New Wesley campus ministry at Bethel University embodies conference investment in young people

By Lane Gardner Camp, Director of Communications, Memphis Conference

Fall 2016 FINAL ISSUE

New home
After receiving endorsement from Bethel University and the Memphis Conference, the next step for the campus ministry was finding a home, which it did over the summer – less than a mile from campus at McKenzie First United Methodist Church (UMC).

When asked how her congregation is receiving and reacting to the students’ presence with the start of the fall semester, Rev. Latricia Trull said, “They love it!” Trull is pastor of the church and serves the college students as their campus minister.

As the church was working this summer to rearrange and better utilize church space, Trull said the

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Memphis Conference 2016 ‘Lenten Hunger Offering’ raised more than $33,800; each district received almost $4,500 for food pantries and other feeding ministries

By Lane Gardner Camp, Director of Communications, Memphis Conference

Memphis Conference United Methodist churches gave $33,804.73 in 2016 to the annual Lenten Hunger Offering (LHO). The money has now been distributed to feeding ministries inside and outside the Memphis Conference that includes West Tennessee and Western Kentucky.

The LHO is unique to the Memphis Conference and has raised more than $2 million for hunger-relief ministries since its establishment in 1983. It is planned and coordinated by the Memphis Conference Connectional Ministries office.

The campaign name was shortened in 2016 to Lenten World Hunger Offering to Lenten Hunger Offering to better communicate local hunger needs alongside world hunger issues.

The 2016 campaign ran from Ash Wednesday, Feb. 10, to Eastern Sunday, March 27, 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.

2016 Recipients
The 2016 campaign was intentionally designed to keep more money inside the Memphis Conference by granting more money to the conference’s four districts (than in the past) for their churches’ food pantries and feeding ministries.

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On Palm Sunday 2016, Rev. Adam Hamilton, pastor of the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, Missouri, stood before his United Methodist congregation, holding a “crown of thorns” fashioned from biscuit boxes.

The thin, brown circlet was made by Janell, a member of Grace Place UMC and an inmate at the Mark Luttrell Correctional Center in Memphis, Tennessee.

“The women of the prison chose this as their gift they wanted to send to you – what Janell had made – this crown of thorns made of rubbish, cast aside,” he told listeners. “For them, it represented what’s happened in their own lives—that God has taken what others have seen as refuse and rubbish, people who are in prison and incarcerated—and making them into something new.”

Grace Place UMC is a Memphis Conference prison congregation that was based in the Luttrell Correctional Center until recently when the women’s prison was relocated to Henning, Tennessee, and is currently identified as West Tennessee State Penitentiary Site 1, according to Rev. Diane Harrison, the church’s pastor. The church moved with the prison.

Harrison said the female inmates in her congregation had been watching Hamilton’s Bible study videos for several years and started to feel a connection with the pastor and author. “They grew, over time, to really know him,” she said.

When Hamilton met someone who knew Hamilton, she found an opportunity to offer her congregation a special treat. Through that connection, she encouraged the pastor to record a video for Grace Place members. Hamilton obliged, and the video eventually played at the 2016 Memphis Annual Conference in June.

Grace Place members were so grateful. They wanted to give Hamilton and the members of his church a gift. They settled upon the simple “crown of thorns” Janell had made with acrylic sealer, paint and trash from the mess hall. Harrison said the artist felt honored that other members of the congregation chose her work.

“It’s beautiful,” Harrison said of the piece. “[The] work was really fine.”

In return, Hamilton sent Janell a hand-written thank you letter after receiving the “crown of thorns” gift on his church’s behalf. Then, on Palm Sunday, he picked it up at the end of his sermon and told Janell’s story. He described her situation in the prison. He talked about how she became a part of Grace Place and how she found redemption through Christ.

“For Janell, the meaning of the cross was love and grace and mercy and new beginning and a different way of living and a fresh start and a God who would not let her go,” he said in the sermon. “And that, I think, is the meaning of the cross for you.”

Then, he placed Janell’s crown of thorns on a cross.

“Just think – she made this out of trash because that’s all she had,” Harrison said. “She had nothing else to give. Adam Hamilton gave such dignity to her.”

To watch Hamilton’s Palm Sunday message, including his tribute to Jewell and Grace Place UMC, find this story on the Memphis Conference website at www.memphis-umc.org.

‘Overflow crowd’ attends first gathering of Western Obion County UM Cooperative Parish

[First published on website 8/2/2016]

An “overflow crowd” was reported by Rev. Phillip Cook about the first gathering of the Western Obion County United Methodist Cooperative Parish in the Mississippi River District.

The event was Sunday, July 31, at Hornbeak UMC in Hornbeak, Tennessee. The parish is made up of Troy, Zion, Obion Chapel, Cobbs Chapel, Mt. Manuel and Hornbeak UMCS.

Attendees enjoyed fellowship, a devotion, congregational singing and a concert by the Fincher Family.
‘Exceptional Worship’ is new, monthly ministry for special needs children & adults, presented by Miss. River District lay servants at different locations

[First published on website 9/7/2016]

“Exceptional Worship” is the name of a new worship ministry that launched in September by a committee of ten lay servants of the Mississippi River District in the Memphis Conference.

“This new ministry is geared specifically toward special needs children and adults,” reports Kelly Greer, who serves on the committee.

Beginning Sunday, Sept. 18, and continuing the third Sunday of each month (April excluded) through May 2017, Mississippi River District lay servants will lead and participate in a one-hour worship service from 2 to 3 p.m. at different United Methodist churches in the Mississippi River District.

“These praise-filled services will be called Exceptional Worship and will be led by youth and adult lay servants,” said Greer.

“We are extending (an) invitation to anyone in the area to come and be a part of an awesome worship community.”

Below is the remaining schedule of 2016-17 Sunday services. All services are from 2 to 3 p.m.

November 20, 2016 – Ripley First UMC
145 South Main, Ripley, TN

December 18, 2016 – Trenton First UMC
500 South College St, Trenton, TN

January 15, 2017 – McCabe UMC
215 Hyndsvler Road, Martin, TN

February 19, 2017 – Medina First UMC
500 West Church Avenue, Medina, TN

March 19, 2017 – Humboldt First UMC
200 North 12th Avenue, Humboldt, TN

May 21, 2017 – Brownsville First UMC
117 E Franklin Street, Brownsville, TN

For more information, contact Kelly Greer at dchunter.hunter@gmail.com

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Load the Lounge: Colonial Park UMC summer project collected supplies for teacher lounge of neighborhood school, Sea Isle Elementary

Compiled by Lane Gardner Camp, Director of Communications

[First published on website 9/6/2016]

“Y’all are AWESOME!”
That’s the feedback Colonial Park United Methodist Church (UMC) in Memphis received from its neighborhood school in response to a project this summer to stock the school’s teacher lounge.

2016 marks the 25th year Sea Isle Elementary School has been the adopted school of Colonial Park UMC.

“As a friend and neighbor, we have opportunities throughout the school year to reach out to (the school),” wrote Mike McGee, who helped coordinate the church’s donations to the school.

“Load the Lounge” was the name of the campaign to collect supplies for the teachers this summer before the start of the fall semester. Supplies collected were based on a wish list provided by the school.

“We are so blown away by the amazing amount of goodies you brought to help us ‘Load the Lounge’ at Sea Isle Elementary!” wrote Stephanie Lee to the church.

These are just some of the many supplies donated to the teacher lounge at Sea Isle Elementary School by its church neighbor, Colonial Park UMC in Memphis. (Submitted photo)

“Wow! We appreciate your generosity so much,” wrote Stephanie Lee to the church. She is the president of the school’s Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO).

Donated supplies included paper towels, coffee sweeteners, hand soap, assorted hard candies, assorted chocolates, wipes, room/air fresheners, napkins, paper plates and plastic utensils.

For more information about this project, contact McGee at mikemcgee@aol.com.

Follow Bishop McAlilly on his Blog:
www.bishopbillmcalilly.com

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Faith Health Center of Jackson received $4,200 from barbecue event by members of Northside UMC

By Bob Sharp, Northside UMC
Men’s Ministry Leadership Team

[First published on website 9/20/2016]

$4,200 in proceeds from an Aug. 20 barbecue event at Northside United Methodist Church in Jackson, Tennessee, was presented to Faith Health Center, located at 510 Carriage House in Jackson, for its community health care ministry.

The men of the church barbecued over 750 lbs. of pork and chicken to help raise money for the center, founded by Northside UMC member Dr. Dave Larsen, who operates the center with his wife, Sara.

Faith Health Center is a non-profit medical clinic that provides medical care, wellness counseling, and health education to insured and uninsured children, adolescents, adults, elderly and disabled patients in Madison and bordering rural counties of West Tennessee.

The center is a full time medical facility. Patient appointments are from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.

In addition to proceeds from the barbecue event, Northside’s donation to Faith Health Center also came from the sale of baked goods by the women of the church and donations.

“God is faithful and He continues to provide a way,” said Larsen.
Memphis Conference received appreciation plaque from Eastern Mexico Conference in appreciation of pacto

By Lane Gardner Camp, Director of Communications  [First published on website 9/28/2016]

Rev. LaTricia Trull, left, pastor of McKenzie First United Methodist Church in McKenzie, Tennessee, hands off an appreciation plaque she received on behalf of the Memphis Conference from the Eastern Mexico Conference, to Dr. Joe Geary, director of Connectional Ministries for the Memphis Conference. (Photo by Lane Gardner Camp)

In appreciation for its pacto (covenant) with the Eastern Mexico Conference of The Methodist Church of Mexico, the Memphis Conference of The United Methodist Church was presented with a plaque in June during the 2016 Eastern Mexico Annual Conference.

Rev. LaTricia Trull, pastor of McKenzie First United Methodist Church in McKenzie, Tennessee, attended the Eastern Mexico Annual Conference, June 22-26, in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico, as the “official observer” from the Memphis Conference. She received the plaque on behalf of the Memphis Conference on June 24 and called the experience “an honor.”

The plaque recognizes the Memphis Conference for its “great ministry service in the Manantiales District over the past four years” and expresses “gratitude for Bishop William T. McAlilly and Dr. Joseph A. Geary and the great volunteer in mission teams that have served in mission here with love and devoted service.”

Geary, director of Connectional Ministries for the Memphis Conference, described the plaque as “a recognition of the ongoing relationship (covenant between our conferences) and the gratitude the Mexican Methodists have for our relationship.”

The pacto was signed at the 2011 Memphis Annual Conference, but the relationship between the Memphis and Eastern Mexico conferences goes back to 2009 when that year’s Memphis Annual Conference offering was designated for “children in crisis in Mexico.”

That beginning has led to numerous cross-conference initiatives through the years, including mission trips, building projects, summer camps, Vacation Bible Schools, job training programs, medical and food assistance, provision of Bibles, school supplies and health kits, and more. Teams from Eastern Mexico have traveled to the Memphis Conference and teams from the Memphis Conference have traveled to Eastern Mexico.

Trull said the pacto’s main objective is to “build relationships” among individuals, churches and communities. Geary said about the future, “We look forward to continuing to help and support one another in ministry and mission.”

Other highlights of the 2016 Eastern Mexico Annual Conference for Trull were:
- Hearing a business session report about the conference’s growth from 16,500 members in 2014 to 28,864 in 2015 with another increase expected by the end of 2016.
- Witnessing the election of the conference’s first-ever female district superintendent. “You could feel the excitement and electricity,” said Trull.
- Observing a vote to reduce the number of districts in the conference from 13 to 12, similar to the Memphis Conference’s recent reduction from seven to four districts.

‘Flipping Church’ book has whole chapter devoted to ‘Grace Place UMC’ in the Memphis Conference

By Lane Gardner Camp, Director of Communications  [First published on website 8/8/2016]

Flipping Church is the name of a book released in August that has one whole chapter devoted to the Memphis Conference’s own Grace Place United Methodist Church (UMC).

Grace Place is a church for women prisoners located inside the Mark H. Luttrell Correctional Center in Memphis (part of the Tennessee Department of Correction).

Flipping Church: How Successful Church Planters Are Turning Conventional Wisdom Upside-Down is the full title of the book edited by Rev. Michael Baughman, a United Methodist pastor, church planter and a founder of Union Coffee in Dallas, Texas.

The book is described in promotional literature as “an innovative anthology written by successful church planters who have consistently broken prevailing assumptions about healthy church development and ‘best practices.’”

“Churches Go Into Prisons, They Aren’t In Prisons,” is the title of the chapter written by Rev. Diane Harrison, founding pastor of Grace Place UMC.

Each chapter of the book, explained Baughman, “presents as its title something that many people in the church assume and that the chapter subsequently challenges.”

All the chapters are written by church leaders who tell about the “challenges and blessings” of planting faith communities in “a myriad of economic and cultural settings.”

Baughman said he is “thrilled” to have Grace Place as part of his book – “not only because (its) work is on the forefront of what it means to empower lay people to ministry.”

Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., has endorsed the book.

“Diverse in experiences, gifts, and methods,” she writes, “these leaders’ collective testimony reminds us that the Holy Spirit is still moving in mighty ways, that the church prevails in all shapes and sizes, and that apostles called to roads less traveled are not alone.”

Ludlum says the book is for pastors seeking inspiration, church planters seeking wisdom and disciples seeking hope.

To order the book, visit cokesbury.com or amazon.com and search for “Flipping Church.”
Collierville UMC middle school students partner with ‘Project Transformation’ and ‘Golden Cross Senior Residents Fund’ during summer mission week

By Kristi Henson Owens, Executive Director, Golden Cross Senior Residents Fund [First published on website 8/2/2016]

Middle school students from Collierville United Methodist Church (UMC) spent a week in July doing mission work through Project Transformation. Close to 40 youth and five adult volunteers spent the first part of the week with children at Longstreet and Centenary UMCs in Memphis. They spent time sorting books and reading with the children at the day camp.

Miller Riggins, an eighth grader at Schilling Farms Middle School, said it made him feel good to know he was helping little kids. “The kids were looking up at me as I was reading to them. Maybe these little kids think that reading isn’t cool, but if they see older kids reading, maybe they will think that reading is cool.”

Trace Heffernan, another eighth grader at Schilling Farms Middle School, had a great time doing crafts with the children. Heffernan watched a young boy have so much fun creating a spy shark from a simple piece of paper.

Students were amazed that the day camp children were able to have fun with simple things when they have so much and are often bored.

The last day of the Project Transformation mission week was spent at St. Peter Manor, a senior living community sponsored by Golden Cross Senior Residents Fund.

Middle school students spent the first part of the day sprucing up a common area with new mulch, plants and flowers. Senior residents walked through the area all morning complimenting the students on the beautiful work they were doing and wanted to make sure the middle schoolers knew that the flowers needed water.

After lunch, Collierville UMC youth played Bingo with the senior residents. The prize table was full of toilet paper, paper towels, hand soap, dish soap, laundry soap, cleaning supplies and other daily use items, all donated by Collierville UMC.

Kris Konzowitz, Collierville UMC youth director, observed that the first three senior residents who won Bingo all picked large packs of toilet paper as their prize, thus highlighting the basic needs of the residents.

Ice cream sundaes were served by the youth to the senior residents as they played Bingo. Heffernan said, “Being here today has helped me to realize that I should be more thankful for everything that I have and not take things for granted. Some people do not have as much as I do, and they are happy.”

The week ended with a worship service held in the chapel at St. Peter Manor led by Mark Taylor, assistant youth director at Collierville UMC. Andrew Bradham, a sophomore at Collierville High School, played the guitar as members of the Collierville UMC Praise Band led youth and seniors in contemporary songs and traditional hymns.

Taylor shared a message about how youth and seniors can learn from each other. Youth are capable of doing many things and being young is not a hindrance, he said.

Seniors have much to offer, as well. Being in a different generation does not mean they are not as capable. By working together, youth and seniors can teach, as well as learn, from each other.

Taylor doesn’t see the older and younger generations as the church of yesterday and the church of tomorrow; instead he saw in that room the entire body of Christ: the young and the old with their strengths and weaknesses, living out the Kingdom of God.

Peace Tree UMC remembered 9-11 with ‘Public Safety Appreciation Day’ activities

By Lisa Junkins, Peace Tree United Methodist Church [First published on website 8/20/2016]

All five Collierville, Tennessee, firehouses, as well as the police station, were visited on Sept. 11 for Peace Tree United Methodist Church’s second annual Public Safety Appreciation Day.

Teams of volunteers delivered homemade cookies as an expression of gratitude for the men and women who work year-round to keep our community safe. Peace Tree UMC’s house groups baked the cookies in the days leading up to the Appreciation Day.

On Monday, Sept. 12, additional teams delivered cookies to Collierville schools’ resource officers and fire administration employees. Peace Tree enjoyed delivering the cookies last year and knew this was a tradition they wanted to continue.

“This year marked the 15th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, and we felt that now, more than ever, we needed to show our appreciation to the brave women and men who sacrifice so much in order to serve others,” said Peace Tree’s lead pastor, Kristofer Roof. “We’re humbled and honored to present our police, firefighters, and EMTs (emergency medical technicians) with these tokens of thanks.”

Peace Tree UMC formed in 2015 and gathers as a network of “house groups” modeled after the house churches of early Christians.
The 200 apartments at Wesley Highland Meadows in Memphis, Tennessee, are new refreshed and rehabilitated, according to a June 24 media release from Wesley Housing Corporation in Cordova, Tenn. According to Jim Nasso, CEO of Wesley Housing Corporation, the Wesley Housing team started dreaming and planning the work 15 years ago.

The $6.5 million in renovations include kitchen and bathroom updates, installation of new heat pumps and appliances and improvements to siding, roofs, cabinets and driveways.

Some residents have seen as much as a 50 percent savings in electric costs from the new heat pumps, said the release.

A June ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrated the rehabilitation of Wesley Highland Meadows in Memphis, Tennessee. (Submitted photo)

### Mullins United Methodist Church in Memphis celebrates transforming mission trip to Costa Rica

By Camille Bradley, Mullins United Methodist Church

On Sunday, July 24, the congregation at Mullins United Methodist Church in Memphis celebrated the return of their Youth Mission Team from a trip to Alajuela, Costa Rica.

During worship, the youth and a few of the adult team members shared with the congregation some of the many God stories they experienced during their July 9-17 trip.

As United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM), the mission team participated in Basecamp, a special week during the summer hosted by Rice & Beans Ministries (The Advance #3021052).

Thirteen Mullins members, including pastors, youth and adult youth sponsors, joined about 135 others, mostly from the Southeast United States, to serve together in Bible day camps and food ministry over a period of four days.

Each morning Basecamp volunteers were divided into seven different teams and boarded seven buses. All seven teams left at 7:30 a.m. for different barrios (neighborhoods) to share Bible day camps and food ministry with thousands of children. Through face-painting, balloon sculptures and Bible story puppet shows, the volunteers were able to share God’s love and Word with the children.

They also played games and sang and danced to songs before departing at noon.

They found a nearby open space to make and share lunch together. They prepared for the afternoon’s work by filling food bags with enough rice, beans, masa, pasta, powdered milk and coffee to feed a family of four for about a week.

Returning to the same neighborhood, the teams divided into smaller teams going door to door delivering food bags and offering prayer in God’s name. The teams were often greeted by the families of some of the children met in the morning. Some of the children still wore face paint and big smiles!

The God stories began pouring forth as teams asked if there were any particular prayer concerns at each house. One especially poignant story came from a woman who told that she woke up praying to God because she didn’t have enough food to feed her children. She smiled saying “Dios te bendiga,” meaning “God Bless You.”

Members of Alamo First United Methodist Church (UMC) in Alamo, Tennessee, have found a new way to accommodate the parents of small children during worship services.

They have established a “Little Lambs Room” near the sanctuary.

Earlier this year, Alamo Pastor Rev. Justin Ramer said, members noticed a pattern – no one was using the nursery.

“It seemed that the people who have very young children wanted to keep them with them during worship,” he said. “Even though [children] are a welcome part of the service, we noticed that it was difficult for [parents] to keep them confined to the space of the pew. The question was, ‘How do we make worship hospitable for everyone and make it easier for families with small children to come and be a part?’”

Ramer said the nursery is still available on request, but the church no longer keeps a paid nursery worker. The play area usually suffices.

“Sometimes, the parents need it, and sometimes, they do not,” he said. “We are still tinkering with it, but it seems to be well received.”

And, Ramer added, when Alamo First UMC holds a large service, members easily remove everything in the Little Lambs Room and revert it back to an extension of the sanctuary. Problem solved.
Artist Jaime Winton of St. John’s UMC in Memphis created commissioned art as gifts for retiring bishops
By Lane Gardner Camp, Director of Communications, Memphis Conference
[First published on website 9/21/2016]

The five retiring bishops of the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) of The United Methodist Church each received a gift of artwork this summer made by a member of St. John’s United Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

The art was commissioned by the jurisdiction’s active bishops and presented at a retirement banquet held by the SEJ College of Bishops during the 2016 SEJ Conference in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, in July.

Bishop Bill McAlilly of the Nashville Episcopal Area (Memphis and Tennessee Conferences) secured the gifts as part of his responsibility for planning the retirement celebration.

“It is customary for the active bishops to offer a gift to those retiring,” explained McAlilly. “In the past, rocking chairs had been the gift of choice, but the source for the chairs was no longer available.”

As McAlilly and his wife, Lynn, pondered an appropriate gift for the retiring bishops, it occurred to them to commission artist Jaime Winton to create some original artwork. A piece by Winton currently hangs in McAlilly’s office in Nashville, Tennessee. He had received it as a gift when he preached at St. John’s UMC in 2015.

McAlilly called Winton’s mixed media canvases “a great way to honor” the five retiring bishops. Each one is a slightly different visual interpretation of a passage from Frederick Buechner’s Whistling in the Dark:

“If we are to love our neighbors, before doing anything else we must see our neighbors.

With our imagination as well as our eyes, that is to say like artists, we must see not just their faces but the life behind and within their faces. Here it is love that is the frame in which we see them.” ~ Frederick Buechner

“The recipients were pleased and honored to receive the original art,” McAlilly said.

According to Rev. Dr. Johnny Jeffords, lead pastor at St. John’s, “Jaime is a remarkable artist, spirit and vital member of our church.” Rev. Renee Dillard, in charge of the church’s discipleship ministries, said, “Jaime is abundantly gifted and shares those gifts generously!”

Winton recently said she was “deeply honored” to be offered the opportunity by Bishop McAlilly “to honor the legacy of these great bishops.”

The process of creating the art, she explained, “required spending a great deal of time working closely with Buechner’s prophetic words” and “turned out to be powerfully prayerful.”

Winton describes her painting process as “quite messy” because she works almost as much with her fingers as with brushes. “It’s in the meditative muck of it that the words I’m painting tend to resonate most clearly.

In this case, it was almost like a ‘lectio divina’ of sorts, repeating (Buechner’s) challenge over five canvases. What a privilege to be asked to serve in this way! I’m humbled.”

And, thanks to the commission, Winton said, “I can finally spell the words ‘Frederick Buechner’ accurately almost every time I try these days. … Thanks, Bishop McAlilly for that!”

To learn more about Winton and her art, visit her website at www.jaimewintonstudio.com.

Scouts build wheelchair ramp for cancer patient
[First published on website 9/22/2016]

Boy Scout Troop 452, chartered by Arlington United Methodist Church in Arlington, Tennessee, served its community in four places on Sunday, Sept. 18, according to Teresa Pinkston-Rector, Arlington UMC chartered organization representative for the Boy Scouts.

One of the projects (see photo below) involved leaders, older scouts, a few Eagle Scouts and several Scout fathers designing and building a wheelchair ramp for a cancer patient, a registered leader of the troop.

This is the second wheelchair ramp the troop has built, said Pinkston-Rector. The first was built last Christmas. (Photo by Teresa Pinkston-Rector) ✽

“Praise The Spirit” was the name of a concert and barbecue event on Oct. 8 at St. Luke’s United Methodist Church (UMC) in Memphis, Tennessee. More than 100 attended the meal (with more than 40 different desserts) and more than 150 attended the free concert by The Finchers, according to Steve Ragsdale, event organizer. The event was sponsored by the church’s United Methodist Men (UMM) with help from the church’s United Methodist Women (UMW). Meal proceeds went to UMM ministries. ✽
Response to August flood disaster in Louisiana included much-needed relief supplies AND more than $37,000

By Lane Gardner Camp, Director of Communications, Memphis Conference [First published on website 9/28/2016]

In addition to relief supplies collected for Louisiana flood survivors in August, the Memphis Conference collected money for the same cause – more than $37,000 as of Sept. 26, according to the Memphis Conference Treasurer’s Office.

Prolonged rainfall in early August resulted in catastrophic flooding that submerged thousands of houses and businesses in southern Louisiana and resulted in some deaths.

The Memphis Conference (West Tennessee and Western Kentucky) responded with needed supplies and money.

Supplies

By late August, Memphis Conference United Methodist churches (churches and individuals) donated relief supplies that included 810 cleaning buckets, 1,950 health kits, 43 sprayers, 12 box fans, 23 rakes, 24 shovels and 39 extension cords.

The supplies were delivered by truck to the Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, Louisiana, one of two UMCOR depots in the U.S. where volunteers assemble, verify and pack relief-supply kits for distribution to disaster-hit areas as needed. The Memphis Conference (West Tennessee and Western Kentucky) purchased supplies (the depot) purchase supplies and money to distribute them.

UMCOR is the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

The original plan was for the supplies to be loaded on one rented truck, along with similar supplies donated by the Tenessee Conference, but the donations were so great by the two conferences that two trucks were required for the delivery to Louisiana, reported Rev. Robert Graig, Memphis Conference disaster relief coordinator.

Money

Financial gifts to help flood survivors continued to be received through September by the Memphis Conference Treasurer’s Office – $37,261.38 as of Sept. 26.

That total came from approximately 70 churches from across the Memphis Conference (West Tennessee and Western Kentucky).

The largest gift from a single church was $7,700 from Enville United Methodist Church in Enville, Tennessee, in the Tennessee River District.

Appreciation

“I am grateful to all the individuals and churches in the Memphis Conference for their gifts of relief supplies and money for this shocking flood disaster,” said David R. Reed, Memphis Conference lay leader.

“A great many people are being helped through such selfless generosity and I pray coming to understand the love of Christ through the work of United Methodists.”

Some churches donated money and supplies through channels other than the Memphis Conference. For that, the Conference also is thankful, said Dr. Joe Geary, Memphis Conference director of Connectional Ministries.

The Treasurer’s Office has forwarded funds received so far to UMCOR and will send any additional money received to UMCOR, according to Clare Wilson, assistant treasurer.
During the 2016 Memphis Annual Conference in June, three members of the Memphis Conference received the Harry Denman Evangelism Award for Evangelism. Sponsored by the Foundation for Evangelism, the award recognizes United Methodists in each annual conference who have consistently shared the Gospel message in their communities.

Dr. David Russell, the Memphis Conference chair of evangelism, presented awards for clergy, laity and youth to Rev. Mark Carrigan, Jim Hathcock and David Gerle, respectively, during the 2016 Memphis Annual Conference in June in Jackson, Tennessee.

Rev. Mark Carrigan, pastor of Huntingdon First UMC in Huntingdon, Tennessee, received the Denman award for clergy. He frequently encouraged his church members to reach out into their community and to build relationships with their neighbors.

Jim Hathcock, member of Bartlett UMC in Bartlett, Tennessee, received the Denman award for laity. He provided many volunteer services for his church and welcomed visitors.

David Gerle, member of Trinity UMC in Paducah, Kentucky, received the Denman award for youth. He frequently invited friends to worship services, and some of them have now become members.

Rev. Mark Carrigan

Rev. Mark Carrigan said his passion lies in “preaching, teaching and living God’s Word.” As Huntingdon First UMC’s pastor, that fervor helped him share Christ’s love in his community.

“Making God’s word relative to the times and situations is what breaks my heart,” he said. “I’m passionate about evangelism. Bringing people into the Kingdom and seeing lives change is what keeps me going.”

Carrigan developed this passion through a long pastoral career. Born in 1952, he grew up in Hickory Point, Tennessee, and received degrees from Clarksville High School and Austin Peay University in Clarksville, Tennessee, and in 1990, he graduated Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, with a master of divinity degree.

Before becoming pastor at Huntingdon First UMC, he served appointments at Centenary, New Bethel and Glencliff UMCs in Nashville, Tennessee, and Christ UMC in Cookeville, Tennessee. Through the decades, he loved the job.

“I’ve never doubted God’s call on my life to be a pastor and preacher,” Carrigan said. “God’s call has kept me going many times. I can’t imagine doing anything else.”

John Raines, a member of Huntingdon First UMC, nominated Carrigan for the Denman award and praised the pastor for his passion. He said through Carrigan’s many, years in ministry, the pastor saw 394 professions of faith, performed 259 baptisms and helped 618 people become new members of his churches.

Raines said Carrigan now regularly visits people in hospitals and nursing homes and has established a van ministry to transport those without vehicles to church. Carrigan’s outreach to people in need even led to an expansion of Huntingdon First UMC’s food pantry. Raines also said Sunday School attendance has doubled since the year Carrigan became pastor.

“I would like to say that, in my heart, Rev. Mark Carrigan is the greatest evangelist I have ever met,” Raines said.

Carrigan is married to Robin, a registered nurse, and they have two grown children, Jacob and Andy.

Jim Hathcock

According to fellow members of Bartlett UMC, Jim Hathcock cares for nearly any need that arises at the church. He picks up those who can’t drive to United Methodist Men’s breakfasts and meetings; he visits and calls sick church members; he serves as a church usher; he helps set up for church events and more.

“Jim is the face of the church for so many people,” Bartlett UMC Associate Pastor Andy Thompson said. “He continues to volunteer at the church five days a week and is a vital part of welcoming and assisting parents who are bringing their children to our preschool and morning activities at the church.”

A former controller for the Shelby County Hospital and Care Facility, Hathcock joined Bartlett UMC in 1972 with his wife, Joyce, and their two children, JD and Jenny. He had lived his entire life in west Tennessee, caring for its people. He was born in Covington, Tennessee, and then moved to Millington, Tennessee, with his family at the age of 13. He met Joyce while attending Lambuth College in Jackson, Tennessee. They married in 1966.

Hathcock’s volunteer work at Bartlett UMC has been underscored by what Preschool Director Jennifer Freeman calls his “willing, helpful nature.” She said he generally helps out in the church’s Life Enrichment Center each day, greeting students, caring for infants, showing up early to unlock the building’s doors, and more.

While Jim Hathcock is certainly not a pushy Christian, the love of Christ shines through him in all that he does both for our church and for those in our community,” she said. “I have only heard kind words from his mouth and never a complaint about the many responsibilities that he takes on to help keep our church open and accessible to all that want or need to come in our doors.”

This kind attitude and dedicated service earned Hathcock the title of Bartlett’s “Volunteer of the Year” in 2012.

David Gerle

David Gerle received the Denman Evangelism Award for Youth, in part, because of his willingness to invite others to Trinity UMC.
Four Memphis Conference churches received One Matters Award during the 2016 Memphis Annual Conference in Jackson, Tennessee, in June.

The honor went to Bemis United Methodist Church (UMC) in Jackson, Tennessee; Edith UMC in Ripley, Tennessee; El Redentor UMC in Memphis, Tennessee; and Trinity UMC in Paducah, Kentucky.

Sponsored by Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church, the Memorial Conference Connectional Ministries office, the award honors one church from each of the conference’s four districts that have increased their baptisms and professions of faith and come with a plaque and a $1,000 gift.

Discipleship Ministries funded the first award and Memphis Conference Connectional Ministries funded the three additional awards.

Dr. Joe Geary, director of Memphis Conference Connectional Ministries, said the four churches that were recognized went from zero professions of faith three years ago to consistently increasing positive numbers.

Recognizing these churches supports at least two of the conference’s four areas of focus—engaging the mission field and growing fruitful and faithful churches, said Geary, who noted that the $1,000 gift is to be used to make more disciples for Jesus Christ, and is not to be used for church operating costs, salaries, or programs.

Bemis UMC, Jackson, TN

Bemis UMC says consistent mission work has lead to its increase in professions of faith. The church says its ministries include an after-school program, a food pantry, a clothes closet, a community Easter egg hunt and a community Vacation Bible School (VBS). It’s also involved in the Room in the Inn homeless shelter program. Led by its pastor, Rev. Sharon Lewis-Karamoko, Bemis focuses on building relationships and adapting ministries to include all “age levels, backgrounds and spiritual journeys.”“

“We are guided by the scriptures and messages we hear on Sunday morning, our interactions with each other, discernment of our outreach goals and the importance of our missional purpose at Bemis in reaching the needs of our community,” reads a church statement.

Edith UMC, Ripley, TN

Edith UMC, pastored by Rev. Scott Hartman, follows Christ’s example regarding the creation of disciples. The church says it focuses on building relationships through witnessing and community outreach.

“The United Methodist Church can be followers and make disciples—one child at a time, one person at a time and one family at a time,” the church says. “People respond to love and relationship. All of our ministry is predicated on personal relationships.”

In an issued statement, Edith UMC says its visitors hear Scripture and the Gospel preached. Some make professions of faith, and the Holy Spirit changes their hearts. After baptism, the pastor asks these newcomers to join the church.

The church also expresses gratitude to the Memphis Conference and to God for the $1,000 gift attached to the One Matters Award. It says the money will help members continue making disciples, which it considers a priority.

“We respond to God’s love for us when we help build his Kingdom one ‘saved’ or ‘born again’ personal relationship at a time in and through Jesus Christ,” the statement reads.

El Redentor UMC, Memphis, TN

El Redentor UMC, a Hispanic congregation led by Rev. Luz Campos, says it takes inspiration from 1 Corinthians 3:6. The verse states, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.”

To grow discipleship, the church says its members worship in homes, visit the sick and encourage those who need it. They try to patiently love others without judgment.

Members also try to connect with Hispanics and other ethnicities in Memphis—through culture.

“El Redentor is a multicultural church; they are not all or only Hispanics,” a statement from the church reads. “They speak Spanish, but they are very diverse culturally. How do we reach [this diverse population]? We respect and value their culture, customs, language and identity. The Lord gave each a different language in the book of Acts. Each culture was able to hear and identified; they did not remain without hearing God’s message.”

The church also says its members work as a team to invite visitors to services and events and to make them feel welcome. Guests like El Redentor UMC’s form of worship, and that convinces them to stay.

Trinity UMC, Paducah, KY

Trinity UMC, led by Rev. Sue Engle, says it prays as a community each Sunday, asking God for opportunities to share the Gospel.

“We have focused our time on practical ways to develop our relationships with God and others, and what it means to offer Jesus to our neighborhood,” the church says. “We have encouraged people to use their gifts and talents to serve.”

These efforts have led Trinity UMC to participate in a local Christmas parade, work with a “Reading Pals” program in a local elementary school and establish a concert band consisting of children, youth and adults.

Trinity also says some of those who have made professions of faith were already attending the church with family. However, two high school students made professions after becoming involved in the congregation through the concert band. Another new Christian came to Trinity’s Easter egg hunt and felt at home there, so she began attending services and, still another was a foreign exchange student living with Trinity church members. Although he has now returned to Japan, this student remains a member.

“The best way to describe Trinity’s discipleship system is that it engages those who are already here to reach those who haven’t joined us yet,” the church says.

More Information

For more information about Discipleship Ministries or about the One Matters Award, visit www.umcdiscipleship.org.

Clergy and laity representatives of four churches in the Memphis Conference received the ONE MATTERS award on behalf of their churches at the 2016 Memphis Annual Conference. (Photos by Lane Gardner Camp)

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**Scouts at Arlington UMC earn Bishop’s Award of Excellence**

[First published on website 9/12/2016]

Cub Scout Pack 452 and Boy Scout Troop 452, both chartered by Arlington United Methodist Church (UMC) in Arlington, Tennessee, received the Bishop’s Award of Excellence (for scouting) at the 2016 Memphis Annual Conference in June.

Teresa Rector, chartered organization representative at Arlington UMC, says the award, given by the General Commission on United Methodist Men, honors churches and scouting groups that have developed programming for the young.

“This award was established for the purpose of recognizing congregations and units within The United Methodist Church that extend their ministry to children and youth by creating a faith-based environment for children, youth, their families and their leaders to participate in civic youth-serving agencies,” she says.

United Methodist Church scouting units must meet a list of seven criteria within a year to earn the honor. According to an award brochure, the list contains requirements such as participation in Scouting Ministries Sunday, service project completion and worship service observation during camping trips.

Philip Craig, Memphis Conference scouting ministries coordinator, presented each scouting unit with a Bishop’s Award of Excellence plaque on June 21.

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**Lenten Hunger Offering**

“We can’t love our neighbors when we ignore their needs,” said Dr. Gary Morse back in February. Morse is the conference’s outgoing world hunger advocate and pastor of Lambuth Memorial United Methodist Church in Jackson, Tennessee.

Funds were distributed in August as follows:

- Metro District – $4,496.44
- Mississippi River District – $4,496.44
- Purchase District – $4,496.44
- Tennessee River District – $4,496.44
- Mexico feeding ministry partners – $2,000.00
- Reelfoot Rural Ministries – $1,498.81
- United Methodist Neighborhood Centers of Memphis – $1,498.81
- Peanut Butter Project – $2,997.63
- Our Father’s House (Tanzania, Africa) – $2,997.63

Any funds not distributed in one year are held for emergency needs, carried over to the next year for distribution, and used to help pay costs associated with creating and distributing LHO campaign materials, explained Morse.

With the distribution of the monies it received to church food pantries and feeding ministries in the Tennessee River District in September, Dr. Richard Clark and Elyse Bell, superintendent and resource leader, respectively, enclosed a letter that reminded recipients about two areas of focus of the Memphis Conference: to “engage the mission field” and “increase the capacity of local churches to make disciples of Jesus the Christ.”

Clark and Bell explained to their grant recipients, “This money will help you continue your ministry of directly building relationships with people in your community. Jesus taught us to love our neighbor. Relationships of trust allow people to come to have faith in the Christ we serve.”

They pointed out that the primary arena for making disciples is local churches and communities. “Agencies do great and needed work,” Clark and Bell wrote, “but they tend to make clients and not disciples. The more direct ministry your local church can do in the community, the more opportunity you have to witness by Word and Deed. Don’t outsource these opportunities to others and wonder why the church continues to decline and seems irrelevant in this culture.”

**Leaders in Giving**

At press time, the following churches (in alphabetical order) had each contributed $1,000 or more to the 2016 LHO campaign, according to the Memphis Conference treasurer’s office:

- Benton First UMC, Benton, Ky
- Collierville UMC, Collierville, Tn
- Concord UMC, Paducah, Ky
- Dresden First UMC, Dresden, Tn
- Dyersburg First UMC, Dyersburg, Tn
- Ellendale UMC, Ellendale, Tn
- Enville UMC, Enville, Tn
- Jackson First UMC, Jackson, Tn
- Poplar Grove UMC, Drummonds, Tn

The largest contribution ($2,500) came from Enville UMC.

**2017 Campaign**

Plans are now underway for the 2017 LHO campaign under new leadership. Dr. Debra S. (Debi) Selby will lead the campaign in the new quadrennium (2016-2020) as the conference’s new world hunger advocate. She is a lay member of Paris First United Methodist Church in Paris, Tennessee, and works as a pediatrician in Paris, Tennessee.

Morse exits the position of world hunger advocate, after serving for eight years, from 2008 to 2016. He has worked closely with the LHO campaign since 2001.

“It has been a joy and a privilege to serve, helping to raise funds for the Lenten Hunger Offering. The compassion of the people of the Memphis Conference in helping to feed the hungry has been exhibited year after year,” said Morse.

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**Campaign Materials**

The 2016 LHO campaign provided the following materials, which churches could utilize to promote the offering:

- Video
- Letter
- Beneficiaries List
- Campaign Ideas
- Social Media Ideas and Art
- Poster
- Calendar
- Bulletin Insert (Hunger Quiz)
- Jar/Can Wrap

**More Information**

For more information or questions about the:
- 2016 LHO, contact Dr. Gary Morse at pastor@lmumc.net.
- 2017 LHO, contact Dr. Debra S. (Debi) Selby at drdebishk8@bell-south.net

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**Dr. Debra S. (Debi) Selby** left, a lay member of Paris First United Methodist Church in Paris, Tennessee, is the new Memphis Conference world hunger advocate for the new quadrennium (2016-2020). She will help lead the conference’s annual Lenten Hunger Offering, beginning in 2017. She takes over from Dr. Gary Morse, right, pastor of Lambuth Memorial United Methodist Church in Jackson, Tennessee, who served as the conference’s world hunger advocate from 2008 to 2016. (Photo by Lane Gardner Camp)
New Wesley campus ministry continued from page 1

membership agreed to realign their student ministry to a larger space to provide a more inviting atmosphere for new students.

Trull was basking in pride that her congregation voted not only to provide the meeting space, but also to place a copy machine in the room for the students to make free copies while they gather and study. She said this simple gesture is very much appreciated by the students.

With the campus ministry now based in their education wing, Trull said the church is seeing more students in worship. Adults in worship are welcoming, she said, because many of them have been and are parents of college students and know the value of hospitality for college students who are away from home.

Trull said McKenzie First UMC also has many Bethel alumni who enjoy seeing students from their alma mater in the church building and at worship.

Trull was appointed to McKenzie First UMC in June. She followed Rev. Jason W. Jones who had served since June 2013, but was appointed to Lone Oak UMC in Paducah, Kentucky, in June, 2016.

Beginnings

Jones was instrumental in taking what was just a dream in 2013 and working with students, university and conference personnel and others to see it through to official ministry status, said Geary, who worked with Jones in the early stages.

Previously, Geary was superintendent of the former Paris district where McKenzie is located. McKenzie now is part of the Tennessee River District.

Geary praised Jones for “taking seriously” the work that was required to form a campus ministry.

As the Paris District’s mission strategist in 2013, Geary had learned Bethel was one of the fastest growing private universities in Tennessee. With that information, he encouraged Jones and the laity of McKenzie First UMC to find ways to connect with students and younger adults in their community.

Jones was thanked by Bishop William T. (Bill) McAllilly during the 2016 Memphis Annual Conference in June in Jackson, Tennessee, for his critical leadership.

Timeline

Recently, Jones recounted highlights of the journey from “idea” to “fellowship” to “official campus ministry.”

Jones recalled that a small group of students, at his invitation, began meeting at McKenzie First UMC in the fall of 2013 to talk about what

| Josh Shaw, president, is a member of Alamo First UMC in Alamo, Tennessee, where he also serves as youth director. He organized and presented the students’ request for official recognition by Bethel University.|
| Cody Greene, vice president, is a member of Broadway UMC in Paducah, Kentucky. He worked with Shaw to create and promote “Paint, Prayer & Pancakes,” a midnight event that attracted more than 100 students.|
| Brooke Cagle, a member of Northside UMC in Jackson, Tennessee, “graciously lent her musical gifts to leading our worship time – an offering which added immeasurable depth,” said Jones. Though he now lives and ministers in Paducah, Jones said, “I am fortunate to have traveled with Bethel Wesley for a time. I count myself blessed to have seen it get off the ground and take on a life of its own.”|

And I’m glad to have left the ministry in more-than-capable hands,” a collective reference to the students, Trull, the laity of McKenzie First UMC and other area United Methodists that support the ministry, including Bruceton First UMC in Bruceton, Tennessee; Carter’s Chapel UMC in McMinnville, Tennessee; Paris First UMC in Paris, Tennessee; Trinity UMC in Paris, Tennessee; and Lakeshore Camp and Retreat Center in Eva, Tennessee.

More information

Keep up with the Bethel Wesley campus ministry on its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/bethelwesley

Youth members of Jr. Leadership Team at UM Neighborhood Centers paint wall murals

[First published on website 10/13/2016]

Youth members of the Junior Leadership Team (JLT) at United Methodist Neighborhood Centers (UMNC) are creating murals on retaining walls outside UMNC’s Scott Center at 3000 Walnut Grove Road in Memphis, Tennessee.

Dr. Mark Matheny, special missionary with UMNC, said the mural work includes depictions of the parable of The Good Samaritan and the Mark 12:31 scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

“Supervising artist Eric Harris of Carpenter Art Garden and JLT Counselor Rochelle Lewis are guiding our youth in this uplifting project,” said Matheny.

For more information about the project, contact Lewis at 901-323-4993.

Many gather Sept. 18 to consecrate new ‘Christian Ministries Center’ at Bolton UMC in Arlington, TN

[First published on website 10/17/2016]

Submitted by Bolton United Methodist Church, Arlington, TN Conference