Lenten World Hunger Offering raises almost $46,000 in 2015 to help end hunger

Continued on page 16

Memphis Conference churches gave $45,867 dollars in 2015 to the annual Lenten World Hunger Offering (LWHO). The money has now been distributed locally and across the globe.

Beneficiaries feed hundreds or thousands of impoverished people each year. The Society of St. Andrew in Nashville, Tenn., is one of the recipient nonprofits. Regional Director Linda Tozer was so grateful for her agency’s recently-received LWHO donation that she wrote a thank you letter to the Memphis Conference.

“We are humbled by the generous giving of so many churches within the Memphis Conference—and we are grateful to be able to partner with you in ministry,” she said.

The LWHO is unique to the Memphis Conference and has raised more than $2 million for hunger-relief ministries since its establishment in 1983.

The 2015 campaign ran from Feb. 18 to April 5 and sought to combat hunger in three ways:

• By presenting information concerning the extent and causes of hunger—locally and globally.
• By challenging United Methodist church members to examine and change personal habits of food consumption in light of Christian stewardship.
• By receiving special offerings for hunger with specific emphasis leading up to and during Lent.

Leaders in Giving

At press time, the following churches had contributed $1,000 or more to the 2015 LWHO campaign, according to the Memphis Conference treasurer’s office:

Ellendale UMC – Ellendale, Tenn.
Munford UMC – Munford, Tenn.
Milan First UMC – Milan, Tenn.
New Shiloh UMC – Medina, Tenn.
Union City First UMC – Union City, Tenn.

2015 Recipients

Checks have been mailed to the following recipients:

• UMCOR Food Resource Bank – $4,586.70
• Peanut Butter Project – $4,586.70
• United Methodist Districts in Mexico – $4,586.70
• Our Father’s House (Tanzania, Africa Ministry) – $4,586.70
• Society of St. Andrew – $4,586.70
• Hunters for the Hungry – $4,586.70
• Reelfoot Rural Ministries – $2,752.02
• District Funds (divided evenly among all five districts) – $2,522.69
• United Methodist Neighborhood Centers of Memphis – $2,064.02
• Mid-South Food Bank – $2,064.02
• Regional Inter-Faith Association (RIFA) – $2,752.02
• Paducah Cooperative Ministry – $2,752.02
• We Care Ministry – $1,376.01
• Feeding Fayette (formerly Moscow Community Food Pantry) – $1,376.01
• Emergency/Promotion – $687.99

‘Race relations’ and ‘racial reconciliation’ were subjects of conversation on Aug. 30 & Sept. 27 at Alex Haley Museum in Henning, Tenn.

Article and Photos By Lane Gardner Camp, Director of Communications

“We can’t change the past, but we can start today to change the future.”

That was one of many thoughts shared by eight small discussion groups on Sunday afternoon, Aug. 30, at the Alex Haley Museum & Interpretive Center in Henning, Tenn.

The museum partnered with the Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church to offer two private showings of the museum’s exhibit “Slaves and Slaveholders of Wessyngton Plantation” on Aug. 30 and Sept. 27.

Panel presentations and small group conversations about race relations and racial reconciliation also were part of the activities.

Charlotte Ammons, a member of the witness and worship team at Ripley First UMC in Ripley, Tenn., was among those in attendance on Aug. 30 and said she planned to attend again on Sept. 27, calling it a “most worthwhile cause.”

“How could anyone come away and not think they gained a tremen-
VBS kids at Somerville First UMC send 189 Bibles to children in Thailand

This summer, Vacation Bible School (VBS) participants at Somerville First UMC in Somerville, Tenn., made a difference in the world. The VBS partnered with Operation Kid-to-Kid, an outreach program that gives children chances to help their peers around the world by donating gifts like school supplies, Bibles, hygiene kits, Christmas gifts and Bible coloring books.

Somerville First UMC students, with some help from the congregation, piled enough money in the VBS offering plate to buy 189 kid-friendly Bibles for children in Thailand.

Tennessee River District organizes by ‘mission sectors’

The Tennessee River District is now organized in a way that supports a mission focus in line with the Memphis Conference.

The conference’s mission statement is to “discover, equip, connect and send lay and clergy leaders who shape congregations that offer Jesus Christ to a hurting world, one neighborhood at a time.”

Tennessee River District Superintendent Rev. Dr. Richard Clark says his district is supporting the conference mission by dividing its counties into “mission sectors,” the leaders of which serve on a district operational team.

“Knowing the transformational value of the environment we are creating, each leader has committed to this time together to prepare ourselves to lead others into similar opportunities,” Clark says. “Generative results that reach out into the local congregations are what we strive to achieve.”

Mission sectors/leaders include:
- Benton County: Dean Emerson
- Carroll County: Jason W. Jones
- Chester/Hardeman Counties: Roger Penn
- Decatur County: Aaron Dowdy
- Henderson County: Douglas Norfleet
- Henry County: Rob Martin
- Madison County North: Don Thrasher
- Madison County South: Dan Camp
- McNairy/Hardin Counties: Terry Presson
- McNairy/Hardin Counties: Terry Presson

These leaders will meet together eight hours per month for worship, study, sharing, strategizing and accountability. Clark says they will also oversee mission focus groups in their sectors that will generate more localized mission conversations. Group members must commit to both district-wide clergy meetings as well as smaller focus group meetings. Mission sector charge conferences have also been scheduled for the fall.

“The mission focus group meetings will have a format of devotional, God stories and mission strategizing for the mission sector,” Clark says. “These smaller and more localized mission focus group gatherings will provide the best opportunity for discernment, creative thinking and fruitful, missional strategy throughout the district.”

The Tennessee River District was created in April of this year during a Memphis Conference reorganization. The conference reduced the number of its districts from seven to five. The other four districts are Metro-Asbury, Metro-McKendree, Mississippi River and Purification.

Questions about the Tennessee River District should be directed to Tennessee River District staff.

Orientation for two conference leaders discussed ‘changing culture’ and need for ‘adaptive leadership’

Two representatives from the Memphis Conference attended “Cultivating Vital Ministries,” the new DS/DCM Orientation, on August 23-27 in Lake Junaluska, N.C. (DS refers to district superintendent; DCM refers to director of connectional ministries.)

Rev. Dr. Joe Geary, director of Connectional Ministries, and Rev. Kevin Conrad, superintendent of the Mississippi River District, joined new district superintendents and directors of Connectional Ministries from across the country at the orientation at Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center. Bishop Bill McAlilly appointed Geary and Conrad to their positions in 2015.

The United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GB-HEM), Council of Bishops and Discipleship Ministries sponsored the event. According to an article on the GB-HEM website, the conference attracted 67 superintendents and 13 directors of connectional ministries. Attendees represented 35 conferences. The theme was “Cultivating Vital Ministries.”

Geary had attended the orientation before — in 2008 as superintendent of the former Paris District. He said the training seven years ago focused much more on supervision, administration and legal issues. This year, however, the agenda also covered “adaptive leadership” and “how to lead in a changing religious and secular landscape.”

This year’s orientation included heavy emphasis on inter-cultural competency. “Learning to understand, value and reach other cultures is of great value to reach the next generation for Jesus Christ,” Geary said.
‘Mission camp’ at Germantown UMC teaches fourth and fifth graders to serve others

By Casey Northcutt Watson  [First published on website 8/21/2015]

In June, 14 children picked up hammers and paint brushes for the first-ever fourth and fifth grade summer mission camp at Germantown UMC (GUMC) in Germantown, Tenn. Over the span of five days, campers played games and performed volunteer work around town. They built two picnic tables for and spread mulch in GUMC’s columbarium, and they made comfort pillows for patients at Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital in Memphis, Tenn.

“I had a lot of kids say it was great,” organizer Jacob Pierce said. “I had one little girl, in particular, say it was the most fun she’s ever had.”

Pierce, a senior at Houston High School in Germantown, planned the event for a school project. He thought church volunteering would work well for his assignment, and he also wanted to meet a need.

“We have all kinds of mission opportunities for youth – you know, middle school to high school – but none for little kids,” he said. “So, I figured I’d organize a mission camp to, you know, teach them about service early on in life.”

The student planned the event with his mom, GUMC Director of Children’s Ministry Lisa Pierce. They organized mission opportunities, arranged for meals and advertised the camp. In the end, it all went smoothly, and they said the children had a great time. According to Lisa, they even sent the Pierces thank you notes after camp ended.

And while they had fun, campers learned to serve. Said Lisa: “If we can start building a love for service at an age when they’re wanting to do it, then I think that maybe we can create lifelong servants and disciples.”

Jenni Thorn, director of children’s ministry at Jackson First UMC in Jackson, Tenn., had to dye her hair PINK after Vacation Bible School children raised more than $600 for Hannah’s Hope, an agency of the Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church. (Photo provided by Jackson First UMC)

‘Vacation Bible School’ at Jackson First UMC learns about adoption and raises money for Hannah’s Hope

[First published on website 8/21/2015]

Jenni Thorn, Jackson First UMC director of children’s ministry, talked about her experience adopting her daughter, and then VBS adult volunteers encouraged children to get involved with Hannah’s Hope.

“As a tangible and fun way for kids to see how they could help Hannah’s Hope, they were invited to bring money each morning to give as their offering,” said Bobbie Mays, director of communications for the church. Thorn motivated the students with a promise to dye her hair PINK if they raised $600.

The final offering totaled to $619.33, and Thorn kept her word.

Ross UMC hosts football kickoff dinner for Dyersburg High School

[First published on website 8/19/2015]

As a service to its community, Ross UMC in Dyersburg, Tenn., hosted the 2015 Dyersburg High School football kickoff dinner on Thursday, Aug. 13. See photo at right.

The Mississippi River District eNews reported that Bart Barker, anchor for WBBJ-TV in Jackson, Tenn., and co-host of the station’s “Good Morning West Tennessee” program, was the keynote speaker.

Food for the dinner was provided by the United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women of the church.
How would you make the budget for your church if your members had no money? Grace Place UMC, a prison congregation located in the Mark H. Luttrell Correctional Center in Memphis, Tenn., faces that challenge. We planted our church in 2007 and became a chartered mission congregation in 2012. Since the beginning, we have had budget issues. We are funded 100 percent by donations from churches, small groups and individuals who believe the writer of Hebrews: “Visit those who are in prison as if you were in prison with them.” (Hebrews 13:3a)

We are so thankful for those generous people who have felt God’s call to help us and who have responded. Each week, Grace Place members and partners participate in worship, choir, small group study, book club, exercise classes and crochet group. They are actively engaged in ministry and mission work inside and outside the prison. They raise funds for missions by making handmade items and sending them out to be sold by volunteers. Last year, our congregation gave more than $2,500 to local and foreign mission projects. More than 135 women each week participate in Grace Place ministries.

The United Methodist Church is a “connectional” church, but for many years, the incarcerated have become disconnected from the church. You can help us “reconnect” with our brothers and sisters in prison by becoming a partner with Grace Place through a program called “Grace Place Connect.” GPConnect invites you to become a lasting partner with our congregation by making a financial commitment. Individuals, groups or churches can do this. The commitment can be monthly, quarterly, semiannually or yearly and can be any amount of money. But this will let us know how to budget and plan, just like any other church, because we will have some idea about what to expect regarding donations.

We already have some partnering congregations, and we are so grateful for them. Enville United Methodist Church in Enville, Tenn., has faithfully sent a monthly donation for years. We wouldn’t have made it this far without them. One retired couple living in Florida has also supported us from the beginning. Others throughout the conference - Sunday School classes and United Methodist Women units and circles - have helped sustain us with their generosity.

Grace Place is a church of which our Memphis Conference can be proud, not only for the work members do for missions, but also for how the church leads other conferences that want to establish congregations in prisons. Church leaders from California, Missouri, Illinois, North Carolina, Mississippi, Kentucky and Tennessee have visited Grace Place to learn more about starting prison congregations.

One out of every 100 Americans is in jail or prison. As the church, we know the power of God’s forgiveness, redemption and restoration. It’s transformative!

A Grace Place brochure is now available. If you would like to receive one or more copies, email me at graceplacemin@aol.com.

Grace Place prison congregation seeks financial support pledges from Memphis Conference United Methodists by way of its ‘GPConnect’ program

By Rev. Diane Harrison, Pastor, Grace Place UMC
[First published on website 6/26/2015]

Vacation Bible School (VBS) students from Germantown UMC (GUMC) in Germantown, Tenn., donated 1,464 books and $940 in June to the Love for Literacy Center at Caldwell-Guthrie Elementary School in Memphis, Tenn.

Lisa Pierce, GUMC director of children’s ministry, said the church has an ongoing cooperative relationship with the school and regularly provides reading tutors for some of its second graders.

Months ago, Pierce asked Caldwell-Guthrie’s principal how VBS students could help the school. The answer was books and donations for the school’s new literacy center, a designated space in which children may read quietly and develop a passion for reading and books.

Consequently, during VBS, Pierce and other VBS teachers spoke to participating kids about literacy’s importance. It’s a necessity, they said. The teachers also talked about how God can use students to help others learn to read.

Those lessons inspired the children.

“They responded beautifully,” Pierce said. “They brought in their money, and they brought in their books. We had so many books. We loaded down two huge SUVs to carry these books down to the school.”

A few students made extra efforts to make sure other children had quality reading material.

“Some of them even went out and got new books because we talked about bringing their best,” Pierce says.

This generosity encouraged her. She said people shouldn’t discount the impact children can have on others.

Germantown UMC’s ‘Vacation Bible School’ students give money and books to school’s literacy center

By Casey Northcutt Watson [First published on website 8/21/2015]

‘Kids Thrive’ is new preschool at Trinity UMC in Paducah

[First published on website 8/19/2015]

“Kids Thrive” is the name of a new preschool that opened in August at Trinity UMC in Paducah, Ky.

The church’s Aug. 19 eNews reported, “Nine precious new faces (see photo at right) have been enjoying our preschool. It has been so much fun to watch them arrive, and to listen to (teachers) teach them to walk in a line, sit for a story, recognize their names and start to learn their letters.”

“This ministry is already reaching families in our community, and seeds are being planted,” the story said.
Memphis Conference youth find encouragement to ‘Go On’ at ‘Youth 2015’ conference in June in Florida

Rev. Autura Eason-Williams contributed to this article [First published on website 8/21/2015]

Roughly 75 youth and adults from the Memphis Conference attended Youth 2015, a quadrennial event held on June 24-28 in Orlando, Fla.

Rev. Dr. Joe Geary, director of Connectional Ministries, said the participants traveled from about 10 congregations in west Tennessee and western Kentucky. In Florida, they attended a mixture of workshops, small groups and missions activities based on the theme, “Go On.” The event encouraged students to cultivate piety and mercy and to positively influence their churches and communities, according to the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Terence Hampton, a young member of Capleville UMC in Memph, Tenn., loved it. “All the speakers were pretty electrifying,” he said. “The messages, sermons at all the services were inspiring and I think they reached a lot of people. One take away from the experience is no matter where you came from, God sent you here to make a difference.”

Leslie Curry, another Capleville UMC youth, sang in the event’s mass choir. She ranked the choir as her favorite part, along with worship. She also appreciated the powerful messages she heard and the opportunities she found to meet other youth. “Even to this day, I wish I was still there,” she said after the event.

Rev. Autura Hampton, Capleville UMC’s pastor, said her group also witnessed a baptism for one of the participants and helped serve communion to the event’s 5,000 attendees. “It was awesome to see the kids all having a great time being Christians!” she exclaimed. “As parents, we are all proud of the investment of time and money … as we worked toward Youth 2015. It was an investment in all of our faith journeys.”

Her daughter, Gwendolyn, agreed. “The whole thing was amazing!” Gwendolyn Hampton said. “The fellowship, the speakers, the fun – was amazing! One take away is to ‘go on’ and spread the word of Jesus Christ – to move forward in my relationship with Christ.”

Learn more about this event at www.youth2015.com.

**Encourage YOUTH 2015 attendees to keep their covenant to GO ON.** A free download resource called Go On Beyond provides inspiration for youth to continue doing the means of grace explored at YOUTH 2015. It can be modified by youth leaders and is available at youth2015.com. Youth and leaders also can check out facebook.com/Youth2015 to explore photos and videos from the event. And they can subscribe to Devos 2 Go On by texting “SUB” to 615-724-9047 for inspiration to keep doing the means of grace. ♦

Orientation for leaders continued from page 2

Highlights of the orientation for Geary were examples of successes and failures and information about the new religious landscape. He said this year’s orientation offered more peer-to-peer learning.

“The day of the expert telling us what to do is largely over,” Geary observed.

Conrad mentioned an “inspirational” message by Bishop Gary E. Mueller of the Arkansas Area. It was titled “Going to the Heart of the Matter” and based on Colossians 3:12-17.

Conrad said Mueller “warned against inevitable job or mission creep for district superintendents” who can “so easily become consumed with personnel matters, conflicts, legal issues and institutional management.”

“Our training actually dealt with each of these issues as expressions of the very broken world and troubled time within which we live,” said Conrad, but “keeping the character and compassion of Christ as the centerpiece of our ministry is still how we keep ‘the main thing the main thing.’”

According to Conrad and Geary, speakers focused heavily on how society’s rapidly changing culture is affecting the church.

“It was widely recognized and mentioned,” Conrad explained, “that this is one of the most challenging times in the life of the church that we have faced for at least two generations.”

Conrad said differing theological, social and political stances are straining at the fabric of all denominations, not just The United Methodist Church. He believes opinions are becoming more and more polarized with “the Methodist middle quickly disappearing” – and that is affecting how superintendents do their jobs.

“The political and social commentary in our culture,” he said, “is becoming more and more toxic. As that voice gets louder and more influential, it is shaping conversations in our churches, ironically more than the voice, character or examples of Christ, in some instances.”

The superintendent is thrust into this tension, said Conrad.

“We are now the ‘chief missional strategist’ in the life of the church. It has been my experience that when local churches are focused on the actual teaching of Christ [and] the example of Christ and [are] filled with the Spirit of Christ, a sense of community and consensus around Christ and His mission is ultimately what brings us together in love and empowers us to be a transformative presence in culture.”

Conrad said he hopes to instill that vision in the new Mississippi River District. ♦

From left, Rev. Kevin Conrad, superintendent of the Mississippi River District, and Rev. Dr. Joe Geary, director of Connectional Ministries for the Memphis Conference, participated in an Aug. 23 orientation for their conference leadership positions. (File photos)
Multiple monikers: Explore most popular church names in Memphis Conference

By Casey Northcutt Watson [First published on website 8/21/2015]

Do you go to Trinity UMC? Is that the Trinity UMC in Mayfield, Ky.? Paducah, Ky.? Brownsville, Tenn.? Henderson, Tenn.? Memphis, Tenn.? Paris, Tenn.? Or East Trinity UMC in Jackson, Tenn.?

Congregations often lean toward the same words, imagery and even saints when picking monikers for their churches. The Memphis Conference is no different. It has no less than seven Lebanon UMCs and the same amount of Trinity UMCs, if you count East Trinity – and we do.

The conference’s online church list is fraught with repeats. In fact, it includes a total of 42 names that apply to multiple congregations. Most only appear two or three times on the list, but a popular few are stamped on church signs across the region.

Other than “Lebanon” and “Trinity,” the highest ranking names are: “Mt. Pleasant UMC” (six), “Shiloh UMC” (six), “Mt. Carmel UMC” (five), “New Hope UMC” (five) and Palestine (five).

Individual words tend to repeat on the list, too. Obviously, “First” is popular because it signifies the first United Methodist church built in a certain city. The Memphis Conference has 42 “First” churches. Many congregations also like to evoke small-town, peaceful atmospheres, so “Chapel” appears on the list 39 times while “Grove” shows up 24 times. And, how many “Mount” churches can you attend in the Memphis Conference? If you count both “Mount” and “Mt.,” your answer is 20.

Multiple monikers: Explore most popular church names in Memphis Conference

By Casey Northcutt Watson [First published on website 8/21/2015]

Resurrected ‘Vacation Bible School’ (VBS) at Palestine UMC in Holladay, Tenn., triples attendance [First published on website 8/21/2015]

Attendance for Palestine UMC’s Vacation Bible School (VBS) in Holladay, Tenn., more than tripled in 2015, a year after the church resurrected the event.

According to members Reba Patton and Yvonne Woodin, Palestine hosted its first VBS in a several years last summer. Five children attended. In June 2015, that number increased to 16, while 21 adults helped run the classes and activities. Using the theme, “God’s Love is Real,” the VBS included games, Bible stories and crafts for students ranging from preschool to high school.

“Children were really involved in the crafts—decorating crosses, painting rocks,” Patton and Woodin wrote about the event. They admitted that planning for last year’s VBS had been difficult. They didn’t know if any children would show up at all because they had so few in their congregation. But, their pastor, Rev. Dr. Charles Parker, felt they could plan a VBS and then recruit participants. So, organizers continued preparing for it, having faith plans don’t work out,” she said.

“Had it not been for YAC, I would have never known how much of an impact youth have on the church,” she said, adding, “I learned that we are not the church of tomorrow but the church of today.”

The young people ended their event by opening the 2015 Memphis Annual Conference on May 31 with words, music and dance. Josh Shaw, director of youth ministries at Alamo First UMC in Alamo, Tenn., led a dance team from his youth group as they performed to Kirk Franklin’s “He Reigns.”

Overall, participants deemed the 2015 YAC a success, including Sherry Score, the volunteer youth director at Shiloh UMC in Somerville, Tenn.

“[Students] absolutely blew me away with their faith in God and their eagerness to share it with the world,” she said.

More than 40 youth attended Youth Annual Conference, May 29-31 in Jackson, Tenn., that took place right before the 2015 Memphis Annual Conference.

The two events overlapped, allowing the youth to open Annual Conference on May 31 with words, music and dance. (Photo by Jane Gardner Camp)

More than 40 students participated in 2015 ‘Youth Annual Conference’

[First published on website 8/21/2015]

More than 40 youth from more than 12 Memphis Conference churches attended the Youth Annual Conference (YAC) this year from May 29-31 in Jackson, Tenn. The event took place just before the 2015 Memphis Annual Conference.

Using the theme, “IGNITE,” the YAC focused on outreach as well as spiritual concepts. Rev. Kristofer Roof, pastor of Peace Tree UMC in Collierville, Tenn., said students learned to use social media evangelism, wrote letters to veterans and active-duty soldiers and reflected upon spiritual disciplines.

The conference also gave teens opportunities to mix and mingle.

“For many youth, the only opportunities they’ve had to meet other students from across the conference have been at Lakeshore Camp and Retreat Center [in Ewa, Tenn.],” Roof said. “But, we discovered that a number of youth had never attended a camp or retreat at Lakeshore, so this was their first time interacting with Methodist youth from west Tennessee and western Kentucky.”

In addition to providing social opportunities, the YAC also hosted several speakers, including Dr. Cynthia Davis, Metro McKendree District superintendent. She talked about Psalm 16:9, which says, “Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure.” (NIV) The verse rejoices; my body also will rest secure.” (NIV) The verse

It reminded me that God always has me, even when my plans don’t work out,” she said. Lauren Riley – a rising senior, a member of McKenzie First United Methodist Church in McKenzie, Tenn., and children and youth director of Greenfield United Methodist Church in Greenfield, Tenn. – delivered a brief message, as well.

“We are to wash feet and not have ours washed,” she reminded participants. Evan Knaff, a rising senior and member of St. Paul UMC in Memphis, Tenn., ranked the conference among the best experiences he’s ever had. Evelyn Odle, a rising sophomore and member of Lexington First UMC in Lexington, Tenn., said the event empowered her.

“Had it not been for YAC, I would have never known how much of an impact youth have on the church,” she said, adding, “I learned that we are not the church of tomorrow but the church of today.”

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The two events overlapped, allowing the youth to open Annual Conference on May 31 with words, music and dance. (Photo by Jane Gardner Camp)
Working in concert with the Memphis Conference, Metro McKendree District, Methodist Healthcare’s Congregational Health Network and people of faith near and far, we are planting a new faith community in the Southwest Memphis, Tenn., area called the New Generation Ministries Empowerment Center (NGMEC).

Our purpose
Our purpose is to plant this community of faith and church for people who desire new hope, meaning, transformation, purpose and opportunity for their lives. Our focus is to reach all people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with a special emphasis on African American males, both youth and young adults.

Our objectives
- To intentionally model the beloved community by teaching and practicing the love of God and Christ in our community of faith.
- To encourage our friends to know and love the Word of God, and accept the Bible as a personal love letter to them from God.
- To be a community of over-comers with new hope, meaning, transformation, purpose and opportunity through love, faith, prayer, biblical study and service to God and man.
- To celebrate God’s grace and our accountability to God, without intentionally hurting or dismissing anyone because of our differences.
- To be a community that is made strong by the grace of God, the love of Jesus, and the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit, that is always resting, ruling and abiding in our community.

Our prayer
- That the men will find positive transforming value for their lives.
- That they will participate in the ongoing events and opportunities that we will present.
- That they will desire to be a part of our faith community and members of our launch team.
- That they will be future facilitators of the program.
- That they will become future leaders in the church plant

A call to empowerment
This is a call and an invite to men, both youth and young adults who need new hope, meaning, transformation, purpose and opportunity for their lives.

Whether you live near or far, we invite you to partner with the New Generation Ministries Empowerment Center church plant:
- As a prayer partner
- As a member of our launch team
- As a financial contributor
- By sharing your talents and expertise

Scouts undertake creative fundraiser that benefits others and not just themselves

Boy Scout Troop 452 raised funds for United Methodist Neighborhood Centers this year while also collecting money for summer camp.

The troop, chartered by Arlington United Methodist Church in Arlington, Tenn., hosted its annual steak dinner in May. The event raises money to offset the cost of attending Boy Scout Resident Camp at Kia Kima Scout Reservation in Hardy, Ark. However, Teresa Pinkston-Rector, scouting ministries coordinator, said this time, the scouts simultaneously raised money for United Methodist Neighborhood Centers of Memphis (UMNC), an agency of the Memphis Conference that provides food distribution, childcare and more to impoverished families.

During the dinner, the scouts hosted two silent auctions titled “Handmade Brigade...Painting for Missions” and “Bizarre Bazaar” to host a holiday-themed service project for UMNC children when the season approaches.

‘Hispanic Outreach Weekend’ draws many to Ross UMC

Ross UMC in Dyersburg, Tenn., celebrated its third annual Hispanic Outreach Weekend, Friday and Saturday, Oct. 9-10.

More than 50 people from the community attended the Friday night dinner. Art, photographs and history were displayed.

On Saturday, Rev. Sam Rodriguez hosted a three-hour training on working with and reaching the Hispanic community. Rodriguez is the director for Hispanic/Latino and multi-ethnic new church starts for the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship.

Pictured are some of the designs created by Boy Scout Troop 452 for pottery plates they made and sold as a fundraiser for their camp expenses and to benefit United Methodist Neighborhood Centers of Memphis. (Submitted photo)
Language translation services provided for first time ever at 2015 Memphis Annual Conference

El Redentor United Methodist Church (UMC) in Memphis, Tenn., expressed appreciation to the Memphis Conference for providing language translation services during the 2015 Memphis Annual Conference, May 31 - June 3 in Jackson, Tenn. It was the first time in the history of the Memphis Annual Conference event that such services have been provided.

“We would like to thank the Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church for the translation services provided to the delegation of the Redeemer UMC,” El Redentor Pastor Rev. Luz Campos said. “We also thank those who made the effort translating. God bless the Methodist Church.”

“El redentor” means “redeemer” in Spanish. Currently, there are at least three Spanish-speaking congregations and one Korean-speaking congregation in the Memphis Conference, according to information provided by the Memphis Conference’s district superintendents.

The 2015 Memphis Annual Conference made available translation for Spanish- and Korean-speaking delegates and guests. This came in addition to the conference’s long-established sign language services for the hearing impaired.

The spoken language interpretations utilized four volunteer interpreters and 10 portable listening devices loaned from the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. In all, 17 people participated, including Rev. Marco Antonio Gonzalez Cortes of the Eastern Mexico Conference, who spoke during the annual conference.

Rev. Jin Kim, pastor of the Korean UMC in Germantown, Tenn., translated for Koreans delegates and guests.

“Having known the Irvans for more than 40 years, Easley, said, “I can tell you that this is what they always wanted to do and they never had any second thoughts about it.”

Easley announced that Murray First UMC is carrying out the Irvans’ wishes for the money by investing it in an endowment (with the United Methodist Foundation of the Memphis and Tennessee Conferences) for “permanent church improvements or construction of church property.”

“This extraordinary gift – the largest ever given to this church – is an example for all of us of what it means to maintain a perpetual covenant with the church,” said Easley. “As faithful members of this church, we can do our part by assuring that we follow the directions expressed in their sacred last will and testament.”

An endowment gift of $2.4 million was presented to Murray First United Methodist Church in Murray, KY, on Nov. 1. TOP PHOTO: From left are Dr. Rick Dye, the church’s senior pastor and chair of the church’s endowment committee; Roy Riley, endowment trustee; Sid Easley, friend of John and Rebecca Irvan who willed the money; and Dr. Philip Jamieson, president of the United Methodist Foundation for the Memphis and Tennessee Conferences. BOTTOM PHOTO: Items on display at Murray First UMC remember John and Rebecca Irvan, who willed $2.4 million endowment to their church. (Submitted photos)
Members of Colonial Park UMC in Memphis offer thoughts on prayer in new book

By Casey Northcutt Watson [First published on website 8/21/2015]

Fourteen members of Colonial Park UMC in Memphis, Tenn., have joined other Christians and recorded their thoughts and feelings about prayer in a new book.

Grandmother Earth and Life Press, both owned and operated by Colonial Park member Frances Brinkley Cowden, released “Person to Person to God: A Prayer Journey” on Sept. 1. Roughly 18 years in the making, the book is a collection of poetry and essays about the nature of prayer. Cowden wrote multiple pieces and then gathered work from what the book cover calls “a cloud of witnesses,” which includes several people from her church.

“I went to people I knew who were strong in prayer and who also didn’t mind writing,” she says.

Those members composed both verse and prose about subjects ranging from prayer’s role in avoiding temptation to childhood prayer to strength derived from prayer. They poured out their hearts and helped Cowden finish her project.

“They’re just a supportive group,” Cowden says. “They love the Lord. … We care about each other. And, I told them I was doing this, so they wanted to support me.”

Aline Thompson, another Colonial Park member, says she was happy to contribute to the book. She has known Cowden for 25 years and wanted to help. She submitted an essay titled “Taking It to the Streets.”

The piece talks about prayer’s role in outreach—specifically in a Colonial Park ministry that distributes Sunday lunch to day laborers and homeless people. Thompson wrote about the bologna and cheese sandwiches she and other volunteers give away and about the people they meet. She wrote about what those people have meant to her.

“We learn their names, smile, linger to visit and offer to pray with those who are interested; there are hugs, handshakes and sometimes tears,” her essay reads. “Praise be to God that He has used our group to bless others,” Thompson says.

Order “Person to Person to God” online at https://gmoearth.wordpress.com.

Conference Room A gets new signage that reflects conference’s ‘current reality and preferred future’

[First published on website 10/12/2015]

Conference Room A in the Memphis Conference office in Jackson, Tenn., has recently been redecorated with new wall signage.

Now hanging on all four sides of the room (located immediately to the right as one enters the front door of the conference office) is signage that communicates the Memphis Conference mission statement, values and four areas of focus.

The new signage has been hung “to represent our current reality and preferred future with a focus on where we are and hope to go,” said Rev. Dr. Joe Geary, director of Memphis Conference Connectional Ministries.

“By hanging these (signs),” Geary said the hope is that the content and messages will be “more present in the minds of Memphis Conference individuals and groups who meet in the room.”

The Memphis Conference office is located at 24 Corporate Boulevard in Jackson.

Faith Health Center of Jackson receives $3,500 from Northside UMC barbecue event

[First published on website 9/30/2015]

Faith Health Center (FHC) of Jackson, Tenn., is the beneficiary of $3,500 from an Aug. 29 barbecue event at Northside UMC in Jackson, Tenn., according to Bob Sharp, a member of Northside UMC’s Men’s Ministry Leadership Team.

Sharp said the men barbecued 700 pounds of pork and chicken to help raise the funds. Baked goods were sold by the women of the church and donations were received.

FHC, located at 510 Carriage House Drive in Jackson, was founded by Northside UMC member Dr. Dave Larsen and his wife, Sara. It is a non-profit 501c3 medical clinic that provides medical care, wellness counseling, & health education to insured & uninsured children, adolescents, adults, elderly & disabled patients in Madison & bordering rural counties of West Tennessee.
Two United Methodist churches in Carroll County help take ‘Vacation Bible School’ into community

A total of 43 children attended one or more days of Vacation Bible School (VBS), thanks to the efforts of two Carroll County, Tenn., United Methodist churches.

New Hope UMC in Vale, Tenn., and Hebron UMC in Hebron, Tenn., worked together and were assisted by other churches in the county to offer a community VBS for ages three through teens, June 8-12 at the Vale Community Center.

The VBS ran 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day and used a curriculum called “G-Force.” Children learned about God’s love and enjoyed songs, scripture lessons, Bible verses, crafts, science/nature lessons and food.

“Children from the whole community came,” said Rhonda Crawford. “It was such a great response. We had children from all walks of life.”

Crawford is a Sunday School teacher and youth director at New Hope UMC.

“I was overjoyed with the response from the kids,” continued Crawford. “They loved all of the zones. We kept them moving and active.”

Gift from Paducah Sub-District of ‘United Methodist Men’ sends 20 kids to summer camp at Lakeshore

A group of 20 elementary school-age campers (photo above) attended a week of summer camp in 2015 at Lakeshore Camp and Retreat Center in Eva, Tenn., thanks to a gift of over $7,000 from the Paducah Sub-District of the Purchase District United Methodist Men (UMM).

Lakeshore is the camp and retreat ministry of the Memphis Conference (West Tennessee and Western Kentucky) of the United Methodist Church.

“Each year, several UMM groups from the Paducah area, including McCracken and Ballard Counties, raise money to cover the cost of tuition, transportation and in-transit meals for up to 20 campers ages 8 to 11,” reported Joe Burkhead, UMM volunteer.

“Lakeshore is truly one of our (Methodist, Memphis Conference) greatest assets, and here are 20 examples why,” added Burkhead, referring to the 20 children who benefited from the experience.

Jackson First UMC fills shoe boxes, celebrates Advent in August

Members of Jackson First UMC in downtown Jackson, Tenn., celebrated Advent in August by packing 175 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child.

Operation Christmas Child is a program of Samaritan’s Purse, an international relief and humanitarian aid organization. People in the U.S. pack shoe boxes full of toys, hygiene supplies, school supplies, crafts and more for boys and girls in need. They send the packages to Samaritan’s Purse, which distributes the gifts around the world.

After Jackson First UMC members of all ages donated boxes in August, Susan Crocker, director of women’s ministries at the church, thanked them for their generosity.

“I witnessed firsthand these boxes being used in Ethiopia,” said Crocker. “The joy of Christ just shined in the children’s eyes. Packing and sending your box to a child you will never meet is truly being a disciple of Christ.”
Earheart, Engle, Gilbert received Denman Evangelism Award during 2015 Memphis Annual Conference

By Casey Northcutt Watson [First published on website 7/20/2015]

The Memphis Conference honored three people with the Harry Denman Evangelism Award during June’s 2015 Memphis Annual Conference in Jackson, Tenn. Dr. David Russell, Memphis Conference chair of evangelism, presented awards on behalf of the Memphis Conference Committee on Evangelism in three different categories — clergy, laity and youth.

The awards went to Rev. Mark Earheart, of Dresden UMC in Dresden, Tenn.; Susan Engle of Trinity UMC in Paducah, Ky.; and Hailey Gilbert of Collierville UMC in Collierville, Tenn.

The Foundation for Evangelism established the Denman Award more than 30 years ago to honor those who have demonstrated extraordinary efforts in Wesleyan evangelism.

Rev. Earheart received the Denman Award for clergy. He serves as the pastor of Dresden First UMC, where he encourages his congregation to reach out to its surrounding community.

The Denman Award for laity went to Engle, who has recently transitioned from the role of lay to clergy. She now serves as the pastor of Trinity UMC. She formerly held the position of lay resource leader for the former Paducah (now Purchase) District and has been instrumental in the establishment of the Generative Leadership Academy. She also currently is chair of the Memphis Conference’s Intentional Discipleship Action Team.

Gilbert received the Denman Award for youth. The 18-year-old recently graduated from Collierville High School in Collierville, Tenn., and has been very active at Collierville UMC. As a junior, she led a volunteer trip to help Hurricane Sandy survivors.

**Mark Earheart**

Dresden First UMC member Linda Akers, who nominated Earheart for the Denman Award, says her pastor works hard to make sure his church is open and inviting. He tells his congregation to welcome everyone to the church.

“He preaches loving the unlovable, reaching out to those who cannot return the favor and giving everyone chances, regardless of their financial status, age, gender, race, ethnicity or influence,” she says. “Mark practices what he preaches. He doesn’t just evangelize the upper class — paying people. He doesn’t care whether they have money or not.”

Akers also says after people visit a Dresden First UMC service, Earheart, in return, visits them at home and invites them back. In addition, he supports a Wednesday night program for school-age children that teaches Bible messages, and he currently leads the church’s largest and most diverse confirmation class. He also has helped establish a program in which church volunteers share lunch with elementary children who rarely have visitors eat with them at school.

“He makes every effort to promote the cause of Christ through evangelism and mission and encourages our church to be focused on evangelism through mission,” Akers says.

Born in 1948, Earheart grew up in Nashville, Tenn., and Mt. Juliet, Tenn. He served three years in the United States Army, from 1968-1971, including a tour in Vietnam. He also attended Middle State Tennessee University in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tenn., where he graduated. He worked as a trucker and dairy farmer before feeling God’s call to become a pastor at age 36. In 1997, he earned a master of divinity degree from Memphis Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn. He has two children, Paul Dawn Churchwell and Stephen Mark Earheart Jr., from a marriage to his late wife, Judy. He is currently married to Mary Dawn.

**Susan Engle**

Since Engle became the pastor of Trinity UMC in June 2014, the church has grown in several ways. It established a concert band through which the congregation’s musicians can showcase their talents. Volunteers began reading to local elementary students weekly. The youth group grew to include a Japanese foreign exchange student and the children’s choir ministry expanded to include new leadership.

“Her love of discipleship and deep desire for people to not only know and love Christ but to [also] be equipped so that they might make disciples has borne fruit in numerous churches across our conference,” Purchase District Superintendent Sky McCracken says. “I can think of no one else more deserving of this award.”

Engle has recently trained to be a licensed local pastor. She has attended the Wesley Theological Academy for lay staff development, and she attended the Academy of Spiritual Formation. She earned her Christian Education Certification, as well. She is married to Mark Engle, her college sweetheart, and they have three children, Matthew, Timothy and Samuel, and three grandchildren.

**Hailey Gilbert**

For someone so young, Gilbert has accomplished much in ministry, according to Kristine Konswozit, director of youth ministries for Collierville UMC.

“Hailey has a passion for helping others experience God’s transforming love through Jesus Christ by serving,” she says.

The daughter of John and Stephanie Gilbert, the teen has been an active member of Collierville UMC since 2006. She also has participated in numerous service projects, including serving pancakes in inner city Memphis, ministering with several Mountain T.O.P. (Tennessee Outreach Project) efforts in the Cumberland Mountains and working with Rice and Beans ministry in Costa Rica.

In 2012, Gilbert also heard about Hurricane Sandy and felt compassion for those who had lost their homes and possessions in the storm.

“Hailey felt called to serve Hurricane victims because her family suffered during a hurricane in Florida and relocated to the Memphis area due to their loss,” Konswozit says.

The youth minister encouraged Gilbert to meet with Memphis Conference disaster relief personnel to find out how she could help. The teen then spent the next year researching relief efforts and eventually led a volunteer team to the affected area to work with the Greater New Jersey Conference’s “Future with Hope” project.

The volunteer team included eight high school girls and several adults. They helped survivors rebuild after the storm, and they facilitated relationships between the United Methodist Church, local government and residents in an Asian-American community.

“In 32 years of youth ministry I cannot think of a student with more passion for serving others so they may experience God’s transforming love through Jesus Christ,” Konswozit says.

Gilbert intends to continue this life of service by pursuing a career in nursing at the University of Memphis.
Two retired clergy serving as volunteer hospital chaplains help former chaplain’s wish come true
[First published on website 10/8/2015]

This story is reprinted with minor revisions from the October 2015 issue of Volunteer Views, the volunteer newsletter of Regional Hospital (recently renamed Tennova Healthcare Regional) in Jackson, Tenn. The lady’s name and place of residence are omitted for patient privacy.

Regional Hospital in Jackson, Tenn., recently helped make a wish come true for a resident of a local assisted living facility.

The resident had been a chaplain in her active life. Her burning desire was to once again minister to a patient in a hospital setting.

On Wednesday, July 15, the resident/former chaplain’s wish came true with help from Regional Hospital Volunteer Chaplains Rev. Russell Gallimore and Rev. Harrell Phillips. The two Memphis Conference retired clergy partnered with Angela Johnson, volunteer coordinator at the hospital.

Gallimore donned a hospital gown and played the role of hospital patient. Phillips led the former chaplain from her wheelchair to Gallimore’s bedside.

Phillips told the former chaplain that a patient (Gallimore) had requested prayer. The former chaplain took Gallimore by the hands and led a beautiful and patient-appropriate prayer.

Gallimore thanked the former chaplain for her lovely prayer and invited her to visit again.

As she left, the former chaplain told Gallimore he “looked good” and that he’d “better beware” because “the ladies might try to make off with him.”

Gallimore responded, “Bring ‘em on!”

The hospital’s volunteer chaplains made her day and she made their day!

A former chaplain (center) gets a chance to be a chaplain again as she visits Rev. Russell Gallimore (playing the role of patient in the hospital bed) with the assistance of Rev. Harrell Phillips, right. Gallimore and Phillips are retired clergy from the Memphis Conference who currently serve as volunteer chaplains at Tennova Healthcare Regional in Jackson, Tenn. (Submitted photo)

Carroll County United Methodist students receive R.C. and Annie Austin Scholarships
[First published on website 9/24/2015]

Students from five Carroll County, Tenn., churches have received the R.C. and Annie Austin Scholarship for the 2015-2016 school year.

According to the Sept. 11 issue of Tennessee River District eNews, the college scholarship was established around 1981, after the Austins created an endowment benefiting United Methodist students in Carroll County. The couple had been longtime members of Carroll County’s Huntingdon First UMC in Huntingdon, Tenn.

This year, the scholarship committee awarded students from Huntingdon First UMC, McKenzie First UMC in McKenzie, Tenn., Davis Chapel UMC in Huntingdon, Tenn., Carters Chapel UMC in McLemoresville, Tenn., and McLemoresville First UMC in McLemoresville, Tenn. To receive the scholarship, each recipient needed to have been a member of a Carroll County United Methodist Church for at least one year.

The scholarship selection committee included Rev. Dr. Richard W. Clark, district superintendent of the Tennessee River District; Rev. Jason W. Jones, pastor of McKenzie First UMC; and Rev. Mark Carrigan, pastor of Huntingdon First UMC.

Students wanting to apply for 2016-2017 R.C. and Annie Austin Scholarships may pick up applications from their pastor or from the Huntingdon First UMC office. April 15, 2016, is the application deadline for high school seniors who want their schools notified before graduation. For everyone else, the deadline is July 15, 2016.

100 years after first mailed, Jackson First UMC receives postcards as ‘redistribution of happiness’
[First published on website 10/1/2015]

Jackson First UMC In Jackson, Tenn., recently received mail — from a century ago.

Bobbie Mays, the church’s director of communications, says Lowell Joerg of Stockton, Calif., sent the church two postcards this summer (pictured right) that he discovered in an antique store. The cards featured photographs of the church and dated back to 1915.

“They are old-time classics for sure,” Joerg wrote in a letter that accompanied the cards. “I thought to myself, ‘By golly, I think I’ll send them home where they can be appreciated.’”

The cards were originally addressed to “Mrs. W. W. Wright” in Orlando, Fla., and “Mrs. E. McAdams” in Macon, Ga. Joerg thought the Jackson church members might appreciate them now. He said he likes brightening life for others.

“I like to call my little hobby a ‘redistribution of happiness,’” Joerg wrote. “Our world sure needs it.”

Joerg, however, wasn’t sure he would hear back from Jackson First UMC. He said his wife told him he would have to take her to lunch if he got a reply.

Mays and Rev. Dan Camp, the church’s senior pastor, responded with a note of thanks, a small donation, a recent church newsletter and a church tote bag. Mays said they also assured Joerg the postcards will be preserved and added to the church archive.

Find us on Facebook
‘Project Transformation’ has ‘Advance Special Fund’
[First published on website 9/28/2015]

The Memphis Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A) has designated Project Transformation Memphis as an Advance Special fund, according to CF&A Chair Bethany Huffman.

Project Transformation is an organization offering eight-week enrichment experiences for children, grades 1-9, who come from low-income families. Additionally, young people may serve as interns in the program and learn leadership skills.

Lynn McAlilly, wife of Bishop Bill McAlilly, introduced Project Transformation during the 2015 Memphis Annual Conference, saying a Memphis chapter will begin in the summer of 2016.

McAlilly worked as an elementary school teacher for 20 years and has a passion for children, education, literacy and poverty alleviation. She challenges conference churches and small groups to partner with locals schools.

Project Transformation’s new status with the Advance Special furthers that goal.

Churches that pay 100% of their Conference and District apportionments and give additionally to Methodist-related charities or approved Conference Advance Specials will have this giving taken off their total operating costs reported before apportionments are calculated for the next year. To qualify, make sure Methodist charitable giving beyond your apportionments is reported on your end-of-year statistical reports submitted to the Treasurers Office.

Project Transformation is fund 55, the number formerly designated for UNICEF. It’s a non-apportioned line and found at the bottom of remittance slips, according to Clare Wilson, assistant treasurer.

‘New Church Start’ grant from Rethink Church helps launch Peace Tree UMC in Collierville
[First published on website 10/2/2015]

Peace Tree UMC in Collierville, Tenn., is the recipient of a New Church Start Grant from the Rethink Church initiative of United Methodist Communications.

The church received the news from Rethink Church in early September.

“The Metro-McKendree District applauds the work, commitment, prayer and dedication that went into the successful completion of this grant application,” Metro McKendree District Superintendent Dr. Cynthia Davis said. “We are grateful to the Rethink Church Grants Team for selecting our new church plant, Peace Tree!”

Peace Tree, one of the newest congregations in the Memphis Conference, exists without a building. Lead by Rev. Kristofer Roof, it caters to those who can’t attend Sunday services or who have grown uncomfortable with traditional church atmospheres. Instead, the church consists of small groups that meet throughout the week in casual settings such as homes, restaurants or parks.

Members of the new church’s launch team are from Collierville UMC.

Visit Peace Tree UMC’s website at www.peacetreeumc.org and its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/peacetreeumc to learn more.

John Wesley makes personal appearances in McKenzie
[First published on website 9/24/2015]

From left, Jackson Nunn and Drew Harvey take turns playing John Wesley at McKenzie First UMC in McKenzie, Tenn. Their pastor, Rev. Jason W. Jones, made the Methodist founder’s cutout in 2014 for a youth football event and has pulled out the prop on other occasions, including a recent Wesleyan stewardship study at the church.

(Photo by Wesley Brockman)
Children from Troy UMC in Troy, Tenn., helped people in their community this summer when they collected more than 800 food items for the Reelfoot Rural Ministries (RRM) food bank.

RRM is a mission agency of the Memphis Conference of The United Methodist Church in Obion, Tenn., that provides various services for those in need, including childcare, dentistry and food distribution.

According to RRM Executive Director Rev. Robert Craig, the Troy UMC kids collected items as a part of a Vacation Bible School contest. Their leaders, Youth Director Leta Williams and Children’s Ministry Director Bo McEwan, divided the children into two teams for a “pie in the face” challenge. The team that collected the most items got to shove a pie in the face of the opposing group’s leader. The contest spurred students to collect almost 1,500 pounds of food. In the end, McEwan’s team lost and he got creamed.

Craig said this contest occurred at the perfect time for RRM. "Aside from the month of December each year … July 2015 was the busiest on record at RRM," he said. “While July 2015 was most demanding on our resources, it was also the lowest July on record of donations. We were in desperate need of many of the items that these young people collected. They were definitely agents of God’s grace for many families in early August.”

RRM served just short of 400 households in July and 280 households in August.

Children at Troy UMC in Troy, Tenn., were motivated by a “pie throw” to collect food for the food pantry at Reelfoot Rural Ministries. (Submitted photos)

Malawi Project makes use of old pill bottles collected by Calvary UMC in Mayfield, Ky.

Calvary UMC in Mayfield, Ky., is offering its members a new way to recycle old pill bottles.

The church is collecting prescription pill containers for The Malawi Project. According to a promotional flier, medical facilities in Malawi, a landlocked country in southeast Africa, have little access to proper containers. Doctors and pharmacists there must wrap medicine in scraps of paper. Steve and Vicki Conner, members of Calvary UMC, are currently collecting old prescription pill bottles for the project, so Malawian people can keep their pills safe, clean and away from children. Containers of all colors, sizes and cap configurations are needed, except for large vitamin containers.

For more information, visit www.malawiproject.org.

Martin goes from redhead to bald as Paris First UMC ‘imagines no malaria’

Even though the Memphis Conference-wide campaign to raise $1 million for Imagine No Malaria (INM) in partnership with the Tennessee Conference ended in June, Paris First UMC in Paris, Tenn., is still working to raise money for the initiative that seeks to eradicate the disease through education, communication and treatment. Read more about IMN at www.imagenomalaria.com.

Throughout August, the church worked to raise $1,000 ($10 per life) and have 80 percent of the congregation in attendance each week “protected” from mosquitoes, according to Dr. Rob Martin, pastor.

Activities included worship service skits, missionary witnesses, a building infestation of hundreds of pipe cleaner mosquitoes and roaming exterminators who checked church members for their mosquito protection, according to Martin.

“Protection,” Martin explained, was obtained by making a $5 per individual or $20 per family donation to INM. Each donor received an INM button to wear and show they were protected.

INM supporters were encouraged to wear their buttons to church and in the Paris/Henry County community throughout August, Martin explained.

As an incentive, Martin agreed to dye his hair red if the congregation “saved” 750 lives. And if the congregation saved 1,000 lives, he agreed to shave his head.

The 750-life goal was reached the second week in August and the 1000-life goal was reached Sept. 2 with a “passing of the hat” at “Wednesday night dinner” that raised the final $120.

Martin first dyed his hair red and then he lost all his hair.

The final event of the church’s INM campaign was a Color Out Malaria 5K and 1-Mile Run/Walk on Saturday, Oct. 3, at Memorial Park in Paris.

Dr. Rob Martin had to dye his hair red (left photo) and then had to shave off his hair (right photo) as members of his congregation, Paris First UMC in Paris, Tenn., reached goals to save lives in a month-long Imagine No Malaria campaign. (Submitted photos)
KIPP students earned volunteer service hours by working to clean Centenary UMC in Memphis

By Kathryn Crawford, Centenary UMC, Memphis, TN [First published on website 9/24/2015]

"I Must Work the Work of Him Who Sent Me While it is Day…"

Centenary United Methodist Church Outreach Ministry partnered with Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) "to continue to strive and develop healthy, relevant youth programs that will model and offer the love of Christ as a vital and viable option to gangs and/or youth violence." KIPP is dedicated to preparing students in under-served communities for success in life and college.

A group of 73 high school seniors from KIPP joined forces with Centenary UMC volunteers to deep-clean specified areas of the Memphis, Tenn., church on Tuesday, Aug. 18.

The purpose of the KIPP students’ visit to the church was to satisfy mandatory volunteer hours. Each KIPP student is required to complete 100 hours of community service.

To kick off the event, Dr. Deborah Smith, pastor of Centenary UMC, welcomed the group. Thomas Milam, Administrative Council chair, gave a synopsis of the church’s 150-year history. Dr. William Gibson, Jr., missionary from Senegal, West Africa, shared an overview of missionary work goals and objectives.

Following introductions of the Centenary volunteers and prayer, teams were formed and the work began!

The church was cleaned from top to bottom – including the prayer room, worship room, classrooms, sanctuary and both kitchens.

When Dr. Smith was asked why partner with KIPP, she stated, “It is because of the population KIPP serves. Students face challenging circumstances daily. KIPP provides them options. The program incorporates home visits by classroom teachers and school administrators. Teams are available to assist students with life skills as well as core academic skills. Volunteer hours are mandatory for all students. The rigorous curriculum sets high expectations. KIPP also allows students to be young boys and girls, which is vitally important.”

KIPP began in 1994 with a powerful idea. The educational model is based on rigorous academic preparation and integrating character development into everyday lessons. Developing character strengths like zest, grit and optimism is a key part of KIPP’s college-preparatory approach.

Over 87 percent of the students are from low-income families, and 95 percent are African American or Latino. Nationally, over 93 percent of those who completed eighth grade at KIPP have graduated from high school and over 82 percent have gone on to college.

As of spring 2015, 44 percent of KIPP students have earned a four-year college degree after finishing eighth grade at a KIPP middle school ten or more years ago. This is above the national average for all students (34 percent), and five times the rate of the average student from a low-income community (nine percent).

Three Memphis students were asked about their experiences working at Centenary UMC:

**Donzell Polk** is impressed with the academic program KIPP offers. He said it is organized and focused, and students are encouraged to have fun, grit and perseverance. He plans to attend college in Arkansas, Kentucky or Tennessee. He is a point guard and shooting guard on the basketball team and plans to be a walk-on football player in college. He plans to major in Art or Theatre. When asked why he volunteered for this particular project, he stated, “It is important to clean up Memphis because I want the city to be a better place.” Donzell’s inspiration and courage come from his grandmother, Nancy Seymour, who always reminds him, “You can be anything you put your mind to as long as you have God in it.”

**Destiny Pickett** moved to Memphis in 2005 from St. Paul, Minn. She plans to attend Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tenn., on a basketball scholarship. An all-around athlete, Destiny averages 19.5 points and 17 rebounds per game. She plans to major in law enforcement and would like to be an FBI agent. She plans to study business and African American studies. Destiny wants to create another ‘African American Wall Street’ like the one that existed in Oklahoma. She was very complimentary of her experience, stating, “It [the church] was like visiting a spa; so relaxing, a good quality environment; very friendly and welcoming—like coming home.”

**Mario Moore** is a native Memphian from the Foote Homes community. According to Mario, KIPP has changed his life and given him an opportunity to better himself and save him from his environment. Advisors not only help students get into college; they work with them throughout their college experience. Mario plays basketball and football and will attend Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tenn., on a football scholarship. After college, he plans to pursue a career as a wide receiver or defensive end in the National Football League. In the meantime, he plans to ensure that he gets his degree in business and open a heating and air conditioning business following his NFL career. Community service is important to Mario. When asked why he chose the Centenary project, Mario eagerly said without pause, “It is the Lord’s house. I want to show Him I care by cleaning up His house.”

Training educates district, conference staff on changing communications technology

A group of approximately 18 staff from the Memphis Conference and its five district offices gathered on Aug. 25 for the conference’s third annual technical communications training event at the Memphis Conference office in Jackson, Tenn. Also in attendance were representatives from Mission Connect and the Tennessee Conference. Rev. Bill Lawson, Memphis Conference associate for technical communications and pastor of Briensburg UMC in Benton, Ky., led the training.

(Photos by Lane Gardner Camp)
dous amount of understanding of our differences/similarities and a great appreciation for both,” she asked following the Aug. 30 event.

James Ellington, certified lay minister and lay leader of Lester’s Chapel UMC in Jackson, Tenn., as well as vice president of mission and outreach of his district’s United Methodist Men, said about the Aug. 30 event that he was “so glad” to have participated, that he enjoyed the tour and exhibit and was “so proud of everyone who made the effort (to attend).”

The exhibit

“Slaves and Slave Holders of Wessyngton Plantation” looks at the lives of enslaved African Americans and their white owners on the 13,000-acre plantation in Robertson County, Tennessee (north central Tennessee on the Kentucky border) before, during and after the Civil War.

The opportunity for the private showings of the exhibit at the Lauderdale County museum grew out of conversations with museum staff by Rev. James Luvene, pastor of Hughlett, Lighthouse and Ross UMCs in the Mississippi River District of the Memphis Conference.

For more information about the exhibit, visit www.alexhaleyuseum.org and www.wessyngton.com or email/call the museum at alexhaleyuseum@bellsouth.net or (731) 738-2240.

Panel presentation

Luvene joined with Rev. Dr. Joe Geary, Memphis Conference director of connectional ministries, to plan presentations and conversation about race relations and racial reconciliation, in conjunction with the exhibit.

Geary and Luvene believe the free exhibit and organized conversations fit well with a current Memphis Conference initiative to help churches address racial prejudice and hatred. Piloting that work is Linda Warren Seely, Memphis Conference “Peace With Justice” advocate and a member of Jackson First UMC in Jackson, Tenn.

Working with Geary, Seely launched the initiative in response to the race-motivated murders of nine African American Christians in Charleston, S.C. in June. Visit the Memphis Conference website at www.memphis-umc.org to learn more about Seely’s initiative, including a Nov. 21 training event.

Panelists on Aug. 30 included Seely, Luvene, Geary and Rev. Dr. Cynthia Davis, Metro McKendree District superintendent. Edna Bonner, Memphis Conference Church and Society Action Team leader, replaced Davis on Sept. 27.

Geary opened the panel presentation with a nod to the American writer Alex Haley, whose one-time home could be seen through the interpretive center’s large glass windows. Haley authored the 1976 book Roots: The Saga of an American Family that was adapted as a television mini-series in the 1970s, drew record-breaking numbers of viewers and increased interest in family genealogy.

“All of us have a story,” said Geary. “Alex Haley taught us the value of having a story.”

Geary told the approximately 54 people who were gathered – people of different races, ages and faith affiliations – that he believes God wants “us” to be “voices of reconciliation” in the midst of racial conflict. He said he hoped the Aug. 30 and Sept. 27 events will provide forums to teach, listen and share with one another.

“In being honest, humble and approachable, we will begin to hear our voices,” said Geary, who shared his personal story, followed by Luvene, Davis and Seely, who each offered personal experiences related to race relations.

“When you develop relationships with people, it changes your perspective,” said Davis.

Seely stressed the importance of being “intentional” and “de-liberate” about reaching out and listening to one another.

Small group conversations

“Candid and lively” was how Geary described the conversation that took place among the eight small groups after the panel presentation. Each group reported back to the larger group its thoughts, comments and observations.

Each group was given a list of four questions to help stimulate conversation.

Below is a sampling of thoughts (some paraphrased) that were shared by the groups:

• There are a lot of hurt and angry people. It’s going to take time and reaching out in faith.
• The secular media has played a role in separation and division among the races.
• We have to acknowledge how we are different, but also how we are the same.
• We can’t change the past, but we can start today to change the future.
• The voice of the church may be the only one that can frame this conversation and bring it to the public.
• We have to harness the anger. Anger (can be) a good thing.
• What we do with the past will determine outcomes.
• We have individual stories, but there is a shared, common narrative. We have to understand and meet in that common story.
• We have to be careful not to pass on the toxicity of racism to our children.

• We can’t correct the present without looking at the past.
• We can’t excuse, but we can understand.
• Laidy have to support clergy in these hard discussions.
• We can’t have an integrated community with a segregated church.
• Too often storytelling gets cut off because it gets uncomfortable.
• One way we work past this is first seeing each other as individuals.
• “Culture” is what we’re talking all around.
• True growth only comes from stepping outside our comfort zones.
• We have to come to terms with the fact that we worship differently.
• Maybe we do need to apologize, even though we didn’t (first) cause the problem.
• Churches have to be intentional about worshipping, praying and serving together.
• We have to listen and develop relationships.

SEE MORE PHOTOS from the Aug. 30 and Sept. 27 conversations in the GALLERIES section of the Memphis Conference website at www.memphis-umc.org

Lenten World Hunger continued from page 1

These funds will be used to meet needs around the world. In addition to the thank you letter from the Society of St. Andrew, the Memphis Conference also received one from the Tennessee Wildlife Foundation (TWF) for its Hunters for the Hungry program. The letter explains how much the Memphis Conference gift will impact impoverished people.

“The support of forward-thinking donors like you, since 1998, Hunters for the Hungry has provided over four million meals to our partner soup kitchens and missions across the state,” TWF Chief Development Officer Kendall McCarter wrote. “Additionally, we were able to achieve huge success in the 2014/2015 season, providing over 500,000 meals for the less fortunate. We know that with your funding, we can make the next season even better!”

Campaign Materials

The 2015 LWHO campaign featured the following materials, which churches could use to promote the offering:

• Letter to pastor/campaign organizer
• List of campaign ideas
• List of beneficiaries
• Poster
• Video (2 minutes)
• Social media messaging and art
• Calendar
• Bulletin insert (Hunger Quiz)
• Jar/can wrap

These resources are located here on the Memphis Conference website.

More Information

Visit Memphis-umc.net/lentenworldhungeroffering.