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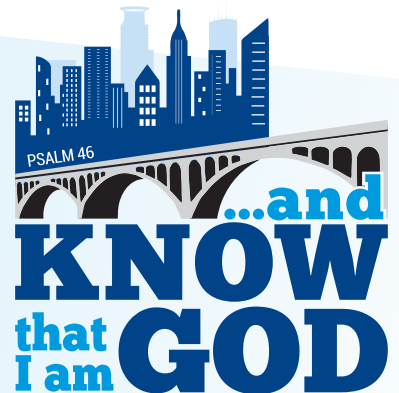
The magazine of
UNITED METHODIST MEN

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What are we fighting for?



The United Methodist Church
GENERAL CONFERENCE 2020
MINNEAPOLIS. MINNESOTA





GIL HANKE
General Secretary/
Chief Executive Officer

My hopes for General Conference 2020

I know the following statement will convince you of my need for intensive counseling: I have attended seven General Conference sessions as a voting delegate.

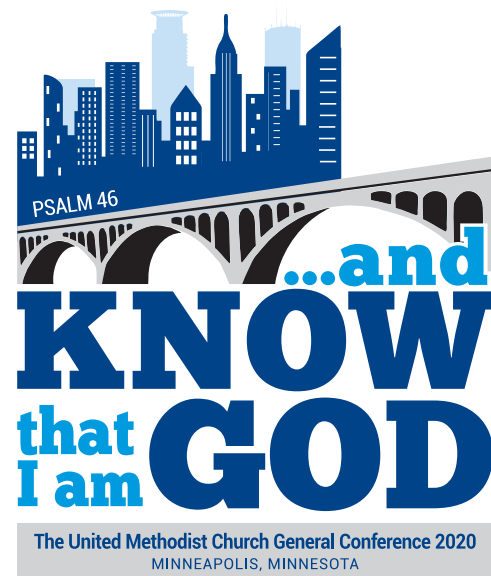
For a host of reasons, I will attend the 2020 conference only in my role as the general secretary of our commission.

Let me remind you of a few important facts. Nothing is already decided, and nothing is a “sure thing.” Because something is endorsed by a committee at GC2020, it does not mean it will be approved on the floor. Literally, “It is not over until it is over.”

My hopes for GC2020 include:

- Everyone attending in any capacity, will offer compassion and will receive compassion.
- We will, as best we can, follow John Wesley’s “Three Simple Rules”:
 - Do no harm
 - Do good
 - Stay in love with God by practicing the Ordinances of God. (I plan to re-read Bishop Rueben Job’s book *Three Simple Rules, A Wesleyan Way of Living* multiple times before GC2020.)
- Attendees will delight in the breadth of this part of the Wesleyan movement. Not just in size or numbers, but from and to every corner of the world. Our impact and footprint are amazing.
- I will make new friends from around the world and have the joy of seeing friends from previous journeys from around the world.
- We will delight in the presence of the Holy Spirit multiple times every day.
- I will listen more than I talk, learn more than I explain, sing more than I sigh, pray for others more than for myself or my interests, and trust more in God than in our best efforts.

Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers.



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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 United Methodist Men. Articles without bylines are written by commission staff.

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REV. RICH PECK
Editor

I've had the opportunity to attend [12 General Conference sessions](#) as editor of the *Daily Christian Advocate* and as a reporter for the UM Publishing House and UM News Service.

It seems as if every General Conference receives an advance billing declaring it to be "the most significant in a generation."

It was certainly true of the 1968 assembly in Dallas when the Methodist Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church and eliminated the racially based Central Jurisdiction.

It was true in 1972 when delegates to the Atlanta gathering created the General Council on Ministries and approved a new doctrinal statement.

It was true in 1980 when the Indianapolis assembly sent a delegation to meet with President Jimmy Carter about the Iran hostage negotiations and approved a "TV Presence in Ministry" plan.

It was true in 1988 when delegates to the St. Louis meeting created Africa University and accepted a new hymnal.

It was true of the 1996 session in Denver when delegates created the General Commission on UM Men and redefined the two orders of ministry, deacons and elders.

It was true for the 2004 session in Pittsburgh when delegates approved a statement on the meaning of the Lord's Supper and established the Connectional Table.

It was true for the 2012 assembly in Tampa when delegates thought they had approved a "Call to Action" plan to restructure the denomination only to have Judicial Council strike down the approved legislation.

It was true of the 2019 special session in St. Louis when everyone thought we would finally resolve our differences regarding homosexuality.

It is true for the 2020 session scheduled for Minneapolis where delegates expect to review several plans which could divide the denomination.

This issue focuses on those plans for GC2020. If any one of the plans is revised and approved by a legislative committee and subsequently approved by a plenary session, this General Conference will truly be one of the most significant in several generations.

No matter what happens at that May gathering, the need for ministry to men and youth will continue and this commission will find ways to provide that ministry.

Read on.



PSALM 46
...and
KNOW
that
I am **GOD**
The United Methodist Church General Conference 2020
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

May 5-15, 2020

General Conference, the highest legislative body in the UMC, will convene May 5-15 at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

The theme selected for the 2020 General Conference will be “...and know that I am God,” (Psalm 46:10).

To show hospitality, the local host committee intends to greet every delegate, invited guest, bishop and spouse with a handmade purple scarf.

Of the 862 delegates (equal numbers of lay and clergy), 55.9% will be from the U.S., 32% from Africa, 6% from the Philippines, 4.6% from Europe and the remainder from concordat churches with close ties to the UMC.

The main task of the assembly is to revise the *Book of Discipline*, a book of laws governing the structures of local churches, clergy, and denominational agencies, and the *Book of Resolutions*, a book of statements on social-justice issues. The assembly will also elect members of the Judicial Council and the University Senate. In addition, delegates will also approve plans and budgets for church-wide programs for the 2021-2024 quadrennium.

Delegates are seated by a blind drawing at a meeting of the Commission on General Conference. Names of annual conferences that were seated in the back half of the 2016 assembly are taken one by one in a blind drawing to be seated in the front of the 2020 gathering. After former back-row conferences have been drawn, the remainder are drawn and seated in accordance with the drawing.

PETITIONS

The primary sources of legislation are petitions submitted by individuals, churches, conferences, agencies and caucuses. Petitions submitted prior to the September 18 deadline, are printed in the Advance Edition of the *Daily Christian Advocate*. That volume has been sent to all elected delegates.

The General Board of Church and Society is proposing a new **15,000-word Social Principles statement** outlining the UMC positions on the environment, the economy, and social and political communities. After refinement by the 2020 conference, the principles will be printed in the 2020 *Book of Discipline* and the 2020 *Book of Resolutions*.

The **Connectional Table** is proposing a new structure for churches in the United States, called a regional conference. This conference would enable the **U.S. Regional Conference** to focus on matters pertaining the U.S. and enable General Conference to focus on global issues.

The Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters proposes **the creation of a new central conference in Africa** and increasing the number of African bishops from 13 to 18.



Several petitions suggest ways to deal with intransigent positions on homosexuality:

- ▶ The **Bard-Jones Plan** prepared by Bishops David Bard and Scott Jones would allow an annual conference to join one of three groups tentatively called the Traditional Methodist Church, the Open Methodist Church, and the Progressive Methodist Church.
- ▶ The **Indianapolis Plan** envisions a Traditionalist UMC that would maintain restrictions on same-sex weddings and ordination of gay clergy. A separate Centrist/Progressive UMC would remove those restrictions. A third Progressive UMC would provide for the full inclusion of LGBTQ people.
- ▶ **UMC Next Plan** would keep the UMC intact while allowing for greater regional autonomy across the connection. The language and policies that exclude LGBTQ people would be removed.

- ▶ **New Expressions Worldwide Plan** would dissolve the UMC and form four new global denominations for traditionalist, moderate, progressive, and liberationist.
- ▶ The **Plain Grace Plan** proposes a period of discernment leading to the creation of “fresh expressions of Methodism” that various like-minded groups could form. Each new form of Methodism would remain in full communion with The UMC through 2028 and potentially beyond.
- ▶ **Oppose Dissolution Plan** calls for a study with the goal of developing a new form of church organization that creates unity in mission while allowing for contextual ministry in matters that divide us.

Petitions are numbered and grouped by disciplinary paragraph or by resolution topic and assigned to one of 14 legislative committees. Each delegate is assigned to a committee.

During the first week, delegates meet in these committees to accept, reject or revise the various petitions.



THE MINNEAPOLIS CONVENTION CENTER.

OPENING SESSIONS

Opening days will feature worship services and addresses by people representing the Council of Bishops, the laity and the youth.

On the opening days, delegates will also be asked to approve the schedule and rules of order proposed by the Commission on General Conference. It is not unusual for the assembly to spend several hours debating these recommended legislative procedures.

The commission is proposing rule revisions that would:

Require delegates to use placards or flags to raise points of order, rather than entering the digital queuing system used during the two previous General Conference sessions.

Require that before delegates vote to end debate on a given matter, that the presiding bishop inform delegates of how many in the queue have speeches for, speeches against or amendments.

No longer allow challenges of misrepresentation to interrupt a delegate who has the floor.

The commission approved a schedule that includes 22.3 hours for legislative committee work in the first week and 27.8 hours for legislative work during the second week's plenary sessions. Compared to the 2016 session, that's 10 minutes fewer for legislative committee work and nearly 3 hours more for legislative work in the second week.

FINAL DECISIONS

Petitions approved by the legislative committee move on for consideration by the full body of delegates. These approved petitions are called "calendar items."

If a petition is not controversial, has no financial implications, seeks no change in the constitution, and receives fewer than 10 negative votes, it is placed in the "consent calendar." Any 20 delegates may have a consent calendar item removed by filing a request with the Secretary of the General Conference. After delegates have removed items they wanted considered separately, the consent calendar is voted on by the entire assembly. This bunching of petitions expedites the legislative process.

For the first time, this General Conference is required to act on all petitions. Previous conferences would frequently adjourn before all petitions had been considered.

Delegates are not required to vote in accordance with the wishes of annual conference members who elected them. They are asked to cast their votes in accordance with their own conscience as moved by the Holy Spirit (see ruling by the [Judicial Council](#)).

Delegates cast their votes by electronic, smartcard-enabled devices. Votes are not traceable to any specific delegate or delegation. Only the vote totals are recorded and reported.

A simple majority passes most motions. Constitutional changes require a two-thirds majority of the delegates present and voting and subsequent approval by two-thirds of those voting at annual conferences to be held later this year.

The legislation, budget and other items approved by the General Conference take effect on Jan. 1, 2021, unless specified to take effect at another time.

FOLLOWING THE PROCESS

Throughout the legislative process, from the submission of petitions to actions taken by legislative committees and plenary sessions, all items before the General Conference are tracked and reported through an online tracking system. The progress of all legislation handled by the 2016 General Conference is [archived](#). The 2020 version will be available after the submission and translation of all petitions is complete.

THE AFRICA UNIVERSITY TOURING
CHOIR SINGS DURING THE 2016
UNITED METHODIST GENERAL
CONFERENCE IN PORTLAND, OREGON.

What are we fighting for?

By Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton

As we look forward to the 2020 General Conference, this is not the time for us to resign ourselves to the current state of affairs in our denomination.

A SPIRITUAL PROBLEM

I believe that at the heart of all the issues we've been debating as a church is a spiritual problem. There is too much negativity.

More attention is given to a report indicating a decline in worship attendance, professions of faith, and baptism than to what God is doing in and through faithful disciples. Church meetings look more like the local civic club than a spirit-led movement. Small groups spend more time discussing politics than equipping participants to share their faith with others. Far more concerns are shared during prayer time than joys.

Before long negativity, skepticism, apathy and a lack of vision dominate the landscape, and we run the risk of saying and doing things that cause more harm than good.

In a world filled with stories of terrorism, disease, fear, and violence we need a refuge from the storm, a place where there is a word of hope, a feeling of joy, and a word of encouragement. We are all looking for a place where someone has the bold conviction to proclaim the hope that is greater than what we hear on the nightly news. We need to be inspired.



Thomas J. Bickerton is bishop of the New York area and president-designate of the Council of Bishops. He is a former vice president of the General Commission on United Methodist Men. This article is based on edited excerpts from *What Are We Fighting For?* (Abingdon Press 2016). Permission to reprint granted by the United Methodist Publishing House.

THE ANSWER

I believe we are on the verge of the Promised Land. We just need enough courage to wade into the water and cross the river to find a land flowing with opportunity and God's abundant grace and blessing.

Some want to talk about our impending death, but with all that God has given us, I'm counting on a resurrection story of new life.

I've never bought into the idea that our future hinges on the style of our worship, the form of our administrative structure or some major reform. What I do buy into is a conversation grounded in spiritual discernment that doesn't claim any one person or group has the right answer, but instead, acknowledges a genuine need for the Spirit of God to inform, bless and forge a collaboration that will discover the right answers together.

The answers to the issues we face as a church will be found in a power higher than our own. We need confession and a renewed desire to seek the heart of God.

THE CHURCH AT WAR

The church is embroiled in a variety of wars. There is a war between the older, established members of our church and the young generation. The older generation, says, "We've never done it that way before. The emerging generation counters with, "We want the church to be relevant to our needs.

Similarly, there is a war between those who adhere to religious tradition and those who advocate for cultural adaptation. Traditionalists fear that everything they believe in and practice will fade away. Those want to see the church more intimately integrated into the needs of the community and the cultural context of the day fear that the church will fade away into a meaningless institution.

There is also a war concerning theology. Conservatives believe our doctrine is being adversely affected by cultural challenges and adaptations. Liberals believe that our witness is dependent upon the integration of our faith with a changing world. In the middle are moderates who understand both sides.

SEEK COLLABORATION

In these days of fear and uncertainty, it is time to collaborate.

While it would take great courage to make ourselves vulnerable to someone who has a contrary set of beliefs, think what an act of collaboration would communicate to people who are looking for hope in times of confusion and anxiety.

Genuine collaboration begins with the realization that people who think differently than we do are not wrong, only different. This is not an easy posture to take, but it does not lessen your own beliefs and convictions. It is a great mark of spiritual maturity to acknowledge and believe that God has given each of us a variety of gifts and opinions. Think of the difference we can make when we find a way to collaborate and then demonstrate that collaboration with acts of grace and love toward one another.

In our context within the UMC, collaboration is finding a way to work with people and groups within the church to achieve and fulfill the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

GENERAL CONFERENCE VOTING DEVICES



BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

United Methodists believe the Bible is essential to our understanding of God's work and continual formation in our lives, but there are many versions of the holy book. If we believe there is only one correct version of Holy Scriptures, we have a limited segment of believers who favor another version.

Also, if we believe there is only one way to read the Scriptures, then we narrow the scope of who will be reached by their message. If, however, we believe there are varieties of ways to interpret Scripture, then everyone does not have to conform to our method of interpretation, making room for multiple branches on the same tree.

Some ascribe to liberal interpretations of Scripture seeing the Bible as a story that has life lessons we can embrace. Others, take a more conservative approach, seeing and interpreting the Bible more literally.

We need to understand that both approaches have at their foundation the belief that the Bible is God's word and the source of our inspiration and direction. Increasing our willingness to do the hard work of understanding one another's biblical interpretations and belief systems can only help our appreciation of one another as well as our public witness as people of faith. This requires desire, intentionality and empathy. When we passionately and purposefully work to understand one another, the way history informs belief, how we feel about certain issues, and the lenses through which we see things, a door of wonderful possibilities suddenly opens.

IN ALL THINGS LOVE

One day a Pharisaic lawyer asked Jesus, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'."

Jesus' answer sets the standard for every follower since to embrace and follow.

When we find ourselves getting caught up in questions of hesitancy and doubt, it is important for us to remember how God's grace has been at work in our lives through the witness and care of those who have found a way to make love of God and love of neighbor a reality in the way that they live.

WHY ARE WE FIGHTING?

Why are we fighting when we have so much going for us? God has given us the precious gift of the church--and our own branch of it we call the UMC. It is our responsibility to take care of it and nurture it. We have been given clear directions and a specific timeline for our work: "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

I believe God is not through with the UMC. I believe we were created for this time and we are called to work for the unity of the church, which is the source of our greatest public witness.

There is a way through the morass of our own controversies and struggles. And on the other side of those hardships lies a future filled with goodness and joy.

I believe that is exactly what we are fighting for.



PHOTO BY KATHLEEN BARRY/UMNEWS

UNITED METHODIST BISHOPS STAND ON STAGE AS OTHERS PROCESS INTO THE OPENING WORSHIP SERVICE FOR THE 2019 UNITED METHODIST GENERAL CONFERENCE IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI.

A scouting report prior to the Minneapolis game

by Rich Peck

The UMC line-up is set for the 2020 General Conference.

Veteran observers are reviewing players scheduled to play in the May game in Minneapolis.

Local Churches (LC) will be pitching. LC has an arsenal of pitches and speedy delivery, but he is known to make some wild pitches, and could be thrown out of the game by the umpire.

Caucuses and General Agencies serve as relief pitchers. They are veterans who have thrown a lot of pitches in previous games. Good News (GN), a right-handed pitcher, has been throwing hard balls since 1968 and, talk about veterans, Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA), a left-hander, has been pitching since 1907.

The *Daily Christian Advocate* has a full scouting report on expected pitches.

General Conference Delegates (GCD) will be behind the plate. GCD tries to catch everything thrown to him and occasionally catches balls that haven't been thrown. He is adroit and flexible, but he tends to make errors in late innings. A new rule will require GCD to catch everything thrown in this game. In the past, GCD left the game while the pitcher was still throwing fast balls.

Judicial Council (JC) serves as the umpire. JC is a tough on all players and has a narrow strike zone. In 2016, he threw out the entire team in Tampa.

Indianapolis Plan for Amicable Separation (Indy) will play center field. Indy will try to catch balls coming from all directions. Indy tries to make both the right fielder and left fielder happy.

Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA) will play right field. WCA said he will let the center fielder catch some of the balls hit his direction, but he may change his plan if Indy moves too close to the left fielder.

UMC Next (Next), a player recruited by 600 scouts at a May 2019 Kansas meeting, will play left field. Next plans to avenge the loss of a previous short-inning game won by Traditionalists.

All three outfielders support players who want to leave the team, but the umpire may dampen their enthusiasm for that effort.

New Expression Worldwide (New) will play first base. New surprised his teammates by suggesting they join four different teams, Traditionalist Methodist Church, Moderate Methodist Church, Progressive Methodist Church, and Liberation Methodist Church. A Transitional Council will help players make team selections. New knows this will hurt the line-up, but he insists they can all remain friends.

The Bard-Jones Plan (BJ) will play shortstop. BJ thinks his teammates aren't playing well together and he wants them to join Progressive, Open and Traditional teams in the next two years. BJ wants all the teams to set the rules for the General Council of Finance and Administration, Wespath, the UM Publishing House and the General Commission on Archives and History.

Plain Grace (PG) will play second base. Don't get confused when he sometimes spells his name as Plane; it all depends on his mood. PG can't understand why BJ and New are in such a rush to break up the team. PG wants to give players time on other teams before they decide where they want to build their careers.



Black Methodist for Church Renewal (BMCR) will play third base. The veteran recalls how black players prior to 1968 were forced to play in the Central Jurisdiction. He will remind the catcher that issues related to race relations must still be fielded.

The Connectional Table (CT) will be the pinch hitter. CT is expected to connect with a pitch that would make the U.S. Church into a regional church body. If CT connects, the ball will have to be caught by two-thirds of conference members around the world.

Bishops will sit in the dugout. It's a shame they won't get to play as they have been star players in previous games.

Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation (Protocol) arrived after the players were on the field waiting for the game to begin. After chatting with fans, player representatives and a few bishops on the bench, Protocol suggests giving a \$25 million bonus to traditionalists to form a new team.

Traditionalists, centrists, progressives and bishops propose separation

A 16-member group of bishops and representatives of diverse advocacy groups is proposing a plan to create a new traditionalist denomination, allow for the creation of other denominations, and the continuation of a modified UMC denomination.

The agreement, the [Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation](#), achieved on December 17, 2019, calls for suspension of all administrative and judicatory action regarding complaints involving LGBTQ clergy and same-sex weddings until after the 2020 General Conference.

The 16-member group came together as an outgrowth of a consultation initiated by bishops from outside the U.S. The parties sought assistance from attorney [Kenneth Feinberg](#), former special master of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund and administrator of the BP Deepwater Horizon Disaster Victim Compensation Fund.

A SHARED LOVE

According to an [FAQ page](#) set up on the Council of Bishops, “It was understood from the beginning that this was an unauthorized group of persons who shared a deep love for the church as well as a significant desire to see if a mediated solution could be proposed. Those who participated clearly understood that while they brought the perspectives of their various constituencies to the table, they could in no way attempt to represent all viewpoints of those in the church.”

Document signers include leaders of UMCNext, Mainstream UMC, Uniting Methodists, The Confessing Movement, Good News, The Institute on Religion and Democracy, the Wesleyan Covenant Association, Affirmation, Methodist Federation for Social Action, Reconciling Ministries Network, and the UM Queer Clergy Caucus, as well as bishops from around the world.

Representatives pledged to support the proposal and develop legislation to implement it. The legislative proposal is available [here](#).

FUNDING

The protocol anticipates the formation of a new traditionalist Methodist denomination. Once formed, the new church would receive \$25 million over the next four years and give up further claim to assets of the UMC. An additional \$2 million would be allocated for potential additional new Methodist denominations which may emerge.

Acknowledging the historical role of the Methodist movement in systematic racial violence, exploitation and discrimination, the Protocol would allocate \$39 million to ensure there is no disruption in supporting ministries for communities historically marginalized by racism.

ACTION AT THE 2020 GENERAL CONFERENCE

Though this proposal was hatched after the deadline for petitions to General Conference, the Discipline allows for special annual conference sessions to submit additional petitions.

The Philippines Annual Conference Cavite sent the proposal without any revisions to the Minneapolis gathering. The Liberia Annual Conference revised the proposal, increasing the \$25 million for the traditionalist church to \$120 million.

The group behind the proposal asked the Council of Bishops to ask Judicial Council to consider the constitutionality of the legislation before the opening session of the conference.

If the implementing legislation is adopted, the Council of Bishops will provide meeting space for those interested in creating other Methodist denominations to meet at the adjournment of the Minnesota conference session.

If the plan is adopted, the bishops will also call for an organizational session of the post-separation UMC, and, if such legislation has not been passed, consider matters pertaining to creating regional conferences.

ALIGNMENT PROCESS

If the separation plan is adopted by General Conference, annual conferences may vote to align with any new Methodist denomination.

If at least 20 percent of members of an annual conference, agree, they may vote on whether to affiliate with a new Methodist denomination prior to July 1, 2021. A vote to affiliate must be supported by 57 percent of those voting. If a conference does not take a vote on affiliation or does not receive a 57 percent majority, it remains part of the post-separation UMC. The Liberia Conference wants to reduce the percentage to 50 percent.

A local church which desire a different affiliation than its annual conference may vote to consider a different affiliation. The church council shall determine a voting threshold of either a simple majority or two-thirds of those present and voting at a duly called church conference. Decisions about affiliation by a local church must be made by the last day of 2024. If a local church does not vote, it remains a part of the Methodist denomination selected by its annual conference.



BISHOPS AND OTHER UMC LEADERS GATHER FOR A GROUP PHOTO AFTER REACHING AGREEMENT ON A PROPOSAL THAT WOULD CONTINUE A MODIFIED UMC BUT ALLOW TRADITIONALIST CONFERENCES AND CONGREGATIONS TO FORM A NEW DENOMINATION.

Meet at the empty tomb

By Bishop Gary Mueller

While I can't know with certainty, I have a feeling the first two Christians probably had a theological discussion over their respective interpretations of the faith. Not surprisingly, similar discussions have continued ever since, because faith is ultimately something very personal.

These differences, however, have taken an ugly turn recently. A huge gulf has opened between those who are more conservative and those who are more liberal, which mimics the polarization gripping our nation. The result is the church now seems to be in full-blown battle mode.

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

I think it is because we have ideologized the Christian faith. We no longer understand our faith primarily in terms of our relationship with Jesus, to other believers in the Body of Christ and to the world based on how Jesus teaches us to treat others. Instead, we have reduced Christianity to our own personal belief system defined by our theological understandings, political preferences, cultural perspectives and a good dose of arrogance with the result that it leaves little room for anyone who does not think like us.

The particularly insidious part of this ideologization of the faith is how easily we convince ourselves that those who disagree with us have bad beliefs and, therefore, are bad people. Because they are

bad people, we feel justified in stereotyping them. The more we focus on our crude characterizations of them, the more they become the enemy. Since we are in a battle of right versus wrong, we have to protect ourselves and be victorious. Because they are the adversary, we can do anything to them we wish without a shred of remorse. And on and on and on, until we are trapped in a cycle of polarization, disdain and fracture. If you have any doubt whether this is an accurate picture of reality, just take a look at the current state of the UMC.

My heart hurts - indeed, it breaks - that it has come to this. What is more, there are days I have little hope that things will improve. And, yet, I cannot give up because God is calling us to break this sinful cycle, Jesus is molding all Christians into his body, and the Holy Spirit is working to bring together what we have rent asunder.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

What if all progressives, traditionalists and those somewhere in-between were to meet at the empty tomb this Easter? To get back to the heart of our faith. To remember God loves us so much God sent the only begotten Son right into the mess of the world to save it. To look - truly look - at those gathering with us, and see them as the light of Christ illumines their faces. To allow the Holy Spirit to bind us together through the resurrected Christ.



Bishop Gary Mueller is the episcopal leader of the Arkansas Area and vice-president of the General Commission on U.M. Men.

YOUR GIFT MATTERS

Together we can make sustainable changes as we partner in the work of UMCOR

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UMCgiving.org/GiveUMCOR

SPECIAL SUNDAY
 UMCOR



Build bridges to younger men

By Odell Horne

Local churches must change their strategies in order to attract and retain younger men. Building bridges is a relational process; older men have valuable life lessons to share with younger men if they choose to become spiritual mentors.

Here are some of the things that I have learned while visiting with UM Men organizations in the Atlanta area:

1. Most of the men are more than 50 years old. They have a “missionary mindset” for international missions; they dig wells, construct schools, and engage in disaster-relief activities. However, they do not have the same missionary mindset for younger men. They have a “come-and-join-us” mentality instead of a “go-and-make disciples” mentality. This generational divide caused by doing projects and conducting programs instead of developing mentoring relationships and succession planning are addressed in [Understanding Men’s Ministry](#) training sessions.
2. Older men love to talk politics -- a lot. This is a poor way to attract younger men. Younger men are more concerned with their spiritual lives (who they are and what they believe) than they are with politics.

3. Several of the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) churches that I visited made it a point to talk about LGBT inclusion, while no one outside of RMN churches even brought up the topic. This is also true of black churches concerning racial conversations. Coincidentally, there were very few younger men in the RMN and black churches men’s ministries, which leads me to believe that pointing out the “sins of the other” in the name of social justice is not an effective way to reach younger men.
4. Younger men are concerned with being good husbands and good fathers. They are also concerned about being better Christians, as well as succeeding in their careers. Older men have an opportunity to walk with younger men to show them how to navigate the trials of life. By choosing to become spiritual mentors, like the men of [Northside Church](#) in Atlanta, older men can build bridges across generations.
5. Young men would love to be a part of the UM Men organization; however, the meeting dates and times may not be convenient to them. As a result, several churches have established multiple men’s small groups that meet on different days of the week or at different times of the month.
6. Younger men are tired of tradition and their friends just don’t understand it. Churches that embrace modern worship styles increase the retention rates of younger men.

7. Racial conversations need to be addressed by “calling people in,” not “calling people out.” Much of the racial conversation in men’s ministry is rooted in an “I Have A Complaint Speech,” not an “I Have A Dream Speech.” Former members of the Ku Klux Klan now fight for [civil rights](#) because of Christians who showed them unconditional love.
8. Sermons that critique masculinity as misogynistic and homophobic are not rooted in grace, love and redemption, and they are not well received by younger men. Post-colonial theologies and the historical-critical method of shaming men will not change hearts. A spiritual conversation with UM Men is desperately needed to address the “sins of men” with grace and truth.

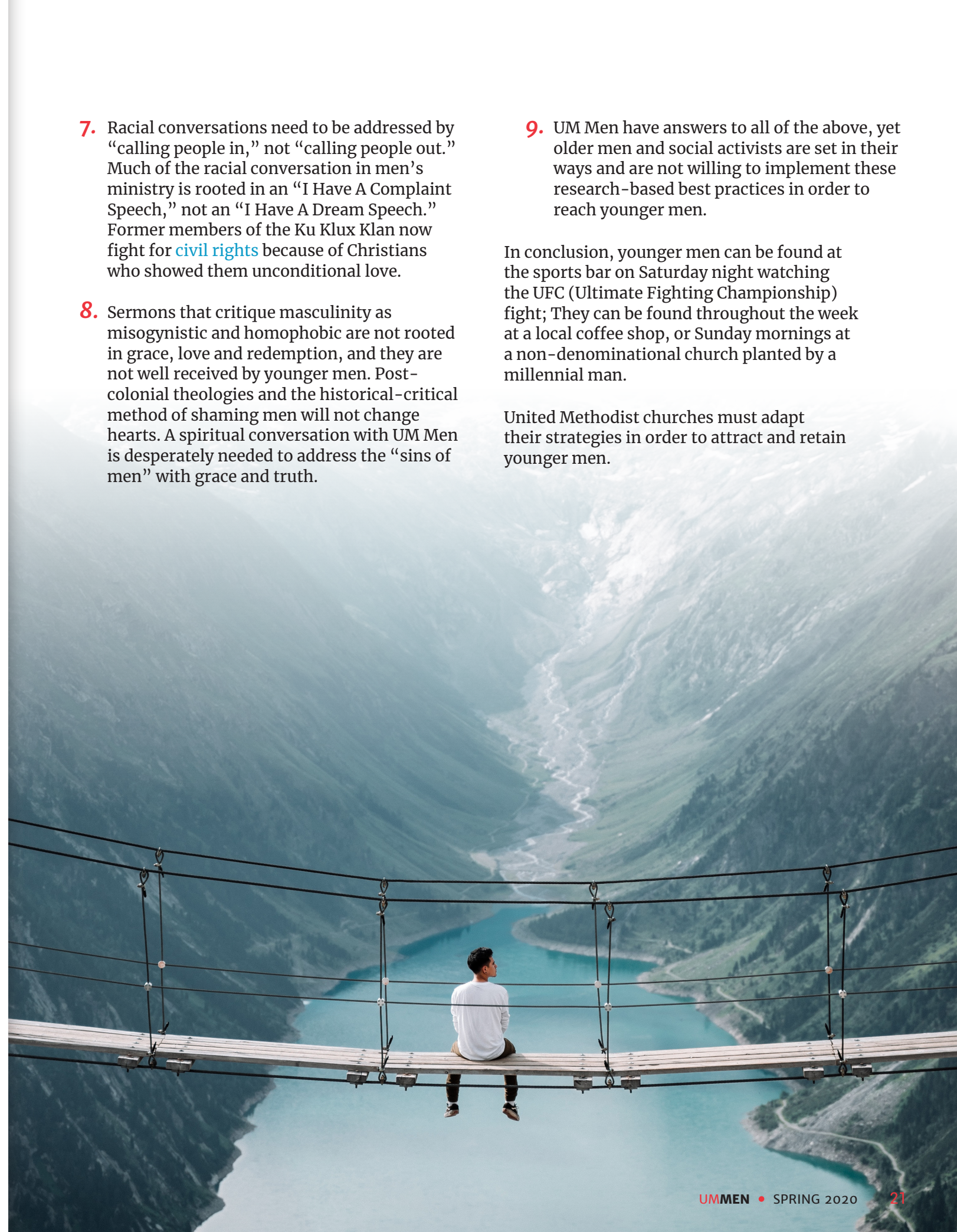
9. UM Men have answers to all of the above, yet older men and social activists are set in their ways and are not willing to implement these research-based best practices in order to reach younger men.

In conclusion, younger men can be found at the sports bar on Saturday night watching the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) fight; They can be found throughout the week at a local coffee shop, or Sunday mornings at a non-denominational church planted by a millennial man.

United Methodist churches must adapt their strategies in order to attract and retain younger men.



Odell Horne is a men’s ministry specialist and a lay servant at Impact UMC near Atlanta. You can follow the YoungER Men’s Ministry on [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and our [website](#)



A language the deaf can hear and the blind can see

By Walter Albritton

Mark Twain left us many delightful quotations. This is one of his best: “Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.”

Even more expressive are the words of Albert Schweitzer: “Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust and hostility to evaporate.”

Both respected men remind us of the value of kindness.

ABSENT IN POLITICAL RHETORIC

Kindness is so important that no one denounces it, and everybody applauds it. Yet it is conspicuously absent in the rhetoric and actions of the politicians of our time. Even more alarming, though not surprising, is the growing acceptance of profanity among those vying for public office. Profane language will surely weaken, if not destroy, the fiber of our society. Surely it is time, perhaps past time, for decent, Godfearing citizens to come against incivility with kindness.

Kindness is one of the great themes of the Bible.



The Rev. Walter Albritton is pastor emeritus of St. James UMC in Montgomery, Ala.

II SAMUEL

In Second Samuel, King David asks if there is anyone to whom he can show the kindness of God. When informed that a son of Jonathan was lame in both feet, David summons Mephibosheth. As the frightened young man stood before him, David says, “Don’t be afraid, for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father, and you will always eat at my table.” In later years David penned these words in Psalms 63: “Thy loving kindness is better than life. My lips shall praise Thee. Thus, will I bless Thee. I will lift up my hands unto Thy name.”

PROVERBS 14

Solomon, in Proverbs 14, tells us: “Blessed is he who is kind to the needy,” and “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.” Such scriptural admonitions remind us of the necessity to show kindness to the needy as well as to strangers and friends.

COLOSSIANS

Named as one of the fruits of the Spirit, kindness is often linked to Christian living in the New Testament. When writing to the Colossians, Paul insists that his friends must “rid themselves of anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language.” Some of our politicians, on the Left and the Right, would have to rewrite their speeches if they took Paul seriously.

Paul goes on to admonish the Colossians to “clothe themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” Imagine how the political arena would change if our politicians were to follow Paul’s advice.

EPHESIANS

Twice in his letters, Paul speaks of our salvation as being “the kindness of God.” Indeed, God’s willingness to allow Christ to die for us “while we were yet sinners” is the ultimate kindness. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul invites us to “be imitators of God.” At first glance that seems impossible, but it is what we are called to do—to imitate God’s kindness as we relate to others, thus practicing forgiveness like that we have received from God. Here is surely the solution to the incivility that threatens to destroy our nation!

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Receiving authentic kindness, when we least deserve it, can be life-changing. On one occasion (and there have been many others), I did a foolish thing. I voiced some sharp criticisms of a man in my church who had been a close friend. When others told him what I had said, he called me and poured out his anger. Our friendship was history. Days went by, days when my guilt was overwhelming.

Finally, I swallowed my pride and drove to his home (hoping he would not be there). But he was there, and I managed somehow to get the words out: “I want to apologize for what I said and ask you to forgive me. I need your friendship in my life.”

Thankfully he was open to reconciliation. We wept unashamedly and prayed together, and God restored our relationship. I have never forgotten the joy of that moment for it was an act of kindness for both of us. Kindness demonstrated. Kindness practiced. Kindness at work.

Perhaps that is why my favorite verse in the New Testament is Ephesians 4:32 – “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.”

Who would come to mind if you were to ask yourself the question King David asked, “Is there someone to whom I can show the kindness of God?” Ponder that. Then ask yourself. “Is it time for me to engage in an act of kindness that could be life-changing?”

Dare to go where the Spirit leads.



A TALKING FROG

A pastor was crossing a road one day when a frog called out to him and said, "If you kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess." He bent over, picked up the frog and put it in his pocket.

The frog spoke up again and said, "If you kiss me and turn me back into a beautiful princess, I will stay with you for one week!"

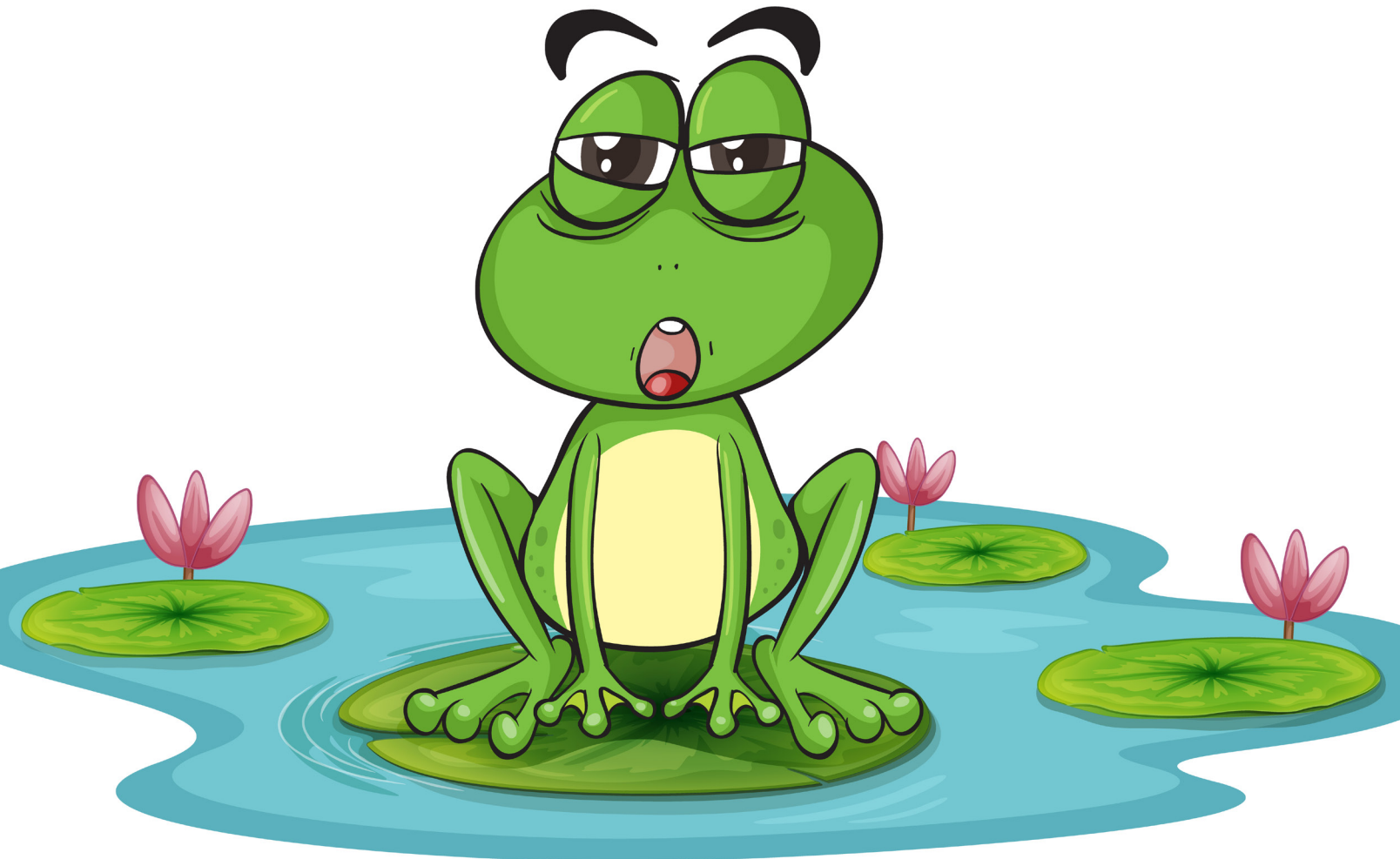
The pastor took the frog out of his pocket, smiled at it and returned it to the pocket.

The frog then cried out, "If you kiss me and turn me back into a princess, I'll stay with you and give you anything you want."

Again the pastor took the frog out, smiled at it and put it back into his pocket.

Finally, the frog asked, "What is the matter? I've told you I'm a beautiful princess, that I'll stay with you for a week and give you anything you want. Why won't you kiss me?"

The pastor said, "Look I'm an pastor. I already have a wife, but a talking frog, now that's cool!"



SPIRIT-FILLED PEOPLE OF GOD



15 ways to pray for your pastor

by Joe Iovino

The life of a United Methodist pastor is filled with a variety of responsibilities. They preach, teach, visit, counsel, lead, consult, communicate, budget, clean, and so much more.

Pastoring a church is not a job that can be done well under the pastor's power alone. Every pastor relies heavily on God's guidance, strength and peace as they live into their call.

One of the best ways we can support our pastors and show them our appreciation is to regularly pray for them. But it can be difficult to know exactly what we should pray for. To help get started, we've assembled fifteen areas of pastors' lives and ministries where they would value your prayers.

Pastors lead us in worship each Sunday.

Let us pray for our pastors who lead us in worship each Sunday.

1. Spiritual lives

Our pastors' spiritual lives are important to their finding the wisdom, strength and guidance necessary to lead a church. Pray for your pastors' growth as a disciple of Jesus Christ, as the Holy Spirit works through them to serve your congregation and community.

2. Time management

With all of their responsibilities, United Methodist pastors need to become masters of their calendars. John Wesley knew this back in the 1700s. He instructed the preachers, "Never trifle away time." Pray for your pastors to use time wisely, including blocking out occasions for Sabbath rest, prayer, work and family.

3. Families

Speaking of families, it is important to remember that our ministers may also be a spouse, a parent, and a child to parents who have needs. Remember to pray for your pastor's family.

4. Preaching

Delivering a great sermon (and the ones that are less than great) takes hours of study and preparation. Pray for your pastors as they prepare worship services, sacraments and sermons. May they have the words to communicate what God has placed on their hearts.

5. Strength

The work of a pastor requires reserves of spiritual and emotional strength. Ask God to bolster ministers' hearts and minds, especially on days when they feel weak, inadequate, or unqualified.

6. Visiting ministries

Visiting people in hospital rooms, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, memory centers, hospice units, homes and jail cells, is an important part of your pastor's job. Pray for her or his ability to connect with those who are struggling and to share God's comfort, peace and hope.

Pray for your pastor as she/he leads your congregation.

Let us pray for our pastors who lead our congregations.

7. Leadership

Pastors shepherd their congregations, lead individuals to Christ and guide the church as a witness to the work of God in our communities. Pray for your pastor's ability to lead your congregation.

8. Decision-making

Being a leader includes making difficult decisions. Sometimes that means making a call when the "right answer" is elusive. Other times it is about making an unpopular choice. Pray for God to guide your pastor's decisions.

9. Ministry with the poor

Pastors are called upon to help those who do not have enough food, rent money, or the ability to pay a utility bill. They also lead their congregations to do the same. Pray that your pastor has the wisdom and resources necessary to help those in need, and that he or she might represent Jesus well to those who feel forgotten.

10. Communication

We've all sent a note, email or text that is misunderstood by the recipient. Ministers reach out to so many people, miscommunication is nearly impossible to avoid. Ask God to make your pastor's communication clear and for grace when he or she is misunderstood.

11. Conflict

Conflicts sometimes arise when people miscommunicate and disagree. Some conflicts are serious, while others are petty. Pray for your pastors' strength, wisdom, patience and discernment as they navigate the conflicts that arise.

12. Vision

United Methodist pastors help set the vision for their congregations. Pray that your pastor may clearly see where God is leading your church and for opportunities for ministries to grow in those areas.

Pastors keep healthy in a variety of ways.

Let us pray for the physical and spiritual health of our pastors.



13. Finances

Money worries can be a big distraction. Pray for financial peace for your pastor, both with the congregation's budget and his or her family finances.

14. Health

Your pastor's physical health is important. Pray for them to take time to care for their bodies through rest, exercise, and eating well.

15. Encouragement

Pray for your pastors to be encouraged today. Pray that they might know in their hearts the differences they make in the lives of individuals, in your congregation, and in your community.

You can be an answer to prayer when you encourage your ministers. Write a note, text or email to let them know what a difference they make in your life. They will surely appreciate it.



Joe Iovino is the Senior Manager of UMC.org at United Methodist Communications.

UM Men fight climate change in Congo

By Philippe Kituka Lolonga

UM men in Congo are helping to fight climate change through education and action.

“The effects of climate change are felt in Congo. ... It is our responsibility as men to see far away and begin to counter it through our actions,” said Martin Lubamba, president of UM Men in the Kivu Conference.

FIRST STEP

During a recent celebration of the men’s organization, the group reflected on ways to combat climate change. They appealed to agronomist Rachid Mutoro, a young adult in the conference, to teach them about global warming and the measures they can take to protect the environment.

“The challenge is significant,” Mutoro said, “because despite the threat, our society is struggling to review its waste management habits in households and industries that are located in urban areas.”

Mutoro urged the men to raise awareness of the dangers of climate change and the consequences, including rising temperatures and sea levels, flooding and decreased agricultural production.

He said UMs need to practice good management of household waste and garbage and to reforest empty spaces to reduce greenhouse gases.

“All this will leave the future generation with a better climate and clean air,” he said.

Mutoro said the destruction of forests is a problem facing the country.

“Today, Congo is threatened by heavy deforestation by a large number of uninformed farmers and is at great risk of extinction of some (fauna and flora) species,” he said.

Mathieu Bahindula, who is in charge of projects for the Kivu men’s group, said he is planning training for UM farmers to help them deal with climate change issues.

TREE PLANTING

The men’s group also has begun planting trees in Fizi and Uvira, and efforts are underway to begin the activity in other districts such as Bukavu, Goma, Kisangani, Kindu and Beni.

Trees absorb carbon dioxide and transform it into energy, Mutoro said, so planting new trees is a good first step in reducing carbon dioxide and limiting global warming.

Alimasi Musafiri, president of UM Men in Fizi, said the group has its own tree nursery and the men distribute the trees to different sites for planting.

The UM Men of Kivu vowed to plant trees on UM church grounds and to educate church members and the community to act now to make a difference for future generations.

The men have created a temporary tree nursery to allow them to start planting in church plots, and Mutoro said he hopes it will become a permanent tree nursery.



AGRONOMIST RACHID MUTORO (RIGHT), A UM IN THE KIVU CONFERENCE, HELPS A MEMBER OF UM MEN TEND TO A NEW TREE NURSERY THE MEN HAVE STARTED IN GOMA, CONGO. THE MEN’S GROUP IS PLANNING TO TRANSFER THE TREES TO UM CHURCH LAND IN THE REGION.

It is a way for me to demonstrate that it is easy to have the money thanks to the reforestation that also allows us to fight against global warming,” he said.

Dr. John Manga, president of UM Men in Bukavu and head of the government’s Office of the Environment Division in South Kivu, said it is important to fight climate change because it’s affecting people’s health.

“Today, we have several diseases that through global warming or climate change begin to occur in humans like chikungunya, Ebola, dengue and salmonellosis,” he said.

UM SITES

In the East Congo Conference, the Rev. Félix Okende has been reforesting land belonging to The UM Church for nearly three years.

“One of the natural and effective ways to fight global warming is the reforestation of our forests, which is why I prefer to contribute as a pastor in this struggle by planting trees,” he said.

Okende, pastor of Kitumaini UM Church in the South Kindu District, is an agronomist and currently has more than 800 seedlings in his nursery ready to be reforested at several UM sites.

“I’m planting the trees next to our local churches, UM schools (and) health centers. This will bring a good air next to our churches and allow worshippers to worship God with peace of mind,” Okende said.

In addition to helping the environment, the pastor’s tree planting is providing extra income.

“I use two types of trees in the reforestation activities I do: fast-growing trees and fruit trees. The fruits that these trees produce, I’ll eat them with my family and some will be sold to allow me to have some money.

In his opening remarks at the Kivu Annual Conference in Goma, East Congo Bishop Gabriel Yemba Unda acknowledged that climate change is one of the greatest threats to human development efforts today.

“Climate change affects many sectors of the economy and threatens the achievement of the goals of sustainable development,” he said.

He called on all UMs to do their part to protect the environment and bring about positive change.



THE REV. FELIX OKENDE MAINTAINS A TREE HE PLANTED IN FRONT OF KITUMAINI UM CHURCH IN IN THE SOUTH KINDU DISTRICT OF EAST CONGO, WHERE HE IS PASTOR. THE AGRONOMIST PLANTS TREES NEXT TO UM CHURCHES, SCHOOLS AND HEALTH CENTERS TO HELP PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT. PHOTO BY CHADRACK LONDE, UM NEWS.

Kituka Lolonga is a communicator in the Kivu Conference. Chadrack Tambwe Londe, a communicator for the East Congo Conference, contributed to this report.

UM Men by the numbers in 2019

9	People inducted into the John Wesley Society.	2,700	Volunteers at Love Packages who worked with six employees to provide Christian literature to 50 million people.
18	Susanna Wesley Awards.	3,111	Churches with chartered Scout units.
28	Life Achievement Awards.	3,258	Number of chartered churches.
40	Men currently certified as men's ministry specialists.	3,631	P.R.A.Y. Awards given by 799 UM churches.
46	Scout leaders trained the Philmont Scout Ranch.	9,058	Strength for Service books distributed.
88	Conference presidents and prayer advocates attended a March training session.	9,978	Scouting units in UM churches.
90	Men who taught Disciple Bible Study in state prisons.	25,245	Dollars contributed to the Upper Room Prayer Line.
99	Years of partnership with Boy Scouts of America	106,498	Dollars provided by UM Men to Society of St. Andrew Meals for Millions.
150	Hearing aids ready to give to Haitian children by Hope of Hearing when political conditions allow.	153,984	Participants in UM Men organizations according local church reports.
170	People currently certified as scouting ministry specialists.	264,940	Prayer requests received by the Upper Room Prayer Line in 2018.
359	Handicap ramps built by 553 SAWS volunteers in three states.	300,710	Pounds of produce gleaned with Society of St. Andrew.
475	UM Men engaged in an 8-week AMEND study of domestic violence.	486,003	Youth served by scouting units in UM churches.
1,720	Tons of literature delivered to 28 different countries by Love Packages.	3,549,933	Servings of food provided by UM Men through Meals for Millions.
2,338	Number of EMS members.	16,691,507	Dollars spent on UMM projects according to local church reports.

Taxi driver in Heaven

A pastor and a taxi driver both died and went to heaven. St. Peter was at the Pearly gates waiting for them.

"Come with me," said St. Peter to the taxi driver.

The taxi driver followed St. Peter to a mansion. It had anything you could imagine from a

"Wow, thank you," said the taxi driver.

Next, St. Peter led the pastor to a rugged old shack with a bunk bed and a little old television set.

"Wait, I think you are a little mixed up," said the pastor. "Shouldn't I be the one who gets the mansion? After all I was a pastor, went to church every day, and preached God's word."

"Yes, that's true. But during your sermons people slept. When the taxi driver drove, everyone prayed."



10 ways to improve your prayer life

By Susan Hogan

Moses went to a mountaintop to hear God. Jesus fled to the desert.

But for many Christians, their most regular place for praying is whatever pew they sit in on Sundays. Work, children, chores and other duties make stopping for prayer seem a luxury.

That's not the way it's supposed to be. Souls, like vines, tend to grow wild and weak when untended.

No matter the season on the church calendar - Advent, Lent, Easter, Pentecost -- or all of the times in between, prayer is the gasoline that fuels Christians.

Prayer, like tennis, takes practice to become accomplished. Spiritual guides and sages, pastors and other church members are filled with advice and counsel.

Prayer can happen anywhere... it doesn't have to take place in a church.

10 tips about prayer

1. YOU ARE WORTHY.

Do not feel guilty about the quality of your prayer life, or fall victim to doubts and despair about your worthiness to talk to God. Each of us has a spiritual gift. So remember John Wesley's words: "In Christ we gain more than in Adam we lost."

2. THE MORE YOU PRAY, THE RICHER YOUR PRAYERS BECOME.

To deepen your prayer life, don't be a slacker. Like anything in life, to become good at prayer you must be disciplined. Just as running is an exercise in physical fitness, prayer is a spiritual discipline.

3. PRAYER IS ACTIVE.

Prayer involves action; namely being attentive to God's voice in your life. Listening for God means stopping and sitting still. It means paying attention to what God may be saying to you at any point in your life.

4. PRAYER SHOULD NOT BE AN AFTERTHOUGHT.

Prayer was the backbone of Jesus' ministry. Often, he broke away from his disciples to spend time with God. In the same way, prayer is essential to individual lives and to the life of the church. Break away from your daily routine for quiet time in prayer.

5. SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE SEASONED AT PRAYING.

People who've established prayer routines have much to teach those wanting to draw closer to God. Seek out those who can help guide and encourage your prayer life.

6. GOD DOESN'T REQUIRE ELOQUENCE.

Don't worry if you fumble for words when you pray. God is not looking for Toastmaster's graduates, but sincerity (not that you can't have both at once). If the words won't come, God still knows what's in your heart. Lift up that desire.

7. PRAYER NEED NOT INVOLVE WORDS.

The great Christian saints all write of prayer as a time of sitting quietly with God. Jesus even went off for 40 days of prayerful solitude. Take a deep breath. Exhale. Follow the breath as it flows in and out of your body. Think of it as the spirit of God breathing life into you.

8. PRAYER IS A TIME FOR CONVERSATION WITH A FRIEND: GOD.

Whether you see that friend routinely or just every once in awhile, know that whenever you turn to God, you're turning to someone who loves you.

9. ASK GOD FOR HELP IF YOU GET STUCK.

Maybe you've hit a dry spell. There's no shame in asking God to guide you to pray in a new way.

10. THE THREE Ls OF PRAYER: LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN.

Listening for God is central to prayer, according to the great saints. It's so critical that St. Benedict began his famous Rule with this command for monks: "Listen with the ear of your heart."

Happy 100th birthday to Methodist Scouting

Scouting was officially recognized by the Methodist Episcopal Church in February 1920.

In truth, Methodist churches were supporting Scout troops prior to 1920 when James V. Thompson, superintendent of Young People's Sunday School, wrote to James E. West, the Chief Scout of BSA.

But that letter marks the first formal relationship between the Methodist Episcopal Church and Boy Scouts of America.

FIRST LOCAL CHURCH

Grace Methodist Church in Delaware, Ohio, may be the first local church to sponsor a troop. In 1908 The Rev. L. Eugen Rush wanted to keep Methodist boys off the streets, and he founded the Eastside Roughnecks. The name was eventually changed to the East Side Gang and they became involved in activities like Scout troops engage in today.

Rush later contacted Sir Robert Baden-Powell, a British military hero who founded the Boy Scouts in England.

Baden Powell sent Rush a charter, making East Side Gang a troop in the British Scouting movement.

When the Boy Scouts came to America in 1910, Rush's troop became Troop No. 1 in Delaware, Ohio. Now there is a Number One BSA Troop in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. There were dozens of Methodist Churches in 1908-1909 who had established Boy Scout Troops. They joined the BSA after its creation in 1910. The pastor was often the first Scoutmaster. The connection of values, character, and the church was natural.

UM MEN TAKE THE LEAD

The Center for Scouting Ministries of the General Commission on UM Men takes the lead in nurturing scouting ministries in the denomination. Today 3,111 UM congregations charter 9,611 Scout units serving 309,739 young people. UM churches provide home base for more Scouts than any other denomination in America.

The UMC designates the second Sunday in February for Boy Scouts of America and the second Sunday in March for Girl Scouts of the USA. Many congregations use a Sunday of their choice to celebrate all ministries offered in collaboration with the Center for Scouting Ministries.

SCOUTING MINISTRY SPECIALISTS

There are 171 active scouting ministry volunteers serving conference, district and local church Scout units across the U.S. These specialists encourage local churches to sponsor Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (PRAY) classes for four age groups. Some pastors use God and Church courses in confirmation classes. In addition, these scouting ministry specialists provide churches with information about awards to honor Scouts and express appreciation to leaders.



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BSA declares bankruptcy

SCOUTING IN LOCAL CHURCHES IS UNAFFECTED

The national organization of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy to achieve two key objectives: equitably compensate victims who were harmed during their time in Scouting and to continue to carry out Scouting's mission for years to come.

Scouting programs in churches are unaffected by the action. The United Methodist Church charters the most Scout organizations of any denomination in the United States. A total of 3,111 churches charter 9,344 Scout units, serving 486,003 young people.

“Our support for the Boy Scouts of America has not changed,” says Gil Hanke, top staff executive of the General Commission on UM Men. “We need youth who can make moral and ethical decisions over their lifetimes. We need a place for youth to learn citizenship, group and personal skills”

Local councils have not filed for bankruptcy. These councils are legally separate, distinct and financially independent from the national organization.

Regular unit meetings and activities, district and council events, other Scouting adventures and countless service projects will take place as usual.

Roger Mosby, chief executive officer of BSA, says the action is the result of “increasing financial pressure on the BSA from litigation involving past abuse in Scouting.

“We are outraged that there have been times when individuals took advantage of our programs to abuse innocent children and sincerely apologize to anyone who was harmed during their time in Scouting,” says Mosby. “We believe victims, we support them, we provide counseling by a provider

of their choice, and we encourage them to come forward. Our plan is to use this Chapter 11 process to create a Trust that would provide equitable compensation to these individuals.”

Mosby assures Scout families that:

- Scouting is safer now than ever before. Approximately 90% of the pending and asserted claims against the BSA relate to abuse that occurred more than 30 years ago. That's precisely why over many years we've developed some of the strongest expert-informed youth protection policies found in any youth-serving organization.
- From mandatory youth protection training and background checks for all volunteers and staff, to policies that prohibit one-on-one interaction between youth and adults and require that any suspected abuse is reported to law enforcement, our volunteers and employees take youth protection extremely seriously and do their part to help keep kids safe.
- Scouting programs will continue to serve youth, families and local communities throughout this process and for many years to come. Just last year, communities across the country benefited from more than 13 million Scouting service hours, and young men and women earned more than 1.7 million merit badges that represent skills that will help them succeed throughout their lives. Studies prove and parents agree that Scouting helps young people become more kind, helpful and prepared for life, and as long as those values remain important to our society, Scouting will continue to be invaluable to our nation's youth.

If you would like to know more specifics, please use the links below.

[Boy Scouts of America Bankruptcy Explained](#)

[BSA's bankruptcy resources](#)

[BSA Youth Safety](#)

[BSA restructuring.org](#)

If these resources don't answer your questions, please feel free to reach out to BSA through Member Care at:

972.580.2489

MyScouting@Scouting.org

Sunday school teacher leads mission trips

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

First UMC presented Caitlynn Pulley with a Good Samaritan Award following her service as a Sunday school teacher, a member of the choir, and a leader of youth mission trips.

A graduate of Grand Canyon University, Caitlynn volunteers at Habitat for Humanity projects and Feed My Starving Children programs.



Caitlynn Pulley

Jose Amorin, assistant scoutmaster for BSA Troop 41, described Caitlynn as “a loving, caring, kind person who loves to laugh and enjoys music and art.”

Scout achieves Eagle rank following cancer diagnosis

BENTON, ARKANSAS

After 11-year-old Nicholas Burrell crossed over from Pack 82 to Troop 99 chartered by Salem UMC, he was diagnosed with germinoma, a rare cancer in the brain and spine.

In April 2017, he began 26 rounds of radiation over six weeks.

Most people would have dropped Scouting, but Nicholas was determined to achieve the rank of Eagle.



Nicholas Burrell places canned goods inside the blessings box he built as his Eagle Scout project in front of Salem UMC. Photo by Sam Pierce of the Arkansas Democrat Gazette.

He was homebound from school, but he attended troop meetings when he could and served as chaplain assistant while he worked on merit badges.

At the suggestion of the Rev. Justin Ledbetter, pastor of Salem UMC, Nicholas created a “blessing box” for his Eagle Scout project. The \$1,000 storage area provides free food for residents near the church.

At age 14, Nicholas became the youngest in Troop 99 to attain the rank of Eagle, and he plans to continue in Scouting until he is 18.

“It’s been an opportunity to show Scouts and others that something like this doesn’t stop you from reaching your goals,” said Nicholas.

Bishop receives Torch Award

ATHENS, GEORGIA

North Georgia Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson received the Torch Award at the 2019 Annual Conference for her outstanding support of the Scouting ministry.

In April 2018, Bishop Sue hosted a Bishop’s Scout Lunch promoting all three Scout programs and Programs of Religious Activities with Youth (PRAY). Since that lunch, several churches launched Girl Scout and Boy Scout units and 70 churches hosted PRAY classes.

Bishop Sue is a graduate of the University of Florida and a cum-laude graduate of Candler School of Theology at Emory University. She was a federal law clerk and a litigator with the Tampa law firm of Carlton-Fields before she answered her call to ministry. She was ordained a deacon in the Florida Annual Conference in 1996 and an elder in 1998. She subsequently served pastoral appointments as an associate pastor at



Bishop Hauptert Johnson

4,500-member First UMC, Lakeland; as pastor of a 300-member church in Tampa, and as a pastor of two large-membership churches, First UMC, Cape Coral, and First UMC, Ocala. She served as superintendent of the North Central District from 2013 until her election as bishop in 2016.

Mayor proclaims Methodist Scout Sunday

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA.

Noting that February 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of Scouting in the Methodist Church, Mayor Steven Benjamin proclaimed February 9, 2020 as Boy Scout Day in the United Methodist Church. The proclamation was signed by the mayor and six members of the city council.

Cub Scouts and BSA troops from Asbury Memorial UMC, Shandon UMC, and Red Bank UMC led the council meeting in its opening Pledge of Allegiance, then recited the Scout Oath and the Scout Law.



Mayor Stephen Benjamin presents the proclamation to the Rev. Robert Cox, S.C. Conference Scouting Coordinator.

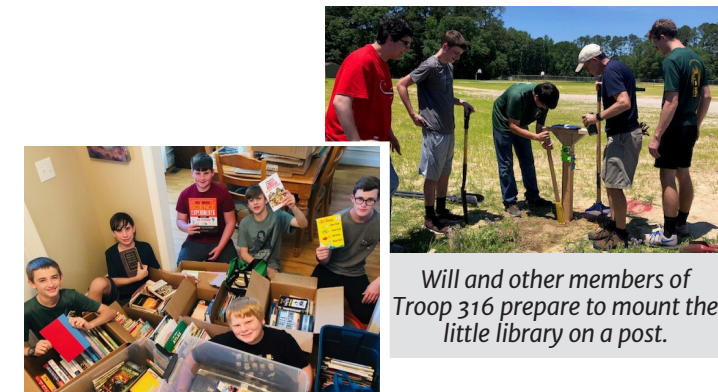
Scout creates two little free libraries

LUGOFF, SOUTH CAROLINA

Boy Scout William Rashley achieved the rank of Eagle following the successful completion of his Eagle project to build and install two little free libraries at St. John’s UMC and Lugoff Elementary School.

Will and members of Troop 316 collected some 800 books for the take-a-book-return-a-book free libraries.

A senior at Lugoff High School, Will plans to study finance at the University of South Carolina in the fall.



Scouts sort through 800 books slated for use in two little

Will and other members of Troop 316 prepare to mount the little library on a post.

Venture crew member receives top award

HAMPTON, VIRGINIA

The Colonial Virginia Boy Scout Council presented Ashleigh Stukes, a member Venture Crew 1151 chartered by First UMC Fox Hill, with the council’s first Summit Award.

Similar to the Boy Scout Eagle rank or the Girl Scout Gold Award, the Summit Award is the highest honor a person can attain in Venturing. Recipients of the award must complete a service project, at least three Tier or Tier II adventures, and serve as a leader of at least one Tier III adventure.

Ashley served as crew president and earned a God and Life Award from PRAY (Programs of Religious Activities with Youth). She completed a National Leadership Training course and earned the Pathfinder Award.



Colonial Virginia Council Executive Clinton Hammett presents a Summit Award to Ashleigh while Bob Stukes, Ashleigh’s father, proudly stands nearby.



Why crash diets don't work

By Dr. Bryant Stamford

Health experts warn against going on a crash diet. Even so, there always seems to be a new “revolutionary” crash diet scheme guaranteed to work that grabs attention, and fatty Americans jump on board in droves eager to shed lots of weight quickly. Ironically, they jump on board despite the fact they have been down this road before, and some have tried the same approach several times. The old saying, “Fool me once shame on you, fool me twice shame on me,” applies here.

Crash diets don't work because they go against the wisdom of the body. Here's why.

Crash diets reset metabolism rate

When you cut your daily energy (caloric) intake drastically to the level of semi-starvation, you set in motion a self-defeating series of events. This is because the body knows its survival depends on having an abundant ongoing supply of energy, and in response to consuming too little energy the body will take steps to conserve it. The bigger the reduction in energy intake, the bigger the steps taken to conserve it.

The first step will be to reset the body's metabolism at a lower level. In other words, you burn fewer calories per minute when at rest. Let's say your resting metabolic rate is 1.2 calories per minute, but it drops to 1.0. That's a drop of 0.2 calories per minute, which doesn't seem like a lot, but it's ongoing all day long. Therefore, you have $0.2 \times 60 \text{ minutes} \times 24 \text{ hours} = 288$ calories you are no longer burning off each day.



Bryant Stamford is a professor of kinesiology and integrative physiology at Hanover College in Indiana. This article is courtesy of the Louisville Courier Journal.

Muscles go first

The second step is to sacrifice muscle mass. Muscle mass makes up approximately 30 to 40 percent of the total body mass in a typical adult. That's a huge amount and it accounts for most of the body's metabolic rate because it takes a lot of energy to feed your muscles, even when they are at rest. Therefore, the body reasons that a good way to dampen metabolic rate even further is to get rid of as much muscle mass as possible.

Ironically, when you cut calories severely on a crash diet, the body will dump muscle mass while zealously holding onto fat. This is the dirty little secret behind losing weight quickly on a crash diet. You lose a bunch of muscle mass, which means you shed pounds quickly because you can lose muscle five times faster than losing fat.

Rebounding

Fortunately, the vast majority of folks who attempt foolish crash diets soon abandon them. When they do, does this mean the body goes back to where it was, packing on lost muscle mass and increasing the metabolic rate to normal levels? That depends on how much weight you lost and for how long. Here is an extreme example.

Contestants from the TV program “The Biggest Loser” were studied scientifically to determine the effects of huge weight losses in a short period of time. It was reported that the metabolic rate of contestants fell dramatically as their bodyweight plummeted. More recently, a study published in the journal *Obesity* took it a step further and examined how long it takes after the diet is over for the metabolic rate to rebound and return to normal.

On average, subjects in this research study lost nearly 40 percent of their body weight. This equated to an average loss of 128 pounds (from 327 pounds to 199). Accompanying the weight loss, subjects experienced a drop in their metabolic rate of 23 percent.

OK, fast forward six years. What happened? Subjects were struggling mightily to keep the weight off, and most found themselves back to their original weight or close to it, and some were even heavier. That's bad news, but worse, the metabolic rate was measured again and was still well below where it was prior to losing the weight. In other words, they were burning fewer calories per day, which makes managing their weight more difficult.

The bottom line

Crash diets are fools' gold. They promise quick weight loss and they deliver. The bad news is, you want to lose fat, not muscle, and you want to keep the weight off. Unfortunately, you don't get either one. Much of the weight that is lost is muscle, and it comes back fast, along with extra body fat. Worse, if metabolic rate remains suppressed, managing your weight will be more difficult than it was prior to the diet.

Like everything in life, if it's worth doing, it's worth doing right. Take it slow and limit weight loss to just a couple of pounds a month by a subtle reduction of calories, healthier food choices, and lots of moderate daily exercise.



In Memoriam

Ernie Wendell

Ernest (Ernie) John Wendell, 89, former president of the National Association of Conference Presidents (1989–91), died December 9.

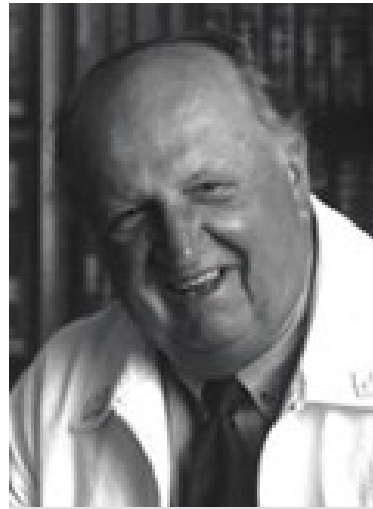
Prior to his election as national president, he served as president of North Carolina UM Men.

Ernie was born and raised in Cook County, Ill., to the late Ernest Peter Wendell and Eleanor Katherine Wendell.

Following his high school graduation in 1947, Ernie enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served for 21 years, retiring in 1968 as senior chief.

While still in the Navy, in 1953, he married Mary Ellen. The December 15 service was conducted by Mary Ellen's dad, the Rev. George Stephen Taylor.

Following his service in the Navy, Ernie became general manager of Durham Products for 13 years. He later served as a consultant and business developer for Turner Asphalt.



Ernie Wendell

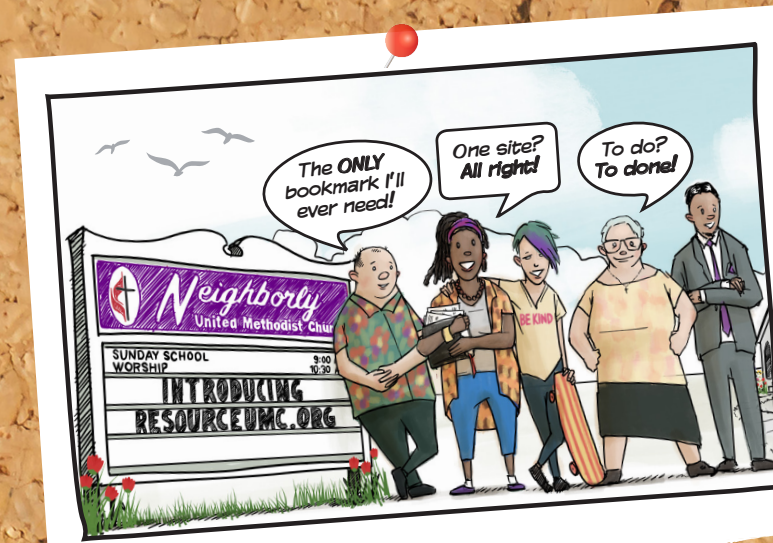
Ernie was a speaker at heart and served two terms as president of the Durham Toastmasters. He was also elected twice as president of the Durham Exchange Club, and one term as a member of Meredith College Board of Trustees.

Ernie and Mary Ellen were active members of McMannen UMC.

His most privileged title of service after "senior chief" was being elected president of North Carolina Conference UM Men and later as president of the NACP. While serving as NACP president, he represented UM Men on the General Board of Discipleship.

Ernie is survived by sons Ernest Wendell and his wife Renee; Russell Wendell and his wife Jeanne; David Wendell and Katherine, eight grandchildren, and ten great grandchildren.

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Be still and know that I am right

By Tom Tozer and Bill Black

We are separated from our brothers and sisters now in a way that is troubling. We speak to defend, conclude, or protect—interrupting and arguing rather than listening and understanding. Yet, Proverbs 18 says, “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. . . A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.”

When your teen risks offering an opinion different than yours, how do you react? Consider this: rather than signifying disrespect or disobedience, might it reflect positive growth toward becoming an independent thinker? Perhaps if we parents hold our tongues and listen, rather than immediately return fire, our teen just might mirror that behavior and listen back.

GOOD LISTENING FOSTERS BETTER BEHAVIOR

Here’s what we’ve learned. No one talks on a battlefield. There’s only noise and a lot of wounding.

Too many subscribe to the notion that the loudest mouth in the room is the one who must be right. If I can dominate the conversation with both volume and intensity, I can force my “truth” down your throat. Bullies operate this way. Some moms and dads parent this way. It’s my way or the highway.



Tom Tozer and Bill Black are authors of *Dads2Dads: Tools for Raising Teenagers*. Like them on Facebook and follow them on Twitter at Dads2Dadsllc. Contact them at tomandbill@Dads2Dadsllc.com.

Psychologist Joseph P. Allen at the University of Virginia says his research indicates that teens who learn to express disagreement in a calm, rational manner carry that mature behavior into their peer relationships. And their ability to disagree and discuss an issue in a cordial manner is good practice for resisting negative peer pressure.

The desired outcome in an argument isn’t so much agreement, it is understanding—a civil exchange of thoughts and ideas.

OPEN THE TOOL CHEST— TAKE OUT EMPATHY

Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, wrote, “When you show deep empathy toward others, their defensive energy goes down, and positive energy replaces it. That’s when you can get more creative in solving problems.”

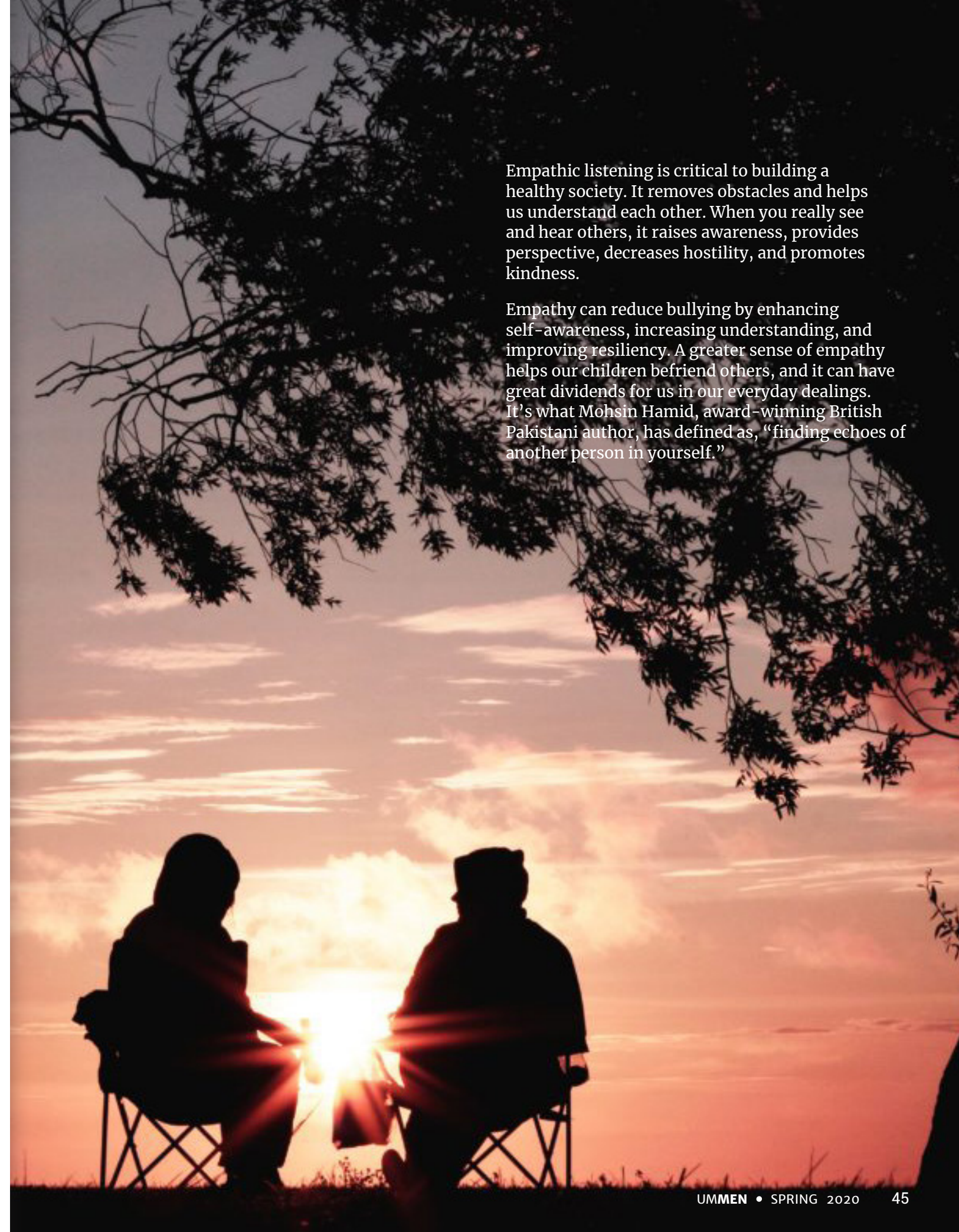
In a recent article in *Forbes*, Teri Citterman, CEO of Talonn, writes, “Why empathy? Because it has the ability to make a material difference in how leaders lead and people respond. When people feel like their boss knows them, they feel cared for and heard; it translates to inspired and motivated employees. People who feel cared about, feel safe. They feel like they matter and that their work has purpose.”

This is true for our children and their relationships.

Proverbs 2:2 says, “Make your ear attentive to wisdom and incline your heart to understanding.”

Empathic listening is critical to building a healthy society. It removes obstacles and helps us understand each other. When you really see and hear others, it raises awareness, provides perspective, decreases hostility, and promotes kindness.

Empathy can reduce bullying by enhancing self-awareness, increasing understanding, and improving resiliency. A greater sense of empathy helps our children befriend others, and it can have great dividends for us in our everyday dealings. It’s what Mohsin Hamid, award-winning British Pakistani author, has defined as, “finding echoes of another person in yourself.”





NEW MILFORD, CONNETICUT

UM Men provide trees for Village Green

For 53 years the Greater New Milford Chamber of Commerce has sponsored a tree lighting ceremony on the Village Green.

Members of the New Milford UM Men’s Club cut down the trees, place them on the Village Green, string the wires and the lights, and take them down shortly after New Year’s.



Photo by Deborah Rose of the Hearst Connecticut Media.

The men also sell Christmas trees at the church during December. Funds raised provide monies for scholarships, mission projects and community agencies.

AURORA, ILLINOIS

Appreciating pastor

Members of Flowing Forth UMC presented their pastor, the Rev. Derek Rogers, with a basket of gift cards as a token of their appreciation.

Derek has served as Flowing Forth’s pastor since July 2018, when the church was created by the merger of the former Fourth Street UMC and Flowing Grace UMC, both in Aurora.



Sara Williams and Leslie Miller present Rogers with a gift basket. Photo by Al Benson

AURORA, ILLINOIS

Church members pack nearly 25,000 meals

Twenty adults and youth from Flowing Forth UMC filled, weighed and packed 24,840 plastic bags of dry-food meals. The ingredients were provided by Feed My Starving Children.

Meals are donated to food partners around the world.



Photo by Al Benson.

SCHAUMBURG, ILLINOIS

Scouting program involves 91 youth and 34 adults

The Scouting program of Our Savior’s UMC touches the lives of 34 adult leaders, 91 young people, and an equal number of parents. That means 216 people are influenced by the church’s hospitality, mission, and servant leadership each week.

The 16-member Venture Crew has adventures each month and they went canoeing and kayaking in northern Wisconsin.



Crew 392 in action.

The 35 youth in Boy Scouts participate in monthly campouts and day trips, including a trip to Mammoth Cave in Kentucky.

The 40-member Cub Pack held a Pinewood Derby and a Blue and Gold Banquet

Led by 34 adults, the crew, troop, and pack contributed many hours of service to the church and community.

CENTREVILE, MARYLAND

UM Men participate in vigil

The Rev. Bill Ross, pastor and a member of UM Men of New Life Community UMC, participated in an inter-faith candlelight vigil for tolerance

Clergy and members of synagogues. and churches gathered at the Centreville Court House to offer prayers, sing songs, and light candles for peace.

Rabbi Peter Hyman from Temple B’nai Israel opened the service with the ceremonial blowing of the ram’s horn.



UM Men participate in candlelight vigil for peace and tolerance.

Pastor Ross read I Peter 3:9, “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing too.”

“Because I am Afro-American, I have been in places where people accept me and others where they didn’t, but one thing I’ve learned is not to respond to insults with insults,” Ross said.

“Violence,” he said, “is a fact of life that must not be tolerated. But in prayer, we must still try to understand those who use it.”

UM Men sang “We Shall Overcome.”

LEXINGTON, NEBRASKA

UM Men welcome parade participants

A Christmas parade began at the parking lot of First UMC.

Parade participants were invited inside the church for pancakes and sausages prepared by UM Men.

People had a chance to warm up and fill up both before and after the parade.



Santa rides a Lexington fire truck.

HOWELL, NEW JERSEY

Scouts blow and rake leaves

When leaves started pile up on the lawn of the Church of the Master, Lew Weil, president of New Jersey UM Men and a scouting ministry specialist, called Eric Muller, a Scout leader.



Eric soon had 30 Scouts out on the grass with blowers, rakes and tarps.

Within two hours the lawn was clean and neat.

SAW MILL, NEW MEXICO

South Georgia men deliver Christmas gifts

Seven UM laymen and pastors from South Georgia spent Dec. 11 to 18 delivering two trailer loads of Christmas gifts to churches located on Navajo Indian reservations.



Men unpack boxes of Christmas gifts for Navajo children.

The men traveled 4,000 miles to delivered 2,000 gifts to churches in Shiprock, Window Rock and Sawmill, New Mexico, and to a church in Blue Gap, Arizona.

CAPE HATTERAS, NORTH CAROLINA

Men repair homes following hurricane

Cape Hatteras UM Men deployed three teams to repair homes following Hurricane Dorian last September.

There were 449 requests for help as a result of flooding and wind damage in villages from Avon to Hatteras.

UM Men worked with Baptist Men, relief agencies, and local governments to address the most critical situations.



UM Men install new floor boards on a flooded home.

“We hope to get more homes raised and to find ways to replace some of the substandard ones, especially old mobile homes,” said Dennis Carroll, director of Cape Hatteras UM Men. “To this end, we’re helping owners pursue FEMA grants and partnering with our UM Conference Committee on Relief and the Outer Banks Community Foundation.

BOONVILLE, NEW YORK

Men distribute 45,000 pounds of potatoes

UM Men of Boonville UMC distributed 900 50-pound bags of potatoes to local food banks.

Potatoes were provided by the gleaning network of the Society of St. Andrew.

This potato drop was part of an Upper New York Conference effort to provide 150,000 pounds of potatoes through potato drops at Rose UMC, Endwell UMC, Boonville UMC, and the Conference Center. Each location had 35,000–50,000 potatoes picked up by food pantries, churches, community organizations, families, and individuals.



LYNCHBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

Men and women provide bread after services

Men and women of St. John UMC are partnering with Panera Bread to reduce hunger in their community.

Immediately following morning services, church members give bread to anyone in need.

On Friday nights, St. John’s UM Women pick up the bread from Panera Bread in Florence, and the UM Men do the same on Saturday nights. They bag the bread prior to Sunday morning services.



LYNCHBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

Men build three ramps

Harry White, president of Florence District UM Men, learned a church member could not return home from an assisted-living center because he couldn’t access his home in his wheelchair. Harry contacted Florence District Superintendent Terry Fleming and the two of them planned a district work day.

On two work days, 40 UM men from 20 area churches built three ramps for people in need, including Harry’s friend.



ARLINGTON, TENNESSEE

Shadow box celebrates scouting

Arlington UMC celebrates 20 years of scouting with a shadow box showcasing awards presented to Boy Scout Troop 452 and Cub Scout Pack 452.

The display is located on the sanctuary wall.



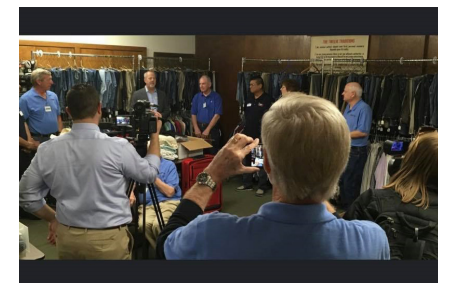
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Men celebrate 20-year ministry

The Capital District UM Men’s Homeless Men’s Clothes Closet celebrated 20 years of providing clothes for Austin area homeless men, a ministry that has served 25,000 clients.

Men of the Rio Texas Annual Conference work with Front Steps, a homeless advocacy organization based in the Central Presbyterian Church.

“What you guys are doing here is nothing short of changing people’s lives,” said George McCormack, executive director of Front Steps. He says clothes keep the homeless warm and help them prepare for job interviews.



TV Station KXAN films UM Men celebrating the 20th anniversary of a clothes closet.

FORT WORTH, TEXAS

Ministry provides devotional books to prisoners

Larry Coppock, chief executive officer of the Nashville-based Strength for Service ministry, read selections from *Strength for Service to God and Country* to 23 inmates at the Tarrant County Jail.

A former staff executive with the General Commission on UM Men, Coppock told about the history of the book before reading the two devotionals.

“It seemed appropriate to read a 1942 devotion on hope, written by The Rev. James Gilbert, who was then pastor of St. James Episcopal Church in Philadelphia,” said Larry.

The book contains all of the original devotions written for World War II troops. It also contains additional devotions by contemporary writers.

“I also read a devotion titled “Answering the Bell,” written by Don Hunsberger, the father of Evan, the Boy Scout who led the effort to republish the 1942 book,” said Larry.

Prior to his visit to the jail, Coppock had shipped a case of books to Chaplain Wes McDuffie to distribute to prisoners. The chaplain subsequently invited Coppock to speak with prisoners who had earned a sufficient number of “points” to participate in this select group.

“We enjoyed one-on-one time with detainees after the formal presentation,” said Larry.



Larry Coppock (left) and Chaplain Wes McDuffie

HENDERSON, TEXAS

Men honor fire fighters

The Men’s Ministry of First UMC presented copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community* to firefighters. The men have distributed some 200 copies of the devotional book to first responders.



From left, Firefighter Ben Martin, Gary Pointer, Robert Wright, Michael Jimerson, Josh Wardle, Lt. Lance Ellis, Firefighter Dan Krohn, Pastor David Luckert, and Firefighter Chance Jennings

PLANO, TEXAS

Church members write personal notes

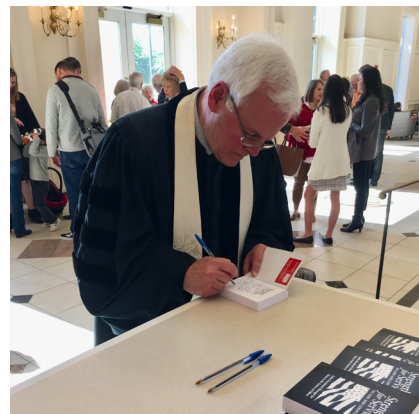
Beginning in 2016, UM Men of St. Andrew UMC annually raised money to purchase copies of *Strength for Service to God and Country*.

Church members write notes of appreciation in the opening pages of the books of daily devotions. Each note is different; one high school girl wrote, “You are loved”;

another girl wrote, “Give ‘em Hell.”

After each devotional includes a personal note, the books are shipped to a U.S. military base.

In 2019, the men sent 816 books to Fort Bliss Army Base in El Paso, Texas.



Dr. Robert Hasley, pastor of St. Andrew UMC, writes a personal note to Lt. Col. Shinri (Mike) Nishimura, chaplain at Ft. Bliss.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Men provide lunch for officers

UM Men of Northwest Hills UMC provided

lunch for active servicemen and veterans. They also presented them with copies of *Strength for Service to God and Country*.

Boy Scouts posted the colors and served the lunch.



From left: Lt. Col Don Wheeler, Sergeant Janay Baptiste, Col Knowles Atchison, and San Antonio District President George Hampton.

HALIFAX, VIRGINIA

Men provide spaghetti dinners

For more than 25 years men of Halifax UMC have sponsored an annual all-you-can-eat spaghetti supper.

Tickets for the dinner provide funds for various mission projects.



Men of Halifax UMC set plans and work assignments for their annual all-you-can-eat spaghetti supper.

VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

A ‘Semper Gumby’ Scout leader

Scouters often say “Semper Gumby” – always flexible.

This was apparent at Virginia UM Men Conference at Baylake UMC.

Bill Chaffin, Virginia Conference director of Scouting ministry, invited Elizabeth Burtner, one of the York River District coordinators to assist him at a Scouting ministry booth.

When a liturgical dancer, could not perform at the event, Elizabeth stepped in for the injured dancer.



Elizabeth Burtner, a Scout leader in the Virginia Annual Conference, moves from the Scouting ministry booth to the front of the Baylake UMC sanctuary to perform as a last-minute substitute dancer at a UM Men Conference.

MARTINSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA

Men give devotional books to VA hospital

Using donations from an October pancake brunch served by the Men’s Fellowship at Otterbein UMC in Harrisonburg, Va., 52 copies of *Strength for Service to God and Community* were delivered in January to the Veterans Administration Medical Center.



From left: Carter Ritchie, member of Otterbein Men’s Fellowship; Terri Martin, voluntary service specialist for the medical center; Joseph Hardy, chief of chaplains at the medical center; and Bill Pollard, member of Otterbein Men’s Fellowship.



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FEEDING AMERICA'S HUNGRY



We know a few things about food & farmers. We're still working on the markets. For assistance, we picked you!



We are looking for a few good men who have an unmatched passion for helping with the very real issue of hunger in America. More than 40 million Americans sometimes don't know where their next meal will come from. With the help of our UMMen partnership, the Society of St. Andrew feeds millions of hungry Americans. This spring we have another way to grow our efforts together. A new program that will help us do even more will open up brand new opportunities for UMMen all over the country, even in areas where SoSA does not have an existing operation. The Farmers Market program has few requirements. All you need is a farmers market in a nearby location and the desire to coordinate picking up the leftovers after the market closes. Transporting the food to a nearby food pantry, shelter, or church the same day is the second part. You can do this and we need you to!

To learn more, and to make a group or individual commitment to feed the hungry, visit Endhunger.org/umm. Or contact Meals for Millions director **Wade Mays** at **800-333-4597** or **wade@endhunger.org**

