

UM MEN

The magazine of United Methodist Men



A letter from the General Secretary

Winning and losing

Whether it is fantasy football, selecting investments, shopping for a used car or buying your kid or grandchild their first bike, we have this desire to do it right — to win — to come out on top — to be the best.

Apparently, the manner in which we seek to win differs from the formula prescribed by Jesus

“All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all those who lose their life because of me will find them.”— Matthew 16:25 (CEB)

This issue looks at winning and losing from several different angles.

It asks “What is so important, so vital to us, that we would give our lives to it, or give our lives for it?”

The publication of *Strength for Service to God and Community*, has had unexpected consequences for me.

The book was written for first responders — those men and women who run into danger while we run in the opposite direction. I know these folks —I worked with them at the hospital and within the communities where I have lived. But since the book was finished I have been shocked by the number of places first responders are called to the scene every week. We wanted to serve a need, but that need is now more visible to me.

We are taught that we need to win, to be the best, to lead, to be on top of the heap. But where do those desires, those qualities morph into bullying? How can we turn this around? Can we ever regain the ability to discuss difficult hot-button issues with some measure of civility? We see bullying in a variety of forms, and we see it everywhere,



including in some of our churches.

Can we lose everything on purpose so we gain everything as a servant? These are hard questions, but there are great articles within this issue to help all of us address them.

We also have received reports of new forms of ministry, celebrations, calls for change, and changed lives.

In a recent survey of some of our leaders, this magazine was rated as the most helpful resource we produce. So thank you for reading this, and thank you for passing it on, and on, and on. Stay in touch. Use us up.

Striving to be His servant,
Gil Hanke



contents

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UM Men

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Editor's note: This magazine includes articles from individuals who hold diverse opinions. We hope all articles are thought provoking; they are not necessarily the opinions of the General Commission on UM Men.



For what are we willing to die?

That's the question we ask ourselves in this issue of *UM Men*.

During the first three centuries of the

faith, Christians went through periods of peace followed by periods of persecution. At least ten Roman emperors engaged in some sort of persecution of Christians and Jews.

Nero may be the most infamous emperor as he accused Christians of starting the 64 A.D. fire in Rome. Christians were charged with "hating the human race," and put to death.

Most historians consider Diocletian to be the worst persecutor of Christians. He issued several edicts in 303 A.D. removing all rights from Christians until they converted to the Roman religion.

At first, those who refused were simply imprisoned, but it was not long before they were executed by both crucifixion and beheading. Even Christian senators were imprisoned and executed. Diocletian resigned in 305, but persecution continued until Constantine's rise to power in 324.

If we take our DeLorian time machine back to 303 A.D., it's difficult to know how we would respond to the charge of being Christians.

Much as I'd like to think I'd plead guilty to the charge, I strongly suspect I would answer as Peter did. "I don't know what you are talking about."

While no one in America is asked to die for their faith, police officers, fire fighters and other first responders have entered vocations in which—on any given day—they may be asked to sacrifice their lives in the line of duty.

The least the rest of us can do is to host a Strength for Service Sunday and provide them with copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community*.

Most of us aren't put in situations where we are asked to run toward danger while others run away.

While it may be difficult for the rest of us to know what we might be willing to die for, it might be easier for us to answer the question: "What are we living for?"

The simple way to answer that question is to evaluate how we have spent our time and our dollars over the past days, weeks, and years. That assessment will establish what we are presently living for.

It might—or might not—be that for which we claim to give our lives.

It is doubtful that we will ever be asked to give up our lives for a cause, but we will all give our lives to a cause.

In a separate article, Paul Coughlin suggests that one of the causes to which we should give our lives is to the elimination of bullying. He suggests several ways in which we can do this.

Other articles focus on ways UM men have given their lives to support various ministries.

All of the reports challenge us to live our lives in accordance with what we profess.

Rich Peck



A call to arms against bullying

By Paul Coughlin

My dog, Haggis Barley McStitch, has the attributes I hope to possess.

Mark Twain wrote that Heaven must go by favor, not merit, because, if it went by merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in.

That's Haggis, my cairn terrier; he is a mountain of a dog stuffed into a small-dog body. He's a pugnacious and protective sentinel who guards my family against enemies both foreign and domestic. Haggis thirsts for a righteous cause, something he can really sink his canines into.

So do Christian men of all ages.

Thumos

Dogs are men's best friend because of their "thumos," a Greek word that means courage. A person with thumos has a pugnacious spirit, a combative will, and an inner strength. It's where we get today's word for thermos, a container of heat.

This fundamental human capacity is one of three given to us by God: 1) our ability to think, a capacity located in our heads; 2) our ability to feel, a capacity found in our hearts; and 3) our ability to act, a capacity located in our chests and lungs.

This triune capacity of a brain, a heart, and courage is explored in the *Wizard of Oz*, one of the most popular movies of all time.

C.S. Lewis bemoaned the theft of courage in an essay, "Men without Chests."

When seasoned by the Holy Spirit, thumos can become a gift to even the weak and broken.

Throughout history, the greatest men are almost always more defined by their thumos than by their minds or hearts. Think of justice-seeking heroes like Martin Luther King and John Wesley.

Their contemporaries knew of the same injustices. Their contemporaries felt pity for

crushed souls. But it is thumotic courage that enables heroes to rise above the crowd and to reflect their Savior's goodness and courage.

"Catch on fire with enthusiasm," wrote John Wesley, "and people will come for miles to watch you burn." Without courage, no man burns for long..

Thumos gives a muscular expression of love.

Ask boys what they want to be when they grow up, and many will vigorously name a protective occupation such as a fire fighter, policeman, or soldier.

Their heroic thumos, like yours, gets beat nearly to death later in life by a world that values comfort over truth and security over righteousness. Yet embers remain within every man's soul. They need a righteous cause



to catch fire, causing people to come for miles to watch them burn.

Lead the charge

Men, it's time to develop some thumos and lead the charge against bullying, a growing form of injustice, cruelty and oppression.

Bullying stems from the spiritual maladies of arrogance and pride.


In order to address the issue, fathers, grandfathers and sons need to provide a redemptive, assertive and non-violent response to bullying.

What can I do?

1. Put bullying on the radar of your church, school, Scout troop--wherever youth gather. For example, if you send your child to a summer camp, ask how many campers have been expelled for bullying. If it's a large camp and no one has been sent home, that camp does not take this problem seriously and likely has little if any anti-bullying training.
2. Be critical of adult culture that glorifies bullying. Unkindness, meanness and cruelty are glorified not just in youth culture but adult life as well. Celebrity chef Gordon receives \$225,000 per TV episode in part for demeaning and abusing others. Many adults find this verbal blood sport entertaining—exactly the way students experience glee when a fellow student has her physical or psychological skin seared through physical, verbal or cyber-bullying.
3. Expect your child to intervene. An Oregon study reveals that if one student uses assertive, but non-violent, words such as “Stop—that’s wrong,” bullying will end 60% of the time within 6-8 seconds. Help your child change from being a bystander into becoming an along-sider who says “no” to bullying. If that is too difficult, encourage your child to tell an authority. Explain the

difference between tattling and reporting—tattling is designed to get someone into trouble; reporting is designed to get someone out of trouble. We don't tattle crime, we report crime. The same should be true for bullying.

4. Battle the “just world theory.” Youth culture is saturated with a belief that targets deserve to be treated poorly because, well, they deserve it. They believe that bad things don't happen to good people. Right now the majority of bystanders join the abuser (40-60%) as opposed to helping the target (around 13%). If the “just world theory” were true, then the passive bystanders who support abusive behavior should also have bad things happen to them, right?
5. Incorporate the “power of two.” Encourage each child to make an agreement with another child that they will defend each other from bullying. There is something magical, about having one person by your side during times of stress. As Christians, they should also agree that they will intervene when they see another child being bullied.

During a 700 Club feature on *The Protectors*, I met two boys who used the “power of two” on behalf of a bullied boy with the Asperger syndrome. His grades dipped and he was considering leaving the school, but two protectors changed his life through courageous compassion. He stayed in school, his grades improved and his faith was renewed. 



*Paul Coughlin is a Fox News contributor and author of *Raising Bully-Proof Kids* and *No More Christian Nice Guy*. He is founder of *The Protectors: Freedom From Bullying—Courage, Character & Leadership for Life* (www.theprotectors.org).*



A UM resolution against bullying

In an effort to reduce bullying in society, United Methodist congregations will:

- Categorically oppose the practices of adult, youth, and child bullying;
- * Diligently work to increase societal awareness of these destructive behaviors;
- * Welcome teens and offer safe places for teens to gather;
- * Post and widely distribute materials including contacts for hotlines and other local and national resources;
- * Incorporate the topic of adolescent bullying into sermons, making clear the church's position;
- * Use language of responsibility and healing rather than blame and punishment;
- * Encourage family members, neighbors and friends who suspect or know of abuse to come forward;
- Provide education and training for clergy and laity on abuse prevention, detection, and intervention;
- Create and nurture peer groups for adolescents to raise awareness of the stresses in their own families and issues that are risk factors for abuse;



- Raise awareness about Internet bullying and peer pressure;
- Organize forums, inviting outside speakers, including survivors, abusers and representatives of local and national organizations to facilitate discussions and encourage congregants to come forth about their own risk status; and
- Encourage congregant volunteers to organize and run support groups and forums.

A resolution passed by the 2004 General Conference and amended and readopted by the 2012 General Conference.



Prevent cyberbullying

Forty-three percent of teens have been victims of cyberbullying in the last year.

Cyberbullying occurs when young people use the Internet or cell phone messaging to ridicule others or to provide negative images of their victims.

Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a wide audience. It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source or delete the messages.

Most youth think cyberbullying is just a joke, and the practice is encouraged by friends.

Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a

day, 7 days a week, and reach young people even when they are alone.

Parents can reduce cyberbullying:

- Establish rules about appropriate use of computers and cell phones.
- Tell your children never to share passwords even with their closest friends.
- Encourage your children not to post anything they don't want everyone in the world to see.
- Know the sites your kids visit and their online activities.
- Install parental control filtering software. 



Florida girl jumps to her death following cyberbullying

LAKELAND, Fla.—

Rebecca Sedwick, 12, was found dead after she jumped from a ledge in mid-October, 2013.

Rebecca almost certainly jumped to her death following cyberbullying that never let her go.

"The harassment began in 2012 over a boy," said Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd. "Girls who used to be Rebecca's friends turned against her; at one point, she got in a fight with one that resulted in her getting suspended".


Weeks later Judd said Rebecca appeared to be beat down. "At the end of the day, it wasn't a physical schoolyard fight that was the demise of this child. It was the bullying online."

Rebecca reportedly received messages that said "Why are you still alive?" and "Go kill yourself."

Her friends said she felt "terrorized"; her mom pulled her out of her school, home-schooled her for a while, and placed her in another school.



Rebecca's mom, Tricia Norman, told a local television station that she'd deleted her daughter's Facebook account but kept finding other social apps on her daughter's phone where bullying was still happening.


"I don't know what I'm supposed to do next. I just lost my world," said Norman. "Don't ignore your kids if they seem fine – still check on them, because you don't know what's going on with them." 

Little brother wins essay contest on bullying

DENVER, Colo.—

Bill West, president of UM Men in the Rocky Mountain Conference, is proud of AJ, his little brother under the Amachi program of Big Brothers Big Sisters.

AJ participated in a contest sponsored by Peyton Manning, quarterback of the Denver Broncos. Little brothers and sisters were asked to write essays on what they can do to prevent bullying in their schools.

Manning's PayBack Foundation awarded two tickets to the Bronco-Raven football game to each of the 12 winning essayists. Out of 300 youngsters in the Denver area program, AJ's essay was selected as a winner. 



Bill West, and his little brother AJ attend a football game at Bronco stadium in Denver

A.J.'s essay on bullying

I learned that bullying can hurt to the point where you want to kill yourself. I can point to a place where you are not safe with your kids going to school.

I can stop bullying by telling the teacher when I see it or tell the principal. If it gets out of hand, get the cops involved.

When I went to a school called vision academy I was bullied by an 8th grader and I was very scared. It got to the point that a Channel 9 news crew investigated it.

I would like to stop bullying because I was bullied and it's wrong.

I wish we would not be bullied because of our skin color or because we are mental or because we are little or because we are fat. I wish we could love each one another just the way we are.

Areveion (AJ) Hutchison, age 10

For what are you willing to die?

Members of the Secret Service will take a bullet to protect the President. It's part of their job description.

Members of the Armed Services, police officers, and firefighters risk their lives to protect others. An average of 154 police officers and 83 firefighters die in the line of duty each year.

A total of 6,668 U.S. military personnel died in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

"During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

—Nelson Mandela 1918-2013

Christian martyrs

The Christian faith spread across Europe during the first three centuries as the result of Christians who were willing to face death rather than recant their faith.

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," said Tertullian, a second century theologian.

But martyrs are not confined to the first three centuries of inconsistent persecution.

Duane Arnold and Michael Glen Bell produced a CD that musically recalls the

prayers of Christian martyrs. Bell is an ordained deacon in the UMC.

Words in the musical come from Bishop Ignatius who died in a Roman arena during the reign of Emperor Trajan in 108 A.D., and from Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was shot celebrating Mass in 1980, after his opposition to the oppressive government in El Salvador.

Prayers made into songs include the final prayer of Church of England Archbishop Thomas Becket who was killed in 1170 as the result of his opposition to King Henry II.

Also included is the prayer written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer as he awaited his sentencing for a failed plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. A strong opponent of Hitler's genocidal persecution of the Jews, he was

arrested in April, 1943 by the Gestapo and executed by hanging in April, 1945 while imprisoned at a Nazi concentration camp. He died 23 days before the German surrender.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In 2008, The General Conference of the United Methodist Church passed a resolution recognizing Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a "modern day martyr for the cause of Christ." The word "martyr" literally means "witness."

Can't distance ourselves

"It is too easy to distance ourselves from the martyrs by thinking of them as mere historical curiosities from the early centuries of the church," said Arnold in the preface to "Martyrs' Prayers."

"Even in so-called Christian societies—whether modern or medieval—wars

of religion, disregard of conscience, and attacks upon the values of simple human dignity have called forth believers who have 'spoken truth to power' and have placed their lives on the line for the sake of Christ and his message of redemptive love.

"When those lives have been required, they have not only been given with grace, they have been infused with grace," wrote Arnold.

A contemporary martyr

Youcef Nadarkhani, pastor of a network of Christian house churches in Iran, has made it clear he is willing to die for his faith.

He was imprisoned in December 2006 for apostasy (leaving Islam for Christianity) and evangelism (spreading the message of Jesus Christ), but was released two weeks later.

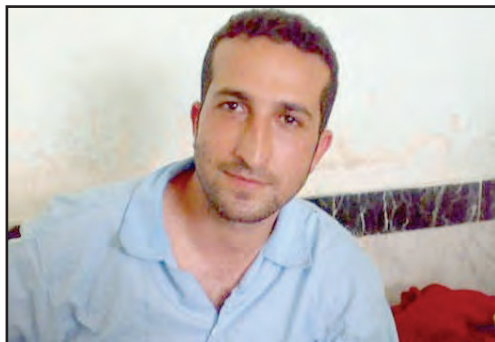
Youcef is married to Tina and the couple has two sons.

In 2009, Daniel, 10, and Yoel, 8, were attending a local school when the government decided that all children should be taught about Islam, including those from Christian families. Youcef protested the action, saying the Iranian constitution allows for freedom to practice religion. However, on Oct. 12, 2009, he was arrested, charged for protesting, and sent to prison. Later the charges were changed to apostasy and evangelism to Muslims.

Authorities said Youcef would be released if he denounced his faith, but he refused.

To put pressure on him, the government charged Tina with apostasy. She was tried without benefit of an attorney and sent to prison. While her children were living with a relative, Tina hired an attorney to appeal the verdict. The sentence and conviction were overturned and she was released.

On September 21-22, 2010, Youcef was tried and given a death sentence, but the Supreme Court ordered the local



Youcef Nadarkhani

court to re-examine whether Youcef was a practicing Muslim after age 15.

A year later, a second trial determined that even though Youcef did not practice Islam, but his ancestors did, therefore Youcef was still considered an apostate.

In late 2011, an Iranian court told Youcef that if he would accept Mohammed as a prophet sent from God he would be released. Again. In early 2012 the court promised to release him if he would declare Islam as one of the divine religions. Youcef refused to respond to either opportunity to gain his release.

On September 8, 2012, after rumors of his death, Youcef was cleared of apostasy, but he was sentenced to three years in prison for evangelism. Since he had already served all but one month of that sentence, he was released.

For what are you willing to die?

It is clear that Youcef was willing to die for his faith. He joins hundreds and perhaps thousands of people who have also displayed a willingness to die for their faith.

While we may be willing to give our lives for our loved ones, if we are honest we become more hesitant when asked to give our lives for our neighbors, our country or our faith.

While Christians in America sometimes find they are not able to declare their faith in every situation, we cannot compare being marginalized with being persecuted.

If Christians are occasionally ridiculed for their faith, their responses should be similar to an unknown woman in the Ravensbrück Concentration Camp.

Bell and Arnold tell about the words written on a piece of wrapping paper and placed inside the clothing of a child killed in the camp. The child was one of 95,000 who died from gassing, overwork, medical experiments and starvation.

The prayer asked God “not only to remember those of good will but also those who have hurt us and those who have killed. When all of those who have hurt us, come to be judged by you, may their forgiveness be found in our company of love.”

If a person living under such circumstances can ask God to forgive those who tortured and killed them, it should be no

task to ask God to forgive the trivial act of ridiculing or marginalizing Christians.

It’s unlikely that Christians in America will be asked to die for their faith, but it’s worth asking ourselves, “For what are we willing to die?”

Christian martyrs over the past 20 centuries and a Christian pastor in Iran today challenge us to answer the question.



Thomas Becket

For information about the Prayers of the Martyrs project and the CD, visit <http://themartyrsproject.com> ; Facebook: The Martyrs Project, Twitter @Martyrs Project. 

What things would you be willing to die for?


That’s an on-line question asked by Yahoo. Readers were asked to rate responses.

The winning response:

“It’s a nice philosophical question to ask, but no one knows the answer unless put to the task. I’ve never been in a position where I’ve risked my life for a principle, but I have risked by life for work, for sport, to save some money, and for strangers.”

Other answers:

- “I would die for my country if it was truly under attack. I won’t die for the oil companies, or so that some president can be a ‘war president’ and ignore the constitutional limits to his power.”
- “The preservation of science and nature along with humanities.”
- “I would die for my sweetie. She means more to me than life itself. I would probably die for my kids if I had any, but that’s easy to say ‘cause I don’t.”

- “Would I die for a cause? I might. Depends— I have risked my life for causes, but the risk wasn’t that great and I don’t take credit.”
- “I would die if it meant someone else could live. At least if I knew them- like my mom, sister, people like that. I think it would be harder to die for just anyone. It’s probably not a decision one could make in the moment. I think survival instincts might take over. But if I could choose right now to die instead, I would choose to do it.”
- “Someone I love or what I believed in because if you wouldn’t die for love you don’t really love them and if you wouldn’t die for your beliefs what’s the point in having them.”
- “I wouldn’t die for anything. What good would that do? Life is precious and shouldn’t be wasted.”
- “Family.”
- “For the human species.” 

A bad pun and a helpful meditation

By F. Belton Joyner, Jr. and Repton H. Merritt, Jr.

The ruler of a small kingdom learned that a group of noblemen was plotting to overthrow him.

He arrested two reputed ringleaders. He demanded that they tell him who else was involved in the plot, but they refused.

In a fit of rage, the king cried, "Off with their heads!"

They soon found themselves with their heads on the chopping blocks. Two executioners simultaneously raised their axes. Just as the blades started to swing down, both men cried out, "We'll tell!"

It was too late. The axes did their work.

The moral of this story is: **Don't hatchet your counts before they chicken.**

The Bible provides several accounts of "chickening."

When Peter was accused of being a follower of the about-to-be-crucified Jesus, he said, "I don't know what you're talking about. I don't understand what you are saying." (Mark 14:68).

When Israelites inspected Canaan, they reported the land devours its residents and it would be better to return to Egypt. (Numbers 13:32b, 33b; 14:3b).

But there are also accounts of courage and faith.

Daniel and the lion's pit (Daniel 6:10-22).

The proclamation of the Gospel in the midst of attacks (Acts 4:29-31).

Paul celebrating the courage of the church at Philippi (Philippians 1:28).

What turns the disciples' cowardly act (Mark 14:68) into courageous actions (Acts 4:13)?

Scripture provides clues

"But if the Lord is with me, I should be able to remove them, exactly as the Lord promised" (Joshua 14:12).

"I can endure all these things through the power of the one who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

"The Lord is my helper, and I won't be afraid. What can people do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6).

The truth is that there is probably a little of both the chicken and the courageous in each of us. Our goal in grace is to be defined more by the latter than by the former.

This is an edited excerpt from *I'm a Frayed Knot*—52 devotions based on 52 really bad puns by F. Belton Joyner, Jr. and Repton H. Merritt, Jr. 

Wrong Advertising

The little church in the suburbs suddenly stopped buying from its regular office supply dealer. So, the dealer telephoned Deacon Brown to ask why.

"I'll tell you why," said Deacon Brown. "Our church ordered some pencils from you to be used in the pews for visitors to register."

"Well," interrupted the dealer, "didn't you receive them yet?"

"Oh, we received them all right," replied Deacon Brown. "However, you sent us some golf pencils ... each stamped with the words, 'Play Golf Next Sunday.'"

humor



Local church honors first responders

The Communion Table of Bridgewater UMC honors first responders.

BRIDGEWATER, Va.—

Members of Bridgewater UMC expressed appreciation to police officers, fire fighters and the town's rescue squad on the Sunday before September 11.

"We honored our town's first responders with 'Proclamations of Gratitude' from our congregation, and during our worship services we thanked God for their service," said the Rev. James M. Tongue, senior pastor.

United Methodist Men provided 100 copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community* for the members of all three organizations, many of whom attended the Sept. 8 worship service in their uniforms.

A fire truck, police cruiser and a rescue vehicle were parked on the front lawn of the church, at a busy intersection.


During the sermon, Tongue recalled when he officiated at the June, 1995, funeral of Carter Martin, chief usher at Tongue's church and a professional firefighter in Lynchburg, Va. Martin was assisting motorists

stranded on a bridge, when the Timberlake dam broke and the water level instantly rose more than 4 feet, overcoming Martin.

"This was the largest funeral service over which I have ever presided," said Tongue as he recalled how first responders lined the streets on the way to the cemetery.

The tragedy paralleled the loss of two Bridgewater first responders in the 1970s when all the schools and businesses closed for the funerals, even the Seven-Eleven.

"It seems like it's only in the time of loss that we express our gratitude," Tongue told his congregation, "But today we don't have to do that."

Turning to first responders attending the service, he said, "Today is the day we honor you as Bridgewater's finest." 



The bulletin for the September 8 worship service.



A fire truck, police squad car, and ambulance welcome members of Bridgewater UMC to First Responder Sunday.

From 'borderline bordello' to the pulpit

I have made more mistakes than I would care to remember. I wish I'd known Jesus sooner.

*A UMNS Commentary
by the Rev. Rudy
Rasmus**

When I was 5, my dad told me how we were going to make money. He said, "Big Shot, we are going to make money off other people's pain."

My dad and I owned a business in a tough Houston neighborhood, a motel that catered to prostitutes and their customers. That's what I did every day.

Every day, in and out of this "borderline bordello," there were buyers and sellers, and most of the sellers were female.

I had no idea the ages of the girls who worked in and out of our place; I didn't care. Because I was raised without a conscience, it didn't matter.

I spent every day in that place not caring who got hurt, why, or even the cost. We profited from darkness.

I wish I had known about Christ back then. There were people around me who did the church thing and people who said they were Christians, but my dad taught me never to trust preachers and church people. He said they were all "full of it." For most of my life, I believed he was right.



The Rev. Rudy Rasmus delivers the opening sermon at the Imagine What's NEXT 2012 young adult conference in St. Louis. Photo by Jon Woon.

Twenty-eight years ago, I walked into this building that just happened to be a Methodist church. I was still in the "family business," but attended with my wife — who actually introduced me to Jesus.


I'd go; I'd sit; I'd leave, and go back to work. I did that for five years.

During those five years, there were people in that church who would say, "Rudy, we love you." And I'd reply, "Yeah, right." My daddy told me about people like them. He said they say one thing, but do another. But I showed up every week, and these people keep telling me they loved me.

Five years later, at age 34, I believed them; that's when life got interesting.

Now, I'm constantly reminded how much God loves me.

I've had many opportunities over the years to recount and to repent, and Jesus has responded by inviting me to be part of his crowd.

That unconditional love God showed me is why I'm so committed to this faith. 

The Rev. Rudy Rasmus is co-pastor, with his wife Juanita, of St. John's United Methodist Church in Houston. This commentary is adapted from his November, 2012, sermon at the Imagine What's NEXT young adult conference in St. Louis.



Hope of Hearing returns to Haiti

remember you; you worked with me when I was a little boy at St. Vincent's!"

That was Mackenson St. Louis' signed greeting to Gilbert C. Hanke upon his Nov. 3 arrival at the Mission of Hope, a community for the deaf in Leveque, Haiti.

Hanke had tested Mackenson for a hearing aid in 1992, one of 20 visits the speech-language pathologist has taken to the island nation since her first visit.

"What a joyful reunion," said Hanke. "Mackenson was beaming not because I might have a hearing aid for him and not because I was bringing other materials. He was filled with joy because I had remembered him; that I had returned as I promised, and that our team brought hope, an element in short supply in Haiti."

"Hope of Hearing" is a project supported by United Methodist Men, and Hanke serves as the top staff executive of that Nashville-based organization.

This was Hanke's third trip since the devastating earthquake. On his first two trips after the disaster, he was carrying cinder blocks instead of testing for hearing. This time he and a team of three audiologists returned to their annual practice of testing children for hearing loss and providing hearing aids when appropriate.

During the four-day visit to several schools, the team tested 380 children and fit 105 with hearing aids.

After the January 2010 earthquake, hearing-impaired adults found shelter in a tent city in Port-au-Prince not far from the airport. However, communication problems in that area resulted in the community having problems receiving food and other services.




Gil Hanke, top staff executive of the General Commission on United Methodist Men, examines a Haitian child.

With help from Frazer Memorial UMC in Montgomery, Ala., and Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., the community was moved to a rural setting in Leveque. The Hope of Hearing team was invited to test the children of parents with significant hearing loss in that area.

During their 2012 trip, the president of the Methodist Church of Haiti also asked the team to screen children in one of some 100 Methodist-related schools.

"The team designed a screening form to help teachers identify children who demonstrate some behaviors of hearing loss," said Hanke. "One day, over 80 children were tested, and several were identified with medical issues."

Hanke was accompanied by Drs. Sally Muhlbach, Ricardo Gauthier, and Angela Poe. This was Poe's first trip with the team. 

Healing homes while building a home

By the Rev. Talbot Davis

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—

Good Shepherd UMC discovered a way to connect with men in the congregation: a “Men’s Steakout.”

The dinner was part of “Home,” a sermon series that focused, in part, on ways that Christ is to be the foundation, and not a mere decoration, in households called “Christian.”

A second thrust of that series was to raise awareness of the scourge of domestic sex trafficking of minors, expose the ways in which Christian men have been part of the sickening demand that leads to the traumatized supply of young girls, and, finally, to raise funds for the construction of a home to shelter girls who have been rescued from sexual slavery.

The goal was to “heal homes while building a home that heals.”

It was an ambitious project. Yet, because so many of the issues involved men—both their role in their homes and the sexual issues with which so many wrestle—Good Shepherd gathered 150 men of the church on the Saturday night before the special Sunday offering for “Home.”

Partnering with a local Outback Steakhouse, the church provided a high-quality steak and potatoes meal for the low cost of \$10 per man.

Following a time of table fellowship, one of the church’s pastors spoke with conviction

and authenticity about the impact of pornography and promiscuity on men in our culture and in our church.

The evening concluded with prayer and an opportunity to sign up for one of several Men’s Life Groups. At Good Shepherd, “every event is a step,” meaning the church hosts events in order that attendees will take the next step towards a deeper community and connection.

And what was the impact of the Men’s Steakout on the effort to provide shelter for rescued minors?

The challenge goal for the project was \$125,000 to be given on one Sunday. The miracle goal was \$150,000 in one day.

On the day of the “Big Give,” the people of the church—including, no doubt, men who had attended the Steakout the night before—gave \$367,000 towards the project.

Healing homes while building a home that heals indeed. 



A graduate of Princeton University and Asbury Seminary, Talbot Davis has served as pastor of Good Shepherd UMC since 1999. The church is known for its multi-media style of worship and the multi-ethnic composition of its congregation. Talbot

and his wife, Julie, are parents of two adult children.





Across the Nation

SWANSBORO, N.C.—

Men feed Habitat workers

Men of Swansboro UMC fed 18 workers and staff at a Habitat for Humanity work site in Newport, N.C.

The men used a UMM member's cooker to fry hamburgers and hot dogs during the July 30 event.



From left: Frank Cizerle, Doug Johndrow, Justin Francisco, Derwin Trigleth, Bill Baker prepare a barbecue lunch for Habitat workers in Newport, N.C.

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas—

Harlington men win barbecue cook-off

Men of First UMC, Harlington, won the first Annual Southwest Texas Conference Barbecue Cook Off.

A victory in the McAllen District Cook Off gave the Harlington team the right to participate in the conference competition. They beat UM Men teams from the Corpus Christi and Victoria Districts.

San Antonio Area Bishop Jim Dorff and Terri Schonert, president of Conference UM Women, served as judges.



Men of Harlington UMC proudly take possession of the prestigious Circuit Rider Trophy, which they will hold until 2014 when they will have to win again in order to retain possession.

PARKERSBURG, W.Va.—

Church receives Bishop's Award of Excellence

Stout Memorial UMC has supported BSA Troop 12 for 58 years. During that time, more than 500 boys and 100 adult leaders have participated in the troop, and 70 young men have attained the rank of Eagle.

In addition, the church now sponsors a Cub Scout pack and a Venture crew.

Each May, the troop sets up tables, cooks, and serves a dinner for a Salvation Army banquet. Last year the troop helped an Eagle Scout candidate renovate a deteriorating cemetery.

The church received the Bishop's Award of Excellence.



Cub Scouts in Pack 12 present tasty cream pies to their leaders.

LOS ANGELES, Calif.—

Nearly 1,200 UMs attend Dodger game

A total of 1,188 United Methodists watched the Dodgers beat the Cincinnati



Reds by a score of 5 to 1.

During the 5th inning, cameras showed the UM crowd on Dodger Vision, the largest video screen in major league baseball. Dodger night raised \$3,550 to help young people in the California-Pacific Annual Conference attend UM camps.

STAFFORD, Va.—

Furloughed workers use Fridays to serve

At a meeting of UM Men of Ebenezer UMC, Warren Schaeffer spoke about federal workers being forced to take unpaid furloughs

An employee of the Defense Information System Agency in Fort Meade, Schaeffer faced furloughs himself. After chatting with his wife, Schaeffer envisioned a day of devotion and service, where church members could use their days off to help others.

"I don't want to sit on my fanny and worry," Schaeffer said. "This gives us a chance to forget about why we're not working—and to be serving and all that good stuff."

In July, Ebenezer hosted its first Furlough Friday.

Since that time, Furlough-Friday events start with breakfast and a brief devotion at 8 a.m. Community service projects start at 9 a.m.

Only a handful of people showed up for the first event. But the crew has grown and now includes furloughed employees who don't belong to the church as well as church members who aren't furloughed.

The group has done yard work, painted church rooms, power-washed a house, and helped build a Habitat House.

GREENFIELD, Ind.—

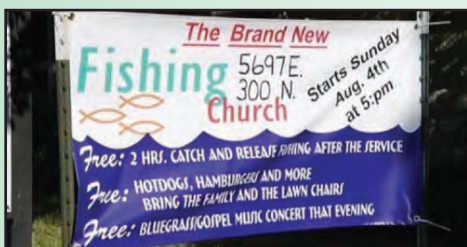
Pastor holds services in a former bait store

The Rev. Wade Compton, pastor of Bradley UMC, conducts Sunday evening wor-

ship services in a converted bait store on a 19-acre lake.

Following the summer services, participants enjoy hamburgers and catch-and-release fishing at the stocked lake.

Compton still leads traditional services at Bradley UMC. He uses the lake location to reach out to people who do not attend the Sunday morning service.



RISING SUN, Md.—

Baltimore Ravens chaplain leads seminar for UM Men

Men of Janes UMC sponsored a September “Training Camp,” led by Darrell (Coach D) Andrews, chaplain of the Baltimore Ravens.

The Rev. Brett Rush, pastor of Shiloh Community Fellowship in Quarryville, led the worship for the 160 attendees.

“We’re in a day and age where there’s a tremendous need for strong father figures—strong male figures,” Andrews said. “I’m very clear that God has given a specific job to men.”



Coach Darrell Andrews provides advice to participants in a “Training Camp,” a men-only event held at Janes UMC in Rising Sun. Photo courtesy of Dave Roberts.

Janes UMC also sponsors a Wednesday evening men’s Bible study, and from April through July, the men play softball every Tuesday in a league sponsored by the Susquehanna Baptist Association.

WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH, N.C.—

Men engage in several fund-raising projects

Men of Wrightsville UMC held a golf tournament, a chili and chowder cook off, and a fish fry and oyster roast. The group also sponsored an “Artistry in Jazz” performance by a 22-piece band. As the result of these fund-raising events, the men donated \$2,000 to the Methodist Home for Children and \$500 to Salkehatchie camps for high school and college age youth. They also provided \$300 gift cards to two families with children in elementary school, and they contributed funds for a Vacation Bible School and a ministry to seniors.

PHILADELPHIA, Pa.

1,200 attend UM Day at the Phillies

On August 17th more than 1,200 United Methodists from the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference attended a Phillies game.

The event was led by UM Men Conference President Ross Brightwell. Camphor UMC and six other conference churches sang the National Anthem and America the Beautiful prior to the game.



United Methodists are greeted by the Phillies Phanatic

MARYVILLE, Tenn.—

Scouts save church from fire

Maryville Boy Scout Troop 1804 was holding its weekly meeting at St. John UMC when a Scout heard a sound coming from downstairs. Scout leaders checked out the noise and discovered a fire in a newly renovated youth room. They called 911 and made sure all Scouts were out of the building before the fire department arrived.

Had the troop not been meeting and had they not called 911, the fire would have spread and could have destroyed the entire structure.

The church was planning to honor first responders prior to the fire.

“Never did I assume in a million years we would go on such a personal note,” said Lori Stewart, coordinator of children’s ministries.



Fire crept up the wall of the youth room, inches from the ceiling.

COLUMBIA, S.C.—

UM Men award scholarships

Asbury Memorial UM Men awarded \$1,000 each to three members attending the University of South Carolina.

John Santharaj, president of UM Men, awarded the scholarships to Reece Fun-derburk, a broadcast-journalism major; Jeani Rae Clark, a social-work major; and Kaylee Amick, a nursing student.

Funds for the scholarships are raised by an annual golf tournament, a pork barbecue every spring and chicken barbecue every fall. They also hold an annual father-son banquet.

SMYRNA, Ga.—

Church is proud of Troop 22

Faith UMC posted a sign expressing pride in 42-member Troop 22, which has produced 12 Eagle Scouts.



Last year, 71 percent of the Scouts advanced in rank and the troop received the “Journey to Excellence Gold Award,” recognizing the 7-year-old troop as a top performer.

Joey Penick, a scouting ministry specialist, requested the posting.

“We just introduced a new pastor and she is trying to re-energize the youth program,” said Penick, who serves as chaplain for the leadership team. “We felt a Scout Sunday event would get some kids in the door to hear the new message.”

COLUMBIA, Md.—

UM Men, Women oppose domestic violence

The effort to oppose domestic violence has drawn together the UM Men and UM Women.

“The statistics are staggering,” said UM Men President Richard Campbell. “Every nine seconds a woman is beaten. Every 35 seconds a man falls prey to

domestic violence; and each year, more than 3 million children witness domestic violence in their homes.”

The groups launched an effort to increase awareness of domestic violence and to provide information about resources to address it

ELMONT, N.Y.—

Men raise \$16,000 for missions

UM Men of St. John’s UMC annually raise more than \$16,000 for missions.



For a decade, the men have consistently topped the list of donors to the UM Center in Far Rockaway. The 20-year-old mission provides hot meals five days a week, a food pantry and clothing giveaways.

The men sponsor a dinner dance that sells out annually to 700 people at \$90 per person. They also hold breakfasts that raise \$3,500 annually.

LAKE GENEVA, Wis.—

Men operate prayer line

Men of Northern Illinois Conference operated an Upper Room Prayer Line during their Sept. 13-15 Spiritual Congress at Lake Geneva, Wis.

“We had 28 callers between 1-7 p.m.,” said Scott Brooks, a leader of UM Men at Kirkland (Ill.) UMC. “Pairs of men operated the prayer line in half-hour shifts, and at least six men expressed a desire to start the prayer line in their churches.”

David Murrow, author of *Why Men Hate Going to Church*, was the principal speaker at the conference.

VANDALIA, Ohio—

Four graduate from Men’s Ministry Course

Four UM men graduated from an Understanding Men’s Ministry course led by Leo Scholl, a men’s ministry specialist.

Scholl said the men adopted the slogan: “Men of Steel.” “As iron sharpens iron, so Men of Steel sharpen one another as they mentor and disciple each other on the way to becoming the men God created them to be,” said Scholl.



From left: Pastor Tom Weeks, Mike Cecil, Leo Scholl, and Tom Green graduate from a men’s ministry training event. John Weber, a graduate, was distributing Gideon Bibles in Columbus, Ohio, when the photo was taken.

NORTHVILLE, Mich.—

Church hosts 50 homeless people for a week

Once a year, First UMC of Northville hosts the Interfaith Rotating Shelter run by Cass Community Social Services. For 30 years, the church has opened its doors to 50 homeless individuals to provide beds, food, clothing, showers, toiletries, Bible study, worship, counseling, haircuts, résumé preparation, recreation, and fellowship. This year, hospitality week will be Feb. 22 to March 1. The men’s group always serves breakfast on the final Saturday and cleans the area.

Brooks Kelley, treasurer of the men's group, reports that the organization hosts breakfast and study on Wednesday mornings and a once-a-month Saturday breakfast. They also serve meals in Pontiac and Detroit and participate in food drives.

PINEVILLE, La.—

Men recognize first responders

UM Men of First UMC honored first responders in the community by presenting 75 *Strength for Service to God and Community* books to officers of the Pineville Police Department and the Pineville substation of the Rapides Parish Sheriff's Department.



The project was funded by a barbecue that raised \$1,100. The men also donated \$200 to Grace Camp, \$300 to The Pineville Youth Center, and \$200 to The Society of St. Andrew.

MONTVILLE, Pa.—

Men distribute 45,000 pounds of potatoes.

UM Men paid \$2,100 to ship 45,000 pounds of potatoes from Presque Isle, Maine, to Montville.

Forty-six men loaded the potatoes into cars, pickups and vans collecting for food banks, homeless shelters and needy families.

It took less than three hours to give the spuds away.

The give-away is one of 150 annual potato or produce drops sponsored by the Society of Saint Andrew.

COLLEGE STATION, Texas—

Scouts offer flags across city

Boy Scout Troop 802, chartered by A&M UMC, provides church members with the opportunity to have American flags posted at their homes on six national holidays.

For \$30, Scouts install a "flag-yard holder" made from an 8-inch PVC pipe, and the Scouts install and remove the flags on each holiday.




The troop received a Bishop's Award of Excellence.

SMITHFIELD, N.C.—

Church honors fire and rescue personnel

Men of Asbury UMC hosted a dinner for 44 local firefighters and EMS personnel in Smithfield. During the evening, the men presented the first responders with copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community*.

The men also plan to host a dinner for police officers and one for water and sanitation personnel.

"We plan to host the three events annually," said Bill Ellis, president of Asbury UM Men. 

**Send news of your
men's organization
to Rich Peck
(rpeck@gcumm.org).**

Strengthening One Another

by Mark Lubbock

As Iron Sharpens Iron, so one man sharpens another.

Traffic was light and I was unexpectedly early for my morning appointment so I swung into a nearby coffee shop. While catching up on work with my laptop I could hear a small group of men talking behind me.

The first man was lamenting about issues resulting from his ongoing divorce. The men in this group patiently listened to his comments, complaints and questions. Then one by one, they responded when they had something of value to offer.

What I witnessed was a safe venue where this hurting man could share what was foremost on his mind. A group of caring brothers listened to him, and where appropriate, offered suggestions. At one point he spoke of wanting to retaliate against unfair things taking place. His brothers gently affirmed him and steered him in a more fruitful direction.

The upshot was that they offered support to a hurting brother while mentoring him in God's way. As they prayed for him I could see a weight lift off of his shoulders. It was evident that these men had earned his trust; he received their correction and direction well.

Discipling is a life-long process that enhances Christian relationships. Small groups are important for spiritual growth, particularly where deep, trusting relationships exist. I belong to more than one such group and


intentionally surround myself with men who support me, love the real me, and help me walk with integrity.

How about you? What does your church offer in the way of small groups for men? Do you model this yourself by participating in a small group? Real leaders serve as living examples for their men.

If you feel like you could use some help, take heart! GCUMM is perfectly positioned to assist you personally, and to help your church develop meaningful discipling processes. For example, men's ministry specialists are equipped to help design, develop and implement effective ministry to men.

We can bring a customized plan to your city, church or region to help you reach and connect men to Jesus Christ.

I challenge you to step up and commit to a deeper personal discipline that includes not only time in the Word and in prayer but also in a Christian small group.

Don't wait for someone else to do this. Do it yourself and do it NOW! 



The Rev. Mark Lubbock is a deployed staff member of the General Commission on UM Men.



How do you say
GOOD BYE
to a dying friend?

by Walter Albritton

The older I get the more I realize how little I know. There are so many things nobody ever told me. For example, how do you tell a dying friend goodbye? During the past decade I have had to do that several times. Each time I felt like I was flying by the seat of my pants.

I remember how strangely uncomfortable I felt standing beside the hospital bed of my dying sister, then my wife's sister, then my father, and later my mother. Though a preacher is something of a wordsmith, I usually struggled to know what to say—to either family members or the person dying.

It is not enough to hide behind clichés like “silence is golden” or “just being present is enough.” Some are content to say nothing and assume that “the ministry of presence” is sufficient. Though all that is true, I long to come up with words—at least a few words—that might comfort, encourage, and inspire faith. If I were the person dying I believe I would want my family and friends to say something that would bless me, and not just stand by with their hands in their pockets waiting for me to take my last breath.

Some people do not have my problem. They never stop talking. Their loquaciousness makes me want to scream. And it does trouble me to encounter a talkative friend or relative quoting scripture and trying to get someone “saved” in their last hour. I think the time for such earnest pleading is probably past but then, who am I to judge?

I am big on holding hands. I have spent hours holding the hands of dying family members and friends. Occasionally I spoke of times past, of joyous memories we shared, but later I felt much regret. I regretted that I did not, for example, tell my dad and my mother how much they had meant to me, how grateful I was for the lessons they taught me and the examples they were for me.

Shirley and Al called one day from Alaska. After a few pleasantries Al's voice broke as he told us that Shirley had only a few more weeks to live. At that moment we realized they had called so she could tell us goodbye. Her faith was

strong. She assured us she was at peace with God and would be waiting for us on the other side. But, honestly, words failed me. I finally told Shirley I loved her and that her friendship had blessed my life. Perhaps that was enough. Shirley died in less than a month.

A year or so later the phone rang again. Now it was Al's turn to say goodbye. "I have terminal cancer," he said softly, "and my doctor says I don't have much time left." Again my words were few. Al had been one of my dearest friends. He had meant so much to me for nearly 40 years. I should have told him that, but the words never came from my lips. I did tell Al that I knew his faith would see him through to the end and that I was sure we would see each other again. After word came that Al had died, I thought of so many things I wished I had said to him.

This week a letter came from another dear friend. The envelope was blue with snowflakes on it. She began her letter with these words, "Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year." Not what one would expect inside a letter dated September 13. I read on, "I am sending this greeting early because if I wait, it may be too late. My pancreatic cancer is spreading and my time is not."

Tears kept me from reading the next lines for a moment. Then I almost laughed as her faith jumped off the page. She said, "The good news is that I am not in pain, I feel great, and I am enjoying living with my daughter and her family." Then she scribbled a bold "Hooray!"

She closed by saying "My time is short. However, it is a happy time and I thank you for being my friend. Happy Holidays!"

The next day my wife and I both wrote her a letter and mailed them immediately.



What do you say? Well, we thanked her for her marvelous faith, her wonderful friendship, and the precious ways she had been a blessing to us. We thanked her for the memories, especially those of times when her contagious laughter had blessed us so. Her laughter had triggered so many moments of joy in my heart. She was genuine to the core and always full of the joy of the Lord.

This dear friend's bold announcement of her impending death may have freed me to think of creative, inspiring words to share with a dying friend. I hope so. I do want to do a better job of saying goodbye to the next dying friend who calls me. Until then my prayer will be simple: "Lord, help me know what to say, how to say it helpfully, and do save me from saying too much."



The Rev. Walter Albritton is pastor of congregational care at St. James UMC, Montgomery, Ala.

Men need new Christian identity

by Bishop Swanson

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—

“Men are in search of a new Christian identity.”

That’s what Mississippi Area Bishop James E. Swanson Sr. told the General Commission on UM Men, at the conclusion of their Sept. 6-7 meeting in Nashville.

Serving as chair of the 20-member commission, Swanson said that men are seeking to find genuine and passionate ways to express God’s call upon their lives. “This new identity must not be wrapped up in a grab for power or position; it is simply a response to the opportunity to serve God by serving humanity and the Church,” said the bishop.

“We hope to be seen as fulfilling our call to aid in the renewal of the church without being viewed as a threat to anyone or vilified for our deeply felt passion to see the UMC offer Christ to men, children and youth.” said Swanson. “We’re trying to do this cautiously because we don’t want to offend anyone, but I believe God is calling us to hasten our pace. This calls us to struggle with what this new Christian man identity should be.”

The bishop also urged the commission not to measure success by the large stadium events of the past. “It may be a watershed event even if only 100 men show up. God may be using the event to plant a seed that is bold, wonderful and new.”

During the business sessions, the commission:

- Created a Susanna Wesley Award to recognize the special achievements made by women in the UMC. Named for the mother of John and Charles Wesley, founders of the Methodist Church, the award will cost \$500;
- Agreed to investigate the possible building of a storage facility adjacent to the commission’s office on Music Row in Nashville. Construction costs will be provided from reserve funds;

- Tabled a request from Faith United against Gun Violence in order to gain additional information;



Bishop James E. Swanson Sr., chair of the General Commission on UM Men.

- Learned that UM Men contributed \$20,908 in the first eight months of 2013 for the Upper Room Prayer Line. The ministry of the Upper Room receives an average of 22,000 calls each month;
- Learned that the UM Men Foundation is considering employing a part-time person to lead efforts in planned-giving. Assets currently total \$2.28 million;
- Learned that gifts from UM Men to the Meals for Millions program of the Society of St. Andrew have increased each of the last three years to \$180,000 in 2012;
- Agreed to change the process for men’s ministry specialists so they must seek an interview before they can complete the application process;
- Agreed to raise \$20,000 to help with travel expenses for people rebuilding homes damaged by Hurricane Sandy;
- Celebrated a successful National Gathering of UM Men in which 800 people participated;
- Learned that 1,500 copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community* were given to first responders in Boston, Newtown, Conn., West Texas; and Nashville; and
- Agreed to allow non-United Methodists to receive Torch Awards, making that award similar to all other scouting awards.

In Memoriam

Wardell Boyd

HAZEL CREST, Ill.—

Wardell Boyd, prayer advocate for Northern Illinois Conference, died Oct. 28.

“Brother Boyd was a rock of a man,” said Steve Nailor, president of Northern Illinois Conference UM Men. “His love for the church and men’s work goes beyond what I could ever begin to explain. Wardell has been a friend and brother to us all. He will be deeply missed.”



Wardell Boyd

“Our brother Wardell was committed to the Lord, his beloved church and promoting the work of our Prayer Center,” said Migdiel Perez, manager of The Upper Room Living Prayer Center. “He was our main contact and remote coordinator during many conference retreats and events supporting the Upper Room Prayer Line. I know he is resting at peace in the arms of our Heavenly Father.”

At Hazel Crest Community UMC, Boyd modeled a two-hour monthly remote prayer line for other churches in the annual conference, and he led efforts to raise funds for the Nashville-based ministry.

Boyd and Nailor attended the 2013 meeting of the National Association of Conference Presidents and Prayer Advocates where Boyd presented the prayer ministry a check to the prayer ministry for \$1,000 on behalf of the conference.

Boyd also served Hazel Crest Community UMC as president of UM Men, chair of the Board of Trustees and co-chair of the Food Pantry.

Boyd is former president of the Southern District UM Men, and he has been a member of the executive committee of Northern Illinois Conference UM Men for 18 years.

He also provided alternative life choices for at-risk students by teaching automotive mechanics at an evening vocational school and the Washburne Trade School. His care for students and his work ethic also provided an example for students who frequently had few positive role models.

Boyd was inducted into the Society of John Wesley in 2011.

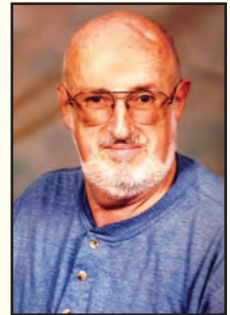
Douglas B. Nicholson

LAKE RONKONKOMA, N.Y.—

Doug Nicholson, 72, former president of New York Conference United Methodist Men, died July 12.

Nicholson served for 32 years as a member of the New York Conference UM Men.

“He was a great leader who exemplified vision, character, competence, commitment and care,” said Royston Bailey, current president of New York Conference UM Men. “Doug received a certificate of service recognition for over 20 years of faithful service to UM Men. Most of his contributions were in communications.”



Douglas Nicholson

Nicholson also supported the UMC of Lake Ronkonkoma as their IT person. He was responsible for all software, hardware, LAN support and the phone systems. He wrote many of the software interfaces that helped the church staff automate their tasks.

He also served the Lake Ronkonkoma church as chair of the Board of Trustees, chair of the Property Committee, chair of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and treasurer of the District Council on Ministries.

He is survived by his wife, Marilyn, his children, Gregory Nicholson, and Jill Zotter, and five grandchildren.

The day the Living Prayer Center changed my life

By Ed Van Wicklen

It was our regular Wesley Forest men's fall retreat in Pennsylvania.

I had no idea when I registered, that I would take part in a ministry that would change my life.

We were told we would take part in an Upper Room Living Prayer Center remote. This was something I would have never thought to attempt. I was not familiar with praying for others openly, and I was worried about how well I would do.

That evening, a group of six men sat around a table. All of us were concerned about what the first call would be like.

It was not what I expected.

The folks who called were obviously searching for help from someone that might be able to talk to God on their behalf.

The response from the callers was wonderful. I felt that I was doing something that made a difference; not for me, but for others. I had been on a dozen committees and sung in the choir for years, but this was different.

Like the other five fellows that helped me that night, I felt really good when our turn was over and we went back to our cabins.

I felt God had touched me and I was beaming from within.

That same year, I initiated The Upper Room Living Prayer Center remote ministry in our church. We started slowly, but gained momentum until we had two phone lines and up to 50 people at the phones for 8-hour sessions.

Years later, I moved to my present church, Pine Grove UMC in York, Pa. Again I initiated this ministry and once more the response was wonderful. At each session we always have new faces and now we are bringing in younger participants. It's a blessing for those we pray for but for us as well.

To pray and intercede for another person has been the most rewarding part of my life.

Every time we have a remote telephone ministry session our helpers say it was rewarding and touched their lives.

If after each session, we've touched even one life, I feel we've done God's work.

My own family has gone through many crises and we came through understanding God had heard and answered our prayers.

I know God will help those for whom I pray. There is no greater feeling than knowing you've done a job that God gave you and you were ready and willing to respond.



Ed Van Wicklen

Ways for YOU to connect with The Upper Room Living Prayer Center:

To request prayer,
call 1-800-251-2468

To volunteer, visit
<http://prayer-center.upperroom.org>
Individual Living Prayer Center volunteer and covenant prayer groups respond to over 800 prayer requests by name and need each day.

To give, visit
www.upperroom.org/gift
In 2012, United Methodist Men's groups have given over \$25,000 to help fund The Upper Room Living Prayer Center.



A family in need of prayer

Prayers answered

By Sally Groesbeck

Recently I emailed Migdiel Perez to thank the living prayer center for the prayers said on behalf of my family.

One—well three—of the reasons I have asked for prayers are my triplet niece and nephews. They had a difficult time during pregnancy and were born at 26 weeks gestation and less than 2 pounds each.

Through God's grace and a lot of answered prayers, these three healthy babies turned two yesterday. Despite the dark times during their 4 month stay in the new infant care unit and the health scares that followed them home, all three are happy, healthy and smart two year olds.

Thanks to the Prayer Center for all it does to spread God's word and all the prayers said on behalf of strangers like myself. The center is a testament to God and the power of prayer.



One year later, prayers are answered.

Texas engineer supports ministries with his time and dollars

GONZALES, Texas—

Clarence Littlefield, president of Southwest Texas Conference UM Men, has been on six mission trips, helps prepare meals for youth retreats, repair homes and churches, and he supports the ministries of UM Men as a Legacy Builder.

“The Legacy Builder program allows us to provide funds in addition to the manual work efforts associated with mission projects,” said Littlefield. “While we may not be able to support every individual project (or even be aware of many), support of Legacy Builders allows for that backing when it is needed.”

Involved in UM Men for 30 years

A six-year member of the Army National Guard during the Vietnam War era, Littlefield says he started attending conference retreats 30 years ago. He served as secretary of the Victoria District UM Men Charter Committee in the early 1990s and developed the by-laws and constitution for the district.

He was elected vice-president of Conference UM Men in 2005 and president in 2010; he was reelected in 2012.

Supporter of local church

Littlefield says he has served on nearly every committee in his local church (except UM Women). He is the former chair of the Finance and Administration Council and currently serves as lay leader. “My wife served as a local pastor for 10 years in three small rural churches and I served as the alternate lay delegate to conference most of those years.”

The active churchman also chairs the building committee for Victoria District Board of Trustees planning a \$3 million expansion to a retreat center.

Professional engineer

Littlefield is a 1965 graduate of the University of Texas (B.S. in civil engineering). He obtained his professional engineer’s license in



Clarence Littlefield hammers a ceiling panel in place during a mission project in Buras, La.

1970 and has served as president of the Austin Branch of the American Society of Civil Engineers and president of the Victoria Area Surveyors Association.

The Littlefields have been married for 46 years, and they have two sons. In 1967, it took them three years to build a house on 60 acres in Gonzales where they now raise cattle. The couple also enjoys traveling, and they have taken more than 6,000 photos while visiting 35 states, plus Canada, Mexico, and Great Britain.

One of Littlefield’s recent trips was to Nashville for the National Gathering of UM Men. “Participating in my first potato drop was special,” he says. “The fellowship alone was uplifting, but providing food where needed even more so.” He has been a 10-year supporter of the Society of St. Andrew.

“How could we as UM Men not support the Legacy Builders?” he asks.

“I firmly believe that the survival of the UMC will require stronger leadership of the men.”

Legacy Builders are people who pledge at least \$120 annually (\$10 a month) to men’s ministry. To participate, click on the “Support GCUMM” tab at the top of the www.GCUMM.org website.

UM Men Awards

Bob Nash

Men honor district lay leader

PINEVILLE, La.—Men of First UMC presented Bob Nash with a Lifetime Membership for his devoted service to the church and UM Men.

In 1960, Nash was a member of UM Men in Harahan, La. He continued to support men's ministry when he moved to Pineville in 1964.

He served as the district lay leader and president of lay speakers for 10 years. He is the past president and leads the nominating committee for Pineville UM Men.



Joe Kelley (in vest), national prayer advocate, presents a life membership to Bob Nash. Cliff Kelley, former UM Men president (left), and Fred Carter, UM Men president, participate in the presentation.

Archie Bratton

Church honors former president and teacher

AUSTIN, Texas—Crestview UMC honored Archie Bratton with a Lifetime Membership in UM Men. He served as president of UM Men and a Sunday school teacher. He also leads the Prayer Chain Committee, serves as an usher, and he is a member of the Board of Trustees.

“Archie is always present when needed whether it is for moving furniture for the preschool or preparing for anything that requires his big hands and back,” said Jack Moncure, president of UM Men.

Don Harbert

Army veteran named life member of UM Men

COPPERAS COVE, Texas—Men of Grace UMC presented Don Harbert, 80, with a Lifetime Membership in UM Men. At age 18,

Harbert joined the U.S. Army to fight in Korea; that action was the beginning of a 21-year career with the Artillery Corps. He retired as a sergeant first class.

A 40-year member of Grace UMC, he has served as Sunday school superintendent, keeper of the church kitchen and head cook for the men's monthly breakfast.

Johnell Norton

Former Tennessean establishes UM Men groups in New England

WARWICK, R.I.—Johnell Norton grew up in Jackson, Tenn. After moving to New England, he helped organize several UM Men groups. He also helped reestablish a UM Men organization at Asbury UMC.

He is a member of the New England Annual Conference and a leader of Walk to Emmaus for the Rhode Island/Southeast Massachusetts District. He has served Asbury UMC as chair of the Christian Education Committee and chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. He also leads a church-wide Lenten study and serves as a member of the choir.

“A life-time award is a great way to honor Johnell for his commitment to serving the Lord,” said Dave Dorsey, president of Asbury UM Men. “His actions through the years have helped other men trust and follow God.”

Tom Cloninger

Men honor 16-year member

MOUNT HOLLY, N.C.—Men of First UMC presented Tom Cloninger with a Lifetime Membership. A 16-year member of UM Men, Cloninger serves on the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and is one of the teachers of the Pioneers Sunday School Class.

“As a retired manager from the transportation industry, he brings a lot of wisdom and a lifetime of knowledge and common sense on how to think things through,” said Fred Hefner, vice president of UM Men. “Tom is always ready to greet any visitors and is in the kitchen cooking and cleaning for our monthly meetings.”

Scouts encounter God at Philmont

By Dr. William P. Payne

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me; your right hand will hold me fast.

--Psalm 139:7-10 NIV

Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico is a place of high mountains and deep valleys. During a typical itinerary, Scouts push their bodies to their physical limits as they carry heavy packs over arduous trails. It is not for the faint of heart. A successful trek requires upwards of two years of training.

However, the rewards of hiking Philmont are worth the effort!

Besides the beautiful vistas, the daily adrenalin charges, the awesome programs in the backcountry camps, and the incredible sense of accomplishment that a crew experiences when it returns to base camp, there is another side to a Philmont adventure.

Honestly, most Scouts do not come to Philmont because they want to get closer to God. In fact, Philmont does not advertise spirituality. However, God is front and center at Philmont.

First, creation itself screams out His name. Everything about nature at Philmont testifies to God.

Second, because Scouts are separated from normal circumstances, lack creature comforts, and “feel” nature pushing upon them, they are in a place where they can sense God.

Additionally, every crew selects a chaplain's aide. The aide is trained by a Philmont

chaplain. The aide leads in grace, encourages daily devotions from *Eagles Soaring High*, focuses the crew on spiritual opportunities like watching a sunrise from a high peak, conducts conflict management, and models the Scout Law. Most importantly, he manages the Duty to God program, a program that puts meat on the twelfth point of the Scout Law (a Scout is reverent).

Bibles given at chapel services

Scouts may attend a Roman Catholic mass, a Jewish prayer service, a Protestant service or a LDS service on their first or last night at the base camp. In all, eight chaplains attend to the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of Scouts and staff.



The Rev. William Payne presents Bibles to Scouts attending the Protestant Worship Service.

Photo by Katy Mooney

This year, Protestant services were mostly packed. Scouts who attend the services received a *Backpacker's Bible* compliments of UM Men. The pocket-size book contains the New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs. It also features the Philmont Arrowhead on the front cover.



The Rev. William Payne preaches at the Protestant Worship Service at the Philmont Base Camp. Photo by Katy Mooney.

Scouts who complete their trek receive the coveted arrowhead patch. For this reason, they are eager to get a personal copy of the Bible. Many who received the Bibles have no active relationship with God or a local church.

I encouraged chaplain aides to make use of the books along with *Eagles Soaring High* devotional guide while on the trail.

Atheist finds God

Last time I served at Philmont a 16 year old Scout approached me after a chapel service and informed me that he was an atheist. He had attended the Protestant service with some friends. Life had convinced him that God did not exist. Still, he thanked me for the worship service and took one of our Bibles as a souvenir.

Twelve days later, the Scout attended another service before he boarded a bus for home. After the service, the beaming youth told me a story I will never forget.

He and his crew took a side hike to Mount Baldy, a sheer climb to 12,441 feet. The mountain is called Baldy because it is above timberline. For that reason, one climbing Baldy may feel like he is walking up a high stairway with no rails. When the Scout and his crew reached the top of Baldy, a sudden storm came upon them.

Large hailstones and cold rain pelted them; strong winds buffeted them and lightning sparked around them.

Terrified, the Scouts descended very quickly. Some slid out of control on the hailstones.

When confronted with his mortality and the awesome display of God's creation, the atheist Scout began to pray. At first, he only prayed for help as he cried out in fear. When he reached the tree line and was out of imminent danger, he pulled out his Bible and began to read it. Two days later, he was still praying and reading the Bible.

He was no longer an atheist.

He found God at Philmont.

Truly, God held this Scout fast in His hand (Ps 139:10). Like the psalmist, the Scout discovered he could not run from a loving God who called to him through the storm. God also used a *Backpacker Bible* to speak more clearly to him while he was in a state of heightened receptivity.

I thank God for Philmont, for the support of UM Men, and for the opportunity to serve as a Philmont chaplain.

The Rev. Dr. William P. Payne is the Harlan & Wilma Hollewell Professor of Evangelism and World Missions at Ashland Theological Seminary. A clergy member of the Florida Annual Conference, he is author of American Methodism, Past and Future

Churches launch effort to expand scouting ministries

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—

The number of Scout troops and other youth-serving agencies sponsored by UM congregations is likely to increase over the next 12 months.

The General Commission on UM Men, meeting last September in Nashville, learned that there are 363,876 youth meeting in 10,868 BSA units sponsored by 6,700 UM congregations, the second highest among all denominations. That number is likely to increase because of the presence of 234 scouting ministry specialists in 47 annual conferences and because Mississippi Area Bishop James Swanson, chair of the commission, wrote a letter to other bishops encouraging them to hold Bishop's Dinners for Scouting. These dinners help local congregations understand how youth-serving programs provide an opportunity to invite unchurched families to participate in their faith communities.

Efforts within the UMC are part of a "New Unit Campaign" by the BSA.

New membership policy

Mark Wappel, an executive with the national BSA, told the 20-member commission that some churches dropped Scout units, following the BSA decision to admit gay Scouts, but 80 percent of dropped troops have found new homes.

Wappel expressed appreciation to UM congregations for inviting many of these troops to their congregations.

Wappel also made it clear that the new



Mark Wappel

policy states that any "sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual by youth of scouting age is contrary to the virtues of scouting." If the behavior of any youth member becomes a distraction to the program by discussing sexual activity or advocating conduct inconsistent with the mission and beliefs of the BSA, that youth may be removed from the troop or crew.

Three annual conferences, New York, New England and Northern Illinois, asked the commission to urge the BSA to expand their membership policy to include gay adults. The commission will continue to work with the Religious Relations Task Force to discuss membership policies. The commission had earlier urged the BSA to seek the counsel of the taskforce before implementing a new membership policy.

National Jamboree

Larry Coppock, director of scouting ministries, said the commission had a major presence at the July 15-24 National Jamboree at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in West Virginia.

West Virginia Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball led a UM Communion service for 800 Scouts following a Protestant worship service coordinated by the Rev. Greg Godwin, a clergy



The sign outside Summit Heights UMC in Louisville, Ky., welcomes new and returning Scouts. The sign was posted the week the Cub pack was conducting a parent orientation session.

member of West Virginia Annual Conference. Godwin served as chaplain for the event along with 10 other United Methodist clergy. Steady rain came down during both services, but it did not dampen the spirits of the Scouts and leaders.

More than 20 volunteer UM leaders served in a 20-by-40-foot tent housing information about scouting ministry specialists, Stop Hunger Now, and the 2014 UM Scouters workshop at Philmont. Volunteers also gave out 1,400 copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community* book of daily devotions for first responders.

Five days of service

The largest service project in West Virginia included some 30,000 Scouts who spent five days in 350 sites to provide 300,000 volunteer service hours for local projects including Stop Hunger Now. Scouts packaged 16,000 meals for emergency situations in West Virginia and around the world.

Two Venturing crews and three Scout troops volunteered at the Beckley campus of UM Burlington Family Services. Scouts and leaders provided on-site work and learned about the residential treatment facility for troubled youth.

Phil Howard, chair of the Scouting Ministry Committee of the commission, said some 150 Scouts also spread 150 tons of gravel in a parking lot and on a hiking trail.

PRAY Awards

Coppock also told the commission that UM congregations presented PRAY (Programs of Religious Activities with Youth) Awards to 6,700 young people, the highest number of any Protestant denomination. These awards, formerly called “God and Country Awards,” provide religious instruction to young people in four age groups. Some churches use these studies and awards as part of their confirmation classes.

Messengers of Peace

The BSA launched a global initiative to inspire young people in 220 countries to work for peace. Troops, packs and crews are encouraged to support projects that increase harmony between individuals and communities. Suggested projects include sponsoring a holiday party for children of prison inmates, collecting books and magazines for inner-city schools, cleaning a Habitat house, creating a community prayer garden, and replacing graffiti with peace-related murals.



Protestant Scouts attend a worship service at the National Jamboree at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in West Virginia. Photo by Gil Hanke.

Forty-seven conferences now have scouting ministry specialists

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—

A total of 234 people have now registered as scouting ministry specialists, so 47 of the 571 annual conferences now have at least one person ready to help neighboring churches establish Boy Scout troops, Girl Scout troops, Cub Scout packs, 4-H clubs, Camp Fire USA clubs, and to encourage church members to participate in a Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program.

Twelve people registered as scouting ministry specialists during the July National Scout Jamboree in West Virginia. There are now 13 trained volunteers in that state.

In order to be certified, scouting ministry specialists must show proof of having completed the BSA Youth Protection Training or Safe Sanctuaries and Sexual Ethics online course. All candidates must also authorize the Commission on United Methodist Men to conduct a criminal background check. The volunteers are required to have read Scouting Guidelines and they are encouraged to attend scouting webinars or additional training.

These specialists also encourage neighboring churches to establish Programs of Religious Activities (PRAY) for young people in their communities. Formerly called God and Country, these studies and awards include “God and Me” (grades 1-3); “God and Family” (grades 4 and 5); “God and Church” (grades 6-8) and “God and Life” (grades 9-12). Some churches have used “God and Church” in their confirmation classes.

Volunteers also encourage churches to consider encouraging youth and adults by presenting awards such as the Good Samaritan Award, the Shepherd Church Charter Recognition, The Cross and Flame Award, The Torch Award, and the Bishop’s Award of Excellence.

Scouting has been part of The Methodist Church’s outreach to children and youth since 1920. More than 1.5 million people are estimated to be affected by scouting ministries in the United Methodist Church.

These programs provide churches with a way to minister to their communities and a way to invite families to consider making a United Methodist Church their spiritual home.



Greg Nelson and his son, Dillon, started attending St. Marks UMC in Swartz, La., because Greg was an assistant scoutmaster and attended services on a Scout Sunday. “I know from personal experience how scouting can bring people to God,” he says.

**The number of annual conferences as of Jan. 1, 2014 is 57. The formation of the Great Plains Annual Conference occurred Jan. 1 with the official merger of Kansas East, Kansas West and Nebraska.*

West Virginia church receives Bishop Award of Excellence

REEDSVILLE, W.Va.—

Reedsville UMC received the Bishop's Award of Excellence for its ministry to young people through Venturing Crew 66. The award was signed by Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball.

In 2010, the Rev. Paul Helmick, pastor of the 275-member congregation at the time, thought Venturing would be a great way to minister to both males and females in the 14-20-year-old age group. Efforts begun by Helmick have been continued by the Rev. Brian Long, who was appointed to the Reedsville church in June, 2013.

God and Life studies

After establishing the crew, Helmick, a 45-year veteran of scouting, invited the young people to participate in God and Life studies sponsored by the Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (PRAY).

“We initiated the PRAY program for the youth during Sunday mornings prior to the regular worship service,” said Crew Adviser Paul White.

White said the PRAY studies enriched the faith of crew members and enabled them to receive the



From left: Matthew Clemens, Katy Pompili, Todd Funkhouser (back) and Heather Strahin get ready for a helicopter flight.

Venturing Bronze Award in Religious Life. The youth also led Sunday school classes and supported church fund-raising efforts.

Support for disaster response efforts

The ten youth and ten adult crew members assisted the West Virginia Annual Conference Disaster Response Team by providing -flood buckets, comfort kits and blankets for emergency situations.

“Crew members spent numerous hours preparing the Reedsville depot for use and assisting with stocking the items,” said White. The conference certified crew leaders as emergency-response team members.

White notes that two males and two females earned Silver Awards, the highest award in Venturing. One member has earned the Venturing Gold Award and is currently waiting to fulfill his time requirement to be awarded the Venturing Silver Award.

Long list of activities

Members have participated in canoe trips, climbing and repelling activities, a helicopter excursion, and various community-service projects. They have also engaged in “geocaching” in which the participants use a GPS to find “geocaches” (waterproof containers containing logbooks where the geocachers enter the date they found them and sign them with code names).



Heather Strahin makes her way up a high COPE (challenging outdoor personal experience) course.

Crew members also engaged in a number of fund-raising activities including making apple butter and sponsoring a spaghetti dinner. The crew also helped form a Cub Scout Pack.

Five adult members have received the Cross and Flame Award for their dedication and commitment to the scouting ministry.

“It has truly been my honor and pleasure to work with this group of people,” said White who serves as one of the 13 scouting ministry specialists in the conference. “Regardless of the task, members have been willing to work together and assist each other to complete the project or activity.”

Why I Love Congolese Scouts

By Taylor Walters Denyer

It came as a surprise to me when I moved to Kamina in the Democratic Republic Congo in 2005 and found out my neighbors and best buds were Scouts.



Scouts serve as escorts for the Rev. Taylor Denyer during her visit to Mulango.

Weren't they a bit old to still be scouting? What exactly was the point of it when everyone there already knew as a matter of daily survival how to live off the grid and MacGyver random objects?

How do you talk about allegiance to God and country when your government is so broken?

I had much to learn.

I was shocked when I began traveling with the bishop into remote communities that had been directly impacted by the war. Scouts were always there to meet us. They helped transport the luggage and equipment and they formed a human chain around their visitors and escorted them safely to their lodging. They then took shifts guarding the compound 24/7 and would act as runners for supplies.

Scouts, it turned out, are the go-to crew for hospitality, crowd control, security, protocol, and setting up lighting and sound systems for special events. They also assist

widows and orphans and mobilize community clean-up efforts.

The deeper we traveled into the war zone, the more disciplined Scout troops seemed to be.

At first it disturbed me

how much these Scouts resembled young soldiers as they marched in their lines. Then it hit me: these young men know the face of war have and been recruited (often forcibly) by armies and warlords. The decision to join Scouts—the community's unarmed peacekeeping force—is a bold act requiring the resolve of a patriotic soldier.

The UMC North Katanga Conference has 4,807 active Scouts.

The Rev. Taylor Walters Denyer is UMC pastor who lives in Djibouti with her husband (a Foreign Service officer) and young daughter. A graduate of Wesley Theological Seminary, she coaches church leaders in Djibouti, Zambia and Democratic Republic Congo. This article is an edited version of a blog.

Taylor Walters Denyer is executive director of Friendly Planet Missiology and an elder in the North Katanga Conference.

Scouting Awards

Good Samaritan constructs prayer garden

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.—

Hunter L. Smith received a Good Samaritan Award for constructing a prayer garden at Fountain City UMC.

Hunter raised \$2,000 to provide the garden with five planters (one with a cross), a swing, two benches, and dozens of flowers and shrubs.



The extensive project took five months to complete.

Hunter served Troop 55 as a senior patrol leader and he earned “God and Family” and “God and Church” awards through the St. Louis-based Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (PRAY). The troop received the Bishop’s Award of Excellence.

Aldersgate UMC honors four

SLIDELL, La.—

Scouting awards were presented to four members of Aldersgate UMC.

Milton Lizana and Madeline Malchow received Cross and Flame Awards, and Holly Stokes and Mich Bearden received Good Samaritan Awards.

Lizana was recognized for his mission work through the Epworth Project, a disaster recovery program housed on the Aldersgate campus. Malchow was cited for her work in children’s Christian education.

Stokes and Bearden are active in the youth group and have worked at several Epworth Project worksites and have served on mission trips.

“Both of these young people have shown



From left: Lane Cotton Winn, pastor of Aldersgate UMC, celebrates the achievements of Madeline Malchow, Holly Stokes and Milton Lizana with Pastor Gary Willis.

extraordinary compassion and concern for those in crisis in our community,” said Dale Kimball, executive director of the Epworth Project. “They have set an example of unselfish giving for both their peers and seniors alike.”

Scout campaigns for Nothing but Nets

WAUKESHA, Wis.—

First UMC presented a Good Samaritan Award to Theo Johnson after he collected \$820 for Nothing but Nets.

He began a campaign for funds after

attending the 2010 National BSA Jamboree where the effort to eliminate malaria in African nations was featured.

He returned to the 2013 National BSA Jamboree to present a check to West Virginia Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball.



Theo Johnson presents a check for Nothing but Nets to Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball following a UM Communion service at the National BSA Jamboree.

Theo is an 8th grader at Asa Clark Middle School, and he serves the church by participating in Loaves and Fishes, a food assistance program. He also helps with a semi-annual rummage sale and an annual back-to-school carnival.

Church honors 50-year veteran of scouting

FAIRMONT, W.Va.—

Members of Walnut Grove UMC presented a Silver Torch Award to their pastor, James Zinn, for 50 years of service to the Boy Scouts.

Zinn is a former Cub Scout, Eagle Scout, cubmaster and scoutmaster and currently serves as assistant scoutmaster for Troop 7 in Fairmont.

In nominating Zinn for the award, Ralph Herron, scouting coordinator for West Virginia Conference, noted that the pastor was the first Scout to receive a God and Country award at Millersville UMC.

Zinn took boys to Philmont Scout Ranch on two occasions and he served as chaplain for a Scout camp near Morgantown.

He also worked at a trading post during the 2010 BSA National Jamboree at Fort A.P. Hill in Virginia, and he served as a chaplain at the 2013 jamboree in West Virginia.

Scout provides reading garden

ABBEVILLE, S.C.—

Main Street UMC presented a Good Samaritan Award to Jonathan David Wilson after he provided a reading garden for children.

“The first step was laying down a weed-guard fabric to keep the weeds at bay,” said Jonathan. He and other troop members then spread mulch, put up a



Jonathan Wilson

fence, provided potted plants and washed off the sides of the building. On the final day, the group placed benches in the garden.

“We make sure to keep the garden in shape, changing the plants and décor to match the season,” said Jonathan.



A teacher reads to children in a garden provided by Jonathan Wilson for his Eagle project.

Boy Scout builds two handicap-accessible hunting blinds

ABBEVILLE, S.C.—

Benjamin Walter Glace built two handicap-accessible hunting blinds for the Wheelin' Sportsmen Hunt, sponsored by the National Wild Turkey Federation.

The U.S. Forestry service paid for some of the materials.

Ben had served as a guide for handicapped hunters, and he had helped clean the deer. The experience led him to propose building hunting blinds as his Eagle project.

Main Street UMC presented him with a Good Samaritan Award.



Benjamin Glace (second from left) is joined by friends for whom he built a hunting blind.

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