church to change those statistics. It was founded in 1995 by Rev. Paul Webster and his wife Roxanne, both Wisconsin missionaries with the General Board of Global Ministries. Although Roxanne passed away from ovarian cancer in 2004, Paul returned to the centre to continue their work.

André Kanjimana (left) and Paul Webster, Missionaries at Mujila Falls in Africa

He and others at the centre introduce western-influenced agricultural practices to the people. Mujila Falls helps them more effectively use the natural resources of the area, while also cultivating new, nutritious food sources not indigenous to the area. Their projects include: building construction; raising dairy cattle; pork, poultry and egg production; bee keeping; growing corn crops; utilizing agricultural and communications technologies; building irrigation dams; maintaining a pre-school and sewing club; and spiritual formation.

Following the premise of the popular quote, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day; teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime,” they avoid giving handouts. Instead they strive to empower the people of Africa to advance through their own initiative and God-given talents with education, resources, and training.

One such individual is Thala Mwengo. When the Websters met him, he was a village boy from the Democratic Republic of Congo who had a desire to learn about agriculture. With the help of gifts from Wisconsin United Methodists, he was able to obtain his Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from Africa University and was recently commissioned a full missionary by the General Board of Global Ministries. He now serves as Paul Webster’s codirector at Mujila Falls. André Kanjimana has also been empowered by his connection with the Mujila Falls Agricultural Centre. He serves as a mechanic and missionary at the centre; takes care of volunteers who travel there, and travels to the United States to educate people about the work they do there. He has a wife and four boys.

“[I]f we can’t give them the tools, they can’t make a difference,” Paul Webber said. “But in many places, we can’t give them the tools, they can’t make a difference.”

The staff at the Mujila Falls Agricultural Centre works hard to help people in Africa gain access to resources like we do here in the United States. In a land without CostCos, they are empowering people to improve their health and nutrition, and encouraging them to enjoy their own sense of God’s abundance.

If you are interested in supporting this vital ministry, please send a check to the Wisconsin Conference UMC Treasurer for GBGM Advance Number 15016A. Your gift will support the Mujila Project by providing means for fuel, supplies, equipment, facilities, and many more things necessary to the operation of the centre. Volunteer in Mission teams are always welcome and appreciated. For more information, visit www.mujilafalls.com. You can also view Paul Webster’s PowerPoint presentation at www.wisconsinumc.org under Tools/PowerPoint.

André Kanjimana (left) and Paul Webster, Missionaries at Mujila Falls in Africa

Share Your Stories on Facebook; Win a Prize

Even though the RETHINK CHURCH and Change the World events took place earlier this year in Wisconsin, churches around the state continue to do great ministries outside and inside the walls of their church in a wide range of communities! We want to hear and share the stories of what your congregation is doing—either locally or globally—to continue the momentum to change the world.

We have already heard from some Wisconsin UMC members: Merrimac UMC raised money for Project Pink to provide a well and a source of clean water in a Ugandan community. St. James UMC in Milwaukee posted some great updates to our Facebook page that shows their choir performing for the Neighborhood Share Fair at Bethany Calvary UMC in Wauwatosa, WI. Monona UMC shared a video that documents a recent mission trip to help people in the Dominican Republic. Solomon Community Temple UMC in Milwaukee featured their community garden and Harambee initiative. For the second year, Asbury UMC in Madison spent a Saturday this past summer giving away free hamburgers, car washes and oil changes to people of all income levels and religious beliefs—their way of blessing the community.

To share your congregation’s story, visit www.facebook.com/wisconsinumc. You can post photos, videos, links to your website, or simply share your story directly on our wall. As a thank you and special recognition for your heartwarming efforts, those who post updates will be able to take their pick of either the Change the World book or the informative Essentials for Religious Communicators book/CD combination (while supplies last).
By Dan Dick

We’re Making Progress at the Wisconsin Conference

Ongoing Communications Efforts

We offer bulletin inserts, training, devotional materials, discussion guides, Bible studies, video resources and other support materials to lead a fall campaign. We will kick off the process at Annual Conference, host training events through the summer, provide downloads of all materials to churches, and conclude with a celebration event in November.

5. Mission and Ministry Education will be provided by a team of lay servants and other leaders in 2012. They will preach and teach on the amazing mission and ministry our Conference apportionments support locally, nationally and globally. We are doing incredible ministry in Wisconsin that many don’t even know about. The giving of Wisconsin United Methodists makes a huge difference, and they should be proud of the fantastic ministry they do with their unselfish giving.

6. Ongoing Communications Efforts will continue to get the word out, share our thinking and planning, and invite feedback and engagement around the priorities of the Conference. We will use the website, News, Reflections, and our public gatherings to keep everyone updated on the progress we’re making toward becoming a fruit-bearing/fruit-sharing Conference.

Conference Calendar

October 21st–22nd
United Methodist Women Annual Meeting
Black River Falls UMC

October 21st–23rd
NCI CORR Annual Learning Event
Holiday Inn, Des Moines, IA

October 22nd
Bullies, Victims and Bystanders: A Seminar for Youth and Adults
Wauwatosa Avenue UMC, Wauwatosa

October 23rd–26th
Mission Week
Chippewa-Heartland (23rd), Nicolet-Winnebago (24th), Metro North and South (25th), Capital-Goule (26th)

November 2nd–3rd
Commission on Archives and History Retreat
Pine Lake Camp

November 12th
Commission on Archives and History Retreat
Chula Vista, Wisconsin Dells

November 20th
Metros Regional Meeting with Bishop Lee
Whitefish Bay UMC, Milwaukee

November 27th
United Methodist Student Day Offering

November 30th–December 2nd
WIVOAD Annual Conference
Wisconsin Military Academy, Fort McCoy

For a more comprehensive list of events and training opportunities, visit our website www.wisconsinumc.org

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Prison Ministries in Wisconsin Bring Hope to a Hopeless Place

“I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.”

Matthew 25:36 (New Living Translation)

People involved with prison ministries live these words every day. Through their service to incarcerated individuals and their families, they bring hope to a hopeless place, provide each person with their Constitutional right of freedom of religion, and see the image of God where many would not bother to look.

They must be many things to the people they serve; often acting as counselors, confidants, worship leaders for the recognized religious groups (including Protestant and Catholic), Christians, Islamic, Native American, Pagan, Buddhist, Jewish, and Jehovah’s Witness), program managers, and officiators at funerals for prisoners who have died.

Luckily, they do not have to do it alone.

“I believe that the Wisconsin Conference of the United Methodist Church is very supportive of my ministry,” said Rev. Julie Reinke, a retired prison chaplain who continues to lead Victim Impact Programs on a volunteer basis. As an example, she noted that the members of Algoma Boulevard United Methodist Church in Oshkosh where she attends provided much education on restorative justice and prison ministries.

“They collected yarn for the church knitting program, participated in Angel Tree, offered two worship services a year at the prison, created a program for Safe Sanctuaries, and when a sex offender returned to the community, provided a Buddy System for the person so he could worship.”

However, there is still a stigma associated with the incarcerated, which people involved with prison ministries work to dispel.

“There is much prejudice against prisoners, especially sex offenders,” said Reinke. “Forgiveness is extremely hard for people and communities. They want second chances, but do not want to give others a second chance.”

Sometimes, it is the prisoners themselves who have to forgive. Reinke told of a prisoner named Adam who was a participant in the Victim Impact Program, a ministry in which inmates witness the pain victims go through, develop empathy for them, and make a commitment to never again harm a person through crime. Although he was a Christian and believed God had forgiven him, he had a hard time forgiving himself and carried a large burden of guilt.

One day, Reinke drew a balloon on a piece of colored paper and told him to write all the things he was guilty for and give it to God. Long after Adam had forgotten about the exercise, Adam came to her and told her that although he initially thought it was stupid, one day he started writing around the balloon. He filled the whole thing, tore it into shreds, and got down on his knees. He told her he couldn’t believe the difference giving his burdens to God and letting Him keep them made in his life.

There are many stories of redemption like Adam’s. Samuel Royappa, District Superintendent of the Capital-Goule region, has led Bible studies and worship services at prisons in Wisconsin, and continues to preach at Dodge Correctional Institution. He said, “Prison ministry is all about ministering to people who are feeling lonely—being separated from God and from people. They are looking for ways to connect...I have witnessed their lives being transformed by the good news of support and encouragement, coupled with love and compassion.”

People who work in prison ministries continue to answer Jesus’ call to serve “the least of these” through their ministries. In turn, they find joy in sharing the redeeming love of Christ. As Reinke said, “[The ability to] provide healing for victims, offenders, their families, and the community from which they come...is truly a blessing.”

We’re Making Progress at the Wisconsin Conference

By Dan Dick

Sometimes the staff and elected leadership of the Conference get so caught up in what we’re doing, we forget to let anybody else know what’s going on. Just so you know that we’re not all sitting around playing cards.

In 2007-2008, the Conference went through a visioning process, and identified three priorities:

1. To equip clergy and laity in collaborative ministry to strengthen positive relationships within and between our congregations and circuits.

2. To support congregational ministry at the local and circuit level, helping to cultivate healthy congregational environments engaged in vital ministries.

3. To improve communication at all levels through our connection.

These three priorities have driven our structure and planning, and so far have produced these results:

1. Eight Resource Teams— including spiritual formation; Christian education with children, with youth, and with adults; worship arts; evangelism; stewardship and missions—are working to offer training, consultation, networking, resource sharing, and support for ministry at the church and circuit level.

2. The Discipleship-Leadership Council and Executive Team was developed to provide comprehensive coordination and alignment. We intend to work more closely in key ministry areas, making sure that our boards and agencies are working together on our missional priorities and Conference objectives.

3. A Conference-Wide Stewardship Campaign with the “Live, Give, Love...Beyond All Expectation” theme will launch in the fall of 2012. We will offer bulletin inserts, training, devotional materials, discussion guides, Bible studies, video resources and other support materials to lead a fall campaign. We will kick off the process at Annual Conference, host training events through the summer, provide downloads of all materials to churches, and conclude with a celebration event in November.

4. “Living the Fruits of the Spirit” will be our new focus and vision for the 2013–2016 Quadrennium. There are four guiding questions. What do congregations and circuits need to become centers of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? What resources, training and support will enable every church to cultivate, produce, harvest, and share fruit that will last? How can we shift our focus from scarcity and need, to abundance and possibility? What will it take to make the Wisconsin Annual Conference’s witness to the denomination and world one of truly living the fruitful life?

5. Mission and Ministry Education will be provided by a team of lay servants and other leaders in 2012. They will preach and teach on the amazing mission and ministry our Conference apportionments provide locally, nationally and globally. We are doing incredible ministry in Wisconsin that many don’t even know about. The giving of Wisconsin United Methodists makes a huge difference, and they should be proud of the fantastic ministry they do with their unselfish giving.

6. Ongoing Communications Efforts will continue to get the word out, share our thinking and planning, and invite feedback and engagement around the priorities of the Conference. We will use the website, News, Reflections, and our public gatherings to keep everyone updated on the progress we’re making toward becoming a fruit-bearing/fruit-sharing Conference.

Dan Dick
Ark. music camp helps medical ministry to fly

By Amy Forbus

Special Contributor

How can five days of musical fun pay for medical help in the Congo? One answer to that question comes from First United Methodist Church Fort Smith in Arkansas.

Campers from four churches and four states gathered at First UMC Fort Smith Aug. 1-5 for Music Camp, a tradition of the church’s music ministry spanning two decades. Each year the camp chooses a different mission focus.

“The last few years we have chosen the mission that the Arkansas Conference chooses in June,” says Nancy Vernon, music coordinator and organizer for First UMC Fort Smith.

This year, that meant giving the money to Wings of the Morning, one of several mission efforts supported by the conference. A United Methodist ministry, Wings of the Morning saves lives by providing air transport so people in remote villages of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) can reach the medical care they need.

First UMC Fort Smith’s Music Camp is a day camp, limited to 55 children entering the second through seventh grades. The campers spent five days learning music and rehearsing for a performance on the evening of Friday, Aug. 5.

This year the group presented the musical Table for Five … Thousand! The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes by Tom Long and Allen Pote. The plot shares the biblical story mentioned in the title, and conveys the message that with God’s help, everyone can do great things.

Everyone involved participated in multiple ways: Each camper had a speaking part and a vocal solo in the musical. The campers also played hand chimes, which gave some the opportunity to pick up a new musical talent and others the time to sharpen their existing skills.

As the week progressed, the children searched their homes for loose change and gave the money to daily offerings for Wings of the Morning. By Friday, they had gathered more than $100 for the cause.

Then came the Friday night spaghetti supper and performance. Before the children presented the musical, the crowd heard from a special guest: Billy Reeder, a former communications director for the Arkansas Conference who has traveled to the DRC. He spoke about his experiences there and the needs he witnessed.

“Billy gave a heartfelt, sincere and well-received testimony to the needs of the people of the DRC, whom he obviously loves,” Ms. Vernon said.

At the end of the musical, the love offering for Wings of the Morning totaled $4,425.

“Last year we raised $3,800 for a water well in the DRC,” Ms. Vernon said, noting that with two additional events and individual donations, the church was able to donate to the Congo Wells Project the $8,000 required to pay for one well.

The offering total is the highest amount raised to date at any of the church’s summer music camps.

Ms. Forbus is editor of the Arkansas United Methodist.

To give to Wings of the Morning, go to gbgm- umc.org/active and search for “08596A.” Or, visit the Arkansas Conference website at arumc.org/congo.

Minister organizes concert to battle human trafficking

By Ramon Renteria

Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas—Josh Rivera wants to shed more light on one of El Paso’s dark secrets: human trafficking.

Mr. Rivera is the inspiration behind “Save the Brave Music Fest,” a Christian music concert held Sept. 29 to create awareness and raise money for the Salvation Army’s anti-human-trafficking program.

Rivera, 25, a musician and youth minister at St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, came up with the idea for the concert after reading what he describes as a disturbing book about a woman exploited for years by her foster parents.

“I had no idea I was being called to a greater need,” Mr. Rivera said. “I wanted a small benefit concert. It turned into a need to fund an organization that desperately needed help.”

The event at the El Paso County Coliseum featured headliner Natalie Grant, an award-winning Christian singer who has her own anti-human-trafficking campaign.

The Salvation Army helped establish an anti-human-trafficking network in El Paso with a U.S. Department of Justice grant that ended more than two years ago. El Paso’s anti-human-trafficking program is regarded as a model for other programs across the United States because of its success in getting law enforcement agencies at every level and social service agencies to work together.

Salvation Army officials said inadequate funding hinders the ability of various agencies to reach out to more people and help human-trafficking victims once they are identified.

Officials said it takes about $100,000 a year to effectively run the program.

Human trafficking is defined as using coercion for labor, sexual or other exploitation.

Salvation Army officials said El Paso is a key source of entry for children trafficked into the United States from Mexico and other Latin American countries.

According to the U.S. State Department, 14,500 to 17,500 victims, many of them women and children, are trafficked into the United States each year from Asia, Central and South America and Eastern Europe.

Some estimates suggest one out of every five trafficking victims in the U.S. usually travel along the Interstate 10 corridor from California to Houston. A Department of Justice report listed El Paso and Houston among the most intense trafficking jurisdictions in the country from 2001 to 2005.

The book Human Rights Along the U.S.-Mexico Border suggests that human trafficking cannot be easily documented because it is an underground, illicit phenomenon. Kathleen Staudt, Tony Payan and Z. Anthony Kruszewski, all political science professors at the University of Texas at El Paso, edited the book, published in 2009 by the University of Arizona Press.

While the full dimensions of human trafficking remain unknown, it is clear that within the United States trafficking is a crime primarily perpetrated against undocumented migrants,” the authors wrote. “By virtue of their immigration status, undocumented persons can be easily intimidated to accept illicit working conditions, work without pay, and other abuses by employers that, under specific conditions, can be classified as ‘human trafficking.”

With that in mind, individuals like Mr. Rivera hope to spread the word about the known dimensions of human trafficking. KJ-52, a Christian hip-hop artist in the concert lineup, shot a video to distribute on the Internet.

“El Paso is being known throughout the world because of this event, because of the compassion that these artists have for the cause,” Mr. Rivera said.

Virginia McCrimmon, a crime victim advocate working with the El Paso County Sheriff’s Office, is often credited with launching the anti-human-trafficking program and task force in El Paso.

“Our aim is to protect these individuals who have been exploited,” Ms. McCrimmon said. She often tells the story of a 14-year-old boy named Carlos from Central America who sneaked into the United States near Fabens, only to be taken in by a family who offered him work but allegedly never paid him. The teenager was placed in foster care elsewhere in Texas. The couple was not prosecuted because of insufficient evidence.

Last May, a Las Cruces couple was charged with human trafficking, a federal offense, for allegedly bringing two victims from Indonesia and forcing them to work without pay. John Martin, director of the Salvation Army’s El Paso chapter, estimates that 3,500 individuals trafficked into the United States pass through El Paso each year.

“Are some of those victims in the sex trade? Yes, but it’s not just the sex trade,” Mr. Martin said. “There is forced servitude or slavery. There are a number of individuals in El Paso that have been forced into working for a family or an individual.”

This story first appeared in the El Paso Times.
How churches can help domestic abuse victims

BY CATHY COVINGTON
Special Contributor

Religious leaders historically have had difficulty helping congregation members who experience domestic violence, often denying the abuse or further endangering a woman by encouraging her to return to her partner. As an advocate and a pastor’s wife, I am encouraged by the steps many churches have taken recently to address domestic violence, but other churches still have a long way to go.

Many people, clergy included, do not become involved in efforts to stop domestic violence until a murder happens in their community, but the time to address domestic violence is now, before another victim loses her life.

Women of faith often feel they must endure abuse because leaving breaks the marriage covenant. Churches must help victims understand that, in reality, the abuser is the person who breaks that covenant. Victims are often blamed for not respecting their husbands, so churches need to help release them from these preconceived notions. Marriages are destroyed when violence surfaces, not when a woman acts to protect herself. Domestic violence breaks up families, not a woman’s decision to leave an abusive partner. Deciding to divorce is never an easy decision, but it is often a needed step to save the lives of a battered woman, her children, and even the abuser.

For clergy members offering hope and healing to victims, the pulpit is one of the best tools. October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, so this is the perfect time to speak out about worship services. Victims desperately need to hear that they are not alone and God wants them to be safe. Battering needs to hear that they are responsible for their behavior and will be held accountable. Abusers often interpret Bible passages, such as Ephesians 5:21-33, to justify violence, but clergy can counteract with 1 Corinthians 13 to discuss what marriage should entail.

Clergy can further educate congregations about domestic violence by printing articles in church newsletters, making brochures about services available in women’s restrooms, or inviting advocates from local agencies to speak.

While couples counseling can be unsafe for victims because abusers retaliate and inflict greater physical harm, clergy can still intervene when domestic violence is suspected. Meet with the victim, help her plan for safety, and refer her to local agencies that provide support services she will need.

Ultimately, the church should provide a proactive pastoral care response to domestic violence by focusing on actions and not blaming the victim.

Ms. Covington is a member of Fairview United Methodist Church in Grubville, Mo., and a crisis intervention specialist for ALIVE (Alternatives to Living in Violent Environments).

Mo. churches join forces for service event on 9/11

BY FRED KOENIG
Special Contributor

Many United Methodist churches around the U.S. marked the 10th anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks by performing service projects. In the Missouri Conference, they did that in a big way. On the weekend of Sunday, Sept. 11, more than 260 congregations in Missouri went out into their communities and extended a hand of service.

According to numbers gathered by the conference’s Office of Creative Ministries, 264 United Methodist churches participated. Of those, 69 reported their numbers of volunteers, which totaled 4,786 UM volunteers and 1,334 volunteers not affiliated with the church.

The planning of the event had been in the works since last spring by the staff of the Office of Creative Ministries, but many churches just started considering it in the last few months. The Rev. Virginia Barnes pitched the idea of participating in SERVE2011 to the administrative council at Rocheport UMC, her new appointment after annual conference. They liked it, and decided to turn it over to the whole church.

They collected ideas for mission projects during worship one Sunday, and had 15 ideas submitted on pieces of paper in the offering plate. The church chose two: Host a community picnic and pick up trash along the highway into town.

The day of service on Sept. 10 was just the beginning for them.

“The church has decided to adopt the highway, so we’ll pick up trash along it four times a year,” Ms. Barnes said. “They have also said they would like to accomplish all 15 of the ideas submitted over the course of the next few years.”

To invite people to the community picnic, Rocheport members put out door-bangers and hung fliers.

“The most meaningful part of this for us may have been going out door-to-door, meeting all the people in our community and inviting them to our church,” Ms. Barnes said.

Visible presence

In Columbia, Mo., all of the United Methodist churches in town participated in a day of service on Sept. 11. Fairview UMC participated in the group projects with the other churches in Columbia, but also wanted to do something that would have a visible presence in their immediate neighborhood, so they spent Saturday cleaning up a nearby city park.

“I think we might stay with this park and keep it as one of our regular service projects,” said volunteer team coordinator Gary Moreau.

On the morning of Sept. 11, a few minutes before 8 a.m., the church bells at Wilkes Boulevard UMC in Columbia rang, as they did at churches across the nation, commemorating when the first of the Twin Towers was struck by the hijacked airliners. Six times that morning bells rang and a moment of silence was observed, representing each of the four plane crashes and the times that the towers fell.

That morning at Wilkes Boulevard, the Rev. Meg Hegemann told the 200 volunteers that they had two tasks before them.

“The work we’re doing is important, but of equal importance are the relationships that we build,” she said. “Take time to visit with the homeowners and chat with the neighbors.”

Later that day, one of the homeowners, Charlotte Hughes, was very happy to have a large, dead oak tree removed from her front yard.

“I’m very grateful, because it would have cost a lot of money that I don’t have if I had needed to hire someone to take it down,” she said.

Volunteers from Woodlandville UMC in Rocheport went to nearby Harrisburg Elementary School after church and spent the afternoon painting, planting flowers and assembling shelves. The Woodlandville church and many of its members reside in the Columbia Public School District, but the Harrisburg school is closer, and they know that it has financial difficulties. The support they are giving to the school has extended beyond the weekend.

“We told the school to let us know what they need, and we’ll do whatever we can to help,” said the Rev. Karen Alden, Woodlandville’s pastor.

Mr. Koenig is editor of publications for the Missouri Conference.
School of Christian Mission Helps Us Put Our Faith into Action

The School of Christian Mission (SOCM), which took place this past August in Stevens Point, is an annual event that was started in the 1920s, and continues to offer a way for people to gather for education, spiritual growth, fellowship, and most especially, mission work. "I see mission as a way of living out faith, putting faith in action. [The SOCM is an opportunity] to learn how the church is doing that and how we can be a part of that," said SOCM Dean Gloria Carter.

The theme, All Things Made New, was played out in three courses. Participants in Haiti: Challenges and Hopes learned about the history of Haiti, including the influence of colonialism in the region. "The 2010 earthquake awakened people to the problems that existed before [which] have been exacerbated because of the earthquake," said instructor Lorna Jost, Coordinator of the North Central Jurisdiction United Methodist Volunteers in Mission. Attendees also learned about the heart and soul of Haiti’s people through pictures and Creole adages, and discussed the impact of the January 12th earthquake and how they could become involved in the recovery effort. The course was intended to encourage ongoing exchanges of cultural understanding, respect, and mission between United Methodists and the people of Haiti.

Joy to the World: Mission in the Age of Global Christianity covered the changes in direction, goals, and methods of mission work in the past 100 years. "Culture and ways of life are changing," said Rev. Tsuchue Vang, instructor of the course. "I hope [this course helps participants] prepare for the next century!" Participants learned the Biblical mandates for mission and evangelism and how they play out in a twenty-first century context, why Christians are involved in mission, and ways to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

The Spiritual Growth study, The Journey: Forgiveness, Restorative Justice and Reconciliation taught participants how individuals, families, and communities are called to a life-long journey of practicing forgiveness, justice, and reconciliation. The course included a series of Bible studies and was intended to bring about personal and social transformation. "I hope to build trusting relationships so people can share stories safely and take small steps toward being [part of a] forgiving community that brings restorative justice," said instructor Rev. Grace Imathiu.

Along with the courses, attendees were offered personal choice time in which they could participate in a variety of enriching activities. These included a presentation by General Board of Church and Society Young Ethnic Intern Julia Mayeshiba, leadership development, focus groups, and mission group meetings. A learning center coordinated by Rose Vanschynedel also offered a place for SOCM attendees to stop by at their leisure to indulge their creative sides, relax, and have fellowship with each other.

There were people from many different backgrounds present at the SOCM, including several youth. During the SOCM, the youth did a mission project which involved cleaning and organizing at the Central Wisconsin Children’s Museum, and set up signs in Kmart and Trigs, a local grocery store, to encourage consumers to consider products from companies that have adopted fair trade practices. They also raised money for missions by selling flower arrangements, “mug-ems” (pre-measured and mixed ingredients meant to make cooking and baking simpler), flower pot banks, and bracelets. Their fingerprint and toenail painting station and performance in the talent show were fun additions to the SOCM, and their diverse perspectives enriched the classes.

Some 40 years after the first School of Christian Mission took place, mission is still a valuable part of what it means to be United Methodist. Through educational courses, fellowship, and mission projects, the participants at this year’s SOCM found many ways to “live out their faith.”

The theme for next year’s School of Christian Mission is Living Sacramentally and Walking Justly, with a focus on the location of Haiti, and the issue of poverty.

Join the 2011 Wisconsin Mission Celebration: Connecting the Church in Mission

The Wisconsin Conference UMC invites you to a statewide celebration of our outreach activities. Come see how Wisconsin United Methodists are serving as the hands and feet of God here in Wisconsin and beyond. The celebration is free and will take place in four locations so everyone can participate. We are honored to have Thomas Kemper, the General Secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries, as the keynote speaker. In addition, representatives from each of our ministries and agencies will be in attendance to answer any questions and explain how you can become involved. See firsthand how your apportionment giving is working to support these worthy causes. To make reservations, contact your local District Superintendent office. For more information, contact Deborah Thompson at 888-240-7328. The mission celebration will take place on the following dates:

- October 23rd, Eau Claire Chapel Heights UMC (4 p.m. — call 715-835-5181)
- October 24th, Appleton St. James UMC (5-30 p.m. — call 920-991-0548)
- October 25th, Elm Grove Community UMC (5:30 p.m. — call 414-271-5080)
- October 26th, Madison Asbury UMC (5:00 p.m. — call 608-837-0056)

Visit our website at www.wisconsinumc.org for more details.

Lake Lucerne Camp Recovers Thanks to Volunteers

The Lake Lucerne Camp and Retreat Center sustained extensive damage from the storms that occurred this past September. The severe weather impacted 17 counties throughout Wisconsin. Thanks to the efforts of 24 volunteers giving more than 140 hours of labor to help in the immediate clean-up efforts, Lake Lucerne Camp has been able to return to serving guests. We have been very grateful for all the help and support we have received in recovering from the damage. In early October, 40 VIM volunteers gave of their time and talents for additional clean up, repairs and preparations for our service to others as well as getting the grounds and facility ready for winter. We have been blessed with your prayers and support. To inquire about future camping or retreat opportunities at one of our Wisconsin UMC Camps, call 877-947-2267 or visit www.wiumcamps.org.
Talk about preaching to the choir. The Rev. Jackson Henry did that as soon as he showed up to lead the music program at St. Mark’s United Methodist Church in Murfreesboro, Tenn., eight years ago.

“I made it pretty clear to our choir about my philosophy of church music being that their primary goal is to facilitate and lead congregational singing,” he said.

To the congregation, he preached that they need to sing out, with fervor, even if they miss some notes. And he’s done his part, programming their favorite hymns, leading them to have new favorites, constantly teaching and coaxing.

Patti Dawes, a congregation member who sang in her college choir, can tell the difference.

“People are really into it,” she said. “He’ll teach us a little bit of a new song, or he’ll say something about the hymn and how it should relate to what we’re thinking about. He’s always upbeat and trying to share new things and get everybody involved.”

Mr. Jackson belongs to a small but growing number of young United Methodist music ministers who believe congregational singing in the denomination isn’t nearly what it should be—for the souls of the parishioners or the glory of God—and are heck-bent on improving it.

They have dual, Dallas-based mentors in the Rev. John Thornburg and the Rev. C. Michael Hawn, who are friends and kindred spirits.

Mr. Thornburg—a writer of hymn texts, president of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, and compiler of a hymnal for United Methodists in Cameroon—felt called to move from parish ministry to start his Ministry of Congregational Singing. That has him on the road often, leading workshops.

And it also has him challenging church music professionals to pay considerably more attention to congregational singing.

“A lot of my work is asking choirs and [praise] bands, ‘Do you want the people to sing?’” Mr. Thornburg said. “They look at me and say, ‘Of course we do, stupid.’ I nonetheless say to them, ‘Prove it.’ And I see lots of people with their arms crossed at their chests.”

Dr. Hawn is in his 20th year of teaching sacred music at Perkins School of Theology, at Dallas’ Southern Methodist University, and he too is gone many weekends, working with congregations, choirs and music ministers.

Under the Rev. Jackson Henry, who supervises the music program, congregational singing is a major emphasis at St. Mark’s United Methodist Church in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

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Multicultural churches remain a rarity | 8B

UM LEADER OF LIBERIA WINS NOBEL

B Y S A M H O D G E S

Managing Editor

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SING!

PEOPLE

LET THE SING!

UM LEADER OF LIBERIA WINS NOBEL

B Y S A M H O D G E S

Managing Editor

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a United Methodist who spoke at the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth, has won the Nobel Peace Prize with two other women leaders.

She shares the $1.5 million award with women’s rights activist Leymah Gbowee, also from Liberia, and democracy activist Tawakkul Karman of Yemen—the first Arab woman to win.

Ms. Sirleaf, 72 and nicknamed “Iron Lady,” was elected president in 2005, becoming the first democratically elected female leader of an African nation.

Liberia had been ravaged by civil war for more than a decade before her election, leading to about 200,000 deaths and widespread population displacement. Ms. Sirleaf ran as a reformer and peacemaker, and under the country maintains a fragile peace.

Nobel Peace laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu cheered her recognition from the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

“She deserves it many times over. She’s brought stability to a place that was going to hell,” said Archbishop Tutu.

Under the Rev. Jackson Henry, who supervises the music program, congregational singing is a major emphasis at St. Mark’s United Methodist Church in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Advocates emerge for congregational song

B Y S A M H O D G E S

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Tutu, according to an Associated Press report.
Also saluting her was Bono, leader of the rock band U2 and champion of peace and justice work internationally. He called Ms. Sirleaf “an extraordinary woman, a force of nature, and now she has the world recognize her in this great, great way.”
Ms. Sirleaf said Friday, Oct. 7, from Monrovia: “This [award] gives me a stronger commitment to work for reconciliation. Liberians should be proud.”
When she spoke to the 2008 General Conference, Ms. Sirleaf emphasized her religious heritage.
“I feel at home with you, members of my United Methodist family,” said Ms. Sirleaf, a member of the Monrovia (Liberia) United Methodist Church.
Ms. Sirleaf emphasized then that Liberia’s key challenges were reducing poverty, building democracy and giving youth a better future through education. She credited the UMC as a force for good in her country. The church operates a university, a hospital and more than 100 parochial schools there.
“We thank all of you fellow United Methodists assembled in this hall for your support through the grace of God,” she said in Fort Worth. “But I would be less than honest if I didn’t tell you that we need the church now more than ever.”
Ms. Sirleaf first ran for president in 1997, losing to warlord Charles Taylor. Though she trails him badly, the election gave her prominence and earned her the “Iron Lady” nickname.
Ms. Sirleaf currently is running for re-election, and has denied opponents’ charges of buying votes and using public funds for her campaign.
The chairman, Thorbjorn Jagland, of the Norwegian Nobel Committee said the approaching election had no bearing on the committee’s decision.
“We cannot look to that domestic consideration,” he said. “We have to look at Alfred Nobel’s will, which says that the prize should go to the person who has done the most for peace in the world.”
Ms. Gbowee won for organizing a women’s peace movement in Liberia that enabled the country to end its civil war. The movement was one of the first organized against the warlord warlord Charles Taylor—when he returns there this weekend.
“I’m honored to do it,” Dr. Hauerwas said by phone from Duke University Divinity School. “It’s a lovely occasion.”
The idea for the theologian’s hometowncoming came from the Rev. Annelda Crawford, pastor of Pleasant Mound-Urban Park UMC, which was known as Pleasant Mound Methodist in Dr. Hauerwas’ day.
“I’m more than thrilled” that he agreed to come, she said.
Dr. Hauerwas grew up in the Pleasant Grove section of Dallas, son of a bricklayer. He and his parents seldom missed a Sunday attending the nearby Pleasant Mound Methodist Church.
His father, Coffee Hauerwas, served as building superintendent for its sanctuary.
In his youth, Dr. Hauerwas labored alongside his father during the summer, acquiring a strong work ethic and salty vocabulary. He also became a serious reader, going on to UMC-affiliated Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, then to the divinity school at Yale University, where he earned his Ph.D. and embraced the theology of Karl Barth.
Through his long teaching career—first at Augustana College, then at Notre Dame, and for many years at Duke—he has risen before sunrise to read, grade papers and write. He’s the author of many books, including The Peacable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics, and Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony, which he wrote with UM Bishop Will Williford, and which has sold more than 100,000 copies.
Dr. Hauerwas’ theology defies easy summary. For example, he’s a committed pacifist who quarrels with much of liberal Christianity. He has written on a wide range of subjects, and is a sharp critic of what he calls the “accommodated character” of much Christianity in the United States.
His industry and depth as a writer and thinker have impressed many in the academy. He’s been the subject of dissertations and books, and there’s an anthology of scholars’ reaction to his work.
Time magazine named him America’s best theologian” in 2001, and that same year he delivered the prestigious Gifford Lectureship at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. Earlier Gifford lecturers included William James and Albert Schweitzer.
“That’s my Dad”
Ms. Crawford studied The Peacable Kingdom at Perkins School of Theology, but it was Dr. Hauerwas’ 2010 memore, Hannah’s Child, that gave her the idea to bring him back to his home church.
In that book, he covers many subjects, including the long ordeal of his marriage to a woman with serious mental illness. (His subsequent marriage to the Rev. Paula Gilbert, a UM elder, he describes as extremely happy.) Early chapters recount in vivid detail the influence that the Pleasant Grove community, particularly Pleasant Mound Methodist, had on him.
Last January, Ms. Crawford traveled to New Orleans for a meeting of the Society of Christian Ethics, of which Dr. Hauerwas is president. With cooperation of others in the group, she benevolently ambushed him at a reception, playing a DVD with gravy footage of the dedication of Pleasant Mound Methodist Church’s building, including the man most responsible.
“He said, ‘That’s my Dad,’” Ms. Crawford recalled. “Oh, it was so moving.”
Dr. Hauerwas promptly accepted Ms. Crawford’s invitation to come this weekend. The church is hosting a “This Is Your Life, Stanley Hauerwas” dinner on Friday (Oct. 14), for family and friends, including some fellow Eagle Scouts from boyhood days.
On Saturday afternoon, there will be an academic forum, with Dr. Hauerwas answering questions about Christian ethics and theology. Then on Sunday morning at 9:30, he’ll be signing books during coffee hour, and he’ll preach at the 10:30 worship service. His title? “Coming Home.”
Church reaction mixed on immigration ruling

BY HEATHER HAHN
United Methodist News Service

United Methodist reactions to a federal judge’s rulings on Alabama’s new immigration law were as mixed as the rulings themselves.

U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Lavolace Blackmun allowed key provisions of the legislation to go into effect. However, she blocked part of the law church leaders feared would criminalize routine acts of ministry, such as transporting children to Sunday school.

“The judge’s decision . . . protects our churches’ ministries from prosecution under this over-reaching law and substantially protects our religious liberties,” said Bishop William H. Willimon of the North Alabama Conference.

However, he and other United Methodists expressed concerns about portions of the law Ms. Blackburn let stand.

Bishop Willimon joined three other bishops from the state’s Episco- pol and Roman Catholic dioceses in a federal court suit to stop the law. The Alabama law, HB56, also faces legal challenges from the U.S. Justice Department and a coalition of civil rights groups. Both opponents and supporters of the Alabama legislation have called it the toughest immigration measure in the country.

Of particular concern for the bishops was Section 13 in the law, which would have made it a crime to knowingly “harbor” or “transport” immigrants who are not lawfully present in the United States. In one of her rulings issued Sept. 28, Ms. Blackburn put the section on hold while appeals move forward, saying it conflicted with federal law.

“One of the positive effects of this bill is to learn all that our churches are doing,” Bishop Willimon said. He said he was particularly impressed by the ministries some of the conference’s small rural churches were providing for immigrants.

Contracts not valid

The law has intimidated some of these small congregations, Bishop Willimon said. But with the judge’s ruling, he said, United Methodist churches in Alabama can continue “to provide food, shelter, transportation, housing and the church’s sacraments to all of God’s people, regardless of race, class or citizenship status.”

In her ruling on the lawsuit brought by the bishops, Ms. Blackburn denied the request of the church leaders to halt a provision that nullifies contracts involving unauthorized immigrants.

The bishops contended that the provision, Section 27, would prohibit Alabama churches from performing marriages and baptisms for unauthorized immigrants. They argued the measure also would prevent the operation of camps, day cares or any service that might be used by individuals suspected of being undocumented.

Ms. Blackburn, who was appointed by President George H.W. Bush, disagreed. The Alabama law, she wrote, excludes marriage licenses from its definition of a “business transaction,” and such services as day care and camps do not require contracts for their operation and management.

Since the provision had no potential to harm church work, she wrote, church leaders did not have standing to press the issue.

Danny Upton, United Methodist attorney and native Alabamian, also challenged Section 27 as part of the lawsuit brought by civil rights groups.

Mr. Upton is the national program attorney for the United Methodist min- istry Justice for Our Neighbors, which provides free, professional legal services at monthly clinics for immigrants. He argued that Section 27 would prevent him from entering representation agreements with his clients.

Such contracts, he told UMNS, are “the very mechanism by which the undocumented can become docu- mented . . . and I am not able to do that with any undocumented people in the state of Alabama.”

In her ruling on the case brought by the civil rights groups, Ms. Black- burn agreed that Mr. Upton had standing to challenge the law. How- ever, she disagreed with his argu- ment that Section 27 violated federal anti-discrimination law.

The federal law, she wrote, “does not protect a person from discrimination on the basis of unlawful presence.”

Bishop Willimon and Mr. Upton had other misgivings about the law. Ms. Blackburn let stand a provision requiring public elementary and secondary schools to check the citi- zenship status of children. Bishop Willimon wondered where the funding would come from to support “the new bureaucracy” required to check student birth certificates or immigra- tion papers.

The judge also declined to block the provision that requires law enforce- ment officials to “make a reason- able attempt” to determine the immigration status of anyone they stop and suspect of being in the country illegally.

Mr. Upton, a member of Hazel Green (Ala.) United Methodist Church, rejoiced that Ms. Blackburn halved part of the law that banned unauthorized immigrants from en- rolling in public universities.

Yet, he said, he feared the law-en- forcement provision could lead to racial profiling and the unwarranted detention of people based on their ethnicity.

“We have such a painful history of race relations in this state anyway,” he said, “and I think this will be a painful experience for all Alabamians in the end.”

Open letter protest

More than 150 United Methodist clergy in North Alabama signed a June 13 open letter sent to state govern- ment officials denouncing the law as unjust.

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More than 150 United Methodist clergy in North Alabama signed a June 13 open letter sent to state govern- ment officials denouncing the law as unjust.

The Rev. Matt Lacey, the North Al- abama Conference’s director of mis- sion and advocacy, and the Rev. R.G. Lyons, pastor of Community Church Without Walls, crafted the letter.

“We are pleased to see some of the harsh and far-reaching elements of the law have been struck down,” Mr. Lacey and Mr. Lyons said in a state- ment. “We feel that many of these ele- ments, written by members of the state house and senate who campaign on Christianity, are not representative of the message of Christ who wel- comed the stranger despite country of origin or status.”

They added that they worry some of the remaining parts of the law also are too harsh and hope “the courts will look further into those provisions.”

State Rep. Mac Buttram, a retired United Methodist pastor, also had mixed feelings about Ms. Blackburn’s rulings. A Republican from Cullman County, Mr. Buttram campaigned on enacting immigration reform in 2010 and voted for the Alabama law this summer.

While he disagreed with some of Ms. Blackburn’s legal interpretations, Mr. Buttram said, he saw her rulings mainly as “an affirmation.”

“Our intent has been to make sure people who are here illegally are not given the same privileges people who are here legally should get,” he said. “I’ve always contended that we were not limiting ministry in churches.”

He did acknowledge that the chal- lenges to the law are far from over, and the law already has prompted some unintended consequences. In his county, which depends on agriculture, farmers have told Mr. Buttram that they are short of workers because even legal immigrants have left the state since the passage of the law.

“I would not have anticipated that people who are here legally would have left because of the law, but apparently that has happened,” he said.

He is trying to help farmers apply to participate in the federal guest worker program.

“I am going to be pushing for solu- tions but not backing off people who are here illegally,” Mr. Buttram said.

The Rev. John Bailey, director of missions at Asbury United Methodist Church in Madison, near Huntsville, sees the law as an opportunity for his ministry. Mr. Bailey is among the clergy who spoke out against the law.

“My call as a United Methodist deacon is to encourage, equip and pre- pare the body of Christ to join in God’s work in the world, especially among the poor and oppressed,” he said. “It was painful to realize through this process that so many who profess the name of Christ view the alien as ‘other’ and do not see themselves in the eyes of the alien . . . My ministry remains the same, to take people to the places where the others’ live and work and trust the Spirit of God to open our eyes and soften our hearts.”
The goal is to give people permission to offer what they have.

—The Rev. Charlie Overton

I make it to my home church [Northaven UMC] about seven or eight Sundays a year, " he said. "I make it to his church, to his youth group Christmas parties, Christmas Eve, Easter Sunday."

Mr. Henry offers anecdotal evidence from when he took a month’s leave and visited a number of churches he’d heard good things about. "What Michael is doing that I think is brilliant is that he's training leaders of the people’s song, " said Jorge Labrador, director of the global praise program for the UMC’s General Board of Global Ministries. "He's training music ministers—people who bring the music from elsewhere."

One of the Rev. Joe Stobaugh, a Perkins graduate who leads the music program at UMC in North Texas, saw in this the title "cares of a shepherd to reflect the philosophy he outlined in his book, "The Art of Singing"

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Allegedly glorious past won’t provide answers to UMC’s needs

By Wes Magruder
Special Contributor

In Woody Allen’s most recent film, *Midnight in Paris*, a young struggling novelist pines for the “good old days” of 1920s literary Paris, when the cafes were filled with Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Gertrude Stein. Through Mr. Allen’s inventive and playful script, the novelist, played by Owen Wil-son, gets to reexperience that golden age.

Without giving too much away, Mr. Wilson’s character learns that the present is the only time we are given. He discovers that the time he spends pining for the past is wasted, as misguided.

In the raging discussion about Methodism’s future, I believe all of us are stuck in a similar rut. Some of us think the good old days of Methodism were in the early American years, when church attendance was generally higher. Some of us think the best days of Methodism were in the early American years, the time of the circuit riders who gallerately evangelized the wild western frontier. Others look back to the days of John Wesley himself, particularly his middle-age years, when he seemed to have a fairly stable routine of annual conferences, society and class meetings, and circuiting lay preachers.

The truth is hard to swallow. Methodism since the 1950s has been inextricably linked with the myth of American exceptionalism, and thus failed to slow the Cold War or prevent wars in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, as well as numerous covert operations elsewhere. Furthermore, mid-20th-century Methodism was found to be profoundly white and middle-class.

The 19th-century circuit riders didn’t seem to protest the treatment of Native Americans during the frontier expansion, nor did they seem overly concerned with treatment of slavery. It appears they were more concerned about beating the Baptists and Presbyterians to new areas than anything else. Furthermore, they were riven hard by bishops who seemed to ignore their declining health and diminishing enthusiasm.

And don’t get me started on John Wesley. As much as I admire the guy’s theology, writing and organizational skills, he was likely a real pain to work with. He had an obsessive-compulsive disorder that rivals anything I’ve ever seen in real life, had a strange relation-ship with members of the opposite sex, and ruled the Methodist connection with an iron fist.

I’m making a very simple point here: Let’s stop comparing our present to our past. Our context is different from those other places and eras. Discipleship in the 21st century may have nothing to do with church attendance, or baptisms, or recorded professions of faith. It may have nothing to do with buildings, denominations or clergy.

So let’s quit trying to rebuild, re-capture, redo old-time Methodism, whatever it was. Stop worrying about “death tsunamis” and “declining atten-dance” and “shrinking budgets.”

The serious discipline of Jesus only has one real question to answer: What does it mean to follow Jesus here and now?

The Rev. Magruder is senior associate pastor at First Rowlett, United Methodist Church in Rowlett, Texas, and blogs at www.methofesto.wordpress.org, where this column first appeared.

God calls laity, clergy to ministry partnership

By Sandy Jackson
Special Contributor

Most dynamic United Methodist churches tend to have effective and spiritually engaged laity in leadership roles, according to the Call to Action report, and aside from making disciples, equipping the laity is one of the most important tasks of the church.

Each member of the United Methodist Church is called by the Book of Discipline to be in ministry as a servant of Christ to the world in all areas of their lives—family life, daily work, recreation and social activities. The initial preparation for discip-leship is the development of an un-derstanding of the priesthood of all believers. (1 Peter 2:9) Too often when we talk about the “call to ministry” in the church, we are talking about the call to ordination within the church. How-ever, all Christians are ordained by God to fulfill the role of ministry and mission in the world. If a layperson does understand the “call to ministry” as referring to all believers, they often believe that “ministry” is what they do in the church—offices they hold, services they perform or meetings they attend as committee members.

To value the concept of the priest-hood of believers and grasp the mean-ing of mission and ministry is the beginning of true discipleship.

Vital personal faith is a primary concern when developing laity for leadership. All congregational and missional leaders should be spiritual leaders who faithfully practice the means of grace and participate in an accountability group.

Because leaders become role mod-els for others they should be attentive to their own spiritual growth and per-sonal piety. As John Wesley said, “O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. . . . Whether you like it or not, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way: else you will be a trifler all your days.”

Spiritually grounded individuals who are gifted in their areas of leader-ship and passionate about their mis-sion are disciples who serve not only as role models but as mentors to others.

The laity themselves and their spirit-given gifts are assets for effective lay leadership. An initial effort to equip the laity should include an assessment of their spiritual gifts and their areas of passion. When spiritual gifts are discovered, an empowerment occurs that is not related to permission giving by a pastor, but by the acknowledge-ment of the Holy Spirit’s presence which equips them for service.

What would it look like if each member knew their spiritual gifts and was equipped to use them? What if clergy realized that they need help in various areas of mission/ministry?

What if the laity did not expect the clergy to do all the work of ministry? What if the clergy would fill in the gaps in areas such as administration, caregiving, prayer, shepherding, and even preaching and teaching?

What if the congregation and pas-tor were partners in ministry, and we had not clergy and not laity, but CLAIRTY—holy partners in a heav-enly calling? (Hebrews 3:1)

And don’t get me started on John Wesley.

“The church is called holy; wrote John Wesley, because it is holy: This need not be dis-tressed holiness, but it is intentional and communal—a holiness in the midst of the stresses and strains of everyday life. If we can recover that, we will re-cover a church that is vital and effec-tive in the twenty-first century.”

Wesley also said, “In the meantime, let all those who are real members of the Church, see that they walk holy and unblamable in all things. ‘Ye are the light of the world! Ye are a city set upon a hill! and cannot be hid.’ O ‘let your light shine before men’!”

May it be so.

Ms. Jackson is director of connectional laity development for the General Board of Discipleship.
Arminianism—essential for Methodist recovery

By Donald W. Haynes
UMR Columnist

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions. This is right and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. — 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NRSV)

We live today in a new age of religious pluralism. The prognosticators of modernity who expected religion to move to the perimeter of cultural influence in the 21st century were clearly wrong.

As Thomas Paine wrote concerning political debate, “These are the times that try [our] souls.” Not since the 16th century has there been such a battle for the religious mind as we have today. If we as United Methodists identify with the world and have nothing to say, we have no future. Recovering Arminianism is an imperative.

Everyone has a “place at the table” but some are very articulate and engaging and convincing about their understanding of God and humankind, while others hesitate to speak. In United Methodism, those who have deep convictions about social justice issues are more bold and courageous in speaking their mind than those who are devoted Arminians. For many generations we were taught a distorted version of Wesley’s “catholic grace,” so that our beloved denominational ranks have become “a mile wide and an inch deep.” Thus it is that we are very uncomfortable in stating that we are Arminians.

Why is it important to revive an old theological debate between Arminians and Calvinists? The jurist John Calvin! In Chapter 21 of Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion, he asks why some of God’s children believe and others do not. His answer lies not in us but in God’s eternal election. In Chapter 23, Calvin’s legal mind leads him to the inevitable conclusion that God wills not only the salvation of the elect but also the damnation of the reprobate. This is why the theologically sophisticated, precocious Susanna Wesley wrote to her son, John, at Oxford, “The doctrine of predestination, as maintained by the rigid Calvinists, is very shocking, and ought to be abhorred, because it directly shows the most high God with being the author of sin. I think you reason well and justly against it… Do we still hear such sound advice when parents write to college students today?

Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) was a Dutch Calvinist who became a dissenter to the Calvinist notion of predestination. Wesley adopted the doctrine of Arminianism and wove it into the theological fabric of Methodism.

According to Wesley scholar Donald Heisey’s article, Deh Vindivanity School, Wesley decided to meet the Calvinist challenge head-on in November 1777 by producing a monthly magazine himself. Wesley’s distribution of The Arminian Magazine popularized the work of Jacob Arminius for the first time. John Fletcher and Richard Watson made the cornerstone in their systemization of Wesley’s theology. Until 1840, The Methodist Quarterly Review reflected the clearly Arminian evangelical pragmatism of the Second Great Awakening.

“We believe God chooses to express total sovereignty with total love for every one of God’s children. . . . The Methodist fundamental doctrine is that God is inherently love.”

Arminianism is the linchpin of Methodist grace theology: “Grace—for all and in all” is indigenous to the Wesleyan revival and early American Methodist growth; yet few United Methodist seminaries taught it in the 16th century; John Fletcher and Richard Watson made the cornerstone in their systemization of Wesley’s theology. Until 1840, The Methodist Quarterly Review reflected the clearly Arminian evangelical pragmatism of the Second Great Awakening.

Accepting God’s love
Another important Arminian accent in the parable of the Prodigal Son is that the Prodigal Son’s salvation depended upon his volitional response: “But when he came to himself he said, ‘I will get up and go to my father.’ ” The father had been waiting by the gate for years, but respected his son’s human liberty enough to allow the boy “to come to himself.” The son did not save himself, but he did balefully realize his father’s love.

To the Calvinist, God expresses God’s sovereignty in his omnipotence, his power. To the Calvinist, God’s sovereignty is expressed by “elective grace.” As Arminians, we believe that God is all-powerful in sovereignty, but we differ from the Calvinists in how God expresses God’s sovereignty.

We believe God chooses to express total sovereignty with total love for every one of God’s children. That is grace “for and in all.” The question boils down to this: “Is the nature of God inherently justice or inherently love?” The question must not be seen as an 18th-century issue. The Methodist fundamental doctrine is that God is inherently love.

“We believe God chooses to express total sovereignty with total love for every one of God’s children . . . The Methodist fundamental doctrine is that God is inherently love.”

The Methodist was pretty clear on what it means having what Wesley called “natural liberty.”

Rejecting TULIP
Glen Hinson, a moderate Baptist who was once on the faculty of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, writes, “Fundamentalism of a more sophisticated sort traces its roots to Dort Calvinism.” Albert Mohler Jr., president of the seminary, has been called by Time magazine, “the reigning intellectual of the evangelical movement in the U.S.” Can the Clergy Today describes Dr. Mohler as a “cerebral, churchly . . . five-point Calvinist,” a reference to the five points of the Dort Calvinist TULIP: Total depravity (to the extreme that we cannot hear has a “love that will not let go.” The woman whose betrothal necklace had a missing coin and the shepherd who had a missing sheep were looking for the lost with a proactive, seeking love that had no limits. The father whose prodigal son was gone waited with a patient perseverance that had no ultimate.}

Dr. Haynes is a retired clergyman of the Western North Carolina Conference. He is the author of On The Threshold of Grace. Email: dhaynes111@triad.rr.com.
Multiethnic churches still rare in 21st century

By Lucas L. Johnson II

There are currently between 300,000 and 350,000 congregations in the U.S., according to Rice University's Kinder Institute for Urban Research. Ninety-two percent are homogeneous, meaning at least 80 percent of the congregation is comprised of a single racial group.

When Mr. Catt became pastor of Sherwood Baptist in Albany, Ga., which is among a few churches taking steps to create—and maintain—multiethnic congregations more than half a century after King gave his poignant sermon about the divisiveness among so-called Christians.

In 1956, King wrote a sermon entitled "Paul's Letter to American Christians," in which he spoke as if the Apostle Paul were delivering a message to the modern-day church.

King said: "You can't pastor a church in a certain sector of town and then leave the people in the shadows behind." He said he was fired from a Mississippi church because he advocated for black students attending white schools.

“If we’re going to change our culture, they’ve got to see it," Mr. Whitten said. "If we’re going to create what we want to see in society within the church, it begins in the church."

Bernice A. King

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