



Living my faith

Doubt can be part of the faith journey

By Joe D'Amore

Our men's October retreat at the UM Camp in Wrightwood, Calif., closed with breakfast and a beautiful outdoor Communion service.

Although anxious to return to my family and my comfortable bed, I, as many in attendance, would have liked to stay on the mountaintop to continue to experience God in the special ways He made possible over the weekend.

As the theme of the retreat, "Living My Faith," unfolded. It became clear to me that a faith journey does not exclude times of doubt, but that perseverance and trusting God is the ultimate goal in living one's faith.

When one man emotionally described his battle with fear and doubt, it was as if we were describing identical experiences. Despite our diverse lives, I discovered that we had made similar faith journeys.

God's love was with us as we bared our souls and shared our joys and sorrows. His encouraging and comforting hands rested on us as we stepped onto unfamiliar ground and described our experiences.

While driving down the mountain after the retreat, I felt an urge to pray.

I parked near a giant pine tree and thought about how grateful I was for my

experiences. I realized without faith in God, I would never have been so blessed. I thanked Him for loving and accepting me, for blessing me with a loving wife and children and for allowing me to experience my Christian brothers and their expressions of genuine love and encouragement.

I asked God to send the Holy Spirit to make me aware that doubt can breed a desire to trust Him, ultimately bringing me to a "thin place" where I am closest to God.

I surrendered my will to God, to follow Him where He wants me to go, and do what He asks me to do.

I came away from the retreat renewed in my focus on life and stronger in my belief in God, my brothers in Christ, and in myself. Gratefully, I can now confidently ask, "Where do I go now, Lord? What do you want me to do?"



D'Amore is the president of the UM Men at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Arcadia, Calif. A writer and a musician, D'Amore is married to Marcia and the couple has three adult children and a chocolate

Labrador Retriever, named Lakota.

Summer training opportunity offered Scout leaders

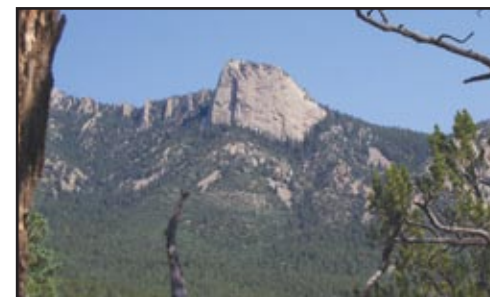
Local church, district and conference scouting coordinators, Boy Scout and Cub Scout leaders, clergy, and youth leaders are encouraged to attend a July 26-Aug. 2 United Methodist Scouters Workshop at Philmont Scout Ranch near Cimarron, New Mexico.

The 2008 event will focus on how the outreach ministry of scouting can increase church membership. Other topics will include: United Methodist awards and recognition opportunities, the God and Country program, youth protection, a bishop's dinner as a means of increasing the number of troops and crews, and the common features of Venture and United Methodist youth groups.

To receive information about the workshop, please email your name, phone number and position to Larry W. Coppock, national director of scouting ministries: lcoppock@gcummm.org.



Randy Mitchell, a West Virginia Conference pastor, portrays an 18th century circuit rider as he leads a 2007 service at the Philmont United Methodist Scouters' Workshop.



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